

FLORENCE, ITALY: RIDES IN A
POST-MODERN ITALIAN
THEME PARK

by

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ABSTRACT

Steeped in history and commodified through tourism, Florence, Italy has morphed into a post-modern version of itself. My research project analyzes post-modern Florence, focusing on its identity as a Theme Park City. The project consists of four parts: a literature review of relevant articles and books, my synthesis of the literature review in which I propose a new framework of the Theme Park City, my classification of the rides in a Theme Park City, and the application of my framework and classification system to Florence. My framework of the Theme Park City combines five criteria: the city is post-modern, the city is a simulacrum, the city lacks authenticity, the city is transformed by tourism, and the city is commodified. There are two categories in my classification of theme park rides: organic rides and incorporated rides. In Florence I identify and analyze the following rides: the Duomo, Florentine Restaurants, the San Lorenzo Leather Market, the Ponte Vecchio, and American Bars and Pub Crawls.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has the power to drastically alter the cultural landscape of a city. One outcome of tourism is a transformation of the city into a simulation of what visitors believe to be authentic. A perfect example of this is Florence, Italy. The famed city of the Renaissance has been transformed by tourism in many ways. The resulting Theme Park City features culturally and historically “authentic” rides that attract tourists to the area. The Theme Park City, as described by Michael Sorkin, is a place where reality is obscured and intentionally disfigured to represent expectations and ideals of best use. However, the reality of what is truly authentic to native Florentines remains hidden and unknown. In short, the Florence that tourists experience is a manufactured and commercially-based product designed to emulate what tourists expect, and is not the Florence that actually exists. These spaces, exaggerated and diverse, feature immense disconnect that fractures the city. Pieces exist individually as theme park-type rides that demonstrate the experiential nature of the city.

My research analyzes Florence, Italy as a Theme Park City. Steeped in history and commodified through tourism, Florence has morphed into a post-modern version of itself. Furthermore, it is currently a city defined and sustained by its tourist economy. I will analyze its theme park characteristics based on a framework of five criteria: the city is post-modern, the city lacks authenticity, the city is a simulacrum, the city is transformed by tourism, and the city is commodified. I will also classify two types of theme park rides, organic and incorporated, and analyze the theme park rides of Florence using that classification system.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Post-Modern Urbanism

In “The Iron Lotus: Los Angeles and Post-modern Urbanism,” Michael Dear and Steven Flusty postulate that post-modern urban space originated in Los Angeles. Here, the previously popular Chicago style of Urbanism was negated “in favor of a noncontiguous collage of parcelized, consumption-oriented landscapes devoid of conventional centers” (Dear, 162). While Los Angeles is the archetypal post-modern urban example, a younger, less mature version of the framework exists in Las Vegas (Dear, 152-63).

The post-modern city does not adhere to norms or previous frameworks. Instead, it constantly morphs according to a variety of situations, expectations and needs. While Los Angeles is the archetypal post-modern city, its characteristics are not a definite measure of the post-modern characteristics of another city. Certain criteria may be the basis for a post-modern Los Angeles, but they could be completely unsuccessful building blocks for another post-modern city (Dear, 152-4).

Despite the ambiguity of post-modern space, post-modern cities share certain characteristics. Dear and Flusty recognize eclecticism in the post-modern city. This eclectic city, in direct opposition to the modern forms that came before it, rejects the “single-minded modernist vision of an urban landscape filled with great skyscrapers, mega-structures, and machines” (Dear, 154) that clutter and obstruct it. The post-modern city operates as a fantasy-land, where dreams and long-held expectations can come to life. The city can be whatever it needs to be for the inhabitant or even the visitor (Dear, 152-4).

Dear and Flusty identify another characteristic of the post-modern city as a commitment to restructuring. The various restructuring efforts include de-industrialization, followed by re-industrialization, and finally a rise in the information economy. The biggest evidence of this is in the “selective revival of older styles” (Dear, 154) as a way to bring new life to the city. Replicating the past further contributes to the eclecticism of the post-modern urban space. It is a combination of the old, the new, and the old made to look new (Dear, 153-4).

In “Sensing the City,” John Urry describes cities as being cut into a collection of discontinuous structures and points. This structure of the city obtains direction and purpose directly from its inhabitants. Every structure, addition, or attraction is specifically placed to attract and fulfill the needs of a specific type of consumer. These components of the city are objectified for consumption by either the inhabitant or the visitor. They are not placed in their respective spaces to contribute to the urban space as a whole. Rather, they are separated to make them more profitable individually. Inhabitants and visitors do not consume the city; they consume the pieces of the city. As people begin to consume only pieces of the city, it loses its identity and the original image of the city is transformed (Urry, 71-88). The city is distorted in the form of photographs, postcards, and advertisements that focus on the target piece and not the city as a whole.

Simulacra

Jean Baudrillard discusses images to great lengths in his book *Simulacra and Simulation*. He makes two main points about the transformation of the image in post-modern space. First, the image is subject to hyper-reality. This means that, over time, the image distorts so that the resulting symbol is more recognizable and is more real than the

original reality. Secondly, people interpret reality in different ways. One person's "truth" may lead them to regard one image as real, while another person's "truth" will do exactly the opposite. The image only has meaning given to it by those using it (Baudrillard, 1-42).

Baudrillard further explains post-modern images by providing a simple definition of the simulacrum. He refers to it as a copy of something that never existed. He asserts that the simulacrum, the fake image, is recognized as real, despite being subject to hyper-reality. The real image begins to imitate the simulacrum.

