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# The domestic domain within a post-colonial, feminist reading of social enterprise: towards a substantive, gender-based concept of solidarity enterprise

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## Introduction

Dominant approaches to social enterprise propose adding social and/or environmental goals to enterprises’ market-oriented activities to meet the “double” or “triple bottom line”. While concerns with enterprises’ social and environmental impacts are undoubtedly legitimate, it is the persistence of a market-oriented perspective that should be questioned. Focus on the market tends to obscure economic plurality and makes it difficult to adopt a substantive definition of the economy and, hence, a broader scope of action for social enterprises. Regardless of the perspective on social enterprise models that they choose (Defourny and Nyssens, 2016; Teasdale, 2011; Young and Lecy, 2014), these approaches all share the propensity to associate the economic domain with the market, the social domain with protection and the political field with public authorities. Calling into question the universality of these formal conceptions of the economy and the enterprise, the substantive vision advocated in this book extends the economic domain to market and non-market practices, the political domain to public space and the social domain to the complex interaction between social protection and emancipation. In doing so, this approach emphasises the idea that none of these domains can be uncoupled from the others. The concept of social enterprise must thus be framed within this network of intertwined relations.

This chapter aims to contribute to the development of a substantive concept of social enterprise based on debates within feminism that have shown the importance of the domestic domain and questioned its place in and its nature as an element of women’s emancipation. An important issue in this debate, which has resurfaced repeatedly in Western feminism, is the presumed split that exists between the economic and domestic domains. Discussed in the 1980s, by authors such as Nicholson (1986) in the Anglo-American context, this issue resurfaced again in the works of Waller and Jennings (1991) who pointed out the increasing invisibility of women’s labour in the public space due to the lack of recognition in the formalist approach of the role of non-market institutions in shaping the economy.

In this chapter, we revisit this alleged split between domestic, economic and political domains to discuss to what extent this idea can be universally applied to women worldwide. Drawing on a feminist approach to the debate on the limits of current social enterprise concepts, we argue that a substantive concept of social enterprise still needs to be developed. Based on the results of fieldwork in Brazil (Hillenkamp and Nobre, 2016; Hillenkamp, forthcoming; Lucas dos Santos, 2016, 2017, 2018a, forthcoming), we discuss the pertinence of this separation outside of a Western concept of

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gender and present a more accurate reading on the domestic domain, especially in relation to women-driven economic initiatives in the Global South. We argue that these economic experiences led by women on the periphery bring a fresh look to the debate on social enterprise by refining, in epistemological terms, the substantive concept of the economy and social enterprises. To illustrate our case, we draw primarily on postcolonial thought, feminist economics, epistemologies of the South and socioeconomics (particularly Polanyi's principles of economic integration, namely reciprocity, redistribution, householding and market exchange). We will also discuss "solidarity economy" (Laville, 2010; Coraggio et al., 2015), as it is a key concept in the substantive approach to social enterprise. The economic initiatives discussed here adhere to this category or can be thought in terms of community economies (Gibson-Graham, 1996), as in case of popular and indigenous economies.

This chapter is organised into three parts. The first part outlines the contributions of some of the main schools of Western feminist thought to the inclusion of the domestic domain in political and economic debates. It discusses how these schools of thought question the relation between the domestic domain and the economic and political ones and the hypothesis of their mutual exteriority. The second part challenges this hypothesis further by questioning the construction of the categories and concepts of Western feminism from a post-colonial epistemological position. Adopting this position leads us to broaden the scope of the theoretical framework in which assertions on subaltern women's political voice and role in the economy have been formulated. Grounded on a postcolonial perspective, we aim to highlight subaltern<sup>3</sup> women's capacity to constitute alternative political arenas through solidarity and community economic initiatives that are based primarily in the domestic domain. Using experiences in the Vale do Ribeira region in Brazil as a case study, the third and final section illustrates how a different analytical perspective that considers the interweaving of "the domestic" with the economic and political domains and that introduces other noteworthy dimensions such as non-market practices, political and informal organisation in the public space and social emancipation can contribute to the development of a broader substantive concept of social enterprise.

## 1. The domestic domain in Western feminist theory

There is a vast debate among the various feminist schools of thought on the place and the treatment reserved for the domestic domain. Evidence of this is the numerous qualifiers that exist on the subject: "domestic work", "domestic mode of production", "domestic economy", "domestic sphere" and so on. As it would be impossible to cover the numerous ramifications of this debate here, we seek to identify theoretical trends that prevailed at certain times and places to explain how the domestic domain, its relation to the political and economic ones and its place in the debate on the domination and emancipation of women have evolved overtime. It should therefore be emphasised that the list of authors selected here is by no means exhaustive.

Delphy's book *The Main Enemy: Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*<sup>4</sup>, first published in 1970, is a possible starting point for feminist movements not only in France but in other countries as well during this period. This book was borne out of these movements' need to position themselves within the left at the time, especially vis-à-vis the Marxist schools that were affirming the primacy of capitalist exploitation and the proletarian struggle over women's struggle. According to orthodox Marxist views, domestic work does not directly create surplus value and is therefore considered

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<sup>3</sup> Subaltern should be understood here in the sense proposed by Subaltern Studies, which takes its origin in Gramsci's concept. Despite Gramsci's influence on Subaltern Studies' authors - namely Guha, Chakrabarty, Chatterjee and Spivak, to name but a few - there are some differences in the way they approach the concept. While Gramsci did not see any possibility for subaltern people to achieve autonomy without controlling the state, Subaltern Studies scholars argue that even though autonomy is fragmented and episodic, historians should take it into account to make an alternative historiography possible.

