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POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND LIVELIHOODS

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Introduction

Political ecology and livelihoods studies are natural partners. Whether examining the influence of multinational capital on local agricultural decision-making, or the community-level impacts of conservation projects that materialize global discourses of environmental management, exploring how people live in particular places has long been at the center of political ecological inquiry. At the same time, livelihoods research is fundamentally integrative, focused on how particular people in particular places mobilize environmental, economic, and social resources to meet challenges to well-being and achieve various goals (Hussein, 2002; Valdés-Rodríguez and Pérez-Vázquez, 2011). Many ostensibly local livelihoods decisions and outcomes are linked to extra-local processes and structures (e.g. Bagchi et al., 1998; Bebbington, 1999; Carr, 2013; Hussein, 2002; King, 2011; Murray, 2001). There is little in political ecological inquiry that might not be approached through livelihoods, for as Scoones (2009: 172) notes, this concept can be attached to "locales (rural or urban livelihoods), occupations (farming, pastoral or fishing livelihoods), social difference (gendered, age-defined livelihoods), directions (livelihood pathways, trajectories), dynamic patterns (sustainable or resilient livelihoods)" and other ideas and foci.

Any discussion of livelihoods, however, risks conflating disparate discussions about ways of thinking, sets of principles, and frameworks for analysis (Farrington, 2001). Conversations about ways of thinking about livelihoods and principles for livelihoods analysis tend to speak of livelihoods in holistic, locally focused terms. The application of these ideas to the investigation of how people live in particular places via livelihoods *approaches* is substantially narrower (see Prowse, 2008, 2010 for a discussion of the disjoints between the ontological and epistemological assumptions of livelihoods approaches), framing both the motivations behind particular livelihoods decisions and the evaluation of the outcomes and sustainability of particular livelihoods activities in economistic ways, often without any explicit theorization of these decisions or outcomes (Bebbington, 1999; Carr, 2013; de Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Jakimow, 2012; Kaag et al., 2004; Scoones, 2009; Small, 2007). Despite wide awareness of the limitations of livelihoods approaches that rely on such framings of behavior, efforts to reframe livelihoods decision-making and outcomes (e.g. Bebbington, 1999; Carr, 2013; Jakimow, 2012, 2013; King, 2011; Prowse, 2010) have generated little impact on practice.

In this chapter, I argue that the persistence of narrow economism is enabled and perpetuated, at least in part, by the fact that most livelihoods *frameworks* are deeply *cultural* ecological in their assumptions about how people live in particular places. Such frameworks generally treat livelihoods as local systemic relationships between people and their environment through which individuals and households access needed assets, relegating broader economic, environmental, and political processes to the role of shocks and pressures that "arrive" in particular places. Thus, in the broad field of livelihoods inquiry, livelihoods are treated as systems of local resources and networks intermittently connected to social, economic, political, and environmental relations that cross scales.

This narrowly economic, cultural ecological construction of livelihoods represents a lost opportunity to better understand how people live in particular places, the choices they make in their day-to-day lives, the outcomes of those choices for their quality of life, and the sustainability of their way of life over time. This chapter argues for greater alignment between political ecology and livelihoods studies. When compared with their implicitly cultural ecological counterparts, livelihoods frameworks built on political ecological understandings of the nature–society relationships at the core of rural livelihoods produce more robust representations of how people live in particular places, and more comprehensive assessments of the future sustainability and trajectories of those ways of living.

I begin with a brief review of livelihoods as an object of research, and the livelihoods approaches that emerged in the late 1990s as various development actors attempted to better focus aid on the needs of the global poor. I briefly review well-rehearsed critiques of these approaches as being too focused on economic factors in both framing livelihoods decisions and evaluating livelihoods outcomes. I then examine the (relatively unremarked) influences of cultural ecology implicitly embedded in these approaches, and demonstrate how they align with economizing frameworks to form a coherent whole. The result is an analytic process that treats behaviors that are inefficient with regard to local economic outcomes as outliers or problems to be addressed, instead of intentional efforts to make a living in a particular place. This process pushes critical factors shaping livelihoods decisions outside the analytic frame, limiting our ability to understand livelihoods decision-making and evaluate the efficacy and sustainability of those decisions. I then discuss efforts to engage livelihoods decision-making and outcomes through a political ecological lens. I demonstrate that these promising, if incomplete, efforts to consider factors and forces that play out across multiple scales provide us with greater analytic purchase on the decisions and outcomes of those we work with and for in the Global South. I close with a brief discussion of new frontiers at the intersection of political ecological and livelihoods research.

