

Environmental changes, livelihoods, and resilience

A revival of the drylands

Resilience in Action:

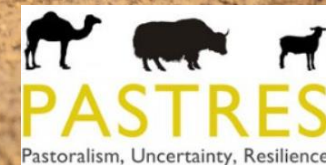
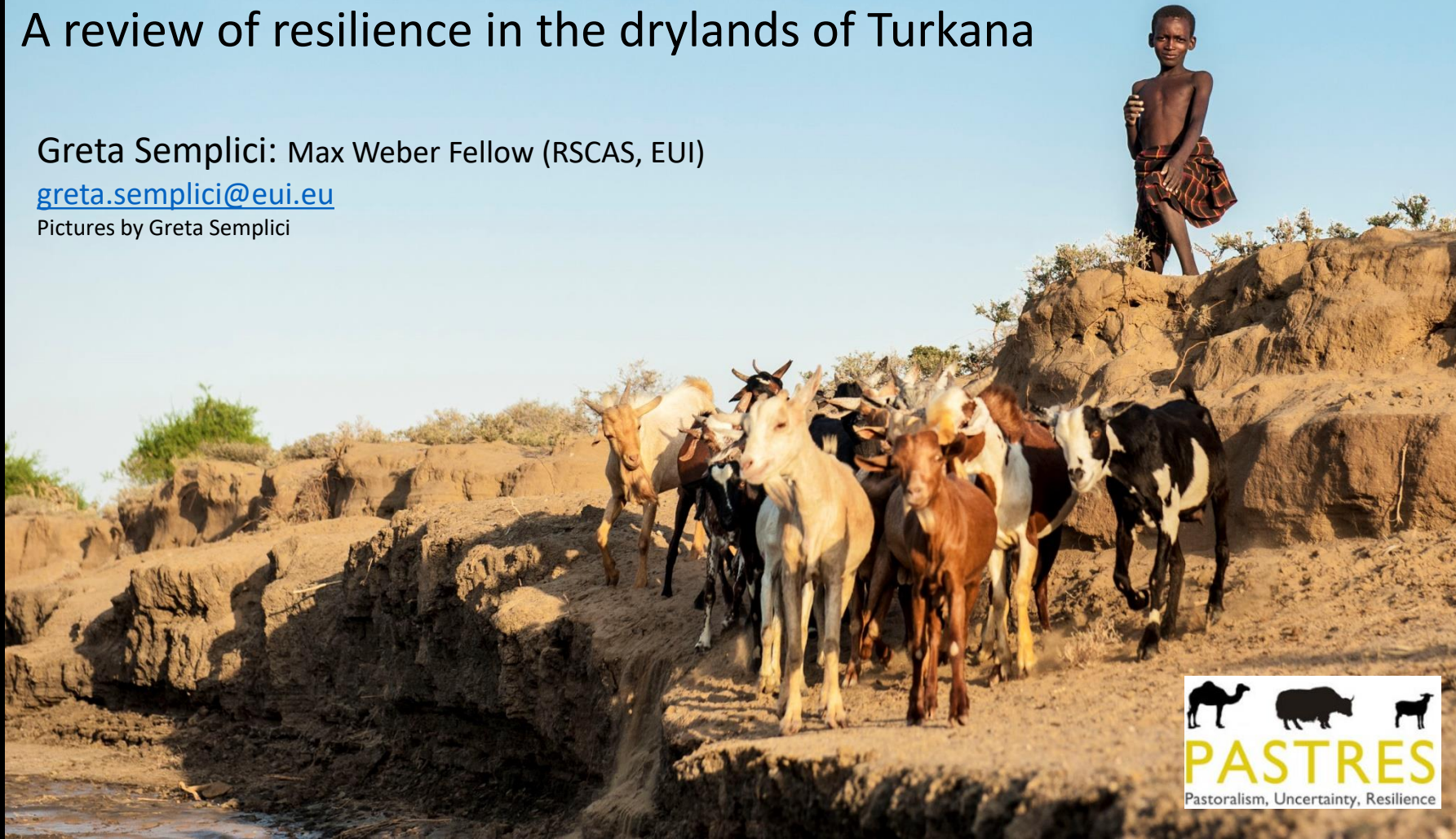
Local practices and development/humanitarian policies

A review of resilience in the drylands of Turkana

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Pictures by Greta Semplici



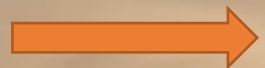
Outline

- Resilience and environmental change
- A revival of the drylands
- A turning-back question & responses
- Policy changes and legacies
- A radical rethink



