

Why not *‘alternative livelihoods projects’?*

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Community Conservation
Research Network



Alternative livelihoods projects...

Often promoted by conservation agencies

Supply-driven – ‘menu’; markets



Little rigorous evidence for positive impacts

Much anecdotal evidence suggests few **lasting** benefits for people or biodiversity

“Alternative” to what?

IIED, CIFOR and ZSL
Systematic Review definition*:

.....providing or encouraging
the use of:

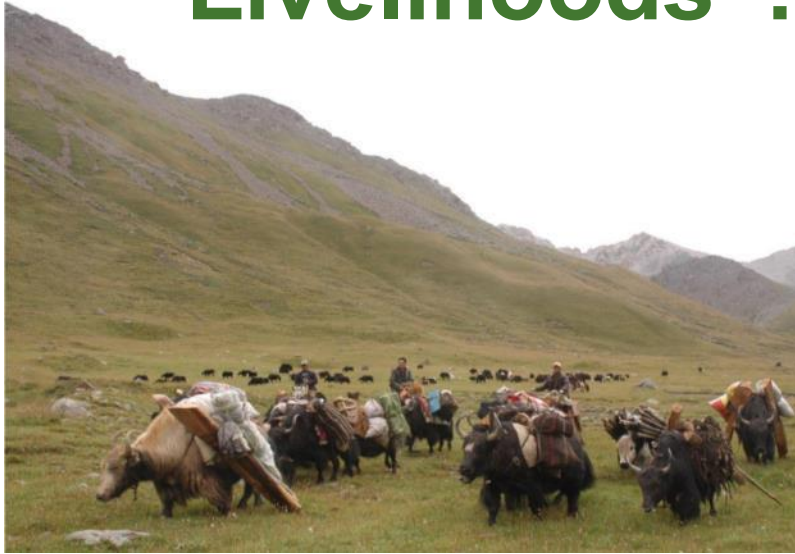
- **an alternative resource**
- an alternative occupation



- **an alternative (lower impact)
method of exploitation**

...to alleviate a human threat to
biodiversity

“Livelihoods”: more than just \$\$



Livelihoods projects often aim* to support income generation BUT..

Livelihoods are as much **a way of life** as a means of making a living

Multiple dimensions of wellbeing:

- Food security
- **Agency, self-determination**
- Equity
- **Personal security**
- Maintenance of cultural values
- **Social cohesion**



“Livelihoods”: dynamic complexity

Need to understand:

What motivates different actors' choices and behaviour?

e.g. bushmeat alternatives.....



Uptake depends on:

- **availability**, price, **protein source**
- taste, **personal/cultural preference**
- symbolic value, **pride**, prowess....
‘going out with the boys’...or
‘staying home with the girls’....

“Livelihoods”: diversity

- Risk appetite, learning curve
- Diversification – additional, not alternative
- Social differentiation
- Gendered roles, knowledge, skills.... e.g. seaweed farming



“Livelihoods”: links to conservation

Often tenuous

Understanding drivers of degradation & over-exploitation

- Targeting
- Internal/external threats
- Opportunity costs



- ‘Poachers turned gamekeepers’
- Timing
- Subsistence vs commercial
- Market systems

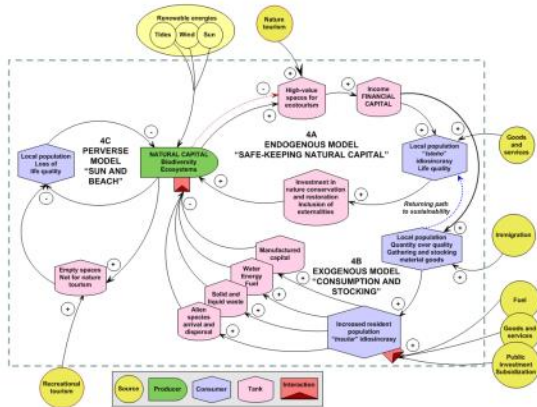
“Projects”

