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imaginings on a world of wealth and well-beingⁱ

Anasuya Sengupta

Nafsa woke up to the smell of fresh kapi. Vishwa must be up, she thought - and ready to leave for work. Unis and Vasudhi were both out on assignments; Unis was healing someone in Europa, while Vasudhi was researching an article for her Wiser. Luckily it was Nafsa's week off - she had just returned from a vibrant new town in Latina, where she had been working on the construction of a Community centre - and she had time enough before she checked where she was going to next, and what she would be doing there. She lay in bed for a minute, working out dates in her head. If this is Tuesday... it must be the B-time next Wednesday, she calculated. The WWW always factored in hormones. So next week would be a less gruelling task: perhaps some transcription work out of home, or an easy knitting job. Repetitive tasks with minimal need for sustained intellectual effort were always a stress-reliever when the

body decided to have its lunar letting of blood, and adequate rest was something that the WWW not just appreciated, but insisted upon.

She walked into the shower, calling out as she did, "Warm and lavender-tinged this morning, Rei." Which it was. Wonderful how Rei processed the simplest wishes in the most magical of ways - though SHE still needed language of some kind or the other for activation. Nafsa suspected though, that there would soon be a morning when she would walk in and be treated to a super-delicious soaking just the way she had thought of it in her head - Rei was definitely working on subliminal messaging.

A process that Vishwa had worked out to perfection. A hot cup of kapi, some lightly scrambled eggs and warm idlis were waiting for her, as she walked into the foodroom. Vishwa was half-way through his own breakfast, and scanning the information pages. She kissed him on her way to her own console. "Any news on the WWW Council's latest updates with Rei?" she asked. "The Mystory archives of the pre-Council's times?"

"Well, you're the one who's going to be discussing them later today," he replied. "Your Wiser session with Cathy is scheduled for about an hour from when you finish eating. Aren't you discussing times of mal-wealth with her? What did they call it then?"

"Poverty," she exclaimed. "And what kind of Wiser am I, who forgets to check in with Rei while soaking? She must have realised - was my meeting schedule transmitted in on your information page?"

"Yes," Vishwa said. "Along with pictures of Unis smiling at his healee, and Vasudhi complaining about missing us. But you better get Moving soon; I charged your mobility card for you. It's waiting at the door."

Nafsa escalated down to the street level and walked into the nearest Move-Around. She flashed her card in, and closed her eyes as it flew quietly towards the WWW Centre near their home. Sun machines were such a comfortable way to travel, she thought. Though the street Move-Abouts were more interesting - they went slower, and you could chat with friends on another street, and watch the children as they played in the nearby Commonsplace. But if Cathy had

checked in with Rei, she would know Nafsa was on her way, and would probably soon be at the Centre herself. As a Wiser, Nafsa enjoyed their Mystory conversations - the past was always fascinating, and collective memory was what had made this a gentler, happier world. The Council asked every person to take regular Mystory classes - and a Wiser's role was to share information on the Mystory times they had researched the most; with great support, of course, from Rei's processing systems.

Cathy was waiting for her at the entrance to the WWW Centre. As Nafsa gave her a hug, Cathy called out to Rei to open up the Chatspace. A side wall slid up immediately, and Nafsa and Cathy walked into a comfortable room with an array of single and shared consoles. They chose a shared console facing each other, and asked Rei to turn on the archives.

"So what do you understand about mal-wealth?" Nafsa asked.

"And what do you want to know from me and Rei?"

Cathy thought for a moment. "Well, you know I've been trying to understand how the WWW was begun - and what is so different about our World of Wealth and Well-being. Why is

it so different? I suppose the Mystory of mal-wealth is part of the difference..."

"Yes," Nafsa replied. "Certainly, the ways to understand and remove mal-wealth were very much part of the Mystory of the WWW. But remember that it was only about 300 years ago that the Council was formed - and its centres were set up all over worldspace soon after. For about 350 years before that, humankindness had been trying to understand what they called 'poverty'... What it meant, how to measure it, how to remove it..."

"Perhaps then we should be looking at the Mystory of around 200 pre-Council?" Cathy quickly asked. "Because it would tie up with that fascinating Mystory you and I were exploring some time ago - the Femstory, 'feminism'... Do you remember?"

