

# Nexial Contributions Submission to: The COP 30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner.

March 2026

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COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE



FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

## A Short Introduction to Nexial

Nexial is a not-for-profit strategic thinking consultancy with the sole purpose of creating change in complex systems. **We exist to engage and equip people with the tools and skills to drive sustainable transformation.** We combine insights, systems maps and a digital platform to amplify impact. For over two decades, we have applied facilitated systems thinking, mapping and foresight methodologies to some of the most complex challenges facing governments, institutions and societies. Our work has spanned support to strategic policy recommendations for the UK Government, contributing to the Net Zero Built Environment agenda under High-Level Champions Nigel Topping at COP26, Laudes Foundation reframing strategy to drive economic system transformation, and most recently working with the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative and RELP. A fuller account of our work, including founder biographies and project summaries, is in the Appendix.

## The Rationale for the Contributions We Offer

Our contribution will be focused on questions (a) and (b), but rather than adding new individual barriers or levers to an already comprehensive inventory, we bring a different perspective to what may be a most consequential and least addressed question that cuts across sectors and geographies: whether the actors working on transitions are equipped to think and work together, in a way that matches the systemic complexity of the challenge.

At the heart of our thinking is the often underestimated pervasiveness of the energy systems of today. The outline of this Call for Contribution makes it clear how it is not possible to disentangle transitions from the rest of the economy, and more broadly, societies' standards of living expectations. A lot which is familiar and comfortable comes from that source of energy, so, whether we look at it from a hard infrastructure angle or from a social values, norms and behavioural perspective, we know it is embedded everywhere. This simple reality that all systems currently rely heavily on fossil fuels cannot be taken lightly.

**The multifaceted nature of this challenge makes it imperative that those involved in transition efforts can navigate strategically and carefully through many of the important elements of their own Roadmaps.** From coming up with feasible solutions for economic alternatives independent from fossil fuel revenues or lifestyles, incentives that distort market signals, debt rebalancing and financing for new infrastructure or retrofit, to the tremendous underlying effort needed to bring all levels of society from raised awareness to an honest and deep reckoning with the realities of our changing world.

Although this pervasiveness of energy systems is talked about in different words and contexts, unfortunately, for many reasons, thinking and actions are yet to match that challenge. We see how key actors across the board, advising governments, publishing important papers, hosting key

conferences or podcasts with thousands of listeners, funding coalitions, are today still talking of intervention ideas as separate parts of a puzzle.

Over the years, we've seen a pattern of strong actors, with top-quality intellect and intent, with great subject-matter understanding and intervention ideas, who keep hitting an invisible ceiling when it comes to thinking systemically together, imagining new possibilities, and holding a coherent strategic line to drive actions across multiple fronts.

This is, in our view, very concerning and worthy of profound consideration. The pervasiveness leaves no room for doubt: interventions to drive phase-out, phase-in, and climate justice, must be thought through as interconnected if they are going to work in a way that moves whole systems and not just isolated parts. That is where true leverage lies.

**With that in mind, our specific response to this Call for Contribution is structured in two levels:**

1. **A systemic view on Barriers and Levers** - Immediate contribution to the COP30 team inventory, in response to the Call's questions (a) and (b) in particular.
2. **An offer of further contribution** - Ideas of potential future work to strengthen the systemic impact delivered through the Roadmap development.

Our contribution is therefore less about *what* needs to change, and more about *how* those driving change must think and work differently, together; for any of it to move.

## A Systemic View on Barriers & Levers



**(a) What are the most critical barriers - whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social - preventing a transition away from fossil fuels?**

Much has been documented on the barriers to transition (physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological and social). The list of topics offered for this Call for Contribution, and the essential elements of a Roadmap suggested by Minister Irene Velez Torres, Ambassador André Correa do Lago, Andre Andrade and Sérgio Brito on [this recent panel](#), provide substantial inventories. What we observe, however, are barriers that cut across all these other ones, but are rarely named as such.

The pervasiveness of energy systems mentioned above, has, over many decades, created interdependencies that are now deeply set and influence the ways of working across sectors of our economies, as well as the ways of thinking about how society functions, and what success looks like. **The various system lock-ins we observe** - how economic alternative development is undermined by cost-of-living crisis, how finance of new infra-structure is undercut by current treatment of stranded assets, how narratives of wellbeing can drive further conspicuous consumption - **all reinforce status-quo and strengthen incumbents' power**. In this context, from a systems thinking perspective, it is impossible to look at barriers only as individual elements.

