

# **Framework for Societal Recovery from the Childcare Benefits Affair**

## **Beyond Learning Lessons: Transforming and Actually Doing Recovery**

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# Framework for Societal Recovery from the Childcare Benefits Affair

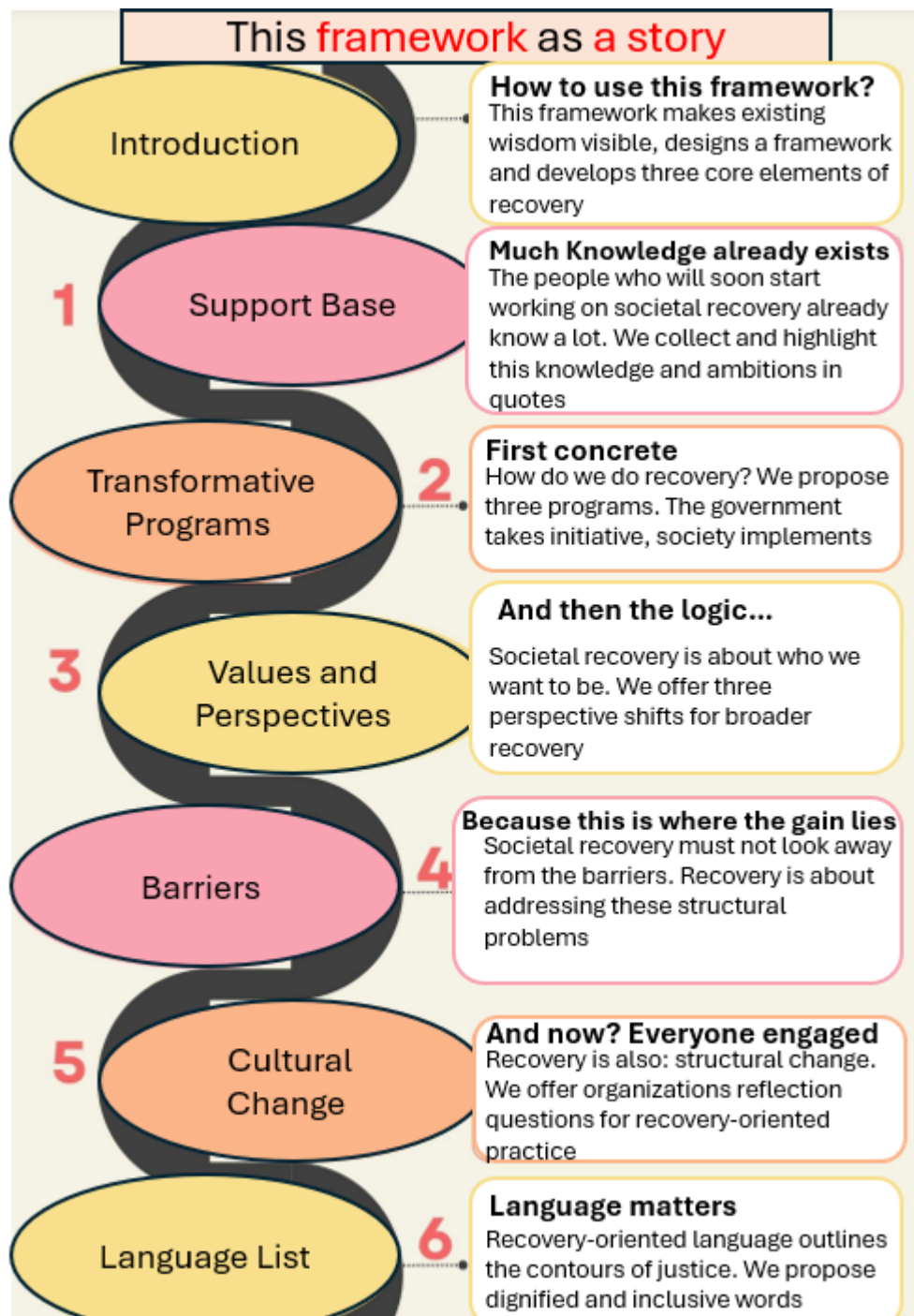
## Beyond Learning Lessons: Transforming and Actually Doing Recovery



[Illustration: Netty van Haarlem]

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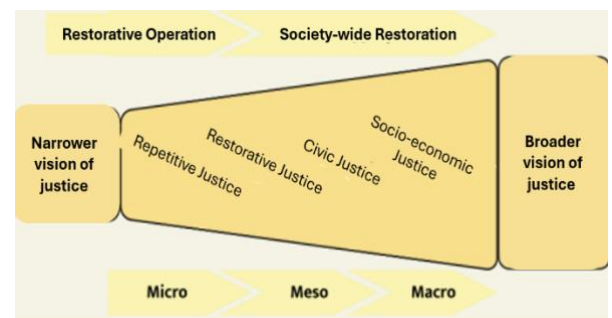


## Summary

**Purpose:** This framework presents our scientific vision and elaboration of societal recovery. It is not a progressive report. In our guided work sessions with professionals within the government, we saw that much knowledge already exists. The framework helps, through theoretical frameworks, to support and anchor existing energy and initiatives via concrete language and actions.

### What is societal recovery:

society must be visible in the conversation about recovery: relationships with society have also been damaged. Societal recovery transforms these relationships. The broadening of societal recovery can be captured in a spectrum:



### Societal recovery at its core:

This framework brings together three parties and centers their relationships: government and implementation; society; and parents and young people. From this flow three core elements of societal recovery:

1. institutional transformation – government and implementation
2. dialogue - society
3. inclusion of knowledge(carriers) – parents and young people

### Getting started:

This is not a step-by-step plan and not a menu of choices. This is an integral framework, because transformative recovery is an integral process. Every organization can work with this framework independently.

### THE SIX CHAPTERS:

1. **Support Base:** mapping the existing knowledge about recovery challenges within the government
2. **Transformative Programs:** Three transformative programs form a concrete answer to the question of how the three core elements of recovery look in practice. A. **Institutional transformation: recovery-oriented personnel policy:** Everyone wants the system to change – but that system is formed by human work. Recovery-oriented recruitment and promotion policy reflects appreciation of collaboration, contradiction, and conflict. It helps prevent reproduction of injustice. We make a suggestion for a recovery-oriented performance review. B. **Dialogue: art program depicting**

**responsibility** Transformative recovery is about reversing the logic of injustice to the logic of justice. Institutional responsibility must therefore be repeatedly acknowledged and examined. A participatory art project makes these structures of injustice, and thereby the contours of a just society, accessible and visible. C. **Inclusion of knowledge(carriers): recovery expertise center** Structural injustice brings, besides much suffering, also much knowledge. Expertise of suffering translates into expertise of recovery. Therefore, we propose an expertise center, consisting of experts with lived experience of structural injustice and experts with academic and procedural knowledge.

For each program, we propose alternative, broader societal applications.

3. **Values and perspectives:** The recovery process is the mirror of who we want to be. Many principles of recovery are also principles of good citizenship. Societal recovery is about jointly determining these principles and values. This value framework, applied to the spectrum of recovery, is thus a starting point for a society-wide conversation about broader recovery.

4. **Barriers to recovery:**

- **Over-bureaucratic business approach:** Due to excessive focus on business operations, the human dimension becomes lost and dehumanization can occur. Societal recovery helps shape humanization and makes people and justice visible again.
- **Hierarchy:** Rigid relationships ensure that critical signals are not picked up, while these precisely help prevent (reproduction of) injustice. This also calls for a renewed appreciation of direct implementers and recovery-oriented cultural change within organizations.
- **Political (time) pressure:** Societal recovery as a process involves transforming structures and may never be finished. But individual points on the horizon can be set. Inclusive, careful sequencing helps create clear and energetic policy.
- **Institutional racism:** When this structural cause is not named, the process of societal recovery will continue to reproduce this injustice. Integral diversity-equality and inclusion policy and citizenship education offer ways to continuously examine and counter institutional racism.

