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Identity and Placemaking of Modern Roman Piazzas: Case Study Analysis of Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio, and Piazza Cavour

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Honor Capstone
Bachelor of Architecture

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ABSTRACT

The more we understand the patterns of how people use space, the better we will be able to forecast the outcomes of new public space initiatives. Studying public life can be done in a similar way to how meteorologists can fairly accurately describe the weather (Gehl 2013, 2). The goal of this analysis is to better understand the patterns evident in these successful spaces so that more similar spaces can be developed in the future. Can exemplary public spaces be used to forecast new projects? Rome has a high density of successful public spaces, and this case study will focus on three of these piazzas; Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio, and Piazza Cavour. Analysis will be used to determine the similarities and differences that can be identified as replicable components and implemented in new designs or revitalization projects. These categories will include uses, surrounding program, shading, landmarks, materials, general form, historical significance, natural vs manmade elements, proximity to public transportation, and safety. The success of each space will be based off criteria from projects for public spaces and documented using strategies from Jan Gehl's book on how to study public life. This capstone should be used as a starting point for designers to conduct their own case studies that can be redeveloped into strategies applicable to their own specific project. It is not a definitive list of principles but a compilation of tools and elements from the integration of different analysis methods.

INTRODUCTION

The climax of a community is its public center. The place that houses the most intersections of life, love, politics, and money. People come for work, relaxation, entertainment, and justice and leave feeling a sense of connection, refreshment, and accomplishment. Communities thrive when they serve a variety of people and functions, but so often cities are littered with unused and abandoned spaces. How can new designs for public space and revitalization projects take cues from successful piazzas to promote growth, connectivity, and pride? Placemaking projects with these characteristics have the capability of benefiting locals but also drawing in tourists, benefiting surrounding businesses and providing identity to the area.

Experts in placemaking and urban design have studied many types of public spaces throughout time and would agree that the Roman piazza is a prime example of successful public space. During the time I spent studying abroad in Rome various professors and people who lived there recommended I visit the spaces discussed in this analysis. The iconic piazzas of Rome give life to the city and provide spaces of release amid the dense city center streets. Before my time in the city, I planned on studying landmark piazzas like St Peters Square or Piazza Navona, however, as successful as they are at bringing people together, I decided to study some spaces that reflected more of the everyday life of a Roman. Piazzas slightly removed from the tourist scene, but close to the historic center of Rome and used for a variety of programs throughout the day.

Key questions guiding study:

- **What features are evident in all the successful spaces?**
- **Does size or form of the space effect the components that make it successful?**
- **Could a recipe/kit of parts be an effective design tool for outdoor public spaces? Or are the surrounding context and site conditions the primary driving factor? Or a combination of both?**
- **Is there a physical difference between spaces that are full of tourists and those that are primarily full of locals?**
- **What is the character and identity of each place?**
- **How can studying existing successful spaces help forecast the success of future ones?**

The goal of this analysis is to tell the stories of these public spaces that are well loved by their communities and visitors alike because of what they represent and offer to them. I want to suggest that by studying these spaces from a variety of angles we will have a more complete picture of what makes them successful and be able to apply these lessons of identity and typology to future public spaces in a way that mimics the patterns that have be exemplified in good spaces and allow us to forecast the success of developing spaces.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Identity- The defining characteristics that give a place value, make it recognizable and memorable. A combination of the physical elements of program and design with the intangible feelings the place makes someone experience.

Piazza- An Italian public square or marketplace

Placemaking-

“As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, **placemaking** inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution” (Project for Public Spaces)

Successful Public Space- A space that is well rounded, embodying quality sociability, accessibility, and comfort. Marked by interaction, pride, proximity, connection, safety, activity, and vitality.

BACKGROUND

Background on Placemaking

Placemaking, although a broad subject can be simply defined as “the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play, and learn in” (Steuteville 2014). A quality place should be mixed use, provide multiple transportation options, reflect community history and culture, include greenspace, and be a place for recreation. A quality space should be characterized as safe, connected, inclusive, accessible, and sociable. To further add specificity, placemaking can be divided into three more categories: strategic, creative, and tactical. Each of these has a different end goal in mind. Strategic placemaking is when the focus of the project is not only on creating a quality space, but also addressing some specific goal. This could be along the lines of economic or job growth for the surrounding businesses. Creative placemaking focuses on the increase of the arts. Examples of this could be musical performances, art displays, or media presentations. Tactical placemaking is “lighter, quicker, cheaper.” It usually consists of smaller projects setting the stage for larger ones. This helps gather support from the surrounding community and can help discern if the project would be successful in the long run (Steuteville 2014).

There is ample information regarding the way public space should be designed and occupied. Variety in opinion and process to achieve the most successful and effective outcome is by no means in shortage. The focus here will be on the typology of the piazza, not necessarily its technical terminology but its function and service to the community it is situated in. The piazza is pedestrian oriented, traditionally surrounded by a series of buildings. The piazza is continuously filled with activity, no matter the time of day and are also very flexible spaces. The flexibility of the piazza allows for permanence and seamless turnover for spaces as they are multiuse and timeless in their design. The easy pedestrian accessibility of the piazza also reiterates the design being at the scale of the person instead of that of the automobile or large building (Takemoto n.d.).

In medieval times public spaces like these were often residual spaces due to the expansion of the city. The two leading forces in this time were the king and the church. This focused the architecture on defense and the display of power (Martin 2014). Often open spaces would be left for people to stand back and enjoy the beauty and majesty of the castles and churches. During the renaissance, the design of these public spaces became more intentional. The rise of economic powers like the Medici family, lead to an increase in funding for public projects, as well as an increased need for them to be centers of trade and commerce. These new spaces are what initiated the formation of the outdoor public space typology and have been used as precedents for public gathering space throughout time.

One of the writers on this topic is Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schultz. Christian Norberg-Schultz's "The Phenomenon of Place" introduces the idea that place is more than just a location. That beyond the physical bones of the site the other senses are what help people experience the spirit of the place. Norberg-Schultz suggest that the vocation of the place is understood. Norberg-Schultz describes place as the concrete term for environment and that "when man dwells, he is simultaneously located in space and exposed to a certain environmental character. In his article "a place is defined in terms of 'space' and 'character' where space denotes the three-dimensional organization of the elements which make up a place, [and] character denotes the general atmosphere which is the most comprehensive property of any place" (Norberg Schultz 2014, 418). Similarly, Gehl describes public spaces as the physical components, "streets, alleys, buildings, squares, bollards: everything that can be considered part of the built environment" and public life as "everything that takes place between buildings...everything we can go out and observe." (Gehl 2013, 2).

What Makes a Great Place?

**Project
for Public
Spaces**

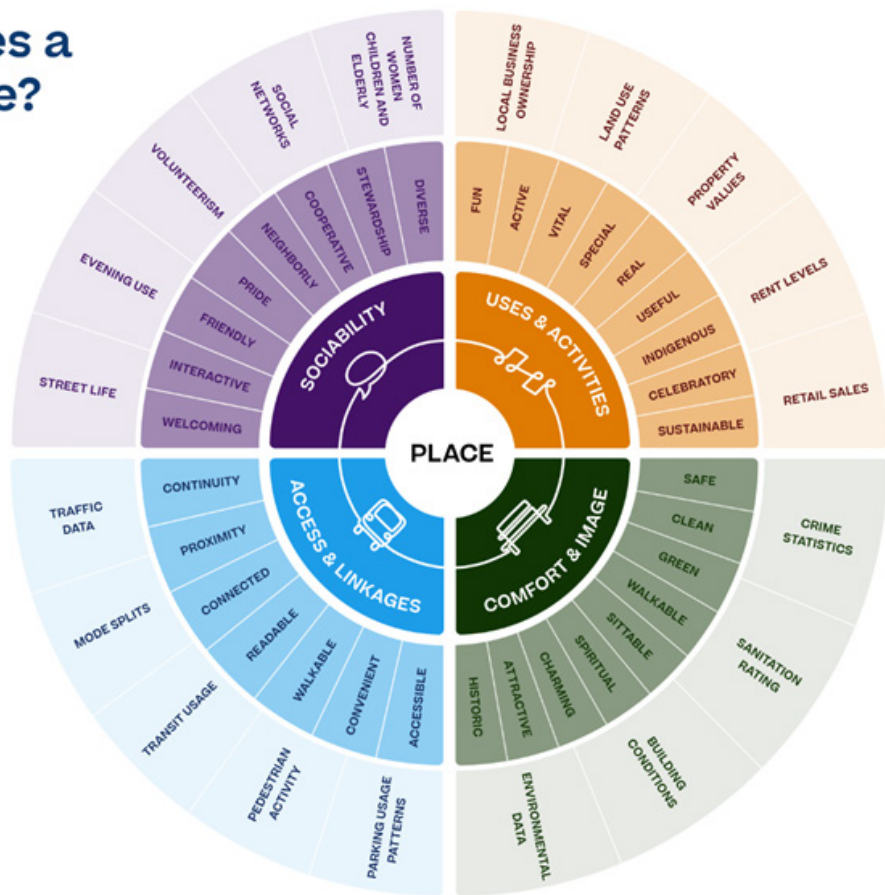


Figure 1: Project for Public Spaces Place Diagram

The Project for Public Spaces helps define some of these characteristics and spaces with the chart above. By asking what makes a great place, one can start to build criteria including elements that are important to the success of a public space. Spaces also have different purposes, so defining the intention of the space will help to determine if it is meeting the needs of the community, it's in and serving the purpose that it was made for.

To continue to define placemaking Mahyar Arefi's book *Deconstructing Placemaking: Needs, Opportunities, and Assets* looks at the factors that initiate projects (Arefi 2014). For example, need-based is when there is a unique set of circumstances that must be met, like a deficiency or limitation. Opportunity-based placemaking is when someone takes advantage of a space that is currently unoccupied and uses it for their

own purpose and asset-based is when a community decides to invest in its own abilities and potential. These sectors reveal the intense complexity and extent of what the impact of placemaking can be.

“Placemaking is, by nature, contingent, complex, multilayered, and contested. It is contingent because its nuances, to a large degree, reflect the circumstances in which people create them. Its complexity ... emanates from how places are conceived, perceived, and lived. It is multilayered and embraces physical, social, and political dimensions. Places reflect physical realities: they are big or small, near or far, accessible only by cars or by other modes of transportation. They also reflect socio-economic realities: some places are crowded, affluent, poor, socially homogenous, or diverse. They represent contested political realities too: as repositories of meaning, they symbolize people’s identities, attitudes, perceptions, and aspirations, and justify political struggles.” (Arefi 2014, 4)

Several debates arise though this discussion: public versus private, expert knowledge versus local knowledge, and site versus place. A component of the case study analysis will look at the way the case studies used the professional knowledge of design and implementation, as well as the local knowledge of what the community wanted and needed. The public space should be marked by the footprint of its community. Evidence of the way people use a space will be visible in what they leave behind, whether that’s some crumbs from a picnic lunch, a left behind umbrella or more permanent changes like desire paths. These desire paths, or paths of least resistance, represent where people have used the space in a way, they saw best fit and was not planned for in the design. A common example is a worn foot path through the grass that people have used as a shortcut. Studying these spaces and developments can help designers take hints from the natural way people move through and occupy space and include those in their future designs.

Public space is something that has always existed, whether that be a ceremonial space or a somewhat informal gathering spot. Throughout history these places have been the social, political, and economic centers of society. These case studies will be examined and compared emphasizing the value of the public square and the successful components that repeatedly appear and how those elements are used in relation to their context.

Background on Case Study Sites

The three piazzas that were chosen are Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio and Piazza Cavour. They are all located in Rome, but slightly outside of the historic center. Below, in Figure 2, is a map of their locations in relation to one another and Table 1 lists some of the their location and size information.

Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio and Piazza Cavour were selected as sites to analyze because they were recommended by faculty at the University of Arkansas Rome Center and deemed as successful places people gather in the city. They offer variety in content and context, slightly removed from the heart of the tourist scene and more representative of daily life in the city for the people that live there.



Figure 2: Map of piazzas in relation to one another

Table 1: Piazza Metrics					
Name	Approximate Piazza Size (m ²)	Neighborhood	Neighborhood Size (km ²)	Neighborhood Population	Density of Neighborhood (people/km ²)
Piazza San Cosimato	5409 m ²	Trastevere	2.017 km ²	17,115	8,486 / km ²
Piazza Testaccio	3790 m ²	Rione XX Testaccio	0.602 km ²	6,536	10,859 / km ²
Piazza Cavour	19207 m ²	Prati	1.367 km ²	14,759	10,796 / km ²

METHODS

Descriptive studies find facts based on relatively few quantitative and/or qualitative variables that are measured and described as precisely as possible, while explanatory studies test relationships between variables to solve problems (Singleton 2018, 68). The capstone is a descriptive case study looking at the effects of specific elements in public spaces and defining and describing their impact, positive, negative, or indifferent.

Robert Yin's Case Study Research and Applications (2018) is used to establish the case study method. First, to achieve construct validity operational measures for the study's constructs are identified (both quantitative and qualitative measures); multiple sources of evidence are used; and drafts of the report are reviewed (Yin 2018, 42). External validity is reinforced by clearly articulating case study analysis methods and how the findings might be generalized to cases outside the study. Finally, this study's reliability is strengthened by clearly showing replicable methods that would have similar findings if the study was repeated.

This capstone describes three successful piazzas in Rome, Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio, and Piazza Cavour. It tells the stories of each place from the perspective of identity and placemaking. It also analyzes them to determine the similarities and differences that might be identified as replicable components and implemented in new designs or revitalization projects. The success of each space is based on criteria from Projects for Public Spaces and documented using strategies from Jan Gehl's book on how to study public life. Key terms are specified and defined to provide boundaries and clarity to the discussion. Research is triangulated from a variety of sources and cross referenced to provide a strong foundation and give validity to the analysis (Yin 2018, 128). Elements deemed successful are evident in more than one site or are observed to be successful due to their relationship within their context. The analysis examines the historical and current significance and context of the sites, formal

spatial qualities, the urban context, and the authors observations to determine which components are the most significant for understanding different types of placemaking and identity in the piazzas. See Table 2 for a list of analysis constructs that will be analyzed for each site.

Table 2: Components of Good Urban Spaces for Analysis	
Components for Analysis	Guiding Analysis Questions
Uses	Program: What are the internal program components? Designed program or developed program?
Surrounding Program	Activated: What program surrounds the site? Do any of the programs bleed onto the piazza at different times during the day, benefiting or activating the space?
Shading	Refuge: What trees or architecture on the site provides refuge for people to get out of the sun in the summer? Is there space that is warmed by the sun for people to inhabit in the winter?
Landmarks	Recognizable: What makes the site recognizable? Is the landmark on the site or nearby? Is this something people will visit the site just to see?
Materials	Relationship: What is the relationship between hardscape and softscape on the site? Are the materials unique from the surround context or do they continue in the same language?
General Form	Defined: How does architecture define and interact with the spaces? How do apertures and thresholds emphasize and guide the visitor? How do you access the site? Is there a main orientation or entry?
Historical Significance	Significant: Has the site been a place of gathering for the community for generations or is it a more recent addition? Did any significant political, social or religious events occur in the area?
Nature and Architecture	Integrated: What is the relationship between nature and architecture? Does one dominate the other? How do they work together?
Proximity to Public Transportation	Access: Is the site easy to access from various forms of transportation?
Safety	Protected: Does the space promote a variety of ages and demographics? Do neighbors keep eyes on the street from their businesses and residences?

In his book, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* Yin details six sources of evidence commonly found in case study research; documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts (Yin 2018, 113). This analysis will use documentation, archival records, direct observations, and participant observation. Documentation is used to corroborate and validate evidence from other sources, although it is often personal and can be influenced by some bias. Archival records could be service records, maps, charts, and survey data and are used primarily for quantitative information. Direct observations are collected during fieldwork and often include photographs of the experience. Participant-observation is similar to direct observation; however, you may actively participate in the actions being studied. Below, Table 3 details the types of evidence used in this analysis and the specific sources used.

Table 3: Data Sources	
Data Source Type	Specific Source
Documents	Census data News articles Formal studies Books on the subject
Archival Records	Historic and current maps (Nolli Map, Satellite Imagery) Historic photos
Direct Observation	Photographs from the author Gehl observation tools completed by the author
Participant Observation	Author utilizing the piazza and its programmatic activities

Diagrams will be made to detail site observations and represent findings. Tables will also be included to display concrete information about each piazza. The findings will then help determine if public space can be created from a kit of parts or if it must be primarily developed from the existing context. Conclusions will be drawn about how the scale, recognition, and proximity of the space to various elements effects the conditions.

The answers to questions about the importance of designed elements, like form and the existing contextual characteristics will help determine if lessons learned from these case study piazzas can be applied to new designs or revitalization projects.

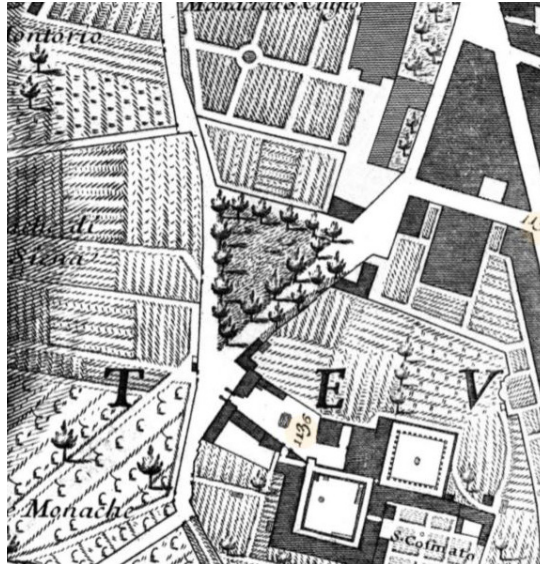
When studying each of the piazzas the essence of the space will also be described. There are qualities that help make a successful space that can't necessarily be documented; therefore, storytelling will be used in order to help convey the soul of the space. Through telling the story of these piazzas and documenting findings from the analysis designers will be able to approach various design problems with the example of these spaces in mind. The measurable tools and strategies employed in these examples may be helpful, but so might the way specific conditions are dealt with and altered depending on site.

