A photograph of Ada Colau, the Mayor of Barcelona, smiling and looking towards the camera. She is in the foreground, wearing a light-colored, textured cardigan. Behind her is a large, diverse crowd of people, some looking towards the camera and others looking away. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing Ada Colau. The entire image has a strong red color cast.

“We’re living in extraordinary times that demand brave and creative solutions. If we’re able to imagine a different city, we’ll have the power to transform it”

Ada Colau

HOW TO WIN BACK THE CITY EN COMÚ
GUIDE TO BUILDING A CITIZEN MUNICIPAL PLATFORM

HOW TO WIN BACK THE CITY EN COMÚ: GUIDE TO BUILDING A CITIZEN MUNICIPAL PLATFORM

This guide has been possible thanks to the International Committee of Barcelona en Comú

Twitter: @BComuGlobal

Contact email: global@bcnencomu.cat

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Photography: Marc Lozano



INDEX

- 4 INTRODUCTION**
- 4 WHY A MUNICIPAL PLATFORM?**
- 5 HOW IS A WINNING CITIZEN PLATFORM BUILT?**
- 5 PHASE A: BEFORE THE PUBLIC LAUNCH**
- 6 PHASE B: FROM THE LAUNCH TO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN**
- 6 CROWDSOURCING A CODE OF ETHICS**
- 7 FINANCING**
- 7 DRAWING UP AN ELECTORAL PROGRAMME “EN COMÚ”**
- 8 PUTTING TOGETHER AN ELECTORAL CANDIDACY**
- 8 STRUCTURE OF BARCELONA EN COMÚ DURING PHASE B**

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning, those of us who participate in Barcelona En Comú were sure that the democratic rebellion in Barcelona wouldn't be just a local phenomenon. We want Barcelona to be the trigger for a citizen revolution in Catalonia, Spain, Southern Europe and beyond.

We know that there are many similar initiatives to our own in other cities that aim to break apart the current political and economic regime from below. Each city will have to find its own way, whether it takes the electoral route or not. Nevertheless, having won the Barcelona elections, we are excited to publish this guide to the philosophy and organization of Barcelona En Comú from our launch to our entry into government. We hope that it will be useful in the construction of citizen platforms that aim to win local elections around the world.



WHY A MUNICIPAL PLATFORM?

Barcelona En Comú didn't come out of nowhere. In the years before its creation, in a context of economic and political crisis in which traditional political institutions were failing to respond to the needs of the people, a multitude of citizen movements mobilized in the city and demonstrated the power of organized citizens to propose and implement solutions.

We took the social networks, We took the streets and We took the squares. However, we found that change was being blocked from above by the institutions. We couldn't allow this. So, we decided that the moment had arrived to take back the institutions and put them at the service of the common good. We decided to win back the city.

However, we found that change was being blocked from above by the institutions. We couldn't allow this. So, we decided that the moment had arrived to take back the institutions and put them at the service of the common good. We decided to win back the city. For us, "winning back the city" is about much more than winning the local elections. It means

putting a new, transparent and participatory model of local government, which is under citizen control, into practice. It also means implementing fair, redistributive and sustainable policies to respond to the economic and political crisis. Our strategy has been to start from below, from what we know best: our streets, our neighbourhoods. The proximity of municipal governments to the people makes them the best opportunity we have to take the change from the streets to the institutions. Cities have always been a place of encounter, of exchange of ideas, of innovation and, when necessary, of revolution. Cities are where democracy was born, and they'll be where we can start to recover it.

For more information on the new municipalism in Spain [click here](#).

HOW IS A WINNING CITIZEN PLATFORM BUILT?

PHASE A: BEFORE THE PUBLIC LAUNCH

DECIDING TO WIN BACK THE CITY AND PRESENTING THE INITIATIVE TO CITIZENS

The first step is to bring together a group of men and women who want to create a citizen platform to build a winning candidacy for the local elections. Each platform should emerge from the social reality of the city, be driven by citizens, rely on the widest possible support and not be led by any political party. It's essential that there is a gender balance in all areas of work from the very beginning. A revolution that isn't feminist isn't worthy of the name.

There should only be one citizen platform in each city. If more than one citizen municipal candidacy is launched, everyone involved should make every possible effort to bring them together around concrete goals and proposals and to cooperate rather than compete in the municipal elections.

