Unlocking collaboration

A framework for developers and designers

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Wey Wey Web Conference 2023

Who is responsible for how good is the UI?

We care about our practice

We care about UIs & products

Great products or UIs do not happen without collaboration

In other words...

We kind of need to get along

Easier in theory than in practice

Look mum,

I made a framework

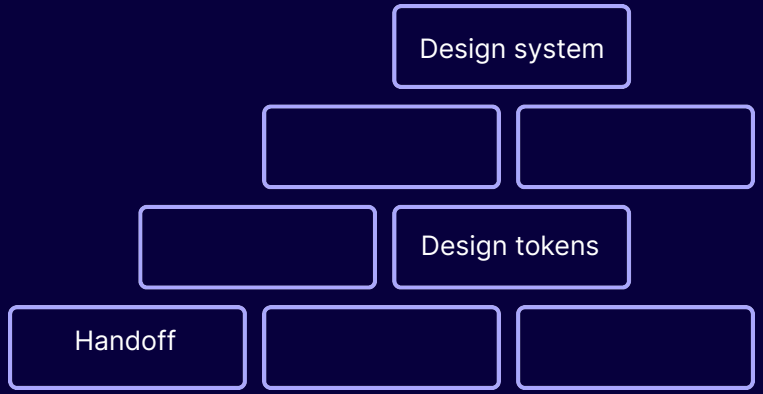
Design system

Annotations

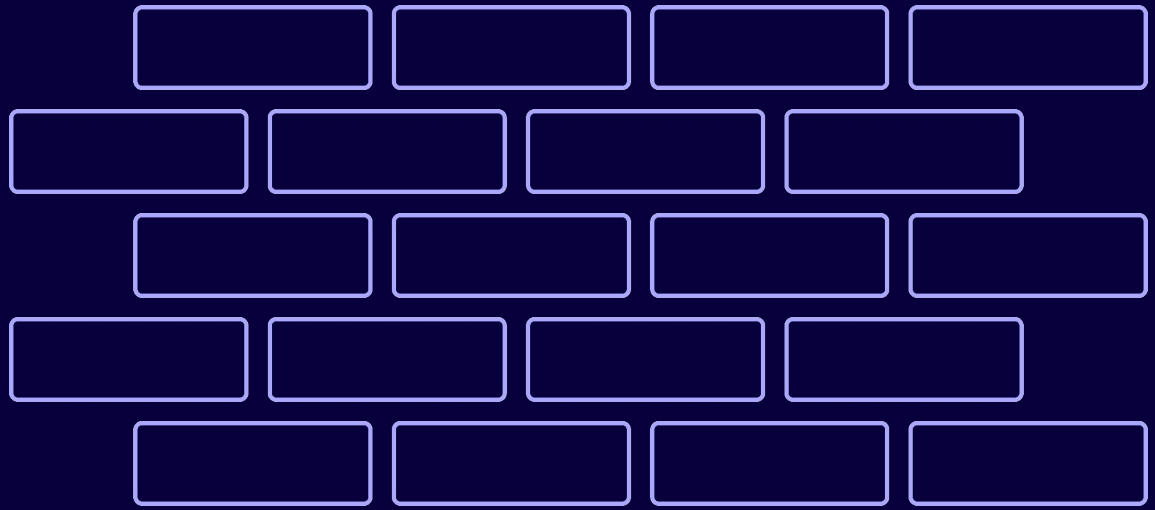
Design tokens

Handoff

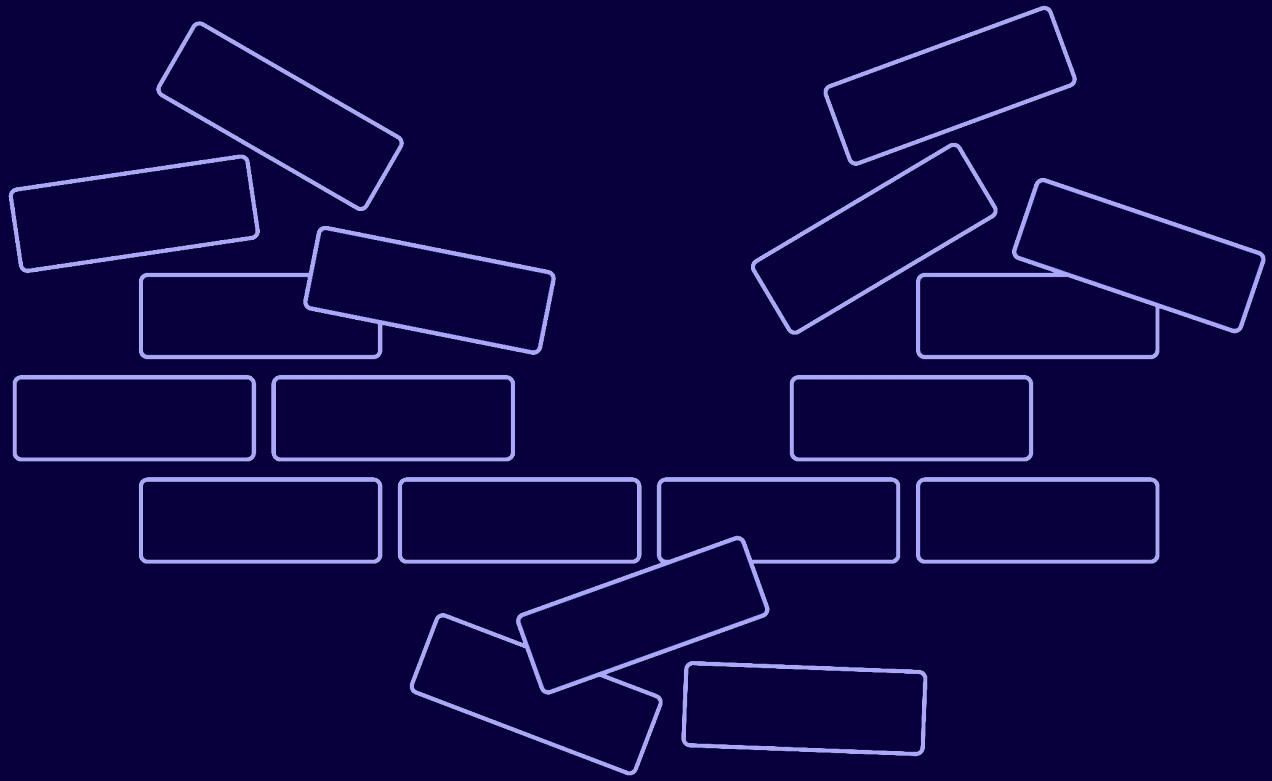
Some collaboration building blocks



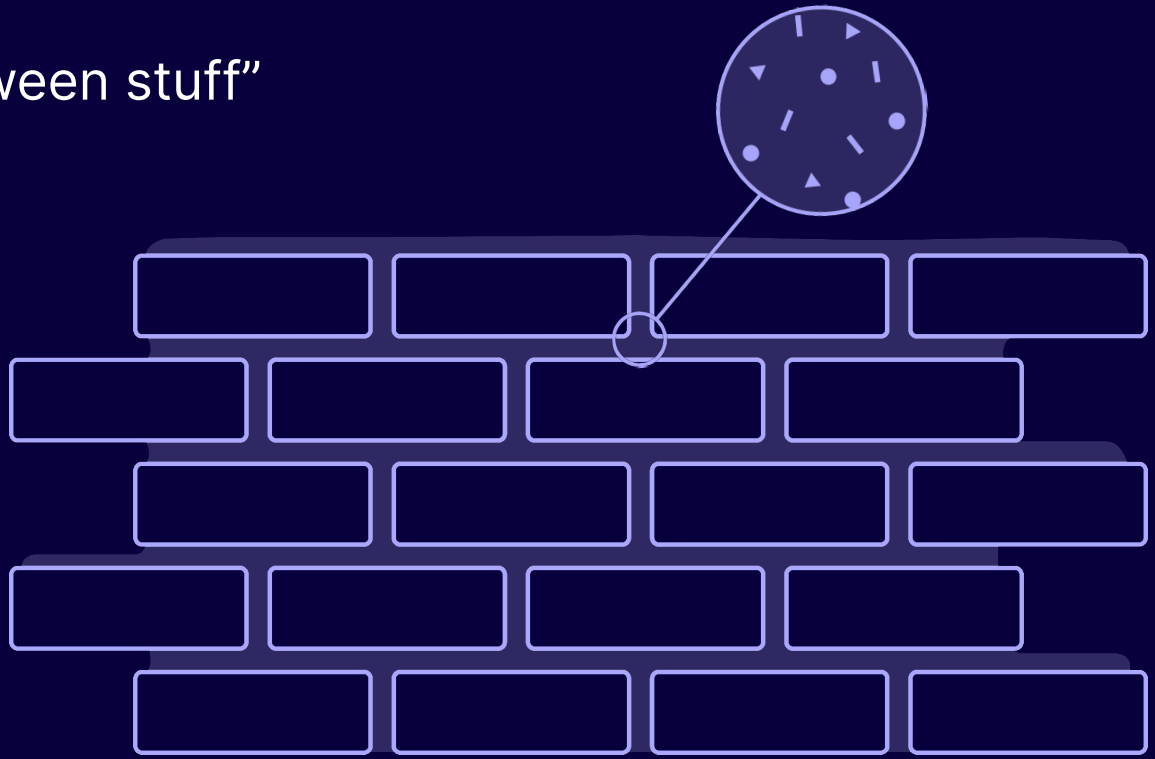
Just a bunch of bricks piled up, not a structure