We suggest that two critical barriers cut across all systems:

1. **Relationships between barriers (and solutions) and the structure of interdependencies - how they reinforce, undermine, and entrench one another - constitute barriers in their own right**, but are rarely named or addressed as such. As long as interventions are designed for individual elements without accounting for these dynamics, the system as a whole remains locked.
2. **The capacity (in individuals and institutions) to work collectively through this complexity remains critically underdeveloped, and is itself a barrier to effective intervention**. Holding and navigating systemic interdependencies requires specific cognitive tools, deliberate process design and collaborative approaches that most multi-stakeholder groups setting currently lack. Without these, even well-resourced and well-intentioned actors struggle to trace cause & effect across systems, anticipate unintended consequences, or coordinate action with the coherence required to make real difference to the dynamics and lock-ins that hold the system in place.



**(b) What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the transitioning away commitment?**

As with the Barriers, there are many important Levers that are well documented in various studies and conferences - policies, finance, multilateral governance, social movements, etc. However, given the multiple interdependencies across the systems at stake, ***true leverage can only come from connecting interventions across levers with coherence and intent. That requires dedicated investment to secure strategic collective capacity across multistakeholder settings (addressing the 2 barriers highlighted above).***

Navigating this density of systemic interdependencies is unprecedented, making the work to transition away from fossil fuels ultimately about embracing complexity. We are entering uncharted territory - a big delta of wicked problems with no clear channel, an awful lot of sailors, each with their own compass, who haven't yet learned to read the same currents.

More specifically, two potential levers we believe are critical to ensure work accelerates in the right direction:

1. **An unrelenting (almost obsessive) commitment to systemic thinking across all issues and opportunities.** There will be much need for diving deep and untangling complexity alongside deliberations over difficult trade-offs that transitioning strategies will require. Concepts like *mutirão*, collective intelligence, radical collaboration, now need to turn into real, embedded ways of working at speed, across so many spheres and levels, **and these new ways of working need to carry systemic integrity.**
2. **Collaboration platforms explicitly designed for the complexity of the phase-out challenge.** COP/UNFCCC was not structured to support the phase-out debate at the pace and depth required. The emergence of Santa Marta and the Transition Roadmap by the COP30 Presidency represents a meaningful shift - platforms built specifically for this agenda. Minister Irene Velez Torres and Ambassador André Correa do Lago have described the platforms' work as complementary (in the same panel linked above), signalling that this new architecture for collaboration has real political commitment behind it. The progress of the last months on this front has been remarkable and it will be crucial to keep momentum. **The key task now is to ensure the design of these platforms matches the complexity of what they are being asked to hold.**

Making things move with real leverage, demands a genuinely different quality of collaboration. The new platforms emerging from this moment - and hopefully many others to come - face a double design challenge as a result: On one hand, they must stimulate and support the ideas for transformation of 'external' systems: energy, infrastructure, governance, finance. On the other hand, they must also cater for the inner journey of the changemakers, who must embrace transformation themselves: how they think, how they relate, and how they work together. These are two very different demands on platform design and management, each calling for tailored processes, approaches, and tools. Most platforms are built for only one of them, usually the first.

Furthermore, the work ahead will require something that is hard to ask of busy, high-performing people across sectors of society: sustained, collective, strategic debates that can be unrewarding, and uncomfortable at first. For many it can even feel intimidating and overwhelming, and rarely urgent (or appealing) enough to prioritise. While for some, in contrast, it could not move fast enough. A combination of stamina, patience and perseverance will be on call to sustain momentum and continuous engagement of many, important actors throughout the journeys.

**These are the 'soft' challenges that don't get addressed on a barriers' list or levers' log-frame, and instead get delegated to a 'working group'. But they live 'in the room', in how people listen, defer, challenge, trust and commit together, and need to be catered for accordingly by collaboration platforms if they are to create leverage.** Underestimating these does not make them disappear. They show up eventually, at best as wasted and delayed efforts, at worst as fully missed outcomes.

Regrettably, this is a very concerning risk we recognise in the context of transitions.

**We see a critical 'soft infrastructure' gap undermining great efforts across important levers. Dedicated, collective work is required to bring about this platform 'infrastructure', embedded in real work, to support complex decisions already being made across institutions and networks. We see the Roadmap for TAFF as a top priority, and precisely the right place to begin addressing the gap. We welcome the opportunity to contribute further to this direction.**

Complex systems can only change - in the desired direction and with the required pace - with a powerful combination of collective intelligence and collective action.

