



Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development. By Ian Scoones. Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies Series, 2015. 168 pp. Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing. Price: \$76.42 (Hardcover) and \$9.99 (kindle)

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ARTICLE INFO

Editorial responsibility: Prof. SOK Serey
Received: 05 September 2023
Revised: 11 November 2023
Accepted: 22 November 2023
Published online: 31 December 2023
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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Book

A well-known saying by Jeff Corwin, 'The natural resources we've depended on, if the places where they exist are not stable, our livelihood and our health are put at risk' is inspired for writing this book review. A book on Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development is a long-term work of Ian Scoones, co-director of the ESRC STEPS Centre at Sussex. In this book, key concepts are the extended livelihoods approach advocated, which argues for close attention to the local and the particular, appreciating the complexity of people in places. Based on critical agrarian studies, the book presents new questions and four dimensions of a new politics of livelihoods, such as interests, individuals, knowledge, and ecology. In 1990, Ian Scoones aimed to bring this argument about the importance of livelihood approaches in development to a wider audience and encourage debate and discussion. Moreover, this book comprises nine main chapters related to the livelihoods framework, which explores the articulations with the practical and policy concerns of livelihood approaches and critical agricultural and environmental studies, highlighting knowledge, politics, and political economy theories. It encourages readers to contribute their case studies and methodologies to the field of livelihood analysis, addressing the political economy of agrarian change and promoting a more inclusive approach to rural development (Ian Scoones, 2015). One of the key components of sustainable livelihoods is the promotion of diversified and resilient livelihood strategies. This

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<https://www.doi.org/10.61945/cjbar.2023.5.2.09>

involves providing opportunities for rural residents to engage in various income-generating activities such as agriculture, livestock rearing, small-scale enterprises, and other sustainable economic activities. Diversification helps communities to spread risks and adapt to changing environmental and market conditions, thus enhancing their resilience.

1.2 Summary of the Book

The book is divided into nine chapters, including concepts and empirical experience. Chapter One mentioned “Livelihoods Perspectives: A Brief History” which focuses on livelihood perspectives that have become increasingly central in discussions of rural development over the past few decades. The main debate of livelihood perspectives and framework is to integrate a holistic, bottom-up philosophy centered on understanding what people do to make a living in diverse social contexts and circumstances, which has been central to rural development thinking and practice for decades. The livelihood framework is not new since livelihood thinking did not suddenly emerge in 1992 with the influential paper by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway. The livelihoods perspective has a rich history, which can be traced back to William Cobbett (1885), Karl Polanyi (1944) and Karl Marx (1973).

The recent interest in livelihood thinking emerged in the late 1980s with the connection of three words: Sustainable, Rural, and Livelihoods. This connection was reputedly made during a discussion of the Food 2000 report for the Brundtland Commission, which took place at a hotel in Geneva in 1986. A working paper for the Institute of Development Studies states that ‘a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets while not undermining the natural resource base’ (Conway and Chambers 1992: 6) Critical ideas of this chapter are to explain key concepts of their livelihoods strategy through insecure, oppressive, and increasingly ‘informalized’ wage employment and a range of likewise precarious small-scale and uncertain ‘informal sector’ (‘survival’) activity, including farming; in effect, various and complex combinations of employment and self-employment. Many of the laboring poor do this across different sites of the social division of labor: urban and rural, agricultural and non-agricultural, as well as wage employment and self-employment (Bernstein, 2009).

In Chapter 2 “Livelihoods, Poverty, and Well-being” are interconnected concepts that play a fundamental role in shaping the quality of life for individuals and communities. Understanding the relationships between these three elements is essential for creating effective strategies to alleviate poverty and enhance overall well-being. There are different approaches to livelihoods and their outcomes. Livelihoods refer to how people make

a living, including the assets, activities, and resources they rely on. Livelihood strategies encompass diverse economic activities such as agriculture, small-scale enterprises, wage labor, and other income-generating pursuits. The sustainability and resilience of livelihoods are crucial for individuals and families to escape poverty and achieve improved well-being (Krantz, L. 2001). All offer a multidimensional view, but each is rooted in a different conceptual tradition (cf. Laderchi et al. 2003). The first approach focuses on the individual and on maximizing what economists call utility. This approach looks at the tradeoffs between different options and between individuals and explores how welfare outcomes are achieved. The second approach has its roots in arguments about social justice, fairness, and liberty, drawing, for example, from the debates in the Theory of Justice by John Rawls. This approach also links to Amartya Sen’s capability approach and Martha Nussbaum, who goes as far as to list “central human capabilities,” which include life, bodily health, bodily integrity, reproductive and sexual choice, practical reason, affiliation, and control over one’s environment. The third approach focuses on the subjective, personal, and relational aspects of a person’s life, such as happiness, satisfaction, and psychological well-being, that arise from various factors, including relationships with others (Gough and McGregor 2007, Layard 2011). The fourth approach is relational in a wider social and political sense, which focuses on equality in society and where opportunities exist for advancement. However, according to Scoones, each approach requires a different method for measuring livelihood outcomes, which includes:

