Nolli to New Town
A tale of two urban blocks


HSBC
HOBART HOUSE
FUTON
sale
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sale
FUTON
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sale
FUTON
OPEN


Henderson's SHOP & DELI
Salvatore
lyden
NEAL'S YARD REMEDIES

Content

## Content

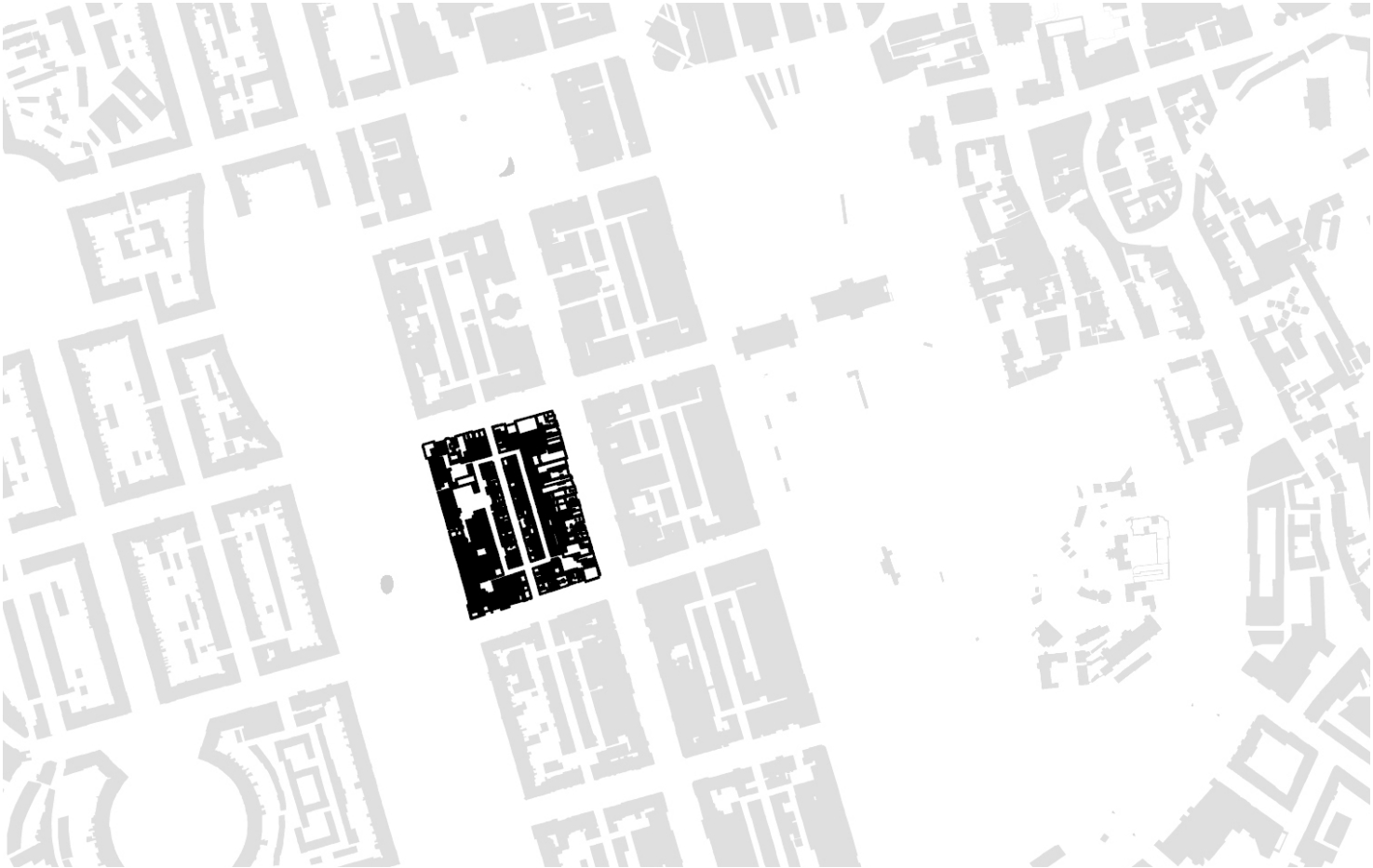
Discussion

Discussion

Giambattista Nolli (1701-1756) created a map of Rome in response to Pope Benedict XIV's commission to survey and draw boundaries for the 14 districts of Rome. To produce the ichnography plan of Rome Nolli made several innovations; first by orientating the map to the North (rather than to the East as in Bufalini's map of 1551); and second, Nolli represented enclosed public spaces such as the Pantheon as open civic spaces.
He began surveying Rome in 1736 and published what is now widely refered to as The Nolli Map in 1748.

The Nolli projects aims to explore how rational spaces in a contemporary city interact with their surroundings.

Edinburgh offered an appropriate setting to look at spaces within a contemporary city, which have been forced to evolve over time in response to the social and economic demands of society. The study looked at two blocks within the city, a Georgian planned block in the New Town and a residential block in the Marchmont area of Edinburgh.



Location

New Town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New Town

New Town

For the New Town area the block located between George Street, Queen Street, Hannover Street and Frederick Street was chosen. The block was planned as a part of James Craig's master plan for the New Town built between 1765 and 1850. The New Town was originally conceived as a purely residential suburb with a few shops confined to the ground floor. However, the area is now dominated by commercial activities with George Street in particular having almost no residences. The situation on Hannover and