

# Time to be **WISER**

Addressing  
economic insecurity  
and social exclusion  
in the Netherlands

2025 report

**Wellbeing**

**Inclusion**

**Sustainability**

**Equal Opportunity**

**R**



**WELLBEING  
ECONOMY  
ALLIANCE  
NEDERLAND**

# Executive Summary

How can local and regional initiatives contribute to a broader societal and economic transition? And how do they relate to the theme of *bestaanszekerheid*—the assurance of a secure and dignified livelihood—which has become a key issue in Dutch national politics? In an expert workshop, we brought together a group of participants with backgrounds in academia, policy institutes (such as CPB, PBL, and TNO), and practice-based civic initiatives. This interdisciplinary setting provided fertile ground for a rich dialogue on what is needed to shape human-centred and future-proof policy.

The workshop built on the principles of the Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide by WEAll, while also bringing new insights to light. Whereas the Design Guide primarily takes a systemic and policy-level perspective, this workshop focused on the local level: what is needed to make wellbeing a tangible and actionable foundation for policy in neighbourhoods, towns, and cities? Five key lessons emerged.

From the outset, it became clear that “wellbeing” is a unifying but complex concept that must be shaped according to local contexts. This calls for a methodical yet open approach—one that creates space for residents’ experiences and narratives, rather than relying solely on data and indicators.

A central finding was the importance of meaningful and constructive relationships between government and society. Civic initiatives tend to be more successful when public authorities are open to intensive collaboration. Trust, reciprocity, and room for experimentation are critical preconditions—alongside streamlined processes for financing such initiatives. Participants noted that local efforts often face bureaucratic obstacles, such as difficulties in accessing funding, obstructive regulations, or lack of formal recognition.

The workshop further revealed that decision-making processes remain largely fragmented and are still insufficiently transparent. Moreover, there is limited attention given to broader societal value creation—both social and ecological. Financial business cases often become the decisive factor, sidelining more holistic, multi-dimensional approaches.

Participants also emphasised that current policy structures insufficiently support the integration of top-down and bottom-up processes. Much of the potential of participatory policy-making is lost due to the lack of alignment between these approaches.

Finally, there was shared concern about the lack of data needed to meaningfully assess wellbeing at the local level. A multidimensional wellbeing indicator at the neighbourhood scale could significantly improve understanding of community wellbeing, offering a more solid basis for targeted and effective local policy.

These initial findings call for further collaboration. We hope there will be room for follow-up research in which these insights can be translated into more concrete strategies for action. WISER is not a rigid model, but a direction: an invitation to reorient economy and society around what truly matters—**Wellbeing, Inclusion, Sustainability, and Equal Opportunity.**



# Authors

This project is an initiative of the *Wellbeing Economy Alliance hub Nederland* and is implemented by foundation *Our New Economy*.

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# Introduction

## *Economic insecurity and social exclusion in the Netherlands: an urgent challenge for an inclusive transition*

The Netherlands is among the most prosperous countries in the world. Nevertheless, around 16.5 per cent of the population faces a risk of poverty or social exclusion (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek)<sup>1</sup>. The current cost of living continues to rise, with little sign of relief. During the 2023 elections, the issue of *bestaanszekerheid*—the assurance of a secure livelihood—played a central role and had a significant impact on the election outcome, particularly in relation to the rise of right-wing populist movements. More broadly, growing socio-economic inequalities and economic insecurity have far-reaching negative consequences for both individual wellbeing and society at large. They affect standards of living, physical and mental health, and the broader economic dynamics (Mahoney 2023, WISE Report).

Beyond these social and economic effects, economic insecurity and social exclusion warrant particular attention in the context of the Green Transition. Climate change is becoming an increasingly urgent challenge. At the same time, society is growing more polarised, and incidents of radicalisation are on the rise. In this light, it is strategically important to reflect on the consequences of necessary economic transitions. Special attention must be paid to vulnerable groups—those most affected by economic insecurity and social exclusion.

An inclusive wellbeing economy approach requires that these groups are not disproportionately burdened by the socio-economic consequences of policy interventions. Rather than leaving them behind, they should be actively supported in adapting to changing labour markets and societal developments through effective and inclusive policy.

