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### Livelihoods as Intimate Government: Reframing the logic of livelihoods for development

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# Livelihoods as Intimate Government: Reframing the logic of livelihoods for development

EDWARD R CARR

*ABSTRACT* Livelihoods approaches emerged from a broad range of efforts to understand how people live in particular places. They have since cohered into often instrumentally applied frameworks that rest on the broadly held assumption that livelihoods are principally about the management of one's material circumstances. This assumption limits the explanatory power of livelihoods approaches by shifting a range of motivations for livelihoods decisions outside the analytic frame. This article extends efforts to recover a broader lens on livelihoods decisions and outcomes by conceptualising livelihoods as forms of intimate government, local efforts to shape conduct to definite, shifting, and sometimes contradictory material and social ends. By employing a Foucault-inspired analytics of government to the study of livelihoods in Ghana's Central Region, the paper presents a systematic, implementable approach to the examination of livelihoods and their outcomes in light of this reframing, one where material outcomes are one of many possible ends of intimate government, instead of the end. By opening the analytic lens in this manner, we can explain a much wider set of livelihoods outcomes and decisions than possible under contemporary approaches.

Within contemporary development studies and implementation, livelihoods analysis rests on an implicit assumption that livelihoods strategies are principally, if not exclusively, efforts to address material challenges to well-being. This reading is not a necessary part of livelihoods frameworks. It has been called into question, either explicitly<sup>1</sup> or implicitly,<sup>2</sup> in various studies of the complex, indeterminate local outcomes of development efforts. These studies, and many others, make it clear that livelihoods address social goals as well as material needs, and that livelihoods strategies are efforts to align these two often-contradictory arenas. However, this recognition has thus far lacked systematisation comparable to that of, for example, the sustainable livelihoods approach. This limits the reach and influence of these observations in the wider development community.<sup>3</sup>

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This paper extends existing efforts to understand livelihoods as more than means to material well-being by presenting case-study evidence from Ghana that illustrates how, above very low thresholds, social goals often trump material factors in livelihoods decision making. To tease out the systematic character of such decisions, the paper frames livelihoods as forms of what Agrawal calls intimate government,<sup>4</sup> local efforts to shape conduct to definite, shifting, and sometimes contradictory material and social ends. Among these ends are a wide range of social goals that are not necessarily determined by (or even principally shaped by) efforts to address material circumstances. Unlike contemporary instrumental applications of livelihoods approaches, the approach I present here does not privilege any of these ends *a priori*. Instead, the approach requires the investigator to establish which ends carry weight in a particular context or decision, and to step back and ask the general question that originally inspired the livelihoods approach: how do people live in this place? Within such a framing, cases of livelihoods decision making in which various social factors trump the desire to seek greater material return no longer stand out as idiosyncratic outliers. Instead, they become analytically intelligible, enabling greater purchase on local decision-making and livelihoods pathways than possible under more instrumental livelihoods approaches.<sup>5</sup>

The first half of the paper is an extended literature review and theoretical discussion that accomplishes three goals. First, it highlights the capabilities and limitations of existing instrumental uses of livelihoods approaches. Second, it identifies a tendency in the development and governmentality literature to treat local social relations and contexts (including livelihoods) as governmentality's other, rendering them legible only through interaction with larger projects of rule. Third, it moves beyond this treatment of 'the local' to build a general approach to livelihoods as forms of intimate government. In the second half of the paper I apply this approach to the analysis of livelihoods decision making in two villages in Ghana's Central Region. In doing so, I am able to explain how observed limitations on overall opportunity within households,<sup>6</sup> and the production of household-level gender inequality, are not unintended or unwanted consequences of efforts to meet basic material needs. Instead, they are integral to the alignment of a project of rule (narrowly read as the management of the uncertain economic and environmental context via men's control over household resources) with the self-guidance of the ruled (the desired social and material outcomes of *all members* of these households).<sup>7</sup> This alignment produces a complex intimate government in which all participants are embroiled, shaping the roles, strategies, and outcomes associated with livelihoods in these villages. Framing livelihoods as intimate government in this case renders a range of otherwise unintelligible livelihoods decisions and outcomes analytically legible, enabling greater potential understandings of both the current viability of livelihoods and likely future livelihoods pathways. These improved understandings are critical to the future of livelihoods approaches in development, as we are poised at a moment when locally specific, complex readings of livelihoods outcomes could take a place of importance in development programme design and evaluation.

### Livelihoods in development

As Scoones has demonstrated,<sup>8</sup> what today we call ‘livelihoods approaches’ emerged from a long history of efforts to understand how people live in different places, 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’. Scoones argues that, while these strands were woven into what we now call livelihoods approaches in the early 1990s,<sup>9</sup> such approaches did not gain wide purchase until the emergence of a post-Washington Consensus policy context in the UK in the late 1990s. Development programmes and policies emerging in this context focused on poverty alleviation and local specificity, yet required systematic framings to support the design and evaluation of programmes and projects. The result was an approach to livelihoods as ‘the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living’.<sup>10</sup> On one hand, this definition extended beyond income generation to holistically explore the many ways a person might make a living,<sup>11</sup> and the viability of livelihoods in particular places at particular times. On the other hand, the need for systematisation in a programme and policy context led to an approach with a fundamental emphasis on the economic attributes of livelihoods, which were understood as mediated by social and institutional processes.<sup>12</sup>

While the literature on livelihoods in development is vast, and a full review is beyond the scope of this article,<sup>13</sup> livelihoods analysis has some general characteristics. Livelihoods approaches generally frame livelihoods assets as belonging to one of five types of capital: natural, physical, human, financial or social (see Table 1). The analysis of the use of these livelihoods assets tends to follow a series of steps. For example, under the sustainable livelihoods approach, the evaluation of a particular livelihood’s viability begins with the establishment of the vulnerability context, the various economic, environmental, social, and political trends that might affect local livelihoods, the shocks that might occur in each of these realms, and the seasonality of the local environment and economy. The analysis proceeds to the impact of the vulnerability context on local forms of livelihoods capital, which allows the investigator to

TABLE 1. The five livelihoods capitals and their definitions

Type	Definition
Natural capital	The natural resource stocks from which resource flows and services (eg nutrient cycling, erosion protection) useful for livelihoods are derived
Physical capital	Comprises the basic infrastructure and producer goods needed to support livelihoods
Human capital	Represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives
Financial capital	The financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives
Social capital	The social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives

Source: dfid, ‘Sustainable development guidance sheets’, at <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0901/section2.pdf>, accessed 29 September 2012.

translate biophysical and economic stresses into human impacts. Finally, examination turns to the processes through which members of these communities interact with each other and the larger society, such as policies, institutions, and even power relations. These are the means by which individuals and communities access various forms of livelihoods capital, and the context in which decisions are made about how to use these forms of capital. This approach therefore frames livelihoods outcomes—such as adequate food and income to support the household for the year—as the result of efforts to manage the vulnerability context via the interplay of local assets and local social relations. If a livelihoods strategy reproduces the household only through the continuous draw down of one or more capitals, such as the extensification of the family farm into land accessed through one's extended family (which draws down both natural and social capital), it is not a sustainable livelihood.

Livelihoods approaches were intended to emphasise social processes alongside the challenges posed by the natural environment in livelihoods decision making.<sup>14</sup> While Scoones rightly notes that livelihoods studies that downplay such issues tend to be instrumental uses of a much more comprehensive, holistic approach,<sup>15</sup> he glosses over why such instrumental readings occur. I argue that in shifting discussions of how people live into economic terms, the livelihoods approaches that emerged in the late 1990s came to rest on an unstated, and largely uninterrogated, assumption: livelihoods are principally about the maintenance and improvement of the material conditions of life.<sup>16</sup>

This assumption subtly plays out in the questions we ask about livelihoods decisions. For example, take the many efforts to understand why livelihoods utilise economically less-than-optimal (eg non-Pareto efficient) distributions of resources within the households of particular agrarian communities.<sup>17</sup> The very framing of this question suggests that livelihoods should optimise economic (and therefore material) outcomes, and that activities that do not do so are somehow abnormal and in need of explanation and redress. Thus, we find 'non-optimal' behaviours explained as the products of incomplete information or 'failed bargaining'. Rarely, if ever, are such 'inefficient' behaviours and strategies taken on as intentional efforts on the part of participants. Therefore, they remain outside the analytic lens, issues to be resolved, not inherent parts of livelihoods strategies.

As de Haan and Zoomers note,<sup>18</sup> this framing is not universally accepted in the livelihoods literature.<sup>19</sup> Alternative approaches to livelihoods take a holistic view, arguing that 'livelihood is not a matter of material well-being, but rather that it also includes non-material aspects of well-being'.<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein I have argued that when one gets down to the intra-household level and conducts detailed qualitative investigations of livelihoods strategies, there is evidence to suggest that 'non-optimal' strategies reflect efforts to bring together two often-competing goals: the need to meet the material needs of the social unit (or units) in question (household, family, community, etc) and an effort to preserve the privileges and prerogatives enjoyed by those who hold positions of authority within these social units.<sup>21</sup> More recently I have taken this critique one step further, arguing that this same evidence indicates that, above very low material thresholds, the tension between material and social goals tends to be resolved in

favour of desired social outcomes, even when such resolutions result in reduced access to income, food, and security. Further, this ‘double-edged’ character of livelihoods is recognised by the participants in a given strategy, even those who are not in positions of authority and who ‘lose’ materially by participating in these strategies and associated activities.

