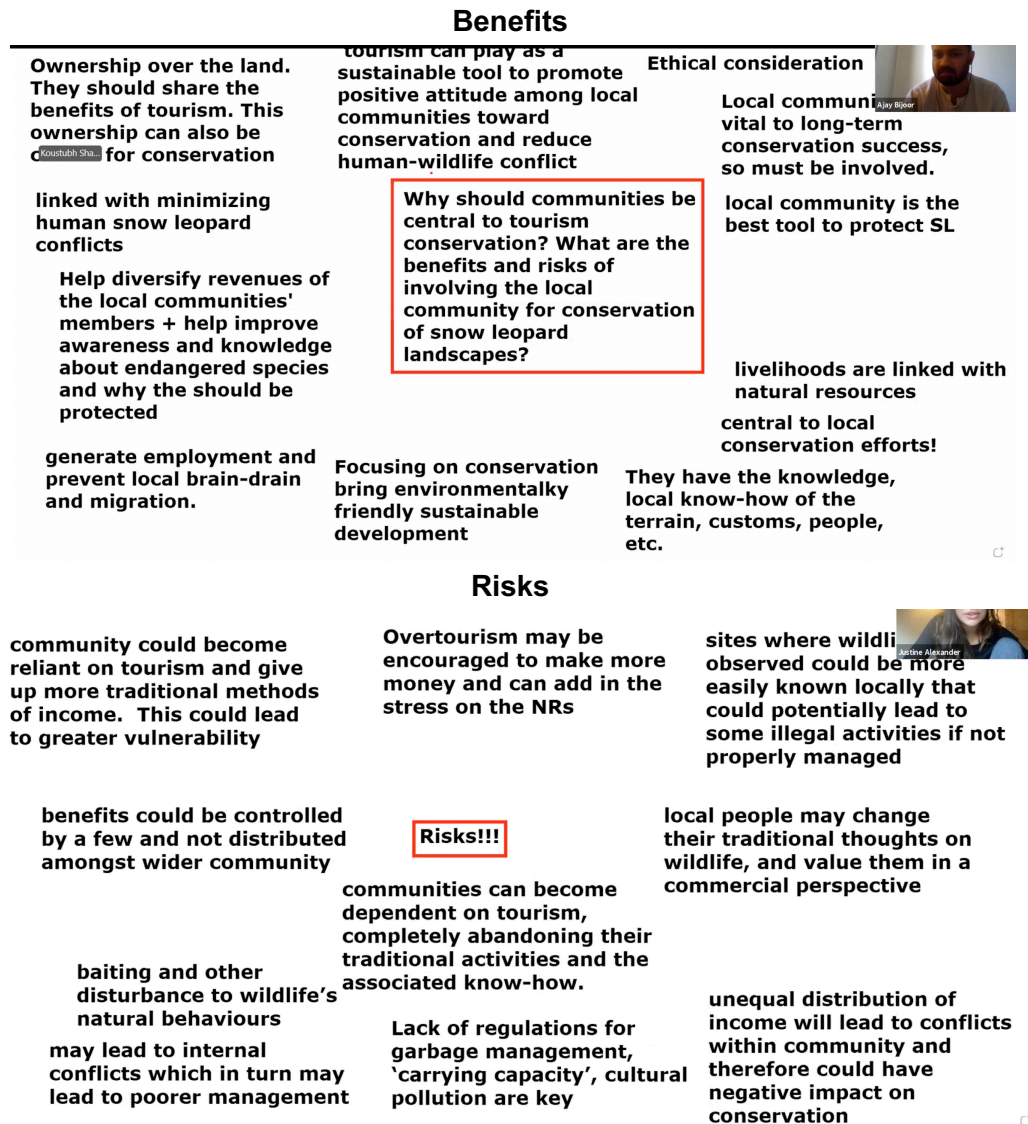


Highlights from Session 2: Communities & Tourism

Why should local communities be central to conservation?

