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Out of the penumbra: dispute and alliance in domestic service employment relationships

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To the women I interviewed during the fieldwork.

Às mulheres que entrevistei durante o trabalho de campo.

- Ce soir, ils reçoivent quelques amis comme tous les jeudis. Je mangerai du gigot, seule dans la cuisine, au bout du corridor.
- Et la rumeur de leur conversation vous arrivera toujours pareille, pareille à un tel point qu'on pourrait croire de loin qu'ils se disent tous les jeudis les mêmes choses?
- Oui, et je n'y comprendrai rien, comme d'habitude.
- Et vous serez seule, là, entourée des restes du gigot, dans une sorte d'assoupissement. Et on vous appellera pour desservir les assiettes à gigot et servir la suite.
- Non, on me sonnera, mais vous vous trompez, on ne me réveillera pas, je les sers dans un demi-sommeil.
- Comme eux sont servis, dans l'ignorance totale de qui vous pouvez bien être vous aussi.

Duras (1991 [1955]: 63)

We should not make a master category out of theory. Let's bring it down, and consider that part of having a vigorous public sociology is that we can work at theorizing with our publics, accepting that they also can theorize – can see, and may indeed see what we cannot see, because we are blinded by the enormous clarity of our theories.

Sassen (2005: 403)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- CCP: Confederação do Comércio e Serviços
(Confederation of Commerce and Services)
- CGTP-IN: Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – Intersindical Nacional
(General Confederation of Portuguese Workers – Inter-union National)
- CIETT: International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies
- CIP: Confederação da Indústria Portuguesa / Confederação Empresarial Portuguesa
(Confederation of the Portuguese Industry / Portuguese Business Confederation)
- CTP: Confederação do Turismo Português
(Confederation of Portuguese Tourism)
- EU: European Union
- EU-15: member states of the European Union from 1995 until 2004 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom)
- EUROSTAT: statistical office of the European Union
- GAMI: Grupo de Apoio às Mulheres Imigrantes
(Group of Support to the Immigrant Women)
- ILO: International Labour Organization
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
- OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
- SITSESE: Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Técnicos e dos Serviços
(Union of Technical and Service Workers)
- SLED: Sindicato Livre de Empregadas Domésticas
(Free Union of Domestic Employees)
- SSD: Sindicato do Serviço Doméstico
(Domestic Service Union)
- STAD: Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Serviços de Portaria, Vigilância, Limpeza, Domésticas e Actividades Diversas
(Union of Door Attendants, Security Guards, Cleaners, Domestic Employees and Diverse Occupations)
- UGT: União Geral de Trabalhadores
(General Union of Workers)

ABSTRACT

The contemporary features of paid domestic work have been recently documented in a variety of geographic locations, with a notable emphasis on the recruitment of immigrant women to perform cleaning and care tasks in affluent households. This dissertation begins with a review of the existing scholarship on the subject, followed by a discussion of Portugal – and, in particular, the urban area of Lisbon – as a critical case for the empirical examination of domestic service employment relationships today. A complex analytical framework is proposed based on three concomitant processes of structuration in this sector: negotiation, reorganization, and intermediation.

Analysis draws on legal documents, official statistics, and a total sum of 77 semi-structured interviews with domestic employees, private employers, company managers, and members of labour, employer, and activist organizations. Fieldwork took place in Lisbon in the 2011-2013 period. The discussion of first-hand evidence covers working contents and conditions, the changing quality of employee-employer arrangements *vis-à-vis* social hierarchies of class, gender and ethnicity, and the role of a number of formal institutions engaged in the mediation and transformation of domestic service employment relationships.

While working conditions are found to be substantially heterogeneous and segmented, the overwhelming recruitment of women in this sector remains key to conceal lingering gender asymmetries within households and society at large. The expected transition of domestic service from a paternalistic model to a commodified model – or from a class status to an employment status – is described as gradual and contested at best. Men are still largely absent from the picture; immigrant women still take up many of the least desired positions, particularly as ‘live-in’ direct care providers; symbolic hierarchy and emotional hostage linger on. Nevertheless, the efforts of domestic employees to transform the rules of the game – both individually and through collective organization – have multiplied and gained strength.

Keywords: domestic work, domestic service, gender, class, migration, employment relationship

RESUMO

Os traços contemporâneos do trabalho doméstico remunerado têm sido examinados em diversas localizações geográficas, com uma ênfase assinalável no recrutamento de mulheres imigrantes para desempenhar tarefas de limpeza e cuidados pessoais em lares abastados. A presente dissertação começa por expor uma revisão da literatura sobre o tema, seguindo-se uma discussão de Portugal – e, em particular, da área urbana de Lisboa – como um caso crítico para a investigação empírica das relações de trabalho no serviço doméstico de hoje. Para esse fim, propomos um quadro analítico complexo com base em três processos concomitantes de estruturação do setor: negociação, reorganização e intermediação.

Os dados analisados incluem documentação institucional, estatísticas oficiais e um total de 77 entrevistas semi-estruturadas que realizámos com empregadas e empregadoras do serviço doméstico, gerentes de empresas e membros destacados de organizações sindicais, patronais e ativistas. O trabalho de campo decorreu em Lisboa no período de 2011-2013. A discussão dos dados contempla os conteúdos e as condições de trabalho, a mudança qualitativa dos relacionamentos estabelecidos entre empregada e empregadora face às hierarquias sociais de classe, género e etnicidade, e o papel de algumas instituições formais empenhadas na mediação e transformação das relações de emprego no setor do serviço doméstico.

Se constatamos que as condições de trabalho neste setor são substancialmente heterogéneas e segmentadas, o recrutamento esmagador de mulheres permanece uma peça chave para encobrir a perseverança das assimetrias de género na esfera privada e à escala mais ampla da sociedade. A esperada transição do serviço doméstico de um modelo paternalista para um modelo mercadorizado – ou de um estatuto de classe para um estatuto de emprego – é descrita, à luz dos nossos dados, como gradual e em disputa. Os homens permanecem em larga medida ausentes do panorama; as mulheres imigrantes assumem amiúde as posições menos desejadas, em particular enquanto prestadoras de cuidados diretos em regime de internato; persistem as hierarquias simbólicas e os abusos emocionais. Porém, os esforços das empregadas domésticas para transformar as regras do jogo – quer individualmente, quer através da organização coletiva – têm vindo a multiplicar-se e a ganhar força.

Palavras-chave: trabalho doméstico, serviço doméstico, género, classe, migração, relação de emprego.

1

Domestic service and contested invisibilities: an introduction

1.1. Beatriz

Beatriz is employed at three private households.¹ Her assignments include cleaning, tidying up, cooking, washing clothes, and ironing. There is a small child in one of those households only, and caretaking is not part of Beatriz' defined tasks although she is occasionally asked to do it. She uses her set of keys to enter the apartments as employers are usually out at their jobs during the day. Her 35-hour working week from Monday through Friday is supplemented by three hours commuting in public transports per day, and sometimes cleaning other apartments at the weekend.

Looking upon her trajectory as an immigrant worker, Beatriz points out that she has been successful in a number of respects. First and foremost, she was able to exit 'live-in' domestic service employment and eldercare – that was how she initially earned a living in Lisbon after arriving from the state of Minas Gerais in Brazil in 2005. Second, she could obtain a permit from the Portuguese immigration authorities after a few years of irregular stay. Last, she is fairly happy about her current employers. Her legal rights to paid holidays and social security coverage are observed in two of the three households, which in addition are conveniently located in the same apartment building. Whereas developing intimate ties is deliberately kept at bay by both Beatriz and her employers, she feels that they have trusted her from the start. A key element in this regard, she says, is that she has always taken up jobs previously held by her sister or friends. She is granted considerable autonomy in adjusting working hours as long as the work is done in satisfactory conditions. The ticking of time is indeed the main source of

¹ Beatriz was interviewed during our fieldwork, which took place from April 2011 until March 2013. Pseudonyms are used throughout the dissertation to safeguard the anonymity of respondents.

pressure. While some employers are more directive than others in regard to how things shall be done, often things can not be done ‘neither their way, nor my way: it is the time's way’.²

Still, she is considering moving back to Minas Gerais to join her nine-year old daughter who is being nurtured by an aunt. Since Beatriz' savings by the end of every month amount to ‘50 Euros at best’ and her husband is unemployed, why should they stay abroad? Furthermore, job opportunities in their hometown seem to be on the rise: Beatriz may be able to find something better than temporary work in cleaning or retail, her experience prior to migrating. She is 31 years old, and she would like to study in order to become a beautician. This was precisely how her sister moved away from domestic service employment upon arrival in Portugal. The necessary time, energy and money are yet to be found by Beatriz.

1.2. Paid domestic work in contemporary Western Europe

It is by no means incidental that this dissertation begins with a short account of Beatriz' own considerations. Later on, a point shall be made in favour of conceiving domestic employees as a theoretical category as much as the flesh-and-blood women hired to perform cleaning and care work in private households. Behaviours and standpoints on the ground are to be paid close attention. This is not to say that we advocate an individualistic approach to the subject in hand. Much to the contrary, in the terms of Burawoy (1991: 285), our key aim is to document and discuss ‘the interplay between system and lifeworld, between domination and response’.

The upsurge of paid domestic work in contemporary affluent societies is far from surprising by now. Recent developments in various locations have been documented by scholars, with a notable emphasis on the recruitment of immigrant women under more or less formal arrangements (e.g. Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002a; Ungerson, 2003; Lutz, 2008; Mahon & Robinson, 2011; Dahl et al, 2011).³ In particular,

² All fieldwork interviews were conducted in Portuguese. Whenever adequate, the original expression used by the respondent will be provided in a footnote. In this case, Beatriz' words were: ‘às vezes não dá para fazer tudo. Não é à maneira delas, nem à maneira minha: é à maneira do tempo.’

³ These references pertain to works attempting a global or multi-sited analysis of the phenomenon; they draw heavily on a fast-growing number of empirical studies confined to particular locations or countries. See also various special issues in academic journals: on domestic work in the *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2007; on niches, gender and ethnicity in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2007; on the legal regulation of domestic work in the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, Vol. 23, No. 1,

Hochschild (2000) proposes the concepts of global care chains and emotional surplus value to discuss how domestic service, far from a mere remainder of antiquate ways of living, is ingrained in the logics of modern-day capitalism. Notwithstanding important differences across countries, the growing commodification of household labour over the latest decades has been empirically observed throughout much of Western Europe and North America (ILO, 2013a). Important contributions to understand change and persistence in this sector of employment can be drawn from fields as diverse as gender studies, economic sociology, sociology of the family and post-colonial studies. Bridging the often controversial gaps between these different traditions of thought is one of the theoretical goals in this dissertation.

A number of reasons for the resilience of domestic service demand in Europe have been advanced by scholars concerned with gender and economic structures. Increases in the number of single-parent households, the geographic dispersion of family members within and across countries, and the participation of both men and women in paid employment exert particular pressures on work-family balance (Drew et al, 1998; Crompton et al, 2007; Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009; Lewis et al, 2009). Population ageing and gains in life expectancy pose new challenges to public care systems (Spencer et al, 2010; OECD, 2012). In some places more than others – namely, in Southern Europe more than in Northern Europe – collective solutions for the provision of personal services under public, private or community models lag behind the needs (Haas, 2005; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Méda & Périvier, 2007; Lyonette et al, 2007; Casaca & Damião, 2011).

The expected consequence is a growing resort to commodified individual arrangements. At these various levels, gender and class inequality tensions are paramount. A disproportionate amount of labour in family context is absorbed by women, and the insufficiency of coordinated public intervention leaves households to struggle with the greater or fewer possibilities determined by life circumstance and income bracket (Torres et al, 2004; EUROSTAT, 2008; Williams, 2010a; Casaca & Damião, 2011). Beyond a binomial conceptualisation of state and household, a crucial question mark lies on why and how particular modes of organizing housework and personal care in society prevail over others.

Recent research underscores the character of domestic service as an ethnic niche (Moya, 2007; Williams, 2010b; Ambrosini, 2013). In fact, the accumulation of knowledge on paid

2011; on migration and care in *Social Policy and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2010; on domestic work and social inequality in *Estudios Sociales*, No. 45, 2013.

domestic work has been much favoured by the key role it is granted in studies of migration – and especially undocumented migration – which would seem at first uninterested in any particular occupational sector. In turn, research focused on domestic service corroborates the extended presence of informality (Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Lutz & Palenga-Möllbeck, 2010; Näre, 2012). Undocumented immigrant women are described as being especially vulnerable to demand-driven thrusts to reduce workers' wages and benefits. Their situation *vis-à-vis* the state contributes to mould employment relations and practices of power imbalance and precarity (Anderson, 2007, 2010a). This encourages research to expand into evidence on the growing fraction of the overall population working under insecure, discontinuous, and flexible or informal labour relations (Beck, 2000; Mosley et al, 2002; Supiot, 2010).

While playing a prominent role in the global economy, domestic employees are confronted with the material and symbolic devaluation imposed by cultural biases on labour performed by women, many of whom come from lower-income countries and subaltern ethnic groups (England, 2005). The ‘new world domestic order’, as described by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001), builds on multiple layers of gendered and ethnicized segmentation – the availability of care and housework in cheap and flexible forms emerging as key to facilitate the economic autonomy of native highly educated women, often struggling with long working hours at their own jobs and less than collaborative male household members. The nexus of patriarchal and colonial power relations is eloquently illustrated through a comprehensive view over migrant domestic labour today (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2012). Behind the walls of private households, social relationships may do more to organize the job than formal standards or regulations, and the bonds of trust, affection or solidarity established between domestic employees and their employers interlock with the persistence of hierarchies (Rollins, 1985; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002b).

However, developments *beyond* the walls of private households are certainly not negligible. The distinctive contribution of immigrant groups engaged in mobilizing and representing domestic workers has been described in places such as San Francisco (Salzinger, 1991), Washington (Cantor, 2010), London (Anderson, 2010b) and Rome (Marchetti, 2012). A widespread social movement supported the Domestic Workers Convention adopted in 2011 at the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2010). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are thereby pushed into the ground of politics, that in which ‘spokespersons, being granted a

monopoly over the legitimate political expression of the will of a collective, speak not only in favor of those whom they represent but also very often in their place' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 147).

The very *invisibility* of domestic service under global capitalism is contested by scholars and social movements alike. As migrant domestic workers become a fundamental category in the debate, one should bear in mind that they do not exhaust the actors to be considered. As written by Sassen,

master categories have the power to illuminate, but theirs is blinding power thereby also keeping us from seeing other presences in the landscape. They produce, then, a vast penumbra around that centre of light. It is in that penumbra that we need to go digging.

In Sassen (2005), p. 402.

In this sense, a number of relevant actors and processes remain very much in the penumbra. Little is known about native domestic employees, employers, or formal organizations such as for-profit companies providing domestic services. Little is known about the role of trade unions in transforming or failing to transform the dynamics of the sector. In addition, while the importance of legal regulation on the working and living conditions of domestic employees is a recurrent claim, the actual content of the regulation and its application on the ground have been less frequently assessed in a detailed or critical manner. A key concern underpinning this study is the need to map the connection of domestic employees with – and thus also their isolation from – structures of mediation, representation, and collective action.

Portugal, and in particular the urban area of Lisbon, is proposed here as a critical case for empirical examination. The selected setting and time-frame of analysis are claimed to offer an especially fruitful soil in which to expand ground-floor observation and theory formulation. The notion of a privileged site of observation builds primarily on a peculiar combination of elements regarding economic structures and gender inequality in this country (Ferreira, 1981, 2010; Perista, 2002; Amâncio, 2007; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Casaca, 2007, 2012; Torres, 2008). The piecemeal opening of high status professional areas to women coexists with a strongly gendered differentiation of skills at the bottom tier of jobs. The challenge between women's economic autonomy and lingering traditionalism in gender roles remains in the foreground of the academic debate. In the meantime, the rapid increase in immigration since the mid-1970s and lingering ethnic segmentation in the labour market are also documented

(Baganha, 1998; Góis & Marques, 2009; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010). Post-2008 economic recession and austerity policy measures have raised concerns about the vulnerability of both women (Casaca, 2010) and immigrants (Peixoto, 2011).

These various studies help us situate the case of Portugal within Europe, as well as within the Mediterranean or Southern European model as understood in cross-national comparative research. Most of them acknowledge domestic service as a common source of income for women with working-class or immigrant background. Still, they seldom carry out an in-depth empirical investigation of working conditions and systemic logics in this employment sector. While domestic work is indeed a consolidated concern in sociological research on Portugal, only a few exploratory attempts have been made to describe it as a segment of the labour market (Guerreiro, 2000; Catarino & Oso, 2000; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Baptista, 2011; Guibentif, 2011). The disperse though promising contributions of such endeavours shall be paid close attention in our literature review.

1.3. Beatriz is not alone: other presences in the landscape

A while ago, Madalena was asked permission by her part-time domestic employee to be absent from work on a particular Friday. The domestic employee suggested that her own sister would come to do the usual cleaning and cooking. In the eyes of Madalena, this solution was acceptable as long as her domestic employee's sister covered the same volume of work. Occasional replacement – which is not uncommon in domestic service – provides an interesting illustration of how interwoven the strategic estimation of costs and benefits is with personal bonds and immaterial values. The substitute is expected to be equally productive, but she is trusted to enter the employer's apartment on the condition of being an employee's close relative or friend, that is, under a tacit system of mutual accountability.

During the following weeks, the same replacement occurred several times until the replacing sister eventually took over the job on a permanent basis. This was how Madalena became one of the employers of Beatriz. Beatriz' sister, in the meantime, completed her formal training in cosmetics and obtained a full-time job in a beauty parlour; interviewed during our fieldwork too, she explains that she only had only gone into domestic service because the owners of the

restaurants where she first worked after arriving in Portugal refused to give her a written employment contract as required to obtain a residence permit from immigration authorities.

By conducting individual interviews with the current employee (Beatriz), the former employee (Eva) and the employer (Madalena), we are granted a valuable insight into their relationships. For instance, we learn that the recruitment of a domestic employee in this particular household used to be an incumbency of Madalena's mother until she died in 2010. Madalena was 25 years old by then, and she decided to keep the domestic employee. However, the duties of the domestic employee have been far from uniform over time. The child's growing up, the original employer's illness, and the original employer's decease affected work requirements and dynamics. A key element of continuity is that Madalena's understanding of norms and standards regarding paid domestic work is strongly informed by memories of her mother's views, including a peculiar combination of emotional and professional expectations. Taxes and social security contributions are paid; minimum working conditions are observed. Just like Beatriz or her sister never had any contact with a trade union or an immigrant organization, Madalena never resorted to any kind of support from a formal organization to undertake her role as an employer.

Also in Lisbon however, there are people expending efforts to develop particular structures and channels of mediation. Mário, the owning manager of a for-profit company specialized in homecare, is committed to promote a professionalizing view of household services. One of his convictions is that the provision of personal care and the provision of housework are to be clearly separated. In Mário's view, the fluidity underlying relationships like the one between Madalena and Beatriz – fluidity over time in regard to tasks, skills, and even who the actual employer and employee are – is a marker of ‘the wrong view of household services’⁴: an outdated understanding which builds on class asymmetry and dissatisfaction of both parties. He pointedly rejects the notion of providing services to ‘households’⁵, instead favouring terms such as ‘cases’, ‘care recipients’, or ‘customers’.⁶ The recruitment process is key. His company claims the capacity to match not only the needs of customers and the skills of workers (demand and supply as conventionally conceived in rational economics), but also their personal profiles and tastes, anticipating risks and benefits in interpersonal dynamics.

⁴ ‘A visão errada dos serviços domiciliários.’

⁵ ‘Casas.’

⁶ ‘Casos’, ‘utentes’, ‘clientes.’

The quest for cost reduction and flexibility in which companies such as Mário's are engaged makes the picture all the more diffuse. Alessandra's position is cautious: the recent rise of companies in this sector may not be good news at all. Alessandra is a member of an immigrant women's organization operating in Lisbon. She traces her interest in activism back to her early days as a domestic employee, an occupation that she had never experienced before migrating from Brazil to Portugal. The main aim of the organization, in her words, 'is to capacitate, to change the paradigm, to give tools, to empower, to reduce the vulnerability'.⁷ Among other things, information leaflets are published and disseminated, technical and peer-to-peer support is offered to domestic employees in need, and regular activities promoting information and awareness are organized. The loneliness and confinement in which paid domestic work is very often performed – even within the organizational framework of service companies – is a familiar obstacle to this NGO.

Yet in a distinct office in town, Cristina maintains permanent contact with the staff of the ILO to discuss developments and strategies following the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention. She is a member of the Women's Commission at a national trade union confederation. A task on the top of her current agenda is to tackle the long record of inertia concerning domestic service employment within the workers' movement. Relevant materials must be collected, thematic workshops must be organized and attended, gender awareness among union ground-floor and top-level members must be stimulated. Challenges exist at both the cultural and the regulatory levels. On a more positive note, Cristina points out the great transformation – improvement – in working conditions in this sector over the last decades in Portugal, especially the reduction of child labour and the expansion of social security coverage.

The fact that the trade unions currently covering domestic employees in Portugal combine a wide range of occupations is a source of both concern and strength. On the one hand, the unions' agenda is likely to be dominated by occupations in which unionisation is greater and employers include large companies, such as cleaning, hotel, retail, or office work. On the other hand, the incorporation of domestic service employees in unions with a broad scope and substantial bargaining capability offers considerable prospects of advancement. Cristina is well aware of the divisions within the workers' movement. Whereas the fragmentation of areas and responsibilities across unions seems to be fairly consolidated in Portugal, one can

⁷ 'Capacitar, mudar o paradigma, dar ferramentas, empoderar, reduzir a vulnerabilidade.'

still hope to reach a general alignment regarding goals and strategies. The ideal, she argues, would be to have ‘one single union in spirit’.⁸

1.4. Research question and design

Employees and employers are not monolithic categories, and they are not the only actors to be considered either. In what may seem paradoxical at first sight, acknowledging other relevant actors is a necessary condition to delve into the *solitude* of paid domestic workers as they experience and respond to the pressures of patriarchal capitalism, work value hierarchies, and globalization (Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1996; Sassen, 2007; Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007; Castillo, 2008). The proposition of public sociology by Burawoy (2005, 2009) seems straight to the point as it lies on the premise of placing the pluralism of norms and aspirations at the core of the debate. ‘Civil society is not simply the object of knowledge for sociology – we examine much more – but rather the *standpoint* from which we study the world’ (Burawoy, 2009: 468, original emphasis). Examining the emergence or erosion of collective action in its various forms is crucial to document the dynamic interplay between system and lifeworld.

Building on an extensive review of literature, we will argue that so far the usual focus on a binomial concatenation of macro and micro level developments has been insufficient to illuminate how employment relationships in this sector are in effect established and disputed. The research question can then be formulated: considering the location and time of our study, *how are domestic service employment relationships structured?* How do these employment relationships come about and to what extent do they reflect or challenge the rules of the game between domestic employees, their employers and other actors in the broader socioeconomic structure?

To answer these questions, a complex analytical framework based on three concomitant processes of structuration is proposed. The first of these processes is *negotiation*. Negotiation pertains not only to working conditions, but also to the contents and meanings of paid domestic work. Historical legacies and contemporary inputs – and, in particular, the tensions surrounding emotional work – must be paid attention. The prominence of personal bonds and informality in this employment sector is often equated with traditional or pre-capitalistic production

⁸ ‘O ideal seria um só sindicato em espírito.’

relations. However, both at the micro and the macro levels of analysis, modern and capitalistic standards permeate the interaction between employees, employers, and mediators (when they exist). That these standards may be negotiated under asymmetrical, diffuse or experimental conditions should not prevent the sociologist from describing and discussing them.

Second, *reorganization*. The transition of domestic service from a paternalistic paradigm to a commodified paradigm is still up to empirical scrutiny. Roles and tensions at the workplace – and beyond the workplace – are expected to be entwined with the changing logics of gender, class and ethnic stratification. As argued by Mills (1967: 154), the ‘ritual’ of ‘sketching in the historical background’ or ‘giving an historical explanation’ is insufficient to the sociological eye. The point is not to separate the present from the past, neither to assess in any strict way whether the social forms and the social conditions that we observe today are ‘new’ or ‘old’. Instead, we want to ‘historicize’ our subject (Wallerstein, 2006: 82), that is, to situate our subject in time while recognizing that developments over time are complex, sometimes ambiguous or inconsistent; that time exists within our matter of examination rather than simply precedes it.

Third and last, *intermediation*. The existing scholarship has repeatedly signalled the importance of formal institutions in regulating domestic service, even if employment remains largely informal. Further efforts must be expended to understand the dynamics of lawmaking in this sector, as well as their actual impact on the behaviour of employees and employers. Collective representation is also a grey area of inquiry. Who represents employees and employers, and what particular practices and strategies are favoured by those representatives? What dilemmas and solutions are they encountering in their operation? Mário, Alessandra and Cristina are not personally acquainted, and they may never sit down at the same table to discuss their contrasting perspectives. Nonetheless, each of them holds views on what the others are doing. These views too offer ‘strategic material’ for sociological research (Merton, 1987). Engaging with the multiplicity of actors at stake, and not losing individual employees and employers from sight along the way, is a key condition to follow Sassen's (2005: 403) proposition that ‘part of having a vigorous public sociology is that we can work at theorizing with our publics, accepting that they also can theorize – can see, and may indeed see what we cannot see, because we are blinded by the enormous clarity of our theories.’

Our research project draws on case study techniques to collect and analyse data. According to Yin (1989: 14), the case study approach entails the most powerful methodology to answer

how and why questions: it ‘contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena’ and ‘allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’. The extended case method is especially adequate to grasp the interplay between systemic trends and local contexts and meanings (Burawoy, 1998). The challenge is to combine a strong empirical endeavour with a coherent vision over the broader system of social relations. To do so, a combination of data sources will be used.

On the one hand, the examination of official statistics from both Labour Force Surveys and Social Security Records contributes to overcome the typical difficulties associated with a quantitative characterization of domestic service (Baganha, 1998; Peixoto, 2002). Particular limitations of large-scale datasets to describe this sector constitute a well-known challenge for scholars dealing with employment and migration (Williams, 2010b). Numbers, concepts, and analysis must be carefully considered in order to retain their meaning and significance.

On the other hand, first-hand collected data is chiefly qualitative. Novel contributions are provided by the extensive study of institutional documents such as legislation and materials published by the various organizations under examination. Between April 2011 and March 2013, a total number of 77 open-ended interviews were conducted in the area of Lisbon with domestic employees, private employers, domestic service company managers, and members of labour, employer and activist organizations. Based on semi-structured scripts, these interviews lasted 90 minutes on average. Public officers, experts and other strategic informants consulted throughout the research project offered useful background suggestions and clarifications. The formulation of new elements and questions by respondents was encouraged. Situated experience is thus brought to the fore in order to enrich and challenge findings from previous scholarship.

Data collected in institutional documents and interviews was coded into categories, concepts and relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mayan, 2001). Examination privileges particular themes as they emerge as the most helpful to answer our research questions. In-depth knowledge of the elements at stake is favoured over numerically significant observation. As far as a wider landscape is concerned, it is the amplification and revision of analytical findings – rather than the amplification of raw results – that shall take the leading role (Yin, 1989: 21).

1.5. Overview of the dissertation

This introductory chapter circumscribes in a broad manner the questions under study and the strategic choices steering the research. Contributions from literature and anecdotic evidence from fieldwork interviews are brought together to anticipate our major concern with both. The brief accounts of theory, methodology and empirical analysis hereby provided are naturally to be expanded in the next chapters.

We begin with a review of existing scholarship, locating domestic service at the intersection of gender, class and ethnic inequalities (Chapter 2). Particular attention is paid to research in Portugal. We observe that the availability of cheap and flexible domestic labour is a key piece in the distribution of family roles among double-earner households with higher incomes. Over the last decades, significant advancements of women toward economic autonomy have coexisted with lingering gender asymmetry in both private life and the labour market. Domestic employees remain a critical element in the *affair* that articulates – and conceals the tensions between – public and private spheres, women and men, working class and middle-class households, and, increasingly, native and immigrant workers. A number of loopholes in our present knowledge of the subject are taken as departure points for research.

The research question is then formulated, convening contributions from additional literature to delve into a number of issues that remain in the penumbra (Chapter 3). A complex analytical framework is proposed based on the concomitant processes of negotiation, reorganization and intermediation. As we assert our intent on placing the employees' and the employers' agency at the core of the analysis without relinquishing the collective dimension of the phenomenon, our preoccupation suffers a subtle though important transformation. It does not suffice to say that domestic service is located at the intersection of inequalities or sources of oppression; it is necessary to question if and how the structuration of employment relationships in this sector (including the actual strategies mobilized by employees and employers as they seek more satisfactory arrangements concerning their working and living conditions) tangles with the dilemmas, contradictions or ambiguities of the collective struggles for the rights of women, workers, or immigrants.

First-hand data collection is confined to the city of Lisbon, in Portugal, and a combination of data sources and analytical methods is proposed (Chapter 4). Tools used in previous scholarship are discussed and the procedures undertaken to collect and analyse data are

described in detail, together with a number of practical limitations and sources of caution. We outline a general profile of the employees and employers interviewed during the fieldwork in various sociodemographic and employment dimensions, a crucial condition to understand the potential and limitations of our case study with regard to knowledge advancement.

We then proceed to present and discuss the research findings. First, diachronic developments observed at the societal level show how the legal regulation of domestic service (Chapter 5), as well as the volume and composition of the sector (Chapter 6), are entwined with broader political and economic processes. The Domestic Workers Convention adopted at the ILO in 2011 is likely to strengthen the position of workers in times of economic recession and austerity policy. The legal rights of domestic service workers are approximating those of regular wage-earners more than ever, but a scenario in which their employers are recognized as regular employers is still some crucial steps away. The persistent volume and feminization of domestic service in the period of 2000-2010 in Portugal has coexisted with the growth and decreasing masculinization of highly status professional groups, an eloquent corroboration of the neo-Marxist literature on global economies – and a spectacular challenge to women's movements and solidarity. By discussing the unequal share of gains and losses from broader developments in society, we begin to see the heuristic value of negotiation, reorganization and intermediation as simultaneous multiscale processes.

Afterwards, attention turns to how these processes occur and shape up behind the walls of private households. We draw on interviews conducted during fieldwork to discuss working contents and conditions (Chapter 7) and the changing quality of employer-employee arrangements *vis-à-vis* social hierarchies building on class, gender, and ethnic differentiation (Chapter 8). Discussion covers heterogeneity and segmentation in working conditions, personal and collective mobility, and emotional work. By questioning the empirical manifestations of place and time singularities with respect to class, gender and ethnicity, the much expected transition from a paternalistic paradigm to a commodified one is described as gradual and currently under dispute.

Last, the role of a number of formal institutions engaged in the mediation and transformation of domestic service employment relationships is examined (Chapter 9). With regard to regulation, the rights to social security coverage and paid holidays are discussed in the light of evidence collected during our fieldwork. The experiences of two trade unions covering this sector and two ongoing NGO-led initiatives are empirically documented, illuminating factors

of conflict and cooperation. Finally, the rise of for-profit companies providing cleaning and care services in private households is addressed, and the significance of their involvement as employers or brokers highlighted.

The concluding chapter summarizes how the research findings shed a clearer light on the structuration of domestic service employment relationships – and the extent to which contemporary disputes push for the end of the affair at stake (Chapter 10). It is argued that a variety of ruptures are provoked and felt on the ground by domestic employees and their employers. At the same time, the institutions and organizations under scrutiny offer significant contributions to shape working conditions and relations, as well as spaces for the emergence or erosion of collective actors that are typically presumed to remain silent and informally organized at best. Neglected in much of the previous scholarship, the exploration of a meso level of developments – between the macropolitics of global capitalism and the micropolitics of personal relations at the workplace – raises important questions for both future research and policy-making.

1.6. Personal motivation and trajectory

This dissertation is the outcome of our participation in the Doctoral Programme in Economic and Organizational Sociology at the School of Economics and Management, University of Lisbon (2010-2014).⁹ The key pillars of our research project began to materialize during previous experiences as a student and a researcher. While attending a Master's Programme in Sociology at the University of Amsterdam (2007-2008), we chose to examine in detail the employment experience of immigrants moving from Brazil to the Netherlands. Research was not confined to any particular employment sector. On the contrary, the main aim was to understand diversity within the same origin and destination countries. Particular occupations however called for closer attention.

If immigrants are concentrated in particular sectors as a result of poor working conditions, amplified by the snowball effect of social networks, one may learn more about their employment situation by looking into each sector than by looking into personal

⁹ Programa de Doutoramento em Sociologia Económica e das Organizações, Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão, Universidade de Lisboa.

mobility. Even though migrant labour and inequality of reward across occupations are generally considered two separate objects of sociological inquiry, they help understand one another. [...] The labour market does not simply reflect or enforce ethnicity: it also shapes it.

In Abrantes (2011), p. 78.

Later on, our participation as a researcher in team projects concerning gender inequality at the labour market and the political participation of migrants provided the opportunity to consider domestic service employment from various complementary angles. The fact that literature on migrant domestic labour grew so much over the last years means that, to some extent, this subject has been increasingly encased in its own specific compartment and distanced from other research topics. It seemed clear that a major upcoming challenge would be to bring it back closer to broader debates on labour relations and social change.

Our engagement with this subject is also linked to civic participation. Over the years, collaboration with a few projects at NGOs brought us closer to particular notions, research questions, political dilemmas. One of these dilemmas pertains to looking at domestic service as either a transitory condition – a necessarily degrading type of employment that can be somehow useful to migrant women in their initial period away from home – or a proper occupation in which recognition and valorisation must be fought for. The answer is political more than anything else, and a sociologist may prefer not to be concerned with it. However, social science can provide relevant contributions to discern the empirical settings and relations that render a given activity more or less degrading, more or less transformable. Findings from research are likely to support individual and collective actors in understanding and dealing with their current dilemmas – or dropping them altogether. Such is at least the hope of this study.

Domestic service at the intersection of inequalities

2.1. Intersecting streams of research

Domestic work in its paid or unpaid modalities has been paid attention by scholars from various fields and traditions of thought, including sociology of work, sociology of the family, gender studies, migration studies, and post-colonial studies. Domestic service as a sociological subject in its own right gained a new momentum over the last decade. A precious array of theorization and empirical evidence is therefore available. The global aim of this chapter is to locate where these distinct streams of research come into the presence of one another and succeed or fail to dialogue.

Taking one step back, we should observe that work and labour markets have been objects of study in sociology since the very word sociology came into use (Smelser & Swedberg, 1994; Castillo, 1999). Like other forms of interaction, work is a complex product and producer of social relations and identities. It occupies a substantial part of people's everyday life. It is also a channel through which resources are allocated and inequalities change or persist. The sociology of work *par excellence* is interested in what types of work exist and how they are organised and practiced in society. This is a somewhat vague and yet important statement insofar as it leads to the notion that paid work, even if it can be one's focus, should not be mistaken for a synonym of 'work' excluding all modalities which do not fit into the common notion of remunerated activity. Feminist scholars have been especially critical of gender biases in the study of economic activities, arguing that major concepts and assumptions presented as gender-neutral draw more often than not on male-oriented norms and expectations (Oakley, 2000; Bould & Gavray, 2008; Ferreira, 2009; Spierings, 2012). As a result, much of the value and meaning of women's work is lost in the analysis, with a particular neglect of care and domestic chores.

In fact, the borders between paid and unpaid work, or work and leisure, or work and non-work, should not be understood as static and normative analytical fences, as in a sort of either/or choice for the researcher. They are themselves a deserving object of study. We are moving closer to Glucksmann's (1995) proposal that we examine less 'work' than the 'total social organisation of labour'. A similar starting point is proposed in Hochschild's (2005: 75) discussion on the outsourcing of emotions and intimacy: 'What if it were true, I'd like to ask, that we were not out of the market in private life and not always in it at the workplace and mall?'

This chapter begins by defining paid domestic work and mapping the recent upsurge of research on this subject, especially in Europe. Second, relevant contributions from literature on gender, migration, and employment are reviewed. Particular attention is paid to topical subjects of inquiry such as global care chains, emotional work, work-family balance, and labour market dynamics. Third, peculiarities and developments in Portugal are discussed. Finally, we conclude that domestic service is located at the intersection of inequalities based on gender, class and ethnic differentiation, and we identify a number of specific loopholes in research to date. These shall be the key departure points for the following chapters.

2.2. Defining paid domestic work

Before proceeding, a word on the definition of our subject is necessary. Activities understood as domestic work are typically summarized in the three c's of cleaning, cooking and caring. While it is clear that these activities entail significant difference with regard to tasks, skills and routines, a normative divide between conventional housework (such as cleaning) and the provision of care (as in childcare or eldercare) has proved difficult in empirical observation. Whereas domestic workers may be recruited as either cleaners *or* carers, many of them accumulate assignments and find themselves in an overlapping area (Anderson & Hughes, 2010). The borders that separate such activities are fragile and shifting – they are a matter of negotiation in itself. To make things yet more nuanced, the very meanings of *work*, *domestic* and *care* can vary across settings and depending on personal perceptions. Clarification is thus expected to emerge from an empirical examination of practices rather than an overruling categorization established *a priori*.

To deal with this issue, Anderson (2000: 21) posits that ‘domestic work is not definable in terms of tasks but in terms of a role which constructs and situates the worker within a certain set of social relationships.’ Moreover, the construction of housework as falling beyond the scope of personal care is weak and ambiguous. An accurate view of the care economy, as argued by Folbre (2006: 186-8), requires a conceptualization of care work that is at once broad and disaggregated, drawing on a labour process-based approach rather than relying only on site of production or production activity classifications. According to the terminology proposed by Folbre, care work may then be ‘direct’ (involving personal and emotional engagement, like in childcare and eldercare) or ‘indirect’ (providing support for direct care even though real-time physical interaction can be absent, like in housecleaning).

The views of Anderson and Folbre are partially conflicting. In Anderson's view, domestic workers perform cleaning, care and many other tasks; in Folbre's, the same workers should be understood as paid carers providing either direct or indirect care. However, the bone of contention pertains to terminology more than to analytical circumscription – even if it bears significant implications for social policy and political action. Throughout this dissertation we will favour a hybrid of the two views, accepting that *domestic workers* are employed in private households to provide *direct and/or indirect care*. The bulk of the reviewed literature on domestic service, as well as the available official statistics, broadly subscribe to the same understanding, which facilitates the comparison of findings. In addition, this understanding is largely consonant with the formulation adopted in the legal materials that we will be examining in our empirical research, namely the current law on domestic service employment in Portugal and the Domestic Workers Convention adopted at the ILO in 2011. In those documents, domestic work is defined as encompassing any work performed in or for a household other than one's own as long as this happens on a regular rather than sporadic basis (Law-Decree No. 235/92, 24 October: Art. 2; ILO, 2011a: Art. 15A/4). We will refer to paid domestic work and domestic service interchangeably, although the two concepts may mean different things in other contexts of debate.

It is important to underscore that our choice of concepts is based on their usefulness to the present analysis and not because we deem them ‘objectively’ more correct. From an occupational or professional point of view, domestic work is a rather problematic term, as vague as for instance education work or rural work, mixing a wide variety of job contents, skills and expectations. It can thereby downplay differences in the actual nature and dynamics

of the relationships between the actors at stake. The in-depth analysis of evidence collected during our fieldwork, especially the interviews with employees and employers, shall offer some compensation in this respect.

2.3. What do we know about paid domestic work today?

The recent research on paid domestic work draws on a number of critical issues identified in broader analyses of class, gender and ethnic relations in contemporary labour markets. To start with, the growth of highly qualified jobs in the upper strata of reward does not prevent the continued expansion of routinized low paid jobs, especially in urban settings with a thriving service industry (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Hochschild, 2000; Warhurst & Nickson, 2001; Kovács, 2006; Sassen, 2007).¹⁰ The gap between men's and women's participation in paid employment, conventionally taken as a measure of gender equality, does not account for the resilience if not increase of occupational segregation and pay differentials (Ferreira, 1999, 2010; Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009; Plantenga et al, 2009; Casaca, 2005, 2012a). Given the unequal distribution of responsibilities concerning home and the family, a growing number of women holding advanced formal qualifications and high status jobs can coexist with – even enhance – the consolidation of a category of underpaid women, often migrants, employed as domestic workers (Fagan, 2001; Lutz, 2002; Yeates, 2004; Crompton et al, 2007; Torres, 2008; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010).

The body of comparative scholarship on the subject provides an ambiguous picture of difference and similarity across countries (e.g. Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002a; Ungerson, 2003; Lutz, 2002, 2008; Isaksen, 2010; Dahl et al, 2011). The suggestion is that domestic service is expanding throughout Western Europe and North America. While the degrees and forms of this expansion are far from uniform, much of the exposed dynamics and operating networks are analogous. The same can be said of the persistent preponderance of women and the poverty of working conditions in this sector. The development of hierarchies legitimised by ethnic-based differentiation is a feature of every

¹⁰ While the knowledge society has become a common reference in public debate, the occupational categories employing the largest number of workers in the European Union by 2009 were still 'Shop, stall and market salespersons and demonstrators' and 'Domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers' (Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009). The same statistics indicate that both categories are on the increase at least since the mid-1990s.

studied location, although the main origin countries of domestic workers differ. National legislation provisions are different, but they all hold common fundamental restrictions and grey areas.

A general lack of quantitative analysis endured until the publication of an extensive report by the ILO in the aftermath of the adoption of its Domestic Workers Convention. Based on official statistics, the report estimates that there was a total of 3.6 million domestic workers in the group of ‘developed countries’¹¹ by 2010, with an increase of about 210 thousand over the previous 15 years (ILO, 2013a: 35-6). This increase is almost exclusively attributed to the countries of Southern Europe: the number of domestic workers more than doubled since 1995 in Spain and Italy, where foreign-born women presently make up the majority of the sector; these trends are shown to be less pronounced in Portugal. To be sure, large-scale datasets entail various limitations in the recording of paid domestic work, and a cautious comparison of sources is recommended before any conclusive statement is made. For instance, some observations of the ILO's publication on the case of Italy are incongruous with the research of Colombo (2007), who argues that both immigrant domestic workers and ‘live-in’ recruitment in that country are typically overestimated. The independent sources reviewed by this author estimate that, in 2004, only 2.9 per cent of households in Italy hired a non-Italian domestic worker against 4.9 per cent hiring an Italian domestic worker, which suggests that ‘most of the many women, and a far smaller proportion of men, who perform paid domestic work for Italian families are not foreigners at all, but Italians, even now’ (Colombo, 2007: 209). However, in the records of the National Social Security Institute considered in the ILO report, 78,4 per cent of all domestic workers in Italy by 2008 were foreign-born.¹²

¹¹ ‘Developed countries’ in this document include the EU member states from Southern, Western and Northern Europe (not Central and Eastern) plus Australia, Canada, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and United States of America. A total of 117 countries and territories are considered in the report; the global estimate of domestic workers by 2010 stands at 52.6 million (ILO, 2013a: 95, 109).

¹² These findings are not necessarily incongruous considering that different sources are likely to grasp different things and methods vary across datasets. In the particular example of Italy, it is clear that labour force surveys, social security records and independent studies are not measuring exactly the same object; collecting evidence from either individual workers or households bears relevant implications to the results; also, non-Italian is not synonymous with foreign-born, since a person born abroad may be granted Italian nationality at birth or later on. Plus, covering informal or precarious work is difficult. We shall pay close attention to these issues, including the potential and limits of triangulating several sources of evidence, during the discussion of methodological procedures (Chapter 4) and the examination of the available figures for Portugal (Chapter 6).

Regardless of the ongoing debate about the accuracy of statistics, recent change in the ethnic profile of paid domestic workers has been taken as a point of departure by many scholars. Based on her seminal empirical research in five cities in Europe, Anderson (2000) concludes that the conditions under which migrant domestic workers live and work depend on two major elements: the ‘live-in’ or ‘live-out’ regime under which they are recruited (relationship with the employer) and their legal status as documented or undocumented migrants (relationship with the state). Institutional and social factors help understand developments in both fronts. In turn, Parreñas (2001) discusses the situation of migrant domestic workers on the basis of how they experience four parallel dislocations: the migration trajectory, the formation of a transnational family household, the entry in the labour market, and the development of a migrant community. ‘The majority of those who arrive in Europe are not from working class backgrounds’, as noted by Lutz (2002: 95), and they ‘are better educated than their predecessors’. This means that many of the women employed in domestic service go through what Parreñas (2001: 150) calls a process of ‘contradictory class mobility’: they are able to increase their earnings and secure their family's subsistence by accepting an occupation below their formal qualifications and earlier social standards.¹³ Domestic work thus moves further away from the role of levelling – and, indeed, into the role of dividing – the *women's condition* on the basis of economic resources or ethnic background.

Ehrenreich and Hochschild (2002b) elaborate on the global dimension of the phenomenon. Their emphasis falls on the international migration system of care labour which develops as affluent societies demand – and depend *de facto* on – low wage workers, overwhelmingly women, to look after children, frail adults and elderly people. Through the money that they earn abroad, immigrant women often support families and communities back home, in particular their own children and elderly relatives. In an earlier publication, Hochschild (2000) proposes the concepts of global care chains and emotional surplus value to frame this composite of arrangements within the dynamics of present-day capitalism. The historical closeness between domestic labour and serfdom raises both theoretical and political concerns.

Today, coercion operates differently. While the sex trade and some domestic service is brutally enforced, in the main the new emotional imperialism does not issue from the barrel of a gun. Women choose to migrate for domestic work. But they choose it because

¹³ Both Parreñas and Lutz, in the formulations cited here, seem to draw on traditional national-based notions of class structure. These can be disputed in the light of Sassen's (2007) perspective on emergent global classes, to be discussed below.

economic pressures all but coerce them to. That yawning gap between rich and poor countries is itself a form of coercion, pushing Third World mothers to seek work in the First for lack of options closer to home. But given the prevailing free market ideology, migration is viewed as a 'personal choice.' Its consequences are seen as 'personal problems.' In this sense, migration creates not a white man's burden but, through a series of invisible links, a dark child's burden.

In Hochschild (2002), p. 27.

The classical image of young single women moving from rural impoverished areas to work as maidservants in wealthy houses within the same country has been largely abandoned. This should not obfuscate that these women were – and still are – migrants as well, even if legal frameworks do not classify them as such. Their moving away, supporting relatives back home, or struggling with patriarchal rules and unfamiliar social patterns are reported features one must not neglect (Meersschaert, 1986; Brasão, 2010). Certainly citizenship status plays a relevant role in labour market segmentation (Anderson, 2009). What is yet to be understood is whether the observed ethnic change in the sector, and indeed ethnic coexistence, is related to difference in the nature of the work and working conditions. When considering developments over time, Lutz (2002: 90) highlights ‘the paradox of the informal, archaic labour market that has arisen amid today's revolution of information technology’. Less is known about the elements of continuity.

Working conditions in domestic service may concern remuneration, working hours, tasks, the worker's place of residence, or the worker's legal status, among other things (Anderson, 2000; Williams, 2010b). Arrangements are seldom made in a definite manner between employer and employee at the outset of their relationship. Even if basic rules are then established, they remain a matter of construction and negotiation over time and practice (Lan, 2003; Akalin, 2007; Isaksen, 2007). Such process still represents a grey area of inquiry. This can be partially explained by the fact that employers have been overlooked in most of the research about paid domestic workers, just like paid domestic workers have been overlooked in research about work-family balance and the organisation of domestic chores (Anderson, 2007). Although a wide range of information has been collected on both sides, scarce knowledge is available about the modelling of the employment relationship, work cultures, or the dynamics of skill and status in this sector. The asymmetry of power – regarding both economic and symbolic resources – between domestic workers and their employers is sometimes assumed to mean

that there is no negotiation taking place. The sociology of work is prone to concede instead that employment relationships are *always* negotiated, even when one of the parties makes the bulk of the decisions. As shown in our next chapter, the elaboration on exit and voice by Hirschman (1970) or the notion of a ‘psychological contract’ by Marsden (2004) are valuable contributions to study negotiation under conditions of inequality.

With respect to working contents, Hochschild (2000) claims that a pair of characteristics of household services has been traditionally overlooked: that they include intensive, physical and demanding forms of work; and that they involve emotional work, especially in child and eldercare, requiring many of the interpersonal skills that are recognized and rewarded in educational or healthcare jobs. The understanding of emotional work as skilled work raises a general doubt. If the formal accreditation of emotional skills is difficult and they do not necessarily entail an increase in personal autonomy or collective organization, should they be considered beneficial to workers and job quality (England, 2005; Payne, 2009)? Or are they inextricably attached to employer's control, suggesting that the product being sold is not simply the labour of the domestic worker but something more – perhaps the domestic worker herself (Anderson, 2000)? The same point may hold for many other categories of work in the expanding service industry of the Global North (Agustín, 2003; Stewart, 2011). Empirical research on interactive service work stresses the ambiguous commodification of emotions, aesthetics and sexuality (Nickson et al, 2003; Casaca, 2012b). In the end, it may well be that this remains a matter for fieldwork requiring an attentive consideration of (inter)subjectivities instead of the dualistic notion that specific categories of work are either inherently subordinate or empowering (Nickson & Warhurst, 2003).

However, the *idea* that domestic service does not require complex thinking or advanced knowledge – chiefly understood as capacities obtained through formal education – remains a powerful argument to justify its low status, and it is the basis of a very significant distinction between types of work reinforced by the rhetoric of knowledge societies (Pinto & Pereira, 2008). This is especially the case for housework tasks such as cleaning and cooking, which tend to be attached a lower symbolic value than tasks related to caring for children, elderly people or disabled adults (Cox, 2010). Being inside or outside the sphere of knowledge thus perceived is not simply a matter of classification or description. It is also about who defines and benefits from that system of notions and values – a structure of cultural reproduction and symbolic violence which prescribes the submission of disfavoured groups to dominant groups

(Bourdieu, 1989, 1991). This is why studying issues of deference and dependence ‘involves questioning the accepted pattern of inequalities on which the entire social order is based’ (Cock, 1980: 5; see also Anderfuhren, 1999). The concept of skill is the product of social, economic and political constructions, to which gender, ethnicity, or the public-private divide are hardly unrelated (Cockburn, 1983; Isaksen, 2000).

Even if particular qualifications are unrequired to earn a living as a domestic worker, one should be careful before saying that schooling or credentials are irrelevant for either work practices or the negotiation of working conditions. Cultural values and social relationships are key in how domestic service is organized and performed (Rollins, 1985; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001). The way workers and employers make sense of their own class position is bound to affect their sense of entitlement (Perrons et al, 2005; Anderson, 2010a). A consonant argument is made in the study of the working class at large by Abrantes (2013a: 998), who suggests that ‘major social and cultural changes have played a key role in eroding some of the traditional values and solidarities and fostering the individualization process, but they have by no means eliminated the effect of social class socialization on life paths and identities.’ While the improvement of conditions in domestic service occupations remain far from social awareness in part because these occupations are considered unskilled, a parallel assumption is likely to permeate the workers' self-perception (Lautier, 2003; Anderson, 2009: 420-2; Abrantes, 2011: 72-3). They may avoid any struggle for the improvement of conditions on the grounds that what is wrong is not their current working conditions, but rather the very existence of the job, or the fact that they are the ones recruited to do it; they may also feel obliged to accept it as a price to pay for living in a more affluent society. The position of immigrant women earning their living as domestic workers, many of whom were never employed in the sector before migrating, is especially delicate in that they may cherish the opportunities provided by this ethnic niche while rejecting its role in moulding their identity as workers or citizens (Moya, 2007; Kofes, 2001: 301-48; Anderson, 2010b; ILO, 2010).

Yet another peculiar element in domestic service employment relationships is that the workplace is the home of somebody; usually, the employer's. This is the case even when employment is mediated by a company. As underlined by Anderson (2010b: 64), ‘the household is imagined as a place for private individuals, not political or indeed market actors’, and this is very often an either/or option with little room for nuance. None of the studies reviewed in this chapter mentions public labour authorities inspecting private

dwellings as actual workplaces. Contrastingly, immigrant workers have seen their own households visited by authorities looking for undocumented overstayers to deport, which suggests that the inviolability of home depends on the status of those living in it. For this reason, undocumented domestic workers may feel safer working as ‘live-in’ than as ‘live-out’ even when this means blurred boundaries between work and private life, or no private life at all (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002a; Degiuli, 2007; Van Walsum, 2011: 155). In either case, work is carried out in a setting that, far from being a regular workplace, often represents a grey area – if not a black hole – between public and private spheres.

A handful of questions thus remain to be answered. How are working conditions in this sector established and disputed? How are skills valued and transmitted? What is the connection of those processes with class asymmetry and hierarchy in the employer-employee relationship, as well as among the employers and among the employees? Can one speak of emerging or changing occupational identities? And how do they relate to forms of collective action? While these elements have not been scrutinized in a systematic manner so far, helpful contributions to dwell into them are provided by the existing scholarship on gender, migration and employment.

2.4. Work, gender and family

The increasing participation of women in paid employment over the latest decades has been shown to be closely linked up with the expansion of education, the enlargement of the service industry, and the growing introduction of corporate flexibility strategies (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Hochschild, 1997; Crompton, 1999; Rubery et al, 1999; Maruani, 2003; Casaca, 2007, 2013). Change in gender relations at the labour market has been therefore interwoven with the very decline of the Fordist-Keynesian system of employment relations (Walby, 1986; Lash & Urry, 1987; Kovács & Casaca, 2007). Several authors discuss evidence on the increase of highly qualified jobs in the upper strata of reward and the simultaneous enlargement of routinized low paid jobs in the service sector with little prospects of progression, especially in major urban agglomerations (Warhurst & Nickson, 2001; Kovács, 2005; Sassen, 2007; Castillo, 2008; Payne, 2009).

Ferreira (1981) argues that the classical debate offers two possible paths to women's emancipation. Liberal feminism envisions emancipation through the advancement of women in an otherwise unchanging capitalistic production system, drawing benefits from individual opportunities of progression in the existing educational and employment structures. Instead, reformist feminism advocates collective action and the transformation of production and class relations. The study of domestic labour suggests that these two paths do not necessarily exclude one another. On the contrary, it seems difficult to conceive an improvement in the position of women in the labour market without a change, however partial, in common understandings and practices structuring the sexual division of work inside and outside the walls of private households.

Crompton's (2006) analysis of the relation between public policy, employment and domestic work division suggests that the growth of women's employment rate and a gradual change in attitudes toward gender roles can in fact coexist with an ideology reasserting the public agency of men and the domestic invisibility of women. Extensive research conducted in Western Europe and North America corroborates that despite significant differences both across countries and over time, domestic work in most households is performed by women (Drew et al, 1998; Perista, 2002; Torres et al, 2004; Crompton et al, 2005; Crompton, 2006; McDowell et al, 2006; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; EUROSTAT, 2008; Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009; Aboim, 2010; Wall et al, 2013). The family member responsible for maintaining home or purchasing domestic services in the market tends to be a woman, and decisions on how to combine employment and motherhood are often individualized ones. Notwithstanding the substantial rise of women's participation in paid employment since the 1970s, the share of men's participation in domestic chores has been increasing at a much slower rate. Paid domestic workers, when recruited, are mainly women themselves. Activities understood as domestic work remain socially 'coded as feminine' (McDowell, 2000: 506).

The same studies also suggest that the latest decades have been characterized by a gradual unravelling of the male-breadwinner and female-caregiver model for the articulation of employment and family life, and, in fact, as a functional unit in 'industrial society'. It is worth noting that while gender inequality may be a relevant element for the socioeconomic study of any period of the past, the consolidation of gender roles that are frequently labelled typical or traditional – men as privileged interveners in the labour, productive and public realms, women attached to the domestic, consumption, private issues – is linked to concrete historical

processes such as the dawn of capitalist industrialization and, later, the emergence of consumption society (Braudel, 1969; Beechey, 1979; Ferreira, 1981; Glucksmann, 1995; Crompton, 2006). The mid-twentieth century may be seen as the zenith of this role distinction, which has always been challenged and mutating (Crompton et al, 2007). While it is true that the long process of labour commodification and market society expansion opened particular doors to gender equality, the general perception is that gender inequality remained embedded in social relations with rather persistent patterns being observed over time (Milkman & Townsley, 1994; Rambla, 2000; for specific insights on domestic work, see Lutz, 2002; Sarti, 2008).

The reasons and composition of domestic service demand are thus entwined with recent transformation in family and economic structures. Increases in the number of single-parent households, the geographic dispersion of family members (within and across countries), and the participation of both men and women in paid employment exert particular pressures on the articulation of work and family responsibilities (Drew et al, 1998; Crompton et al, 2005; Crompton et al, 2007; Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009; Casaca, 2013; Wall et al, 2013). Population ageing and gains in life expectancy expose a severe deficit in public care systems (Spencer et al, 2010; OECD, 2012). Demographic ageing and the rise in the average age of parents when having their first child further mean that an increasing number of people in paid employment are taking responsibilities for two generations – younger and older – at the same time, or with a shorter interval in between (EUROSTAT, 2009a; Casaca & Bould, 2012). In some locations more than others, collective solutions for the provision of personal services under public, private or community models lag behind the needs (Haas, 2005; Méda & Périvier, 2007; Lyonette et al, 2007).

According to Crompton et al (2007), the continuing increase in the level of paid employment among women leads to one of three paths: a move towards a dual earner and dual carer family model with a balanced sharing of domestic tasks, a double shift for employed women with obvious obstacles to women's professional prospects, or the outsourcing of domestic tasks. Class difference is key in determining which path is trodden in any given household (Torres, 2008; Aboim et al, 2013). For one, the working hours of the family members, their earnings and their level of schooling are decisive factors in the capacity of women to negotiate domestic responsibilities and family options (Crompton et al, 2005; McDowell, 2000). Women employed in routine or manual jobs are more likely to reduce or leave paid

employment to the benefit of home and family tasks than women in highly schooled careers, especially once children are born, many of whom manage to continue working by purchasing domestic services (Fagan, 2001; Hochschild, 2005; Crompton, 2006; McDowell et al, 2006). Domestic workers are thus a key element in sustaining what would otherwise be an unsustainable life-style:

The employment of a paid domestic worker enables the negotiation of contradictions, not just the public/private divide, but gendered identities and the consequent tensions and demands placed upon women.

In Anderson (2000), p. 19.

Importantly, it is yet to clarify whether the outsourcing of domestic tasks is a manner of smoothing the conflict between men and women regarding their roles or, on the contrary, a manner of perpetuating it. Not only outsourcing presents a common alternative to balancing the distribution of duties and time within the household, but it also relies strongly on the transfer of weight onto women with less economic resources or chances in the labour market who are employed to do the work. By weight it is meant both the physical effort inherent to domestic work and the general rule about undervaluing those who perform it.

Historically, in Europe and the US the presence of household domestic workers was a measure of the prestige of bourgeois families, whose women did not go 'out to work'. Although family status persists as a rationale for the employment of domestic servants (in some countries more than others), in these days, household domestic workers are more likely to be employed in order to facilitate women's employment. In circumstances in which dual earner households access marketised reproductive work, largely via the hiring of domestic servants, even full-time employment amongst women may easily co-exist with enduring traditionalism in gender relations.

In Crompton & Lyonette (2007), p. 119.

Difference across countries is observed regarding not only the total amount of time spent on paid and domestic labour, but also the distribution of both things among household members (Perista, 2002; Crompton, 2006; Wall & Amâncio, 2007). At the same time, some of the factors underlying difference are class-based and they cut across nations.¹⁴ When trying to

¹⁴ Country specificities will be discussed in greater detail when we look into the case of Portugal below.

account for these different levels of variation, Crompton et al (2007) draw a conceptual distinction between structural and relational elements. Key examples of structural elements are the welfare regime, labour market regulation, or the levels of social and material resources available to households. Relational elements, on the other hand, include attitudes to gender roles, religion, ideology and cultural norms, for instance on the advisability of employment for mothers of young children or on ideals of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. It is these authors' contention that 'the impacts of national policies, as well as prevailing cultural norms, are institutionally, organisationally and individually mediated' (Crompton et al, 2007: 15).

Distinguishing between structural and relational elements does seem useful, although one should be careful about the extent to which it can be done. Public policy concerning child and eldercare, for instance, influences how families work out domestic responsibilities and the purchase of household services in the market (Fagan, 2001; Lutz, 2008). In a certain sense, this constitutes a structural element as much as a relational one, since it mediates gender and class relationship – or conflict – through state provision of services and benefits. Plus, the formulation of public policy is the result of decisions which elected governments are expected to have a say in. One may then wonder if it is correct to address public policy as a structural element *per se*, instead of a relational element that has been negotiated – constructed – at the political level and crystallised into institutional form. This echoes Esping-Andersen's (1990) view of welfare regimes as the concrete product of class bargaining, as long as we recognize that class and gender systems are interwoven in their formation (Walby, 1990; Trifiletti, 1999; Crompton, 2003).

The seeming simple choice of purchasing domestic services entails intertwining matters of material constraints, personal life stories, and cultural understandings of gender, marriage and class, influencing how individuals or families negotiate and rationalize the division of labour within and outside their home (Zelizer, 2005). In their study of the types of opportunities and choices made by middle-class households in London regarding childcare, McDowell et al (2006) add up what they call place-based factors such as the costs and environment of the residential location, the vicinity of childcare services, and the distance to the home of helpful relatives and friends. These factors not only assist us in understanding variation within one same social class, but they are also relevant in a broader consideration of the nexus between domestic work and class structure.

2.5. Migration and globalization

The share of foreign workers in Europe and North America grew significantly over the last decades (Castles & Miller, 2003; OECD, 2008). Introducing a gender perspective in migration studies requires a critical approach to orthodox models based on either rational neoliberal conceptions or structural neo-Marxist ones (Kofman et al, 2000; Andall, 2003; Morokvasic-Müller et al, 2003; Peixoto et al, 2006; Grassi & Évora, 2007; Peixoto, 2009). Among other things, it encourages a greater consideration of structures at an intermediate level – between the individual and the state or society at large – such as families or households, social networks, or various sorts of migrant institutions.

The development of employment sectors in which migrant women are overwhelmingly recruited becomes a crucial matter to study. Recent research confirms that domestic service in many locations operates as an ethnic niche, employing especially immigrants in their early period of living abroad (Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Moya, 2007; Lutz, 2008; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Williams, 2010b; Castles, 2010; Baptista, 2011). In fact, the accumulation of knowledge on paid domestic work has been much favoured by the key role it is granted in studies of migration and gender which would seem at first uninterested in any particular occupational sector. The increasing ethnicisation and internal segmentation of the sector is entwined with persisting gendered features, though not to the same extent everywhere (Catarino & Oso, 2000; Schrover et al, 2007). A comprehensive view of migrant domestic labour in present-day affluent societies is telling about the resilient nexus of patriarchal and colonial power relations (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2012), adding a gendered dimension to the classical formulation by Césaire (1978 [1955]) on the two main problems bred by Western civilization: the ‘proletariat problem’ and the ‘colonial problem’.

Domestic service employment has been shown to be largely informal in distinct locations.¹⁵ This is particularly apparent in regions combining persistent migration inflows, large and

¹⁵ Since the usage of the concept varies across authors, it is generally consensual to endorse the broad notion of informal work as work that is ‘performed outside the realm of labour regulations and social protections’ (Chen, 2011: 168). This notion builds on the definition proposed earlier by Portes and Sassen-Koob (1987: 31), itself inspired by the growing incorporation of the concept in activities of the International Labour Organisation. The recent study of paid domestic work underscores the resilience of relationships that resemble formal employment in some of the characteristics structuring everyday interaction – employer-employee differentiation, pay in exchange for labour, and regularity – but which nonetheless lack compliance with applicable regulation.

increasing numbers of immigrant women, and labour markets more thoroughly pervaded by gendered informality and segmentation. Within the confines of Europe, this is the most striking in the Southern continental countries: Italy (Quassoli, 1999: 222; Cvajner & Sciortino, 2010; Näre, 2012; Marchetti, 2013), Spain (Domínguez & Guerra, 2006; Petersen, 2007: 270; León, 2010: 414; Sabater & Domingo, 2012), Greece (Lazaridis, 2007; Kambouri, 2008: 15), and Portugal (Baganha, 1998: 376; Peixoto, 2008: 37, 2009: 193, 199-200; Góis & Marques, 2009: 39; Góis et al, 2009: 125; Miranda, 2009; Trovão & Ramalho, 2010). However, a normative view of informal paid domestic labour as an idiosyncratic feature of southern Europe is ill-advised considering findings of similar dynamics in Belgium (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2005: 677), Poland (Keryk, 2010: 440), Sweden (Calleman, 2011), or the United States of America (McGrath & DeFilippis, 2009; Cantor, 2010). In their case study of Germany, Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2010) go as far as to argue that undeclared care migration has become an integral part of welfare state policies under unspoken mechanisms of compliance and complicity.¹⁶

Beyond the expectation that undocumented immigrant women are especially vulnerable to demand-driven thrusts to reduce wages and benefits, their situation *vis-à-vis* the state contributes to mould employment relations and practices in manners that favour power imbalance and precarity (Anderson, 2007, 2010b). Various analytical approaches and streams of research can help us understand this. The rationalist view of immigrant incorporation in segmented labour markets builds on the notion that, far from extended support networks and social control, newcomers tend to follow more pragmatic and individualised considerations regarding employment (Piore, 1979: 54). They are therefore more responsive, that is, more vulnerable to the idiosyncrasies of labour demand, and they often find themselves performing dead-end jobs that will hardly provide them the skills or capitals required to move up within a severely compartmentalised economy (Piore & Sabel, 1984). Other authors focus on institutional arrangements or the imperfect match between supply and demand of competences in destination countries (Borjas & Crisp, 2005; Reyneri & Fullin, 2011).

Informality is therefore distinct from ‘casualness’ or ‘illegality’, although concepts may juxtapose on some occasions.

¹⁶ We do not examine here the complex subject of informal work (in a variety of employment sectors including domestic service) in countries outside Europe and North America, even if we draw important contributions from scholars working with a global lens. To dwell further into the global analysis of informal work, precious starting points can be found in Portes (1994), Castles & Miller (2003), Sassen (2007), or ILO (2013b).

According to a structuralist approach, the vulnerability of immigrants is less attributable to particularities of segmentation in contemporary labour markets than to a much older systemic mechanism to reduce labour costs. Migrant populations have indeed experienced disadvantage long before the expansion of the service industry or the policies of full employment that characterised the mid-decades of the twentieth century (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Sassen, 1999; Castles & Miller, 2003). The distinctive feature of the Fordist-Keynesian system of industrial relations is that it enabled the working class to accomplish significant benefits, thereby encouraging the recruitment of cheaper foreign labour. The power of the state to regulate the aspirations of the working class and export unemployment whenever necessary through migration policy is retained (Castles & Kosack, 1972, 1985).

World-system theory gave a new impulse to this debate by highlighting the multiple bonds between the diffuse position of migrants in class structure and the neutralization of borders to the circulation of capital and trade (Reich, 1991; Portes, 1995; Sassen, 1998, 1999, 2007; Wallerstein, 1999; Massey, 2005). If national economies, conventionally perceived to be autonomous self-containing units between which migrants move, are acknowledged as operating in interdependence, attention shall turn to the global organization of labour (Miles & Satzewich, 1990; Reich, 1991). Sassen (2007: 98-9) claims that understanding such dynamics requires – rather than opposes to – the analysis of local production settings. Only in this manner can one hope to grasp the multiplicity of economies and work cultures in which contemporary globalization is embedded. Global cities assume a particular position in the new transnational geography. They are a strategic setting for new forms and scales of inequality, as well as political action by privileged and underprivileged groups.

A lingering question is whether transformations associated with post-industrialism and post-Fordism signal or lead to the disintegration of class structure and the expansion of ‘postmodern lifestyles – fragmented, identitarian, and basically not classlike – insofar as the deep foundational inequalities that continue to function fail to engender something akin to class consciousness’ (Sassen, 2007: 166). The answer, according to Sassen, is likely to depend on the notion of class to be adopted: this can be based on the composition of production structures, or on the dynamics of domination and monopolization of resources. Inequality can cut across the immigrant population itself, as shown in the case of particular categories of professionals and executives who enjoy more favourable administrative and economic conditions to access and settle down in countries of Europe (Miles & Satzewich, 1990;

Abrantes, 2011). Resuming Sassen's terminology, global classes may be understood as emergent collective formations based on the sharing of a common position in the worldwide distribution of resources and power. The distinction between objective and subjective features remains expedient: we can choose to examine propriety, qualifications, autonomy, but we can also consider behaviours, cultures, consciences (Costa, 2012). Global classes are expected to both draw and break away from more traditional, often national-based, class identities.

My research suggests that it is largely at the top and bottom of the social system that the national state has weakened its grip in shaping the experience of membership and identity. Vast middle strata – whether workers, firms, or places – have not been particularly affected by these processes of transformation. [...] The new global classes are probably best thought of as emergent social forces. Their points of insertion into our societies are today not primarily through long established institutional frameworks and the more typical political struggles, those enacted through party politics and union politics. But [...] even though global, they are to varying extents embedded in national settings and hence perhaps better conceived of as partially denationalized. This distinction is critical in considering their articulation with national class structure and whether they unsettle the later.

In Sassen (2007), p. 171 & p. 186.

Important in this respect are the actual responses of trade unions, migrant organizations and other social movement groups to the dynamics of migration and globalization (Penninx & Roosblad, 2000; Hyman, 2001; Waterman, 2001; Santos, 2002, 2006), a topic to be dealt with in our next chapter. One of the growing goals in recent research is to document the manners in which migration is embedded in broader social change at the regions of origin, destination or transit. Settings themselves are dynamic. Even informal employment or domestic service do not require migration as much as a combination of conditions in the productive structure under which given categories of workers – such as migrants, women, or migrant women – become particularly well suited to operate below general standards (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987: 48-51). While assessing the development of migration studies over the last decades, Castles (2010: 1566) argues for ‘the need to embed migration research in a more general understanding of contemporary society’, which ‘requires forms of enquiry that start from a situation of rapid and generalized changes’.

This encourages delving into evidence on the growing fraction of the overall population working under insecure, discontinuous, and flexible or informal labour relations (Hochschild, 2000; Beck, 2000; Mosley et al, 2002; Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007; Supiot, 2010). In this view, it is possible that the ‘Brazilianisation of the West’ proposed by Beck (2000) is still underway. Beck argues that, despite the generalized notion that Europe is setting the standards for what the other parts of the world should be like, the very opposite may be taking place in the realm of employment. As a result of decreasing workers' bargaining power and increasing individualization of employment relations, one may witness either a transformation of structural elements or a reinforcement of traditional axes of differentiation based on gender, class, and ethnicity (Pinto & Pereira, 2008; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010; Abrantes, 2011).

