



**Testing *Alexander's Pattern Language* Theory Using
Lynch's Elements of Image of the City in Five Italian Piazzas
to derive lessons for Public Urban Open Space Design**

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Christopher Alexander et al's
Pattern Language

**Design Access to Water (25) Promenade (31)
Night Life (33)**

Market of Many Shops (46)

Main Gateways (53)

Quiet Backs (59)

Access to Green (60)

High Places (62)

Dancing in the Street (63)

Pools and Streams (64)

Holy Ground (66)

Circulation Realms (98)

Pedestrian Street (100)

Entrance Transition (112)

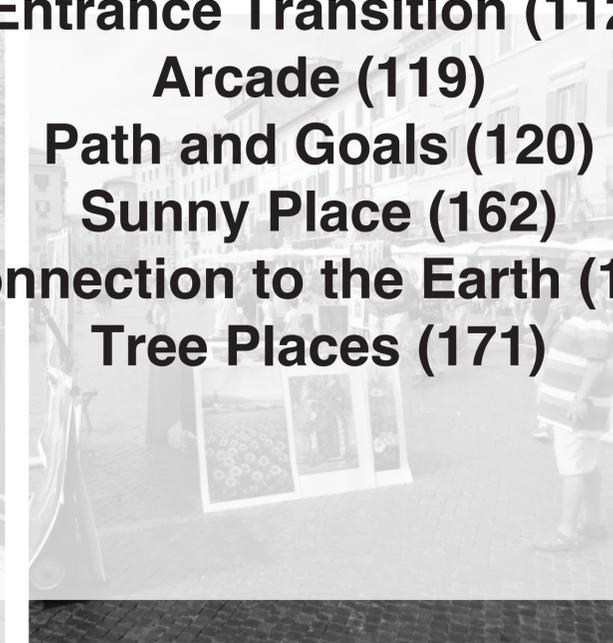
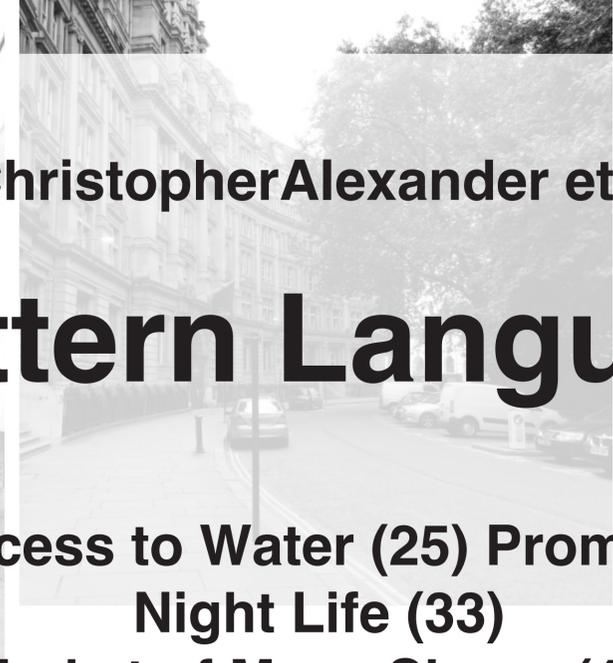
Arcade (119)

Path and Goals (120)

Sunny Place (162)

Connection to the Earth (168)

Tree Places (171)





Kevin Lynch's
**Five Elements
of the City**
District,
Edge, and Path,
Node, and Landmark



