



The Greeks called them “agoràs” and the Romans “foros”, Western tradition turned them into “squares” (from the Greek “plateia” or clearing/open-space from which we get the Latin “platea”, which later became “piatìa”): for centuries these spacious and extremely busy fragments of the city – certainly not lacking in theatrical qualities, which the expertise of town-planning cut into the heart of mediaeval towns, the centre of big Renaissance cities and the core of modern metropolises – were the focus of educated social life in three forms: the square holding the, the square for the palace and the market square. The decline in modernity has also brought about a downward turn in “squares”, increasingly less the hub of civil enterprises or economic energy, not because they have faded away but because, as they have changed down the years, they have

moved elsewhere and taken on forms more congenial to modern-day demands geared to different kinds of rituals. Nowadays sociologists, architects and economists are telling us that the old-fashioned Italian “piazza” – the “squares” par excellence – has been reborn in the form of big shopping malls, now found all over the sprawling urban suburbs, often actually helping them to redevelop through the spatial and social reorganization of what were previously amorphous areas. This does not break with tradition. In actual fact, thanks to these shopping malls – and also multiplex cinemas with their vast array of sales outlets, entertainment facilities and refreshment services – the old-fashioned “agorà” is re-emerging in our cities, only now in the form of a Roman “foro”, what Camillo Sitte once described as a “sumptuous open-air interior”,

1. Rewind Rome, Rome (Italy)
Company: Mirage
Granito Ceramico
Product: Slate
2. Residential Area, Medicina (Bologna, Italy)
Company: Ceramica Panaria
Product: Pietre di Fanes
3. New Market Ponte Milvio, Rome (Italy)
Company: Palagio Engineering
Product: TerraFlat, TerraTube
4. “Piazza Italia” Shops, Italy
Company: PiemmeGRES
Product: Absolute