Livelihoods: a brief history of a concept and its frameworks

In his detailed review of the livelihoods concept and approach, Scoones (2009: 174) notes that the topics often grouped under livelihoods or livelihoods studies have been conducted for some time under any number of disciplinary headings, including "village studies, household economics and gender analyses, farming systems research, agro-ecosystem analysis, rapid and participatory appraisal, studies of socio-environmental change, political ecology, sustainability science and resilience studies (and many other strands and variants)." Cultural and political ecologists have long contributed to these bodies of knowledge. For example, work conducted under the broad heading of cultural ecology has promoted the holistic, local-scale investigation of particular social groups' efforts to make a living in particular places, for example through the importation and integration of ecological concepts like the community with anthropological concepts such

as the household (Brookfield, 1964; Grossman, 1981; Netting, 1993; Reenberg et al., 2008; Steward, 1977; Vayda, 1969). More recent political ecological work extends this initial interest in how people live in particular places beyond a consideration of local relations to understand how that which is experienced as "the local" is constituted by forces, pressures, and shocks operating at many scales, and over which communities and individuals have varying degrees of control and influence. For example, political ecological work on conservation and development (e.g. Brockington, 2002; Goldman, 2011; Hanson, 2007; Horta, 2000; Jones, 2006; King, 2010; Ramutsindela, 2007; Schroeder, 1999; Selfa and Endter-Wada, 2008; Wilkie et al., 2006) demonstrates how local livelihoods are impacted by the enactment of conservation efforts driven by discourses that mobilize various forms of global capital. Another long-standing political ecological theme is that of agrarian change, where political ecologists have examined how discourses of development and "improvement" mobilize international capital and investments, and drive policy changes, in ways that produce sometimes dramatic livelihoods impacts for agrarian and pastoral communities (e.g. Bassett, 2006; Batterbury, 2001; Carney, 2004; Carr, 2011; Geoghegan et al., 2001; Kea, 2013; Little, 1994; McCusker and Carr, 2006; Perreault, 2003; Schroeder, 1997; Turner, 2004).

With the rise of modernization approaches in development, a broad body of cultural-ecological knowledge was condensed into the precursors of contemporary livelihoods approaches. As Scoones (2009) notes, these approaches focused on technical solutions for development challenges, and contributed to the rise of monodisciplinary social science perspectives, especially economic perspectives, in development thinking (see also Prowse, 2008: 15). This perspective moved integrative, locally focused work to the margins of development thought and implementation, at best used to inform the selection and design of projects aimed at achieving national-level goals set by economists. Once so situated, this proto-livelihoods work continued in a proscribed manner. As Scoones (2009) notes, in the 1980s especially there was a proliferation of interesting work that could easily be labeled as livelihoods studies, such as that on farming systems and agro-ecological systems, that while marginal, was still integrated into development efforts.

Livelihoods became more formalized as an area of inquiry with the emergence of the idea of sustainable livelihoods. This concept, coined by an advisory panel to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), and popularized by Chambers and Conway (1992) in what became a very influential paper, formalized both the definition of livelihood, and the basis upon which a livelihood might be seen as sustainable. In their now-famous framing:

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base.
>
> *(Chambers and Conway, 1992: 6)*

This framing of livelihoods did little by itself to shift livelihoods research from the margins of development policy and implementation. Scoones (2009: 176–181) traces the rise of livelihoods approaches in development to the growing frustration with the Washington Consensus in the late 1990s. In 1997, the new Labour government in Great Britain articulated a livelihoods and poverty focus for development. This created a space into which long-peripheral livelihoods studies moved (see also Small, 2007: 28). This move, however, was not without friction. Integrative, multidisciplinary, grounded livelihoods work had to be translated into the language of an economics that thought only a little about institutions, and even less about the contexts in

which markets and institutions took shape. It is from this pressure, Scoones (2009) argues, that a framing of livelihoods emerged which focused on how assets (livelihood capitals) were accessed through social networks to address particular challenges (such as seasonality of livelihoods activities, or shocks that might upset those activities). Under contemporary livelihoods frameworks, the measurement of the sustainability of a given livelihood is framed in terms of these capitals and their drawdown. For example, any livelihood that continually draws down a livelihoods asset (such as a farmer who draws down the natural capital in his/her land through extensification) without the replacement of that capital in some form (such as through investment in children's education, which might be expected to enhance the human capital available to the household over time) is usually deemed unsustainable. As Carr (2013: 80) has argued, this presumes an economizing logic on the part of the farmer, where "livelihoods are principally about the maintenance and improvement of the material conditions of life."