Nafsa laughed, "Oh, of course I do! You were my Wiser for that one; you were obsessed with the stories of women and men who had completely changed peoplestyles... changed the way they lived, the ways they treated each other and finally changed the ways everyone else lived too... Thank kindness they did, it sounded like a very strange

worldspace then. I know you'd have loved to have been part of that Mystory, but I'm very happy where I am now. My well-being would have dropped by a hundred flash, if I'd even Moved past a world like that! I think you're correct, though, the two Mystories come together at some point. It would have been natural that they did meet, wouldn't it?"

Just at that moment, the consoles beeped at them disconsolately. Rei was starting to feel left out of this conversation...

Perhaps you would like to flash straight into the 200 pre-Council archives? The archives could display some of the Mystory sources behind understanding mal-wealth, and then you could discuss the Femstory links to it.

"That sounds excellent, Rei," Cathy grinned. "Thank you for steering us past chat time and into Mystory time!"

The vocabulary and language of poverty (from the archives 200-325 pre-Council; 1880-2005 AD)

Poverty is both reality and myth. People's perceptions of who is 'poor' and who is not, have varied over socio-cultural time and space. There are numerous words for the poor in every world language. In Persian, for instance, there are more than 30 words for the poor; every language in Africa has at least 3 to 5 words for poverty. In the Middle Ages, there were over forty Latin words covering the range of conditions encompassing the concept of poverty (Rahnema 1997 AD).ⁱⁱ

"It's quite strange," said Cathy. "Why was being 'poor' so difficult to understand? Surely peoplekindness could have expressed how they felt? Was it their peoplestyles that didn't help them? I mean, everyone now knows when their well-being count changes..."

"I think it was a complex problem," Nafsa replied. "Like that pre-Council game that Vishwa told us about the other day? The jig-saw... Lots of pieces that needed to come together for the worldspace to be seen... Most importantly, they didn't have Rei to help with worldspace perception. Everyone understood how they lived differently, but they couldn't always communicate it to each other. There was a story I read which talked about how in a little

inhabitation in pre-Council times, that very few people visited, nobody understood what being 'poor' was. And then when there were more visitors, there was also more of the outside worldspace that came in to that inhabitation, and their peoplestyles changed. They wanted things they didn't have... and suddenly, ten years after they said they didn't know 'poverty', they were pleading with visitors to help, talking about how they were 'so poor'..."ⁱⁱⁱ

Cathy looked upset. She walked across from the console to the food panel at the side of the Chatspace. She knew Nafsa loved kapi at all times of the day, and asked for one of those, along with her own calming favourite, a sanguina. As she was waiting for them to be beeped through, she turned back to listen to Nafsa, who was reading out from Rei again.

According to normal usage, poverty is "[t]he state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions" (Kanbur and Squire 1999 AD:5).^{iv}

Cathy walked back to the consoles, sipping her sanguina. She gave Nafsa the kapi, and then stared at her own console. "So some people understood what mal-wealth was

about... It meant not having enough wealth. That's what 'money' and 'material possessions' meant, didn't they?"

Nafsa smiled. "The pre-Council jig-saw was a very complicated game, Cathy. Most people then didn't understand wealth the same way we do. They thought having or not having money, meant being or not being, 'poor'. And yet, money was different across worldspace, different across units of inhabitation. One unit of money didn't mean the same thing to everyone. Think about it in our worldspace - very few peoplekind even use the word 'money' anymore. Our WWW cards measure costs of Options and Opportunities - and that for us, is the closest we come to the pre-Council system of money, or income and expenditure. The costs and the entitlements of worldspace Options and Opportunities measured against our individual work and leisure rhythm cycles are what we call wealth, and Rei helps us calculate and distribute this justly. But there were very few people who were starting to see it that way then..."

"But Nafsa, didn't they have any ways to understand mal-wealth then? I mean, the way Rei helps us to measure our wealth helps us improve our well-being counts... Wouldn't that have been the same then? Trying to understand how to

measure 'poverty' would have helped people kind with strategies to reduce it?"