## An Offer of Further Contribution

We would welcome a conversation with the COP30 team to explore how Nexial can contribute to strengthening the systemic impact delivered through the Roadmap development.

**Our strategic frameworks and mapping tools are designed precisely for this kind of integration challenge - bringing together the thinking across the many different topics mentioned in this Call for Contributions, to create a systemic picture of barriers, levers, and key relationships between them, outlining the essential elements that any transition roadmap should cover.**

We would welcome an early conversation to share directly relevant past work. Our work with the UK Government on policy development offers a close parallel to the challenge the COP30 team faces now, specifically, how to maintain systemic coherence when consolidating many perspectives, sectors and inputs into a single strategic document without losing the integrity of the connections between them. More recent work with the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, Endgame Scenarios and RELP adds directly relevant content on the fossil fuel transition specifically. We suspect these experiences would be of interest, and offer them as a starting point for a conversation.

Building on the current work of the team developing the Roadmap document, and the outcomes of the Santa Marta Conference, we would propose to explore opportunities of working with a multi-stakeholder group, ideally convened and co-led by the COP30 team, on a facilitated systems mapping journey - the shape of it we would want to define together. The objective would be to surface and make visible the deep, often hidden interdependencies between the issues, sectors and actors that come up as critical for transition roadmaps to navigate: the dynamics of supply and demand, the relationship between policy instruments and market mechanisms, the flow of knowledge and information, the role of social movements and shifting norms.

**The mapping process itself is where much of the value lies - as much as, if not more than, the final maps as outputs. Working together through these interdependencies, stimulated by structured mapping tools and facilitated conversations, is where levers come to life. It is where shared language is built, where trust deepens, where the courage required to act on hard trade-offs begins to form. The collaborative journey is where the possibility of structural change becomes embodied: in the collective wisdom, mutual understanding and shared ambition of the people 'in the room'.**

A key part of what makes this possible at scale is our digital platform, which allows complexity to be unpacked and visualised in interactive layers. Rather than presenting participants with an overwhelming map of everything at once, the platform enables groups to move deliberately through

different dimensions of a system - zooming in on specific dynamics, toggling between perspectives, and building a cumulative, shared picture of what needs changing and where intervention is most likely to create movement in the desired direction. This capacity to break down complexity without losing its integrity is, in our experience, what allows diverse stakeholders to stay in the room, and in the work, together.

We trust the above explanation makes clear the relevance of the proposed approach although the details of the journey always need to be tailored to cater for requirements of specific multistakeholder groups involved.

**The window for this kind of deliberate capacity-building is narrowing, and the cost of not investing in it is already visible in the gap between the quality of ideas in this space and the pace of coordinated action. We are confident that we have something unique to contribute, and we are in conversation with a number of individuals and organisations already working in this space. Our interest is to find synergies and identify where Nexial's approach can best strengthen the underlying capacity for collective systems change. We see the Roadmap for TAFF as the most important context in which to deepen that effort. We would welcome the opportunity to explore with the COP30 team where and how this contribution would be most valuable - and to begin that conversation as soon as possible.**

