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Community-based tourism homestays' capacity to advance the Sustainable Development Goals: A holistic sustainable livelihood perspective

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ABSTRACT

Community-based tourism is an approach to tourism presumed to achieve progress on SDG1 No Poverty and SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities. In rural communities, homestays are a critical CBT component given tourists need lodging and the capacity to involve many village families. As a result, h h homestays appear to make a positive contribution to lifting whole families out of poverty while retaining decision-making within the community. However, it is not clear what the true capacity is of homestays' to advance these SDGs when examining them from a holistic sustainable livelihood perspective. This research adopts the Sustainable Livelihood Framework to critically examine both livelihood benefits and costs of operating a homestay. Taking a case-study approach, semi-structured interviews, observation notes and secondary sources were combined to study homestay operators in a CBT destination in Laos. Findings highlight that operating homestays offers significant capacity to advance SDG1 and 11, however, extensive costs requiring collective planning and management were also uncovered.

1. Introduction

For developing countries, tourism has long been seen as an avenue for sustainable development (Scheyvens & Laeis, 2019). Particular focus has been placed on tourism's potential contribution to poverty reduction (Saarinen & Rogerson, 2014) as well as on the conservation of the natural environment (Edgell, 2019); although tourism's far-reaching negative impacts are also widely acknowledged (Caton, Schott, & Daniele, 2014). When the United Nation's Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were ratified in 2015, it is not surprising that tourism was identified as pivotal in in ing making progress towards achieving the SDGs. Tourism's important role in this context was subsequently formalised in the declaration of the, 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. A popular tourism initiative that is considered consistent with tourism-based sustainable development is Community-based tourism (CBT). In simple terms, CBT is an alternative form of tourism development that concentrates on community participation in all processes from idea formulation to planning, implementation, management, monitoring, evaluation, and benefit sharing (Schott & Nhem, 2018). It is akin to sustainable tourism by encompassing socio-cultural, environmental and economic dimensions (Dangi & Jamal, 2016).

In the context of the SDGs, CBT is thought to contribute to SDG1 No Poverty because it has been demonstrated to support job creation (López-Guzmán, Borges, & Castillo-Canalejo, 2011; Manyara & Jones, 2007) as well as improve z z localized economic connections resulting in reduced economic leakages (Lapeyre, 2010). CBT is also regarded as a positive driver for SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities where it encourages local participation, empowerment, and decision-making (Duffy, 2002) while also improving local infrastructure such as health care, transportation and communication which benefit the community (Manyara & Jones, 2007). While on the surface CBT then appears well-positioned to advance SDG1 and SDG11, Boluk, Cavaliere, and Higgins-Desbiolles (2019) remind us that we need to critically assess and evaluate assumptions about tourism's contributions to sustainability. Hence, we need to examine CBT homestays from a holistic perspective to understand their *true* capacity to advance SDG1 and SDG11 by considering both costs and benefits in a broader livelihood context.

An analytical lens that offers such a perspective is the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Scoones, 1998), which frames livelihood as holistic activities that not only include subsistence income and employment, but also the link between assets and the related options

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people retain to supplement alternative activities in order to generate income (Ellis, 2000). While rural community-based tourism development, such as CBT homestays, should be guided by the principle of sustainable livelihoods (Anand, Chandan, & Singh, 2012), it is unclear what the holistically-considered livelihood outcomes for the people and communities involved in CBT homestays are. In other words, the true capacity of this type of tourism development to advance SDG1 No Poverty, to end poverty in all its forms everywhere (UN, 2020), is unclear when considering the wider implications for a family to devote their time and labour to running a homestay. Equally, despite the apparent alignment of CBT homestays with SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, which seeks to make human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UN, 2020), we lack deeper understanding of homestays' broader impacts on the holistic sustainability of a community. In this paper we adopt a critical perspective on CBT homestays as tools for sustainable development of rural areas by examining the outcomes of operating a homestay from a holistic livelihood perspective. Specifically, this paper is guided by two aims: it seeks to examine the diverse benefits of homestays for operators' livelihoods, before illuminating the under-researched costs of CBT homestays when adopting a holistically-focused holistic SLF perspective. These aims are serve to ultimately better understand the true capacity of this type of sustainability-minded tourism development to contribute to SDG1 and SDG11.

2. Literature review

2.1. Community-based tourism and homestays

CBT is often described as alternative tourism aimed at at combatting mass tourism in the developing world as well as aiding rural communities in the global South through grassroots development, local participation, empowerment and capacity building (Dangi & Jamal, 2016; Isaac, 2010). There is a lack of agreement among experts about a definition of CBT given its context-dependent nature, but the core distinguishing features of CBT can be summarized as local ownership of development projects, strong participation of local communities in all stages of project development, and meaningful host-guest interaction (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Lynch, 1999). Potential benefits of CBT to the community include economic benefits, such as contributions to rural development and poverty eradication (Goh, 2015; Müller, Huck, & Markova, 2020; Salazar, 2012), as well as strengthened local cultural traditions (Kayat, 2010; Lenao, 2015), empowered rural communities (Salazar, 2012), cross-cultural exchange (Regmi & Walter, 2016), and the preservation of the natural environment and wildlife (Newsome, Moore, & Dowling, 2012; Reimer & Walter, 2013). The CBT approach has long been advocated as an integral part of sustainable tourism development (Okazaki, 2008) because it seeks to achieve economically, socio-culturally, and environmentally sustainable development, while at the same time aiming to increase the community's capacity to accommodate tourism by lessening the costs and enhancing the benefits of tourism (Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017). According to Benur and Bramwell (2015), CBT products incorporate a variety of touristic activities, local food and beverages, and accommodation services. Outdoor touristic activities typically include trekking, camping, walking, while indoor activities tend to focus on village activities including participating in cooking, weaving, and other traditional practices (Jugmohan, Spencer, & Steyn, 2016). Goodwin and Santilli (2009) note that homestays are regarded as the major component of CBTs given that homestays represent an authentic locally-run experience where tourists not only stay the night but also enjoy local food and other locally-anchored activities; and importantly, tourists need a place to sleep when visiting a CBT initiative. Lynch's (2005) definition describing homestays as types of accommodation where tourists pay to stay in private homes, interact with the host family living in the home and share communal space is consistent with the Lao approach to homestays examined in this study.