The notion that immigrant women are among the primary victims of casualization in the labour market remains undisputed. It is though important to bear in mind that any dynamic of ethnic discrimination in employment builds on ‘class relations, interest-group attitudes and other aspects of the social structure’ (Solé, 2004: 1211). The extent to which migration can transform structures and institutions in the place of destination remains a critical source of contention. In particular, Portes (2010: 1548) argues that massive migration can lead to wide street-level changes while the fundamental pillars of society remain unaltered, including basic values guiding social interaction and the distribution of power arrangements. Theoretical and empirical elaboration must be aware that society is not a simple aggregation of individuals that can be affected by just the growing size and diversity of the foreign population. In fact, the possibility of nuanced or even reverse effects – the more diverse the population, the more rigid the social structure – should be questioned as well.

Particular elements are key in mediating the relationship between migration and social change. The most evident of them is policy. Building on the pivotal observation that illegality is produced by law itself, recent research exposes how this materializes in various locations. Drawing on fieldwork in the Netherlands, Van der Leun and Kloosterman (2006) conclude that the extent to which undocumented immigrants constitute a distinct labour market category depends on institutional features such as the level of state regulation in the labour market and the strictness of the enforcement regime. Based on an extensive collection of life histories of undocumented domestic workers in Italy, Cvajner and Sciortino (2010) identify distinct types of irregular migratory systems rooted in distinct kinds of migratory careers. Their underlying argument is that such distinction is key to assess the impact of migration and

control policies, as well as migrants' responses to them. The central role of both immigration policies and the practicalities of their implementation is signalled in Quassoli's (1999) research in Italy. Overall, these studies usefully further our understanding of the persisting paradox of 'immigration policies that prohibit the entry of undocumented labourers, but, de facto, permit it on a massive scale, thus increasing the supply of low-wage labour on which informal enterprises thrive' (Portes & Sassen-Koob, 1987: 56).

Second, the original structuralist approach has been significantly expanded by authors paying increasing attention to the agency of migrants. Agency is a broad concept covering individuals, households, ethnic communities, and political groups (Portes, 1995). Moving beyond the orthodox dichotomy of illegalised migrants as victims of exploitation of villains breaking the law is therefore required (Anderson & Ruhs, 2010: 177). This is an important step to resist *othering* the state and grasp democratic action and emerging movements. 'A genuinely *critical* scholarship of migration', as written by Genova (2010: 111: original emphases), 'must in fact be addressed to the task not merely of describing but also theorizing – and critiquing – *actual* struggles, the real social relations of unresolved antagonism and open-ended struggle that continuously constitute social life.'

Research on migrant domestic workers has been typically sensitive to matters of agency. Various authors document the efforts of workers to redefine the value and boundaries of their labour, a critical thrust underpinning the transition of the occupation itself from a traditional model of domestic servants to a model of entrepreneurship regardless of its actual incorporation in local regulation (Romero, 1992; Schrover et al, 2007; Van Walsum, 2011). On the other hand, the contribution of immigrant groups engaged in mobilizing and representing domestic workers has been documented in places such as San Francisco (Salzinger, 1991), Washington (Cantor, 2010), London (Anderson, 2010b) or Rome (Marchetti, 2012), and a fast-growing international movement supported the Domestic Workers Convention adopted at the ILO in 2011 (ILO, 2010).

The third element to be mentioned is that scholarship on the employment incorporation of immigrants has largely relied on a simplistic – and usually implicit – notion of competition between ethnic groups in the labour market. The following section of this chapter shows how evident this is in research concerning southern Europe and low status occupations. The empirical features of competition are certainly far from the tidy models of neoclassical economic theory based on atomistic rational agency. It is perhaps more accurate to state that

the dynamics of labour market regulation and segmentation generate advantages on which particular categories of workers are in a better position to capitalise. These competitive advantages are only apparent if analysis moves beyond a stationary understanding of advantage. The main contribution in this respect comes from authors questioning the empirical implications of subtle distinctions such as the ones between informality and illegality (Ruhs & Anderson, 2010), whiteness and nationality (Reiter, 2012), or different modes of distributing public and private responsibilities in care labour (Haas, 2005; Williams, 2010a; Van Walsum, 2011).

Competition is also vulnerable to the time-frame of developments regarding migration flows and labour market dynamics – and this is the final element to be underscored. In her study of undocumented Polish workers in Brussels, Grzymała-Kazłowska (2005: 694) traces the progression of a small, homogeneous, highly cooperative ethnonational group into a context in which a larger and more stabilised migration flow coexists with the saturation of the informal sector underpinning differentiation and competition within and across migrant groups. The prominent role of experience and perception over time in the study of migration is hardly recent. Roberts (1995: 75-6) in particular argues that a dynamic distinction between temporary and permanent migration must be complemented by the consideration that group mobility is grounded on family and community projects. Portes (2010: 1557) further claims that the time-frame for the analysis of migration and its consequences must be appropriately set to prevent the risks of both short-term and long-term historical perspectives. The changing position of migrants within regulatory and social frameworks regarding their residence or work should be placed at the core of the debate. ‘This status mobility’, Anderson and Ruhs (2010: 177) observe, ‘may be a consequence of shifting state policies or of individual choices and opportunities, and under certain circumstances and regimes may actually be used strategically by migrants to improve their positions.’

2.6. Portugal: a critical case

Domestic work is a well-established topic of debate in Portugal. Yet, few studies have been devoted to mapping the commodified forms under which it is performed. The debate on work-family balance is focused on the distribution of domestic chores and responsibilities among household members, construing the recruitment of a domestic employee as one of the possible

solutions – an end to the story as it were. In turn, research on gender and migration is confronted with domestic service as a major employment sector for foreign women, but only a small number of attempts have been made to obtain in-depth knowledge about the sector (see below). This section shows how paid domestic work in Portugal constitutes a ‘critical case’ in the sense that it provides a rather fruitful ground to the exploration of the theoretical contributions convened in the earlier sections (Yin, 1989: 47-8).

In cross-national research, Portugal is often considered within the Mediterranean or Southern European model. However, the large and still increasing proportion of women participating in paid employment distinguishes this country from the remainder of Southern Europe (Nunes, 1991; Casaca & Damião, 2011). According to the 2005 *ad-hoc* module of the European Union (EU) Labour Force Survey on the articulation of work and family life (EUROSTAT, 2005: 4-5, covering the 25 member states at the time), the proportion of different-sex couples between 20 and 49 years old in which both partners had a full-time job was the highest in Portugal (67 per cent of couples), followed by Finland (63 per cent) and France (52 per cent); couples in which only the man was in paid employment were more common in Italy, Greece and Spain (43 to 45 per cent of the couples). More detailed comparisons of official statistics suggest that the reasons for a large presence of women in the labour market are not uniform across countries. For instance, key advances toward gender equality and extensive public childcare systems are typically identified as an explanation for the figures in Scandinavia, whereas family structure, economic need and labour market segmentation seem to be determinant in Southern Europe (Torres, 2008; Aboim, 2010; Casaca & Damião, 2011; Távora, 2012). It is notable that high occupational segregation, affecting primarily but not exclusively low-paid jobs, has been found in countries of Southern *and* Northern Europe (Ferreira, 1999; Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009).

Whereas the entry of women in the labour market in Portugal occurred overwhelmingly under full-time arrangements, it was permeated by substantial stratification on the grounds of class. Women with less economic resources and lower schooling have been employed primarily in industrial and frontline service occupations, whereas women from more affluent backgrounds made their way into the sectors of public administration, management, health, or education (Casaca, 2005, 2012a; Torres, 2008; Brasão, 2010). The piecemeal opening of high status professional areas to women coexists with a strongly gendered differentiation of skills at the bottom tier of jobs (Amâncio, 2007; Casaca, 2009).

In her study of the domestic servant condition between 1940 and 1970 in Portugal, Brasão (2010) argues precisely that the little attention paid in feminist politics or scholarship to domestic employees is linked to their construction as the *other* of women's liberation, represented – in both material and symbolic terms – by the movement of middle-class women from the domestic realm to the labour market, from the private sphere to the public sphere. Domestic workers ‘are therefore shadows of a discourse of conquest and emancipation mixing science and ideology’ (Brasão, 2010: 4, own translation; see also 149-155). This elaboration resonates with Sassen's (2005: 402) contention that the power of master categories to illuminate is also blinding insofar as it keeps us ‘from seeing other presences in the landscape’ – those lost in the ‘vast penumbra around that centre of light’. Domestic service is inconsistent with the victorious storyline of equality if it amounts to double-earner couples with white skin and white-collar jobs recruiting women from subaltern economic and ethnic backgrounds as a substitute housewife of sorts.

Indeed, the challenge between women's economic autonomy and lingering traditionalism in gender roles remains in the foreground of the academic debate (Chagas Lopes & Perista, 1999; Torres et al, 2004; Casaca, 2005; Ferreira, 2010). Among the six countries examined in Crompton's (2006) comparative study – the other countries being Finland, France, Norway, United Kingdom and United States of America –, Portugal is the one in which families register the largest number of hours in total paid and unpaid labour. It is also the country in which the gender distribution of these two types of labour remains the most unequal, an issue addressed by other scholars in greater detail (Perista, 2002; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Aboim, 2010; Casaca, 2013). Data on household unpaid work collected for the latest European Quality of Life Survey show that women in Portugal spend on average seven hours per week more than men in housework, and another seven hours per week more in childcare (Wall et al, 2013: 42-5). Wall et al (2013: 34, 134-5) stress that this is simultaneous with a high rate of participation in paid employment – standing at 88.8 per cent among women in the age bracket of 25-34 years old by 2011.

Casaca (2013: 32-3) examines figures from the Labour Force Surveys to confirm that, differently than in most of the other countries of Europe, motherhood has little impact on labour market participation in Portugal. By 2011, the employment rate of women between 25 and 49 years old with children younger than six stood only 2.3 percentage points below the one of those without children; and the differential drops to 1 percentage point considering

children younger than 12 (Casaca, 2012a: 16, based on data from 2009). Notably, full-time arrangements remain the general rule in both cases. For middle and high income households, recruiting a domestic employee may play a decisive role, even if an ambiguous one: it smoothens conflict in the articulation of work and family incumbencies just as it enables asymmetry between men and women to be swept under the carpet (Crompton, 2006: 198).

According to estimates of the latest comprehensive survey on time-use in Portugal, 13 per cent of the households by 1999 resorted to regular unpaid support from non-household members (in most of the cases, women relatives); 14 per cent of the households recruited a domestic employee, chiefly in part-time arrangements ranging from 5 to 9 working hours per week (Perista, 2002). The analysis of Perista (2002: 466) also suggests that income is a more decisive factor than the number or age of children living in the household: in the higher bracket of income, as many as 46 per cent of the households recruited a domestic employee, and tasks such as cleaning, cooking or laundering appeared to be at least as important as the provision of direct care. These findings concur with the persistent centrality of informal networks and non-commodified exchanges in the organization of social life – a ‘welfare society’ (Santos, 1995) which reproduces and depends on gender and class asymmetries (Ferreira, 1999).

Attention has been also paid to the rapid increase of immigration since the mid-1970s and the lingering patterns of ethnic segmentation in the labour market (Baganha, 1998; Peixoto, 2002, 2008; Góis & Marques, 2009; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010). The early inflow of migrants from the former Portuguese colonies in Africa was overtaken from the late 1990s onwards by the arrival of migrants from other countries, especially Brazil and Ukraine, many of whom are women moving on their own or ahead of other family members (Peixoto et al, 2006). Several other studies highlight the concentration of foreign women in domestic service, as well as in cleaning jobs in industrial or commercial settings (Pires, 2002; Miranda, 2009; Trovão & Ramalho, 2010; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Baptista, 2011; Pereira, 2013).

A vision of immigrant women as a monolithic category of workers employed in particular jobs may be hasty though, even in a global analysis of the labour market. For instance, Brazilian women are recruited for frontline jobs in the hospitality industry much more often than immigrants from other countries, apparently as a result of employers' prejudice and social networking (Malheiros, 2007; Góis et al, 2009). Also, the colour of one's skin can be more relevant than nationality in many empirical contexts, as exposed by scholars concerned

with the case of immigrants from Cape Verde and their descendants (Machado & Abranches, 2006; Fikes, 2009; Reiter, 2012). Yet another complex subject is the nexus between the incorporation of immigrant women in domestic service and informality in this sector. While the recruitment of immigrants is typically associated with informal employment, the evidence collected by Peixoto et al (2006: 218-9) suggests that many foreign domestic workers push for the formalization of their employment relationship when this is a key condition to secure their legal permanence in the country. We are drawing away from the understanding of domestic service as a last resource *par excellence*; it can also be instrumentally pursued in the initial period abroad as a way to obtain economic leverage and regularization. This is more likely to be the case among women who have children and long-term expectations to stay in Portugal. As observed for many of those arriving from Cape Verde, Angola or Guinea-Bissau, the *mother's sacrifice* is rewarded not through her mobility into a more rewarding occupation later on but through the opening of educational and employment possibilities for her children (Peixoto et al, 2006; Fikes, 2009; Pereira, 2013).

The experiences of migrant women in paid employment can not be detached from evidence on labour market changes favouring new forms of division among workers, often associated with flexibility and segmentation (Estanque, 2005; Casaca, 2005; Kovács & Casaca, 2007; Abrantes, 2013b). The decline of agricultural activity, the flow of population from rural regions to the largest urban agglomerations, and the growth of low-skill services to meet increasing consumption patterns are important developments to take into consideration. Concerned with the manners in which flexibility regimes actually translate into working and living conditions, Casaca (2012a, 2013) underscores the growth of non-voluntary part-time arrangements, extended and antisocial working hours, fixed-term contracting and unemployment, all of which affect especially women. Between 1999 and 2010, the proportion of women working under non-permanent contracts in Portugal went from 20.3 to 23.7 per cent – the figure for men in the same situation being 17 and 22.4, respectively (Casaca, 2012a: 21). Official statistics examined by Casaca & Peixoto (2010) indicate that non-permanent contractual arrangements were experienced by 29.9 per cent of the foreign-born population in Portugal by 2004, against 14 per cent of the native-born population (Casaca & Peixoto, 2010: 126). Employers have established and consolidated strategies of recruiting and releasing workers as a short-term response to changing production needs and market demands, typically accompanied by low wages, insecure employment and a limited level of social protection. Austerity policy measures have been shown to reinforce the vulnerability of

both women (Casaca, 2010) and immigrants (Peixoto, 2011) in the labour market. These two authors observe that the growth of precarious work and unemployment in Portugal is underway since the early 2000s; while the position of women and foreign workers has always been especially fragile, their probability of finding new jobs decreased after 2008.

Interestingly, the number of domestic employees in Portugal decreased under the economic boom of the 1980s (Baganha, 1998: 372), increasing again since the late 1990s with remarkable resilience *vis-à-vis* periods of economic downturn and stricter immigration policies (Baptista, 2011; Reiter, 2012). In fact, Portugal has been recently signalled as a country registering both an extended domestic service sector (Baptista, 2011; ILO, 2013a) and a substantial volume of undeclared economic activities (Schneider & Klinglmair, 2004; Triandafyllidou, 2010). An extensive demand for eldercare underlies much of this upsurge (Guerreiro, 2000; Perista, 2002; Wall & Nunes, 2010). Based on data published by the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Security, Wall et al (2013) point out that the existing homes for the elderly and domiciliary eldercare services together make up a modest coverage rate of 12 per cent; still, domiciliary eldercare services registered an increase from 3 per cent in 2000 to 4,8 per cent in 2011. In the meantime, the capability of public or private childcare facilities expanded substantially, reaching a coverage rate of 35,1 per cent in the age bracket of 0-3 years old and 87,4 per cent in the age bracket of 3-6 (Wall et al, 2013: 125-7).

All things considered, a large part of the daily support required by children and elderly people is still ensured by their relatives, either directly or outsourcing tasks in more or less formal, more or less commodified modalities. With regard to the recruitment of 'live-in' or 'live-out' employees, elderly and disabled individuals form a particular category of employers considering their physical vulnerability and the frequent mediation provided by family members, public institutions or commercial companies (possibly a combination of the three). A context of economic downturn, fiscal restraint, and consumer choice ideology offers policy-makers sufficient reasons to encourage the operation of the market as a strategy to tackle the demands of demographic ageing, especially as it can contribute to the creation of jobs or quasi-jobs (Jany-Catrice, 2010).

In a comparative study conducted in Lisbon and Madrid, Catarino and Oso (2000) conclude that in both locations the increasing number of immigrant women employed in domestic service is closely associated with a particular demand for underprivileged workforce and a thrust to reduce labour costs. Nevertheless, ethnicisation occurred in distinct manners in the

two contexts of reception. In Lisbon, the recruitment of immigrant domestic workers happened later and at a slower pace, reflecting dynamics of the local labour market – chiefly, the highest employment rate of Portuguese women in the older age brackets – and the gradual recognition of domestic service in migration policy. In a report published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Guerreiro (2000) combines statistical analysis at the national level and two empirical case studies in the Greater Lisbon area. Various types of services and contractual configurations are distinguished. The author concludes that demographic ageing and public policy inputs have promoted a significant expansion of eldercare and childcare services in various configurations, including private companies, the public sector, and informal paid work. Complementarity rather than competition thus becomes the keyword.

Ten years later, Wall and Nunes (2010) examine the particular bond between migration flows, welfare state policy, and care provision models. They confirm that stimuli from these various sources have contributed to consolidate a mixed model regarding the place of care provision (private homes and institutions), the ethnic background of workers (natives and immigrants), the funding sources (public and private), and the degree of labour regulation (formal and informal). Fieldwork suggests that full-time wage employment for a single household has decreased, live-in arrangements being increasingly taken by migrant women. Employment through enterprises – either third-sector organizations or for-profit companies – is also on the increase, largely due to recent investment and schemes by the state to support initiatives that may help mitigate the care crisis.

Baptista (2011) describes how the niche of domestic service employment in Portugal shifted from a context of recruitment at the national scale to the global scale. Based on her fieldwork in the urban area of Lisbon, this author shows that the experience of migrant domestic workers remains under the pressure of low salaries, employment insecurity, irregular working hours, difficulty in reclaiming one's rights, and more extreme cases of control by employers, lack of personal documents, and debts contracted in the migration process. In-depth evidence collected by Pereira (2013) suggests that a process of ethnic replacement has been also underway, with women from Brazil – and, to a lesser extent, Eastern Europe – being favoured by employers in detriment of women from countries of Africa. Certainly relevant are mechanisms of power and control with respect to skin colour, as well as the different timelines and institutional conditions characterizing migration flows.

A recent national-wide questionnaire to paid domestic workers confirms that the violation of legal rights by employers abounds, especially regarding social security contributions, holiday pay and benefits, concession of maternity leave, and payment of health costs in case of workplace accident (Guibentif, 2011). The population described in this seminal survey is overwhelmingly composed of women, a majority of whom (67 per cent) with Portuguese nationality. Smaller though significant numbers of workers are nationals of either Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa (mainly Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and São Tomé and Príncipe), Brazil, or Eastern Europe (mainly Ukraine). Although a substantial proportion of workers only completed four years of schooling, others hold higher qualification, including above secondary-level education. This is especially the case of foreign women, confirming their high risk of overqualification (Peixoto et al, 2006; OECD, 2008; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010). The high proportion of individuals working in several households, generally recruited by middle-class double-earner couples, corroborates the thesis of the gradual democratization in access to domestic services (Catarino & Oso, 2000: 186; Brasília, 2010: 173).

Two additional elements must be underscored before proceeding. One pertains to continuity and transformation in domestic service. Formalisation in this sector in Portugal has been gradual and partial, and a large fraction of it remained underground throughout the last decades. The same has been observed for the other countries of Southern Europe (Koser, 2010: 187; León, 2010: 414). The generalised notion is that 'migrants' informal arrangements *merged with* the local informal economies' (Quassoli 1999: 219, emphasis added). In regard to distribution in the labour market, the concentration of immigrant women in domestic services is often flagged as an illustration of how newly arrived ethnic minorities occupy jobs abandoned by local workers due to the negative social standing they entail and the increase in education and professional expectations (Quassoli, 1999: 220; Góis & Marques, 2009: 39). Examining the four countries of continental southern Europe, Solé (2004: 1210, 1214) stresses that the relationship between immigrant and native workers in a growingly ethnic-based labour market remained one of substitution and complementary rather than competition.

Secondly, to what extent do migration and labour policies underlie these developments? Differently than in Italy or Spain (Quassoli, 1999; Catarino & Oso, 2000), the visa system in Portugal has never contemplated domestic service employment to date (Baptista, 2011). However, the change in migration law in 2001 permits legalization as long as applicants fulfil a number of requirements (Góis & Marques, 2009: 34). A similar programme would be

implemented in Spain in 2006, although the failure rate in the renewal process of temporary permits remains high (Sabater & Domingo, 2012: 193, 215). In the case of Portugal, requirements include a written proof of an employment relationship – signed by the employer or a legally recognised institution – and a regular situation concerning the social security system. In addition, immigrants must typically present a proof of housing, a criminal record free of offenses, and a no-debt declaration from tax authorities. Full-time employment in domestic service is considered valid, which means that full compliance with labour regulation becomes key in the process of legalisation and integration at large. Despite the pressure of temporary migratory projects or income maximization, migrants may therefore be more prone than natives to seek formal labour relationships (Peixoto, 2009: 200-1).

Obligations for workers and employers comprise paying income and payroll taxes, making social security contributions, and complying with working conditions established in labour law. The minimum monthly wage (485,00 Euros at the time of writing) applies to full-time arrangements only. It is noteworthy that paying contributions to social security is mandatory in domestic service employment since 1982 (Regulatory-Decree No. 43/82 of 22 July), in what was perhaps the most significant policy measure towards the formalisation of the sector. Although this applies to any domestic worker regardless of the number of working hours, those working full-time for one employer on a monthly basis are again in a different situation than workers under part-time arrangements (Peixoto et al, 2011: 46). The latter are granted less benefits, in particular a lower retirement pension and no unemployment benefits at all. For this reason, they are allowed a lower tributary rate (Instituto da Segurança Social, 2012: 14). Seemingly innocuous administrative details are important because they provide the framework in which employers and workers ponder their degree of compliance with the law (Ruhs & Anderson, 2010).

2.7. Points of departure for research

The breadth of literature reviewed in this chapter exposes how paid domestic work is located at the intersection of three axes of social inequality: gender, class, and ethnicity. To be sure, these are rather wide analytical categories, and they encase more specific grounds for social differentiation in everyday interaction such as skin colour, age, or speech. It is not simply that women with little resources or foreign nationalities sell their labour force to more affluent

households; domestic work as an activity, in both paid and unpaid modalities, tends to be ascribed a low position in material and symbolic hierarchies, becoming a demeaning social marker on the ones who perform it (England, 2005; Cox, 2010). The same culture that gives paid work a core position in social relations – a job can define a person's worth, and the person's traits can define a job's worth – accepts a sharp asymmetry of value between activities and production systems (Beck, 2000; Sassen, 1998). Inequality is thus naturalized, and the disadvantage of paid domestic workers in the labour market turned into something acceptable, even desirable.

The existing scholarship on the case of Portugal suggests that the promotion and protection of the rights of middle-class households over the last decades has rested on the tacit assumption of maintaining paid domestic labour available in cheap and flexible forms. This is key to conciliate the expectations of highly educated women toward economic autonomy and lingering asymmetry in gender roles. While the demand for domestic service (especially in the 'live-in' modality) decreased in the 1970s and 1980s, domestic employees remain a critical element in the intimate affair that articulates – and conceals the tensions between – public and private spheres, women and men, working class and middle-class households, and, increasingly, native and immigrant workers. The concept of *affair* is useful as it suggests a composite of social relations comprising benefits and risks for the several parties involved, though not necessarily distributed in an equitable manner, and a customized acceptance of the practice regardless of underlying unresolved issues or taboos.

The various theoretical standpoints and streams of research convened so far can not only inform one another, but also raise common questions. A number of particular loopholes shall be summarized as they offer key points of departure for own research. These loopholes are obviously intertwined – one could almost think of them as one single loophole with various manifestations –, and they can be disentangled only to a certain extent.

First, analysis of the sector has been focused on either workplace dynamics (as observed in private households employing domestic workers) or systemic trends concerning globalization and migration. The same is to say, variability and causality have been chiefly sought within these two scales of observation, or through examining their interconnection as in the studies of Anderson (2000) or Parreñas (2001). But even these studies imply a normative contrast – and a problematic one – between the micro setting, where the life and agency of domestic workers take place, and the overpowering processes of patriarchal capitalism at the macro

level to which individuals are expected at best to react. The intermediate or meso levels where agency, power and ideology emerge or erode are still to be explored. An important initial step is to scrutinize developments in collective mobilization and political action – among domestic workers as well as their employers and other relevant actors such as governmental bodies, social movements, or for-profit companies.

Second, we lack detail with regard to historical processes. Both in academic discourse and everyday life, domestic service does not fall swiftly within the orthodox dichotomies of work and non-work, wage labour and self-employment, skilled and unskilled work (Kofes, 2001; Anderson, 2007). Far from a matter of description, acknowledging this difficulty should bring us to question how concepts and values are practiced and reproduced over time. Economic sociology demonstrates that markets are social constructions bound by culture and ideology, rather than an illustration of some universal, all-embracing theory of market operation (Zelizer, 1989; DiMaggio, 1990; Swedberg, 1997). The challenge is, quoting Wallerstein (2006: 82), ‘to place the reality we are immediately studying within the larger context: the historical structure within which it fits and operates.’ The critiques of Mills (1967) and Burke (1980) to the limited vision of history in social science may sound less poignant now that sociologists generally agree on the importance of history. Still, their ideas remain far from due incorporation in actual research.

Social scientists may – in fact, many now do – attempt to retreat from history by means of undue formality of Concept and technique. But these attempts require them to make assumptions about the nature of history and of society that are neither fruitful nor true. Such a retreat from history makes it impossible – and I choose the word with care – to understand precisely the most contemporary features of this one society, which is an historical structure that we cannot hope to understand unless we are guided by the sociological principle of historical specificity.

In Mills (1967), p. 157.

It is impossible to understand how the system works if one does not understand the values of the participants. In other words, there can be no social history without the history of ideas, provided that that phrase is understood as the history of everyone's ideas rather than the ideas of the most original thinkers of a given epoch.

In Burke (1980), p. 74.

Third, recent empirical research on domestic service draws primarily from in-depth interviews with domestic workers, especially immigrants. Notwithstanding the major importance of documenting individual experiences and perceptions in this manner, it is striking that so little attention has been devoted to the standpoints of other actors – employers, policy-makers, or members of bodies engaged with the subject such as trade unions, employers' associations, and nongovernmental organizations. These actors are typically invited by researchers to play the role of strategic informants, but seldom are they considered as interveners in the very employment relationships under study and their discourses examined accordingly. A similar situation occurs in regard to the legal frameworks regulating domestic service. While the importance of law is widely recognized, its actual operation – what the law says, how it came to be, and in what ways it regulates the relationship between domestic employees and their employers in theory *and practice* – remains understudied. Attention must be paid not only to existing frameworks, but also to forms of collective agency that emerge under specific social and political conditions and time-frames.

Another gap pertains to quantitative large-scale analysis. Official statistics entail key limitations when it comes to cover domestic service, and indeed women's work at large (Ferreira, 1999; Oakley, 2000; Bould & Gavray, 2008). It is difficult for standardized concepts and categories to ensure useful meanings over time and space. In particular, a substantial number of informal or precarious employment relationships are likely to go unrecorded, which is especially problematic in countries with a large volume of undeclared economic activities. It is however important to note that some of the very same difficulties permeate qualitative research. Definitions of *work*, *domestic* and *care*, to mention only the key examples, often vary across empirical contexts and personal perceptions. Plus, the propensity of quantitative analysis to underestimate informal work relations does not reduce its capacity to describe formal work relations as long as methodological possibilities and limitations are clearly acknowledged. In this sense, statistics should not be perceived in epistemological contrast with 'narratives', a concept often limited to qualitative research. In fact, even 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' are less absolute than relative terms (Oakley, 2000: 303). Statistics are narratives in their own right; they require attention to both what they show and what they do not show, very much in the same way that ethnography is expected to document what is said and left unsaid in empirical contexts (Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007: 15).

Fourth and last, the studies of domestic service to date have been largely confined to major urban agglomerations. This is the case even when research is expected to generate conclusions concerning the overall case of a country. Shared cultural values and national legal frameworks certainly play a role, but locations hold their own dynamics and structural specificities as shown in the scholarship about global cities (Sassen, 2001, 2007). While the cases of different cities have been submitted to comparison (e. g. Anderson, 2000; Catarino & Oso, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Marchetti, 2010), analysis of domestic service at national or cross-national level is underdeveloped. Perhaps more strikingly, one can read at length about international migration to big cities in Europe without a word being said about in-country flows, which are also likely to be permeated by gender, class and ethnic asymmetries. The recruitment of native women in domestic service appears to have been dismissed from the list of topics to be studied.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will hopefully make a contribution, however modest, to tackle these loopholes. In so doing, we are bound to engage in some the ongoing public debates about domestic service. Civil society, as proposed in Burawoy's (2009: 468) defence of public sociology, 'is the *standpoint* from which we study the world'. Gender equality and immigrant integration have been asserted as key goals in public policy. Educational systems and welfare states are expected to smoothen social inequality. Legal instruments are in place, and under discussion. The distribution of fatigue and dignity in contemporary society is at stake – and so is sociology.

In addition, the singularity of domestic service in contemporary economic structures and labour markets remains diffuse. Although this sector shares a handful of historical characteristics with other categories of employment, very little has been done to explore this relation. The same holds for present and future scenarios. As employment rights are pressed for reduction under 'total market' agendas and neoliberal responses to the economic crisis (Supiot, 2010), it may be that approximation is accomplished less by the inclusion of domestic workers in labour standards applying to the overall workforce than by the reduction of those labour standards – or, to be more accurate, the exclusion of a greater number of workers from that area of security and benefits, increasingly to be seen as a privilege.

This discussion resonates Beck's (2000) claim that despite the generalized notion that Europe is setting the standards for what the other parts of the world should be like, the opposite may be taking place in the sphere of employment. Considering recent thrusts to expand flexibility

in the labour market, one may then wonder if despite the generalized notion that standard wage labour is setting the standards for what domestic service employment should be like, a *domestic-workification* of the labour market is actually underway. Answering such question falls beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to concede that domestic service employment relationships should be understood as less traditional ‘by nature’ and more cutting-edge than initially thought, especially as the unorganized workplace gains momentum in the landscape of employment relations. Evidence from this particular employment sector may provide important insights on the broader model under operation.

3

Digging in the penumbra: research question and analytical framework

3.1. The research question

At the end of the previous chapter, a number of loopholes in the existing scholarship about paid domestic work in Europe have been underscored. In order to tackle them, we need to begin by accepting that contemporary domestic employees are a theoretical category *as much as* the flesh-and-blood women actually employed in this sector. This statement may sound fairly obvious and consensual. Still, it warns us against viewing domestic employees as static actors – or marginal players, or victims – limited to react to external overpowering processes. There are surely reasons to indulge in such view, considering how little and insignificant inputs at the micro level seem *vis-à-vis* the enormous forces of patriarchal capitalism and globalization in operation. There are also reasons to emphasise, as much of the literature does, the highly personalized relationship between domestic employees and their employers. However, in both cases there is a neglect of how employment relationships in this sector are effectively structured and disputed. This can only be ignored at the peril of in-depth knowledge. In the meantime, stressing the *new* and *global* features of an occupation must not jeopardize an adequate understanding of historical and local dynamics.

How are domestic service employment relationships structured? And, considering the context of Portugal described in our literature review, how do developments in these employment relationships reflect or challenge the affair – at once private and public – established between domestic employees, their employers and other actors in the broader socioeconomic structure?

To address these questions, we propose a reconceptualization of domestic service focusing on the interaction between multiple actors (employees, employers, and beyond) whose forms of agency are still to be documented. This endeavour should not throw us into an individualistic

approach which would contribute to obscure, rather than illuminate, social structures and systemic processes. We want to connect the dots between empirical detail and theoretical generalization, not to draw them further away.

This chapter is concerned with the elaboration of a useful analytical framework. We start by defining three processes underlying the structuration of employment relationships in domestic service: negotiation, reorganization, and intermediation. Various levels of interaction and sources of agency are brought to the fore, exposing the need to examine their operation and interplay. Afterwards, additional contributions from literature are convened to help us in that undertaking. Some of them may seem as first distant from the particular subject of domestic service. In fact, they offer crucial orientation to delve into issues that have been insufficiently or inadequately explored in studies of this employment sector such as lawmaking, workers' organization and commercial entrepreneurship. To a large extent, we are following Sassen's (2005: 402) advice to dig in the penumbra produced around our own bright, powerful master categories. Given our concern with the case of Portugal, we will also address a number of contextual elements in the operation of organizations engaged in supporting and representing workers, such as trade unions and nongovernmental organizations, as well as for-profit companies providing cleaning, care and other services to private households.

3.2. Negotiation, reorganization, intermediation: a complex analytical framework

As argued in the previous chapter, the typical asymmetry of power between employee and employer in domestic service relationships should not be mistaken for lack of negotiation. Particular contributions from labour studies offer an improved lens to deal with this subject. The work of Hirschman (1970) is ground-breaking as it proposes a theoretical framework based on voice and exit mechanisms, overcoming the classic circumscription of voice to political theory and exit to economic theory. There are various empirical contexts in which voice is indeed a political resource whereas exit is understood as the privileged option to maximize economic interests. However, the articulation of both permits exploration to move further.

While Hirschman is chiefly concerned with relations within formal organizations, his conceptual scaffold may be applied – with due caution and adjustment – to employment

relationships in domestic service. A blunt example is that of a domestic employee dissatisfied with her present working conditions at a given household (low wage, lack of social benefits, personal disrespect in everyday interaction) who pursues an upgrade by changing employers strategically. Instead, voice can be used in the hope of achieving better working conditions with the current employer. And, of course, the employee can resort to both mechanisms, or to none. These resources are also available to employers. Both parties may find it difficult to disentangle pecuniary and emotional matters, especially if providing direct care is part of the job. 'The reluctance to exit in spite of disagreement with the organization of which one is member', as written by Hirschman (1970: 98), 'is the hallmark of loyalist behavior'. The notion of loyalty is also a prerequisite for disloyalty to occur. Unexpected behaviour by one of the parties is bound to challenge notions of morality and legitimacy, as well as future employment relationships in which they shall engage.

Certainly Hirschman's framework does not account for the implications of stratification based on class, gender or ethnicity. If 'inequality regimes' (Acker, 2006) operate and reproduce in formal work organizations through more or less covert practices and processes, conditions may well be even more hierarchical in domestic service considering how social relationships are key to 'organize the job' in this highly informal and individualized sector (Rollins, 1985). Institutional constraints must also be considered (Anderson, 2000). An immigrant woman who depends on a particular employment relationship to secure her legal stay in the country is likely to take this element into account. Voice and exit do not exist in isolation, much to the contrary.

In his approach to the rise of the 'network economy' and project-based work, Marsden (2004) proposes the concept of 'psychological contract' to encompass the plurality of norms and expectations underlying an employment relationship. Formal documents can not offer employees and employers (and social scientists) more than a plastic, incomplete picture of what is at stake. A combination of legal and economic considerations, written and unwritten agreements, declared and undeclared intentions – they all make up a grey area in which power arrangements are established and challenged. As argued by Anderson (2000: 112-3), whether the 'product' sold in domestic service relationships is the domestic employee's labour power or something more – the power to command, the whole person, the self – may be under dispute in the empirical setting. Based on in-depth qualitative evidence from the case of Filipina migrant women in Taiwan, Lan (2003) describes the micropolitics of employing

migrant domestic workers as a daily negotiation of socio-categorical boundaries (class and ethnic positions) and socio-spatial boundaries (private and public spheres).

While these theoretical notions are clearly valuable to illuminate dynamics at a micro level of analysis, they are also meaningful in broader scales of observation. Developments addressed in our Chapter 2 such as those pertaining to the participation of men and women in paid employment, migration flows, or consumption and lifestyle patterns are entwined with various negotiations – however partial, diffuse or contested – of roles and responsibilities in society. Symbolic and material resources are disputed, and collective action is engendered in more or less organized forms. The point is not to limit our attention to working conditions in domestic service, but to consider too the contents and meanings of the work being done; not to examine workplace logics as the result of atomistic apolitical behaviours, but rather to explore their interlinkage with wider social and political dynamics.

Domestic service employment relationships are not only negotiated: they are also under a constant process of reorganization. This is far from an exclusive feature of domestic service. Studies from the field of economic sociology demonstrate that markets are historical constructions, permeated necessarily by culture and values (Zelizer, 1989; DiMaggio, 1990; Swedberg, 1997). Yet, the extent to which domestic service today preserves or breaks away from practices of the past remains obscure. The transition from a paradigm of paternalistic informal relationships to a paradigm of ‘modern’ commodified exchanges – supported by advancements in legal regulation, collective organization, or professionalization – is up to empirical enquiry. Again, changing roles and standards in the sector are expected to interlock with gender, class and ethnic stratification.

In the landscape of global economy, domestic service is included in the variety of services in which production can not be easily delocalized into a distinct region in order to reduce labour costs; it is the worker rather than the product that must be imported (Sassen, 2007). Some questions are still on the table though. Is domestic service the quintessential dead-end employment sector, or is it a channel through which women can secure their economic autonomy and advance their – or their children's – position *vis-à-vis* the labour market, the welfare state, and the class structure at large? How does the occupation change over time? The gendered division of labour in the family seems to be both a necessary condition and an obstacle to the advancement of modern capitalistic relations (Ferreira, 1981; Milkman &

Townsley, 1994). Historical legacies and contemporary inputs must be scrutinized, with an emphasis on the often invisible requirements of emotional work.

Organizing the analysis on the basis of temporal processes rather than stationary outcomes calls for a careful assessment of agency. Diverse actors, sources of power, capitals and settings are thus brought into the debate. The recent literature on paid domestic work has done much to expose the behaviour and standpoint of domestic employees; less attention has been paid to employers, as well as to the interplay of employer-employee relationships with other sources of agency or mediation. Regulatory frameworks, workers' representation, or the recent rise of commercial entrepreneurship in this sector are typically acknowledged, but we need more research to understand these institutional developments as subjects in themselves rather than marginal, contextual elements to be described without further questioning. This means going beyond the usual discussion on the position of domestic employees *vis-à-vis* legal frameworks to document the actual contents and mechanics of the law. The same can be said about the collective representation of workers or employers. Who are these actors? What particular practices and strategies do they favour? What dilemmas and solutions do they encounter in their daily operation?

In sum, the aforementioned processes of negotiation and reorganization coexist with various forms of institutional intermediation. Some of them are probably more significant than others; some of them have been present for a long time, others emerged quite recently. According to the empirical circumscription of our study, we will look into these developments in Portugal, and caution is required before pointing to implications beyond national borders because conditions may vary substantially across countries. We do not expect to exhaust the sources of mediation either. In the case of migrant domestic employees, one could think for instance of migration authorities in both origin and destination countries, informal brokers who arrange travelling and work, or transnational religious congregations. Our efforts to document the role of some institutions, mainly formal ones, should not be taken for more than a partial and exploratory step to grasp the importance of actors beyond the employer-employee binomial. The same holds for understanding the nexus between micro and macro level developments, as these sources of mediation can be described as operating at a meso level: they are not behind the walls of every employing household, but they are also far from global in their logics and interventions.

It is now apparent that adopting such a complex analytical framework to examine domestic service employment relationships requires the incorporation of additional contributions from literature. While studies of domestic work may have paid little attention to these issues, precious insight and conceptual tools are provided by research from other areas of inquiry. The following sections aim to approximate this variety of contributions, sometimes expanding beyond the boundaries of sociology into the fields of law and history. One must bear in mind that the goal here is not to develop an interdisciplinary model of analysis as such, but rather to collect particular observations from those other fields.

3.3. Lawmaking

The regulation of social inequality through law has been submitted to longstanding debates. In his *Capital*, originally published in 1867, Marx addresses the role of specific norms such as the minimum age of workers, daily working hours, or land expropriation, describing their establishment within a political setting dominated by capitalist agents in which the elected parliament at best administers ‘freedom drop by drop’ (Marx, 2010 [1867]: 183). Recent research on present-day domestic service exposes the disturbing adequacy of this view almost 150 years later. Despite notable achievements, underage labour is still a key challenge to be tackled (ILO, 2010: 19-20). Daily working hours remain a major controversy both in lawmaking and everyday practice, especially for ‘live-in’ domestic employees, and the intensity of migration flows is far from implying a radical leap toward freedom or intercultural solidarity (Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Sassen, 2007; Lutz, 2008).

In fact, paid domestic work offers a strategic site to examine the ambiguous process through which state law draws its legitimacy from a declared opposition to traditional power inequality based on social status – *all are equal before the law* – while it legitimates difference and prejudice inherited precisely from social status. The historical closeness between domestic labour and serfdom, to begin with, revives the classic questioning of the construction of wage labour as opposed to slavery (Weber, 1978 [1911-13]: 692). Hochschild (2002: 27) discusses this complex development in the case of domestic workers as she refers to emotional imperialism and global care chains. As shown in the previous chapter, the nexus of migration and domestic work is a well-established feature of contemporary capitalism in affluent societies. Where does lawmaking stand in this scenario?

According to Guibentif (2009), two key legislative undertakings played a leading role in the consolidation of modern capitalism: constitutionalism and codification. Civil codes adopted in several states of western Europe following France in 1804 are especially important insofar as they were created upon principles of positivistic policy, professional technicality, and national interest (Weber, 1978 [1911-13]: 866). Hespanha (2003) argues that the production of civil and other codes is nothing short of a landmark in the transition from common law into rationalist law, and, therefore, in the advent of liberalism. He shows that there is a significant ambivalence in this endeavour. While it promotes systematization and understanding of the law among citizens, thereby favouring popular control over it, it is also grounded on the notion of a 'juridical monument' aiming to be as permanent and consensual as possible, that is, to resist parliamentary action (Hespanha, 2003: 247-8).

In her examination of the first civil code in Portugal, Beleza (2002) further underlines its role in legitimating patriarchal rule. Women were granted an indirect relationship to the state, mediated by their fathers, husbands, or older sons. This author stresses further that legislation does not merely adjust to existing social inequality in a given historical moment; it builds and shapes inequality. The study of legislation which has been modified in later periods is therefore key to understand today's juridical discourse and practice (Beleza, 2000: 50-1). The consideration of gender asymmetry is especially relevant. On the one hand, historical research exposes a significant link between the commodification of labour under capitalist industrialization and the ideology of separate spheres of production and reproduction, prescribing the public agency of men and the invisible domesticity of women (e.g. Braudel, 1969; Pinto, 2007). Activities understood as domestic work have been largely 'coded as feminine', as argued by McDowell (2000: 506). To be sure, the verb *to code* in McDowell's formulation takes on a different meaning than in juridical discourse as it refers to common sense and everyday practice rather than legal regulation. Still, the fact that the same word is used is an interesting detail.

It is noteworthy that the gender composition of domestic staff has been more balanced in some periods of the past than it is nowadays (Sarti, 2005). Men hold their own traditional realm of positions in the sector as drivers or butlers – still, positions with a higher status and better defined work contents in comparison with those of women. Accepting that the underprivileged situation of domestic workers in labour law is related with its extensive feminization, we nevertheless lack historical detail and knowledge of the mechanics in place.

In Portugal, the implementation of a democratic regime after 1974 requires particular attention with respect to equality policy and collective bargaining (Cerqueira, 2004, 2009; Monteiro, 2010). If key restrictions to the political citizenship of women were lifted in that period, class difference and stratification would remain a major topic of contention (Ferreira, 1999; Torres, 2008; Brasão, 2010).

In addition, labour markets at large underwent considerable change during the last decades (see Chapter 2). Globalization has been thoroughly used as a standard argument to reform labour law. While capital crosses national borders in search of the most favourable legal framework, governments are encouraged to embark on a race to the bottom concerning employment conditions (Supiot, 2010: 155). Labour market segmentation is a fruitful ground to the expansion of service jobs pervaded with poor working conditions, both in old and novel configurations (Piore, 1979; Sassen, 1998, 2001; Warhurst & Nickson, 2001; Lutz, 2002; Payne, 2009). Global care chains emerge as functional elements to reduce labour costs. The struggle over legal regulation is at once local and global, which raises obstacles as well as new possibilities to collective organization. This implies, as written by Van Walsum (2007), understanding the regularisation and legalisation of work not as ends in themselves but rather as means to strengthen the position of the workers at stake. The following section will expand on this proposition.

Whereas national politics are criticized for being too distant from citizens as to allow full democratic participation, supranational authorities with different purposes emerge as key sites to the readjustment of power (Hespanha, 2003; Sassen, 2007; Faria, 2008). Supiot (2006) highlights the normative political orientations followed by organizations such as the EU or the World Bank, which promote an uncritical understanding of adaptable labour markets as the desirable or only possible future. In contrast, the ILO has recognised the basic need to combine market liberalization and regulation since its creation in 1919. Denouncing abuse in under-regulated employment sectors remains a political trademark of this organization, and it played a significant role in the process leading to the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention in 2011 (ILO, 2010, 2011a, 2013a).

Regulating paid domestic work is troubled by ‘variation between countries and variation between economic sectors in the same country in terms of what is socially and legally constructed as acceptable employment practice’ (Anderson, 2006: 25). An important contribution to frame the subject in hand can be found in the overarching perspective of

Santos (2006). In Santos' view, the production of globalization occurs in two distinct spheres. The hegemonic camp pushes for neoliberal economy, weak state, liberal democracy with an absolute priority of civic and political rights over social and economic rights, and the primacy of the rule of law and the judicial system conceived as independent and universal mechanisms. On the other hand, the counter-hegemonic or subordinate production of globalization builds on 'the aspiration by oppressed groups to organize their resistance on the same scale and through the same type of coalitions used by the oppressors to victimize them, that is, the global scale and local/global coalitions' (Santos, 2006: 398).

For its affirmative and identitarian character, the international convention on domestic work adopted in 2011 may be understood as a process of social emancipation – the first of its kind to address the particular situation of domestic workers. However, emancipation is not found within law but rather within movements, organizations and groups which can resort to law as stepping stones for successful paths of 'insurgent cosmopolitanism' (Santos, 2002). Examining the struggle for the rights of migrant domestic workers within two nongovernmental organizations in the United Kingdom, Anderson (2010b) shows how radical takings can be gradually captured by the logic and practices of state sovereignty. In different terms, the work of these various authors exposes the threat of confusing or replacing politicization with legalization. A critical analysis of politicization can be usefully informed by examining developments in collective organization among workers.

3.4. Workers' organization

Collective action by workers is expected to be confronted with extraordinary difficulties in times of rising unemployment, a large service industry, global flows and competition, and labour market deregulation. In any case, all of these processes are preceded by the domestic workers' impressive record of silence and exclusion *within* the labour movement. To a certain extent, one and the other thing are inextricable. The construction of a movement is the result of continuous internal and external developments and negotiations. This is shown in Hyman's comprehensive study of trade unionism in Europe, in which he sets forth a number of key ideas to understand strength and weakness in workers' organizations.

The aggregation of interests which is essential for any coherent collective action involves establishing priorities among a variety of competing grievances and aspirations. One

reason why many employers, and also governments, came to perceive the value (to themselves) of the existence of a recognized vehicle of employee 'voice' was that unions filtered out (or perhaps suppressed) certain demands and discontents while highlighting others. Another was that unions could be induced to share responsibility for disruptive initiatives and uncomfortable changes.

Often the type of solidarity underlying twentieth-century trade unionism reflected and replicated on the one hand the discipline and standardization imposed by 'Fordist' mass production, on the other the patterns of differentiation within the working class between those who were central to this production process and those who were more marginal. [...] within companies and sectors, collective bargaining priorities were normally set by 'core' employees (male, white, with a stable place in the internal labour market); within national labour movements, priorities were imposed by the large unions of manual workers such as miners and engineers.

In Hyman (2001), pp. 170-1.

Hierarchization of demands is therefore much more than an internal matter. To begin with, trade unions have been central in the process of industrialization and nation-state building, playing a leading role in the 'social movement through which working classes have entered and promoted mass democracy' (Ebbinghaus & Visser, 2000: 4; see also Esping-Andersen, 1990; Wallerstein, 1999). Collective bargaining, typically associated with organized action, lobbying, and supporting political parties and candidates, is expected to decline under the pressures of neoliberal policy (Rigby et al, 1999; Supiot, 2010). Waterman (2001: 183, 209) discusses the 'exhaustion of the traditional trade union movement' and 'the increasing irrelevance of traditional leftists strategies'. As employment structures and workforce profiles change, preponderant claims are confronted with the underprivileged position of particular categories of workers.

Gender and ethnicity have been paid particular attention by scholars. The growing presence of women and migrants in the labour market can be seen as a satisfactory structural achievement of capitalist economies insofar as it contributes to increasing numbers of cheaper, flexible and unorganized labour (Castles & Kosack, 1972; Humphries, 1977; Castles et al, 1987; Ferreira, 1999, 2002). Based on a comparative study of trade unionism in fifteen countries of Western Europe during the second half of the twentieth century, Ebbinghaus and Visser (2000: 62) argue that marginalization of migrants and women in the agenda of unions is linked to the initial belief that their growing presence in the labour market would be temporary or limited

to the duration of cyclical economic downturns. Their conclusion is that both groups remained underrepresented in unions long after their exclusion has been deemed unacceptable in discursive and strategic practices.

The position of trade unions and other relevant civil society organizations *vis-à-vis* the compositional change of the workforce is determinant to understand past developments and future scenarios. Rigby et al (1999) criticize the dominant paradigm in research for its typical emphasis on trade union outcomes. Instead, they claim, more attention should be paid to the dynamic intentions and responses of unions with regard to relationships among members, including their sensitivity or ability to deal with both internal differences and external factors that affect industrial relations such as technology and skill developments, market constraints, or the distribution of power in the surrounding society. The 1970s in particular were characterized by

the emergence of radically new social-protest movements (feminists, environmentalists, consumer interest groups, and ethnic minority groups), which were not only organically disconnected from the trade unions, but also often identified them as part of the problem with which they had to deal. This development marked a shift from class-based cleavage, which further weakened the unions' position as key socioeconomic representatives articulating the concerns of the workforce.

In Rigby et al (1999), p. 13.

In this perspective, understanding collective organization as a set of practices and tactics devoid of political meaning is either counterproductive or a contradiction in terms (Simms & Holgate, 2009). The suggestion is that the dynamics of class struggle have been permeated by the same ideology of separate spheres that attributes production to men and reproduction to women (Braudel, 1969; Hyman, 2001). The challenge of feminism over the last decades is apparent in specific actions towards gender equality within unions, although the 'feminization of the symbolic universe of unions is a slower process' (Bradley, 1999: 187). Looking into developments in Portugal, Ferreira (2002) observes that the emergence of a standardized discourse of gender equality within trade unions often coexists with a lack of actual measures to tackle the existing evidence on labour market segregation and women's under-representation.

Ferreira's point of view largely concurs with Munro's (1999) claim that a satisfactory approach must examine not only how women are marginalized in the trade union movement, but also why – and to what extent – women and men have different interests in the realm of employment. In other words, the notion of a 'limited trade union agenda' is not able to exhaust the debate. Two main concerns arise in this regard. First, the hierarchical division of the labour market: 'work is constructed and reconstructed by reference to gender and race which results in specific gendered and racially defined interests' (Munro, 1999: 196). Second, the persistence of a gendered division of roles in family and intimacy contexts means that a wide range of issues such as the organization of childcare and eldercare services or the right to abortion and democracy in parental decision-making can be properly seen as matters of workers' rights. Both issues are instantiations of the interdependency of capitalism and patriarchy (Beechey, 1979; Walby, 1986), and examining the case of an occupation performed overwhelmingly by women, many of whom migrants, is an important contribution to understand equality and solidarity in labour movements. Both as traditions of thought and agendas for action, Marxism and feminism often appear to be 'unhappily married' (Hartmann, 1979).

To the extent that domestic service is still treated as a lower form of employment concerning social status, economic reward or legal regulation, any endeavour to improve the conditions under which it is performed is confronted with paths to either erode or reinforce gendered subordinate understandings of the work itself. Action is caught in the classic dilemma – which is experienced at both the individual and the collective levels – between struggling for better working conditions and struggling for a way out of the sector; ultimately, *saving* or *abolishing* the occupation.¹⁷ To be sure, this dilemma is chiefly ideological. In practice, better working conditions may be understood as a contribution to conformation and permanence in the job, but they are also bound to provide greater chances of exit, especially by facilitating the accumulation of precious types of capital by workers such as education, money, time, energy.

Responses to migration within trade unions have also been diverse and controversial. Penninx and Roosblad (2000) conclude that a tendency toward more sensitivity and inclusiveness can

¹⁷ A brilliant formulation of this dilemma can be found in Marguerite Duras' (1983 [1955]) novel *Le Square*. One of the main characters, a young housemaid, explains how she accepts all impositions from her employers without any resistance so that she shall never lose her 'horror' for this job. As much as her main wish in life is to 'belong to herself', she is convinced that neither the trade union nor herself can do much in that regard; no one can rescue her except a man, a husband (Duras, 1983 [1955]: 14, 39-40).

be discerned across Western Europe since the 1960s, although the actual correspondence between discourse and action is still to be assessed in detail. The adoption of particular policies by the state and the intervention of immigrant organizations are both expected to influence the emergence and configuration of ethnic issues within workers' movements. The activity of grassroots nongovernmental organizations seems to be on the increase and some of them 'occupy a terrain which trade unions, having abandoned in the past, cannot easily repossess' (Hyman, 2001: 61-2), placing a crucial question mark on cooperation between these different actors. The debate on alternative globalizations also brings the work of nongovernmental organizations to the fore (Waterman, 2001; Santos, 2002, 2006). Both women's and immigrant movements are often keen on emphasizing global problems and solutions rather than achievements at the national level. The ambiguous implications of their incorporation in mainstream policy, especially through public consultation bodies and state financial support, coexist with their potential to enrich traditional social movements.

The logics of globalization should not be perceived as being located above or neutralizing places. In particular, the national level retains much of its preeminence in the definition of authority, identity, and market dynamics (Sassen, 2007: 14-5). This means that nation-states are a worthy subject of research – more than just the typical unit of analysis. Furthermore, comparative studies engaged in the debate of convergence or divergence in industrial relations agree on the importance of dynamics, constraints, and conflicts at the national scale (Ebbinghaus & Visser, 2000: 3; Hyman, 2001: 169-70). At the same time, national analysis often misses 'subtle and more qualitative shifts which may be taking place nearer to the workplace' (Rigby et al, 1999: 16-7). Particular sites and contexts must be brought to the fore not only because they may contradict views on broader or macro analytical trends, but also because they are often the very fuel and content of those general trends (Bradley, 1999; Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007).

This is especially relevant in the case of a country where the trade union movement has been described as combining pluralism, centralization and hierarchization (Cerqueira, 2004). Despite a growing stability in the structural features of industrial relations in Portugal since the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1974, some important developments can be identified. First, the successive waves of division and concentration in unions which largely affected the smaller ones (Ebbinghaus & Visser, 2000: 59). Second, the shift of focus from pecuniary claims – typically related to inflation until the mid-1980s – toward issues of employment management,

such as the organization of work practices or health and safety provisions. ‘Decrease in the number of union members and union density is therefore consentaneous with the transformation in the sociological composition of the union movement and with great transformations regarding its organization’, as argued by Cerdeira (2004: 141, our translation; see also 89-92, 147). The suggestion of this author's work is that whereas a hierarchical and asymmetrical incorporation of unions within the labour movement in Portugal has been a source of weakness (fragmentation), the existence of alternative unions and confederations favours union dynamism insofar as it is based on sectorial or ideological complementarity (pluralism). In their analysis of industrial relations in Europe, Crouch and Traxler (1995: 8) write that ‘it is hardly possible to classify the development of collective bargaining in Italy, France, Belgium and Portugal along a uni-dimensional dichotomy of centralization and decentralization’.

Certainly analysis can not neglect the politics of democratization in the 1970s. This was the decade in which the two largest union confederations in Portugal were officially created: the *Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – Intersindical Nacional* (CGTP-IN) in 1970, and the *União Geral de Trabalhadores* (UGT) in 1978.¹⁸ Created in 1974 and 1976 respectively were two of the most influential employers' confederations: the *Confederação da Indústria Portuguesa*, founding member of the later *Confederação Empresarial Portuguesa* (CIP)¹⁹; and the *Confederação do Comércio*, later *Confederação do Comércio e Serviços* (CCP).²⁰

The legacy of intervention by an authoritarian state and a state-induced corporatist organization with partly compulsory membership had a long-term impact on the formation of interest organization during the transition period. [...] The long heritage of authoritarian corporatism with state-mandated associations, and the push towards centralization by the revolution of 1974-75 led to state-dominated industrial relations. These were based upon constitutional guarantees, legislative measures, state regulation, and direct government intervention.

In Naumann and Stoleroff (2000), pp. 545-7.

¹⁸ ‘General Confederation of Portuguese Workers – Inter-union National’ and ‘General Union of Workers’, respectively (our translation).

¹⁹ ‘Portuguese Business Confederation’ (our translation).

²⁰ ‘Confederation of Commerce and Services’ (our translation).

Considering events in Germany and Italy, Hyman (2001: xi) also argues that ‘the fascist caesura, while not totally expunging the influence of earlier development, certainly entails that the trade unionism of the last half-century was in many respects a novel socio-political construct, and it is the developments of this relatively concentrated historical period which deserve primary attention for those concerned to comprehend the present’. It is important to recognize that the novelty of a democratic system can blind us from seeing enduring patterns of domination and exclusion. The particular difficulties that domestic workers in Portugal experienced *vis-à-vis* the state and workers' organizations before and during the dictatorship regime have been documented (Brasão, 2010). The same can be said of the period after 1974 when the lift of restrictions concerning the political citizenship of women was detached from a highly gendered class structuration (Ferreira, 1999; Torres, 2008).

In addition, systematic research exposes a gradual and limited decrease of state intervention in industrial relations since the creation of the tripartite Standing Council of Social Concertation in 1984 (Cerdeira, 2004). Naumann and Stoleroff (2000: 547-8) argue that the 1980s were the time of ‘a decisive shift of Portugal's political economy towards free market and free trade liberalism’, notwithstanding substantial achievements in infrastructure, education, social welfare, and democratic institution building. Overall decline in union membership and density hides the asymmetry of this trend across economic sectors. An extensive comparative analysis covering the period of 1974-1986 shows that union density remained the greatest in sectors with lower numbers of employed women and larger average number of workers per employer (Cerdeira & Padilha, 1990: 34-5) – two aspects clearly disfavoured domestic workers. According to the same study, the category of ‘Personal and domestic services’ is the only one in which union membership *declined* in the period between 1974 and 1984. This is an especially striking observation considering that unions of domestic employees were first created in this very period; only broader service workers' unions existed before that, and they were operating under the strict standards imposed by the 1926-1974 dictatorial regime.²¹

²¹ Brasão (2010: 45-6) recounts that hotel and domestic workers came together in 1921 to create a regional sectorial association in Lisbon. Though supported by local proletarian trade unions, this association was not able to obtain permission to operate from state authorities. After the enforcement of dictatorial rule in 1926, efforts to create and manage a system of placement and recruitment in domestic services would be resumed by a catholic institution with the declared aim of providing jobs and basic survival assistance; class struggle was out of the picture. When the original association was reconstituted in 1939, domestic workers were not included anymore. Details on the formation of trade unions covering domestic service after 1974 are provided in our own empirical study; see especially Chapters 5 and 9.

Orthodox arguments to explain low union membership may apply, such as less accessible workplaces, low educational levels, more part-time employment, or little job attachment – in addition to the personalized and emotional elements that often permeate domestic service relationships, on the basis of which employees may fear retaliations from their employers and accept their relationship as an interpersonal arrangement rather than a proper employment bond. Far from causes of inevitable failure, these factors should be understood as challenges and weaknesses of organized action to date (Munro, 1999: 13-4). Organized labour confronts additional risks of demonization by both policymakers and workers under a neoliberal response to economic downturn, with corporatist or sectorial claims being instrumentally condemned as opposing the public interest (Ferreira, 2012).

Trade unions in Portugal have been active, even if late, in engaging with migration issues. The study of Kolarova and Peixoto (2009: 65-6) highlights their role in promoting initiatives of debate, awareness, and consultation in formal and informal modalities. They have also supported and intervened in the two processes of extraordinary regularization of immigrants conducted by state authorities in the 1990s. Practical claims have been directed at the vulnerability of migrants employed in occupations riddled with informality. Such is the case of the universal access to public health and education, or the unions' authority to certify the existence of an employment relationship for the purposes of regularization; this authority was lost in 2001 and regained in 2007. Also notable is the integration of immigrants as union delegates, the growing interaction between unions and nongovernmental organizations concerned with ethnic discrimination, and the great importance of the experiences of migrants both in the origin and destination countries in determining their engagement with unions (Kolarova & Peixoto, 2009: 86-94).

Two final remarks on the development of competing trade unions are required. At the level of union confederations, the general notion is that a wing of the workers' movement has been greatly influenced by communist ideology and focused on blue-collar occupations, whereas the other wing subscribes to a model of social cohesion or business unionism representing chiefly white-collar workers, or, to be more precise in historical hindsight, occupational groups that have resisted integration into communist-oriented organizations (Naumann & Stoleroff, 2000: 552-3). It is reasonable to concede that ideological thrusts must be subjected to empirical-based debate rather than taken at face value as

unions which define themselves as class actors nevertheless find themselves performing very different roles. Conversely, unions founded on a rejection of the principle of class opposition may nevertheless find themselves echoing the appeals of class radicalism.

In Hyman (2001), p. 36.

A second note is that the manner in which this divide has been politically constructed offers various obstacles to paid domestic workers. Under the model of trade unions as vehicles of anti-capitalist mobilization, domestic workers must struggle for incorporation in the claims of the working class. Under the model of trade unions as partners in the improvement of social welfare and cohesion, they have much to gain by asserting their special contribution to the sustainability of contemporary lifestyles. There are risks that domestic workers will not be welcomed with utmost joy by views centred neither on revolution and conflict, nor on modernization and middle-classification. Is this variety of obstacles unsurmountable, or does it entail strategic holes in the bucket through which the claims of domestic workers can be advanced? We need empirical research to delve further into this issue.

3.5. Commercial entrepreneurship

Increasing attention has been paid to the singularity and potential of the enterprise sector to transform domestic service dynamics. Whereas the provision of homecare assistance by charity-oriented organizations is a longstanding practice in many countries, the rise of for-profit companies focused on selling services to private households is fairly recent. These services consist mainly of cleaning and caring for children, elderly or frail adults, although other types of work such as cooking, gardening and a variety of personal assistance tasks are also available through formal enterprises (Hochschild, 2005). By entering a market which has been largely construed as being alien to formalization and professionalization, companies are bound to alter the landscape. Something as simple as a public job advertisement or a clear definition of job contents and required skills are novel objects in much of this activity sector. In the process, entrepreneurs are required to (re)interpret the occupation with symbolic and effective implications for working practices, relations, and conditions.

To be sure, efforts by domestic workers to redefine the value and boundaries of their work are documented (e.g. Romero, 1992; Lan, 2003; Schrover et al, 2007; Van Walsum, 2011). In

particular, Romero's (1992) research with women of Mexican descent in the city of Denver uncovers how domestic service workers can find themselves in a dead-end low status job and still actively seek the transformation of employer-employee dynamics toward a model of quasi-entrepreneurship. This author further argues that the instrumental strategies deployed by Chicanas interviewed in her fieldwork 'are consistent with the emergence of cleaning agencies that advertise expert and skilled labor' (Romero, 1992: 161). However, there is little empirical evidence to help us understand how companies in this field operate, what is the actual position of domestic workers within them, and to what extent formal endeavours to industrialize paid domestic work reproduce or else break away from the historical patterns of gender, class, and ethnic asymmetry.

Several elements are likely to boost their development. Policymakers across Europe are under pressure to address the various implications of demographic ageing, one of them being the growing number of elderly people requiring support on a regular basis (Isaksen et al, 2008; Williams, 2010a; Spencer et al, 2010). In the countries of Southern Europe, a severe deficit in public care systems contributes to maintain this issue as a grey area between public and private responsibilities (Haas, 2005; Lyonette et al, 2007; Wall & Nunes, 2010). Confronted with evidence on the difficulties of work-life articulation for individuals in paid employment, governments may stimulate the pursuit of solutions through the market (Torres et al, 2004; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Anderson, 2007). In addition, this can contribute to the creation of jobs or quasi-jobs, a relevant advantage in times of economic downturn (Jany-Catrice, 2010).

In the particular case of child and elderly care, private individualized solutions are likely to grow insofar as they offer lower costs or greater flexibility than public system facilities. An extensive report based on data from 2006 (CEDRU, 2008) shows that in Portugal the public sector still comprised over 80 per cent of care services provided to the elderly, a large segment of which is arranged through state-funded not-for-profit organizations. However, extended small-scale, discontinuous, and informal operation in the private sector is expected to be underestimated. Obstacles to the emergence and sustainability of commercial companies in the sector are highlighted in the same report, shedding doubts on the expectation that the recent welfare system reform would open promising roads to formalization and entrepreneurship. Competition and pressure to reduce labour costs is expected to favour large-investment monopolistic or irregular enterprises in detriment of local medium-scale private initiatives that might otherwise offer greater social and economic sustainability over time (Gil,

2009). At the same time, exploratory research by Guerreiro (2000) and Wall and Nunes (2010) suggests that complementarity rather than competition is linking distinct modes of care provision in Portugal such as private companies, the public sector, and informal paid work.

Commercialization entails particular implications to employment relationships in this sector. The most apparent of them is that a relationship typically composed of two actors (domestic workers and the members of the private household employing them) is replaced by the triangular relationship of managers-workers-customers that characterizes much of the interactive service sector (Korczynski, 2009; Casaca, 2012b). Important possibilities of specialization emerge, and it is unsurprising that companies may invest in the provision of either cleaning or personal care services rather than domestic service as an all-encompassing and ill-defined category of employment with limited prospects of professionalization or cultural upgrading. The provision and performance of private household labour through a commercial enterprise is likely to suspend or question traditional understandings structuring work contents, recruitment and daily interaction.

At the same time, it means that a clearer framework of authority and industrial relations is introduced in the sector – in a Marxist perspective, one is encouraged to think of surplus value, surplus labour, and their implications to power and conflict (Hochschild, 2000). Companies in this sector are in a favourable position to consolidate the incorporation of domestic workers in the wage-labourer class. On the one hand, domestic workers are confronted with a structure that can offer them significant benefits, in particular the reinforcement of their symbolic and formal integration in socioeconomic and juridical structures. On the other, industrialization in times of labour deregulation and declining trade unionism (see section above) poses substantial threats to the prominent position of employment as a domestic worker in the survival circuits of women with low educational credentials or migrant background. Industrialization is a highly heterogeneous development which can not be analysed without the empirical scrutiny of the actual operation modes of companies. This is also a key step to bridge the intellectual divide between scholars who study *work* and scholars who study *organizations*, with positive outcomes to both fields (Haveman & Khaire, 2006).

In so doing, we will be following the footsteps of a few exploratory investigations. In her study of a few domestic employment agencies operating in Los Angeles, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001: 62) underscores that such organizations do more than simply articulating demand and

supply in the sector: ‘they are important because they create a labor market and they serve to regulate the occupation’, fulfilling ‘two requirements, intended (recruiting and hiring) and unintended (structuring the job)’. The same is suggested in Tomei's (2011) assessment of the impact of private formal investment in household services in Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Brazil, where she presents the following conclusion:

While employees of not-for-profit licensed enterprises may fare better than those employed by private individuals, the ‘industrialization’ of domestic work has not managed, however, to counter the under-valuation of domestic work and its characterization as a low-wage job. The depersonalization of the employment relationship and the shift towards more standardized employment relationships has, paradoxically, eroded the pressuring power that workers engaged in direct employment can exert on their employers, especially when the labour supply is relatively limited, and has made competition among employees fiercer. As a result, employment in the domestic sector remains fundamentally precarious.

In Tomei (2011), p. 209.

Drawing on empirical evidence collected in France, Devetter and Rousseau (2009) corroborate that the ‘industrialization strategy’ sought by both companies and the state in this activity sector is based on precarious employment, highly competitive recruitment, and persistent inequality in the balance of the power between employers and workers.

Companies are thus provoking a second ‘revolution’ in household employment, after the first which saw the replacement of ‘live-in’ by ‘live-out’. These jobs are beginning to resemble other low-skilled work. The market itself is shifting from the domestic to the industrial arena, accompanied by developments in qualified personnel [...] The emergence of profit-seeking companies in the domestic service market appears to correspond to a major change in the way this sector operates.

In Devetter & Rousseau (2009), pp. 311-2.

Van Walsum's (2011) examination of developments in the Netherlands suggests that new regimes of domestic or care services building on flexibility, private initiative, and decentralized authority may entail a significant downturn in working conditions, *even if* the symbolic value of the occupation may be upgraded at the public level. Concerned with the interstices between formal and informal sector employment, Chen (2011: 179) pointedly

claims that the dilemma at the core of the formalization debate is that ‘many of the mainstream observers who advocate formalizing informal enterprises also advocate de-regulating (in effect, de-formalizing) labour markets.’

From a quantitative point of view, the limited presence of commercial companies in the market could justify oblivion. We suggest, much to the contrary, that what is happening in the enterprise sector may illuminate important features of recent and future developments in paid domestic work. In addition, companies operating in this sector are ‘strategic research material’ (Merton, 1987) to the broader study of formalization, industrialization, or professionalization. Important contributions are likely to spill over to research on other types of employment, more or less distant in work contents and historical dynamics. Once again, we will be contributing to bring the study of domestic service closer to debates on economic structures and social change at large.

4

Research design and knowledge advancement

4.1. Methodology battles or complementarity?

The studies discussed in the previous chapters draw on a variety of methodological resources and designs. This variation is far from random; instead, it reflects particular trends within disciplines and areas of inquiry. For instance, scholarship on the articulation of employment and family activities has relied mainly on large-scale surveys and semi-structured interviews with adult women and men (e. g. Drew et al, 1998; Torres, 2002; Torres et al, 2004; Lapeyre & Le Feuvre, 2004; Casaca, 2005; McDowell et al, 2006; Crompton et al, 2007; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Aboim, 2010; Casaca & Damião, 2011). In contrast, research on domestic service – and especially migrant domestic labour – has kept quantitative analysis very much at bay, favouring case studies in large cities with strong exploratory or ethnographic components (e. g. Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992; Anderson, 2000, 2007; Parreñas, 2001; Kofes, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002a; Lan, 2003; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Marchetti, 2010; Näre; 2012).

A comprehensive discussion of methodological disparity and bias in the several streams of investigation convened in our literature review is too ambitious a task to undertake here. The point to bear in mind is that the adoption of distinct scales, concepts, techniques or procedures often makes it difficult to bring together findings and arguments. This is also what complementarity is about. Considering that domestic service raises questions among scholars concerned with a broad diversity of topics (gender, family, migration, class, employment), it is hardly surprising that theoretical debates and research designs vary so much.

