

ENGLISH



# Handbook for drawing up Transition Plans

Committing to a Sustainable  
and People-centered  
World for all

[www.barcelonaconsensus.org](http://www.barcelonaconsensus.org)

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# HANDBOOK FOR DRAWING UP TRANSITION PLANS

## Introduction

The Barcelona Consensus (CB) - promoted by **Nova**, in collaboration with other organizations- aims to inspire a transformation of the dominant socio-economic and political model established by the Washington Consensus.

Around 250 academics and leaders of the social movement participated on-line in a series of deliberations and discussions. This led to the ***Barcelona Consensus Declaration 1.0: Commitment to a people-centered world for all***<sup>1</sup>. This document details the necessity that we, as global citizens, participate actively in building a more balanced, fair and sustainable world, and suggests a way to do it: design and implement transition plans in seven major areas as well as some emergency actions.

This handbook<sup>2</sup> suggests some steps to help anyone who wants to make a concrete individual or collective commitment to a transition to a people-centered world for all. We hope that this handbook will give you the energy to develop your commitment, to learn one from one another and to share our experience.

## What is a Transition Circle?

Transition Circles (TC) are groups of people who get involved in achieving voluntary realistic specific objectives, over a 10 year period. They aim to progressively transform their communities or sectors into sustainable and people-centered areas. **Their main task is to define and agree a Transition Plan (TP) with a specific OBJECTIVE, in an specific AREA - family, neighbours, friends, suburb, village, country, world; organization, political party, professional sector, and so on - and with a specific TIME-FRAME.**

The TP should facilitate a change of unsustainable habits, attitudes and structures, including a voluntary forfeit of unnecessary privilege. It can also mean exercising some civil rights such as refusal to cooperate or collaborate, shop, serve or obey those organizations/institutions that are an obstacle to the transitions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://consensus.nova.cat/news/barcelona-consensus-international-meeting>

<sup>2</sup> This guide is inspired by the Transition Initiatives (Transition Towns) that began years ago in the United Kingdom, with Rob Hopkins' proposals as reference. They have shown the citizens capacity to cope with peak oil and climate change in more than 9.000 neighborhoods, villages and cities around the world. ([www.transitionnetwork.org](http://www.transitionnetwork.org)). We encourage the groups that decide to choose objectives similar to those of the Transition Initiatives, such as Energy Plans, to get involved with this network and to strengthen it.

## Why to start a Transition Circle?

To start a Transition Circle means to commit to change to a better world and to assume our responsibility in making it possible. Some reasons to get moving and set up a TC are:

- **The shared conviction that it is better to plan and act to make the world that we want possible, rather than wait (do nothing) and accept the consequences of the serious situation that we are currently facing.**
- **The deliberate and determined desire of a specific group that want to implement a particular objective that allows them to build a more people-centred world for all.**
- **The extraordinary levels of inventiveness and collective intelligence that people have shown and that can be used, if they so wish, for better management not only of the problems of our own neighborhood but also those of the whole planet.**
- **The ability to cooperate in a creative way and to act together in circles or communities.** This capacity shows us that building a more peaceful, balanced and sustainable neighborhood, country or world is in our own hands.

## How to organize a Transition Circle

A Transition Circle consists of a group of people that come together either by affinity or by proximity. Once created, the group organizes a meeting to agree through discussion<sup>3</sup>, with the maximum consensus possible:

1. What is the **field of interest** (from the Barcelona Consensus 7 transitions and urgent actions)?
2. What are the **feasible objectives** (specify the objectives where the group aims at achieving a real change)?
3. Where it is going to take place -**area of influence**- (in what context the actions take place: local, national, global, family, professional sector, friends...) and
4. **How long** will it take to achieve visible results?

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<sup>3</sup> To choose the areas and objectives, as well as for some further discussion, you can use the "Participative generator of consensus". It comes from personal contributions on the issue being raised, reasoned and prioritized in small groups. The proposals with more agreement are shared in a larger group afterwards. This larger group assesses the degree of consensus on each proposal, and therefore allows the most consensual agree. This instrument can be provided upon request or found on the web [www.nova.cat](http://www.nova.cat)

It would be helpful if the people forming the group could sign the Barcelona Consensus 1.0 Declaration during this process. The result of this meeting (or meetings) is the **commitment to build and implement a Transition Plan** (or more than one) in the specific AREA 'X', to achieve specific OBJECTIVES 'Y', in the CONTEXT 'Z' to the year '#'. All the people forming the group commit to promote and implement the plan, using their own means.

