

APPROPRIATING THE INAPPROPRIATE: (RE)SIGNIFICATIONS OF THE SPACES OF A LOW-CLASS PROSTITUTION ZONE IN BELO HORIZONTE (MG)

APROPRIANDO O INAPROPIADO: AS (RE)SIGNIFICAÇÕES DOS ESPAÇOS DE UMA ZONA DE PROSTITUIÇÃO DO BAIXO MERETRÍCIO EM BELO HORIZONTE (MG)

APROPIANDO EL INAPROPIADO: LAS (RE)SIGNIFICACIONES DE LOS ESPACIOS DE UNA ZONA DE PROSTITUCIÓN DE CLASE BAJA EN BELO HORIZONTE (MG)

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Abstract

The history of Guaicurus intertwines with the spatial planning of the city, going through an intense process of transformation over the years. Considering this process, this study was developed with the goal of analyzing the spatial dynamics that surround the Guaicurus prostitution zone, through concepts of space, place and territory. To reach this goal, we conducted a descriptive research with a qualitative approach, in which the unit of analysis was the prostitution zone called Guaicurus, in Belo Horizonte (MG). The units of observation were the internal spaces of prostitution hotels and their surroundings, as well as the prostitutes. Data were collected through 27 in-depth interviews with the prostitutes, the application of a projective technique and the photographic documentation of the brothels facades. The data of the interviews were submitted to French discourse analysis. We have been able to notice ambiguities in the social imaginary concerning such space, sometimes a place of prostitution, sometimes a psychical prison, whose chains have been forged by the workers themselves; that is, a form of self-imposed imprisonment. To alleviate the suffering arising from this process, some of the interviewees resignify parts of the room spaces by giving them a cozier, more familiar disposition, necessary for their permanence in prostitution work.

KEYWORDS: Space. Place. Territory. Prostitution zone. Guaicurus.

Resumo

A história da Guaicurus se entrelaça com o planejamento espacial da cidade, passando por um intenso processo de transformação ao longo dos anos. Considerando esse processo, este estudo foi desenvolvido com o objetivo de analisar a dinâmica espacial que circunda a zona de prostituição de Guaicurus, por meio dos conceitos de espaço, lugar e território. Para atingir esse objetivo, realizamos uma pesquisa descritiva com abordagem qualitativa, na qual a unidade de análise foi a zona de prostituição

denominada Guaicurus, em Belo Horizonte (MG). As unidades de observação foram os espaços internos dos hotéis de prostituição e seus arredores, bem como as prostitutas. Os dados foram coletados através de 27 entrevistas em profundidade com as prostitutas, a aplicação de uma técnica projetiva e a documentação fotográfica das fachadas dos bordéis. Os dados das entrevistas foram submetidos à análise do discurso em sua vertente francesa. Pudemos notar ambiguidades no imaginário social em relação a esse espaço, às vezes considerado um local de prostituição, outras uma prisão psíquica, cujas correntes foram forjadas pelas próprias trabalhadoras; isto é, uma forma de prisão auto-imposta. Para aliviar o sofrimento decorrente desse processo, algumas das entrevistadas ressignificam partes dos espaços dos quartos onde trabalham, dando-lhes uma disposição mais acolhedora e familiar, necessária para sua permanência no trabalho da prostituição.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Espaço. Lugar. Território. Zona de Prostituição. Guaicurus.

Resumen

La historia de Guaicurus está entrelazada con la planificación espacial de la ciudad, pasando por un intenso proceso de transformación a lo largo de los años. Considerando este proceso, este estudio fue desarrollado con el objetivo de analizar la dinámica espacial que rodea la zona de prostitución de Guaicurus, a través de los conceptos de espacio, lugar y territorio. Para lograr este objetivo, realizamos una investigación descriptiva con un enfoque cualitativo, en la cual la unidad de análisis fue la zona de prostitución llamada Guaicurus, en Belo Horizonte (MG). Las unidades de observación eran los espacios internos de los hoteles de prostitución y sus alrededores, así como las prostitutas. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de 27 entrevistas en profundidad con prostitutas, la aplicación de una técnica proyectiva y la documentación fotográfica de las fachadas de los burdeles. Los datos de la entrevista fueron sometidos al análisis del discurso en su perspectiva francesa. Pudimos notar ambigüedades en el imaginario social en relación con este espacio, a veces considerado un lugar de prostitución, otras veces una prisión psíquica, cuyas cadenas fueron forjadas por los propios trabajadores; es decir, una forma de encarcelamiento autoimpuesto. Para aliviar el sufrimiento resultante de este proceso, algunos de los entrevistados replantearon partes de los espacios en las habitaciones donde trabajan, dándoles una disposición más acogedora y familiar, necesaria para su permanencia en el trabajo de prostitución.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Espacio; Lugar; Territorio; Zona de prostitución; Guaicurus.