Frederick Street is similar whilst Queen Street does still offer large town house properties but is largely given over to office space. The block is dissected by Thistle Street and two lanes, which stem from it. These would originally have been used as service mews for the large town houses. The lanes are now used as the back of house for the large commercial properties and the street house independent shops and café's.

Marchmont


Marchmont

In Marchmont the block defined by Strathearn Road, Whitehouse Loan, Thirlestane Road and Marchmont Road was studied. This block was built as part of a planned residential development and the buildings are predominantly 4 storey Victorian tenements. A narrow mews runs from Marchmont Road down the middle of the block stopping before reaching the former convent (now a conference centre) which occupies the west end of the block. The mews would originally have been used for stables at the rear of the homes but is now filled with cars and garages. Warrander baths is located midway along Thirlestane Road and was opened in 1887 as a private bath house and is still in use today. Although the area was initially planned as a dry area and licensed premises were not allowed there are now a few licensed premises and a variety of small shops.

# Definitions

Definitions

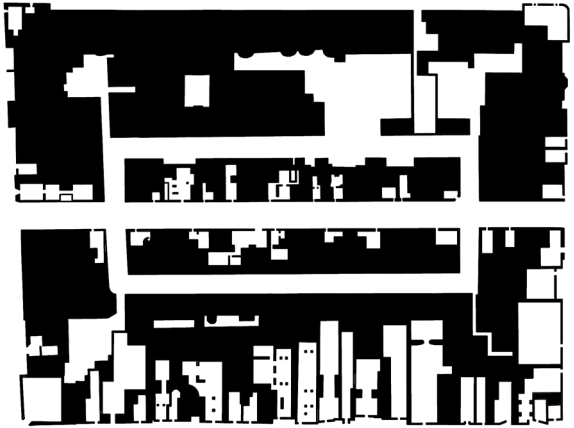
The process of drawing the New Town and Marchmont blocks as a Nolli plan prompts the consideration of what is actually public and private within each. Although the black and white approach to representing space within the city appears simple the decisions that have to be made in order to produce a final drawing are numerous and Nolli himself must have encountered similar issues when surveying Rome. During the study of the two city blocks factors such as, time of day, monetary obligations and levels of inhibition were found to complicate the definition of public space.