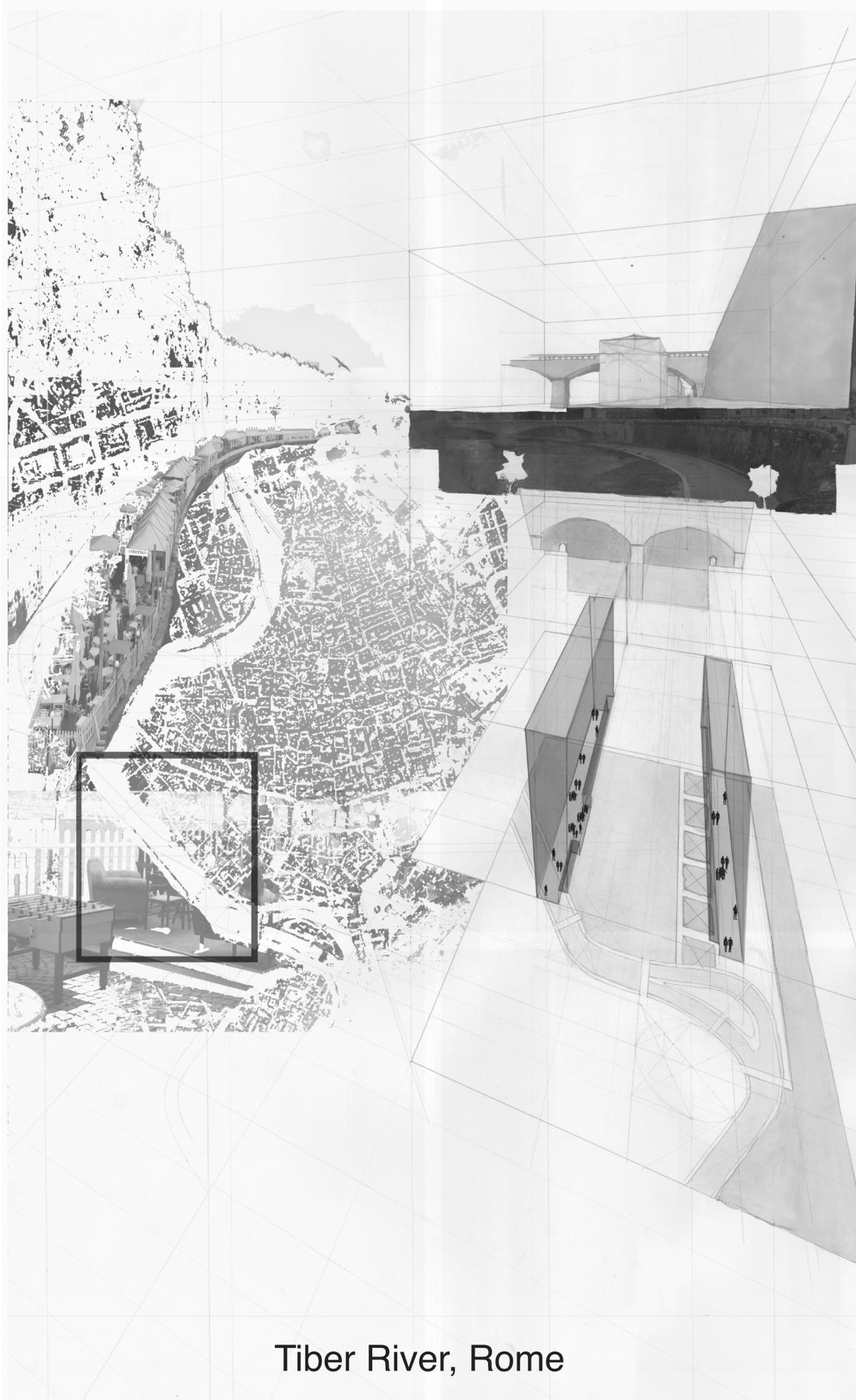
Piazza Navona



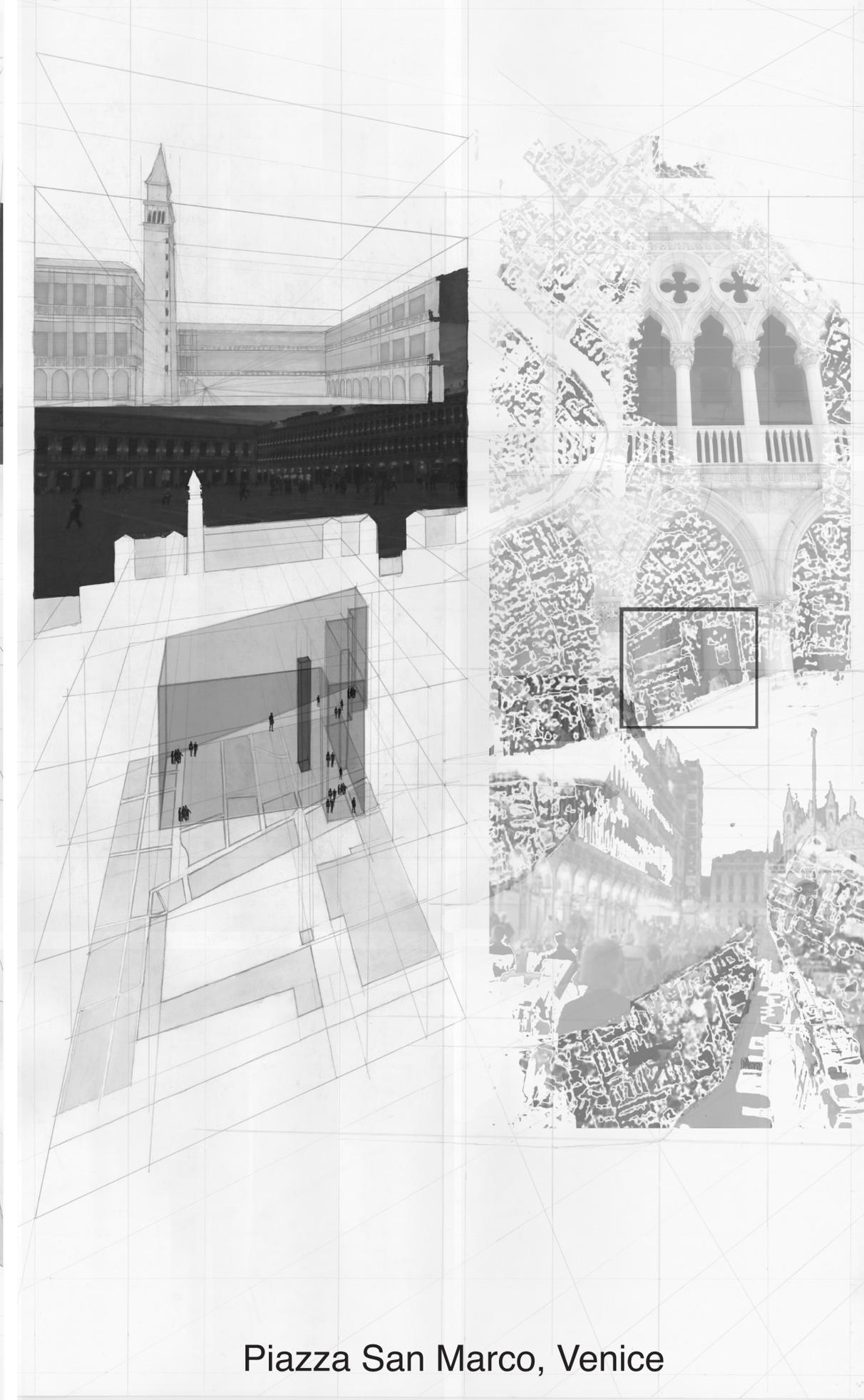
Districts and Edges

At its core a district is a self-sustaining area (much like a neighborhood) that has its own unique identity. As Kevin Lynch states in his *Image of the City*, “the physical characteristics that determine districts are the thematic continuities which may consist in an endless variety of components: texture, space, form, detail, symbol, building type, use, activity, inhabitants, degree of maintenance, topography.

An edge is the dividing space between different districts. The one essential in understanding a border is that it is not a threshold. It is not a distinct line that divides two sides. Rather, it is a zone that can be anywhere from the width of a street to an entire neighborhood. Fundamentally, the edge develops for two different purposes. On one hand, it is the physical gap between two or more districts that allow each district to exist at full intensity without intruding on each other. On the other hand, these edges must act as both the connecting link between districts as well as house the common necessities that each district shares. These commonalities can include restaurants, grocery stores, piazzas, theaters, mass transportation systems and paths.