1. Introduction

Throughout human history, prostitution has been a rich research field in several areas of knowledge. As an occupation, it has been resisting structural changes, religious wars and political turnarounds (BARROS, 2005). Worshiped, persecuted, stigmatized and degraded, the prostitute becomes a non-trivial being, permeated by the exoticism and sacredness of the sexual taboo that encompasses her.

From a capitalist perspective, prostitution can be defined as the exchange of sex for money. However, we consider the attempt to explain prostitution only by relying on those who practice it as limiting (WALKOWITZ, 2016), given the many facets that involve this phenomenon, among which we highlight the appropriation of marginal spaces, such as the popularly named prostitution “zones”. In this paper, we understand “zones” as territories where relations of submission and power are present, transforming bodies into objects of desire and consumption and leaving the emotional and affective ties in the background (PEREIRA et al., 2018).

For this study, we focused our analysis on one of the most famous Brazilian hereafter “low- class” prostitution zones, in the city of Belo Horizonte (the capital of the state of Minas Gerais and the third largest city in the country), called “Guaicurus”. In its heyday, Guaicurus could be compared to other great

bohemian zones of the world, such as the Moulin Rouge, in Paris, and the Red-Light District of Amsterdam. In this paper, we understand “low-class” as cheap prostitution, by which practitioners generally justify their acts to meet their own and/or their family’s survival needs (OLIVEIRA; GUIMARÃES; FERREIRA, 2017).

Little by little this space was forsaken, and the prostitutes found in it a place to make a living. In place of the cabarets, which disappeared completely, the “battle hotels” emerged. These are establishments composed of numerous small rooms, rented by prostitutes to provide their services on a daily basis. Nowadays, this space is popularly known as “Up and Down Street”, due to the intense flow of men going up and down the brothels stairs and to the sexual act itself (SOUSA et al., 2017; PEREIRA et al., 2020). This structure contributes to the invisibility and marginalization of the place, where there is a connection between the bohemian zone and the brothels, the so-called “red-light houses”. (Figure 1)

