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GENDER, POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract

Views on poverty are deeply rooted in cultural frameworks about the human condition shaped by histories. In the debate on modernity, perspectives on poverty oscillate between: a) making the poor – their ‘morals’ and ‘culture’ – responsible for their own situation and b) positioning the causes in structural shifts in regimes of accumulation and changing forms of governing the population.

In this paper we review and explore some key contributions to poverty knowledge from a gender lens. Feminist contributions to poverty debates are wide ranging and hinge on a key area of contention: the hegemonic and binary treatment of the ‘production’ of things and ‘reproduction’ and nurturance of human life as different and separate social spaces, rather than as both fundamentally integral to a human society. By valuing the production of things more than the reproduction of human life, this construct has buffeted both class and masculinised power and operates as a gender-based mechanism of selection and exclusion for voice and participation. This is evident in the discourses on poverty, which surfaced in the context of capitalist industrialisation and political debates on pauperism in the 19th century. Early feminist research followed an empiricist mode in highlighting the invisibility of women and the gaps in poverty data. The findings of these studies gradually helped define the contours of a conceptual critique of the neo-liberal model of accumulation. The feminist conceptual critique of poverty knowledge formed part of a broader challenge to the androcentric and culturally specific assumptions of mainstream knowledge systems. However the contributions of feminist poverty knowledge go beyond some of these new knowledge systems through the articulation of key concepts of gender analysis such as intra-household power relations, care economy, the emphasis on subjectivity, agency and the notion of ‘trade-offs’, all of which offer an epistemological position that provides a lens on poverty that addresses a wider social domain.

In the policy field there is limited incorporation of gendered poverty knowledge through 1) selective appropriation; 2) the construction of new myths; and 3) the selective articulation of gendered poverty knowledge that omits major implications for social justice and transformation. This reflects the discursive construction of a new orthodoxy in poverty knowledge systems in line with extant neo-liberal rationality. The present transnational character of poverty and its links with gender poses tremendous challenges to theories of social justice. A gendered analysis of the discourse, politics and policies for reducing poverty forms an important component of a broader social justice framework to address the intersection of emerging forms of exclusion and vulnerability marked by class, caste, ethnicity, race as well as local and transnational processes and dynamics of power.

Keywords

Gender, poverty, social justice, feminisation, welfare state, dependency, Poverty knowledge, social capital, care economy, reproduction tax

GENDER, POVERTY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE¹

1 Introduction

Views on poverty are deeply rooted in cultural frameworks about the human condition shaped by histories. In the debate on modernity, perspectives on poverty oscillate between: a) making the poor – their ‘morals’ and ‘culture’ – responsible for their own situation and b) positioning the causes in structural shifts in regimes of accumulation and changing forms of governing the population. The relationship between structure and agency, or determination and freedom, thus lies at the heart of the poverty debate with significant implications for how rights, duties and responsibility towards the plight of the poor are conceived (Hanson, 1997).

In this paper we review and explore some key discussions on poverty knowledge from a gender lens and elaborate the difference between the feminist empiricist contribution and the feminist conceptual contribution to poverty knowledge. We illustrate how in the policy field there is limited incorporation of gendered poverty knowledge through 1) selective appropriation; 2) the construction of new myths; and 3) the selective articulation of gendered poverty knowledge that omits major implications for social justice and transformation. In the final section we discuss the challenges posed by the contemporary transnational character of poverty and its links with gender to theories of social justice.

Feminist contributions to poverty debates are wide ranging, covering many disciplines in the humanities (Young, 1997, Fraser, 1997, Okin, 2003) and social sciences and empirical domains, including the welfare state (Kingfisher, 2003), ‘developing’ countries (Jackson and Pearson, 1998, Whitehead and Lockwood, 1999, Chant, 2007, Kabeer, 2003), ‘transition’ countries (Fodor, 2002, Pascall and Kwak, 2005) and the South-North circuits of survival (Sassen, 2002). They hinge on a key area of contention: the hegemonic and binary treatment of the ‘production’ of things and ‘reproduction’ and nurturance of human life as different and separate social spaces, rather than as both fundamentally integral to a human society. The hierarchy of values attached to this binary construct has had significant historical bearings on the organisation of social life and the conditions of members of society. By valuing the production of things more than the reproduction of human life, this construct has buffeted both class and masculinised power and operates as a gender-based mechanism of selection and exclusion for voice and participation.

Feminist scholarship sees this treatment as a major limitation to achieving social justice and democracy goals. The dominant stance towards both the family (normatively defined as heterosexual and nuclear) and the sexed body as non-political or pre-social misrepresents justice, and/or misjudges the presence

¹ This paper draws on our individual research and teaching as well as many joint discussions on gender, poverty and social justice. We thank Rosalind Melis for sharp editorial comments, which helped shape the paper.

of inequality in intra-family relations as well as unjust disciplinary control over the body (Truong, 1990, Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998, Orloff, 1993). Permeating law making and scientific reasoning, conventional understandings of 'gender' continue to map knowledge terrains in ways that confine understanding of gender, poverty and social justice in particular ways (Ferree et al., 1999), most dominantly in line with the liberal vision of progress: private ownership, market principles and the rule of science in statecraft and social reforms (Somers and Block, 2005). Such a vision excludes those whose poverty is defined by birth, stigmatized identities, old age or disability whose struggle for survival remains poorly understood. Social activism worldwide have brought to the surface complex forms of poverty that connect different structures of inequality to gender identity which have remained so far invisible to the crafts of science and the state. They demand more inclusive feminist theorizing, new conceptual understandings and analytical skills to address the diverse facets of poverty and their interconnections.

2 Historical Antecedents: Gender and Welfare – From Relief Work to the Control of Paupers

The discourse on poverty surfaced in the context of capitalist industrialisation and political debates on pauperism. The field of welfare studies emerged in early 19th century in Britain with the shift of relief work from parishes in local communities to the national level through the introduction of the Poor Laws. The Laws classified the poor into 'able-bodied' and 'non-able bodied', 'deserving' and 'undeserving', marking a physical and moral segregation among the poor. As Dean (1991) and Goose (2005) show the classification was also imbricated with gender, age and sexuality, deeply affecting the assessment of those deemed eligible for relief and their lives in poverty. The category of the able-bodied included those who were unable to find work due to cyclical or long-term unemployment. They were not eligible for outdoor relief, except in cases of sudden and urgent necessity. The only source of relief was incarceration in workhouses, created to make welfare relief so abhorrent to deter poor people from seeking welfare support and to force them to find employment. Strict discipline and sexual celibacy were conditional, with the consequence of a break-up of the family. The 'non-able bodied' poor included widows with children – irrespective of the physical state of their bodies – and the infirm. Widows, including those with legitimate children, were allowed outdoor relief for a short period (Goose, 2005: 353). The 'undeserving' poor included the able-bodied 'vagrants' or 'beggars', treated as crime suspects. Single women without children found no place in the system of classification while mothers of illegitimate children, whatever their condition, were treated as 'sturdy beggars' (Dean, 1991: 161-169).

