



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

***How joyful militancy takes shape  
in feminist movements in Spain***

***A discourse analysis of Territorio Doméstico***

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Magister Thesis in Gender Studies  
Master's programme in Gender, Justice and Society  
Spring semester 2023  
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## Abstract

This study aims to analyse how joyful militancy, characterized by care, joy and affection in the struggle, is embedded in the discourse created by *Territorio Doméstico*, a feminist movement formed by domestic workers in Spain. Through discourse analysis of songs and images of *Territorio Doméstico*, this study shows how meanings constructed through discourses build collective identities and challenge hegemonic discourses on domestic and care work and on migrants.

Keywords: Joyful militancy, Migration, Care, Domestic work, Discourse analysis.

*“The most widespread, long-lasting, and fierce struggles are animated by strong relationships of love, care, and trust”*

Carla Bergman & Nick Montgomery, 2017

*“The power of humour lies in its flexibility....it can function as a bouquet, a shield, and a cloak, as well as an incisive weapon in the armoury of the oppressed”*

Janet Holmes, 2000

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## 1. Introduction

Global care chains are a phenomenon characterised by the internationalization of domestic and care work that falls on the shoulders of female migrant workers (UNRISD, 2022, p. 104). Thus, feminized migration along with the gendered nature of globalisation has resulted in ‘women who stand at the intersection of care work exploitation with gender, ethnic and migrant oppression in the context of a globalising world’ (Williams, 2010, p. 386). In Spain, this is reflected in a growing demand of cleaning and domestic workers, as a result of a weakened state intervention to make work-life balance possible, and that has been met by migrant women (Sánchez-Domínguez & Fahlén, 2018, pp. 368-369).

Data show that women from Latin America are the most preferred as domestic and care workers, being nearly two-thirds of the women employed in this activity in Spain in 2020 (Martínez Buján, 2022, p. 85). But what is the reason behind this ‘preference’? Researchers have shown that the discourse on the supposed cultural compatibility of Latin American migration with the autochthonous population covers a different reality: Spanish society prefers Latin Americans because of their precarious labour and legal situation (Martín Díaz et al, 2012, p. 825 and 859). Thus, Latin American women have suffered exploitation by their employers, which is in turn encouraged by policies that do not stimulate the regularization of migration workers, and that promote a ‘periodic ethnic replacement that guarantees a surplus of cheap and vulnerable labour’ (Martín Díaz et al, 2012, p. 831).

In order to respond to the precarious employment conditions that characterize the care sector, some movements have sprung in Spain over the last decades, including *Territorio Doméstico* (Domestic Territory in English), created by women, mainly from Latin America, working on the domestic and care sector.

Domestic workers do not only experience precariousness or labour abuses, but they have also traditionally been made invisible, and invisibility is implicitly related to lack of agency and disempowerment (Sansen, 2007 as cited in Sekeráková Búriková, 2021, p. 1698). Sekeráková states that domestic workers experience a stronger connection between invisibility and disempowerment due to their privacy of their working places, their employer’s house, invisible for the authorities and the public (Sekeráková Búriková, 2021, p. 1698).

However, the emerging of new feminist movements formed by workers that have been historically made invisible suggests that things are changing and that new ways of struggling are gaining ground.

Despite being historically relegated to invisibility, *Territorio Doméstico* (hereinafter referred as to TD) has become a key feminist movement in Spain, participating in debates and interviews in national TV channels<sup>1</sup>, national press<sup>2</sup> or even being the subject of a TV documentary<sup>3</sup>. TD defines themselves as ‘a collective space of struggle and empowering women, mostly migrants and domestic and care works. The important thing, which brings us together, is that we are women who do a hard, enormous, and invisibilized job: the work of caring for people and homes’ (Laboratoria, 2023). Rafaela Pimentel<sup>4</sup>, the spokeswoman of TD explains how the movement started by listening to the stories of women who had suffered discrimination and difficult situations, followed by accompanying women who reported their employers, mainly migrant women in an irregular situation<sup>5</sup> (Draper & Pimentel Lara, 2020).

Besides providing legal assistance, training and spaces of listening, and self-care for their comrades (*compañeras*<sup>6</sup>), TD has also fought for changes at the legislative level, building strategic partnerships at the international level with other groups to work on one of the most remarkable and enduring struggles of domestic workers: the ratification of the ILO Convention 189<sup>7</sup>. This Convention was adopted in 2011 to put rights of domestic workers on an equal foot with those available to other workers in the same country, such as social security or limited working hours or days off (HRW, 2013, p. 3).

In order to make the Spanish government ratify the Convention 189, TD has worked for years by carrying out advocacy campaigns along with other organizations. Eleven years later, in 2022, Spain ratified the convention as a Royal Decree-Law that grants the right of unemployment benefits for those working in domestic work (it was the only professional sector without this right in Spain, which had been considered discriminatory by the EU justice system). The legislation equalises domestic workers’ rights with those of other workers and resolves one of the grievances of this group: dismissal without cause’ (Moreno, 2022). However, the Spanish ratification of the ILO Convention does not benefit all domestic workers since undocumented

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB\\_qrSnJkSc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wB_qrSnJkSc)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.eldiario.es/economia/dia-d-paro-espana\\_130\\_8771749.html](https://www.eldiario.es/economia/dia-d-paro-espana_130_8771749.html)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQelnXaCoFw>

<sup>4</sup> Rafaela Pimentel Lara is a feminist, activist, and domestic worker from the Dominican Republic who lives in Madrid where she has been part of different groups struggling for the rights of domestic and care workers, such as *Territorio Doméstico*, the *Turín Group*, the *Observatorio Jeanneth Beltrán*, *Senda de Cuidados*, and “*eje de precariedad*” – a group devoted to feminist economies (fully extracted and quoted from: <https://viewpointmag.com/2020/02/06/making-the-network-that-sustains-us-visible-conversation-with-rafaela-pimentel-of-territorio-domestico-madrid/>)

<sup>5</sup> According to Spanish immigration laws, people living in Spain in an irregular situation, without residence permit, need to wait three years in order to be able of applying for a work and residence permit if they have a job offer <https://www.echeverriaabogados.com/en/blog/procedures/what-situations-allow-work-permits-in-spain>

<sup>6</sup> ‘*Compañeras*’ is never translated into English, which reveals that it is a key concept for *Territorio Doméstico*.

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C189](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C189)

migrants are excluded, this is why TD is calling for the extraordinary regulation of migrants already in Spain (Pimentel, in Moreno, 2022).

When it comes to TD's relations with other organizations, Pimentel explains that most trade unions have not treated them as an equal but rather in a paternalistic way, organizing their agenda ignoring the availability of domestic workers, particularly those that are live-in domestic workers. She also notes that feminism has traditionally ignored the struggle of domestic workers, however the fact that they began meeting in the space of the feminist association *Eskalera Karakola*<sup>8</sup>, made them entail close collaboration with this organization, having in common struggles that emphasize care, creativity and the importance of speaking about their experiences (Draper & Pimentel Lara, 2020).

While reading articles, posts and news on TD, I have noticed that their actions might be signs of new ways of feminist activism called 'joyful militancy'<sup>9</sup> that uses care, affection and joy in the struggle. Thus, joyful militancy connects 'fierce struggle with intense affect: rebellions and movements are not only about determined resistance, but about opening up collective capacities. With joyful militancy we want to get at what it means to enliven struggle *and* care, combativeness *and* tenderness, hand in hand' (Bergman & Montgomery, 2017, p. 30). TD uses aspects of joyful militancy such as joy, care and creativity in their struggle: *We put life in the center in everything we do... Putting life in the center also means taking care of ourselves, taking care of the everyday that does us good, and fighting and defending our claims by making creativity and joy into political weapons. When we meet, it is not only due to the pleasure of being together, but also to strengthen ourselves and provide ourselves with the affection that nourishes us to fight politically and in everyday life* (Laboratoria, 2023).

## 2. Purpose and research question

Taking all the above into consideration, the purpose of my research is to examine how joyful militancy takes shape in the discourse created by TD through their advocacy campaigns and street actions, which connect politics with everyday life of domestic workers and are characterized by humorous and creative approaches that combine struggle with care.

But what do we mean by joyful militancy? Even though this concept will be more explained in the section of theories, I would like to stress here that some of its characteristics are the use of

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<sup>8</sup> <https://eskalerakarakola.org/>

<sup>9</sup> The first time I heard about this term was in a [podcast](#) about how domestic workers achieved the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 by the Spanish government, which was mentioned in Spanish as 'militancia gozosa' or 'militancia alegre'. This brought me to the book 'Joyful Militancy' by Carla Bergman and Nick Montgomery in <https://joyfulmilitancy.com/>

‘creativity and joy into political weapons’ (Laboratoria, 2023). In the book *Joyful Militancy. Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic times*, its authors explain that they bring together joy and militancy ‘with the aim of thinking through the connections between fierceness and love, resistance and care, combativeness and nurturance’ (Bergman & Montgomery, 2017, p. 14).

My aim is to examine how this type of militancy, the joyful militancy, acquires meaning in the construction of TD’s discourses, and particularly to what extent TD’s discourses construct meanings ascribed to identity and actions. In doing so, I would like to respond to the following questions:

- What discourses are constructed and how?
- How does TD construct its identity and social meaning as a feminist movement through discourse?
- How does TD politicise care and domestic work in their discourses by ascribing identities to subjects that play an important role such as domestic workers, employers, agencies or the state?
- Does TD challenge hegemonic discourses? If so, how? Which are these hegemonic discourses?

