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From Design Idea to Structured Information

Why RIBA Plan of Work and facet classification are essential for structure, collaboration and cost control

Every strong design starts with a powerful idea. An architect translates the client's ambition into a shape that touches, surprises, or soothes — and ideally all three. That idea is the heart of the concept, the starting point of the entire project. That's exactly why it deserves both protection and support. Because without structure and clear agreements, even the best idea can easily falter.

The **RIBA Plan of Work 2020** provides a clear framework of sequential steps in the building process. Rather than using vague terms like "preliminary design" or "sketch phase," RIBA makes each stage concrete, with clear deliverables and responsibilities. But structure alone isn't enough.

Only when RIBA is linked to other standards — like NBN EN 15221-1, ISO 12006-2, NEN2699, STABU2, and CCS — does **the BouwData cost control framework** emerge: a coherent and traceable structure in which information, communication, and cost management go hand in hand.

A crucial part of this is **faceted classification**: three mental models (languages/systems) to understand a building:
1. **Spatial aspects**: where is it, at what level, in which zone?
2. **Functional systems**: what is it for?
3. **Technical systems**: how is it built?

In Stage 1 (Preparation and Brief), Stage 2 (Concept Design), and Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination), architects think in terms of *functional systems*. In Stage 4 (Technical Design), the focus shifts to *technical systems*.

At each stage, one classification dominates, and all parties temporarily speak the same language. Internally, they can still use their own logic — but within the project team, they translate their input into the active language of that stage – whether this is space, functional or technical.

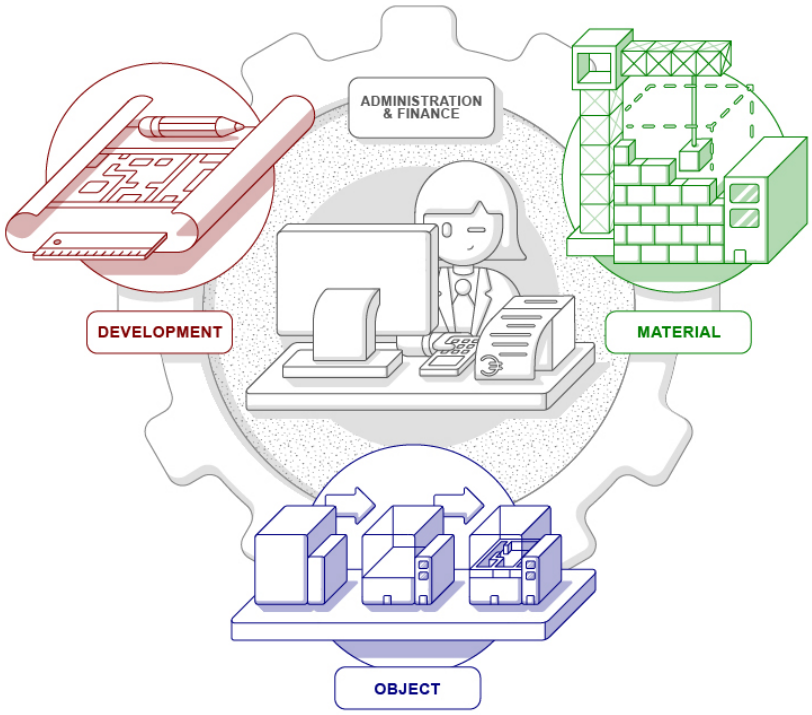
What's essential: **a central point to collect quantities**. Some data comes from the BIM model, some is still measured manually, and some is added by the early-stage cost consultant based on the complete picture. In Stage 4, Technical Design, **each unique combination of space, function and technic becomes a separate line in the bill of quantities**. Yes, that makes it longer — but also much more usable, verifiable, and reusable. No more ad hoc measurements, no more endless discussions.

Want to align your **CDE structure** with the BouwData thinking? Start with **AS6 (tags as faceted classification)** and **AS7 (folders as a hierarchical classification).** Both are freely downloadable in Excel format via www.bouwdata.net and offer a practical foundation for central data management. Yes, we know there's room for improvement — AS6 and AS7 will be revised in the future in collaboration with other stakeholders, but they already provide a solid foundation to build on.

🎯 Practical tip

Use the gearwheel image from the whitepaper:

1. Start by setting up a **CDE (Common Data Environment)** as your *single source of truth*. Without this digital anchor, structuring remains difficult.
2. Appoint a **client representative** responsible for administration, data structure, and cost tracking.



Doing this from Stage 1 ensures that the architect's creative idea can be translated into a technically feasible and financially realistic project — without getting lost along the way.