



NEW TYPE COURTROOM DESIGN: THE INSTANCES OF ORDU ANNEX COURTHOUSE OF TURKEY AND HONEFOSS COURTHOUSE OF NORWAY

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Abstract

Strengthening the Court Management System Project, which was initiated in 2007 jointly with the Council of Europe and Ministry of Justice of Turkey is a project developed to solve the problems in judicial system of Turkey. In this context, new type of courtroom type has been established and some changes have been made with the existing courthouse buildings of Turkey within the scope of court management system. Some of these changes include establishment of information desks and front offices, limited corridor system, and common use courtrooms. In 2013, an introductory book was published to facilitate the implementation of these decisions and to introduce the new system. In this paper, new type courtroom design is discussed and exemplified through the instances of Ordu Annex Courthouse of Turkey and Honefoss Courthouse of Norway which are the first examples of the new type in these countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

Maintaining the independence of judiciary and securing the justice and arranging the justice system to meet the needs of the new age are among the main duties of the government. In this context, Strengthening the Court Management System Project has emerged by alliance of Republic of Turkey and Council of Europe. The first stage of the project was implemented between 2007-2009. In this regard, judges, prosecutors, court staff and lawyers from Turkey, to exchange ideas, has studied on the solution of problems in the judiciary. The decisions were implemented in 5 pilot courthouses (Konya, Mardin, Aydın, Rize, and Manavgat). A guidebook was prepared for the envisaged decisions to be implemented. The second phase of the project was implemented in 21 selected courthouses. In this context, the guide prepared in 2011 was revised and published in 2013 (Topraklı, 2013a, 2013c).

Judicial activities, which are one of the most important obligations of the judicial system, are tasks that must be performed in a timely and correct manner. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the judicial buildings and court halls, where the concept of justice is embodied, must be arranged in such a way as to fulfill their functions at the maximum level. In this context, the efforts to improve judicial activities have accelerated and continued incessantly with the process of accession to the European Union since 2001.

As a result of the studies, it has been observed that the courthouse buildings are in an intricate structure and the courthouse user has difficulties in the use of the buildings. In order to improve this negative situation, it was decided to establish preliminary offices for the first-time users coming to the courthouse to handle their business without difficulty. This also alleviates the workload of the clerk units and provides convenience to the user. In the old courthouse system, users can walk freely all over the courthouse and there were crowds in the corridors due to lack of orientation.

Eliminating this problem, which reduces the work performance of judicial staff who should have a work concentration, is one of the issues addressed in the Court Management System project. In this context, it was aimed to create restricted areas by separating the judicial units into various sections, and to ensure more efficient and safe use of the buildings only by the transition of authorized persons to these areas. In this system, access to the sections that will be used by the citizen will be open to use, but the rooms of prosecutors, judges and judicial personnel are required to be in limited access areas. In this way, it is aimed to ensure that judicial works run faster and smoothly, and that judges and prosecutors do their work in a quieter environment. The noise factor has a great effect on indoor environment quality which affects the performance of users (Machner, 2015; Zhang, 2019). In order to alleviate the workload of the public prosecutors who have a serious workload in the courthouses, the new cadre created under the name of Courthouse Manager aimed to take care of the administration of the courthouses, which are expressed in thousands of visitors per day. Within the scope of the project, it was also aimed to establish District Courthouses and to plan these courthouses in the process started by the Ministry of Justice of Turkey on 22.05.2007.

2. INNOVATIONS BROUGHT WITH THE COURT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

As a result of the steps taken to strengthen the justice and improve the functioning of the judiciary, the Support to the Court Management System Project was put into operation. This is the continuation of Strengthening the Court Management System Project. 21 courthouses selected across Turkey was taken into the project scope (Alanya, Amasya, Bafra, Bandırma, Bergama, Çorum, Düzce, Elazığ, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Isparta, İstanbul, İskenderun, İstanbul, Kastamonu, Kırşehir, Kırklareli, Ordu, Salihli, Siirt, Yalova). In this context, judiciary personnel, judges, prosecutors, lawyers were interviewed to determine the defect points of the courthouses and various cadres and institutions were established. These institutions, staff and changes made can be summarized as follows.

2.1. Establishment of Information Desks

Courthouses are buildings with high user load. The daily number of visitors of the courthouses reaches thousands even in the small courthouses, and in the big cities this number reaches to higher dimensions. For example, this number varies between 35-60 thousand (daily) for Ankara (Adliye Personeli El Kitabı, 2013). According to a study conducted on the judicial users in the United States, 68% of the judicial users have been in court once in their lives (Gillert, 2008). The high number of visitors makes it essential to ensure that the users are guided in a healthy way so that things can be get done smoothly in the courthouse. In the absence of a consultant, or in a situation which the user cannot find the advisory unit, it is common that the user consults unrelated persons such as surrounding judicial staff, cleaners and so on. In this case, unnecessary discussions and tensions occur between the personnel and the citizen, and the efficiency of the personnel decreases. With the establishment of information desks, simple works that can be handled by information desk, are handled. And they can get information about the issues they can handle without going to the courthouse and get their things done without occupying the courthouse.