Within the framework of the *Driving Equality Project*, the WEAll NL Hub is working to draw attention to this issue and to generate concrete insights into how economic insecurity and social exclusion can be addressed through inclusive wellbeing policy at the municipal and provincial levels. To this end, we organised an expert workshop in collaboration with a range of partner organisations and civil society networks—including representatives from policy think tanks, the academic community, and vulnerable communities—to create a co-creative space for joint knowledge development and policy innovation.

Using two wellbeing-focused case studies and drawing on the expertise of the participants, we gathered practical insights into how Dutch policy can more effectively contribute to building a wellbeing economy. We also discussed relevant movements, frameworks, and tools currently in use in the Netherlands to ground the conversation in practical realities. This project was carried out by the foundation *Our New Economy* on behalf of the WEAll NL Hub, in collaboration with contributors from the following organisations:

- University of Amsterdam
- Leiden University
- TNO (Dutch Organisation for Applied Scientific Research)
- CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek)
- PBL (PlanBureau voor de Leefomgeving)
- NJR (National Youth Council of the Netherlands)
- TEMMA (social enterprise)
- Voedselpark Amsterdam - Luktemeer (grassroots movement, volunteer-led)

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<sup>1</sup> This percentage refers to the share of the population living in households experiencing at least one of the three risks of poverty and social exclusion: the risk of poverty, severe material and social deprivation and/or living in a household with very low work intensity (Eurostat, 2022).

# Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide

How this report relates to the Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide and a brief explanation of why this workshop was organised.

## WEALL Policy Design Guide

- Developing a wellbeing vision and framework that aligns with local values, goals and contexts.
- Shaping a Wellbeing Economy Strategy that identifies key economic areas for well-being and outlines a plan to strengthen them.
- Assessing and selecting policies for a Wellbeing Economy based on their alignment with wellbeing values and goals.
- Implementing policies for a Wellbeing Economy by empowering communities to take a leading role in this transformation.
- Evaluating the impact of policies on welfare, with a view to continuous learning and adjustments.

From a Dutch context, this report offers concrete insights that flesh out the more abstract, global recommendations of the Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide. In doing so, it focuses on addressing practical experiences and possible recommendations within the well-being economy.

## Brief description of the workshop

In preparation for the workshop, we asked all participants to reflect on the following key questions

- What does wellbeing economics mean to you? How would you define wellbeing economics in the context of your work or expertise?
- What challenges do you see in the current economy in terms of promoting wellbeing? Think about the barriers you encounter in your work or in your environment and how these barriers hinder the transition to a welfare economy.

In the workshop we sought answers to these questions through two case studies. The case studies used are described in the following section

## Cases

**Case study TEMMA: Social inclusion and bureaucracy.** An initiative of two passionate social entrepreneurs, TEMMA provides study and personal support to students through a customised platform. It focuses on guiding students through their academic challenges and personal well-being during their studies. Temma offers personalised help, including study planning, mental support and access to relevant resources, for example on student finance. This helps students cope better with stress, planning and their study progress.

**Lutkemeer case study: Valuing ecological and social factors.** The Lutkemeerpolder is an agricultural area and is considered one of the last fertile piece of land in Amsterdam. It is threatened by plans to develop an industrial site intended for distribution centres. Action groups, such as Behoud Lutkemeer, are committed to preserving this area because of its ecological and social value. They stress the importance of local food production, biodiversity and sustainable development. The battle for Lutkemeer illustrates the tension between economic development and ecological and social interests at the local level.

# Experts

The following expert participated in the expert workshop:

Nicky Pouw	University of Amsterdam
Sander de Bruijn	PBL
Thierno Baldé	Temma
Lucie Snoeker	Luktemeer
Horlings, E. (Edwin)	CBS
Jurgen van der Heijden	TNO
Fenna Timsi	Nationale JeugdRaad

This document contains references to the workshop and expert input. We are grateful to everyone for their time and shared insights. The insights from the workshop helped the authors immensely in writing this report. The experts have an advisory role. The authors of this report take full responsibility for the conclusions and recommendations of this report.