Homestays are sought to offer benefits to not only the individual homestay operators but also the community more broadly. From an economic perspective, operating a homestay has been found to enhance access to economic activities (Lama, 2013), which not only creates family income but can also improve other long-term livelihood opportunities such as health care and education (Shukor, Salleh, Othman, & Idris, 2014). Cash income, as for instance provided by visiting tourists, is a fundamental part of rural communities as it helps families with food security (Ashley, 2000). This is critical in the dry season or drought years when cash earnings from tourism can be used to purchase much-needed food (Mbaiwa, 2011). From a socio-cultural perspective, Leh and Hamzah (2012) note that homestays attract tourists to rural villages which in turn offers opportunities for cultural exchange and for tourists to increase their awareness and understanding of local cultures and lifestyles. At the same time, increased tourist interest in the local culture can strengthen the community's sense of identity (Ball, 2004). Furthermore, homestays have been found to help preserve natural resources by encouraging better community waste management (Kayat, 201010; Shukor et al., 2014).

Although homestays have been argued to offer many benefits to both operators and communities, the challenges of their operation should not be ignored (Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, & Duangsaeng, 2015). Tosun (2000) highlights that operating a homestay is time-consuming as participants require considerable time and skills to organise and sustain the homestay, which may in turn cause conflict with other livelihood activities (Ashley, 2000). Conflicts can arise both within and between different communities (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015) given that people share the same resources and use these resources to gain individual benefits or make a living. Despite the important role afforded to homestays as a major component of CBT (Sen & Walter, 2020), and by implication as an agent of rural sustainable development, there is still a significant gap in knowledge about the holistic impacts of homestays on the sustainable livelihoods of the operators as well as the the the (host) communities more broadly.

2.2. The concept of sustainable livelihoods

According to Ellis (1999), livelihood denotes the means, activities, and assets by which an individual or household make a living. In addition, a livelihood is not just about income and employment, but it also involves diverse strategies for living (Chambers & Conway, 1992). According to Chambers and Conway (1992), who coined the term sustainable livelihood,

"A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. 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". (p.6).

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) developed by Scoones (1998) builds on this definition and considers the multitude of activities that rural communities perform to support their livelihoods. SLF puts people at the centre of development activities and focuses on the capacities, knowledge, and skills that communities already have (Scoones, 1998). As illustrated in Fig. 1, SLF consists of five key elements including context, conditions and trends, livelihood resources, institutional processes and organizational structures, livelihood strategies, and sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Scoones' (1998) framework illustrates how sustainable livelihoods are achieved by accessing livelihood resources. The resources (capitals) are combined in the pursuit of different livelihood strategies. In the framework's centre are a range of institutional and organizational factors that influence sustainable livelihood outcomes. The scope and critical focus of this paper is on the relationship between livelihood resources, livelihood strategies, and livelihood outcomes. As such, these three components are discussed in detail, while the framework's other components are beyond the scope of this article. Livelihood capitals are:

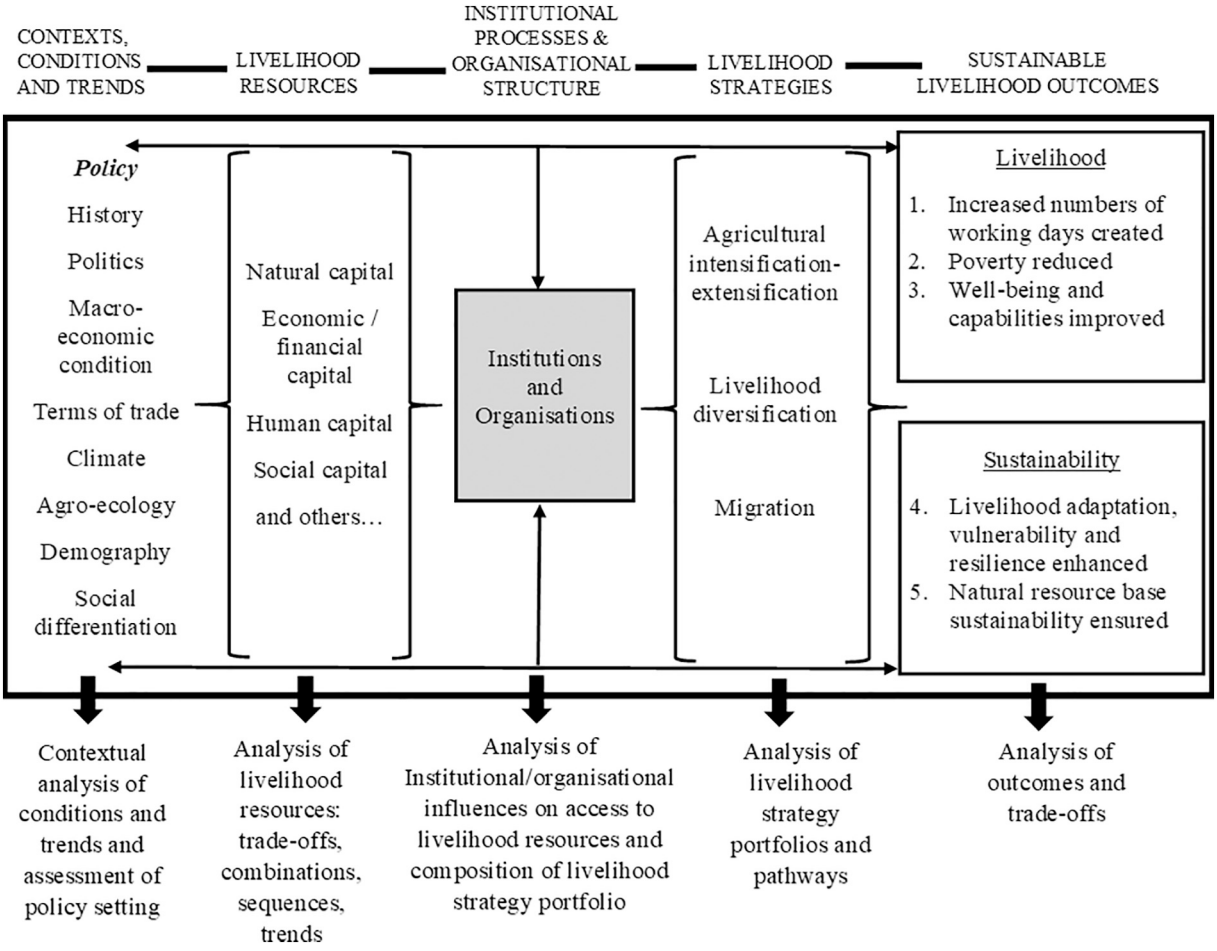

Fig. 1. Sustainable Livelihood Framework.
Source: Scoones (1998)

natural capital, human capital, economic or financial capital, physical capital, and social capital (Table 1). These livelihood capitals are both interconnected and interrelated.

