

# The Role of Regional Cooperation in Area Development: The case of Leidsche Rijn and Rijnenburg

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Management in the Built Environment

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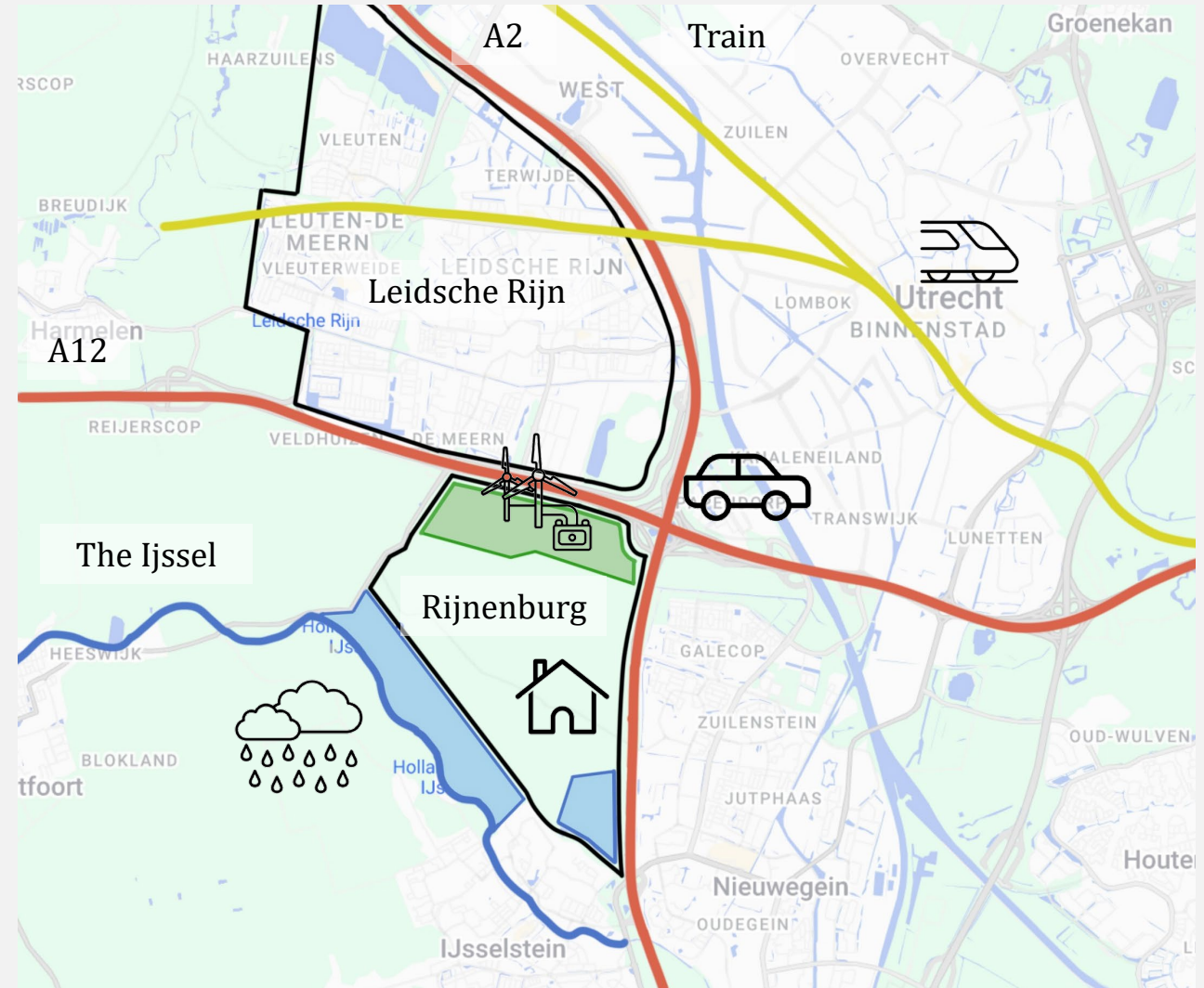
# The Battle for Space

Urban expansion is at a critical juncture. The country grapples with **housing shortages**, **climate adaptation** and the **sustainable allocation** of land for competing uses.



# The case of Leidsche Rijn and Rijnenburg

- Enclosed by the A2 and A12
- No train connection
- Room for the River the IJssel to overflow
- Northern side has been zoned for sustainable energy
- Planned to develop around **25.000 dwellings**
- (*Leidsche Rijn has 30.000*)



# Our past



# Problem statement

The case of Rijnenburg reveals the complexities of area development in **the current institutional context**, marked by **fragmented decision-making**, **financial constraints**, and **conflicting stakeholder priorities**. These issues hinder progress and create challenges in aligning **housing, environmental, and infrastructure goals**, making it difficult to address the urgent spatial needs of the region effectively.

## **What is area development?**

*“Area development is the art of connecting functions, disciplines, parties, interests and financial flows, with a view to the development of the area.” – Friso de Zeeuw*

## **What is Regional Cooperation?**

*“The goal is to bring together a wide range of stakeholders in voluntary cooperation to address development challenges that cross administrative boundaries. These are not just planning exercises but attempts to establish governance arenas in which consensus is built, strategies agreed, and implementation mechanisms tested” – Phill Allmendinger*



# Research questions

## **Main question**

*How can regional cooperation contribute to the implementation of area development in the Netherlands, with a focus on lessons from Leidsche Rijn and the future development of Rijnenburg?*

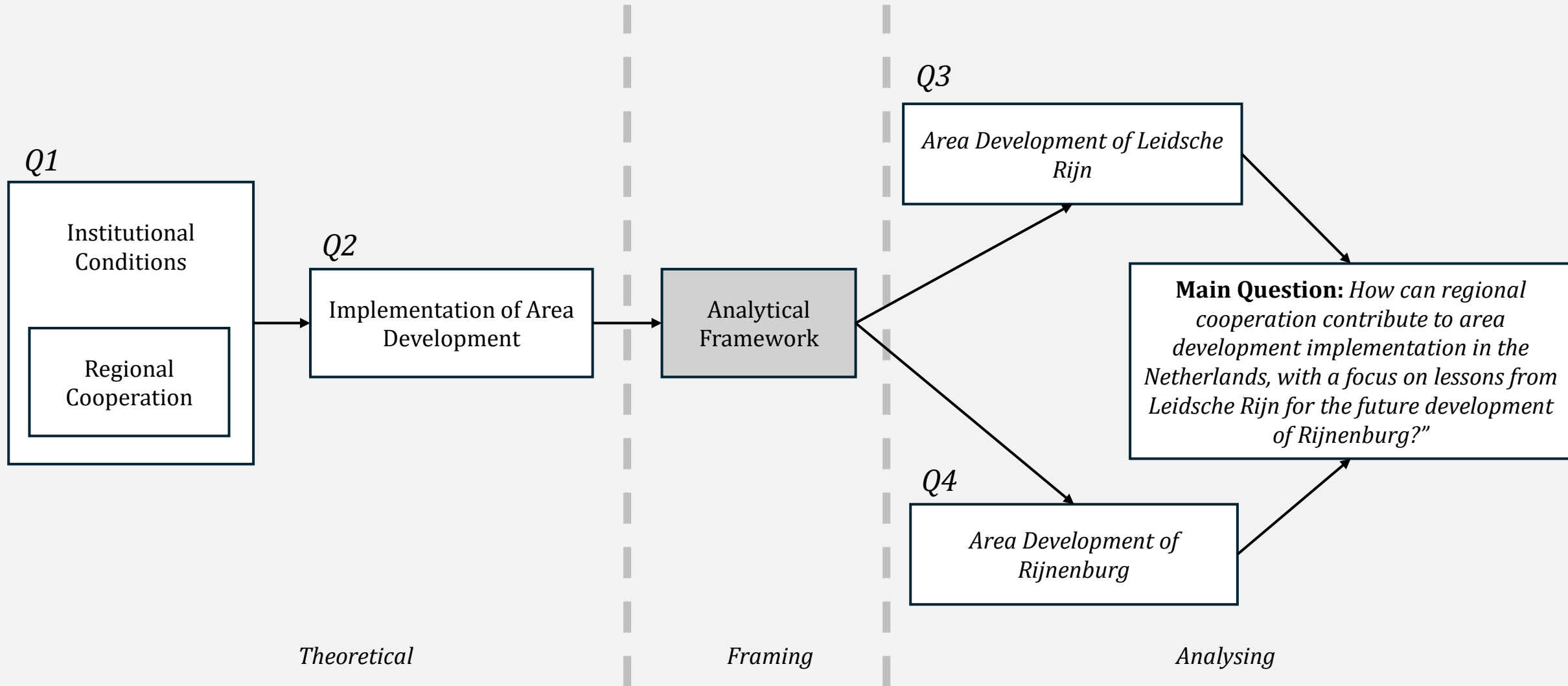
## **Sub questions**

1. How have the institutional conditions, in terms of regional cooperation and area development, developed in the Netherlands since 1990?
2. How is area development implemented with the contemporary institutional conditions?
3. What are the main lessons, regarding regional cooperation, from the area development of Leidsche Rijn?
4. What are the recommendations for the area development of Rijnenburg?