5. **Cultural change:** The call for 'the entire culture must change' sounds abstract, but culture also consists of the daily choices we make. Reflection questions at three levels of relationships (micro, meso, macro) provide a starting point for each organization to examine their own contribution to societal recovery as a form of cultural change.

6. **Language list:** Language matters. Language can, through social imagination, outline the contours of justice. This language list makes suggestions for inclusive scientific and everyday words.

## Introduction: How to Use This Framework?



Over the past year, we, two researchers from the University of Humanistic Studies, have translated insights from our overarching project Dialogics of Justice to the Childcare Benefits Affair. We did this through the discussion paper "Recovery as a Societal Mission: Visible Transformation of Relationships"<sup>1</sup> and interactive work sessions with parties involved in the recovery process. The work sessions revealed that much support base and knowledge was already present. Moreover, much is already happening in the field of societal recovery, especially through parents and young people<sup>2</sup> themselves. These expert groups have already generously shared their insights about societal recovery. We have therefore chosen a different approach for this framework than that of a 'prescriptive' report: after all, we don't need to start from the beginning. The framework helps, through theoretical frameworks, to support and anchor existing energy and initiatives via concrete language and actions.

### Why Societal Recovery?

The Childcare Benefits Affair has, fortunately, gained faces. We think of the stories of individual parents and young people, but also of the words of responsible politicians. We envision a tribune of parents, or a row of high-ranking representatives apologetically explaining how things could have gone so wrong. Injustice is thus about people and therefore about relationships, while most people still think that recovery is mainly about money. Money is an instrument, but above all, the relationship needs to be restored.

Here lies an entire field that often goes faceless: society. Because the lived experience of injustice in the childcare benefits affair didn't consist only of letters from or phone calls to the Tax Authority. The injustice also consisted of the quick judgment of the youth care worker. The strict judge. The sympathetic look of the teacher. The umpteenth newspaper headline about fraudsters. The relationship between society and citizen is damaged, so this relationship too must be restored.<sup>3</sup>

### What is Societal Recovery?

Like injustice, recovery is about people and thus about relationships. We see societal recovery:

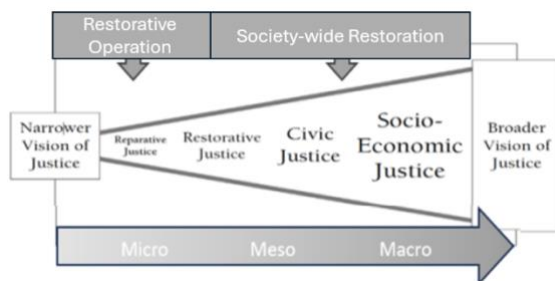
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as the process of transforming relationships in society, so that all parties can participate equally and with trust in dialogue about structural (in)justice.

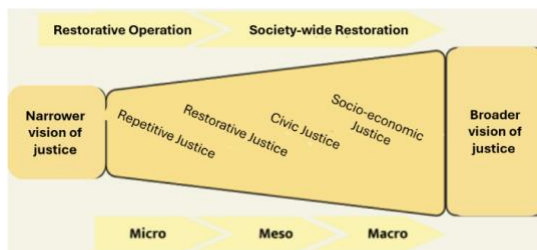
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Societal recovery is therefore not an outcome. It's about the journey towards it. Those who have been affected by injustice emancipate themselves in a process of recovery to a position where they are once again equal to those responsible. This (in)equality is partly a subjective feeling.<sup>5</sup> But equality is, besides being an experience, also a very concrete and political process of democratization and citizenship.

Societal recovery is also about asking the question: who do we want to be? The dialogue that thus emerges about a more just society is therefore part of the transformation in the government-citizen relationship. That is societal recovery. To see this 'what can be better,' we use the idea of social imaginaries: a way to make the invisible ('what stands in the way?') and alternative realities visible. To envision this broadening in thinking about recovery, we use the work of Lisa Laplante (above). We apply her idea about broadening justice<sup>6</sup>: the spectrum of recovery (below).



**Figure 1:** Model of Laplante (2015): justice continuum © Cornell International Law Journal



**Figure 2:** Our adaptation of Laplante's model (2015): The spectrum of recovery



The **spectrum of recovery** explained:

Recovery Layer	Example
<b>Reparative recovery:</b> recovery of direct, measurable damage in the relationship between those responsible for the injustice and those affected: the relationship between Tax Authority - parent or young person.	Restitution (return) of the taken money
<b>Restorative recovery:</b> recovery of the relationship between those responsible, those affected, and surrounding communities. This is therefore about trust, for example.	Listening      Writing Project          by (Equal)Worthy Recovery <sup>7</sup>
<b>Citizenship recovery:</b> sustainable recovery of the relationship between government and citizen, whereby the citizen is heard and seen through participation and thus takes part in democracy.	College of Recovery Experts <sup>8</sup> in Almere
<b>Socio-economic recovery:</b> recovery of structural social and economic inequalities – even if they were formed before the childcare benefits affair began. Policy takes these structural causes into account.	Diversity and inclusion policy in organizations

The spectrum shows that societal recovery encompasses multiple layers: the further along the spectrum, the more transformative potential. Recovery also has a clear political dimension there. It's about how we want to deal with citizenship and socio-economic issues such as poverty reduction and equality of opportunity. In this framework, we as researchers do not take a political position, but rather a substantive and normative one. For this, we base ourselves on insights from other cases of institutional injustice in our project Dialogics of Justice. <sup>9</sup>

Financial compensation as part of the recovery operation takes place in the first layer: that of reparative recovery. Societal recovery only begins at the second layer and encompasses restorative, citizenship, and socio-economic recovery. In this framework, we therefore specifically do not focus on 'the money question,' unless it also relates to, for example, restorative values such as regaining one's own agency, or citizenship recovery because it promotes trust in government.<sup>10</sup> In this way, this framework contributes to broadening the conversation about recovery for the childcare benefits affair that is often reducibly and hurtfully limited to money.

Something essential precedes the spectrum of recovery: transformative recognition. Recognition can be transformative when it makes the damaged and unequal power relationship visible and thereby names the structural cause of the injustice. Without recognition of the structural injustice, recovery cannot begin. At the same time, recognition is also a continuous process.

In each layer of recovery, recognition must be repeatedly expressed for the injustice in:

- direct damage (reparative recovery)

- the relationship with communities (restorative recovery)
- the government-citizen relationship (citizenship recovery)
- the interaction of this injustice with structural, existing inequalities (socio-economic recovery)

### Who Takes Action?

In news coverage, two parties are often central: parents and young people on one side and institutions (ministries, Tax Authority) on the other. But as our spectrum shows, societal recovery is about the multiplicity of relationships. Because with each step in the spectrum, more actors join: we move from the micro- (individual relationships), to the meso- (relationships within organizations) and the macro-level (relationships between organizations and groups) until ultimately the entire society is involved. The illustration below shows how we think that the entire Dutch society is also in the picture. Societal recovery affects and involves all parties in the triangle: government and implementation, parents and young people, and society.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 3:** The triangle of government and implementation – parents and young people - society. Illustration: Netty van Haarlem.

