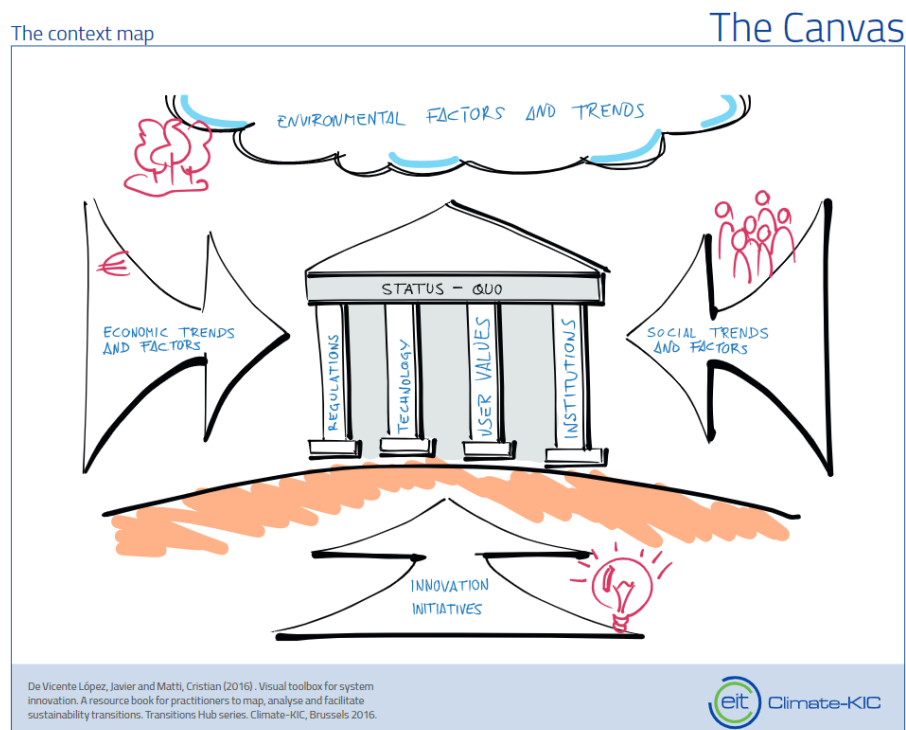# Multi-level perspective (MLP)

The Multi Level Perspective (MLP) is a useful theory to understand transformational change at a systems level.

"It's an analytical approach to describe processes of innovation and transitions in socio-technical systems. It can be used to better understand the relevant context of system innovation projects." (De Vicente Lopez, 2016)

It builds understanding about the factors influencing and creating the system in which your project is embedded. It also helps to understand connections between your project/system and the factors and elements surrounding it.

The context map   The Canvas

De Vicente López, Javier and Matti, Cristian (2016). Visual toolbox for system innovation. A resource book for practitioners to map, analyse and facilitate sustainability transitions. Transitions Hub series. Climate-KIC, Brussels 2016.

eit Climate-KIC

There are three levels to MLP framework

- **Landscape**, where global trends may occur which influence and pressure the regime e.g. enviromental, social, and economic trends as shown above.
- **Regime**, is the mainstream society that is supported by social norms and integrated systems (The status quo).
- **Niche** developments where new ideas can grow until they have an opportunity to challenge the existing regime. (Olesson, 2019)

How MLP explains system changes

If we take the energy sector as example, currently we have:

Landscape factors like climate change, high oil and gas prices, and growing global awareness of energy issues

A regime (system) that includes energy generation, transmission infrastructure (how energy gets to workplaces/homes), and the choices consumers make around energy use

Energy generation niches/innovations, where smaller groups of people develop ideas away from the mainstream. Home solar power generation and wave-generated power are examples.

We can see that the landscape factors put pressure on the current system, as normal ways of doing things may become impractical or be challenged. Niches may also challenge the current system: for instance, if enough consumers choose to install home solar power, this will necessitate shifts in the current regime.

If the niches and landscape factors put enough pressure on the regime, it may be reorganised around a different set of components and ideas. This can be called a transition.
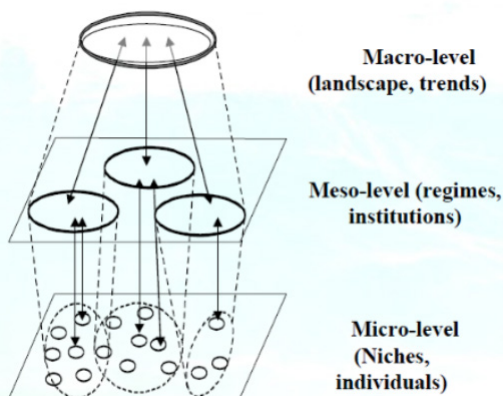

Figure 1 Transition dynamics: complex, uncertain and long term (Loorbach 2007, based on Rotmans et al. 2001; Geels & Kemp 2001)

Applications of MLP

This framework can be used to prompt thinking about stakeholders that may need to be involved in a programme and help with defining research problems and context. For more information on these, please refer to the T-Platform toolkit sections on contextual awareness and stakeholder analysis.

For further explanation about MLP, check out this short video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_q1is1JGJxU

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Figure 1
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