Poverty lines is a widely used approach by microeconomists to assess the number of individuals and households living above and below a certain threshold. It is based on assumptions about basic needs and usually has a monetary value. This approach is crucial in targeting social support and protection programs, such as those deployed in India. However, the poverty line is controversial due to its assumptions, data, and implications (Deaton and Kozel 2004). The efficacy of such measures is debated due to multiple measurement challenges (Ravallion 2011a). Both income and consumption measures of poverty have their advantages and disadvantages. Income measures suffer from recall problems and are often variable, making it difficult to capture all aspects and key tradeoffs (Greeley 1994; Baulch 1996). Consumption measures are easier to collect and less prone to variations, but may not capture all aspects and key tradeoffs. These quantitative measures of livelihood outcomes are narrowly focused on an individualist utilitarian view, missing a lot.

Household living standard surveys is living standards surveys, established in 1980 by the World Bank, and offer a quantitative method for assessing livelihood change at a household level. These surveys focus on assets,

income, expenditure, schooling, health, and other human development indices, expanding the poverty line approach but still focusing on quantifiable and measurable aspects. However, the focus on the household may miss out on intra-household dimensions (Razavi 1999; Kanji 2002; Dolan 2004) and relations between households, as part of household “clusters”(Drinkwater et al. 2006). There is a longstanding debate about the limitations of the household as a unit of analysis (Guyer and Peters 1987; O’Laughlin 1998). A household is often defined as a group of people “eating from the same pot,” but livelihoods can be constructed across other dimensions, such as polygamous marriage, child-headed households, or migration patterns. Close kin in a village or cluster of homes may share many assets, making the household unit obscure.

Human development indicators focus on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) compiles the Human Development Report annually, which includes human development indicators such as literacy, infant mortality, and life expectancy (Morris 1979). The first published indices included life expectancy, schooling, and GDP per capita at purchasing power parity. Since then, there have been attempts to extend and improve these indices. Sabina Alkire and colleagues combine health, education, and living standard indicators to compute an overall indicator based on household data. This approach allows for multidimensional comparisons within and across countries, but it often suffers from limitations as these indicators are often derived from household data.

Well-being assessments focus on Standard poverty assessments often focus on material aspects like income, expenditure, and assets, neglecting less tangible aspects like living standards, health, and education. Well-being approaches argue for a combination of physical/objective, relational, and subjective dimensions for assessment (Gough and McGregor 2007; McGregor 2007; White and Ellison 2007; White 2010). These approaches establish a wider set of livelihood needs, including psychosocial aspects. A more rounded well-being approach, often focusing on individuals within households and communities, provides a more complete perspective on livelihoods. It is essential to negotiate the diverse meanings of well-being and how it is experienced, and to accept the political tradeoffs between different conceptions of well-being (Deneulin and McGregor 2010).

Quality of life measures focus on well-being approaches focus on psychological dimensions like life satisfaction, esteem, and self-worth (Rojas 2011). Lack of hope is a debilitating poverty trap, impacting motivation, investment, and livelihood improvement (Duflo 2012). Some argue that a single measure of happiness is possible (cf. Layard and Layard 2011), as Bhutan has developed an index to track happiness. Others suggest a diversity of measures, such as the OECD’s Better Life Index, to address the multiple psychological dimensions of well-being, like material aspects.

Employment and decent work focus on the International Labour Organization emphasizes the generation of decent work, which includes both formal and informal employment. This includes on- or off-farm work, domestic labor, and more formal employment. A qualitative assessment of work, including pay, conditions, flexibility, and rights, can calculate the number of decent work days. This measure reflects another important dimension of livelihoods, focusing appropriately on work and employment of different sorts, rather than income or consumption poverty lines.

On the other hand, poverty encompasses the lack of adequate income, resources, and capabilities to meet basic human needs. It is multidimensional, surrounding financial deprivation and limited access to education, healthcare, shelter, and social opportunities. Poverty often constrains people’s livelihood options, limiting their ability to pursue diverse economic activities and perpetuating cycles of deprivation. As a holistic concept, well-being goes beyond material wealth and encompasses physical health, mental and emotional fulfillment, social connections, and a sense of agency and empowerment. Sustainable livelihoods are vital for enhancing well-being, as they provide individuals and communities with the means to access essential goods and services, engage in meaningful work, and build resilience to external shocks and stresses. In addressing the intersections of livelihoods, poverty, and well-being, it is imperative to consider the following:

1.2.1 Economic Opportunities

Creating diverse and sustainable livelihood opportunities through skill development, entrepreneurship support, and market access can help individuals and communities escape poverty and improve their overall well-being. Economic development in a country heavily relies on rural development, as eco-tourism is the secondary source of livelihood after agriculture in rural areas. The demand for industrial goods is directly linked to agriculture and tourism production. However, people in rural areas often struggle to earn wages or migrate to urban areas, with migration patterns varying based on region, opportunities, and socio-economic status. The poorest families, particularly landless and marginal holders, often migrate with their entire families. This migration can lead to poor health, lack of education, and social pressures, ultimately eroding moral values and affecting the quality of life.