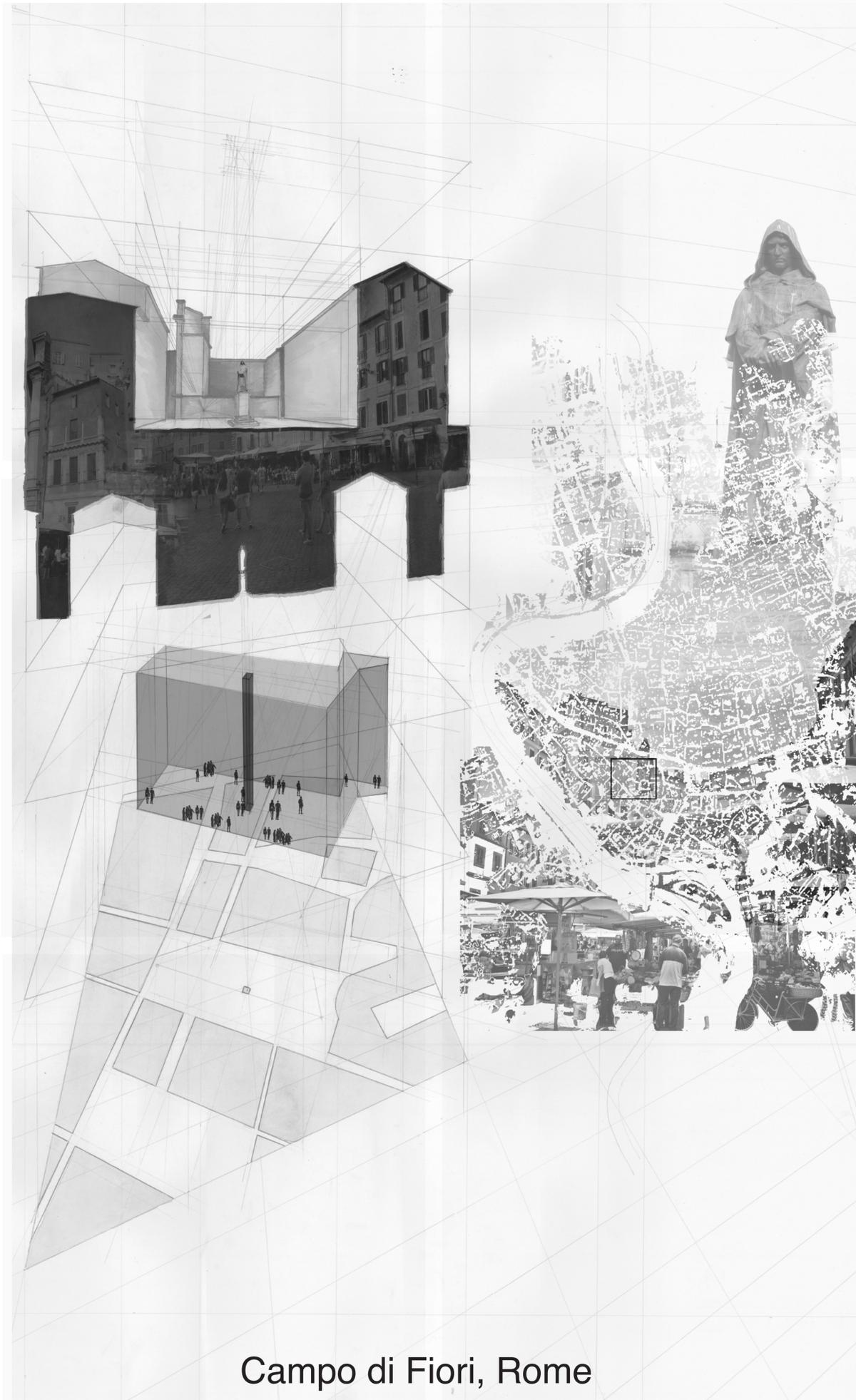
Tiber River, Rome



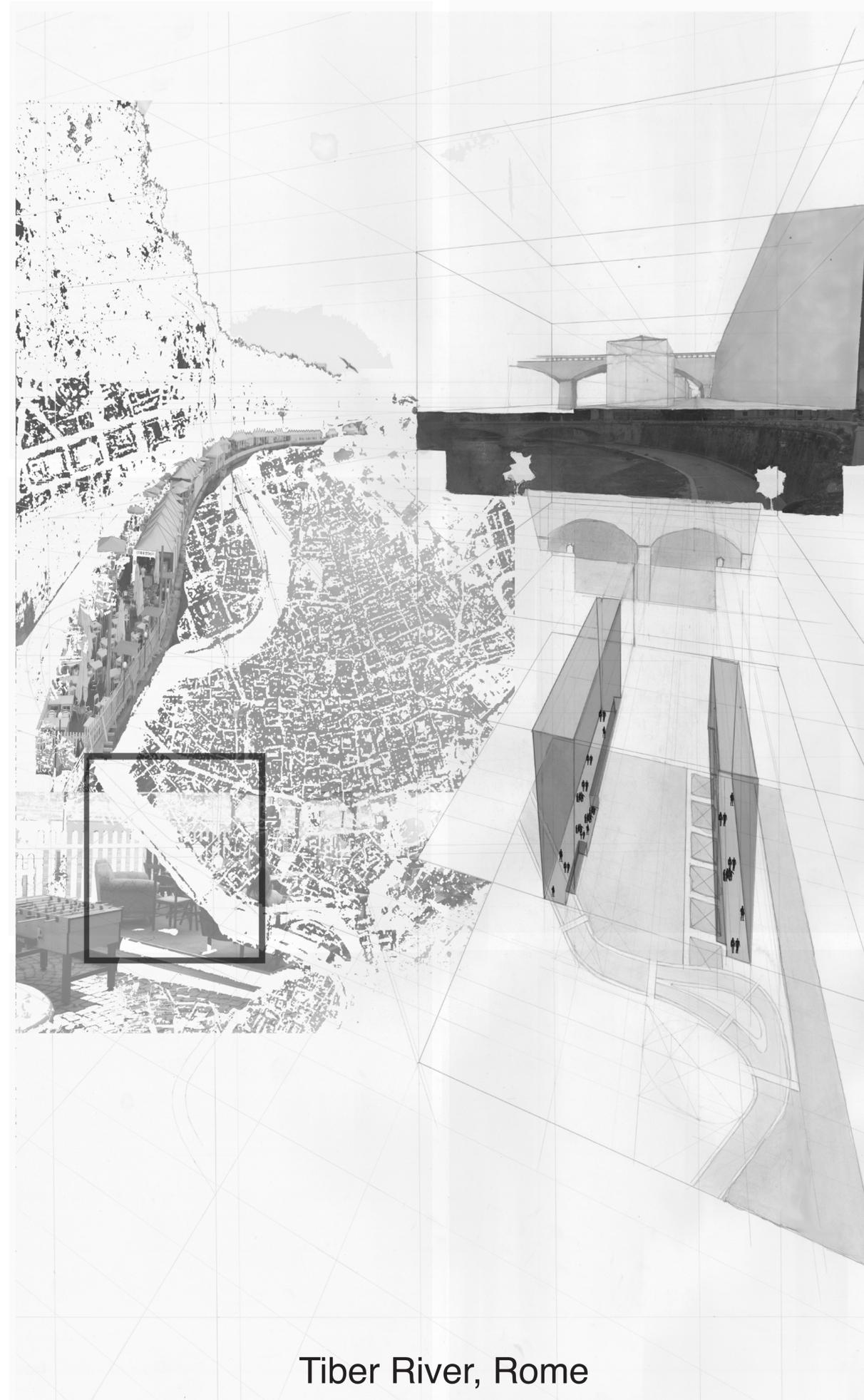
Piazza San Marco, Venice

Social Nodes

The singular element that defines how people interact and move in these spaces is delineated by the small programmatic elements inhabiting and occupying said spaces. Each store, coffee shop, street performer, outdoor restaurant, market stall and artist congregation creates its own social zone which has its own, unique gravitational pull. These can range in scale from a single point, such as a stall, kiosk, or performer, to an entire city block.