<sup>4</sup> The original title in French was *L'ennemi principal: économie politique du patriarcat*. The first English version was distributed at the 1974 National Women's Liberation Conference and became more widely available in 1977, when it was published as a pamphlet (Jackson, 2000).

“unproductive” work. This theoretical position is fraught with negative practical consequences, as underlined by Paulilo (2005). Situated in a very different context, Paulilo demonstrated how in rural Brazil, the alleged unproductivity of domestic work carried out by women justifies the maintenance of inequalities in marriage, inheritance and access to land. Adopting a materialist stance, which assumes that the material conditions of existence determine social organisation, Delphy combats the Marxist view by using its own arguments as her weapons: she asserts that domestic work is productive work like any other form of market-oriented labour and that as such, it is subordinated to a mode of production – the domestic mode of production – just as the market-oriented labour is subordinated to the capitalist mode of production. She concludes that the women’s movement is not subordinate to the struggle of the proletariat and it deserves political autonomy.

Other authors from this period coincided with Delphy on the “articulation of modes of production” (Rey, 1973) and on how the capitalist system needs unpaid housework to guarantee the reproduction of the working force<sup>5</sup> (Federici, 1975). These approaches had the merit of giving visibility to domestic work and affirming a critical position from the outset. It also opened the way for analysis on the connection between domestic work and market-oriented wage labour, which was soon overtaken by the concept of the sexual division of labour that established the separation and hierarchisation of so-called men and women’s work as the foundation for gender relations (Hirata and Kergoat, 2007). This school of thought contributed to the analysis of the linkages between different systems of oppression (gender, class and race) by developing the concept of consubstantiality of social relations (Kergoat, 1978). Together with theorists on intersectionality (Hill Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991), they drew attention to the interaction between different systems of power, while affirming the primacy of the material dimension of oppression over that of identity and culture (Galerand and Kergoat, 2014). All these contributions refuted explanations on the sexual division of labour that were based on an essentialist concept of the feminine and masculine natures, especially those developed by Becker in the 1960s, which he later summarised in his *Treatise on the Family* (Becker, 1981). In his work, Becker assumes that the specialisation of women in domestic work is the result of the comparative advantage that their role in biological reproduction gives them.

At the same time, the materialist stance led feminists to consider the domestic domain exclusively from the angle of work and the mode of production. Its potential for self-fulfilment and emancipation was discarded because it was identified as the place *par excellence* for the reproduction of male domination. While it did deserve to be politicised, the only way to do so – or so feminists thought at the time – was to shine light on the darkness of and exploitation in private life – the personal becoming political – and not to see it as a possible space of resistance, much less of emancipation. Furthermore, the representations or cultural factors that may explain women’s oppression were necessarily considered secondary to the material conditions of existence, thereby reinforcing a vision centred on domestic *work* alone. Finally, the relationship between domestic and capitalist modes of production was conceived in terms of the “articulation” between the two, thus assuming that they were mutually exclusive. They were represented as two distinct relations of production that were undoubtedly linked to one another by a relation of subordination, but whose constitutive logics do not interpenetrate each other. In other words, while materialist feminists recognised the domestic domain as a form of work, thus forming part of the economy, they did not cease to consider it as operating only in a given place – the household – which was supposed to be completely separate from the places where wage labour was exploited (the factory, the company, etc.).

In the 1980s and 1990s, in a context marked by the triumph of neoliberalism, the debate changed, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world. Deeming the application of the neoclassical corpus of

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<sup>5</sup> Federici (1975: 78) helps us understand the connection between unpaid housework and the reproduction of the working class: “By denying housework a wage and transforming it into an act of love, capital has killed many birds with one stone. First of all, it has got a hell of a lot of work almost for free, and it has made sure that women, far from struggling against it, would seek that work as the best thing in life (the magic words: “Yes, darling, you are a real woman”). At the same time, it has disciplined the male worker also, by making ‘his’ woman dependent on his work and his wage, and trapped him in this discipline by giving him a servant after he himself has done so much serving at the factory or the office”.

economics to the “women’s case” as profoundly inadequate, feminist economists introduced a new feminist approach to their discipline. A milestone was reached with the publication of *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics* (Ferber and Nelson, 1993), which gave birth in 1995 to the International Association of Feminist Economists and the *Feminist Economics* scientific journal. These authors criticised the so-called “separative self” model – the allegedly autonomous and selfish being of neoclassical theory (England, 1993) – and its over-valuation in the market sphere (Nelson, 1995) as the foundation of the androcentric bias of economics. This vision limits our understanding of not only the market sphere, but also the non-market sphere, which is falsely presented as the locus of relationship and altruism, obscuring gender inequalities (England, 1993). Not only have the concepts of masculinity and femininity been attributed to people, but they have also permeated people’s perceptions of activities, conceptions and behaviours, thus determining what is considered part of the economic domain or not, as Ferber and Nelson (2003) clearly demonstrate<sup>6</sup>. Eliminating this gender bias requires going beyond these false attributions by developing a model of human behaviour that integrates autonomy and interdependence, individuation and relation, and reason and emotion (Nelson, 1995).

Feminist economists from the 1990s therefore reaffirmed the need for an all-encompassing view, which includes all the different spheres of the economy but within categories and a scientific and political debate that are very different from those of materialist feminism. It was no longer a question of positioning oneself vis-à-vis Marxism, but rather in opposition to the dominant neo-classical school of thought. The priority was no longer to criticise the subordination of the domestic mode of production to the capitalist one, but to review explanatory models of behaviour in market and non-market spheres. This hierarchical (market/non-market) partition became preponderant in theoretical explanations and the domestic domain came to be viewed as an element of the non-market sphere. To capture the two spheres in a single conceptual framework, Nelson redefined economics as the study of “provisioning”, understood as “the production and distribution of all of the necessities and conveniences of life” (Nelson, 1995: 143).