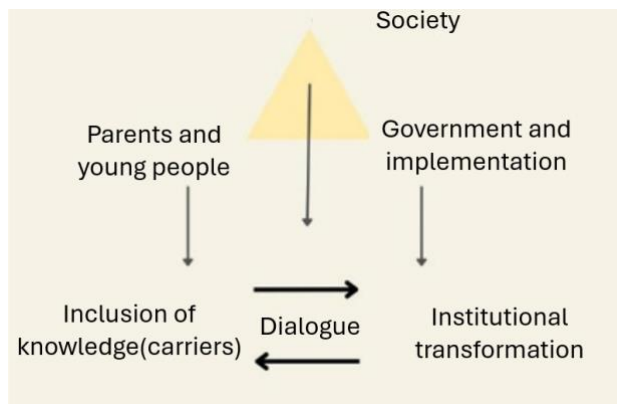
### Transformative Justice

Societal recovery thus belongs to all of us and changes all of us. It is a visible form of transformative justice.<sup>12</sup> In this framework, we therefore present what makes recovery 'transformative' rather than 'affirmative'. Every recovery process runs the risk of reinforcing the harmful power relationship that was at the basis of the injustice:<sup>13</sup> for example, when those affected 'receive' recovery instead of being able to shape it themselves. The Childcare Benefits Parent Panel has shared important insights about this.<sup>14</sup>

Transformative recovery for the childcare benefits affair therefore consists of three core components, which correspond to the three parties in the triangle:

- **INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION:** within all government and implementation agencies, whereby (repetition of) the injustice is prevented
- **DIALOGUE:** within society, about both injustice and justice

- **INCLUSION OF KNOWLEDGE(CARRIERS):** particularly of parents and young people, who bring the expertise of lived experience of injustice and recovery



**Figure 4** The three core elements of recovery in relation to the triangle of government and implementation - parents and young people - society

Transformative justice is thus about reversing the logic of injustice to the logic of justice. All three core components are needed for this: institutional transformation changes the structures of injustice; based on dialogue in society; and inclusion of knowledge(carriers) through which expertise about recovery is safeguarded. In this integral approach, transformative justice also differs from other (also important!) forms of justice, such as procedural or distributive justice – which deal with a specific aspect of injustice.<sup>15</sup>

This also means that the different layers in the spectrum work together. The movement doesn't only go from left to right but can sometimes also go from right to left citizenship recovery, for example, often includes reparative elements, such as well-executed financial compensation. Therefore, there is also an interaction between the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels: for the citizen, a positive contact with a civil servant (micro) can influence the relationship with the government (meso and macro). Individual and collective recovery are also interconnected: every citizen is after all also a member of a family, community, and (sometimes marginalized) population group.

Institutional transformation brings us to what the United Nations calls guarantees of non-repetition: the injustice must not repeat itself.<sup>16</sup> Parents and young people also emphasize this.<sup>17</sup>

Yet the parliamentary inquiry committee concluded that it 'could happen again tomorrow.'<sup>18</sup> in the process of recovery, these structural causes can be transformed. But because this doesn't happen overnight, the recovery process itself can also reproduce the injustice (secondary victimization). Transformative justice guarantees of non-repetition, and alertness to reproduction of injustice must therefore go hand in hand if the injustice is to really stop: during the recovery process and structurally, also in other government agencies.

## **Why a Framework?**

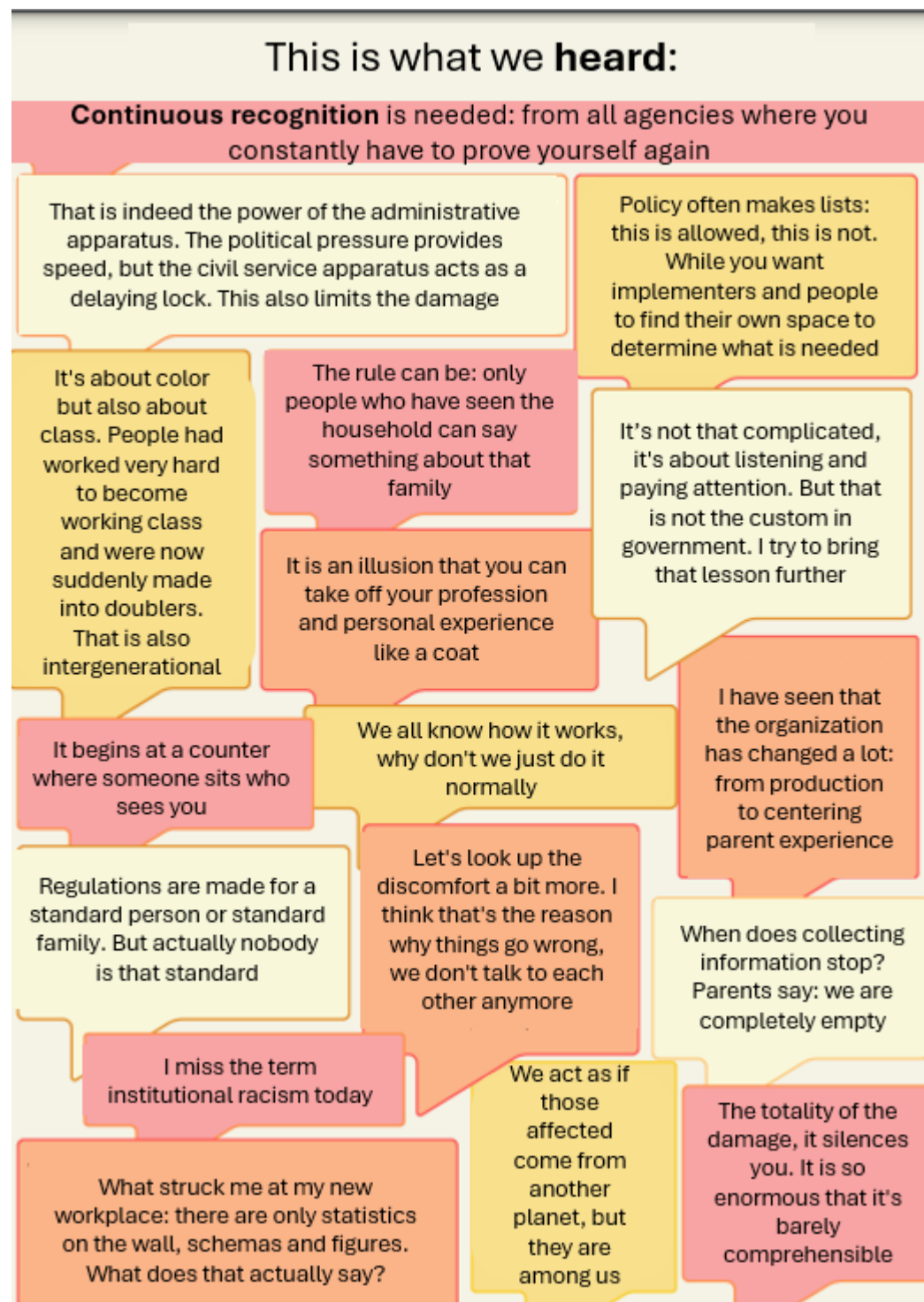
Societal recovery sounds like a broad mission for all of us. But that doesn't mean that the responsibility for societal recovery also primarily lies with society. No, as parents have clearly indicated: the involved institutions must take the initiative.<sup>19</sup> This framework helps first and foremost the government to determine what it can do to take this responsibility and thereby facilitate and mobilize society.

For this, we translate our vision of recovery into multiple handles and frameworks for recovery. We use the term 'framework' to show that this encompasses a large process: we are really talking about the society-wide recovery that is needed. At the same time, the word framework emphasizes that each organization and each department must also work independently to apply these ideas to their own context.