Public life is unpredictable. It is affected by so many different variables making it hard to capture a space's complete essence in a small snapshot of its full use and identity. In this study, in order to reduce variables, I visited the piazzas on the same day of the week, around the same time and with similar weather conditions. The study was conducted manually using what I observed and documenting with notes and photos. The approaches for this exploration stem from the ideas discussed in *How to Study Public Life* by Jan Gehl. Gehl presents a series of strategies to better understand a place including, counting, mapping, tracing, tracking, looking for traces, photographing, keeping a diary and test walks. In this study of Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio, and Piazza Cavour I utilized the tools of counting, mapping, tracing, and photographing. In Gehl's words "counting provides quantitative data that can be used to qualify projects and as arguments in making decisions...mapping behavior is simply mapping what happens on a plan of the space or area being investigated... [and] tracing mean drawing lines of movement on a plan" (Gehl 2013, 25-28). Each of these tools allowed me to document how people were using the space live and gave me a base line for use and comparison between piazzas.

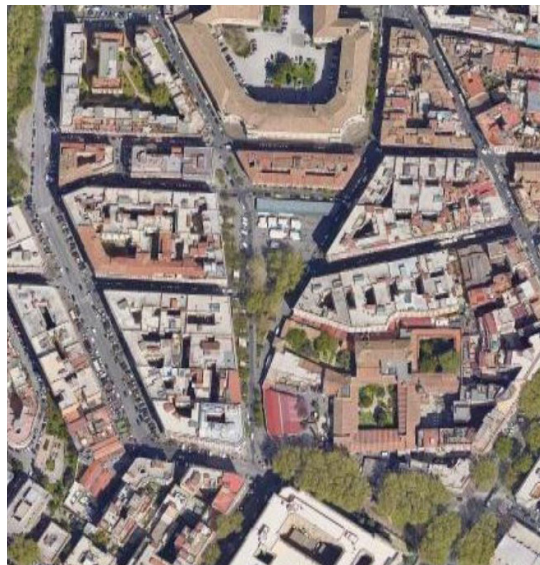
Gehl introduces an analogy that compares studying public life to studying weather. The more we understand about the patterns of how people use space, the better we may be able to forecast the results, similar to how a meteorologist can fairly accurately describe the weather (Gehl 2013, 2). The goal of this analysis is to better understand the patterns evident in these successful spaces so that more similar spaces can be developed in the future.



Piazza San Cosimato



NOLLI



SATELLITE



FIGURE/GROUND

Figure 3: Piazza San Cosimato map comparisons

CASE STUDY – PIAZZA SAN COSIMATO

Background and Historical Significance:

Piazza San Cosimato is in the heart of the Trastevere neighborhood of Rome framed by a bend in the Tiber River. The space has been a public gathering spot for many years but going back to the imperial age and first century BC it was home to Rome's Naval Colosseum. Emperor Augustus inaugurated the site to house naval gladiatorial battles for around "30 ships and more than 3,000 participants. The Naumachia's basin alone measured a staggering 533 by 355 meters and was fed by an aqueduct running down the Janiculum Hill...Augustus boasted about it in his *Res Gestae* – an autobiographical list of achievements Augustus disseminated throughout the Roman Empire but visible in Rome on the side of the Altar of Peace" (Romeing Editorial Staff n.d.).



Figure 4: Rome's Naval Colosseum (*The Hidden History of Rome's Piazzas*)

General Form:

The form of the piazza is the result of a gap between the surrounding buildings, overall taking on a triangular form. The northern edge is created by the market structure, the two long sides are defined by roads and buildings that frame the space and then the southern point is defined by where those roads come together. People typically access the site by walking along one of the bordering roads.

Uses:

The foundation of Piazza San Cosimato is its programmatic elements that anchor the space and attract people to the site while inviting them to come spend an extended period of time in the space. The generational market defines the northern edge of the space with fixed stalls where vendors set up every day but Sunday from 7:30am until 2:00pm (Discover Rome 2018, Ugolini n.d.). Established at the beginning of the 20th century this traditional market passes stalls down from generation to generation, as most owners are residents of the district. Mrs. Giuliana Pettini, owns a meat and cheese stand that was passed down to her from her father said that when she decides to stop working, it will be passed down to her son Emiliano. Market leader, Mr. Franco, shares a similar story as his father worked their family's stall before him, and before that his father's aunt owned the stall. He also described how their fruit and vegetable stall has grown and evolved over time to include a wide variety of products now. The oldest stall in the market is the fish stand Menelik, which has been open for about 100 years. In 2006, for two years, the market relocated, about a five-minute walk east, to Piazza Mastai while San Cosimato was being renovated (Ugolini n.d.). Although the space remains a very active central piece of the neighborhood, stall owners voiced their disappointment with being excluded from the design process during the renovation. Mrs. Pettini explained that "going to the supermarket is easier but much more sterile" (Discover Rome 2018). Some vendors also complained about the new implementation

of a limited traffic zone until 10:00am because it prevents people coming to the site by car until later in the day. However, even with the complaints the vendors refuse to let that hinder them as they bring smiles to the community and help create space for interaction and connection.

Another component of the piazza is the playground situated in the middle of the east edge. The space is clearly defined as an area for children full of color and playful design elements. It is wrapped in colorful metal fencing with a concrete base coated in murals of The Simpsons cartoon. There is a central playground structure with climbing elements and slides. However, one of the most unique aspects at the space is that the surrounding district's occupants have a habit of donating toys to the space for anyone to use (Discover Rome 2018). An act representative of the way that people take care of one another and use this space as a way to interact with their neighbors.

One of the most defining features of the piazza is its open-air cinema. Starting in 2018 families were invited to come to the piazzas every day, but Monday or Tuesday, over the summer at 9:15 for free movie screening. Movies are typically shown in their original language with subtitles in Italian. "It is a truly political and cultural event, created to commemorate the historical Roman cinema, and to let the citizens live [in] the public squares in an unusual way, and to enhance the role of aggregation and social growth they have" (Discover Rome 2018).

Beyond the designed programmatic elements, the open space in the piazzas becomes open and adaptable to the users. Benches become meeting spots and the cinema floor becomes a stage for makeshift soccer matches. Programs that have developed inside the space have added an additional layer to the identity of the space.

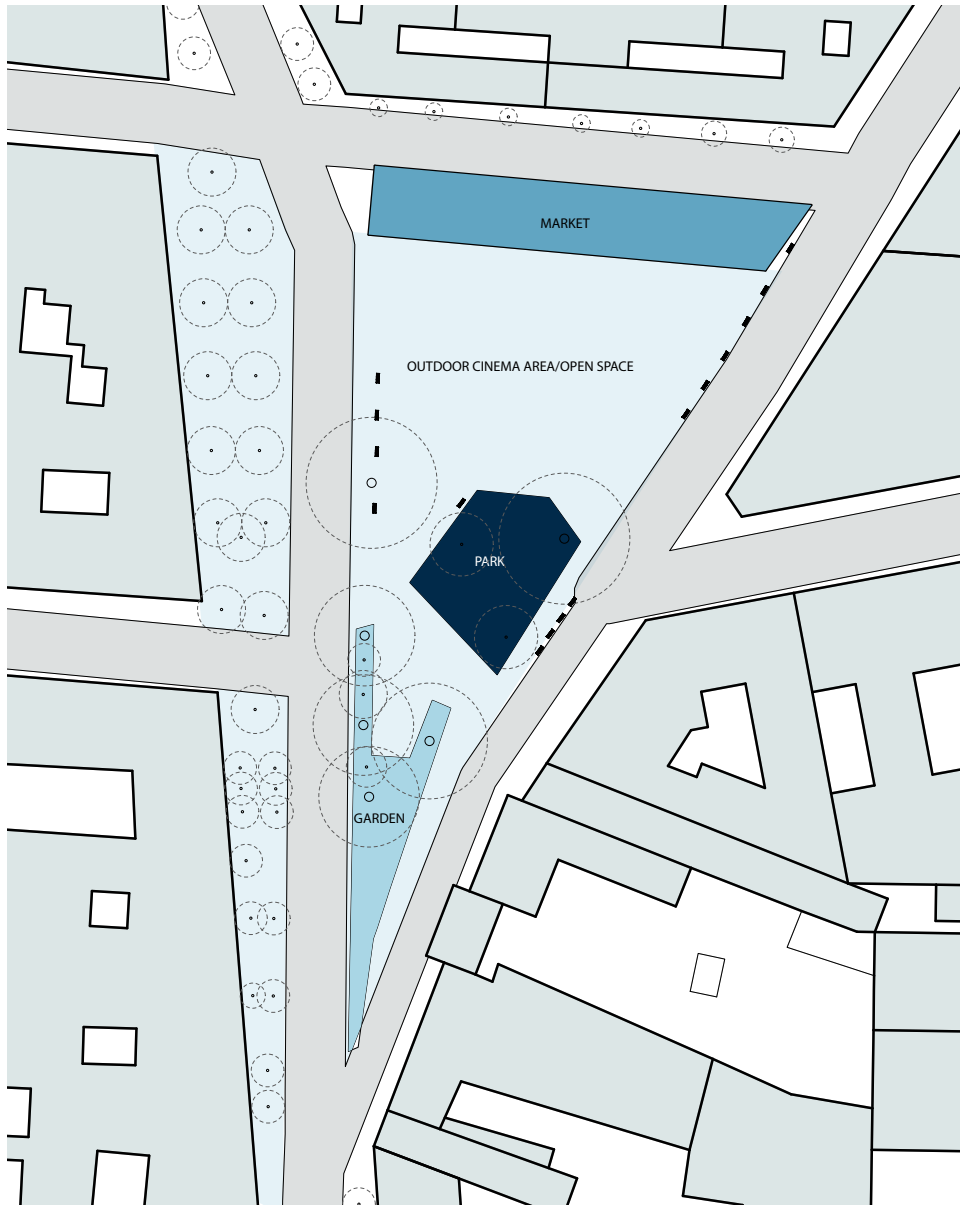
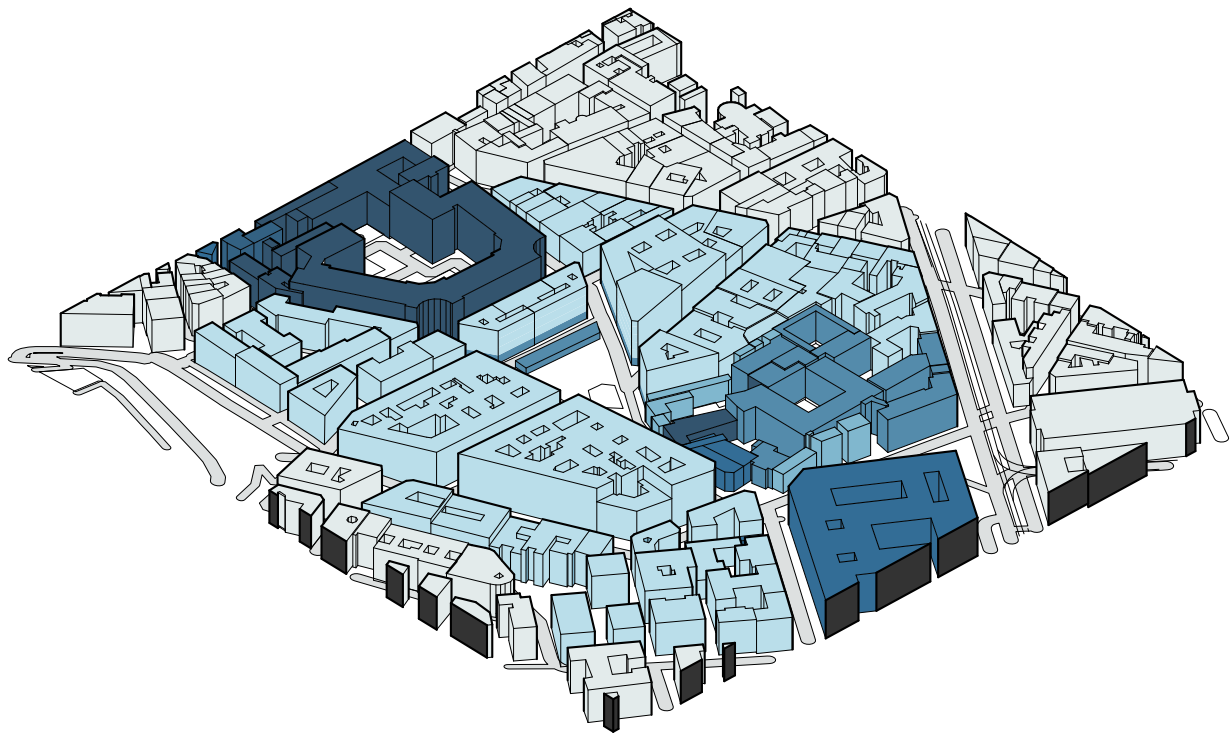


Figure 6: Piazza San Cosimato site plan and program

Surrounding Program:

The edges of the piazzas are important and influential to the way the space operates as well. San Cosimato is surrounded by seven-story residential buildings with restaurants and shops on the ground floor. There is also a historic church and hospital that border the piazza. The programs bleed into the bounds of the piazza creating pulses of people and use of the space. The restaurants on the western edge utilize the piazza on the opposite side of the Via Roma Libera as outdoor seating, activating the space through the changing visuals of people coming and going throughout the day, hearing the chatter of people talking and dishes being stacked and served, and finally the smells of the food drifting across the street.

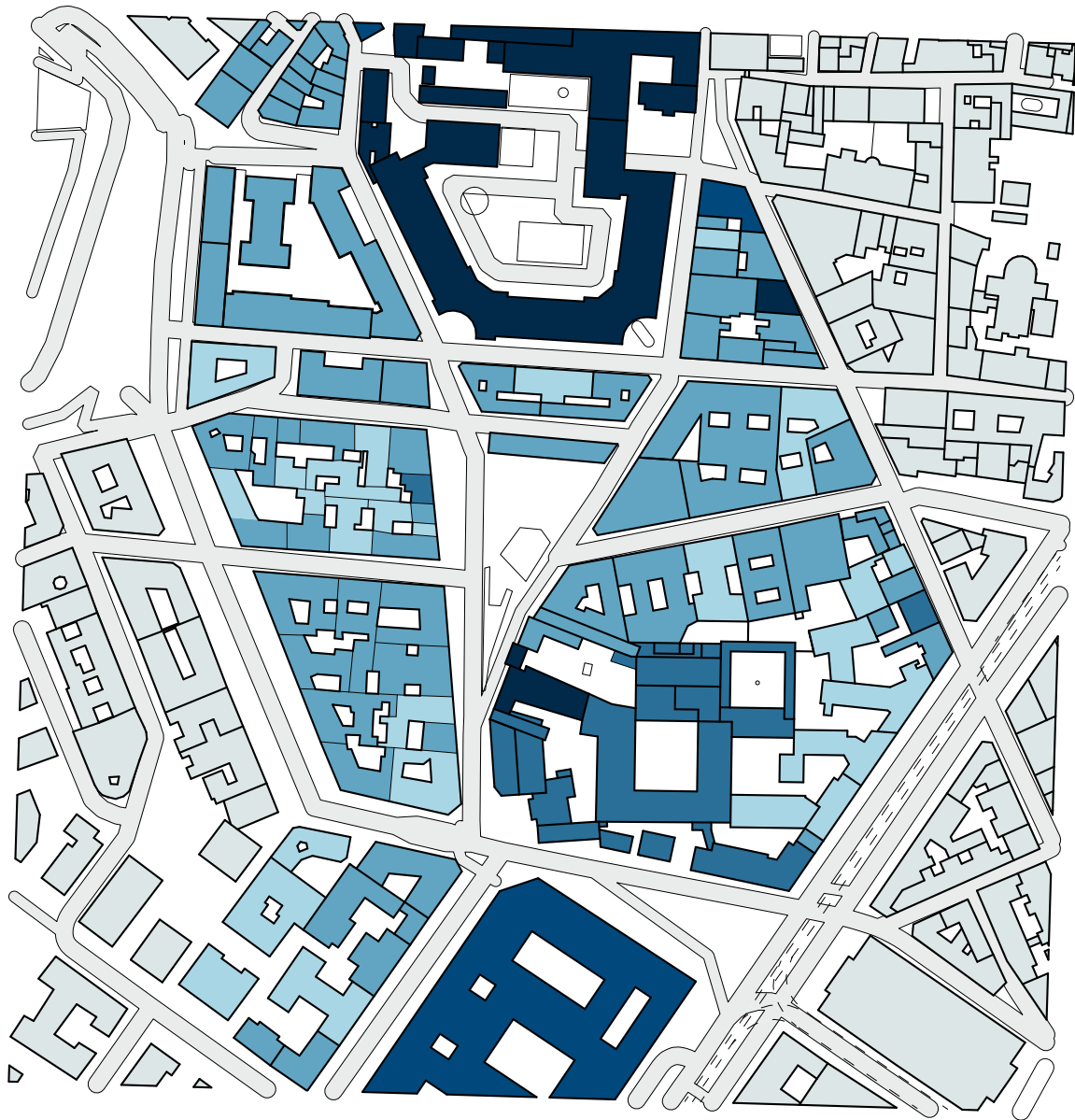
The piazzas influence and impact on the area have encouraged other companies to move to the area. For example, OttoMassimo's moving bookshop has found a location very close to the market for people to sit and read or to have a painting or drawing workshop.