Livelihood strategies are the activities employed to generate the means of household survival. Scoones (1998) states that livelihood strategies are activities people do and prioritise to gain a living. Ellis (2000) divides livelihood strategies into two categories: natural resource-based activities (collection or gathering products from woodlands and forests, food cultivation, non-food keeping and pastoralism, brick-making, weaving, thatching) and non-natural resource-based activities (rural cultivation, livestock trade, services such as vehicle repair, rural manufacturing, and remittance (urban and international).

Table 1
Summary of Livelihood Capitals and Elements.

Livelihood Capital	Elements
Natural Capital	The natural resource stocks (soil, water, air, etc.) and environmental services (hydrological cycle, pollution sinks etc.) from which resource flows and services useful for livelihoods are derived.
Human Capital	The skills, knowledge, ability to work, good health and overall physical capability important for the successful pursuit of different livelihood strategies.
Financial Capital	The financial capital base (cash, credit/debt, savings, and other economic assets) which is essential for the pursuit of any livelihood strategies.
Physical Capital	The basic infrastructure (changes to the physical environmental that help people to meet their basic needs and to be more productive, such as road, etc) and the equipment and tools needed to support livelihoods.
Social Capital	The social resources (networks, social relations, affiliations, associations) which people draw on when pursuing livelihood strategies that require collaboration or coordination.

Source: Adapted from DfID (1999) and Scoones (1998)

The sustainable livelihood outcome indicators include creation of working days, poverty reduction, well-being and capacities, livelihood adaptation and resilience, and natural resource base sustainability (Scoones, 1998). The SLF has been adopted in only a handful of tourism studies, with a cluster of publications involving Wall. These publications include Tao and Wall (2009) exploring the links between tourism and other livelihood strategies, Su, Wall, and Xu (2016a, 2016b) examining community resettlement at a Chinese World Heritage site in the context of tourism, Su, Wall, and Jin (2016) investigating fishing and tourism on a Chinese island, whilst Su, Wall, Wang, and Jin (2019) adapted SLF to analyse the interrelationship between tourism and rural subsistence in a Chinese town. Additionally, Ashley (2000) examined the impacts of tourism on rural livelihoods in Namibia, whilst Lee (2008) employed SLF in the context of pick-your-own farms and farmers' livelihoods, and Munanura, Backman, Hallo, and Powell (2016) studied perceptions of tourism revenue sharing in Rwanda. These studies have demonstrated the value of applying SLF to a tourism context, however, a nuanced application of the SLF to a specific CBT product such as homestay is still lacking; additionally, SLF studies in tourism are concentrated in mainland China, Taiwan, and several African countries, thus far ignoring the rapidly developing tourist destinations of South East Asia.

In a global cross-sectoral context, the United Nation's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the associated Sustainable

Development Goals give focus to what the world's sustainability goals for the next 10 years are considered to be. Agenda 2030 is bold in its ambitions as it seeks to "transform our world" (UN, 2020, n.p.), which speaks to the severity and urgency of many of the sustainability challenges we are understood to be facing. As a global road map towards a 'better world' the SDGs have garnered considerable momentum over the last five years and tourism is seen as a pivotal driver in this context because of the importance as well as the responsibility of tourism as a key economic sector to make a difference, both locally and globally (Saarinen, 2020). While all SDGs are of relevance to tourism, SDG1 No Poverty and SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities will be introduced to frame the article's focus. SDG1 aims to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere" (UN, 2020, n.p.) and is supported by seven targets. It is not considered one of the four key enabling SDGs identified by the International Council for Science, but it has strong direct interactions with SDG2 Zero Hunger, SDG3 Good Health and Well-being, SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy, and SDG14 Life Below Water (ICSU, 2017). SDG11 seeks to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable" (UN, 2020, n.p.). The goal is supported by a total of ten targets and is also directly connected to the four key enabling SDGs highlighted above (ICSU, 2017).

2.3. Case study

Phou Kao Khouay National Protected area (PKK NP) is a large protected area in Laos covering 88 km from West to East and 40 km from North to South (Sirivongs & Tsuchiya, 2012). The park is comprised of various types of forests, waterfalls, and rivers (Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism, 2016), while endangered wild animals such as Asian elephants, white-cheeked gibbons, and green peafowls are also found in the park (Vongkhamheng, 2015). Due to these characteristics a CBT project was developed in PKK NP in 2003 by two communities; Nakhaopha and Hathkai. The Nakhaopha community is situated in the East of PKK NP,1.5 kms on a dirt road from the main road and consists of 130 families. Hathkai is located to the North of Nakhaopha and consists of 125 families. For both communities farming and wet rice cultivation are the main livelihood activities. In a touristic context PKK NP's CBT offers nature-based products, including trekking, boating, kayaking, wildlife observation, and visiting waterfalls, as well as homestays which includes not only accommodation but also tourists experiencing the local culture and lifestyle (making of handicraft and opportunities to cook local food).

Tourist numbers to PKK NP have fluctuated over the last eight years (Table 2). The overall trend in international visits to the CBT communities is gradually declining and this decline translates to decreasing visitor numbers for CBT homestays. The downward trend may be due to an increase in competition between provinces as well as an overall drop in international tourists to Laos (Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism, 2019). Unfortunately, however, the tourism statistics are incomplete as domestic visitor statistics are not available.

Table 2
Numbers of International Visitors to the PKK NP CBT.

