



IMPROVING GOVERNANCE OF URBAN PLANNING IN TÜRKİYE

GOVERN UP

Purpose and Context:

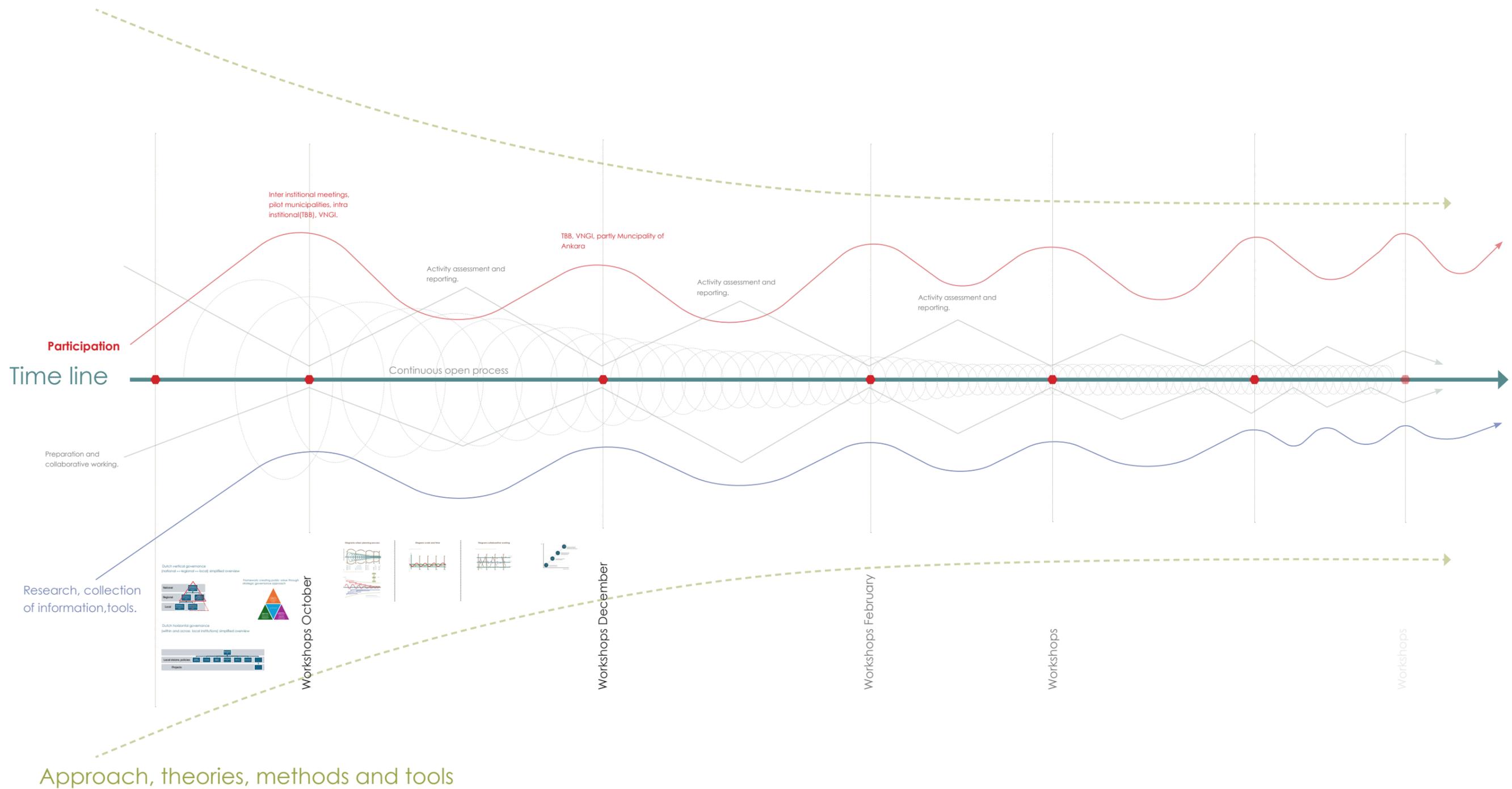
The December Govern-UP workshop brought together representatives from the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT) Project Team (Resilient Urbanisation Studio), and VNG International Technical Assistance Team to jointly reflect on governance models for urban planning and to explore opportunities for more participatory, resilient, and collaborative practices.

This report consolidates the workshop outcomes and integrates the feedback received from partners.



Time line Govern UP - work in progress

Outputs and results

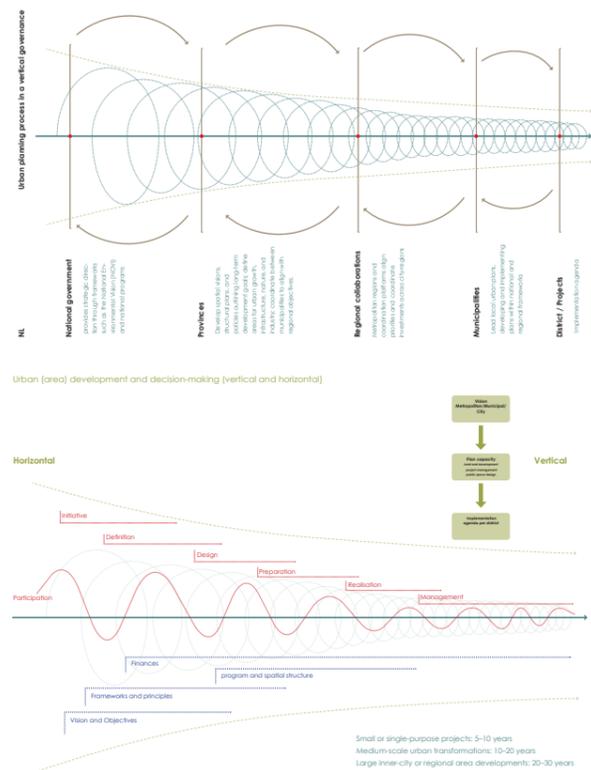


Storyline of december workshop

Assessing vertical and horizontal governance in urban planning process

Guidelines on participatory and transparent urban planning with "behind the scenes" examples from NL and TR

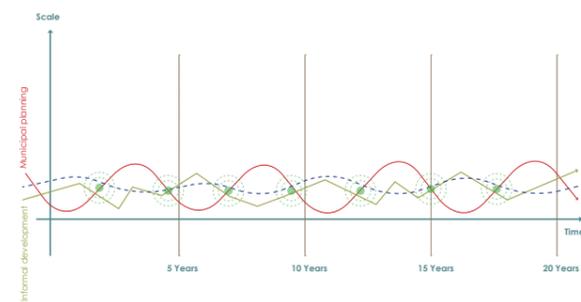
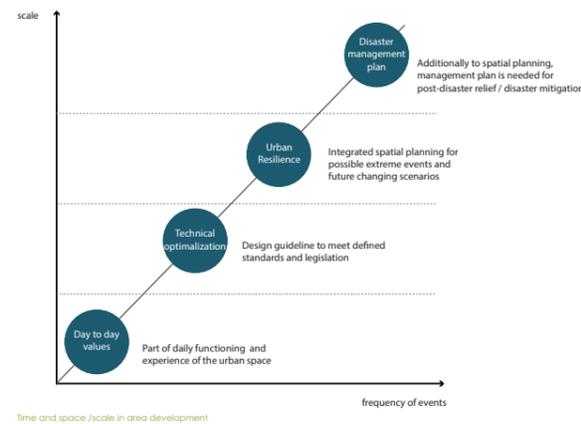
Diagrams urban planning process



