



Australian Government

**Australian Centre for
International Agricultural Research**

Better understanding the role of policy in smallholder livestock systems

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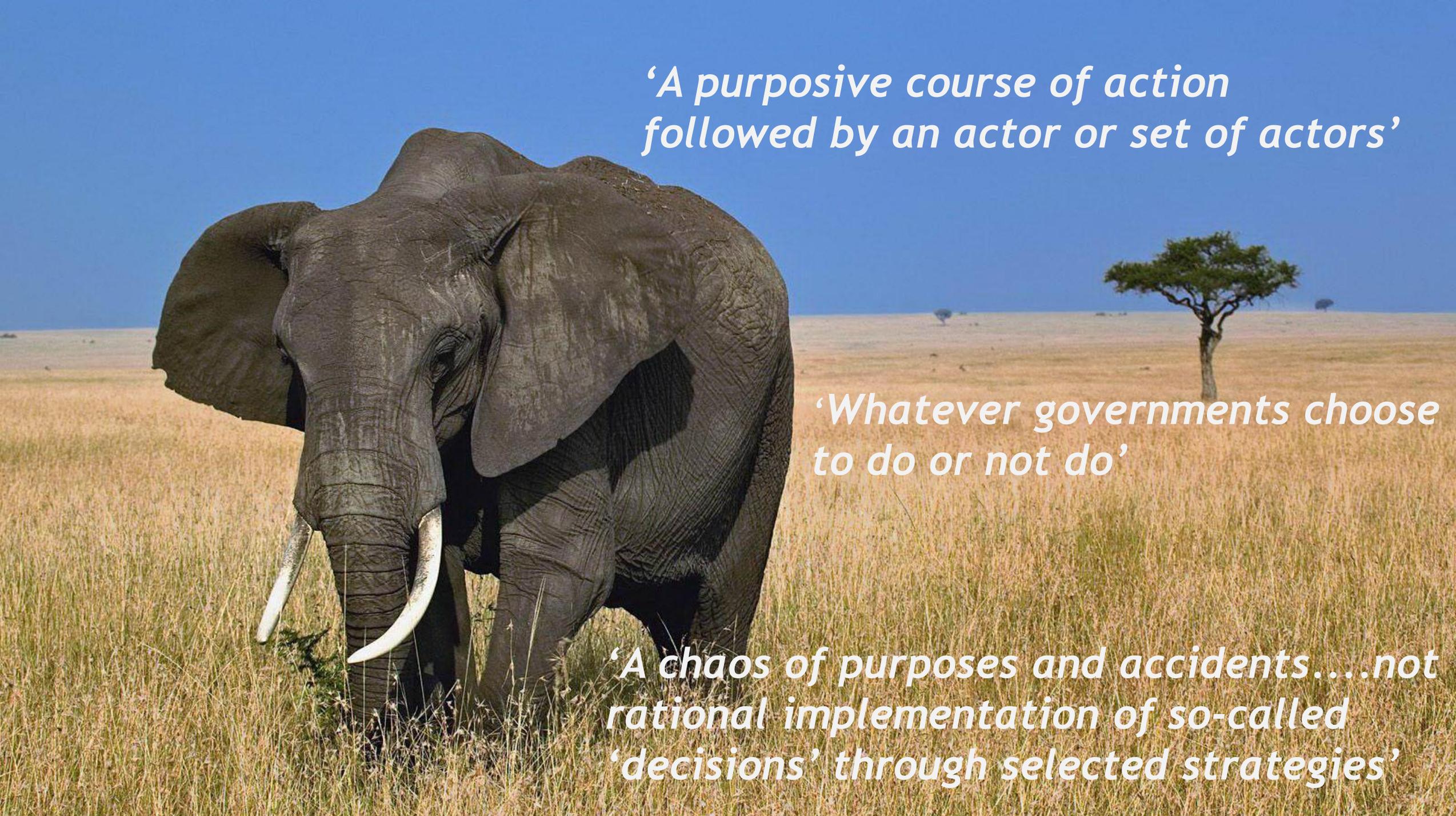
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Smallholder Livestock Systems



- ▶ Almost 20% of the world's population; utilize majority of tropical agricultural land
- ▶ SLS - low input/low output, small land sizes/animal numbers, compete well in informal market chains, free/family labour
- ▶ Commercial - high input/high output, large land size/numbers of animals, linked to formal market chains and utilize some form of paid labour
- ▶ SLS more than simply economic contribution - ceremonial/cultural, nutritional security, draft, savings

A large African elephant with prominent tusks stands in a savanna landscape. The elephant is the central focus, facing slightly to the left. The background features a flat, open plain with a single acacia tree on the right and a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the image in white, italicized font.

