

INTRODUCTION

Research Topic:

Through the P1 research of "Whose Neighborhood?", we considered the space of our site as various rooms that the neighbourhood contains, and rich stories with characters were hidden inside the islands. When I look at the site again, I find that the structure of the "rooms" can be divided into three levels: Layer 1 (visible, open public space), Layer 2 (facade visible, private residence/industry), and Layer 3 (invisible/facade visible, small business/studio/school/residence/homestay).

Interestingly, usually the layer 3 is considered as urban grey space, that is the buffer zone (such as retails and studios) between open public space and private residential area. It is the space that can best reflect the quality of street life in a neighborhood. However, in Anderlecht, the buffer zone is located at the innermost layer and completely separated from the layer 2 (residential area). It disrupts the order of the transformation from public to private, while replaced by the transformation from public to private and then to semi public, which to a certain extent explains why the boundaries between each level are so clear, while the distributions of inside and outside, public and private, and front and back are confused.

So, the research question is: **How do urban public space and buffer zone contribute to the street life of Anderlecht neighborhood?**

- Where you are allowed to enter? Are the users happy to be seen or not?
- What is the grade of public and private?
- What does a "street corner" mean? What can the street corner contribute to the neighborhood?
- Is there any (potential) connection with the sets of "rooms"? Is there any interlacing between the "characters" and between the "stories"?
- What can people at two sides of the "wall" share from each other?
- Is there any (potential) multi-used space? In what time does these space are used/spare? Are they used by the same group of people? Are they used as the same function?

keywords:

Enclosure: the entrances/edges between the layers

Joint: street corners/(potential)shared space/interior public space

Flow: changes in space usage over time

Nolli map can be the main tool to explore the research question:

"The 1748 Map of Rome, *La nuova topografia di Roma*, by Giambattista Nolli is widely regarded as one of the most important historical documents of the city ever created. The map records the situation of the city and its suburb accurately and contains a wealth of detailed information. Nolli map represents the city's urban form by figure-ground plan and expresses an understanding of the urban structure, urban fabric and public space of Rome, It is regarded as an exemplum of historical and theoretical significance. Nolli map was chosen as the design basis for Roma Interrotta in 1978." (by LI Mengran, FENG Jiang, *An Analysis of the Value of the Nolli Map's Analytical Method*)

In Nolli map, the filled blocks are like black pieces, and the streets and squares are blank spaces between pieces. The blank is surrounded by black fragments, with a very distinct boundary and shape, which becomes the figure of the drawing, while the black part is the ground of the figure. This relationship is called the figure-ground. The figure-ground actually reflects the relationship between public space and the entity in the Nolli map. The public space is represented as a concrete figure in the map, which can be clearly perceived as the surrounding buildings that define it. The streets of the city are surrounded by buildings on both sides, and the squares are surrounded by buildings around them. The continuous building facades constitute the "walls", making the space a volumetric entity: the squares become outdoor "rooms", and the streets become outdoor "corridors". Rome in the map seems to be a building consisting of various "rooms" and "corridors", which is a valuable reference of "rooms" in Anderlecht.



- Layer 1 (visible, open public space)
- Layer 2 (facade visible, private residence/industry)
- Layer 3 (invisible/facade visible, small business/studio/school/residence/homestay)

Research Methods:

The P2 research is a continuation of the P1 research.

At P1 with the topic of "Whose Neighborhood?", spatial narrative as a phenomenological research method is adopted as the main approach to explore the neighborhood in the given context. The specificity of this method lies in the use of phenomenology to read places and conduct spatial experience. It requires the researcher to perceive the atmosphere with multiple senses instead of only sight observation, which means during the field investigation, sound recordings, videos, interviews and texture rubbings are as important as photographs.

In our case, both outside and inside space of Anderlecht neighborhood are considered as various "rooms", thus form a continuous narrative with characters and events in it. The narrative is represented by 3 parts:

1. The composed film compares and contrasts the different realities of the city, revealing a collective perception of the neighborhood. Along with telling a tale, the movie depicts the experience of the neighborhood from a sensory point of view, allowing the viewer to hear, see and feel;
2. The scenes we filmed became our sets, the people we interviewed became our characters. Each "room", along with each person, has a story to tell;
3. The script holds a description on the setting in which all these stories take place. It forms a glossary to all these stories which can be used to cut and edit into a plot line for a film.

