



NGO Involvement in the Structural Funds

Influencing Policy and Funding Conservation:
Experiences from Greece

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NGO Involvement in the Structural Funds

A few characteristics of EU regional policy:

- **A very wide policy, multi-targeted and multi-faceted**
- **A “framework policy” funding other policies**
- **A “loaded” political role**
- **A very complex set of implementation regulations and guidelines**
- **Implementation procedures “specific” to each country and administration level**
- **A “progressive” policy evolving and changing at a rapid pace**



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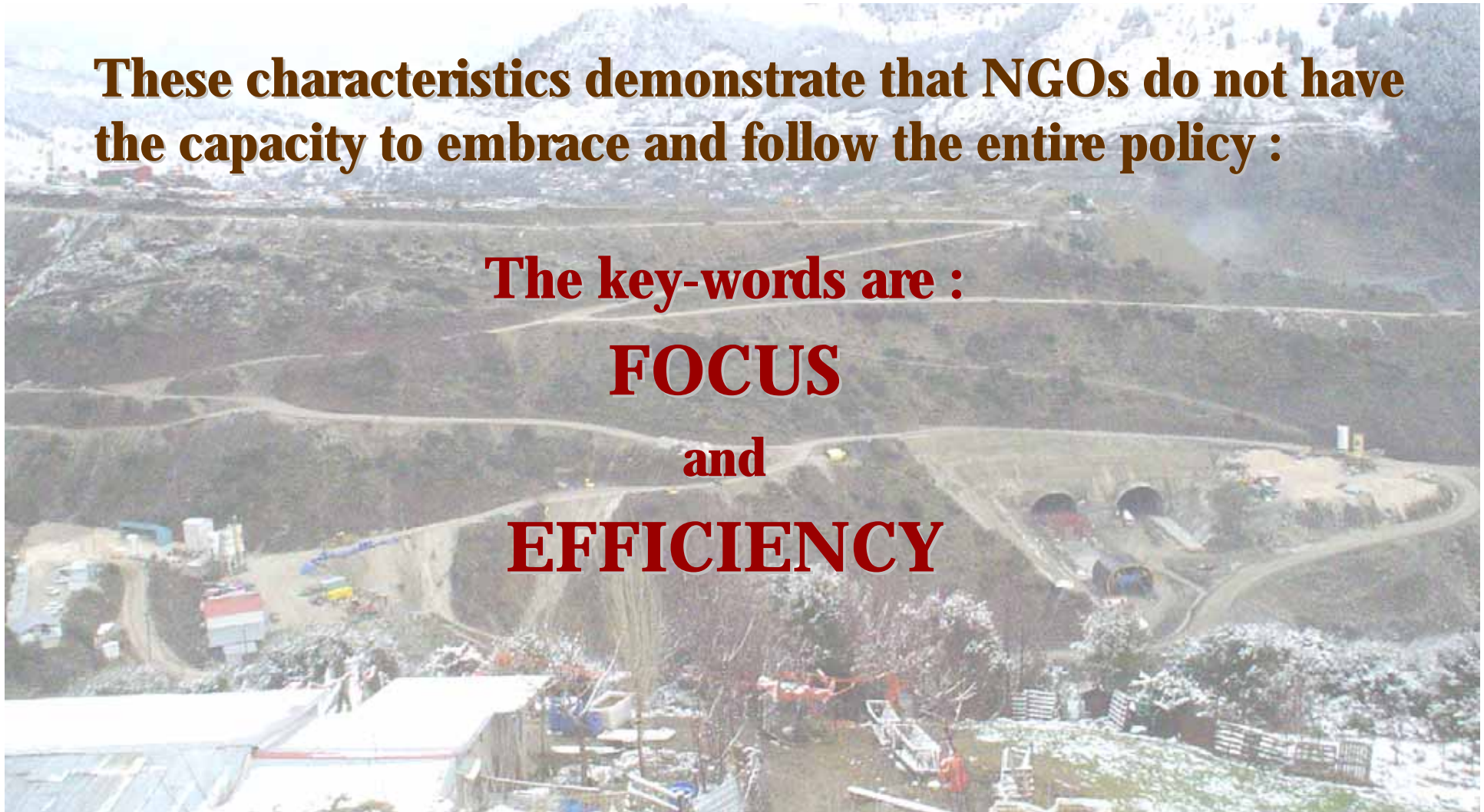
These characteristics demonstrate that NGOs do not have the capacity to embrace and follow the entire policy :