2.2. Establishment of Front Offices

The tasks of the clerks in the courthouses are to prepare the works, documents for judges and prosecutors and to ensure the flow of all documents in the courthouse. Clerks couldn't do their job by being exposed to the questions of the citizens and their work performance decreases. (Adliye Personeli El Kitabı, 2013). In addition to the mentioned works, they had to respond to the request for information on issues such as explaining to the citizen how to fill in the documents, explaining where to deliver documents. This situation ensures that the personnel of this department work under constant stress and low level of working performance. The solution of these problems in the courthouses within the scope of the Court Management System was the establishment of front offices. The front offices, which have been tried in many countries and where positive results have been observed, are the superiors of the information desks. All transactions related to the judiciary are monitored by this unit and the necessary documents are directed. In this way, the workload of the clerks has been reduced and it is ensured that the clerks do their own work more efficiently.

2.3. Creating Restricted Office Area

The necessity of limited spaces in courthouses is a problem that has been expressed for a long time but has not been solved. Prosecutors and judges are known to complain about inability to examine the case files due to the noise created by crowds of people in the corridors (Adliye Personeli El Kitabı, 2013). This problem has been dealt within the scope of the Court Management System and some solutions have been developed. Accordingly, working environment of judges, prosecutors, clerks are separated from public circulation. Thus, judicial staff will be able to work in a quieter environment with higher performance, since the judicial users are only access to the required areas and citizens are not unnecessarily taken into the personnel corridors.

In this context, the main units to be included in the limited areas within the courtroom were judge, prosecutor and clerk rooms. With limited access to the corridors where these units are located, only authorized personnel pass through and a high-quality working environment is provided for the employees. Visitors can access these areas only in case of necessity. The three areas planned to be established in the courthouses for the mentioned restricted areas are public, restricted and semi-restricted areas. Public spaces are areas where the user of the courthouse can handle their work. There is no authorization needed to enter this field. Some units in this area are information desks, front offices, courtrooms, waiting rooms, judicial registry and pay desks. Semi-restricted areas are fields that can be entered by first degree authorization (eg, clerk rooms or query rooms). Restricted fields are those that can be entered with second degree authorization. Units such as judge and prosecutor rooms are located in this area. The higher-level authorization is designed for units such as archive units, entrust rooms.

2.4. Common-Use Courts and Other Changes in Courthouse Architecture

The biggest innovation brought by the Court Management System is the common-use court system. While a courtroom was planned for almost every court before, it is aimed that many courts will use the common courtrooms within the scope of the project. In this way, it is possible to design a courtroom which is less in number but superior in size and technical specifications. In the old system, a courtroom is allocated to every court, in which case the courtroom remains empty when there is no hearing. With the new system, it is stated which court on which day and time will be held in front of the courtroom, so that the courtroom is used more effectively with the joint courtrooms. In addition, it is aimed to reduce the human traffic occurring in the courthouse by envisaging that the hearing rooms are located on the lower floors or ground floor instead of the upper floors. Within this project, the first exemplary application was designed and implemented in Ordu Annex Courthouse.

3. COURT DESIGN FOR THE COURT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Courthouse buildings contain mixed function requirements in terms of operation. Courthouses require various planning principles for security reasons. Double corridor system designed for courtrooms can be given as an example of these planning principles. For judges, the entrance to the courtroom should be provided from the judge corridor and should be restricted to the use of citizens and other judicial personnel. Citizen entrance to the courtroom should be provided from the main circulation. Another planning principle applies to detainees. Prisoner entrance to the building should be planned as an independent entrance. This entry, which should be planned in a way to allow the entry of the prisoner's vehicle, should reach the custody units, the court room or the attorney units via the prisoner's stair and corridor (Topraklı, 2013b).

Figure 1 shows the planning principle that should be followed for the courtrooms. When the judicial buildings are examined in general, it is seen that people are generally not used to the environment or feel insecure in courthouses. According to a survey of courthouses in the United States, 68% of people have been into courts once in their lives. Courthouse users indicated that they (28% of them in the parking area, 22% of them in the toilets, 10% of them in the jury room, 12% of them in the detention unit, 18% of them in the clerk room, 26% of them in the main corridor and 24% of them in the courtroom) feel insecure

(Gillert, 2008). Therefore, it is debated in various publications that a design should be made for the courthouses to leave a warm and soft effect away from the cold and flattened effect (Topraklı, 2013b).

