1) **Think of this piece as an intellectual concept vehicle.** Much like an automotive concept vehicle, it shows the potential of what can be done, and how it might look. It does not, however, drive right off the lot. That requires a production model, which I am working on as a separate piece.

2) Traditional approaches to the study and assessment of livelihoods in development assume that livelihoods are principally efforts to secure material well-being: **this basic assumption is incorrect.**
   a. Studies of livelihoods are rife with examples of people making decisions against their material interests. These cases are typically dismissed as examples of limited or distorted information, or the products of false consciousness.
   b. Such interpretations generally proceed from inappropriately universalized assumptions about human motivations (i.e. *homo economicus*) or a failure to grasp the underlying logic of decision-making.
   c. To illustrate this point, **the paper presents a case** in which there is evidence for excellent information about the inputs and the material outcomes of livelihoods strategies, yet participants in these strategies routinely make decisions against their material interests.
   d. This case suggests that many livelihoods behaviors currently cast as illogical or outliers are, in fact, evidence that current livelihoods approaches are insufficient for capturing the dynamics of livelihoods.

3) **Framing livelihoods as forms of government**, as opposed to means to material ends, **better captures the logic behind livelihoods strategies and their outcomes.**
   a. In the context of this paper, government is understood as efforts to shape the conduct of individuals or populations to definite, shifting and sometimes contradictory material and social ends.
   b. When framed as government, a wider range of livelihoods decisions becomes intelligible than under approaches that assume material maximization as the primary goal of livelihoods.
   c. This framing also demonstrates that inequality and (economic) inefficiency are inherent to many livelihoods, and not issues that can be addressed through simple technical interventions.

4) **Reframing livelihoods as government requires a different analytical approach to livelihoods.**
   a. Livelihoods strategies do refer to material conditions that contribute to vulnerability (often referred to as *exposure*) (#1 in figure below).
   b. However, livelihoods outcomes are not merely responses to exposure, but reflections of the ability of the social group 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).
   c. Understanding livelihoods decision-making requires access to the sensitivity/adaptive capacity nexus in the context in question.
      i. Access to this nexus can be achieved by ethnographically examining livelihoods to identify reveals moments in which participants call the logic and legitimacy of livelihoods strategies into question (called a *problematization*, see #2 in the figure below).
1. This access point helps to establish the appropriate scale of analysis for the livelihoods in question, as it will point to the most relevant institutions and activities for a given livelihoods

2. Disagreements over the logic and legitimacy of livelihoods will provide access to the sensitivity/adaptive capacity nexus (see #3 in the figure below) by calling one or more of the three factors that shape this nexus into question:
   a. Coercion (means of compelling action)
   b. Discourses of livelihoods (local understandings of how livelihoods and the world are supposed to work)
   c. Identity (how people see themselves in the context of livelihoods, and how they want to be seen by others)

ii. Each of these factors needs to be identified and examined in relation to the others, as they form a cohesive, mutually-reinforcing context of adaptive capacity and sensitivity that shapes possible livelihoods decisions and outcomes in the context in question (see #4 in the figure below)

iii. The outcomes of livelihoods then feed back to influence the vulnerability context, the problematization (or the creation of new problematizations), the adaptive capacity/sensitivity nexus, and therefore future livelihoods outcomes.

---

**Diagram:**

1. Vulnerability Context (exposure)

2. Problematization

3. Coercion and Mobilization of Identity

4. Livelihoods Outcomes