Baudrillard also provides a list of four steps, or phases, of the image that separate it from reality. First, the image is a reflection of a basic reality. In this phase, the image is not entirely removed from the original. It is simply replicating it; it is a mirror image. Second, the image is masking and perverting a basic reality. At this point the image becomes removed from the original but is still attempting to be recognized as the real thing. Next, the image masks the absence of the basic reality. This phase is similar to the second in that the image shares few characteristics with the original; however, the original is now missing and the image is filling its place. Lastly, in the most perverted phase, the image bears no relation to any reality whatsoever. At this point, the image is fully defined as a simulacrum, as it shares absolutely no characteristics with the original (Baudrillard, 1-42).

Dear and Flusty take this process one step further and show how simulacra exist in post-modern urbanism. Cities containing or built upon simulacrum are essentially imitations of "what a city should be" (Dear, 156). They are representations of fantasies and ideal locations that are brought to life. Not every structure or piece of the city is a

simulacrum, and, consequently, the image and the reality become confused. The simulacrum, or the fake, will intertwine with the real to create a new reality (Dear, 156).

This new reality is only real because those viewing it and consuming it recognize it as so. In their article "Evaluating Urban Tourism," Susan Fainstein and David Gladstone point out that this new image actually prevails over reality. In many ways, the image is preferred because it is an ideal. People choose this reality because it fits their expectations. The meaning given to the simulacrum is the result of a choice made by people to accept it. Their acceptance is the only fuel that brings the image to life (Fainstein, 21-34).

Urry comments on society's perversion of reality. He states that images of the original are constantly bombarding everyday space. Therefore, the original must morph more and more in order to remain viable. The hyper-reality is necessary in order to stand out in a sea of competing images (Urry, 71-88)

There are many concrete examples of simulacrum in everyday life. Leavenworth, in the state of Washington, is an example of one such city. In their descriptive analysis, "Bavarian Leavenworth and the Symbolic Economy of a Theme Town," Stephen Frenkel and Judy Walton paint a picture of Leavenworth as a themed-city specifically designed to attract tourism and boost economic growth. The city, requiring years of planning and preparation, is far from an accidental occurrence. Every detail of the city was calculated to fit the predetermined image. In the true spirit of simulacrum, the chosen theme has no connection with the reality or history of the town. To maintain their profitable facade, Leavenworth commits to constant renovations as new knowledge of the Bavarian theme is discovered. They are trying to acquire an identity that does not belong to them, one that

never really existed in Leavenworth. Keeping up with the theme is not easy and requires the entire community's involvement. The town's people are forcing themselves to behave and live as something they are not. Like actors in a play, they follow a pre-determined script for their chosen theme. A bittersweet relationship also developed between the tourists and the community. The inhabitants of Bavarian Leavenworth need the tourism industry to remain economically viable, but also resent how it robs them of their true identity and authenticity (Frenkel, 559-84).

Authenticity

The presence of authenticity in the urban environment directly affects the experience of the inhabitant or visitor. In the article "Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience," Ning Wang identifies three main types of authenticity. First, objective authenticity is the recognition of toured objects as authentic. Second, constructive authenticity is authenticity that is constructed in terms of various perspectives. Lastly, existential authenticity consists of the personal feelings of authenticity activated by tourist activities. The experience is not authentic simply because the tourist thinks it is. The participation of the tourist gives is validation. In reality, tourists do not want an authentic experience. According to Wang, the tourist is in search of inauthentic experiences that will aid them in their search for their authentic selves. During their travels, tourists "collect" a variety of experiences. While generally inauthentic in nature, these experiences provide the tourist with a personal authenticity that they can take away with them (Wang, 350-6).

In a critique on post-modernism, Edward Bruner also names five types of authenticity. The first type is the original, not a copy. The second is authoritative or

legally valid. The third appears as a currently credible version of the past. The fourth is something that a person from the period would recognize as authentic. The fifth type is authentic in intention, and not intentionally misleading (Bruner, 399-400).

In his article on staged authenticity, Dean MacCannell states that tourist settings are arranged to support certain beliefs. He defines authenticity as a series of front and back regions. Penetrating into back regions, or the true authenticity, is extremely difficult. Tourist experiences are inauthentic by nature, therefore making almost impossible to find a back region as a tourist. Many tourists will search out authenticity, but real experiences happen by chance (MacCannell, 589).

MacCannell pulls the terms front region and back region from a six stage continuum created by Erving Goffman. The first stage is a true front region. It is the most inauthentic and the stage that tourists most want to overcome. Second, the touristic front region disguises itself to appear somewhat like a front region. The next stage is a front region that completely resembles a back region. This stage is much more difficult to recognize as inauthentic. Fourth is a back region open to outsiders and free of restriction. While this is closer to the real thing, the mere presence of tourists diminishes the authenticity. Next is a back region that is cleaned or altered because it is available to tourists. The authenticity here decreases even more as alterations are made. Lastly, the sixth stage is a true back region. This is the pinnacle or motivation for tourists. However, it only remains a true back region as long as it remains free of tourists and outsider interference. The staged quality or alteration of the space makes it superficial. Tourists remain generally unaware of this superficiality so they can continue to enjoy the staged front regions. Coming from an outsider's perspective it is difficult to tell the difference

between a staged back region and the “backstage”. It’s not uncommon to be completely fooled by a well-constructed front region. They are designed to look natural, so most people will recognize them as such (MacCannell, 597-8).

Commodification

According to Fainstein and Gladstone, the commodification of urban space puts all the power in the hands of the tourist. It allows them to shape their experiences through choice. In this way, the city becomes consumed with the experience of the tourist, catering to their expectations and needs (Fainstein, 21-34).

