

# YOUR ARCHITECT

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE



ORDINE DEGLI ARCHITETTI,  
PIANIFICATORI, PAESAGGISTI E CONSERVATORI  
DELLA PROVINCIA DI MILANO



FONDAZIONE DELL'ORDINE DEGLI ARCHITETTI,  
PIANIFICATORI, PAESAGGISTI E CONSERVATORI  
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Whether you are thinking of renovating an apartment, constructing a building or you wish to venture on a real estate undertaking, the best investment you can make is to work with an architect.

This guide has been done to point out the advantages a professional expert can bring to your project and to help you in your search for the most suitable architect to achieve your project goals. It suggests simple rules for creating a good relationship between the client and the architect, which is essential to achieving a result that meets your requirements.

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## WHO IS AN ARCHITECT?

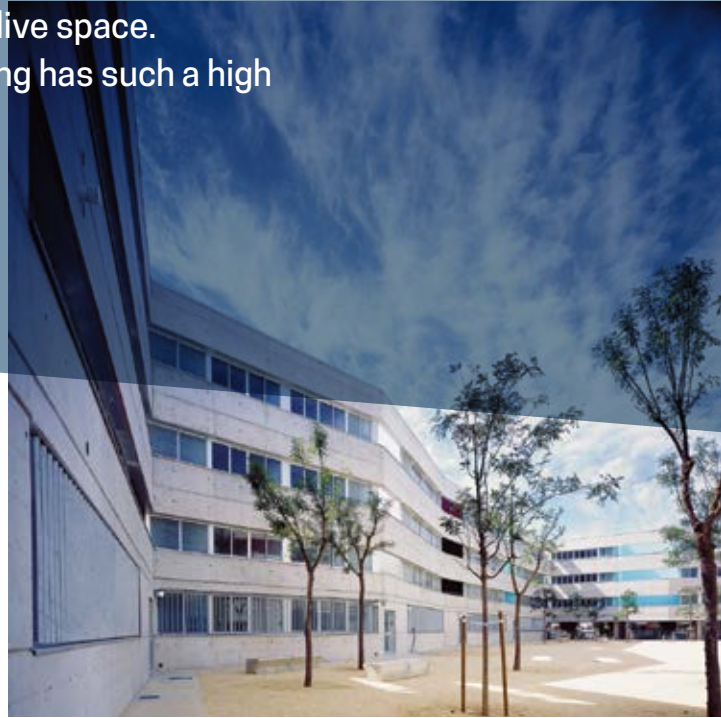
An architect is a professional figure with a 5-year degree in architecture (or 3 years for a junior architect), who has passed the qualifying exam to enter the profession and is a registered member of a professional Order. Each Order possesses a register of its members, accessible online through the [Albo unico nazionale](#).

Architects are able to develop a project idea and bring it into being, and their training and experience enables them to:

- understand your ideas and your requirements, develop them and communicate them to all the other operators involved, so as to offer you a global view of the project;
- design the spaces to enhance your professional activity, if it is a company project;

An architect can give you not only what you want, but also what you have yet to imagine, finding innovative solutions to your needs. A good project is both a technical solution and an idea that opens new perspectives in the way we live space.

This is why architectural designing has such a high intellectual value.



- build an honesty-based relationship with you. Your Architect will become your professional advisor, so you can be sure your questions will be adequately answered;
- act as director or supervisor, coordinating all the other operators and specialists involved;
- apply their knowhow and technical capability to give added value to the practical work on site.

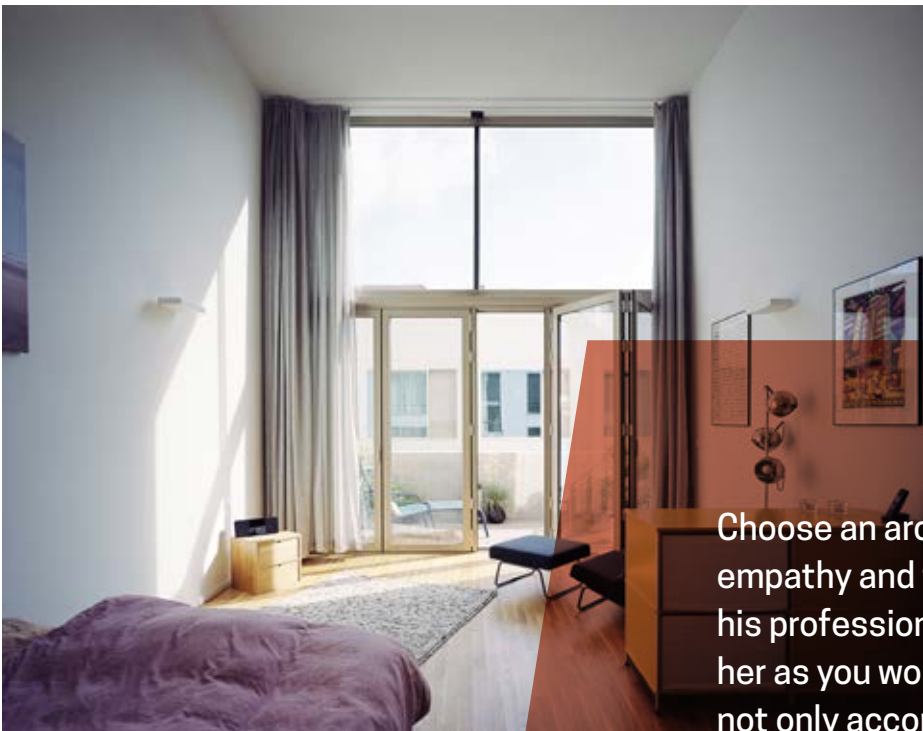
## HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT ARCHITECT FOR YOU