"You're a wise woman, Cathy! That's exactly what was important, then - the way you named, or 'defined' 'poverty', gave you a particular way to create strategies to reduce it." The only problem was, that there were so many different namings, so many different definitions, that no one really agreed on what to do or how to do it!"

The measurement of poverty and strategies of poverty alleviation (from the archives 200-325 pre-Council; 1880-2005 AD)

While there is worldwide agreement on poverty reduction as an overriding goal of development policy, there is little agreement on the definition of poverty. [Amongst others, there are] four approaches to the definition and measurement of poverty - the monetary, capability, social exclusion and participatory approaches... [E]ach is a construction of reality, involving numerous judgements, which are often not transparent. The different methods have different implications for policy, and also, to the extent

that they point to different people as being poor, for targeting... Empirical work in Peru and India shows that there is significant lack of overlap between the methods with, for example, nearly half the population identified as in poverty according to monetary poverty [but] not in capability poverty, and conversely. This confirms similar findings elsewhere. Hence the definition of poverty does matter for poverty eradication strategies (Ruggeri Laderchi, Saith and Stewart 2003 AD:1).^{vi}

Nafsa was explaining this archive to Cathy. "It may seem strange to us now, but back in the pre-Council years, it was practically impossible to agree on how to measure poverty. Humankind didn't know what concerns to include in its definition, whether this definition would apply across cultures and nations, whether to rely on perception or statistical data, and finally, what it was that really separated the 'poor' from the 'non-poor' - were there some kind of disjunctures that made this more visible?" ^{vii}

Cathy grew excited. "Oh, but surely they looked at both individual and humankind perceptions? After all, that's what Rei helps us do - consolidate our individual perceptions into a larger worldspace mapping of wealth and well-being."

The consoles beeped happily. Rei was clearly delighted to have SHE's presence acknowledged.

Nafsa laughed. "Well, Rei is an extraordinary creation of the Council's Techno-Wisers, Cathy. About 300 pre-Council years ago, it would have been difficult to imagine a process in which every single humankind was able to flash his or her perceptions of well-being into Rei's analytical

consoles, and have that mapped against the Council's wealth and well-being counts. That's the knowledge that's now stored on our WWW cards, and that's what allows us to work and rest, to live according to a justice of options and opportunities."

"You mean there was no idea-image of justice then? How did they live with kindness?"

"Of course they had idea-images of justice! They had had them for a few thousand pre-Council years, but they weren't able to agree on it for all of worldspace, exactly like their idea-images of poverty. They didn't know whether to measure mal-wealth for an individual humankind, or for their homeunit, or for a Commonsplace inhabitation... or for what geographical location... They also didn't have Rei's capacities for measuring different aspects of wealth or mal-wealth across worldspace and consolidating these counts and they certainly weren't sure for what moments or periods of time they should be measuring these changes."

"Were homeunits like those we have now?" Cathy asked. "Because I remember that was one of the inner Mystories of the Femstory - how people lived in homeunits, that they

called 'households', and whether they shared the homeunit justly."

"Now that's what I call a Wiser winder, Cathy! I can't remember exactly how they defined the homeunit then, but I'm fairly certain that it wasn't both choice and bloodline, as it is now. I think it was only bloodline, and only two people were allowed to be Parents. Most often, one man humankind, and one woman humankind... Certainly, a homeunit like yours or mine, with three or four Parents, and Children by both choice and bloodline, would have seemed very strange to them..."

Rei flashed at them. A reminder that Cathy's 'Wiser winder' was definitely winding them away from the Mystery of the moment.

The monetary approach to poverty measurement [is] a set of techniques and methodologies, adopted mostly by economists, based on the identification of poverty with a shortfall in a monetary indicator and the "objective" derivation of a poverty line (Ruggeri Laderchi 2000 AD:3).^{viii}

Cathy sipped her sanguina, again thoughtful. "Does that mean that this approach was based on how much below a poverty line a personkind was, and that the line was measured in terms of wealth?"