Resilience and environmental change

- Use of resilience pervasive in scholarly and policy circles
- Expansion in academia: roots in ecology (Holling, 1961) and psychology (Masten et al, 1990), but now popular in many disciplines (engineering, physics, economics, sociology, etc.)
- Expansion in policy world: “key political category of our time” (Neocleous, 2013)
- In the policy/media landscape the greatest usage is in environmental/climate change (Brown 2011, 2012; ODI 205)
- Many international organisations promote resilience as means to link development to environmental change (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005, Human Development Report 2007, World Bank’s Programme for Climate resilience 2008,)



HOW HAS THIS TRANSLATED IN THE DRYLANDS?

✧ Drylands : *some key facts* ✧



- Largest land category: about 40% of the world's landscape (Davies 2016)
- **Key feature of drylands is variability**: ephemeral resources in time and patchy in space, they can be relied on in the form of unpredictable and short-lived concentrations more than uniform and stable distributions (Behnke et al., 1993 , Scoones 1995, Niamir-Fuller 1999)
- **Local livelihoods (pastoralism) have specialised to take advantage of variability** by employing flexible and adaptive strategies (strategic mobility, herd diversification, functional land tenure, mechanisms of reciprocity, etc.)
- Subject of **MAJOR MISCONCEPTIONS** that have seen new life since the rise of climate change concerns

Period	View of livelihood and environment	Policies
Colonial times	Drylands as empty ands used for commercial purposes and explorations; Pastoralism as irrational and exploitative	Large fencing schemes, Coercive settlement, Livestock taxes, Buffer zones for military purposes
Sahelian droughts (end '70s)	Classical ecology theory (eq.-thinking); Drylands as instable and unproductive; Pastoralism as a disturbance (overgrazing and cattle complex)	Pastoral development policies received first international attention, and were designed in search of ecosystem stability, reduction of uncertainty, and control of pastoral behaviour
'80s – '90s	New rangeland paradigm (res. paradigm); Drylands as “resilient”: non-equilibrial but persistent ecosystems; Pastoralism as opportunistic and adaptive	Pastoral crisis (development failure and donor withdrawal)
'00s....	Drylands as fragile, unproductive, and in need of development, Pastoralists as vulnerable	Increasing concerns about climate; “build resilient communities” = agricultural development, urbanisation, settlement, and promotion of alternative livelihoods

A turning-back question?



Is there a limit, a threshold, to pastoralists' adaptive capacities?



Moving the debate backward to 40 years ago when variability was treated as a problem to solve



Marking an incompatibility between local responses and global problems (a global problem that hides local responses)

Responses

- 1) Dead end for pastoralism (vicious cycles of poverty, violence, environmental degradation) – mainly UN literature



Increased mechanisation of agri.,
Irrigation schemes,
Infra. development,
Conservation programmes,
SP programmes (food/cash transfers)
Education programmes