In fact, theory and methodology can not be detached from one another as perfectly as might be suggested by a positivistic paradigm. Any given investigation, Almeida and Pinto (1975: 380) argue, encases a ‘theoretical cycle’: a venture in which theory takes on the

‘commanding’ function, determining how problems are formulated and how meaning is attributed to data. More than a simple sum of neutral, logistical choices, the research design is the manner in which one's initial knowledge develops toward the collection of original evidence and the discussion of results, a process throughout which theory-building retains its centrality (Yin, 1989: 35-40).

Ascribing a leading role to theorization does not mean, as observed by Pais (1986: 41), that researchers are granted the right to ‘commit the most insolent and meta-social epistemological forms of mischief’, thereby contributing to ‘the divorce between theory and empirical facts’. Based on a discussion of how sociology deals with everyday life, Pais resorts to eloquent metaphors when claiming that both the excesses of structuralist analysis (‘window watching’ with a neglect of the way in which things are lived) and the excesses of phenomenological analysis (‘street wandering’ under the illusion that moments express everything) mistakenly suggest that these are incompatible endeavours. A curious detail: to demonstrate that some subjects can not be understood from one of the standpoints alone, this author provides two particular examples – the relationship between public and private life, and the operation of class structures – that have been prominent in recent research on contemporary domestic service.

An additional degree of complexity is added to the discussion as social science delves into issues that undergo political dispute. Wallerstein (1999) traces the idea of ‘objective’ science ‘informing’ political positions back to the emergence of the Enlightenment thinking, when colonialism (among other structures of oppression) could be supported by a plethora of authoritative scholarly arguments. This troubled relationship can only go on, and claims to a research design devoid of any influence from systems of domination – be them colonialist, patriarchal, capitalist, or other – are out of place. Political positions, either conscious or unconscious, also ‘inform’ science. Politically or otherwise, ‘the preconstructed is everywhere’ – a statement by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 235) to which we shall come back later on.

The use of orthodox quantitative methods of analysis has been especially criticized for incorporating cultural biases leading to interpretations that underestimate and misunderstand women's work (Acker, 1973; Crompton, 2003; Bould & Gavray, 2008). Beechey (1979: 80) pointedly highlights the rather difficult task of examining the dynamics of patriarchal capitalism without ever resorting to patriarchal capitalistic categories: ‘how can we utilize a

materialist method of analysis in such a way that we can satisfactorily integrate production and reproduction as part of a single process, and which will reveal that gender differentiations are inseparable from the form of organization of the class structure?’ Fieldwork and qualitative analysis offer precious ways of getting closer to experiences and meanings on the ground, but they are not any less pervaded by the ‘preconstructed’. A possible though certainly partial consolation lies in the triangulation and attentive revision of knowledge engendered over time by scholars working with distinct concerns, data sources and methods. In this sense, one can consider for instance that critiques raised in feminist and post-structuralist scholarship to the quantitative study of production systems strengthens rather than dismisses that type of study by making clearer what it does *not* tell us.

Science can have nothing to do with the totalizing excess of a dogmatic rationalism, at one extreme, or with the aesthete's resignation to nihilistic irrationality, at the other. It is content with the partial and temporary truths that it can conquer against the common perception and the intellectual doxa, truths able to secure the only rational means for using fully the margin of manoeuvre left to liberty, that is, to political action.

In Bourdieu et al (1999), p. 629.

To say that science, like social science, is a social product, is not at all the same thing as subscribing to epistemological nihilism. Science may be socially produced, but particular scientific conclusions may be more or less credible and trustworthy. [...] All forms of science need to develop an awareness of how hidden partialities, including Eurocentrism and androcentrism, may lead to bias. People are not interchangeable as knowers, any more than they are as the known.

In Oakley (2000), pp. 302-3.

There is, in sum, an important parallel between maintaining a critical eye on social systems of oppression and maintaining a critical eye on one's own work as a researcher. In addition, Burawoy's (2005: 9) defence of public sociology underscores the possibilities and benefits of striking up ‘a dialogic relation between sociologist and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other’. A consonant source of support in engaging with our subject is drawn from Gunewardena and Kingsolver's (2007) notions of plural globalizations and plural marginalities – a setting of multiple economic and cultural

segmentations which women ‘navigate’ in their attempts to exercise agency within constraints.

This chapter documents our journey under the orientation of these various pieces of advice, recognizing that another full-length dissertation would be required to dwell in depth into the epistemological debates that they raise. We begin by the key implications of incorporating multiple actors and levels of interaction in our research, as advocated in the previous chapter. Second, the choice of a case study is explained. Third, the procedures undertaken to collect data are documented in detail, paying special attention to the use of official statistics and first-hand interviews with employees and employers. The last section offers a summary of the efforts involved in analysing and composing the collected data. Various moments throughout the chapter will offer insight into the ‘social conditions’ of our research, assuming that they bear an impact – though not in a deterministic way – on the very production of knowledge (Almeida & Pinto, 1975).

4.2. A pluralist approach: multiple actors, multiple levels of interaction

Our research question builds on the notion that employment relationships are structured through the interaction of multiple actors – an interaction occurring simultaneously at multiple levels, which have been categorized for clarity reasons as macro, meso and micro. We are thus reminded of the sociological interest in relations (rather than individuals) as an object of study and a unit of analysis. Favouring empirical examination over a normative stance on working conditions, we set out to scrutinize the viewpoints of employees and employers as they emerge from both personal experience and collective organization. A research design that does not incorporate the variety of processes uncovered in our literature review is likely to lag behind the goals of the study.

The challenge of such a pluralist approach is to combine a critical examination of practice and discourse (situated in a particular time and place) with a vision over the broader logics of social relations. Only this way can analysis move beyond deterministic interpretations. This can be exemplified by the work of Kovács (2002) on the impact of technological upgrade on working processes and conditions, which shows that fierce debate between optimistic and pessimistic perspectives may fail to account for more subtle and ambiguous developments.

Drawing on Kovács' contention, Casaca (2005: 216) adds that the key importance of societal and institutional dynamics in structuring relations at work and at home should not bring us to forget that those dynamics themselves are to a large extent 'a reflexion of the practice of social agents (men and women).'

Burawoy's (2005, 2009) proposition of public sociology seems straight to the point as it lies on the premise of understanding the pluralism of norms and aspirations in society, and, more than that, placing pluralism at the heart of the debate. To be sure, our research project can not be considered a project of public sociology as defined by Burawoy; a closer cooperation with groups or social movements from the outset would be required to ensure the aforementioned interconnection of agendas. However, we subscribe to this author's notion that 'civil society is not simply the object of knowledge for sociology – we examine much more – but rather the *standpoint* from which we study the world' (Burawoy, 2009: 468). Considering the notable advancements in the study of class, gender and ethnic relations propelled by recent empirical research on paid domestic work, one should also remember Sassen's (2005: 403) elaboration on Burawoy's argument: 'part of having a vigorous public sociology is that we can work at theorizing with our publics, accepting that they also can theorize – can see, and may indeed see what we cannot see, because we are blinded by the enormous clarity of our theories.'

Actors are complex formations, and the same holds for the bonds that they develop with each other. Domestic employees, their employers, and workers' or employers' representatives are all expected to hold their own concerns and interpretations. In addition, these may be far from uniform across each of the categories. Cross-cutting elements of complicity or alliance, based for instance on ethnic differentiation, should not be too surprising. Again, we can usefully resort to the methodological considerations of Casaca:

- *the system (and each subsystem) is not a unified, cohesive and homogeneous reality; instead, it is permeated by contradictions, inconsistencies and conflicts;*
- *the system (and each subsystem) is not static and unchanging, but dynamic and open to external influence, either from other systems or from social practices and actions.*

In Casaca (2005), p. 221, our translation.

The qualitative analysis of evidence collected through in-depth interviews is especially relevant to illuminate the interplay between these various levels of interaction. Still, we must beware that articulating scales and methods of observation *per se* is not sufficient to document

the logics of power and legitimacy. Scholars concerned with the everyday materialization of asymmetries between women and men are familiar with the outstanding difficulty at stake.

The case of gender domination shows better than any other that symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of recognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond – or beneath – the controls of consciousness and will, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are at once gendered and gendering. And it demonstrates that we cannot understand symbolic violence and practice without forsaking entirely the scholastic opposition between coercion and consent, external imposition and internal impulse. [...] The work of socialization tends to effect a progressive somatization of relations of gender domination through a twofold operation: first by means of the social construction of the vision of biological sex which itself serves as the foundation of all mythical visions of the world; and, second, through the inculcation of a bodily hexis that constitutes a veritable embodied politics. In other words, male sociodicy owes its specific efficacy to the fact that it legitimates a relation of domination by inscribing it in a biological which is itself a biologized social construction.

In Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992), pp. 171-2, original emphases.

In this sense, the outsourcing of domestic labour and the feminization of migration make up ambiguous developments. They may suggest a significant increase in women's autonomy as much as their functional subjection to the demands of present-day global capitalism (see our Chapter 2). Theoretical debate can not do much without the empirical exploration of how these developments are lived and felt by individuals, households, communities.

This does not imply abandoning the study of macro structures and dynamics. Much to the contrary, Gunewardena and Kingsolver (2007: 279) advocate that 'local conditions and women's everyday lives [are] unique vantage points for understanding the phenomena collectively termed globalization.' Detailed analysis is necessary to document 'the connections between our everyday milieus and transnational processes' (*id, ibid*: 15) – or, in broader terms, 'the interplay between system and lifeworld, between domination and response' (Burawoy, 1998: 285). Similarly, Sassen (2007: 31-2) stresses that 'research using qualitative methods can delve into the specific globalizing cultures of cities' and 'the daily work and politics involved in the production and maintenance of a global city.'

Why is it important to recover place and production in analyses of the global economy, particularly as they are constituted in major cities? It is because they allow us to see the

multiplicity of economies and work cultures in which the global information economy is embedded. They also allow us to recover the concrete, localized processes through which globalization takes shape and to argue that much of the multiculturalism in large cities is as much a part of globalization as is international finance. Finally, focusing on cities allows us to specify a geography of strategic places at the global scale, places bound to one another by the dynamics of economic globalization. I refer to this as a new geography of centrality, and one of the questions it engenders is whether this new transnational geography is also the space for new transnational politics. Insofar as an economic analysis of the global city recovers the broad array of jobs and work cultures that are part of the global economy, though typically not marked as such, it allows us to examine the possibility of new forms of inequality arising from economic globalization. And it allows us to detect new types of politics among traditionally disadvantaged workers; that is, it allows us to understand in its empirical detail whether operating in this transnational economic geography as it materializes in global cities makes a difference to the disadvantaged. [...] Thus the empirical details of these social forms are also a window into the features of the current globalization phase.

In Sassen (2007), pp. 98-9.

In the context of Portugal, we can confirm the benefits of articulating large-scale analysis and intensive fieldwork in recent research about gender roles and identities (e.g. Torres, 2000; Casaca, 2005, 2012b; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Ferreira, 2010). The collection of personal narratives is crucial to further our understanding of existing power disputes, as well as to uncover ‘the margins to act, the spaces of manoeuvre of social actors, the attempts to circumvent structural constraints and conditions’ (Torres, 2002: 570-1, our translation). Attention and sensitivity to everyday experience shall not mislead us into discarding a historical perspective (Pais, 1986: 18).

In sum, the first step in our research design consists in highlighting the relationship between employees and employers as the privileged axis of analysis, provided that we understand this relationship as being conditioned by particular sources of institutional mediation (as discussed in Chapter 3). Original findings are expected to fill our initial framework with local and subjective meanings. It follows that we are not aiming at a comprehensive description of domestic service within the confines of time and space proposed for empirical research, but rather the in-depth scrutiny of how relationships in this employment sector are structured – that is, established and challenged.

4.3. Choosing a case study

It is precisely the acknowledgement of a multiplicity of actors and levels of interaction that underpins the choice of a case study. As argued by Yin (1989: 14), the case study approach is especially appropriate to answer how and why questions insofar as it ‘contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena’ and ‘allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events’. Our literature review has uncovered many of the ‘individual, organizational, social, and political’ elements at stake in the organization of paid domestic work. According to the terminology proposed by Yin, an ‘embedded’ (rather than ‘holistic’) case study permits covering – at once distinguishing and approximating – subunits within the general system, such as employees and employers in our case. Caution is required to prevent that research ‘focuses only on the subunit level and fails to return to the larger unit of analysis’ (Yin, 1989: 50), the original phenomenon of interest becoming the context instead of the target of study.

Additional and more particular considerations render the conduction of a case study adequate – and a *single* case study in detriment of a comparative multiple-case approach as preferred in other studies of domestic service (e.g. Anderson, 2000; Catarino & Oso, 2000; Parreñas, 2001). First, the empirical setting of Lisbon offers a critical case to the exploration of well-formulated theories concerning class, gender and ethnic inequality (see Chapter 2). Change and persistence in social relations with an impact on domestic service dynamics can therefore be examined in the same location, and their practical articulation exposed. Second, this setting represents a revelatory case considering that the body of knowledge on paid domestic work in Lisbon, as well as in Portugal at large, is still scarce. This is another reason to concentrate efforts in documenting developments in one place only. Third, recent research includes a number of comparable case studies in other cities of the world, including in Southern Europe.

After surveying and considering other options, we have decided to draw primarily on the ‘extended case method’, defined by Burawoy (1998: 273-4) as a strategic combination of exploratory techniques and critical systematic examination supported by the notion that ‘micro and macro are discrete and causally related levels of reality and that generalizations can be derived from the comparison of particular social situations.’ Accordingly, the collection and analysis of evidence is oriented toward the simultaneous mapping (and the

approximation between) systemic trends and local practices. The researcher's itinerary evolves in a sequential manner to reconstitute the network of bonds and exchanges operating in everyday context – a 'chain case study' as it were, resonating closely with the claims of various authors who advocate a stronger recognition of experience and agency in the field of economic sociology without falling into individualistic analyses (Abbott, 1993; Castillo, 1999; Granovetter, 2005; Sassen, 2007).

The very profile of the individuals interviewed during our fieldwork and their past and present situation in the employment sector under study provide important pieces of information with respect to the limits of the case (see section on fieldwork interviews below). They are women with a number of specific characteristics regarding material resources, ethnic background, place and year of birth, household composition, and working trajectories. Based on previous studies, we are able to assess their location in social and employment structures, and this location is neither random nor irrelevant for our discussion of findings. In other words, respondents are not expected to represent employees or employers in any strict sense. Instead, their situation must be framed within broader data offered by existing scholarship, large-scale official statistics, institutional documentation, or privileged informants dealing with the subject from various points of view (typically for longer than the researcher).

Far from the paradigm of extensive research, our approach to first-hand evidence privileges situated in-depth knowledge (see especially Chapters 7, 8 and 9). Singularities in the respondents' narratives and interpretations are frequently favoured over numerically significant observation. As far as a wider landscape is concerned, it is the amplification and revision of analytical findings – rather than the amplification of raw results – that takes the leading role.

The short answer is that case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).

In Yin (1989), p. 21.

The elaboration of solid questions for future inquiry is yet another goal to pursue, especially considering that the voices of employees and employers (and even their representatives') are

often unheard or unclear in policy debates about domestic service. A reciprocal question-and-answer relationship between scholars and actors on the ground is expected to support the production of results that may be useful to actors themselves, as advocated under the framework of public sociology. Telling illustrations can be found in the work of researchers who have established fruitful bonds of cooperation with local NGOs engaged in supporting and mobilizing immigrant domestic workers (e.g. Salzinger, 1991; Anderson, 2010; Marchetti, 2012).

4.4. Sources of evidence and collection techniques

Since our purpose is to cover various levels of analysis, data collection must be undertaken at several complementary scales, which is feasible if we use first-hand and second-hand data. The combination of sources hereby proposed is also expected to enhance the dialogue with previous research on domestic service in Portugal, which has mainly privileged exploratory qualitative analysis (e.g. Meersschaert, 1986; Guerreiro, 2000; Brasão, 2010; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Pereira, 2013). Quantitative overviews, such as those attempted in Guibentif (2011) and Baptista (2012), provide important answers – as incomplete and up to debate as they may be – regarding large-scale developments in the sector. At the same time, agency and subjectivity can be captured through the empirical examination of individual trajectories as long as we are able to keep structural conditions and social disputes within sight (Burawoy, 1998; Bourdieu et al, 1999; Torres, 2000; Casaca, 2005). The use of in-depth interviewing is further encouraged by the urgency to countervail the normative application of culturally biased concepts which have repeatedly obstructed an accurate reporting of women's work (Glucksmann, 1995; Bould & Gavray, 2008). As concluded by Oakley in her extensive discussion of lingering methodological disputes in the field of gender studies:

'Quantitative' methods need to enshrine a greater respect for the perspectives of the people who contribute data. One of the things this may mean is less use of pre-prepared measuring and assessment scales, which often force people's experiences and views into places they do not want to go. [...] 'Qualitative' methods could do with more self-criticism about the mediation of their research findings by partial, researcher-driven perspectives, and by more caution, openness and accountability in relation to the findings claimed. It is time to stop boasting that 'triangulation' and computer-based analysis are all that are required to establish the trustworthiness of 'qualitative' findings – just as it is

time to give up the pretence that all that matters in experimental research are large sample sizes, adequately concealed allocation and competently executed statistical tests.

In Oakley (2000), p. 303.

Three types of evidence can be distinguished in our study. One consists of *institutional documents*. These include reports and publications from organizations such as trade unions, private companies and NGOs, as well as legal instruments regulating domestic service relationships. We will seek to illuminate change over time and focus on the contents of labour law, referring to other relevant areas of regulation (for instance, on social security or immigration) only in a complementary manner. This is not because we assume that, from the point of view of legal frameworks, labour law explains most of what happens in this sector. Instead, we were not able to locate any study that discusses in detail the case of contemporary domestic service within labour law in Portugal, and this is best considered as a first step in that challenging task.

The other two types of evidence are *official statistics* and *fieldwork interviews*. A selection of longitudinal data from Labour Force Surveys and Social Security Records shall help us overcome the typical difficulty associated with a quantitative characterization of domestic service employment (Baganha, 1998; Peixoto, 2002; Peixoto et al, 2006). As to the fieldwork, a total sum of 77 open-ended interviews were conducted between April 2011 and March 2013 with domestic service employees (25), employers (25) and company managers (15), as well as privileged informants from state authorities or local labour, employer, and activist organizations (12). These privileged informants are listed in the Appendix 2a; they were interviewed in the very first stage of our empirical research so that their insight could help us with the preparation of the interviews to come.

A general profile of the employees, employers and managers interviewed during the fieldwork can be found in the Appendix 2 (2b, 2c and 2d, respectively). In the case of the employees and employers, an overview of their characteristics is presented below in this chapter; a number of details and practicalities must be mentioned, as they certainly entail important implications to the content and quality of our findings. In the following pages, special attention is paid to the use of official statistics and in-depth interviews, accepting that these sources of data represent the primary and most original contribution of our research project.

A) Official statistics

Statistical analysis in the study of domestic service is a delicate issue. On the one hand, it is a valuable method to obtain a longitudinal perspective on a given activity sector and a general portrait with regard to workers' sociodemographic characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, class background) and, to a lesser extent, their working conditions (time, income, benefits). On the other hand, large-scale datasets typically suffer from various and serious limitations in the particular case of domestic service. It is difficult for standardized concepts or categories to retain their meaning as observation stretches over time and space. Perhaps more important, official figures are likely to exclude a substantial number of situations in which work is performed under informal or precarious conditions, an especially problematic matter in regions with a large volume of undeclared employment. Other obstacles are exposed in the worldwide report about domestic workers published by the ILO (2013a: 7-17), suggesting that a downward bias tends to exist in estimates for this sector of employment, even in countries with comprehensive and consolidated statistical collection on the labour market at large.

It is important to remember that the same difficulties permeate qualitative research (Anderson, 2000: 21; Williams, 2010b). Domestic work is hard to define, measure and compare, no matter what methodology is adopted (see our Chapter 2, in particular sections 2.2 and 2.3). Furthermore, the propensity of quantitative analysis to underestimate informal work relations does not reduce its capacity to describe formal work relations, provided that a clear record of methodological possibilities and limitations is kept. Numbers may be also linked to information collected through different methods, including fieldwork on undeclared work and migration. In this sense, statistical data should not be understood in epistemological contrast with 'narratives', a concept often limited to qualitative research. In fact, even 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' are less absolute than relative terms (Oakley, 2000: 303). Statistics are narratives in their own right. They require attention to both what they show and what they do not show, very much in the same way that ethnography can document what is said and left unsaid in empirical settings (Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007: 15).

The Labour Force Survey is a household sample survey undertaken in cooperation by national statistic offices in the EU. Concepts and methods are uniform across all member states since 1995; this harmonization followed the classifications and guidelines of the ILO, and it enables fairly reliable cross-national comparisons on a wide range of subjects (Charlier & Franco, 2001; EUROSTAT, 2001, 2009b; Massarelli & Wozowczyk, 2010). In Portugal, the survey is

conducted by Statistics Portugal (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*). A break in series for the national data in 1998 makes it problematic to compare figures before and after that year. In order to ensure full reliability, analysis will be circumscribed to data collected between 2000 and 2010, and the cross-national comparison will cover the 15 member states of the EU by 2000.²²

The Labour Force Survey is expected to be as representative of the total population as possible, covering all industries and occupations. While it entails the limitations of any sampling survey, these are mitigated by computing yearly averages from results collected on a quarterly basis and weighting the sample according to sociodemographic variables recorded in broader datasets (in the case of Portugal, the population census which occurs every ten years).²³ Interviews take place either by telephone or face-to-face, using a specific standard week for reference. At the time of writing, the full questionnaire can be consulted on the official website of the EU Labour Force Survey.

How does it deal with undeclared labour or undocumented migration? In principle, this survey is blind to the legal status of the respondents' employment or residence. Questions about 'paid work', 'main source of income' or 'main occupation' are expected to be answered regardless of the manner in which these activities are classified in law. A couple of reservations are necessary though. Universal coverage is impossible to achieve whenever the reference population drawn from the national census (or, as in other countries, from municipality files or phone records) excludes undocumented residents. In addition, every survey depends on the availability and responsiveness of individuals. It is reasonable to concede that those lacking a legal residence permit or performing undeclared work may be less prone to provide complete and accurate answers on these particular subjects. Therefore, some underestimation is likely to subsist.

²² Referred to as EU-15 from here onwards, this group is composed of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom

²³ The possibility of examining census data with regard to domestic service employment, as done for instance by Baganha (1998) and Brasão (2010), was also pondered during our project. A point in favour is that the census attempts to cover the whole population in the country rather than using a sample. However, as far the reliability of data collection on the topic of labour market participation is concerned, it lags behind the more detailed, complete and regularly conducted Labour Force Survey. Methodological differences between these two undertakings – and, especially problematic, changes over time within each of them – are likely to explain some mismatch in their figures, but a thorough investigation would be required to make sense of those inconsistencies, as we come to understand after consultation with several experienced scholars and staff from Statistics Portugal.

The Labour Force Survey uses two distinct classification schemes for employment, both of which consist in a major set of groups that are disaggregated into successive sub-groups. In the International Standard Classification of Occupations, jobs are grouped on the basis of skill similarity, enabling the identification of ‘Domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers’ and ‘Personal care and related workers’. While useful, these groups are not sufficiently accurate for the purpose in hand as it is not possible to distinguish whether work is performed in or outside private households. For instance, domestic and industrial cleaning, or residential and institutional care, are considered together. The maximum level of disaggregation would allow this distinction to be made, but sample size at that level is too small to generate reliable data.

In turn, the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities contains a group called ‘Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel’. This includes a useful range of services such as cleaning, cooking, personal care, gardening, driving, secretarial assistance, or security. Again, distinction between these services, or between ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ arrangements, is not possible. Employment configuration rather than activity is key: individuals employed directly by households are included in this category, whereas if they perform the same tasks under a contractual arrangement with a private or public enterprise they are excluded. All things considered, this classification scheme is the most informative as far as the volume of the sector is concerned, as corroborated in the aforementioned ILO report (ILO, 2013a: 10-1; for the use of Labour Force Surveys in research about domestic service in Italy, see Colombo, 2005; Fullin & Reyneri, 2011). As more detailed statistical figures are sought, the sample size naturally decreases and so does data reliability. This is an obstacle to extract information on the occupational composition of the sector or the demographic profile of workers, as well as sub-national estimates.

In that regard, data made available by the Social Security Institute of Informatics (*Instituto de Informática da Segurança Social*) provide precious insight. Social Security Records concerning domestic employees in Portugal are available since 2002. It is important to remember that paying contributions to social security in this employment sector is mandatory since 1982.²⁴ We can obtain the number of employees with actual access to social protection and attempt a characterisation of this workforce by gender, age, and nationality. With respect

²⁴ Regulatory-Decree No. 43/82 of 22 July. Some of the dynamics underlying compliance or non-compliance with this legal norm in empirical context are examined in the qualitative analysis of our fieldwork findings (especially in Chapter 9).

to nationality, some countries of origin are aggregated based on geographical or historical proximity. The lack of information on birthplace makes it impossible to draw a distinction between native-born and naturalised citizens, a sign of the institutional bias toward identifying foreigners rather than ethnic minorities (Reiter, 2012: 1074). However, this gap can be adequately overcome by resorting to research on different ethnonational groups as recommended by Peixoto (2008).

To a certain extent, Labour Force Surveys and Social Security Records are complementary. Any attempt to compare different datasets raises reliability issues, but this very comparison – once sources of caution are acknowledged – is one of the ‘indirect’ and ‘residual’ methods available to estimate undocumented migration (Jandl, 2008: 28). The same holds for undeclared work, presuming that it is captured by Labour Force Surveys and absent from Social Security Records. A favourable element is that both sources in this case collected and treated the data in a steady manner throughout the period to be covered in our analysis. Their limitations are thus held constant, and patterns or developments over time can be assessed in a relatively consistent manner.

B) Fieldwork interviews

As argued above, qualitative evidence on the life of individuals, households and communities offers both the possibility to expand our understanding of micro-level dynamics and ‘a window into the features of the current globalization phase’ (Sassen, 2007: 99). In-depth interviews are an important and frequently used resource for that purpose. Considering the questions raised in our study, employees and employers in the sector under analysis are respondents of particular interest. Their experiences, trajectories and viewpoints can thus be uncovered, discussed and linked to broader developments in society, corroborating or challenging notions presented in the existing scholarship. In a sense, this is the closest that our research project shall get to examine everyday interaction and logics, accepting that real-time observation of the employee-employer relationship in domestic service would be difficult and of limited reliability.²⁵ Also, interviews often tell us more about everyday life than it seems at

²⁵ In addition to the interviews, the researcher shared a number of occasions with respondents including travelling by bus or car, strolling along the street, having meals or coffee, picking up or taking children somewhere, watching the news or a soap opera on television. The interviews with employers also provided us the opportunity to enter some of the private households where domestic service is performed; we were able to

first sight. The practicalities of scheduling the interview or the opinions of respondents on the research project underway, among other things, may provide information as relevant as the very content of their discourse during the interview.

Both among employees and employers, we have interviewed only women. This is a fairly logical decision with respect to employees: the theoretical foundations of our study build on the recruitment of women to perform paid tasks in private households, and, indeed, women make up over 98 per cent of the workforce in this sector in Portugal (see our Chapter 6). The decision is more questionable when our attention turns to employers. To be sure, men's experiences and viewpoints may be just as valuable to discuss the organization and practices of domestic work; the idea of their being of secondary importance to the subject under study is hasty, and even dangerous insofar as it can reinforce a perception of domestic work as a *women's issue* only. In fact, we do not subscribe to any such notion of central and marginal roles in the debate.

What we do believe is that there are several strong arguments to put the empirical emphasis of our study on women employers rather than men. For one, the literature review has focused on the position of women – understood as including objective and subjective elements. Second, the feminist critique that the value and meaning of women's work is either overlooked or misread in many large-scale quasi-universalistic analyses raises epistemological concerns. Here, we shall be especially interested in illuminating ways of experiencing, interpreting and acting upon life that emerge from the condition of being a woman, similarly to what is proposed by scholars working on the complex nexus of gender and globalization (Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007; Stewart, 2011). Third, a critical knot of the inequalities exposed in our Chapter 2 is the encounter between two women – those who can be politically construed as ‘sisters and allies struggling to achieve common goals’ while they are also ‘mistress and maid, employer and employee, across a great divide of privilege and opportunity’ (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002b: 11).

The intention to both collect pre-determined types of evidence and listen to respondents as they formulate new lanes of inquiry and interpretation led us to conduct open-ended

obtain a general view of the spatial and material organization of the home, and sometimes even witness real-time interaction between employer and employee. Systematic data collection in these respects is hindered by the fact that not all employers or employees felt comfortable with it. Whenever access was offered though, valuable elements and clues could be collected to enrich our analysis.

interviews with a semi-structured script. We used distinct scripts depending on whether respondents were interviewed regarding their experience as a domestic employee or as an employer, although some key questions were present in both. Among the issues covered are the organization of tasks and responsibilities at home, present and past employment experiences, relationship with relevant individuals and formal institutions, and personal trajectory over time, besides more factual data on sociodemographic profile and household composition. Additional scripts have been prepared to support the interviews with managers of companies operating in this sector and privileged informants. The full scripts (translated into English) can be consulted in Appendix 1.

All of the interviews were conducted in Portuguese. A couple of implications must be underscored. First, Portuguese is not the native language of a few respondents, namely some of the immigrant domestic employees; they had to expend additional efforts to communicate with the researcher, and some information is likely to be lost or left unsaid despite our sensitivity to this issue. Second, translating fragments of the respondents' discourse into English (as we do in this dissertation) entails other risks of information loss. We try to compensate for this limitation by including the original Portuguese formulations in footnotes, recognizing that both scientific accurateness and political matters are at stake in linguistics and translation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 146-7).

Most of the interviews took about 90 minutes; a few of them took longer (as much as 150 minutes in the case of one employer), depending on the respondent's own availability and willingness to speak. 'Speaking about one's personal life to someone with whom one does not have a close emotional bond', as observed by Casaca, 'is hardly *natural*'; it is therefore for the interviewer to recreate a relationship that is the least *artificial* possible and the most adequate to alleviate reservations and stimulate trust' (Casaca, 2005: 247, our translation, original emphases). Respondents were able to choose the location and date of the interview; in most cases, interviews took place at their home, in the evening or during the weekend. Some respondents were asked to provide further details on particular matters at a later point in time.

After consultation with strategic informants and the first respondent employees themselves, we have decided not to tape-record the interviews. The suggestion is that the audio recorder is an intimidating, intrusive object in the researcher-respondent interaction, especially as conversation dwells on practices and behaviours falling outside legal requirements; the obvious examples are undeclared income and undocumented migration, key issues to be

covered in our fieldwork. Furthermore, the adequacy of audio recording had been disputed in the self-assessment of the methods adopted in our earlier master's research project, which also dealt with the employment experiences of migrants: the darkest and most insightful statements were heard when the recorder was off, leaving a critical question mark on how much more had been left unsaid (Abrantes, 2011: 33-4). The lack of comprehensive interview transcripts is counterbalanced by a resolute effort to increase the reliability and completeness of collected evidence. In a broader sense, success in this respect is only possible provided that the research design embodies an active response to the high degrees of control, submission and depowering to which women in underprivileged socioeconomic positions are submitted in their everyday life (see especially methodological considerations in Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001; Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007).

Anonymity is safeguarded by using pseudonyms in all of the materials resulting from our empirical research. The same caution applies to particular details on geographic and personal background. For instance, we refer to origin countries and regions within those countries, but hometowns remain unnamed. Likewise, we avoid mentioning elements of the respondents' everyday life that could compromise anonymity. We also comply with the explicit requests by a few respondents not to refer to specific events that they disclosed during the interview; they did it either in a thoughtless manner or intentionally to offer us a better understanding of their position on a given topic.

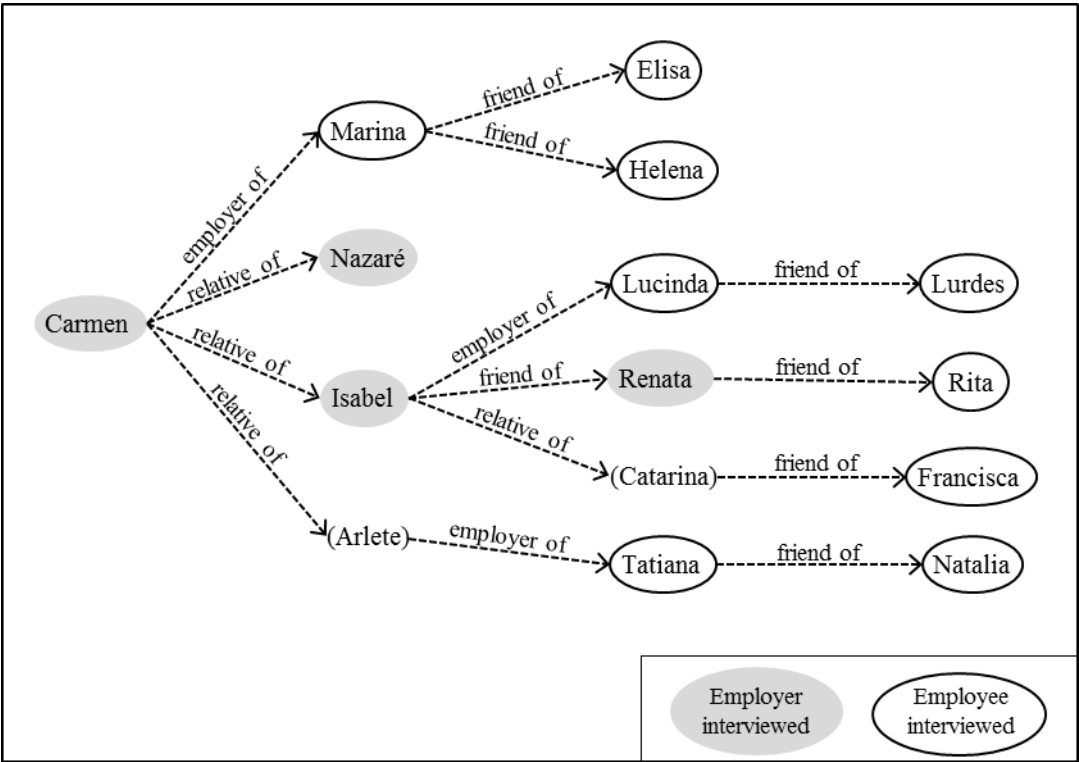
Employees and employers to be interviewed were located through snowball recommendation, an appropriate technique to dwell into an occupation often performed in the underground economy and grasp the content of informal communication channels which are themselves relevant to the actors' thinking and acting (Romero, 1992: 7; Van Walsum 2011: 156; Gorban, 2012: 32-3). A necessary degree of trust could thereby be accomplished. Given the concern that chain-referral sampling is typically biased toward homogeneity, it is useful to engage with several personal networks simultaneously (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001).

An exemplary overview of one of these networks can be found in Figure I. It should be read from left to right. This network began from our contact with Carmen. Afterwards, we got in touch with Carmen's domestic employee, Marina, as well as three of Carmen's relatives who are also employers of a domestic worker (they were Isabel, Nazaré and Arlete). In turn, Marina introduced us to two of her acquaintances working, like herself, as a domestic employee – Elisa and Helena. In the meantime, we interviewed Isabel, Nazaré and Arlete's

employee, Tatiana, who later introduced us to her friend Natalia. Through Isabel, we reached Lucinda (Isabel's employee), Lurdes (Lucinda's friend), and Catarina. Catarina was not interviewed for our research project; so far, she has never had any experience with domestic service as neither employer nor employee. She does hold an original position in our network: while several women from her family hire a domestic employee (Isabel among others), she introduced us to a friend of hers who *is* a domestic employee (Francisca). Renata's case is somewhat similar. An acquaintance of Isabel, she accepted to be interviewed as the employer of a domestic worker, and later introduced us to a friend who is currently employed as a domestic employee. The very existence of friendship bonds between women with contrasting positions in this sector (beyond the case of those who are the employer and the employee of *one another*) is an interesting element emerging from our fieldwork.

FIGURE I

ONE OF THE NETWORKS OF INTERVIEWEES DEVELOPED IN THE FIELDWORK



Source: Own elaboration based on the fieldwork notes.

Interviewing employees and employers who are engaged in an employment relationship with one another was possible in four cases (Carmen-Marina and Isabel-Lucinda, present in Figure I, are two of them). This was not a goal established from the outset, but rather the result of unexpected opportunities that came up during the fieldwork. It brings about particular challenges to data collection and analysis. Regardless of our confidentiality guarantees, respondents may fear that the researcher will pass on information to the other party or attempt to decide who is right and wrong with respect to particular issues of contention. At the same time, it opens a promising territory to explore, considering that our research project is less concerned with individual experiences than with employment relationships. In her study of domestic service in South Africa, Cock draws primarily on interviews conducted with employees and their particular employers, an option that entails notable benefits to discuss how respondents 'define their situations, their typifications of themselves and others, and the rules which define how their reality is constituted and experienced in interaction' (Cock, 1980: 15). However, the same author alerts to the risks of presuming that the presence of the sociologist is either inherently positive or inconsequential to the actual lives of respondents. Forcing one's way through to the complex and often intimate bond between employee and employer may bear consequences that are hard to estimate beforehand – even hard to assess at a later moment.

In fact, the studies of domestic service covered in our literature review present numerous reasons to be cautious about the illusion of 'non-interference' before and after stepping into empirical work. We have strictly limited ourselves to move within the boundaries of the suggestions and initiatives of the respondents. This entails significant implications too. The sequential recommendations that we have been offered are likely to favour cases or relationships construed by respondents as relatively 'successful'. For instance, a domestic employee would only introduce us to her employer (or vice-versa) when a fairly smooth relationship exists between the two women. The same holds for recommendations among each of the two categories of respondents separately. This is probably the main reason why we have only seldom come across extreme cases of conflict and exploitation such as those described by privileged informants based on their personal contact with this employment sector.

In other words, the methodology adopted in our fieldwork arguably contributes to our interviewing employees and employers who currently hold a sort of 'privileged' or

‘exemplary’ status in the broader landscape of domestic service, a position that some respondents themselves acknowledged when referring to darker stories that they had heard elsewhere. The opposite could have happened if we had chosen to look explicitly for individuals with the most striking experiences of direct conflict and exploitation.²⁶ Suffice to say that most of the respondents, employees and employers alike, described their own trajectory over time as one of socioeconomic upward mobility, and they tended to direct us to acquaintances with ‘interesting’ stories in that regard – meaning, more often than not, stories of struggle and victory. This subjective notion of achievement is something that we shall come back to in the discussion of our findings.

In view of these concerns, we have sought to favour diversity whenever possible. A table with a summary of respondents' personal characteristics can be found in Appendix 2. Readers may want to consult it for methodological reasons as well as to follow our empirical analysis (Chapters 7, 8 and 9), as it permits drawing a fast correspondence between the name of a given interviewee and her profile in various sociodemographic and employment dimensions. All of these data refer to their situation as recorded at the time of the interview.

Among the 25 women interviewed regarding their experience as domestic employees (Appendix 2b), some of the elements to bear in mind are:

- Their working time in domestic service ranges between 20 and 52 hours per week, with the exceptions of one respondent whose working time in this sector is 6 hours per week and four others who are currently employed full-time in other sectors. The decision to include these women as respondents is due to our interest in learning about not only their experience as domestic employees in the recent past, but also their very exit from the occupation, including subsequent experiences in the labour market and personal insights on the trajectory. The same attention to transience holds for respondents who held other occupations before becoming domestic employees. Only four women report that they did not have any paid employment experience outside domestic service so far (this excludes unpaid work in family businesses).

²⁶ This is very much what happens to our privileged informants from immigrant NGOs and trade unions. One of them, Alessandra, told us that during the activities of the NGO that she represents there is often an excessive focus on defeat and not enough positive testimonies to learn from. In the meantime, a difficulty shared by academic researchers and activists is how to expand and consolidate channels of communication with domestic employees in the most isolated settings, including those labouring away from cities where support services exist or under ‘live-in’ arrangements.

- The number of households in which they are employed ranges between one and nine. Full-time employment at one single household is the case of two respondents only, one of whom under a ‘live-in’ arrangement. There is a similar number of formal and informal relationships considering the full spectre of present employment arrangements. This is an asset to our in-depth examination of dynamics underlying formalization, in particular with respect to social security coverage (in Chapter 9).
- Year of birth ranges between 1953 and 1987. Distribution along this time span is fairly balanced: five respondents were born during the 1950s, ten other during the 1960s, four during the 1970s.
- Household composition is similar across respondents. The majority of them reside together with a male partner and children; the number of children ranges from one to three, including minors in ten of the cases. Four other respondents are separated, with children in the house except in one case. Only the three youngest women do not have any child to date, one of them being the only respondent who is single and lives on her own.²⁷ Among the immigrant women, only one of them has a child living back in her country of origin under the care of a relative. This is another strong corroboration that the most extreme cases of economic hardship have remained outside the scope of our fieldwork.
- Born in Portugal were 14 respondents, seven of whom in the Lisbon area. The remaining 11 were born in either Brazil (three), Cape Verde (two), Guinea-Bissau (two), Angola (one), Mozambique (one), Ukraine (one) or Russia (one). Considering those born both in and outside Portugal, the year of their first arrival in Lisbon ranges from 1966 to 2007. But all cases up to 1992 pertain to migration from rural areas of Portugal or from territories in Africa while these were still under the Portuguese dictatorial rule; in turn, the cases of immigration strictly speaking occurred in the 1990s (the two respondents born in Guinea-Bissau) and the 2000s (the respondents born in countries other than former Portuguese colonies in Africa), in close

²⁷ For the sake of simplification, we use the term ‘single’ to describe respondents who report that they have never shared residence with a love partner so far, while ‘separate’ refers to those who did it at least once in the past. These terms do not account for the actual engaging in love relationships or breaking up, neither for the legal status of those relationships (marriage/partnership, divorce/separation, etc.). While the stress here falls on co-residence, we recognize that love relationships and legal status *per se* have important implications in our empirical research.

concurrence with the changing trends documented in large-scale analyses of migration flows in Portugal (Baganha, 1998; Peixoto et al, 2006; Góis & Marques, 2009). The inclusion of respondents with both international and internal – mainly rural-urban – mobility experiences is key to overcome the frequent gap in knowledge regarding how the two things interconnect and compare (Sassen, 2007; Wickramasekara, 2011). Only one of the immigrant interviewees lacks the legal documentation of residence in Portugal.

- With regard to schooling, the highest level among respondents is secondary education: this was completed by as many as 12 respondents. Three other completed only primary education, and three left school before that. Only one woman, the oldest among the respondents born abroad, never attended school. Overall, this is a more educated profile than could be expected based on what we know about the case of Portugal concerning labour migration (Baganha, 1998; Pires, 2010; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010) or educational trends (OECD, 2009; Martins, 2012). The suggestion that we have interviewed women with formal education above the average in this occupation is reinforced by evidence from a recent questionnaire to paid domestic workers in Portugal (Guibentif, 2011), which found out that 36 per cent of them had primary education or below. To be sure, educational profile in the sector is far from homogeneous: according to the same questionnaire, 22 per cent of domestic employees have 10 or more years of schooling (the case of half of the respondents in our own empirical research). In both cases, the qualifications of foreign respondents are considerably higher than those of the Portuguese ones.
- While three respondents are members of a trade union (two) or an immigrant NGO (one), none of the others is affiliated with an organization of this type. Some nevertheless report experiences of union membership when they were employed in other occupations, an important detail that we shall not fail to address in Chapter 9.

What about the profile of the 25 women interviewed regarding their experience as employers of a domestic worker (Appendix 2c)? Relevant general characteristics at the time of interview are, among others:

- The working time of domestic employees at their home ranges from 3 to 22:30 hours per week, with the exception of five respondents who presently do not hire domestic

services on a regular basis; the voices of the latter are worth listening to considering their past experience as employers, as well as the particular events and reasoning that led them to cease those relationships (the same attention to transience noted above for the case of interviewing employees). None of the respondents is a full-time employer, although several of them have been in the past. This is consonant with our previous observation that most of the interviewed employees currently work part-time for several households, and it matches the notion of an overall expansion of part-time arrangements in this sector (Catarino & Oso, 2000; Perista, 2002; Brasão, 2010) and the close association between full-time recruitment today and eldercare (Guerreiro, 2000; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Pereira, 2013). A proportionate distribution of formal and informal domestic service arrangements are reported by the employers interviewed.

- Nearly all hold a full-time job, the only exceptions being one respondent working part-time as a freelancer and two who are retired (one other is also retired from her original job but still works as the owning manager of a company). While a variety of occupations is reported, there is a clear predominance of professional and technical workers, including six respondents with a job in applied informatics and six other in the educational area (including teaching at secondary and tertiary education institutions). Only five respondents, those with working experience in clerical or service jobs, do not hold a tertiary education degree. The fact that over half of these 25 respondents are employed in the public sector is a relevant particularity of the set, insofar as women working in the private sector may be confronted with other difficulties and solutions in the articulation of work and family responsibilities (Torres et al, 2004; Casaca, 2013). This unintended bias in our empirical study has several explanations. One of them is that respondents working in the public sector referred us mainly to other respondents in the same situation. Another explanation, perhaps more instructive, is that our efforts to counterbalance this trend were hampered by the lesser availability of women with jobs in the private sector: notably, several of them declined or postponed time and again our interview for reasons of tight agenda or unwillingness to speak about personal affairs.
- Although year of birth ranges from 1928 to 1985, only one respondent was born before 1951, and only five after 1974. The age of most of the respondents is thus between 35 and 60 years old, a positive condition for us to examine the various

manners in which they have organized domestic work over time, presumably related with elements such as changing childcare and eldercare demands within the family or career developments.

- Seven of them reside together with a male partner and children; the number of children ranges from one to three, including minors in five cases. Five other respondents live only with their partner, reporting either that they expect motherhood to come in the future (two of them pregnant at the time of the interview) or that their children already grew up and moved out. Other respondents are separated (six, three of whom with children in the house), widows (three), or single (three). There is a co-resident elderly parent in three cases. Several other respondents are responsible for overseeing the well-being of one or more dependent elderly relatives, but these relatives are not co-resident: they live either in collective facilities or at their own home under the care of domestic employees hired for this purpose.
- Although the majority was born in Lisbon, four other were born in a different region of the country; and five were born abroad. Among the latter, only one has foreign nationality (Brazilian), whereas the remaining are Portuguese citizens but were born when their parents were living outside the country, in Portuguese colonies or elsewhere. This is an important information because it adds a degree of complexity to the conventional dichotomy between *native employers* and *foreign employees*. A nuanced approach to the subject is further encouraged once we consider both international and in-country mobility. These issues shall be paid particular attention in our discussion of empirical evidence on ethnic and migration dynamics (Chapter 8).
- Five respondents are affiliated with a trade union. Three other were affiliated with a trade union throughout most of their careers, ceasing membership due to retirement or a recent change of mind. All of these cases pertain to respondents working in the public sector, reinforcing our previously mentioned concern with differences in public and private sector jobs.

These descriptive remarks are crucial to understand the potential and limitations of our case study – and therefore the possibilities that it offers to knowledge advancement. Based on the profile of employees and employers interviewed during fieldwork, we can confirm that particular types of employment relationships remain pretty much beyond our scrutiny. This is

the case of full-time and ‘live-in’ arrangements, including a substantial part of those related with eldercare. The same holds for situations in which domestic service is performed under highly precarious and exploitative conditions; such descriptions do come up as employees refer to past experiences or as employers refer to circumstances that they have witnessed or heard about, but not in first-hand accounts of present-day experience. For a different outcome, different methodological options would have to be made. We are nevertheless in a favourable position to fill some gaps as we listen to both employees and employers – valuable insight on each of the parties can be provided by the other one too. Complementary evidence is collected through consultation with the strategic informants.

4.5. Analysing and composing data

The question of whether the analysis of collected data is more or less descriptive, explanatory or exploratory is largely determined by the way in which the problem has been formulated at the outset. It is also entwined with the very characteristics of the datasets. Our conduction of in-depth interviews responds to a declared inclination toward explanatory and exploratory approaches. The official statistics and legal documents to be examined offer favourable conditions to a more descriptive endeavour, but even then a substantial exploratory component is present due to limitations in these types of evidence as well as their unique and revelatory potential. To develop a global interpretation of findings, we shall take as a starting point that ‘the analysis of causality is only one of the forms (though probably the privileged one) of scientific explanation’ (Almeida & Pinto, 1975: 443). Description and exploration can also be ways of *explaining*, depending on what one is attempting to explain.

A key aspect of the datasets used in our study pertains to disparity in their geographic and temporal boundaries. While examining relevant developments in lawmaking (Chapter 5), we trace the legal regulation of domestic service in Portugal back to the Civil Code adopted in 1867; this historical perspective on the subject is claimed to expose a number of informative elements to our understanding of contemporary dynamics. For technical reasons explained above, our scrutiny of official statistics (Chapter 6) covers the first decade of the twenty-first century. In contrast, fieldwork interviews (Chapters 7, 8 and 9) do not follow any strict temporal circumscription. They were conducted in the period of 2011-13, but some respondents have been employees or employers in this sector for over three decades while

others are only recently in such situation. Although all respondents currently live or work in the area of Lisbon, their accounts include experiences in other parts of Portugal or abroad; in contrast, legislation and statistics favour a national scale of observation. In short, the overlap of our datasets is partial rather than integral, and this is both a call for caution and a source of encouragement with respect to data analysis.

Given the distinct types of data, analysis is supported by a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Statistics from official sources are examined through simple computation of numbers and dataset triangulation. For evidence collected through interviews, we adopt a model of interpretative content analysis (Almeida & Pinto, 1975), that is, based on the grouping of significations rather than vocables (as a semi-quantitative analysis of discourse would have). Data are coded into categories, concepts and relationships, with particular themes emerging as helpful to fill in or challenge the analytical framework defined beforehand (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Mayan, 2001). The codification is organized according to the two dimensions used by Casaca (2005, 2012b) in her analysis of interviews with women employed in the service industry: a ‘chronological’ dimension, akin to the proposition of the biographical approach (Becker, 1974); and a ‘thematic’ dimension, typically privileged in studies of working conditions and relations (Abbott, 1993; Castillo, 1999).

As discussed above, quantitative methods raise a number of concerns with regard to the adequate understanding of experience, value and meaning. In turn, qualitative methods can easily be criticized for lacking – or not being sufficiently explicit about – systematic criteria to ensure trustworthiness and reliability in the phase of analysing and composing data (Oakley, 2000: 57). For all its ‘depth’ and ‘heterogeneity’, case study research entails particular demands to prevent the discussion of findings from being ‘an act of impressionism with a wide margin of arbitrary’ (Almeida & Pinto, 1975: 387). In our study, three overriding criteria are adopted. The first of them is the use of multiple sources of evidence rather than just a single one. This is why it is so important to bring together figures from two different official sources (Labour Force Surveys and Social Security Records) and the voices of individuals and strategic informants dealing with the subject from a variety of angles and standpoints. The approximation between survey and intensive research methods encompasses major benefits to interpretation, as defended for the study of contemporary migration by Massey and Capoferro (2004).

The second principle is the creation of a detailed written database. In our case, several sub-databases have been created to cover all sites of data collection. Survey evidence and personal accounts can thus be jointly oriented to the purpose of building a complex case description. Systematic record-keeping permits moving back and forth in the time frame of the research. This is important not only due to the multiplicity of actors and levels of interaction under examination, but also because the research project aimed at a prolonged engagement with the sites of enquiry. The four-year project was preceded by a period of preparation associated with submitting the research proposal to public funding. The collection of data from primary sources lasted for two years as initially planned in order to enable the maturation and cyclical verification of findings.

Third, it is crucial to maintain a practical chain of evidence, making clear the sequence of steps that lead from data collection to the elaboration of conclusions. Consistence in interpretation is ensured by relying on theoretical propositions (theory testing and revising), structured questioning, the analysis of embedded units, the triangulation of observations, and chronological considerations. Descriptive and theory-building efforts are clearly distinguished along the following chapters of this dissertation. This is a necessary condition to understand the location of respondents in broader socio-economic landscapes and theoretical debates, thereby favouring the connection of our results to the existing body of knowledge. Readers are able to keep an eye on the breadth of coverage of the data and assess the transferability of our findings to other settings. There has been an effort to keep the research question as well as the exploration of answers within manageable limits considering the time frame of the project: the topics uncovered during research which fall beyond the scope of our core analysis are mentioned in the concluding chapter as suggestions for further study.

With respect to the fieldwork interviews, two additional elements must be paid attention. First, the analysis of data collected during fieldwork can not be detached from a thorough consideration of the relationship between researcher and respondents. As any other individual, the researcher occupies a particular position in gender, ethnic and class structures, to mention only the hierarchical formations addressed at length in the previous chapters. This position is the result of both objective and subjective conditions, and it is relational rather than absolute, that is, it depends on the position and perception of others. In the present case, we were never free from the markers of being male, native-born, white-skinned, a PhD candidate – and, on these various grounds, someone who is less likely to work as a domestic employee than to

hire one. This is especially relevant as our interviews deal with issues of social structure and inequality; it is plausible that a researcher with different personal traits would obtain different information from respondents. Attentive listening and emphatic understanding were crucial to grasp personal narratives and their contexts. The sensitivity required to examine other types of evidence such as official statistics also vary across researchers depending on personal experience. These are, after all, practical instantiations of the broader intellectual challenge in the face of which Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) advocate reflexive sociology: practicing the radical doubt – that is, breaking from common sense as a necessary step to build scientific knowledge – and pursuing relational thinking.

The preconstructed is everywhere. The sociologist is thus saddled with the task of knowing an object – the social world – of which *he is the product, in a way such that the problems that he raises about it and the concepts he uses have every chance of being the product of this object itself.*

In Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), p. 235, original emphasis.

This brings us to the second element worth underscoring. Whenever we draw evidence from interviews, we are not working with official or definitive accounts; more often than not, respondents are construing their narratives, opinions and assessments as they go – and again, the role of the researcher in this process is far from negligible. In addition, our scripts touched upon topics that are especially delicate for some respondents. One example: our interview with Beatriz, a foreign domestic employee, was running smoothly until the moment when she mentioned her daughter; it took Beatriz a long while to get hold of her tears and find the right words to describe her separation from the small child, who is currently under the care of a relative in Brazil. Another example: Alzira, one of the employers interviewed during our fieldwork, explicitly acknowledged at the end of the interview that she would have liked to tell us more about the past and present dynamics in her family were she not tormented by the memory of her husband's recent death.

As conversation delves into intimate or painful events – but also into those reported with joy and loud laughter –, we are reminded that the researcher thinks and feels *with* the respondents, and not merely *about* them. Clearly established as they may be at the outset of fieldwork, the boundaries between ‘I’ and ‘them’ tend to become too thin once knowledge is conceived as a form of approximation. To lay our viewpoints on stronger foundations, we needed to take into

consideration both invisible systemic dynamics and lifeworld experience, and we felt obliged to borrow the occasional indifference of respondents regarding their own position in social structures so that we could accept the kind invitation to come into contact with their hearts and souls. The immaterial content of the relationship between researcher and respondents is a composite of conscious and subconscious operations.²⁸

Last, composing and reporting are also part of the analytical undertaking. Respondents have shared their experience through speaking; it is for the researcher to find adequate ways to register it for future memory. Writing is still researching, if only through selecting, organizing, commenting. This dissertation is based on a 'linear-analytic' structure (Yin, 1989): we present sequentially the problem, the methods, the discussion of findings and the conclusions, sometimes revisiting the same evidence and taking on distinct theoretical approaches. In so doing, we reconstitute the itinerary of the researcher all the way from the survey of existing scholarship to the elaboration of the original results.

During the conduction of our research project, selected data and preliminary findings have been submitted to debate on several occasions. The regular exchange of ideas with the two research supervisors was key. Scientific meetings offered additional opportunities to write, reflect, and receive feedback from peers. Among these:

- Substantial parts of the literature review and problem formulation in the Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation were presented at the *XVII World Congress of the International Sociological Association* in Gothenburg, July 2010; and the *I International Meeting of the Portuguese Sociological Association on Work, Organizations and Occupations* in Oporto, July 2011;
- The research design described in this chapter was presented in Doctoral Seminars at the Technical University of Lisbon on the 22nd of February, 2011, and on the 16th of April, 2012;

²⁸ An illustration of how this relationship expands beyond the limits of conscience is provided by a dream that we had during night sleep in the final period of the research project. After a day of intensive work on the Chapter 7 of this dissertation, one of the women interviewed during the fieldwork appeared in our dreams to express her disagreement with a particular part of what we had written. To be sure, this opinion was a product of our own imagination (at best, our thoughts about the possible thoughts of the respondent), and it is perhaps more accurate to see it as a form of self-assessment than as a viewpoint from someone on the outside. Yet, it is suggestive of the density and complexity of the interviewer-interviewee communication.

- The analysis of lawmaking in Chapter 5 was presented at the *International Conference on Law and Inequalities* in Coimbra, April 2012;
- The analysis of official statistics in Chapter 6 was presented at the *7th Interim Meeting of the European Sociological Association Research Network 19 (Sociology of Professions)* in Helsinki, May 2012; and the *VII Portuguese Sociological Congress* in Oporto, June 2012;
- The analysis of developments and dilemmas in collective organization was presented at the *2012 Annual Conference on Industrial Relations in Europe & Mid-term Conference of the European Sociological Association Research Network 17 (Work, Employment and Industrial Relations)* in Lisbon, September 2012; the workshop *Domestic Work and Immigration: Class, Gender and Ethnicity in the Labour Market* in Lisbon, September 2012; and the *1st Congress of the History of Labour and Social Movements in Portugal* in Lisbon, March 2013;
- Analyses drawing on fieldwork interviews were presented at the *European Science Foundation Exploratory Workshop on Circular Migrant Domestic Workers in European Societies* in Florence, November 2012; the *8th Annual Series of Young Social Scientists* in Coimbra, February 2013; the seminar on *Work and Workers: Realities, Identities and Processes* in Lisbon, May 2013; and the *XV National Meeting of Industrial, Organizational and Labour Sociology* in Covilhã, May 2013.

Likewise, the composition and revision of our findings benefited from the work involved in the publication of articles in scientific journals. The contributions of close fellow researchers and anonymous reviewers must be acknowledged, as well as the periods spent as a visiting fellow in the VU University Amsterdam (in the Netherlands), the National University of Cuyo and the National University of Salta (in Argentina).

Beyond academic settings, our findings have been often presented to respondents themselves. The main purpose was to find out whether they considered the researcher's views to offer a wise and sensitive account of subjects that they deal with in everyday life. Certainly disagreement must be welcomed and assessed in a critical manner. In the case of developments in collective organization, we had several opportunities to discuss our findings with labour organizers and activists between the summer of 2011 and the end of 2012. In the

case of commercial companies, a summary of preliminary findings was presented to the interviewed managers in July 2012. Policy recommendations included in the concluding chapter of this dissertation were discussed at the *Forum on Immigration and Domestic Work* organized by the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue in Lisbon, on the 29th of June, 2012. Contact with respondents and relevant organizations in the stage of reporting findings is one of the premises of public sociology, with positive implications to the approximation between sociologists and other actors in civil society (Burawoy, 2005, 2009).

Law and decency: historical developments, lingering tensions

5.1. A historical approach to the legal regulation of domestic service in Portugal

Gathered in June 2011 for its 100th general conference, the ILO adopted a convention and a recommendation establishing minimum standards for the working conditions in domestic service (ILO, 2011a, 2011b). To a certain extent, these documents can be understood as providing a foundational framework: a global attempt has been made to clarify the contents and boundaries of domestic service, as well as to define a major set of rights and duties applying to several parties – workers, employers, companies, governments. However, this is also the outcome of a complex process of negotiation between those parties. In other words, it challenges national standards and existing power relations as much as it builds on them.

In her introduction to a thematic issue of the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, Blackett (2011) observes that a large body of scholarship across the globe insists upon the role of national law in constructing and perpetuating the oppression of domestic workers. Based on previous studies, this author concludes that ‘the landscape for regulating domestic work is dynamic, with an emerging and increasing number of specific regulatory frameworks put in place in nation states of the global South and North’ (Blackett, 2011: 10). Still, little information is available to help us understand how current frameworks came to be. Our Chapter 3 exposes the benefits of bringing together contributions from the disciplines of sociology and law, in both of which attention is paid to the role of formal institutions in the legitimation (and de-legitimation) of inequality. The work of a variety of authors navigating this disciplinary frontier informs and supports our defence of a historical perspective (Weber, 1978 [1911-13]; Beleza, 2000, 2002; Hespanha, 2003; Santos, 2006; Guibentif, 2009; Anderson, 2010a; Van Walsum, 2011; cf. especially section 3.3 of this dissertation). As thorough as it may be, a discussion limited to the legal standards currently in force is bound to

overlook the impact of historical developments – their content, their political meaning and their timing – on the present-day operation of the sector.

Similarly to what happens in other countries, domestic service in Portugal is regulated by a specific law. Significant contention subsists as to what extent exceptional legislation on particular types of employment responds to their singularities, or, from a distinct viewpoint, excludes them from broader movements and accomplishments of the working class. Problematic implications to the regulation of domestic service are underscored in a global report published by the ILO (2010: 24): ‘domestic workers form a significant part of the working population and, given their vulnerability to dangerous, discriminatory and abusive working conditions, they warrant special attention rather than exclusion’. In the case of Portugal, the legal separation between this type of employment and standard wage labour exists since the first extensive endeavour to establish the basic rights of workers and employers at the national level.

We propose drawing back to that very initial document – the Civil Code of 1867 – so that we can better grasp subsequent developments. Afterwards, our attention turns to a selection of relevant legal changes over time, with an emphasis on the post-1974 democratic period. This task requires not simply description, but also a critical consideration of political struggles and decisions. Official positions from political parties and trade unions are pinpointed. Last, we assess the challenges that the ILO Domestic Workers Convention – yet to be ratified by the state of Portugal at the time of writing – poses to the regulation of domestic service in this country. Our analysis is chiefly based on the documental analysis of institutional records, including legislation and transcripts of parliamentary sessions. Valuable pieces of orientation are provided by first-hand interviews, especially those with public officers and representatives of workers' and employers' organizations. In the light of the originality of our undertaking, we assume an exploratory lens, recognizing the need for future systematic research on particular topics and historical periods.

5.2. Distinction and exclusion (1867-1974)

Consisting of a total number of 2497 articles, the Civil Code adopted in 1867 covers a broad range of subjects including citizenship rights and duties, ownership, family, trade and labour. One particular chapter concerns the regulation of employment. This chapter is divided into

eight sections, one of which – in fact, the first – is dedicated to domestic service.²⁹ Domestic service, like professional occupations or apprenticeship arrangements, is thereby distinguished from standard wage labour, which is dealt with in a section of its own applying to all jobs without specific regulation. The particular attention of legislators to paid domestic work suggests an acknowledgement of this issue not only as complex or delicate, but also as a singular matter with respect to public order.

First of all, this document circumscribes domestic service to household work that is *rewarded* and performed on a *temporary* basis: commitments for life between employer and worker are deemed legally invalid, in which case any of the parties can abandon it free of costs or obligations (Arts. 1370-1). Interestingly, this provision is not attached to any other occupation in the Civil Code of 1867, and one of its goals is to establish an operational boundary between domestic service and serfdom or slavery (Ferreira, 1870: 392). Further rules with respect to the beginning and end of the employment relationship are specified, as well as a list of duties and rights of both parties (Arts. 1376 to 1384). Neither employer nor worker is able to abandon the relationship without following due procedures save there is a just cause for termination.

The selection of words is noteworthy. The person who employs a domestic worker is referred to as *amo* (master); in the section of the Civil Code concerning standard wage labour, the word *servido* (served person) is used instead. However, the person who is hired to work is called *serviçal* (servant) in both sections. This detail is interesting insofar as it reflects a distinction not between domestic employees and regular wage earners, but rather between their employers. The master, unlike the employer, is expected to own more than the worker's labour power. What employers buy from domestic workers, Anderson (2000: 112-3) argues, may in fact be less their labour power than their very personhood, thus challenging the postulate of modern political philosophy that all individuals possess their own body and mind – a key principle underpinning the achievement of rights for women and ethnic minorities throughout the 20th century.

²⁹ *Parte II: Da aquisição dos direitos; Livro II: Dos direitos que se adquirem por facto e vontade própria e de outrem conjuntamente; Título II: Dos contratos em particular; Capítulo IV: Do contracto de prestação de serviços; Secção I: Do serviço doméstico; Arts. 1370-1390*, pp. 236-239 in *Código Civil Portuguez* (1868), 2nd edition, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional.

The Civil Code of 1867 further states that whenever domestic servants have not been recruited to perform a particular task, the employment relationship binds them to perform any service compatible with their physical ability (Art. 1375). Social customs or values – without specification – are mentioned in several articles as providing the standards to be observed. While this is not a particular feature of the legal regulation of domestic service, it does add some peculiar elements to it. For instance, Art. 1374 states that, should an explicit agreement on remuneration be absent, pay is to be based on local customs considering the servant's sex, age and duty. If the servant suffers from a health problem, the master is responsible for arranging medical support and then deducting its costs from the remuneration if not willing to pay for it out of 'generosity' (Art. 1384/3). With regard to inheritances, Art. 1386 establishes that if the master decides to leave some of his inheritance to a servant, this can not be subtracted from the remuneration and dismissal pay (15 extra days) that the servant is entitled to receive from the master's heirs.

Concerning age, minors are allowed to perform domestic service, although in that case an agreement must be reached between the master and the minor's legal guardian. Again, local customs apply when the servant is a minor without a legal guardian. Among the employer's duties, it is stated that whenever the servant is underage the master is obliged to correct his or her mistakes 'as a legal guardian would' (Art. 1384/1).

Two overall contributions of this piece of legislation can be discerned. On the one hand, an effort is expended to acknowledge some rights and benefits in paid domestic work. On the other, the singularity of domestic service among existing occupations and the paternalistic characteristics of this type of labour relationship are clearly asserted. This is apparent in the aforementioned selection of words. Second, the duties of the 'master', as well as his authority to command, expand well beyond what is established for standard wage labour. This is closely related to the legal construction of the inviolability of home, which owes less to modern day constitutional rights on individual freedom and privacy than to the autonomy of the domestic sphere – as a peripheral power – *vis-à-vis* the central power of the state (Hespanha, 2003: 22). In fact, individual rights are often sacrificed within the very context of the household, according among other things to patriarchal rule (Beleza, 2002). Third, it is necessary to point out that the protection of domestic employees in the Civil Code of 1867 is minimal since just causes for dismissal include broadly applicable notions of inability at work, misbehaviour, and breaking or stealing master's belongings (Art. 1381). To a large extent, this source of

insecurity at work remains in place until today, and it is crucial to ensure asymmetry in the employer-employee relationship (Guibentif, 2011).

From the last decades of the 19th century onwards, a wide array of legislation on particular employment issues was implemented in Portugal. This is the case of the status of minors and women as workers, the rights of workers to association and representation, the responsibility of employers regarding health and safety at work, the legal procedures to settle disagreements between employers and employees, or the norms of labour inspection. More often than not, these decrees contained an article excluding particular categories of workers, typically those employed in the agricultural, maritime and domestic service sectors. The underlying claim is that the special conditions under which these jobs are performed justify exceptional regulation. In the case of domestic service, labour inspection conflicts with an ambiguous notion of the inviolability of private households (Anderson, 2010b: 64). A second problem is that domestic workers are required to work, or *stay at the workplace*, longer than standard wage earners. Notably, when a national maximum number of working hours was established in 1919 (8 hours per day and 48 hours per week), it explicitly mentioned that it did not apply to rural workers, hotel and restaurant workers, or domestic servants.³⁰ This was indeed a period of intense workers' mobilization. In 1921, a regional association of hotel and private household workers was established in Lisbon. Although supported by local proletarian trade unions, it was not granted permission from state authorities to operate (Brasão, 2010: 45-6). After the enforcement of dictatorial rule in 1926, the efforts of this association to run its own system of placement and recruitment in domestic service would be resumed by a catholic institution with the official goal of providing jobs and basic survival assistance. When the original association was reassembled in 1939, domestic employees were not included anymore.

The general labour law of 1933 imposed dramatic changes on the system of industrial relations.³¹ Collective organization was severely restricted; among other things, workers and companies were required to maintain a 'social peace spirit' (Art. 5) and forbidden to 'suspend or disturb' any economic activity 'with the purpose of obtaining new working conditions or other benefits' (Art. 9). The law establishing the standard rules for employment contracts in

³⁰ Decree Nr. 5516, May 10, 1919, Art. 1. That same year, the ILO was created within the League of Nations. Portugal was among its founding member states.

³¹ *Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional*, Law-Decree 23048, 23 September, 1933.

1937 added important provisions.³² By the time the civil code was revised in 1966, provisions on employment in this document were limited to the definition of basic concepts, all further issues being dispatched to specific labour legislation (Arts. 1152 to 1156).³³ Absent from both the new civil code and general labour law, domestic service remained under the norms of the Civil Code adopted 99 years earlier. It is also possible to assume, as suggested to us by a trade union representative, that the norms laid down in 1867 no longer applied as such, and that disputes pertaining to this employment sector were expected to be settled by legal authorities on the basis of a combination of sources, including general labour law, separate legislation, customs and caselaw. Additional research would be necessary to clarify this point.³⁴

In her doctoral project, Brasão (2010) aims to map the processes of domination and resistance shaping the domestic servant condition in Portugal between 1940 and 1970. Based on various sorts of evidence, this author demonstrates that the period under examination in her study entails the rise of new social tensions regarding the presence of the maid in the sphere of the employers' family and the paternalistic foundations underlying this type of relationship. The standards of discipline dictated in relative harmony by employers, state authorities and catholic organizations was contravened by acts of disorganized resistance from domestic employees in their everyday life, in such a way that the 'disorganization' of the workforce – together with the insufficient legal regulation of the sector – arguably became the greatest threats to control exercised by the elites.

In Portugal, the historical process of the decline of the domestic servant condition is not accompanied with a revolutionary aspiration of the collective kind, neither is it a product of mobilization in that direction. It is a transformation lacking in riots, strikes, contestations or lockups. The unravelling of the domestic servant role would become apparent through diffuse manifestations of resistance to power, which were most of the times met with responses of strengthening authority over certain forms of disobedience and requests that the state regulated the obligations applying to domestic work.

In Brasão (2010), pp. 170-1, our translation, original emphasis.

³² Law Nr. 1952, March 10, 1937

³³ Decree-Law Nr. 47344, November 25, 1966.