- Housing/Hotel
- Restaurant/Shop
- Hospital
- Government
- Church

*Buildings colored based on majority program

Figure 7: Piazza San Cosimato surrounding program axon



- Housing/Hotel
- Restaurant/Shop
- Hospital
- Government
- Church

*Buildings colored based on majority program

Figure 8: Piazza San Cosimato surrounding program ground floor plan

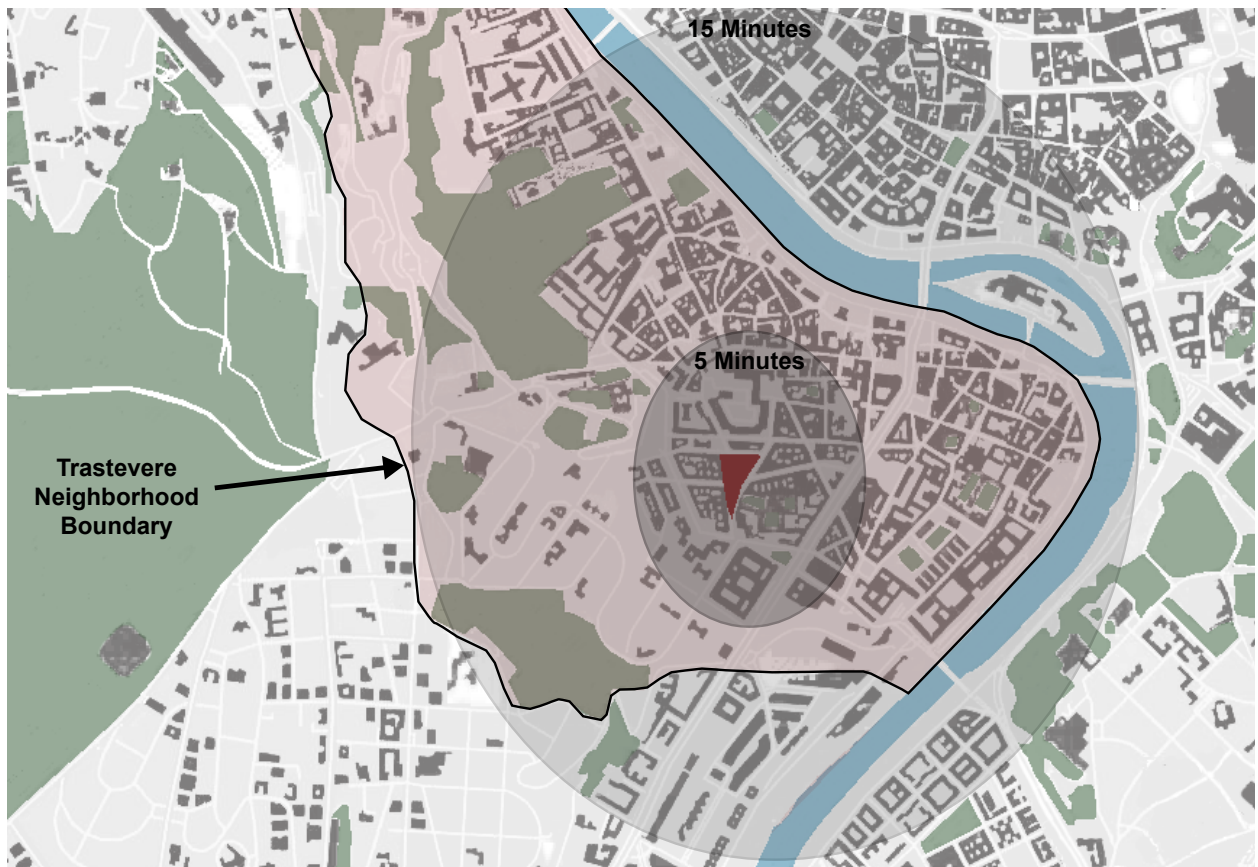


Figure 9: Piazza San Cosimato walking radius

Proximity to Public Transportation:

Piazza San Cosimato is located very centrally in the neighborhood of Trastevere, making it an easy place to access when walking or biking. The nearest bus stop is about a three-minute walk south and the nearest tram stop is about a four-minute walk east. The closest train station is about a 25-minute walk south and the closest metro station is across the river also about a 25-minute walk.

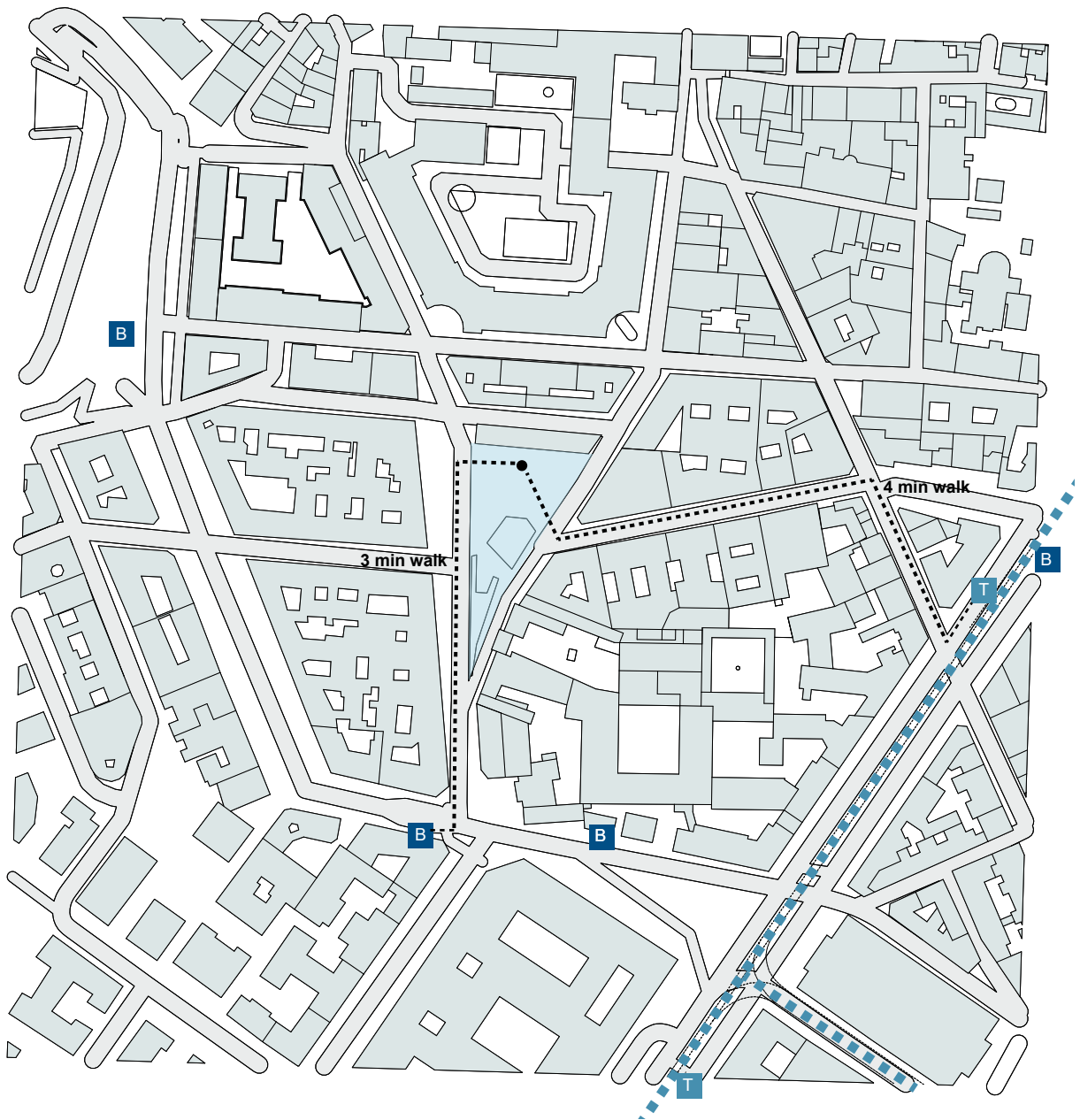


Figure 10: Piazza San Cosimato transportation access

Shading:

At the urban scale the piazza has areas that are shaded throughout the entire day due to the seven story buildings that surround the space. At a more local scale the southern half of the piazza is shaded more consistently because of the tree canopy covering the space. This extends over some of the benches, the playground and some of the garden. In the winter when you want to stay in the sun the best place to be is at the center of the piazza which gets the least amount of shade.

MARCH 21ST & SEPTEMBER 21ST (EQUINOX)



8:00AM



10:00AM



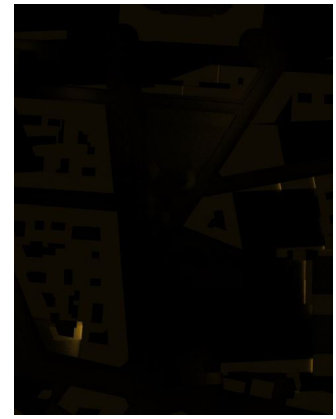
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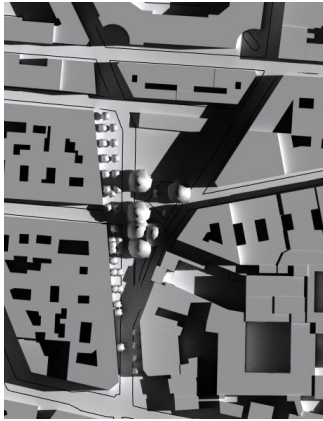
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Figure 11: Piazza San Cosimato shading

JUNE 21ST (SUMMER SOLSTICE)



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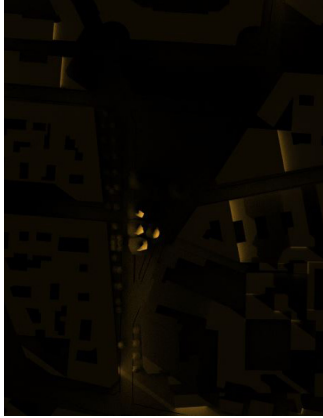


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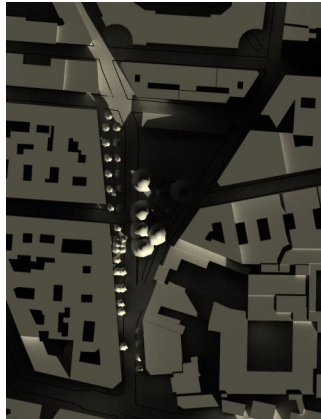


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DECEMBER 21ST (WINTER SOLSTICE)



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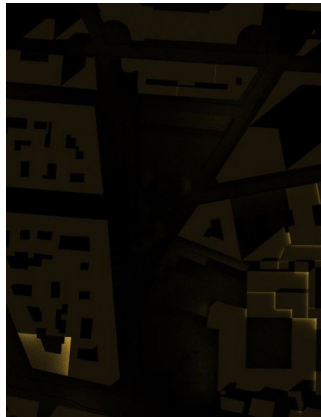
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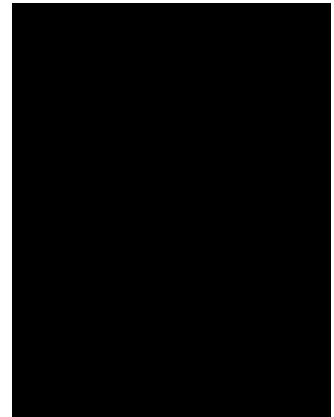
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6:00PM

Landmarks:

Piazza San Cosimato is a short walk from Basilica di Maria in Trastevere, a titulus from 392 AD. This is the first church in Rome dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus and most likely the first building for Christian worship in Rome (Roma Wonder 2017). It was built on the site of a refuge for retired soldiers. Basilica di Maria in Trastevere has been worked on several times over the years, however it maintains its medieval architecture style. It is known for its golden mosaic in the apse of the church. It is free to visit by the public any day from 7:30am to 9:00pm and still has mass multiple times a day, morning, and evening.

Along the southern tip of Piazza San Cosimato sits Chiesa di San Cosimato and Nuovo Regina Margherita, a historic hospital in Rome, dating back to the 10th century (Churches of Rome Wiki n.d.). The name comes from two medical brothers Cosma and Damiano who treated the poor for free and were “beheaded after, after long tortures, under Diocletian in 303 (ASL Roma 1 n.d.). The church and hospital have gone through numerous transformations and reconstruction of both structure and program, the most current being a “hospice for the palliative care of the terminally ill” (Churches of Rome Wiki n.d.). The buildings surround The Cloisters of San Cosimato



Figure 12: Piazza San Cosimato surrounding landmarks

Nature and Architecture:

In Piazza San Cosimato there is a clear divide between the use of structure and the use of vegetation to frame the space, but they work together to create a piazza that has a variety of areas with different purposes. The northern half encompasses the market and cinema structure, while the southern half houses the garden and utilizes trees to define spaces for people to inhabit.

Materials:

Piazza San Cosimato material palette is very diverse due to the wide variety of components throughout the site that require unique conditions from the rest of the space. The paving is a smooth gray stone which covers the floor surface everywhere except the playground space. The benches scattered throughout the site are made of concrete and paint is used to add depth and color to the space, helping differentiate the zone intended for play. Plants and trees add another layer to the material palette, changing leaves and colors over time with the seasons. The market brings its own set of materials with the stalls, umbrellas and colorful food.

Safety:

When spending time in Piazza San Cosimato it is evident the space is utilized by a variety of age groups, partly in part of the programmatic elements like the playground that are intended for a specific group of people, but there are other elements that are open to the interpretation of the user or are appealing to any age group or demographic. This piazza, being a local place for neighborhood use and interaction, makes it a place that residents and surrounding business owners watch over and protect. Many people make their commute to work through the space, take their break at the space, or even work off of the space. There are always eyes looking from surrounding buildings.

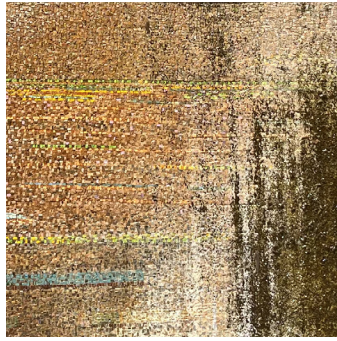
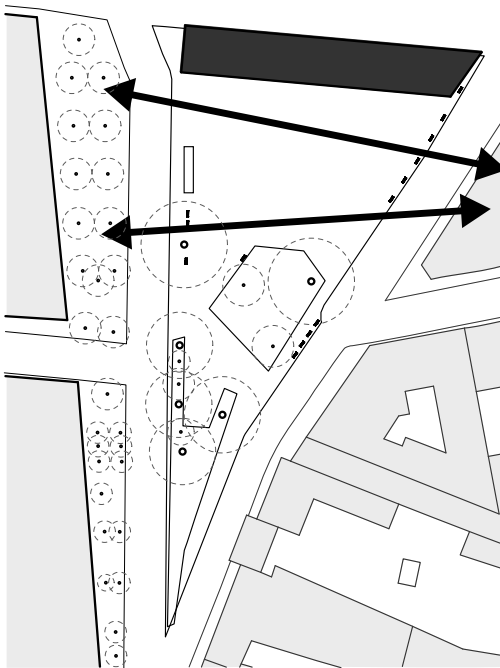
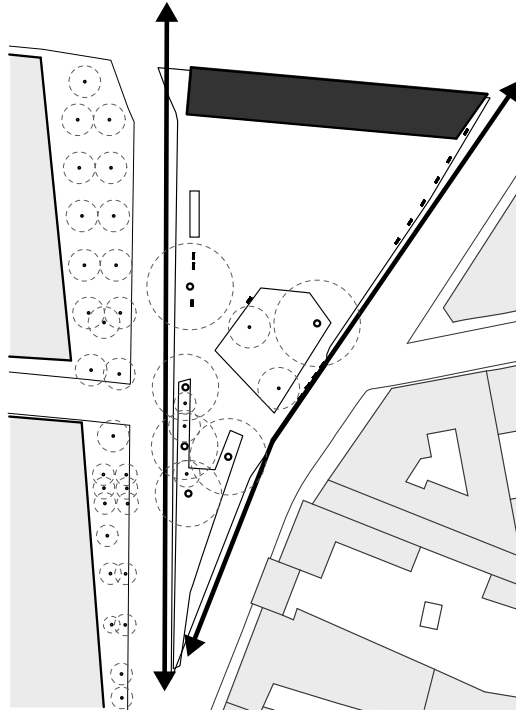


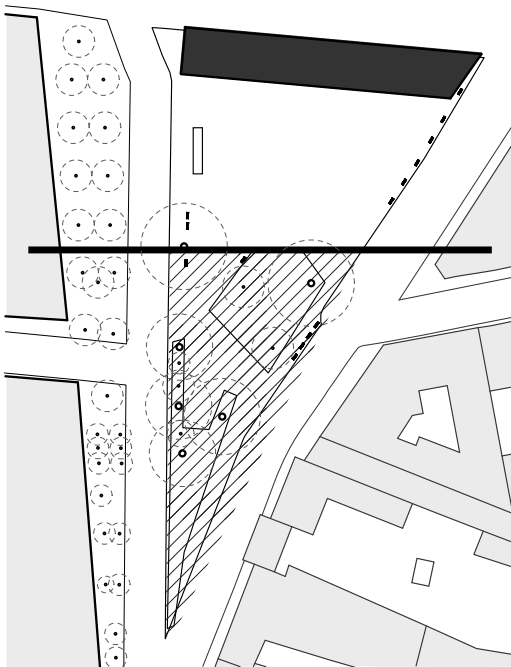
Figure 13: Piazza San Cosimato material palette