Campo di Fiori, Rome

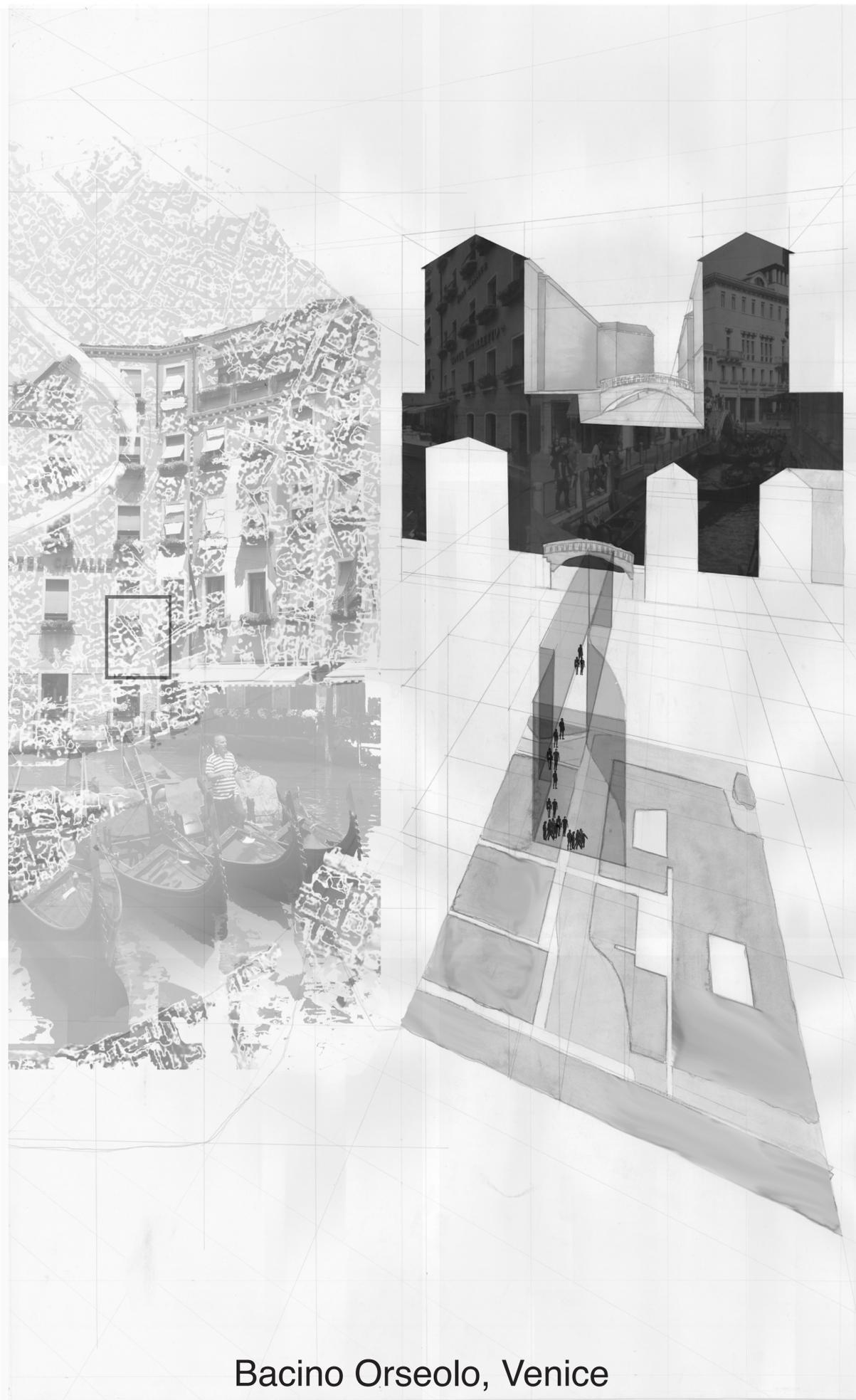


Tiber River, Rome

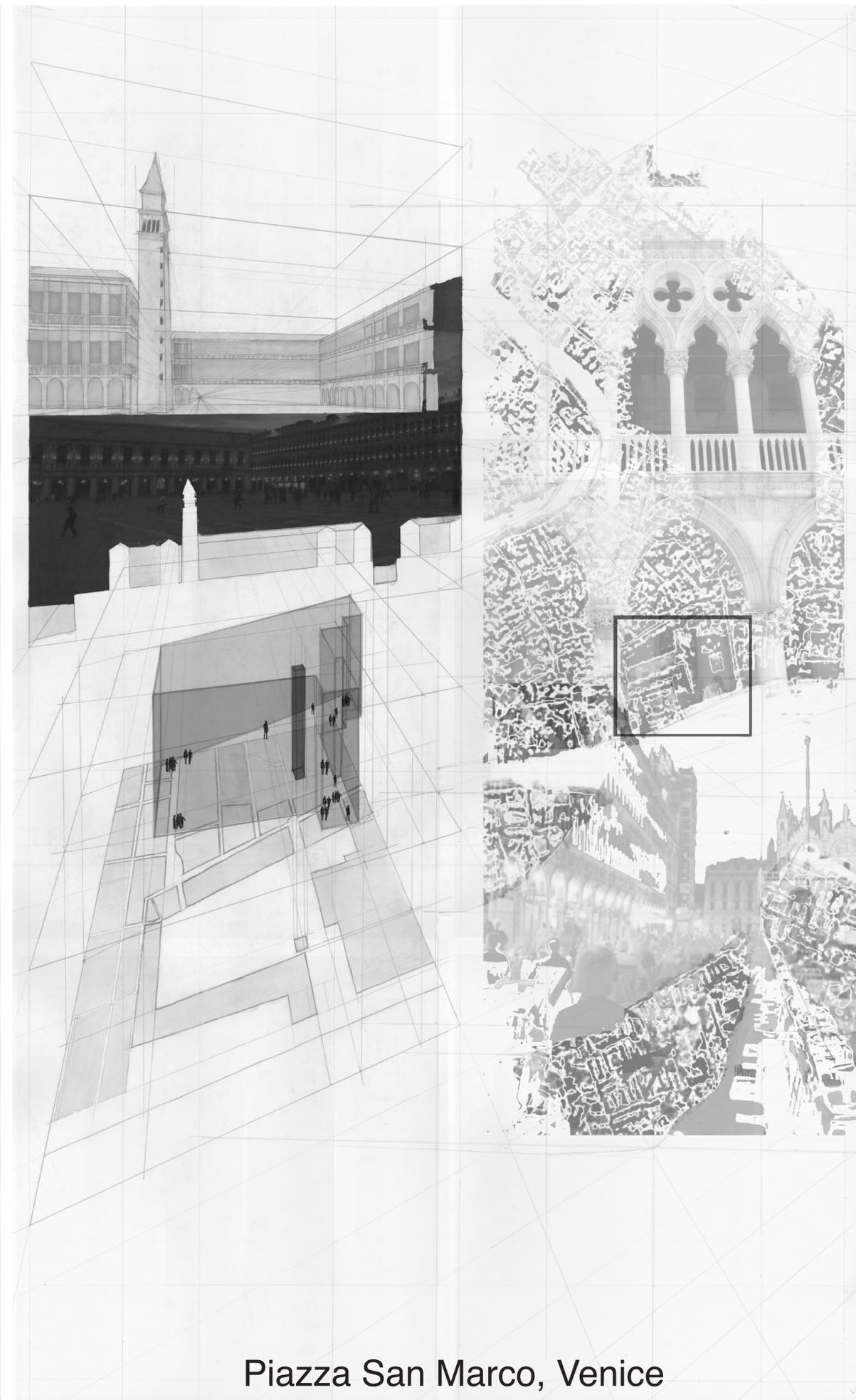
Positive Space and Spatial Hierarchy

Positive space, as put forward by Christopher Alexander is “[...] a distinct and definite shape, as definite shape of a room,” while negative space is merely spaces that is left over. That is to say that positive space has a distinctive geometry in and of itself, while negative space is shapeless.