"Well, wealth in the pre-Council days: money wealth. They measured it either as earnings, or what they called consumption, how much you spent of these money earnings. You can imagine that this was limitative in many ways; it was based on individuals, not humankindness as a whole, it assumed that measuring spending and earnings in money terms could apply similarly across different kinds of individuals, with some adjustments in their data... But I suppose that in pre-Council times, money value was one of the few ways to measure wealth of other kinds - well-being as we understand it ourselves." ^{ix}

"And who were economists, Nafsa?"

"Ah, that's a whole other Wiser session, Cathy, and I'm not sure I'm the one who can chat with you about them! They were Techno-Wisers, I think, but only about issues around money... I'm not very sure, though, we should ask Vasudhi when she Moves home... Once humankindness stopped seeing

wealth and well-being as being only about money, they lost much of their importance..."

*The relevance of economic performance is that it may be a means to an end. That end is not the consumption of beefburgers, nor the accumulation of television sets, nor the vanquishing of some high level of interest rates, but rather the enrichment of mankind's feeling of well-being. Economic things matter only in so far as they make people happier (Oswald 1997 AD:1815).**

"Before you ask, beefburgers were a kind of food, and television sets were the pre-Council Parents of Rei's consoles! I think the reason Rei's flashed this to us, is for us to remember that not all economists were limitative in their idea-images; not all of them agreed about this monetary measurement of poverty. So there were other idea-images, some of which led to the creation of the Council itself... For instance, there was one whose knowledge was quite important in the way peoplekind began to understand well-being, a little like we know it today. He described what he called capabilities..."

[Sen's] capability approach calls for people to have the largest possible set of valuable functionings among which people can then choose a life they have reason to value. Among the basic capabilities are the ability to be lead a long life in good health, be well nourished, educated, housed and adequately clothed, and integrated into the community (Klasen 2004 AD:5).^{xi}

"So for this Techno-Wiser, poverty was the failure to achieve basic capabilities.^{xii} He felt that well-being was not based on the fulfilment of desires, measured through consumption, because it didn't consider the physicalities of the individual personkind. Instead, he said, well-being was the process of extending the choices of all peoplekind."

"So rather than focusing on means, like having money for food, the capability idea-image looked at ends, like being nourished...^{xiii} Is that what it was, Nafsa?" Cathy asked excitedly. She was beginning to see how this had led to the worldspace she now inhabited.

"Yes, exactly. It looked at a range of different ways to make all humankindness less poor, from both money earnings, as well as services like better health, food, learning... And

those who believed in this approach started seeing mal-wealth as we see it now - not just about peoplestyles in terms of money, but also political and cultural peoplestyles..."

"But it feels as though both these idea-images still looked at the individual peoplekind, Nafsa. Didn't they see them also as group inhabitants, like we do now? Like you said before, Rei analyses both together..."

Rei sent a spark of starworks across the consoles, with a couple of meteor tails writing out 'Thank you...' as they blazed past. Depending on who was heading the Council on which day, SHe's sense of humour was either extremely subtle and ironic, or rather exuberant and Child-like. As Nafsa and Cathy smiled at each other, they both knew exactly who was at the Council headcentre today!

The European Union defines Social Exclusion as a: 'process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live' (European Foundation 1995) (from Ruggeri Laderchi, Saith and Stewart, 2003 AD:20).^{xiv}

Nafsa looked at this archive for a little while, trying to understand how best to explain it to Cathy. "Do you remember when we discussed worldspace as divided over time, into geographical units called countries, rather than our virtual units of WWW centres that are also mapped onto a few Community cultural centres at a time? Well, a particularly large unit in pre-Council Europa, wanted to describe how poverty affected both poor and non-poor countries; some people in non-poor countries could also be described as 'poor', they said, because they could not participate in all activities and enjoy all opportunities of that country... So you were correct in that the previous two approaches we were archiving, were both based on individual humankind. But you can see that this is different, can't you?"

"Yes, like saying that if a Community centre couldn't access a WWW unit, they would all be 'poorer' than those of us who can... Is that correct, Nafsa?"

"Precisely, Cathy! Not that the Council would accept that ever happening in present-time, but in some ways, that is exactly what did happen to the poor in pre-Council days. They couldn't access their councils, or governments, in the

same ways as others. And often, certain groups of peoplekind were 'excluded' all together... like people who were Elder, or Dif-Abled..."

