A Vision for the Quays of Antwerp - Stroom in de Stad

Our Gift to the City: Necklace of Jewels
in Scheldt Water Park - The New Living Room on the River!

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Response to the Brief
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We believe that rapidly increasing process of urbanisation is throwing into question conventional urban design solutions.
We therefore entered this area as a multidisciplinary organisation linking our work within this emerging market, and combining solutions drawn from architecture, urbanism, landscape design and socio-economics. Given the opportunity, we enter the design process earlier than normal, shifting the emphasis from solving singular problems to searching for the right questions. This approach to design is strengthened through a collaborative and interdisciplinary working method.
This approach was shaped to evolve more in the direction of an 'organisation' prepared to address questions of design at all levels. Subsequently this emphasis in focus has allowed the practice to operate in the growing 'world wideness of work' resulting in projects achieving greater levels of expectation.

Content

The River Scheldt Quays

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1 THE RIVER SCHELDT QUAYS

1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE QUAYS OF ANTWERP TODAY

"De echte problemen van de stad zitten dieper dan velen denken. Ze raken immers aan de essentie van de stad zelf, die plaats waar veel en bovendien heel verschillende mensen samenleven. De problemen van de stad smeken om een grondige en geduldige aanpak. ... We moeten ... niet hopen dat de problemen verdwijnen om dat we er niet over praten of om dat we ze onder de mat vegen. We moeten evenmin denken dat ze oplosbaar zijn door eenvoudige of ronduit simplistische ingrepen. ...
Waar gaat het echt over? Antwerpen is de grootse stad van Vlaanderen. Niet voor niks wordt Antwerpen "het stad" genoemd. Als economische motor van Vlaanderen draagt Antwerpen in onze regio het volle gewicht van al het goede en al het kwade dat het begrip "stad" oproept. Als het goed gaat met de steden gaat het goed met Antwerpen. Als het slecht gaat met de steden, gaat het slecht met Antwerpen. ...
Antwerpen heeft een glorieus verleden en een onzekere toekomst. Het zal de kunst zijn om die toekomst tenminste even aantrekkelijk te maken als het verleden. Dat is een enorme uitdaging."

(Patrick Janssens, Het beste moet nog komen...)

For making the "future at least as attractive as the past", we need to fully understand both Antwerp's past and its present "real problems".

ANTWERP'S PAST
Antwerp's past has always been related to its river Scheldt. "The Scheldt river owes its existence to God, and Antwerp owes its existence to the Scheldt river" is a popular saying that shows how important the river Scheldt is for the city. Originating from a roman village, Antwerp was steadily expanding until it reached its peak in the 16th century becoming the economic and financial capital of Europe. Because of various reasons decline threatened several times the harbour activities but Antwerp always managed its way out and is now the 2nd biggest harbour city in Europe and the 4th of the world.
How must we imagine the spirit of Antwerp's golden age?
Surely one of the focal points beside the church, the city hall and the market was the harbour. Vessels coming and going, goods were loaded and unloaded, sailors, dockworkers and salesmen around. Pubs and bars for people to hang out after a hard day working. Goods with foreign countries were exchanged and the smell of exotic spices was in the air. The harbour was also the place of arrival for immigrants as e.g. the Jewish artisans coming in the 16th century. And a lot of people departed from here seeking for the American Dream. The harbour was a pulsing place enriching the city not just economically but also culturally. Economy and society have changed since these flourishing times. Antwerp's harbour is still responsible for 3.8% of the turnover of all economic sectors in Belgium. The lack of expansion possibilities and the urban planning of segregating functional zones made the harbour move to the city's edges in the 19th century. Society shifted its economic base from industry to services.

ANTWERP'S "REAL PROBLEMS"
Antwerp's "real problems" are manifold, but in fact they all are of economic or social nature.

UNEMPLOYMENT
In contradiction to the positive figures of Antwerp's economy and turnover, there is a huge problem of unemployment. The unemployment rate is 15.9%, which is compared to Flanders' average (8.2%) very high. The unemployment rate of immigrants is approximately 40%.

EDUCATION
Statistically seen have children of non-Belgian origin and/or of low-income families bad educational conditions. They start late on educational training and can't catch up with the other pupils. A consequence is that it's mainly them who have to struggle later with badly paid jobs or unemployment.

SEGREGATION
Since the beginning of the 1990's the housing sector has massively changed. New laws and strict regulations on the housing market made the place to live based on people's monthly income. As a consequence living area's lost their

social diversity.
The physical segregation of the city by the river is still present, even though Linker- and Rechteroever are connected by tunnels. On the mental map of the people east and west haven't managed to grow together yet.
MIGRATION OUT OF THE CITY:
Since the mid 1980's Antwerp has suffered from a decrease in population. Since 1990 the city of Antwerp lost 25,000 inhabitants. The tendency of the numbers is rising again but still Antwerp has to do its best to re-attract its people.