Such evidence pushes the explanatory capacity of current instrumental applications of livelihoods frameworks to a breaking point. It also illuminates a path forward. If we are to understand livelihoods decision-making, assess the sustainability of livelihoods and address their future outcomes we must reframe livelihoods analysis away from *a priori* assumptions about the material motivations for observed behaviours and decisions. Instead, we must establish locally appropriate framings of how people live in particular places that treat material outcomes as one of a set of motivations for livelihoods decisions. While there are many possible ways to achieve this reframing, I argue that seeing livelihoods as double-edged efforts to balance a generally held need for material security with an effort to maintain the prerogatives of those in positions of authority points us toward a reframing of livelihoods around Foucault’s concept of governmentality.

### Development and governmentality

Foucault first introduced the term ‘governmentality’ in a lecture given to the Collège de France in 1978, and which appeared in written form in 1991.<sup>22</sup> Since then, it has been subject to a range of interpretations. In general, however, governmentality is taken to be a specific way of thinking about government, where government is understood as

any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite and shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

In short, the ends of government<sup>24</sup> are achieved through the mobilisation of *many* desires, aspirations or interests, a framing that runs contrary to the livelihoods focus on material motivations above all others. Shaping conduct is not the same thing as ordering or forcing subjects to behave in a prescribed manner, but instead reflects a project of rule that reconciles domination with a subject’s own self-guidance.<sup>25</sup> This reconciliation proceeds from the alignment of the goal(s) of a project of rule with the production of self- and collective understandings of things like social roles, appropriate behaviour, and desirable outcomes and circumstances through ‘regimes of practices’, our organised ways of doing things such as earning a living and interacting socially.<sup>26</sup> In short, through the practices of everyday life, these self- and collective understandings become institutionalised as truth claims, what Gidwani calls ‘social facts’ that define fields of possible action and thought,<sup>27</sup> thus linking domination with self-guidance.

Foucault’s focus was on the emergence of ‘the art of government of the state’ in Western European societies.<sup>28</sup> Specifically his work focused on the ways in

which states shifted from efforts to exert authority within a defined territory to shaping the conduct of the population towards specific political goals.<sup>29</sup> Some of the development and governmentality literature follows Foucault's project closely,<sup>30</sup> examining the ways in which development projects and plans become vehicles for the extension and consolidation of state power within a state's territory. However, as several authors have noted, while Foucault's project was specific to a particular place and time, the focus on the extension and consolidation of state power is but a subset of a larger concern with how we think about governing, especially how government comes to be taken for granted in particular places at particular times.<sup>31</sup> Typically, efforts to move beyond Foucault's original focus, what Appaduri calls 'new geographies of governmentality',<sup>32</sup> look to situations where state and extra-state institutions, policies, and practices mix.<sup>33</sup> This work examines what Ferguson and Gupta call a 'transnational apparatus of governmentality',<sup>34</sup> visible in a broadly neoliberal political agenda<sup>35</sup> often enacted not just through state institutions, but also through nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that run parallel to or are subsumed within particular state politics.<sup>36</sup>

These new geographies of governmentality represent an important extension of the idea of governmentality within development studies that better frames and interrogates events as they are in the world. However, a side-effect of the literature's focus on development as a mechanism for the accomplishment of rule is the deferral of discussion about local subject formation, power, and knowledge,<sup>37</sup> especially the social relations that *precede* development interventions. In the contemporary literature, local social relations become visible as they are reworked to the ends of state-level political and economic goals by particular projects, policies, and engagements. This leaves such relations open to interpretation as the outcomes of development-as-governmentality, not as projects of rule in their own right.<sup>38</sup>

This problem extends even to the few in this literature who have considered local social and cultural contexts *in their own right* as an explicit part of their projects.<sup>39</sup> This work engages local social contexts at least in part as a means of addressing the tendency of work on governmentality and development to rely on a vaguely defined discursive determinism to explain observed outcomes. Such determinism does little to explain how political agendas and desires are translated into actions and outcomes in particular places, as it obscures what Li calls the 'accomplishment of rule'.<sup>40</sup> For example, Moore's work on struggles over rural livelihoods and resettlement in Zimbabwe shares with much of the governmentality literature a concern for how the control of these livelihoods was framed through development discourses (in this case focused on land alienation).<sup>41</sup> However, he does not treat these discourses as direct explanations for observed changes in settlement patterns and livelihoods. Instead he illustrates how these discourses, national and even transnational in scope, were reworked into observable outcomes through grounded livelihoods struggles that served as a 'crucible of cultural politics'.<sup>42</sup>

But even these detailed accountings of grounded struggles implicitly, and I think unintentionally, reinforce the idea that 'crucibles of cultural politics', or 'spaces of cultural intimacy',<sup>43</sup> are governmentality's other, objects with which

larger efforts at government must compromise to produce particular outcomes. Therefore, even as it has greatly deepened our understanding of the contingent and complex ways in which development extends the power of various institutions, this literature has (unintentionally) created a sense that there are projects of government which can be interrogated via governmentality, and there are the objects of government, which somehow stand outside such interrogation until they are incorporated into larger state or supra-state projects. This framing of local social context limits our potential analytic purchase on observed activities, decisions and outcomes by shifting local social processes outside the scope of analysis until they come into contact and/or conflict with a larger, extralocally-sited project of rule.

The livelihoods approach I propose in the next section of the paper closes this gap, moving livelihoods, as an aspect of the local social, cultural, and political context, from the *other* of the development literature's vision of governmentality to *another* site of modern government and power. This opens livelihoods to an analytical framing that explicitly addresses the negotiations between projects of rule and material needs at the heart of livelihoods strategies, removing the *a priori* privileging of the economic aspects of how people live in existing livelihoods frameworks to better engage with the range of desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs that lead to observed outcomes. The result is an approach that enables higher resolution understandings of livelihoods decision making and outcomes than is available under livelihoods approaches as currently framed and employed.

### Approaching livelihoods as intimate government

In the context of governmentality the idea that livelihoods are double-edged, balancing social imperatives with material needs, suggests that they might be framed as 'regimes of practices' through which individual self-government is brought into alignment with efforts to shape the conduct of individuals within relevant social units such as households, communities, and lineages. So framed, livelihoods can be subjected to what Dean calls an analytics of government, which concerns the connection of thought (understood as the taken-for-granted assumptions that mark a particular social unit) with particular practices and institutions and other technical means of (re)shaping conduct to bring self-guidance and domination into alignment.<sup>44</sup>

Such an approach, like the sustainable livelihoods approach, begins with an assessment of the vulnerability context, or what the climate change community has termed 'exposure', 'the degree of stress upon a particular unit of analysis'.<sup>45</sup> However, as those studying livelihoods well know, livelihoods outcomes are not merely responses to exposure, but reflections of the ability of the social unit in question to address the challenges that arise from exposure. This ability is shaped by a combination of sensitivity, 'the degree to which a system will respond' to change in the vulnerability context, and adaptive capacity, 'the capacity of a system to adjust to actual or expected changes in the vulnerability context'.<sup>46</sup>

One means of approaching the sensitivity/adaptive capacity nexus of a given livelihood—without starting from unfounded assumptions about the social unit



and the motivations of those who belong to it—is through the ‘identification and examination of specific situations [called problematisations] in which the activity of governing comes to be called into question’ by those enmeshed in the project.<sup>47</sup> In short, a problematisation is a point of disagreement about the functioning of livelihoods that often emerges in preliminary, general conversations with people about how they live and why they live that way.

Problematisations serve two important purposes. First, they help to establish the appropriate scale of analysis for the livelihoods in question. Livelihoods are intimately linked to social relations and identities that are themselves informed by biophysical events, multiple social units, and social, political, and economic processes that operate at different scales. Further, each of these events, social units, and processes is itself shaped by its interactions with other events, units, and processes, rendering the identification of a deterministic, bounded causality for local livelihoods decisions and outcomes impossible. This is not to say that we cannot explain livelihoods decisions or outcomes, but that any such explanations are necessarily partial. Their utility hinges on the identification of the most relevant events, units and processes as a foundation for analysis. This approach directs analysis toward the most proximate biophysical events, social units, and processes to the livelihoods in question because these are the sites from which problematisations generally spring, thus providing an analytical foundation onto which other less proximate events, units, and processes can be incorporated as appropriate. This avoids the imposition of a rigid scale of analysis on all livelihoods, which might inappropriately bound the analysis of a particular livelihood.

Second, problematisations serve as a point of entry for understanding sensitivity and adaptive capacity. These are shaped at the intersection of three factors that bring domination and self-guidance into alignment: coercion, discourses of livelihoods, and the subject positions and identities mobilised by both (see Figure 1).

