TERRITORY AND PROSTITUTION IN THE TRAVESTI EXPERIENCE IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the relationship between the travesti experience and the institution of paradoxical discontinuous territory in southern Brazil. Our reflection is based on twenty-two interviews conducted with travestis who work in the sex trade and seven interviews with people working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work with travestis. All the interviews were analysed according to the constitution of semantic networks, as proposed by Bardin (1977), which gave meaning to the spatial dimensions experienced by the travestis. All the analysis shows that it is through various processes of social exclusion and spatial interdiction that travestis resist; both through various multidimensional geographies, as well as specifically through the southern Brazilian paradoxical discontinuous territories.

KEYWORDS
Travesti; Feminist geography; Queer geography; Prostitution.

INTRODUCTION
This paper examines the relationship between the travesti experience¹ and the institution of paradoxical discontinuous territories in southern Brazil. This proposition was developed within the Territorial Studies Group, from the analysis of the content of twenty-two interviews conducted with travestis who work in commercial sexual activity², three of which were conducted in Spain³. Seven other interviews were also carried out with people working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work with travestis. All the interviews were analysed

¹ In order to protect the identity of our sources, we decided to use the names of female figures from Greek and Roman mythology as pseudonyms. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that the term “travesti” is used in the female gender to respect the identification as female of these people, even though they may have male genitalia.

² Catonné (2001) states that prostitution, as well as being one of the oldest activities of mankind, now involves millions of people worldwide. According to Edlund and Korn (2002), supported by studies of the International Labour Organisation, it is estimated that between 0.25% and 1.5% of the populations of countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand derive their livelihood through prostitution. This activity represents between 2% and 14% of the gross domestic product of each of these countries.

³ Interviews given to the researcher Joseli Maria Silva (postdoctoral fellow in geography and gender at the Complutense University of Madrid, 2008).
according to Bardin’s proposal (1977), and the results produced semantic axes that gave meaning to the spatial experiences of the group that was studied. The total of all these interviews was systematised using four discursive spatialities that produced different intensities of evocation in the group’s discourse. These discursive spatialities were ‘home’, with 12% of evocations, ‘city’ (5%), ‘intra-urban territory’ (22%) and ‘discontinuous territory’ (38%). Despite the importance of the listed discursive spatialities and their interdependence, this text deals specifically with the so-called ‘discontinuous territory’ of travesti prostitution.

This discursive spatiality was created from the observation carried out by the group in search of increasingly large territorial conquests, reaching several spatial scales, which went beyond municipal boundaries. According to Howell (2001), although it is highly complex from a spatial point of view, the phenomenon of prostitution has not aroused the interest of geographers. So-called ‘Feminist geographies’ and ‘Queer geographies’, despite being focussed on the relationship between sex, gender and desire, do not highlight the theme of prostitution.

However, in Brazil, we can point to several studies of the relationship between space and commercial sexual activity, such as Mattos and Ribeiro (1996), Ribeiro (1997), Campos (2000), Silva (2008) and Ornat (2009). This text is organised into two parts. The first part is a discussion about the use of paradoxical discontinuous territory as a comprehensive tool in relation to travesti prostitution, in order to find theoretical and conceptual support able to build an understanding of this phenomenon. The second part of the text explores personal and territorial connections, which give meaning to the reality experienced by the studied group of travestis in Brazil.

PARADOXICAL DISCONTINUOUS TERRITORY IN THE TRAVESTI EXPERIENCE

Territory is an important focus of interest in geography, especially in the political area. Wastl-Walter and Staeheli (2004) have linked it to the notion of nation-state borders. This trend has obscured the possibility of viewing the idea of territory and power through the prism of sexuality and other social markers such as gender and race, for example. However, the use of the concept of territory, beyond its relationship with state power, has been made in the field of geography (Nagar, 2004; Martin, 2004).

Souza (1995) explored the relationship between territory and relations of power by constituting territory from the idea of ‘who’ is in charge and has influence, and ‘how’ they control and influence space; is the power over space that establishes the inclusion or exclusions of objects, people and behaviours. Nevertheless, sexuality has not been sufficiently explored in its relation to space, or with territory.

The activity of travesti prostitution is a phenomenon that can be understood through the

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4 23% of discursive evocations of this universe were disregarded for not constituting a semantic axis.
5 The tradition of territory grounded in the nation-state has been widely discussed by Ratzel (1882) and Gottmann (1973).
idea of territory as it is extremely hierarchical and it produces constant tensions between the people who are involved in it.