NATIONALIST SENTIMENTS
The up-coming popularity of extreme rightwing parties proves the change in the attitude of the Belgians towards their country and towards their immigrants. Sentiments as "stuur alle vreemdelingen terug" show a lack of toleration and integration towards Antwerp's foreigners. Cultural and national mix can be a challenge but utilising and celebrating this diversity creates an enormous enrichment for the city: 't stad is van iedereen!

1.2 UNDERSTANDING THE QUAYS OF ANTWERP TOMORROW:

THE ROLE OF THE QUAYS IN THE BIGGER PICTURE
The harbour lost its central role for the people whereas the Quays still have their central location. The pulsing life has gone a long time ago and what is left is a reminder of the good old days – without meaning and relevance to us, as we've never experienced their spirit. We believe that both size and central location have the potential and power to generate a vision that reaches far beyond a spatial solution for the Quays tackling their infrastructural and technical problems. This is both challenge and opportunity for Antwerp to tackle its "real problems" – an opportunity to generate a Vision that creates economic and social regeneration.

THE BIGGER PICTURE: 'T STAD IS DE TOEKOMST
Both economic and social regeneration can't develop successfully without each other. Economic regeneration needs to be carefully analysed and understood using new models to fully engage the regeneration challenges of the area. Antwerp's culture and community holds the key to social regeneration and the urban renaissance of the area. The needs of the communities, businesses, and cultural institutions are equally crucial and must be carefully considered. The right approach to these issues will ensure a fully sustainable long-term structure that facilitates growth and change in a dynamically changing economy.

A clear Vision supported by a robust yet flexible 'Regeneration Framework' is necessary to define and articulate the many different and often conflicting issues in the area. There are five quite distinct scales operating which need resolving; the scale of the neighbourhoods adjacent to the Quays, the scale of the city itself, the scale of the province with Antwerp as the capital, the scale of the country with Antwerp being the 2nd largest city, and last but not least Antwerp's international scale not only in economics but also in tourism. The combination of these very different scales poses a major challenge to be resolved. Yet hidden within these conflicts is the potential of great opportunities. The distinctive manner in which we work freely between the disciplines of architecture, urban design, economy and market, landscape and culture will enable the Vision to gain a uniqueness with powerful and achievable ideas informing the Regeneration Framework. The down to earth attitude that our team brings and the uniqueness of our method enable us to answer crucial questions such as "How can Antwerp become a place where people want to be and where a new generation of institutions and businesses want to invest?" Providing such answers will enable Antwerp and its Quays to define their new role and relation.

1.3 THE BIGGER PICTURE: STROOM IN DE STAD

'Stad aan de stroom', the Vision for the city established through a competition in 1990, is still very alive in the minds of politicians and residents of Antwerp. Ongoing projects as Het Eilandje developed under its spirit and represent the city's big ambitions. We believe that the former slogan for the Vision - city along the stream - needs re-definition in the beginning of the 21st century.

The new Vision 'STROOM IN DE STAD' - stream in the city - reverses the relationship between city and river. The stream transforms from the edge condition (aan de stad) to a central position – as the 'Living Room' of the city - which also implies that the city doesn't stop where the river starts.
But 'stroom' does not only refer to the river - the stream also implies the activity, the economic energy, the social mobility and spatial fluctuation that pulse through the city.

STROOM IN DE STAD STREAMS THROUGH 3 KEY INGREDIENTS:
1. THE STREAM OF CONNECTION (Social Concept)
2. THE STREAM OF EXCHANGE (Economic Concept)
3. THE STREAM OF FLOWS (Spatial Concept)

These key ideas generate a regeneration strategy that operates on three different fields. We believe there is no spatial regeneration without social and economic regeneration. Also we believe, that in order to deeply embed the Quays within the City, we need to deeply embed them in the mental map of the people. Therefore the strategy has to go far beyond the Quays and deep into the city and the minds of its citizens.

'STROOM IN DE STAD' transforms the Quays and the River Scheldt into Antwerp's Urban Living Room, with the left bank as Antwerp's Green Garden. Both Antwerp's 'Living Room' and 'Garden' Spaces form the key ingredient for STROOM IN DE STAD.

