



Working on
broad prosperity

Together toward a future-proof world



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Introduction

The ever-accelerating climate change, increasing social inequality, and tensions in society make it crucial to speed up the sustainability of the economy and society in a way that does not lead to even greater social tensions. By looking through the lens of broad prosperity at “what individuals and society consider to be of value,” we can chart a course toward a future-proof world.¹ We thus have the opportunity and the task of addressing ecological, economic, and social aspects simultaneously, weighing them in conjunction with the goals and targets to be formulated to promote broad prosperity. The far-reaching transitions in society in areas such as climate and energy, labor market, health, and digitalization, therefore, require new shared values.² For example, how do we design a sustainable economy that aligns with the ecological boundaries? And what should the social foundation look like? How do we ensure that people have sufficient prospects for existence? How do we ensure that people are willing and able to adapt to the necessary changes? Viewed from the human perspective, it becomes evident, among other things, that not everyone can easily keep up with the various transitions and that an equal distribution in society is not evident. What will it take to accomplish this? The internationally accepted perspective of broad prosperity also leads to questions about the organization of the social order and thus about interrelationships amongst citizens, market, and government. What does this mean for politics, governance, and leadership? How do we balance the different dimensions of broad prosperity? Where can potential win-win situations be created? And what (uncomfortable) choices are necessary?

Based on its expertise as a university of humanities and social sciences, Tilburg University aims to understand the above challenges and offer concrete perspectives for action for the various stakeholders involved in implementing these transitions. For Tilburg University, broad prosperity is thus a connecting and guiding framework to pursue a sustainable, inclusive, and just society. These three core values for improving broad prosperity are in line with the United Nations (UN) principle of “leaving no one behind,”³ which is guiding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the targets set in the 2030 Agenda⁴. Through academic collaborative centers and other initiatives, we apply our expertise in the fields of economics, law, theology, social sciences, humanities, and digital sciences to contribute concretely, in co-creation with societal partners, to preserving and

¹ ESB (2023) <https://esb.nu/verbind-meten-van-welvaart-expliciet-aan-maatschappelijke-doelen/>

² Putters, Kim (2023) *Samenleving in de steigers (Society in the Scaffolding)*. Lecture for Cathedral Builders, <https://www.ser.nl/nl/actueel/toespraken/kathedralenspeech>

³ United Nations Development Programme (2018) <https://www.undp.org/publications/what-does-it-mean-leave-no-one-behind>

⁴ United Nations 2030 Agenda (2015) <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

enhancing broad prosperity here and now in the Netherlands but also for people outside the Netherlands and for future generations. For Tilburg University, this collaboration with social parties is a prerequisite for shaping our contribution to the transitions. In doing so, we work from our distinctive Tilburg perspective, namely from four transformative mechanisms: laws and regulations, markets and organizations, society and citizens, and technology and data. Our research agenda focuses on descriptive, monitor-type questions but, more importantly, also on deeper and more explanatory questions that deal with societal transitions and distributional issues, how to address them and, in terms of management and governance, how to embed them institutionally. We develop these questions into five thematic issues: climate and energy transition, labor market/old age, health and wellbeing (both physical and mental), poverty, and hunger.

In doing so, we choose co-creation as a working form. This collaborative and participatory approach involves multiple stakeholders (researchers, societal partners, businesses, students, the community) in the research process. Through co-creation, we bring together different perspectives and expertise based on the understanding that they are valuable and necessary to address complex problems and generate meaningful and useful knowledge. Through co-creation, we seek to bridge the gap between theory and practice and increase the relevance and applicability of research findings.

In this position paper, we explain why and, more importantly, in what way the perspective of broad prosperity serves as a guiding and unifying principle for our mission to contribute to a sustainable, inclusive, and just society. In addition, we present our Program for Broad Prosperity outlining eight initiatives addressing the five interrelated thematic issues mentioned above. Finally, we argue that, although the future is uncertain and largely unpredictable, we must seize the opportunity in this way now to build a future-proof world based on being responsible ancestors. We hope this position paper will not only present our ambitions, but also inspire others to take up the gauntlet in the collective task of helping to realize the necessary transitions.



1. Broad prosperity as concept

As stated, our society is facing major societal challenges that call for complex transitions. Pressing issues such as climate change, declining biodiversity, environmental pressure on raw materials, poverty, growing inequality, an aging population, a rising demand for care, and labor shortages call for new visions and solutions in a long-term agenda. There is growing awareness that the traditional notion of prosperity falls short in considering these transitions in their mutual relationship. In practice, the amount of goods and services produced (the gross domestic product, GDP) is often considered an indicator of our prosperity. More production implies more prosperity. However, we should be cautious with that conclusion, as GDP by no means captures everything that people themselves consider essential for their wellbeing nor what the earth can handle.

An increase in GDP does not automatically mean that everyone is also better off and healthier, nor that the quality of the living environment (nature and environment) improves. On the contrary, GDP growth can have negative effects if it is not balanced with social and environmental dimensions. Therefore, we also need to assess the quality of nature and the environment and the state of education, public health, poverty, and security. In short, broad prosperity.

The concept of “broad prosperity” represents a broad and internationally supported view of what prosperity means for people and society as a whole. More recently, it builds on the influential Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (2009)⁵, written on behalf of French President Sarkozy, which focuses on measuring economic performance and social progress. It argues for a broader and more holistic perspective on prosperity beyond traditional economic indicators such as gross domestic product. Broad prosperity paints a picture of a society’s prosperity by taking into account a wide range of conditions that affect people’s wellbeing. In addition to economic factors such as income and employment, it also includes social, cultural, and ecological factors such as health, education, equality, social cohesion, sustainability, and the living environment. This approach allows for a more complete understanding of prosperity and enables working towards prosperity in a broader and coherent sense. Broad prosperity can then evolve into an integral framework for assessments and decision-making, serving as a common compass in achieving far-reaching societal transitions.