Every project is different, because it starts with the specific needs of the client, the special characteristics of the task and the aims it has to achieve.

There is no one single solution to your project, so there may be many architects able to satisfy your requirements, and many different ways of doing so.

## SOME USEFUL TIPS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO GUIDE YOU IN YOUR CHOICE OF ARCHITECT:

- **For what kind of project is it necessary to consult an architect?**  
For very simple projects you can ask for a consultative opinion, whereas for more demanding projects, roughly speaking those entailing an expenditure of over €50,000, it is advisable to formally appoint an architect to the task.
- **When should I bring in the architect?**  
Right from the start. The architect can help you determine each stage of the project from the very beginning, giving you advice as you weigh up the various options concerning the choice of plot, building, apartment and company.
- **How can I identify professionals who meet my requirements?**  
You can ask people you trust and who have had experiences similar to yours. If you have seen work that you particularly like, you can ask for information about the architect responsible for the projects. You can consult their studio websites, where it will be possible to examine their profile. You can also consult online registers and portfolios such as that [of the Milan Order of Architects PLC](#).



Choose an architect above all for the empathy and trust that you place in his professionalism: choose him or her as you would your family doctor, not only according to the cost of his services.

- **How should I structure an initial, introductory interview?**  
To understand how an architect and his/her team work, you can ask to see presentations of projects similar in terms of size and function to your own. Get the team to explain how they tackled the projects and how their clients requirements were turned into an architectural idea. The interview will also help you assess the degree of empathy you will be able to build with the expert.
- **Should I entrust all aspects to a single professional figure?**  
Not necessarily, it depends on the complexity of the project. Even if you already have experience in project management, it is still a good idea to consult your architect to decide who will coordinate the work and what other services or professional skills will be involved.
- **How many professionals should I meet?**  
It is usually enough to meet two or three. Treat all the architects you meet in the same way, offering each of them the same time, the same information and allowing each one to inspect the site to be designed. Make sure you give the same list of services to all of them so that you can compare their proposals.
- **What should I base my decision on?**  
It is essential that you trust your architect. Look for the right balance of design skills, technical skills, professional services and cost. Factors such as the experience, technical competence and human resources available to the firm are very important to your decision.

When you have to tackle complex projects, you may decide to organise a competition and select the architect by comparing the projects submitted. Tell the invited architects quite openly that it is a contest of ideas, so they can decide freely whether or not to take part, accepting the risks of designing a project that might not be accepted. Budget for an adequate refund of expenses.

If you envisage particularly complex projects, drawn up by property investors, for a competition, [the Concorrimi platform](#), proposed by the Milan Order of Architects PLC may be useful. As well as being an aid for drawing up the Competition Call, it offers the possibility of managing the procedure correctly and transparently online.

So, just as architects have to be careful in their choice of clients, you must be careful when selecting professional experts to whom to entrust your project.





