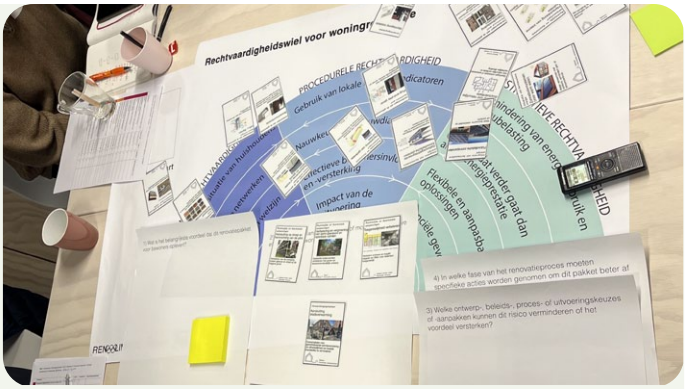
Translating Energy Justice into Renovation Decision-Making Criteria



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What does this guide offer to whom?

This guide is intended for practitioners involved in housing energy renovation, such as sustainability advisors and policy officers at municipalities, housing associations, resident and tenant advisors, energy consultants and companies, financial advisors, building designers, and social professionals working between policy and residents. It provides a shared language and a flexible framework – the Justice Wheel for Housing Renovation (Figure 1) – to help diverse stakeholders identify what matters, surface tensions between competing priorities, and locate where sufficient consensus exists to move forward. The framework translates energy justice principles into concrete design and decision-making criteria. These criteria are deliberately kept general so that they can be tailored to the specific context, building conditions, and resident needs of each situation.

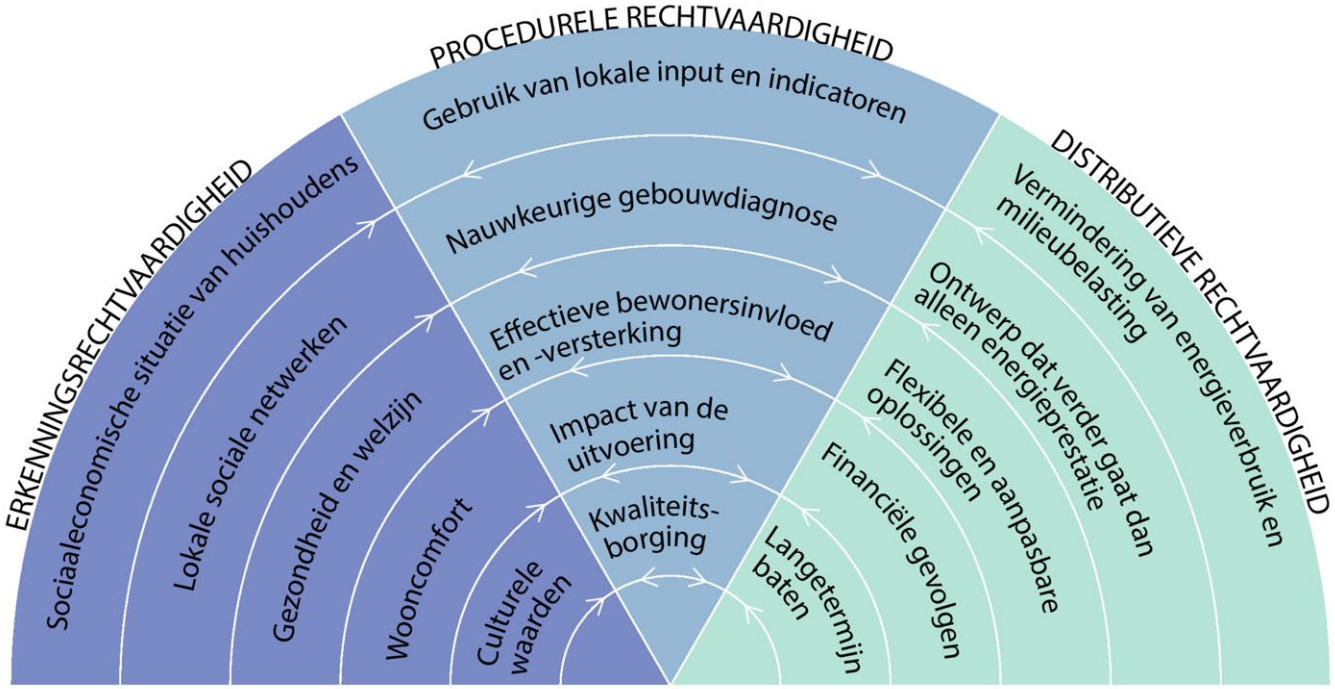


Figure 1 The Justice Wheel for Housing Renovation: a visual framework synthesising justice-based criteria to guide renovation design and decision-making.

