

## Navigeren op het smalle pad naar brede welvaart:: Maatschappelijke transitie en ons poldermodel

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# Navigating the Narrow Road to Broad Prosperity

Social transition and our polder model



Inaugural address, delivered by  
Prof. Dr. Kim Putters



**Kim Putters** is University Professor of Broad Prosperity (Brede Welvaart) at Tilburg University and President of the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) since September 2022. From 2013 to 2022 he served as director of the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau), as well as Professor of Health Care Governance in a Changing Welfare State at the Erasmus School of Health Policy & Management, part of Erasmus University Rotterdam. From 2008 to 2013 he was Professor of Health Care Management at the same university. He earned his doctorate on issues of policy and governance in public-private settings, such as healthcare and the broader social domain, conducting research on innovations, social entrepreneurship, neighbourhood care and community-based work. In 2022, the Dutch Open University awarded Kim Putters an honorary doctorate in recognition of the appealing evidence-based way he makes complex social issues accessible to a wider audience. In 2023 he also received the Comenius Price. From 2003 to 2013, Putters was member of the Senate and its First Vice President from 2011. He also chaired the Dutch parliamentary delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Amongst others Putters is board member of The National Committee for 4 and 5 May, as well as member of the advisory boards of the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and the National Youth Council (NJR). Until October 2024 he also was vice-chair of the Oranje Fonds.

### **Explanation of the title:**

“The narrow road” is an expression often used in a moral or spiritual context. It refers to a path or way of life that is more difficult but considered virtuous or right. Jesus speaks of the “narrow way” in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 7, verses 13-14. “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” In these verses, Jesus emphasizes that the path to (eternal) life is hard to find and requires choosing the narrow road, as opposed to the broad road that leads to destruction. The narrow road is symbolic of following a righteous, often difficult path, requiring, for example, adherence to strict moral or ethical standards. This ties in with the message of my inaugural address that steering for broad prosperity is not “anything goes” but requires substantive choices and new forms of steering.

# Navigating the Narrow Road to Broad Prosperity

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Kim Putters

**Inaugural address,**

delivered in adaptive form during the public acceptance of the appointment as University Professor of Broad Prosperity at Tilburg University on November 4<sup>th</sup> 2024.

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# Navigating the Narrow Road to Broad Prosperity

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I. Introduction:  
the promise of  
broad prosperity

*Mr. Rector, colleagues and students, ladies and gentlemen,*

With this address, I officially accept the appointment of university professor at Tilburg University. Founded in 1927 as the Roomsche Katholieke Handelshoogeschool. In 1986, we became the Katholieke Universiteit Brabant (Catholic University of Brabant) and in 2003, Tilburg University. Today we are a University that continues in the footsteps of its founding fathers Dr. Hendrik Moller, Prof. Th. Goossens, and Prof. Martinus Cobbenhagen with a strong focus on humanities and social sciences. Started with the economics program, it became a multidisciplinary university with *Understanding Society* at its core. From that perspective and basic attitude, this University aims to look at social transition and our prosperity, but also contribute to change.

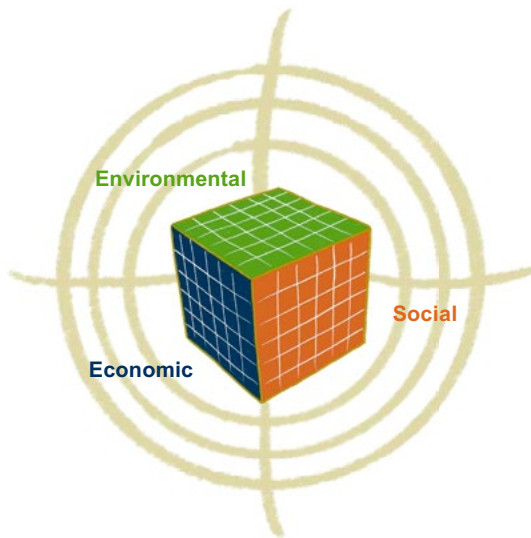
At a University with these Catholic roots, and with a Roman Catholic mother, I feel confident to begin my address with a quote from Pope Francis: “A real ecological policy always also is a social policy. The ecological debate should be about fairness and justice and should address the cry of planet earth as well as the cry of the poor.” According to the Pope, the challenge of integral and sustainable development requires a broad vision that encompasses all aspects of life; with a caring attitude toward creation, with particular attention to the poor and the exclusion of people. The quote from the encyclical *Laudatio Si* (2015) stresses his concerns about climate change and its consequences for planet Earth and for growing social inequality. Our economic and social systems tend to exacerbate the problems rather than help to solve them. He points to the need for change in behavior and of our systems with a more holistic approach to prosperity, with both environmental and societal justice at its center.

The Pope joins an ever-growing group of scientists, politicians, policymakers, civil society organizations, and citizens who are advocating a so-called “broad prosperity approach.” I am among them for several reasons. Before explaining these and indicating the questions I formulate (Section 1.3), I will reflect on the definition of broad prosperity that I use and the reason for a university professor in Tilburg to become involved in this period of time.

### **1.1 The multiple nature of (broad) prosperity**

Broad prosperity is a broad concept that includes social, environmental, and personal aspects of well-being in addition to economic factors when looking at

how our economy and society are doing. It takes into account factors such as health, education, environment, social relationships, personal safety, long-term well-being, and the role and significance of institutions in this regard (such as the community, schools and also government policies). The plural nature of broad prosperity thus lies in the connection between economic, environmental, and social dimensions at the individual level (personal situation) and at collective levels (f.e. society). This is being symbolized in figure A by the blue, green and red sides of the cube, that ideally all score in an optimal way on their side.



*Figure A.*

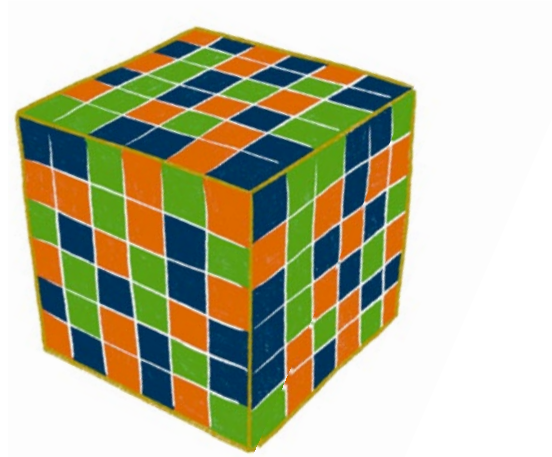
When one makes a case for a broader prosperity approach, it raises the question of what narrow prosperity is. There is much debate about how economic indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), per capita income and material wealth guide how we assess our standard of living. Narrow prosperity assumes a neoclassical view of humanity, where people value only material goods and their preferences are considered a given because they know for themselves what is good for them. The criticism is that material and financial aspects of well-being, such as income, consumption and property, are central but that non-economic factors that affect quality of life, such as health, environment and social cohesion, are not given sufficient weight, if any.

Broad prosperity is a relational concept because it assumes that people also value intangibles, such as connection with others and significance in life. In doing so, people identify with others, with culture and social norms playing a major role. Behavioral norms and preferences develop over time and are often transmitted by leaders. Preferences and beliefs are culturally shaped and help guide what is considered important and just (Vrooman, 2009). People can set aside their own (material) interest in that context. This ties in closely with the Pope's quote, but also with *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* by Adam Smith (1759). Broad prosperity is relational, meaning amongst people, in interconnectedness with nature and in collaboration. Bovenberg (2019) argues that economics is fundamentally collaborative, aka relational economics. Thus, prosperity should be considered broadly from that perspective.

Broad prosperity is a typically Dutch concept. Abroad, people often talk about well-being or beyond GDP. Broad prosperity is a multiple concept that must be looked at with economic, sociological, political, legal and, for example, philosophical lenses. National planning agencies, among others, are making efforts to bring those insights together, including also when I was director at the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP). This is not easy, I will come back to that in a moment. Broad prosperity can become a feel-good concept, who could object to it, but not everyone understands it in the same way, and everyone places their own accents. Meanwhile, it is embraced for steering by governments, businesses and many societal organizations and knowledge institutions.

Is steering (or navigating) for broad prosperity possible and desirable? What does it look like? A lot of scientific literature and policy documents focus on the question of what exactly broad prosperity is and how we can measure it, but the steering question that lies behind it is at least as important for the ultimate impact of that broader view of prosperity (Bovenberg and Van Geest, 2021; Vollebergh, 2022; PBL, 2023; SCP, 2023; CPB, 2023; SER, 2024; House of Representatives, letter 15-05-2024). Steering from the narrow view of prosperity is not and was not easy either. Steering for broad prosperity includes many more aspects of prosperity, further adding to the complexity. A better understanding of its potential impact requires conceptual development, also about the institutional context of steering for broad prosperity. Moreover, the question also is what degree of social and political consensus it requires because there is inherent tension in the trade-off between economic, ecological and social values, goals

and interests. There is a variety of (sometimes conflicting) political views on this. Figure B shows that in real life economic (blue), ecological (green) and social (red) values, goals and interests are being combined and exchanged all the time. How to deal with that? Or: how to rotate the cube?



*Figure B.*

As a university professor, I see it as my mission to connect, between disciplines, amongst academia, the policy world and the practice of companies and institutions, and amongst (inter)national, regional, and local levels of government. The Academic Collaborative Center for Governance and Management for Broad Prosperity is a place where all comes together. We work together with all Schools (faculties), societal partners, companies and governments on research into broad prosperity, including in education and in-depth meetings. The Tilburg Academic Collaborative Centers work together in co-creation in multiple-year projects, interdisciplinary and based on a common ambition (Position Paper Program for Broad Prosperity, 2023). This provides a unique environment with the opportunity to develop a framework for thought and action.

## **1.2 The relationship between broad prosperity and societal transition**

It is urgent to bring together a variety of insights about our prosperity and its distribution across society because much indicates that we live in an era of more fundamental changes in our economy and society affecting all people and nature (WRR, 2024; SER, 2024). As president of the Social and Economic Council

(SER), I am, therefore, constantly working to put the future of our economy and society on the agenda. Consider the impact of climate change, from flooding or water shortages to other extreme weather events such as heat and storms. But also digitalization and robotization, which are increasingly changing the way we communicate with each other, work, learn and do business. Ageing and migration are demographic developments with an impact on the labor force, namely a higher proportion of older people and more diversity of characteristics and needs (State Committee Demographic Developments 2050, 2024). More elderly people are working longer or need care and support. This also puts pressure on care personnel, especially in a structurally tight labor market where work and informal care have to be combined more often.

Finally, there are also geopolitical shifts between economic power blocs such as China and India, with uncertain positions of the EU and the United States, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and violent conflicts elsewhere in the world (such as in the Middle East). Against this background, the Netherlands must also adapt to the new, more fragmented, world order (WRR, 2024). Mario Draghi (2024), in a recent report on the future of the EU, argues that substantial investments in innovation and in the internal market are needed to strengthen geopolitical and economic positions for the broad prosperity of all Europeans.

The existence of these trends is not endorsed by everyone, but I distinguish facts from images and perceptions. In the chart below, I substantiate the trends with various research data. The answers to all these trends are not neutral, such as dealing with migration or with working hours or changing the pension age. This also requires political choices and a weighing of values (such as solidarity).

### *Box 1. Overview of transitions.*

- **Technological changes:** The rise of artificial intelligence, automation and digital technologies is changing the way we work, communicate and live. This technological revolution has major implications for employment, education and privacy. The demand for robots is increasing, with three times as many robots expected to be used in an industry, such as construction, by 2030. The number of routine tasks is decreasing sharply. Some jobs will disappear, others will change and new jobs will be created.
- **Climate Change:** There is a growing sense of urgency regarding climate change and the need for sustainable solutions as well as dissent, denial and anti-sentiment. The 1.5 degree warming, however, no longer seems to be reversible. Since 1970, there has been 69% loss of biodiversity (such as fish, birds, mammals, reptiles, plants). Targets such as 55% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction in 2030 and climate neutrality in 2050 are unlikely to be met. Further commitment to circular economy can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by as much as 30% and reduce our dependency on products and raw materials from other countries (such as China).
- **Political and geopolitical shifts:** Around the world, there are shifts in political power dynamics, populist movements and changes in international relations. Trust in politics is under severe pressure. Africa and Asia are increasing in population; Europe, China, and Latin America are decreasing. Economically, Europe faces great challenges, and with a company like ASML, the Netherlands plays an important role in the EU and worldwide. One third of the Dutch economy depends on international trade. The dependence on countries like China for so-called bottleneck products and raw materials has increased from 14 to 20% and is continuing to grow.
- **Economic changes:** Globalization, changing trade relations and economic uncertainties (such as the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic) are affecting the global economy and national economies. For example, the labor force will hardly grow (see demographics) and labor market shortages are structural. The investment and business climate in the Netherlands is under pressure due to high regulatory pressure and inadequate facilities (such as the power grid, housing and education), among other things. At the same time, there is also resistance to internationalization and pressure to be more domestically oriented (nationalism).
- **Demographic change:** towards 2040, the population will grow to nearly 20 million people; this summer we reached the mark of 18 million. The proportion of people over 65 will be approximately 25% of the population. Life expectancy continues to rise to 86 years, so we live longer. However, 54% of the elderly will experience dementia. This has a lot of impact on healthcare, social security and the labor market shortages. Migration also remains an important factor in population growth with, among other things, impact on social cohesion.

- **Social change:** There is an increasing focus on social justice, diversity and inclusiveness. About 800,000 people in the Netherlands structurally live in poverty and 200,000 children grow up in poverty. Inequality in opportunities for learning, getting a job and a social network is structurally determined by educational training, among other things. Academically educated people live about 14 years longer in good health (and experience about 5 years more of life expectancy). Although the Netherlands have a well-educated population, it scores worse on educational performance compared to earlier days (including math and writing in PISA scores). The (labor) participation of people with disabilities also lags behind. Thus, inclusion is not progressing everywhere and for everyone.

*Sources: CPB, 2023; PBL, 2023, CBS, 2024; Staatscommissie Demografische Ontwikkelingen 2050, 2024; SER 2024; SCP, 2024.*

All of these changes are long-term in nature and already present before they were prioritized on the political and societal agenda. They tend to go step by step, but with profound and sometimes shocking consequences (think of AI). The way we work, do business, care and learn is changing, as is the place and time where some do their work. This can suddenly feel like a crisis, especially when one's own position and rights are at stake. Yet, crisis policy is not an answer to transitions. A crisis is usually sudden and sometimes requires unorthodox measures, think of the COVID-19 crisis. However, there may be a latent crisis that is neither sudden nor simply disappearing (Overmans et al., 2023). A transition requires multi-year thinking and a cohesive approach by the government, business community and society.

It requires much adaptability and resilience, while many already experience limited grasp of the consequences for their own position and future. The divisions between people who experience opportunities or, on the contrary, an accumulation of problems are persistent. They can be traced back to structural differences in income, education, employment, and for example, health (SCP, 2014; 2021; 2024). People with more education and networks have more access to good work, better health and a brighter future than those who do not. Inequality in opportunities in all of these aspects of quality of life is substantial. Academics live up to about 5 years longer than the practically educated and experience up to 14 more healthy years of life. The latter group also experiences more job and income insecurity. Policies of governments and companies hardly seem to reverse such developments. This leads to declining institutional trust and social unease

(SCP, 2024; Edelman Trust Barometer, 2024). Also during my time at the SCP, we often pointed this out: broad prosperity is distributed in an unequal way, which means we are also talking about a distribution issue (see 3.2).

The promise of steering for broad prosperity is that, in the process, a (more) sustainable and inclusive economy and society can be realized with a fair distribution across society. This requires adaptability of economic and social systems, people and organizations. However, the reflex is often to stick with what we have always done (this is the way we do it). This can be explained in several ways. For example, by a limited view of what can or should be done differently, and how. There are also often established (vested) interests that prefer to keep things as they are because there is perceived benefit from the current situation. Sometimes people also think that all the changes are not progressing that quickly, leading to denial and conspiracy thinking. However, Rotmans (2023) advocates the acceleration of transitions wherever possible, so that the transformation of our systems and behavior are enforced. In all, I see three issues that complicate steering for broad prosperity in times of transition, and which call for a multidisciplinary approach.

### *I Disconnections between economy, ecology, and society*

The way our economy is set up for growth leads to reproduction (of the same), including the inequalities outlined. There is a growing awareness that some groups in society are structurally left behind and that, for too long, too little weight has been given to solidarity with new generations and the fair distribution of profits and expenses (Oxfam Novib, 2024; Stiglitz, 2024). For example, in choices regarding retirement, climate and education. Krzrnaric (2022) calls this a lack of good ancestry.

This has also been reinforced by the meritocratic idea that success and failure are mainly your own merits. As a result, the fear of falling is substantial. There is fear of falling in social mobility due to insecure employment contracts, discrimination and the perception that the children will not have a better future (Janssen and Putters, 2022; SCP, 2023). There is also frustration and sadness due to the lack of upward mobility, which is primarily seen as ones' own fault of lack of effort.

Moreover, our way of doing business and living together has crossed planetary boundaries. Resources, energy, materials and, increasingly, also human capital are not infinite and available at low cost. We leave a substantial footprint elsewhere in the world (PBL, 2023). Much of our production capacity has moved to low-wage countries over the past century, called offshoring. For the sake of Europe's strategic autonomy and security, which has been put at risk due to these dependencies on labor or raw materials, we must become more self-sufficient in areas such as energy and medicine. A more circular economy can change production chains and enforce our self-sufficiency, with the region being the scale of action more often than before (Raspe, 2024). It illustrates the quest to restore connections amongst people, planet and profit, amongst economic, ecological, and social dimensions of prosperity. Including safety and strategic autonomy.