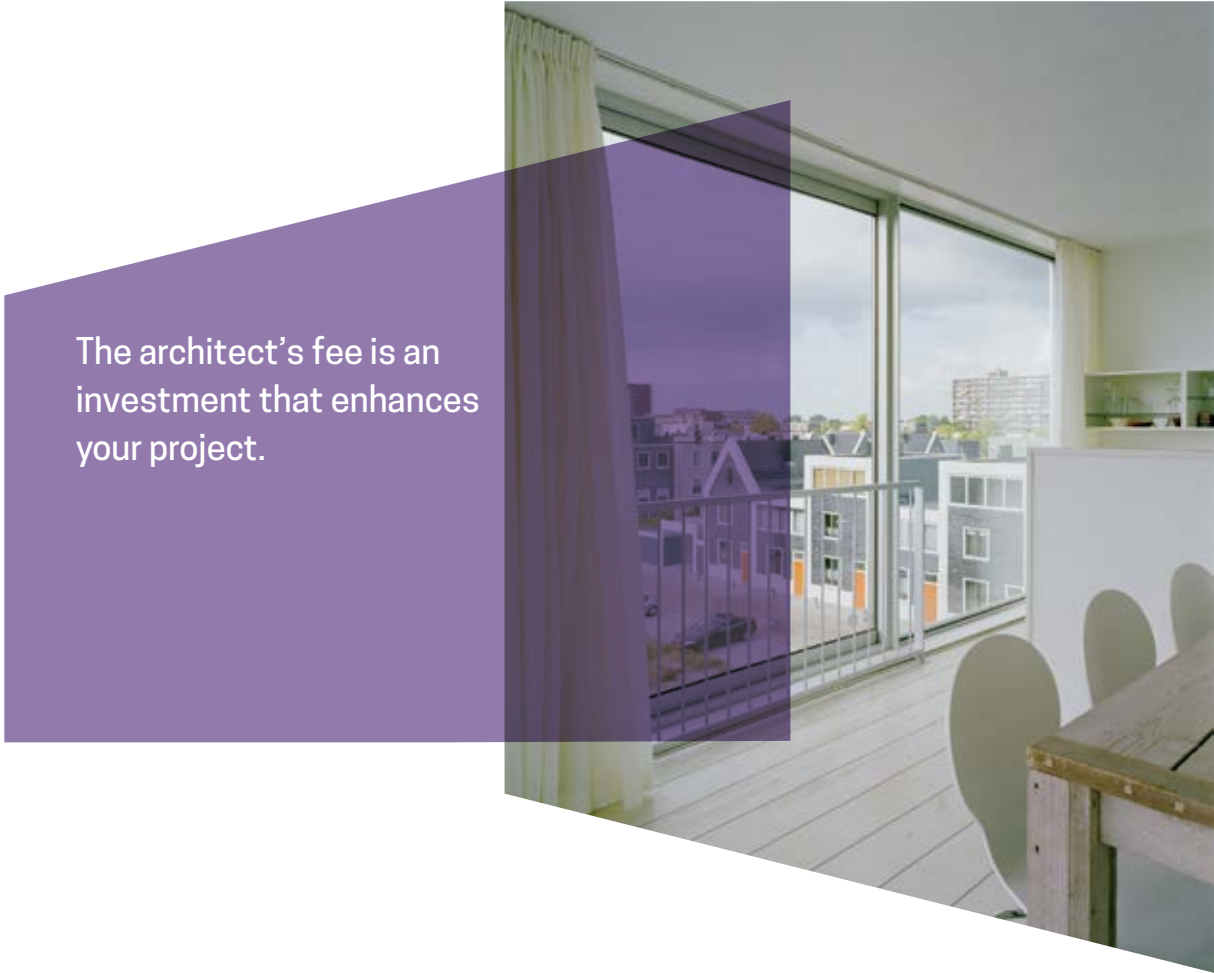
## 2.

### APPOINTING THE ARCHITECT

#### **ARCHITECTS' FEES**

Once you have found Your Architect for your project and determined the project plan, it is important to ask for a cost estimate. A cost estimate is a professional obligation and the client's right.

The fee can be determined according to various criteria. It may consist of a percentage of the construction costs, of a lump sum or be calculated on the basis of an hourly or daily rate. The characteristics of each project influence the way the fee will be calculated.



The architect's fee is an investment that enhances your project.

The fee depends on many factors:

- **the types of service offered**, determined on the basis of the project plan;
- **the complexity and size of the project**: for example, renovating and/or extending existing buildings may require far more resources than a new construction, just as building sites in historical town centres are even more complex and costly in proportion;
- **the stages of work that you wish to entrust** to your architect: for example, only the initial planning, the final project plans, the implementation, or also the direction of works and/or the final inspection;
- the construction **costs and timing** necessary for completion of the project.

Substantial variations during construction may entail recalculation of fees. Urgent actions are usually added to the invoice as a percentage of the cost of the work and services requested. We would advise you to regulate this aspect in the formal contract.



Expenses – such as the cost of travel, printing plans, photocopies and the necessary documentation – can be specified at the bottom of the invoice, or included in the general amount.

It is important to establish what is included and what is not – for example, the intervention of other specialists such as plant engineers etc. – and to agree terms and deadlines for payment. Generally speaking, an advance payment is agreed upon when signing the contract, and it may be useful to link payments to stages in the project or construction process.



## AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACT

Once the estimate has been approved, a formal contract is drawn up and signed. This specifies the responsibilities of the client and Your Architect and the services to be supplied.



The contract is an obligation and it must specify costs, timing and services; the clearer it is, the fewer misunderstandings there will be in the future. The architect will discuss all the issues with you so as to thoroughly clarify the terms of your agreement.

The contract determines the details of the services to be provided in the project, the way the fee and expenses will be calculated, the presence or otherwise of other consultants, insurance cover for the architect and the period of responsibility, and finally the procedure for resolving any disputes. You can use as a model one of the example contracts available on the Milan Order of Architects website: [Ordine degli Architetti e P.P.C. di Milano](https://www.ordinearchitetti.it/).

In the **project planning section** you will find a diagram illustrating how an architectural project is carried out, and a table of professional services: you can refer to this when drawing up the contract.

