

CROSSING THE LINE FOR NATURE:

CROSS BORDER PLANNING COLLABORATION FOR EFFECTIVE ECOSYSTEM-BASED ADAPTATION

Climate change is creating alterations and increasing risks to both nature and our built environment. One of the most evident risks is sea level rise. We need to reconsider the way we have been preparing cities to face the climate change related issues. The hard infrastructure that has been used in the past to deal with these issues requires high investment and has very limited adaptive capacity.

Instead of fighting nature, we should understand better the natural processes that take place in the ecosystems and use them in our favour to become more adaptable. The use of these Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) strategies can contribute to the sustainable development of our regions.

The main challenge in this discussion is to acknowledge the dimension of these ecosystems and their processes, which normally does not align with the administrative and political divisions that we have established for our territory. This issue is very apparent in the case of the Western Scheldt, the remaining open arm of the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta that has to satisfy the needs of the Dutch and Belgian development.

Some cross-border initiatives have already been implemented in the region, the most important one being the Western Scheldt Commission. This commission created an outline and long-term vision for the sustainable development of the Western Scheldt. Increasing port activity, dealing with multiple risks associated to flood and maintaining ecological qualities in this tidal estuary were defined as the main functions to be addressed.

Because the systems related to these functions are interdependent, dealing with them separately can have many negative impacts. Port activity is the main driver of change in the Western Scheldt. Until recently, it has mostly developed autonomously and resulted in increasing flood risks and further deterioration of the valuable ecosystems in the region.

Port development has high potential to be integrated with the other functions and will be used as the driving force for the proposal. Port development projects in the Western Scheldt will be paired with the expected local impacts in the values of safety and ecology.