There are some specific differences between *travesti* prostitution and female prostitution, for example. *Travestis* contradict the linear pattern between sex, gender and desire (Butler, 2003) and those who seek their services, mostly men, are more likely to keep this type of relationship secret than they would regarding relations with women prostitutes. This is because sexual intercourse with a person, who, despite looking female has a penis, can tarnish the image of virile masculinity of the client. The fact is that that *travestis* are specifically different from the heteronormative standard; there is a history of exclusion and discrimination throughout their lives, from early childhood to adulthood. This aspect is common among these people and their stories of suffering end up being elements of the bonds of affection between them, as reported by Silva (2009) and Ornat (2009).

The intra-urban spaces appropriated by *travestis* do not exist independently of themselves. They depend on the mobility of *travestis* between different cities in order to offer themselves as ‘novelties’ to clients, which generates curiosity and desire. The profitability of this type of prostitution today is made up of the high turnover of *travesti* prostitutes who, when they arrive in a place, can attract a greater number of customers, whose fantasy is to experience new sexual experiences. The flows of mobility between the various *travesti* prostitution territories located in different municipalities in southern Brazil establishes connections between them, and shapes a configuration that Souza (1995) calls discontinuous territory.

For Souza (1995), the idea of discontinuous territory articulates various spatial scales and all of them include actions of control or power that generate restricting borders and processes of inclusion or exclusion of people and behaviours, as also argued by Wastl-Walter and Staeheli (2004). The elements of borders (The boundary limit of a territory), the excluded (outsiders) and included (insiders), so present in theories about territory, cannot be susceptible to only one interpretation. Every configuration depends on what is the ‘point of departure’ or the gaze that builds the intelligibility of the phenomenon. A person who observes the activity of prostitution from the 'outside' of that reality can conceive of a particular territorial configuration, which may be different from those who look at the phenomenon from 'within' the activity. Thus, the same reality, depending on the position of the beholder, can compose different configurations between border, insider and outsider i.e. various territories.

The relational view of spatial phenomena was developed by Massey (2008) and for her nothing is final or static; everything is always in interdependent motion and is the result of a process that is a consequence of 'who is looking' and 'where they are looking from'. Accordingly, the activity of *travesti* prostitution does not constitute a single territory that could be revealed as a universal truth, but multiple possibilities. The option chosen for this research is to show the territorial configuration of the point of view of *travestis* themselves.

*Travestis* are part of the society that excludes them. This is because for a heteronormative society to remain as such, it needs to create the idea of 'vile' beings that
society itself denies the right of social existence. Butler (2008) refers to ‘abject beings’ to define people who are socially disregarded. According to the author, abject beings question the matrix production of bodies and their social meanings, as well as the delineation of what can be considered valid as social existence.

The bodies of *travestis* are identified negatively by Western society, since they contravene the linear rules of sex-gender-desire. These people experience the world in a paradoxical way; they are in constant tension with the society of which they are a part. This characteristic is critical to how they conceive of their own lives. Outside of social existence, they build their lives evading the legality that does not accept them. Informality is a striking feature in the constitution of their territories of prostitution. Despised socially and yet sexually desired, they establish their survival strategies through various informal actions in which the moral codes of their group and personhood\(^6\) are crucial to achieving hierarchical positions and also spatial conquests of greater amplitude.

The exercise of power includes the control of the elements that make up the networks of personhood and the moral codes involved in *travestis* prostitution. However, this power is not organised into an opposition between dominant and dominated. The notion of power discussed in this research is based on the ideas of Foucault (1988), who believes that power is a multiple correlation of forces that will never run out, and which are inseparable from the field in which they are exercised. Thus, the power that is exercised does not consider the idea of the opposition between an insider/outsider in a territory because they are interdependent; they only exist in relation to one another. Foucault’s ideas about power greatly influenced the work of Rose (1993). Rose’s view of geography challenges the dual, oppositional notion of the constitution of territories. It creates the concept of ‘paradoxical space’ to highlight the multiplicity and the plurality of locations of people living in permanently tensioned relationships of power, who may be in the position of the centre and/or the margin of territorial configuration, depending on the relationship profile that is established. For Rose (1993), people simultaneously occupy both central and marginal poles of power relationships from the most varied spatial possibilities and this depends on the position of the person who is looking at the phenomenon.

The social marginalisation experienced by *travestis* can also serve to elucidate the simultaneous position of the insider/outsider. In an interview about prostitution, Pitia states:

> If I were a ‘normal’ person I would not know that this existed; this other world that society knows about but closes its eyes to. They sleep on their goose feather pillows and think that they live in another world. Within the city there are other worlds. People know that they exist but they don’t know how they work. I know how they work and I live in one of them. (Interview with Pitia, Porto Alegre City, Brazil, 21/12/2010).