Adding participatory approach for resilient urban planning

Guidelines on participatory and transparent urban planning with "behind the scenes" examples from NL and TR

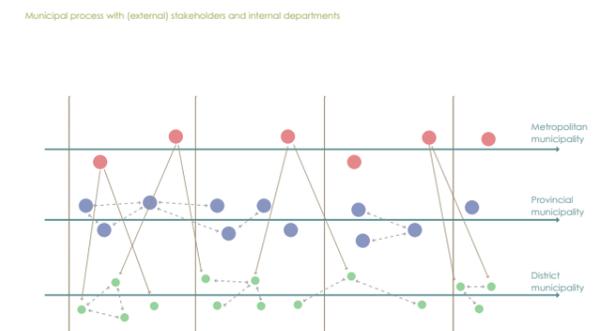
Diagrams scale and time



Collaborative working; which role can UMT take?

Preparations for upcoming mission and role and ambitions of UMT

Diagram collaborative working

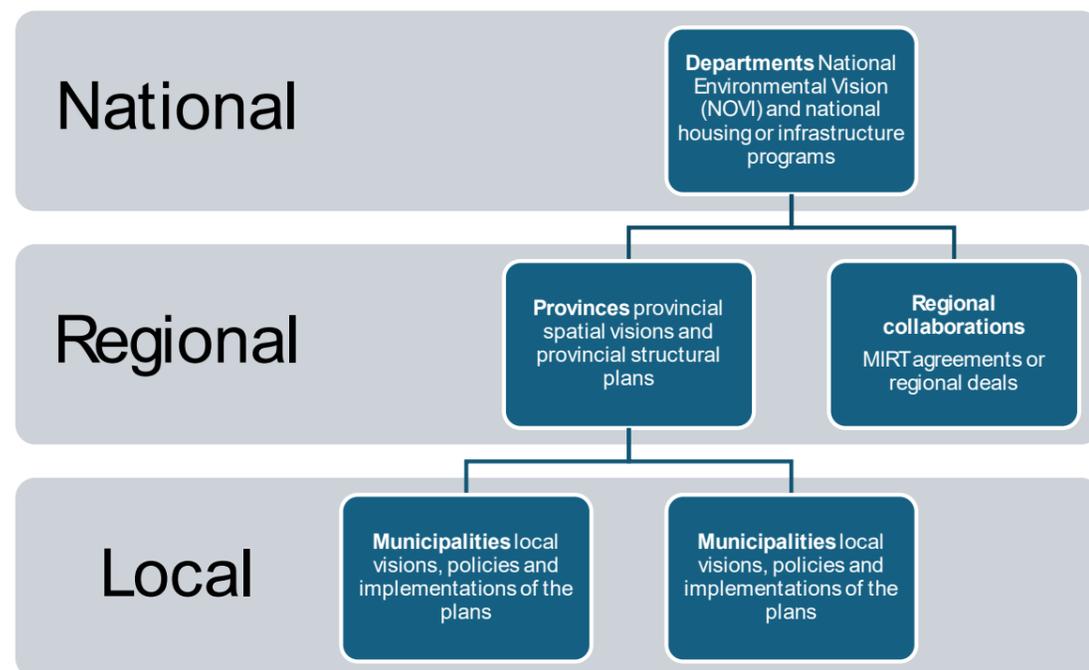


Setting the scene - central questions

- How are the current urban planning processes?
 - Why?
 - What and how can they be different?
 - What is the role of UMT in this?
- How can ideas apply and translate to your situation?

Spatial planning in the Netherlands

There are three levels of physical planning in the Netherlands.



On national level the various ministries define policies and outlines per sector. Integrated in a national law on physical planning.



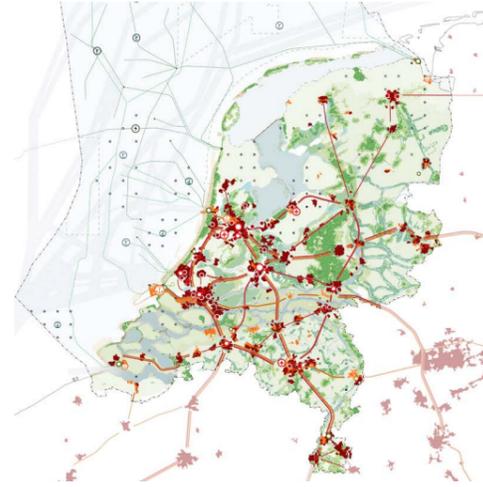
Eleven provinces with regional planning intermediate in between these national programs and specific local interests of cities and the countryside.



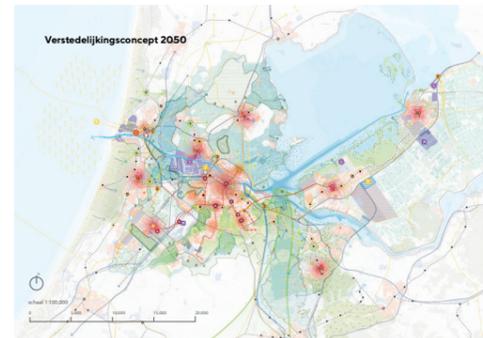
Municipalities are the executioners on local scale of all these policies and programs

This system works top down as well as bottom up (feedback).
And is regulated and balanced with financial budgets and protocols (permits).
Each level has clear responsibilities.

National plan
national environmental vision



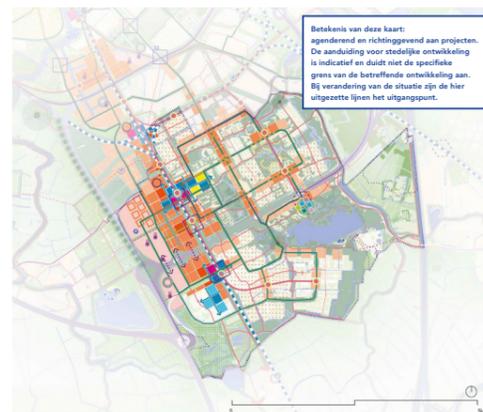
Regional plan



City plan



District plan



NL

Urban planning process in a vertical governance

National government

provides strategic direction through frameworks such as the National Environmental Vision (NOVI) and national programs

Provinces

Develop spatial visions, structural plans, and policies outlining long-term development goals; define areas for urban growth, infrastructure, nature, and industry; coordinate between municipalities to align with regional objectives.