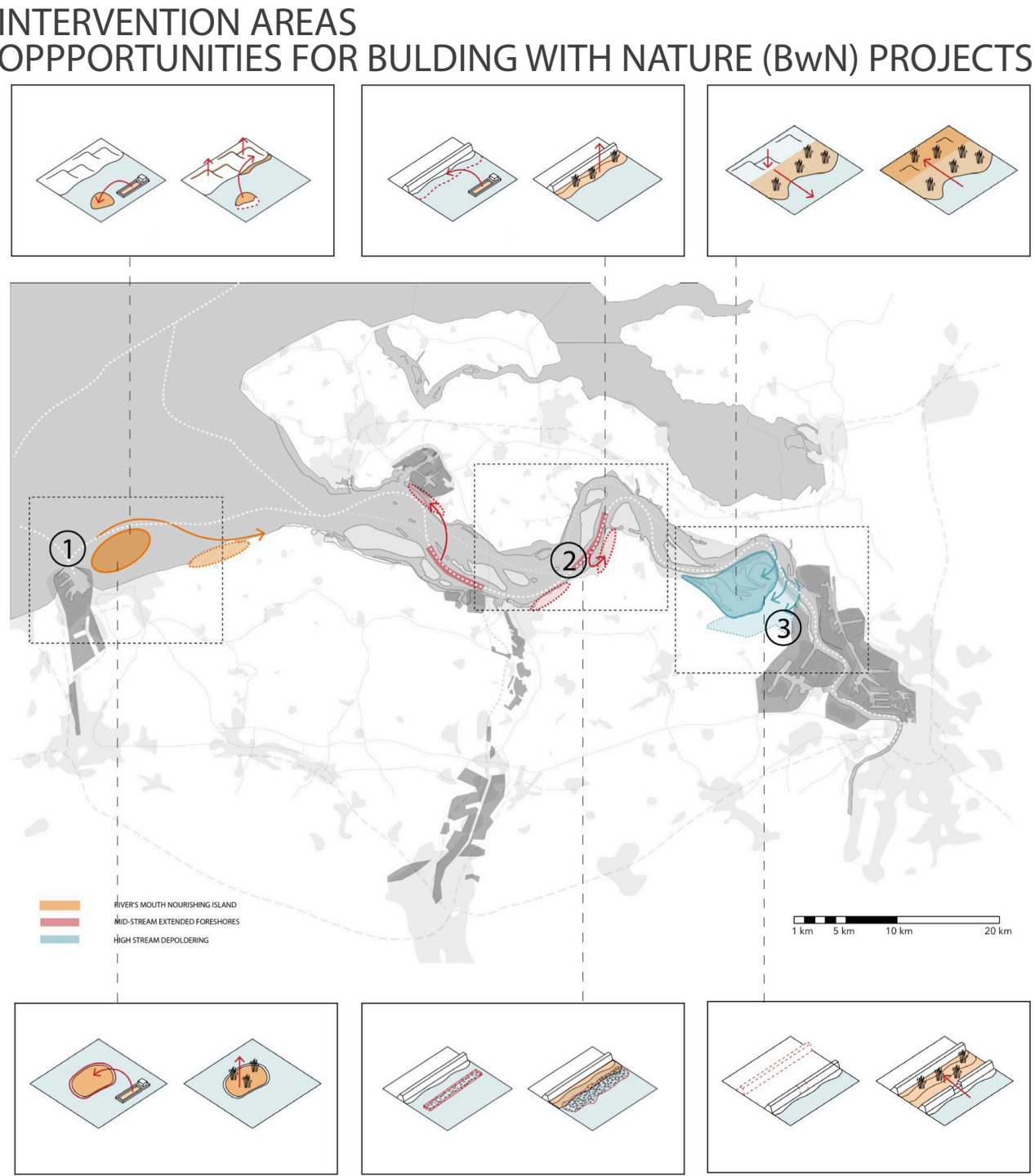
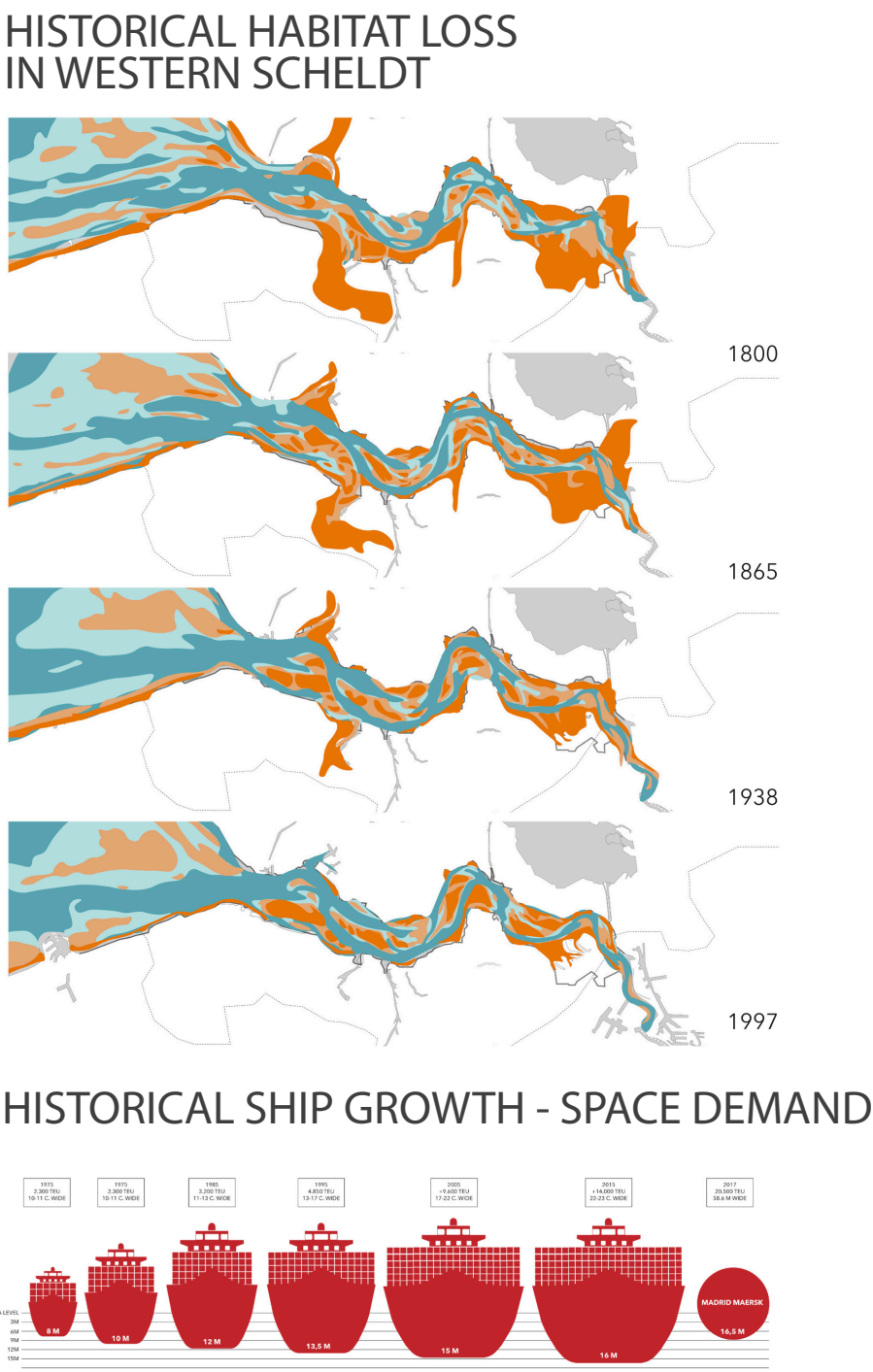
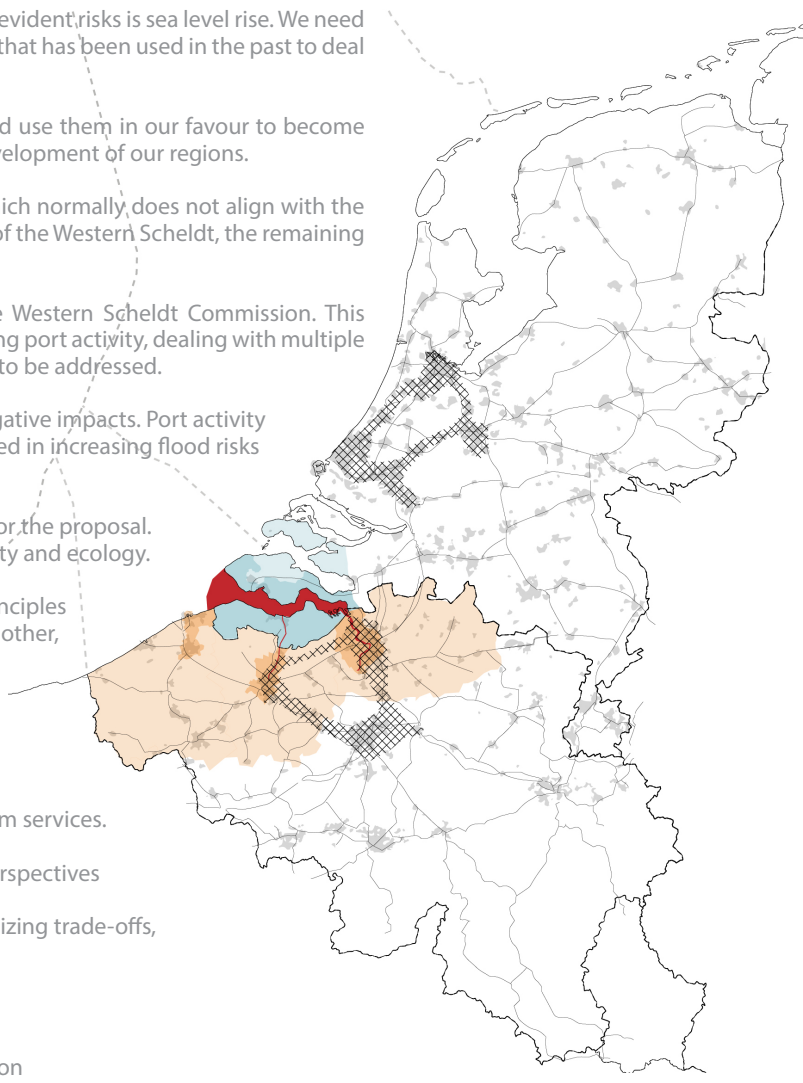
Each of these projects will be addressed through a multi-system approach, taking the Building with Nature (BwN) principles and exposing its potentialities. The pairs not just give way to BwN as technical solution, where systems support each other, but also, will establish pathways for beneficial governance arrangements.