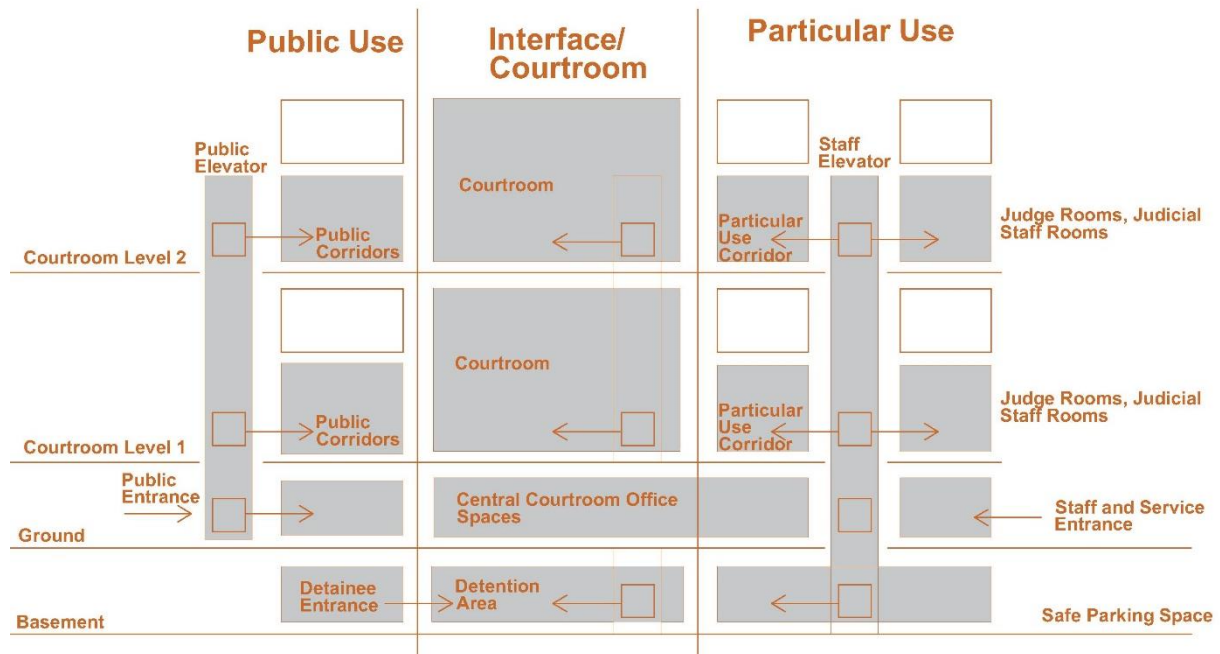


Figure 1: Relationship Between Courthouse Units (Adapted from (Hardenbergh, Griebel, Tobin, for State Courts, & Yeh, 1998)

4. ORDU ANNEX COURTHOUSE BUILDING COURTROOM DESIGN

In the new courthouse design implemented for the first time in Ordu, common courtrooms are designed. Use of these courtrooms are arranged by reservation. The court is held with information screens and announcement systems for visitors. The use of front office is becoming more effective in the design of the new type of courthouse. Recent practices within the European Union are also in this direction and the prosecution block can generally be carried out separately from the entire court building. The first application of the project in Turkey, does not include the prosecution units. It was decided to allocate the court currently in use as the prosecution block. Thus, prosecution block was completely separated from the judge block.

Ordu Annex Courthouse Building is located in Karşıyaka Neighborhood Atatürk Boulevard No: 506 Altmordu / ORDU. The courthouse is a total of 15003,20 m². In addition, the front part of the building is reserved for protocol and personnel parking. Public parking is in front of the old building. There are total of 8 court halls, 4 of which are 72m² of Criminal Courts and 4 of which are 72m² of Law Courts. There are also 2 large 140m² two-story hearing rooms with balcony. There are 6 40m² president rooms, 23 22 m² member rooms, 31 22m² judge rooms, 42 45m² clerk rooms. Personnel corridors have been separated by card entrance doors thus, it is aimed to improve the working environments of the offices and increase the efficiency of the employees.

In the new type of courthouse, the front offices are located on the ground floor. In order to maximize the natural light of the entrance hall, a gallery has been created in this area where circulation is high. In addition, the skylight was placed on the entrance hall terrace to illuminate the staff rooms facing the hall. Pay desk, police unit, private security, photocopy, etc. rooms are in this section. The ground floor also has control point, bank, PTT, cafeteria and so on.

