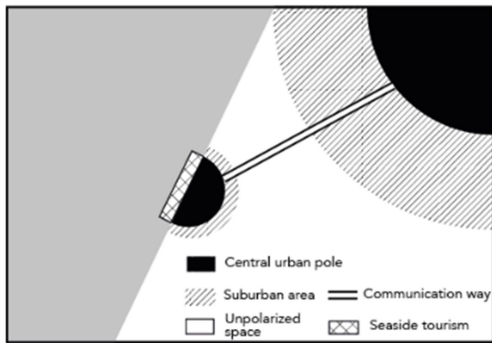


ARCHETYPE 2

Peri-urban and tourist resort close to a central pole in the coastal hinterland



Towns matching this archetype:

- Palavas les Flots, La Grande Motte, Gruissan, Canet en Roussillon
- Fouras
- Ouistreham

DESCRIPTION OF THE ARCHETYPE

Spatial configuration

These are peri-urban *communes*¹ of moderate size, close to a larger *commune* or metropolis located in the coastal hinterland and characterised by its peri-urban nature with significant home-to-work travel. They could be fishing ports or coastal *communes* that have developed or new *communes* which have grown due mainly to their peri-urban nature and secondarily for tourism. Located on a sandy coast (or possibly a barrier beach in the Occitanie region), this type of *commune* is heavily exposed to inundation and erosion. As a result, the *commune* regularly undertakes beach nourishment and has built numerous groynes to stabilise its coastline. The frequent presence of nearby lagoons and marshes offers a rich biodiversity and outstanding landscapes. Peri-urban dwellers are attracted by residential housing with a preponderance of bungalows that offer no refuge from inundation and are therefore highly vulnerable.

Territorial economy

These characteristics mean that the economy is essentially of an *in place* nature based on tourism and commuting with strong seasonal variation. The attractiveness of the *commune* lies in its recreational activities (casinos, nightclubs, restaurants, beach bars (*paillottes*), recreational activities, summer shows...) both in the summertime for tourists and day visitors and throughout the year for people living nearby in the central *commune*. The debt level tends to be relatively moderate as structural investments are co-funded by the central town

¹ A level of administrative division in the French Republic. *Communes* are based on historical geographic communities or villages and are vested with significant powers to manage the populations and land of the geographic area covered. The *communes* are the fourth-level administrative divisions of France.

whilst the *commune* generates significant tax revenue given the high living standards of its residents.

Socio-demographic characteristics

The large number of peri-urban residents includes a significant proportion of permanent residents, who tend to be economically active, relatively young and high educated. Owners are significantly indebted as property prices are high because the *commune* is very attractive given the quality of life it offers and its proximity to the central town. Outside of the tourist season, there is a significant increase in the student population in rented accommodation. There are tensions between the different population profiles according to the neighbourhood, relating to inequalities in situation and income, between long-time residents, often retirees living on the seafront, and peri-urban dwellers in the coastal hinterland as a result of progressive urban sprawl.

Innovation pathways

The *commune* has greatly developed (has perhaps even been created) over the last thirty years with an influx of new people. This new population often comes from interregional migration and has little knowledge of coastal risks. An active protection policy (groynes and nourishment) nurtures a lack of risk memory. So far, it has made it possible to maintain the beaches and to limit infrastructure damage. However, nourishment weighs heavily on the budget and is becoming a cause for concern. Beach car parks are no longer free. Land reserves are low as a consequence of the restrictive Risk Management Plan (RMP) relating to risk exposure.

Governance

The *commune* has little political power or engineering capacity to address environmental and sea-level-rise adaptation issues. These are discussed and managed at *intercommunality*² level where the central town carries the most weight. As a result, there are no independent adaptation strategies; they are dictated (and for the most part funded) by the central town. And the latter wishes to maintain both the beaches and the recreational use of the coast which contribute to its own attractiveness.

There are many local associations both for environmental protection and to defend free beach access as residents wish to protect their quality of life. More recently peri-urban residents' associations have been created. These are well integrated professionally and socially into the central town networks and campaign for ecological transition often

² In France, *intercommunality* refers to a group of actors and co-operating bodies for all or some of the *communes* in the exercise of their administrative powers.

supported by students and researchers, even becoming involved in citizen research programmes on the subject. They work towards raising awareness about relocation in order to maintain the beaches and organise important voluntary actions to maintain the dunes and the wetlands, with cultural events about the protection of nature. Their actions lead to debate about these issues and raise risk awareness which was initially low.

Psychosocial characteristics

Local identity is linked to the sea and to the recreational nature and the cultural dynamism of the *commune*. Property prices and quality of life generate strong symbolic and utilitarian links to the place. On the other hand, the emotional attachment is insignificant as residence is relatively recent and work proximity has a strong influence on housing choice. Tenants tend to be highly mobile because buying or renting property is expensive for single-parent households.