The new governance arrangements will respond to the site specificities and consider the following aspects:

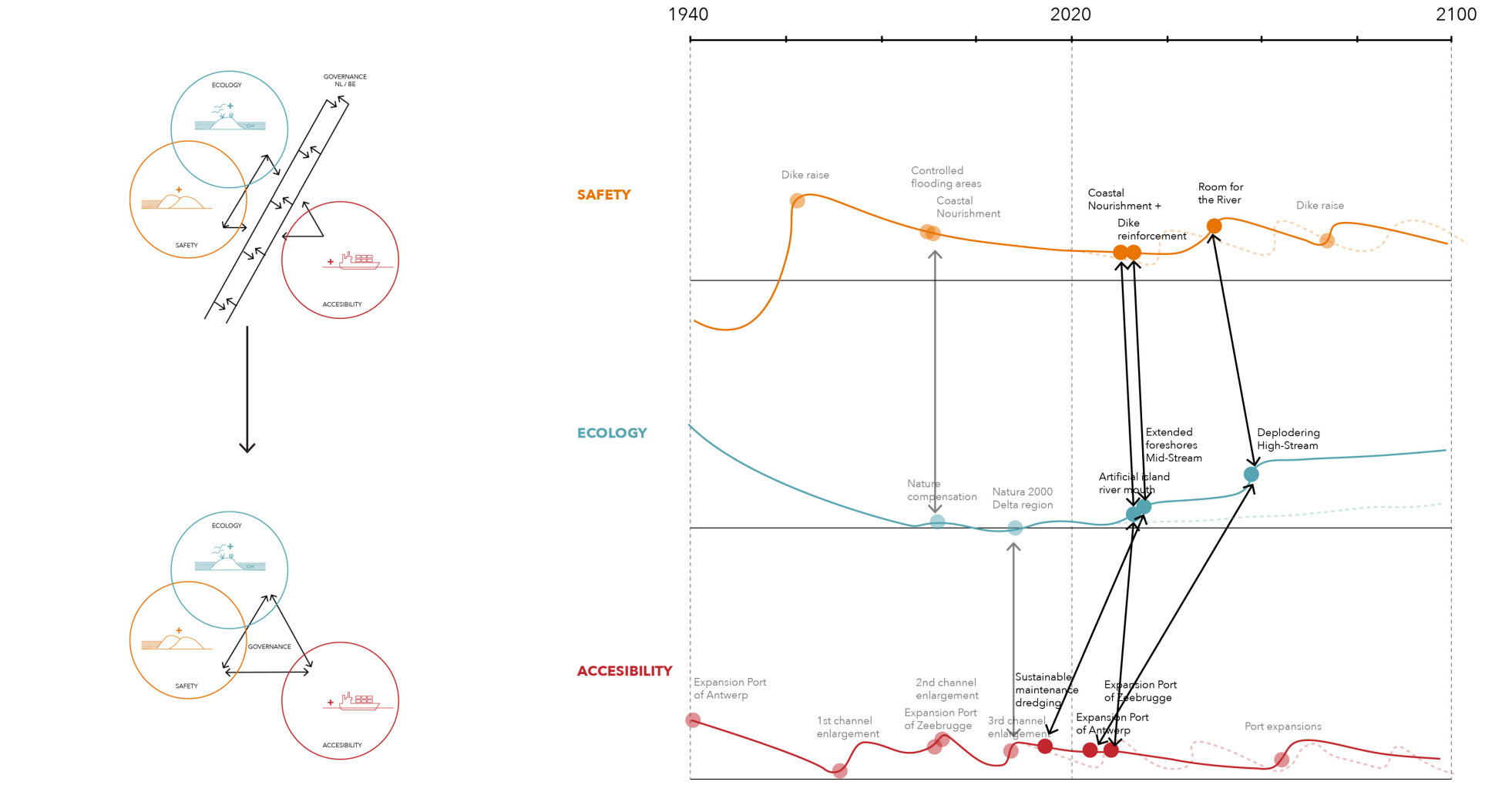
- It identifies the site-specific group of stakeholders that would have an important role in the implementation of the proposed EbA strategies.
- The regional drivers are established and connected to local-scale groups that benefit from the provision of ecosystem services.
- This contributes to initiate and maintain the conditions of these ecosystems.
- The network highlights synergies between different sectors, facilitates the exchange of interests, knowledge and perspectives and distributes responsibilities to ensure the networks robustness.