1.2.2 Social Protection

Establishing social safety nets, such as cash transfer programs, food assistance, and healthcare subsidies, can help mitigate the immediate impacts of poverty and contribute to improved well-being for vulnerable populations. Governments play a crucial role in enhancing social welfare by creating social security

programs that provide benefits to citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable, addressing issues such as low incomes, unemployment, and life events like illness, child-rearing, and retirement (Parliamentary Institution of Cambodia, 2019).

1.2.3 Access to basic services

Ensuring access to education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation supports well-being by addressing fundamental human needs and fostering human capital development. Access to basic services includes basic access to drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene facilities, essential health care, education (as a minimum primary school education), energy, social welfare schemes (commonly referred to as safety nets) and basic mobility and in urban contexts additionally access to basic waste collection services and broadband internet access. Activities under this thematic area aim at improving quality and coverage of services offered by public (usually national and sub-national government actors and agencies), private (e.g. service provider companies) or philanthropic (such as NGOs in the absence of governmental or private service providers) actors to ensure they can meet basic needs (<https://www.acted.org/en/what-we-do/our-programmes/access-to-basic-services>).

1.2.4 Inclusive policies and Governance

Policies that promote social equity, address power imbalances, and foster inclusive governance can create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods and improve the well-being of all members of society. By recognizing the intricate connections between livelihoods, poverty, and well-being, it is possible to design and implement interventions that address the multidimensional nature of poverty and support holistic well-being for individuals and communities. Therefore, this chapter mainly focuses on the approaches to livelihood outcomes introduced briefly, underpinned by different philosophical assumptions about the development objectives: what it takes to assure a good life. Discussing results and their assessment helps us define what we mean by a livelihood, which is a key move in any livelihood analysis related to the measurements of income patterns or consumption poverty in a population to more qualitative assessments of well-being and human capabilities.

In Chapter 3: “Livelihoods Frameworks and Beyond”, the previous two chapters have shown that livelihoods are complex and are affected by multiple factors, from local conditions to broader structural, political, and economic processes, so a more overall framework can help understand such complexity, as well as for thinking about how to act on it since it offers a hypothesis about how elements are related and what happens between them. The following debates about livelihood frameworks will illuminate some of the conceptual and

methodological challenges of livelihood approaches to research development: Livelihood Contexts and Strategies, Livelihood Assets, Resources and capital, Livelihood Change, Politics, and Power. This chapter ends with a discussion on “What’s in a Framework?”. Framework has played a discursive and political role since it had significant power and influence, commanding attention and resources in diverse settings. In addition, empowering rural communities through access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure is vital in promoting sustainable livelihoods and rural development. Access to quality education and healthcare services can improve human capital and productivity. At the same time, providing infrastructure such as roads, water, and energy supply can enhance the overall quality of life in rural areas. Therefore, in this chapter, the author tries to explain more about the extension of the sustainable livelihoods framework developed by Scoones in 1998. The framework thus links livelihood contexts with resources, the building blocks of livelihoods, to strategies (differentiating for a rural context agricultural production, off-farm diversification, and migration out of the area) and outcomes (across a range of indicators, as also discussed in Chapter 2).

Chapter 4 is related to “*Access and Control: Institutions, Organizations and Policy Processes*”, in which institutions, organizations, and policies are crucial in mediating access to livelihood resources and defining opportunities and constraints. In rural settings, institutions like marriage, customary inheritance, and local land tenure affect land access, while organizations like the church, chieftaincy, local government, and national land registries provide organizational settings. Legal pluralism occurs when multiple institutions govern resource access, leading to conflict between resource users. Understanding access and exclusion is essential for influencing livelihood outcomes. Institutions mediate access to resources, and power relations influence these processes. Feminist perspectives emphasize the lived bodily experience and the impact of gendered roles on livelihoods. An ethnographic and biographical approach can enrich the understanding of institutional processes and livelihood construction in complex contexts. Understanding policy change requires a simple analytical framework that distinguishes the power of narratives, actors, networks, politics, and interests. Policies must be seen concerning institutions and separate from practice and negotiations. Thus, this chapter tries to explore what the institutional and policy elements of the livelihoods framework represent in attention to power and politics, and the social and political relations that underpin them.