Year	Nakhaopha		Hathkai	
	Total visitors *	Doing homestay	Total visitors *	Doing homestay
2012	610	150	863	374
2013	689	200	691	328
2014	612	180	494	125
2015	525	170	467	122
2016	467	165	455	115
2017	460	158	396	101
2018	38	20	432	126
2019	30	14	342	58

Source: BDICT (2019); *(includes visitors to the park and doing the village tour).

3. Methodology

A case study approach is employed with a focus on a single case study, as it enables the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the case examined than in a multiple case study approach (Yin, 2017). Given the research explores how CBT homestays impact on the sustainable livelihood of homestay operators a single case study is the most appropriate approach as it provides deep insight into the diverse impacts on a specific group of people participating in tourism (Yin, 1994). Triangulation was employed to complement different sets of data; semi-structured interviews, field notes from observation, and secondary sources. The SLF guided the development of the research questions and was subsequently enlisted as the core analytical tool to understand the breadth of impacts triggered by homestay tourism. To provide a sufficient range of perspectives and experiences an even number of participants from both villages was targeted. In line with the research aims, representatives of the three layers of homestay management were sought from each village, spanning community leaders, who have responsibility for overseeing the management of the homestays, to heads of tourist guides and their deputies, who act as homestay tourism managers in the village, and finally the homestay operators themselves. As both villages are small and the researchers were mindful of minimising disruption, a total of 2 community leaders, 4 heads of tourist guides, 8 deputy heads of tourist guides, and 20 homestay operators were invited to participate in the research. The majority of those invited (26 respondents) agreed to participate while two homestay operators, two heads of tourist guides and four deputy heads declined the invitation for a variety of reasons. In terms of respondents, hthe the the homestay operator group group consisted of 11 women and seven men. The eleven women completed only primary school, while the seven men completed secondary school (four) or college (three).

In line with Patton's (1999) conceptualisation of triangulation, which he defined as the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena, the study combined semi-structured interviews with field observation notes and secondary sources. Secondary data was gathered from various organisations including the Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA), Borlikhamxay Department of Information Culture and Tourism (BDICT), Thaphabath Department of Information Culture and Tourism (TDICT), community leaders, and the heads of the tourist guides. Additionally, field notes were taken while exploring the villages as well as while staying in homestays in the two communities during the fieldwork. Finally, the bulk of the data for this study was provided by in-depth interviews with the above-mentioned respondents. Ultimately the three data sources were combined to develop a comprehensive overview of the CBT and homestays which was not offered by one source alone. The different data sources were also used to cross-check information and to thus enhance the validity of the data (Golafshani, 2003). Once all three data sources were compiled the analysis was guided by the SLF to ensure a critical and holistic perspective on homestay's far-reaching positive and negative impacts. The information about livelihood capitals and livelihood strategies was obtained from semi-structured interviews with community leaders, heads of the tourist guides (Appendix B), and homestay operators (Appendix A), as well as through on-site observations. Data related to livelihood outcomes was gathered through semi-structured interviews with the homestay operators (Appendix A).

A deductive approach was adopted by enlisting the SLF to guide the analysis. The interviews, which were conducted in Lao, where initially transcribed in Lao before they were translated into English. To enhance the validity and reliability of the core data the translation was cross-checked by a Laos-based academic familiar with CBT and fluent in English and Lao. Guided by the SLF and research questions, transcripts were coded using thematic analysis in NVivo 12. Owing to the fact that the author who conducted the research grew up in rural Laos, speaks fluent Lao, and is very familiar with cultural protocols in rural Laos she

was able to relate to the respondents and interpret their responses in their cultural context, however neither author had visited the case study area prior to the fieldwork for this study.

4. Findings

We initially analysed the livelihood capitals of the homestay operations, as people require a range of livelihood capitals to achieve positive livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 1998). The five capitals identified, and their characteristics, are summarized in Table 3 and will now be discussed in turn.

Natural capital plays a significant role given that homestay operations are reliant on natural resources to attract tourists to the rural villages in the first place. Natural capital includes forests, which attract tourists for trekking and to experience endangered animals, as well as rivers which are used to transport tourists and for water-based activities such as kayaking and rafting. In the context of human capital, it is important to note that operating a homestay is often a whole-of-family activity with the operator's family members helping with housekeeping, cooking, and cleaning. Most commonly the head of the family welcomes and communicates with guests, while other family members fulfil more of the housekeeping and kitchen roles due to limited English language skills. All the homestay heads have English language skills owing to basic language training provided by LNTA at the initial stage of the CBT development. This is consistent with Murray, Elliot, Simmonds, Madeley, and Taller (2017) who found that although it is challenging for the host community to acquire sufficient English language skills, community members appreciate that languages are a critical skill in order to provide effective service.

With regard to financial capital, there are two main sources that homestays have access to in Laos; their own savings and financial support from external organisations. In the CBT setup phase, homestay operators relied heavily on financial assistance from the Laos government and NGOs; this is consistent with Schott and Nhem (2018) who identified financial support from NGOs and governments as crucial in the development of new CBTs seeing that local communities have a lack of financial capacity. Although homestay operators often have small amounts of savings that could be used for homestay setup and improvements, the savings are often earmarked for other livelihood activities such as raising animals or crops. Road infrastructure is the key physical capital identified which plays the crucial role of providing tourist access to PKK NP and the communities. Other physical capital includes the tourist information centre, which is used for welcoming tourists with a Baci ceremony as well as for providing cultural activities during their stay. Both communities also have a community lodge for those who prefer not to stay with local families, as well as homestays for those looking for a more connected experience. It was noted during the interviews, that homestay buildings needed to be maintained on both the outside as well as inside, which in turn represented a further physical capital.

In the context of social capital, the interviews highlighted that homestay operators have strong networks with community insiders as well as outsiders and consider these networks to be an important resource. For instance, they have regular contact with friends, cousins, and neighbours for social exchange as well as for supporting each other with livelihood activities. In addition, friends, cousins, and neighbours provide an important support network by sharing food and food ingredients. Relationships with government staff are also considered social capital because, although CBT is under the management of the village, advice and support is provided by the district tourism department and NGO staff. Other important relationships include networks with tour operators to assist with marketing of the CBT and homestays. According to Schott and Nhem (2018), developing strong networks with other tourism businesses and tour operators can diversify distribution channels, which act as a critical mechanism to connect homestays to the tourism market, and as a result lead to increased income. Importantly, interviewees also commented on the importance of strong networks with former tourists which act as catalysts for informal marketing through word-of-mouth and social media.