³⁴ The final chapter of this dissertation includes a number of ideas for further study that emerged in the course of our research. One of them is the in-depth analysis of caselaw, both in distant periods of the past and in more recent years. This would allow us to dig into juridical practice and better assess the implications of the legal changes identified here.

Eventually, the state did regulate – if only after the fall of the dictatorial regime. The intention would then be to fill the apparent gap in labour law with respect to this activity sector and, in so doing, resolve a number of lingering doubts regarding the applicability of other legal dispositions. One of these, perhaps the most striking, concerned underage workers. According to the general law of 1969, recruitment was limited to minors who had completed 14 years of age, but it was unclear to what extent this measure still restricted the recruitment of younger girls as ‘live-in’ maids.³⁵ The controversy, as noted by a trade union representative interviewed for our project, was juridical as much as sociological. The relationship between these children and their employers was often construed – symbolically and, at least in some cases, in practice – as falling beyond the scope of employment. The girl was less hired than ‘taken in’ by the new household, where she was expected to learn (mainly from older servants and the more affluent ‘madam’) a portfolio of manners and skills so that she might become either an adult maid or the housewife of a (working class) husband to be, saving her family of origin the expenses of her subsistence along the way. The workload required in exchange from the girl would depend on her masters' needs and preferences. Without the ambition of a historical study, we shall refer to these arrangements in later chapters as they were experienced during childhood by several domestic employees interviewed in our fieldwork.

5.3. Revision and approximation (1974-2014)

Once more, employees of the agricultural and domestic service sectors were excluded when a national minimum wage was implemented in the early days of the democratic regime in 1974. A minimum wage for domestic employees only came into force in 1978.³⁶ The amount defined then (3500 Escudos gross per month, or 17,46 Euros in simple currency conversion) would go through several upgrades over the following decades, remaining below the minimum amount for standard wage labour until they were finally merged in 2004 (365,60 Euros gross per month at that time; 485,00 by 2014).³⁷

³⁵ Law-Decree Nr. 49408/69, Chapter VIII, especially Art. 123.

³⁶ Law-Decree Nr. 113/78, May 29, 1978.

³⁷ A systematic survey of the evolution of the national minimum wage for domestic, agricultural and all other types of employees between 1974 and 2007 can be found in Baptista (2011: 161-2). Amounts are based on a full-time arrangement, that is, the maximum working period legally permitted; the proportional hourly wage applies to part-time arrangements. As shown below, a part of the remuneration can be paid in kinds.

TABLE I
CHRONOLOGY OF SELECTED POST-1974 LEGISLATION
ON DOMESTIC SERVICE IN PORTUGAL

Year	Document	Relevance
1978	Law-Decree 113/78, 29 May (Art. 1/1a)	Establishment of a minimum wage for domestic employees (to be updated on a yearly basis)
1980	Law-Decree Nr. 508/80, 21 October	Extensive regulation of domestic service employment relationships
1982	Regulatory Decree 43/82, 22 July	Inclusion of domestic service employment in the social security system
1992	Law-Decree Nr. 235/92, 24 October	Revised regulation of domestic service employment relationships
1996	Law-Decree Nr. 88/96, 3 July (Art. 1/1)	Extension of the general regulation on Christmas allowance to cover domestic employees
2004	Law-Decree Nr. 19/04, 20 January (Art. 2)	Extension of the general regulation on minimum wage to cover domestic and agricultural employees

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of legislation.

Pressure for inclusion in the dynamics of democratization was exerted by the two domestic service unions created in 1975-1976, one of which gained public visibility by presenting a petition to the national parliament and a project of regulation to the Ministry of Labour.³⁸ Although the draft for a law on this sector was elaborated in 1978, the process could not be completed before the collapse of the parliamentary coalition supporting the government.³⁹ In fact, developments in lawmaking can not be detached from the high instability of national politics in the period of 1976-1985, with ten different elected or appointed governments in only nine years (Lobo, 1996). The legislative elections of December 1979 resulted in a right-wing coalition coming to office.⁴⁰ In October 1980, the first extensive law regulating domestic service employment in Portugal was adopted.

³⁸ For more on the creation and ideological difference of the two unions, as well as their current operation, see our discussion of workers' organization and collective action in Chapter 9.

³⁹ The *Partido Socialista* (Socialist Party) was then in office with the support of the *Centro Democrático e Social* (Democratic and Social Centre).

⁴⁰ Under the name of *Aliança Democrática* (Democratic Alliance), this coalition was formed by *Partido Social-Democrata* (Social-Democratic Party), *Centro Democrático Social* (Democratic and Social Centre) and *Partido Popular Monárquico* (Monarchist Popular Party). It remained in office until 1983.

The very preamble of the decree is dubious as it states that it is ‘an imperative of social justice to cover the activity sector of domestic services with updated and more complete *though necessarily particular* legislation’ (our translation, emphasis added).⁴¹ In its 24 articles, it covers various possibilities of employer-employee arrangements regarding working time, holidays, pay, procedures to begin and terminate the contract, and minimum age. Three distinct aspects – besides the aforementioned disadvantage with respect to minimum wage – should be underscored. First, a list of tasks is provided to make explicit the standard working contents of domestic service relationships; however, the last item on this list clarifies that ‘any other activities of a similar character consecrated by usages and customs’ may be included (Art. 2), resonating with the type of formulation used in the Civil Code of 1867. Second, a maximum working time is not established. ‘Live-in’ employees are entitled to breaks for resting and eating which can not make up less than two hours per day, as well as to rest at night for eight hours in a row (Art. 8) – implying that they must be available during a total of 14 hours per day. Still, the breaks which they *have* the right to enjoy ‘are granted without detriment to the tasks of oversight or assistance to the household’ (Art. 8/2), and the night rest ‘should not be interrupted except for serious non-regular or imperative reasons’ (Art. 8/3). Last, just causes for termination include any change in the conditions that originated the relationship, failure to fulfil basic duties as established in the same law, breach of confidentiality over sensitive matters, or lack of good manners (Art. 17). The employer is further entitled to terminate the relationship if the worker brings other people such as relatives or friends into the house without the employer’s knowledge, maintains habits or behaviours that do not suit the regular operation of the household, or uses equipment owned by the employer carelessly.

The approval of the law in the national parliament, where a majority of seats supported the government, was never at risk. Opposition political representatives nevertheless protested that constitutional principles would be overridden as the government was legislating unilaterally on fundamental rights and representative unions had not been adequately integrated in the drafting process. Despite fierce criticism to the content of some articles, all of the parties in parliament except one ended up casting a favourable vote on the grounds that they welcomed

⁴¹ Law-Decree Nr. 508/80, October 21, 1980. Our reconstitution of the process leading to the adoption of the law draws on *Diário da Assembleia da República, 1ª Série*, 11/03/1977: 2830; 29/10/1977: 38; 16/06/1978: 3283; 21/06/1980: 3122; and *Diário da Assembleia da República, 2ª Série-A*, 16/06/1978: 914. Declarations by political party representatives are extracted from the full transcriptions of parliamentary sessions in *Diário da Assembleia da República, 1ª Série*, 31/01/1981: 855-866; 06/02/1981: 935-944; 11/02/1981: 966-978.

the initiative to regulate this employment sector. Criticisms included an unclear definition of maximum working period and activities comprised in the employment relationship, the establishment of entitlements to holiday duration and pay below general labour law, a loose formulation of reasons for dismissal, the absence of any reference to employee rights to private life and intimacy, and the authority granted to the Ministry of Labour – instead of labour courts – to deal with upcoming cases falling beyond the law. The key contention was that the ‘specific nature’ of domestic service work did not justify these particular formulations, and that in fact the ‘specific nature’ argument was being used to maintain domestic employees' rights below important achievements of the working class. The very opposite was advocated: for instance, that holiday benefits should be settled in law rather than left for collective negotiation as it happens in other employment sectors since collective negotiation did not exist in this sector.

In the preamble of the Law-Decree n. 508/80, it is stated that it constitutes a first step in the improvement and betterment of working conditions to be introduced in future revisions. But let's face it: it was a shy step, a step in serfdom, but not outside serfdom.

(Odete Santos, Portuguese Communist Party, on 10/02/1981)

The UDP [Popular Democratic Union] presented an abstention vote in the ratification of the Law-Decree Nr. 508/80 because this diploma suffers from organic and formal unconstitutionality, given that the workers at stake have not been listened to and their interests have been unattended. It excludes domestic employees from enjoying rights conquered after much struggle by all workers and represents a regime of exception. According to the AD [the coalition in office], this law-decree is not an endeavour to regulate domestic work but, more properly, a sort of love declaration, in which affection between the working woman and her employers is encouraged.

(Mário Tomé, Popular Democratic Union, on 10/02/1981)

In their response, the parties in office condemned the inability of previous governments to regulate this employment sector and claimed that the general norms of social dialogue did not apply due to the inexistence of employers' representation. As a result, it would be for the President of the Republic to oversee compliance with the constitutional principles regarding minimum working conditions and the participation of workers' representatives in the decision-

making process.⁴² Similar standards in other countries and the fact that the decree itself envisaged a revision in one year' time were invoked.

This is a realistic decree, which aims at consolidating a social reality and it does not aim, through the law, at creating social tensions nor creating unemployment in the class of domestic service workers. This is precisely why there is this advance, in a slow but firm manner, in the regulation of working conditions in this sector. (...) I must tell you that the approximation of the juridical regime regulating domestic services toward the general regime of the individual employment contract is something that must be done, but not without due prudence, under the risk of creating unemployment and severe social tensions in the sector. (...) I am sorry, Mr. Deputy, but it seems to me that there is no such thing as paternalism in the advancement of a decree regarding this sector. Paternalism may be not advancing with regulation on this sector; but, as long as regulation is introduced, this is sufficient proof that no paternalist notions of society are held.

(António Queirós Martins, Social-Democrat Party, State Secretary of Labour, on 30/01/1981)

This diploma will have to be improved...

– *Voice from the Portuguese Communist Party: When?*

As a catholic, I say that only God's Law commandments are not to be improved, as they were perfect from the start. But everything that is done by human hands must always be improved.

(Isilda Barata, Social Democratic Centre, on 30/01/1981)

The law adopted in 1980 would remain in place for 12 years, despite the shift towards governmental stability and single-party majority in the mid-1980s (Martins, 2004; Freire, 2005). The right of domestic employees to inclusion in the social security system was clarified in 1982.⁴³ Although social security contributions have been mandatory since then, exceptional rules still apply to employees in this sector, an issue to be considered in more detail in our next section. A systematic appraisal of national parliament sessions after that uncovers occasional, marginal references to domestic service – often together with agricultural work – in debates about the minimum wage, the maximum working period, and the reform of the social security system. In these debates, such types of employment are

⁴² The President of the Republic did not object to anything in this case, neither did he require the intervention of the Constitutional Court. It was then Ramalho Eanes, elected as an independent candidate in 1976 and about to be reelected in December 1980.

⁴³ Regulatory Decree 43/82, 22 July, 1982.

normatively (and consensually) perceived as providing the lowest or minimal standards of workers' benefits, seldom leading to a critical questioning of inequality within the working population or to the possibility of bringing sectorial claims into the broader discussion of industrial relations.

The revision of the law in 1992 brought up the version currently in force.⁴⁴ The political process underpinning this revision holds some notable similarities and differences with the events in 1980.⁴⁵ Again, the Social-Democrat Party was in government, although now with a single-party office and a majority of seats in parliament. Therefore, negotiation through oppositional party politics remained severely constrained. The law was eventually approved in parliament with favourable votes of the right-wing hemisphere and the abstention of all of the remaining parties. Again, the initiative was triggered by the lobbying action of workers' representatives – in particular, the trade union confederation UGT at the Standing Council of Social Concertation, created in 1984 –, but then conducted and implemented through governmental decree.

The fact that fixed-term contracts do not require a written document, the Christmas holiday pay only reaching 100 per cent of the pay after five years on the job, the non-application of the Student-Worker Law to the case of domestic employees, or the non-consideration that the majority of these workers are women are issues of some relevance absent or negatively addressed in the law.

(Jerónimo de Sousa, Portuguese Communist Party, on 07/04/1992)

In fact, domestic service implies a relation that is at the same time so close – because it requires a special trust at the level of the human relation – and so distant – because so many times it is even physically distant – that any approximation to the general labour law requires special caution so that the status of the worker is reinforced without leaving unattended the position of the employer, which in this sector is not often and necessarily the strongest link in this relation.

(Rui Salvada, Social-Democrat Party, Second Secretary of State for Employment and Social Security, on 07/04/1992)

⁴⁴ Law-Decree Nr. 235/92, 24 October, 1992.

⁴⁵ See *Diário da Assembleia da República, 1ª Série*, 22/01/1992: 589; 08/04/1992: 1535; 29/04/1992: 1745; 08/05/1992: 1923.

A number of important modifications were undertaken. To start with, the article on working time was substantially transformed. For the first time, it is established that the ‘normal period of weekly work’ for domestic employees must not exceed 44 hours (Art. 13/1). Nevertheless, in the case of ‘live-in’ domestic employees, this maximum number of hours refers only to time spent in ‘effective work’ (Art. 13/2). Plenty of room is left for employers to require extensive availability from ‘live-in’ domestic employees as a specific definition of ‘effective work’ is nowhere to be found. Are surveillance tasks, for instance, included in this concept? If they are not, is the employee free to exit the workplace and return only when the next period of ‘effective work’ begins? Is there something like ‘ineffective’ work? In historical perspective, it is clear that this formulation entails a way of dealing with the problem of working time in ‘live-in’ arrangements without resolving it whatsoever. In addition, the organization of breaks for resting and eating must be made by mutual agreement or, if this is not possible, defined by the employer according to the ‘periods established for this by customs’ (Art. 14) – a sentence which was not present in the law of 1980.

The possibility of fixed term contracts in domestic service, already asserted in the previous version of the law, is regulated in greater detail (Art. 6). In particular, fixed term contracts can be signed for a maximum period of one year and renewed a maximum number of two times. A protective provision is incorporated establishing that the actual period of holidays can not be renounced, neither exchanged for any sort of reward, even with the worker's consent (Art. 22). The following four additional issues were introduced in 1992.

- An article defining what constitutes abandonment of the employment relationship by the employee and following procedures was added (Art. 34).
- Upon termination of the employment relationship, employees are entitled to a certificate signed by the employer indicating how long they worked in that particular household and how much they earned (Art. 35).
- The Christmas allowance to which domestic employees are entitled should not be below 50 per cent of their monthly pay (Art. 12). In 1996, soon after a substantial change in the composition of the national parliament toward a centre-left majority, a general law on the Christmas holiday pay would result from social concertation. This law establishes that all workers including (explicitly) those employed in the domestic

service, agricultural and maritime sectors are entitled to a Christmas allowance corresponding to 100 per cent of their monthly pay.⁴⁶

- A complete list of rules of health and safety at the workplace was incorporated (Art. 26). These include the employer's duty to inform the employee about the operation of equipment and maintenance products used in the household, repair damaged or dangerous materials, and, in the case of 'live-in' employees, provide housing and food in conditions that are not harmful to the employee's health and hygiene. Importantly, the employer must take an insurance from a legally entitled company or organization in order to cover any damage resulting from accidents at work. Following dispositions approved at the EU-level, more complete legislation on accidents and illness at work was adopted covering all workers including those employed in domestic service.⁴⁷

Although a national Labour Code was adopted in 2003 – and later revised in 2009 –, domestic service employment is still regulated by its specific law. The same holds for other areas of activity such as agriculture, entertainment, navy and harbours, railway transportation, sports, and public administration. In other words, the current legal configuration retains the distinction between domestic service and standard wage labour established in the Civil Code of 1867, while an approximation of rights has gradually taken place.

5.4. Unsolved issues and the ILO Domestic Workers Convention

Following the guidelines of the ILO's double discussion procedure, a first step was taken in March 2008 when a discussion on decent standards for domestic workers was placed on the agenda of the International Labour Conference to happen in 2010. A report on law and practice across member-states was elaborated by the office to support the discussion (ILO, 2010). The delegates gathered in the annual conference debated what the international standards for this employment sector should be. As conceived at the outset of the process, the simultaneous adoption of a convention and a recommendation allows a combination of binding and non-binding agreements. The drafts of both documents were then submitted to

⁴⁶ Law-Decree Nr. 88/96, July 3, 1996.

⁴⁷ Law Nr. 100/97, 13 September, 1997.

TABLE II
SELECTED TOPICS IN THE REGULATION OF
DOMESTIC SERVICE IN PORTUGAL BY 2014

Topic		Regime
Written employment contract		Unrequired*
Working time	Maximum	44 hours of 'effective work' per week
	Rest / breaks	Unspecified meal breaks during the day + 8 hours at night 'without detriment to the tasks of oversight or assistance to the household'
	Holidays	22 paid days per year
Remuneration	Minimum	485,00 Euros per month, or 2,80 Euros per hour
	In kinds	Up to 50 per cent of the above amount
	Mandatory allowances	1 extra month pay by Summer; 1 extra month pay by Christmas
Social security contributions	By the employer	Mandatory
	By the employee	Mandatory
Retirement pension		Yes (particular forms of calculation)
Health benefits	Insurance by the employer	Mandatory
	Maternity	Yes
	Illness	Yes
Unemployment	Pension	Partial**
	Compensation	One month pay for every year of service completed
Education		Guaranteed as a right for workers below 18 years old

Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of legislation; the selection of fields for the table is based on the work of Loyo and Velásquez (2009: 67).

* While unrequired for domestic employees as such, a written employment contract is compulsory in the case of foreign individuals recruited for any type of employment (Labour Code, Art. 5). Therefore, it is required in the recruitment of foreign domestic employees but not national ones.

** Access to unemployment benefits in the same conditions as standard wage earners is granted in the contributory programme restricted to domestic employees who (a) are employed full-time by one sole entity, (b) enter the programme before they turn 57 years old, and (c) sign an agreement term with the employer for this specific purpose.

the opinions of national governments and representatives of workers and employers in every member-state (ILO, 2011a, 2011b). In the conference of June 2011, the final text of the *Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers* was approved, together with a *Recommendation* on the same matter. At the time of writing, the Domestic Workers Convention has been ratified by 12 member states of the ILO, two of which in Europe.⁴⁸ Through ratification, a state is committed to undertake the necessary changes in the national legal framework to ensure full compliance with the standards established in the convention; two expert bodies of the ILO are responsible for supervising and assessing compliance (ILSD, 2006).

In the case of Portugal, representatives from the government, two trade union confederations (CGTP-IN and UGT) and two employers' associations (CCP and CTP) participated at some point in this process. The participation of the latter is arguably the most notable aspect, considering how entwined the difficulties of regulation described in the previous section are with the absence of official representation among employers. The problem of disorganized employers in this sector is not inevitable, as shown by collective bargaining experiences in France, Italy or Mali (ILO, 2010: 27). It is also noteworthy that, according to the administrative report on the international tripartite consultation for this particular convention, 'workers' organizations voiced broad support, whereas most employers' organizations expressed preference for a Recommendation only' (ILO, 2011b: 3).

Whereas the trade unions covering domestic service in Portugal seem to maintain a passive acknowledgement of this limitation, there have been relevant endeavours from employers to countervail it. These arise not chiefly from private household employers, but rather from companies aiming to enter or expand the market of domestic services. The International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (CIETT) has made several attempts to bring domestic service employment to the attention of its members. At the national level, the CCP recently promoted the issue on its agenda. This reflects in particular a growing interest from some companies engaged in temporary employment and outsourcing services which come together in the *Associação Portuguesa das Empresas do Sector Privado de Emprego*⁴⁹ (a member of both the CCP and the CIETT). The following excerpts from our interviews with two representatives who were present in the 100th International Labour Conference as national

⁴⁸ In alphabetical order: Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Guyana, Italy, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay.

⁴⁹ 'Portuguese Association of Private Employment Sector Enterprises' (our translation).

delegates (Nuno, from a trade union confederation, and Ângelo, from a confederation of employers' organizations) are exemplary of the complex and diffuse developments underlying the adoption of the convention.

I was at the ILO conference this year, I had been there last year as well, and the discussion on the domestic work convention covered many issues... and the convention encourages collective bargaining. But how, if there is no employers' representation? And there can not be. Because one employer can be very conservative and backward, while the other is progressive and equalitarian. And the first employer may even pay his domestic worker 700 Euros, because he has a good income, and the other one earns less and is only able to pay 400. And the worker is going to speak ill of the latter, and praise the former. So, what unites them? Nothing; only this fact, really, that they both have a busy life or they want to save some time at home, to do other things or to read the newspaper or to do nothing at all for a moment.

(Nuno)

That session was very strange... very strange, and I can tell you that I have been in several others, some of which complicated, for instance the one on child labour, which was a very complicated session, but this one was strange. Why strange? Because... well, 80 per cent or 70 per cent of the delegates, either from trade unions, employers' organizations or governments, were not interested in this. Because... for historical reasons, for ethnic reasons and for cultural reasons, etc., they saw no motive for this to be normalized and promoted. In India, you see, people, boys and girls work since they are little, slave labour, right? There was a whole array of things deterring interest even in the field of trade unions... from some countries, right? Then, there was a very strong lobbying, very strong, from European trade unions and from some countries in Latin America in favour, and therefore they exerted enormous pressure on the advancement of works so that some things were included in the document. [...] Among employers, there was... well, there were some very strange things, because many of them were like this: this is none of our business, employers' organizations, so why should we care? Then there was a very strong lobbying from temporary employment companies so that: wait a minute, that's not exactly right, because we are interested in the business and we must open business. And I think there was an excessive condescendence from employers toward some things that were eventually included in the final document. [...] When I've thought about this, even in order to talk to you, etc., I say: well, this was a difficult, complicated, weird, strange affair. These are all words that come up to my mind.

(Ângelo)

In February 2012, a public letter from one of the trade union confederations urged the Minister of Economy and Employment to take action toward ratifying the convention.⁵⁰ The key argument in this letter is that the existing regulatory framework in Portugal is in compliance with the standards established in the convention and therefore ratification shall not imply any legal change. However, a thoughtful observation of the convention requires addressing various unsolved issues in this country too. These can be organized around nine distinct though certainly interrelated matters. To be sure, the final text of the convention opens wide room for debate, especially considering the typical cautious provisions that have been included – measures may be applied progressively by the states and due attention is to be paid to the specific characteristics of domestic work.

1: Social protection. The access of domestic employees to social security in Portugal is regulated by a special scheme.⁵¹ According to this scheme, the workers who are employed full-time by one sole entity on a monthly basis are in a different situation than those under part-time arrangements. The former are able to enrol in two distinct programmes: *a*) a programme with the same rules and benefits that apply to standard wage earners, including unemployment benefits; or *b*) a programme based on a lower tributary rate (28,3 per cent against 34,75 per cent, at the time of writing) and a standard remuneration which can be below the worker's actual pay, meaning that the remaining pay can be earned and not considered for social security purposes. Employees under part-time arrangements can only access programme *b* – this is a first significant source of distinction. Even among workers who are employed full-time by one sole entity, enrolment in programme *a* is only accessible if they are under 57 years old and sign an agreement term with their employer for this particular purpose. Considering that the text of the national Constitution (Art. 59/1b) includes the right of all workers to ‘material assistance when they are involuntarily in unemployment’, there seem to be an odd variety of *if*'s in the case of domestic employees. It also true that this article of the Constitution forbids discrimination based on age, sex, race (ethnicity), citizenship, place of origin, religion, and political or ideological conviction, but it does not mention

⁵⁰ In June 2011, the same month when the Domestic Workers Convention was approved in Geneva, early legislative elections took place in Portugal. The government of the Socialist Party, supported by a minority of seats in parliament since 2009, gave then way to a coalition formed by the Social-Democratic Party and the Democratic and Social Centre). The Prime Minister's resignation under parliamentary disagreement on economic policy preceded the call for elections.

⁵¹ For the more recent dispositions, see Law 110/2009, 16 September, 2009; and Regulatory Decree 1-A/2011, 3 January, 2011. An overview of social security norms and procedures applying to domestic employees can be found in Instituto de Segurança Social (2012) and Peixoto et al (2011: 46).

occupation. Encased in a lower level of benefits as they are, domestic employees can in fact be described as sub-workers in the social security system. The Article 14 of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention requires ‘conditions that are not less favourable than those applicable to workers generally in respect of social security protection’.

2: Indistinction between ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ employees. The present law applies to both cases, resorting to the concept of ‘effective work’ – and presuming that ‘live-in’ employees perform it during a maximum sum of 44 hours per week – to cover up what is actually a grey area of employer-employee negotiation. Equally ambiguous is the Article 10 of the international convention, which states that ‘periods during which domestic workers are not free to dispose of their time as they please and remain at the disposal of the household in order to respond to possible calls shall be regarded as hours of work *to the extent determined by national laws, regulations or collective agreements*’ (emphasis added). Still, the notion of on-call periods is absent from the law on domestic service in Portugal, and the indistinction between ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ employees largely translates into the greater vulnerability of the former to overtime.

3: Dismissal. The pursuit of fair terms of employment requires reconsidering the norms that regulate the termination of the relationship. On the one hand, just cause for dismissal by the employer is defined in a very particular manner which is both broad and detailed: it comprises disobedience, lack of interest, mishandling of material items or confidential matters, abnormal reduction in productivity, lack of good manners, or behaving in a way that does not combine with the regular operation of the household, among other things. Though more limited, just cause for dismissal by the employee also includes some of these considerations, including the ones referring to behaviour. On the other hand, the relationship can be terminated due to the employer's impossibility to maintain it, economic insufficiency, or a substantial transformation in the circumstances under which the worker was recruited (Art. 28). While the convention does not explicitly elaborate on this specific topic, it seems plausible that all measures aiming at reducing workers' vulnerability depend on addressing and reformulating the terms of employment termination.

4: Written contracts. The Article 7 of the convention states that measures shall be taken to ensure that ‘domestic workers are informed of their terms and conditions of employment in an appropriate, verifiable and easily understandable manner and preferably, where possible, through written contracts.’ Although absent from the law in Portugal, written contracts are

mandatory according to the general Labour Code whenever the relationship involves foreign workers (Art. 5), short-term employment (Art. 141), part-time employment (Art. 153), intermittent employment (Art. 158), or temporary employment (Arts. 177 and 181). The fact that an employment contract with full legal rights is presumed to be in place as long as an employment relationship exists *de facto* may explain why this is not a common claim from trade unions. However, the wide scope for unilateral decision by the employer of a domestic worker exposed in the three issues above throws a different light on the subject. The importance of written contracts has been highlighted in one of the latest campaigns for the rights of domestic employees in Portugal, in a joint initiative by activists and scholars: the handbook for employees and employers produced within this campaign includes a contract template and further instructions (GAMI, 2012: 52-5).

5: Education. Since the first version of the law adopted in 1980, domestic employees in Portugal must be at least 16 years old. Education is not mentioned. However, the Labour Code contains a number of provisions protecting workers under the age of 18 including education, and these apply to domestic employees as well (Arts. 66-83). Compulsory schooling is currently set at the 12th grade, which is generally reached when students are 17 or older. This benchmark only applies to students enrolling in school at an earlier grade than 7th grade from 2009 onwards.⁵² Besides several provisions against child labour, the international convention requires ratifying member states to ensure that the recruitment of domestic workers under the age of 18 ‘does not deprive them of compulsory education, or interfere with opportunities to participate in further education or vocational training’ (Art. 4). It is crucial to address the rights of domestic employees to education considering both present-day compulsory schooling and their own personal perspectives, including for employees above 18 years of age. The importance of this issue is reinforced by the low levels of formal education among women employed in domestic service, especially natives (Guibentif, 2011).

6: Living conditions of ‘live-in’ employees. The insufficient acknowledgement of ‘live-in’ domestic employees in national law further translates into the absence of objective standards for their living conditions. The only requirement is that housing and food must be provided ‘in conditions that safeguard the hygiene and health of workers’ (Art. 26/1e). This is all the more problematic as general provisions on housing provided by employers to standard wage earners, e. g. posted or temporarily delocalized workers, tend to be equally laconic. In this

⁵² Law 85/2009, August 27, 2009, Art. 8/1.

case, it is formulation rather than reformulation that is at stake. The contribution of the convention is not straightforward either. While its reference to ‘decent living conditions’ maintains the subject in the muddy waters of customs, the notion of ‘respect’ for ‘privacy’ mentioned in the same Article 6 may be a more fruitful ground for collective parties to build their claims.

7: Freedom. The Article 9 of the convention protects the freedom of domestic workers to reach an agreement with their employer on whether to reside in the household, to be away from the house and household members during periods of daily, weekly or annual leave, and to keep travel and identity documents in their possession. Clearly intertwined with some of the issues above, none of these three specific elements is mentioned in the national law on domestic service employment. If this sector is to be maintained under particular regulation, it is required that such regulation addresses the objective sources of vulnerability that public intervention and academic research have repeatedly uncovered. This article of the convention, otherwise read as a broad human rights claim, makes a key contribution to that purpose. It is especially relevant to the extent that basic human rights at work are often a taboo in political debate: it is presumed that both parties comply with them and all workers know about them – according to the discourse of institutional actors, including trade union representatives, this is what allegedly distinguishes Western Europe from the rest of the world. The fact that authoritative documents such as the Constitution assert or implicitly require respect for these rights means that labour law does not need to be concerned with them. Yet, this produces practical results only insofar as the concrete manifestations of such rights in particular contexts are acknowledged and protected.

8: Intermediation. Two distinct matters arise under the subject of intermediation. On the one hand, trafficking or smuggling of people is to be tackled. Again, provisions and measures are left outside the realm of domestic employment regulation – migration and criminal laws are expected to deal with it – even if domestic service bears close historical links to forced labour. Far from matters of the past, these links have suffered new impulses under globalizing neoliberalism (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002a; Peixoto, 2009). On the other hand, intermediation also refers to legally authorized organizations providing domestic services. Intervention in this regard certainly takes on a different meaning. It is not only about ensuring compliance with basic human rights, but also defining the conditions under which commercial companies or agencies must operate (Art. 15 in the convention). A major risk is that workers

employed through private enterprises are not covered by either domestic service employment law or general labour law as they become independent contractors, following a typical route to precariousness in contemporary labour markets. This configuration is likely to prosper unless domestic service regulation addresses it in proper terms.

9: Labour inspection. The norms of labour inspection in Portugal explicitly concede that, whenever the workplace is a private residence, the rules of domiciliary visit set through penal regulation apply instead – meaning that a warrant for this purpose must be obtained from judicial authorities.⁵³ The ‘private workplace’ is thereby protected. There is a further difficulty in the case of domestic employees. As they are very often the only employee at that particular workplace, the intervention of the labour inspection is likely to contribute to the deterioration of the relationship with their employer. This problem is surely not limited to domestic service, but again the special vulnerability engendered in certain employment sectors demands explicit and straightforward action. In the end, as argued by Blackett (2011: 20), a more just and efficient legal approach to domestic service employment can not do away with the task of re-imagining labour regulation beyond the industrial workplace model.

5.5. Final remarks

Far from negligible in number or magnitude, these issues are actually too significant – too political, one might say – to be dealt with as minor administrative adjustments, and this may help us understand why they remain unsolved. To a large extent, they all pertain to the distance that still separates, though surely in a smaller fashion than in 1867, the regulation of domestic service from that of general wage labour; and they can only be properly addressed provided their role in the structuration of this sector is explicitly acknowledged. Dismissal procedures and the case of ‘live-in’ domestic employees are the most striking illustrations. Changing the legal configuration in these respects may lead to a readjustment of power in the sector, and any progressive proposition is bound to be accused of prompting unemployment and disfavours domestic employees for its excessive aspiration. In addition, the enactment of full rights to social security and labour inspection requires changes in neighbouring legal dispositions, pushing the struggle beyond the law on domestic service employment.

⁵³ Law-Decree 102/2000 from 2 June, preamble/6 and art. 11/1a.

While the historical approach exposes important particularities of domestic service regulation, further research is necessary to examine its links with regulation in areas such as migration and gender equality (Valenzuela & Mora, 2009: 294–7). As suggested by Van Walsum (2011: 143), legal advancements must build on the notion that domestic service is structured not only through the traditional gendered fault line between paid and unpaid labour, but often also through other fault lines distinguishing citizens and aliens, dominant ethnic groups and ethnic minorities – or, we would add, low and high status categories of workers. From an historical point of view, the juridical condition of domestic employees in Portugal confirms their slippery position between paid labour on the basis of an employment contract and unpaid labour on the basis of gender, ethnic, and class roles. Considering research in other locations, our study corroborates the notion that national particularities coexist with a political hesitation experienced across countries to eliminate the disadvantage of domestic employees *vis-à-vis* the legal framework applying to standard wage earners (Loyo & Velásquez, 2009; ILO, 2010; Chen, 2011).

Looking into the mid-decades of the 20th century in Portugal, Brasão (2010) concludes that the ethics of domestic service were historically and socially construed by the employers – or the ‘masters’, as they were then defined in national law. Our analysis suggests that the same assertion can be extended to cover the implementation of the Civil Code of 1867, and, perhaps more surprisingly, the period of democracy after 1974. The rise of social tensions and the acts of disorganized resistance by domestic employees documented in the work of Brasão were followed by legal measures in which governmental decrees ruled over any chance of social dialogue. Such a development can hardly be considered an exceptional feature of this sector in the broader landscape of post-1974 industrial relations.

The long heritage of authoritarian corporatism with state-mandated associations, and the push towards centralization by the revolution of 1974-75, led to state-dominated industrial relations. These were based upon constitutional guarantees, legislative measures, state regulation, and direct government intervention.

In Naumann and Stoleroff (2000), p. 547.

Rather than forgotten in the process of democratization, the advancement of domestic employees' rights has met with fierce resistance at the political level. Their late and gradual access to major working class accomplishments covenanted in labour law reflects successive

obstacles and challenges. Especially remarkable is the lingering unwillingness to have them covered by the principles of the national Constitution with respect to assistance in unemployment and social dialogue. The extended powers of employers in this sector, legitimated through law while the dictatorial regime lasted, were partially challenged after 1974, but the potential outcome of workers' self-organization was diminished by disorganization among employers. It is reasonable to read this disorganization as strategic: in the absence of employers' representation, government intervention has been oriented to facilitate the recruitment of domestic employees as a key resource of middle and high income households in the articulation of their work and family incumbencies, while providing domestic employees with a simplified route to earn money (apparent in the exceptional regime of social security) under the presumption that domestic service is only a source of supplementary household income for them – either because they maintain another more regular occupation, or their husband is the main provider in the family.⁵⁴ Similarly to what we observe in the Civil Code of 1867, the intention to equalise the rights of domestic employees to those of standard wage earners is still limited by the inability to recognize their employers as standard employers.

The nexus of democracy and domestic service as examined in this chapter sheds light on the tensions underlying ‘the reconstructive process of moving from a status relationship to a work relationship, with an enabling rather than paternalistic state and international responsibility to ensure the transition’ (Blackett, 2011: 11). Two competing arguments emerge to interpret developments in Portugal. One of them is that the active promotion and protection of the rights of middle-class households – the very promotion of a middle class – rested on the tacit assumption of maintaining paid domestic labour available in cheap and flexible forms. This was crucial to conciliate the expectations of highly educated women toward economic autonomy and the persistence of gendered asymmetries in employment and family contexts (Ferreira, 1999; Torres, 2008; Casaca, 2009, 2013). The other argument emphasises the great transformation of working conditions in domestic service following 1974, including the reduction of child labour and the gradual inclusion of this activity sector in the institutional framework of the new service economy. Political parties, trade unions or scholars are still far

⁵⁴ Notably, we find a general acceptance of this idea even among the trade union representatives consulted during our project. As we shall see in Chapter 8, a very distinct picture is offered by our fieldwork interviews with domestic employees: even when initially sought to provide only a marginal complement to household income, employment in domestic service can later become the main or even sole source of household income.

from grasping the details of this transformation – a necessary step to understand the actual concerns, strategies and options of domestic employees today.

The transition from a paradigm of autocratic and paternalistic master-servant bonds to the paradigm of commodified relationships between individuals with autonomy in the negotiation of working conditions remains up to empirical enquiry. This transition should not be expected to constitute an inevitable outcome of the transformation of industrial relations from pre-1974 dictatorial rule to the neoliberal state of the mid-1980s onwards (Naumann & Stoleroff, 2000), but some parallel manifestations are likely to exist. Throughout this chapter, we have highlighted the singularities of the position in which domestic employees find themselves as workers. There is a risk of underestimating the juridical and everyday life experiences that they share with other wage earners, particularly in a context of increasingly flexible labour markets and disorganized workplaces.

As chains of production and services become more complex, the distinctions between employers, self-employed, and employees are becoming increasingly vague. Each of these players is caught up in, and trying to cope with, the insecurities of the fragmented, mobile, and volatile markets of today. This suggests that the increase in precarious work is not just a simple manoeuvre, on the part of the employers, to avoid having to conform to the relatively costly norm of full-time and permanent employment, but that it is an expression of fundamental and structural changes in the way production and services are currently being organized in modern industrialized countries.

In Van Walsum (2011), pp. 163-4.

Recent changes in general labour law support a consonant trail of interpretation for the observed developments toward the legal approximation of domestic employees to standard wage earners. As employment rights are pressed for reduction under the agenda of the ‘total market’ and neoliberal responses to the economic crisis (Supiot, 2010), it may be that approximation is accomplished less by the inclusion of domestic employees in overall labour standards than by the reduction of those labour standards – or, to be more accurate, the exclusion of a greater number of workers from that area of security and benefits, increasingly to be seen as a privilege. This hypothesis resonates Beck's (2000) claim on the process of Brazilianisation of the West: he argues that despite the generalized notion that Europe is setting the standards for what the other parts of the world should be like, the very opposite may be taking place in the sphere of employment. Based on the historical examination

presented in this chapter, one may wonder if despite the generalized notion that standard wage labour is setting the standards for what domestic service employment should be like, a *domestic-workification* of the labour market is actually in place.

Answering this grand question would certainly require further investigation and discussion. Still, it is noteworthy that the government which introduced the first law on domestic service employment in Portugal was explicitly accused of this operation by members of two political parties in the opposition. ‘It is necessary not to forget’, the socialist deputy Ferreira Guedes declared during the parliamentary session of 10/02/1981, ‘that the philosophy of the AD's [the right-wing coalition in office] political project is not to extend rights and benefits that the remaining workers already enjoy to workers such as domestic service and agricultural workers; the philosophy of the AD's political project, workers' associations permitting, would be to extend the restricted regime of rights and benefits of domestic service and agricultural workers to the remaining workers.’ A neighbouring formulation has been made in a recent comparison of the situation of women and men regarding wages in Portugal: ‘we can be witnessing’, writes Ferreira (2010: 185, our translation), ‘a «feminization of employment», in the sense that working conditions and relations that traditionally characterized feminine employment – deskilling, insecurity and low remuneration – generalize.’ The fact that some of the political measures aiming at the reduction of workers' benefits do not affect domestic workers directly offers some short-term comfort. This comfort is however moderated by the possibility that such ‘protection’ contributes to set domestic employees further apart from core workers' movements and claims – both in advocacy and in their immediate context of workplace, family, personal network and community.

The Domestic Workers Convention is a significant instrument to contest the underprivileged position of domestic employees in labour regulation and clarify the incorporation of this category of workers in the ILO's broader agenda for decent work. A distinct sort of decency remains at stake – one that is markedly evident in legal documents from earlier days. It is closely linked to public order, to social values and customs, and to the implicit indecency of ‘lower level’ workers demanding equality. The future is yet to show whether full integration in general labour law is politically attainable. In the meantime, market dynamics are likely to maintain considerable pressure to exclude domestic employees from the regulation in place, especially through the legal configuration and rhetoric of the self-employed worker. As written by Gunewardena (2007: 296), ‘human rights conventions, pronouncements, and

practices have traditionally prevailed largely over the terrain of politics, but not directly over the tyranny of economics.’ At this juncture, we can remember Santos’ (2002) argument that emancipation is not be found within law but rather within movements, organizations and groups which can resort to law as stepping stones to build successful paths of ‘insurgent cosmopolitanism’. This discussion shall be resumed when we look into the action and discourse of trade unions and immigrant NGOs in Chapter 9.

6

On volume and composition: quantifying domestic service in the 21st century

6.1. Yes, and what about numbers?

As shown in the literature review, domestic service has been paid considerable attention by social scientists from the turn of the millennium onwards. The existing body of scholarship sheds a great deal of light on the experiences of domestic employees, especially those who are immigrant women in cities of the most affluent nations, offering challenging elaborations on gender, class and ethnic dynamics. However, quantitative data is still little and sparse. Several theoretical and technical arguments concur to ascribe statistical figures a marginal role in the study of contemporary domestic service, as observed in our Chapter 4. Building on the benefits and limitations of large-scale survey analysis discussed in that chapter, a contribution shall be made to answer a few basic questions which are typically left pending. How many people are employed in domestic service? How did the numbers of this sector evolve in recent years? To what extent is difference across countries of Europe apparent? And what can we see as we dig in the case of a particular country, bringing together various available datasets and previous findings from qualitative studies on the same subject?

At this point, our major concern is to discuss developments at the societal level. On the one hand, the selected statistical evidence provides an overview of domestic service in Portugal, and, to some extent, in the broader international landscape. The very characteristics of the datasets favour analysis at the national scale rather than a local scale. On the other hand, this undertaking, similarly to the scrutiny of legal developments in the chapter before, frames (as far as permitted by data) the qualitative analysis of fieldwork interviews to be presented in the next chapters. The well-known difficulties of official figures to cover migrant workers and informal or precarious employment mean that their examination is not expected to yield more

than partial and tentative conclusions. Nevertheless, these conclusions may be confronted with findings derived from other sources of evidence and thereby increase the solidness of our research endeavour and global interpretation.⁵⁵

First, we consider the volume of domestic service in 15 member states of the EU during the period of 2000-2010. Based on the Labour Force Surveys conducted in cooperation by national statistic offices, we are able to pinpoint a number of similarities and differences across countries. Second, a higher degree of detail is attempted as we look into data from the same survey in Portugal, accepting that every country would require a similar amount of attention for a better assessment of its figures. Third, complementary information is drawn from the national Social Security Records. Provided some caution is maintained, the combination of datasets allows us to estimate the social security coverage of domestic employees in Portugal, as well as to examine the composition of this workforce according to gender, nationality and age. In the final section, we summarize the key results from our quantitative analysis and discuss the extent to which they corroborate or challenge theoretical expectations.

6.2. Growth and variation in domestic service employment across Europe

The estimate number of individuals employed by private households in the EU-15 is shown in Table III.⁵⁶ This number increased from 1.689 million in 2000 to 2.450 millions in 2010 – a growth of about 45 per cent. Once the figures are broken down by year (unpublished data), the largest increase is to be found between 2003 and 2008. While the economic deceleration of the early 2000s did not entail a contraction of this group, a clear disturbance in the trajectory of growth is observed in the last two years of the decade.

⁵⁵ For the main methodological options and procedures in our examination of official statistics, see Chapter 4, in particular section 4.4a.

⁵⁶ This estimate is based on the share of Labour Force Survey respondents whose ‘main occupation’ falls in the category ‘Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel’ of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities. Although our analysis relies on the number of employees rather than the total number of working hours expended in this activity group, we recognize that the latter is an equally important indicator to assess change over time. For instance, the number of employees may increase while their average or total working time decreases. However, the Labour Force Survey estimates of working time are, too our mind, less reliable; especially problematic is the lack of distinction between ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ employees, and the particular difficulties of measuring the working time of the former – an issue highlighted in much of the empirical research to date.

TABLE III

DOMESTIC PERSONNEL BY COUNTRY AND GENDER, EU-15, 2000 AND 2010

Country	2000		2010	
	N (1000)	% women	N (1000)	% women
Austria	10.9	98.2	10.8	94.4
Belgium	17.7	71.2	35.3	91.8
Denmark	4.5	...	5.7	82.5
Finland	3.9	94.9	8.0	51.3
France	543.3	96.4	593.9	83.3
Germany	129.0	95.3	206.8	94.8
Greece	52.6	94.3	89.9	95.0
Ireland	7.5	90.7	7.3	91.8
Italy	196.0	75.7	543.9	90.8
Luxembourg	3.6	...	4.8	97.9
Netherlands	3.1	96.8
Portugal	153.6	98.8	144.0	98.3
Spain	427.3	88.9	746.9	91.5
United Kingdom	134.6	70.1	52.4	72.3
EU-15	1688.7	89.8	2.450.3	89.6

Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by national statistic offices), retrieved on 13/3/2014; our elaboration.

Note: Data for Sweden (2000 and 2010) and the Netherlands (2010) are missing.

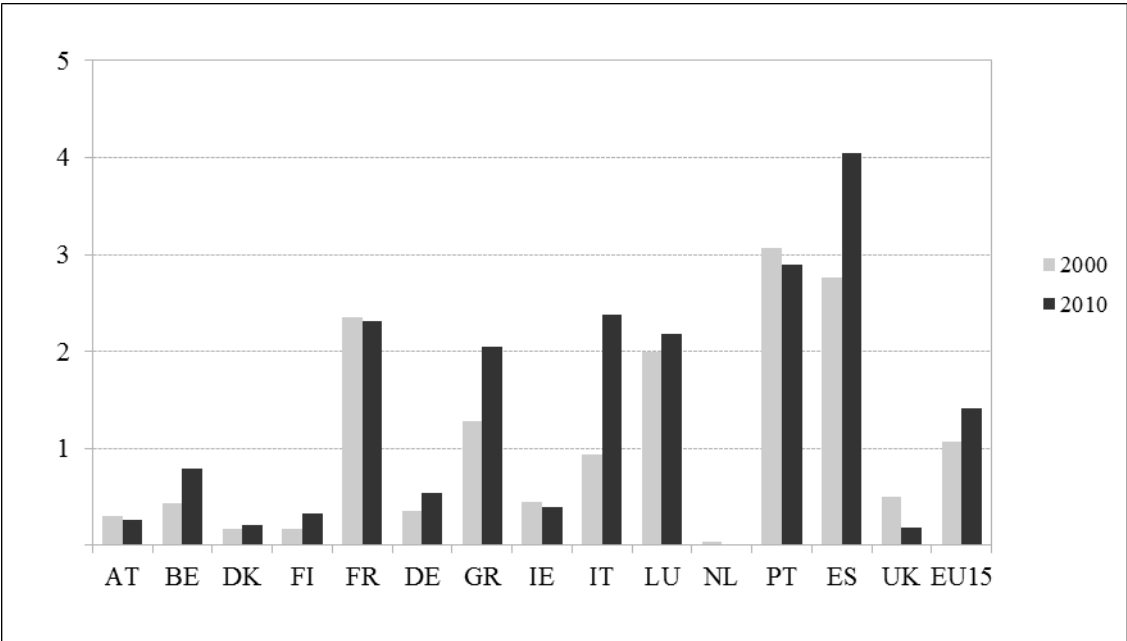
Variation across countries is apparent. As seen in Table III, the greatest increment in the 2000-10 period is registered in Italy and, to a lesser extent, Finland and Belgium (100 per cent or more), whereas a smaller though still substantial increment is found in Spain, Greece and Germany (between 60 and 75 per cent). In contrast, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Ireland and Austria show an actual decrease. The share of women in this activity group is very substantial, standing at 89.6 per cent in the total of the EU-15 by 2010. It is important to point out the distinctive situation of countries where this group is very close to a 'feminine exclusivity', such as Portugal and Luxembourg, in comparison with countries like Finland or

the United Kingdom where women constitute a more moderate majority of the workforce. A second remark is that a trend toward de-feminization is suggested in some countries, most notably Finland and France. In others, the share of women has remained stationary, or it has even increased: Belgium and Italy are the paramount examples.

If we want to compare a particular activity group across countries, absolute values may be misleading because countries have different dimensions and their volume of total employed population can also evolve in different manners. Figure II therefore uses the share of total employment made up by domestic personnel in each country.⁵⁷

FIGURE II

DOMESTIC PERSONNEL IN % OF LABOUR FORCE BY COUNTRY, EU-15, 2000 AND 2010



Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by national statistic offices), retrieved on 13/3/2014; our elaboration.

Note: Data for Sweden (2000 and 2010) and the Netherlands (2010) are missing. Country acronyms: AT, Austria; BE, Belgium; DK, Denmark; FI, Finland; FR, France; DE, Germany; GR, Greece; IE, Ireland; IT, Italy; LU, Luxembourg; NL, The Netherlands; PT, Portugal; ES, Spain; UK, United Kingdom.

⁵⁷ The same procedure is followed to obtain a rough measure of cross-national comparison in the global report of the ILO (2013a: 118-130). There is not a perfect match between the values presented in that report and the ones presented here because distinct data sources and reference years are used.

As anticipated in our literature review, substantial disparity can be observed. Considering data of 2010, this sector employs a larger share of individuals (between 2 and 4 per cent) in Mediterranean countries and Luxembourg, while northern countries show lower values (below 1 per cent). The relative weight of this category of employment increased in most of the countries during the first decade of the 21st century, the United Kingdom being the only significant exception. A trend toward uniformity is counterbalanced by the cases of Spain, Italy and Greece, countries where an already large volume of domestic employees in 2000 has undergone significant increment over the decade, in line with the conclusions of the ILO's report for the 1995-2010 period (ILO, 2013a: 35-6).

Cross-national variation in the proportion of the labour force employed in domestic service may be interpreted at various levels, four of which shall be highlighted. To be sure, all of these explanatory tracks are expected to be strongly intertwined, and disentangling them is possible only to a certain extent. This is why the language of explanatory levels or standpoints may be more adequate than the one of explanatory variables often adopted in large-scale comparative analyses.⁵⁸

First, it is clear that the recruitment of domestic workers is more generalized where public care systems remain distant from universalistic provision. It is especially important to bear in mind that policies regarding care, family and gender equality, although they can be neatly approached as distinct issues of public intervention, are uniquely bound up in their practical and symbolic outcomes (Crompton & Le Feuvre, 2000). They can either favour or impair the effects of each other. The countries of southern Europe are perhaps the most critical illustration of this relation, as impressive accomplishments in women's rights over the last decades remain in conflict with limited supportive policies concerning childcare and eldercare (Lazaridis, 2007; Torres, 2008; León, 2010; Casaca & Damião, 2011; Stefanelli, 2012). Attention must be paid to broader historical and institutional developments as they show to

⁵⁸ Building on the same considerations, we refrain from testing the statistical correlation between the national volumes of domestic service and the neighbouring issues brought into the discussion, such as public care provision, women's employment patterns, cultural values, or economic inequality. In fact, this has been done at a given moment of the project and incorporated in our presentation of preliminary findings at a meeting of the Research Network on Sociology of Professions from the European Sociological Association in Helsinki (see Appendix 3 for the full list of articles and papers based on project results). The reasons that led us to step out of that methodological trail include limited data reliability and the understanding that the factors under consideration can not be treated as independent variables *stricto sensu*, which limits the accuracy and relevance of the findings to be. Therefore, we favour a broader interpretative discussion based on confronting the evidence from Labour Force Surveys with arguments advanced in the existing scholarship.

what extent the politics of care have been acknowledged as a legitimate field in which claims for social justice and equality may be advanced (Williams, 2010a). The case of the Nordic countries in this respect is noteworthy because not only the political construction of this issue happened earlier than in most of the other locations, but also it seems to have resisted considerably well the multifaceted offensive of neoliberalism on social policy favouring cost-effectiveness, budget restraint and consumer choice.

On the other hand, the implementation of cash payments for care in countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy or the Netherlands is expected to boost recruitment by private households (Anderson, 2007: 249). Still, the numbers presented above suggest that this impact is not uniform across countries. The most outstanding cases are perhaps France and the United Kingdom. In France, the comparatively large volume of domestic employees remained almost unchanged from 2000 to 2010. This volume is much smaller in the United Kingdom, and it actually decreased during the same decade. Finally, the prominent trajectories of Spain, Greece and Italy offer strong support to the notion that policy-making regarding migrant domestic employees can play a key role in sectorial developments (Catarino & Oso, 2000; Domínguez & Guerra, 2006; Anderson, 2009; Triandafyllidou & Ambrosini, 2011; ILO, 2013a). The somewhat singular position of Portugal in this respect will be addressed in the next sections of the chapter.

Second, it has been implied in our literature review that domestic service employment is stimulated by the erosion of the male-breadwinner and female-carer family model, especially among middle and high income households. While the evidence from Labour Force Surveys loosely confirms this idea, it is necessary to bear in mind that the relation between demand for domestic service and the participation of women in paid employment is far from a linear one. If this was the case, how would the high rate of women's participation in paid employment in the Nordic countries, as well as Germany, Austria or the United Kingdom, coexist with a relatively low volume of domestic service? A piece of key explanatory value in this respect seems to be the unequal distribution of part-time and full-time jobs. In fact, a much smaller proportion of women participates in paid employment in Greece, Italy or Spain, but those who do so work for a number of hours that is greatly above the EU average (Casaca & Damião, 2011). Limited opportunities and low wages in part-time employment naturally constrain adjustment to changing needs in the work-family balance. One likely implication is that it is easier for households (whether double-earner or single-living) in the remaining countries to

combine public or private services outside the house and occasional help in detriment of hiring a domestic employee. At the same time, the fact that most of the part-time workers in those countries are women leaves a question mark on how these flexible solutions should be understood regarding gender equality in the distribution of paid and unpaid labour (Tijdens, 2002; Crompton et al, 2007; Yerkes, 2013).

In any case, the number of domestic employees is the largest in countries in which previous comparative research shows a stronger support for an asymmetrical model of labour division and a less balanced distribution of time spent on household chores among men and women (Drew et al, 1998; Crompton, 2006; Crompton et al, 2007; EUROSTAT, 2009a). In her examination of the actual gap between couples' attitudes and practices based on data from the 2002 International Social Survey Programme, Aboim (2010: 192) observes that 'individual attitudes seem to have a relatively lower impact on practices both where the support for equality is higher (Sweden for instance) and lower (Portugal for instance)', suggesting that 'less hegemonic gender cultures most probably favour a stronger connection between ideal and real arrangements in specific cases, even if a substantial gap persists between the two levels'. The very values underpinning family roles are likely to translate into differentiated cultures and practices of domestic work, both in its paid and unpaid modalities. Evidence on young women increasingly investing in their professional autonomy and postponing family projects may reflect a generational rupture against the outsourcing of household labour, as well as severe economic constraints and a greater valorisation of the family project (Méda & Périvier, 2007).

The third aspect to be underlined pertains to inequality in the broader economic landscape, an hypothesis explored by Milkman et al (1998) to account for variation in the volume of domestic service across the largest metropolitan areas of the United States of America. Their large-scale analysis demonstrates that the recruitment of domestic personnel by 1990 was more abundant in locations with a greater economic disparity between high income households (potential employers) and working class women (potential employees). Focusing on material resource differentials, Milkman et al nonetheless acknowledge that these are often entwined with status hierarchies based on education, ethnicity and other sources of capital, as underscored in empirical research on the micropolitics of paid domestic work (Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992; see our Chapter 2 for research conducted more recently and outside the United States of America). This argument holds for the evidence presently under examination,

presuming that stronger dynamics of class distinction and exploitation – the basis for the persistence of paternalistic bonds between employers and employees – prevail in the most unequal EU-15 countries. Together with welfare policy, this is an important element to understand why economic deceleration can coexist with a growing recruitment of women to perform cleaning, care and other tasks for more affluent households, and why employees are frequently immigrant or older women even in periods when the unemployment rate of native and younger populations is on the rise.

Finally, internal factors of the employment sector itself must be taken into consideration, including working conditions, labour costs and migration flows (Gadrey & Jany-Catrice, 1998). Yet again, it is difficult to assess to what extent we are speaking of distinct issues. It can still be asserted that low wages, extended informality or the response of migrant women to recruitment as ‘live-in’ employees are crucial drivers in the development of this sector (Catarina & Oso, 2000; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002a; Anderson, 2007). In other words, elements grasped at this level of analysis are probably major conditions restricting the expansion of domestic service in Nordic countries. This reinforces a prior reservation, one that social scientists engaged in comparative analysis know only too well. Although particular arguments are useful to interpret cross-national variation, national or even local contexts retain their own explanatory logics. As we look into smaller geographic frames, different explanations for the same result may emerge. The theoretical standpoints explored in this section of the chapter must be understood as operating in dialogue rather than contrast with such localized interpretations.

6.3. Domestic service employment in Portugal

As a first step into the context of Portugal, we draw on evidence collected by the same Labour Force Survey in this country, resorting to the International Standard Classification of Occupations before we examine the particular trends of domestic service employment. Table IV shows the ten occupational groups in which the largest numbers of individuals were employed by 2010 in Portugal. The two groups of major interest in our study, ‘Domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers’ and ‘Personal care and related workers’, are both on this list; they are estimated to employ as many as 280.2 thousand individuals and 146.9 thousand individuals respectively. These numbers account for 5.6 per cent and 3 per cent of

the labour force in the country. Considering employed women only, the share of the two groups reaches as high as 11.5 and 6 per cent respectively. Both groups show an increase between 2000 and 2010, especially in the period of 2004-8. The predominance of women remains rather stable.

The position of largely feminized domestic and cleaning occupations at the top of the occupational distribution casts a reluctant light on the expectations of significant progress toward a knowledge-based society and gender equality. Certainly we need to bear in mind that the way in which occupational classification schemes are conceived have an impact on the results. Since the International Standard Classification of Occupations aggregates occupations on the basis of skill similarity, those in which a greater degree of specialization is recognized (for instance in technical areas) are bound to be smaller; this can help us understand why they are absent from Table IV even if they have also grown in the period under consideration. If the group ranking first on this table was disaggregated into cleaning in private households and cleaning in other types of settings, or into cleaning and laundering, the groups resulting from the disaggregation would fall to a lower position.

Consensual nevertheless is that the growth of technical and professional jobs in Europe – underway at least since the early 1990s – has coexisted with the expansion of employment in the lower brackets of qualification of the service sector, while substantial shrinkages are concentrated in the agricultural and industrial sectors (EUROSTAT, 2008, 2009b). The same figures suggest that gender segregation has persisted if not increased over time, especially in low-pay occupations. According to an international report by Bettio and Verashchagina (2009: 45, 90-1), the advances toward gender equality in legislation, education and cultural norms weaken classical explanations based on biological factors, women's under-investment, or preferences. Based on a combination of large-scale statistical analysis and qualitative case studies, these authors argue instead that the key determinants are to be found in educational segregation, organizational practices, and the unequal distribution of care work within the family encouraging women to accept lower wage and part-time offers in their struggle to combine motherhood and paid employment.

TABLE IV

LARGEST OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN PORTUGAL, 2010

Occupational group (International Standard Classification of Occupations, 3 digits level)	2010		2000	
	N(1000)	%	N(1000)	%
Domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers	280,2	5,6	273,4	5,5
Shop, stall and market salespersons and demonstrators	250,7	5,0	252,0	5,0
Housekeeping and restaurant services workers	247,7	5,0	192,6	3,8
Building frame and related trades workers	200,0	4,0	271,4	5,4
Numerical clerks	197,8	4,0	261,1	5,2
Managers of small enterprises	196,7	4,0	278,7	5,6
Messengers, porters, doorkeepers and related workers	162,0	3,3	111,0	2,2
Motor vehicle drivers	148,6	3,0	149,0	3,0
Personal care and related workers	146,9	3,0	112,1	2,2
Market gardeners and crop growers	131,4	2,6	176,6	3,5
Total (10 largest occupational groups)	1 961,9	39,4	2 077,8	41,5
Total employed population	4 978,2	100	5 002,6	100

Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. - Statistics Portugal), retrieved on 29/12/2010; our elaboration.

The gendered features of the employment structure in Portugal has been addressed by various authors, uncovering the unequal distribution of women and men across both occupations and hierarchy ladders, as well as the extraordinary difficulties experienced by women to penetrate traditionally ‘male’ professional groups (Amâncio, 1994, 2007; Torres et al, 2004; Casaca, 2005, 2009; Torres, 2008). Remarkable accomplishments in education have given rise to a polarized scenario in which women are still preponderant in precarious and low-wage occupations while they make up a gradually larger proportion of workers in positions requiring a tertiary degree. While stratification among women increased on the basis of class, ethnic and other divides, the gender gap at large did not undergo a dramatic reduction since the change is led by a particular fraction of women – ‘alibi women’, to use the formulation of Ferreira (1999: 208), as they constitute the alibi of a gender equality revolution which has

conquered discourses and minds faster than actual practices. Still, Ferreira observes in the same text that segregation in Portugal by the end of the 20th century was lower than in other countries of Europe such as the Netherlands or Denmark – interestingly, both of them archetypes of labour market flexibility (Abrantes, 2011). Casaca (2007) consonantly alerts that agendas inspired by the notion of flexible employment trajectories and some professional and family reconciliation policies, far from being neutral or inherently positive to gender equality, can reinforce the reproduction of a patriarchal model based on the economic subordination of women and the accessory role of men in the realm of domestic and care work.

Concerning developments in domestic service employment, two overall trends stand out during the decade covered in our study: an increase between 2002 and 2008, followed by a downfall (Table V). Given the moderate and fairly constant decrease in overall employment in this country, the growth of domestic service employment until the eruption of the economic crisis is especially significant (Figure III). It is reasonable to expect that the later context of restraint in family budgets and growing income insecurity among middle-class households leads to a decrease in demand. Still, expanding cultures of long working hours, demographic ageing, or the implications of state under-investment in public care provision are considerable sources of pressure in the opposite direction. The very large share of women in this sector is remarkably persistent, standing at over 98 per cent in 2010.

Differentiation between part-time and full-time employment is also presented in Table V, exposing a moderate upward trend in domestic service as a full-time occupation. The impact of economic downturn following 2008 seems to be stronger on part-time rather full-time employment, probably related with increasing pressures to work for a larger number of hours. The average working time by 2010 stood at 30 hours per week – 41 hours for full-time workers, 18 hours for part-time workers (unpublished data). This does not account for the number of households in which every respondent is employed, an issue that the questionnaire of the Labour Force Survey fails to cover.

TABLE V

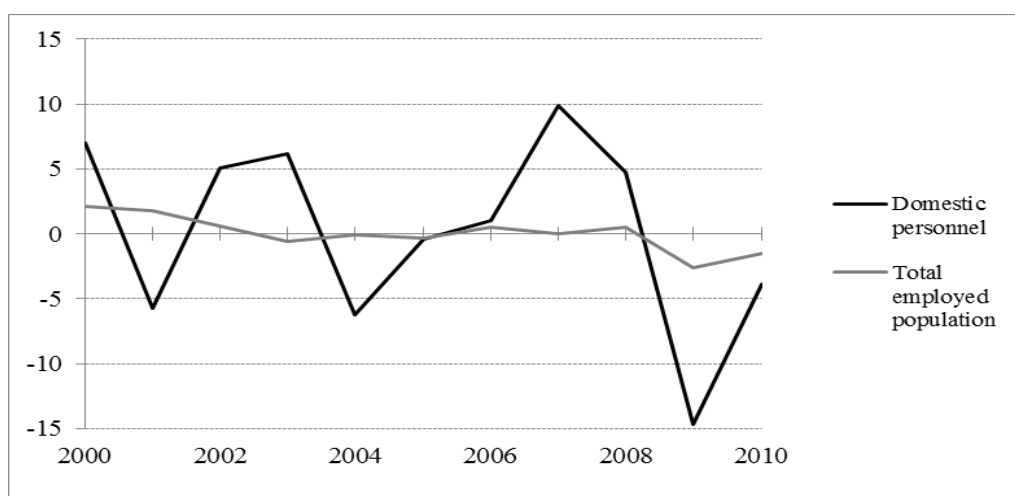
DOMESTIC PERSONNEL BY WORKING TIME AND GENDER, PORTUGAL, 2000-2010

	N (in thousands)	% part-time	% full-time	% women
2000	153.6	56.1	43.9	98.8
2001	144.8	53.2	46.9	98.9
2002	152.2	51.3	48.7	98.8
2003	161.6	53.5	46.5	97.9
2004	151.5	50.5	49.5	98.2
2005	150.9	51.4	48.6	98.9
2006	152.4	53.5	46.5	98.6
2007	167.5	52.9	47.1	98.6
2008	175.5	52.9	47.2	98.8
2009	149.8	50.9	49.1	99.5
2010	144.0	50.5	49.5	98.3

Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. - Statistics Portugal), retrieved on 22/2/2012; our elaboration.

Note: Distinction between full and part-time employment is based on the answer of the LSF respondents; the reference framework is that the former must not exceed 35 working hours per week and the later must not be below 30 working hours per week (INE, s/d: 59-60).

FIGURE III

YEARLY GROWTH OF DOMESTIC PERSONNEL AND
TOTAL LABOUR FORCE, PORTUGAL, 2000-10 (IN %)

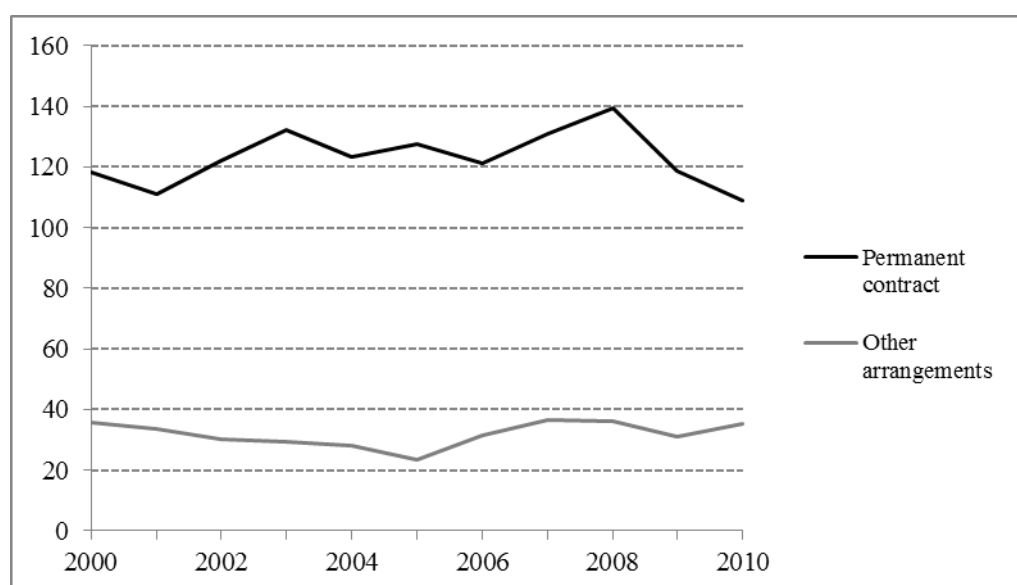
Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. - Statistics Portugal), retrieved on 22/2/2012; our elaboration.

Previous studies indicate that full-time employment, especially under ‘live-in’ arrangements, is a more common type of recruitment for immigrant women (Catarino & Oso, 2000; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Guibentif, 2011). Demand in this modality is chiefly associated with the provision of direct care to children and frail adults. Part-time employment, in turn, is customary among native women who seek to complement other sources of income such as a regular job in another setting or a retirement pension. Therefore, full-time employment may rise even if the contraction of family budgets causes a reduction in part-time employment. The internal segmentation of this sector is a piece of key explanatory value to understand its peculiar resilience in periods of economic recession in comparison with other sectors employing a large number of immigrants in Portugal such as construction, retail, or hotel and restaurant services (Casaca & Peixoto, 2010: 124; Peixoto et al, 2011: 106).

Last, the number of domestic workers with a permanent employment contract increased at a constant pace until 2008, a moment in which, again, the trend reverses, and the number of individuals in this situation decreases from 139 to 109 thousand – or from 79 to 76 per cent (Figure IV). According to labour law in Portugal, a permanent contract is considered to be in place whenever the employment relationship, if regular and verbally established between the two parties, has not been subjected to a written agreement that defines it in any other way. Although workers in this situation – including undocumented immigrants – are encased in the legal category granting the highest level of labour security, their actual situation may be extremely precarious, especially considering the exceptional breadth of valid reasons for dismissal (for more on the legal regulation of domestic service, see our Chapter 5). Hence, the consolidation of other contractual arrangements since 2005 appears to reflect two distinct developments. On the one hand, the thrust toward formalisation led by immigrant women in order to secure their legal residence in the country (Peixoto, 2009: 200-1). On the other, the adoption of contractual arrangements based on temporary assignments and service provision, including a growing number of relationships mediated by for-profit companies (Guerreiro, 2000; Wall & Nunes, 2010).

FIGURE IV

DOMESTIC PERSONNEL BY CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENT,
PORTUGAL, 2000-10 (IN THOUSANDS)



Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. - Statistics Portugal), retrieved on 22/2/2012; our elaboration.

Note: *Short-term, service provision, seasonal work or other contracts.

The same survey also registers whether workers are ‘employees’ or ‘self-employed’. However, the operationalization of this distinction is especially delicate in the case of domestic service. The questionnaire explicitly ignores the configuration of employment relationships according to tax or social security systems. Instead, this distinction draws on a direct question to respondents about who defines the conditions under which labour is performed, such as working time and service cost: if this is done by the worker, a situation of self-employment is assumed to exist (INE, s/d: 51). The great subjectivity of the question reduces possibilities of analysis. Yet, it is interesting to observe that 19 per cent of the domestic employees interviewed in the survey of 2010 are considered self-employed (unpublished data). This share is very similar to the one registered back in 2000, although larger shares can be found in most of the years in-between. The suggestion is that a minor though still substantial fraction of workers in this sector maintain significant autonomy in their employment relationships, an hypothesis to be paid closer attention through empirical qualitative research.

