

Commoning the Commons Rehabilitating Community Lands in India

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Context



- Grazing based livestock production sustains around 350 million livestock in the rainfed regions of India
- Households in dryland regions meet around 45% of their fodder requirement from the commons
 - pastures, forest, barren and uncultivated land, river and tank beds, agricultural fallows and in many areas harvested agricultural fields
- Grazing based extensive systems meets a substantial portion of the milk and meat requirements

Challenges

- Institutional erosion
- Lack of clear tenure
- Competing land uses
- Construct of ecological-social-economic positions
 - Social: Tragedy of Commons
 - Ecological: Carrying Capacity
 - Economic : Low Productivity

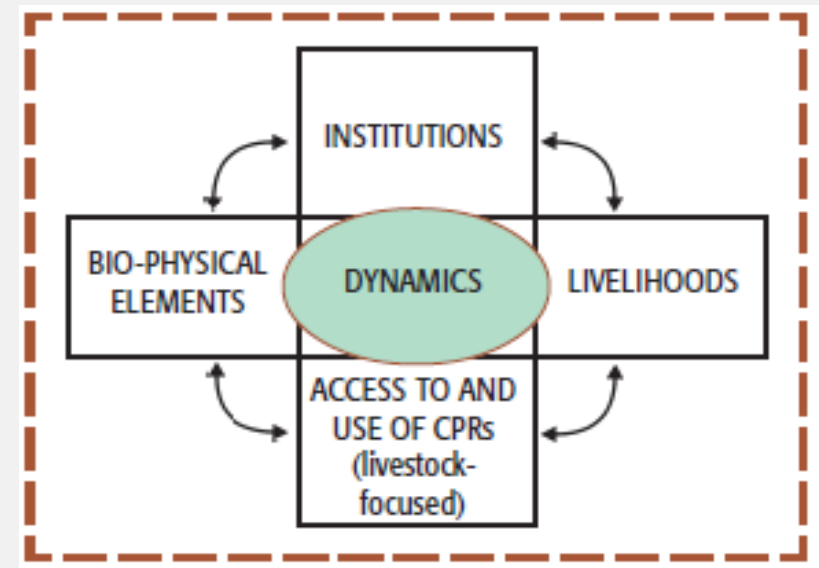
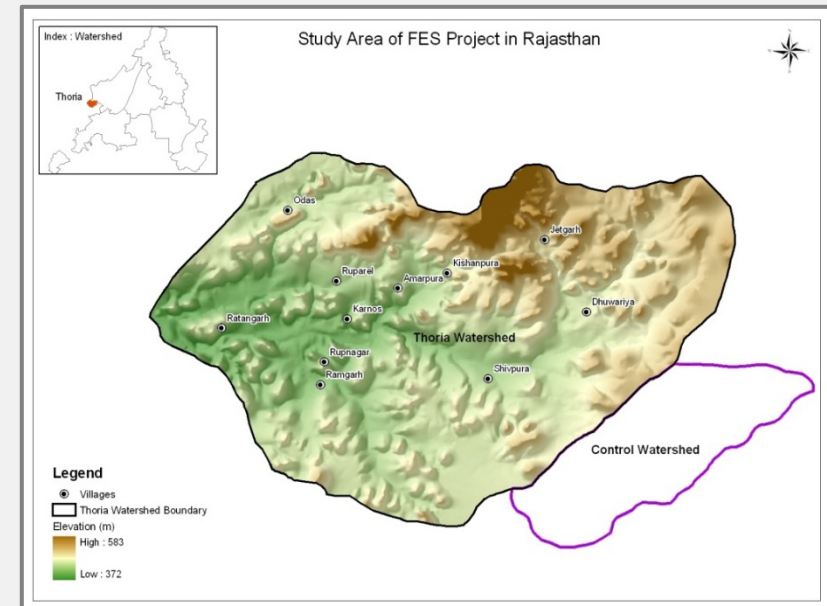


Commons and Community Ownership generally doesn't feature in the official vocabulary of land use



