Applying adaptation pathways practice for sustainable development

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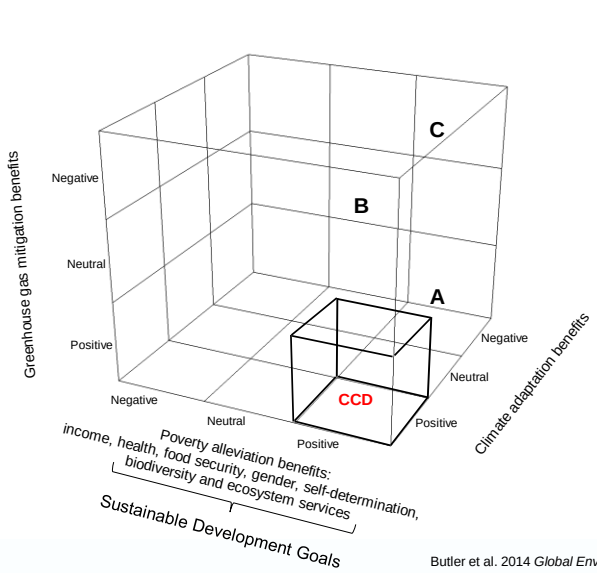
Adaptation Futures Conference, Rotterdam, 10 – 14 May 2016

Climate compatible development (CCD)



Butler et al. 2014 *Global Environmental Change* 28:368-382

Science-Policy Session

Objective: *identify principles for practicing adaptation pathways thinking in developing countries*

Agenda

Part 1 What are adaptation pathways? (5 min)

Part 2 Priming adaptation pathways (25 min)

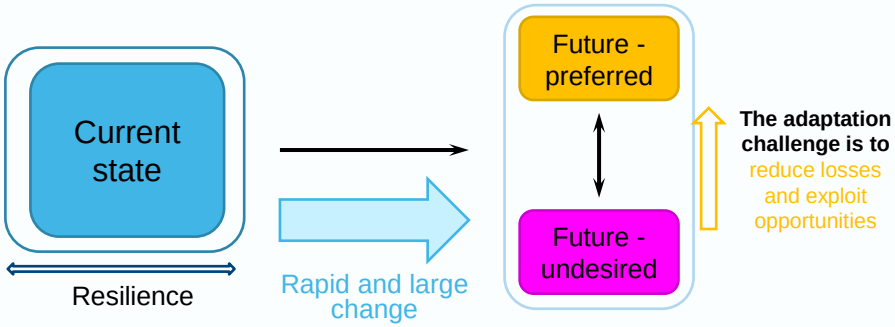
Part 3 Tools to identify and implement adaptation pathways (40 min)

Part 4 Evaluating adaptation pathways practice (25 min)

Part 5 Conclusions (10 min)

Part 1 What are adaptation pathways?

Framing the adaptation challenge



Part 1 What are adaptation pathways?

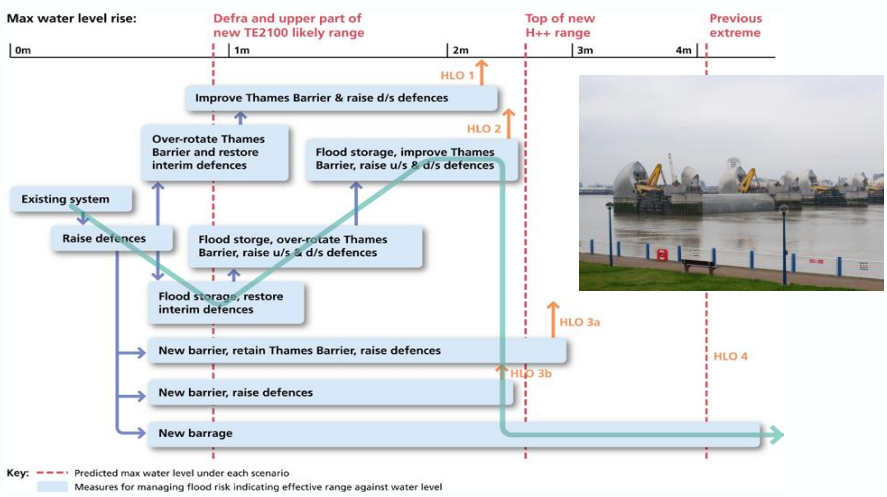
Why an adaptation pathways approach?

Adaptation Pathways are **decision-focused** approaches developed to address concerns about many Vulnerability, Adaptation and Resilience assessments where:

- information is often generated at scales decision makers have no mandate or agency to act upon;
- adaptations are often framed as one-off interventions; and
- the power and politics of ideas and development/adaptation agendas are inadequately dealt with.

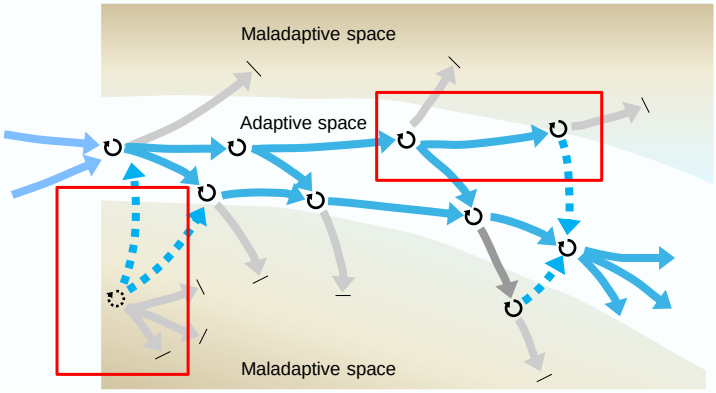
Part 1 What are adaptation pathways?

Archetypal Adaptation Pathway?



Part 1 What are adaptation pathways?

Pathways of evolving social-ecological systems



Wise et al. (2014): multiple uncertainties and drivers of change; evolving and contested societal objectives; many decision makers in mal-adaptive spaces; Transformation often needed to create and keep options open

Part 1 What are adaptation pathways?

Principles of adaptation pathways thinking

- Account for multiple drivers and their interactions across scales
- Coordinated responses across scales to avoid threshold effects and mal-adaptive consequences
- View and approach adaptation pathways as learning journeys
- Design processes that recognise and account for contested values, conflicting interests, and diverse knowledge cultures
- Prioritise the identification of 'no or low regrets' interventions
- Expect to tackle systemic cause of vulnerability and design adaptation pathways approaches accordingly

Part 1 What are adaptation pathways?

Challenges to adaptation pathways thinking

- Limited capabilities and capacity
- Meeting basic needs while tackling systemic causes of vulnerability
- System trajectories are both path-dependent and highly dynamic and therefore difficult to influence and steer
- Cultural, organisational and institutional barriers are pervasive, including:
  - power imbalances across decision-making levels
  - incentive, funding and reporting structures that are short-term, project-based, and under-value learning

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