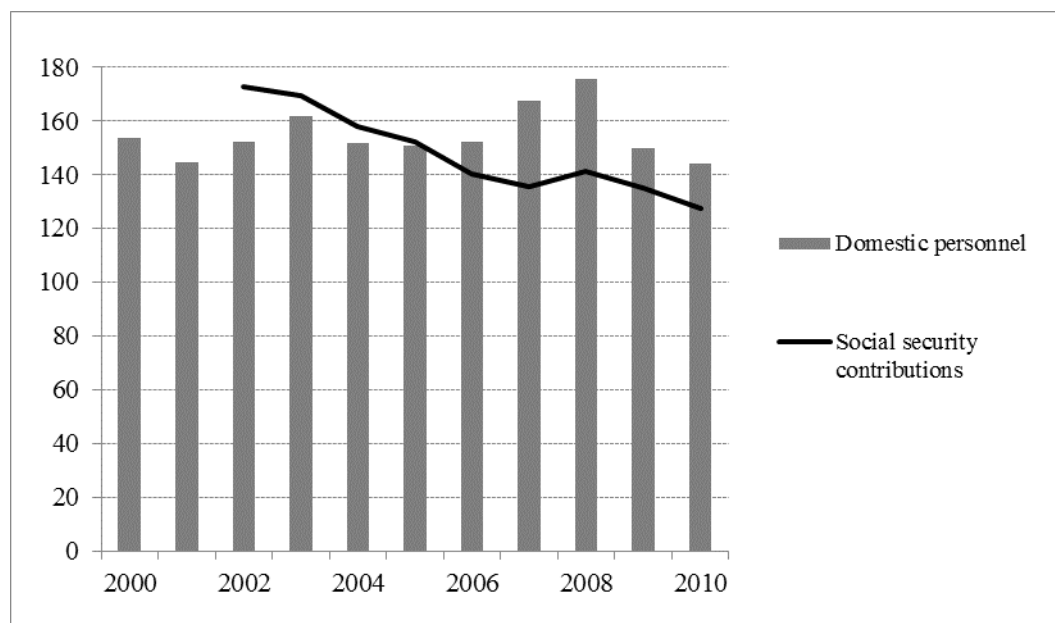
6.4. Workers' profile and social security coverage

Important findings are provided by bringing in data from the Social Security Records. First of all, the number of individuals with social security contributions as domestic employees decreased substantially since 2002 (Figure V, black line in the graph). By then, this population was as high as 173 thousand, a number that is actually higher than the Labour Force Survey estimate for total domestic personnel. This does not necessarily imply that official figures are inaccurate, as individuals categorized in other groups of the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities may be registered in the social security system as domestic employees. The Social Security Records include every employee for whom at least one contribution was made over the year, therefore blending more and less temporary arrangements; in contrast, our analysis of the Labour Force Survey data is based on the 'main occupation' of respondents. Among those combining it with other sources of income, registration in the social security scheme of domestic service can be preferred because it allows a lower contributory rate (see our Chapter 5, especially section 5.4). It is also possible to make one's own contributions to this scheme regardless of effectively performing the work. As uncovered in our own fieldwork, this is a likely recourse for immigrants to prevent the penalty inflicted by migration authorities on discontinuous working trajectories or incompliant employers.

These considerations render the overall downfall of social security contributions all the more impressive, corroborating the difficulty of domestic employees to secure their position in the social security system (Guibentif, 2011). Perhaps more surprisingly, this difficulty seems to have increased rather than decreased during the first decade of the 21st century. Only in-depth research can be expected to disentangle the various possible explanations drawn from the existing empirical studies (Peixoto et al, 2006; Blétière, 2008; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Baptista, 2011; Pereira, 2013): low remuneration, the priority of private saving over employment formalization, the resistance of employers to fulfil their legal obligations, or the perception of domestic service relationships as falling beyond the scope of wage labour.

FIGURE V

DOMESTIC PERSONNEL AND SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS FOR DOMESTIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT, PORTUGAL, 2000-10 (IN THOUSANDS)



Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. - Statistics Portugal), retrieved on 22/2/2012; Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Social Security Administrative Records, retrieved on 26/7/2011.

Foreign and native employees by 2010 are disaggregated in Table VI. The Labour Force Survey estimate of foreign individuals employed in domestic service stands at 20 thousand. While this still represents a minor proportion of the population employed in the sector (14 per cent), it exceeds considerably the proportion of foreign workers in the total labour force in Portugal (4 per cent). We should keep in mind that an independent survey applied specifically to domestic employees in 2009-10 found a share of foreigners as high as 33 per cent (Guibentif, 2011: 7). Even if that survey lagged behind the Labour Force Survey with regard to statistical representativeness at large and various methodological differences exist between the two undertakings, the mismatch in the results reinforces earlier doubts concerning the full coverage of the immigrant population by official sources (Peixoto, 2008: 24-6), and it is plausible to suspect that the most accurate figure lies somewhere between the two estimates.

TABLE VI

DOMESTIC PERSONNEL AND SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS FOR DOMESTIC
SERVICE EMPLOYMENT, PORTUGAL, 2010 (IN THOUSANDS)

	Domestic personnel		Social security contributions	
	N (1000)	%	N (1000)	%
Portuguese	123,6	85,8	106,1	83,1
Foreigners	20,4	14,2	21,5	16,9
Total	144,0	100,0	127,6	100,0

Source: EUROSTAT, Labour Force Survey Database (based on data collected by Instituto Nacional de Estatística, I.P. - Statistics Portugal), retrieved on 22/2/2012; Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Social Security Administrative Records, retrieved on 26/7/2011; our elaboration.

TABLE VII

SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS FOR DOMESTIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT
BY NATIONALITY, PORTUGAL, 2002-10 (IN THOUSANDS)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Portugal	163,4	158,3	145,4	138,7	127,2	120,0	120,4	113,1	106,1
Brazil	1,9	3,0	4,2	4,5	4,6	6,8	10,7	11,3	10,2
PALOP*	3,4	3,6	3,5	3,5	3,4	3,7	4,2	4,5	4,7
Eastern Europe	2,4	2,9	3,1	3,4	3,3	3,3	3,9	4,1	4,3
Other EU	0,7	0,9	1,2	1,3	1,3	1,3	1,4	1,4	1,4
Total	172,5	169,4	158,0	152,1	140,4	135,7	141,3	135,1	127,6

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Social Security Administrative Records, retrieved on 26/7/2011.

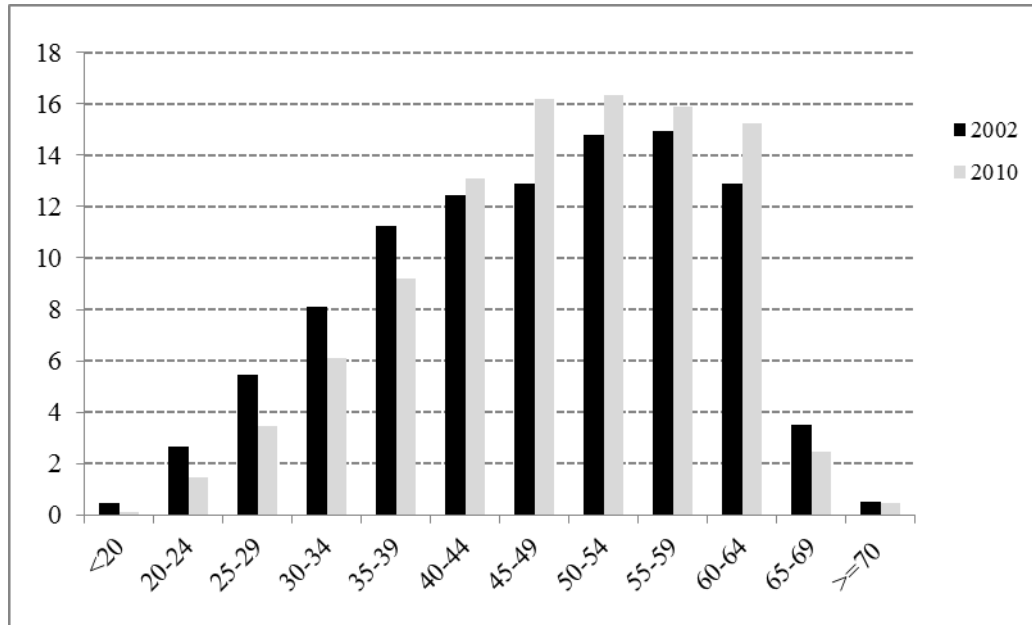
* PALOP stands for 'African countries with Portuguese as the official language': Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

In addition, the greater access of foreign domestic employees to social protection is strongly corroborated. Greater detail is provided by identifying the largest nationality aggregates between 2002 and 2010 (Table VII). At the beginning of the decade, foreign nationalities exhibit very low numbers, suggesting a generalised lack of social protection. The decline in social security contributions among Portuguese employees has been accompanied with an increase among foreigners, from 9.2 thousand in 2002 (5 per cent of the registered population) to 21.5 thousand in 2010 (17 per cent). This increment has been the greatest for employees coming from Brazil and Eastern Europe, and, to a smaller extent, other EU member states and African countries, whereas all the remaining nationalities stand below 1 per cent. Much to our regret, the data made available by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security does not allow any further degree of detail in this respect, and countries with very different characteristics must remain amalgamated. Also, the lack of information on birthplace prevents us from deriving any implication concerning members of ethnic minorities born in Portuguese territory. Both of these limitations affect especially the examination of trends related with the former colonies in Africa.

With regard to age, the registered population is concentrated in the brackets between 40 and 64 years old (Figure VI). This is more the case in 2010 than it was eight years earlier. The combination of data on the age, gender and nationality of the examined population discloses two main elements (unpublished data). First, the population with Portuguese nationality is largely to be found in the oldest age brackets, with 71 per cent of individuals over 45 years old by 2010. The foreign population is significantly younger, with only 32 per cent individuals over 45. Second, the share of men, albeit small, is larger among the foreign population, especially coming from Eastern Europe (9 per cent), against a value of 0.6 per cent among the native population. However, this was more evident in the beginning of the decade, as the share of men decreased since then for all origins. In other words, the growing presence of immigrants in this sector pertains almost exclusively to women.

FIGURE VI

SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS FOR DOMESTIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT
BY AGE, PORTUGAL, 2002 AND 2010 (IN %)



Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Social Security Administrative Records, retrieved on 26/7/2011.

The deduction that social security contributions in domestic service employment were stimulated by their key role in the struggle of immigrant women to obtain legal residence can hardly explain its recent decrease, considering that administrative procedures remained unchanged in that particular aspect. Two complementary interpretations may help grasp the course of events. One of them is that paid domestic work has been increasingly performed by immigrant women who already hold a permanent residence permit, or who are able to secure their stay through channels other than employment such as naturalisation and family reunification. The other interpretation is that native women, who seem more likely to work under informal employment relationships, still constitute a large part of the workforce in this sector – and possibly a growing part under the pressures of unemployment and poverty (Peixoto et al, 2006: 223). In addition, domestic employees, in particular the Portuguese ones, are increasingly concentrated in the older age brackets, as underlined in previous research too (Catarino & Oso, 2000; Baptista, 2011). As a result, many of them are ineligible to enrol in

the social security scheme for domestic employees, notably those who are already receiving a retirement pension, however parsimonious.⁵⁹

The seeming resilience or upsurge of informality in this employment sector encourages a revision of the debate on legal compliance. Ruhs and Anderson (2010) conceptualise three ideal-typical levels of compliance in their examination of the perceptions and functions of various ‘spaces of illegality’ in the employment of migrants in the United Kingdom. Beyond compliance and non-compliance (that is, plain fulfilment of administrative requirements and the unlawful recruitment of unauthorised residents), the authors underscore the growing importance of ‘semi-compliance’, a situation in which migrants who are legally resident are employed to work in violation of employment regulations. The ensuing argument is that semi-compliance constitutes a distinct and contested space of (il)legality serving important functions, such as economic benefit maximization for both parties and the prevention of state sanction for violating immigration law (Ruhs & Anderson, 2010: 207). Considering the case of domestic service in Portugal, this conceptual framework holds rather well provided it is expanded to comprehend native workers as well. As employers seek to reduce labour costs, recruiting a native worker in breach of existing labour regulation – in particular, social security contributions and payroll tax – emerges as a manner to negotiate and minimise irregularity.

A return to historical perspective is expedient. Immigrant women were increasingly recruited as domestic employees in Portugal due to their vulnerability to informality and poor working conditions, the case of ‘live-in’ arrangements being arguably the most striking demonstration (Peixoto et al, 2006; Wall & Nunes, 2010; Baptista, 2011). Following the change in migration law in 2001 and the efforts of political mobilisation promoting rights to equality, they played a leading role in the formalisation of an economic sector that was largely informal long before their arrival (Baganha, 1998; Brasão, 2012). According to the estimation of Guibentif (2011), 29 per cent of the individuals employed in this sector have a written employment contract with the household or households that they work for, most of these cases pertaining to foreign employees – who usually need it to obtain or renew their visa permit at the immigration

⁵⁹ For instance, Conceição, one of the women interviewed during our fieldwork, combines full-time employment as a domestic employee, for which she earns 600 Euros per month, with a retirement pension of 223 Euros per month. At the age of 59, she is the main provider of her household, which includes her husband and two adult children. More on pay and social security arrangements can be found in later chapters, especially sections 7.4 and 9.2a.

authorities. A significant though partial withdrawal of the complicity between weak state and strong market (Peixoto, 2002) was thereby accomplished. The additional cost entailed in formal employment arrangements has not ceased to threaten such accomplishment. This disputes the argument that increasingly restrictive migration policy and intense control preside over the pressure exerted on migrants to move into the underground economy (Van der Leun & Kloosterman, 2006: 60-2). In fact, the same can happen in a country with a relatively open migration policy and little control – if only through the mechanics of the market. The legalist view of policy-making and administrative procedures as creating barriers to formalisation can not obstruct the consideration of other key elements (Chen, 2011: 174-5).

Three sources of bias in earlier studies are now apparent. First, the implicit notion of an entirely formal labour market as a starting point for analysis. As a result, the emergence or re-emergence of informality is fatally muddled with developments in irregular migration. Second, a conception of ethnic complementarity in the labour market as opposed to competition. Periods of economic downturn are likely to make this theoretical mistake ever more evident. Third, the presumed irrelevance of policy-making in countries characterised by weak state intervention. Dwelling on the cases of Portugal and Italy, Solé (2004: 1213) argues that low levels of institutional discrimination and state intervention explain the little impact of immigrants' legal status on their position in the labour market, as 'regular and irregular immigrants alike find jobs in the informal economy and in the same branches of activity'. This chapter shows how such a statement can painfully miss the actual dynamics of segmentation and competition, and the ensuing risks of exclusion and poverty for women employed in domestic service and their families.

6.5. Final remarks

The evidence examined in this chapter contributes to outline important trends in the volume and composition of domestic service, as well as to assess its position within recent changes in the occupational structure. Cleaning and personal care services are shown to employ a large and growing number of individuals, especially women, in the general landscape of the EU-15 countries. Not only the women's participation in paid employment is more substantial than earlier, but they are also more often employed in these particular occupations. The combination of longitudinal data from the Labour Force Surveys and national Social Security

Records paves a promising way to describe developments in domestic service employment in Portugal and overcome some – though certainly not all – difficulties typically associated with a quantitative characterization of a sector pervaded by precarious and informal arrangements (Baganha, 1998; Peixoto, 2002). Concurring with the literature on gendered labour market stratification (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Sassen, 2007), the persistent volume and feminization of domestic service in the first decade of the 21st century coexists with the growth and decreasing masculinization of highly status professional groups – raising particular challenges to women's movements and solidarity.

Segregation in paid employment can be properly understood only if the broader subject of the stereotypical specialization of gender roles in the social and economic organization of labour is considered (Glucksmann, 1995; Amâncio, 2007; Méda and Périvier, 2007; Casaca, 2009). The cross-national comparison attempted above, however modest, suggests that distinct forms of organizing domestic work prevail across Europe. To a significant extent, the notion of two key regimes dividing Europe – the northern countries relying chiefly on public services, the southern ones resorting more to private solutions – is corroborated. Yet, a nuanced approach to this division is required since various countries do not fit in the division as neatly as might be expected. An overall trend toward the expansion of domestic service is observed, but the rhythm and significance of this development varies across countries. A diverse range of explanatory levels can be explored, all of which are interwoven and complementary in nature. For this reason also, our findings should be understood less as a definite insight than as a point of departure for forthcoming in-depth investigation.

Concerning Portugal, the data under consideration show that domestic service employment maintained a moderate increase until the eruption of the economic crisis in 2008. Beyond variation in volume, an important transformation regarding the composition of the sector is exposed. In what would seem paradoxical to a positivistic theory on the ‘modernization’ of domestic service, work in this sector appears to have become both more intense and more informal between 2000 and 2010. In a comparison with evidence collected in the late 1990s (Catarino & Oso, 2000), the continuing ethnicisation of the sector is apparent, with a special emphasis on the increase of Brazilian workers. This process seems to be – especially in periods of economic downturn – less abrupt than in countries like Spain (Domínguez & Guerra, 2006; Petersen, 2007; León, 2010) and Italy (Quassoli, 1999; Ambrosini, 2012), where domestic service has been explicitly covered by the national visa system. Although the

same did not occur in Portugal, several amnesties took place in this country since 1992, and legalization is regularly permitted on the basis of employment status according to the reform of migration law in 2001 (Góis & Marques, 2009). The requirements of migration authorities include a written employment contract and the payment of income tax and social security contributions. In the meantime, we should not forget that class asymmetry and migratory flows *within Portugal* constitute a longstanding structural feature of domestic service employment in this country (Brasão, 2010), similarly to what has been underscored for the case of Italy (Colombo, 2007).

The suggestion is that a convenient alliance between particular institutional features and the thrust for flexible employment relationships has been able to reverse the trend toward formalization that characterised paid domestic work by the beginning of the decade in Portugal, pushing it deeper back into the underground economy. As migrant labour moved increasingly above ground, native labour moved underground. While immigrant women are granted poorer working conditions in important respects such as wages and working hours, they are more resistant to work under informal employment arrangements. This unorthodox nexus amplifies the importance of three elements often neglected in the rationalist view of immigrant incorporation in segmented labour markets: the political agency of migrants, the complex impact of overall economic downturn, and the time-frame of changes in the dynamics of the sector.

Although certainly useful in some respects, the structuralist view is also challenged by these findings. Recruitment on the basis of ethnicity or nationality is still instrumental to reduce labour costs, but this may happen in a more nuanced manner than typically conceived. Migrant workers – and especially women – should not be assumed to compose a reserve army *par excellence* without detailed and place-bounded empirical questioning. It is possible to envision a scenario in which immigrant women in Portugal are again ascribed the competitive advantage of working under informal arrangements and lower costs. A vicious cycle of market and state coercion would then be in place. For migrant workers, this situation entails greater risks of vulnerability and lapsing into illegality. They have largely drawn on a two-step strategy, securing their position in the labour market first and their legal residence status next. As this occurs in a sector of employment permeated by informal practices, migrant domestic workers claiming rights to the formal recognition of their work situation can be described as revolutionary and they are met with fierce resistance at various levels. This movement is

therefore decisively political, and it sheds a clearer light on the extent and contexts in which migration can transform fundamental structures and institutions in the place of destination (Portes, 2010).

Documenting the impact of economic crisis and labour market deregulation or flexibilisation on the livelihood of migrant women can usefully build on particular studies of employment sectors with long records of deregulation and flexibilisation. In addition, the convergence of national legal frameworks – ‘either because of the pressure that the process of European integration has placed on the member-states to unify their immigration policies, or due to the liberalisation of such policies within member-states’ (Solé, 2004: 1220) – suggests that the interaction between policy-making and market dynamics addressed in this chapter is likely to emerge under similar garments in other countries. Abundant evidence on the link between migrant domestic labour and informality across the globe clarifies that this issue is far from an exclusive feature of Southern Europe. The empirical case in hand further confirms the supreme challenge of effective policy-making in times of economic downturn (Sabater & Domingo, 2012: 216). The crisis in Europe since 2008 makes similar analyses even more topical, especially with regard to the risks of exclusion and poverty for working class women, both natives and immigrants.

Everything and the strictly professional: micropolitics of the private workplace

7.1. What is it that domestic workers exactly do?

During the conduction of our fieldwork interviews with domestic employees, a question as seemingly simple as ‘What tasks do you perform at your job?’ turns out to be one of the most complex and time-consuming steps of the script. Several respondents start by answering ‘everything’⁶⁰ (Conceição, Elisa, Helena, Lurdes, Marina, Rute, Tatiana), and there is a general difficulty in listing all of the activities expected from them at the workplace. This is a difficulty that the same respondents tend to take as a minor issue, presuming that everybody – or at least, on that occasion, the questioning researcher – is overly familiar with the range of chores implied in one's own unpaid housework. It does not take much to pinpoint the exceptional interviewees who keep a list of services provided at the tip of their tongue (Fernanda, Joaquina, Otília). When ‘things start to get confused’, Otília explains, ‘some people will take advantage [of the employee]’. She recounts several personal experiences in which the unclear definition of job content and her emotional bond with the employer led to abuses of authority and work overload. Today, she tries to work as if she was ‘a company’, ‘you do the service and leave’.⁶¹

The same tension is acknowledged by employers when asked ‘What tasks in your household are performed by a paid worker?’. ‘She basically does everything’ is the immediate response of Carmen, the only employer mentioning the word ‘everything’, and even her proceeds to correct her answer by detailing the specific chores actually performed by her domestic service

⁶⁰ ‘tudo.’

⁶¹ ‘aí já as coisas se começam a confundir, e depois há quem se aproveite. [...] eu trabalho como se fosse uma empresa. [...] faz-se e sai-se.’

employee, who in the end ‘does not give more than the strictly professional’.⁶² Indeed, the employers interviewed during our fieldwork find it easy to list the limited assignments carried out by their employees, as well as to explain how this entangles with the organization of household labour among co-residents (Ana, Dulce, Isabel, Jacinta, Luísa, Renata). The issue however gets fuzzier when they express their opinions about the quality and cost of domestic services. By then, it becomes explicit that what they purchase goes beyond a given number of assigned tasks, calling for a consideration of the social and economic significance of emotions.

After a decade of vigorous efforts expended by scholars on mapping and theorizing the global dynamics of contemporary domestic service, Colombo (2007: 207) looks into the case of domestic employees in Italy and alerts that little is known ‘about the nature and structure of the work they do, exactly what it is they do in the homes of the Italians.’ According to our literature review, the same gap holds for research in Portugal. This chapter aims to tackle such gap, drawing chiefly on the first-hand descriptions and reflections of the women interviewed during fieldwork. We begin by scrutinizing the tasks performed at the workplace, thereby setting sail to navigate the varying empirical meanings of domestic service. We go on to analyse the particular subjects of time and pay, two factors which – together with tasks – emerge from empirical evidence as key pillars of domestic service employment relationships. Also, they are shown to be largely inextricable. While heterogeneity within ‘live-out’ domestic service is exposed, the stratification of the sector along the lines of ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ arrangements remains undisputed.

Afterwards, competence and learning are brought into the discussion. This requires identifying the emotional labour entailed in domestic service and the ways in which its very existence and value are disputed on the ground. We will question how such immaterial job contents relate with the emotional attachment between the two women playing the roles of employer and employee, paying due attention to the different interpretations and opinions of respondents in that respect. The chapter closes with a summary of the contribution of these findings to answer the research question overseeing the project.

⁶² ‘ela basicamente faz tudo. [...] não dá mais do que o estritamente profissional.’

7.2. Tasks

It is relevant to note from the outset that, to a large extent, we will be examining arrangements between the parties that have been orally established at best. Our fieldwork interviews did not locate the existence of a current written contract in the case of more than two employees (Tatiana and Beatriz, the latter only with one of her three employers), in spite of past experiences with it mentioned by other employees (Eva, Maria, Natália, Rute) or employers (Clotilde, Marília, Nazaré). The limited use of formal agreements and its close link with immigrant regularization will be discussed in a later chapter. For the time being, the important observation is that not even the two employees presently holding a written contract refer to it when describing their duties at work. In both cases, that document exists for instrumental reasons concerning immigrant regularization, and it is not primarily expected to offer clarification or security with regard to working contents or conditions.

Based on how respondents describe their own experiences, a small number of patterned categories is uncovered. The first of them can be labelled *extensive housework service* and consists of relationships in which the employee is expected to secure cleaning, laundering and cooking. Within this group, important sources of variation are observed: cleaning may cover the entire household or exclude given areas such as bedrooms or desk rooms; laundering may be comprehensive (washing, drying, and ironing) or restricted to a specific part of the process; kitchen work may range from preparing daily meals to smaller incumbencies like cleaning up after the employers or cooking soup once a week. In short, although respondents in this category report similar situations concerning overall task circumscription, substantial difference exists in work volume and intensity.

A distinct category can be labelled *partial housework service*. In this case, the employee is assigned the tasks of cleaning and laundering, and the kitchen remains out of her concern. Last, a third category is that of *housework and direct care service*, in which the employee combines the duties of cleaning, laundering and cooking with those of assisting individuals (elderly, disabled adults, or children). Again, the extent and volume of housework tasks vary across households. So do the actual needs of the direct care recipients. Assisting an elderly person, for example, is far from a monolithic concept on the ground considering the actual circumstance under which activities such as physical hygiene, mobility or eating take place. And there are limits to how experience can help anticipate such circumstance. Tatiana

describes two widely distinct work realities – two distinct jobs, one might think – depending on whether her elderly Parkinson-struck employer is ‘calm’ or ‘aggressive’ on each particular day. On ‘calm’ days, Tatiana is able to both concentrate and relax at her other duties, and she can even leave the house to run errands and enjoy the sunny weather. The account of ‘aggressive’ days is an endless tale of sweat and tears, with nervous uprisings and verbal attacks from both parties, as confirmed in our interview with the care recipient's daughter (Carmen).

Going out on the street to run errands for the employer is a task sometimes performed by the employee, though never being acknowledged as comparable in importance or regularity to the indoor tasks (Idalina, Maria, Marina; Ana, Augusta, Carmen, Isabel). The same holds for gardening or looking after pets. Such tasks are not mentioned as part of the job requirements (except for pet care in the case of Amélia), but they can be performed out of goodwill on the basis of mutual advantage: the employer is pleased and the employee takes a small break from housework routine. This notion of a *marginal tier* of assignments is out of the question for Joaquina, Lurdes or Otilia, who favour an unaffectionate relationship with their employers and cater up to nine homes in a single week – besides their own. Interestingly, not even these respondents perform the *same tasks* at their multiple workplaces. That is, they keep a strategic strictness concerning the range of tasks agreed at each household, but they do not describe themselves as providers of any exclusive set of tasks. More often than not, they find themselves engaged in employment relationships spreading across the three categories identified above.

Another distinctive arrangement is that of households employing more than one person. Elisa explains that one of her elderly employers expects her to focus on cleaning and laundering; the kitchen instead is the domain of a ‘a lady who works there as a live-in’, distinguished for being ‘76 years old already’ and possessing a ‘magic finger for cooking’.⁶³ Tatiana, in turn, has been hired to care for her elderly employer while the general cleaning of the apartment remains the incumbency of another woman coming once a week. What we find in both cases is the articulation of two employees ensuring housecleaning and direct care respectively. A different situation occurs at Ana's home. ‘Two ladies come here’, she says; one ‘comes only to iron’, whereas the other one is in charge of cleaning. Like in the situations of Elisa and

⁶³ ‘uma senhora que trabalha como interna, já tem 76 anos [...] e tem um dedinho para a cozinha que eu vou-lhe contar!’

Tatiana though, a crucial element of the storyline is the employer's acknowledgment that the same employee is incapable or unwilling to cover all of the necessary tasks. The recruitment of two employees is therefore entwined with task circumscription – and offers possible scenarios for workload reduction and specialization. However, this does not emerge as a necessary consequence, at least for ‘live-in’ employees. Both Maria and Natalia remember their ‘live-in’ experiences in households simultaneously hiring as much as two ‘live-out’ employees as a period in which their tasks were never over.

In other words, the range of tasks performed by employees can not be fully understood without paying attention to the number of hours that they spend at each workplace; and task listing may indeed be less significant than time as far as working content is regarded. Nonetheless, before stepping into the issue of time – and to better grasp its relevance – it is expedient to question the *changing quality* of tasks as perceived in empirical context.

Conceição is a domestic employee in charge of housework and direct care to an elderly woman. During most of the day, the two of them are alone in the apartment. But assignments may suffer a modification when the elderly's relatives who also live in the household come to have lunch or need a particular set of clothes ready. Conceição highlights this ill-definition of tasks when saying that what she really does at her workplace is ‘house life normally’.⁶⁴ In turn, Oflia's main duty is to clean, but she must sometimes give support to her employers' children or elderly relatives. Rita does her employers' laundry only when ‘the madam didn't have time to go to the laundry shop’.⁶⁵

This availability to fulfil changing requests is certainly welcomed by employers. Inês keeps loving memories of a few of her past domestic employees who would acquiesce to any ‘simple thing’ that she asked them, such as going to the local grocery shop or leaving the vegetables unpeeled and washed inside the pot so that it was quicker to cook the soup when she got home. Clotilde remembers having a particular employee who was ‘a saint’ – she ‘did everything’ both indoors and outdoors, in spite of lacking a driver's license.⁶⁶ At a certain moment, Clotilde told her that she was willing to pay her the training to get the license, but the employee ‘didn't want it’.

⁶⁴ ‘vida de casa, normalmente.’

⁶⁵ ‘[...] se a patroa não teve tempo para ir à lavandaria.’

⁶⁶ ‘uma santa. [...] fazia tudo.’

Variation can also occur in a more consistent manner over time. While the composition of the household is altered as a result of people's birth or death, divorce or marriage, adult children moving out of home or moving back in, the employee is presumed to carry on with her work, even though it can be apparent that work contents changed substantially (Conceição, Eva, Lucinda, Marina, Oflia; Carmen, Clotilde, Custódia, Madalena). Lucinda is employed in two households for a considerable length of time now – 21 and 10 years respectively. In one of them, she saw children grow up and move out, and today her tasks are concentrated on cleaning and taking care of her middle-age employer as she suffers from various health problems. In the other, she has been originally recruited by a couple in their sixties to do the cleaning, later accompanying the death from illness of one of the members of the couple, as well as the worsening of the Alzheimer's condition of the surviving one. A similar case is that of Eva, who after the death of her employer kept working for the employer's co-resident daughter (Madalena), who was 25 years old at the time and decided to maintain the situation as her mother had arranged it.

Another recurrent possibility after a child moves out of the house or employers divorce is that the employee proceeds to work in both households (Joaquina, Lurdes, Oflia, Zita; Carolina, Clotilde). Carolina explains that when she left her parents' home for an apartment with her male partner in a different part of town, her parents' employee, Zita, started catering to her new place too. 'Because there's less work to do there [at my parents'] without me, she comes here once per week'. 'Everything else stays the same', Carolina adds, referring to tasks and working time as well as salary, since she pays in consonance with her parents' practice.⁶⁷ Despite tasks being vaguely defined then, the employee follows the bifurcating paths of the family on the basis of a change in the *location* of those same tasks, and we find employment relationships deeply bounded with personal and family life stories.

One element emerging from fieldwork is that changes in task assignment – which may be more or less temporary, more or less predictable, more or less agreed between the parties – are not only a measure of employer power, but also a materialization of the actual expectations underlying a domestic service relationship. Even when tasks are clearly assigned at the outset, such assignment must be kept sufficiently broad and flexible if the employee is to be more than simply the one who cleans or cares – becoming the one who, in the words of employers,

⁶⁷ 'Como sem mim lá há menos trabalho, vem um dia para cá [...] tudo o resto mantém-se, e eu pago o que corresponde a esta manhã que ela está cá.'

‘keeps things going’ (Odete), ensures that the home is a ‘comfortable, clean, organized’ place (Inês), or ‘sees my needs’ (Augusta).⁶⁸ Remarkably, the domestic employees interviewed during our fieldwork do not seem to realise that their role is *that* important for employers; this can derive from either a symbolic devaluation of work or a strategic attempt to reject the immaterial demands placed upon themselves. Sparse statements still allow us to hint at the very opposite. Natalia, looking back at her experience as a live-in domestic employee, claims that ‘when you have an employee, you don’t have to think’: the employee can do a lot of thinking for you with regard to housework or childcare. Amélia comments that the things to be done ‘sometimes don’t finish, it’s not like there is a list’.⁶⁹

Does the expansion of *thinking* or *non-listable* tasks pave the way to work overload or work upgrading? This discussion will be resumed when looking into competence, learning, and emotional work. For now, it is enough to admit that a definition of tasks strictly anchored in *material* requirements fails to grasp a substantial part of what is going on.

7.3. Time

The liquid boundaries of domestic work are not typically mentioned when the two parties arrange the terms and conditions of their relationship. Recurrent points of reference then are time and money, may their appearance as *objective* elements help the parties anticipate conflict stemming from the subjective nature of tasks. This is far from a perfect solution to the problem though. How many hours is it reasonable for an employee to spend at a given task? And how many hours is the employer willing to pay? Luísa’s employee always tries to leave the workplace before her four paid hours are complete. ‘I couldn’t care less!’, Luísa exclaims, in close resonance with statements by other employers, ‘what I care about is that the work gets done’.⁷⁰ Still, amid the distrust of both employer and employee concerning the meaning of time, a number of hours *is* arranged, and our empirical research has not come across any reference to a present or past case in which the number of hours was left unspecified except

⁶⁸ ‘mantém as coisas a andar’; ‘confortável, limpo, organizado’; ‘ela vê as minhas necessidades.’

⁶⁹ ‘tu quando tens empregada, tu não precisas de pensar’; ‘as coisas para fazer às vezes não acabam, não é como se houvesse uma lista’.

⁷⁰ ‘Quero lá saber! O que me importa é que o trabalho esteja feito.’

when involving ‘live-in’ employees – which is sufficiently informative about the importance of defining working periods.

As far as ‘live-out’ service is concerned, the arrangements uncovered in fieldwork span from a full-time commitment of 40 hours per week at a single household (Conceição and Rute, both involving direct care) to working periods of three hours per week; there are even cases of one and two hours per week, although these are clearly exceptional (Joaquina; Dulce). Most observations fall between 4 and 16 hours, and regularity is always set on a weekly basis. At the time of the interview, Amélia and Rita are the only employees who keep one sole part-time employer, combining domestic service with other sources of income. In the opposite end of the continuum we find Joaquina, whose weekly work schedule comprises a total number of 52 hours spread over nine households; or Fernanda, with 48:30 hours over six households.

Working periods occur between 8:30 and 18:30, chiefly from Monday through Friday (again, we are excluding ‘live-in’ arrangements). Conceição works on Saturday too, from 9:00 to 14:30, at the same household where she performs eldercare during weekdays from 8:30 to 17:00. Also involving eldercare is the case of Natalia: sometimes, she works on Saturday or the full weekend replacing friends employed in the ‘live-in’ regime who need a break. Joaquina, pinpointed in the paragraph above for her very busy and compact schedule, caters to two distinct households on Saturday, spending four hours at each. The same is done whenever possible by Beatriz, after working 35 hours during weekdays. Yet, these are exceptions among the respondent employees, and no similar example has been found among respondent employers. Working on Sunday remains an exclusive feature of the ‘live-in’ regime.

Who decides so? Several employees declare their fierce determination in staying away from paid employment during the weekend, even if those who have children ground their claim on the need to work at their own home (Helena, Lurdes, Marina, Oflia). We know how the right to rest on Sunday, and to a lesser extent on Saturday, is a fundamental achievement of workers since the times of extensive ‘live-in’ recruitment. It is still under dispute whenever ‘live-out’ employees are sporadically asked by their regular week employers to come on the weekend, although in a novel outfit: the additional work may be paid for or compensated with a corresponding break during the week. But the interviews with employers confirm the occasional wish for the presence of their employee during the weekend as much as their overall wish for their *absence* during the weekend. The employee comes to the house in periods of the day when they are out at their own job, and the inexistence of physical

encounter between the two of them is described as only natural (Carmen, Carolina, Laura, Madalena, Renata) or even convenient and desirable (Ana, Clotilde, Inês, Luísa).

A large part of our interview with Inês, a divorced mother, is her explanation of how domestic work is organized in her household, an undertaking that she describes as a ‘brutal’ challenge entailing ‘a very strict discipline’.⁷¹ Currently, she employs a domestic worker for only 6 hours per week, tasks being limited to cleaning and ironing. While extending the employee's working time and tasks would be within economic reach for Inês, she does not ‘see it as such an advantageous thing’ because the recruitment of an employee for ‘too many hours... breaks the intimacy of people’. Indeed, Inês does not like to be at home when the employee is there since she feels her ‘personal space very much invaded’. Another important opinion added a bit later is that a domestic employee absolves resident children from their responsibility in the household tasks to be done. It is ‘very important to have a person, yes, who helps’, she concludes, ‘but I don't think that she should be part of the family's life’.⁷²

The nexus of working time and assigned tasks is tense, and this tension underlies much of the dissatisfaction regarding pay or the quality of the employer-employee relationship at large. Maria describes her various conflicts with employers who recruited her for a specific set of tasks (e.g. cleaning, ironing) and went on to expand the list of demands (e.g. cooking, direct care) on the basis of those assignments taking place within Maria's original working time. Both Liliana and Idalina compare their experience in domestic service with that as cleaners in commercial or public settings, only to conclude that the benefits of the former regarding pay per hour obscure the fact that hours are much more difficult to count or to comply with: you come across employers who ask for a volume of work requiring 8 hours to be done in only 3, so ‘you either stay until later, or do it in a hurry and do it wrong and then the customer complains’ (Liliana).⁷³ Beatriz comments that some employers are much more directive than others in regard to how things shall be done, but ‘often things can not be done neither their

⁷¹ ‘Ih... brutal! Isso é uma disciplina muito rígida.’

⁷² ‘Eu não vejo isso como uma coisa assim tão vantajosa [...] empregadas a tempo inteiro ou demasiadas horas... quebram a intimidade das pessoas. [...] sinto o meu espaço pessoal muito invadido. [...] É mesmo importante ter uma pessoa, sim, que ajude, mas não acho que ela deva fazer parte da vida da família.’

⁷³ ‘e então ou fica até mais tarde, ou faz à pressa e faz mal, depois o cliente queixa-se.’ It is interesting to note that Liliana refers to her employers as *clientes* (‘customers’) even though she is hired under direct employer-employee arrangements. Following up on our reflections about the application of the law in Chapter 5, this is an empirical instantiation of how the rationale of self-employment and service provision relationships pervades this sector. From a legal point of view, Liliana's arrangements, part-time and unwritten as they are, are employment contracts nonetheless.

way, nor my way: it is the time's way.' 'Oh, another thing that happens', Amélia says, 'is that there is no lunch break'. She can not remember any of her acquaintances who stops working or leaves the workplace to have lunch; 'you eat while standing up in the kitchen' at best.⁷⁴

And what if tasks are not fully concluded by the time that you should leave? 'Well, you finish them', Lurdes replies. Lucinda, who is employed in two households for a Monday-to-Friday total of 42:30 hours, takes one of her employer's clothes to wash or iron at her own home when regular working time has not been sufficient to do it. At home, she is glad to do it at her own rhythm and rhyme, combining for instance ironing with watching television. It is not a coincidence that the employer in question spends her days at home and maintains a strict supervision over Lucinda's work. This is a unique case within our fieldwork interviews in that it comprehends close *in loco* surveillance by the employer and the preference of the employee to labour back at home in detriment of spending additional hours at the workplace.

Whereas finishing housework tasks may be thus resolved or transformed, the picture is different when it requires caring for an elderly or a child (Conceição, Rute, Tatiana). Leaving the workplace in the common circumstance of the adult co-residents coming home later than expected is out of the question. An hybrid solution, somewhat similar to the scenario of Lucinda ironing at home, emerges when the employee lives nearby and accepts taking the child under care to her own home (Carmen and Marília, referring to past experiences).

In any case, what is typically taken in empirical context by both employer and employee as a matter of 'personality' or 'circumstance' builds on a historical and political confrontation for the power to establish and effectively implement working time boundaries. The account of Marina is exemplary. According to her estimation, she works everyday an average unpaid extra time of 15 minutes, either because employers asked her so or she does 'a miscalculation of the available time' and gets 'delayed' in the tasks to be completed. You can not mop only half of the floor or leave clothes in the washing basin, she says to illustrate her point – 'I have to be respectful, haven't I?'.⁷⁵ She leaves workplaces the latest in the Christmas' season, when employers request more cleaning and cooking than usual. Again, the expectation of accompanying household rhythms stands out. But it also stands out that Marina, prevented by

⁷⁴ 'às vezes não dá para fazer tudo. Não é à maneira delas, nem à maneira minha: é à maneira do tempo.' 'Ah, outra coisa que acontece é que não há hora de almoço. [...] acaba-se por comer de pé, na cozinha.'

⁷⁵ 'Ou pediram, ou às vezes atraso-me. [...] calculo o tempo mal e não vou deixar uma sopa a meio, não é? Não vou deixar o balde da esfregona a meio da cozinha. Não vou deixar a roupa na sabonária... Também tenho que ter um bocadinho de consideração, não é?'

her employers from taking a week of holidays during the Christmas' season, persistently voices her wish to be dispensed on the 24th and the 31st of December (non-holidays just before the public holidays of 25/12 and 1/1). Two of her employers concede her that; one other does not. When leaving later than expected, she never stays longer than one extra hour unless some pay or rest compensation is proposed by the employer.

And this is also what brings Carmen, one of her current employers, to underscore that Marina 'does not give more than what is required by law' or 'more than the strictly professional'.⁷⁶ Carmen proceeds to explain that, differently than some of her friends' employees do, Marina is very strict about her leaving time and never accepts exchanging a week day of work for a weekend day. Carmen's discourse is especially interesting as it exposes the intersection of an *occupational argument* – Marina should be more flexible as an employee – and a *solidaristic argument* – Marina should be more compassionate considering particular circumstances of the household and her employer's excessive domestic workload. For instance, when the family was moving to a new house, the employee was never available to start working a little earlier or leave a little later when it was evident that it would make a significant difference. 'And I resented that very much', Carmen says, remembering how many hours she stayed busy cleaning and unpacking by herself, unassisted by her male partner and children.⁷⁷

In consonance with the suggestion of our examination of tasks, it is apparent that employers hold some expectations concerning their employee's working time that are not fulfilled. However, none of the respondents reports that the unwillingness of their employee to work extra hours (be them unpaid or paid) has ever been considered sufficiently serious to equate terminating the employment relationship. The same goes for employee's requests to reschedule working shifts, e.g. from the afternoon to the morning. For employees though, securing compliance with the working periods previously established is a permanent challenge. It is curious to add that one of the strategic informants interviewed during fieldwork, a lawyer for a trade union confederation, stresses that a common obstacle in resolving cases of domestic service in court is the difficulty to prove working periods, since in almost every case the only individuals who can testify are precisely the employee and the employer.

⁷⁶ 'não dá mais do que o exigido pela lei, não é? [...] não dá mais do que o estritamente profissional.'

⁷⁷ 'e eu levei aquilo muito a mal.'

7.4. Pay

At this moment, one can understand the astonishment of Otilia when she was told by an employer that, given to a decrease of household income, there would have to be a reduction in either her working period or her pay – no reference to tasks being made then. As expected, she manifested her preference for reducing the working period, and immediately sought a new employer to fill in the hours lost. Resigned to the work intensification implied in this arrangement, Otilia is decided to get monetary compensation. But how much can one be paid for domestic service? How much variation do wages comprehend, and who sets them?

Here, we will be looking at net wage. This is a necessary step of harmonization considering that our group of respondents – both employees and employers – present a rather balanced distribution of cases in which social security and income tax are observed and unobserved. Five of the employees interviewed are simultaneously engaged in formal and informal relationships with distinct employers. Due to their manifold implications, formalization and social security (as well as holiday allowances) will be discussed in Chapter 9, and they are considered in the present section only to the extent that they impact on net pay.

Convening present experiences as reported by the respondents, we find a mean hourly pay for domestic service of 6.25 Euros; more precisely, 6.15 Euros among the interviewed employees, and 6.35 Euros among employers. Pay may be defined directly on a hourly basis or on a monthly basis, the latter applying to employees who work full-time for that single household (Conceição, Rute and Tatiana), or employees who worked full-time for that single household in the past and in the meantime suffered working time reduction with an agreed pay reduction (Marina; Carmen, Carolina, Isabel). Those whose pay has been defined on an hourly basis from the outset of the relationship earn more, their average standing at 6.60 Euros. Consonantly, those experiencing time reduction from full-time to part-time at a particular household (always associated with employers' grown-up children moving out of the house) went out to earn a higher hourly wage at their new workplaces, but still managed to get an increase of the hourly wage at the original workplace. A few years ago, the members of a local NGO engaged in supporting immigrant domestic workers defined 6 Euros as the minimum reasonable amount to be paid in this sector; many of the women who sought their support earned less than that.

Variation from 5.00 to 8.50 Euros is observed. Definite outlier is the arrangement of Joaquina with one of her nine employers, who pays her 10 Euros for each hour worked on a Saturday, a comparatively high value even considering that Saturdays tend to be paid above weekdays. The same goes, in the opposite extreme, for the arrangement of Conceição with her full-time employer: her monthly wage is 600 Euros for 42:30 working hours per week, hourly pay thus standing at 3.50 Euros. Aware that she earns less than standard practice in the occupation, Conceição attributes this fact to emotional attachment. A very strong affection links her to the elderly woman that she is caring of, as well as to the elderly's family, and she is positive that this is as much as can be paid by the two co-resident adult siblings – mid-skill workers with children at their responsibility too.

In fact, employees for whom care is the main incumbency are paid less (per hour) than those who perform only housework service, if only because their arrangements are typically made on a monthly basis. Implications of the employer-employee emotional bond are more ambiguous. Employees providing direct care only sporadically such as Fernanda, Marina, Rita and Zita all report a longstanding affectionate relationship with some of their employers, but we find no evidence of a linear impact on pay. If we incorporate other forms of gratification in the analysis, the picture may even be reversed. The four of them mention that they are offered the opportunity to eat from the provisions of those particular employers, besides receiving material gifts on festive occasions or fresh consumables when employers come back from short stays in their ancestors' properties in the countryside.

Reflecting upon this very issue, Augusta asserts that the amount that she pays to her employee (225 Euros per month on a part-time regime, corresponding to 7,03 Euros per hour) is 'one part professional and one part emotional'. Or, in other words, 'it is inflated by the emotional part'.⁷⁸ To put it in economic terms, she mentions that she pays the same amount every month even if the employee has been absent for a number of days. But she also knows that the woman that has been her employee for 36 years now is always available to help in case of need or emergency: 'it seems one of those relationships of old in which employees were part of the family'.⁷⁹

Trust can have monetary value, then – and not only trust on the interpersonal relationship with the employee *per se*, but also on her efficient performance, even when bonds are not

⁷⁸ 'o que pago é uma parte profissional e uma parte emocional. [...] É inflacionado pela parte emocional.'

⁷⁹ 'Parece aquelas relações antigas que havia em que os empregados fazem parte da família.'

permeated by significant affection. This is the case of Lúdia, who stresses that pay remains unchanged regardless of her employee often leaving earlier as long as ‘the work is well done’ and ‘tasks are completed’.⁸⁰ The same is generally practiced by all of the other interviewed employers (reported explicitly by Ana, Carolina, Carmen, Isabel and Luísa), corroborating the previous suggestion that they largely understand pay to be made on the basis of task completion rather than hours spent at the workplace.

Even though it is consensual among respondents that evading social security contributions and income tax is a strategy with short-term benefits for both parties – increasing employee income, decreasing employer expenses –, we do not encounter any evidence that employers who *do* observe formal requirements pay a lower gross wage than their unobservant counterparts. The contrast is still between hourly-based and monthly-based pay arrangements, since the latter are more likely to be formalized. However, a disaggregate comparison of these two types of arrangements does not show any consistent difference in gross or net pay per hour.

Another relevant feature is that the hourly pay is fairly uniform for each individual employee across workplaces. Excluding the aforementioned arrangement of Joaquina on Saturdays, the greater variation is experienced by Beatriz, to whom each working hour is paid at 7 Euros by two employers (for extensive housework service) and 5 Euros by another (for only cleaning, no laundering nor cooking). Generally, the variation experienced by one same person across workplaces is close to non-existent, especially if we control for tasks performed.

A part of an immediate explanation for this is that interested employers often ask the employee to set her price. Lúdia pays 6 Euros per hour to her current employee, ‘the normal price as far as I know’. She remembers the initial meeting when conditions were established. ‘It’s the domestic employee who defines it’, she underscores as she recalls previous experiences too, ‘I don’t bargain’.⁸¹ Another explanation consists in the tendency to isomorphism through social networks, i.e. the multiple personal acquaintances of every employer and employee. The two households where Beatriz is employed at 7 Euros per hour are located in the same building, these two employers being neighbours and friends. One of them, Madalena, remembers how a few years ago, while talking with her neighbour, she was astonished to find out that she was paying her employee 2 Euros per hour less than her neighbour for the same exact tasks. She eventually decided for the correspondent pay rise.

⁸⁰ ‘desde que o trabalho esteja bem feito, desde que as tarefas estejam cumpridas.’

⁸¹ ‘É o preço normal, tanto quanto sei [...] a empregada doméstica é que define; eu não regateio.’

Another explanation is that pay is one of the central criteria on which employees base their selection of interested employers, to the extent permitted by economic need at the time of seeking employment. Amélia recently refused a proposal to work during the week afternoons for 200 Euros per month and no social security. ‘Can you imagine how much that means per hour?’, she exclaims.⁸² It means 2.30 Euros – before deducting public transportation costs, Amélia points out.

With regard to pay rise over time, a mixed landscape emerges. Some employees experience regular yearly rises, others do not. When rises are practiced, this can happen as a result of the employee's claim or the employer's initiative. Common is the downward trend after the economic crisis outburst in 2008, affecting even those employer-employee relationships in which yearly pay rises had taken place for over two decades (Elisa, Lucinda, Marina, Rita; Augusta, Carmen, Isabel). All of these cases pertain to employers who are public servants or pensioners, thus experiencing direct income reduction since the implementation of the austerity policy measures. Carmen, one of these employers, recalls that her employee ‘never asked for a rise’; it was always Carmen's initiative to do so. ‘If I'd get a 10 per cent rise myself, I'd rise her 10 per cent’.⁸³ One of Lucinda's current employers, on the contrary, had to be convinced of the same logic. ‘Don't you get a pay rise every year, madam? So I must get it too’, Lucinda says in a concise summary of her successful argumentation back then.⁸⁴ For her, 2012 was the first year of wage stagnation (at 6.55 Euros per hour). But she also comments that ‘the lady who works next door earns 7 Euros’, and not farther than one kilometre away, in a wealthier neighbourhood, there are domestic employees ‘who earn as much as 8 Euros’. The standard strategy, according to Lucinda, is to demand a higher wage when you start working at a new household. As a result, ‘you earn more in those homes where you began more recently, do you get it?’⁸⁵

While we find recurrent statements of respondents comparing wages across neighbourhoods, age brackets, or nationalities, these statements are not always consistent, and the adopted research design does not permit clarification. A number of hypotheses requiring further

⁸² ‘Já viu quanto dá isso à hora?’

⁸³ ‘Fui sempre eu. Nunca ela me pediu aumento. [...] se eu era aumentada 10 por cento, aumentava-a 10 por cento.’

⁸⁴ ‘A senhora não é aumentada todos os anos? Então eu também tenho de ser.’

⁸⁵ ‘a senhora que trabalha aqui ao lado ganha 7 euros à hora. E ali na zona da Expo há quem chegue a ganhar 8 euros. [...] ganha-se mais nos sítios onde se está há menos tempo, está a perceber?’

research do emerge. Among them is the expectation of pay being higher when employers are wealthier – asserted by some employees, discredited by others. Logical economic reasoning aside, Laura explains that she pays her employee as much as 7 Euros per hour (plus social security contributions) on the grounds of countervailing class asymmetry: ‘if there is too much of a disparity in the living conditions’ of employer and employee, the relationship becomes ‘unbearable’.⁸⁶ Another plausible hypothesis is that of women employers paying more than men employers. Palmira's opinion is that domestic employees do not earn much, even when she considers the period when her own domestic employee was paid a higher amount per hour (5.00 Euros) than Palmira herself as a university graduate working at a bank's support office (3.80). Her husband, she declares, ‘sees things differently, he thinks they [domestic employees] earn a lot’.⁸⁷

7.5. ‘Live-in’ and ‘live-out’

Be it with regard to tasks, time, or pay, the distinction between ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ regimes remains crucial in the segmentation of the sector. This is acknowledged by respondents with and without personal experience of ‘live-in’ domestic service. As stressed in Chapter 4, our fieldwork has been focused on the ‘live-out’ modality and this is mostly what the empirical evidence can be expected to illuminate. Still, it is useful to address relevant perceptions and standpoints concerning ‘live-in’ arrangements.

Only one of the respondent employees holds a ‘live-in’ job at the time of the interview; one other working as a ‘live-out’ from Monday through Friday reports being sporadically asked to stay over during the weekend, and one other does the same on occasional weekends to cover the rest break of friends working in the ‘live-in’ regime (Tatiana, Conceição and Natalia, respectively). Eldercare is the main assignment in the three cases. Among the interviewed employers, none of them currently employs a ‘live-in’ worker at their household. Several of them however report having elderly relatives (a parent or a parent-in-law) for whom a ‘live-in’ domestic worker has been recruited, and they take varying degrees of responsibility for

⁸⁶ ‘se há uma grande disparidade entre as condições de vida de uma pessoa e da outra é insustentável.’

⁸⁷ ‘ele não vê isto da empregada da mesma maneira, acha que ganham muito.’

that arrangement (Carolina, Carmen, Clotilde, Isabel, Marília, Palmira). This has been the solution adopted so that the elderly in question could remain at her or his own home.

If we bring in past experiences, a more complex picture emerges. There are native employees who started working as a 'live-in' employee (typically, a 'maid') for a wealthy family on the basis of an arrangement between such family and their own parents (typically, their mother). Joaquina experienced it when she was 15 years old, Marina and Otília at 14, Fernanda at 10, Zita at 9. These particular cases all took place between 1973 and 1983. In two of them, the arrangement required the young girl to move from her rural homeland to Lisbon, and it was made possible because the family recruiting her was originally from that same rural area. A similar occurrence is reported by various employers when recalling their childhood times and how their own parents used to hire domestic employees (Ana, Carmen, Clotilde, Isabel, Luísa, Marília). In other words, there were in-country migration flows characterized by members of wealthy families moving to the city and 'bringing' or 'ordering' predominantly young women to work for them, often the very descendants of their parents' or grandparents' maids in the countryside. But this could also happen within urban limits, as in the cases of Joaquina or Zita, who moved from a working-class suburb to an affluent neighbourhood in the city centre.

Among foreign respondents, 'live-in' domestic service was the first way to subsist in Portugal for Beatriz, Idalina, Maria, Natalia and Rute. All of them were then adult and emigrated on their own, even if a male co-national partner would reunite with them later on. These particular cases took place between 1995 and 2005, except for Idalina who arrived from Cape Verde in 1974 (at the age of 18). The next chapter will look closer into how in-country and cross-national migration flows are related with 'live-in' recruitment and domestic service segmentation. Because our focus here falls on the respondents' experience today, it suffices to add that all of these women would eventually exchange 'live-in' domestic service for either 'live-out' domestic service, a job in another sector or a period of unemployment (resuming the occupation at a later stage). Their life story is thus deeply interwoven with a lingering depiction of 'live-out' domestic service as proper employment *vis-à-vis* 'live-in' serfdom. The same dichotomous depiction is found in the discourse of respondent employers when comparing the poor working conditions of their family's maids in the past with those of their current 'live-out' and mostly part-time domestic employees.

None of the mentioned employees re-entered 'live-in' service to date. Crucial for both native and foreign workers, the shift from 'live-in' to 'live-out' employment must not be taken as a

systematic transition though – it is overemphasised in this group of respondents because we interviewed almost exclusively ‘live-out’ employees. Interestingly, the only respondent currently employed as a ‘live-in’ worker, Tatiana, left her small town in Ukraine for agricultural work in a rural region of Portugal in 2003, and only entered ‘live-in’ domestic service three years later after a lapse of unemployment. This can also occur to native workers, as reported by respondents from their personal knowledge. Another reported case is that of native women who entered ‘live-in’ service at an early age and never exited it.

As expected, ‘live-in’ work is closely associated with the provision of direct care, and one same employment relationship can shift to the ‘live-out’ modality over time. Augusta, Carmen and Custódia currently employ part-time domestic employees who began working at their households under a full-time ‘live-in’ arrangement. They consonantly maintain that the immediate reason for the ‘live-in’ modality then was childcare, or, more precisely, the difficult articulation of motherhood with personal autonomy pursuit and less than collaborative male partners – close to a *desperate solution*. Indeed, they did not seek it again once their children grew enough as not to require permanent overseeing.

A similar reasoning (including less than collaborative male partners) is behind the recent recruitment of a ‘live-in’ employee to care for elderly parents who have lost their autonomy. However, a distinct viewpoint on ‘live-in’ eldercare also emerges from the interviews – one that construes domiciliary 24/7 paid care as the solution that ensures the greatest quality of life for the elderly, that is, the *best solution* rather than a desperate one. Plenty of references are made to the poor quality solutions offered in public elderly homes and the unaffordable costs of private ones. ‘Our oldies are very unprotected’, Sandra says, ‘it is as if the sooner they die, the better.’⁸⁸ While the recruitment of one single ‘live-in’ employee working from Monday through Friday (or Saturday) is never presented as the preferred option, it is often the one within economic reach. At the same time, we come across an uncontested acknowledgement of eldercare as demanding particular skills – in a much stronger tone than when housework or even childcare skills are discussed.

⁸⁸ ‘Os nossos velhotes estão muito desprotegidos, é como se quanto mais depressa morrerem, melhor.’

7.6. Competence and learning

But how does skill materialize in practice? When respondents bluntly equate workplace tasks with everyone's own chores at home, should we presume that there is a broad convergence in respect to competence and learning across paid and unpaid settings? A positive answer to this interrogation is strongly supported by our empirical evidence.

First of all, uniformity does not pertain only to *what* the employee does at the workplace – it is also about *how* she does it. This can be observed even when the main assignment is eldercare, usually pointed out as the task requiring greater skill. Tatiana was first recruited as the ‘live-in’ carer of an 98-year-old men with Alzheimer without having reported any experience other than looking after her own cancer-struck father at home for two months. In a later job, she was informed at the outset that the care recipient suffered from Parkinson. ‘I didn't know the disease in practice’, she recalls, ‘I didn't know what it implied’.⁸⁹ She necessarily learned what she could as time went by, spending most days alone with the care recipient. The case of Conceição is alike. ‘The same way I do at home, I do at work’ is her remarkable assessment referring to a full-time job in which she secures housework besides catering to a dependent elderly and a child.⁹⁰ At her own home, Conceição never had the experience of eldercare, and her two children are now adults. Still, she can equate her paid and unpaid work incumbencies because she is expected to draw on very much the same skills.

Like in the employee's private life, learning on the job is construed as a process consisting of response and adjustment to circumstance. This is addressed in varying terms by most of the respondent employees. When recruited for ‘live-out’ housework and direct childcare by her current employer, Zita ‘started in the dark’. The only piece of instruction that she remembers receiving at that time was ‘to do things as if I was at home’. Lucinda puts it the other way around: ‘on Saturdays and Sundays I don't work; I stay at home, doing the same’.⁹¹ Sometimes, personal and job assignments are even fulfilled at the same time. When Lucinda takes her employer's laundry to wash or iron at home, she saves energy and time by taking care of it together with her own family's laundry. Another instantiation of this *simultaneous double shift* is that of employees who bring home their employers' children or, much more

⁸⁹ ‘Não conhecia a doença na prática, não sabia o que implicava.’

⁹⁰ ‘Como faço na minha casa, faço aqui.’

⁹¹ ‘Vim às escuras! E a [empregadora] disse-me: faça como se estivesse em sua casa.’ ‘Sábado e domingo não trabalho; é em minha casa. É fazer a mesma coisa.’

recurrently, bring their small children to the workplace (Elisa, Fernanda, Helena, Lucinda, Marina, Paula, Rita, Zita; Augusta, Carmen, Custódia, Isabel).

The bond between paid and unpaid incumbencies is reinforced by the symbolic representation of the domestic service employee as someone who provides *help* (ajuda). Unsurprisingly, we find the term *help* only in the interviews with employers, not in those with employees. Taking care of housework for Laura ‘is very easy because I have that help’; Odete ‘always had help’; Jacinta says that her family ‘needed that help for sure’; Dulce’s employee ‘helps a lot’. While the word is more frequently used when referring to cases of employment relationships with short part-time working periods (as if ‘help’ opposes a full-time arrangement), it appears even if the employee comes to the house as much as three times per week. ‘I have a lady who comes to help’, Renata says, before noting that the employee ‘has been there for longer than me’ – being already her husband’s employee before he married Renata.⁹² First, *help* emerges as an expression of devalued work. Second, it is also a measure of how the closeness between worker and employer is understood in personal terms rather than employment terms. The very position of the *employers* is devalued along the way. Third, and perhaps most explanatory of all, the employee is there to *help* a particular somebody in a particular role: the woman who is expected – *with or without help* – to keep everything ready and running for her male partner, children or elderly parents to enjoy.⁹³

And *help* tends to be required at those tasks which the employer finds the hardest or the most unpleasant. This is explicitly acknowledged by some employers who thus maintain a negative view over their employee’s incumbencies, a view manifested in terms that are normative as much as solidaristic. Laura claims that she knows how to do everything at home, having been taught by her mother ‘or else I’d get beaten’. But she resents domestic work for being ‘a routine’, ‘everyday the same thing’, and she admires her employee for being able to bear it on a daily basis in several households – to the point of letting the employee do things ‘a little

⁹² ‘Tenho uma senhora que vai ajudar. [...] ela está lá há mais tempo do que eu!’

⁹³ An important parallel can be drawn between the conceptualization of paid domestic work as help in the everyday discourse of some employers and the way it is labelled in official public records. According to the national classification of occupations, domestic workers employed to provide direct care are categorized as *ajudantes familiares*, that is, ‘family helpers’ (the correspondent English term used at the EU level is ‘home-based personal care workers’). In turn, those who do not provide direct care are categorized as *empregadas domésticas*, that is, ‘domestic employees’, both words declined in the female form (the correspondent English term used at the EU level is ‘domestic helper’). An interesting detail is that, in the Portuguese classification, ‘help’ is a feature of the direct care worker rather than one of the cleaner. In the international scheme in English, the situation is partially reverse.

worse' or 'a little slower' at her home.⁹⁴ The same empathic tolerance is reported by Isabel, knowing that the other employers of her employee are very strict and demanding. Ana underscores that she hates ironing: 'I don't want to do it, I refuse to do it!'. For her, ironing is the task that must be outsourced. Adosinda says the same about cleaning; Nazaré, about ironing and cleaning; Carolina, about everything taking place outside the kitchen. The employee is thus assigned the most unwanted tasks while the employer resigns to the remaining ones. The most eloquent example is that of employers who wish that their employee would secure all of the housework so that they would only need to be concerned with caring and spending a good time with their children (Adosinda, Anabela, Carolina, Luísa).

We see once more how domestic employees accompany important changes in the composition and dynamics of the employer households. However, our earlier comments in this respect must be slightly reformulated in that the employee does not simply accompany changes. In fact, these changes tend to have a negative material or emotional significance to the employee: a member of the household gets ill or dies; children move out of the house, or they move back in when they are unemployed; a baby is born, and workload increases as a result of parents' decreasing availability for domestic tasks. Again, skills are obtained, developed or applied on the basis of response and adjustment to circumstance.

But if skill exists, who holds it in the first place? Or, to put it another way, where does it come from, and how is it transmitted? This is a relevant issue insofar as the traditional presumption of domestic service as *low-skill* or *unskilled* service collides with the empirical observation that both employers and employees draw thick distinctions between good and bad, competent and incompetent, expert and non-proficient domestic workers. When asked if they feel that they have ever taught their employers something, the employees interviewed during our fieldwork overwhelmingly reply that they have not. In fact, this question is received with long silent breaks and awkwardness, the paradox being that they could never teach their employers – even admitting that they may be more skilled domestic workers than their employers – as they were recruited to do precisely what the employer would be doing if she did not have to go out to work. Their employer's preference rather than their own dictates how things are to

⁹⁴ 'Eu sei fazer tudo, aprendi desde pequena senão levava tarefa [...] uma rotina, todos os dias a mesma coisa [...] que mal tem se [a empregada] faz as coisas um pouco pior ou um pouco mais devagar?'

be done, regardless of little to none instructions at the outset. Elisa is the only respondent out of 25 to clearly identify one thing that she taught one particular employer (cooking).

In the meantime, employers may see it differently. Marília assures that her first domestic employee was the one who taught her not only how to do and efficiently ‘organize’ housework, but also how to deal with a number of health issues during pregnancy and childcare. Carolina similarly states that her employee, who is also her parents' employee, ‘never had to be taught’ anything at work, much to the contrary. Isabel ‘learned a lot’ with Lucinda, her long-time domestic employee, including at dealing with the laundry, sewing, and cooking. Lucinda, also interviewed during fieldwork, does not report any significant teaching though. It is plausible that learning processes are more visible for employers than for employees, considering that the former have obtained more formal education and may thus keep a more attentive eye to this matter. But there is also a possibility that the skills brought in by the employee are made invisible by the hidden script of hierarchy in the relationship between the two parties.

Consensual indeed is the assertion that the employer is expected to play the teaching role – allowing for exceptional cases like that of Marília, in which the employee really ‘treated me as a daughter’.⁹⁵ Ana, Carmen and Clotilde had to teach their employees what they perceive to be elementary rules of cleaning, cooking or childcare, not to mention the general occurrence of the employer ‘teaching’ how she prefers things to be done. Inês considers that there was ‘a lot of learning’ for both her and her employee, as in a process of ‘mutual adjustment’, but only at the very beginning of the relationship – never afterwards, also as a result of the employee coming when Inês is out at work.⁹⁶ Luísa comments that many times her employee does a bad job at ironing her clothes. What can Luísa do about it? She ‘must tell’ the employee that the clothes need to be properly ironed again – ‘I, not knowing how to iron myself!’, she exclaims, in an exemplary account of how the lack of technical expertise limits teaching. ‘What I do know is that I can't go to work with the clothes in that state.’⁹⁷

The age or life stage of both employee and employer are certainly part of the story. ‘This is not like you do at school’, Zita clarifies; when you are a domestic employee, ‘you learn as

⁹⁵ ‘ela tratava-me como uma filha.’

⁹⁶ ‘houve bastante aprendizagem de parte a parte [...] foi uma coisa de ajuste mútuo.’

⁹⁷ ‘ponho a roupa de parte e tenho de lhe dizer. [...] Eu, que não sei passar a ferro! Mas sei que não posso levar a roupa assim para o trabalho.’

you go'.⁹⁸ For her, it started when she was first employed as a 'live-in maid' at the age of 9. Marina, also entering domestic service as a minor, learned how to take care of a home with her first employers. This is confirmed by one of her current employers, Carmen. While Carmen can not think of any particular ability that she may have learned with Marina, she is quick to remark that Marina is 'better' or 'quicker' than herself at doing 'everything'. Palmira compares the case of two of her employees in the past: one of them was experienced and did not have to be taught anything; the other was 'very young' and 'had never worked as a domestic employee', so she 'had to be moulded' by Palmira.⁹⁹

In these various modalities and understandings, learning the trade of domestic work can be read as a process of labour and skill division internal to the female gender. Fieldwork interviews would have to cover men employers or men employees to elaborate on this argument. Still, it is impressive that we can not locate one single reference by either employers or employees to a man (employer, husband, father) while addressing matters of learning. What is more, the gendered codification of domestic skills is corroborated by the gradual transition of the employee from executor to *co-organizer* of her employer's household labour. Lurdes gives the example of one of her employers (a middle-aged couple) who first requested her to come four hours once a week. After a while, she proposed coming twice per week, two hours on each occasion, so that she could wash clothes one day and find them dry on the other day to iron. Lídia's employee caters to several households in the same building and often drops by one of them on a day off for small tasks, such as collecting dry laundry from the outdoor clotheslines when she sees that rain may be coming up. Between Beatriz and Madalena, the following interaction occurs: the employee decides what to cook and writes down the list of necessary ingredients, and the employer goes to the supermarket to buy them. 'That's because I don't know how to cook', Madalena explains during her individual interview. As far as she knows, Beatriz learned a lot of cooking from another of her employers. In a similar vein, Augusta stresses that her employee is 'master and commander' of her own activity; she is the one takes the everyday domestic decisions and defines what needs to be done. To illustrate her point, Augusta goes as far as to say that her house 'is not really mine, it is hers [her employee's]'.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ 'Não é como vocês na escola. Vai-se aprendendo.'

⁹⁹ 'era novinha, nunca tinha trabalhado como empregada doméstica [...]. Teve de ser moldada.'

¹⁰⁰ 'A minha empregada é dona e senhora de fazer o que quer e o que lhe apetece [...] aquela casa não é minha: é dela.'

And Augusta is certain that such state of affairs contributes to turn into a challenging job what would otherwise be just monotonous domestic work, an argument in which she is seconded by Dulce. We have seen that there is a thin line between what is required from a competent domestic employee and what is simply understood as a kind, unnecessary gesture from her; and that the expansion or transformation of incumbencies toward the role of organizing household labour can be imposed on the employee as much as stimulated by the employee herself, though motivations certainly differ. The doubt remains: is the explicit incorporation of organizational tasks in job contents synonym with a tentative transition of the employee from unspecialized executor to a sort of *household manager*? Is this about work overload, work upgrading, or both? The subtle and dynamic negotiation of roles between the two parties can not be understood without a closer look into emotional work and emotional bond.

7.7. Emotional work

Our fieldwork uncovers the centrality of emotional work in domestic service relationships, especially though not exclusively when the employee maintains daily physical interaction with adults, children or elderly people. Importantly, as shown below, the emotional work performed or exchanged at the workplace is often rendered invisible – or naturalized – in the everyday discourse of respondents, both employers *and* employees.

In this respect, a crucial element confirmed through empirical analysis is that emotional work behind the walls of private households is not simply extracted from employees by their female employers – before that, and still during the employment relationship, it is often extracted from those same female employers by their male relatives. In other words, two closely intertwined processes emerge in the discourse of respondents. On the one hand, female employers benefit from instrumentally making the emotional dimension of their employees' performance invisible or natural. On the other, their own emotional work has been typically rendered invisible or naturalized within household and family dynamics. As she searches for the adequate words to address this delicate issue, Inês comments that wives and mothers

‘ensure a lot of care, right?’, and this is something that ‘also takes space, doesn't it?, it takes time, that's true.’¹⁰¹

In fact, unless in a few exceptional cases, the employers interviewed during fieldwork had their first experience of recruiting a domestic employee after they realized that they would not be able to ensure the care work expected from them while pursuing a professional career which could grant them a minimum degree of personal economic and social autonomy. In most cases, children were at the core of the affair. Some employers had recently married; others had recently divorced. One can also learn from the exceptional cases: Custódia always had domestic employees, even before having children and after dropping paid employment, thanks to the abundant steady income of her parents and husband; in turn, Dulce could resort to female relatives to care for her children when they were little, and she recruited a domestic employee only much later when her health condition made it difficult for her to keep doing the weekly cleaning and laundry. Laura recalls living for some years with a male partner with whom there was no need to outsource domestic work. ‘We did it together, it was like a ritual’, she says, noting that such co-responsibility at home is also a form ‘of creating a family, of consolidating the bonds of the people who live there’.¹⁰²

Direct care is acknowledged as a major reason for the recruitment of a domestic employee. Consonantly, all of the employers report having sooner or later shortened the weekly working hours of their employee as a result of decreasing direct care needs, e.g. when children grew enough as to take care of themselves or adult care recipients died. Nevertheless, direct care is minimized in a global view over the role of the employee. Lídia's first employee was recruited to iron, though ‘she also looked after the children whenever necessary’. Adosinda's employee was recruited ‘to take care of the child’, but in the meantime ‘she did the cleaning and the cooking’. For Inês, ‘a good thing of having an employee’ is that her child ‘can go home from school and be accompanied during those hours’. When questioned about her first domestic employee's assignments, Carmen says that ‘she was there for everything: cooking, cleaning, laundry’. Was childcare included?, we ask. ‘Yes, that too!’ is Carmen's answer. At a later moment of the interview though, she stresses that her main requirement concerning her

¹⁰¹ ‘a maior parte das mulheres asseguram muitos cuidados afetivos, não é? [...] e isso também ocupa espaço, não é?, ocupa tempo, é verdade.’