The contract specifies the fundamental responsibilities of the architect, such as:

- to carry out the services requested with competence and care;
- to represent the client on certain occasions
- to advise the client on regulations and legislation
- to update the client on the state of things as work progresses and on quality, cost and time related issues;
- not to make substantial modifications to the project without the client's consensus, except in an emergency;
- not to subcontract anything without the client's consensus

As the client you must be able to:

- contribute to setting priorities for the project, providing the architect with all the necessary information and documentation;
- make decisions and answer any questions the architect asks you;
- pay the architect's fees, expenses and mandatory social security contributions, and the taxes due for the project, including VAT.

The architect will assess the complexity of the assignment and inform you of aspects that may create problems while work is in progress. He/she will also inform you of situations in which unexpected factors might lead to a modification in the initial agreement.





## STARTING OFF

Before starting it is useful for you to answer a few questions. Even if you are unable to answer all of them, they will help you to focus your requirements and explain them clearly to Your Architect.

- What will be the main function of your project? Do you already know how you will use the spaces?
- Do you already have an area or building on which to act?
- Do you need an external opinion on this?
- Do you already have an idea of your budget and time schedule?
- What are your main expectations for this project?
- Who will make decisions? Only you, or will other people be involved?
- Are you willing to invest in energy-saving systems or other technology with a longer-term financial return?
- Have you already had experience with architects and the construction world? If so, was it successful or were you disappointed and for what reasons?

Once you have clarified these points you will be ready to meet the architect and start off on your project.

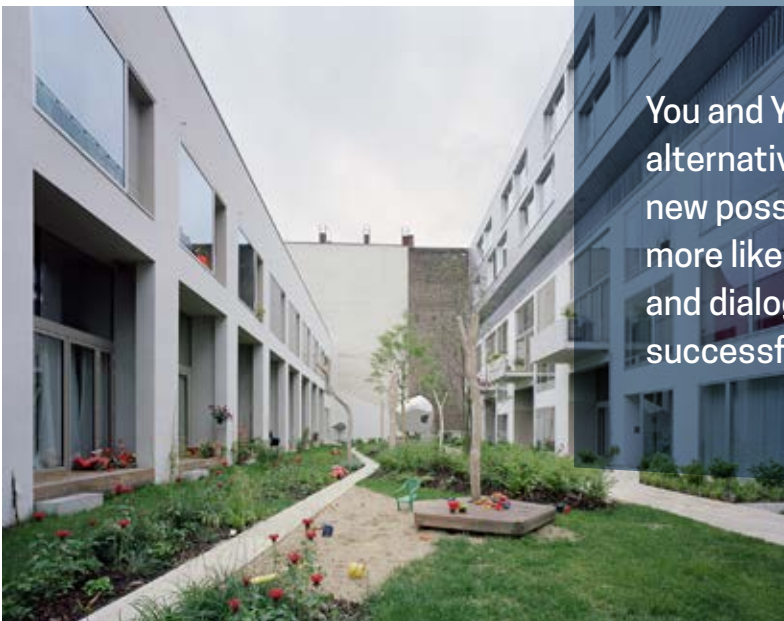
A good architect will listen to your requests carefully, helping you to consolidate your aims and wishes, and then turn them into a project and shape them into real architecture.

Try to be sure, clear and constant in your objectives: frequently changing your idea does not help the end quality of the project.



Be ready to answer the architect's questions about the aims, budget, time schedule and other consultants involved in the project. Talk openly and tell him what you know about the field and what you expect from the project; ask for explanations when you don't understand something. If you deal with all these questions right from the beginning, the project will gain substantially in quality and effectiveness.

You and Your Architect will assess the design alternatives together: if your priorities are clear, new possibilities and new design ideas are more likely to come out. Constant consultation and dialogue are essential for the project's successful outcome.





## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The initial dialogue will enable the expert to understand your requirements and draw up a **project schedule** with you that will respect the cost and time limits you have indicated.

By inviting questions and making suggestions Your Architect will help you to identify the pros and cons of the various options, offering ideas to improve the final result. The programme will constitute the basis for the contract that you will sign.

The **Schematic Design** develops into the project plan through solutions that correspond as closely as possible to the aims, compatibly with the budget and physical conditions of the places. They are definite enough to allow the amount and cost of the work to be estimated through drawings, reports and rough calculations.