A prime example of such commodification is the urban development of Harborplace, Baltimore by acclaimed real estate developer James Rouse. In his TIME magazine article “He Digs Downtown,” Michael Demarest tells how Harborplace, a festival-marketplace of sorts, was designed as a shared space for tourists and locals alike. Its spectacular set of attractions “blends commerce and showmanship” (Demarest, 42) to attract visitors. The development’s design focuses on interaction, by use of buttons, levers, and the like, to engage the consumers. Sitting on waterfront property, the location is attractive and provides a variety of choices to please them all. Shops, food vendors, street entertainers have transformed Harborplace from a dingy wasteland to “the commercial and social centerpiece of the Inner Harbor” (Demarest, 42).

The existence of Harborplace not only boosts the tourist economy, but strengthens and restores the community as well. Old, rundown buildings and structures were renovated for profit and given new life. Citizens and business owners are incentivized to restore old homes and shops. In sort of a large-scale recycling effort, the old is saved and incorporated into the new. As a result, people visiting the city can experience an

imagined piece of history while still getting the entertainment they crave (Demarest, 42-8).

None of the developmental choices for Harborplace were by accident. Almost every single detail was made deliberately and planned to serve a specific purpose. Demarest even points out that tenants could be turned away due to their inability to fit in with the calculated experience or theme. Less than two percent of the initial 2000 applicants were chosen to join the Harborplace development. While a seemingly eclectic disorder exists for consumers, Harborplace lacks chaos behind the scenes (Demarest, 42-8).

In the case of Harborplace, commodification gives the city purpose. This results from Rouse's practical urban philosophy to move from the cluttered outer-city sprawl to the city which is "truly responsive to the needs and yearnings of [the] people" who inhabit it. The city holds no meaning not defined by the people using it. Any need or want of the consumer will be reflected either directly or indirectly in the design of the space. Everything from the type of shrubbery placed outside doors to the ambient music that plays as people stroll contributes to an overall theme. This theme does not simply satisfy the needs of the consumer. A park could do that; but a park also does not generate profit. The design behind an urban marketplace like Harborplace must satisfy the consumer in a way that makes them want to spend money. However, this commodification does not come without a price. For every consumer or tourist that enters a city, a certain amount of authenticity must be exchanged (Demarest, 42-8).

Tourism

Susan Fanstein and Dennis Judd name tourism as one of the top influences of urban form. In their article “Cities as Places to Play” Fainstein and Judd categorize three basic types of tourist cities. The first, Resort cities, are created solely for consumption by visitors. These cities are built within or nearby an actual city that is supported by the tourist industry. The second type are the Tourist-Historic cities. These cities have a historic and cultural identity but are promoted and reconstructed into tourist sites. Here tourism incorporates the natural fabric of the city, but still has the power to change the character of the city as it grows. The third and final type are the Converted cities. These cities build new infrastructure and attractions for the sole purpose of attracting visitors. Also, these cities do not want just any visitor. They develop specific themes and designs that will attract the type of tourist that they want (Fainstein, 261-72).

According to Fainstein and Judd, tourist cities have the same connotations as theme parks. Pieces of the city and the people inhabiting it are exploited for profit. People come to these places to experience them, not to live in them. Eventually they want to get off the “rides” and return home; meaning any connection they may have to the place is temporary (Fainstein, 261-72).

Fainstein further explores this with David Gladstone in their discussion of urban tourism. They contend that in order for a city to remain viable and draw tourists in, the city must offer something original that will catch the tourist’s attention. The tourist must remain interested. Tourist cities have discovered that accomplishing this is much easier said than done. Sometimes the real city isn’t interesting enough. Or sometimes, people will build up such high expectations of a city in their imaginations that the real thing fails

in comparison. Also, it takes time and patience to experience a real city. For these reasons, tourist experiences are often condensed to represent packaged versions of the reality. In this form, the experience in the city is much easier to digest and therefore more attractive to the visitor. However, this standardization of tourism is robbing tourists of the exceptional. Tourist experiences are selected pieces of a much bigger experience. While exoticism is necessary to lure tourists in; what they are receiving is ultimately fake. Tourists want to see something they have never seen before, regardless of whether it is the real thing or not. Profit will make the tourist's expectations worth more than the reality in the long run (Fainstein, 261-72).

THE THEME PARK CITY FRAMEWORK

All Theme Park Cities are different, and a flexible framework is necessary to analyze them. My framework is a way to analyze different examples of Theme Park Cities. Each example combines five criteria in varying degrees of intensity. These criteria include: the city is post-modern, the city lacks authenticity, the city is a simulacrum, the city is commodified, and the city is transformed by tourism. The extent to which the criteria apply is constantly changing depending upon the location and circumstances. In the literature review, I discussed several methodologies developed to analyze tourism in a post-modern urban landscape. In this next section, I will use aspects of previous work to define and provide examples of each criteria.

The City is Post-modern

The post-modern criterion exists at the very center of my framework. It is the characteristic by which all other characteristics originate. So broad is this criterion that defining it proves truly difficult. In its most general state, the post-modern city is a

fractured, eclectic, and exaggerated image of its former self that is repurposed for maximum consumption. This definition is not by any means all-encompassing. Rather it provides a solid starting point from which we can imagine the possibilities of a post-modern city. As mentioned before, Los Angeles is the prime post-modern example. It is not a standard by which all post-modern cities must conform, but a prototype for the ever-changing post-modern landscape. The post-modern city's loose definition gives us license to apply it in many urban contexts, even those that differ greatly from each other.

Fort Worth, a city drastically different from Los Angeles, has introduced new post-modern features into its urban landscape. Operating under a western facade, it is tailored with amplified history and distorted cultural connections. Lauded as a place where the past and future intersect, Fort Worth's main stage is the acclaimed and recently renovated Sundance Square. Motivated by potential profit, the city replaced a grungy, dated parking lot with a renewed and aesthetically pleasing hot-spot. Here, this "framework of urban development" comes to life with images of cowboys, cattle drives, and red brick streets. The wall murals and themed shops provide a way for tourists and locals to connect to the past. But the history they are seeing is deceptive. It is a hyped up, commercialized version of the past. Visitors transcend time and space to enter the Fort Worth Cowtown theme park. While the features of Cowtown are hyper real and commercialized, they also lack interconnection. The city displays a mural of the cattle drive within a block of the Starbucks and Dallas Cowboy's Fan Shop. This type of fragmented, profit-driven diversity in urban planning gives it that post-modern aura.