### 3. Previous research

If we focus on the concept of joyful militancy, the book *Joyful Militancy. Building Thriving Resistance in Toxic Times* (Bergman & Montgomery, 2017) can be considered as a key publication, whose objectives are to expose the limitations of ‘rigid radicalism’ that makes people feel guilty or insecure, and to reflect about new ways of doing militancy, more creative and transformative and less dogmatic (Bergman & Montgomery, 2017, p. 11).

Considering that one feature of the joyful militancy is the use of humour in protests, this field of research has received attention from several authors (Hart, 2007, 2016; Sørensen, 2008), with multiple articles analysing concrete examples from different parts of the world, such as the use of humour in Istanbul’s protests in 2012 (Seçil Dağtaş, 2016), how Canadian Raging Grannies use fun and creativity to inspire others (Roy, 2006), or how Afghan civilians use humour as socio-political expression and resistance (Fluri, 2019). In her analysis of humour in the workplace, Holmes notes that one of the most basic functions of humour is ‘to create and maintain solidarity, a sense of belonging to a group’ but also serves to ‘emphasize power imbalances, or even to license challenges to status hierarchies’ (Holmes, 2000, pp. 159-160).



The use of humour and creativity in feminist movements has attracted the interest of researchers too. In her analysis of humour in women's experiences and engagement in social justice movements and community groups, Gouin identified frequent themes: 'identity and group formation, resistance, resilience and coping' (Gouin, 2004, p. 32). When thinking about humour and feminism, we cannot forget the Guerrilla Girls<sup>10</sup>, very well known for its creative campaigns to denounce sexism in the art world, using provocative visual images and graphics that attracts media attention (Raizada, 2007). Another example is Nieto-Valdivieso's analysis of how joy and happiness are constructed through the stories created by Colombian female ex-combatants, the author explains that women's narratives connected to the joyful militancy are built on three pillars: affection provided by the group; participate in the guerrilla as a learning experience, where each one is respected and appreciated, and the experience to as a place for learning new skills and where they were recognized and valued, and the satisfaction of fighting for a just cause (Nieto-Valdivieso, 2017, p. 78).

However, if we look specifically at joyful militancy in discourses of movements led by female domestic workers, research barely exists. In English language I have only found one draft article<sup>11</sup> that examines how migrant domestic workers in the Gulf used TikTok during the Covid-19 pandemic to 'subvert domination, exploitation and subjection' (Chee, 2022, p. 1), using jokes to 'symbolically reverse the roles of the employer and domestic worker' (Constable 1997, 174, as cited in Chee, 2022, p. 10).

In the Spanish context, TD is gaining more and more attention from universities, moving from being treated as 'objects' to being agents that 'have a lot to teach' (Draper & Pimentel Lara, 2020). While looking for literature focused on joyful militancy in Spanish feminist movements, I was extremely grateful to find a booklet made collectively by members of TD: "Biosindicalismo desde los territorios domésticos. Nuestros reclamos y nuestra manera de hacer"<sup>12</sup> (Pimentel Lara et al, 2021) where they explain their struggles, their way of doing, including personal stories, thus becoming an extremely useful document for my research.

On the basis of the foregoing, my intention is to contribute to the knowledge of new ways of doing militancy, the joyful militancy, examining the case of a discourse constructed by a feminist movement led by migrant women that work as domestic and care workers in Spain.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.guerrillagirls.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Written permission has been requested and granted by the author, by email, to cite and use the article.

<sup>12</sup> I would translate it as 'Bio-syndicalism from domestic territories. Our claims and our ways of doing'.

## 4. Theory

### 4.1. The notion of joyful militancy

The term ‘joyful militancy’ as opposed to sad militancy or rigid radicalism is extensively documented by Carla Bergman and Nick Montgomery (2017). It reveals ‘a kind of sensibility happening in currents of feminism, queer theory, Black liberation, Indigenous resurgence, youth liberation, anarchism, autonomism, and radical ecology, among others’ (Joyfulmilitancy, 2017). Joyful militancy also refers to other ways of being, other ways of building relationships based on affection and care through movements that provide autonomy and trust, thus strengthening the collective power that is created when people can fully participate in life. ‘Amidst and beyond barricades and Molotovs there are new forms of care and belonging, quiet and humble forms of support. There are emergent sensibilities based in listening, curiosity, and experimentation’ (Bergman & Montgomery, 2017, p. 12). These sensibilities are common or share values that characterize joyful militancy such as care, connection or support (2017, p. 35).

For Silvia Federici, the joyful militancy is opposed to sad militancy, the latter being promoted by men, and characterized by little enthusiasm or perceived as an obligation (Gavroche, 2020). In Haiven’s interview with Federici, she argues ‘we struggle and try to change things because we are unhappy, because we don’t like this society, because we need to improve our lives. It’s not sacrifice. Struggle is supposed to make you grow, struggle is supposed to heal your pain, to socialize your pain: you are together with other people who are suffering with you. Now you can begin to creatively respond to this suffering, and that’s where the joyfulness of militancy comes in. Politics has to be a healing process, a process of creative growth (Khasnabish & Haiven, 2017, p. 30).

An example of how joyful militancy is relevant is given by TD: ‘We talked about complicated, very difficult situations, but gracefully, because we do not like pouring salt on old wounds; we are suffering enough to cry even more’<sup>13</sup> (Pimentel Lara et al, 2021, p. 65). To see how joyful militancy is translated into practice by TD, I will examine what aspects of joyful militancy such as care, affection of humour are used in their songs and street actions, and how they are represented.

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<sup>13</sup> Text originally written in Spanish.

## 4.2. Concepts of bio-syndicalism and embodied struggle

The first time I heard about bio-syndicalism, it was included in the booklet's title 'Bio-syndicalism from domestic territories. Our claims and our way of doing'<sup>14</sup> (Pimentel Lara et al, 2021) that has been created by TD. Then I thought to what extent this concept is connected to Foucauldian concepts of biopolitics and biopower. For Foucault, biopower has two poles: discipline and regulation. The first one is 'a disciplinary power' that demands bodies to be disciplined, to maximize its capacities to make them docile and thus integrate them into 'systems of efficient and economic control' (Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 170 [172] as cited in Cisney & Morar, 2015, p 4). The second one is called 'bio-politics of the population' which is related to the population control (regulation and monitoring of birth rates, fertility rates, diseases...etc) (Cisney & Morar, 2015, p. 5), more focused on groups of people rather than on individuals.

Looking at the meaning of bio-syndicalism, TD defines it as follows, 'rather than a closed concept, it is a research proposal on the terrain between life and unionism...goes beyond the fight for labour rights: it is a form of struggle for everyone's right to have lives that are worth living and, above all, the joy of being lived. Because we fight and want to continue fighting for all the rights at stake in everyday life, hence the play on the prefix "bio" (Laboratoria, 2023). Thus, for TD biosyndicalism means not only fighting for labour rights of domestic workers but also for everything that is needed to enjoy a life with dignity: housing, education, social participation, etc.

The second notion that characterizes TD's struggle is what they call '*embodying the struggle*' understood as a way of doing embodied politics, aligned with TD's purpose to 'do politics starting from ourselves, from our bodies and our knowledges. We believe that this embodied politics works and transforms, since it transmits the truth, our truth. We call this to "acuerparnos" [to embody - us], one of our favourite words' (Laboratoria, 2023). Thus, 'acuerparse' [to embody – oneself] is a key concept for TD, 'goes beyond the English concept of embodiment to refer to the act of collectively coming together and putting bodies on the line in struggle, and of supporting one another in the proces', it is:

*...the personal and collective action of our bodies, outraged by the injustices experienced by other bodies, that self-organize to provide themselves with political energy to resist and act against the multiple patriarchal, colonialist, racist, and capitalist oppressions. Acuerpamiento generates affective and spiritual energies and breaks borders and imposed time. It provides us*

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<sup>14</sup> Original title in Spanish: 'Biosindicalismo desde los territorios domésticos. Nuestros reclamos y nuestra manera de hacer'

*with closeness and collective rage, but also revitalization and new strength, to recover joy without losing our rage* (Laboratoria, 2023).

TD gives some examples of ‘embodying the struggle’: ‘One of them has to do with the support and welcome that we provide each other, with celebrating ourselves... We also place a lot of importance on sharing individually with one another, on taking care of relationships... Dance and music are a mode of expression, they allow us to celebrate and bring us joy, because “if we can’t dance, it’s not our revolution!”’ (Laboratoria, 2023). Joy and care are not only used to fight for their rights but also to cope with loneliness: ‘We embody the struggle against the loneliness produced by domestic work and migration, we seek joy and care for one another. Care is what keeps us in the group: we return for the hugs and good moments that we share’ (Laboratoria, 2023).

While, in my view, Foucauldian concepts reflect the negative control of bodies exercised through politics, bio-syndicalism and embodied struggle are ways of challenging power relations as well as questioning hegemonic discourses (for example when TD mentions ‘the truth, our truth’ in the previous page). Moreover, these two concepts are aligned with the idea of joyful militancy since they attach importance to the ‘joy of being lived’, “to recover joy without losing our rage” which is not limited to demand for labour rights but also for other right such as ‘the right to decent housing, the right to basic material conditions for a dignified life, the right to migrate, the right to health and care, the right to pleasure, to live lives without any type of violence, to actively participate in collective life...the right of all human beings to live lives that, with their natural complexity, since we are not naive, deserve the joy of being lived’ (Laboratoria, 2023).