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\(^6\) The idea of personhood was developed by Silva (2002) to provide evidence that knowledge among people who share a common code of values is a key element in social relations that develop in small spaces, overlapping formal and neutral relations, which are typical of the impersonality that is predominant in the large cities of modern Western society.
Pitia is referring to her position of marginality in relation to heteronormative society and how she is designated as ‘abnormal’. However, her comments demonstrate a notion of centrality when she says that in the world of prostitution, where she lives, she knows very well how everything works, i.e. she controls strategies and elements that must be mobilised to influence that space.

The idea of the existence of the simultaneity of positions, and the interdependence of insider/outside peer relationships, offers great potential for understanding the dynamics of travesti prostitution, especially because this approach adopts the point of view of those involved in such activity. Thus, the conceptual proposition that is established here is that paradoxical discontinuous territory is defined as a space that is discursively produced, which is simultaneously connected/disconnected, and which is instituted by diffuse and unstable power relations exercised in a multi-scale manner, thereby generating the plurality of locations of the various individuals who claim for themselves the right to space.

The displacements between the various locations developed by travestis involved in the activity of prostitution connect spaces and form networks with various patterns and diverse linkages. The following section will examine this phenomenon.

**DISCOURSE INSTITUTION CATEGORIES OF PARADOXICAL DISCONTINUOUS TERRITORY IN THE TRAVESTI EXPERIENCE**

The discourses of the travestis regarding the activity of prostitution and spatial mobility generated a total of 380 evocations, which were arranged into four different discursive categories: ‘motivational factors related to displacement’ (17.4%), ‘spatial factors of connectivity’ (23.4%), ‘strategic factors related to displacement’ (17.1%), and ‘control factors related to the territory of prostitution’ (35.5%).

The discursive and structural categories of paradoxical discontinuous territory shown in Figure 1 will now be discussed in the light of an ordering that builds an argumentative logic of the travesti discourse, and not through the quantitative hierarchy of their evocations.

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7 6.6% of the evocations did not constitute a semantic category.
The text presents the following order of argument: 1) the motivational factors affecting displacement between locations in travesti prostitution, to understand the reasons for such a spatial dynamic; 2) the spatial factors of connectivity in the flows of the travestis involved in prostitution, in order to understand the interests that each locality exerts in the development of commercial sexual activity; 3) the strategic factors used by travestis in the process of spatial displacement, establishing the form of their actions to achieve their goals; and finally, 4) the controlling factors of paradoxical discontinuous territory in relation to travesti prostitution, in order to understand the ways of maintaining the territorial configuration that is established.

Motivational factors affecting displacement between locations in travesti prostitution

The discursive category ‘motivational factors affecting displacement’ was composed of the following elements: financial reasons (33%), search for fresh experiences (21%), body transformation (12%), flight from spatialities (12%) and the search for new relationships (12%).

8 The remaining 10% of evocations were scattered and did not constitute a semantic axis on their own.
Travestis justify their high spatial mobility by the economic advantages that it brings with it, both in moving between Brazilian cities and in moving abroad, and in moving to other cities when they are abroad. They point out that such movements are made possible by the figure of the madam, who centralises relationships with travestis, while establishing links with other madams. This connection between the madams establishes a network founded on its own moral codes, to be followed by all members of the group who want to stay in a particular location.

There is interdependence between the madam and travestis. The madams need the travestis to perform intensive sex work because, in general, they get a percentage of the earnings of the travestis. On the other hand, the travestis rely on the ability of the madams to place them in different locations within a short period of time. Therefore, the travestis require positive indications that a madam can get work for them in different cities. Spatial mobility is related to the demand for sexual services, as being ‘new’ in a locality is an advantage with customers. Thus, both madams and travestis have a great interest in increasing the turnover of being a ‘novelty’ in different places and for this to occur, the madams establish a network of people who are able to make the necessary changes feasible.

The turnover between locations of prostitution, usually in different municipalities, is a key element to be considered within the discursive category ‘motivational factors affecting displacement’. Travestis need to be viewed with desire and this is directly related to being something that is yet to be known and discovered, invoking the fantasy of the body, as argued by Pile (1996). Artemis recounts this process:

So the strategy is this, you are in the city for a while, a month in Curitiba City. Then you have already got customers, you have gone out, made all the contacts and everything. Then you move to another city for a while, and then move from one city to another, and then move back to Curitiba City. I moved back to Curitiba City and I’m working here. The clients are now different, or maybe even the same as when I first came here, but it’s a different time, you know? (Interview with Artemis, Curitiba City, Brazil, 26/6/2010).