# Workshop insights

For each insight, we also describe how it relates to Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide (WEPDG; from the Guide's thematic framework)

## Insight - Wellbeing is pluralistic

Through answers to the first preparatory question to the workshop participants, the understanding emerges that the concept of wellbeing has multiple views, which are:

- **Relational and ecological approach:**  
Well-being is seen as a network of relationships between people and their environment. Social cohesion, sustainability and democratic engagement are central. This vision emphasises collective action and a sustainable connection with nature. This includes both social and natural elements, such as satisfaction, relationships and environmental protection. Related: the term "Donut Economy" was mentioned several times in the workshop.
- **Future-oriented Broad Welfare**  
This vision emphasises well-being as a balance between social, environmental and economic aspects, focusing on both current and future generations. It is about making responsible decisions that focus on the long term and future generations. Welfare in this context is also viewed through the eye of the measurement method; so a Welfare Economy is roughly equivalent to that measured in the Netherlands, for example, by the Monitor Brede Welvaart (MBW)<sup>2</sup>.
- **Inclusive community orientation**  
Welfare is created through local ownership and cooperation within communities. Participation and resident initiatives play a key role in this, seeing welfare as a shared responsibility that goes beyond mere government policy. It also means, for example, that young people should be able to participate fully in policies and decision-making that affect their future
- **Livelihood security and individual well-being**  
Welfare begins with financial security and the ability to fulfil basic needs without stress. It provides a foundation for personal development, with an emphasis on countering inequality and creating opportunities for all.

**Concepts:** wellbeing, wellbeing economy, residents/citizen/community as economic actor alongside private and government/public

**Conclusion:** Wellbeing is pluralistic and can differ from person to person - there are several answers to the question 'What is Wellbeing?', some of which overlap.

## Government's course of action

The recommendations from the Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide (1A and 1B) offer a valuable approach for structuring the complexity of the concept of wellbeing and integrating it more effectively into policy and decision-making.

**1A: Understanding what matters for wellbeing** emphasises that wellbeing is a multifaceted and context-dependent concept, shaped by both individual and collective perspectives. This directly aligns with the insight from the workshop that wellbeing is plural and can be approached from various viewpoints—

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<sup>2</sup> There is debate among experts whether the set of indicators of MBW can be equated with what is meant by wellbeing economics. The details of that are beyond the scope of this publication.

such as relational and ecological perspectives, future-oriented prosperity, and foundational security. By explicitly acknowledging this variety, policymakers and communities can develop a more inclusive and realistic understanding of wellbeing, where different dimensions are considered equally important. This conversation must take place at multiple levels: shared principles concerning relational and ecological values should be translated into a future vision and corresponding measurement instruments. These instruments must be inclusive and should clearly demonstrate how they contribute to individual wellbeing and existential security.

In addition, **1B: Crafting and communicating your wellbeing vision** provides guidance on how to translate these layered insights into a clear and collectively supported vision of wellbeing. As wellbeing can vary by individual and community, it is essential to use a participatory process in which citizens, policymakers, and civil society actors jointly determine priorities. This approach resonates with the Dutch *Monitor Brede Welvaart* (Broad Prosperity Monitor), which operationalises wellbeing through measurable indicators. By combining this data with qualitative insights from local communities, a more integrated wellbeing policy can be developed—one that captures both objective and subjective dimensions of wellbeing.

Finally, this approach contributes to the development of a wellbeing economy in which citizens operate as active economic agents alongside the government and market. In this context, wellbeing is not only the outcome of policy decisions or economic growth, but also of bottom-up initiatives that promote social cohesion and ecological sustainability. Developing a wellbeing vision that is both measurable and narratively compelling allows for a broader understanding of wellbeing to be embedded in both policymaking and practice—leaving space for individual and collective needs alike.

# Insight – Bureaucracy hinders access to wellbeing

Issues of inclusion, caused in part by complexity and bureaucracy in Dutch society, lead to social exclusion

## Case: TEMMA

TEMMA is an initiative founded by two dedicated social entrepreneurs. It offers academic and personal support to students through a tailored platform, helping them navigate their academic challenges and personal wellbeing throughout their studies. The platform provides personalised assistance, including study planning, mental health support, and access to relevant resources, such as information about student finance. This enables students to better manage stress, structure their time, and track their academic progress.