There is an increasing discussion in the international literature about the need to focus on well-being or, in other words, to look at prosperity more broadly and relationally. Stiglitz (2024) talks about the question of "why capitalism failed" and argues that we need to put the values of the "good society" more central. Annett (2022) sees dealing with increasing inequality as a challenge for all economic activity and puts "ethics" at the center. "Inequality undermines economic growth and peace," according to Annett. He speaks of "the end of old economy" and that we are now faced with the choice of moving toward a new economic model in which connections are strengthened between groups in society (bridging the dividing lines) and between humanity and nature. Balkenende and Buijs (2023) refer to this as "capitalism reconnected" with a plea for a strong social market economy, in which markets are regulated by governments securing sustainability, social justice and safety.

## *II Public interests at stake: uncertainties*

The transitions outlined also affect the definition of what public interest is and how it should be safeguarded. For example, what do digitalization and AI mean for working conditions and social security? What does robotization mean for the quality of care and education? How to deal with the disappearance of old jobs and the creation of new ones, as well as access to lifelong development and job-to-job support? How to pursue innovation? The government bears an important (constitutional) responsibility for care, housing, and social security, for example. However, not only the government is responsible for public interests, for example when it comes to fighting inequality and climate change. This requires shared

efforts and responsibility with the business community and society. Corporate social responsibility, therefore, goes beyond the wishes of shareholders and short-term profits. Corporate interests, employee interests and public interests are intertwined (Borghouts and Freese, 2022).

Social transition forces us not only to stay sharp on what public interest is and who is responsible for it but also to connect organizational goals to it. This sometimes requires redefining what public interests are, such as concerning the access to lifelong learning services, but also setting up new facilities or opportunities for innovation. Here, Philippen (2024) points at “transition risks,” for example, that in making sectors sustainable, problems arise in access to the energy power network or due to the lack of sufficient available personnel. A shared-value economy is needed, in which government and businesses cooperate with civil society on the basis of a broader view of prosperity, including the transition risks or new commons involved (Porter and Kramer, 2011). This is not simple. Values such as quality, efficiency and justice often clash, requiring trade-offs and political choices. Steering for broad prosperity requires an understanding of this complexity and examining which institutional conditions enforce or hinder this.

As a professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) and director at SCP, I saw similar issues with the decentralizations in healthcare, social security and at the labor market. Health, care and good work are all part of broad prosperity, but by stressing vulnerable citizens’ own responsibility too much, the public interest of social protection and accessible services is jeopardized. The movement from a protective to an “activating” welfare state, in which people first have to take the initiative themselves, was partly based on an unrealistic proposition, for example, due to working limitations of people with disabilities or due to the consequences of living in poverty (SCP, 2022). Their uncertainty increased about whether sufficient care is available even at times when it is needed, and thus uncertainty about the realization of public interests. Currently, digitalization and climate change are also influencing the interplay between government and citizens, including the question of what public interest is, what common goods are and who bears what responsibility.

### *III Governance model under pressure*

Considerations regarding broad prosperity go beyond the traditional socioeconomic structures through which we make decisions. With a variety of stakeholders pursuing and representing more or less institutionalized economic, ecological and societal interests. Do people experience shared interests, an equal dialogue and constructive cooperation? Can we believe each other in a world of fake news? Is steering for broad prosperity sufficiently evidence-based? Uncertainties and mistrust concerning steering and governance can lead to strengthening the status quo as well as the distrust. When this is coupled with increasingly strong images about what is right and wrong and what is fact or fiction (for example, about growth or degrowth; see 3.2), it can lead to a power struggle over who sets the course toward the future. Polarized "we-them" thinking or "me and myself versus the rest" is lurking when one thinks mainly of one's own interest (partial interest of the group) and when the interest of the other (or nature) is not taken into account or is even weighed negatively (Bovenberg, 2019; Kramer, 2024).

Negotiated results are more often contested in politics and society. The legitimacy of choices is partly influenced by the representativeness of who is at the table. Some feel unrepresented or underrepresented. Established parties also take a strategic approach to what they can accomplish together or alone. Behavioral patterns do not change overnight either. Nationally and internationally, the narrow view of prosperity is strongly embedded in the way decisions are made and accounted for. Financial-economic institutions and knowledge sources dominate. Economics is the scientific discipline with the most influence on and in government and corporate policy. These established interests and positions (including those of science) tend to be stronger in times of transition to transformation than the interests and positions of sick patients, start-up entrepreneurs or disciplines at a distance from decision-making, with the risk that innovation and sustainability fail to materialize and that inequality increases rather than decreases. The interests of the next generation are not automatically at the top of the agenda as well due to short-term orientation (sometimes "survival"). The impact (of failure to act) in the long term is often underestimated.

The business community is undertaking many initiatives aimed at broad prosperity, but is it enough? For example, there is much discussion about the role of large corporations in environmental damage and the large income disparities

created by rewards (especially at the top). There is tension between what shareholders and stakeholders find desirable, how decision making and financial supervision are done. The broader long-term effects of corporate choices on broad prosperity are not always seen by shareholders. Recently, some companies made a step backwards when it comes to sustainability and societal responsibility (Cable, 2024; Dekker and Persson, 2024). There are also varying views in politics about the relationship between economic development, nature and issues such as social inequality. Moreover, the government itself regularly fails in implementing policies. People get stuck in regulations, from getting a permit up to healthcare provision. Unfair treatment, as in the childcare allowance scandal, puts additional pressure on trust in the Dutch government.

If we also look at the societal field (civil society), we see that it has become more fragmented and highly regulated by government policies and supervision, making it difficult to respond to what is needed, for example, in a region, to maintain and foster broad prosperity. New citizen collectives for energy supply can be promising but require a lot in terms of bureaucratic skills. Moreover, the question is who participates in them and whether it does not deepen societal divisions if they mainly profit people with more education.

Government, businesses, social institutions and citizens actually need to work together. The Dutch polder model stands for the governance model of the consultative economy, which seeks answers to socio-economic issues through consultation and consensus building. The government shares power with societal organizations, such as employers' associations and trade unions, which serve the interests of their constituencies through representative and democratically organized bodies. Tjeenk Willink (2002; 2018) refers to this as social democracy alongside our political democracy. The developments described above make it clear that this institutional arrangement does not always and automatically lead to broadly supported outcomes. Some advocate for further democratization because not all stakeholders have an equal position at the table or because the voice of nature is missing (Den Outer, 2023; Van Reijbrouck, 2024; Elzinga, 2024). Rotmans (2017) calls the democratic transition "the mother of all transitions." Others advocate for more government control and corporate social responsibility (SER, 2024). Or all in combination.

The urgency of giving direction together is great in an increasingly fragmented and digitalized society, which sometimes also seems to be falling apart. This requires connection, not only between goals and interests, but also with each other. It is a search for what binds us (Van der Vorst, 2023). I see steering for broad prosperity as a possible answer to this, but it is not self-evident. Our way of steering is increasingly under discussion. New ways of steering and governance may only have a positive impact on broad prosperity if actors want to adjust their behavior, if they are capable of doing so (for example, with knowledge and skills or power) and if they have the opportunity to do so (Borghouts and Freese, 2022). In other words, steering for broad prosperity depends on its institutional context and on the options for institutional change.

### **1.3 Consequences for our social contract: many questions to ask**

My ambition is to get to the bottom of steering for broad prosperity from multiple disciplines and practical experiences, across fields of expertise. In doing so, I aim to contribute to an impactful knowledge community, which realizes both knowledge development and societal impact. With this I also aim to contribute to a just transition and a fair distribution of broad prosperity, together with my colleagues at the Tilburg Academic Collaborative Center.

In my first inaugural address in Rotterdam (2009), I previously studied the dynamics of hybrid healthcare governance, in which public, private and professional values, goals and interests converge and what it requires of the moral compass and institutional awareness of leaders to steer for justice and solidarity, but also what this requires of the interplay with governments, societal stakeholders and patients. In my second inaugural address in Rotterdam (2017), I explored what this means in a context in which you have to break through compartmentalized institutions, such as those of healthcare and the labor market, to promote people's quality of life. After all, life consists of more than just receiving care. We need to look more broadly. In my role as university professor of broad prosperity I build on these experiences.

*Where is steering for broad prosperity to be found and seen?*

More insight is needed into what broad prosperity means and what indicators we should be looking at. The societal transitions increase the urgency to understand the connections and trade-offs between economic, ecological and social values

and interests. There is still much work to be done to properly map these and monitor the (regional) distribution of broad prosperity. Fellow professor Otto Raspe elaborates on the focus of broad prosperity and its measurement in his inaugural address.

The promise of steering for broad prosperity is a more sustainable and inclusive economic development and a just distribution. The promise is that a broad prosperity perspective helps us to achieve collective preferences with rules of the game that strengthen the effectiveness and legitimacy of choices into the future. This is rather complex. Steering for broad prosperity conceals differences in views on its content and desirability, as well as differences in power positions. Consider various views on climate change and the position of vested interests that slowly adjust their behavior or their business models. This puts more pressure on institutional trust.

*What does steering for broad prosperity in times of transition mean for democracy and governance?*

Steering for broad prosperity thus touches the essence of our so-called social contract, a concept I use in the spirit of philosophers such as Locke, Rousseau, and Rawls. With the social contract, I mean the set of formal, informal and sometimes unspoken agreements, rules and expectations amongst government, businesses and citizens, which is based on sharing power in exchange for freedom and (social) protection. In the time of the philosophers, this was about citizens yielding power to an absolute sovereign or the community in exchange for security and protection. In our time, it is about sharing (social) risks and power among the government, businesses, civil society organizations, and citizens in the democratic rule of law. With freedom, justice and solidarity as guiding values, with everyone willing to accept the outcomes of this interplay (Putters, 2017; Van Bavel, 2023). Does that still work? Traditional structures are challenged, but change is slow and clashes with vested interests and positions. This fuels a “performance crisis” and can reinforce polarization. What institutional change is needed?

To answer that question, it is necessary to understand the institutional context of the way we have organized our society and economy and how we make choices. In this address, I emphasize that context of steering for broad prosperity.

This is constantly changing: European policy has more and more influence, digitalization creates more decentralized possibilities, also across borders. It is international, European, national, regional and local, with companies, citizens and social entrepreneurs. It is multi-level governance. Moreover, the governance of broad prosperity is not just about effective coordination between policy domains. Integrating policies, developing robust measurement tools and ensuring inclusive decision-making are also a matter of culture and behavioral change, moral compass, and knowledge development. It assumes a degree of consensus, supported vision and leadership.

I will seek locations of steering for broad prosperity to deepen our understanding of these institutional dynamics (Chapter 2) and to get hold of workable elements in a time of transitions. In doing so, I aim to contribute to options for dealing with these transitions in a just way (Chapter 3). This urges for cooperation with many disciplines, as well as substantial exchanges with policy practices. At the end of this address, I will discuss the meaning of steering for broad prosperity for our social contract and our governance model (the “polder model”), also the subject of my last Rotterdam inaugural address and many publications and lectures I delivered in various roles (Chapter 4).

## 2. The long road to change

In the first period at my chair, I had conversations with colleagues from different Schools to find out how they view broad prosperity. Through the Academic Collaborative Center, I did the same with our societal stakeholders. As SER chair, I am also an actor in this landscape myself when it comes to promoting “good” entrepreneurship and discussing socio-economic policy with politicians. On the basis of these experiences and insights, among others, I arrive in Chapter 3 at a framework for steering for broad prosperity. First, I outline the search that has been going on for a long time, and which teaches us several lessons on the path towards broad prosperity.

### 2.1 Quest for new answers

In the late 1960s, the Club of Rome presented a different way of looking at economic development: more sustainable and within planetary boundaries. In the Netherlands, in the years that followed, the SER formulated a sustainability agenda, earlier than politics. This faded somewhat into the background due to the major economic and unemployment problems of the 1980s. Yet, it was prioritized again with the Energy Agreement (2013), the Climate Agreement (2019), and numerous recommendations on sustainable development and corporate social responsibility, with which the employers organizations, labor unions and NGO’s influenced the agenda within the SER, but also the political agenda.

Criticism of existing economic growth models emerged in some famous publications during this period, such as the Club of Rome report *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) and *Our Common Future* by the Brundtland Commission (Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The work of the Stiglitz Commission (Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress) became an important benchmark in the debate regarding human and environmental damage due to the economy’s focus on the GDP. Environmental costs and societal issues had to be included in economic development trade-offs (Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi, 2009). The economic viewpoint should no longer focus that much on general production output, but more on income and consumption. In his most recent work, Stiglitz (2024) also outlines the risks of social inequality and climate change for institutional trust and democracy.

Internationally, the UN Human Development Index was developed and established in 1990, the UN Millennium Goals in 2002, and the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. These are guiding our thinking about broad prosperity on a global scale. This framework should help countries integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions into their policies and with the implementation of climate agreements. To achieve this, the Dutch government has set goals such as a 55% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction by 2030 and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. All countries have adopted the SDGs and use them as a reference point.

In the meantime, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) developed indicators of well-being and promoted policy practices beyond GDP growth, under the eloquent title *How's life*. This provided countries with guidelines and tools to integrate broader well-being indicators into policies. The Conference of European Statisticians (2014), of which the Dutch CBS is an active member, among others, added that the dimension of space and time should be included more. After all, current prosperity may come at the expense of prosperity elsewhere and of future generations. Therefore, insight is needed into the trade-offs between “people, planet and profit”, between regions and between generations (and the considerations involved).

From a European perspective, the Green Deal has been a strong driver more recently. The Environment Social Governance - framework (ESG) focuses on corporate responsibility for the effects of their actions on people and the environment. The Corporate Sustainable Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) are part of this and include reporting and acting according to corporate social responsibility regulations. It enforces transparency of the impact of economic activities in the production chain on people, their social circumstances and on the environment. Thus, it is all about the responsibility of companies to account for their actions more broadly than their own organizations' profits.

Recent European legislation requires much effort and commitment in practice to prevent the focus from remaining on what directly affects stakeholders (*single materiality*), while the broader societal impact of economic activities must also be recognized and addressed (*double materiality*). In the Netherlands, employers, trade unions and NGOs have been working on this together in cooperation with the Social-Economic Council (SER). They agree on a broader view of prosperity and to act accordingly through sector agreements and cooperation in the

production chain. In practice, cooperation and perseverance are needed, even if there is (to be) (further) legislation. The OECD has recently praised this Dutch approach, particularly for its multi-stakeholder approach and the commitment it generates in the chain between companies, employee organizations and NGO's, together with a supportive government (OECD, 2023).

Employers and employees had already included broad prosperity in their visions, such as in the *NL Next Level* strategy report (2016) and the *Ondernemen voor brede welvaart* update report (2012; 2023) by VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland. Among the trade unions, the fight against societal inequality and for greater sustainability have paralleled each other. Together with the independent Crown-appointed members in the SER, they increasingly turned these efforts into advisory reports and policy proposals to politicians and the government. In 2023, the SER eventually also adjusted the goals of this cooperation in the “polder”. Since 1992 promoting the greatest possible economic growth and the fullest possible labor participation were set as its goals. From 2023 this was replaced by promoting broad prosperity. This now is the basis of the SER future vision, *Perspectief op brede welvaart 2040* (Perspective on Broad Prosperity 2040), which was adopted in 2024 (see Section 2.2).

In Dutch politics, the broad prosperity perspective has been more prominently on the agenda since 2016, even though the government's responsibilities for housing, care, social security and a good living environment, for good reasons, were already constitutionally established as early as the 1980s. In 2016, a temporary House of Representatives Committee led by Rik Grashoff (now alderman in Tilburg) presented a report on the importance of adopting a broad prosperity perspective into government policies, which was the impetus for the Broad Prosperity Monitor, published annually by the CBS since 2018, together with the yearly update of the implementation of the SDGs. The monitor offers a “photo” of a multitude of broad prosperity indicators, but yet no insight into the effects of policies. More insight into the meaning of policy interventions thus is crucial.

Therefore, tentative initiatives followed to improve the embedding of broad prosperity in the policy and budget cycle. Since 2018, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) have

been advising the government to develop a system that permanently puts broad prosperity at the center of the budget cycle (amongst others Reudink cs., 2022). The 2024 Budget Memorandum was titled “budgeting for broad prosperity”. Meanwhile, municipalities and provinces also develop likewise activities in their context, with Friesland and North Brabant using broad prosperity as the basis for their coalition programs. In our province, Het Pon & Telos developed a broad prosperity model for research and policy since 2018. Rabo Research and Utrecht University enact a Broad Prosperity Indicator with a regional focus (see also Raspe, 2024). TNO developed a model for steering for broad prosperity that takes into account the spread of factors that affect people’s well-being, also considering the impact of policies (TNO, 2019; Steen, 2022). All initiatives remain work in progress because both the indicators to be used (and their measurability) and the impact of policy interventions require further study.

This made an integrated assessment of the political parties’ election programs in 2023 by the planning agencies – a typical Dutch way to offer a reality check on future plans of politicians concerning f.e. finances and other possible societal and environmental effects - difficult/limited (as did the limited time available to do so). Partly, such insight was offered, but the trade-offs between economic, environmental and social issues could not always be mapped out exactly yet. The Rutte IV government did formulate the ambition in the coalition agreement to promote broad prosperity, but at that time the SCP (2022), among others, commented that mainly economic, spatial and environmental choices were made visible and that the social dimension was not sufficiently addressed. Following policies were corrections in that sense, for example by integrating its social effects in areas such as housing and energy (for example, when it affects poverty).