Binnie (2001) argues that the search for new and different bodies is part of the erotic possibilities of the city; a spatial materialisation of sexual desire. The spatiality related to travesti prostitution is linked to the realisation of sexual desires that are related to contracts made between travestis and clients. Thus, the paradoxical discontinuous territory of travesti prostitution also involves the materialisation of desire and sexual fantasies.

As Binnie (2001) observes, fantasies allow us to create contexts and spaces oriented to our desires. The distinction between fantasy and ‘reality’ is created from spatialities that are related to travesti prostitution, materialising - making the fantasies real - or at least making them possible.

9 Interview with Dine, Londrina City, Brazil, 27/3/2009.
The access to technologies of body transformation was also part of the discourse of the travestis, and it was grouped in the discursive category 'motivational factors affecting displacement'. The constant displacement which allows them to increase their income also provides access to processing technologies such as plastic surgery, the fitting of prostheses, and even injecting industrial silicone. Atena exposes the relationship between displacement and body modification: "I arrived in Balneário Camboriú City, my body all made up, ten years ago. For example, [the city of] Santo André gave me the body, Avenida Industrial in Campinas City gave me the prosthesis, and Balneário Camboriú City gave me everything I have "(Interview with Atena, Balneário Camboriú City, Brazil, 26/5/2009).

The constant need to achieve the ideal of femininity that matches their psychological and social well-being involves large sums of money and so displacement is connected with the increase of profits and the achievement of a desired body shape.

The 'flight' from spatialities is linked to prejudice within the family and from those close to a travesti. It also occurs when a travesti is threatened or suffers violence or risk of death. The 'expansion of relationships' is a key component of the discursive category 'motivational factors affecting displacement' and it is linked to the need to extend networks of contacts, especially those who may be able to facilitate displacement.

The extension of relationships is a key tactic that guarantees travestis a number of advantages, such as recommended for a place at the home of a madam by a friend, to have a place to stay when moving to another city or to be protected against other travestis. The more a travesti expands their networks, the easier it is to cope with displacements; thereby forming the dense networks of personhood that are required. The option of 'where to move to' is related to the 'spatial factors of connectivity', which was another discursive category identified in interviews with the travestis.

Spatial factors of connectivity within travesti prostitution

The discursive category 'spatial factors of connectivity' was made up of the following elements: 'relationship with procuring' (68%), 'the help of travestis' (14%), the 'relationship between political militancy and procuring' (8%) and 'the relationship with NGOs' (5%)10.

The 'relationship with procuring' is undoubtedly a hegemonic element in the formation of this discursive category. Travestis referred to procuring11 with the following meanings: the importance of the madam in power relations at each location, the need for the existence of a house run by a madam, and the intense relationships between the madams at different locations.

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10 The remaining percentage was related to 'police repression and procuring', 'the help of travestis and madams', 'the industrial city' and 'good family relationships with elements of non-spatial connectivity'.

11 According to the Brazilian law 12.015 (2009) procuring (or more commonly, pimping) is the practice of sexual exploitation, in any form, having direct or indirect relation with the economic gains from prostitution. Importantly, this sense of illegality was not found in the discourses of the travestis.
The tactics established in the relationship between madams and *travestis* require the existence of both parties, since, in general, the madams of *travestis* are older *travestis*, or infrequently, women. To achieve the centrality of the networks of personhood and become a madam is a long task; their main functions in the organisation and maintenance of prostitution networks are related to organising displacements, indicating a *travestis* to another madam at another location, occasionally lending money (to be charged at high interest rates), mothering, protection, and also coercion and violence to maintain rules.

Erinia states that the main activity of Aphrodite (the manager of a lodging house for *travestis*) was to solve the problems related to the spatialities of *travesti* prostitution in their city. This was not only linked to the use of force and violence, but also to the influence that she was afforded due to the respect of other *travestis*. According to Erinia, Aphrodite won this respect when she was responsible for a street of *travesti* prostitution in Italy. Erinia states that Aphrodite had the idea of establishing a lodging house for *travestis* in Europe, thereby creating a transnational network of *travesti* prostitution.