At what time of day should a Nolli plan be drawn? Looking specifically at the New Town site, in the morning shops and cafes are open but restaurants, bars and clubs are closed. As the day progress these facilities open and close changing what is public and what is private. Depending on the individual walking through the site and their own level of inquiry different spaces become public or private. In the Marchmont block the conference centre at the west end of the block has numerous signs, which suggest private land, but there are no physical barriers stopping an individual from wandering in.
Is a building really public if you are obliged to pay something when you are in the space? There are many shops, café's, restaurants and bars throughout the New Town block and depending on where the line is drawn on this issue can dramatically change the outcome of the Nolli plan. It is worth noting at this point that this is an issue which Nolli must have dealt with as shops are not represented as public space in his plan of Rome.
If an open space is not accessible is it public? Again this is an issue which Nolli dealt with in his plan of Rome and decided to represent closed courtyards within blocks as public space. This issue arises in the Marchmont block where the Victorian tenements have shared garden spaces accessed from locked closes.

Analysis and discussion of these factors provides a complex and ever changing definition of public space and allow an appreciation of the subtle rules and conventions which govern life in the modern city.

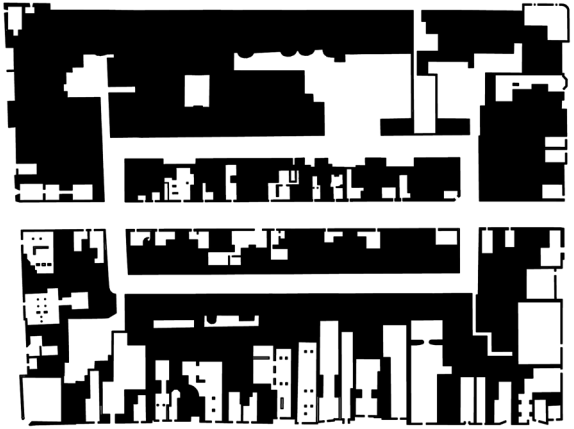
Time

New Town



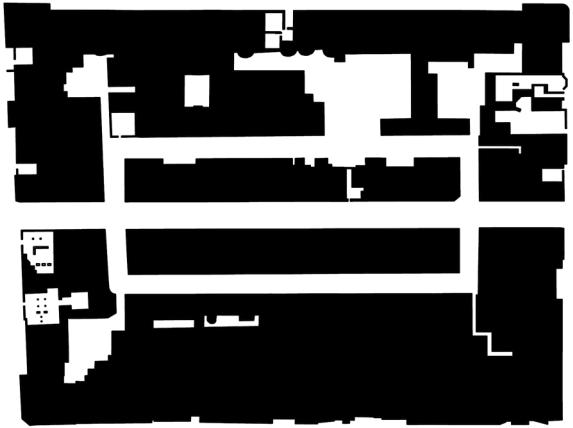
Morning

New Town



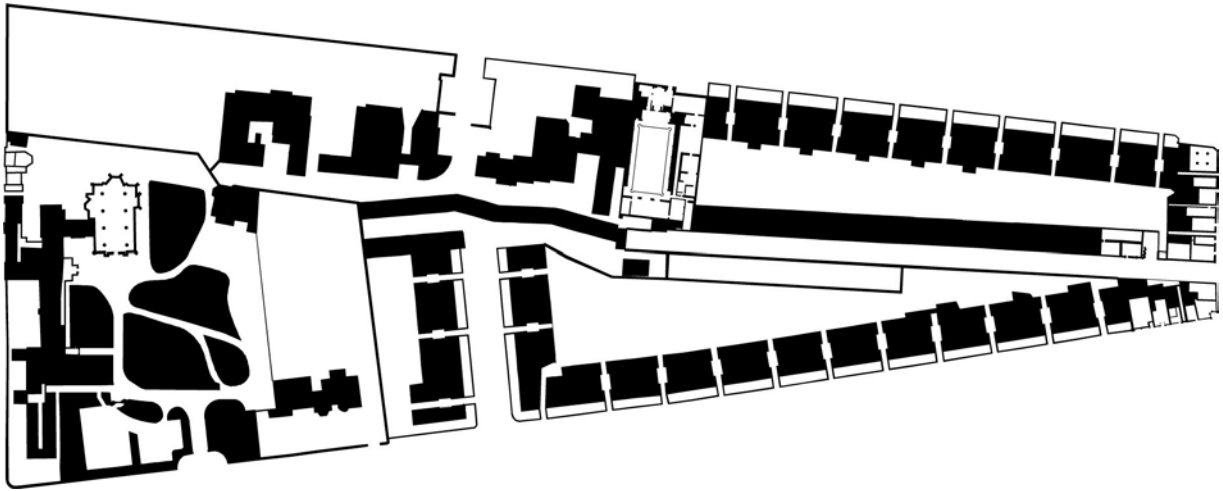
Afternoon