The policy program of the Schoof administration and its proposals for allocating the Budget in the year 2024-2025 were analyzed by three planning agencies together for the first time, mid-2024, from the perspective of broad prosperity. Amongst others they stressed the importance of the long term effects of budget cuts on education and research for economic development, innovation and social inequality (CPB, PBL and SCP, 2024).

Also in the High Level Advisory Committee for the Budget (SBR), the committee that advises a new government on the rules for allocating the national budget, a broader analysis of broad prosperity is being pursued for some years now. The

*SBR* has included broad prosperity in its advices since 2017. It advised steering for “stable and consistent financial policy, even in times of turbulence, which contributes to broad prosperity but also requires financial buffers” (Studiegroep Begrotingsruimte, 2020). An important and remaining point of discussion is which concepts, indicators and measurement methods are reliable and useful to measure the impact of steering on broad prosperity. A recurring discussion also is how broad prosperity indicators can be objectively set and used, especially if they cannot be measured properly (or when this seems or is assumed to be the case). Here science has an important role to play, because this cannot be enacted solely by consultants. Concepts of justice and solidarity can and should be put on the table with scientific arguments and evidence. Methods of measurement can and must be improved. More common language is needed. In all situations politics also has to make choices, which is the case with the selection and use of each indicator. Steering by *GDP* also remains a political choice!

In 2023, the Council of State advised to provide the national budget with an integrated broad prosperity analysis replacing the review of numerous disconnected indicators. At the start of a new government, the Council would have liked to see an initial policy memorandum on broad prosperity that takes coherence as its starting point and formulates plans to break through disconnected policy domains and organizational silo's. It is the only way to tackle issues concerning sustainability and societal inequality. Unfortunately, this has not (yet) happened with the Schoof government, which does not make it any less urgent. Moreover, the Netherlands Court of Audit intends to measure government performance against the yardstick of broad prosperity. So, the institutions are moving in that direction, but there are questions regarding the measurement of policy effects and the ways to steer on broad prosperity. Also, there are political differences of opinion regarding issues of sustainability and inequality that influence its impact.

In addition to business, politics, governments, the EU and the UN, groups of citizens also become more vocal on the ambitions for broad prosperity. Consider the voice of *Milieudefensie* and *the Stichting Natuur en Milieu* providing input into the SER-activities. A movement like *Extinction Rebellion* (XR) is also present in public debate and protest, demanding much more efforts from companies and governments. It leads to resistance and demonstrations. Lawsuits are being filed for companies' and governments' negligence towards people and nature.

Consumer behavior is also changing, such as flying less and eating less meat, though these changes go slowly and for some with feelings of paternalism and imposed social norms. This can increase antagonisms (and us-versus-them thinking) and it can also cause retreating or reluctant reactions by companies.

This overview is far from exhaustive, nor is it intended to be. It shows that many actors in science, policy and politics, business, and in the social field, national and international, are advocating and/or exploring a broader approach to welfare. It has taken a long time, with a substantial incubation period since the Club of Rome, but scientifically and administratively a more common language and awareness is emerging that, in a period of transitions, more adequate answers must be offered to balance *people, planet and profit*. In Chapter 3, I therefore elaborate on a framework of thought and action outlining the path to broad prosperity, with choices to be made along the way that can help with this.

## **2.2 The SER and broad prosperity: interlude on a personal experience**

How has this landed in the SER? The SER will have its 75 years existence in 2025 as part of the Dutch consultative economy. It was founded in 1950 to help building up the Dutch economy and society after the Second World War. In 1945, already, the *Stichting van de Arbeid (Foundation of Labor)* was founded, in which employers' organizations and labor unions worked (and still do) together in the public interest of a strong economy and jobs (with f.e. agreements on wages and pension schemes). In the SER, together with independent experts, (Crown appointed) they dealt (and still do) with the long term economic and societal changes (and advise government). Over the years, the SER has constantly evolved or reinvented itself. Starting in a corporatist system with connections to society through hierarchically organized sectors, including through foundations and associations of f.e. employers and employees, to an institution in a much more fragmented world with also new and more loosely coupled partnerships. Through digitalization, more and more stakeholders will (be able to) come forward as they have or gain access to information and opportunities to use their voice. Steering for broad prosperity takes place in that context and leads to (partly new) steering questions.

At least two aspects make the position and role of the SER interesting and relevant for steering for broad prosperity. First, the agenda-setting function and second the institutionalization of steering for broad prosperity. Looking at the

first, I have just outlined the role of the SER in putting sustainability and equity on the agenda after the Club of Rome came with its famous report, but also in recent periods on energy and climate agreements. Nowadays we see agenda setting on topics such as diversity, women at the top, and preventive healthcare. The SER can do this from its unique position in the polder and towards politics, although (political) susceptibility to the message of course has to exist. Recently, as mentioned before, the SER has also changed its own goals in terms of broad prosperity, and its vision for the future of the economy is based on this. That process is summarized in the box below with a timeline for the most recent period 2022-2024, concisely outlining my own experiences.

*Box. The SER and broad prosperity 2022-2024*

- September 2022–October 2023: debate with stakeholders and constituencies on socio-economic policies in times of transition and the meaning of broad prosperity.
- October 2023: modification of the SER goals (which were focused on maximum economic growth and labor participation). The new objective: *To promote broad prosperity in which society, economy, and environment are in balance, here and now, later, and elsewhere. We do this by working together to promote entrepreneurship and decent work; and to promote sustainable growth and an inclusive society with a balanced distribution of income.*
- April 2023–December 2023: in-depth lectures with experts on the major transitions in the economy and society. Goal: fact finding and sharing knowledge.
- December 2023: adoption of Participation Guide as part of the program “participation and representation,” Goal: learn from previous experiences of involving (new) stakeholders (such as dialogue tables; committees) and explore new participative forms (such as citizens’ councils).
- April 2023–January 2024: the “Economy of the Future” vision report was formulated with all branch chairs and union leaders, with which personal commitment was requested to jointly arrive at a vision of the economy of the future, reasoning from broad prosperity. In January 2024, the vision report “Perspective on broad prosperity: building the economy of the future” was adopted.
- January 2024: adoption of the advisory report on “Sustainable Industry”, which translated the vision on a broad prosperity economy for the manufacturing sector.
- January 2024: adoption of the advisory report on “Growing up, living, and working in a healthy way: towards a structural health approach and combatting socio-economic health inequalities”, for which steering for broad prosperity in relation to people’s health was applied.

- January 2024: the future vision, relevant recommendations regarding industry, lifelong development, and health were sent to the “*informateur*” for the purpose of the cabinet formation that took place after the November 22, 2024 elections.
- September 2024: adoption of the advisory report in which steering for broad prosperity is applied to labor market changes in sectors like agriculture, water management and nature preservation.
- November 2024: signing of the future model for sector agreements for International Corporate Social Responsibility (*IMVO*) supported by the SER.

The SER pleads for a social market economy based on broad prosperity. This is not a fighting economy and race to the bottom in the competition for natural and financial resources, and manpower. It means bridging contradictions and connecting values and interests such as sustainable growth, earning capacity and strong investment climate, good social protection, and socioeconomic security. For example, we do not want any ‘working poor’ by 2040, but we do want a circular economy that respects planetary boundaries and creates earning models by then.

This touches on the second aspect, namely the institutional context of steering for broad prosperity. A strong consultative economy (*Rhineland model 2.0*) requires strong agreements between government, employers’ organizations and unions, on work and working conditions, on greater job and income security, better access to education during lifetime, and possibilities for combining work, learning and (informal) care. As well is the case for possibilities for innovation and socially responsible entrepreneurship. The perspective of broad prosperity led the SER to aspire to strengthen the social market economy as an institutional arrangement.

This raises a number of relevant issues. First, the ongoing issue of legitimacy. Employers’ organizations and unions represent a large part of the entrepreneurs and employees in the Netherlands, but in general, the civil society has weakened and has become more diverse. It has taken a long time, but self-employed professionals got membership of the council within the existing delegations of employers (VNO-NCW, MKB Nederland and LTO), employees (FNV, CNV and VCP) and within the independent group of Crown-appointed members. More and more parties are also participating within the advisory processes and other SER-activities regardless of whether they have a seat on the council. For years, the *Stichting Natuur en Milieu* has participated in the SER Commission on Sustainable Development as an advisory member. Since 2016 also a Youth

Platform is involved in the SER-activities, representing en broad range of Dutch youth organizations. In the end, employers and unions bear (and feel) responsibility for the agreements made in the SER. As a result, their influence on the recommendations is considerable. The institutional arrangement is thus responsive, to a certain extent, but it is not responsive to everyone, and new stakeholders take different positions within the arena.

Second, the relationship between politics and polder is relevant. The SER, together with the *Stichting van de Arbeid* (*Labor Foundation*), is part of our consultative economy and, historically, of societal democracy in the Netherlands. Called, the “polder”. Internationally, the model is unique in that sense that it is tripartite. Independent members (experts) are appointed by the Crown and work with trade unions and employers’ organizations based on their knowledge and experience. The Netherlands Bank (*DNB*) and the *CPB* have permanent seats on the council. The SER also cooperates with the other planning agencies, universities, universities of applied sciences, and knowledge organizations. Knowledge gathering for consultation and consensus building does and can strengthen the authority of SER recommendations.

In the midst of the transitions I have described, it takes a lot of mutual contact and trust to maintain authority. Politics sometimes seems to see the SER primarily as a gathering of lobbying interests and personal gains while it also is an arena where public interest is discussed and weighed. When I took office as SER president, there was no organized consultation between the group of leaders in the polder and the cabinet government anymore, as was the case in earlier years. This is being re-established again because it starts with seeing, knowing and understanding each other.

Third, there also is a governance issue. Parties with nomination rights in the SER are democratic associations whose boards are accountable to their members for the agreements and compromises they make. That works differently in the organizations of some of the NGOs, not having these democratic structures. Broad prosperity requires broad participation, but how can you organize that properly on the basis of equal partnership? Against this background, the SER explores forms of participation and representation and searches for a renewal of the working method that is in line with broad prosperity issues in an era of transitions, such as with forms of design thinking and the involvement of artists.

Diversity of knowledge (partners) also helps to contribute to new ideas and creativity.

Fourth, the SER mainly plays a role at the national level while steering for broad prosperity also has a clear international, regional and local dimension. It is multi-level. The SER is a member of the European and International Association of SER-like organizations and has connections with a number of regional SER organizations in the Northern provinces, Overijssel and Brabant. Relations also exist with the SERs on the islands in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. Europe has many relationships between employers' organizations (for example in Business Europe) and trade unions (in ETUC), but the so-called social dialogue on economic and labor market issues is especially important. In that social dialogue, employers and unions can influence European legislation (such as minimum wages or teleworking). In the Netherlands, however, employers' organizations and unions traditionally find each other faster and easier than is the case at the European level, where we were told to have a unique and valuable cooperative model during a recent SER-visit to Brussels. At the regional level, many developments with an impact on broad prosperity come together regarding, for example, business activity, the labor market, education and the use of space (see Otto Raspe, 2024). So it is an ongoing quest for the SER how it should relate to these different levels (institutionally).

In short, the rules of entry into the arena of the consultative economy are highly institutionalized but show some adaptability as witnessed by the introduction of representatives of the self-employed professionals in all groups within the SER Council. Traditions and informal codes steer relationships a lot, due to the perceived ownership of established parties that also guard their influence towards politics. At the same time, especially regionally and internationally, important developments take place that constantly demand repositioning. Steering for broad prosperity through the social market economy requires institutional change.

### **2.3 Why is change taking so long?**

That question arises, given the many years that have passed since the Club of Rome presented its report. The observation that we currently only realized 18% of the SDG goals says enough (in six years that should be the case for all SDGs). A number of explanations can now be given for this.

### *I Institutional rigidity and the exclusion of certain values and interests*

It is not easy to align economic, ecological and social interests; to clarify how much impact policies in one area have on the other; and to build support for policy choices in a world full of vested interests and power positions. Moreover, the dominant economic model focuses on steering for GDP and material prosperity. This is strongly structured at all levels of governance, including internationally. The knowledge community (often economists) with great influence on policy strengthens and supports this (Hoekstra, 2019).

Steering for broad prosperity is not only about formulating a substantive agenda about the desirable relationship between economic, ecological and societal goals and interests. The interaction with the institutional context within which this takes place (or should take place) is at least as important. Steering for broad prosperity is still too rarely seen as a matter of power imbalances between stakeholders, the presence of conflicting interests and values, and processes of inclusion and exclusion. The reflex of “this is the way we do it” creates a dominance of existing interests and sources of knowledge. Normative assumptions are often not or less challenged and other views or values are given less attention (Rahmawan-Huizenga, 2024). Thus, the institutional context also hinders alternative views and practices. Exclusion rather than inclusion.

This may also lead to a naïve optimism (or strategy) that with the same stakeholders in the same context and in the same way as before, other interests and stakeholders can also be well represented. Deliberate depoliticization of the broad prosperity concept in this way can lead to some values fading into the background (e.g., justice for groups that are not represented or for the interest of nature). This leads to frustration when stakeholders who are not allowed to participate are being confronted with “done deals” or get stuck in the implementation.

### *II Focus on the short-term and limited view of transition costs*

The task of the SER is to search in the (medium) long term for supported solutions to societal and economic issues, which is or should be more proactive in nature than reacting to short-term crises and (political) interests. Yet the short term regularly dominates, both in the political arena and among shareholders. Transition-based thinking brings in dealing with transition risks, such as sharp differences in access to and costs of the power grid or labor market shortages

in shifting activities. The level playing field is affected if surrounding countries make different choices on these (short and long term) issues. Therefore, deployment at the European level is crucial for a longer-term view of how to distribute transition risks and steer toward broad prosperity (SER, 2023; Philippen, 2024).

Over the years, however, governments and businesses have faced several crises that demand acute (often also ad hoc) responses in which the interest of the next generation (or even the next government) seems very far away. This was true in the economic crisis of the 1980s, but also during the COVID-19 crisis. This challenges government policies, but also our models of governance and democracy. Also within our model of socio-economic consultation and dialogue. In that context, innovating (both technological and social innovation) is difficult, although, over the years, the business community has strategically focused on that, including with R&D. The government did so later on with funds (such as the Growth Fund, which is now being phased out by the Schoof administration due to different political choices).

### *III Images and changing ambitions*

When it comes to the role and position of the business community, there are obviously big differences at the business level on how broad prosperity is engaged and how fast it is being implemented. About small businesses, I stated earlier that they often already have strong connections with the local community around them and realize societal impact all the time (cultural, sports, care). For example with jobs and internships for people with migration backgrounds or disabilities (Putters, 2023).

In recent years, employers' organizations MKB-Nederland and VNO-NCW, as mentioned, have worked on a broad prosperity strategy and, together with trade unions and NGOs, on International Social Responsibility (IMVO; see chapter 3). But there is also criticism, about the speed with which companies are really committed to sustainability or to improving job and income security and better working conditions. Societal criticism is heard more often, e.g., by the Stichting Natuur en Milieu and XR (sometimes also through the courts), that things are moving too slowly as the interests of shareholders and other stakeholders clash. Eccle (2024) speaks of "Greenhushing" when the interests of shareholders

dominate (single materiality), which may have to do with regulatory pressure experiences as being too complex or with a limited view of their role in society.

The success factor in concluding covenants in the context of IMVO is the establishment of a meaningful public-private dialogue with stakeholders—in the Netherlands under the guidance of the SER—in which agreements are made for the production chain and to which people hold each other accountable. Points of discussion here, as well, are the level of ambition and the extent to which individual companies can be held accountable (Van Schadewijk and Wolters, 2024).

#### *IV Tunnel thinking and unrealistic behavioral assumptions*

Varying views and ambitions on issues of sustainability and opportunity inequality are also seen in politics. Moreover, when it comes to the government policies, as director of the SCP I pointed out earlier that some of the behavioral assumptions underneath are unrealistic and too limited. Tunnel thinking arises when assumptions about what citizens and companies will and will not do are not based on realism. This has burrowed into the core of policymaking. Whether it is about promoting self-reliance in the social domain, without understanding whether people and their families can and will actually do that, or about expectations that entrepreneurs can and will employ migrants or people with disabilities. For steering for broad prosperity, it is relevant to start from realistic assumptions because it requires something from everyone and because conditions for behavioral change must be present (see below).

SCP shows convincingly that behavioral assumptions in policy are often unrealistic, incorrect or based on desirability. Much of the thinking is based on the calculating citizen who must be guided with “incentives”. This is too narrow a view of behavioral change. It should be about “willingness” and “ability,” which is strongly linked to the individual, but it also matters whether someone has or is offered the opportunity (Borghouts and Freese, 2022). The latter is (partly) the responsibility of governments, companies and societal organizations as well.

“Good” citizenship means that all conditions are met in a positive sense. Yet, “good” citizens may be capable but they may not be willing. “Capable” citizens may be willing but not capable of acting (or not given the opportunity) as the policy would want them to be. And “marginalized” citizens are aloof, unwilling,

unable, or uninvolved (SCP, 2023). The behavioral assumptions influence whether you want or need to enforce behavior with regulation or rather by encouraging it. Legislation is linked to extrinsic motivation (it has to be done, otherwise I will be fined). Voluntary covenants, for example, are more linked to intrinsic motivations to participate. Behavioral assumptions often remain unmentioned but can be decisive in practice.