The City Lacks Authenticity

The second grouping of criteria is one of authenticity. Wang defined three types of authenticity: objective, existential, and constructive. In my framework, only objective authenticity has any meaning. Despite personal feelings or an individual's personal perspective, the city is either fully authentic or it is not authentic at all. If features of the city do not exist in their original form and circumstance, they are not considered authentic. For example, there are several replicas of the Eiffel Tower that exist all over the world, but the original and authentic Eiffel Tower is located in Paris, France. If, in their ignorance, a tourist is unaware of this, they might mistake one of the replicas for the real thing. From their perspective, the replica tower is authentic and it might even spur existential feelings of authenticity within them; but it is not truly and objectively authentic. In this context, the types of authenticity are less significant than the presence of authenticity, or lack thereof. While it is important to recognize the existence of authenticity gray areas, where attractions may not be entirely inauthentic, these gray areas do not characterize criteria in my framework. If at any time the attraction, or the city, significantly strays from truthful representation, the entire thing is deemed inauthentic.

An example of objective inauthenticity is Ellis Island in the New York City theme park. Although the premise of Ellis Island is authentic, it is no longer being used for its original purpose. While authentic qualities remain, my framework does not recognize it as truly authentic. Plenty of urban features have lost their authenticity due to a similar transformation. Very few historical attractions actually fulfill their original purposes. The whole concept of a historical attraction means that it was meant for another time. These

representations exist side by side with commercialized retail property and the skyscrapers, making them inauthentic and out of place.

The City is Commodified

The third criterion is the city as a commodity. Commodification and profit are the strongest driving forces behind the transformation of the urban landscape. The Theme Park City is commodified and subsequently designed to generate the largest possible profit. This can mean exploiting historical property to create a tourist attraction. It can mean fracturing the city into an eclectic landscape of disjointed retail venues. It can even mean changing local laws and policies to promote the development of a consumer friendly urban environment. Money is a very powerful catalyst in any urban setting, and the Theme Park City is no exception. Although Theme Park Cities develop for a variety of reasons, those seeking to make a profit usually foster and maintain it.

Many different kinds of people will benefit from a Theme Park City. Each one is surrounded by its own specific circumstances that give it purpose. In the case of Harborplace, Baltimore, the purpose was a renewal of the community into a shared space for tourists and locals. This renovation generated tremendous profit for both the development owners and local business owners. Bavarian Leavenworth gave a new meaning to the town, and that new meaning was as a commodity. Although, the locals resent the toll it has taken of their everyday life, the town cannot exist without the income from tourism. Commodification of the city frequently creates these love-hate relationships between the local community and the influx of consumerism. While this transformation of the city can be quite unsettling for many people, it is difficult, almost

impossible, to reverse once it begins. As more money is generated by the city, more is needed to sustain it.

The City is a Simulacrum

Simulacra are products of inauthenticity but may be inherently difficult to recognize. Although they are not authentic, people are deceived to accept simulacra as real. For instance, someone who has been to Venice would perceive the Venetian in Las Vegas very differently than someone who had not. Simulacra rely primarily on expectations and perspective. The definition of a simulacrum as “a copy of something that never existed” proves slightly problematic. This does not mean that it never existed anywhere, but that it never existed in that specific time, place, and circumstance. Presenting only fragments of a culture or city make it easily accessible, but very rarely truthful.

Disney World is an example of a simulacrum in its most extreme form. When you enter the Magic Kingdom, you are surrounded by characterized representations of people, streets, and buildings. Main Street USA, Mickey Mouse, and Cinderella’s Castle never existed in the real world. Yet, Disney has brought them all to life in one magical theme park. In this case, it is not just that these things never existed in that specific context, it is that they never existed, period. Disney has literally produced copies of things that never existed and through them created a city. While the presence of simulacra in Theme Park Cities will not always be this extreme, Disney World demonstrates how they can seamlessly take over every part of the city to define their own reality.

The City is Transformed by Tourism

The last criterion of the Theme Park City, transformation by tourism, truly separates it from other cities around the globe. While all cities are commodified in one way or another, the Theme Park City is commodified for the purpose of inviting outsiders in. In this way, we see that tourism transforms the city. Locals can certainly partake in the attractions of Theme Park City, but more commonly their roles are to create and maintain its existence. Tourists travel to the Theme Park City to escape the realities of their own cities.

Tourism captures and transforms cities across the globe like a plague. The big players in the urban tourism, London, New York, Paris, and many more, command a global presence. As a result, they attract a global variety of visitors. Some cities deal with tourist intrusion on a minimal basis and some are completely consumed by it. The entertainment hub, Los Angeles, attracts tourists wanting to explore the glamour and fame of celebrity and Hollywood life. Of course, Los Angeles has a diversified consumer base, but the image of Hollywood has partially consumed the city and increased tourism exponentially.

Tourists are global consumers. They visit Theme Park Cities around the world and utilize imagination to truly transcend reality. Some are willing to spend large sums of money to do so, making tourism an extremely powerful source of income. Tourists indirectly alter the landscape of the city through their expectations. No matter how sacred a place is, it can usually be entered for the right price. Many tourists want to take the road less traveled. If it has never been done before, it will surely become a novelty tourist attraction. Furthermore, if you have the money, almost nothing is off limits.

