



# Resilient Atoll Nations in Productive Oceans

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## Session 5: The Socio-cultural, Economic, and Political Dimensions of Adaptation

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# Session outline



ADAPTATION  
HORIZON/FRONTIERS



PHYSICAL AND NON-  
PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS



MIND-MAP OF  
DIMENSIONS



KEY QUESTIONS FOR  
THIS SESSION

# Adaptation Horizons/Frontiers



**Adaptation and resilience-building efforts can be viewed as occurring in two horizons or frontiers**



**Current frontier: incremental, conventional, e.g.:**

Coastal and flood protection

Infrastructure climate-proofing

Strengthening water security, drought resilience, and food security



**As the climate crisis worsens, its effects will become deeper and more complex; this requires a shift to a second frontier**



**Second frontier: more radical, transformational, e.g. possible:**

Population relocation and/or consolidation (internal or external)

Large-scale land reclamation

Elevation or creation of new islands/settlements

Other unconventional approaches

# Physical and Non-Physical Dimensions



**We can also consider a physical-nonphysical dichotomy**



**Most of what we are doing now is focused on the tangible: infrastructure, project-based initiatives:**

Protecting what we have here and now

Defending the existing physical assets and resources

More project-focused



**But the less tangible, non-physical dimensions also warrant attention and action, sooner rather than later**

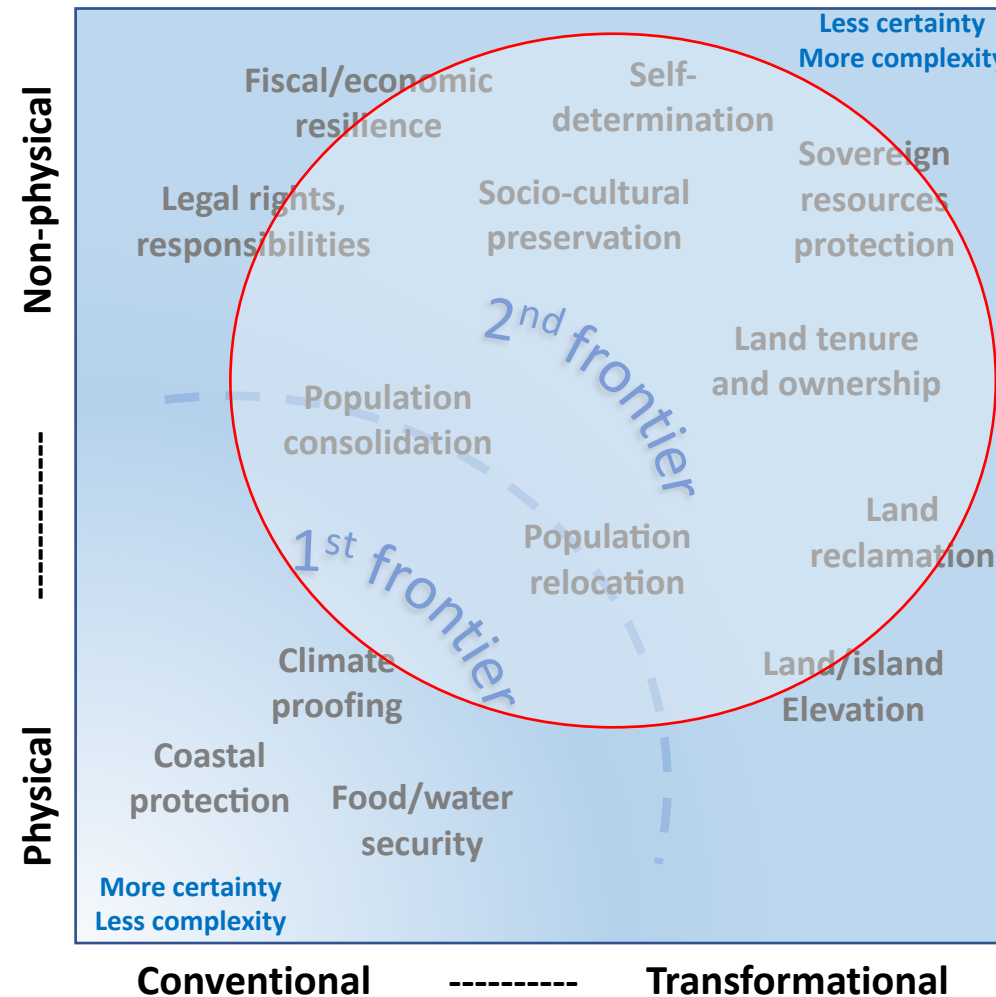


**Social, cultural, legal, economic, sovereign aspects and implications:**

Preserving the institutions of society, place-based cultures, and foundations of self-determination

More planning and systems focused

# Mind-map of Adaptation Dimensions



## ***1. Internal population relocation and consolidation***

Serving and protecting many small and scattered communities is likely to become more challenging and costly over time with sea level rise and more severe droughts and tropical cyclone patterns. This may require that atoll nations internally relocate and consolidate their populations. What are the lessons from previous experiences of internal relocation or displacement in atoll countries? What are the political, social, and other implications of re-arranging and concentrating communities?

## ***2. Impacts of sea-level rise on sovereign boundaries and resources***

Sea-level rise and the effect of retreating (or submerged) terrestrial baselines may impact the sovereign boundaries and exclusive economic zones of atoll nations, including their claims to resources held within these boundaries (air space, ocean space, deep sea). What actions are needed to address this issue, national and internationally?

## ***3. External population relocation***

External relocation is one long-term adaptation option, but this may result in the loss of cultural practices, language, and identity. Should external migration be considered a long-term option and, if so, how can it be managed in a way that minimizes these losses?

## ***4. Complexities of land reclamation and elevation***

As sea levels rise, maintaining our current existence will ultimately become untenable. This has led to considerations of large-scale reclamation and elevation as a means to sustaining a resident population. Reclamation and elevation are not new processes, but their environmental, social, legal and other implications (e.g. land ownership) are complex. If reclamation and elevation are to be pursued, how can we plan and prepare for these complex issues? What lessons are available from previous experiences?