Aphrodite herself reflected on her position as a 'manager of a lodging house for *travestis*’ and stated that the success that she had achieved, based as it was on the centrality of personhood relationships that enable the displacement of *travestis* in prostitution networks, was greatly aided by the ‘testimonies’ of the *travestis* themselves, who valued her services, and that it was a relationship full of affection. She observed that her maternal role was often recognised by the *travestis* whom she welcomes into her home:

I set up my house. One [*travesti*] came along, and then another, so they all consider me, mother... All [the benefits], a smile, the joy of one of them, make me more than happy. This recognition of being a mother is amazing because I end up really feeling like their mother. Because if they have to cry, they come crying to me. If they need some advice, I listen. They come to me for everything; to ask for an opinion, to ask for an answer, a solution. I know that it’s my job, but it goes beyond money. (Interview with Afrodit, Curitiba City, Brazil, 31/7/2008).

The madams are part of the group and have ambiguous roles; of exploitation, but also protection and hosting. The *travestis* do not refer to the madams pejoratively, rather in a positive manner. Thus, contrary to what one might imagine, madams figure as something positive in the existence of *travestis*; in their role as a host, by enabling them to earn money, but also by providing certain services related to body transformation in an exclusive environment. In this way, *travestis* do not need to be exposed elsewhere in the city, where they might suffer

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12 The word ‘mothering’ is the construction of the relationship between a mother figure and a child, without, however, including the biological factor of motherhood.

13 Interview with Erinia, Ponta Grossa City, Brazil, 30/7/2010.

14 The term ‘manager of a lodging house for *travestis*’ is used by many madams to alleviate the pejorative meaning of procuring.
These exclusive services are more expensive than in the open market and when they are financed by madams the final price ends up being even more expensive still.

The madams are identified as a maternal figure who is often called ‘Mother’ or ‘Godmother’ and moreover, they are the main instrument of displacements of the *travestis*. Iris\(^\text{15}\), for example, states that displacement happens when you know the madams. According to her, it is through recommendations and references from other *travestis* that one can access these ‘lodging houses’. Once they are inserted in the network of personhood, *travestis* move from one ‘lodging house’ to another, both within Brazil and abroad.

The activity of being a madam is the main element of the discursive category ‘spatial factors of connectivity’: the madams are like nodes in a network of personhood that adheres to the moral codes of the group and which allows the intense flow of *travestis*. Due to the fact that *travestis* constitute a group who live informally, personal relationships are of great importance and, therefore, they consider that help from other *travestis* to perform their displacements is a key factor (14% of evocations). The fact of knowing a large number of other *travestis* causes an expansion in the ability to access other locations. However, unlike the characteristic of fixity that the madam presents, the fact that *travestis* are constantly shifting presents a fluid possibility of connections.

The category ‘spatial factors of connectivity’ also contains elements of the ‘relationship between political militancy and procuring’ and ‘relationship between NGOs’. The fact that *travestis* mostly survive through commercial sexual activity and still fight politically for human rights sets up an interesting interweaving of the institutions of civil organisations who fight for LGBT rights, and the personhood networks established by madams and *travestis*.

The same madam who structures *travesti* prostitution may also be an important political activist in the struggle for human rights and citizenship. Thus, it is impossible to separate the contacts that make up prostitution from those through which *travestis* gather for political action. The political activities of *travestis* enable the expansion of their network of relationships within the country, interlinking actions of legality and illegality.

The discourses of the *travestis* that constituted the discursive category ‘factors of spatial connectivity’ provided evidence that the connection between different locations made via the flows of *travestis* is fundamentally based upon elements of personhood relationships that revolve around madams.

*Strategic factors used by travestis in the process of spatial displacement*

The discourses of the *travestis* also constituted the discursive category ‘strategic factors of displacement’ in terms of paradoxical discontinuous territory. To move between locations in order to improve their earnings, it is necessary to master some important strategies. The

\(^{15}\) Interview in Ponta Grossa City, Brazil, 8/8/2008.
elements that constituted this discursive category were: ‘help from travestis’ (45%), ‘help from procuring’ (29%) and ‘obedience to convenience’ established in the groups of travestis (17%).

The analysis of the interviews showed a strong interrelationship between the travestis and procuring. As indicated above, in general, the procuring of travestis is not performed by men or women, but by travestis. It is important to remember that there is a long way to go for a travesti to become a madam or a ‘manager of a lodging house’. In general, madams are former prostitutes who, when they get some money together, perform practices that make them madams. This process creates a kind of complicity between them because, as a former prostitute, the madam knows the life of a travesti, and the travesti projects herself into the future with the dream of becoming a madam.

The factor ‘help from travestis’ is linked to the recommendations that are guided by affection or friendship between them, or through friends of friends who recommend them to work with madams. Using the name of a travesti who has prestige among other travestis can be a great aid in the world of travesti prostitution. Thus, the central position of the travesti, used as a reference in the power relations of which she is a part, is the key to entering certain spatialities. The endorsement of older travestis or ‘bridesmaids’, who are respected by the network members, may also serve as an important strategic factor that enables spatial displacements.