## Appendix – Nexial’s Work

### Our Work

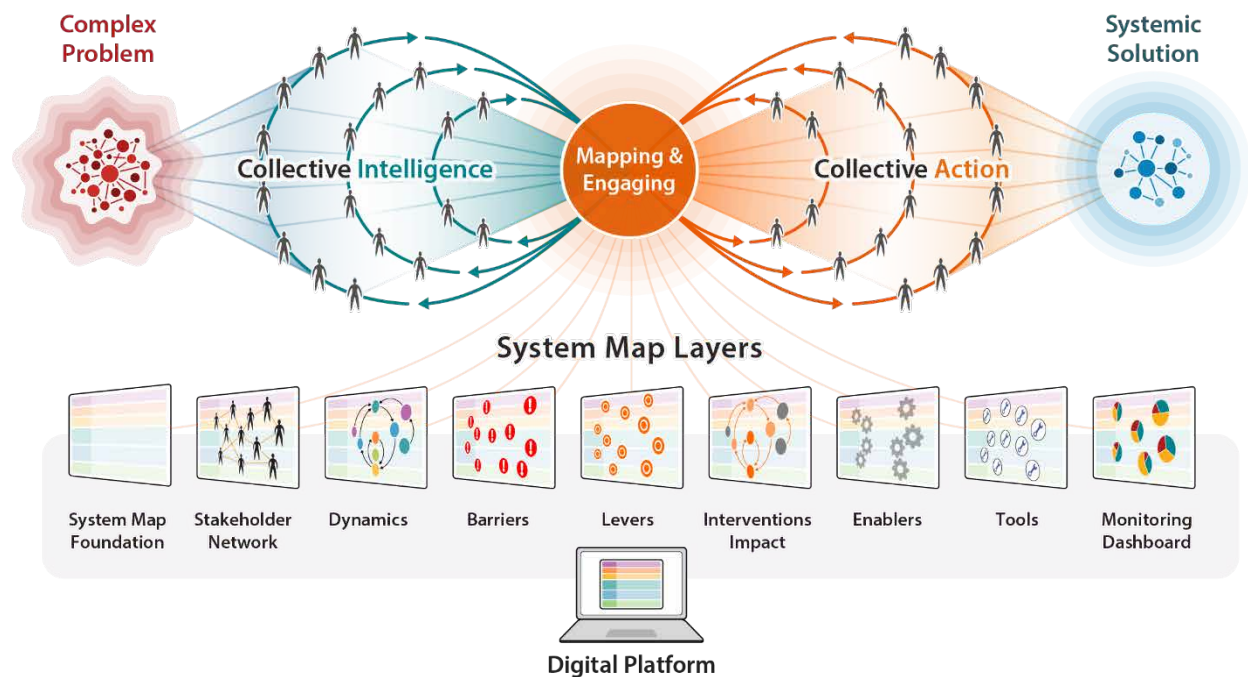
Nexial’s approach leverages the experience and expertise of its 3 co-founders in global projects focused in various areas of sustainable development. This experience is codified into the processes, frameworks and tools we use, and constantly evolve as we learn and incorporate new insights from each project.

The Nexial team has worked on systems change projects across the world. Our clients have included international foundations (e.g. Laudes Foundation, Jacobs Foundation, Climate Breakthrough), national government departments (UK, Canada), non-profit organisations (Rainforest Alliance, Renewable Energy for All), and other consultancies or multinational corporations (Dalberg Catalyst, Generali, Nike). Our projects have covered many subject areas – but they all share the goal of making the world a better place.

Read more about our Theory of Change and our projects below. For testimonials [click here](#).

### Nexial’s Theory of Change

The diagram below illustrates a journey we suggest is required to drive transformation in complex systems. **Relationships and insights** developed through a process (and captured on system maps) that makes real change happen on the ground.



Our tagline (and the motto we live by) ‘Collective Intelligence for Collective Action’ encapsulates the two pillars of our theory of change:

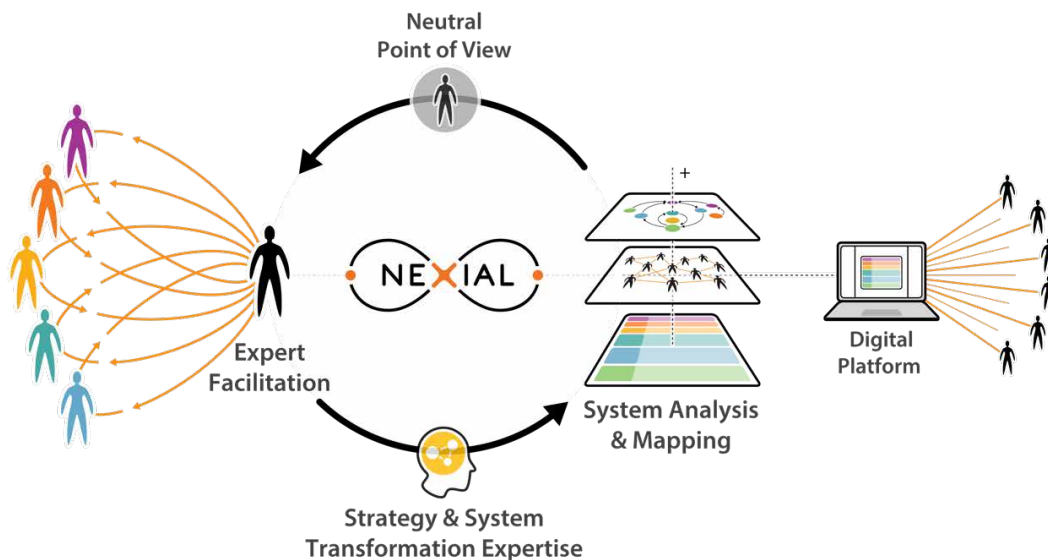
## 1. Collective Intelligence

To tackle deep systemic problems, we need to cater for the inherently cross-sector, cross-disciplinary nature of the challenges. It requires participation and thinking from multiple stakeholders. Systems thinking and mapping allow us to integrate knowledge and perspectives from different players and parts of the system, developing a shared evidence-based view and understanding of the situation that can expand our collective intelligence.