There are important conflicts between long-term and peri-urban residents. Better educated and more indebted, the latter tend to live in the coastal hinterland and are worried about rising local taxes and shrinking beaches. They support managed retreat of the most exposed property in order to keep the beaches which are a key element in their quality of life.

ADAPTATION PATHWAYS

Adaptation pathway (slow progression): a solidarity-based transition led by the peri-urban residents and supported by the *intercommunalité*

The central town pushes for managed retreat as it wishes to preserve the neighbouring recreational sites. To begin with, significant conflicts arise between *communes* and between different types of resident within the same coastal *commune*. However, a massive storm (EX3) that generated very significant rebuilding costs for both residents (still compensated) and community facilities led the *commune* not to rebuild like-with-like in order to benefit from *intercommunalité* solidarity (G2), from institutional support (G1) (water agency, the French agency for biodiversity, the French agency for adaptation to climate change (EX2) (a subsidiary of *Caisse des Dépôts*) and from new European funds targeting adaptation (G1). This strategy is backed by peri-urban residents who have gained (EX7) locally in recognition and political responsibility: the mayor comes from this peri-urban population and stresses the importance of cooperation with the central town. Second homes may be used to house affected residents whilst work is carried out given that a Private Public Partnership (G5) (PPP) enables the creation of a consortium with developers for adaptation activities. Thus, as part of specific arrangements compatible with the Coastlines Act, new and denser eco-

constructions have been programmed (T12): (i) at the coastal *commune* level in a wooded area with a view of the lagoon but far from the sea and therefore not exposed to inundation risk, and (ii) in a new ecodistrict on the outskirts of the central town with a major investment in non-motorised transportation modes and public transportation to facilitate access to the sea as well as commuter transportation from the peri-urban areas of the coastal town. The coastal *commune* has lost low- and average-income residents to the central town but its residential and well-off character has been maintained (SD2) whilst tourism has evolved towards eco-tourism. The rise in temperature (EX3) leads to: (i) new exotic plantations (palm and orange trees in the Mediterranean; pines and olive trees in the Atlantic) which strengthen the image of a recreational town (ET3) and (ii) a significantly longer tourist season.

This restructuring spread over 20 years following a decade of conflict and deadlock. It benefitted from the absence of further exceptional storms after the one that started the process even though strong annual storms justify the adopted strategy. Governance is totally dependent on the *intercommunality* (G2), in particular as regards building permits which is a way to avoid the initial conflicts. The new image of the coastal *commune* remains residential but the recreational aspect is strengthened by ecotourism more evenly spread throughout the year. Residents' attachment to the place (PS1), both symbolic and utilitarian is stronger and better spread across the whole population. Property prices remain high (SD2) which secures property owners' capital and maintains symbolic ties with the place. Taxes remain high (ET1) and even though the *commune* has lost some of its residents and is further indebted, it can deal with the transition.

Adaptation pathway (fast progression): Decline and deskilling due to a lack of local reactivity and solidarity

As noted above, alliances with the central town lead to the managed retreat of the most exposed property but the increasing number of exceptional storms (3 in 12 years) (EX3) has so indebted the *commune* that it can no longer afford the transition. The price of exposed property has dropped significantly whilst prices have risen in non-exposed areas (SD1) benefitting peri-urban residents. The peri-urban area is growing in the hinterland tending towards a continuous urban zone around the central town. Low-cost tourism is growing. At the same time, the drop in front-line property prices attracts people with lower incomes (SD2) affecting the image of the *commune* (ET3) which then becomes incompatible with the symbolic attachment to the place (PS1). Better-off people gradually leave (SD2), either selling relatively cheaply or renting to holiday-makers. The general decline in quality of life and infrastructure (ET3, T12) and the departure of the most politically-aware people (G4) are not conducive to ecotourism. Instead, mass tourism develops with receipts gradually falling over the years and therefore lower tax income (ET1) and many shops, restaurants and services close... There follows a decline in the number of permanent residents and what was

once a *commune* with many peri-urban working people becomes a downmarket tourist resort with low-income full-time residents. The central town welcomes residents who leave the coastal *commune* but chooses to densify existing districts and to reduce to a minimum any solidarity with the coastal *commune* (G2). As it controls urban planning, it restricts coastal constructions in order to reduce future damages and costs.

It is also likely that the central town, depending on its size, oversees several coastal *communes* and will choose to invest only in some of them, leaving the others to decline. Choices will depend on elected representatives' collaborative preferences, on the attractive features of the *communes* (natural and cultural heritage), on the availability of non-exposed land and on ease of access. Coastal *communes* (G2) may compete for financial and engineering support (for example from an hypothetical "French Agency for Climate Adaptation" or some new European funds targeting adaptation).