⁵ Stiglitz, Joseph E., Sen, Amartya & Jean-Paul Fitoussi (2009) *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/8131721/8131772/Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi-Commission-report.pdf>

Broad prosperity is thus an important concept for policymakers, as well as for companies and institutions, because it indicates where opportunities and challenges lie in various domains. Determining the appropriate scale level for a policy aimed at preserving and enhancing broad prosperity is essential. That could be at a continental level, such as Europe, or at a national level, but also, for example, at a regional, municipal, or neighborhood level. After all, where people live and what that location has to offer in terms of, for example, work, schools, housing, but also the quality of the living environment, are crucial factors influencing their wellbeing. Because people are in different circumstances, the living environment varies and people (can) mobilize their sources of prosperity at different scales, the policy challenges also differ. Broad prosperity is not evenly distributed among people and places; some groups are more vulnerable in some places than others. Often, unfavorable outcomes even accumulate. Looking at background characteristics, wealth differences manifest themselves mainly by migration background, education level, and residential environment.⁶ People with poorer health and lower education levels tend to have more limited income from employment and are more likely to live in non-energy-efficient housing. From a regional perspective, we see that, in addition to inner cities, deprivation is particularly prevalent on the edges of the Netherlands.⁷ Depending on whether a location lags behind in certain aspects of broad prosperity or has good opportunities to strengthen certain dimensions, the focus and implementation of policies must be adjusted.

Meanwhile, various instruments have been developed that show the state of affairs with regard to broad prosperity; there is the Wellbeing Monitor by CBS (Statistics Netherlands), which maps broad prosperity for the whole of the Netherlands, but there are also regional and municipal monitors. These instruments offer policymakers a better understanding of what broad prosperity means for people and society at different scale levels.

⁶ Statistics Netherlands (CBS) (2023) *Monitor Brede Welvaart & Sustainable Development Goals 2022*, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/dossier/brede-welvaart-en-de-sustainable-development-goals/monitor-brede-welvaart-sustainable-development-goals-2022>; Klerk, Mirjam de, Eggink, Evelien, Plaisier, Inger & Klarita Sadiraj (2023). *Zicht op zorgen. Kerncijfers over de problemen, hulpbronnen, leefsituatie en ondersteuning van mensen in het sociaal domein*. The Hague: Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP). <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2023/05/31/zicht-op-zorgen>

⁷ Council for the Environment and Infrastructure, Council for Public Administration & Council for Public Health and Society (2023) *Elke regio telt! Een nieuwe aanpak voor verschillen tussen regio's (Every region counts! A new approach to disparities between regions)*, https://www.rli.nl/sites/default/files/rli_elke_regio_telt_nieuw_hr_def.pdf

However, an important challenge remains in translating this insight into concrete policy and into concrete strategies and actions that promote and protect future wellbeing. This requires not only operationalizing the concept of broad prosperity but also designing organizations, governance, institutions, and politics with an integral approach based on this broader perspective. Moreover, no single organization can manage all the relevant dimensions of broad prosperity. This always requires collaboration with (a network of) other organizations. Tilburg University aims to be one of these organizations and play a catalyzing role based on its own knowledge and expertise.




2. The Tilburg DNA of broad prosperity

A comprehensive view of prosperity, as well as the premise of justice, is in Tilburg University's DNA. Tilburg University was founded in 1927 as a commercial school at a time when there were relatively few Catholics in key positions in industry, commerce, shipping, and banking. Tilburg, meanwhile, had become a major industrial city, and the new institution of higher education could begin to provide training for corporate executives. This Catholic emancipation, in which the Tilburg commercial school had a share, also brought about an approach to commerce and economics that was actually broader than the concept developed around the same time by the American economist Simon Kuznets, the earlier mentioned gross domestic product. This had everything to do with the contribution of priest, economist, and professor Martinus Cobbenhagen (1893-1954), one of the founders of the Roman Catholic *Handelshoogeschool* (Commercial College) in Tilburg, where he served as Rector Magnificus three times.

Cobbenhagen promoted Catholic socio-economic ideas and, in his way, opposed a narrow, limited approach to economics. Among other things, he stressed the importance of ethics in economics. In a climate in which pleas for more social justice were on the rise, Cobbenhagen made a plea for "solidarism" as a socio-economic organizing principle, instead of, on the one hand, purely individualistic capitalism that fosters social inequality and, on the other hand, state socialism that is based on class differences. Much later, this position would be named as the "Third Way."

Cobbenhagen also advocated scientific training for the practice of socio-economics. He found quantitative and model-based methods useful, but they should not be the core of economic science. Thereby, economic science should be "organically" connected to other disciplines, such as sociology and psychology.

Thus, the expansion of the commercial college, into a modern university specialized in humanities and the social sciences with six Schools - Economics and Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Law, Theology, Humanities and Digital Sciences, and TIAS School for Business and Society- can also largely be attributed to Cobbenhagen's conviction and purposeful blueprint.



3. Impact, interdisciplinarity, and co-creation

Tilburg's current diverse offerings as a humanities and social sciences university attract a diversity of students, lecturers, and researchers and thus also create opportunities to approach societal issues from multiple perspectives and contribute adequately to addressing them.

From the beginning, Tilburg University, as highlighted above, has had a strong focus on addressing societal issues and practice. Scientists often engaged with societal problems or organizations in a personal capacity. Martinus Cobbenhagen, for example, was president of the *Wijkwerk* Foundation, which supported underprivileged families after World War II. These kinds of activities, research, advice, and contributing ideas for the benefit of society, were long referred to by universities as “community service.” In the 1970s and 1980s, many initiatives arose from the call for a socially relevant university, such as in 1969 the *Tilburgse Rechtswinkel* (legal aid center), the first in the Netherlands.

Much later, the term valorization also came into vogue, particularly at technical universities. About ten years ago, Tilburg University and the Tilburg region started to focus on social innovation, which is the Advisory Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation⁸ defines as a collective term for contemporary initiatives of people and organizations aimed at innovative solutions to societal challenges that can grow into a broad initiative of various parties and individuals, such as citizens, entrepreneurs, and scientists.

In the period 2018–2021, Tilburg University ran the impact program Advancing Society in a Digital Era, which further strengthened the connection between science and society. After previously talking about valorization, in line with the terminology used by the KNAW and the NWO, from now on we talk about impact. The Program for Broad Prosperity builds on this.