Chapter 5 is connected to “*Livelihoods, the Environment, and Sustainability*” and focuses on how sustainable livelihoods are essential for coping with stress and shocks without undermining the natural

resource base. The concept was popularized by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway in 1992, emphasizing intergenerational questions and global interconnections. However, much of the debate on livelihoods and their application to development practice has not considered these factors. Concerns with global climate change have shifted the discussion to resilience building, climate adaptation, and longer-term responses to change. Sustainability is a political concept that requires debate across disciplines, from natural to social sciences and policy domains. Resource scarcity is a common topic in policy debates about resource allocation and livelihoods, but it is relational and constructed in specific social-political settings.

Environmental change narratives in Africa criminalize livelihoods and deny access to resources, leading to “fortress conservation” policies and the use of fences and anti-poaching units to protect biodiversity. Ecosystems are complex and dynamic, necessitating a responsive and adaptive management approach. Research on local practices and adaptation to environmental change has shown that population increases, agricultural intensification, and demographic pressure have led to better responses to drought and climate change. Addressing the politics of sustainability requires creating new assemblages of livelihoods, technologies, and policies that generate more sustainable futures. A political ecology of sustainability is essential for a more sophisticated understanding. Thus, environmental sustainability is another fundamental aspect of sustainable livelihoods and rural development. Promoting practices that preserve natural resources, minimize environmental degradation, and support the sustainable management of land and ecosystems is important. This can include promoting agroecological practices, sustainable forestry, and the use of renewable energy sources, among other initiatives.

In Chapter 6: *“Livelihoods and Political Economy,”* the livelihoods are influenced by power and politics, with institutional, organizational, and policy processes affecting strategies and outcomes. The political economy of livelihoods encompasses long-term structural power relations, economic and political control by powerful actors, and differential patterns of production, accumulation, investment, and reproduction across society. Karl Marx and other classical political economists advocated for a critical political economy approach, which exposes the “rich totality of many determinations and relations” and helps reveal a concrete understanding through iteration between conceptual abstractions and empirical observation. A study in Zimbabwe identified fifteen different livelihood strategies, highlighting the complex nature of emerging class dynamics in new resettlements. Understanding longer-term livelihoods and a wider political economy perspective is essential. Addressing historical tensions between the market and

society is crucial for sustainable livelihoods, connecting the critique of commodification to the critique of domination. The intersection of livelihoods and political economy plays a significant role in shaping the economic activities, social relations, and power dynamics within communities and societies. The concept of livelihoods refers to the capabilities, assets, and activities people use to make a living. At the same time, political economy examines how power and resources are distributed and utilized within a given society.

One of the key aspects of the relationship between livelihoods and political economy is the influence of political and economic structures on people’s access to resources and opportunities. In many cases, unequal distribution of power and resources can result in marginalized groups needing more access to livelihood assets, such as land, capital, and education, impacting their ability to pursue sustainable economic activities. Political economy also affects the policy and regulatory environment in which livelihood activities occur. Government policies, political decisions, and economic systems can either support or hinder the development of sustainable livelihoods. For example, land tenure policies, trade regulations, and taxation systems can directly impact rural communities’ livelihood strategies and small-scale producers’ livelihood strategies.

Furthermore, the political economy of natural resource management is closely linked to livelihoods, particularly in rural and resource-dependent communities. The control and allocation of natural resources, such as land, water, and forests, are often central to people’s livelihoods, and political decisions regarding resource use and management can have far-reaching impacts on the well-being of communities and the sustainability of their livelihood activities. In addition, power relations and socio-political dynamics within communities can also shape livelihood strategies and outcomes. Understanding the political economy of local power structures, social networks, and cultural norms is essential for addressing social equity, inclusion, and access to livelihood opportunities. Thus, the relationship between livelihoods and political economy highlights the importance of understanding how political and economic factors influence people’s ability to secure sustainable livelihoods.

Chapter 7: *“Asking the Right Questions: An Extended,”* explores the political economy of livelihood issues using Henry Bernstein’s “Bernstein haiku” to analyze ownership, actions, and distribution. It also explores social and ecological challenges in contemporary societies, social classes, and political changes influenced by dynamic ecologies. Six cases demonstrate how long-term micro-level livelihood analysis using Marx’s multiple determinations can provide a wider understanding of agrarian change. Rural livelihoods are dynamic and influenced by long-term processes and structural drivers,

such as agrarian differentiation, labor migration, market changes, and globalized connections. Understanding local social, institutional, and political processes is crucial for understanding livelihoods. Livelihood interventions enter dynamic systems with complex histories and interconnections, and a livelihoods analysis helps inform, ground, and prepare those involved to assess risks and consequences in the context of a livelihoods approach. Thus, this chapter links detailed, longitudinal analysis of livelihoods in particular settings with wider agrarian change processes, accumulation patterns and investment, and class formation to help us connect local realities and wider approaches. This requires us to ask the right questions about the social relations of production and labor and the ecological basis for this.