The group can also **choose a promotion team and program its resignation** during these initial meetings. One of the team's roles will be to actively involve all the people of the group once they are organized in commissions. At least four commissions should be organized. Once they are created, it is better that the promotion team can be recreated with one person from each commission. It is important to put the project interests before those of the people.

Once all these agreements have been reached, it is time to start working on the Transition Plan.

## **Aspects to take into account when preparing a Transition Plan**

- It is important to explain and justify the personal and collective benefits that will be achieved with the TP in order to motivate the beginning of the process.
- Although the TP is focused on specific objectives, it is appropriate to make a list with all the other aspects that will be indirectly affected: people, economy, energy, education, health...
- The TP needs to be structured in a way (complete, imaginative, practical, amusing) that encourages other groups or circles with doubts to decide to create a similar TP.
- Before the TP is designed, it is necessary to take some time so that everybody becomes aware of the situation (at personal and collective level), gets informed, trains, exchanges ideas, exchanges, defines actions...
- After this period, the group chooses a starting day for the TP, when the process of achieving the objectives begins. This process will also include the exchange of experience and different Transition Circles can help one another other.
- The consciousness-raising and implementation period varies depending on the size of the group and the objectives. It is helpful

to define deadlines that can be modified during the process, according with the group rhythm, although we recommend a maximum of 10 years.

- The TP needs to be written before the implementation begins; however we recommend a continuous evaluation of the process in order to remain flexible and be able to adjust it to new needs and perspectives.

## Criteria that indicate readiness to start a TP

- The Transition Circle is committed to the Barcelona Consensus (the group has signed the Declaration 1.0)
- TC members have a demonstrated understanding of the problem and the objectives to be addressed.
- There is a small team that wants to take the lead in the initial phase.
- The TC people, especially the promotion team, demonstrate a positive attitude, good people skills and a basic knowledge of the aspects to be changed as well as of the area in which they want to influence, the institutions and key people involved.
- Avoid potential conflicts of interest among the promotion team members.
- All the members of the group agree to begin the transition by changing their own behaviors, habits and attitudes.
- Ensure that the process to be followed is explicit and fully understood by the whole group (TC).
- There is a place for holding regular meetings.
- The administration and public institutions concerned are informed or connected in some way to the project that the TC wants to start.
- There is a commitment to work as a network: ensure relationships and exchange with other circles that have similar or complementary transitions.
- Accept the commitment to publish the TP process on the Barcelona Consensus website at regular intervals, in order to help of other potential TC.
- Agree to ask for help during the process, if necessary, from the *Support Team for Transition Circles* and / or to other circles.

Setting up the TC in a constitution form and the Transition Circle Commitment documents (where the respect to and implementation of all these aspects are taken into account) will result in the recognition within the BC, of the corresponding TP; in the publication of the TP on the Barcelona Consensus web; and in the support for the whole process.

## Overcoming common problems

When this kind of transformation process begins, it is often possible to meet barriers - real or imagined ones - that hinder not only the transition, but even the ability to implement it. Some of these difficulties are quite common and we can draw on the experience of those who came before us to overcome them.

- "They won't allow us to do ..." It is often assumed that transformation initiatives are stifled, stopped or prevented by the administration. However, when there is a clear collective consciousness and daily involvement in the construction of a new reality, often we get a favorable response and even unexpected support from it. Moreover, in many cases, the TP can be "silent" and act without creating hostility.

- "There are other groups that address these issues ..." This is not to compete, but to create accomplices to go a little further. A good idea is to make contact with existing groups already working in the same direction and maintain the expectation that they can become allies.

- "Nobody really cares about the issue we want to transform ..." It is convenient to look around for a while, because it can often surprise that there are people who enthusiastically support some key element of TP that is proposed. It's about finding common ground to facilitate collaboration.