‘A purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors’

‘Whatever governments choose to do or not do’

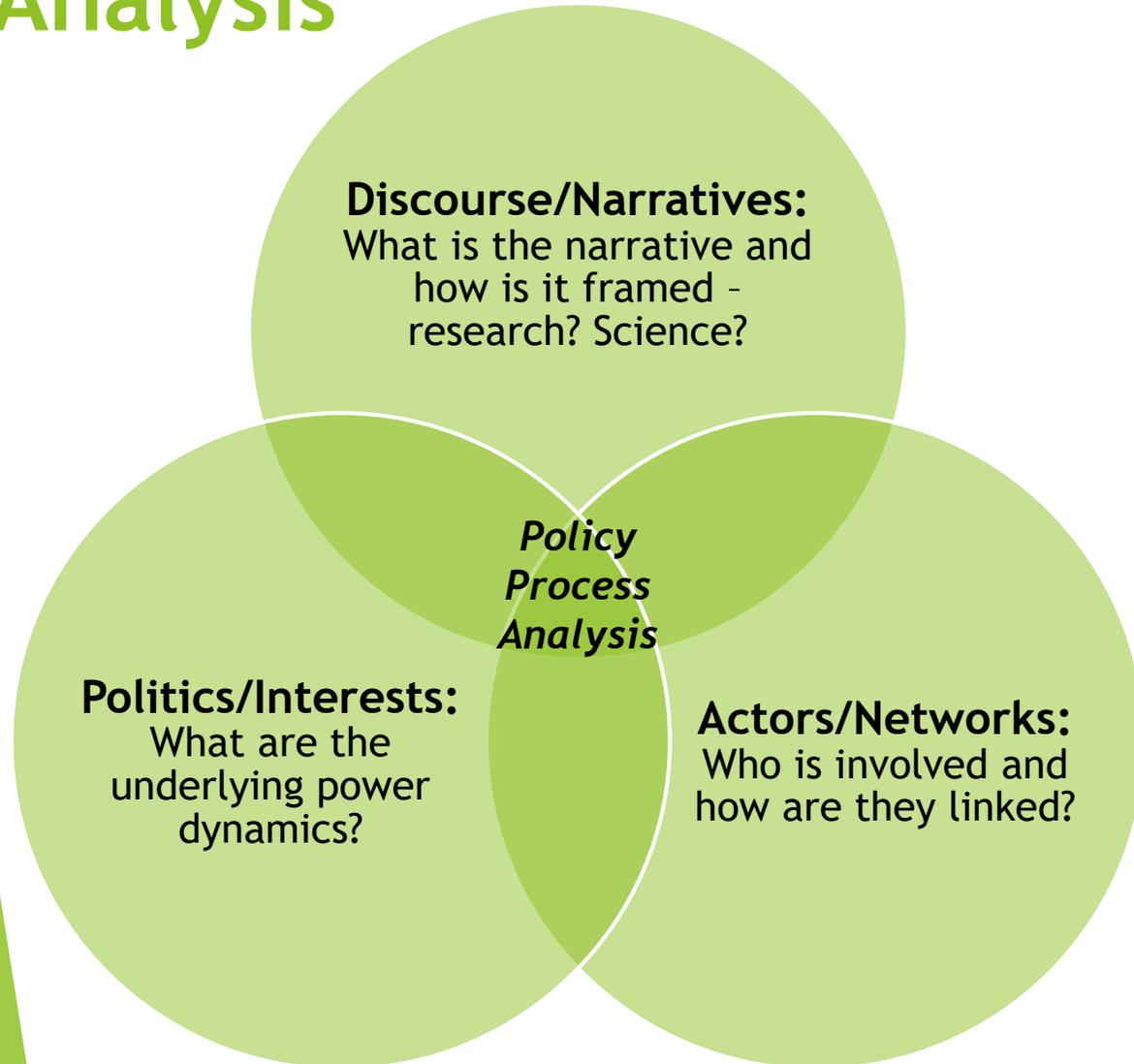
‘A chaos of purposes and accidents....not rational implementation of so-called ‘decisions’ through selected strategies’

'Instrumental' view of Policy

- ▶ Rational, linear process - “neutral & value free” - agenda-setting based on conventional understanding of the issues, ‘good science’ – easiest to conceptualise
- ▶ Information failure, limited resources – prevent assessment of all policy options and outcomes, considers only a small number of alternative objectives/instruments
- ▶ Dichotomy between policy decisions and implementation mechanism opens up ‘escape routes’ for policy-makers to avoid responsibility for failures



'Critical' view of Policy - Policy Process Analysis



- ▶ How actors develop certain policy narratives within a political context which at the same time constrains them = *“heart of the policy process”*
- ▶ Political economy studies give greater insights on policy making than the linear model (e.g. Fairfield, 2004, for Bolivia, and Vu, 2003, for Vietnam)

Challenges with SLS policy development



- ▶ Many policy settings fail to appreciate livestock's role in food security and poverty reduction; assumes overall objective is increased meat/milk production
- ▶ Default to policy settings that support commercial and semi-commercial production systems, often in formal market chains, whilst important nutritional, economic and socio-cultural outputs of SLS often under-estimated
- ▶ SLS maximize a 'survival' rather than a 'production' function-lack of incentive/capacity to intensify, compared to farmers with commercial establishments where inputs into disease control etc may be financially beneficial (FAO 2008)

Importance of Critical View of Policy



- ▶ The underlying “political economy” of policy making must be acknowledged and understood - understanding “who gains, who loses and who calls the shots” (Scoones 2010)
- ▶ Understanding the relevant policy processes - and in particular the mechanisms by which potential policy solutions should be applied and communicated - is an important first step in promoting the contribution of SLS to food safety and security in LMICs worldwide
- ▶ Understanding what constitutes ‘evidence’ for policy, and what this may look like to different actor-networks, has the potential to help improve research design, resulting in greater utilisation of research efforts in this area



‘By the time these (policies) come to us, political decisions have been made. So you have no choice but to keep working and implementing things you are so certain are wrong....

....some of us, we have lived through agony because all the time they are coming with the wrong decision - all we can do is try to “moderate” the exercise of the wrong thing, so that’s what we do....’

- Senior official, MAAIF Uganda