

FIRENZE EXPERIENCE & IMPRESSION

SFU ITALIA DESIGN 2007 DOMINIC WONG

Dynamics of Delight Application

The analytical and application portion of this assignment focuses on dynamic and convergent spaces, namely the streets of Florence and the Market Piazzas. Using terms and concepts from Peter F. Smith's Dynamics of Delight, we'll see how clash and resolution influences pleasure through aesthetic rewards. "Complexity gives way to orderliness" and creates patterns within the streets and squares of Florence. The streets surrounding Piazza S. Ambrogio, Piazza dei Ciompi, and Piazza Salvemini will be used as an example.

Smith claims that the street is a "visual conveyor belt," one that bubbles with human activity and social interaction. Opportunities are given for meetings and spontaneous social activities (Social Attractors). And in an intimate scale, the streets converge to these three piazzas and their "piazzaettes".

In the daytime, near Piazza Salvemini, I first noticed that from that piazza, streets expand in all different directions. After walking a little further to a smaller piazza, it was at that second (which I couldn't pull out my camera in time) that a rush of social activity happened. People were conversing, cars were crossing, bikes were parking, stores were open and up for business. The intertwining and complexity of the activities began to reflect a smaller community in a larger city of Florence. Then after the smaller piazza, I walked under a pathway on my right and the space that followed was an exact mirror of the previous piazza, where three streets (this time pedestrian-only) were expanded out again. A block before that, in Piazza S. Ambrogio holds the same street patterns as well, which has one street (like the rest) that surprises the viewer with a peek at the monumental Duomo. These streets and secondary squares open up channels for people to pass through, accumulating or even distributing the rate of "pouring."



*Top:
Via Dei Servi - view towards the Duomo*

*Middle:
Piazza Salvemini and its streets*

*Bottom:
Piazza S. Ambrogio - Daytime*

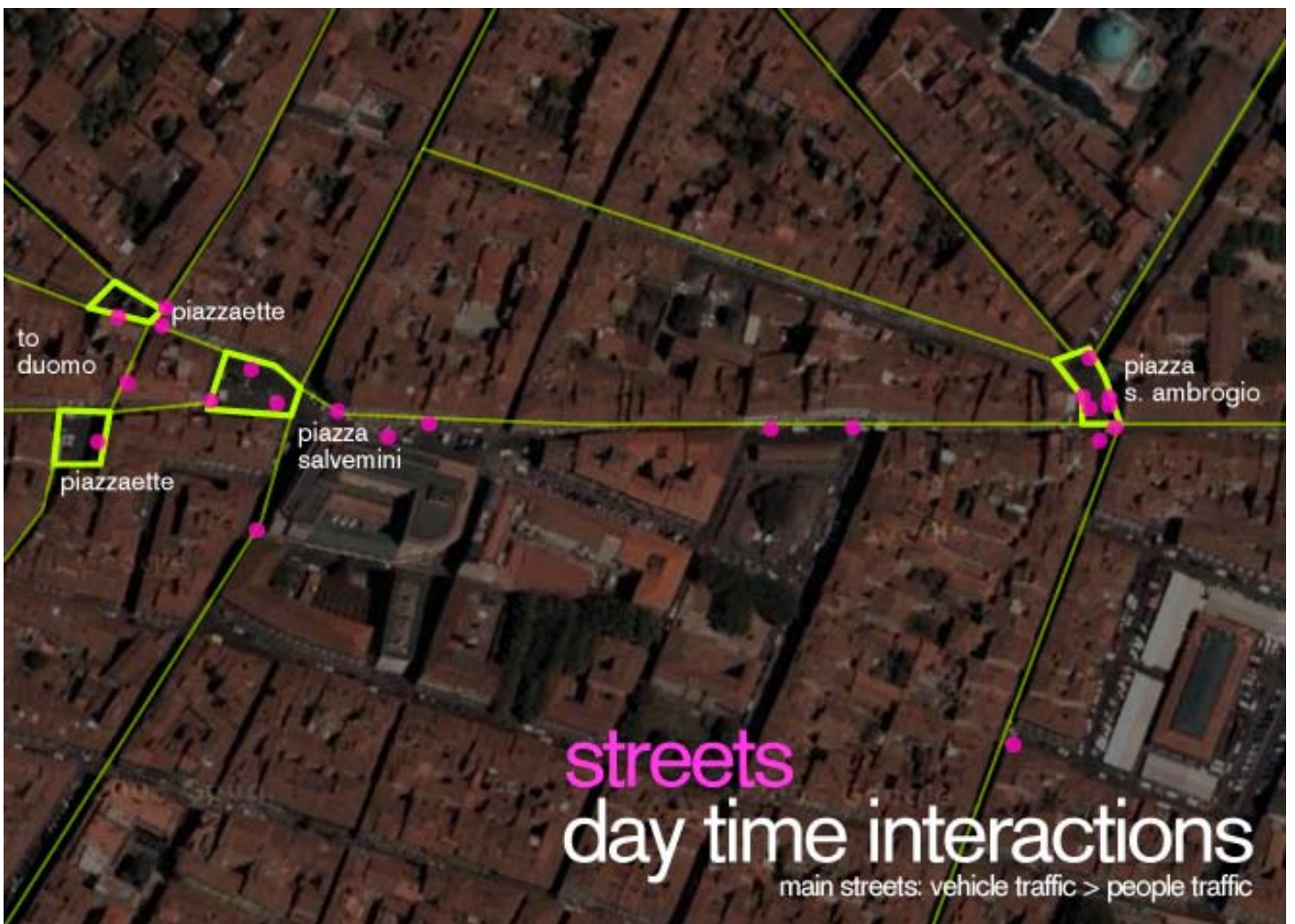
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“Movement is the essential component of the aesthetic agenda.” (Smith, 166) As seen in the diagrams to the right, the daytime interaction is evenly spread out, with people communing in different corners and shaded areas. This type of communication is short but lively exchanges of routes and unpredictable bump-in’s. Activities in these streets occur spontaneously and flow as frequently as the automobile traffic (or even tourists) that goes by.