In the context of this approach to livelihoods analysis, when I speak of coercion, I am using shorthand for ‘specific ways of acting, intervening and directing [conduct] ... made up of particular types of practical rationality ... and relying upon definite mechanisms, techniques and technologies’.<sup>48</sup> One example of such a mechanism often relevant to livelihoods is the local land tenure regime, which shapes access to a critical livelihoods asset. This regime can become a coercive force when it is used to constrain the agricultural activities of a landholder who might otherwise threaten the prerogatives of the powerful. As Gidwani has pointed out, Foucault’s focus on power as a productive, self-constituting force risks underplaying the significance of coercive power, such as the threat of violence, in sustaining and promoting that productive power.<sup>49</sup>

Tools of coercion are necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure that those who lose (i.e. benefit less, or experience greater constraints on opportunity) under a given livelihoods strategy continue to participate in that strategy. To better understand livelihoods decision making, we must build upon our understanding of coercion by examining the discourses of livelihoods in circulation, the ‘distinctive ways of thinking and questioning, relying on definite vocabularies and procedures for the production of truth’ related to the vulnerability context.<sup>50</sup> Such an inquiry might examine how a particular strategy frames the impacts of

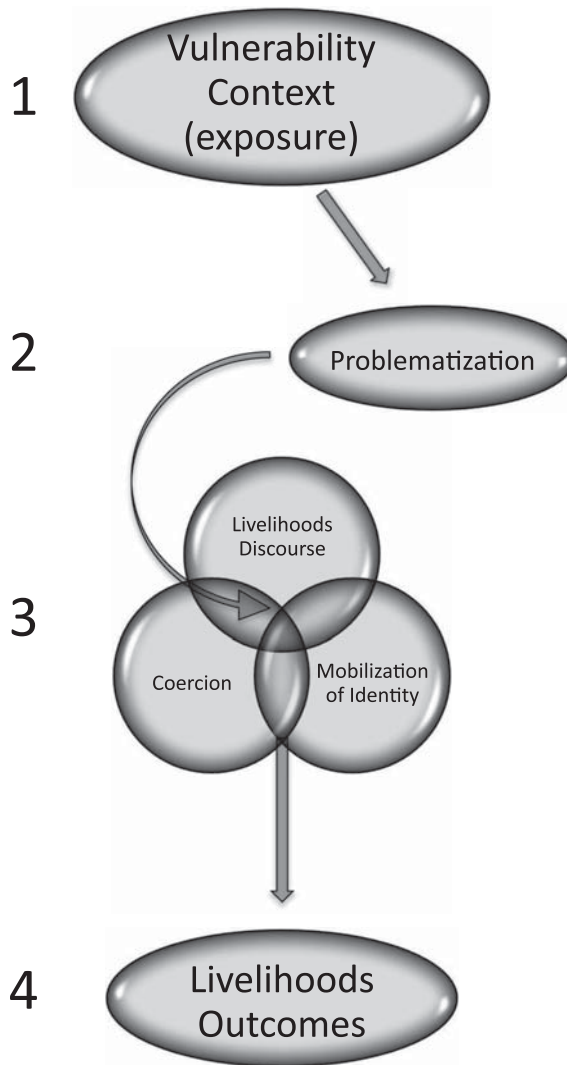


FIGURE 1. Conceptual diagram of the proposed livelihoods framework. To summarize: 1) Identifying current challenges to human well-being and livelihoods outcomes 2) often reveals moments in which the logic and legitimacy of livelihoods strategies are called into question by participants in those livelihoods 3) providing a point of entry to the nexus of livelihoods strategy formation 4) which becomes the basis for interpreting livelihoods outcomes.

food price instability on the household, the resources available to address these impacts, and the most appropriate means of mobilising these resources to address the need for food and income in the face of this challenge. Discourses of livelihoods serve to frame a variety of disparate activities and events as a coherent whole which, at least in particular places at particular times, helps to define acceptable and even possible actions in the world.

However, as I have argued elsewhere,<sup>51</sup> discourses are at best *partial* framings of the world, the product of finite individual consciousness in a complex materiality. Such framings are always in need of maintenance, as they are susceptible to rupture when the discursive fails to map to the material. This maintenance is, in the context of governmentality, achieved when the tools and techniques of coercion, and the discursive framing of the world associated with livelihoods, mobilise identities, ‘characteristic ways of forming subjects, selves, persons, actors or agents’.<sup>52</sup> These identities precede and exist beyond the project of governance embedded in any livelihoods strategy. This mobilisation is not forced, but the product of choices made by actors in efforts to meet what they see as their interests, for example by linking a gendered livelihoods role to expectations of what it means to be a ‘good woman’. If the setting is such that the label ‘good woman’ (itself constituted by relations that extend across scales and social units) will convey social and other benefits from which they might otherwise be excluded, its desirability will inform the choices women make.

It is critical to understand that the mobilisation of identity through livelihoods strategies is not merely an imposition of the powerful on the weak. The legitimacy behind the roles of those in authority rests on their ability to draw on social expectations that mobilise roles and meanings beyond their control, and to which they must answer to maintain social status. This constrains their options for action. It is therefore difficult to identify a dominator and a dominated in any social unit; there are those with more capacity to act on the actions of others, but all actors are embroiled in a context that is beyond their control. In this way, even within what can be termed a project of rule, livelihoods strategies are produced by the needs and demands of all members of the relevant social unit. Because livelihoods strategies connect the tools of coercion, the discursive framing of the world associated with livelihoods, and these identities through actors’ self-guidance, this project of rule stands outside everyday interrogation, further legitimising the mechanisms and modes of thought that enable the reproduction of particular, often highly unequal, livelihoods outcomes.

This framing of livelihoods suggests a cohesive project that is, at the same time, highly precarious. The achievement of rule through livelihoods strategies depends on the alignment of discursive understandings of an ever changing biophysical, economic, political, and social world with the mobilisation of identities and subject positions that are (over)determined by factors beyond this narrow project of rule and with coercive tools whose use risks highlighting the unequal outcomes of livelihoods strategies that might delegitimise the project of rule at hand. Thus, the maintenance of social order under any livelihoods strategy is not an expected, inevitable outcome, but the result of a dynamic process that continually aligns and realigns discourse, coercion, identity, and agency.

To illustrate the explanatory power of livelihoods thus framed, I now turn to the livelihoods strategies associated with two villages in Ghana’s Central Region in 2004. These livelihoods strategies were means of negotiating the uncertain economy and environment in which the residents of these villages found themselves. To this end, both were successful, allowing residents to manage years of drought, storms that brought excessive rain, and the sudden collapse of the national currency, without catastrophe. These strategies also resulted in smaller

household incomes than might have been achieved with different distributions of the livelihoods resources at hand, and highly unequal, gendered incomes within the households of these villages that greatly limited women's opportunities. When we employ the lens of governmentality to frame these livelihoods strategies as forms of intimate government, it becomes clear that these outcomes are not the contradictory products of imperfect, materially-focused strategies, but inherent parts of a cohesive project of rule within which material outcomes are but one motivation. This reframing presents a different lens on observed decisions about the allocation of resources, appropriate livelihoods activities, and even decisions to participate in these strategies, enabling much deeper, more nuanced understandings of these strategies and their outcomes, and a stronger foundation for projections of likely future decisions and outcomes under the stress of economic and environmental change.

### Case study: Ponkrum and Dominase

Ponkrum and Dominase are two villages located roughly eight kilometres north-west of Elmina, in Ghana's Central Region (see Figure 2). The two villages are positioned 500 meters apart along the same road, with Ponkrum (population 211) the dominant of the pairing (Dominase only had a dozen residents). These villages are best understood as a single place with two settlement loci. The residents of the two villages share a self-identification as Fante, an ethnolinguistic subset of the Akan ethnicity. As a result, they rely on the same system of inheritance, and same land tenure arrangements. While family lineages from each village control different amounts of land in the area, these landholdings are thoroughly intermixed around the villages, limiting the influence of micro-environmental variation on farm outcomes between villages and landholding family lineages. The livelihoods of those living in Ponkrum are indistinguishable from the livelihoods of the residents of Dominase. All households depend on agriculture for the backbone of their household income, which they augment with non-farm employment (NFE).<sup>53</sup>

Economic change and instability are significant challenges for these communities.<sup>54</sup> In Dominase and Ponkrum this was manifest starkly in 1999–2000, when the Ghanaian currency lost roughly half its value against the dollar and other major currencies in six months. Farm-gate prices for the crops grown in these villages did not rise in a manner commensurate with stunning price increases for imported goods, and indeed any good transported via truck (as petrol prices rose, and the cost was passed on to consumers). Prices rose so quickly that residents could not plan for the effective use of their incomes on a day-to-day basis. In response, they fell back from market engagement, shifting the use of most of their farm output from market sale to subsistence.<sup>55</sup>

Atop the challenges posed by an uncertain and unstable economy are the issues created by a changing regional climate. Coastal West Africa has experienced a well documented decline in precipitation over the past several decades,<sup>56</sup> evident in readings from relatively close-by rain gauges at Dunkwa (see Figure 3). Recently Owusu and Waylen have uncovered a trend in central and southern Ghana suggesting that the September/October minor rainy season, a



FIGURE 2. Locator map of the study area.

*Source:* Map prepared by Kevin Remington, Department of Geography, University of South Carolina.

relatively short pulse of precipitation that enables a second planting and harvesting cycle, is disappearing, becoming instead a long, 'moist' tail after the major rainy season.<sup>57</sup> This trend, if it continues, will have significant negative impacts

on this second annual agricultural cycle, and therefore on livelihoods in these villages. It is not clear if the farmers in Ponkrum and Dominase distinguish this trend in the minor rainy season from the overall decline in annual precipitation seen in this region. In any case they certainly are aware of the impacts of a changing precipitation regime on their farm outputs, as it makes a stable household agricultural income more difficult to obtain each year. According to the few remaining residents who lived in Ponkrum and Dominase in the early 1970s, declining agricultural production related to changes in precipitation exacerbated the economic hardship created by the loss of NFE opportunity when the road system fell into disrepair in the late 1960s. This contributed to the departure of many households between 1970 and the early 1990s.<sup>58</sup>

While the climate of Ponkrum and Dominase is marked by distinct trends, it also exhibits significant variability. The timing and quantity of precipitation is inconsistent. In 1998 the major rainy season did not come to Ponkrum or Dominase at all, compromising farms throughout the area and driving many village households into food and income shortages. During fieldwork I experienced a few days where there was simply no food in the village to be purchased at any price. On the other hand, in 2005 unusually heavy rains fell, causing streambeds that had been dry for more than a decade to run, flooding fields and destroying crops. Farmers have managed this sort of uncertainty, where they are able, by disaggregating their farms into several small plots located in various topographic situations. Thus, hilltop fields will survive unusually heavy rains, while fields planted in dry streambeds and gullies will capture limited rainfall in drought years. Nearly all households disaggregate their farm plots in this manner.