These aspects of collaboration will contribute to the implementation of EbA by increasing the overall support, minimizing trade-offs, revealing additional potentialities and channelling resources efficiently.

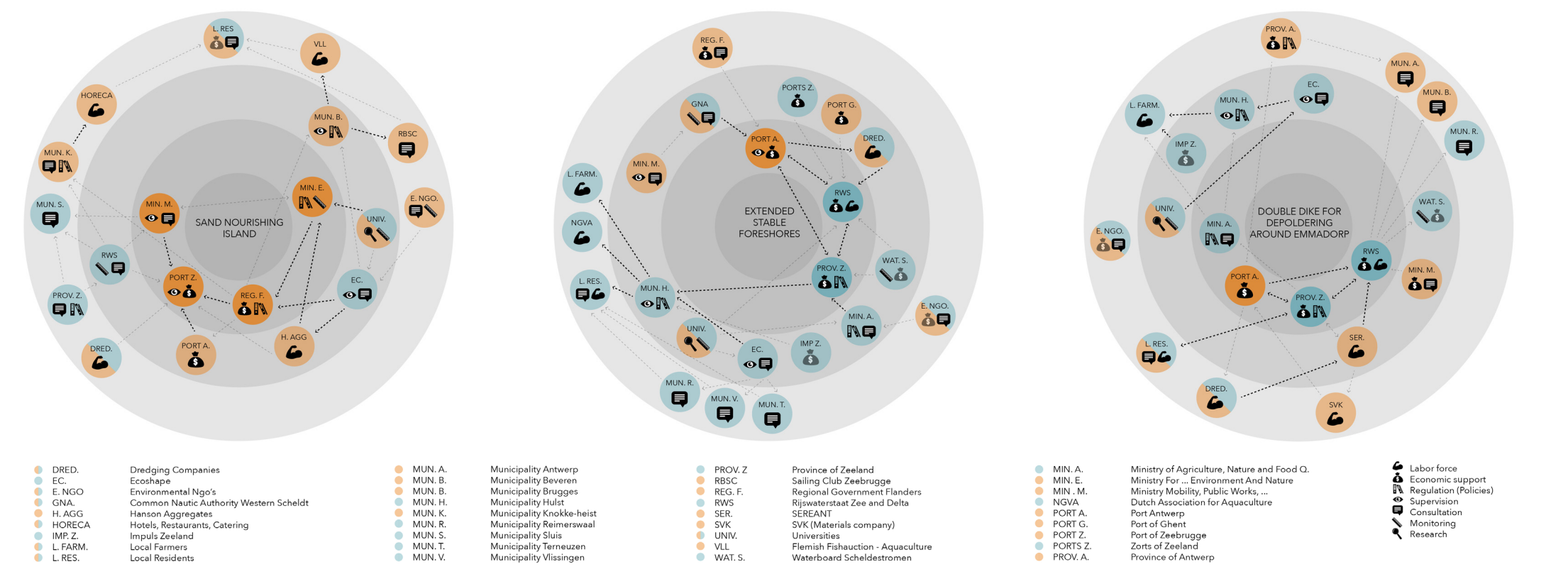
Keywords:
Ecosystem-based adaptation, adaptation strategies, Building with Nature, regional planning, cross border collaboration



