

buildings as solids. Gibberd suggested an alternative form of mapping.²¹ He suggested alternating the way the form and ground are represented: in this type of map the buildings remain white and the public spaces, the streets and squares are represented as black. This change of perspective concentrates the mind not on the buildings and their forms, but on the spaces between the buildings, the anti-form (Figure 3.39). A basic visual analysis of the city should include these two figure ground studies. From these studies it should be possible to highlight weaknesses in the enclosure of public space, points of weak connection and the general characteristics of spatial composition.

Useful techniques for spatial analysis are the aerial photograph, aerial perspective and the aerial axonometric (Figures 7.6 to 7.10). The aerial photograph shows the relationship of the building forms to the surrounding public and private open space at a given time. Unfortunately, the choice of viewpoint is often not under the control of the designer. A time series of aerial photographs can give valuable insights into recent developments. Both the aerial perspective and aerial axonometric have the advantage of greater control and choice of vantage point. The aerial axonometric is a little easier to construct than the perspective, particularly if it is simplified to show buildings in block form. For this reason it is used more often than the perspective during the analytical stages of the design process. It is a particularly simple procedure for use with the computer which can translate a two-dimensional map together with spot heights, into a series of axonometric drawings from a multitude of viewpoints. When used in this way, the aerial axonometric becomes a powerful design tool. The aerial perspective is usually reserved for the presentation of the completed proposal either to the client or at public exhibition.

The distorted bird's eye perspective used by J.H. Aronson to illustrate the form of a public square and show its relationship to the city is a remarkable tool for the analysis of urban form.²² The technique

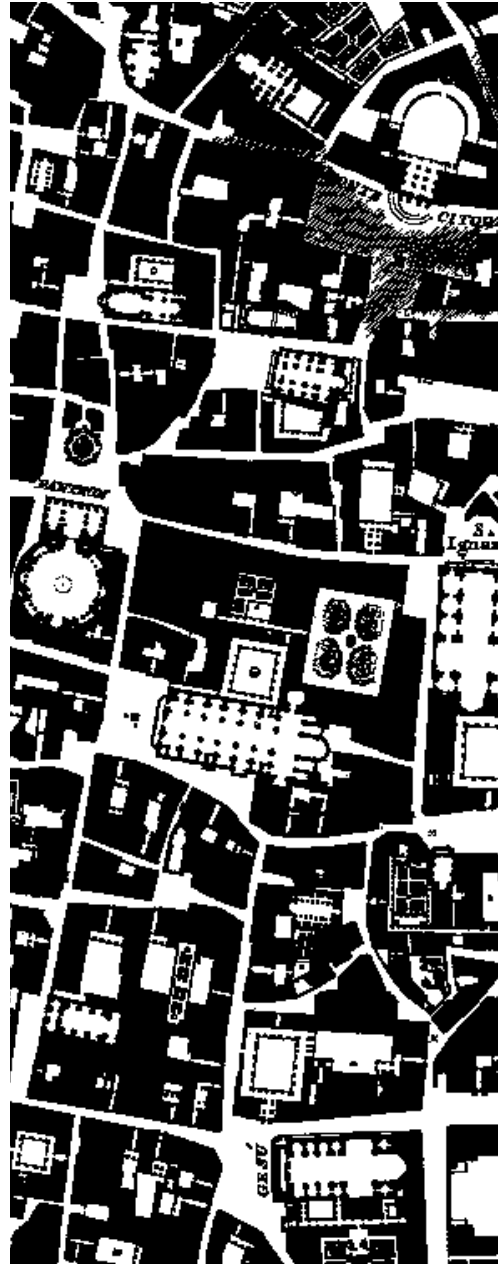


Figure 3.38 Fragment of the map of Rome by Giambattista Nolli.