Take the many calls for citizen participation. Communication is often inaccessible (and consists of policy jargon). There are assumptions about what people cannot or will not do. It is not always understood that people are not able to participate in committees for an entire day on site. It is assumed that its usefulness is understood and additional costs (such as child care or transportation) will be paid for. Academics are more likely to fit these assumptions and tend to be less in a daily struggle to make ends meet. So-called “dispersed citizens” do not have the resources, time or energy to comply (‘S Jongers, 2024). This leads to a situation where they end up in a “straddle mode”: they have to stretch between surviving and participating, which is often not sustainable. Not even for entrepreneurs who cannot engage in consultation on public policy at any time of day.

#### *V Unwillingness and lack of reflexivity*

Another explanation for the long road to broad prosperity is that insights about daily practice are known but do not come at the right time. With a coalition agreement used as a dominant and rigid framework for politicians to make choices, with strict budgetary discipline (read: the Ministry of Finance is decisive), these insights are easily dismissed as poorly thought out or classified with a lack of evidence. Sustainability and societal aspects are more often put aside than financial arguments. This was also my experience as a member of the High Level Advisory Committee on the Budget. Long-term effects in the area of social inequality or sustainability are taken less seriously if costs and revenues are (still) too uncertain. Even if it is fairly certain that they will occur. Short-term thinking hinders long-term structural solutions. It is pennywise pound foolish if solutions that will yield effect in the longer term are denied or reversed because of short-term considerations such as costs (think of the discussion regarding the abolition of the Community Service Scheme). Short-term focus is a relevant institutionalized obstacle to steering for broad prosperity.

A lack of reflexive capacity and time is a persistent problem in the policy arena. What do we learn from the past? Where did we go wrong and how can we do better? What can I do differently? We evaluate one thing after another, often too soon, but what happens to it? Parliamentary inquiry after inquiry concludes that adaptability appears limited and that there is an unwillingness and powerlessness to do things differently. Trapped in their own policy world and institutional arrangements, it seems. Moreover, bottlenecks, such as between policy and implementation, are fairly quickly regarded as problems of structure. As a matter of organizing more efficiently. That mostly leads to more regulations, but not to different ways of thinking and acting. In implementation, things get stuck because of this complexity, as for example, in the far too complicated provisions for incapacity for work (OCTAS, 2024). So, it should be more about how equity versus innovation or efficiency should be weighed. This requires political consideration, but also civil service professionalism that formulates policy options, and leadership that translates them into practical choices.

So there is a wide range of explanations for the speed of change on the path toward broad prosperity. Time for some interim conclusions.

#### **2.4 Interim conclusion: unraveling the steering question**

The outline of the broad prosperity debate and the interlude on the SER confirm that broad prosperity is a relational concept, but also that it leads to a search for who should be involved and what knowledge and consensus are needed. It involves developing indicators, finding and formulating goals and weighing values. Reciprocity between stakeholders plays a major role. It is important “...to identify the proper locus of moral decision making in an increasingly interconnected world” (Annett, 2022). In an era of transition, changes occur in what is being directed (focus), but also where this is done (locus), with whom, how, and with what tools. It is not always clear what the collective goals are, whether companies commit to them, whether governments are reliable, whether citizens can and want to change their behavior, and what rules of the game are necessary and workable (ROB, 2022).

There seems to be a great sense of urgency, given the many policy initiatives concerning broad prosperity. At the same time, it appears not so easy to get implementation done more quickly. The many initiatives are not always complementary and are (sometimes) developed independently of each other.

They do not always address the same issues. There is a variety of broad prosperity measurements and monitors that do not add up to a generally accepted and shared standard. The shared basis of all initiatives is that “broad prosperity encompasses a diversity of well-being aspects (everything people find of value) and distributional effects between groups, in space and time” (PBL, 2023).

Steering for broad prosperity, by definition, appears to be multidimensional in nature and takes place at numerous levels. International, European, regional and local. By government, business and society. Or all in combination. These are promising attempts for an integrated approach to prosperity, in which different sectors and stakeholders work together. No one can steer broad prosperity alone (SER, 2023; Hoekstra et al., 2024). Whether you are formulating climate policy, concluding *IMVO* covenants, making homes more sustainable, or aligning labor market policy with digitalization.

Moreover, this is not “neutrally” bringing together and intertwining domains and interests in the name of broad prosperity. It is also working on the interpretation and safeguarding of public and private interests, sometimes with new knowledge sources and new ways of collaboration (Van der Woerd, 2024). If the weighting of values remains underexposed in the process, an undesirable depoliticization can occur, preventing difficult choices from being made. Too often, for example, the distribution of broad prosperity is interpreted and guided by averages, with those averages regularly scoring satisfactory to good. However, a large group of unprosperous citizens score insufficiently on various indicators of subjective well-being. After all, no human being is average. So we must get past the averages and explain the group differences. Next, we need to weigh values and make choices, such as concerning an equitable distribution of broad prosperity.

All in all, this demands a great deal from network governance and from the participation and representation of groups and individuals (including silent groups and nature), but also a willingness to share power and influence, mutual commitment, and trust. Whether this succeeds, also in implementation, is partly determined by administrative traditions, but also by the state of knowledge about broad prosperity and whether, for example, results can (and should) be made transparent. Just like the question whether people trust each other and can hold each other to agreements. Leadership appears crucial but needs to be trusted by the market, the government, and society (Hoekstra cs., 2024). This is not easy.

We saw that all of these factors affect the ambitions, the speed with which they are being realized, and whether commitment is being questioned.

The above mentioned intermediate conclusions force us to review the existing steering model associated with our social contract (see Chapter 1). The relational nature of broad prosperity has consequences for how it is or can be steered. With “steering towards” there is the association with a clear goal, an action by which that goal can be achieved and a structured process that helps to achieve it. The emphasis is then quickly placed on the availability of information on which to base choices and on bringing stakeholders together at the most appropriate level of steering (RLi, 2024). Steering for broad prosperity, however, occurs amidst strong dependencies between public and private interests, goals and positions. Power must be shared, as well as risks. Not all stakeholders have the skills, capabilities and desire to do so. Outcomes are not supported by all. The relationship to nature is too often missing, and outcomes are increasingly perceived as unfair. This is not just a matter of the structure and organization of steering for broad prosperity but also of expectations, traditions and culture. So our social contract and its governance are firmly under pressure and no longer satisfactory.

The economy and society are, of course, not engineerable, but they can be influenced. The institutional context is changeable. What this means is part of my research agenda. To that end, in the next chapter, I will work out a multi-stakeholder approach to collaboration.

3. Framework for thought  
and action for steering for  
broad prosperity:  
core elements, core activities,  
and core conditions

### 3.1 Core elements

We need to go from thinking about *well-being* to *well-doing*. How does that work? In this chapter, I develop a framework for steering toward broad prosperity. At the same time, it is a framework for research and interdisciplinary collaboration. At the end of this address, I return to the implications for our social contract and governance model.

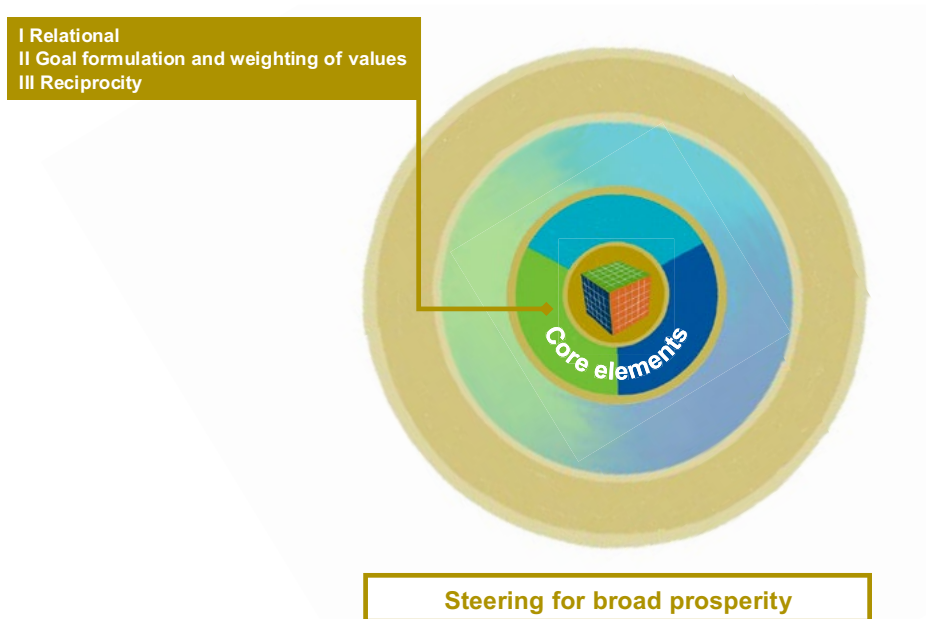


Figure C.

I focus on three core elements (see figure C) that do justice to the multiple character of broad prosperity as the basis of the framework. From this basis, I arrive at choices in activities on the “path” to broad prosperity and for the realization of the (institutional) conditions required for this. These are choices that can (and must) be made now by the stakeholders involved. So this is not a plea to wait for a grand design, it is a call to action.

#### *I Relational character*

As I outlined in Chapter 1, broad prosperity assumes behavioral assumptions that state that people also value intangible goods of connection and meaning for others, as well as a social network with which they can identify. This is mostly

culturally determined. This may seem like an open door, but the exchange or transaction that takes place is complex and can be long term in nature (over generations, for example). People also do this voluntarily, consider caring for loved ones or for the environment. If people experience reciprocity, even if there is no immediate material gain, they are, to some extent, willing to put aside their own interests. Economic, ecological and social ambitions, values, and interests are thus linked and weighed when steering for broad prosperity. This requires adaptation of the neoclassical behavioral assumptions that I discussed earlier.

This always involves distributive issues, namely, how the profits and expenses (and risks) are distributed. This has a transactional character at the time of exchange, but it is not always a matter of a zero sum game or trade-off between profit and/or damage to the economy, people and nature. There can be transfers of social norms and contributions to a community. There can also be win-win situations. For example, in companies that develop earning models through transactions amongst investments, living environment, and human capital that, certainly over a longer period of time, sometimes produce greater positive effects for people and/or nature than imagined. This relational character makes both *connecting* and *distributing* a core activity of steering for broad prosperity (see 3.2). Exchange, transfer and synergy (win-win) are important transactions here.

## *II Goal formulation and weighting of values*

Second, a time of transitions requires additional attention to goal formulation and shifting values. Formulating goals often proves difficult and is surrounded by uncertainty. The SDGs provide a framework, but in practice more concrete goals and target values are required (Vollebergh, 2023; PBL, 2023). This applies to linking to the national budget, but also to local initiatives. At the same time, digitalization and AI will continue to drive the process of adaptation and improvement, which may cause goals to shift, for example, in the area of realizing equal access to care or educational services or stimulating entrepreneurship. Moreover, what works in one context (in the area of, for example, instruments to realize certain goals) need not be applicable or desirable everywhere. Therefore, I speak of goal seeking. Justifying choices when formulating goals and deploying instruments is a core activity of steering for broad prosperity (see 3.2).

### *III Reciprocity in network relationships and roles*

Third, there is reciprocity in network relationships that is reflected in the division of roles and working methods amongst governments, businesses, institutions and citizens. It involves complex collaboration between mutually dependent stakeholders aimed at exchange, transfer, or synergy often over long periods of time. It is also about the willingness to share power and influence, and to co-manage the risks of others (Wilthagen, 2009). In times of transition, however, the legitimacy of decision-making arrangements to achieve equitable societal outcomes for all members of society is more quickly called into question. Annett (2022; 280): “A few wealthy people possess more than all the rest of humanity”. The way nature is taken into account/speaks at the table, or the next generation, also affects the legitimacy of decisions. The extent to which the rules of the game are unclear or contested, such as by action groups, NGOs, or by voters’ choices during elections, also affects the effectiveness and legitimacy of steering for broad prosperity. Core activities are, therefore, also organizing and regulating (see 3.2). This is not merely a matter of structure, information and clarity but also of culture, morality, and leadership. It is not only about power but also about authority.

These three core elements form the foundation of steering for broad prosperity. It requires collaboration at all levels. A number of core activities emerge from it on the path to broad prosperity that I discuss next. The associated preconditions I discuss subsequently.

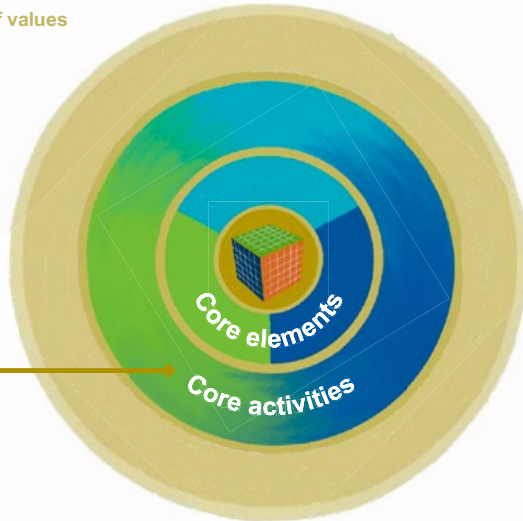
### **3.2 Core activities**

I thus consider as core activities on the path to broad prosperity: connecting, distributing, justifying, organizing and regulating (see figure D). What dynamics do they show in times of transition?

## Core elements

- I Relational
- II Goal formulation and weighting of values
- III Reciprocity

- I Connecting
- II (Re)distributing
- III Justifying
- IV Organizing
- V Regulating



Steering for broad prosperity

Figure D.

### *I Connecting*

Broad prosperity is always about connecting interests, domains and stakeholders. Connecting on substance and through collaboration. It is a search for so-called shared value, as described by Porter and Kramer (2011). They see three strategies for companies that can combine societal and economic growth, namely developing new products and markets, redefining productivity in the value chain, and providing opportunities for local clusters to innovate together. Raspe (2023) increasingly sees this connection appearing regionally.

Stam (2022) also advocates a broader approach to the societal contribution of companies, with companies focusing on new products and services, but also on developing the capabilities of employees. This focuses not only on the company's profits, but for society as a whole. The enterprise is then—in terms of Porter and Kramer—a value-creating community whose members broaden their horizons with learning and with knowledge development as the basis for sustainable innovation (Putters, 2022). Because a company can never achieve broad

prosperity alone, agreements and collaboration within chains and industries are crucial. The following examples illustrate this.

By example, an innovative, sustainable manufacturing industry should contribute to earning power and employment, the reinforcement of vulnerable regions, the promotion of clean technology and a healthier living environment. In the Netherlands this sector is responsible for about one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions. Making it more sustainable makes an important contribution to achieving the climate goals, provides work and income for many households, and is of great value to the quality of life in the regions where they are located. Sustainability is a precondition for maintaining industrial activities in the Netherlands and necessary for our strategic autonomy in connection with the increased dependence on raw materials from countries such as China (SER, 2024). Steering for broad prosperity also means solving problems with the congested power grid, stable policies to realize investments and high-quality jobs, a sufficient well-trained workforce, and a clean-tech agenda focused on innovation and the raw materials transition. In short, a sustainable manufacturing industry requires connecting interests, goals and stakeholders, and transactions over a longer period of time. It requires trust among all stakeholders that everyone's interests will—at some point—be served in the process.

You can also see this way of *connecting* at the organizational level. In the installation sector, I visited a company that can repair heating and other installations remotely through innovations. This requires, at the same time, retraining of personnel and trust from, and together with, the customer (whose equipment the company can, for example, access remotely). Good cooperation with the government is indispensable here, for example in how solar panels are or are not financially supported, how education is set up, and whether permits for new activities are issued in a time frame that is in line with the investments to be made.

## *II Distributing (and redistributing)*

How are welfare and well-being distributed in such a way that (groups of) citizens have equal opportunities for a good life? This involves the distribution between groups, but also across various broad prosperity goals and geographical regions. The relative weight of the various economic, ecological and societal goals is not a given. Moreover, in situations of scarcity, it is usually about the redistribution of

money, space, and/or human resources and about the reciprocity between benefits and costs for the collective/society, consider goals set about income equality, addressing poverty, promoting social mobility, or creating equal opportunities. It often translates into the formulation of rights and duties of citizens, households and organizations.

There are also conceivable situations of abundance that lead to distributional issues, such as with solar and wind energy, online data, and with earning models that are actually helpful to nature (as with regenerative growth, for example, in nature-inclusive agriculture). *Stimulating* a higher level of broad prosperity (i.e., growth) is, in my view, closely related to this. As long as everyone benefits, you might say, certain types of growth do not have to lead to a distributional issue. However, the question of the limits of growth and whether it is equitably distributed does ultimately touch on (re)distribution. I position myself in a nuanced way in the discussion of growth and de-growth. Growth need not be the problem; it must be about growth of broad prosperity and equitable distribution. That growth will be necessary to pay for public services, which requires (difficult) choices in situations of scarcity as well as situations of abundance.

The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR, 2023) distinguishes four categories of equitable distributions that can be used to steer for broad prosperity and a *just transition*: (1) distribution based on greatest utility; (2) distribution based on individual rights and freedoms (per capita; existing rights; personal responsibility); (3) distribution based on capacity and solidarity (for the benefit of the least well off; maintaining a minimum lower limit); (4) distribution based on contribution and profit (the polluter pays; via the profit principle; the more sustainable earns). *True pricing* is a way to achieve equitable distribution, as well as encouraging innovations and the distribution of (social) risks involved. Thus, distributing profits and expenses; who experiences utility, rights, and benefits in what way. Values of solidarity, reciprocity and good ancestry (distribution between generations) play a guiding role in this. *Justification and distribution* are both core activities of steering for broad prosperity.