Another important element that makes up the discursive category ‘strategic factors affecting displacement’ is the aid of madams or pimps. Although aid among travestis is a strategic element in spatial displacement, it is most significant on the national scale. When one considers the international scene, the issue of procuring appears at a higher intensity, although it is also very important on the national scale. As already mentioned in other discursive categories, knowledge networks enable the suggestion of names, addresses and phone numbers, which are a major source of information exchange in this industry. Even though the networks of personal knowledge may appear to be disorganised, it can be argued that they are extremely efficient in ensuring their reproduction, even outside Brazil.

The strategies of international displacement occur through loans of money, advances for the purchase of airline tickets, the preparation of documentation, and the facilitation of entry into European countries; in general, Italy, Spain and Portugal. The debt incurred is subsequently charged at values often exceeding twice what was borrowed.

In their interviews, Febe and Estige point out that the amount of debt is much higher than the expenses required for displacement. According to Febe, even though she entered Europe with 1,300 Euros, her debt to her ‘facilitator’ was 7,000 Euros. She also stated that she knew friends who entered Europe with debts of 10,000 or 15,000 Euros, even if the actual cost of their displacement was only 2,000 Euros. Silva (2011) indicates that travestis develop a set of strategies of displacement, dodging regulatory mechanisms at the borders between countries.

\[\text{16 The remaining 9\% of the evocations did not constitute a semantic axis and were disregarded.}\]
Consequently, they deal with hegemonic legal structures in their survival tactics on a daily basis, often illegally, and so they are part of the international circuits of globalisation, as argued by Sassens (2003).

Another element that is a component of the category 'strategic factors affecting displacement' is what Mayol (1996) calls convenience. The relationship between procuring and travestis is regulated by a set of values and practices related to behaviours that allow for the maintenance of travestis in networks of personhood and, thus, reap the advantages or disadvantages of the power relations that are established. Consequently, every travesti should behave according to the conventions of the group in order to be recognised as belonging to the group. Convenience, or a list of tacit rules employed within the group, is interpreted by travestis as humility in the presence of stronger travestis and is set in the centre of power relations, such as gaining friendships, the pretence of intrigue, not being addicted to drugs so as not to attract the attention of police, as well as paying on time to the manager of the ‘lodging house for travestis’. An interesting aspect of convenience is respect for stronger travestis who are stronger or more centrally positioned, which occurs through acts of violence, or respect for older travestis. Violent acts are shaped by the honour of 'not running away' and facing challenges with courage.

Thus, knowing how to skilfully handle interpersonal relationships, recognising conveniences, and group hierarchies are key strategies for greater advantages in travesti prostitution.

**Factors related to the control of paradoxical discontinuous territory in travesti prostitution**

The discursive category ‘factors related to the control of discontinuous territory’ was the category that was most evoked in the discourse of the travestis in the establishment of the territory of prostitution. This discursive category had as its main elements: procuring (29.2% of evocations), the relationship between travestis (26.1%), spatial displacement (25%) and convenience (19.7%). The institution of territory is never fully finished; on the contrary, it is constantly in the process of development, and because of that, control factors are triggered to keep power centralised in certain individuals. Control involves the power that is established in interdependent, unequal and mobile relationships; factors which are intrinsic to the relationships between travestis and madams.

In the context of the discursive category ‘factors factors related to the control of discontinuous territory’ procurement was the main element. The so-called ‘managers of lodging houses for travestis’ claimed that they organised their activities after having spent some time as prostitutes abroad, and with that experience they acquired the resources necessary for their business. Thus, for a travesti to become a madam is something that requires an investment in time and funding; not only financial resources but also maintaining a strong network of knowledge about people. Of course there are also men who are pimps and women who are
madams. However, madams who were formerly *travestis* were the most common scenario in the group that we studied.

Considering the international setting, when it comes to factors related to controlling territory, the issue of procuring is also predominant. To send a *travesti* from Brazil abroad, you must have money to invest upfront in buying the airfare, making the necessary documentation, and also making a connection in another country to perform the displacement. Often, all these elements are controlled, and at other times, control vanishes. The case of Tetis, who ended up losing contact with people from outside, which made it impossible to send *travestis* out of Brazil, is an illustration: "It is difficult for me because the people I knew there aren’t there anymore. One’s in jail, another died, and another is in hospital" (Interview with Tetis, Florianópolis City, Brazil, 25/5/2009).