- "We're not qualified to do ..." And who would be? The only important thing is to recognize the need to act and to be open to different forms of commitment and participation with others. Maybe it's preparing the ground.

- "Maybe it's too late for ..." It may be true, but it is possible that we are still in time. Efforts made in this regard could therefore be quite significant. The action keeps us from falling into despair.

- "We do not have enough energy to do ..." *Goethe is credited with the phrase: Anything you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in itself.* The idea may shake us, but the implication in the process releases so much energy that makes it unstoppable. Perhaps we will find unexpected cooperation during the process. Just make the leap from "Why is nobody doing anything?" to "Let's do something!"

- "We have no funding for ..." Having donors who fund a TP is not always a good idea because they often want to control and direct the initiative to other interests rather than those of the TC. On the other hand, no budget may be required (a change in attitude does not cost money!). And perhaps the TP can generate revenue.

- "It is difficult to reach an agreement" The discussions and collective decision making often encounter this difficulty because we have some patterns of

action that lead to absurd and endless discussions, which may be resolved by a vote, which involves winners and losers. There are different ways to address this issue such as the collective deliberation, which can greatly facilitate the task of decision-making ([www.deliberaweb.com](http://www.deliberaweb.com))

## **Steps to take to start a Transition Plan**

**-Become aware and raise awareness in others, prepare oneself and prepare the community for the launch of the TP.** This involves identifying the problem, defining the objectives, action strategies, thinking, testing, collecting information and working, calling on experts to answer questions, identifying potential allies and possible difficulties ... And transposing some of these issues to the current situation: social networks, websites, articles in newspapers or newsletters, interviews, radio broadcasts, conferences, raising public awareness in social and educational centers and others.

**-It is vital to establish the base of the TP establishing communication with other groups,** recognize their work and note their role in the TP, and also to prepare briefings that explain and justify the TP, its objectives and its importance in the community. It is also good to invite the community to participate in defining strategies for action and transition.

**-Define a start date.** The TP should be written and approved to be published on the website of the BC on this date. Communicating the TP to the community can be useful at the same time, and generate a new force. The idea is that by engaging in a proposal is worth much more than to just protest. If we organize ourselves we can change things.

**- Create commissions.** Collective thinking is the key to the process. From this point on, it will probably need to be organized in commissions. You will need the same number of commissions covering the different aspects as are necessary to enable to carry out the project and make it grow.

**-Create spaces for deliberation and coordination.** The commissions' work needs to be exposed, verified, supported ...with the whole community involved. There are several methods to provide these opportunities for exchange and coordination interesting and effective, so that they can be used to unite and move forward, never to stop and divide.

**-Create visible and practical signs of the TP.** It is essential to avoid the project becoming a gathering or meeting on the topic, where everyone can express their wishes. It is important to avoid being perceived that way. From the outset, the TP must have practical interventions (if possible also visible ones) that encourage others to participate. It is better to set concrete, achievable goals that mark the progress of the process, not great goals that are never achieved and that discourage people.

**-Community bridging.** It is good to cultivate a positive and productive relationship with the authorities concerned and with groups that can teach and/or train for some of the tasks to be undertaken. Perhaps you can find

more cooperation than expected but, in any case, it is better to have them with you rather than against you.

**-Be open to uncertainty.** Pretending to have a fully enclosed design and rigid plan may be counterproductive. All you need is to have a clear design of the plan and begin to make way, and remain open to new paths, without losing sight, of course, of the basic criteria of the TP.

All these steps are designed for a collective TP that concerns not only the promotion group but also the whole community. It is possible to develop a TP within the family or a small group, even personal ones that do not affect anyone else (although the benefits are shared). In this case, some of the steps explained are unnecessary, but knowing them can help in order to take issues that can be interesting for everyone into account.