STROOM IN DE STAD creates the River Scheldt Park, consisting of 9 distinct Public Park Zones and 9 distinct Cultural Nodes along the Stream, all of them deeply embedded in their 9 distinct adjacent neighbourhoods. The 9 Parks offer Common Ground for all citizens; a place to relax, learn and play. Each Park recognises and celebrates the distinct existing character of its neighbourhood along the River Scheldt. By operating on multiple scales, STROOM IN DE STAD offers 9 new public amenities for everyone: 't Stad is van Iedereen! Developed with their neighbourhood communities, they work on the very local scale giving a new identity and offering a place to live. Utilising their central location, the Nodes offer amenities for both sides of the city. Public institutions (as museums and educational centres), tourist facilities (as hotels and info-centres), and business services (as educational centre and conference centre) allow the Nodes to gain importance also on the national and international scale.
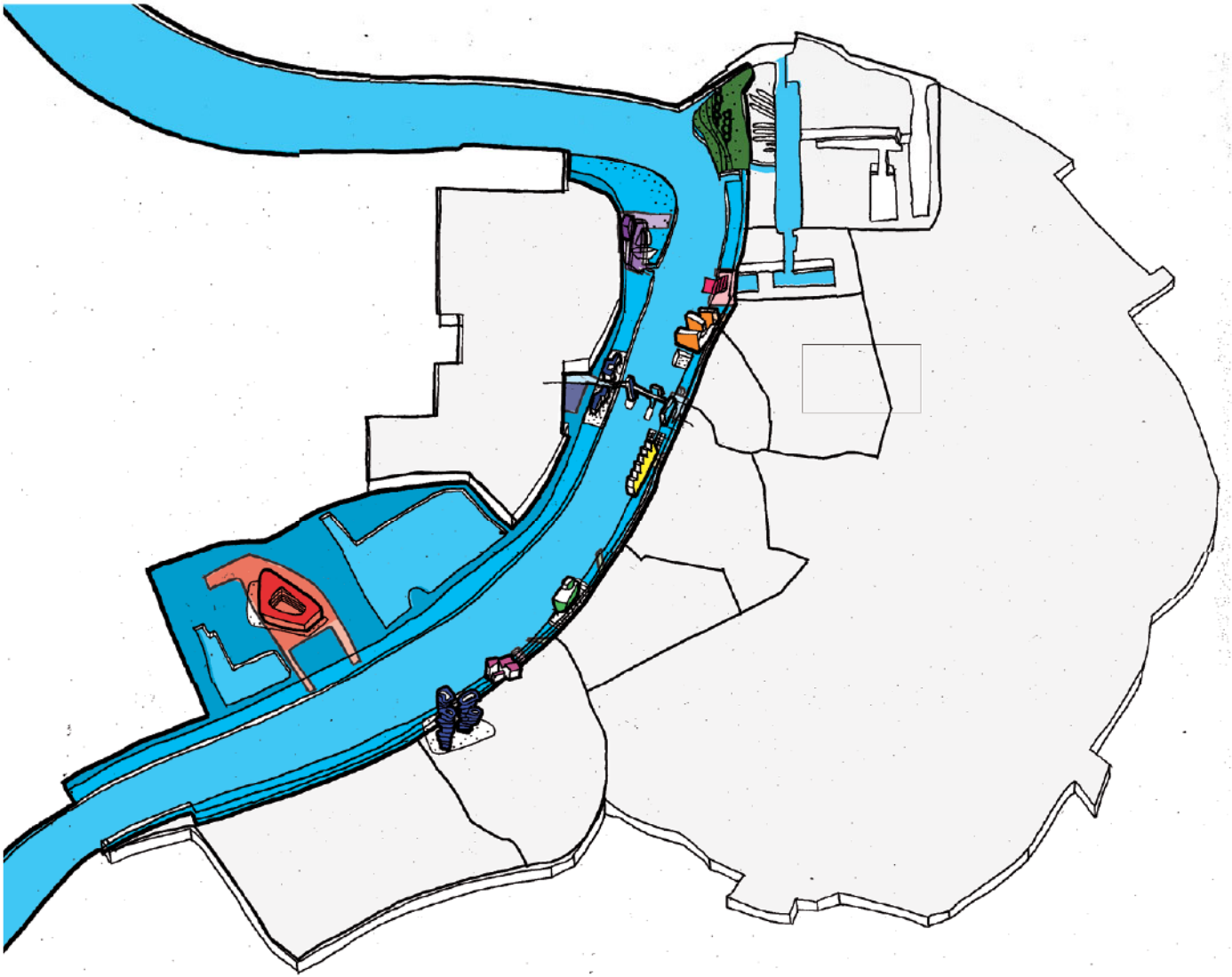
River Scheldt Park

Response to the Brief

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2 RESPONSE TO THE BRIEF

2.1 THE 'STAPPENPLAN'
For deeply embedding our Vision in Antwerp and the minds of its citizens we propose the following action plan

STEP NO.1: RE-EVALUATING THE 9 DISTINCT CHARACTERS OF THE 9 NEIGHBOURHOODS
The 9 neighbourhoods are all very distinct and characteristic. From historic to industrial, from chique to rough surroundings, activities ranging from visiting museums to artistic fairs - all this you can experience here! We want to discover together with the local communities these distinct characters. Each of the neighbourhoods offers today already special activities, amenities or places - these we want to intensify where necessary. Diversity can be a challenge but celebrating this is a big opportunity to make the city distinct!