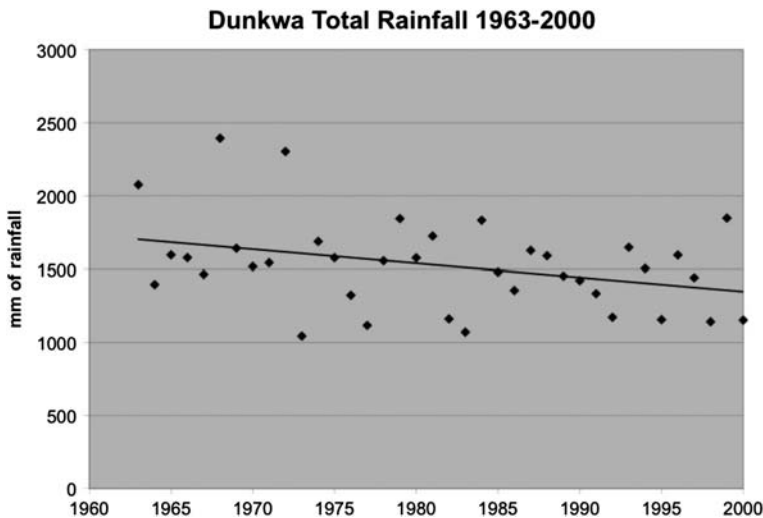


FIGURE 3. Chart of annual rainfall totals at Dunkwa Weather Station, Ghana, 1963–2000. *Source:* Photocopied records from the Ghana Meteorological Service.

### *Methods*

The data presented here were gathered during fieldwork in May–June 2004. Although I gathered data in these villages during field seasons in 2004, 2005, and 2006, this paper focuses on the 2004 data because they are the only detailed data I gathered on livelihoods that preceded the construction of a feeder road through the villages. The construction of this road was the second direct, targeted development effort to touch the villages since the 1940s (the first being the construction of a borehole in 1997). Further, the villages had seen very little state engagement of any sort since the late 1960s.<sup>59</sup> As the goal of this paper is to demonstrate that livelihoods are forms of intimate government in their own right, there is a significant risk that incorporating the data from 2005 and 2006 into the paper will make it difficult to parse out the local project of rule inherent to these livelihoods from the outcomes and decisions formed in the crucible of cultural politics that emerged in the context of transportation development in subsequent years. Instead, the changes in livelihoods reflected in the data from those years will comprise a separate investigation into road construction and livelihoods in these villages.

The only exception to this data limitation is the use of focus group data I gathered in 2006. I used these focus groups to cross-check the findings and interpretations presented in the following case with a wide range of residents of Dominase and Ponkrum. As I was interested in livelihoods, I organised these groups around different household situations and livelihoods strategies to capture a diversity of views within the villages. In the course of the focus groups I also clarified my understanding of gender roles and responsibilities in these different households through focused discussion and concrete examples provided by participants.

I gathered the 2004 data (and ran the 2006 focus groups) with the assistance of Francis Quayson, my field assistant for various projects in these villages since 1997. We interviewed as many people as we could (n=57) in the time allotted for my field season, moving from respondent to respondent via snowball sampling, at the same time trying to control for a balance of men and women, as well as a range of household situations (ie monogamous, female-headed, single man, etc). The interviews were semi-structured, building on general questions I had asked during dissertation fieldwork between 1997 and 2000, and on questions that had been raised by the responses to these initial questions. To obtain a measure of rigour and validity in the responses, I employed a continuous design model, following the answers I received to various questions (and from various sources) to new lines of inquiry, until I reached what Glaser and Strauss call theoretical saturation: the point at which new concepts and paths of inquiry ran out and the data gathered through my interviews began to repeat themselves.<sup>60</sup>

Quayson and I also mapped and inventoried the farms of each person we interviewed. The farms were mapped by taking a global positioning system (GPS) point at the centre of each plot, and sketching a map of the locations of all crops in the plot. At the close of fieldwork I used the centre-point measurement to identify each plot on a 60cm Quickbird satellite image of the study

area, and created shapefiles of the area of each crop in each plot in ArcGIS. This allowed for the calculation of area under cultivation for each crop, for each interviewee. In 2004 I had reliable data for the total area under cultivation for every crop on the farms of 51 of the 57 people I interviewed. The remaining farms were obscured, in part or entirely, by cloud cover on the imagery and therefore could not be used for measurement.

*Livelihoods as intimate government in Dominase and Ponkrum*

In 2004, livelihoods in Dominase and Ponkrum were dominated by two strategies that mixed agricultural production with NFE.<sup>61</sup> Under the ‘market strategy’ all members of the household oriented their agricultural production toward market production. The average reported annual income of a household operating

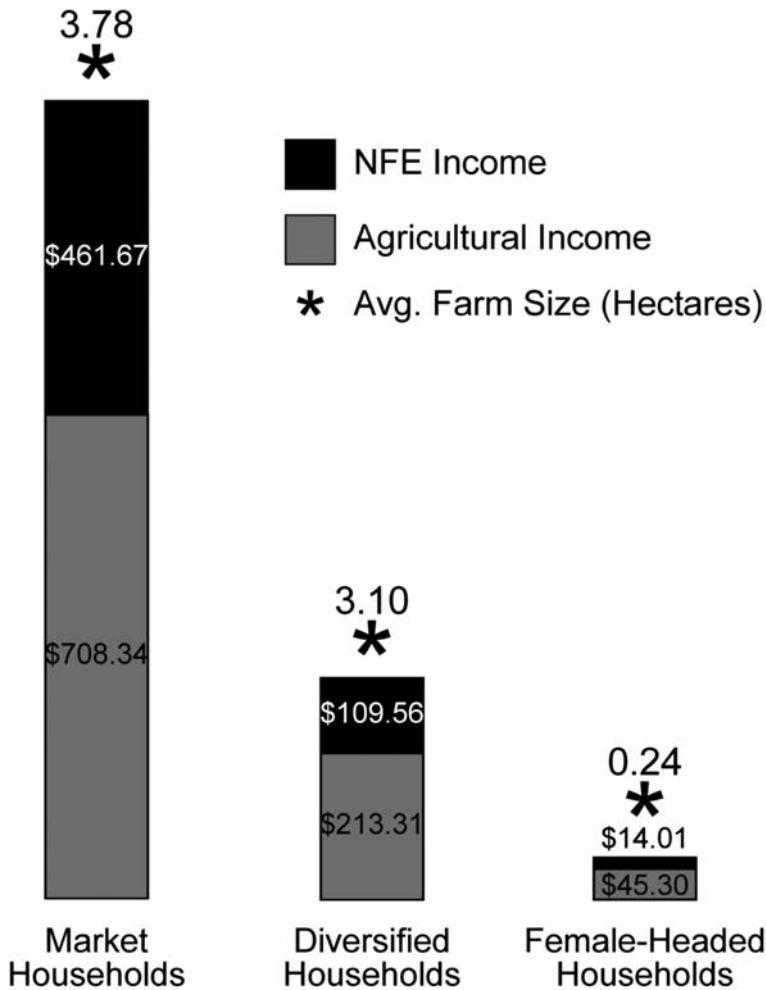


FIGURE 4. 2004 incomes for market, diversified and female-headed households.



under the market strategy was \$1170.<sup>62</sup> Under the ‘diversified strategy’, the household mixed market and subsistence agricultural production, and earned a reported average of \$323 each year. This mixed approach was highly gendered, with men taking the role of market producer while women oriented their agricultural labour toward subsistence production.

The large difference in these reported household incomes was not a product of differential engagement with NFE across these two livelihoods strategies. As Figure 4 illustrates, while the incomes of market and diversified households were quite different, their relative emphasis on NFE (roughly 35% of household income) and agricultural incomes (roughly 65% of household income) was quite similar.<sup>63</sup> Further, the different incomes of these households were not a simple product of access to land, as the average market household farmed only 22% more land (3.78 hectares) than the average diversified household (3.1 hectares).

Instead, these strategies represent different ways of seeing and managing the uncertainty that characterises life in these villages. The market strategy did so by maximising household income, providing the resources necessary to maintain access to goods that may have had unstable prices, or food in years where precipitation was inadequate to produce needed household supplies. The diversified strategy managed the same uncertainty by providing some income for the purchase of goods or food in bad agricultural years, while also providing a baseline source of food for the household in times of economic instability that might make food purchases untenable.

Neither strategy managed the vulnerability context in what we might consider an economically efficient manner. In market households men reported agricultural productivity of about \$170 per hectare. Women in these households produced roughly \$400 per hectare farmed. In diversified households these figures were \$60 per hectare for men and \$120 per hectare for women. While some of this difference in productivity was related to the fact that women farmed very small plots in both types of household, and therefore could plant them densely and tend to them intensively, subsequent adjustments of farm size, captured in the 2005 and 2006 data,<sup>64</sup> demonstrated that women in both types of household could farm more than double their 2004 farm areas without dropping their per hectare productivity below that of their husbands. Clearly, the distribution of livelihoods resources was not optimised for household income, or indeed for agricultural production for any purpose.

This basic framing of the vulnerability context, and the two livelihoods strategies that have emerged to address it, raise two important questions. First, why were both strategies marked by such economically inefficient use of limited livelihoods resources? Second, why was this clear gender inequality across the strategies so enduring?