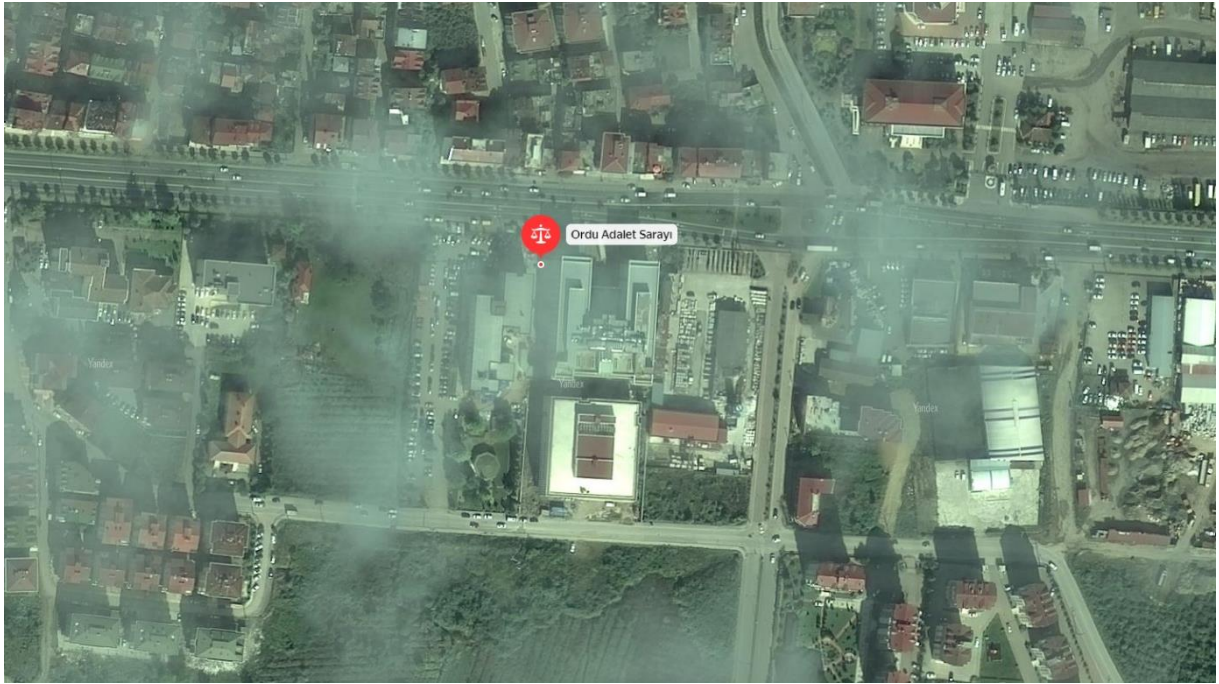


Figure 2: Aerial Photo of Ordu Annex Courthouse Building (Yandex. Maps (2019) Retrieved May 27, 2019)

4.1. Floor Plans

The project area is located to the south of Atatürk Boulevard in the city center of Ordu as shown in Figure 2. There is an open parking lot for 135 vehicles in the site. Ordu Annex Courthouse Building is located to the east of the existing courthouse. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the existing building and the annex building. The building consists of basement, ground floor, 4 normal floors and roof floor. There is a main entrance in the north of the building and a ramp and vehicle entrance from the west side of the building to the basement. When choosing a site for courthouses, attention should be paid to the relationship between the site and its environment, access to the site, economic variables, and topographic characteristics of the site (Topraklı, Adem, & Dağdeviren, 2016). Although the central location influenced the choice of this area, the main reason is that the existing courtroom building is located here.

Ordu Additional Courthouse Service Building; basement floor, ground floor, 4 normal floors and roof floor. Floor heights are planned to be 4 meters each. +5.40 ground level is assumed to be ± 0.00 in the project. In the basement, there are entrance to the detention area, detention facilities and units for law enforcement officers. Provided that this section is not directly related, boiler room, archive, etc. The plan of this floor was not shared for security reasons.

On the ground floor there are main entrance, security, information desk, as well as front desk, pay desks. There is also a public cafeteria between PTT and bank units on this floor.

In the first-floor, there are a total of 4 courtrooms, 2 law and 2 criminal courts. The detainees that are going to the courtrooms are taken from the basement floor to the courtrooms with their own stairs.

On the 2nd floor, there are 4 court rooms, 2 law and 2 criminal courts, with a plan similar to the first floor. As shown in Figure 3, the personnel corridors are painted red and the judge corridors are painted blue. In addition, the area painted in yellow indicates the prisoner's ladder. On this floor, similar to the 1st floor, there are the judge rooms, clerk rooms and other necessary office units.

