Space planning in Rome can be quite fascinating as well as general design decisions and finishes. Both the St. Regis and the Boscolo Exedra had architectural details that emphasize the historical approach to Roman architecture and interiors. Some of these details such as arches, porticos, atriums etc. will be seen throughout the essay and are vital to understanding the Roman approach to order and wayfinding.

Exedra is part of a multiuse building built on top of the Baths of Diocletian. The name of the hotel “exedra” is a direct reflection of the form of the building, which follows the original baths shape as seen below in an overlay sketch of the baths and the current street/site plan.

This location is excellent in terms of access to public transportation as it is right in front of the a metro stop, and Termini bus depot. From the Piazza della Republica, the entrance to the space is very prevalent and noticeable. One can arrive in the space using one of two rotating doors located under a portico. The main entrance is made very clear through the use of a hierarchy and differentiation in the dome above the door.

There are several different areas throughout the space to help develop a mental map. When entering the space, I found it easiest to dissect it into the main components, then to explore the adjacencies and relationships between these spaces. The reception also served as a large primary circulation space long a wide in shape with the proportions of 4:1. It was split visually by components such as the two rotating doors, large reception desk, and archways showing visual connections to other spaces.
This main circulation path gives access to the following destination domains: elevator banks, emergency egress, restaurant lobby, and retail. This circulation pattern is linear and very clear. The user stays along the exterior boundary as they move through the space and maintains the same visual connections of what's ahead and behind them from any location. This is useful in wayfinding and creates a space that is well ordered and easy to read.

It also has a visual connection and access to the center of the space which is a large lounge area centered off of the main entrance. The boundary of this space is clearly defined using a series of columns and archways. The space is rectangular in plan with a semicircle added to one of the short ends. It provides direct access to a small retail shop and an additional entrance into the main hotel restaurant/bar area. This adjacency is important, as there are menus on each of the table suggesting the patron may sit and have a coffee or aperitif in this multi-functional lounge area.
This space is considered a center due to the grand scale and visual importance. It is used by both the public and “residents” of the hotel and contains a landmark of the space- a large centerpiece and chandelier.

Leading into the restaurant, the interior changes dramatically. This space differs in tone and lighting as well as material selection. It is a darker space with stronger boundaries and less visual connections to the other spaces. It is more intimate in setting where the furniture further divides the space into smaller domains used for individual dining parties. These boundaries are defined using booths and square columns. The ceiling boundary is also more of an intimate setting compared to the large high ceilings in the other spaces.
The circulation of the restaurant is still linear and contains a single main path but nodes interrupt it: beverage and server stations. In the bar, there are a few nodes along the circulation path where seating areas are.

The center also has a less obvious adjacency to an additional hotel desk. The addition of this second “lobby” node is a little confusing to understand the purpose and necessity. There seemed to be two hotel desks and as a patron, this could become confusing.
The overall read of the space is relatively simple in comparison to the St. Regis Rome. It was easy to make a mental map of the space after walking through it once. Signs were unnecessary and not prevalent or available as the space visually connected to many of the destination domains as well as the center. As the patron moved into the center, more connections were visible reinforcing the notion of that being the center.

The St. Regis was much more complicated. It is located across the Piazza within the same area, which again makes approach and access fairly simple. It’s main entry is as highlighted on the map below and it’s relation to the Exedra and Baths of Diocletian is also shown.

The arrival of this hotel was reminiscent of a courtyard processional entrance. It is similar in relationship to urban, public, and private environment as a traditional Roman house; as the patron moves into the space they progressively move into a more private area. This relationship is shown in the diagram of entrance space.
Upon entering the space, confusion initially set it. It is a highly decorated Baroque style space adorned with mirrors on walls, doors and ceilings. The ceilings are vaulted and the floor changes levels often the colors are rich and deep in color reds and golds. The eye is very overwhelmed and there are few spaces of relief both visually and physically.

The reception desk was located to the right upon entry and there was a small sign to point the patron in the correct direction. It wasn’t an open area like Exedra but rather a smaller room.
Straight ahead a large archway revealed a large waiting area but it was unclear whether this was for the public or just patrons as it was a multi-tiered room with dining on the second tier. This room was the most overwhelming as it contained level changes not only in the floor but ceiling height differences, wall niches, etc. as shown in the images on page 5.

The path through the space was very open and determined by the user of the space. While in plan, the centers boundaries are clear; the mirror treatments on vertical surfaces create visual confusion. This waiting space is definitely the center as it contains a landmark chandelier. One could argue the entire space itself as a landmark; it is very memorable and different from the surrounding spaces and has a clear line of site to an important boundary marker, the exterior.
The overall circulation of the space can also be classified as linear and takes the shape of a “U” surrounding the main areas accessible. The main circulation path was broken into smaller pieces and differentiated using differing flooring materials and series of small archways. Visually, this helped to break up the linear element into more manageable sections and patterns. The destination spaces along the path were not clearly marked and the closed doors closed the adjacency between the spaces making it difficult to know where you were. There were a few hidden destination spots that were clear: an outdoor courtyard and two large staircases on opposing corners. These are marked on the plan.

There were also a large amount of nodes throughout the circulation plan for areas of rest marked by furniture in small seating arrangements.
The last noticeable thing about this space is that it advertised commercial properties such as a retail shop and day spa but when one tries to access these areas they were near impossible to locate. The wayfinding was non-existent except for a sign saying “Piano 6” or “Floor 6”, however, the elevator only accesses up to floor 4.

Overall the order of this space is mediocre. After experiencing the space, one can begin to form a rough mental map but only after further and deep analysis could the viewer form an accurate representation of the space. This is shown in the way of the two separate diagrams. The first diagram is the bubble diagram made sitting in the Grand Salon and the second is the floorplan taken from the egress sign heavily analyzed.