Wuyts has pointed out that in the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century a transition occurred from a focus on poverty to unemployment as a new variable in social and economic analysis. This meant that poverty was no longer seen as specific to certain categories of people but reflected "the nature of the employment relation within capitalist development" (Wuyts, 2001: 3). The principles underlying the Poor Laws on

welfare and relief were firmly based on the idea of forging a system of wage labour concentrated on the male-breadwinner who should maintain the family independence in and out of work, in recognition of its central role as a moral model to cope with poverty and unemployment as a 'social problem' linked with cyclical economic changes (Walters, 1994). A major implication was the significant place occupied by the nuclear family in the field of poverty as welfare studies (Booth, 1969, Rowntree, 1971). Rowntree's findings clearly showed the arbitrary nature of separating primary poverty (nutrition, health, housing) and secondary poverty (consumption of tobacco and alcohol). He identified the vicious cycle of the self-reproduction of the 'unfit' as an outcome of the dynamic interaction between the two sides of poverty.

Maintaining the 'fit' image of self-efficiency of the male breadwinner appeared to be significant to the working class families as a way of avoiding being seen as 'unfit'. In her review of the literature on welfare analyses in England between 1950-1980 among working class families Oren shows how women married to low-paid unskilled workers often practiced self-denial and apparently claimed a disproportionate small share of the household's resources. She calls this phenomenon the 'wife's elastic standard of living' (Oren, 1973: 121). This notion of female altruism figures in both Gary Becker's Household Economics model as well as Amartya Sen's model of the household as an arena of cooperative conflict and has been subject to feminist interrogation as discussed further (see also Kabeer, 1994). Goose (2005) offers a different perspective on elderly people. He uses 19th century English national and local sources (Hertfordshire) to demonstrate how lone elderly men face greater suffering than lone elderly women. There was more willingness among Poor Law officers to grant relief to elderly poor women and a harsher attitude to the male counterparts, primarily due to the link between the two constructs of the 'able-bodied' and the 'breadwinner'. Denied of an entitlement to outdoor relief, lone elderly men were condemned to a life of hard physical toil in the fields, struggling with seasonal unemployment and overstocked agricultural labour markets. Lone elderly women had access to charity houses and employment in indoor cottage industries. Walkowitz's (1980) study on prostitution in Victorian England shows how, being outside of the classification system, poor young single women without skills had no welfare option except marriage or prostitution.

Appearing at the same time of Dean's study on the constitution of poverty in Europe, Handler and Hasenfeld's (1991) study scrutinizes the historical behaviour of society in the United States towards the poor to show how social welfare practices were derived from a notion of welfare constructed according to sanctioned social roles defined according to a person's relation to work, with the label of the 'deviancy' falling disproportionately on women and minorities. Fraser and Gordon (1994) deepened the gender question further by deconstructing the concepts 'poverty' and 'dependency'. They highlight four historically formed frameworks of meanings: 1) economic dependency on another for survival (eg, housewife or servant); 2) socio-legal status when the legal status of a person is subsumed under the legal personality of another (eg, married women under the common law of coverture); 3) political – where there was subjection to an external political power as in the case of colonial dependency, or exclusion of some groups to citizenship rights; 4)

moral/psychological – regarding traits of individuals and groups defined through moral or religious beliefs, or through professional assessment (as in the case of drug addicts).

Similar to the case of Britain the US wage system rested on the notion of dependency being inimical to dignity and self-determination as based on the idealized construct of the male breadwinner. The housewife identity became affiliated with economic dependency, acceptable in the light of the family wage. Paupers were to be cleared out of the way under the law of vagrancy, slavery was abolished by legal means; but race remains imbued in social welfare practices with the imposition of the concept of the ‘culture of poverty’ (Lewis, 1962, , 1968) on non-White communities. Despite its arbitrary classification of the major traits of the culture of poverty, and its ethnocentric and psychologically reductionist reasoning, this concept gained prominence because it accredited poverty to norms of living practiced by the poor as its cause. It provided a basis for the legitimacy to attack the welfare system for fostering an underclass of passive dependents and permanently poor. The intersectional construction of race and gender surfaced with the widely held stereotype of ‘unmarried, teenage, welfare-dependent mothers’ (often also identified as Black) as being ‘the Welfare Queen’, which loaded the concept of dependency with negative prejudices (Crenshaw, 1991, 1995, Hancock, 2004). The contemporary meaning of the term ‘dependency’ boils down to a psychologically pathological condition.

Somers and Block’s (2005) historical analysis of the shifts in welfare regime in the 1996 US Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act in comparison to the English New Poor Laws of 1834 clearly revealed similar ideas regarding the conversion of poverty as welfare deficit to poverty as ‘perversity’ facilitated by a growing public acceptance of market fundamentalism. These authors provide a deeper understanding of those political processes which have gradually reduced understanding of individual agency to mere market interest and displaced the substantive conditions of welfare and agency and their complexity.

Imbued in morality, often justifying economic concerns, the ethos of ‘welfare’ rests on the sanctioned image of a productive age, male-centric and public-located individual whose worth is to be assessed according to productivity and efficiency. Subject to different moral classifications for being socially unproductive or disruptive – which led to diverse practices of ‘reforming’ their subjectivity – the ‘poor’ in their diversity remain a lumpen entity, to be defined along social lines other than class. Such formulations effectively uncoupled the link between regimes of accumulation, modes of governmentality and systems of inequality. Gender, class, sexuality, age, race and marital status have been central to practices of classifying and demarcating entitlements and rights and modes of self-reform.

3 Feminist Poverty Knowledge

The Feminist critique of poverty knowledge formed part of a broader challenge to the androcentric and culturally specific assumptions of mainstream knowledge systems. Since the 1980s feminist analyses have made

significant contribution to poverty knowledge through their critical engagement with debates and practices of social reforms over the years. In tracing the genealogy of feminist critiques and its contribution to poverty knowledge, it is useful to keep a distinction between a *feminist empiricist* critique and a *feminist standpoint* critique. Though they are interlinked and, in a sense, the latter position emerges organically from the first, there are tensions between them. In its interaction with mainstream poverty knowledge systems there is often a fragmentation of the organic unity of the epistemological and methodological contribution of feminist poverty knowledge. This results in its selective and truncated absorption into existing knowledge systems.

