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from traditions to newest demands**



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The explanatory power of Space Syntax and Urban Morphology

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Abstract

Space Syntax, developed by Hillier and his colleagues, and Urban Morphology, developed by Muratori, Whitehand, Conzen and the School of Versailles are significant contributions for generating general understandings or theory building on built environments. In this contribution Roy Bhaskar's critical realistic model of science and Georg Henrik von Wright's account of explanation and understanding are used to assess the explanatory power of Space Syntax and Urban Morphology research.

In essence subsequent considerations will distinguish between a theory able to offer an explanation of phenomena and a theory proposing an understanding thereof. As concluded, Space Syntax can offer an explanation of changes in a built environment in terms of cause and effect, while Urban Morphology aims at an understanding of the meaning associated with the causes at issue. The first perspective concerns built form and function, while the latter one concerns built form and meaning. Examples from cases where both research methods are applied will be used and discussed throughout the paper.

Keywords

Theory building, Space Syntax, urban morphology, modal logics, explanatory power, urbanism