Heterodox feminist economists pointed to the proximity of this definition to Polanyi’s concept of the substantive economy. Polanyi criticised reducing the economy to the market and its unsustainable consequences for society (Waller and Jennings, 1991; Benería, 1998). Seeking to deepen Polanyi’s premises from a feminist standpoint, these feminist economists highlighted the need to analyse the concepts of gender that arise from the hierarchical division between market and non-market spheres and the relations between the institution of the family and the market, which Polanyi had neglected (Waller and Jennings, 1991). They also questioned the merits of integrating women into markets, especially global ones, and called for a positive view of the non-market sphere in which the logic of solidarity may be valued and supported, provided that this sphere is democratised (Benería, 1998). In general, the relationship with the market acquired a central place in their analysis to qualify the non-market economic logic. If the link between the two spheres is thus affirmed - and this link is critically analysed in relation to their hierarchisation – it means that they are still considered external to one another.

In parallel, Western feminist debate on the economy also evolved towards the adoption of explanatory frameworks that connected the categories of work, domination and oppression to ones of relations and interdependence. The “care paradigm” was the main field in which these new approaches emerged. Introduced in the United States by Gilligan (1982) to refer to the moral paradigm of “the ability to care for others” and the “priority concern of relationships with others” (Gilligan, 1982: 37, quoted in Zielinski, 2010: 632), the care ethic combines solicitude and responsibility, and accompaniment and care, according to philosopher Tronto (2009). For Carrasco (2014), care refers

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<sup>6</sup> Ten years after “Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics”, Ferber and Nelson (2003: 1) published another book on the development of feminist economics as a field. In this book, they conceptualise gender, saying that it “refers to the way societies attribute ‘masculinity’ or ‘femininity’ not only to various people, but also to various activities and even concepts”.

to work that guarantees the satisfaction of bodily and emotional needs based on relationships and is therefore a personalised form of work. In her view, care should be the purpose of the economy, not the pursuit of private profit. This line of thought gave rise to policy proposals such as the calculation of the monetary equivalent of care work (Folbre, 2006; Carrasco, 2007) or institutional incentives to ensure that care work – as a provider of well-being – is carried out without penalising women (Folbre, 1997).

In addition to expanding the explanatory frameworks, the debate on care led to a real shift in Western feminist debate. Without ignoring relations of domination, it drew attention to the fulfilling dimension of caring for others and the environment. Care – which can take the form of social work, domestic chores and sometimes even market-oriented wage labour – is located at the presumed border between market and non-market spheres, which draws our attention to the porosity of this border. It opens up the possibility for us to reconsider the presumed places of domination and emancipation. As such, it converges towards proposals from another school of thought: ecofeminism. Formed by authors from very different contexts and ideological positions, this current is based on a common critique of the political and epistemological links between the domination of women and of nature. Ecofeminism is often criticised in the academic world for its essentialist positions, as some authors make women appear as necessarily fertile, nurturing, caring, altruistic, etc. However, these authors represent only part of the ecofeminist school of thought, as clearly shown by Burgart Goutal (2017). “Constructivist” ecofeminists (Puleo, 2002; Siliprandi, 2009) reject this type of naturalisation of women and analyse women and men’s relationship to their environment in political terms, namely the link between human collectives and “nature” (Larrère, 2017). Places such as the home or “the community” – where almost everywhere, women, because of their gender position and not their feminine nature, are more numerous and more engaged than men – are considered political.

From this standpoint, the boundaries drawn between the domestic and the capitalist modes of production, and the non-market and the market spheres, are blurred when priority is given to the defence of livelihoods. Politicising the domestic domain is less about attracting the public or authorities’ attention to private issues and more about affirming new political subjects who are active in these places. With this broader concept of the political in mind, the next section will focus on non-Western contexts in which universalised Western feminist assumptions are challenged.

## **2. Can the split be considered an universal question? The domestic domain through the lens of feminisms from the South**

Issues commonly debated by Western feminists are often seen from a different perspective when analysed by feminists from the South. The domestic domain is no exception to this rule. As remarked by different feminist authors - such as Brah and Phoenix (2004), Oyěwùmí (1997, 2002), Castillo (2008), and Lugones (2008) -, concepts and categories should not be immediately assumed as universal even when they apparently apply to diverse realities. They cannot be uncoupled from a situated perspective of knowledge and specific circumstances that forged them.

Pointing out the Eurocentric roots of some feminist theories, Oyěwùmí (1997, 2002) provocatively questions the universality of the very concept of patriarchy as well as the adequacy of the Western concept of a nuclear family system to represent African realities. The issue at heart is that otherness has been built as something particular in the global imagery whereas Western categories have been assumed to be the standards for all. While discussing the absence of gender in Yorùbá<sup>7</sup> culture, Oyěwùmí (2002: 1) reminds us that “the architecture and furnishings of gender research have been by and large distilled from Europe and American experiences”. She also affirms that for an African epistemology to be taken seriously, it should be informed by a careful analysis of its own non-Western social dynamics. Lugones (2008), for her part, stresses the fact that gender should not be considered a universal category that fits all women worldwide and on which key concepts can be attached. She

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<sup>7</sup> Yorùbá is an ethnic group from southwestern Nigeria and other parts of the African continent.

argues that the colonial/modern gender system - in which we can find recurring problems such as the invisibility of domestic labour or the gender pay gap, to name a few - is not enough to explain the different ways gender may be experienced in different societies. Moreover, afflicted by “simultaneously interlocking oppressions” (Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 78), women’s bodies experience gender differently due to the influence of other social markers such as class, race and sexuality. As a consequence of these markers in everyday life, some women will experience through their bodies the deepening of inequality, while others will feel the endorsement of their privilege.

