The London School of Economics and Political Science

Paradoxes of Subaltern Politics: Brazilian Domestic Workers' Mobilisations to Become Workers and Decolonise Labour

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Declaration:

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the possibilities and forms of subaltern politics through an empirical study of Brazilian domestic workers' mobilisations. Domestic work, often described as a legacy of slavery in Brazil, is characterised by the intersection of gender, race and class matrices of oppression, which makes domestic workers a subaltern group. As a result of their subaltern status and characterisation as 'non-standard' workers they are expected to be harder, or even impossible, to organise and represent. Yet, Brazilian domestic workers have been organising since 1936; they formed their own autonomous trade unions, and won partial recognition in 2015 when the Brazilian Congress approved a law extending basic labour rights to them. Thus, my thesis examines how this subaltern group has been able to organise, and argues that instead of considering subalternity as an impediment to collective action it should be understood as a potential resource for mobilisation.

I have identified three paradoxes of subaltern politics. First, I show how the professional identity 'domestic worker' is both necessary for political recognition in the Brazilian corporatist state, but also rejected, as it re-inscribes domestic workers into the raced-gendered power relations they want to challenge. Furthermore, I find that while the intersecting nature of their oppression is what has constructed domestic workers as a subaltern group, it has also enabled the formation of broad-based alliances with women, black and workers' movements, thereby turning subalternity into a resource for collective action. Finally, domestic workers have used their perceived vulnerability to force recognition from the Brazilian state, yet, this has led to a paternalistic mode of recognition and a certain demobilisation of the domestic workers' local unions. As domestic workers gained partial recognition as workers, they were also forced into an industrial relations model that did little to respond to the complex and multi-sided forms of oppressions they face, posing new challenges to their modes of organising.

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Abbreviations

CEB: Local Ecclesiastical Communities (*Comunidades Ecclesiais de Base*)
CLT: Consolidated Labour Laws (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho*)
CONLACTRAHO: Confederation of Domestic Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean (*Confederación Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Trabajadoras del Hogar*)
CONTRACS: National Confederation of the Commerce and Services (*Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores do Comércio e Serviços*)
CTPS: Card of Employment and Social Security (*Carteira de Trabalho de Previdência Social*)
CUT: Unified Central of Workers (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*)
DIEESE: Inter-union Department of Statistics and Research (*Departamento Intersindical de Estatísticas e Estudos*)
ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
FECONEZU: Black Communitarian Zumbi Festival (*Festival Comunitário Negro Zumbi*)
FENATRAD: National Federation of Domestic Workers (*Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas)*
FES: Foundation Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung
FGTS: Fund of Guarantee for Time of Service (*Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço*)
FGV: Getúlio Vargas Foundation
FNB: Black Brazilian Front (*Frente Negra Brasileira*)
IBGE: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas*)
IDWF: International Domestic Workers' Federation
ILC: International Labour Conference
ILO: International Labour Organisation
IUF: International Union Federation
JOC: Young Catholic Workers (*Juventude Operária Católica*)
MNU: Unified Black Movement (*Movimento Negro Unificado*)
PLP: Popular Legal Promoters (*Promodoras Legais Populares*)
PNAD: National Household Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*)
PSDB: Party of the Brazilian Social Democracy (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*)
PT: Workers' Party (*Partidos dos Trabalhadores*)
SEPPIR: Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (*Secretaria de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial*)
SPM: Secretariat of Policies for Women (*Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres*)
STDMSP: Union of Domestic Workers of the Municipality of São Paulo *(Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo)*
TDC: Programme 'Domestic Work and Citizenship' (*Trabalho Doméstico Cidadão*)
TEN: Black Experimental Theatre (*Teatro Negro Experimental*)
TRT: Regional Tribunal of Labour (*Tribunal Regional do Trabalho*)
UFF: Federal Fluminense University
UNICAMP: University of Campinas
USP: University of São Paulo

"*A questão da democracia tem muito mais a ver conosco, que somos excluídos, do que com os caras que estão no poder, que não estão a fim, evidentemente*."

"The question of democracy has much more to do with us, who are excluded, than with those guys who are in power, who, apparently, don't really care."

Lélia Gonzalez, 1991

Chapter I/ Introduction

> "We had the *Lei Áurea*, but slavery kept on going in our country. It freed the slaves but not the domestic workers." (Rosa da Motta Jesus, President of the union of domestic workers of Franca, 7 July 2017)

As Brazil celebrates the 130 years of the *Lei Áurea* (Golden Law) that abolished slavery (signed on 13 May 1888), debates are raging on whether slavery has been effectively eradicated or not. Being the last country in the world to have abolished slavery, Brazil also concentrates one of the largest Afro-descendent populations outside of Africa and is infamous for its high levels of social inequalities and racial discrimination (IPEA, 2014; Venturi, Santos, & Silva, 2009). The intensity of the debates on the abolition and its aftermaths, which permeates the social, political, and academic spheres,[1] was vividly illustrated during the 2018 Rio de Janeiro carnival. The samba school Paraíso Tuiuti chose the history of colonisation and slavery as its central theme, leading to a nation-wide controversy.[2] The parade represented slaves being trafficked from Africa to Brazil enchained and silenced by muzzles, slaves in the sugar cane and coffee plantations during the 19th century, and then moved on to portray the 'modern slaves' embodied by the large segment of informal workers (street vendors, domestic workers, and workers in the construction sector) without access to labour rights. The samba school used the parallel between old and new forms of slave labour to claim that the Golden Law remained a mere declaration of intentions, never materialised on the ground.

The Tuiuti parade also directly attacked the neoliberal policies of the current interim Temer government, which came into power in 2016 after the coup/impeachment of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) President Dilma Rousseff.[3] The samba school portrayed Temer as a vampire sucking the blood of the working class and

[1] An example of this is the publication of the *Dictionary of Slavery and Freedom* (Schwarcz & Gomes, 2018), launched in May 2018 to coincide with the 130th anniversary of the Golden Law. This edited volume gathers critical texts about the process of abolition itself, the distinction between free and slave labour, as well as the lack of effective racial equality after the proclamation of juridical equality between white and black people. This book has already been acclaimed as one of the best sellers for non-fictional books in 2018.

[2] For an account of the politicised carnival parade, see for instance Dom, P. (2018), "Samba-school carnival parade depicts troubled Brazil as 'monster'", in *The Guardian*, published on 13/02/2018: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/13/samba-school-carnival-parade-depicts-brazil-as-monster

[3] More discussion is provided in chapter II on the distinction between coup and impeachment, but I choose to refer to this process mostly as a coup (*golpe*), and use the term impeachment exclusively to refer to the parliamentary vote that led to the destitution of Dilma Rousseff.

manipulating an army of conservative puppets who supported the coup.[4] The parade explicitly confronted the 2017 general labour reform (*reforma trabalhista*), which is deregulating the labour market and weakening workers' rights. Dancers held coffins containing the Labour Code, while the refrain of their *samba enredo* (traditional carnival music) asked: "My God, oh my God, is slavery really extinct?"

Domestic workers – defined here as those who work for private households, including cleaners, carers, cooks or any other type of personal service taking place within a private house – are emblematic of continuing slave-like forms of labour and dire precarity of work.[5] Indeed, they are in their vast majority Brazilian-born black poor women (93% are women and 61% are black women), very often directly descendant of slaves, under-paid, under-valued, and lacking of legal protection (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007a, 2015b; DIEESE, 2013; Santana Pinho & Silva, 2010). As affirmed by Rosa da Motta Jesus, the President of the domestic workers' union of the city of Franca, the abolition of slavery did not fully reach domestic workers. Freed black women remained in the same type of occupations, undertaking the care and reproductive labour of middle and upper-class white families under very similar conditions to those of their enslaved ancestors.

In fact, domestic workers are the only category of workers excluded from the Labour Code, an exclusion that is solidly secured by the article 7 of the 1988 'citizen' Constitution that ended the military regime (1964-1985). It is called the 'citizen' Constitution because in 1987 a Constituent Assembly was elected specifically to write the Constitution, and mechanisms allowing people – either individually or in organised groups – to submit their amendments were put in place.[6] As a result, the 1988

[4] For pictures of the parade, see for instance: https://g1.globo.com/rj/rio-de-janeiro/carnaval/2018/noticia/desfile-da-paraiso-do-tuiuti-veja-fotos.ghtml

[5] The ILO (2017a, p. 17) defines slavery as "the status or conditions of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised", while modern slavery refers to "situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power". Modern slavery includes: forced labour, forced marriage, human trafficking, and debt bondage. These practices are set in opposition to free waged labour, in which a person is supposed to voluntarily enter a working contract with an employer in exchange for a wage (this has been extensively challenged by Marxist theory). This thesis cannot engage in depth with these different concepts and debates, but I choose not to use the term 'modern slavery', which I find too broad. I prefer to talk about a legacy of slavery and the coloniality of labour, to insist on the continuations and interconnectedness between the pre and post-abolition periods in Brazil.

[6] See the historical reviews made by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies: https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/infograficos/2017/10/30-anos-da-constituicao-cidada,

Constitution is said to reflect the will of the people, forming the basis of the modern democratic state and social contract. Yet, one significant group of workers – domestic workers – was excluded from this renewed pact of citizenship. In Brazil, the most common word used to refer to domestic workers is *empregada* (employee), a diminutive for *empregada doméstica,* which means literally 'house employee' but is better translated as 'maid' because of its connotation of servitude. *Empregada doméstica* is the term used in the legislation, and the one selected by most actors (media, politicians and employers). In contrast, the unions of domestic workers insist on using the term *trabalhadora doméstica* (domestic worker), to insist on the fact that they are proper workers and part of the working class. For them, being called workers rather than maids means being recognised as subjects of labour rights and citizens. Thus, the very word designating this professional category is a field of political struggle. I choose to use the term domestic workers throughout this thesis in respect for the unions' self-denomination.

A historical change took place in 2013 when the PT government, under the presidency of Dilma Rousseff, approved the Constitutional Amendment 72/2013, known as the *"PEC das domésticas"*, which changed the article 7 of the Constitution and proclaimed equality of rights between domestic workers and other workers. The Constitutional Amendment was then translated into a piece of legislation, the Complementary Law 150/2015, that specifies which labour rights domestic workers are entitled to.[7] This change in the political and social Brazilian landscape is so significant that it has been characterised as a "second abolition of slavery" by politicians.[8] However, the 2013 Constitutional Amendment, while proclaiming equality of rights, maintains domestic workers' exclusion from the Labour Code, and the 2015 legislation extends only some – but not all – existing labour rights to them. Besides, the law is widely associated with the legacy of the PT, obscuring the 80 years of domestic workers' struggles behind it.

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and: http://www.camara.gov.br/internet/agencia/infograficos-html5/constituinte/index.html (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

[7] Constitutional Amendment n. 72/2013: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/emendas/emc/emc72.htm
Complementary law 150/2015: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/LCP/Lcp150.htm

[8] See for instance declarations from PT Ministers in June 2015: http://www.pt.org.br/regulamentacao-do-trabalho-domestico-acaba-com-escravidao-diz-ministra/, or from Senators from various political parties commenting on the 2013 Constitutional Amendment: https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2013/03/13/pec-das-domesticas-e-vista-como-lei-aurea-moderna

In many regards, domestic work is used as a measure of social progress. The figure of the domestic worker is often mobilised either to illustrate the advancements made – now domestic workers have equal rights and this represents a second abolition of slavery, or to highlight the entrenched coloniality of labour in Brazil – domestic work is still performed by black women with lower wages and lower levels of protection. The reality is a combination of both. While domestic workers have been organising since 1936 to claim equal labour rights and won a significant legislative victory in 2015, they are not equal to other workers yet. Their movement, and successes, are marked by a fundamental tension between their will to be included within the existing rights framework and the profound changes to this framework such an inclusion would produce for Brazilian society. Indeed, a simple inclusion within the Labour Code, which regulates working relations and defines all the existing labour rights, would mean in effect a complete redefinition of work, the worker, and the colonial structure of power.

A domestic worker is defined in the 2015 legislation as someone who "provides services in a continued, subordinated, paid and personal form, in a non-profit making way, to individuals or households, within their private homes, for more than two days per week" (art. 1).[9] This includes cleaners, nannies, cooks, drivers, gardeners and carers. Quite crucially, this definition insists on the personal and non-profitable character of domestic work – it supposedly does not generate any profit for the employer, thereby justifying its differentiated legal treatment compared to other forms of work. If domestic work is not a profitable activity, then it is not a proper job, and therefore, it does not deserve the same type of protection and regulation.

The 2013 Constitutional Amendment represents an immense social progress. It proclaims equality of rights between domestic workers and other workers, thus reverting 60 years of legal exclusion since the adoption of the Labour Code in 1943, and 500 years of coloniality of labour. Its associated law, the law 150/2015, entitles domestic workers to the following labour rights: the minimum wage, remuneration for night work, a maximum of 8 hours of work per day and 44 hours per week, compensations for extra time beyond these hours, weekly rest, paid annual leave, bank and religious holidays, transport vouchers paid by the employer, one month notice

[9] In Portuguese: "Ao empregado doméstico, assim considerado aquele que presta serviços de forma contínua, subordinada, onerosa e pessoal e de finalidade não lucrativa à pessoa ou à família, no âmbito residencial destas, por mais de 2 (dois) dias por semana, aplica-se o disposto nesta Lei."

period, compensation for unfair dismissal, access to unemployment benefits, maternity leave, sick pay, and statutory pension. The signing of the working card (*Carteira de Trabalho de Previdência Social* – CTPS), which is the condition for being formalised and to access labour rights in Brazil, becomes compulsory, and employers refusing to sign it face a fine. Furthermore, this legislative victory takes place amidst a favourable international context: the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted the Convention 189 in 2011 on decent work for domestic workers, which guarantees domestic and migrant workers the same labour rights as every other workers.[10] Brazil ratified the Convention 189 in 2018, after having changed its national legislation in order to make it compatible with the new international standard.

However, just like the *Lei Áurea* in 1888, the declaration of equal rights for domestic workers remained a mere declaration. The 2015 legislation gives a limited number of labour rights to domestic workers and maintains their exclusion from the Labour Code. In practice, this means that domestic workers are located outside of regulated industrial relations, and thus have limited possibilities of organising as workers. Even though they have their own labour unions, these structures fall outside of the standards applying to unions and workers' representation. Besides, the 2015 legislation contains important limitations that will be detailed in chapter VII, such as the distinction between daily and monthly workers. Daily workers (*diaristas*), defined as those who work for less than three days a week for the same employer, are considered self-employed, therefore, they are not entitled to the newly gained rights which are only applicable to registered domestic employees. Finally, the 2015 domestic workers' legislation was adopted in a context of political and economic crisis, and just a year after its adoption, the left-wing PT government was impeached and replaced by a right-wing conservative government with an agenda of deregulation and flexibilisation of the labour market. In this context, the implementation of domestic workers' rights is less than guaranteed.

Thus, domestic workers have been recognised as workers, but not fully; they have been declared equals, but not quite. Such recognition – the extension of all labour rights and the inclusion within the Labour Code – would imply a too profound change in Brazilian society. It would put an end to the coloniality of labour and the deeply entrenched legacy of slavery, which enable the white elite to benefit from the cheap services of

[10] ILO Convention 189: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189

black women in order to access more qualified jobs in the labour market. This thesis analyses the struggles of Brazilian domestic workers for equal rights, and explores the deeply paradoxical character of their movement. Indeed, the very condition for reaching equality of rights is the full inclusion of domestic workers within an industrial relations system that has been founded on their exclusion and oppression.

I/ Domestic workers' paradoxical politics

Brazil was the last country in the world to abolish slavery in 1888 (Campbell, 2015; Preuss, 2012), and the one which received the largest contingent of African slaves; about 5.8 million, or 46% of the trafficked slaves in the Atlantic trade.[11] While men were brought to work in the sugar cane and coffee plantations, women slaves worked as servants and wet-nurses for the colonial master (Rios & Silva, 2015; Roncador, 2014; Twine, 1998). Over a century after the abolition of slavery, black women are still over-represented within domestic labour. In 2013, domestic work employed 14% of all economically active women, and 22% of all economically active black women, being the second largest sector of activity for women and the first for black women. Of the 6.4 million estimated domestic workers in 2013, 93% are women, and 61% are black women, while black and mixed-race people account for 54% of the Brazilian population. Domestic workers earn on average 60% less than other workers, and in 2013, only 33% of domestic workers had their CTPS signed compared to 65% of other workers (DIEESE, 2013; IBGE, 2013).[12] These figures are changing with the crisis, and the informality rates tend to be increasing for every sector of activity, but the gap between domestic workers and other workers remains. Domestic workers are also exposed to overt forms of violence, being sometimes used as "sexual initiation" for their white masters (DeSouza & Cerqueira, 2009; Ribeiro Corossacz, 2014).

The perpetuation of the racial and gendered division of labour inherited from the colonial past has led many Brazilian scholars to qualify contemporary domestic work as

[11] Table of estimates for the period 1500-1876: http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

[12] In terms of statistical data, I will mostly refer to the study carried out by the research institute DIEESE in 2013, as it the latest national study on domestic work available. Other employment studies that are done every year focus on 5 metropolitan areas, thus limiting the reach of the analysis. Data are also changing relatively fast since 2015, due to a combination of the new legislation and the economic crisis, and at this stage it seems preferable to use data produced prior to the crisis to provide a more reliable overview.

a direct legacy of slavery (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015a; L. Brown, 2006; Santana Pinho & Silva, 2010). I argue that this specific intersection of gender, race and class oppression within the colonial economy defines the subaltern status of domestic workers. Subalternity, understood here as a position of marginality within social and economic structures (Gramsci, 1971), shapes domestic workers' particular situation of exploitation as well as their possibilities of collective action. Indeed, it is because they are poor black women descendant of slaves that domestic workers have been produced as unskilled cheap labour and placed outside of what counts as work. This condition of subalternity has made domestic workers one of the most oppressed and marginalised groups within Brazilian society, and arguably, worldwide (Fish, 2017; ILO, 2009, 2013). Their labour was never recognised as a valuable activity, justifying their exclusion from the Labour Code. Indeed, domestic workers represent the non-worker exemplified; they perform 'valueless' reproductive work in the private sphere and operate within personal and emotional relationships that hide the professional dimension of their work.[13]

As a result, domestic workers are deemed lacking of political consciousness (Britto da Motta, 1999), "notoriously hard to organise" (Cox, 2006, p. 125), and "in total opposition to industrial work" (P. Smith, 2000, p. 108). Industrial relations and social movements scholarship quite unanimously predict that precarious or 'non-standard' workers are harder to organise, and even more so to unionise, because of the precarious and informal nature of their activity (Anner, 2007; Bonner & Spooner, 2011; Brophy, 2006; Collovald & Mathieu, 2009; Faniel, 2012; Theron, 2010; Wells & Jason, 2010). Domestic workers in particular work in isolated homes, the sector is fragmented by different statuses and access to labour rights, and they are not perceived as proper workers by their own employers (Bonner & Spooner, 2011; ILO, 2009, 2013; Meagher, 2002; P. Smith, 2000).

Subaltern studies, while having evolved in relative disconnection from industrial relations studies, emerged to recover the voices and histories of those who were not subjects of history; the peasants, the 'lumpen-proletariat', the non-organised workers deemed deprived of a political or class consciousness (Chakrabarty, 2000; Guha, 1997; Guha & Spivak, 1988). Despite important debates and divergent perspectives within the

[13] A detailed discussion on the devaluation of the work of social reproduction is provided in chapter III.

field (see chapter III), subaltern studies focused their attention precisely on those characterised elsewhere as 'non-standard' workers, proposing a new way to understand political action from below. While many scholars tend to present the subalterns as being against the state and official institutions because of their oppressed condition (Bayat, 2000; Motta & Nilsen, 2011; Pogodda & Richmond, 2015), others understand the subalterns as being not representable within existing hegemonic discourses which have erased them from politics and history (Beverley, 2001; Morris, 2010; Spivak, 1988a). Subalterns are, somehow, situated outside of political structures of representations. Thus, the subaltern and the 'non-standard' workers are the non-subjects of trade unionism and organised collective action.

Yet, Brazilian domestic workers have a quite long history of fighting for their rights. The first association of domestic workers was created in 1936 by the black activist and domestic worker Laudelina de Campos de Mello (1904-1991), in the city of Santos (state of São Paulo). In the 1960s, associations of domestic workers were founded in the largest cities (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Recife, Salvador) with the support of the Youth Catholic Workers, and subsequently transformed into trade unions after the return of democracy in 1988 (Ávila, 2009; Cornwall, Oliveira, & Gonçalves, 2013; Gonçalves, 2010). Domestic workers then created the National Federation of Domestic Workers (*Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas* – FENATRAD) in 1997, which united all the local unions and allowed them to be affiliated to the biggest confederation of workers of the country, the Unified Central of Workers (*Central Única dos Trabalharadores* – CUT), a structure allied to the PT. The FENATRAD is now composed of 21 local unions from 13 federative states (out of 26).

II/ Research aims and questions

Against all odds, domestic workers have been organising themselves and demanding equal rights since the 1930s. And most surprisingly, when the literature predicts that 'non-standard' workers would find alternative or non-traditional ways of mobilising (Barchiesi, 2010; Chen, 2013; D'Amours, Bellemare, & Briand, 2012; Duffy, 2010; P. Smith, 2000; Wells & Jason, 2010), Brazilian domestic workers have instead used the 'weapons of the strong' and created their own trade unions. How could this subaltern group get organised? What can explain domestic workers' mobilisations, and into what

extend can this process be considered as successful? My thesis addresses the crucial question of the possibility of subalterns' politics, but rather than asking the Spivakian question "can the subaltern speak?", I ask *how* they speak: under which conditions, and to what effects? This leads to the interlinked question of the possibility for the subalterns to be heard; their forms of political action (speaking) impacts on the ways in which they are recognised, opening or foreclosing prospects of transforming their condition of subalternity.

Subaltern groups, and domestic workers more specifically, have been organising for decades in places as diverse as the USA (Bapat, 2014; Boris & Klein, 2006; Boris & Nadasen, 2008) South Africa (Ally, 2009), Indonesia (Jordhus-Lier, 2017), Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Mexico, and Argentina, (Chaney & Castro, 1989; Rojas-García & Toledo González, 2017; Valenzuela & Rangel, 2008), and, the focus of this thesis, in Brazil. Thus, it is not that domestic workers or the subalterns cannot organise, but rather that their mobilisations are overlooked by conventional approaches to politics and trade unionism, and often disregarded by other social movements. I consider these silences and exclusions in order to examine which forms subaltern politics can take, and to analyse the possibilities of subaltern collective action. Domestic workers' mobilisations in Brazil operate outside of regulated industrial relations, yet, they have formed their own labour unions and have been able to obtain a constitutional reform from the state. Therefore, rather than being puzzled by domestic workers' ability to organise, and explain how their unlikely mobilisations took place, I propose to shift the perspective and consider instead subalternity as a potential resource for mobilisation. Indeed, I suggest we look at how subalternity is perceived, transformed and used by domestic workers to develop their own mobilising strategies.

In this thesis, I argue that gender, race and class vectors of oppression have positioned Brazilian domestic workers as a subaltern group, but this has also simultaneously been key to their mobilisation. Subalternity, and the shared experience of oppression produced by it, shapes domestic workers' collective identity and repertoires of action. Domestic workers successfully used their multiple vectors of oppression to form alliances with feminist, black, and workers' movements, and they made themselves an unavoidable issue for the state. Their subalternity is also, to a certain extent, what gave domestic workers a greater visibility at the global level: international organisations, and the ILO in particular, are willing to protect those who are perceived to be the most

vulnerable, ‘the poorest of poor’, or the ‘modern slaves’ exemplified (Fish, 2017). Thus, instead of considering subalternity as an impediment to collective action, it will be understood here as a potential resource for mobilisation.

In order to study subalternity and its effects on collective action, I take organisations led by domestic workers as a starting point. I consider domestic workers’ subaltern location as a place from which to rethink politics and from which to challenge the coloniality of labour in Brazil. Indeed, I take seriously the claim that domestic workers are workers, and that they do trade unionism, despite the legal and structural restrictions imposed on them. I use ethnographic methods to better understand what organised domestic workers do, think, and say about their own situation of subalternity and their political praxis. To this effect, I spent over 8 months conducting fieldwork in Brazil between 2015 and 2017. I conducted 77 interviews with both unionised and non-unionised domestic workers, and immersed myself in the lives of six local unions of domestic workers affiliated to the FENATRAD.

I focus on the Southeast region, and more specifically on the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which are the richest states of Brazil and those with the largest number of domestic workers. Taken together, these two states account for 40% of the domestic workforce (CUT-RJ & Sintell-Rio, 2013). Like other trade unions, domestic workers are bound by the rule of territorial unicity; this means that there can be only one union per professional category per territory, usually a city or a group of smaller cities. In the state of São Paulo, I studied the unions of the cities of São Paulo, Campinas, and Franca, and in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the unions of the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Nova Iguaçu, and Volta Redonda. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, these three unions are the only legalised unions affiliated to the FENATRAD, while in the state of São Paulo, there are a few others in smaller cities but they are in a critical state and some were closing down during my fieldwork. The three selected cases in São Paulo provide an overview of different local configurations and types of leadership, with an important variation in terms of city size. The region studied is identifiable in the map below.

Figure 1: Map of Brazil[14]

Through ethnographic observations, in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with domestic workers, and the analysis of internal documents collected at the local unions, I demonstrate the deeply paradoxical, precarious and gendered nature of subaltern politics. On the one hand, domestic workers mobilise in order to gain recognition as domestic workers, but, on the other hand, they refuse the category itself. I show how their identity as domestic workers is both necessary for political recognition but also re-inscribes them into the raced-gendered power relations they want to challenge. Furthermore, I find that even as they reject their identity as 'domestic workers', the intersecting nature of their oppression has enabled the formation of broad-based alliances with women, black and workers' movements, thereby turning subalternity into a resource for collective action. In effect, I argue that intersectionality is both an analytic of power, but also one that can be leveraged for subaltern political activism.

Finally, domestic workers' subalternity has made them both ambivalent but also remarkably astute subjects of labour rights. They have used their perceived 'vulnerability' to force recognition from the Brazilian state, yet, by doing so, they have

[14] Source: IBGE, Political Map of Brazil (2018), available online: https://atlasescolar.ibge.gov.br/images/atlas/mapas_brasil/brasil_politico.pdf (last accessed on 20/12/2018)

brought new difficulties to their movement and became to a certain extent less mobilisable. Their legislative victory shifted their repertoires of action from grassroots mobilisations towards strategies focused on influencing institutional politics, and towards more conventional forms of trade unionism. As domestic workers gained partial recognition, they were also forced into an industrial relations model that did little to respond to the complex and multi-sided forms of oppressions they face, posing new challenges to the unions' modes of organising.

Thus, my thesis shows that Brazilian domestic workers are paradoxical political subjects. While their subalternity has made them second-class citizens, it has also been key to their mobilisations and legislative victory. And while they successfully used their subalternity to mobilise, they also transformed the conditions of their mobilisation by gaining new rights and political recognition. Therefore, the history and experience of the Brazilian domestic workers' movement provide us with an important site from where to reconceive subalternity as a powerful, yet paradoxical, intellectual and political resource for organised collective action.

III/ Thesis outline

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter II maps domestic workers' politics within the Brazilian institutional and political context. It shows how the colonial history continues to shape domestic work, producing a subaltern class marked by gender, race and class inequalities. It also explains the Brazilian corporatist model of industrial relations, highlighting the points of exclusion and marginalisation of domestic workers that have been inherited from colonialism. Indeed, the modern state as constructed in the 1930s affords considerable labour protection to the 'standard' industrial workers (white European male workers) while it excludes domestic workers from the Labour Code, thereby reinforcing the legacy of slavery. The chapter ends with an overview of the PT governments and the current political crisis to show how the changing political landscape affects domestic workers. While the years of the PT brought some progress for the most marginalised, the current crisis can be understood as a conservative backlash to maintain the colonial social order in place.

Chapter III reviews the literature on domestic work, subaltern studies and social movements, proposing a theoretical framework to understand domestic workers as a

subaltern group and to capture their forms of politics and trade unionism. In this chapter, I define subalternity as an observable condition produced by gender, race and class vectors of oppression in a post-colonial context, but also conceive this condition as something that can be changed and transformed. More specifically, I consider subalternity both as a condition of oppression and as a possible resource for collective action, thus making subaltern politics an inherently paradoxical action. While domestic workers' gendered, raced and classed oppression is what has positioned them as a subaltern class, these material and subjective conditions of oppression also form the ground for their collective identity and repertoires of action.

Chapter IV details the methodology used to conduct this research. It proposes some criteria to establish my research as a feminist research, and, in particular, adheres to a feminist epistemology of knowledge as being partial and situated within power relations. By examining my own location (and dislocation), I try to show how this research is impacted by specific power dynamics. I then explain the recourse to ethnographic methods in order to understand the world of domestic workers' trade unionism, and to comprehend their own perception of what they do. I give a detailed account of the activities carried out in the field and the process of data collection and analysis. The chapter ends with a reflection on reciprocity and responsibility, and specifies the actions I have taken to be accountable to my participants. Although partial and situated, my methodology aims to contribute to a feminist ethics of research and offers some ways of addressing unequal power relations.

Chapters V, VI and VII present my empirical findings. Chapter V addresses the paradox of constructing a domestic workers' class. Drawing on interviews with both non-unionised and unionised domestic workers, it shows the difficulties of creating a collective identity 'domestic worker', which is at the same time indispensable for collective action but rejected by domestic workers themselves. Given the corporatist structure of the Brazilian state, having trade unions to represent the professional category of domestic workers appears as a necessity to be heard by the state. However, non-unionised domestic workers refuse to be identified with a category that is socially devalued and associated with negative perceptions. They would rather identify with the broader category of "the poor", incarnated and defended by the PT, than with that of the domestic workers. Nonetheless, unionised domestic workers try to effectively "make

the class"[15] by creating a positive collective identity around which to unite. Through small-scale and concrete practices of solidarity, the unions of domestic workers transform the socially devalued category 'domestic worker' into a political and dignified collective of workers, able to fight for their rights.

Chapter VI moves on to the mezzo-level of action led by domestic workers' trade unions, and explores one of their key strategies to capture resources and be more visible: the formation of alliances with other social movements. In this chapter, I argue that what has made these alliances possible, is precisely the intersectional dimension of domestic workers' oppression. Indeed, it is the recognition and mobilisation of their gendered, raced and classed oppression that enabled a strategy of alliance-building with movements that share the same social identities. This chapter focuses on interviews with union leaders to understand their perception of unionism and collective action, and analyses local unions' diverging strategies of alliances. I find that local unions' ability - or willingness - to form alliances is informed by their vision of domestic work and how intersectional they are in practice. The more social identities are incorporated into the discourses of local unions, the broader their alliances are. I also suggest that while being challenging to implement, an intersectional practice allows unions to develop a more encompassing vision of domestic work and to expand their recruitment tactics, thereby reaching out to a greater number of domestic workers.

Finally, chapter VII discusses domestic workers' institutional politics and their strategy at the national and international level to gain recognition from the state. It retraces the 80 years of struggle for equal labour rights and the inherent tensions in trying to negotiate with the state. Subaltern groups need the state to guarantee their rights, yet, their recognition is necessarily ambivalent. The state decides on the modalities of recognition and can selectively recognise one aspect of subalterns' demands while ignoring others. This chapter explores these ambivalences, and argues that while subalternity has made domestic workers' legislative victory possible, the process of winning rights has brought new challenges to their movement. Domestic workers were recognised by the state and by the ILO on the grounds of their extreme 'vulnerability', pushing governments and international organisations to take remedial action. In order to discuss with established decision makers, the domestic workers' unions have had to

[15] I borrow this expression from E. P. Thompson (1963), *The Making of the English Working Class*.

adopt a more institutional form of political action, and, in order to make their new rights effective, they have had to turn to judicial repertoires of contention. But these more conventional forms of action have, to a certain extent, demobilised domestic workers' unions and forced them to adapt to a system of industrial relations that has historically excluded and oppressed them. The last chapter concludes by highlighting my contributions and the potential implications for future research as well as for policy-making and social movements.

Overall, this thesis investigates how domestic workers organise, what they do both at the grassroots and the institutional level, and what politics is possible given their exclusion from the rights framework. By focusing on their political actions and their demands, I also aim to resituate their agency within the history of labour and social movements. Brazilian domestic workers have been organising for 80 years; this is not a new phenomenon, as the literature on the precariat suggests (Kalleberg, 2009; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Standing, 2011, 2014), nor is it the fruit of a revitalisation strategy implemented by more established trade unions, as is the case in most scholarship on community unionism (Alberti, 2016; Engeman, 2015; Holgate, 2015; Lucio & Perrett, 2009; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009). Domestic workers have developed their own protagonist actions and their own forms of organising in order to claim equal rights and be recognised as workers. In fact, I suggest that they can be considered as a model for other unions in a context of loss of rights, and in the face of the difficulties established trade unions seem to have in organising precarious and 'non-standard' workers.

Furthermore, telling the history of the domestic workers' movement makes visible the genealogy of their labour rights; these rights were not given by a benevolent PT, nor are they only a "boomerang effect" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) of the ILO Convention 189. The labour rights contained in the 2015 legislation had been claimed decades ago, representing a subaltern epistemology of rights. This struggle has gained momentum with the ILO Convention 189 and the discourses on decent work, but the claim for equality, and the associated labour rights necessary to make this claim effective, has been formulated by domestic workers decades before being heard by the Brazilian state. Thus, starting from the location of organised domestic workers allows me to challenge colonial structures and discourses, and represents an attempt to make Brazil a better place, less unequal and less unjust.

Chapter II/ Domestic workers at the margins of the Brazilian state: the production of a subaltern class

Brazilian domestic workers, a category marked by race and gender inequality (61% are black and 93% are women), informality, poverty and fragmentation, have just won new labour rights through a constitutional reform that became national law in June 2015. However, in many ways, they are still perceived as being at the service of the dominant class, and therefore, not deserving proper labour rights (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015a; Girard-Nunes & Silva, 2013; Teixeira, Silva Saraiva, & de Padua Carriei, 2015). Groups of employers and elected members of the Congress who mobilised against the 2015 law practically argued for the return of unpaid labour, claiming that work performed inside private homes cannot be considered as work, and that the relationship between the household and the maid is one of "confidence" – as opposed to professional (Girard-Nunes & Silva, 2013). In this chapter, I will show how domestic workers have been subalternised by colonial, capitalist and patriarchal structures, and as a result, are still not recognised as equal to other workers.

Whilst similar dynamics can be observed in other Latin American countries such as Uruguay or Bolivia, which combine the existence of domestic workers' movements with recent changes in the legislation (Blofield, 2012), Brazil has national specificities. It is the largest employer of domestic workers in the continent, it has a distinctive colonial history, and the category of domestic workers is relatively more homogenous. Indeed, domestic workers are in their vast majority Brazilian born, they speak the same language, and are quite homogenous in terms of race – although an important minority is white. Brazil is also the country with the largest population of African descent, and the one which received the greatest number of African slaves between 1500 and 1800 (Rigby, 2014). While men were brought to work in the plantations, women slaves worked as servants for the colonial master and were forbidden to have a family of their own (Rios & Silva, 2015; Roncador, 2014; Twine, 1998). The perpetuation of racial and gender division of labour inherited from the colonial past has led many Brazilian scholars to describe contemporary domestic work as a direct legacy of slavery (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015a; L. Brown, 2006; Santana Pinho & Silva, 2010). And it is this specific intersection of gender, race and class oppressions within the colonial economy that defines the subaltern status of domestic workers.

This chapter demonstrates how domestic workers have been produced as a subaltern class through material, historical and political processes. The combination of colonialism and corporatism has created an exclusionary and highly stratified society, (Blofield, 2009, 2012; French, 2004), in which the protection of the few is made at the detriment of the majority. In this social organisation, domestic workers have been located at the margins of the state and of citizenship. However, the Brazilian system, and the union structure in particular, also provide a basis for domestic workers to get organised and claim equal rights. The Labour Code, although exclusionary, also works as a promise of equality and inclusion within the welfare state (A. M. Cardoso, 2010). Domestic workers, organised in their own autonomous trade unions, have been demanding their full inclusion within this frame of citizenship since 1936. I will show here the importance of gaining the status of worker, before analysing in more details domestic workers' unions actions and discourses in the empirical chapters.

The election of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT) in 2002, a left-wing party borne out of the trade unionist movement, has also represented the hope of change for the most marginalised. Social policies introduced under its government extended the basis of social protection, considerably improving the material conditions of the poorest. Yet, the PT has been criticised for not transforming more radically social structures and the economy (Saad-Filho, 2012; Saad-Filho & de Lourdes Rollemberg Mollo, 2006), and the underlying contradictions of its politics ultimately led to the impeachment/coup of the first woman President, Dilma Rousseff, in 2016. The tensions of demanding inclusion within an exclusionary system, and the attempts at changing it while also using it, are reflected in the domestic workers' movement.

The first section argues that there is an enduring legacy of slavery in Brazil, by demonstrating how domestic workers have moved from enslaved servants to underpaid and undervalued maids. The second section analyses the formation of the Brazilian corporatist state, emphasising the points of exclusion of domestic workers from industrial relations and the welfare state. In particular, it will discuss the difficulties of having trade unions in a sector that is not fully recognised as work. Finally, the last section provides an overview of the PT years, showing that the election of a left-wing government had opened political opportunities for the subaltern. Yet, the social changes undertaken under the PT were cut short by the political and economic crisis, which

started just when the law on domestic work had been approved. Overall, this chapter indicates important features of the Brazilian state to understand the tensions and paradoxes of domestic workers' movement.

I/ From slavery to domestic work

This section presents a brief history of colonialism in Brazil to show the links and continuity between slavery and present day racial inequalities. Racism has been incorporated into the capitalist economy creating a subaltern class that would serve the dominant white elite. Over a century after the abolition of slavery, many studies reveal that this racial and class structure still remains in place. But social stratification also has a gender component; indeed, black women are more excluded and discriminated against than black men or white women. They moved from enslaved servants to domestic workers, a job that is still characterised by high levels of informality, lower wages and normalised abusive relationships with employers. This section first highlights some dynamics of colonisation and coloniality of the state, to then show the persistence of racial inequalities in contemporary Brazil. Finally, it presents data on domestic workers, emphasising gender and racial inequalities. Table 1 below presents selected key dates in the modern Brazilian history, in order to better situate the different processes that will be discussed throughout the chapter.

Table 1: Key dates in modern Brazilian history

1822: Independence from Portugal.
1831: Law Feijó, adopted under the pressure of the British Empire, prohibiting the international traffic of African slaves in direction of Brazil. This law was never applied and illegal traffic of slaves continued, leading to the expression "a law for the British to see".
1843: Slave Trade Act prohibiting British people to own slaves, even when residing abroad, which applied to Brazil.
1850: Law of the Land, establishing that the only way to own property is by purchasing it, thereby excluding slaves from land ownership and justifying the expropriation of indigenous populations.
1850: Law Eusébio de Queirós, prohibiting the entrance of trafficked slaves inside the Brazilian territory. It led however to an increase in the internal traffic of slaves.
1871: Law of the Free Womb stipulating that children of enslaved women could become free at the age of 21.
1885: Law Saraiva-Cotegipe, granting freedom to enslaved people aged over 60.
1888: Golden Law abolishing slavery.
1889: Proclamation of the first Republic.
1930: Revolution of 1930, and establishment of Getúlio Vargas as President.
1934: New Constitution, introduction of the right to vote for women.
1937: Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship, creation of the New State (*Estado Novo*), a corporatist union structure and interdiction of the Communist Party.
1940: Comprehensive labour laws (minimum wage, paid leave, weekly day of rest), consolidated in 1943 in the Labour Code (CLT).
1951: Return to democracy and free elections.
1964: Military coup and establishment of a military regime.
1978-79: Metal workers' strikes in the periphery of São Paulo (the ABC region).
1980: Creation of the Workers' Party (PT).
1983: Creation of the Unified Central of Workers (CUT).
1985: Movement for direct and democratic elections, end of dictatorship.
1988: New Constitution, which includes basic labour and social rights.
1990-2002: The 'neoliberal decade'.
2002: Election of the PT (Lula da Silva 2002-2010, and Dilma Rousseff 2010-2016).
2015: Law on domestic work.
2016: Impeachment of the PT government.

1) Colonisation and coloniality of the Brazilian state

Brazil was the last country to abolish slavery in 1888, over 60 years after it became independent from Portugal (Campbell, 2015; Preuss, 2012). The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database estimates that there were about 5.8 million African slaves shipped to Brazil between 1500 and 1876, which represents 46% of the 12.5 million slaves trafficked during this period.[16] This was combined with a massive extermination of the indigenous population, which decline by 50% (from 3 million to 1.2 million) between

[16] Table of estimates for the period 1500-1876: http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

1500 and 1570.[17] This rapid and significant change in the population composition has been perpetuated over the centuries, and white and black people remain more numerous than indigenous people who represented less than 1% of the population in the last national census (IBGE, 2010).

The colonial economic model was mainly turned towards exportation to the European empires. Slaves were first brought in the North of the country to work in sugar cane plantations, until the economy shifted to coffee and gold extraction in the 18th century, which relocated productive activities in the South. In 1819, the Northeast region held 51% of the slaves of the country, while in 1888, the South had 59% of them (Linhares & Cardoso, 1990). Throughout the period, Rio de Janeiro was the biggest port for slave trade, but about 1.5 million slaves came through and stayed in the Northeast (Campbell, 2015), which continues to be today the region with the largest black population in the country. According to Linhares and Cardoso (1990), land and slave ownership were the fundamental principles of classification and hierarchy of colonial Brazil. Property ownership was combined with what the authors call a system of socio-ethnic stratification. In 1850, the Law of Lands (Lei das Terras) established that the only way to access property was to purchase it, thereby automatically excluding slaves from the possibility to own land, and justifying the expropriation of indigenous populations. This incorporation of slavery and 'feudal'[18] elements into the emerging capitalist economy was maintained after the independence, and some argue, after the abolition of slavery (F. Fernandes, 1965; Roncador, 2014; Twine, 1998; Venturi et al., 2009).

The colonial economy also relied on the exploitation of black women and the construction of gender and race hierarchies (Caldwell, 2007; C. Rodrigues & Prado, 2013). The access to black women' bodies played a major role not only in satisfying colonisers' sexuality but also in creating a hierarchy between the sexually available

[17] According to the FUNAI, National Foundation of the Indigenous, the indigenous population went from 100% of the population in 1500, to 0.2% in 2010: http://www.funai.gov.br/index.php/indios-no-brasil/quem-sao, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

[18] There have been important debates regarding feudalism and capitalism in Latin America; and in particular, discussions as whether the 'under-development' of the continent is a result of its feudal structure that has delayed a capitalist and industrial form of development (Laclau, 1971; Mariátegui, 1976; Stern, 1988), or is rather a product of capitalist accumulation on a world scale (Frank, 1984; Wallerstein, 1988). Some have argued for instance that the colonial structure and the existence of slavery limit the distinction between capitalism and feudalism (Marquese & Pimenta, 2015; Stern, 1988). While it is not the object of the thesis to take position on 'feudalism' in Brazil, I will argue that the permanence of a colonial structure and enduring legacy of slavery do shape the contemporary state.

black women, and the respectable white housewives (Caldwell, 2007; Saffioti, 1969). Black women worked as servants for white families and were not allowed to have a family of their own. Children born out of the rape of black women by their white master would remain slaves and bastards. Saffioti (1969, p. 177) argues: "Thus, slavery satisfies not only the requirements of the productive system, but also those imposed by the form of colonisation implemented, and the white family in which the role of the white woman was principally one of mother of the legitimate offspring" (my translation). She further notes that after the abolition of slavery, there was a rapid expansion of paid sex work to compensate for the loss of access to black women's bodies by the colonisers.

This system of gender and racial stratification fed the myth of the over-sexualised and dangerous black woman – a threat to the white nuclear family. A study by de Oliveira Neto (2015) of pictorial representation of black women during the colonial period confirms the prevalence of this myth. The author shows that black women were always portrayed as wild and uncivilised creatures, with larger hips and genitalia, very often naked or not properly dressed to emphasise their uncontrolled sexuality. Whilst black women had to be available to white colonisers, the Catholic Church would not allow or recognise inter-racial marriages. Together with the state, they implemented a strategy of 'containment' of mixed marriages in the 19th century, to ensure that it would stay limited to lower classes (Linhares & Cardoso, 1990; Moura, 1977; Venturi et al., 2009). This strategy changed in the 20th century though, with the creation of the myth of racial democracy and the attempts at 'whitening' the population through miscegenation and subsidised migration from Europe (Mitchell, 2010; Reichmann, 1999; Skidmore, 1999). The state imposed then a model of development based on the willingness to become more European, and it was claimed that bringing in industrial white workers from Europe would accelerate Brazil's path to modernity.

2) The persistence of racial inequalities

Many authors have demonstrated that racial discriminations persisted after the abolition of slavery at all levels of society: education, political representation, labour market, and cultural production (Burdick, 1998; Da Costa, 2014; Mitchell, 2010; E. L. Nascimento, 2007; Reichmann, 1999; Twine, 1998; Venturi et al., 2009). However, this was veiled under the myth of racial democracy and justified by the meritocratic mechanisms of a

liberal democracy. The creation of the idea of racial democracy is attributed to Gilberto Freyre and his seminal book *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The Master and the Slave) published in 1933 (1946 for the English version). In this study of the colonial period, Freyre (1946) represents slavery as a harmonious system where the "good master" and the "passive slave" live together peacefully, the latter willingly serving the former. According to him, Brazilianness is the result of the natural – but stratified – fusion between Portuguese and African cultures, creating the particular mix that sustains the idea of racial democracy. Freyre also presents "sexual decadence" as something imported by the African race in Brazil, and links miscegenation to a "corruption" of the traditional white family (Rezende & Lima, 2004).

Against this idealised vision of races mixing peacefully, which complacently silences the extreme violence of colonisation, slavery, and the genocide of indigenous people, Brazilian Marxist authors have demonstrated the persistence of racial inequalities in the labour market and the existence of a racist ideology that justifies them. Bastide and Fernandes (1959) argue that racial prejudices that were once used to validate servility are now used to validate class society. Florestan Fernandes (1965) is one of the first Brazilian scholars to clearly link race and class, and to explain the situation of exclusion of black people by a lack of integration into the capitalist industrial economy. In this framework, racial prejudice works to maintain intact the system of production. Moura (1977) has also contributed to the elaboration of a Marxist analysis of race, arguing that Brazil moved from the image of the 'good slave' to that of the 'bad citizen'. The idea that slavery was harmonious, as opposed to a disorganised present, serves to devalue black workers and remind them where they belong.

According to Moura, race and the legacy of slavery are used to mark difference and prevent black people's social mobility. The author contends that racial prejudices are rationalised to maintain white people's privileges intact, and protect them from the competition of former slaves in the labour market. This is for him the very essence of capitalism, which produces fear and instability and pushes workers to devalue their competitors. Therefore, the figure of the lazy, drunk and delinquent black man serves as a rationale for social and economic exclusion, and is opposed to the myth of the good and passive slave who knew where his place was. Moura (1977, p. 86) argues that black people represent the new dangerous class: "The black who already managed to be culturally and economically more skilled in order to compete with the white worker is

presented as dangerous because he no longer knows how to stay in his place" (my translation). This idea of servants out of place is present in discourses around the law on domestic work that was voted in 2015. In an interview published in October 2015,[19] Margareth Carbinato, a representative of employers in São Paulo, declared that nowadays it is hard to find a good *empregada* (house employee) because they lack respect for their employers. She claims "what is missing in the human being is everyone knowing their place", and further argues that: "Just because you have a new right, it does not mean you can become arrogant".

Although Moura wrote under the military dictatorship, it seems that his analysis still applies to contemporary relations of work and subordination. A hundred and twenty-five years after the abolition of slavery, dominant classes still claim that black people should know how to stay in their place, and complain that their new rights will disorganise social relations. Discussing structural inequalities, Da Costa (2014, p. 5) argues: "The Brazilian context, with its observable socio-economic disparities that mark the subaltern conditions of black Brazilians, presents a situation in which the degree of blackness of one's body shapes one's position at the juridical, economic, and symbolic levels of the social configuration." Indeed, in 2015:

- Illiteracy rate is twice as high among black (11.5%) as it is among white people (5%);
- Black people earn on average 40% less than white people;
- Black people account for 77% of youth homicides every year;
- And at the last election in 2014, there were only 20% of black and mix-raced people elected in the Parliament when they represent over 50% of the Brazilian population.[20]

The fallacy of the myth of racial democracy, combined with the persistent racial inequalities, have led some scholars to talk about institutional racism in Brazil (Htun, 2004; Paschel, 2009; Venturi et al., 2009). Santos (2009) argues that institutional racism

[19] Interview published in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, on 04/10/2015: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/saopaulo/2015/10/1689476-nao-aprendi-muito-com-que-horas-ela-volta-diz-representante-de-patroes.shtml?cmpid=comptw

[20] Sources: IBGE 2013 on wages and illiteracy rates; Amnesty International Brazil for homicides: https://anistia.org.br/campanhas/jovemnegrovivo/; and Congress internal data on elected members: http://www2.camara.leg.br/camaranoticias/noticias/POLITICA/475684-HOMENS-BRANCOS-REPRESENTAM-71-DOS-ELEITOS-PARA-A-CAMARA.html

is characterized by the constant practices of devaluation and humiliation that were perpetuated since the beginning of slavery as legal system, and carried on after the abolition, to exclude black people from the spheres of power and decision-making. And because they were always in a subaltern position, their inferiority and social exclusion became natural (Santos, 2009, p. 48). Thus, for the author, institutional racism works to maintain black people in a subaltern position and make it appear as normal, and racism must be understood not only as an effect of class but also as an ideology that justifies a differentiated integration for certain groups of the population. Although it is accurate in my view to talk about institutional racism and racist ideology, these perspectives do not consistently incorporate gender dimensions into the analysis of racist and capitalist forms of oppression.

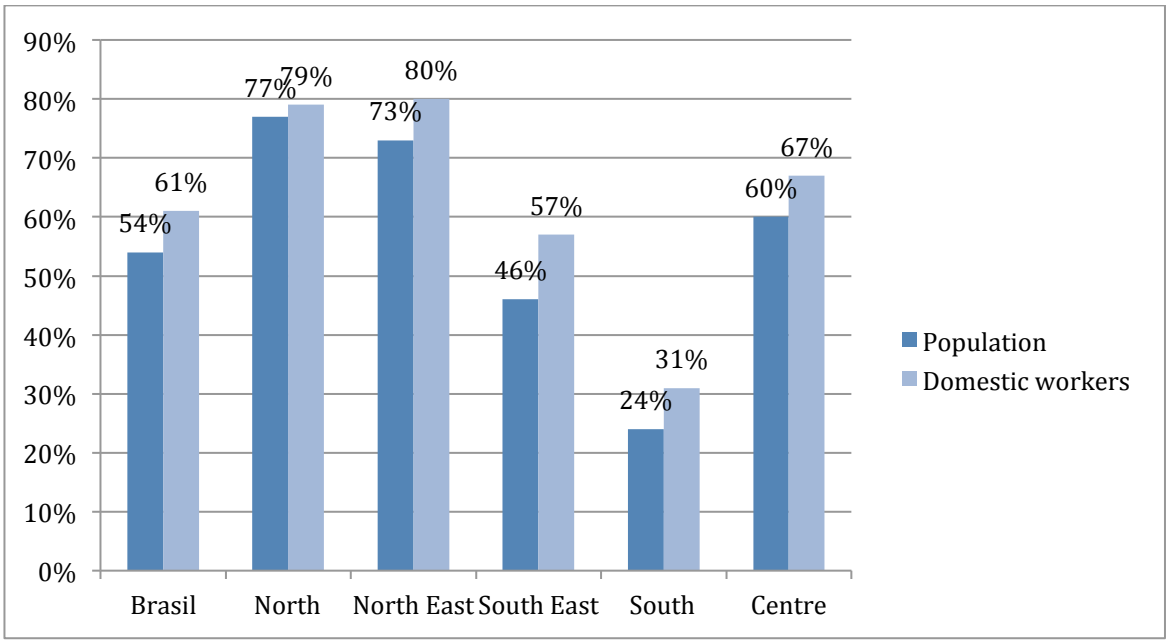
3) Domestic work in contemporary Brazil

The studies that do pay attention to the intersection of gender, race and class in Brazil on their hand, systematically refer to domestic workers as emblematic of these oppressive dynamics (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007b; Brites, 2014; Rezende & Lima, 2004). They also explicitly link contemporary forms of domestic work to a legacy of slavery given the over-representation of black women and the lack of formalisation of this work, which used to be performed for free by live-in black maids in exchange for food and a place to stay (Ávila, 2009; Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007a; Kofes, 2001; Teixeira et al., 2015). The data presented in this sub-section will refer mostly to the national study carried out by the research institute DIEESE in 2013, as it is the latest national study on domestic work. More recent statistical data usually focus on the biggest metropolitan regions and do not cover the whole country. Trends are also changing and unstable because of the crisis, and for some indicators, such as formalisation rates, it is hard to establish whether they are an effect of the crisis or of the new legislation. Therefore, I prefer to use data from the period just before the legislation and the crisis as a baseline to map the characteristics of contemporary domestic work.

Domestic work is characterised by an over-representation of women, and black women in particular (Bezerra De Lima, 2006; Lovell, 2006; Rezende & Lima, 2004). In 2013, domestic work employed 14% of all active women, and 22% of all active black women. And as shown in Figure 2, while black and mixed-race people account for 54% of the

overall Brazilian population, they represent 61% of domestic workers. These numbers vary considerably from region to region, but on average, black women are significantly over-represented within domestic work (DIEESE, 2013; IBGE, 2013).[21]

Figure 2: Distribution of black people in the population and in domestic work in Brazil



Source: IGBE – PNAD 2013 and DIEESE 2013

The increasing female participation in the labour market since the 1960s has been mainly absorbed by the tertiary sector; and in particular services to industries (like cleaning), collective services (education and health), and domestic work (Lovell, 2006). But Bruschini (2007) notes a polarization between white and black women in the labour market; while both groups are more active, the main sector of work for black women

[21] The denominations 'black' and 'mixed-race' are debated, but academic studies tend use the same categories as in the census. 'Black' refers to the population with the darkest skin who are descendent of African populations, although there is no clear criteria like the one-drop rule in the USA (Htun, 2004). 'Mixed-race' refers to mix black and white ('brown' in the census), as well as mixed white and indigenous and mixed black and indigenous. The census also has a 'yellow' category for Asian populations, mostly of Japanese descent. But because 'yellow' and 'indigenous' account for less than 2% of the population, studies on domestic work often use the binary white/non-white to insist on racial discriminations. It is also important to note that these categories are chosen by respondents, therefore individuals decide how they self-define. It is quite common to see mixed-race people defining as a white, and the national census shows an increase of the black population since the 2000s which is widely attributed to a regained self-confidence and willingness to assume one's black identity. This means that the proportion of white domestic workers could be overestimated, and it makes it hard to compare it throughout different periods of time.

continues to be domestic work while white women gained access to more qualified and valued professions. In 1998, 37% of black women worked as domestic workers, this decreased to 22% in 2013, but domestic work remains the principal way for black women to access the labour market (PNAD-IBGE 1998 and 2013). Table 2 shows the distribution of domestic workers by region, and reveals that the regions with the largest population of domestic worker are also those that had the largest slave population, thus reinforcing the idea of a direct legacy of slavery.

Table 2: Distribution of domestic workers by region in 2013

Region	Number of domestic workers	Economically active population	Overall population
North	432 000	7 781 353	17 707 783
Northeast	1 581 000	25 985 168	56 915 936
Centre	552 000	7 811 966	15 660 988
Southeast	3 020 000	43 783 941	86 356 952
South	838 000	15 699 148	29 439 773
Total	**6 423 000***	**101 061 576**	**206 081 432**

Source: IGBE – PNAD 2013
**The total includes both registered and unregistered domestic workers, therefore it is likely to be an underestimate.*

Lovell (2006) shows that even when they have similar levels of education, white and black women do not have access to the same professions, although on average, black women tend to be less educated than white women. In 2000, white women were twice as likely to be employed on the highest paying administrative and professional occupations as black women. Black women are also significantly more likely to work in the informal sector than white women (Rezende & Lima, 2004), and this is reflected within domestic work. In 2011, there were only 24% of domestic workers who were registered, and white domestic workers were more likely to be formalised. Daily workers are those who work less than three days a week for the same house, and their employers have no obligation to register them. Although this is a more precarious position, some studies also show that they tend to earn more than full-time workers (DIEESE, 2013; Girard-Nunes & Silva, 2013).

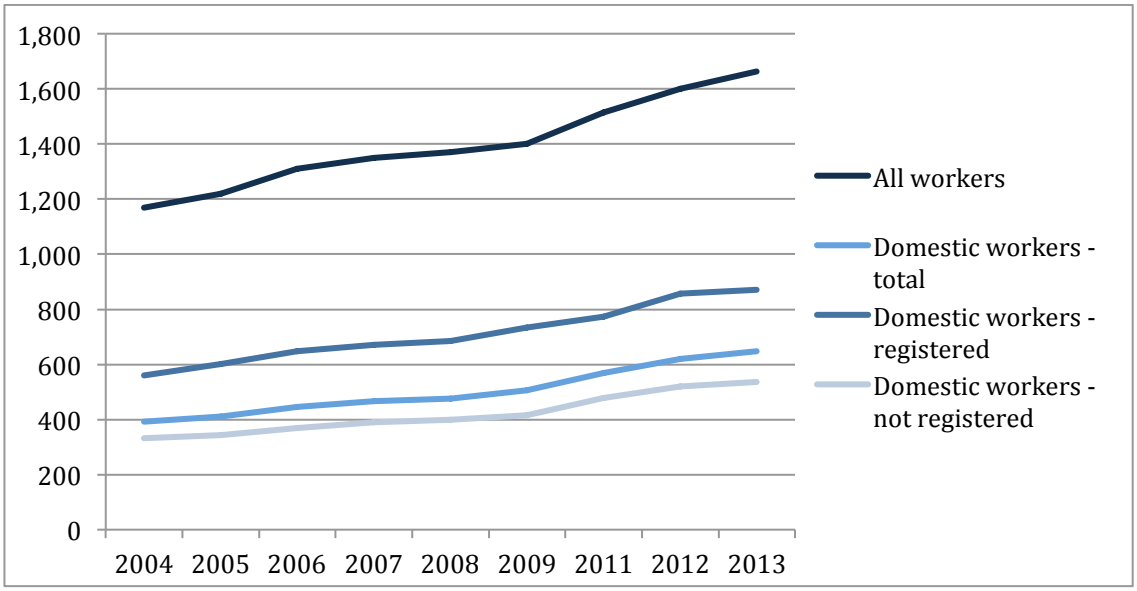
Table 3: Type of contract by race in 2011

Type of contract	Black	White	Total
Full-time, registered workers	22,5%	27,7%	24,5%
Full-time, not registered	48,0%	40,0%	44,9%
Daily workers	29,5%	32,3%	30,6%

Source: PNAD 2011

Domestic workers' wages and levels of formalisation are significantly lower than for other categories. Figure 3 shows the gap between the average wage for all workers (given for all jobs cumulated) that reached 1,633R$ in 2013, while the average wage for domestic workers was less than half, reaching only 647R$.[22] Among domestic workers, there is also an important gap between registered and un-registered workers.

Figure 3: Evolution of the average wage in Brazil, 2004-2013

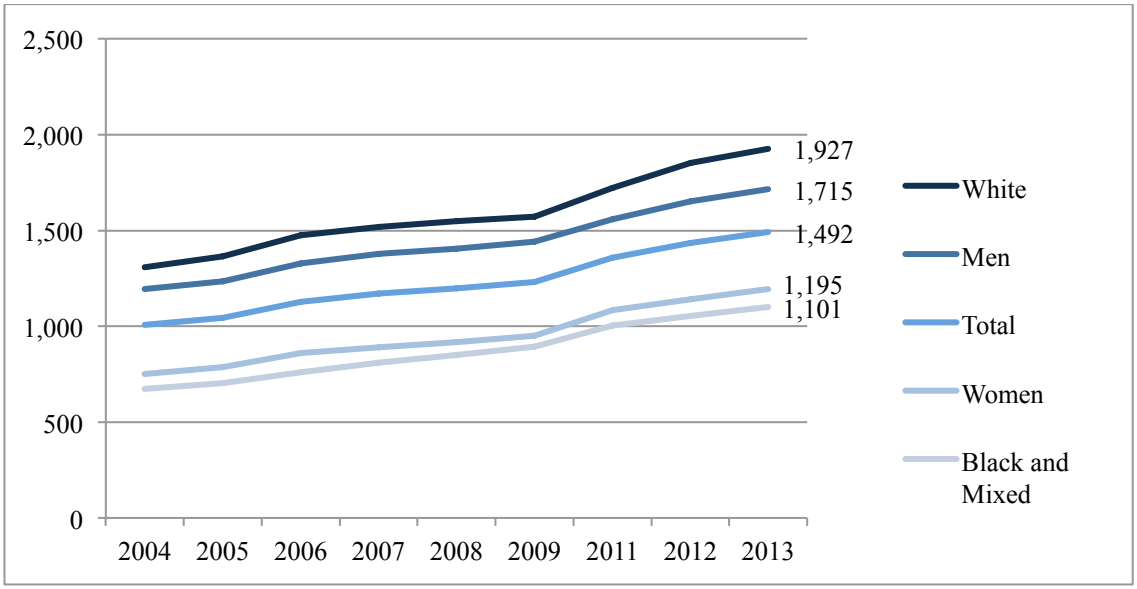


Source: IGBE – PNAD 2013
** Average wage given for all jobs cumulated and in absolute terms, it does not control for inflation.*

As in many other countries, wages also vary significantly depending on gender and race factors. Figure 4 shows that while the tendency is for wages to increase for all categories in the past decade, men and white people have consistently earned more than women and black people.