Also in the 2022-2027 Strategy: Weaving Minds and Characters, the university explicitly chooses to reinforce the social significance of its research. This is done in part within the academic collaborative centers launched in 2023 in which researchers and students work together with societal partners in co-creation on solutions to major societal issues. These collaborative centers, together with other well-established forms of co-creation such as Netspar and Tranzo, are integrated into a program through which the university shapes and contributes to broad

⁸ Advisory Council on Science, Technology, and Innovation (2014) *The Power of Social Innovation*, <https://www.awti.nl/documenten/adviezen/2014/1/31/de-kracht-van-sociale-innovatie>; Summary in English: [The power-of-social-innovation-summary](https://www.awti.nl/documenten/adviezen/2014/1/31/de-kracht-van-sociale-innovatie) | Publication | Advisory council for science, technology and innovation (awti.nl)

prosperity, aimed at achieving a society with equal opportunities and employment, a sustainable living environment, and sufficient economic growth.

For such a program, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary are a necessary prerequisites - an observation already made by Cobbenhagen at the time.⁹ We draw on the Tilburg themes of business and organization, entrepreneurship, behavior, decision-making, communication & cognition, social justice, health, digitalization, artificial intelligence and data science, labor and labor market, fulfillment, globalization, governance and regulation, and competition and markets. These scientific competencies, combined with methodological skills, are the foundation for the Program for Broad Prosperity.

To tackle societal issues that are considered multifaceted wicked problems, we work intensively in co-creation with a range of civil societal organizations, businesses, and networks. We also involve citizens, which we refer to as “citizen science.” Co-creation requires a two-sided approach in which we seek an agenda that overlaps and aligns the practical problems stakeholders are struggling with and the knowledge housed within our university, creating a true interaction between practice and research. This does not mean that we will solely focus on applied research, but rather that academic research addresses questions that are highly relevant to the practical world or “use-inspired basic research.”¹⁰ It also does not mean that, in the collaborative centers, we only focus on solving the problems experienced by (individual) stakeholders, but on strengthening “the common good” from the perspective of wellbeing at various levels of society.

⁹ This paragraph draws heavily on Wilthagen, T., Aarts E. & Valcke, P. (2018) Time for interdisciplinarity: An essay on the added value of collaboration for science, university, and society. Tilburg University https://pure.uvt.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/28373248/180464_Essay_Tijd_voor_Interdisciplinariteit_EN_finalproof_1_.pdf

¹⁰ Stokes, Donald. E. (1997) Pasteur's Quadrant. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.



4. Program for Broad Prosperity

Through the overarching and connecting theme of broad prosperity, the university develops, in co-creation with societal partners, knowledge and applications that contribute to the realization and channeling of the social transitions needed for a future-proof world. As mentioned earlier, the starting point for all activities of the Tilburg academic collaborative centers is the UN principle of leaving “no one behind.” Based on the broad prosperity concept outlined above, this means that the activities undertaken by the academic collaborative centers aim at an inclusive society and ensure inclusion. Prosperity through inclusion, as the SSH Council¹¹ puts it. For the various tasks, such as energy transition and labor market transition, this may require additional and/or different efforts to ensure that everyone can participate (and continue to participate).

To this end, we develop knowledge and offer perspectives for action for the various stakeholders involved in implementing these transitions. It primarily involves exploring how organizations (government, businesses, NGOs) can effectively enhance broad prosperity in practice. Together with our partners, we investigate what works in practice to achieve demonstrable societal impact. From Understanding Society to Advancing Society, so to speak.

On the basis of interdisciplinarity and in co-creation with societal partners, this comprehensive and coherent program of initiatives works to actually help bring about these transitions. This means that it is important to choose the appropriate scale level for the organizations and initiatives that have to put broad prosperity into practice. This could be the Netherlands as a whole, but it could also be a region, municipality, district, or company.

Below we discuss the eight thematically designed initiatives, mostly coordinated through academic collaborative centers, through which we work on broad prosperity at Tilburg University. Sequentially, we describe our commitment to the following initiatives; 1) Academic Collaborative Center for Governance and Management for Broad Prosperity, 2) Academic Collaborative Center for Climate and Energy, 3) Academic Collaborative Center for an Inclusive Labor Market, 4) Academic Collaborative Center for Digital Health & Mental Wellbeing 5) Network for Studies on Pensions, Aging, and Retirement, Netspar, 6) Scientific Center for Care and Wellbeing, Tranzo, 7) Zero Poverty Lab, and 8) Zero Hunger Lab.

¹¹ SSH Council (2020), *WIN – Welvaart door Inclusie* <https://sshraad.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/361/2021/06/SSH-propositie-WIN.pdf>



4.1 Academic Collaborative Center for Governance and Management for Broad Prosperity

Although a broad prosperity perspective is increasingly being embraced by various public and private parties as a guiding framework for policy preparation, development, monitoring, and evaluation, its application in national, regional, and local policy and administrative practice still raises several questions. For how do you best depict the broad prosperity of a country, region, or city? How do you make choices between the broad prosperity objectives of the various social transitions? In other words: which goals reinforce each other (synergy), and which goals require a trade-off? How do you reinforce the synergy and limit the trade-off? How do you measure an organization's contribution to the development of broad prosperity? And what does reinforcing the development of broad prosperity require of the mutual collaboration between public and private organizations at the various scale levels?

The Academic Collaborative Center for Governance and Management for Broad prosperity focuses on answering these questions and, thus, attempts to provide perspectives for action for the various stakeholders involved in implementing the major societal transitions – climate and energy, labor market, inequality

and poverty, health, and wellbeing. In other words, it is about how public and private organizations (governments, businesses, and NGOs) can enhance broad prosperity in practice through the aforementioned societal transitions. The research themes of the collaborative center are, therefore, not specifically focused on one of the societal transitions but on the broader, underlying questions related to the operationalization of the concept of “broad prosperity” and which are relevant to all collaborative centers and stakeholders involved. Central to the Collaborative Center is the question of *how public and private organizations can better steer towards and govern broad prosperity*. This question expresses the need of many stakeholders to make the transition from ambition to action, from concept to practice, from the use of broad prosperity as a framework to a guiding compass.

Many parties indicate their intention not only to use broad prosperity as a (policy-poor) monitoring instrument, but also as a (policy-rich) assessment framework and compass on which to steer. The call to steer towards broad prosperity is becoming louder and louder. In recent years, companies and policymakers have wanted to include non-economic factors such as health, inclusion, and climate in their decision making. However, they currently lack sufficient tools to provide concrete steering. While much research is already being conducted at the (inter)national level on (the refinement of) measurement systems for monitoring broad prosperity (such as by the national planning agencies), the more action-oriented translation of the insights this yields for planning and management of organizational activities and policies is still relatively unexplored. The Academic Collaborative Center for Governance and Management for Broad Prosperity chooses to venture into this area and to contribute, through practice-oriented research, to the steering question that is currently preoccupying many public and private organizations.