New Town



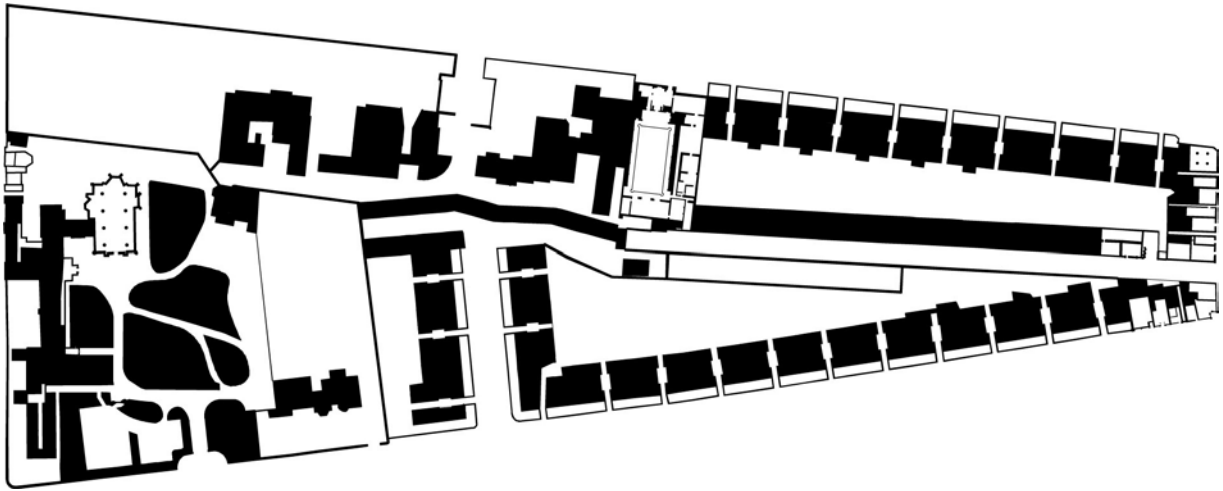
Evening

Marchmont



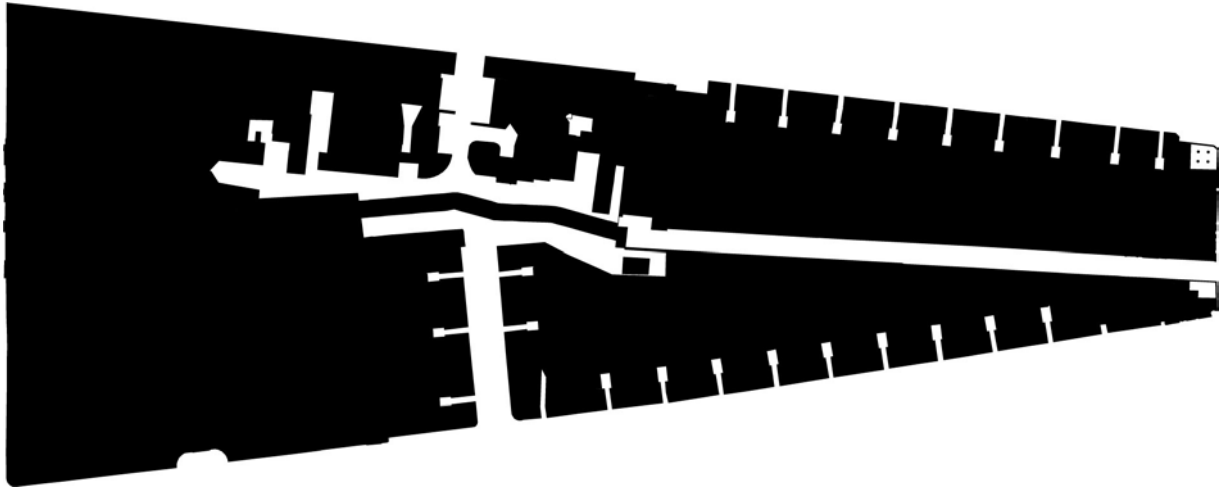
Morning

Marchmont



Afternoon

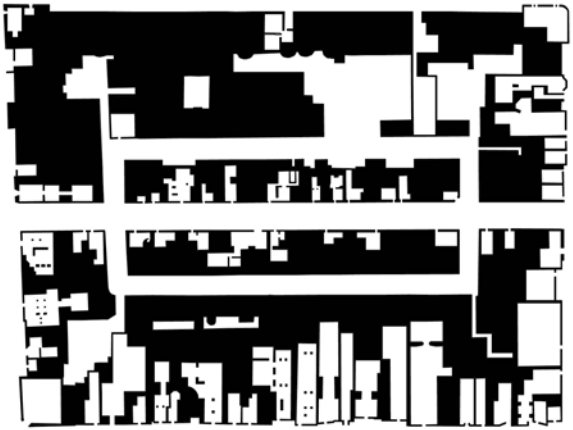
Marchmont



Evening

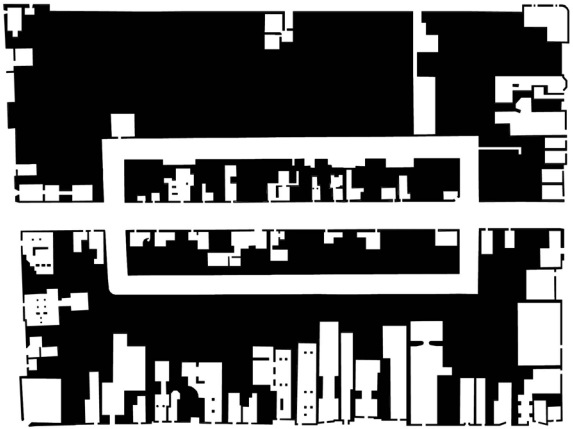
# Levels of Enquiry

New Town



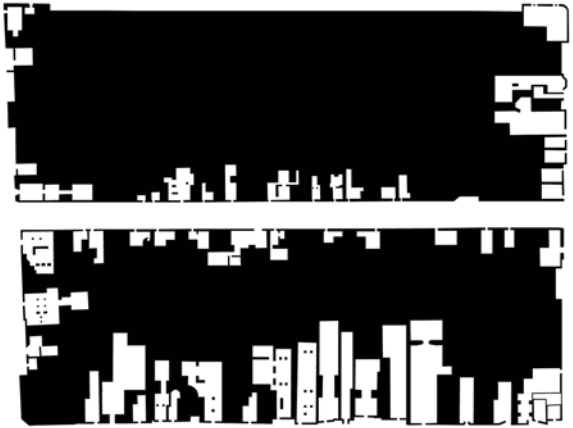
High

New Town



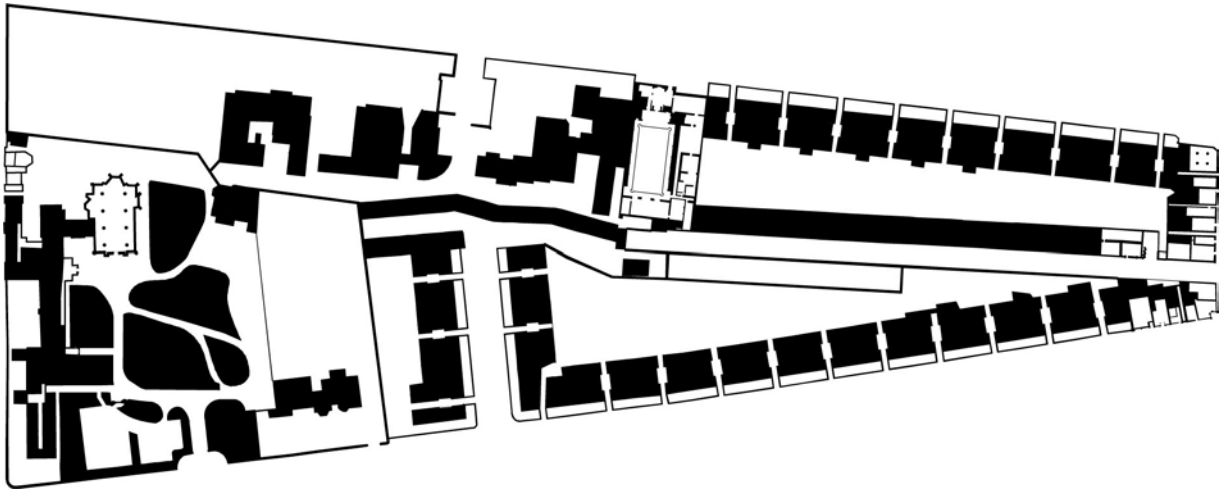
Typical

New Town



Low

Marchmont



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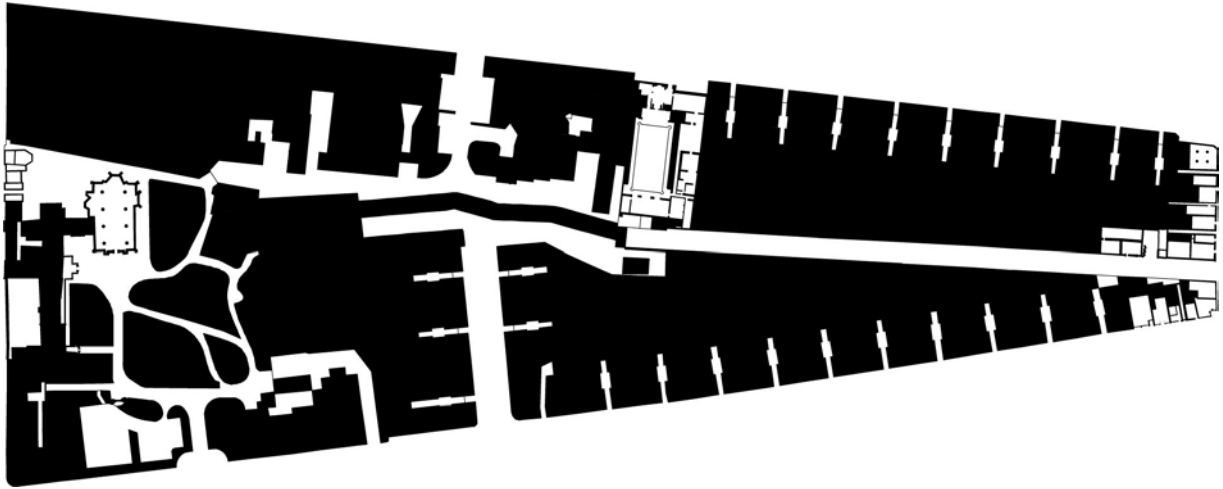
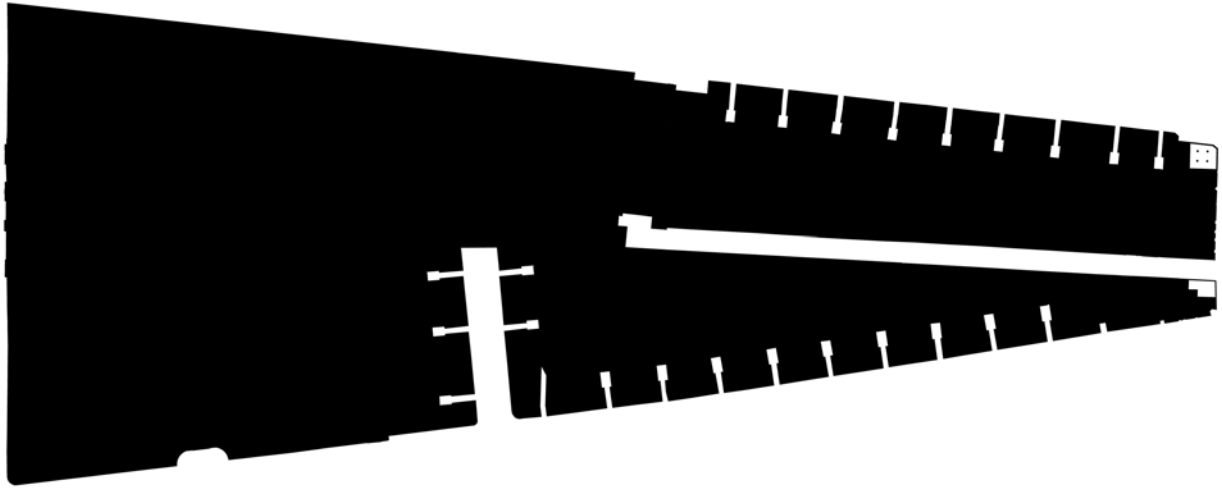
Marchmont



