

Florence Study:

Ethnographic Analysis of Via S. Verdiniana

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“Florence may be viewed as a city which has a great past”

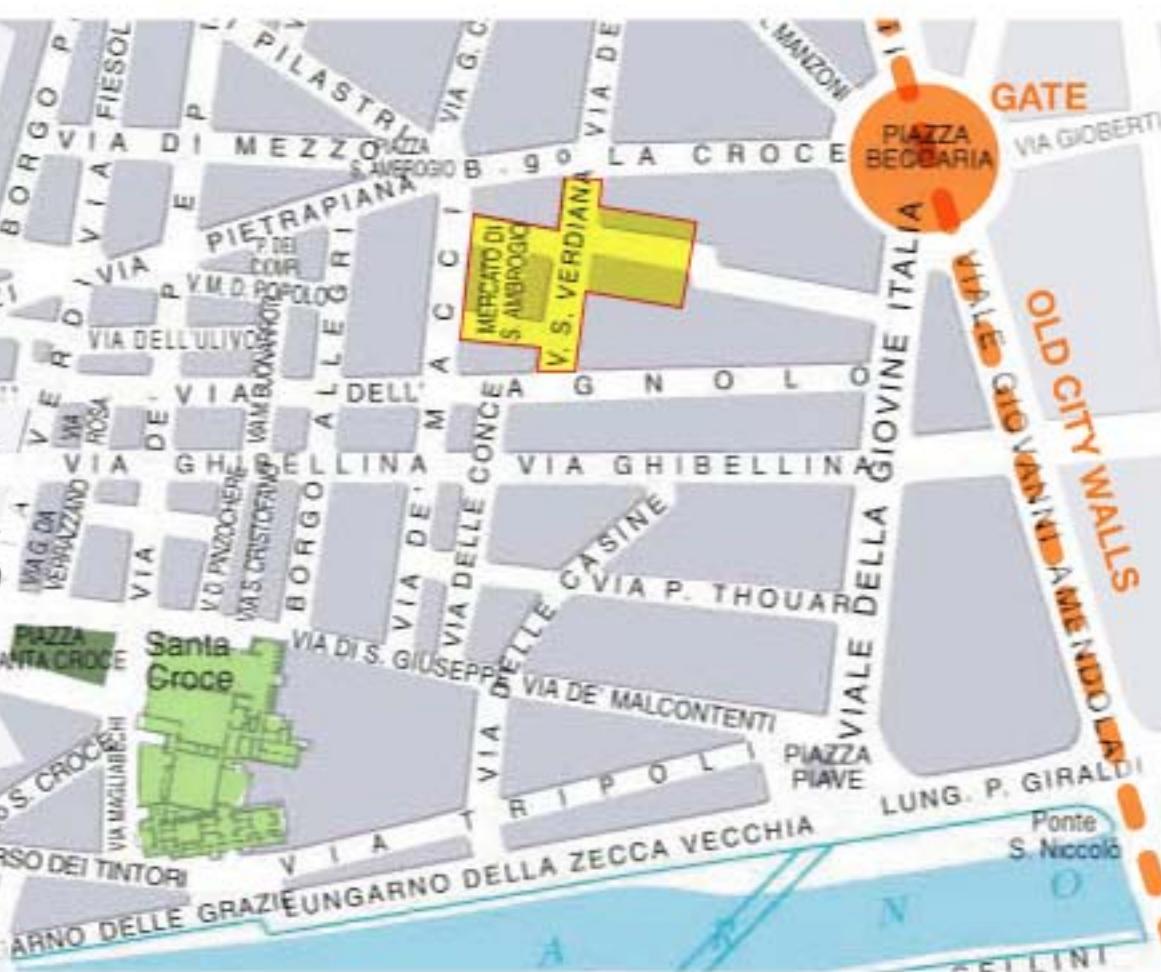
(Vignozzi, 2005a, 15:30)

Florence, under the rule of the Medici family, was at one point the epicenter of some of the greatest advancements in the world. “In the 13th century, the city was growing with a speed that we are not able to comprehend” (Vignozzi, 2005a, 17:00) However, at the end of the 15th century, progress dropped off; this period has been the most impactful on Florence’s urban consciousness.