The goal of the Collaborative Center is to gain more insight into the complexity and effects of decision-making related to steering for broad prosperity by public and private organizations and to develop concepts, models, and steering instruments that contribute to better decision-making for broad prosperity. Based on the central idea of “steering on (or governing) broad prosperity,” we have defined four (interrelated) research themes that give substance to this, namely: (a) impact monitoring, (b) entrepreneurship, (c) steering and network governance of (collaborating) organizations, and (d) institutions and institutional design for broad prosperity (figure 1). On the one hand, these themes align with ongoing knowledge domains and the specific expertise of Tilburg University researchers and, on the other hand, respond to the questions and needs of involved practice partners.

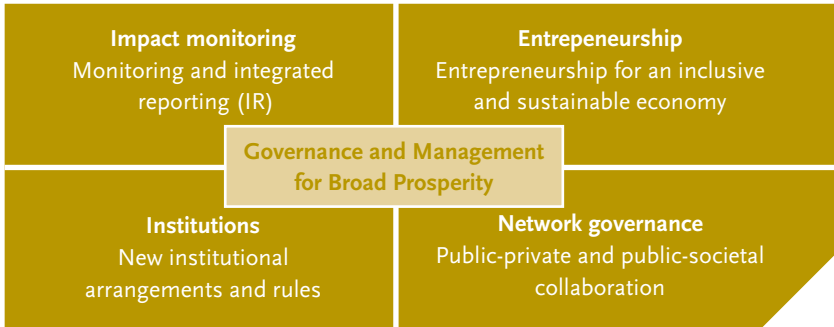


Figure 1. Research themes Academic Collaborative Center for Governance and Management for Broad Prosperity, Tilburg University

The figure expresses the fact that Tilburg University conducts research that contributes to (management for) broad prosperity and that we do so on the basis of a number of distinctive but interrelated themes. For example, integrated reporting is important for businesses to gain insight into their impact on broad prosperity, on the basis of which they can improve their entrepreneurship for an inclusive and sustainable economy. The impacts get greater reach when more businesses do so simultaneously. And because companies - locally and regionally - often work together in chains and networks, it is important to also look at how to jointly manage for broad prosperity and how those chains and networks can be better designed and directed to achieve broad prosperity goals. This touches on the institutional conditions and preconditions in the interaction between government, business, and society, which may or may not contribute to decision-making that promotes broad prosperity. In the elaboration of the research program, we keep this interrelatedness in mind and try to promote border traffic between the themes.



4.2 Academic Collaborative Center for Climate and Energy

Climate change is increasingly becoming an urgent and fundamental threat to humans. Consider, for example, the consequences of global warming in the form of prolonged drought, but also in the form of total devastation that floods can cause when large amounts of water cannot be absorbed due to dry soil. Here we often think of examples from far away, such as the floods in Italy in 2023, but we also find such examples closer to home such as in Limburg in the Netherlands in 2021. The consequences of climate change generally affect where we can live and work safely, the environment around us (consider biodiversity) and being human in the broad sense of the word, thus on broad prosperity.

Recent reports on climate change are increasingly pessimistic about the possibility of averting the often-severe consequences. At the same time, it is not too late to take action and reduce the worst consequences. However, climate change can only be effectively and legitimately addressed if the transitions needed to do so are socially just (or perceived as such). Thus, it is important to ensure that different groups in society can benefit equally and that the transition does not come at the expense of certain already vulnerable groups, such as people living

in disadvantaged neighborhoods or groups not represented yet, such as future generations. Again, the principle of leaving no one behind is the starting point.

Fundamental research has already improved our understanding of climate change science and helped to innovate in energy technologies. However, transitions involve not only technical challenges but certainly also social, economic, and legal challenges related to the way people behave and societies are governed. They involve high costs and benefits, both tangible and intangible. If we better understand the social aspect of climate change and energy transition, we can develop targeted expertise to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and the European Green Deal. With the Academic Collaborative Center for Climate and Energy, we aim to make an important contribution to developing the expertise needed to enable and accelerate the transition to a more sustainable way of living and working.

Currently, a major focus within the Collaborative Center is the transition to more sustainable energy systems based on, for example, green electricity, hydrogen, or heat in order to achieve the desired net zero emissions by 2050. Sustainable energy systems are socio-technical systems in which people interact with technology in the longer term in a way that is sustainable for people and the planet. The transition to such systems can make a huge contribution to improving health and wellbeing in more inclusive and just societies. However, addressing the many psychological, social, organizational, economic, financial, legal, political, administrative, and ethical barriers that hinder sustainable energy transitions is then necessary. Within the Collaborative Center, therefore, the concept of energy justice is studied from multiple perspectives.

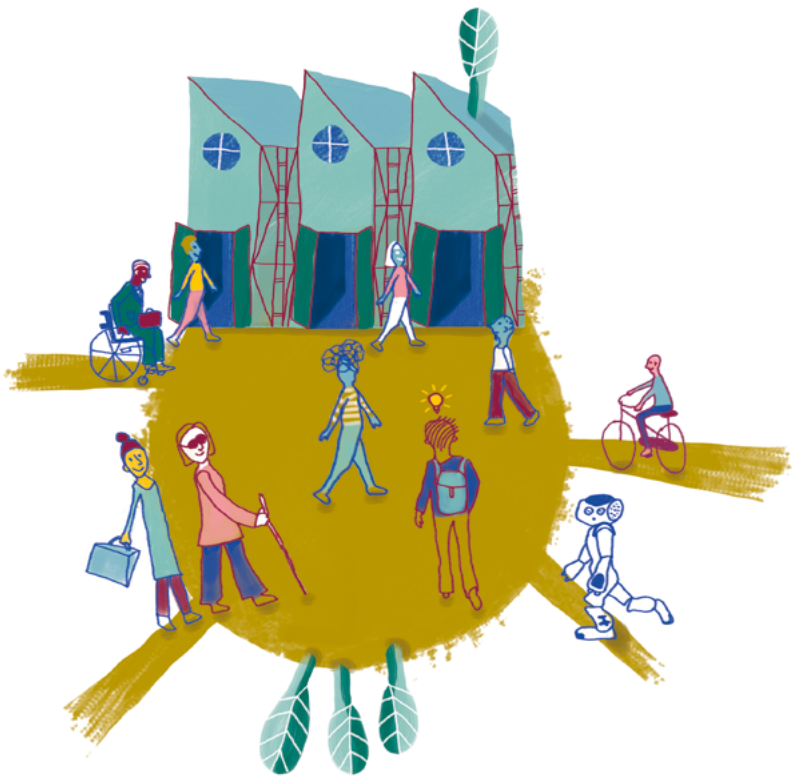
The Collaborative Center also works on issues related to market design and regulation. For instance, research is conducted on the possibilities and limitations of battery storage, the creation of energy hubs, and incentives for behavioral change of energy users, together with matching regulatory measures. The goal is to develop principles and strategies that sufficiently promote the future resilience of laws and regulations and ensure a just and smart energy transition.