3.1 The Feminist empiricist challenge to poverty knowledge

Early feminist research followed an empiricist mode in highlighting the invisibility of women and the gaps in poverty data. Challenging the ‘sexless averages’ (Johnsson-Latham, 2004) of the money-metric identification of poverty, the vital need for sex-disaggregated data and indicators which measured changes between men and women has been asserted since the 1980s – starting with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and subsequently reasserted in the Beijing Plan of Action (BPA). Advocacy was based on an argument making a link between women and poverty through highlighting the disproportionate number of female-headed households among the poor, noting women’s primary responsibility for household provisioning and their marginalization in development policies (see Buvinic, 1983, Buvinic and Yudelman, 1989, Chant, 2007). Given that the feminist critique of poverty knowledge began with, and has been set within, the empiricist mode of ‘welfare’ analysis, it did not at this stage challenge gender bias in the *conceptualization* of poverty in specific programmes or macro-economic policies. It focused mainly on programmatic responses to poverty situations, limited to income generating projects geared towards improving family welfare rather than dealing with the gender differential causes and effects of poverty.

The radical potential of feminist empiricism regarding poverty lies in the assertion of the epistemological principles of the equal importance of the “context of discovery” and the “context of justification”. This leads to a re-identification and re-definition of research problems and greater rigour in application of research norms and methods (Harding, 1987). The surfacing of gender differences through data on the differential causes, experience and outcomes of poverty which emerged in a spate of studies documenting the effects of Structural Adjustment policies during the 1980’s in a number of developing countries laid the ground for a deeper epistemological shift in the conceptualisation of poverty. Drawn from the experience of countries in the South this assertion has not only aligned it to the broader anti-positivist critique of poverty knowledge but also represents a significant departure from the Northern welfare state focus of earlier analyses of the gendered experience of poverty.

3.2 Conceptual critique of poverty knowledge

The findings of these studies have gradually helped define the contours of a conceptual critique of the neo-liberal model of accumulation. They highlighted ways in which privatisation transferred costs to the household, the cushioning effect of women's productive and reproductive labour in domestic and community provisioning, and the increase in the number of female-headed households who suffered greater disadvantages than male-headed households (Beneria, 1992, Sparr, 1994, Elson, 1995, Moser, 1996, Chant, 1997). Palmer (1992) and Elson (1999) identified the hidden 'reproduction tax' which is the normative obligation, paid in labour time and commitment by women who handle family provisioning and household maintenance, as a key element in responses to economic crisis. The deconstruction of the neo-classical notion of the unitary household, along with identification of the limits and possibilities of women's capacity to command and allocate intra-household resources, brought issues of power to the fore and thus paved the way towards more multidimensional conceptions of poverty (Kabeer, 1996).

3.3 Multidimensional conceptions of poverty

The feminist contribution to poverty knowledge draws on broader frameworks that have gone beyond welfare economics and its narrow focus on GNP (now GNI)/consumption/utility to a wider notion of well-being and agency. A notable influence has been Amartya Sen's capability approach. He replaced the concept of welfare with well-being, permitting a shift of the analytical lens from an individual's income and expenditure to their capability to function in historically shaped contexts of entitlements and rights. From the perspective of well-being thus defined, poverty signifies more than a welfare deficit; it is also a capability deficit linked ultimately with the ways of functioning of a given society. Sen's intervention has revolutionized thinking on poverty by opening up for investigation the epistemological and ethical domain regarding consequences of poverty for justice. Linking poverty/inequality/democracy/freedom, this perspective emphasizes the importance of processes and outcomes. Hence poverty is the absence of capabilities and development is the process of expansion of real freedoms (Sen, 1999). Sen's views on the capability and well-being nexus have inspired large teams of social scientists in the United Nations Development Programme and the European Commission; both entities share an interest in using of social indicators for poverty assessment rather than translating the social into economic indicators.

Over the last two decades the UNDP has incrementally developed a sensitive measure of human development (the human development index – HDI) and a new aggregate measure – the capability poverty measure (CPM) which was a forerunner of the Human Poverty Index (HPI) developed in 1997 to assess the average state of people's essential capabilities in a society. Additional measures developed by the UN include the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which together aim to show the inequalities between women and men in relation to longevity, knowledge, a decent standard of living and the extent to

which women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life. GDI focuses on some capabilities while GEM is concerned with the use of those capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life. While these indices are useful they do not take into account the multiple dimensions of gender and power. In an attempt to create a rival indicator to GDP, a more profound definition of well-being – which includes the qualitative dimension of a social base of dignity and self-respect – was in fact narrowed down to those dimensions which are calculable from quantitative indicators: life expectancy, nourishment, health and education, employment and political representation.

The ‘social exclusion approach’, which emerged as a critique of the negative social effects of economic restructuring in Western Europe, offers another frame for expanding the conception of poverty to one of *relative deprivation*. Social exclusion refers not only to the exclusion of groups and individuals from livelihoods but also rights and other sources of well-being and highlights non-economic factors such as inability to enjoy social rights, low self esteem and stigmatization and the processes by which people move from vulnerability to dependence to marginality. The European Union since its enlargement in 1999 defined poverty in terms of social exclusion to guide its social policy (Atkinson et al., 2004). National social indicators relating to poverty (living standards, health, educational attainment) are also being made specific to capture the separate conditions of children, young people and the elderly. The approach brings to the fore critical assessment of the terms of inclusion and conditions for *social citizenship*.