### STEP NO.2: CREATING 9 DISTINCT LINKS WITH THE SCHELDT
These intensified 9 'treasures' - embedded in their local neighbourhoods and community - will be re-connected with the Quays. These connections exist already today. They are streets as any others. The fact that these special streets bring the citizens down to the waterfront needs to be celebrated. Distinct spatial elements as special lighting systems, special plants, special street furniture ... lead to the water and make your walk to the Scheldt a special and distinct experience coming from the cores of the neighbourhoods.

STEP NO.3: DEVELOPING 9 NEW DISTINCT NODES ALONG THE SCHELDT
Together with the City Council, the local communities and economic stakeholders Nodes will be developed along the Quays. Nodes which represent the interests of all involved parties creating the impulses for economic, social and spatial regeneration. Economic Regeneration will be mainly driven by tourism, and will help to pull of social and spatial regeneration. The Social Regeneration is based on and around community. The Spatial Regeneration focuses on new public space, new connectivity and new infrastructure (tram line, flood barrier).

STEP NO.4: NETWORKING THE 9 NODES ALONG THE SCHELDT
Each project will have a partner project on the opposite bank helping to stitch the two sides of the river together. The new Diamond Museum e.g. on the right bank has a Gallery on the left bank, the Recreation Garden on the left bank has special facilities on the right bank. Easy access between the Nodes is created. A new central bridge connection for pedestrians and cyclists connects the Linkeroever and its facilities with the existing axis going from Steenplein via the Stadhuis, Grote Markt, along the Cathedral and Groenplaats up to Central Station and the Zoo. A new Water Taxi connected with Tram Stops at each Node will connect the Nodes. Bike Stops at each ferry stop will provide additional transport facilities guiding your way through the city.
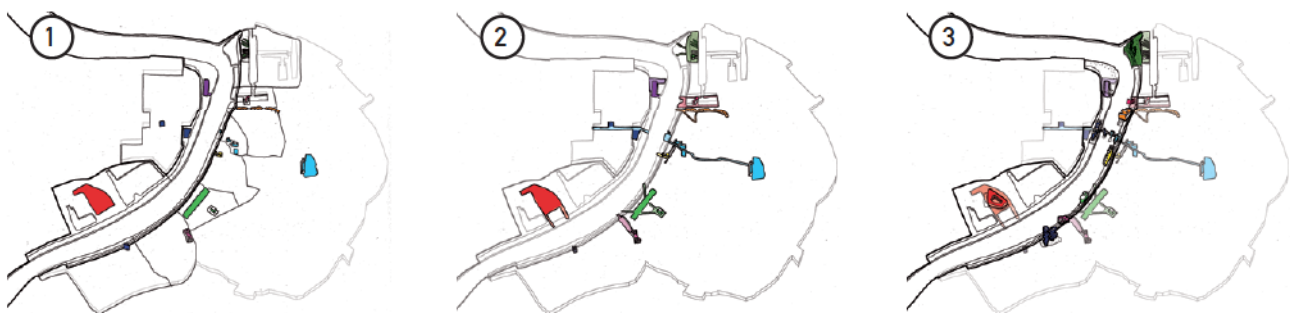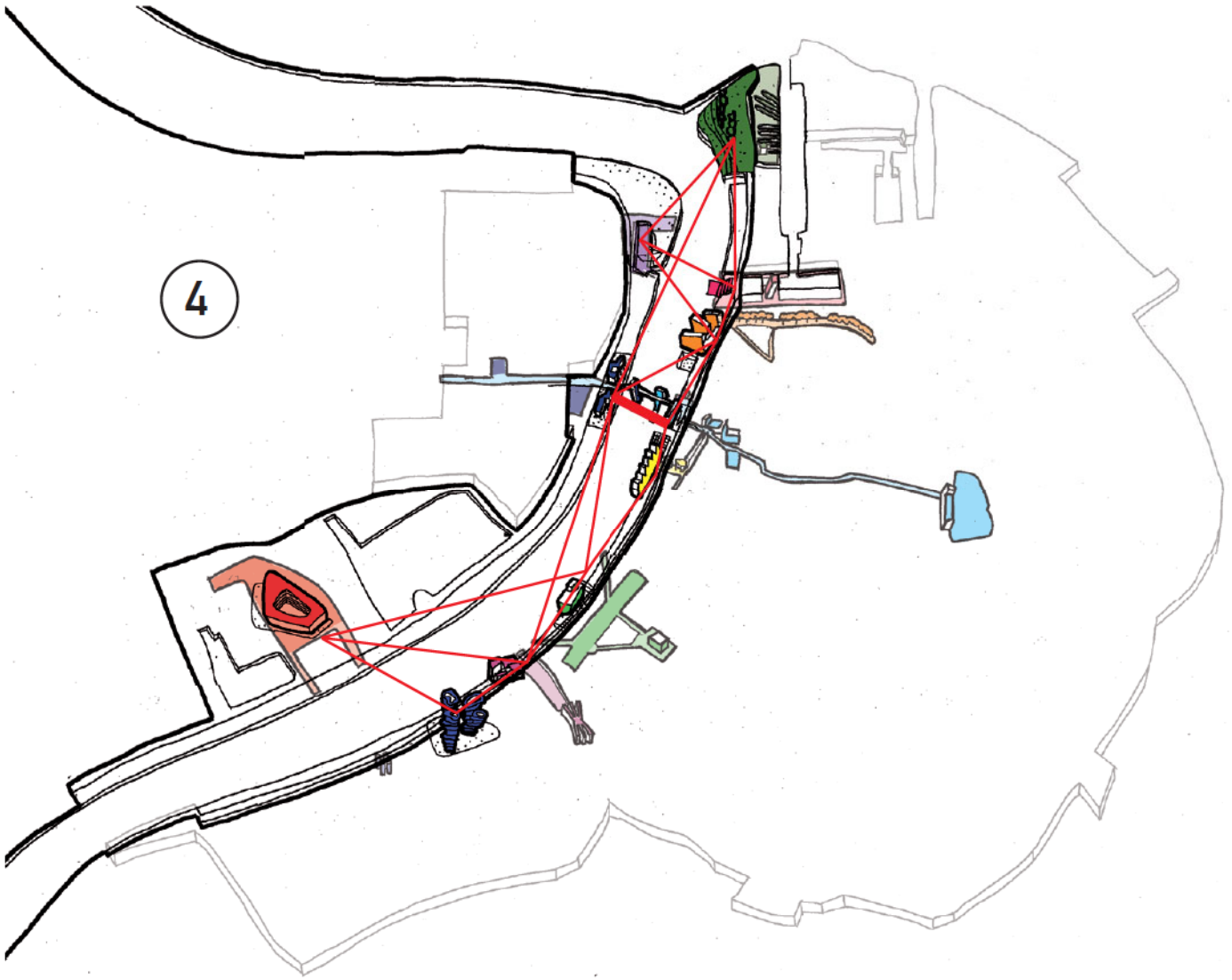
Networked River Nodes

