

How can we make anticipatory action work for pastoralists?

Samuel Derbyshire

Jameel Observatory for Food Security Early Action

ILRI

Pastoralism and uncertainty: what has changed and why it matters

Stability/equilibrium as ideal

Mobility as
outdated/unsustainable

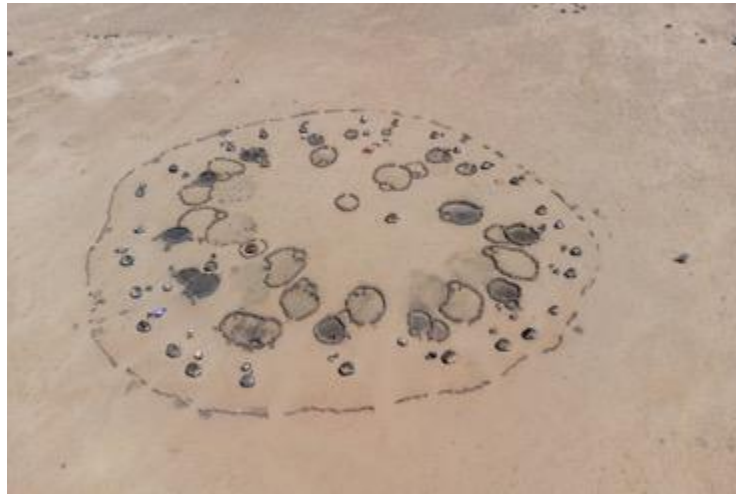
Uncertainty as vulnerability



Living with variability

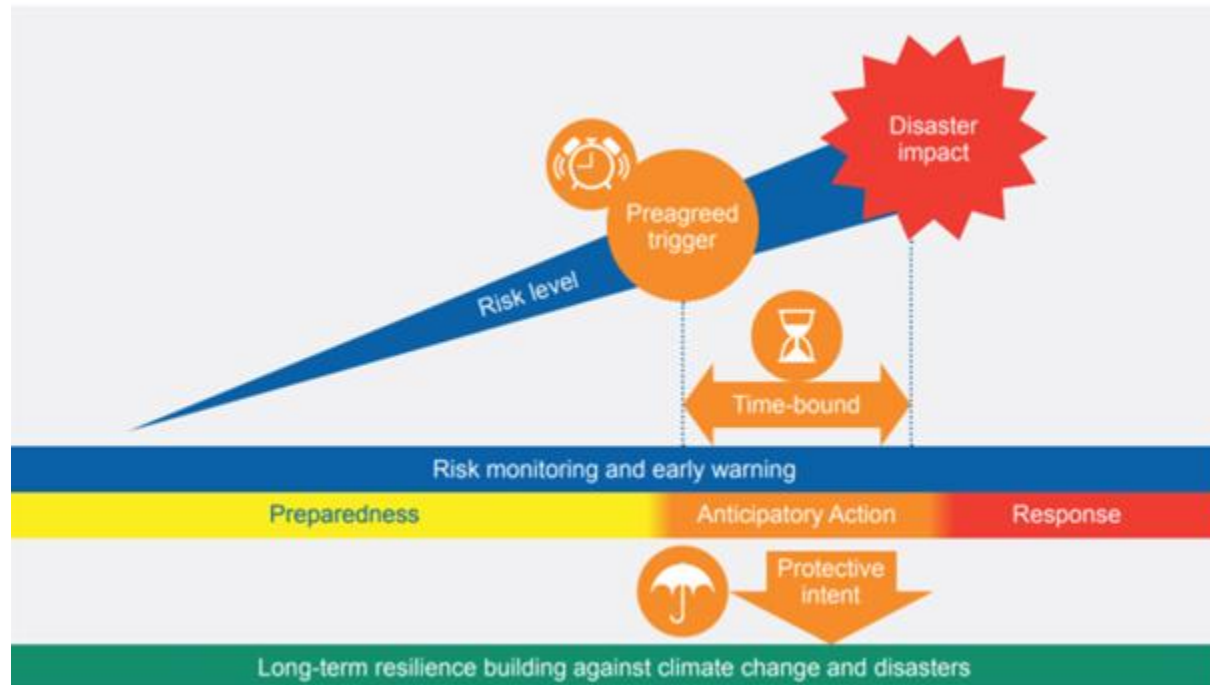
Mobility as essential, strategic
and adaptive

Uncertainty as a condition of
prosperity



Early warning systems and anticipatory action in the drylands

Dominant model of anticipatory action



- Linear risk escalation
- Pre-defined triggers
- Pre-set protocols and action plans

Adapted from WFP 2023: 10

Anticipatory action as a site of change

Why stick with anticipatory action, and how can we offer more than just critique?

Institutional traction

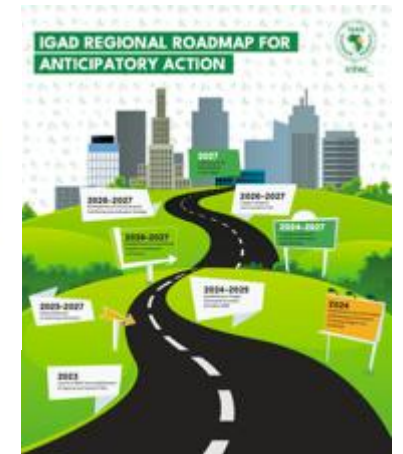
(embedded in policy, funding and practice)

Normative legitimacy

(part of a longer-term trend attending to entrenched marginalisation)

Conceptual openness

(ambiguous, unsettled and contested)



From critique to reconfiguration

Why current anticipatory action falls short

Event focused, assumes stability and settlement, linear response, misalignment with existing pastoralist livelihood dynamics



How can research intervene?

Lived uncertainty - how risk is actually navigated

- Mobility
- Seasonality
- Informal networks
- Human-animal inter-dependence

Decision making logics – how anticipation happens in practice

- Non-linear
- Relational
- Distributed
- Dynamic improvisation

Leverage points – where existing systems can change

- Timing
- Types of action
- Who acts
- Approaches to 'integration'



What can change?

Anticipatory action moves from a purely trigger-based, technical model, to a flexible, caring approach, grounded in pastoralist logics of uncertainty

What might be done differently?

Targetting

Are vulnerability assessments working?
Could assistance be better targetted towards collective institutions or vulnerabilities (rather than individual ones)

Flexibility

Are anticipatory action protocols sufficiently flexible to work with pastoralist livelihoods, and to support dynamic improvisation?

Information

Is focus only on the 'end user' of weather and climate information appropriate in a context of limited capacity. How can weather and climate information ecosystems be better understood and supported, along with the two-way relationships connecting pastoralists with local authorities?

Services

Can anticipatory action support existing local informal service provision – from transportation to informal credit?



Thank you