A third significant framework informing feminist poverty knowledge is the Livelihood Systems approach (Chambers and Conway, 1992, Moser, 1998, Ellis, 2000). Rather than a focus on income poverty, these authors emphasize the importance of triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data and show how the lived realities of poverty and vulnerability are embedded in multiple livelihood systems subject to specifiable risks, hazards, shock and stress. The concept of ‘vulnerability’ led to multiple indicators of poverty status. A significant shift facilitated by this approach was the view that the poor were not helpless and passive victims but had agency expressed through “the strategic management of complex asset portfolios” (Moser, 1998:4) in coping with contingencies. Path-breaking insights gained from Chambers (1995) use of participatory approaches and methods that enable poor and marginalized people to express their realities laid the way for a radical departure from positivist methodologies, which resonate with feminist inquiry. With ‘Whose Reality Counts?’ Chambers opens up an analytical space for poverty being considered, not just a status, but as outcomes of processes shaped by intersecting power relations (class, caste, ethnicity, gender, age). By linking poverty experiences with capabilities and livelihoods he grounded development ethics in the experiential domain of being poor and knowing what it is like to be poor. This gave more substance to the capability/poverty nexus – which had been simplified for the sake of quantification. He charts four main perspectives on poverty as an interconnected entity, which he names the web of poverty’s disadvantages (2006). These include 1) consumption poverty based on income, 2) material deficits derived from faulty transfers and services, 3) capability deprivation linked to the functioning of social systems, 4)

multidimensional deprivation: the mutual reinforcement of these dimensions according to situation and context.

4 Key conceptual contributions of feminist poverty knowledge

These new conceptions of poverty, which broaden the definition of poverty from basic needs to functionings, capabilities, assets, and livelihoods and a dynamic notion of vulnerability, inform the feminist contribution to poverty knowledge. Moser's Asset Vulnerability Framework (Moser, 1998, 2007) facilitated a focus on tangible and intangible resources (including household relations) and the identification of vulnerability as insecurity and sensitivity in the well being of individuals, households and communities. The broadening of indicators has the potential to address the gendered experience of poverty. For instance, vulnerability can involve: exposure to economic risk caused by death, divorce, or desertion of spouse – also exposure to domestic violence – which have complex gendered roots, processes and outcomes; gendered social arrangements can partially determine the impact of exposure to natural disaster during both a disaster itself and the post-disaster recovery (Bamberger et al., 2001).

The significance of the contributions of feminist poverty knowledge is that even as it uses the multidimensional frameworks, it goes beyond some of them through the articulation of key concepts of gender analysis. For instance, the feminist rejection of the conventional money metric assessment of poverty based on income/consumption measures using large scale household surveys concurred with others who saw this approach as paternalistic, technocratic and non-comparable (Kabeer, 1996, Kabeer 2003, Saith, 2005), but went further in criticizing the expenditure focus which ignored *intra-household distribution*.

a. A key contribution of feminist poverty knowledge has been the deconstruction of the neo-classical concept of 'the household', which informs macro-economic policies. Drawing on Amartya Sen's 'cooperative conflict' model (1990), the feminist re-conceptualisation of the household as an arena of power relations, with variation in access to assets and vulnerability of its members, was a major shift leading to the identification of a set of problems defined as 'secondary poverty' and multidimensional vulnerability. The critique showed how a focus on expenditure ignores intra-household distribution and misrepresents the embeddedness of 'gender habitus' in naming and framing perceived contribution to the household (Kabeer, 1998). Gendered agency shows how universal principles and norms of equality cannot be applied in an unmediated way, without challenging the treatment of the family as external to civil society (Nussbaum, 2000). As Chant (2003: 22) notes: "...household-level research has demonstrated that there is often as much going on within the home, as outside it, which determines women's poverty, well-being and power". Choice depends on substantive conditions that generally are gendered. The gender lens on the inner workings of the household opened up the 'black box' of neo-classical economics and challenged the assumption that consensus, altruism and benevolence are the 'natural' governing considerations for maximization of joint-welfare (Folbre, 1987, see also Hart, 1997).

b. A further conceptual contribution of feminist analysis has been the surfacing of the ‘care economy’ as a significant element in the experience of poverty. Debate on the care economy extends beyond the ‘domestic labour debate’ of the 1970s and demonstrates the empirical and theoretical implications of the labour involved in housework and emotional efforts of caring for family members – primarily carried out by women. The notion of the care economy embodied these aspects in addition to the moral and systemic significance of ensuring human well-being and the reproduction of human life. Gender equality and care became integral to theorising on well-being, challenging the ‘iceberg’ view of the economy for its inability to go deeper than the tip of what is defined as ‘productive work’ (Elson, 1990, Budlender 2000, 2004) and its blindness to how changes in production affect the organisation of care.

Studies on economic restructuring and economic crisis have highlighted a global care deficit with, “a squeeze on unpaid time available for care as men and women allocated more of their time on paid work; a squeeze on public provisions of care, as public expenditures were cut back in response to international economic pressures and a squeeze on quality of care services provided by private sector as a result of competitive pressures to cut costs” (Grown, Elson & Cagatay, 2000).

Numerous studies have identified a new category of ‘time poverty’ from the long hours that poor women spend in paid and unpaid work, stretching their time at the expense of their own health (Floro, 1995). Elson’s (1990) exposure of the assumption of the ‘infinite elasticity of women’s labour’ – which underpins the risks taken in neo-liberal macro-economic adjustment policies – combined with ‘time poverty’ is a powerful indictment of the neglect of the care economy in mainstream approaches to poverty analyses. Documenting the emergence of phenomena such as care chains and care drains through internal and international migration (plus their local/global interfaces) has brought to the fore the deeper meanings of caring relations and their significance in sustaining social relations, an aspect which development ethics cannot afford to ignore (Gasper and Truong, 2009). Normative principles of gender equality provide a broader vision of the economy, which include the informal economy and care economy, and thereby offer a vision of needs and rights that transcends the public-private divide. Postulated interventions for poverty reduction include possibilities for the transformation and democratization of gender relations having significance for both men and women. Issues of redistribution are intricately intertwined with issues of recognition of social identities (Chhachhi, 2008). A gendered perspective on poverty as multidimensional provides a standpoint to address asymmetry in access to resources, care and opportunity for voice, as well as other aspects crucial to well-being such as a sense of belonging and self-respect, dignity, empowerment, participation and the awareness of the right not to be discriminated against (Johnsson-Latham, 2004: 19).

c. Another significant contribution of feminist research on poverty has been the emphasis on subjectivity, agency and the notion of ‘trade-offs’. This refers to tactical choices made by individuals between “different material, psychological and symbolic aspects of poverty” (Chant, 1997, Kabeer, 1997,

Jackson, 1998). Decisions women make on the exit option from abusive marital relationships are often assessed in terms of the cost of losing male protection – even if the men are no longer economic providers, as Kabeer (2000) has shown in Bangladesh. Or it may be a matter of accepting greater poverty and insecurity as lone heads of household in order not to compromise their autonomy, as (Chant, 1997) evidences in Costa Rica, Mexico and the Phillipnes, echoing Graham's (1987:59) point that: ‘..(S)ingle parenthood can represent not only a different but a preferable kind of poverty for lone mothers’. Poverty is hence as much about the compromising of agency due to abuse, stress, fatigue, voicelessness, as it is about lack of resources (Sweetman, 2002).