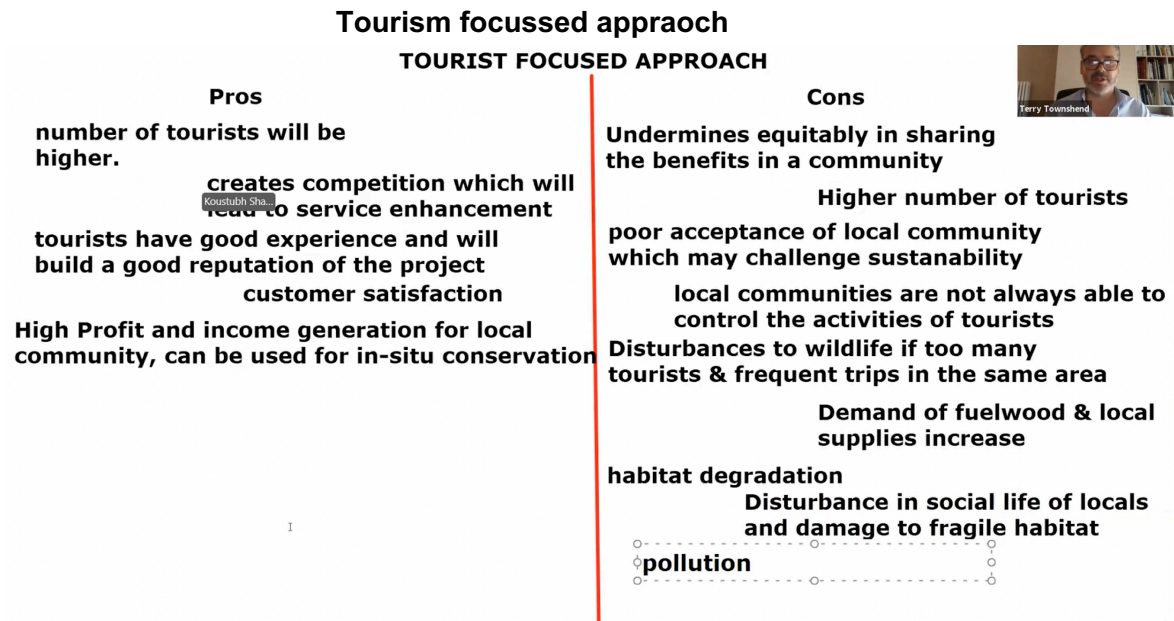
- Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) distribution spans 1.2–1.6 million km² of high mountain habitat in 12 countries of central Asia. Of this 14–19% area has been set aside as protected. (Johansson et. al. 2016)
- 40% of the 170 protected areas in the global range of the snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) are smaller than the home range of a single adult male. (Johansson et. al. 2016)
- A large part of the snow leopard range is shared by people and wildlife, predominantly pastoral communities who depend on the landscape for their livelihoods.
- Both people and wildlife, appearing in low densities, depend pervasively on these landscapes.
- **What are the benefits and risks of involving local communities for conservation of snow leopard landscapes? (white board discussion)**



Principles for how to engage communities in snow leopard conservation tourism?

1. Tensions between individual and community interest

- There may be a tension between tourist experiences and community cohesion. For example tourists will want to stay at the best place for the best chance. They will also want to choose where they stay. Versus the community being empowered to regulate, and promote the equitable distribution of benefits.



- Angsia, Qinghai Province, China case-study: community chose the host family based on respect for the internal community structures. The selection was based on the following criteria: a balanced approach, location (participants that were more easily accessible)

and trust in the household participants in representing the community. An example of a community focussed approach.

2. Effective community structures to deal with tourism and manage the program

- In the Angsai example the community has setup a Committee that act as the management group. This group aims to solve any conflicts that arises.
- The management group also works towards ensure that there is a rotation system in terms of which community members host tourists. The aim of the rotational system is to try and distribute benefits across different households involved.
- The income generated from the tourism program is shared across the community in order to maximize benefiting the community as a whole and not just individuals. This is achieved by having a transparent system- where everyone agrees on and see where funds are distributed and used.
- The funds are currently distributed: with 45% of the funds to the host family, 45% goes to a community fund (this was used as a poverty relief fund- where the poorest families benefited first and the remaining shared amongst all community members). 10% goes to a conservation fund (these funds have not yet been spent).

3. Support of the local governments and other enforcement agencies

- It is important to cultivate strong leadership and support:
- For example in China's example the team has cultivated strong support from the local government leaders. The local government help with enforcing some regulations such as access into the area (regulating the number of tourists) and providing additional facilities to host families.

Other ideas for engaging communities as a whole?



4. Larger scale context approach

- An integrated approach is crucial when looking at snow leopard tourism.

- While one community may be better suited to host guests, other nearby communities can be part of the wider service ecosystem. One can consider the distribution of benefits at the landscape level.
- The distribution of benefits can be based on skill sets. These satellite communities can provide a host of other services ranging from guiding to provisions, to pack animals
- Sightings can take place in a wider area, while accommodations remain centrally located.
- A permit fee and strong regulations are key to ensuring that all families in the overall area of operations gain access to economic benefits.
- It is important to link tourism with conservation actions by the community. For example integrating tourism revenue with reducing snow leopard depredations- such as the construction of predator proof corrals, livestock insurance programs.
- Tour operators and communities should have a more important relationship than tour operators and tourists - this is why restricting certain more sensitive areas to ethically minded tour operators is critical to ensure profit is not prioritized.