The next important theme concerns how to involve citizens and other stakeholders in the energy transition (also known as participation) and how to steer involved stakeholders such as government organizations, market players, and societal initiatives. The ever-increasing digitalization already has a major impact on the entire playing field, whereby research into the effective and safe use of technology

and the responsible and optimal use of data can help to further shape and accelerate the energy transition. The relationship between energy transition and the allocation of increasingly scarce space is another theme that requires attention.

In the field of climate, research is already being conducted at Tilburg University on such topics as the transition to sustainable agriculture and incentives for industry and the built environment to reduce CO₂ emissions. Increasing attention is also being paid to the raw materials transition: reducing the share of newly extracted materials and increasing reuse and alternative, more sustainable materials. Examples of this include bio-based construction, based on building materials made from animal materials, fungi, plants, or bacteria that are ecologically grown, harvested, used, and reused. Circular business models, in which reducing the demand for materials by extending the lifespan of products and closing the cycle through reuse and recycling are central, can also make an important contribution here. Within the Collaborative Center, we are building on this research in order to contribute to climate adaptation and the management and mitigation of climate change.

With regard to the above topics, a wide range of questions can be formulated. The answers to these questions will enable and facilitate transitions related to climate and energy and can, thus, accelerate them. A crucial point to consider when looking at climate change and the energy transition through a broad prosperity lens is that these questions must be approached in an integral way and with a focus on the longer term. Within the Collaborative Center, in co-creation with our partners, we strive to find an acceptable and feasible starting point, allowing for targeted action and learning opportunities, so that progress can be made toward the goals set.



4.3 Academic Collaborative Center for an Inclusive Labor Market

Inclusive employment has immense significance for people's wellbeing. People who are gainfully employed feel better, have better health, a higher income, and more social contacts and development opportunities than people who cannot find or retain employment. Additionally, children of working parents have a better future ahead compared to those dependent on welfare. From this perspective, inclusion in the labor market is still the royal route to broader societal participation.

Moreover, an inclusive labor market, providing valuable work, is an essential aspect of broad prosperity at the level of society, as embodied in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG no. 8).¹² By organizing the labor market appropriately, as many people as possible can participate in work, contributing to broad prosperity in areas such as the energy and climate transition, addressing the

¹² United Nations (2015), Sustainable Development Goals <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

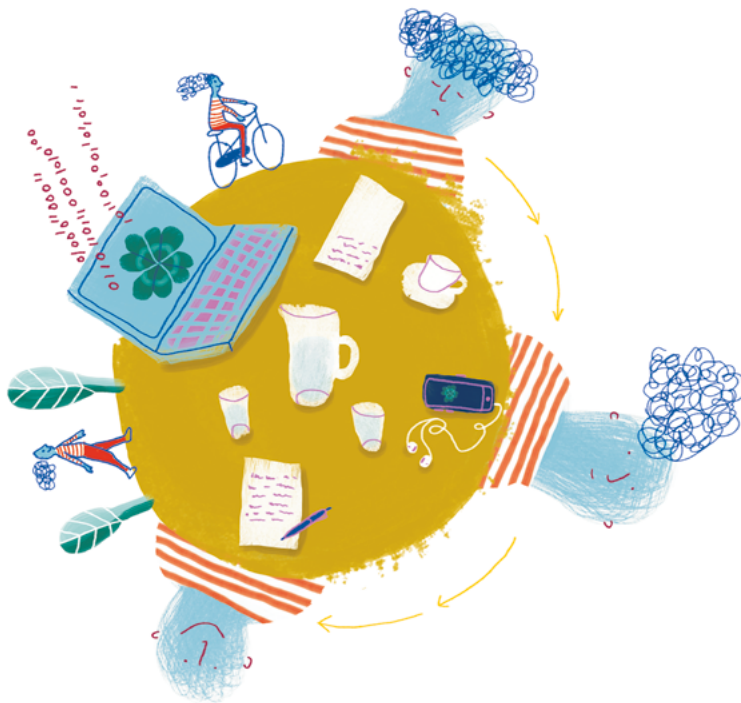
housing shortage, maintaining and improving healthcare and education, and so on. Without sufficient people with the right knowledge and skills, those transitions cannot be made.

However, the population aging and the labor demand resulting from societal transitions, lead to structural shortages on the labor market. This development will not reach its peak until around 2050. This scarcity is already causing societal disruption as experienced by citizens in numerous areas. This makes the labor market a major Achilles heel of our broad prosperity. Scarcity means choices now and even more so in the future. How and what will we choose, regarding which economic activities, work, jobs, professions, and training, and who will do that?

Moreover, in addition to rising labor shortages, paradoxically, there is also a persistent inclusion deficit. There are still more than a million people who cannot find (sustainable) work even in the tight labor market because they are older, have a migrant background, or are dealing with chronic diseases or other disabilities. By doing so, we leave people unjustly and unnecessarily behind, which is both undesirable and unacceptable on an individual and societal level.