Chapter 8: “*Methods for Livelihoods Analysis*,” aims to expand discourse on livelihood change using a mix of methods, including quantitative, qualitative, deliberative, and participatory approaches. Early livelihood approaches focused on ecology, society, politics, and economy, but as disciplinary focus took hold in the 1970s and 1980s, resistance to disciplinary hegemony in rural areas emerged. Rapid rural appraisal, participatory appraisal, and participatory action research appeared in the late 1970s. Mixed methods, panel surveys, and life history methods gained attention in development studies. The extended livelihoods approach, advocated in Chapter 7, urgently needs to bring politics back into livelihood studies, determining who owns what and who gets what. So, a livelihoods approach with mixed methods and reflexivity can shift perspectives and challenge assumptions, influencing policy questions on poverty and its causes and reducing it. This approach can help inform understanding of people experiencing poverty and their experiences, ultimately leading to more effective solutions.

In summary, a livelihoods approach galvanized by the right questions and appropriately mixed methods and sufficiently reflexive around potential biases – can offer a new focus for debate and deliberation. Based on these arguments, we suggest for the methods for livelihood analysis; we suggest that livelihood analysis methods vary and can be tailored to specific contexts and research objectives. Here are some common methods used for livelihoods analysis:

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): PRA involves engaging with community members to gather information on their livelihood strategies, assets, challenges, and priorities. Through participatory methods such as community mapping, seasonal calendars, and social mapping, PRA enables researchers to understand the local context and perspectives on livelihoods. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a method that enables local people to share and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions. It draws from various fields such as activist

participatory research, agroecosystem analysis, applied anthropology, field research on farming systems, and rapid rural appraisal (RRA). PRA uses methods like mapping, modeling, transect walks, matrix scoring, seasonal calendars, trend analysis, well-being ranking, and analytical diagramming. Its applications include natural resources management, agriculture, poverty and social programs, health and food security. It took until the 1990s for PRA to be recognized and grow (Chambers, R. 1994).

Household Surveys: Conducting structured surveys at the household level can provide quantitative data on income sources, asset ownership, expenditure patterns, and service access. Surveys can also capture demographic information and socio-economic indicators, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of household livelihood strategies. Household surveys offer quantitative data on income sources, asset ownership, expenditure patterns, and service access. They also capture demographic information and socio-economic indicators, enabling a comprehensive analysis of household livelihood strategies. These surveys cover diverse socio-demographic data, including welfare conditions, demographic characteristics, cultural factors, and social and economic changes.

In-depth Interviews: In-depth interviews with key informants, community leaders, and stakeholders can provide qualitative insights into livelihood dynamics, social norms, and power relations within the community. These interviews help us understand the nuances of livelihood decision-making and the challenges different groups face. In-depth interviews are a type of interview that focuses on specific topics based on a guide, allowing the interviewer to cover areas appropriate for the interviewee. The interviewer processes the material produced during the interview, posing positive questions to encourage responses. The process is human and less mundane. In-depth interviews use probing techniques to understand results through exploration and explanation, asking follow-up questions to gain a deeper perspective. Often, interacting with the target audience creates new knowledge, such as understanding purchase behavior. Researchers and participants present ideas for specific topics and solutions to the problems posed. Overall, in-depth interviews are a valuable tool for understanding and addressing various issues.

Focus Group Discussions: Group discussions with homogeneous or heterogeneous community members can be used to explore specific livelihood themes, such as agricultural practices, off-farm employment, or access to natural resources. Focus group discussions facilitate dialogue and the exchange of perspectives among participants. Focus group discussion is a popular qualitative data collection approach in conservation research, bridging scientific research and local knowledge. It is crucial for decision-making on natural resources, as

people derive their notions from their surroundings and experiential knowledge (Berkes, 2004). However, there is limited critical discussion on its merits and demerits, making it difficult to determine when and in which context it would be most appropriate.

Livelihoods Asset Mapping: This method involves mapping out the tangible and intangible assets that households or communities rely on for their livelihoods, such as land, livestock, skills, social networks, and access to infrastructure. Asset mapping helps visualize the resources available and understand their distribution within the community.

Livelihoods Analysis Frameworks: The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) and the Vulnerability and Resilience Framework provide structured approaches for analyzing livelihoods, considering multiple dimensions, including assets, institutions, policies, and external shocks. These frameworks can guide the analysis and visualization of complex livelihood systems. The livelihoods framework is a tool for analyzing livelihoods and agrarian change, focusing on the material political economy of agrarian change and livelihoods. It allows for an integrated analysis linking livelihood activities with wider structural political processes. This approach can help researchers, policymakers, and field practitioners link context-specific information about livelihoods to wider processes of change, identify risks, tradeoffs, and challenges, and ensure inclusive and sustainable outcomes. However, rural development efforts often lack professional biases and focus on top-down impositions and inappropriate projects. To improve livelihoods, livelihood approaches should consider lived realities in particular contexts and shift the focus from capital cities to rural areas, from elite experts to pastoralists themselves. This approach can significantly impact policy problems and alternative livelihood options, addressing poverty dynamics, patterns of differentiation, and long-term livelihood trajectories in different settings.