Each of these criteria explains one part of the Theme Park City, but it is only in unison that they are fully applicable. The Theme Park City combines all these criteria in varying degrees. They are linked, but not consistently in the same way. For example, tourism harbors consumerism and commodification of the city. Through this commodification, the space inherently loses its authenticity. Inauthentic places and spaces are the building blocks for simulacra. Finally, all of the aforementioned criteria contribute to the post-modern nature of the Theme Park City.

Theme Park Rides

The final part of my framework is a classification of the two types of rides that exist in the Theme Park City. Rides are the objects, images, spaces, or events that engage visitors with the city. Rides can tangibly present themselves or even exist existentially. In its very basic form, a ride produces a sensory experience. The rides can be identified into two categories: organic or incorporated.

Organic rides are landmarks or pieces of the city that originated originally within the city. They are usually historical in nature and have been transformed over time into tourist attractions. The Terracotta Army in China is one example of an organic ride. It was originally funerary art commissioned by the Chinese Emperor. No ordinary art, the Terracotta Army and its extraordinary grandeur draw in tourists from all over the world. The Statue of Liberty is another organic ride. It is a national landmark that embodies the symbol of the American dream. It existed long before tourists formed long lines to see it, but it remains one of the first things people want to do when they visit New York City.

In contrast, incorporated rides are placed in the city for the sole purpose of attracting tourists. Lascaux II in France is a deceptive example. The original Lascaux

caves would actually be considered an organic ride; but the originals cannot be shown to the public due to fear of disturbing the preservation of this historical site. For this reason, a copy of the caves was created in Lascaux II. Developed solely for spectator value, Lascaux II has no purpose without tourists. As previously mentioned, The Venetian in Las Vegas bears little resemblance to the city from which it borrows its name. The developer has gone replicated many Venetian landmarks. Some may ignorantly miss the differences between the Venetian and Venice, Italy, but the differences are certainly there. Like most of the Las Vegas attractions, developers incorporated the Venetian into the fragmented cultural landscape.

The rides of the Theme Park City demonstrate how each of the five criteria apply in a specific location. Through these rides we see the influence of tourism and the subsequent commodification of the landscape. They may be simulacra or contribute to the inauthentic nature of the city as a whole. Lastly, all rides demonstrate the post-modern nature of the city. It is only through these rides that the criteria in the Theme Park City framework are fully identifiable. In order to properly characterize a Theme Park City, we must first identify both the organic and incorporated rides. The rides can then be used to pinpoint where the five criteria exist in the landscape.

THE FLORENCE THEME PARK CITY

As the archetypal Theme Park City, Florence offers many examples to represent the varietal characteristics of my framework. Through first-hand observation of Florence I identified five rides that demonstrate the interwoven nature of each Theme Park City criterion: the Duomo, Florentine restaurants, the San Lorenzo leather market, the Ponte Vecchio, and American bars and pub crawls. These rides do not represent all the rides in

Florence. Rather, they display the most acute evidence for the five criteria in my own personal observation. According to my analysis, the Duomo is not a cathedral; Florentine restaurants are not serving Italian food; the San Lorenzo Leather Market functions as a souvenir-style tourist trip; the Ponte Vecchio is not a bridge; and for students studying abroad, American Bars and Pub Crawls may be the most remembered experience of their time in Florence. New perspectives on the Florence Theme Park might present additional rides. After all, Theme Park Cities naturally transform over time according to circumstance. The transformation of the city breeds transformation of perspective. These rides, although powerful examples, merely serve as guiding attractions in the intricate layout of the city.

The Duomo

Arguably the most well-known landmark in Florence, the Duomo tops every tourist's must-see list. The cathedral's history, size, and Catholic prominence ensure that Florence stands out as unique among other cities. As part of Florentine history, the Duomo could not be replicated effectively in any other space. Finished and consecrated in 1436, it developed concurrently alongside the city. For this reason, I classify the Duomo as an organic ride.

The Duomo consists of many parts that connect tourists with the development of the Renaissance in Florence. Brunelleschi's dome, Ghiberti's bronze doors, Giotto's Bell Tower, and Donatello's statues are all fascinating pieces of Duomo history that tourists flock to see. In fact, the Duomo's current primary purpose is for tourist consumption. Although liturgical services still commence daily, the tourist visitors significantly outnumber the religious visitors. Of the seven million people that visit Florence each

year, more than half of them also visit the Duomo. Every day a long line can be seen extending out the front of the facade and winding around the cathedral. Maneuvering through Piazza del Duomo proves difficult in seasons of high tourist activity. The entire space is dedicated to accommodating tourists and their needs. Tourism transformed this once sacred space and its environs into a secular ride for outsiders.

Entering the main Duomo cathedral requires no ticket or purchase of any kind. The lines may be long, but anyone can enter if they are willing to wait. For this reason, merchants employ other methods to capitalize off of the idling visitors. In Piazza del Duomo, various merchants set up stands in close vicinity to the line. Much like the stands at an actual theme park, these stands offer everything from caricature drawings to small souvenirs. But these merchants do not simply wait patiently at their stands. Many will venture out into the crowd, demonstrating their whirly, light up toys, and enticing onlookers to make a purchase. Some do so quite aggressively, almost forcing the product into tourists' hands. Similar to others in Florence, these merchants seem desperate to make a sale. Although the actual ride is free, the space surrounding the Duomo is densely commodified. In addition, tourists can pay 15 euros to avoid the cathedral line and partake in a special tour. For those wanting to climb the Dome, climb Giotto's Tower, or enter the Baptistery, a small entry fee is also required. The main cathedral may be free, but this lost profit is made up in every way possible. Every visitor can enter; but only those willing to pay get the full experience.