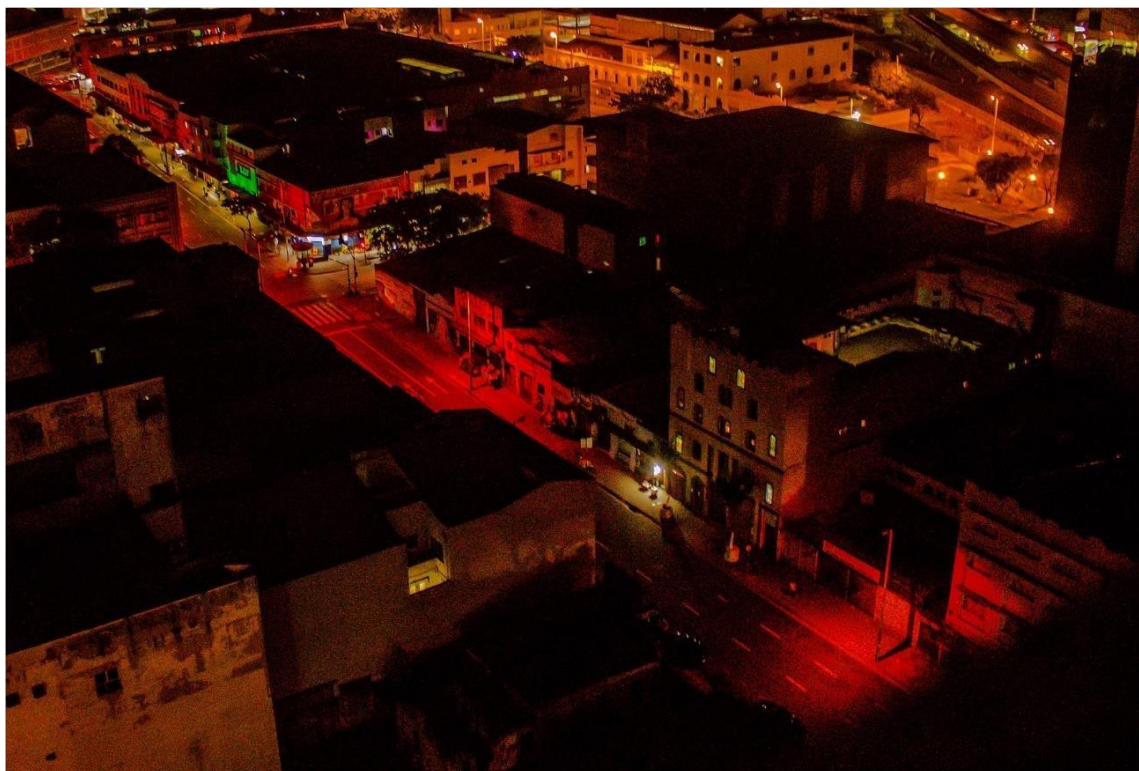


Figura 1. The Guaicurus Zone
Source: Private photo by the authors.

The history of Guaicurus intertwines with the spatial planning of the city, going through an intense process of transformation over the years and decaying from an upper-class space, when the city was designed, to the marginalization of the low-class prostitution. Considering this process, this study was developed with the goal of analyzing the spatial dynamics that surround the Guaicurus prostitution zone, through concepts of Human Geography (space, place and territory). As pointed out by Palhares, Correia and Carrieri (2020) and Lima, Palhares and Carrieri (2020), although recent, the study of spatial dynamics is important for the Management area, because they show the different forms of appropriation and uses of space and the impacts of spatial differences in work relations and in business.

To achieve the proposed goal, we conducted a descriptive research with a qualitative approach. The data were collected through 27 in-depth interviews with the prostitutes, the application of a projective technique and the photographic documentation of the brothels facades. The data of the interviews were submitted to French discourse analysis. This paper is divided into five sections, as of this introduction. The next section will present the theoretical framework of space, place and territory. Then, we will discuss the methodology adopted in this study. Subsequently, we will analyze the data about spatial dynamics that

surround the Guaicurus prostitution zone and, finally, we will present the final remarks.

2. On Spaces, Places, Territories, Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

In this study, we resort to the organizational-space approach inspired by Lefebvre's space production theory (1991), in which the term is conceived not as something static or as an independent material reality, but instead, procedural, actively and socially produced and resignified.

In "Space and Politics", Lefebvre (1976, p. 25) argues that "space plays a decisive role or function in the structuring of a totality, of a logic of a system". Notably the idea of social space is a central point in Lefebvre's reflections, whereas it represents both a field of action and the basis of action in society (DEAR, 1997). The social relations project into space, become inscribed in it and, in this process, produce space itself. Therefore, social space is, at the same time, a product and a production resource. Thus, "the social relations (...) do not have a real existence, except in and through space. Its support is spatial" (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 404). The social space serves as a starting point to articulate the ways in which different social practices, things, bodies or any other product of society find space differently, incorporating and enacting its ruptures and contradictions (KINKAID, 2020).

In this aspect, the social space must be understood from the relation that it establishes with the social practice and, therefore, can not be seen as an absolute space, "empty and pure, place par excellence of numbers and proportions" (LEFEBVRE, 1976, p. 29), or as a product of society, "a point of assembly of objects produced, the set of things they occupy and their subsets, effected, objectified and therefore functional" (LEFEBVRE, 1976, p. 30).

In aggregate terms, the space should not be seen as a starting point (absolute space) or as a point of arrival (space as a social product) (CORREA, 2002). Still from Lefebvre's (1976) perspective, the space is neither a political instrument nor a process of reproduction of the work force through consumption, but a field of actions linked to an individual or a group. The author proposes a broader conception of the notion of space, which encompasses and surpasses the usual conceptions, according to which space is conceived as the reproduction of society, that is, a locus of reproduction of social relations of production. According to Lefebvre (1976, p. 34):

of space can not be said to be a product like any other, an object or the sum of objects, a thing or a collection of things, a commodity or a set of commodities. It can not be said that it is simply an instrument, the most important of all instruments, the presupposition of all production and all exchange. It would be essentially linked to the reproduction of (social) relations of production.

Therefore, space is one of the dimensions of social reproduction and, therefore, has relations inherent to each mode of organization of society, which implies conceiving it beyond materiality, with its representations and meanings; unveil its contents, which are social (ALVAREZ, 2019).

