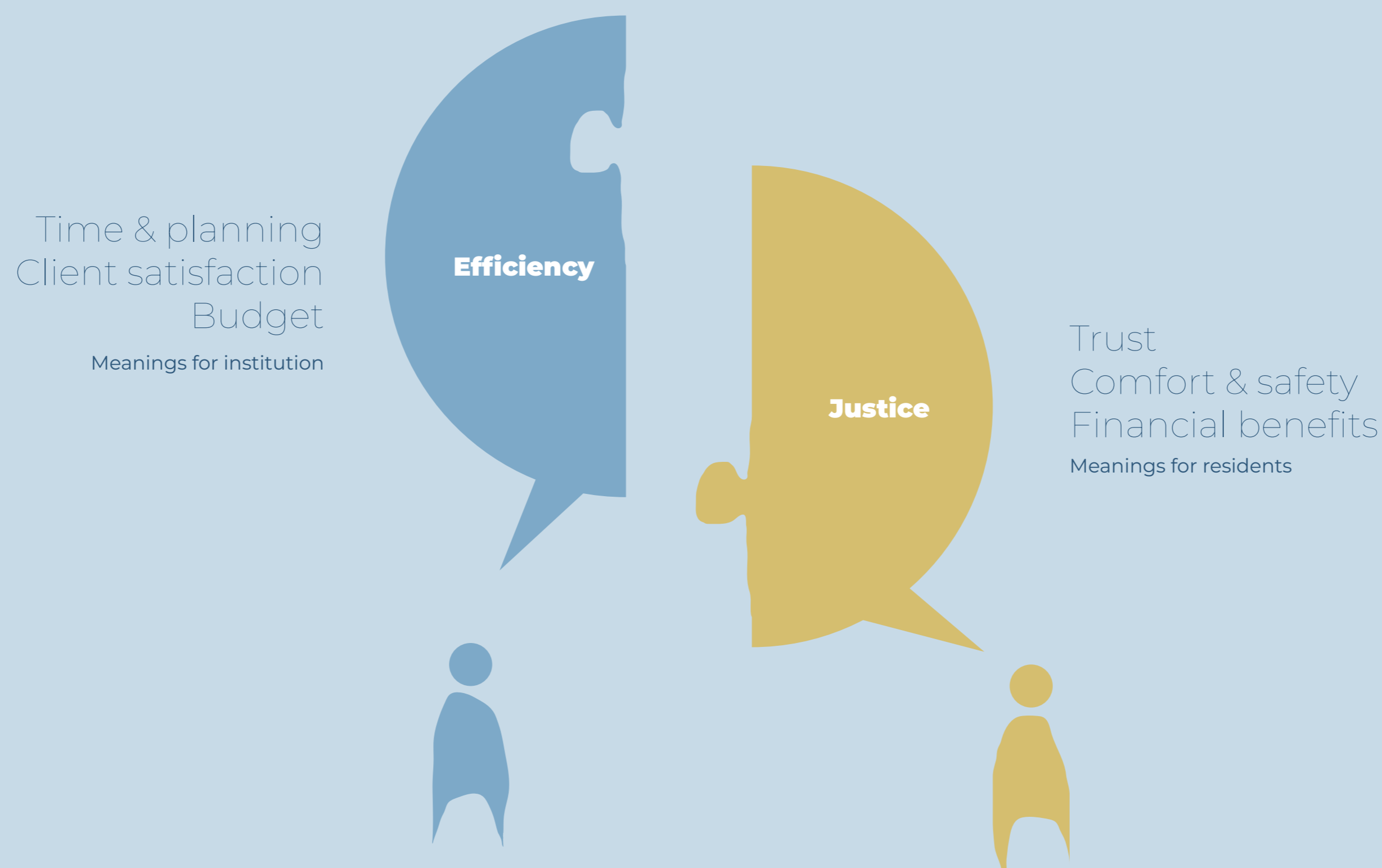


# Designing resident participation in social housing energy renovations: balancing efficiency and justice



## Balancing resident voices with efficient renovation plans

In the coming years, thousands of social housing dwellings across the Netherlands must be renovated to become more energy-efficient. These renovations are technical and tight to a budget, but also deeply social in practice. Behind every front door is a person with a story, and those stories often don't fit neatly into tightly planned renovation schedules, causing **resistance in the execution phase**.

This project explored how residents, many of whom face energy poverty, health issues, language barriers, or institutional distrust and live in uncomfortable living conditions, can be involved in renovation processes in a way that is **just**.

Using the CLEAR model (Lowndes et al., 2006) and literature and ethnographic studies, three frameworks were introduced to address the CLEAR questions on how participation can be made just: **capability programmes**, **reciprocity**, and **feedback loops**.

For these frameworks to be effective, the institution must **shift its energy and time towards the participation phase**, in which trust can be built to prevent resistance in later stages.

## Renovation process



CLEAR model	Research questions	Framework
<b>C</b> can do	How can residents be provided with the right <b>resources</b> and <b>knowledge</b> to participate <b>meaningfully</b> ?	Capability programmes
<b>L</b> like to	How can a sense of <b>belonging</b> and shared purpose be fostered to encourage participation?	Reciprocity
<b>E</b> enabled to	How can <b>structural</b> and <b>social support</b> be provided to enable participation?	Capability programmes
<b>A</b> asked to	How can residents be <b>genuinely invited</b> and <b>encouraged</b> to participate in the process?	Reciprocity
<b>R</b> responded to	How can the input of residents be <b>acknowledged</b> and <b>reflected visibly</b> in decisions?	Feedback loops

(Lowndes et al., 2006)

**Capability programmes:** Participation should match the abilities of residents. That means understandable communication, visuals instead of complex text, and choices in how and when people want to participate.

**Reciprocity:** A relationship of giving and taking. Trust starts with offering something first. That can be a warm welcome, food truck, time, and genuine attention. These small gestures matter more than you would think.

**Feedback loops:** If residents take time to give input, they should see it reflected. Ideally, in a way that's easy to understand and clearly shows: we heard you.

These frameworks come together in a practical guideline, with four steps to help navigate the tension between justice and efficiency:

1. Understand residents
2. Make it easy to participate
3. Encourage involvement
4. Act on input

While the technical goals remain, this project shows how working with empathy and care can lead to fewer conflicts and better outcomes, for both residents and the renovation team. Justice and efficiency do not cancel each other out, but need to be balanced, with people at the centre of the process.

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