A particular situation that evinces the invisibility of some women’s groups on behalf of a contrived common agenda can be seen in the current feminist debate on domestic work, a common issue affecting women all around the world. This debate has not been properly updated to reflect the different ways in which domestic work becomes a particularly heavy burden for black and migrant women in situations of economic vulnerability. Black peripheral women, to whom low paid jobs such as domestic servants, cleaning ladies, nannies and home-based caregivers are usually offered, are likely to be more concerned with the way they are exploited - and sometimes humiliated - by white female employers than with their own double working day (Rio, 2012). This kind of issue has been masterfully discussed by authors such as Rio (2012), Carby (2005) and Molinier (2012), the latter addressing the case of immigrant women<sup>8</sup>. This means that for black and migrant women, unpaid domestic work may not be the focus of their concern, demonstrating that Western white women’s perspective has prevailed. Nonetheless, it is worth recalling that consensus on domestic issue might be unfeasible since it is expected to be addressed by different perspectives and voices.

Contrary to some Western feminists who still focus on the social invisibility of women as being historically connected to the split between the domestic and the economic domains, feminisms from the South have been more interested, in epistemological terms, in debating the pertinence and coherence of certain concepts on a global scale. To illustrate the extent to which Western feminist debates on domestic work may be far away from the reality of women in the Global South<sup>9</sup>, we have chosen aspects that reaffirm the potential political dimension of the domestic domain. These aspects are primarily concerned with three key issues: 1) women from the South and their political role in solidarity and popular economy initiatives, despite the usual absence of a feminist framework in the literature on solidarity economy; 2) the subaltern arenas (Fraser, 1990) that these women may construct by promoting a different logic for the production, exchange and distribution of values (in agreement with Gibson-Graham, who proposed expanding our economic imagery beyond the capitalist triad enterprise-wage labour-market); and 3) the way these subaltern women have fostered - through reciprocity, redistribution and householding - symbolic autonomy, political articulation and the constitution of a support network.

The first aspect to be addressed has to do with the theoretical framework we often use to formulate our assertions, particularly the ones on subaltern women’s role in the economy or the presumably uncontested development guidelines based on models from outside for them to face poverty. An Eurocentric perspective on gender in feminism might misrepresent indigenous, peasant, peripheral, immigrant and Muslim women - in the South or in the South of the North - and their ways of fighting against asymmetries within and outside their communities. Western feminisms may also undervalue the resistance inherent in the way these women organise their material life, which is not necessarily grounded on the development agenda proposed by multilateral agencies or funding programmes. Autonomy achieved through both shared management and the organisation of a support network capable of guaranteeing reciprocity and the redistribution of scant resources is as important as, if not

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<sup>8</sup> For more on this issue, see also Federici (2016). Federici differs from the perspective proposed by Rio, as she is interested in knowing better how the discussion on migrant domestic work has revitalised the feminist debate on domestic work. According to Federici (2016: 10), “migrant domestic workers’ organizing has not only changed their relations with the institutions but affected feminist activism and its research agenda”.

<sup>9</sup> We use the definition proposed by Santos (2014) for the term “Global South”. For him, the Global South should be understood as a sociological category instead of a geographical concept and is used to refer to the set of knowledges and ways of living and producing meaning that are usually seen as residual or backward.

more important than, the actual performance of popular economic initiatives. Therefore, the first idea to be stressed here is the risk of veiling the epistemological diversity of the world (Santos, 2006) by using presumably universal categories that refer to specific realities. Chakrabarty's idea of provincialising Europe, which can also be understood as a necessary attempt to strive for effective epistemological acuteness, "is not only about bringing to the fore other histories and experiences, but also about recognising and deconstructing – and then reconstructing – the scholarly positions that privilege particular narratives without any recognition of the other histories and experiences that have similarly contributed to the constitution of those narratives" (Bhambra, 2009: 69). This first aspect is thus related to the need to question what is deemed as universal.

The second aspect is concerned with the very concept of "the political". Historically, Subaltern Studies has helped understand the need for broadening its scope. The works of Chatterjee (1983) and Guha (1982) demonstrated that when referring to subaltern groups, "new theoretical categories" for "the political" may be required to make it more comprehensible, since the history of subaltern resistance has been fragmented, episodic and not as linear as the elite's narratives (Guha, 1982; Góes, 2013). That is why Guha argued that "it was necessary to extend the imagined limits of the political as a category far beyond the well-known territory bounded by the European political thought" (Góes, 2013: 11, our translation). This means that some subaltern practices of insurgency may not be recognised as such since they are out of the reach and sight of the public sphere. Subaltern people are not expected to have the same power to voice their opinion and negotiate. It is thus recommended that attention be paid to informal contexts in which dissenting voices express different narratives. A Habermasian concept of the public sphere has not been capable of welcoming and coping with the set of claims brought by different marginalised groups, particularly the ones who are part of "uncivilised civil society" (Santos, 2006). Yet, this may lead one to ask, "what does this have to do with the argument that the domestic domain can play a political role?"