[22] The current conversion rate is 1£ = 4.5R$, but in 2013 it was 1£ = 3.5R$.

Figure 4: Evolution of wages by gender and race/colour in Brazil, 2004-2013



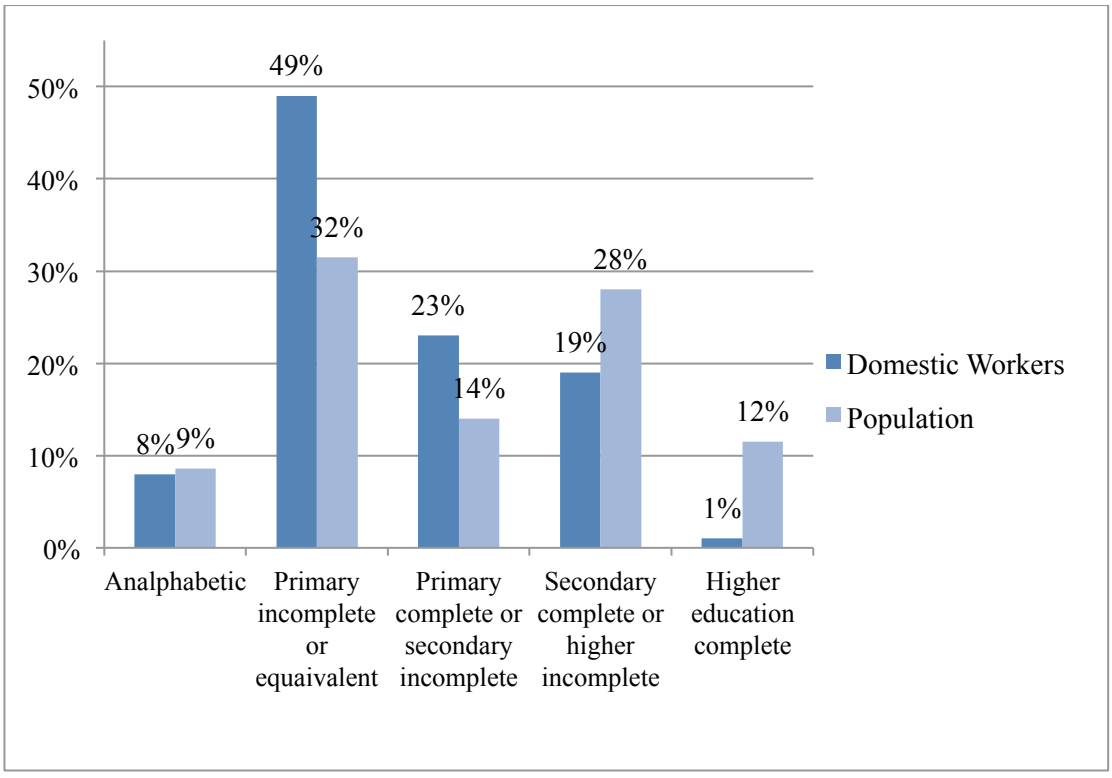
Source: IGBE – PNAD 2013
** Average wage given for main job only, in absolute terms.*

Formalisation has a significant impact on wages, however, on this indicator too, domestic workers' situation is more precarious. For the overall workforce, excluding domestic workers, the proportion of registered workers increased from 55% in 2001 to 65% in 2013. In contrast, only 33% of domestic workers were registered in 2013, with an unequal distribution across genders: only 32% of women were registered compared to 45% of men. Black domestic workers being less likely to be formalised, they are consequently more precarious and tend to earn less than white domestic workers.

Another determinant element is domestic workers' lower levels of education, which is often used as an argument to pay them less. Figure 5 shows that most domestic workers stopped studying at the end of primary school, and only 1% holds a higher education degree compared to 12% of the population. In addition to financial difficulties that prevent domestic workers from staying at school, their lower levels of education can also be partly explained by the persistence of child labour. In 2004, 6% of domestic workers were aged under 18, while this has fallen to 4% in 2011, representing approximately 250,000 children (DIEESE, 2013). Of those, 93% are women and 68% are black. Child domestic labour has been classified as one of the worst forms of child labour in 2008 (decree n. 6.481/2008) and is prohibited by the 2015 legislation. However, the National Forum for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour

estimates that there are still about 18 million children and teenagers involved in unpaid domestic services in their own houses, which complicates the evaluation of the number of children domestic workers.[23] Some might be 'helping out' a neighbour or other members of the family, without this being considered as proper work. There is also a historical – and colonial – tradition of poor black families giving their young girls to a white 'godmother', in the hope that they would gain a better life. Very often, this means that the black girl has to drop out of school to serve the white family instead, in exchange for food and a place to sleep. This is usually the case of older women, such as Lenira Carvalho from Recife or Creuza Maria de Oliveira from Salvador, who started working before the age of 10 (see their life stories in Carvalho, 1999; and Cornwall, et. al. 2013).

Figure 5: Highest level of education achieved in 2011 within the population and domestic workers



Source: IGBE – PNAD 2011
** For the general population, 15% did not receive any education, and 9% were analphabetic. The equivalent category was not given for domestic workers, so here only the proportion of analphabetic is taken into account.*

Despite the emergence of a new middle-class in the past 10 years, and wage increases for the majority of the population, the consumption of domestic services remains highly

[23] See their 2013 report on Child Domestic Labour: http://www.fnpeti.org.br/arquivos//biblioteca/c053a0d7537657af8b2a384c3bc545e9.pdf

concentrated at the top of income distribution. The top 10% consumes 61% of domestic services in the country, while the bottom 10% consumes only 0.4% (Barreiro de Souza, 2014). Thus, domestic work is primarily an activity performed at the service of a rich and white elite.

Table 4: Distribution of consumption of domestic services by decile of revenue in 2012

Decile	Domestic Services
1	0.41%
2	1.09%
3	0.93%
4	1.06%
5	1.65%
6	2.95%
7	4.04%
8	8.89%
9	17.78%
10	61.22%
Total	**100%**

Source: Barreiro de Souza 2014, table 7, p. 331

Finally, some studies have documented the violence and sexual abuses perpetrated against domestic workers at their work place, i.e. a private household. DeSouza and Cerqueira (2009) conducted a survey with 400 domestic workers in the South, and found that:

- 26% of domestic workers had been sexually harassed at work in the past year;
- Live-ins are more likely to be harassed;
- In 75% of the cases, the perpetrator is a man;
- And victims of harassment/aggression show lower self-esteem, and signs of anxiety and depression.

The anthropologist Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz (2015) conducted a qualitative study in Rio de Janeiro on the question of abuse and violence, where she interviewed 21 white men belonging to the upper-class, aged between 43 and 60 years old. They all report that during the period in which they grew up, the access to the body of the maid was normalised and part of their "sexual initiation". Ribeiro Corossacz notes that while this practice is normalised in her interviewees' discourses, they also acknowledged the relations of power that made it possible, reinforcing the idea that the maid is a body at the disposal of her employer. Ribeiro Corossacz argues that there is a continuity between the figure of the African slave and the contemporary domestic worker, who,

because of her inferior status and skin colour is deemed sexually available and at the disposal of the employer.

These data confirm that the intersection of gender, race and class influences wages and inequality, and that domestic workers suffer from a triple discrimination. Black women tend to have lower levels of education, to be more concentrated in low-skills professions, and to earn less than white women and men in general (Bruschini, 2007; Girard-Nunes & Silva, 2013; Lovell, 2006). The process of formalisation, one of the main aims of the 2015 law, is also relatively slower compared to other categories of workers, negatively affecting their wages and working conditions. The intersection of gender, race and class oppressions has positioned this large group of the population as an under-class of servants, and continues to impede their full recognition as workers and productive members of society.

II/ Domestic workers at the margins of industrial relations

This section discusses the legal and political exclusion of domestic workers from the realm of labour and industrial relations. Embedded within the legacy of the colonial structure, the 'modern' Brazilian state has located domestic workers outside of labour regulations and legal representation. Indeed, the formation of the corporatist state has meant that citizenship, and its associated social rights, is mediated through the status of worker. However, the definition of who is a worker is very restrictive, and the Labour Code originally excluded the former slaves – the domestic and rural workers – from its remits. The Brazilian labour market is, as a result, highly stratified. Only formal workers can access social rights, thereby excluding all the informal workers from labour protection. The first part of this section will retrace the construction of the modern corporatist state, emphasising the points of exclusion affecting domestic workers, while the second part will focus more specifically on domestic workers' unions within the national industrial relations structure. It will show how the limitations imposed on their unions affect their organisational possibilities.

1) The Brazilian corporatist state

The 1930s are commonly referred to as the 'modernisation period' of the Brazilian state, which coincides with a project of development based on industrialisation and the willingness to 'catch-up' with the West.[24] In particular, this period is marked by the government of Getúlio Vargas, from 1930 to 1945, who implemented the basis for a state-led model of industrialisation with a strong involvement in the field of labour relations (French, 1991; Hunter, 2014). Vargas' regime combined authoritarian features with an extensive system of social protection; indeed, on the one hand, the 1943 labour code has been described as one of the "most advanced" of the world (French, 2004) and is still in force today, but on the other hand, Vargas created the New State (*Estado Novo*) regime in 1937 concentrating most political powers into his hands, abolishing parties and imposing censorship. The introduction of a social security system and extensive labour rights adopted at the time were framed under a strong nationalist ideology, and aimed at mitigating the 'communist peril' by co-opting workers into a centralised authoritarian state structure (Lippi Oliveira, Pimenta Velloso, & de Castro Gomes, 1982; Pandolfi, 1999).

Vargas, often presented as the 'father of the poor', has been compared to Perón in Argentina or Mussolini in Italy; the implementation of pro-labour policies and social rights was done in exchange for an increased state control, and unions in particular were conceived as an instrument of surveillance of workers (French, 1991; Moreira Alves, 1985). This corresponds to the definition of a corporatist model of industrial relations, in which "the state plays a major role in structuring, supporting, and regulating interest groups with the object of controlling their internal affairs and the relations between them" (Mericle, 1977, p. 303). In this model, trade unions serve as mediating institutions between the state and the workplace rather than as political organs of contentious action. And in fact, while Vargas gave workers the right to organise into trade union (law n. 19.770/1931), he also prohibited strike action.

In 1932, inspired by Mussolini's *Carta del Lavoro*, Vargas introduced the Social Security and Working Card (Carteira de Trabalho e Previdência Social - CTPS), which is still a compulsory document for workers to be formalised (law n. 21.175/1932). Each

[24] To know more about historical debates on the period of the 1930s and the economic model, see for instance Fausto (1978) or Furtado (1980).

individual must request his/her own CTPS from the Ministry of Labour, and is given this unique document that must be kept during their entire working life. The CTPS has to be signed by the employer, and contains key information regarding the job (working hours, main tasks, salary). Except for civil servants who are employed by the state and have their own labour regulations, this card is the condition to be considered a formal worker and access social security, without a signed CTPS, workers are not protected by the labour code and cannot access work-related benefits and pensions.[25] All the labour rights were then unified into a single code in 1943, the Consolidated Labour Laws (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* – CLT), which codifies workers' rights, unions' regulations, and the conditions of access to social security. Thus, through this comprehensive labour rights regime, the access to citizenship and social rights gets mediated through the status of worker; one must be a registered and formal worker, paying social contributions, to access work-related benefits, pensions, and the welfare state more generally.

This is what Esping-Andersen (1990) has identified as a corporatist or conservative model of welfare state, in which the access to rights and social security is based on the status of worker, and social contributions are conceived as rewards for one's work performance and productivity. This model has the advantage of maintaining workers' level of income when they are unemployed or retired, but it also perpetuates social cleavages. Indeed, it tends to separate well-protected industrial workers from informal, unstable, or 'non-standard' workers. The strong level of protection of the insiders is achieved at the detriment of the large segment of outsiders and non-workers. In Brazil, this is illustrated by the fact that rural workers were excluded from the CLT until 1963, while domestic workers remain excluded to this day. These two groups of workers correspond to the former slaves, who worked in the plantations and the master's house. This noticeable exclusion is qualified by Blofield (2009) as a "feudal enclave", and it did in fact maintain unpaid labour for decades in sectors that are shaped by the colonial history.

Quite crucially, the CLT only applies to formal workers, yet, studies estimate that in Brazil between 46% and 47% of the workers in non-agricultural employment are informal, a proportion that reaches 70% for the sector of domestic work (DIEESE, 2013), while the World Bank evaluates that Brazil's shadow economy is worth 40% of

[25] The exact rules and procedures of the CTPS are defined in the CLT, Title II, On the General Norms of Work, Chapter I, On the Professional Identification, art. 13-56

its GDP.[26] This means that in practice, the CLT is ineffective for about half of the workforce, and does not cover all those who are not considered as productive elements of society or proper workers, such as domestic workers. French (2004) has argued that the CLT's ineffectiveness is intentional by design; the state gave a law that has all the appearances of social progress and social justice, but without the conditions for it to be respected and implemented, following the tradition of a law for the British to see (*lei para Inglês ver*). This can also be said into a certain extent of the 2015 legislation on domestic work, which makes most of the new rights inapplicable by design, as will be discussed further in chapter VII. Therefore, the CLT represents a possibility of equality, and an unfulfilled promise for the excluded (A. M. Cardoso, 2010), working at the same time as the tool of exclusion and the utopic horizon of inclusion.

A corporatist system of industrial relations also implies a strong state control over trade unions and workers (L. M. Rodrigues, 2009a). The CLT defines trade unions as:

> The association with the purpose of study, advocacy and coordination of their economic and professional interests of all that, as employers, employees, agents, self-employed or professionals are engaged in, respectively, the same activity or profession, or activities and professions that are similar or related. (Title V – On the Union Organisation, Chapter I, Section I, art. 511 – my translation)

A trade union's main purpose is thus to group a professional category around common economic interests. Their formation depends on the approval of the Ministry of Labour, and compliance with the rules established by it, for instance, publishing the dates of local general assemblies in an official journal, and having the minutes of the elections signed by every member of the elected committee in full possession of their identity card and civil registry (CLT, Title V). Trade unions are also bounded by the rule of unicity: one union per category and per territory (CLT, Title V). This limits the possibility of inter-category organisation, and leads to a fragmentation of workers' representation at the national level. Since 1941, trade unions are funded by a compulsory union tax, corresponding to the equivalent of one day of salary per month of the worker whether he/she is affiliated to the union or not. Trade unions must also undertake a certain number of bureaucratic tasks, such as checking contract termination procedures and calculating workers' entitlements to social benefits (CLT, art. 477). But

[26] Report from WIEGO (2011) on informal work: http://www.wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Budlender_WIEGO_SB4.pdf, and Report from the World Bank (2010) on the shadow economy: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/311991468037132740/pdf/WPS5356.pdf

if trade unions can be used as an instrument of workers' control, they can also provide a solid basis to mobilise workers (O'Connor, 2016), and in fact, they automatically represent all the workers in their sector and territory. The compulsory union tax further provides them with stable resources and an easy access to workers.[27]

This corporatist structure remains in place today, although the "new unionism" that emerged with the transition to democracy opened-up workers' representation and led to a revived union democracy. The *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (Unified Central of Workers – CUT) was founded in 1983 at the 1st National Congress of the Working Class (*Congresso Nacional da Classe Trabalhadora* – CONCLAT). The CUT was the first democratic trade union confederation to be created at the end of the military regime, iniating what many authors have called the "new unionism" (Antunes, 1991; I. J. c. Rodrigues, 1997, 1999; L. M. Rodrigues, 1990). The confederation represents now 7.9 million of workers, through 3.960 affiliated local unions, which makes it the biggest confederation in the country and in Latin America.[28]

The CUT, together with the PT, emerged from the workers' strikes in 1979-1980 against a 30% cut in wages imposed by the military regime. These strikes counted approximately 3 million workers and were combined with massive street demonstrations in the periphery of São Paulo. After this wave of strikes, led by the metallurgist worker who would later on become the President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (mostly known as Lula), workers created their own party (at the time illegal) and a democratic trade union to represent their interests. The struggle for workers' rights was then intrinsically tied to the struggle against the regime and for the return of democracy (Antunes, 1992, 1994; Fontes & De Macedo, 2013; Keck, 1992; I. J. Rodrigues, 2002; Santana, 2012).

The CUT proposes a new model of unionism, in rupture with the corporatist model inherited from the Vargas era (Alves, 2000; Antunes, 1991; Boito Júnior, 1991; I. J. c. Rodrigues, 1997, 1999). In particular, the CUT demands the right to have an autonomous and workers' led organisation that represent workers in negotiations with employers. Following a Marxist tradition, it aims at "defend the immediate and historical interests of the working class" within a united organisation (1st CONCUT, Congress Resolutions, 1983) that transcends territorial fragmentation. The CUT is also

[27] These rules are being changed by the labour reform approved in 2017, but as this process is still happening, I cannot fully account for them in this thesis.
[28] See CUT's website: https://www.cut.org.br, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

historically opposed to the union tax but now that this tax has been suppressed by the 2017 general labour reform (*reforma trabalhista*) they are revising their position. The CUT has also pushed for the 2007 reform of the Labour Code recognising the existence and legal powers of national union confederations (law n. 1990/2007). This means in effect that workers can join an inter-sectorial labour organisation, and be represented by it for national collective negotiations both with the state and employers. Workers are free to choose which central they want to be affiliated in, and the affiliation is decided through elections at the local union level.

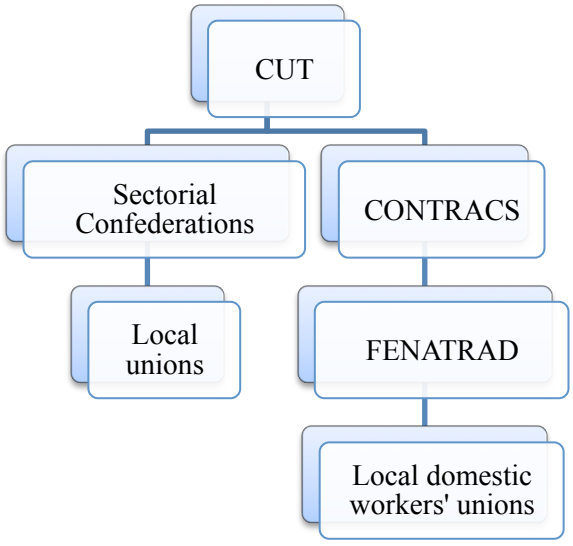
However, some authors contest the dichotomy 'new' vs. 'old' unionism, and argue that the 'new' has been built on the structures of the 'old' (O'Connor, 2016; Santana, 1999). Indeed, the CUT relies on local unions, which pre-existed the creation of the central, as the rule of unicity remains unchanged to this day. In fact, the 'old' union structure guarantees a relatively good union density (17%), and capacity to mobilise quickly. Furthermore, because of its strong ties with the PT, and through it the government between 2002 and 2016, the CUT has been criticised by some grassroots movements for being too accommodating with the federal power. Some authors have argued that there has been a process of institutionalisation and a shift from a strategy of confrontation to a strategy of co-management, whereby the confederation failed at opposing neoliberal policies (I. J. c. Rodrigues, 1999; Simões, Antunes, & Santana, 2014; Tumolo, 2002). Thus, the 'new unionism' has also to a certain extent been an ally of the state and institutional power, showing some signs of continuity with the corporatist system of industrial relations.

2) Are domestic workers' unions real unions?

In this context of corporatist welfare regime, relying entirely on the formalisation of workers through their CTPS to access social and labour rights, what are the possibilities of representation for domestic workers? Quite paradoxically, domestic workers are allowed to form their own trade unions since the 1988 Constitution (other workers won this right in 1931 as explained in the previous section), yet, they remain excluded from the Labour Code, which considerably limits their capacity for action within the conventional system of industrial relations. The unions studied in this thesis are all affiliated to the CUT, and follow the rule of unicity: local unions are either city-based or state-based, they are then grouped into a National Federation of Domestic Workers

(*Federação Nacional das Trabalhadoras Domésticas* - FENATRAD), which is in turn affiliated to the National Confederation of the Commerce and Services (*Confederação dos Trabalhadores do Comércio e Serviços* – CONTRACS). The CONTRACS is the organ through which the FENATRAD is affiliated to the CUT. Compared to other sectors, domestic workers have an additional layer of disconnection, or representation, which guarantees them the existence of an autonomous federation of domestic workers but also means that their access to the CUT is mediated through the CONTRACS. Their localisation within the CUT structure is illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6: The FENATRAD within the CUT structure



Most domestic workers' local unions were first associations, created during the 1960s and 1970s with the support of the progressive branch of the Catholic Church. They could only become trade unions with the 1988 Constitution, which reverted the interdiction to form trade unions stipulated in the 1931 trade unions law (n. 19.770/1931). The FENATRAD was subsequently founded in 1997 (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b), and has now 21 local unions affiliated in 13 federative states. According to the leaders, the FENATRAD represents 133,000 domestic workers in the country (about 2% of the domestic workforce). Outside of the FENATRAD, there are other non-autonomous domestic workers' unions run by lawyers or accountants, and affiliated to confederation competing with the CUT. They will not be considered in this study, which focuses exclusively on domestic worker-led organisations.

However, because they remain excluded from the Labour Code, domestic workers' unions face important limitations. One of the major restrictions imposed on them is regarding funding. Unlike other professional categories, they cannot collect the union tax. In every other sector of activity, this tax is compulsory, and automatically deducted from workers' salaries regardless of union membership. The rationale being that collective bargaining outcomes apply to the sector as a whole, and not only to union members (Bensusán, 2015; L. M. Rodrigues, 2009b). The union tax represents the main source of funding for regular trade unions, although this is being changed by the 2017 general labour reform. In contrast, resources are rather limited for domestic workers' unions. They receive a small contribution from their members, usually between R$8 and R$10 a month (about £2), but have no membership management system: local leaders do not know how many members they have or how many of them pay their contributions. Local unions also get a support fund of R$3,000 per year from the CUT, and a contribution towards the cost of particular events such as congresses or trainings. But they remain largely under-funded compared to other sectors. This means that their elected officers are volunteers, and usually still working, whereas other unions have paid elected officers and permanent staff.

The 2015 legislative reform introduced an important change in the system; the government created an online platform called *e-social*, supposed to facilitate the process of formalisation, tax returns and termination of employment contracts. Through this platform, the Ministry of Labour should be able to better track the termination of contracts and follow up with workers regarding their benefits. Quite importantly, the reform introduces a contribution for contract termination procedures to be paid to the trade union: for each contract termination signed off by the union and reported on the platform, a fee of the equivalent of a day's salary – at the worker's rate – goes to the local union (Avelino, 2015). Since local unions' daily activities consist mostly of legal support and casework, this new contribution could represent an important source of income. The local union is a functional and compulsory step for any worker facing a labour issue, and acts more as a para-administrative entity than as an activist or base-mobilising organisation. In this sense, domestic workers' unions work like any other union, and fulfil their role within the corporatist state structure, including the role of mitigating discontent and liaising with the Ministry of Labour. Except that they are not given the means to do so, and cannot possibly oversee all the dismissals happening within their city or region with their scarce human and financial resources.

Another important difference with other sectors is the absence of collective bargaining processes. Although the right to collective bargaining has been recognised by the 2015 law, there is no official employers' bodies to negotiate with. Therefore, domestic work regulations depend exclusively on national legislation, and local unions have no social dialogue partners. Finally, the informality of the sector represents an important obstacle to union organisation. Only workers with a signed CTPS can join a union, which automatically excludes about 70% of domestic workers. Besides, the new legislation creates a distinction between daily workers (*diaristas*), who work for less than three days a week for the same employer, and regular domestic workers (*empregadas domésticas*), who work at least three days a week for the same employer. An employer has no obligation to register a daily worker, which means that the new law does not apply to them, and that they cannot join a trade union. Thus, the very law supposed to extend labour rights to the category imposes a considerable restriction on their access to these rights and their capacity to organise. Some local domestic workers' unions have allowed in their constitution for the possibility to have *diarista* members, but this remains a zone of ambiguity and one that each union has to negotiate with the regional representation of the Ministry of Labour. It can in some instances be used to decline them their union card. Table 5 summarises the key differences between domestic workers' unions and regular unions.

Table 5: Main differences between domestic workers' unions and regular unions

Union characteristic	Domestic workers' unions	Regular unions
Human resource	Run by volunteers	Run by permanent paid representatives and support staff
Funding	No union tax Fee from contract termination procedures Minimal support fund from the confederation (CUT)	Union tax from workers to unions Union tax from unions to National Federations Regular contribution from the confederation (CUT or other)
Union density	Extremely low (2%)	Average (17%)
Capacity of action	No specifications regarding strikes but not covered by CLT No collective bargaining processes Lack of employers' representation Representation of workers in labour disputes / Legal advice to workers Certifying contract termination procedures	Right to strike Collective bargaining processes at the local, state and federal levels Branch-wide validity of agreements Representation of workers in labour disputes / Legal advice to workers Certifying contract termination procedures
Type of membership	Fragmented and informal	Shop floor or factory-based
Inclusion within industrial relations	Union organisation not included in the Labour Code (CLT) – *ad hoc* type of unions Partial inclusion within the union structure	Union organisation governed by the CLT, precise definition of rights and duties Full inclusion within the union structure

These exclusions from the normal functioning of industrial relations have an impact on domestic workers' ability to organise. While their unions cannot fully operate as regular trade unions, domestic workers do reclaim the status and the prerogatives of trade unions and their belonging to the working class. However, the legal restrictions imposed

on them, combined with the specificities of the sector, have forced the local unions to diversify their repertoires of action and use a mix of social movement and trade unionism tactics, as will be further discussed in the empirical chapters.

III/ The PT governments, between transformations and continuities

In such a highly stratified and unequal context, the election of the PT in 2002, a left-wing party that had emerged from workers' movements and the resistance against the dictatorship, represented for many the hope of a fairer society. Both PT presidents, Lula and Dilma Rousseff, embodied the fight for democracy and are important symbolic figures for the left. The former headed massive workers' strikes in the periphery of São Paulo in 1979 and 1980 leading to the creation of the PT and the CUT, while the latter was part of a guerrilla group and got imprisoned and tortured by the military regime. It seemed that for the first time since the return of democracy, the marginalised could have a voice. For domestic workers in particular, their affiliation to the CUT has given them a direct access to the PT government, enabling them to lobby the state and win new rights in 2015 under Dilma Rousseff's presidency.

This section reviews the 14 years of PT governments, highlighting the key social policies that have demonstrably improved the conditions of the most marginalised. While attempting to extend social protection beyond the corporatist status-based welfare state, the PT has nonetheless grounded its politics on a strong working class discourse and identity. The successive PT governments have also maintained some neoliberal characteristics of the previous government, and became as a result unable to deeply transform the society. The 'reasonable' compromise of ambitious social policies with an unchanged economic structure has led to dissatisfactions on both sides of the political spectrum, leading ultimately to the coup/impeachment of the President Dilma Rousseff in May 2016.

1) The party of the subalterns?

The election of the PT in 2002, part of what some scholars refer to as the Latin American 'pink tide', [29] has represented a unique opportunity for marginalised populations to voice their concerns and access representation at the highest level of society. Indeed, the PT was born out of the workers' strikes in the 1970s, is strongly associated to trade unions and the CUT in particular, and played an important role in the transition to democracy (Fortes, 2009; Samuels, 2004). However, there are on-going debates regarding PT's economic policies and whether it represents a rupture or continuity with the neoliberal model implemented in the 1990s, which has been detrimental to the poorest (Cypher, 2015; Ferrero, 2014).

The return to democracy in 1988 marks in Brazil the beginning of the 'neoliberal decade'. Neoliberalism is understood here as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (D. Harvey, 2005, p. 4). Neoliberalism is often associated with the rollback of the welfare state, dismantling of public services and privatisations of state-owned companies. In Latin America, neoliberalism usually refers to the set of policies known as the 'Washington consensus' that were prescribed by international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank as a response to the economic crisis of the 1980s. This set of recommendations entails fiscal discipline, financial liberalisation, increasing foreign investments and deregulation (Burdick et al., 2009; Feliz, 2012; Ferrero, 2014; Flores-Macias, 2012; Schmalz & Ebenau, 2012). The continent, and Chile in particular, have been described as a 'laboratory' for the implementation of neoliberal policies, although this was done differently and with varying degrees in each country. But the detrimental consequences of these policies on poverty, social inequality and external debt led many authors to characterise the 1980s and 1990s as the 'lost decades' for development (Barrientos, Gideon, & Molyneux, 2008; Schmalz & Ebenau, 2012).

[29] The expression 'pink tide' has been used to describe the successive election of left-wing governments in 12 Latin American countries between 1998 (Chávez in Venezuela) and 2008 (Lugo in Paraguay), thus giving an impression of a 'wave' that was expanding. For a detailed account of this process and the debates about how left these governments really are, see: Beasley-Murray, Cameron, and Hershberg (2009); Burdick, Oxhorn, and Roberts (2009); S. Fernandes (2007); French (2009); Tockman (2009).

In Brazil, the neoliberal phase started in the 1990s with the newly elected democratic government, which subscribed to the IMF's structural adjustment programme (Cesar, 2015; Novelli & Galvão, 2001; Schmalz & Ebenau, 2012). Saad-Filho (2012) argues that the process of democratisation was incomplete, and relies on a compromise that has not been disrupted since: the return of civil liberties and democratic institutions in exchange for the maintenance of wealth and land concentration. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, elected with the Party for the Brazilian Social Democracy (*Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* – PSDB), is often cited as an emblematic neoliberal President.[30] His *Plano Real* (Real Plan) to limit inflation in 1994 led to a massive devaluation of the currency and a solvency crisis. His government also implemented large-scale privatisations, including telecommunications and energy supply, and in 1999, Brazil faced one of its biggest shortages in electricity supply - the *apagão* or 'big switch-off' (Amann & Baer, 2002; Arestis & Saad-Filho, 2007; Novelli & Galvão, 2001).

Cardoso further introduced measures of flexibilisation of the labour market and attempted at dismantling the CLT. In particular, he introduced temporary contracts, extended the recourse to extra hours with lower compensation for employees, and de-indexed the minimum wage from inflation (Moraes, 2011; Vogel, 2013). Collective negotiations were decentralised to the branch level, thus inverting the precedence of the law over local agreements, and weakening national trade unions' bargaining power (French, 2004). Overall, the 1990s are marked by a sharp decline in wages, rising unemployment and high inflation rates (Bellone Hite & Viterna, 2005; Paiva, 2006; Saad-Filho & de Lourdes Rollemberg Mollo, 2006). As a result of neoliberal labour reforms and rising unemployment, informality increased from 36% in 1990 to 49% in 1999, and the sector of domestic work rose by 11% during this period (Novelli & Galvão, 2001).

The election of the PT in 2002, and of other left-wing governments throughout the continent, has been interpreted as a reaction to the neoliberal decade (Burdick et al., 2009; Dello Buono & Bell Lara, 2007; Flores-Macias, 2012). But like the other 'pink tide' governments, the PT mandates are characterised by a mix of rupture and continuity. During the presidential campaign of 2002, foreign investors threatened to withdraw their capital from Brazil in the event of a victory of the 'radical' left. In this

[30] It is interesting to note that in the 1970s Cardoso, often called by his acronym FHC, was a prominent thinker of the dependency theory and considered to be a Marxist. His politics changed radically after the return to democracy and his election as President.

context, Lula was forced to write a public letter in which he committed to pursue Cardoso's monetary policy and to preserve financial stability.[31] Seen as a strategic move by some, this letter is described by others as a capitulation to the neoliberal ideology (Coggiola, 2004; Saad-Filho, 2012; Saad-Filho & de Lourdes Rollemberg Mollo, 2006). In fact, Lula's first government (2003-2007) continued some of Cardoso's policies, and reinforced the inflation-targeting regime by maintaining high interest rates. Lula also deepened the opening to global markets and made debt reduction one of his key priorities (Paiva, 2006). The foreign debt decreased from 45% of the GDP in 2003 to 15% in 2010 (Wylde, 2012). Dilma Rousseff's policies during her second mandate (2015-2016) could also confirm the thesis of a continuity with neoliberalism; she froze pensions' adjustments to inflation, partially privatised the biggest national oil company Petrobras, and was pursuing the low inflation/high interest rates policy in the year preceding the coup (Leahy, 2015; Morais & Saad-Filho, 2012).

However, most authors seem to adopt the thesis of a mixed or 'neo-developmentalist' model. They emphasise that inflation control and macroeconomic stability came together with job creation, state-led industrial policies and social programmes (Ban, 2013; Boito & Berringer, 2013; A. n. C. d. Medeiros, 2010; M. Medeiros, Soares, Souza, & Osorio, 2014; Nederveen Pieterse & Cardoso, 2014). Indeed, Lula initiated a process of formalisation of work and a strengthening of labour protection (Ban, 2013). He implemented a major trade union reform in 2007 (law n. 1990/2007) that recognised national confederations of workers as legitimate actors in collective bargaining processes, thus reversing the measures adopted under Carodoso. This was pursued under Dilma Rousseff, who secured trade unions' representation at the board of state-owned enterprises. The 2002-2010 period is also marked by a significant growth of GDP and GDP per capita, driven by industrial production and the expansion of consumer credits, a growth of investment and a surplus in the trade balance (Wylde, 2012).[32]

One of Lula's most famous reforms, both nationally and internationally, is the direct cash transfer programme *Bolsa Familia* (Family Basket). This programme gives the

[31] "Carta ao Povo Brasileiro" (Letter to the Brazilian people), published on 22 June 2002, 4 months before the first turn of the presidential elections: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/brasil/ult96u33908.shtml

[32] See also the World Bank Indicator online: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG

poorest families the equivalent of £20 per month (adjusted depending on the number of children) in exchange for registering their children at school and taking them to medical checks on a regular basis. This policy, which costs 0.5% of the GDP, is responsible for taking 40 million people out of poverty between 2002 and 2014, thus reducing by half the number of people living below the poverty line. *Bolsa Familia* has also had positive effects on school attendance leading to a reduction in drop-out rates in some of the poorest areas; it contributed to decreased inequalities of access to education between black and white children; and it is associated with an improvement in children's health (Campello & Côrtes Neri, 2014; Traldi & Almeida, 2012). M. Medeiros et al. (2014) further show that contrarily to liberal economics' expectations, *Bolsa Familia* did not deter people from working, on the contrary, employment rates only increased during this period, including during the global financial crisis. Wylde (2012, p. 146) affirms that:

> These steady improvements in the poverty and inequality figures in Brazil throughout the 2002-10 period have reversed the continuingly worsening trends of previous decades, and represent one of the best achievements in reducing poverty and inequality in the Latin American and Caribbean area, and indeed globally.

Pereira (2015) also contends that the programme has strengthened citizenship rights of the poor and enhanced democracy. According to him, *Bolsa Familia* helps raising political awareness amongst the poor and turns them into a more active electorate that puts pressure on the government to deliver on its promises. However, some authors have argued that targeting poverty does not lead to a substantive wealth redistribution (Saad-Filho, 2012), and that the conditional element of the programme individualises the responsibility of poverty (Lavinas, 2013). Thus, *Bolsa Familia* is compatible with a neoliberal economic model and the downsizing of the welfare state; it targets poverty at a minimal cost and does not address the structural causes of inequality.

In addition to *Bolsa Familia*, there are three other policies that directly impacted on the poor and domestic workers. The first one is an access-to-property programme called *Minha Casa Minha Vida* (My Home My Life), which helped about 4 million households to buy their house through a state-backed loan.[33] The programme is still expanding and was combined to an access to electricity programme for the most isolated households in rural communities. Under the PT, there was also the vote and

[33] To see details of the programme: http://www.minhacasaminhavidainscricao.com/, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

implementation of a law that recognises domestic violence as a crime and penalises violence against women.[34] This was a demand from feminist movements for decades, and the FENATRAD participated in the national campaign against violence against women, arguing that domestic workers are particularly exposed to violence both in their home and in their work place.

Finally, Lula introduced black quotas in higher education in 2002. This scheme guarantees that a minimum of 20% of public university's admissions be reserved for black candidates (Htun, 2004; Moehlecke, 2002), and since 2012, 50% for candidates from state schools (Cervi, 2013). If quotas were demanded and supported by black movements, their implementation has been highly contested on the grounds of 'meritocracy' and equal opportunities. A survey conducted in 2003 shows that if the majority of the population recognises the existence of racism, and agrees in principle with having policies to fight against racial discrimination, only 7% thought that the Government should implement quotas for black students. White respondents in particular tended to use universalistic ideas of equality and expressed the fear that 'undeserving' black people would take the places of 'deserving' whites (Venturi et al., 2009).

Quite interestingly, a study on the state university of Parana shows that the black quota ended-up having a positive gender effect too (Cervi, 2013). Black women's admission increased more in relative terms than black men's admission, although a gender gap remains both for white and black students. This case study reveals the importance of considering gender, race and class simultaneously, and also partly explains the decreasing number of young black women who work as domestic workers. The combined effect of social policies and quotas in the education sector seems to be opening new opportunities for black women. Most of the domestic workers I interviewed had a daughter or a niece who went to university thanks to the quota and could then access better jobs on the labour market. Another important effect of these policies on an electoral level is that domestic workers unanimously consider the PT to be their best ally, and the first party to ever care about them.

[34] Law Maria da Penha, voted in 2006, named after a woman activist who became paralysed after her husband shot her: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/l11340.htm

Hunter (2014) has argued that the PT policies represent a movement towards a less corporatist state and a more universalistic one; indeed, the *Bolsa Familia* for instance is means-tested and not dependent on being a formalised worker. However, although the PT has arguable extended the basis of safety-net available to citizens, most social rights such as pension, unemployment fund, and sick pay, remain mediated through one's status as a formal worker. And in fact, one of the PT's aims has been to reduce informality, so that more workers could be covered by the CLT.

2) The crisis of the left

However, the promises to reform the system have been undermined by a political and economic crisis that ultimately led to the removal of the PT from power through an impeachment, or 'institutional' coup in May 2016. As the economic crisis is still on-going, and the political situation is fast-changing, I have decided to limit the discussion to the years leading up to the coup, and I am not able to provide accurate updates for the period after 2016. Since 2013, macroeconomic indicators have been deteriorating; inflation reached its highest level since 2003 (9%), unemployment doubled since 2013 reaching 8% in August 2015, and international investors started speculating again on the country's solvency. [35] In September 2015, the rating agency Standards & Poor downgraded Brazil from BBB- to BB+ (FT View, 2015; Garcia, Maynard, & Fonseca, 2015). This economic downturn is arguably linked to the end of Latin American commodities boom and the deterioration of terms of exchange with China where the consumption of imported goods is slowing down (Harris & Scully, 2015).

The PT has also been weakened by corruption scandals in 2005/2006 and 2014/15. The first is known as the crisis of the *mensalão* (the big salary) and refers to a payment scheme inside the Congress to secure votes in favour of government's bills (Analytica, 2012; Basile, 2005; C. Cardoso, 2005; de Freitas, 2007). But the PT recovered from this first scandal, and in fact, won the presidential election again in 2006. The second scandal relates to the uncovering of a money-laundering scheme within the state-owned oil company Petrobras (Costa, 2015; Fitch Rating Agency, 2014; Offshore Technology, 2014; Ogier, 2015; Reuters Agency, 2015), which has come to be referred to as

[35] IBGE press release, 25/08/2015: https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-sala-de-imprensa/2013-agencia-de-noticias/releases/9651-pnad-continua-mostra-desocupacao-de-8-3-no-2-tri-de-2015.html

'operation car-wash' (*lava jato*) and ultimately led to the coup/impeachment of the president in May 2016.

A conservative social movement emerged in 2013 using the corruption's scandals to demand Dilma Rousseff's resignation. The 2013 protests started in the city of São Paulo after the state Governor (from the PSDB) increased bus fares by 20 cents. After a couple of demonstrations organised by the *Movimento Passe Livre* (Movement for Free Transports),[36] it appeared that the movement became more of an anti-PT movement, shifting from specific demands on transport to broader demands against corruption and for Dilma Rousseff's resignation. The demonstrations organised in June 2013 in São Paulo were composed of a quite privileged and anti-PT population: 77% of participants had a degree compared to only 22% of the population, and only 6% of participants declared being active supporters of the PT compared to 24% of the population (Datafolha, 2013a, 2013b; IBOPE, 2012).

As the movement carried on in 2014, focusing this time on the World Cup, members of the PT and trade unions were expulsed from the protests. Calls to demonstration on Facebook specified that people should come with no political banner, and avoid colours such as red that reminded the PT.[37] These protests reflect in part the dissatisfaction of the squeezed middle-class, who benefited less than the top and bottom 20% from PT governments' policies (Sampaio, 2014). However, during the 2014 presidential campaign, this wave of dissatisfaction seemed to have turned into a hatred campaign against Dilma Rousseff. This was conflated with a racist and classist campaign against *Nordestinos*, the inhabitants of the Northeast, who voted massively in favour of the PT (more than 75% in Bahia compared to 51% nationally). The former President Cardoso even declared: "The PT relies on the less informed people, who by coincidence are the poorest. But it's not because they are poor that they vote PT, it's because they are less informed".[38]

After the PT won the election, social media were saturated with comments blaming the Nordestinos for the victory of Dilma Rousseff, and calling them "lazy bastards" who

[36] MPL-SP: https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)
[37] See a report on aggressions published in *El Pais* on 17/09/2015: https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/08/17/politica/1439769515_800304.html
[38] See the whole interview: http://www.brasil247.com/pt/247/poder/156038/FHC-insulta-eleitor-e-vê-petista-como-ignorante.htm

live on the *Bolsa Familia*.[39] The demonstrations organised then confirmed that the movement is – at least in part – made of extreme-right groups and represents a quite privileged population. A significant majority of the participants in the demonstration of March 15th 2015 in São Paulo had a higher education degree (76%), and 41% of them earned 10 times the minimum wage or more when this proportion is lower than 2% at the national level (Datafolha, 2015). In the August 16th demonstration, some people exhibited banners asking for the return of the army.[40] The operation *lava jato* also reached the former President Lula who is currently being investigated for tax fraud, and for having bought a flat with money evaded from the Petrobras scheme. If this was proven to be true, Lula would not be able to run for the 2018 presidential elections and could face up to 12 years of prison.[41]

The opposition gained force, supported by the context of economic crisis and political disarray, and although the PT won the 2014 presidential election, the right dominates the Congress. The composition of the Congress elected in 2014 has been described by many as the most conservative since the end of the military regime, and is often referred to as the Congress of the "three Bs": Beef, Bible and Bullet. [42] Beef stands for the group of "ruralists", an expression designating landowners who are against the agrarian reform and indigenous people's rights. They are the biggest of the three, with 109 deputies (out of 513 at the lower chamber). Bible stands for the Evangelical group who counts 74 members, all pastors or missionaries. Amongst their key propositions was the recognition of the unborn child and a further penalisation of abortion, and the creation of a day of Heterosexual Pride. The third one, Bullet, refers to a group demanding a decrease in the age of penal majority and a greater freedom to buy and carry guns. They count 22 members, all policemen or former military. Together, the three Bs hold 40% of the votes. In this context, the domestic workers' reforms had very little chances to succeed.

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[39] For a sample of the most offensive tweets: http://tnh1.ne10.uol.com.br/noticia/eleicoes-2014/2014/10/27/311054/ataques-a-nordestinos-tomam-as-redes-sociais-apos-reeleicao-de-dilma

[40] Pictures of some the banners exhibited at the 16 August demonstration: http://www.revistaforum.com.br/blog/2015/08/os-dez-cartazes-mais-inacreditaveis-do-1608/

[41] See for instance Telesur, "Brazil: Public Prosecutor Orders former President Lula da Silva to Start 12-Year Sentence", published on 06/03/2018: https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Brazil-Public-Prosecutor-Orders-former-President-Lula-da-Silva-to-Start-12-Year-Sentence-20180306-0012.html

[42] For more details on the composition of the Congress and the "three Bs" see Martins, R. (2015), "A Bancada BBB Domina o Congresso", published in *Carta Capital*, on 14/04/2015: https://www.cartacapital.com.br/revista/844/bbb-no-congresso-1092.html

An in fact, just a year after the domestic workers' law (2015) was approved, Dilma Rousseff was impeached. The impeachment has been characterised by many as a coup, or "institutional coup" as opposed to the military coup of 1964 (Jinkings, Doria, & Cleto, 2016; Moretzsohn, 2016). Indeed, whilst done within the boundaries of legality, it was voted without sufficient proof against the president, supporting the claims that it was an organised conservative counterattack against the left-wing government (Alves, 2016). Dilma Rousseff herself has described the impeachment as a sexist attempt to oust her, and the feminist scholar Maria Betânia Àvila argued this is a "patriarchal coup".[43] Eleonora Menicucci, Minister for Women's Rights under Dilma Rousseff's government, also declared: "the biggest impact of the coup can be seen without any doubt on women's daily lives". She identified the process of destitution of the President as a "patriarchal, machista, sexist, capitalist, and fundamentalist coup".[44] In line with these arguments, I choose to refer to the process as a coup (*golpe*), and use the word impeachment only to designate the specific parliamentary vote that ended Dilma Rousseff's presidency.

The current interim (or *golpista*) Temer government has implemented large-scale neoliberal reforms that will affect the most vulnerable people in Brazil. Temer has presented a Constitutional amendment to the Congress in order to set a cap on federal spending for the next twenty years, thus making austerity compulsory for any future elected or unelected government. This includes ending the provision that guarantees that 18% of the budget coming from tax revenues be allocated to education, and 15% to health, that had been introduced under Lula. The Constitutional amendment, known as '*PEC 55'*, has been approved by the Senate in December 2016, after months of protest from the population. It has been described as the "most socially regressive austerity package in the world" by the UN, and massively rejected by voters (60% of the population declared to be against) whilst allegation of corruption against Temer

[43] Dilma's interview for CNN, 19 April 2016: http://edition.cnn.com/2016/04/19/americas/brazil-dilma-rousseff-speaks/, and Maria Betânia Àvila (2016), "Um golpe patriarcal", in *Teoria e Debate*, published online 15 June 2016: http://www.teoriaedebate.org.br/index.php?q=materias%2Fpolitica%2Fum-golpe-patriarcal

[44] See her column in *Brasil 247,* published on 27/06/2016: http://www.brasil247.com/pt/colunistas/geral/240538/Como-o-golpe-em-curso-impacta-na-vida-das-mulheres.htm

compromised his stance on morality and good governance.[45] Indeed, he is currently being investigated for illegal donations to his presidential election campaign.

The interim government has also announced cuts in scholarships in higher education and the end of the international exchange programme *Ciências sem Fronteiras* (Sciences Without Borders), claiming that these programmes cost too much. The Ministry of Education plans a reallocation of spending to prioritize national-based rather than international scholarships.[46] In addition, and in line with its eagerness to cut social programmes, Temer promised a revision of the *Bolsa Família* in order to remove the 'undeserving beneficiaries', which he estimates to be over ten million families.[47] Finally, in 2017, the government approved a labour reform (*reforma trabalhista*) that aims at dismantling the CLT and could severely jeopardize workers' rights (DIEESE, 2017a). The reform includes: an increase of the working limit from 8 hours daily to 12 hours, an easier recourse to part-time and flexible contracts for companies, and the extension of sub-contracting which is now only allowed for activities considered to be secondary to companies. The reform also aims at introducing an inversion of judicial norms, giving the primacy to collective agreements over the law, which means in substance a devaluation of the Labour Code. This will negatively affect the most precarious sectors - women dominated - such as the textile industry or domestic work, that have very low unionisation rates and little capacity to bargain with employers.

Thus, the weakening of the PT and the organised left, ultimately ousted from power by a conservative neoliberal coalition, represents great uncertainties for domestic workers. While they have lost their leverage at the institutional level, and are being affected by the fate of their allies, they are also suffering the consequences of the economic crisis

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[45] On the '*PEC 55'*, see for instance: Dom, P. (2016), "Brazil Senate approves austerity package to freeze social spending for 20 years", published in *The Gua*rdian, on 13/12/2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/13/brazil-approves-social-spending-freeze-austerity-package
On the on-going scandal investigations, see for instance: Dom, P. (2016), "Brazil president Michel Temer accused of soliciting millions in illegal donations", published in *The Gua*rdian, on 12/12/2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/12/brazil-president-michel-temer-illegal-campaign-donations

[46] Editorial, "Governo acaba com o Ciência Sem Fronteiras para cursos de graduação", in *Globo 1 – Bom dia Brasil*, publised online on 26/07/2016: http://g1.globo.com/bom-dia-brasil/noticia/2016/07/governo-acaba-com-o-ciencia-sem-fronteiras-para-cursos-de-graduacao.html

[47] Leme, L. (2016), "Brazil Update: One Month into a Michel Temer Government", in *Americas Society/Council of the Americas*: http://www.as-coa.org/articles/brazil-update-one-month-michel-temer-government /

that considerably reduces their bargaining power. Data show that domestic work has increased during the economic crisis, as well as the number of unregistered domestic workers, which reflects the interlinked increase in precarisation and informality of the labour market provoked by the crisis. In 2017, the (estimated) number of domestic workers back went back up to 6.3 million, when it had decreased to 6 million in 2015, and the proportion of registered domestic workers reduced somewhat from 33% in 2015 to 32% in 2016.[48] A higher supply of cheap labour will be detrimental to domestic workers' capacity to negotiate better terms and conditions with their employers.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the contemporary working of colonial structures within the Brazilian society, and in particular, has demonstrated that domestic work is a direct legacy of slavery. Domestic workers have moved from enslaved black women working at the master's house to under-paid, under-valued, precarious domestic workers. Black women are still over-represented in the sector, and fare worse than other workers on every indicator on the labour market. Thus, domestic workers have been created as a subaltern class, and as a consequence, they have been excluded from state regulations and labour rights. The Brazilian corporatist state and welfare regime makes the access to citizenship dependent on the status of worker, yet, domestic worker are the 'non-workers' exemplified. And although they gained some labour rights in 2015, they are still not fully recognised as workers by the state, which has made them a less-than-equal category of workers.

Domestic workers did nonetheless organise into trade unions, and got affiliated to the biggest confederation of workers, the CUT. Their unions face important legal restrictions, but they do claim the status of workers and the status of trade unions. They share some of the common unions' prerogatives, such as overseeing contract termination procedures, although they are left without the proper resources to do so. Domestic workers are constantly at the margins; they are recognised but not quite,

[48] See *Correio Braziliense*, published on 23/02/2017:
http://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/economia/2017/02/23/internas_economia,576147/ibge-cai-a-incidencia-de-carteira-assinada-entre-empregados-domestico.shtml
And *Época NEGÓCIOS*, published on 30/11/2017:
https://epocanegocios.globo.com/Economia/noticia/2017/11/numero-de-empregados-domesticos-registra-maior-alta-desde-2015.html

included within industrial relations, but only partially, have their unions but these cannot work as regular unions. Yet, trade unions are precisely the main institution through which workers can reach the state and bargain with employers; therefore, domestic workers' selective inclusion has consequences for their modes of organising and their repertoires of action.

Finally, this chapter has given an overview of the PT years, and its attempts at challenging the hierarchical and unequal social structures. The PT has initiated a shift towards a more universal coverage and a better inclusion of the poorest through emblematic social policies such as *Bolsa Familia*. However, these reforms were embedded within an unchanged economic structure, creating increasing tensions and contradictions for the PT government, and leading, ultimately, to its impeachment in 2016. The impeachment, or coup, is arguably a closing window of opportunity for domestic workers, and represents a high risk that their law will not be enforced. Before addressing these issues in the empirical chapters, the next chapter will provide a theoretical framework for conceptualising domestic workers as a subaltern class, and discuss the implications subalternity has on their collective identities and repertoires of action.

Chapter III/ Rethinking subaltern politics as paradoxical: transforming vectors of oppression into resources for collective action

The previous chapter has demonstrated that domestic work is a direct legacy of slavery; there is a continuity between the work executed by enslaved African women at the master's house and contemporary forms of domestic labour. Domestic workers are still in their majority underpaid black women, who, until 2015, had barely any labour rights. Thus, domestic work in Brazil is characterised by a triple discrimination based on vectors of gender, race and class (J. Bernardino-Costa, 2014; Brites, 2013; Crenshaw, 2002; Pinho & Silva, 2010; Ricardo, 2012), and this particular situation of exploitation and intersecting oppressions leads me to conceive domestic workers as a subaltern group. More specifically, I define subalternity as a situation of subordination grounded on the simultaneous oppression of gender, race and class in a post-colonial context, thus proposing an approach to subalternity that accounts for the material conditions of existence of the subaltern group. I argue that the concept of subaltern must be gendered, raced, and located, and should be used to analyse a condition of oppression that may or may not be contested.

The subaltern is not necessarily an "oppositional agency" (Nilsen & Roy, 2015), or an inaudible group confined to silence within hegemonic structure (Morris, 2010; Spivak, 1988a); subalterns operate between these two extremes depending on their particular context and political opportunities. While this thesis is interested in subaltern politics, it does not assume that subalterns will necessarily contest their condition of subalternity or enter forms of collective action. I propose instead to explore how subalternity impacts on subalterns' ability to organise, how it shapes their repertoires of contention, and the ways in which subalterns can use and transform their condition of oppression.

I understand subalternity not as something fixed or static, but rather as a condition that can be transformed, although the ways in which subaltern groups practice politics varies according to their time and place. Because of their subaltern status, domestic workers are not expected to be organisable or representable by traditional parties and unions. Subaltern studies tend to present the subaltern as being against the state and official institutions (Bayat, 2000; Motta & Nilsen, 2011; Pogodda & Richmond, 2015), or not representable within existing hegemonic discourses (Beverley, 2001; Morris, 2010;

Spivak, 1988a), and, somehow, outside of what counts as political. Industrial relations and social movements' literature on the other hand, quite unanimously predict that precarious or 'non-standard' workers are harder or even impossible to organise and represent (Anner, 2007; Bonner & Spooner, 2011; Brophy, 2006; Collovald & Mathieu, 2009; Faniel, 2012; Theron, 2010; Wells & Jason, 2010). Domestic workers in particular work in isolated homes, the sector is fragmented with different statuses and access to labour rights, the turn-over is high, and they are not perceived as workers by their own employers (Bonner & Spooner, 2011; ILO, 2009, 2013; Meagher, 2002; P. Smith, 2000).

Yet, domestic workers have a quite long history of fighting for their rights, in Brazil and elsewhere. In Brazil, the movement for equal rights started in 1936, and domestic workers' local associations became trade unions in 1988. Therefore, it is not so much that domestic workers are un-organisable, but rather that their political actions and mobilisations have been absent from official records. They are seen as harder to organise, yet they have been doing it for decades, at the margins of industrial relations and conventional unions. I argue that it is not in spite of their subalternity, but on the contrary, by politically crafting their subalternity that domestic workers have been able to organise. Indeed, subalternity has shaped domestic workers' collective identities, discourses and repertoires of contention, and has been used as a resource for their collective action. It has enabled the formation of a "critical community of resistance" (Chun, 2016a), the production of an alternative vision of work and value, and the building of alliances with social movements. Thus, instead of considering subalternity as an impediment to collective action, I propose to look at how subalternity is perceived, transformed and used by domestic workers to develop their own mobilising strategies.

In this chapter, I bring together subaltern studies and social movement studies in order to develop a new approach to subaltern mobilisations, rooted in the particular experience of Brazilian domestic workers. In many ways, subaltern studies and studies of 'non-standard' workers or the 'precariat' commonly assume that the 'weak' are harder or impossible to organise, thus rendering invisible their long and rich history of mobilisations. Subalternity, understood as an intersectional and located condition of marginalisation, offers the possibility to capture the simultaneity of gender, race and class oppressions in a post-colonial context, while also providing a new framework

through which to understand collective action. I argue that Brazilian domestic workers are paradoxical political subjects: while their subalternity has made them second-class citizens, it has also been key to their mobilisations and legislative victory. And while they successfully used their subalternity to mobilise, they also changed the conditions of their mobilisation by gaining new rights and political recognition.

This chapter is structured as follows. I first review the literature on domestic work to show the difficulties surrounding the recognition of this activity as work. Domestic workers are often described as an extremely precarious and marginalised group, embedded in unequal social structures. Section II explores the intersectionality of domestic workers' oppression in a post-colonial context, and proposes to reconceive Brazilian domestic workers as a subaltern class. Finally, section III analyses how this position of subalternity impacts on domestic workers' possibilities of representation and collective action. I will suggest that paradoxically, their shared oppression is at the same time what positions them as a subaltern class and what forms the ground for their mobilisations.

I/ Domestic work and the value of labour

This section discusses social understandings of domestic work, and its lack of consideration as proper work. I first review the contribution of Marxist feminists,[49] who have shown that historically domestic work has been performed for free by women in the private sphere. They have insisted on the appropriation of women's housework by the capitalist economy, arguing that the separation between productive and reproductive activities maintains women in a subordinated position. However, this literature tends to omit the existence of inequalities among women and overlooks the role of paid domestic work in the reproduction of inequalities. I then turn to feminist political economy, which has in part addressed these gaps by showing how care and domestic work are linked to dynamics of global and national inequalities, describing domestic work as a highly precarious sector. Existing scholarship quite unanimously presents

[49] Different strands of feminist theories have paid attention to household or domestic labour and its implication for gender inequalities. The contribution of Marxist feminists, as formulated in the 1970s and 1980s, is to explicitly link domestic labour to the capitalist system of production and reconceptualise it as work. For Weeks (2007), one of their main characteristics is to take care and domestic labour as a standpoint for feminist theory, and one from which revolutionary subjects – the woman class – can be created.

domestic workers as extremely oppressed and exploited, located at the 'bottom of the chain' of the production system. I suggest that these elements point towards a conceptual redefinition of domestic workers as a subaltern class.

1) The private is profitable

Traditionally, domestic work is not considered as real work on the grounds that it is not a productive activity. This has justified domestic workers' exclusion from labour regulations in many countries, such as the United States or Brazil. Mainstream economic theory considers for instance that domestic work is not a product that can be sold and exchanged on the market; therefore, it has no economic value. A. Smith (1776 book II, chapter 3) has famously argued that the work of domestic servants is unproductive because there is no material commodity produced by it, and thus no value to be extracted or sold. The work of a cleaner will inevitably have to be repeated over time, as a house can never be cleaned permanently. This expense is constant in an employer's budget while the gains are minimal, and the 'cleanliness' is not something that can be sold or exchanged in the market. Feminist theory, and Marxist feminists in particular, have contested this idea. Explicitly linking domestic labour, performed for free by women in the private sphere, to the capitalist system of production, they have reconceptualised domestic work as productive work. By doing so, they have provided a new analysis of the relation between production and reproduction – one that profoundly challenges the classical separation between the private and the public spheres (Weeks, 2011).

Based on Engels, who conceived the mononuclear bourgeois family as the basis of the capitalist system of production, Marxist feminists argue that social reproduction is a productive activity. Social reproduction is used in this framework to describe the activities necessary to reproduce the system of waged labour. And because these activities – which can be encompassed under the term 'domestic labour' – are done primarily within the private sphere, they are not recognised as productive. Engels (1884, p. 4) saw the family structure, in the form that emerged in Europe together with the process of industrialisation, as necessary to ensure workers' social reproduction and productivity:

> According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate essentials of life (…). The social organization under which the people of a particular

> historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour on the one hand and of the family on the other.

Marxist feminists in the 1970s and 1980s went further in positing unpaid housework as being at the very core of women's oppression. The enforced sexual division of labour, productive for male and reproductive for female, is seen as a necessary condition for the capitalist process of accumulation (Federici, 1975). Founding their analysis on an analogy between women and the proletariat, Marxist feminists argue that patriarchy is a system of exploitation on its own, in which women are dispossessed of the surplus value they produce. Thus, capitalism and patriarchy are complementary systems that reinforce each other. In this context, Pateman (1988) has reconceived marriage as a "sexual contract" whereby husbands are guaranteed unlimited access to care and sexual services from their wives. She compares the husband/wife relation to the master/slave relation: "The marriage contract, too, is a kind of labour contract. To become a wife entails becoming a housewife; that is, a wife is someone who works for her husband in the marital home" (p. 116). According to her, the housewife, just like the slave, is characterised by her unwaged labour.

In this conception of labour and gender relations, the distinction between public and private vanishes. In 1972, a group of European Marxist feminists created by Federici, Dalla Costa and James, among others, have founded the International Wages for Housework Campaign asking for an economic compensation for domestic work. By doing so, they link production to reproduction demonstrating how one is necessarily dependent upon the other. Because of this interconnection, housewives should be remunerated just like workers are remunerated in the labour market. Insisting on the oppressive character of unpaid housework, Federici (1975, p. 15) claimed: "identifying ourselves as housewives is worse than death". Similarly, Selma James (1973) has argued that "when capital pays husbands they get two workers, not one", and that all women, whether they have a paid work or not, are defined by the housework they have to perform for free.[50] This form of oppression is seen as common to all women and distinct from the oppression of the proletariat; which has led Delphy (1977) to define the patriarchal class as the "main enemy" of the woman class.