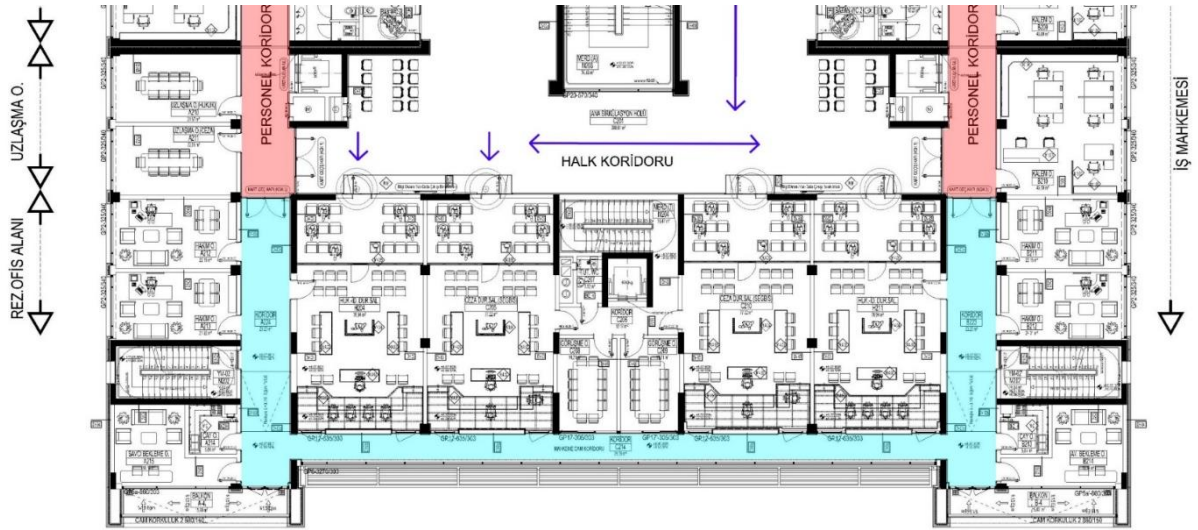


Figure 3: Second Floor Plan of the Building, Courtrooms, Judge Corridor and Personnel Corridors Are Shown (Partial Plan)



Figure 4: Main Entrance of the Building



Figure 5: South Facade of the Building - Judge Corridors are Showed

As can be seen in Figures 6, the main entrance of the building is kept at a height of 2 floors and an entrance is designed to meet people. In the large courtroom on the third floor, a gallery was provided by using the height of 2 floors and a balcony was designed for the viewers.



Figure 6: Section of the Building – Relationship Between Judge Corridor and Public Circulation is Showed

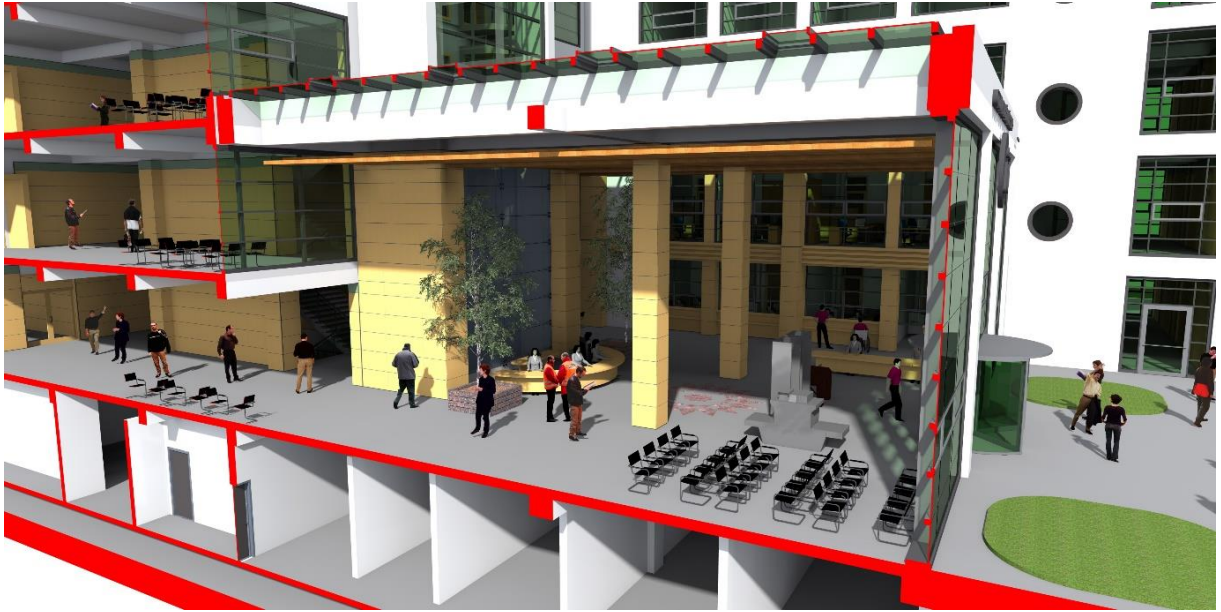


Figure 7: Section from Main Entrance



Figure 8: Common Use Courtrooms and Corridor of Judges (H-for Law, C- for Criminal Courts)

As can be seen in Figure 8, judge corridors are accessible only for judges. Citizen entrance of courtroom is in relation with main circulation. By planning the outer edge of the building (judge corridor) with curtain wall, natural light is taken to the courtrooms.



Figure 9: Common Use Courtrooms (There are Regulatory Screens for Common Use on the Public Entrance Side of the Courtrooms)



Figure 10: Exterior view of Ordu Annex Courthouse Building

5. HONEFOSS COURTHOUSE BUILDING COURTROOM DESIGN

Honefoss Courthouse (Ringerike Tingrett) was built in 2007 in Honefoss, Norway on the corner of Bloms gate and Nordrehovs gate as can be seen in Figure 11 and 13. The building has courtrooms, office units, ceremony rooms, archives, detention units and technical spaces. To be able to use the natural light, the offices are faced to the round shaped garden in the middle of the building as can be seen in Figure 12.