To understand the holistic impact of CBT homestays, an examination of all livelihood activities is crucial as communities in developing countries sustain themselves through multiple livelihood activities rather than a single job, and tourism is generally a supplementary rather than a core livelihood activity (Tao & Wall, 2009). The findings show that homestay operators' livelihood activities are diverse and includedd farm as well as non-farm-based activities, in addition to operating a homestay. Farm-based activities were the main livelihood activities of most operators and included wet rice cultivation, raising animals, and growing rubber trees and cash crops. Wet rice cultivation was the most widely practiced activity, which is common in Laos, where rice is the main food for rural people (Douangsavanh, Polthanee, & Katawatin, 2006). Raising animals included buffalos, cattle, poultry, and fish, while cash crops encompassed tomatoes, pineapples, banana, and other types of garden vegetables. At the same time, non-farming activities were also widely practiced, including handicraft such as crafting of sticky rice boxes and basketry. A few operators also worked as school teachers and two homestay operators also ran small grocery shops from their homes.

All respondents viewed the running of homestays as a supplementary livelihood activityoffering valued additional income, rather than considering it it as the main activity and income earner. This supplementary role of tourism is supported by Tao and Wall (2009) who argue that this is an important feature of a sustainable livelihood approach as otherwise there is the inherent risk of tourism displacing existing activities. The provision of accommodation and food and drink to guests were the main tasks of the homestay operators. However, many operators also participated in other CBT-related activities such as the handicraft performance group, Baci ceremony and cooking group. Additionally, some also worked as tour guides, while others provided boat renting and car renting services for tourists. These livelihood activities were all part of the PKK NP CBT and strongly linked to the crucial homestay component of CBT, thus illustrating the strong synergies and overlap between different CBT-related activities.

Table 3
Livelihood Capitals of Homestay Tourism in PKK NP.

Capital	Type	Role in support of HT
Natural capital	Wildlife	Attracting tourists for endangered wildlife viewing
	Waterways and scenery	Attracting tourists for enjoyment of scenery and kayaking on rivers
Human capital	Household skills	Family members with housekeeping and food preparation skills
	Language skills	Family members with English language skills to communicate with tourist
Financial capital	Financial support	Funding by government and NGOs for construction of infrastructure and buildings
Physical capital	Transport infrastructure	All-year road access to PKK NP and communities
	Tourism information	Tourism office to meet and provide welcome activities for tourists
	Tourist accommodation	Community lodge for tourists who prefer not to stay in homestay
	Tourist accommodation	The level of standard and maintenance of homestays
	Tourist accommodation	The number of homestay operations
Social capital	Community internal	Friends, cousins, and neighbours that support each other in daily livelihood activities as well as sharing of food ingredients
	External to communities	Government staff who provide support and advice for operational issues
	External to communities	Satisfied tourists providing word-of-mouth and social media marketing

4.1. Livelihood outcomes of homestays

The interviews with the 18 homestay operators revealed that while operating a homestay led to a range of positive livelihood outcomes, several challenges were also uncovered. The positive livelihood outcomes were wide-reaching, thus demonstrating significant capacity to contribute to SDG1 and SDG11, as well as, unexpectedly, SDG5 Gender Equality. Benefits include cash-based income, empowerment of women, cultural revitalisation, and enhancement of the local natural environment. However, respondents were also critical of homestays and highlighted a range of significant costs experienced as a result of operating a homestay; thus illustrating the potential weaknesses of this form of rural tourism development when seeking to achieve Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The negative outcomes encompassed a range of opportunity costs that had negative impacts on other livelihood activities, as well as 'culture shock', and conflict with other community members.

In the context of benefits, respondents discussed that homestays provide a highly valued source of cash income, a finding reflected by other CBT homestay studies (Ashley, 2000; Bhalla, Coghlan, & Bhattacharya, 2016). Although operators explained that the income earned from homestays is neither as much nor as frequent as income earned from the sale of animals and handicraft products, it was considered very important as it was available immediately. In stark contrast, the sale of animals and handicraft to wholesalers and regional markets led to credit-based income which did not provide the same flexibility as the cash received from tourists. Cash is considered the fundamental financial capital for households in rural areas in Laos because it supports the purchase of essential household and farming needs when credit from wholesalers is not accepted. Interestingly, the high importance of cash income is not limited to South East Asia, as Ashley (2000) made the same observation while examining tourism's impact on Namibia's rural communities. Critically, homestay operators also spent this supplementary income on supporting their children's education, which in turn enhances the community's human capital through better education of the next generation. This aligns with Scoones' (1998) assertion that people are the centre of sustainable livelihoods, and that investment in education is likely to enhance community members' long-term sustainable livelihoods; a viewpoint shared by the SDGs, through SDG4 in particular.

The empowerment of women in social participation and decision-making was also identified as a benefit with respondents commenting that gender relations had greatly changed since the CBT and homestays were introduced. Homestay operations promote the social position of women in rural society, which aligns strongly with SDG5 Gender Equality, as the majority of operators are women. Because in South East Asian rural communities, women have a lesser social status (Phommavong & Sörensson, 2014), homestays are an important change agent; this aligns closely with Duflo's (2012) observation that economic development alone can play a major role in reducing inequality between men and women. Importantly, Acharya and Halpenny (2013) assert that gender empowerment, as observed in this case study, is not only beneficial for women' sustainable livelihoods but the livelihood of the whole family. The sense of empowerment experienced through operating a homestay is well illustrated by this female homestay operator.

"When I attend a meeting, I am not afraid of sharing my thought".

Another outcome highlighted as beneficial is the revitalisation of traditional skills and cultural practices, which contribute to sustainable communities (SDG11) through increased cultural resilience. In part owing to significant tourist interest, weaving skills and traditional dances are being practised more frequently and greater efforts are made to impart these important cultural skills to the next generation. For instance, young people are taught how to make handicraft products by parents and grandparents, while traditional dances are taught at the local school. This aligns with Shukor et al.'s (2014) Malaysian study that identified the profound importance of these cultural practices, which are seen as beneficial in both creating economic income as well as fostering skills to maintain the community's cultural heritage.