The Collaborative Center focuses on developing the knowledge and skills needed to ensure that the labor market works for everyone: designing the labor market in such a way that, in an aging society, labor can continue to contribute to broad prosperity, socially and individually. Of course, we do this from a multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary perspective, based on team science and, in societal collaboration, citizen science. By using the knowledge of citizens, experts by experience, and civil society organizations, we design and implement new or improved arrangements for the labor market. This includes new forms of organization, work, education and training, (business) economic models, improved data and analysis, smarter working methods, inclusive technology, more optimal regulations, new rights, skill passports, inclusive HR policies, ways to attract and retain (national and international) talent, and sustainable and reliable institutions. We help scale up good practices. We approach this not only from the systemic perspective of the labor market but also primarily from the lived experiences of people and the daily practices of companies and institutions. Therefore, we also study how people, especially younger generations, perceive work, what they expect in terms of fulfillment, and how we can prevent work (pressure) from leading to physical and mental health issues, absenteeism, and dropout.

In the Collaborative Center, therefore, we strive for better work, a better and just labor market, also with a view to the future, in the interest of future generations and the context of a significantly aging society. We do this at the national and international level and, where appropriate, certainly also at a regional and local level, such as in the context of the city professorship with the city of Tilburg and the Hart van Brabant region.



4.4 Academic Collaborative Center for Digital Health & Mental Wellbeing

Good mental and physical health for all is a necessary condition for broad prosperity. The relationship between health and prosperity is complex and goes both ways. It is obvious that reduced physical or mental health has a negative impact on the quality of life, as everyone who has experienced the flu or migraine can attest. These are usually short-term effects that fortunately pass quickly, but there are also large groups of Dutch people who experience long-term impediments, such as depression or cancer, to name but two common conditions. Conversely, it is also true that the major societal challenges we face can have repercussions on our health and wellbeing. Obviously, hunger is an immediately life-threatening condition, but poverty also has a major effect on wellbeing. For example, being in debt or receiving welfare benefits is associated with poorer health. Overall, even in a rich country like ours, there seems to be a linear relationship between income and life expectancy: the higher the income, the healthier years of life. There are also less obvious correlations to consider. For example, job insecurity and high work pressure are associated with mental complaints such as stress and burnout, and concerns about the climate result in an increasing number of “climate depressions,” especially among young people.

The importance of good health care is thus evident. However, the entire healthcare system in the Netherlands is under increasing pressure. Healthcare costs are rising, there is a shortage of staff, and employees are experiencing an ever-increasing workload. With a population that is getting older, the problems will only get worse in the future. The Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) has calculated that if current trends continue unchanged, by 2060, 1 in 3 people in the Dutch labor force will have to work in health care, which is obviously impossible. Something must be done.

Digital tools and interventions are often presented as a possible route to address the aforementioned problems. A range of possibilities can be considered here, ranging from smart use of health data to eHealth and mHealth applications and the deployment of innovative new AI techniques such as chatbots, virtual reality, and large language models. Another route to reduce the pressure on health care is by encouraging people to live healthier lives (because, as we know, prevention is better - and cheaper - than cure). Consider, for example, encouraging a healthy (and more plant-based) diet, drinking less alcohol, and quitting smoking. This goes hand in hand with an increased focus on quality of life (for both sick and healthy people) and mental health. Digital tools and interventions can also play a significant role in this broad range of initiatives (for example, chatbots that encourage people to quit smoking or self-management tools that can detect a new depression early), with the same caveats as mentioned earlier.

It is obvious that such innovations will have a major impact on the future of health and health care. But so far, the deployment of digital technologies lags behind expectations and their overall effectiveness has also not yet been convincingly demonstrated. This presents a major challenge for scientific research, with a potentially large societal impact. The Academic Collaborative Center for Digital Health & Mental Wellbeing will, therefore, dedicate itself to this transition.

To be able to contribute to this effort, it is essential to collaborate closely with external partners who collectively cover the entire playing field. To this end, we seek contact with healthcare institutions and insurers, patient organizations, digital developers, knowledge institutes, and more. In co-creation with all these partners, a collaboration agenda is being developed and four broad “working tables” have been established: 1. Data and Digitalization, 2. Prevention and (Self-)Monitoring, 3. Technical Development and Evaluation, and 4. Policy and Practical Implementation.

4.5 Network for Studies on Pensions, Aging, and Retirement, Netspar

Adequate income now and in the future and trust in the institutions set up for that purpose are important elements of broad prosperity. Since the 1950s, the Netherlands has had Old Age Pension (AOW) benefits as a basic income in old age for almost every Dutch citizen. But the Old Age Pension is often insufficient to maintain the standard of living people had during the active phase after retirement. Also, the age at which one receives AOW benefits has increased significantly in recent years. The question is whether all Dutch people can continue to contribute fully to the labor market until that AOW age. As with many social security issues, the question of the balance between income security and affordability of social services comes into play as well.

Confidence in supplementary pensions has eroded over the past 15 years by the failure to compensate for inflation, and sometimes even to reduce pension benefits. The impact of the decline in interest rates and the associated increase in the cost of promised lifelong pension benefits is hardly comprehensible in a complex pension system. Previous agreements were continually adjusted, leading to the redistribution of pension assets thus, particularly between generations. None of this has done any good for trust in pension institutions. Many young people think they are paying for supplementary pensions but will never see anything in return.

After years of debate, the new pension law was passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate. Tilburg's research contributed significantly to this pension reform. Risk sharing between participants will remain, but there will be much less redistribution between groups of participants. At the same time, it is clear that many implementation questions remain open. For example, more attention is being called for steering benefits based on purchasing power, and there are still many questions regarding a balanced transition of existing pension contracts to the new world.

Although virtually all employees build up supplementary pensions, there are still large groups of Dutch people for whom there is no supplementary pension. These include the self-employed who do not make the choice to voluntarily save for later in a fiscally attractive way, hoping to cash in on the value of their business in due course. But self-employed people who hardly build up any value in their business also tend to refrain from setting aside money for later. An important research question is how to help people make these kinds of financial decisions.

Increasingly, employees also lack supplementary pensions or have very meager pension provisions. Addressing these so-called white and gray areas has been the subject of research for some time, but the real solutions remain to be found.

The new pension law aims to bring more transparency into what people are entitled to, and it significantly increases survivor pensions for low-income groups. But here, too, there are still many issues that have been pointed out from Tilburg, including the potentially significant differences in benefits upon death as an employee, a self-employed individual, or a retiree.