"Can you imagine Vasudhi not being able to access the Council because she has limited out-sight?" Cathy grinned. "She's one of their most important members when she's not away on work! And all the sensory clothes she wears that Rei is so proud of creating... We should send Rei back in time to make certain no one feels 'excluded' in any way - I'm sure SHE would make sure the councils worked for everykind, not just some peoplekind!"

"Hmm... before Rei starts showering us with actual starworks in SHE's happiness, let's move on, shall we?" asked Nafsa. "Rei, could you flash us any archives on the last approach we wanted to discuss? The participatory ways of measuring mal-wealth?"

PRA (participatory rural appraisal) is defined as 'a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act' (Chambers 1994 AD:

57). *Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPA) evolved from this methodology.*^{xv}

"This approach came out of a well-intended attempt to make certain that those who were 'poor' participated in the decisions made about understanding their peoplestyles in order to measure how poor they were... So many of the People-Changes in the pre-Council times were brought from outside the communities, that this approach made people the centre of their own Mystories of change..."

"But Nafsa," Cathy looked surprised. "Weren't the people themselves the Councillors, like we have now? Didn't they all get a chance to be part of these... 'governments', like our Councils? I mean, that's why Rei randomly chooses us to be on the Council, because each of us has a Vision for our Communities, and we get Opportunity to express how we feel. And Rei and we work together to discuss with our Communities what People-Changes we all might need, and how we must act upon them."

"In pre-Council times, Cathy," Nafsa replied, "there were many more levels of Council than we have now, but the most important level was not at the Community level of the WWW

centres as it is for us, it was at the Country and Inter-Country levels of the WWW centres. People dis-remembered that the further you are from your communities, the less you remember their needs... Now, of course, our virtual units mean that Rei is in constant scan with all the WWW centres in worldspace, and it is only a few Wisers and Councillors who need to be at the worldspace WWW Council, and even they keep Moving between their own Community headcentre and the worldspace Council."

"Coming back to the 'participatory' approach, Nafsa, wasn't it necessary to have both in-sight and ex-sight to measure mal-wealth? It's again what we do with Rei - we flash in our own counts of wealth and well-being, and Rei analyses that against the Community counts and the other WWW centre counts... isn't that so? Is it possible for us to have an entirely correct view of our own and our Community well-being without this process?"

"That's an excellent point, Cathy, and one that the Wisers of pre-Council times had to think about a lot. Another issue was that in those days, Communities were much more unequal than they are now, and so not all peoplekind had Opportunity to participate. And really, was it Techno-

Wisers from outside who did these 'assessments' or the Communities themselves? Who analysed the information, and what did it mean for People-Change, the process they called 'policy'?^{xvi} It was an important step, though, in pre-Council times, to return to the Communities..."

"Umm... can we return home now, Nafsa? This is a lot of Wisers-session to process, and we still have the Femstory to discuss. I need to do a little more archiving on that, considering it's my area of interest..."

"Fine, Cathy, check in with Rei or me tomorrow, and we can decide when to meet. Don't dream about mal-wealth!"

"I have other things to dream about, Nafsa," Cathy said wickedly. "Flash you tomorrow!"

Feminist perspectives on poverty (from the archives 200-1100 pre-Council; 1105-2005 AD)

As Nafsa was soaking in her orange-sprinkled and cool shower the next morning, Rei flashed three times, and activated a voice connection to Cathy.

"Are you in your shower right now, Nafsa? Didn't you think a sight of you would energise me for the day?" Cathy laughed.

"It might energise you, my Witty one, but it would probably drop my well-being by a few counts!" Nafsa replied. "Are we meeting again today?"

"Yes, please... Rei and I have a little surprise planned for you. I was working on it all day yesterday, after our session. See you at the Centre!"

A few hours later, Nafsa was sitting at a console in the WWW Centre, looking across at Cathy expectantly. "And what's this little surprise, Cathy? Rei's been sending smilies and laughies across the screens and the walls all the while I've been waiting for you."