Widening perspectives on 'the political' need to be welcomed if we hope to identify the multifaceted ways subaltern women around the world resist and fight different and intertwined asymmetries. The same can be said of their efforts to re-embed the economy. In fact, it is by going against the expectations of formal procedures for demonstrating disagreement that women's insurgency forges subaltern arenas - or subaltern counterpublics, as proposed by Fraser. With respect to this and other counter-hegemonic agendas, Fraser (1990) pointed out the need to recognise insurgent social groups as parallel discursive arenas that bring to the surface different readings on reality. Fraser (1990: 61) not only identified the lack of representation of women and marginalised groups in the bourgeois public sphere, but also emphasised the importance of "alternative styles of political behaviour and alternative norms of public speech". This means that these subaltern counterpublics are important for three main reasons: 1) they foster different forms of being vocal and, in doing so, they broaden the very concept of resistance; 2) they strengthen political articulation among minorities' citizens by echoing their concerns and proposals; and 3) they may serve as a nursery that nurtures new rationales for the production, consumption and circulation of goods and services, since they themselves follow different logics of production, aesthetic rationalities, temporalities and knowledges. Among the examples Fraser mentioned, feminists were remembered as a particular subaltern counterpublic compromised with a political role beyond the discursive domain. Fraser explains: "a subaltern counterpublic from which we disseminated a view of domestic violence as a widespread systemic feature of male-dominated societies. Eventually, after sustained discursive contestation, we succeeded in making it a common concern" (Fraser, 1990: 71).

This leads us to the third aspect to be stressed: the very capacity of women from the South to constitute subaltern (and alternative political) arenas by fostering solidarity and popular economic initiatives to face their social and economic vulnerability. In the absence of a welfare state and while surrounded by precariousness, achieving autonomy, when it does happen, is a remarkable feat.

And thus we get to the point. Many of the community economies in which women play a pivotal role and that run counter to the narratives of efficiency or performance are primarily domestic. What we argue here is that the domestic (according to the concept of householding in Polanyi's work) should



be recognised in its political sense, whether it be for bringing different logics, procedures, and concerns to the space of women-led popular markets, or for having allowed different subaltern women to create spaces for dialogue, confidence, social cohesion, and political articulation. Although Western feminisms have debated the problems related to the historical split between the domestic and the economic domains (Waller and Jennings, 1991; Nicholson, 1986), namely the deepening of women's economic invisibility due to their association to the household, this split should not be assumed as an universal rule since there are many legitimate community economies today in which this division has never existed. This is the case, for instance, of Quilombola and peasant women from the Vale do Ribeira region in south eastern Brazil who have united around feminist and agroecological agendas, as we will see in the third section of this article. Indigenous economies are another example where this split has not occurred.

There is a large set of women-led initiatives that have connected domestic concerns to the possibility of achieving material and symbolic autonomy for peripheral women. One clear example is the group of 78 female bricklayers living in areas at risk who decided to build their own houses through a collective effort (*mutirão*) in Recife (a city in the northeast region of Brazil). Recognised by the UN as a creative solution to housing problem worldwide, this village built by women in 1994 is an example of articulation among peripheral women in their fight for their right to housing<sup>10</sup>.

It is worth highlighting that these examples bring forms of reciprocity and redistribution to the forefront. The economic nature of these women's initiatives cannot, under any circumstances, be disregarded, since they provide them with some of the material conditions needed for a dignified life. Faced with scant resources, including labour force, women are capable of overcoming precariousness, on one hand, and exercising their right to choose, on the other. To guarantee this right, they routinely meet to either exchange their surpluses or build their own houses. Pooling their different technical skills - as blacksmiths, tilers, painters and bricklayers - these women work together to assure each one what is needed for getting the house project on its feet.

This leads us to the crucial point that we would really like to stress here: the need to be more attentive to the different ways subaltern women are able to reshape Polanyian principles of economic integration in everyday life to try to take advantage of them more. They do so by combining these principles in different ways and at different intensities, and fostering alternative forms of redistributing surpluses, whether through exchange and seed fairs or reallocating resources among the members of an extended family. This aspect was already noted by Hillenkamp, Lapeyre and Lemaître (2013: 6) when they argued that a “closer observation of the way popular actors secure their livelihoods shows multiple patterns of petty accumulation based on a diversity of resources and types of interdependencies within families, communities, and professional, religious and other types of groups”<sup>11</sup>. In addition to this, what we intend to emphasise here is that through their economic practices, subaltern women can challenge (1) the specific meaning that each principle of economic integration may assume in different contexts, and (2) the feminist economics' assumptions of what is worth considering economic. We argue that this field could be widened by taking different women's economic experiences into account. For some of them, redistribution may not fit into the standards valued by Western feminist economics.

Therefore, we should be attentive not only to the means by which these women criticise and range themselves against the phenomenon of the economy's disembeddedness, but also, and primarily, to the different practices through which subaltern women have creatively re-embedded economies.

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<sup>10</sup> To know more about this experience, see: <http://www.leijaja.com/noticias/2018/03/08/pedreiras-uma-vila-inteira-construida-so-por-mulheres/> and <http://www.revistanabuco.com.br/colunas/marcia-a-pedreira-de-peixinhos/>

<sup>11</sup> In regards to this issue, Hillenkamp, Lapeyre and Lemaître (2013: 5) state: “The principles of economic integration therefore generate different types of institutional structures, which can be combined in multiple configurations. They form a conceptual framework that takes into account the diversity of socio-economic practices of popular actors, without assuming them to be evolving towards a model of a “modern” capitalist enterprise”.

