

Lines and squares:

Towards a configurational approach to the morphology of open spaces

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Abstract

The research this paper is concerned with aims at extending the results of previous research on the relation between centrality and configuration to the specific urban element of the square. Wide open spaces, in fact, seem to escape the configurational analysis based on axial maps of the settlements, vanishing and leaving their place to the lines that connect them and the other convex spaces. Though it has been shown that the geometrical features of a settlement get internalised within the respective axial map, all the same such a view cannot actually recognise and represent two dimensional elements: in particular, axial analysis cannot account for the presence of squares, nor support any interpretation of their position and their morphology as related to their specific urban role. The research is hence a first attempt to study the specific configuration of urban squares, so as to identify the configurational conditions for their actual working as meeting and interaction spaces. With that purpose, we have taken as our case studies some Italian towns; each of them is located in Tuscany and appears characterised by the presence of a prominent main square. The study provides some remarkable evidence that allows us to extend the results of the research so far on the matter of urban centrality. Still, even more significant, such results can be applied in supporting the present planning of public open spaces, highlighting the reasons which the evident modern decline of a fundamental town planning element can be ascribed to.

Keywords

Urban space, land use, grid configuration, open spaces

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