Typical

Marchmont



Low

# Degrees of Obligation

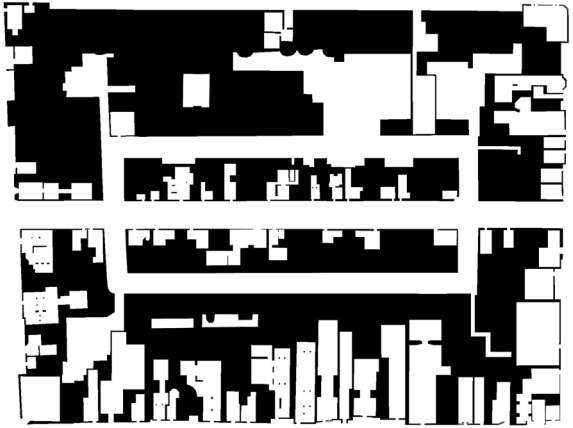
New Town

No Obligation

New Town

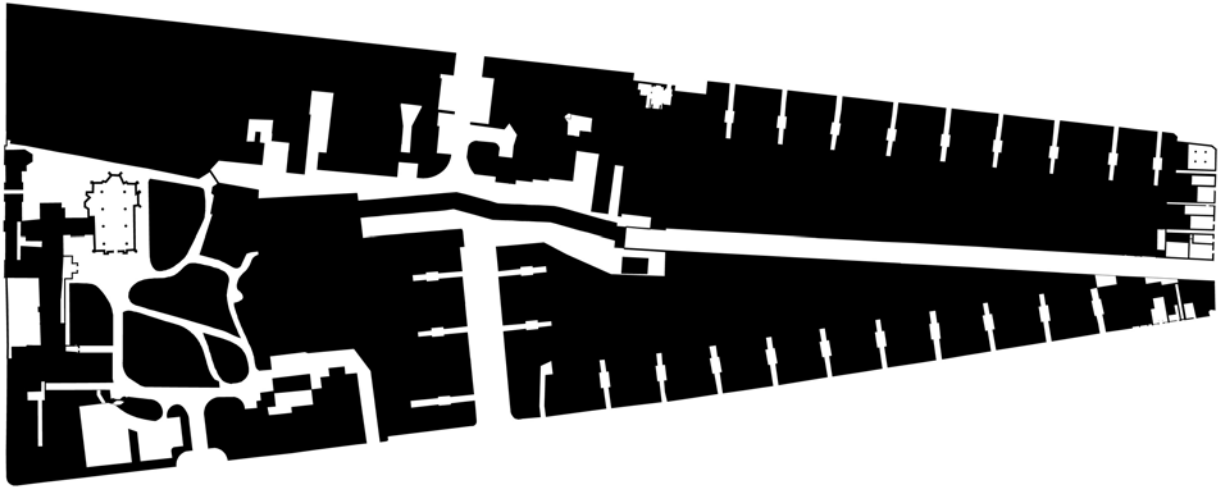
Requirement to pay

New Town



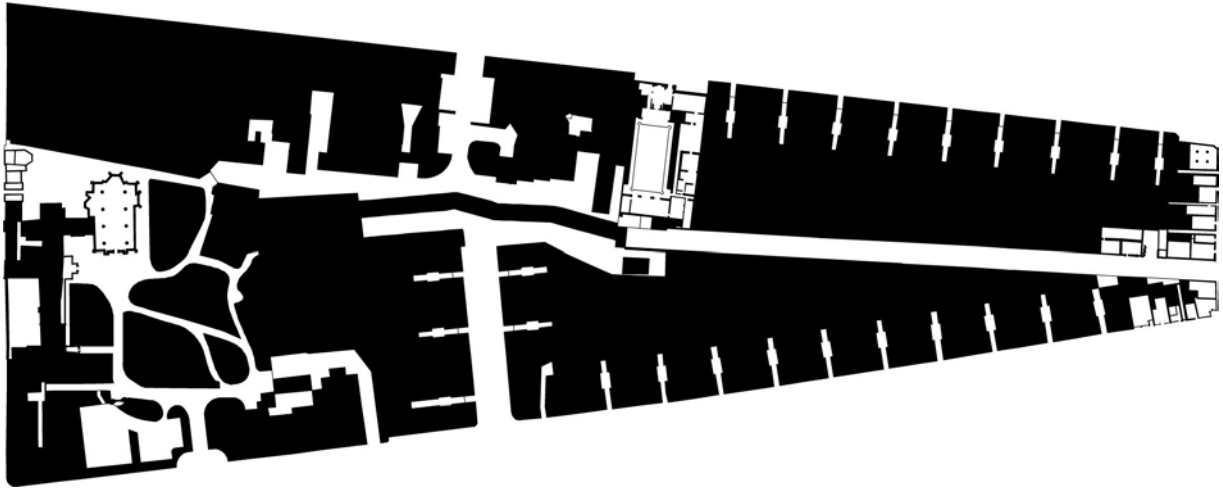