"Well," said Cathy, looking uncannily like the holo-images Rei was flashing by at that very moment, "we've looked at a few concepts of mal-wealth in pre-Council times, and we'd promised to link it to the Femstory that I'd been working

on. So Rei and I decided to put the two together in a rather Creationary way... let us introduce you to Akka!"

"I can introduce myself, thank you, Cathy," said a lilting voice from somewhere behind Nafsa. "After all, having come through unlikely worlds and eighty-four hundred thousand vaginas,^{xvii} give or take a few thousand, I'm sure I can speak this strange language you use these days. Besides, Kannada was the language of my tongue, only Cathy and Rei have transformed it into the English you understand..."

Nafsa nearly slid off her console seat while it was spinning round to see where the voice came from. Just behind her, almost Her-size, was the holo-image of a naked woman with long hair streaming down her back.

"What Cathy and Rei have done, as I understand it, have created an Arti-Intel woman - whatever that means - comprising the thoughts of various feminists through the pre-Council ages, to help you understand how they understood their worlds of poverty and well-being. Quite clever, I must say... If the monster my daughter had created had even a little of the intelligence you've poured into

me, her story on that silly creature would not have eclipsed my writings on women.^{xviii} Hmmpf!"

Nafsa looked entirely bewildered. Cathy, on the other hand, was smiling delightedly. "Sorry, Nafsa, because Akka's a Creationary collage of various Femstories through pre-Council times, she does tend to jump from being one woman to another. It's a little confusing, but I need more time to work on her. For now, we'll try and get her to concentrate on the mal-wealth story. Akka, can you think about 200 pre-Council and tell us about how issues of poverty were seen by Feminists of that time?"

Before Akka could answer, Rei, clearly not willing to be left out of the conversation, had flashed another piece from the archives.

'Feminization of poverty' has come to mean not (as gender analysis would suggest) that poverty is a gendered experience, but that the poor are mostly women (Jackson 1996 AD:491).^{xix}

"The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind..." Akka sang.

"Oops, sorry both, memories carry me away. And the answers

are always being lost in time. You want to know the connections between gender and poverty? There were so many to make, and so few to make them! And the real revolution ain't about booty size...^{xx}"

As Akka trailed off, humming another song, Cathy looked at Nafsa.

"Sorry, Nafsa, Akka really does seem to be a bit on the wild side. I suppose too many Feminists do spunk up the broth..."

"Don't worry about that, Cathy. I think Akka's a lot of fun, actually, let's keep her in Rei storage for other Wiser sessions! But here's a question for you, this time. I understand what Akka means by gender and its complexities, Cathy... I mean, we archived all that during my Wiser sessions with you, but surely it's strange that the pre-Council times didn't appreciate the Femstories enough? That they didn't make the connections easily?"

"I suppose that's why we believe so strongly in Memory, Nafsa, knowing that if every peoplekindness remembered the past-times, they would treat each other with dignity and

gentleness. And I suppose that's also why the Wiser sessions are considered so important by the Council, so that we keep making the connections between issues and events, processes and outcomes, consequences and well-being. I guess we should look at the pre-Council time of the late 20th century and early 21st century in the same way. As far as I can understand, there was slowly growing to be a literature of the connections between gender and poverty, but the interlinkages were still not adequately analysed at the time.^{xxi}"

"That's true, Cathy. I'm beginning to remember my past-time archiving in this area. As Rei displayed to us, rather than looking at how gender differentiates the social processes leading to poverty, most people concentrated on looking at whether women suffered more than men, in numbers or in intensity... 'Policy' analyses, what we now call People-Change, equated female-headed households with poverty, made certain assumptions about female disadvantages in well-being within this household, and posited a positive relationship between 'investing in women' and poverty reduction.^{xxii} I suppose the feminists questioned easy assumptions, and asked difficult questions. And out of some

of that questioning, came the ways in which we understand well-being today..."