These two concepts will be operationalized by analyzing how their characteristics acquire meaning in TD’s songs and street actions, by looking at how the struggle for rights and dignity beyond labour rights takes shape (bio-syndicalism) or how collective actions put bodies at the centre and how mutual support is expressed in TD’s songs and actions (embodied struggle).

#### 4.3. Sørensen’s theory on the role of humour as nonviolent resistance

TD has a peculiar way of telling hard and difficult experiences that happen to domestic workers, instead of using pity or shame, they prefer to use humour and irony (Pimentel Lara et al, 2021, p. 7). In this connection, Sørensen examines the role of humour in resistance and protest movements, for Sørensen (2008), humour has three main functions: facilitating outreach and mobilization; facilitating a culture of resistance; and turning oppression upside down. The first function concerns the relationship with people outside the movement. The second one relates

to the contribution of humour towards strengthening solidarity and capacities of individuals to participate in resistance movements. And the last one, perhaps the most powerful one, modifies the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor.

Based on Sørensen's theory, I will see to what extent the functions outlined are reflected in TD's actions. It should be noted that these three functions are conceived as ideal types to help an analysis, meaning that they can be overlapped, and that one action of humour can contribute to more than one function.

#### 4.4. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory

Foucault argues that discourses are linked to power in a complex way: 'Discourses are not once and for all subversive to power or raised up against it...discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (ibid.: 100 -101, as cited in Lynch, 2014, p. 18). In this way, I will analyze to what extent TD has created a discourse/s as a form of resistance and to exercise power.

Foucauldian notion of discourse has served as the basis for new theories on discourse that share a basic premise: the way we talk is not neutral, it does not reproduce our social relations and identities objectively, rather it is of crucial importance in the way we can create and change them (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1).

I will use Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to analyze songs. It is a 'poststructuralist theory in which the whole social field is understood as a web of processes in which meaning is created' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 25). Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory broadens the scope of analysis by covering all social practices, in this way, discourses and systems of social relations are regarded as synonyms (Howard, 2000, p. 8). Thus, all objects and actions are considered meaningful, since everything is discursive there is no dialectical interaction between discourse and social practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 19).

Thus, discourse theory goes beyond Foucauldian discourse analysis that differentiates between 'discursive practices' and 'non-discursive' activities and institutions (Foucault, 1972, 1981, 1991<sup>a</sup>, as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 4). Moreover, discourse theory establishes an analogy between social and linguistic systems and interprets meanings of social practices in historical and structural contexts (Howard, 2000, p. 13).

To Laclau and Mouffe, there is no one truth to be discovered, on the contrary, people's understanding of society and identity is always contingent or contextualized, based on the

struggles between discourses, this implies that meanings are never definitive and final but are constantly changed. For Laclau, the politico-discursive production of society is contingent, 'by showing the structural undecidability of numerous areas of the social, deconstruction reveals the contingency of the social' (Mouffe, 1996, p. 2). Thus, 'the condition of possibility of something is also its condition of impossibility' (Laclau, 1996, p. 50).

Here it should be noted that discourse theory raises a problem of epistemology: '...The problematic relationship between language and "reality". Without a doubt, the political project that emerged from poststructuralism is a "radical skepticism about 'truth' and the correspondence of fact and concept' (Isenberg, 1992, p. 451). However, Isenberg argues this does not mean 'an anarchy of meaning', since discourse theory acknowledges that discursive practices model history, thus contributing to questioning the assumptions of 'objectivity, neutrality, and the transparency of representation' (Isenberg, 1992, pp. 451-452).

Discourse analysis is intended to examine how the processes of struggling to fix meanings of signs take place, and how some of these processes of fixating meaning are so conventionalised that are seen as natural (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 25-26). Here we find a crucial idea of discourse theory: since all social phenomena are constructed discursively, their meanings are always subject to change, they are never fixed definitively (Rear, 2013, p. 5).

Taking all these into account, I will examine how TD constructs discourses by fixing meanings and signs (the discursive process) and to what extent TD's discourses contribute to question the assumptions of impartiality and truth in hegemonic discourses. More specifically, I will look at how domestic and care work acquires meaning through TD's discourses and to what extent TD has created discourses that are shaped by key features of joyful militancy (care, joy, humour, etc).

## 5. Method and material

### 5.1. A case study approach

Schell defines case studies as those in which the principal subject is selected as an example of a social entity within its context (1992, p. 3). Since my research question focuses on how joyful militancy takes shape in discourses of feminist movements, the case study is appropriate when addressing the question on 'how' (Schell, 1992, p. 2). I have decided to do case study research because it constitutes an empirical inquiry to examine a contemporary phenomenon (Territorio Doméstico) using multiple sources of evidence (images and songs).

My case study is based on a single case: *Territorio Doméstico (Domestic Territory)*. This choice is based on several reasons. The first one is that TD defines themselves as feminists and we need to keep in mind that this research is focused on feminist movements:

*..we feel that, more than being feminists, we do feminism all the time: a popular, grassroots, streets feminism, not an armchair feminism....We have politicized the work of household and care employees connecting it to proposals and discourses from feminist economics. We have taken them something very concrete: our situation and how it is interconnected with the social reorganization of care. In that process, we have met and connected with many feminist compañeras [comrades] and we have learned from one another, through resonance, encounter, and also conflict, which we recognize as part of life and collective construction. (Laboratoria, 2023).*

Besides, TD has emerged as one of the main movements formed by female migrants working as domestic workers in Spain, for TD humour and creativity but also care and struggle go hand in hand, which are defining characteristics of their ‘embodied struggle’ and that can be considered as features of joyful militancy too. In addition to this, their actions are well documented through diverse material available online, which allows us to explore how TD constructs discourses and how joyful militancy is shaped in its discourses.

## 5.2. Data collection of online material

The main method of collection consists of online observation, through the internet, to collect material that already exists. The collection of material includes images and songs extracted from TD’s websites and social media, however my research is not focused on how TD uses social media or on examining the particular role of social media, rather I use social media and webpages as places where I can gather material, to collect material, it is research through the internet, not about it. When collecting data online, there are different types of data, in my research I will collect ‘extant data online’, material that already exists without any intervention by the researcher, mainly songs and images.

When addressing research online, Postill and Pink’ reflections are particularly pertinent because they highlight the connection between online and offline environments and how the internet is an environment where boundaries between online and offline worlds are blurred (Postill & Pink, 2012, p. 126). In this way, the internet constitutes a digital ethnographic place where the online and the offline worlds are interrelated in its narratives (2012, p. 127).



### 5.3. Methods of analysis

When it comes to structure my analysis, I have decided to start by dividing the analysis by each type of material. Firstly, I will use Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to examine songs that constitute textual material; songs are more appropriate to be analysed through discourse analysis since text is the primary unit of analysis (Walton & Boon, 2014, p. 360). Moreover, I need to be humble and realistic, taking into account that this is my first-time applying discourse analysis, songs are more adequate for my first analysis.

Bearing in mind that a discourse is conceived as 'the fixation of meaning withing a particular domain' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26), I will identify how key concepts of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory are present in songs. Taking into account my research questions I will examine how key concepts of theory discourse (nodal points, floating signifiers...) can help us answer these questions.

However, discourse analysis does not only imply to identify key concepts of discourse but to examine how they relate to each other, for example the construction of TD's identity need to be analysed by looking at how key signifiers are combined through chains of equivalence that are opposed to other chains, in a process that includes and ignores possibilities of identification (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 44). In this way, the focus needs to be on 'their capacity as articulations: what meanings do they establish by positioning elements in particular relationships with one other, and what meaning potentials do they exclude?...Does it challenge and transform an existing discourse by redefining some of its moments?' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 30). These key concepts and their meanings will be explained in the section on research results.

Once songs are examined, the main findings will be used to see to what extent they are reflected in images created by TD, which are mainly examples of advocacy campaigns and street actions. This does not mean that this second analysis will consist of applying a checklist to confirm that findings from discourse analysis are valid, but to examine examples of how meanings constructed in discourses through textual material are represented in visual material.

Moreover, images can enrich the exploration of discourses of TD and they will be analysed with more suitable methods for visual material. In particular, I will use the method of discourse analysis proposed by Gillian Rose (that she calls 'discourse analysis I'), which focuses on how discourse is articulated through images and texts (Rose, 2001, p. 140).



## 5.4. Material

The material includes songs and images created by TD or images representing actions of TD. Three songs from the album ‘Porque sin nosotras no se mueve el mundo’<sup>15</sup> (‘Without us, the world does not turn’), recorded in 2019<sup>16</sup>, have been selected. The choice of songs is based on the following reasons: the album represents ten years of activism, being songs that have been used in street actions. Moreover, the three songs address different topics that are connected to TD’s aim and actions, and they were the most played songs at the time I accessed to the online album (04/04/23). The songs are: ‘Todas somos Adelita’<sup>17</sup>, ‘Deja ya los miedos’<sup>18</sup> and ‘Mujeres transfronterizas’<sup>19</sup>.