The key-words are :

FOCUS

and

EFFICIENCY





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FOCUS regards defining the exact scope and targets of our policy work. It should be established for each of three distinctive policy levels :

- 1. “High Regional Development Politics”**
- 2. “Low Regional Development Politics”**
- 3. Funding Conservation**





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EFFICIENCY presupposes that policy work is strategically planned to pursue maximum results given the few available resources. It requires:

- 1. Identifying policy “hot – spots”**
- 2. Targeting our policy work where our capacity is**
- 3. Proper timing of our “interventions”**
- 4. Utilizing all available partnerships and “alliances”
and**
- 5. Achieving maximum synergy between policy work at
different levels**



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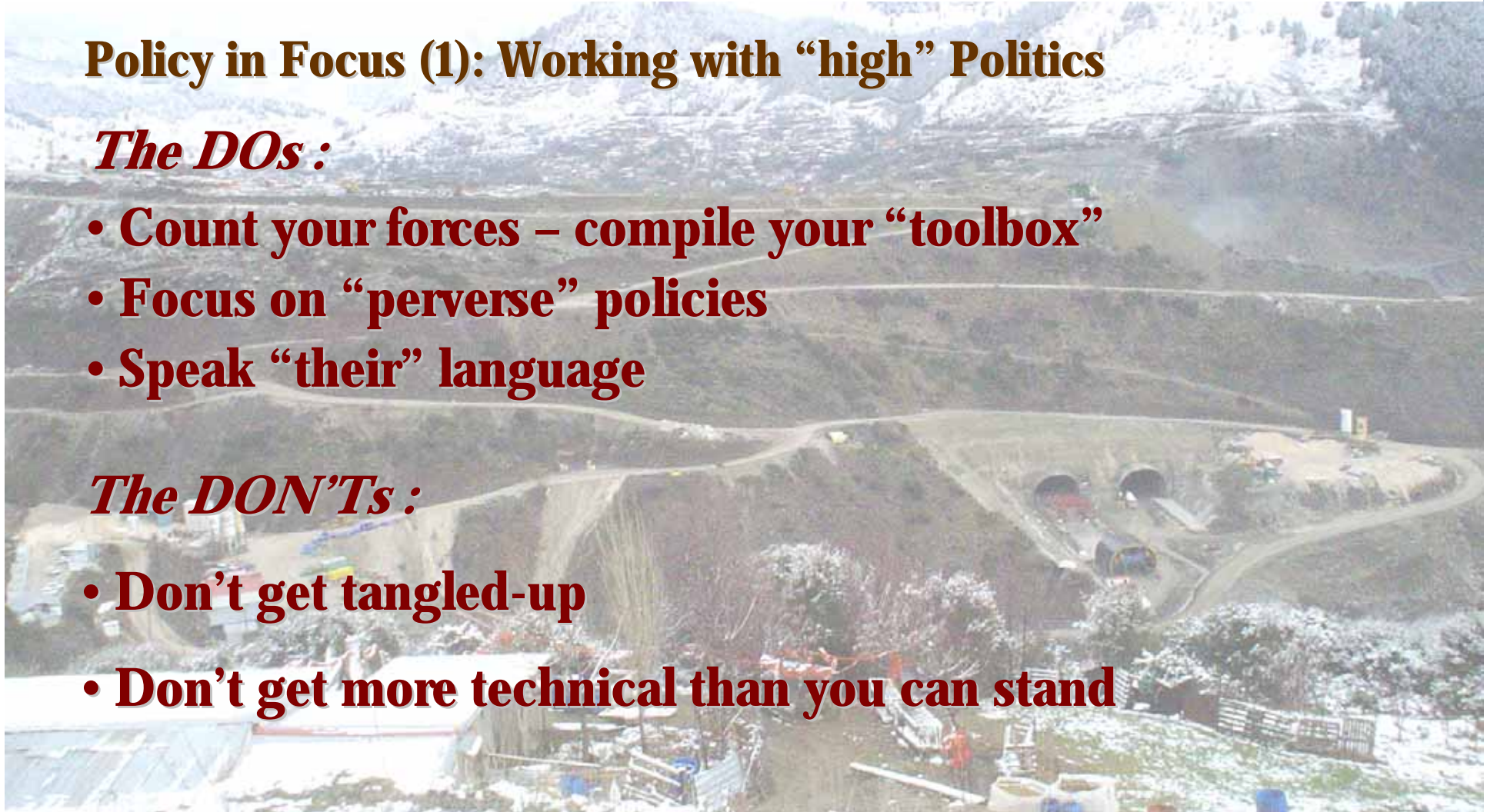
Policy in Focus (1): Working with “high” Politics