This framework offers, consecutively, insight into the available knowledge and existing support base, three concrete transformative programs based on the three core elements, a value framework, an analysis of the barriers, starting points for cultural change, and a language list. We connect each chapter to the spectrum of recovery.

But this framework is not a step-by-step plan. For this reason, we also don't present this framework linearly: the chapters cannot be read in isolation. Each of the parts refers to insights from other chapters. Together they form an integral framework. Hopefully, this framework will not become a report that disappears into a drawer, but a living document: the starting point for conversation in all kinds of organizations - perhaps based on agreement, but perhaps also precisely based on the criticism it generates. With this framework, each organization can determine its own role in the societal recovery process.

## 1. Support Base: Mapping Existing Knowledge About Challenges and Recovery

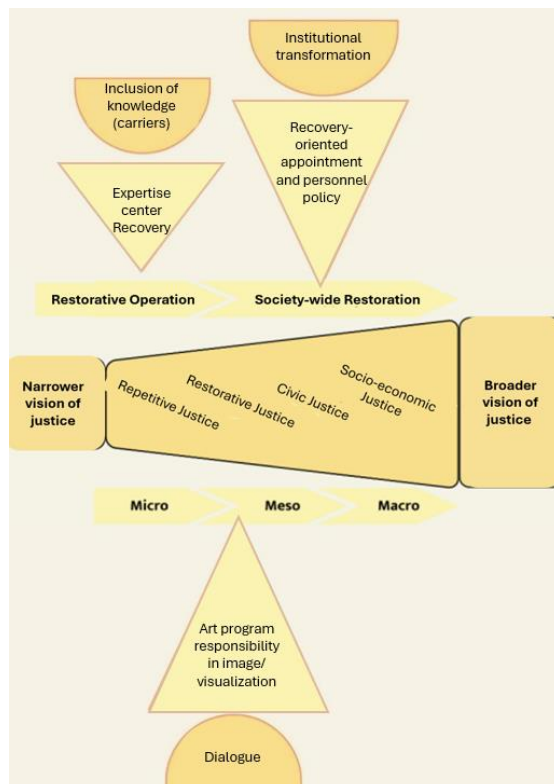


## 2. Three Transformative Programs: Concrete Starting Points



Societal recovery sounds complex but is primarily a concrete practice. That's why we begin this framework with three transformative programs. They are our answer to the three parties and their associated core elements of societal recovery:

- A. Recovery-oriented recruitment and personnel policy, focused on government and implementation – institutional transformation
- B. Art program depicting responsibility, focused on society – dialogue
- C. Recovery Expertise Center, focused on parents and young people – inclusion of knowledge(carriers)



**Figure 5:** The three transformative programs on the spectrum of recovery

These programs, like the framework, are not a step-by-step plan or menu of choices. Each of the three core elements requires action and each must still be developed by people with available institutional knowledge and expertise of lived experience. As researchers, we offer with these programs a social imagination of the core elements of recovery. We show which values are at play. For each program, we also make proposals for broader application by other social organizations.

## **A. Institutional transformation: recovery-oriented recruitment and personnel policy**

### ***What knowledge and initiatives already exist?***

Policy and implementation are human work. More inclusive, equal, and diverse recruitment and personnel policy is therefore a prerequisite for good recovery. Many organizations are already working on this (such as the municipalities of Amsterdam and Almere). What we propose here serves as a possible guideline for structural anchoring.

### **Initiative from the government**

Everyone wants the system to change – but that system is ultimately formed by people. And therefore, as *Blind to People and Law* also shows, 'courageous people who stick their necks out at the right moment' can make the difference.<sup>20</sup> But criticism and conflict are often met with fear in the recovery operation and daily practice. Good personnel policy actually facilitates collaboration, contradiction, and disagreement as indispensable and useful knowledge. Contradiction then becomes a form of social imagination that reveals barriers and possible alternatives. Recruitment and personnel policy that stimulates this diversity of viewpoints thus becomes part of societal recovery. The organization's own people can then recognize (reproduction of) injustice earlier and propose improvements.

### **How? An example: a recovery-oriented performance review**

More recovery-oriented personnel policy can begin concretely: a restructuring of the performance review, for example.

A recovery-oriented performance review contains at least the following questions focused on collaboration, contradiction, and conflict transformation:

1. How have you facilitated collaboration, contradiction, and conflict within your team?
2. How have you ensured safety within your team in expressing criticism?
3. How have you helped colleagues to express different interests, thereby acknowledging and transforming conflict (instead of: 'solving' it by dismissing it)?
4. How have you, in contact with those affected by injustice, learned from their expertise? What knowledge about recovery have you gained here? How did you put this into practice?
5. How do you help identify injustice in policy and implementation? What have you identified over the past year?
6. How have you contributed to taking, or calling out, responsibility for the causes of structural injustice?

These questions can also be translated to the highest management levels. Managers in particular have an important task in facilitating contradiction.

## **Who?**

Recovery-oriented personnel policy is valuable for all government agencies and social organizations – and perhaps even for commercial enterprises. Social safety and diversity, equality, and inclusion policy is in any case an integral part of this. This includes broadening available knowledge: expertise of lived experience at all levels of the organization leads, alongside existing administrative and technical expertise, to high quality collaboration and contradiction. This helps societal recovery.

## **When?**

Recovery-oriented recruitment and personnel policy is always useful, but especially in the later layers of recovery: it anchors lessons from earlier layers of the spectrum. It is part of what is sometimes called a guarantee of non-repetition: the transformations that can ensure this injustice does not repeat itself.

### ***Cultural change: broader applicability for society***

➤ ***Political parties and administrative organizations:*** Encourage disagreement in the form of discussion within your own organization, especially about topics that feel 'too sensitive'. Be open about this: it's not bad if there was and is conflict about certain decisions, but it is if that gets swept under the rug. Appoint people to portfolios who have specifically dealt with injustice in that area. Organize criticism within your own organization.

- *Relevant values:* listening, expertise, meeting, integrity, safety, transparency

➤ ***Implementation organizations:*** Establish a recovery-oriented 'regret rule': implementers, both in their regular activities and in the recovery process, may make mistakes by being 'too generous': this is not seen as weakness, but as an inevitable part of implementation based on trust and justice. For example: the manager accepts that an implementer, in 20% of the approved applications from citizens, in retrospect, acted too generously.

- *Relevant values:* service orientation, empathy, courage, care, trust, seeing, room to bend the path, humanity, human dimension

➤ ***Judiciary:*** Organize regular moral deliberation, led by an external professional, to discuss rulings where disagreement exists. Reward participation in these and other types of critical exchanges.

- *Relevant values:* curiosity, expertise, contact, listening, meeting, dignity, equality, humanity



## **B. Dialogue: Art Program Depicting Responsibility**

### ***What knowledge and initiatives already exist?***

Various artists have captured the childcare benefits affair in theater, literature, and visual art. This is important to do justice to the diversity of the injustice. Therefore, art can also be part of the diversity in recovery. For example, there is the theater performance "Lost Youth," created based on interviews with twelve 'benefits children'<sup>21</sup>, and several parents plan to write a book. We propose such a movement from expertise of lived experience to art and culture here as well: specifically focused on responsibility.

### ***Initiative from the government***

It is understandable that we want to give injustice a face by looking for individual culprits, but anonymity is part of the logic of structural injustice. This structural and institutional responsibility must become visible. This can be done, alongside the usual reports, through a participatory art program that investigates and visualizes this institutional responsibility in a more accessible way.