With regard to the images, they have been extracted from TD’s Facebook<sup>20</sup>, Twitter<sup>21</sup> and other online media<sup>22</sup>. They have been selected according to two main criteria: they represent images of advocacy campaigns (illustrations) or images of street actions (photos); they show actions carried out by TD or campaigns in which TD is involved, discarding images shared by TD related to other issues. Taking into account that TD’s Facebook was created in April 2016 and Twitter’s account in December 2018, I have gone through all posts to see to what extent they meet the aforementioned criteria, and finally resulted in seven images covering the period 2000 – 2023 (March).

## 5.5. Limitations and ethical considerations

All materials (songs and images with text) are written in Spanish language so I have translated them into English but since I am not a professional translator, this would imply to have some inaccuracies in the translations that may compromise the reliability of the analysis. Moreover, at the beginning of my research I found quite challenging the application of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory since there are not methodological guidelines for researchers. For this reason and in order to better understand how to apply discourse theory, I have consulted several articles but also watched videos created by researchers<sup>23</sup> and universities<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://soundcloud.com/territoriodomestico>

<sup>16</sup> The creation of the album is a project supported by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (Office in Madrid).

<sup>17</sup> <https://on.soundcloud.com/LNMjc>

<sup>18</sup> <https://on.soundcloud.com/1EZky>

<sup>19</sup> <https://on.soundcloud.com/a3skv>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/territoriodomestico>

<sup>21</sup> <https://twitter.com/Territoriome1>

<sup>22</sup> Only image 6 has been extracted from a different source, the website of the organization that has supported the recording of the album: <https://www.rosalux.eu/es/article/1871.territorio-dom%C3%A9stico.html>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEnjZZzcJ4Y&t=3s>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tstkq9JCkgE&t=20s>

When it comes to research in online spaces, I would like to mention two ethical considerations: the first one is not risking the identification of individuals, the second one is to take into account the distinction between public and private, especially when collecting extant data, which means that material that is accessible online might not be perceived as public by its creators, ‘Individual and cultural definitions and expectations of privacy are ambiguous, contested, and changing. People may operate in public spaces but maintain strong perceptions or expectations of privacy. Or, they may acknowledge that the substance of their communication is public, but that the specific context in which it appears implies restrictions on how that information is -- or ought to be -- used by other parties’ (AoIR, 2012, p. 6). In this research, all material to analyse is published online, in social media, and the official website of TD, that’s why I assume that their use is not problematic.

Since I am Spanish and I will analyse discourse produced mainly by female migrants, I need to take into account Sara Ahmed’s idea of ‘the otherness’, which illustrates how the construction of the Other involves difficulties to reach the ‘knowable’ other, pointing out that ‘the Other represents otherness precisely because she is not understandable or easy to represent’ (Ahmed, 2002, as cited in Carbin, 2014, p. 112). In line with this, Mohanty warns against the risks of ‘discursive colonization’ (Mohanty, 1991, as cited in De Vault & Gross, 2011, p. 5). In this sense, I need to be aware of the risks associated to the hierarchical construction of two categories (Western woman and Third-World woman) that conceives Western women as the norm or referent (Mohanty, 1988).

## 6. Research results

Moving from discourse theory (DT) to discourse theory application (DTA) has not been without difficulties and fears since there is no guidance with specific steps on how to apply it. As Jonathan Potter points out, discourse analysis is a “craft skill” that can be learnt by doing (1996:140, as cited in Rose, 2001, p. 139). In that regard, Müller explains that discourse analyses have to be tailored to the study, particularly the aim of the study and the concept of discourse (Müller, 2010, p. 3) so I will keep in mind my research questions while exploring key concepts of discourse theory and how they relate each other by looking at the types of discourses, logics of discourse and the construction of identities. In the following I explain the analysis applied to songs followed by the analysis of visual material (images).

## 6.1. Discourse analysis of songs

In order to better explain how this analysis was conducted, I will outline the main steps, which are partly based in the framework proposed by Walton and Boon (2014, pp. 360-367) , albeit modified for my research's needs. Please note that original lyrics of songs (in Spanish) as well as translations into English and the link of the album are included in the Appendix, in case this can facilitate understanding of this analysis.

### **Step 1: Constructing and contextualizing the data**

In 2019 TD launched a disco that compiled ten songs used in their street actions for over a decade, which are sung by members of TD. The three songs selected are the most played in Soundcloud at the time of collection (April 2023): “Todas somos Adelita” (We are all Adelita), “Deja ya los miedos” (Let go of your fears now), and “Mujeres transfronterizas” (Transborder women). Despite my analysis is documented using English language, in order to apply discourse analysis and find key concepts I have focused on the lyrics written in Spanish, the original language of songs, as well as my mother tongue, which facilitates my analysis. When referring to these songs, I will number them as 1 (Todas somos Adelita), 2 (Deja ya los miedos) and 3 (Mujeres transfronterizas) to simplify the quotation of lyrics.

To my knowledge, two out of the three songs are inspired in revolutionary songs: ‘Todas somos Adelita’ is a very famous song about the Mexican Revolution of 1910 while ‘Mujeres transfronterizas’ draws from the anti-fascist Italian song ‘Bella Ciao’. I do not know if the song ‘Deja ya los miedos’ has also a revolutionary origin, I would only say that its origin may be from South America according to its music.

### **Step 2: Identifying existing discourses**

This step aims to identify discourses articulated in the text and to examine what meanings are included. The first one is about *domestic and care work*, which stresses the importance of recognizing labour rights: ‘join our fight against the precariousness’ (song 2), ‘we only want rights and no more exploitation’ (song 2); giving visibility and value to care work: ‘Adelita how much you have worked bringing wealth here’ (song 1); and criticizing how transnational care is organized : ‘Global care chains are the new perversion created by the patriarchy to exploit us’ ( song 2), and ‘We spend hours in telephone centres to take care here and here’(song 3) to stress the importance of telephone centres as a symbol of transnational care (Laboratoria, 2023).

This discourse is articulated together with a *migration discourse* where female migrants are protagonists of the stories, being migration focused on their everyday experiences: ‘One

morning in Nicaragua a young woman leaves her house and crosses the wide sea' (song 3), 'remittances are our urgency' (song 3), as well as on restrictive migration policies and their consequences: 'Adelita ten years working but she is still illegal' (song 1), 'Adelita is imprisoned in the CIE<sup>25</sup>, she was caught in her way to work' (song 1).

I would say that there is a third discourse that is intertwined with the two previous ones: a *discourse on rights* and the need to fight for them. Based on the situation of female migrants (discourse 2) working as domestic and care workers (discourse 1), TD fights for their rights, but moving beyond labour rights to other rights are considered equally important, as they explain when they define themselves as a movement doing 'bio-syndicalism' (Laboratoria, 2023).

In this way, songs talk about labour rights ('the agencies exploit us...we want to report them' in song 2, 'if Adelita had a contract she could legalize her papers' in song 1), the right to participate in collective life and to live a life without violence and fears ('let go of your fears and come now to demonstrate in the street' in song 2, 'we fight together' in song 3), the right to joy and love ('we support each other' in song 3, 'we sing together' in song 2), and the right to have a dignified life ('fight for your dignity' in song 3). In my view, they represent what TD calls bio-syndicalism that implies fighting for rights beyond labour rights. Moreover, we see some ideas regarding the 'embodied struggle' when lyrics illustrate that they support each other and they fight together.

So far, we have seen that there exist three discourses in TD's songs: a discourse on domestic and care work, a discourse on migration and a third one on rights. They are not conflicting discourses and the first time I analysed them, the feminist claim *The personal is political*<sup>26</sup> came to my mind. On this point TD stresses '...the joy and love that we have placed in our relationships as a political form of constructing the common, of making the personal political' (Laboratoria, 2023). In this connection, it has been affirmed that 'the personal is political' is a key concept for feminist poststructuralism since it abandons the idea of two categories (individuals and structures) (Koložova, 2021, pp. 100-101).

### **Step 3: Analysing the organization of each discourse**

The key unit of analysis in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is the *signifier* of signifying practices (signs with meanings-signified) (Müller, 2010, p. 11). Discourses are composed by

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<sup>25</sup>CIE=Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros (migrant detentions centres in Spain). For more information about CIEs, their consequences and the situation of human rights, please see <https://madridnofrills.com/cies-no/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://feminisminindia.com/2017/11/15/personal-is-political-journey-slogan/>

*moments*, which are defined as ‘signifiers whose meaning has been partially fixated through articulation’ (2010, p. 11), while elements are signifiers that still have multiple meanings.

Articulation is the process to achieve a partial fixation of the meaning and thus transforming elements into moments (Müller, 2010, pp. 11-12). However, it should be noted that this process, called *closure*, is never complete (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 28), since discourses are constantly reconstituted through contingent articulatory practices.

Laclau and Mouffe argue that articulation is characterized by ‘the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:113, as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 102). A *nodal point* is ‘a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal point’ (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). Thus, nodal points acquire meaning through chains of equivalence whose aim is to ‘bind together a particular system of meaning (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8, as cited in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 363).

Another key concept is *floating signifiers*, ‘signs that different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their own particular way’ (2002, p. 28). Jørgensen & Phillips provide a good example to illustrate this: ‘body’ would constitute a nodal point in medical discourse, whereas it would be a floating signifier when it does not have a clear delimited meaning and there are different ways of understanding it, for example the way body is understood in the discourse of alternative treatment is different from that of medical discourse (2002, pp. 28-29).