Quantitative Data Analysis: Statistical methods and econometric analysis can be used to assess the determinants of livelihood outcomes, such as income levels, employment patterns, and food security. Regression analysis, correlation studies, and other quantitative techniques can help identify factors influencing livelihood strategies. Data analysis is the most important part of a research study, as it uncovers relationships and understanding of the data collected. Research methods textbooks often focus on quantitative data analysis, but fail to provide guidance on how to use these tests and perform exploratory analysis. Exploratory analysis is essential for truly understanding results, and many students view quantitative data analysis as just collecting data, running statistical tests, and reporting the *p-value*. To improve data analysis, three major pedagogical goals must be taught: asking the right questions during all phases, judging the relevance

of potential questions, and understanding deep-level relationships within the data. When students do not understand these goals, they may make errors such as drawing conclusions from descriptive statistics, running statistical tests on all combinations of data, and blindly reporting results without considering their meaning. By focusing on data analysis, researchers can better understand the importance of data collection and its relevance in technical communication.

Ethnographic Research: Immersion in the community through ethnographic research allows for a deep understanding of local cultures, traditions, and social dynamics that shape livelihood activities. Ethnographic methods can uncover implicit knowledge and social norms that influence livelihood decision-making. Ethnographic and sociological observations; asset ownership surveys; historical/longitudinal analyses of production and accumulation; conflict analysis.

These methods can be used individually or in combination to conduct a comprehensive livelihood analysis, considering the multidimensional nature of livelihoods and the contextual specificity of different settings. Each method offers unique insights and contributes to a holistic understanding of livelihood strategies, vulnerabilities, and opportunities. Indeed, it can shift our perspectives and challenge our assumptions, both concerning epistemological understandings (what we know) and ontological understandings (what is). Deeper understandings rooted in a livelihoods analysis can, in turn, help inform wider policy questions, including, for example, who are people experiencing poverty, where do they live, how is poverty experienced, and what can be done to reduce it?

In the last Chapter 9: “*Bringing Politics Back In: New Challenges for Livelihoods Perspectives*,” emphasizes the importance of incorporating politics into livelihood analysis, as it often goes unnoticed due to instrumentalization. Chantal Mouffe advocates for “agonistic politics,” which addresses the problems democratic institutions face. The four core areas are politics of interests, individuals, knowledge, and ecology. Understanding these areas is crucial for understanding livelihood opportunities and addressing societal antagonistic potential. The politics of individuals involve actor-oriented approaches and understanding human agency, identity, and choice. Integrating personal stories, testimonies, and ethnographies enriches understanding of livelihood outcomes. Knowledge and ecology are crucial in livelihood analysis, as they influence policy and perceptions of good livelihoods. Balancing livelihood change directions and activities distribution is essential for sustainability. A new politics of livelihoods can be created by challenging and expanding existing approaches in rural development since the 1990s, emphasizing local and particular attention while considering wider dynamics that shape localities and livelihoods.

The reintegration of politics into livelihood perspectives presents new challenges and opportunities for understanding the complex dynamics of sustainable development and well-being. Traditionally, livelihoods perspectives have focused on the diverse assets, capabilities, and strategies individuals and communities use to secure their livelihoods, often overlooking the broader political and power dynamics shaping these pursuits. By “bringing politics back in,” scholars and practitioners seek to address this gap and explore the influence of political processes and power relations on livelihood outcomes. One of the critical challenges in integrating politics into livelihood perspectives is the need to understand how formal and informal political institutions, governance structures, and policy processes affect livelihood opportunities and constraints. This involves examining the role of governments, local authorities, and other political actors in shaping the distribution of resources, formulating regulations, and providing public goods and services that directly impact people’s livelihood activities.

Furthermore, bringing politics back into livelihood perspectives requires exploring how power relations and social hierarchies influence access to livelihood assets, decision-making processes, and the distribution of benefits and risks. Understanding the dynamics of power and influence within communities and societies is crucial for identifying the social and political barriers preventing marginalized groups from fully realizing their livelihood potentials. Another challenge lies in recognizing politics’ dynamic and contested nature in shaping livelihood outcomes. Political processes are often characterized by competing interests, conflicting agendas, and negotiations that can either support or undermine livelihood opportunities. This complexity requires a nuanced analysis of how political contestation, social movements, and advocacy efforts shape the conditions under which livelihoods are pursued and sustained. At the same time, integrating politics into livelihood perspectives presents an opportunity to develop more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to sustainable development. Understanding the political economy of livelihoods makes it possible to design interventions and policies that address power imbalances, promote social equity, and create enabling environments for diverse livelihood strategies to thrive. In conclusion, the renewed focus on bringing politics back into livelihoods perspectives highlights the need to understand the interplay between political processes, power relations, and livelihood dynamics. By addressing the new challenges these perspectives pose, we can advance more holistic and contextually sensitive approaches to promoting sustainable livelihoods and enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities.