## 2. Collective Action

Shared understanding, vision and trust are what drives aligned action. This is especially true for systemic collective action problems, where the solution requires coherent and integrated action from a range of actors. We incorporate the collective understanding work (supported by the development of system maps and other visual tools) into a facilitated process of engagement, communication and action planning. This process is designed to create a shared vision and, more importantly, develop the ownership, trust, enthusiasm and mindset shifts that underpin real change.

### Core Elements of Our Proposition – How We Work



**A neutral point of view** – we don’t come from one area of expertise or subject matter. Our role is to integrate, build connections and bring knowledge and people together.

**Expert systems thinking facilitation** – we combine hard and soft skills to bring people from across the system along on a journey, a guided navigation through complexity.

**Strategy and system transformation expertise** - we anticipate the work required to produce the right outcomes. We put ourselves in the shoes of our project partners to determine the scope and depth of our system challenges.

**System analysis and mapping** – we work with teams, mapping the system in as many layers as needed, to dive into specifics without losing sight of the bigger picture. We make complexity more approachable.

**A digital hub** – allows easy information organisation and visualisation, making insights accessible to the community to encourage ongoing collaboration. The technology makes it possible to navigate through different parts of a system transformation challenge, from the high-level case for change and strategy down to detailed process steps, activities, and metrics.

For more information about Nexial, visit <https://Nexial.co>

## Nexial's Co-founders



### Alexandra Kanitz

CEO and co-founder of Nexial is originally from Brazil, with 20 years in the UK and Europe, now based in Canada since 2018. With a varied international career, Alexandra has worked with government, global corporations, foundations, and NGOs. She has covered diverse areas such as projects with the UK Government, Global Futures Forum of Intelligence Agencies, business transformation in multinational corporate settings. With a passion for work which combines strategic thinking with her drive to make change happen on the ground, she thinks solutions and stirs up teams to do the same - she believes 'where there is a will, there is a way'. **Alexandra has been working for over 30 years using her experience and expertise to create approaches and tools that stimulate and equip stakeholders to master the challenges of the systems they influence and to create the transformations required for a thriving society.**



### Marshall Clemens

**Marshall is a co-founder of Nexial, lead system cartographer and designer of the Nexial system mapping platform.** After working at a number of Boston-area technology companies, Marshall turned his attention to understanding the mechanics of complex socio-technical problems, and using visual tools to design more holistic and effective solutions. He has 25 years of experience in the application of systemic analysis and mapping to facilitate understanding, strategy-making and alignment for complex multi-stakeholder problems, including complex global issues such as obesity, mental capital, sustainable finance and value chains.