However, the evening paints a different picture. As local shops are closed and tourists are gone, the complexity of the daytime traffic resolves as people approach the space and streets much differently. The social activity that once was evenly and spontaneously spread out has now shifted and clustered together in the main piazzas (ex. Piazza S. Ambrogio). This event shows the much cared for and planned meeting places of locals, residing in once open spaces in the day - the piazza steps which were occupied



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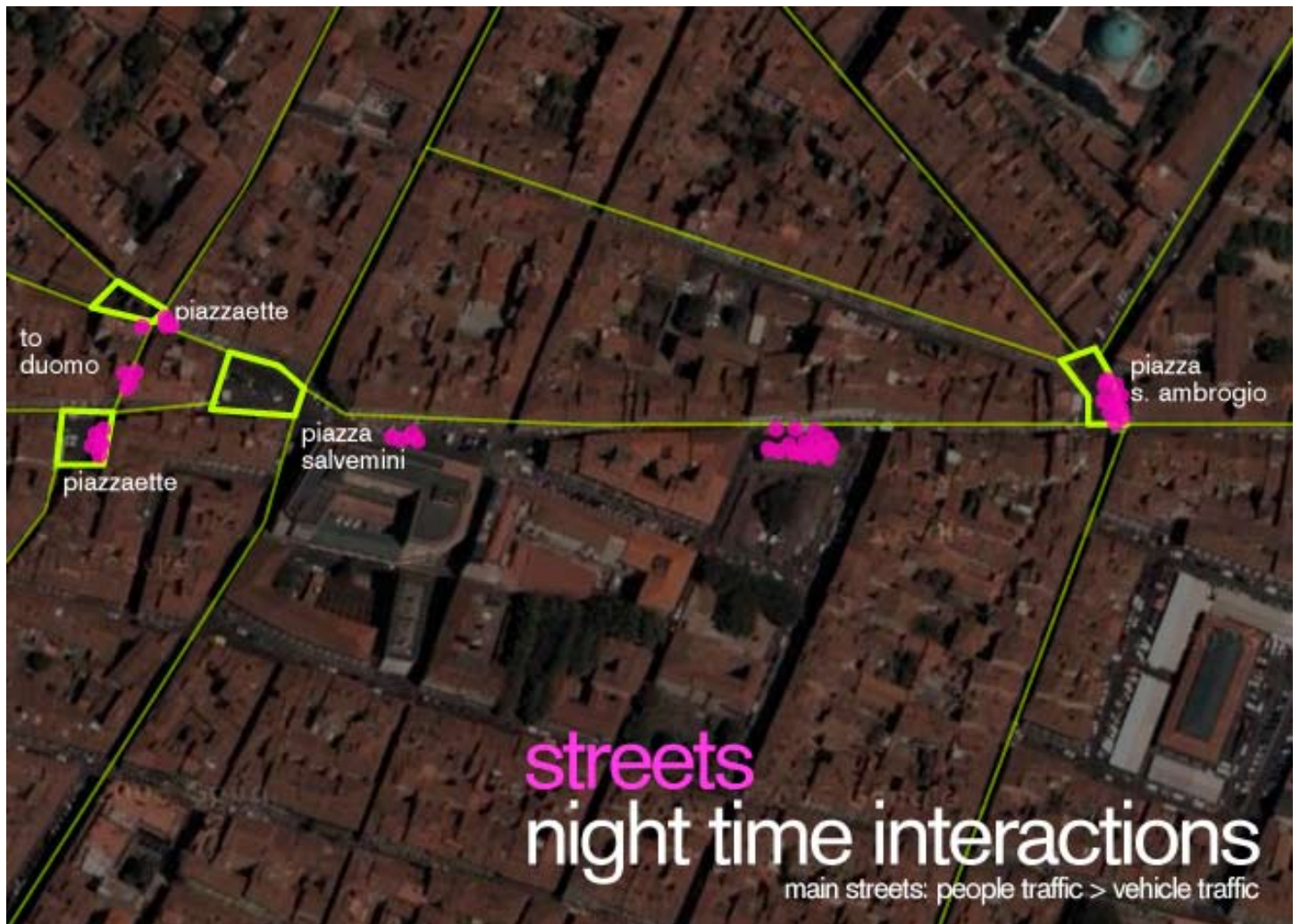
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by tourists and merchants. Different people end up using the exact same spaces for different purposes. The streets are now no longer channels for meetings that expand, but act as a pathway to a destination point awaiting community activity. As we can see from the piazzas and streets around it that there is progressive transformation between the aesthetics and functions of the space.