Once these key concepts (elements, moments, floating signifiers, nodal points and chains of equivalence) have been explained, they will be identified in the three songs. The discourse on domestic and care work is constructed around the nodal point *exploitation*, around which other moments such as ‘long hours’, ‘no contract’, or ‘not being paid’ are organised. Within the migration discourse, *difficulties that migrant face due to restrictive migration policies, particularly those in an irregular administrative situation* represent a nodal point, around which other moments are articulated in a chain of equivalence: being caught by the police, being imprisoned in a detention centre for migrants (Spanish CIE) and not having a contract. Instead of naming the nodal point ‘irregular administrative situation’, I will use the term used by TD: ‘being illegal’.

The third discourse on rights has *struggle* as its main nodal point, in my view there are different moments of TD’s struggle such as the joy of singing, demonstrate in the streets, no more fears, providing mutual aid through meetings and listening to one another, or being aware of the importance of their work and their contribution to the society. Dignity is a key element in TD

and it is part of one of its slogan ‘Nothing from pity, everything from dignity’<sup>27</sup> to stress that their struggle ‘is a matter of social justice, not a charity or social assistance. We tell those who treat us poor little migrants, “We are working on something that is in common with you, that affects you and your family and the whole social structure, why do you start from pity?”’ (Laboratoria, 2023)

There is one moment ‘*having a contract*’ that is linked to two nodal points ‘exploitation and ‘being ilegal’. For this reason, since it does not have a single meaning and it is opened to different ascriptions of meaning, I would consider it as *floating signifier*, however I am hesitant here since I do not consider discourse on care and domestic work and discourse on migration as struggling for the meaning of ‘not having a contract’. It might, rather, constitute an element with several meanings, rather than a floating signifier.

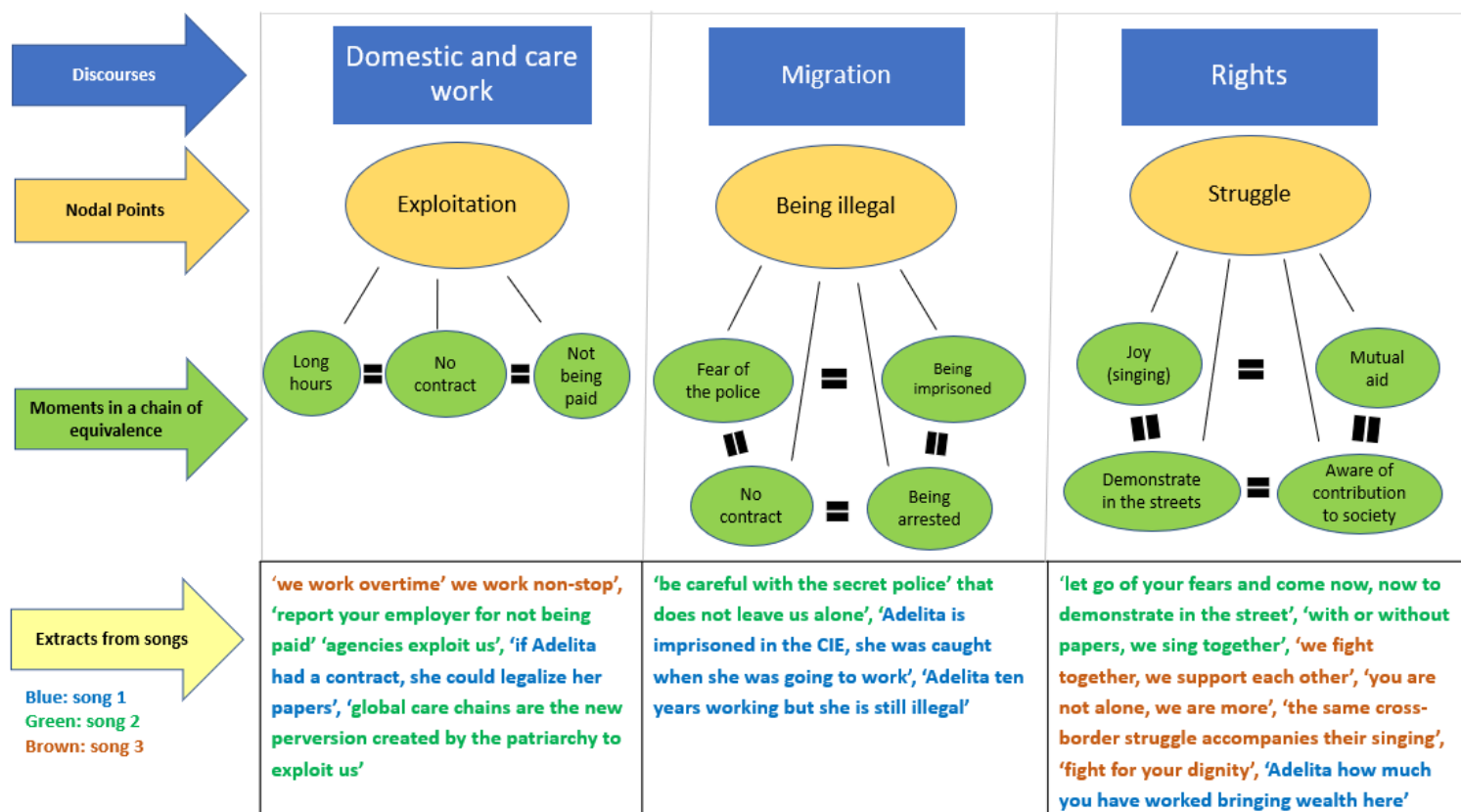
It is important to note that the three discourses analyzed are not opposed, there is no antagonistic frontier between them. However, I think that the third discourse on rights emerges as a response of the two first discourses, based on the exploitation and irregular situation suffered by many female migrants working as domestic and care workers in Spain. Moreover, since discourse on the struggle for rights is closely linked with the way TD fights for their rights as a way of doing a joyful militancy, I will pay more attention to the latter when reflecting on how nodal points and moments identified illustrate new forms of feminist militancy, however this does not mean ignoring the other two discourses, in fact they are so intertwined that sometimes isolating one discourse becomes difficult.

Figure I illustrates how discourses are articulated around nodal points and moments identified, including extracts of songs to evidence these findings.

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<sup>27</sup> The original slogan in Spanish is “Desde la lástima nada, desde la dignidad todo”.

**Figure 1. Discourse articulation in Territorio Doméstico's songs**



#### **Step 4: Examining how identities are organised discursively through subjectivity**

This step is intended to understand how texts serve to construct and mobilize subjects based on the post-structural idea of non-essentialism (Walton & Boon, 2014, p. 364), according to which the perception of identity is also subject to change through ongoing struggles between discourses (Rear, 2013, p. 5). In this step we focus on understanding how TD perceives their identity as a group within society, and how it constructs meaning of other subjects mentioned in their songs.

To Laclau and Mouffe, subjects are understood as 'subject positions' within a discursive structure' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 41). In this way, discourses 'designate positions for people to occupy as subjects' (2002, p. 41). But how is identity constructed within discourses? It comes from 'identification with certain subject positions' conceived as nodal points of identity that are linked together through chains of equivalence that play a key role in creation of a group identity (Rear, 2013, p. 10).

When it comes to the identity of TD as a group, it is not an identity with clear limits, not having established an antagonist boundary to define its limits, for example to differentiate 'us' from 'them', as is the case of constructing national identities (Rear, 2013, p. 11). TD's identity discourse operates under a logic of equivalence that focus on moments articulated through

chains of equivalence that stresses how different individuals (from different countries, of different ages, with different migrant status...), have common features (migrants), and unmet demands (labour rights, equality...). Thus, its identity is articulated around subject positions of women, domestic worker, transborder/migrant and feminist activism.

Next quotations are examples of how TD has constructed its identity focusing on their shared interests but acknowledging the diversity of its members: ‘elderly or young, black or half-breed, the same transborder struggle accompanies their singing’(song 3), ‘female Ecuadorian, female Dominican...female Romanian, Bangla or Bolivian...fight for your dignity’ (song 3), or ‘with or without papers, we sing together, we only want rights and no more exploitation’ (song 2).

While there are different concepts in TD’s discourses that deserve attention, I will focus on those that seem significant to me when analysing the subject position of migrant domestic workers, it is the *subject identity of the ‘dehumanized-disposable worker’* that has been socially constructed and that TD challenges with its songs: ‘Adelita how much you have worked bringing wealth here and now the crisis expels you so go back to your country’ (song 1). I understand this in the sense that migrant domestic workers are treated as tools, not as persons, that can be used and then send back to their countries when there are economic crises.

Moreover, songs highlight ‘age’ as a key concept, related to how women leave their countries when are very young, still girls, experiencing a migration process which is very hard, and how they risk being expelled from the labour market or from the country when they get older, in line with the identity of the ‘dehumanized-disposable worker’: ‘Another morning in Philippines...still a girl takes a plane and suddenly grew up’ (song 3), ‘If you are fifty, they tell you that you do not serve to work’ (song 1).