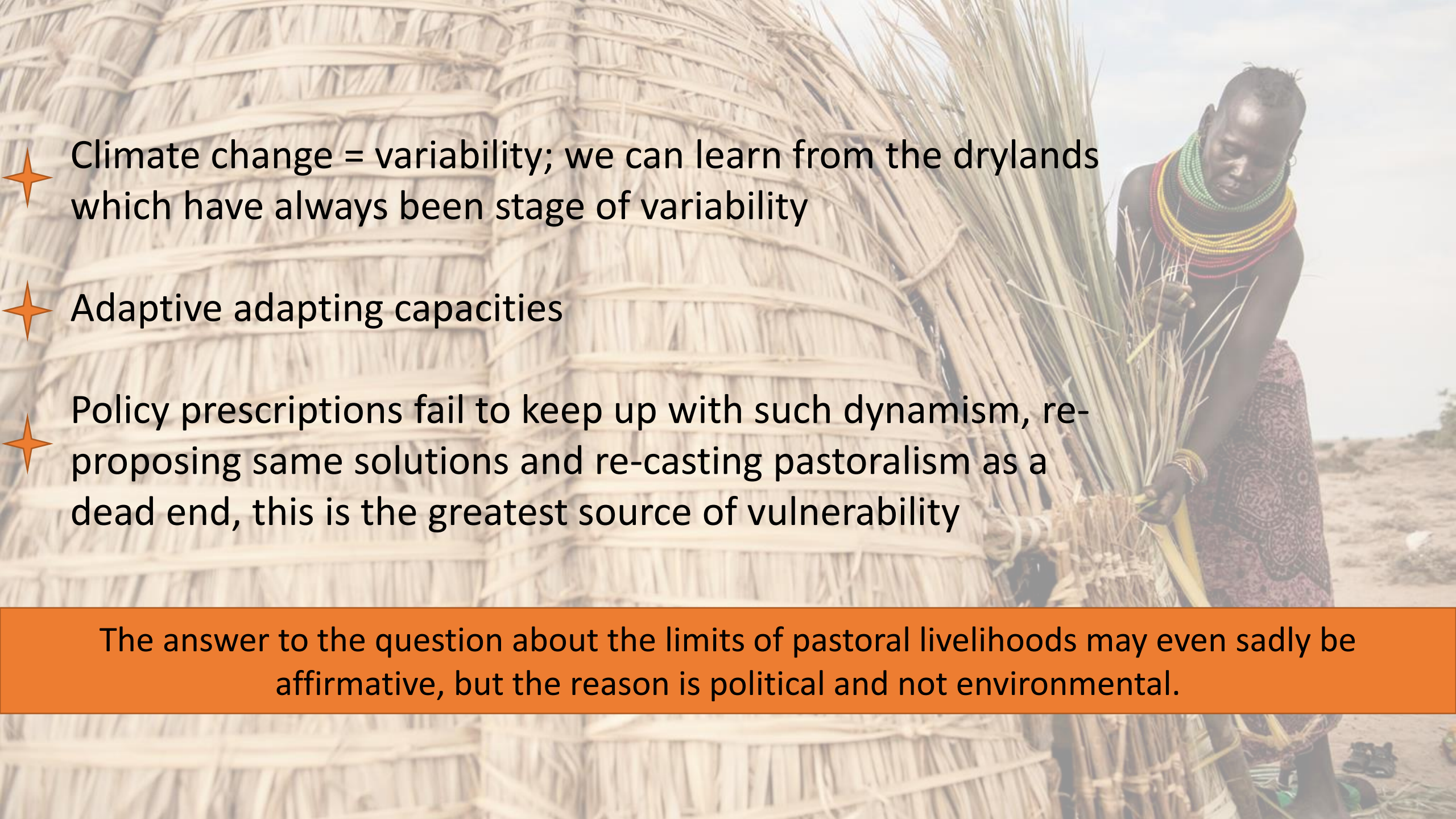


“Generate opportunities for new livelihood activities that are less vulnerable to the impacts of droughts and other shocks” (Cervigni and Morris 2016:4)



2) Net of policy restrictions, pastoralism not only is **locally well positioned** to face environmental change, but also it can have an **important role** to play in terms of **global lessons** of management of uncertainty





