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# Resilience and livelihoods in low rainfall agro-silvo-pastoral systems

Mark Stafford Smith, CSIRO Land & Water  
(& Future Earth Australia)

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# Bread-and-butter research and practice outputs

- **Dryland management practices**

- Soil and water flow management
- Pasture and livestock management
- Biosecurity – weeds, pests and diseases

- **Integration and co-benefits, and implications for ‘licence to operate’**

- Plot, landscape and catchment scale integrated production and conservation
- Management and policy for new land uses such as carbon farming
- Integrating Indigenous perspectives into land management
- Managing for high levels of climate variability

- **Responding to Land Degradation Neutrality needs**

- Monitoring systems to evaluate LDN
- On-farm and regional use of remote sensing (from drones to cell-phones to satellites)
- Etc...



# Framing issues

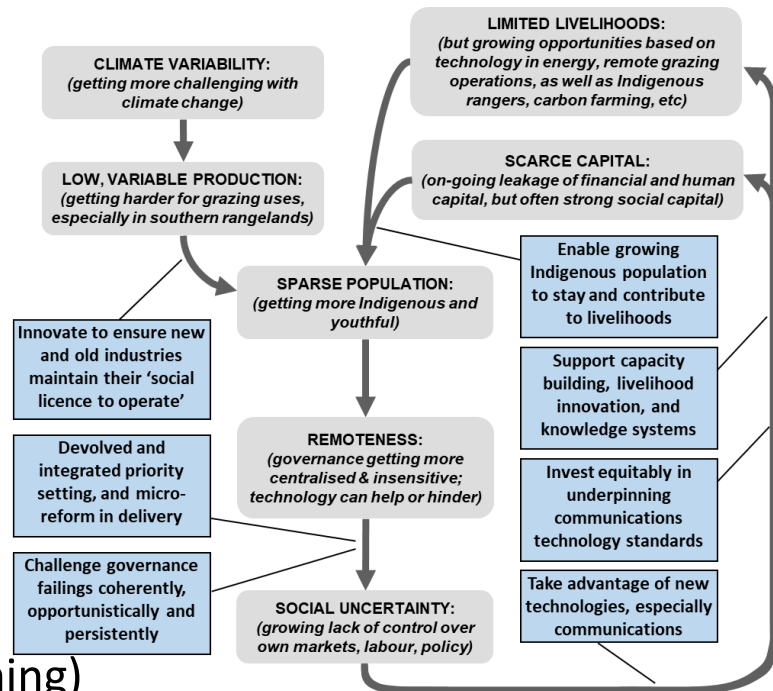
- **Dryland Development Paradigm**

- 1 – Reynolds *et al.* 2007 *Science* **316**
- 2 – Stringer *et al.* 2017 *Land Deg&Dev* **28**
- Desert system ideas in Australia

- **Resilience and not fighting the last war**

- Resilient to what?
- Specified resilience
  - To known risks (perhaps with uncertain timing)
- General resilience – on-going change and uncertainty
  - Ready for the unexpected (as well)

➤ *Are our mental and economic models suited to this?*



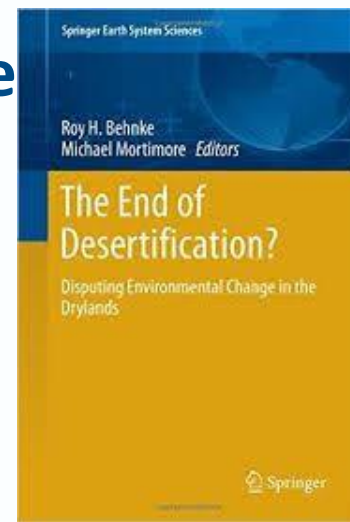
Foran *et al.* 2019 *Rangeland Journal* 41: 271.

# Dealing with a world of values, power and change

## Behnke & Mortimore 2016 *The End of Desertification?*

Reflections on their views for drylands globally:

1. **Power:** Disruptive effects of local and post-colonial centralised power structures in undermining successful community self-management
2. **Global Change:**  
Reality of population, urbanisation and global change - conditions changing from what was successfully managed in the past
3. **Narratives:**  
Influence of negative mental models and narratives, in research as well as the public mind, reinforced by media self-censoring



*(Stafford Smith 2016, Chapter 20 "Reflections on the mirage" in Behnke & Mortimer)*



# Dealing with a world of values, power and change

## Behnke & Mortimore 2016 *The End of Desertification?*

Challenges for drylands globally:

1. **Power:** recognising the inevitability of centralized power dynamics, how can drylands organize themselves and create cross-scale alliances to build desirable resilience?
2. **Global Change:** how can different drylands best be given support to handle the pressures of global change as they play out in local populations and environments, without creating dependency?
3. **Narratives:** what is the high level, positive, and probably value-laden narrative about the future of drylands across the world which would override the impacts of power dynamics and global change?

e.g. support urban migration and a good remittance system, with networking and a good narrative, rather than discourage movement? (but, in which systems will this work?)

*(Stafford Smith 2016, Chapter 20 "Reflections on the mirage" in Behnke & Mortimer)*



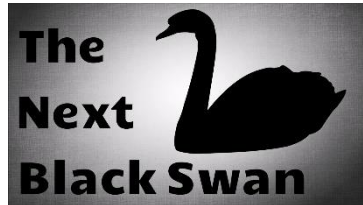
# Building general resilience

## What to value:

- Reserves (in many forms)
- Response diversity (in many pathways)
- Social capital, networks & institutions
- Human capital, inclusive, equity
- Systems thinking, tight feedbacks
- Cross-scale thinking
- Appropriate connectivity
- Reflective adaptive learning
- Be safe to fail, rather than fail-safe

## What economic norms say:

- These are just inefficient 'redundancies' (because of our discounted time horizon)
- These can't be measured/included in economic efficiency measures
- These are incompatible with specialisation for efficiency
- Our optimisations are never wrong!



- All of these are important for developing *general resilience* for drylands to black swan events, or even lesser change and uncertainty

➤ *Ask yourself – are we allowing these factors to be valued?*

# Summary

- Diverse technical research and practice in Australia to draw on
  - Mutually valuable work still to be done here
  - Includes engagement processes and governance lessons not yet mentioned
- Broader framing is worth considering
  - Highlights that these are important but probably not the limiting factors in better drylands outcomes
- Approaches to building resilience and appropriate transformability could be mutually useful



# Thanks

CSIRO Land & Water  
Mark Stafford Smith

t +61 408 852 082  
e [mark.staffordsmith@csiro.au](mailto:mark.staffordsmith@csiro.au)  
w [www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au) | <https://research.csiro.au/climate/>