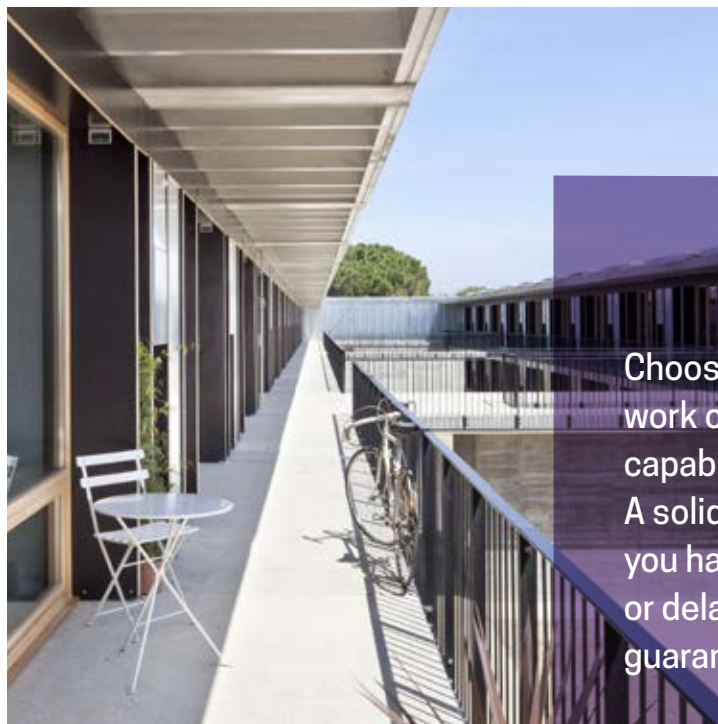
The **Design Development** (progetto definitivo) is developed into the final solution and all the technical and legal documents are drawn up in order to obtain building permission.

The architect will study the **administrative procedure** for your project from the start, finding out about the authorisations required and the documentation to present. He/she will best advise you in the design and bureaucratic choices to be made. Considering the large number and diversity of rules and regulations in Italy, the procedure is not always as unambiguous as one would wish.

During the project verification stage, which involves various bodies and may often delay the start of operations, it is possible to look further into some of the economic and construction aspects, the choice of materials and finishing details, so as to have the **Working Drawings** (progetto esecutivo) ready before the procurement stage.

## STARTING CONSTRUCTION

The architect knows the construction world and will guide you through the construction stage, helping you to choose the building firm and the other operators involved.



Choose the building firm to entrust with the work carefully, verifying their entrepreneurial capability and rectitude with your architect. A solid, trustworthy, building firm will avoid you having to deal with sanctions, surprises or delays in the realisation of your project, guaranteeing successful results.

It is essential that you stipulate a proper contract agreement (contratto di appalto): this is a fundamental document, a legally binding commitment between you and the builder, which defines your project. If it is well drawn up, the contract will be your safeguard.

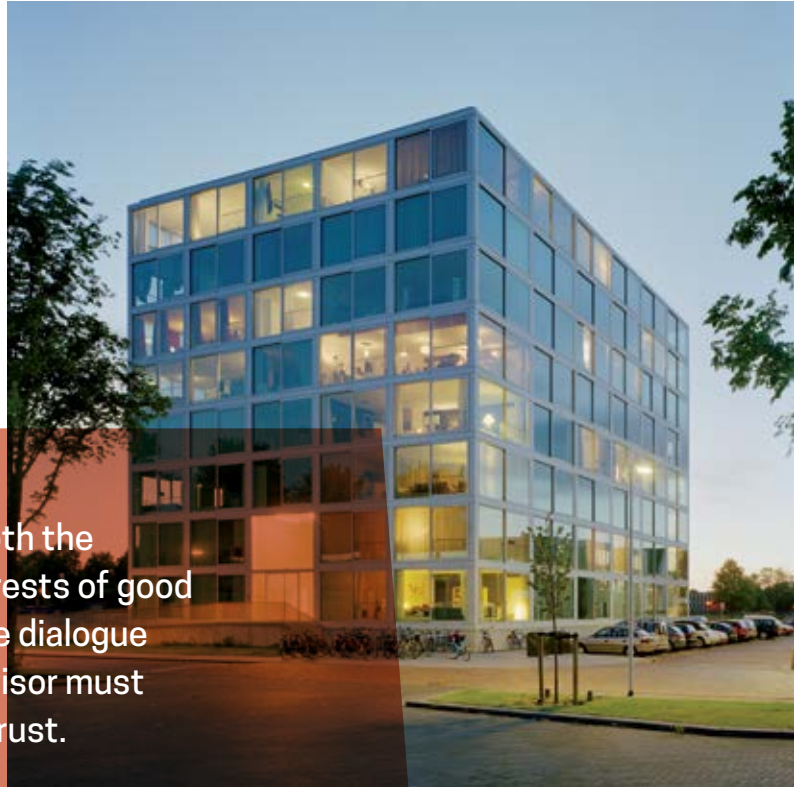
Your architect can draw it up for you or help you to draft it in the best way, avoiding any exceptional circumstances being left to chance.

Once you have chosen the building firm and opened the building site, the architect in charge of the project can also act as Site Supervisor (Direttore Lavori) or Artistic Director. The role of the Site Supervisor is to supervise and ascertain the correct execution of works in relation to the project through periodic visits to the building site. If requested he/she can also provide support at the final inspection and assist you in settling accounts with the building firm.