In order to contribute to the above challenges, Netspar continues to pay attention to the labor market for older workers, the many questions that are still pending regarding the design of the new pension contracts and the transition to them, and the guidance of choices that participants in pension plans will be able to make. Additionally, new questions such as the role of pension assets in the transition to a sustainable economy and the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the pension sector (e.g., in choice guidance) are high on the agenda.

Meaningful education and research into societal issues such as the organization of the pension system in a broad sense cannot only take place from the ivory tower of the university. For Netspar, coordination with the pension sector and with all those for whom a pension provision is or is not being built up is essential for this. Since its founding in 2005, Netspar has developed working methods for knowledge development (often in co-creation with the sector) and knowledge sharing. With great regularity, it coordinates with the sector as to which questions are most urgent to address at that moment, after which Netspar encourages researchers to take on those challenges. Meanwhile, an extensive set of tools has also been developed and proven successful in bringing new knowledge to the attention of users in the sector.

4.6 Scientific Center for Care and Wellbeing, Tranzo

Health and wellbeing are intertwined with complex challenges such as the cost of care, climate change, the refugee issue, quality of life, rule of law, and (digital) security. Societal trends such as aging, changes in (health) care, and in the entire social system imply that health-related behaviors, care delivery, and related factors are changing; chronic diseases are increasing; and the cost of care is rising. There is a shortage of healthcare personnel, and this will only grow in the near future. Moreover, the large gap in healthy life expectancy between high and low socioeconomic status groups is increasing rather than decreasing despite substantial efforts to reduce it. In addition, recent reforms in the social system and in care will significantly affect people's health and wellbeing.

Addressing these complex issues requires *transformation* of care and wellbeing. We can expect a major contribution to this from the university. We do this by means of the following themes: 1. health-related behavior, policy, and society: this includes societal and environmental influences on health, government policy and health, public health, and prevention; 2. health and wellbeing in relation to social inequality and inclusiveness; namely, social disadvantage, social vulnerability, empowerment, and resilience; 3. mental health, capabilities, and recovery; including the role of stigma, recovery processes, and integration of vulnerable groups; 4. client perspective and participation, which focuses on the role of experts by experience, client perceptions, and societal participation; and 5. the (health) care system; this includes the subthemes of healthcare costs, system changes, accessibility, and socio-demographic influences.

In the social and behavioral sciences, the term “transformation” is used to denote fundamental, sustainable change *processes*, not only in structures but also in working and thinking. Therefore, it involves innovation in care-related content. In the much-needed transformation of care and wellbeing, it is important to connect as much as possible to the lived experiences of clients, citizens, and professionals. In other words, their needs guide the process, and the systems and organizational forms follow suit. Collaboration with all parties involved, i.e., all participants in an ecosystem including citizens and clients, is therefore a *conditio sine qua non*. As a university, we add value to society through research and education. In addition, our explicit aim is also to enable local networks to create value themselves. The focus of the university is, on the one hand, global, but on the other, it also has a strong regional or local network and can, therefore, also co-direct and nurture the local ecosystem.

Tranzo seeks to study the influences on the quality of life, quality of care, and health, and wellbeing of people in co-creation with (healthcare) practice and citizens. In this vision, three sources of knowledge are crucial: scientific knowledge, professional expertise, and the knowledge of patients, clients, and citizens in general. Integration of these knowledge sources generates robust evidence to understand and explain these issues and contribute to improving care and wellbeing. Developing new knowledge through co-creation is an iterative process together with societal partners and with citizens. This new knowledge is not only the result of scientific research but also the outcome of interactions between science and society. The goal of this collaboration is not only to prove but also to improve based on three principles: complete equality between university and practice partners, personal contacts at multiple levels within the organizations involved, and a win-win situation for all parties involved. For this, it is crucial that the collaboration between science and practice organizations to be long-lasting: parties must commit to each other.

The topics mentioned in the field of care and wellbeing are multidimensional, intersectoral, and applicable to various target groups. To generate knowledge that is socially relevant, it is important to involve many sectors, such as public health, primary care, hospital care, mental health care, occupational health care, youth care, and the social domain, as well as different target groups, such as older adults, young people, and people with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems. In addition, we enhance the coherence and theoretical foundation of the various research programs through transversal themes: quality of care, quality of life, and people's wellbeing. In this way, Tranzo aims to contribute to an evidence base for healthcare practice.

4.7 Zero Poverty Lab

Poverty is a humanitarian disaster that occurs not only in the poorer parts of the world but also in richer parts including the Netherlands. Significant progress has been made in the area of extreme poverty in recent decades: in 1990, 36% of the world's population lived below the absolute poverty line of (then) \$1.25 a day. By 2015, 25 years later, that had dropped to about 9%.¹³ Between 2015 and 2018, global poverty dropped to its lowest point at 8.6% of the world's total population.¹⁴ Due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, global poverty rose to 9.2% in 2020. The increase in poverty was compounded by rising inflation and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It is estimated that all this will lead to an additional 75-95 million people in poverty. The number of people in poverty who work and have families also increased internationally from 6.7% in 2019 to 7.2% in 2020. This roughly equates to an additional 8 million people living in poverty.

Looking at the Dutch situation, we see an alarming picture there as well. In August 2022, the CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis estimated that, due to inflation and lagging wage growth, the total number of poor people in the Netherlands will increase from 1.1 million to almost 1.3 million.¹⁵ In 2020, 221,000 children were already living in poverty.

The government has taken new measures to prevent and address poverty starting in 2022. The goal is to halve the number of people living in poverty by 2030 (an ambition that we to be conservative).

In 2015, the United Nations agreed to eliminate poverty and hunger worldwide by 2030. This is laid down in SDG 1 and involves the effort to eliminate poverty in all its forms; encompassing both financial aspects and the impact of poverty on people's lives. The Zero Poverty Lab works from this mission.