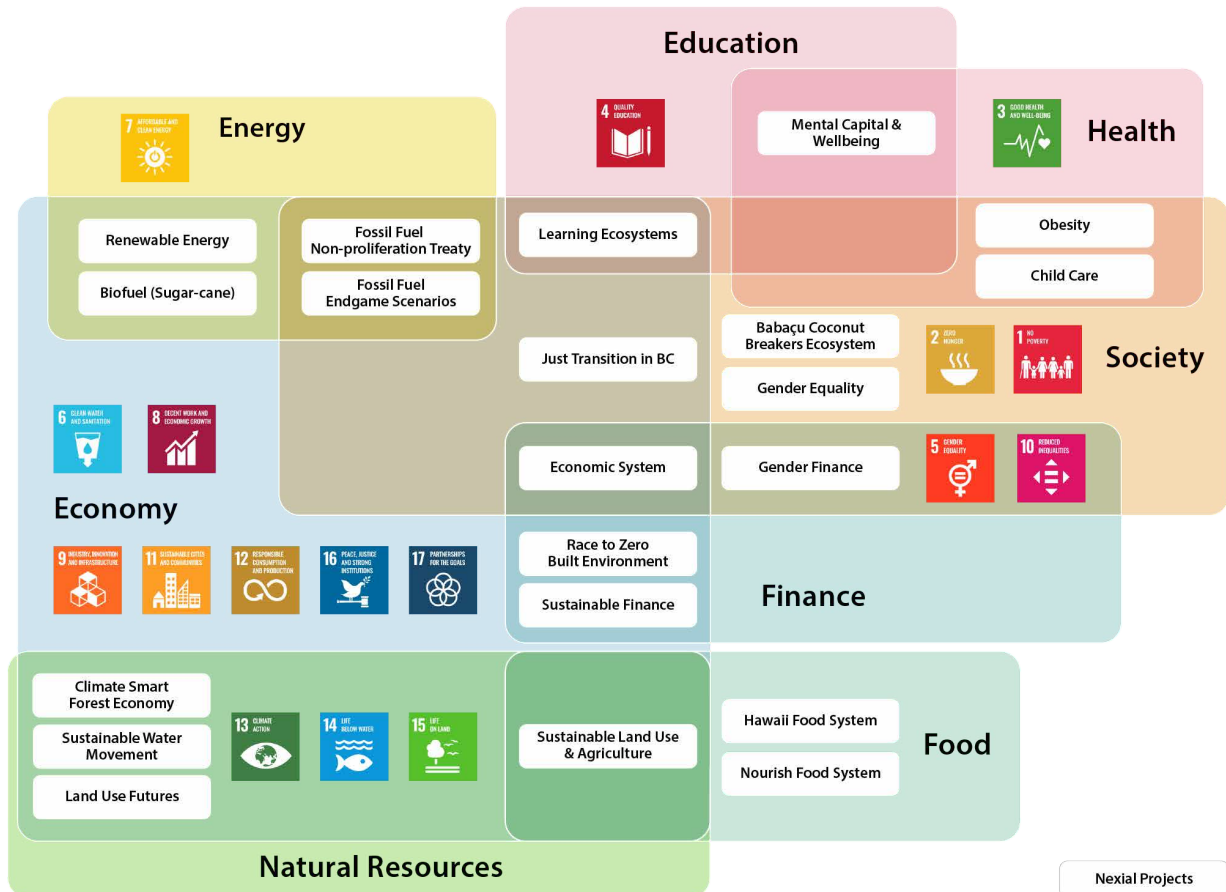


### John Rasmussen

John is a co-founder and director of Nexial. With a truly global career spanning 38 years, and as an accomplished Senior Executive Management team of a global multinational, he brings the experience in leading customer focused businesses with over 1,000 people in 35 countries. John has expertise in strategy, marketing, operations, change leadership and performance management, and combines the ability to conceptualise and formulate strategy with a distinguished track record of operational and P&L delivery. With a natural knack for leadership, John is an inspiring business leader and a pragmatic compass for the Nexial dreamers.

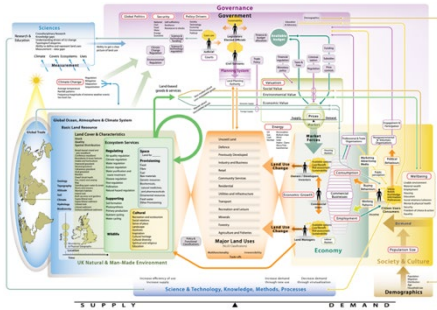
## Previous Projects

The diagram below demonstrates and highlights the intertwined nature of the many projects that Nexial and its founders have been involved in over the past 20 years. We learn valuable insights from each and every project, which we're able to apply to our future work.

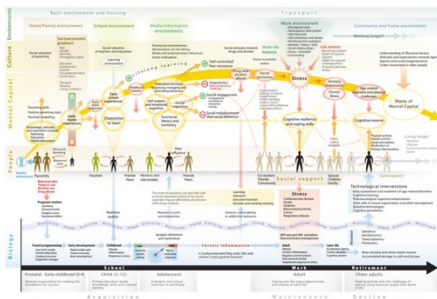


We've highlighted a few relevant examples of projects on the following pages, for a summary of our work in one place.

## Government of the United Kingdom: Land Use Futures and Mental Capital & Wellbeing



[The UK Foresight Land Use Futures project](#) aimed to use the “best available scientific and other evidence to take a broad look at the most important challenges and opportunities for land use in the UK over the next 50 years. What needs to be done to use and manage land more sustainably and to unlock greater value for people and the economy – now and in the future.”

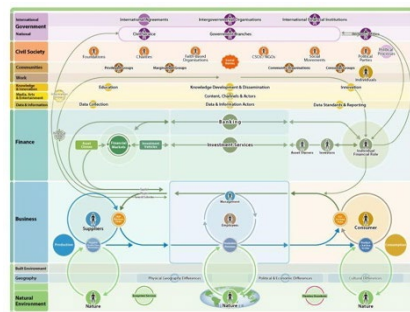


[The Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project](#) aim was to develop a vision for the opportunities and challenges facing the UK, 20 years ahead and beyond, and the implications for mental capital and mental wellbeing. Over the period of 18-months the project brought together global leading experts and lived experience stakeholders to help highlight where action was most important, to inform the strategic and long-term choices

facing Government departments, business and society as a whole.