Regional collaborations

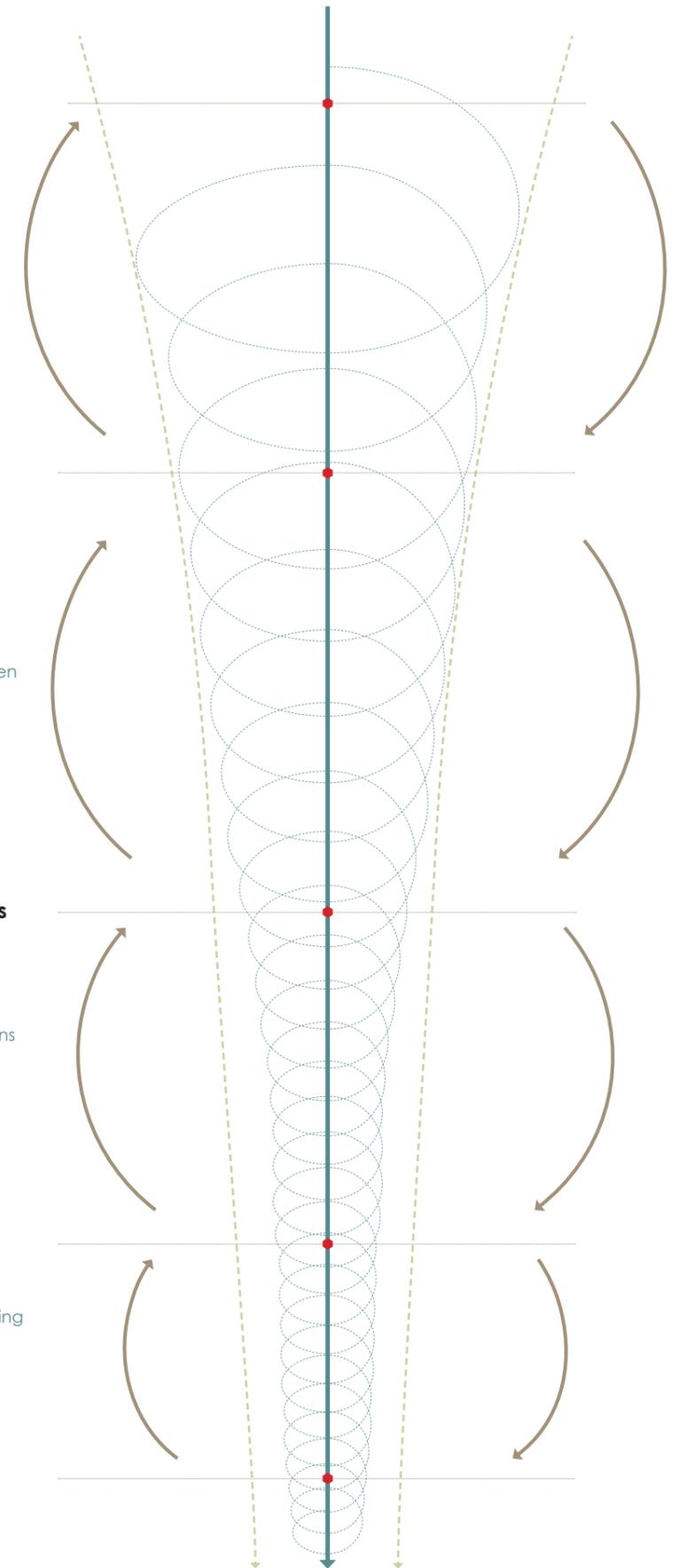
Metropolitan regions and coordination platforms align priorities and coordinate investments across city-regions

Municipalities

Lead local urban plans, developing and implementing plans within national and regional frameworks

District / Projects

Implementation agenda



Rethinking Spatial Planning Governance in Türkiye: From Hierarchy to Matrix

A key conclusion of the workshop discussions strongly emphasized by UMT representatives and the Director of Urban Planning during the courtesy visit is that spatial planning in Türkiye cannot be adequately represented through a purely vertical or hierarchical governance diagram.

Unlike the Netherlands, where national, regional, and local authorities are formally embedded in a vertical governance chain, the Turkish system is constitutionally characterized by a separation between central and local authorities. While strong central government tutelage exists, municipalities do not fall under the direct jurisdiction of ministries. Instead, provincial directorates operate as extensions of the central government, while municipalities function as autonomous local administrations.

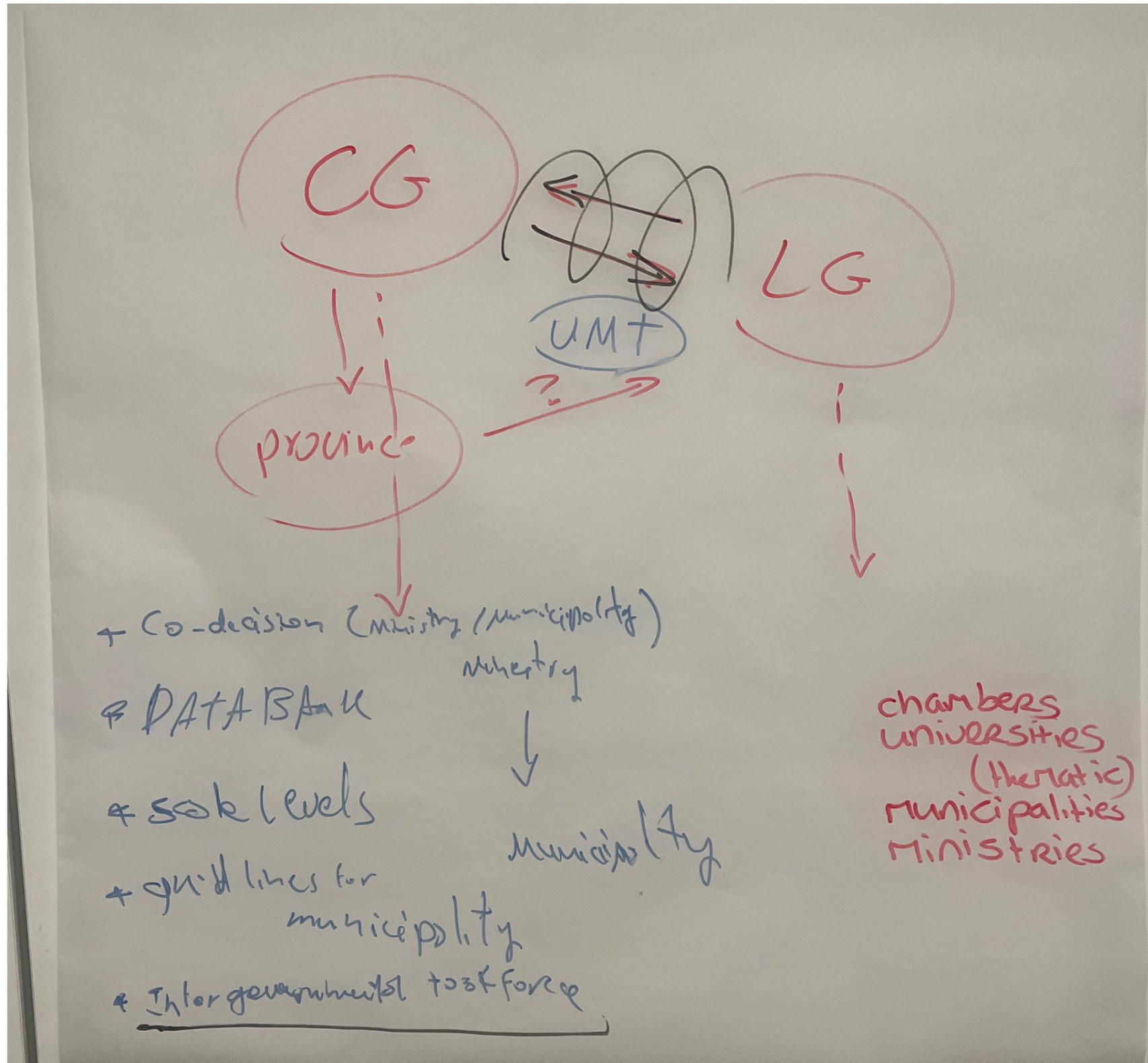
As a result, the workshop reached consensus on the need to reframe spatial planning in Türkiye as a matrix of relationships, rather than a linear hierarchy.