d. Feminist poverty knowledge has offered an epistemological position that provides a lens on poverty that addresses a wider social domain. Applying this approach to in- depth micro level studies has highlighted the gender-disaggregated outcomes of poverty for children as well. Particular aspects of household relations shape girls' experience of poverty differently from boys'. Eldring et al's (2000) study on tobacco farms in Southern Africa demonstrates how child labour is often closely linked to women's labour and their delegation of tasks to girls, especially, due to a weaker command over boys. This can affect the girls' schooling and socialisation. Pressures on survival and livelihoods – additionally induced for example by the HIV/AIDs pandemic – can have dramatic impact on family structures through migration of individual members as a coping strategy. Processes of fragmentation and re-formation of households through the movements of children involves multiple shifts, create fluid structures and complex family formation (Young and Ansell, 2003).

Carter's study (2000) on Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States used social indicators to assess the impact of poverty on children. The study shows how poverty is deeply embedded in the structural re/design of opportunities, which in consequence have shaped the capabilities of persons to cope with systemic changes within the region. The transition from an inward-looking communist regime to one organized by ideas of global capitalism have triggered structural changes and given rise to an intergenerational transfer of vulnerability among the disadvantaged groups.

e. Feminist engagements with multidimensional conceptions of poverty have taken up the notion of *well-being* and *agency* in critical assessment of the gendered terms of *social inclusion* and the conditions for social citizenship. These build on current gendered poverty knowledge which has emerged through a range of concepts linked with diverse methodologies. Results triangulated from quantitative and qualitative techniques have produced nuanced and in-depth understandings -- well articulated for example in 'Voices of the Poor' (Narayan et al., 2000). Gender differences in perception and experience of poverty have emerged with women defining poverty not only as the lack of money and food, but of housing, land and other assets necessary for material well-being, above mere survival. Women consider basic infrastructure and provision of assets of greater import rather than immediate income-earning opportunities for insuring ensure long-term security (Chant, 2007). This contrasts with men's first-and- foremost demand for jobs. Women also emphasize aspects related to

dignity such as voicelessness and humiliation. These insights have significant implications for macro-economic policy.

5 Feminist poverty knowledge in the domain of policy

From the 1990s onwards there was a return to a concern with global poverty, as expressed in the annual development reports issued by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as in the Beijing Platform for Action. All these reports focused on poverty, and each of them made explicit mention of gender in addition to policies targeted specifically at poor women. Gender appeared to have arrived on the policy map. The forms in which gender has been incorporated into mainstream poverty knowledge nonetheless require critical scrutiny. Some reports continue to adopt a non-analytical reference to 'gender' and pursue policies directed at women paternalistically constructed solely in terms of their biological reproductive roles. For instance the World Development Report 1990 laid out its New Poverty Agenda promoting pro-poor growth through labour-intensive strategies to generate income-earning opportunities for the poor, plus social investment in basic health and education to improve the productivity of labour. However it had little to say in its analysis about the gender dimensions of poverty despite mention of women's disadvantage relative to men in selected sectors. Emphasis, for policies remained on female education and employment -- seen as important for reducing fertility rates (Kabeer 2003).

The 2000 WDR went further with its focus on the key themes of opportunity, empowerment and security, providing gendered analysis of the institutional basis of gender inequality. The links between customary norms, legal systems, kinship regulations and state policies in reinforcing women's subordination were highlighted and an argument made for the "instrumental social and economic benefits for poverty reduction" from a gender equity perspective. In an endorsement of competitive markets as the main engine for growth the report omits an analysis of gender bias in markets (see Kabeer, 2003 for analysis of key reports).

The presence and yet absence of gender has led some feminist scholars to caution against the treatment of 'being female' and 'being poor' as synonymous. Jackson (1998) argues that the singular policy focus in international organisations has conflated gender justice with poverty reduction. Gender needs to be rescued from the 'poverty trap', not by mainstreaming gender into poverty by defining women as especially poor within existing poverty concepts, but rather through a reformulation of poverty beyond a narrow materialist understanding. For this there must a culturalist relational perspective with greater recognition of gendered identities, ideologies and struggles. Others such as Razavi (1999) maintain that gender can and needs to be mainstreamed through use of a variety of arguments including, equity, and efficiency.

The gaps in gender analysis and the limited incorporation of gendered poverty knowledge is due not just to 'loss in translation'. They reflect the discursive construction of a new orthodoxy in poverty knowledge systems in line with extant neo-liberal rationality. Three examples serve to illustrate this

observation: 1) selective appropriation; 2) the construction of new myths; 3) the selective articulation of gendered poverty knowledge that omits major implications for social justice and transformation.

5.1 Selective appropriation

Throughout the 1990s social scientists conducting ethnographic research uncovered networks and social support systems, used by the poor, evolved from their own coping with poverty and economic crisis. A key contributor to this body of literature, González de la Rocha (2007), documents how she constructed an analytical model of the ‘resources of poverty’ through enquiry into how the poor managed to cope with poverty in Guadalajara, Mexico, during the 1981 and 1982 economic crisis. Four significant structural conditions emerged from her study as essential strategies for survival and reproduction of the household: a) the possibility to earn wages; b) labour invested in petty commodity production and petty trade; c) labour invested in the production of goods and services for consumption; d) income from social exchange. The ‘resources of poverty’ model was taken up by the World Bank as evidence of the resilience and capacity of the poor to survive through using their own resources. In subsequent follow up research in the same region, González de la Rocha found that urban poor households could no longer cope through traditional household mechanisms of work intensification. The Mexican crisis had intensified with increased precariousness in the labour market leading to an erosion of not only societal systems for support and self-help but also the capacity to participate in alternative occupations and self-provisioning activities. The result was a process of *cumulative disadvantage*. The crucial need was for employment generation and state policies for support. Despite these findings reinforced by studies elsewhere, the World Bank has continued to use the ‘resources of poverty’ model based on the agency and resilience of the poor. This model has been reformulated into the model of ‘social capital’ as a convenient tool to continue with neo-liberal economic policies and legitimize shifting the responsibility of costs of reproduction from the state to households and communities. Institutional power protects this ‘sacred narrative’ which is virtually impossible to challenge, as González de la Rocha discovered. She writes: “Contradicting these ideas, or revising them in a critical way, was virtually unthinkable. My exposition on the erosion of the survival model in the late 1990s received a hostile response from scholars, activists and professionals working in development agencies. How dare I argue that reciprocity, solidarity among the poor, and mutual help could reach limits? My critics made me feel not just that I was wrong, but that I was being almost blasphemous. The paper in which I developed the shift from the ‘resources of poverty’ to the ‘poverty of resources’ was rejected by different periodicals, in spite of various positive, independent reviews’ (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2007: 48).