In all projects with the UK Government Office for Science, the role of the Nexial team, under the ShiftN brand, was to develop the systems and futures angles of the programme, through intensive engagement of all relevant stakeholders and analysis, contributing to critical content of the final recommendations report.

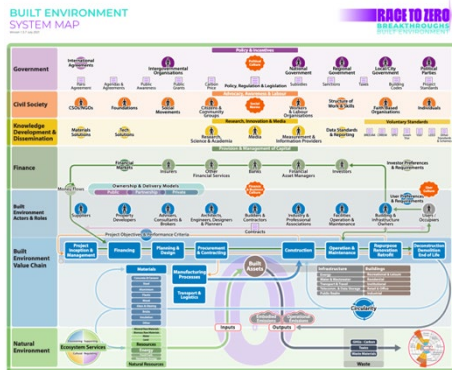
## Laudes Foundation: Economic System



A multi-year project, involving interviews and a series of workshops with over 100 global stakeholders from across the system (from thought leaders, through experts, policymakers, policy advisers, to grassroots NGOs). Focused on engagement, system analysis and mapping to stimulate collaborative action towards a climate-positive and more inclusive economy. The project was a success in broadening and deepening perspective

around the structural issues of our economic system. [The map and narratives](#) are used by global and local communities of changemakers to explore systemic implications of their strategies and interventions.

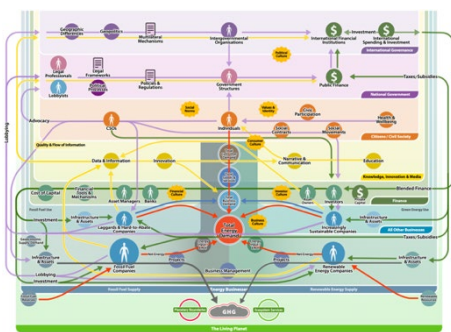
## UN High-Level Champions for Climate Action: Race to Zero Built Environment System



Together with the UN Race to Zero coalition, we engaged with a wide range of professionals and experts in the built environment system to map the main challenges and levers to achieve net zero in the sector. The coalition co-created [an interactive map](#) for policymakers, businesses, investors, and innovators to explore their roles in this transition and to continue to build partnerships for the much-needed cross-sector collaboration. The map, introduced in [this video by Nigel Topping](#), the UN High-Level Champion for COP26, is used by communities of different sectors involved in the built environment across the world.

We used the map to promote systemic conversations in multi-stakeholder settings to better enable radical collaboration. Specifically, we worked with WBCSD and GlobalABC to outline their vision for market transformation for the built environment, and how to go about it. This was a call for action for business, finance, government and science to work together, focused on three key levers of the system, and building on two underlying enablers. The work was presented at COP26, in the opening of the WBCSD Built Environment Market Transformation Session to garner commitment to 2030 and 2040 goals.

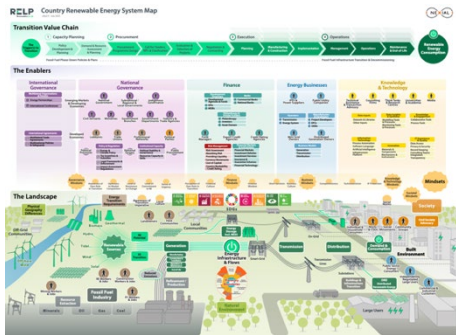
## Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative: Systems Thinking Platform



The Treaty Initiative is pushing for a global transition to safe, renewable and affordable energy for all. To support this work, [we created a system map](#) and a number of different narratives and animations, including deep dives into rigged system market dynamics and into the dominant industry hold that keeps the world locked-in to fossil fuels. In [this video](#), [Tzeporah Berman](#) explains the systemic nature of the Initiative's Theory of Change, and shows their sophisticated

approach for tackling these complex challenges – designed to maximise the force and impact of powerful, interconnected levers. The platform is a tool for diving into this complexity to explore the interconnected nature of a system that needs reinforcing solutions, spanning from local grassroots to the multilateral arena. It is offered as a gameboard for collaborations to forge ahead with coherence and scale.

## REL P Systems Thinking Platform



Transforming a country's energy system is a complex undertaking for all stakeholders involved. Nexial and RELP [built this system map](#) to be used as a tool, to help all those navigating this complexity to have a view of the whole and consider different angles and points of view.

The map brings to life a neutral perspective, representing key elements (actors, activities, mindsets, relationships, etc.) that play a role in the system. It is a tool to help build shared understanding and support actions that accelerate the renewable energy transition.