“A complex design which could be achieved only with the participation of everybody” (25:40) (regarding the Piazza d. Campo)

Things weren’t getting done in Florence for a long time, until a **recent change in the civic government**. With these adjustments in the allocation of tax dollars, a lot more initiative is being taken with the development of public spaces. As a result, *most of the work that has been done in the last 30 years has actually taken place in the past few years.*

Around the city there used to be a large wall built of rusticated stone-work. The decision was made to rip them down to allow the city to grow more, and all that is left are the emblematic gates. However, a “wall” still exists due to the high traffic flow on the roads that follow the path on which the wall stood. This creates a phantom edge, officially marking the edge of the historic center, and unofficially marking a significant drop-off in tourist density and activity.



historic context

VIA S. VERDINIANA: Put up a parking lot

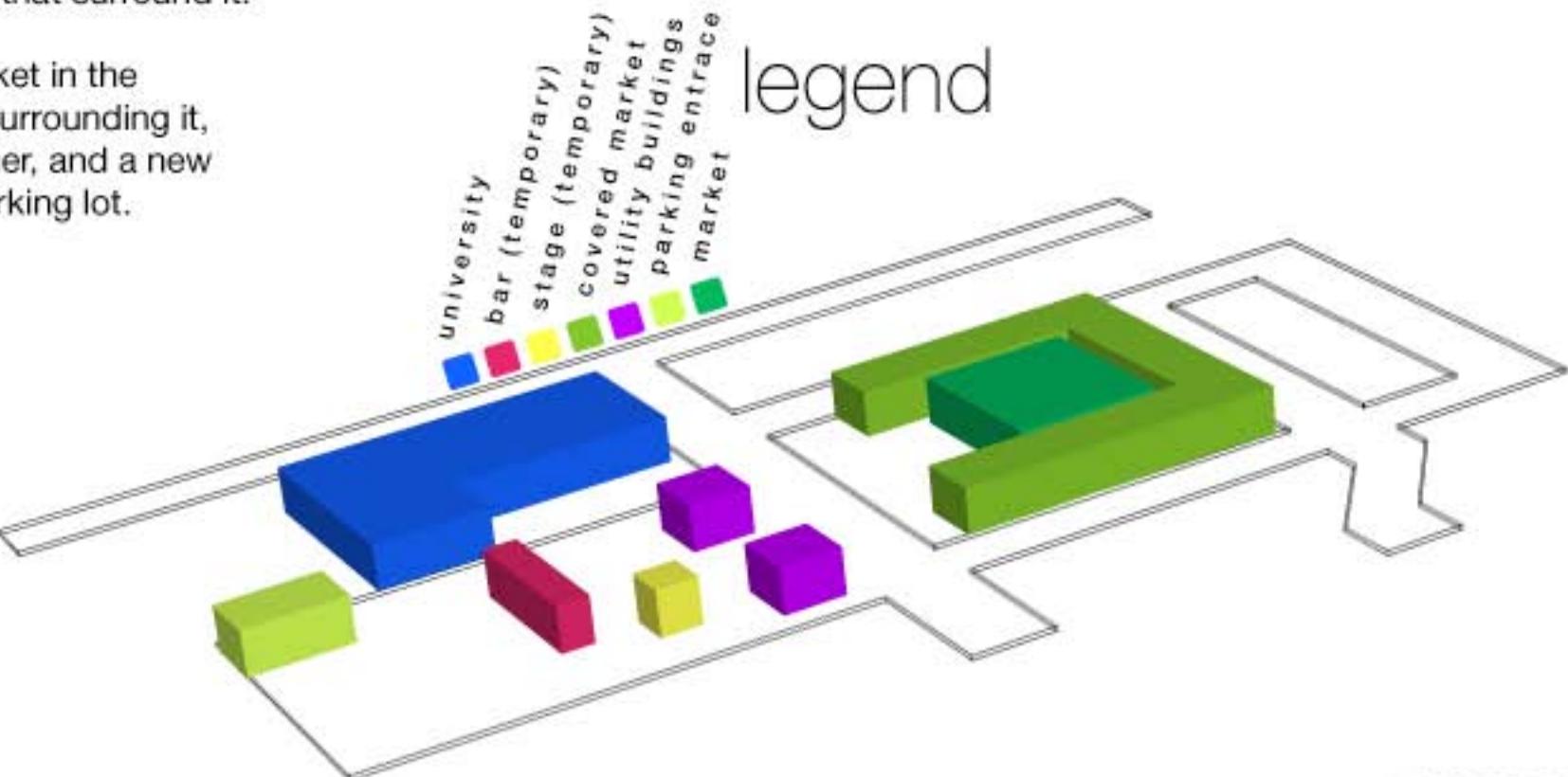


The space that we are choosing to study is a street called Via S. Verdiniana, and the two piazzas and secondary streets that surround it.

The space contains 3 main areas: there is a market in the Western piazza with a covered outdoor market surrounding it, an architectural university in the South East corner, and a new piazza on the North East side that sits atop a parking lot.

The market appears to have been an institution in the space for at least the past 20 years, if not more. The university building also appears to be anywhere from 10-20 years in age, probably built during one of the more recent economic booms of the late 80s - early 90s. We would like to find more information on this.

The eastern piazza is the newest space, having been constructed on top of an underground parking lot within the past year.



Form Analysis - *The panoramic matrix*

interactive edge space that



early morning piazza

changes over



morning market

time.



pre-siesta street

night time piazza



Form Analysis - What to look for: activities/interactions

empty piazza



market transaction



loading goods



walking



communiting



vehicles



market transaction



bike rentals



concerts



cafe



social gathering



meeting place



play area



cell phone



Form Analysis - Leads to: piazza as edge

empty piazza



local outdoor market

local merchants/local products

local/tourist buyers



communiting

university/students

local stores

walking vs vehicles

parkades

tourist/local bike rental



social night life

free concert enjoyed by locals/tourists

large groups

couples

kids

this dude

bikes



The Florentine Market, and Morning Commute



In the morning, Via S. Verdiniana is very much alive with market life. The majority of the traffic flows in south along this road from the Corso, but there is also a minor flow that runs counter to that out of the parkade exit comprised of native florentines and a few tourists (marked in red).