All bricks, no mortar

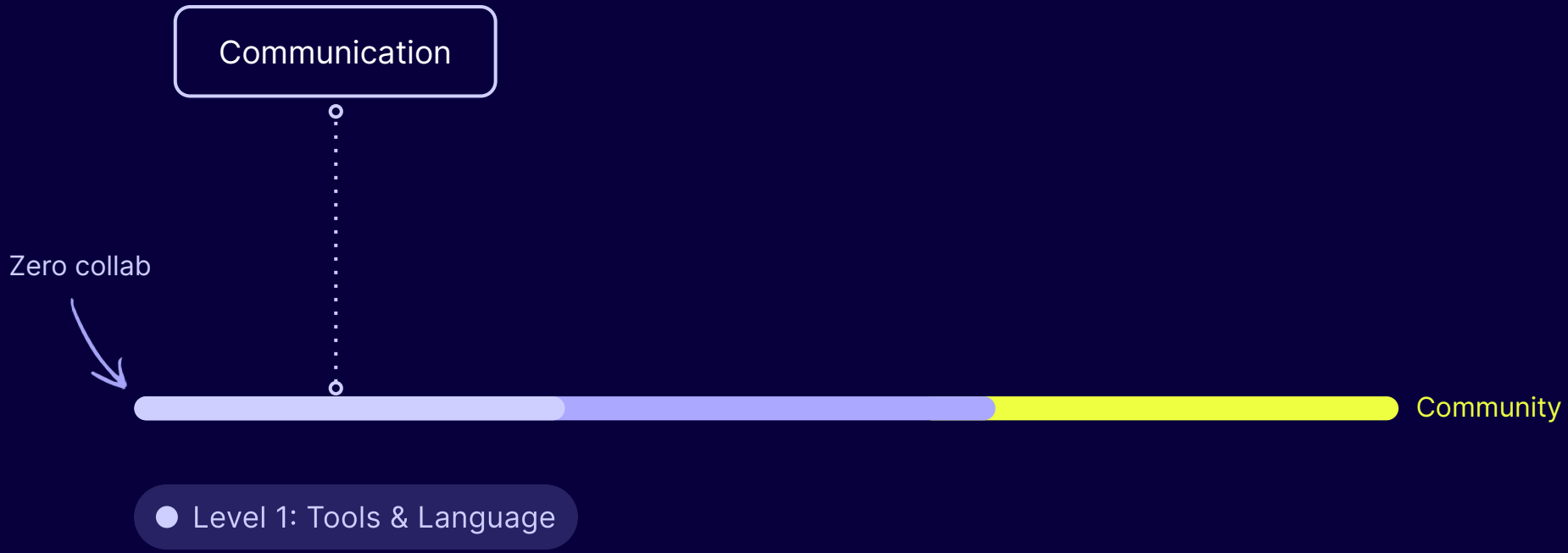


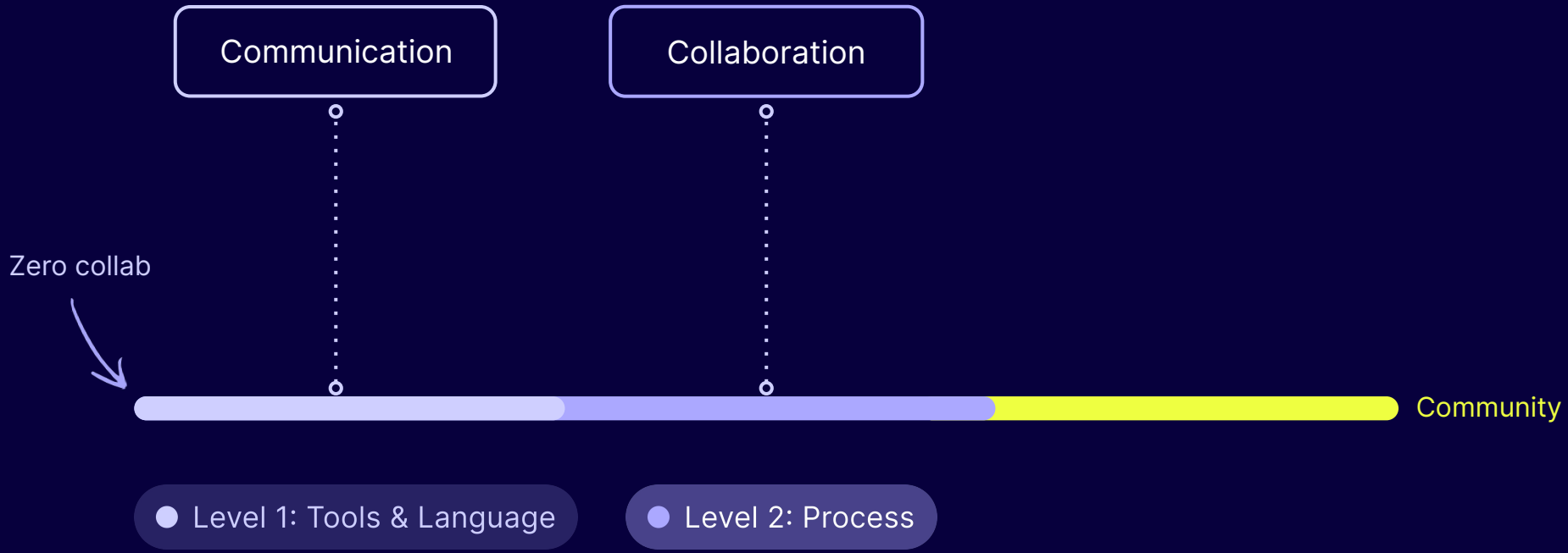
The “in-between stuff”



What does it take to collaborate?

A collaboration framework


Communication
Zero collab
Community
Level 1: Tools & Language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Collaboration
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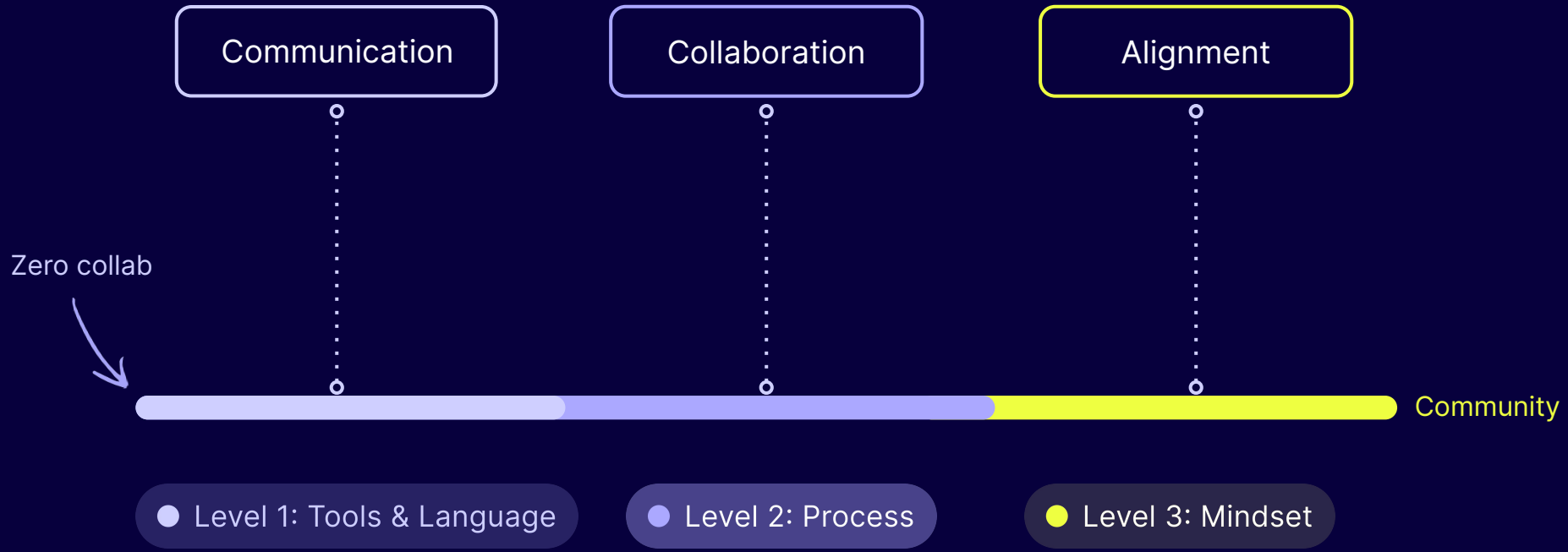
Level 1: Tools & Language
Level 2: Process


Communication
Collaboration
Alignment
Zero collab
Community
Level 1: Tools & Language
Level 2: Process
Level 3: Mindset

How can you implement this framework?