A madam needs to establish her networks in order to maintain her position of centrality in the control of the territory of prostitution and if this territory exceeds the national orbit then the networks needs to be fairly agile, involving people of different nationalities who enable various displacements.

When the issue of procurement in Brazil was the subject of *travesti* discourse, the reports revolved around other measures to control the territory of prostitution, which were related to rent payments (in the lodging houses where *travestis* stay), tolls (payments for being allowed to stand in the street), violence (both to demonstrate power and as protection) and even spatial agreements between madams for the organisation of activity in some cities. The seasons also influence the control actions of territory between madams, because in the summer season, for example, there is a flow to beach resort areas.

When the activity of prostitution occurs in the street, madams appropriate certain locations and charge *travestis* to use that space. Those who are stay in their homes are referred to as ‘daughters’ and violence can occur if there is some kind of threat to these ‘daughters’, to whom madams owe protection, or when a *travesti* refuses to pay for being in an space that has been appropriated by a madam.

An interesting way to keep control of the territory of prostitution developed by certain madams is to camouflage their actions of procurement under the name 'lodging house for *travestis*'. This term has been used, notably by *travestis* who are involved in LGBT political movements, because procuring is criticised from the human rights perspective. Thus, to disguise the contradiction of the position of a militant defender of human rights and the practice of procuring, this less compromising term was created. Yet *travestis* recognise the real meaning of this term. Procurement can be a juxtaposition of various territories in the city and the limits of action of each madam are tacitly contracted.

The relationships between madams in order to maintain control of the territory of prostitution are not always peaceful. Some *travestis* have reported violence between madams, of information passed to the police, as well as murders. The action of ‘managers of lodging
houses for *travestis* or madams, potentiates the activity of prostitution in a paradoxical manner, involving coercion as well as the protection of *travestis*.

The relationship between *travestis* is another element that shapes the discursive category 'factors controlling paradoxical discontinuous territory' because they create solid and resistant identity ties. This occurs to the extent that they share the same life stories, suffering and discrimination, that covers the periods of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Despite the fact that *travestis* recognise themselves as a group that shares many values, competition between them is common.

In addition, they are aware that they are part of a socially excluded fringe group and to maintain their survival they need to remain within networks of personhood that structure the activity of prostitution. They argue that there are some attitudes which are fundamental in their relationships so they can enjoy certain advantages in the prostitution network. These include being kind, offering drinks and cigarettes, and recognising relationships of hierarchy and power. However, they dispute among themselves over the positions of hierarchy that involve beauty, femininity, purchasing power and the ability to seduce customers. These disputes between them are pervaded by the space that emphasises specific rules and social conventions.

The simultaneous relationship that involves identity and disputes between *travestis* also occurs in other countries and involves yet another feature - nationality. *Travestis* who have worked in other countries report that being a Brazilian brings advantages over *travestis* of other nationalities. They report that Brazilians are extremely sought after by foreign clients because they are considered to be more sexy, beautiful, sweet and captivating.

Thus, the relationships between *travestis* contain ingredients that simultaneously unite them and push them apart. Consequently, they need to conduct the balance of their relationships because, as they are a marginalised group, they are intensely interdependent. It is the control of this balance that helps them to widen their network of relationships and thus extend their spatial displacement.

Spatial displacement is another element that makes up the discursive category 'factors controlling paradoxical discontinuous territory'. The narratives of the *travestis* included the names of ninety-eight cities in which members of the group lived and worked as prostitutes, including cities in other countries such as Argentina, Italy and Spain. One curious element about these cities is that 75% of them have a population of less than 490,000, contrary to our initial idea that large cities would be their preferred destinations. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the research area was southern Brazil and in that sense, it is to be expected that most of the cities mentioned were from that region.

The organisation of the trajectories of displacement reported by the interviewed *travestis* indicated three basic trends\(^\text{17}\). The first of these trends relates to connections between cities.

\(^{17}\) The trends did not represent ideal types that can be used for the displacement of any *travesti*, but for the universe that was studied. It is important to mention that two *travestis* who were interviewed did not
without commuting between them. The second trend refers to displacements between intra-
urban territories of *travesti* prostitution where commuting occurred. The third trend is related to
the existence of a transnational constitution of displacement activity related to *travesti*
prostitution.