### **How? Cultural makers make responsibility and justice visible**

The art program researches responsibility 'then' and looks at the meaning of justice 'now': it connects past and future. Cultural makers (artists) can turn the logic of injustice into the logic of justice. Art touches because it appeals to different 'language' and expertise than we're used to: for example, embodied knowledge. The program meets these requirements:

1. Cultural makers engage in dialogue with knowledge carriers of systematic injustice: academics, politicians, civil servants, parents and young people. This way they investigate how institutional responsibility for injustice 'work(ed)'
2. It involves different art forms and both permanent art and performances: for example, spoken word, visual art, music
3. Cultural makers are paid for their research and the art they create
4. Cultural makers represent a cross-section of society, so institutional responsibility becomes visible across the full spectrum
5. The art program is widely distributed and 'travels' through the country
6. The program shows the injustice AND visualizes justice: in both cases making the invisible, visible
7. The project doesn't end with the art: experts are selected from the cultural makers (who might join the expertise center), who monitor and advise on the further functioning of the institution

8. The art program can become part of citizenship education, because it visualizes the breadth of humanization of institutions and the public sector

### **Who?**

The government and specifically the Tax Authority open their doors to cultural makers to examine their system. They also finance the project as a whole. But they let go of the outcome and process, because anger, grief, conflict: it's all allowed in art. Systemic injustice can remain invisible because the system appears anonymous, emotionless, and harmonious. An art program in particular can dismantle the 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' of the system and make the sharp edges of injustice visible. Allowing cultural makers to investigate institutional responsibility is therefore challenging, but also useful to see how it can be improved.

### **When?**

An art program can make important pillars of societal recovery visible. While art is often seen as a conclusion, it can actually provide much knowledge about the past and a better future in the layer of restorative recovery, thereby restoring relationships between citizens, government and communities.

### ***Cultural change: broader applicability for society***

➤ **Education:** Let children who have experienced injustice make drawings or plays about it. Then as a teacher, also engage in discussion: what can be improved? Who can take responsibility for that and in what way?

- *Relevant values:* curiosity, space for grief, visibility, seeing, humanity, equality

➤ **Implementation organizations:** Visit a theater performance about the childcare benefits affair with employees and discuss it in terms of: how does injustice work, and what does justice look like - and consider this time as working hours. Translate these lessons to your own institutional context.

- *Relevant values:* service orientation, respect, seeing, dignity, meeting, equality of opportunity, transparency

➤ **Art institutions:** Invest in or provide a platform for art that emerges from the lived experience of structural injustice.

- *Relevant values:* empathy, visibility, space for grief, dignity, seeing, humanity

## **C. Inclusion of Knowledge(carriers): A Recovery Expertise Center**

### ***What knowledge and initiatives already exist?***

The childcare benefits affair has made clear to many that knowledge about injustice and recovery primarily lies with parents and young people. This knowledge needs to be better valued. The College of Recovery Experts in Almere, the Recovery House in Amsterdam, and similar communities of parents in other locations embody these principles. We therefore propose an expertise center that further contributes to putting these ideas into practice at an overarching level.

### ***Initiative from the government***

Structural injustice brings, alongside much suffering, also much knowledge. Expertise of suffering often translates into expertise of recovery. Therefore, we propose: a permanent and paid Recovery Expertise Center consisting of experts with lived experience of structural injustice and experts with academic and procedural knowledge. The center advises government agencies about the benefits recovery process AND other recovery trajectories, which unfortunately may also be expected for the future.

The experts are thus parents and young people, but perhaps in the future also those affected by other structural injustice, who provide advice about ongoing and future recovery trajectories. The center contributes to society-wide awareness about expertise of lived experience as theoretical knowledge of what just recovery looks like. Other experts are academics and experienced civil servants, so that knowledge can always be well translated to the specific context where advice is needed. This case-transcending expertise center helps prevent each subsequent injustice from being interpreted as an isolated 'mistake' and thus counters the 'incident rule reflex.'<sup>22</sup>

### **How?**

An expertise center must at minimum provide the following:

1. Financial compensation for involved experts
2. All experts have lived experience of structural injustice
3. Good, broad representation of the group. Principles of intersectionality can provide guidance here
4. Services of knowledge sharing and advice to various government agencies involved in recovery. For each subsequent recovery trajectory, involvement and advice from the expertise center can be a standard component
5. Input from experts and possibilities for adjustment during the recovery trajectory if their knowledge and advice are insufficiently applied
6. Clear accountability and fair leadership structures, to be developed in a system of co-determination by the experts themselves
7. Facilitation of conflict and disagreement within the center

## **Who?**

The government should provide financial and logistical support for establishing the expertise center. Previously mentioned expertise organizations of parents and young people could perhaps provide advice here.

## **When?**

Knowledge sharing and advice from the expertise center can be valuable in all layers of the spectrum. Especially before the official start of a recovery process, the advice of an expertise center is valuable, because that's precisely when scale and objectives are determined. Where implementers of these recovery trajectories often think they are 'groping in the dark' during that phase, experts with lived experience of structural injustice can provide knowledge and direction – after all, they already know the situation. This means the wheel doesn't need to be reinvented repeatedly, which often happens and costs much energy.

### ***Cultural change: broader applicability for society***

➤ **Education:** Organize knowledge sharing about structural injustice within co-determination structures as well. Value the expertise of parents with lived experience of injustice.

- *Relevant values:* expertise, listening, safety, space for grief, trust, agency, care, integrity, meeting, transparency

➤ **Journalism:** Actively recruit colleagues among groups with lived experience, or commission freelance assignments to these experts. Write from this expertise not only about recovery and injustice, but also about what a just society could look like.

- *Relevant values:* expertise, visibility, trust, equality, equality of opportunity

➤ **Housing corporations:** Ask (former) clients who your organization treated unjustly in the past to provide advice on how to prevent this in the future. Compensate them for this advice.

- *Relevant values:* expertise, service orientation, courage, integrity, meeting, human dimension, equality of opportunity

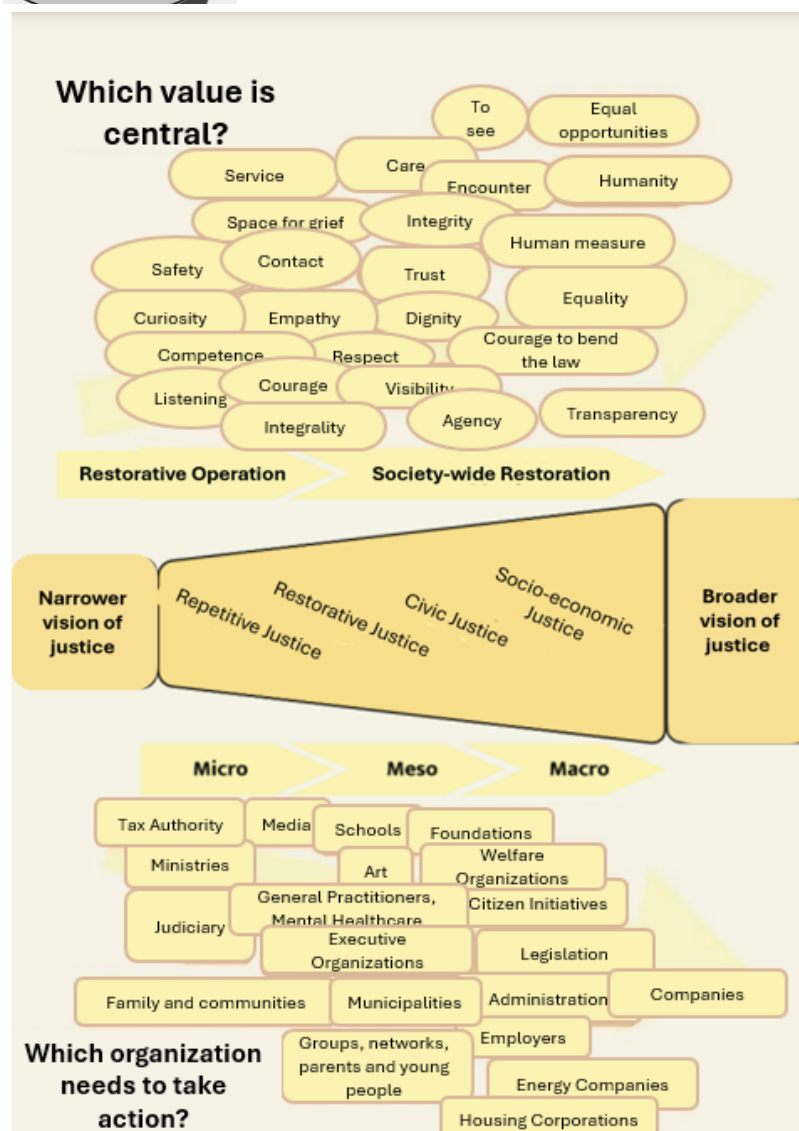
➤ **Businesses and organizations:** If an expertise center sounds too large, start with a tandem project: pair managers with people from your target group who have expertise from lived experience. Let them shadow for a few paid days to point out the concrete effects of difficult procedures. Ask them for advice on how to improve.