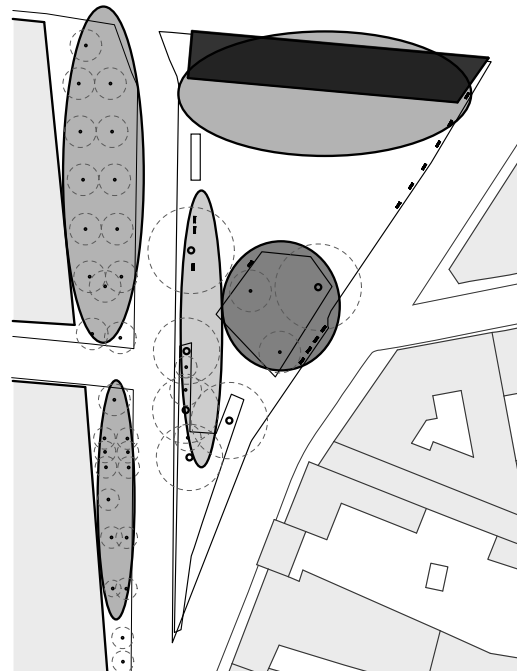
Primary Circulation Path



Secondary Circulation Paths



Upper Hardscape/Lower Vegetation



Primary Zones Where People Come and Stay

■ Short Time
 ■ Medium Time
 ■ Long Time

Figure 14: Piazza San Cosimato observation diagrams using Gehl strategies

FRIDAY 1:00PM

07-01-22



Figure 15: Piazza San Cosimato photo story 1



Figure 16: Piazza San Cosimato photo story 2



Figure 17: Piazza San Cosimato photo story 3



Figure 18: Piazza San Cosimato photo (tip of garden)



Figure 19: Piazza San Cosimato photo (garden signage)



Figure 20: Piazza San Cosimato photo (fountain)



Figure 21: Piazza San Cosimato photo (chalk wall)



Figure 22: Piazza San Cosimato photo (east edge looking north)



Figure 23: Piazza San Cosimato photo (east edge looking south)



Figure 24: Piazza San Cosimato photo (looking west)



Figure 25: Piazza San Cosimato photo (playground)



Figure 26: Piazza San Cosimato photo (site photos)



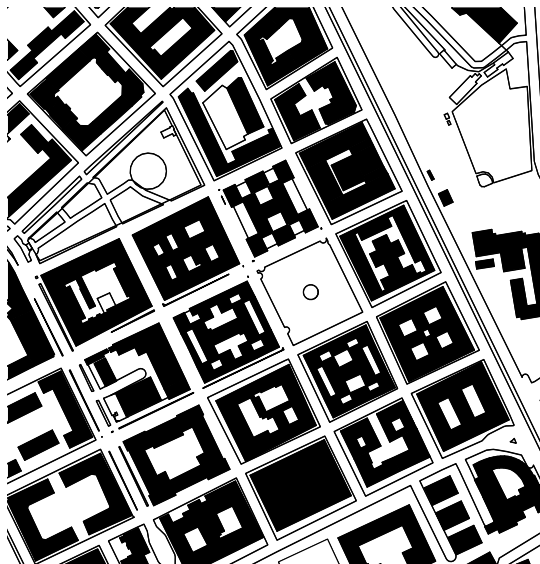
Piazza Testaccio



NOLLI



SATELLITE



FIGURE/GROUND

Figure 27: Piazza Testaccio map comparisons

CASE STUDY – PIAZZA TESTACCIO

Background and Historical Significance:

Piazza Testaccio is located in the Rione XX Testaccio district and is one of the most representative spaces of contemporary Rome. The piazza was formerly known as Piazzas Mastro Giorgio. “The square was born by popular will around 1900, to curb the urbanization of the area” (Turismo Roma 2021). Up until 2015, when the piazza was renovated, the piazza was home to one of the historic markets in the area. The market has relocated and the “Fountain of the Anfore, built by Pietro Lombardi in 1926, has been brought back to the center of the square, where it was initially located.” Now the piazza operates and a gathering place for people to make use of however they see fit. Trees and benches line the perimeter of the space, while the interior remains free besides the central fountain.

General Form:

The form of this space is very simple as it follows the grid of the urban plan of the neighborhood. Its square shape creates equality among each of the sides and symmetry in the space. The square is framed by four streets and the centrality is emphasized by the continued rings around the space. There is a layer for sidewalks, then a layer for trees and seating, a layer for movement, a ring of accent paving that define the central zone, culminating at the fountain in the middle of the space. Each side of the piazza is lined with four trees, each with two benches and a seat-height table. The trees are evenly spaced and one of two sizes, a very regular rhythm across the whole piazza. The trees also act as almost little rooms with the furniture beneath them. The components in each room are the same, however they are all arranged in unique ways and can be manipulated to fit the needs of the occupants.

Uses:

Piazza Testaccio has no defined programmatic elements anymore now that the market has moved locations. It has seating around the space and the fountain in the center that people can utilize how they see best. However, some programs have developed inside the space. From talking to people who live around the area and work at the Rome Center, the piazza has developed some unspoken zones. Kids will use the ring around the edge as lanes for a bicycle track.

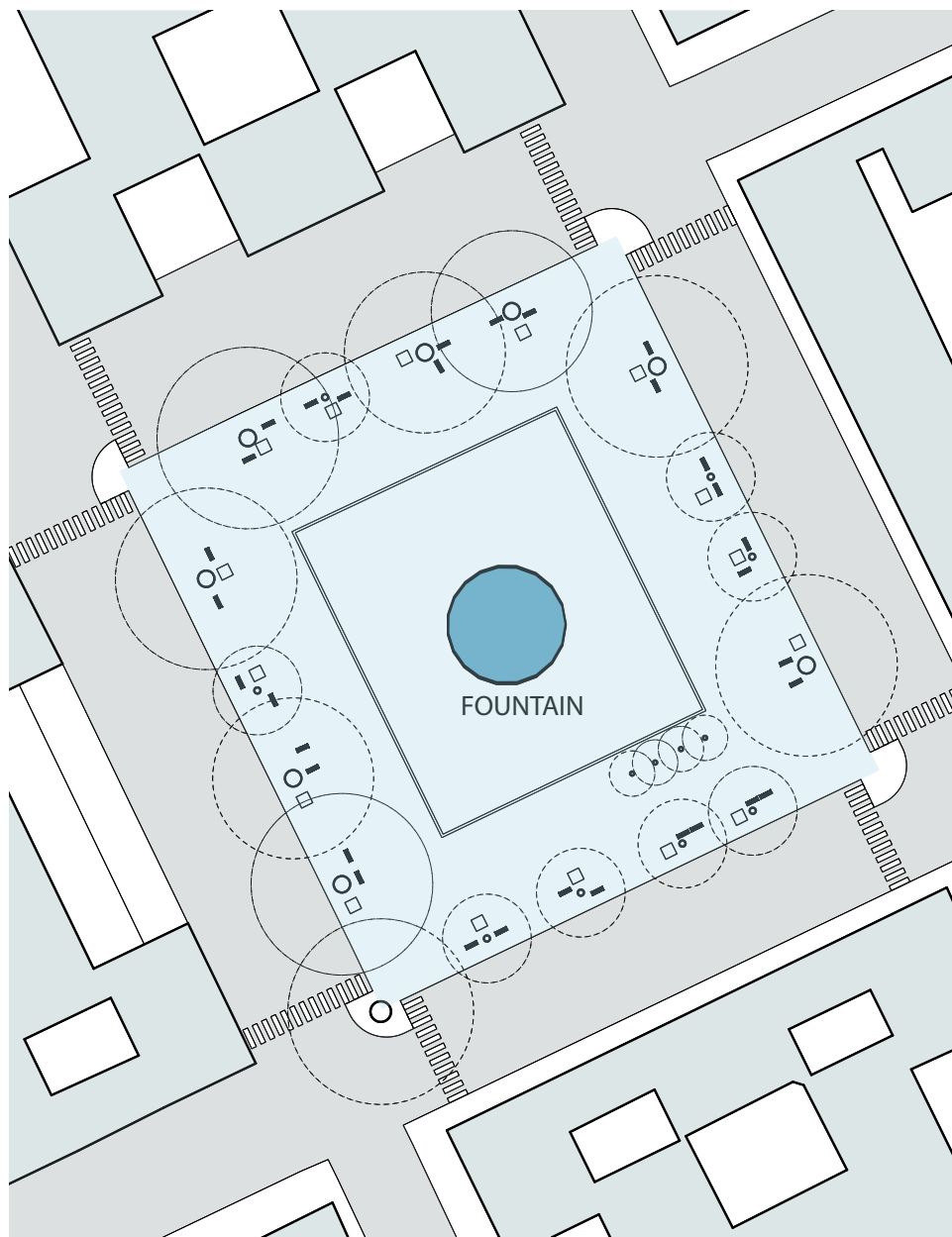


Figure 28: Piazza Testaccio site plan

Surrounding Program:

The area surrounding Piazza Testaccio is primarily made up of residential buildings with shops and restaurants on the ground floor. The market that spent some time located on the site of Piazza Testaccio has relocated to its new covered location a fifteen-minute walk away from Via Lorenzo Ghiberti. The glass-roofed building houses over 100 fresh food stalls. Testaccio is also home to many schools at a variety of education levels, from middle schools to colleges. The piazza is walking distance from IIS De Amicis Cattaneo, I.C. Elsa Morante, Scuola secondaria Carlo Cattaneo, Dipartimento di Architettura – UniRomaTre, IED Roma - Istituto Europeo di Design, CFP Simonetta Tosi, Quattro Novembre, and CIOFS FP Lazio - TESTACCIO (Ginori).

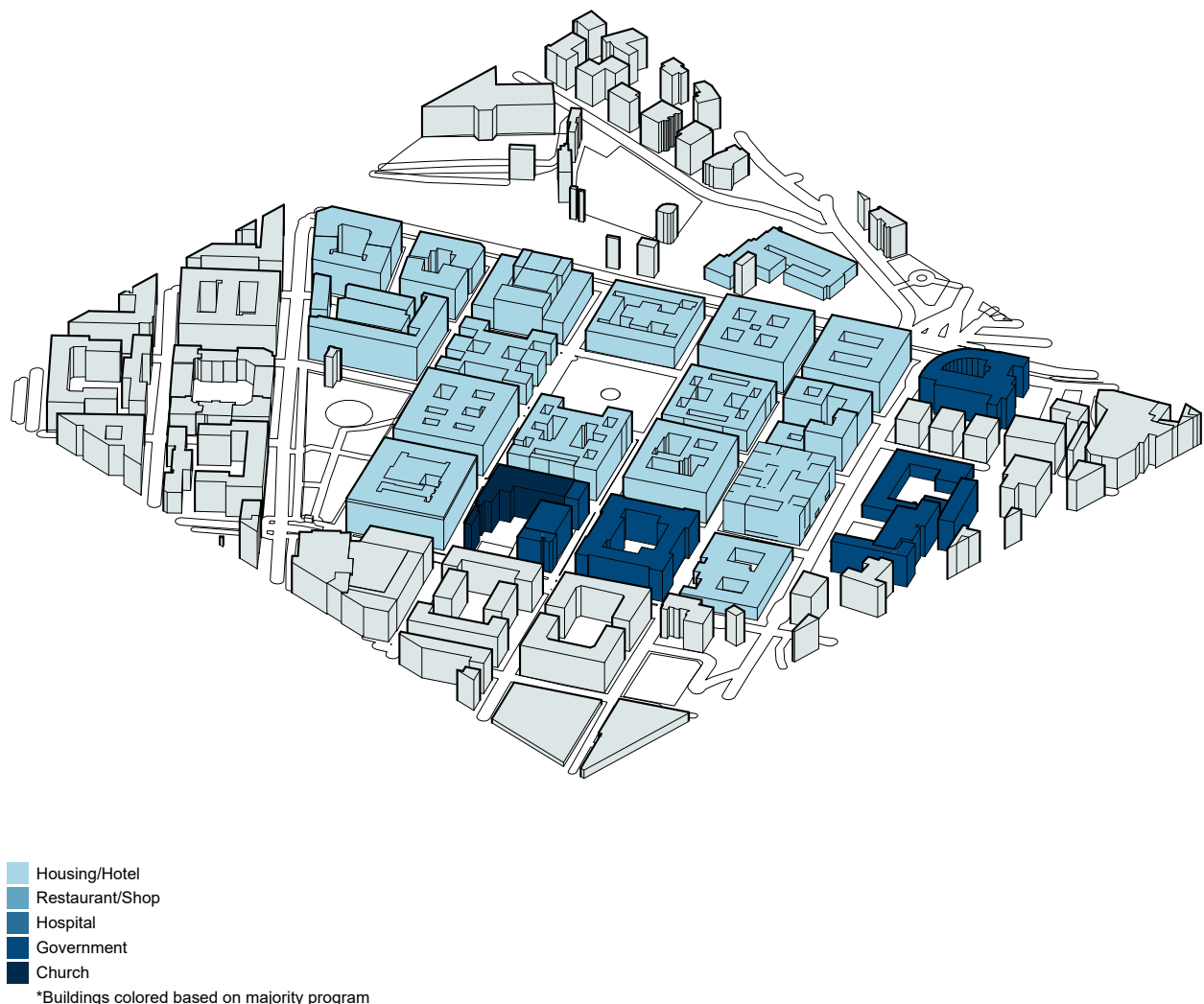
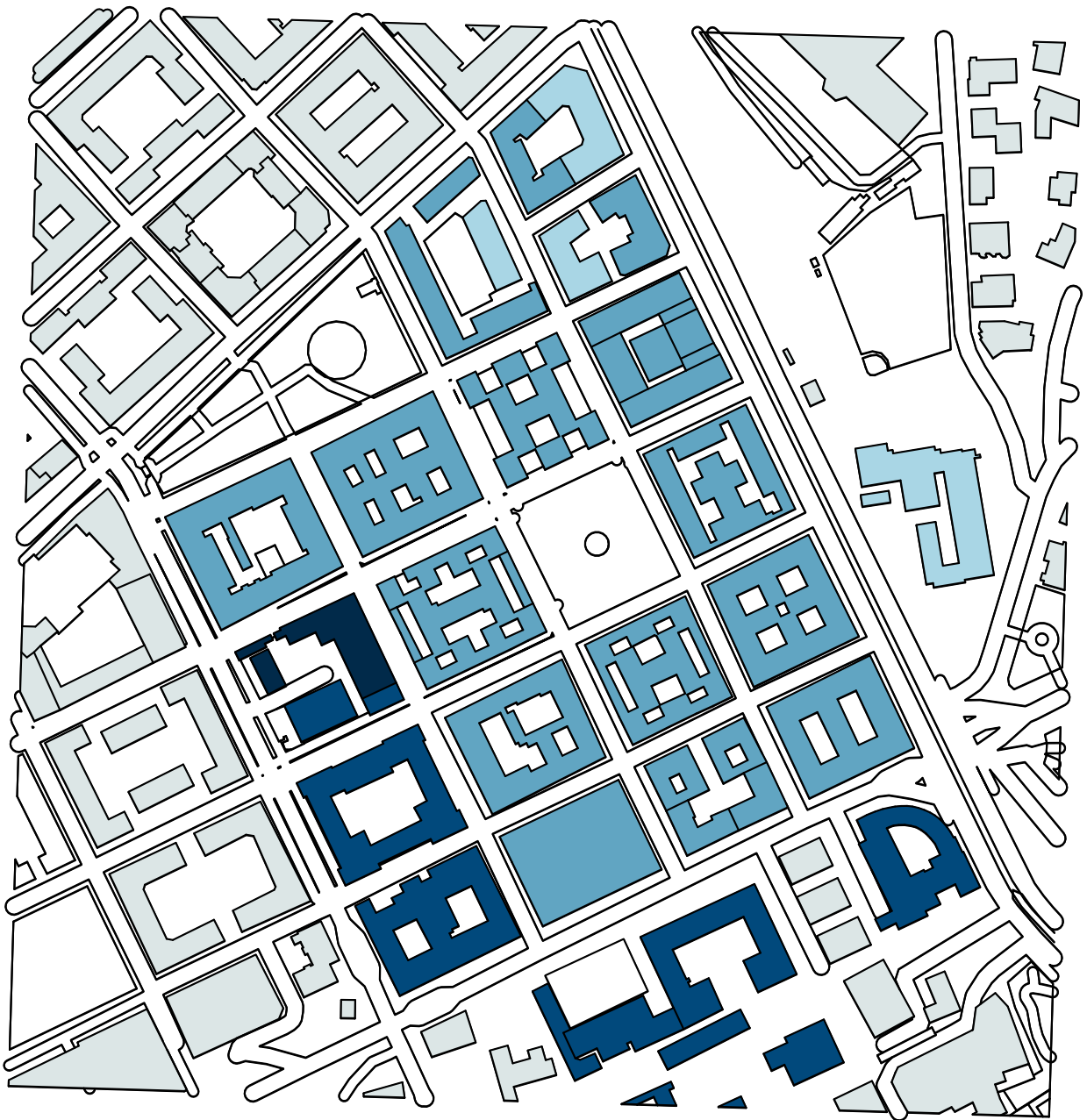