In Barcelona, this group nominated a number of spokesmen and women (some of whom willing to stand as candidates) to represent the platform to the citizenry and the media during the initial months. These spokespeople presented the project at an open, public event, inviting citizens and like-minded political forces to join and make it their own. The presentation also saw the publication of a **manifesto** that diagnosed the economic, political and social context of the city and a text of **Principles and Commitments** that summarized the main goals of the platform.

Look the video presentation [here](#).

PHASE B: FROM THE LAUNCH TO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

GETTING THE PEOPLE'S ENDORSEMENT

The next step is to collect a certain number of signatures of support (in Barcelona, a city of 1.6 million residents, our goal was to collect 30,000 from June to August 2014), and present the project in public meetings in different neighbourhoods across the city. The aim of the public meetings is both to get the word out about the project and to gather the concerns and proposals of city residents. It is essential to start like this, proving that there are other ways of doing politics - listening, participating, collaborating - from the very beginning.

Video about the neighbourhood meetings:

CROWDSOURCING A CODE OF ETHICS

A citizen platform doesn't just aim to change local policies. It also aims to change the rules of the game and create new ways of doing politics. A key way of achieving this is to draw up, debate, and approve a code of ethics in a public and transparent way.

The code of ethics is a document that defines the practices that those occupying elected and appointed positions in public of ce should carry out in order to ensure a responsible administration that remains in touch with real life. It sets limits on salaries and expenses that guarantee that anyone can get involved in politics but, at the same time, end the privileges that have led political representatives to be out of touch with ordinary citizens. The code of ethics should include efficient financial transparency and accountability mechanisms, as well as mechanisms to involve citizens in public life.

Barcelona En Comú's code of ethics was drawn up based on previous work by political forces involved in the project, a day of in-person debate, and approval via an **online platform**.

Read the Barcelona En Comú code of ethics.



Video about the neighbourhood meetings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTWt2jpXKOY>

Code of ethics proces: http://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/Guanyem-ICV-EUiA-Podemos-Proces-Constituent_0_328267839.html

Code of ethic Barcelona En Comú: <https://guanyembarcelona.cat/es/codigo-etico-gobernar-obedeciendo/>

FINANCING

As a platform, we have a policy of transparency and clear accounting and make all of our income and outgoings public. We've committed not to finance ourselves with bank loans and to base our support on the loans and donations of individuals.

DRAWING UP AN ELECTORAL PROGRAMME "EN COMÚ"

The collective process of putting together our electoral programme began in the summer of 2014 when the different neighbourhood and policy groups of Barcelona En Comú (open to anyone who wanted to participate) carried out diagnoses of their own areas, deepening the reactions of the general manifesto.

Fruit of these first months' work, the policy groups drew up framework documents at the end of 2014. These documents were the basis of the many participatory processes used to draw up the electoral programme.

The initial proposals generated by this work went through two phases of public, open, in-person and online debate and feedback. The first phase allowed for contributions to the initial proposals, and the second allowed participants to prioritize the final list of policy measures.

These processes produced:

- A citizen mandate made up of 40 measures in order of the priority given to them by citizens, which formed the core of the Barcelona En Comú electoral programme.

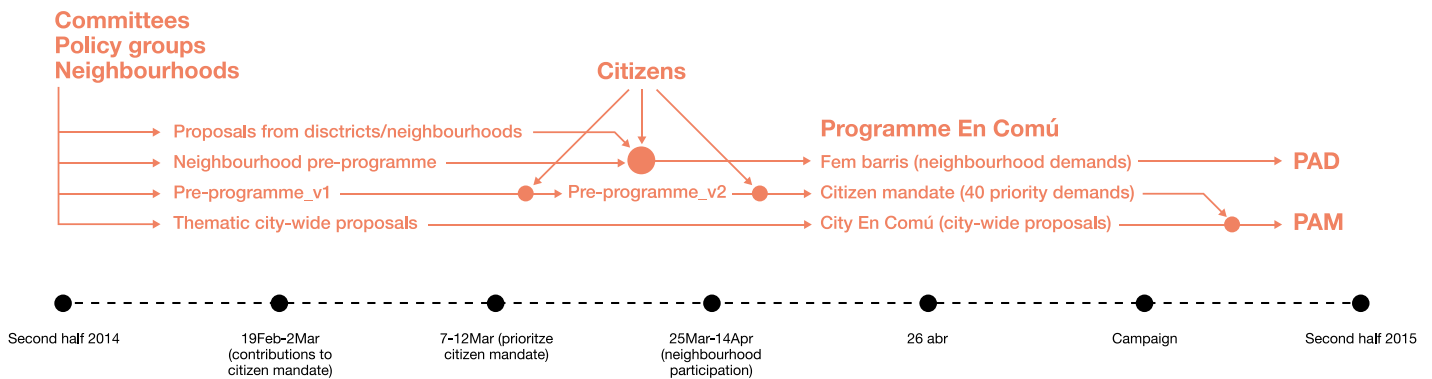
- A set of citizen demands for each neighbourhood and district of the city.