2. Analysis and Reflections

Scoones’ book advances sustainable livelihood perspectives by outlining the genealogy of livelihood thinking and giving a rationale for adopting the livelihood approach in rural development. It expands the sustainable livelihoods framework by linking it to power and politics, improving existing frameworks, and analyzing the sustainability of livelihoods. The book uses concrete examples from different countries to illustrate the importance of linking livelihoods to poverty reduction and improving quality of life. Overall, in this book, the authors highlight the limited cooperation and cooperation between the authorities and the people in developing ecotourism for sustainability. In particular, the government and stakeholders’ development plans must integrate a comprehensive livelihood framework.

Cambodia’s Ministry of Tourism developed a master plan in 2017 to promote high-quality tourism, focusing on infrastructure development, eco-friendly resorts, social order, services, and hospitality. The plan utilizes information and communication technology for efficient management (Chan, 2017). Cambodia’s tourism sector has experienced rapid economic growth, with an annual GDP growth of 7.2% in 2011-15, and expected to continue for the next five years. Since 2000, the sector has grown significantly, with total visitors increasing by over tenfold to 5.6 million people annually. Tourism’s share of GDP has risen from 6.2 to 16.3%, making it the highest among ASEAN member states. However, ecotourism development still needs to grow despite government efforts to promote sustainable tourism. Cambodia has significant potential in developing ecotourism due to its rich historical, cultural, and natural resources. The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan 2016-2025 aims to make tourism sustainable and inclusive, promoting local community participation, safety, and environmental protection (Thong, 2011).

The Royal Government of Cambodia should address several key challenges to strengthen ecotourism development:

The Royal Government of Cambodia must convert support into concrete actions with adequate financial and human resources. The government should seek help from the private sector and international investors to secure resources for expanding ecotourism destinations. Strengthening coordination among ministries is crucial, as ecotourism development involves various sectors. The aviation sector plays a crucial role in tourism development. Further development of aviation infrastructure, including continuous improvement of flight safety, still continues to be a key priority to ensure the tourism development and absorption of an increasing number of tourists to Cambodia. The Ministry of Environment and Cambodia’s Ministry of Tourism are working together to develop management policies, regulatory frameworks, and

strategies to expand ecotourism in Cambodia. With an estimated 20% annual increase in ecotourism, the Ministry aims to strengthen natural capital management and boost economic prosperity. The Angkor temples are the primary target market. The RGC plans to develop a focus on Large- and small-scale ecotourism operations, Priority ecotourism areas, and Private sector participation in ecotourism.

Cambodia needs to improve the quality of its ecotourism products and offer a unique experience to tourists. The country faces competition from neighboring countries like Lao PDR, Thailand, and Malaysia, which have more developed ecotourism attractions. Many local communities must provide well-trained tourism service providers; there is room for improvement. Cambodia has significant potential for ecotourism due to its rich historical, cultural, and natural resources, as well as the unique “unspoiled” ecotourism experience that has emerged from the country’s untouched natural areas post-1991 civil war. The Asian Development Bank found that out of 209 tourist sites in 2001, 98 were suitable for ecotourism development (OECD, 2016). Currently, Cambodia operates around 50 ecotourism sites, including seven national parks, nine wildlife sanctuaries, and four Ramsar sites, which protect international-important wetlands (ODC, 2018). These sites offer unique and unique experiences for ecotourism enthusiasts.

Cambodia needs a smart and targeted marketing strategy to promote ecotourism. To financially sustain ecotourism sites, the government should reach out to foreign visitors, as Europeans are more likely to visit national parks than other regions. Regional cooperation can boost the development of ecotourism in Cambodia. Cambodia’s government has been actively promoting ecotourism since the late 1990s, with plans to strengthen conservation and link conservation with ecotourism. The National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 aimed to develop nature-based ecotourism in the northeast as a priority for tourism products. The tourism ministry was tasked with drafting a national strategic policy for ecotourism. At the same time, the Tourism Development Strategic Plan 2012-2020 acknowledged the need for improved ecotourism as part of a sustainable tourism sector vision.

Therefore, Cambodia can join forces with tourism authorities in other countries to offer cross-border ecotourism packages, increasing the attractiveness of ecotourism products and raising the visibility of ecotourism attractions. Nature-based destination attractions for ecotourists and other cultural travelers are powered by potential natural and cultural resources. Natural attractions include undisturbed habitats, rich biodiversity, and unique ecological formations. On the other hand, cultural attractions are geographic places rooted in cultural and historic assets that provide

satisfaction and good experiences for tourist activities. These resources serve two main functions for ecotourism: sensitizing people to the destination area and fulfilling their expectations.

