

From Imagination to City, an exhibition that explores the development process of a city



Workshop based on 'Dogville' by Lars von Trier, Theaterplein Antwerp, Belgium (Secchi, Viganò & Jaspaert) © Tom Cortoos

# Antwerp as a laboratory for the city of the future

**How does architecture make a city? This was the central question that the University of Antwerp's Faculty of Design Sciences and the Flanders Architecture Institute decided to explore. As their test case, they used Antwerp, a complex city in which experimental design plays a leading role. The result can be seen in From Imagination to City, an exhibition that lays bare the hidden mechanisms of the metropolis.**

For many of us, a city is something self-evident. It is a static concept, an accumulation of buildings and streets that we pass through every day on our way to work, or our journey home. "Nevertheless, behind this visible city lies a veritable laboratory", says Stefan Siffer, co-curator of From Imagination to City. "A city like Antwerp is the result of an intense development process, in which the transfer of knowledge plays a crucial role."

*“Behind the visible city lies a veritable laboratory”* Stefan Siffer, Co-curator of ‘From Imagination to City’

**Designing a medium-sized city**

From Imagination to City shows how projects that are the tangible result of design research have been applied to the Antwerp City Region. The University of Antwerp’s Faculty of Design Sciences went in search of the mechanisms that invent, represent and shape the city. And Siffer believes that as a test case, the city on the Scheldt was an obvious choice: “For decades, Antwerp has been playing a pioneering role in city development processes in which design-based research plays a leading role.” It was not for nothing that the Antwerp City Architect won the Flemish Culture Prize in 2012 for the use of design-based research in city development policy. In From Imagination to City it is comparable with other medium-sized European cities with populations of between 400,000 and 900,000.



Antwerp Meir, A house of literature gives the Meir a new look © Carole Boeckx

The exhibition provides an insight into the implicit logic of a city: its collective images, its different moods and possible scenarios for its future. On a series of worktables, six Antwerp projects that merit closer attention in the future are examined in the light of historical and international examples. Areas of the city like the Seefhoek, the 20th-century belt and the old port area are also featured. “The 21st-century city needs ideas and stories that confirm its relevance”, explains Lara Schrijver, Professor at the UA and the co-curator of From Imagination to City.

## *“The 21st century city needs ideas and stories that confirm its relevance”*

Professor Lara Schrijver, UA

### **Vision for the future**

The conceptual exercises featured in this exhibition give residents, policy makers and visitors the chance to imagine the impact that a new building or a new city square could have on the way that a city is experienced. Lara Schrijver believes that vision plays a crucial role in this: “For many city residents, urban development is an abstract concept. We hope that a glimpse into our laboratory will help to explain the vision for the future.”

From Imagination to City is part of PROJECTIONS, a series of exhibitions in which the Flanders Architecture Institute and deSingel provide a platform for existing research in Flanders. The driving factors behind the choice of projects are social themes and/questioning the role of the discipline of architecture **in society**.

Colophon:

**production** Flanders Architecture Institute & deSingel International Arts Campus

**curators** Lara Schrijver (University of Antwerp) en Stefan Siffer (Flanders Architecture Institute)

**development** Dirk Janssen, Erik Wieërs, Wannes Peeters, Bram Denkens, Marnik Heijligen

**based on research of** Onderzoeksgroep Henry van de Velde and the Master Architecture, University of Antwerp’s Faculty of Design Sciences

**in collaboration with** University of Antwerp

**with the support of** the Flemish Government

### exhibition

Wed 16 March 2016 → Sun 05 June 2016

open Wed → Sun 11 → 18h and during evening performances

closed Mon, Tue and holidays

price: free

### opening

Tue 15 March – vernissage and debate at 8pm in the Music Studio (deSingel)

free

registration is recommended:

[www.vai.be/inschrijven](http://www.vai.be/inschrijven)

### images

[Download press images](#)

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