5.2 Construction of myths

Contemporary discourses in development studies on gender and poverty are peppered with phrases such as “*feminisation of poverty*”, and comments like

“poverty has a woman’s face”, “female-headed households are the poorest of the poor”. Their entry into the development lexicon has given gender a significant presence in discussions on poverty and its reduction. Nevertheless there is increasing disquiet at the ways these tropes have been deployed and programmatically applied. Chant (1997) who spearheaded research on female-headed households in the 1990s has made a trenchant critique of the subsequent ‘feminisation of poverty’ thesis. The thesis is used to refer to facts such as: a) women have a higher incidence of poverty than men; b) their incidence of poverty is more severe than men’s; and that c) there is a trend towards greater poverty among women particularly associated with female-headed households. Chant points out that the thesis primarily implies monetary privation; and also that there is a trend towards increasing income disparity between men and women. These implications are problematic for the following reasons. The focus on income goes counter to the holistic concept of poverty/vulnerability in gendered poverty knowledge. There is no comparative database, in fact a dearth of sex-disaggregated longitudinal panel data, which could substantiate such a global trend. The thesis is belied by the (currently) shrinking statistical disparities between men and women’s capabilities and opportunities, particularly in the fields of education, employment and politics (Chant, 2008): 167). The concomitant implication that there is a ‘masculinisation’ of wealth and privilege’ is also now contrary to emerging evidence in many countries of increased male unemployment and job insecurity; what is now called a ‘crisis of masculinity’. Even where a narrowing of the gender wage gap has been noted, it has been argued that this is due to a process of levelling down rather than levelling up. Hence what is reflected is a process of (gender) equality by impoverishment’ (Elson, 1999).

The linkage of feminisation of poverty with the specific category of female-headed households who are the ‘poorest of the poor’ needs similar deconstruction. The ‘culture of single motherhood’ has become associated with the ‘New Poverty Paradigm’ with the assumption that such households are dysfunctional and result in an ‘intergenerational transmission of disadvantage’. Echoing historical discursive constructions of ‘dependency’ and ‘culture of the poor’ discussed earlier, women are once again portrayed not only as victims but as irresponsible culprits who are themselves to blame for their situation. While certain categories of women do indeed face special disadvantage, evidence from feminist research shows that assuming headship (of the household) is sometimes a way in which women actually enhance their own and their children’s well-being. Households headed by women seemed better able to prevent drastic changes in their diets and make decisions prioritising food and health than were male-headed households. Where women were in control there was also less violence and more equal sharing of responsibilities (see Chant, 2007 for case studies).

Analytically the trope of ‘feminisation of poverty’ misinforms through an overemphasis on income and female-headed households, plus a neglect of multidimensional vulnerabilities. The key conclusion, which gets lost in such a deployment of this trope is the evidence on the ‘feminisation of responsibility and obligation’ as women take on the burden of dealing with poverty (Chant, 2008: 176-182). Furthermore the increase in the ‘reproduction tax’ as incomes fall and women’s time and labour inputs increase is not matched by any

increase in their entitlements or bargaining power either within or outside the household. Studies have bought out the ways in which the policy response to ‘feminise’ anti-poverty programmes in fact ends up placing even more obligations and responsibilities for social reproduction on women’s shoulders.

As discussed earlier, this feature of neo-liberal restructuring has fostered a ‘new maternalism’ in recent welfare policies which draws on an ‘army of voluntary labour’, that also serves as the guardian of social capital. Molyneux (2006) notes how ‘gendered assets and dispositions are being increasingly recognised by the international development agencies, but so far this has not bought significant material benefits to the women involved’ mainly because ‘lack of support for care work and long-term security are rarely taken into account. Prevailing policy assumptions still tend to naturalise women’s roles’. The dynamics of gendered relations of poverty need to be examined from an intersectional perspective highlighting the specific ways gender (in-)equality manifests by way of intersections of age, ethnicity, race, caste and religious affinity in a given context.

In the new orthodoxy of welfare state restructuring a central theme is the balance between a citizen’s rights with his/her societal obligations (whether it be to his/her own autonomous self; as a member of a family; community or nation; and more recently, as a ‘regional or global citizen’) (Jordan, 1998). This arose from shifts in public policy that intersect with minimum standards of welfare provisioning in the welfare states, and form the basis of the normative construction and formulation of the concept of ‘active citizenship’. This concept demands the strengthened participation and involvement in, and responsibility of individuals over, the ‘development’ and continued progress of society. As responsible and responsive members of society, the active citizen is constructed as an independent, autonomous, self sufficient and caring individual situated in an environment with an abundance of opportunities for self-development and growth (personal and professional). Within this framework of understanding, it is implied that poverty; lost opportunities; and most marginalized and disadvantaged positions result from one’s own failure, folly, lack of responsibility and solidarity – to which, the state, has absolutely no responsibility to rescue, protect and support.

Covering a wide range of countries, mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world, Kingfisher (2003) demonstrates how the nexus of gender and welfare restructuring must be understood as part of a global set of neo-liberal social prescriptions that deal with both the public and private sphere. Despite situated differences, neo-liberalism has forged a new autonomous and self-sufficient subject and recast the subjectivity of citizens. Biggs and Powell (2003) also point out there are many dangers in homogenizing the effects of active citizenship in state attempts of re-arranging welfare care provisioning for the elderly based on their reconstituted identity as active citizens. The postmodern reshaping of aging as a matter of mid-lifestyles to solve the problem of ageing by assuming that older people are the same as everyone else is ridden with inaccuracy since older people cannot be characterized as having the same abilities (to do the same jobs as younger adults and needs) without special requirements because of disabilities associated with age (see also Vera-Sanso, 2006).

5.3 Articulation versus silencing

Critical readings of various countries' policy documents – such as their Participatory Poverty Appraisal (PPA) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) – have revealed the limited extent to which feminist poverty knowledge has been incorporated (Whitehead and Lockwood, 1999, Whitehead, 2003). Even most third generation PRSPs continue mainly to pigeon-hole discussions of women and gender into the education and health sections, with some discussion in the sections on labour markets (mainly micro-enterprises) and hardly any mention at all in sections dealing with agriculture, land rights, rural development, environment and natural resource management, safety nets and food security, water supply, sanitation, urban development, transport and energy or violence. There continues to be a conceptual, statistical and strategic silence on the multidimensional and multi-sectoral aspects of gendered poverty (Chhachhi, 2007).