[50] Text available online: https://caringlabor.wordpress.com/2010/08/14/selma-james-women-the-unions-and-work-or-what-is-not-to-be-done/

The question of exploitation in the private sphere leads to an analysis of the body as a site of production and reproduction. Some scholars have argued that bodies are socially and economically produced (Orzeck, 2007; Wright, 2004), and occupy a very specific position within the system of production. D. Harvey (1998) demonstrates that because the body is what enables the worker to sell his/her labour power to the capitalist, it can be conceptualised as a site of capitalist accumulation. Within a Marxist framework, the creation of value depends on the production of surplus value, and this relationship is necessarily exploitative because of the gap created between production, value and wage. Indeed, the capital appropriates the surplus value produced by the worker, who receives a wage that never fully reflects his/her actual value. For D. Harvey (1998, p. 408), the body is the medium through which these relations of exploitation are materialised:

> The gap between what the labourer as person might desire and what is demanded of the commodity labour power extracted from his or her body is the nexus of alienation. And although workers as persons may value themselves in a variety of ways depending upon how they understand their productivity, usefulness, and value to others, the more restricted social valuation given by their capacity to produce surplus value for capital necessarily remains central to their lives.

In this framework, domestic work can be understood as the work to reproduce other bodies' capability to work and produce. Domestic workers' bodies are used to enable their employers to sell their labour power on a more profitable market, and this mechanism creates an accumulation of surplus value by the employers who become in turn more productive and more valuable. I argue that this is also a mechanism of "accumulation by dispossession" (D. Harvey, 2004). Although Harvey uses this concept to describe relations between states and finance capital that accumulate profit by dispossessing other nations or groups of people, I contend that it can be applied to domestic work. The accumulation of reproductive services by some workers is done through a very low remuneration of other workers, which creates the condition for the extraction of surplus value. Indeed, paid domestic work enables the employers to spend more time earning a wage that is significantly higher than that of their cleaners or nannies, or to spend this time in leisure activities. It appears more profitable for employers' families to pay someone else to do this job than wasting their 'productive' or leisure time doing it themselves (Kilkey, Perrons, & Plomien, 2013; Meagher, 2002). Thus, domestic workers are dispossessed of their production and become a commodity that wealthier workers can buy (Federici, 2012; Staples, 2006).

Marxist analysis of exploitation and value, and Marxist feminist analysis of the link between production and reproduction in particular, are crucial to understand the devaluation of domestic labour. Marxist feminists have challenged the classical boundaries between public and private by highlighting the processes through which social reproduction occurs, and by insisting on the surplus value created by unwaged housework (Barker & Feiner, 2009; Caffentzis, 1999; Landes, 1998, 2003). They have demonstrated that not only is the private political, but it is also *profitable* to the capitalist economy. This perspective has also blurred the artificial distinction between work and leisure; indeed, as argued by Federici (2012), there is no leisure in doing housework that serves to reproduce labour. Recent studies (ESRC, 2013; Gálvez-Muñoz, Rodríguez-Modroño, & Domínguez-Serrano, 2011), have demonstrated the perpetuation of the gendered division of labour even with the massive feminisation of employment. This is now commonly referred to as the 'double day' of women who, in Europe, still take on average two-thirds of the housework in addition to their paid work. The fact that housework is still not recognised as a valuable activity represents a major barrier to the full recognition of domestic workers as proper workers. The public/private division continues to maintain a hierarchy between productive and reproductive activities, thus limiting access to labour rights for domestic workers.

However, Marxist feminists have been criticised for universalising women's condition and ignoring not only the intersectional nature of oppression (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989) but also the different positions women have in the relations of production (Bose, 2012; Duffy, 2007). Typically, it tends to erase the fact that black and migrant maids do the housework for white middle-class and professional women who can compete for qualified and better paid jobs on the labour market (Anderson, 2000; Glenn, 1992, 2002; Lorde, 1984). These problems are partially addressed by feminist political economy, which demonstrates that care and domestic work are intrinsically linked to social and global inequalities.

2) Women's labour and social inequalities

Gender segregation on the labour market feeds the idea that care and domestic work is by essence a 'feminine' work, for which women are naturally gifted (they are maternal, loving, and caring). And because these particular types of task are perceived as being natural, associated jobs such as nanny or carer do not seem to deserve a proper pay.

Women do it because they truly 'love' it, and this requires no particular qualification (England, 2005; Folbre, 2012). But as argued by Perrons (2010, p. 39): "Given the diversity among women it is perhaps less likely that as a group they simply prefer these types of employment, and more likely that there are external constraints of some kind that impedes their entry and progression elsewhere." Besides, these types of jobs do actually require a particular set of skills. If we break down care and domestic work into the different activities it can involve, we find cooking, personal care for a disabled or elderly person, childcare, and cleaning. Cooking is quite well recognised as being a qualified profession when it happens outside of the home; to the point of becoming the subject of TV shows staging highly qualified chefs. The same goes for personal care, which in the labour market would be performed by trained nurses or doctors. And in fact, many would agree that nurses do not get paid enough for the work they do.

As for nannies, studies unanimously reveal how demanding families are (Brites, 2014; Cox, 2015; Parreñas, 2001, 2008; Tronto, 2002). Nannies are expected to speak foreign languages, help the children with their homework, cook for them, clean the house and do all sorts of housekeeping tasks. If they were hired as private tutors, or as educators in nurseries or primary schools, they would be entitled to better pay and regulated working terms and conditions. Ibos (2012) studied the community of African nannies in Paris and she highlights the inherent contradictions in parents/employers' attitudes and discourses; while they want the best for their children and have a long list of criteria for what makes a good nanny, they are never ready to pay them the minimum wage. One of the couples she interviewed even turned down a PhD student, scared that she would use her degree to ask for a higher wage. But quite crucially, these studies point to the fact that the consumption of care and domestic services depends on the access families have to such services at the private and public levels, and on the existing social models of care (Hirata, 2016b; Hirata & Guimarães, 2012). Typically, in the absence of publicly subsidised childcare, households with higher income will be able to privately hire a nanny or carer, while lower income households will try to find informal and family-based arrangements.

The provision of care and domestic work remains a major debate within feminist theory; it defines models of welfare state as well as conceptions of citizenship and work (Fudge, 2005; Jenson, 1997; Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012). Fraser (1997) has proposed a "universal caregiver model" that would equalise gender roles in society. Women's

access to the labour market would be promoted while men would be incentivised to take on a more important share of domestic work, thus equalising the share of both productive and reproductive labour in society. Duffy (2010) has also recommended a model in which care would be conceived as a right, for both receivers and providers. The valuation of care as a good would create greater solidarity between workers and consumers, and shift work/personal life arrangements towards a more inclusive system. In this model, providers and receivers of care are seen as interdependent and sharing the same interests in having a well-funded system of care provision that guarantees access and quality on both ends.

Yet, in reality, domestic work is associated with lower wages and levels of protection worldwide (ILO, 2009, 2013; Oelz, 2014), and encapsulates what many authors have identified as the 'feminisation of work', which simultaneously describes increasing female participation and declining working conditions (Bellone Hite & Viterna, 2005; Benería, 2003; Gutiérrez-Rodriguez, 2013). Neoliberal globalisation uses and intensifies gender inequalities, creating a category of workers who is "docile, cheap to employ, and able to endure boring, repetitive work" (Acker, 2004, p. 34), from whom extra surplus value can be extracted. Gender roles are recreated and naturalised through unequal labour practices and the confinement of women to 'feminine' tasks (Bair, 2010; Eschle, 2004). The Global Care Chains (GCC) framework has drawn attention to the reproduction of inequalities between countries that are maintained and reinforced through female migration from the global South to work as domestic and care workers in the global North (Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012; Yeates, 2004, 2012). These "servants of globalisation" (Parreñas, 2001) leave their own children and families behind to take care of other families in the North, thus generating a chain of outsourcing of caring activities on a global scale. Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2003) conceive these migration trends as an extraction of human labour from the South to sustain patterns of living in the North. This has the double effect of depriving sending countries of their qualified workforce while creating global care chains at the end of which the quality of care is significantly lower than at the top.

In this context, migration has become a strategy of development at the national level and a way to secure greater revenues at the individual level. As the work of Parreñas (2001, 2008) illustrates, the Philippines are emblematic of a strategy of 'exporting' workers, with a clear specialisation in care work. Sassen (2008) also notes a trend of

polarisation of employment in global cities, in which there is a growing demand for specific types of work at the top and bottom levels. She argues that high level management and professionals produce the need for low-paid service workers to cater, clean and take care of their children for them. The intensification of work and the pressure to be more productive make it harder to combine personal and professional life. Households, and particularly those with children, are left with few options if they want to sustain their living standards. Thus, female migration is filling gaps in the labour market and enabling middle and upper-class women to work in better paid professions (Cox, 2006; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Ibos, 2012; Kilkey et al., 2013).

Finally, domestic work is marked by racial inequalities, either resulting from longer historical dynamics or from discriminatory migration and citizenship status. Studies on domestic workers in the US for instance have highlighted the racial division of reproductive labour, in which white middle and upper-classes women can access competitive jobs in the labour market by outsourcing the burden of domestic work onto black and Latina domestic workers (Duffy, 2007; Glenn, 1992, 2002). Looking at exploitation and mistreatment in the UK, Anderson (2000, p. 158) has qualified this sector as a "legacy of slavery". These dynamics are present in the EU more broadly with migrant workers who are often marked by their race and lack of access to citizenship. Repressive immigration policies put them in a situation of exteriority in relation to the core/legitimate citizens at the service of whom they came to work (Gutiérrez-Rodriguez, 2013). As affirmed by Parreñas (2001, p. 73): "this division of labour is a structural relationship of inequality based on class, race, gender and (nation-based) citizenship".

These feminist perspectives are crucial in showing that care and domestic work is associated with national and global inequalities, relying on and reproducing gender and race divisions of labour. However, they sometimes tend to reproduce the idea of the domestic worker as a passive victim of globalisation (R. Brown, 2015; Nadasen, 2015), neglecting their ability to resist and enter collective action. Besides, in Brazil, domestic work is not a new or growing phenomenon, but rather a direct legacy of slavery and the colonial structure (L. Brown, 2006; Pinho & Silva, 2010; Roncador, 2014). The domestic workers' class has not emerged as a result of recent neoliberal policies or global patterns of migration, and in fact, domestic workers are in general Brazilian-born

and internal migrants. However, what all these perspectives suggest – although not always explicitly – is that domestic workers can be considered as a subaltern group, marked by the intersection of gender, race, and class vectors of oppression. The next section proposes a comprehensive framework to reconceive domestic workers as subalterns.

II/ Conceptualising domestic workers as a subaltern class

Domestic work has been described as an informal, fragmented, and precarious sector where women and black women in particular are over-represented. This multi-dimensional exploitation has positioned domestic workers in a subordinated position whereby their labour remains undervalued (Abbots, 2012; J. Bernardino-Costa, 2014; Blofield, 2009; Cox, 2006; Glenn, 2002). However, in Brazil, the racial and gender division of labour is also inscribed in the context of a colonial economy and has been characterised by many scholars as a direct legacy of slavery (Girard-Nunes & Silva, 2013; Rezende & Lima, 2004; Santana Pinho & Silva, 2010). This particular intersection of oppression combined with the legacy of slavery will lead me to redefine domestic workers as a subaltern class. Indeed, it is the intersection of gender, race and class in post-colonial Brazil that defines domestic workers as an under-class of servants, and this subaltern status shapes their possibilities of collective action.

1) Intersections of gender, race and class oppressions

Coined by the black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), the term intersectionality has been developed to capture the struggles of black women in the USA and to theorise the particular forms of racist and patriarchal oppression they face (Combahee River Collective, 1986; Davis, 1982; hooks, 1989, 2000). Black feminists have argued that their experience of oppression cannot be understood in terms of either being black or being women separately, but must include the interconnection of both race and gender which mutually reinforce each other. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) showed that in some circumstances it is impossible to determine which element of one's social identity caused the discrimination, and that the different vectors of oppression cannot be analysed as discrete categories. For Patricia Hill Collins (2000), intersectionality is an epistemological point from which to do research, grounded in the lived experiences of

black women. She has also defined intersectionality as the analysis of matrices of oppression (Hill Collins, 2007), thus providing a structural perspective on the construction of social identities. Indeed, within an intersectional perspective, identities are not only individual or subjective elements, but rather the result of matrices of oppression that place groups of people into certain positions of power or oppression.

There have been important debates on the expandability of the term; should it be used in relation to black women's oppression only or can it be applied to other groups and social identities (Cho et al., 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006)? There are also questions regarding how many 'intersections' to consider and how to include them meaningfully into the analysis (Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005). Intersectionality as an analytical strategy has been applied to different fields of study: for instance, to labour market studies to show how particular groups are discriminated against (Barker & Feiner, 2009; Cordero-Guzmán, Smith, & Grosfoguel, 2001; Duffy, 2007; Flippen, 2014; Lovell, 2006); to the study of social movement to understand how movements negotiate and deal with difference and inequalities (Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013; Lépinard, 2014; Lewis, 2013); or as a tool to critically assess public policies (Hankivsky, 2012; Verloo, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006). While these studies have contributed to disseminating intersectionality to other disciplines, Hill Collins (2015) argues that the success and institutionalisation of the concept can lead to a form of depoliticisation of intersectionality, delinking it from its feminist and anti-racist origins. Similarly, Bilge (2013) has criticised what she calls the "whitening" of intersectionality which consists of trying to rebrand intersectionality as "the brainchild of feminism", thereby negating its roots in black feminist critical theory.

Intersectionality has also been criticised for being divisive and promoting a 'Olympics of oppression' (for a detailed discussion on that: Devon, 2013; Patil, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2012), thus slipping into an individualistic and essentialist form of identity politics. Two recent interventions in the USA illustrate these accusations against intersectionality. The first is the claim by Ayaan Hirsi Ali that intersectionality has made feminist critiques of Female Genital Mutilations (FGM) impossible because they are practiced by men of colour: "Intersectionality entrenches victimhood and prevents men of colour from being held accountable for patriarchal attitudes and behaviours,

laying the blame entirely on white men."[51] The second is the denomination of intersectionality as a "religion" by Andrew Sullivan, who contends that the concept is a "neo-Marxist orthodoxy" trying to provide a grand explanation for all human experiences.[52] In both cases, the authors claim that intersectionality promotes a victimhood culture within which individuals compete to be seen as the most oppressed by virtue of the accumulation of their marginal identities, as if there were pre-defined identity boxes that could be checked to validate the status of 'intersectional subject'.

In a quite different vein, and starting from a concern with the trend to individualisation, Mohanty (2013) has alerted to the risk of appropriation of radical critique by neoliberalism in the context of an increasingly marketised academia. She affirms that the post-modernist position against all forms of generalisation has to a certain extent converged with the neoliberal one, favouring individualised analyses and neglecting structural oppression. Cho et al. (2013) have addressed this concern, and answered the accusations against the 'Olympics of oppression', by arguing that on the contrary, intersectionality is a way to analyse structural inequalities and power. Indeed, within an intersectional framework, social identity is a result of power relations and not taken as something natural or fixed. In Crenshaw's work, intersectionality is deployed as a way to spot moments where black women have "fallen through the cracks" of legal and political discourses, and she carefully connects structural, political and representational intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991, 2012; Crenshaw & AAFP, 2015).

In line with what I understand to be the original purpose of the concept, and fully recognising its roots within black feminist struggles, I use intersectionality as a tool to analyse power relations. More specifically, I follow the definition provided by Patricia Hill Collins (2007, 2015): intersectionality as an analysis of matrices of oppression. She insists on the overlapping and cumulative effects of patriarchy, racism and capitalism, and argues that: "intersectionality's raison d'être lies in its attentiveness to power relations and social inequalities" (Hill Collins, 2015, p. 3). Intersectionality is crucial to understand the situation of domestic workers in Brazil; indeed, it is the specific combination of gender, race and class oppression that constitutes them as an under-class

[51] Hirsi Ali, A. (2018), "The anti-woman violence feminists are afraid to confront", in the *New York Post*, published on 24/03/2018: https://nypost.com/2018/05/24/the-anti-woman-violence-feminists-are-afraid-to-confront/

[52] Sullivan, A. (2017), "Is Intersectionality a Religion?", in the *New York Mag*, published on 10/03/2017: http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/03/is-intersectionality-a-religion.html

of servants. This is not to deny the importance of actors' collective identities – and in fact I will examine how they are used within the process of mobilisation – but I want to emphasise that this particular group has been constituted as an under-class of servants as a result of structural forces.

Nevertheless, domestic workers' condition of oppression is not fixed or immutable, and intersectionality, used here as an analytical lens, also enables us to consider the dynamics of oppression and resistance at stake in their movement. As written by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016, p. 30) about the black women's movement in Brazil:

> By challenging myths that racial democracy had been achieved, or that the black movement could handle gendered concerns of women, or that Brazilian feminism was adequate for all women, the social justice activism of black women's movement in Brazil provides a different angle of vision on social justice.

In this fragment, the authors show how intersectionality works in practice, and the ways in which it illuminates marginalised groups' politics. By providing an analysis of how power works, intersectionality gives insight into how social actors understand their oppression, and how their shared experience can become a driver for collective action (Alinia, 2015; J. Bernardino-Costa, 2014). In fact, understanding inequality as a collective effect rather than an individual characteristic allows groups that face similar forms of oppression to uncover points of similarities and to organise collectively around their shared oppression (Carastathis, 2013; Chun et al., 2013; Cole, 2008).

Therefore, the concept of intersectionality allows me to simultaneously analyse the formation of subaltern social identities, and to understand how subaltern groups can transform their condition of subalternity through collective action. The social identities 'women', 'black' and 'poor' are collective effects, mutable and interconnected, that Brazilian domestic workers can use to create and sustain collective identities and collective action. I consider intersectionality as a *critical inquiry* into power and inequality, as well as a *praxis* deployed by the domestic workers' unions (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality being so central to both the analysis of domestic workers' oppression and to their political practices, it will be fully integrated into my conceptualisation of subalternity.

2) Towards a materialist definition of subalternity

In Gramsci's work, the subaltern is conceived as a class that is subordinated to the ruling elite and is characterized by its exclusion from structures of power (Gramsci, 1971). The dominant class ensures its domination through the development of a hegemonic culture that propagates its values and norms to the point that it becomes common sense. For Gramsci, the idea of subalternity is intrinsically linked to that of hegemony. There is no a priori impossibility for the subaltern to be represented or to become dominant, but this requires a radical change of power relations, that is, a revolution (Gramsci, 1971, p. 55). For revolution to happen, subalterns' consciousness must be released from the hegemony of the ruling class. Gramsci follows a 'stageist' Marxist tradition with different phases of development of class consciousness, which determine the possibilities for subaltern groups to become dominant or not.

There are six stages of subaltern organisation (Gramsci, 1971, p. 52). The first is the "objective formation of the subaltern social groups", which correspond to the passive existence of a class in itself resulting from common material conditions and a subordinated position within the system of production. The second is "their passive or active affiliation to the dominant political formations", this phase shows the emergence of a class-consciousness and an attempt by subaltern group to defend their interests within already existing parties. This leads to the third phase, in which dominant groups create new parties "intended to conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and to maintain control over them". The fourth stage is then the formation of autonomous subaltern parties and trade unions "in order to press claims of a limited and partial character". Stage five is the affirmation of subalterns' autonomy but within the old framework, while the final stage is the affirmation of their integral autonomy within a transformed system – after the revolution has happened. Gramsci notes that these phases can vary, but what is important for the historian is to track the process from the passive existence of the subaltern group to its complete autonomy. Therefore, quite importantly for the study of subaltern politics, Gramsci affirms that subalterns can get organised and even be represented without necessarily becoming dominant; only a transformation of the relations of production can change their position of subalternity.

Building on the work of Gramsci, a collective of South Asian historians created the subaltern study group in 1982,[53] with the aim to recover subalterns' voices and rectify the elitist bias in accounts of Indian history (Chakrabarty, 2000; Prakash, 1994). Their objective was to provide an alternative history of the construction of the Indian state, taking into consideration peasants' voices that had been erased by nationalist historians. Based on historiographical methodologies, the collective wanted to contest narratives that presented India's independence as being an achievement of the elite while eliding the peasantry – representing in their perspective the subalterns – as a relevant actor (Chatterjee & Pandey, 1992; Guha, 1983a, 1983b, 1997; Said, 1988). They also fostered a reflection on the subaltern subject, here conceived exclusively as the peasants, by demonstrating how its agency had been denied not only by colonialist scholarship but also by Marxist narratives in which only the working class could be a revolutionary subject.

However, this project was challenged right from the start. Gayatri Spivak (1988a) has argued that the notion of a self-transparent subaltern subject who could easily be retrieved from the archive is problematic, and reproduces the very critiques against Marxism and nationalism that subaltern studies were trying to address. In her piece on historiography, first published in 1986, she discusses the need to deconstruct the idea of a subject-agent that historians could find in the archive. Spivak (1988a, 1988b, 1999) provides an epistemological definition of the subaltern, arguing that subalternity represents the position from which one cannot be heard, therefore, this position cannot easily be seen by the researcher. The subaltern is not a transparent subject-agent, but rather a subject who has been silenced by the elite; consequently, recovering this voice through traditional elitist research methods in a post-colonial context is problematic, or even impossible. And because the hegemonic ear is incapable of hearing the subaltern, at the moment where this voice is heard, it is already being adapted to, and becoming part of, the hegemony (Spivak, 2005). This perspective, while raising crucial questions of ethics and representation (Morris, 2010), and producing a powerful analysis of the effects of subalternity, makes it hard to investigate subaltern politics. The existence of subaltern activism is practically negated by definition since they can never be heard, and if they are able to enter representation, then they cease to be subalterns. The Spivakian subaltern seems trapped between silence or hegemony (Beverley, 2001).

[53] Date of publication of the first volume of subaltern studies, edited by Guha: *Subaltern Studies I: Writing on South Asian History and Society*.

The search for subalterns' voices and agency progressively drifted subaltern studies away from its original Gramscian perspective. This resulted from the difficulties of simultaneously trying to recover subalterns' voices while also deconstructing dominant discourses that had produced them in the first place (Mallon, 1994; O'Hanlon, 1988; Prakash, 1994). This moved the field towards an analysis of the colonial and western discourses that erased the subaltern, leaving aside the historical investigation of peasants' insurgency. It is often argued that after 1986 and the publication of Spivak's piece subalternity has become a *discursive* effect (Chaturvedi, 2000; Ludden, 2002). Marxist authors have alerted to the risk of shifting to a purely 'culturalist' definition of the neo-colonial order, at the expense of an analysis of class and capital (Aboul-Ela, 2006; Bartolovich & Lazarus, 2002; T. Brass, 2000; Chibber, 2013). Some have further argued that subaltern studies rely on a too abstract concept of the subaltern without justifying its added-value compared to the concept of class, forgetting the material conditions that have produced subalternity (Parry, 2012; T. Roy, 2002).

Although this 'culturalist' turn is quite clear in many post-colonial works (Bhabha, 1994; Chambers & Huggan, 2015; Ellis, 2015; Palladino & Gjergji, 2015), critics of subaltern studies themselves have recognised that scholars in the field are quite careful in their consideration of the colonial structure (Chibber, 2014). Besides, there are interesting projects that aim at reconciling a materialist approach to post-colonial critiques of modernity, showing how the capitalist and colonial structures interconnect (Bartolovich & Lazarus, 2002; T. Brass, 2000; Dirlik, 2005; Sakar, 2000). Some post-colonial authors (Ong, 2006; A. Roy, 2011; Wynne-Hughes, 2015) have also tried to integrate processes of neoliberalism into analyses of subalternity, showing how neoliberalism as a discourse and technique of governance produces particular subaltern subjects. However, these studies do not specifically examine the conditions under which subalterns can mobilise. Thus, the need for a more comprehensive study of how the intersection between the colonial economy and contemporary capitalism shapes possibilities of political activism for the subaltern remains. The subaltern cannot only be defined by its (im)possibility of enunciation, and has to be attached to identifiable material criteria. Indeed, I argue that the subaltern is not a 'discursive' effect but the product of capitalist, patriarchal and colonial structures.

3) Gendering, racialising, and locating the subaltern

Inspired by the work of their South-Asian colleagues, a group of US-based scholars specialists of Latin America, coming from cultural and area studies, created their own subaltern study group in 1993. According to them, this project was motivated by the political failure of the left, and a willingness to rethink possibilities of emancipatory politics for the poorest (Beverley, 1997; Latin American Subaltern Study Group, 1993; Rodríguez, 2005). The group used the concept of subaltern as a category more encompassing that than of class, that would include all the marginalised and not only the Marxian organised working class. Subaltern studies were conceived not as a study of the subaltern like in South Asia, but rather as "a radical critique of elite cultures, of liberal, bourgeois, and modern epistemologies and projects, and of their different propositions regarding representations of the subaltern" (Rodríguez, 2001, p. 9).

However, the Latin American Subaltern Study Group published only one volume (*The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, in 2001), and ceased its activities relatively quickly after its creation. Indeed, the group split up in 1998 following from internal divisions, and in particular the critiques of Waltern Mignolo against the "imperialism" of cultural studies (Ballestrin, 2013). According to Rodríguez (2005), the project suffered from criticism both from the North and the South for studying Latin America while not being rooted in the continent, and for imposing western concepts onto Latin American studies. There were also irreconcilable tensions around the definition of the subaltern, torn between Marxist, post-structuralist and post-colonial approaches (Mallon, 1994; Rodríguez, 2005). Besides, the group did not resolve the fundamental question of its role and objectives, and whether it should produce a purely theoretical work or also be politically engaged and promote a subaltern agenda (Legras, 2004; Rodríguez, 2005).

In rupture with the Latin American Subaltern Study Group, but with members emerging from it, a network of Latin Americanists from different disciplines and based in different universities across the American continent launched the research group Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) in the late 1990s. The group was formalised in 2000 with the publication of *La Colonialidad del Saber: Eurocentrismo y Ciencias Sociales, Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* (The Coloniality of Knowledge: Eurocentrism and Social Sciences, Latin American Perspectives), an edited volume gathering texts from

Arturo Escobar, Enrique Dussel, Fernando Coronil, Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, and forming the basis of what has been called the "decolonial turn" in Latin American studies. The M/C research group fundamentally disagreed with the Latin American Subaltern Study Group for trying to apply analytical categories formed in the former British colonies, and for overlooking distinctively Latin American epistemologies.

The M/C research programme can be broadly defined as an attempt to rethink the paradigm of modernity from the location of the Americas. Although the group is not homogenous in terms of perspectives and disciplines, Escobar (2007) identifies its founding principles as: the location of the origins of modernity in the conquest of America in 1492 and the organisation of the Atlantic slave trade rather than European Enlightenment; an analysis of colonialism as co-constitutive of the capitalist world economy; and the domination and subalternisation of the others outside of Europe as a necessary condition of modernity. In this perspective, coloniality is central to modernity, and subalternity is understood as a particular location from which alternative knowledges and epistemologies are produced. As a consequence, the members of the M/C research programme advocate a decolonial option, which is a resistance against the modernity/coloniality logic, although each author has their own nuances and concepts (see Escobar, 2007, for an overview of the key concepts produced by the research group).

The M/C research programme provides important insights in order to rethink the linkages between colonialism and capitalism, and to understand the effects of these intersections on the production of knowledge. Nonetheless, the group has been criticised for romanticising ideas of the 'pre-colonial' and 'pre-modern', recreating binaries between the North and the South (Ballestrin, 2013). Indeed, the tendency to idealise the pre-colonial subject can be seen in some recent works in Latin American studies, which have focused on the notion of 'indigeneity' and redefined the subaltern as the 'native' and the 'indigenous' (Byrd & Rothberg, 2011). Being decolonial in this context has meant returning to pre-colonial cultures. In the past 15 years, there has been a multiplication of studies on indigenous movements, and in particular movements in the Chiapas and Bolivia that became symbols of hope and political alternatives (Burman, 2011; Schaefer, 2009; Stahler-Sholk, Vanden, & Becker, 2014; Wolff, 2013).

However, this 'return to the native' presents important potential pitfalls. First, it seems to fall into the trap of recovering 'authentic' voices, romanticising movements from below as if there were by essence progressive and decolonial (e.g.: Escobar, 2004; Mallon, 2012). Mignolo (2000, 2005, 2011), for instance, insists on the need to delink theory from Eurocentric thinking by going back to indigenous and native knowledges. He rejects modernity as it is inevitably linked to coloniality, but seems in doing so to recreate a binary opposition between modern/non-modern wherein the European stands on the modern side whereas the 'native' subaltern embodies the non-modern (Domingues, 2009; T. Smith, 2006).

The second problem, linked to the question of authenticity, is the association of 'pre-modern' with non-political. Studies on the indigenous *buen vivir* and cosmology for instance, tend to present these pre-colonial systems of knowledge as alternatives to neoliberalism, and essentially superior to 'modern' ideologies or party politics (Alonso González & Vázquez, 2015; Blackwell, 2012; Paschel & Sawyer, 2008). The subaltern, when associated with the indigenous, is described as being outside the modern political sphere, as if their 'authentic' and pre-colonial knowledges had remained intact. However, it seems unrealistic to presume that subaltern groups are completely un-alienated or untouched by western modernity, as if they were living in a strictly separate impermeable space. This idea of an 'authentic' indigenous subject seems in contradiction with the history of colonialism and the violence of national modernisation projects, while also denying indigenous groups the possibility of being 'modern' political actors. The interactions between pre and post-colonial, pre-modern and modern ontologies, are more complex. Some authors have precisely criticised the use of *buen vivir* by current indigenous governments in Ecuador and Bolivia as an empty rhetoric that masks their extractivist and neoliberal economic practices (Ranta, 2016; Tockman & Cameron, 2014; Villalba, 2013).

Finally, an exclusive focus on indigeneity risks neglecting gender dimensions as well as black movements. When the indigenous is posited as being the 'true' subaltern, there is an erasure of other racial structures and an implicit creation of hierarchies of struggles between black and indigenous people. The idea of 'nativeness' is also quite problematic and exclusive of black populations who were brought through slave trade and do not technically qualify as 'native' in quite the same way indigenous populations do (Rahier, 2012). Thus, in Latin American studies, the subaltern is very often romanticised and

presented as a ‘pre-modern’ subject, erasing the intersections of gender, race and class in a colonial and neoliberal economy, as well as the social and economic changes that took place throughout centuries and in the contemporary period more specifically.

Spivak has insisted on the erasure of the subaltern as a woman in the post-colonial context. She writes: “Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways” (Spivak, 1993a, p. 90), explicitly bringing gender and race into focus. In this perspective, the ‘Third World woman’ would symbolise the ultimate subaltern. Although Spivak’s work has been recognised as a major contribution by subaltern studies scholars (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 2010), her approach remains quite unique in the field. Post-colonial feminists (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mahmood, 2005; Mohanty, 2003b; Narayan, 1997) have extensively written on the production of the ‘Third World woman’ as a passive victim of her own culture, in need to be saved by the more advanced western feminists. They have demonstrated how this particular process of “discursive colonisation” (Mohanty, 1988) silences women’s struggles and deprives them of agency, while reinforcing the hierarchy between the North and the South. However, this literature reproduces to a certain extent the binary division between the ‘Third World’ and the ‘West’, presenting these entities as homogenous and geographically fixed (Bartolovich & Lazarus, 2002; Hall, 1996).

Besides, women in ‘Third World’ or post-colonial countries can be part of the national elite and perpetuate forms of discrimination themselves. Typically in Brazil, the employers of domestic workers are usually white upper-class women. ‘Third World woman’ can then be understood as a political and epistemological position (Ali, 2007), and as a place from which the oppressed and colonised women speak. But this similarly seems to erase dynamics of power in national contexts by assuming that all ‘Third World women’ are oppressed. Some scholars have thus preferred the term ‘post-colonial’, but as suggested by Ali (2007), it is often used to signify ‘race’ rather than the location in a former colony. I choose to use the term ‘black women’ to insist on racial inequalities, and I will avoid the term ‘Third World’ to refer to Brazil (which is the 7th largest world economy) or Latin America as I think it does reproduce the binary division between ‘developed’ and ‘non-developed’ countries.

To move away from the dichotomy West/Third World while recognising the impact of colonial relations, I use the coloniality of power framework as developed by the

sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2000, 2007). This framework helps linking the intersection of oppressions to the colonial economy, and avoids homogenising discourses on the 'Third World' by stressing the complexity of intra-national colonial relations. Quijano (2000, 2007) argues that globalisation and modernity are marked by the 'discovery' – a term that is extensively challenged by Mignolo (2005) – of Latin America and the organisation on a global scale of slave trade. This founding moment is accompanied by the creation of the concept of race as an organisational principle. Coloniality of power, a structure that survives formal decolonisation, can be characterized as "the systematic classification of the world's populations around the idea of race" (Quijano, 2000, p. 535). In Latin America, it creates a racial division of labour in which white colonisers possess the means of production while black and indigenous people, descendent of slaves, must sell their labour power.

However, Quijano emphasises race over gender, often neglecting the intersection of both. He even claims that gender has more biological foundations than race does, and that "race and racism are situated, more than any other element of modern capitalist power relations" at the juncture of the western dualism body/spirit (Quijano, 2007, p. 53). Lugones (2010) and Gutiérrez-Rodriguez (2013) propose to integrate gender within the concept of coloniality of power to better understand the particular situation of black women and women from post-colonial countries. Lugones (2010, p. 747) calls the analysis of "racialized, capitalist, gender oppression" the "coloniality of gender". She suggests that black and chicana women have been subalternised through the combined effect of gender, race and class. Therefore, to define a woman as a 'subaltern' we need all these elements combined together; a white professional woman from a post-colonial country, such as an employer of domestic workers in Brazil, would not in this sense be considered as subaltern.

Thus, taking all these elements together, I argue that domestic workers in Brazil are a subaltern class. They do not correspond to the image of the 'pre-modern' or 'native' indigenous; they are mostly situated in urban centres, in their majority Afro-descendants, and inserted into modes of labour and production/reproduction that are quite distinct from those of peasants or indigenous communities. Yet, their intersectional situation of oppression and marginalisation makes them a subaltern class according to all the different criteria identified in this section. Indeed, Brazilian domestic workers are a large group of poor black women in a post-colonial country,

exploited in the system of production and socially marginalised.[54] This particular gendered and raced division of labour is inscribed in the enduring coloniality of power and capitalist forms of exploitation. This does not mean that they are the only subaltern group, or that they will always be subalterns. Taking a Gramscian perspective, I understand subalternity as something that can be transformed, and understand subalterns as being able to organise and improve their material conditions of existence without necessarily becoming part of the hegemony. The concept of subalternity, defined here as a particular position of marginalisation and exploitation, enables me to analyse the simultaneous effects of gender, race and class within a post-colonial and capitalist economy while also analysing how subalternity shapes domestic workers' collective identities, political opportunities and resources for mobilisations.

III/ Brazilian domestic workers as paradoxical political subjects

So how did Brazilian domestic workers get organised? How did they create trade unions and gain new rights in a context of centuries-long devaluation of their labour? In this section, I will bring together subaltern and social movements studies to explain how this large group of subalterns got organised and sustained their mobilisation for decades. On the one hand, social movements studies provide the tools to analyse processes of mobilisations and movements' possibilities of success or failure. But this scholarship often neglects the coloniality of power and the intersectionality of actors' oppression, as well as the effects these two elements have on collective action. On the other hand, works on subaltern mobilisations have evolved separately from social movements and industrial relations literatures, sometimes missing their insights on organised collective action. While subaltern studies are more attentive to the colonial structure, they tend to consider the subaltern as either a revolutionary agent or as being outside of organised political action, thus overlooking an analysis of the conditions under which they can, and do, organise. And because domestic workers do not match the definition of the subaltern as a 'pre-modern' or indigenous subject, their modes of political action also require a slightly different theoretical perspective.

[54] Although 40% of domestic workers are white according to 2013 national data, historically, domestic labour has been strongly associated with black women and the legacy of slavery, as discussed in chapter II, and this is still present in cultural and popular representations. Black domestic workers are also over-represented in my sample, as will be detailed in the methodology (chapter IV), therefore, the focus of this thesis is almost exclusively the experience of black domestic workers. The possible political fragmentations resulting from racial divisions amongst domestic workers are mentioned in chapter VI, but at this point, I do not have enough data to discuss this aspect extensively.

The first sub-section engages with the literature on the so-called 'non-standard' workers, and discusses to what extent they really are harder to organise. I then review the scholarship on subaltern mobilisations to show how it can partially address the invisibility of the domestic workers' movement, and select the elements that can help analysing this particular form of politics. Finally, bringing the insights of these two strands of literature together, I explain the paradox of domestic workers' politics.

1) Organising 'non-standard' workers

Social movements, and more broadly what McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001), call "contentious politics", are defined as actions that interrupt the normal course of political activities. They differ from, and disrupt, routine politics such as elections, legislative activity, or everyday governmental decision-making. Tarrow (1998, p. 4) defines social movements as: "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities". There are four major strands within mainstream social movements theories, that correspond to four different explanatory variables:

- resource mobilisation theories explain the emergence of social movements by their rational calculation in terms of gain and loss, and what resources they have at their disposition to form a movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1973; Olson, 1965);
- political opportunities analyses focus on the structure; they look at what enables or constrains social movements from the outside, like the openness of the political regime or the level of repression (McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978);
- collective action frame, or framing analysis, builds on the cultural and constructivist turn arguing that the key element is not what the objective structures or resources are but rather how actors perceive and interpret them (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1984; Snow & Benford, 1988, 2000);
- and finally, the repertoires of contention approach focuses on the political processes and tries to explain how movements organise by looking at the different forms of action they can use (Tilly, 1995, 1997, 2006).

McAdam et al. (2001) proposed to shift from this 'checklist of variables' to a more relational approach that emphasises the processes and mechanisms of contentious politics. They argue that in most studies it is hard to identify which of these four dimensions influences the others and propose to focus instead on "significant recurrent mechanisms and processes as well as principles of variation" (p. 33) to understand the emergence, successes and failures of collective action. The authors intend to reconceive the relationship between the agent and the structure as a more active one, locating the source of change in individuals' actions while taking into account the social structures and processes they are part of. While I will focus more specifically on the scholarship addressing the organisation of the 'non-organisable', I will refer to the notions of repertoires, framing, and political opportunities throughout the empirical chapters. I argue that subalternity shapes these different dimensions of collective action; I show how the domestic workers' unions have constructed a collective identity, examine their repertoires of contention ranging from grassroots forms of sociability to state lobby and advocacy, and discuss their opening political opportunities at the national level with the election of the PT and at the international level with the pro-active role of the ILO on issues of decent work.

As regards to the literature on non-organisable groups, there have been growing discussions on 'non-standard' workers in the past decade, linked to debates on the emergence of new forms of labour and declining trade unionism (T. Brass, 2015; Kalleberg, 2009; Lazar, 2017b; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009; Mosoetsa, Stillerman, & Tilly, 2016; Prosser, 2015; Standing, 2011). Industrial relations scholars in particular have discussed the representation, or lack thereof, of precarious and part-time workers, or what is commonly referred to as 'non-standard' workers. These studies show a decline in unions' membership, which is interlinked to the decline of their core industrial membership combined with the increase of precarious, part-time and outsourced workers (Faniel, 2012; Martínez Lucio, Marino, & Connolly, 2017).

These 'non-standard' workers are often characterised as harder to reach and organise; indeed, their insecure contracts make them more risk-averse, the lack of direct link with an employer when workers are outsourced complicates the identification of a clear source of power, and their fragmentation across different working places makes them more "cost intensive" to organise for trade unions (Bonner & Spooner, 2011; Keune, 2013; TUC, 2017; Vandaele & Leschke, 2010). Amongst precarious and 'non-standard'

workers, domestic workers seem to be even further removed from representation; they work in private homes, do reproductive labour, and are mostly informal workers. As a result, they are said to be harder to reach, and usually remain completely excluded from labour representation (ILO, 2009, 2013; P. Smith, 2000).

The decreasing capacity of trade unions to represent workers is often associated with processes of neoliberalisation, which increase the casualisation of workers, the flexibility of the labour market, and the spread of the production chain over different sites and countries (Assunção, 2013; Bandy, 2004; Barchiesi, 2010; Brophy, 2006; Hale & Opondo, 2005; Lopez, 2005; Sutcliffe, 2012). The combination of these factors creates new barriers to collective action, and makes it more risky for workers to organise in the absence of proper contracts or labour regulations. Thus, some have claimed that traditional unions are no longer appropriate to represent new forms of labour in the neoliberal economy (Anner, 2007; Theron, 2010; Vandenberg, 2006).

Others have focused instead on non-traditional forms of organising. J. Collins (2006) and Zugman (2003) for instance, show how women in highly precarious and unstable sectors organise outside of the workplace, in their neighbourhood or local communities. By setting-up local networks of care and solidarity they call attention to the 'private' (childcare, pregnancy, health) and bodily aspects of labour. Similarly, some studies explore the diverse forms of autonomous and self-organised politics practiced by workers outside of trade unions (Brooks, 2002; Murgia & Selmi, 2012; Wright, 2004). They have shown how precarious workers and women can lead negotiations with employers or public authorities outside of traditional labour organisations, securing access to healthcare or unemployment support funds.

But for most scholars, the growing proportion of precarious workers shows the need for trade unions' renewal more than the end of trade unionism, and reveals the necessity for labour organisations to include more consistently migrant, casual, and women workers in their revitalisation strategies (Alberti, Holgate, & Tapia, 2013; Brickner, 2010, 2013; Hardy, 2010; Holgate, 2015; Leiva, 2012). Processes of unions' diversification in their recruitment and mobilisation strategies are often characterised as either "community unionism" or "social movement unionism", to capture the fact that unions are expanding their actions and demands beyond the workplace and taking more account of other dimensions of workers' lives (Brickner, 2013; Engeman, 2015; Fairbrother, 2008;

Holgate, 2015; Lazar, 2017b; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Murray, 2017). Typically in the UK and US contexts, studies have shown how established trade unions formed alliances with migrant and community-based associations in order to organise precarious migrant workers (Alberti, 2014; Alberti et al., 2013; Chun, 2016b; Engeman, 2015; Holgate, 2015; Yu, 2014). While unions bring material resources and bargaining power, community-based associations possess the language and cultural resources to create collective identities based on other dimensions than class.

Overall, these studies focus on actions driven by established trade unions and their strategies to organise 'non-standard' workers. While they are extremely valuable in showing that it is possible to organise those deemed non-organisable, they sometimes presuppose that migrant or 'non-traditional' workers would be more driven by identity politics than class-based politics, and that they are to be found in community-based associations rather than in trade unions. Although this has been empirically contradicted, for instance by recent outsourced cleaners' movements in the UK (Moyer-Lee & Chango Lopez, 2017),[55] most scholarship focuses on how established unions can organise 'non-standard' workers rather than considering what these workers do, and how they organise themselves. Yet, in Brazil, domestic workers did not get organised at the initiative of big established unions; they created their own local associations, which they transformed into autonomous unions in 1988, and then decided to join the CUT in 1997 in order to be more powerful. Therefore, I propose to ask how 'non-standard' workers have been organising themselves rather than how they can be organised by more established groups. While these two dimensions can intersect, my main focus is what domestic workers do, and what forms of politics and trade unionism they have developed.

Finally, these debates tend to assume that precarity is a new phenomenon, associated with contemporary neoliberal reforms that pose new challenges to trade unions (Kalleberg, 2009; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Standing, 2011, 2014). Precarious work is opposed to 'standard work', usually understood as industrial, male-dominated, permanent work. However, 'standard work' is not the standard everywhere, and for an important segment of the population precarity has always been the norm (Braga, 2016;

[55] On the cleaners' movement at the LSE, see for instance: Marotta, A. and Hughes, L. (2018), "Rebellion at the LSE: a cleaning sector inquiry", in *Notes From Below*, published on 09/02/2018: http://notesfrombelow.org/article/rebellion-lse-cleaning-sector-inquiry

Mosoetsa et al., 2016). In particular, if we look at female-dominated activities, such as care and domestic work, insecurity and low wages are the standard. Domestic work is embedded in a historical gender and racial division of labour which enables some to access good secure jobs while outsourcing the burden of social reproduction to the precarious others (Duffy, 2007; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Glenn, 1992, 2002). The very existence of male protected industrial jobs has only been possible through a gender and racial division of labour wherein some were protected while others were precarious or unpaid (Fraser, 2016). Thus, conventional approaches to 'non-standard' workers' organising cannot fully account for domestic workers' mobilisations; they tend to neglect the coloniality of labour intrinsic to domestic work and the intersectional dimension of domestic workers' oppression that has made them a subaltern group. Their subalternity shapes, in turn, their collective identities, political opportunities and repertoires of contention.

2) How does the subaltern speak?

Subaltern studies partially responds to this gap by showing that the subaltern can get organised across varied contexts and historical moments, but they tend to limit subalterns' repertoires of contention by presenting them as either infra-political and fragmented subjects outside of organised collective action, or as oppositional agencies and essentially revolutionary subjects mobilising against modernity, development, and neoliberalism. As argued by Nilsen and Roy (2015), subalterns are usually conceived as either an entirely voluntary agency or as always subsumed under the power of dominant discourses, which makes it hard to investigate the forms of political action located in between. Subalterns become then defined by their forms of mobilisation rather than by an observable material condition, and although this thesis is interested in subalterns' forms of organising, we must still consider the possibility that they cannot or do not organise. Thus, taking a social movements perspective, we can ask under what circumstances subalterns do mobilise, and what makes it possible for them to enter collective action.

An important strand of literature considers the subaltern to be in opposition to the state, and necessarily challenging neoliberalism, (Asher, 2013; T. Brass, 2000; Motta, 2009; Motta & Nilsen, 2011). In the context of Latin America, the subaltern is often associated with indigenous movements, and mobilisations against extractivism or

neoliberal developmentalism (N. Harvey, 2015; López & Vértiz, 2015; Rodríguez, 2009). Similarly, in South Asia, the subaltern tends to be equated to Dalit or Adivasi groups (Chemmencheri, 2015; Nilsen, 2012; Steur, 2011; Svensson, 2014), thereby positing the state a source of oppression and making the subaltern by essence an "insurgent citizenship" (Nilsen, 2015). Sharma (2011) has argued for instance that subaltern's agency is expressed against the idea of the liberal individual and modernity, while for I. Roy (2016) subalterns' notion of equality is a popular utopia opposed to that imposed by the state.

Some studies have used the category of subaltern in the context of revolutionary movements in the Middle East (De Smet, 2013; Ismail, 2013; Maghraoui, 2011; Munif, 2013). These studies use a Gramscian analysis of hegemony and subalterntiy, and understand the subaltern as being equivalent to the 'popular' or the 'poor'. Munif (2013) and De Smet (2013) for instance, attribute the eruption of the revolution in Egypt to the failure of the preceding regime to maintain its hegemony over the population, and the subalterns in particular. In these case studies, the subaltern is broadly defined as the people who were not in power and who are not the ruling class. Ismail (2013) provides a more nuanced approach to subaltern politics by arguing that being a subaltern does not in itself lead to being a revolutionary subject. He shows that some subaltern groups in Damascus were pro-regime and acted as counter-revolutionary forces. As argued elsewhere by Mahmood (2005), although she does not directly engage with the notion of subaltern, we should not presume that the marginalised are necessarily liberal or progressive, or even willing to 'resist'.

While these perspectives show that the subalterns can speak, and accord them a political agency, they often tend to produce a romanticised view of the subaltern as being by essence anti-neoliberal and anti-establishment. The high investment in subalterns' revolutionary agency leads to defining the subalterns by their propensity for revolutionary action rather than by their material conditions, neglecting an analysis of other existing subaltern repertoires of actions. What if the subaltern is not against the state, but rather wants its recognition and uses the 'modern' language of rights? Are they not subalterns then? In Brazil, domestic workers do not oppose modern rights frameworks, on the contrary, they claim the right to be part of it, and in order to be heard, they have pressed their claims directly to the PT governments through institutionalised forms of politics.

On the other side of subaltern studies, some scholars consider the subalterns not as a revolutionary subjects but rather as 'infra-political' or 'pre-modern' subjects, located outside of organised collective action. These approaches tend to explain subalterns' ability to mobilise by the recourse to non-traditional politics, echoing to a certain extent industrial relations' approach to 'non-standard' workers. Scott (1985, 2013) has argued that subalterns' insurgency is 'infra' or 'pre-political', as they are more preoccupied with immediate survival than class exploitation. These forms of insurgency manifest themselves into local, micro, and individual actions, but not through an articulated and organised movement against the elite. Following this line of thought, many authors have looked at everyday forms of resistance and small acts of insurgency in South Asia, the Middle East and Latin America (Bayat, 2000; Bishara, 2015; Motta, 2009; Pogodda & Richmond, 2015; A. Roy, 2011; Sharma, 2011). In this strand of literature, the subalterns are a not a unified class with organised movements but rather a collection of small scale actions directed towards claiming a particular space, or access to a particular resource (Bayat, 2000).

If these studies help politicising micro-level actions, they seem nonetheless to recreate a dichotomy between 'big' and 'small' politics, excluding subalterns from the political realm. In many ways, they reproduce conventional approaches to 'non-standard' workers in which migrant, women, and precarious workers are confined to community-based associations rather than class-based trade unionism. Chatterjee (2004) made a slightly different intervention by disconnecting politics from citizenship. In this framework, subalterns are conceived as agents of change who make demands on the state, but they do not have access to civil society and citizenship. This work affirms the political status of the subaltern, and pays attention to its relationship with the state, but it has been criticised for reproducing the conventional binaries elite/subaltern and modern/traditional (Whitehead, 2015). Besides, it seems inapplicable to the Brazilian context where domestic workers got organised into trade unions and gained new rights through a constitutional reform.

Chandra (2015) has proposed to rethink the concept of subaltern resistance as a reworking of power relations in a more favourable or emancipatory direction. Trying to improve living conditions is not necessarily revolutionary in itself, but neither is it 'infra-political'. Chandra further identifies two new developments in the study of

subaltern mobilisations: rightful resistance and lawfare. Rightful resistance is defined as "a form of popular contention that operates near the boundary of authorized channels" (O'Brien, 2006, p. 2), while lawfare is the "use of legal means for political and economic ends" (J. L. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009, p. 26). They both characterize forms of resistance that operate within the structures of power, and make a strategic use of dominant rhetoric and discourses. While these frameworks are helpful in rethinking the relations between the state and the subaltern in a more nuanced way, they still do not account for possibilities of cooperation between the state and subaltern groups. Yet, the state is the target of many subaltern movements as it holds the power to define norms and adopt laws that guarantee subalterns' rights. Therefore, we must conceive of instances where their relationship is not antagonistic but can be more institutionalised and cooperative, or even co-opted. Ultimately, the goal of subalterns' movements is to improve their conditions, and as claimed by Spivak (1999, p. 65):

> When a line of communication is established between a member of subaltern groups and the circuits of citizenship or institutionality, the subaltern has been inserted into the long road to hegemony. Unless we want to be romantic purists or primitivists about 'preserving subalternity' – a contradiction in terms – this is absolutely to be desired.

Taking a Gramscian perspective, I argue that it is possible for the subalterns to get organised and to enter into a relationship with the state or the ruling class, without necessarily ceasing to be subaltern; only a complete transformation of the structures of power can end their subalternity. However, I agree with Spivak that we should not want to be preserving subalternity, and in fact, the aim of subalterns' movements is precisely to do the opposite. Thus, subalterns are not automatically an "oppositional agency" (Nilsen & Roy, 2015); they are embedded within the institutions and norms that reproduce hegemony, and as argued by Gramsci, unless there is a revolution, they cannot reach integral autonomy. Nonetheless, there are diverse possibilities to contest within the boundaries of the state, or to create forms of cooperation with the state, although, for Gramsci, any compromise made within existing structures of power will necessarily be done in the interest of the ruling class.[56] The case of Brazilian domestic

[56] The ruling class is not understood here as a homogenous entity, on the contrary, the alliances between domestic workers and the PT governments shows the plurality of actors and interests, including within the state. However, I draw a distinction between the subalterns – those who are marginalised, and the ruling class or elite – those who possess the political and economic power. And even though the domestic workers interviewed recognised the existence of "good employers", the class of the employers is very privileged economically (and racially), and is politically represented by quite conservative groups who opposed the 2015 legislation or the PT government more broadly.

workers shows that the subalterns can use a wide range of political actions, from local social events and identity building activities to institutional lobbying and judicial actions against their employers. They are neither entirely revolutionary nor totally silenced by the ruling the class, rather, they act in between those two extremes using their subalternity as a resource to mobilise, and transforming their conditions as they win more rights.

3) The paradoxes of subaltern politics

While domestic workers have been described as "notoriously hard to organise" (Cox, 2006, p. 125), they do organise, and have been doing so for decades in places as diverse as the USA (Bapat, 2014; Boris & Klein, 2006; Boris & Nadasen, 2008) South Africa (Ally, 2009), Indonesia (Jordhus-Lier, 2017), Bolivia and Argentina (Chaney & Castro, 1989; Rojas-García & Toledo González, 2017; Valenzuela & Rangel, 2008) and of particular interest to this thesis, in Brazil (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007b; Brites, 2013; Kofes, 2001; Pinto, 2015). Thus, it is not that domestic workers or the subaltern cannot organise, but rather that their mobilisations are unseen by conventional approaches to politics and trade unionism. Because their trade unions cannot work as traditional unions, they are deemed harder or impossible to organise, even though many empirical studies suggest otherwise. In Brazil, they use a mix of repertoires, including social and festive events, alliances with other movements, legal actions, institutional lobby and transnational networks.

Therefore, rather than being puzzled by domestic workers' ability to organise, and explain how their unlikely mobilisations took place, I propose to shift the perspective and consider instead subalternity as a potential resource for mobilisation. Indeed, I suggest we look at how subalternity is perceived, transformed and used by domestic workers to develop their own mobilising strategies. One element that comes across empirical accounts of domestic workers' mobilisations, although not always explicitly, is the centrality of intersectionality both as a frame of analysis but also as a potential resource for collective action (Bapat, 2014; J. Bernardino-Costa, 2014; Nadasen, 2015). I argue that in Brazil, gender, race and class vectors of oppression have positioned domestic workers as a subaltern group, but it has also simultaneously been key to their mobilisation. They were able, with local variations and to different degrees, to use their

shared experience of oppression to build a collective identity based on gender, race and class oppression, and to form alliances with women's, black's and workers' movements.

Within social movements and industrial relations scholarships, some authors have explicitly used the analytical frame of intersectionality to capture workers' multiple forms of exclusion and inequality (Alberti et al., 2013; Johansson & Śliwa, 2016; A. McBride, Hebson, & Holgate, 2015). Some have called to be more "intersectionally sensitive" in data collection and analysis (A. McBride et al., 2015), while others have suggested we examine how intersectionality can be used to build coalitions (Birdsell Bauer, 2017). Workers' multiple identities are usually addressed within the literature on social movement unionism and community unionism (Fairbrother, 2008; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009), which explore how trade unions build alliances with movements beyond the workplace. However, if these studies take into account the intersectional nature of 'non-standard' workers' oppression, to date, they have not consistently considered the impact of intersectionality on their ability to mobilise. 'Non-standard' workers experience multiple vectors of oppression, which are intrinsically linked to their labour condition. Race and gender cannot be separated out from class.

As a result, their identification with the 'worker', an identity usually corresponding to the white male industrial worker, and its associated labour-based organisations, is rendered more complex. In addition, for domestic workers, the workplace is also a private home, which challenges the assumed boundaries between workplace and community, public and private spaces. Consequently, domestic workers' modes of organising have always included the building of alliances with other social movements, and the reaching out to workers within their communities (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b; Boris & Nadasen, 2008, 2015; Cornwall et al., 2013; Fish, 2017). Thus, what seems to be a renewal strategy from established trade unions to reach out to precarious workers (Alberti, 2016; Birdsell Bauer & Cranford, 2016; Lazar, 2012, 2017b), has been a long-standing strategy for domestic workers. For most precarious or marginalised workers, class and other vectors of oppression cannot be conceptually split out, thereby rendering the distinction between the workplace and the community artificial (Alberti, 2016; Chun, 2016a). The case of the domestic workers' unions in Brazil shows that the more intersectional unions are in their discourse and practice, the stronger they can be. Indeed, intersectionality is a tool for them to recruit members, form broader alliances, and build a more cohesive collective identity.

Subalternity must, therefore, be understood both as a situation of oppression and as something that can be transformed, and because it is a material and lived condition, it shapes all four dimensions of contentious politics (resources, political opportunities, identities and repertoires). Resources that are available to domestic workers are scarcer; indeed, their unions are under-staffed and under-funded, and they have very low rates of unionisation. Their main material resource is their access to other organisations, which, in turn, leads to the consolidation of narrative resources and a consistent discourse on domestic work as valuable work. Their alliance with the state since the election of the PT in 2002 has also proven important in negotiating a new piece of legislation that extends basic labour rights to them. Furthermore, subalternity changes the analysis of political opportunities. Although many studies assume subaltern groups to be antagonist to the state, the election of a left-wing government in Brazil and the particular social policies implemented by it, such as *Bolsa Familia* or a black quotas in higher education, seem to open rather than close opportunities for subaltern groups. More specifically, the adoption in 2015 of a new legislation on domestic workers' rights makes them more visible in public debates and represents a concrete possibility for them to improve their working conditions.

As for collective identities, they are also produced by actors' material conditions and experience of oppression. However, I do not take identity as a given but rather as something that needs to be constantly constructed and reworked in order to produce identification with the movement (Cho et al., 2013; Lazar, 2017a; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; C. Rodrigues & Prado, 2013). The fact that the FENATRAD insists on their lineage with the anti-slavery movement for instance reflects their close relationship with black movements, and is a pragmatic way to secure their support. Domestic workers' common experience of subalternity leads to the formation of a "critical community of struggle" (Chun, 2016a), which can then be leveraged for collective action. Finally, subalternity has an impact on domestic workers' repertoires of contention. As explained in chapter II, strike or conventional forms of industrial action are out of reach for domestic workers. As a result, they have had to develop their own modes of recruitment and identity building through social and cultural events, establish multi-level alliances at the national and international level, and use judicial mechanisms of labour disputes to make their rights effective.

Quite crucially, domestic workers have been able to use subalternity and their perceived vulnerability as a resource; because they are considered to be the "poorest of the poor" (Fish, 2017), they can no longer be avoided by governments and international organisations that have a social justice agenda. However, their construction as vulnerable subjects has led to paternalist modes of recognition, and has, to a certain extent, reduced their possibility to form strong autonomous movements (Ally, 2009). Because of this contradictory position, domestic workers are "hybrid workers"; they claim access to equal labour rights and demand recognition as proper workers, yet, they also need to be more vulnerable – and therefore not proper workers – to justify state interventions (Boris & Klein, 2012; Fish, 2017). Building on these insights, I argue that domestic workers are paradoxical political subjects: while their subalternity has made them second-class citizens, it has also been key to their mobilisations and legislative victory. And while they successfully used their subalternity to mobilise, they have also partially transformed it in the process of gaining new rights and political recognition, which has in turn affected their forms of organising.

Conclusion

This chapter has started with a review of feminist literature on domestic work, which explains its social devaluation and lack of recognition as proper work. Indeed, because it is performed in the private sphere, highly gendered and racialised, and associated with multiple forms of inequalities, domestic work has remained the 'non-work' exemplified, deemed valueless and unproductive. The combination of the different gender, race and class vectors of oppression characterising domestic work, has then led me to define Brazilian domestic workers as a subaltern class, thus providing a material and located definition of subalternity. I suggest that subalternity must be understood as an observable condition, and one that can be transformed through collective action. Finally, through a discussion of subaltern and 'non-standard' workers' mobilisations, I have demonstrated how subalternity shapes collective action, and proposed a framework to analyse the domestic workers' movement in Brazil. In particular, I argue that Brazilian domestic workers are paradoxical political subjects, and will demonstrate that in details in the empirical chapters. But before turning to the empirical discussion, I first present my methodology and the process of data collection and analysis.

Chapter IV/ A qualitative feminist methodology

This chapter presents my methodology, and the 'behind the scenes' of the research. It discusses the process of data collection and analysis, the fieldwork, and my position within and beyond the field. The methodology is consistent with the overall theoretical framework and the aims of the research, and it attempts to follow the guiding principles of a feminist epistemology and ethics. This thesis is conceived as a tool to produce alternative knowledge and challenge dominant structures of power, and in particular here, the coloniality of the Brazilian state and its associated gendered and raced division of labour. I do so by making more visible the history of domestic workers' struggles for labour rights, and by resituating their agency within the study of social movements and industrial relations.

This can only be partially done, and I do not pretend to have successfully retrieved an 'authentic' subaltern voice from the archive. As Spivak (1988b) rightly argues, the researcher's ability – or inability – to hear and listen is limited by her own location within structures of power. I try to give an account of those dynamics in this chapter, and to explain how they shape the process of data collection and analysis. However, considering the warnings against the existence of a readily available subaltern subject that would be transparent to the researcher, I argue that it is possible to work *with* the subalterns and to (imperfectly) represent some of their struggles. Through a commitment to reciprocity, and by considering domestic workers' voices and experiences as sources of valid knowledge, I have been able to access their discourses about labour, rights, and domestic work. The empirical chapters aim to give the best possible account of those knowledges.

This research project is qualitative, and I used ethnographic methods to learn from organised domestic workers, understand their perceptions of what they do, and try to see and feel with them the daily life of a trade unionist domestic worker. By this I do not claim that I have stopped being a white researcher from the LSE, nor that I can ever fully comprehend what it is like to be a domestic worker in Brazil, but I have subjected myself, "[my] own body and personality, to the set of contingencies that play upon [them]" (Goffman, 1988, p. 125), by immersing myself into their realities and every day activities.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I discuss to what extent this research can be considered as feminist research, and address in particular questions of epistemology and location (or dislocation). Then, I explain the process of data collection and analysis, and consider the challenges linked to ethnographic research. The last section presents my attempts to build reciprocity with participants and to live up to feminist ethical standards.

I/ Doing feminist research?