## Workshop reflections

- 1. Problem identification:** Bureaucracy within the policy environment for social initiatives—such as TEMMA—is experienced as overly complex and discouraging. This complexity hinders efficient and effective access to essential resources, such as grants and financial support, thereby delaying the implementation of social projects.
- 2. Proposed solutions:** Simplifying bureaucratic procedures by centralising funding processes and offering clearer, more accessible guidelines could help organisations like TEMMA operate more effectively. Supporting social enterprises through a cooperative model may also foster innovation from citizen-led initiatives.
- 3. General reflection:** Dutch bureaucracy is a significant barrier to social inclusion and innovation. Reforming and streamlining these systems could not only improve efficiency but also foster a more inclusive society, in which civic initiatives play a central role in shaping wellbeing policy.

## Conclusions

TEMMA encounters several bureaucratic barriers in practice. From this, we can draw a number of important lessons:

- Existing policy frameworks often struggle to align with or flexibly accommodate bottom-up wellbeing initiatives. These initiatives frequently arise in response to local social or ecological problems, with communities proposing integrated local solutions. Can policy frameworks become more adaptive?
- Bureaucracy in the Netherlands is highly complex and could be made more accessible in order to stimulate “civic progress”.

## Policy perspective

The recommendation to reduce bureaucracy is understandable but remains rather general. It is necessary to identify specific barriers that make it more difficult for initiatives like TEMMA to operate effectively and contribute to the wellbeing of their respective communities.

The WEPDG offers a relevant recommendation in section **4A: Empowering localised policy implementation**:

This recommendation underscores the importance of inclusive and participatory policymaking, in which policymakers actively collaborate with civic initiatives (such as TEMMA) to achieve wellbeing goals. This means that policy should not be shaped exclusively from the top down; grassroots initiatives must be given a structural role in the development of regulations and funding mechanisms. By establishing shared platforms where policymakers and civic actors regularly meet, bottlenecks can be identified and addressed early on. This reduces bureaucratic barriers and enables faster, more effective support for social entrepreneurs—lowering the threshold for contributing to social inclusion.

Implementing a **cooperative policy model**, as recommended by the WEPDG, can help close the gap between bottom-up initiatives and government policy. In such a model, initiatives are not merely policy implementers but co-creators—contributing to a more flexible and responsive policy environment.

The WEPDG also stresses the need for **direct access to resources and simplified funding procedures** as essential conditions for encouraging wellbeing initiatives. Financial support should not be based solely on economic efficiency but also on social impact and community value. By making funding systems more transparent and easier to navigate, the threshold for initiatives like TEMMA is lowered—enabling them to promote social inclusion more effectively. This supports not only the students that TEMMA serves but also strengthens the broader ecosystem of wellbeing-focused social enterprises in the Netherlands.

In short, government policy can become more flexible, accessible, and interactive.

- Better exchange between policymakers and initiatives like TEMMA can significantly improve the effectiveness of wellbeing policy.
- Lastly, it is important to note that organising funding is often challenging. Moreover, the emphasis tends to fall on financial-economic efficiency—undermining the principle of multiple value creation.

# Insight – Democratisation and public transparency in policy and decision-making

Challenges in democratisation and public transparency within policymaking, and the difficulty of valuing ecological and social factors

- Lutkemeer
- Broader Assessment Frameworks
- Safeguarding Public Trust
- Hard vs soft business case

## Case: Lutkemeer

The Lutkemeer polder is an agricultural area on the outskirts of Amsterdam. Its continued existence is under threat from plans to develop the area into a business park. Activist groups such as *Behoud Lutkemeer* advocate for preserving the polder due to its ecological and social significance. They highlight the importance of local food production, biodiversity, and sustainable development. The struggle over Lutkemeer exemplifies the tension between economic development and ecological and social interests at the local level.

The case of Lutkemeer shows how difficult it is to incorporate ecological and social values into policy decisions.