¹⁰² ‘fazíamos juntos, era como um ritual. Penso que, ao fazer essas coisas, estamos a criar família; a consolidar os laços de quem lá vive.’

domestic employee has always been that she ‘took well care of my children; everything else was less important’.

At first, Madalena had a quite impersonal relationship with her employee, originally recruited to perform only housework service. When Madalena's mother got ill and subsequently died, the relationship between the two surviving women turned into close fellowship. Clotilde once had a serious conflict with the domestic employee hired to look after her first child. Through personal acquaintances in the neighbourhood, she found out that the employee would eat the baby's food herself and then take the baby to a local coffee shop to give him a muffin for lunch. Indeed, the first word that Clotilde's child learned how to utter was ‘muffin’.¹⁰³

Direct care can be thus treated as both secondary and too important a task to compare with the other common assignments at the workplace. Differently than what we see in other regards, the interviews with domestic employees do not provide a counter-narrative to this seeming contradiction. Extreme cases are those of Marina, who describes her everyday routine at one of her workplaces without ever mentioning that her employer is often limited to lie on the bed for health reasons. Tatiana mentions that one of her tasks is to ‘accompany the lady’, an odd word choice considering that her elderly employer is physically unable to get in and out of bed, walk, or use the bathroom on her own.¹⁰⁴ Employees report witnessing many intimate and intense developments in their employers' life story. They are there when employers or their relatives get ill or die; they are there as children grow up and families expand; they are there as love relationships evolve into co-residence or divorce. The cases are too many to describe at length here, but we can draw an eloquent example from the account of Conceição, who was first recruited at her current workplace to care for an elderly couple. After the male care recipient got seriously ill, she visited him at the hospital a few days before he died and promised him that she would look after his wife until the end. She has kept the promise to this day.¹⁰⁵

The invisibility of direct care is also a piece of interpretative value for competence and learning as discussed in the previous section. In one of her previous workplaces, Zita was

¹⁰³ ‘queque.’

¹⁰⁴ ‘acompanhar a senhora.’

¹⁰⁵ As mentioned above in section 7.4, Conceição explicitly acknowledges emotional attachment as the key explanation for her frequent unpaid overtime work and her pay being below common local standards in the sector.

much appreciated because she displayed a ‘way of talking’ and a ‘tenderness’ with the elderly care recipient that the elderly's own daughters admitted that they lacked.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Conceição is sometimes required to stay the weekend with the elderly mother of her employer ‘because she [the elderly] is more at ease with me, even more than with her own children, because with me it's different’. Amélia, who looked after a child for several years, says that she ‘ended up being the central reference for the little girl’, and that was why she could not leave the job when she was offered better conditions in another workplace. Isabel underscores that her employee is so careful as to call on a day off to remember the children's medication or to know when to cook the children's favourite meals to prevent them from eating too little. Her employee, Isabel adds, ‘was never seen as an employee, not even by the children’. These are all attempts by the respondents to shed light on the often unspoken dimension of emotional work in everyday domestic service.

The situation can be quite different for employees who provide housework service when there is nobody at home. Otília caters to her eight employing households as if she ‘was a company’, ‘you do the service and leave’. Tânia is sure to conclude that housecleaning is ‘where I feel good, where I am relaxed’. Looking upon her previous employment experiences, which include homecare and working behind the bar of a coffee shop, she says that those jobs required her to be ‘always in a good mood’ – ‘I'm no good for that kind of work’.¹⁰⁷ This reasoning, largely seconded by the other housecleaners interviewed during our fieldwork, must be juxtaposed to the distinct features of their employment situation when compared to that of their counterparts providing direct care: physical isolation and higher wages.

We are therefore confronted with a number of subtle and complex processes determining the devaluation of emotional work. One of them, as argued above, pertains to the very devaluation of emotional work within the employing household. Another one is the ambiguous entwining of paid assignments with the personal bond that develops over time between employee and employer – a liquid area where trust, control and dignity can grow in various configurations.

¹⁰⁶ ‘a maneira de falar, o carinho.’

¹⁰⁷ ‘na limpeza [...] é onde eu me sinto bem, onde estou descontraída [...] Eu não dou por exemplo para trabalho de café, de balcão. [...] estar ali sempre bem-disposta, não gosto.’

7.8. Trust, control and dignity

Because, in fact, the fact of entering a home, of entering a family, et cetera... It's an extremely delicate relationship of trust and mutual dependence, and many times it becomes detrimental, over time, or it can become detrimental, to the establishment of a proper employment relationship. A lot of things get in the way...

(Daniela)

These are the words of a local NGO activist consulted as a strategic informant. They resonate with those of Nuno, a trade union representative, when he comments that trust is the most precious asset of a domestic employee, and that she will only seek the legal support of the union when, and only after, the bond of trust with her employer has been broken. This is all the more relevant considering that work is performed far from the public eye. Still, it remains difficult to make a conclusive assessment on whether personal trust and mutual dependence should be interpreted as opposing a proper employment relationship or rather assumed to be part of employment relationships in this sector – and perhaps many other sectors too.

Trust is key from the outset of the relationship, as illustrated by the overwhelming prevalence of recruitment through informal contacts and personal networks. We have not come across more than one single account of a recent employment relationship resulting from the employee's application to a written job advertisement (Amélia, replying to an offer posted by a private household on a website). This is quite an impressive observation considering the high number of relationships in which many respondents have been engaged as employees or employers over the last years. In fact, both parties praise word-of-mouth as an efficient tool to save time and reduce the risk of exploitation (for employees) and turnover (for employers). More than that, advertisements published on newspapers, websites or local notice boards can be dangerous for either the responding employee or employer: 'you can never tell what's on the other side' (Joaquina).¹⁰⁸ Although a crucial role is thus attributed to oral recommendation, the people who transmit such recommendation can be close relatives and friends as well as someone briefly met at the workplace or at a neighbourhood shop. The degree to which recommendation itself is to be trusted varies accordingly, but even a third-party conversation heard while waiting for the bus can offer a valuable opportunity (Lurdes).

¹⁰⁸ 'nunca se sabe o que vai estar do outro lado.'

What do employers actually know about the employee that they are hiring? Inês located her current employee through family: the employee had been working for her brother for some time already. Inês was then informed that the employee ‘had one or two daughters’, ‘was a very religious person – and she is’, and ‘was a honest person’. At that time, she did not feel the need to ask her brother if the employee ‘was good at cleaning, not those details’. This can be explained in part by the overshadowing prominence of *honesty* in the affair, possibly the most decisive requirement, since the employee ‘will be given our home keys’. It also echoes matters that have been discussed above, namely a subjective definition of skill and the notion of competence as depending to a large extent on how the employee matches the expectations of each particular employer. In other words, the employee at stake could be considered a good cleaner – she could *be* a good cleaner – at the household of Inês's brother and not at Inês's. Nonetheless, the two siblings have ‘shared the same employee many times’ in the past.¹⁰⁹

Likewise, Carolina, Clotilde, Augusta and Luísa all ‘share’ their domestic employee with their parents or adult children. Luísa recalls how this happened. She told her mother that her male partner and her ‘wanted to find someone’, her mother ‘described’ her current employee, and they said ‘that's fine’. Luísa's first physical encounter with the employee took place ‘when I opened the door for her to start working’.¹¹⁰

In turn, Dulce first spoke to her domestic employee to be while they both attended the local catholic mess on a Sunday. Living in the same area, the two women had known each other from sight for a long time and maintained a number of common acquaintances. The experience of Custódia is somewhat similar. Having moved from a rural part of the country to a Lisbon suburb after marrying, her domestic employees since then have always been ‘brought’ from her region of origin, because she did not know any women that she could trust in Lisbon as much as to hire her. ‘Down there’, she says referring to the country region where she is from, ‘it's different, we know the people, the families.’¹¹¹ Another recurrent use of personal networks is made when the employee herself recommends someone to replace her when she leaves the job (Beatriz, Fernanda, Eva, Tatiana; Inês, Lídia, Madalena, Marília).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Sabia que ela tinha uma filha ou duas filhas [...] que era uma pessoa muito religiosa... e é... e que era uma pessoa honesta [...] se ela é ou não é boa a limpar, esses pormenores não, não sabia [...] porque a pessoa fica com a nossa chave de casa. [...] nós partilhamos muitas vezes a mesma empregada.’

¹¹⁰ ‘dissemos à minha mãe que queríamos encontrar alguém, a minha mãe descreveu-a, nós dissemos está ótimo [...] e só a conheci em pessoa quando lhe abri a porta para ela começar a trabalhar.’

¹¹¹ ‘trazíamos era de lá [...] Lá em baixo é diferente: conhecemos as pessoas, as famílias...’

Importantly, the centrality of trust is not reduced by the fact that the employee comes to the house when her employers are out at their job. To the contrary, trust may be the only source of security and comfort for an employer who can not be there to supervise the employee's behaviour or her way of going about the intimacy of residents (Clotilde, Inês, Luísa).

To be worthy of trust, the candidate should also keep a faultless record of discretion. 'Nobody knows the masters better than their domestic employees', Amélia says.¹¹² This statement could be disputed, but certainly breaching the implicit rule of confidentiality over the private lives of employers is a common reason not to be again recommended by neither employers nor fellow employees (Fernanda, Otilia; Clotilde, Jacinta, Luísa). One thing that Clotilde appreciates about her employee, who also works at the home of her adult child, is that she 'doesn't tell me anything of what's going on at my son's'. As a result, Clotilde 'knows' that the employee doesn't talk about what's going on at her home either.

Social networking is not only about solidarity and unselfish feelings, as both employers and employees know too well. Carolina is sure that she would only hire someone with 'referrals' from her acquaintances, otherwise it is preferable to resort to a cleaning company which 'is expected to exert some control, right?'. Luísa favours hiring someone who is employed at the home of an acquaintance *at the same time*, presuming that in such case the employee 'will not want to jeopardize the two homes because of some problem'. An exemplary view from the other side is provided by Otilia, her account being identical in this respect to the ones of Helena, Rita, or Joaquina. At the time of our interview, Otilia was employed at eight distinct households; the plurality of employers is key to increase income and prevent becoming economically dependent on a particular household. In her own perception, the fact that almost all of these employers know each other personally is a source of security for her, since they attempt to harmonize their practices according to standards of social acceptability and she can be somehow protected from opportunistic behaviour. At the same time, she notes that any hint about her incompetence in a given household would threaten her permanence in the other ones. In short, the capacity of networks to offer stability coexists with lingering tensions regarding control and power with benefits to employers: work intensification is favoured and resistance claims by employees are discouraged.

¹¹² 'quem melhor conhece os patrões são as empregadas domésticas.'

At this juncture, the relationship of trust between employer and employee can be just as well read as a relationship of distrust, at least in the initial stage. But what of its progression over time? Cases of strong emotional bonds developing between employer and employee have been mentioned above. A question mark falls on how domestic employees report and interpret such experience. Two clearly distinct answers emerge from the fieldwork interviews with employees. One of them is that the emotional bond is *a necessary condition to meaning and dignity* in domestic service relationships. The other is that the emotional bond *obstructs the achievement of a satisfactory position* in domestic service relationships. To a large extent, these are competing and mutually exclusive discourses. But they can also be combined to generate a hybrid, more ambiguous outcome – according to which meaning and dignity in domestic service relationships are attained precisely when these relationships are perceived as constituting something other than an orthodox employment relationship.

Let us look into the *necessary condition* discourse first. Fernanda is currently employed at six distinct households; she provides mainly housework service, most of her employers being elderly women who lost their physical ability to take care of their home. During the interview, Fernanda constantly refers to her employers as ‘my little oldies’,¹¹³ and she declares her steady preference for employers who really ‘need’ her even when she could increase her income otherwise – a practice confirmed, with a reproaching undertone, by two respondent employees who have known her for a long time, Almerinda and Paula. Differently than what happens in the interviews with these two women, the interview with Fernanda suggests nothing less than a quasi-public service *ethos* in paid domestic work; or, perhaps more accurately, a strategic solidaristic arrangement between middle-class and working-class women. Apparent is the resemblance with the aforescribed case of Conceição. Lurdes, employed in seven households without any direct care incumbencies at the time of our interview, is categorical in stating that ‘in this job we grow fond of people, because otherwise it's nothing, right?’ Rute, who combines childcare and housework at her full-time workplace, asserts that ‘without a personal relationship I don't stay in a home’. She hotly opposes domestic service employment based on distant and impersonal interaction, relationships ‘made only of rules’, ‘those cases of I-master and you-employee’. Zita underscores time and again how the relationship built with her employers over 18 years is the only thing that keeps

¹¹³ ‘os meus velhotinhos.’

her at work, and she is sure that the same degree of fellowship is felt by her employers: ‘It's not like if I die they will take in another person’.¹¹⁴

In the *obstruction* discourse instead, these considerations are recognized only to be criticized and placed at safe distance. Marina is determined to resist getting fond of her employer's children so that it will be easier to leave the job when a better opportunity comes up. She attempts to fulfil the required emotional work without falling into emotional attachment, a fine line to tread as it is, because she feels that she is not treated in a fair manner by this particular employer – who, among other things, refuses to pay the mandatory social contributions as Marina requested at the beginning of their relationship. Oflia makes further incisive remarks about the need to limit emotional attachment with the families employing her. She declares that emotional attachment is very often the ground on which abuse and work overload take place. Joaquina alerts that some employers will try to pull you into a psychological ‘game’ so as to get what they want from you. Natalia reports a past traumatic experience of that sort. Since then, she says, ‘I sell my hands to work; I don't sell my heart, nor my mind’.¹¹⁵ This discourse is reinforced by the realization that changing jobs is a valuable resource to improve one's position in a sector where prospects of promotion on the job are minimal. Emotional attachment is then second to the pressing need to quit the household if you feel disrespected by your employer or if the amount of tasks to be performed grow out of proportion, bringing the instrumental dimension of the employment relationship to the fore.

It is significant that those respondents subscribing to the *necessary condition* discourse who entered domestic service as a child do not extend the same reasoning to their very first employers; rather, they associate those employers with episodes of exploitation and humiliation. That is, they praise emotional bonds – they praise *particular* emotional bonds – provided that these are accompanied by what they perceive to be decent working conditions and a respectful behaviour in everyday interaction. This leads to an important observation: emotional bonds develop under different conditions and regulate the relationship between employer and employee in different ways. We will advance into the identification of various

¹¹⁴ ‘Neste trabalho nós afeiçoamo-nos às pessoas, porque senão não é nada, não é?’; ‘sem relação pessoal não fico numa casa. [...] se for só regras, aquela coisa de eu-patroa e tu-empregada doméstica, eu não fico’; ‘não é assim: se eu morrer, põem outra pessoa.’

¹¹⁵ ‘Eu vendo mãos para trabalhar; não vendo coração, nem cabeça.’

grounds for the development of emotional bonds in the next chapter, demonstrating how they are closely entwined with broader class and gendered arrangements in society.

7.9. Final remarks

The largely descriptive endeavour underpinning this chapter builds on the notion that discussing the position, role or function of paid domestic work in contemporary society must not acquit scholars from a scrupulous examination of what people actually do and feel behind the walls of private households. The analytical plunge into the configuration of interpersonal arrangements in empirical context does not reduce the significance of debating macro level dynamics; instead, it contributes to establish a more solid ground on which such debate can take place. ‘It is impossible to understand how the system works’, as written by Burke (1980: 74), ‘if one does not understand the values of the participants’. Certainly women employees and employers do not exhaust the participants to be considered. Listening to them is though crucial to countervail the orthodox application of male-biased concepts and lenses which limit our reporting and understanding of women's work and experience (Glucksmann, 1995; Torres, 2000; Oakley, 2000; Casaca, 2005; Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007; Bould & Gavray, 2008). This chapter has shown how their accounts provide a privileged starting point – a window through which to peer into the contents and meanings of labour performed at the *private workplace*.

As we listen to the voices of both parties, we are also confronting the lifeworld dimension of systemic developments addressed in previous chapters: in particular, how the growth and decreasing masculinization of highly status professional groups has coexisted with the growth and persistent feminization of domestic service, or how the availability of domestic labour in cheap and flexible forms has been key to facilitate the economic autonomy of highly educated women as they deal with strict professional demands and less than collaborative male partners (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Ferreira, 1999; Hochschild, 2000; Crompton, 2006; Sassen, 2007; Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Torres, 2008). The undisputed importance of societal developments in determining the behaviour of employees and employers should not bring us to neglect the very role of personal interaction in creating and maintaining hierarchical systems (Rollins, 1985).

In fact, the examination of evidence collected through our fieldwork interviews demonstrates that the dialogue between employee and employer is at once personalized and political. When the former reports that she is hired to do ‘everything’ and the latter reports that the relationship is ‘strictly professional’, we are in the presence of a contradiction that is less factual than conceptual. In other words, both accounts can be accurate from the respondent's point of view – and what is more, they help understand one another. As shown throughout this chapter, employees are confronted with a wide and changing range of demands at the workplace; in turn, employers are confronted with a limited availability of employees to cooperate beyond what is perceived to be reasonable on the basis of social norms and remuneration. This very tension is an instantiation of how the micropolitics of paid domestic work are negotiated (Lan, 2003). In contrast with a normative or positivistic approach to labour market operation, a suggestion from our fieldwork is that workers may be selling one particular thing while employers buy a distinct one. Anderson (2000) questions whether the exchanged product in domestic service relationships is the employee's labour power or her very personhood. Like in Anderson's study, we have seen that the shift from a ‘live-in’ arrangement to a ‘live-out’ arrangement is a decisive element in this respect.

We also see that the conundrum may remain in place at the symbolic level: the employee's performance is construed as ‘house life’ or ‘help’, and immaterial demands – especially regarding emotional work – are persistently, almost methodically, naturalized and devalued. In this process, the way in which employees and employers make sense of their own position at the workplace and the labour market at large is bound to affect their feelings of entitlement (Perrons et al, 2005; Anderson, 2010a). As far as the negotiation of tasks, pay and time is concerned, employees whose main assignment is to provide direct care appear to be in a more difficult situation than their counterparts providing indirect care. Resorting to England's (2005) typology, this reflects the ‘public good’ penalty (the failure of markets to pay care workers commensurate with the public benefits of their work) as well as the ‘prisoner of love’ penalty: altruistic motivations and intrinsic rewards pave the way to relationships in which employees experience poorer working conditions on the basis of emotional hostage or loyalty. This is more so when daily interaction with children or frail adults provides them with a sense of meaning and dignity as workers. An old paradox emerges: employees may be penalized precisely for developing the bonds of trust and affection that offer them the primary *reason* for their job – bonds without which the job is ‘nothing’, to paraphrase Lurdes' striking statement.

However, distinct orientations have been shown to exist among employees and across employment relationships. Some employees – and, to a lesser extent, some employers – are unwilling to engage in this delicate trade-off between symbolic and material gratification, and they do their best to bypass the marshland of fondness. In any case, the construction of intersubjectivities is key to undermine or restore dignity – defined by Hodson (2001: 3) as ‘the ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others’. A useful distinction between dignity *in work* and dignity *at work* is proposed by Bolton (2007). The former concerns the realization of interesting and meaningful work with a substantial degree of responsibility and autonomy, recognized social esteem and respect; the latter concerns structures and practices that offer equal opportunities, individual and collective voice, safe and healthy working conditions, just rewards and secure employment contract. While the nexus of servility and dignity in paid domestic work is negotiated on the basis of distinct values or orientations, the instrumental estimation of costs and benefits – with a priority of exit over voice mechanisms (Hirschman, 1970) – is a logical response to extended informality and precariousness in the sector, especially considering the disadvantage of domestic employees with regard to legal regulation and industrial relations at large (see in particular our Chapters 5 and 9).

In empirical context, the concept of *domestic employee* encases designated tasks but these are far from exhausting expectations. The analytical divide between typical housework and the provision of care to children and frail adults is easy to acknowledge and operationalize in some cases, but it is blurred in many others, most of all because care is not absent – only made invisible – in arrangements centred on so-called housework (chiefly cleaning and laundering). An important part of the explanation is that domestic work remains to a large extent a synonym for women's work within the household even when it is performed for a wage. Gender roles transform and consumption society consolidates without overthrowing the embeddedness of gender inequality in private settings. A number of scholars have underscored that the purchase of paid direct or indirect care is typically the result of a woman's individualized strategies to combine employment and motherhood (Drew et al, 1998; Crompton, 2006). Our study is biased in that regard since all of the interviewed employers are women, but their accounts do show that they establish with the household's employee a relationship in which advantage drawn from class and ethnic differentiation is obscured by sharing a gender condition. The complex foundations and implications of this arrangement will be paid closer attention in our Chapter 8.

Our exploration of competence and learning corroborates the suggestion that employers retain the ownership of domestic expertise even when the employee is undisputedly more experienced in the trade. It is precisely by withholding the role of work supervisors or organizers that middle-class employers are able to define their employees as unskilled or ignorant (Romero, 1992). Paid domestic work can thus include both intensive physical requirements and interpersonal competences without ever being understood as skilled work (Hochschild, 2000). At the same time, interactive service work in other activity sectors has been shown to be permeated by emotional, aesthetic and sexualized requirements (Nickson et al, 2003; Casaca, 2012b), and we should not jump too quickly into the idea that we are speaking of a particularity of domestic service. Moreover, we would need further in-depth investigation to understand how the acquisition and recognition of skills in everyday domestic service relationships connects with power asymmetry, be it on class, gender, ethnic or other grounds. A point of departure for this endeavour could be our realization that employers learn a number of things from their employees without their employees noticing it or ascribing it comparable relevance. Can ‘a magic finger for cooking’, ‘treating me like a daughter’ or ‘learning as you go’ be other ways of referring to life stories of servility imposed on domestic employees? To what extent are domestic employees ‘moulded’ by their employers? What do clothes mean when neither the employer nor the employee are proficient in ironing? And what is going on when an employer says that it is as though her house belonged to her longstanding employee?

Heterogeneity with regard to tasks, time or pay coexists with the harmonizing power of social networking, ‘whose processes are important not only in job placement but also in effecting some job standardization, however imperfect’ (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001). Personal networks offer both employers and employees a reasonable degree of security and stability, while reproducing lingering tensions regarding control and power. The bonds of trust, affection or solidarity between the two parties in the employment relationship are part of how hierarchies and social values persist (Rollins, 1985; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002a). Juxtaposing the current findings with those of a recent study about ‘live-in’ domestic service in mid-20th century Lisbon (Brasão, 2010), we observe consolidated signs of the social aversion to an extended presence of the employee in middle-class households. Significant illustrations are those of employees performing the service when household residents are away, or those of employers supporting the employee in finding other sources of income or exit domestic service altogether. But we also see how, in more or less commodified ways, the modes of

organizing domestic work are embedded in the life stories of both employers and employees. Delving into this phenomenon requires a detailed look into the position of the interviewed women *vis-à-vis* gender, class and ethnic structures. That is precisely the aim of the next chapter.

8

The long and winding road between paternalism and commodification

8.1. Throwbacks and plenty of inequality

After confirming her availability to speak to us about her experience as a domestic employee, Rute begins with these words: ‘My experience: I’m an immigrant, I came from Cape Verde 12 years ago’. Born in 1983, she was 17 when she came to Lisbon on holidays with an aunt. ‘Whenever you go on holidays’, she says, ‘you think of finding a way of living’, and this came in form of her aunt arranging her a ‘live-in’ position at the home of a Portuguese couple with a baby. Two years later, Rute would ‘leave that family’ – her own mother then came from Cape Verde to take up the job. During her second childcare ‘live-in’ assignment, Rute resumed schooling, completing secondary education and enrolling in an evening-taught bachelor in Basic Education, both in private institutions. For some time, she reduced domestic service to a few hours per week and additionally held two part-time jobs as a call centre operator. ‘Then I had a throwback’, she says to account for being currently employed as a full-time ‘live-out’ domestic employee. ‘I’m not ashamed of what I do, nobody has to be’; yet she feels that she has ‘regressed, like when you tumble’.¹¹⁶

Why should moving from call centre work to domestic service be a throwback for Rute, even after she explicitly observes that the latter entails a higher pay, more job security, friendlier employers and more pleasant working contents? The limited prospects of promotion and the lower status ascribed to being a domestic employee is arguably the best known part of the comparison. But there are also material aspects to it. To start with, ‘I’m 10 hours per day

¹¹⁶ ‘A minha experiência: eu sou imigrante, eu vim de Cabo Verde há 12 anos. [...] a pessoa sempre que vai de férias pensa em arranjar forma de viver [...] deixei essa família [...] Eu tive um retrocesso [...] não tenho vergonha do trabalho que faço, ninguém tem que ter [...] mas sinto que voltei atrás, como um tropeção.’

there', which leaves no time to do other things such as studying or obtaining a driver's license. Rute spends a daily total of 3 to 4 hours commuting by bus and metro. Most important of all, university is 'falling behind': she is not even allowed to attend the courses presently underway for her bachelor until she pays about 1000 Euros due for past courses (more than her monthly net wage of 750 Euros). To solve this problem, she is seeking advice from a national trade union of the educational sector with which she became affiliated upon entering university. She has never been a member of a trade union covering domestic employees.

Some of these elements can be observed from a distinct angle as we listen to Ana, one of the employers interviewed during the fieldwork. Born in 1962 in Lisbon, she grew up under the wings of her housewife mother and successive 'live-in' maids who slept 'on a couch' in an antechamber connected to the children's room by an archway. Ana graduated in Social Service from a private university after a significant interruption when she became a wife and mother, because 'we didn't have enough money to keep our three children at school'. 'This was also why we went abroad', she says, describing it as 'an adventure, but it was an economic migration', her husband having been offered a promising job in Cape Verde at a Portuguese consultancy company. After living for six years in Cape Verde, the same company determined a move of the family to Belgium for another six years. Back to Lisbon since 1999, Ana became a Social Worker in the public sector.

A full-time job for Ana came in the condition of recruiting a domestic employee. Now that her children are grown-up, housework service is outsourced on the basis of 12 hours per week performed by two distinct employees (one for cleaning, the other for ironing). Ana would like to reduce it further, but out of compassion she is incapable of firing her employees unless they find 'a better job elsewhere'. Although her monthly net wage of 1050 Euros is 'too little to raise a family', it is 'compensated' by the fact that her husband has a relatively stable well-paid job. In addition, she underscores that they have always been able to help their children with studying through to university and thus secure their own subsistence once they became adults. When trying to describe herself politically, Ana uses the words 'Marxist', 'social-democratic', and 'anti-liberal', that is, she does not believe that 'any person, coming from anywhere, can simply study and be very successful'; 'there are exceptions alright, but above all there's plenty of inequality'. She tries to be coherent in her relationship with her domestic employees, complying with all of the legal requirements including social security and holiday

allowances. ‘I’m very critical, very activist’, she claims. She is even ‘ashamed to say’ that she is not affiliated with any trade union. ‘I really should be; the reason is cheapskate.’¹¹⁷

Trajectories like those of Rute and Ana can be read as tales of attempted mobility – mobility that is at once geographic, economic and political – conveying first-hand evidence on the reproduction and reconfiguration of social inequality. As shown in our literature review, class, gender and ethnic hierarchies are interconditioned in multiple ways. Provided that we keep this in mind though, it is possible to disentangle them so that we delve deeper into the analysis of power and alliance, exploitation and resistance, asymmetry and solidarity. Such is the hope of the present chapter. As we set out to examine the changing quality of employer-employee arrangements *vis-à-vis* class, gender, and ethnic stratification, we are provided an important opportunity to assess historical developments which would remain invisible in the most scrupulous survey of legislation and official statistics.

In the previous chapter, we observed that the development of employee-employer bonds over time occurs in different conditions and regulates relationships in different manners. The complex and ambiguous dynamics established between the two women engaged with one another in a domestic service relationship are highlighted in the existing scholarship. In this chapter, we start by drawing on fieldwork interviews to describe the lifeworld contexts in which such bonds develop. Afterwards, we focus on the markers of class distinction in domestic service today and elaborate on the enduring gendered codification of arrangements in this sector. We move on to address the relevance of ethnicity, proposing an interpretation of empirical evidence that takes into consideration both in-country and international migration flows, and the experiences of geographic mobility among both employees and employers. Last, we discuss the contribution of these findings to answer our research question, paying particular attention to how present-day domestic service employment relationships reveal, or fail to reveal, the expected transition from a paternalistic model to a commodified model – a process that we describe as gradual, contested, and presently underway.

¹¹⁷ ‘um trabalho melhor noutra sítio [...] é pouco para criar uma família [...] marxista, social-democrata, anti-liberal [...] não acredito na ideia de que qualquer pessoa, venha de onde vier, pode estudar e ser muito bem sucedida [...] Há exceções; mas sobretudo há muita desigualdade. [...] eu sou muito crítica, muito ativista [...] Até tenho vergonha de dizer... devia estar sindicalizada; é por forreite.’

8.2. Emotional bonds as a question mark

The development of personalized bonds between employee and employer, especially apparent when they are engaged in a domestic service relationship for a substantial length of time, provides a useful starting point for empirical inquiry. Observation at the micro scale is necessary to address class, gender and ethnic stratification from a relational point of view. By placing the experiences and perceptions of the respondents at the centre of our attention, we shall be able to explore – rather than dismiss – the political dimension of their personalized arrangements. Therefore, we begin by identifying three broad grounds for the blooming of affection based on the words of the women interviewed during our fieldwork – only to demonstrate, in the remainder of the chapter, how these experiences are entwined with wider dynamics and disputes in contemporary society.

First, we find emotional bonds that develop around the struggle of the two women – employer and employee – against a social and economic system that dictates their disadvantage *vis-à-vis* men. In these cases, it is their very sharing of a gendered condition that paves the way to relational logics pervaded by solidarity and mutual support. To be sure, this does not mean that patronization and paternalism (or maternalism) are absent. Marina describes her long-time employer, for whom she has worked for 23 years (since she was 21), as an ‘older sister’: among other things, this employer was the maid of honour at her wedding and a key source of emotional and financial support when she got divorced 15 years later; she has also helped Marina's children with studying at school on several occasions. When questioned about this chain of events, Carmen – the employer in question – declares that she ‘somehow expected’ the invitation to be her employee's maid of honour, which included paying for substantial wedding expenses. She does not remember ever considering that she could refuse it, first of all ‘because that would be very unfair’ knowing that Marina had a ‘very bad’ relationship with her own parents, from whom support is traditionally expected.¹¹⁸ A crucial reason for that family conflict, Carmen significantly adds, was that Marina had persistently rejected the order of her parents to remit them the whole amount of her wages after they had sent her to work as a domestic employee in the city. At the same time, Carmen initially recruited Marina as a ‘live-in’ employee when she was required to go abroad for regular periods at her job while her two children needed looking after at home.

¹¹⁸ ‘uma irmã mais velha’; ‘de alguma forma eu imaginava [...] porque seria muito injusto, quer dizer, ela dava-se muito mal quer com a mãe, quer com o pai.’

While impressive in the context of an employment contract as such, this account is only an especially eloquent manifestation of the recurrent bond between employee and employer growing out of their concomitant response to subsistence and autonomy concerns (among the employees, Helena, Lucinda, Rita, Zita; among the employers, Ana, Augusta, Custódia, Clotilde, Isabel). Another manifestation of the same process is that of the employer who is willing to reduce the working time of her employee only when the latter finds another household in which to compensate for the lost income. Ana does not hesitate to say that since her children moved out of the house there is no need to have an employee for so many hours – and besides, her employee ‘is not such a good employee’, ‘she’s not a good professional’. Yet, Ana is incapable of firing her. ‘It’s a complex, it must be studied’, she says in a serious tone, recognizing that she would probably be happy if her employee found ‘a better job elsewhere’.¹¹⁹ Laura, Conceição and Carmen dealt with the same dilemma by encouraging or actively seeking an acquaintance to hire their employee for a number of weekly hours. The critical mechanism is the feeling of co-responsibility for the preservation of the economic well-being of the employee and her dependent relatives. All of the respondent employers mentioned in this paragraph report practicing yearly wage increases proportionate to their own wage increases, regardless of the overall income situation of the household.

Second, emotional bonds can develop within the limits of working time and contents. Tânia draws a distinction between generally cold employers and those with whom a meaningful relationship can be established. One of the latter once hired her from 9:00 to 11:00, but the rule was that all work should be completed by 10:30 so that they could sit down together, have tea and biscuits, and chat. Nazaré similarly remembers spending moments of rest and leisure with one of her past employees: they would ‘clean the house side by side’ and then go out for lunch together. Later, she established an intimate connection with another employee who got pregnant right after they met. Madalena is still searching for manners in which to build such a bond with her current employee: ‘I want to get closer to her but still keep the distance, that’s the paradox.’ She is decided to ‘invest’ in creating a more pleasant work environment, as if she might one day ‘become the Google’ of domestic employees.¹²⁰ Ana says that she ‘talks a lot’ with her employee, not that she feels obliged to do so – ‘it just

¹¹⁹ ‘ela não é grande empregada, não é boa profissional [...] Isto é um complexo, tem que ser estudado. [...] Se ela arranjasse um trabalho melhor noutra sítio, eu dizia-lhe: vá.’

¹²⁰ ‘quero aproximar-me mas manter a distância, é o paradoxo. [...] quero fazer um esforço para que o ambiente de trabalho dela seja agradável, devia investir mais, tornar-me a Google.’

happens'. As she reflects upon the case, Ana realizes that she knows an enormous number of personal things about her employee but oddly never visited her home, an apartment in a social housing complex quite near to Ana's own workplace.

Third, emotional bonds can draw momentum from the very advancement of the domestic employee in educational structures – including leading to her exit from domestic service. When the child of Rute's first employer began going to the kindergarten, the two women rearranged the terms of their employment relationship. Rute, then at the age of 21, would remain as a 'live-in' employee, but she would go to school on her employer's expenses during the day. The employer was the one 'establishing the goals' and pressing her when necessary 'to study', 'to get on the track', 'to make the most of the opportunity'. Upon completing secondary education, Rute enrolled in university and reduced domestic service as much as she could while earning her living as a call centre operator. She describes that employer as a person who 'paid attention, who understood the way things were'.¹²¹ Ana provides a similar account from the viewpoint of the employer. She convinced her 'live-in' employee to resume going to school and later saw her leave the job to work as a care assistant in a elderly home. The two women remain 'very good friends' and meet each other from time to time.¹²²

A clear suggestion is that this sense of personal or moral incumbency from employers is ignited by their interest in terminating full-time or 'live-in' arrangements. And success is not guaranteed; in fact, it is under the severe threat of the material and symbolic pressures exerted upon domestic employees. Helena entered an evening school programme, but she soon gave it up for family reasons. In particular, she notes that her children's grades at school immediately fell as she could not be at home in the evening to control their homework tasks. The same difficulty in articulating full-time work, study and childcare is reported by Marina and Tânia when explaining why they – unlike Rute – did not follow their employers' advice or even monetary incentive to resume formal education. Instead, they turn the hope of social mobility toward their children, insisting that they should attend school and postpone entering paid employment. 'At this age', 49-year-old Zita says, 'the things that we would like to see happening are to our children.'¹²³

¹²¹ 'ela estabelecia as metas! [...] ela manteve-me no caminho: Rute, atina! Rute, a oportunidade! Rute, a tua vida! [...] ela prestava atenção, entendia as coisas.'

¹²² 'muito amigas'.

¹²³ 'Olhe, Manel, com esta idade é assim: as coisas que a gente gostava que acontecesse é aos filhos.'

Close to consensual is the recognition of the domestic employee's position as a result of impositions associated with gender and class asymmetries, suggesting that we are, in short, speaking of a social condition more than an occupation. This is manifest in the very terms used to describe the worker. Most of our respondents report having been employed or having employed another person as a 'domestic employee' (*empregada doméstica*, inflected in the female form); other common terms such as 'woman-per-day' (*mulher-a-dias*) or 'a lady' (*uma senhora*) also appear. 'Maid' (*criada*) is only used when referring to periods of the past. Nuanced differences in the usage of these concepts can be identified, often relating to the number of hours agreed upon: a full-time employee is typically a *domestic employee*, whereas a *woman-per-day* or a *lady* comes for shorter periods of time or with less regularity. Perhaps more importantly, all of these concepts express an expectation rather than a particular function or set of functions. Terms like 'cleaner', 'cook' or 'carer' are not used by any of the respondents when they allude to domestic service arrangements. In the meantime, the employees refer to their employers as *patrões*, more often than not in the female-inflected form *patroa* – which could be translated as 'mistress', 'madam', 'female boss'. Endorsed in legal documents, the word 'employer' (*empregador*, in the so-called neutral male form) is very seldom used in empirical context.

Indeed, official categories may be less accurate than the broader and ill-defined concepts of *domestic employee* and *mistress*, considering that the employment relationships at stake encase the expectation that the employee shall be available to fulfil the wide and changing needs of the employing households. As shown in our Chapter 7, this implies accompanying household rhythms and subsequent variations in work volume, as well as an eventual reduction of tasks (and possibly working hours and pay) whenever convenient for the employer. In lifeworld settings, the greatest sign of affection from a *mistress* is to encourage her *domestic employee* – through emotional, economic or other type of support – to exit her current occupation and thereby overcome her diminished condition in society.

8.3. Changing classes

The employers interviewed during our fieldwork constitute a fairly homogeneous group with regard to education and occupation. Nearly all of them hold a tertiary education degree and a professional or technical job requiring formal credentials and specialized skills. The picture

among employees is different. 12 of them completed secondary education (this is the case of almost all of the foreign respondents, as well as three of the native ones); three completed only primary education, three left school before that, and one other never attended school.¹²⁴ Significant variation also exists in the labour market trajectories of the employees. Domestic service has been the constant primary source of income since entering paid employment for less than half of them; the others report experiences of frontline work in commercial cleaning, institution-based personal care (in nurseries or homes for the elderly), retail stores, factories, or agriculture. As expected, the immigrant women with the highest level of qualification held distinct occupations before migrating such as schoolteaching (Maria), owning a business (Tatiana) or providing formally recognized alternative medicine consultation (Natalia).

Nevertheless, individual profiles according to standard employment and education schemes fail to provide a fair view of class belonging or class relations. A qualitative examination of workplace dynamics may be of greater use to assess the relevance of class distinction in domestic service relationships today.

One of the key strategies to mark and reproduce class distinction is the use of control. Tânia and Lucinda both underscore their first-hand experiences with employers purposefully leaving money around the house to see if the employee would take it. ‘They do that kind of tests’, Tânia says. ‘And I’m poor but honest’, Lucinda claims, ‘I’ve never stolen anything’.¹²⁵ Twice did she find an employer rummaging through her bag in search for sneaked objects or food. Fernanda once quit a job ‘due to problems’. She had to go into the hospital to treat varicose veins and her employer ‘called the hospital to reschedule the surgery’. In contrast with the doctor’s recommendation, the employer insisted that it would be more convenient to have the surgery in August ‘because that was when she could give me vacation’. When Fernanda came back to work, the conflict resumed around the fact that she had to work slower than usual until the recuperation period was over. Fernanda finally left after listening from her employer that she was ‘a dog that does not recognize its owner – these were her very words’.¹²⁶ Zita remembers her ‘live-in’ experience in a household where she was required to stand next to the table whenever her employers would be eating. One Saturday morning, ‘I exploded and told

¹²⁴ For more information on the profile of respondents, see section 4.4b (in Chapter 4) and Appendix 2.

¹²⁵ ‘Fazem esses testes’; ‘e eu sou pobre mas honesta [...] nunca roubei nada.’

¹²⁶ ‘aconteceu-me uma vez sair por causa de problemas [...] a senhora tentou desmarcar a minha operação por telefone [...] dizia que eu tinha de ser operada em agosto, que era quando ela me podia dar férias [...] E ela disse-me: você é cão que não conhece o dono. Disse-me mesmo assim.’

him [the male employer] that I'd break the tray on his head – and I would!’¹²⁷ She quit the job on that same day. Notwithstanding the cases of affection and mutual support that we underscored in the previous section, domestic employees are familiar with abuse and violence at the workplace.

As exposed in our Chapter 7, the current-day behaviour of employers also suggests an overall trend to keep physical distance from their employees. *Trust* thereby acquires a key function in extracting emotional work and securing inter-class harmony. Madalena tries to ‘reproduce the distance’ that her mother typically maintained with employees. Back then, Madalena notes, ‘I was a child’ and thus ‘I could be more at ease, I could be friends with the employee’. Anabela recalls her mother once firing an employee for stealing. ‘It was horrible’, especially because it started happening when the employee had been working in the house for some years. Firing her ‘was difficult’, Anabela says, for ‘my mother... pitied her, or I don't know, she was embarrassed’. ‘Ideally’, Ana says, ‘I'd have a cook, a person to do the cleaning, and a person to be my driver’, but only ‘insofar as I could pay them what I consider to be a reasonable wage’.¹²⁸

Tensions regarding servility and personhood commodification can not be entirely detached from their historical structure. In addition, our fieldwork interviews show that the shift from a dominant paradigm of ‘live-in’ recruitment to one of part-time ‘live-out’ arrangements has occurred within the extension of most of the respondents' lifetime. Indeed, this shift may be better construed as presently ongoing rather than complete, especially considering the resilience of ‘live-in’ domestic service in eldercare and childcare. A closer look into personal trajectories is helpful to grasp how individuals move within a class structure that changes at the same time – even if it does not change in a clear unidimensional manner.

Let us first look into the case of domestic employees who entered paid employment as ‘live-in’ maids. Marina was 14 years old when her mother arranged a ‘live-in’ position for her at a wealthy household in Lisbon, a city that she had never visited before. Her first employers were originally from the same rural region of the country as Marina, and that was why they

¹²⁷ ‘explodi e disse-lhe que lhe metia a bandeja pela cabeça adentro! E metia mesmo!’

¹²⁸ ‘A minha mãe mantinha essa distância, que hoje tento reproduzir. Nessa altura eu estava mais à vontade, podia ser mais amiga’; ‘a minha mãe teve dificuldade para despedi-la, porque tinha... pena, ou não sei, constrangimento’; ‘Ideal-ideal, eu digo-te: teria uma cozinheira, uma pessoa para fazer a limpeza, e uma pessoa para me fazer de motorista [...] Só teria estes empregados na medida em que lhes pagasse uma quantia que acho razoável.’

got in touch with Marina's mother. For seven years, she was granted one sole weekly break on Sundays, when she would 'leave in the morning and come back in the evening' – in time to 'serve dinner at 8 o'clock sharp'. Questioned about her impressions of Lisbon back then, Marina stresses that she would not venture further than the neighbourhood's commercial streets and church until she was introduced by common acquaintances to her husband to be. She then found a new 'live-in' job at another family's household through an aunt of her fiancé. When she eventually moved in with her husband, she became a Monday-through-Friday 'live-out' employee for that family. She was 23 then. Two decades later, she is employed part-time at three households. The in-house closure of her initial times in domestic service is described as a faraway though unforgettable experience, compared to which her present situation can only be assessed in a positive manner.

In Helena's account, class distinction is also apparent in the personal interaction that she established with her first employers. She recalls feeling especially 'hurt' and 'disgusted' when the employers' nine-year-old child (Helena was about 17 years old then) began laughing at her for not knowing how the TV remote control or the micro-wave operated, neither the meaning of English terms for clothing commonly used among the Portuguese urban elite such as 'blue jeans' or 'sweatshirt'. By way of explanation, Helena points out that before entering 'live-in' domestic service she used to live with her parents in a home devoid of bathroom, electricity and water. The tension drawn from strikingly uneven living conditions interconnected with the tension of age proximity between the maid and the children under her care. An eloquent case is that of Zita, who at the age of 10 was expected to look after a pair of children between three and five years old – 'After all we were three children, right?'¹²⁹ This particular case occurred in 1973. Our fieldwork exposes experiences of underage recruitment until as late as 1983. In all of these cases, the two same elements are reported as crucial to exit 'live-in' domestic service: refraining from sending the whole amount of wages to the family as would be expected; and moving into co-residence with a male partner.

The employers who grew up in the presence of 'live-in' maids provide a view of the same phenomenon from the other side of the class divide. During Isabel's childhood, her parents employed two maids: one of them, 'the oldest', was in charge of 'cooking, serving at the table and cleaning'; the other one, 'who was probably about 14 or 15 years old', looked after the children and gave a helping hand at whatever needed to be done around the house. A very

¹²⁹ 'No fundo éramos três crianças, não é?'

similar arrangement is described in the interviews with Ana, Carmen, Clotilde, Custódia, Marília and Palmira. The clear pattern is that of housework being valued above childcare. The former was performed by an older maid who earned a higher wage and supervised the performance of the younger childminder. Also, the older maid tended to keep her position (either as a ‘live-in’ or as a ‘live-out’ employee) for long periods of time while the childminder would rotate. One or two employees were permanently in the house regardless of the respondent's mother having a paid job or not.

‘It was slavery – horrible’, Isabel claims when comparing such arrangements with her own experience in hiring a domestic employee. Carmen underlines that employers back then were expected to be ‘paternalistic’ in the way they dealt with their employees: ‘it wasn't really social justice; it was social charity’. This was typically a direct incumbency of the female employer. Common practices were those of the employer becoming the maid of honour at her employees' wedding or the godmother of her employees' children. This implied paying for substantial expenses and ensuring that both the employee and her children followed the moral dictates of catholic church. Palmira remembers that as she grew up her toys would often pass on to the children of her parents' employees. ‘We were educated like that’, she says, ‘my parents always taught us to help’.¹³⁰

Both among employees and employers, there are respondents who did not have any personal experience with domestic service until a later moment in life. Elisa abandoned school after completing primary education to ‘help’ her parents in agricultural work. She married at the age of 19 – ‘too soon’ – and followed her husband when he got a job in Lisbon. Four years later, she found her first job as a domestic employee. Similarly, Lurdes never felt that her husband expected her to have a full-time job. When their daughter started attending school, Lurdes set out to ‘find something that would take some hours of the day’, and her first job was at a coffeehouse counter. Domestic service became Lucinda's occupation at the age of 36, and Conceição's at 56. For these women, entering domestic service has been a response to their increasing difficulty in finding other types of work due to their age (especially in frontline commercial jobs) or the shrinkage of opportunities in the sectors where they were first employed (especially in factory jobs).

¹³⁰ ‘Era escravatura... horrível!’, ‘de uma forma muito paternalista [...] Não era bem justiça social; era caridade social’; ‘Nós fomos educados assim [...] os meus pais sempre nos ensinaram a ajudar.’

What about current employers who did not grow up in the presence of domestic employees? Raised in a working class environment, Lúdia and Dulce did the housework side by side with their mothers ever since they can remember. Even in periods when their mothers did have a job out of the house, a domestic employee was never recruited. The same goes for Laura. Her father was a shoemaker, her mother a seamstress ‘who never went to school, never learned to read’. Laura has ‘always worked’: as a teenager, she treaded the streets of Lisbon to deliver the shoes made or patched by her father and to sell cakes that she baked at home herself. Later on, she earned her living as an office secretary and a clothes model until graduating from a public university and becoming a scientific researcher. In the meantime she lived two years in Switzerland as an *au-pair*, far from imagining that one day she would hire someone to take care of her housework herself. Interestingly, women employed in domestic service today may have had their own experience as employers in the past. When Helena was a child, her parents did employ domestic employees. They lived in Angola then, and they returned to Portugal at the time of the independence war with very little possessions; a few years later, Helena would enter ‘live-in’ domestic service. Amélia was the employer of a domestic worker during more than twenty years of marriage. Her husband was the breadwinner of the household. After divorce, Amélia started looking for a job, and she found it in domestic service.

While many class markers of past domestic service relationships seem to have vanished, others linger on with remarkable persistence. A recurrent element emerging from fieldwork interviews pertains to difference in the means used by employers and employees to move through the city. All of the respondent employers have a driver's license and own a car, although some of them commute in public transport as this enables them to move quicker or save money. Their daily commuting time ranges from half an hour to two hours, shorter periods being associated with living or working in a relatively central area of the city. Among the employees, a driver's license is held by four respondents only, and daily commuting can take as much as four hours. Marina, Fernanda or Joaquina have successfully managed to keep their employing households within one same neighbourhood, but they still have to travel an inconvenient distance to get there every morning.

Stratification in the access to means of transportation entails both material and symbolic implications. In her rural hometown, Lucinda was used to see affluent families driving around in modern cars while working class men rode bicycles and working class women walked everywhere. She started using her brother's bicycle as this enabled her to save substantial time

and energy, as well as quickly going home during the lunch break at her factory job to feed the animals and finish up any pending housework chores. She only told her father that she had learned to ride the bicycle after she got married, ‘because this way he wouldn't beat me up’. Dulce obtained her driver's license when she was about 30 years old. Her husband, a fireman, was away from home for long periods of time, and she ‘knew’ that she had to ‘play the role of mother and father’ of their two children. Both in daily errands and in the unfortunate event of having to go to the hospital with a child, driving a car was quite useful. ‘It helped me a lot, really’, she concludes, ‘not to depend so much... in this case, on my husband’.¹³¹ The victorious efforts of Lucinda and Dulce to improve their physical mobility are interwoven with the work overload that falls upon them as daughters, wives and mothers, and the desired gain in autonomy did not mean any considerable change in the unequal partition of paid and unpaid incumbencies with their male relatives.

8.4. Gendered arrangements

As observed in our analysis of official statistics (Chapter 6), women constitute the overwhelming majority of domestic employees in Portugal, and there are no signs of change in this respect during the first decade of the 21st century. This coincides with the experience of the employees and employers interviewed during our fieldwork: none of them is personally acquainted with any case of a man employed in domestic service, except in particular positions such as those of driver or butler, for which demand is confined to the wealthiest segments of the population. However, when questioned if they believe that men can be as competent as women in the performance of paid housework or personal care, the respondents express a generalized view that they can.¹³² What practical interpretations are then provided to account for the persisting feminization of this sector? Based on a thorough examination of the

¹³¹ ‘Eu só lhe contei nessa altura, quando já era casada, porque assim ele não me batia’; ‘eu sabia que eu tinha que fazer papel de mãe e de pai [...] E a carta ajudou-me bastante, realmente. Ajudou-me a ser mais... a não depender tanto, neste caso, do meu marido.’

¹³² The questions in the interview scripts were *Do you think that a man could be as good as yourself at doing your work? Why?* (‘Acha que um homem poderia fazer o seu trabalho tão bem como a senhora? Porquê?’), question II.7 in the interviews with employees, see Appendix 1b) and *Do you think a man could be as good as your employee at doing her work? How would you see the hypothesis of hiring a man? Why?* (‘Acha que um homem poderia fazer o seu trabalho tão bem como a sua empregada? Como veria a hipótese de contratar um homem? Porquê?’), question II.10 in the interviews with employers, see Appendix 1c).

interviews, distinct interpretations are to be discerned. While they certainly share common elements and may even be read as variations of one sole reasoning, there are also singular nuances and contradictions deserving attention.

First, the gender coincidence between the domestic employee and her employer or direct care recipient. We have seen that recruiting and supervising a domestic worker is typically a woman's incumbency; plus, we have only interviewed women employers, and eight of them currently do not have any male co-resident, instead living on their own or together with their daughters or mother. Conceição claims that a man could perfectly ensure the cleaning and cooking at the home where she is employed, but the same does not apply to caring for her elderly female employer 'like I do, bathing her, etc.'. Tatiana, who is also employed to care for an elderly woman, says that everyday routine was much more tense during the time that she cared for a man, as he would feel 'ashamed' to stand naked before her and 'always kept the doors closed behind him'. Maria reports that while she worked as a caregiver for a formal non-for-profit institution her few male colleagues catered only to the homes of male care recipients 'because of hygiene and stuff'.¹³³

Some employers similarly argue that their major concern about recruiting a man would pertain to matters of intimacy. Carmen manifests her greatest discomfort with the idea of having a man going through her underwear. Laura mentions that sometimes she is dressed in her pyjamas or having a shower when her domestic employee arrives at her home. 'I don't mind at all', Laura says, adding that if her employee were to be a man that sort of situations 'could be upsetting'.¹³⁴ The apparent fragility or contradiction in this explanation is that even male employers are expected to recruit a woman more often than a man.

Second, women are considered to be experts in performing domestic work, which includes both proficiency in the tasks to be done and obeying orders – this is advanced as an important justification by a number of respondents, even if they acknowledge it as a consequence of uneven gender relations in society. Conceição does not believe that a man would be as careful as she is at her job; as an example, she doubts that 'a man would scrub the floor on his knees'. But in the future, she admits, 'it may happen that men perfect' their housework skills. Palmira

¹³³ 'tomar conta dela como eu tomo, dar banho, etc.'; 'tinha vergonha [...] fechava sempre a porta'; 'em geral os homens vão a casa dos utentes que são homens, até por causa da higiene e isso.'

¹³⁴ 'ela chega, eu estou no banho, não me importo minimamente. Imagino que, com um homem, isso fosse chato.'

says that ‘taking care of the house’ is ‘a more natural work for women’, just like ‘changing a car tyre or fixing a light bulb is for men’. She argues that the defence of equal rights for men and women ‘does not mean that we are or should be equal’. For Adosinda, recruiting a man ‘would be strange in the beginning’; she believes that women share something like ‘an open channel, a domestic knowledge, a way of being efficient’. A male employee, she imagines, would react negatively to ‘a madam giving him orders as if he was her husband’. Carmen's partially humorous conjecture is that ‘on the second day of work’ the male employee would be the one giving *her* the orders. Men are not associated with ‘serving the other’, Jacinta agrees.¹³⁵

Historical legacy is certainly part of the story. Carmen, Clotilde and Inês explicitly state that the main reason for them preferring a woman domestic employee is ‘prejudice’.¹³⁶ The notions of men as more prone to stealing and to paedophilia are also mentioned, while women are described as offering a more gentle and serene presence, on the grounds of either biological difference or a socially construed nexus of violence and submission. Luísa exposes yet a more ambiguous argument when she says that domestic service is one of the few occupations where women are favoured; if the word spreads that men are just as good at doing it, ‘we won't have nothing left’. Indeed, employees such as Rita and Zita concede that men may be one day considered fitter for domestic service as they hold some skills that women candidates typically lack – knowing how to fix electrical equipment and driving a car are the examples that they provide, besides the special utility of physical strength in eldercare. ‘It is not the activity in itself that is attributed to women’, Isabel claims, ‘it is the activity *when* it has low status’.¹³⁷ She goes on to observe that men can do the cooking at their own home and even become acclaimed professional *chefs*, but they will not do it for a domestic

¹³⁵ ‘Um homem ali de joelhos, a esfregar: não vejo [...] com o tempo, pode ser que aconteça, que o homem se aperfeiçoe’; ‘acaba por ser um trabalho mais natural das mulheres, tomar conta da casa, assim como o é para os homens mudar um pneu ou arranjar um candeeiro na casa [...] devemos ter os mesmos direitos, isso sim, mas não acho que sejamos nem que devamos ser iguais’; ‘para as mulheres, já há algo como um canal aberto, um conhecimento, um saber doméstico, um ser eficaz [...] talvez fosse estranho, ele ia-se perguntar: então, a patroa vai dar-me ordens como se eu fosse o marido dela?’; ‘No dia seguinte estava o homem a mandar-me fazer a cama e arrumar a roupa e não sei quê’; ‘nunca se associa muito... ao homem o servir, não é? Servir o outro nesse sentido.’

¹³⁶ ‘preconceito’.

¹³⁷ ‘os homens são preferidos para tantos trabalhos, este é dos poucos em que as mulheres têm vantagem [...] portanto tenho essa coisa feminista... ainda começam a dizer que os homens também são melhores do que as mulheres no trabalho doméstico e já não nos sobra nada’; ‘Não é a atividade que é atribuída às mulheres: é a atividade quando não tem estatuto’.

service wage in private households. According to Rute's perception, both in restaurants and industrial cleaning men make up a growing proportion of the workforce – the different case of domestic service ‘has more to do with the context, right?, with the mentalities.’ ‘Men do these things’, Lídia says, ‘perhaps they've always done them, but in other contexts’.

At the same time, the recruitment of a domestic worker is closely related with the mobility of women employers toward employment sectors and professional behaviours that were once seen as a male privilege. In other words, the enduring gendered codification of domestic work coexists with the efforts expended by middle-class women to overstep patriarchal limitations imposed on their participation in the labour market. In this regard, two broad types of arrangements are reported in the fieldwork interviews: in one of them, the woman accumulates paid employment with the bulk of unpaid domestic work at home; in the other, domestic work is shared between women and men living in the household, but a domestic employee is still recruited to perform particular tasks.

Palmira's experience is one of accumulation. Ever since she married, she has been in charge of cleaning, cooking and childcare, even in a period when she had two part-time jobs in different areas of the city. Hiring a domestic employee is described as a ‘joint decision’ between her and her husband – ‘we both agreed that I needed it’. Likewise, Lídia was the one ‘conducting’ the recruitment of a domestic employee, but her husband ‘always agreed, he always told me: you know better’. Carmen was decided to outsource housework from the early days of married life. Her husband however opposed this idea, defending that they ‘should be self-sufficient’. After one year of doing all of the cleaning, cooking and laundry by herself, Carmen says, ‘I was sick and tired of it, and I wanted an employee’. Inês also underscores that her husband ‘didn't want’ a domestic employee, but she thought that ‘if he wasn't going to do a bit, there was really no other option’.¹³⁸ To this day, Ana recalls the nuisance of ironing her husband's clothing every morning before he went to work until they hired a domestic worker.

Carolina feels that having a domestic employee makes her ‘a privileged one’ among the women at her workplace; their men colleagues, on the other hand, ‘do not seem that worried about their housework’. Carolina's own male partner is often at his job for more than 12 hours

¹³⁸ ‘Decidimos juntos, estávamos os dois de acordo que eu precisava’; ‘eu conduzi, mas o meu marido sempre concordou, sempre disse: tu é que sabes’; ‘ele defendia que não, que a gente devia ser auto-suficientes [...] eu disse que bastava de experiência e que estava farta, e que queria uma empregada’; ‘o meu marido nem queria, eu é que achei que, se ele não fazia nada... tinha mesmo que ser.’

in a day. An ideal scenario for her would be to extend their domestic employee's working period as this would enable her to be more relaxed and have 'more time and energy' to spend with their baby. Clotilde categorically states that it is 'impossible' to articulate motherhood and a demanding job with responsibilities – 'a job like those that are traditionally men's jobs' – without resorting to a domestic employee.¹³⁹ In the case of her household, children came with a shift of the domestic employee's part-time position to a full-time position. A recurrent arrangement regarding children is that in which the man takes them to kindergarten or school in the morning and the woman fetches them in the afternoon (Carolina, Inês, Lídia, Marília, Palmira). This is hardly a form of equalitarian parenthood, considering that children must be fetched within regular day job time and the mother looks after them in the following hours; meanwhile, men are supposed to extend their working period. Another case of deceptive sharing is that in which the man is reported to do his part as long as he is asked to (Adosinda, Ana, Dulce, Palmira, Sandra). Both Carolina and Odete are considering shifting from full-time to part-time employment so that they can spend more time with their children; income reduction and their employers' hostile view on part-time working are strong reasons to hesitate.

A more balanced share of unpaid domestic work is reported by a few respondent employers. Ana's husband is the one currently cleaning the house when their domestic employee is absent. At Luísa's home, she does the necessarily cleaning as well as supermarket shopping (most of the times through the internet), while her male partner is in charge of cooking and ironing; 'he's better at ironing than our employee', Luísa points out. Anabela is said to be 'a privileged one' by the other women at her workplace because her male partner ensures a great deal of cooking and childcare. Renata's partner took care of most of the housework during the period when she was combining a full-time day job and evening university classes. Even in these cases, a domestic employee comes to the house, but her weekly working period is shorter than in the cases mentioned above. An important detail is that the respondents reporting a balanced share of unpaid work – together with the recruitment of a part-time domestic employee – have been able to keep professional aspirations comparable to (or even higher than) those of their male partners. This is also associated with postponing motherhood

¹³⁹ 'Eu sou privilegiada [...] Dos meus colegas, a maioria são homens e não parecem muito preocupados [...] mais tempo e mais energia para estar com a criança'; 'é impossível ter-se filhos e um trabalho exigente e de responsabilidade... um trabalho como aqueles que são tradicionalmente os trabalhos dos homens, basta pensar nos horários... sem uma empregada doméstica que dê esse suporte.'

until they accomplished particular goals such as completing university education, getting a satisfactory job, owning a car.

In some cases, the respondents stress that the crusade toward women's economic autonomy in their family has been started by their mother rather than by themselves. Age difference among respondents is only a partial explanation for this; particular family dynamics come into play as well. Lídia remembers how her mother entered paid employment around the age of 30 (late-1960s) and still heard men on the street yelling the colloquial Portuguese expression that 'she should go home to knit socks'.¹⁴⁰ Born in the same year as Lídia, Dulce was supposed to stay at home with her housewife mother until marriage, but instead she went on with studying (supported by her mother, who had her own savings). Raised in wealthier households, respondents like Ana, Custódia, Isabel and Marília describe yet another experience. Their mothers were housewives and yet most household tasks were performed by domestic employees. The employers' daughters were expected to focus on both studying and finding a husband, and the fact that they were never taught how to cook or iron is described as a source of tension in the early times of married life. 'I think that generations are shaped by their mothers', Augusta says drawing on her personal experience, whatever the mother tells her sons and daughters to do at home 'becomes the reality for them'. Marília highlights that neither her mother nor mother-in-law were able to provide much help in caring for their grandchildren; they would not even change diapers, 'since they never did any of those things to their own children'. It was Marília's employee, she says, 'who would often occupy that role'.¹⁴¹

In the previous chapter, we addressed the discursive construction of domestic service as an arrangement in which the employee 'helps' her employer. The partial reconfiguration of gender roles under examination in this chapter builds on the assumption that the man of the house can remain largely on the margin of household tasks, 'helping' when he is available at best. 'Helped' by both partner and employee, the woman employer is ascribed the function of managing the home affairs – besides performing the tasks left uncovered by the domestic employee. When Palmira was ill, her husband took care of cooking for a while; Palmira 'only had to do the planning', 'that's something that I've always done myself'. Likewise, Adosinda

¹⁴⁰ 'ainda ouviu muitos homens na rua dizer-lhe: vai para casa coser meias.'

¹⁴¹ 'As gerações... eu acho que são moldadas pelas mães [...] se a mãe fizer tudo ou... se os puser a fazer as coisas desde pequenos, para eles a realidade passa a ser aquela'; 'porque elas não fizeram nada disso aos seus próprios filhos [...] e a [minha] empregada veio ocupar esse papel muitas vezes.'

says that while her husband ‘can do some things’, he lacks ‘initiative’ to ‘manage or plan’ house chores. ‘What I generally see’, Adosinda says, ‘is men waiting for the women’ as to what should be done and how. Teodora can not remember ‘one single couple’ among her acquaintances in which the man is the one taking note of the items to be purchased at the supermarket. The ‘thinking of it all’, ‘that mental activity’, is women's work. This is also acknowledged by employees. Marina never saw her employer's husbands taking part in the way things should be done. Lurdes has worked in households where men did some domestic chores, but their wives were still the ones who did ‘the thinking part’, ‘the organization of tasks that you need in every home’.¹⁴²

In the meantime, what is happening at the domestic employee's own household? Unsurprisingly, most of the employees interviewed during the fieldwork have engaged in paid employment without forsaking their housework and childcare incumbencies. This often requires standing up against their male partner's preference that they would rather be full-time housewives. Tatiana, for instance, took up paid employment against the will of her husband: ‘he used to tell me: if I work, you don't have to’. Rita's husband took a while to accept that she too would keep her job throughout marriage and motherhood. He used to tell her that people would see her at work ‘and think that he couldn't support the family on his own’. Lucinda recalls making clear to her husband to be that she would not quit her job once they got married. In addition, Lucinda's father also opposed the idea of having a daughter working outside the house; her mother in turn ‘did not mind’. Cátia quit working for a few years when her children were little because her husband did not want them to go to a nursery, ‘he'd rather have me staying at home with them’. Amélia experienced a similar scenario in her family, and she indeed refrained from looking for a job until she divorced. Up to this day, she feels that her ex-husband and grown-up children ‘do not understand’ her decision to struggle for her own means of subsistence, instead expecting her to carry on with ‘that kind of prostitution’ that she accepted as a way of living for over two decades.¹⁴³

¹⁴² ‘Eu só tinha de planear; isso sim, sempre fui eu que fiz’; ‘ele pode fazer algumas coisas [...] eu é que tenho de gerir, de planear, ele não tem iniciativa [...] O que vejo em geral é os homens estarem à espera das mulheres; ‘Não há nenhum casal que eu conheça que seja o homem a pensar o que é que tem que ir comprar. [...] Há um papel de gerir tudo, não é? Pensar na globalidade... essa atividade mental eu não vejo nenhum homem fazer’; ‘a parte do pensar [...] é preciso organizar as tarefas numa casa.’

¹⁴³ ‘O meu marido não queria, ele dizia: eu trabalho, tu não precisas’; ‘dizia que as pessoas me viam e iam achar que ele não era suficiente para sustentar a família’; ‘a minha mãe não se importava’; ‘o meu marido não queria que eles fossem para a creche, preferia que eu ficasse com eles [com os filhos, em casa]’; ‘não entendem [...] Eu

A man may frown upon his wife's participation in the labour market even when *she* is the breadwinner of the household. Although frequently initiated to offer only a marginal complement to household income, employment in domestic service can later become the key or sole source of household income (Conceição, Elisa, Fernanda, Lucinda, Lurdes, Marina, Natália, Rita). The expansion of the respondent's working period and her attempt to negotiate higher wages thus interlock with critical events in her life – a decline of her male partner's employment activity (Fernanda, Maria, Natália, Rita), divorce (Elisa, Marina), or unexpectedly large timespans during which her children are in formal education or unemployment (Elisa, Fernanda, Lurdes, Marina). Conceição's husband is now used to her having a full-time job; the conflict however resumes when she works additional hours during the weekend. 'But I'm the one who must pay the bills', Conceição says, so 'if I decide to do so, that's how it is'.¹⁴⁴ It was only in his periods of unemployment that Conceição's husband began performing tasks such as cooking, cleaning or looking after the children. Nowadays, it sometimes happens that Conceição arrives from work in the evening and he has already had supper and gone to bed.

A curious element emerges from the fieldwork interviews. By playing the role of authoritarian decision-makers in the household, men are also unwitting trainers: the wives and daughters on whom they have imposed domesticity go on to seek their own economic and social autonomy by selling their domestic skills in the labour market. As succinctly put by Amélia, what other employment sector could be more adequate to someone whose only area of expertise is taking care of a house and children? 'Cleaning, ironing, cooking', Francisca says, these were 'the very things that I had learnt at home'.¹⁴⁵

As anticipated, this does not necessarily imply that their unpaid domestic workload decreases. Fernanda still wakes up at 6 a.m. to prepare the meals that her husband and children will eat during the day. Helena is sometimes able to get her teenage children to help her – 'the father, he's the one who enjoys it alright'. At the home of Beatriz, 'housework is shared, but in fact I'm the one who does nearly everything'. Lucinda comments that men today do more

penso que é o lado prostituto das pessoas, é como eu lhe chamo. Acham que se deve suportar tudo e que na minha situação eu devia ter deixado as coisas andar. Mas é prostituição, não é?

¹⁴⁴ 'mas eu é que tenho de pagar as contas... e portanto [...] se eu achar que sim, é como é.'

¹⁴⁵ 'fazer a limpeza, passar a ferro, o comer, tudo coisas que eu tinha aprendido em casa.'

domestic chores than in the past; ‘I’m unlucky though, because mine doesn’t do a thing’.¹⁴⁶ And what about looking after children when their mother is out at work? Conceição is the only respondent reporting that her male partner played a significant role in this respect, and only after he lost his job. Much more common solutions seem to be resorting to another woman in the family, overwhelmingly a grandmother (Beatriz, Elisa, Fernanda, Francisca, Lucinda, Otília, Rita, Zita), and bringing their children to the workplace, either regularly or sporadically (Elisa, Helena, Fernanda, Lucinda, Marina, Paula, Rita, Zita). Household finances allowing, a childcare institution or a paid carer may be sought for a few hours per day (Conceição, Joaquina, Lurdes).

For a number of respondents, the solution was to keep away from paid employment until their children were old enough to stay home alone (typically around the age of 10) or their eldest child could look after the youngest (Amélia, Cátia, Conceição, Idalina, Tatiana). Helena, Otília and Joaquina explicitly state that domestic service was their only possibility of paid employment once they become mothers. Indeed, they abandoned other types of jobs – in a factory, a supermarket and a restaurant, respectively – at the time of their first pregnancy. The advantages of domestic service include a permanent day shift, a higher pay per hour, and the expected goodwill of employers as they see their employee dealing with the unpredictable demands of motherhood. These are also relevant when it comes to combine domestic service employment with looking after one’s grandchildren (Otília, Rita, Zita).

Last, the cases of employees and employers who benefit from unpaid childcare support by people outside their family, if only during a limited period of their life, suggest that those networks of support remain equally gendered. A crucial helping hand may be offered by a neighbour or a parent with children attending the same school, but this is typically an arrangement between women (Otília, Rita, Zita; Alzira, Inês, Nazaré). Nazaré recounts that the only period during which she was able to raise her children without recruiting a domestic employee was when she lived in an apartment building where women neighbours were extremely friendly. They had each others’ house keys, took care of each others’ children, and often exchanged favours concerning cooking, shopping or ironing.

¹⁴⁶ ‘O pai, esse é que está bem!’; ‘O trabalho é partilhado, mas de facto sou sobretudo eu que faço as coisas’; ‘Agora já é diferente, [os homens] já fazem mais. Só eu é que não tenho sorte nenhuma, que o meu não faz nada! Nadinha!’

8.5. Migrations

As in other locations, the NGOs engaged in supporting and representing immigrant women in the region of Lisbon are familiar with the particular hardships of domestic service employment. Foreign women are much more present in this sector than a few decades ago, as confirmed by the official statistics. But this is not all: there is a general perception that immigrant women are especially vulnerable to poor working conditions and fill in the least desired positions within the sector, as stressed by the activists consulted during our research project.

You see it all the time: a woman, for instance, who has a family network here in Portugal, an extended support network, feels stronger or is in a better condition to... if unsatisfied at work, try and find another job. The women who have just arrived or have less time of residence here, or those who are alone, many of them with very tough family situations in their country of origin... well, they all work to feed their children, but some of them are confronted with really tough situations, and they are more likely to conform to whatever comes up.