# Methodology



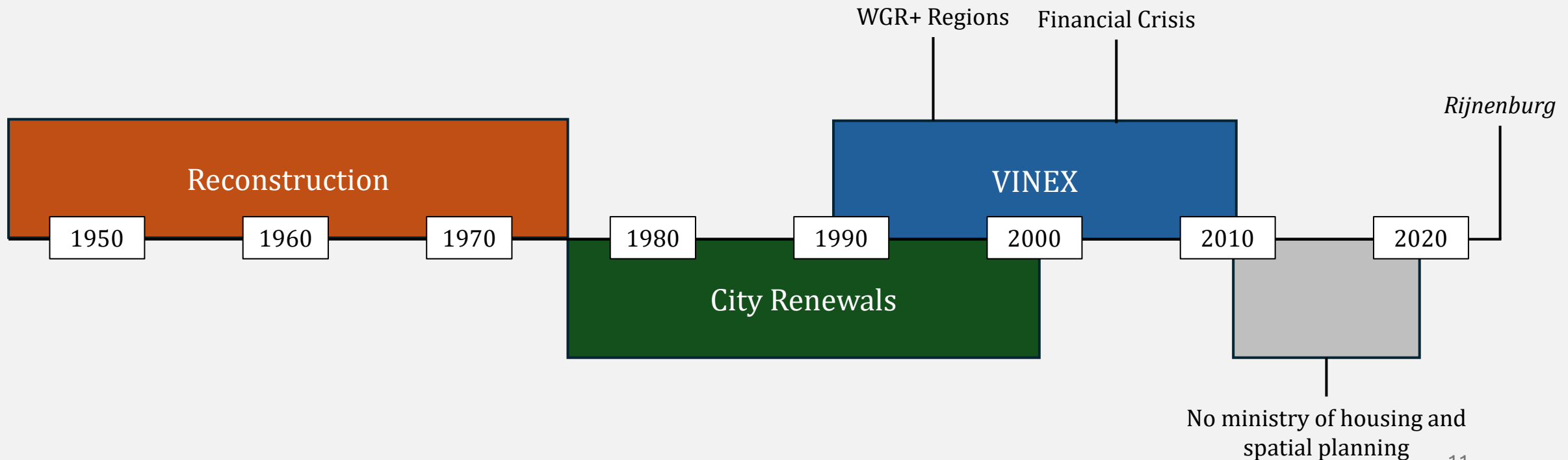
# Research Design



# The Institutional Context

# Timeline of Urban Investments

The development of **willingness, capacity** and **commitment** over time



# WGR+ Regions

- **Facilitates** intermunicipal cooperation
- **Provides** legal institutional framework
- **Coordinates** regional strategies and investments

→ Dismantled in 2015 due to the **lack of electoral mandate** and there were **too many governmental layers**



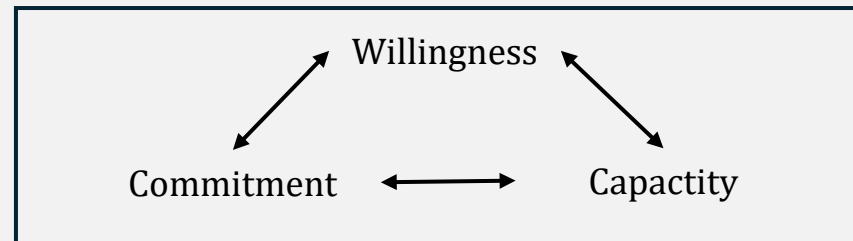
# From Area Development 1.0 to 2.0

## Area Development 1.0

- A **strong** public lead
- **Large-scale** land acquisition by public authorities
- **Fixed** master plans and sequential project phasing
- **Risk absorption** by the state
- **Predictable** public-private partnerships

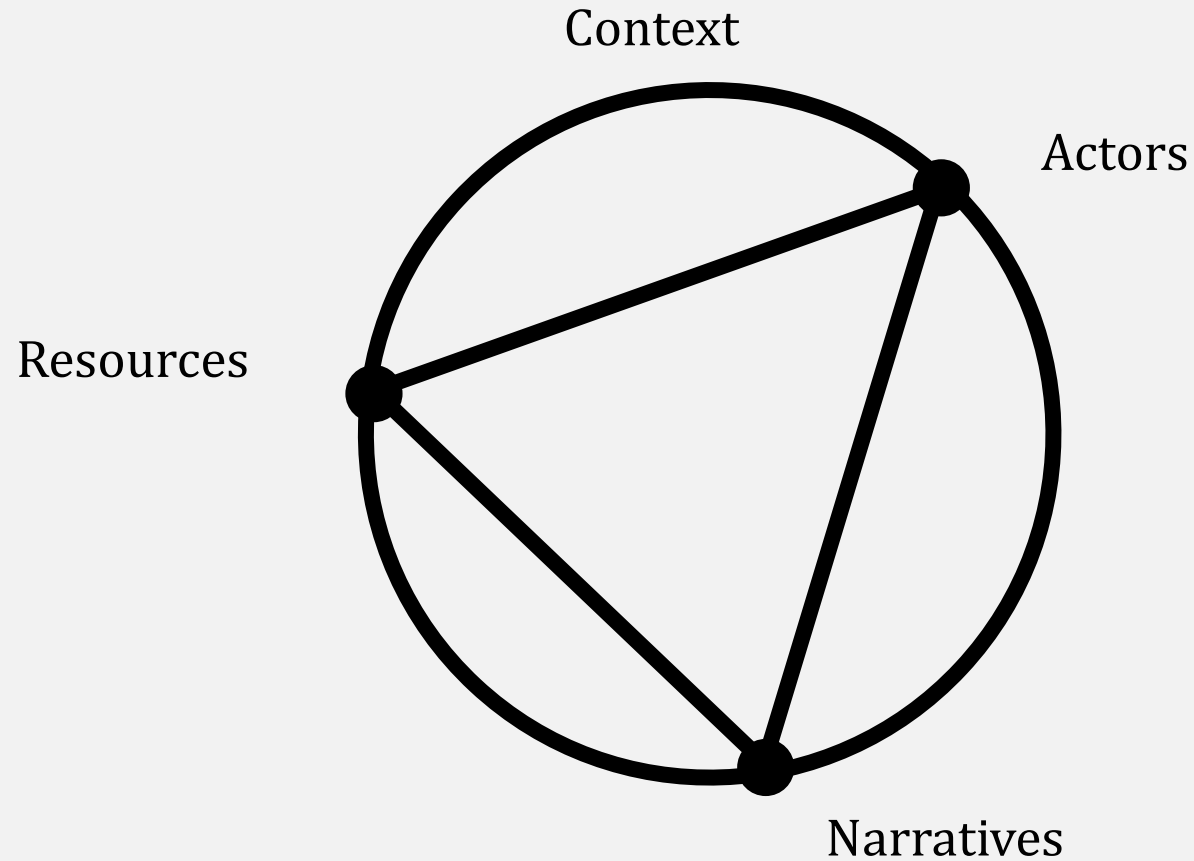
## Area Development 2.0

- A more **facilitative** or networked public role,
- **Fragmented** land ownership (often in private hands),
- **Flexible** and adaptive planning processes,
- **Market-driven** initiative, with public actors reacting or negotiating,
- Shared or **unclear** responsibility for financial and legal risk.



# The Implementation of Area Development

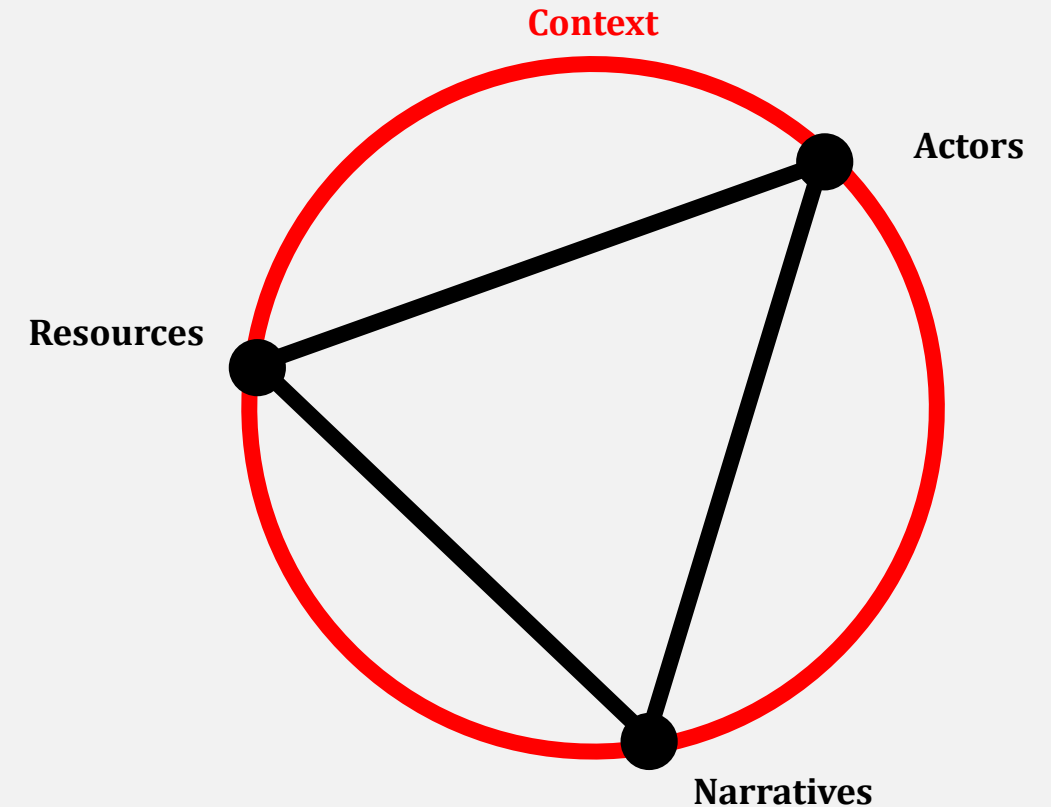
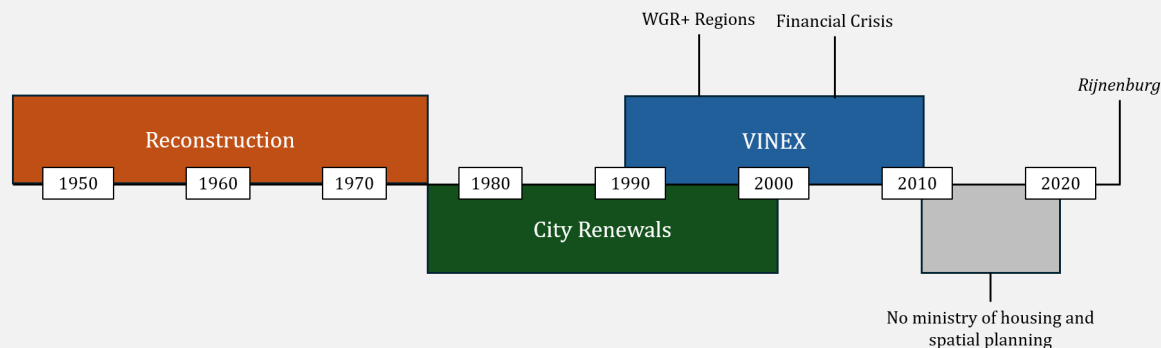
# The Implementation of Area Development