The main problem is that most PRSPs use 'women' as a generic term, rather than gender as an analytical category, with an almost exclusive focus on widows and female-headed households – reinforcing the assumption that they are the poorest. A common sense – rather than analytical – notion of vulnerability is applied to refer primarily to natural disasters. The nexus of knowledge construction and power remains hegemonic. The positivist approach dominates and econometric methodological techniques are the only sanctioned form of 'scientific' evidence. Data from qualitative techniques, despite the use of participatory research, is not integrated into analysis or policy recommendations – nor, crucially, budget allocations. Gender and the 'voices of the poor' are filtered out.

Questions of social justice are articulated in efficiency terms linking gender equality with poverty reduction in an instrumental way. Policy frameworks in general do not articulate a vision of social justice that embraces the intrinsic right for women to develop their capabilities and choices, and live a life of dignity plus quality. A review of current pathways out of poverty, all of which use the terms 'vulnerability', 'gender', 'voice', and 'rights', and argue for a special focus on the poor and on women, shows important differences based on different conceptions of social justice but also alerts one to a convergence on the ground between some of these approaches (Chhachhi, 2008). Most offset job insecurity and vulnerability by a minimal, contingent state-based provision of social assistance for the poor, cast in paternalistic terms. This is combined with market-based initiatives directed towards investing in 'the bottom of the pyramid'. In the long term many such schemes reproduce the conditions for privatization of profit and public responsibility for risk, this time at the cost of the poor. Market-based entitlements constitute a reconfiguration of social citizenship from one resting on a notion of universal rights to basic public goods towards a notion of citizens as entrepreneurs and consumers. Such approaches result in a process of *levelling down* and reduction in the possibilities for the enhancement of human capabilities and hence limits to the assertion of democratic citizenship and distributive justice.

6 Feminist Poverty Knowledge: Implications for Social Justice

The present transnational character of poverty and its links with gender poses tremendous challenges to theories of social justice. The multi-dimensional and interconnected character of *vulnerability* of human beings and their societies when viewed from the vantage point of *relationality* requires an understanding of the 'social' as something multi-layered, which transcends the boundaries of nation-states and requires a corresponding conception of 'justice'. A key issue lies in the rigidity within institutions – their own structure and decision-making processes – which only recognizes in/justice by their own definitions. Feminist scholarship has uncovered many dimensions of poverty in which socio-economic injustice not only overlaps with cultural injustice but in some instance become co-constitutional. Some forms of poverty involved national as well as global causes, requiring reforms not only in the legal domains of equal rights but also a deepened understanding of practices of rights claims, responsibility and authority in everyday life. The feminist debate on poverty touched upon social citizenship (entitlements and rights to welfare), active citizenship (the shift from welfare to workfare), citizenship in practice, and inclusive citizenship. Each of these perspectives adds something new but most are bounded by the nation-state as a political community and lack a perspective on the interface between the local and global.

Fraser's (1997) proposal to address economic injustice as redistribution, and cultural injustice as recognition opened up the space to reflect on a range of methods for political-economic restructuring which must go hand in hand with a transformation of societal patterns of representation, interpretation and communication in ways that would change everybody's sense of self. Such a combined strategy to social justice would be able to address gender maldistribution and gender misrecognition simultaneously. New rules of engagement that are culturally as well as politically informed would be required. Through a critical assessment of the Universal Breadwinner and the Care giver Parity models, Fraser presents a nuanced, even if Utopian vision of a society which satisfies seven principles for gender equality in the Universal Caregiver model. In this model men and women would balance care giving with waged work, with the welfare state ensuring universal citizenship rights and entitlements. However, Ungerson (1997) points out care allowances and payments are complex, have variable political roots and very complicated implications for the caring relationship and power structures within it. Debates on care allowances without care ethics are problematic.

Moving beyond Fraser, Lister (2007) explores the values underpinning the concept of inclusive citizenship which include Fraser's proposed elements of redistribution, recognition, plus participation parity, which Lister (2007) coins as respect. These have implications for the notion of cultural citizenship and the theorization of differentiated forms of citizenship, which nevertheless appeal to universalist principles. In her view these principles provide the basis for the citizenship claims of marginalised groups in citizenship studies, such as: people living in poverty, disabled and differently able people and children. She proposes a multi-tiered analysis, which pays attention to the spaces and places in which lived citizenship is practised. Such an analysis includes care and

citizenship and the interconnections between the intimate/domestic and the global as manifest in the 'global care chain phenomenon.

In their attempts to overcome fragmentation of rights claims driven by identity politics, Sen and Nussbaum moved beyond the notion of justice as fairness put forward by Rawls (1972), or equality of basic rights, to include equality of basic capabilities of all persons as members of humanity. Sen (2004) views the defining of capabilities as an exercise of deliberative democracy – a necessity due to the imperfection of resources and rights as indicators of capability and well-being. Historically and culturally defined, resources and rights are diverse; so are the socio-cultural contexts allowing for the conversion of resources into personal and/or group well-being. Respecting what people have reasons to value when building a wide information base for policy guidance is central to Sen's approach. Nussbaum concurs with Sen's capabilities approach, viewing it as superior to the social contract traditions; but remains critical about his reservation in giving any ranking order to the capabilities. She took the bold step of listing ten most important capabilities – drawing from the International Bill of Rights. This she intended as a working list for comparing equality of capabilities between females and males (Nussbaum, 2000). Her binary treatment of autonomy and care bypassed many insights gained from feminist care ethics, which emphasize the need for more contextual and situational ways of knowing and responding. She tends to treat care as parochial, and practical reasoning with autonomy as a capability essential to human development (Truong, 2006).