- *Relevant values:* expertise, service orientation, trust, integrity, meeting, agency, courage to bend rules, human dimension, humanity

### 3. Values and Perspectives



Societal recovery reflects the values that we as a society consider important. In this sense, the recovery process is the mirror of who we want to be. Many principles of recovery are also principles of good citizenship. We have already begun this process of jointly determining these values in the work sessions: this value framework is thus a starting point for a broader society-wide conversation. Below, these values are connected to the spectrum of recovery. Because values are only meaningful when it is clear who is responsible, we have also indicated the relevant organizations.



**Figure 6:** Values and organizations on the spectrum of recovery

Every value and organization on the left still participates on the right: the number of relevant values and organizations thus increases with each step to the right and with each layer of recovery. The Tax Authority and involved ministries, for example, come into view immediately with reparative recovery as direct causes of the injustice. They still play a role in socio-economic recovery as well. Businesses, on the other hand, don't need to be in view yet for reparative recovery. After all, they have little to do with the direct damage in the government-citizen relationship. Yet they too have a responsibility when it comes to socio-economic societal recovery: this is also about structural poverty reduction and equality of opportunity, which the benefits system was actually meant for but fails to achieve. A diverse and inclusive personnel policy, similar internship structure, and good whistleblower policy – to name some concrete examples – are thus also part of businesses' possible contributions to societal recovery.

We also see that the values actually expand and increase in content with each step from left to right. In the direct government-citizen relationship, for example, listening, contact, and time and space are already essential values for reparative recovery. The citizen who encounters a listening civil servant can thus repair the direct bit of suffering that was previously inflicted because the citizen only encountered a blind wall. But further to the right, listening and contact are not enough. If we really want to talk about citizenship recovery, **encounter** comes into view as a value: the moment when both parties, government and citizens, truly change through contact and see and hear each other. The same applies to dignity: useful for recovery of direct relationships between citizen and government and communities (reparative and restorative recovery), but for citizenship and socio-economic recovery, equality is needed.

Besides formal social organizations, families and communities must also come more into view. Individual recovery seems not to exist really, because recovery is always relational: from the government, to one's own family or neighbors. The childcare benefits affair has also damaged family relationships. In the recovery process, this injustice is sometimes reproduced. As young Giliano states: 'My youth was taken from me, and with it everything I could have been [...] And I also feel guilty, because I was angry at my mother for so long because I thought she didn't have her affairs in order. Now I know I should have been angry at the government.'<sup>23</sup> Moreover, family is often larger than the nuclear family. This means that when making policy and recovery arrangements, attention should also be paid to other family constellations.

We encourage every social organization to investigate for themselves how they relate, in their different activities, to those four layers of recovery and each of the values. Organizations already indicated on the spectrum can draw a vertical line and see exactly which values are important for them (everything around and to the left of the line). Determining relevant values can be a useful step in designing, testing, and adjusting projects and programs. For the three transformative programs, we have already provided a starting point for this 'method' by naming the relevant values each time.

## **Perspective Shifts: Translating Values into Societal Recovery**

In the previous framework, we brought together relevant values and organizations on the spectrum, making clear who is responsible when for putting those values into practice. We present three perspective shifts that help us see, based on these values, what is needed for a broader practice of societal recovery.<sup>24</sup>

### ***1. Appreciation of emotion and disagreement***

Conflict and emotions are often met with suspicion. But conflict and emotions are forms of knowledge. Disagreement within the group(s) of parents and young people is more a sign of success than failure: parents and young people feel like citizens who can talk back – emancipation as part of recovery. The role of government and society is not to play divisions against each other, but to provide a platform for emotion and conflict as a form of dialogue that leads to recovery.

Which values play a role here? When people are not seen in their (justified) emotions as a form of knowledge, they are not seen in their completeness. The appreciation of anger, emotions, and disagreement is a form of encounter – a real meeting. This therefore contributes to humanity and, especially when conflict is well facilitated rather than managed away, to dignity.

### ***2. Recognition of structural injustice***

Recognition of a 'mistake' is denial of structural injustice. The benefits recovery operation acknowledges this injustice, but other government agencies still dismiss injustice in their domain as excess or incident: government-wide there is thus still denial.

Which values play a role here? When the causes of injustice are named and acknowledged, this directly contributes to the values of trust and humanity. When those structural causes are also addressed, this contributes to a more caring government, through which citizens experience agency again, and to society-wide equality of opportunity.

### ***3. Participation of parents and young people as experts in recovery and inclusion of knowledge***

Parents and young people are experts in suffering AND recovery. Participation is not reactive but a continuous process. For other social actors in society-wide recovery too, the goal is structural inclusion and participation and appreciation of all forms of knowledge: knowledge justice. Useful here is also the now often-heard plea for practical wisdom.<sup>25</sup>

Which values play a role here? Including all forms of knowledge in societal recovery, and particularly the expertise of those affected, makes listening truly become contact: the knowledge is also heard. This becomes visible and tangible when this knowledge returns in policy and practice. For this exchange and appreciation of different forms of knowledge, time and space are needed to ultimately lead to equality.