### **3. Broadening the concept of social enterprise from a postcolonial feminist perspective**

#### *Social enterprise and gender-based analyses: brief comments on the literature available*

Despite some efforts to further the debate on the situation of women in the specific context of third sector and social enterprises (Odendahl, 1994; Lange and Trukeschitz, 2005; Garain and Garain, 2006; Ferreira, 2007; Degavre and Nyssens, 2008; Lopes et al., 2008; Teasdale et al., 2011), there is still a huge gap in the literature on gender, especially from a feminist approach. Even so, it is worth mentioning some efforts by the EMES Network to table this subject in its latest conferences, where gender appeared as a thematic issue and feminist approaches were encouraged. However, although some specific conference and working papers on gender were made available online (Teasdale et al., 2011; Pestoff and Vamstad, 2013; Hillenkamp and Wanderley, 2015; McLean, 2017; Lucas dos Santos, 2016; Bonfil, 2017; Cid-Aguayo and Ramirez, 2017; Périlleux and Szafarz, 2015; Fossati, Degavre and Lemaître, 2017), some of which were connected to the idea of solidarity economy, social enterprise literature remains gender-blind (Teasdale, 2011; Muntean and Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015). When gender is brought to the discussion on social enterprises, wage gaps, reasons for women's adhesion to the third sector or social enterprise model and the need to intensify women's presence in leadership positions are among the most popular issues.

As for the term "social enterprise", which may be used to refer to both social economy and solidarity economy arrangements (through solidarity enterprises), we should keep in mind that it serves as a kind of umbrella concept that encompasses a wide range of different types of initiatives, such as volunteer organisations, social businesses, community enterprises, cooperatives and third sector institutions that deliver public services (Teasdale, 2012 apud Defourny and Nyssens, 2016: 7). Therefore, there are different perspectives on the connection between feminism and social enterprise to be addressed and analysed. These go from a market-oriented reading on women entrepreneurship to a feminist discussion on the androcentric path of social enterprises, or from the support social that social economy institutions give to different women to reduce their unpaid care burden to women's autonomy that solidarity enterprises are expected to foster, whether in the South or in the South of the North.

Regarding solidarity enterprises specifically, recent works by feminist authors in both the North and the South have brought new ideas and theoretical frameworks to the scene. Women authors with considerable research contributions worth mentioning here include: Guérin, Verschuur, Hillenkamp, Nobre, Wanderley, Farah, Larrañaga, Jubeto, Matthaei, Pérez, Lucas dos Santos, Osorio-Cabrera, Cunha, Degavre and Saussey, to name but a few. Regardless of their differences, all these works have been concerned with bringing a feminist approach to the literature on the solidarity economy. Some analyse agroecology initiatives (Hillenkamp and Nobre, 2018), whereas others are more focused on developing a theoretical approach based on a feminist view and/or a substantive concept of economy (Hillenkamp, 2013; Cunha, 2015; Lucas dos Santos, 2016). There are authors who are particularly focused on relations between the solidarity economy and care issues (Osório-Cabrera, 2016; Jubeto et al., 2014; Farah and Wanderley, 2014). And there are yet other works specifically concerned with building up a solidarity economy approach grounded on a feminist framework (Guérin, 2004; Degavre and Saussey, 2015; Verschuur, Guérin and Hillenkamp, 2015; Osório-Cabrera, 2016; Matthaei, 2010). Generally speaking, these works take one of three main approaches: institutionalist, ecofeminist or postcolonial (or that connected with epistemologies of the South).

This means that there is a growing trend to adopt a feminist approach in literature on the solidarity economy. The same does not apply to the literature on social enterprises, which could be enriched significantly by feminist contributions, particularly those from the feminists from the South. As social justice is one of their main goals, social enterprises are expected to strive to build a wider frame that properly reflects different realities. This requires being more porous and sensitive to asymmetries based on race, gender and class that can undermine economic solutions, especially when they are not built by communities themselves. It is also worth recalling that Western feminism does not adequately

address certain problems. Meanwhile, postcolonial feminisms shed light on the need to keep away from solutions that aim for a standardised state of local development. Postcolonial feminisms point out the importance of the contexts and the intertwining of inequalities blocking the so-desired social justice.

### *The contributions of postcolonial feminisms*

The postcolonial feminist approach reverses the way we look at subaltern women in relation to social enterprises and social entrepreneurship. We need to shift away from the Western model of the enterprise to adopt a new focus on the practices and worldviews of these women – one that overcomes the common idea of subaltern women being the beneficiaries of a “social mission”, the “social responsibility” of market-oriented enterprises, other forms of philanthropy or development agendas, and affirms a vision that sees these women as entrepreneurs in charge of their own lives. From this new perspective, social entrepreneurship integrates, as inseparable dimensions, the way that these women secure their livelihoods based on different principles (reciprocity, redistribution, householding and market exchange) and the way they express their visions of the world from their own standpoint, starting from the domestic sphere and from the collectives and communities to which they belong. This does not mean that market-oriented enterprises, public authorities, “development” agencies and NGOs will stop spreading their vision of social order and retaining important resources; yet, they will become peripheral actors from these women’s point of view. The central issue becomes, then, the conditions for the substantive solidarity entrepreneurship practices of these women – that is, practices oriented towards the construction of their own autonomy and their emancipation from oppressive relations, whether they arise from the market, the State, the family or the community. The conceptual and political approach here consists of restoring the spaces and dimensions that are absent from the formal conceptions of the economy and the social enterprise – namely those of the domestic domain, the non-market sphere, the subaltern political arenas and emancipation – without losing sight of critical analyses of these spaces and dimensions.

