

Analyzing the configurational impacts of architectural intentions

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This paper reports a space syntax study of the Faculty of Architecture at Oporto University (FAUP), by the masterly Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza. The study's main objective is the exploration of the relationship between the architectural and programmatic intentions behind the building's form and their configurational outcomes. Besides, the spatial analysis of an academic institution raises other pertinent questions that the present study explores. How can a building internal configuration induce patterns of movement and co-presence, and consequently social and inter-relational potential situations? How can architectural intentions affect spatial experience and patterns of use in educational buildings? How can spatial layout promote a better use of this kind of installations?

The paper is divided in four parts. First, it reviews the FAUP's design process, identifying the architectonic, programmatic and conceptual options behind the building's form. Second, it explores the configurational properties of FAUP's spatial system and its insertion in the surrounding urban area, using several syntactic analytical methods (graphs, convex maps, axial maps and visual graph analysis). Third, empirical findings based on direct observations (movement flows and people following) of the actual spatial use of the building by its users are reported. Finally, conclusions are drawn on the configurational impact of the architect's spatial and programmatic strategies, which cast some light on the actual space use patterns of FAUP's academic community.

Keywords: FAUP, space syntax, architectural intentions, configurational impact