Level 1

Tools & Language

Level 1: Tools & Language

Before collaborating, we need to start communicating

Level 1: Tools & Language

Common spaces

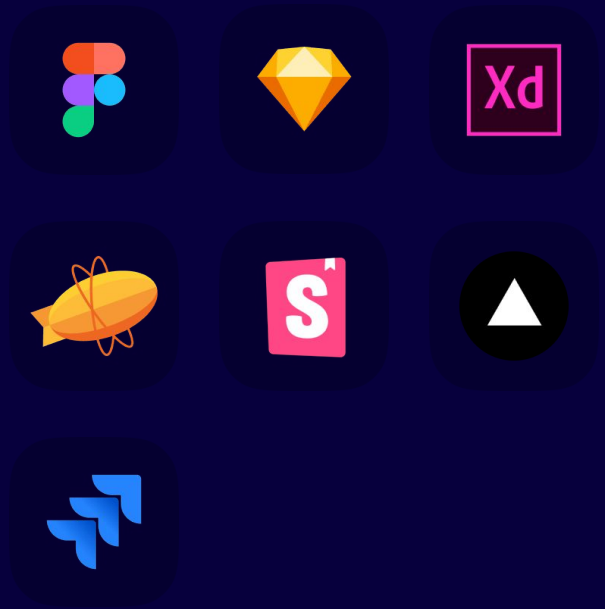
Translations

Shared language

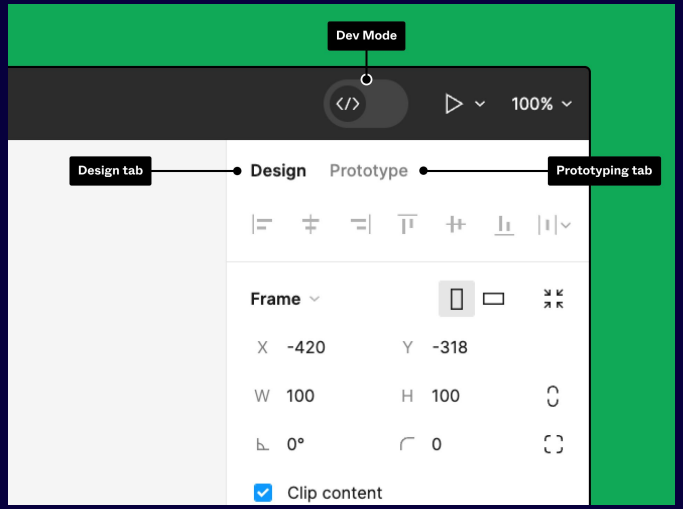
Level 1: Tools & Language

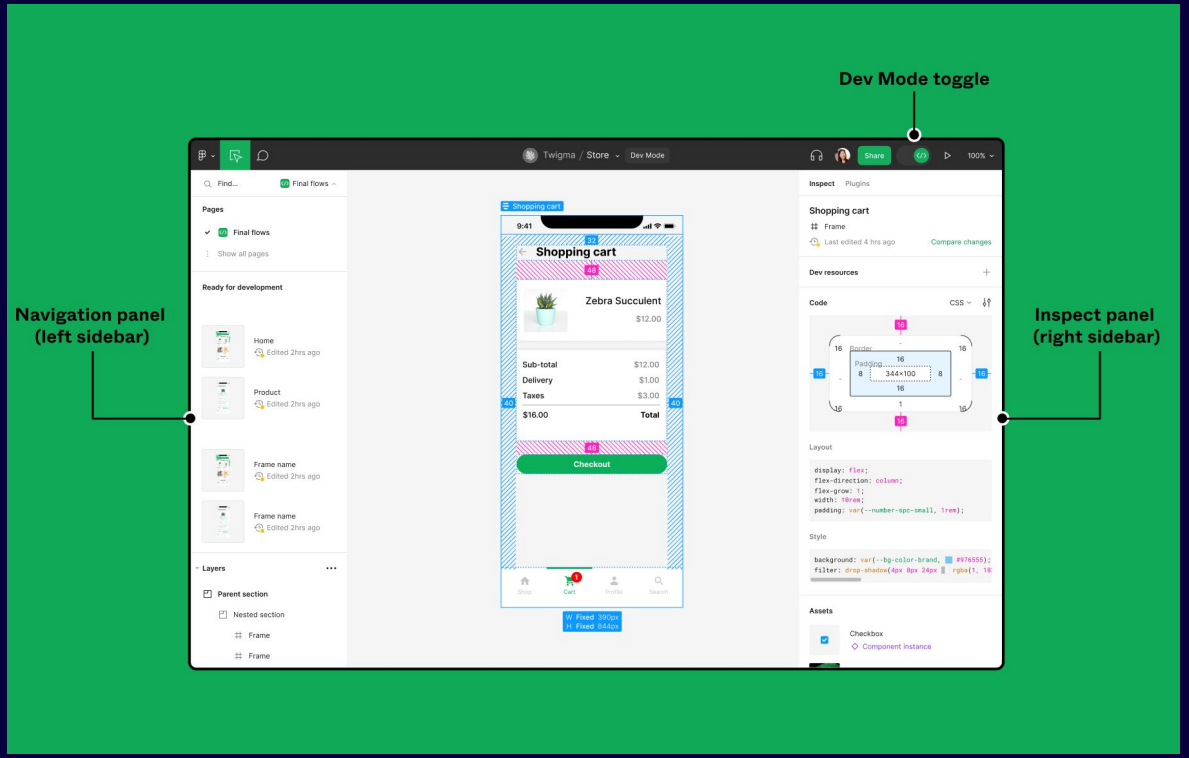
Level 1: Tools & Language

Common spaces



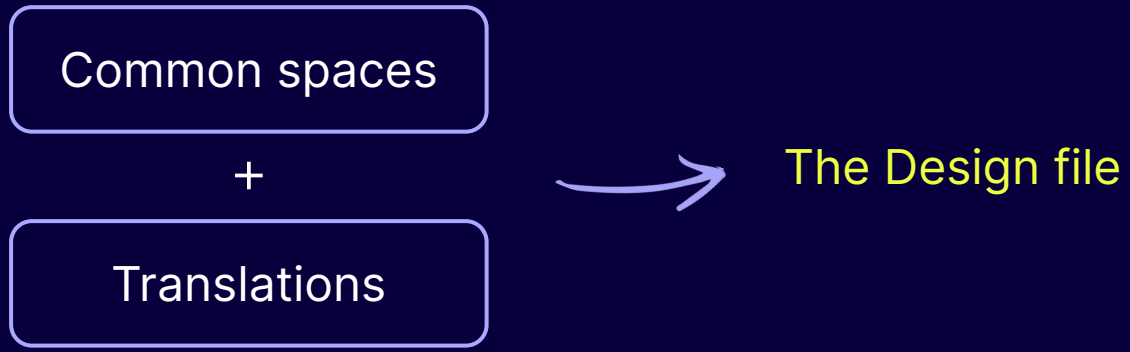
Level 1: Tools & Language





Images from help.figma.com “Design, prototype, and explore layer properties in the right sidebar”

Level 1: Tools & Language



Level 1: Tools & Language

Great tool, or collaboration nightmare

Level 1: Tools & Language

Designer, think of the developer as the user of your design file

Level 1: Tools & Language

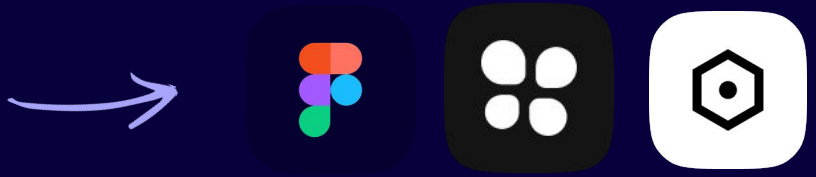
Shared language

Naming conventions

Design tokens

Level 1: Tools & Language

Design tokens



Level 1: Tools & Language

Shared SSOT

Design tokens

Design system

Shared ticket & requirements

Level 1: Tools & Language

This is just a preview

Level 1: Tools & Language

Make it work for your team

Level 1: Tools & Language

To start communicating...

