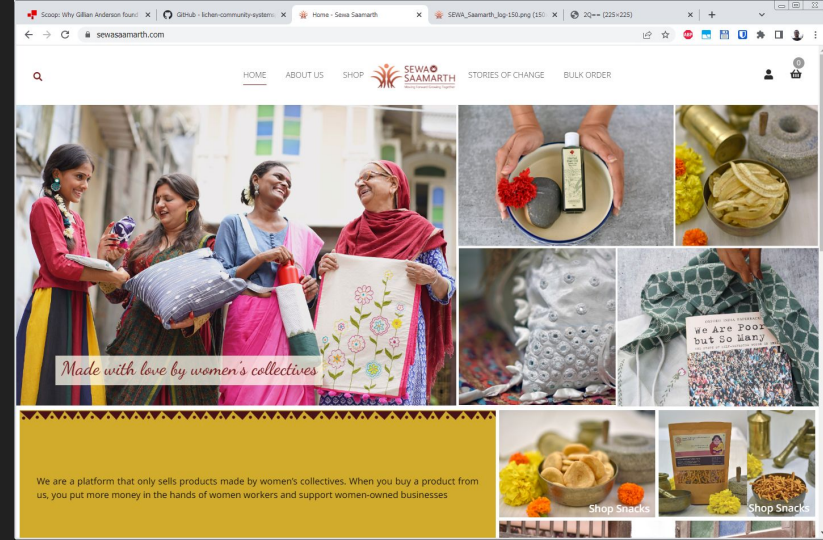


# SEWA Saamarth



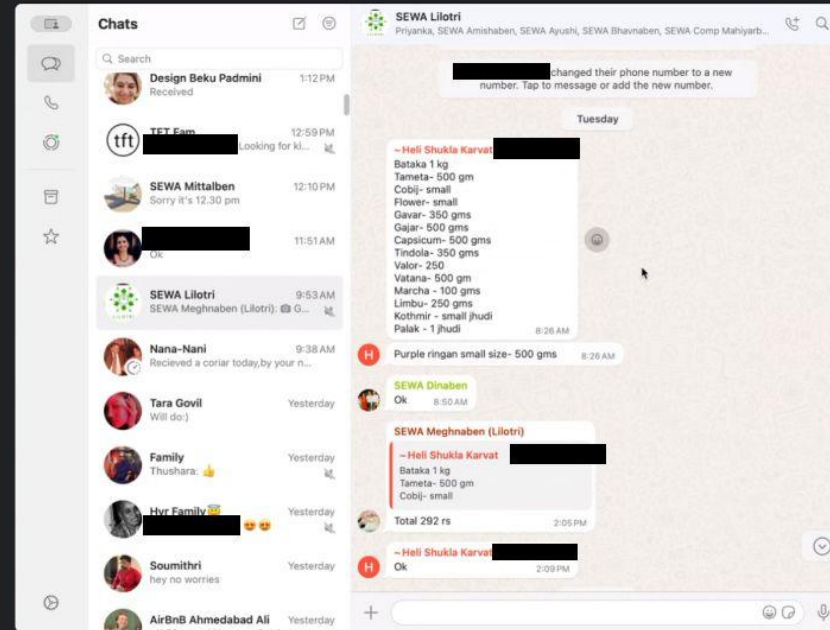
# Saamarth

- A Sanskrit word representing “capability”, “strength”
- Umbrella term for a variety of commercial activities already underway throughout SEWA Federation
- Existing WordPress e-commerce site at <https://sewasaamarth.com/>:



# SEWA Lilotri within SEWA Saamarth

- Brand within Saamarth focusing on sale of farm produce (fruit/vegetables)
- Salonie approached Antranig in December 2023 with requirement which arose organically amongst Federation team
- Originally conceived as a “WhatsApp bot” based on replacing/augmenting existing functions within WhatsApp channel