Answering these questions requires interrogating the livelihoods strategies of Dominase and Ponkrum as projects of intimate government. We know the vulnerability context of these villages to which these strategies speak. To implement this approach next requires reducing the complex Venn diagram of Figure 1 to a linear process of inquiry driven by a problematisation, which serves as an analytic point of entry (see Figure 5). The problematisation that I used to open an analytics of government for the livelihoods of Dominase and

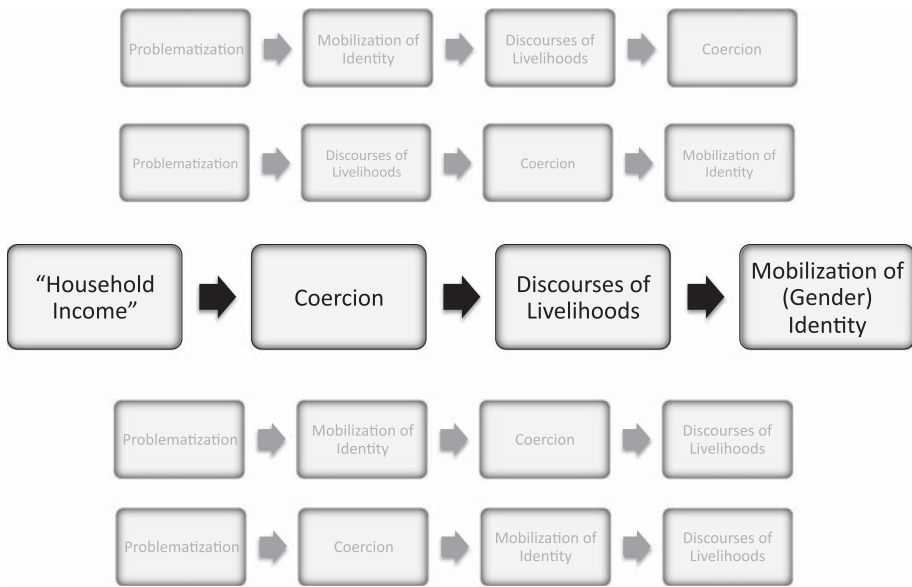


FIGURE 5. Conceptual diagram of the approach to livelihoods analysis taken in this case study.

Ponkrum revolved around the idea of the household income. In the course of conversations about their livelihoods, incomes, and decision making under uncertainty, men often referenced a ‘shared income’ *in the household* that they claimed to control and use as a means of managing aspects of the vulnerability context for the good of the wider household. The problematisation arose when, in parallel conversations, women contested this idea, arguing that their farms, farm incomes, and NFE incomes were separate from those of their husbands, and therefore not part of a ‘shared income’ within their household. In making this argument, women in both diversified and market households called their husbands’ implicit claims about intimate government into question. This problematisation rested on a reference to the local land tenure regime, which women claimed protected the autonomy of their incomes. As I will illustrate below, by referencing this local institution and its associated practices to legitimise their own claims, women actually legitimised one of the principal mechanisms of coercion by which men achieved rule over their households.

*Livelihoods, land tenure and coercion.* As numerous scholars have noted,<sup>65</sup> under Akan land tenure the male head of the household obtains land for his household from his clan lineage (the family to which he belongs under one of the eight Akan clans). He then divides that land among the producers in his household. In 2004 men in Dominase and Ponkrum assigned themselves between six and 12 times as much land as they gave to their wives. Once this land was assigned to the wife (or other producer), however, she decided what to plant, when to plant it, when to harvest, and for what to use her farm products. Most importantly, the income generated by her farm belonged to her, and not to

the household. This was also true for the husband's farm. Therefore, the concept of the household income was, in these villages, somewhat misleading in that, under an idealised reading of the land tenure regime, households in Dominase and Ponkrum were socially meaningful units that housed two or more autonomous economic agents.<sup>66</sup>

While these rules appear to provide at least a modicum of protection for women and their incomes, I argue that the land tenure regime had a coercive component to it, as made clear by the situation of female-headed households. In 2004 female-headed households farmed an average of just 0.24 hectares of land, a product of the fact that the women had no direct access to land. Without husbands to obtain land for the household, women heading households were forced to rely upon their uncles and fathers to provide something from their household allotments.<sup>67</sup> While there was no prohibition against these women renting agricultural land, their tiny earnings precluded the savings necessary to pay such rents, and they lacked the collateral needed to secure informal loans in the village. As a direct result of this constrained access to land, women in these households reported average annual agricultural earnings of \$45.30 from their farms. They also reported \$14.01 of NFE earnings (see Figure 4). While I have little doubt that these figures are significant underestimates (see note 62), they still represented very small incomes, even by the standards of these villages. Simply put, female-headed households were not viable in these villages. They survived because family members (usually fathers and uncles) quietly gave them land, food, and money. As these men had to provide land for their own households out of their allotments, they had limited capacity to provide land to their daughters and nieces who headed households. Any married woman who thought of divorcing her husband had only to look at the female-headed households of these villages to see her fate, and the fate of her children.

The land tenure regime also allowed men to closely control the earnings of their wives. First, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>68</sup> men closely controlled the amount of land their wives farmed to ensure that nearly all their agricultural production was consumed by meeting the reproductive needs of the household. This is most clearly illustrated in the simple scatterplot in Figure 6. This plot illustrates the relationship between the overall market orientation of a given woman's farm (an ordinal scale ranging from 1—complete subsistence to 5—complete market sale) and the area of that woman's farm for all of the women living under the diversified strategy in 2004. To obtain the market orientation value, I took the score for a given crop as indicated on the ordinal scale by the farmer, weighted it by its area on a given farm, and then averaged the weighted values to get an overall indication of market orientation. As this figure illustrates, very small increments of additional farmland enabled women to produce a surplus that they could market, which drove their overall market orientation up very steeply. That we can see this relationship so clearly, and that the increment of additional land needed to dramatically increase the market orientation of a given women's farm was so small, suggests that men knew almost exactly how much land to allocate to their wives to ensure that their subsistence production met the basic needs of the household without allowing for a significant marketable surplus. This surplus was important not only in its own right, but

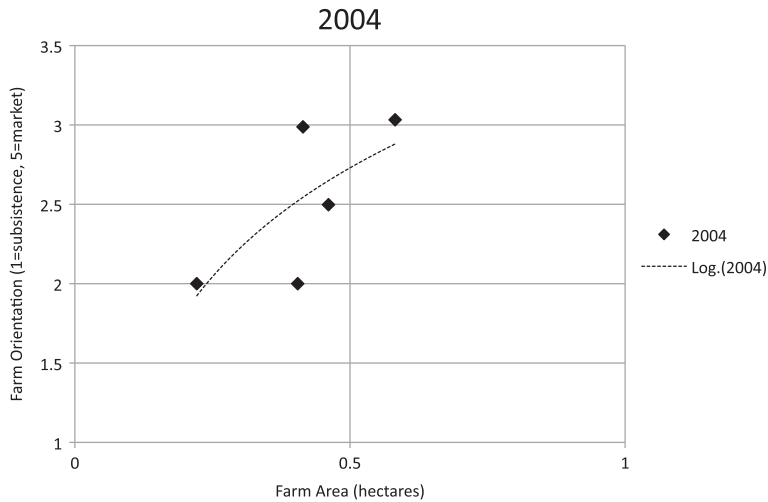


FIGURE 6. A scatterplot illustrating the relationship between market orientation (vertical axis) and farm size (horizontal axis) for women's farms in diversified households.

because it could be used by women to finance other NFE activities, like petty trading (described below), further enhancing their incomes in a manner that could not be controlled or usurped by their husbands. Thus, if a man became concerned that his wife was earning enough money to call his government of the household into question, he could simply reduce the amount of land she farmed until her after-subsistence income dried up.<sup>69</sup>

Further, because men controlled what land, and how much land, their wives planted each year, they could effectively prevent the planting of lucrative tree crops like oil palm, oranges, and acacia (*Acacia polyacantha*, planted for charcoal production). Women had no guarantees that they would be able to retain control of a given plot from year to year, which acted as a strong disincentive to planting crops with long maturation cycles.

Therefore, when women referenced the land tenure system to legitimise their control over their own land and income, they were also legitimising the system that allowed their husbands to curtail their access to land and therefore limit women's options for planting and non-farm activities. In short, the land tenure system was not a mechanism for the liberation of women in these villages. Instead, it was a key coercive mechanism by which men shaped the choices, actions, and livelihoods outcomes of the members of their households.

*Discourses of vulnerability and management.* While the land tenure regime in Dominase and Ponkrum was an important mechanism that enabled men's management of their households and the vulnerability context, this management was the product of much more than the coercive force behind access to land. An examination of the regime of practices associated with agriculture under each strategy demonstrates the existence of moments of self-government that, while related to the coercive mechanism of land tenure in these villages, went beyond what could be accomplished through coercion alone.

In 2004 I interviewed the husbands and wives of five households operating under the diversified strategy.<sup>70</sup> Men farmed an average of 2.68 hectares of land, reporting annual agricultural incomes of \$159.04. They also reported average NFE incomes of just under \$12.73, for a total reported income of \$171.77. Women farmed a mere 0.42 hectares, earning a reported \$54.27. However, they parlayed these earnings into significant NFE incomes, which averaged \$96.83. As a result, women's reported average incomes were \$151.10, 88% that of their husbands.