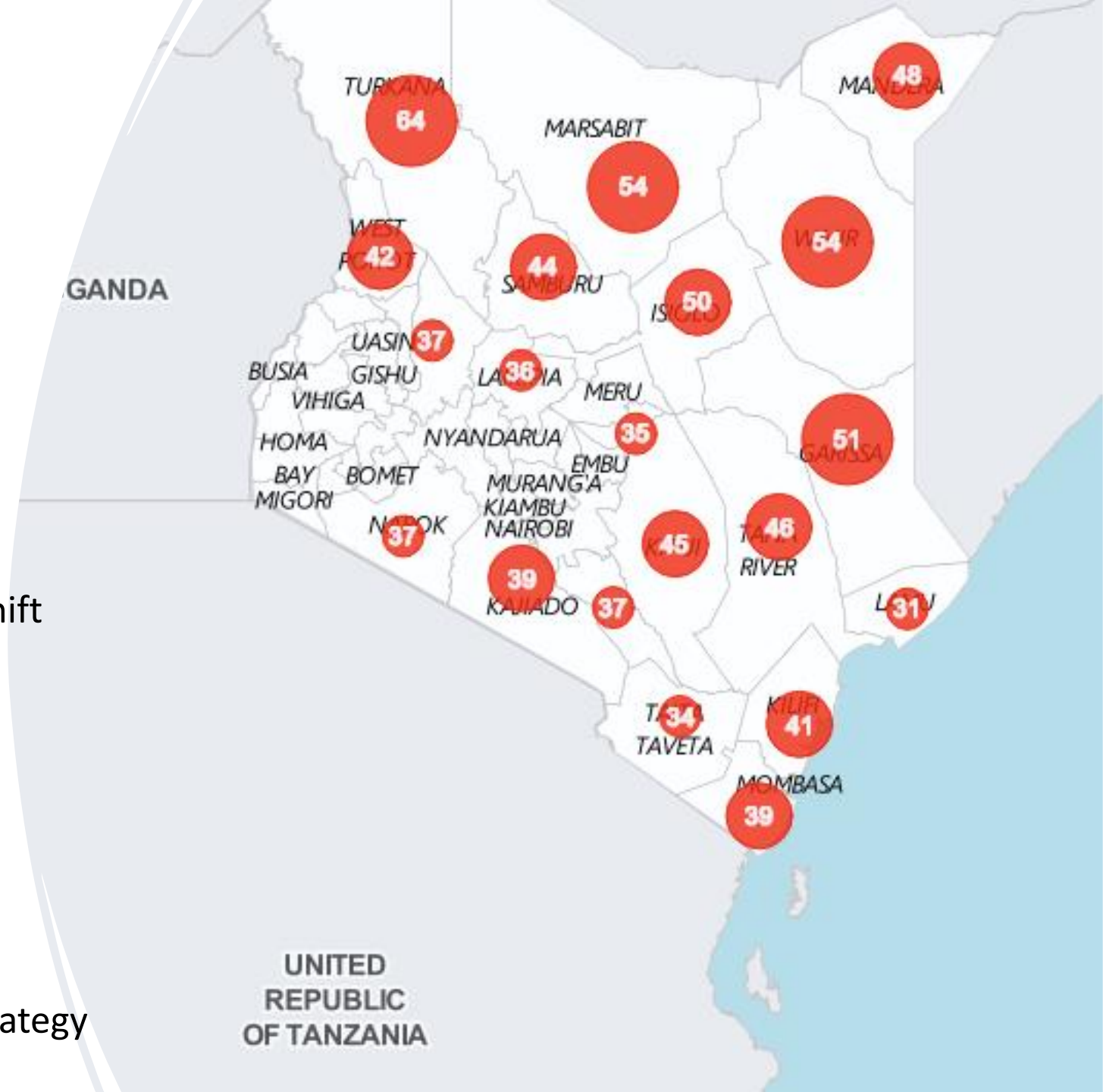
- ★ Climate change = variability; we can learn from the drylands which have always been stage of variability
- ★ Adaptive adapting capacities
- ★ Policy prescriptions fail to keep up with such dynamism, re-proposing same solutions and re-casting pastoralism as a dead end, this is the greatest source of vulnerability

The answer to the question about the limits of pastoral livelihoods may even sadly be affirmative, but the reason is political and not environmental.

REF Study – Policy legacies and changes

Changes

- Organisational changes, design, evaluation, overarching principles
- New policies which refer to the paradigm shift
 - Kenya case particularly illustrative and progressive
 - New Constitutions (with the word pastoralists in it!)
 - The Kenyan Vision 2030
 - The Sessional Paper n.8 (2012)
 - ASALs' policy 2012
 - The Ending Drought Emergency strategy (EDE) 2012-2022



Policy legacies

A person is shown from the back, wading in a body of water. They are holding a long wooden pole and a large fishing net. The net is spread out in the water, and the person appears to be pulling it. The background shows a calm body of water and distant hills under a hazy sky.

1. Lack of real political will and problems of implementation

- Investing and budgeting intervention (i.e Turkana County Budget 2% to the livestock sector)
- Incorporation into the wider national frameworks (inconsistencies and competing objectives)
- Developed centrally