(Sabrina)

The existing scholarship suggests that this is far from a recent phenomenon, although most of the migrant domestic workers in earlier days came from impoverished rural areas of Portugal. The empirical evidence collected during our fieldwork contributes to document this reconfiguration of ethnicity in domestic service. We begin by examining the cases of foreign employees, subscribing to the current trend of investigation on the subject. This will be though followed by considering the migratory experiences of employees born in Portugal. Finally, we will also look into the experiences of geographic mobility among the interviewed *employers*, drawing on the notion that migration systems can be properly understood only if we keep in mind their internal complexity and stratification.

When 30-year-old Maria first travelled to Lisbon in 1995, she could not picture how long her stay would turn out to be. At that time, she earned her living as a schoolteacher in Guinea-Bissau, her country of origin, and she had recently entered a loan agreement to buy a house where she could live with her husband and two children. Her intention at the outset was to spend only the summer months in Europe – she had older relatives living in Portugal and France – and collect additional money from temporary work. She was surprised to see how

quickly she was offered a job as a full-time ‘live-in’ domestic employee in Lisbon. Although she began by earning only the minimum monthly wage for domestic service in Portugal, this was a substantial help to pay off her recent house. The outburst of civil war in Guinea-Bissau eventually led her husband and children to migrate as well – first to Senegal, then to join her in Portugal. In the meantime, Maria had exchanged ‘live-in’ employment for a number of ‘live-out’ part-time jobs in cleaning and eldercare; she had also obtained a residence permit in Portugal during an extraordinary amnesty period. Her children are currently university students in Lisbon. When reflecting upon the possibility of returning to Guinea-Bissau, Maria is unable to precise whether the house that she owns there is part of her past, present, or future.

Differently, Beatriz is positive that she will soon move back to her hometown in the state of Minas Gerais, in Brazil. Her initial job upon arrival in Lisbon in 2005 was as a ‘live-in’ domestic worker. Nowadays, her 35-hour working week from Monday through Friday comprises 3 households in which she is in charge of cleaning, tidying up, cooking, and ironing. After a few years of undocumented permanence in the country, she now holds a residence permit, written employment contracts, regular social security contributions, and paid holidays. Another reason to be positive about, she says, is that her sister and a number of friends live nearby. However, there are two main reasons why Beatriz insists on conceiving Lisbon as only a place of transit in her life course. One is that her nine-year old daughter is being nurtured by an aunt in the family's hometown. The other is that pecuniary gains do not seem to compensate efforts. Her expected monthly income is 750 Euros; since her savings by the end of the month currently amount to 50 Euros at best – her husband is unemployed –, why should they stay abroad? Furthermore, job opportunities in their hometown seem to be on the increase. Beatriz may be able to find something better than temporary work in cleaning or retail, her experience prior to migrating. She is now 31 years old, and she would like to enrol in a professional training programme to become a beautician. This was how her sister moved out of domestic service employment after migrating to Portugal.

When juxtaposing the migratory experiences of Maria and Beatriz with those of the other foreign respondents (Eva, Idalina, Liliana, Natalia, Rita, Rute, Tatiana), a number of common elements are apparent with regard to family structure and social network. They all had a close relative or friend living in Lisbon before they arrived. Either initiated before or after migrating, they all engaged in relationships with male partners from their country of origin. In

addition, those who have become mothers find themselves under a tense negotiation to be close to their children and ensure their well-being in the best possible way. ‘Live-in’ domestic service has been the first source of income for some of them; the others, significantly, have all migrated together with a male partner, and he was the one guaranteeing household subsistence during the initial years. Maria (from Guinea-Bissau) and Natalia (from Russia) both migrated ahead of their male partner and children, and the family reunited only after they exited ‘live-in’ domestic service.

Another important element pertains to the regularization of the residence status in Portugal. For Eva, Tatiana or Natalia, domestic service was the accessible route to regularization, as they were unable to obtain the necessary employment contract in different sectors where they were offered a job that they would have otherwise preferred. In contrast, Maria and Liliana have a long record of informal employment in domestic service, and they are convinced that the best way to secure a regular status is to draw *away* from domestic service. Last, an issue that often remains invisible in large-scale analyses of immigration and domestic service is that the foreign women employed in this sector have distinct class backgrounds. While Beatriz, Rita or Rute were not surprised to become domestic employees abroad, Maria or Natalia report feelings of severe downward class mobility. ‘I was a doctor of alternative medicine in Russia’, Natalia says, ‘and here I was working as a live-in, my level dropped, you know what I mean?’. Unlike the other respondents, Natalia states that she did not migrate for economic reasons. Instead, she felt suffocated by social control: she uses words such as ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ to praise her current life in Lisbon.¹⁴⁷ Since her three grown-up children have their own earnings in Russia, Natalia is not required to send them any money. In fact, she has never told them about her experience as a paid domestic worker. As far as she can tell, they believe that Natalia’s husband is the breadwinner of the household – he did use to work in the construction sector, but he has been unemployed for over two years now.

Various experiences of migration are reported by the domestic employees who were born in Portugal too – both within and beyond national borders. To start with, seven of them moved from a rural area of the country to Lisbon, either when they were recruited as a ‘live-in’ maid by a wealthy family or together with their husband and children at a later moment in life. Some of these women also experienced living abroad. Elisa spent seven years of her

¹⁴⁷ ‘O problema é que, Manel, estás a ver, eu médica na Rússia, medicinas alternativas, consultas, as pessoas procurar-me, e aqui eu trabalhar de interna, eu descer de nível, percebes o que quero dizer? [...] eu aqui ter mais independência [...] aqui eu sou livre.’

childhood in France; during that period, her father worked in the construction sector and her mother as a domestic employee. Elisa's four siblings went on to live abroad – the three oldest of them in France, the youngest one in Switzerland, which means that she is ‘the only one here, now’.¹⁴⁸ When Helena was born, her parents lived in Mozambique. After returning to Portugal in 1975, they migrated to France leaving their children under the care of relatives, and for a number of years Helena travelled every summer to work next to her parents in the harvesting. Conceição and her husband made an attempt to settle down in France, where she immediately started working at a laundry. ‘I speak good French, I did 10 years of French at school’. Conceição's husband however did not manage to learn the language or find a regular job, so ‘after one year we had to come back’.¹⁴⁹ Zita left her new-born child under the care of her parents to take up a job opportunity as a seamstress in Spain, but she returned home after 10 months as she felt exhausted and underpaid.

The longest experience of immigration as an adult is that of Fernanda. Born in 1972 in a rural area close to Lisbon, she began earning money at the age of 10 as a ‘live-in’ maid. She worked in several households until she married and moved to the Netherlands with her husband and two small children. Work in the cleaning sector was not difficult to find – Fernanda went through part-time jobs at private households, hotels, warehouses and corporate offices. In the meantime, her children were having a very tough time at school and social life, and none of the household members ever managed to have a good command of Dutch. Returning to the country of origin emerged as the only option to restore the family's well-being. ‘Money is not everything’, Fernanda emphasises a decade later.¹⁵⁰ Still, the savings accumulated during four years in the Netherlands did give the household a decisive help in getting through difficulties and insecure employment once they settled back in Lisbon. While these various accounts consist of relatively short periods of residence in another country, at least in comparison with those of the foreign domestic employees, some native respondents have parents or siblings living abroad for a long time (Cátia, Elisa, Helena, Marina). To be sure, household structure at the time of migration is a point to take into consideration: their relatives who stayed abroad did not have children when they left Portugal, and some of them married a national of the country of destination later on.

¹⁴⁸ ‘sou a única cá, agora.’

¹⁴⁹ ‘eu falo bem francês, tive 10 anos de francês na escola [...] mas o meu marido não arranjou trabalho, não falava francês, e portanto passado um ano tivemos de voltar.’

¹⁵⁰ ‘o dinheiro não é tudo.’

We also find experiences of migration among the employers interviewed during fieldwork. Notably, five of them were born abroad, and four other in a region of Portugal other than Lisbon. Except for Renata, an immigrant from Brazil herself, all of the other employers born abroad have Portuguese parents who happened to be living outside the country at the time of their birth (in Angola, Timor, South Africa, or Algeria). Some of the respondents moved to Lisbon as a result of their parents' decision when they were still children, whereas others did it only once they were adults, either on their own or together with a male partner. A few of those who were born and raised in Portugal also lived abroad for a certain time.

The trajectory of Ana, described at the beginning of this chapter, resonates with that of other respondents. Isabel settled down in Mozambique in the late 1980s after her husband was offered a job opportunity there. They had 2 small children, and Isabel was able to escape becoming a full-time housewife by taking up temporary assignments as a schoolteacher and a clerk. The savings accumulated while living abroad allowed them to buy their first apartment in Lisbon. Single and without children, Laura lived in Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands for eight years of her adult life. Sandra was a small child herself when her family emigrated to Angola, and she stayed there until the age of 25 when the independence war broke out. 'My heart was Angolan', she says, 'it had nothing to do with Portugal'.¹⁵¹ After a couple of years living in Brazil, she eventually came back to Portugal; her sister instead moved to South Africa, where she lives up to this day. Similarly, Adosinda grew up in Angola and left the country in 1975. Madalena was also a child when her divorced mother took up a job as an economist in Belgium from 1999 to 2001.

These experiences of geographic mobility do not seem to be any less motivated by economic reasons as the ones of domestic employees. However, as the adult members of the household held jobs in the upper strata of reward and status – and this enabled, for instance, the recruitment of a domestic employee to meet housework and childcare needs –, trajectories could be planned and benefits could be drawn from temporary mobility in a way that remains out of reach for low-wage migrant workers.

Both for domestic service employees and their employers, geographic mobility can be a past experience as well as an expectation – in either case, with possible implications to how employment relationships are perceived and negotiated. Elisa and Lurdes, two of the

¹⁵¹ 'o meu coração era angolano, não tinha nada a ver com Portugal.'

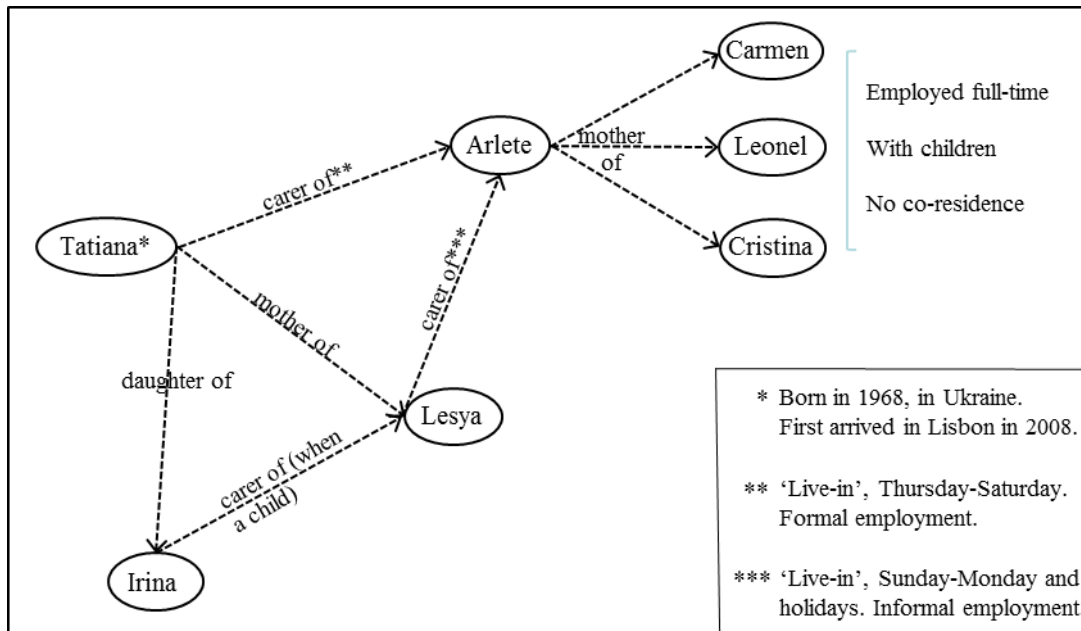
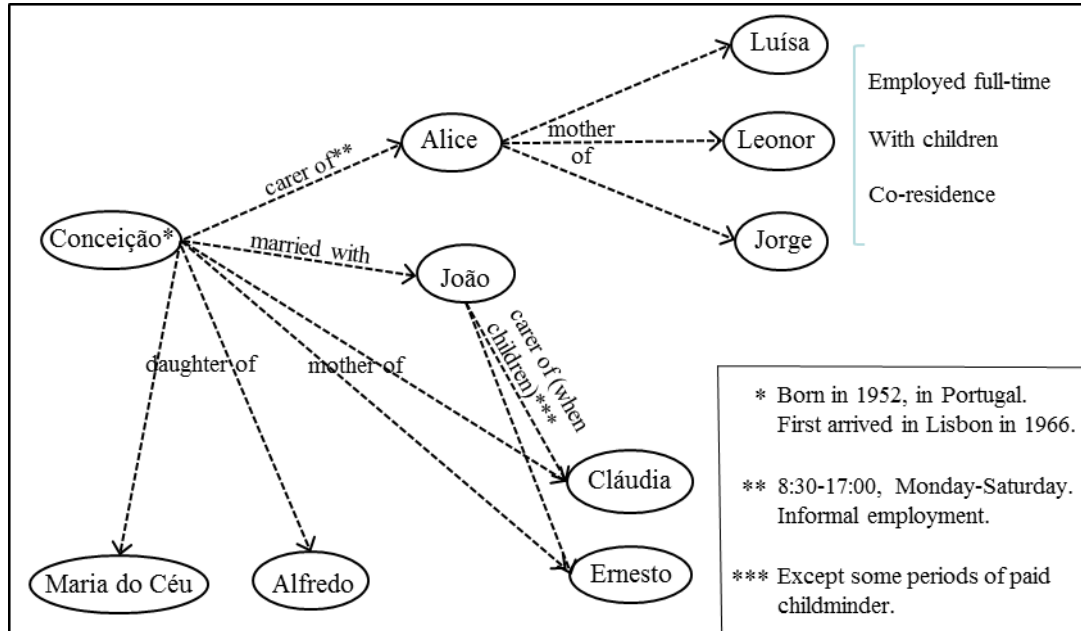
respondent employees who come from a rural area of Portugal, look forward to ‘going to the land’, a common colloquialism in Portuguese that means returning to one's origin town in the countryside. They do not expect Lisbon to provide them with more than a subsistence wage in the meantime. In the case of Lurdes, she is only waiting for her husband to retire from his railroad job.¹⁵² Their daughter has been the first in the family to ever graduate from university; currently unemployed, she is applying to jobs abroad. Renata is convinced that her Angolan domestic employee will leave Lisbon in the near future, probably to go to her husband's hometown in the south of Portugal. Custódia, now a retired widow, splits her time between Lisbon and her own hometown in the countryside. At this juncture, the two parties have additional reasons to conceive employer-employee relationships as nothing more than provisional or instrumental arrangements, unaware of their relentless effects in shaping identity and inequality.

The accounts of simultaneous paid and unpaid arrangements provided by our respondents allow us to map the operation of care chains on the ground. The cases of Conceição and Tatiana, both currently recruited in households where a dependent elderly person lives, are presented in Figure VII. Similarly to most of the other respondents, both of these women have combined full-time employment with looking for the available ways to ensure the well-being of their own children and elderly parents. In the case of Conceição, the everyday care of her children before they grew up was taken up by a paid childminder (a woman too) and the children's father alternatively. Conceição's dependent parents, living in a rural northern area of Portugal, are presently under the care of another daughter, who is replaced by Conceição when she is granted holidays at her job. In turn, Tatiana resorted to her own mother when she moved from Ukraine to Portugal leaving her small daughter behind. Now that this grandmother needs assistance herself, Tatiana spends her holidays back in her hometown looking after her, and it is Tatiana's daughter (now grown up) who replaces her mother in the job in Lisbon.

¹⁵² ‘o meu plano é ir para a terra’; ‘e vou para a terra. Ai pois vou! [...] Assim que o meu marido se reformar, é logo.’

FIGURE VII

DIRECT CARE CHAINS ON THE GROUND: THE CASES OF CONCEIÇÃO AND TATIANA



Source: Own elaboration based on the fieldwork notes.

In its various modalities, sharing and replacement in the response to paid and unpaid direct care demands – typically among women – is a well-known subject to all of the respondents, even if some have experienced it more often than others. It is one more instantiation of how intertwined a strategic estimation of costs and benefits (the rational actor of orthodox neoclassical economy, considering that replacement is expected to prevent loss in production and income) is with personal bonds and immaterial values (including family obligations and love). Importantly, replacement can also be associated with the employee's purpose of obtaining time to engage in other activities such as studying or community work (Helena, Maria, Natalia, Rute), or with her urgent need to extend a period of rest due to health problems (Conceição, Fernanda, Idalina, Lucinda). In all of these cases, it is further complicated for those who have dependent relatives away from the place where they live and work, especially abroad.

8.6. Final remarks

This chapter contributes to locate domestic employees and their employers within the structures and dynamics of class, gender and ethnic stratification. While large-scale quantitative studies have done much to further our understanding of social change and social mobility, qualitative examination confined in time and space may be just as essential. In particular, feminist scholars have questioned the dominant analytical emphasis on class outcomes in detriment of class processes, arguing that sufficient attention should be paid to both ‘materiality and meaning’ (Bradley, 1996: 9-10; see also Acker, 1973; Beechey, 1979; Ferreira, 1999; Crompton, 2003; Torres, 2008). The in-depth consideration of trajectories and viewpoints on the ground – delving into a micropolitics of intimate lives as far as permitted by the adopted methodology – is useful to document class reproduction and reconfiguration.

This necessarily requires rethinking some of the presumptions of quantitative analysis, such as taking occupation – or groups of occupations – for a synonym of class. The resilient centrality of employment in the distribution of symbolic and material resources should not obfuscate that employment-based schemes ‘are best regarded as useful proxies for «class», rather than as actual descriptions of concrete classes’ (Crompton, 2010: 12). Plus, it is risky to assume uniformity in occupational groups that are arguably heterogeneous concerning status, autonomy or career prospects, especially when heterogeneity builds on gendered hierarchies,

such as in clerical or professional jobs. Taking one step further, Sassen (2007: 98-9) claims that the notion of class can be based either on the composition of production structures or on the dynamics of domination and monopolization of resources. Understanding these dynamics, Sassen claims, should not be seen as opposed to the analysis of local production settings; on the contrary, such analysis is required to grasp the multiplicity of work cultures in which contemporary globalization is embedded.

In this chapter, we have seen that personalized bonds of trust, affection or solidarity between employees and employers in domestic service can emerge from, and evolve around, different types of concerns. We have highlighted three of them – subsistence, working conditions, and social mobility –, and it is plausible that value-ascriptive interpretations vary accordingly. Emotional attachment may obscure class inequality, but this is also a sector in which class inequality is much more *visible* than in others, as eloquently exposed by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) when comparing the experience of a domestic worker's employer with that of a consumer who would buy a pair of Nike shoes while staring directly at the exploited children who manufactured them. Attempts at 'sharing' social mobility between the two women are possible when employers engage in logics of maternalism and employees engage in logics of seeking patronage (Lan, 2003: 530-9).

Our observation in the empirical setting of Lisbon corroborates that the hierarchical conditions underlying domestic service relationships have changed throughout the last decades. However, the expected transition from a paternalistic model to a commodified one is best described as partial and contested. Using a metaphorical description, these two models can be understood as towns separated by a short distance but connected by a long and winding road. Although this road encases significant overall trends over time, it is also a matter of everyday negotiation in domestic service relationships as we speak. From a theoretical stance, we could expect employers to maintain paternalistic practices, either as a legacy of status altitude or as a rational strategy to reduce labour costs, while employees would push for commodification. This hypothesis holds for the trajectories of some respondents. The trajectories of others nonetheless suggest that paternalism and commodification provide two ideal types of relationships in this sector, or two standard orientations, distributed *both* among employers and among employees.

A part of the explanation for this is that domestic service arrangements are still a setting in which, as described by Rollins (1985: 6), we largely find two members of the subordinate

gender in a relationship of unequal power divided by class and geographic background – an occupation that is ‘both congruent with and useful to stratification’. Can the rates of men and women in paid employment be used as a measure of gender equality? They can, but they are incomplete or even misleading if we do not take into consideration labour market segmentation or the persistence of traditional asymmetries in family and intimacy contexts (Amâncio, 1994; Ferreira, 1999; Fagan, 2001; Casaca, 2005, 2010; Torres, 2008; Aboim, 2010). The international study of Crompton et al (2007) suggests that unpaid domestic work in dual earner households is either shared between the household members, performed by the adult women living in the house, or outsourced according to market logics. Our fieldwork interviews show that in middle and high income households these three possible results can coexist, that is, they do not necessarily exclude one another: a fraction of the tasks are shared between women and men; a domestic employee can be hired for only a few hours and a short number of assignments; and, all things considered, women – wives and mothers more than anything else – retain the duty of *organizing* and *thinking* domestic work.

Women are also confronted with various postulates of patriarchal dominance in the labour market, among which their greater adequacy to perform functions situated in the extension of domestic duties and their limited access to positions which involve exercising authority over men (Bourdieu, 1998). Over the life course of the employees and employers interviewed in our fieldwork, we find numerous attempts to advance in social and economic structures while these same structures seem to take a longer time to change. Individuals thus engage with the promises of liberal feminism, according to which – in contrast with reformist feminism – women are supposed to improve their position in the capitalist production system without bringing about any significant transformation of production relations (Ferreira, 1981). In this regard, the case of employees circulating among several low-wage occupations before entering domestic service is noteworthy. Some feel *condemned* to domestic service, others stress that they prefer it over other occupations experienced in the past because pay is higher or children can be brought to the workplace. In other words, domestic work is not always a last resource; instead, it emerges as a convenient resource to endure the hardships of everyday life in a context of patriarchal oppression at work and at home.

However, every gesture and even every thought of the domestic employee toward improving her situation is a potential act of resistance. When Zita threatened her employer with smashing the lunch tray on his head, she made an assault on one of the most stringent protocols of

traditional domestic service – ‘the table regime’, ‘a micro-cosmos of differentiation rules’ (Brasão, 2010: 175-185). But Zita quit the job on the same day, and a number of similar experiences reported by other employees show how difficult it is for a domestic employee to use voice without exiting the employment relationship right away. Domination and response are one same object of study (Burawoy et al., 1991). The same holds for deference and dependence (Cock, 1980). Increasingly arranged in the modality of a part-time employee who does her work while household members are absent, domestic service has been transformed in some of its basic features. The most apparent of them is the shrinking importance of the ‘public’, once a key element in the legitimation of the asymmetrical relationship between madam and maid (Brasão, 2010: 223-4). Today, the maintenance of inter-class harmony is secured through mechanisms of trust and control, often concomitant with the development of emotional bonds. Commodification, more than paternalism, is expected to sustain class distinction.

Social factors manifested in everyday interaction entwine with institutional factors (Anderson, 2000). This is especially felt by foreign domestic workers, as the regularization of their residence status in Portugal depends on formal employment or family reunification. Our fieldwork confirms that immigrant women are largely recruited in the most unfavourable segments of domestic service, in particular the provision of ‘live-in’ direct care (Wall & Nunes, 2010). Under continuous reorganization, the sector preserves a distinction of regimes between ‘live-out’ part-time housework and ‘live-in’ full-time direct care. Stratification in the traditional system of maids was based on the idea that recruited girls initially looked after children until they would either exit domestic service employment or acquire the skills and physical strength to cover the bulk of housework. The increasing social valorisation of children and childhood – also expressed in the contemporary aversion to underage recruitment – does not mean that childcare today is performed under more satisfactory working conditions than housework. As shown by the empirical evidence discussed in the previous chapter, direct care providers can go through a symbolic upgrade and a material penalty at once (England, 2005; Folbre, 2006).

Experiences of migration are reported by both employees and employers, in consonance with the significant quantitative increase of foreign workers in Western societies over the last decades (Castles & Miller, 2003; OECD, 2008). Important differences emerge from personal accounts. Whereas the women employed in domestic service report longstanding situations of

uncertainty and experimental decision-making, the women in the upper brackets of pay and status hierarchies provide a picture of greater autonomy, strategic planning and pecuniary accumulation. Sometimes circulating within the very same countries – consider especially the multiple cases of mobility within the territory of former colonial Portugal –, our respondents shed light on how the new transnational geography of economic centrality is empirically construed (Sassen, 2007: 98-9). Global economies are experienced and fuelled not only by workers who migrate to work in sectors that can not be delocalized such as domestic service and civil construction, but also by those who migrate within corporate internal systems or to take up a professional job in some other way.

Based on an extensive review of literature, Lutz (2002: 95) concludes that contemporary domestic employees are different than their predecessors: they are ‘older’, ‘better educated’, and ‘not from working class backgrounds’. Conducted a decade later, our fieldwork in Lisbon corroborates the first two assertions; the third one seems to be of a more complex nature. To be sure, there are immigrant women that increase their earnings and secure their economic autonomy – and often their family's – by accepting an occupation below their qualifications and earlier social standards, in a process pointedly described by Parreñas (2001: 150) as ‘contradictory class mobility’. Yet, some foreign domestic employees do come from working class backgrounds. In addition, a variety of class backgrounds is also found among native domestic workers today. And last, we are still speaking of local classes. In times of global migration and global care chains, should we instead turn our attention to the emergence of global classes – collective formations sharing a particular position *vis-à-vis* the worldwide distribution of power and resources (Sassen, 2007)?

Further research would be required to develop a thorough discussion of class intersubjectivity among domestic employees and their employers, including their senses and sentiments of class conscience and class struggle. This discussion is here impaired by the focus of our empirical research on the structuration of employment relationships, belittling the manners in which these relationships themselves structure class dynamics – even if the two questions can not be entirely disentangled. Different methodological options should be deployed to dwell on the construction of behaviours, values and cultures, documenting the multidimensionality of contemporary global inequalities (Costa, 2012) and the biographical complexity of life paths and identities (Abrantes, 2013b). One thing however is clear from the examination of our findings. While the strategies mobilized to advance one's position in social structures tend to

be described by our respondents as individual undertakings, they are informed by an intensive flow of knowledge through personal networks, and even the smallest deed of dominance or resistance may have consequences expanding beyond the particular moment and place in which it occurs. Still, the collective conscience of domestic employees seems to evolve mainly outside the framework of formally organized industrial relations. Likewise, employers in this sector are not united through any employers' organization as such. There are organizations engaged in the politics of paid domestic work though – one need only to think of trade unions, NGOs, or commercial enterprises providing services to private households. Documenting their singularities and their actual penetration in this employment sector is precisely the goal of our next chapter.

9

From individual to collective action: emergent presences in the landscape

9.1. It's not like we have an option

Helena is employed at two households. Both of these employers comply with their legal obligations concerning social security and holidays. This is not always the case when you are a domestic employee, Helena alerts. ‘It depends on the people [employers], it's not like we have an option.’ In fact, one of her current employers decided at the beginning of their relationship that – in breach of national law – Helena would not be paid neither wage nor holiday allowance during vacation periods. In addition, regular pay would be in cash rather than bank transfer, so that no easy proof of an employment relationship existed. After a couple of years, Helena recalls, this particular employer had a child and stayed ‘two or three months at home on leave’, which enabled the two women to spend ‘more time together’. The next summer, holidays came with the due wage and allowance. ‘I saw then that she is not really a bad person’, Helena says. She is positive that a crucial element in the formalization of their relationship, including the use of bank transfer for payment, was the development of close interaction, personal trust, even ‘friendship’.¹⁵³

This story is certainly familiar to activists. Nuno, one of the trade union leaders consulted during our project, has been a mediator in several disputes between employer and employee in this sector. In a recent case, both parties were summoned to a meeting at the headquarters of the union to reach a non-judicial agreement. Nuno underscores that at some point the discussion revolved around 500 euros that the employee, a woman with Brazilian nationality,

¹⁵³ ‘Depende das pessoas, não é como se tivéssemos escolha. [...] Depois a senhora ficou grávida e teve os dois ou três meses de baixa em casa, e estivemos mais tempo a conviver. Foi aí que vi que ela não é assim uma má pessoa. [...] Agora sim, já temos uma certa amizade.’

was entitled to receive; the employers proposed paying this amount directly to the employee's children on the grounds that the employee was immature and did not 'deserve' such amount. In the end, Nuno persuaded the employers to let go of their paternalist good intentions and simply abide by the law. 'Mind you', the union leader says, this sector is characterized by 'a very particular relationship of responsibility'.¹⁵⁴

As suggested in previous studies, law enforcement in domestic service is often entwined with personal bonds – bonds shown in our Chapters 7 and 8 to be pervaded by trust and distrust, emotions, and change over time. Our literature review shows that analysis seldom moves beyond this nexus, contented with documenting how individuals interacting at the micro level deal with the existing regulatory frameworks. However, regulation is neither stationary nor independent from experience and behaviour on the ground. It can be taken as an object of study in its own right. Our first step in this direction was taken in a brief discussion of lawmaking dynamics and developments in Portugal (Chapter 5). The organized forces that advocate legal compliance or legal reform emerge as subjects requiring closer empirical consideration.

So far, the examination of evidence collected during our fieldwork has been very much circumscribed to the employer-employee binomial. In this chapter, we delve into the role of a number of institutions with a potential impact on the mediation and transformation of domestic service employment relationships. We begin by examining the practical capacity of law in the regulation of the sector. Based on first-hand evidence, two particular issues are addressed: social security and holiday rights. Afterwards, our attention turns to organizations engaged in the representation and mobilization of domestic employees: two trade unions covering this sector at the national level, and two ongoing NGO-led initiatives in the area of Lisbon pushing for the rights of immigrant domestic workers. Last, the rise of commercial enterprises providing cleaning and care services in private households is discussed. The final section summarizes the main findings of this chapter, highlighting the contribution of the organizations under scrutiny to shape working conditions and relations, as well as their role in the emergence or erosion of a collective voice among either employees or employers.

¹⁵⁴ 'repare, há esta relação de responsabilidade que é muito particular.'

9.2. Regulation and formalization

Compliance with the applicable regulation may be absent from relationships that otherwise emulate formal employment – those in which everyday interaction takes place under agreed conditions of employer-employee differentiation, pay in exchange for labour, and periodicity. In our analysis of official statistics (Chapter 6), social security coverage is adopted as the best available measure of formalization in domestic service as we lack large-scale quantitative data on conformity with other rights established by national law. To be sure, the women interviewed during the fieldwork report a variety of situations as far as social security is concerned.

Before looking into that complex scenario, let us pinpoint the possible reasons provided by our strategic informants to explain legal compliance and non-compliance at the micro level. First, the *lack of knowledge* about the law among either employers or employees. Second, the establishment of an *agreement of convenience* between the two parties regardless of their actual awareness of regulatory frameworks. It is apparent that both employer and employee can draw short-term benefits from an arrangement outside formal requirements. Third, logics of *oppression and despair* may lead to a situation in which working conditions below legal standards are imposed by employers and accepted by employees on the basis of power inequality. As put by Helena, it depends on employers – ‘it's not like we have an option.’

These three arguments must be situated in the particular place and time in which they emerge. A public officer and a trade union leader, interviewed on different occasions, assert that domestic service today is frequently construed – by employers, by employees, and by the public eye – as a sector in which workers are self-employed individuals selling their services to households, even though the national law defines them as wage workers. In this respect, the public officer says, ‘a lot of work is yet to be done to raise awareness’ (Deolinda). ‘In practice’, the union leader says, the domestic employee finds herself in ‘a gap between dependent and independent work’, where she often gets ‘the worst of both’ (Cristina).¹⁵⁵

The other three interviews with union leaders confirm a strong concern with the measures adopted by recent governments in favour of labour market deregulation and flexibilisation (Aldina, Ciro & Macário, Nuno). At this juncture, we find workers' representatives with

¹⁵⁵ ‘Há todo um trabalho de sensibilização que é preciso fazer’; ‘ou então na prática acaba por ser um buraco entre o trabalho dependente e independente no qual a trabalhadora tem o pior dos dois’.

declared ideological disparities agreeing on the idea that domestic service regulation in Portugal is relatively protective and progressive, having remained in a sheltered position when significant reforms of the general labour law were debated and implemented. ‘The main task is to ensure that the law is applied’ (Nuno); ‘the problem is the enforcement of the law, this is where we always lag behind’ (Macário).¹⁵⁶ In his reflection upon the existing regulation, a representative from the employers' association of commerce and tourism comments that stronger mechanisms to formalize domestic service are to be expected from the national government since substantial amounts would be obtained from ‘immediate social security contributions and income tax’ (Ângelo).¹⁵⁷ According to this leader's view, incentives to the operation of temporary work agencies in this sector can be an effective contribution.

‘Do you know if there is any law in Portugal that regulates domestic service?’ was a question asked in our interviews with employees and employers.¹⁵⁸ Lack of knowledge about the existence of the law is clearly exceptional among these 50 women. Maria has been a domestic employee for over a decade and states that she is not aware of any law covering this sector. ‘It would be very important that there was such a law’, she says, ‘and that people knew their rights, and their duties too’. Lídia and Jacinta are two employers declaring that they do not know whether domestic service is explicitly mentioned in legislation. The views of these three women are similar in that they take informal networks and interpersonal trust as the only sources of reference for proper behaviour from both parties. For Lídia, knowing about the law ‘has never been necessary’, since ‘people pass on the information, be it right or wrong’. She further justifies her unawareness of the law by describing the area where she comes from as ‘a small place’ where ‘people know each other’, suggesting that social control provides sufficient regulation.¹⁵⁹

All of the remaining women interviewed during the fieldwork are aware that this occupation is covered by a regulatory framework, although their degree of knowledge or understanding

¹⁵⁶ ‘o trabalho tem sido e continua a ser esse, de conseguir que a lei seja aplicada’; ‘o problema é o da aplicação da lei, que aí é que andamos sempre atrasados em relação aos outros [países].’

¹⁵⁷ ‘Como é um governo que anda à procura de receita, tinha aqui contribuições para a segurança social imediatas e tinha IRS que está tudo fora de mão.’

¹⁵⁸ ‘Sabe se existe alguma lei em Portugal que regula o trabalho doméstico?’, question II.14 in the interviews with employees and question II.18 in the interviews with employers (full scripts in Appendix 1).

¹⁵⁹ ‘Era muito importante haver uma lei [...] e as pessoas saberem os seus direitos, e também os seus deveres’; ‘nunca foi preciso [...] isto é um meio pequeno: as pessoas vão passando a informação, certa ou errada, e vão-se entendendo, é assim que funciona.’

of the law content varies. Predominantly, they learned about it when engaging in a particular domestic service relationship – not necessarily their first one. Helena worked for several years in this sector in a fully informal manner until she was hired by a particular employer who insisted on complying with the law. At that moment, neither Helena nor her employer were familiar with the applicable legislation, and they had to seek information about it. This employer, Helena says, ‘was really human, because I wouldn't ask for it, I didn't know about it’. Amélia also learned about the law through her employers. They always paid her social security contributions and holidays, ‘and I've never checked if everything was right’.¹⁶⁰ Among employers, Ana recalls obtaining basic information about domestic service regulation through ‘women's talk’ at her workplace, since most of her colleagues hire a domestic worker too. Palmira and Luísa did some research on the issue before hiring a domestic worker. Isabel did the same thing but only a few years after hiring a domestic worker, when her employee ‘started wanting to deduct for her social security’. Clotilde says that she had to explain several of her domestic employees *why* it was important that they learned about the regulation of this occupation: ‘they had no sense of their own rights whatsoever.’¹⁶¹

We find other cases of employees claiming rights when their employers apparently did not know about the legal obligations in place. Almerinda once quit a job because her employer refused signing the mandatory income declaration for tax purposes alleging that she was not required to do so. During a conflictual resignation, Zita went to the open desk of the General Labour Inspection to know about her rights. When she came back and demanded from her male employer the amount that she was entitled to receive from past holidays and dismissal compensation, he argued that he would have to contact the General Labour Inspection himself since he could not trust the words of someone who hadn't even completed primary education. He eventually paid the due amount, Zita says, ‘otherwise we would have gone to court, yes we would’.¹⁶² Marília says that her successive employees taught her everything that she knows about the regulation of domestic service, including access to social security and holiday rights.

¹⁶⁰ ‘a senhora [...] foi mesmo muito humana; até porque eu não ia pedir, eu não sabia’; ‘e eu nunca fui verificar se estava tudo certo’.

¹⁶¹ ‘conversa de mulheres por lá [no emprego]: com a minha empregada faço assim, com a outra assado’; ‘Quando a Lucinda [empregada] começou a querer descontar para a segurança social’; ‘Elas não tinham sentido nenhum dos seus direitos.’

¹⁶² ‘o patrão disse-me: eu vou lá ver isso, então a Zita nem estudou, como é que eu vou saber se está a dizer bem? [...] e ele aceitou, porque senão tínhamos ido a tribunal. Ah, pois tínhamos!’

Knowledge of the law is not synonymous with compliance. There is also a grey area in which some legal requirements are absent while others are kept. For instance, Otilia – familiar with the main rights and duties in her occupation – works informally for all of her employers, some of whom however comply with holiday pay. Rute left her previous employer without receiving the full compensation she was entitled to, but she never took the issue to the court because they ‘got along very well’ and she would not want to ‘close that door’ – referring to the possibility of having this employer hiring her or recommending her to someone else in the future.¹⁶³ Madalena, who has always paid her employee's social security and holidays, was recently surprised to learn that workplace insurance is also mandatory. She is still thinking about it. Knowledge about workplace insurance is on the rise, especially since several banks and the national post service began advertising their insurance offers for this sector.

In short, the first suggestion is that lack of knowledge is less relevant to explain legal incompliance than could be expected. Certainly we are speaking of a particular profile of employers and employees, as explained in our Chapter 4 (section 4.4b). It is possible that large segments of the sector do lack information about the existing regulation. Still, within the empirical confines of our research, the other two arguments seem to be much more useful. They are also tightly interwoven: if legal incompliance rests on an agreement of convenience between employer and employee, can this really be detached from the broader logics of oppression and despair at stake? A detailed look into the experiences of respondents concerning social security and holiday rights is useful.

A) The case of social security

With regard to social security, we find employees whose current domestic service relationships are in full compliance with the regulation (Amélia, Beatriz, Idalina, Lurdes, Maria, Natalia, Rute, Tatiana), and others whose current relationships are not (Almerinda, Conceição, Fernanda, Otilia, Joaquina, Rita, Zita). In addition, there are employees engaged in compliant and non-compliant relationships with different employers at the same time (Elisa, Lucinda, Marina, Tânia). Unsurprisingly, a number of respondent employers report compliance (Ana, Carmen, Isabel, Laura, Madalena, Marília, Nazaré) whereas others report incompliance (Adosinda, Augusta, Carolina, Clotilde, Custódia, Dulce, Inês, Lídia, Luísa,

¹⁶³ ‘nós dávamo-nos muito bem, porque é que eu ia fechar essa porta?’

Odete, Renata). Many employees and employers describe a combination of compliance and non-compliance experiences in the past. Another important aspect to bear in mind is that social security coverage does not necessarily mean conformity with all of the remaining legal requirements, such as maximum working time or holiday pay. Conversely, workers uncovered by social security may enjoy some of these other rights.

Lurdes and Cátia are two employees who have social security contributions since the very beginning of their experience as paid domestic workers. As far as they can remember, their first employers were the ones determining this way. From then onwards, however, both of them have rejected a number of job opportunities in this sector from employers who were not interested in a formal relationship. Other employees, such as Marina, Helena or Tânia, have been circulating between situations of compliance and incompliance depending on whether they can persuade every particular employer to pay the due contributions.

When Lucinda got her first job as a domestic worker, she told her full-time employer that she did not want to be covered by social security. Engaging in an informal relationship enabled Lucinda to increase net income, since neither social security contributions nor income tax would be deducted from her pay. She also mentions that her husband's formal employment provided her sufficient peace of mind concerning old-age subsistence. When the couple decided to buy an apartment though, banks required them a proof of an household income above the regular earnings of Lucinda's husband. After consideration, they agreed that the best solution would be to formalize Lucinda's employment relationship. Her employer, Isabel, accepted this as a legitimate request. It was only then that Isabel, who had never hired a domestic employee prior to Lucinda, felt the need to get information about this issue.

Similarly, Ana began paying the social security contributions upon her employee's request. 'At first we didn't define anything about it', she says. It was only later on that her employee 'had the initiative' of asking for it. Laura's relationship with her employee was uncovered by social security during a few years too. 'She didn't ask for it', Laura says, 'and I, to be honest, didn't want to think about it either'. It was Laura's ex-husband who explained her how things should be done to comply with the law, and she then 'helped' the employee at regularizing the situation. On the contrary, Nazaré 'always suggested' social security payment to her

successive employees, and all of the employees ‘accepted it’ except for one who did not want it because it was more convenient for her to remain inactive in the Social Security Records.¹⁶⁴

Among the employers who conceive formalization as a choice to be made by the employee, there are those who engaged in formal relationships only when their employee was a foreigner (Clotilde, Inês, Nazaré). Formal employment is a key requirement to obtain or renew a residence permit at the immigration services, except if the foreigner is applying for family reunification. Therefore, it is unsurprising that immigrant workers demand the formalization of their employment relationship more often than natives. This is corroborated in our interviews with employees. While some of the foreign-born respondents were in formal employment from the outset of their stay in Portugal (Idalina, Natalia, Rute), others saw it rejected by their first employers and only got it after changing jobs (Beatriz, Eva, Maria and Tatiana).

What about relationships uncovered by social security? Some employees say that they have been explicitly denied social security by employers when they asked for it (Beatriz, Elisa, Helena, Marina, Paula). For over two decades, Elisa worked without social security coverage. When she finally demanded it, she was successful only at one of the three households where she is employed. ‘The other ladies didn't agree with it’, Elisa says, ‘they said they weren't interested [in paying the due contributions]’.¹⁶⁵ For six years, Idalina was employed full-time at a household in which she was told that her social security contributions were made. When she quit the job, she found out that no single contribution had ever been made. In several periods of the past, Helena and Beatriz have paid the employers' contribution from their own money. This way, the employee prevents the penalty imposed by the social security system on discontinuous contributive careers, namely in the calculation of the pension to be received upon retirement (in the case of Helena), or saves herself from getting into troubles at the time of renewing her residence permit as a foreigner (in the case of Beatriz).

Other employees confirm that they are the ones deciding to keep their employment relationships outside such requirement. For Conceição, this is a way of accumulating a monthly wage of 600 Euros with her retirement pension (223 Euros per month). Tânia also

¹⁶⁴ ‘A início não definimos nada em relação a isso [...] A segurança social foi iniciativa dela’; ‘ela não pediu, e eu, vou ser honesta, também não quis pensar nisso [...] foi por causa do Ricardo [ex-marido], deve ter sido ele a dizer-me, e eu ajudei a Vyara [empregada] com isso.’

¹⁶⁵ ‘fui falar com as outras senhoras e aí é que elas não foram muito de acordo, disseram que não estavam interessadas.’

prefers working informally to keep the guaranteed minimum income that she receives from social security – 200 Euros per month, on which she counts to pay her family's apartment rent (190 Euros). 'I did it [paid the social security contributions] for 15 years', Otília says. She stopped doing it when she realized that 'you pay a lot and get very little back', especially considering that in only a few years the contribution monthly amount for a full-time domestic employee has increased 'from 70 euros to about 120', while wages remained close to stagnation. Joaquina expresses an identical reasoning. Zita has been a domestic employee for 39 years without a single social security contribution. Although her current employers 'would like to pay it' (as confirmed in the interview with one of her employers), Zita does not see 'much use in it'.¹⁶⁶ Instead, she has been disciplined in nourishing her retirement savings account at a private bank.

Such discourse resonates with the aforementioned understanding of domestic employees as independent contractors, but this is not a result of employees being unaware of the law. Otília, for example, stresses that with regard to social security contributions 'employers are the ones who must pay for it, that much I know'.¹⁶⁷ However, precarious and discontinuous trajectories in the labour market, as well as a substantial number of employers unwilling to comply with their legal duties, encourage workers to resort to informal employment in the framework of their strategies to ensure subsistence along the way.

Among the uncompliant employers, we find the two expected positions. On the one hand, there are those who have given their employee the possibility of choosing whether she wants to have her social security contributions paid (Carolina, Inês, Marília, Odete, Renata). On the other, there are those who have not considered such hypothesis (Adosinda, Dulce, Palmira). Adosinda, for example, says that she never thought that social security would be 'worthwhile' since her employee only worked four hours per week at her house. This employment relationship lasts for over 15 years. Palmira paid the social security contributions when she first hired a domestic employee. 'We [my husband and I] brought up the issue ourselves at the recruitment interview, and both parties were interested.' However, she did not do the same thing when she later hired a new employee, because her husband 'opposed that idea' arguing that this woman was hired 'on trial' and her weekly working period 'varied depending on the

¹⁶⁶ 'fiz [descontos para a segurança social] durante 15 anos! Mas a verdade é que vi que paga-se muito e o ganho é muito pouco'; 'Quando eu comecei, ela [empregadora] quis pagar-me. Mas eu não vi que fosse preciso [...] não vejo grande utilidade.'

¹⁶⁷ 'os patrões é que têm de pagar, isso eu sei; pelo menos têm de pagar a parte deles.'

needs of the household and her own availability'. She would come to the house as much as three times per week. Six months later, the relationship was terminated because Palmira and her husband were unsatisfied with the employee's performance; the mandatory procedures for dismissal were not observed either. Palmira recalls insisting 'on other things' though – for instance, that this employee had proper meals during the day. 'This was one of my concerns, I would cook lunch myself and we ate together at this table.'¹⁶⁸

B) The case of holidays

Domestic employees are legally entitled to 22 days of paid holidays per year. The existing legislation explicitly details that this particular right can not be done away with, neither exchanged with any type of compensation, even when the employee would agree to do so. During holidays, domestic employees are to receive the corresponding wage together with an allowance of the same amount (see section 5.3 in our Chapter 5 for more on present-day legal dispositions).

Only a few of the employees interviewed during the fieldwork report being used to enjoy the due length of holidays (Beatriz, Helena, Idalina, Marina). In most of the cases, they get it from some though not all of their employers. We have already noted in Chapter 7 that a dominant element in domestic service relationships is that the employee is expected to accompany the rhythms of the households where she is employed. This typically means enjoying holidays in August, when employers are granted summer holidays at their own jobs. Some employees state that their request for holidays on the Christmas season has been rejected by employers, regardless of employers being granted holidays themselves in this period (Elisa, Marina, Paula). Requests of this sort may be more successful when they pertain to other times of the year. For example, Tatiana has been given permission by her full-time employer to go on holidays in May, her favourite month to visit her hometown in Ukraine as it coincides with the visit of various family members who live in different locations abroad.

¹⁶⁸ 'não valia a pena, porque era pouco tempo que ela trabalhava lá'; 'até fomos nós que levantámos o assunto na entrevista, e estavam as duas partes interessadas. [...] o meu marido não quis, porque dizia que ela estava cá só à experiência, que seria sempre algo temporário [...] e de facto ela vinha dias variáveis e a duração era indefinida, ia variando conforme a nossa necessidade e a disponibilidade dela [...] eu insistia noutras coisas, por exemplo para ela almoçar... um dos meus cuidados era esse, eu própria preparava o almoço e comíamos juntas, aqui à mesa.'

Lucinda prefers to be granted holidays in June or November, convenient periods to travel to her hometown in a rural area of Portugal and work at her family's small plantation for in-family consumption. In both of these cases, as reported by other respondents, the employee arranges for her own replacement: a relative or a friend of hers takes up the work assignments during her absence.

Using the holidays to work elsewhere – whether in paid or unpaid forms – is not uncommon among domestic employees. Conceição, Joaquina and Idalina have done it on plenty of occasions. They try to have holidays from their regular households in months other than August precisely because August is not an adequate period of the year to find alternative paid work, be it in private households, agriculture, or childcare. Unfamiliar with traditional vacation trips, Conceição prefers to ‘keep on working rather than stay at home’. During summer, her husband is sometimes able to convince her to spend a day on the beach. When she does leave the Lisbon area, she goes to her rural hometown and replaces her sister at caring for their parents who are presently over 90 years old.

Employers may acknowledge their employee's right to enjoy holidays and yet refrain from paying them any wage or allowance for such period. This is the case of employees like Almerinda, Conceição or Fernanda. ‘We ask for it’, Almerinda says, ‘but it depends on the person [employer]... it depends on the person's humanity’. ‘I'm only paid for what I work’, Fernanda says. She goes on to recall a past experience when she was hired to provide direct care to an elderly woman. While the daughters of this woman paid Fernanda's regular wages, they objected to the payment of holiday allowances. It was the elderly woman herself who started paying the due allowance under the condition that Fernanda kept it a secret so that her daughters would never know about it.¹⁶⁹

Like Fernanda, other respondents working at multiple households are used to have some employers abiding by the rule of paid holidays and others who consider holidays to be the employee's sole concern. A relevant detail is that some employers, regardless of complying with holiday rights, practice other ways of gratification in times of holidays. Last Christmas, one of Helena's (compliant) employers gave her an extra amount of 100 Euros for her ‘to buy

¹⁶⁹ ‘Nós pedimos [subsídio de férias], mas ficamos dependentes de a pessoa dizer que sim ou não... vai da humanidade da pessoa, estas coisas’; ‘não são pagas, as minhas férias; só recebo pelo que trabalho [...] houve uma senhora que uma vez me disse: eu pago-lhe o subsídio de férias, mas não diga às minhas filhas, que elas não podem saber.’

a little gift'. For Helena, it was 'as good as if it had fallen from the sky'.¹⁷⁰ Idalina is also used to receive gifts from her (uncompliant) employers when she takes a week off in the summer or by Christmas. Sometimes this comes in cash, others in the form of vegetables and fruits that employers bring from their family property in the countryside. Such behaviours may be read as resilient manifestations of the paternalistic bonds underlying domestic service, as discussed in our Chapter 8. A curious element to add is that they can coexist with the observation of legal requirements by employers, as well as compensate for the lack of observation.

To a large extent, the divide between compliance and in compliance overlaps with the divide between relationships recognized as standard wage labour and relationships symbolically construed under a model of self-employment. In the former, the employer acknowledges the employee's right to holidays and pays accordingly. In the latter, remuneration is made by the working hour, and periods of absence from work are unpaid.

It is noteworthy though that there is not a strict correspondence between the observation of holiday rights and the payment of social security contributions. Adosinda, Luísa, Odete and Renata are employers whose domestic employee is uncovered by social security contributions and income tax; still, they have always conformed to holiday wages and allowances. They identically assert that it was their employee's decision to remain outside social security requirements. Holidays are then described as a different issue. However, we do not find any case in which the reverse happens; whenever the relationship is covered by social security, there is a strict compliance with holiday rights. This suggests that social security is the crucial marker of a formal relationship in the eyes of both employer and employee – if only because social security contributions constitute a strong legal proof that an employment relationship is underway. The subject of compliance and in compliance shall be resumed in the concluding section of this chapter.

¹⁷⁰ 'outras gratificações é no Natal e no verão, deixam-me algo para eu comprar uma prendinha, ainda este natal deixaram-me 100 Euros e foi mesmo... como se tivesse caído do céu.'

9.3. Trade unions

This section starts with a short introduction to the two trade unions covering domestic service in Portugal today, drawing mainly on institutional documents and interviews with privileged informants, some of whom are union leaders. Priorities and strategies in their present action are summarized, with an emphasis on key lingering difficulties. Afterwards, we look into the experiences and viewpoints of employees and employers interviewed during our fieldwork on the subject of unionization.

Soon after the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1974, two trade unions representing domestic employees were created. The first of them was called *Sindicato do Serviço Doméstico* (SSD) and began operating officially in 1975.¹⁷¹ The other one, created the following year, was called *Sindicato Livre de Empregadas Domésticas* (SLED).¹⁷² Both aimed to organize employees at the national level. The SSD affiliated with the union confederation CGTP-IN, inspired by communist ideology. In turn, the SLED would come to affiliate with the union confederation UGT, founded in 1978 as an alliance of workers' organizations offering an alternative to communist unionism. More elements on the ideological divide within the workers' movement in Portugal are provided in our review of scholarship in Chapter 2 (section 2.6).

According to our fieldwork interviews, both unions exerted political pressure in the process leading up to the adoption of the first law on domestic service employment in 1980. While the legitimacy of their claim was largely accepted in the political landscape, the centre-right party coalition in office went on to legislate through governmental decree, raising harsh criticism on the grounds that neither sectorial nor parliamentary dialogue were properly observed. The absence of organizations representing employers in this sector left trade unions with little option other than urging the government to regulate in a more favourable manner.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ 'Domestic Service Union' (our translation).

¹⁷² 'Free Union of Domestic Employees' (our translation), employees being inflected in the female form.

¹⁷³ This is corroborated by our analysis of the parliamentary sessions in which the regulation of domestic service was discussed. The public transcripts under examination can be found in *Diário da Assembleia da República, 1ª Série*, 11/03/1977: 2830; 29/10/1977: 38; 16/06/1978: 3283; 21-06-1980: 3122; and *Diário da Assembleia da República, 2ª Série-A*, 16/06/1978: 914. For the statements of the political parties standing in parliament at the time of voting the law, see *Diário da Assembleia da República, 1ª Série*, 31-01-1981: 855-866; 06/02/1981: 935-944; and 11/02/1981: 966-978.

Whereas in the late 1970s these two trade unions were focused on demanding the inclusion of domestic employees in the democratization of industrial relations, one decade later their number of members had decreased and the workers' movement at large struggled with the overpowering threats of neoliberal policy and European integration. Smaller unions were often limited to pinpoint particular risks and concerns within their sector, such as child exploitation and gender-based harassment in the case of domestic service. The reform of the domestic service employment law in 1992 was again triggered by claims of workers' organizations – in particular, by the confederation UGT at the Standing Council of Social Concertation – and then conducted and implemented through governmental decree by a centre-right majority government. It is also significant that drafting and discussion took place in a period of general convulsion in industrial relations over matters as diverse as the pension system, the regular working period, the juridical framework of collective negotiation, or the impact of constitutional reforms on the labour market. In this context, the voices of political parties and top-level confederation representatives were favoured over those of sectorial unions, and the revision of domestic service law was construed by the government as falling within the scope of administrative adjustments.¹⁷⁴

In the mid-1990s, the SSD merged into the broader *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Serviços de Portaria, Vigilância, Limpeza, Domésticas e Actividades Diversas* (STAD).¹⁷⁵ The SLED would be deactivated later on, its aims being then overtaken by the *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Técnicos e dos Serviços* (SITESE).¹⁷⁶ Therefore, the STAD and the SITESE are the unions presently covering domestic service in Portugal, and they were the ones consulted as workers' representatives during the drafting process of the Domestic Workers Convention adopted at the ILO in 2011. The fact that both of these unions combine a wide range of occupations may be a source of either concern or strength with regard to the advancement of domestic workers' interests. On the one hand, the agenda of the unions is likely to be dominated by occupations in which unionization is greater and employers include large companies, such as cleaning, hotel, retail, and office work. On the other hand, the incorporation of domestic employees in unions with greater dimension and negotiation capability offers possibilities of improvement that should not be neglected.

¹⁷⁴ See debates at the national parliament in *Diário da Assembleia da República, 1ª Série*, 22-01-1992: 589; 08-04-1992: 1535; 29-04-1992: 1745; 08-05-1992: 1923.

¹⁷⁵ 'Union of Door Attendants, Security Guards, Cleaners, Domestic Employees and Diverse Occupations' (our translation).

¹⁷⁶ 'Union of Technical and Service Workers' (our translation).

Based on our interviews with their leaders, the daily activity of these particular unions can be described as comprising three distinct functions or levels of intervention. First, they provide information to members, mostly pertaining to wages, welfare benefits, and procedures concerning the beginning or termination of an employment relationship. Second, they support members and take action in cases of employee-employer dispute by offering a non-judicial route of negotiation. Third, if the conflict does evolve into a judicial process, they provide the employee with legal representation in exchange for a fraction of the value eventually obtained in court. Nuno, a union leader with a long personal record of mediating employee-employer disagreements, makes a positive assessment on his dealing with the employers of domestic workers. Unlike companies, ‘these employers generally do not have a lawyer’, he notes, ‘and they see the union as a sort of solution’.¹⁷⁷

Organizing is certainly important to reverse the vulnerability of domestic employees in comparison to other occupational groups. The overall decline in union membership over the last two decades provides a discouraging landscape. Ciro, one of the interviewed leaders, allegorically describes the task of organizing domestic employees as ‘fishing with a fish hook’. In his view, the challenge of individualized workplaces is further complicated by widespread informality in this sector and the migrant background of many workers. Aldina, a leader of the other union, underscores that individuals informally employed in this sector can become members of the union. ‘Even if there are no papers proving it’, she says, ‘that’s not a problem’. Undocumented immigrants however can not join the union. In this case, the union advises the worker on how to regularize her stay in Portugal before becoming a member. If immigration services require a written employment contract, the worker must ask for it directly to her employer. ‘But we haven’t had that many cases of irregular migrants’, Aldina says.¹⁷⁸

The women’s commission within one of the aforementioned workers’ confederations recently undertook a number of initiatives – including the production of written materials and the organization of public and in-house sessions – to enhance the discussion of union strategies regarding domestic service. Cristina, a member of this commission, underscores previous exemplary accomplishments of the workers’ movement with a great relevance to this employment sector such as the reduction of child labour and the expansion of social security

¹⁷⁷ ‘os empregadores geralmente não têm isso [apoio jurídico] e o sindicato aparece-lhes assim como a solução.’

¹⁷⁸ ‘é um trabalho de pesca à linha’; ‘Se não há papéis a provar, isso não é problema [...] mas não temos tido assim tantos casos de irregulares.’

coverage. A lot of work is still to be done, Cristina admits, to promote gender awareness among both ground-floor members and top-level representatives. In her view, increasing unionization among domestic employees would require a campaign specifically conceived for this sector.

Yet another element must be brought into the picture: the centrality of collective bargaining in the action of trade unions. In the absence of organized employers with whom to establish minimum working conditions, unions are confronted with a situation in which, as put by *Ciro* and *Macário*, ‘dating is possible, marriage is not’. *Cristina* corroborates that the lack of employer representation condemns unions to operate ‘at a minimum level’. The recent international convention encourages collective bargaining – ‘but how is that possible if there is no employer representation?’, *Nuno* asks. To his mind, employer representation in this sector ‘can not exist’ as nothing ‘unites employers’ except for the fact that ‘they have a busy life or in any case want to save time in household chores’.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, the invisible adversary of unions is located inside the very territory of unions: most of the employers are workers themselves. The context of growing unemployment and austerity policy measures justifies additional awareness to this element, as suggested in the following excerpt from the interview with *Ciro* and *Macário*, two fellow union leaders.

Ciro: The current crisis has forced many of these people [employers] to... consider their resources; opt for dismissal. And there is this interesting thing I was asked the other day... this was a married couple of public sector employees, and they asked me: if this year I will be paid neither Christmas nor holiday allowances myself, what should I do to my domestic employee? These were the words. And I told them: well, I have no idea...

Macário: They just wanted to hear: well, cut the domestic employee's benefits as well!

Ciro: And it is obvious that this couple must have sorted it out easily: at the end of the year, they said: look, we're very sorry... right?... you must find a job elsewhere because we will not have enough money next year. [...] I think that in other activity sectors there might be a chance of moving forward, of breaking through some resistance, but not in this one. In this one, right at the outset employers are embezzled.

¹⁷⁹ ‘houve ali um namoro, mas nunca houve casamento [...] O casamento aqui era a contratação coletiva de trabalho, que é impossível estabelecer’; ‘Nos outros setores é fácil, há representação [patronal], há uma negociação... aqui trabalhamos a um nível mínimo’; ‘mas como, se não há representação patronal? E não pode haver. [...] o que os une? Nada, só mesmo o facto de terem uma vida atarefada ou de quererem poupar tempo em casa’.

While unions maintain a close to passive acknowledgment of such obstacle, there have been recent endeavours from employers to erode it. These come not from private households employing domestic workers, but rather from enterprises aiming to expand their presence in the market of domestic services. Notably, the CCP has participated actively in the discussion of the international Domestic Workers Convention. Ângelo, one of its leaders, is committed to keep this sector among the confederation's current priorities. The companies of temporary employment and outsourcing services affiliated with the CCP, he argues, may provide a relevant contribution to the upgrading and formalization of domestic service employment.

This began when the ILO contacted us in an attempt to raise the awareness of social partners to the debate. [...] And the reply is voluntary. It depends on whether the partners consider this to be a matter of their direct interest, a matter on which they want to give out their opinion. So, the CCP did it. If other organizations failed to do it, it's probably because they found that this was not directly related to the sector that they represent or... they were not interested; in practice, that was it. The unions, in general... they reply almost always. Among the employers' organizations, there is often a... well, I mean, decisions are made in a manner... a very specific manner in light of the activity sectors that they represent. It's a very specific matter, right? Selective option.

(Ângelo)

The expansion of companies in this sector is perceived by the union leaders as compounding positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, they offer an interlocutor, a voice with whom dialogue can be established and claims presented. On the other, they entail increasing risks of flexibilisation and precarisation, especially as unionization among domestic employees remains at a very low level.

This section would not be complete without referring to how the employees and employers interviewed during fieldwork relate to trade unions. Idalina is the only respondent employee affiliated with a union. She became a member of the STAD 'about fifteen years ago', right after a union representative delivered a speech at the company where she was then employed as a cleaner. Interestingly, she still combines part-time cleaning at a company with part-time domestic service. Although the same union covers both of her employment settings, Idalina's unionization occurred in the context of her (formal) employment relationship as a cleaner rather than her (informal) employment relationship in domestic service. None of the other interviewed employees is aware of the existence of a trade union covering their occupation except for Zita. Some of them nonetheless were union members when they worked in other

sectors – Maria in hospitality, Almerinda in industrial production, and Natalia in healthcare (in Russia). Rute is a member of a trade union of the educational sector since she engaged in tertiary education to become a schoolteacher.

The common feature of these experiences is that unionization happened as a result of obtaining information about the union at the workplace or an educational institution. A few respondents state that they considered searching for the support of a union when they had a conflict with an employer, but they eventually sought advice from public labour authorities (Fernanda, Zita), a private lawyer (Tatiana), or an immigrants' organization (Maria). Another relevant observation is that personal networks seem to be quite efficient in spreading information in other respects – including about the legal regulation of this occupation, as we have seen in the previous section – and yet fail to provide domestic employees with references or recommendations to the unions covering the sector.

Different is the case of interviewed employers. While not more than five of them are presently affiliated with a trade union (Anabel, Carmen, Isabel, Lúcia and Marília, all of whom employed in the public sector), all of the remaining respondents know what union they could join if they decided to do so. The availability of information at workplaces and educational institutions is confirmed to be decisive. The same holds for the flow of information through personal networks, including explicit recommendations from relatives or colleagues to become a union member. Sandra is not a union member, but she reads the e-mails from the union delegate at her workplace. Nazaré, Dulce and Clotilde have been union members for most of their careers. Only three of the interviewed employers recall ever hearing about a union which domestic employees could join, and they are not sure whether such union is still in operation (Carmen, Clotilde, Isabel).

9.4. Women's and immigrants' organizations

Two distinct initiatives have been recently developed by NGOs in the area of Lisbon to push for the rights of migrant domestic workers. Based on document analysis and interviews with activists engaged in these initiatives, the present section documents their emergence and present action. Particular concerns and difficulties are highlighted, including the persistent distance between the NGOs at stake and trade unions.

The first of these initiatives, *Grupo de Apoio às Mulheres Imigrantes* (GAMI)¹⁸⁰, was officially launched in 2009, and its primary goal is to promote the dignification and social recognition of domestic work. Three organizations were involved in the creation of GAMI: an immigrants' organization, a women's organization, and a social science research centre. The particular immigrants' and women's organizations engaged in this initiative have a significant record of political participation in civil society; some of their projects are funded by national and international institutions, and they hold seats in public consultative bodies regarding immigrant integration and gender equality respectively. The participation of a social science research centre offered the endeavour scholarly expertise; in turn, a team of researchers was given favourable conditions to work on the subject and indeed conduct the first extensive research project on working conditions in domestic service ever done in Portugal (Blétière, 2008; Guibentif, 2011).

The GAMI envisaged the establishment of an information desk specialized in matters of domestic service, the creation of a safe job hunting service ran by voluntary staff, the organization of regular activities to inform and raise awareness among domestic employees and in society at large, and the publication of an easy-read brochure on the rights and duties in this employment sector (GAMI, 2012). The initiative has been able to cast financial support from institutions at local, national and international levels, such as the Municipality of Lisbon, the state High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue, and the European Social Fund.

The other initiative, *Trabalho Digno*¹⁸¹, is conducted solely by an immigrant women's organization founded in 2008, also formally recognized by the High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue. The main goal of this campaign is to struggle against irregularity and exploitation in employment, especially in domestic service. Self-organization in this particular sector is the key driver of the initiative from the outset; in fact, it had been one of the purposes underlying the creation of the NGO itself. Antecedents are to be found in a not-for-profit recruitment service led by a member of the organization a few years earlier with the support of two local churches. The plan to expand this service beyond the role of a placement agency or a charity network called for a different, more ambitious institutional framework: the aim was not only to facilitate the matching between workers and employers,

¹⁸⁰ 'Group of Support to the Immigrant Women', our translation.

¹⁸¹ 'Decent Work', our translation.

but also ‘to capacitate, to change the paradigm, to give tools, to empower, to reduce the vulnerability’, in the words of one of the organizers.¹⁸²

Presently, the *Trabalho Digno* initiative comprises the publication of an information leaflet, the provision of both technical and peer-to-peer support to migrant domestic employees in need, and the organization of regular activities promoting information and awareness among domestic employees. A precondition for workers to enter the recruitment system ran by the organization is to attend a workshop in which the rights of domestic employees are discussed and the importance of collective mobilization is underlined. In turn, employers entering the system must also hand in their curriculum vitae and a short record of previous experiences as employers of domestic workers, preferably with referrals. This organization has been successful in its application for support from the renowned women's fund Mama Cash, and it is actively engaged in the campaign of the International Trade Union Confederation for the ratification of the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention.

As shown by these brief descriptions, the activities across the two initiatives are remarkably similar, thereby raising the concern among activists that effort is duplicated and gains divided. Likewise, both of these initiatives germinated from the regular contact of the NGOs with immigrant women employed in domestic service. It can be said that attention to the subject emerged from their daily operation before an actual decision to address it was taken. This organic genesis means that building such projects, as well as keeping them running, is very much about construing the problem together with a growing number of domestic employees. Considering that immigrant regularization typically depends on employment status (either the applicant's or a relative's status), these issues are more often than not both regularization *and* labour issues. A typical case mentioned in the interviews is that of a foreign woman trying to obtain or renew her legal documents based on family reunification because her husband's job is formalized while her own job in domestic service is not. The reverse happens as well. Besides the regularization-labour nexus, others must be considered, such as those linking the value of domestic service employment and the value of employment in other occupations, or the legitimacy of women's claims *vis-à-vis* their male relatives' claims.

The volunteers offering daily frontline support to the immigrants and so on, well, they started realizing that there were terrible cases of exploitation in domestic service, as it

¹⁸² ‘Capacitar, mudar o paradigma, dar ferramentas, empoderar, reduzir a vulnerabilidade.’

happens in all sectors, of course, but that there was a greater absence of response in this one, right? [...] Immigrants seek assistance from the organization for two reasons mainly: either issues that have to do with regularization and all that, or labour problems, labour abuses, issues related to work. And so many times what we do is to forward these immigrants to the Labour Courts, so that... but in domestic service it was much more complicated, a number of things started to come up... much more complicated than in other sectors. [...] For instance, sometimes they would come to sort out their son's documents or something like that, and, when we told them about this project, these other issues would come up. Other times they would come to complain about these issues from the start, yes, but this was probably not what happened most often, because there is this feeling that, well, maybe nothing can be done... that, well, no, this is how it goes in this respect, we have no contract, we have no security at all, we have no protection at all.

(Sabrina)

Within one of the initiatives, an art workshop was organized in which participants were asked to draw and paint on aprons. The aprons were later put on sale by the organization to raise funds for the project; one of them was even bought by the employer of the very domestic employee who had painted it. In the other initiative, activists resorted to Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. The use of creative activities to promote bonding and collective identity assisted the participants in locating their own position within society and the labour market. The perception in both groups is that domestic employees experiencing the worse living and working conditions were absent from those activities because participation requires a degree of freedom, time and energy that they lack.

The organizers are aware of diverse sources of constraint in accessing and participating in NGO activities. Family relations matter. The same applies to expected and actual migration trajectories. In this respect, NGO volunteers and trade union officers interviewed during our fieldwork agree: organizing immigrant domestic employees is especially hard as they often resist feeling connected to their occupation or their current place of residence. Both elements come together when they do not know what to expect from their future as it depends chiefly on a man's decision or fortune. A further challenge pertains to the divide between advocating for the improvement of working conditions in domestic service and supporting the workers' prospect of moving into occupations that may be more rewarding. Organizers are familiar with immigrant women perceiving domestic service as a transitional occupation – a stepping stone in the first years that they spend abroad. These are the years when they 'go through

everything, really' (Fabiana), meaning both unsatisfactory employment and minimal living conditions.¹⁸³ Confronted with this variety of tensions, the NGOs have established a distinction between two categories of activities. There are activities in which everybody is welcome; this covers the relatives of participating domestic employees, such as their partners and children, as well as other people interested in the topic (e.g. volunteers and academic researchers). In contrast, other activities are restricted to domestic employees, privileging unity and intimacy within the group. Such freedom in space and time is difficult to conquer as participants strive between duties and expectations imposed on them as workers, migrants, spouses, and mothers.

The operation of these two initiatives naturally rests upon the assertion of common goals among domestic employees. Affirmative and identity elements are therefore key. It is important to underscore that both initiatives are led by immigrant organizations. Although they promote a claim to dignify domestic service at large and welcome native workers, their focus on immigrants women entails an unintended potential of exclusion. In the meantime, the participation of employers is also encouraged. The fact that one of the initiatives evolved from an earlier not-for-profit recruitment service facilitates this endeavour. Applicant employers are invited to visit the office of the organization and participate in the activities of the project. Just like the trade union leaders, the NGO activists also identify the silence or invisibility of employers as an obstacle to upgrading working conditions in this sector.

Daniela: Well, I think that, right now, it would be good to understand what is the perception of the people who employ about what a relationship of domestic work actually is. Understand what they think that their rights and duties in that partnership are. I think it would be important to know that. I think it would be important that there was some way to... to educate employers, too. I think that's necessary.

Fabiana: To inform, right?

Daniela: To inform, that's it. Maybe educate is not the right word, but rather inform.