As others have noted (Hussein, 2002; Valdés-Rodríguez and Pérez-Vázquez, 2011), livelihoods frameworks generally continue to follow this asset-based approach (see Carney, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Scoones, 1998). The impact of these approaches in both development policy/implementation and academia has been profound. Scoones (2009: 181) notes that the use of livelihoods approaches meant "Aid money was spent in different ways, new people with different values and skills were hired, and, for once, even if grossly inadequately, local contexts were better understood and poor, marginalised people were involved in plans and decisions." The world of development studies and development implementation responded accordingly, and today, livelihoods approaches are at the center of vulnerability analyses, project designs, and monitoring and evaluation efforts (see Hussein, 2002: 54; Scoones, 2009: 178–179 for discussion).

Livelihoods approaches and livelihoods analysis: criticisms

Despite their widespread adoption in development studies and implementation, asset-based livelihoods approaches have come under considerable critique. Scoones (2009: 181) focuses on four "recurrent failings of livelihoods perspectives": A lack of engagement with the processes of economic globalization, a lack of attention to power and politics, a failure to appropriately engage with climate change and its impacts, and the limited engagement of livelihoods approaches with ongoing agrarian transformation in many parts of the Global South (see Knutsson and Ostwald, 2006; Prowse, 2010; Small, 2007 for other, largely commensurate, typologies of problems in asset-based livelihoods frameworks). Here, I argue that these four recurrent failings are all linked by an inherent, uninterrogated scale of analysis that privileges local social, economic, political, and environmental contexts in the explanation and evaluation of livelihoods.

Generally speaking, livelihoods approaches pay attention to extralocal processes, and indeed the extralocal components of otherwise local processes, when they impinge upon the vulnerability context in the form of shocks and pressures. These processes and institutions, such as the state or global commodities markets, are otherwise vaguely sited "out there." As Scoones (2009: 181) notes,

> Livelihoods approaches, coming as they did from a complex disciplinary parentage that emphasised the local, have not been very good at dealing with big shifts in the state of global markets and politics. In the frameworks, these were dumped in a box labelled "contexts". But what happens when contexts are the most important factor, over-riding the micro-negotiations around access to assets and the finely-tuned strategies of differentiated actors?

The implicit scaling of livelihoods under asset-based approaches either reduces extralocal processes, and those aspects of local processes that transcend the local, to pressures and shocks felt through the vulnerability context, or it removes them from the analytic frame entirely. Livelihoods approaches tend to construct communities and individuals as receiving and responding to the influences and impacts of events and processes in other places, or operating at other scales, as opposed to participating actively in those processes. Thus, under the sustainable livelihoods approach, the assessment of environmental sustainability is largely local, and refers "to coping with immediate shocks and stresses, where local capacities and knowledge, if effectively supported, might be enough [to achieve sustainability]" (Scoones 2009: 182). At least in terms of their scale of analysis and framing of social-ecological relationships, contemporary livelihoods frameworks are much more cultural ecological than political ecological.

