

## WHAT WAS DONE, AND WHAT WAS NOVEL?

Adaptation pathways have emerged as promising, decision-focused approaches for exploring the sequences of actions that people undertake to address challenges in uncertain conditions. We used a literature-based learning framework to explore whether the key principles of the framework have been at play in a Mali case study, and derive lessons about the conditions under which adaptation pathways can be effective at supporting sustainable transformation.

While researchers and adaptation practitioners are responsive to the potentials of adaptation pathways, there have as yet been no systematic attempts to clarify the conditions that need to be in place for adaptation processes to be effective. Such knowledge is critical for improving the design of adaptation pathways, and for assisting planners and decision makers with making long-term plans and informed policy decisions under deep uncertainty.

We explore these challenges to identify and validate the key conditions contributing to the success and failure of adaptation pathways processes.

## KEY FINDINGS

Our findings show that an understanding of the configuration of stakeholders, including power structures, is a critical step towards realistic future adaptation planning. We highlight the need for stimulating networks that link stakeholders and resources across levels and spatial scales. Because of the complex nature of climate challenges, engaging strategic partners such as policy makers and the private sector can facilitate further interactions and stimulate a sustainable process. The framework shows potential for structuring pathway analyses in a more systematic way, and mapping gaps and screening key barriers throughout the process. However, the framework needs to be significantly adjusted to allow it to capture social and institutional aspects – such as power relations, culture, and social differentiation – which all play out in adaptation processes.

## KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The framework we used is a useful tool that structures pathways analysis in a systematic fashion. In serving as a check guide, it helps to explore whether all key aspects have been considered to ensure the suitability of the process and avoid maladaptation.

The framework can greatly help decision makers, planners and practitioners to design sustainable adaptation plans.



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