



Key Advice

Background information on the Transition Model Canvas

The Transition Model Canvas (TMC) is a practical tool that helps students, educators and professionals to better understand, analyse and influence transitions—especially those related to sustainability. It is based on transition theory, and in particular the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP), which helps make complex system changes easier to grasp and act upon.

The TMC was developed through collaborative research with practitioners to operationalise transition theory for use in governance, education and innovation processes. It builds upon research in sustainability transitions and socio-technical systems and translates academic insights into a format that can be used in education, innovation and policy-making.

Multi-Level Perspective (MLP)

The MLP describes how systems change across three levels:

- **Landscape:** Large external developments, such as climate change, cultural shifts and geopolitics, that influence the system, but are usually beyond the control of individual actors.
- **Incumbent system:** The dominant, stable system that currently fulfils a societal function (e.g., transport, energy or food), supported by rules, technologies, institutions and powerful actors.
- **Niche system:** Small-scale, emerging alternatives that challenge the incumbent system and offer new ways of doing things. These spaces of innovation detail what's present and what's missing in the current system.

Transitions happen when pressure from the landscape destabilises the incumbent system, while the niche system gains momentum and legitimacy as a new alternative.

Key Concepts of the Transition Model Canvas

The TMC is a visual canvas that helps map out the dynamics of system change. It includes five core elements:

1. **Transition goal**

A clear, specific ambition for a more sustainable future or desired system change (e.g. fossil-free transport or circular farming).



2. **Landscape**

External trends and forces that influence both the current and emerging system, such as laws, social trends or crises.

3. **Incumbent system**

The current dominant system, including key actors, institutions, resources and infrastructures. This also includes:

- **Strengths** (e.g. stability, funding, political support)
- **Vulnerabilities** (e.g. slow to adapt, loss of public trust)

4. **Niche system**

The new system that is still developing, aligned with the transition goal. This part maps what is already in place and what is still missing, as well as its **strengths** (e.g. innovation, public support) and **weaknesses** (e.g. small scale, fragile funding).

5. **Strategies**

The actions different actors take to keep the current system in place, or to support change. The TMC helps identify four types of interventions:

- **Defend** the incumbent system
- **Block** or slow down niche growth
- **Destabilise** the incumbent system
- **Strengthen** the niche system

These strategies help reflect on one's role within the system and design targeted action to change, or understand why change is being resisted.