This matrix:

- Distinguishes clearly between national, provincial, and municipal levels, rather than ranking different municipal types above or below one another;
- Acknowledges that certain functions, competencies, and actors operate across levels;
- Highlights UMT's intertwined role, engaging simultaneously with central institutions and local governments.

This matrix-based understanding provides a more accurate foundation for analysing governance challenges and for designing collaborative and participatory interventions.

Spatial Planning Governance in Türkiye Matrix



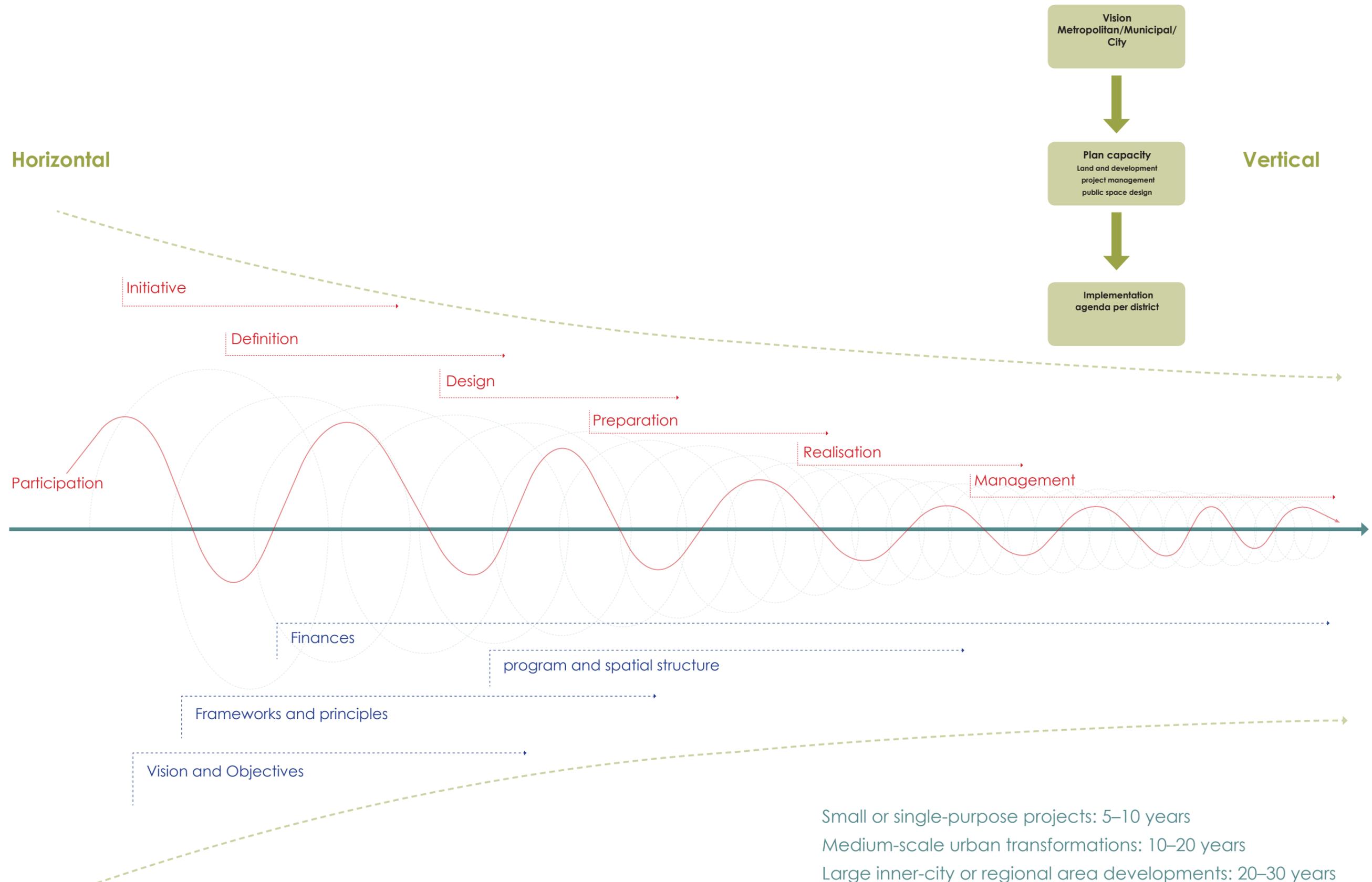
Comparative Insights: Similarities Between Planning Systems in NL and TR

In addition to identifying structural differences, the workshop also highlighted important similarities between the Dutch and Turkish planning systems. In both contexts:

- National-level frameworks set strategic directions;
- Spatial plans are developed at multiple scales;
- Implementation largely takes place at the municipal level;
- Coordination across sectors and institutions is critical for successful outcomes.

Explicitly highlighting these similarities helps position the Govern-UP project not as a transfer of models, but as a mutual learning process, where comparable challenges are addressed within different institutional arrangements.

Urban (area) development and decision-making (vertical and horizontal)



Governance Processes: Vertical, Horizontal, and Collaborative Dimensions

The workshop analysed urban planning processes through three complementary lenses:

Vertical governance

Strategic frameworks, sectoral policies, and regulatory instruments developed at national and provincial levels.

Horizontal governance

Coordination across municipal departments and collaboration with external stakeholders such as residents, entrepreneurs, professional organisations, and civil society.

Collaborative working

A cross-cutting dimension that links vertical and horizontal processes through structured cooperation, trust-building, and shared problem-solving.

Participants agreed that collaborative working should be understood as an integral part of the planning process, rather than an additional layer. This includes:

- Inter- and intra-institutional cooperation;
- Clear roles for different stakeholders;
- Agreed-upon processes, tools, and mechanisms.

The matrix approach to governance provides the conceptual basis for embedding collaboration and participation across all stages of planning and decision-making.