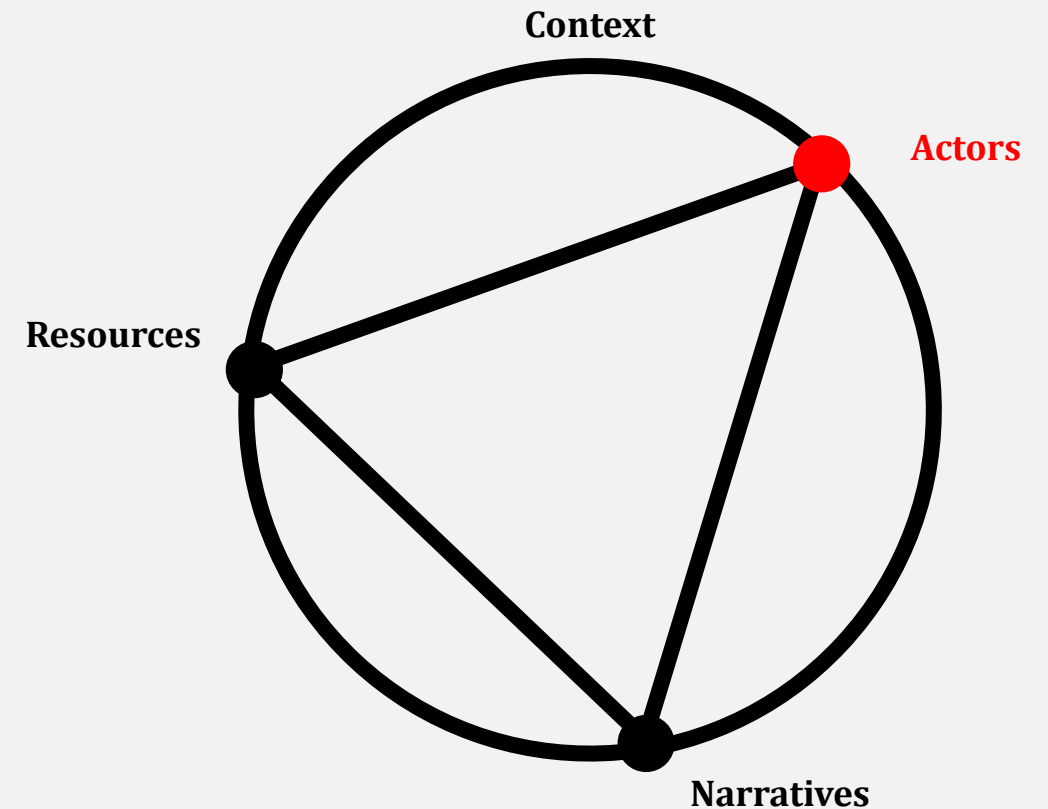
# The Implementation of Area Development

- The Institutional Conditions
- The Willingness
- The Capacity
- The Commitment



# The Implementation of Area Development

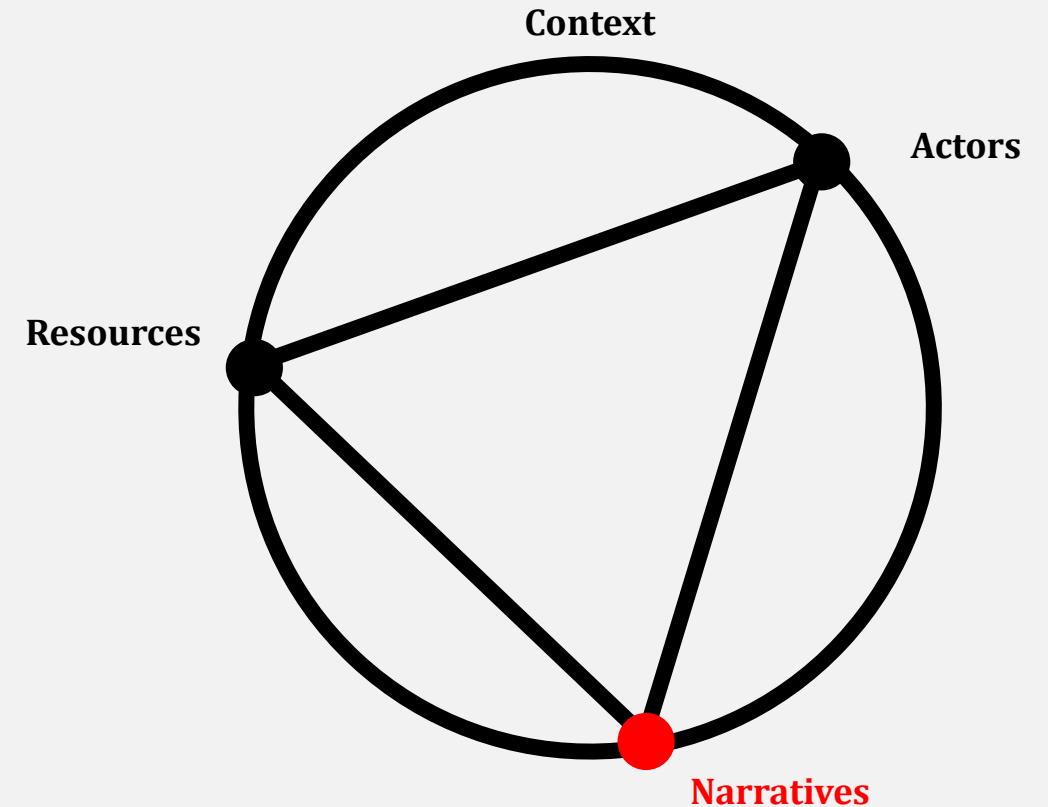
- Public, private and societal stakeholders
- Governance capacity through coalitions
- Evolving roles and responsibilities
- *Willingness, capacity and commitment*



# The Implementation of Area Development

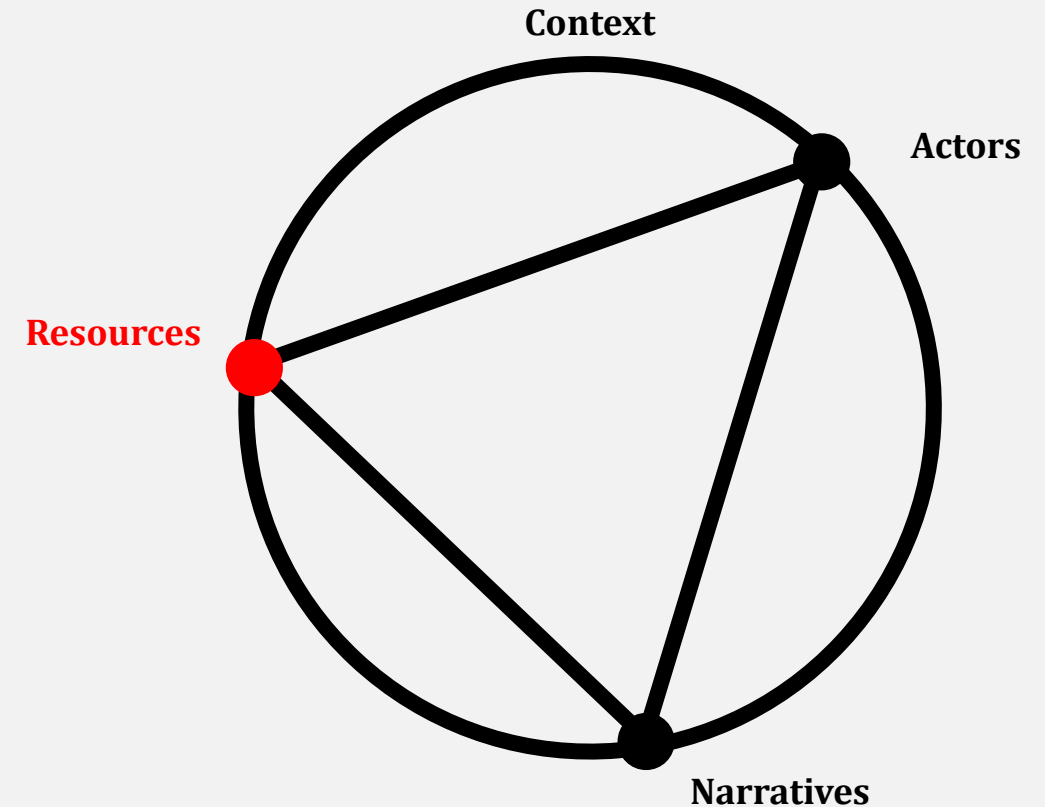
How does the built environment facilitate:

- What can one reach within 10 minutes of travel?
- For whom is the area affordable?
- How sustainable is the area?
- How energy efficient is the area?
- How does one identify themselves with an area?
- *Etc.*