The Duomo certainly demonstrates strong simulacrum qualities. Although it was once a deeply religious and sanctified space, the Duomo no longer represents a truthful and authentic version of itself. Tourism and commodification have transformed it for

other purposes. Visitors experience what they believe to be a piece of history; but this is deceptive. Native Florentines and religious devotees utilized the Duomo in its original form. Now, the presence of tourists and the accommodations that follow damage its historical preservation. This is not to say that physical damage occurs, but rather, the perception of the cathedral changes. Religious services still occur here; but, they happen in tandem with tours and relentless picture taking. The actual Duomo never existed under these circumstances. What tourists stand in line and pay to see actually represents an altered image of the Duomo.

Many transformations made the Duomo more accessible to tourists, but increasingly inauthentic. Signs, instructions, and information posted all over the Duomo detract from the space's true form. Security personnel and barricades ensure that visitors proceed uniformly and somewhat methodically through the line. Pamphlets and donation boxes placed near the entrance allow them the opportunity to contribute and learn more about the history behind the space. Despite their perceived positive effects, these additions to the cathedral are inauthentic. In the cathedral line, the trinkets and toys marketed by merchants have little or no connection to the Duomo. The souvenirs rarely even tie back to Florence, and are more likely to depict images from the city of Rome. Many of these transformations result directly from the influence of tourism. Consequently, by trying to experience the real Duomo of Florence, the tourists have ensured that they never will.

The Duomo exists as the hub of the post-modern Florence Theme Park City. As an image of Florentine history, it remains immobile while an eclectic urban environment develops around it. Souvenir shops, each one the carbon copy of the last, now surround

and overwhelm the religious monument. Tourist-oriented restaurants and bars complete the mix of retail land use that creates a chaotic mob of tourists hurrying to and fro in the vicinity of the Duomo. The exaggerated image of Renaissance Italy is imposed on the Duomo in a way that dramatically contrasts with the modern surroundings.

Florentine Restaurants

Although restaurants have existed in Florence for many years, I would not consider them an organic ride. In the tourist center of Florence, every restaurant caters to outsiders, and most of these never existed in the pre-tourist age. Florentine restaurants, or what tourists believe are Florentine restaurants, are incorporated rides specifically designed to draw tourists in and generate profit.

Of all the Florence Theme Park City rides, Florentine restaurants suffer the most from the enormous tourist influence. People travel from all over the world to get a taste of the authentic Italian cuisine. Unfortunately, these visitors are deceived into purchasing grossly substandard food. From a distance, the perception of Italian food includes the basics: pasta, pizza, and wine. Most do not know depth and diversity of true Italian food. Despite this, tourists are given exactly what they think they want. The result is often a shoddy, and exaggerated version of the real thing. The overwhelming influx of tourists each year has produced a string of endless trattorias, cafes, and ristoranti, each one a slightly-altered carbon copy of the last.

The sheer volume of restaurants in Florence indicates their potential for profit. At the heart of Tuscany, Florence is expected to offer quality dishes and wine selections. As a result, tourists are willing to pay more than the usual tariff to enjoy supposed delicacies. Everything from simple pasta dishes to cans of coke are marked up one-hundred to two-

hundred percent. As is the case in many European cities, restaurants often charge visitors to sit down or even for ordering a simple glass of water. There is an extra charge for bread that is placed on the table. Florentine restaurants will charge for anything and everything, because they know the tourists will purchase it out of necessity and desire. With every restaurant in town selling dishes at the same exaggerated price, cheaper options do not exist. They can either pay for the overpriced food or miss out on what is supposed to be an authentic Italian meal. In this way, Italian restaurants are commodified without regard to quality or value.

Unfortunately for tourists, the restaurants they pay to enjoy are only images of real Florentine restaurants. Countless replicas of the same ideal are endlessly recreated on each street, blurring together with their cliché pasta dishes and candlelit tables for two. Menus translated into three or four different languages are placed outside each restaurant for easy viewing by tourists passing by. Often times, food deteriorating under heat lamps can be seen through open windows. This infinite string of restaurant clones represent a concept of Italian life; but this concept only exists within the minds of outsiders. The authentic, top-quality Florentine restaurants exist outside the city center and operate under a code of quality and pride in the food they serve. Tourists are rarely seen and the food selections match authentic Italian food much more closely. In contrast, central Florence rarely offers the type of food native Florentines would eat. These grossly deficient copies reflect what the tourists expect Italian restaurants to be, not what Florentine restaurants truly are.

Lack of authenticity separates the simulacra from the reality, but only for those familiar with authentic Italian cuisine. Tourists arrive in Florence looking for a

picturesque plate of spaghetti and meatballs like they would get back home. Most visitors are unaware that spaghetti and meatballs originated in America. Even more are clueless about things like regional variety. In Italy, each region features specialty cuisine that can be produced and perfected locally. For Florence this includes pecorino cheese, steak alla fiorentina, and Chianti wine. While real Italian restaurants would never serve spaghetti and meatballs, a somewhat similar dish, spaghetti with Bolognese sauce, would more likely be found in Bologna. In central Florence, many restaurants ignore these regional distinctions hoping to capitalize off the misconceptions. Simply put, they serve dishes like spaghetti and meatballs because tourists believe it to be Italian.

A similar misconception occurs with the numerous gelato shops placed on every corner. In the city center, gelato resembles large, fluffy clouds, and is offered in a rainbow of colors. Despite a positive visual effect on tourists, this gelato is in fact poorly made. Gelato that is too fluffy is likely whipped and includes excessive air. Exceptionally bright colors might indicate artificial coloring. There are only a handful of authentic gelato shops in Florence that store gelato, carefully crafted on site, in covered containers. These gelato shops do not need to flaunt the aesthetic qualities of their product to attract customers. Unfortunately, most central Florence gelato shops lack these quality standards, and tourists seem to not care as long as they think the gelato is authentic.