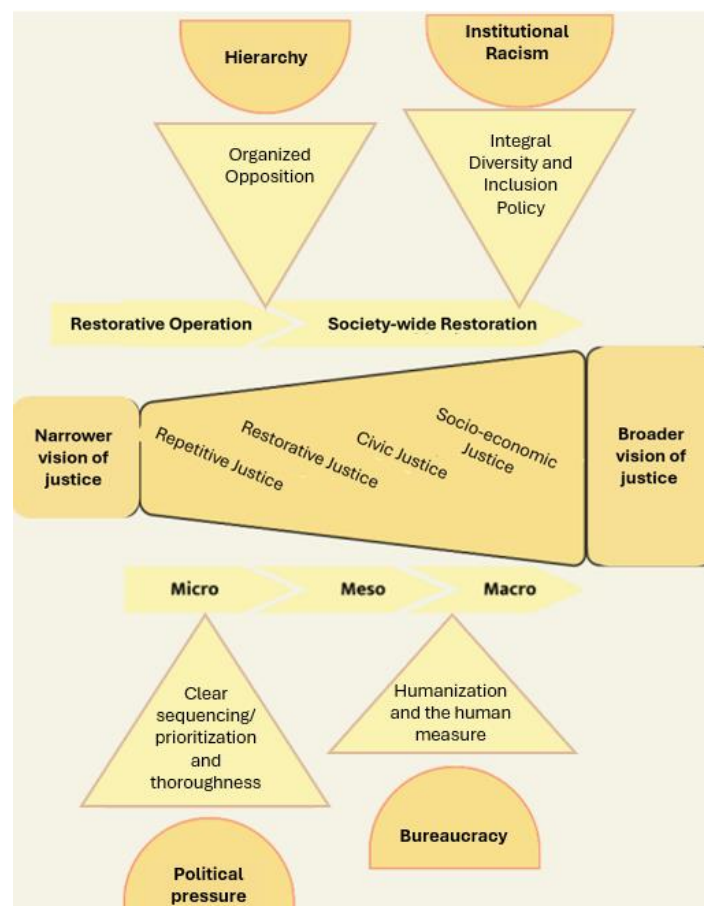
#### 4. Barriers to Recovery



We notice that talking about recovery and solutions always goes hand in hand with talking about barriers and the injustice itself. This sometimes feels like a step backward and can also be burdensome for those affected. And yet it is also important. After all, transformative justice is about turning the structural causes of injustice into structural safeguards for a better system. Recovery takes place during this process.

Therefore, we discuss here these structures that are both causes of injustice and barriers to recovery. These structures have to do with organization ('this is just how things work here') and with self-image ('we mean well'). Some employees within the organization don't feel fully supported in their ambitions for recovery. We can be direct about this: this framework also serves as a way for organizations to collectively express commitment to societal recovery. It supports those who want to be the bearers of the transformation process. Here

we outline the contours for transformation: by turning the logic of the barrier into the logic of recovery and justice.



**Figure 7:** Barriers on the spectrum of recovery



## Over-bureaucratic Management and Individualization

Bureaucracy and efficiency have important functions in governance, politics, and implementation. But these only truly come into their own within a system built around the values of public service and the rule of law. This is precisely what's missing, as the report *Caught between Counter and Policy* also concludes: 'There is no leading governance philosophy for the government as a whole – while it is now widely recognized that the business-like approach (the philosophy of New Public Management) has gone too far.'<sup>26</sup> 'Regime keepers' defend, perhaps unconsciously, what they think has become their main goal: business operations. They will thus only support recovery as long as it means returning to the old situation and old values. This also explains why learning proves so difficult. All knowledge is there, but this knowledge seems not to be anchored.

Our view of societal recovery is focused on that anchoring: namely sustainable transformation of the system so that the causes of injustice are addressed. This means that people should no longer be judged on efficiency and production, but on responsiveness to citizens' needs. This performance and time pressure affects the most vulnerable citizens first, as their cases might be difficult to fit within the boxes of standard regulations. This goes hand in hand with the disappearance of the counter: the 'loss of personal contact.'<sup>27</sup> Too strict and top-down implementation stifles customization and necessary correction mechanisms in the bud. Thus the human dimension gets lost from view and dehumanization can occur.

Moreover, society has become incredibly complex. Many aspects of policy and governance have become 'juridified,' leading to quick recourse to legal 'solutions' for problems that are actually societal. Citizens therefore quickly get stuck. Such implementation thus insufficiently takes into account the 'capacity to act': 'citizens must not only know the law, but also be able to 'do' it: be able to act on it.'<sup>28</sup> It's good that it's possible to object, but not every citizen has access to that option.

This capacity to act also helps us see that society and communities need to come back into view. With the bureaucratic hyperfocus on the individual, we insufficiently see that self-reliance is actually about relational responsibility. Citizen resilience is a relational process and is determined by the community resources someone has access to. The social context is central to recovery.

It is therefore up to all of us to make bureaucracy serve the public cause again, doing justice to all these social relationships.<sup>29</sup> In other words: bureaucracy needs a vision of human dignity: humanization. Fortunately, societal recovery as a process can help shape humanization - precisely where things went wrong with the childcare benefits affair. As the parliamentary inquiry committee concluded, the government was 'blind to people and law. Blind to the consequences for the people involved.

Blind to these people's rights. Blind to its own failure which allowed this to continue for years. Blind to the signals that were given. From within and from outside. All state powers have been blind to people and law.<sup>130</sup>

Transformative societal recovery makes people and law visible again.

### **Rigid Hierarchy**

Like bureaucracy, hierarchy also has an important function. It creates clarity in position and responsibilities. However, we see in discussions that this hierarchy promotes the organization looking away from responsibility, or prevents people from taking responsibility. *Caught between Counter and Policy* also concludes:

'Within implementation organizations, it occurs that employees don't feel safe to report bottlenecks in their work to their supervisors. It also occurs that when they do, they hear nothing more about the report. Supervisors regularly lack 'follow-through power' to solve the identified problem. Especially in large implementation organizations, a signal sometimes has to go through a clay layer of managers before someone can make a decision.'<sup>131</sup>

Hierarchy thus leads in these situations to the externalization of responsibility: particularly in the highest positions, few feel called to intervene, because the signal contrasts too strongly with their self-image of a good organization and their image of recovery, or because the distance to practice has become too great. Contradiction is often not well organized: employees don't feel safe to express themselves critically. As a result, important knowledge, such as the expertise of lived experience, goes unseen. The image of a 'good' civil servant or implementer has become distorted: because precisely that critical signal function, even more than efficiency, has transformative potential and serves the public interest. In a sense, appreciation of collaboration and contradiction is the core of recovery.

The knowledge that has emerged from the childcare benefits affair points us to a renewed appreciation of the role of direct implementers. They are often the first to pick up direct signals about injustice, but also those who even then must implement those unjust structures. In making and adjusting policy, implementers should take a more central role. Within organizations, this is also about integrating complaint procedures and feedback loops.

### **Political (Time) Pressure**

Our idea of societal recovery is about the process instead of the outcome – while politics is often interested in the latter. But this political time pressure need not exclude vigorous recovery: for those affected too, expedience<sup>32</sup> and clarity<sup>33</sup> are important. Expedient, generous, collective restitution of direct damage is needed to be able to get on with life. Individual compensation for indirect damage indeed takes longer, but this is not in contrast: restitution comes before compensation anyway. We often call this sequencing: the order of recovery measures matters.

Societal recovery may 'never' be finished: after all, it's about transforming structures. It is therefore important that those implementing recovery stay alert to simplification. From the beginning, the entire

spectrum of recovery must be in view. Even in the layer of reparative recovery in the recovery operation, societal recovery is already being shaped. And in the middle of those layers of societal recovery, moments of reparative recovery will return. Sequencing thus specifically does not mean making a rigid planning, but designing a timeline of recovery to which you can add new feedback loops.

Awareness of this bigger picture also means attention to smaller steps. Those individual dots on the horizon can be set and completed. This requires careful communication and honesty. Parents find it 'suspicious,' for example, that the government is now focusing on societal recovery, while the recovery operation (individual, reparative recovery) is progressing so difficultly.<sup>34</sup> There lies clear wisdom here: expedience in the recovery operation is essential. At the same time, it's also true that precisely by giving shape to societal recovery, new insights about reparative recovery can be integrated into the recovery operation. Policy and implementation therefore have the, indeed difficult but also very meaningful, task of showing politics where quick action is required, and where an integral, careful approach is needed.