The assessment made by the interviewed activists about cooperation with trade unions is far from positive (Alessandra, Fabiana & Daniela, Sabrina). General steps of approximation to the workers' movement have been taken through adhering to key festivities and

¹⁸³ 'Eu acho que se calhar só [durante] aqueles primeiros anos de entrada em Portugal é que passam mesmo por tudo, não é?, ou sujeitam-se a tudo, e depois também com o tempo, com conhecimentos, começam a conseguir, se calhar, terem mais margem de manobra.'

demonstrations on the 25th of April (commemorating the democratic revolution of 1974), the 1st of May (International Workers' Day), and the 8th of March (International Women's Day). However, contacts with trade unions during the preparation of particular events directed at domestic employees are said to have been fruitless. While occasional help in promoting activities through internal networks was offered by particular unions leaders, their institutions have not moved beyond the role of passive consultants.

This is an odd finding in view of the expected interest of unions in reaching out to organizations mobilizing workers beyond their traditional area of influence. The suggestion is that institutional dynamics and different practices, rather than any division in overarching goals, presides at the persistence of this distance. Alessandra regrets that her organization never got any response to invitations by e-mail, phone and face-to-face contact from the very same national union that participated in the drafting process of the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention. Daniela, engaged in the other NGO initiative, describes a pretty similar situation. She admits that the unions may have considered that it would be inconvenient to be associated with initiatives that they did not co-organize. 'Things of this sort were perhaps the problem', Daniela says, 'more than lack of interest'.¹⁸⁴

9.5. Commercial enterprises

Union leaders and NGO activists alike view the recent rise of companies providing services to private households with caution. As we will see below, a few of the employers interviewed during our fieldwork report recent experiences with hiring the services of a company; others consider the possibility of doing it in the future. This option is equated with handing over some of their responsibilities as employers. Still, little is known about the modes in which these commercial enterprises operate, as well as their impact on work contents and power dynamics. Our interviews with the managers of 15 existing companies in the area of Lisbon permit an exploratory examination of their trajectory and strategy. The experiences and viewpoints of company managers are thus brought into the discussion of how external actors attempt to mediate and transform domestic service employment relationships. Keeping in line

¹⁸⁴ 'não sei se aquilo é falta de interesse pela temática da parte deles, ou se foi ali uma questão, pronto, das entidades que estavam ali em causa, de eles não se quererem associar muito a um projecto que não era deles, não sei se houve assim mais essas vertentes do que falta de interesse.'

with the previous sections, we will first describe the profile and upsurge of these companies. Afterwards, we discuss some aspects of their daily operation, including the efforts to consolidate the triad consisting of company, customer and worker.

With regard to the range of services provided, three types of companies can be distinguished. First, there are those providing housework service only, such as cleaning and laundry. Second, there are those providing direct care only, with elderly people as the most common recipients. Companies of this type offer a variety of other services such as cleaning, laundry and cooking, but exclusively when these activities are directed at ensuring the well-being of a dependent individual. Third, there are companies selling both housework service and direct care. Although the managers of this last type of companies favour a broad approach to the marketization of household chores, they insist on the importance of keeping a clear understanding of the limits of each service – especially, the divide between housecleaning and domiciliary care – as they entail different tasks, skills, and costs. Indeed, they report being often confronted with customers who maintain a view of domestic service according to which a single individual is expected to clean, provide direct care and fulfil any other household needs without a strict job definition at the outset (concurring with our findings in Chapter 7).

Also common is the gradual extension of the company activity to cover neighbouring services. Companies specialized in eldercare sell and rent out technical equipment to improve the life quality of dependent individuals. Companies specialized in housecleaning now advertise their services to business offices and residential condominiums too. The variety of additional services suggests a considerable potential of expansion and experimentalism. Private vehicle driving, gardening, beauty and aesthetics, image consulting, pet care, legal advice, senior sitting, or medical and psychological support are some illustrations. Interviews with managers also suggest a consistent trend toward a growing acknowledgement of diversity in demand. In particular, several respondents declare that demand for housecleaning and laundry decreased since their venture was set up, while demand for secondary services – medical support, accompanying elderly individuals in leisure activities, image consulting, or pet care – increased (Eduarda, Luís, Mariana). Significant is the account of a woman manager whose business goal is to satisfy a wide range of requests from customers by finding the most adequate worker to each situation:

What people seek the most nowadays is not traditional domestic service, if you like. Perhaps in that case they resort to specialized cleaning companies, if you like. Essentially

what remains from that is 'live-in' domestic employees to look after babies or the elderly. [...] You see, the market is so... diversified. There are companies for everything now. There are companies for gardening, there are companies for vehicle driving... there are companies for nearly everything, so people end up going to the specialist and not so much to my company.

(Carla)

Among the 15 companies under examination, six are licensed by state authorities as a *Serviço de Apoio Domiciliário* ('Domiciliary Support Service', our translation). In two others, managers are currently preparing their application to obtain this status. The provision of domiciliary care by commercial enterprises has been explicitly covered by legislation on the public licensing of social services since 1997.¹⁸⁵ Holding this specific license is beneficial in that not only service quality is certified, but also a fraction of the service cost may be deducted by customers from their yearly income tax. In addition, individuals receiving welfare benefits for the purpose of domiciliary care must resort to a licensed company. This system, which applies to both for-profit and third-sector organizations, foresees the provision of a range of assistance tasks to individuals who are unable to undertake an autonomous daily routine, such as personal hygiene, housework, cooking, escorting to the outside, and shopping. It is important to underline that these services qualify for tax credit only when the recipient is a dependent person, therefore excluding the same services when provided to households in a different situation.

The licensing procedure is composed of several steps in which the company shall prove that it fulfils a number of conditions.¹⁸⁶ These include the existence of particular facilities in the company's head office, the establishment of a detailed care plan with every care recipient, and technical supervision by credentialed professionals (social workers, nurses, or similar). However, managers and frontline care workers are not required any specific education or training. Over the years, a growing number of guidebooks, handbooks and written forms has been published by social security authorities to support and promote the standardization of practices across organizations operating in this field. Distinct reasons explain why a number of companies remain uncovered by the licensing system. Some of them are specialized in cleaning or operate as placement agencies, and they are therefore withdrawn from the

¹⁸⁵ Law-Decree 133-A/1997, replacing the Law-Decree 30/1989.

¹⁸⁶ Law-Decree 99/2011.

domiciliary care business (Aurélia, Carla, Domingos, Mariana, Susana & Miguel). Insufficient financial resources may also be a key reason for not pursuing the license, since fulfilling the necessary legal requirements would require substantial construction works in the company's head office and recruiting additional qualified personnel (Cláudia, Sofia & Patrícia).

When and how were these 15 companies study set up? To start with, they officially took off between 1997 and 2011. Not more than two began operating before 2002 (Mariana, Mário), and three began operating after 2010 (Carla, Eduarda, Sofia & Patrícia). According to key informants and managers themselves, this is suggestive of the overall scenario regarding commercial entrepreneurship in this sector in Lisbon. Activity remained minimal until as late as the turn of the century, and post-2008 economic recession has been accompanied with both the closure of some companies and the appearance of new ones. In four cases, the company was created and first owned by a single person (a men in two of them, a women in the other two). In all of the remaining cases, the company was created by people who knew each other fairly well in advance – two or more friends in six cases, and a married couple in three other. Although accumulating daily management tasks and a full-time job elsewhere is a common feature of the early activity period, it only subsists in three of the companies examined. This reflects an intense volume of work put upon managers, as well as positive prospects to secure their own income from business revenue.

Motivations to set up the business are entwined with substantial difference in company size and the initial context of operation. Juxtaposing the following two cases is informative. In the first case (Aurélia), a company specialized in housecleaning was set up in 2006 by two women friends who were unemployed at that time. They both had experience in social service work in third-sector organizations and lived in the same city area, a combination of elements offering them privileged contacts with people who would later become either workers or customers. After a failed application to state support for the creation of self-employment, they decided to advance by cutting down expenses as much as possible. The generosity of an acquaintance with some practice in web design rendered the making of a company's website costless, and the head office occupies two rooms in one of the owners' private residence. In the second case (Pedro), a man who had worked for 15 years in the area of computer science decided to invest in a franchise of an international brand of domiciliary care. The selection of this particular sector is linked to his knowledge of a number of friends and relatives who were

experiencing difficulties in arranging affordable quality care to elderly in their family. The company began operating in 2004, and it is currently licensed under the official system of domiciliary care. Differently than in the former example, this company has been successful in maintaining steady marginal profits, and the number of customers as well as investment partners expanded over time. Services such as the production of graphic materials are outsourced to specialized companies.

None of the individuals who created or currently run the companies has any personal experience as a paid domestic worker, either in cleaning or in domiciliary care. Questioned about their knowledge of the trade at the outset, they refer to particular elements of their formal education trajectory (university degrees in nursing, social work or psychology) or to personal experiences as the employers of a domestic workers. In one case (Sofia & Patrícia), the company grew from a project that two recently graduated women submitted to a publicly funded programme to support entrepreneurial women. Victorious result meant that they were offered a training course in business management, a start-up fund of 5 thousand euros, and a room in an office building in the city centre. When the decision to invest in a business preceded the selection of this particular sector, entrepreneurs stress the importance of past experiences in dealing with housework and child or eldercare responsibilities within their own families.

Concerning formal status, companies are classified as either service providers or placement agencies. Companies operating as placement agencies are singular insofar as the service that they provide is not really cleaning, care or any other household service, but rather the selection and recruitment of personnel to perform those very tasks. In other words, these companies mediate and charge only the first contact between customers and workers, and they are excluded from the contractual relationship that may eventually tie the two parties. Nevertheless, a closer look into contractual practices demonstrates that companies operating as service providers are not as different as could be expected, because their arrangement with frontline workers is overwhelmingly that of independent contractors. This means that in legal terms workers provide their own services to the company rather than become its employees, even when they provide the same exact services to the same company (and even to the same household) over a large number of years. This way, workers are covered by the law regulating self-employment. In particular, payroll tax does not apply, and settling income tax, social security contributions and insurance against accidents at work are the worker's responsibility.

Only two of these 15 companies currently employ frontline workers, and even then contracts are fixed term and an exceptional practice – one and two employees respectively (Marco, Susana & Miguel).

Service provision contracts (as opposed to employment contracts) with frontline workers are described by some respondent managers as the most adequate arrangement to deal with volatile demand and unexpected risks of service termination. It is significant that even when written terms require customers to observe a pre-notification period of two or four weeks to terminate the service purchase, managers assert that they generally accept to do away with such condition. Uncertainty is amplified by the centrality of personal bonds and profiles in this occupation. Conflicts and misunderstandings in the customer-worker relationship are a common problem demanding the intervention of managers, which is unsurprisingly directed at keeping the customer; replacing the worker is often the chosen solution. Managers arguing along this line maintain that service provision contracts are the arrangement preferred by most of the workers themselves, because it allows them to reap higher net incomes and preserve a greater degree of freedom to cease collaboration with the company or request a change in their work agenda.

Overall, the notion of household service workers as self-employees is so widespread that they are frequently described by managers as demanding work from the company. In this view, the position of the company approximates that of a broker as it performs almost symmetrical roles vis-à-vis workers and customers. One respondent interestingly commented on how difficult it is to struggle with a number of work applicants that far exceeds the business volume of her company (Mariana). In a lyrical description, she equates most days at her office with a public welfare service where unemployed people accumulate in the hope of receiving benefits against poverty. If applicants call her first on the phone, she must often dissuade them from visiting the office by stressing that ‘they will be wasting time and money in the public transports’. The head office of this particular company includes two separate waiting rooms to prevent potential customers and work applicants from sharing the same physical space as they wait for their appointment with the company staff. Entrepreneurial behaviour by workers themselves is both a source of content and caution. They are expected to be energetic and responsible, but their ‘entrepreneurship’ can also lead them to compete with the company by seeking direct agreements with customers.

Despite difference in size and profile across companies, the interviewed managers express a number of common goals regarding institutional change and policy reform. First, the state should further facilitate the pursuit of solutions to family needs in the private market. One of the propositions is the adoption of a social security voucher so that families can opt between public or private provision of direct care. Another proposition is the implementation of a general tax credit for household services regardless of the health condition of customers. Also consensual is the claim that state authorities should increase their efforts in combating undeclared work and illegal brokerage activity in this sector. Last, public investment in the education of household service workers is mentioned by a few women managers (Aurélia, Carla, Sofia & Patrícia).

Tânia, one of the domestic employees interviewed during the fieldwork, worked for a housecleaning company (incidentally, one that is not included in our empirical examination) during six months in 2011. She felt ‘motivated’ and ‘enthusiastic’ at work, and after three months on the job she became a ‘team leader’.¹⁸⁷ She underscores that, in comparison with the usual domestic worker's experience, working for the company was more demanding and more intensive. It was also paid considerably worse: as a full-time team leader, her gross wage was not higher than 610 Euros per month, approximately 3.80 Euros per hour, while customers would pay the company between 18 and 24 Euros per each hour of service performed. However, cleaning the houses in collaboration with a colleague made it more satisfactory. Tânia also notes that it was pleasant not to handle business directly with the household members, as this kept authority abuse and class asymmetry at bay. A few years earlier, Rute, another interviewed employee, had a try at setting up a placement agency herself. She had already recommended several friends to work for acquaintances of her full-time employer at that time, and it was precisely this employer who suggested her the launching of a formal business. The enterprise would last for one year only, as the employers seeking Rute's placement service constantly failed to pay the agreed commission fee.

Among the interviewed employers, we find other experiences of contact with commercial enterprises operating in this sector. Nazaré once hired a domestic employee through a formal placement agency (one of those included in our empirical examination). The company made a pre-selection of three applicants for the job, and Nazaré was then able to choose which one to recruit. In her view, this type of service ‘makes perfect sense’ because it enhances ‘efficiency

¹⁸⁷ ‘a motivação, o entusiasmo [...] chefe de equipa.’

and security both for us and for them’ – us meaning employers and them meaning employees. Carmen also makes a positive assessment of her experience when she hired the services of a domiciliary care company to care for an elderly relative. The presence of a formal mediator simplified her own task as an employer. ‘If the employee is not competent for the service, you just have to call the company and tell them’, Carmen says, ‘and the company will send in another one’. She nonetheless thinks that paying ‘the enormous amount of money’ charged by companies is only worthwhile ‘for exceptional situations of great responsibility’, such as caring for a dependent elderly, and not ‘for the case of normal housework routine’.¹⁸⁸

Other interviewed employers have resorted to housecleaning companies in the past (Clotilde, Marília, Teodora). Teodora did it in a period when she did not have any domestic employee. She recalls asking the company to make sure that three specific things at her home were properly cleaned – cupboards, windows and balconies. The company however performed ‘a general cleaning’ and Teodora was not happy in the end as ‘none of the things that I asked them was in a perfect state’.¹⁸⁹ She is considering seeking the services of another company next time. Differently, Marília was pretty satisfied with the housecleaning service that she regularly hired until the company informed her that service would have to be suspended. The company manager told her that her home was too untidy for the workers to do their job within the assigned number of hours. Marília herself found such position to be ‘reasonable’, considering that her three children ‘are really very messy’. ‘When the company resigned’, she was left with ‘a feeling of huge humiliation’.¹⁹⁰

9.6. Final remarks

The exploratory undertaking presiding at this chapter opens up new lanes to discuss dispute and alliance in domestic service employment relationships. Whereas the previous chapters are

¹⁸⁸ ‘E eu acho que faz todo o sentido este tipo de empresa: torna o trabalho mais eficiente e mais seguro, quer para quem nós, quer para elas’; ‘a empregada não é competente para o serviço, tu só tens que telefonar para a empresa e dizer [...] e pronto, a empresa manda outra. Acho que, para situações excepcionais de grande responsabilidade... acho que sim. [...] Agora, no caso de rotina de uma casa normal, eu vou sempre preferir arriscar e, mesmo que não goste, ter que despedir e procurar outra do que estar a pagar aquele balúrdio.’

¹⁸⁹ ‘uma limpeza geral [...] mas depois nenhuma delas ficou muito perfeita, estás a ver?’

¹⁹⁰ ‘são mesmo muito desarrumados [...] Quando a empresa se despediu... foi uma sensação de grande humilhação.’

confined to the experiences and direct bonds of employees and employers, our lens has now been enlarged to cover a number of organizations seeking to mediate and transform those very employee-employer relationships. Differently than what happens in other sectors of employment characterized by low wages and little educational credentials, the suggestion is that formal self-organization among either domestic employees or their employers remains minimal. The trade unions, NGOs and commercial enterprises described above do not seem to bear an extensive impact on the actual operation of the sector, at least for the time being; what these organizations do bring about is a set of relevant practices and viewpoints ensuing from their daily contact with the sector. They are bound to both mediate and construct interests, and consequences thereby unravel to the emergence or erosion of collective voice. The qualitative methodology adopted here is useful to grasp internal negotiation and move beyond the official discourse of top representatives. A focus on dynamics, means and strategies – rather than outcomes – helps identify what issues are at stake and what issues remain in the penumbra to either local actors or scholarship on the subject (Rigby et al, 1999; Bradley, 1999).

To be sure, the notion that employment relationships in this sector are unmediated – a notion that employees and employers interviewed during the fieldwork often subscribe to – is not to be taken at face value without empirical questioning. One particular source of mediation has existed for a long time now: national law. The capability of the law to regulate practices on the ground is limited though. In their examination of the perceptions and functions of various ‘spaces of illegality’ in the employment of immigrants in the United Kingdom, Ruhs and Anderson (2010) conceptualise three ideal-typical levels of compliance. Besides the orthodox categories of compliance (i.e. complete fulfilment of administrative requirements) and non-compliance (i.e. unlawful recruitment of unauthorised residents), these authors draw attention to arrangements of ‘semi-compliance’ – in their study, this refers chiefly to situations in which legally resident immigrants are employed to work in violation of some employment regulations. The ensuing argument is that semi-compliance constitutes a relevant and contested space of (il)legality serving important functions, such as economic benefit maximization for both parties and the prevention of state sanction for violating immigration law (Ruhs & Anderson, 2010: 207). In light of our own findings, this conceptual framework holds rather well provided it is expanded to comprehend native workers as well. As employers seek to reduce labour costs, recruiting a native worker in breach of existing labour regulation – notably social security contributions and payroll and income taxes – is a manner to negotiate and minimise irregularity.

Three possible arguments for the resilience of informality in domestic service have been discussed. One of them, based on the lack of knowledge about the law by employees or employers, is partially discarded for being exceptional in empirical context. Instead, intense flows of knowledge on rights and duties are uncovered. What is more, we find extended intragroup flows of information (that is, between employees or between employers) as much as intergroup flows (from employees to employers and vice-versa). The remaining two arguments are shown to be plausible; they are also strongly interconnected, as employer-employee agreements of convenience at the micro level are often driven by the logics of oppression and despair at the societal level. The observation that some employees fail to enjoy the total length of yearly holidays to which they are legally entitled, even when they are paid holiday wage and allowance, is a striking example of the multiple negotiations underway. The changing position of a number of employees and employers within regulatory frameworks over time – for instance, alternating between compliant and uncompliant relationships concerning social security – is a result of more or less strategic choices reinforcing an understanding of domestic service as something other than conventional wage work.

In historical hindsight, we see that the mounting social tensions around the paternalistic foundations of this type of labour relationship (Brasão, 2010) was followed by a gradual approximation of the rights of domestic employees to those of regular wage earners. In the meantime, market dynamics went on to exert a considerable pressure to exclude domestic employees from the applicable regulation. Today, this pressure is somewhat mingled with the legal configuration and rhetoric of the self-employed worker, one of the greatest obstacles to the social recognition and self-organization of occupational groups in times of economic recession and neoliberal policymaking (Rigby et al, 1999; Stiglitz, 2003; Supiot, 2010). With ‘social dialogue closed for maintenance’, as put by one of the union leaders interviewed in our study, domestic employees are likely to receive more encouraging signs from international bodies such as the ILO.¹⁹¹ While emancipation can hardly be provided by law itself, social movements and organizations can resort to law as a stepping stone to advance their interests and build alternative ways of organizing economic and social life (Santos, 2002, 2006).

The limited collective representation of domestic employees in Portugal sheds an ambiguous light on a national trade union movement that has been described as plural and fragmented

¹⁹¹ ‘a gente até tinha um diálogo social, bom ou mau, mas tínhamos, e agora fechou; está fechado; fechou para obras e está extremamente difícil.’

(Cerqueira, 2004). Pluralism is certainly not synonym with diversity or extensive coverage. In their relationship as competitors, distinct trade unions produce a particular nexus rather than complement one another perfectly. Domestic employees are in a difficult position in this respect as they have not been able to fit into any of the two dominant visions. Hyman's (2001) typology of identity models in European trade unionism is useful to understand this conundrum. On the one hand, the unions subscribing to a discourse of anti-capitalist mobilization still question the very existence of domestic service, perceiving it as an inherently subordinate occupation in terms that are similar to those presented by Marx (2010 [1867]: 293). On the other hand, the unions favouring the paradigm of social cohesion have not welcomed the subject any more cheerfully: as they tend to be dominated by occupational groups with whiter collars and higher educational credentials, they are especially concerned with domestic service as a resource available to middle-class individuals in their work-family balance. At this juncture, our findings confirm the case of domestic service as an instantiation of persisting ruptures within the workers' movement based on gender and ethnicity (Bradley, 1999; Munro, 1999; Ebbinghaus & Visser, 2000; Penninx & Roosblad, 2000; Cerqueira, 2009; Van Walsum, 2011).

In close association with gender and ethnic inequality, typical arguments for little unionization and collective action hold for paid domestic workers – less accessible workplaces, low formal education, extended part-time and precarious work, limited job attachment. However, they can be understood as lingering challenges and weaknesses of organized action rather than inevitable problems (Munro, 1999: 13-4). It has become commonplace to hear from union officers that workers resort to trade unions only when they are confronted with individual problems and do not stay around to organize or support collective initiatives (Kolarova & Peixoto, 2009: 89; confirmed in our fieldwork). This vision subscribes to a normative divide between individual and class interests. Empirically though, it is detectable that defending one's individual rights as a worker can also be about defending class interests, especially in occupations in which informal, cultural and emotional elements are so apparent. The symbolic construction of domestic service as self-employment draws further inspiration from the silencing of the tool most commonly used by unions: collective bargaining.

While unions may pass out the message that working conditions in this sector are a public issue rather than a political one, the NGO-led initiatives examined are more prone to bring back the paradigm of class struggle. Responding to a longstanding difficulty in advancing

domestic workers' claims through national-level industrial relations or parliamentary action, these organizations emerge as lighthouse keepers for migrant women 'navigating cultural and economic marginalities' (Gunewardena & Kingsolver, 2007), postulating a shift from 'negotiation within limits' to 'reshaping limits' (Burawoy, 1991: 286). Through their holistic approach to the vulnerability of migrant women and their positive response to the salience – sometimes avalanche – of emotional elements, they are in a better position to lead the 'transformation of domestic work itself from unskilled to skilled, from humiliating to respectable, from minimum wage to its double, from employer-controlled to worker-controlled, from «dirty» work to «clean»' (Salzinger, 1991: 158). They are also pushed into the muddy ground of politics, that in which 'spokespersons, being granted a monopoly over the legitimate political expression of the will of a collective, speak not only in favor of those whom they represent but also very often in their place' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 147). This fluid motion between agents of mobilization and producers of policy advice means that they can become strategic players just as they are experimental ones.

Developments among employers are taking place too. The increasing interest of a national employers' confederation on the subject and the rise of commercial enterprises operating in this sector are findings not to be neglected. Our research shows that the growth of these companies is closely related to state incentives to both entrepreneurship and domiciliary care provision. In particular, the public licensing system of domiciliary care entails a number of problematic implications for working conditions: requirements regarding workers' training are minimal, service prices and wages are unregulated, and effective institutions able to ensure information-sharing on the ground are still to be created at the present time.

Our empirical evidence challenges the expectation that entrepreneurship allows workers to gain autonomy and claim ownership of the metier. Instead, we find significant flows of investment capital associated with top-down flexible and precarious labour contracting, as uncovered in other countries including France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands (Devetter & Rousseau, 2009; Jany-Catrice, 2010; Tomei, 2011; Van Walsum, 2011). Start-up capital, the ability to deal with administrative paperwork, and expanded networking with customers are the standard practical conditions to set up a business in the market of household services, and they contribute to isomorphism in the profile of entrepreneurs. For instance, the field of education varies across the founders of the 15 companies under examination, but only in one case do they lack a university degree. Against such homogeneity, it is important to

underscore the coexistence of large-scale investment and micro-enterprises, profit-seeking and professional expertise motivations, or complex hierarchical structures and family business conduction.

The managers interviewed during our fieldwork find themselves treading a narrow line in more than one respect. They seek to valorise their own role through promoting a positive view of entrepreneurship in domestic service and yet restrain the entrepreneurial attempts of workers to engage in direct employment agreements with customers (Romero, 1992). They recruit workers under the regime of independent contractors and yet advocate formalizing the sector (Chen, 2011). Nevertheless, a more accurate depiction of the current-day landscape may be that commercial enterprises are pursuing the instrumental goals of employers as they seek the most beneficial balance between expenses and profits, between low pay and efficiency, between short-term and long-term success. The growth of market competition in the sector favours a corporate focus on survival. From a perspective of industrial relations, the missing element is not a change of behaviour from company managers – as if this constituted a sort of moral dictate – but rather the increment of organization and representation among the workers recruited to perform the tasks demanded by private households.

While trade unions may express satisfaction at the regulatory framework in place, the NGOs and commercial enterprises considered in this chapter share an interest in approaching the political power to campaign for institutional change. Unsurprisingly, their aims differ. Companies advocate improved conditions for private households to seek solutions for their domestic work needs through the market. NGOs envisage advancements in the workers' self-organization, empowerment, and working conditions. Still, both types of organization are engaged in drawing public attention to the subject of domestic service. They agree on the importance of tackling informality, even if for different reasons – companies being primarily concerned with the competition of lower labour costs in the informal sector, NGOs with the particular vulnerability of undocumented immigrant workers. They show that not everything that matters in domestic service employment relationships today is contained in the personalized bond between two individuals playing the role of employee and employer, an issue that will be paid special attention in the following and concluding chapter.

Conclusions: dispute and alliance at the heart of the affair

10.1. Overthrowing invisibility

One of the starting points of our research project, as highlighted in Chapter 1, has been the invisibility of paid domestic work in contemporary society. By now, it is apparent that such invisibility is contested and political – much more than a result of any objective feature of the occupation. The fact that domestic service is largely performed by women (often women with little formal education or migrant background) behind the walls of private households can be said to draw the experiences and concerns of these employees away from the public eye. However, their activity is also much *more* visible than other categories of work, such as those carried out at factories in remote locations or at corporate offices dealing with recent and complex business areas. In empirical context, nearly everyone is one way or another familiar with the tasks performed by domestic employees. In a country where the volume of domestic service is relatively large, as observed for the case of Portugal (Chapters 2 and 6), an extended number of people is expected to be directly acquainted with someone who is employed as a domestic worker or someone who hires a domestic worker.

Therefore, the idea that domestic employees are in a vulnerable position because few people care about them or about their activity sector is as plausible as the idea that this happens because everybody has something at stake when it comes to changing the written or unwritten dispositions that regulate domestic service. The attention paid to this activity sector in the very initial attempts to adopt extensive national legislation on employment relations (Chapter 5) is instructive. It can not be said that political actors – then or in later periods – have failed to acknowledge the relevance of domestic service. To the contrary, this sector was ascribed explicit and exceptional configurations *vis-à-vis* standard wage labour, some of which are still manifest in legal documents and everyday interaction today. As shown throughout this

dissertation, the full recognition of domestic employees as workers is far from a marginal issue in contemporary society: it is entwined with broader structural matters in the distribution of material and symbolic resources, up to a point in which it is impossible to speak about this occupation without calling into question the patterns of class inequality, the undervaluation of women's work, the reform of public policies, or the economic dislocation of people within and across countries.

The moment has come to summarize how our findings shed a clearer light on the structuration of domestic service employment relationships. We proceed in three steps. First, we resort to the analytical framework presented in Chapter 3 to develop a global interpretation of our empirical results. Negotiation, reorganization and intermediation are presented as concomitant processes of structuration. Second, our attention turns to crucial ongoing alliances and disputes in the sector, stressing that any systemic transformation in the conditions under which this type of work is performed is related to success or failure in the incorporation of domestic employees in collective movements based on class, gender, or ethnic belonging. Drawing on a dynamic view of practices and behaviours, a couple of existing threats to the delicate equilibrium between actors on the ground are discussed. Third, we point out a number of issues demanding the attention of scholars and policy-makers in the near future.

10.2. The complex structuration of domestic service employment relationships

Our discussion of previous research in Chapters 2 and 3 suggests that the existing scholarship on paid domestic work is especially attentive to the 'special relationship' (Wall & Nunes, 2010: 403) forged between domestic employees and their employers. Trust, personalization and mutual dependency have been thoroughly documented as sources of conflict and solidarity. This approach to the subject entails a particular risk though: domestic service is presumed to be based on a direct and private arrangement between a limited number of actors, typically two women with distinct class or ethnic backgrounds. This often coincides with the view held by the two women at stake, as corroborated in our fieldwork. However, as we move forward in the construction of meaning around their experience and life course, we are bound to accept that other explanations, perhaps more useful, emerge far from the site of observation (Bourdieu et al, 1999). Individual women are acting on their own only insofar as they are left to struggle within the bubble of subordination and work overload underpinning demand and

supply in this activity sector. We thus propose a distinct approach, one in which relevant actors are multiple and diverse, and the boundaries of action are wide and considerably porous.

In other words, the very appearance of domestic service employment relationships as the outcome of personalized agreements is a product – and a producer – of the resilience of class, gender and ethnic stratification. Once the notion of domestic service as a *special* or *marginal* sector is discarded, it follows that the empirical analysis of practices in this sector should be put into the frame of economic structures at large. This is also necessary to understand how disputes at the micro level are more often than not an instantiation of collective struggles with regard to the distribution of material and symbolic resources. The official statistics considered in Chapter 6 show that the number of individuals employed in cleaning and care services in the EU-15 increased considerably over the first decade of the 21st century. The proportion of women in paid employment is greater than it was ten or fifteen years ago; but they are also more often employed in these particular occupations, especially in the countries of Southern Europe. Our examination of large-scale data available for Portugal corroborates the coexistence of growth in jobs located at both the upper and lower strata of reward and qualification (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Ferreira, 1999; Sassen, 2007). In what may seem paradoxical to a positivistic theory on the modernization of domestic service, variation in the volume of the sector has been accompanied with an overall increase of work intensity and informality.

Countervailing the emphasis given by earlier studies to immigrant employees and informal work, our empirical research covers native employees and formal work just as well. Fieldwork has been conducted on the basis of employment sector and geographic location; global care chains are taken as an important analytical tool rather than an object of study *per se*. This is key to grasp domestic service as encompassing heterogeneous and segmented working conditions, in particular around the degree of commodification of practices and expectations. In line with a study carried out in the same urban area by Guerreiro (2000), the picture emerging is one of diversity and complementarity. Any attempt to extract a general definition on the profile or experience of domestic employees is of little use here. The juxtaposition of our own findings with those of recent studies on contemporary domestic service in Portugal (Wall & Nunes, 2010; Guibentif, 2011; Baptista, 2011) uncovers an employment sector that is broad enough to include both poor dead-end working conditions

and individual trajectories of relative improvement. This is precisely the landscape in which employment relationships are negotiated.

Negotiation occurs at several levels simultaneously. At the micro level, employees and employers resort to mechanisms of voice and exit in the light of their personal resources and options (Hirschman, 1970). In our Chapters 7 and 8, we see how the empirical context of domestic service relationships tends to render voice and exit an either-or type of choice. Declared dissatisfaction at the workplace is problematic to the continuity of the relationship, especially if the incumbencies of the employee are understood by both parties as including direct care provision and emotional exchange. While some employees seek autonomy and dignity at work by evading emotional attachment, others seek the very same things by venturing into the muddy waters of emotional attachment. At the macro level, domestic service remains key to conceal lingering gender asymmetry in double-breadwinner households (Perista, 2002; Crompton, 2006; Casaca, 2010; Ambrosini, 2012). Upgrading working conditions through regulation and public debate has been pointedly depoliticized. The challenges posed to organizations engaged with the sector at the meso level such as trade unions, immigrant NGOs and commercial enterprises often seem to exceed their current capabilities. In-country and international migration flows respond to the gap of collective action on domestic work, which is construed in empirical settings as ‘house life’ or ‘help’ – an efficient way of naturalizing and devaluing the immaterial demands placed upon domestic employees and women at large.

Negotiation coexists with a qualitative change in domestic service employment relationships over time. Embedded in structural developments as it is, this change is certainly not radical; in fact, it seems more adequate to conceptualize it as a continuous process of reorganization. The sector is reorganized through the daily negotiation of the boundaries of work (Lan, 2003), as well as through ongoing labour market and migration dynamics. The expected transition of domestic service from a paternalistic model to a commodified model – one could say, from a class status to an employment status – remains under dispute. In this dyad of condition and occupation, the women engaged with one another as employees or employers do not break away from all of the historical elements of patriarchal rule. Men are still largely absent from the picture; immigrant women still take up many of the least desired positions, particularly in ‘live-in’ direct care; symbolic hierarchy and emotional hostage linger on. Nevertheless, the efforts of domestic employees to transform the rules of the game – both individually and

through collective organization – have multiplied and gained strength. The shift from a context of recruitment at the national scale to a global scale (Baptista, 2011) is better understood as a partial and gradual process. Recruitment on the basis of ethnicity or nationality is instrumental to reduce labour costs (Catarino & Oso, 2000; Wall & Nunes, 2010), but this happens in a more nuanced manner than might be expected. While immigrant women are granted poorer working conditions in important respects such as wages and working hours, they are more resistant to work under informal employment arrangements whenever this jeopardizes obtaining or renewing their residence permit.

We thus find domestic service in an ambiguous, almost contradictory position. On the one hand, it is a stronghold which capitalistic logics have not yet penetrated completely. On the other, it provides a wide arena for multiple forms of exploitation. Quantifying or qualifying the work performed by domestic employees is still especially difficult. Employers follow cost-benefit considerations only to a certain extent; emotions and class status are often decisive. While recruitment is not based on the pursuit of a surplus value above all things, none of the parties is able to establish a standard way to measure – and sometimes not even define – the work that is bought and sold. The broader economic recession experienced since 2008 seems to favour the reorganization of domestic service. As traditional forms of demand decrease, employers are encouraged to push for flexible and irregular modalities.

Negotiation and reorganization are less unmediated than one could think at first sight. Various channels and sources of intermediation have been exposed in our research, most notably informal networks providing a substantial degree of security and stability to both employers and employees (Chapters 7 and 8) and institutional representatives that develop and promote particular views on domestic service and the working conditions under which it is performed (Chapter 9). The representatives of employees or employers are part of this story, even if their role has been often characterized by silence and little intervention. Intermediators are expected to introduce novel public interests and viewpoints, while our study also shows that they come up as strategic representatives of either employees or employers.

Be it by the action of trade unions, NGOs or commercial enterprises, the rights and duties in domestic service employment relationships are at stake – as much as the societal distribution of responsibilities concerning this sector. The emergence of formal organizations in the landscape offers opportunities to the consolidation of collective voice and, in the long run, even the development of industrial relations in a modality similar to the one that exists for

other occupations. These can also contribute to the institutionalization of hierarchy at the workplace. Employees or employers treading an individual trajectory that they consider to be successful, or those who are engaged with each other in terms of loyalty and alliance, are likely to do without the possibilities of collective organization. In any case, significant efforts toward legal reform, self-organization and industrialization are presently underway, suggesting that in the near future the institutional framework for the debate of working conditions in domestic service may be quite different from what it has been so far.

10.3. Emergent threats to the affair

Domestic service is located at the heart of the affair that articulates – and conceals the tensions between – public and private issues, male and female roles, working class and middle-class households and lifestyles, native and immigrant workers. At the same time, the dynamic quality of employment relationships has been repeatedly asserted throughout this dissertation. Every individual or collective advancement is expected to arouse a response; every alliance is expected to build on a dispute; and all that we find in fieldwork may be changing as it goes, even if it changes only to ensure social stability or inertia (Giddens, 1993; Wallerstein, 1995). While documenting the actual state of things, researchers also collect signs of subtle, incomplete developments. These are key to what Santos (2002: 261) defines as a ‘sociology of emergences’, that in which the ‘task is not so much to identify new totalities, or to adopt other meanings for social transformation, as to propose new ways of thinking those totalities and conceiving those meanings’. In this section, we dwell on two particular elements that threaten to disturb the delicate equilibrium underlying contemporary domestic service. These emergent threats, so to speak, can be read as pushing for the transformation of the systemic affair at stake.

The first of them pertains to the unequal share of gains and losses from broader developments in society and economy. As observed in earlier studies conducted in Portugal, the increasing participation of women in paid employment from the mid-decades of the 20th century onwards has coexisted with substantial degrees of labour market segmentation and class asymmetry (Wall & Amâncio, 2007; Torres, 2008; Casaca, 2009, 2012a; Távora, 2012; for an European perspective, see Bettio & Verashchagina, 2009). The working class is also confronted with labour market stratification along gendered lines of nationality and migrant status (Baganha,

1998; Peixoto et al, 2006; Casaca & Peixoto, 2010), and considerable ethnic segmentation is found within the very sector of domestic service. The resultant ‘paradox’ in the situation of women (Ferreira, 1999) is apparent in the development of contextual alliances between domestic employees and their employers, even if the content and implications of those alliances vary depending on whether they build on subsistence, working conditions, or social mobility concerns. The use of trust and control to ensure inter-class harmony is simultaneous with accounts of shared – however unequal – advancements in social and economic structures, the most eloquent example being provided by the cases in which both women recognize that their ‘autonomy’ (in particular *vis-à-vis* their male partners) would not be possible were it not for the ‘support’ provided by the other one. This support can be expressed in pecuniary or emotional forms, and it is likely to reinforce a personalized understanding of the employment relationship by both parties.

Empirically as much as theoretically, domestic employees remain a crucial piece in the organization of contemporary social life. They are the ‘marginal insiders’, as written by Lan (2003). Their daily work secures not only the lifestyle of affluent or middle-class employers (Anderson, 2000), but also the subsistence of their own families and communities. Even when employment as a domestic worker is expected at first to offer only a marginal complement to the employee's household income, it can later become the key or sole source of household income, especially as their partners and children face rising risks of unemployment and precariousness. This development does not necessarily overthrow the symbolic construction of domestic service as a marginal, complementary type of work, but it does contribute to expose its centrality in the eyes of employees themselves. What some of them once thought to be a transitory condition in their existence as women from a low social stratum turns out to be more and more a continuous occupation over their life course. In this sense, it is the very socioeconomic centrality of the occupation that threatens the continuation of the affair.

The second emergent threat consists in the multiplication of public and political positions on what is occurring in this activity sector. An overall rise of recognition and awareness to the experiences of domestic employees may still seem distant and improbable, but one should not neglect relevant developments in this regard. Once it is accepted that domestic employees ensure a great deal of direct and indirect care needs in present-day societies, the pending question is *who cares for the domestic employees* – if only among those advocating organized resistance to push for gender equality or workers' empowerment. While intellectuals and top-

level representatives may keep themselves busy with debating whether domestic service is a job like any other or an inherently subordinate social condition, their conclusions do not appear to be of much use to the actual domestic employees struggling to get by. Effective political action, be it in representation of employees or employers, is coming from other sites of intervention such as the ILO, immigrant NGOs, or commercial enterprises operating in the sector. The increasing prominence of eldercare demands in this sector, especially considering the pressures of demographic ageing and shrinking public services, is also significant. Elderly and disabled people, either as employers or care recipients, are more likely to be organised (through patient associations or advocacy groups) than the regular domestic service ‘consumer’. Developments in this regard may in the future add complexity to the political discussion.

To be sure, this does not mean that a solution has been found to the everlasting debate on the *social acceptability* of domestic service. Libertarian thought still envisages the abolishment of domestic service, or at least the abolishment of its longstanding markers of gender, class and ethnic oppression; neoliberal thought still envisages the pacification of domestic employees as low-wage workers in more or less patriarchal and xenophobic configurations. Domestic employees, both individually and through self-organization, are seeking a different thing though: they seek the ‘transformation of domestic work itself from unskilled to skilled, from humiliating to respectable, from minimum wage to its double, from employer-controlled to worker-controlled, from «dirty» work to «clean»’ (Salzinger, 1991: 158) – in broader terms, ‘the reconstructive process of moving from a status relationship to a work relationship’ (Blackett, 2011: 11). In fact, the individual strategies documented in our fieldwork largely concur with the orientations of the rising global movement of self-organization among domestic workers. What we find at stake is the very end of the affair that has made this occupation a form of class-based subservience, with domestic employees attempting at once to tear down subservience and upgrade the occupation.

10.4. Further research

As we approach the end of this dissertation, a number of issues calling for further research are worth underscoring. All of them are somehow associated with a critical questioning of the very concept of domestic work. Important if subtle differences in the manner in which this

concept has been used by scholars are exposed in Chapter 2; their implications have been acknowledged by researchers proposing a detailed observation of developments from a sociological or historical perspective (Anderson, 2000; Sarti, 2005; Folbre, 2006; Anderson & Hughes, 2010). The difficulties to reach a satisfactory definition are both overcome and amplified as we examine the findings from our own investigation, be it with regard to the legal regulation of employment relationships (Chapter 5), the large-scale statistical description of this sector (Chapter 6), or the micro level dynamics reported by women interviewed during the fieldwork (Chapters 7 and 8). What if our object of study does not exist as such? To start with, its forms, meanings and limits are in a state of constant metamorphosis, be it over time, across locations, or even across households. It is also plausible to argue that domestic work is what domestic employees do at their own home, not at their workplace. Drawing a clear analytical line between paid and unpaid modalities is elusive though. Beyond the consensual notion that paid and unpaid domestic work can not be understood in isolation, future research may need to bear in mind both the internal segmentation of this employment sector and its relation with other employment sectors, other public issues, other parts of social life.

A second element to consider pertains to the study of domestic service as a study of exclusion and marginalization. It is tempting to conceive this occupation as one that has remained relatively at bay throughout a number of structural changes in society – the industrial revolution, the rise and hardships of trade unionism, the adoption of democratic regimes, the technological revolution. However, this is only one more reason why the study of domestic service should *not* do away with the examination of the practices and discourses of the collective actors that have conducted and disputed those processes. Symbolic hierarchies within institutions and movements are bound to help explain a part of the observed developments concerning organization, or lack of organization, among employees and employers. Our research project has made an attempt, however modest, to bring the empirical analysis of present-day domestic service nearer to debates of labour relations and social change at large. Much more remains to be done in this respect.

A practical recommendation emerging from our discussion of legal developments in Chapter 5 is to conduct an empirical analysis of existing caselaw so that we can better grasp patterns and variations in the juridical discourse, which are likely to have implications for the practices and social representations of paid domestic work. The efforts expended to further our quantitative knowledge of this employment sector in Chapter 6 are also tentative and

exploratory, and future data collection at diverse scales is much required. While qualitative methodology may play a leading role in documenting local dynamics, it would be very useful if extensive statistical endeavours at national and international levels expanded data collection and reliability on the profile of workers, including educational degree, pay, access to welfare, and ‘live-in’ or ‘live-out’ arrangements.

Distinct suggestions to further quantitative analysis are conceivable at this point. On the one hand, one may delve into a specific material aspect or explanatory element by comparing it across a number of countries or locations. This is for instance the case of labour costs, public care policy, or the negotiation of gender and family roles at the household level, perhaps using available large-scale datasets such as those produced by the European Social Survey or the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Cross-national research is also helpful to scrutinize lawmaking dynamics and consequences in greater depth. On the other hand, research focused on particular countries is prone to expand knowledge concerning not only the elements addressed in our study, but also other key characteristics of domestic service employment – including the impacts of labour market flexibility policy and economic recession.

Last, a more thorough analysis of mentality and ideology in mediating everyday interaction is expedient. How do employees, employers and other relevant actors construe their own senses of entitlement? We would recommend future research on domestic service to consider in special detail men and masculinities, as well as the relevance of class socialization and intersubjectivity – two issues that remained largely unexplored in our own research project. Symbolic representations and unspoken codes and scripts can be surveyed at both private settings and top-level institutional negotiation. Also to be understood are the ways in which particular social dynamics transform or persist once the employment relationship is formally mediated by a company. It is expectable that a period of significant contraction in family budgets and job insecurity among middle-income households leads to a reduction in the demand for domestic service in its traditional forms. Elements of segmentation within the very sector – ‘live-in’ and ‘live-out’ employment, part-time and full-time work, cleaning and care, direct recruitment and mediation by commercial enterprises – may be key to assess future developments. The role of emerging initiatives of workers' organization in shaping and deciding future developments is another open field for researchers.

10.5. Implications for policy-making

Considering that the organization and practices of paid domestic work are recognized as a matter of public concern, research on the subject is likely to deliver valuable recommendations to policy-making. As written by Blackett (2011: 10), ‘the gap between the law on the books and the practice on the ground could be filled-in precisely from the continuing proliferation of literature and activism over domestic workers' conditions.’ Policy-making however is not limited to the design and enforcement of regulatory frameworks. This section discusses three main implications of our empirical findings to the political debate that is undergoing at the time of writing.

The first derives from our focus on the position of domestic service within broader social and economic structures. This means moving definitely beyond the moral reflection on the acceptability of domestic service and holding on instead to the realization that we still ignore much of what employees and employers in this sector claim – or may come to claim – as collective actors. The very framework of policy debate can draw precious support from recent initiatives to amplify the voices of the two parties as documented in our Chapter 9. With the adequate institutional recognition and thrust, organizations engaged in the representation of employees or employers can make a decisive contribution to offset the longstanding absence of consolidated representation – a necessary condition to the development of effective social dialogue and collective bargaining. These novel modes of organizing, far from overthrowing more conventional actors such as trade unions, can be expected to pave the way to the public presentation of solid views in the near future. From the standpoint of social policy, the marketization of care provision is lacking this crucial step: empowering representative bodies and enhancing dialogue between them. In such a perspective, the debate is drawn away from a normative notion of problematic industrialization into a critical notion of ongoing industrialization, a scenario in which power relations and the negotiation of public and private responsibilities remain under construction. Extensive silence from either employees or employers is a key obstacle to the development of appropriate policy responses, leaving little option to states and governments other than implementing top-down hit-and-miss measures or laws.

The second implication pertains to the symbolic or cultural dimension of paid domestic work. Social valorisation is about more than rights and duties at the workplace. Any substantial

improvement in working conditions is unlikely to come about until this category of work is adequately recognized (including by employees and employers) as a job. It is noteworthy that during our collection of fieldwork interviews with domestic employees it was easier to get the respondents' trust and availability as long as the issue to talk about was their life at large rather than their experience at work. Some respondents express pride in being a domestic employee; they feel nonetheless that this pride is disdained by the people around them with daily, relentless, methodical efforts. This is what illuminates the very resilience of pride, its need, its urgency.

Social movements promoting the rights of immigrants and the rights of women have so far played a dubious role in this regard. In the light of empirical circumstance, they are quick to reject the de-valorisation of domestic work; but the question is whether they do so while subscribing to the notion that a woman, and a migrant woman in particular, must necessarily break with domestic work. Domestic work itself can thereby become their primary foe. Orthodox emancipatory discourses are certainly accurate in one respect: many women, foreign-born or native-born, are employed in domestic service as a result of – and only while – failing to access a different route to pursue their autonomy or support their family. This heterogeneity of feelings is expected to be present in many occupations though. A certain activity can be, for some people, degrading, unnecessary; for others, it is a source of joy and respect. Dignification also emerges in contrast with the threatening solitude of everyday experience: the solitude of the domestic worker under stringent paradigms of male domination, racism, flexible labour markets, asymmetrical professionalization. The importance of atomized workplaces and linguistic difficulties, especially among migrant women, is not to be downplayed.

At the policy level, this problem translates into the dichotomous understanding of improving one's situation within the occupation or moving to another occupation. But improving one's situation within the occupation, be it through increasing respect in daily interaction, higher pay or collective representation, provides the employee with greater resources of self-esteem, time, energy, money – all of which are important if not necessary elements to exit the occupation. Therefore, such dichotomy is in practice elusive and dangerous, suggesting that women should struggle for their individual upward mobility in an otherwise unchanging structure. It encases a veiled invitation to inaction and resignation with the way things are.

The third implication has to do with regulation. Various institutional representatives interviewed during this research project expressed their satisfaction with the regulation in place; minimal enforcement is then identified as the crucial problem to tackle. Is it possible to conceive that a regulatory framework that is permanently and extensively transgressed is well designed? Or is it more reasonable to assess it on the basis of actual practice rather than textual content only? Concerning both written documents (Chapter 5) and actual collective representation (Chapter 8), domestic employees, and especially those working under ‘live-in’ arrangements, are still excluded from particular accomplishments and claims of the workers’ movement. They remain some steps away from full inclusion in the social security system, standard rules for dismissal, and collective bargaining. Furthermore, women recruited in this sector have been growingly recognized as workers, but the households purchasing domestic service retain a special status as employers in institutional practice and discourse. Once again, the policy debate is hindered by the lack of symmetry in the recognition of the two parties engaged in the employment relationship.

10.6. Is it over?

‘Is it over?’, Idalina asks after answering the last question of our interview script.¹⁹² We have been sitting in the living room of her apartment for about a hour and a half, and she still has to cook dinner and leave it ready for her children as she will be out at work until late. Yes, the interview is over – at least, as much as an interview can ever be. We follow Idalina into the kitchen and keep her company for a while, talking about traditional recipes from her hometown in Cape Verde and assisting her in small tasks. She insists that we must come over again on a Sunday and have a lunch party together with relatives and friends.

In fact, once we plunge into a particular subject or research question, it is difficult to pinpoint where the finish line of our undertaking really is. The goals defined at the outset may have been accomplished, the research tasks completed, and yet we are still moving along, we are still making headway, as if a clean end to the project was no longer conceivable or intelligible. Earlier, we believed that this dissertation could be seen as the definite outcome of a four-year commitment to document and analyse domestic service employment relationships in present-

¹⁹² ‘Acabou?’

day Lisbon. Now, it seems to represent a first step just as much. Our own engagement with this area of inquiry is hopefully not over. Our communication with some of the women and men interviewed during the fieldwork goes on; our contact with some of the organizations dealing with paid domestic work on the ground may soon evolve into close and solid cooperation. Let us remember, as put forward by Sassen (2005: 403), ‘that part of having a vigorous public sociology is that we can work at theorizing with our publics, accepting that they also can theorize – can see, and may indeed see what we cannot see, because we are blinded by the enormous clarity of our theories.’

At the very beginning of this dissertation, the readers find an extract from *Le Square*, a work of fiction by Marguerite Duras originally published in 1955. In that book, a young woman working as a ‘live-in’ maid explains her everyday routine to a man that she has recently met. The two of them are sitting down in a public square where she usually takes her employer's small child for a walk. The man, with a similar working class background, is nonetheless astounded to hear some of her experiences and viewpoints. He also expresses his amazement at how little this woman's employers seem to know about what she thinks or feels despite living under the same roof for years. ‘Comme eux sont servis’, the man comments with perplexity, ‘dans l'ignorance totale de qui vous pouvez bien être vous aussi’ (Duras, 1991 [1955]: 63). This remark has often come to our mind as we listened to the employees and employers interviewed during the fieldwork. In some cases, longstanding bonds of affection are reported, but even then there is a sense that much remains to be known about the other – in particular, about *who* the employee is or might be. An academic endeavour can hardly expect to fill a gap as political and deep-rooted as this one. Still, we are in a good position to make a contribution. As far as the women interviewed in our research project are concerned, awareness and reflection have been stimulated above all things by the interview itself.

And it is to the women who kindly agreed to share their experiences that we turn the final words of this dissertation. We are immediately reminded of those migrant workers who are still searching for a way to reunite with young daughters or sons that they left behind. Those who have severe pending conflicts with an employer. Those who seek the necessary resources to change their current situation, resume formal education, address urgent troubles at home, build future possibilities. And all of the respondents, employees or employers, who – one way or another – struggle on a daily basis to elude and resist the violent rushes of capitalism, patriarchy or racism. For these women too, the story is far from over.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCRIPTS

Appendix 1a. Script for the interviews with privileged informants

1. What is the nature of your contact with the subject of domestic service and how did it start?
2. What particular positive and negative situations have you witnessed first-hand with regard to this activity sector?
3. What are the main difficulties in your work of intervention or support?
4. How do you assess the existing legislation on domestic service in Portugal?
5. To what extent do you consider working conditions in domestic service to be homogeneous or heterogeneous? What factors are important in the negotiation of working conditions?
6. In your perception, has there been any change in the ethnic profile of domestic employees over the last ten years? If so, what implications does it have?
7. What do you know about the profile and behaviour of employers?
8. What important questions are still to be answered regarding domestic service?

Appendix 1b. Script for the interviews with employees

I. Current employment situation

1. Please describe your work activities during a regular week.

Consider: how many households do you work at?; how many days per week, and what days?; how many hours?; how often do you work extra hours?; what tasks do you perform at your job?

2. Do you live in the household where you are employed?

If so: since when?; have you ever worked as a 'live-out'?; what would you prefer, and why?

If not: have you ever had that experience?; what would you prefer, and why?

3. Where in the Lisbon area is/are the household(s) in which you work located?

4. How do you get there and how much time do you spend commuting?

5. How did you find your current job(s)?

6. Have you got a written employment contract?

• *If so: since when?; have you ever been employed without one?; why do you have it?*

• *If not: have you ever been employed with one?; would you like to have one, and why?*

7. How are your days off and holidays settled? Are they paid?

8. Are your social security contributions made?

• *If so: since when?; who makes them – you or your employer(s)?; what would you prefer, and why?*

• *If not: have they ever been?; what would you prefer, and why?*

9. How much is your monthly gross and net income in domestic service?

If unwilling to disclose the exact amount, identify the income bracket that applies (in Euros): 0 - 243; 243 - 485; 485 - 728; 728 - 970; 975 - 1213; 1213 - 1455; >1455.

10. If paid on a hourly basis, how much are you paid per hour?

11. Do your employers pay for your work in any other way, such as providing accommodation or meals?

12. Do you consider that you earn a fair amount? Do you consider it enough?

13. Have you got other sources of income?

- *If so: since when?; which are they?; how much is your total income?*
- *If not: have you ever had any?; would you like to?; what level of income would you find good enough?*

II. Relationship with state and employer(s)

1. What did you know about your current workplace(s) before you began working there? What do you know now?

2. How is your relationship with your employer(s)?

Consider: with whom do you interact?; would you describe it as strictly professional relationship or friendly-like?; do you consider it to be a good or a bad relationship?; do you feel that the two parties are entirely honest with each other or are you both playing a role?

3. What do you feel about the tasks that you perform?

4. Do you usually (or did you ever) speak with your employer(s) about the following issues: tasks to be performed; working hours; days off and holidays; pay; social security; terminating the relationship; outfit / look; personal subjects.

5. Have you ever posed particular requests or demands? How were they received?

6. Have you learned something from your employer(s)? And have you taught them something?

7. Do you think that a man could be as good as yourself at doing your work? Why?

8. Are you satisfied with the spare time that you have for leisure?

9. Considering the various aspects that we have been talking about, do you feel that your working conditions improved since you started working? And during the last ten years? And during the last two years?

10. Do you feel that your working conditions depend on any of the following issues: your nationality; the employer's personality; the employer's living conditions.

11. What would you like to see happening in your life in the next few years, and why?

12. Did you have any experience with migrating? From and to where? Why?

13. Were you able to sort out all of the paperwork required upon migrating? What difficulties did you experience?

14. Do you know if there is any law in Portugal that regulates domestic service?

- *If so: how and when did you know about it?; what is your opinion about it?*
- *If not: would you like to know about it?; do you find it important?*

15. Have you ever been a member of a trade union? Do you know if there is any trade union in Portugal for domestic employees?

- *If so: how and when did you become a member of it?; what is your opinion about it?*
- *If not: would you like to know about it?; do you find it important?*

III. Demographic and socioeconomic profile

1. What is your nationality and birthplace?

2. How many years of formal education have you completed?

3. How old were you when you left school, and why did it happen? Have you ever studied after that, or would you like to?

4. What is your current age?

If unwilling to disclose the exact age, identify the income bracket that applies (in years): <20; 20-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65-74; 75-79; >79.

5. What do your closest relatives do for a living?

Consider (possibly): father; mother; siblings; children; spouse or partner.

6. What city council and neighbourhood do you currently live in?

7. How long have you been living there, and where did you live earlier?

8. With whom do you live?

9. Are you satisfied with your housing conditions?

Consider: location; dimension; interaction with co-resident people.

10. How much is the monthly gross and net income of your household, and who is the person who contributes the most?

If unwilling to disclose the exact amount, identify the income bracket that applies (in Euros): 0 - 243; 243 - 485; 485 - 728; 728 - 970; 975 - 1213; 1213 - 1455; >1455.

11. How do you assess the current situation of your household with regard to material resources? And over the last ten years?

12. If married and/or with children, how old were you when that happened?

13. Who does the domestic chores at your house? With whom do children or the elderly stay while you are at work?

14. Do you help relatives with whom you are not co-residing? How, and how often?

15. Have you got contact with relatives living outside Portugal? How, and how often?

Appendix 1c. Script for the interviews with employers

I. Current living and employment situation

1. With whom do you live?
2. If married and/or with children, how old were you when that happened?
3. What do you currently do for a living, and how did it come to be?
4. If currently employed, how many hours do you usually spend at your workplace? How often do you work extra hours?
5. How do you get there and how much time do you spend commuting?
6. Are you satisfied with the relationship that you have with your employer(s) and colleagues?
Consider: what kind of issues have recently raised dissatisfaction or disagreement at your workplace?
7. Are you a member of any trade union or professional association?
 - *If so: since when and why?; what is your opinion about it?*
 - *If not: have you ever been?; why, or would you like to?*
8. Do you feel that your job gives you adequate conditions to take care of your home and family?
What would you like to change in that regard?
9. How are domestic chores organized at your home? Who usually does them, and how much time is spent on them?
Consider (among other chores): cleaning and tidying up; laundry; cooking; looking after children or elderly people.
10. Was it always like that? Why or how did it change? Do you talk about it with the other members of the household?

11. What do you feel about the various domestic chores that need to be done at your home? Do you enjoy doing some of them more than others?

12. Do you remember how domestic chores were organized at the home in which you grew up?

13. Are there tasks performed by somebody paid for it?

- *If so: indoors or outdoors?; since when, and what was the reason for it?; are you satisfied with the current arrangements?*
- *If not: was there ever?; why not?; would it be a satisfactory solution?*

14. If so, what tasks in your household are performed by a paid worker?

Consider (among other chores): cleaning and tidying up; laundry; cooking; looking after children or elderly people.

15. Do you feel that your employee enjoys doing some tasks more than others? Or that your employee does some tasks better than others?

II. Relationship with employee and mediators

1. How did you find your current domestic employee?

2. How was this employee recruited?

Consider: who conducted the process?; who made the decisions?; were you happy with the way things were done?

3. How many days and hours does your employee spend at your home? How often does your employee work extra hours, and why?

4. How are your employee's days off and holidays settled? Are they paid?

5. What did you know about your current domestic employee before she or he started working at your home? And what do you know now?

6. How is your relationship with your employee?

Consider: with whom do you interact?; would you describe it as strictly professional relationship or friendly-like?; do you consider it to be a good or a bad relationship?; do you feel that the two parties are entirely honest with each other or are you both playing a role?

7. Do you usually (or did you ever) speak with your employee about the following issues: tasks to be performed; working hours; days off and holidays; pay; social security; terminating the relationship; outfit / look; personal subjects.

8. Were there ever particular requests or demands posed by any of the parties? If so, how were they received?

9. Have you learned something from your employee(s)? And have you taught them something?

10. Do you think that a man could be as good as a woman at this job? Would you consider recruiting a man? Why or why not?

11. How much do you spend on domestic services per month?

If unwilling to disclose the exact amount, identify the income bracket that applies (in Euros): 0 - 243; 243 - 485; 485 - 728; 728 - 970; 975 - 1213; 1213 - 1455; >1455.

12. Is your employee paid for her/his work in any other way, such as providing accommodation or meals?

13. Do you think that the amount that you spend on domestic services is fair considering the work done? How necessary do you consider it?

14. Is there a written employment contract?

- *If so: since when?; have you ever recruited a domestic employee without one?; why do you have it?*
- *If not: have you ever recruited a domestic employee with one?; would you like it to exist, and why?*

15. Are your employee's social security contributions made?

- *If so: since when?; who makes them – you or your employee?; what would you prefer, and why?*
- *If not: have they ever been?; what would you prefer, and why?*

16. Considering the various aspects that we have been talking about, do you feel that the organization and the execution of domestic chores at your home improved since you first recruited a domestic employee? And since you recruited your current employee? And during the last two years?

17. Do you feel the performance of a domestic employee and your relationship with her or him depend on any of the following issues: the employee's nationality; the employee's personality; the employee's living conditions?

18. Do you know if there is any law in Portugal that regulates domestic service?

- *If so: how and when did you know about it?; what is your opinion about it?*
- *If not: would you like to know about it?; do you find it important?*

19. Do you know if there is any trade union in Portugal for domestic employees?

- *If so: how and when did you know about it?; what is your opinion about it?*
- *If not: would you like to know about it?; do you find it important?*

20. What would you like to see happening in the next few years with regard to the organization of domestic chores at your home, and why?

III. Demographic and socioeconomic profile

1. What is your nationality and birthplace?

2. How many years of formal education have you completed?

3. How old were you when you left school, and why did it happen? Have you ever studied after that, or would you like to?

4. What is your current age?

If unwilling to disclose the exact age, identify the income bracket that applies (in years): <20; 20-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65-74; 75-79; >79.

5. What do your closest relatives do for a living?

Consider (possibly): father; mother; siblings; children; spouse or partner.

6. What city council and neighbourhood do you currently live in?

7. How long have you been living there, and where did you live earlier?

8. Are you satisfied with your housing conditions?

Consider: location; dimension; interaction with co-resident people.

9. How much is the monthly gross and net income of your household, and who is the person who contributes the most?

If unwilling to disclose the exact amount, identify the income bracket that applies (in Euros): 0 - 243; 243 - 485; 485 - 728; 728 - 970; 975 - 1213; 1213 - 1455; >1455.

10. How do you assess the current situation of your household with regard to material resources? And over the last ten years?

11. If married and/or with children, how old were you at those different events?

12. Do you help relatives with whom you are not co-residing? How, and how often?

13. As far as you know, how are the domestic chores organized at the home of your closest relatives or friends?

Consider: distribution of work between women and men; recruitment of a domestic employee; generational differences.

Appendix 1d. Script for the interviews with company managers

I. The company

1. How and when was the company created?

2. Please describe the daily operation of the company.

Consider: regular tasks and procedures; interveners; communication circuits; schedules and spaces.

3. What geographic areas do the services of the company cover? Has this changed over time?

4. What services are provided by the company?

5. During a regular week, how many households does the company cater to? And how many workers are involved?

6. As far as you know, has the economic crisis of the last few years affected the sector of domestic services? If so, in what ways?

II. Relationship with customers and employees

1. How are customers sought or attracted? Are you satisfied with your relationship with them?

Consider: duration and quality of the relationships; service hours contracted; contractual regimes; customers' needs.

2. Do you feel that there are similarities in the profile of customers with regard to family composition, economic resources, age, or needs?

3. How are workers recruited? Are you satisfied with your relationship with them?

Consider: duration and quality of the relationship; service hours contracted; contractual regimes; workers' availability.

4. In your perception, has there been any change in the ethnic profile of domestic employees over the last ten years? If so, what implications does it have? Does your company recruit workers from various nationalities?
5. Do you feel that the workers do some tasks better than others? Do they enjoy some of them more than others?
6. What particular positive and negative situations have you witnessed first-hand? If there have been tensions or conflicts, what is your opinion about them and what do you think that the manager of a company should do to solve them?
7. What have you learned from the company's customers and workers so far? Do you feel that you have taught them something?
8. Are you familiar with the existing legislation on domestic service in Portugal? If so, what is your opinion about it? Is this relevant for your work?
9. To your mind, what are the main difficulties that the company and yourself have experienced so far?
10. How do you assess the trajectory and performance of the company? And what would you like to see happening in the next few years?

APPENDIX 2: RESPONDENTS' PROFILES – A SELECTION OF CHARACTERISTICS

2a. Privileged informants

<i>Interview Nr.</i>	<i>Type of organization</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Interviewees</i>
1	Trade union	Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Serviços de Portaria, Vigilância, Limpeza, Domésticas e Actividades Diversas (STAD)	1 union leader
2	Trade union	Sindicato dos Trabalhadores de Serviços de Portaria, Vigilância, Limpeza, Domésticas e Actividades Diversas (STAD)	1 union leader
3	Trade union	Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Técnicos e dos Serviços (SITESE)	2 union leaders and 1 support officer
4	Trade union	União Geral de Trabalhadores (UGT)	1 officer of the Women's Commission
5	Trade union	União Geral de Trabalhadores (UGT)	1 legal aid officer
6	Employers' organization	Confederação do Comércio e Serviços (CCP)	1 leader of the organization and 1 support officer
7	NGO	Banco do Bebê	1 activist
8	NGO	ComuniDária	2 leaders of the organization
9	NGO	Grupo de Apoio às Mulheres Imigrantes (GAMI)	2 activists
10	NGO	Grupo de Apoio às Mulheres Imigrantes (GAMI)	1 activist
11	NGO	União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (UMAR)	1 activist
12	Governmental body	Autoridade para as Condições de Trabalho (ACT)	1 officer

2b. Employees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Working hours/week</i>	<i>Employing households</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Country of birth</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>First arrival in Lisbon</i>	<i>Co-residents</i>	<i>Years of education completed</i>
Almerinda	25	4	1971	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner and 1 child (minor)	5
Amélia	20	1	1961	Mozambique	PT	1981	1 friend	12
Beatriz	35	3	1981	Brazil	BR	2005	Partner and 2 friends	12
Cátia	-	-	1972	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner and 5 children (4 minors)	8
Conceição	42:30	1	1953	Portugal	PT	1966	Partner and 2 children	11
Elisa	37:30	3	1964	Portugal	PT	1983	1 child	4
Eva	-	-	1981	Brazil	BR	2001	Partner	12
Fernanda	47:30	6	1972	Portugal	PT	1982	Partner and 2 children	4
Francisca	-	-	1975	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	2 children (minors)	9
Helena	41	2	1969	Angola	PT	1975	Partner, 2 children (1 minor)	6
Idalina	9	1	1956	Cape Verde	CV & PT	1974	Partner, 4 children, 1 grandchild (3 minors)	0
Joaquina	52	9	1968	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	2 children (minors)	6
Liliana	-	-	1987	Brazil	BR	2007	Partner and 2 friends	12
Lucinda	42:30	2	1953	Portugal	PT	1989	Partner, 1 child	4
Lurdes	39	7	1958	Portugal	PT	1983	Partner, 1 child	3
Maria	40	6	1966	Guinea-Bissau	GNB & PT	1995	Partner, 3 children (1 minor)	12
Marina	36	3	1968	Portugal	PT	1982	2 children (1 minor)	3
Natalia	32	2	1959	Russia	RU	2001	Partner	12
Paula	37	3	1982	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, 5 children (minors)	9
Otília	28:30	8	1963	Portugal	PT	1977	Partner, 2 children, 1 daughter in law	6
Rita	6	1	1964	Guinea-Bissau	GNB	1992	-	9
Rute	50	1	1983	Cape Verde	CV & PT	2000	-	12
Tânia	40	3	1982	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, 3 children (minors)	9
Tatiana	'Live-in'	1	1968	Ukraine	UA	2003	Partner, 1 child	12
Zita	21:15	2	1963	Portugal	PT	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner	3

2c. Employers

<i>Name</i>	<i>Domestic service hours/week</i>	<i>Main occupation</i>	<i>Employment status</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Country of birth</i>	<i>First arrival in Lisbon</i>	<i>Co-residents</i>	<i>Years of education completed</i>
Adosinda	4	Computer technician	Full-time	1962	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, mother	11
Alzira	4	Computer engineer	Full-time	1957	Algeria	1977	-	16
Ana	12	Social worker	Full-time	1962	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, 1 child, 2 friends	16
Anabela	-	Nurse	Full-time	1982	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, 1 child (minor)	16
Augusta	8	Computer engineer	Retired	1956	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	-	16
Carmen	18	Professor	Full-time	1955	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	1 child	20
Carolina	4	Product manager	Full-time	1982	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner	19
Clotilde	4	Business manager	Full-time	1956	Portugal	1981	-	19
Custódia	12	Clerk	Retired	1928	Portugal	1949	-	11
Dulce	2	Clerk	Full-time	1958	Portugal	1970	Partner, 2 children	9
Inês	6	Professor	Full-time	1966	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	1 child (minor)	16
Isabel	22:30	Computer engineer	Full-time	1960	Portugal	1972	Partner, 1 child	16
Jacinta	-	Professor	Full-time	1983	Portugal	2001	-	18
Laura	3	Scientist	Full-time	1962	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	-	20
Lídia	7	Computer technician	Full-time	1958	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, 2 children	11
Luísa	4	Accountant	Full-time	1981	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner	18
Madalena	4	Web content manager	Full-time	1985	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	-	16
Marília	-	Schoolteacher	Full-time	1958	Portugal	1976	3 children	16
Nazaré	8	Schoolteacher	Full-time	1957	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner	16
Palmira	10	Real estate agent	Part-time	1972	Timor	1991	Partner, 1 child (minor)	17
Odete	12	Clerk	Full-time	1968	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	Partner, 3 children (minors)	16
Raquel	-	Computer engineer	Full-time	1974	S. Africa	1979	Mother	17
Renata	6	Clerk	Full-time	1968	Brazil	1993	Partner	19
Sandra	-	Computer technician	Full-time	1951	Angola	1977	Mother (dependent), 1 friend	11
Teodora	4	Illustrator	Full-time	1982	Portugal	(Born in Lisbon)	1 child (minor)	16

2c. Company managers

<i>Name</i>	<i>Characteristics of the company</i>				
	<i>Provides housework service</i>	<i>Provides direct care</i>	<i>SAD license (Domiciliary Support Service)</i>	<i>Formal status</i>	<i>Began operating in</i>
Aurélia	X			Service provider	2006
Carla	X	X		Placement agency	2011
Cláudia		X		Service provider	2007
Eduarda	X	X		Placement agency	2010
Domingos	X			Service provider	1998
Eunice	X			Service provider	2006
Horácio		X	X	Service provider	2009
Luís		X	X	Service provider	2010
Marco	X	X	X	Service provider	2006
Mariana	X	X		Placement agency	1998
Mário	X	X	X	Service provider	1997
Pedro		X	X	Service provider	2004
Sofia & Patrícia	X	X		Service provider	2011
Sara & Leonor		X	X	Service provider	2002
Susana & Miguel	X			Service provider	2008