Akka suddenly spoke up, quietly, seriously. "My dears, the moment of change is the only poem.^{xxiii} Only when we ask the difficult questions, can we make the complex connections. Does studying less make a girl poor, or being from a poor family mean that she will study less than her brother? Why are there more young girls dying than young boys? Why are poor older men more at risk of illness? Do men and women die different deaths, for different reasons?^{xxiv}"

Both Cathy and Nafsa were silent for a moment. Then Cathy said, "Yes, Akka, it takes courage to change. But look at the pre-Council approaches to poverty. Surely peoplekind realised that only a combination of these approaches would make sense of mal-wealth? That even then, it was so much about culture and context and community that it would be difficult to make worldspace judgements based on Commonsense experience? Was that also what the Femstories were able to add to the Mystory of mal-wealth?"

"I'm sure that was true," Nafsa added. "After all, the Feminists were able to use their own Mystories and their

Techno-Wisdoms to analyse all four approaches, and make further contributions to ways in which to reduce mal-wealth in those times. They looked at how understanding the gendered nature of poverty changed the way resources were distributed, including who owned land, how ways and kinds of work and trade needed to change, and how all this affected the way homeunits were run. They analysed the different ways in which the poor, both men and women, coped with difficult times, and how new networks of friendship and solidarity were created..^{xxv} And with all this, it was about ways in which to understand peoplekind's freedoms and well-being."

In mainstream economics, freedom is often seen only as 'negative freedom', i.e. the freedom from interference, but for the poor, women in particular, 'positive freedom' - the capability to be and to do - is equally, if not more, important, to the ways in which they understand well-being (Staveren and Gasper, 2002 AD).^{xxvi}

"That's an interesting archive from Rei, Nafsa. I suppose that's how we began to build the Council too... a worldspace built on Options and Opportunity, the ability to be and to do... It did begin with pre-Council dreams, didn't it?"

Akka laughed. A lovely full-throated laugh. And her voice turned husky. "Yes, my friends. I am always learning to unlearn. The words of a friend of mine.. And listening to the two of you, and hearing about this strange wonderful whimsical life that you live, I have hope for the women of my many pasts. I, who once felt that if you live long enough, every victory turns into a defeat,^{xxvii} now see that victories can even lead to happiness. Un autre monde, c'est possible, n'est-ce pas?"

Across Rei's console screens and across the walls of the Chatspace, starworks and smilies accompanied these words: *Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.*^{xxviii}

ⁱ This world could not have been created without the references of Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, and the conversations with Ashwin Mathew. Any shortcomings in its imagination and analysis are, naturally, mine.

ⁱⁱ Majid Rahnema (1997) "Poverty," in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.), *The Development Dictionary: a Guide to Knowledge as Power*, Zed Books, London, 1997, pp. 158-176.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1995), quoted in Ravi Kanbur and Lyn Squire (1999) *The Evolution Of Thinking About Poverty: Exploring The Interactions*, Unpublished paper.

^v *Ibid.*

^{vi} Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, Ruhi Saith and Frances Stewart (May 2003) *Does it matter that we don't agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches* Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series - Number 107 (Oxford)

^{vii} Critical issues around the different definitions and measurements of poverty include: spaces of deprivation i.e. different definitions capture different 'spheres of concern', the universality of the definitions, subjective or objective measurements of poverty, discrete poverty lines, units of measurement of poverty, the aggregation of indices, and the time horizons of measurement. For a clear explication of these issues, please see *ibid.*

^{viii} Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi (December 2000) *The Monetary Approach to Poverty: a survey of concepts and methods* Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series - Number 58 (Oxford)

^{ix} "For economists the appeal of the monetary approach lies in its being compatible with the utility maximising behaviour assumption which underpins microeconomics, i.e. that the objective of consumers is to maximise utility and that expenditures reflect the marginal value or utility people place on commodities. Welfare can then be measured

as the total consumption enjoyed, proxied by either expenditure or income data, and poverty is defined as a shortfall below some minimum level of resources, which is termed the poverty line" (Ruggeri Laderchi, Saith and Stewart 2003:7). *Does it matter that we don't agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches* Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series - Number 107 (Oxford)

^x Oswald, Andrew J. (1997) *Happiness and Economic Performance*, *The Economic Journal*, 107: pages 1815-1831.