The Site Supervisor is the client's spokesperson on the building site and coordinates the various activities. The building firm then appoints a site manager. If the Site Supervisor is not the architect himself he must still be familiar with every aspect of the project. He/she may also have the support of similar figures for any specialised work, e.g. for plant systems and structures. If qualified, he/she may also cover the role of safety coordinator.

The Site Supervisor works in both the client's interest and in the interests of good architecture; for this reason the dialogue between client and Site Supervisor must always be rooted in reciprocal trust.



The Site Supervisor is also responsible for modifications to the project decided during construction, towards the architect and the client, and in terms of their conformity to building and town planning regulations.

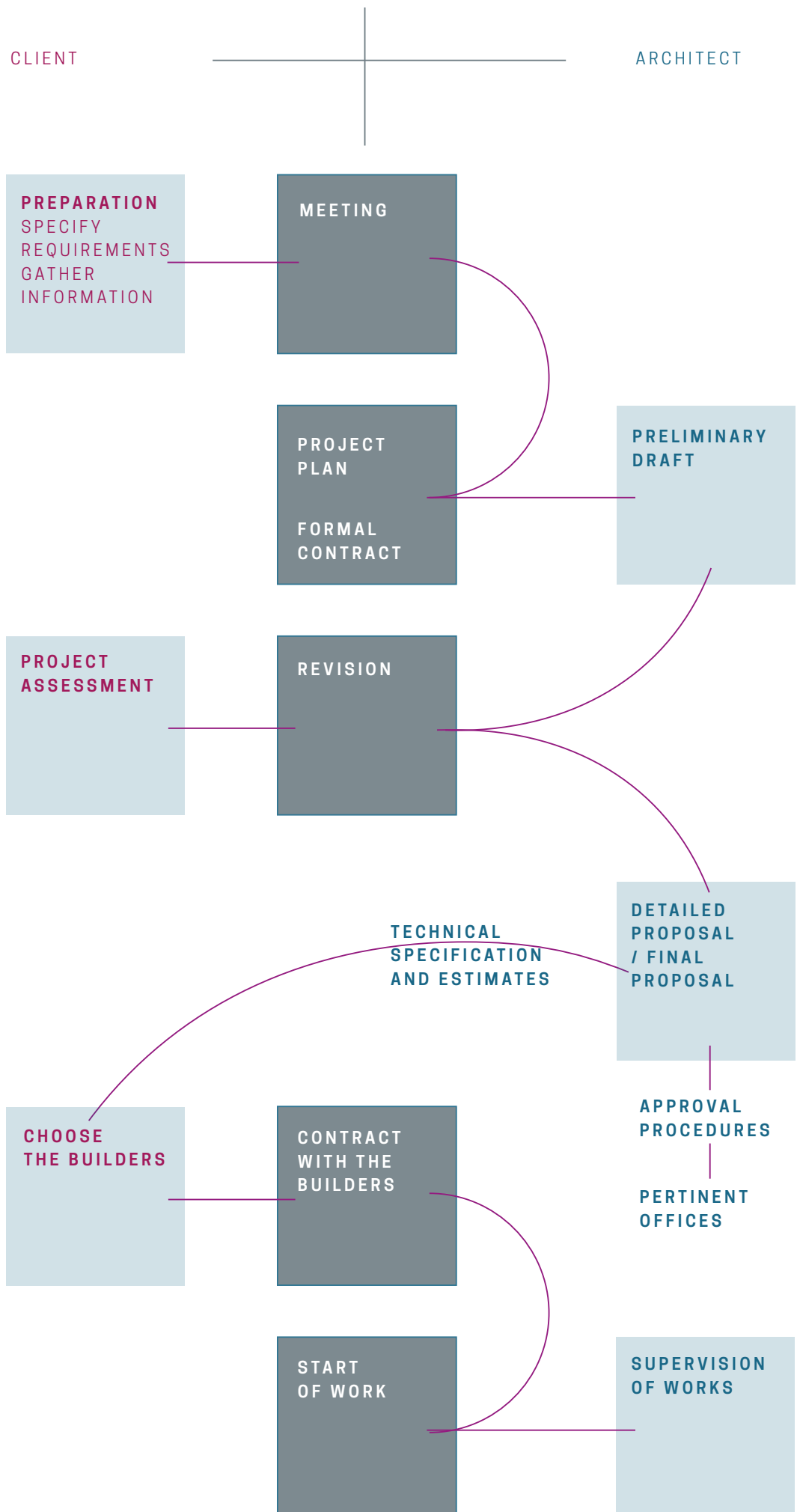


# 4.

## THE DESIGN AND PLANNING PROCESS

### CLIENT AND ARCHITECT. STAGES OF WORK

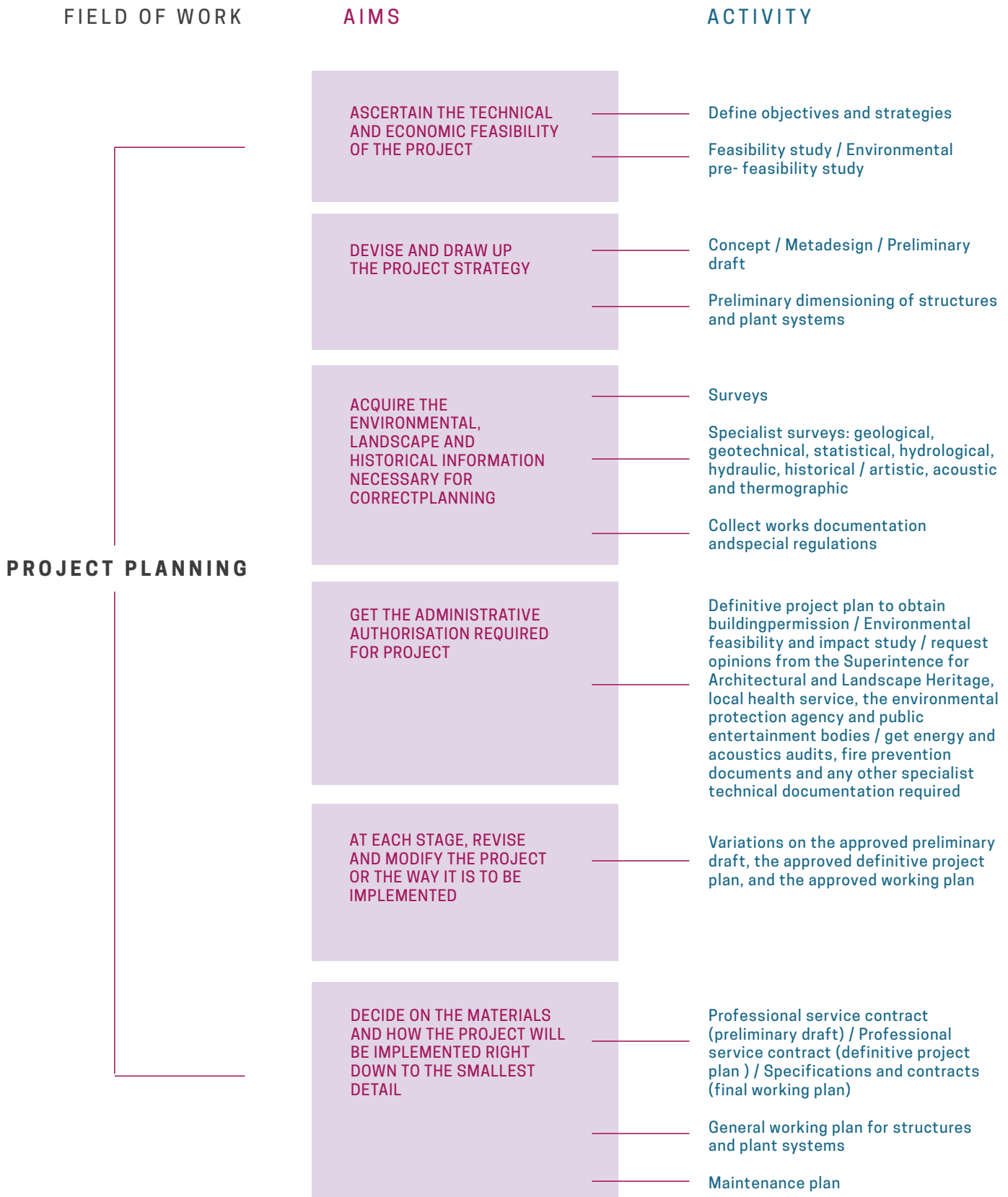
The realisation of an architectural project is a complex process. To offer you an overview we have created the “Client and architect” diagram, which shows the main stages of work, indicating those in which you will be involved more directly and those that will mainly be managed by the architect.