3. Conclusion and Policy Implication

Sustainable livelihoods and rural development are closely intertwined, and addressing rural communities’ complex challenges requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. The consideration of political economy, power dynamics, and local contexts is essential for promoting sustainable rural development and enhancing the well-being of rural residents. By recognizing the multidimensional nature of livelihoods and the influence of political and economic factors, it is possible to develop targeted interventions and policies that support diverse livelihood strategies, foster social equity, and promote environmental sustainability. Sustainable livelihoods are increasingly becoming an integral part of rural economic development. As communities struggle to cope with the effects of global climate change and other environmental issues, sustainable livelihoods provide a much-needed solution for promoting and maintaining economic and social stability. By investing in projects that support sustainable livelihoods, rural areas can develop resilient, vibrant economies characterized by healthy, diverse ecosystems and strong community involvement. Through better access to renewable energy sources, improved creation and distribution of sustainable goods and services, and strengthened governance initiatives, sustainable livelihoods can help reduce poverty and enhance rural livelihood security.

Moreover, access to natural resources and enterprise development can be further facilitated by implementing effective incentives and mechanisms that protect the rights of local actors and ensure equitable and sustainable use of resources. The impact of sustainable livelihoods on rural development can also be seen in improved health and well-being, increased productivity and competitiveness, and increased job opportunities. As such, governments, businesses, and civil society organizations must recognize sustainable livelihoods’ vital role in promoting and sustaining rural development.

This book provides valuable livelihood insights for development practitioners and researchers, addressing the challenges of poverty in developing countries. The author recommends a subsistence approach that emphasizes people-centered and participatory nature, participates in rural development, and emphasizes resilience and sustainability of livelihoods and the environment. The book outlines ways to promote sustainability and stability in rural development efforts, including adaptive practices and lifestyles. Sustainable livelihoods and rural development are crucial factors in ensuring the well-being of people living in rural

areas. Sustainable livelihoods emphasize promoting economic opportunities, social equity, and environmental sustainability in rural communities.

Furthermore, sustainable livelihoods and rural development involve the promotion of social equity and inclusion. This includes empowering marginalized groups such as women, indigenous communities, and youth to actively participate in decision-making processes and gain access to resources and opportunities. Ensuring equal opportunities for all community members contributes to rural areas' overall social and economic well-being.

Overall, sustainable livelihoods and rural development encompass a holistic approach to improving the well-being of rural communities. By promoting economic opportunities, social equity, and environmental sustainability, we can contribute to the long-term prosperity and resilience of rural areas, ensuring a better future for generations to improve livelihood sustainability. Lesson learned from this book, we would like to provide some recommendations for audiences below:

Empowerment of Marginalized Groups: Policies and programs should empower marginalized groups, including women, indigenous communities, and youth, by providing them with opportunities for education, skill development, and access to resources. Empowering these groups can contribute to more inclusive and equitable rural development.

Integrated Natural Resource Management: Sustainable management of natural resources, such as land, water, and forests, should be a priority in rural development initiatives. Promoting agroecological practices, sustainable forestry, and community-based resource management can enhance environmental sustainability and support resilient livelihoods.

Strengthening Local Governance and Participation: Enhancing local governance structures and promoting community participation in decision-making processes is essential for ensuring that rural development initiatives are responsive to local needs and priorities. Engaging communities in planning, implementing, and monitoring development projects can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Access to Finance and Markets: Improving access to finance, market linkages, and value chains for rural producers can enhance their economic opportunities and contribute to diversifying livelihood strategies. Supporting small-scale enterprises, agricultural cooperatives, and rural financial institutions can stimulate economic growth in rural areas.

Infrastructure and Service Provision: Investing in rural infrastructure such as roads, water supply, healthcare facilities, and energy access is crucial for improving the quality of life in rural communities. Access to basic services can enhance human capital, productivity, and overall well-being.

Development of Livelihood Skills: Training and capacity-building programs to enhance livelihood skills and promote entrepreneurship can enable rural residents to pursue diverse income-generating activities. Skills development in agriculture, livestock management, and alternative livelihood options can contribute to sustainable rural development.

Finally, sustainable livelihoods and rural development require a holistic approach that addresses the intersection of economic, social, and environmental factors. By incorporating the recommendations above and considering the complexities of political economy and power dynamics, it is possible to create enabling environments for sustainable livelihoods and promote the long-term prosperity of economic community development.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to express gratitude for the financial support provided for PhD research through the Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP).

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares no conflict of interest. The author has read and approved the final, published version of the manuscript.

Credit authorship contribution statement

Long Chandavy: Drafting, revising, and editing. The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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