Summary

Energy justice is not a fixed standard to be applied uniformly. It is a lens for asking better questions about renovation decisions: *Who benefits? Who bears the burden? Whose needs are being recognised? Who has a meaningful say?*

Three deeply entangled dimensions help structure these questions:

Recognition justice: acknowledging the diversity of residents' needs, living conditions, and identities, including those that are rarely visible in technical assessments

Procedural justice: ensuring that residents and relevant stakeholders can participate in decision-making in a transparent,

timely, and accessible way

Distributive justice: attending to how the benefits and burdens of renovation, comfort gains, cost increases, construction disruption, long-term savings, are distributed across residents

These three dimensions emerge from academic literature and serve as an analytical starting point, not a normative prescription. They do not define what justice *should* look like in a given situation. What actually constitutes justice in practice is inherently situated: it emerges from the specific social, spatial, and material conditions of each neighbourhood, and from the claims and priorities of those directly affected. Local knowledge, resident experiences, and practitioner insights may confirm, nuance, or even challenge what these dimensions suggest. The framework is therefore designed to be **complemented and grounded by what emerges locally**; some aspects will resonate strongly in a given context, others may be less relevant or need to be reframed entirely.

What follows from this

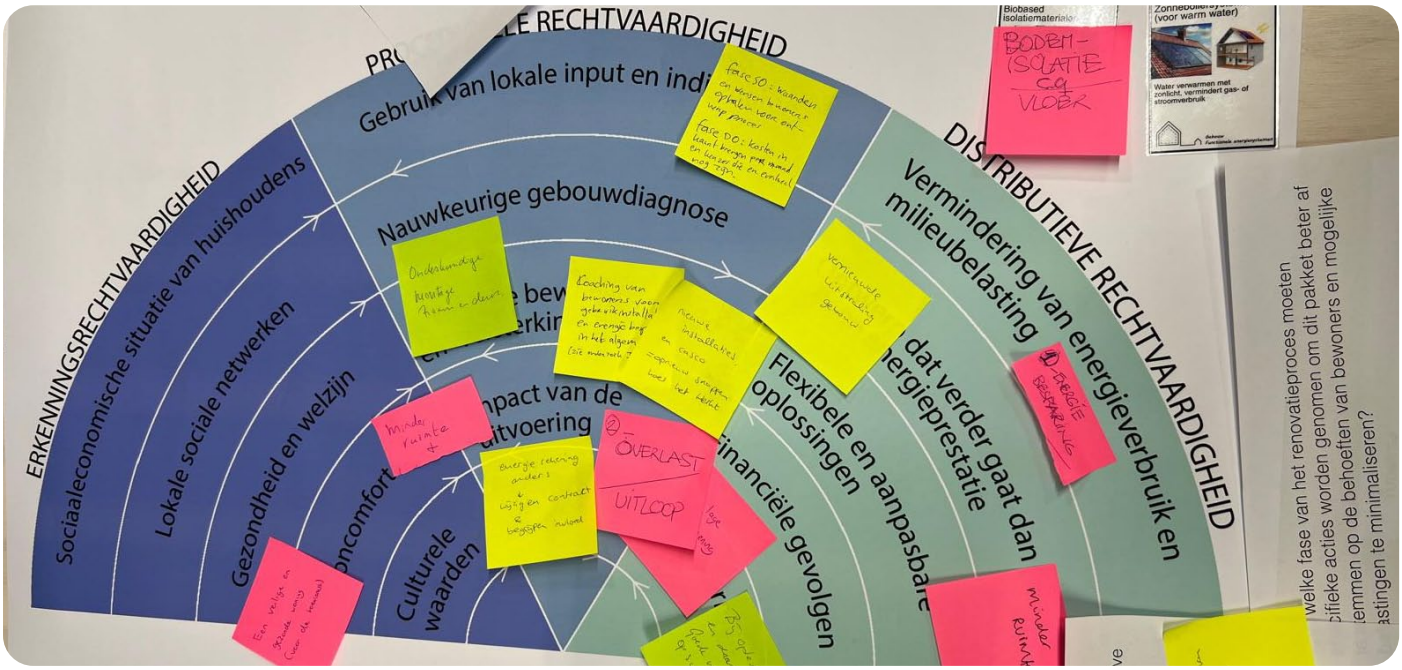
The Justice Wheel for Housing Renovation (Figure 1) is the central framework of this guide. It makes the three justice dimensions operational by translating them into fifteen concrete criteria for renovation design and decision-making. These criteria are organised across the three interconnected dimensions of the wheel:

Recognition) what needs to be seen and acknowledged -> Socioeconomic situation of households, Local social networks, Health and wellbeing, Living comfort, Cultural values

Procedural) how the process is designed and governed -> Use of local input and indicators, adoption of a accurate building diagnosis, Effective resident influence and empowerment, Impact of the construction process on residents, Quality assurance

Distributive) how costs and benefits are shared -> Long-term benefits, Financial consequences for residents, Flexible and adaptable solutions, Design that goes beyond energy performance alone, Reduction of energy consumption and environmental impact

Further reading:
Ricci, et al. (2025). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2025.104016



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