Concerning the equitable distribution of climate change effects, the WRR states: “If a just procedure has been followed, then the distributions that result are more likely to be accepted as just, even by people who are disadvantaged by them.” So:

procedural justice, for which societal involvement is central for recognizing and correcting previous and existing injustices and/or policies. Justice also reveals itself in the fair distribution of profits and expenses (*distributive* justice) and in other non-financial values. Whether everyone can participate and use their talents in society is called *contributive* justice (Sandell, 2015). It is important to find out what the preconditions for the different forms of justice are, such as access to education, to decent work, the space for sustainable business, and the enforceability of agreements.

Regarding just climate transition as an example, which is also the subject of important research in the Academic Collaborative Center for Climate and Energy, this translates into various distributive questions and trade-offs. There are distributional questions regarding ecology (such as gas use), the economy (inflation, creating new revenue models), and social policy (purchasing power, poverty reduction). For example, commitment to good housing ventilation may come with higher costs and a demand for more labor. This is not just about facilitating the well-informed citizen in the maze of subsidies involved, but also about supporting vulnerable households and small business owners who can barely make ends meet in regions with many drafty label-G homes and storefronts. Facilitating energy cooperatives and other civic initiatives can help people share social risks. In addition, retraining and upskilling to new jobs and occupations are needed when new technology also requires different skills (Van de Wetering and Groenleer, 2023; Tunderman, cs., 2024). In short, equitable distribution leads to a combination of procedural, distributive and contributive justice.

I also found an illustration of this on location for *biobased housing*. I visited a location in Bilthoven where local farmers grow a type of hemp that is processed on their land with a machine into semi-finished products for housing construction (for example, in cavity walls and on facades). The houses are more sustainable because of the use of natural raw materials, so less damage to nature. In addition, the material optimally insulates the houses, hardly any heating is needed even during frost. The initiative to make it more sustainable is actively supported by experts and their passion to innovate. We also need inhabitants who support this initiative and dare to take the risk of doing something new and innovative. And locations to build on. So it requires not only the connection and interaction between the municipality, housing, farmers, experts, and residents

but also sharing resources, space and financial risks. It requires trust that due to these connections and ways of (re)distribution (also in time) everyone (including nature) will be better off, but also that during the transition the facilities needed for this will be available.

### *III Justifying*

Constantly, then, the necessity of making just trade-offs is highlighted every time. Bovenberg and Van Geest (2021) rightly criticize the rational choice approach in economics that has relegated ethics and value considerations to the background or excluded them as “normative.” The broad prosperity debate forces a broadening of the perspective on welfare. It is about relationships between people, with governments and organizations and with nature, but also about weighing what is important in those relationships and what choices are considered just. This is about more than GDP.

Justifications can be legitimate for a variety of reasons. Steering for broad prosperity requires a reflection on our norms and values, on what we consider right and wrong and what behavior aligns with it. Thus, there is (1) *pragmatic* legitimacy if it helps one (even in the short term) to weigh and decide in broad prosperity terms; (2) *Moral* legitimacy if it is clear what is and is not acceptable, if there is a baseline on public benefit, equality or need; (3) *Cognitive* legitimacy when it seems sensible or logical to make the consideration in broad welfare terms.

*Just transition* touches what is of value, including the unwritten, the underlying values that we consider important but may not always be expressed (Halman et al., 2022). Most people want their neighbors to keep doing well, as well as the next generation. As soon as the discussion about retirement or care flares up, it becomes clear that those values are still there, also often shared, but not always expressed. We have some 220,000 working poor in the Netherlands; people who often have multiple jobs or contracts but nevertheless no minimum income (SCP, 2019; CBS, 2024). That can feel unjust. Perhaps others see it as “their own fault,” but that too touches on what we as a society consider just. Steering for broad prosperity thus also appeals to values of justice and legitimacy that are felt more strongly in times of crisis or polarization.

We discussed earlier that this is also the case with the substantial socioeconomic health disparities associated with work, education and growing up in poverty. The choice to prioritize this aspect of broad prosperity in policy can find justification in fighting unacceptable differences in life expectancy between groups. This is a government's responsibility, but also of businesses when it comes to working conditions, and for societal organizations and civic initiatives regarding care, education or shelter (RVS, 2020; SER, 2024). Our university's *Zero Poverty Lab* conducts impactful research in this area, on poverty (reduction).

I found a practical example during a visit to Nursing Home Tierendwaert in Hardinxveld-Giessendam, where care is organized based on a vision of the quality of life of the elderly. Formulated together with relatives who offer care, as far as possible, based on the role they always had in the home situation. This means that informal care is done in the way it was done at home to a partner with dementia. Arthur comes over every day to help his wife have breakfast, make her bed and drink coffee. He has a relationship based on trust with the staff. I also saw this approach in Het Vertrouwde Dorp in Houten. Not arranging everything based on what professionals consider to be good care, or to save costs, but reasoning from what people themselves want or can do. It requires letting go, listening and good cooperation with the institution. They regularly conflict with government regulations or supervisors who take issue if not all guidelines for good care are met. So it requires redefining and justifying what good care is, how you organize it, and what control or supervision is appropriate. Looking more broadly at the well-being of the elderly. Of course labor market shortages also plays a role, but in these examples, it is one of the ancillary circumstances. Here, social innovation is central to promote broad prosperity and justify other ways of working.

#### *IV Organizing*

Steering for broad prosperity also presents an organizational issue. Many public and private stakeholders are required and involved. This requires agreements on the approach, division of roles, allocation of resources, involvement of knowledge, and organized consultation. This happens in numerous ways.

For example, the SDGs and various national and European initiatives (Green Deal; ESG) encourage looking at prosperity more broadly and organizing collaboration. Not only as a means, but also as a connection between actors who

create value together. We know of international examples (some also predating the SDGs) where budget design based on broad prosperity has led to a different organization of the policy process, for example, in New Zealand with the Wellbeing Budget and in Bhutan where they steer by Gross National Happiness. In Wales there is a commissioner with powers to monitor whether policy also takes future generations into account. In the Netherlands, we have the broad prosperity monitor (CBS), which does not yet forcefully direct the organization of the budget. Numerous instruments and scans are being developed that steer cooperation (see 2.1).

Many initiatives are being undertaken at the regional level, such as through the Regiodeals. These are collaborations with the aim of strengthening regions shifting from promoting economic growth to fostering broad prosperity. Regional knowledge partners, such as the Frisian Social Planning Agency, Groningen Social Planning Agency, and *HZ Kenniscentrum Zeeuwse Samenleving* (HZ Knowledge Center), or *Het Pon Telos* in Noord-Brabant, gather and disseminate knowledge about broad prosperity in the region. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency supports them by providing national knowledge. A number of regional actors, together with some ministries and the CBS, have established the *Nationaal Netwerk Brede Welvaart* (National Network for Broad Prosperity) in which researchers and policy makers make broad prosperity measurable and usable for the regional context (SCP, 2024; PBL, 2023).

An example of regional organization in steering for broad prosperity is the Brainport region, where ASML has a role to play in the broad prosperity choices for the future. The local/regional governments want to accommodate the intensification of business activity through the growth of the company. Collaboration with the national government (project Beethoven) is crucial here, not only for the clustering of local (and new) activities, but also socially. The region does not score that well on a number of indicators of broad prosperity, which is worrisome. For example, growing loneliness and a decreasing number of social contacts, declining self-reliance, limited retraining and further education among the workforce, less affordable housing, high noise pollution, high energy consumption, and growing energy poverty, but also an unused labor potential of 33,000 people (Wilthagen *cs*, 2024). As thousands of households are added, there is a shared responsibility of the government and business, and of educational,

public housing, and healthcare institutions to organize facilities regarding people's needs and for the needs of the regional economy.

In addition to organizing collaboration between public and private stakeholders in networks, steering for broad prosperity also has consequences at the organizational level itself, such as on the internal structure and functioning of an organization. This involves the hierarchy, departments, teams, communication lines, the leadership styles and HR practices needed to achieve organizational goals (Borghouts and Freese, 2022). Companies, institutions and personnel must adapt to a changing environment, such as through technological innovations, market changes or new regulations. Moreover, in a time of labor market shortages, a stimulating culture for employees and possibilities for innovation are additionally (and always) important, also in the production chain and in regional clusters. As in the previous example of the installation industry.

Citizens, social entrepreneurs or citizen collectives also organize themselves on broad prosperity collaboration in chains. Consider impact investing, for example, by investing in sustainable energy projects, social enterprises or microfinance. Profits are intended to make the initiatives more independent of donations and subsidies and to achieve scaling up. The aim is not allocating profits to shareholders but realizing shared value. Other initiatives include decentralizing resources and decision-making by supporting cooperatives, local businesses and community development projects, supporting local food systems by buying locally grown food, supporting farmers' markets, community gardens and sustainable agriculture. Broad prosperity is organized in a varied way.

### *V Regulating*

Regulatory issues focus on the rules and standards that organizations must adhere to, often imposed by external organizations such as the government, industry associations or international institutions. Tilburg Accounting colleagues such as Philip Joos are explicitly concerned with this. Consider the operation of relevant laws and regulations, such as labor laws, environmental regulations, and privacy rules, as well as European regulations for reporting on sustainability and social responsibility (ESG). Tax and subsidy policies also play a role, for example, regarding tax breaks for sustainable initiatives or additional levies on environmentally polluting activities. They regulate accounting for environmental impact, social (in)equity and well-being, in addition to financial results. This

includes emission standards, mandatory reporting on sustainability performance, and regulations on the circular economy.

I discussed earlier that “greenhushing” must be prevented, i.e. that the interests of shareholders will again or continue to dominate at the cost of societal impact, because the latter is considered too difficult to measure or too complex (Eccles, 2024). The multitude of KPIs can be a reason to experience reporting as an end in itself, with the ultimate goal disappearing from sight. The current and previously mentioned anti-diversity and anti-inclusion movement can also reinforce a wait-and-see and defensive attitude among companies.

In the context of broad prosperity, the rules concerning *IMVO* are also relevant (see also 2.1). European legislation now focuses on mandatory reporting by companies on sustainability and human rights in production chains with a focus on, for example, labor condition and equal payment for men and women. In the Netherlands, covenants have already been concluded to this end, based on dialogue and voluntariness, in various sectors, such as textiles, natural stone, and wind and solar energy. Cooperation and meaningful dialogue and holding each other accountable for results and commitment are central to this approach, and supported by the *SER*. Knowing each other, supporting each other, exchanging information and sharing risks have added value. It can prevent the so-called *Tragedy of the Commons* (Hardin, 1968), i.e. that individual stakeholders make maximum use of shared resources, even if this depletes those resources. This also applies to the *Tragedy of the Horizon*, that the interests of the next generation do not count sufficiently (Phillipen, 2024). Being able to call each other to account and stick to agreements remains essential in complying with legislation and sector agreements. Then, perhaps, a “Victory of the Commons” can be realized.

An example of regulation at the organizational level can be found in the so-called “green” terms of employment. This includes steering sustainable behavior through HR policy, i.e., terms of employment that influence staff mobility but also sustainable living and education. Green terms of employment are relatively new. They have not been part of the institutionalized dialogue between employers, labor unions and/or employee representatives. This offers chances for (new) ways of consultation and participation, including green working conditions as part of the outcome of this dialogue. Such regulation can be encouraged and

lead to pioneers setting a standard through exemplary behavior (SCP, 2021). This kind of regulation and dialogue contributes to broad prosperity as well.

I have already discussed the fact that regulation does not automatically lead to the desired outcome when discussing the activities of the High Level Advisory Committee on the Budget (SBR). Although in a formal sense the House of Representatives “enforced” (asked) the directors of the *SCP* and *PBL* to become members of this official study group to advise a new government on budget rules, it turned out that it was not yet easy to actually (and immediately) put a broad prosperity assessment on the table. Informal rules, such as what is meant by scientific evidence and what is not (often: whether indicators are measurable), or what is considered a priority officially and politically, have a lot of influence. As does varying political support for steering toward broad prosperity. So regulation, as part of steering for broad prosperity, is also about informal codes, “the way we do it,” and these tend to be difficult and slow to change.

### 3.3 Core conditions

For the successful implementation of the core activities, a number of conditions are crucial, which we will further explore and deepen in research. They must be part of the institutional arrangements on the path toward broad prosperity. For example, Balkenende and Buijs (2023) point to the importance of ideals about the good economy, inspiration from a challenging future story, ideas about economic activities, indicators to track and measure it, and institutions that facilitate a multi-actor approach. Partly inspired by this, I consider relevant conditions to be (see figure E): (I) the degree to which knowledge is present to seek and formulate goals and to make trade-offs more transparent; (II) the degree of clarity of the rules of the game concerning the entry and involvement of new stakeholders; (III) the degree of clarity of rules of conduct in multi-level governance; (IV) the presence of the moral compass needed for broad prosperity among leaders; and (V) a transition-oriented culture that stimulates value creation. I elaborate on them below.

## Core elements

- I Relational
- II Goal formulation and weighting of values
- III Reciprocity

## Core activities

- I Connecting
- II (Re)distributing
- III Justifying
- IV Organizing
- V Regulating

- I Knowledge level
- II Entry rules and sharing power
- III Rules of the game
- IV Transformative leadership
- V Culture of value creation

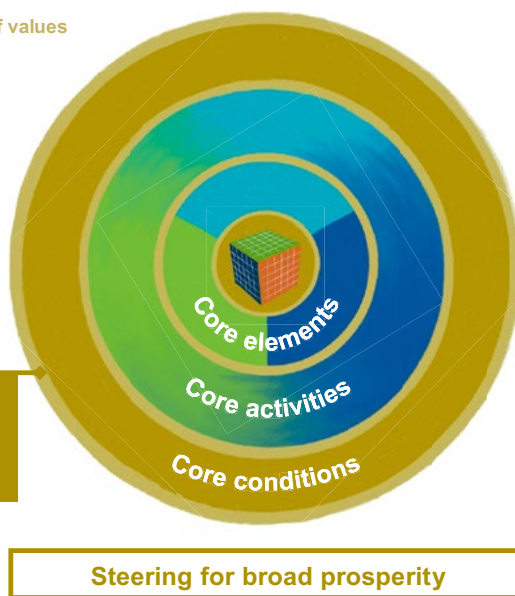


Figure E.

*I The presence of sufficient knowledge for seeking and formulating goals and for improving the transparency of trade-offs*

According to Vollebergh (2023), in the context of broad prosperity, it is crucial to consciously and substantively set concrete goals and sub-goals of economic, social and ecological policy, weighing both the collective level of society and economy and the individual level of preferences of individuals. A broader, more flexible conception of prosperity looks at more than individual preferences or their derivatives. Government goals such as economic growth, inflation reduction, employment and equitable income distribution are understood as intermediate goals for citizens/individuals. They are preconditions for well-being, health, participation or happiness and trust. This includes, in the light of broad prosperity, living environment goals and social goals in the areas of poverty reduction, education or care.

The use of target figures linked to the broad prosperity goals is important for the capacity to act (agency). These give direction to concrete policy assignments.

The difficult—but crucial—aspect for broad prosperity is the hierarchy of goals and targets, i.e., what is more important? “That is true, for example, if climate change could possibly hamper the survival of the earth, and thus GNP as such. The necessary caution is required here, so that especially the benefits that are not or difficult to value in money will not lose out” (Vollebergh, 2022). Moreover, in a time of transition, goals and target figures can shift quickly. Thus, the process of joint goal finding is at least as important as formulating the goals and understanding how these goals relate to each other. The extent to which politicians and the business community are able to formulate, substantiate and prioritize broad prosperity goals is an important precondition for steering for broad prosperity.

I link *goal seeking and goal formulation* directly to agency, which is about the extent to which actors are able to connect individual and collective interests and goals. Two important issues come into play here. First, this cannot be done without understanding the preferences or views of the actors involved. This also raises the question to which extent actors internalize externalities and whether that becomes a guiding principle for their behavior. For example, the effect of nitrogen emissions on others and nature. Which effects should be considered as externalities, and how that influences (or should influence) goal formulation and behavior, both deserve critical interdisciplinary study.

A second issue is that a focus on growth and everything that is measurable in a digitalizing world can lead to an infinite and immoderate process (Van der Vorst, 2023). The goal is never reached, and a focus on multiplying growth and improvements always continue (parametric optimization according to Rosa, 2013). A goal-oriented focus, of course, is always important. But in a time of transition, we will have to be more focused on goal-seeking and long-term strategies rather than on fixed short-term goal-setting. Even if that entails uncertainty about less easily measurable outcomes.

Kramer and Pfitzer’s (2016) plea for a shared ecosystem, in which stakeholders collaborate and learn from each other, appeals to me here: “Governments, NGOs, companies, and community members must all be involved in programs to create shared value, yet they work more often in opposition than in alignment. A movement known as collective impact has facilitated successful collaborations in the social sector, and it can guide businesses in bringing together the various

actors in their ecosystems to help remedy some of the world's most urgent problems. (...) Five elements must be in place for a collective-impact effort to achieve its aims: (1) a common agenda, which helps align the "players" efforts and defines their commitment; (2) a shared measurement system; (3) mutually reinforcing activities; (4) constant communication, which builds trust and ensures mutual objectives; and (5) dedicated "backbone" support, delivered by a separate, independently funded staff, which builds public will, advances policy, and mobilizes resources."