Understanding contemporary livelihoods approaches as cultural ecological helps to explain the most commonly voiced criticism of livelihoods approaches, those that either explicitly or implicitly argue that livelihoods approaches tend to underplay or overlook social processes, especially power relations, in their analyses (see, for example, Arce, 2003; Bebbington, 1999; Carr, 2008, 2013; de Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Jakimow, 2012, 2013; Kaag et al., 2004; King, 2011; McSweeney, 2004). The implicit scale of analysis in these approaches enables a narrowly materialist framing of individual and community motivations under contemporary livelihoods frameworks by producing an oddly stilted view of the social relations and processes that shape local outcomes (Carr, 2013). For example, land tenure rules whose local exercise are often used as a means of coercing particular livelihoods decisions or behaviors frequently derive legitimacy through ethnic ties or laws and regulations established and (unevenly) enforced by the state. Livelihoods approaches generally do not create the space for analysis of such translocal decision-making, pushing issues of complex identity politics and translocal social networks out of the analytic frame. Without consideration of the ways in which these larger considerations might enable, constrain, or otherwise shape the motivations that mold their livelihoods decisions, it becomes possible to rely on narrowly conceived framings of material self-interest in livelihoods analysis. Carr (2013: 80) argues that such reductionism is now inherent to contemporary livelihoods approaches, as they rest on an unstated and largely uninterrogated assumption that livelihoods are, principally, "about the maintenance and improvement of the material conditions of life" (see also Bebbington, 1999; de Haan and Zoomers, 2005; Jakimow, 2012; King, 2011; McSweeney, 2004).

Asserting the political ecological in livelihoods

Recovering the political ecological component of livelihoods and reinserting it into livelihoods analysis is one means of addressing the trend toward narrow analysis and interpretation that contemporary livelihoods frameworks have promoted. A political ecological approach to livelihoods analysis explains local livelihoods decisions and their sustainability through locally specific materializations of translocal economic, political, and environmental processes and structures. In this way, livelihoods become a political ecological lens, an ordering principle for making sense out of the complex, often-messy negotiation of these processes and forces by particular people in particular places.

There have been a few attempts to bring this political ecological framing to questions of scale and economism in livelihoods analysis. Bebbington's (1999) efforts to reframe livelihoods around capitals and capabilities rests fundamentally on the idea that "people's assets are not merely means through which they make a living: they also give *meaning* to the person's world … This meaning will then be one of several influences in subsequent decisions people make about their livelihood

strategies" (Bebbington, 1999: 2022). For example, in accessing water, a woman is doing more than merely gathering a resource for her household that is needed for sanitation and sustenance. In many places, she is also enacting "women's work," thus defining her gender (and, by deferral, other genders) while also likely performing the role of a "good wife" (with such status comes access to different social resources and networks). Similarly, a woman or group of women might use the gathering of water to challenge these same categories. The gathering of water may, in conforming to or contesting the roles and responsibilities associated with her gender or household status, serve as an act of definition that is as important to these women as the actual acquisition of the resource. These meanings, made and remade through this and other livelihoods activities, are critical to decision-making, but cannot be evaluated through relatively simple assessments of total availability or consumption as under contemporary livelihoods frameworks. Bebbington's framework thus "widens the lens" of analyses that examine the sustainability of livelihoods, noting that such sustainability is not only a biophysical question, but also a social question, a question of "tradeoffs between economic growth, human development, social integration and environmental integrity that are implied by different development options" (Bebbington, 1999: 2031; see also Batterbury, 2001; Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001)

Bebbington's challenge to the economism of livelihoods frameworks is political ecological in that the assets engaged in people's livelihoods should not be seen as either purely natural resources, or purely local resources, especially as many livelihoods engage both local natural resource exploitation and various labor and commodities markets that extend beyond the local. As Bebbington notes,

> This conceptualization [of livelihoods] has a related benefit, perhaps more potential than so far real, of conceiving livelihood sustainability within a framework that could also be used for thinking of regional and national sustainability…thus suggesting elements of a framework that could link levels of analysis in research and practice addressing the relationship between environment, society and development.
>
> *(Bebbington, 1999: 2022)*

For example, changing land uses can alter the availability of commodities commonly exchanged in broader markets, impacting business owners and consumers far from the land use changes. Such shifts can, in turn, potentially disrupt networks of capital and social connection critical to the long-term maintenance of the livelihoods in question. This framing of livelihoods opens up the analytic consideration of how networks of policy, economy, and power that might result in major livelihoods shifts in particular rural communities are intimately linked to, and productive of, the lives and livelihoods of those who we might commonly think of as "powerful." Thus, this reframing speaks to Scoones' concerns for better addressing agrarian change, globalization, and local power and politics, and at least opens the door to addressing several recent concerns for the impacts of local livelihoods decisions on processes operating beyond the local, and how that might impact how we assess the sustainability of livelihoods (Carr and McCusker, 2009; King, 2011; McCusker and Carr, 2006).