Prior Agreement

Marchmont



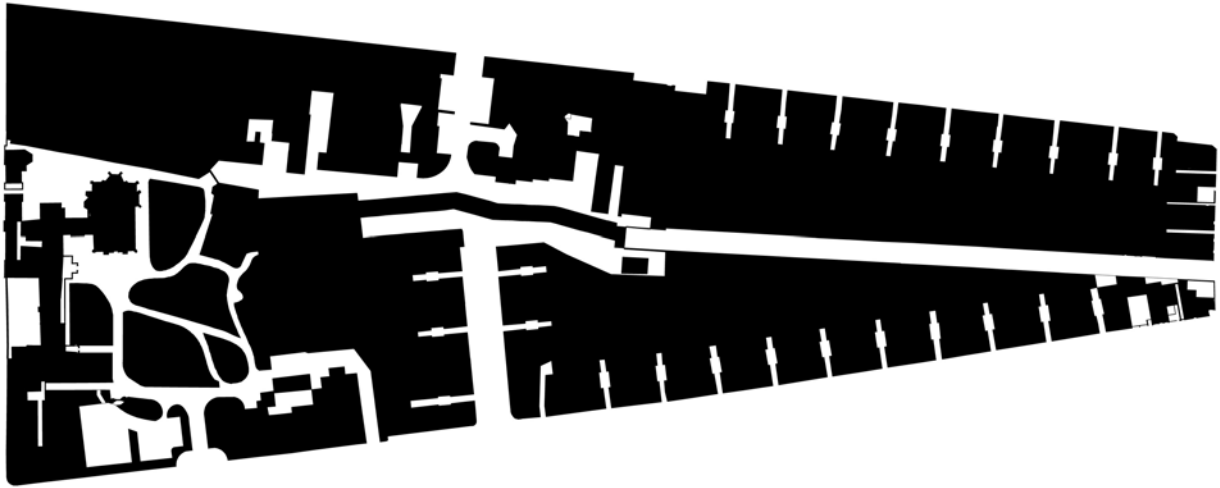
No Obligation

Marchmont



Requirement to Pay

Marchmont



Prior Agreement

Further Reading

## Further Reading

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