# Low cost, “ad hoc” platform

- Focus on reducing running costs to the bare minimum, and exploiting literacies membership already had
- Exploit invaluable “cut-through” created by very mature Indian UPI payment system meaning system does not need to store any user data or process transactions
- Entire back end of system can be hosted in Google Sheets



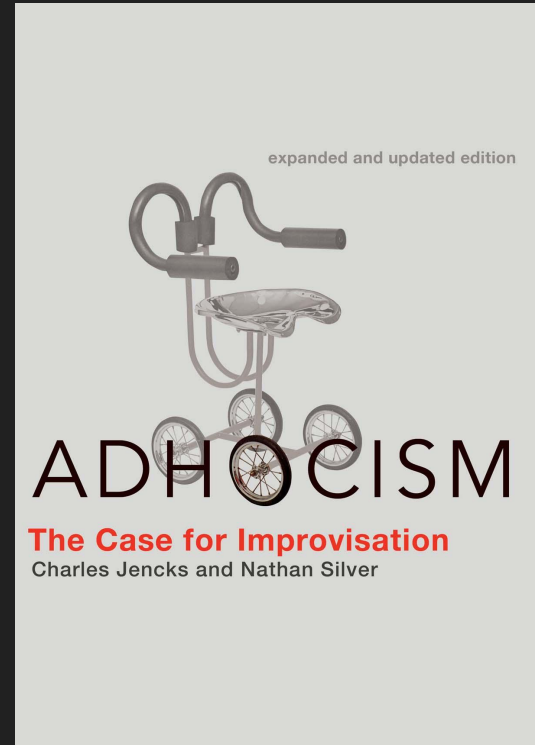
UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE

# Ad hocism

Notion arising from a [1972 text](#) (Jencks and Silver) later adopted by Palestinian technologists

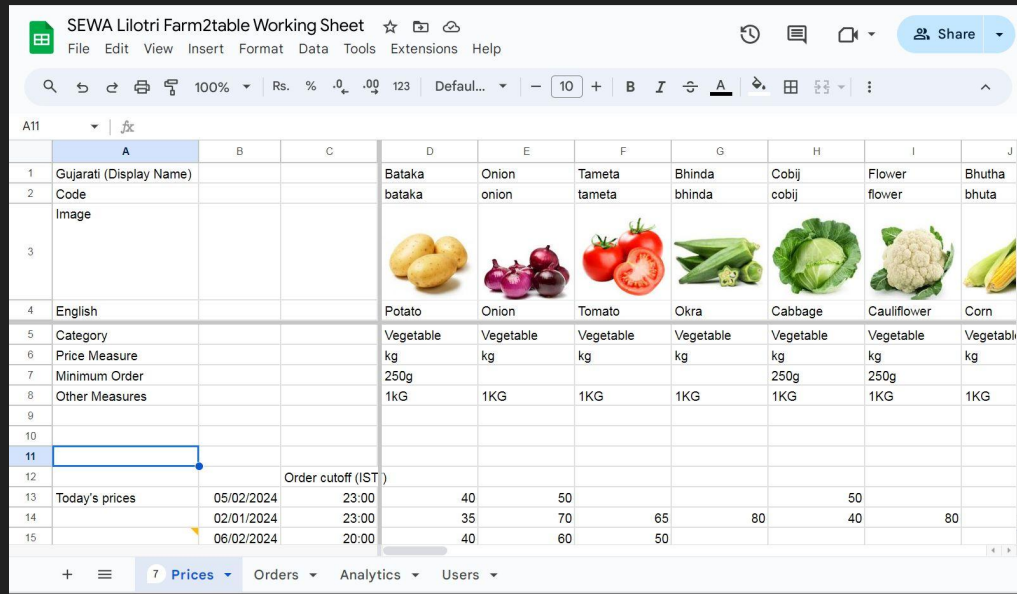
“At a populist level, adhocism is radically democratic and pragmatic, as in the first two stages of revolution.”

