



Principles

Principles matter

They matter because the people we deal with on a day to day basis can hold us accountable to them. They matter because they're how we look at problems, devise responses and interact with people. They matter because the field that we're operating in can knock us sideways, and it's really useful to have something solid to grab hold of.

These are the principles that Transition Network aspires to as an organisation, and we hope to model them in such a way that other transitioners adopt them as well.

Like everything else, they're not cast in stone, and if the wider field of transition feels that they need to change, then we welcome that input. This page is open for comments for that very purpose.

On this page we've listed the [transition principles](#), [permaculture principles](#) and the [characteristics of resilient systems](#) – all of these are part of how transition has come about.

Transition principles

1. Positive Visioning

We can only create what we can first vision

- If we can't imagine a positive future we won't be able to create it.
- A positive message helps people engage with the challenges of these times.
- Change is happening – our choice is between a future we want and one which happens to us.
- Transition Initiatives are based on a dedication to the creation of tangible, clearly expressed and practical visions of the community in question **beyond its present-day dependence on fossil fuels.**
- Our primary focus is not campaigning against things, but rather on **positive, empowering possibilities and opportunities.**
- The generation of new stories and myths are central to this visioning work.

2. Help People Access Good Information and Trust Them to Make Good Decisions

- Transition Initiatives dedicate themselves, through all aspects of their work, to **raising awareness** of peak oil and climate change and related issues such as critiquing economic growth. In doing so they recognise the responsibility to present this information in ways which are playful, articulate, accessible and engaging, and which enable people to feel enthused and empowered rather than powerless.
- Transition Initiatives focus on telling people the closest version of the truth that we know in times when the information available is deeply contradictory.
- The messages are non-directive. **respecting each person's ability to make a response that is appropriate to their situation.**

3. Inclusion and Openness

- Successful Transition Initiatives need an unprecedented coming together of the broad diversity of society. They dedicate themselves to ensuring that their decision making processes and their working groups embody principles of **openness and inclusion.**
- This principle also refers to the principle of each initiative reaching the community in its entirety, and endeavouring, from an early stage, **to engage their local business community, the diversity of community groups and local authorities.**
- It makes explicit the principle that there is, in the challenge of energy descent, no room for 'them and us' thinking.
- In a successful transition project every skill is valuable because there is so much happening.
- We need good listeners, gardeners, people who like to make and fix everything, good parties, discussions, energy engineers, inspiring art and music, builders, planners, project managers.
- Bring your passion and make that their contribution – if there isn't a project working in the area you are passionate about, create one!!

4. Enable Sharing and Networking

- Transition Initiatives dedicate themselves to sharing their successes, failures, insights and connections at the various scales across the Transition network, so as to more widely build up a collective body of experience.

5. Build Resilience

- This stresses the fundamental importance of **building resilience, that is, the capacity of our businesses, communities and settlements to deal as well as possible with shock.**
- Transition initiatives commit to building resilience across a wide range of areas (food, economics, energy etc) and also on a range of scales (from the local to the national) as seems appropriate – and to setting them within an overall context of the need to do all we can to ensure general environmental resilience.
- Most communities in the past had – a generation or two ago – the basic skills needed for life such as growing and preserving food, making clothes, and building with **local materials.**

6. Inner and Outer Transition

- The challenges we face are not just caused by a mistake in our technologies but as a direct result of our world view and belief system.
- The impact of the information about the state of our planet can generate fear and grief – which may underlie the state of denial that many people are caught in.
- Psychological models can help us understand what is really happening and avoid unconscious processes sabotaging change, e.g. addictions models, models for behavioural change.
- This principle also honours the fact that Transition thrives because it enables and supports people to do what they are passionate about, what they feel called to do.

7. Transition makes sense – the solution is the same size as the problem

- Many films or books who suggest that changing light bulbs, recycling and driving smaller cars may be enough. This causes **a state called "Cognitive Dissonance" – a trance where you have been given an answer, but know that it is not going to solve the problem you've just been given.**
- We look at the whole system not just one issue because we are facing a **systems failure** not a single problem failure.
- We work with complexity, mimicking nature in solutions based problem solving.

8. Subsidiarity: self-organisation and decision making at the appropriate level

- This final principle enshrines the idea that the intention of the Transition model is **not to centralise or control decision making, but rather to work with everyone so that it is practiced at the most appropriate, practical and empowering level**, and in such a way that it models the ability of natural systems to self organise.
- We create ways of working that are easy to copy and spread quickly

Permaculture principles

Permaculture principles provide some critical insights that inform how Transition has, and is, developing. Here's the list from "Principles And Pathways Beyond Sustainability" by David Holmgren.

We've added some suggestions for how this might apply to the early stages of transition projects.

Principle	Catch Phrase	An Example (from us)
Observe and interact	Beauty is in the eye of the beholder	Find out what is already happening locally before starting any project
Catch and store energy	Make hay while the sun shines	Use the energy that is inspired by transition model – create lots of ways for people ways to join and give support
Obtain a yield	You can't work on an empty stomach	Harvest ideas at events with post-its or flip charts
Apply self regulation and accept feedback	The sins of the fathers are visited on the children unto the seventh generation	Create spaces where your community can let you know what they think; include evaluation and evolution in your plans
Use and value renewable resources and services	Let nature take its course	Work with existing currents, trends and projects where possible.
Produce no waste	A stitch in time saves nine.. Waste not, want not	Use psychological awareness to avoid conflict where possible
Design from patterns to details	Can't see the wood for the trees	Energy descent planning – strategic as well as micro
Integrate rather than segregate	Many hands make light work	Partnership partnership partnership!
Use small and slow solutions	The bigger they are the harder they fall. Slow and steady wins the race	Allow groups time to form and grow before expecting action
Use and value diversity	Don't put all your eggs in one basket	"Both.. and" rather than "either/or" – let's do it your way and my way
Use edges and value the marginal	Don't think you are on the right track just because it is a well beaten path	The boundaries between systems are interesting places – between existing and new movements, council and business, young and old.
Creative use and respond to change	Vision is not seeing things as they are but as they will be	Keep the vision open, active and creative – don't tie it down or stop it evolving.

Characteristics of Resilient Systems

These are some very valuable pointers from "Resilience Thinking" by David Salter and Brian Walker.

Characteristic	Description
Tight feedback	The system knows what's happening inside itself quickly and can respond
Diversity	Diversity in all areas, ecological, social, economic needs to be attended to and supported.
Modularity	Sub systems within the system are independent or not over connected – if one fails they don't all fail.
Ecological variability	Eco systems constantly change. Any attempts to limit or prevent change are generally disastrous. Understanding the variability of a system is wise.
Understanding slow variables	Slow variables are often the key to understanding systems. They determine the thresholds in a system that can lead the system to tip into a new regime.
Social capital	A resilient world would promote trust, well developed social networks, and adaptability. Resilience is very closely determined by the ability of people to respond and work together.
Innovation	A resilient system places an emphasis on learning, experimentation, locally developed rules, and embracing change.
Overlap in governance	Institutions that include redundancy in their governing structure, and overlap in common and private ownership with overlapping access rights
Ecosystem services are valued	We have to learn to value ecosystem 'services'. The earth is not an unlimited source of materials and rubbish dump.
Human beings have diverse connections to each other and all beings. These connections are seen and unseen; inner and outer.	All connection to our world, 'hidden' energetic or inner, are accepted as implicit, immanent, and integral to all of our understanding and practice. We must explore and create awareness of our connections both to other people and to all of creation.