While men's control over access to land in these households was an important determinant of the different men's and women's incomes in these households, it does not explain some observed behaviours associated with this strategy. The strategy was highly gendered, with women taking on the role of subsistence producer (and thereby greatly limiting their agricultural incomes) while men served as producers for market sale. These roles were visible in two ways. First, crops that derive all, or nearly all, of their value from market sale were exclusively raised by men (see Table 2). There were no cases of oil palm, acacia, oranges, cocoa or coconuts on the farms of women associated with diversified households. This pattern was related to land tenure, for, as noted above, women in these households would have had to rely on the largesse of their husbands to take the risk of planting cash-generating crops that would take between two and seven years to mature.

However, the land tenure system cannot explain a second phenomenon. Looking at how men and women perceive the use of particular crops, it is clear that in these households women tended to view a given crop as more for subsistence production, while men were inclined to see the same crop as more for market sale. Figure 7 illustrates this pattern across the four crops found on two or more men's and women's farms in diversified households in 2004. This pattern is interesting because women's use of their crops was not mandated by the

TABLE 2. Crops planted by men and women in diversified households, 2004

	Men	Women
Acacia	80	0
Cassava	100	100
Cocoa	20	0
Coconut	20	0
Garden egg	20	20
Maize	100	100
Okra	0	20
Orange	20	0
Palm	80	0
Papaya	0	20
Pepper	0	80
Pineapple	40	20
Plantain	20	20
Sugarcane	20	0
Tomato	60	60
Yam	20	20

land tenure system. According to that system, these women alone controlled what was planted on their farms and the end use of those crops.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, this persistent, gendered understanding of crops suggests a case of women disciplining their own production to bring it into line with the larger household strategy of diversification to address the uncertainty and instability of everyday life in Dominase and Ponkrum.

This decision is particularly interesting because, while it may have served to meet the reproductive needs of the household, it also enhanced the coercive force of land tenure on women in these households. By using most of their crops for subsistence consumption, these women deprived themselves of income that might have been leveraged to rent more land or invest in a small NFE enterprise. Their income figures make it clear that these women were very good at leveraging their very meagre post-subsistence agricultural incomes to seed successful NFE activities. By voluntarily playing the role of subsistence producer in these households, they limited their access to resources that might ensure their safety and some degree of certainty should they divorce their husbands or become widowed.

In 2004 I interviewed the husbands and wives of five households operating under the market strategy. Men in these households farmed an average of 3.48 hectares, earning \$589.00. They also reported NFE earnings of \$358.67, for total incomes of \$947.67. Women farmed 0.3 hectares, earning a reported average of \$119.34. They also reported NFE incomes averaging \$103.00. Their total reported incomes, \$222.34, were only 23% that of their husbands.

While men and women both farmed with an emphasis on market production, this strategy was gendered in a manner similar to the diversified strategy. However, this gendering was not as easily seen in agricultural strategy as in diversified households. While in market households men still have exclusive control over market-oriented crops like acacia and oil palm (see Table 3), when we look at how men and women viewed the uses of the crops found on both their farms (see Figure 8), we see that women often saw their crops as only slightly more for subsistence than did their husbands, a division by no means as clear as in diversified households.

Instead, the gendered component of this strategy was visible in what appeared to be missing from the women's incomes in these households: their NFE income.

	Men		Women
Cassava	Eat more than sell	Cassava	Sell = Eat
Maize	Sell more than eat	Maize	Sell = Eat
Pepper	Sell more than eat	Pepper	Sell = Eat
Tomato	Eat more than sell	Tomato	Eat more than sell

FIGURE 7. The motivations for planting particular crops as expressed by men and women in diversified households. *Note:* Comparisons are made only between crops raised by two or more men *and* women, to control for individual idiosyncrasy.

TABLE 3. Crops planted by men and women in market households, 2004

	Men	Women
Avocado	40	0
Acacia	100	0
Cashews	40	0
Cassava	100	80
Coconut	80	0
Garden egg	20	40
Maize	80	100
Mango	40	0
Okra	20	20
Orange	60	0
Palm	80	0
Pepper	100	60
Pineapple	20	0
Plantain	20	0
Sugarcane	20	0
Tomato	40	60
Yam	20	0

	Men		Women
Cassava	Eat more than sell	Cassava	Eat more than sell
Maize	Sell more than eat	Maize	Sell more than eat
Pepper	Sell more than eat	Pepper	Sell more than eat
Tomato	Sell more than eat	Tomato	Sell more than eat

FIGURE 8. The motivations for planting particular crops as expressed by men and women in market households. *Note:* Comparisons are made only between crops raised by two or more men *and* women to control for individual idiosyncrasy.

Women in market households reported agricultural earnings more than double that of women in diversified households, but the women in diversified households had NFE incomes that were 94% that of the women in market households. Unless we are willing to assume that the women in market households were, as a group, less competent than the women in diversified households when it came to investing their agricultural income in NFE activities (and I saw no evidence for this in my fieldwork), these income figures strongly suggest that the women in market households were not using all their reported agricultural incomes for themselves or their own NFE activities. Assuming similar levels of initiative and competence as those seen in diversified households, the women in market households were using the bulk of their agricultural incomes to meet the reproductive needs of the household, and then investing the remainder in NFE activities. This is important because there was no rule under the regimes of practices

associated with agriculture in these villages that required women to meet the reproductive needs of the household. Instead, their income was their own, to be used as they chose. In spending the vast majority of their agricultural incomes on reproducing their households, women in market households limited their bargaining power within the household, and lowered the stock of assets they could call on had they later been divorced or widowed.

The discursive framing of gendered vulnerability context management roles under these livelihoods was clearly aligned with the coercive tool of land tenure. However, the finite character of discourse in a complex, changing world suggests the need for ‘discursive maintenance’, a continual process of naturalisation of these framings of the world to (re)produce them as social facts outside contestation. Given the importance of gendered regimes of practices to these livelihoods strategies, an understanding of this process of maintenance requires engagement with the role of identity in both coercion and the discursive framing of livelihoods, as the maintenance of these strategies and their outcomes rested on how both leveraged existing identities and subject positions.

*Livelihoods and the mobilisation of identity.* The above-described examples of women’s self-government were not moments in which these livelihoods strategies reduced women to agents of men’s project of rule, or examples of some form of ‘false consciousness’ related to their roles within their households and these livelihoods strategies. Instead, these decisions reflect moments in which issues of gender identity that transcended the livelihoods discourse, and that women considered critically important for their own well-being,<sup>72</sup> were mobilised within the regime of practices associated with livelihoods in these villages. In 2006, as part of my focus group investigations, I asked both men and women to identify the roles and characteristics of a ‘good man/husband’ and a ‘good woman/wife’. I did so without reference to livelihoods or livelihoods strategies, instead attempting to gain an understanding of gender roles and identity at their most broad in these villages. The most widely repeated answers are listed in Table 4. Note here that women were taking on tasks, such as domestic duties like cooking, cleaning, and childcare, efforts whose principal goal was to meet the reproductive needs of the household, before leaving time and resources to pursue their own activities and interests. It is important to note that these were characteristics that women identified *for themselves* as much as characteristics men identified in their ideal woman.

TABLE 4. Commonly agreed-upon duties of men and women emerging from the author’s focus group discussions in 2006

Men	Women
Obtain land for the household	Manage all domestic duties
Clear land for farming	Childcare
Pay school fees	Food for funerals
Buy school uniform and books	Transport crops to market
Purchase clothing for their children	Purchase household goods
Daily food purchases	



When women met the reproductive needs of the household before their own, they were enacting the role of ‘good wives’ and ‘good women’, taking a broadly shared understanding of that role within these villages and applying it to the livelihoods arena. Their choices to farm for subsistence, spend their earnings on household reproduction, or to cook and clean for the household were particular moments in which women *made themselves* as subjects that, among other things, had a responsibility to meet the needs of the household first (through domestic labour and spending on the reproduction of the household) before meeting their own needs with any income or time that remained. This subject position linked these household strategies to the wider expectations of the community, including members of the husband’s clan lineage, granted women status as adults in the community, accorded them respect among other women, and afforded a degree of material security in what was often an uncertain economic and environmental setting. At the same time, as this particular subject came into being through these choices and actions, it made these overarching responsibilities tangible, (re)creating the ‘social facts’ by which one’s identification as a ‘good’ woman became desirable and measurable within these villages.

A parallel process existed for men in these villages. Their idealised role was framed around cash transactions and ensuring access to land for the household. Men enacted this role in the context of livelihoods when they produced crops for market sale to ensure the income to make needed purchases. However, in response to wider Akan and Ghanaian expectations of their gender, men were also obligated to be in control of their households, and to be able to direct their wives’ behaviour. Men in these villages saw women who earned large incomes (examples of which were clearly visible in the markets of nearby towns like Elmina) as threats to their status as adult men in the community and within their clan lineage, and therefore took steps to ensure that their wives did not also become wealthy. These men were aware that they were limiting the overall incomes of their households, and therefore the levels of comfort and opportunity they might enjoy, by constraining their wives’ incomes. However, in the context of these livelihoods strategies this decision served to reinforce men’s social status in the wider community, and indeed in the very social collective (clan lineage) central to access to land, perhaps *the* key livelihoods resource in Dominase and Ponkrum. Thus, the short-term benefits from allowing their wives to make more money could have been outweighed by future negative impacts on both men’s and women’s incomes if such choices resulted in reduced access to land for the entire household. As a result, these men were not inclined to consider alternative gendered responsibilities or earning opportunities that might challenge their social standing within and beyond their households. *Both* earning income for the household *and* ensuring that their wives did not earn too much money were practices that (re)produced the standard by which a ‘good man’ was to be measured in this community. Men were not ‘in control’ of this process any more than were women. Both were bound up in the same sets of expectations, which limited their livelihoods options to a legitimate and naturalised few. Thus, livelihoods in Dominase and Ponkrum, while producing outcomes that created clear winners and losers in terms of income, were products

of both men's and women's self-guidance that emerged in the tension between the needs and expectations of each.