^{xi} Klasen, Stephen (2004) *Gender-related Indicators of Well-being* WIDER Discussion Paper No. 2004/05, Page 5, World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki. The details of this approach can also be found in A. K. Sen (1985) *Commodities and Capabilities*, Elsevier Science Publishers: Amsterdam. For critical appraisals, see Partha Dasgupta (1993) *An Inquiry into Well-being and Destitution*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, amongst others.

^{xii} Sen, Amartya (1993) "Capability and Well-Being" in *The Quality of Life* (eds) M. C. Nussbaum and A. K. Sen. Oxford, Clarendon Press: 30-53.

^{xiii} Sumner, Andrew (2004) *Economic Well-being and Non-economic Well-being: A Review of the Meaning and Measurement of Poverty* WIDER Research Paper No. 2004/30, World Institute for Development Economics Research, Helsinki.

^{xiv} Caterina Ruggeri Laderchi, Ruhi Saith and Frances Stewart (May 2003) *Does it matter that we don't agree on the definition of poverty? A comparison of four approaches* Queen Elizabeth House Working Paper Series - Number 107 (Oxford)

^{xv} Chambers, Robert (1994). "The origins and practice of PRA." *World Development* 22(7): Montreal.

^{xvi} The institutionalisation of participatory methods includes the scaling up of the PPAs by the World Bank as complementing their poverty assessments, as well as the multi-country exercise, covering 23 countries, which was the background to the WB 2000/*World Development Report*, called *Voices of the Poor*. In addition, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are purportedly prepared through a participatory process of member countries, involving domestic partners as well as external stakeholders, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Yet 39 organizations and regional networks in 15 African countries agreed at a meeting in Kampala, May 2001, that PRSPs 'were simply window dressing' (Ruggeri Laderchi, Saith and Stewart, 2003).

^{xvii} Akka Mahadevi ('akka' is a honorific that means 'elder sister' in Kannada) was a visionary poet of the 12th century AD, in south India, whose *vachanas* or verses in Kannada, challenging social norms, continue to be sung into the 21st century. One of her most famous *vachana* begins with these lines: "Not one, not two, not three or four, but through eighty-four hundred thousand vaginas have I come. I have come through unlikely worlds, guzzled on pleasures and pain..." (translated by AK Ramanujam, excerpted from *Women Writing in India, Vol I*, eds. Susie Tharu and K. Lalita 1995, p. 80, Oxford University Press: Delhi)

^{xviii} Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) wrote various classic texts of liberal feminism, particularly *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). She married William Godwin, author of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793). She died a few days after the birth of their daughter, Mary, who later married Percy Bysshe Shelley, and wrote *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, and other novels. See <http://www.philosophypages.com/ph/woll.htm> and <http://www.literature.org/authors/shelley-mary/frankenstein/>.

^{xix} Jackson, Cecile (1996) "Rescuing gender from the poverty trap" *World Development*, 24(3): 489-504.

^{xx} An excerpt from Sarah Jones' song, "Your revolution", originally a poem. <http://www.sarahjonesonline.com/press/VillageVoice.html>

^{xxi} Razavi, Shahra (September 1998) *Gendered Poverty and Social Change: An Issues Paper*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Discussion Paper No. 94, Geneva.

^{xxii} *Ibid*, p.1.

^{xxiii} Adrienne Rich: see http://www.wwnorton.com/introlit/poetry_rich5.htm.

^{xxiv} See Razavi, Shahra (1998) for an explication of issues including gender disadvantage in sex ratios, complexities in the adjustments required for gender and age differences in nutritional and morbidity factors, and poverty as a cause rather than an outcome for gendered access to education,.

^{xxv} Baden, Sally (1997) *Economic Reform and Poverty: A Gender Analysis*, Report No. 50, prepared for Gender Equality Unit, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Institute of Development Studies: Brighton.

^{xxvi} Staveren, Irene van and Des Gasper (July 2002) *Development As Freedom - Contributions And Shortcomings of Amartya Sen's Development Philosophy For Feminist Economics*, Working Paper No. 365, The Institute of Social Studies: The Hague.

^{xxvii} Simone de Beauvoir: quoted at http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/s/simone_de_beauvoir.html

^{xxviii} Gloria Steinem, quoted at: http://womenshistory.about.com/cs/quotes/a/qu_g_steinem.htm