Is there a feminist way of doing research, and if so, what are its criteria? This section identifies some common elements of what can constitute a feminist methodology, and highlights my own challenges and contradictions in trying to apply them. I will first discuss the foundations of a feminist epistemology, and then explore my own locations and dislocations within the research process.

1) A feminist epistemology

Maria Mies (1983) proposes seven methodological guidelines for feminist research: the 'value-free' research must be replaced by conscious partiality; the top-down relationship between the researcher and the researched must be replaced by a view from below and be "thought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited and oppressed groups" (p. 123); the "contemplative, uninvolved" research must be replaced by an active participation into the struggles of the group researched (p. 124); the starting point of the research is a willingness to change the status quo; the research process must become a process of "conscientisation" (p. 125); its aim must be to make visible a history of women; and finally, to collectivise women's experiences in order to create a women's consciousness in the same way workers' movements have created a class consciousness.

While Mies provides a basis to establish feminist criteria, and in doing so reveals the existing problems with mainstream research methods, some of her claims can be debated. Indeed, she assumes the existence of a "women's consciousness", that can serve as a powerful basis for researching the oppressed and tackle dominant structures of power. However, as many scholars have demonstrated, not all women are oppressed

in the same way, and there is no universal women's consciousness (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1982; Hill Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984; Mahmood, 2005; Mohanty, 2003a). The second potential problem with Mies' prescriptive approach, is regarding the view from below. Although I attempt to make the views of the subaltern more visible in this research, and agree that some particular questions can only be asked from the location of the marginalised, I disagree that this is the only or the best way to understand the social world. In fact, there have been very interesting works on elite groups and processes of domination that explain how social hierarchies are reproduced, including for instance the work of Pierre Bourdieu. However, I agree with Mies that the relationship between the researcher and the researched should tend to be reciprocal rather than hierarchical.

As a consequence, it is problematic to claim that "most empirical research on women has concentrated so far on the study of superficial or surface phenomena" (who decides what is superficial?), and that the goal of a feminist research is to reveal "women's true consciousness" (Mies, 1983, p. 125). According to Mies, this "true consciousness" is only visible to women in moments of crisis or ruptures with normal life, and the research, understood as a process of conscientisation, serves to reveal to women their own oppression. Again, this assumes a universal and homogenous women's consciousness, but also, in contradiction with the claim to reciprocity, Mies proposes that the researcher enlightens the researched about her true conditions of oppression. I find that it is exactly the reverse that happened to me, and the domestic workers I spent time with are the ones who informed me and provided me with an alternative discourse on labour and what counts as work. I see my role more as being attentive to their "folk theory" and translating it back into "academic theory" (Burawoy, 2009), rather than one of conscientising them.

Some of Mies' guiding criteria remain nonetheless relevant, and can be found with a different formulation in other works. Bhavhani (1993) for instance, proposes that a feminist methodology should avoid reproducing dominant representations of the world, be attentive to the micro-political context of research, and take into account difference and the intersectional position of actors. Here we find again the idea of feminist research as serving the interests of the dominated and/or as challenging the status quo. Harding (1995), Hill Collins (2000) and Hartsock (1988) have also argued that feminist research should be done from the point of view of the marginalised, who are better

placed to analyse dominant structures of power as they have to live through them every day. Although the idea of "epistemic privilege" assumes an authentic voice or truth that would emanate from the subaltern (Code, 2014), it does nonetheless rightly insist on the importance of knowing from which place the knower is speaking. Thus, feminist standpoint theorists have contributed in making visible the power relations at stake in the process of knowledge production.

Quite crucially, feminist scholars have shown that who the knower is has an impact on the type of knowledge that is produced, and as consequence, knowledge can only ever be partial and situated (Code, 2014; Haraway, 1988; Madhok & Evans, 2014). Feminist research, then, should unmask the "epistemic impact" of the knower (Madhok & Evans, 2014, p. 2), in order to give a more accurate account of the inevitable bias in the research process. Post-colonial feminist authors have also highlighted the importance of recognising one's own place within the structures of power, and being attentive to how our position might recreate some assumptions about, or hierarchical relationships with, those about whom we are doing research (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1988a). Having been trained and educated in European universities, I carry with me certain assumptions. The notion of 'non-standard' worker for instance, quite widely used in industrial relations, reproduces the hierarchical distinction between who is or is not a 'worker'. Besides, the 'non-standard' is only non-standard in a particular location – informality is the norm in Latin America – and it assumes a male-centric point of view: it does not take into account the paid or unpaid domestic labour done by women which has been the very condition to sustain 'standard' male industrial employment. As explained in chapter II, definitions of the worker based on the colonial legacy in Brazil have been at the core of the social, political and legal exclusion of domestic workers.

Thus, while I work through the concept of 'non-standard' worker, it is also crucial to question this concept, and to try to decolonise theory in order to produce research that is more responsive to subalterns' voices and interests. I do not claim to successfully and entirely decolonise thinking in my thesis, but inscribe myself in this endeavour – sometimes referred to as the "decolonial turn" in Latin America (Ballestrin, 2013; Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007), building on the work of authors such as Maria Lugones (2010), Walter Mignolo (2011), and Aníbal Quijano (2000, 2007). I understand decoloniality as an attempt to challenge colonial categories and epistemologies, for instance here, the idea of work and the worker. A decolonised

conception of labour, rooted in the experience and knowledge of domestic workers, could lead to full equality of rights between domestic workers and other workers.

This thesis is one instrument to make Brazilian domestic workers' knowledge more visible, and to make it travel to the global North. By doing so, I hope to challenge some dominant assumptions about the possibilities for the subalterns to get organised. I argue that domestic workers can be seen as a model for other groups, particularly in a context of declining unionism in Europe, and in light of the visible difficulties for established trade unions to organise the 'non-standard' workers. I do not imply that there is a 'truth' to be extracted from the subalterns, but I conceive domestic workers' epistemic location as one place from which to analyse the coloniality of power in Brazil, contest its gendered and raced forms of oppression, and rethink labour and politics. This could have been done from an elite location; the experience of white rich employers would tell us a lot about structures of power. But I have decided instead to do it from a subaltern location, and to make domestic workers' struggles more visible. I want to highlight their place in labour history, and challenge the claims that they would be unable to or impossible to organise. I argue instead that domestic workers have been unseen by dominant conceptions of what is political, who is a worker, and what is a trade union. Ultimately, my thesis aims to change these analytical categories and recognise domestic workers as political subjects, and workers, in their own right.

2) Locations and dislocations

I now try to analyse my own location, or as written by Rich (1986, p. 212), my place "on the map" and in "history", in order to show how this has an impact on the research process. The first aspect I should discuss is my whiteness. My parents are white Brazilian, born in Brazil but descendants of white Europeans. My mother's family came from Italy, while my father's family came from Germany on his mother's side, and from Uruguay – but of Italian descent (Acciari is an Italian name) – on his father's side. Two of my grandparents were born in the state of Rio de Janeiro in the 1920s: my mother's father (Niterói), and my father's mother (Petrópolis). As far as I know, my German great-grandfather was a diplomat who worked in Brazil in the 1920s (when my grandmother was born), and then had to hide during the war. He took his family to Switzerland to escape the Nazi regime, and came back to Brazil after the war. There, my grandmother met her Uruguayan husband, Luis Acciari. On the Italian side, my

ancestors were probably brought to Brazil at the time the government was subsiding the immigration of white European workers in order to 'whiten' the population. My mother's father was born near Rio de Janeiro, but he grew up in Italy and only came back permanently in 1948, as he and my grandmother had lost their homes and families during the war. Being born in Brazil, he had a Brazilian passport, so they could easily migrate back.

Both my parents were born in the state of São Paulo. Their whiteness afforded them some privileges in the Brazilian context, but their class situation was never fixed. Both families were deeply destabilized by the military regime; my *Nonno* got arrested on suspicions of being a communist, and my father's brother, Alberto Acciari, was exiled to Spain in the early 1970s for being involved in the student movement. In 1982, aged 23, my parents did the reverse journey and went back to Europe, more specifically to France, where my aunt's communist husband had a small workshop. There, they were never privileged in terms of class; they did not have a degree, did not speak French at the time, and had a precarious citizenship status. They worked in low-paid jobs, including cleaning and being a nanny. But still, we are and remain white – in fact I was one of the few white children in primary school – and our class condition was mostly linked to migration. The poverty threshold in France is below €700 of income per month, which is already three or four times the Brazilian minimum wage.

France, in the *banlieue* of Seine-Saint-Denis, is where I was born. However, because both my parents are foreigners, I was not allowed to be French until the age of 13, and I grew up with an identity card that said: "minor born in France to foreign parents". I was never really French enough, although this was my home, yet, had never lived in Brazil, although this was my official nationality. To make things worse, I moved to the UK in 2012, being now a migrant myself, but a quite privileged one; white, with a European passport (although that particular privilege is being taken away), and studying at the LSE. When asked where I am from, I never know how to answer. London? The *banlieue* of Paris? São Paulo? Maybe Italy, after all? As much as I have enjoyed working and studying in London, I have also felt fragmented, between now not only two, but three countries, languages, cultures, and constantly varying class positions. My monthly ESRC scholarship of £1,300 just about affords me a decent living in London, yet, when I go to Brazil, the current exchange rate means that my purchasing power is multiplied by four. All these elements have an impact on the field: by Brazilian

standards, I am rich, and because I am white, I look rich. And in fact, I was often taken for an employer or a lawyer when I went to the unions, and was very visibly not a domestic worker.

Strangely enough, this insider/outsider position has been a positive element enabling me to be accepted in the field. My participants romanticized Europe and felt valued because I had come from that far away to talk to them, which reveals in many ways the colonial structures I carry with me. They asked me questions about France and the UK, terrorism, migration, some asked if I had ever met the Queen, and others wanted me to find them a job in Europe. Most of them had heard of the riots in the suburbs of Paris in 2005, and were intrigued to find out that this is where I am from. They probably imagined me in a much nicer neighbourhood. We had very interesting discussions about the different ways of life here and there, and I often argued that for low-paid migrant workers maybe Europe was not that promised *El Dorado*. Some dreamt about French perfumes and fancy wines, while others thought that my life in London was very sad, and could not understand why I was not living with my mother if I was not married yet. They were also proud to know that their stories would be told back in Europe, and several times they said: "You have to write this down, and tell everyone what it's like for us."

However, I am also Brazilian enough to share their language and culture, to know the spaces they circulate in, and be integrated into their everyday activities. Being white but not from Brazil distanced me slightly from some power relations; I am not and never was an employer, even though I look like one. My trajectory seemed very confusing to them, as it is for me I guess, but they all liked my family's history. The fact that my parents migrated because of the military regime put me immediately on the 'right side' of history, creating genuine complicities between us during the period of the coup in 2016. Quite importantly, and I will discuss this in more detail in the last section, the fact that I came from a prestigious European university meant that they invested me with a lot of power and a great responsibility. They trusted me with their stories, and expected that in return I could effect some change.

The fact that I am a woman, and have worked as a nanny in France and in the UK, also helped me get integrated and accepted into domestic workers' circles. I could relate to some of their stories, although being an occasional nanny in Europe is obviously

completely different from my participants' experiences, but some common characteristics appeared nonetheless. For instance, the fact that employers expected me to do everything in the house, the fact that I could not always eat the same food that I was preparing for their children, and all the emotional contradictions that we go through when taking care of people. Being a woman also made a lot of intimate interactions possible, such as sleeping at my participants' houses, spending entire days walking around the city with them, going to the beauty salon together, being invited to family gatherings, and becoming their friend. I believe that many interviews would not have been possible without this intimate rapport, and probably many stories would have remained untold.

Finally, I should say a word about my own political trajectory and how I constructed this particular research question. I started university in Paris in 2006, a few months after a massive student movement against a labour reform that proposed to extend the probation period for people under 25 to two years. Galvanised by the victory, I immediately joined the main student union (*Union Nationale des Etudiants de France* - UNEF), and stayed involved with them throughout my five years at Sciences Po Paris. I became General Secretary, Vice-President, and President. In 2010, there was an important mobilisation against pension reform, and again, our union was at the forefront of the student movement. At this particular time, gender roles and inequalities appeared much more salient to me within the movement. It was always the men who spoke at the assemblies, who took on the more political tasks, while us women were confined to minute-taking or proof-reading pamphlets. I think this is when I became a feminist, if this is something we can become.

I wrote my master's dissertation on women's spaces and feminist discourses inside the Brazilian CUT, discussing things that I was experiencing myself in my own union: gender division of the political labour; gendered expectations and roles inside the movement; the contradictions between a left-wing emancipatory discourse and the reproduction of patriarchal attitudes; and the difficulties for women to reconcile a private and a public life. Most women leaders I interviewed for my dissertation talked about intersectionality and how, amongst women, domestic workers were the most oppressed. They also mentioned the positive role religion had played in their lives, and explained that they became activists through their local churches. That convinced me I had to do a PhD in gender studies, but at the time, in France, it was not really a

recognised field and I did not get funding to pursue my project at Sciences Po. Just like my parents, at the age of 23, I left, except that this time, it was to study in a prestigious university and not to run away from a politically unstable situation. In 2012, I got accepted to do a master at the LSE Gender Institute, and wrote my dissertation on Catholic feminists in Brazil. In 2014, I finally received an offer to do a fully-funded PhD at the LSE. My initial project was on subaltern discourses on feminism and religion, but in 2013, the Brazilian Constitution was being changed to give domestic workers equal labour rights. I convinced my supervisor to allow me to adapt my project to focus instead on what seemed to me the most extraordinary change taking place in Brazil at the time: domestic workers being recognised as workers.

II/ Relationship with the 'field' and the challenges of ethnography

These locations and dislocations, varying positions of privilege, and political convictions, shape my research and the way I have conducted my fieldwork. My relationship with the field, and the sometimes impossible demarcation between what is or is not the field are detailed in this section. Where does the research start, and can it really ever end? In this section, I first explain the choice to use ethnographic methods, then, I describe in detail my fieldwork with its challenges and life-changing encounters, and end the section with an overview of the process of data analysis.

1) Using ethnographic methods

This research is concerned with what organised domestic workers do and think, and with listening to their theories about their political practices. I aim to explain how they organise, and to show what their trade unions do to mobilise this professional category. Therefore, ethnographic methods, with a prolonged period of immersion in the universe of domestic workers' trade unions, appeared as the most appropriate way to conduct this project. I use Goffman's definition of ethnography to describe my activities on the field:

> [this method] is one of getting data, it seems to me, by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation, or whatever. So that you are close to them while they are responding to what life does to them. (Goffman, 1988, p. 125)

This immersion is necessary to gain a "deep familiarity" (Goffman, 1988, p. 129) with the situation of the participants, and to provide what Geertz (1973, p. 6) has famously called a "thick description" of a social context. The condition to make it work, according to Goffman (1988, p. 128), is to "open yourself up in ways you're not in ordinary life", an advice that is in many ways replicated by other authors. The anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hugues (1992, p. 24), for instance, argues that a good ethnography is one that transforms the self, while the sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2004) immerged himself so much with his object of study that he became an amateur boxer in the suburbs of Chicago. Fundamentally, ethnography is about human interactions, and how we as researchers try to make sense of them: "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). Co-living with the unionised domestic workers in their context and on their own terms has enabled me to get a sense of their reality, and to understand how they give meaning to it, interpret it, and produce a theory of their action.

Fieldwork is also about human feelings, and how we get immersed in social and emotional networks. Strathern (2006, p. 532) argues that anthropological fieldwork teaches us the "ethics of the open subject", by which she means that we become responsible for one another by opening ourselves up to each other. Indeed, my fieldwork would not have been possible without feelings of empathy and compassion that were expressed on both sides. The domestic workers I met, and the union leaders with whom I spent most of my time, opened not only their unions, but also their lives, their hearts, and their private spaces to me. Some welcomed me as if I was part of their family. As I felt moved by their stories, my admiration for them also grew everyday. These women are warriors, resisting every adversity life throws at them. But they are at the same time just normal people, with their dreams, fragilities, and deceptions. We shared incredible moments together: we cried, we laughed, we protested, we loved, we gossiped, we danced, and we enjoyed each other's company. So much so that I was heartbroken when I had to come back to London. Brazil felt in many ways more home than the UK, and the intensity of the human relationships I have built while in the field are unmatched by the academic – and sometimes solitary – life of London. Goffman (1988, p. 129) would say this is part of the process: "one thing is, you should feel you

could settle down and forget about being a sociologist". But I also felt re-located, and truly welcomed, after years of transnational dislocation.

Entering the political through the local and interpersonal relationships made national dynamics more concrete to me, which is arguably one of the key advantages of doing ethnography. Wacquant (2012) for instance, moved from the boxing ring of his local club to an analysis of the American prison system and the neoliberal state. In my case, through the life-stories of domestic workers, I could grasp precious elements of the coloniality of the state, institutional politics, and the important social changes implemented during the PT governments. This is exemplified by my interview with Adelimar da Conceição, in April 2016, after which I wrote on my fieldwork diary:

> Adelimar is a direct descendant of slaves, and like most domestic workers of her generation she had to quit school very early (by the end of primary school). She went back to school decades later, graduated from high school, and is now in her final graduate year in Education at the state university of Rio. She's thinking about doing a post-graduate degree in social work. Like all domestic workers, her life is made of complications, losses, injuries and impossibilities… the moment I was more touched is when she said she never wanted to have kids because she didn't want them to have the same life that she did. I had to fight really hard not to cry. But her life is also the story of Brazil's rapid development, of the PT miracle, of unexpected successes and hopes. At the age of 55, she is getting a degree from a very good university, and is teaching in the project with the sub-contracted cleaners, opening-up new pathways for them, like a teacher once did for her. The granddaughter of a slave made it to higher education; that, in a nutshell, is the legacy of the PT.

2) In and beyond the field

In total, I did four trips to Brazil between 2015 and 2017.

August 2015

I conducted a first pilot study in 2015, during which I spent one week in Salvador to interview the President of the FENATRAD, and three weeks in São Paulo where I got to know the local domestic workers' union. In Salvador, I was hosted by a friend of my mother who has a small artisan shop in the touristic centre (Pelourinho). She happened to know the President of the FENATRAD through the black movement, and it is only thanks to her insistence that the union received me. In São Paulo, I stayed with my family who happens to live 45 minutes away by bus from the local domestic workers' union. I first asked for the help of Marinalva Araujo, the CUT women's campaign staff, whom I had known since the fieldwork for my master's degree in 2010. Being

introduced by the CUT helped me be easily accepted by the local leaders, although it also revealed some tensions between the central and the local union.

There, I interviewed Maria Lima, the President, and about ten non-unionised domestic workers who had come to the union about a labour dispute. As explained in chapter II, trade unions are obliged to oversee some procedures and most women go there like they would go to a public office. They are usually not affiliated, and often ignore that they have come to a union. It became clear during this first study that one of the easiest ways to access non-unionised domestic workers was to interview them 'on the spot', while they were queuing in the trade union's waiting room. In the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, there are between 15 to 40 women coming to the union every day, and their waiting time was often long enough to allow for an in-depth interview.

February to June 2016

The second trip was the longest; it took place between February and June 2016, right in the middle of the political crisis and the coup. I had the opportunity through the ESRC to do a three-month visiting exchange at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) in Rio de Janeiro, for which I received additional financial support. There, I was affiliated to the school of Social Sciences and Contemporary History, under the supervision of Paulo Fontes. I attended the weekly seminar he ran for post-graduates on Social History of Labour, and had access to the university's resources. I did a lot of travel back and forth between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as I had initially decided to focus on the local unions of these two big cities. In Rio de Janeiro, I rented a room via Airbnb in the area of Botafogo, near the FGV, in the wealthy south zone of the city. My host had a cleaner coming a few times a week, but I never dared to interview either of them. I did however interview her mother's employee, who had worked for their family for most of her life, and lived at the employer's house – in Ipanema – most of the week.

My access to the union of Rio de Janeiro was not as easy as in São Paulo, as I had no pre-existing contacts there. I tried to book an appointment over the phone, but it never worked out, and then I decided to just show up at the Rio de Janeiro's union one day. I took a ticket with a number, like the domestic workers who were there, and waited my turn patiently. When it was finally my time to talk to Carli Maria dos Santos, the President, I explained who I was and what I was doing, and asked if anyone would have some time to be interviewed. She did not seem too keen and told me to come back the

following week, but as I arrived on the day we had agreed on, the union was already closed. So I went back the following day, and queued again. This time Carli apologised, and seemed slightly less reluctant to speak to me. On that day, I could interview Josefa Faustino, another leader, and was given the permission to come back every day to observe their activities and talk to the women in the waiting room. After few weeks, I finally got to interview Carli. During this period, I also met Noeli dos Santos, elected at the FENATRAD committee and representative of Brazil at the CONLACTRAHO. We had informal chats over lunch and coffee, but I could never interview her formally.

Marinalva Araujo from the CUT had put me in touch with the CUT-Rio Women's Officer, Marlene Miranda. In the context of the political crisis we were in, Marlene set-up a group of "women for democracy", and I could follow their meetings and activities. At these events, I also met some feminist NGOs, and in particular the Network for Human Development (*Rede de Densenvolvimento Humano* – REDEH) who gave me precious books about feminism in Brazil. Marlene did not know the leaders from the domestic workers' union of Rio de Janeiro personally, but introduced me to the Cleide Pinto, the President of the union of Nova Iguaçu. Lastly, in Rio de Janeiro, I attended all the demonstrations against the coup. At one of them, to which I went with my friend and colleague Deivison Amaral from the FGV, I met Marcelo Mac Cord, Assistant Professor at the Federal Fluminense University (*Universidade Federal Fluminense* – UFF). At the time, he was leading a popular education project for outsourced cleaners on his campus, in order to bring them to the equivalent of a GCSE level. His own students in the Faculty of Education taught on the project, and these hours counted towards their hours of compulsory training practice. I had the honour to meet these cleaners and their teachers in April 2016, and in particular Adelimar da Conceição, a former domestic worker, who was one of the teachers in the project, and to whom I often refer throughout this thesis because of her exceptional trajectory.

In São Paulo, I stayed with my family again and went to the union almost every day to interview domestic workers and the other leaders I had not interviewed in 2015. In a period of three weeks, I interviewed about 40 non-unionised domestic workers. I had lunch there almost every day, which was the occasion of very instructive informal chats with Maria Lima, the President. As she got to know me better, she also shared more stories and felt more comfortable expressing her opinion about political events. She also gave me access to their small archive room, where they store handwritten minutes from

all their meetings since 1962, pamphlets, and newspapers where there is some news about domestic work. I could photocopy some of this material. I also attended all the events against the coup, and followed the activities of the CUT Women's Campaign. Through the CUT, I got access to institutional actors, at the City Hall and the regional Ministry of Labour, although the political landscape was fast-changing with the crisis. I also met with researchers from the DIEESE (Inter-union Department of Statistics and Research), an institute that does statistical research for the CUT, the FES (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung), a not-for-profit research and policy institute that works closely with the ILO, and academics from the state universities of São Paulo (USP) and Campinas (UNICAMP).

Through my CUT contacts I could attend a two-days gender training event organised in March 2016 by the CONTRACS, the confederation to which the FENATRAD is affiliated. There, I met Regina Semião, a leader of the Campinas' union, who invited me to one of their monthly meetings. I then decided to include Campinas in my study, for its historical importance and dynamism compared to the other cities. Indeed, the Campinas' union was founded by the historical leader Laudelina de Campos Mello. It is also the place where the FENATRAD was created, and it gave the federation its first President. Campinas was an easy to access city for me, as my entire father's family lives there or in smaller cities nearby. I was impressed by the vitality of their monthly meetings, and their ability to be everywhere: in official ceremonies at local the Legislative Assembly, in other social movements, and in religious groups. I interviewed the local leaders, and one former leader, Anna Semião, who had been the first President of the FENATRAD. She invited me to her place several times to show me pictures, and gave me a lot of her own personal archives, composed of precious documents about the union and about the FENATRAD.

The 2016 fieldwork was marked by the political crisis, and I was in Brazil right during the coup. This had consequences for the field; some institutional actors were inaccessible, some resigned from their positions, and the CUT's activities were entirely turned towards contesting the coup. This was omnipresent in every discussion, both at the national and local level, and in April in particular, it was often the first thing participants would want to talk about. This also meant that some leaders would test me before trusting me, and I had to disclose straight away I had voted for Dilma Rousseff in 2014. At that moment, I was Brazilian enough to be forced to take sides, in a way a

foreign researcher probably would not have to. I am also convinced that a Brazilian researcher from 'the other side' would not have been able to access the domestic workers' unions at this particular period. On a personal level, I lived the coup as a disaster, and as one of the saddest political moments of life. My vote was being thrown away, and I felt totally powerless.

September 2016

The third trip happened at the request of the union of Rio de Janeiro. They asked me to attend the FENATRAD's National Conference held in September in order to act as a translator for international guests. The event was over a period of four days, but I stayed for the whole month in order to do some follow-up interviews. My previous visit was done under the visiting exchange scheme of the ESRC, therefore I could still request financial support for a fieldwork trip. I spent the week leading up to the conference in Rio de Janeiro, helping the local leaders with all sorts of administrative and logistical tasks. The conference in itself was an incredible opportunity for me: I met most of the affiliated unions and their leaders coming from all over the country, as well as representatives from the CONLACTRAHO, and I acted as a translator for Elizabeth Tang, the General Secretary of the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF). This was a great experience, and unique chance to learn from her and the transnational side of the movement. This further gave me access to official meetings between her and the FENATRAD, and at the end of the week, the FENATRAD voted in favour of joining the IDWF.

At one of those meetings, leaders from the FENATRAD requested concrete help from the IDWF; they wanted to conduct a mapping of their affiliates to know their most urgent needs and develop a proper revitalisation strategy. As we came out of the meeting, Elizabeth asked me if I would consider doing it. I cannot describe how happy and proud I felt at that moment. It took us a few months to agree, via Skype meetings and emails, across time and space differences, on a budget, a timeline, and for the FENATRAD to select the unions that would be included in this study. Once we had a solid proposal, I obtained the full support of both my supervisor and the ESRC to do this research through the non-academic collaboration scheme. The research took place in the summer of 2017, and was co-funded by the IDWF, the ILO, and Solidarity Centre.

Figure 7: FENATRAD's National Congress, September 2016

1. Handmade banner: 11th National Conference of the Domestic Workers

2. Picture with all the delegations

July to September 2017

This last round of fieldwork was probably the most intense. I spent about two weeks in each union, which meant I was on the road all the time. The four unions that had been selected for the organisational assessment are: Campinas and Franca in the state of São Paulo, and Nova Iguaçu and Volta Redonda, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. We agreed that it was better to keep the same geographic area I had already been working on, for

an easier insertion and to allow complementarities between the researches. The unions chosen by the FENATRAD were those in most urgent need of support, except for Campinas. I believe – but this was never confirmed – that Campinas was selected because of some tensions that had arisen between them and the national leadership, and this research was a way to reintegrate them within the national structures. But compared to the other unions, Campinas has always been stronger. The purpose of the study was to map the strengths and weaknesses of these four unions, and to evaluate their organisational needs. I designed a questionnaire (see appendix 3) in consultation with the international partners, which focused on both material and immaterial resources. It was complemented by participant observations at the unions and some archival data where it existed, as well as my already existing data.

Because I was being sent by the FENATRAD, I was welcomed like never before, and got fully integrated into the unions' activities. I already knew some of the leaders: those of Campinas with whom I had already worked, I had talked on a few occasions with Cleide Pinto from Nova Iguaçu, and had met Lúcia Helena Conceição de Souza from Volta Redonda at the National Conference in September 2016. Franca was a completely new discovery, but they immediately adopted me as if they had known me forever. In all four unions, I experienced a sort of accelerated ethnography – a shorter but more intense immersion. I was with domestic workers' leaders all the time; I spent the days at the unions or accompanying them to whichever activity they had planned, the evenings at their place, and my free time hanging out with them. Within those months, we also organised several workshops, which allowed me to reconnect with many leaders who were not directly involved in this particular project.

The political context in 2017 was very different. Post-*golpe* Brazil looked much sadder and depressed. While I was there, the government was just approving a general labour reform (*reforma trabalhista*) that in essence, completely deregulates the labour market. Most of our events and meetings with the domestic workers' unions were spent trying to understand what the consequences would be for their rights and the 2015 legislation. It had also become clear that the CUT no longer had the capacity to mobilise the masses, and despite few attempts at organising a general strike, the climate was more one of survival than one of resistance. Nobody really knew what to do. The novelty effect of the 2015 law had been dissipated, and the local unions had fewer people coming in everyday than in 2016. All the leaders I talked to expressed their concerns regarding the

increase of informality. But this depressed context was also, paradoxically, an opportunity for the domestic workers' unions to become a model. As the other unions were losing the rights and advantages once guaranteed in the Labour Code, the sector of domestic work, which never had those rights, could teach the others how to survive.

Overall, I spend almost nine months in the field, and studied six local unions: São Paulo, Campinas and Franca in the state of São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro, Nova Iguaçu and Volta Redonda in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Taken together, these two states account for 40% of the domestic workforce (CUT-RJ & Sintell-Rio, 2013; DIEESE & FES, 2015). The unions can count on a very limited number of volunteer leaders, usually between three and ten, and they have no intermediary level of activism or engagement. There are no active members that are not the elected leaders. The unionisation rate is extremely low – 2% nationally – but this also includes non-CUT affiliated unions. Most members do not pay their fees and do not attend meetings or events. They probably joined when they came for a labour dispute and never came back.

Having the fieldwork spread across four different moments gave me the time to analyse my data in between each trip, and to adjust my questions and observations according to what I thought was missing. But it was also very disconcerting on a personal level, and all this back and forth meant I had my life constantly spread across different places. Just when I felt adapted to one place, I had to come back to the other. Doing ethnographic research with domestic workers also required total flexibility on my side; they do not always have control over their own time, and they can only organise unions' meetings during the weekends. I was sort of continuously embedded in the field, sometimes not knowing where the field started or ended. This contributed in developing intimate ties with the participants, and only made it all the more difficult to leave them.

3) Data collection and analysis

I gathered three types of primary data: my participant observations, in-depth qualitative interviews, and internal documents from the unions. I also cross-checked when possible with existing statistical data or existing literature, in particular from Brazilian scholars whose work helped me retrace the history of the movement (see for instance: Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015a; Kofes, 2001; Pinto, 2015). Table 6 below summaries the data collected.

Table 6: Overview of data collected

Place	Data collected
São Paulo	Formal interviews (45 domestic workers: 36 non-unionised, and 9 unionised – all leaders of the union, + interviews with institutional actors and partners) Informal discussions with union's leaders Participant observations and external events Internal documents from the union
Campinas	Formal interviews (10 domestic workers: 2 non-unionised, 8 unionised – former and current leaders) Participant observations Support with events and training Internal documents from the union
Franca	Formal interviews (3 unionised domestic workers – all current leaders) Participant observations Internal documents from the union
Rio de Janeiro	Formal interviews (6 domestic workers: 2 leaders of the union, and 4 non-unionised) Interviews and discussions with national and international leaders during events (FENATRAD, Solidarity Centre, IDWF, ILO, CUT) Informal discussions with 10 non-unionised domestic workers, and 3 employers Participant observations and external events Internal documents from the unions
Volta Redonda	Formal interviews (6 unionised domestic workers – all current leaders, and 3 partners: the pro-bono lawyer, and the 2 nuns who founded the union) Participant observations Internal documents from the unions
Nova Iguaçu	Formal interviews (3 unionised domestic workers – all current leaders) Informal discussion with 4 other members and the 2 pro-bono lawyers Participant observations Support with events and trainings Internal documents from the union
Salvador	Formal interviews (1 national leader of the FENATRAD, and 3 non-unionised domestic workers)

The participant observations include: daily activities and work at the local unions, regular lunches and chats with the leaders, monthly unions' meetings, external meetings and trainings, the 2016 FENATRAD's National Conference, demonstrations against the coup and CUT events. All the external events, including the big demonstrations, confirmed the absence and invisibility of domestic workers within feminist and workers' movements. I did not try to get access to black movements as I had no established contacts with them, and felt it might have been inappropriate in that particular context. I kept a fieldwork diary, and tried to write everyday what I had seen and done. It is written mostly in English, but with a mix of Portuguese sometimes. I also carried a notepad with me and some of these notes were never digitalised. I have about 85 pages of fieldwork notes, but some moments and events are much more detailed than others, and typically, I have almost no digitalised notes from 2017 – I never found the time to transfer everything from my notepads to my laptop. Between 2015 and 2017, I have filled five notepads with fieldwork observations. The nature and density of interactions with my participants were described in the previous section.

In total, I formally interviewed 77 domestic workers, by which I mean the discussion was clearly directed for research purposes, recorded, and lasted a minimum of 45 minutes (some went up to 5 hours). I also had numerous informal discussions off the record, which I cannot fully account for, therefore, leaders with whom I spoke at events but did not formally interview are not included in this figure. However, I cite some elements of these discussions that were repeated by different participants, showing some consistency in their argumentation or historical accounts of specific events. Of those 77 interviewees, 32 were union leaders, and 45 were non-unionised domestic workers. The average age of my sample is 55, ranging from 30 to 85.[57] An absolute majority, 92% is non-white, and 70% self-defined as black specifically. The 8% of white domestic workers are all from the state of São Paulo, which is a 'whiter' region compared to the rest of Brazil. These figures are relatively consistent with, although higher than, national statistics, which estimate that 60% of domestic workers are black. Some of the union leaders were interviewed several times, and I tried to first build a

[57] However, it is important to note that because domestic workers have had on average a limited access to formal education, they are not always able to provide specific dates or years in their narratives, and could sometimes be unsure of their own date of birth. For older participants, who were born in rural areas, it is also quite common to have the wrong date of birth written in their identity card as it could take their families years to gather the money required to register them formally at the local administration.

rapport and gain their trust, before proceeding to the formal interview. The non-unionised domestic workers, however, were mostly interviewed on the spot, as they were waiting at the local union, and I could not build that level of intimacy. I was also unable to keep in touch with all of them.

This technique introduces an obvious bias in my sample: I only interviewed women who had some sort of conflict with their employer, and were sufficiently informed to know to come to the union. As already explained, they were not members, and not particularly active politically. They often ignored that they were coming to a union. But I probably met an elite within the category, better informed than most of their colleagues and aware that they have some rights. I decided to use this method because my primary focus is the domestic workers' trade unions, therefore who comes to the union and why is of crucial importance. But also because chasing non-unionised domestic workers from scratch would have required a completely different kind of fieldwork, and full-time dedication. Booking an interview appeared almost impossible: the few with whom I tried, for instance the employee of my flatmate's mother in Rio de Janeiro, cancelled on me four times, and I had to conduct the interview at the employer's house which also raises some ethical tensions. It did not seem like a good option to interview them at their workplace, but finding them outside of work or going to their private homes was also not an easy task. Thus, I decided to focus on the universe of the unions, and to interview as many women as I could on the spot.

I also interviewed a small sample of actors that are not domestic workers: a civil servant at the City Hall of São Paulo, a member of staff of the Regional Ministry of Labour of São Paulo, the head of the consultancy firm *Doméstica Legal* that gives advice to employers on the new law, Marcelina Bautista from the CONLACTRAHO (she is a domestic worker though, but not from Brazil), and the two nuns, Eliete and Irene, who founded the union of Volta Redonda. In addition, I had informal discussions with the lawyers working pro-bono for the local unions, academic colleagues, and representatives from the FES, ILO, IDWF, Solidarity Centre, the CUT and the CONTRACS. However, I could never obtain a formal interview with employers; I had informal discussions with three employers at the union of Rio de Janeiro, and other informal chats in very unexpected settings: in a bus, on the beach, at my swimming practice. I had asked friends of my flatmate in Rio de Janeiro if we could meet, but they all declined. The employers' side was not that important for my research question, but

the impossibility of accessing them is a finding in itself. Nobody wants to be recognised as an employer, and the few comments I have heard in those informal settings were very openly racist and classist, and quite hard for me to handle. I considered it was probably best for me to leave these actors aside, and I could access their discourses and position in the mainstream media anyway.

Consent was explicitly asked before each interview, and with domestic workers I quickly abandoned the idea of having them sign a consent form. They do not trust more the written as opposed to the oral form, and wanted me to explain things orally rather than make them read and sign a piece of paper. The goals and process of the research were always made clear, as well as the guarantee of anonymity. I also gave all the interviewees my Brazilian WhatsApp number in case they wanted to withdraw or add something. However, nobody wanted to be anonymous; they all wanted their stories to be heard and be made visible, and often gave me very specific details they asked me to include in my work. I finally decided to keep their real names, and when citing them, I use their preferred appellation: for some, this means a nickname or just a first name without their family name. For union leaders, there are so little of them that they are easily recognisable for anyone who knows those unions, and making their history visible is such an important part of this thesis that I want to give them the possibility to be the protagonists of this process. They also told me clearly what could or could not be included in the thesis. I give their full names when these have been communicated to me, but most people prefer to be called by their first name. For the non-unionised women, I kept their first names only to make sure they will not be recognised. The cities where I conducted fieldwork are so big, and their first names are so common (Maria, Vera, Marlene, Sandra…) that they cannot possibly be identified by a name only. They are already anonymous.

All the interviews were recorded on my phone, and stored on my personal laptop. I transcribed them using the software NVivo, which makes the transcription easier by slowing down the pace of the audio file. Due to lack of time, some interviews were not fully transcribed, and I took notes directly as I was listening to them. I started coding on NVivo, which helped me visualise the emerging themes, but towards the end, I found it more useful to print everything and use pens of different colour to highlight common themes. I had no pre-defined categories – although the narratives are of course shaped by the questions I asked (the topic guide is provided in appendix 1), and rather let them

emerge from the interviews. I treated each interview as a text in itself, and analysed them looking for repetitions, internal logic, and use of specific words or concepts, in dialogue with my theoretical framework and the other data collected. I also used the interviews as a primary source of theory, and as an explanation of their own on specific issues.

Lastly, I collected some internal documents in the local unions, including pamphlets, minutes of meetings and Annual General Meetings (AGMs), and documents from other allied organisations such as the Youth Catholic Workers or some feminist groups. All the local unions had for instance a pamphlet about the history of the movement co-produced by the local union of Recife (North-East region) and the feminist NGO SOS Corpo. However, the constitution of an archive is a challenge in itself, given the difficulties for domestic workers to produce their own written material and to read it. None of these documents were digitalised for instance, or even organised: they were often left in a small room or in a drawer inside the union. I brought back the equivalent of 10 kg in hand luggage of books, posters, pamphlets, and photocopies, and have in addition some pictures of documents I could not take away from the unions. I became obsessed with the idea of creating a proper archive for the local unions, to make sure their history does not get lost, but that will remain a post-PhD dream.

The data presented must be assessed in light of its specificities and limitations; this is a study of organised domestic workers, and more precisely, of six local unions in the South-East region affiliated to the FENATRAD. Their common affiliation enables me to analyse their mobilisations both at the local and national level, but the particular individual trajectories and the leaders' discourses must be appreciated within their own context. Local unions have different strategies in the cities of Salvador or Recife for instance. Nonetheless, this data enables me to substantiate arguments regarding the political work of domestic workers, their modes of organising and the importance their movement has for Brazilian society. It also represents an important case study for theories of social movements and subaltern politics, and quite crucially, for how subalternity can be used as a mobilising resource by social actors.

Figure 8: Example of internal documents found in the unions

1. Invitation to attend Volta Redonda's union monthly meeting, from August 1995

2. Poster of the 7th National Conference of the FENATRAD in 1993

3. Monthly bulletin of information of Campinas' union, March 1993

CAMPINAS PAULINIA E VALINHOS

SINDICATO DOS TRABALHADORES DOMÉSTICOS

CUT

Nº1 MARÇO 1993 ANO IX

R. DR. MASCARENHAS, 220 - FONE 8-1109 - BOTAFOGO -

PLEBISCITO

VOTO

PRESIDENCIALISMO

MARCIO 55-50-71

PARLAMENTARISMO

MONARQUIA

O que significa estas palavras?

Sabendo ou não a diferença entre estes regimes de governo, no dia 21 de abril teremos que escolher na votação.

Precisamos nos esclarecer e discutir com outros trabalhadores para decidir com clareza e consciência. A classe dominante não está interessada em dar informações. O que ela quer é passar suas idéias para continuar a dominação.

A situação de desemprego, de miséria e de fome, com mais de 70 milhões de brasileiros que não comem o suficiente, não pode continuar. Conseguimos tirar o Collor, isto mostra nossa força. Nossa participação ativa nos debates na comunidade, no bairro e no sindicato e nossa opinião firme sobre como deve ser o governo é muito importante.

NÃO PODEMOS VOTAR AS CEGAS E SERMOS ENGANADOS DEPOIS

NESTE BOLETIM

ainda nossos direitos ...

o plebiscito

Dia Internacional da Mulher

O Sindicato tem força

I only translated the extracts of archives and interviews that I quote in the thesis, and did all the translations myself. Translating from my mother tongue to English has not always been easy, and I have tried to focus more on the meaning than on a 'correct' translation, making the translation itself part of the process of knowledge production (Temple & Young, 2004). The reader is limited to the fragments I have selected, and can only read them through my partial translation. I have kept some words in Portuguese, such as *doméstica* (maid), which is often used by participants, and give the full Portuguese version of organisations' names and of places. Sometimes I could not fully transcribe the ways in which participants expressed themselves, or the peculiarities of Brazilian Portuguese, and prioritised then the meaning of the speech (or my interpretation of it) over literal translation. I could also only imperfectly translate my relationship with the original text (Spivak, 1993b), but have tried as much as I could to communicate a sense of place, and who the speaker is, to provide the reader with a more contextualised understanding of the speech.

I have been feeling ambivalent about writing in English. Besides the fact that it is necessary since I am studying at the LSE, it also gives me access to a potentially wider audience. However, it means that the people I have been working with on the field, and

most members of my family, cannot read this text. Using the English further reinforces the hegemony of Anglo-American academia and the production of knowledge in the language of the strongest (Mignolo, 2005; Spivak, 1993b), which, as much as it is good for my career, seems at the same time problematic for decolonising knowledge. Quite crucially, it means that I am mostly embedded within the Anglo-American literatures and debates, and that many Brazilian authors who have not published in English are left behind. I refer to the key authors who have written on domestic work, and on the aspects of the Brazilian state and the current context that are directly relevant to this thesis, but I could not engage with Brazilian debates on social movements, decoloniality or gender. In the following section, I explain how I have addressed some of these challenges.

III/ Building reciprocity, taking responsibility

After having presented my epistemology and the methods of data collection, I now discuss what I did with the data, and how I tried to practice ethical research. The power relations at stake in the field, and the responsibility which the participants had invested in me, led to some ethical challenges. But it also gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own practice, and to build forms of accountability that went beyond the strict 'field' of the research. In this section, I first consider questions of representation and power, then explain how I have taken responsibility and used my privileges in a way that I consider to be ethical, and finally, review the different actions I have taken to give something back to my participants.

1) Representation

Feminist scholars, and Spivak (1988a) in particular, have extensively discussed the possibilities and impossibilities for the subaltern to speak, as well as the responsibility for us as researchers that results from it. Assuming that the subalterns can easily speak for themselves within existing structures of power might lead to further silencing them, and to adopting a "retreat" position that contributes to reinforcing their invisibility (Alcoff, 1995). Yet, speaking for them also carries inextricable tensions and dilemmas; what do we really know and hear, and how can we accurately represent their voices? Abu-Lughod (1990) for instance has warned us against the tendency to assume a

feminist agency and to interpret our participants' behaviour in a too voluntaristic way whereby their actions would only confirm what we wanted to see. Working on and with the subalterns also raises questions regarding our representation of what they do; while I want to show the structures of oppression and exploitation Brazilian domestic workers are embedded in, I also want to avoid producing a victimising or colonial image of the poor 'Third World' women in need of being saved (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mohanty, 1988, 2003b).

I do not pretend to have a miraculous solution to these dilemmas, but propose here some steps to attenuate them. The first is, as suggested by Spivak (1988a) and Kapoor (2008), to speak *with* the subalterns, and not only *for* or *about* them. I take domestic workers' knowledge seriously and have tried to translate it in this thesis, considering it as theory in itself. Of course, I have my own analysis and contributions to make, but I aim to show the implications of domestic workers' words, and give importance to their analysis of domestic work. Although it is impossible to go into the field without some a priori knowledge or ontology, I have also tried to "leave open the possibility that [I] may be remade through an encounter with the other" (Mahmood, 2005, p. 37). I presented my findings several times to the local unions, opening myself to their criticisms and suggestions, and ensuring that my text was accurately reflecting our discussions.

Furthermore, I reflected on my position of privilege before, during and after the fieldwork, and have given an account in this chapter of my location and how it affects the research process. This does not by any mean make privilege disappear, but I can at least trace how it influences my findings. Power relations in the field are not fixed, and can be negotiated according to the context. I am acutely aware that many domestic workers were willing to talk to me because they saw me as a wealthy European person, which gave them prestige by association. Some would for instance 'use' me to show their status, and take me to events only to be seen with a French comrade. Once, I was even introduced as an American student, at which point I felt I had climbed all the prestige ladders. The fact that I am white has inevitably intimidated some non-unionised domestic workers, who at first thought I was an employer or a lawyer. I had to totally open myself up to them to prove I was worthy of their trust.

My position as a white European scholar also means that I am listened to, and taken seriously, and often asked to speak about domestic workers while they remain invisible. There was one particular event that crystallised this tension. In September 2017, the CUT organised an event about domestic work at their headquarters in São Paulo, at which the three local unions (São Paulo, Franca and Campinas) were present. The first panel in the morning was composed of people from the CUT and the CONTRACS, the second, of academics, including myself. When the chair opened the Q&A session after the panel I was in, representatives from Campinas stood up and shared all their frustration. They thanked us for our work, but complained that they have had to listen throughout the morning to people talking about them, while they were just here in the room. How come they were not on that panel? They reminded the audience that they had come all the way here, during a working day, so *they* could speak, not listen to what they already knew.

Later on we spoke about it, and they assured me their complaint was not against me but against the way the event had been organised. In fact, we had come together from another event in Campinas the day before, and discussed in advance whether I, and they, should attend. But it could have been directed at me, and I would have accepted it. I could only agree with what they were saying. The reports and pictures from the event published on the CUT's website only featured the academic panel, highlighting the presence of international researchers. Although this event ended up being productive to decide on some action points and agree on what other unions could do to support the struggle of domestic workers, it started with an extreme form of silencing. And every time I am invited to speak somewhere, I am in a way reproducing these dynamics. The ones who should really go are the domestic workers, yet if I do not speak at all, I miss an opportunity to make their history and struggles more visible. This leads to my second point, which is taking responsibility and trying to use my privilege in an ethical way.

2) Responsibility

Our responsibility does not end with the end of the fieldwork, and what we do afterwards matters just as much as being an ethical researcher during the data collection process. I alone cannot undo coloniality; I cannot become less white, or erase the fact that I am studying at the LSE. But I can use it in a way that is consistent with my ethics and my values. I can try to live up to domestic workers' expectations, and indeed bring

their stories back here, write them, publish them, and talk about them. I will still be benefiting from it, but because I am heard, I can make their stories heard too. For instance, it was very important for me to publish an article in Portuguese, in a Brazilian journal, so that domestic workers could read it if they wanted, but also because their words are louder and more powerful in their own country. I also used extensively the Gender Institute's blog to disseminate some of my findings to a wider audience.

During my time at the LSE, I also realised that I can use my privileged position to take action. Just when I came back from the field in early October 2016, I was made aware of the cleaners' movement at the LSE. The cleaners are in their vast majority migrant workers, all Black or Minority Ethnic (BME), at the time they earned less than £10 an hour, and work under very hard conditions. They were not directly employed by the LSE, but outsourced to a company called Noonan. A lot of them are women. A lot of them had a different job back home, and some Latinos have a degree but because they do not speak English they cannot use it here. And so here I was, sitting in my PhD office at the LSE, writing about intersectionality and domestic workers in Brazil, while these migrant cleaners were protesting against their harsh working conditions and campaigning for equal rights just under my nose. I had to do something. I attended some union meetings, went to their events, and started getting involved in their campaign.

One thing that really surprised me is the similarity between their stories and my participants' stories in Brazil. I never expected working conditions in the UK, and even less so at the LSE, to resemble that much those of the poorest workers in Brazil. Yet, they are subjected to the same types of harassment, disciplining, mistreatments and prejudice. Cleaning is not a dignified job; not in Brazil, not in the UK, not anywhere. I also kept feeling uncomfortable because I cannot reconcile the fact that we, feminist and 'critical' thinkers, are sitting here, enjoying very good material conditions to do our work, while the cleaners are being undermined and devalued. We are directly complicit in this situation. Black and migrant people are literally cleaning up after us so that we can read, think and write. And they are under a lot of pressure to do it quickly, efficiently, and silently. My privileged position meant that I could do something, and this particular campaign became for me one way of putting into practice my theory, enacting the claim of domestic workers in Brazil that cleaning work is real work. It also made my fieldwork more real, and omnipresent; the things I was studying were not

confined to a distant Brazil but happening here at the LSE too. As an LSE student, I could say out loud what I think, and stand in solidarity with the cleaners, without facing any of the consequences they had to face for entering a labour dispute.

They successfully organised a strike action in March, May and June 2017, and won the end of the outsourcing of their services, setting a historical precedent in the UK. They started their new internal contracts in March 2018, giving us all a great victory to remember. Two of the women leaders, Mildred Simpson and Beverley Williams, came to speak at a training workshop for the domestic workers' unions in Rio de Janeiro in April 2018, that I co-organised with Cleide Pinto, the President of Nova Iguaçu, and Tatiane Oliveira, a colleague from the FGV (see appendix 4).

3) Accountability

The third and final element I want to address is the importance of giving something back to participants. The first time I met with Creuza de Oliveira, in August 2015, she asked me at the end of our interview: "So what are you going to do now? Researchers like you, they come here all the time and then we never see them again. What's in it for us?" Her words stuck with me throughout the entire research process.

At the institutional level, I published a paper in a Brazilian journal edited by the FGV. I acted as a translator at the FENATRAD's National Conference, upon their own request, and then undertook the collaboration project in 2017. The results of this research were presented once over Skype to the ILO and the FENATRAD, and once at the FENATRAD's extraordinary AGM in December 2017 in Brasília at which all the partners were present. A full report in English was delivered to the IDWF, the ILO, and Solidarity Centre. We are still discussing the possibility of translating it into Portuguese, or developing a more adequate format, like an individual report for each union. In the meantime, the ILO Brazil has designed a capacity-building training together with the FENATRAD, using this piece of research.

At the trade unions' level, I supported all the local unions with administrative tasks, and in some cases with IT tasks. In Rio de Janeiro, I set up a website in a blog format, and showed them how to use it, but this was a partial failure as it would have required more training to make it sustainable for them. With the union of São Paulo, we organised a

workshop in May 2016 where I could discuss my preliminary results with them. About 11 members attended, and gave me their feedback on the presentation. In Campinas, I delivered a workshop in July 2017 on domestic workers' rights globally so that they could compare it with the situation in Brazil. I printed a folder for each participant with my slides and my paper in Portuguese. This workshop was replicated at a regional training few weeks later in Nova Iguaçu. At the Nova Iguaçu regional training, I became a multi-task assistant to the union who was in charge of organising the whole event. I acted as secretary, translator, facilitated group activities, and took minutes.

Figure 9: Workshop on domestic workers' rights globally in Campinas

Lastly, at the individual level, I translated a paper Marcelo Mac Cord had written about the education project with the outsourced cleaners at the UFF, and had it published in a French activist journal. I went back to see the people from the project in August 2017, and talked to them about the LSE cleaners' strike. Adelimar, whom I met through this project, sent me some of her writings. I translated a text on black hair and black beauty, and published it on the Gender Institute blog.[58] I further supported her with the writing-up of her dissertation. Anna Semião, from Campinas, also gave me two short pieces about herself and the movement, but we still need to decide what to do with it. I cannot thank her enough for the three long interviews and all the documents she gave me. With Cleide from Nova Iguaçu, and Lúcia Helena, from Volta Redonda, our relationship went way beyond the field, and I am really not sure I am the one giving something back to them.

[58] To read her piece: da Conceição, A. (2016), "Meu Cabelo Crespo", in *Engenderings*, published on 20/06/2016: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2016/06/20/my-curly-hair-meu-cabelo-crespo/

There are also all these women to whom I will never give anything back, with whom I could not stay in touch and who are very unlikely to ever come across my work. To all the 45 non-unionised domestic workers I interviewed, I still owe so much.

Conclusion

This chapter started by identifying some criteria for feminist research: making explicit the location from which the researcher is speaking and how this impacts on the research, taking the epistemic position of the marginalised as a valid place from which to analyse the social world, and being aware of how positions of power affect the overall process of research. I gave an account of what elements in my personal trajectory are meaningful to uncover my bias, and tried to show the impact they have had on this research. I then discussed in detail the process of data collection, and explained the choice – and challenges – of conducting ethnography. Qualitative methods are the most appropriate to understand the perceptions of organised domestic workers on what they do, and to grasp what their life as trade unionists and domestic workers is like. I have shared the different steps of my fieldwork, the difficulties encountered, as well as my imbrication in the social and human relations I was studying. The results presented in the following chapters must be read in light of these research processes; my findings are localised, time and place specific, and sensitive to the broader political context.

Finally, I considered questions of ethics and responsibility, which are central to conducting feminist research. I presented my ethical dilemmas regarding representation and the ability to speak, and offered my own personal way of addressing these tensions as a possible and partial answer. I argued that recognising our privilege is necessary but not sufficient, and we must think about what we can do with it and how we can use it in a form that is meaningful to us and to our participants. In particular, I have emphasised the different actions I took to give something back to my participants. Throughout the process of doing a PhD, it became evident to me that I wanted my research to have some practical impact, even if partial and limited, otherwise, I cannot reconcile the contradictions between *writing about* and *doing with*.

Chapter V/ The making and unmaking of the Brazilian domestic workers' class

It is 9.30 am when I arrive at the headquarters of the *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo* (Domestic Workers' Union of the Municipality of São Paulo - STDMSP), rua das Margaridas in the Barra Funda neighbourhood, on 24 July 2015. I am welcomed by the President herself, since the union has no receptionist. Maria Lima is a small, thin, 65 year old black woman, dressed very simply in black trousers and a colourful jumper. She is from the state of Ceará, in the Northeast of Brazil, and has a quite distinctive accent from that region. Maria is already very busy answering the phone, opening the door, and talking to a group of women waiting for their appointment with the union's lawyer. Like the other union leaders, Maria is a volunteer and does not receive any salary or other form of financial support for doing what she does. She is retired but still has to work about 10 hours a week to support her father who remained in the Northeast. During our 2 hours-long interview, she had to stop at least 15 times to open the door and answer the phone. On that day, she always seemed to be answering the same question: "yes, you now have the right to the FGTS", and, "yes, your employer has to pay a patronal contribution for it". [59]

Maria Lima lives in the city of Francisco Morato, about 2 hours away from the union headquarters. She does this journey five times a week, so that the union can be open from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, to receive domestic workers' inquiries. She is the only one who comes in every day, and gets occasional help from a small group of four other elected officers; Estela, Elisabete (hereafter Bete), Noêmia and Silvia. Maria and her colleagues usually bring their own food to the union to avoid spending money at lunchtime. The main activity of the union consists of dealing with administrative procedures and casework. The volunteer leaders answer questions regarding labour rights, they oversee contract termination procedures, and support domestic workers in labour disputes. For more technical issues, workers are referred to the lawyer who works pro bono or the legal assistant. Local AGMs are held once every other month, on a Sunday, and usually gather less than ten members – all elected officers.

[59] The FGTS is the Fund of Guarantee for Time of Service, financed by employers' contributions. Each employee has the equivalent of a personal savings account that can be used in case of sickness or unemployment.

There are between 15 and 30 women coming to the union on a daily basis, for a variety of labour issues ranging from a simple question regarding the law, a delayed payment, or a procedure of contract termination. But they are not necessarily members – anyone can access the union of his/her professional category to solve labour disputes without paying membership fees. In fact, local leaders do not even know the exact number of union members, and when asked for that information, Maria Lima replies: "There should be one million!" They do not have a proper register or a systematic way of keeping track of their members. Maria further complains about the lack of involvement of domestic workers, who, according to her, come to the union when they have a problem but never come back, and refuse to join. She also blames them for dividing the category of domestic workers and fostering the distinction between daily workers and *empregadas*:

> The workers, they make a point of not being *domésticas*. If you hand them over a membership form, they say like that: "I'm not a domestic worker, I am a daily worker." They have a lot of prejudice. *Doméstica*, daily and monthly; they think it's different. But every worker who works in a house where there is an oven, a fridge, a kitchen, where they clean and iron the clothes, is a *doméstica*. The monthly, she works from Monday to Friday. The daily, she works in different houses. It's in their heads, they think that a daily is not a *doméstica.*

Maria raises a core issue for trade unions: the fragmentation, and to some extent, the rejection, of the category 'domestic worker' by domestic workers themselves. The lack of unity and identification with the category is a major barrier to collective action. Indeed, it raises the question of how and whether domestic workers can be brought together into a movement representing a class they do not want to be part of. And, furthermore, how unity can be created in such a scattered and individualised sector of activity? Domestic workers' identity is simultaneously rejected and needed for recognition in the Brazilian corporatist system. They need to be proper workers to be entitled to basic labour rights, yet, they have historically been constructed as the non-workers par excellence and cannot reach the standards of the typical industrial worker. Therefore, domestic workers' unions face an immense paradox: they are trying to organise a category that does not want to be, and that, to some extent, cannot be.

The difficulties in organising informal workers, and domestic workers in particular, are well documented (Bonner & Spooner, 2011; Boris & Nadasen, 2008; Chen, 2013; Jordhus-Lier, 2017; Kabeer, Sudarshan, & Milward, 2013; Lindell, 2010). They face important practical challenges: they are fragmented, isolated, work in private houses,

and do not enjoy standard labour rights. But they also face subjective, or "framing" (Benford & Snow, 2000) challenges: because they are not 'standard workers', their identities are not only made through work, turning them harder to represent by conventional trade unions focused exclusively on class-based issues (Lazar, 2017b). As explained by Kabeer et al. (2013, p. 13), there is no easy-to- activate pre-existing collective identity: "The geographically dispersed, socially isolated and frequently casual conditions under which many informal workers operate – the multiplicity of grounds on which they experienced social exclusion – means that a shared identity cannot be just assumed, but most often has to be built." According to the authors, women in the informal sector often do not even perceive their activities as being work, but rather as an extension of their domestic tasks or survival strategies.

While domestic workers' categorisation as non-workers is indeed a major obstacle for their unionisation, I observed a slightly different dynamic amongst my interviewees. They did understand their activity as work, but did not want to be identified as domestic workers and associated with this socially devalued occupation. They rejected the very identity 'domestic worker' and with it, any form of belonging to that class. In this context, what can domestic workers' unions do to create this collective identity, and make it positive or desirable to non-unionised domestic workers? This chapter explores the tensions around the making and unmaking of the domestic workers' class, which constitutes the first paradox of subaltern politics: the identity 'domestic worker' is at the time necessary for political recognition, but rejected by domestic workers themselves because of its negative connotations grounded in their intersectional oppression. Because there is no readily available 'domestic worker' subject to be mobilised, the first step for local unions is to create the collective identity domestic worker. Through small-scale and concrete practices of solidarity, domestic workers' unions transform the socially devalued category 'domestic worker' into a political and dignified collective, able to fight for their rights. I analyse the differences between unionised and non-unionised domestic workers, and argue that there is a 'union effect' through which domestic workers' perceptions are transformed.

The first section explores the paradoxical discourse of non-unionised domestic workers about their work. I show that despite a profound rejection of the identity 'domestic worker', there is nonetheless a strong identification with the class of 'the poor', and there are common material and subjective elements defining domestic work that can be

used for collective action. The second section contrasts the perception of non-unionised domestic workers with that of unionised domestic workers, and suggests that local unions are effectively making the class by reframing domestic work as a positive and dignified activity. Thus, through unions and the experience of activism, domestic workers can become a class for itself.

I/ A class that does not want to be

According to Marx, a class is defined by its relation to labour and the modes of production. The working class is "a class which possesses nothing but the ability to work" (Marx, 1847b, p. 7), whereas the capitalist class has the ability to accumulate labour and multiply its value. A class also entails the recognition of being part of that class; and this recognition is what distinguishes a class *in itself*, that exists passively, from a class *for itself*, when workers start defending their interests against the capital. Marx (1847a, pp. 333-334) argues:

> Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle.

Thus, a class is formed by the combination of material elements – a specific position in the relations of production – and subjective elements, which is the recognition of shared interests. A group can be identified as a class in itself because of its objective material conditions, without having become yet a class for itself that recognises its common identity and interests. This process of self-recognition, Marx notes, happens in the struggle. For Marx, the revolutionary potential of the working class lies in its ability to become a class for itself and get organised to defend its interests. As long as they remain at the passive stage of class in itself, workers will keep on being exploited and dominated by the Bourgeoisie (Marx, 1852). Therefore, the process of consciousness-raising that leads to an organised movement of workers is crucial. But how to determine who constitutes a class? Drawing on Marx, E.P. Thompson (1963, pp. 10-11) provides a definition of class that accounts for historical, structural and cultural factors:

> Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed

> to) theirs. Class consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms.

The definition of class is rendered more complex when we take into account gender and race, and the intersection of different vectors of oppression and exploitation. But I will focus here on two key points taken from Marx: the material conditions that define a class in itself, and its subjective elements of self-recognition that makes it a class for itself. I argue that Brazilian domestic workers do form a class in itself, connected to, but distinct from, the more generic 'working class' because they are even more exploited and excluded from the main system of labour exchange. As a result of the intersection of gender, race and class, they have a different material condition and experience of exploitation. However, without the action of their unions, domestic workers remain only a class in itself, and what is more, reject the identity and very existence of the category 'domestic worker', which is socially devalued and subalternised. They are a class constantly in the making.