## Reflection

**1. Problem identification:** Policy communication from government actors is perceived as ineffective. The policy approach is based on a monofunctional vision for the area's development, and there is a lack of clear methodologies for weighing multiple types of value. The current policy tools lack robust assessment frameworks and insufficiently address human rights concerns. As a result, the policies in place often fail to align with the needs of the local community.

**2. Proposed solutions:** Improving policy by integrating multifunctionality would help support a broader set of wellbeing-related outcomes. It is also essential to develop better methodologies that incorporate local data and offer transparent assessment frameworks. A democratic and inclusive decision-making process from the outset can increase both public involvement and policy acceptance. This would also help rebuild trust in public institutions.

**3. General reflection:** The Lutkemeer case illustrates the need for policy that does not focus solely on narrow objectives, but instead adopts a holistic approach that reflects the diverse needs of the community. Striving for better methodologies and more inclusive processes can lead to policies that help preserve places like the Lutkemeer polder.

## Conclusions

The concept of a wellbeing economy deserves a stronger presence among both policymakers and citizens. To that end, there must be a two-way conversation between these groups.

Democratization and public transparency are needed at all stages of policymaking—from agenda-setting to implementation and monitoring.



Current policies often rely on monofunctional approaches, lacking the integrative benefits and broader (multi-value) business cases.

Genuine participation requires significant time and commitment from policymakers. Half-hearted efforts undermine public trust.

There is a missing layer of expertise when it comes to measuring local wellbeing in broad, multidimensional terms. Translating this into financial value can help policymakers make better-informed trade-offs. Scientific insights from the wellbeing economy can help weigh financial, social, and ecological values effectively.

## Policy perspective

The WEPDG provides relevant recommendations in two chapters:

**2B: Aligning institutions and stakeholders for wellbeing** and  
**2C: Managing trade-offs and power dynamics.**

These recommendations offer guidance on tackling the issues of democratisation and transparency in policymaking, as illustrated by the Lutkemeer case.

**2B** emphasises that effective and inclusive policy requires active collaboration between governments, civil society, and citizens. This directly relates to the need for broader assessment frameworks that take social and ecological values into account from the very beginning of the policy process. Such an approach fosters a shared vision among stakeholders, leading to greater trust and better implementation.

**2C** addresses the imbalance in influence between economic interests and socio-ecological values. In the case of Lutkemeer, traditional policy models tend to prioritise economic efficiency (a hard business case), while broader wellbeing indicators (soft business cases) are undervalued. The recommendation highlights the need for transparent and participatory processes to rebalance these power dynamics. This means that citizens must not only be heard but also have meaningful influence over decisions. By developing methods that integrate local data, policymakers can make better-informed trade-offs and give greater weight to social and ecological values. This leads to more comprehensive decision-making, where economic arguments are not the sole determining factor.

Crucially, this requires strong institutional embedding as a precondition.

Finally, implementing these recommendations would also help restore public trust in policymaking. Making policy development less opaque and more participatory can strengthen citizens' sense of ownership. This avoids confrontational dynamics—as seen in Lutkemeer—and encourages a more collaborative approach. The result is not only improved local wellbeing, but also more sustainable policy support in the long term.

# Insight – Top-down and bottom-up integration

The dynamics between top-down (government and institutional) and bottom-up (community-led) initiatives in building a wellbeing economy

1. Tensions between structures: bottom-up initiatives often feel constrained by top-down policies that prioritise economic outcomes and are driven by bureaucratic processes. This results in a mismatch of priorities and a lack of recognition for the social and local value that community-based projects contribute.
2. Opportunities for collaboration: when top-down and bottom-up efforts are aligned, space opens up for innovation and inclusion. Communities contribute local knowledge and engagement, while policymakers offer resources and scalability. Participatory policy can enhance this collaboration and foster shared ownership.

The dynamics between these approaches require mutual understanding and cooperation. Top-down systems must become more flexible and inclusive, while bottom-up initiatives need to operate more strategically within policy frameworks. Mutual adjustment is essential for accelerating a sustainable and inclusive wellbeing economy. It's also important to note that adaptation should not be expected solely from governments. The success of grassroots initiatives also depends on their ability to form strategic narratives and build broader coalitions that align with institutional contexts.