Figure 29: Piazza Testaccio surrounding program axon



- Housing/Hotel
- Restaurant/Shop
- Hospital
- Government
- Church

*Buildings colored based on majority program

Figure 30: Piazza Testaccio surrounding program ground floor plan

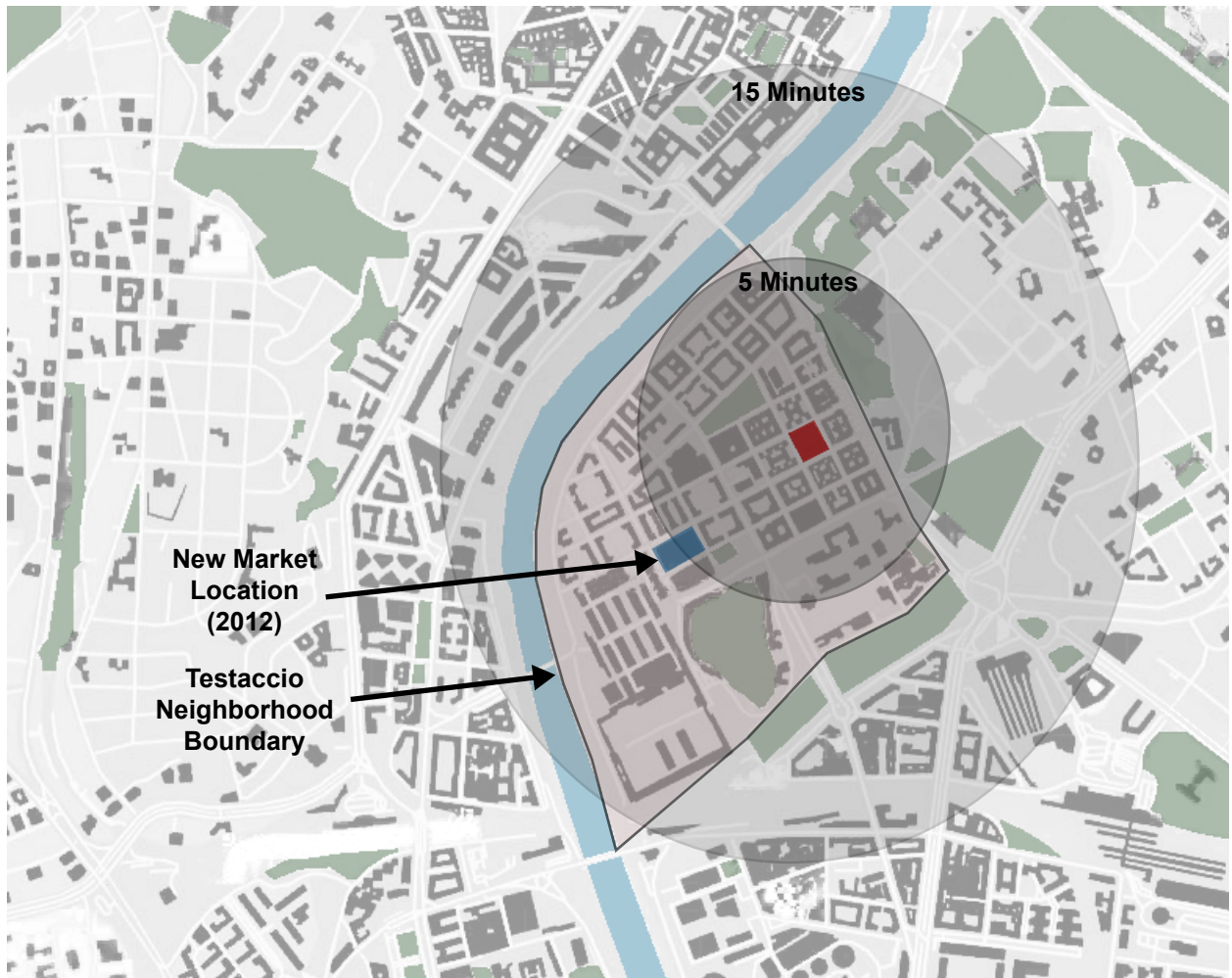


Figure 31: Piazza Testaccio walking radius

Proximity to Public Transportation:

There is a bus stop located less than a five-minute walk in any direction from Piazza Testaccio. Southeast of the piazza, along Via Marmorata, Piramide subway station is a ten-minute walk, and the Roma Ostiense train and transit station is a fifteen-minute walk.

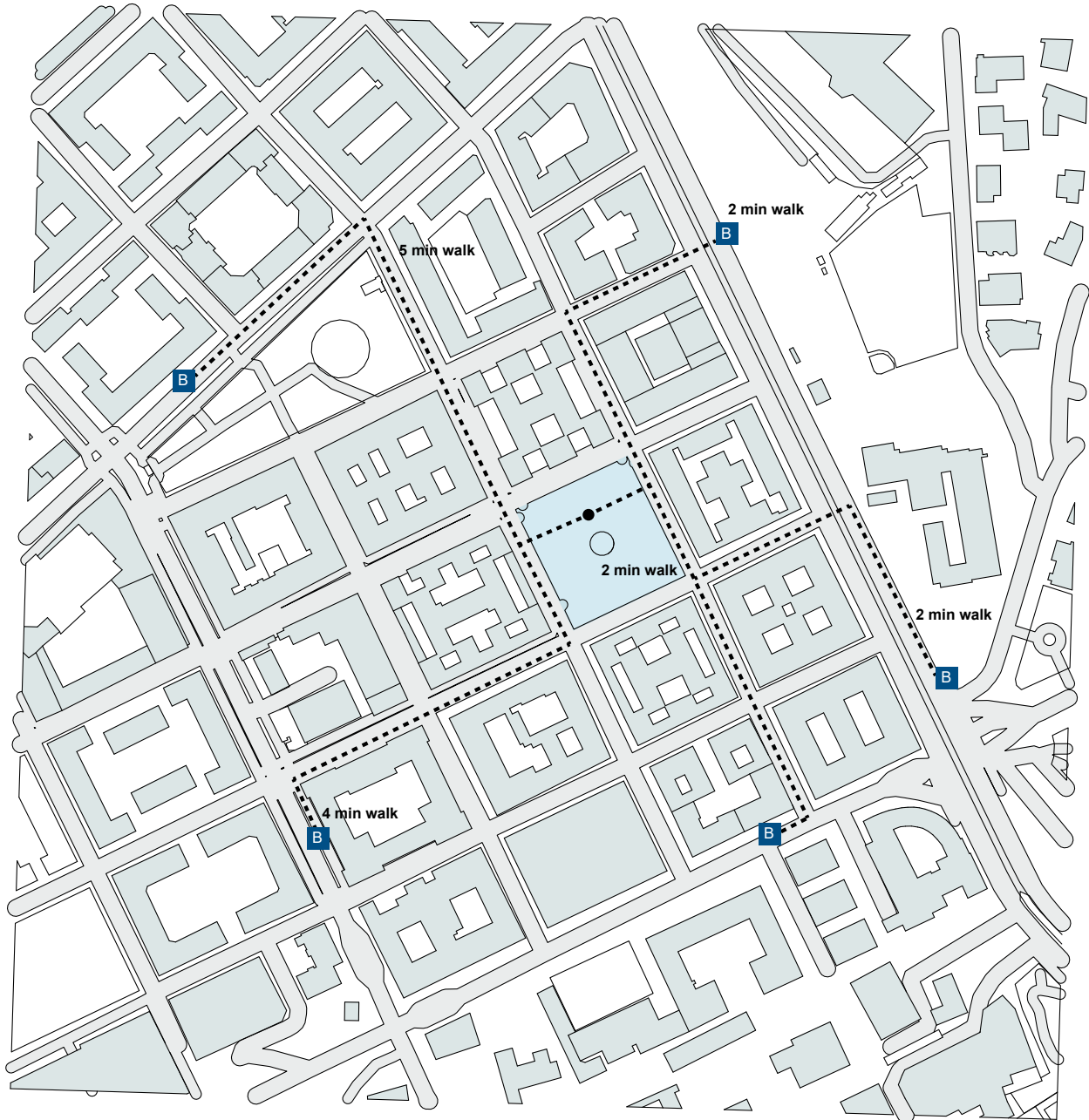
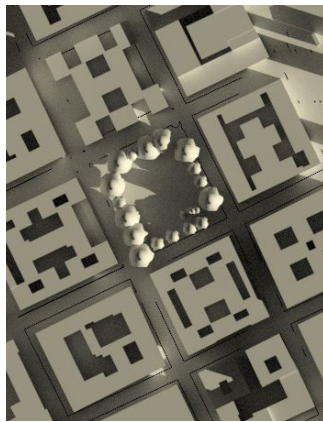


Figure 32: Piazza Testaccio transportation access

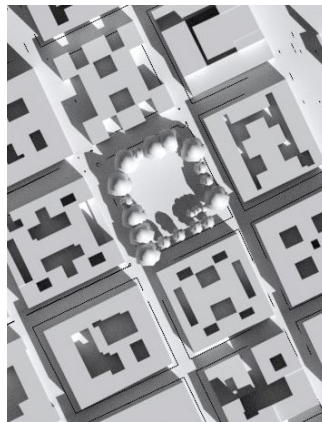
Shading:

The shading of the space is split between the outer edges with trees and the open center. In the summer people spend time at the perimeter of the space where the trees protect them from the heat, but in the winter, people will gather around the fountain to be warmed by the sun.

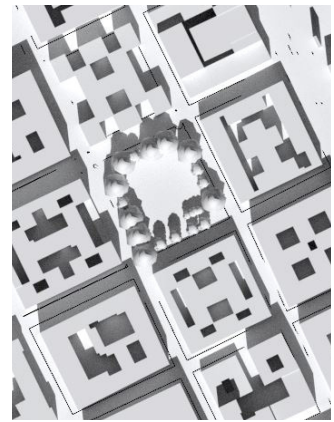
MARCH 21ST & SEPTEMBER 21ST (EQUINOX)



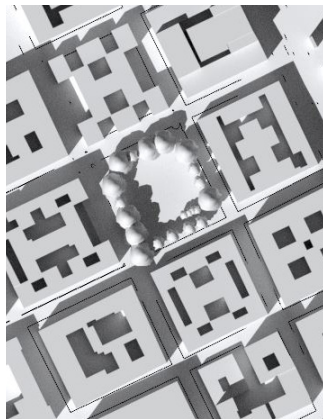
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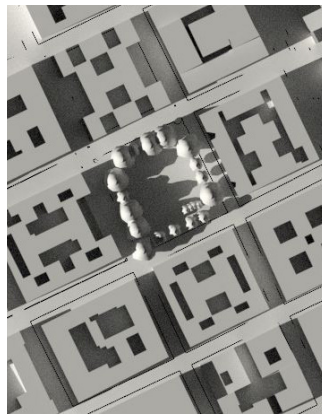
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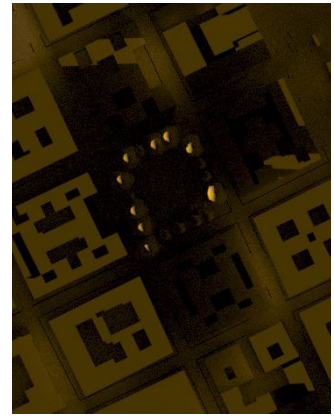
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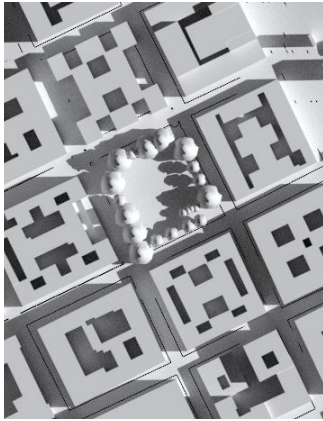
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Figure 33: Piazza Testaccio shadow studies

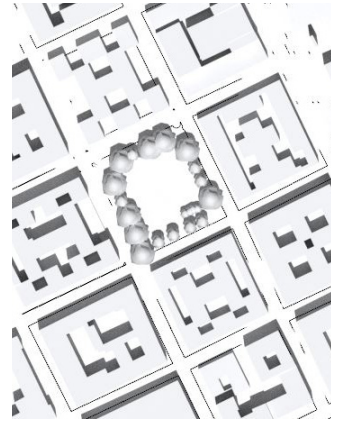
JUNE 21ST (SUMMER SOLSTICE)



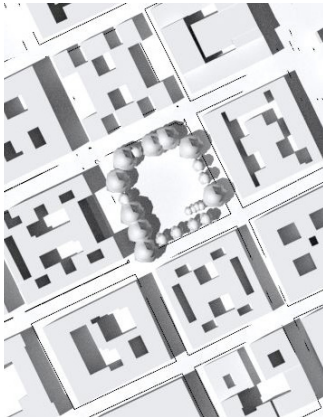
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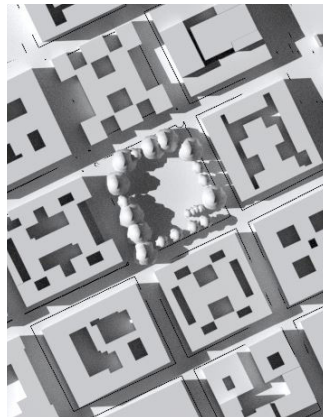
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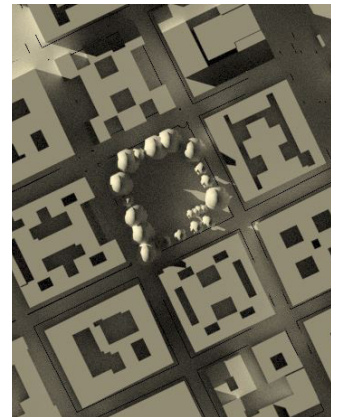
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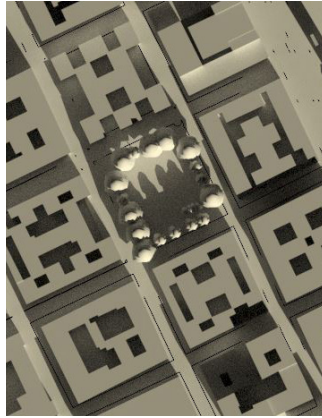


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DECEMBER 21ST (WINTER SOLSTICE)



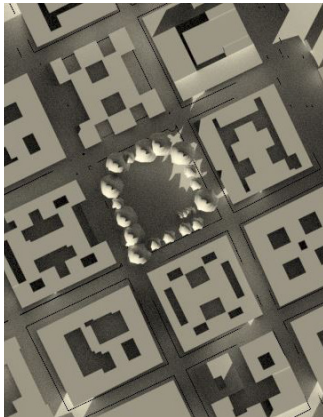
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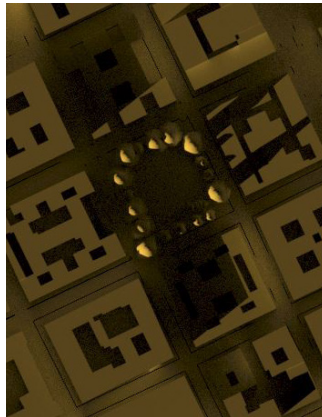
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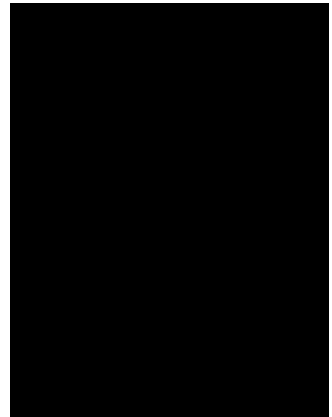
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Landmarks:

Monte Testaccio is just over a five-minute walk from Piazza Testaccio and is known for its unique construction. “For more than 250 years the ancient Romans methodically piled up broken terracotta amphorae, or oil jars, creating Monte Testaccio” (Ugc 2014). The hill is also called Monte dei Cocci, meaning Mount of Shards and is sited along the Tiber River where an ancient port and warehouse for goods like olive oil were located.

The neighborhood of Testaccio borders one of Rome’s seven hills, Aventine Hill, home to several historic churches and the iconic Giardino degli Aranci with view back to the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica.



Figure 34: Piazza Testaccio landmarks

Nature and Architecture:

In Piazza Testaccio the trees and paving work together to create order in the space. The trees along the perimeter designate zones for people to stay. Each tree acts as its own room, each with two benches and a seat-high table beneath. The arrangement of each is unique and allows the occupant to adapt the space to their individual needs. Moving towards the center of the space the presence of vegetation reduces and the space is open beside the centrally located fountain. The trees help frame the monument in the center and act as a buffer between the surrounding city and cars and the pedestrian space of the piazza.

Materials:

The materials in this space include a variety of ground paving materials that shift from a regular flat gray paving to a gray cobblestone surrounding the fountain. There is a square ring of beige paving that separates the two other types of stone. The seating is made of wood

Safety:

The variety of programs surrounding the site promote a variety of users to interact with the site. The school's and business's students and employees help activate and watch over the space. The piazzas crowd is primarily locals that live works and study in the neighborhood and use the piazza as a space to gather with family and neighbors.