These projects of self-making bring us back to the original problematisation that provided a point of entry into these livelihood strategies: the idea of shared income. While technically there was no such thing as a shared income under men's control in the households of these villages, an examination of the reported expenses of men and women across these households showed that up to 45% of women's reported expenses were for items that were 'men's responsibilities' as defined in later focus groups. Clearly, men were shaping how women spent their money in the villages. When I probed this subject in interviews and focus groups, I found that this control was brought to bear when men, objecting to anything from their wives' cooking to the overall cleanliness of the household, refused to pay for certain household expenses. The withholding of income can be interpreted as a public performance of control over the household, where men demonstrated that their wives could not tell them what to do, and that their households were dependent on them. In each act of withholding income, as with each effort to constrain their wives' incomes, these men made their social role material, providing 'social facts' against which other men and their behaviour were judged.

When men withheld money from the household, expenses did not go completely unpaid. Instead, women stepped in with whatever resources they had to pay for what they could, a clear example of meeting the reproductive needs of the household ahead of their own needs, even under circumstances that might be interpreted as manifestly unfair under agreed-upon gender roles in these villages.<sup>73</sup> When I asked women what they did when men withheld their incomes from the household, their responses were limited to refusing to complete their domestic duties, like cooking and cleaning, and in extreme cases withholding sex from their husbands. At no time did the women discuss planting different crops or spending their money on different items as means of resisting the appropriation of their incomes by men. Here, women's self-making as subjects responsible for the well-being of their households above all else, taken in concert with the coercive force of land tenure and the discursive framing of the vulnerability context and its management, framed very narrow acceptable fields of resistance to men's withholding of income. Further, in effectively acquiescing to the withholding of income as 'something men do', women not only made themselves as subjects, but also played a role in producing 'man' as a subject that, while carrying an expectation of income generation for household reproduction, had great flexibility in meeting this responsibility.

*Discussion: understanding livelihoods outcomes in Dominase and Ponkrum*

The livelihoods strategies at play in Dominase and Ponkrum in 2004 met the basic material needs of the residents despite a complex, challenging economic and environmental context. However, they did not maximise access to material resources (in the form of income or food) that might be used to manage this vulnerability context. The impact of this economically inefficient use of livelihoods resources (specifically land) on household incomes was compounded by

the limitations it imposed on women's non-farm earning potential, as agricultural income is the single largest source of capital women had for starting such activities. Yet there is ample evidence that the men in the households were intimately aware of the productive potential of their wives' farms, and of their ability to leverage surplus farm income via non-farm activities. If we adopt the instrumental view of most livelihoods approaches and treat livelihoods as fundamentally about the material outcomes of how people live in particular places, these strategies fall outside the realm of systematic analysis, becoming 'illogical' behaviours shaped by cultural externalities to core economic motivations.

These decisions, however, are not illogical or resistant to systematic analysis. By framing livelihoods as intimate government, and using the problematisation of 'shared income' as a point of entry to the complex nexus of sensitivity and adaptive capacity at the heart of the livelihoods strategies of these two villages, I have presented a rigorous understanding of these livelihoods decisions on the terms of those who make them. Specifically, we can understand why men chose to limit their wives' agricultural and NFE incomes (and see that this was indeed a choice, and not a mistake). Any additional income from their wives would have come at both a social and a material cost, challenging expectations of individuals of both genders, and therefore the definition of a good member of a particular gender and a good member of the community at large. For men, this could have resulted in both social fallout and decreased access to land. Thus men were not just unwilling, but unable to allow their wives to earn more money, as such a decision carried with it likely social and material consequences that would have negatively affected their status, safety, security, and well-being.

At the same time, we can understand why women would choose to continue participating in these livelihoods strategies, even though they were aware of their exploitation under each strategy. Land tenure, the very institution that women referenced to validate their claims to control over their farm incomes, was the institution that provided men with various coercive opportunities to limit and shape their wives' agricultural production. The convergence of these coercive moments with the historical success of these gendered strategies in addressing the vulnerability context of this convergence was always in question, especially as the changing economic and environmental context of the villages stressed these livelihoods strategies. However, both the land tenure system and the gendered roles prescribed by discourses of livelihoods in these villages were legitimised by mobilising gender identities that transcended these strategies. The social risk of rejection for women who stepped outside these gendered expectations was high, and the material risk of challenging one's husband's social standing and therefore losing access to land was clear. For most women in the villages, then, the choice to participate in these strategies was the best one available to ensure their safety and security.

The case of Dominase and Ponkrum demonstrates that we cannot fully understand livelihoods decisions or outcomes without framing livelihoods as intimate government: local efforts, internal to a given community or social unit, to align a project of rule with the self-guidance of the ruled—in this case, aligning men's management of the vulnerability context through the shaping of the

actions of their wives with both men's and women's understandings of desirable and appropriate social and material outcomes. This is not the same thing as saying that these livelihoods were a process through which men ruled their households; they were a process that ruled both men and women by mobilising particular expectations and constructions of the world such that individual self-guidance came into alignment with the perpetuation of an unequal social order. The fact that these strategies resulted in highly unequal (gendered) outcomes within the household, limiting women's opportunities and raising questions of justice at the household and community levels, was not a reflection of imperfect information or inefficiencies in these strategies. Inequality and inefficiency were not 'bugs' in these livelihoods; they were features central to their functioning.

### Conclusion

In its simplest form, framing livelihoods as intimate government returns livelihood studies to their original overarching question: how do people live in this place? In so doing, this framing of livelihoods forces us to engage with the complex, differentiated desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs held by different actors who come together in the projects of rule we call livelihood strategies. As the case of Dominase and Ponkrum clearly demonstrates, these desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs are focused on much more than material outcomes and material well-being. Instead, they reflect particular intersections of a range of factors that includes everything from local material situations and institutions to broader societal framings of gender roles that are beyond the control of those participating in these strategies.

The approach presented here is explicitly theorised, allowing for the transparent consideration of the assumptions that undergird the approach and of their impact on all steps of investigation from research design to data interpretation. This approach is systematic and implementable, guiding the investigator through the establishment of the appropriate socio-spatial scale of analysis, and a locally appropriate analytic frame, for the livelihoods in question. As the case of Dominase and Ponkrum demonstrates, when livelihoods analysis proceeds through an analytic of government such as presented here, it renders legible a much wider range of decisions and outcomes than possible under existing instrumental uses of livelihoods approaches.

This wider lens on the logic of livelihoods is of critical importance to those working in fields from development to the human dimensions of global change. The case of Dominase and Ponkrum suggests there are much wider ranges of potential livelihoods pathways under possible future changes in particular vulnerability contexts than we can identify through instrumental livelihoods frameworks. This, in turn, suggests that when we rely on instrumental livelihoods frameworks to assess likely future challenges and opportunities for particular populations in particular places, there is a significant risk that we will overlook plausible, if not probable, outcomes. Reframing livelihoods as intimate government does more than present a wider range of possible futures from which to choose. In rendering legible the logic behind a wider range of livelihoods decisions than possible under instrumental approaches, the approach

presented here provides greater rigour in the identification of *the most likely* future pathways out of this new, wider set of possible outcomes. This creates new opportunities for development planning, adaptation planning, and scenario development that could affect everything from development project outcomes at the community level to our broad framing of the possible future feedback loops between the impacts of climate change on human well-being and human efforts to manage those impacts.<sup>74</sup>

It is not too much to hope that an argument for a more complex, nuanced understanding of livelihoods might assert itself in contemporary development and global environmental communities. Scoones traced the emergence of current instrumental livelihoods frameworks to a particular political-economic context in the history of development. Today that political-economic context is changing in a manner that might facilitate the uptake of more complex, locally specific framings of livelihoods. Large donors such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) are shifting from *output* indicators of money spent and actions taken that say little about the effect of projects in the world towards *outcome* indicators that capture the impact of that spending and those actions in terms of their impacts on the well-being of affected populations.<sup>75</sup> To respond to this new accountability for project outcomes, donors, and implementers will need to design and evaluate programmes and projects with substantially better information about existing livelihoods and situations than provided by currently available systematic, implementable livelihoods approaches. Framing livelihoods as intimate government is an effort to seize this moment of opportunity for new, more nuanced understandings of livelihoods in development implementation.