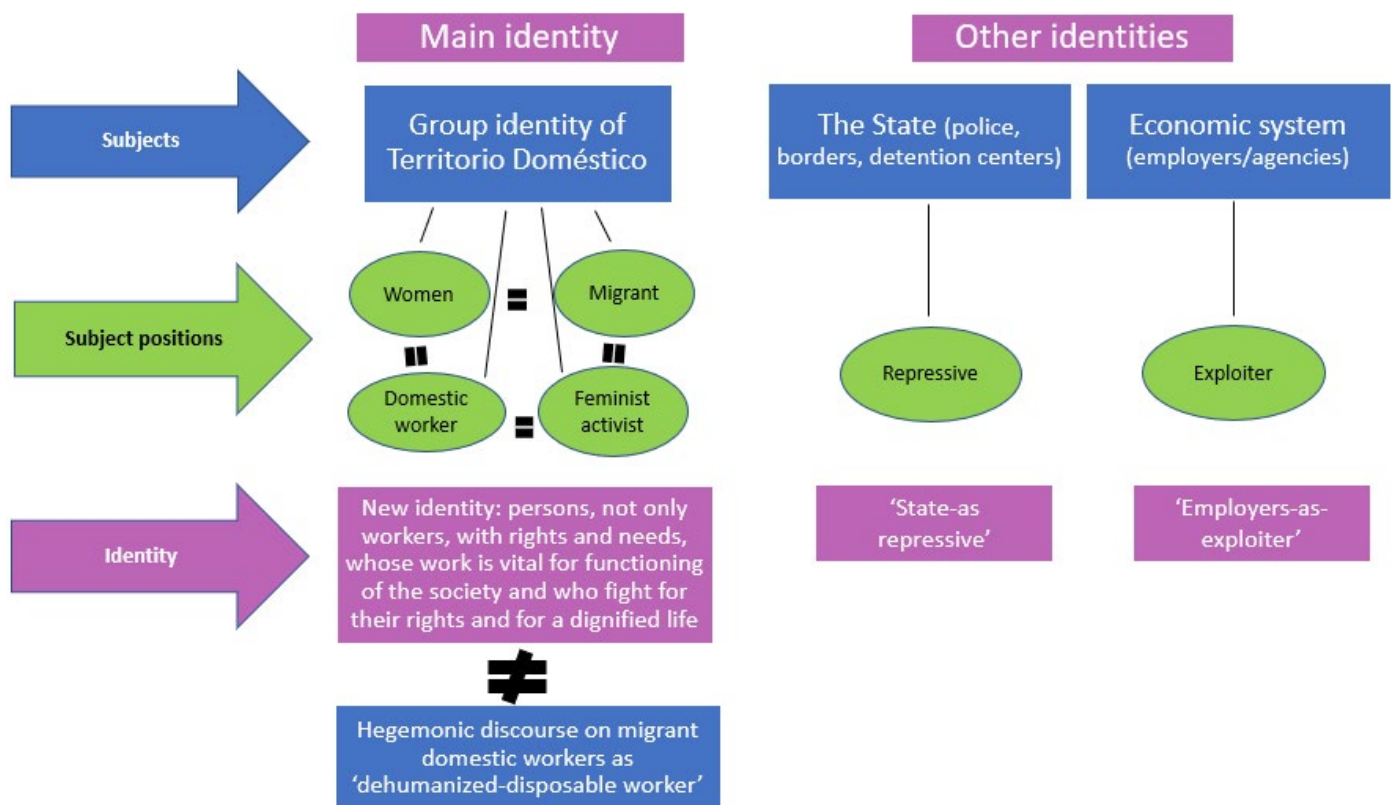
In my view, a key contribution of the discourse created by TD is to acknowledge the existence of this identity and to challenge it with a *new identity* as ‘persons, not only workers, with rights and needs, whose work is vital for functioning of the society and who fight for their rights and for a dignified life. In line with this, I would like to recall that the title of the album is ‘Without us, the world does not turn’, one of their main slogans, as they explain:

*...what would happen if we did not work one day?...Without us, not even the most important and powerful man could exercise his power... The market and capitalism need invisible, precarious, feminized, badly paid or completely unpaid care work so that people can be productive in this system that only values that which generates money and profits* (Laboratoria, 2023).



Moving now to examining which subject positions are present in a discourse helps us understand the existence of conflicts and how some voices are more prevalent than others (Walton & Boon, 2014, p. 364). Two main agents have been identified: the first one is represented by the state, through the police, detention centres for migrants and borders, seen as ‘*state-as repressive*’. This is illustrated with extracts such as ‘she was caught when she was going to work’ (song 1) and ‘be careful in the underground, in the bus terminal too, be careful with the secret police that does not leave us alone’ (song 2). A second agent is formed by employers (private employers or agencies), part of the economic system, which are given the subject position of ‘*employer-as-exploiter*’: ‘report your employer for not being paid’ and ‘the agencies exploit us...they take advantage of the crisis, we want to report them’ (song 2). In both cases, subject positions are constructed as agents participating in an economic system accompanied by immigration policies shaped by a patriarchal system: ‘Global chains are the new perversion created by the patriarchy for our exploitation’ (song 2).

**Figure 2: Construction of identities in Territorio Doméstico's songs**



## 6.2. Discourse analysis of visual images

Once songs have been examined using Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis, in this section I will apply the discourse analysis proposed by Gillian Rose (2001), adapting it to my research questions, to examine to what extent and how discourses constructed through songs are present in images too. It must be noted that some images, particularly those illustrating advocacy campaigns, include text that also need to be analysed discursively, putting it in relation with images and with their contexts.

To conduct discourse analysis, as proposed by Rose, I will start by following her recommendations to get familiar with the material by trying to immerse myself in it. Then, several steps will be taken in order to answer questions such as 'How are particular words or images given specific meanings? Are there meaningful clusters of words and images? What associations are established within such clusters? What connections are there between such clusters?' (Rose, 2001, p. 151).

The seven images analysed are also included in the Appendix with information on their sources, date of collection and links. Additional images have been also included in the Appendix as examples of TD's actions.

### **Step 1: Getting familiar with material**

Following Rose's recommendations, time is needed to look and look again images so that you can find new ideas, focusing on each aspect of the image and how they are connected. In this sense, I have paid attention to the context and purpose of each image, if they are part of the advocacy campaign to demand the ratification of ILO Convention on Domestic Work in front of the Spanish parliament, if they illustrate street performances to raise awareness amongst citizens of the situation of domestic workers, etc. Here I need to stress that most images are related to the campaign to call on the Spanish government to ratify the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Worker that was carried out between 2020 and 2022.

### **Step 2: Identify key aspects of images**

After getting familiar with images, I have divided features identified in images into five categories: objects, costumes, words, locations, actions. Then, I have reflected on those that may be more important, not necessarily those that are the most repeated, in order to 'think about connections between and among key words and key images' (Rose, 2001, p. 150). I have adapted this step to my research by reflecting on how these features are also connected to discourses identified through songs, paying attention to two main issues that are connected with

the research question on examining how joyful militancy takes shape in Territorio Doméstico: the discourse on rights (with struggle as its main nodal point) and the identity of TD as a group.

**Table 1: Main aspects in images of Territorio Doméstico**

Type	Description of elements
Objects	Cleaning and cooking tools: toilet brush, cleaner spray, iron, vacuum cleaner, mop, mop bucket, lids for pots, feather dusters, gloves for washing.
Costumes	Wigs, apron, flamenco dress, feather boas, nurse costume.
Words	Related to the demand of rights (labour rights, labour protection, ratification of ILO Convention 189...) and dignity (essential workers, ‘nothing from pity, everything from dignity’).
Locations	Public space: streets, squares, near the Spanish Parliament.
Type of action	Street actions: dress statutes as domestic workers dance and sing, street theatre to represent the work done by domestic workers. Drawings as part of advocacy campaigns.

Table 1 is not comprehensive since there are other components (gestures, movements...) that are not included but they will be considered when analysing the images, words have been translated from Spanish to English. The purpose of this table is to guide my analysis, to take them into account when analysing images. Once these aspects have been classified, the next step is to explore their connection with the discourse on rights and with TD’s group identity.

### **Step 3: Explore connections between key components of images and discourses**

Since songs that represent years of activism have been examined using discourse analysis and images represent actions at a specific point in time, this step aims to explore to what extent discourses constructed through songs and those created through images are interconnected.

To this aim, I have analysed a sample of images, divided into two categories: three illustrations of advocacy campaign (not representing real actions) and four images of street actions (street performance and demonstrations). Within each type of images, all images have been ordered in chronological order, from the oldest to the most recent since some of them are related to historical moments (advocacy campaigns for the ratification of ILO Convention, celebration of the ratification, demand of translating the ratification into a national law...) that may be better understood if images are ordered historically.

### 3.1. Illustrations of advocacy campaigns

They represent three illustrations, two of them relate to the ILO Convention 189 (images 2 and 3) and another (image 1) on demanding labour protection for domestic workers. English translation of the main text in the three images is provided in a footnote<sup>28</sup>.

Image 1. Campaign on the World Day for Safety and Health at Work (28.04.20)



Image 3. Campaign for the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work (21.06.22)



Image 2. Call for Assembly for law's application of ILO Convention 189 (22.06.22)



The three images are part of the discourse on rights, with a focus on demanding labour rights (labour protection, ratification of ILO Convention...). Looking at some key features, all of them include cleaning tools (cleaner spray, gloves...) and they represent women, united, identified as domestic workers and with diverse origins based on different shapes of hairs (image 2), and a woman whose 'weapon' is a cleaner spray in a serious attitude (image 3).

While I was getting familiar with images of TD, looking and looking at them and identifying key components, I have realized that there are two objects that are frequently repeated: the toilet brush and the apron. While the apron can be considered as a way to identify its members as domestic worker in their actions, the toilet brush acquires a very special relevancy as we will see in the analysis of images of street actions.

