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“Variations in the syntactic structures of the public realm: a case study of the 1748 Giambattista Nolli map of Rome”

Dawn Haynie

Keywords:

urban morphology, syntactic analysis, Rome

Abstract:

Often, those studying syntactic structures have focused either on the traditional notion of the public realm – the space most commonly described as the street, or the private realm – defined often as simply the area within the building interior. Few have investigated if or how the intelligible structure of the city is shifted when these two realms are considered concurrently. Does the inclusion of publicly accessible, interior space as part of the traditional urban syntactic analysis affect the resulting intelligible structure of the city? With Nolli’s 1748 plan of Rome as a case study, the densest, most central section of the map is used to create a comparative analysis to explore this central question. First, a syntactic analysis is constructed from the traditional definition of the city as the street structure; it is subsequently analyzed; and the core cognitive structure is extracted. As a comparison, the syntactic analysis is reconstructed with the inclusion of Nolli’s interior spaces, as illustrated within the map, added to that of the traditional street structure. The inclusion of the interior spaces as an added layer of complexity in the analysis illustrates that particular areas within the traditionally public structure do become more integrated, and associated shifts can be seen within the intelligible as well as core cognitive structure. These results emphasize the importance and necessity for considering comprehensive spatial relationships when designing the public realm.