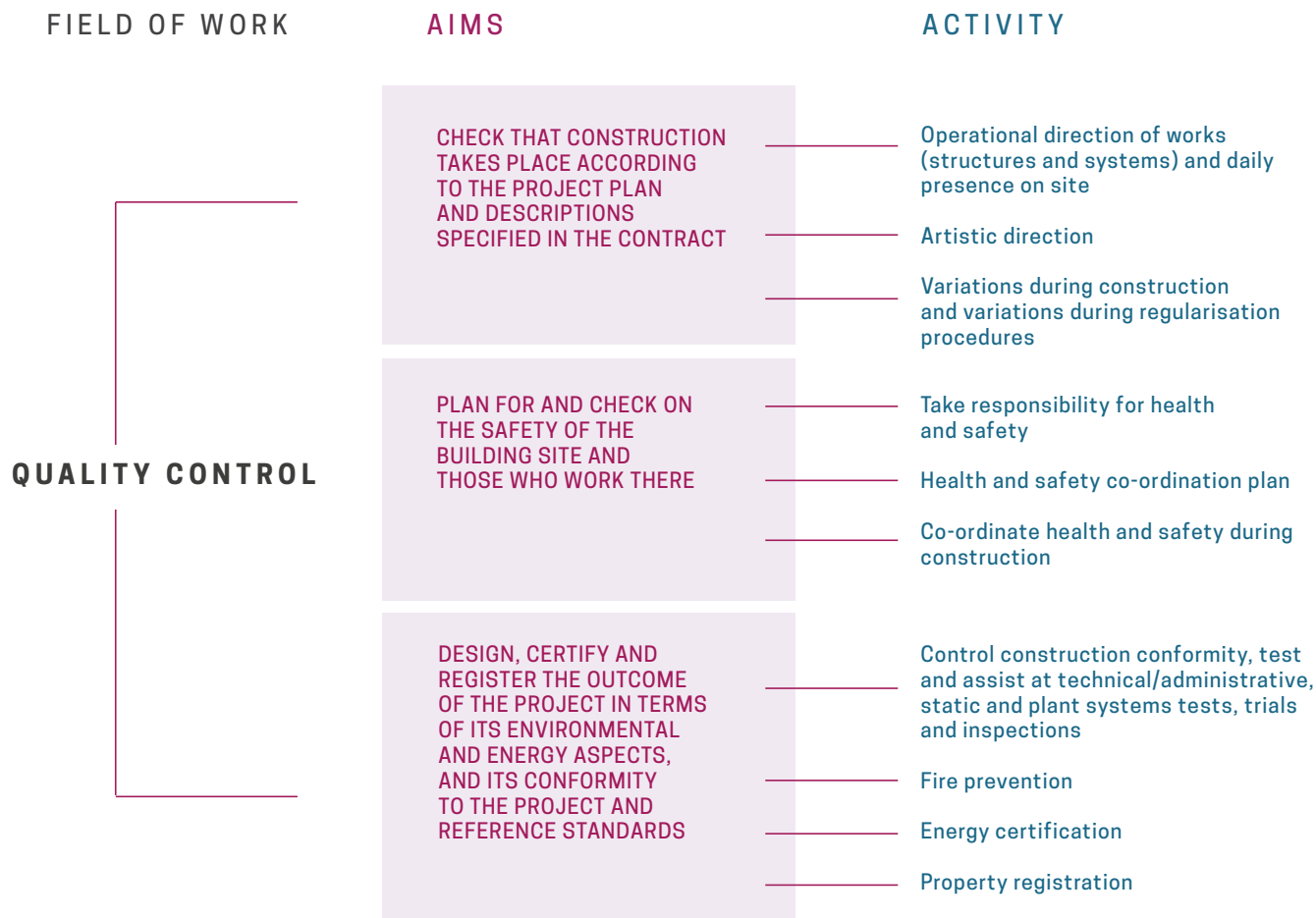


## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The various fields of a project are indicated in the “Professional services” table, together with their corresponding aims and activities. You may find this useful when deciding with the architect the services to be carried out and when specifying them in the contract.

FIELD OF WORK	AIMS	ACTIVITY
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	DECIDE ON THE PROJECT TEAM AND DETERMINE THE COST OF THE VARIOUS CONSULTANTS' FEES	<p>Decide on the project team: identify the collaboration and consultations required</p> <p>Estimate and contracts</p>
	ORGANISE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION STAGES	<p>Stipulate the responsibilities of the various parties: client, architect, builder, others</p> <p>Share the stages of work and step in the checking process</p> <p>Compliance testing /validation</p> <p>Coordinate the project group</p>
	ESTIMATE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION COSTS	<p>Economic frameworks (initial and final project plans)</p> <p>Analyses, price lists and price updates</p> <p>Short estimates (preliminary draft), project implementation costing (definitive project plans), bill of quantities for the architectural construction, structures and systems (final working plan).</p>
	VERIFY COSTS DURING AND ON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT	<p>Accounting and measurement of work, price revision</p> <p>Payment</p>
	ESTIMATE TIME REQUIRED FOR PLANNING, AUTHORISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION	<p>Timeschedule for implementation stages (preliminary draft, definitive and working plans)</p>
	CHOOSE THE BUILDER AND THE FORM OF CONTRACT	<p>Organise the call for tender (building firms) and selection process, assist in stipulating the contract</p>







# ABOUT

In this guide the Milan Order of Architects PLC has summarised the essential instruments in order to help clients in their choice of architect.

Its straightforward, non-specialist language lends it to multiple uses: it addresses both the client and the professional expert, because a good project is always fruit of a dialogue between the parties.

The guide helps clients to define their aims and priorities and architects to manage the project planning process.

You can consult **Il tuo architetto** (Your Architect) in various ways: through our [online website](#), in PDF form or on paper.

Buon lavoro!

## CREDITS

a project by the

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2015 Harquitectes+DataAE, Student Housing, Spain  
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2013 Atelier Kempe Thill, Hiphouse Zwolle, Netherlands  
(photo: © Ulrich Schwarz, Berlin)

2011 Zanderroth Architekten, BIGyard, Germany  
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2007 Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra, Social housing complex in Rota, Spain  
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