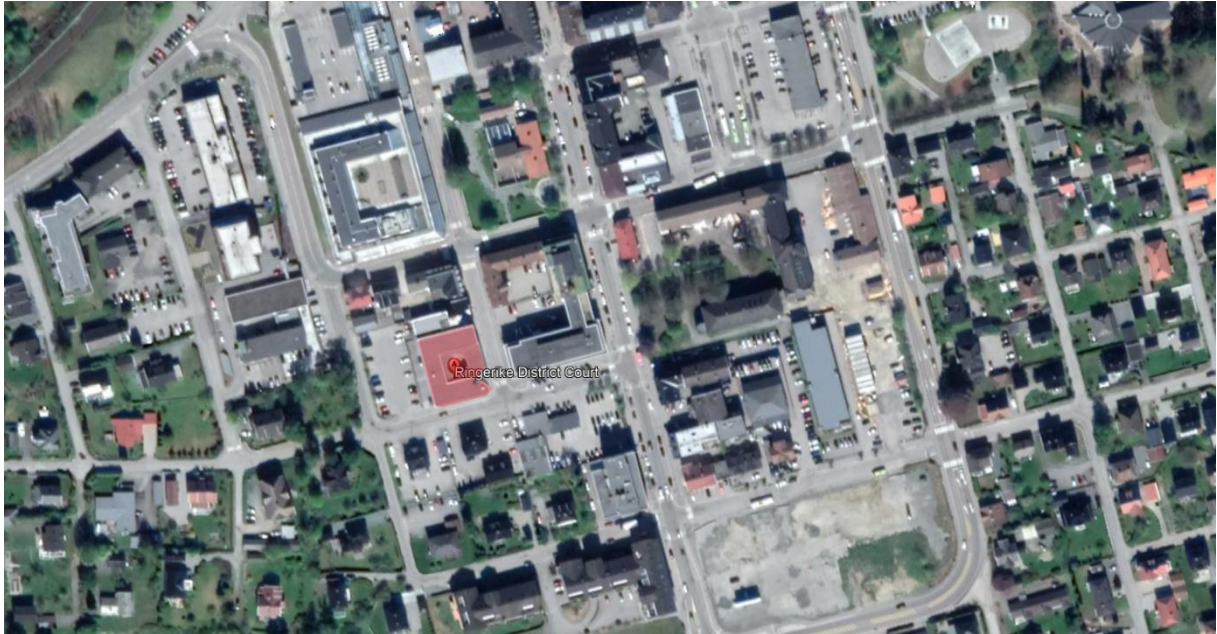


Figure 11: Aerial Photo of Honefoss Courthouse Building (“Google Maps-Ringerike Tingrett,” 2019)



City Center - 2 Storey Design - Open to Public (800 m²) / Restricted Offices (900 m²)

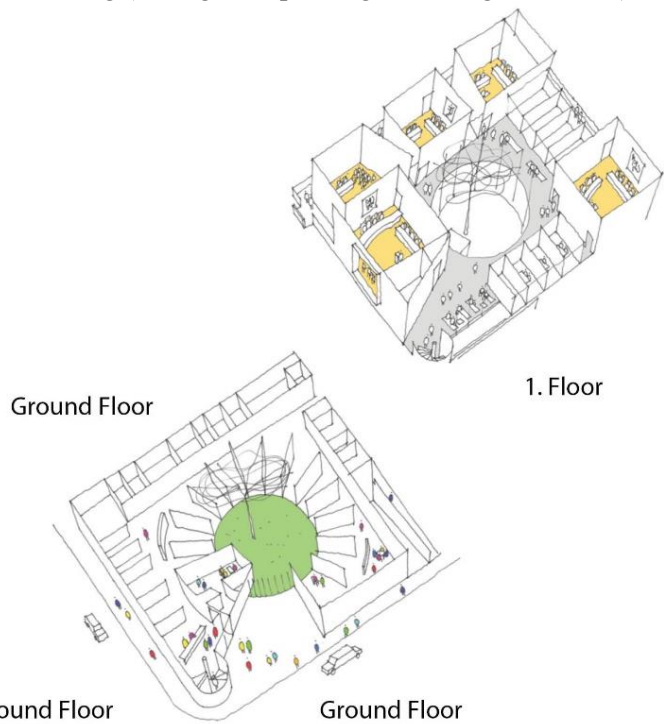


Figure 12: Relationship of the Units in Honefoss Courthouse



Figure 13: Site Plan and Model Views of the Building



Figure 14: Model View of the Building

5.1. Floor Plans

As can be seen in Figure 15, ground floor of Honefoss Courthouse (Ringerike Tingrett) has 7 judge rooms, 5 office units, a prosecutor room, 2 archive units, library and technical units. Office units are generally faced to the yard located in the middle of the building. Thus, natural light was used effectively. In this floor, there is a vehicle entrance for detainees from Nordrehovs gate. 3 cells and police unit are located in relation with the detainee entrance.