- City-wide policy proposals on different issues.

The policy groups of Barcelona En Comú carried out the tasks of collecting, summarizing, developing and assessing the feasibility of all proposals made.

Our Programme en Comú is a document that aims to enrich dialogue with citizens. It isn't a set of electoral promises, rather, it's a firm commitment that will guide all of our work in City Hall. This is essential in order for citizens to be able to get enthusiastically involved in political life again. That's why **our programme** includes implementation and accountability mechanisms.

Diagram of process of development of Barcelona en Comú programme



PUTTING TOGETHER AN ELECTORAL CANDIDACY

Barcelona En Comú isn't a coalition or an alphabet soup of party acronyms. We've shunned traditional party logics and built a new space which, respecting the identity of everyone involved, goes beyond the sum of its parts and is open to people who have never participated in electoral politics before.

Part of the DNA of a citizen platform is that people participate as individuals. There aren't any quotas for the political groups involved. This is what we call 'con uence'. It's a philosophy of collaboration based on shared priorities and concrete goals, not horse-trading between parties. It requires exibility and generosity on all sides, and for everyone to contribute their unique strengths and resources to a project shared by all.

When drawing up the Barcelona En Comú electoral list, we took into account the balance between political forces and activists and gender parity. The final list was made up of both political groups that had already held elected of ce in Barcelona and those which had not.

Guanyem Barcelona: original drivers of the project, made up of many activists and campaigners from social movements

ICV-EUiA: party with councillors in Barcelona City Hall

Podemos: new party without representation in Barcelona City Hall

Procés Constituent: Catalan social movement without representation in Barcelona City Hall

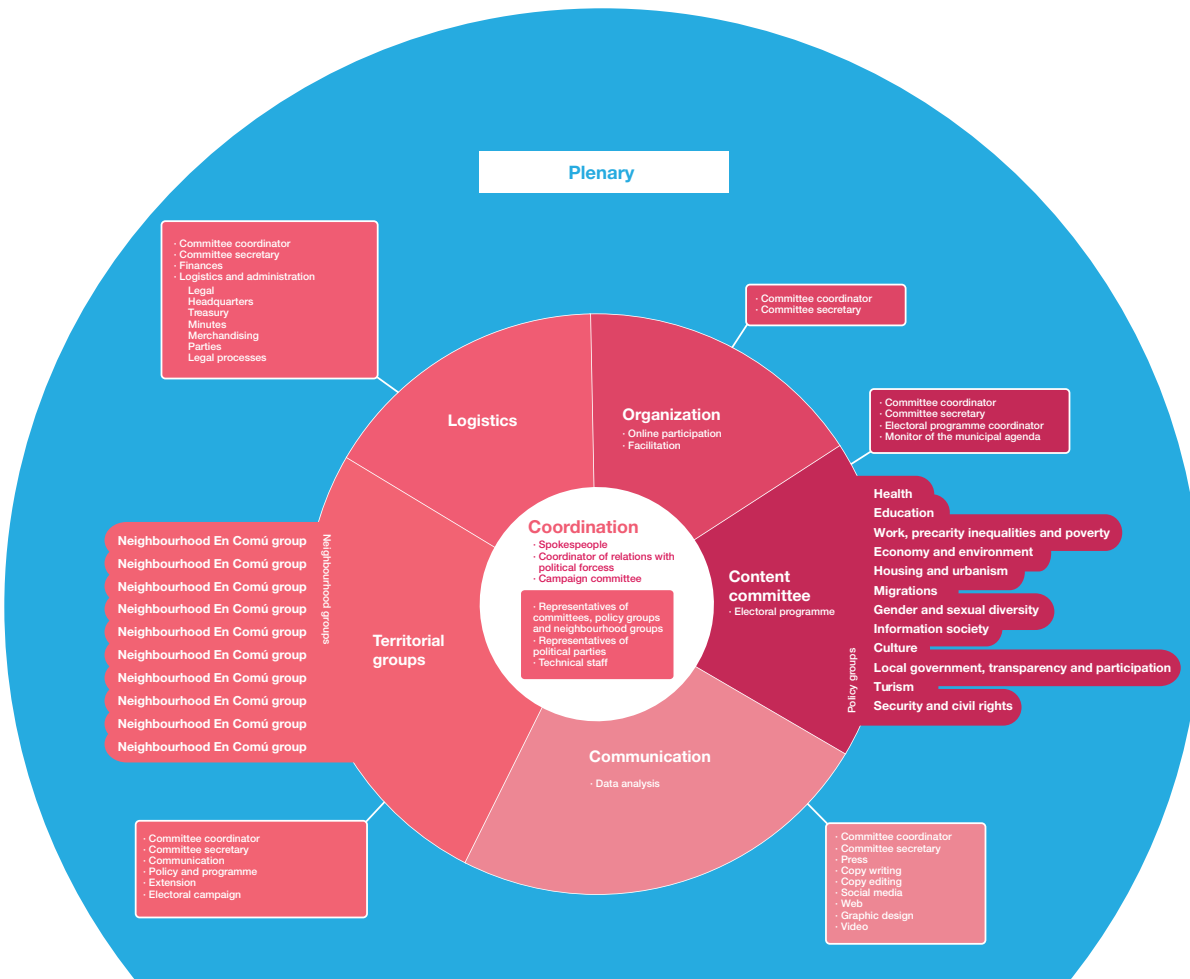
Equo: environmental party without representation in Barcelona City Hall