<sup>28</sup> **Image 1:** #Labourprotection FemaleDomesticWorkers. 28 April World Day for Safety and Health at Work #PreventionofRisksatWorkLawNow. **Image 2:** Ratification 189 achieved! We have the right, now for the law. Assembly of the Feminist Movement for the 189. **Image 3:** Essential workers with labor rights. Ratification of 189 Convention now. 16 June, 9 years without full rights

There is a key word in image 3 ‘trabajadoras esenciales’ [female essential workers] that needs to be contextualized to better understand it. The image is framed in the context of the COVID pandemic period where domestic workers were called ‘essential workers’ to stress the importance of their work, but being those who suffered particularly the consequences of the COVID-19 such as losing their jobs or seen increased the work overload (de Diego-Cordero et al, 2022, p. 134). In my view, this is not only connected to the discourse on rights but also to the identity of domestic workers that has been constructed by TD, as women that are aware of the importance of their work, of how essential it is.

Moreover, TD has constructed an identity that also questions some discourses constructed on migrants:

*Pity, at its core, is traversed by the imaginary of maids, with the idea that, due to being Indian, or Black, or Mestiza, due to being from an “underdeveloped country”, that is their destiny, that is their lot in life. From that starting point, it quickly goes from “poor little immigrants” to “immigrants are invading us”. There are people who think that they are doing you a favor when they contract you for four hard hours or when they give you clothes that nobody wants anymore: in their hearts they think they are helping you... We do not want anyone to feel sorry for us, because we want to break with that miserablism. We want to break with the covert racism and classism hidden in those types of discourses... (Laboratoria, 2023).*

### 3.2. Illustrations of street actions

I have analysed four images of street actions aimed at demanding the ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work. In my view, image 4 is particularly significant because it is the current cover picture of Facebook profile of TD and it has served to illustrate the cover and back cover of the main publication about TD’s activism<sup>29</sup> (they can be found in the Appendix).

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<sup>29</sup> [http://laboratoria.red/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Territorio\\_RL\\_WEB.pdf](http://laboratoria.red/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Territorio_RL_WEB.pdf)



Image 4. Cover picture of TD's Facebook, street action to demand ratification of ILO Convention 189 and to regularize migrants in an irregular situation (21.06.20)



Image 6. Street performance in front of the Spanish parliament to demand the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 (image extracted from a documentary about TD and published in an online article on 15.02.21)<sup>30</sup>



Image 5. Street action for ratification of ILO Convention 189 and to regularize migrants (21.06.20)



Image 7. Retweet of Territorio Doméstico on article from national newspaper about the victory of domestic workers regarding the ratification of ILO Convention 189 (10.06.22)



In all images we can see again cleaning tools and costumes used in street actions. There is one tool that has caught my attention, as already mentioned, the toilet brush. It is used in almost all images (drawings or pictures), being carried with the fist raised, as a symbol of fight or struggle. But what is the meaning behind the use of the toilet brush? While reading documents about TD, I have found out that toilet brush is used as a sword or microphone while lids for pots are considered shields, to represent themselves as warriors (Pimentel Lara et al, 2021, p. 66).

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.rosalux.eu/es/article/1871.territorio-dom%C3%A9stico.html>

Toilet brush has become the symbol of TD's struggle, it has even been used as 'a present' given to national deputies of the Spanish parliament, along with a document with their demands, to make them aware of 'who are the ones cleaning and doing the most invisible work that makes the world function but still without full labour rights'<sup>31</sup>.

The use of cleaning tools and clothes acquires meaning through discourse on rights with struggle as its main nodal point. In these images we see how different moments of discourse on rights (joy, aware of domestic work's contribution to society...) are translated into street actions. Cleaning tools are not aimed at being solely funny, rather they intend to show that care is fundamental, they do not hide any tasks that could be considered dirty or degrading (for example cleaning toilets represented by the brush), it is a way to bring to the public space objects that belong to private places and to provide them with other meanings, to question why care is organized in such a way and to challenge society on how care could be addressed in a different way (Pimentel Lara et al, 2021, p. 27).

It is important to highlight that some objects that could be interpreted as tools with a single objective, have in fact more than one purpose. This is the case of wigs used by some participants in street demonstrations that are in an irregular administrative situation in Spain and are afraid of being detained by the police (Draper & Pimentel Lara, 2020), while others use wigs for joy.

In my view, these images represent what TD calls 'embodied struggle' that is connected to the idea of 'joyful militancy':

*We take to the streets with wigs, dance, and songs and launch our messages that strongly communicate material aspects of everyday life: access to housing, health care, the most basic needs and rights, sexist violence... With our embodied way of occupying the street, putting ourselves in play and communicating with our bodies, showing ourselves as diverse territories, with each woman's rhythm and compass, we break that cliché of the poor little domestic worker and generate references for other migrant women. We render our bodies visible, with their curves, their ailments, their age, and we do so with pride, overturning the norm that only considers certain bodies beautiful and putting ourselves in play exactly as we are, with a power generated by the energy of doing it together and the transformative and communicative power of being and showing ourselves as we are: strong, powerful, diverse women, who fight with joy as a political weapon, speaking clearly with our bodies and our presence. (Laboratoria, 2023).*

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<sup>31</sup> Extracted from press release made by Territorio Doméstico on 16 June 2000, it has been translated into English. <https://www.facebook.com/territoriodomestico/photos/1730492937102782>

As they clearly explain, this embodied struggle is also a way to challenge the identity ascribed to migrants as ‘poor migrants’ and to vindicate a new identity with pride.

## 7. Discussion

In this section, we need to examine to what extent main findings address the research questions. When it comes to discourses created and how they are articulated, three discourses have been identified (domestic and care work, migration and rights), each of whom is constructed around one main nodal point: exploitation, being illegal, and struggle, respectively. Each discourse is constructed through the logic of equivalence (with chains of equivalence connecting moments around a main nodal point), they are not conflicting discourses, rather they are intertwined.

If we look at the way TD constructs its group identity, we find a discourse that highlights differences between individuals (with diverse origins, ages or migrant status) but who share common characteristics (e.g., being migrant) and unmet demands (labour rights, dignity, equality...). In this way, TD articulates its identity around the subject positions of women, domestic worker, migrant and feminist activism. In TD’s songs we also find two identities ascribed to economic and political agents, however they are less developed than the group identity of TD. Here I refer to identities of ‘state-as-repressive’, represented by the police, borders and detention centres for migrants, and the identity of ‘employer-as-exploiter’ as main agents of the economic system.

TD challenges the hegemonic discourse that conceives migrant domestic workers as ‘dehumanized-disposable worker’ by constructing a new identity of domestic workers that are conceived as persons, beyond workers, with rights and needs, who are aware that their work is key for societies and question the way care is organized. In addition to this, TD also challenges discourses on migration policies and how care is organized, by questioning the existence of borders and global care chains.

If we look at how discourses are created in relation to characteristics of joyful militancy, songs and images evidence the use of joy, care along with the ‘embodied struggle’ in TD’s actions, mainly present in discourse on rights. Thus, TD tells hard stories in a graceful way, creating actions that make their work visible and question how it is organized. Moreover, they are aligned with the feminist claim ‘the personal is political’ by connecting their personal experiences with political and economic spheres.

Humour is a characteristic of joyful militancy that has different purposes. When it comes to functions of humour based on Sørensen’s theory, I would say that TD uses humour for two



reasons. The first one is to promote more solidarity and strength among its members, we see in images 5 and 6 that they play 'humorous scenes' wearing flamenco dresses, with comic and exaggerated postures. However, I would not say that images alone tell us that humour is used for this purpose, in order to arrive to this conclusion, I have consulted TD's publications where TD explains it: 'we are very damaged and that's why, hugs, the listening, the laughter, strengthen us'<sup>32</sup> (Pimentel et al, 2021, p. 49). The second function aims to facilitating outreach by better connecting with the audience, again this is not a conclusion extracted from the material analyzed but from TD's publication where it is explained how songs engage the public: *Songs became a tool to make our situation as domestic workers and female migrants visible, to tell it with humour, giving it a twist, generating spontaneous complicities with the audience*<sup>33</sup> (Pimentel et al, 2021, pp. 65-66).

## 8. Conclusions

Despite initial difficulties to understand how to apply Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory to my analysis, I would say that it has proven to be an effective tool to explore how a feminist movement, Territorio Doméstico, creates meaning through discourses and how joyful militancy is shaped in TD's discourse.

In my view, TD is a good example of how joyful militancy and embodied struggle contribute to new ways of doing feminism, which connect personal stories with the structural level, questioning the legitimacy of global care of chains and challenging hegemonic discourses on care and migration.

In addition to this, the fact that TD makes visible one of the most precarious and invisible work, the domestic and care work, and points the finger at the patriarchal system, embedded in the political, social and economic systems, is an example of the power of new ways of doing feminism and contributes to raise awareness on the need to rethink how care is organized.

I would like to conclude by saying that, in an increasingly globalised world, further research is needed to explore other examples of joyful militancy in emerging feminist movements that particularly address the intersection of gender, care and migration in their struggles, contributing in that way to the knowledge on how construction of discourses that question the legitimacy of power relations can mobilize people and contribute to social change.

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<sup>32</sup> Original text in Spanish.

<sup>33</sup> Original text in Spanish.

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## Appendix: Material

### 1. Facebook images (extracted from Territorio Doméstico Facebook<sup>34</sup> on 2 April 2023)



Cover picture of Facebook of Territorio Doméstico (31 March 2022)

This photo inspired the drawing made by the illustrator Ana Peñas for the book cover of the publication 'Biosindicalismo desde los territorios domésticos' (Bio-syndicalism from domestic territories). Below it is an example of a tweet on the presentation of this publication as well as the cover and back cover of the publication.