This section explores the tensions and contradictions around the identity 'domestic workers' that emerged in my interviews with non-unionised domestic workers. I first discuss the difficulties for domestic workers to identify with their category, then examine the individual strategies of survival they have developed as a result of not seeing themselves as a part of a class, and finally, I demonstrate their identification with the class of 'the poor' which is interlinked to their political support for the PT. I conclude by showing the existence of common material and subjective elements in their lived experience that can define them as a class, and be used by the unions to create a sense of collective identity.

1) Domestic work as a non-category

The barriers which domestic workers face to organise are multiple: they are fragmented; usually work in isolation in private homes; are disproportionately located in the informal sector; and they have low wages and precarious working conditions (Brites, 2014; Cornwall et al., 2013; ILO, 2013; Menon, 2013; Oelz, 2014; P. Smith, 2000). However, quite importantly, I also find that there is a lack of clearly identified identity 'domestic worker' amongst them, and that most women who work in this sector do not see themselves as one. Domestic work is often described as being an undervalued and

subalternised work (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007b, 2015b; Brites, 2014), and the majority of non-unionised women I interviewed expressed the will to exit this professional category rather than being part of it. When describing their jobs, they would use a diversity of words to avoid using the term *empregada* ("maid" – the most common term in Brazil to refer to domestic workers); such as "nanny" (*babá*), "carer" (*cuidadora*), "cook" (*cozinheira*), or "chambermaid" (*arrumadeira*). However, all these activities fall under the legal category *empregada doméstica* (house employee) as defined by the 2015 legislation, and even though the women interviewed created these differences, they are all technically *empregadas domésticas*. Nanny and carer were perceived as more qualified and more important jobs, as they involve the direct care for another person. These tasks tend to require more and more a technical training, especially carer for the elderly, while cleaning is still perceived as a low-skill task and there are no specific training or certificate for this occupation. Thus, domestic workers themselves create a hierarchy of skills at the top of which stands the carer, and at the bottom, the cleaner. One of the interviewees in São Paulo complained about the fact that her employer had registered her as an *empregada* in her working card, while in reality she is a "carer" (*cuidadora*).

This echoes a relatively widespread idea that having *empregada* written in their working card would "dirty" it (*sujar a carteira*), making these women less employable in the future as a result. This subjective hierarchy also reflects an empirical reality: a study by Nadya Guimarães (cited in Hirata, 2016b, p. 198) shows that the workers who classify themselves as carer and not *empregadas* tend to be whiter, have more years of schooling and better salaries. Wu (2016) also report a similar dynamic in Canada, where white nannies try to distance themselves from what is a socially devalued work, and differentiate themselves from migrant nannies of colour by framing their job as being temporary and transitional. However, the interviews revealed that the majority of women actually perform most of, if not all, the domestic tasks within a given household. When hired to be a nanny, one often ends up cooking and cleaning for the same price. Or, when they have multiple employers, domestic workers find themselves carrying out a diversity of tasks within one week.

In this context, the separation between the different jobs contained within the broader term 'domestic worker' appears as a construction, with the clear purpose of re-valuing

one's profession through a process of distinction.[60] To dissociate themselves from domestic work, many interviewees also insisted on highlighting all the other jobs they had done throughout their lives, the most common being: seamstress, waitress, cook or cleaner in a restaurant (all being highly precarious and informal sectors of activity). This double strategy of dissociation and distinction responds to a widely shared feeling of being under-valued and under-recognised for the work performed. If these women see themselves as workers, and poor workers more specifically, they tend to reject their belonging to the group 'domestic workers'.

The women interviewed often became domestic workers for lack of better opportunities or choice. Some are older women returning to the labour market after a long period of inactivity, others spent years working in the informal sector and therefore have no records of their experience or qualifications, and some have been domestic workers since their childhood and never imagined doing something else. Nonetheless, and despite the social stigma associated with it, several interviewees argued that domestic work was the "least bad" of all the jobs they had done, and presented it as the best option within their constrained environment. Domestic work gives them slightly more autonomy in their schedule, does not involve too much contact with a boss or difficult clients (in the case of cleaners), and can sometimes be better paid, especially for nannies in big cities. Vanete for instance, explained that there are several benefits associated with being a nanny for a rich family:

> I love children, the only issue is that you usually get stuck inside the house. But when you work for people who are really rich, then you get to go to other places, you get to know more people, other nannies… but otherwise you just get stuck inside the house.[61]

However, this reality co-exists with the fact that domestic work is devalued and remains perceived as a low worth occupation. Confirming what other studies on domestic work and the cleaning sector have found (Ally, 2009; Casanova, 2013; Cox, 1997, 2006; Kofes, 2001; Soni-Sinha & Yates, 2013; Wu, 2016), most interviewees complained about the fact that their labour is taken for granted and not appreciated by their employers:

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[60] I use the concept of distinction as developed by Bourdieu (1979), to insist on a process of active differentiation between specific social groups or classes. Here, domestic workers try to create a hierarchy of skills and place themselves at the top of it to appear distinct from the simple cleaner or the common *empregada*.

[61] Vanete, São Paulo, 02/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

> *Doméstica* has no rights! *Doméstica* is a race that is denigrated. [62]
>
> It's just that house service isn't easy, you know? You work, you work, and they don't value you.[63]
>
> There always was prejudice against *domésticas*. Always... people always felt like that… *domésticas* are a less privileged class, more ignorant… back in the days they didn't even know how to write. What is working for a household? It's the profession of those without education. [64]

All interviewees reported an act of humiliation perpetrated by an employer, ranging from treating the employee like an incompetent, being subjected to insults, the withholding of food, or insalubrious working conditions. Of course, not all employers mistreat their *empredaga*, and many women made the distinction between "good" and "bad" employers, but the interviews show that they all had experienced an act of humiliation at the hands of their employer at some point in their professional life. Some even talked about having felt that they were not being treated like humans. The lack of recognition for their work, into which they put so much effort, deeply affects domestic workers' sense of self-esteem. Eunice told me: "The employers, they think that we are silly and clumsy. One thing that really hurts, it's the lack of consideration we get."[65]

The social stigma attached to this occupation, combined with the impression of being undervalued and underpaid, explains domestic workers' willingness to distance themselves from it. Although domestic workers do not directly connect this situation of exploitation to gender and race hierarchies, several interviewees reported episodes of abuse or mistreatment clearly grounded in racist or patriarchal dynamics. Clarice for instance, aged 60 at the time of the interview, shared an act of abuse perpetrated by her employer when she had just started working as a domestic worker at the age of 12. At the time, she said, "the men of the house thought that they had all the rights." [66] Too scared of bringing shame on her own family by disclosing a case of sexual abuse, she simply left the job without being able to seek help or justice. More than 40 years after the fact, she still felt extremely vulnerable when telling her story.

[62] Marli, São Paulo, 12/08/2015, non-unionised domestic worker.
[63] Eulina, São Paulo, 29/02/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.
[64] Iara, Rio de Janeiro, 25/02/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.
[65] Eunice, São Paulo, 12/08/2015, non-unionised domestic worker.
[66] Clarice, Campinas, 05/05/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

A study by Ribeiro Corossacz (2014) shows that in the 1960s and 1970s it was quite common to use domestic workers for the sexual initiation of the young men in the house. Other interviewees also shared stories of violence perpetrated by their husbands, and explained the difficulties they had in leaving them because of their lack of financial stability, or because they did not know their rights. For some, a "nice" employer would provide support with the fees of the legal procedure, or with finding a new place to live. But violence, and more specifically gender-based violence, appears as a common reality for most domestic workers.

Finally, the majority of black interviewees shared shocking stories of blatant racism from their employers, which confirms national studies on racial discrimination in Brazil (see for instance: Venturi et al., 2009):

> For instance, he wouldn't let me drink the water from the house, every day I had to take my own water to work… I take care of his mum, and one day, we needed more toilet paper, so he went to buy some, and when he came back, he said to me: "Next time I'll buy black paper for your black ass!" His mum would always call me "that nigger".[67]

> When I got inside the house, the lady looked at me from head to feet. I thought: Gosh! She didn't like me. Then she told her grand-daughter: "tell her to use gloves!" I stayed there, immobilised, static. I had to give bath to that woman, and she wouldn't let me touch her with the sponge… I couldn't touch her. She looked at me with such a mean look. […] Sometimes, she would look at me like that, and I was thinking that I felt like in the times of slavery. […] When I had to take her out of bed, she would wrap herself in the sheet so that I wouldn't touch her. [68]

These stories reveal the connections between gender, race and class, and how they combine in a particular way that has contributed to the constitution of an under-class of workers. Domestic work being mostly performed by black women, it remains invisible and not fully recognised as work. The situation of extreme social vulnerability in which domestic workers find themselves means they have to simultaneously face racism, poverty, class prejudice, violence, and the devaluation of their labour. In this context, the identity 'domestic worker' is not desirable, and not easily available for the unions to mobilise. If domestic workers share a common material situation, and tell very similar stories, the majority wants to exit the class, not be part of it or organise within it.

[67] Selma, São Paulo, 07/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.
[68] Iara, Rio de Janeiro, 25/02/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

2) Individual strategies of survival

The refusal of a domestic workers' identity, combined with the highly individualised form of labour they perform, lead domestic workers to find individual strategies of survival. Indeed, the location of domestic work within the private sphere represents an important barrier to their collective action and unionisation. Traditionally, unions recruit in workplaces where there is a collective of workers to be mobilised. But because reproductive work is not recognised as work (Federici, 2012; Fraser, 1997, 2016), there is no subject-worker attached to it, and therefore, no readily available subject for unionism. As argued by P. Smith (2000, p. 108): "To be sure, because of its location within the home and its perception as 'woman's work', domestic service historically stood in total opposition to industrial work." Thus, the most immediate and accessible form of resistance for domestic workers is individual.

The coping mechanisms developed by domestic workers represent a type of resistance in a context of deprivation that Bayat (2000) has called the "surviving poor". Indeed, non-unionised domestic workers implement strategies of survival at the micro level, individually negotiating professional and affective relationships with their employers. In fact, the rejection of domestic work as a category means that domestic workers are disengaged from the collective struggles of their class. When I asked if they would consider joining the union, the first reaction of interviewees was usually incomprehension, and they would ask in return "what do you mean?", as if my question made no sense. They would then often ask me if it was paid, and when learning that the union leaders are volunteers, they explained to me that they could not afford doing this for free. They also presented their different conflicting priorities, such as taking care of their own family, or helping out at the local church. For Marlene, participating in religious activities seems more important than being involved in the union or any form of contentious politics:

> I have never had any interest in participating in the union, I've already got the church. In my congregation, I help there, I work in the canteen. I'm always making a lunch, doing something, so I don't have time.[69]

Being a "good Christian" is a more positive, or more socially valued, identity, and women involved in their local church receive a more immediate form of recognition

[69] Marlene, São Paulo, 04/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

from their community. The identity domestic worker being socially devalued the engagement in a trade union that relies on this identity is not desired or desirable.

In addition, the very personal nature of the relationship between domestic workers and their employer represents a significant obstacle to collective action. Working relations are often dealt with on an individual – and emotional – rather than collective level. Domestic workers develop an affective relationship with their employers (Ávila, 2009; Barker & Feiner, 2009; Brites, 2014; Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2014; Soares, 2012), especially those who take care of children or elderly. They perform what some authors have identified as "affective" (Hardt, 1999; Hardt & Negri, 2004) or "emotional" labour (Hochschild, 1983), which are forms of immaterial labour relying on and reproducing affects, feelings, and relationships. By attending to the caring needs of the household, domestic workers produce the immaterial feeling of wellbeing; they provide their employer with a clean, safe, and loving home. They are also expected to perform emotional labour, thereby selling their feelings as part of their job. Indeed, they are required to do their work for love rather than for money, and to take care of their employers' children as if they were their own (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Folbre, 2012; Hirata, 2016a).

As a result, emotional labour is naturalised – women do it because they love it – and the affective relationships involved in these interactions serve to justify a lower wage. This is illustrated by the case of Selma. She used to work as a nanny for a white upper-class family, and when their second child was born, they expected her to take on the extra work without any pay raise:

> I got fired because I cost too much, I charge above the market rate. I charge, to take care of two children, with one new-born baby, I charge R$3,000 (£700). She wanted someone to work 14 hours a day, I said I wouldn't work more than 12 hours. Then she decided to look for someone cheaper.[70]

From her description, the woman employer is not looking for a worker but for someone who can be at the total disposal of the household and attend to her children's needs almost for free. She is looking for a second mother, at no cost. And this is presented as acceptable because of the affection and love implied in the interactions with the children. Thus, affective relationships hide professional relationships, and are used as an instrument of exploitation (Brites, 2014). Domestic labour is posited as a moral

[70] Selma, São Paulo, 07/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

exchange rather than a commercial exchange, relying on women's natural feelings as opposed to their professional skills. Furthermore, because domestic workers are attached to the families they work for, they are less likely to claim their rights or start a labour dispute that could harm the recipient of their care (Birdsell Bauer & Cranford, 2016; Murphy & Turner, 2014).

Some black interviewees also referred to their employers as their "white family". This particular mode of affective relationship, relying on the fiction of racial equality, is often the source of immense deception for the worker. In moments of conflict with the employer, the employee stops being part of the family, and is morally injured by the loss of the trustful relationship they had developed with their employer. The rhetoric of being like one of the family serves to veil unequal racial and class relations, and is "a means of extracting further unpaid physical and affective labour, without the genuine caring and respect associated with a familial relationship" (Stiell & England, 1997, p. 351). Yet, these forms of exploitation coexist with affective and caring interactions, making the employer-employee relation particularly complex. Many interviewees argued for instance that if they work well, they will be "well treated" by their employer, as if good treatment was something optional that depended on individual performance. The protection and good intentions of the employer is in effect the safest option to secure decent working conditions in this highly informal and precarious sector, thereby reinforcing the dependency of the worker on her employer.

Participants described the relationship of trust (*relação de confiança*) as one of the most important criteria to assess their employer; the first quality they are looking for in an employer is honesty, perceived as the only guarantee that they will be treated fairly. More than the law, it is the good character and personal qualities of the employer that can ensure social justice. Domestic workers are looking for some level of care from the household, in exchange for their own emotional labour. Therefore, the emotional relationships and lived intimacy between employers and employees make them mutually dependent, even though the power relation remains asymmetrical. While employers exert a form of violence by extracting unpaid labour from their employee, they also simultaneously display signs of care and attachment. They have the power to offer their domestic worker fair and decent working conditions provided that she does a good a job. Thus, denigration and attachment, affect and exploitation, are co-constitutive of domestic work (Ally, 2011).

Another strategy that appeared quite common amongst interviewees is an informal mode of protest, or what some have called "everyday forms of resistance" (Pande, 2012; Scott, 1985, 2013). Although feminist scholars have warned us against the risk of romanticising resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Mahmood, 2005), or attaching too quickly a revolutionary agency to ordinary actions, interviews suggest nonetheless a conscious decision from some domestic workers to punish their employers by performing acts of rebellion at the micro level, such as: spitting in their drink, flushing their toothbrush in the toilets, leaving dirt in the salad, or stealing food or objects. These actions are presented by interviewees as a form of revenge for the mistreatments and humiliations they had to endure. Sandra explains that although reprehensible, this type of reaction is only normal and predictable:

> Louisa: If you had the money, would you like to have an *empregada*?
> Sandra: yes, I would, and I would treat her very well, because I would know that she takes part in everything that is intimate in my life. I would not want her to spit in my coca cola or to flush my toothbrush in the toilets.[71]

Because domestic work is such an individualised, isolated, and informal work, these small acts of revenge are one of the most pragmatic options available to domestic workers to protest against the mistreatments they endure. These actions of revenge are at the same time invisible, or hard to prove by the employer, thus protecting the employee from dismissal, but also visible enough by the domestic worker to provide her with a sense of relief and justice. Brites (2014) similarly interprets acts of theft performed by domestic workers as part of their interactions and communication with their employers. According to her, theft should be understood as small form of resistance, illustrating the unequal class relations at stake within domestic service in Brazil.

Finally, domestic workers often present a quite individualised approach to rights and meritocracy, and put forward the notion of the "deserving poor", which could be described as neoliberal in the sense that it locates rights at the individual rather than at the collective level (Faulk, 2013; Goodale & Postero, 2013; D. Harvey, 2005). Most interviewees would remind me that, with the new law, they do not only have "rights" but also "duties", and that one depends on the other; you cannot claim your rights if you have not fulfilled your duties. They would also express the feeling of "deserving" this

[71] Sandra, São Paulo, 02/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

law because they work very hard and are as a result "good citizens". At a union meeting in São Paulo in February 2016, participants compared their situation to that of prison inmates. These domestic workers were complaining about their low wages, and argued that even prisoners get paid for their labour inside the prison, which they thought was particularly unfair, since they, the "good citizens" and "hard working poor", were not even earning the minimum wage. This resonates with the Brazilian corporatist welfare state, in which being a good citizen means first and foremost being a good worker.

This is combined with a strong conviction that if one works hard enough she will succeed, make more money, and be treated well by her employer. Class mobility is posited here as an individual responsibility. Most interviewees had also accepted the idea that being a domestic worker is only a logical consequence of their low level of education and lack of qualification. Had they studied harder, they would have had a better situation today. In this context, it is hard for them to see the added value of collective action. Indeed, if success only depends on individual characteristics and work ethics, what is the point of joining a union? [72] This creates a very paradoxical condition for domestic workers' trade unions: they are unions without a class. The very identification with, or existence of the professional category, is negated by domestic workers themselves, who would rather find individual strategies of survival than joining forces to defend their class. Unions are faced with the immense challenge of organising a group of workers that nobody wants to belong to. More than a lack of perception of their work as work, as shown in other studies (see for instance: Kabeer et al., 2013), Brazilian domestic workers reveal a deep reluctance, and even rejection, of the very identity 'domestic worker'.

3) The politicised poor

However, non-unionised domestic workers do strongly identify with "the poor"; a class that is distant and distinct from that of the employers – "the rich" – and whose living conditions are very different. Marli illustrates this when talking about the different educational norms that apply to rich and poor people: "(being a nanny) It's a lot of responsibility! Because poor kids, they fall down, indeed, it happens, but try to let a rich

[72] For a critic of the individualised pro-work ideology, see Weeks (2016), A feminist case for Basic Income: An interview with Kathi Weeks. *Canadian Dimension. 50(3)*

kid fall down to see what happens!"[73] Here, Marli is claiming that the quality of care varies depending on one's class; the expectations regarding the well-being of children, whether they fall-down or not, and hurt themselves or not, depends on their class. Similarly, one of the participants in a group discussion in São Paulo said that her house, "for a poor person's house", was quite nice. This domestic worker marks a distance between her world and that of the "rich people": they will never have the same living conditions, and given where she comes from, she has a relatively good situation. Nonetheless, this good situation will always only be relative – "for a poor person" – because the standards are set by the upper-class. Distinct standards also apply to food. According to Adelimar, poor people have unhealthy eating habits whereas the upper class knows how to eat properly:

> So for instance, if I have to make pancakes (for the employer)… the poor eat pancakes with rice, carbs, they mix-up everything! They (the rich), don't. If the person has a slightly better dietary education, she already knows that you only eat the pancake with a small salad or steamed vegetables, you wash the salad's leaves… cut everything nicely.[74]

This corresponds to what Casanova (2013) calls "embodied inequalities": employers' bodies are made more valuable than that of their employees through health and food habits, and class is made apparent through bodily practices (for example the use of uniforms). Domestic workers are well aware of their position within society, and have somehow accepted their lower status compared to their employers. This is produced and reproduced through daily actions marking the distinction between their homes, their food habits, and their expectations towards their children. The reproduction and acceptance of different classed life styles has been labelled by Brites (2014) as "stratified complementarity". The employer needs the domestic worker to maintain and perform her lifestyle, just as the domestic worker needs her employer to earn a wage. They are mutually dependent, but only as long as they occupy a different – and visibly distinct – class position.

Domestic workers' perception of class and social stratification is not only applied at the individual level; they also have a strong sense of belonging to the broader and collective entity "the poor". This sense of collective belonging is mediated through the pro-poor discourses and actions of the PT, who was able to create a class identity and loyalty from the poorest people in Brazil. Indeed, the social policies implemented under the PT

[73] Marli, São Paulo, 12/08/2015, non-unionised domestic worker.
[74] Adelimar, Niterói, 19/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

government directly affected domestic workers and their families, creating a durable allegiance to the party. Most interviewees benefited from either the *Bolsa Familia*, the "My House My Life" (*Minha Casa Minha Vida*) programme, and/or the black and social quotas in higher education. These different programmes led to concrete improvements of their material conditions, and generated a feeling of gratefulness towards the PT government. Many interviewees had a niece or a daughter who could access higher education through the black quotas and government-sponsored scholarships:

> Lula did the ProUni. Thank God! We are poor, but this year my daughter will graduate. My own son… when did this ever happen, a poor person going to university? I could never have afforded it. They got the scholarship, thank God, thanks to this ProUni my children can be there, graduating from university.[75]

This is particularly important in the eyes of domestic workers as most of them expressed the desire to see their children doing a more valued and better-paid activity than themselves. Getting access to education, and higher education, meant for these women and mothers the opportunity of upward class mobility. Adelimar benefited from the black quotas herself and started a degree in Education at the age of 50. She is a direct descendant of slaves, and has worked as a domestic worker for most of her life. As a child, she used to help her grandmother doing the laundry for rich white families in Copacabana. She completed secondary education just before turning 50, and then decided to continue into higher education. She describes her university, the Federal Fluminense University (*Universidade Federal Fluminense* – UFF), a public university in the state of Rio de Janeiro, as a white place, and explains how great an achievement it is for her to be able to study there:

> I work in these houses here in Icaraí, and I see employers' children here, at the UFF. So, for me, the UFF was a privileged place, that of the employers' children. I never thought of myself being in here![76]

These different social programmes contribute in creating the image of Lula as the "President of the poor". Many also recalled his social origins, or the fact that his own mother was a domestic worker, making Lula one of them. Clemuce, a 60 years old woman who I interviewed in São Paulo, even credited Lula for implementing free public transport for the elderly – even thought this is actually a decision taken at the

[75] Maria P., São Paulo, 02/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker. ProUni, "programme university for all", is an access to education programme funded by the federal government that provides the poorest students with scholarships.
[76] Adelimar, Niterói, 19/03/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.

municipal level. Overall, domestic workers see all the improvements in their lives as a direct result of the PT governments. Domestic workers' positive appreciation of the PT leads them to defend it in the context of the current political crisis, and they would usually define the impeachment as a coup (*um golpe*). Most interviewees saw this process as an attack on the poor and the working class; and more precisely, a backlash against social programmes orchestrated by the rich and the media. This position directly mirrors the discourses articulated by Lula and the PT throughout the period of the political crisis. In a public meeting in support of Dilma Rousseff that I attended in Rio de Janeiro on 11 April 2016, only six days before the first session of vote at the Congress that would open the process of impeachment, Lula contrasted his way of governing with that of the elite:

> It only took us winning an election for a part of the Brazilian elite to show its true face, the part that doesn't like democracy. Their democracy is when *they* are governing, their democracy, is to govern only for the top 30% of the population. […] The Brazilian elite never cared about the poor being able to study, and we changed this logic, we took the poor from the periphery into university! […] I have no degree, I barely completed primary education, but there are a few things I am really proud of, and one of them, is being the president who built the largest number of universities in the history of this country. In 12 years, we did 3 times what they did in a whole century! […] And this bothers them, you know, because they keep thinking, how can this stupid illiterate guy have more university titles than the qualified sociologist who once was president of this country?[77]

In this speech, the former President is directly appealing to class-consciousness, and presenting himself as the President of the poor. He is also arguing that the interests of the poorest are best protected with the PT in power, as the elite will never govern for "the people". Echoing Lula, domestic workers also expressed a sharp criticism of the political elite, emphasising that they earn 20 times more than "normal people" and do nothing with this money, or that they only come to the *bairros* when they need people's vote and then never come back. Clemuce presented her own alternative vision of politics, by imagining what she would do if she got elected:

> But if I were a candidate for something, I would not forget about people, I would go fulfil my promises. I wouldn't be like them. But unfortunately, I can't be a candidate, can I? Because I don't have the money to pay for all the documents… but if I was candidate to the local council, and won, I would go

[77] When mentioning his university titles, Lula refers to the numerous honorary degrees he received in recognition of his action against poverty. The "sociologist" is the former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, from the PSDB, who governed Brazil from 1994 to 2002, and is indeed a Doctor in Sociology. The full speech can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJz1rotv_JQ, (last accessed on 26/06/2018).

> greet everyone! Today I'm no one and already greet them, I greet everyone; dog, cat, chicken, everything that is out there![78]

Here, with simple words, she draws a powerful critique of politics as being only for the rich, who can afford the cost of electoral campaigns, and do not consider the people who voted for them. Politicians are perceived as being unaccountable and self-interested. Corruption is also identified as something practiced by the elite and the employers, starting with small-scale tax evasion done at the expense of their *empregadas*. Many domestic workers believed that their employers did not declare their revenues correctly, and consequently, did not pay the correct amount of tax and social contributions. However, when it came to Lula and the PT, the allegations of corruption were mostly regarded as either false, and part of the plan to illegitimately impeach Dilma, or as almost irrelevant. Some interviewees seemed quite resigned to the fact that every politician is corrupt, and in this context, the PT is the best possible choice for "the poor". Ana for instance explained:

> They can even steal, and it's true they do, but everybody steals. At least today we have a trial, there are people in jail for that. So for me, I'd rather vote for a party who steals, but does something for us, than a party who steals, but defends the rich! At least our situation is better today.[79]

Domestic workers' discourse on corruption contrasts with the middle-class social movement initiated in 2013 against corruption, which ultimately led to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff. While the 2013 and 2014 mobilisations insisted on corruption at the government level, claiming that public money would have been better spent on education and health than on the football World Cup (see Chapter II), domestic workers complained about a household-level type of corruption performed by the rich rather than the government. The very meaning and acceptability of corruption seems then to differ depending on class position. Some level of corruption is acceptable to "the poor" if the policy outcome is good, but more importantly, the discourse on corruption is seen as being instrumentally used against the PT government, while the rich practice tax evasion on a daily basis. Unlike other movements in Latin America that denounce corruption at the state level (see for instance: Faulk, 2013), here corruption becomes part of the broader political coup and has a class-based reality.

[78] Clemuce, São Paulo, 09/02/2016, non-unionised domestic worker.
[79] Ana, São Paulo, 11/08/2015, non-unionised domestic worker.

Thus, although non-unionised domestic workers reject the identity and very existence of the category 'domestic worker', they express a strong identification with 'the poor' as a broader category. Belonging to the poor, as opposed to the corrupted and self-interested elite, has become a more positive social and political identity under the PT. Domestic workers demonstrate a politicised and articulate discourse on public policies and institutional politics, including a classed definition of corruption, and a quite good knowledge of the actions of the successive PT governments. Non-unionised domestic workers correspond to a certain definition of the subaltern as the "political poor" (Chandra, 2015; Motta & Nilsen, 2011; Rodríguez, 2001, 2005), with a potential for collective forms of resistance – despite the prevalence of individualised strategies of survival. There are enough material elements to recognise domestic workers as a class in itself (provision of services to a private household, informal work, low pay, precarious working terms and conditions, structural gender and race inequalities), but also important subjective elements, and a shared experience of oppression, that could lead to their identification as a class for itself (experience of racism, affective relationship to the employer, lack of valuation and recognition).

Table 7 summarises the different material and subjective elements that constitute domestic work as a distinct class, and which can form the ground for a collective identity. Although some elements are common to other informal and precarious workers, the particular combination of gender, race and class forms of exploitation makes domestic work a quite distinct occupation. And these different elements can be leveraged by their trade unions to create a collective identity.

Table 7: Material and subjective characteristics of domestic work

• Provision of services to a private household
• Individualised relationship with employer
• Affective relationship with employer
• Low or no pay
• Precarious working terms and conditions
• Informality
• Exploitation
• Being poor
• Mistreatments and disrespect
• Experience of racism
• Gender-based violence and/or sexual abuse
• A women's job
• Systematic devaluation of labour
• Discrimination
• Distinct lower living standards
• Distinct place within social hierarchy

II/ Making the unions, making the class?

Despite the prevalence of individual strategies of survival, and a profound rejection of the identity 'domestic worker', there are autonomous domestic workers-led trade unions, proving that the fragmentation of the workforce does not make collective action impossible. However, these subaltern unions cannot work in conventional ways, and they have to first *make* the class and create a collective identity 'domestic worker' before partaking in more conventional forms of industrial action. This section analyses the actions developed by domestic workers' unions to create a sense of collective belonging amongst domestic workers and transform them into a class for itself. I identify three mechanisms: the creation of sociability through practices of solidarity and festive events, the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse on domestic work as a valuable work, and the building of a sense of dignity and self-worth amongst domestic workers.

1) Creating sociability in a dehumanised sector

The first mode of action is the creation of social and affective links, bringing back some humanity within this highly fragmented and exploited sector. The unions become a place to share, talk, and have moments of amusement. These practices of sociability, enacted both through special festive events and everyday activities, create a sense of

community and belonging, sustaining local unions' existence and giving them their strength (Lazar, 2017a). Although the practice seems to be less common in recent years compared to the 1990s and early 2000s, many leaders highlighted the importance of Sunday lunches and festive events when they joined the union. All the local unions used to organise *feijoadas* (the typical Brazilian meal made of black beans, pork, cassava flower, and rice) once a month to raise funds and gather their members. Maria Lima recalls:

> Through this colleague from the market, I knew there was lunch every last Sunday of the month. She was an *empregada* for another family, and we met at the market. So I went to the lunches. Before I would eat outside in the street, in a snack bar… so I stayed. And she said, "there it's also a union of domestic workers, let's go contribute to their lunches, contribute to their income." Because they don't have any support from the government, only the contributions from the members, and donations.[80]

The oldest members also recall that back in the 1980s, when most domestic workers lived at their employer's house, the union was the only place where they could socialise, meet other workers and spend their time off on Sunday afternoon. These women had often been separated from their families, or had no family at all, being permanent live-ins. As such, the union was a space for them to celebrate their birthdays and Christmas, meet with other colleagues to complain about employers and share common experiences. In Rio de Janeiro, women would go for lunch at the union every Sunday and stay over for the night. A former leader, who went back to her hometown in Recife in 2015, explained that in the 1980s there would have been about 10 to 15 women sleeping at the union every Sunday. The importance of these Sunday lunches is confirmed by Carli Maria dos Santos: "In the old days, on the Sunday it was crowded. Because they didn't have anywhere else to go, so they would come here on Sunday, make lunch, and stay here."[81] Carli tries to keep this tradition alive by organising festive events and social activities at the union. When I visited them in May 2016, she was planning a *festa junina* – a celebration that takes place every year in June to mark the start of the winter in Brazil. At this occasion, people usually wear typical countryside clothes, drink mulled wine, and dance to Brazilian country music. Carli was organising a lunch at the union to be held on 11 June, with typical food and music. Tickets would

[80] Maria Lima, São Paulo, 24/07/2015, President of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.
[81] Carli dos Santos, Rio de Janeiro, 15/03/2016, President of Rio's union at the time of the interview.

be sold to cover the price of the food and earn some extra money for the union. She was expecting at least 50 women, with their husbands and families.

In Campinas and São Paulo, monthly or bimonthly union meetings are also always accompanied by a lunch. In São Paulo, they usually hold a first meeting in the morning, which is only for elected officers, then have lunch together before holding a second meeting in the afternoon, which is open to all members. In the 1990s, they used to organise lunches more frequently and on specific dates such as the national day of domestic workers (27 April). An information bulletin from September 1999 states: "we had our delicious lunch, prepared with care by our comrades". The leaflet also reports on a bingo they had organised in August:

> We had another of our famous *feijoadas* with an afternoon of bingo playing. The *feijoadas* and bingo at the union are already famous and this one didn't let the tradition down![82]

On Campinas' union website, lunches and *feijoadas* are listed as regular activities of the union, with pictures of the different events held in the past 4 years,[83] and I was invited myself to one of them in July 2017. At this occasion, the union was transformed into a street restaurant; the doors were wide open and any one could join as long as they purchased a ticket (R$20 per person, to eat unlimited amount of *feijoada*), a loud speaker was located at the entrance playing samba and popular music, everyone was dressed-up and visibly enjoying themselves. Members came with their families, and stayed there the whole afternoon, appreciating the music and having beers with their friends.

Domestic workers also demonstrated a taste for role-plays and cultural events. At the FENATRAD's National Conference held in September 2016, local leaders organised a fashion show for delegates to take part in. After a day of debates and lectures, all the delegates walked around the room in colourful dresses, sophisticated make up and hairdos, to the rhythm of the music and under the applause of their colleagues. For one moment, they could be beautiful women and not just disposable domestic workers. The day after, each delegation presented an element of their local culture: Recife had prepared a song about the history of the movement, the three delegations from the state

[82] STDMSP. (1999). *Boletim do Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo - September 1999* - São Paulo: STDMSP
[83] Campinas' local union website site, page "activities": https://sinddomcampinas.wordpress.com/atividades/ (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

of Rio de Janeiro made a *roda de samba*, and delegates from Bahia came dressed in African prints and distributed lucky bracelets (*pulseira do Bonfim*) which are emblematic of the city of Salvador. These moments of joy and relaxation are crucial in bringing the group together, and offering domestic workers something they hardly have access to: leisure.

Figure 10: Roda de samba at the delegations' cultural presentation

Rio de Janeiro also has a local tradition of the theatre of the oppressed (*teatro do oprimido*). In 1940s, the black activist Abdias do Nascimento founded the Black Experimental Theatre (*Teatro Negro Experimental* – TEN), a cultural organisation led and run only by black people (A. Nascimento & Semog, 2006). Its aim was to empower black people and denounce racism through art and culture. Within the TEN, there was a group of domestic workers, pre-empting the creation of the local association that would come in the 1960s. Following this rich militant tradition, two members of Rio de Janeiro's local union, Maria Izabel and Maria José, are part of a troupe led by domestic workers called *As Marias do Brasil* (The Marias of Brazil), which has been active since 1998.[84] Maria is a very common name in the country, and in this case, it symbolises the anonymity and invisibility of domestic workers: it represents a generic character, faceless and easily interchangeable. I provide a poem in appendix 5 ("Maria Died") that talks about this lack of human recognition.

[84] See their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/grupomariasdobrasil/?fref=ts, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

The theatre group *As Marias do Brasil* raises workers' awareness through plays that portray domestic workers' conditions, each representation focusing on a specific issue such as health, working contracts, access to social security, etc. At the 2016 National Conference, they performed a play about the importance of the working card, by showing how a worker – named Maria – was not able to access social security or to challenge her exploitative employer in the absence of a formal contract. The actresses then called on the audience to be part of the play by re-doing specific scenes, and asked women from the audience what they would have done differently if they were Maria. Domestic work being such a socially devalued activity, these festive and cultural events are crucial in getting people together, and providing them with moments of sociability and enjoyment. It brings humanity back into the sector, and enables the creation of durable social links that compensate for the fragmentation and isolation of domestic workers.

In addition, local unions act as support groups, building effective solidarity amongst workers. Josefa Faustino explains the importance of being part of a community, and highlights the significance of the psychological support provided by the union:

> Doesn't the rich have a psychologist to relieve himself? He goes to the divan, or I don't know where. Kids, they also go I don't know where, to the social workers. What about the domestic worker? You need a place to talk. Here there were a lot of meetings, at the weekends. I wouldn't miss one.[85]

Likewise, Rosa da Motta Jesus, the President of the union of Franca, sees the union as the place where domestic workers can share all their issues:

> The union is like a medical practice: you have to be everything to the workers, their doctor, their psychologist, and even dermatologist sometimes! Sometimes, workers come here crying and you have to find a way to cheer them up, make your office hours a time where they can find a bit of happiness, a friendly word or advice.[86]

These practices of solidarity correspond to what the anthropologist Sian Lazar (2013, p. 114) has called *contención* (containment), which is "both a therapeutic practice of containment through counselling and a kind of encompassment of the individual by the

[85] Josefa Faustino, Rio de Janeiro, 24/02/2016, leader of Rio de Janeiro's union at the time of the interview.
[86] Rosa da Motta Jesus, Franca, 07/07/2017, President of Franca's union at the time of the interview.

collectivity". She also defined containment as a practice of care (Lazar, 2017a), built through everyday forms of sociability enabling the formation of relations of trust and support between union members. Brazilian domestic workers' unions enact two modes of *contención* identified by Lazar: a psychological and therapeutic practice, as powerfully expressed by Josefa who recalls that the poor too have emotional and psychological needs; and a political notion of group belonging in the making and re-making of the category 'domestic workers'. Unlike the Argentinian unions Lazar analyses in her work, who are more established and resourceful, Brazilian domestic workers' unions cannot provide as many services and material support to their members, nor represent them in formal negotiations with employers. But the Sunday lunches, the plays, and the creation of sociability, clearly respond to a need for human contact and friendship.

This space of socialisation also leads to a concrete experience of citizenship, as the social gatherings would often be the opportunity to talk about rights, and labour rights more particularly. Through processes of "political encompassment" (Lazar, 2013, 2017a), unions become a place from which domestic workers can exercise citizenship, or claim their access to it, and a site from which to create a better society. Thus, unions provide both caring relations – they create a community of friends where domestic workers can find emotional support and enjoy themselves – and political relations, as they turn domestic workers into active political subjects.

2) Reclaiming the value of labour

The second type of action unions do can be identified as a "discursive strategy" (Kabeer et al., 2013): they produce alternative (subaltern) discourses on work and the value of labour. Indeed, domestic workers' unions have always contested the characterisation of domestic work as a 'non-productive' activity, which has been used to exclude them from labour laws. In contrast to this dominant narrative, domestic workers claim to have a productive role within the Brazilian economy, and therefore, to be proper workers entitled to labour rights. A pamphlet produced by the local union of Recife in 1989, and distributed to other local unions, explains:

> **The value of our work**
> The tasks that we perform are indispensable to the rest of society. They guarantee hygiene and feeding to thousands of workers; the future workers – CHILDREN. They allow men and women, who work outside their homes, to

> regain their strength daily. Without our daily contribution, the other workers would have to earn more, or work less. Indeed, only this way would they be able to take care of their families and of themselves. Our work within the home complements the public work of the rest of the society![87]

Minutes from a regional training organised by the FENATRAD in 1997 provide a class-based and Marxist analysis of domestic work.[88] It argues that some workers extract profit over others, thereby positing domestic workers as productive units; they create surplus value that is appropriated by their employers. Immersed in their federation's discourse, local leaders have developed a very insightful analysis of the division of labour in which their work is presented as fundamental to society as a whole. They claim that domestic workers produce care and wellbeing, and are essential to the reproduction of other workers' labour power. As Lúcia Helena Conceição de Souza explains:

> Domestic work is the worst and the best of all jobs. It creates education, health and wellbeing. If domestic work ends, all the other professions will end too. Everyone needs a domestic worker; the doctor, the professor, they all need someone to take care of their house, their children, and cook them food. If domestic work ends, Brazil ends. It is a very important job, but people don't value it at all.[89]

The framing of domestic work as work is at the core of the movement, as it is the condition for domestic workers' to access labour rights. Therefore, unions promote a discourse of rights, dignity and citizenship, and constantly reaffirm the value domestic work has for the Brazilian economy. This is illustrated by the discourse of Creuza de Oliveira, leader of the FENATRAD:

> We contribute to the global and Brazilian economy. Our labour power contributes to the economy. But unfortunately, society does not value this work because, first of all, it's done by women and black women. But also, because they don't have to go to university to do this job. A profession that is valued is a profession for which you studied at university, only then do you have a status. Everybody is proud of saying "I'm a judge", "I'm a lawyer", "I'm a politician"… but nobody wants to say "I'm a domestic worker", including the domestic worker herself. Domestic work doesn't have any status.[90]

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[87] Sindomésticos Recife. (1989). *Domésticas: Uma Categoria da Classe Trabalhadora. Seus Direitos, Suas Lutas, Suas Propostas,* p. 7

[88] FENATRAD. (1997). Relatório do II Seminário de Formação dos Trabalhadores Domésticos da Região Centro Oeste.

[89] Lúcia Helena Conceição de Souza, Volta Redonda, 02/08/2017, President of Volta Redonda's union at the time of the interview.

[90] Creuza Maria de Oliveira, Salvador, 07/08/2015, President of the FENATRAD at the time of the interview.

Unlike non-unionised domestic workers, who recognise but also accept the lack of value attributed to their work, Creuza de Oliveira understands this process as discrimination. She questions the social hierarchy and challenges the notion of skilled/unskilled jobs. She actively resists the devaluation of domestic work by positing it at the centre of Brazilian society and economy. Union leaders also differ from their non-unionised colleagues by affirming their pride in being domestic workers. They are proud of doing their job well, of making their own money and being independent, and to provide for their families. Maria Lima from São Paulo would often recall that it is thanks to this job that she was able to buy a house, could provide for her father, and travel the world – she lived for two years in Japan with her former employer. Similarly, Eliete Ferreira explains that domestic work is what maintained her family in dignity and gave her the means to pay for decent schools for her children:

> But I don't know why they are ashamed, darling! Because it's with this profession that I provided for my three children, that I paid for the technical course for my son! It's with this profession that I paid for schooling. […] Everything that I gave to my children… I've always loved dressing my daughter with Barbie clothes. It was with this salary. And new clothes! She wore C&A clothes. My son, I liked to dress him as a tiger. And it was with this profession, so how could I be ashamed of this profession?[91]

This process of redefining domestic work is done inside the unions, both at the national and local level, through meetings, trainings and experience sharing between members. In São Paulo, Maria Lima would always start the Sunday meetings by reminding participants of their rights and emphasising that they too are workers. Then domestic workers are given a chance to ask any question they have, or share an issue they are facing with their employer. This informal discussion group allows them to see the similarities of their working conditions and to support each other by giving their colleagues advice. Campinas' union produces a monthly newsletter to inform workers and invite them to join the movement. Each newsletter ends with a text box explaining how to join the union, and states: "Come to learn how to negotiate with your boss, and how to value your labour. This work is as important as any other."[92] Creuza de Oliveira also insists on using the term 'domestic worker' rather than 'maid', thereby affirming domestic workers' place within the Brazilian working class. This vocabulary of work, worker, rights, and citizenship, is consistently used by the FENATRAD: each leaflet or

[91] Eliete Silva Ferreira, Campinas, 05/05/2016, President of Campinas' union at the time of the interview.
[92] Campinas' union newsletter, issues from October 2013, March 2014, July 2014, February 2015 and June 2015. Available online: https://sinddomcampinas.wordpress.com/informativos/, (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

campaign material addresses the category as 'domestic workers' and mentions their belonging to the working class, as exemplified by the posters in figure 11.

Figure 11: Posters from the FENATRAD: "Domestic work too is a profession"

The leaders I interviewed in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have also been involved in a training programme called "Domestic Work and Citizenship" (*Trabalho Doméstico Cidadão* – TDC), organised in partnership with the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and the FENATRAD in 2006. This programme had the double objective of enabling domestic workers to reach a school level equivalent to secondary education, and teaching them about their rights as workers. The courses were designed with the input of local union leaders, and the guiding principles were:

> Empowerment, autonomy and gender equality in the labour market as a result. Domestic work with full equal rights and recognised as a profession. It is necessary to transform this work, so important socially, into a citizenship-based work.[93]

In addition, the programme "Domestic Work and Citizenship" promotes a positive vision of domestic work as work, insisting on its value for society as a whole:

> Domestic work has an immense social importance, since it has an irreplaceable role in the reproduction of the workforce and for the wellbeing of people. Although an extensive part of this social reproduction is done in the domestic sphere, only a small share of this work is paid. […] The valorisation of

[93] National Plan of Qualification, Citizen Domestic Work: http://acesso.mte.gov.br/data/files/FF8080812CD2239D012CEA32DAAA663A/LivretoPlanseq_trabalhodomesticocidadao.pdf

> domestic work is an urgent demand to build a society that is fairer, more egalitarian and less discriminatory.

The programme was run in the cities of Recife, Salvador, Aracaju, São Luiz, Campinas, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and enabled about 350 domestic workers to complete secondary education. Regina Teodoro, an elected officer in Campinas, talks about this training plan as something that was hugely important, not just for domestic workers' qualifications, but also for their self-esteem:

> I was part of the project "Domestic Work and Citizenship", which was built over 3 years. I was coordinator of the course. This has been a blessing for all of us who were involved in the course. Today we have members who did this course and then went to university without doing a prep school or anything like that. We have this elected officer of ours, Edilene, she studied gastronomy after the course.[94]

Thus, domestic workers' unions are places in which an alternative and positive identity can be constructed, and from where the devaluation of the labour of domestic workers can be challenged (Soni-Sinha & Yates, 2013). Fundamentally, domestic workers reclaim domestic and care work as being productive and valuable against centuries of devaluation of black women's labour. They contest the coloniality of labour (Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2014; Quijano, 2000) and the racial and gendered hierarchies produced by it (Lugones, 2010), and propose a radically alternative (counter-hegemonic) vision of society. They demand equality, and by doing so, they deeply challenge the social hierarchies in place.

3) Building dignity and a sense of self-worth

The third type of action I have identified is a process of empowering domestic workers, taking them from invisible and undervalued workers to trade union militants. The local unions open a space through which domestic workers can become political leaders, exercise power, and strategize on how to make society a better place. Through their militancy, domestic workers do not only realise the of value domestic work as an occupation, but also their value as people and as black women, leading to what can be seen as a process of empowerment (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2013; Gonçalves, 2010; Hill Collins, 2000).

[94] Regina Teodoro, Campinas, 05/05/2016, leader of the union of Campinas at the time of the interview.

The interviewees used specifically the term empowerment (*empoderamento*) when discussing their experience as militants, capturing simultaneously an increased consciousness of their oppression and the process of collective emancipation enabled by their political work. In accordance with unionised domestic workers' discourses, empowerment will be understood here as interconnected individual and collective dynamics. At the individual level, it represents the increase in one's degree of autonomy and confidence, or, as expressed by Hill Collins (2000, p. 74 and 273): the power of self-definition, changing individual consciousness, and transforming knowledges and unjust social institutions. Gonçalves (2010, p. 66) further characterises empowerment as a collective process, with the potential to effect change within society as a whole, and she defines the unions of domestic workers as platforms to "fight for equality in gender and race relations". Using the perspectives provided by Hill Collins and Gonçalves together, I define empowerment as: a process of transforming social relations of domination, expressed through a regaining of confidence (individual sense of self-worth); an ability to produce new knowlegdes about oneself or the group of belonging (domestic workers as workers rather than maids or slaves); and a higher degree of autonomy and capacity of action (defending domestic workers' rights). Local unions are the place where this process can happen.

At the monthly meeting held on 21 May 2016 at the local union of Campinas, one of the elected officers had prepared an activity designed to make participants talk positively about themselves and their achievements. The nine black women and union members who came on that day were sitting in a circle, and were asked to pass around a box with a photograph inside. Each participant in turn had to open the box, describe the photograph they saw and identify one default and one quality of the person on the photograph. They would then say what they wished for the future of the movement. When the activity began, participants found out that instead of a photograph, the box contained a mirror showing their own reflection as they opened it. This activity very rapidly turned into a group therapy; participants became very emotional, and spent a lot of time reminding themselves where they came from and what they had achieved. They all used militant vocabulary such as "fight", "struggle", "warrior", and some shared very intimate stories about mistreatments or sexual abuse from their employers. They also recalled how things were different when they first joined the movement: they had no rights, no minimum wage, and no access to the unemployment fund. They described the union's journey as positive and successful, insisting on its importance for the

category and for themselves as individuals. Significantly, the participants took this opportunity to praise other members and recall how much they admired each other as friends and comrades:

> I will never give up on the fight. I really admire all my comrades, and feel very happy to be here in this fight with them. (dona Lina)

> When I first came I was really shy, the movement enabled me to speak up, I learnt a lot. My objective was to fight for us, domestic workers. (Dorceni)

> I am not here because of any particular elected officer: I am here for the category, for a bigger and wider struggle. The domestic workers' fight is bigger than any of us. (Domingas)

This kind of activity enables the creation of a collective "us, domestic workers", while also enhancing women's self-esteem. It enables them to appreciate their trajectories and struggles, and to recognise their own value and self-worth. As a result, unionised domestic workers are also deeply attached to their union, which gives them a sense of purpose and achievement. As put by Rosa da Motta Jesus, President of Franca's union:

> The union gives life to us, I want to be always fighting and advancing the rights of my professional category. We don't have anything, but we do everything we can, we have a real willingness to do it because we love our professional category.[95]

The movement also brings new opportunities and responsibilities to elected officers: travels, trainings, taking part in Parliamentary enquiries, and negotiations with the government or the ILO. This access to the Congress and formal institutions fundamentally shifts the social role and image of the domestic worker, and challenges the public/private divide. It shows that a house cleaner can be a skilled politician. Through their activism inside the union, domestic workers move from simple worker to representative of their class. They enter the sphere of political power, and learn how to debate and engage with an audience of professional politicians. Going from the status of simple *doméstica* to that of union leader represents a very big step. Most of them had to leave school before completing primary education, and as a result, tasks such as writing leaflets, reading the law, talking in public or debating in front of elected politicians can be really challenging. And in fact, many said that despite not having had any formal degree they went to "the school of life". Josefa Faustino, a leader of Rio de Janeiro's union recalled the shock she felt when she was first elected:

[95] Rosa da Motta Jesus, Franca, 07/07/2017, President of Franca's union at the time of the interview.

> I came as a secretary, the first time… but I had hardly finished the 5th year of primary school, I didn't know how to write, I didn't know how to count, I don't know any of these things… these things of accountants… of those reports… and what am I doing here? The first time it was a shock! It hit me in the face! All I knew was how to be a domestic worker. And I became secretary! Can you imagine, an illiterate person as a secretary?[96]

Similarly, Maria Lima from São Paulo reveals how big a change it has been for her to become president of the local union:

> So after 2007, there was an election, and they invited me to be part of the elected committee. I said, guys, I don't understand anything! I didn't understand anything. I know how to clean up a wardrobe, wonderfully, how to iron clothes. But this thing of talking to the public… we are usually alone, doing our service, we sing while doing our service. Now picking-up the phone, talking to people… if you're not prepared it can be daunting. But now I found my balance, and since 2007 I'm still here.[97]

In addition, being part of the movement gives domestic workers the opportunity to feel useful, to help other domestic workers and through their actions, to transform society. Activism gives a new meaning to domestic work, and elevates the status of the worker to that of someone who matters. Many emphasised how good they felt about doing something altruistic, and how empowering it was to dedicate themselves to social work:

> It's good for me, if I'm here, I like it, it's good for me. Working with the people is very good, you can change their lives. What you've been through, they also went through. It's an exchange of experiences.[98]

> I liked it immediately, I liked it and said "I will stay here". I had never taken part in any meetings like this before. Until then I didn't even know there was a union of *domésticas*. When I heard of it, I came and took part in the first, the second, and at the third meeting I already knew I was going to stay as a member. Then after a year, when they called me to be part of the elected board, this is when I felt accomplished. It gave me a chance to do something good, you know?[99]

Being a union leader gives domestic workers a sense of self-worth; they are valuable and valued members of society, and have the capacity to produce social transformations. This power goes beyond their individual emancipation, they can act for the good of an entire subaltern group. Through their activism, domestic workers cease to be invisible and exploited workers; they become active political subjects (Ávila,

[96] Josefa Faustina, Rio de Janeiro, 24/02/2016, leader of Rio de Janeiro's union at the time of the interview.
[97] Maria Lima, São Paulo, 24/07/2015, President of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.
[98] Maria Lima, op. cit.
[99] Silvia Maria da Silva, São Paulo, 03/03/2016, treasurer of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.

2016). Activism further contributes to redeeming their sense of self-esteem, giving them new responsibilities and a positive image of themselves. This journey, from invisible workers to political subjects demanding their rights, is seen by leaders as a constant battle. As expressed by Regina Semião from Campinas: "it's been hard, but I always say that we are warriors." This process corresponds to what Sardenberg (2008) calls "liberating empowerment", connecting individual consciousness to broader structures of power, as opposed to a "liberal" and depoliticised vision of empowerment focused on individual capacities.[100] Domestic workers who are involved in their trade unions give a political dimension to their personal oppression; they conceive the devaluation of their labour as a structural issue rather an individual weakness, and engage in collective action to defend their rights and change this system of oppression.

The practice of activism radically changes the perception of domestic workers. Compared to their non-unionised colleagues, unionised domestic workers have a more positive image of their job, of the value of their labour and of themselves. They see domestic workers as a collective, and the union as the instrument to defend and protect this collective. According to Eliete Ferreira, the union's role is to "win the rights we don't have, and fight for equality". Local leaders' sense of justice and dignity is embedded in their vision of the union, which is, according to them, the most precious thing domestic workers have. Thus, domestic workers' unions are a place where the class is being made: they produce collective identities, reclaim the value of domestic labour, and empower their members turning them into leaders and political subjects.

Table 8 summarises the key differences between non-unionised and unionised domestic workers, or what I call the 'union effect'. Making the unions effectively means making the class of domestic workers by enabling them to recognise themselves as a coherent group with common interests. The differences summarised on the table are not always that clear-cut, and sometimes unionised domestic workers also use the modes of action described in the non-unionised column. But overall, unionised domestic workers are more likely to use collective repertoires of action and are prouder of their work than non-unionised domestic workers.

[100] For a more comprehensive discussion on the notion of empowerment within feminist literature, and a critique of how it has been appropriated by the development agenda, see for instance: Alvarez (2009); Kabeer (2012); Sardenberg (2008).

Table 8: Differences between unionised and non-unionised domestic workers' perception

	Identification with the category domestic worker	Value of domestic work	Value as individual worker	Strategy of survival	Role of the union
Non-unionised	Low, rejection of the category Furthering fragmentation and distinction	Acceptance of social hierarchy Domestic work perceived as a devalued activity	Mixed feeling of pride and shame, willingness to distance oneself from domestic work	Mostly individual Small-scale forms of resistance and individual negotiations with employers	Instrumental; a compulsory step for labour disputes
Unionised	Strong, active creation of the category Fighting fragmentation and building unity	Rejection of social hierarchy Reclaiming value of labour and reframing domestic work as a dignified work	Pride and dignity, domestic work is a work like any other, or even more important than the others	Mostly collective Demanding labour rights for the class Being active within the union	A space of empowerment A crucial mechanism to fight for equality and social justice

The isolation, informality, and social devaluation of domestic workers make their identification with their professional category harder. Vectors of gender and race oppression complicate the sense of class unity as individual women do not only face labour or class-based exploitation, but they also experience the effects of racism and patriarchy in their lives. The specific combination of gender, race and class in the Brazilian post-colonial context makes domestic work a stigmatised and undervalued activity nobody wants to be identified with. However, the similarity of domestic workers' lived experiences, and their identification with the broader category of the poor, means that there are elements that unions can activate to transform domestic workers into a class for itself. The creation of a collective identity is the first step for these subaltern unions, before being able to undertake more conventional forms of collective action. They do this work of building unity and a positive class identity through social events, by reframing domestic work as valuable work, and by offering a space for domestic workers to empower themselves. Indeed, unionised domestic workers were proud of their work and more assertive about their dignity as workers than

non-unionised domestic workers. I have called this process of transforming individual and collective perceptions the 'union effect'.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the first paradox of subaltern politics: domestic workers' identity is simultaneously rejected and needed for their recognition in the Brazilian corporatist industrial relations system. Domestic workers have been posited as the non-worker par excellence in this system, and the criteria required for recognition can never be adequately fulfilled given the nature of this work. Yet, they need to conform to the imaginary of the worker-citizen to be recognised as workers, and need to join trade unions to be able to demand labour rights. Domestic workers are not adequately represented by conventional unions since they are not the traditional union membership; they are women, black, not in a typical industrial job, and have been outside of labour regulations for decades. As a result, they have created their own autonomous and domestic workers-led unions, at the margins of industrial action, through which they attempt to make domestic workers a class for itself.

The first section focused on non-unionised domestic workers, and their rejection of the identity 'domestic worker'. They do not want to belong to the class of domestic workers, marked by gender, race and class oppressions, socially stigmatised, and devalued on the labour market. Therefore, non-unionised domestic workers tend to adopt individual strategies of survival, and perform small-scale acts of resistance against their employers. But they also appeared as politicised subjects, and identified themselves with the class of the poor, a more positive identity crafted by the PT and Lula in particular, which transmitted the idea that they have rights as poor people. Thus, there are enough material and subjective elements to affirm the existence of a class in itself, which is the basis upon which domestic workers' unions can operate.

The second section turned to the work local unions do at the grassroots level, drawing on interviews with domestic workers' union leaders. Local unions create the identity 'domestic worker' through practices of sociability and solidarity, offering a space for their members to enjoy human contact and find friendship and support. Unions even play a therapeutic role in some cases, and can become the place where domestic workers share their experiences of mistreatment and abuse. It is a place to heal from social isolation and indecent working conditions. Domestic workers' unions also

reframe domestic work as a dignified work, and demonstrate its economically productive and socially valuable dimensions. They posit domestic work as the basis of all the other works. Finally, leaders experience a process of empowerment by doing something they consider useful and ethical. Being in the union transforms domestic workers' perceptions of themselves and of what they do.

The difficulty of creating unity in the sector remains however an important barrier to unionisation. Indeed, domestic workers' class identity is not necessarily the most relevant to domestic workers as they are not only workers but also women and black. One challenge for local unions is therefore to bring all these elements together into a consistent discourse and analysis of domestic workers' condition of subalternity, in order to mobilise all their vectors of oppression and turn them into resources for collective action. Local unions' intersectional practices are the object of the next chapter.

Chapter VI/ Practicing intersectionality: strategies of alliance building and identity mobilising

Wednesday 21 September 2016, 18:30. The plenary that officially opens the 11th National Conference of Domestic Workers is about to start. The event is hosted by the Association of Pensioners of the Bank of Rio de Janeiro, who runs a recreation centre in the area of Tanque, in Jacarépagua, Rio de Janeiro. The session is chaired by Creuza Maria de Oliveira, the President of the FENATRAD, dressed in African fabrics to remind participants of the ancestral origins of black people in Brazil. The list of external organisations represented is impressive: CUT-Rio de Janeiro, the feminist organisations SOS Corpo and Themis, the black organisation Criola, the human rights NGO Cépia, as well as international partners such as the ILO, UN Women, the US trade union Solidarity Centre, the CONLACTRAHO and the IDWF. The audience is composed of 70 delegates of local domestic workers' trade unions, the vast majority of whom are black or mixed race. With the exception of Francisco Xavier, elected for the union of Bahia and treasurer of the FENATRAD, all the delegates are women. Tonight, they are all dressed up formally, which shows the importance of the event. The guest speakers all officially embrace the cause of domestic workers, reminding them of the importance of their struggle not only for themselves, but for Brazilian society; their struggle embodies the fight against social exclusion, inequality, and the legacy of slavery in the country.

However, beyond public speeches, the reality is more ambivalent. The event is entirely funded by international organisations: Solidarity Centre, the ILO and UN Women. The CUT, to which the FENATRAD is affiliated, only provided T-shirts and badges, and a night out on Saturday in a famous samba school of Rio de Janeiro. Other partners seemed more supportive, but were in turn too visible during the Conference, and gave little space for the self-organisation of domestic workers. The first three days were spent listening to external organisations who presented on their own research findings, reports, or campaigns. There was something slightly unsettling about watching external organisations talking about domestic work to domestic workers, instead of listening to them. These few days of Conference capture the complexity of building alliances: although alliances are needed because the unions of domestic workers are precarious and under-funded, having a broad range of partners risks invisibilising domestic workers or having them used for other organisations' own agendas.

At the national level, the FENATRAD has implemented quite an extensive strategy of alliance building with feminist, black and workers' movements (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007b, 2013, 2015a). The organisation receives support from well-established groups such as the Feminist Centre for Research and Advice (*Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria* – CFEMEA), the Unified Black Movement (*Movimento Negro Unificado* – MNU), and international institutions such as UN Women and the UNICEF. In addition, Creuza Maria de Oliveira used to represent the FENATRAD in the Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (*Secretaria de Políticas pela Promoção da Igualdade Racial* – SEPPIR) and the Secretariat for Women's Policies (*Secretaria de Políticas para a Mulher* – SPM), both directly linked to the Government.[101] Creuza de Oliveira also offers a comprehensive perspective on domestic work, linking it to the history of slavery and tracing the connections between gender, race and class:

> Domestic workers' struggle in Brazil has to do with gender, race and class. There is still a remnant, or a historical process, from the movement against slavery. We black women and black men, we were trafficked from Africa and brought here to Brazil. The majority worked in the plantations, the others worked at the master's house. […] There is a historical continuity, we were wet nurses, servants, maids… and now we say that we are domestic workers and that we are part of the Brazilian working class.[102]

Creuza's strategy of alliances corresponds to her vision and understanding of domestic work; its location at the intersection of gender, race and class oppression and its strong historical ties with anti-slavery movements form the basis of their alliances with feminist, black and workers' movements. However, I observed diverging strategies amongst the local unions with whom I worked in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Each local union has its own way of dealing with the intersectional dimension of domestic work, which shapes their willingness to form alliances with other movements. In São Paulo and Franca, the local union refuses to incorporate more than one dimension and focuses only on domestic work as a class and labour issue. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, the three local unions act as critical allies to other movements, privileging class and race over gender. Finally, in Campinas, local leaders perceive the union as an umbrella for organising poor black women, using all the social identities of domestic workers to bring them to the union. The analysis of these complex and

[101] These two structures have been dismantled after the coup in May 2016.
[102] Creuza Maria de Oliveira, Salvador, 07/08/2015, President of the FENATRAD at the time of the interview.

diverging realities directly addresses the question of how the domestic workers' unions organise at the grassroots level.