For more information on the elected representatives of Barcelona En Comú: [click here](#).

STRUCTURE OF BARCELONA EN COMÚ DURING PHASE B

Democratic revolution is impossible without the active participation of citizens and proposals designed collectively. The organizational structure in each city will vary according to the context, but it should always be horizontal and transparent, and there must be clear mechanisms to allow people who want to join the project to participate.

We try to seek a balance between horizontality and effectiveness, while maintaining a firm commitment to internal democracy and gender equality. This commitment implies ensuring that everyone feels comfortable in debate and decision-making spaces, that people can combine their activity in the platform with work and caring responsibilities, and that digital tools do not become a barrier to participation due to age or income.



1. TERRITORIAL GROUPS

1.1. NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

These are neighbourhood or district assemblies in which all local residents who wish to can participate. They are represented and connected to the rest of Barcelona En Comú via the Neighbourhood Coordinator, in which two people from each neighbourhood group participate.

The role of Barcelona En Comú neighbourhood groups is to:

Encourage and welcome participation. Hold workshops and share online participation tools and assist in local residents in their use.

Spread the word about the Barcelona En Comú project by organizing public meetings and distributing communication materials, especially during the election campaign.

Carry out a diagnosis of the situation in the neighbourhood and how it affects local men and women. Create spaces for debate and to draw up proposals.

Make contact with local neighbourhood groups (NGOs, social movements, activists) that can contribute knowledge and experience relating to the neighbourhood, while always respecting the autonomy of such groups.

Coordinate with the Content Committee and Policy Groups

1.2 NEIGHBOURHOOD COORDINATOR

This is the space that facilitates, accompanies and joins up the neighbourhood groups of Barcelona En Comú. It's a space for exchanging ideas and making proposals in order to draw up diagnoses and policies for the electoral programme. It's the bridge that allows ideas and consultations to be communicated between the neighbourhood groups and the Plenary and the coordination team. It is made up of two representatives from each neighbourhood group and a team from the territorial extension sub-committee, which moderates its meetings.