¹³ Development Initiatives (2022) Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2022, <https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2022/>

¹⁴ Eurostat (2022) 8.6% of people in the EU unable to afford proper meal - Products Eurostat News - Eurostat (europa.eu)

¹⁵ CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (2022) Central Economic Plan 2022 [CPB-Raming maart 2022: Centraal Economisch Plan 2022](#)

We do this through innovative methods. We know that poverty has a negative effect on the development and functioning of networks in the brain.^{16 17} This is particularly true with respect to brain networks that allow us to make wise, long-term decisions and that regulate our emotions, thinking, and behavior regarding a bright future. As a result, people living in poverty often make decisions that offer (only) short-term benefits. This negative effect of poverty on (the development of) the brain and skills is most likely one of the causes of generational poverty. More knowledge about the long-term effects on the brain offers opportunities for innovative solutions. Indeed, the brain networks negatively affected by poverty, and related cognitive skills, can be improved using interventions that appeal to neuroplasticity, or the brain's adaptive capacity.^{18 19 20} In this way, the negative spiral of poverty, impaired brain development, and skills can be broken. The knowledge and interventions generated by such longitudinal research can help policymakers and aid organizations make important impactful long-term decisions to break the cycle of generational poverty, end poverty permanently, improve the quality of life for more people, and create a healthy society.

Through multidisciplinary research, our Zero Poverty Lab initiative aims to provide impactful recommendations, insights, and tools to reduce poverty and hunger globally. We do this, as strongly recommended by 'S Jongers²¹, in collaboration with the experts by experience, so that, ultimately, truly workable solutions emerge that fit the needs of those involved. The final recommendations we want to give to policymakers at central and decentralized governments, the United Nations, and NGOs, as well as to businesses and socially vulnerable groups.

¹⁶ Palacios-Barrios EE, Hanson JL. Poverty and self-regulation: Connecting psychosocial processes, neurobiology, and the risk for psychopathology. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*. 2019 Apr;90:52-64 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30711814/>

¹⁷ Bates RA, Ford JL, Justice LM, Pickler RH, Singletary B, Dynia JM. Relationships among caregiving, stress, and self-regulation in toddlers living in poverty. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*. 2022 Sep-Oct;66:184-190. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35835016/>

¹⁸ Troller-Renfree SV, Costanzo MA, Duncan CJ, Magnuson K, Gennetian LA, Yoshikawa H, Halpern-Meekin S, Fox NA, Noble KG. The impact of a poverty reduction intervention on infant brain activity. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35074878/>

¹⁹ Dufford AJ, Kim P, Evans GW. The impact of childhood poverty on brain health: Emerging evidence from neuroimaging across the lifespan. *International Review Neurobiology* 2020;150:77-105. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32204835/>

²⁰ Sitskoorn, Margriet, 2008. *Het Maakbare brein*. Bert Bakker, Amsterdam

²¹ 's Jongers, T, 2022 Beledigende Broccoli, van Genneep



4.8 Zero Hunger Lab

The world's hunger problem is significant. Today, according to the United Nations, a staggering 828 million people go to bed hungry (2021). Every 10 seconds, a child dies somewhere in our world due to hunger and malnutrition. In addition, it is estimated that some 2 to 3 billion people are undernourished in terms of macro and/or micronutrients.²² Healthy food products are not available or affordable in many places, which actually affects the entire world. This can lead to numerous health problems and high societal costs for health care, ultimately disrupting the way we coexist in this world.

Hunger often seems a distant problem, but even in Europe, around 8.6% of the European population does not have enough to eat.²³ Hunger is also increasingly common in the Netherlands; far more than we would expect from a wealthy country. According to the Food Banks, over 400,000 people in our country

²² Macronutrients provide calories, that is, energy. They are fats, carbohydrates and proteins. Micronutrients play no energetic role but are indispensable for the proper functioning of the organism.

²³ Eurostat 2022 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220225-1>

regularly go to bed hungry. In addition, a multiple of this number of people are undernourished in terms of macro and micronutrients.

Reducing the hunger problem globally not only requires more efficient and effective (emergency) food aid. It is important to strengthen local capacity so that farmers, businesses, and communities can provide sustainable food security themselves and thus become independent from aid. This requires collaboration and sharing of knowledge and ideas. Our food systems need a fundamental overhaul over the coming decade. Obviously, not only to better help people in need but also to be able to offer 8.8 billion people three healthy meals a day by 2050 while taking much better care of our planet.

Globally, nations have made and documented commitments in the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The second SDG goal, SDG-2, is Zero Hunger with the following commitments for 2030: safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all; ending malnutrition; doubling the agricultural productivity and income of small-scale food producers; sustainable food systems from farm to fork; and conservation of biodiversity of seeds, plants, and animals.

The Academic Collaborative Center Zero Hunger Lab contributes to achieving the SDG-2 goals through data science. We call this *Bytes for Bites*. We do this by collaborating with aid organizations, development agencies, businesses, governments, and knowledge institutions that are also committed to a world without hunger. We help them use smart analytics, predictions, models, and algorithms to make better decisions in an increasingly complex world. In other words, how can you harness the power of data science for a better world and a healthy planet? If organizations, such as World Food Programme, ZOA, Voedselbanken Nederland, Welthungerhilfe, UNDP, 510/Red Cross, Friesland/Campina, use data to make better decisions, it will ultimately lead to less hunger.

In the Netherlands, we work together on solutions by helping Food Banks Netherlands with smart solutions to logistics issues. With a supermarket chain, we explore ways to reduce food waste in the supply chain of fresh products and gain insights from data analysis on how the supermarket chain can work to minimize waste. We also work in many other places worldwide. For example, we help ZOA's experts analyze their CASH programs to make increasingly better choices in the interest of refugees. In South Sudan, we engage with local people to map the impact of emergency aid - unfortunately often used as leverage in local conflicts - on peace and conflict. Furthermore, we collaborate with specialists from

Wageningen University & Research, Food Agricultural Organization and Somali students to develop data-science training so that people in the Horn of Africa can develop and apply tools themselves.

We strive not only for new, better data science applications but also for transparency, reliability, and fairness in the use of data. To this end, we combine expertise in the field of data science with legal and ethical knowledge, as well as knowledge of domains such as economics and logistics.



Finally

In this position paper, we have presented our ambitions as Tilburg University to contribute to a sustainable, just, and inclusive society. For us, broad prosperity is a connecting and guiding perspective. As a university specializing in humanities and social sciences, we want to develop knowledge in co-creation with partners and provide perspectives for action for the organizations (government, business, NGO) that are responsible for implementing the necessary major societal transitions, thereby enhancing broad prosperity. Now is the time to collaborate to translate these ambitions into concrete actions to realize the crucial societal transitions. Time to work on broad prosperity!



Colophon

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