Above: Piazza S. Ambrogio - Evening

The complexity and dynamic characteristics of a street converge back to the static uniformity of a piazza. The two that are looked at are the Piazza del Mercato Centrale and its relationship with the Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti market. Working as a “backcloth to the continual movement of people.” (Smith 162), these markets have a uniform and symmetrical setup pattern.



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Both being confined by its surrounding buildings, a linear piazza (covered space structures accommodating markets) is created in both settings. As a socially intensive space, the markets act as a collective meeting place for those shopping for groceries or having a meal at their personally committed cafes. Both markets have materials that reflect the spaces around them (ex. Mercato Centrale and the façade across it). Inside, human activity is formed through the layout and organization where information is conveniently grouped into selling meats, clothing, fruits and vegetables. The two markets act as nodal spaces designed for social interaction and in a way that reflect the observed interactions as a community. In this case, there is much more order than there are of random patterns (in comparison to the street patterns in the previous analysis).

Both markets set everything up in a similar fashion. The meats are categorized in a section, and for both markets, have cafes on the corner. The orientation patterns in both markets repeat itself, but available space changes its format. Because Mercato Centrale has more space, it's dedicated the upstairs to selling fruits and vegetables, whereas the Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti market sells the fruits outside around the indoor market.



Piazza del Mercato Centrale



Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti



Piazza del Mercato Centrale



Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti

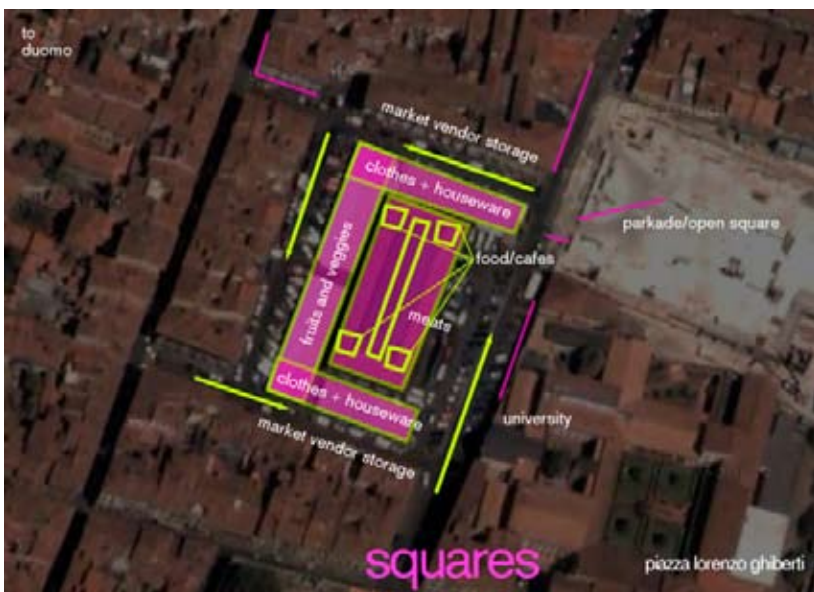
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In the same way, the markets are closed for the night and used differently. The piazza space outside the Mercato Centrale is used for restaurants and open areas for social clusters. The Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti is accompanied by another open space that holds a restaurant which people park underneath the covered area of the market to go to.



Piazza del Mercato Centrale



Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti



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Changing from market stands selling fruits and vegetables, the space becomes useful in another way. People utilize this closed outdoor piazza square as a parking lot. By allowing the space to be used as something else, it's now connected to the spaces around it, such as the restaurants, the open piazzas, and the open streets at night. What was once a socially intensive space, attracting locals and tourists, has now served a different purpose at a different time of day for a different crowd of people.



Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti - Evening



Below: Piazza del Mercato Centrale - Evening