We need tools that bridge the gap between disciplines

Level 1: Tools & Language

Common spaces

Translations

Shared language

Level 1: Tools & Language

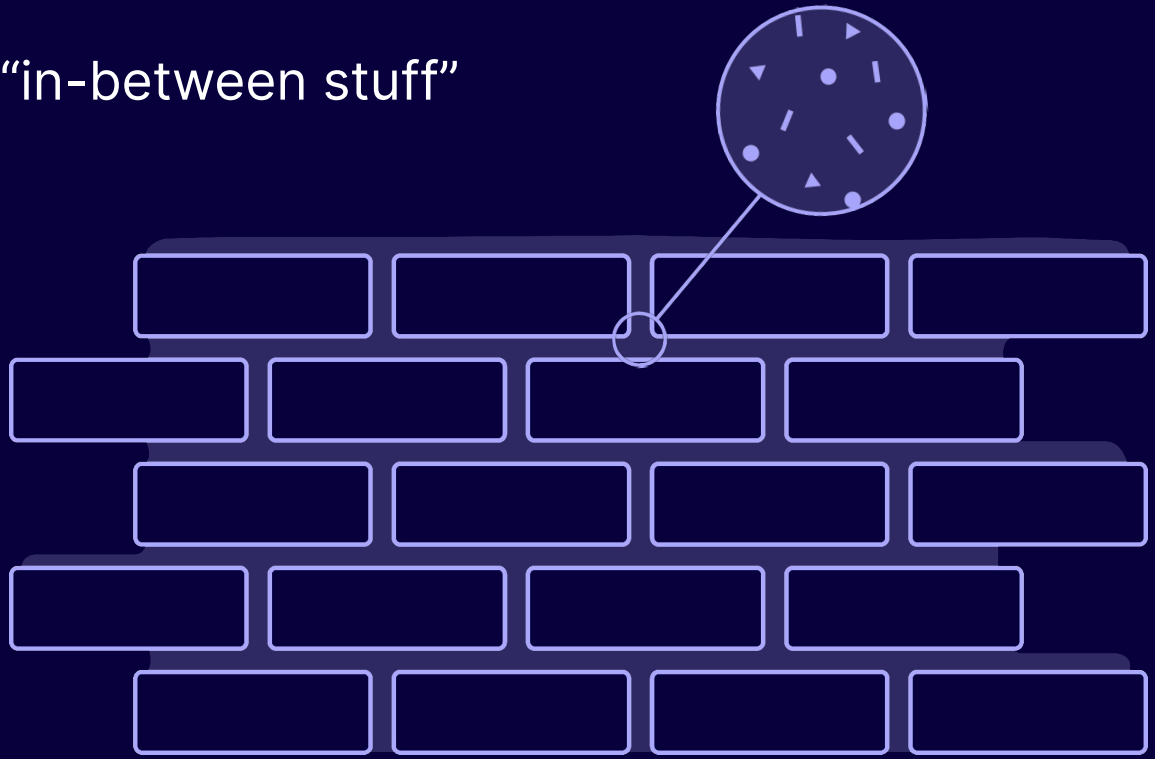
Shared SSOT

Common spaces

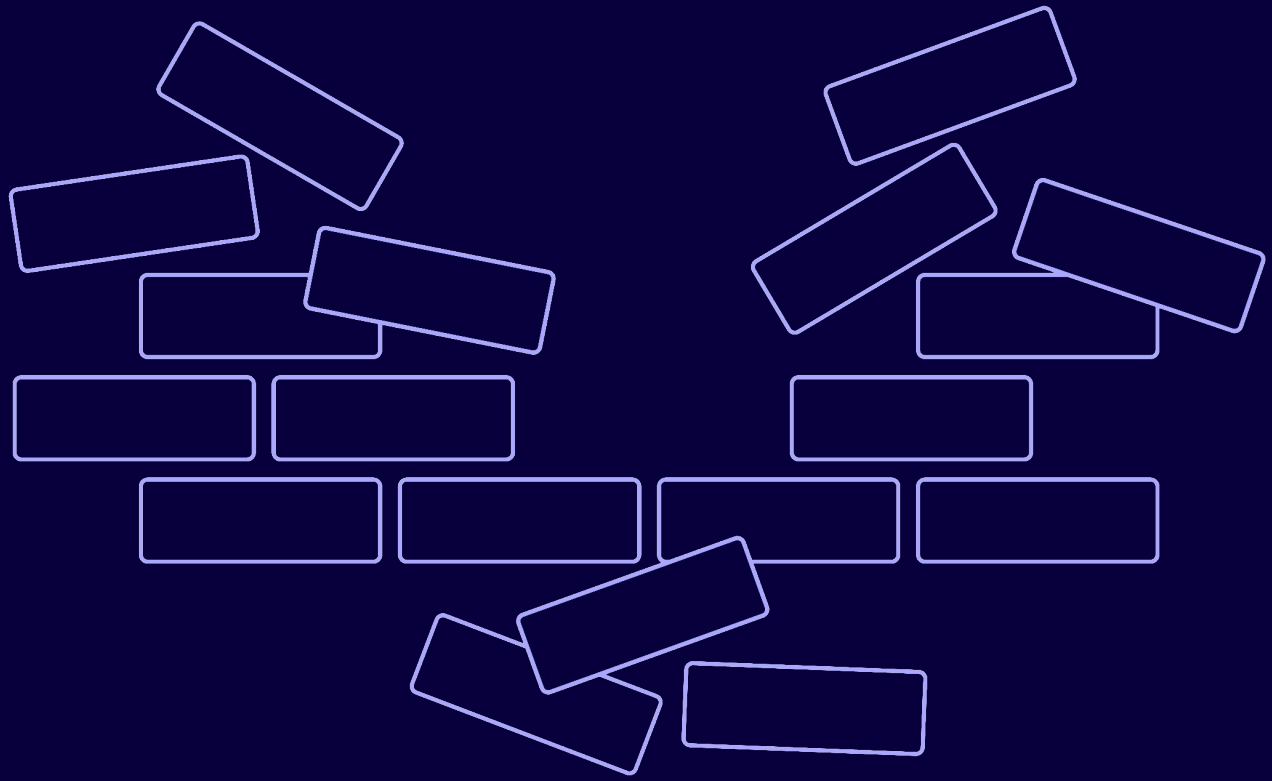
Translations

Shared language

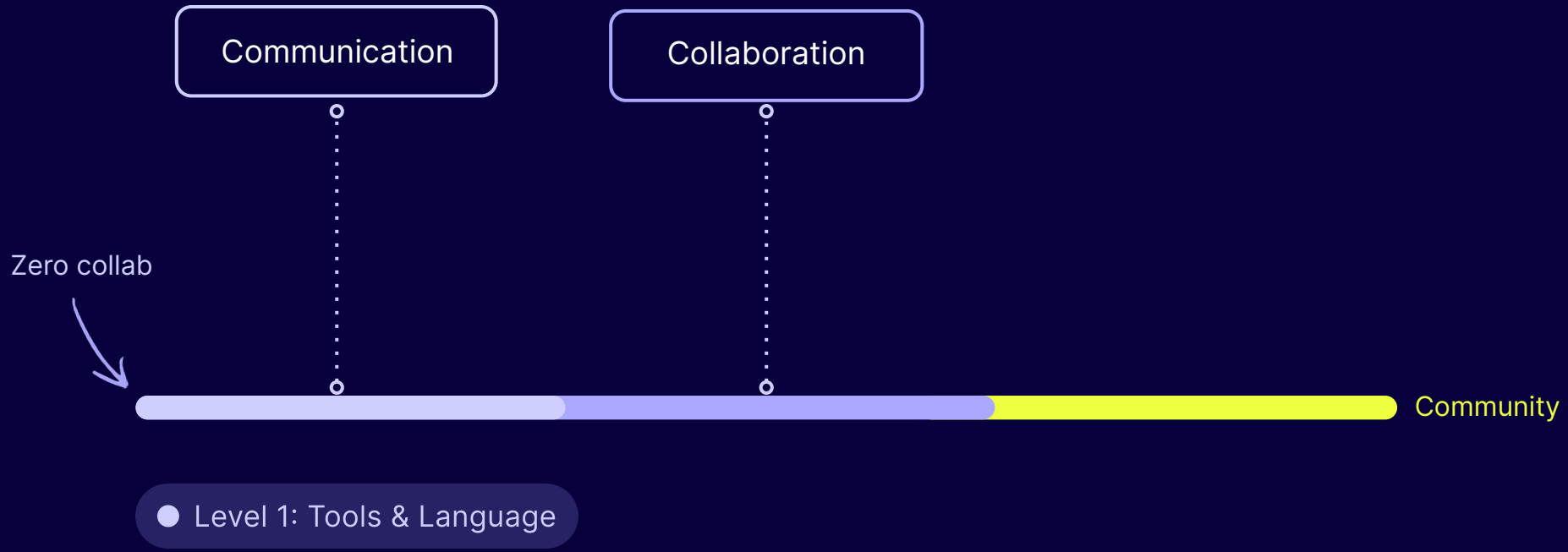
Without the “in-between stuff”



The structure falls flat



What does it take to go from **communication** to collaboration?



Level 1: Tools & Language

How can we work together if the process makes us work apart?

The Design Handoff,

The Design Handoff, the collaboration fallacy

ESPAÑA
ERTA
SILESIA 21
ESPAÑA
BUKESA
SILESIA 21
SEIKO
SEIKO

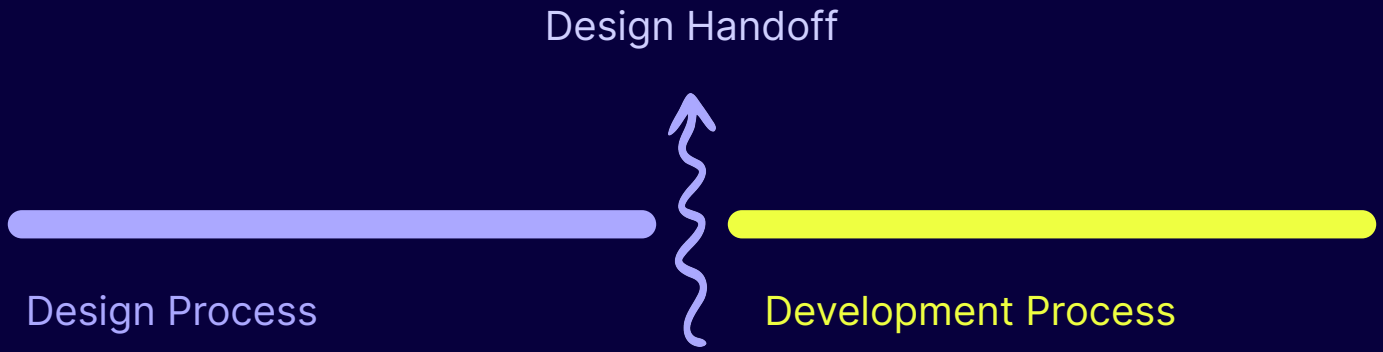
Rio2016
POWER
FELIX

Dear developer,

Find here the link to the design file. Any questions?

Good luck!
Alicia

A meeting at best,
a simple transfer at minimum


Design Handoff
Design Process
Development Process