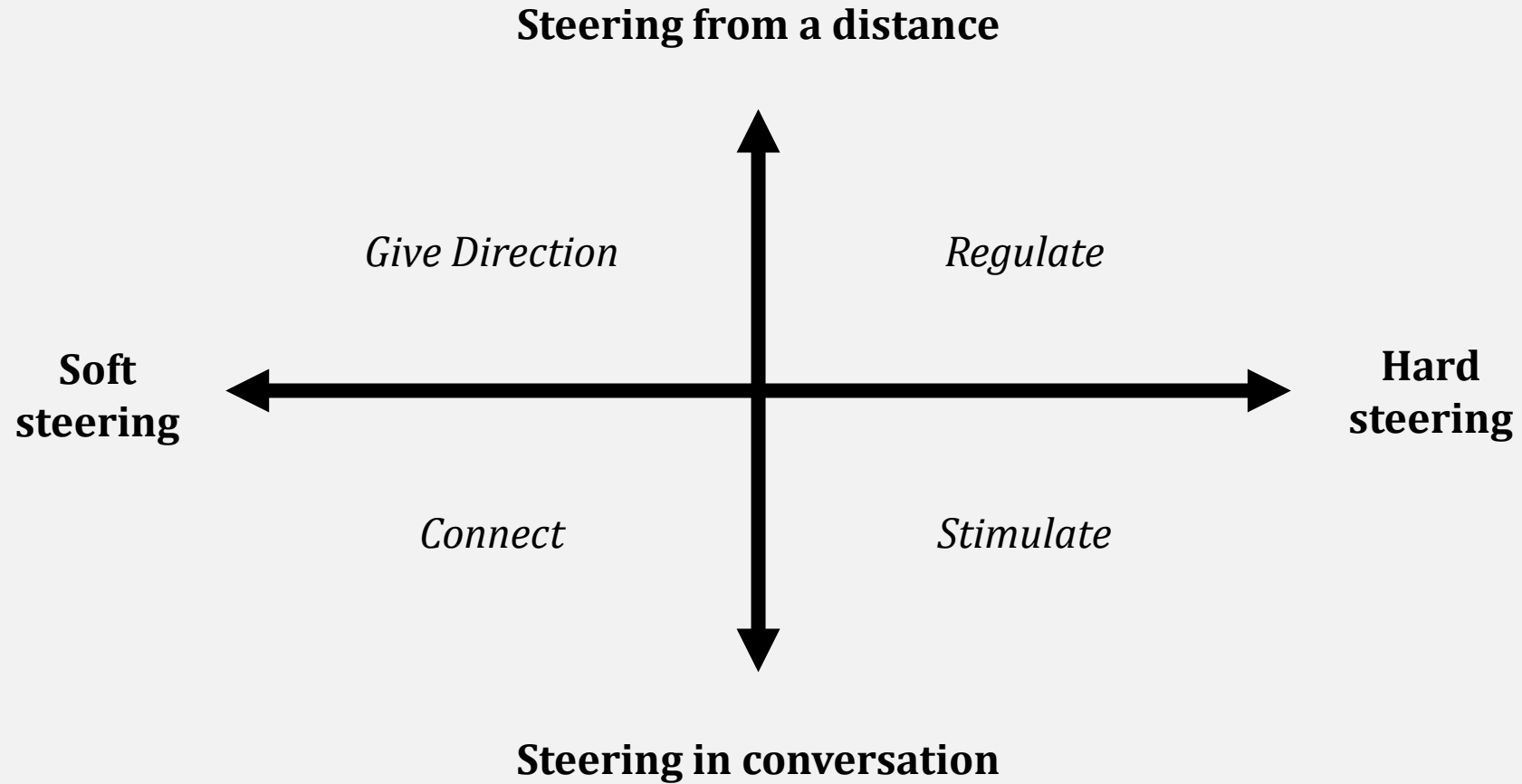


# The Implementation of Area Development

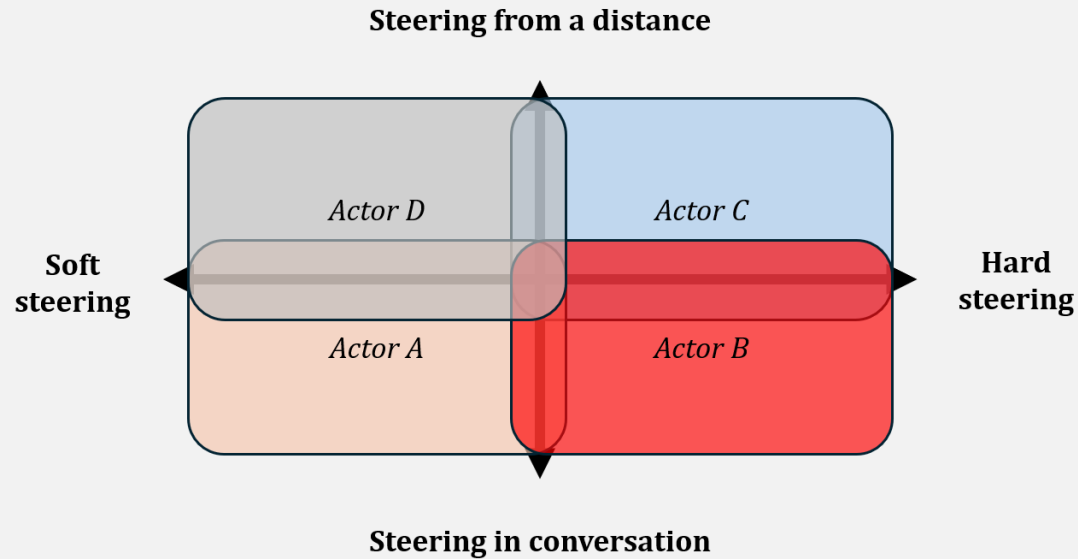
- Soft resources: **knowledge, expertise**, trust, administrative capacity, and political commitment.
- Hard resources: **land, financial capital, legal** instruments, zoning rights, and infrastructure.
- Their interdependence shapes whether area development **moves from vision to action**.



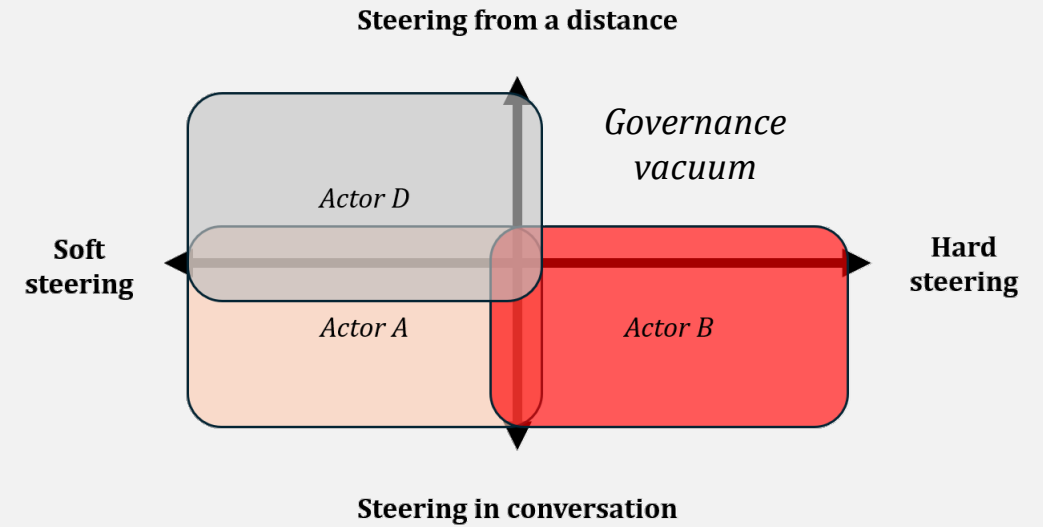
# Steering Framework



# Steering Framework



**Ideal:** all quadrants are covered



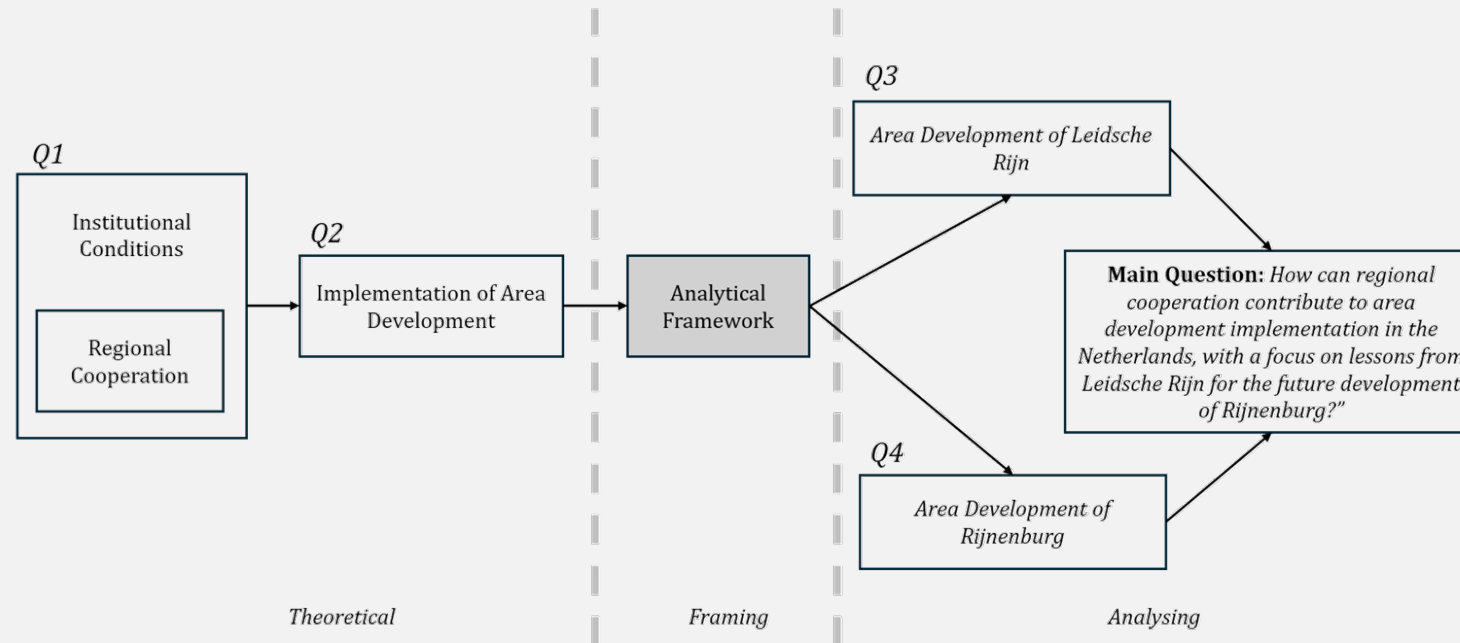
**Not ideal:** a governance vacuum

# The Analytical Framework



# The Role of the Analytical Framework

*“Governance is not the answer to the question of how to govern but a way of developing the right questions about governing.” — Stoker (1998)*