2.2 THE SPATIAL FRAMEWORK PLAN FOR THE QUAYS

COHERENCE:
The spatial coherence of the Scheldt Quays is a given. The articulation of this will need some enhancement and improvement, but the major ingredients are already there.
The Scheldt, the Quays, the road and even the flood barrier are elements that reach from Het Eilandje to Petroleum Zuid as continuous bands. This spatial coherence will be even stronger when the flood barrier is raised and the street profile changed to take up the new tramline.

What is missing today is definition and differentiation of the large and often under-utilised space.
What is missing today is content and programme to fill these spaces. Content and programme that makes the Quays an exciting and economically attractive place to go.

The continuity of the public realm will create the strongest coherence along the Quays in the mental maps of the citizens: de Scheldt is van iedereen!
Welcome to the River Scheldt Park, the Urban Living Room of A.

DISTINCTNESS:
The metaphor for the River Scheldt Park is a necklace, a necklace with very special and diverse Nodes, like exquisite unique diamond beads strung along the Scheldt. The 9 distinct neighbourhoods facing the River Scheldt Park will pass their distinctness on to the River Park. 9 distinct Park Clusters with different programme develop offering different amenities for both Park and City. Imagine the Campus Park with educational amenities, the Water Park with cultural attractions or the Exchange Park with intercultural and international exchange. Special links connecting with the neighbourhoods are created. The existing street network will inform the spatial framework on the keys. The grain of this will make the Quays a part of the grown city.

2.3 THE METHODOLOGY

Our methodology is rooted in multi-disciplinary joined-up thinking. It is imaginative and explorative tapping a broad base of broad international experience together with a search for the true nature of Antwerp, they Quays and its people, and to learn from and be informed by them. We are interested in developing ideas in a creative partnership with stakeholders and the local communities. Therefore the results from this study have enough direct relevance to the different groups so that they can claim the outcome as their own interests. This combination of imagination, practicality and community ownership are the distinctive elements of our methodology.