“A lot of times developers are not collaborative not by choice, but by how the process involves them, in waterfall or agile they are last in mind, thought of as implementers as best, you get handed what design produces and just crank it out, and if there are any issues with it just shut up and do your job!”

Brad Frost on Design Better Podcast (Brad Frost and Dan Mall: Rethinking Agile and how designers collaborate with developers)

If we want to start *collaborating*, we need to work together under a shared process

Level 2

Process

Level 2: Process

- Involve developers from the beginning, and earlier
- Share product decisions

Level 2: Process

Level 2: Process

Level 2: Process

Project scoping

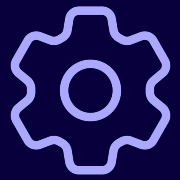
Alignment before the start on the problem to solve & scope, the requirements and feasibility considerations

Level 2: Process

Project scoping

Problem

Requirements



Feasibility

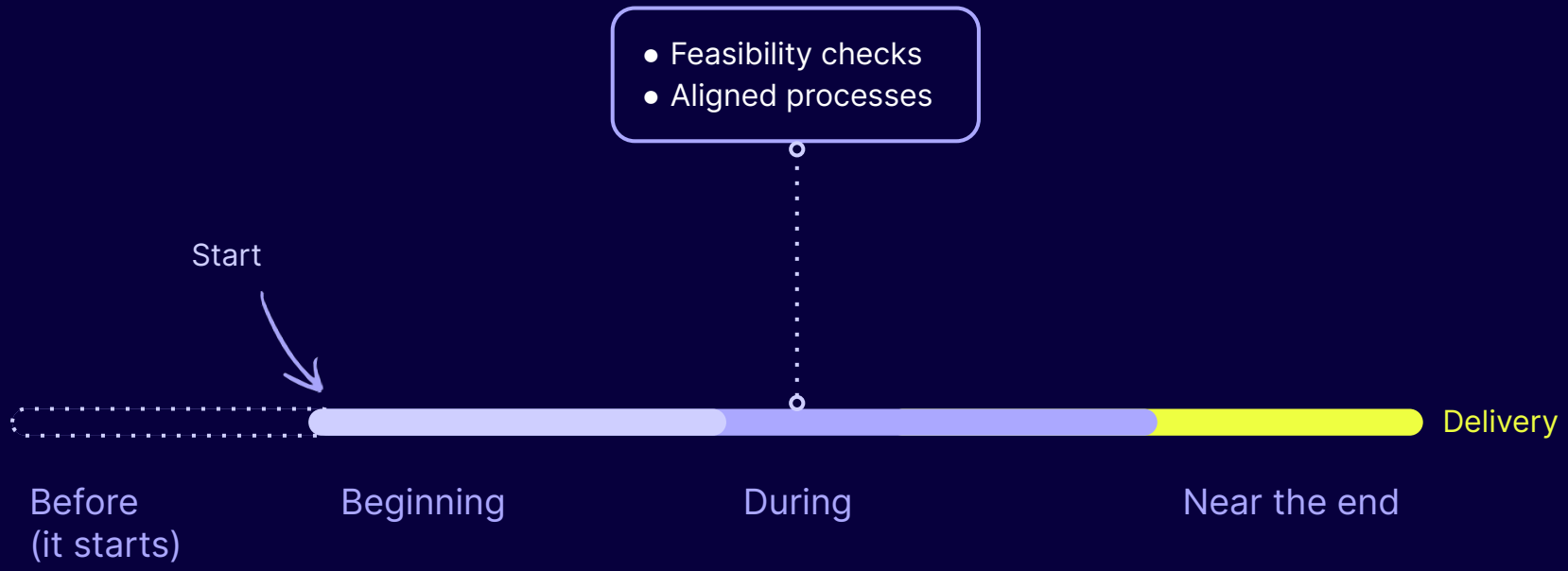
Level 2: Process

Level 2: Process

Onboarding/ Project Kickoff

Agree on shared goals, confirm the requirements and timeline, dependencies and collaboration specifics

Level 2: Process

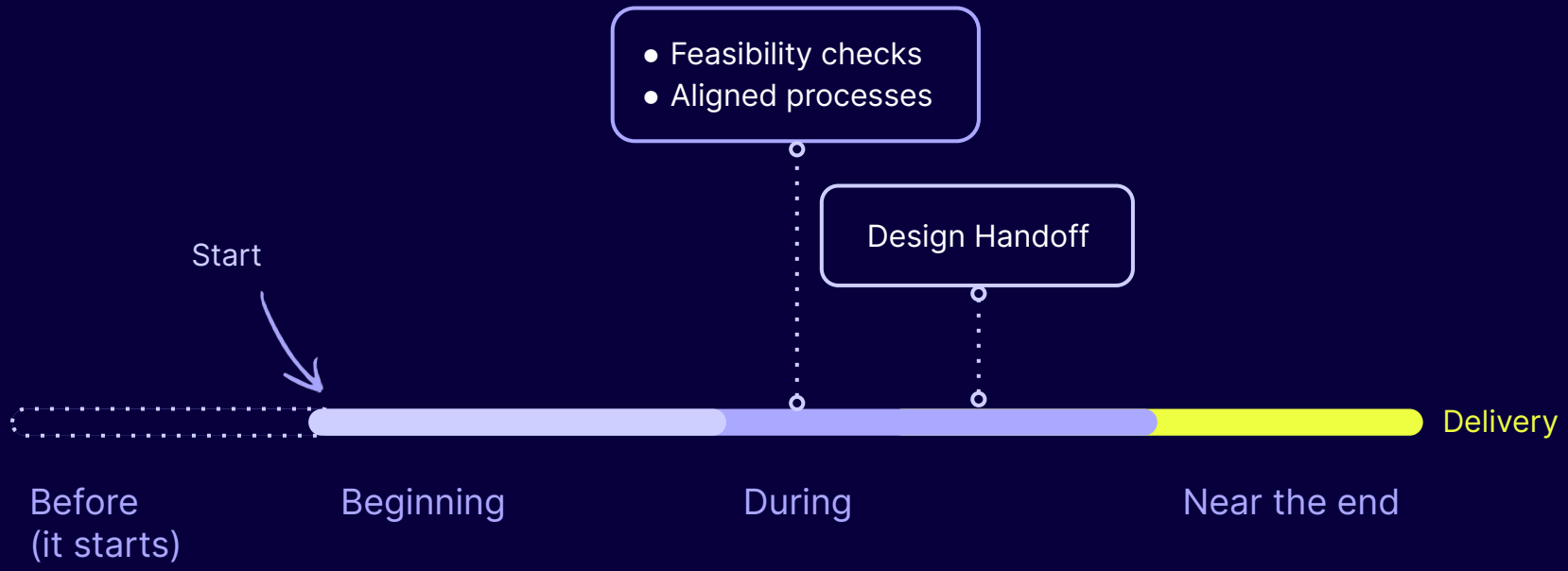


Level 2: Process

Feasibility checks

Have conversations about the design's feasibility from the exploration phase onwards & share product decisions

Level 2: Process



Level 2: Process

Design Handoff

Explain where your design choices come from: what was the problem you were trying to solve, the reason you solved it like that, and the intended impact of it

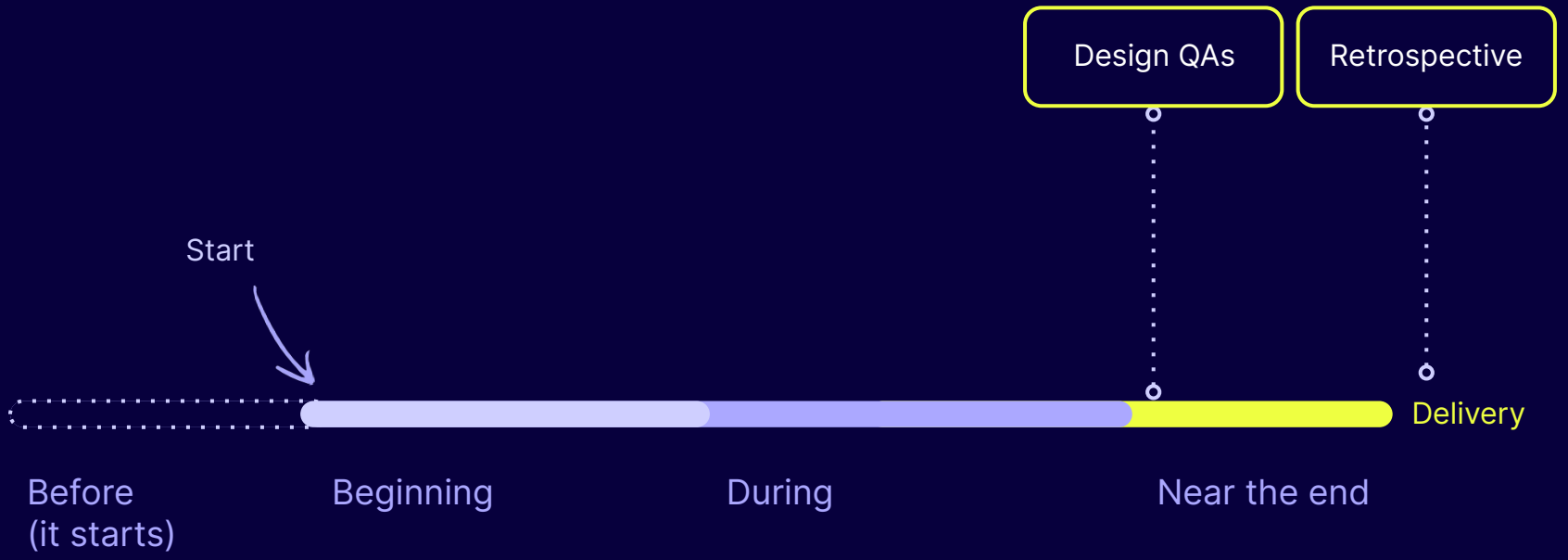
Level 2: Process

Level 2: Process

Design QAs

Designers have to be involved with the development process by doing Design QAs

Level 2: Process

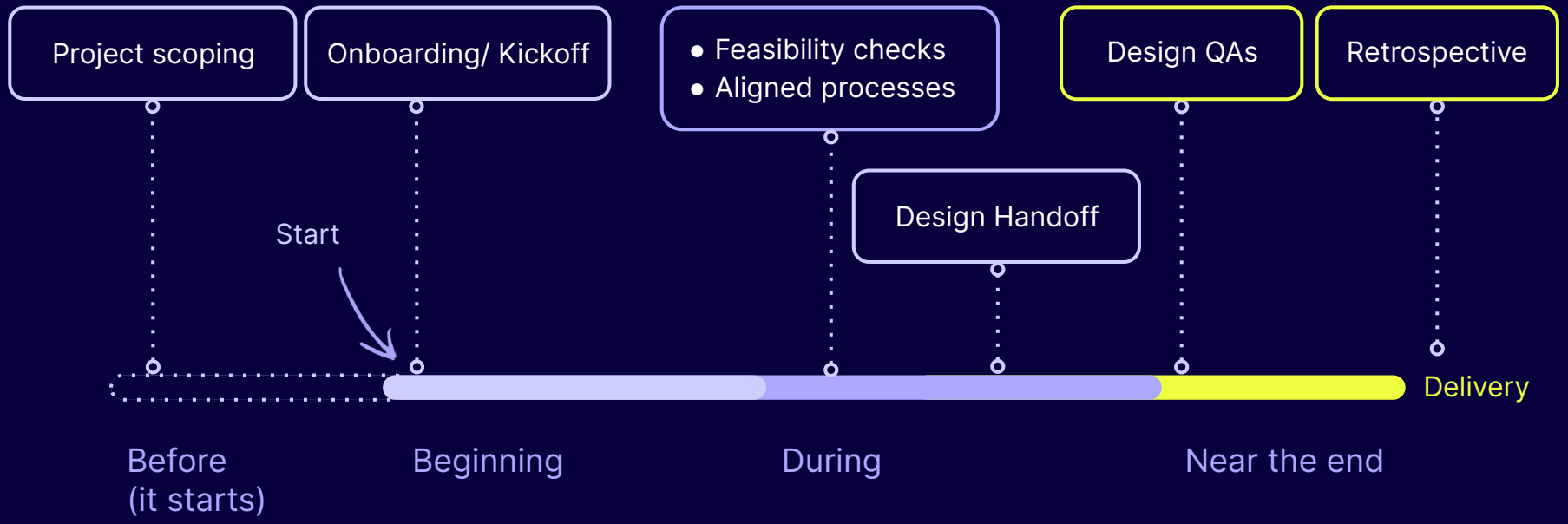


Level 2: Process

Retrospective

Reflect as a team on what worked well, what you've learned and what needs to change... and review the collaboration

Level 2: Process



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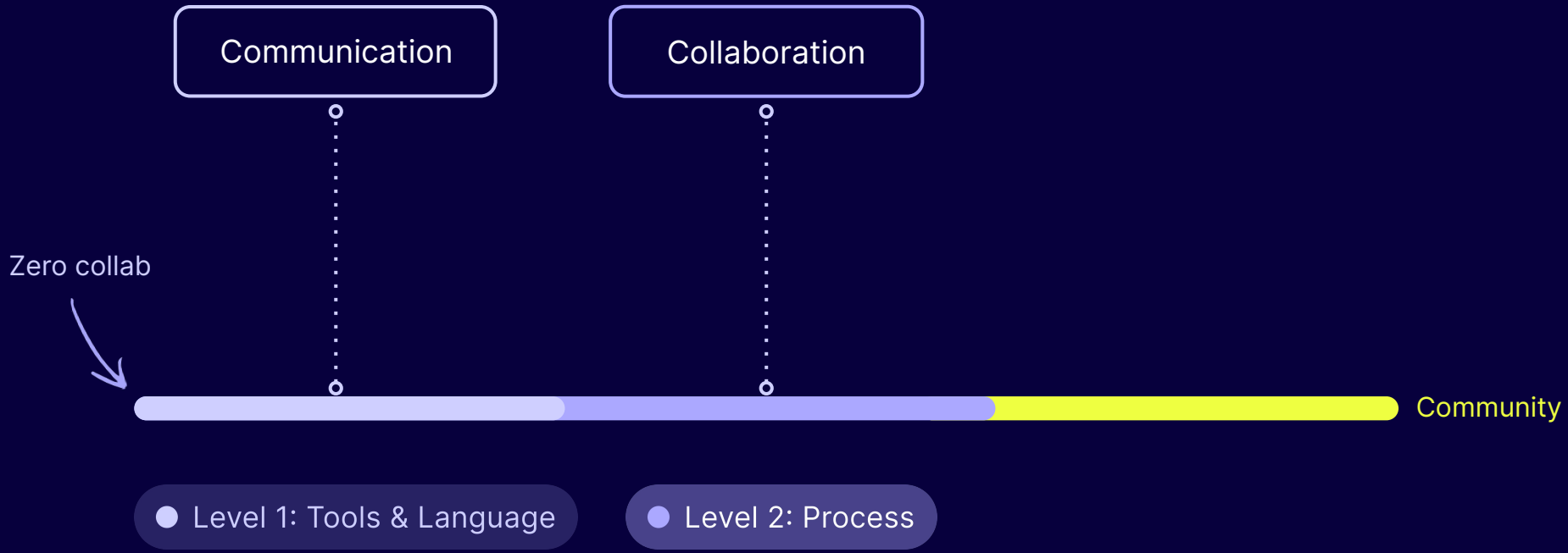
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Level 2: Process

Level 2: Process

It’s about aligning under one process: building the product together

Level 2: Process

Shared goals, shared meetings and shared product decisions

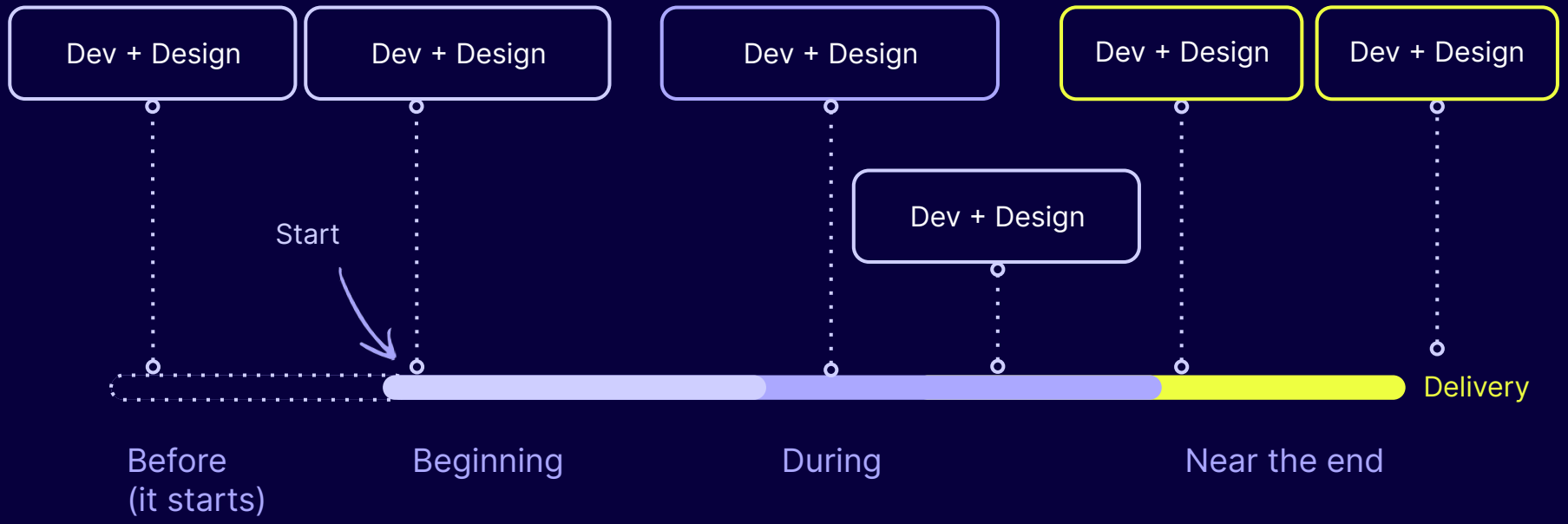
Level 2: Process

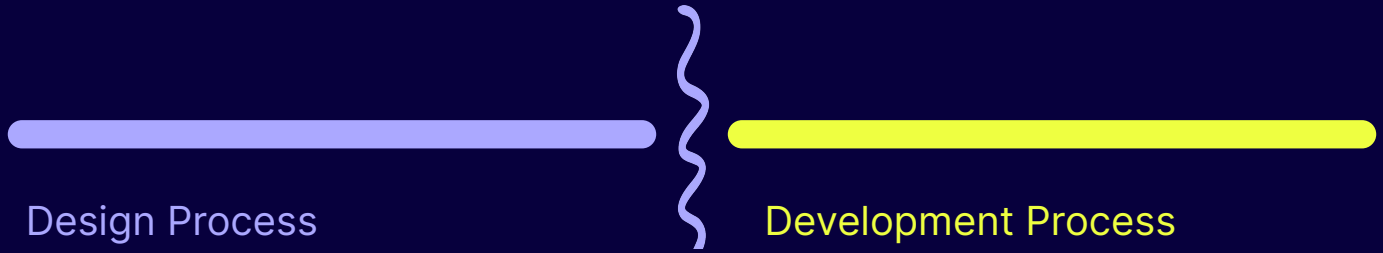
It’s definitely not about *how many* meetings...