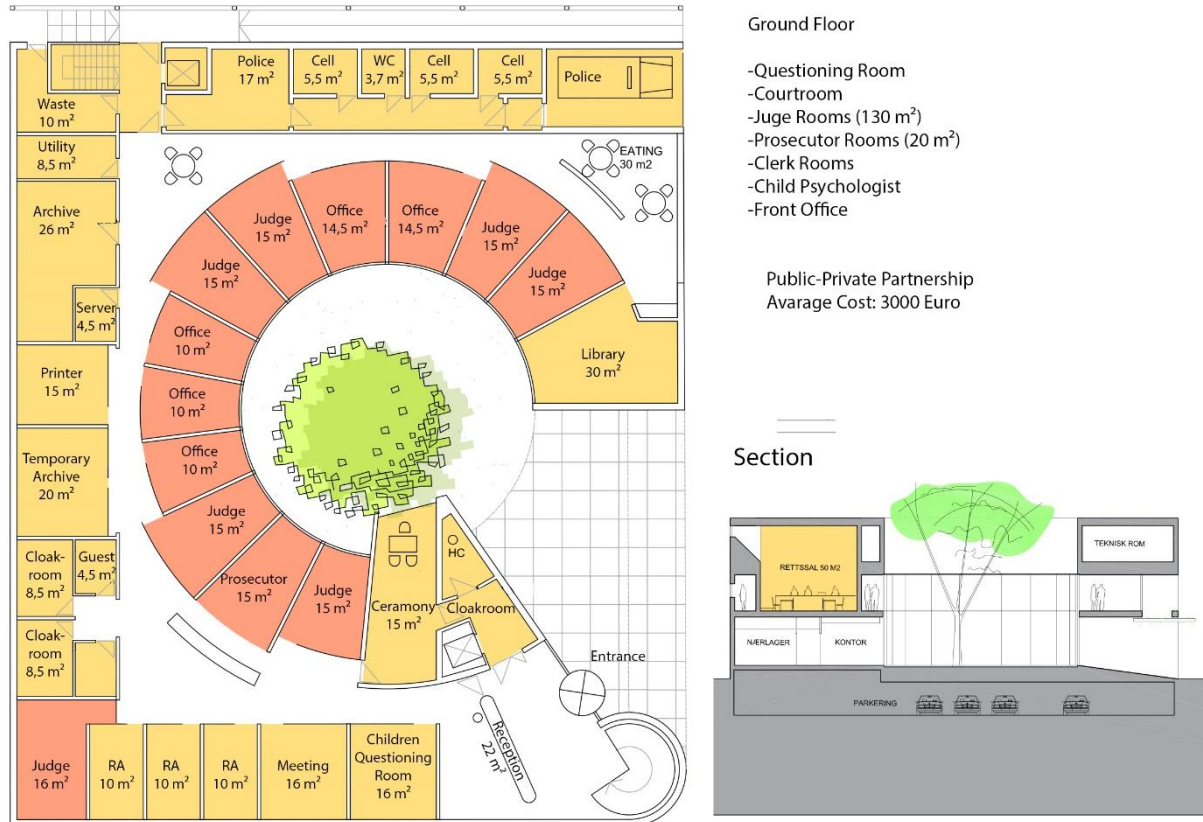


Figure 15: Ground Floor Plan of Honefoss Courthouse

On the 1. floor of the building, there are 5 courtrooms. These courtrooms are located on the outer edge of the building. 4 judge rooms are placed in relation with courtrooms. Corridors on 3 side of the outer edge of the building are planned as judge corridors. Judges enter courtrooms from these corridors. Citizen entrances of courtrooms are from public area. With the limited corridor system, citizens meet judges only in courtrooms. Detainees are taken from the stair related with detention area to courtrooms.