The gap between top-down and bottom-up approaches in the Netherlands calls for better integration and cooperation between policymakers and grassroots actors—treating them as components of a dynamic system, rather than as oppositional forces. Although government-led initiatives such as the *Monitor Brede Welvaart* and the *Masterplan Zuidoost* reflect ambitious wellbeing-related goals, bottom-up efforts like TEMMA and Lutkemeer need stronger support and better incorporation into these frameworks. Their metrics and priorities should influence—not merely respond to—national and regional policies.

The problem lies in translating between these levels and facilitating interaction. Top-down programmes are often well-resourced and broadly framed, but they do not always connect meaningfully with local realities. Meanwhile, community-level metrics—such as those from wellbeing dashboards—can offer rich insights into residents' lived experiences and the effectiveness of local policies.

An integrated approach is needed, in which top-down structures provide the financial means and policy scaffolding to strengthen bottom-up movements. At the same time, grassroots data and priorities should actively shape and evaluate top-down objectives. In this way, both approaches become mutually reinforcing, and the voices and experiences of people are genuinely included in policy formation. Rather than governments making policy *about* people, they make policy *with* them—and bottom-up actors are empowered to shape frameworks and measurement tools, not just comply with them.

One clear example is the Lutkemeer case. If broad measurements of wellbeing and ecological impact had been embedded in the policy process from the start, the unique value of the polder could have been protected within the planning framework. Scientific institutions and governments have a facilitative role to play by ensuring accessible funding, clear communication, and support for translating grassroots data into policy-relevant evidence.

## WELLBEING VISION:

- **1C: Measuring wellbeing**
- **5A: Wellbeing assessments (Evaluating policy impacts on wellbeing)**

# Insight – Data integration and translation into wellbeing policy: Challenges and Opportunities

## Reflection

This insight largely overlaps with the previous themes. However, a few specific points emerged that had not yet been fully explored. For the sake of avoiding repetition, this section is kept concise.

**Policy is currently focused on monofunctionality**, while multifunctional approaches can significantly enhance wellbeing-oriented policy. When setting policy agendas, it often proves difficult to adopt an integrated perspective. Social, ecological, and financial values can reinforce—but also counteract—each other. By applying a multifunctional (also called integrated or multi-value) approach, financial business cases need not always take precedence.

Key components of such a multifunctional approach include:

1. **Broad-based measurement** (TEMMA, Lutkemeer, Wellbeing Dashboard)  
Policies that are multifunctional must rely on comprehensive measurement tools. Nationally, the *Monitor Brede Welvaart* (Broad Welfare Monitor) is available for this purpose, but it is difficult to translate into local indicators. A local *Wellbeing Dashboard* can offer a solution.
2. **A sound understanding of how to monetise non-financial values** An expert discussion during the workshop revealed no consensus on how best to monetise ecological and social values. Some participants expressed concern that converting these values into a financial cost-benefit framework could ultimately undermine their intrinsic worth. One concept mentioned in this context was **True Price**. This tool provides a robust methodology for translating social and ecological values into financial terms—without reducing those values to mere monetary units. Importantly, it avoids the perception that social or environmental harm can be “paid off” (a key risk of over-monetisation).

## Policy perspective

The WEPDG provides relevant recommendations in the following two sections:

*Implementing wellbeing economy policies: 4B. Participatory monitoring of implementation*  
*Evaluating policy impacts on wellbeing: 5A. Wellbeing assessments*

Policymakers often pursue separate policy goals without accounting for the interdependence between social, ecological, and economic dimensions. Recommendation **4B** highlights the importance of participatory monitoring during implementation. By involving stakeholders in the monitoring process, a broader perspective is ensured and policies can be adjusted based on their actual impact on wellbeing. This aligns with the workshop insight that effective wellbeing policy requires inclusive, multi-dimensional indicators—such as a locally grounded wellbeing dashboard.

Recommendation **5A** further supports efforts to address the challenges around monetisation. Systematic evaluation of wellbeing impacts using a comprehensive assessment framework prevents social and ecological values from being reduced to financial “offsets.” This ensures that policy is informed not only by economic cost-benefit analysis, but also by qualitative and quantitative indicators of broad-based prosperity.