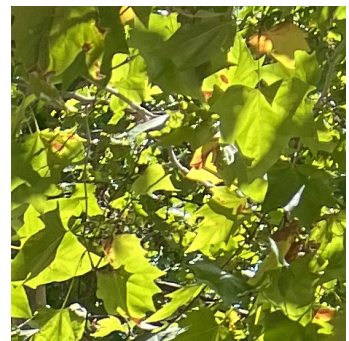
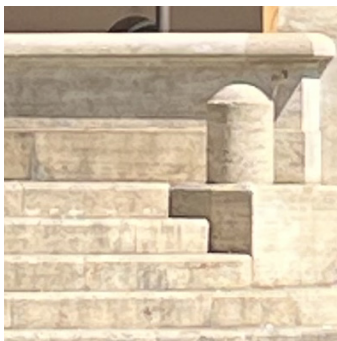
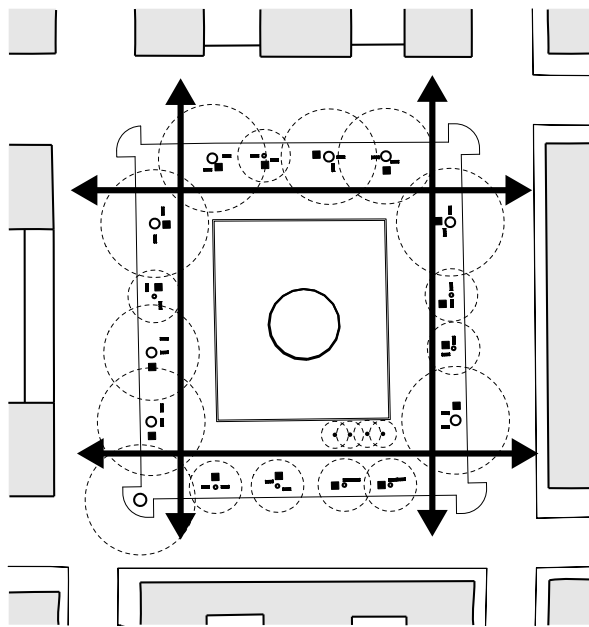
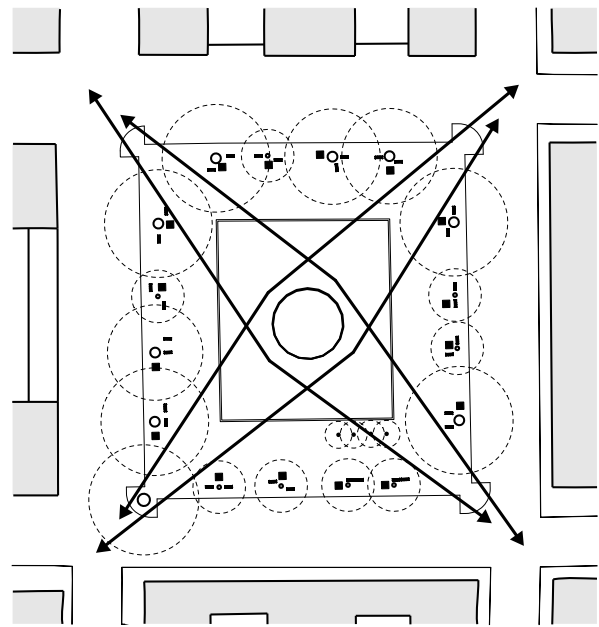


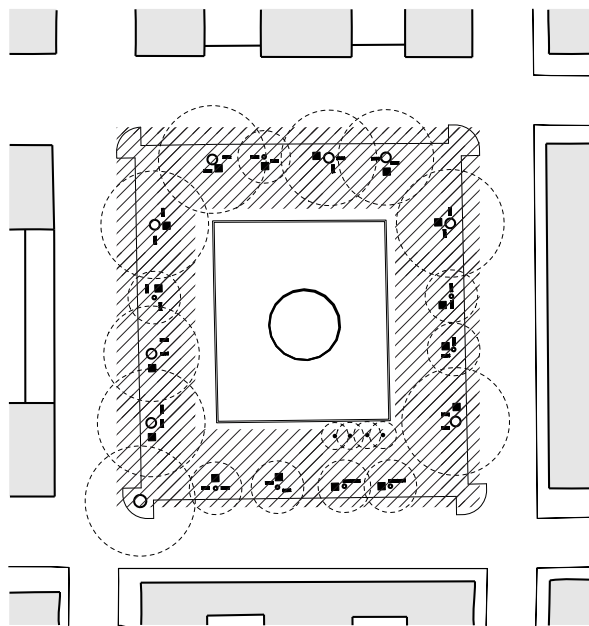
Figure 35: Piazza Testaccio material palette



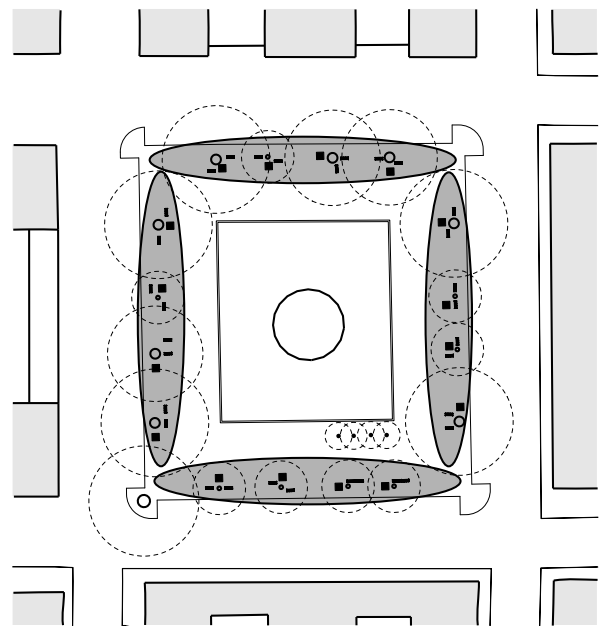
Primary Circulation Path



Secondary Circulation Paths



Shaded with Vegetation



Primary Zones Where People
Come and Stay

Figure 36: Piazza Testaccio observation diagrams using Gehl strategies

FRIDAY 11:20AM

07-29-22



Figure 37: Piazza Testaccio photo story 1



Figure 38: Piazza Testaccio photos (people's use)



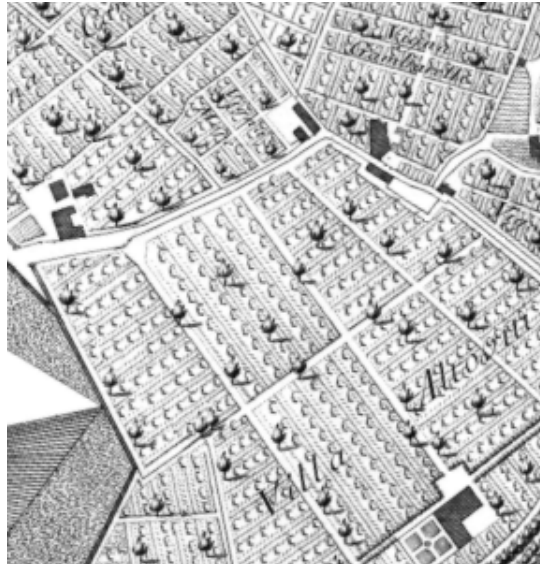
Figure 39: Piazza Testaccio photo (Fontana delle Anfore)



Figure 40: Piazza Testaccio photo (entire space)



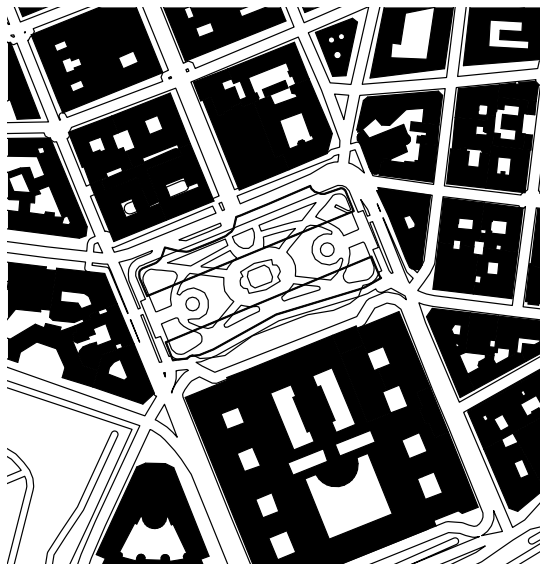
Piazza Cavour



NOLLI



SATELLITE



FIGURE/GROUND

Figure 41: Piazza Cavour map comparisons

CASE STUDY – PIAZZA CAVOUR

Background and Historical Significance:

Piazza Cavour is in the Prati neighborhood, only a short walk from Castel San Angelo. It is named after the Piedmontese statesman Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour. The Count was considered the architect of the Italian constitution and he was the first Prime Minister of Italy (Piazza Cavour Rome 2022). This piazza is monumental in its architecture and design. The scale is large in both plan and elevation. The southern edge of the space is the Palazzo di Giustizia (Palace of Justice) and the opposite side houses the Teatro Adriano and Waldensian Church. The gardens in the piazzas began construction in 1884 and were designed by Nicodemo Severi, while the monument to the Count in the center was designed by Stefano Galletti (Turismo Roma 2022). The central statue of the Count is made of bronze, with a granite platform and marble pedestal in covered in stories about Rome and Italy and construction took ten years. Construction on the Palace of Justice slowed down the completion of the piazza, therefore the garden was not inaugurated until 1910. Shortly before the inauguration Date, Desert, Canarian and St. Peter's palms were planted, providing minimal shade for the large space.

General Form:

The overall form of Piazza Cavour is rectangular, but it is divided in half by symmetrical gardens. The southern edge is completed by the Palace of Justice and the other three are lined with roads.

Uses:

The piazza has no programmatic elements to attract visitors. It primarily serves as a lobby for the surrounding buildings and a place for people to meet in Prati. There are many benches spread throughout the spaces.

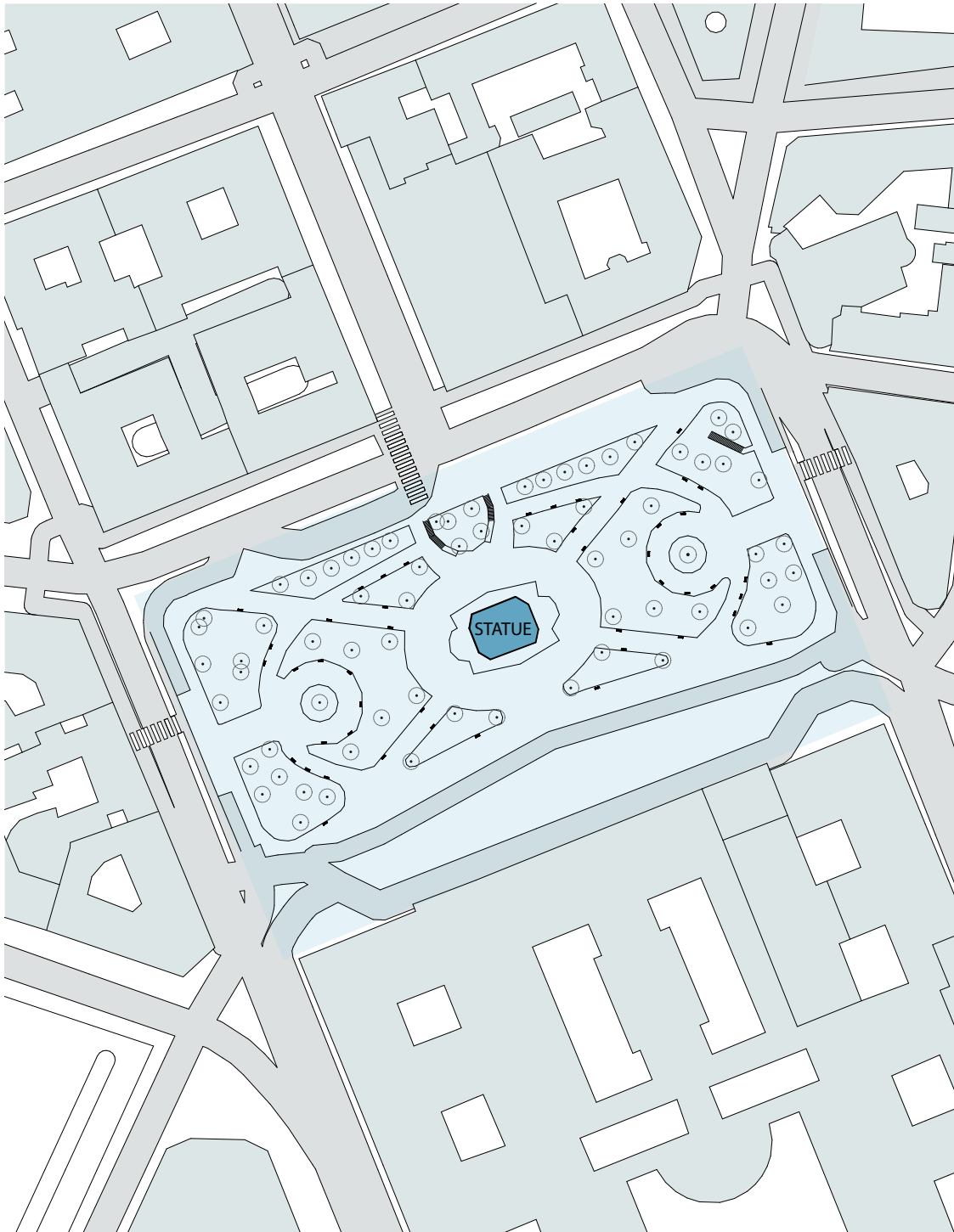
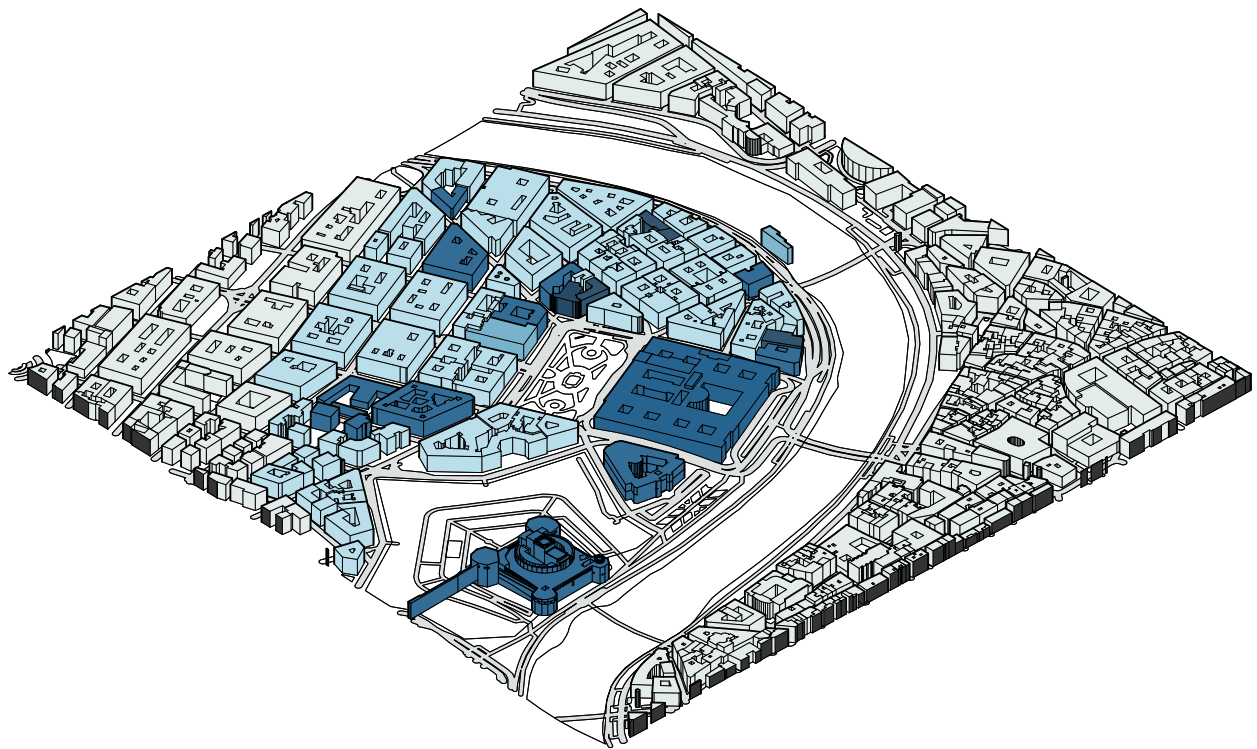


Figure 42: Piazza Cavour site plan

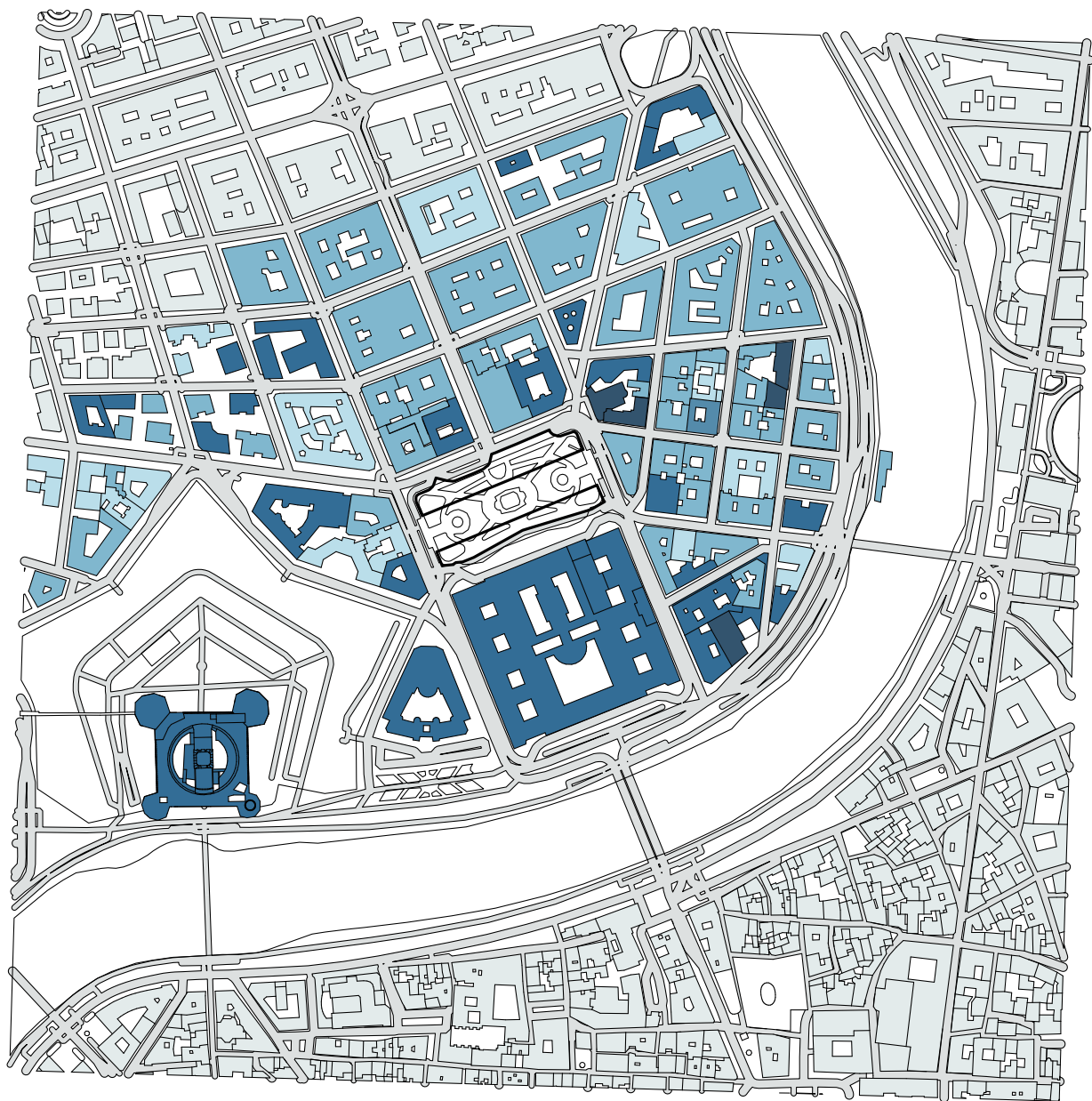
Surrounding Program:

Piazza Cavour is activated by the surrounding programs that bring people through the site. In the larger context of Rome it acts as a node connecting major urban planning strategies and city-wide landmarks. Each corner of the piazza connects to axial roads that point to other public spaces in the city, making this a space that people commonly travel through on their way to other places. The space is also activated by the specific programs aligning the edges. The Corte Suprema di Cassazione or Palace of Justice is completely covered in travertine limestone and detailed ornament spanning the entire length of one side of Piazza Cavour. The building while massive and somewhat dominates the space also acts as a barrier between the business and traffic along the Tiber River. The Renaissance and Baroque building brings many judges and lawyers to the area as it acts as the supreme court of Italy. The Piazza is in the heart of a district full of military and government buildings due to the proximity of the Palace of Justice and St. Peter's. Similarly, the historic theater has been transformed into a movie theater that brings pulses of people to the piazza as they gather before and after the movies they are seeing. Chiesa Valdese di Roma is one of only of its specific denomination in Rome, therefore everyone who associates themselves with this set of beliefs comes to this church to worship, it is also the headquarters of the Waldensian Faculty of Theology.