The women involved in the “feminist agroecology” movement and practices in the Vale do Ribeira region in south eastern Brazil give us a glimpse of what solidarity entrepreneurship as an autonomy-building process may look like. Agroecology is a set of techniques aimed at integrating agricultural production into ecosystem reproduction cycles (Giraldo, 2018) and is based on the recognition of vernacular knowledge on food crops and caring for nature, which is largely held by women, and its extension through networks of exchange and dialogue with scientific knowledge. Far from resulting from some kind of innate closeness to nature, this characteristic stems from a sexual division of labour which, in most countries of the South, has assigned the responsibility of providing family food to women, while men, considered farm managers, were the target of modernisation policies aimed at increasing marketable production (Vatturi-Pionetti, 2006; Guétat-Bernard, 2008; Siliprandi, 2009). Excluded from these policies, women have maintained farming practices that are now promoted as part of a post-development model of agriculture (Giraldo, 2018) and are inseparably domestic and economic in nature: they are domestic in the sense that they are aimed at feeding and reproducing life at the family and community level, carried out around the house (kitchen, garden, henhouse, etc.) and are integrated into domestic work (cooking, recycling food waste, feeding animals, etc.). They have an economic dimension, as they generate monetary and non-monetary means of existence through the sale of agricultural products and self-consumption of food and medicinal plants. Considering solely the market value of these practices in a narrow social enterprise view would reduce and distort these practices, leading actors to underestimate their potential for contributing to the autonomy of these women, families and communities. It may ultimately undermine this potential by prioritising the sale of products over self-consumption and short-term productivity over the long-term maintenance of ecosystems and livelihoods.

In Vale do Ribeira, the recognition of women’s agroecological practices was promoted by the Brazilian feminist NGO SOF (*Sempreviva Organização Feminista*), which implemented a federal government policy on agroecological technical assistance from 2015 to 2017, with the support of international cooperation projects. Having observed male domination in “family farming” in general

and in agroecology in particular, SOF promoted women's "self-organisation" - that is, the formation of collectives (community-based groups or larger networks) in which women may express and discuss their personal experience with this domination (Marques et al., 2018). In this case, the process was carried out with existing collectives, but not all of them were politicised at the start. Some were linked to the defence of the land of traditional black communities and were headed by women, but others were, for example, women's social action groups linked to churches. SOF's work contributed to politicising these groups and encouraging them to coordinate with one another. Forming such collectives is a slow and complex process with multiple ups and downs, as members fluctuate between moments of strong personal commitment and withdrawal, and they are often fraught with internal tensions and sometimes, conflicts. Although they remain fragile, these collectives have nevertheless become places where women talk about the multiple forms of control that they experience in their everyday lives – be it control over their time, their work, their production, their body or their sexuality (ibid.) – and begin to imagine ways to overcome them. SOF helped strengthen the women's discursive capacity<sup>12</sup> by using a method of popular education that, through training sessions and debates, enables women to make the connection between their concrete situation and a critical discourse on patriarchy and capitalism. At the same time, these collectives act as support groups (for agricultural production, but also at home, in cases of domestic violence, illness, etc.) and as spaces for collectively organising work (weeding, planting or harvesting on each other's plots, selling surpluses, exchanging seeds, cuttings etc.). By connecting the experience of gender relations and agricultural practices to a new understanding of the mechanisms of oppression and possibilities for resistance, these collectives play a social role that indissolubly links the dimensions of emancipation and protection. They contribute to emancipation by protecting women from the sometimes violent reactions that any transformation of the *status quo* in gender relations may lead to. Conversely, the logic of protection and solidarity arises from greater awareness of the collective nature of oppression and the affirmation of new subjectivities and worldviews by these women who begin to recognise themselves as "farmers" - and no longer just as wives or mothers - and even "feminists". Here too, reducing the social dimension of the enterprise to the sole protection of supposedly vulnerable populations without considering their own views on emancipation would end up reproducing old mechanisms of domination, such as those based on gender, while creating new dependencies between the beneficiaries and the providers of this protection.

Finally, the political dimension of feminist agroecology is the result of a long-term process rooted in several regions of Brazil and at national level. Since the 1980s, autonomous movements of rural women workers, especially in the north eastern and southern regions of Brazil, have put the recognition of women's work and their right to social protection on the political agenda (Siliprandi, 2009; Jalil, 2013). In the 1990s, they built alliances with feminist NGOs, in which SOF played a significant role, and gradually brought together criticism of gender relations and criticism of the dominant agricultural model (Nobre, 2015). In the 2000s, this alliance was crystallised by the creation of the Women's Group of the National Coalition for Agroecology (ANA, created in 2002), which questioned the coalition's technicist approach and called attention to gender violence through its slogan, "Without feminism, there is no agroecology" ("*Sem feminismo, não há agroecologia*"). Armed with this affirmation, the feminist current of agroecology gained influence in the public policies adopted by the Workers' Party government (from 2003 to 2016). This was notably thanks to the access of members of the Women's Group of the ANA and their allies to new positions of power, such as the Directorate of Policies for Rural Women of the Ministry of Agrarian Development. This happened in a tense context, where unprecedented advances were made in public policies for family farming, while the main interests of agribusiness continued to be preserved in the name of governability (Sabourin, 2014). In this context, some NGOs, such as SOF in Vale do Ribeira, became the executing entities for the new policies for women and agroecology and supported the formation of collectives at the micro level. This opened up new arenas for women farmers to constitute

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<sup>12</sup> Discursive capacity here is the women's capacity to become subjects of the public space by speaking out and discussing relations of domination.

themselves as political subjects and to begin to fight to change gender relations and agricultural models and practices. This coordination between the levels required grassroots groups to raise their discursive and organising capacities to a certain level, which was possible thanks to the joint action of the existing collectives and SOF.