Example - Hengelo: renovation of the market square

The municipality of Hengelo identified sustainability, climate adaptation, and greening as key themes, aligned with its ambition to become climate-neutral by 2050

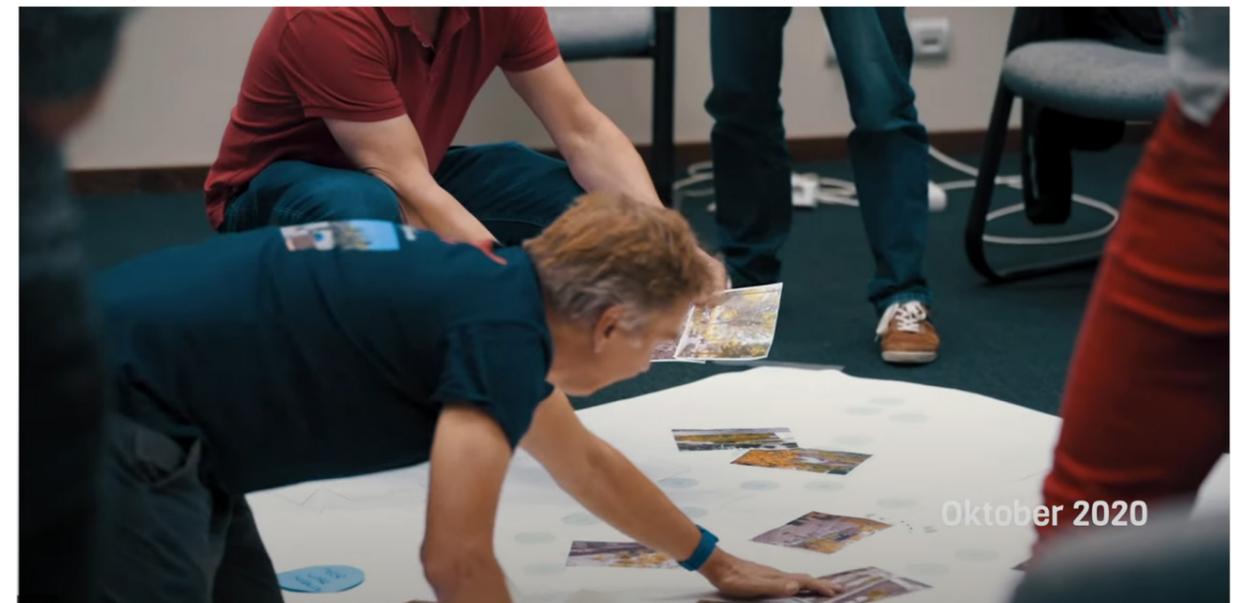


Co-creation process important backbone of redevelopment

Earlier plans to redevelop the city centre lacked sufficient support

The municipality chose a new approach centred on participation and co-creation

with entrepreneurs, residents, educational institutions, the nature and environment council, the Cyclists' Union, the disabilities council.



Behind - the - scene

A framework set by the municipal council

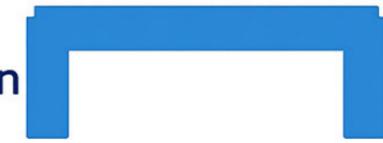
Gathering ideas, opinions, plans, from Hengelo's entrepreneurs and residents

Architect transforms the various proposals into four scenarios

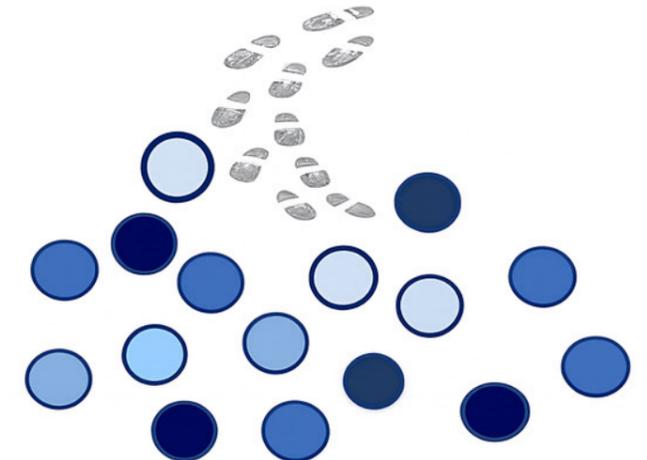
Residents and entrepreneurs respond to these scenarios by giving pluses and minuses

Architect creates one final design which is submitted to the municipal council, who makes the decision

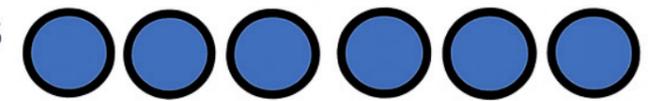
1 Kaderstelling Raad
-Doelen en begrenzingen