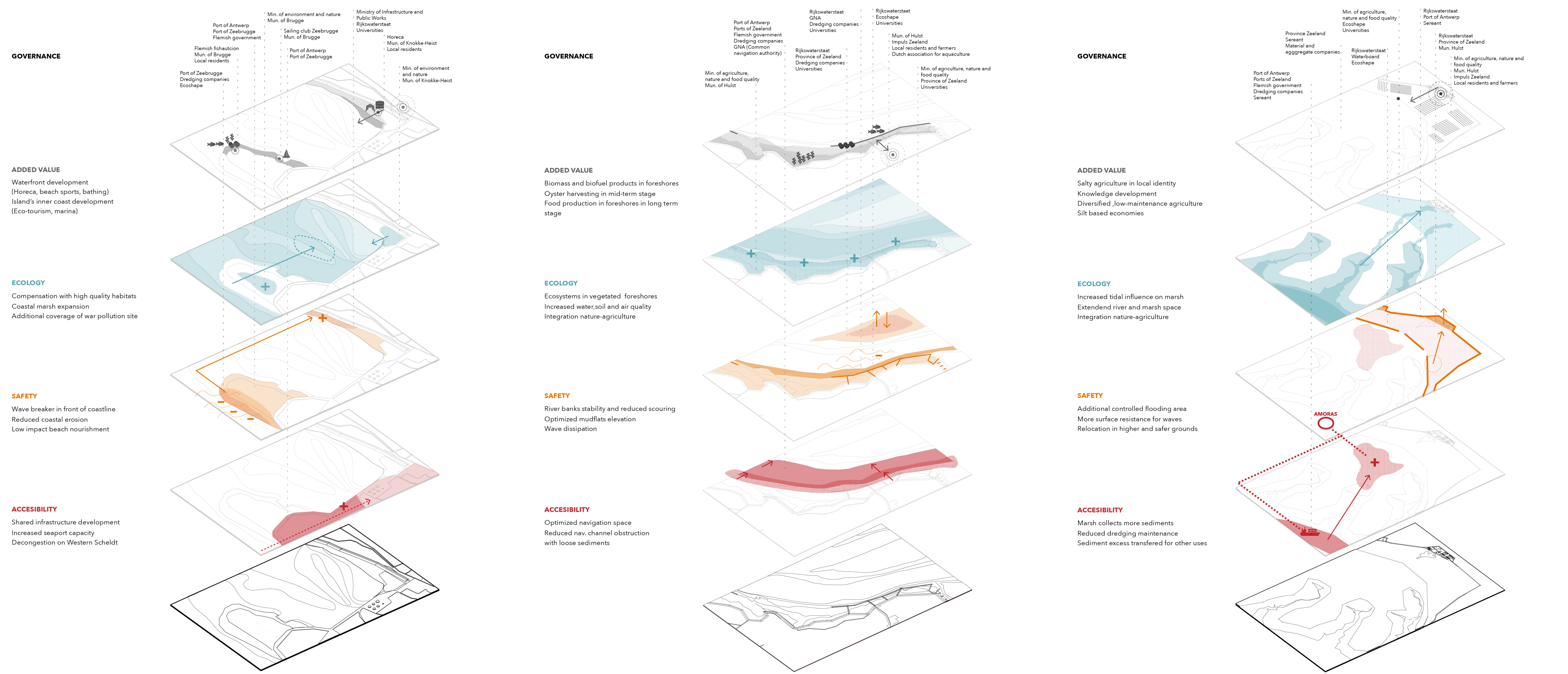
APPROACH - PORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS USED TO IMPLEMENT ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT



PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS



BENEFITS FOR THE DIFFERENT SYSTEMS



OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LOCAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT