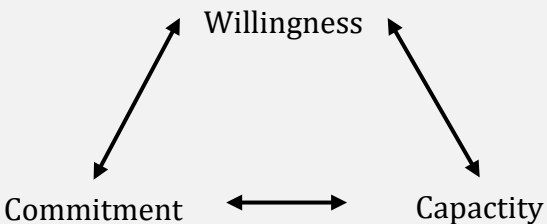


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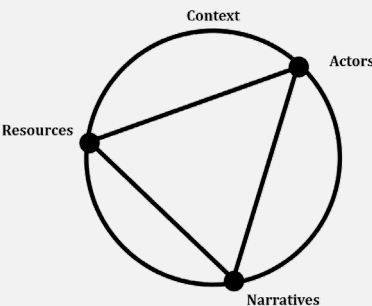
*Governance: "The action or manner of governing a state, organization, etc". (Oxford Dictionary, 2025)*

# Analytical Framework

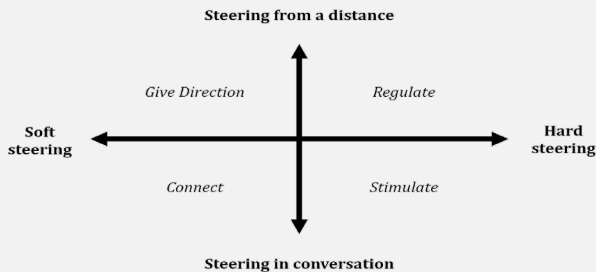
Phase 1: The Conditions



Phase 2: The Implementation



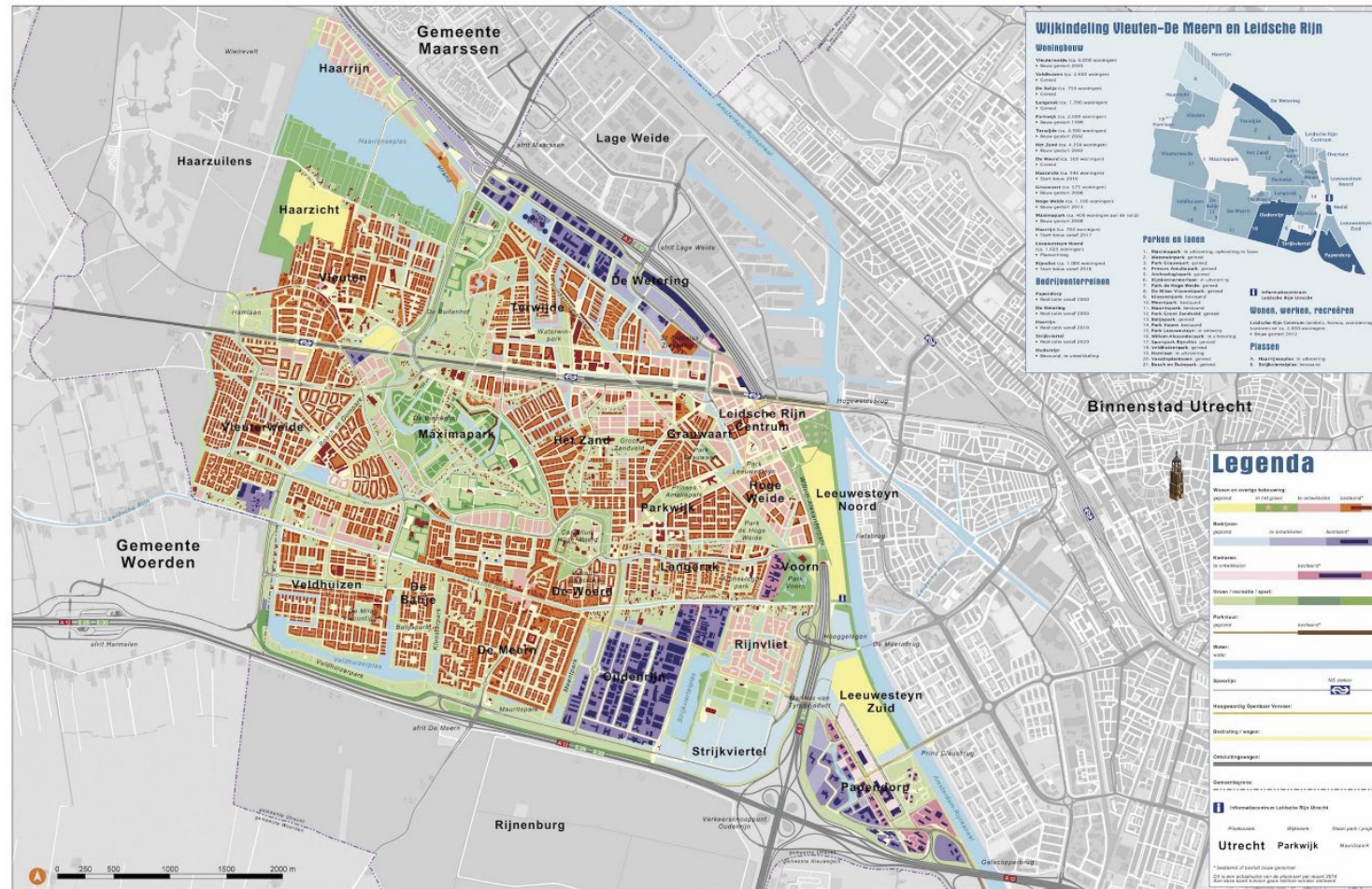
Phase 3: Steering



Time →

# The Lessons of Leidsche Rijn

*30.000 Dwellings on 25 square kilometer*

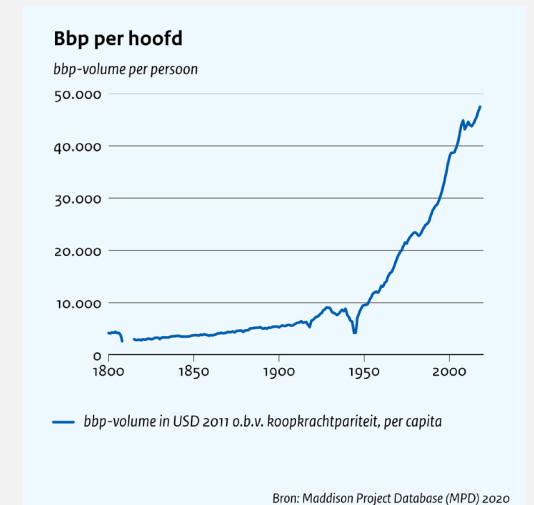
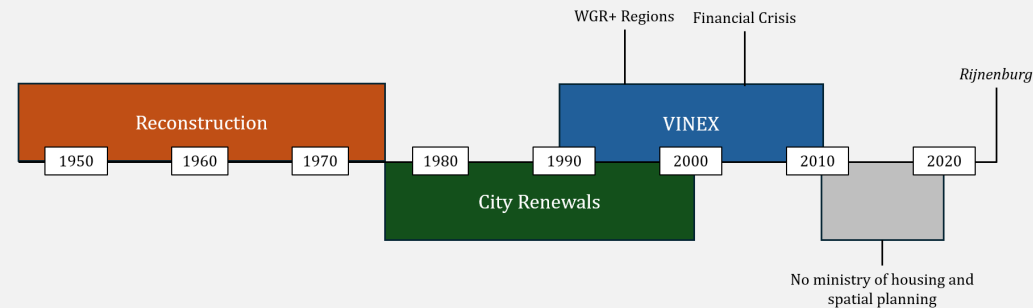
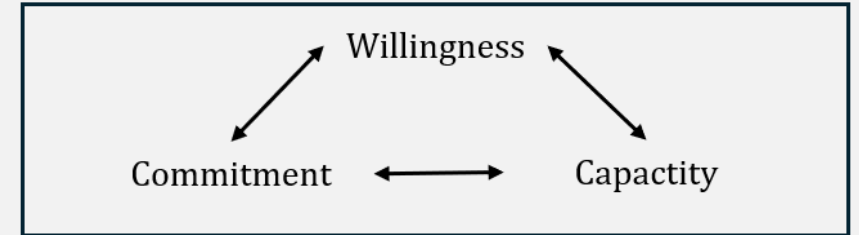


[www.leidscherijn.nl](http://www.leidscherijn.nl)

Leidsche Rijn Utrecht  
Waar mensen elkaar ontmoeten

# The Conditions of Leidsche Rijn

- A growing **housing shortage**: VINEX added 455.000 houses between 1995 and 2005
- **Centralized conditions** in the Ministry of VROM
- **Centralized financing** from the Ministry of VROM
- Municipalities with **land poositions**



Phase 1: The Conditions

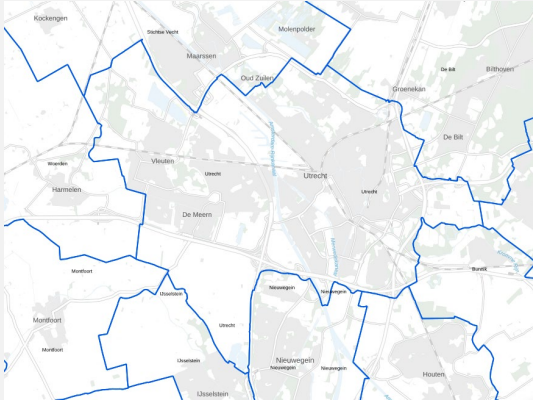
Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering

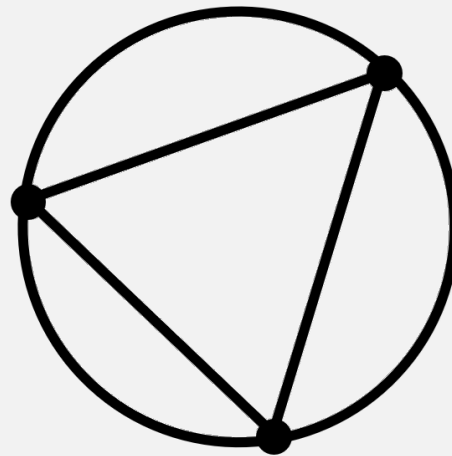


# The Implementation of Leidsche Rijn

## Resources



## Context



## Actors (BRU, VROM & Project Department)



## Narrative (tunneling of the A2 and the Maxima Park)

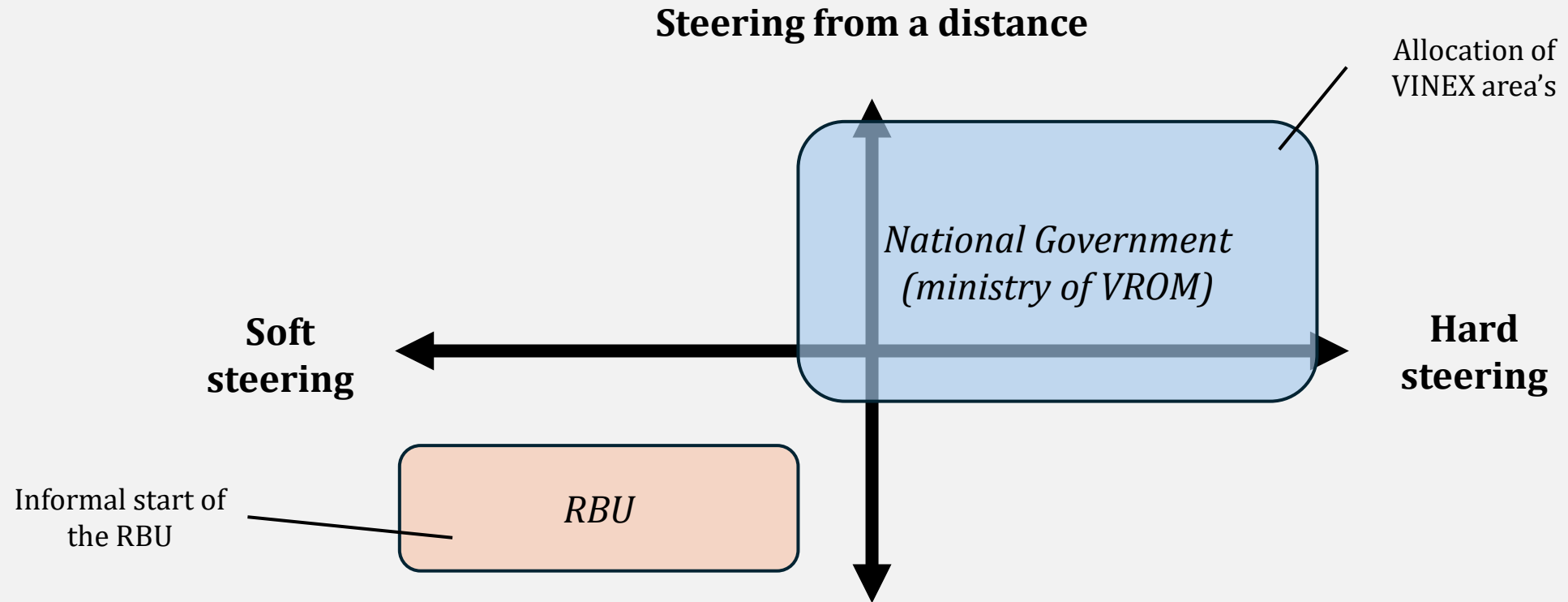


Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering

# The Steering of Leidsche Rijn



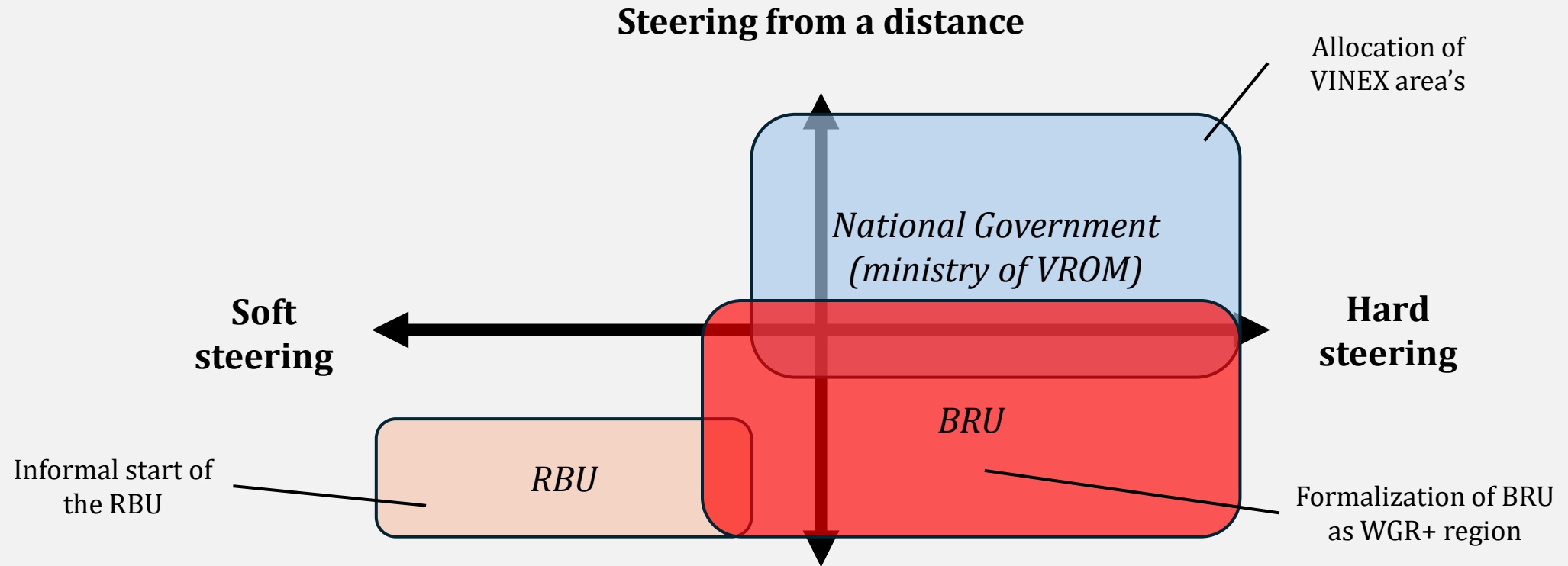
Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering



# The Steering of Leidsche Rijn

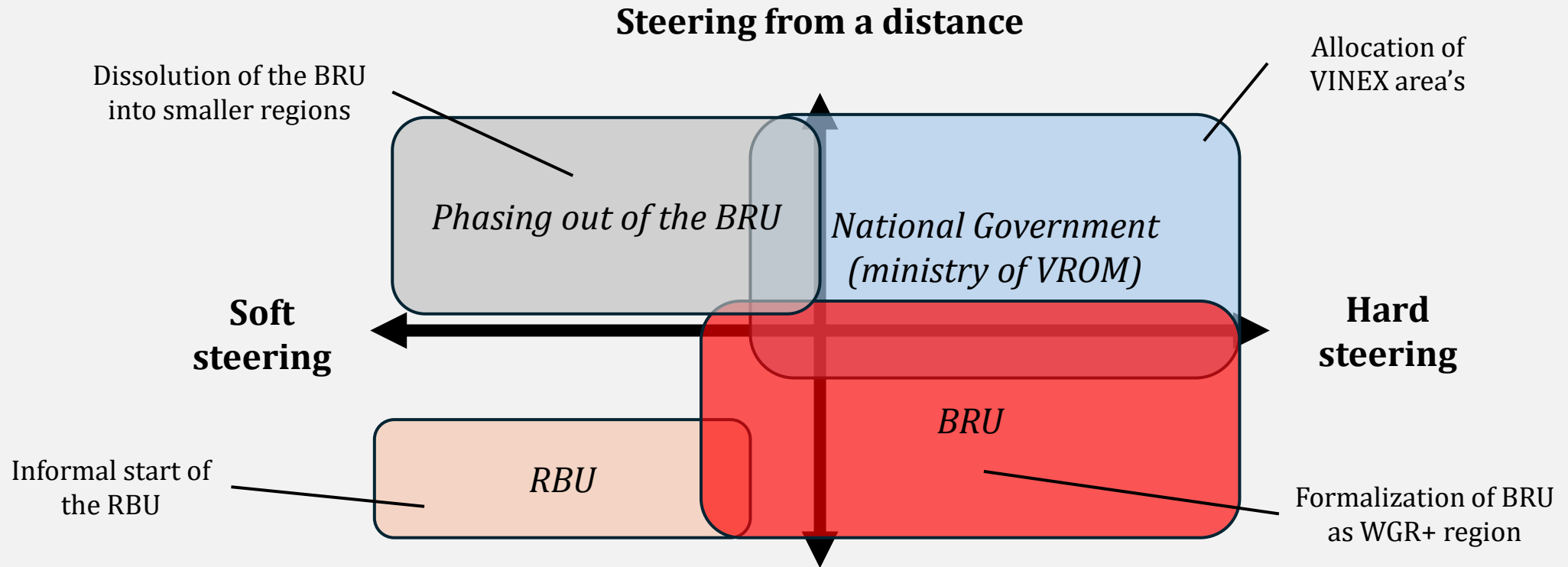


Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering

# The Steering of Leidsche Rijn



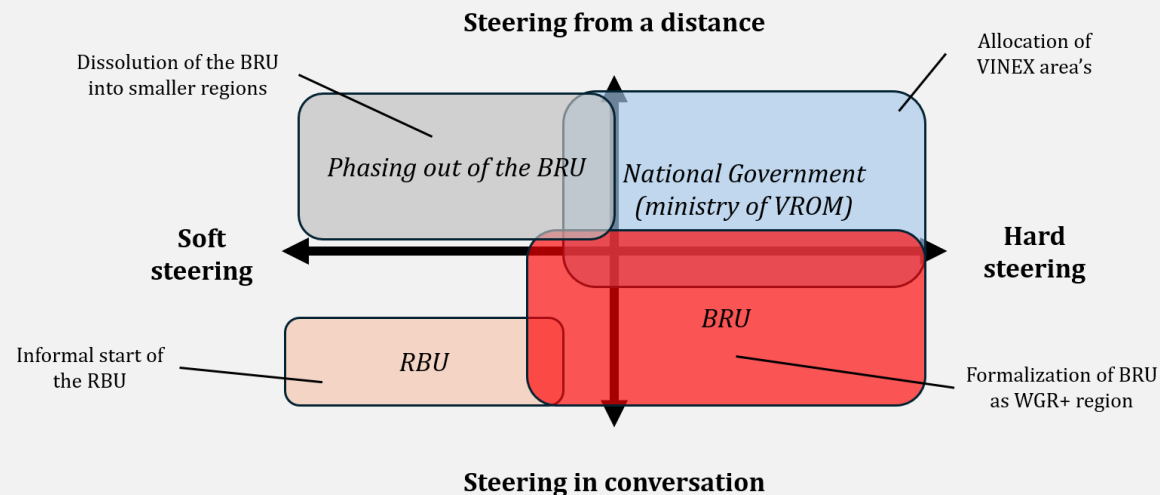
Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering

# The Lessons of Leidsche Rijn

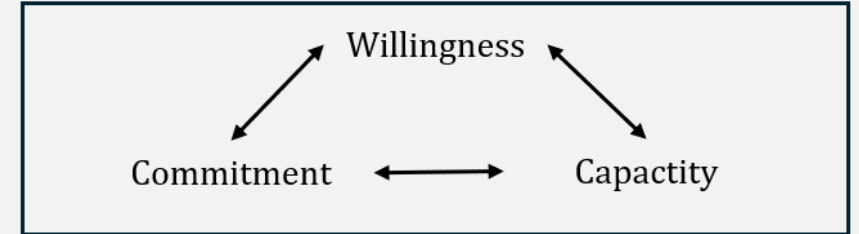
1. The **conditions were favorable** (*willingness, capacity, commitment*)
2. The development was implemented through a **few main actors**
3. The **narrative** was clear, but the execution lacked **infrastructural solutions**
4. The resources were in place, based on previous **knowledge** and **landownership** by relative few parties
5. The steering model was **eventually covered** by key actors



# The Challenge of Rijnenburg

# The Conditions of Rijnenburg

- High levels of willingness among key actors (municipality, province, developers and national government)
- Capacity through external advisors
- Struggling with commitment
- High pressure on housing market



## Note of Principles

- Pre design
- Possibilities
- Feasibility
- Shows **commitment** to private parties

Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

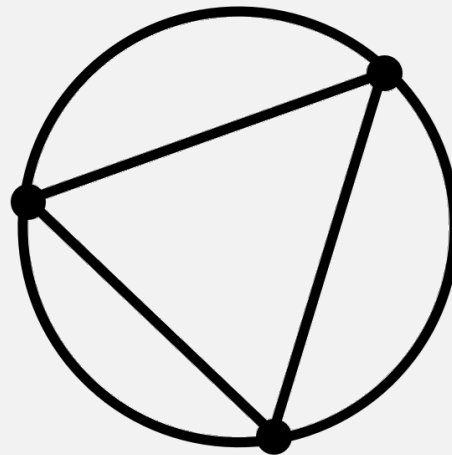
Phase 3: Steering

# The Implementation of Rijnenburg

## Resources



## Context



## Actors



## Narrative (*phasing of development and the merwedelijn*)

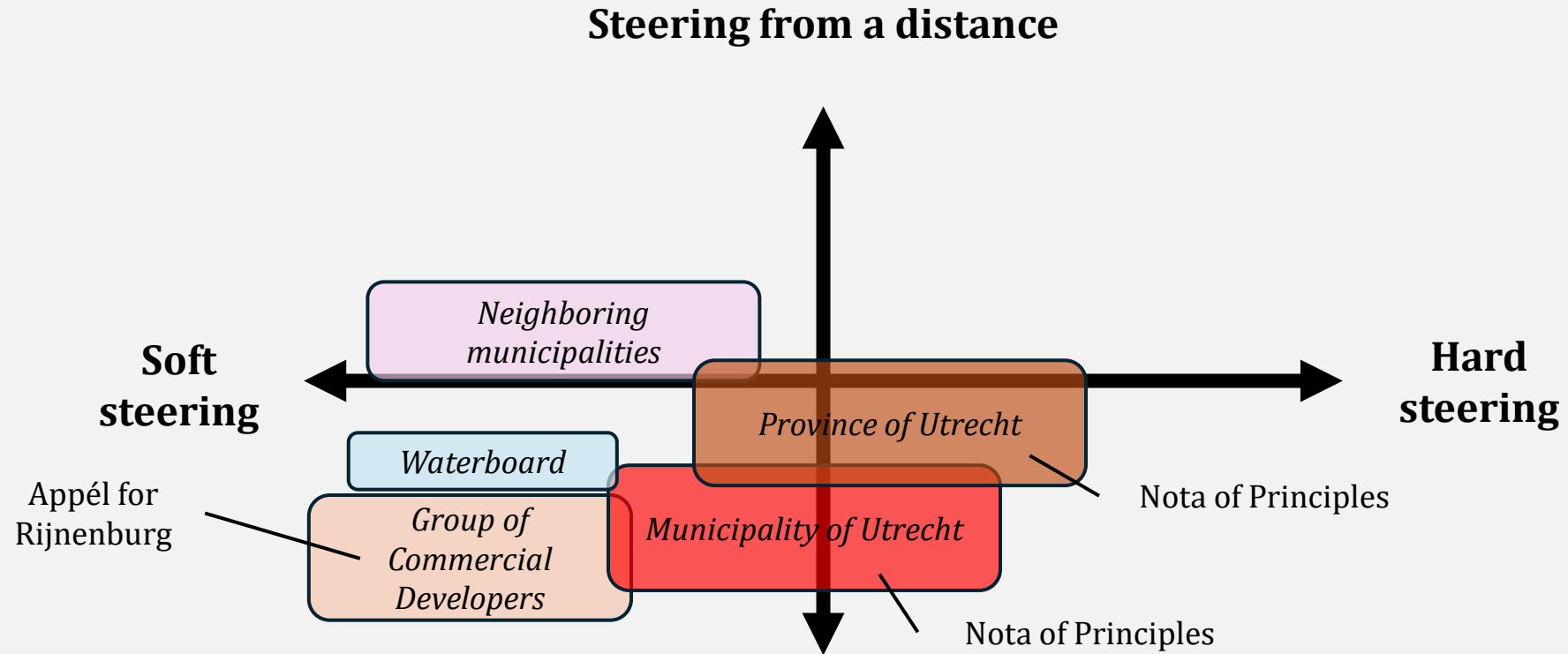


Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering

# The Steering of Rijnenburg



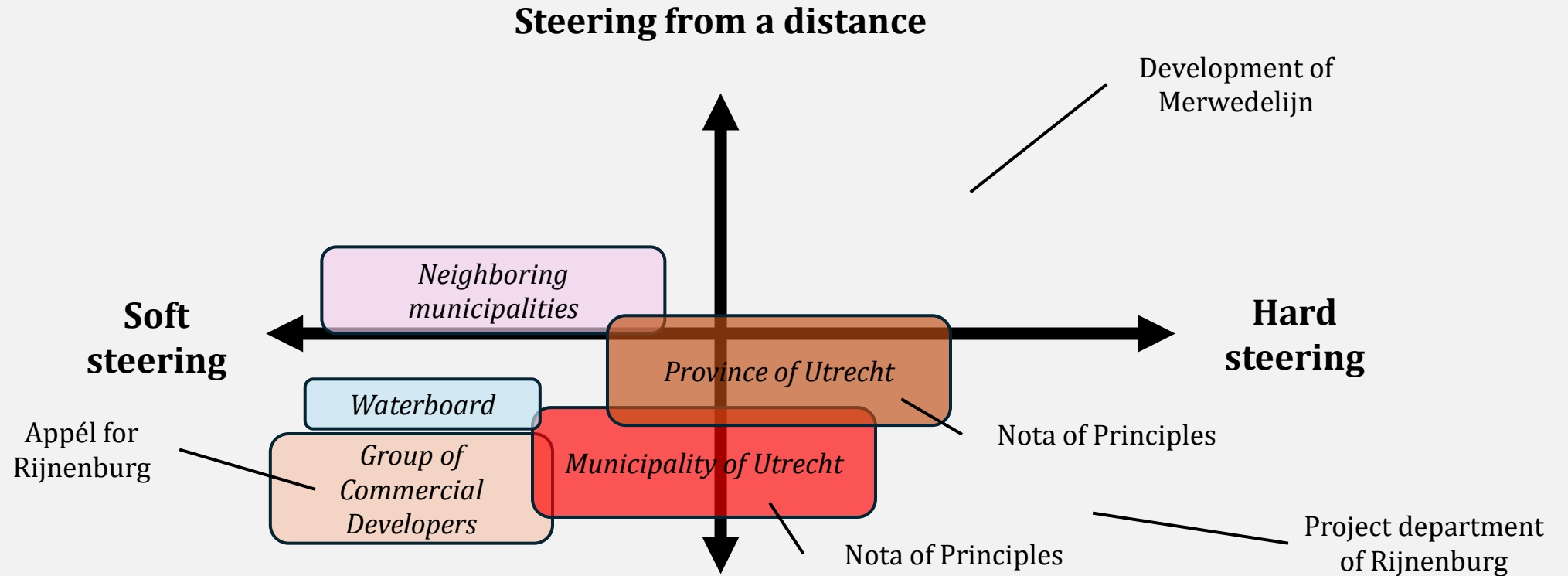
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# The Steering of Rijnenburg