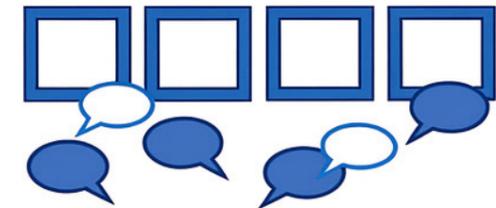
2 Droomfase
- Ideeën en plannen



3 Marktpluin Makers
- Voorstellen maken



4 Vier scenario's



5 Mijn Marktpluin
- Eén ontwerp

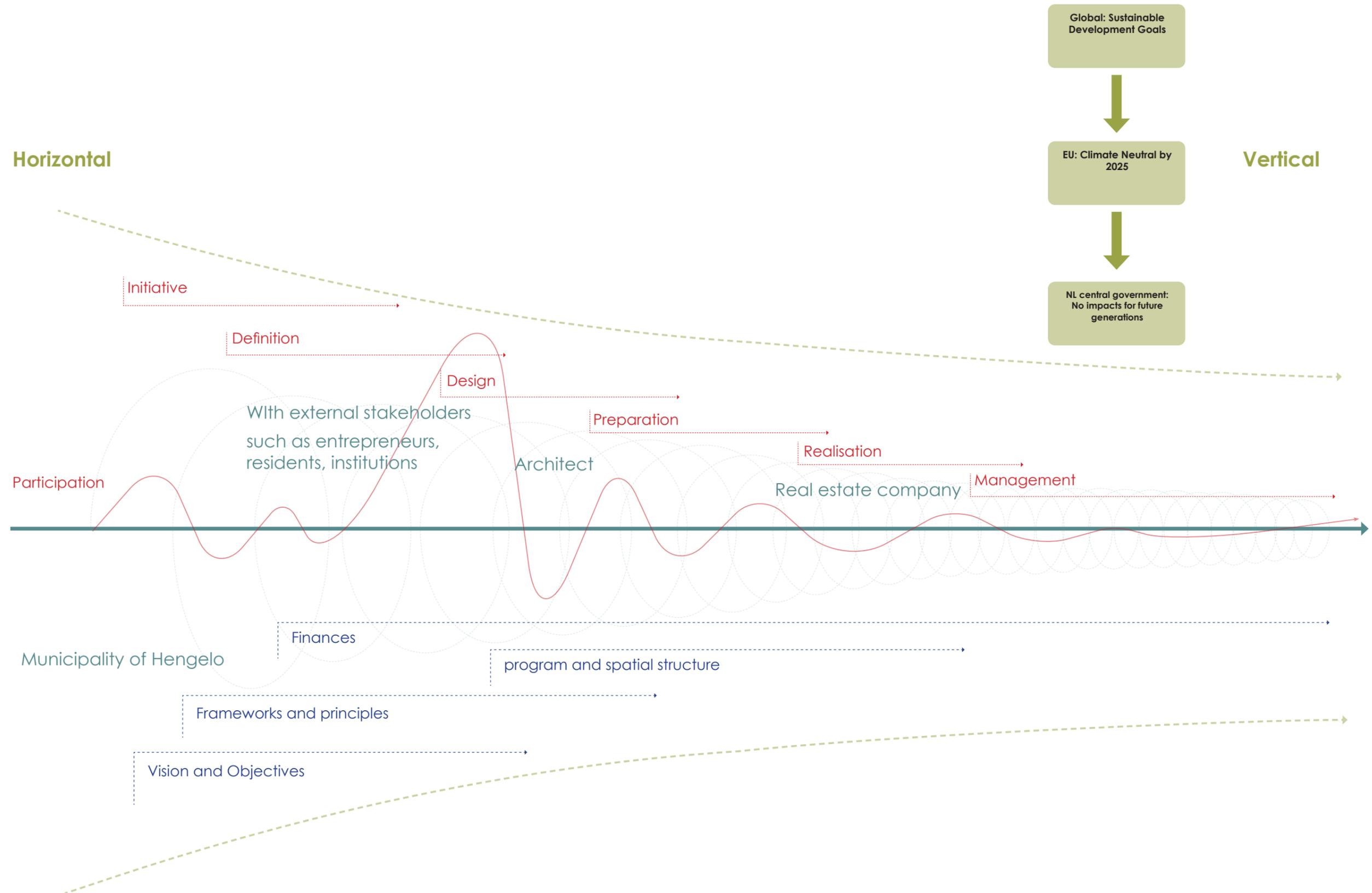


6 Besluitvorming Raad

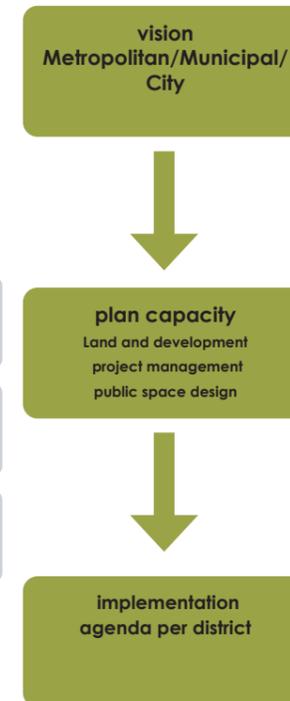
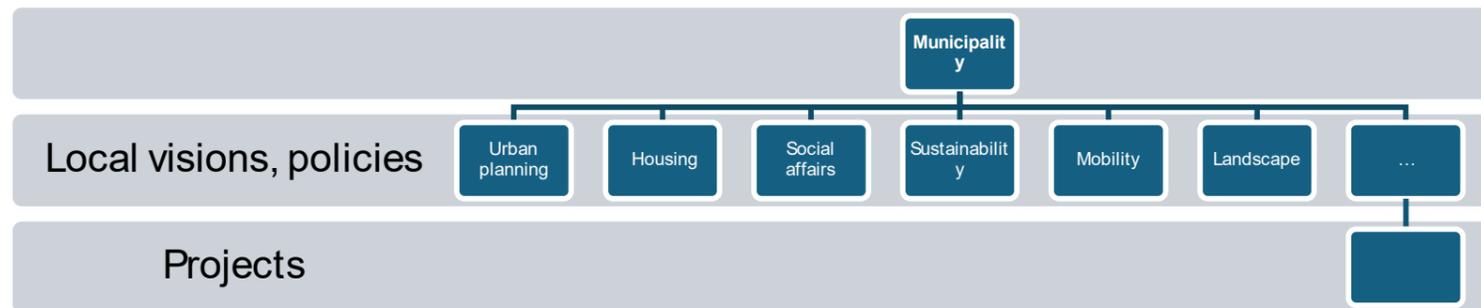


Applying it to the diagram of horizontal governance

Development of the market square in Hengelo



Applying it to the diagram of horizontal governance



Maps:

- as a communication tool to show the added quality to the built environment
- on different scale to show how smaller scale urban transformation is landing in a larger scale plan

How do you ensure implementation of spatial quality as a governmental body on a local scale?

Workshop diagram horizontal governance

Discussion amongst UMT

Horizontal governance diagram
made by UMT

Take aways from UMT e.g.

Tools and mechanisms exist to ensure a
participatory resilient urban transformation
(such as plannotes, phased development)

How decision making takes place?

Which questions remained unanswered?

Example of Beyoğlu - Participatory Process UMT

Main take aways from UMT

Participation and Transparency as Core Elements

Guidelines on participatory and transparent urban planning formed a central pillar of the December workshop story line.

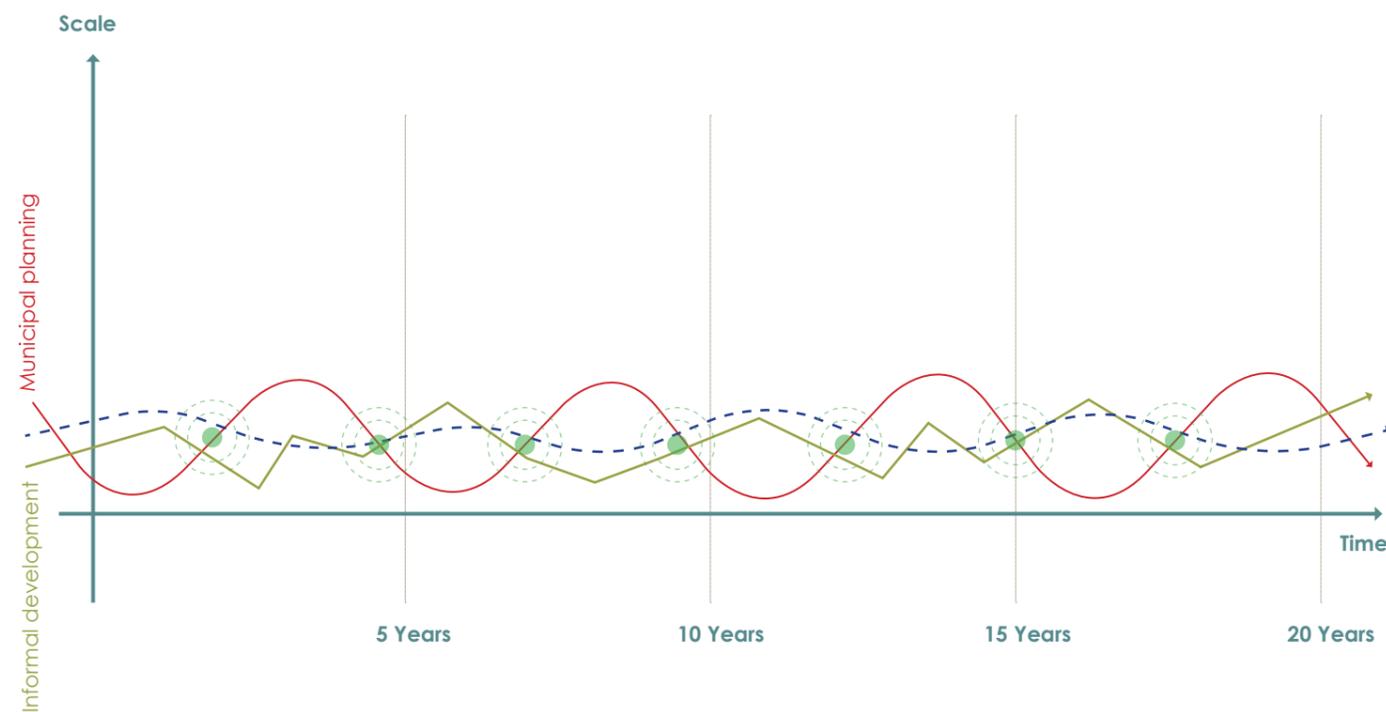
These included:

- Comparative guidelines from both Türkiye and the Netherlands;
- “Behind-the-scenes” examples illustrating how participation is organised, managed, and translated into decision-making;
- Reflections on the need to actively plan participation, rather than treating it as an ad hoc or symbolic exercise.

The Hengelo case illustrated how structured participation and co-creation can build legitimacy and support, while the Beyoğlu example **(to be further developed by UMT)** was identified as a key opportunity to demonstrate how participatory processes function in the Turkish context.

Diagram of scale and time (frequency)

Time and space /scale in area development



(Frequency of) events have influence on the urban planning and decision making processes such as

- Political development
- Disasters
- Economic circumstances
- Informal development
- Municipal planning

The scale and whom you involve when in decision making differs, depending on the impact of the event

Time, Scale, and Frequency

The diagrams on time, scale, and frequency introduced during the workshop highlighted how different types of events, such as political change, disasters, economic fluctuations, and informal development affect planning and decision-making processes.

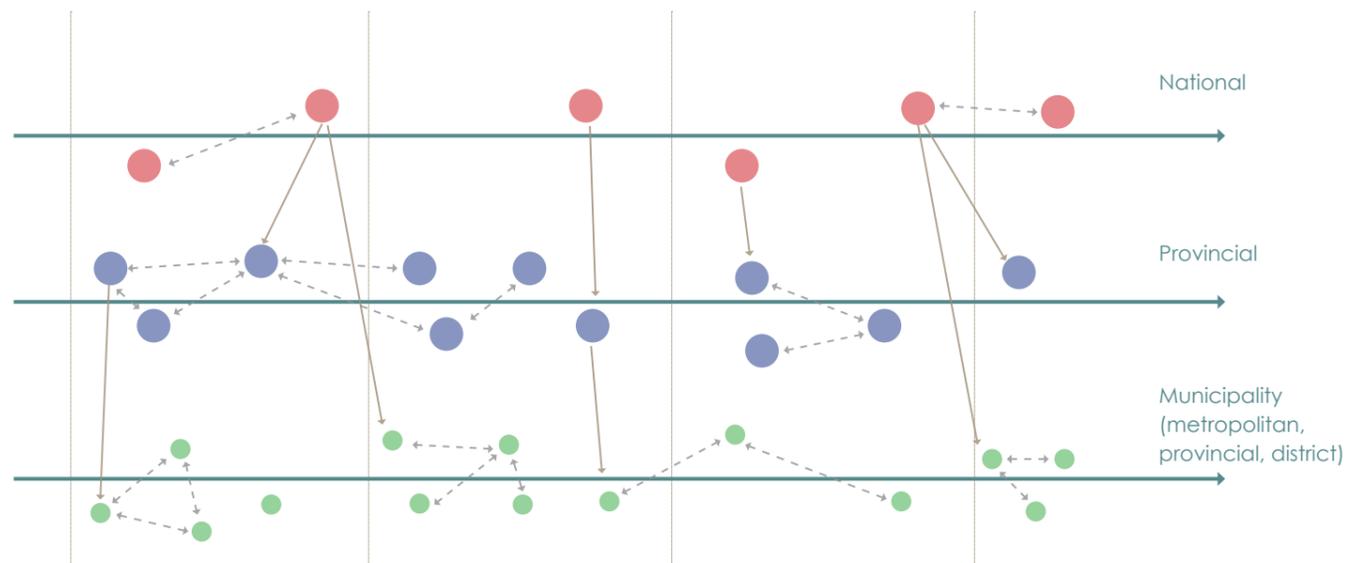
Key insights include:

- Different scales of development require different forms of participation and governance;
- Short-term events may demand rapid coordination, while long-term transformations require sustained engagement;
- Resilience planning must be integrated across scales, combining day-to-day values with preparedness for extreme events.

These diagrams are considered work in progress and will be further refined during the February workshop with municipal representatives.

Collaborative working

Spatial planning process with (external) stakeholders and internal departments



How do you work together (inter-intra institutional)?

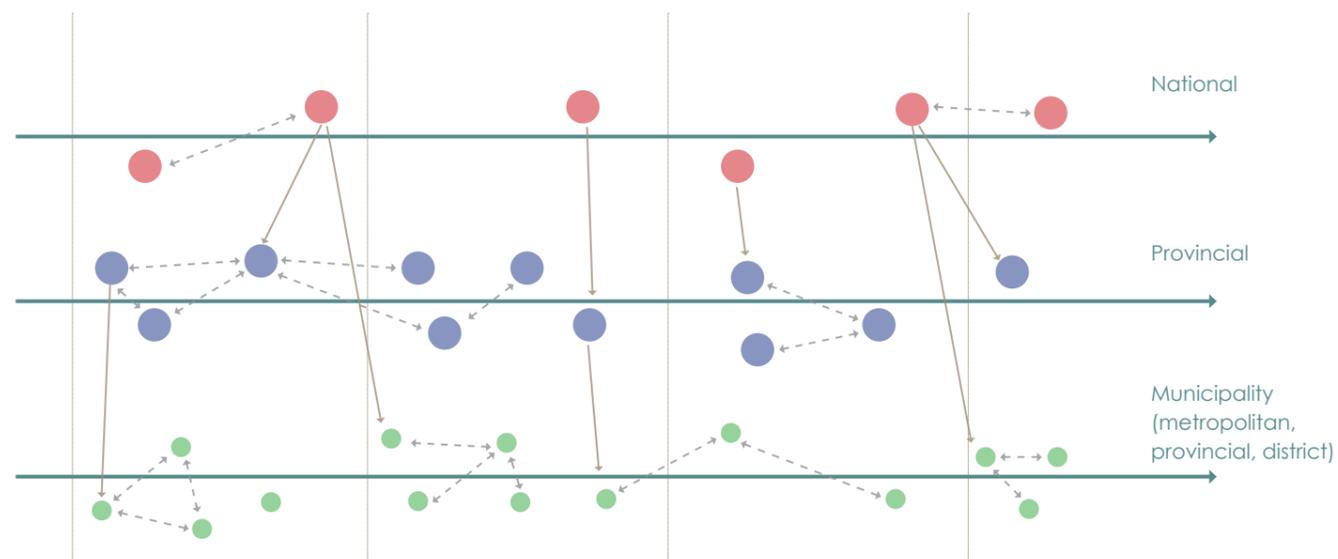
Which stakeholders should be involved?