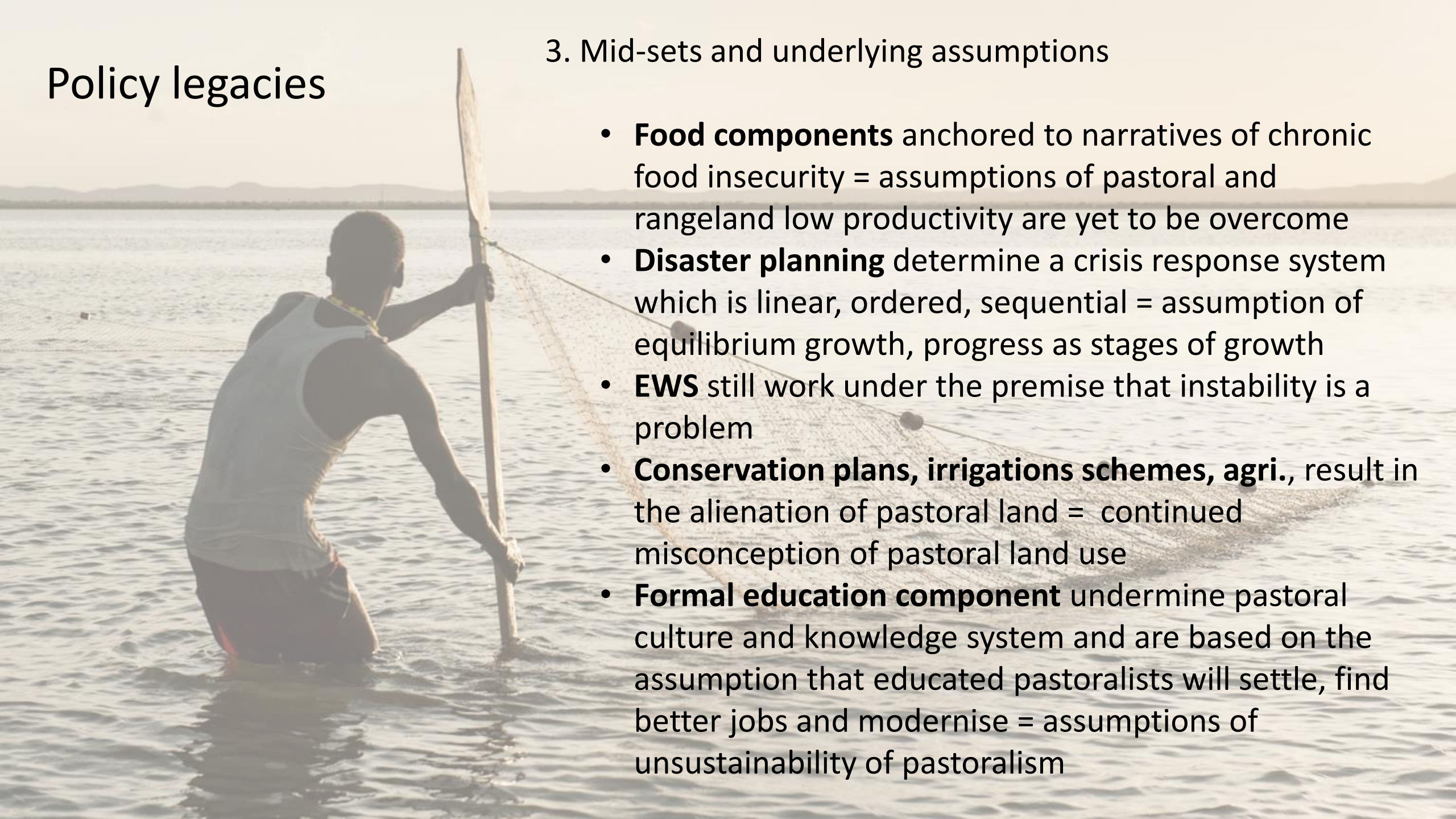
2. Business as usual

- Training, transfers, services and infrastructure
- Static and stable livelihood groups

Policy legacies

3. Mid-sets and underlying assumptions

- **Food components** anchored to narratives of chronic food insecurity = assumptions of pastoral and rangeland low productivity are yet to be overcome
- **Disaster planning** determine a crisis response system which is linear, ordered, sequential = assumption of equilibrium growth, progress as stages of growth
- **EWS** still work under the premise that instability is a problem
- **Conservation plans, irrigations schemes, agri.,** result in the alienation of pastoral land = continued misconception of pastoral land use
- **Formal education component** undermine pastoral culture and knowledge system and are based on the assumption that educated pastoralists will settle, find better jobs and modernise = assumptions of unsustainability of pastoralism



Radical re-think – basic premises

1. **Acceptance of variability** and make it a governance principle
2. The **local** is instructive for the global
3. Integrate **pastoralists' knowledge and expertise** into environmental and climatic assessments.
4. Understand that pastoral **culture and knowledge is not static**, anachronistic or “traditional” but it changes and evolves and that understanding changes in knowledge and practices reveals a lot about broader changes – including climate changes.
5. Warning **against a univocal focus on climate change**



Thank you