The DOs :

- **Count your forces – compile your “toolbox”**
- **Focus on “perverse” policies**
- **Speak “their” language**

The DON'Ts :

- **Don't get tangled-up**
- **Don't get more technical than you can stand**





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Policy in Focus (1): Working with “high” Politics

What's there to win :

- **Long term policy reorientation**
- **“Status” as a policy “player”**
- **Maximum efficiency**

What's there to loose :

Nothing if we wisely manage our confrontations





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Policy in Focus (1): Working with “high” Politics

What we ‘ve been up to in Greece :

- **Working with horizontal policies that should be of relevance (Biodiversity, WFD, Spatial Planning, Sustainable Development strategy)**
- **Evaluated the absolute and relative financial contribution of the SF to Environmental protection**
- **Working on a series of thematic evaluations regarding relevant policy issues (transportation, integration, EIAs, etc)**



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Policy in Focus (2): Working with “low” Politics

The DOs :

- **Count your forces – compile your “toolbox”**
- **Utilize monitoring committees**
- **Focus on the “high” part of “low” politics**
- **Utilize alliances – esp. with the EU Commission**

The DON'Ts :

- **Attempt a detailed monitoring of all projects**
- **Get into unwarranted confrontations with the interests of local societies**



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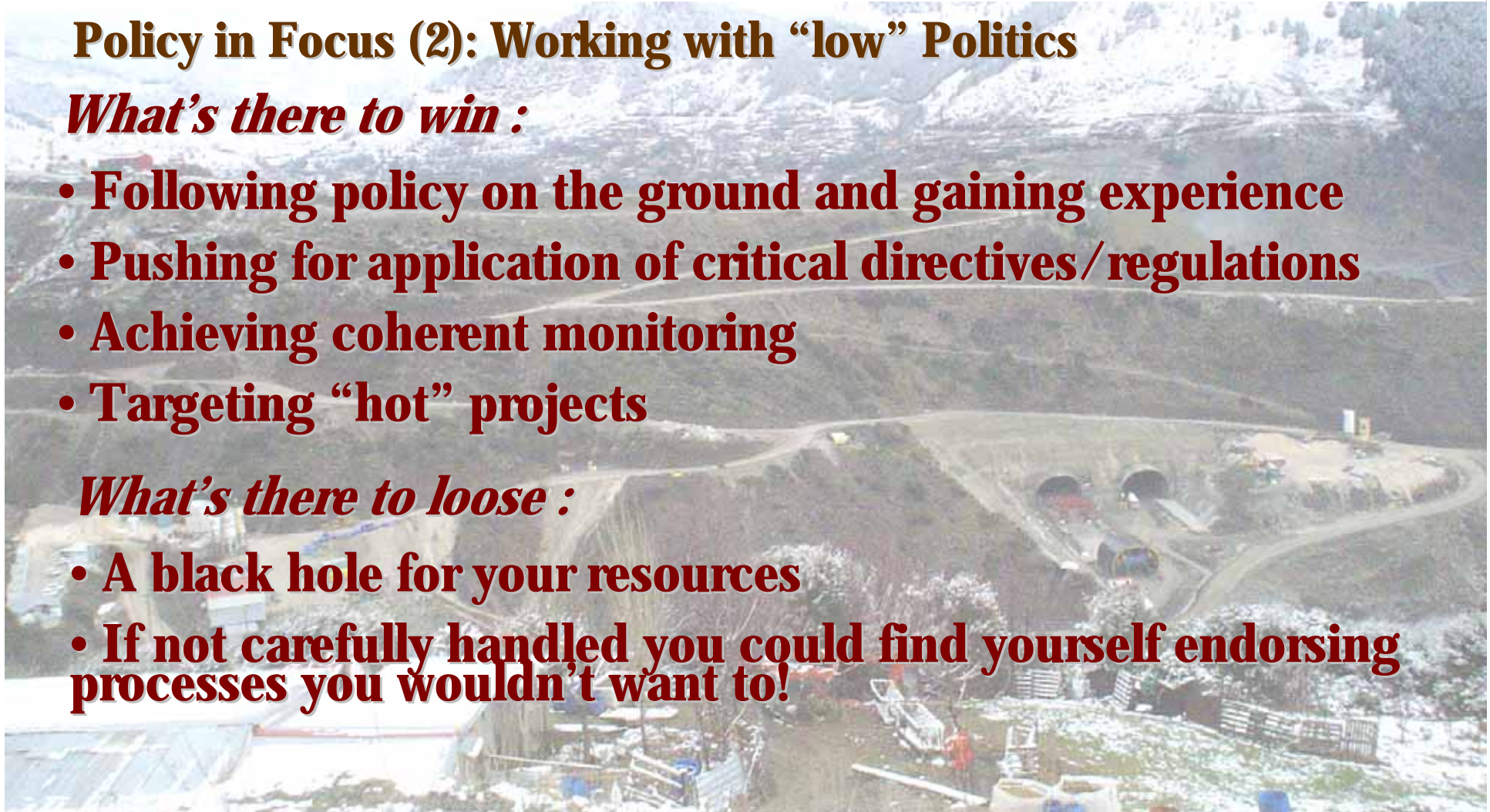
Policy in Focus (2): Working with “low” Politics