- Housing/Hotel
 - Restaurant/Shop
 - Hospital
 - Government
 - Church
- *Buildings colored based on majority program

Figure 43: Piazza Cavour surrounding program axon



- Housing/Hotel
- Restaurant/Shop
- Hospital
- Government
- Church

*Buildings colored based on majority program

Figure 44: Piazza Cavour surrounding program ground floor plan



Figure 45: Piazza Cavour walking radius

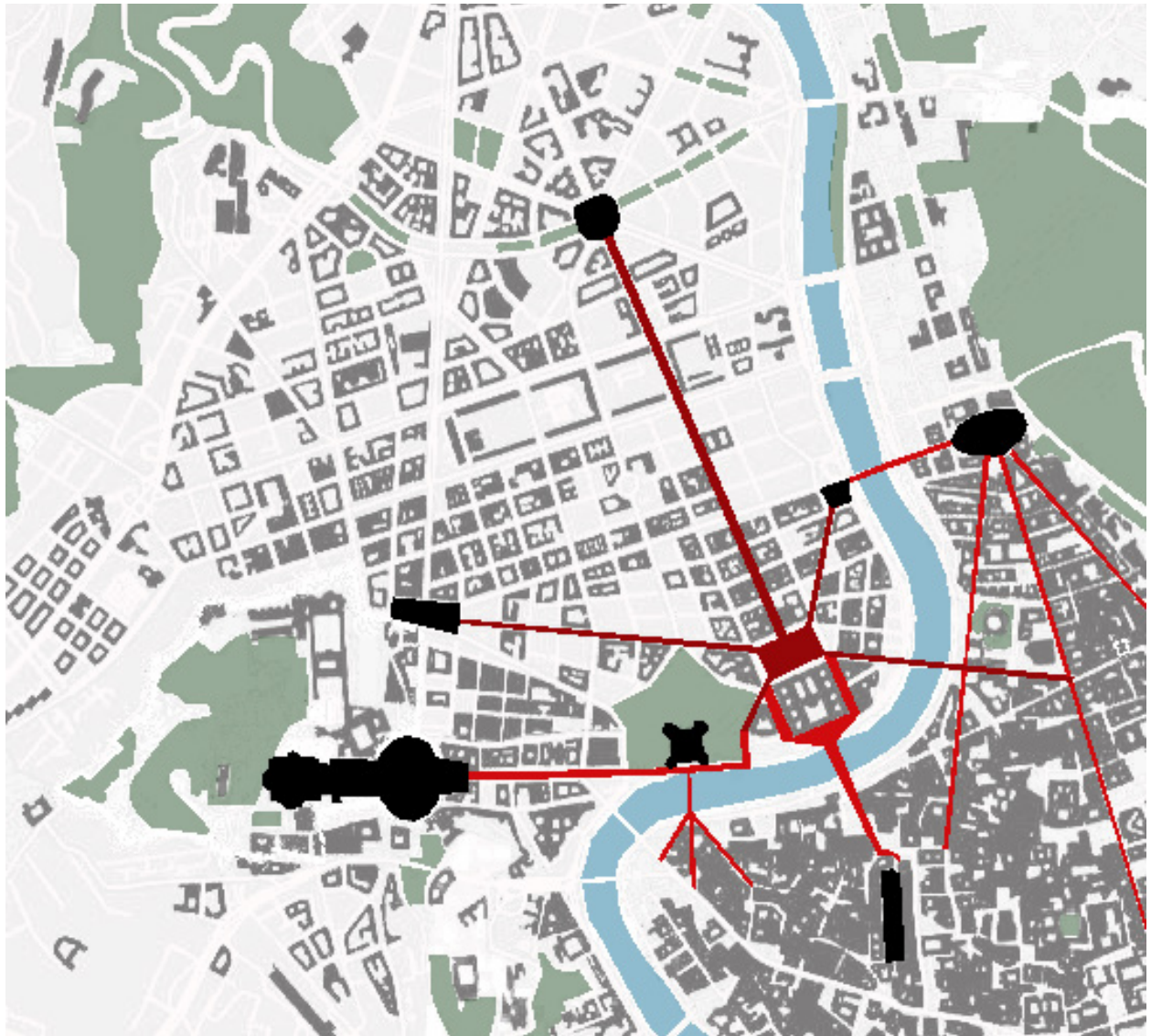


Figure 46: Piazza Cavour axial and city fabric connections

Proximity to Public Transportation:

Piazza Cavour is surrounded by many transportation options. There are two bus stops located directly on the northern edge of the site and many others within a few minutes' walk. A 10-minute walk on the central axis north arrives at the Lepanto subway station, a stop on the metros A line.

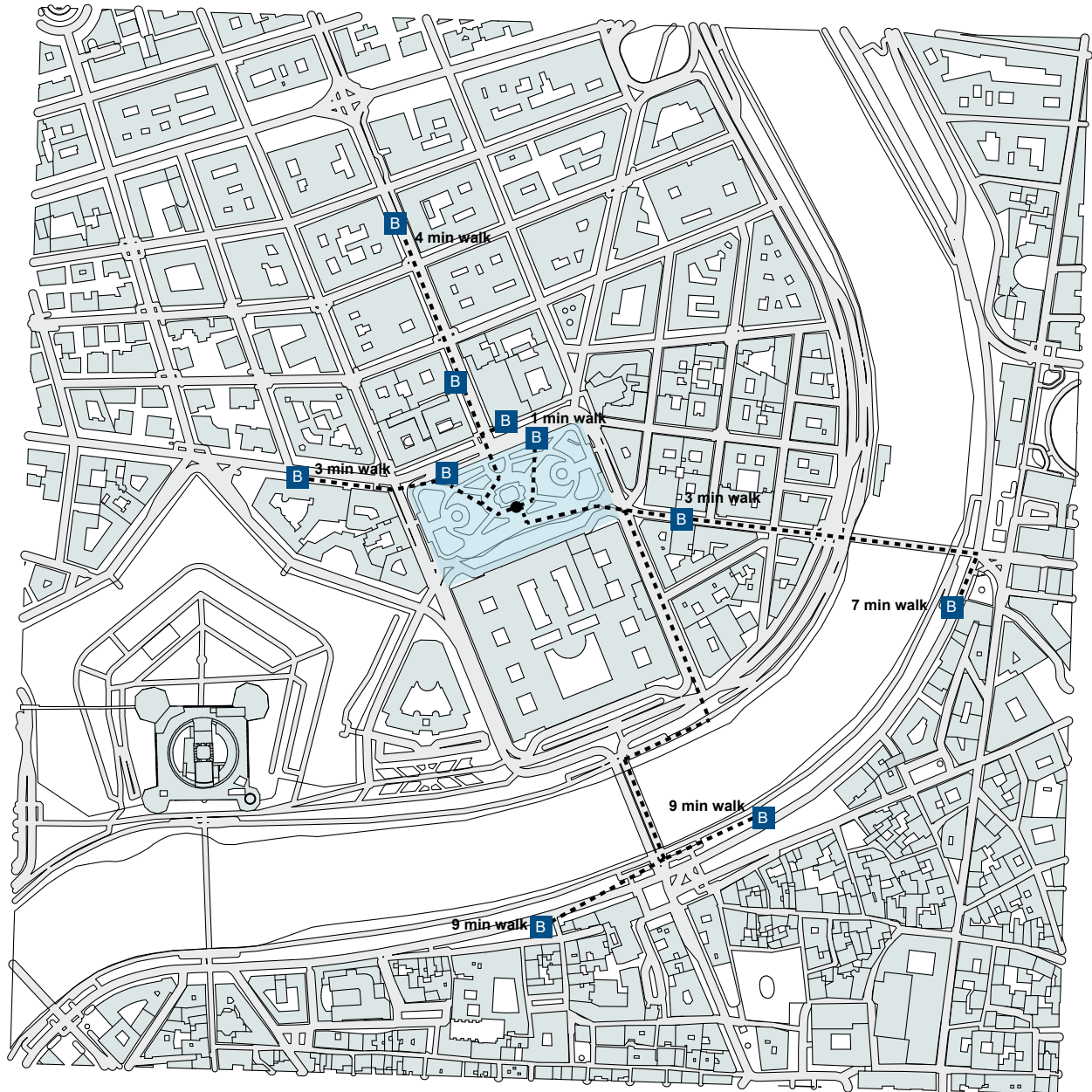


Figure 47: Piazza Cavour transportation access

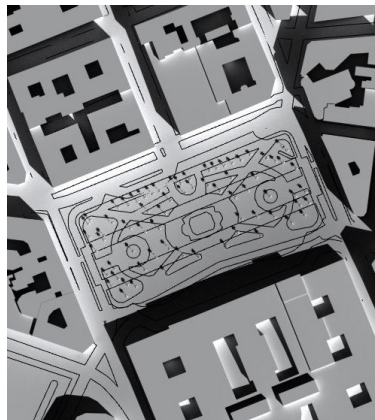
Shading:

Shading in Piazza Cavour is very minimal. The Palm trees provide a unique oasis in the city; however, their height and small canopies provide little to no shade to the pedestrian. People cherish the shade in the warm summer months and can be seen clustered beneath the small footprint of the shadow on the grass.

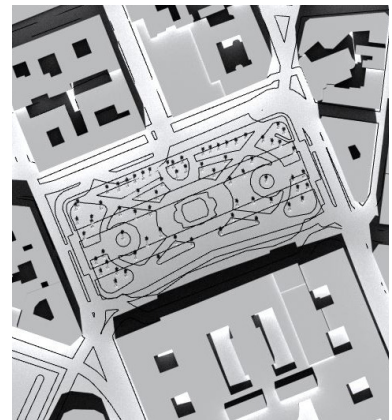
MARCH 21ST & SEPTEMBER 21ST (EQUINOX)



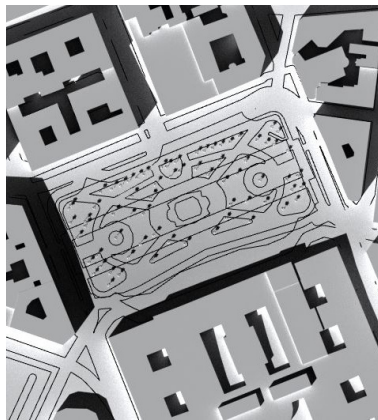
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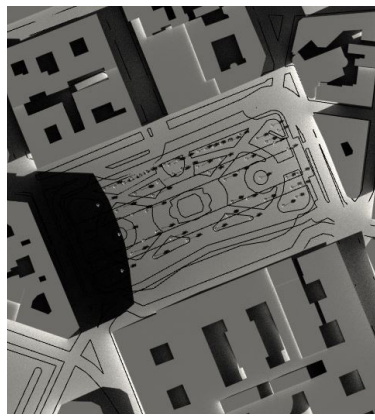
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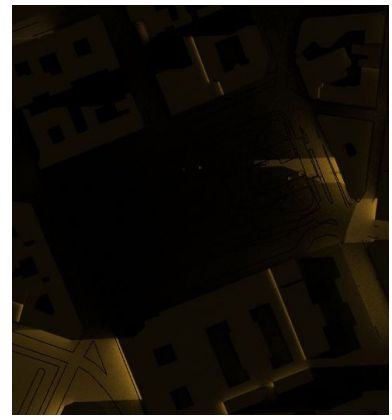
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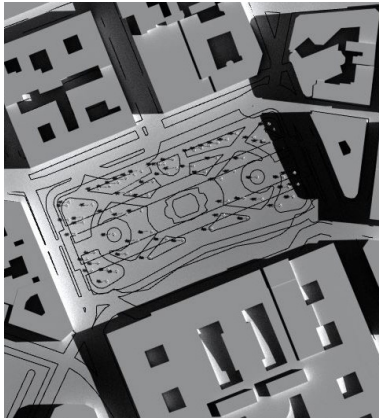
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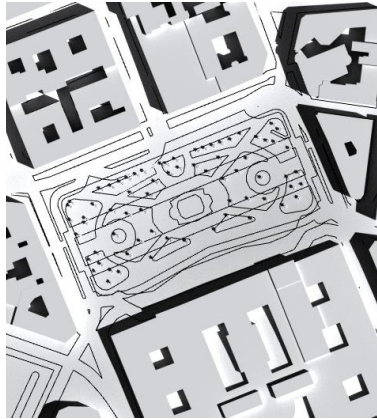
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Figure 48: Piazza Cavour shadow studies

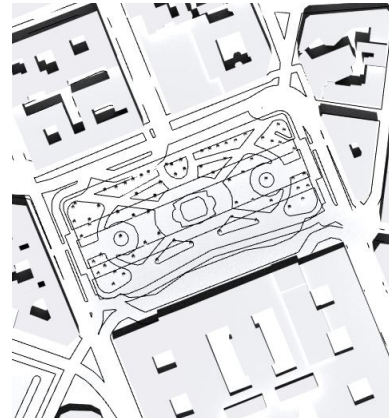
JUNE 21ST (SUMMER SOLSTICE)



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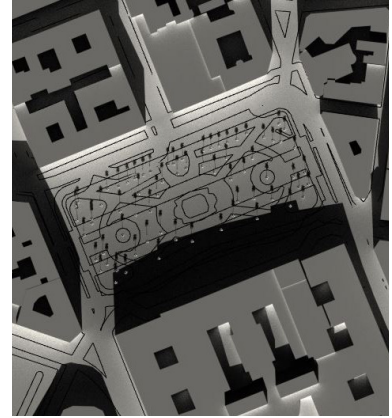
DECEMBER 21ST (WINTER SOLSTICE)



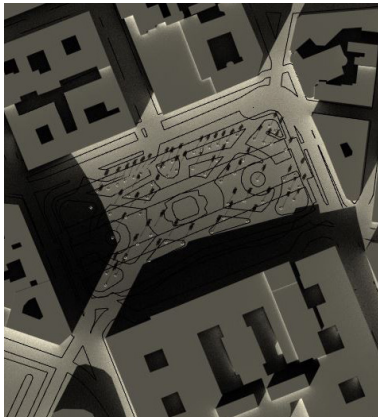
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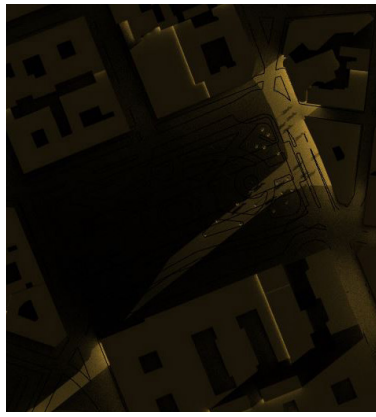
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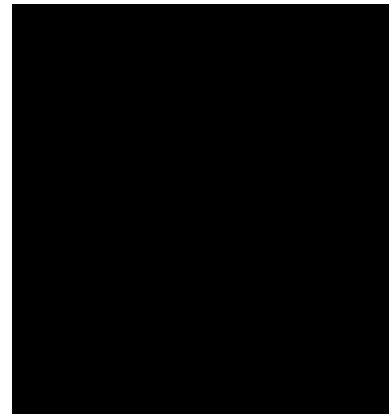
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Landmarks:

Beyond the immediate landmarks surrounding the piazza, like the Corte Suprema di Cassazione, Teatro Adriano, or Chiesa Valdese di Roma, Piazza Cavour acts as a node in the urban landscape connecting other major landmarks in Rome. Just past the southwest corner of Piazza Cavour pedestrians can walk to Castel Sant'Angelo and on to St. Peter's Basilica. They can also walk southeast, straight from the palace of justice and across the Tiber into the heart of historic Rome and Piazza Navona.



Figure 49: Piazza Cavour landmarks

Nature and Architecture:

In Piazza Cavour the landscape and architecture are both designed and integrated into the urban fabric of the city. The garden design creates axis's that align with roads leading to other important nodes in the city. The piazza displayed a variety of "species of palms... including date, desert, Canarian and St. Peter's palms - planted in the 1909 and sold to the Municipality of Rome by the Municipality of Ventimiglia" (Turismo Roma 2022). The detail and structure of the garden form matches the surrounding monumental and historic buildings, while setting the stage for others built after the piazza was constructed.

Materials:

The materials in this piazza are primarily stone and grass. Most of the paving is flat cobblestone except where there are accent pieces of a large flat tan colored stone.

Safety:

This piazza experiences a lot of foot traffic as it acts as a node in the city, a meeting place and a stop on the public transportation route. The large number of eyes on the space and proximity to national landmarks and government offices provides an extra layer of safety to the space as there is a higher level of security and law enforcement present in the area.