It aligns with Eccles' (2024) plea to business leaders to more clearly articulate corporate goals (what you are and are not about), promote transparency in reporting according to the ESG framework, and constructively engage stakeholders. That should help connect corporate interests to broader societal impact. Still, we must be careful not to consider collaboration to create value too instrumental or gratuitous. Collaboration is not only a means to material self-interest, but also intrinsically a goal due to the sensemaking taking place in the process of goal seeking and adjustment. This requires broad knowledge of economics and society and an open dialogue with relevant stakeholders.

However complex, one cannot look broadly enough to understand the reality of and for households, businesses and nature. This also requires resonance and reflexivity (and thus time and also literally space), i.e. reflection on what is and is not good for society. Not only during offsite retreats but organized as an intrinsic part of steering for broad prosperity (see also Chapter 4). This way of thinking is in line with the developments surrounding the corporate governance code in the business world, as drawn up by the Van der Meer-Mohr Commission.

## *II The degree of clarity concerning the entry rules for new stakeholders and for sharing power*

There are rules of the game that deal with power and influence in the decision-making arena: who is in charge, who gets to participate, what knowledge is at the table? Both Stiglitz and Annett are sharp in their condemnation that the financial sector had too much power and influence in past decades and should now play a more subservient role to broad prosperity. Over the years, most of the power has gone to large corporations and to countries that knew how to attract them, for example through a favorable tax and investment climate, according to Stiglitz

(2024). This has raised the question of where society's role lies in steering broad prosperity. That requires new rules of the game (some of which are now in place).

According to Van Bavel (2010; 2023), broader participation and collaboration (and its institutional embedding) with the societal field should determine the distribution of wealth. Annett (2022) also argues that solidarity should be organized through intermediary structures. "Change should come from society organizing itself, not from the top". Van Reijbrouck (2024) emphasizes that people's direct control must be mobilized: "You cannot decarbonize without democratizing." He sees the representation and participation of citizens, including at the individual level, in policy and in companies and organizations as necessary for the just distribution of broad prosperity and for the legitimacy of (democratic) institutions.

However, civil society, the set of associative organizations such as associations and foundations with public purpose, is fragmented. Partly due to social trends such as individualization and secularization (Schnabel, 2016). While cooperatives and civic initiatives are increasing in a number in sectors such as healthcare, energy and housing, they are not replacing the coverage of the former civil society. Is new mobilization possible that contributes to the equitable distribution of broad prosperity and "just transition"? To legitimacy and support? Shared ownership?

The sharing of power is surrounded by rules of the game about whether or not to accept new stakeholders in decision-making, whether they are considered representative, and whether there is a realistic view (set of behavioral assumptions) of how citizens or organizations can and want to participate. Consider citizen collectives or social initiatives, but also their representation as a group that is often missing in important forums and at platforms of decision-making. Den Outer (2023) also advocates rights for nature, so that its importance is more firmly considered and responsiveness to nature interests can be enforced. This is now increasingly done through the courts by holding governments and companies accountable for meeting climate goals.

Avelino (2024) notes that when it comes to power and influence in times of transition, people often point to others. In fact, according to her, we like to describe ourselves as powerless. So that the other person must change or become

active. However, power is not absolute but always in relation to the other person. In a period of transition, transformative power is needed: “It is not enough to create new things (*prefigurative power*), you also need to get rid of old things (*countervailing power*) and hold on to the new things you develop (*reinforcive power*). So paradoxically, we need reinforcive power to enable transformative power.” I find this an inspiring way to think about who exercises what role (and power) in the context of steering for broad prosperity, but also about the openness to welcome new stakeholders and insights, and create opportunities for innovation in governance.

Like Stiglitz, I see the distribution of power and influence as part of the social contract. Hendriks (2023) thereby points out that there is no holy grail when it comes to participation. We must look for forms that complement each other and do not have to be the same everywhere. Public-private partnerships and other forms of participation are not just a means but give meaning and make connections. It is relevant to explore how this can play a role as a transformative power in steering toward broad prosperity and how politics, business and the societal field (can) work together (Chapter 4).

### *III The degree of clarity on rules of the game in multilevel governance*

The rules of the game regarding steering for broad prosperity may be more or less formally defined. For example, do the rules assume solidarity between the rich and the poor or the sick and the healthy? How are social risks distributed? What space is given to socially responsible entrepreneurship? What knowledge is at the table? Mazzucato and Rodrik (2023) talk about the need to agree on new rules of the game: *It is increasingly clear that growth is not neutral, and that a new approach to economic policy is needed if it is to be good for people and the planet. (...) a new approach to industrial policy means making sure that directionality of growth (less inequality, more sustainability) is embedded in the tools that lie at the interface of public-private partnerships (subsidies, loans, grants, public inputs, intellectual property rights).* This is correct, but still too narrowly focused on financial rules and instruments. The SER recently advocated, as I outlined, to also make agreements on opportunities for learning and development for employees, involvement of relevant stakeholders from the environment, and reliable collaboration with the government regarding tailor-made agreements, permits and temporary support.

The Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (RLi, 2024), therefore, structured the decision-making process regarding broad prosperity into a number of phases that require ground rules. From monitoring the current situation on the distribution of broad prosperity to identifying policy options with possible effects and monitoring and evaluating policy interventions. This includes agreements about the knowledge available at the table and how heavily it weighs in decision-making. Often, this is merely a matter of informal status and authority than it is defined in formal rules. In the *SER*, the *CPB* has a permanent seat at the table, while the *SCP* and *PBL* do not. Historically, this is how it came about, tied to the prevailing (economic) view of welfare. The *SER* has now embraced broad prosperity and is having discussions with the three planning agencies to see how we can anchor the broader knowledge in such a way that it contributes to broad prosperity. In numerous ways, the *SER* has also long maintained contacts with the broader knowledge and advisory community.

However, the scientific and policy communities are still organized around broad prosperity in a limited way, both nationally, regionally, Europe-wide and globally (Hoekstra et al., 2024; RLi, 2024). From the classical model, it makes sense that *CPB* and *DNB* have a preferred position. As do the IMF and the World Bank on the international playing field. From a broad prosperity perspective, it is not that logical. It is important to organize broader knowledge cohesively and interdisciplinarily to allow more impact on decision-making. It is also about creating a learning society with interaction between knowledge, policy and practice (Bal et al., 2002; Borst, 2023; Stiglitz, 2024). This is not just about monitoring broad prosperity through indicators and improving measurement methods. Evidence-based broad prosperity policy requires broader knowledge about our society and economy. Yet, AI can help us obtain a more complete picture of short- and long-term effects and the interaction effects involved in steering for broad prosperity.

In short, the rules of the game in steering for broad prosperity are not only about structuring and organizing activities and knowledge use, but also about leadership, authority and culture, which require knowledge from different disciplines (see next).

#### *IV A moral compass among leaders based on broad prosperity values*

The moral compass of leaders must be connected to society. Annett talks about “ethics” that must be based more strongly on the connection between people, planet and profit, and that the rules of the game regarding economic considerations must be adjusted accordingly. Everyone is busy formulating visions and agendas, but without adjusting the way in which we make decisions in the Trêves Hall, boardrooms and institutions such as the SER about who bears costs and receives benefits at what time, about how we work together and do not end up in an us-versus-them polarization, such an agenda will not be implemented.

This requires leadership. Eccles (2024) asks the question: what is responsible business? In the book *The Pope and the CEO*, Andreas Widmer (2011) talks about the importance of spiritual capital and the awareness of leaders to which bigger picture they contribute, for example, in the development of their employees and their contributions to society. Kramer and Pfizer (2016) call this creating value. In his book *Gigantism*, Geert Noels (2022) also argues that adjusting the rules of the game is not enough: “... we will have to be aware again of the importance of morality, the “gravitas” of leaders, the good governance of our organizations. This is not a detail, it is essential.” And: “The morality of our leaders determines the fairness we should expect in our society.” He thinks the bonus culture is inconsistent with this and also should conflict with the moral compass of CEOs and with their connection to society. In other words, the societal license to operate is about how true leaders are able to connect to society (Van Geest, 2010; Bijloos, 2019; Rosa, 2023).

In my 2009 Rotterdam inaugural address, I talked about healthcare administrators and their role in processes of institutional change. They have to serve public, private and professional values and interests simultaneously. From quality to efficiency, safety and justice. Not everything is always possible or all at the same time, so trade-offs are needed in the public interest. This must be accounted for. “In the end, then, you always have yourself to deal with”. Individuals make a difference by prioritizing certain interests or values or making them Chef Sâche. Like the importance of diversity or the interests of the younger generation. However, the call for “authentic” leadership in this sense must not lead to mixing up ideal, person and power, according to Pauline Meurs in her farewell address at the EUR (2022). Leaders must also be challenged and

they need countervailing power. That prevents moral superiority. An “empty chair” has been introduced in many boardrooms and also at the SER, which symbolizes the future generations and their stake. It’s the stakeholder not sitting at the table, but still present and asking for attention in this way, thus challenging leadership.

Yet, of course, that does not mean that in a period of transition to transformation, it is easy to properly weigh all interests. Dealing with dilemmas between making corporate profits on the one hand, and enforcing social justice or sustainability on the other, requires a lot of transparency and communicative power. Transformative leadership (with transformative power) is needed to mobilize people and resources during such a period. Moreover, the infinity of digitalization in making connections between people, allowing new stakeholders to join, gathering and selecting information, and adjusting goals, requires an intense cultural shift. This complexity demands much from leadership (Peeters, 2016; Van der Vorst, 2023).

Leaders who embrace broad prosperity are expected to lead inclusively and understand others. At the beginning of my address, I indicated that many public policies fail due to unrealistic or wrong assumptions about what citizens and businesses will, want to, and are able to do (Putters, 2022; SCP, 2023). All core activities of steering for broad prosperity involve collaboration amongst multiple stakeholders. Revealing and unravelling unrealistic and wrong assumptions about each other is a prerequisite for success. This cannot be done without creating spaces, platforms and possibilities for learning and reflection (Rosa, 2013). As far as I am concerned, that is truly *Chef Sàche* (also see 4.3)!

#### *V A transition-oriented culture that encourages value creation*

The Dutch administrative culture is strongly embedded in institutional arrangements of collaboration, consensus building and compromising. The question is whether that works well in a time of social transition. Kramer (2024) sees that the risk of the existing institutional context is that we get stuck in the way things are, that there is increasing pressure and stress, that power struggles arise and that fact and fiction get mixed up. It can lead to conflict and polarization if it ends up in the struggle between winners and losers in the distribution of broad prosperity. This is being reinforced, according to Rosa (2023), by a strong

focus on growth and “more” in our economic and social systems, with the opposite fear of “less” and a fear of falling.

It is important to consider the existing culture against the backdrop of the new challenges. In collectivist cultures, the emphasis is often on the well-being of the community as a whole, which can lead to policies that emphasize social equality and shared responsibility. In individualistic cultures, the emphasis is usually on personal freedom and autonomy, which affects how (narrowly or limited) welfare initiatives are formulated and implemented. Some societies are also more concerned with the next generation than others (intergenerational solidarity). This influences the way in which the long term interests are put on the agenda and, for example, how resources in the (government) budget are allocated.

The Dutch welfare state is sometimes characterized in the scholarly debate on *welfare state regimes* as a combination of the social-democratic and corporatist models (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The former is characterized more by extensive provisions for all citizens, with high expenses and tax burdens. The premise is that people do not use these provisions for longer than necessary. The corporatist model is more selective and aimed at supporting specific groups, such as workers and the elderly (Veldheer et al., 2012). Since the 1980s, the Netherlands also introduced Anglo-Saxon elements with the introduction of market incentives in (semi) public sectors. The movement towards an investment state, which invests mainly in resources (such as income, health) enabling people to participate, characterizes a transition from a protective to an activating welfare state with more emphasis on citizens’ own responsibility (Hemerijck, 2017).

The combination of the introduction of market mechanisms, the privatization of public services and utilities, the decentralizations in the social domain, and the emphasis on personal responsibility for care and security that went along with it, have also led to citizens being approached merely as customers first seeking to help themselves and getting support from their direct social environment. If necessary, professional and/or government assistance might follow. One of the reasons that the pressure on personal responsibility is perceived negatively has to do with (sometimes unspoken) values such as solidarity and justice (SCP, 2020). These are deeply embedded in the Dutch culture. Research shows that many people feel that there is personal responsibility for health and social positions, but if help is needed it should be available.

Moreover, the economy leans on good social services. People experience that these are increasingly under pressure and more often unavailable, for which the government is held responsible. However, our economic model's focus on growth also has limits when nature and people are concerned, which also raises the issue of corporate social responsibility for nature and social services. I already mentioned the work of Kramer and Pfitzer (2016) in which it emerges that we need to realize an ecosystem in which shared value creation can be achieved. I added that attention is needed for the "quiet values," the values in a society that are not immediately discussed. When things start to feel uncomfortable, however, they are "felt" and that can have major consequences, also for companies and their societal impact (such as pension schemes). Who is responsible for what, what citizens themselves are expected to do, and where the responsibility of government and companies begins and ends, is strongly culturally determined, but that is also subject to change in this time of transition. A key research question is what cultural norms and practices are changing and how they promote or hinder the steering of broad prosperity.

This time of transition requires a view of the values we want to preserve or strengthen and a redefinition of public interests and common goods. There is a lot of underestimation of what demography or technological innovations mean in the longer term, for example for social inequality or use of space, pensions and care (State Commission on Demographic Developments 2050, 2024). But also its meaning for the social justice and intergenerational solidarity people experience (or not). Broad prosperity thinking does not solve this immediately because it also leads to painful and difficult choices. It can be tempting to leave those choices to the next generation, so the rules of the game need to be designed/reformed to prevent this. These rules should enforce value creation. For example, the Council of State (2023) has advised the Dutch government to adopt long-term climate-inclusive budgeting so that the burden is shared fairly across generations. All we have to do now is act...

### 3.4 End

The relational nature of broad prosperity, the goal seeking and formulation processes, the weighing of values, and the reciprocal relationship between stakeholders have an effect on the interpretation of core activities and the core conditions required. On what is seen as equitable in the distribution of broad prosperity, for example. With this, I have also formulated a framework for further research.

This must be approached interdisciplinarily, as mentioned above. In collaboration with economists, public administration experts, lawyers, sociologists, ethicists, organizational scientists, statisticians, and also theologians. Including both quantitative and qualitative researchers. With professionals by experience from the worlds of policy, business and societal practices. It leads to a call for action for governments as well as companies, social institutions, citizens and science. Representatives of these are all in this room. Together I want to develop this further, of course with colleagues from different disciplines and partners in the Academic Collaborative Center.

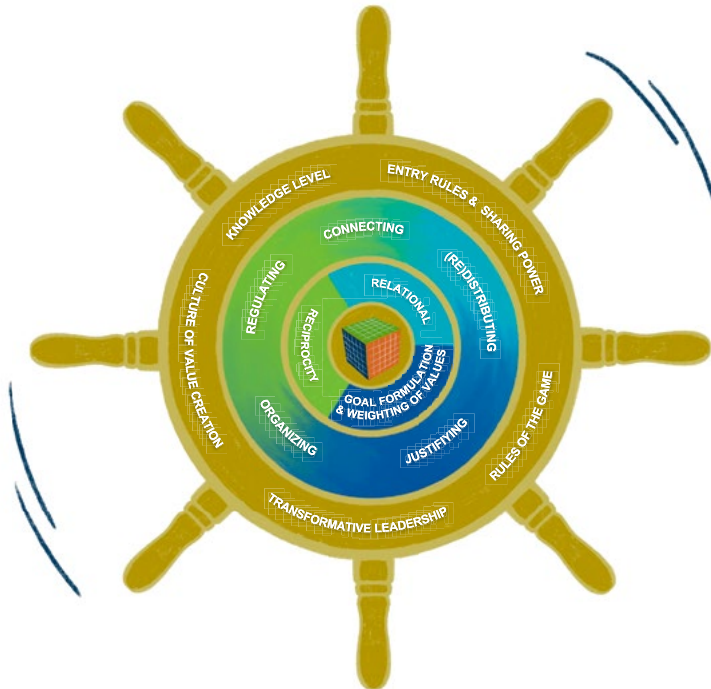


Figure F.

The question that remains for now is where does this add up to? In the next chapter, I consider what steering for broad prosperity means for our social contract and what agenda of institutional change this entails, given the observation that the market, governments and civil society do not automatically and not always steer for broad prosperity together (see figure F).

## 4. Institutional reform in the polder: a call to action

Broad prosperity requires a broad view, an integral framework for action, and adapting and compromising with many stakeholders based on the conviction that the economy, people, and nature will certainly benefit in the long term. You might say, this is really in line with the administrative tradition and institutional culture and structure of the Dutch polder model. Nobody can do it alone, collaboration is needed. But does that still work? The question is how steering for broad prosperity helps strengthen the effectiveness and legitimacy of choices for the future in a time of transitions. Should it be done differently and what process of institutional change is required to do so?

#### **4.1 This is the way we did it!**

In the Netherlands, historically there is a culture of power sharing. I will now return to this in more detail to answer the question of how steering for broad prosperity relates to this. Politics shares power and influence with the social field and business, based on a strong sense of interdependence for money, workforce and space. The government often steers with commandments and prohibitions (regulations) or financial incentives, permits and information. The market works by negotiating between supply and demand, and civil society leans on mutual involvement, caring for and taking care of each other. The societal field has always regulated much itself, through foundations and associations. In their origin often connected by religion, based on principles of autonomy and subsidiarity (Van de Donk, 2001; Van der Grinten, 2007; Wallenburg cs., 2023). The Netherlands, thus, has a diverse societal field. Also in the *SER*, the employers' organizations and labor unions still make their contribution to the general interest from this tradition.