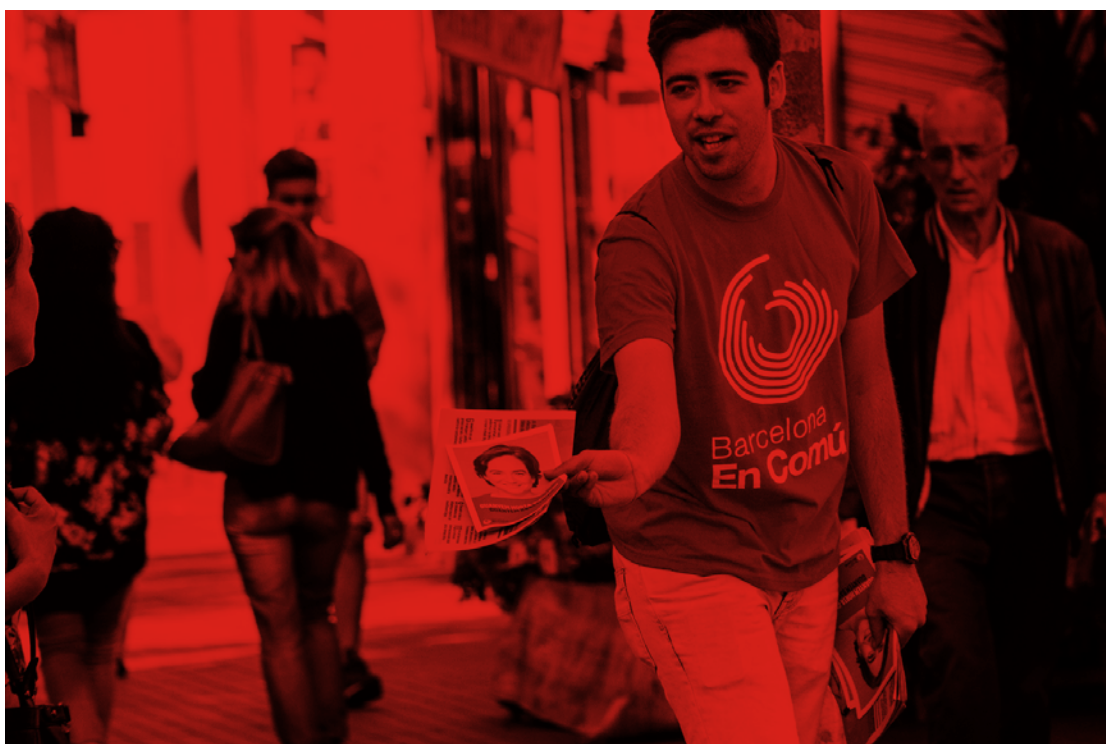
2. TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

These are work groups that carry out the everyday tasks essential to the functioning of the platform. Each committee defines its own size and internal organization. Those who wish to participate in these committees should send a request and attend one of the regular meetings for new collaborators.

Committees active during Phase B of Barcelona En Comú:

Content committee: coordinates the setting up and functioning of the Policy Groups and the drawing up of proposals for the electoral programme.

Communication committee: plans and carries out the communication strategy. Its work areas include: website and server, graphic design, social networks, press, video, streaming, mailing, translation and correction.



Logistics and finance committee: provides logistical support to other spaces, administers the finances of the organization, and organizes legal support.

Cofluence committee: manages relationships with the political forces with which the platform wants to stand for election and works to make this possible.

- Territorial extension: coordinates the platform's activity in neighbourhoods and districts.
- Collaborators: helps people who get in touch requesting to become involved in the project.
- Internal organization: draws up protocols and develops the organizational structure of each phase of the project. Assists in the introduction of online participation mechanisms.

3. COORDINATION

3.1. COORDINATION TEAM

This is the executive space of Barcelona En Comú. It takes urgent, operational decisions and identifies the important, strategic decisions that should be taken in the plenary.

This group is responsible for taking a global view of the process (strategy, roadmap, general calendar, analysis of current affairs, etc.), and for coordinating the rest of the organization. It is made up of the platform's spokespeople and electoral candidates and their support teams, two representatives from each technical committee, one representative of the territorial extension committee and invited members of other spaces. Two people also attend its meetings moderate and take notes.

3.2. PLENARY

This is the most important space for communication and decision-making within Barcelona En Comú, especially in terms of strategic decisions and internal organization. Anyone active in any of the committees or groups of the platform can attend. It meets at least once every two weeks. The plenary can open up decision-making to the entire citizenry by holding online or other forms of citizen consultations.

4. OTHER SPACES AND PROCESSES

4.1. POLICY GROUPS

These are meeting and participation spaces for organizations and individuals active in different policy areas. Their main role is to propose and validate the platform's policy positions, and to assess the issues related to their area and draw up proposals for the election manifesto. Two representatives for each area participate in the Content Committee.

Barcelona En Comú currently has the following policy groups: health; education; work, precarity inequalities and poverty; economy and environment; housing and urbanism; migrations; gender and sexual diversity; information society; culture; local government, transparency and participation; security and civil rights.

4.2. CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Set up and is active during Phase C (the election campaign). Responsible for the day-to-day planning and execution of the election campaign.

4.3 CREATIVE NETWORKS

Barcelona En Comú is supported by a group of artists and designers, the **Movement for the Graphic Liberation of Barcelona**, and a network of cyberactivists, **SomComuns**. These networks diversify the possible ways of participating in the project, and contribute to our communication activity.



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