"All of my family can make handicraft products, even my young daughter. I encourage her to weave handicraft products when she does not study".

Better waste management also emerged as a beneficial outcome. Previously, villagers ignored waste management, which caused significant amounts of rubbish to be spread throughout the villages and the areas beyond. However, as a result of tourists visiting the CBT and staying in homestays greater care has been taken by the village communities to keep villages clean through improved waste management. Not surprisingly, this was echoed by studies from developing (Anand et al., 2012; Kayat, 2010; Yahaya, 2004) as well as developed countries (Hall, Mitchell, & Keelan, 1993), as better waste management does not only contribute to a better tourist experience (Lama, 2013), but also to a more sustainable community (SDG11) and enhancing local's good health and well-being (SDG3).

"Since the practice of waste management was encouraged, our community looks clean and there is no bad smell. In the past our village was full of rubbish spreading everywhere, at the house, at the temple, etc."

However, the interviews also revealed a range of pervasive negative outcomes, which included opportunity costs related to other livelihood activities, as well as culture shock and conflict with other members of the community. The opportunity costs were discussed in two contexts, the competition for time commonly spent on agricultural activities and the prioritisation of domestic livestock for homestay food rather than for market sale or barter. The most critical of these was found to be time management across different livelihood activities. Operating a homestay requires significant amounts of time when waiting for guests to arrive and being available during guest's mealtimes; however, this time is not productive in the same way as working on the family farm.

"I was working on the farm, and then tourist came to the village. I had to come to meet tourists wearing dirty and smelling clothes. Even though I was working on important activities at the farm, I had to go back to the village to receive tourists".

When tourists come in rice-growing season operators will need to take a break from attending to the rice paddies. This type of crop can only grow in the early rainy season and any delays can lead to lower productivity, which can cause homestay families to be without sufficient supply of this staple food for the entire year. This opportunity cost can mean that the net economic benefit of hosting guests, particularly if hosting only one guest, can be negative during important periods in the agricultural calendar. This finding was echoed in a Namibian context which demonstrated that competition for time translated into greater risks for operators in terms of economic benefits from other livelihood activities (Ashley, 2000). Respondents elaborated that competition for time can also create tensions and even conflict within families, which in turn impacts on the atmosphere and 'quality of service' in the homestay.

Competition for the use of domestic livestock was also identified as a cost because homestays rely heavily on ducks, chickens, and fish from their own livestock pool to provide food for tourists. Respondents highlighted that since they started operating a homestay they always keep a certain number of small livestock for the homestay operation because food prepared in a local style from local food sources was a highlight for many homestay guests; tourists strong interests in local food and food ingredients was also found in studies in Malaysia (Kayat, 2009; Razzaq et al., 2011), India (Peaty, 2009) and Thailand (Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015).

"If guests want to have fish as their meals, I can catch fish from my ponds".

Both opportunity costs, competition for time between livelihood activities and competition for use of domestic livestock, can negatively impact the homestay family's financial position. If not mitigated, these opportunity costs stand to significantly weaken the overall sustainable livelihood outcomes, and in turn may lead to negligible positive or even negative impacts on SDG1 No Poverty, which has flow-on effects for

SDG2 Zero Hunger.

Respondents also highlighted a negative outcome that they termed 'culture shock', which is associated with international tourists representing a range of cultural backgrounds that are different to the local Lao culture. Differences of expectations between the Lao hosts and international guests have led to cultural misunderstandings, which at times place operators under increased stress and uncertainty about how to provide for their guests in a way that satisfies both parties.

"I told them (tourists) that there is no bathtub in the bathroom, and that they have to take a bath by using a small bowl to lift water to the body

