The Department of Architecture has expertise in research in the broad field of Architecture, Interior Architecture as well as Urban and Spatial Planning. The "built environment" is seen as an artefact on the one hand designed and on the other hand determined by historical, cultural, social, political, physical, economic and technological factors. The Department is unique in its rich palette of approaches, ranging from theory and history to engineering and construction or from heritage to urbanism, spatial planning and landscape. Designing occupies a central position within this wide area of interest where there is one main objective: excellence.

Internationally, the Department aims to play a leading role at European level in each of its research domains by directing European projects, supporting international organisations and promoting exchange of researchers.

Keywords
architectural history & heritage • theory and criticism • interior architecture • design studies • research by design • human-computer interaction • spatial planning • urban projects and studies • architectural engineering

Mission and Vision

The Department of Architecture at KU Leuven stands at the crossroads of different research methodologies and traditions. “Excellence” is therefore determined by the specific logic and tradition of the subdomain. With researchers from the Faculty of Engineering Science and the Faculty of Architecture, the Department is rooted in both a polytechnic as well as an artistic tradition, comprising a social-scientific dimension.

With campuses in Brussels, Ghent and Leuven, the Department is the largest research department in the field of architecture in Belgium. Thanks to this rich research culture, the Department aims to be the most important reference point in Flanders with regard to policy-oriented and applied research including Research by Design. This is achieved by developing intense relationships with various stakeholders.

Research Areas

The research area “Constructing Architecture & Materialisation” aims at innovation in architectural design by adopting an engineering approach. The emphasis is on the technical aspects of Architecture, the process of designing, and the collaboration between engineers, architects and users. Structures and materials, construction and technology, energy and comfort are taken into consideration in a multidisciplinary manner to develop integrated design solutions and to question, assess, and improve the technical and architectural qualities of the built environment. To achieve these objectives, effort is focused on fundamental, applied, and policy oriented research as well as on bridging academic research, education, practice, building use and experience.
Within the research area “Culture, Criticism and Narratives”, architectural historians and theorists of the Department share an understanding of Architecture as embedded in broader cultural, political and social contexts. They approach their research field from a critical perspective, which relates to traditions of critical theory as well as to principles of historical critique. They consciously contribute to the construction of architectural narratives in order to explore innovative ways of interrelating architecture, culture and society and which address architecture across scale levels (from building interiors to urban network spaces).

The research area “Design Driven Research” aims at raising spatial awareness and intelligence by identifying, developing and honing design strategies which allow coming to grips with the time and person-related processes of conceiving, re-thinking, making and experiencing space.

The research area “Design Practices & Emerging Technologies” aims at leveraging the innovative power of existing as well as emerging design practices and technologies in the context of Architecture. The focus lies on experimental, critical and curiosity-driven research that tackles a wide variety of challenges ranging from the conceptualisation of Architecture, over its virtual modelling and physical fabrication, to the human experience of its material manifestation. This area entails the design-oriented exploration of new and potentially disruptive skills, methods, tools, instruments and techniques, as well as the critical reassessment of already existing ones, that challenge common conventions, norms or practices. As such, this domain often requires the blending of different disciplines or knowledge areas outside of Architecture. Through interdisciplinary research and multiple approaches, the research area “Urbanity, Territories and Engagement” aims to address emergent contemporary challenges between society and its spatial dimension from a socio-spatial viewpoint. An essential element in this exploration is the critical approach to territorial organisation as an apparatus of inclusion, crossing the traditional understanding of socio-spatial boundaries and configurations. Apart from theoretical insights and reflections, the research is characterised by a designerly approach, site-specific observations, interventions at multiple scales, contribution to the co-creation of socially and environmentally sustainable environments.... Shifting in scale and time, in political and societal contexts and perspectives, the researchers and designers in the “Urbanity, Territories, and Engagement” action domain create knowledge on the city, landscapes, and settlements, using a variety of tools, methods and practices including co-creation, new mapping techniques, living labs, future explorations and action research.

### Figures

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<th>Category</th>
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(figures October 2017)