WORK STRANDS
The basis of our approach is a series of work strands. Each of these will be managed by a leading member of the team and will run throughout the study as set out below.

ECONOMIC + MARKET REGENERATION: Project Manager
TM1 will lead this strand to ensure that existing knowledge is complemented with an international perspective and an understanding of how cities compete. The team will review the considerable economic data that already exists to understand better Antwerp's role within the conurbation, regionally, nationally and internationally and to identify the opportunities for growth and regeneration both along and beyond the Quays. This will enable the team to identify new and enhanced roles for the Quays to guaranty the financial feasibility and success of the project. Within this context, an understanding of the local property market and of current proposals and new development opportunities will be identified.

CULTURE + COMMUNITY: Team Member 4 (Media-Lab)
We are convinced from experience on other projects in Europe that culture and community and their involvement hold the key to the urban renaissance of the area. This will be a work strand undertaken by Team Member 4 and the Team Leader and will go through a process of analysis visioning and proposals alongside the other work strands.
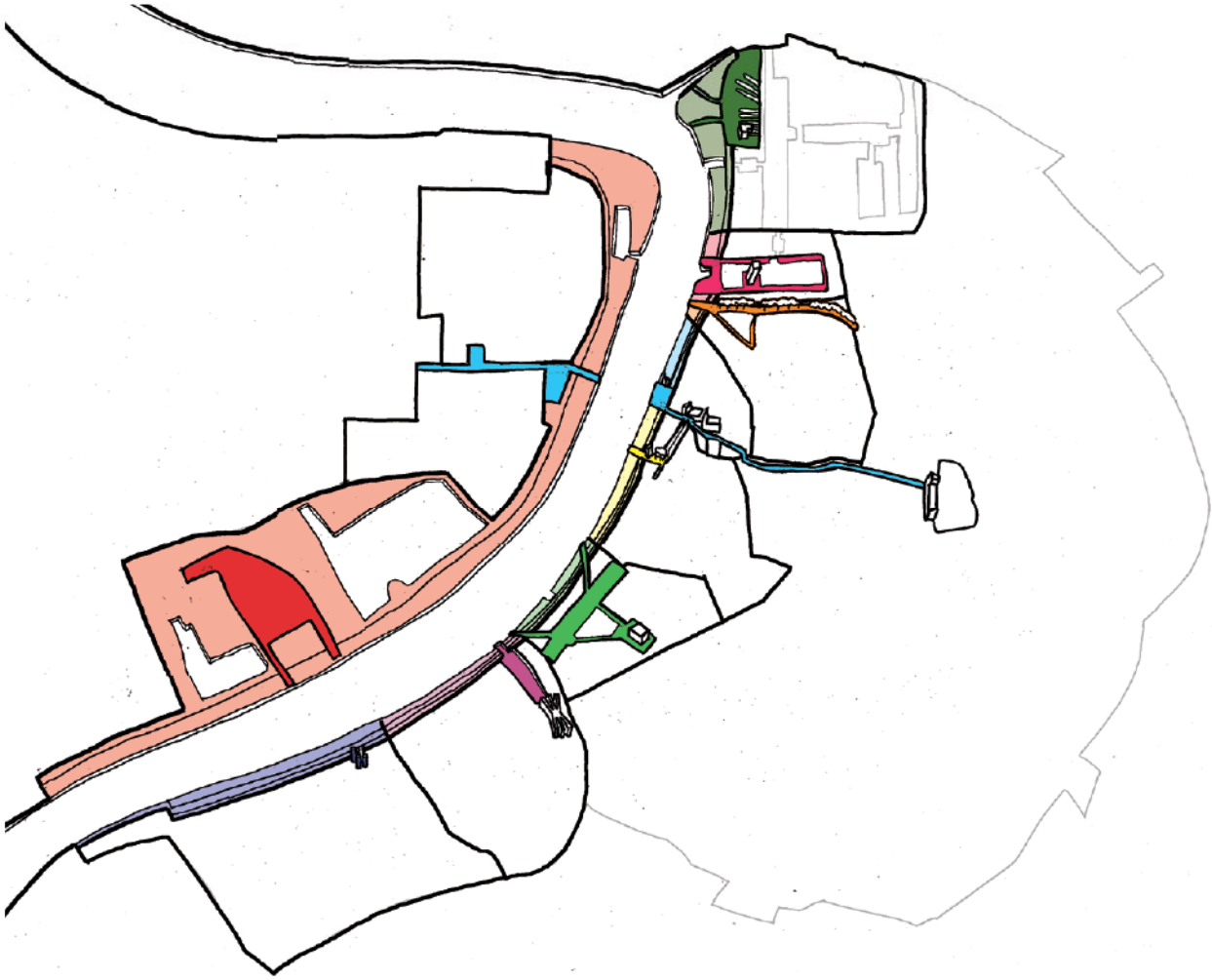
The Spatial Framework Plan