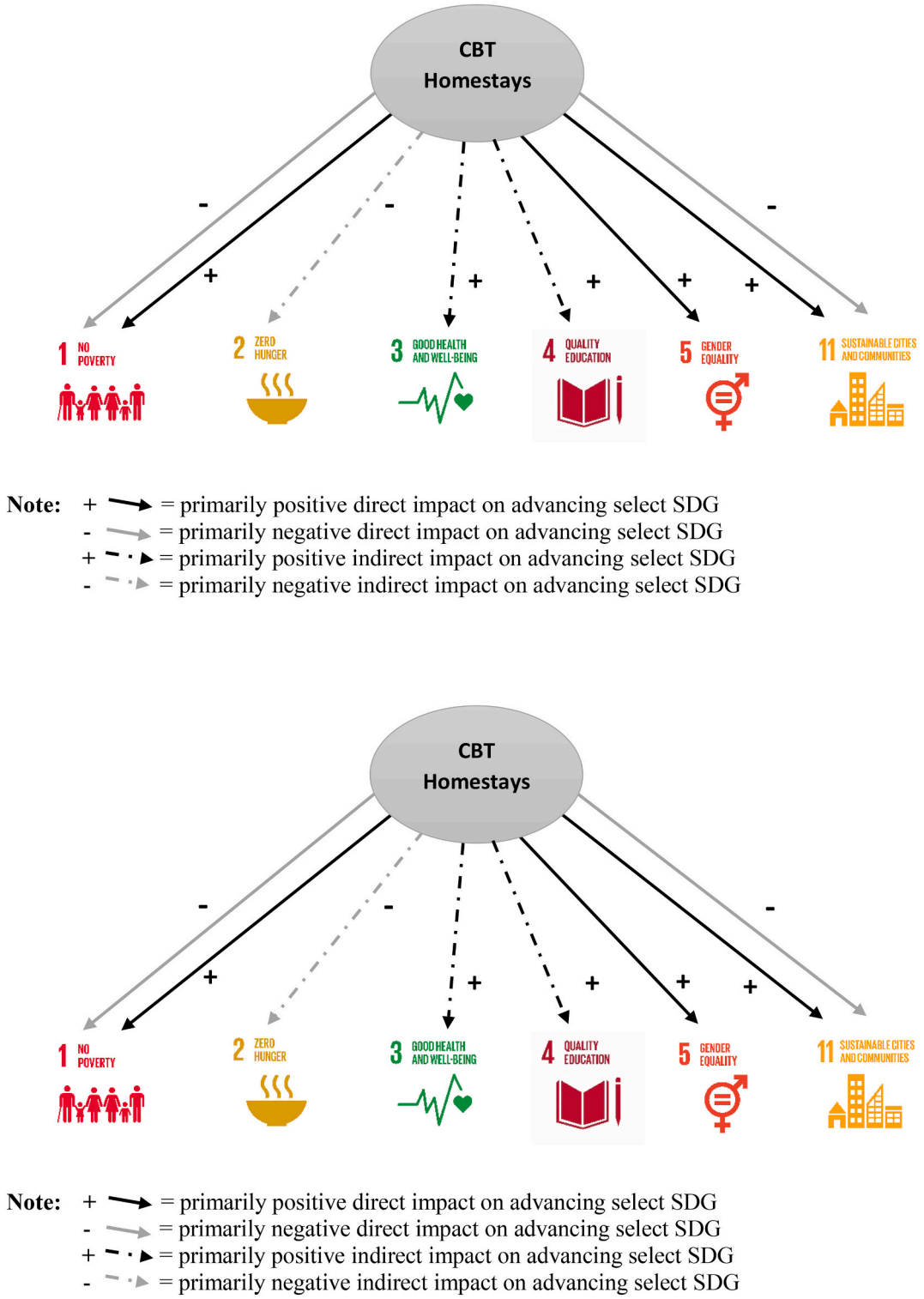

Fig. 2. Homestay's positive and negative impacts on advancing selected SDGs.
Note: ++ = primarily positive direct impact on advancing select SDG
-- = primarily negative direct impact on advancing select SDG
++ = primarily positive indirect impact on advancing select SDG
-- = primarily negative indirect impact on advancing select SDG.

(outside the house). However, something unexpected happened, I went to the bathroom after tourists finished their bath and I found that guests used a water basin as bathtub to soak themselves. I had to clean it up. I was angry but I tried to calm down".

The final cost of operating a homestay, when analysed from a holistic livelihood perspective, was the intra-community conflict that emerged as a result of homestays in the villages. Homestays share communal resources such as natural capital (trees, land, and the river), physical capital (road and electricity), and also financial capital as both an input and an output from the village fund. The community-focused concerns included conflict over the noise created by tourists, as well as a sense of jealousy over the economic income generated for individual families from operating a homestay. Life in rural communities is generally quiet and there are conventions about conduct in the community. Tourists, in particular overnight tourists in homestays, bring disruption to this quiet as they are often not aware of the conventions around village life. Tourists unfamiliar with village protocols create noise in the community throughout the day as well as during the evening, when it is particularly noticed, as those working in agriculture go to bed early; this finding is echoed by a Malaysian study which identified noise from tourists as also seen as disruptive by community members (Kayat, 2010). An associated negative outcome is conflict and jealousy over homestay income, which saw those who wanted to operate homestays but were not selected by the CBT committee being inauspicious towards those who operate homestays. Damaged social networks and a tense social climate within the community are counter-productive when seeking to advance SDG11 and can often also be sensed by tourists, which in turn undermines the attractiveness of the village as an attractive CBT destination.

5. Discussion

This paper adopted a critical and holistic livelihood perspective (Scoones, 1998) to identify diverse costs as well as wide-ranging benefits created by CBT homestays for the local community. By adopting this critical lens, we can shed light on homestay's true capacity to advance SDG1 No Poverty and SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Scoones' (1998) Sustainable Livelihood Framework served to identify a range of significant monetary as well as intangible benefits, which in combination were found to enhance the sustainable livelihoods of homestay operators in this rural area of Laos. These benefits stand to make meaningful progress towards SDG1 and SDG11 in particular, while also contributing directly to SDG5 Gender Equality and indirectly to SDGs 3 Good Health and Well-being and 4 Quality Education (Fig. 2). However, the critical perspective offered by the SLF also laid bare significant costs that can undermine CBT homestays' capacity to contribute towards a more sustainable future. Indeed, the reported costs risk nullifying any progress towards SDGs 1 and 11, or worse, as they relate to the communities' ''most valuable capitals, namely social capital in the form of a cohesive and resilient community network, and natural capital in terms of farmed land. For nearly all the observed costs, recalibrating the essence of *community*-based tourism should go a long way to addressing the observed issues and tensions. Unfortunately, studies highlight time and again that tourism income and other economic opportunities commonly lead to conflict within communities (Weng & Peng, 2014); even in communities that are considered culturally resilient.

At the same time, implications for Scoones' (1998) Sustainable Livelihood Framework also emerged from this study. While the framework was well-suited and effective in supporting this tourism-focused research in rural Laos, "cultural capital" both in terms of embodied and objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), was absent from Scoones' SLF, but emerged as a crucial livelihood asset for this community. As the absence of cultural capital leaves a significant gap in the SLF we echo the call by development studies researchers (Daskon & McGregor, 2012) who propose a stronger focus on cultural capital when studying rural communities as they found that "embodied cultural traditions and subsequent material outputs are vital 'resources' in achieving livelihood objectives and meeting family aspirations" (p.549). These findings closely align with ours and seeing that CBT-focused tourism research is most commonly located in rural communities we propose that "cultural capital" be added to Scoones' Sustainable Livelihood Framework to further enhance its holistic perspective by taking account of this important capital that is core to many rural communities.

5.2. Practical implications for progress on the SDGs

The findings identified a diverse range of benefits that arose from CBT homestays. They spanned cash income, enhanced gender empowerment, cultural revitalisation, as well as practical improvements, such enhanced waste management. Cash income was found to contribute both directly and indirectly to SDG1 No Poverty as it allows not only for the needs of the homestay operators to be met, but also other community members through a localised economic multiplier effect. Zapata, Hall, Lindo, and Vanderschaeghe (2011) remind us that the use of cash income for health care, SDG3 Good Health and Well-being, and children's education, SDG4 Quality Education, also leads to enhanced human capital, which in turn has longer term benefits for reducing poverty and making progress towards SDG1. Equally, while Ball (2004) points out that cultural revitalisation is primarily reflected in strengthened community identity, structures, and practices, which contribute to SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, it also translates into new economic opportunities for community members (Krystal, 2000); thus contributing to SDG1 No Poverty. These opportunities encompass the sale of traditional handicrafts, food, and performances which are a reflection of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), that is catalysed further by tourist interest.