Civil society plays an important role in realizing a sense of community, for example by fulfilling tasks in education and care, but it is less strongly organized than it was in the past. Trade unions and sports associations or housing cooperatives also contribute to a sense of community. Meanwhile, the question increasingly arises about the degree of organization and representativeness of civil society organizations (CBS, 2024). Society has become very much focused on "me" and seems less willing to give and take or share. In addition, the market is unable to distribute broad prosperity equitably, especially when it affects groups or regions in vulnerable positions or situations. And the government often has too little executive power and a lot of regulatory greed. However, everyone has a degree of dependence on collective provisions and on support from communities.

So the question still arises: how and with whom do we then steer for broad prosperity and how do we ensure support for just transition?

I outlined a framework for this in the previous chapter, but at present, the outcomes of the interplay are not yet automatically (and increasingly not) considered equitable. This way of governance is increasingly under pressure, hence the attention I call for the realization of core conditions. The introduction of market incentives and new public management in (semi) public sectors, “shareholder capitalism” in the economy, and a governmental supervision and accountability model with a lot of regulation and control make it difficult to achieve broad prosperity outcomes. The neoclassical assumptions of people’s behavior needs adjustment. It increases distrust in politics and government. More and more scholars are arguing for more value-driven economic trade-offs (Bovenberg and Van Geest, 2021; Jacobs, 2021; Annett, 2022; Vollebergh, 2022; Overmans et al., 2023; Stiglitz, 2024). The same call is given to business, although nowadays we also see shareholders reverting to old frameworks when enforcing broad prosperity becomes too complicated (by regulation) or contested.

Rotmans (2023) argues that in an age of transition and great complexity, the polder model fails, using the nitrogen problem as an example. We set up committees, make incomprehensible compromises, avoid obligations and blow things up when they do not work properly. Then everything starts all over again. Our institutions, mindset, and ways of working are deeply rooted (path dependency). Meanwhile, the transitions continue with major consequences for our society and economy. The most vulnerable can and mostly will be the big losers, both socially and in terms of health and costs.

Yet, I do not consider setting up a committee and constantly seeking postponement and delay to be the essence of the polder model. History shows that the polder model is criticized when it fails to arrive at supported and effective solutions in such a situation and is seen as a *Dutch Miracle* when it achieves results (Hemerijck and Visser, 1997). It must be about weighing all interests and seeking support for change in such a way that people and organizations can support them and are able to bring change into practice. Commitment based on mutual dependencies and shared interests are essential in this. Without being dictated to from above or having to pay heavily for it as a client (such as in the energy transition). The question remains: does the polder model align to this

era of major transitions with difficult or unsolvable problems that must lead to sharp choices? Or is the “polder” a blessing in disguise from the strength of our administrative culture and its governance model?



Figure G.

So, I repeat: one would say that our way of governing by public-private collaboration in the polder model with roles and responsibilities for the government, market parties, and civil society is in line with the multiple nature of steering for broad prosperity (see figure G). However, governance that struggles with support, and whose leadership is contested, can become contested governance. Brandsma shows that polarization is an emotional dynamic that can lead to an “us-versus-them-frame” (between elite and people) that touches more on sharp contradictory opinions (“left versus right”) than on rational arguments or nuanced opinions (Brandsma, 2016). We will have to formulate a response to prevent a governance crisis due to this, although sometimes crisis can enforce change (Ansell cs., 2016).

In the past, this called for the repositioning or sharpening of (broad) participation in decision-making, the will to discuss conflicts and conflicts of interest, and to achieve consultation and collaboration, based partly on knowledge and expertise (Jaspers cs., 2010; Van Bavel, 2023). Mobilizing the more nuanced, but also

“quieter middle” is of great importance to bridge emotions about extremes and us-versus-them framing. But in what ways? I find it an urgent matter to find an answer to this question in order to preserve the unique strength of pacification our model offers us, which can be valuable in times of transition and insecurity.

#### **4.2 Towards a broad prosperity contract**

In this address, I have shown how steering for broad prosperity can be a beginning of an answer to the challenges of our economy and society, but also that there are bumps on the “narrow path”. Many good intentions get stuck in existing institutions and in practice. The causes are diverse, such as limited openness to new stakeholders who bring in new insights and interests (such as nature), the access to and use of fragmented knowledge and outdated rules of the game. Problems are tackled in a compartmentalized manner, knowledge gained through experience often gets lost, and we mainly focus on what is or appears to be measurable. Moreover, the authority of scientists, administrators, politicians and CEOs is under discussion regularly (Noels, 2022; Van Ommeren cs., 2022; Balkenende and Buijs, 2023).

The economy has developed on too narrow a concept of welfare. The government has based the organization of (semi) public services on a too narrow and often wrong/negative set of behavioral assumptions. Society has become more individualistic and demanding. Confidence that collaboration will lead to just outcomes has declined. The perception has grown stronger that the government, business, and social institutions cause problems rather than being part of the solution. This is worrisome because our broad prosperity requires everyone’s effort, I hope I have made that clear to you.

The old social contract of our welfare state is strongly socio-economic in nature. This is too limited a perspective for today’s society and economy. Technology such as digitalization, leads to continuous changes and almost unlimited possibilities. The threat of climate change to our living environment is increasingly felt. Social inequality deepens between those who can take advantage of these transitions and, on the contrary, those who experience its disadvantages. People more often experience extremes in what we consider as good or bad. The existing social contract offers no answer to the resulting polarization. A new framework is needed for just trade-offs in a new era.

This includes a (partially) different way of collaboration and steering. One effect of the increasing individualization is that people do not always recognize themselves in their representatives. Digitalization leads to horizontalization of relationships in a hierarchically organized field with branches and associations. Steering for broad prosperity can and must be more decentralized and local than under the old but current social contract. Individually, there are potentially many opportunities for citizens to contribute (Meijer, 2015; Putters, 2017). “A decentralized economy with a rich ecology of institutions” (Stiglitz, 2024). In fact, I am talking about a chain of local, regional, (inter)national agreements and connections. Steering for broad prosperity requires a substantively coherent approach across frameworks, tasks, and responsibilities, with a varied multi-stakeholder approach (see figure H).



A broad prosperity contract

Figure H.

In short, I plea for a “*broad prosperity contract*” that:

- focuses on connecting economic, social, and environmental interests, goals and values, and thus on collaboration and value creation;
- is a contract *of* rather than *for* people;
- has respect for (and offers voice to) nature;
- produces justice, including for future generations;

- allows for plurality in addressing earning power, inequality, and sustainability;
- has power sharing within the frameworks of the democratic rule of law and the social market economy;
- through (new and complementary) forms of participation and representation, offers (new) stakeholders the opportunity to participate;
- brings knowledge, policy and practice together for better and more supported outcomes (agency);
- is a system of (more and less formal) agreements, expectations and rules in all sorts of places in the economy and in society (from national to regional and locally at the organizational level).

There is a lot of urgency because the broad prosperity contract is a kind of “cement” in society, between groups, between government (politics) and citizens, between businesses and working people, among government (politics) and businesses and the societal field. Between elites and society. With science. People need to feel and experience that the pain and burdens of the societal transitions are shared fairly and equitably. Not only across social, economic and cultural divides but also across regions and generations. Moreover, measures and policies must “come together,” i.e., not increase damage to nature and societal inequality while promoting economic development and innovation. “Only then will citizens persevere, and also hold on to each other,” says De Graaf (2023). The same goes for businesses and societal associations.

### 4.3 Research and reform agenda

The broad prosperity contract leads to an agenda for (institutional) reform in order to be able to steer for broad prosperity in an effective and legitimate way. It is also part of the research agenda to work this out and strengthen the productive interaction between knowledge, policy and practice.

#### *I New commons*

First, it is necessary to consciously define so-called new commons (Aarts cs., 2020). Traditional commons refer to natural resources such as land, water and forests shared by communities. New types of shared resources are created by AI, for example, and are digital in nature. The new commons are about the accessibility and availability for all regarding open source, online knowledge resources, open access to scientific knowledge, and other digital goods. It

is also about shared cultural expressions such as language, music, art, and traditions or literally common places (such as gardens and streets; but also hubs, virtual or otherwise) that people and organizations can get access to in order to organize a workplace. This requires collaboration, collective management and resource sharing.

If learning, working, caring and entrepreneurship change in character and the risks involved change or shift, then this places new demands on the design of our education, work, social security and entrepreneurship. Consider a right to lifelong development, supported by an accessible infrastructure in which governments, societal organizations and companies collaborate with a focus on the jobs of the future. Also think of the meaning of hybrid work in practice in terms of rights and obligations (Aarts cs., 2020; Aarts cs., 2022). Or how we embed child care, and whether we can consider informal care as a new social risk given demographic developments. Or consider a basic social standard (a baseline) for social security, with which a phenomenon like “working poor” is no longer being accepted (SCP, 2019; 2023). And, corporate social responsibility also requires a matching (partly public) knowledge infrastructure (R&D), permits and sufficient capacity on the power grid. Innovation power is crucial for broad prosperity (Draghi, 2024).

Based on my *tour d’horizon* of broad prosperity initiatives, I conclude that the fulfillment of new commons takes place through a number of routes. It can be more *transition-oriented*, for example in the just climate transition, where access to the power grid or the affordability of energy for people in vulnerable positions must be redefined as a public good. It also happens more *area-oriented*, where the state of broad prosperity in a region can determine what educational and labor market facilities should be present when developing new economic activities and how this can meet the needs of individuals, households and businesses (think of the challenges of ASML and the Brainport region). It also happens more *sector-oriented*, as we saw in industry, but then technological development, for example, requires new educational infrastructures, social innovation, and (regional and local) area planning. It can be *domain-oriented*, as in addressing health disparities that touch many broad prosperity domains, from work to poverty alleviation, education and living environment. This also requires a broader definition of welfare and a new definition of public interest, based on values such as justice

and solidarity. It is important to analyze this, for example using the *European Value Studies* of our Tilburg sociologists (Halman cs., 2022).

This asks for a transition-oriented culture that encourages value creation based on multiple dimensions (economic, environmental and social). I formulated this as a core condition for steering for broad prosperity. This can be realized by product development in markets through regenerative growth, i.e., growth that does not come at the expense of nature, but rather reinforces it. For example, through revenue models in the circular economy and organic agriculture. The circular economy offers new combinations of “labor, capital and resources”. This stimulates value creation, but a network of stakeholders must be activated, transparency in activities and impact is required and a willingness to learn is a necessity. This does not happen automatically, people and organizations need help to do so (Stuebing and de Vries, 2018). These are important issues to work on in an interdisciplinary way, among others, together with economists.

When talking about new commons, it is also relevant to know to what extent people have the motivation, opportunity and possibilities to exhibit new desired behavior or develop new products (or need support in doing so). The “capabilities approach” provides a basis for determining whether people possess the essential (new) resources to lead a good life and whether the social and institutional arrangements are in place to support this (Sen, 1988; Nussbaum, 2012; Robeyns, 2017; Van Bavel cs., 2022; Steen, 2022). To prevent this from thinking mainly of the here and now, Krznaric (2022) argues for “intergenerational rights,” so that we are forced to consider the capacity to act (or agency) of future generations as well.

New commons also involve the risk of the *Tragedy of the Commons*. Where can we see new risks that lead to an unjust distribution? The answer to that question can be found by taking time for reflection and thinking about what is and is not good or just. But also whether the focus on growth and the fear that it may become “less” is not only infinite in a digital world, but can also reinforce the fear of falling and the depletion of nature and people. I already indicated that there is a tendency to place those kinds of questions outside our processes and discuss them at offsite retreats, while it is the core of connecting and collaborating aimed at broad prosperity for all (Rosa, 2013; Van der Vorst, 2023).

The relational nature of steering for broad prosperity calls for a system or environment that is set up for connecting interests and stakeholders, constantly seeking goals, weighing values and prioritizing. With the right conditions it can function as a *game changer* to define new (social) rights, new rules of the game and new opportunities for innovation. With Porter, I therefore emphasize the need to create a shared ecosystem, where a broad prosperity agenda and new commons are worked on together, where innovation takes place and where, at the same time, there is openness to (new) stakeholders and (new) mutual trust is built.

## *II New governance*

Second, this touches on the urgency of new governance. Steering for broad prosperity always requires a multi-stakeholder approach because of the reciprocity in network relationships and the search for a matching division of roles. So-called collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2007) “brings public and private stakeholders together in collective forums with public agencies to engage in consensus-oriented decision-making.” What matters here is not only whether there is already a history of collaboration or traditional division of power, but also how the dialogue (face-to-face) is organized, how commitment and a common language are worked on and whether that creates trust (whether people find each other trustworthy).

In our tradition of cooperation and shared ownership, I believe there is a unique opportunity for steering toward broad prosperity, but a number of conditions must be put in place. There are many forms of participation, but not all are equally successful (Hendriks, 2024). Willingness to change and adaptability are required. There I quote Rotmans (2023) with hope: “We underestimate our own power to change and overestimate that of the government and companies. This creates a catch-22 situation: waiting for the other party to act (see also Avelino, 2024; ed.). But we as citizens have much more influence than we think, especially if we act collectively. For example, a group of consumers can bring a company to a standstill in no time. If we were more aware of our potential power and power to change and act accordingly, things could happen five or ten times faster”. Now, I am not advocating bringing businesses to a standstill or occupying a highway, but mobilizing citizen power is necessary. This is where historians and public administration experts can offer insights and ways out.

To organize transformative power, more openness to new stakeholders who are not (yet) at the table or do not have a voice is also required, such as new citizen collectives, start-up entrepreneurs, societal initiatives, nature, and the future generation (see figure 1). Through (new) forms of participation and representation, civil society may be mobilized in new ways, but established interests and positions should also offer them the possibility to enter the “game”. This can be done, for example, through citizens’ councils (which Krznarc calls citizens’ parliaments). This requires insight into what people can, want and will do. New forms of participation will only be effective if there is a serious dialogue about the behavioral assumptions underneath policies and if trust relationships are being realized (‘S Jongers, 2024; Hendriks, 2024). This requires a learning environment and a government presence that safeguards public interests (and new commons). The question of which forms of participation and representation are appropriate for steering broad prosperity, and under which conditions, is one I would like to tackle together with my Tilburg public administration colleagues and, for example, with the Academic Collaborative Center for Energy and Climate, which is looking at participatory governance in residential areas (Van de Wetering and Groenleer, 2023).

The scale from which to steer for broad prosperity also matters, but at the same time scale is not the holy grail either (Postma, 2015). Investigating the meaning of scale, for the defined core activities as well as the core conditions, is an interesting governance question to explore with organizational scientists and economists as well as governance scholars (Raspe, 2024; Van der Woerd cs., 2024). Fellow professor Joks Janssen will also add insights with his inaugural address later this year where spatial and rural dimensions are concerned.

Overall, we must be *willing* to see the value of collaboration. In science, but also in and with policy, and in and with practice. On their own, insights do not come together sufficiently and innovation does not emerge. Divided organizational frames dominate. We need a culture (and conviction) of being better off together by all adding value. This is not only about more participation and strengthening forms of democracy. In the words of Jaspers et al. (2010), we need to reinvent the polder model in a broader sense. The experience with the Rhineland model shows that realizing policy support is about strengthening democratic structures as well as legitimation through different sources of knowledge and authority. I plea for “**broad science**”.

To this end, I now specifically formulate an agenda that addresses the relationship between *knowledge, policy, and practice*. Aimed at new “spaces” (literally, but also virtually and metaphorically) in which these worlds seek each other, learn from each other, and know how to strengthen the impact for broad prosperity. This is a complex matter. Disciplines speak their own language, as do the worlds of policy and politics. Different rules of the game and different sources of authority and support apply. We therefore need insight into the meaning of broad prosperity for different stakeholders. After all, broad prosperity has both a more technical side (e.g., the role of technology, income or the impact of industry on nature) and a more ethical side (the role of values and subjective perception). We have learned that “being well” means many things and that everyone uses (partly) different meanings to it. An open attitude towards each other is therefore required, so different forms of knowledge can be addressed and resonance and countervailing powers are achieved (Drosterij, 2008; 2023 Rosa, 2013). Thus: “broad science” for the benefit of broad prosperity. How this works and what knowledge products are needed, I want to explore together with philosophers of science and others. Next, I propose some basic elements for the design of intermediate spaces that can provide the relevant context and conditions for this.

Next to bringing together disciplines that understand what people do (or do not do) (behaviors), what they think (preferences) and what they experience (such as happiness), it is necessary to connect to knowledge from, for example, transition sciences, creative industry and the arts. This can lead to new and more experimental relationships and ways of working. “Adaptation rather than equilibrium” (Stiglitz, 2024), which fits the digitalization of society and the acceleration of our activities. We are never done. It needs permanent collaboration and “spaces” where difference can be made. Literally by meeting, and by “tinkering,” i.e., constantly exploring the boundaries and coming to new insights. Meurs (2022) calls this an “intermediate land,” a space between worlds that stimulates creativity. Brinkgreve (2021) discusses the importance of in-between spaces with work by Herman Hertzberger on what happens at in-between spaces around building areas, in terms of meeting, social contact and experience. The combination of the fields of sociology and architecture really captures my imagination. The same goes for the research on boundary work by my former colleagues from the Healthcare Governance section at the Erasmus School for Health Policy and Management, in which professionals, clients and policymakers

in healthcare are being studied while connecting different worlds, values, and interests.