King's (2011) work on spatialized livelihoods further develops a political ecological understanding of livelihoods politics. His examination of livelihoods in Mzinti, a community in the KaNgwane bantustan in South Africa, weaves together highly spatialized resources and resource utilization impacts, complex sociopolitical networks, and translocal discourses of conservation in a manner that calls into question how we evaluate livelihoods decision-making and the environmental sustainability of livelihoods. For example, King shows that patterns of resource exploitation in Mzinti are the outcome of the interplay between resource availability

and the local negotiation of resource management conflicts by state and traditional governance actors. The patterns of wood and other resource collection that result from this process of livelihoods decision-making place pressure on these resources, challenging some livelihoods more than others. For example, herders in Mzinti were once pressured by the expansion of agricultural livelihoods and related land use change. To address this challenge, they invoked discourses of cultural conservation that transcended the local, and mobilized conservation actors to preserve access to land and other livelihoods resources. The negotiation of this pressure and the sustainability of this livelihood were both shaped by the ability of herders to mobilize political and conservation discourses that transcended local social relations and social capital to ensure their continuing access to needed resources. The result of this analysis is a political ecological frame of explanation for observed decisions and outcomes.

Carr (2013, 2014) explicitly extends the social reframing of meaning and power in livelihoods advanced by Bebbington (1999) to consider how meaning in livelihoods is itself constructed through identities, discourses, and practices that transcend the community or local scale. Where Bebbington largely left the constitution of social categories and roles to the side of his discussion, Carr argues that these categories, and the ways in which their attendant roles and responsibilities shape livelihoods decision-making, are local mobilizations of broader identities that draw upon the meanings created through broader historical, ethnic, and spatial processes.

Carr (2013) argues that livelihoods are visible manifestations of intimate government, efforts by the community to manage their environment, economy, and one another to shifting but defined ends (Agrawal, 2005). This effort takes shape at the intersection of three spheres: tools of coercion (such as land tenure rules that, while limiting the decision-making latitude of all members of the community, have greater impacts on some more than others), discourses of livelihoods that contain the rationales people provide for selecting particular livelihoods activities and the actions they take related to those perceptions (for example, the need to balance market and subsistence production to maximize incomes while guarding against economic or environmental shocks), and the mobilization of identity to organize these activities (for example, by aligning particular agricultural roles, such as subsistence production, with wider understandings of appropriate roles and behaviors for those of a particular gender). These spheres are brought together through regimes of practices, in this case the routinized practices of making a living in which individuals, households, and communities participate every day (Dean, 1999: 18). These practices serve to naturalize the strategic mobilization of discourses of livelihoods, tools of coercion, and identity roles and responsibilities, placing them beyond question as what Gidwani (2001: 79) calls social facts. At the same time, Carr argues that the intimate government at the heart of livelihoods strategies is unstable, for such strategies merely mobilize aspects of larger processes that are both ever-changing, and outside the control of those who mobilize them to make a living. For example, identity categories are rarely completely determined by local social networks and factors, but generally reference much larger scales and longer histories that extend beyond the present local, and so can be mobilized but not fully controlled by actors to shape livelihoods decisions. In all cases, the explanation of particular livelihoods decisions and outcomes extends beyond the local scale. This is a deeply political ecological framing of power and decision-making within livelihoods that undermines efforts to explain particular decisions or strategies through narrowly economistic framings of behavior that reference local conditions.

Looking forward: future directions for livelihoods

While the study of livelihoods has long been a part of many different fields of inquiry, our understanding of livelihoods decision-making and outcomes remains relatively superficial (Carr,

2011). The bulk of the work conducted under the heading of livelihoods analysis and inquiry has used, and continues to use, frameworks of explanation limited in spatial scale, that produce limited and often flawed assessments of livelihoods decision-making and sustainability. Perhaps, then, the first and most obvious frontier for political ecologists engaged in livelihoods studies is to employ (or create) more political ecological framings of livelihoods in their analyses. Understanding how people make a living in particular places, and why they go about the activities they do in pursuit of this goal, remains a central consideration in everything from development studies to the ever-growing field of inquiry examining the human impacts of global change.