This approach lays the groundwork for a **holistic policy framework** in which wellbeing is the central focus, and financial efficiency is no longer the sole driver of decision-making.

# Practical translation to the Dutch context

## Data integration and wellbeing policy: Challenges and Opportunities

During the workshop, the need was raised to better integrate local wellbeing initiatives into the national wellbeing indicator: the *Monitor Brede Welvaart*. This requires an approach that embraces both **monofunctional** and **multifunctional** measurements. Monofunctional metrics often focus on one-dimensional outcomes such as economic profit and can be short-sighted in defining prosperity. This contrasts with multifunctional approaches, which acknowledge and integrate the complex interplay between ecological, social, and economic factors.

The process of broad-based measurement involves collecting a wide range of indicators that reflect what truly matters to those involved in achieving wellbeing goals. This approach translates the broad—and often interrelated—effects of policies or initiatives into measurable indicators. For example, this could include metrics for CO<sub>2</sub> absorption, heat regulation, or the social and relational benefits provided by an area like the Lutkemeer polder.

It can be useful to **translate these indicators into monetary values**. Alternatively, they can be used as policy objectives in themselves, as long as they are supported by sound scientific evidence and aligned with community priorities. Solid academic justification can help consolidate local indicators and connect them to national frameworks. With a well-designed dashboard, the impact of local initiatives on national policy can be made visible and measurable—supporting evidence-based decision-making that reflects the diverse realities of communities.

The expression of wellbeing and sustainability in financial terms remains a topic of debate. While it may be necessary for justifying policy, experts also acknowledge the importance of protecting broader values. To do this properly, **new methodologies and decision-making processes are required**. These should also incorporate mechanisms that **strengthen citizen participation**. It is crucial that decision-making is impartial; favouring one value over others can be counterproductive and may undermine public trust and engagement.

One specific point that deserves more emphasis is the **practical implementation** of policy. How can we ensure that policy intentions are better aligned with the needs of citizens and communities in practice? This goes beyond indicators and participatory processes and concerns the operational delivery of policy. Although broader values are increasingly recognised, it is not always clear how policymakers can be supported to move away from relying solely on financial business cases.

One recommendation could be to develop **new methodologies** that allow policymakers to quantify ecological and social values in ways comparable to economic calculations. Another approach is to use **economic frameworks that are more compatible with qualitative data**—such as systems thinking or complexity-based economic models.

It is also valuable to involve young people more actively in both policy design and implementation. This could be done through educational programmes, participatory tools, or specific grants for youth-led initiatives. The development of an educational toolkit (*lesbrief*)—mentioned as one of the deliverables—is a first step in this direction.





# Conclusions and recommendations

## Conclusions

*Bestaanszekerheid*—the assurance of a secure and dignified livelihood—is far from guaranteed when current policy practices are viewed through the lens of the wellbeing economy. A more multifunctional approach is essential for effective and inclusive policymaking. The concept of wellbeing encompasses multiple dimensions, and policy decisions must take into account not only economic, but also social and ecological values.

The cases of TEMMA and Lutkemeer illustrate the challenges related to bureaucracy, democratic legitimacy, and measurement in the context of wellbeing policy. The *Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide* offers practical tools for addressing these bottlenecks by placing participation and broad-based prosperity metrics at the centre of policymaking. We also provide some additional reflections specific to the Dutch context.

The cases studied within the WISER project largely align with the key principles of the *Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide*, but they also reveal that the wellbeing economy in the Netherlands is, in these instances, being shaped primarily through bottom-up initiatives. The expert workshop discussions underscored that such initiatives are not yet sufficiently supported by existing policy frameworks. One reason for this is that national dashboards such as the *Monitor Brede Welvaart* do not fully align with local realities. Wellbeing is still not measured comprehensively, which means the *Monitor* is often only partially used—and policy decisions continue to be driven primarily by financial business cases.

A striking conclusion from the workshop is that citizen-led initiatives appear to be adapting to wellbeing thinking—and the intentions behind the *Monitor Brede Welvaart*—more quickly than public governance structures at both national and local levels. As a result, government policy is currently not functioning as a driver of the wellbeing economy, but rather as a delaying factor. This is due in part to the slow and complex process of policy reform. Furthermore, there is a lack of strong links between participatory processes and actual decision-making, which means public input often fails to influence final outcomes.