Debates on organising precarious workers suggest that already existing unions are expanding their actions beyond the workplace, and reorienting their strategies towards social movement-like tactics that are more inclusive of workers' multiple social identities. These strategies have been called community or social movement unionism, emphasising the links between the workplace and the other dimensions of workers' lives (Brickner, 2013; Engeman, 2015; Fairbrother, 2008; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Murray, 2017). Yet, for domestic workers, organising 'beyond the workplace' has always been a necessity, as it is almost impossible to organise workers within private homes, especially when they are the sole employee of the house. Domestic workers' organisations, both in Brazil and elsewhere, have always had to form alliances with community-based organisations to gain visibility and secure both human and financial resources from their allies (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b; Boris & Nadasen, 2008, 2015; Cornwall et al., 2013). I argue that what has made these alliances possible, is precisely the intersectional dimension of their oppression. Indeed, it is the recognition and mobilisation of their gendered, raced and classed oppressions that enables a strategy of alliance-building with movements that share the same social identities. This is the second paradox of subaltern politics: while subalternity has produced multiple forms of exclusion, it has also enabled domestic workers to build alliances with women, black, and workers' movements.

Thus, this chapter explores the ways in which domestic workers understand and use intersectionality, and how they transform their multiple vectors of oppression into a resource for collective action. It focuses on interviews with domestic workers union leaders to understand their perception of unionism and collective action, and analyse local unions' strategies of alliances. This chapter also discusses unions' relative successes and limitations, following the four dimensions developed by Lévesque and Murray (2010): internal solidarity (cohesive collective identity and deliberative processes), narrative resources (ideology and interpretative frames used by the union), network embeddedness (unions' capacity to build alliances and partnerships), and infrastructural resources (human and material resources). This framework enables me to include both material and non-material resources into my analysis of the unions' strengths and capacities, providing a more nuanced picture of their realities. The

complexities of identity building have already been discussed in chapter V, and all the unions studied have weak infrastructural resources, as explained in chapter II, because they are under-staffed and under-funded. Therefore, I will focus here on the dimensions of discourse production and network embeddedness, both of which are directly linked to local unions' practices of intersectionality.

I find that local unions' ability - or willingness - to form alliances is informed by their vision of domestic work, and how intersectional they are in practice. The more social identities are incorporated into their discourses, the broader their alliances are. I also suggest that while being challenging to implement, an intersectional practice allows unions to develop a more encompassing vision of domestic work and expand their recruitment tactics, thereby reaching out to a greater number of domestic workers. Since the very identity 'domestic worker' is rejected by most non-unionised domestic workers, unions' capacity to mobilise other vectors of their social identities considerably influences their organisational outcomes.

The first section of the chapter gives an overview of women's and black movements in Brazil, highlighting their relationships with domestic workers. The second section focuses on the local level, and analyses the three different strategies implemented by unions in the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, showing how each of them articulates gender, race and class into their discourses and strategies. The third section discusses the challenges of implementing an intersectional practice, and proposes a framework for measuring how intersectional unions are. I conclude by affirming that the most successful unions are those who are able to provide a comprehensive discourse on gender, race and class and mobilise these vectors of oppression through a broad strategy of alliance and identity building.

I/ Inclusions and exclusions from social movements

In order to contextualise the relationship between the domestic workers' unions and other organisations, this section gives a historical overview of the women's and black movements in Brazil since the period of democratisation. I will highlight moments of cooperation between these different actors, as well as issues that have historically crystallised some tensions, such as abortion, the 1988 Constitution, and the introduction

of black quotas in higher education. Partnerships around socially marginalised identities are constantly negotiated and being remade by the groups involved, depending on their context and the issues at stake. I first map women and feminist movements and their interactions with domestic workers, showing how they have been punctual allies on specific issues, but that, overall, their relationship is traversed by race and class divisions. I then turn to the relationships between black movements and domestic workers, and highlight the importance of black groups' support to the organisation of domestic workers since the beginning of their movement in 1936.

1) Women and feminist movements

Paradoxically, the period of the dictatorship (1964-1985) has been a time when women's participation in Brazilian political life increased (Alvarez, 1990; Marques-Pereira & Raes, 2002). The unusual absence of men, imprisoned or exiled, led women and mothers to take on new responsibilities in their families and communities. Women's fight for survival rapidly became a fight for the respect of human rights. Just like the well-known *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina (Bosco, 2006; Georgina Waylen, 2000), women in Brazil got organised against the disappearance and torture of their husbands and sons. They also became heads of household in a context of increasing poverty and economic crisis, which led them to directly challenge the military regime. In the late 1970s, women started a Movement Against Hunger, demanding wage increase, and a Movement of Action for Childcare demanding the provision of public services for their children. These movements were rapidly connected to the strikes of 1979 and 1980, thus uniting women and workers' mobilisations against the regime (Chinchilla, 1992; Del Priore & Bassenezi Pinsky, 1997; G. Waylen, 1993).

Women's participation in their local ecclesiastical communities (*Comunidades Ecclesiais de Base* – CEB), strongly influenced by the Theology of Liberation, has also been a key vector of collective action and politicisation (Rosado Nunes, 1997). Promoting a more inclusive and less hierarchical vision of Catholicism, CEB organizers would give women more responsibilities than in traditional churches, training them to speak in public and become political leaders. The CEBs were successfully implanted in poor communities and played a major role in structuring local social activities (Corten, 1990; Ireland, 1991; Lehmann, 1996). Thus, the displacement of political action at the

community level, together with the narrowing of the traditional political space, opened up new possibilities for women's mobilisations (Jaquette, 1989; Safa, 1990; G. Waylen, 1993).

In parallel to popular women's movements, the end of dictatorship and the transition to democracy also saw the strengthening of feminist groups (Alvarez, 1990; Alvarez & Escobar, 1998; Falquet, 2007). These were mostly led by white middle-class women, and had as a their key demands: publicly funded and accessible child care, the end of violence against women, and the recognition of reproductive rights. On those three aspects, feminist and women's movements had very similar platforms, which facilitated their alliances. Feminist movements also linked their struggle for women's rights to the broader struggle for democracy and social justice, and became an important ally to other social movements opposing the regime (Alvarez & Escobar, 1998). Leblon (2014) and Chinchilla (1992) argue that because of the political and economic context, feminist movements in Brazil and in Latin America in general link patriarchy and capitalism more strongly than in Europe or the USA, thereby making feminism more popular.

Feminists also played a key role in the process leading to the writing-up of the 1988 Constitution. The Constituent process opened the drafting of the Constitution to popular participation, enabling local constituencies to present demands and propositions. Women got organised into a National Council for Women's Rights, and, together with the trade union movement, put forward propositions regarding working hours' limitations, maternity leave, paid leave and minimum wage, and obtained that the principle of gender equality be inscribed in the Constitution (Bezerra De Lima, 2006; CUT/CNMT, 1988). However, accounts of women's victory in 1988 often omit the fact that domestic workers, at the time the largest group of women workers, were excluded from the Labour Code by the article 7 of the 1988 Constitution. This came as a major disappointment for the domestic workers' unions.

After the return to democracy, women had to start fighting to be included in political parties and trade unions. They created a Women's Campaign within the CUT, which became an official secretariat of the union in 2003. This means that the National Secretary of Women is part of the National Executive Committee, the highest internal body, and gets to vote the national orientations of the CUT. The CUT also adopted gender quotas in 1993, stating that each executive body must have a minimum of 30%

and a maximum of 70% of men or women (CUT, 2006, 2011). This was changed to a rule of 50/50 parity in 2015. The Women's Campaign also provides legal training for women on their rights as workers, and is invested in a popular education initiative regarding reproductive rights. However, the CUT women's campaign seems relatively distant from domestic workers, and in fact, domestic work is barely mentioned in their pamphlets or policy documents.

Outside of trade unions, there has been a multiplication of feminist organisations and NGOs since the 1990s, including LGBT groups, feminists of colour, and transnational groups such as the World March of Women of the Slut Walk (Ávila, 2007; Giraud & Dufour, 2005; Sorj & Gomes, 2014). Notwithstanding their diversity, feminist groups share common concerns regarding the penalisation of abortion, the gender wage gap, violence against women and dignity at work. However, these demands do not always reflect domestic workers' priorities, and in fact, they are often quite distant from these new feminist organisations. As I will show in the next section, domestic workers' religious values sometimes contradict feminist demands, for instance regarding divorce or abortion, and make some of their tactics look immoral to domestic workers.

Furthermore, Gonçalves (2010) and Kofes (2001) highlight the initially conflicted relationship between domestic workers and feminist movements, essentially led by white middle-class women who are also domestic workers' employers. Low-waged domestic workers have been the very condition of white women's emancipation and insertion into the labour market, especially during the neoliberal decade when public services were cut and labour intensified. They also had important disagreements regarding abortion and reproductive rights. In the 1980s, black women were mostly fighting against forced sterilisation imposed by the military regime, which contradicted to a certain extent the discourses on bodies and freedom of choice promoted by feminist groups (C. Rodrigues & Prado, 2013). Lenira Carvalho, one of the founders of the union of Recife, explains for instance that the first time a militant from the NGO SOS Corpo came to their union to discuss abortion, it came as shock to them (Carvalho, 1999, p. 114), even though these two organisations now work closely together.

2) Black movements

Because of their historical struggle against slavery, black movements appeared to be one of the most important allies of domestic workers (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2013; Covin, 1996; Harrington, 2015). The first association of domestic workers was created in 1936 with the support of the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front – FNB), of which Laudelina de Campos Mello was part. However, the association was made illegal by Vargas in 1937, and Laudelina had to find alternative ways to organise her colleagues. At the time, domestic workers could not organise into trade unions as they were not recognised as a professional category in the Labour Code, therefore, it is trough their connections to black movements that they could articulate their demands against racial discriminations in the labour market (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007b). In the 1940s, the Experimental Black Theatre in Rio de Janeiro enabled the formation of a group of domestic workers who would use this space to discuss their condition as black women (see chapter VII for more details), while in the cities of Santos and Campinas, domestic workers would be involved in cultural and educational activities with local black groups (Pinto, 2015).

In the 1970s, black movements started articulating a stronger discourse against structural discrimination and racism, while reclaiming their black identity and African heritage as a positive collective identity. The *Movimento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement – MNU) was founded in 1978, with the aim of regrouping all the local black organisations, and in the early 1980s, a women's branch was created. They insisted on access to education, closing the wage gap, and put an end to state violence against black populations (Burdick, 1998; Mitchell-Walthour & Darity, 2014; Perry, 2013; C. Rodrigues & Prado, 2013). Although I could not find records of domestic workers being directly involved in these groups, those demands directly affect them as black poor women. In 1984, the city of São Paulo created a council for the participation and development of the black community, which was soon followed by other big cities like Rio de Janeiro. This enabled the progressive inclusion of black demands and the fight against racism in local governments' agendas.

Lula, in the first year of his presidency in 2003, made the 20 November the National Day of Promotion of Black Consciousness,[103] created a Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (*Secretaria de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* – SEPPIR), and implemented a policy of quotas for black students in all state universities (Paschel, 2016; Rodrigues da Silva, 2012). The SEPPIR was an independent consultative body at ministerial level (it has now been reorganised under the Ministry of Justice after the 2016 coup), with the role to propose and monitor policies relating to racial inclusion and anti-racism. It elaborated the Racial Equality Statute, adopted in 2010, and pushed for the inclusion of a race perspective into 25 national policy programmes.[104] Htun (2004) describes the implementation of these racial inclusion policies as being in total rupture with the myth of racial democracy, thus initiating a full recognition of structural racism in the country. The FENATRAD had a seat in the SEPPIR, which enabled it to be part of discussions on black quotas and racial equality.

But Paschel (2016) argues that the progressive institutionalisation of black movements has led to tensions between different groups. The MNU for instance, boycotted the Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality created in 2003 as a sign of protest against the loss of autonomy of the black movement (Paschel, 2016, p. 180). The new pro-black policies also generated conflicts with other movements and revived discussions about the hierarchies of gender, race and class. In an anthropological study of black women's groups in Salvador, McCallum (2007) shows the divisions that emerged between black and white women's organisations around the politics of quotas. Although white feminists were in favour of a gender quota in politics, they did not support the university quota for black students. Interlinked to the racial question, the issue of domestic work has also been another major point of division for the feminist movement, which has often failed to integrate domestic workers' demands. Brites (2013) argues that domestic work reveals the lack of unity between white and black women when their divergent class interests are at stake.

[103] This day was chosen in memory of the day Zumbi, the leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares - a community of fugitive slaves, was murdered (20 November 1695). The Quilombos represent one of the most important forms of resistance against the slavery system during the colonial period, as well as an attempt by trafficked African people to maintain their culture and social organisation. Zumbi was killed by the *bandeirante* (fortune hunter and Portuguese settler) Domingos Jorge Velho, in a fight to preserve the existence and autonomy of the Quilombo dos Palmares, after the governor of the state of Pernambuco had ordered its dismantlement.

[104] See the SEPPIR website for a summary of its history and actions: http://www.seppir.gov.br/sobre-a-seppir/a-secretaria (last accessed on 26/06/2018)

II/ Mobilising gender, race, and class to form alliances

At the local level, I identified three different modes of alliance building, each of them reflecting a particular vision of domestic work and a particular way of dealing with intersectionality in discourse and in practice. Local unions perceive and mobilise the vectors of gender, race and class in different forms, and depending on their vision of domestic work and the role of their union, they establish their own strategy of alliance building. The 'rigid autonomy' strategy corresponds to the refusal by the unions of São Paulo and Franca to build any alliance. This position is based on the unions' perception of domestic work as being first and foremost a class and labour issue. The 'critical ally',[105] a strategy implemented by the three unions of Rio de Janeiro, is a form of punctual and non-institutionalised alliance with some movements, but with the understanding that these can only be partial and made with some precaution. These unions tend to privilege vectors of class and race in their analysis, and are therefore more distant from feminist groups. Finally, the union of Campinas has developed what I call the 'encompassing unionism' strategy, in which the union becomes a platform to organise poor black women. Domestic work is conceived as being at the intersection of diverse forms of oppression, therefore, the union is a tool rather than end in itself to organise black women.

1) The rigid autonomy

The first mode of alliance-building discussed here is the refusal to build alliances, or what I call the 'rigid autonomy'. This strategy is implemented by the unions of the cities of São Paulo and Franca, both in the state of São Paulo, who have made the choice to remain autonomous from other unions and movements at the risk of being isolated. They receive very limited financial or human support from other organisations, and do not take part in broader local coalitions. This strategy results from their understanding of domestic workers' oppression as being first and foremost a class-based issue, and their decision to focus almost exclusively on labour concerns.

São Paulo is the biggest and richest city in Brazil, and is the capital city of the state of São Paulo. There are approximately 474,000 domestic workers for a total population of

[105] This term is often used to characterise social movements, who, while supporting left-wing governments, also adopt a critical discourse on their actions. The Landless Movement in Brazil for instance sees itself as a critical ally of the PT.

12 million people, representing 7% of the active labour force of the city (DIEESE & FES, 2015). Within the state, there are over 1.5 million domestic workers, which represents the largest share of the domestic workforce of the country. The local association of domestic workers was founded in 1962 by a group of *empregadas* who were part of the *Juventude Operária Católica* (Young Catholic Workers – JOC), and only became a union in 1988 when the new Constitution authorised domestic workers to get organised into trade unions. Franca is a medium-range city, located 400 km north of São Paulo city, with a population of 350,400 people. The local association was also created by a local progressive branch of the Catholic Church in 1986, and became a formal union in 1996. According to local leaders, there are about 5,000 domestic workers in Franca. São Paulo's executive committee is composed of three members, and has a board of 18 elected representatives. They hold meetings once every other month, on the last Sunday of the month. However, most elected representatives are not active, and in fact, I only met six of them. Franca also has an executive committee of three members, and a board of 12 elected representatives. They hold monthly meetings, usually attended by about 15 members, and the president is the only one present every day to do casework.

Both unions are quite isolated, and have developed a distrustful position towards the CUT. Maria Lima, the President of São Paulo's union, does not want to get involved with the CUT because she thinks that: "they only take advantage of us, they only give us troubles. They only invite us to their own thing (events/meetings) and don't take any interest in us".[106] Other elected officers of the union disagreed with Maria on the usefulness of being affiliated to the CUT, and believed it helps making them more visible. Nonetheless, they did agree that it was often a one-way partnership; domestic workers are called to attend national events and trainings, but the bigger unions and national leaders do not come to their activities and do not support them at the local level. As such, São Paulo is a reluctant affiliate to the CUT; they joined it because they have to in order to be more visible and access some minimal resources, but their partnership is a source of tension and discontent. Maria Lima further affirmed that she would rather not receive any financial support from the CUT, since "we never know where the money comes from". Similarly, Rosa da Motta Jesus, President of Franca's union, mentioned a conflict she had with a member of the PT who tried to set up his

[106] Maria Lima, São Paulo, 15/05/2016, President of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.

own domestic workers' union, bypassing her, in order to use this structure as a fundraiser for his political campaign at the local legislative assembly. When this happened, she complained, "I did not get any support from the CUT or from the party".[107]

São Paulo's leaders also appear quite distant from the PT, and see institutional politics as a "mess" (*uma bagunça*). Elected members of the congress are perceived to be a self-interested class, representing employers rather than workers. Locally, staff at the City Hall (PT) and in NGOs confirmed their difficulties in working with the union, which they characterised as extremely distrustful of institutional power. In particular, Cristina Corral, a member of the Mayor of São Paulo's office, who set up a centre of information about the new legislation, affirmed that the union first reacted with suspicion towards the initiative:

> They were afraid that this would take their audience away. Then they realised it was not the purpose, although some officers there are still a bit like that. They are really worried that we could use them for our own benefit.[108]

This confirms local leaders' fear of being instrumentalised and losing control over their own agenda. Although the PT is perceived positively (the party of "the poor"), union leaders do not entirely trust individual members who act within established institutions. In fact, they have quite a distant, or even inexistent, relationship with the local representative of the Ministry of Labour (also PT), Luiz Marcolino, who is barely aware of their work. When asked about the action of the Ministry towards domestic workers, he claimed:

> Domestic workers are only just starting to get organised, it will take time to form proper unions. They have no means to pressure the government because they do not have strong unions.[109]

This lack of connection between the union and politicians makes domestic workers relatively invisible in the field of institutional politics, even to those who are elected on a PT mandate and should be more inclined to support them. This considerably limits the ability of domestic workers to get support and resources from more established

[107] Rosa da Motta Jesus, Franca, 07/07/2017, President of Franca's union at the time of the interview.
[108] Cristina Corral, in charge of "Autonomy and Economy" at the Secretariat of Policies for Women of the city of São Paulo, 24/07/2015, interviewed at her office.
[109] Luiz Marcolino, local representative of the Ministry of Labour for the state of São Paulo, 04/05/2016, interviewed at his office. He resigned from his position just after the confirmation of the impeachment, on 11th May.

institutions; or to develop "means of pressure" on local representatives of the government.

Despite their complex relationship to the CUT and the PT, São Paulo and Franca's leaders defend the national government, and consistently referred to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff as a coup (*golpe*). Their connection to the CUT and the PT has enabled the articulation of a strong class identity. A document written by the former President of São Paulo about the history of the union, states that their main purpose has always been the inclusion of domestic workers within labour laws: "Domestic worker is a profession as worthy as any other, therefore, what we want is to reach full equality of rights".[110] Class is the most salient element in their discourses, and forms the basis for their collective action. They see domestic workers as part of the broader class of "the poor", and insist on their value as workers. They explain discrimination against their category as being essentially based on their lower social status:

> Louisa: where do you think this discrimination comes from?
> Estella: because when you are an *empregada*, you have to submit yourself to anything. Although any workplace has its own thing, harassment, and other things. But being an *empregada* is worse; there's a lot of people who look down on you because of their status, and think, "this one is my *empregada*, I can respect or disrespect her, I can do whatever I want", and you have to stay quiet.[111]

At the Sunday meetings, Maria Lima would always remind participants that domestic work is a job like any other, and that they should not be ashamed of their profession. Her discourse would exclusively emphasise labour issues and their identity as workers. Questions of gender or race were never brought up. Likewise, in Franca, Rosa da Motta Jesus insists almost exclusively on labour-related issues and existing legislations when she is receiving domestic workers at the union's office. At the time of our interview, she was particularly concerned with the general labour reform (*reforma trabalhista*) that had been approved by the Congress in 2017, and wrote a leaflet on the matter to inform domestic workers of the upcoming changes. According to her: "they (the domestic workers) don't seem to care, but they will see in November 2017 when the law comes into effect, they will queue up here to know what to do".[112] Although this reform will

[110] STDMSP. (2001). *História de uma Luta*. São Paulo: Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo – STDMSP, p. 3
[111] Estella, São Paulo, 03/03/2016, General Secretary of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.
[112] Rosa da Motta Jesus, Franca, 07/07/2017, President of Franca's union at the time of the interview.

have detrimental effects on domestic workers who have a signed working card, it will mostly affect the workers in full-time permanent contracts covered by the CLT, and in more protected sectors. Thus, insisting too much on this particular aspect might prevent the union from addressing domestic workers' most immediate concerns.

This strategy of isolation and single-issue focus marks a shift from the 1990s. During this period, local unions were more integrated within other movements and had more sustained relations between them at the state level, internal archives mention the existence of 12 local unions in the state of São Paulo whereas today there are only 3 active unions affiliated to the CUT (São Paulo, Campinas and Franca). An information leaflet from 1999 mentions their participation in a black women's seminar and to a local church led by a black priest. It also gives a summary of the National Statutory Plenary that took place the same year, articulating dimensions of race and class together:

> The CUT has been chosen as our confederation. We also had a debate "the 500 years (of Brazil) and the history of the working class". Within this theme it was reminded that our category started existing 500 years ago when the slave masters used to kidnap Africans and commercialise them here in Brazil as slaves, creating the wet-nurse, servant, and maid, to work at their service. All enslaved black women.[113]

The late President of São Paulo's union, Dejanira, also seemed to have been more active within the FENATRAD and she led many activities with other local unions in the state of São Paulo in the 1990s.[114] However, under the current leadership, the union does not have any established partnerships with black organisations, and does not consistently integrate race into their discourses on labour and value. Elisabete (hereafter Bete), an older officer who was more active in the 1980s, mentioned several times some episodes of racism, but this was never articulated within her vision of domestic work or seen as a potential explanation for its devaluation. In fact, Bete is quite critical of black movements, and claims that when she started volunteering for the union, black women would look down on her:

> Domestic workers would not want to be received by another black woman, because they thought I could not know that much about the law. […] Black

[113] STDMSP. (1999). *Boletim do Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo - September 1999* - São Paulo: STDMSP

[114] The minutes from the Regional Conference that took place on 23rd and 24th October 1999 show that Dejanira was a regional coordinator, in charge of organising the state of São Paulo. She was also present at a meeting of the National Coordination of the FENATRAD on 2 July 1999.

> people are racist, even against themselves. Our race, we black people, we are racist.[115]

Bete's quote reveals the reproduction of racial stereotypes amongst black and poor people. It shows the permanence of a social and racial hierarchy within which black communities, and black women in particular, are perceived as being ignorant or not educated enough. Therefore, the social identity 'black' is not easily mobilisable; just like the identity 'domestic worker', it remains associated with negative stereotypes. This is further complicated by Bete's impression of being devalued by her own people. When asked about the union's relationship with black and feminist movements, Bete replied: "the feminists and the black movements don't come find the domestics. They don't really care about us".

A similar dynamic occurs with gender; some aspects of gender oppression are recognised indirectly, but it does not form part of local leaders' discourse on labour and value. Being a woman is never really acknowledged or discussed, except when it comes to marriage. Union leaders perceived husbands in general as being *machista* and oppressive, and some shared personal experiences of gender-based violence, but these elements were not directly connected to their discourse on domestic work. Nonetheless, domestic work is implicitly recognised by Silvia Maria da Silva Santos (hereafter Silvia) as a women's job, and what is more, as an exchange occurring exclusively between women:

> You see, nowadays, women work more often outside, they don't have time to do the housework, so they need someone. And who better placed than the *doméstica* to do this? Therefore, they need one. They go to work, and when they come back home they do not want to clean, cook, take care of the kids, their homework, this kind of things. They come back home and everything is ready, why? Because there is a *doméstica* doing it all.[116]

Silvia makes a difference between women and *domésticas*, and uses the word "women" with some distance, as if she was not a woman herself. Her experience of being a woman, or her idea of what being a woman means, is mediated by race and class; some women have a job outside the house and can hire a domestic worker, others, the poor, are the domestic workers themselves. However, this gender element was never explicitly acknowledged in local leaders' discourses or at their meetings, and it was

[115] Bete, São Paulo, 28/02/2016, leader of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.
[116] Silvia Maria da Silva Santos, São Paulo, 03/03/2016, treasurer of São Paulo's union at the time of the interview.

never part of their explanations regarding why domestic work is devalued, or why domestic workers are discriminated against. When they talked about discrimination, it was always in relation to the law and their rights – or lack thereof – as workers.

In addition, or perhaps as result of this lack of identification with the category 'woman', local leaders have a relation of distrust with feminist movements. Maria Lima sees feminist groups as "messy" and "gossipy"; she pictures them as women fighting and being disorganised, and believes it would be "a waste of time" for her to attend their meetings. São Paulo's union leaders are not part of the coalition that organises the annual demonstration for the 8th of March, or any other local feminist group. The CUT-São Paulo women's campaign also appears to be quite distant from domestic workers. Indeed, when I first visited the union on 24 July 2015 I was accompanied by a member of staff of the Women's Campaign who had offered to introduce me to their local affiliate. However, when we arrived there, I realised it was also her first time at the union, and the Women's Officer had never been there herself. At this occasion, Maria Lima complained about not being included in their mailing list and not receiving any information about their events. After that, the CUT Women's Campaign awarded Maria with a prize in April 2016 to celebrate the National Day of Domestic Workers, but this gesture was mostly symbolic. Domestic work is not consistently discussed or integrated into the Women's Campaign. In Franca, Rosa da Motta Jesus sits at the Women's Council of the City Hall, but this did not translate into any effective strategy of alliance with women's or feminist groups.

Thus, the (partial) lack of identification with the social categories 'women' and 'black', combined with their impression that organised feminist and black groups do not care about domestic workers, explains the disconnection of these two unions of domestic workers from other social movements. And even though they do identify with the working class, they have an ambivalent relationship with the CUT and the PT, preferring to remain isolated rather than having to compromise with them. This relative isolation limits unions' capacity to recruit members and to mobilise domestic workers. São Paulo has only 5 active members (all elected officials), while Franca has 3. Local leaders estimated that they had about 50 paying members in the case of São Paulo, and

70 in the case of Franca.[117] This number is particularly low for a city of the size of São Paulo, which has half a million domestic workers. The unions are quite unknown both to their rank-and-file and to other stakeholders (weak network embeddedness), and their narrative on domestic work remains limited by their single-axis focus. Indeed, local leaders only emphasise class and labour, while the identity 'domestic worker' is precisely the one being rejected by non-unionised domestic workers. As a result, if non-unionised *empregadas* do not see themselves as domestic workers, and the union does not try to mobilise other aspects of their social identity, it becomes harder to recruit and organise the rank-and-file.

2) The critical ally

The second strategy implemented by domestic workers' unions is what I have characterised as the 'critical ally'. This consists in having a non-institutionalised relationship with key stakeholders (unions, feminist and black organisations), and forming occasional alliances but remaining distant and critical of their partners. This mode of alliance-building is implemented by the three local unions of the state of Rio de Janeiro, in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Volta Redonda, and Nova Iguaçu. There are 698,742 domestic workers within the state of Rio de Janeiro, representing 9% of the total economically active population (CUT-RJ & Sintell-Rio, 2013). Within the state, Rio de Janeiro is the biggest city with 6.3 million inhabitants, and has the highest concentration of domestic workers. However, while most of them work in the city they often live in the periphery – an area called the *baixada fluminense* – of which the city of Nova Iguaçu is part. The distance to the city centre and the precariousness of transportation means that many domestic workers still sleep at their employer's house, usually going back to their homes every other weekend.

Volta Redonda is located 140 km away from Rio de Janeiro, at the border with the state of São Paulo. It is known for hosting the state-owned company *Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional* (CSN), the second largest steel industry of Brazil, built in 1946 by President Vargas. The construction of the CSN attracted thousands of workers from the

[117] This exceptionally high number compared to other unions is explained by a special partnership with the city hall through which members of the union can access a transport discount.

coutryside – there were 10,000 workers in 2016 before a wave of restructuring,[118] turning Volta Redonda into a historical site of working-class struggles (see for instance: Santana & Mollona, 2013). Although the history of domestic workers in the city is not accounted for in official records, their movement is interlinked to the presence of the CSN; the wives and daughters of the steel workers became the domestic workers of the industrial city.

The three unions were created by local progressive branches of the Catholic church, linked to the Theology of Liberation (Chaney & Castro, 1989) and they all kept a close relationship with religious groups. Nova Iguaçu and Volta Redonda got access to a space to set up their headquarters through their local church, and some of the unions' elected officials are also actively involved in their religious community. In fact, most of them joined the domestic workers' movement through their local church. Carli Maria dos Santos (hereafter Carli) for instance, heard of the group of domestic workers from a friend of her employer, who was part of the Resurrection Church, and subsequently invited her to attend domestic workers' meetings. The city of Rio de Janeiro used to have a *Pastoral da Doméstica* (domestic worker's pastoral), which is a religious group entirely dedicated to, and run by, *domésticas*.[119] Domestic workers could more easily negotiate a day or an evening off with their employer if it was to attend church's meetings. These local groups would also provide a space for training and sociability for domestic workers, progressively turning them into political activists:

> I started going to that church, there were two alphabetization classes a week, and then this women's meeting once a week. We would do manual work, read the Bible, and chat with each other. I was never really good at painting, embroidery or crochet, but I was good at talking. I always talked a lot, and people would stop and listen to me. Then I was appointed to coordinate a group. She (the nun) gave me a Bible, I still have it today. She said, "every week you'll pick a text from here and will go organise a fraternal meeting." Despite all my difficulties with reading, there I went, and I organised the domestic workers' group.[120]

Similarly, Cleide Pinto, the president of Nova Iguaçu, and her mother *dona* Lourdes, the former president of the union, both joined the union following the advice of their local priest, Father Salvador, a French missionary sent to Brazil in the 1980s. Pamphlets from

[118] See *Confederação Nacional das Instituições Financeiras* news release, on 12/01/2016: http://www.cnf.org.br/noticia/-/blogs/csn-demite-300-funcionarios-na-unidade-de-volta-redonda

[119] Minutes from the National Coordination of the FENATRAD on 2 June 1999 include a short report of activity for each region. In the 'Southeast' section, the union of Rio de Janeiro reports attending activities from the Pastoral da Doméstica.

[120] Carli dos Santos, Rio de Janeiro, 15/03/2016, President of Rio de Janeiro's union at the time of the interview.

that period that I found at the union also show the existence of active solidarity links with the Workers' Catholic Movement in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro. The union of Volta Redonda was founded in 1984 – after a split from the association of the clothes washers (*lavadeiras*) by two nuns who where sent there by their church in order to do social work. Eliete and Irene (they did not inform me of their family names), now aged 76 and 89, still live together, and support the union in every way they can; they negotiated their access to a room in the city mall that serves as their offices, receive some financial support from the local church, and help the union with administrative tasks. Local unions' strong connection to the revolutionary branch of the church has influenced their discourse on class and their modes of organising. They use a language inherited from the CEBs of "base organising" and "nucleus of consciousness raising". In an information leaflet from 1996, they explain the importance of having base groups in each city and region, whose role is to inform, raise consciousness and organise the political struggle of "the class". They also describe the union as the basis "to transform society".[121]

This class-consciousness influenced their choice to join the CUT and the PT, and the three local unions seem to have a relatively good relationship with the confederation at the regional level. Carli, president of the union of Rio de Janeiro, was personally involved in the creation of the CUT in 1983, and reclaims the role of domestic workers in the consolidation of the trade unionist movement:

> Louisa: how did you choose to be affiliated to the CUT?
> Carli: the affiliation to the CUT, well this was when we were still an association… The CUT is younger, right? We were already there when it was created. I also went to São Bernardo to create the CUT, with Odete Conceição. I remember how cold it was![122]

Local domestic workers' unions received some support from the CUT between 1986 and 1988, a period known as the Constituent during which social groups could present popular amendments to be included within the new Constitution under elaboration. The CUT helped them secure transportation to get to Brasília, and present their demands for labour rights to the Constituent Assembly. But Carli claims – confirming other

[121] Report from the 1st Regional Workshop, with the presence of the unions of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and Espirito Santo, 14 and 15 September 1996.
[122] Carli dos Santos, Rio de Janeiro, 15/03/2016, President of Rio de Janeiro's union at the time of the interview. São Bernardo is a city in the suburbs of São Paulo, where the CUT and the PT were founded after the strikes of 1979-1980, led by the then metalworker union representative Lula. Odete Conceição is the woman who created the association of domestic workers of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

historical accounts on the issue (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2007b, 2013) – that the CUT was not their main ally at the time. Instead, a determining factor d in this historical moment of the Constituent, was the election of Benedita da Silva, a black woman and former domestic worker from the favela Praia do Pinto in Rio de Janeiro, and the first black woman to be elected in the Congress.[123] She got elected Congresswoman with the PT for the state of Rio de Janeiro in 1986, and was inside the Congress throughout the period of writing-up of the Constitution. Although domestic workers did not secure equal rights at the time, the union leaders who took part in the campaigns for labour rights during the Constituent in 1988 recall the role of Benedita da Silva and the opportunities she opened for them inside official institutions. The minutes of the National Council of Domestic Workers' (which became the FENATRAD in 1997) meeting of 10 and 11 November 1996 record that the union of Rio de Janeiro was appointed as a referee to liaise with the Congresswoman, which demonstrates their close relationship and proximity. A leaflet from 1992 also shows the alignment between Rio de Janeiro's union with the PT/CUT campaigns against austerity:

> We can say that this was a ghost year. And nothing changed for us, because we still have unemployment, and wages are not adjusted to the prices we pay. All this is the result of a neoliberal politics turned towards the interests of the rich, the bosses. The worker gets poorer every time. Comrades, we need to disrupt this sad reality. We cannot stay mouth shut and arms crossed. It's through the organisation and consciousness raising of all workers - and we are part of them - and through our unity, that we will change the game!

This short text reveals the strategic choice to insist on domestic workers' belonging to the working class, making their struggles part of the broader workers' movement. They make a clear distinction between their class, that of the workers, and that of the rich and the bosses, who employ and exploit them. The three unions seemed to have maintained relatively good relationships with both the CUT and the PT, and Cleide Pinto was elected to the board of the CUT-RJ in August 2015.

However, local leaders are also quite critical of the CUT, and complained about the lack of support and inclusion within their broader agenda. The union of Volta Redonda for instance, contrasted the occasional support provided by the CUT for small repairs and office furniture to their constant lack of funding to run campaigns and for base-mobilising activities. Leaders from the three unions affirmed receiving more support from international organisations such as the ILO or UN Women than their own national

[123] For a more complete biography, see her website: http://www.beneditadasilva.com.br/benedita-da-silva/

confederation. The union of Rio de Janeiro in particular is well connected to international partners, through its representative Noeli dos Santos (hereafter Noeli) who holds a seat at the FENATRAD and at the CONLACTRAHO. This enables her to be well inserted within transnational networks: Noeli knows representatives of domestic workers throughout Latin America personally; has direct contact with NGOs, UN Women and ILO representatives; and is the legitimate representative of Brazil for any international project or issue. Through these different international connections, the local union manages to secure occasional funding to run trainings or campaigns. Noeli and Carli were for instance course coordinators on the programme "Domestic Work and Citizenship" which took place in 2006 in partnership with the ILO and the Ministry of Labour. Noeli is also the person who was in touch with the IDWF, and who invited the General Secretary, Elizabeth Tang, to attend FENATRAD's National Congress in September 2016.[124]

Apart from class-based organisations, the three local unions do not have well established partnership with black or women's movements at the national level. Their relationship with feminist movements is distant, and mostly of distrust. In 2017, Nova Iguaçu had just started working with a black women's organisation, Criola, but they have no formal ties with them, and feminist groups seem mostly absent from the unions' day-to-day struggles. In March 2016, Marlene Miranda, the CUT-RJ women's officer created an activist group called "Women for Democracy" to support the government and oppose the coup, but when I interviewed her about her role as women's officer, she confessed: "Domestic work, I don't know much about it",[125] revealing that this group of women is not a priority for the CUT. Cleide Pinto (from Nova Iguaçu) is part of WhatsApp group "Women for Democracy", but her involvement remains minimal. It takes about 2 hours to get from her city to the centre of Rio de Janeiro by public transports, making it quite inaccessible for her and other women from the periphery.

[124] Language is a major barrier to the transnationalisation of Brazilian domestic workers' unions. If they can communicate with Spanish speaking countries, they usually do not speak or understand English, and do not have enough resources to pay for a translator. In the run-up to the National Conference 2016, I was asked by Noeli dos Santos to support them with emails and translations between them and Elizabeth Tang.

[125] Marlene Miranda, Rio de Janeiro, 23/02/2016, CUT-Rio women's officer at the time of the interview.

Similarly, the organisation of the yearly demonstration for the 8th of March, led by a group called the "Women's Forum", remains quite inaccessible for domestic workers. Although Carli was in their WhatsApp group, I didn't see her or anyone from the local union of Rio de Janeiro at their meetings or events. One day that I was having lunch with them at the union, Carli and Noeli asked me if I was a feminist. I answered that I am in favour of gender equality, and that for me this was feminism. They laughed and replied:

> Oh no, that's not feminism! Feminism is a white movement, they do not share domestic workers' problems and do not pay attention to us. They are all employers. While they demonstrate in the streets, who takes care of their houses? Now there's even those women who march naked and say they are sluts and that it's cool…[126]

The feminist movement is seen as something belonging to upper-class white women, distant from domestic workers' preoccupations and reality, which raises a crucial question for feminist solidarity. What does it mean to be fighting for women's liberation or emancipation, if this activism is only made possible through the exploitation of black women's labour? These critiques have been addressed to white feminists for decades, both in Brazil (see for instance: Gonzalez, 1982) and elsewhere (see for instance: Combahee River Collective, 1986; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984; Lugones, 2010). In addition, domestic workers' religiosity and connection to catholic groups makes some feminist demands, such as abortion, quite controversial. The comment from Carli and Noeli regarding the slut walk conveys a discrepancy between their moral values and the tactics used by some feminist groups. Although there is a rich variety of feminist organisations, including groups of pro-choice Catholics who try to reconcile religious values with feminist demands, religion seems to stand in the way of domestic workers' full adhesion to the feminist movement.

Joaze Bernardino-Costa (2015b) argues that domestic workers' distrust towards the feminist movement comes from feminists' position on domestic labour, and the exploitation of black women's labour to emancipate themselves from housework. A leaflet produced by the local union of Rio de Janeiro in 1995 states for instance: "As long as a woman, to free herself, oppresses another woman, there will be no liberation nor equality between women" (Information leaflet, 1995, cited in: Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b, p. 125). Class and race mediate domestic workers' experience and

[126] Group discussion, Rio de Janeiro, 17/05/2016. They are referring here to the slut walk.

understanding of gender relations; they deny the universality of women's liberation since they are kept in a lower social position so that richer white women can reach this liberation for themselves. Besides, their identification to the class of "the poor" is inseparable from their race; in 2013, 70% of the black population was in poverty, compared to 46% of the white population (IPEA, 2014).[127] This difference is less significant between men and women, 57% of men compared to 59% of women, and amongst women, the difference mirrors that based on race; 71% of black women compared to 46% of white women were in a situation of poverty. In the union of Rio de Janeiro, local leaders discussed race to mark a distinction with other groups; employers, the feminist movement, and elected politicians. It draws a line of demarcation between different social spaces; the rich and the poor, the domestic workers and those who can employ them. In this hierarchy, feminists seem to stand on the side of the rich and the employers, more than on that of the poor and the workers.

In Volta Redonda and Nova Iguaçu, race was mentioned more explicitly. Lúcia Helena Conceição de Souza's (hereafter Lúcia Helena) personal history is tied to that of slavery; the house she and her mother live in had been given to their ancestors by their master after the abolition of slavery. The men of the family stayed in the suburbs of Volta Redonda to work in the plantations, while the women went to Rio de Janeiro to work as maids. Her mother worked for very elite white families in the centre of Rio de Janeiro, including one of the colonels during the military regime. Both Lúcia Helena and Cleide Pinto would talk about race very directly, connecting it to the situation of labour exploitation that domestic workers face.

Their discourse on race and class oppression, as well as their embeddedness in progressive Catholic movements, have enabled the unions of the state of Rio de Janeiro to have a strong and highly politicised leadership. Local leaders are relatively well integrated within the CUT and the PT, and have access to supportive international networks, although they remain quite distant from women's and black movements (average network embeddedness). However, the local unions have a quite weak activist base; Nova Iguaçu has 3 active leaders, and 22 paying members, while Volta Redonda has 3 active leaders and only 10 paying members. The union of the city of Rio de Janeiro has 6 active leaders, and was not able to provide me with an exact figure for

[127] This result is obtained by adding the categories: "extremely poor", "poor" and "vulnerable". Black people are twice as likely (5.5%) to be "extremely poor" compared to white people (2.5%), and three times more likely to be "poor" (7.1% vs. 2.6%).

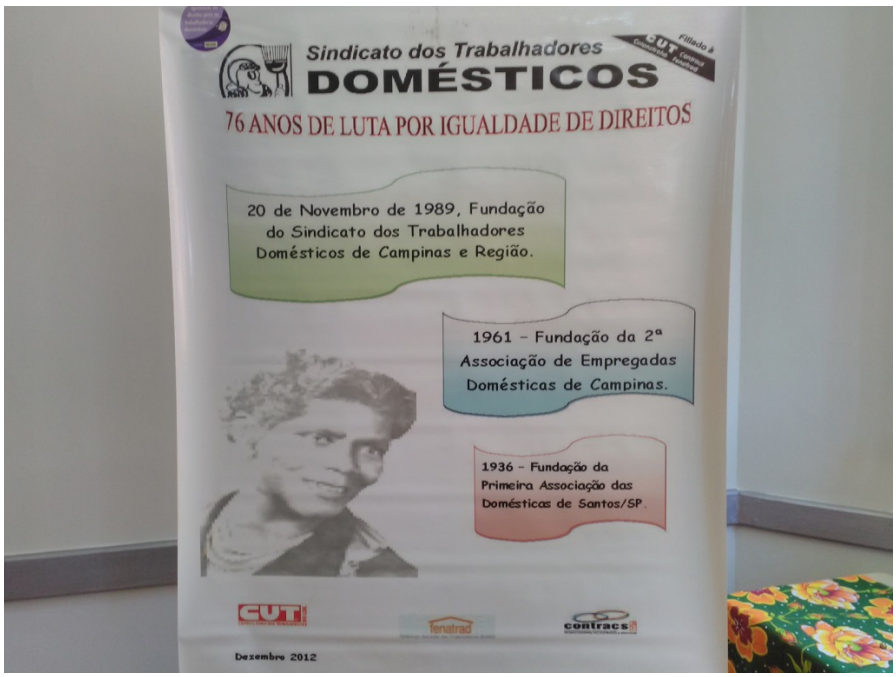
their paying members. None of these unions is well known to their rank-and-file, who think they are going to a public service rather than an activist space (Vidal, 2009), and come to the union out of necessity rather than interest for the movement. Therefore, their narrative resources remain average; they are strong amongst leaders but do not reach the non-unionised. An important element that seems to be affecting these unions negatively is the decline of the Theology of Liberation and the CEBs. Religion used to be a central resource to the domestic workers' unions, providing material support, training, and a space for recruiting domestic workers. The weakening of these religious groups, combined with a lack of collaboration with other local social movements, limits unions' ability to recruit and organise domestic workers.

3) The encompassing unionism

The last strategy observed is what I call the 'encompassing unionism', and it is exemplified by the union of Campinas. There, local leaders see the union as a means to organise black poor women rather than an end in itself. This could be characterised as a form community unionism or social movement unionism (SMU); a union reaching out to its rank-and-file beyond the workplace, including more dimensions than just class, and building broader alliances with community-based organisations (Fairbrother, 2015; Holgate, 2015; Lazar, 2017b). However, in the case of domestic workers, this social movement dimension is not linked to a revitalisation strategy – a concept that does not apply here since the unions were always 'weak' compared to other sectors, nor is it a tactic implemented by established unions to reach out to precarious workers. The domestic workers' local union started as an association in the 1960s, thus pre-dating the creation of the main national confederation of workers, and given the specificities of the sector, leaders have always been forced to reach out to domestic workers outside of their workplaces. Therefore, even though this strategy shares some characteristics of SMU or community unionism, I prefer to call it encompassing unionism because it is not a new phenomenon, and because domestic workers' unions could never function as conventional unions. The word 'encompassing' also better reflects their approach to the union; they see it as a place from where to organise black women, rather than seeing black women as a necessity to revitalise the union.

Campinas is a city located 90 km north of the city São Paulo. It is one of largest cities within the state of São Paulo, with 1.1 million inhabitants. There are no official data available on the number of domestic workers in the city, but some have estimated it to be around 20,000 (de Oliveira, 2009). Campinas union was founded in 1962 by Laudelina de Campos de Mello, who had created the first ever association of domestic workers in the city of Santos in 1936. She was an activist of the black movement (*Frente Negra Brasileira* – FNB) and had the support of the Communist Party (Pinto, 2015), which shows how race and class were already connected from the very beginning of the movement. *Dona* Laudelina is an "iconic symbol" (Kabeer et al., 2013, p. 17) for the movement nationally, and Campinas benefits greatly from this history. Campinas is also the place where the FENATRAD was created in 1997, and the first national president came from this local union. One of the most active black women's organisations in the city is named after her (*Casa Laudelina*), and every internal document from the FENATRAD telling the history of domestic workers' struggles mentions *dona* Laudelina and the importance she had for the movement.

Figure 12: Poster tracing the history of the movement, with a picture of Laudelina de Campos Mello



Building on the legacy of Laudelina, the union has implemented a strategy of community organising and insertion in multiple social movements. Each local leader is a part of other movements, and within the executive committee, there is always someone in charge of "base mobilising" – i.e., recruiting domestic workers in local

communities and bringing them to the union. They regularly organise leafleting in bus stations or in the gated communities where *domésticas* work. They received support from a PhD student at the University of Campinas to make a promotional video,[128] and unlike the other unions, they have a website where they upload information about meetings and events. This shows their greater connection with local stakeholders, and their ability to capture intellectual and financial resources. In contrast to the other cities, the leaders I interviewed could give me very specific examples of recruiting and outreach activities:

> Louisa: what sort of activities do you do nowadays? How do you inform domestic workers about the union or about the law?
> Regina: this is like we always did, we do base mobilising, leafleting in communities, in gated communities, every day we leave the union with a pack of leaflets and we go on distributing them. We have a meeting every third Saturday of the month, open to everyone. And all the movements we are part of, we talk about it, we always have a newsletter in our pocket.[129]

Regina Teodoro is member of a black organisation called Black Communitarian Zumbi Festival (*Festival Comunitário Negro Zumbi* - FECONEZU), as well as of the Popular Legal Promoters (*Promodoras Legais Populares* - PLPs), an activist group who teaches women in poor areas about their rights with a specific focus on gender-based violence. Regina Teodoro was in fact recruited through the black movement, and sees gender, race and class as interconnected:

> Louisa: are you still part of the black movement?
> Regina: this is for my entire life. The Feconezu, the racial question, for me this is something that I will never stop doing. The racial question is in my blood; it runs in my veins. The PLPs today they are the apple of my eye, and this includes domestic workers, but for instance, it is hard to bring the domestic worker to empowerment. We manage more or less to make her negotiate her terms and conditions at work. With the PLPs, we truly empower the woman who lives in a situation of violence, and sometimes without us having to intervene, the course gives her the strength, makes her lose the fear.

Regina Teodoro offers a comprehensive perspective on her activist work; the union in itself is not enough to empower domestic workers, and other actions are required within different spaces to address the gender, race and class aspects of their oppression. A domestic worker is also a woman who could be facing violence in her home, or racist discrimination in her daily life. Therefore, according to Regina, "empowerment" (*empoderamento*) can only be reached by combined work on all of these different

[128] Released on Youtube on12/02/2015: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJlBEydfiEk
[129] Regina Teodoro, Campinas, 05/05/2016, leader of Campinas' union at the time of the interview.

aspects. Eliete Ferreira, the President, supports the "occupation" movements – acts through which homeless people occupy an empty property and reclaim it as theirs – in the periphery of Campinas. She helps them organise and finds available rooms in the occupations for homeless domestic workers. On 28 April 2016, I attended the award of the Laudelina Medal, an event organised every year by the PT members of the local legislative assembly of Campinas to honour the work of local black women activists. In 2016, the medal was awarded to two members of the domestic workers' union. Most of the audience was made of black women from the homeless movements who came in solidarity with the union, as well as women from the union itself. Some of them were also attending the PLPs classes. The interconnection with black, neighbourhoods, and women's movements makes the domestic workers' union a relevant actor for other local social movements.

The Semião sisters, Anna and Regina, both leaders of the local union, are also part of a number of other movements; the PT, religious Afro-Brazilian groups, the FECONEZU, and the PLPs. Regina Semião is currently in the union's executive committee, and an active member of the PT. She first heard of the domestic workers' movement through her CEB in the 1980s:

> So one day I received a letter from the community, the CEB, inviting me to a women's meeting. It was a "women from the periphery" meeting, from the movement. So I prepare lunch and leave everything ready (at the employer's house), and go to this meeting. It was a Sunday afternoon. (…) There I met with this researcher from Canada, Lise Roy, who was helping out the union at the time. She starts asking me questions, I start talking about my job as a domestic worker, and then she says: wouldn't you like to be part of the domestic workers' union? There is a group of women trying to organise domestic workers, don't you want to participate?[130]

Here, like in Rio de Janeiro, religious movements played a major role in organising the left and bringing women to the domestic workers' movement. Many activists of Campinas' union are part of left-leaning religious groups inherited from the CEBs. *Dona* Lina for instance, a 80 year-old black woman who comes to every monthly meeting of the domestic workers' union, is a member of the black religious group at her local church where most women tend to be domestic workers. These religious bases are

[130] Regina Semião, Campinas, 09/05/2016, leader of Campinas' union at the time of the interview. Lise Roy was working as a social assistant at the time, and wrote her master's dissertation on the union of Campinas. She graduated from the University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in 1989. She published a book in 2012 on women's movements in the city: Roy, L. (2012) *Mulheres Fazendo História. História do Grupo de Mulheres na Periferia de Campinas (1980-2010)*, Holambra: Editora Setembro.

usually connected to the PT and the CUT, and act as a recruitment platform for the party.

Anna Semião was also involved in her local church before joining the movement of domestic workers and was brought to the union through her sister Regina Semião. She came to one of the famous *feijoadas* after her husband died in 1990, to enjoy the company of her colleagues and find some comfort in their friendship. Laudelina de Campos Mello was present at this specific lunch, and made quite an impression on her. From that day, she never left the movement; Anna Semião was an elected officer for about 20 years, and the first president of the FENATRAD when it was created in 1997. Anna Semião has a quite different profile from other leaders, which have caused some internal conflicts both in Campinas and at the FENATRAD level. She has been a domestic worker for a relatively short period of time: while a child and teenager, and for a couple of years after her husband died (at the time she was already 50). The accumulation of her widow and retirement pensions (both state pensions schemes) gave her some financial stability, and she did not need to work anymore. She got a degree in Education, and her driver's licence, which made her an elite amongst the other domestic workers. Some contested her leadership on the grounds that she was not a "real" domestic worker. Anna Semião also had an extensive experience as an activist in her local community before joining the union, which enabled her to expand the union's activities and reach domestic workers in many different social spaces:

> When I was outside of the movement, I was already doing a lot of things. I was already part of the PT… it's what I believed in, with my husband for instance, we would talk often about the party, about politics. One thing was the church, where I started having a certain status. My house was always full of people from the church! […] I used to do Tupperware meetings, I did meetings in the periphery, in the favelas nearby. I used to do many things even before I joined the union. […]
>
> Then I thought the movement (of domestic workers) was important. I was already part of the black women's movement, I knew this was the root of all our difficulties in life. It was not because we were domestic workers, but because we were black. And because we are black, we are domestic workers. So, I got really touched by their cause, and very sensitive to all the women who would come here to the union. I wanted to solve each case, and do it until the end, until it's solved.[131]

Anna Semião, like Regina Teodoro, sees the domestic workers' union as a point of connection between all the other movements. She perceives race as the most important

[131] Anna Semião, Campinas (at her residence), 23/05/2016, former leader of Campinas' union.

vector of oppression, providing a comprehensive analysis of the racial division of labour in Brazil. When remembering her first years in the movement, she describes an extremely active local union, well-connected to other movements:

> Obviously, they say we, the domestic workers, we are at the forefront of every struggle; we are in the periphery, we are in the communities, we are in the CEBs, in the MST, in the homeless movement, in the black movement, in the women's movement, in the PT, in the CUT… so we did cover all the spaces.[132]

When asked to explain why she joined the union, her black identity stands out as the most important factor. The consciousness of being black, and what this meant for her chances of inclusion in the labour market or within society as a whole, is extremely present in her discourse. She links the fact that she is a domestic worker to her blackness, and thanks the black movement for enabling her to understand this structural oppression.

> And I was going to all these meeting, it was amazing, I heard things I had never heard before! The racial question was always something… let's put it this way, it is part of your daily life but you don't know what the dynamics of racism are. […] I was fascinated by the movement, it was so good to see those women empowered, beautiful, wearing different clothes and authentic hair, without any straightening product or wig. Because up until my second daughter was born, I was still wearing wigs. Then I started using braided hair and never stopped![133]

In her journey through race and blackness, Anna Semião (Kota in her religious name) left the Catholic church and converted to the *Candomblé*, an Afro-Brazilian religion. When I visited her at her home, she spent an afternoon showing me pictures of her initiation ritual into the local *Candomblé* community, explaining how essential it was for her to reconnect to her ancestral African origins. Leaders and regular activists of the Campinas' union would also talk about race quite spontaneously, mentioning their blackness and their engagement with black groups. Race works both as an analytical tool to explain structural racism and the barriers they faced throughout their lives, as well as a something to be repossessed and used in the movement. Most participants would insist on the importance of being proud of their African heritage and reclaim black beauty.

Thus, the work of the union with black movements has an impact on their members and enables them to politicise their oppression. Joaze Bernardino-Costa (2013) affirms that the rise of Campinas within the FENATRAD has contributed to reinforcing the race

[132] Anna Semião, Campinas (at the union), 09/05/2016.
[133] Anna Semião, Campinas (at her residence), 23/05/2016.

perspective of the movement nationally. However, this conception of the union as a black movement has led to some tensions with white members. A former leader, who lost the 2015 local elections, once mentioned that she felt discriminated against because she was white. Although the idea of an anti-white discrimination should be challenged, the fact that about 40% of the category is white raises a question for the local unions' strategies and discourses around race.

Overall, the union of Campinas stands out compared to the others in terms of membership and vitality; they have 180 paying members, and over 2,000 affiliates who contribute irregularly. They can also count on a pool of 15 active leaders, all connected to other movements, and are well-known to stakeholders in the city, including social movements, officials of the City Hall, and the public university (UNICAMP). These broad-base alliances make them an unavoidable actor locally, and a key actor of the movement nationally. I call this position encompassing unionism; the union is seen as a means, not an end in itself. Any other movement can identify with, and be part of, the union. This has an impact on leaders' discourses and identities, and enables them to articulate the different dimensions of their oppression into a systemic analysis. It also explains in part the greater success and vitality of the union, who can recruit and reach out to domestic workers in many different spaces using the whole spectrum of social identities and lived experiences of oppression that they are embedded with. Nevertheless, as a result of their connection with several different groups, they are also more exposed to internal conflicts and political rivalries. Out of the six local unions observed, Campinas is the only one who had a contested local election, and some of the members on the losing side felt like they had to leave the union. They also run the risk of being instrumentalised by other organisations for their own agenda and political interests.

III/ Challenges in building an intersectional practice

Thus, it appears that the local union with the highest number of members and activists is the one with the most established strategy of alliance. Campinas is also the union with the most developed intersectional discourse, and this analysis of domestic workers' intersectional oppression is what enables them to build partnerships with other groups sharing similar social identities. This section first discusses the practical challenges in

building an intersectional practice based on the case studies, and examines how intersectionality can be used as a resource for collective action by domestic workers' unions. The second sub-section analyses more precisely the effects of intersectionality on the unions. I argue that the strongest unions are the most intersectional ones, and propose a framework to measure and assess unions' strengths and capacity in relation to their intersectional practice.

1) Intersectionality as a resource for collective action

Alliances with feminist, black and workers' movements are both necessary and complex to implement for the local unions of domestic workers. Because they are a subaltern group, they need external support and resources in order to organise, but being at the intersection of gender, race and class oppressions, their inclusion and representation with other movements is only ever partial. Furthermore, non-unionised domestic workers tend to reject the very identity 'domestic worker', which complicates the task of uniting and organising them. In this context, mobilising all their social identities might prove a successful strategy for local unions. Identity must be understood here as resulting from power structures, and more specifically the matrices of oppression of gender, race and class, (Hill Collins, 2007, 2015; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016). The social identities 'woman', 'black' and 'poor' are mutable and interconnected collective effects that can be mobilised and transformed through a process of collective action. Indeed, when intersectionality is meaningfully integrated into the unions' discourses and practices, it can become a resource for mobilisation. An intersectional practice extends the possibilities of building alliances, and enhances unions' capacity of recruitment by attracting potential members from different social sites.

Feminist scholars have looked at how intersectionality is deployed to build women's coalitions, and how different vectors of oppression are negotiated by these coalitions (Carastathis, 2013; Cole, 2008; Lépinard, 2014; Townsend-Bell, 2011; Weldon, 2006). They reveal the complexities of simultaneously addressing vectors of gender, race and class, which can create points of tensions within movements. In these studies, the attention is mostly focused on how 'majority' groups cooperate with 'minority' ones, and the potential forms of exclusions that are reproduced. In social movements and industrial relations scholarship, the inclusion of multiple social identities, especially in the case of migrant workers, is usually comprised under the concepts of community

unionism or social movement unionism, which emphasise the links between the workplace and the community (Brickner, 2013; Engeman, 2015; Fairbrother, 2008; Holgate, 2015; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Murray, 2017). But, as argued above, these concepts do not fully capture the history of domestic workers' organising, as they have never been standard unions and have always had to organise their members beyond the workplace.

Some authors have used more explicitly the analytical frame of intersectionality to discuss renewal or community unionism strategies (Alberti et al., 2013; Johansson & Śliwa, 2016; A. McBride et al., 2015), but most studies do not pay specific attention to the impact of intersectional oppression on workers' abilities to mobilise. Precarious, or 'non-standard' workers are harder to organise not only because of their location within non-traditional workplaces, but also because they experience multiple vectors of oppression, which are intrinsically linked to their labour condition. Race and gender cannot be separated out from class. Therefore, their identification with the 'worker', an identity usually corresponding to the white male industrial worker, and its associated labour-based organisations, is rendered more complex.

In addition, for domestic workers, the workplace is also a private home, which challenges the assumed boundaries between 'workplace' and 'community', public and private spaces. As a result, domestic workers' modes of organising have always included the building of alliances with other social movements, and reaching out to the rank-and-file within their communities (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b; Boris & Nadasen, 2008, 2015; Cornwall et al., 2013; Fish, 2017). I argue that their ability to do so relies precisely on the recognition of their intersectional oppression. By using the social identities women, black and poor, the unions of domestic workers have successfully engaged with social movements that share common aspects of their struggles. However, the way they do it varies, and the local unions observed in this research had different ways of integrating gender, race and class into their discourses and practices.

Across the six local unions, gender is the least salient dimension, and this can be in part explained by the ambivalent relationship some local unions have with the feminist movement, sometimes perceived as being white and upper class. Feminist groups have been important allies of the domestic workers' movement nationally, in particular in

1988 when they sponsored their popular amendment for it to be included in the Constitution (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2013). However, the 1988 Constitution ended up giving a restrictive list of 7 working rights to domestic workers (out of 36), and excluded them from the Labour Code. While the Constitution poses the principle of gender equality, and is presented as a major achievement for women's rights (see for instance: Bonetti, Fontoura, & Marins, 2009; Verucci, 1991), it does nonetheless reproduce the exclusion of domestic workers from citizenship and the status of worker. The absence of a clear gender identity and discourse also reflects the lived experiences of domestic workers, who recognise more clearly the effects of poverty than those of patriarchy. If all the participants would identify as belonging to the class of 'the poor', very few would link their situation of oppression to their gender, even though they did share stories of violence and abuse, and recognised that domestic work is a women's job.