Extracted from Twitter on 29 April 2023

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/territoriodomestico>





Cover and back cover of the [publication](#) (accessed on 2 May 2023)



Campaign on the World Day for Safety and Health at Work (28 April 2020)





Campaign for the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work (21 June 2022)



Performance for the ratification of the ILO Convention on Domestic Work (21 June 2020).

## 2. Tweets in Twitter (extracted from Twitter of Territorio Doméstico<sup>35</sup> or retweeted by Territorio Doméstico when tweets concerning them, on 29 April 2023)



Call for Assembly for law's application of ILO Convention 189 (22.06.22)



Retweet of new from national press about the Spanish ratification of ILO Convention

<sup>35</sup> <https://twitter.com/Territoriodome1>





Retweet of video celebrating the Spanish ratification of ILO Convention



Retweet of video celebrating the Spanish ratification of ILO Convention



Image retweeted by Territorio Doméstico on 9 June 2022 (organizations celebrating the ratification of the ILO Convention 189 by the Spanish government)



Images of TD celebrating the ratification of the ILO Convention 189



### 3. Other images (online sources) – accessed on 29 April 2023



Activistas de Territorio Doméstico en una acción de calle en Madrid.

CEDIDA.

Image included in article about TD action to demand Spanish ratification of ILO Convention 189

<https://ctxt.es/es/20220201/Politica/38846/territorio-domestico-nuria-alabao-feminismo-cuidados-empleadas-domesticas-subsidio-desempleo.htm>



Presentation of TD's album in Madrid. <https://amecopress.net/Politizar-las-ollas-las-calles-y-los-delantales>



Street performance in front of the Spanish parliament to demand the ratification of the ILO Convention 189

Source: <https://www.rosalux.eu/es/article/1871.territorio-dom%C3%A9stico.html>

## 4. Songs from album 'Porque sin nosotras no se mueve el mundo'

('Without us, the world does not turn') Source: <https://soundcloud.com/territoriodomestico>

Song number 1	
<p><b>Todas somos Adelita<sup>36</sup> (original song)</b></p> <p>Si Adelita tuviera un contrato sus papeles podría arreglar Adelita diez años currando pero sigue siendo ilegal</p> <p>Si tienes cincuenta te dicen que no sirves ya pa' trabajar Adelita no llores y vente a la calle a reivindicar</p> <p>Adelita cuánto has trabajado aportando riqueza hasta aquí y la crisis ahora te expulsa pa' que te vuelvas a tu país</p> <p>Si Adelita tuviera un contrato sus papeles podría arreglar Adelita diez años currando pero sigue siendo ilegal</p> <p>Adelita está presa en el CIE la cogieron cuando iba a currar desde dentro y también desde fuera las fronteras vamos a asaltar para que nadie sea ilegal</p> <p>Si Adelita tuviera un contrato sus papeles podría arreglar Adelita diez años currando pero sigue siendo ilegal y no queremos a nadie ilegal vente a la calle a reivindicar.</p>	<p><b>We are all Adelita (translation)</b></p> <p>If Adelita had a contract She could legalize her papers Adelita ten years working but she is still illegal.</p> <p>If you are fifty they tell you that you do not serve to work Adelita do not cry and come to the street to vindicate.</p> <p>Adelita how much you have worked bringing wealth here and now the crisis expels you so you go back to your country.</p> <p>If Adelita had a contract She could legalize her papers Adelita ten years working but she is still illegal.</p> <p>Adelita is imprisoned in the CIE<sup>37</sup> she was caught in her way to work from inside and from outside we are going to storm the borders so nobody can be illegal</p> <p>If Adelita had a contract She could legalize her papers Adelita ten years working but she is still illegal and we do not want anyone being illegal come to the street to vindicate.</p>

<sup>36</sup> "La Adelita" is one of the most famous songs from the Mexican Revolution, representing any female soldier that contributed to this Revolution [http://websites.umich.edu/~ac213/student\\_projects06/joelan/adelita.html](http://websites.umich.edu/~ac213/student_projects06/joelan/adelita.html)

<sup>37</sup> CIE=Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros (migrants detentions centres in Spain)

## Song number 2

### Deja ya los miedos (original song)

¡Viva Territorio Doméstico!  
 Si eres trabajadora  
 o el paro te sienta mal  
 Únete a nuestra lucha contra la precariedad.  
 Con papeles o sin ellos cantamos al mismo son  
 Sólo queremos derechos y no más explotación.  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 a la calle a manifestar.  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 por tus derechos e igualdad.  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 Denuncia a tu jefa por no pagar.  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 Vente ya vente ya vente ya já.  
 Las agencias nos explotan  
 Internet ando fatal  
 Se aprovechan de la crisis  
 Las queremos denunciar  
 Las cadenas de cuidado son la nueva perversión  
 Que ha inventado el patriarcado  
 para nuestra explotación.  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 a la calle a manifestar  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 por tus derechos e igualdad  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 Denuncia a tu jefa por no pagar  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 Vente ya vente ya vente ya já.  
 Ciudadito en el metro  
 También en la terminal  
 Ojito con los secretas  
 Que no nos dejan en paz, no nos dejan en paz.  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 a la calle a manifestar  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 por tus derechos e igualdad  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya  
 Denuncia a tu jefa por no pagar  
 Deja ya los miedos y vente ya ya

### Let go of your fears now (translation)

Long live to Territorio Doméstico!  
 If you are a female worker  
 or unemployment makes you feel bad  
 join our fight against the precariousness.  
 With or without papers, we sing together  
 we only want rights and no more exploitation.  
 Let go of your fears and come now  
 let go of your fears and come now now  
 to demonstrate in the street.  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 for your rights and equality.  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 report your employer for not being paid.  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 come now come now come now Já.  
 The agencies exploit us  
 Internet and I am not well  
 they take advantage of the crisis  
 we want to report them.  
 Global care chains are the new perversion  
 created by the patriarchy  
 to exploit us.  
 Let go of your fears and come now  
 let go of your fears and come now now  
 to demonstrate in the street.  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 for your rights and equality  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 report your employer for not being paid  
 let go of your fears and come now now  
 come now come now come now Já.  
 Be careful in the underground  
 In the bus terminal too  
 Be careful with the secret police  
 that does not leave us alone, not leave us alone.  
 Let go of your fears and come now  
 let go of your fears and come now now  
 to demonstrate in the street.  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 for your rights and equality  
 Let go of your fears and come now now  
 report your employer for not being paid  
 let go of your fears and come now now  
 come now come now come now Já

Song number 3	
<b>Mujeres transfronterizas<sup>38</sup> (original song)</b> <p>Una mañana en Nicaragua  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Sale de casa una muchacha  Y atraviesa el ancho mar.</p> <p>Otra mañana en Filipinas  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Coge un avión casi una niña  Que creció de sopetón.</p> <p>Cuando llegamos a nuevas tierras  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Hacemos horas  Somos internas  Trabajamos sin parar.</p> <p>Y las remesas son nuestra urgencia  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>En locutorios horas pasamos  para cuidar aquí y allá.</p> <p>En autobuses, parques y super  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>nos encontramos, nos escuchamos  no estás sola, somos más.</p> <p>Cada segundo domingo al mes  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Nos convocamos en Karakola  Tan solo nos faltas tú</p> <p>Juntas luchamos, nos acuerpamos<sup>39</sup>  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Organizamos nuestros reclamos  Se acabó la esclavitud.</p> <p>Mayor o joven, negra o mestiza  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>La misma lucha transfronteriza  acompaña su cantar.</p> <p>Ecuatoriana, Dominicana  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>rumana, bangla o boliviana  Lucha por tu dignidad (x3)</p>	<b>Transborder women (translation)</b> <p>One morning in Nicaragua  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>a young woman leaves her house  and crosses the wide sea.</p> <p>Another morning in Philippines  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Still a girl takes a plane  and suddenly grew up.</p> <p>When we arrive at new territories  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>We work overtime  We are live-in (domestic workers)  We work non-stop.</p> <p>And remittances are our urgency  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>We spend hours in telephone centres  to take care here and there.</p> <p>In buses, parks and supermarkets  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>we meet, we listen each other  you are not alone, we are more.</p> <p>Every second Sunday of the month  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>We meet in Karakola<sup>40</sup>  The only thing needed is you.</p> <p>We fight together, we support each other  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>We organize our claims  Slavery is finished.</p> <p>Elderly or young, black or half-breed  The same transborder struggle  accompanies their singing.</p> <p>Female Ecuadorian, female Dominican  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>female Romanian, Bangla or Bolivian  ¡Oh bella ciao! ¡Bella ciao! ¡Bella, ciao, ciao, ciao!</p> <p>Fight for your dignity (x3)</p>

<sup>38</sup> Melody and chorus based on the Italian song 'Bella Ciao' from the late 19th century that was revived by the anti-fascist resistance movement active in Italy between 1943 and 1945 <http://www.folkworld.eu/67/e/bella.html>

<sup>39</sup> 'Acuerpar' means literally 'to put the body' (poner el cuerpo). For more information, see notion of embodied struggle in section 4.2.

<sup>40</sup> Eskalera Karakola is a feminist association based in Madrid. <https://eskalerakarakola.org/>