Change: predictable, time-bound, linear

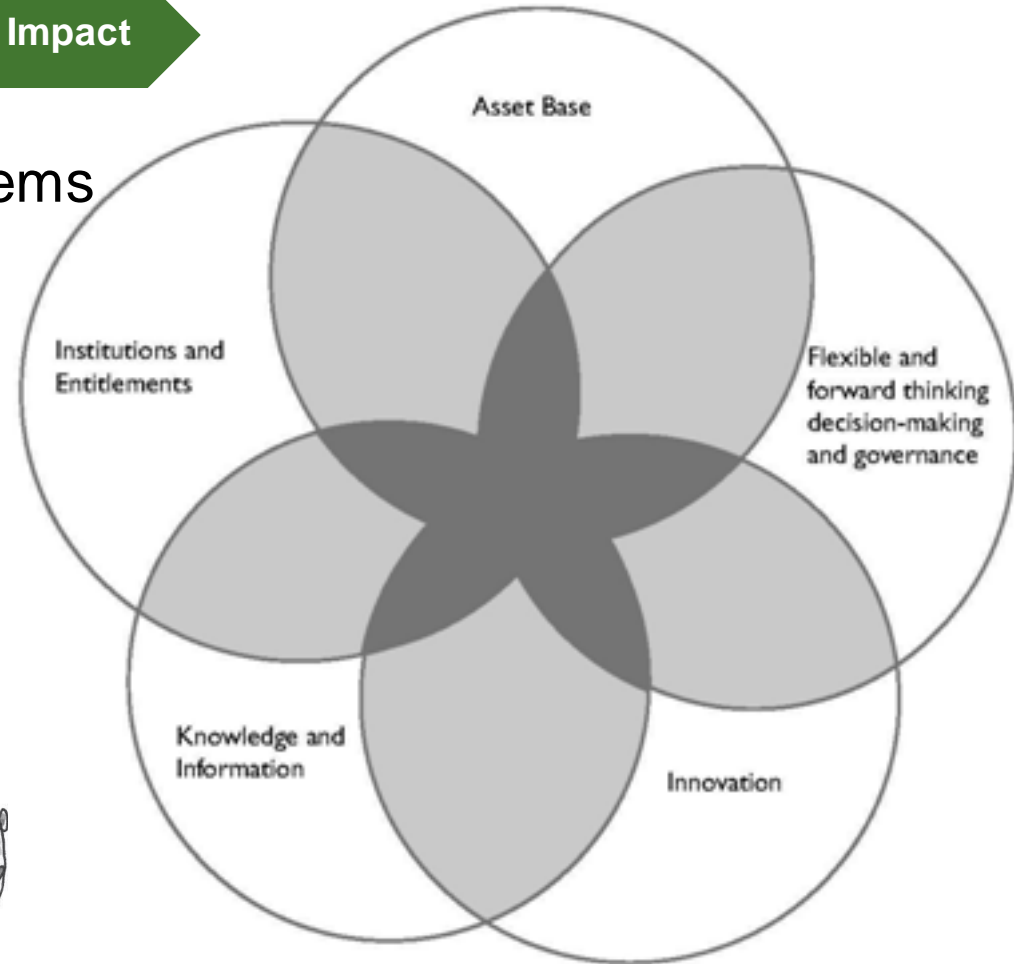
Adaptive capacity



Complex socio-ecological systems



Emergent and transformative change



Conclusions

- *Sustainable*, not 'alternative', livelihoods; triple bottom line
- **Empowering 'PLA' approaches,**
e.g. **Participatory Market System Development**
- No 'blueprints'
- **Understanding complexity, heterogeneity, dynamics**
- (Participatory) Theory of Change; continually test assumptions

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https://api.fauna-flora.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FFI-and-Practical-Action_2017_PMSD-In-Conservation.pdf

https://api.fauna-flora.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/FFI-and-Practical-Action_2017_Market-System-Selection.pdf