### **Institutional Racism and Unequal Citizenship**

Many are willing to examine the structural causes of the childcare benefits affair, but recognizing institutional racism proves difficult. If this structural cause is not named, this injustice gets reproduced in the recovery process. Moreover, we then miss the chance at transformative justice as part of recovery. Diversity, equality, and inclusion should therefore also be an integral part of organizational policy.

Recognition of institutional racism also includes: giving space to diversity within recovery. Different communities in the Netherlands will have different wishes and needs. It is part of the recovery from institutional racism to offer this social space to cultural diversity AND use this as a form of knowledge. Citizenship education can play an important role here. The childcare benefits affair then becomes a case study at school for students to learn how injustice can happen and what recovery entails. After that, they can think together about citizenship: which values and changes together ensure that this kind of injustice cannot take place anymore (guarantee of non-repetition)?

## 5. Cultural Change: Everyone Engaged for Implementation

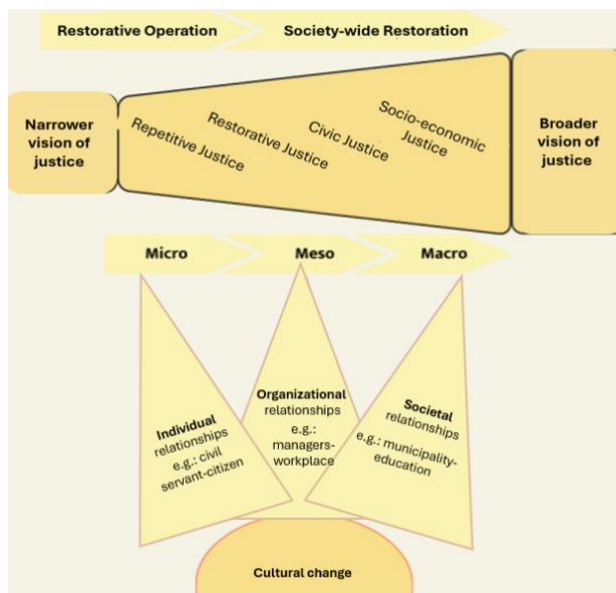


We hear it often when we talk about societal recovery: the entire culture must change. Cultural change is simultaneously very abstract AND very concrete. After all, culture also consists of the daily choices we make.

To give an example: A human rights culture is a society in which the values, norms, and behaviors that promote and protect human rights are deeply rooted in people's daily practice and consciousness. The goal: a society in which everyone feels safe, respected, and valued, and where the rights of each person are recognized and protected. It requires continuous effort.

Self-examination is needed at three levels for this cultural change, looking at unconscious experiences, views of humanity, and invisible structures in daily choices and interactions:

- **Micro:** individual relationships, for example civil servant - citizen
- **Meso:** organizational relationships, for example implementers - management
- **Macro:** relationships between organization and society



**Figure 8:** Cultural change on the spectrum of restoration

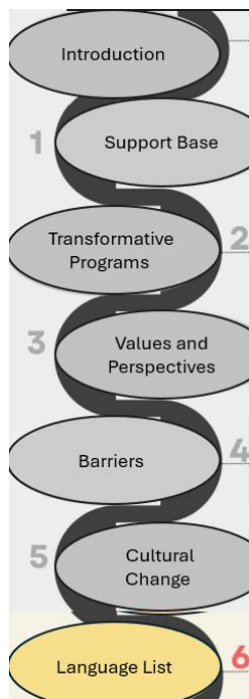
The three perspective shifts form the basis for these reflection questions. How can societal actors contribute to both a transformative recovery operation for the benefits affair (question 1) and to society-wide recovery (question 2)? Every social organization can work with these questions.

## Reflection Questions for Transformative Recovery

	1. Recognition of Injustice	2. Expertise and Participation	3. Emotions and Disagreement
<b>Micro</b>	<p>1) What training do our employees (including higher management) need to recognize structural injustice in contact with affected parties and not dismiss it as a mistake or incident?</p> <p>2) What safe opportunities does our organization offer its own employees to bring elements of injustice and denial to light?</p>	<p>1) What training helps individual employees (including higher management) to recognize, stimulate, and use the expertise of affected parties as a guideline?</p> <p>2) How can employees get more opportunities to bring their expertise from lived experience to the policy level and thereby into the functioning of our organization?</p>	<p>1) What training helps our employees to make space for emotion, anger, and disagreement in contact with affected parties – both from the affected parties and themselves?</p> <p>2) How do we ensure our employees feel welcome to express emotions and disagreement within the organization?</p>
<b>Meso</b>	<p>1) How does our organization contribute to breaking the cycles of denial in the restoration process and to the continuous recognition of structural injustice?</p> <p>2) How does our organization ensure that knowledge brought in from the work floor is processed into more just practices and policy?</p>	<p>1) How does the restoration operation move from isolated moments of consultation and feedback to structural (paid) integration of lived experiences?</p> <p>2) How does our institution anchor participation and inclusion in the organizational culture as a whole? Which lived experiences and tacit knowledge (implicit knowledge) are important for just daily functioning and are currently missing in the organization?</p>	<p>1) What feedback loops, with inclusive participation of stakeholders, can our organization build into the restoration process to value moments of emotion, criticism, and disagreement as 'free advice' and information for (re)design?</p> <p>2) How does our organization implement principles of conflict transformation to translate expressed emotions and disagreement into sustainable policy?</p>
<b>Macro</b>	<p>1) How does our organization contribute</p>	<p>1) How can our organization, including in contacts with</p>	<p>1) What role does our organization play in</p>

<p>to a joint manifestation of the emerged recognition of structural injustice in the public space?</p> <p>2) What are our partnerships for this lasting, visible recognition?</p>	<p>media and education, combat remaining social stigma by embracing affected parties as experts?</p> <p>2) How do we work together with other organizations to stimulate society-wide appreciation of diverse knowledge carriers and forms (including lived experience)?</p>	<p>stimulating the emancipation process of affected parties and other marginalized groups?</p> <p>2) How does our organization, including through media and education, contribute to the appreciation of disagreement as an expression of citizenship and strengthening of the citizen-government relationship?</p>
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## 6. Language List



Language matters. Language can carry injustice within itself, but can also outline the contours of justice through social imagination. In this framework, we have taken this to heart in two ways: we have introduced inclusive scientific terms in **bold** and we have attempted to use dignified 'everyday' language for injustice and justice. Below we present both categories opposite words that are common in science and media, but which we see as less inclusive and have therefore struck through.

### Scientific Language for Recovery:

Preferred Term	Less Inclusive Term (Avoided)
Transformative justice	<del>Transformative justice</del>
Transformative recovery	<del>Affirmative recovery</del>
Recognition of structural injustice	<del>Affirmative recognition</del>
Lived experience of injustice	<del>Victim perspective</del>
Guarantees of non-repetition	<del>Reforms and revisions</del>
Reproduction of injustice	<del>New injustice</del>
Structural and institutional responsibility	<del>Individual guilt</del>
Intersectionality	<del>Identity politics</del>
Knowledge justice	<del>Hierarchy in knowledge</del>
Relational responsibility	<del>Individual responsibility</del>
Human rights culture	<del>Juridification</del>

## Everyday Language for Recovery:

Preferred Term	Less Inclusive Term (Avoided)
Parents and young people	<del>Affected parties</del>
Those affected	<del>Victims</del>
Experts (of lived experience)	<del>Experience expert</del>
Structural injustice	<del>Incident, mistake</del>
Recovery is a practice; you can begin directly	<del>Recovery is very complex</del>
Government and citizens must enter into equal dialogue	<del>Trust in government must be restored</del>
Recovery is a process	<del>Recovery is an outcome</del>
Recovery is always relational (family, communities, collective)	<del>Customization as ultimate solution</del>