What's there to win :

- Following policy on the ground and gaining experience
- Pushing for application of critical directives/regulations
- Achieving coherent monitoring
- Targeting “hot” projects

What's there to loose :

- A black hole for your resources
- If not carefully handled you could find yourself endorsing processes you wouldn't want to!





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Policy in Focus (2): Working with “low” Politics

What we've been up to in Greece :

- **Participation in the monitoring committees of OPs and in the monitoring committee of the whole CSF**
- **Monitoring funding for the environment**
- **Monitoring the application of horizontal policies**
- **Pressing for effective monitoring of policies**
- **Targeted hot projects (eg. Acheloos River)**



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Policy in Focus (3): Funding Conservation

The DOs :

- **Get involved in projects with clear conservation or demonstration benefits**
- **Work with institutional beneficiaries to inform their project designs**
- **Support other beneficiaries for the development of Supportive projects**

The DON'Ts :

- **Get involved in projects you cannot handle. Usually management costs for NGOs by far exceed benefits**



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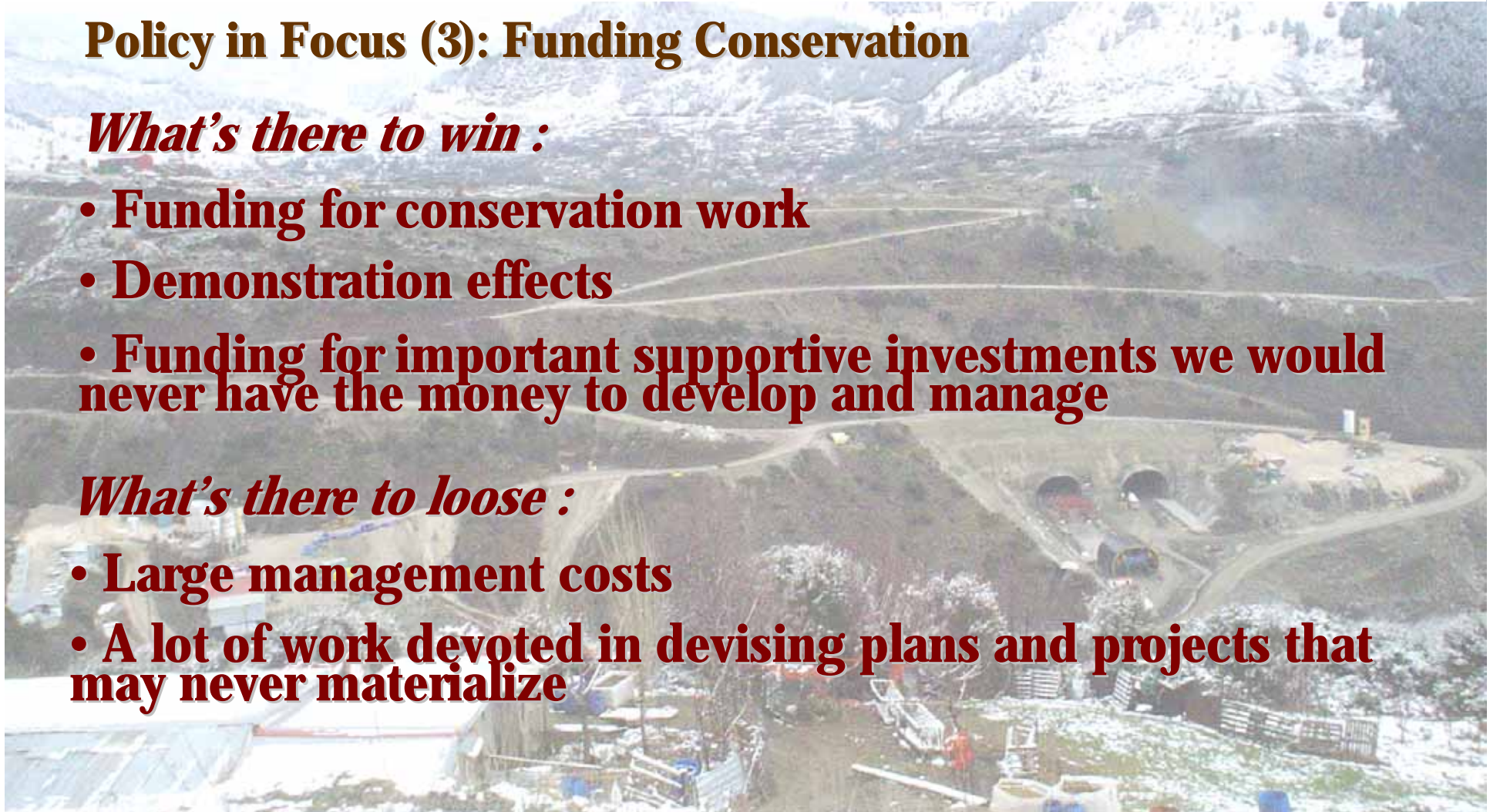
Policy in Focus (3): Funding Conservation

What's there to win :

- Funding for conservation work
- Demonstration effects
- Funding for important supportive investments we would never have the money to develop and manage

What's there to loose :

- Large management costs
- A lot of work devoted in devising plans and projects that may never materialize





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Policy in Focus (3): Funding Conservation

What we 've been up to in Greece :

- **Have submitted applications and achieved funding for few well-targeted projects**
- **Worked closely with other beneficiaries (esp. local administration) for the implementation of conservation projects and supportive investments**
- **Focus more on the initiatives (LIFE and INTERREG) as they have a more favorable benefits-costs balance**





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Some general advices

- ✓ **Count your forces and keep a strict focus for your work**
- ✓ **Try to achieve synergies in articulating your work at different levels**
- ✓ **Start your work at the high politics level: you will gain better understanding to inform work at other levels. It is also the most cost-effective level**
- ✓ **Try to inform funding for supportive investments: they are critical for our work and create important demonstration effects**



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A final concern: Is it worth it?

- **Development is the name of the game! None of our work will ever be sustainable if the forces of development counter it!**
- **EU regional policy sets a very progressive framework for development. If we wish to promote sustainable development, the Structural Funds are the perfect lever!**
- **Within the SF the majority of principles/regulations required for Sustainability are in place. It is our work to see that they are applied!**
- **This is the framework for us to evaluate our conservation targets and make sure that ourselves are realistic and aligned with needs for sustainable development**

Thank you !