It is often difficult for scientists to look across disciplines. That is why a place like an academic collaborative center is important as an intermediate space. The question is how to set up spaces within which different communities can interact in a creative and productive way. What is important is that scientists see each other, but also policymakers, professionals from practice and experts by experience, as equal partners. One should not feel better or more equal than the other. Also, the agendas of the different disciplines can be more linked from an open attitude that we need each other in enforcing broad science for broad prosperity. It asks for realizing that we often reason from our own disciplines ourselves (Wilthagen *cs.*, 2018). Authority comes from multiple sources, such as knowledge, experience and creativity. We must learn to use these more consciously and give more chances to “wisdom” (Bal *cs.*, 2002; Heerings *cs.*, 2021).

Rigid frameworks usually do not help, but stability in roles and clarity about mutual expectations do (Van Ommeren *et al.*, 2022). Especially in everyday exchanges, such as organizing meetings, capacity building through training and education about broad prosperity, institutional support for collaboration and open communication (Borst, 2023). In our Tilburg educational programs this will have to resonate (as Lans Bovenberg advocates in economics education, for example). Educationalists are, therefore, also desperately needed! I make a warm plea for multidisciplinary education and look forward to contributing to the minor in broad prosperity studies for students of all programs. I hope this minor becomes a creative in-between space for students and faculty. An hybrid educational and research space.

Finally, that brings me to so-called combination jobs that lead to “embedded research.” People who work in business, policy and science bring worlds together. Not on the basis of a separate project or program, but as real jobs (frontier workers). It is not always easy, I can tell you, to be accepted in multiple worlds, make effective connections, and be appreciated for it. It links to the way we recognize and reward different academic activities. We need to organize this more broadly and smarter. Less only from the science or corporate interest, more from the common, general interest. Including the way we have to be accountable for

all efforts. Joint commitment to dialogue and deliberation in places where this succeeds paves the way to impact (Bijker, 2017). We can take an example from the Tilburg institute Tranzo, which has long worked with science practitioners at the interface of science and practice in healthcare and the social domain.

### *III New leadership*

Third, new leadership is needed that starts from a rooted ethical understanding and inclusive vision. Recognizing the interconnectedness of interests in broad prosperity and the role of a variety of stakeholders is the basis. Leadership creates opportunities, including for reflection. Transformative leadership puts the societal issue at the center, rather than one's own domain or interest, to establish a shared goal process and break through barriers. If that succeeds, established interests and positions can no longer continue to do what they have always done. They must at least relate to the new collaboration in a new "space" and dialogue. Places like the Academic Collaborative Centers can be *game changers* because institutions do not lead to collaboration and the right outcomes "by themselves". An equitable distribution of broad prosperity does not emerge "by itself."

Too often I miss self-reflection of administrators, CEOs, politicians and scientists as to whether their ways of working, and the institutional arrangements within which they work, are (still) equipped to make trade-offs that support broad prosperity. The moral compass should be tuned sharply enough to connect with society (Van Geest, 2010; Widmer, 2011). I repeat a quote from Geert Noels (2022): "The morality of our leaders determines the fairness we should expect in our society." The emotional or spiritual capital connected to societal issues must be activated for this purpose. Philosophers and theologians offer us insights here (Rosa, 2023). The process of goal seeking and interpreting social issues is a value-creating activity together with stakeholders. This is a quality or skill that must be part of the education, background and selection of leaders. In this way leadership can become a *game changer* in itself.

More and more leadership is developed decentrally and bottom up (see figure I). From consumer behavior, social entrepreneurs and citizen collectives. This can be facilitated and utilized in a more profound way. Pioneers can be given more opportunities to set new social norms on how to treat each other and relate to nature. Leaders can (and should) encourage this. It also often involves co-leadership by sharing rather than dividing responsibilities (Van der Scheer, 2023).

The formulated framework of activities and conditions helps with this, especially the creation of intermediate spaces in which the stakeholders involved can achieve such collaboration and leadership. In this way, leaders can also give more voice to the silent middle, provide a platform for different types of knowledge and insights, and thus contribute to depolarization.

Next to the governance relationships between government, businesses, civil society and science, I also reflect on the role of *politics* in the broad prosperity contract. It cannot be the case in a democratic state under the rule of law that the representation of the people has to agree in all cases on decision-making as described before. I know the reality of the polder model is sometimes being perceived in that way. At the same time, politicians must be willing to see the value of public support on crucial issues. It asks for sharing responsibility on long term policies. For example, discussing each other's concerns and insights at an early stage (and even before problems arise) is extremely helpful. In the broad prosperity contract, it is necessary for politicians to engage in early dialogue with societal partners and in the in-between spaces I outlined, of which the *SER* is also one.

The core activities of steering for broad prosperity that I discussed are also political in nature, but not everything is up to politics. Nor does it have to be. Society and economy are also in charge themselves. New political leadership breaks through the politicization of just about everything, just like breaking through the compartmentalization into policy domains that does not meet the reality of households and businesses. Broad prosperity outcomes must be investigated at different times and in continuous dialogue with, for example sectors of education, healthcare, with entrepreneurs and with societal initiatives. In addition to financial-economic calculations, there must be an eye for what political decisions do to society and nature. For example, from the perspective and in the interest of young people. Taking future generations into account, politicians should focus more on multiannual budgeting because of the consequences of climate change and demographic developments for next generations.

For the equitable distribution of broad prosperity, it is important that politicians at different levels share responsibilities with businesses and society (also f.e. on the regional labor market).

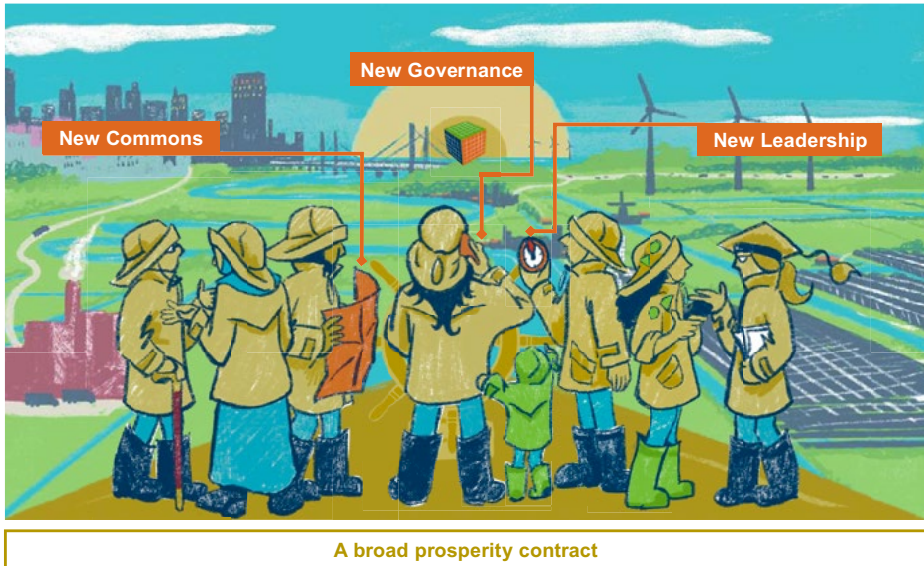


Figure I.

*En passant*, this also leads to a reflection on the current budget cuts in the civil service. I can understand resistance, but it also offers opportunities to achieve a more decisive government in a multi-stakeholder approach. A government that achieves just transition regarding issues such as social inequality, sustainability and earning power. This requires more investment in scientific knowledge and practical experiences. Not only by generalists who look across domains, but with people who really understand the domains, with an attitude of respect to those implementing policies or running a business. Exchanging experiences and knowledge on platforms, such as in academic collaborative centers that create a kind of in-between space for parties to come together, helps with this. This promotes learning and can be organized anywhere, more experimentally than we are used to do so far. This requires leadership, not flat cuts. Just like, by the way, at universities and universities of applied sciences. But without long term investments in education and research there will be less perspective for an economy and society based on broad prosperity.

## 4.4 In conclusion

Broad prosperity does not mean “us against them”, but “us together”. Leaving no one behind. Steering for broad prosperity can prevent unworkable polarization. Ideally, the core conditions I formulated should be present in such a way that the core activities of steering for broad prosperity can be implemented. It means that all elements of broad prosperity will be in a certain balance with each other (chapter 3). In other words, than the cube is “right”. How that works and can be supported, i.e., how the puzzle is or can be best put together, is part of my research agenda which is interdisciplinary in nature. Institutional change should focus on the new commons, new governance, and on new leadership.

This affects all of us, as well as the work that must be done together. So much is certain. So: what will you take up tomorrow in your role as CEO or civil servant in a local community or ministry? It is insufficient just to have heard my story and say, “I was inspired.” True inspiration means translating it to yourself, to what gives meaning in your work or in your life, enabling an answer to the question of your own contribution in this time of societal change (Smit, 2024). The broadening of our thinking and actions toward a *broad prosperity contract* offers, in my judgment, opportunities for everyone’s contribution to societal change. Not literally in the sense of a legal contract that lays down that contribution in detail. It is also about culture and personal commitment.

However, a broad prosperity agreement between government, business, and societal organizations, with an important role for different forms of knowledge, should be possible to materialize. It will not surprise you that as President of the SER I like to elaborate and explore this with my partners. However, there is a research agenda to this as well. That I regard the Academic Collaborative Center for Broad Prosperity in Tilburg as an important initiator and catalyst for this agenda should not be a surprise to you either.

This brings me to a concluding quote that stresses the importance of my plea, from former Prime Minister Drees at the establishment of the SER in 1950 (Jaspers cs., 2010): *A socio-economic policy that is not understood by our people can never be successful in the long run. It breeds misunderstanding and misconception, usually paired with distrust.*

I started with Pope Francis and ended with Prime Minister Willem Drees, which reassures me given my origins. Besides, I have never felt uncomfortable with Christian-democrats and social-democrats working together for a better future (*Rooms-Rood*).

5. Thank you

Being a university professor, what does that actually mean? My predecessor at the Netherlands Institute for Social Research and university professor at Utrecht University, Paul Schnabel (2016), asked his Rector Magnificus and he said: “You do not have to do anything and you can do everything”. This was not what our Rector Magnificus told me, but with our shared ambition to reinforce the theme of steering for broad prosperity I got the maximum of academic freedom to connect to the origin of Tilburg University. The Executive Board allows me to connect to all Schools, seek collaboration, creativity and build an agenda together. Without all kinds of bureaucratic obligations. I have the opportunity to contribute to courses and research about the world we live in and move towards. And: everything is allowed so far. It feels to me as if the academy must once have been intended that way. I feel a great responsibility. I will deal prudently with the trust placed in me. And, it is an honour to be Ernst Hirsch Ballin’s successor as university professor.

I consider it my mission to connect disciplines in the academy regarding steering for broad prosperity, but also to strengthen connections to practice, policy and politics. In the tradition of Tilburg University and Cobbenhagen, with which I started my speech. I see *connecting* as my first core activity. I will have to *divide* my attention, between research and education, but of course especially with my work at the *SER*. I *justify* my work from the fact that I am a university professor, but especially because of the urgency of the societal transition and what that requires of all of us. In this regard, I consider students to be crucial, because we are working on broad prosperity in the interest of the future generation. You have to do that together. The work does need to be *organized* and the Academic Collaborative Center for Broad Prosperity, with great colleagues and support, is the perfect ecosystem for that, where we create value together. *Regulating*, is that what I do as well? I had to think about that for a moment. Yet, that is probably where our challenge lies! What do we do with all the insights we gather? How are they being used in educational programs? How do we achieve impact in policy and business practice? This requires perseverance, agreements, and holding each other accountable for them. In short, I will do my best to not only study the core activities of steering broad prosperity, but to live up to them as well.

In my final report as “*informateur*” earlier this year, I made a point about increasing social unease (Putters, 2024). About the differences in position of groups of people and how that affects their trust in politics, but also what this

requires of political decision-making and policy implementation. This is all about broad prosperity. The agendas of municipalities, companies, departments, and advisory bodies (including the *SER*) are supporting the broad prosperity perspective, but how do we take the next step? There is a gap between policy and implementation. We lack implementation power. I hope that politicians (coalition and opposition) want to hear this lesson from the government formation. It was my final inspiration for this inaugural address. It should be about the outcomes that our political, economic and social systems produce in the time to come. Whether they are fair and perceived as such. If they are not, then all our efforts—in the words of Drees—can never succeed.

Given the values that our University puts at the center of realizing our motto Understanding society, I see it as a moral imperative for all of us to contribute insights and solutions that help in the societal transition: connected, curious, caring and courageous. This means going from *Understanding* towards *Contributing* to Society.

I feel *connected*, Wim, and have done so for a very long time. From the moment you planted the seed asking if I would want to return to Tilburg after my time at the *SCP*, I have not been able to let go of that thought. The fond memories of our time at the then Tilburg School of Politics and Governance were still very much alive. It felt like family. That you sent a bouquet of flowers in the colors of Brabant to my mother the moment my appointment at our University was a fact marks our bond. Thank you for all your trust, and of course that also goes for Jantine Schuit and Wilma de Koning of the Executive Board.

The colleagues of the Academic Collaborative Center for Broad Prosperity keep each other *curious*. By constantly looking at issues from different insights and experiences, we keep each other sharp and critical. All my conversations at the various Schools and collaborative centers have only increased my curiosity. There are too many people to thank, but through Lex Meijdam who exercises the father role of our collaborative center in a stimulating way and with care, and Antoinette de Bont who has made me feel so incredibly at home, I thank you all. Antoinette, how wonderful that our paths have come together again after our time in Rotterdam. Of course I “double” thank colleague Otto Raspe, what an honor to hold our inaugural addresses together today!

I thank Irmgard Borghouts for her support and for the inspiring conversation we had throughout the process of writing this inaugural address, even during the summer vacations, and the valuable comments, together with Mariette Amsing, concerning my presentation. Also the comments and suggestions of Antoinette de Bont, Joks Janssen, Hans Mommaas, Ronald de Jong, Ton Wilthagen, Lex Meijdam, Paul van Geest, Lans Bovenberg, Martijn Groenleer, Eduard Ponds, Reinout Wibier, Tim Reeskens, Niek Verkaik, Robert Borst, Sarah van Hugte, Gerard Drosterij, Jacqueline Prins, Wim van de Donk, Otto Raspe, and Marhijn Visser have helped me to write this inaugural address.

Science is also supposed to be about caring for each other and the people around you. I feel that value of *caring* every time I walk across campus, but also when I am with my former colleagues at Erasmus University Rotterdam, especially at Public Administration and the Erasmus School of Health Policy and Management. Through my supervisor and lecturer Tom van der Grinten, my supervisor Walter Kickert, my former section leader Roland Bal, current section leader Hester van de Bovenkamp and former pro-dean Werner Brouwer, I thank you. Years of working together builds up to friendship. That's why I thank all my PhD-students for working together with my all those years and of course Jonathan, Hugo and Margot for still doing so. As much as I am at home in Tilburg, I miss you. I am grateful for all the opportunities I was given. I also say this to the then Executive Board. You were *caring* towards me. Rotterdam is quite Tilburg-like... The fact that our Jantine Schuit has now become your new Rector Magnificus confirms that!

My colleagues at the Social and Economic Council taught me how to be *courageous*. They taught me we can build on each other if we step forward. We keep going, even at the risk of not achieving what you wanted most. The *SER* is a wonderful professional organization, where, as president, you learn to be courageous every day by the people around you. From the Council members to our receptionists. So I experience this value from within the *SER*, but I am very happy to let the University share in that. I thank the colleagues in the *SER-Council* for their trust in me and the opportunity I am given to deepen our common mission in Tilburg as well. In particular, I thank my two Vice-Presidents Ingrid Thijssen and Tuur Elzinga. Of course, my thanks also goes to the staff of the *SER* and Jacqueline Prins, the Director and General Secretary of the *SER*. We trust, we build. We amaze, we admire. And we do not let go.

I would like to extend an additional word of thanks to the board of TISEM and Jacqueline, Jolanda and Shanice of the TiSEM secretariat office who provide me with a warm home on our campus. I thank Michelle te Veldhuis, Sandra de Jong and Marieke Schoots of the Academic Collaborative Center for Broad Prosperity and Maud Spoor, for their commitment and caring. Of course, I thank Nadia, Shereen, Mary, Merlijn and Stef for all the support and, above all, for the fun we have together on this adventure called “SER”. Richard and René really take care of my broad prosperity, because without safety along the way, no one passes the narrow path on the way home.

My family and in-laws are everything to me. I know that due to lack of time, my attention is not always there, but even now I would throw off the gown when necessary to be with you. On the narrow path there is ultimately only one choice that matters and that is you. In particular and first and foremost Marhijn. I know no one who carries so much knowledge, insight, caring, love and foresight. With you, our narrow path is self-evident.

*I have spoken.*



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The University has established the Broad Prosperity Program to respond to the complex challenges of our time. Through a number of academic collaborative centers and similar initiatives, Tilburg University uses its expertise as a humanities and social sciences University to contribute to strengthening broad prosperity. In these workshops, researchers from all faculties work together with societal partners (companies, governments, NGOs) to develop and implement, in co-creation, knowledge that contributes to solutions for societal issues such as the climate and energy transitions, the labor market, health and well-being, and inequality, thereby enhancing broad prosperity.

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