Taking the different actors, namely women working in NGOs and the government and subaltern women, and their relative position of power into account is necessary to broaden our view on social enterprises and put these women's practices and world views at the centre of analysis. Such an approach is also needed to better understand the interactions between established powers and insurgent social forces –subaltern women and their allies – that are capable of bringing new issues into the political arena. Regarding Fraser's concept of subaltern counterpublics, we believe that at the theoretical level, their capacity to bring different interpretations of reality to the surface should be analysed while taking their relationship with intermediary organisations into account. Two perspectives should be considered here: 1) the need for these intermediary organisations to respect the rhythms and the knowledges within the communities, and 2) the recognition that it is not only about discourse, but also the capacity to build political alliances and connections. In summary, our case study reveals the need for a concept of solidarity enterprise that integrates the economic, social, political and domestic domains in their dialectical dimensions and connects grassroots organisations and intermediary support organisations.

#### **4. The domestic back in the debate: final remarks**

The domestic domain has been addressed in different ways by both feminists and economists over time. In any case, it has always been a subject immersed in controversy. Among economists, institutionalists are the ones who have recognised the economy as provisioning in its broadest sense. Nevertheless, despite being a relevant aspect of material life, the domestic sphere has not been a particular issue of concern for feminist institutionalist economists. Even in Polanyi's work, householding appears as an irregular presence (Hillenkamp, 2013).

Among feminist scholars and activists, for their part, the domestic sphere has always been an issue that splits opinions. In previous times, some activists considered it important to bring a supposedly womanhood to the public sphere to contribute to social reform and other issues, whereas others had already thought, at that time, that unpaid domestic work and mothering brought about gender asymmetries (Ferguson, Hennessy and Nagel, 2018). Further on, some second wave feminists argued that, since domestic work was unpaid and the domestic domain was separate from production, housework was expected to contribute to women's invisibility. To end this asymmetry, some feminist economists emphasised the need to increase the presence of women in labour market. Conversely, others have argued that housework, to be properly valued, should be paid (Federici 1975) or, at least, calculated in economic terms (Folbre, 2006) to make society aware of its importance for household provisioning and the very production of material life.

All these critiques undoubtedly contributed to thinking more wisely about the domestic domain and the way it has been connected to women's life and to the recognition (or the devaluation) of their role in the economy. But it is worth bearing in mind that these relevant theoretical frameworks and critiques cannot be uncoupled from the cultural, historical and social contexts in which different women live. Likewise, these critiques and conceptual perspectives should not be set apart from an intersectional approach capable of considering different identity aspects that will certainly affect these women's priorities. Some arguments that apply to Western white women may simply not make sense to different women in the South, whether they are in the Global South or in the South of the Global North. This does not at all mean that domestic work, caretaking or emotional work do not affect non-Western women, but rather that when seen through intersectional lenses, other usually unseen gender asymmetries may be deepened because of race, class, sexuality or national identity.

Since women are not equal and may thus be affected by social markers such as class and race, it is expected that they have non-matching perspectives on householding. In this respect, the domestic domain can play a political role in the building of fruitful alliances among subaltern women to face powerful common enemies. Likewise, there might not be a split between domestic and economic domains in their community economies as argued in the past by Western feminists. This in no way means that these communities should be seen as outdated or residual. Conversely, they help us question the supposed universality of theoretical models and concepts. Secondly, we would like to emphasise the importance of fresh thinking and new theoretical frameworks for analysing how and to what extent women - particularly women from the South - have contributed to: (1) establishing non-state forms of redistribution and social regulation, which is essential in contexts of state deficiencies, but should not be used to justify the loss of social rights; (2) reshaping economic exchanges through domestic logic and concerns; and (3) politicising householding by interweaving it with decolonial and anti-capitalist struggles against transnational corporations and projects, such as major dams, mining and logging companies.

In sum, it is worth emphasising a double challenge that exists in the field of social enterprise. Firstly, the social enterprise debate could be enriched by a solidarity economy perspective, as demonstrated by Laville and Hillenkamp (2016), since it brings a political dimension to the scene and draws our attention to relevant contextual specificities in the field and with them, different features that need to be considered and valued. In other words, the current social enterprise framework, which is usually disconnected from social movements and peripheral community coalitions, may unintentionally veil important economic experiences (Lucas dos Santos, 2018b) that, if seen or recognised, could strengthen the debate on economic democracy. At the same time, it is worth recalling that the solidarity enterprise perspective needs to be also enriched by adopting a broadened theoretical scope capable of bringing freshness and accuracy to our debate on social justice. Feminist and/or postcolonial perspectives (see section 4.1 above) constitute indispensable lenses for not only thinking of persistent power imbalances but also testing our sense of plurality and economic democracy. It means that solidarity economy is not immune to be permanently challenged and enriched by new lenses. The debate on the domestic domain and its presence in peripheral women-led economic initiatives and community markets is certainly one of the contributions brought by feminist thought to the solidarity economy framework.

The time has come to broaden the scope of our discussions on the domestic domain, social enterprise and solidarity economy by tabling the ways that different women have developed to reframe the economy. They have done so by going beyond the Western “market-household” dichotomy and contributing to economic principles such as reciprocity and redistribution, the latter being seen as a State role. Social enterprise literature could thus benefit from gender-based analyses and from a feminist perspective in particular, which provide reflections on: the male-centric misuse of a women-based welfare society, the need for a progressive women-friendly social economy, the recognition of the political role that women have had in re-embedding the economy and the need for a thought-provoking theoretical debate that goes beyond the idea of women empowerment through market-oriented entrepreneurship. A postcolonial feminist perspective can provide us with a necessary critical reading on hasty, ready-made economic solutions that are often uncoupled from a situated analysis. Although solidarity enterprises may not be a panacea for all social justice problems, when their political sensitivity is firmly grounded on a wide-ranging feminist perspective, they are expected to strengthen subaltern women’s role in the intertwining of economic, social and political domains.

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