LANDSCAPE + ECOLOGY: Team Member 3 (Landscape + Ecology)

Any robust regeneration strategy needs to be firmly based on a sustainable approach to the health of the underlying landscape. It is for this reason that we firmly believe that landscape should be looked at in a very multi-disciplinary way including issues of biodiversity, microclimate, waste, water and energy. The expertise of TM3 will provide the core impetus for this work together with support from the Team Leader.

URBAN REGENERATION: Team Leader

The urban regeneration strand will be informed by the outcome of the economic development and property market strand. This strand will start with an analysis of the structure, history and form of the urban areas within and beyond the study area outlined incorporating existing major studies. Through the project this will develop into strategic proposals and gradually become more specific, culminating in the overall Vision, which in turn will inform the Regeneration Framework and appropriate strategies for policy.

CROSS CUTTING ELEMENTS

The above work strands and the process of analysis and visioning/design synthesis represent a clear and straightforward methodology.
Cross cutting elements that knit these strands together to achieve joined-up thinking.
These cross-cutting elements have three roles:
- They prevent the study from being confined to professional silos by allowing everyone to see the Bigger Picture.
- They are a means of coordinating and stimulating the consultants and the client through the open and creative engagement with stakeholders.
- Most importantly they allow proposals to be developed with the community and key stakeholders so that there is widespread ownership of the outcome.

We appreciate the cross cutting elements and the working methodology set up by the client: STEERING GROUP, PLANNING GROUP, WORKING GROUP MEETINGS and INTERACTION MOMENTS will provide the necessary feedback loops for our work. These feedback loops will constantly inform the project and push it further, enabling us to deliver an inspiring, robust and well-informed Vision and Regeneration Framework.

On top of the cross cutting elements set up by the client we propose CREATIVE WORKSHOPS, guarantying that our approach is not just top down but also bottom up.
As part of Stage One and Two these Creative Workshops will inform as with the necessary local input to deeply embed the Masterplan in the City of Antwerp.

CREATIVE WORKSHOP 1: SITE EXPEDITION

An expedition of the Design Teams on the Quays and there surroundings, enabling us to feel and experience the spirit of the site and its surroundings. The 'experts' walk around in their building helmets discovering impressions, qualities of the area and collecting source material. This expedition gathers and leaves traces during the journey. Also talking to citizens we'll get a first impression how Antwerp's people feel about their own city. The findings of this Site Expedition will be collectively reworked into ideas, creating new mental, spatial and temporal maps of the Quays. What's missing in Antwerp? Where are the blind spots? Where are the hidden qualities that should be valued or could be amplified in new ways ...? The findings and ideas will generate new mental maps of Antwerp and its Quays.

CREATIVE WORKSHOP 2: INTERACTIVE GAMING

A special workshop process with a unique Interactive Gaming technique as urban 'design research' together with City Council, stakeholders and citizens. Interactive gaming is a simple yet refreshing way to enable non-experts and experts alike to engage creatively together and explore the crucial issues of urban transformation. The game is played on an aerial photo with three dimensional elements which have real size and value. It is played in a series of independent rounds focused on separate issues to enable quick decisions. The issues or questions raised are simple, but the power of the tool is as an ideas-engine which searches for the common ground between all participants which any future development should be based on. It also searches for interesting possibilities, surprising insights or special qualities which designers or planners may never have thought of or discovered by themselves.

2.4 REALISATION-BASED MASTERPLAN

Though knowing that there are sub-studies arranged by the client, we extended our team (consisting of urban planners, architects, landscape architects and artists) by market and economy surveyors with enormous experience on urban regeneration. Having economic regeneration research permanently on board, allows us to constantly have feedback loops on the economic impacts of our project. Therefore we'll be able to provide a Vision that is economically fully sustainable, and even more important, feasible.

We believe that economic development and especially tourism will play a major role in the regeneration of the Quays. Combining public space, public amenities and development as e.g. tourist facilities like a hotel will make the project feasible. Re-investing the money gained by strictly controlled economic interventions will leverage not just the necessary infrastructural developments as the new flood barrier and the new tramline, but also increase the development potentials for public space and amenities.