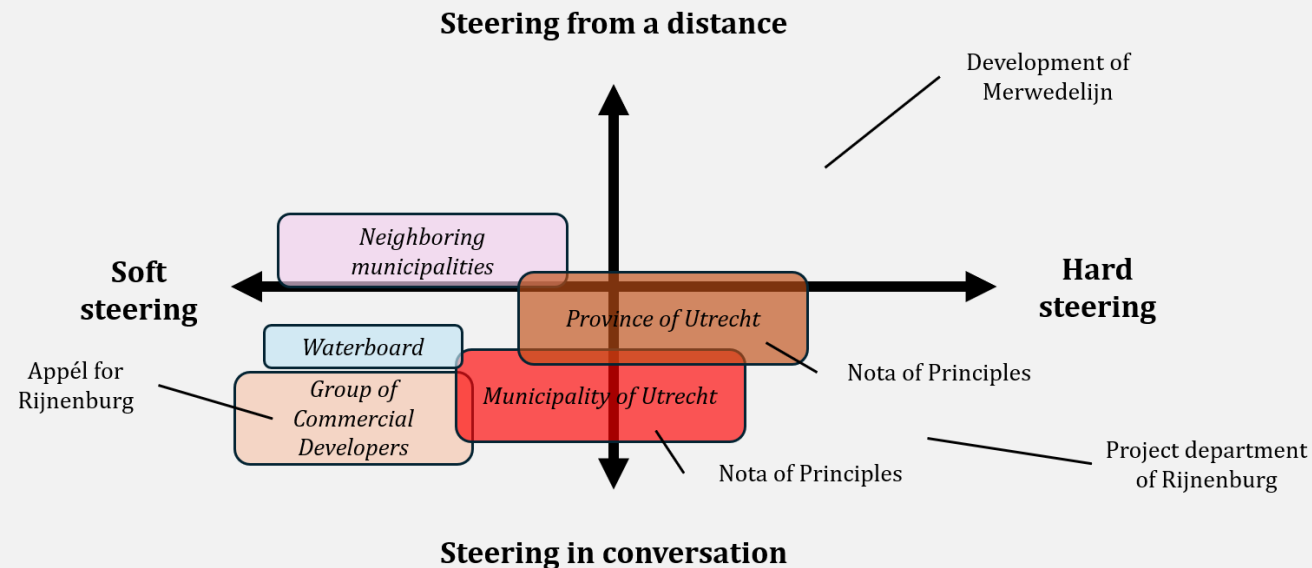
Phase 1: The Conditions

Phase 2: The Implementation

Phase 3: Steering

# The conclusion for Rijnenburg

1. Willingness and capacity seems to be covered. **Commitment** for development is the challenge in the first phase
2. The Implementation of Rijnenburg is **fragmentated** and **uncertain**
3. The steering of model of Rijnenburg suffers from a **governance vacuum**



# Conclusion

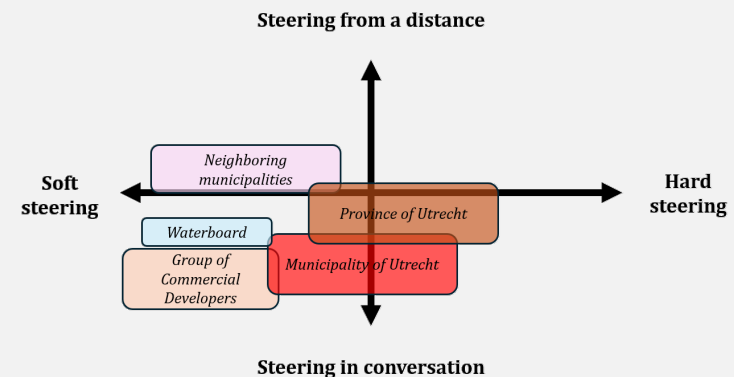
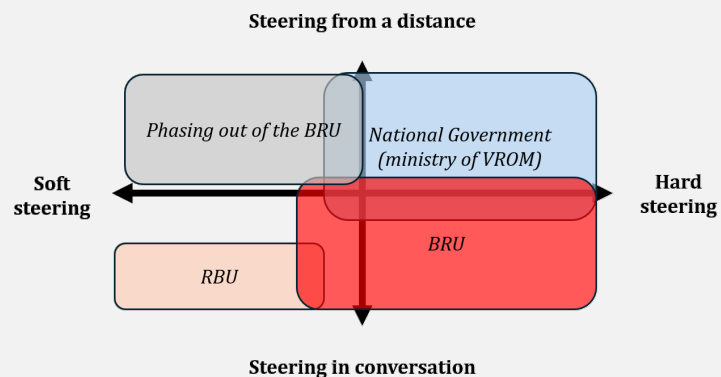
# Conclusion

**Main Question:** *How can regional cooperation contribute to the implementation of area development in the Netherlands, with a focus on lessons from Leidsche Rijn and the future development of Rijnenburg?*

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A **temporary regional cooperation** should be formed for the development of Rijnenburg:

1. The **Nota of Principles** should be formalised jointly by the municipality and the **province**.
2. A **dedicated project department** should be established.
3. A more **formal role for private parties**.
4. The **governance vacuum** in the steering model must be addressed.



# Discussion

# Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was **to explore how regional cooperation** might help unlock implementation of area development under these conditions. We've found out that:

1. It is more **difficult to organize** regional cooperation in the current institutional context.
2. The current form of **decentralization is misaligned**: legal power is decentralized but financial means aren't.

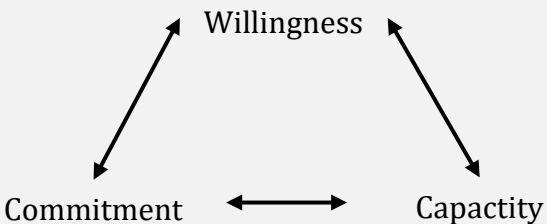
These factors are expected to **hinder the suggested recommendations**. Therefore, crucial questions remain:

1. **How do actors move** from soft coordination to structural commitment?
2. Further reflection on **the formal role of private parties**.
3. **What role** will the national government take in large developments like Rijnenburg? Can they facilitate a temporary regional cooperation?

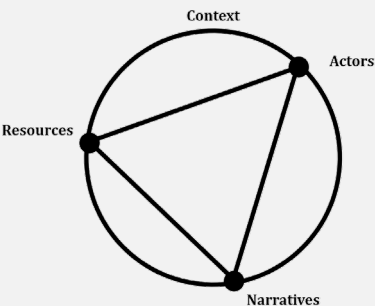
Thank you.

# Analytical Framework

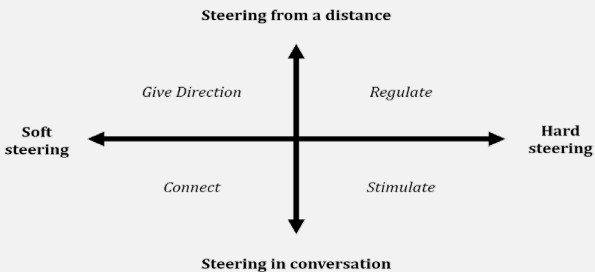
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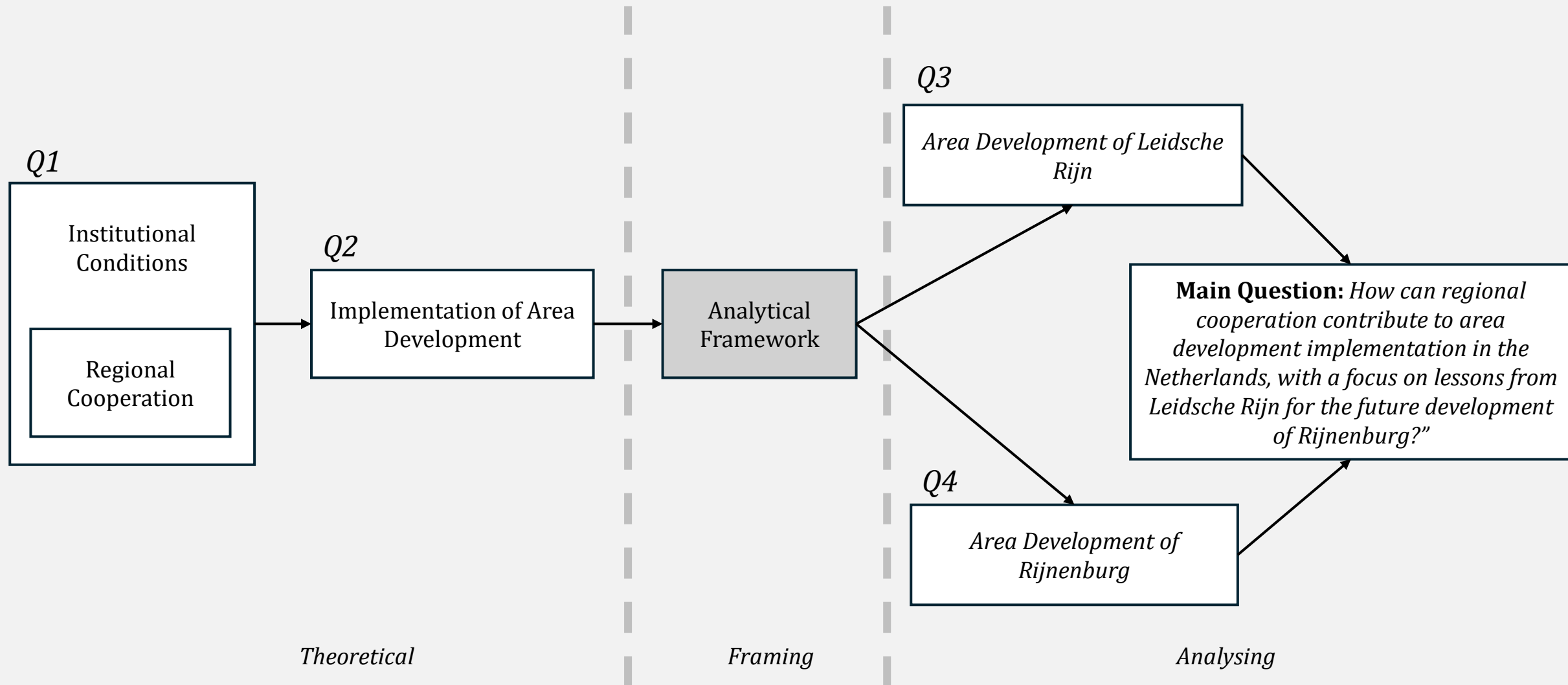
Phase 3: Steering



Time →



# Research Design



## **What is area development?**

*“Area development is the art of connecting functions, disciplines, parties, interests and financial flows, with a view to the development of the area.” – Friso de Zeeuw*

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