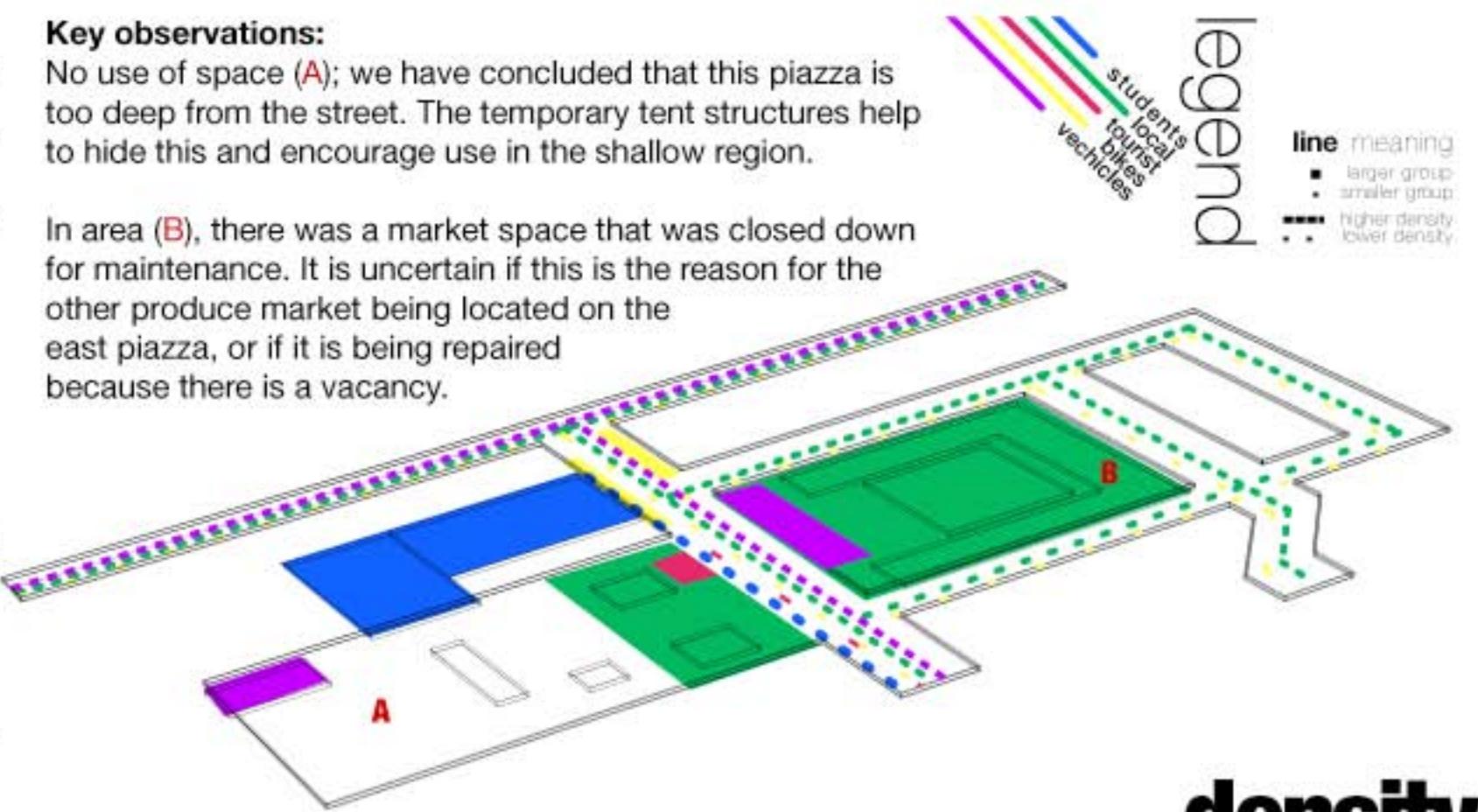
In the earlier hours, there was a steady stream of architecture students coming into the area.

There is a crosswalk connecting the two piazzas, which the market space bled across. This was in heavy use. However, on the east piazza the market was all produce, and on the west piazza, there was a mix of produce, clothing, pottery, sewing supplies, and other things. As a result, and probably due to the better shade and closer proximity, there were more people in the west piazza's market.

Key observations:

No use of space (A); we have concluded that this piazza is too deep from the street. The temporary tent structures help to hide this and encourage use in the shallow region.

In area (B), there was a market space that was closed down for maintenance. It is uncertain if this is the reason for the other produce market being located on the east piazza, or if it is being repaired because there is a vacancy.



density

The evening: Summer Concert series

During the evening, the activity was no longer centered around the west piazza market area. Instead, this acted only as a parking lot for people who were funnelling into the east piazza for the Summer Concert series.