## Recommendations

The insights described above lead to the following recommendations:

**Increase policy flexibility:** ensure more accessible and less bureaucratic structures so that initiatives like TEMMA and Lutkemeer can operate more effectively.

**Strengthen participatory policymaking:** citizens and stakeholders should be involved from the agenda-setting phase onwards, and policy should be developed through transparent processes. Participation should be an invitation to identify which local initiatives exist and which wellbeing indicators are most relevant.

**Integrate bottom-up and top-down policymaking:** bridge the gap between institutional policy structures and local civic initiatives to unlock the full potential of wellbeing-driven solutions emerging from communities.

**Data integration and the development of broad measurement tools:** a local wellbeing dashboard can help translate broad prosperity indicators into local policy terms, making them more aligned with people's lived experiences.

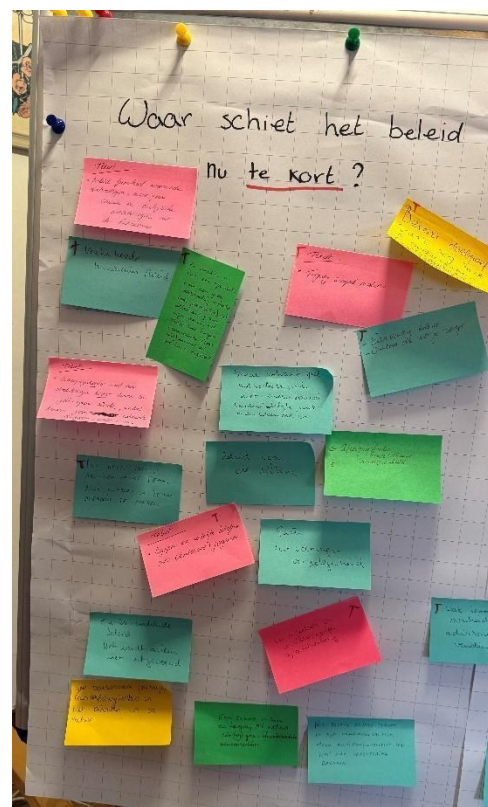
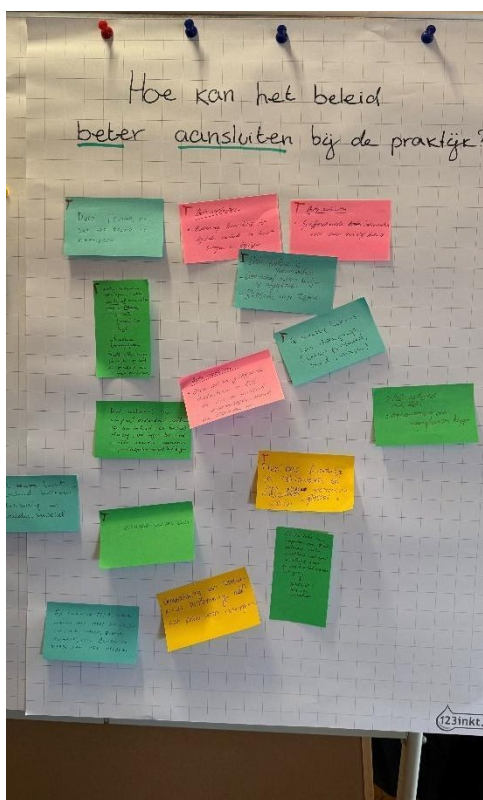
And finally, an additional insight:

Monetising social and ecological values remains a point of attention: tools such as *True Price* can help strike a balance between financial and non-financial values.

## Final thoughts

To truly embed the wellbeing economy within Dutch policymaking practice, the government must respond more proactively to the dynamics of bottom-up initiatives. This requires that participation processes become more genuinely democratic—with clear accountability mechanisms and stronger alignment with local wellbeing indicators.

Only through this shift in thinking and action will we, as a society, be able to make wellbeing a guiding principle in both policymaking and public decision-making.



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