Which processes should be in place and which tools or mechanisms?

What role does UMT take?

Collaborative working

Spatial planning process with (external) stakeholders and internal departments



A consensus on the necessity of re-thinking the spatial planning in Türkiye as reflecting a matrix of relationships, including UMT's intertwined role in both central and local aspects.

incorporate the involvement of different stakeholders (providing a framework of participation)

To be further developed in February workshop with representatives of Adana Seyhan Municipality, Kahramanmaraş Metropolitan Municipality, and Osmaniye Municipality?

Role of UMT



Within your profession as an expert, with your responsibilities and terms of reference, what can be a fundamental innovation?

What can be done differently amongst your organization (TBB)?

What can be done between different organisations and what can the role of UMT be as a representative of all municipalities?

Role of UMT



Thematic knowledge development
(participatory mechanisms in planning,
conflictmanagement, international
network development, water/drought,
human scale city planning, typologies)

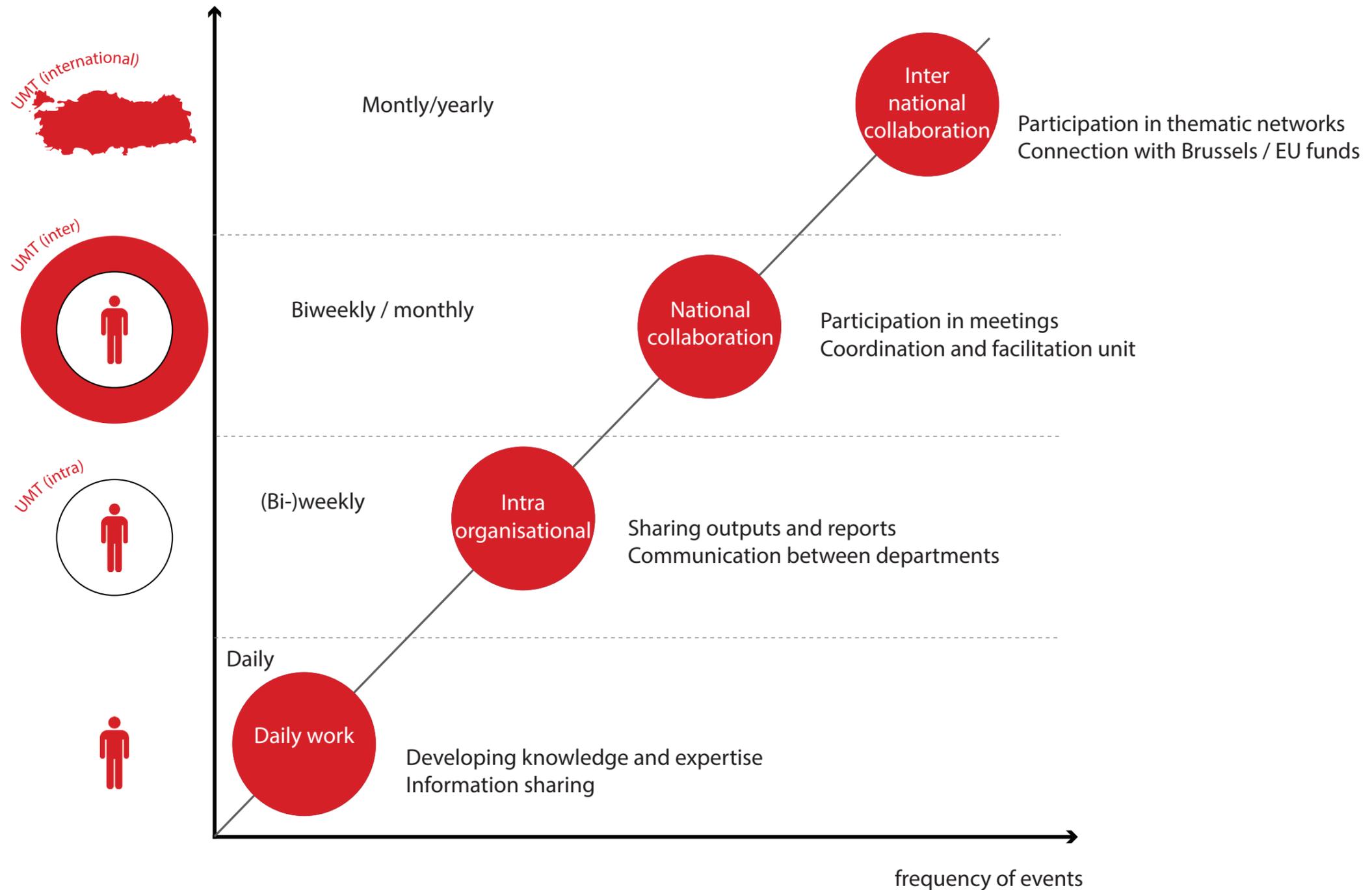
Administrative processes and technical
expertise is currently combined at UMT

Input UMT e.g.

- Trainings to municipal members
- Mediator or facilitator role
- Governance lab

-.....

Role of UMT



Establishment of a Land Development and Urbanism Commission, functioning of the UMT's Coordination Unit, data and information sharing issues, and bureaucratic barriers

Role of UMT: Current Capacities and Future Directions

The workshop and subsequent discussions highlighted that administrative processes and technical expertise are currently combined within UMT, creating both opportunities and challenges.

Key areas identified include:

- The potential establishment of a Land Development and Urbanism Commission.
- The role of the UMT Coordination Unit in facilitation, data sharing, and intergovernmental alignment.
- Existing bureaucratic barriers and information-sharing challenges.

UMT's role was discussed across three levels:

- Intra-institutional: knowledge development, coordination between departments, and internal communication.
- Inter-institutional: mediation, facilitation, training, and support to municipalities.
- International: participation in networks, exchange with Dutch partners, and access to EU knowledge and funding opportunities.

Framing these insights as conclusions derived from workshop discussions strengthens the narrative and clarifies UMT's strategic position within the Govern-UP project.

Next Steps and Planned Activities

To strengthen the overall narrative, the following next steps are clearly articulated:

Workshops with municipal representatives

These workshops aim to:

- Test and refine the governance matrix and participation framework;
- Apply concepts to concrete municipal cases;
- Support peer learning among municipalities.

Planned panel discussion

The panel is intended to:

- Bring together national, provincial, and municipal perspectives;
- Reflect on lessons learned from the workshops;
- Position Govern-UP within broader debates on urban governance and resilience in Türkiye.

These activities are essential for translating conceptual insights into practical guidance and shared ownership.

Çok teşekkür ederim
Thank you very much