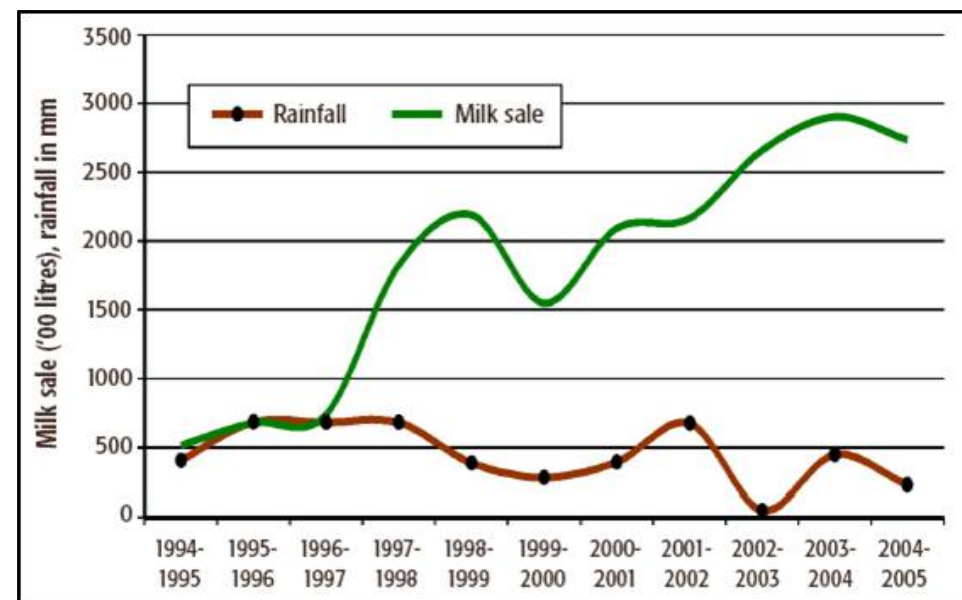
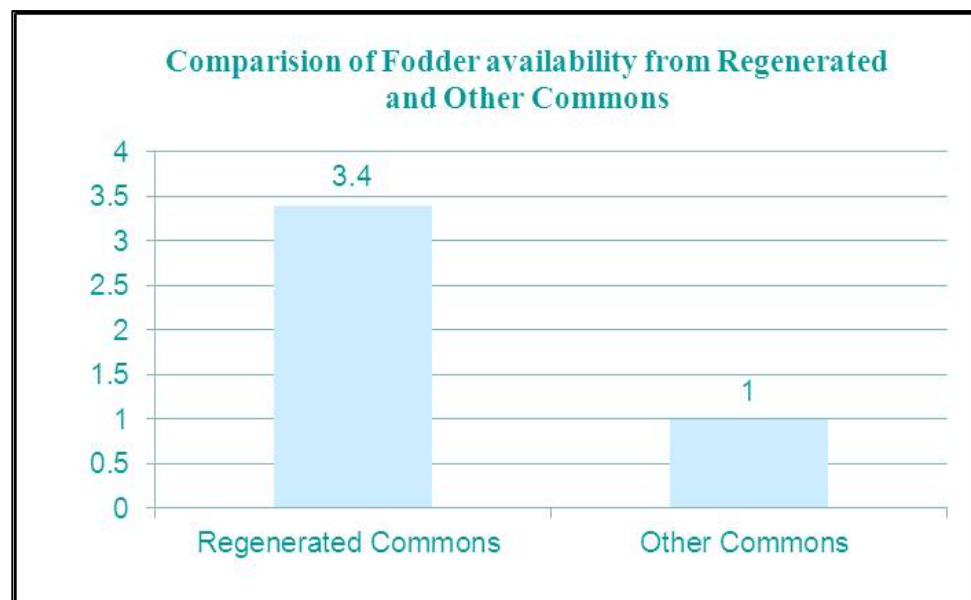
Case Site: Thoria Watershed, Rajasthan

- Rajasthan consists of 57.9 million livestock contributing to 10% of the country's milk, 40% of meat and 35% of the wool production.
- Thoria Watershed in the Ajmer district of Rajasthan spans over an area of about 4500 ha. Total FES coverage 720 thousand ha across 8 states.
- Common lands constitute nearly 65% of the total watershed area. Average annual rainfall of this area is 600 mm.
- 83% of the households are landless, marginal and small farmers depended on agriculture and livestock rearing for their livelihoods.



Change in Land Use Land Cover of Thoria watershed from 1993 to 2013

Land Use/land cover category	Area in Hectares				Change from 1993 to 2002	Change from 1993 to 2006	Change from 1993 to 2013	% Change from 1993 to 2002	% Change from 1993 to 2006	% Change from 1993 to 2013
	1993	2002	2006	2013						
Forest Cover	485	1377	1186	1923	892	701	1437	184	144	296
Single Crop	758	449	449	514	-309	-309	-243	-41	-41	-32
Double Crop	443	792	800	787	349	356	344	79	80	78
Scrubland	1933	1652	2001	1428	-281	68	-505	-15	4	-26
Wasteland	862	288	125	223	-575	-738	-639	-67	-86	-74



Based on a study undertaken by the South Asia Pro Poor livestock policy programme (a joint initiative of FAO and NDDB)

Findings

- Sale of produce to meeting needs - cartloads to head loads, no auction, a right rather than a concession
- Special focus on the poor - Big animals to equal rights for small animals holders
- Reduced costs on fodder and feed (and water) and security in drought periods
- Livestock holding in poor households increased by 15%
- Focus on local livestock species
- 50% of HH reported an increase in milk production attributing it to increase in fodder and water availability

Larger Lessons

- ❖ Aligning Commons tenure alongside state and individual ownership
- ❖ Commons as 'Spaces of the Poor'
- ❖ Devolution and investments
- ❖ Intertwining Conservation and livelihoods
- ❖ Ecologically sound regeneration
- ❖ *No panacea*

Informing the decisions of land managers and policy

- Building evidence from ground
- Energizing networks of networks of members from civil society, practitioners, experts and planners
- Mediating for spaces in Public Policy:
 - Work with State Governments as land is a State subject
 - National Level (Planning Commission, Ministry of Rural Development)
 - Build a larger constituency of partners (IASC Conference, Rainfed Livestock Network, ILC)
- Bring to surface the idea of common spaces, collective action, community ownership, knowledge commons, cultural commons into urban spaces by engaging with media
- Improving Information to Energize Local Visions of Development and Assist in Better Decision Making (Rainfed Area Portal)



Working on common lands, mistakenly called 'wastelands', provides a unique opportunity to act through a singular platform on the issues of poverty alleviation, social justice and improving ecological health.

Thank You