Florentine restaurants and other food venues represent one of the top uses of space in Florence with regards to financial success. They are extremely profitable. Driven by tourism, restaurants pop up all over the central Florentine urban landscape. The main streets leading off from the Duomo feature restaurant after restaurant interspersed with tourist souvenir shops. Despite being all the same, these spaces rarely hold any

connection with one another. They are disjointed, exaggerated, and profit-driven; three pillars of the post-modern city.

The San Lorenzo Leather Market

In its current form, the San Lorenzo Market exists for tourists. However, many years ago the market vendors sold high quality leather products, such as jackets or handbags that represented the highest craftsmanship in Florence. But now quality is a thing of the past. The San Lorenzo Market has been transformed to cater to increasing tourist populations. For this reason, the San Lorenzo Market is classified as an organic ride.

The quality of leather from Florence is known all over the world. High quality, valuable leather jackets and handbags that require fine, detailed work are expensive. Tourists flock to the outdoor leather markets to get souvenirs they can take home. Many cannot afford the high prices. In San Lorenzo, anything and everything that can be made out of leather is sold in the market. Journals, bracelets, shoes, and much more accompany the traditional jackets and handbags. The quality of these products are far from what they used to be. Some of the leather is even made in places like India or China, assuming the leather is real at all. Tourism produced a very real and observable change in this beloved historical market. Now the market's sole purpose is to support the Florentine tourism industry

Leather sold at the San Lorenzo Market no longer meets any verifiable standards. Its only value lies in its point of sale and bargain price. Tourists want to buy cheap souvenirs they can take home and tout as "real Italian leather." As a result, massive quantities of poorly made leather products are produced, likely in sweatshops, to supply

the tourist demand. The same substandard leather products will go for different prices at each merchant stand. This forms the basis for the never-ending bargaining game that frequently cheats tourists out of their hard earned money. Although they are offered at much cheaper prices than higher quality leather, these products still generate a huge profit. Tourists regularly throw their money at anything they perceive to be Italian leather. Producers have no incentive to maintain quality and craftsmanship standards when tourists are just as willing to buy the lower quality products. The commodity-driven standards of the tourist leather industry has undermined the quality standards of traditional industry.

The San Lorenzo Market deceives tourists into thinking they are purchasing products from a traditional Florentine leather market. The traditional San Lorenzo Market existed under very different standards and circumstances. Therefore, the modern San Lorenzo Market represents the image of something that never really existed, a simulacrum. Here the image is not defined by tourists' preconceived notions, but rather by their lack of understanding. There are no transparent practices and products, and merchants take full advantage of that. Tourists understand the value these leather products should hold, but rarely understand how to determine that value.

Poor quality Florentine leather obviously detracts from the authenticity of the products. However, an even larger problem of authenticity is rampantly growing in the San Lorenzo Market. The merchants can now get away with selling fake or faux leather. Although Florentine laws may prohibit them from advertising the fake leather as real, many tourists are fooled by omission. Without distinguishing signs, tourist may just assume the products they purchase are real. A critical look at the label would clear the

confusion up quickly, but many tourists fail to do this. Relying on misplaced trust, they want to believe what they purchase is authentic. Even the legitimate leather products may not originate in Florence or Italy. Many are now imported from India or China. If produced in Italy, some leather products are produced in immigrant sweatshops.

The overwhelming presence of leather products in the San Lorenzo Market demonstrates an exaggerated post-modern mindset. Intensified and disconnected from the traditional craftsmanship of Florence, this leather market has only one purpose: tourist consumption. Native Florentines have no reason to go there and most likely never will. Each merchant stand features an eclectic variety of leather products following no sense of specialty or standard. Indeed, larger, profit-driven shops within the city often use merchant stands to display their mass-produced products in a more appealing manner. Tourists and their expendable income transformed the traditional commerce of the city, replacing it with a disjointed cluster of souvenir shops. The San Lorenzo Leather Market is just one such example of the intensified commercial land use that dominates Florence.

The Ponte Vecchio

The Ponte Vecchio, Florence's famed bridge reaching over the Arno River, suffers a similar predicament. The bridge has always hosted busy merchant life. The original butcher shops were replaced by goldsmiths in the 1500's. In current form, this tradition continues with a dense array of jewelry shops. The Ponte Vecchio is designated as an organic ride because of the bridge's long history in Florence.

There are some similarities to the San Lorenzo Market and tourist activity dominates the Ponte Vecchio. However, while crowds pack the street here, as in the market, the atmosphere is markedly different. People clamor around the glass cases and

windows to see the brilliant offerings of each shop. Most products sold here fall outside the price range of the average tourist. In this way, the shops embody more of an exhibition identity than a store front. Tourists content with just window shopping gaze distractedly in slow passing. Some will receive consultations with jewelers and try on the exciting pieces, but most treat it as just another photo opportunity in between the Duomo and the Boboli Gardens. A spectacular view of the river can be seen from a break in the middle of the shops. At sunset, large crowds of tourists crowd the ledges for their token river portrait.

The Ponte Vecchio generates substantial profit. The various jewelry merchants are the most obvious example, but other sources contribute as well. The space makes room for individual souvenir stands, although not to the extent of other areas. Additionally, panhandlers and gypsies frequent this area looking to take advantage of or outright steal from the unsuspecting tourists. Sly men stand by and on the bridge offering to help take photos, for a price. Street performers and artists dot the streets leading up to the bridge hoping for spare change. This busy route across the city guarantees contact with tourists. For this reason, it also ensures successful business. While not substantially different from that of the rest of the central city, these characteristics form a great representation of how commodification develops in Florence.