Second, despite Bebbington's (1999: 2022) suggestions that a wider livelihoods lens might address issues of regional or national sustainability, livelihoods studies rarely consider how local outcomes might filter back to larger, extralocal processes, thus altering the vulnerability context and potentially rendering the livelihoods in question unsustainable over a longer timeframe. This occurs, in part, because the cultural ecological tendencies of contemporary livelihoods approaches tend to look at communities as islands, operating independently of other communities around them. This is rarely true in practice. Communities interact with one another, and if they are engaged in similar livelihoods activities, often will respond in similar manners to the same shock or pressure. Thus, the market and environmental impacts of livelihoods outcomes in a given community might scale across many communities, multiplying their impact. To illustrate this point, I turn to a study of soil carbon sequestration via agriculture in the West African savannah in Senegal (Manlay et al., 2002). This study found that maize fields annually sequestered an average of 7.5 more tons of carbon per hectare than millet fields. If these measurements hold relatively constant across much of Sudanian Senegal, converting a mere 10 percent of Senegal's 121,235 hectares of maize to millet, whether due to environmental or market stresses, would release more than 900,000 tons of carbon into the atmosphere. While this is a small amount of carbon at the global scale, it is still significant at the regional scale. In neighboring Mali, where maize is more commonly grown, a similar agricultural shift would release roughly four million tons of carbon, or the equivalent of one year's emissions from a coal plant (Carr, 2012). This is the potential impact of a 10 percent shift in cropping, from one crop to one other crop, in some relatively small countries. What climate and climate-related environmental impacts of many shifts between many crops in many places are we likely to see, when will these impacts take place, and how will these shifts impinge upon the sustainability of the livelihoods that we are currently examining? These questions go to the heart of Scoones' (2009) concerns for greater engagement with the implications of climate change for livelihoods.

Third, while interesting work on the spatiality of livelihoods and on the multiscalar constitution of power and social relations have deepened our understanding of livelihoods strategies, decisions, and outcomes, these lines of inquiry exist on somewhat separate tracks. Both sets of work address the multiscalar, translocal character of livelihoods, but they tend to do so with different foci, with the spatial livelihoods literature more focused on the environmental outcomes of this complexity, and the literature on power, society, and livelihoods more concerned with the complex constitution of social drivers and outcomes. While there have been initial forays into the integration of these two emergent literatures (Carr and McCusker, 2009; McCusker and Carr, 2006), considerably more work should be done to connect the lessons of both into coherent livelihoods approaches in particular places.

Finally, there is the issue of implementing livelihoods approaches in the world of development and adaptation programming. As Scoones (2009) has ably demonstrated, livelihoods approaches came to prominence because a major donor (DfID) adopted them as a critical part of its mission, prompting attention to and use of these frameworks in both academia and the world of

development implementation. The version of livelihoods analysis that became the standard in livelihoods studies, however, is greatly limited in its ability to explain observed decisions and outcomes. It is not enough to simply demonstrate these shortcomings to bring about changes in practice. Instead, the lesson of the history of livelihoods studies in development is that those interested in more political ecological livelihoods approaches must build constituencies for such approaches among the communities most likely to use them. How, then, can we build a constituency for efforts that would introduce complex, differentiated livelihoods approaches to development policy and implementation in a manner that can be taken up and used by those communities? The clearest opportunity for such work exists around a growing demand for serious monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools among development donors. Where M&E might have been somewhat farcical in the context of previous development efforts, donors such as USAID (through its USAID Forward reforms) are currently attempting to shift M&E from simplistic reporting on outputs such as money spent, items purchased, and individuals trained to outcomes, actual changes in the quality of life for those whom development projects are ostensibly designed to benefit. These efforts are changing the incentives for program and project design, making project managers accountable for the actual workings of their projects. In this change there is an opening into which new and complex, but more effective, tools might emerge for understanding why people do what they do, and why particular efforts to make a living have the outcomes they do. Therefore, a productive frontier for political ecological livelihoods approaches might be the empirical demonstration of what these new approaches can render legible versus contemporary livelihoods approaches.

As the study of livelihoods fundamentally embraces the question of how people live in particular places, livelihoods will always be a part of conversations about development, climate change, and nature–society relations more generally. By shifting how we conduct livelihoods research to better engage with political ecological practice, we have the opportunity to better understand the world around us, and to shape ongoing efforts to address current and future challenges that the world will present in the Anthropocene.

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