Spatial hierarchy is then seen when a series of spaces, either positive or negative, are placed in relation to one another in such a way that a higher importance is given to one and the others help to further establish said importance.



Bacino Orseolo, Venice

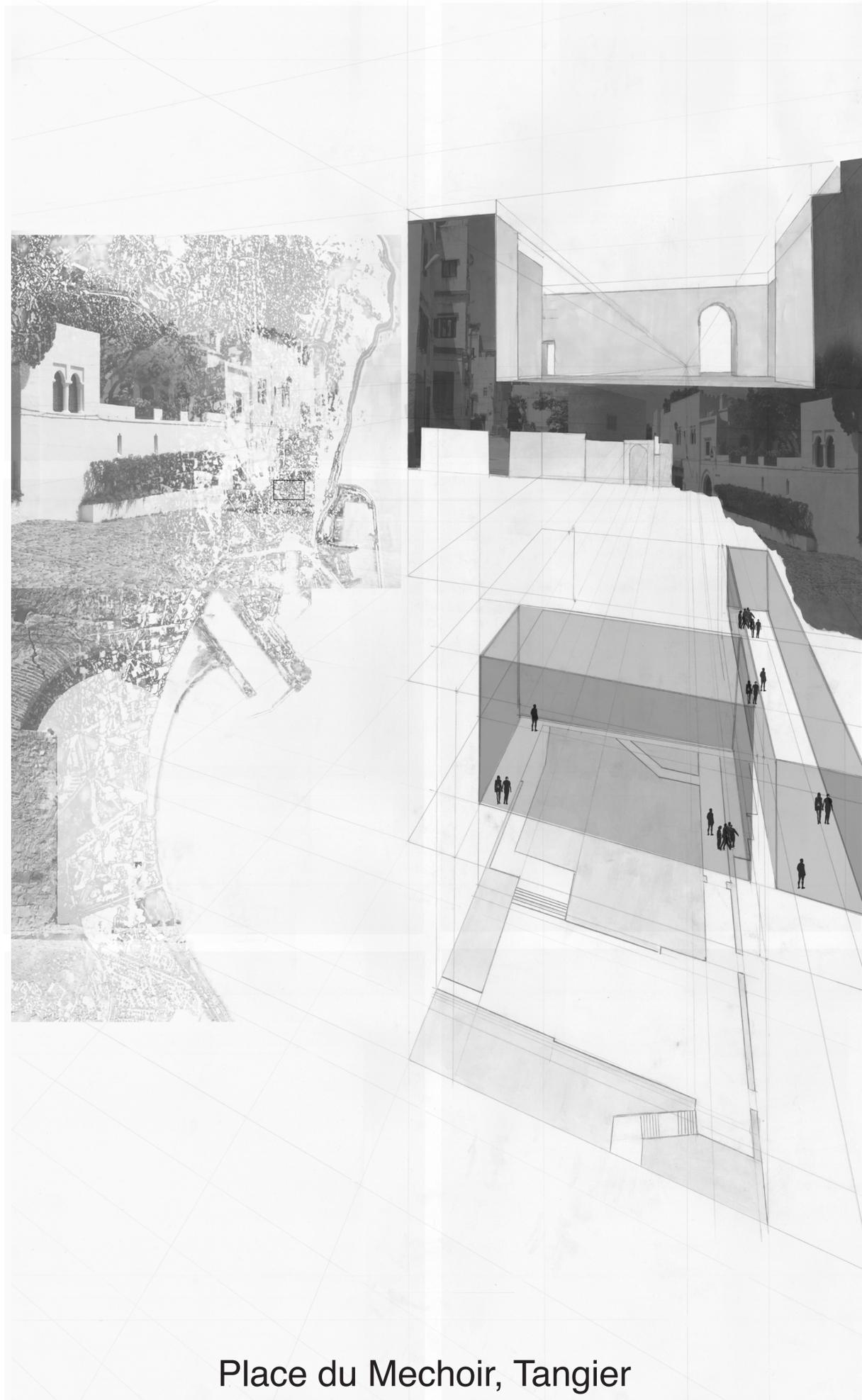


Piazza San Marco, Venice

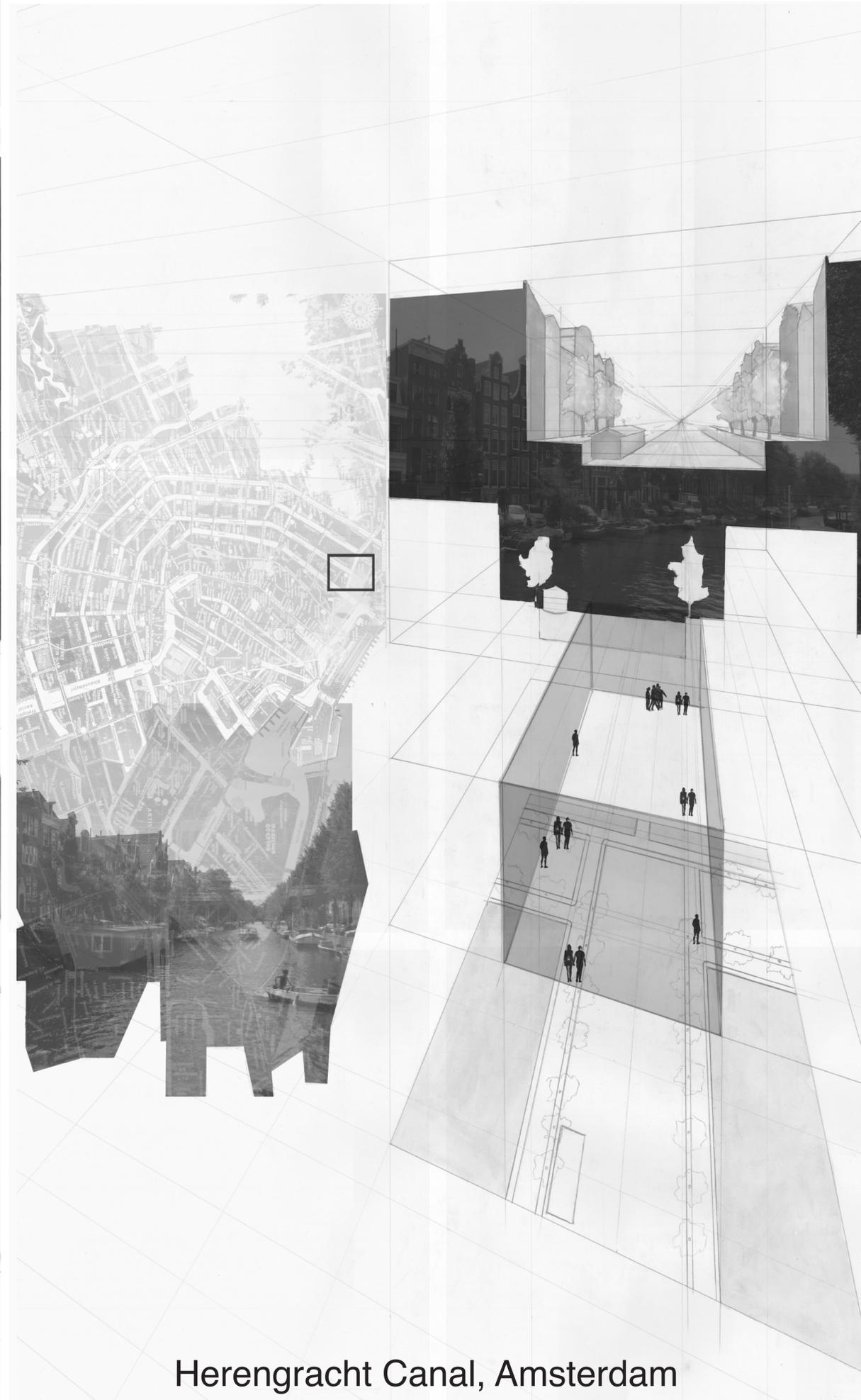
Activity, Rest and Natural Features

Aside from the basic needs such as access to food, water and sanitation, the two fundamental psychological needs that have the greatest potential to affect the urban fabric is the need for both activity and rest.

A need for rest can best be described as the human need to pull away from the rest of society so as to allow for a moment of physical and emotional repose. Activities of rest can be anything from physical rest to meditation to sitting down for a picnic in a quiet park with the intention of allowing for recovery from hectic city, family, work, and social life. On the opposite end of the spectrum are activities of action. These are the activities that are needed to be carried out in everyday life, such as socializing, attending classes, shopping, and working.



Place du Mechoir, Tangier



Herengracht Canal, Amsterdam

Piazza Navona