| Process stage   | Interventions   | Documentation   | Communication   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>1/ Detection and agreement on the problem we want to solve and the objectives we want to achieve</b> | -Contacts with other people interested in the same issue to constitute the TC   | -Handbook to create the TC<br>-Give a name to the TC  | -Sign the BC Declaration 1.0  |
| <b>2/ Constitution of the TC</b>  | -Define the area of interest (from the transitions on the BC), the objectives, the area of influence and the deadline<br>-Choose the promotion team   | -TC constitution form<br>-TC commitment document  | -TC validation (web)  |
| <b>3/Self and collective consciousness-raising</b>  | -Identify problems and define strategies<br>-Make a information kit on the issue<br>-Public awareness: social networks, videos, talks, debates, films, exhibitions...<br>-Training: try strategies and adjust them. | -TP preparation from the script:<br>-Explain and justify the collective benefits of the objectives defined.<br>-Explain the people and areas that will be affected. | -Invite others to participate in the project.<br>-Publishing of articles and talks in newspapers, radios... |
| <b>4/TP Justification</b>   | -Contacts with authorities and organizations specialized in participation issues.   | -TP formulation: produce, write and approve:<br>· justification   | -TP approval  |

|                              |  |  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
|                              |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· objectives</li> <li>· action strategies</li> <li>· organization</li> <li>· methodology</li> <li>· evaluation</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>5/TP Start</b>            | -TP spreading actions  | <b>-TP spreading actions summary</b>   | <b>-TP publication on the website</b><br><b>-Communicate to the community the beginning of the TP</b>                        |
| <b>6/Work in commissions</b> | <b>-Identify areas affected by the plan</b><br><b>-Constitution of commissions</b><br><b>-Choose representatives</b><br><b>- Promotion team dissolved and constitution of a new team</b> | <b>-Produce a working plan for each commission.</b><br><b>-Build an action program</b><br><b>-Coordination time-line</b><br><b>-Make an evaluation time-line</b> | <b>-Publication of the commission action plans on the website</b><br><b>-Contacts with other similar or complementary TC</b> |
| <b>7/TP progress</b>         | <b>- Actions and projects programmed by the commissions</b><br><b>-Generate shared areas for discussion and coordination</b><br><b>-Permanent evaluation</b>                             | <b>-Participation strategies:</b><br><b>·Participative generator of consensus</b><br><b>·Deliberations on line</b>   | <b>-Spread processes and evaluations</b><br><b>-Publish evaluations and modifications of the TP</b>                          |

## Transition Circles Support Team

It is preparing three documents:

- TC constitution form
- Transition Circle Commitment documents
- TP outline

It is organizing an open document database (articles, books, videos ...) on alternative approaches, proposals and experiences on each of the 7 transitions proposed by the Barcelona Consensus. It will be available to the different TC to respond to their demands.

The Support Team consists of 7 people, each specialized in one of the 7 transitions. Their responsibility is to validate the constitution of the TC, to monitor their process, meet their demands, provide materials and documentation of the issues within their projects, and put, where necessary, them in contact with different TCs... We also have specialists in discussion management and decision-making.

**Visit our webpage to:**

**Sign the commitment,  
Share your Transition Plan,  
Propose an Action for a Common Transformation,  
Find out more about the Barcelona Consensus**

**[www.barcelonaconsensus.org](http://www.barcelonaconsensus.org)**

**Contact us: [info@barcelonaconsensus.org](mailto:info@barcelonaconsensus.org)**

#### Organization



#### Support



#### Partner Organizations

The Network of Support Organizations of the Barcelona Consensus currently consists of: Alliance for Freedom and Dignity, IDHC - Institut Drets Humans de Catalunya, Ubuntu - World Forum of Civil Society Networks, Fundació Alfons Comín, Centre d'Estudis sobre Moviments Socials-UPF, Fundación Cultura de Paz, Xarxa d'Economia Solidaria, Centre Unesco de Catalunya, Fòrum Ciutadà de Mallorca (Spain); Patrir - Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (Romania), CRID - Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Developpement (France), Association européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme (Belgium), ALOP - Asociación Latinoamericana de Orgs. e Promoción al Desarrollo (Mexico), IBASE - Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas (Brazil), CAD - Coalition des Alternatives Africaines Dette et Developpement (Mali), Palestinian Medical Relief Society (Palestine), CETRI - Centre Tricontinental (Belgium), World Forum for Alternatives (Senegal) and Good Future Alliance (Austria), PeaceWomen Across the Globe (Suïssa), Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Lituània), The Faculty of Social sciences-Lithuanian University of Educology (Lituània), Mayukha (Índia).