“most everything on earth comes from something else and is compound”










# A directly manifested data cooperative

– In contrast to other systems (DG's Loop, WordPress) members directly own their own data and have it under their fingers - not locked away in a “back end”



SEWA Lilotri Farm2table Working Sheet

| A  | B                       | C          | D   | E   | F  | G   | H   | I   | J   |
|----|-------------------------|------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1  | Gujarati (Display Name) |            | Bataka  | Onion   | Tameta   | Bhinda  | Cobij   | Flower  | Bhutha  |
| 2  | Code                    |            | bataka  | onion   | tameta   | bhinda  | cobij   | flower  | bhuta   |
| 3  | Image                   |            |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4  | English                 |            | Potato  | Onion   | Tomato   | Okra  | Cabbage   | Cauliflower   | Corn  |
| 5  | Category                |            | Vegetable   | Vegetable   | Vegetable  | Vegetable   | Vegetable   | Vegetable   | Vegetable   |
| 6  | Price Measure           |            | kg  | kg  | kg   | kg  | kg  | kg  | kg  |
| 7  | Minimum Order           |            | 250g  |   |  |   | 250g  | 250g  |   |
| 8  | Other Measures          |            | 1kG   | 1KG   | 1KG  | 1KG   | 1KG   | 1KG   | 1KG   |
| 11 |                         |            |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |
| 12 |                         |            | Order cutoff (IST)  |   |  |   |   |   |   |
| 13 | Today's prices          | 05/02/2024 | 23:00   | 40  | 50   |   |   | 50  |   |
| 14 |                         | 02/01/2024 | 23:00   | 35  | 70   | 65  | 80  | 40  | 80  |
| 15 |                         | 06/02/2024 | 20:00   | 40  | 60   | 50  |   |   |   |

# Free Access to Elite Capabilities

Piggybacking on Google Sheets' huge investment in infrastructure gives access to incredible capabilities for a data platform that might have cost \$millions:

- Fine-grained access controls - members can decide who data is shared with, see who it is shared with, and revoke access
- Access to audit trail and revision history for all changes
- Full insurance against data loss, free backups
- Access to real-time analytics

# Minimal running costs

Avoiding unnecessary subscriptions and exploiting “free” commodity technologies leads to minimal running costs

Smallest Amazon EC2 server at \$37/year, registering domain name at \$13/year (and now IP address costs at \$44/year) leads to total rate of about \$8/month (could be brought down by rehosting/reserving)



# An “Indigenous” technology?

Adapted to SEWA’s structure and literacies

Free “horizontal” scaling - add fresh communities to the system simply by provisioning a fresh Google Sheet with its own access controls etc.

Technological approach is a poor fit to highly vertical/high scale e-commerce but is easily adequate for SEWA’s communities

Having two central elements (Amazon server + Google backend) probably physically very close works surprisingly well for this notionally highly inefficient architecture

# A paradox within “big tech”?

Much writing has focused on “protecting vulnerable communities from the incursions of ‘big tech’” - and the resulting extractive practices

How have we protected SEWA’s communities by moving their data into the highest scale data centres on the planet (operated by Amazon and Google)?

We need to “pick our fights” within capitalism. There are trajectories to moving the actual infrastructure into SEWA’s control but not helpful in the short/medium term.

# A direct locus for community-led design

Having the entire backend “under the fingers” creates surprising opportunities for a kind of “direct community-led design” - e.g. demand to sell in units of 10 bananas - what next?

# Appropriateness?

Is the app appropriate and empowering?

Is it discouraging demand by users who don't want to use the app?

Is the (low) formality of offering new products still creating a barrier?

# Sustainability?

How to migrate the rest of the literacies necessary to maintain/develop the platform into SEWA's capacities?

Create links with other communities who can benefit from this approach/establish solidarity?

Incorporate this model for data and its ownership into existing discourse on data cooperatives