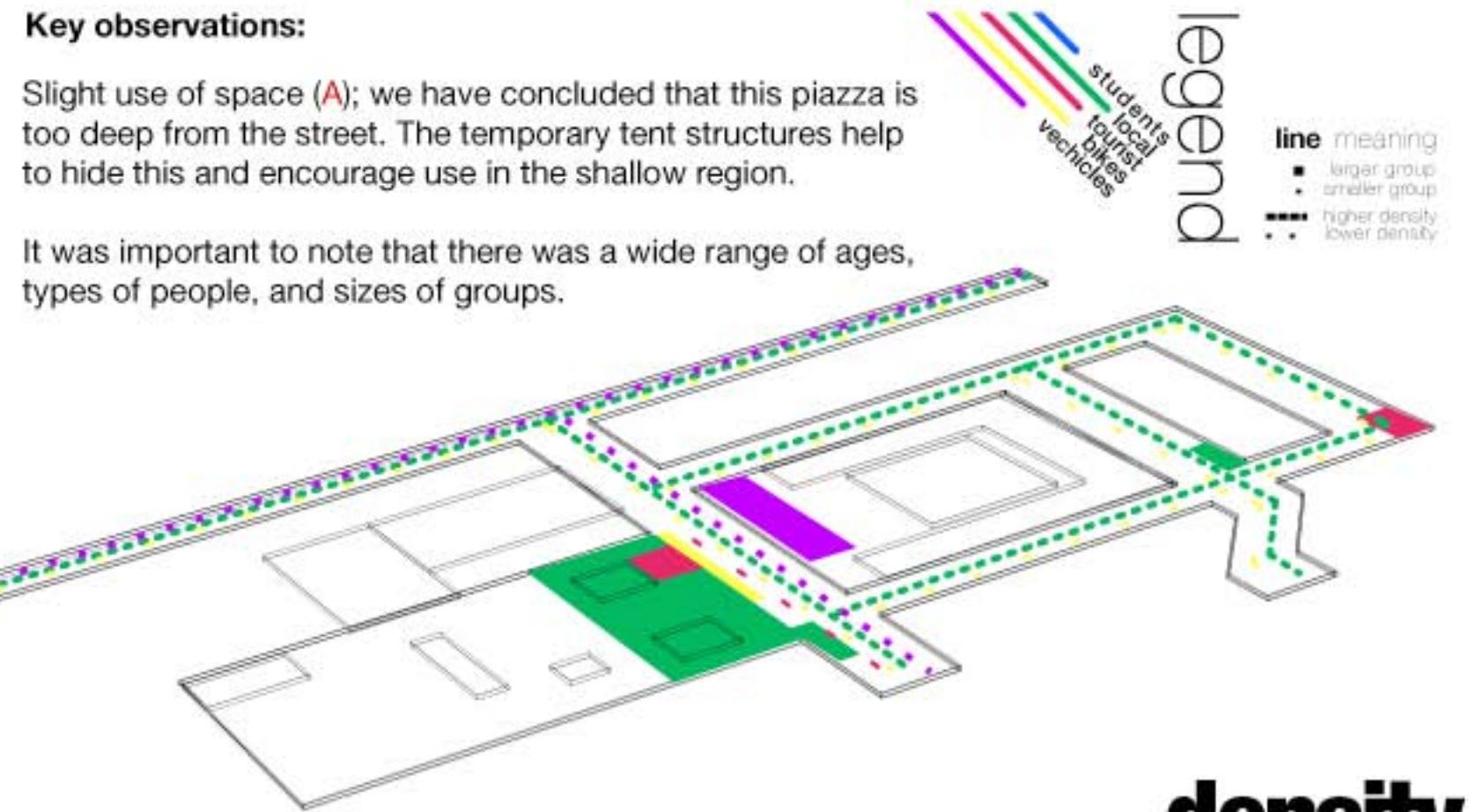
The concert area was divided into 3 sections: there were flat bleachers at the rear, a seated cafe area in the middle, and a stage at the front. The middle area was populated mainly by middle aged persons. The rear bleachers had a higher concentration of young people. Between the concert area and the street, we also found that there was a large contingent of elderly persons standing and having conversations.

Nearby, the restaurant to the south, and the "MatchPoint" gambling outlet were also very busy, the former with a mix of young and middle-aged, the latter with elderly.

Key observations:

Slight use of space (A); we have concluded that this piazza is too deep from the street. The temporary tent structures help to hide this and encourage use in the shallow region.

It was important to note that there was a wide range of ages, types of people, and sizes of groups.



Conclusion:

Via S. Verdiniana as Edge Space

The area is a developing space; it will be interesting to find out if there is a plan already in place for developing further, or if it is seen by city planners as done. In either case, it will be important to watch for moments of community intervention - similar to what happened with the public opinion effecting development of the parkade in front of Fortezza da Basso.

Changes in the density of different demographic groups (students, tourists, elderly, etc.) may also shift over time due to the opening of new stores in response to the new space and other key places like Teatro de Sale.

Finally, there is an opportunity for the comparison to Central City's development as it is a similar urban phenomenon, but with marked differences in scale, context, and purpose.