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### Notes

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- 2 For example, A Agrawal, 'Environmentality: community, intimate government, and the making of environmental subjects in Kumaon, India', *Current Anthropology*, 46(2), 2005, pp 161–190; ER Carr & B McCusker, 'The co-production of land use and livelihoods change: implications for development interventions', *Geoforum*, 40(4), 2009, pp 568–579; V Gidwani, 'The cultural logic of work: explaining labor develop-

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- 3 Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development'.
  - 4 Agrawal, 'Environmentality'.
  - 5 Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development', pp 180, 187.
  - 6 In the case of Dominase and Ponkrum, I focus on the household as the key social unit around which livelihoods cohere because the problematisation that provided analytic purchase on these livelihoods (discussed below) related directly to this social unit, and only indirectly to other social units. This decision was supported in the course of fieldwork as residents framed livelihoods around the household. This is not to suggest that the household was the only social unit that mattered to these livelihoods. For example, as I will discuss below, family lineages were critical shapers of access to land, and a much wider sense of the Akan identity informed expectations of genders that shaped livelihoods roles and activities. Where in my analysis it is appropriate for the purposes of explaining observed livelihoods decisions, I will bring these other social units and their contributions to the fore.
  - 7 The use of the term 'self-guidance' is not meant to be obfuscatory, but instead reflects the fact that self-interest is a very difficult thing to define, often subject to the interpretive bias of the observer. 'Self-guidance' removes implicit judgment from the observation of behaviour.
  - 8 Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development'
  - 9 For example, R Chambers & G Conway, *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies (ids), 1992.
  - 10 *Ibid*, p 7.
  - 11 F Ellis, *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p 11.
  - 12 Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development', p 177.
  - 13 For extended discussions of this approach, see Ellis, *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries*; DF Bryceon, *Sub-Saharan Africa Betwixt and Between: Rural Livelihood Practices and Policies*, asc Working Paper 43, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, 1999; D Carney (ed), *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: What Contribution Can We Make?*, London: Department for International Development, 1998; D Carney, M Drinkwater, T Rusinow, K Neefjes, S Wanmali & N Singh, *Livelihood Approaches Compared*, London: Department for International Development, 1999; D Hulme & A Shepherd, 'Conceptualizing chronic poverty', *World Development*, 31(3), 2003, pp 403–423; M Kaag, R van Berkel, J Brons, M de Bruijn, H van Dijk, L de Haan, G Nooteboom & A Zoomers, 'Ways forward in livelihoods research', *Globalization and Development*, 2004, pp 49–74; I Scoones, *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis*, ids Working Paper 72, Brighton: ids, 1998; Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development'; and C Shackleton, S Shackleton & B Cousins, 'The role of land-based strategies in rural livelihoods: the contribution of arable production, animal husbandry, and natural resource harvesting in communal areas in South Africa', *Development Southern Africa*, 18(5), 2001, pp 582–604.
  - 14 de Haan & Zoomers, 'Exploring the frontier of livelihoods research'; and Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development'.
  - 15 Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development'.
  - 16 Arce, 'Value contestations in development interventions'; and de Haan & Zoomers, 'Exploring the frontier of livelihoods research'.
  - 17 For example, S Chant, 'Household decisions, gender and development: a synthesis of recent research', *American Anthropologist*, 107(4), 2005, pp 738–739; CR Doss, 'Intrahousehold resource allocation in an uncertain environment', *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 78, 1996, pp 1335–1339; ER Fapohunda, 'The nonpooling household', in D Dwyer & J Bruce Stanford, *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988; L Haddad, J Hoddinott & H Alderman, *Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Developing Countries: Methods, Models, and Policy*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997; L Haddad & R Kanbur, 'How serious is the neglect of intra-household inequality?', *Economic Journal*, 100, 1990, pp 866–881; D Thomas, 'Intrahousehold resource allocation: an inferential approach', *Journal of Human Resources*, 25, 1990, pp 635–664; and C Udry, 'Gender, agricultural production, and the theory of the household', *Journal of Political Economy*, 104(5), 1996, pp 1010–1046.
  - 18 de Haan & Zoomers, 'Exploring the frontier of livelihoods research'.
  - 19 Arce, 'Value contestations in development interventions'; A Bebbington, 'Capitals and capabilities'; Scoones, 'Livelihoods perspectives and rural development'; and M Kaag *et al*, 'Ways forward in livelihoods research'.

- 20 de Haan & Zoomers, 'Exploring the frontier of livelihoods research', p 32.
- 21 ER Carr, 'Development and the household: missing the point?', *Geojournal*, 62(1), 2005, pp 71–83; and ER Carr, 'Men's crops and women's crops: the importance of gender to the understanding of agricultural and development outcomes in Ghana's Central Region', *World Development*, 36(5), 2008, pp 900–915.
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- 23 M Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, London: Sage, 1999, p 11. See also K McKinnon, 'Taking post-development theory to the field: issues in development research, Northern Thailand', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 49(3), 2008, pp 281–293.
- 24 In this article I use the term 'government' in the sense defined above. I do not shift to the use of governance, as a Foucauldian framing of government rejects the differentiation between government and governance, where government becomes an object and governance its action. Instead, as will become clear, in this article government and governance are in fact the same thing.
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- 26 Dean, *Governmentality*, p 18.
- 27 Gidwani, 'The cultural logic of work', p 79.
- 28 Foucault, 'Governmentality', p 87. See also Dean, *Governmentality*; J Ferguson & A Gupta, 'Spatializing states: toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality', *American Ethnologist*, 29(4), 2002, pp 981–1002; M Merlingen, 'Governmentality: towards a Foucauldian framework for the study of IGOs', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 38(4), 2003, pp 361–384; and N Rose, 'Government, authority and expertise in advanced liberalism', *Economy and Society*, 22(3), 1993, pp 283–299.
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- 30 For example, J Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994; Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999; L Herbert-Cheshire & V Higgins, 'From risky to responsible: expert knowledge and the governing of community-led rural development', *Journal of Rural Studies*, 20(3), 2004, pp 289–302; S Robins, 'At the limits of spatial governmentality: a message from the tip of Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 23(4), 2002, pp 665–689; and A Sharma, 'Crossbreeding institutions, breeding struggle: women's empowerment, neoliberal governmentality, and state (re)formation in India', *Cultural Anthropology*, 21(1), 2006, pp 60–95.
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- 32 A Appadurai, 'Deep democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics', *Public Culture*, 14(1), 2002, p 24.
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- 34 J Ferguson & A Gupta, 'Spatializing states: toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality', p 994.
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- 37 Agrawal, 'Environmentality', p 165.

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- 39 For example, Agrawal, 'Environmentality'; Gidwani, 'The cultural logic of work'; Li, 'Compromising power'; Li, *The Will to Improve*; Moore, *Suffering for Territory*; and Moore, 'The crucible of cultural politics'.
- 40 Li, 'Compromising power', p 295.
- 41 Moore, *Suffering For Territory*; and Moore, 'The crucible of cultural politics'.
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- 46 *Ibid*, pp 304–305.
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- 48 *Ibid*, p 23.
- 49 Gidwani, 'The cultural logic of work'.
- 50 Dean, *Governmentality*, p 23.
- 51 Carr & McCusker, 'The co-production of land use and livelihoods change', pp 570–571.
- 52 Dean, *Governmentality*, p 23.
- 53 For a detailed description of these villages and their histories, see Carr, *Delivering Development*.
- 54 In the interests of space, I will not go into a deeply detailed discussion of the vulnerability context of these villages. I explore this context in great detail in Carr, *Delivering Development*.
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- 59 Carr, 'Placing the environment in migration'; and Carr, *Delivering Development*.
- 60 B Glaser & A Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Chicago, IL: Aldine, 1967, pp 61–62, 111, 112.
- 61 Carr, 'Development and the household'; Carr, 'Between structure and agency'; ER Carr, 'Rethinking poverty alleviation: a "poverties" approach', *Development in Practice*, 18(6), 2008, pp 726–734; and Carr, *Delivering Development*.
- 62 Throughout the empirical sections of this paper, I refer to reported income figures. These figures do not represent the cash value of subsistence production or household labour, as respondents were unable to provide such information and data do not yet exist that allow for the rough equation of hectares to value for particular crops. While this limitation of the data clearly undervalues women's economic production, it accurately represents their economic position within the household and in society. No woman is compensated for subsistence production or household labour. Further, there is a general understanding in the literature that, for various reasons, when asked about their finances the Akan tend to underestimate income and overestimate expenses. See E Aryeetey, 'Household asset choice among the rural poor', in *isser–University of Ghana–Cornell University International Conference on 'Ghana at the Half Century'*, Accra, 2004, p 77; and A Deaton, *The Analysis of Household Surveys: A Microeconomic Approach to Development Policy*, Baltimore, MD: World Bank/Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. I therefore do not consider these data very reliable except as a measure of relative earnings. All dollar values in this paper are converted from Ghanaian Cedis at the time of the interview(s) on which they are based.
- 63 There are almost no remittances flowing into these villages. At most, the same one or two men leave each year to take up fishing or baking in nearby countries, but this is not a common livelihoods practice.
- 64 For discussion, see Carr, *Delivering Development*.
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- 68 Carr, 'Between structure and agency'.
- 69 In subsequent field seasons, I found that men whose wives had raised enough to sell a significant surplus generally reduced the size of their wives' farms the next year.
- 70 While the number of households operating under this strategy seems small, later fieldwork that effectively covered the entire population of these villages showed that this was probably all, or nearly all, of the households operating under this strategy in 2004. The same is true of the number of diversified households discussed below. It is important to note that in any given year roughly 40% of the population shifts out of both strategies to a situation where the husband and wife farm together, with no differentiation in their agricultural labour. In nearly all cases this shift was a one-year solution for a temporally bounded issue, such as pregnancy, and the household returned to one of the two dominant strategies in the following year. Therefore, virtually all cases where a household is operating under a different strategy from those laid out here are temporary. They give us a picture of a single household dealing with a transition in a single year, but they do not speak to the long-term government of the household achieved through livelihoods in these villages.
- 71 Carr, 'Development and the household'.
- 72 I thank Arun Agrawal for pushing me to think more about this aspect of governmentality in the context of these livelihoods.
- 73 This was especially true with regard to school expenses, such as books and school uniforms. Under Akan kinship, the children belong to the mother's family, and therefore are the ultimate responsibility of the mother and her extended family (ie the children's maternal uncles and grandparents). This gave men something of an excuse for refusing to pay for such items.
- 74 ER Carr, 'Small farmers, big impacts', in R Shah & S Radelet (eds), *Frontiers in Development*, Washington, DC: USAID, 2012, pp 92-97.
- 75 See, for example, usaid, 'Evaluation: learning from experience: usaid evaluation policy', 2011, at <http://transition.usaid.gov/evaluation/USAIDevaluationPolicy.pdf>, accessed 28 September 2012.

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