The chances for *travestis* to be displaced, including abroad, is closely related to the
their ability to recognise codes of convenience that are tacitly agreed by the group in relation to
prostitution. Thus, convenience is a key component of the discursive category 'factors
controlling paradoxical discontinuous territory'. Within this discursive category, convenience, as
well as adding several elements that have already been discussed in other discursive
categories, includes the intensity of violence. In controlling territory, it is essential to
demonstrate physical force and to make other members of the group submit to that force in
order to increase their chances of accessing the centrality of power relations connected to
prostitution, in other words, become a madam. Hipólita clarifies this argument:

So Aunt Ivone was the mother of [name of *travesti* withheld] who was
arrested. So, because [name of *travesti* withheld] had killed the
husband of the madam who was in charge of Curitiba City ( ... ) and
fired a gun at the madam, the madam went to Balneário Camboriú
City and fled Curitiba City. When [name of *travesti* withheld] fired at
the madam she became in charge of Curitiba City because she had
the courage to take a shot. But she was arrested because she killed
the husband of the madam. Then they took [name of *travesti* withheld]
and she was arrested. Then from inside jail [name of *travesti* withheld]
said: look Mum, now I am in charge of Curitiba City. I ’m in jail but you
can charge the fags on the street. When I get out I’ll take care of the
fags who don’t pay you! And she always got out at the end of the year
for good behaviour. Then Aunt Ivone started charging, but in order to
force payment she went along with three black guys in a van. So it
was like a mafia *babadeira* (confusion). (Interview with Hipólita, Ponta
Grossa City, Brazil, 11/9/2008).

Another striking code of convenience in the control of territory is the respect that certain
older *travestis* are accorded through the importance of their experiences in prostitution; the
names of these madams are commonly referred to. This shows that the position of madam is
gradually constructed over time, and goes beyond the use of violence.

To sum up, the constituent elements of the discursive category 'factors controlling
paradoxical discontinuous territory of *travesti* prostitution' are in constant motion, as power
relations tension the positioning of the individual, who gains more or less centrality in the
process of territorial control.
REFLECTIONS ON TERRITORY AND TRAVESTI PROSTITUTION: SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

This research examined the intelligibility of the relationship between the travesti experience and the institution of paradoxical discontinuous territory. The fieldwork material was the key element for the elaboration of an evaluation of the theoretical contributions that can be made to the scientific field of geography.

This research reaffirmed an important tenet proposed by Souza (1995), which is enshrined in geography, and which attempts to understand spatial appropriation as 'discontinuous territory'. That is because travesti prostitution is organised via different connections of intra-urban territories, which are located in different cities on the national and international scale. This research also reaffirms the idea of discontinuous territory, in the sense that Souza (1995) shows that limits or frontiers may be mobile and that territories are made and unmade in different temporalities. These propositions were also valid in the construction of the intelligibility of the activity of travesti prostitution because they are the actions by travestis that shape time and space in their territories, which are extremely mobile.

However, the use of empirical data clarified the need to add the idea of 'paradox'. Paradox is understood here as something that occurs in a surprising, unpredictable manner, as in Rose (1993). The proposition that travesti prostitution can be analysed by what we call here 'paradoxical discontinuous territory' is based around the following arguments:

- Territory is a result of the discourse produced by the travestis themselves, who are working in prostitution. Thus, it is not pre-existing or likely to be conceived by those who observe the phenomenon from the 'outside', and is made in the actions of the individuals who experience it.

- Power is certainly a key component in the appropriation of space. However, it is not oppositional in the insider/outsider relationship, but is a bundle of tensioning between individuals, which can produce different mobile positions at the centre and the margins of power relations, as evidenced in the relationship between travestis and procurement, for example.

- The elements that make up each discursive category of the phenomenon known as paradoxical discontinuous territory do not have an unambiguous or a single position, as shown in the Figure above. The role of the madam, for example, can be a positive element when considered as part of the discursive category 'spatial factors of connectivity', but a negative element within the category 'control factors of the territory of prostitution'. The same element can occupy different positions in the discursive organisation of a particular space, and it can tension relationships between individuals in several ways.

- Moreover, the multi-scale nature of paradoxical discontinuous territory also showed the mobile and indeterminate position of power relations between travestis and madams, which
once again affirms the idea of paradox. The element ‘relationships between travestis’ was predominant in the composition of the discursive category ‘strategic factors of displacements’ on the national scale. However, this element is not central when considering the discursive category ‘spatial factors of connectivity’, especially in terms of the international scale.

Finally, this research offers challenges to geographers, to the extent that it surpasses the notions of fixity and dual opposition between categories; it complicates the relationships between individuals and their spaces. The group of travestis engaged in commercial sexual activity is plurally located in the constitution of territory because it is at both the centre and the margins of power relations, and it is its paradoxical position that shows its resistance to heteronormative society, which simultaneously desires and despises it.

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