The team will review current business/economic strategies, using our considerable knowledge and experience of economic development strategies within Belgium, the UK and other countries to see how we can fully utilise the city's potential. Urban hierarchies are shifting radically, with the result that cities, which might have been comfortable with an allotted role, now have to confront a more precarious and uncertain development path. Where there is competition for investment and income, absolute rather than comparative advantage becomes the watchword. This means that cities need to think about their 'investibility' and their attractiveness to mobile capital. So far as firms and potential investors are concerned, a more attractive location is one which facilitates productivity gains, with the source of those gains being largely external to the firm making the investment. These factors include:

- ECONOMIC DIVERSITY: In the manufacturing and service sectors.
- SKILLED HUMAN CAPITAL: People operating effectively in the knowledge-and information based industries make cities and regions successful.
- THE RIGHT INSTITUTIONAL NETWORKS: A range of links between higher education, research institutions, private industry and government
- THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT: Cities are for living in as well as working in, i.e. the right physical, social, and cultural environment. Economic prosperity cannot be sustained on a sea of vast inequality
- GOOD COMMUNICATIONS: Partly this means physical communications - roads, airports, railroad links, electronic communications. But communications is also cultural, a question of attitude. This underlines the importance of international networking.
- THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY: To mobilise public, private and community resources in the long term to deliver agreed economic and social development strategies.

But there is even more to it than this. Many now believe that the single most important resource a city needs to attract and keep is not investment capital but talent. People with the creative and technical skills to drive companies which constantly innovate are the gold standard of the modern economy and the cities which grow and prosper will have self-consciously transformed themselves into 'talent magnets'. Such places combine advanced technology, great connections and business infrastructure, with softer, less tangible qualities such as diversity, distinctiveness and tolerance of difference.

We have developed a new concept to account for this, which we call 'Drawing Power: The Dynamics of Attraction, Retention and Leakage'. Drawing power assesses the dynamics of attraction, retention and leakage as well as its reverse what deters or even repels people from cities. It is a multi-dimensional concept which seeks to combine an assessment of both hard and soft factors giving more equal weighting to both as well as assessing factors and assets in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms. Drawing power seeks to combine internal and external factors and perceptions in order to assess how wealth creation and social cohesion can be addressed simultaneously. Its assessment criteria are: Critical mass, identity and distinctiveness, innovative capacity, diversity, accessibility, security, linkage and synergy, competitiveness, organizational capacity and leadership. Each of these in turn is judged holistically. For example the diversity of the economic structure to increase local resilience; the means by which the diversity in the population is harnessed both economically and

socially, the diversity of the urban setting to create richer experiences and the cultural diversity as an expression of cosmopolitanism. We have developed set of indicators to measure these criteria.

2.5 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The spatial framework is informed by the interrelation of our different work strands understood through different scales. We have a combination of experts to compliment any one specific issue such as Economic Regeneration, led by the team captain.

Non-contiguous growth
Today, the many and varied initiatives aimed towards the redevelopment of Antwerp focus on particular sites or 'patches', within the overall framework of the city. This pattern potentially accentuates the area's existing fragmentation and segregation, making it difficult for government to decide on the phasing and distribution of developmental resources. How does one define emphasis in a 'patchwork'? We acknowledge the importance of both recognising this patchwork and giving it a strong framework for decision-making.
Rather than seeing simply patches with clear boundaries, our approach will clarify a deeper, four-dimensional register of urban change. We might think of this as a strong framework that gives the patches a sense of their potential performance in the urban process – a strong 'stream' that ties the patches together.

In the near term, a robust and ambitious public space strategy presents one of the most useful urban tools for dealing with fragmented urban patchworks. Parc de la Villette in Paris made this strategy famous. In a dispersed, post-industrial landscape vaguely occupying a no-man's land between Paris and its suburbs, the plan for the park redefined a large terrain as a series of layers responding to different potential developments. It helped to establish a loose urban field upon which future change would find its place and establish new relationships with the surrounding fabric. Located on the peripheral motorway ringing Paris, the park became part of a 'stream' of new developments. The park gave a home to a new knot of cultural and leisure activities and established the rationale for the adaptive reuse of nearby warehouses as a business and entertainment cluster. In a similar way, a landscape strategy can be used to define the early phase of a longer-term vision for change in Antwerp because it can clarify the roles of distinct patches in an urban strategy.

Antwerp's redevelopment will not emanate from a single source - its pattern of new growth will be non-contiguous. Rather than locking the redevelopment strategy into a set sequence of phases, an appropriate approach to the spatial framework allows the fabric to become responsive to economic cycles that vary. Different areas along the Quays will be more attractive to different kinds of new development, and the specific characteristics of these emerging ecologies should be allowed to seed urban change.
It is the spatial framework that enables a strategic and responsive approach to phasing, enabling a flexible yet strong framework for urban growth.