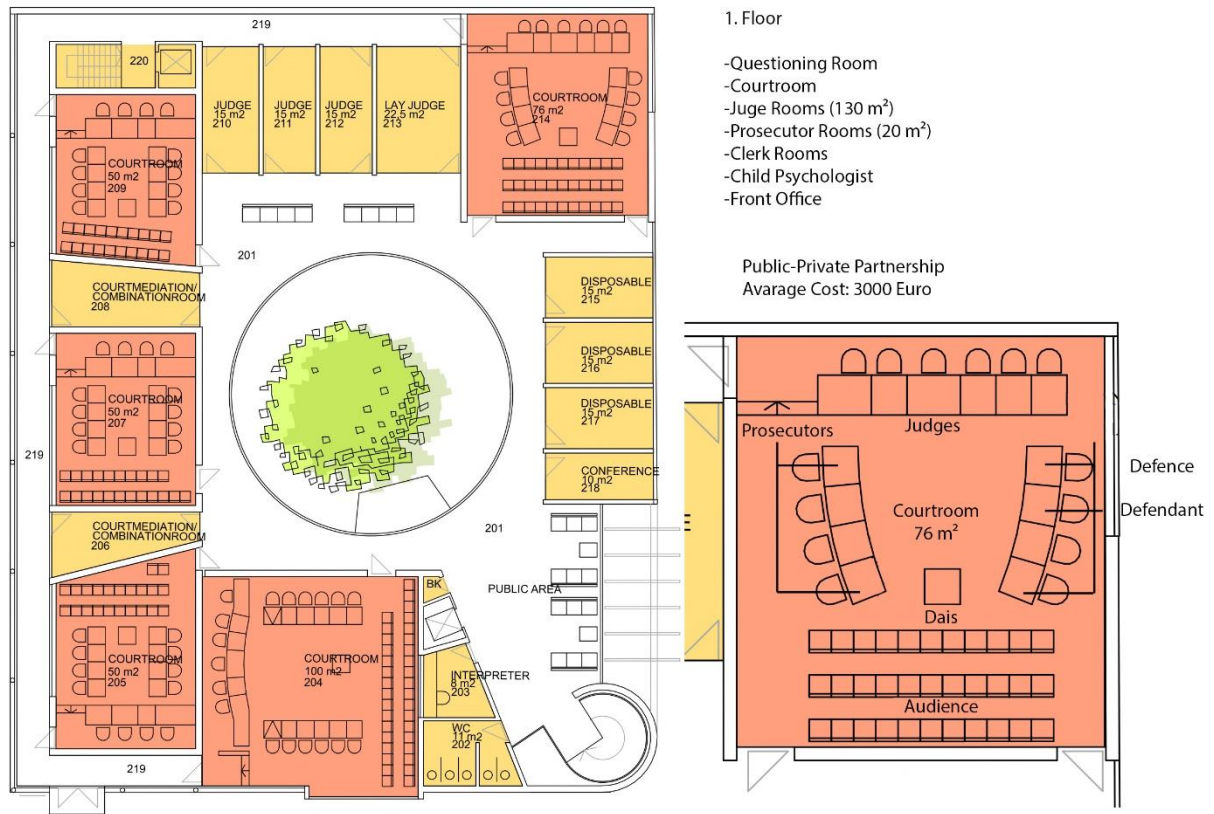


Figure 16: 1. Floor of Honefoss Courthouse

The building was planned considering the relationship between judiciary units showed in Figure 1. The limited corridor system for judge corridors, detention area and its relationship with courtroom, main circulation and movement of citizens are the main design principles taking considered through Honefoss Courthouse.



Figure 17: Interior View of a Courtroom in Honefoss Courthouse



Figure 18: Exterior View of Honefoss Courthouse Building

6. CONCLUSION

Courthouses have become increasingly complex from the past to the present, with increasing demands for comfort and security reasons. In order to prevent difficulties of the judiciary users and to use the buildings more efficiently, the Project of Strengthening the Court Management System was implemented. Within the scope of this program, which was initiated jointly with the Council of Europe in 2007, new courts were opened under the name of 'District Courts' and various amendments were made to the existing courts. One of these changes, the limited corridor system, provided a better working environment for judges and prosecutors and enabled the building to be used more effectively.

Table 1 Comparison of Ordu Annex Courthouse and Honefoss Courtrooms

Similarities
2 different entrance of courtrooms (1 for judges and 1 for citizens) are designed to separate judge corridors from public use.
Enlightening the courtrooms with judge corridors built with transparent materials
Higher ceiling height for courtrooms than office rooms
Both building has independent entrance of detention area
Cell units related to the courtrooms
Independent judge corridors can be seen in both courtrooms.
Both Ordu and Honefoss Courthouses are the first examples of this new type of courthouse in their country.
Differences
Due to the population difference of the region they are located, the size of the buildings is different.

Another change is the establishment of front offices on the ground floor in relation to the entrance. Thus, the citizen was enabled to easily doing their jobs and unnecessary crowds in the building was prevented. Savings were achieved in the building area with the common use of courtrooms and facility management was provided more effectively. In this article, the Ordu Additional Courthouse Building, which is the first building planned and built within the scope of the Strengthening of Court Systems Project and Honefoss Courthouse which is the first example of this type in Norway, was exemplified and attention was paid to the issues that should be considered in court planning.

INFORMATION

This work was produced from the Ordu Annex Courthouse Building Architectural Project, of which the author is the architect of the project. Ordu Annex Courthouse Building was designed within the framework of Council of Europe "Strengthening the Court Management System in Turkey Project (2. Stage)" works. All architectural/render work copyright privileges belong to the architect/designer (here architect A. Yağmur Topraklı and Stein Halvorsen) according to the International Copyright Laws.

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