Gender empowerment primarily contributes towards advancing SDG5 Gender Equality as respondents spoke of greater respect extended by the community, its leadership, and family members to women who operated homestays. Although still the subject of debate due to several layers of complexities (Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012), there are also direct economic benefits that flow from women's empowerment (Anand et al., 2012), which in turn advance SDG1 by addressing target 1.4 "ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property …." (United Nations, 2020, n.p.). It is worth noting that ownership and control, as provided through homestays, can be hard for women to establish in traditional livelihood activities performed in rural areas. Although not explicitly mentioned by the SDG11 targets, it is also important to highlight that several studies have identified a relationship between women's empowerment through tourism and advances in the creation of more sustainable communities (Stronza, 2005; Tran & Walter, 2014). Conversely, cultural revitalisation and improved waste management are key mechanisms for progress towards SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, as articulated in targets 11.4 "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage" and 11.6, which is primarily targeted at cities but equally important to rural areas, "by 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management" (United Nations, 2020).

However, also identified were several costs that hinder progress on the SDGs, or indeed risk reversing some localised progress towards SDG1 and SDG11 if the identified issues are not managed consciously, collectively and effectively. The opportunity costs of operating a homestay perform, at best, a limiting, and at worst, a countering role for advancing SDG1 No Poverty with a potential flow-on effect on the critical SDG2 Zero Hunger. While the prioritisation of families' livestock

for homestay food instead of for market sale needs to be acknowledged here, the more critical issue is that running a homestay requires significant time commitments from the operator; and the time required to attend to tourists and their needs is unpredictable in both length and when it occurs. This time demand has the potential to have significant impacts on the families' crops, which along with domestic livestock are still the primary livelihood strategy for families. While time away from nature-based livelihood activities will always entail a certain amount of opportunity cost, this is exacerbated when tourism-related time commitments occur during the planting, growing, or harvesting time of vulnerable crop such as a rice. Both SDG2 targets 2.3 and 2.4 make refence to protecting, rendering more resilient, and where possible even increasing small scale agricultural production (United Nations, 2020), which highlights the crucial roles that family farming performs in the context of Agenda 2030. This suggests that the whole community needs to collaboratively manage this cost, by for instance coordinating via a rotation system which families welcome tourists on behalf of the whole community during the most crucial time in the agricultural calendar and which community members tend to that family's crops during this time.

Indeed, such a whole-of-community approach to mitigating the costs, while maximising the benefits from homestays, would also assist in addressing the other significant sustainable livelihood cost triggered by operating homestays - conflict within the community. Community conflict created by tourism initiatives clearly does nothing to advance SDG11; in fact, intra-community conflict will likely have a variety of indirect ramifications, which will lead to a less-sustainable community in the long term and ultimately cause negative outcomes for SDG11. The reported tourist noise disruption, also identified in previous studies (Kayat, 2010), as well as the challenge of cultural misunderstanding between hosts and guests, are both best managed through well-designed tourist interpretation of the local context and clearly communicated codes of conduct (Cole, 2007; Phan & Schott, 2019). Conversely, jealousy between members of the same community, which was also observed in a Cambodian CBT (Pawson, D'Arcy, & Richardson, 2017), requires a more collaborative and coordinated response; similar to the one proposed for the mitigation of time competition between homestays and agriculture. By sharing not only the input required to operate a homestay, but also the benefits, more widely across the community, conflict between community members should be reduced. In turn, the crucial social networks within communities would likely be strengthened, leading to communities that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG11) (United Nations, 2020).

6. Conclusions

This study set out to critically examine CBT homestays' capacity to support progress on Agenda 2030 with a particular focus on SDG1 No Poverty and SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities. The findings highlight that numerous direct and indirect benefits are created by CBT homestays. They not only assist in progressing SDGs1 and 11, but wider benefits were also identified that contribute to advancing SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing and SDG5 Gender Equality. However, the holistic perspective offered by Scoones' SLF also uncovered several notable costs that risk nullifying any progress towards SDGs 1 and 11 as they undermine the community's crucial social and natural capitals. As such we need to recognise that 'net positive' contributions to the SDGs from CBT homestays are not a given, and that careful consultative planning and management are essential in mitigating the negative impacts of this type of tourism development. To increase CBT homestays' capacity to produce 'net positive' outcomes in the context of the SDGs, a collective, culturally-anchored and coordinated community approach will allow for the benefits from both natural-resource based livelihood activities, such as farming, as well as from homestays to be maximised.

In view of the complexity of the SDGs as a global sustainability roadmap, an examination of CBT homestays in the context of the four enabler SDGs, SDG2 Zero Hunger, SDG3 Good Health and Well-being, SDG7 Affordable and Clean Energy, and SDG14 Life Below Water, is needed because progress on these four pivotal SDGs ignites progress on many of the remaining SDGs (ICSU, 2017). Although this study is based on CBT homestays in a rural area of Laos, related studies suggest that rural communities embracing homestays in other parts of South East Asia (Kayat, 2010; Shukor et al., 2014) as well as India (Anand et al., 2012) and Nicaragua (Zapata et al., 2011) experience similar benefits and costs. Nevertheless, further SLF-anchored examination of the livelihood outcomes of rural homestays in other countries, as well as in semi-urban communities, would nevertheless be valuable to add to this study's findings. It would also serve to crystalize the common livelihood-related dynamics underlying CBT homestay initiatives in different parts of the world. Additionally, when, as in this study, significant tourism-induced costs are evident in a community, longitudinal exploration of the cultural appropriateness and overall effectiveness of selected mitigation and management strategies is needed through a holistically-focused sustainable livelihood lens that incorporates cultural capital.

Indeed, adding cultural capital to Scoone's Sustainable Livelihood Framework adds additional analytical layers that are valuable in the context of many forms of tourism supply seeing that cultural capital is increasingly acknowledged in both tourism research and practice (Csapo, 2012); in terms of embodied capital, objectified capital, and institutionalized capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Furthermore, we call for much wider adoption of this analytical lens by tourism researchers as Sustainable Livelihood Frameworks have thus far only been applied sparingly in our field, although the SLF has offered much needed critical, yet balanced insight in this study. In addition, CBT projects and their individual products, such as homestays, would also benefit from different theoretical lenses, such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), which originates in organizational studies and has much to offer when examining CBT homestays' organizational structures and management.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100784.

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