The P2 research explores the relation of "room" sequences in a whole public/semi-public space system. A mapping based on the reference of Nolli map is used as the main method to represent how the "rooms", especially public space and buffer zone, interlace with each other and work together to contribute to the street life of the neighborhood.

In the mapping, private spaces are depicted as blocks and the interiors are blacked, while streets, squares, public buildings and public parts of private buildings are classified as the same kind, with their first floor plans depicted and the interiors left blank. It emphasizes the existence of private spaces as the background of both external and internal public space in the city: the black blocks become the substrate of the space and the redundancy of the city, while the public/semi-public space system composed of open space and public buildings has become a dynamic and positive element, forming the skeleton of the city as well as representing the street life of a neighborhood.

In addition, typology is used as the further development of Nolli map, which particularly elaborates the different qualities of the various types of street corner in the neighborhood.

Products:

1. Introduction brochure
2. Main Nolli map, with compass, scale and legend
3. Newspaper, elaborating the connection between research and design
4. A series of cards: zoom-in sketches/storyboard along the wall and the railway
5. A series of cards: typological categories of street corners
6. Design booklet: group and individual

Related Issues:

1. The definition of the urban public space:

- outside space: 1) urban street
- 2) urban square, parks
- 3) landscape elements
- 4) semi-private alley
- 5) semi-private courtyard
- inside space: 1) public part of public building (churches, museums, schools, libraries, city halls...)
- 2) public part of private building (commercial area, shared office...)

2. The relationship:

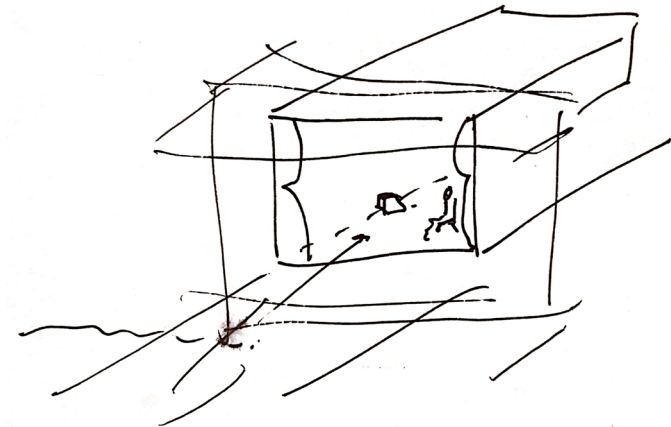
- open&close≠public&private≠outside&inside≠front&back

3. The way to present the research

- not only plan, but also sections which can show the heights and materials, and story board which can show the users and activities happened at some important joints.

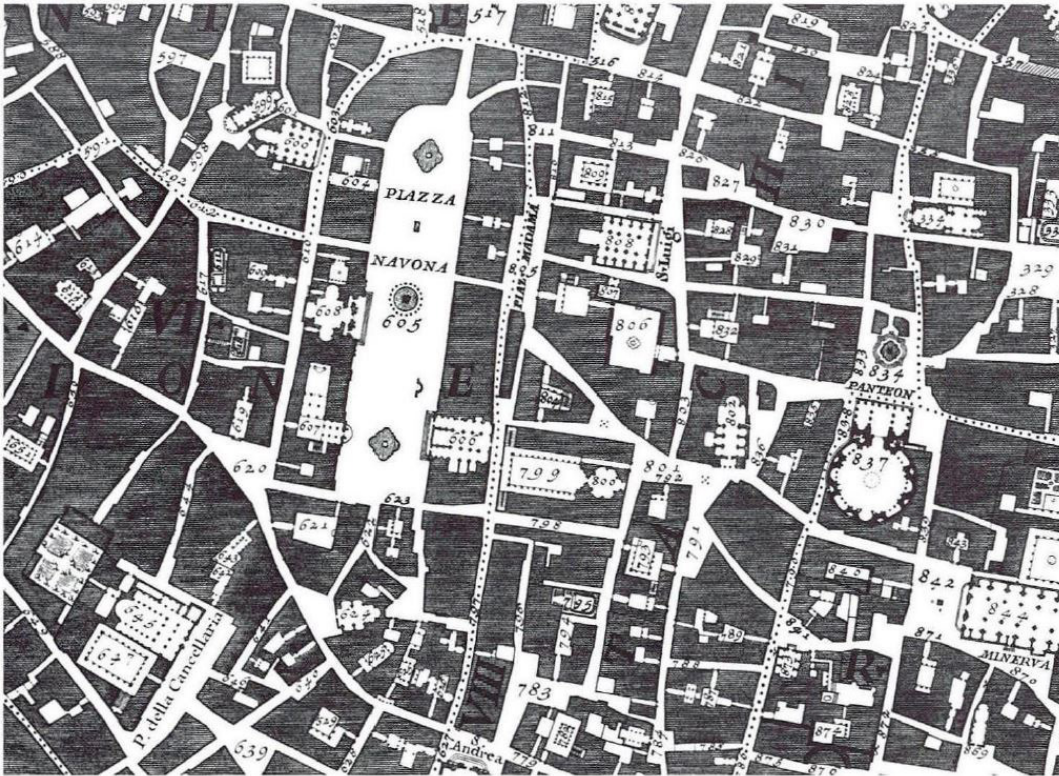
4. Ambiguous space:

- visual accessible while physically unaccessible
- physical accessible but private
- buffer zone between public&private/outside&inside
- accessibility changing over time or usage

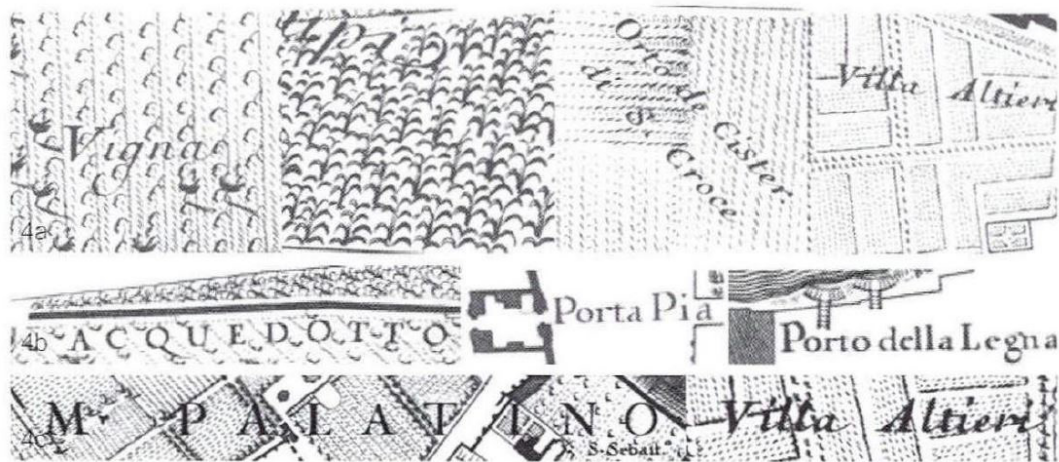


5. The reference Nolli Map was been made according to the context of Roma. In terms of Anderlecht, there may be some adjustments in making the Nolli Map, especially the definition of urban public space. Making a new principle like accessibility to define black and white is one of the way to explore the characteristic quality of public space in our site.

Reference:



Main body of Nolli Map

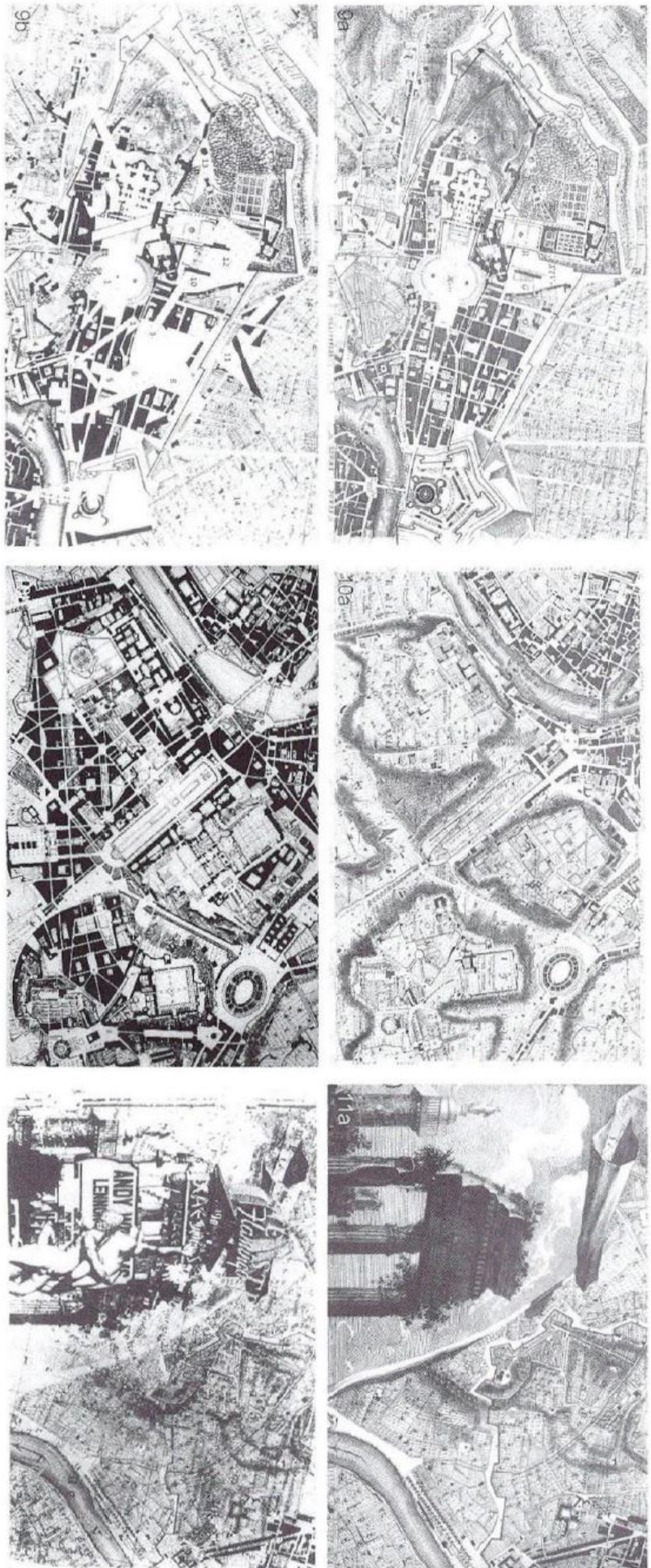


Legend and text in Noli map



Compass, scale and number in Noli map

Reference:



Different versions of Noli map
Right: original Nollis map
Left: recreated Nollis map

LI Mengran, FENG Jiang, *An Analysis of the Value of the Nollis Map's Analytical Method*

Literature:

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Research

Urban Architecture
2019/2020

Reflection

What I get from the P1 research?

1. Layers definition
2. Public domain: In a given site, the public domain we see as visitors is usually different from the accessible area for a resident who is familiar with the neighborhood. Publicity is relative. Some public areas are only public to local residents and the openness changes overtime.

What I get from the mapping?

1. Public/private system: As already found in p1 research, some public areas are only public to local residents and the openness changes overtime.
2. Blocks: The hidden islands where the possible street life might happen are only connected to the street through a narrow alley, and there are no connections between them. In our urban design, we reverse the texture to make the public facilities more accessible for people.
3. Street corners: There are 9 corners showed in the mapping, and each of them has its own quality. The street corner, a central place of urban life, serves as a social meeting place and represents the best opportunity to reorient the neighborhood. A well-designed urban corner creates an attractive scenery and gives strong visual appeal to the streetscape. However, in the case of Anderlecht, the vitality of street corner doesn't seem to have been developed, with some corners even work as an end. In my architectural proposal, the street corner is an important concept and the perception of a street corner will be present from multi-sense according to the exploration of the street corners around our site.
4. The wall: Now the space along the wall and the railway is used as storage and car parking, but interesting activities still happened there. In our urban design, we keep the wall since it has potential to create second-hand space along itself that can reverse the back to the front and guide the transition between public and private.

Public Area from the Perspective of a Visitor



- Outside public area (including parks and playgrounds)
- Inside public area (including schools and the church)
- Private area

Accessible Area from the Perspective of a Resident



- Accessible area (public)
- Accessible area (private/semi-private)
- Inaccessible area
- Entrance

Layers Definition



- Layer 1 (visible: open public space)
- Layer 2 (facade visible: private residence/retail/industry/school)
- Layer 3 (invisible: small business/office/studio/homestay/playground of the school)

Grey Map (urban design)



- Private
- Public building
- Accessible courtyard
- Open public space