Level 2: Process

Who is involved in these
When these happen
What is done in the meetings

Level 2: Process

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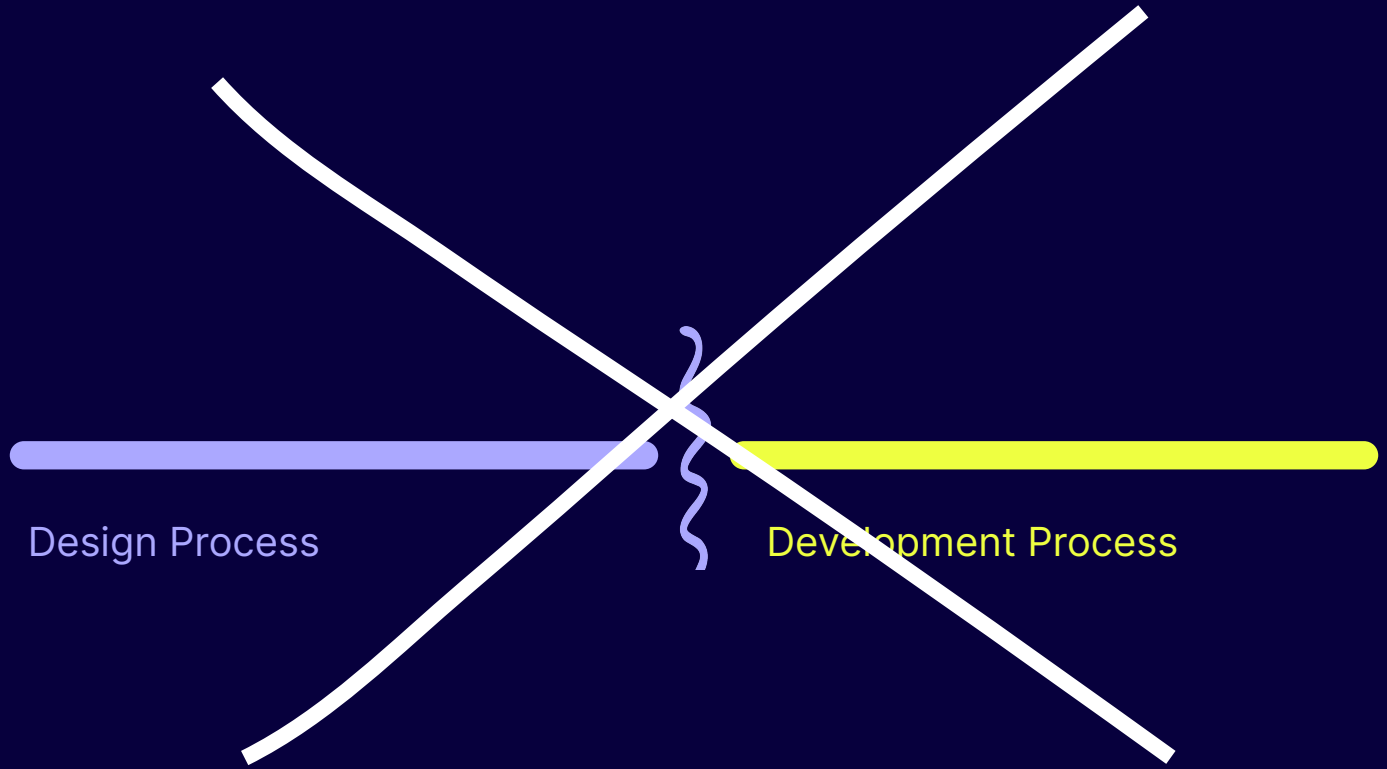
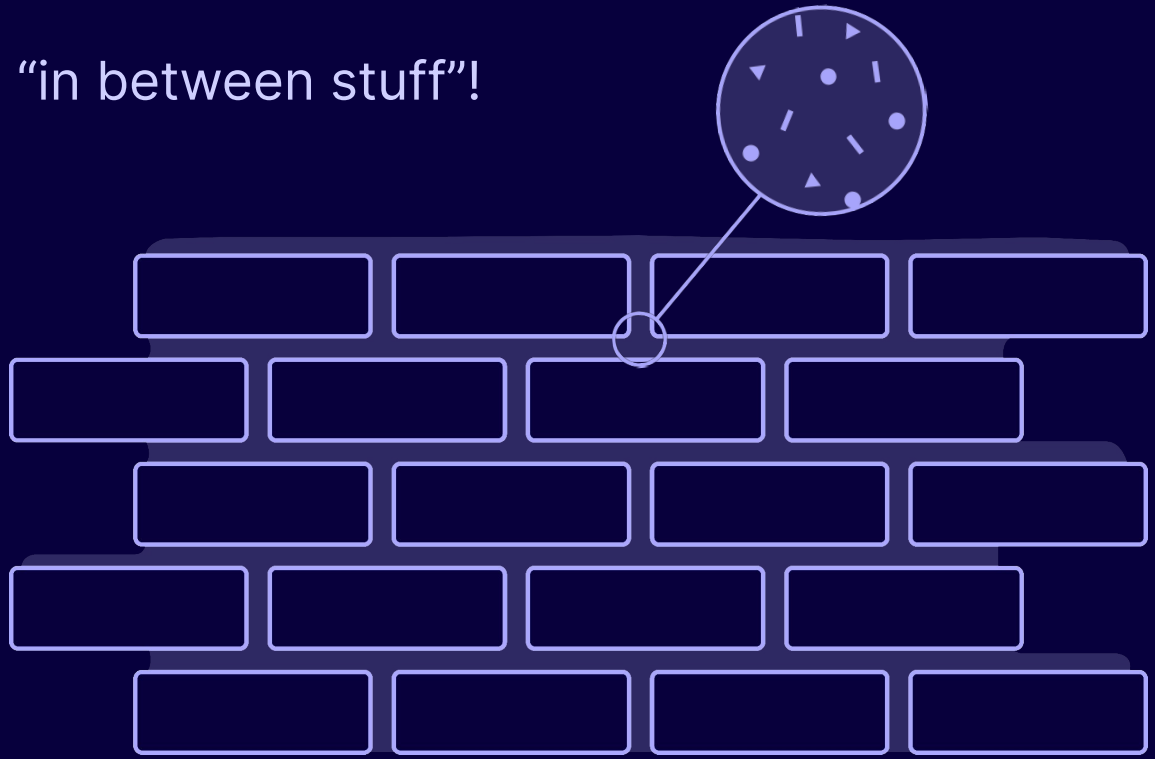
Development Process


Design Process
Development Process

That said, here are some shortcomings

We have the “in between stuff”!



To framework,
or not to framework

Level 3

Mindset

Level 3: Mindset

The collaboration mindset

Level 3: Mindset

✳ Share the ownership

Level 3: Mindset

✳ Respect each other’s craft

Level 3: Mindset

✳ Be willing to make compromises

Level 3: Mindset

✳ Stay curious & open to learn

Level 3: Mindset

Put in the work and get to know each other

Level 3: Mindset

- Share the ownership
- Respect each other’s craft
- Be willing to make compromises
- Stay curious & open to learn
- Put in the work to get to know each other

Level 3: Mindset

Some specifics per discipline

Level 3: Mindset

Designer

Engage with the technical aspects of your work

Level 3: Mindset

Designer

Guard fidelity, but acknowledge its limitations

Level 3: Mindset

Designer

Facilitate the collaboration and adapt your process

Level 3: Mindset

Developer

Connect your work to the product level

Level 3: Mindset

Developer

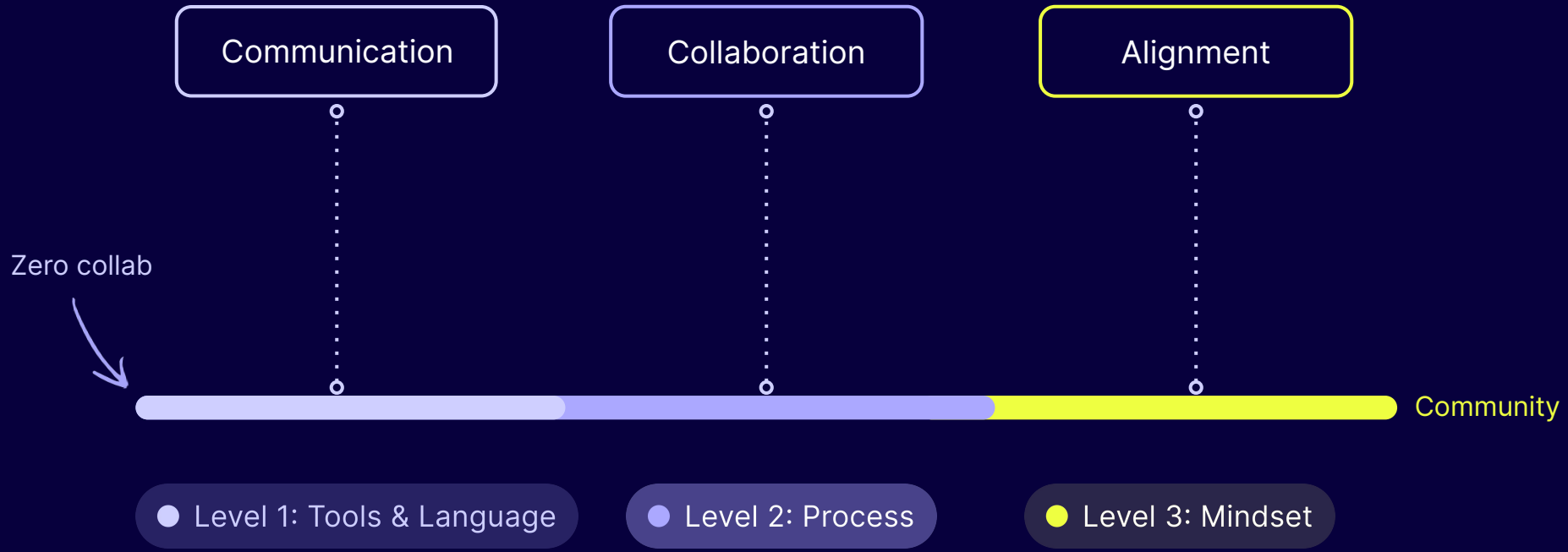
Guard the feasibility, but explain yourself in the process

Level 3: Mindset

Developer

Take ownership of design translation tools

What does it take to collaborate?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What to do at Ops level:

- Set up effective shared communication spaces
- Document collaboration best practices
- Conduct regular retrospectives
- Promote a culture of curiosity and continuous learning
- Foster shared ownership and understanding of goals
- Hire with team-building in mind

My takeaway from this collaboration framework

Thanks!

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