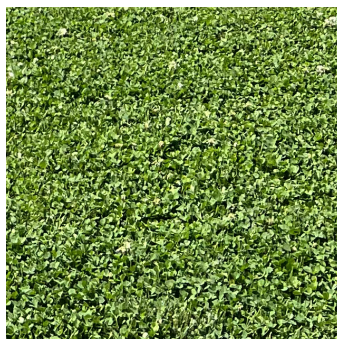
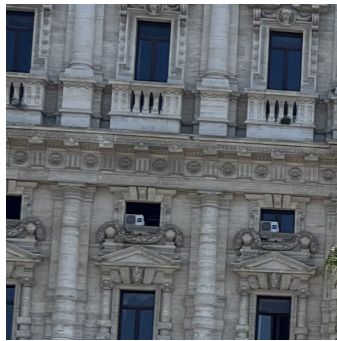
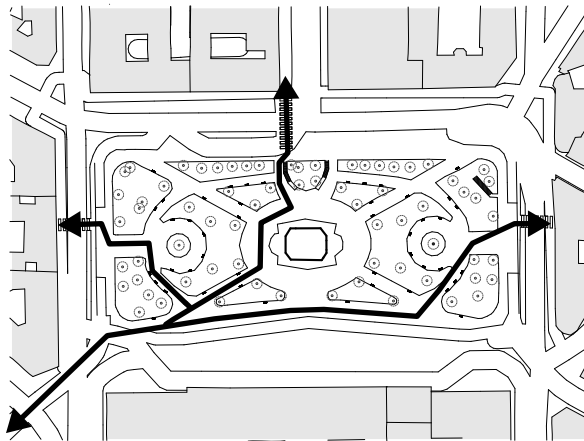
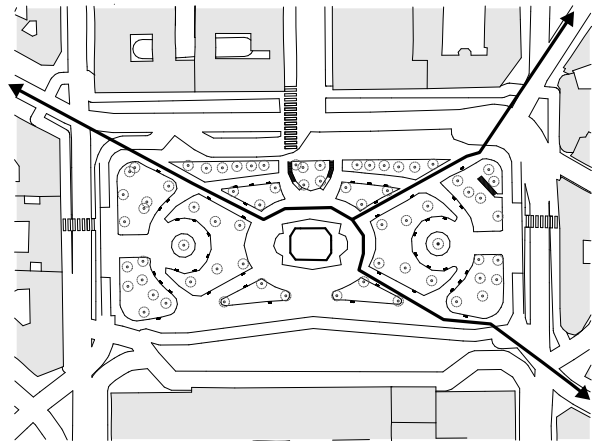


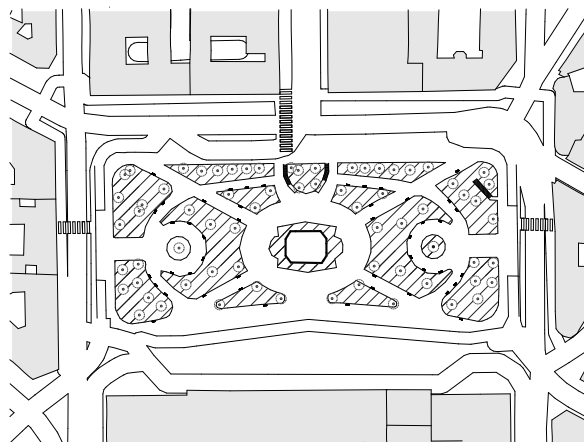
Figure 50: Piazza Cavour material palette



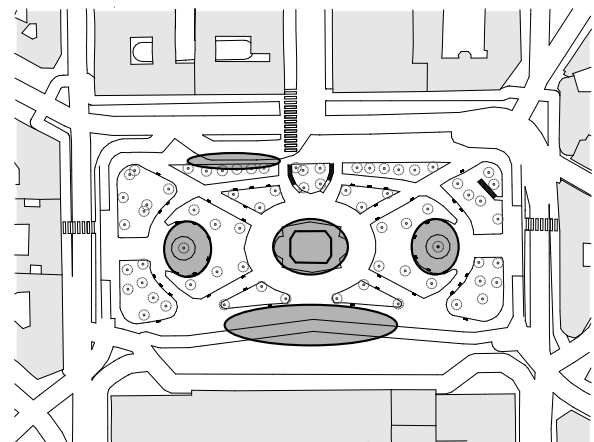
Primary Circulation Path



Secondary Circulation Paths



Hardscape/Vegetation



Primary Zones Where People
Come and Stay

Figure 51: Piazza Cavour observation diagrams using Gehl strategies

FRIDAY 11:20AM

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Figure 52: Piazza Cavour photo story 1



Figure 53: Piazza Cavour photo (approach)



Figure 54: Piazza Cavour photo (vertical circulation)



Figure 55: Piazza Cavour photo (space in front of Palace of Justice)



Figure 56: Piazza Cavour photo (path between garden spaces)



Figure 57: Piazza Cavour photo (Monumento a Camillo Cavour back)



Figure 58: Piazza Cavour photo (seating area)



Figure 59: Piazza Cavour photo (Monumento a Camillo Cavour front)



Figure 60: Piazza Cavour photo (inside space)



Figure 61: Piazza Cavour photo (Corte Suprema di Cassazione)



Figure 62: Piazza Cavour photo (Chiesa Valdese di Roma)

CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS

Each of these Piazzas has been deemed successful, each in unique ways from the others. These piazzas are constantly used by their communities because of the programs they host, and their ability to connect people at the local and urban levels.

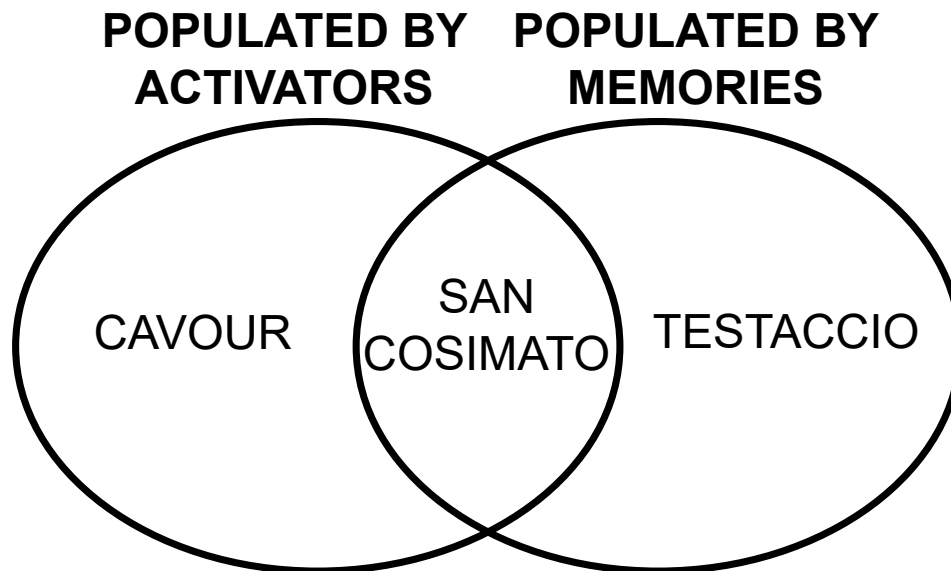


Figure 63: Causes of population

The first area of synthesis relates to what brings people to the piazzas. One end of the spectrum is a piazza populated by activators, the other is a piazza populated by memories. Piazza Cavour is primarily a space populated by activators. The surrounding landmarks draw people to the site and invite them to use it. The design is more urban in connecting the pedestrian to other nodes in the city and acts as a place to meet before heading to St. Peters or Piazza del Popolo for example. People come to the site as they are making their way to the Palace of Justice or to hangout before they head into a movie at Teatro Adriano. On the other side of this spectrum, Piazza Testaccio is populated by memories. The piazza is a place for the community to gather, with the design being nothing more, and nothing less than is needed. It is the memories people have of their families and friends returning to the piazza time after time to gather and spend time together that continues to bring them back. Piazza Testaccio has no major built-in program that would attract people from outside the neighborhood. Instead,

the memories of how it has brought the community together with its past service as a market and open playground. Finally, Piazza San Cosimato fits somewhere in-between a space populated by activators and a space populated by memories. Piazza San Cosimato has programmatic elements that draw people to the site throughout the year, like the market, outdoor cinema, and playground, but it also has a rich history that people remember when they visit the site. The traditional market brings families back to this place over and over as the tradition is passed down from one generation to the next.

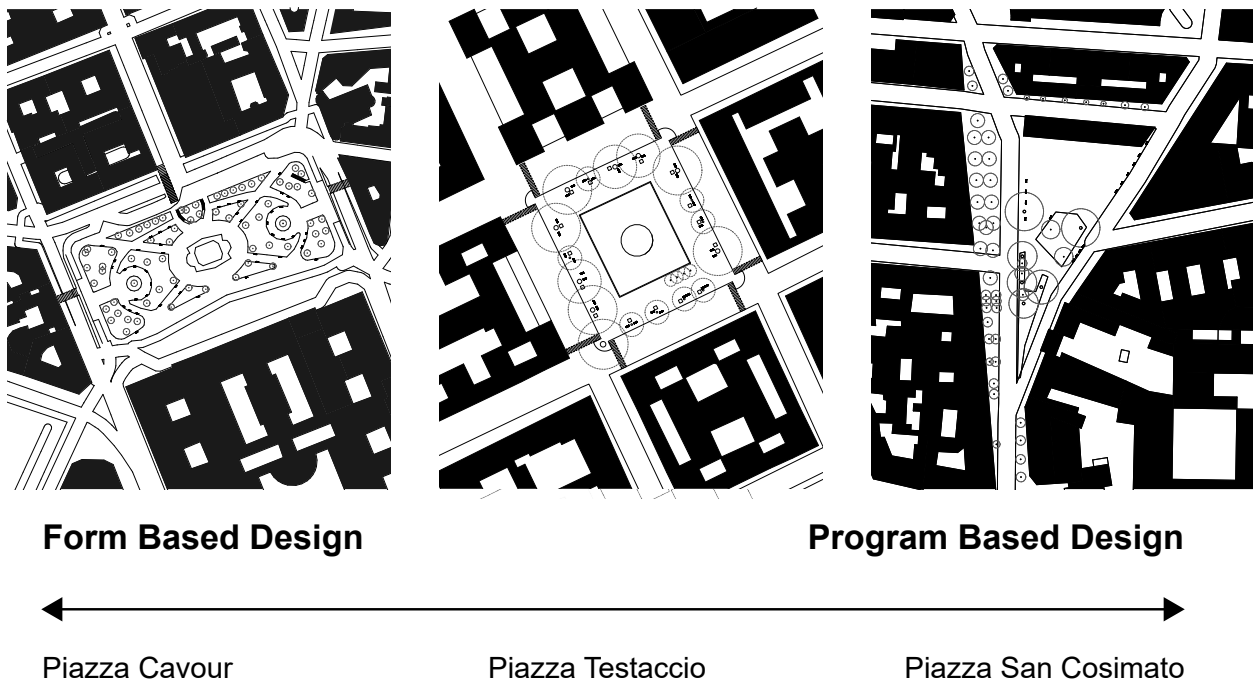
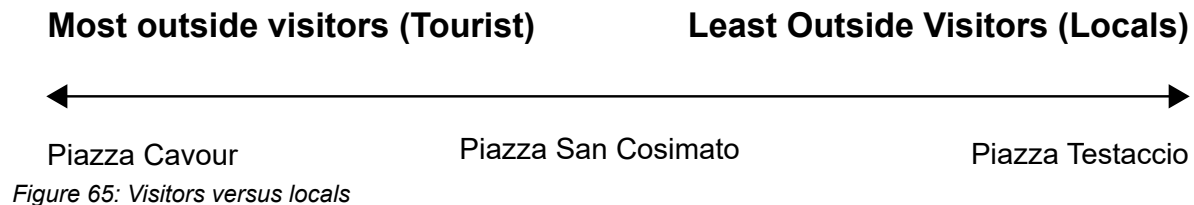


Figure 64: Base of design

The next comparison focuses on what drove the design decisions, program or form. Piazza Cavour's design is based on the form of the gardens and how the piazza is woven into the fabric of the city at an urban scale. The axial connections and views point from the central monument to other nodes in the city. Piazza San Cosimato's design revolves primarily around the programmatic elements on the site. The piazza is stitched together by how one program piece bleeds into another and how a person

experiences the space. Piazza Testaccio falls somewhere between as its form is rather simple, a symmetrical square shape, to support a variety of uses and be flexible to the community's needs.



Finally, these piazzas serve a different audience of people. While they all have a presence and impact on their neighborhoods some have a larger presence of tourist and outside visitors. Piazza Testaccio is a very community-oriented space with a very limited presence of outside visitors. Piazza San Cosimato has a strong local use but its location in the larger context of Rome and proximity to some historic landmarks, as well as unique features like the outdoor cinema places it on the path of some tourist and residents from other districts in the city. Piazza Cavour has a much heavier presence of outside guests and tourists than the other two piazzas. This is primarily due to its location relative to major destinations like St. Peter's Basilica and Castel Sant'Angelo as well as the government facilities like the Italian Supreme Court. It is a node in the urban map of Rome that many people pass through on their way other places, making it more likely for people to stumble upon this piazza than some of the other ones.

CONCLUSION

Piazza San Cosimato, Piazza Testaccio, and Piazza Cavour all contain elements of design and program, and each has a strong identity in its community. This identity is marked by the way that people use the space, the features the piazza has, and the memories associated with the space. The precedent set by these well-loved and used public spaces can teach and influence the design of future public places. Designers and planners can take note of the elements apparent in each of the spaces and how they work with the context on their specific site. Identifying a piazza or public space that has the same typology or a similar audience can help designers study the patterns of how people use the spaces and forecast if their space will be utilized in a similar way.

What features are evident in all the successful spaces?

All three piazzas include some combination of vegetation and architecture. The integration of the two provides people options within the space for how to interact with it. The vegetation is also a shading device for protection from the sun in the summer, however it doesn't cover the entire space so that in the winter the sun can warm the space as well. All these piazzas are also spaces of relief in the density of the city.

Does size or form of the space effect the components that make it successful?

Form alone does not determine the degree of success and the usage that the piazza experiences. The piazza can take a variety of shapes; however the edges must respond to what is happening around them. The size of the space may affect the intimacy which could impact the success indirectly. The larger piazzas must find a way to return to the human scale, this could be by creating the feeling of smaller rooms within the space, somehow directing a person on how the space should be used. This relationship may be an area for further study.

Could a recipe/kit of parts be an effective design tool for outdoor public spaces? Or are the surrounding context and site conditions the primary driving factor? Or some combination of both?

Although this study started out with the intention of compiling a recipe for design, each space is unique and what makes it successful is dependent on a variety of components based on its context and programs. Therefore, the result is more of an approach to studying places and finding identity while also studying form and program. Successful spaces are designed in relationship to their context, not in absence of it, they must be integrated and respond, while also having something that makes them identifiable as a destination in the city and a representation of its users. Identity is unpredictable because it is dependent on every person's individual perception, which can differ based on experience, background, and preference. There may be some universal patterns that are identifiable between successful public spaces but the local patterns help the components transverse the different scales of public space.

Is there a physical difference between spaces that are full of tourists and those that are primarily full of locals?

In my experience piazzas had more tourist traffic for two reasons, one they were physically located closer to other landmarks in the city and two they offered guest something unique that they couldn't get anywhere else. Piazza Cavour is located only a short walk from Castel San Angelo and on the way to other landmarks like Piazza del Popolo. Piazza San Cosimato is one of only three piazzas that offer outdoor movie experiences in the summer and is in a neighborhood home to several noteworthy churches and that is known for its food scene and nightlife. Testaccio on the other hand is more limited in its reach because it has fewer surrounding landmarks, is farther from the typical tourist paths and offers no unique program.

What is the character and identity of each place?

The character and identity of each place are the summation of the defining programmatic or design elements with the essence or feeling of the space a visitor experiences. Certain components in each piazza make it identifiable to the public. For example, in Piazza Cavour the palm trees are unique in their contextual surroundings making the open space seem like an oasis in the dense urban fabric. In Piazza Testaccio the identity of the space is contingent on the habitual patterns of use of the people in the surrounding neighborhood. Piazza San Cosimato is an unusual public space in Rome in regard to organizational strategies, however it offers a dynamic program with many elements to locals and tourists alike.

How can studying existing successful spaces help forecast the success of future ones?

The strategies demonstrated in this study are an example of how to study public space at a comprehensive level utilizing tools and strategies from a variety of respected professionals and researchers. These tools range from personal observations to technical data collections, giving the analyzer control over what strategies when used together present the most accurate and complete picture of the space. This case study can be applied to any analysis when preparing for a new or revitalization project. The study also prompts some further areas of analysis. For example, the study would benefit by visits at different times of the year to study how people use the space with changing weather and seasons. Other researchers' analyses of the same piazzas would also help add to the overall story of these spaces. It would be interesting to study public spaces in other places with the same criteria, like a comparison between the Italian piazza and the American plaza. This study can be a starting point for more broad analysis about piazzas or a narrow study on specific constructs in the spaces.

Overall, this study suggests that we make a practice of studying the way people use space and how that relates to the factors that designers can control to create more successful spaces for people to enjoy. Gehl (2013) compared this practice to that of a meteorologist becoming more accurate in predicting the weather with the more they study its patterns. Through this practice we can confidently support public spaces and places based on the patterns and findings of comparative case studies. We can learn from past and present examples of successful public space to create something that designers, planners, and local communities support, use, and love.

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FIGURES

Figure 1	"Toward an Architecture of Place: Moving Beyond Iconic to Extraordinary." RSS. Accessed March 8, 2021.
Figure 4	Romeing Editorial Staff. "The Hidden History of Rome's Piazzas." Romeing, September 6, 2022.
Other Figures	Created by Author

APPENDIX 1: ROME SUN PATHS