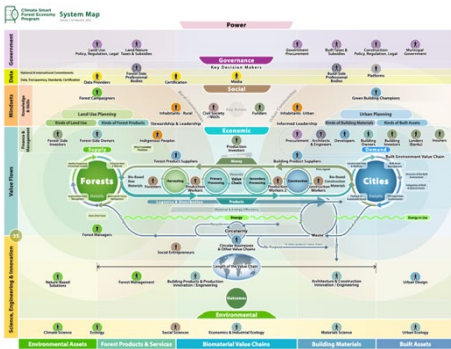
## Vale: Ecosystem das Quebradeiras de Coco Babaçu



We worked with Vale in the [Babaçu Coconut Breakers Ecosystem project](#). The objective was to create a high-level narrative that illuminated what it truly takes for a social movement to achieve regenerative economic activity, which creates not only income, but a more comprehensive and sustainable quality of life for women and families, as well as socio-territorial development in the North and Northeast of Brazil.

We developed a strategic narrative and visual presentation of the babaçu coconut breaker extractivist movements, breaking down the layers of complexity involved and presenting its history and ecosystem characteristics as a living demonstration of what success in this space actually looks like. The work was designed to inspire the very foundation of Vale's commitment to lift 500,000 people out of extreme poverty by 2030, establishing from the outset that this ambition demands systemic thinking, not just resource deployment.

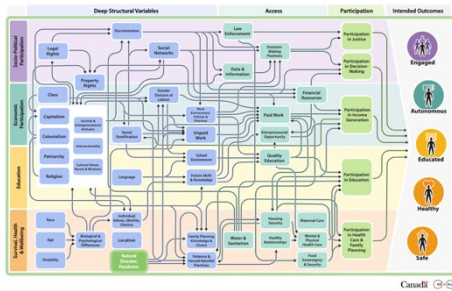
## Climate Smart Forest Economy Program (CSFEP)



We had the opportunity to work with the teams from CSFEP (and its partners, Dalberg Catalyst, Climate-KIC, Axum) to build [The CSFE System Map](#). It was created to help explain what a Climate Smart Forest Economy is, and the role that the Climate Smart Forest Economy Program plays in helping to make those sustainable economies a reality.

This map is offered as a community tool for all those working, in their many different ways, to create climate smart forest economies. The map was designed for different stakeholders to build on – creating versions for different audiences, regions, and programs.

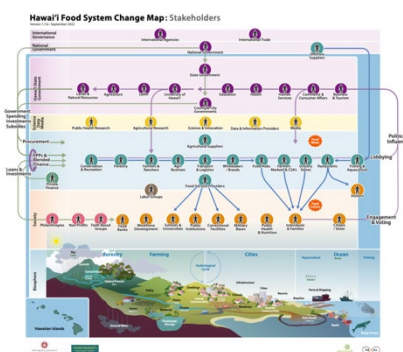
## Government of Canada: Gender Equality System



The objective of this project was to foster awareness and knowledge transfer throughout Canada, in relation to SDG 5 (gender equality) and its cross-impact on other SDGs. We engaged with organisations and stakeholders in various formats, to provide safe and stimulating spaces to explore difficult and diverse perspectives around SDG 5. The publicly available [digital content hub and system map](#) visualises the

elements and connections of the system of gender equality, showing more explicitly how structural variables cascade to impact a range of issues, and thus the need to shape collective interventions to influence these deep variables. There are also layers with stories to bring the system to life, and to show examples of initiatives across that space.

## Nourish Hawai'i: Transforming Hawai'i's Food System Together (THFST)



The food and agriculture system is large and complex, and deeply connected to a number of critical ecological, social and economic challenges. To better understand the agri-food system, we worked with WorldLink and its Nourish Initiative to map the system and visualise key sectors, issues, actors, and processes. The system map provides a holistic view of the food system that can be used to open meaningful conversations about food, health and

sustainability. By telling a visual story, the map contributes to increasing food literacy and building healthy communities.

In a followup project with WorldLink and its Nourish Initiative, Nexial worked with the University of Hawaii (UH) and a consortium of local organisations to create action towards a more sustainable and equitable food system. Through a participatory system mapping process, we helped these stakeholders better understand the structure of the current food system and how, based on where their different initiatives fit into this picture, they could work more effectively together. Through multiple workshops we used the system map as a tool to gather perspectives and insights, and plot food system strategies. The [online map](#) now serves as a reference for ongoing work by the consortia.