In line with Sen and Nussbaum species-specific account of humanity, Engster (2007) combines natural law theory and basic needs philosophy to posit the view that a society that cares creates the necessary opportunities and environment that ensure survival, and human flourishing and care ethics can serve as a minimalist theory of capabilities. Noting how a parochial and gender-tainted understanding of care dominates in contemporary society and creates ambiguity, distrust and suspicion towards attempts to incorporate care in moral/political theory, he draws from the resources of the long history of feminist ethics and proposes to view care as pre-requisite to capabilities, and therefore to natural rights. But he distances himself from Nussbaum's list of capabilities, considering it reflects a culturally specific and middle-class worldview still tainted by the male-centred liberal view of individuals as autonomous entities. He offers a notion of interdependence that hinges on the universality of caring as a capability and being cared for as a need. A framework of social justice based upon the practice of caring, thus, first asks questions about how such practices are arranged prior to questioning freedom and choice. Care ethics in his view must meet the challenges of a multicultural society to be able to deliver a theory of obligations for a just society. Nussbaum and Engster's lines of reasoning differ mainly due to their views on the individual – defined by the former as an autonomous entity and by the latter as a nexus of relationships. Overcoming this difference would imply a contextual understanding of autonomy – which includes choice on the preferred care arrangement.

In line with a species-specific relational ontology Baker et al (2004) integrate care in an alternative vision for an egalitarian society grounded on

four key policy objectives. They treat dependency and autonomy as different moments in the human lifecycle rather than binary opposites. In this perspective an egalitarian society must pay attention to: (a) equality in economic relations and access to resources; (b) equality in the social and cultural domains where systems of communication, interpretation and representation (media, education, the churches) must ensure equality of respect and recognition of differences; (c) equality of power in public and private institutions (formal politics, on governing boards, committees, in work and family/personal relations); and (d) equality in affective relationships (being able to receive and provide on equal terms love, care, and solidarity which operate at different sites – personal relationships, work relations, community and associational relations). Their proposed concept of affective equality integrates the concepts of dependency and interdependency into our understanding of equality and ‘citizenship’; it recognizes the citizen as economic, social, cultural, and political actor as well as universal caregiver and care recipient.

Feminist contributions to poverty knowledge have found particular resonance with the care and justice debate since it broadens and deepens the notion of the ‘social’, and opens up the scope to search for a corresponding notion of ‘justice’. A greater challenge is how to conceptualise care and justice in the frame of a global political society, given the power asymmetries between ‘actors’ in the global framework. The ‘transnational social’ or a space of local/global interactions with implications for inter-cultural encounters on social justice needs to be addressed. Concerns about the narrow understanding of group rights and singular understanding of identity have led to demands for the rooting of poverty concerns in particular geopolitical and multidimensional contexts, requiring more epistemologically situated awareness of the different framings and selection principles used by different actors. A situated understanding and action does not imply a wholesale rejection of universal norms, rather, a more reflexive approach to the existing institutions, their contextual performance and capacity to enhance livelihood security and human development goals.

Sen’s (2001) distinction between *international equity* and *global equity* serves to deepen analysis of the local/global interface. He refers to the former as relations of justice within and between nations as aggregates, and the latter to relations of justice practiced by diverse institutions and actors operating across borders (firms and businesses, social groups and political organisations, non-governmental organisations of different types). In operating across boundaries, these institutions have to face issues of purpose, relevance and propriety – issues that cannot be dissociated from concerns of justice and responsibility. The contributions of these institutions to human capabilities and freedoms must be subject to evaluation. A multi-scale approach to global justice calls for the grounding of social practices of all institutions operating across borders: in their contextual boundaries, in the values they hold, and in the legitimacy of their actions and outcomes.

In this respect Hutchings’ (2000) contributions to care ethics in international relations help deepen understanding of ethical judgement. Moving beyond the war and peace dichotomy she calls for a deepened interrogation of the social relations and institutions that inform and construct

realities and ethical judgements of intervention. Ethical judgements are embedded in the dynamic of relationships, thus often go against principles of universality. The dominant understanding of ethical substance and the location where ethical judgement is produced cannot be ignored. The ethic of care has great potential for societal transformation as it ushers situatedness rather than idealisation or utopian values characteristic of the dominant ethical frameworks. Judgements also correspond to feminist standpoint theory, which is confronted with questions of political relevance at the macro-level and faces the danger of generalizations at the micro-level. What is constituted as ethical or not in today's reality must be understood in its phenomenological and genealogical sense, thus requiring interrogation of the origins and processes by which ethical judgements made.

In this line, Sousas Santos and Rodriguez-Garavito's (2005:15) approach to subaltern cosmopolitan legality has the potential to strengthen the contributions to social justice discussed above. It combines insights from neo-institutional and reflexive sociology with a perspective on counter-hegemonic politics (developed by Gramsci) directed at eroding both dominant ideologies and coercive institutions in order to value and promote new articulations of notions of rights. It calls for a 'conception of legality suitable for reconnecting law and politics and re-imagining legal institutions from below'. Subaltern subjects are those living in poverty and excluded from the benefits of social citizenship by top-down cosmopolitan projects such as neo-liberalism. A 'sociology of emergence', which entails documenting and 'interpreting in an expansive way the initiatives, movements and organisations that resist globalisation and social exclusion', is helpful for uncovering the potential of tendencies and possibilities inscribed in a given practice' of resistance (ibid.:468). Individual entitlements and individuals, which remain at the epicentre of liberal theory, must meet grassroots demands for collective rights and what they define as the '*commons*' – culture, land, knowledge and skills (and one may add care). These commons manifest collective and solidaristic understandings of entitlements (ibid.:). Legality at the local/global interface is an encounter between different normative life worlds: a clash between highly asymmetrical ways of negotiating the different understandings of the meaning of social emancipation. Variation in the concepts of social emancipation is matter of degree – between those limited to the threshold of survival and those which encompass Aristotle's ideal of *eudaimonia* (which is translated as 'living well and doing well' or 'human flourishing'). It should be noted that Aristotle "relegated women and slaves to a realm of "household justice," whose participants are not fundamentally equal to the free men who participate in political justice, but inferiors whose natural function is to serve those who are more fully human" (Okin, 2003:281). Contemporary subaltern cosmopolitan legality strives for full inclusion of its subjects and the full meaning of social emancipation.

Feminist contributions to debates on gender, poverty and social justice have deepened the understanding of the ways gender as a structuring principle of social life and an embedded hierarchy of values produces different conceptions and experiences of poverty as well as adds new meanings to the idea of 'human flourishing'. Neo-liberal globalisation has triggered multiple processes of differentiation and complex intersections of social relations within and across societies in ways that the links between poverty and social justice

can no longer be understood without the addition of a gender lens. A gendered analysis of the discourse, politics and policies for reducing poverty forms an important component of a broader framework required to address the emerging regimes of accumulation and intersection of class, caste, ethnicity, race in new forms of inequality, vulnerability and exclusion as well as the play of local and transnational processes and dynamics of power.

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