The black movement has historically been a strong ally to domestic workers, and supported the creation of the first association in 1936. In Campinas, local leaders' black identity is key to their activism, and a crucial resource for recruiting domestic workers. Many belong to local black activist groups, and have converted to Afro-Brazilian religions in order to reconnect with their ancestral roots. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, local leaders have developed a political narrative of domestic work as a legacy of slavery, and use race in their discourses to mark distinct social spaces. The movement also has historical ties with the Black Experimental Theatre (*Teatro Negro Experimental* – TEN), that was led by the black activist Abdias do Nascimento in the 1940s. In 1985, then elected as a Federal Deputy for the state or Rio de Janeiro, Abdias proposed a bill to establish a National Day of the Domestic Worker on the 27 April. In the justification for the bill, he reminds that domestic workers have created their own group within the TEN in 1945 and have been fighting since then for equal rights.[134] Nationally, the FENATRAD also insists on the racial dimension of domestic work, creating a direct lineage between domestic work and slavery, and most national leaders are directly involved with black movements such as the MNU.

Although less salient in the unions of Franca and São Paulo, the racial dimension of domestic workers' oppression is quite central to the movement locally and nationally. And this corresponds to a material reality; if not all women are poor, poverty is

[134] Bill proposal n. 5.466/1985.

distinctly racialized in Brazil (IPEA, 2014), which could explain the easier identification with 'black' than with 'woman' for domestic workers. Besides, within the category, white domestic workers are more likely to be registered and to earn higher salaries than black domestic workers (DIEESE, 2013), confirming the importance of race in shaping social hierarchies. While almost every domestic worker is a woman, gender is stratified along racial inequalities, some women are employers, others are domestic workers. However, white domestic workers represent 40% of the professional category, and although black workers are still an absolute majority, these demographic elements might impact on the race discourse of unions in the long run, and lead them to adapt their strategy in order to appeal to white workers too.

Finally, the class dimension appears as stronger and more articulated than the two other vectors of oppression. Domestic workers' close ties with the PT led them to transform their local associations into trade unions in 1988, and to be affiliated to the largest national confederation of workers, the CUT. The choice to join the CUT rather than another confederation is justified by the importance this organisation gives to class struggle:

> We sought to understand what were their objectives (of the different workers' centrals) regarding capital and labour and we realised that only the CUT expresses in its objectives to work towards a modification of these relations: through awareness raising of workers it intends to provide a perspective on the socialization of labour, and equal relationships, that is, the necessity to change capitalist relations into socialist relations.[135]

The labour movement then becomes the first place from which to ask for rights, and indeed, the main struggle of domestic workers since the 1960s has been their inclusion within the Labour Code. From their perspective, only equal rights will ensure that they are recognised as workers, and that their labour is valued. However, domestic workers' demands are still quite invisible within CUT's national manifesto, after 30 years of partnership. The word "domestic workers" is not cited before 2006 in CUT's congress resolutions and annual plenary texts. In the 2006 congress resolutions, domestic workers are mentioned twice as an example of a category for which the confederation should be asking for a wage increase. In the plenary text of 2008, there is a paragraph on the importance of trying to unionise the professional category of domestic workers, and the unionisation of domestic workers is further mentioned as a key priority for the

[135] Minutes from the National Council of Domestic Workers meeting of 9 and 10 November 1996, Report of activity of the direction from 1991 to 1996, Section 2: Discussion on Unions' Centrals, p. 2.

Women's Campaign. However, in the 2009 congress resolutions, they are again only mentioned in relation to wage increase demands. The 2012 congress resolutions do specifically claim that the confederation should campaign for the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 relative to domestic workers' rights, but then in 2015, formalisation of domestic workers and the new law are only mentioned in the preparatory text under the positive balance of Dilma Rousseff's government.[136] This does not reflect local leaders' discourses and actions: in fact, they are combating every day the idea that the law was benevolently given by the President rather than fought for by their trade unions for decades.

Most local leaders have a distant relationship to the CUT and the PT, and although these national organisations seem to be domestic workers' primary allies, and key to their identification with the working class, they are not always trusted. Moreover, class appears as a quite difficult concept to handle since non-unionised domestic workers reject the existence of, and belonging to, their class. Their willingness to exit the class rather than being a part of it represents one of the biggest challenges for local unions. Indeed, they are faced with the task of building a class of domestic workers, while also using the other vectors of oppression lived by domestic workers in order to bring them to the movement. As a result, the capacity of some local unions to produce a discourse on domestic work that goes beyond class is what leads them to build broader alliances, and expands their ability to recruit members. Thus, the relative organisational success of the domestic workers' unions is closely linked to an intersectional practice.

2) Local unions' strengths and capacities

Following the work of Lévesque and Murray (2010), we can identify four dimensions to assess unions' power and resources: internal solidarity, network embeddedness, narrative resources and infrastructural resources. "Internal solidarity" captures the extent to which there is a cohesive identity, as well as the deliberative processes and dynamism of the union (participation of members, elections, etc.). "Network embeddedness" assesses the union's capacity to build alliances and partnerships, and its degree of integration with other movements and unions. "Narrative resources" refers to the ideology and interpretative frames used by the union to justify its actions, as well as its discourse production. Finally, "infrastructural resources" encompasses both human

[136] CUT Congress Resolutions, 1984 to 2015.

and material resources, and the organisational practices of the union (i.e., how does it work?).

Although this framework was not developed specifically for the domestic workers' unions, it helps in analysing their strengths and weaknesses with a nuanced account of both their material and immaterial resources. Infrastructure is similarly precarious for the six local unions studied here, and as discussed in chapter V, domestic workers' collective identity is cohesive amongst union leaders but relatively weak amongst non-unionised domestic workers. Thus, this chapter focuses on networks and internal narratives, and I argue that the variations observed are explained by unions' intersectional practice. Table 9 summarises local unions' strengths according to the four dimensions of internal solidarity, network embeddedness, narrative resources and infrastructural resource, while table 10 measures their degrees of intersectionality based on their analysis of gender, race and class. We can see that the unions who have a higher degree of intersectionality are also those with a relatively stronger power and resources.

Table 9: Unions' strengths and capabilities

	Internal solidarity	Network embeddedness	Narratives	Infrastructure
Campinas	average	strong	strong	weak
Rio de Janeiro	average	average	average	weak
Nova Iguaçu	average	average	average	weak
Volta Redonda	average	average	average	weak
São Paulo	average	weak	weak	weak
Franca	average	weak	weak	weak

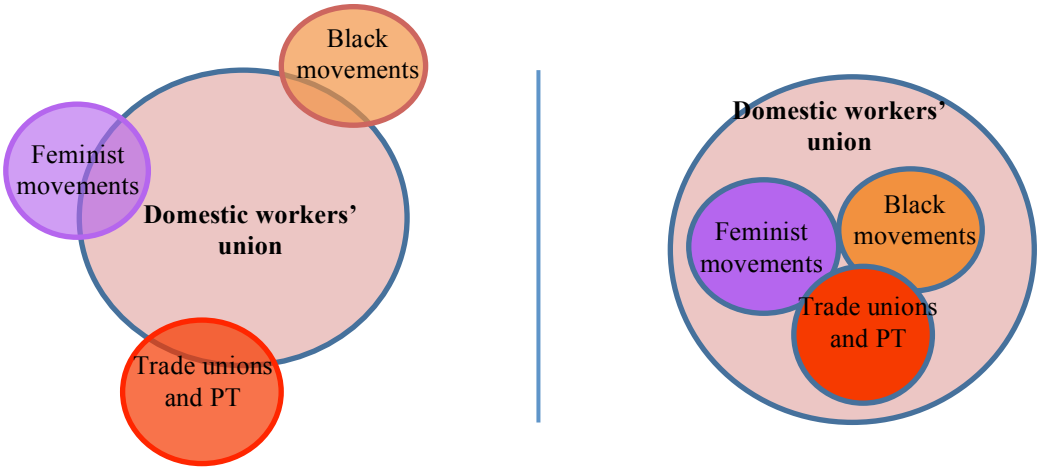
Table 10: Degrees of intersectionality per local union

	Rigid autonomy	Critical ally	Encompassing unionism
Gender	0	0,5	1
Race	0,5	1	1
Class	1	1	1
Intersectional score	**1,5**	**2,5**	**3**

0: category not mentioned or not integrated into analysis
0,5: the category is mentioned but not comprehensively integrated into analysis
1: the category is integrated into discourse and/or practice

Each union defines a particular balance between autonomy and access to resources, while developing their own vision of domestic work and how intersectional this activity is. Depending on their articulation of gender, race and class, local unions have a different conception of unionism and what the role of their organisation should be. São Paulo and Campinas exemplify two opposite strategies in this regard, as illustrated by figure 13. While the former conceives the union as an end in itself, only and exclusively turned towards domestic workers and their most pressing labour issues, the latter considers the union as an encompassing platform for poor black women. In the case of São Paulo, autonomy is privileged over access to resources, and members are expected to first identify as domestic workers. Other movements are only useful as long as their agenda explicitly overlaps with that of the union. By contrast, in Campinas, union leaders use all the other vectors of oppression their member can face to bring them to the union, which then acts as a *means* to organise the category rather than an *end*. The union becomes an umbrella-organisation for other associations and movements.

Figure 13: Inclusive and exclusive modes of alliances



São Paulo's rigid autonomy

Campinas' encompassing unionism

Because domestic workers are at the intersection of many vectors of oppression, they are harder to organise and to unite. Existing scholarship discusses quite extensively the difficulties in organising precarious workers due to their fragmentation, lack of rights, and isolation (Baines, 2010; Brophy, 2006; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Murphy & Turner, 2014; Standing, 2014). Yet, the sort of fragmentation created by the intersection of multiple vectors of oppression is less often debated (see for instance: Birdsell Bauer & Cranford, 2016), although it appears as quite central to the organising of subaltern groups. Indeed, the unions of domestic workers face the challenge of creating unity in a sector where workers are also poor, black and women. Gender, race and class are embedded, but one element can be more salient in a given context and prioritised differently by each individual.

As asked by Hirata and Kergoat (1994, pp. 96, my translation): "how to simultaneously fight as a proletarian black woman? In fact, depending on the times and places of one's life, and depending on the political opportunities, one might first fight as a woman, or as a black, or as a proletarian." The ways in which movements interpret and practice intersectionality is thus fundamental to their mobilising strategies. Indeed, I argue that intersectionality is more than an analytic of power relations; it can also be leveraged by subaltern groups in order to build their mobilisations. Recognising and using the intersections of gender, race and class has enabled domestic workers to build alliances with other movements, and to organise their rank-and-file in the various social spaces they navigate.

However, the intersectional dimension of their oppression also means that no other movement can successfully represent and speak for domestic workers. Feminist movements tend to erase racial inequalities and reproduce class divisions while workers' movements over-emphasise labour issues to the detriment of gendered and raced forms of exploitation. In order to successfully unite their class, the domestic workers' unions attempt to address gender, race and class, building a social identity 'domestic worker' that encompasses all these forms of oppression. But the variations observed amongst local unions reveal the challenges of doing so; indeed, unity is rendered more complex in a sector where workers reject their belonging to their professional category, and where their social identities and experiences are so fragmented. Nonetheless, it appears that the strongest and most resourceful unions are

also those who were able to build an intersectional discourse and practice. Therefore, intersectionality, although complex to implement, seems necessary for social movements and trade unions in particular. Workers are always at the intersection of various and simultaneous forms of oppression and exploitation, based on their gender, race, occupation, religion, citizenship status, etc. These factors shape their material conditions of existence, and the formation of their collective identities.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the divergent intersectional practices of local unions, presenting the second paradox of subaltern politics: while it is the intersectional oppression of domestic workers that has created their condition of subalternity, it has also been transformed into a resource for their collective action. Indeed, their particular condition of oppression and fragmentation make domestic workers hard to unite around a common worker identity. Like most subaltern groups, there are many other dimensions to their oppression in addition to class, and they might have practical needs that appear as more urgent to them than labour-related issues. Thus, the existence of a shared class position cannot fully transcend the multiplicity of oppression they face, and does not seem to be enough to build a collective identity (Kabeer et al., 2013). Yet, intersectionality, understood both as an analytical category and as a practice, is precisely what has enabled the domestic workers' mobilisation.

In the first section, I have shown the difficulty of building alliances at the national level, highlighting points of inclusion and exclusion with the feminist and black movements. I then observed the translation of those interactions and more or less sustained connections at the local level, and identified three different strategies of alliance building implemented by the domestic workers' unions. The rigid autonomy in São Paulo and Franca is a refusal of any partnership, preserving the union's autonomy from other movements at the expense of gaining visibility and resources. The strategy of the critical ally represented by the unions of the state of Rio de Janeiro corresponds to occasional and limited interactions with feminist and black movements, while the unions have quite a rich history of cooperation with religious movements, and are relatively well embedded with the CUT and international partners. This reflects their prioritisation of vectors of class, followed by race, and then gender, in their analysis of domestic work. Finally, the union of Campinas has developed an encompassing form of

unionism. Local leaders use their union as a platform to organise black poor women, and the identity 'domestic worker' becomes almost secondary in their strategy. Their intersectional discourse is translated into an intersectional practice of alliance-building with other local movements.

The last section assessed both the material and immaterial resources of the domestic workers' unions, and demonstrated that the strongest of all unions is also the one that is the more intersectional in discourse and practice. Using intersectionality has enabled the union to reach out to members in diverse social spaces, to be more visible to other stakeholders, and to capture more resources through their alliances. Nonetheless, this strategy involves some challenges and difficulties; for instance, exposing the union to more partners also exposes it to higher risks of dissent or recuperation. But overall, I argue that an intersectional practice can be a successful strategy for subaltern movements. By producing a discourse on domestic work as a gendered, raced and classed reality, the domestic workers' unions have successfully formed alliances with women's, black's and workers' movements. Therefore, subalternity is not a fixed condition, nor is it necessarily an impediment to collective action. As illustrated by the mobilising strategies of Brazilian domestic workers, subalternity can be used as a resource for collective action, and transformed through it. The next chapter will show how subalternity has been leveraged in domestic workers' interactions with the state and international actors, and it will discuss the ambivalences of this process.

Chapter VII/ Becoming subjects of labour rights: domestic workers between political recognition and legal exclusion

On Thursday 5 May 2016, I am invited to have lunch at the Campinas' local union and spend the afternoon with the leaders. The union is located in the bairro Vila Castelo Branco, in a house that was given to the movement by Laudelina de Campos Mello herself just before she died in 1991. The place is quite spacious but has a relatively precarious infrastructure. The waiting room has about ten plastic chairs, and a large portrait of Laudelina, as well as one of her jackets, framed and displayed in the entrance. On the right, there is a small desk where the volunteer unionists receive domestic workers and discuss their cases with them. On the left-hand side, the corridor leads to a small room that serves as an archive, and behind it, an office, with a computer and a printer, but only one of the leaders knows how to use this IT equipment. This is where most of the administrative work takes places; asking for subsidies, organising trainings, contacting partners, writing and archiving minutes. At the back of the house, there is an open kitchen and a dining room, connected to a small yard.

I am welcomed by Regina Teodoro, one of the elected officials. Regina is 58, black, with short curly hair, and is wearing a plain cotton red dress. She has been in the union for about 15 years, and was elected for six years as Secretary Against Racial Discrimination at the National Confederation of Commerce and Services (CONTRACS). After almost 2 hours of discussion, I found out that she was also one of the main representatives of the Brazilian delegation at the ILO's negotiations on the Convention 189 in 2010 and 2011. However, Regina had no illusion regarding the Convention, or the 2015 national legislation on domestic work, and expressed many times her frustration with the whole process. She regretted that the version of the domestic workers' law that was approved in 2015 did not meet the movement's expectations and was less ambitious than the initial Constitutional reform of 2013 that had posed the principle of equal labour rights for domestic workers.

On the day of our meeting, the impeachment of the President Dilma Rousseff had already been voted at the Chamber of Deputies, and everybody was waiting for, with little hope, the vote at the Senate the following week. Regina Teodoro and her colleagues were all worried about what would happen to "their law" if a right-wing government replaced the PT. Although supportive of the PT government, Regina is also

quite distant from it and articulated sharp criticisms against institutional politics. In particular, she argued that domestic workers were consulted but not meaningfully included in decision-making processes, and were often used as tokens on debates about rights. She recalled a Commission on Human Rights to which domestic workers were invited to participate in 2006, at the Chamber of Deputies, which she found particularly unsatisfying:

> So I said, listen, we came here to do this debate – I didn't even know the word debate back then (laughs) – to have this discussion. We spent our money to be here, for this whole beautiful thing, just to sit here and listen that we don't have rights. But this we know already! And this is why we are here! We already know we don't have rights, so we came here for you to tell us how we are going to have those rights![137]

In this fragment, Regina reveals the ambivalence of political recognition from the state: on the one hand, under the left-wing government, domestic workers were being invited to take part in institutional politics; on the other hand, the conditions of a meaningful participation were never permitted. They were being *talked at* (about themselves!) rather than *listened to.* As put by Spivak (2008, p. 92), the subaltern was there "not to be heard, but to be seen". The modes of recognition and inclusion of the subalterns are determined by the political elite, thereby precluding any possibility for the subalterns to be effectively heard (Spivak, 1988a, 1993a). This is, somehow, what happened with the 2015 legislation; domestic workers won new rights, but the law does not reflect the movement's demands, and worse, perpetuates some forms of labour exploitation. Furthermore, with the change of government, domestic workers lost all guarantees that it would ever be made effective. The disruption created by their victory was soon mitigated by the political crisis.

The state is at the same time the institution that has excluded domestic workers from citizenship, and the place where this can be rectified. The government can decide whether to recognise their demands, and the modalities of such recognition. This ambivalent relationship with the state constitutes to the third paradox of subaltern politics: while domestic workers have been made subalterns as a result of their legal and political exclusions, they have been able to successfully use their perceived vulnerability to force recognition from the Brazilian state. Yet, by doing so, they have also brought new difficulties to their movement and became, to a certain extent, less

[137] Regina Teodoro, Campinas, 05/05/2016, leader of Campinas' union at the time of the interview.

mobilisable. To be fully recognised as workers, domestic workers need to be included within the existing rights framework and the corporatist model of industrial relations that have created domestic work as a 'non-work'. They need to be integrated, and 'normalised', into the very structure that has produced their subaltern condition. However, this inclusion within the Labour Code, and their recognition as proper workers, actually means a deep change of the existing rights framework: it means an expansion of the concepts of 'work' and the 'worker' that directly challenges the coloniality of labour in Brazilian society. Indeed, recognising domestic workers as workers would signify the end of the gendered and raced hierarchies inherited from slavery, and the full appreciation of care and reproductive work as valuable activities.

In this chapter, I will show that domestic workers were able to use their subalternity as a resource to gain partial recognition; indeed, because they are considered to be the "poorest of the poor" (Fish, 2017), they became an issue that could no longer be avoided by the PT government or the ILO, in light of their social justice agenda. However, their construction as vulnerable subjects has led to paternalistic modes of recognition (Ally, 2009), and has weakened their trade unions. The legislative victory of 2015 (and its associated Constitutional reform of 2013) was presented as a "second abolition of slavery" in public discourses,[138] and is often perceived by non-unionised domestic workers as a benevolent action from the PT, thus taking away the protagonist role of the domestic workers' unions from this process. Domestic workers' complex relationship with the state makes them 'hybrid workers' (Boris & Klein, 2012; Fish, 2017): while they fight for equal labour rights and their full recognition as workers, they paradoxically also need to be more vulnerable and more fragile to justify a dedicated public action. Therefore, they can never be proper workers, and in fact, their 'normalisation' into the industrial relations model has affected their movement in contradictory ways.

This chapter explores the ambivalences of becoming subjects of labour rights for domestic workers, and argues that while subalternity has made their legislative victory possible, the process of winning rights has also led to a transformation – and partial

[138] See for instance the declaration of Eleonora Menicucci, PT Minister of Policies for Women, on 02/06/2015: http://www.pt.org.br/regulamentacao-do-trabalho-domestico-acaba-com-escravidao-diz-ministra/, or declarations by Senators, reported in *Senado Notícias*, on 13/03/2013 qualifying the 2013 Constitutional Amendment of "modern Golden Law": https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2013/03/13/pec-das-domesticas-e-vista-como-lei-aurea-moderna

demobilisation – of their movement. Domestic workers were recognised by the Brazilian state and the ILO on the grounds of their extreme 'vulnerability', pushing governments and international organisations to take remedial actions. In order to discuss with legislators, the domestic workers' unions have had to adopt a more institutional form of political action, and in order to make their new rights effective, they have had to turn to judicial repertoires of contention. Therefore, I will show how the process of becoming subjects of labour rights has impacted on the domestic workers' movement, and discuss the organisational challenges brought by their legislative victory. I am not arguing that domestic workers should, or could, have adopted a different strategy; in their particular context, and within their particular constraints, cooperating with the PT-led government was certainly the most pragmatic course of action. Rather, I propose to analyse the paradoxical effects of a legislative victory on a subaltern movement, looking at the implications it has on their forms of organising.

The first section retraces the production of domestic workers' discourse on labour rights, and shows that while their recognition came recently both at the national and international level, they have been fighting for these rights for decades. The second section discusses the effects and implications of the 2015 legislation, pointing to its limitations, and analysing the judicial repertoire of action domestic workers have had to adopt in order to make the law effective. Overall, this chapter explores the ambivalent relationship between the domestic workers' movement and the state, and the inevitable tensions resulting from their attempt to be heard by the very institutions that have made them subalterns.

I/ A subaltern epistemology of rights

Domestic workers have been formally demanding equal labour rights since 1936, but because of their location outside of what counts as work and proper trade union representation, they remained unheard for decades. In fact, their full inclusion within the labour rights framework would imply a profound modification of this framework: their recognition as workers with equal rights means an expansion of the concepts of 'work' and the 'worker' that directly challenges the coloniality of labour in Brazil. More than a demand for inclusion, domestic workers' claim to be workers represents a subaltern epistemology of rights, with the potential to decolonise labour and social relations of gender and race. While their subaltern location has made them unheard and

unrecognised, it has also been the place from which to produce a counter-hegemonic discourse on labour rights. Interestingly, domestic workers have been able to use their subalternity and perceived vulnerability to gain recognition from the state and international organisations, embedding their demands for equal rights into a discourse of 'decent work' that matched both the PT's and the ILO's agenda. However, gaining recognition from the institutions that had historically excluded them, and from a state that relies on a strong colonial legacy, means that this recognition is partial and contradictory. The legislative victory has made the PT the main protagonist of rights' making, thereby re-erasing the domestic workers' history.

This section retraces the domestic workers' struggle for, and discourses on, labour rights, demonstrating the elaboration of a distinct subaltern epistemology of rights. The first sub-section focuses on the emergence of the movement and the elaboration of domestic workers' demands that would serve as a basis for the current legislation. Then, I analyse their relationship with the PT and assess the ambivalent role this allied government has played. Finally, the third sub-section discusses how domestic workers have been able to transnationalise their demands and make their subaltern epistemology of rights recognised into an international 'decent work' agenda.

1) Claiming the right to have labour rights

As discussed in chapter II, Brazilian economic structure and state formation are built on its colonial history, and marked by gender and racial divisions of labour. Black women have moved from enslaved servants to poorly paid domestic workers, enabling white women to have a better insertion within the labour market and to access more qualified and highly-paid professions (Brites, 2013; Bruschini, 2007; Lovell, 2006). Domestic work today is still characterised by high levels of informality, lower wages, lower levels of labour protection, and normalised abusive and stratified relationships with their employers (Ávila, 2016; Brites, 2014; DeSouza & Cerqueira, 2009; DIEESE, 2013). Quite crucially, this direct legacy of slavery has meant that domestic work was never recognised as proper work; it is a 'help' provided to households, and the 'natural' place of black women. And because of their location as the 'non-worker', domestic workers have been legally excluded from the labour rights framework as it was being established in the 1930s.

This period corresponds to the consolidation of the modern corporatist state, which connects citizenship to the status of worker. In 1931, the government adopted the law n. 19.770/1931 giving workers the right to unionise, but in its article 11, the law specifies that this right did not apply to house employees. Other labour rights such as the right to paid annual leave (law n. 23.103/1933) and the right to the minimum wage (Constitution of 1934, art. 21) were adopted in the 1930s, targeting mainly industrial urban worker. Labour rights were then consolidated in the 1943 Labour Code (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* – CLT), which excludes domestic workers from legal protection all together. The Code defines domestic service as a "non-economic service provided to families in their private homes" (CLT, Title 1, art. 7), thereby justifying their complete exclusion from all labour regulations.[139] If domestic employees are not workers, consequently, they do not deserve labour rights.

It is in this context that Laudelina de Campos Mello created the first association of domestic workers in the city of Santos, in 1936, demanding domestic employees' inclusion within social security and the right to unionise (Pinto, 2015). The date of 1936 is commonly used as the formal start of the political movement, but there is evidence of an emerging class consciousness and demands for better treatment as early as the 19th century (see for instance: Silva, 2016). A study by Lima (2015) further shows that in the pre-abolition period, some free women litigated against their male employers to demand a remuneration for their services as domestic workers. Based on these legal cases, Lima argues that we can see the emergence of a notion of labour rights connected to the idea of citizenship, and a framing of domestic service as work that deserves remuneration – thus marking its distinction from unpaid slave labour. This period of history is beyond the scope of my thesis, but it is important to note how ideas of work and rights are constructed in connection with slavery, and how this shapes domestic workers' demand for recognition as proper workers (as opposed to slaves).

Documents found at the domestic workers' unions suggest that in 1936, Laudelina de Campo Mello was particularly worried with the fate of *empregadas* who were getting too old or too sick to work, and had no access to pension or social security.[140] The first association of domestic workers was structured on the model of religious charities, and

[139] Original version as adopted in 1943: http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/declei/1940-1949/decreto-lei-5452-1-maio-1943-415500-publicacaooriginal-1-pe.html

[140] STDMSP. (2001). *História de uma Luta*. São Paulo: Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo – STDMSP

provided a place for the elderly to rest with dignity. I could not find sufficient data on the 1940s and 1950s, but the association of Santos was shut down, and domestic workers remained without the right to unionise under the Vargas regime. Laudelina seems to have spent a period, between 1950 and 1961, being mostly active in the black movement (Pinto, 2015).

However, there are records of an organised group of domestic workers in Rio de Janeiro, who were part of the Black Experimental Theatre led by the black activist Abdias do Nascimento (A. Nascimento & Semog, 2006). In a bill presented at the National Congress in 1985, and asking for the establishment of 27 April as the National Day of the Domestic Worker, the then deputy Abdias do Nascimento claims:

> Since 1945, when the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN) was founded, the Association of Domestic Employees was also founded, at the initiative of the class itself and its members participating in the TEN, with the objective to raise consciousness and defend the class. The domestic employees have been trying to gain more recognition, respect, and access to labour rights. At the First Conference of the Black Brazilian, the main demand presented by the representatives of the class was the insertion of domestic employees into the labour laws.[141]

In the 1960s, the Youth Catholic Workers (*Juventude Operária Católica* - JOC), and local branches associated to the theology of liberation, provided a new structure to the movement. They created associations in the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Salvador (all in 1962), while *dona* Laudelina, with the support of the black movement, founded the association of Campinas in 1961.[142] In 1968, domestic workers organised their first National Conference, and drafted a bill demanding to be included within existing labour laws, which they sent to the government.[143] In their 1976 National Conference, domestic workers wrote a resolution demanding a 10 hours working-day with 1 hour lunch break, the minimum wage, compensation for night shifts, and their full inclusion within the CLT (Kofes, 2001, p. 308). Domestic workers' mobilisations proved relatively effective; in the middle of the military regime, and without having the right to form trade unions, they secured a first legislative victory in

[141] Project of law n. 5.466, presented on 28 May 1985, by Abdias do Nascimento: http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=E35754274B65EF11834BA7366BA95F8D.proposicoesWeb1?codteor=1160565&filename=Avulso+-PL+5466/1985

[142] FENATRAD. (2002). *Relatório do encontro nacional* – "Resgatando nossa história", p. 1

[143] STDMSP. (2001). *História de uma Luta*. São Paulo: Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Domésticos do Município de São Paulo – STDMSP.

1972 with the law n. 5.859 that gives them the right to have a signed CTPS, although this remained optional and at the discretion of the employer.

In the 1980s, domestic workers' associations joined the struggles for the democratisation of the country. Many of them took part in the foundation of the PT in 1980, and its affiliated trade union congress, the CUT, in 1983. In 1985, reunited in their 5th National Conference, domestic workers adopted a resolution that demanded very specifically the rights contained in the 2015 legislation: the national minimum wage, a notice period and compensation for unfair dismissal, access to unemployment benefits, a limitation on working time and compensations for extra-time (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b; Carvalho, 1999). Domestic workers then got involved in the Constitutional process between 1986 and 1988; they sent "3 buses of 500 domestic workers to Brasília" to pressure the transitional government, and proposed a Popular Amendment with their demands as formulated in 1985, for which they received the support of feminist groups.[144] Domestic workers requested audiences with the Deputies elected to write the new Constitution in order to present formally their 1985 resolution, which contained specific demands for labour rights. In the end, the version of the Constitution adopted in 1988 secures some rights for domestic workers, however, it reproduces their exclusion from the Labour Code in its article 7, and limits their rights to eight items (compared to 36 for the other workers): freedom to form trade unions, minimum wage, 13th month of salary, one day off a week, annual paid leave, maternity leave, notice period and pension.[145]

Thus, the 1988 'citizen' Constitution remains only a partial win for domestic workers. On the one hand, they secured some fundamental rights that they had been demanding for decades, such as the right to unionise, the right to minimum wage (although this was never enforced), and basic social benefits. On the other hand, the Constitution reproduced their exclusion from the Labour Code, maintaining the distinction between workers and non-workers, productive and reproductive labour, and limiting their labour rights to a restrictive list three times inferior to that of other workers. Yet, feminist discourses tend to present the Constitution as a great achievement for women's rights

[144] Sindomésticos Recife. (1989). *Domésticas: Uma Categoria da Classe Trabalhadora. Seus Direitos, Suas Lutas, Suas Propostas*

[145] Constitution, article 7, as adopted in 1988: http://www2.camara.leg.br/legin/fed/consti/1988/constituicao-1988-5-outubro-1988-322142-publicacaooriginal-1-pl.html

(see for instance: Bonetti et al., 2009; Verucci, 1991). Indeed, it recognises the principle of gender equality, and guarantees some rights such as the right to maternity leave, that feminists had been campaigning for. However, this discourse of victory reproduces the invisibility of domestic workers, omitting to mention the exclusion of one of the largest groups of women workers from the Labour Code. The 'citizen' Constitution made a clear demarcation between who is a citizen and who is not.

From 1988 onwards, most local associations of domestic workers were able to transition to a trade union structure, owning the right to represent their category and intermediate in labour disputes with employers. The labour movement becomes then the first place from which to ask for rights, making the existence of recognised unions absolutely necessary for domestic workers; indeed, in the Brazilian corporatist structure, belonging to a trade union opens the possibility of a dialogue with the state. In order to be heard and perceived as legitimate members of the workers' movement, domestic workers formed the FENATRAD in 1997, and joined the CONTRACS, which in turn provided them with a full inclusion within the CUT structure of representation (at least on paper).

Throughout the 1990s, domestic workers' unions kept on pressing for equal rights through legislative lobbying and street demonstrations. According to older leaders, domestic workers took part in the "March of the Hundred Thousand" (*Marcha dos Cem Mil*), against the neoliberal policies of the government in 1998, and the President of the FENATRAD attended the global demonstration in Seattle in 1999. But domestic workers' main demand remained the access to the Fund of Guarantee for Time of Service (FGTS) – a mechanism that guarantees financial compensations for workers in case of dismissal, and which perceived as the key instrument to provide domestic workers with some stability within such a precarious sector.[146] The government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in the midst of the 'neoliberal decade', approved a bill proposing to extend the access to the FGTS for domestic workers (law n. 4.846/1998). However, the decrees of application specified that employers' contributions would remain optional, and that it would apply only to domestic workers who had a signed CTPS and had worked for at least 15 consecutive months for the same household. These dispositions, combined to an increase of informal work as a result of neoliberal policies, made the law ineffective by design.

[146] FENATRAD. (2002). *Relatório do encontro nacional – "*Resgatando nossa história", pp. 1-5; and Bulletin of Information from the union of Campinas from September 1996 and March 1997

2) Negotiating with the PT government

As discussed in chapter II, the political landscape changed considerably with the election of the PT in 2002, opening a new "structure of political opportunity" (McAdam et al., 2001; Tarrow, 1998) for domestic workers to bargain with the state. Positioning itself as the party of the working class, the PT has been more inclined to listen to, or at least consult with, social movements and unions. Lula's first government (2003-2007) set up new consultative and participatory bodies at the local and national level. The national conferences were composed by a majority – 70% – of delegates from social movements, and held on specific themes such as racial inclusion, women's rights, or child labour (Dagnino & Chaves Texeira, 2014). Their objective was to produce advice and policy guidelines on their field, although these are non-binding and left at the discretion of the government. Wampler and Touchton (2015) report that between 2003 and 2014, 74 national conferences were held, involving 6 million participants from social movements and associations.

In this context of social dialogue and emphasis on 'pro-poor' policies, having a national federation affiliated to the CUT has proven crucial for domestic workers; it meant that they could be heard by the PT, fitting-in its social justice agenda. Through the FENATRAD, domestic workers' unions were progressively included within the new architecture of participation: the FENATRAD was part of the National Council for Women's Rights, a body attached to the Secretariat of Policies for Women (*Secretaria Especial de Políticas Para as Mulheres* – SPM); and the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality, attached to the Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (*Secretaria de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial* – SEPPIR).[147] However, none of these structures were responsible for discussing domestic work in particular, and the FENATRAD was mostly being consulted on cross-cutting issues of gender and race equality, but not specifically on labour rights.

In addition to having a seat in these councils, Creuza Maria de Oliveira, President of the FENATRAD between 2001 and 2016, cumulated several official mandates; she was also President of the Bahia's local union, and coordinator of the Unified Black

[147] These two structures were dismantled by the interim government and repackaged under one secretariat for Human Rights under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice.

Movement (*Movimento Negro Unificado* – MNU) for the state of Bahia. She ran for local elections in 1996, 2000 and 2004, and for Federal Deputy in 2006, 2010 and 2014 (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b, pp. 150-153). In 2015 and 2016, throughout the political crisis and the process leading up to the coup, Creuza appeared several times in defence of Dilma Rousseff, arguing that the coup would hit domestic workers the hardest because it was a coup against workers' rights.[148] Luiza Batista, the current President of the FENATRAD (since 2016), also holds an elective mandate within the CUT, and the feminist NGO SOS Corpo – who has close institutional relationships with the SPM – directly supports her local union (Recife).

Domestic workers being one of the most exploited and marginalised groups within Brazilian society, they became an unavoidable issue for the PT. And because of their specific location at the intersection of gender, race and class vectors of oppressions, they were included in many different spaces: conferences on women's rights, racial equality, human rights, child labour or 'modern slavery'. Furthermore, Lula, attached to his image as the President of the poor, used extensively the case of domestic workers in his discourses to emphasise his true connection with the people. For instance, he claimed many times that the elite was uncomfortable with the fact that a son of domestic worker could become President, or the fact that domestic workers could now take the plane and use the same perfumes as their employers thanks to the PT's social policies.[149] Thus, domestic workers became the symbol of the social progress enabled by the PT.

During our informal chats, domestic workers' leaders confirmed an intensification of institutional lobbying as an essential component of their repertoire of action after the election of the PT, although this tactic has been used since the 1980s. Former leaders of the union of Rio de Janeiro reminded for instance that their first trip to Brasília at the time of the Constitution drafting in 1988 was extremely precarious. They had to ask for other movements' support for transport, and many recalled having slept in a gymnasium with no running water or food provided. By contrast, with the PT in power, domestic

[148] See for instance her declaration on 07/04/2016 at an event organised by women in support of Dilma Rousseff: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veKR3Ec2VsY (last accessed on 31/10/2016).
[149] See for instance his declarations on 30/10/2013 for the 10th anniversary of the *Bolsa Família*: http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2013/10/lula-diz-que-incomoda-muita-gente-que-os-pobres-estejam-evoluindo.html, or when he received a honorary degree in Sergipe on 21/08/2017: https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2017/08/21/lula.htm

workers started receiving financial support either through the CUT or the party directly to travel to Brasília. According to them, they can now go by plane, stay in hotels, and have everything paid for.

The election of the PT also led to the appointment of key allies within the government, such as Eleonora Menicucci, appointed by Dilma Rousseff as Special Minister for Women's Rights in 2010, and Tatau Godinho, who is close to SOS Corpo, and was in charge of the Policies for Women's Employment and Autonomy within the SPM. Rosane Silva, the former officer of the CUT Women's Campaign, acted as advisor to the Minister of Labour and Employment from 2013 to 2016. She used to be a domestic worker herself when she was a teenager, and has a record of trying to make domestic workers' demands more visible within the CUT.[150] With more support within the government than ever before, domestic workers shifted progressively from "the streets to the court" (Bo Nielsen, 2015, p. 619), and used their political allies to press their claims directly onto the state. Their choice to be part of the workers' movement and be affiliated to the CUT has made them the natural allies of the PT, and the FENATRAD became a legitimate actor worth being consulted. As a result of their institutional lobby, domestic workers won a first legislative victory in 2006, with the promulgation of the law n. 11.324 that gives them 30 days of paid annual leave, protection against unfair dismissal for pregnant women, the prohibition of in-kind deductions, and provides a fiscal incentive for employers to register their employees through a tax-deduction mechanism. But a study by Girard-Nunes and Silva (2013) shows that these measures were not effective, and that employers preferred to keep their workers unregistered in order to avoid paying extra social contributions.

The need for a more comprehensive legislation became more pressing, and domestic workers kept on lobbying the government for their full recognition as workers. They used their allies within the Congress, and in particular Benedita da Silva, who has supported domestic workers since she first got elected in 1986. Benedita da Silva is the author of the Constitutional Amendment n. 72/2013 presented as the Congress, known as the '*PEC das domésticas*', that proposes to remove the legal exclusion of domestic

[150] I interviewed Rosane Silva in August 2010 as part of my master's dissertation on the role of women within the CUT. At the time, she had insisted that the most exploited and oppressed women in Brazil were domestic workers. She also wrote policy papers on domestic work for the CUT, see for instance: Internal note, *Domestic Work: a necessary reflection*, 25/04/2008 (my translation).

workers from the CLT. In its final version, the PEC 72/2013 did change the article 7 of the Constitution to declare domestic workers equal to other workers, but, it did not include them within the CLT and only gave them access to some of the basic labour rights guaranteed to the other workers. The corresponding law, voted in 2015 (law n. 150/2015), that specifies the conditions of application of the reform, ended being a lesser version of the promised equality of rights. Although the list of rights is more comprehensive compared to 1988, it is still shorter than for other workers, and the conditions of application of certain rights are quite restrictive. Table 11 presents the full list of rights guaranteed by the 2015 legislation.

Table 11: Domestic workers' rights in the 2015 law

1. Having a signed working card
2. Right to the national minimum wage
3. 13th month of salary (known as the Christmas bonus)
4. Remuneration of night work
5. Limitation of working hours daily and weekly
6. Compensation for extra time
7. Weekly rest
8. Bank and religious holidays
9. Annual leave
10. Transport voucher (employers can pay a proportion of the cost of transportation)
11. Notice period
12. Compensation for unfair dismissal
13. Access to the Fund of Guarantee for Time of Service (FGTS)
14. Unemployment benefit
15. Prohibition of night work, insalubrious or dangerous work for minors under 18
16. Recognition of collective conventions (but this requires an employers' association)
17. Free assistance to the dependents or children of the employee (refers to the right to childcare, but modalities of application have not been specified)
18. Reduction of risks inherent to the job (minimise risks of burns, cuts, falls, electric shocks, or any other foreseeable accident linked to the job)
19. Access to social security
20. Interdiction to dismiss pregnant women
21. Maternity leave
22. Paternity leave

23. Family social benefits (benefit paid to workers with low wages and children under the age of 14, in this case, it is to be paid by the employers but can be deducted from their taxes, so in effect, it is subsidised by the government)
24. Sick pay
25. Compensations in cases of accident at the workplace
26. Statutory pension

Overall, the process leading to the adoption of the 2015 legislation confirms that domestic workers can win rights through a combination of political mobilisation, the support of allies, and the political opportunity provided by the election of a left-wing government (Blofield, 2012). However, while giving domestic workers more visibility, their institutionalisation and partial absorption within the PT government has also led to a certain form of co-optation, or "ritualised participation" (Paschel, 2016), making critiques against the government harder to articulate. And in fact, the law 150/2015 was presented in public discourses as a good gesture from the PT government, and even as a second abolition of slavery, erasing the struggles of the domestic workers' unions and their complaints against an incomplete legislation. Most non-unionised domestic workers I interviewed knew about the law, but attributed it to the good will of President Dilma, and/or to God. Either way, they perceived it as something coming from above, and were in general not aware of their unions' history and struggles. Similar to the dynamics observed by Ally (2009) in South Africa, the recognition of domestic workers by the state on the grounds that they are a vulnerable population to protect, or 'modern slaves' to be freed, took away their agency from the process of law-making. The personal prestige of Dilma Rousseff and Lula got amplified at the detriment of the domestic workers' movement.

Besides, the law was presented as the first of the kind, as if domestic workers had never won any rights before, which is a historical construction. Table 12 summarises the rights obtained since the return of democracy, showing that the process of winning rights has been long and incremental. The 2015 legislation, while providing a concrete improvement, is not the first legislation giving labour rights to domestic workers, neither is it the promised social revolution that would finally lead to complete equality with other workers. Domestic workers have been able to adapt their strategy responding to the political context, and used the PT's purported social justice agenda to achieve important legislative progress. However, through this process of institutional lobbying

and partnership with the state, the domestic workers' unions also became less visible, and were stripped of their own victory that has been re-appropriated by the "government of the poor".

Table 12: Inclusion and exclusion from working rights since 1988

Country	Laws	Exclusions
Brazil	1988	
	Minimum wage (never enforced)	Compensation for unfair dismissal
	20 days of annual leave	FGTS
	1 day off per week	No maximum working hours
		No compensation for night shifts or extra hours
	2006	
	30 days of annual leave	Idem
	Prohibition of in-kind discount to salary	
	2015	
	Severance pay for unfair dismissal / Access to the FGTS	Employers can take back their contribution towards the fund of guarantee in case of fair dismissal
	Unemployment benefit	Only applies after 15 months of continued work while for other workers it applies after 12 months
	Salary compensation for night shifts and extra hours	
	8 hours workday, 44 hours workweek	Creation of a 'bank of hours', the employer does not have to pay for extra hours within the first year
	Fine to employers who do not register their employee	Is only considered domestic worker the employee who works at least 3 days a week in the same house
	Prohibition of night shifts for under 18 years old	

3) Transnationalising rights from below

The PT government also presented the Constitutional reform of 2013 as a required step to enable the Brazilian state to ratify the ILO Convention 189 from 2011 on domestic

workers' rights. Indeed, in its article 7, the Brazilian Constitution excluded domestic workers from the Labour Code, and restricted them to only some labour rights. This made the ILO Convention inapplicable at the national level, and motivated the amendment n. 72/2013. Yet, as demonstrated above, the domestic workers' movement for equal rights had started decades ago, and is rooted in a particular legal and historical context. Thus, while the international dimension of this legislative victory is an important factor, it should not obscure the agency of domestic workers in the construction of a distinct subaltern discourse on labour rights. In this sub-section, I discuss the process of transnationalisation of the domestic workers' movement, and show the ways in which their discourse on labour rights contributed to international debates on 'decent work'.

In 1988, together with domestic workers from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Costa Rica and Guatemala, Brazilian domestic workers participated in the creation of the Confederation of Domestic Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean (CONLACTRAHO).[151] A picture of the founding meeting is reproduced in figure 14. The CONLACTRAHO became a key instrument in making domestic workers' voices heard at the international level. CONLACTRAHO's initial meetings were facilitated by the US scholar and activist Elsa Chaney, who co-edited one of the most cited books on the movement of domestic workers in Latin America, "Muchachas No More!" (Chaney & Castro, 1989). The CONLACTRAHO met regularly, at least once a year, providing a forum for domestic workers to share their experience and become more visible regionally. Despite a variety of organisational models and tactics, domestic workers' demands were fairly consistent across the continent; recognition of their status as worker, legal right to the minimum wage, access to social security, and the right to unionise.

[151] Sindomésticos Recife. (1989). *Domésticas: Uma Categoria da Classe Trabalhadora. Seus Direitos, Suas Lutas, Suas Propostas*

Figure 14: Pamphlet presenting the CONLACTRAHO after its creation in 1988

Note: on the left-hand side, at the front, Nair Jane, a former leader of the union of Rio de Janeiro and currently elected at the union of Nova Iguaçu.

The organisation published annual bulletins of information giving an account of activities led by the different members, and insisting on the value and dignity of domestic work.[152] This transnational network has also enabled domestic workers to attract funding from international organisations such as the ILO, UN Women and NGOs. A pamphlet from 2002, which was given to me by the leaders of Campinas, mentions the organisation of a workshop by the ILO in Costa Rica, and the launching of a study on the conditions of domestic workers in Latin America by the Ford Foundation.[153] The material I could gather from the CONLACTRAHO is written only in Spanish, and the Brazilian leaders that have participated in international events (Regina Teodoro, Nair Jane, Noeli dos Santos and Cleide Pinto) said they would speak in *Portuñol* (a mix of Portuguese and Spanish) with their colleagues. However, language quite often remains a challenge for Brazilian domestic workers unions' access

[152] CONLACTRAHO. (1997). *Por un nuevo despertar.*
[153] CONLACTRAHO. (2002). *Por un nuevo despertar.*

to international spaces, and it is quite likely that they could not read these pamphlets themselves.

In Brazil, the ILO supported the programme "Domestic Work and Citizenship" (*Trabalho Doméstico Cidadão* – TDC) launched in 2006 by the PT, which aimed to improve the level of literacy of domestic workers and strengthen their unions (ILO, 2011). The programme was designed and led in collaboration with the FENATRAD (see chapter V). The ILO also organised a seminar in 2005 with the CONLACTRAHO to discuss domestic workers' participation in trade union centres. Participants signed a joint declaration stating that they would promote the adoption of a specific ILO Convention for domestic workers. Then, at the CONLACTRAHO 2006 Congress, delegates agreed on an action plan that reiterated the commitment to press for an ILO Convention that would guarantee equal rights to domestic workers (Valenzuela & Rangel, 2008). By then, Uruguay (in 2006) and Bolivia (in 2003), had already approved legislations guaranteeing equal rights to domestic workers (Blofield, 2012).

The same year of 2006, a global meeting was organised in Amsterdam at the initiative of the International Union Federation (IUF) and the NGO Women in Informal Employment (WIEGO), with the participation of international trade unions and representatives of domestic workers from around the world (Pape, 2016). The discussions held at this meeting also pointed towards the need for an ILO Convention on domestic work. At this occasion, the International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN), which would then become the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), was created. The IDWN's initial goal was to coordinate domestic workers' organisations globally so that they would present a united front at the ILO negotiations. In 2008, the ILO finally put domestic work on the agenda of the 2010 International Labour Conference (Fish, 2017; Pape, 2016). It is interesting to note that the first time the ILO mentioned the necessity to regulate domestic work was in 1936 (D'Souza, 2010), and that in 1948, the resolutions adopted at the 30th International Labour Conference (ILC) declared that: "time has now arrived for a full discussion on this important subject."[154] However, the issue of domestic work was adjourned again in 1950, and in 1967, and then dropped off the agenda until the 2000s.

[154] ILC Resolutions, 1948, pp. 545-554

In preparation of the 2010 ILC, member states received a questionnaire on the conditions and demands of domestic workers in their country. Research carried out by the ILO, and evidence provided by the member states, all suggested that domestic workers were amongst the least protected workers, which conflicted with the promotion of 'decent work' worldwide (D'Souza, 2010; ILO, 2008, 2017b). The combination of advocacy and research on migrant workers, 'modern slavery', and human trafficking further helped making domestic workers' lack of rights more visible, and contributed in framing them as vulnerable subjects. In Brazil, this period coincided with the PT government, concerned – at least in its discourse – with attending to the needs of the most vulnerable people. The FENATRAD was mobilised to answer the ILO questionnaire, and used this opportunity to reiterate their demand for equal rights. Leaders who had been involved in the TDC programme were called to be part of the consultative process, and put in direct contact with the ILO. In August 2009, a workshop gathering 40 leaders of domestic workers' unions affiliated to the FENATRAD, representatives of UN Women and the ILO, and delegates from the SPM and SEPPIR, was organised in Brasília in order to coordinate domestic workers' demands before the ILC (Sanches, 2009).

Brazil played a key role in the international negotiations, both through its government and through the FENATRAD who was allowed to take formally part in the negotiations as a member of the CUT. Some accounts of the negotiations emphasise the leadership of the Brazilian delegation, and in particular of Creuza Maria de Oliveira, who positioned herself as a legitimate representative of the entire region (Goldsmith, 2013). Marcelina Bautista, General Secretary of the CONLACTRAHO at the time of the ILO negotiations, confirmed that:

> Comrades from other countries would look up to the Brazilian delegation before the votes. They appeared so much more prepared and so strong, that other Latin American countries would follow their lead for major decisions. We were all impressed by the strength of the movement in Brazil and the charisma of our comrades.[155]

Regina Teodoro, from Campinas, was one of the Brazilian delegates at the two ILCs in 2010 and 2011 where the negotiations happened. She confirms that even though language was a barrier – Brazilian delegates do not speak Spanish or English – they managed to set-up a regional group and coordinated their demands before going to the

[155] Marcelina Bautista, Secretary for Latin America at the IDWF, 21/09/2016, interviewed at the FENATRAD's National Congress in Rio de Janeiro.

plenary sessions. However, she also reveals the discrepancy between the very formal process of negotiation happening at the institutional level, and the way politics is practiced at the grassroots by domestic workers. They had to adapt to rules they were not even aware of, and learn very fast how to conduct negotiations in this (hostile) environment:

> This process is very interesting. The rules they have, I mean, the rules are this thing that is very strict. On many occasions, I was interrupted by the little gavel (laughs), we had to be quiet, we couldn't applaud, we had to wait our turn to speak, we couldn't stay in the room after the debates… but because everything went in the opposite direction of what we wanted, we had to protest. And we didn't speak Spanish, so we had to tell another person to say this or that, then the person had to speak and translate back to us. Then we started making noise to actually interrupt, because we were running out of time because of the translation. We finally got the trick. And on the fifth day, countries that did not have domestic workers' unions started following us during the votes.[156]

Here again, Regina Teodoro exposes the contradictions of inclusion; subalterns were brought to the ILO, but no adequate translation was provided for them, and no one had explained the rules of the game prior to the negotiation process. Domestic workers' way to negotiate was reprimanded as being inappropriate – chairs of the negotiations would interrupt them with the "little gavel" (*o martelhinho*) to bring silence back. As Spivak (2008, p. 93) writes: "the subaltern's inability to speak is predicated upon an attempt to speak to which no appropriate response is proffered". However, in this case, and according to domestic workers themselves, they were able to impose their rhythm and make their demands heard. For once, domestic workers were not invisible; they were acting at the forefront of an international tripartite negotiation. Domestic workers' physical presence inside the ILO made it harder, or even untenable, for representatives of employers and governments to deny them the basic rights they were asking for (Fish, 2017; Pape, 2016). The entrance of the subaltern into this international institutional arena made them an unavoidable issue, and it made their lack of rights an immoral condition.

Approved by a large majority of delegates on 16 June 2011 at the 100th International Labour Conference, the ILO Convention 189 has been qualified by many authors as historic (Blackett, 2011; Goldsmith, 2013; Oelz, 2014), and Blackett (2012, p. 783) argues that it represents a fundamental shift to a "human right to labour rights". Indeed,

[156] Regina Teodoro, Campinas, 05/05/2016, leader of Campinas' union at the time of the interview.

the Convention 189 delivered on historical demands of domestic workers, recognising them as proper workers: it requires that member states guarantee fair wages and equal working terms and conditions to domestic workers, and specifies that migrant workers should be fully included within national labour laws and enjoy the same conditions as other workers. Its recommendations can be summarised in four key points: freedom of association and right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.[157] To date, the Convention 189 has been ratified by 25 countries, including Brazil since January 2018.

While the pro-active role of the ILO cannot be underestimated, it is important to remember that the movement for equal labour rights started 80 years ago in Brazil, and about as long ago in some Latin American countries such as Argentina or Bolivia (Valenzuela & Rangel, 2008). It then formalised as a transnational movement in the 1980s, making the CONLACTRAHO the oldest and more structured regional network of domestic workers in the world (Pape, 2016). This thesis cannot fully account for domestic workers' movements in other countries and continents, but strong movements have been existing in the global South for decades, for instance in South Africa, Indonesia, India or Hong Kong (See for instance: Ally, 2009; Bonner, 2010; Jordhus-Lier, 2017). In Brazil, demands for labour rights and the full recognition as workers emerged in the 1930s, responding to a specific political and legal context. While rooted in its particular time and place, the domestic workers' movement in Brazil articulated demands that resonated with domestic workers in other locations. As argued by Dunford and Madhok (2015), transnational principles co-exist and are embedded with local contexts and histories.

However, I argue that the case of domestic workers' rights is more than an act of vernacularisation or adaptation of transnational rights framework (Kay, 2011; Levitt & Merry, 2009; Reilly, 2011); it is a case of what I call 'transnationalisation from below'. Indeed, the term vernacuralisation refers to a process through which local movements adapt "globally generated ideas" (Levitt & Merry, 2009) to their particular context, whereas I contend that the case of domestic workers' rights shows the reverse dynamic: the globalisation – and adaptation into an international Convention – of locally

[157] ILO Convention 189: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID,P12100_LANG_CODE:2551460,en

generated discourses on labour rights and equality. The literature on transnational rights and social movements shows quite well that actors in the global South are not passive receptors of rights imposed on them: they can actively claim, negotiate, and transform rights into concrete local demands (Brinks, Gauri, & Shen, 2015; Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Dufour & Giraud, 2007; Dunford & Madhok, 2015; Kay, 2011; Madhok, 2013; Sikkink, 2005). In this perspective, Sousa-Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito (2005) talk of a "subaltern cosmopolitan legality" to describe the ways in which subaltern movements challenge and transform western-centred rights frameworks and individualistic ideas of rights into counter-hegemonic discourses. While insisting on the active role of subaltern movements in transforming rights frameworks, this approach nonetheless risks reproducing a dichotomy between the North as a place of rights production, and the South as a place of rights reception.

Madhok (2017, p. 485) suggests that we adopt instead a vernacular rights culture approach, to capture not only the acts of translation of 'global' rights at the local level, but also the instances where movements have "their own languages of rights and entitlements grounded in specific political imaginaries, justificatory premises, and subjectivities." In some cases, for instance with domestic workers claiming the right to have labour rights, the very act of claiming a right simultaneously transforms the rights framework and the political imaginaries associated to it (Dunford & Madhok, 2015; Madhok, 2017). Indeed, in the case of Brazil, the category of 'work' has to be expanded in order to include domestic workers' demands. Building on this theoretical perspective, I argue that domestic workers have produced a phenomenon of 'transnationalisation from below' whereby they have made their own subaltern epistemology of rights (a counter-hegemonic source of knowledge on what constitutes work and who is a worker) a transnational discourse that got recognised and adapted into an international convention. Domestic workers used all the available channels at the national level to lobby the state, including programmes subsidised by the ILO, formed part of a regional confederation in Latin America to be more visible and capture more resources, and successfully influenced the course of the international negotiations within the ILO arena since 2008.

Although local and transnational discourses circulate in multiple forms and directions, I argue that domestic workers did not simply transform a pre-existing international rights framework into local demands, rather, they created their own discourses on labour

rights, and then successfully transnationalised their demands. Brazilian domestic workers explicitly claimed the right to social security and to form trade unions back in 1936, and their bill proposal of 1985 already contained the rights established in the 2015 Brazilian law. The ILO has been crucial in providing a political opportunity and the adequate resources for the movement to become global, and the passing of the Convention 189 in 2011 has had concrete repercussions both in Brazil and in other Latin American countries (Poblete, 2018). But the rights secured in the Convention 189, just as those secured in 2015, had been demanded for decades by the domestic workers' unions. Domestic workers astutely played on their vulnerability, reaching the ILO in its core values and rhetoric. Often presented as one of the most vulnerable groups in society, cumulating all forms of oppression, domestic workers became an unavoidable issue for national and international agendas of social justice and human dignity (Fish, 2017).

Thus, domestic workers' transnational politics is deeply paradoxical: they have used their subalternity to be recognised nationally and internationally, being framed as vulnerable workers in need of protection, when this condition of subalternity is precisely what had created their exclusion from the rights framework in the first place. Indeed, because of the gendered and raced division of labour rooted in colonial legacies, domestic work was never recognised as proper work, and therefore, fell out of labour regulations. Domestic workers insisted on their status as workers to gain labour rights, yet, the very definition of 'worker' both in Brazil and globally has been at the root of their marginalisation. As discussed by Ally (2009), this mode of recognition through the framing of domestic workers as vulnerable subjects is ambivalent. If this has been crucial to force a remedial public action, it has also served to partially obscure the political struggles of the domestic workers' unions.

This movement towards transnationalisation, and its ambivalent effects, also reminds of the process of "NGO-ization" of feminist groups in Latin America (Alvarez, 1999, 2009), which opened new possibilities for organising while also bringing new challenges for grassroots mobilising. Alvarez argues that the transnational arena offers considerable opportunities for feminist movements to make their demands more visible, however, she also highlights the difficulties resulting from this institutional work and the challenges of professionalizing social movements – sometimes at the detriment of base-mobilising. Furthermore, the claim to equal status is in tension with the framing of

domestic workers as a group of exception; if they are more vulnerable, then they are not proper workers, but if they are not proper workers, then they do not deserve equal labour rights (Boris & Klein, 2012; Fish, 2017). Therefore, subaltern institutional politics is traversed by unavoidable paradoxes, resulting from the fact that they demand inclusion within a system that has historically worked to produce them as a subaltern class and impeded their recognition as proper workers.

II/ Formal labour rights for the 'non-workers'?

Subaltern groups need the state to guarantee their rights, yet, their recognition is necessarily ambivalent. The state decides on the modalities of recognition, and can selectively recognise one aspect of the subalterns' demands while ignoring others (Sieder, 2016). The law is this sense a "two-edged sword" (*uma faca de dois gumes*);[158] it is the instrument through which rights are guaranteed and claimed, but it also produces new forms of bureaucratic and legal constraints for subaltern movements (Bo Nielsen, 2015; Couso, 2007; Sieder, 2011). While the law opens opportunities for counter-hegemonic struggles (Sousa-Santos & Rodríguez-Garavito, 2005), it simultaneously restricts subaltern movements to legal processes and technical juridical procedures. In the case of Brazilian domestic workers, the law 150/2015 has meant a partial recognition from the state of their status as workers, but it has also implied more administrative and legal burden for the under-resourced local unions. They now have to act as conventional trade unions, but without the means to do so.

Legal gains for subaltern groups that are made within an unchanged structure of power are necessarily limited (Nilsen & Roy, 2015; Sieder, 2016), and, as argued by Gramsci (1971), can only be done in favour of the dominant class interests. In Brazil, the law 150/2015 contains important limitations, and the current context of political and economic crises jeopardises the implementation of these newly gained rights. But the domestic workers' legislation has also another effect; by 'standardising' domestic workers, and integrating them further within the industrial relations systems, it has transformed their modes of action. While representing a real possibility to improve domestic workers' material conditions, the limits and uncertainties of the law have led

[158] Expression used by Cristina Borges, a leader of the local union of the city of Franca, to describe the law. Interviewed on 03/09/2017.

to increasing individual labour litigations from domestic workers in order to be made effective. Thus, the legislative victory also brings new organisational challenges to subaltern movements (actual gains are limited, recourses to implement the law are scarce, domestic workers increasingly need legal representation, and modalities of negotiations with the state are displaced from the political to the legal terrain), illustrating the paradoxical effects of their institutional politics and their ambivalent relationship with the state.

This section discusses the ambivalences of the 2015 legislation, revealing the tensions in giving formal labour rights to a group considered to be 'non-workers'. The first sub-section examines the reaction of the elite against the legislation, and their attempt to maintain the colonial order in place. I then review in detail the limitations of the legislation, and show how it gives some scope to employers to perpetuate domestic workers' exploitation. Finally, I analyse the domestic workers' unions turn to a judicial repertoire of action in order to make the law respected, and assess the effects of this strategy.

1) Challenging the colonial social order

The Constitutional reform of 2013 is the recognition at the highest level of the state that domestic work is work. It changes the article 7 of the Constitution where basic labour rights are stipulated, posing the principle of equal rights between domestic workers and other workers.[159] By giving domestic workers access to basic labour rights, and inscribing them within the Constitution, the law expands social understandings of what counts as productive work. This recognition has been at the very core of public debates on domestic work since the 1930s. The law defines a domestic worker as someone who provides paid personal services to a private household, with no-profit making aim, and who works for at least three consecutive days for the same employer (law 150/2015, art. 1). The absence of economic benefit is the element that has justified different rights and the exclusion from the CLT since the beginning; domestic work is not a productive activity, therefore, not a proper work. This has always been contested by domestic workers, who claim to have a productive role within the Brazilian economy (see chapter

[159] Constitutional Amendment n. 72: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/emendas/emc/emc72.htm

V). Recognising this productive role with a Constitutional reform is in this sense a major change to the existing rights framework, and a revision of the colonial order.

However, this profound change has met strong resistance from middle and upper-class households, who are the employers of domestic workers. They argued that the new law would impose an unbearable burden on households, and directly contested the idea that domestic work is a work like any other. Through their representatives in the Congress, in mainstream media, and national employers' organisations, they claimed that households are not private companies, that the value of domestic work is not the same as any other work, and that the cost of giving equal rights to domestic workers would be too high for the average household. Since 2013, they have initiated a proper movement of counter-recognition, which ultimately contributed to the 2016 coup. Parts of the elite saw the law on domestic work as a frontal attack on their centennial privileges. With the election in 2014 of the most conservative Congress since the end of the military regime, employers gained significant room for manoeuvre within the institutional arena to negotiate down the Constitutional reform, and impose measures more favourable to them. They revived and developed a long-standing narrative in which the employing household is the truly exploited part.