As mentioned, the Ponte Vecchio's history includes local butcher shops and goldsmiths. The true Ponte Vecchio never existed under these circumstances. However, as a simulacrum, the bridge attracts the outsiders that give it modern purpose. Transformed by the tourists it hosts, the bridge and its shops exist outside the comfort zone for locals. Despite any value the products there may hold, no native Florentine

enjoys spending time on the Ponte Vecchio or sifting through the dense crowd of tourists to reach the other side. The current version defies history and instead matches the expectations of tourists.

This issue of resident avoidance detracts authenticity from the bridge in a major way. The historical Ponte Vecchio existed as community space for the merchant city. Offering another opportunity for local businessmen to literally set up shop, this area generally provided Florentines with a service of one kind or another. Now, dedicated to tourists, the space itself has lost its authenticity. Native Florentines do not use it as a bridge, making it the perfect simulacrum. Additionally, the products, which range from jewelry to souvenirs, no longer provide much practical value for anyone choosing to purchase them. The whole bridge is one ride that will take you to other rides.

The Ponte Vecchio strongly represents the transcendence of a post-modern city. Upon entering the bridge, tourists feel as if they were in the Renaissance time, one they expect looked much like what they see now. Despite the misconception, this part of the urban landscape effectively reflects outsider expectations. As with this case, we see over and over again how small pieces of the city go through an observable transformation that alters the identity of Florence. The tourist presence demands the city adapt in this way to survive. Whatever the tourist wants suddenly becomes the best use of space.

American Bars and Pub Crawls

As the most recent ride incorporated into the city, American Bars and Pub Crawls represent what we can likely expect from the Florence Theme Park in the future. Only taking form in more recent years, this ride demonstrates no connection with historical

Florence or even the native residents. It is an entirely new ride introduced by the influx of outsiders.

Of the large spectrum of tourists descending upon Florence each year, Americans average around 600,000 in number. It is these outsiders, particularly the student population, which motivated the introduction of this modern ride into the Florence landscape. Thousands of students move to Florence each year looking for the classic study abroad experience. For many, this experience includes endless nights of partying, alcohol consumption, and bar hopping. Evidence of this activity is painfully obvious in the landscape. Bars and clubs, many with American names, pop up on every corner. The names act as virtual flashing signs that draw in American students and push away actual Italians. Furthermore, the Italians that frequent these places usually have predatory intentions. The establishments built for and sustained by the student tourism industry would not exist without it.

The logical reason to introduce such a lifestyle into a Renaissance landscape would be for potential profit. Students traveling to Florence and looking for a good time are willing to drop every dime they have on another exciting night out on the town. Even though drinking and partying could practically be done anywhere else in the world, bar hopping is now an important activity to be experienced at some point, if not frequently, during the students' study abroad semester. The overwhelming student tourist population demands that the bars exist in large number. They replace local businesses and take up prime real estate in historical buildings. In the Theme Park City, the commodity is a key defining element. This commodity is further exploited through countless pub crawls occurring every day of the week. During daylight, bar representatives stand on street

corners and pass out flyers advertising their services. Students, who are also inundated by advertisements through Facebook and email, accept the invitations like candy. By the time evening rolls around, they have a pretty extensive plan for how to spend their cash while getting as many drinks as possible. These bars have found the perfect market to exploit and they do so quite freely.

American bars in Florence demonstrate the clearest example of a simulacrum we could probably find. This concept has been reproduced over and over again in easily recognizable, but incomplete, ways. For example, just a few blocks from the Duomo, the popular spot, Uncle Jimmy's, attracts hoards of young Americans every night of the week. Uncle Jimmy's could be the name of any bar in the United States; but it is not. Instead, Uncle Jimmy's is a copy of the generic American bar and is given a generic American name.

Copying the concept of an American bar does not necessarily make it authentic. These American bars in Florence are owned and operated by non-Americans. They serve European brands of alcohol and practice the daily aperitivo, an exaggerated happy hour. Even an American concept cannot remain whole under the influence of a foreign space. The host space and the intruder transform each other in a reciprocal fashion. What emerges is a complicated fusion of two very different ideas. The bars take on their own identities, effectively becoming inauthentic copies, but unprecedented originals. In this way, the Theme Park City could be a hodgepodge of disjointed ideas, or a reinvented city-scape.

The American bars and pub crawls are the one ride that brings true variability to the Florence Theme Park. Each of the other rides developed in a similar fashion out of

strong historical foundations. The bars, and other post-modern rides like it, create fractures between the historically connected landscape until the identity of the city is quite ambiguous. Simply put, origin and history are clouded by possibility and profit. Like all rides, the American bars are exaggerated and designed for maximum consumption. The images that each bar sells to the tourist students are governed by tourist expectation, perception, and possibility for profit. The larger the possibility for profit, it is more likely the drastic transformation of the ride.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by these five rides, the Theme Park City framework is applied to Florence in very specific ways. Both historical and modern features exist side by side to form a complex urban landscape. The framework criteria make it possible to analyze this complexity and determine the extent to which the transformation of the city has occurred. This varies not only from ride to ride within the city, but from city to city as well. Each Theme Park City may exhibit similar characteristics to one another, but never quite in the same way. Furthermore, the criteria will always apply, but to different extents.

Utilizing this framework to analyze other cities, possibly London or Paris, could provide interesting comparisons. The concentration of the criteria and the distribution of the types of rides would surely differ greatly from those demonstrated by Florence. I contend that further analyses of these cities is strongly warranted. Doing so would allow us to track the transformation globally and determine how cultural circumstances affect the intensity of the framework criteria.

The Theme Park City is difficult to understand when observed as a whole. However, if treated as the fractured landscape that it is, analyzing the internal processes

and transformations becomes infinitely more manageable. The Theme Park City framework is a tool for observing the electric nature of the city and for pinpointing the exact change occurring or that has occurred. Although not intended to be exclusive, the framework criteria represent the most consistent characteristics of a Theme Park City.

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