Back in the 1960, when local associations were being created, employers were already resisting against the very idea of giving rights to their employees. In 1961, Laudelina de Campos Mello, who had just founded the local union of Campinas, received an anonymous letter from an employer (probably a woman), explaining why domestic work is not a proper work:

> Under no circumstances, Dona Laudelina, would this class of workers be in an equivalent position to that of the working class. Indeed, first of all, workers in factories are exposed to risks, inclement weather, bosses' caprices […]. And above all, they kill their hunger with the food religiously acquired through their sweat and labour. […]. The same does not happen with the ladies domestic workers, because they feed themselves of their employers, are the real housewives, cloth themselves with luxurious products, sometimes even surpassing the poor patroa! […] And despite this comfort that they benefit from, 90% are vain, disobedient, disrespectful, humiliating the poor martyr patroa with irreverent words! (cited in: Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b, pp. 84-85, my translation)

This narrative of the poor housewife, and mistreated employing household, was carried over time and re-deployed every time a debate regarding domestic workers' rights took place. In 1999 for instance, the former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso proposed

to introduce an optional contribution to the FGTS for those with a signed working card. Representatives of employers opposed the measure arguing that it would cost them too much. Dr. Margaret Carbinato, a lawyer and President of the Union of Domestic Employers of the City of São Paulo (*Sindicato dos Empregadores Domésticos de São Paulo* – SEDESP), argued at the time that the measure was unconstitutional: "the access to the FGTS is not a right given to domestic workers in our Constitution and Labour Code, therefore, it is unconstitutional and illegal",[160] placing the debate on legal grounds. She also admitted advising employers against contributing towards the fund because domestic workers' turn-over was so high that they would never be able to access it anyway (the law specified that they could claim their benefits after 15 months of continuous employment for the same household).[161]

In 2013, when discussions around the Constitutional reform to extend labour rights to domestic workers started, employers re-deployed the same old arguments presenting themselves as victims. Mainstream media published numerous reports about middle and upper-class families who would be affected by the reform. Many were worried that it would cost too much to hire a maid and, in a context of inflation, that this would add a burden on their budget. Some also insisted on the fact that most households would be forced to trade their cleaner for electronic devices such as dishwashers.[162] The magazine *Veja*, one of the most read in the country, even published testimonies of upper-class women complaining that it is not possible to check working hours at home. An employer said:

> I don't know how to count costs related to the working day of my nanny, who sleeps at home. What is additional time? What's a night shift? Unlike companies, at home there isn't a clock to check on the worker.[163]

This quote reveals the core of the issue around domestic work: employers do not see themselves as employers, as they do not see domestic work as work. What happens in the privacy of the home cannot be compared to 'proper' work in a company. In another

[160] Interviewed in the newspaper *Estado de São Paulo*, by Kathia Tamanaha, "Prós e contras do FGTS para domésticos", on 21/02/2000.
[161] Interviewed in the newspaper *Diário Popular*, by Sandra Motta, "Lei autoriza demissão por justa causa para doméstica", on 24/03/2001.
[162] Ritto, C. (2013), "Sai a empregada, entra a lava-louça", in *Veja*, published on 13/04/2013: https://veja.abril.com.br/economia/pec-das-domesticas-sai-a-empregada-entra-a-lava-louca/
[163] Honorato, R. (2013), "PEC das domésticas pode elevar despesas de famílias com empregados em quase 40%", in *Veja*, published on 24/03/2013: https://veja.abril.com.br/economia/pec-das-domesticas-pode-elevar-despesas-de-familias-com-empregados-em-quase-40/

article published in 2015, upper-class families explain that they are 'importing' nannies from the Philippines because they are more "submissive" than Brazilian ones.[164] A woman-employer, describing her Filipino nanny explains: "she was incredible, she did the groceries, cleaned, cooked and drove. She even washed the car! In Brazil, a nanny is only a nanny, a cook only cooks, and a cleaner only cleans." Here, the employer is explicitly praising the total disposability of labour of foreign nannies, reinforcing colonial and gender hierarchies. A good employee is someone who is ready to do more for the same the wage, has no fair terms and conditions, job description, or labour demands. A good worker is a flexible, low-paid, disposable worker – a servant rather than a worker (Acker, 2004; Cox, 1997, 2006; Parreñas, 2001).

Dr. Margaret Carbinato, who is now president of honour of the SEDESP, opposed extending labour rights to domestic workers placing this time the debate on a moral level. In an interview published in October 2015, she declared that nowadays it is hard to find a good *empregada* because they lack of respect for their employers.[165] She claims that: "what is missing in the human being is everyone knowing their place", and concludes, "just because you have a new right it does not mean that you can become arrogant". Empowered domestic workers, with basic labour rights, are presented as "arrogant", disturbing the order of things; they are getting out of "their place". Just like in 1999 and 2000, newspapers and experts anticipated that the new law would lead to an increase of 40% of social contributions for employers, and that in the end, this would create more unemployment because nobody would be able to afford a maid anymore. As Creuza Maria de Oliveira puts it: "when we win new rights, there is always a polemic. The big media become terrorists: nobody can have a maid anymore!"[166]

The figure of the domestic worker became a subject of battle during the political crisis and the process leading to the coup, as if the newly gained rights of domestic workers exemplified everything that had gone wrong under the PT governments. The middle and upper-class could no longer afford their privileges, they were being directly threatened

[164] Campos Mello, P. (2015), "Empresa 'importa' babás e domésticas das Filipinas para o Brasil", in *Folha de São Paulo,* published on 10/05/2015: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2015/05/1627108-empresa-importa-babas-e-domesticas-das-filipinas-para-o-brasil.shtml

[165] Interview published in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, on 04/10/2015: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/saopaulo/2015/10/1689476-nao-aprendi-muito-com-que-horas-ela-volta-diz-representante-de-patroes.shtml?cmpid=comptw

[166] Creuza Maria de Oliveira, Salvador, 07/08/2015, President of the FENATRAD at the time of the interview.

in their way of life. The polemic has intensified around the widely circulated image, reproduced in figure 15, of the upper-class white couple demonstrating in favour of the impeachment in Copacabana in March 2016, followed by their black nanny, wearing her uniform, walking with a child's pushchair behind them.[167] A vivid illustration of the gender and race divisions of labour. The employers defended themselves on Facebook, claiming that they "love their nanny very much", making the issue a matter of personal relationship.

Figure 15: White couple demonstrating in Copacabana

Source: Brasil 247 (see footnote)

By refusing to see themselves as employers, middle and upper-class households perpetuate the idea that domestic services should be provided for free, and operate outside of the formal labour market. Their position confirms an entrenched coloniality of labour and legacy of slavery; the elite aspires to have servants with no working rights at their disposition. Black women are still expected to work for free for the white elite, saving them the time to be 'productive', do politics, or be with their families. Domestic workers' aspiration to equal rights is framed as being both economically unachievable and morally wrong – it would destroy society. More than a technical legality, the law 150/2015 is a site of political struggle for recognition and citizenship. The law is the normative instrument that defines who counts as a worker, and as a subject of labour

[167] Brasil 247, "Ícone da Nova Luta de Classes, Banqueiro Diz Gostar da Babá", publishd on 14/03/2017: https://www.brasil247.com/pt/247/rio247/220943/Ícone-da-nova-luta-de-classes-banqueiro-diz-gostar-da-babá.htm

rights. As put by Sousa-Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito (2005), the law is an element of struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic actors; in the Brazilian case, between the colonial elite and the subalterns.

2) The law as a two-edged sword

Many scholars have questioned the possibility for the law or rights alone to produce social transformation; their implementation is never guaranteed, and rights on their own do not change the relations of power that created the situation of exclusion in the first place (Bradshaw, 2006; D. Collins, Falcón, Lodhia, & Talcott, 2010; Cornwall & Molyneux, 2006; Couso, 2007; Gideon, 2006). In an unchanged structure of power, their effectiveness remains limited, and their content accommodates the interests of the dominant class (Bo Nielsen, 2015; Gramsci, 1971). In Brazil, the class of domestic employers is represented in every key sector of society: they are the politicians, the judges, the owners of mass media; they possess the economic and political capitals. This enabled them to change the content of the law, and transform the declaration of equal labour rights for domestic workers into an empty promise. Through their representatives at the Congress, and intense lobbying from private groups such as *Doméstica Legal*, employers secured major gains for themselves.

Indeed, the legislation as adopted in 2015 contains important loopholes and gaps, strongly criticised by domestic workers' unions. The first one is the status of the daily worker. Although daily workers have always existed, the law formalises the distinction between regular *empregadas*, working for at least three a week for the same employer, and *diaristas*, who work up to two days a week for the same employer (art. 1). The new rights contained in the law do not apply to the latter, considered not to have a formal employment relationship, and leaving them with the status of self-employed. It then becomes their own responsibility to sort out their taxes and social contributions, as they have no employer. Because they are self-employed, they cannot receive any of the benefits related to being dismissed or unemployed. Union leaders claimed that in 2015 and 2016 they saw a massive increase in the number of *diaristas*, and that they dealt with many cases of long-term *empregadas* who had been dismissed and re-hired as *diaristas*. A study on the five largest metropolitan regions of the country carried in 2016 confirms the increase in the number of *diaristas*, up to +20% in the city of São Paulo, while the situation of registered *empregadas* seems to vary from region to region

(DIEESE, 2017b). The exact effects of the law and the economic crisis are difficult to disentangle, and aggregated data at the national level is not always consistent since 2015, but the possibility to transform the class of domestic workers into a class of self-employed *diaristas* is a major concern for domestic workers' unions.

Another major point of contention was the creation of a bank of hours, allowing employers to stock the first 40 extra hours worked by the employee and to repay them within a period of 12 months (art. 2, §5). These hours can be paid back either in holiday or in salary after the first year of employment, but, if the domestic worker is lawfully dismissed within those 12 months of service, the hours go back to the employer. In other words, this measure facilitates the extraction of free labour for a period of 12 months. According to FENATRAD leaders, it will lead to a higher turn-over in order to avoid paying the extra-time back to the employees. The third most contentious point was the conditions under which to access the FGTS (art. 22), one of domestic workers' longest struggle. Although the access to the FGTS becomes compulsory, employers' contributions towards the fund is lower than in other sectors, they are not subjected to the 40% fee for unfair dismissal, and in case of fair dismissal the employer gets all the contributions back (equivalent to the number of months or years worked by the employee) leaving the domestic worker without access to the FGTS. There are also important concerns regarding the enforceability of the law. The responsibility of formalising domestic workers and sorting out related social contributions rests entirely upon the household buying domestic services. Thus, the process is completely individualised and relies on the good faith of the employer. The workplace being a private house, the Ministry of Labour can only proceed to an inspection if: a formal complaint has been received, and with the prior agreement of the house-owner/employer.[168]

In short, if the law proclaims equality, it also gives many tools to employers to maintain exploitative working conditions for their employees. The effectiveness of the law depends on its conditions of production and application, and in some instances, it can be used to justify violence and perpetuate exploitative power relations (J. Comaroff & Comaroff, 2007). Under the disguise of a social progress, the 2015 legislation perpetuates some forms of exploitation and legitimises practices that can be detrimental

[168] According to Luiz Marcolino, local representative of the Ministry of Labour for the state of São Paulo, 04/05/2016.

to domestic workers, reinforcing points of exclusion from the common labour rights framework. These loopholes caused a great dissatisfaction amongst union leaders who are, as a result, very critical of the law. Carli Maria dos Santos from Rio de Janeiro said: "this is not the law we wanted", while Regina Teodoro from Campinas complained that "it brought more problems than solutions". Similarly, Creuza Maria de Oliveira affirmed: "we were given only half of the rights when we were promised equality, we cannot be half equal, either we are equals or we are not!"[169] The new legislation extending some labour rights to domestic workers represents a real possibility of improvement, and if enforced properly, it could lead to significant material gains for them. Yet, it also reproduces some "feudal enclaves" (Blofield, 2009) by perpetuating the less-than-equal status of domestic workers, and their exclusion from the CLT. The concessions made to domestic workers are consistent with the colonial legacy that created them as an under-class of servants, and with the corporatist state that does not fully recognise them as proper workers.

Besides, the law was voted amidst an economic and political crisis, generating fear amongst domestic workers that employers would use this unstable context to avoid compliance. Since impeachment of the PT government in May 2016, domestic workers lost their allies within the government and the channels of communication they had secured under a left-wing administration. Newspapers around the world noted the disappearance of women and black people from the new government, and stressed the tragic symbolism behind the coup/impeachment: the destitution of a woman President with a relatively mixed government in terms of gender and race, and its subsequent replacement by a government of white wealthy men. *The Guardian* writes for instance "A lot of testosterone and little pigment" to describe the interim government, while the *Independent* confirms that this is the least representative government since the end of the dictatorship in 1985.[170] One of the first actions of the new government has been to suppress the Ministries for Women's Rights, Racial Equality, and Human Rights, all

[169] Carli dos Santos was interviewed on 15/03/2016 at the union of Rio de Janeiro, Regina Teodoro on 05/05/2016 at the union of Campinas, and Creuza de Oliveira on 07/08/2015 at the FENATRAD's HQ in Salvador.
[170] Watts, J. (2016) 'A lot of testosterone and little pigment', in *The Guardian*, published on 13/05/2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/13/brazil-dilma-rousseff-impeachment-michel-temer-cabinet, and, Barcia, M. (2016) 'Dilma Rousseff's impeachment was led by the white, wealthy men who now make up the Brazilian cabinet', in *The Independent*, published on 15/05/2016: http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/dilma-rousseffs-impeachment-was-led-by-the-white-wealthy-men-who-now-make-up-the-brazilian-cabinet-a7030761.html

now included within the Ministry of Justice. The new Minister, Alexandre de Moraes, is involved with one of the biggest organised crime groups in São Paulo, and known for his repressive action against social movements.[171] In this context, domestic workers' ability to lobby or negotiate with the state becomes limited.

The interim government has also implemented measures that weaken labour rights for other workers, making it harder for domestic workers to demand equality. In 2017, the Congress approved a highly contentious general labour reform (*reforma trabalhista*) which aims at flexibilising the labour market and reducing the level of protection granted by the CLT (for details of the reform, see: DIEESE, 2017a). It does not directly apply to domestic workers as they are not protected by the CLT, however, many dispositions might affect them by repercussion. One of the most contested measures is the increased flexibility employers are given in hiring procedures and contracts, with a greater capability to outsource workers, implement part-time contracts and hire workers as independent rather than employees. These elements break the 'standard' full-time permanent contract that gives workers access to the CLT. Although it does not specifically affect domestic workers, it makes it even more likely that employers will switch to daily workers instead of providing stable contracts since this measure of flexibility is now being generalised to every other sector.

The 2017 labour reform also ends the obligation to have contract termination procedures checked by the trade union, taking away one of the few powers domestic workers' unions have in their sector of activity. Contract terminations are also made easier, and can be done on the basis of mutual agreement between the employee and the employer, which means that the employee loses access to unemployment benefits. Given the individualised and affective relationships at stake in the domestic workplace, it will make it harder for employees to resist pressures from the employer. Thus, their newly gained right to the FGTS and unemployment benefits is already being made ineffective. Furthermore, the 2017 general labour reform allows companies to go back to a 12-hours working day, provided that there is a written agreement with the employee. The limitation on working time has been one of the most important demands of domestic workers since the 1970s, and one of the points they used to compare domestic work with slavery; no time limitations meant a totally disposable worker. Now

[171] Rossi, M. (2015) 'Repressão de Alckmin inaugura a nova fase da reorganização escolar', in *El Pais*, published on 03/12/2015: http://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/12/02/politica/1449081055_661574.html

that domestic workers have won the 8-hours working day, the changes introduced by the 2017 labour reform for other workers are likely to be detrimental to domestic workers too. Finally, this legislation extends the contentious bank of hours from domestic work to all the other sectors of activity.

Thus, in the current post-impeachment context, not only rights are made ineffective by an unchanged structure of power, but the law itself is used to maintain and produce new forms of violence against workers. The 2017 labour reform is generalising precarity to everyone rather than promoting an upward equalisation of rights for domestic workers. Their claim for equality becomes harder to make; equality with whom, in a context of a broader loss of rights? And to whom can they make this claim if the state is no longer a guarantor of rights? The coup comes as an extreme example of the limitations of subalterns' institutional politics, and of a too strong reliance on the state to protect them. And as their unions have been absorbed into the PT structure of governance, domestic workers are now facing major organisational difficulties and suffering from the more generalised demobilisation of the left. Domestic workers national leaders have lost their allies within the state, making institutional politics harder to pursue, and have in the meantime neglected to mobilise the rank-and-file, convinced by the discourse of "second abolition of slavery" that has made trade unions a less relevant actor in their lives.

The local leaders I worked with consistently complained about the lack of participation from members in their monthly meetings, and claimed that meetings in the 1990s would gather up to 50 members while now they gather on average around ten members. I could not confirm the figure provided for the period of the 1990s, relying only on current leaders' narrative, but the meetings I could attend between 2015 and 2017 gathered indeed no more than 10 members, with the exception of Campinas which had between 15 and 20 members present. The combination of the stolen legislative victory, and the absorption of the leadership into institutional politics, weakened the base of domestic workers' unions. Domestic workers' unions also face an impasse with the new legislation; they need to reclaim their role in making it possible, while also articulating their criticisms against it and proving to their rank-and-file that the battle is not won yet. This ambivalent position complicates their political strategy.

3) Judicialising subaltern politics

Faced with strong political resistance against their rights (as detailed in the first sub-section), the introduction of legal mechanisms to make the law ineffective (discussed in sub-section 2), and the loss of allies within the government, the local domestic workers' unions have turned towards judicial forms of politics. Equipped with their new more 'standardised' role resulting from the 2015 legislative changes, the domestic workers' unions became the central mechanism through which individual workers can press claims against their employers and be represented in labour courts. By using these legal mechanisms, they manage to enforce the law, and make their rights respected at the individual level. A study by Lalabee and the Regional Tribunal of Labour (Tribunal Regional do Trabalho - TRT) of the state of São Paulo shows that in 2014, there has been a 25% increase in complaints filed by domestic workers against their employers, reaching a total of 9,928 cases in 2014 compared to 7,953 in 2013. Between January and June 2015, the TRT had registered 5,201 complaints, compared to 4,587 in 2014 for the same period.[172] The TRT identified 30 motives of litigation, amongst which the most common are: employer's refusal to sign the working card, the lack of compensation in case of dismissal, and the lack of benefits such as transport vouchers or extra hours, unpaid holidays or contributions to social security, or more dramatic cases of abuse and mistreatments.

Interviewees had different rationales for litigating against their employer. Very often, trials are a way to earn money in a situation of deprivation; a successful case can bring up to 10 times the domestic workers' monthly wage. Vera, a non-unionised domestic worker, presented the legal process as the only option available to her when faced with an unfair dismissal:

> Once I told another employee that she (the boss) was very selfish, and he went to tell her. So she called me and said, Vera, if you don't want to work here you can leave. So I stayed like that, I didn't know what to do. I had my bills to pay, and my sister to take care of. So I decided to sue her.[173]

[172] Study published in the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, on 10/03/2015: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2015/03/1600561-apos-pec-dos-domesticos-acoes-na-justica-em-sp-sobem-25-em-2014.shtml

[173] Vera, São Paulo, 13/08/2015, non-unionised domestic worker.

Vera's testimony reveals the lack of access to social benefits for domestic workers, and the scarcity of options when faced with financial difficulties. For her, the loss of her wage justifies undertaking a legal action. Litigation is the result of a desperate necessity in the absence of formalised mechanisms to solve employment disputes. Employers sometimes make domestic workers sign contracts they cannot read, with terms and conditions they would have not agreed to otherwise. Or they put their employees in situations of fault, in order to fire them without having to pay the due compensation. Eunice, a non-unionised domestic worker, provides a example of this practice. She came to the union because her employer sent her a letter claiming that she had stopped coming to work, and that this constituted a cause for dismissal. Eunice claims that one day she was stopped at the entrance of the building, and was prevented from accessing the flat she was supposed to clean. After few days of this back and forth, she received a letter of dismissal. Afraid of losing her (already very low) salary, she turned to the union for advice:

> The first time I contacted the union, I didn't even know there was one. I didn't know. I've been through a lot of situations but never did anything, I never called the union before. It's the first time I do it because I was desperate because of this letter, I didn't know what else to do. So I went out looking for the union, because I was desperate, I didn't know if I was going to work or not.[174]

But for many domestic workers, litigation is a form of reparation for the broken trust with their employer. This is illustrated by the case of Cristina Borges, a leader of the union of Franca.[175] Cristina started having issues with her employer after she suffered an accident at work; she was a carer for her employer's mother, and the heavy lifting required for the work led to her rupturing a shoulder ligament. Her employer then started paying her less or with delays, and regularly insulted her ("ugly black woman", "little dirty maid"). According to Cristina, these elements characterise a case of moral harassment. She is convinced that this behaviour was motivated by the fact that the employer did not want to contribute towards her social security, and, ultimately, pay for her surgery. The employer tried to make Cristina resign from her job, but Cristina knew that if she did, she would lose all her unemployment and social benefits.

The president of her local union, Rosa da Motta Jesus, helped her make a legal case against the employer, put her in touch with a pro-bono lawyer, and supported her throughout the process. When asked about her case, Cristina Borges affirms: "I entered

[174] Eunice, São Paulo, 12/08/2015, non-unionised domestic worker.
[175] Cristina Borges, Franca, 03/09/2017, leader of Franca's union at the time of the interview.

this process not because of the money, but because of the humiliation I have suffered". For her, it became unbearable to be treated "like dirt", after years of good and loyal service to her employer, and just at the time that she had a health issue. More than the financial difficulties, what hurt Cristina is the lack of consideration from her employer, and the legal procedure was in her eyes the only way to address that injustice. She said: "the law is the best protection domestic workers have, we cannot do justice with our own hands".

The increasing use of the law and litigation by a subaltern group can be characterised as a form of judicialisation of politics (Couso, Huneeus, & Sieder, 2013; Sieder, Schjolden, & Angell, 2005). More specifically, Sieder et al. (2005, p. 5) define judicalisation 'from below' as the process through which "certain sectors of society gain greater consciousness of their legal rights and entitlements, and citizens adopt strategies of legal mobilization to press claims through the courts for their existing rights to be upheld". This process is in contrast to a form of judicialisation 'from above', initiated by courts or state-actors. Judicialisation from below highlights the fact that social movements can be key agents in the development of legal arguments, and here more specifically, of a renewed discourse on working rights. However, judicialisation is an ambivalent and debated process. On the hand, it can open new opportunities for social movements, creating and sustaining collective identities (Kay, 2011), and strengthen democracy by increasing people's access to the judicial system (Vanhala, 2013). On the other hand, critics have highlighted the risks of depoliticising rights by locking them into technical juridical debates (Domingo, 2009), and of individualising collective rights through the litigation process (Biehl, 2013). Those different effects can co-exist, making judicialisation both an opportunity and a constraint for subaltern movements (Bo Nielsen, 2015; Sieder, 2011).

In the case of Brazilian domestic workers, I argue that judicialisation brings a particular set of challenges due to the attempts at implementing formal rights in the informal sector. The law, and the need to litigate against employers to make it effective, forced the domestic workers' unions to adapt to the 'standard' industrial relations model although this model does not correspond to their reality. First, the law does not apply to informal or 'self-employed' workers when they are precisely the vast majority of domestic workers. All those (about 70%) without a signed working card cannot litigate against their employer even if they wanted to as they are technically outside of legal

regulations. The law serves then to mark the boundary between legal/illegal (Griffin, 2011) and creates a category of un-representable workers.

Secondly, for it to be applied and claimed, the law requires the formation and identification of a professional category. Yet, as demonstrated in chapter V, non-unionised domestic workers do not easily identify with – and even reject – the category 'domestic worker'. Therefore, claiming this identity to claim their rights is a difficult step to take. Finally, the law and its new regulations assume the easy transposition of traditional employer-employee forms of bargaining in a sector where labour relations are individualised and deeply affective. Most domestic workers do not want to start a conflict with their employer, either because of fear, or affective attachment to the family they work for (Birdsell Bauer & Cranford, 2016), or because they do not want to disrupt previously established informal arrangements (Ally, 2009). The women who come to the unions with their cases often see this as a very last resort type of action, and they tend to prefer individual arrangements to contentious actions.

Thus, the legislative victory of domestic workers has had ambivalent effects. The law has further included them in the labour rights framework, which they had been demanding for decades, but it also gave the domestic workers' unions the same duties as conventional unions in other sectors without giving them the means to be conventional unions. And as shown in chapter VI, the unions that gave greater importance to class and labour dimensions at the expense of gender and race are weaker than those who implemented an intersectional strategy. Domestic workers' oppression is multi-faceted and cannot be reduced to labour relations only; they are also exposed to racism, gendered forms of violence, health issues, and precarious living conditions. And it is precisely through the activation of all those vectors of social identity and experience of oppression that local unions have been able to mobilise the class of domestic workers. Paradoxically, by winning new rights and a new status, domestic workers became more 'standard', which has brought new organisational challenges to their unions. Having to manage the law from below has meant that local unions have no time or resources left to do base-organising, social events, or identity building activities. They are expected to conform to a model of trade unionism that does not encompass the reality of domestic work; it does not reflect the complex forms of oppression and identity formation at stake in the sector.

The labour rights won in 2015 are at the same time necessary and unreachable; on the one hand, they gave domestic workers new tools to defend themselves, but on the other hand, they led to a partial demobilisation of their unions and created a new problem for them with the rise of self-employed *diaristas*. This raises broader questions regarding the possibilities of inclusion of the subalterns into the dominant rights-framework: can formal labour rights ever apply to informal, 'non-standard', workers? Or should this framework be profoundly rethought and transformed in order to meaningfully include the subalterns? The status of worker is what domestic workers "cannot not want" (Spivak, 1993b, pp. 44-46): it determines their status of citizen within the Brazilian corporatist state and their access to labour rights, yet, they can never totally conform to the ideal of the worker. Labour rights are essential to guarantee domestic workers some level of protection, but in light of the limitations of these rights, and the power relations existing in the sector, there is an urgent necessity to think domestic workers' access (and other subaltern groups' access) to citizenship and social rights beyond their inclusion within the formal labour market, and independently of their status as worker (Weeks, 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the third paradox of subaltern politics: while domestic workers have astutely crafted their perceived vulnerability to force recognition from the state, the modalities of this partial political and legal recognition have had ambivalent effects on their movement. I showed that domestic workers have used their subalternity to gain recognition from the state, and that this strategy has been partially effective as they won a new national law in Brazil as well as an international ILO Convention. However, this strategy is also inherently contradictory; indeed, there is an unsolvable tension in claiming at the same time their status of subaltern and their status of equals. Equality between domestic workers and other workers would mean their full inclusion within a structure that has produced the very conditions of their exclusion, and while they demand to be included in it, this inclusion requires a deep social and political change. Recognising domestic workers as workers directly challenges the colonial order, and its associated gender and race division of labour. Thus, I have explored in this chapter the ambivalent relationship between domestic workers and the state, and tried to understand the effects of their institutional politics.

The first section demonstrated that domestic workers have produced their own counter-hegemonic rights discourse, and have been pressuring the state to make it recognised. I retraced their 80 years long struggle for equal rights, emphasising that even though these rights were only gained in 2015, domestic workers' demands are not new. They pragmatically used their subalternity and perceived vulnerability to make themselves an unavoidable issue, both for the PT government and for the ILO, concerned with helping the "poorest of the poor". Domestic workers were also able to use their transnational connections to transform a subaltern epistemology of rights into an international convention and a globally accepted discourse on 'decent work'. I have called this process 'transnationalisation from below', to capture the globalisation of a subaltern and locally produced discourse of rights, different from a process of vernacularisation whereby global rights frameworks get adapted at the local level. However, the domestic workers' legislative victory, based on their framing as vulnerable subjects, has also worked to re-erase their voices. Indeed, both the PT and the ILO became the key protagonists of labour rights making, turning invisible domestic workers' decades long political struggle.

The second section then proposed to analyse the effects of the law on the movement itself. It showed that because this legislation has the potential to deeply challenge the colonial order, it was strongly opposed by the elite, who presented it as immoral, and pretended to be the victims of the PT's policies. Employers saw the possibility of no longer having a cheap maid to serve them as a frontal attack on their colonial privileges. Through their institutional power and representation at the Congress, they succeeded in making the 2015 law a lesser version of the 2013 Constitutional amendment, turning the promise of equality into an empty declaration "for the British to see". While the 2015 legislation brings concrete material gains for domestic workers, it also gives enough scope to employers to avoid compliance. Faced with these barriers, the domestic workers' unions have then shifted to a judicial repertoire of action, using legal mechanisms to make rights effective at the individual level. But this process of judicialisation increased the administrative burden of unions at the expense of their distinctive grassroots politics.

Therefore, whilst domestic workers obtained what they had been demanding for 80 years – a better inclusion within the industrial relations system – this model does not reflect their reality. Because of their intersectional forms of oppression, and the 'non-

standard' character of their labour relations (located in the private sphere, informal, individualised and affective), the domestic workers' unions cannot operate in the same way as conventional trade unions. Yet, the law, and its lack of effectiveness, has forced them to do so, by engaging in judicial processes and labour litigations. And although this judicialisation seems necessary to make rights effective, it also brings new challenges for the local unions of domestic workers, and, ultimately, raises the broader question of the limits of the corporatist model in which it is necessary to be a worker first in order to be a citizen.

Chapter VIII/ Conclusion

This thesis has explored the mobilisations of domestic workers in Brazil, trying to explain how they got organised and what their politics looks like. Common expectations from both subaltern studies and the scholarship on 'non-standard' workers tend to assume that precarious and marginalised groups would be harder, or even impossible, to organise, and that if they do, they would do so through alternative or small-scale forms of politics rather than through organised collective action. Trade unionism and 'big politics' are often deemed out of their reach. Yet, Brazilian domestic workers have used precisely the 'weapons of the strong': they formed their own trade unions, and developed a wide repertoire of political action ranging from grassroots identity building to institutional lobby to the state and international organisations. Therefore, the question I asked is not can they organise, or can they speak, but rather, *how* do they organise. What made it possible for domestic workers to mobilise, and to what extent can their mobilisations be considered as successful? In other words, how do subalterns speak, and what is the effect of them speaking?

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that domestic workers are paradoxical political subjects. Indeed, while their subalternity is what has made them oppressed and marginalised, it has also enabled their mobilisations. Domestic workers have been able to use their vectors of gender, race and class oppression to create a common identity, form alliances with other movements, and become an unavoidable issue for the state, thereby transforming their subalternity into a resource for collective action. Therefore, rather than being puzzled by domestic workers' ability to organise, and explain how their unlikely mobilisations took place, I have suggested a shift of perspective to consider instead how subalternity can be used as a mobilising factor.

I/ Empirical findings

The paradox of subaltern politics has been examined in the three empirical chapters, each one providing an account of a specific paradox: the difficulties of identity building, the formation of alliances, and the ambivalences of labour rights.

The first empirical chapter, "The making and unmaking of the Brazilian domestic workers' class", explores the existence – or lack thereof – of an identifiable and self-

identified group ‘domestic workers’. It shows that the identity domestic worker is simultaneously rejected but also required to be heard within the Brazilian corporatist state. Indeed, domestic workers are forced to conform to this identity, because they need to be a professional category in order to have a trade union, labour rights, and be recognised as worker-citizens. However, this identity is also rejected, and somehow impossible to reach; domestic workers are the non-workers exemplified. Their labour is devalued and invisible, associated with a remaining legacy of slavery, and lived as a degrading occupation by many women. Interviews revealed nonetheless a difference of perception between unionised and non-unionised domestic workers, the former being generally prouder of their work and more aware of their productive contribution to society. I have called this difference ‘the union effect’ to show that the domestic workers’ unions can make the class by enabling the formation of a collective identity ‘domestic worker’, even though this class-based identity is sometimes difficult to accept for the non-unionised given its social devaluation. Therefore, subalternity, while being the reason for domestic workers’ extreme marginalisation and partial rejection of the very category ‘domestic worker’, provides at the same time the material and subjective elements that define them as a class in itself, making possible the formation of a “critical community of struggle” (Chun, 2016a).

The second empirical chapter, “Practicing intersectionality: strategies of alliances and identity mobilising”, argues that because of the partial rejection of the identity ‘domestic worker’, local unions have developed an intersectional practice. The multiple vectors of oppression of gender, race and class render collective identity harder to build; indeed, a domestic worker is also a black poor woman, facing different forms of violence and exclusions. However, the domestic workers’ unions were able to turn these vectors of oppression into a resource for their collective action: by insisting on the interlocking effects of gender, race and class, they have opened-up the definition of domestic work beyond a strictly occupational and labour-based identity, and managed to form alliances with women, black and workers’ movements, despite some moments of tensions and conflicts with these different movements. This chapter looks in detail at different intersectional practices implemented by the local unions, and reveals that the strongest local union is the one that had the most developed strategy of alliance-building. By creating cooperation with movements that share their common social identity and their struggles, this local union was also able to reach out to domestic workers in their communities and to recruit them on the basis of their multiple vectors

of oppression. Through the development of an intersectional discourse and praxis, domestic workers were able to transform subalternity into a vector of collective action.

The last empirical chapter, "Becoming subjects of labour rights: domestic workers between political recognition and legal exclusion" demonstrates that subalternity has been the condition for domestic workers' recognition both at the national and international level. Indeed, their perceived vulnerability appealed to the progressive PT government, and to the ILO's core values, justifying remedial actions in favour of the "poorest of the poor" (Fish, 2017). Yet, this process of recognition is ambivalent. Indeed, domestic workers' strategy of alliance with the state in an unchanged structure of power has led to a compromise that is to some extent detrimental to their movement. The 2015 legislation extends some labour rights to domestic workers, but also reproduces certain forms of labour exploitation and provides employers with the tools to avoid legal compliance. Furthermore, by continuing to exclude them from the Labour Code, the legislation reaffirms that domestic workers can never be the 'standard' workers. This tension between recognition and exclusion makes domestic workers' relationship with the state deeply ambivalent: they claim equality with other workers, within a structure that has oppressed them, while at the same time using their vulnerability – and therefore their unequal status – to be recognised by the state (Boris & Klein, 2012). Thus, even though subalternity has made domestic workers' recognition possible, their legislative victory at the national and international level has also somehow weakened their movement.

II/ Theoretical contributions

My findings offer a new perspective on subaltern politics by demonstrating its paradoxical effects, and contribute both empirically and theoretically to the fields of subaltern studies and social movements. Indeed, my thesis provides a grounded and contextualised definition of the subaltern by taking an intersectional lens, and considering contemporary dynamics of economic dispossession. After an extensive review of the literature on domestic work and subaltern studies, I have demonstrated that Brazilian domestic workers are a subaltern group; they are black poor women in a 'Third World' country, exploited in the labour market and excluded from citizenship since the abolition of slavery. Their subalternity has in turn effects on their ability to organise, and their forms of doing so. Instead of considering subalternity as

contradictory with collective action, I showed how domestic workers have used it as a resource for their mobilisation.

Some scholars have conceived the subalterns as being located outside of formal politics, and somewhat non-representable; they cannot speak for themselves and cannot be heard within existing structures of power either (Beverley, 2001; Morris, 2010; Spivak, 1988a, 1993a). While the barriers to subalterns' representation, and the conditions under which they can speak, must be considered carefully, many empirical studies have shown that subaltern groups do get organised. Some of these studies argue that subalterns can mobilise, but only through small-scale forms of resistance or 'infra-political' actions (Bayat, 2000; Bishara, 2015; Pogodda & Richmond, 2015; Scott, 1985, 2013), positing them outside of what counts as the political arena. On the other side of the spectrum, scholars have defined subalterns as an "oppositional agency" in relation to the state and official institutions, making them necessarily revolutionary subjects acting against development and neoliberalism (López & Vértiz, 2015; Motta & Nilsen, 2011; Nilsen, 2016; Nilsen & Roy, 2015; I. Roy, 2016).

Locating myself somewhere in between those two poles, I argue that subaltern politics is not necessarily either 'infra-political' or against the state. Subaltern politics is practiced in relation to the structures of power that subalterns are embedded with, and are shaped by their specific context. In Brazil, for instance, the election of the PT has changed the way domestic workers position themselves towards the government. As suggested by Chandra (2015) and Nilsen and Roy (2015), subaltern politics might be found in their willingness to improve their conditions, without being either totally revolutionary or completely subsumed by the hegemonic elite. Subalternity is also what forms the common ground of identity building for Brazilian domestic workers; it is their shared experience of oppression and exploitation that makes them a class in itself, and provides their unions with the elements to turn them into a class for itself. Subalternity is not a static situation, and by getting organised, subalterns can transform their condition of subalternity (Gramsci, 1971).

Through a pragmatic strategy of alliance-building, Brazilian domestic workers have been able to turn their gender, race and class vectors of oppression into resources for their collective action, securing broader support from other movements and reaching out to their members in a multitude of social spaces. They have also collaborated with the

PT government, and influenced the passing of a legislation in 2015 that gives them access to most existing labour rights. This case study shows that subaltern groups can speak through collective action, and use a diverse range of political tactics, including some institutional forms of politics.

This leads to the second set of contributions, within the field of social movements and industrial relations. The case of Brazilian domestic workers is inscribed within broader debates on organising the 'precariat', or 'non-standard' workers. However, I propose to look at what those workers themselves do, rather than examining the strategies of renewal or revitalisation of more established organisations. Debates on organising precarious workers suggest that already existing unions are expanding their actions beyond the workplace, reorienting their strategies towards social movement-like tactics that are more inclusive of workers' multiple social identities. These strategies have been called community or social movement unionism, to capture the fact that unions are integrating other dimensions of workers' lives into their practices, beyond the strictly defined labour-based or class issues (Brickner, 2013; Engeman, 2015; Fairbrother, 2008; J. McBride & Greenwood, 2009; Milkman & Ott, 2014; Murray, 2017).

Yet, for domestic workers, organising 'beyond the workplace' has always been a necessity, as it is almost impossible to recruit and organise isolated workers in private homes. Besides, in Brazil, domestic workers fall outside of regulated labour relations, which means they do not have the right to strike. Domestic workers' organisations, both in Brazil and elsewhere, have always had to form alliances with community-based organisations and other social movements in order to gain visibility and secure additional resources from their allies (Joaze Bernardino-Costa, 2015b; Boris & Nadasen, 2008, 2015; Cornwall et al., 2013). I argue that what has made these alliances possible is precisely the intersectional dimension of their oppression. While gender, race, class have produced multiple forms of exclusion, these vectors of oppression are also what has enabled domestic workers to build alliances with women, black, and workers' movements.

Precarious, or 'non-standard' workers are harder to organise not only because of their location outside of 'standard' workplaces, but also because they experience multiple vectors of oppression and exclusion, which are intrinsically linked to their labour. Gender and race are co-constitutive of their class condition. Therefore, their

identification with the 'worker', an identity usually corresponding to the white male industrial worker, and its associated labour-based organisations, is rendered more complex. As a result, domestic workers' forms of organising include an intersectional approach, which can vary according to each union and their specific context, and in fact, the most successful unions, are those who have the most developed intersectional practice. Thus, the tactics that established trade unions have implemented as part of their renewal strategy to reach out to precarious and migrant workers (Alberti, 2016; Birdsell Bauer & Cranford, 2016; Lazar, 2012, 2017b) have been a long-standing strategy for the domestic workers' unions. Furthermore, I suggest that the assumed impossible organisation of 'non-standard' workers is more the reflection of a theoretical absence than an empirical one. Domestic workers have been organising for decades in Brazil and elsewhere, using their own tactics and resources. Therefore, the claim that they, or other precarious workers, are harder to organise, reveals the lack of conceptualisation of what they do as political, as well as the non-recognition of their actions as a form of trade unionism.

By bringing intersectionality and subalternity to the study of social movements, I aim to contribute to a decolonial feminist theory (Lugones, 2010), grounded on this located experience of organised Brazilian domestic workers. I propose a new way to apprehend marginalised and subaltern groups' mobilisations, as well as the impact these might have on their own movement and on society more broadly. By challenging the assumed surprising and novel character of 'non-standard' workers' mobilisations, I also want to relocate their agency within the history of labour organising. This research contributes to a better understanding of how marginalised group can get organised, and what their politics looks like. With this case study, I propose to shift the debate away from renewal and revitalisation strategies of established trade unions, to look instead at groups that have been organising 'beyond the workplace' for decades, although they remained unseen of bigger movements and/or of scholarly attention.

Ultimately, the case of Brazilian domestic workers expands our understanding of politics and trade unionism, by taking seriously domestic workers' claim to be workers in their own right. This perspective contributes in redefining what is work, who is a worker, and who is a political subject of industrial relations and labour rights. Taking this subaltern location as a starting point for my research also enabled me to challenge

the coloniality of labour (Quijano, 2000) in Brazil, and to envision an alternative, more just and more equal, society.

III/ Implications for research and policy-making

This research has some inevitable limitations. My sample is confined to two regions, and to the domestic workers' unions that are affiliated to the FENATRAD and CUT. These affiliations shape their politics both at the ideological and practical level, and unions that are affiliated to other national centrals of workers might have developed different forms of political action. The sample selection also restricts my ability to analyse the experiences of non-unionised domestic workers. The women I interviewed came to the local unions for a labour dispute, even though they were not members and not particularly active in the political field. This means, however, that they were usually daily workers, or full-time workers with their CTPS signed, and had some knowledge of their rights. I could not reach the most excluded domestic workers, those who do not even know that they have rights or that they can go to a union to claim those rights.

This thesis is also marked by a constantly changing political context. When I started my research in 2014, the PT was still governing and had just made possible a constitutional reform declaring domestic workers equal to other workers. That seemed to me at the time like the most revolutionary policy. Since then, the PT has been impeached and replaced by a conservative and neoliberal government working hard to dismantle the Labour Code and other social rights. As I write these lines, the former President Lula has been arrested and detained on accusations of corruption, and the political future of the country remains highly uncertain. Beyond my own political affinities, this has a series of implications for the research process: the agenda of national unions and the CUT in particular has been over-determined by the coup and the legal troubles of Lula; many institutional actors to whom I had access have left; domestic workers' rights have dropped off the agenda of their partners who had more pressing issues to address; the 2015 legislation has been immediately mitigated by the 2017 general labour reform and a context of crisis making its implementation doubtful; and statistical data are varying rapidly. This ultimately rendered it difficult to decide where to draw a line and which period to include into my analysis.

Therefore, my findings and contributions must be considered within these limitations, and evaluated in light of this rapidly changing political situation. In addition to my own location and bias, highlighted in the methodological chapter, these external elements have inevitably affected the research process. Arguments that I make about particular unions also depend on the leadership that was in place at the time of my research, and their position regarding their allies or their discourse on domestic work may vary in the future. The leadership of the union of São Paulo changed in September 2017 for instance, which may in turn change their strategy. Nonetheless, it is my hope that some of these findings can contribute to the ways in which we think about social movements, subaltern politics, and the significance that the domestic workers' movement has for society as a whole. I believe that my key arguments about the paradoxes of subaltern politics remain intelligible beyond my particular context, and that this thesis can contribute to a broader reflection on gendered and racialised forms of labour.

In terms of research, it would be worth expanding this study to other regions and unions, affiliated to the FENATRAD/CUT and/or to other centrals of workers. A broader comparison across the sector and the country would help distinguishing the specificities, if there are any, of the FENATRAD in relation to other unions, and to refine the analysis of the type of politics domestic workers do. Although there seems to be a quite strong consistency of discourse amongst FENATRAD's affiliates, practices on the ground may also vary depending on the region and the city. For instance, the local union of Recife has sustained relationships with the feminist NGO SOS Corpo, which is not the case in other cities.

At the macro level, the potential differences between white and black, registered and non-registered domestic workers, could also provide a more nuanced understanding of domestic workers' perceptions and discourses. This would require a bigger sample, and the use of robust quantitative methods. A proper evaluation of the 2015 law could also be done within few years, in order to assess the evolution of formalisation rates, wages, access to the online platform *e-social*, and to social security in general. This depends, however, on the reliability of statistical data to carry such an evaluation.

The fieldwork uncovered the existence of a rich archival data stored in the local unions, although these documents remain unexplored. Having enough time and the appropriate resources, it would be extremely important to systematically collect, organise, digitalise,

and analyse these documents. Constructing a proper archive is, in my opinion, of critical importance both for the movement and for future research. Oral history interviews with the oldest members would further enrich these records. Such a historiographical work would make domestic workers' voices more audible, enabling the mapping of their movement in the *longue durée*. I have started such a process with this thesis, but could not take on the task by myself to build this archive. There are also many unions that I have not visited who I know possess pictures, minutes, and pamphlets, which would be useful in contributing to future research.

Finally, I would want to see my analytical framework expanded to either other sectors of 'non-standard' work and subaltern groups, or to domestic workers' organisations in other countries, in order to test its relevance and validity beyond this particular case study. A combination of historiographical work, ethnographic participation with marginalised groups organising themselves, and an analysis of subaltern epistemologies of rights locally and transnationally, constitute in my view promising avenues for rethinking the field of the political.

In the arena of policy-making, I see three groups of actors that could benefit from this research. The first is the domestic workers' unions themselves. My findings can help them rethink their strategy in regards of the changing political and institutional context. Indeed, they are no longer able, for now, to do institutional lobby and to negotiate directly with the state. The analysis of the other tactics they have used throughout their history, as well as my partial evaluation of what makes unions stronger, can serve as a starting point for adapting and renewing their politics. Local domestic workers' unions are also facing a demobilisation of their base, and could address this issue by re-considering actions that have been successful in the past, such as grassroots forms of sociability and solidarity. The new legislation, despite all the limitations and challenges that it brings, can help in unifying the class: domestic workers have to identify as domestic workers in order to claim their labour rights. Therefore, local unions could benefit from this performative or symbolic effect of the law, to make it more effective and to recruit new members. Lastly, it is likely that the sector of domestic work will grow again with the crisis, which represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the domestic workers' unions to organise their professional category, and fight against further degradation of their living conditions.

The second set of actors is constituted of the allies: other unions, social movements, NGOs, and international organisations concerned with domestic work. Their support has been vital to domestic workers both in Brazil and elsewhere, given their extreme marginality and lack of basic material resources. In the current context in Brazil, their help appears as particularly important to provide domestic workers with additional resources, give them access to institutional politics, and press the state to implement the law. The ratification of the ILO Convention 189 can be one avenue to exert national and international pressure onto the Brazilian state, and to ensure the effectiveness of domestic workers' rights. However, I also found that the domestic workers' unions are extremely inventive in terms of discourse and political practices. They have managed to develop their own model of collective action, and have elaborated very specific demands throughout their decades of mobilising. Therefore, any partnership with them should start from their will, and be done on domestic workers' own terms. They know what they want, and are often more efficient when they do things their own way, rather than when they are forced into conventional forms of trade unionism.

Finally, one determinant and unavoidable actor is the Brazilian state, composed of the federal government, the Congress and the federative states level of governance. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the state to make sure rights are effective, and to enforce the law – although domestic workers and other allied groups should keep on pressuring the state to make it happen. The distinction public/private sphere must be reconsidered, in order to conduct proper checks within private homes, which are also, in so many cases, places of work. Employers must be made accountable for registering their employees and applying their labour rights within their homes. The process of registration and formalisation could in this regard be made easier and less bureaucratic, in order to avoid any extra barrier to domestic workers' access to their rights. But more importantly, the government must change the Labour Code and the Constitution, to make the claims of equal rights real, and fully recognise domestic workers' status as workers. As long as they remain excluded from the Labour Code, the legislation will be for 'the British to see', and colonial relations will persist.

Last but not least, I contend that the corporatist structure and model of welfare state must be rethought, so that citizens are guaranteed social rights independently of their status as workers. The state can propose and promote a universal model or rights, under which every citizen would live decently and access social protection. The current

model, built on the legacy of slavery and colonialism, is purposefully exclusionary of those not deemed productive enough, thereby reproducing racial and gender hierarchies. Ultimately, domestic workers' struggles invite us to radically rethink the relationship between productivity and value, and to imagine a society where reproductive, caring, and domestic activities are not worth less than any other type of activity.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Topic guide for interviews

The interviews were semi-structured, and these questions were just a guide. Most interviews were led as discussions and I let the interviewees take it in different directions.

A/ Interviews with unionised domestic workers

Demographics

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Marital status
- Religion
- Wage

Personal life

- Region of origin and reasons for moving to the South
- Occupation, terms used to describe domestic work, and years in the sector
- Why choose this profession, positive and negative aspects?
- Family life; parents, partners, children?
- Wage and status (daily or monthly worker, registered/not-registered)
- Daily routine at work, and different working experiences
- Relationship with current and/or past employers

Activist trajectory

- When, how and why joined the union?
- How does the union recruit new members? How many members are there currently?
- Structure and organisation of the union, dates of meetings, elections, etc.
- Different roles taken in the union, current role in the union
- What's a typical activist day like?
- What is the role of the union, main activities or campaigns?
- Most common problems raised by domestic workers?
- Impact on personal life of being an activist?
- Positive and negative aspects of being an activist?
- Biggest achievement of the union?
- Biggest challenge the union is facing?

The new legislation and the PT

- Opinion on the new legislation
- Role of the union, and personal implication, in campaigning for it
- How will it be enforced? How are people informed?
- Opinion on Dilma and the PT, the current political and economic crisis

B/ Interviews with non-unionised domestic workers

Demographics

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Marital status
- Religion
- Wage

Personal life

- Region of origin and reasons for moving to the South
- Occupation (terms used to describe the job), years in the sector
- Family life; parents, partners, children?
- Wage and status (daily or monthly worker, registered/not-registered)
- Daily routine at work, and different working experiences
- Relationship with current employer(s)
- Any particularly good and/or bad experience with an employer?
- Why choose this profession, positive and negative aspects?
- If you could, would you like to do something else?

Perception of the union

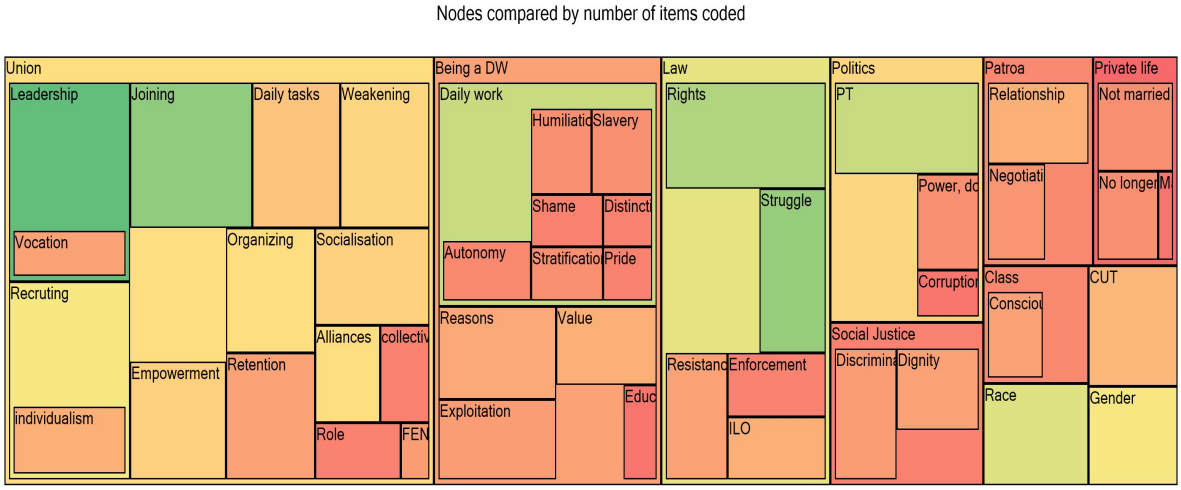
- Why did you come to the union today?
- How did you know about the union, who advised you to come here? Is it the first time?
- How can the union help with your case?
- Would you consider joining the union? Or another organisation? Why/why not?
- What could the union do better?

The new legislation and the PT

- Opinion on the new legislation (if knows about it)
- What labour rights do you have? How do you get information about them?
- Opinion on Dilma and the PT, the current political and economic crisis

Appendix 2: Example of coding with NVivo

I transcribed the interviews on NVivo and used the software to visualise emerging themes, but most of the analysis was done in a second phase manually and each interview was treated as a text in itself. NVivo helped in seeing common patterns and the frequency of some words/themes. The picture below is taken from the interviews with union leaders and shows the main nodes in function of their frequency: the bigger a surface is, the more frequent the corresponding word is. For instance, the square 'union' is the biggest, which means that the word 'union' was cited more often in the interviews. The field 'union' contains the sub-themes: leadership, recruiting, joining, daily tasks, weakening, empowerment, organising, socialisation, retention, alliances, collective, role, and FENATRAD. The sub-theme 'leadership' further contains an internal sub-theme 'vocation', and 'recruiting' contains a sub-theme 'individualism'. The process of coding and organising the nodes was inductive.



Appendix 3: Organisational assessment questionnaire

Questionnaire designed for the collaborative work with the FENATRAD, IDWF, ILO and Solidarity Centre in 2017. This questionnaire was used in the organisational assessment of the unions of Campinas, Franca, Nova Iguaçu and Volta Redonda.

Quest. #	Question
	A. Internal solidarity
	A.1- Cohesive collective identity
1	How would you define a domestic worker?
2	How would you characterise this occupation?
3	Who/what does the union exist for?
4	Main challenges/demands of the category?
	A.2 - Deliberative vitality
5	Frequency of internal elections
6	Procedure to run for elections
6.1	Are elections usually contested?
7	How are members informed of meetings/elections/assemblies?
8	Frequency of assemblies/meetings: - For the executive committee - For all the members
9	On average, how many members attend?
10	Who can vote? And on what?
11	How are strategies and future goals for the union identified and agreed by leaders?
	B. Network embeddedness
	B.1 - Horizontal: name of organisations, formal or informal links
12	Black movements
13	Feminist movements
14	Neighbourhood movements
15	Housing movements
16	PT
17	Other unions
18	Other parties
19	Other movements Institutional partners (elected officials at the local/regional/national level, ILO, FES, UN Women, UNICEF…) Participation in ILO's Programme "Trabalho Doméstico Cidadao"
20	Participation in other trainings/education programmes
	B.2 - Vertical
21	**FENATRAD:** type and frequence of interaction (partnership? Do they support the local union, how?) How would you define your relationship to this organisation? **CONTRACS:** type and frequence of interaction (partnership? Do they support the local union, how?)
22	How would you define your relationship to this organisation

	CUT: type and frequence of interaction (partnership? Do they support the local union, how?)
23	How would you define your relationship to this organisation **CONLACTRAHO:** type and frequence of interaction (partnership? Do they support the local union, how?)
24	How would you define your relationship to this organisation **IDWF**: type and frequence of interaction (partnership? Do they support the local union, how?)
25	How would you define your relationship to this organisation: other
	B.3 - Density
26	Part of coalitions (8th of March, Mulheres pela Democracia, Frente Povo sem Medo…)
27	Frequency of interactions
28	How many national congresses (FENATRAD) did the union attended?
29	How many regional seminars/trainings? With other domestic workers' unions With other unions With other groups
30	How many international events? (the union or a representative from the union)
	C. Narrative resources
	C. 1 - Values
31	Vision and mission of the union
	C. 2 - Shared understandings
32	Role of the union
33	Importance of the union
34	Why did you get personally involved?
	C. 3- Stories
35	Founders of the union/historical leaders
36	Main achievements
37	Participation in the 1988 Constitution
38	Participation in specific movements: diretas ja!, marcha dos 100 mil… (name and dates)
39	Participation in ILO negotiations
40	Participation in PEC 72 negotiations
41	Participation in movement against impeachment
42	Participation in strikes
	D. Infrastructural resources
	D. 1 - Material
43	Date of creation (association and then union)
44	Existence of a union office/head quarter
45	Own or rented?
46	Budget (monthly or annual)
47	Main source of income
48	Main source of expense

49	Donations
50	Regular financial support from other organisations
51	Computers
52	Capacity to print
53	Archives
54	Website/blog
55	Facebook page
56	Telephone
57	Opening times
58	Carta sindical (status of union)
	D. 2 - Human
59	Total number of members
60	Members paying contribution
61	Composition: gender, race, age, average wage
62	Number of elected officers
63	Positions
64	Criteria to join
65	Membership fee
66	Is there a lawyer supporting the union? (how many, which days, how do they get paid?)
	Leadership
67	Number of active leaders
68	Role of leaders
68.1	How are newly-elected officials trained for their role?
69	Level of schooling
70	Speak other languages?
71	Know how to use a cell phone
72	Know how to use a computer/laptop
73	Know how to use skype
74	Part of other movements (if so, specify which ones)
75	Know the legislation (lei 150)
76	Know domestic workers' rights
77	Can do a "calculos" (calculation of domestic workers' benefits, or due compensations, etc.)
78	Can provide information regarding law/rights to the members
79	Can organise/deliver trainings to the members
80	Know the broader political context
	D. 3 - Organizational practices
81	Existence of a constitution (provide copy)
82	What services are offered to the members?
83	**Recruitment:** How can people join (online vs. Physical, docs required) Type of activities to recruit ==> *Is there a vision/strategy to recruit?*
83.1	Target for new recruitment?
84	How are new members inducted or prepared in order to play a stronger role and participate actively?

Type of activities the union does (case work, representation, training, advocacy, campaigns…)
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
85 Annual

Memnbership engagement

86 Trainings

87 Information to members (format and frequency)

88 Social events (type and frequency)

89 Flyering / engagement with the public

90 Retention of members:
- what is done to retain members?
- what is the turn over? / on average, how long to they stay members?

E. Challenges facing the union

91 What are the main challenges for the union currently?

92 What are the most pressing needs?

93 What are the main priorities? (in term of campaigns, rights to win or defend?)

94 Where would you like to see the union within 3 years?
And in 10 years?

Appendix 4: International workshop at the union of Nova Iguaçu in March 2018

Together with the union of Nova Iguaçu, we won a cash prize from the NGO Fundo Elas, UN Women and the British Council, to organise a three days training workshop for domestic workers' leaders of the state of Rio de Janeiro. We won enough resources to invite two LSE women cleaners (Mildred Simpson and Beverley Williams) to talk about their experience of the strike, as well as two women from the popular education project for outsourced workers from the UFF university, including Adelimar da Conceição. The aim of the workshop was to provide practical training to leaders on campaign's organising and planning, as well as opening a space for experience sharing across workplaces and countries.

A/ Programme of the workshop:

Decent work and equal rights: strengthening the collective of women domestic workers to strengthen democracy

Friday 30/03/2018

11:00-12:00 Training on public speaking

12:00-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:00 Opening panel: "Political context and the 2017 labour reform"
Marlene Miranda, CUT Women's Officer
Creuza Maria de Oliveira, FENATRAD's national leader
Benedita da Silva, Congresswoman for the state of Rio de Janeiro, Workers' Party

15:30-16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30 Panel 2: "Winning rights in an unfavourable context"
Adelimar da Conceição and Dilma Santos Silva, project "UFF Limpeza Total", popular education for outsourced cleaners, UFF
Mildred Simpson and Beverley Williams, the LSE cleaners' strike and the end of outsourcing, United Voices of the World (UVW) - LSE
Chair and translator: Louisa Acciari, LSE

Saturday 31/03/2018

9:30-11:00 Training in feminist leadership, part 1– led by CRIOLA

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 Training in feminist leadership, part 2 – led by CRIOLA

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:00 Campaign's planning: recruiting and unionising domestic workers

16:00-16:30 Coffee break

16:30-17:30 History of the domestic workers' movement and perspectives for 2018

Sunday 01/04/2018
9:00-10:30 Training in public speaking

10:45-12:30 Collective planning: strengthening the cooperation within the state of Rio de Janeiro, planning collective campaigns, agreeing on next steps to unionise domestic workers and make rights effective

12:30 Lunch and end of workshop

B/ Workshop banner

Appendix 5: Maria Died / Maria Morreu

"Morreu Maria, Maria Morreu!
Outra de nós, mais uma Maria
Caiu Maria
O corpo de Maria
Viajou
Viajou
Viajou
E caiu
Caiu
Caiu
Para a morte
Morreu Maria
Maria Morreu.
Qual de nós é a Maria?
Morreu Maria
Quem de nós estava sem segurança?
Quem de nós não tem nome?
Qualquer de nós só é chamado de Maria:
Maria da dor, Maria da fome, Maria do amor,
Maria da Exploração, Maria da Vida, Maria do Tombo,
Maria da Morte.
Maria Morreu
Despencou e morreu
Morreu e sujou com seu sangue a calçada da patroa!
MARIA MORREU
MORREU
Mas deixou limpa a vidraça da patroa!"

From Marco Medeiros, for the union of domestic workers of Volta Redonda, in memory of Claudette Aparecida Gomes
(no date found on the text)

English version (my translation):

"Maria died, die did Maria!
Another of us, another Maria
She fell down Maria
The Body of Maria
It Travelled
Travelled
Travelled
And fell down
It fell down
It fell down
To death
Die did Maria
Maria Died.
Which one of us is Maria?
Maria died
Who among us was without security?
Who among us has no name?
Any one of us is only called Maria:
Maria of pain, Maria of hunger, Maria of love,
Maria of the Exploitation, Maria of the Life, Maria of the Tomb,
Maria of death.
Maria died
Plummeted and died
She died and stained the mistress' sidewalk with her blood!
MARIA DIED
DIED
But she left the lady's window clean!"

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