Based on the discussions of Lefebvre, Santos (1977) establishes the concept of socio-spatial formation. For the author, it is not possible to establish a socioeconomic relationship by abstaining from the notion of space, since space deals with the mode of production and socioeconomic formation as interdependent categories. "The modes of production become concrete on a historically determined territorial basis (...) and spatial forms constitute a language of modes of production" (SANTOS, 1977, p. 5).

Therefore, in the concept of spatial formation, it is important to consider that a society only becomes concrete through the space that it produces, being, on the other hand, the space intelligible through society. In this sense, there is no reason to treat space and society as separate things, it is a relationship of interdependence, a socio-spatial formation (CORREA, 2002). The generalization of the

production of space as a commodity points to the realization of property as the realization of fractions of that value, potentiating speculation, insofar as it constitutes the inexorable mediation to obtain gains based on the work already accumulated, but above all in future work (ALVAREZ, 2019). Notably, space plays an important role in society, conditioning it and sharing the complex process of social reproduction and existence, that is, “man-organized space is like other social structures, a subordinate-subordinating structure” (SANTOS, 1978, 145), that is, it is a living space of representation, a place from which all spaces can be apprehended, understood and transformed at the same time (SOJA, 1996).

From this perspective, a space is not only physical but also symbolic and imagined as a response of feeling and imagination to fundamental human needs (TUAN, 1977), a non-static, generative reality (ROSS, 2008). Thus, space assumes considerable importance in the social structure, since it composes the personal and social identity of the subjects and is a source of affective and social load (CHANLAT, 1996). Therefore, space configures itself as a social category, a field that structures the interactions within an organization.

In this way, the space only becomes a place when it acquires a “perceptual unity” (TUAN, 1980; GIBSON-GRAHAM, 1996). The place can be understood as the experienced, symbolic, and everyday space, affectively appropriated (TUAN, 1977), representing the here and now of immediate perception (FORD; HARDING, 2004). The place is socially and symbolically built by individuals; in other words, space can be converted into place through symbols and representations. In this study, it is understood that the place transcends the physical and geographical aspects of spaces (TEIXEIRA; SARAIVA; CARRIERI, 2015). Thus, place can be understood as a socially constructed dynamics, not a static representation of the world (DASKALAKI; STARAB; IMAS, 2008).

According to Castrogiovanni (2007), place can be understood as a human product, a part of the proper space of life, where it is produced and reproduced, as in a continuum, thus possessing an identity. Place is, above all, the coexistence, within it, of diverse, heterogeneous and potentially conflicting forms, relations and economic practices. Place is the possibility of articulating diversity; it is a potential that people are free to capture an opportunity that space offers (VIDAILLET; BOUSALHAM, 2020).

When we focus on subjects such as the prostitution places of the Brazilian low-society, we consider a way of life and personification (DASKALAKI; STARAB; IMAS, 2008), “where experiences, territoriality and identity are rooted” (SPINK, 2001, p.16), places of social and affective load (CHANLAT, 1996) which invoke notion of belonging and feelings (or absences). That is, it is an anthropological place, since it has intelligibility for those who observe it and meanings and meanings for those who live in it (AUGÉ, 1994).

In this sense, the non-place is still to be considered in this discussion, that is, a space of transit and ephemeral occupation (AUGÉ, 1995). In turn, the inter-place is a place visited by passers-by and partially appropriated (CASTROGIOVANNI, 2007). However, it is important to emphasize the relative and subjective character of the categories “space” and “place”, so as not to imply the risk of reducing both concepts (MASSEY, 2005).

Finally, the territory is a part of the space constituted of different territorialities, use and appropriation of space, concerning the way through which the organizational actors take advantage of territories that attribute meaning to and legitimize their experiences and actions (BENFORD; SNOW, 2000). The territory is relational, dynamic, procedural and fluid (CLARE; HABERMEHL; MASON-DEESE, 2018). Remarkably, the apprehensions of the concept of territory are manifold. According to Albagli (2004), the notion of territory is related to the idea of power and belonging, since it is the space appropriated by an individual or group, being delimited and defined with the power relations (RAFFESTIN, 1993; 2012). “It is a term that is already born as representation, being both a politically appropriate and represented space” (TEIXEIRA; SARAIVA; CARRIERI, 2015, p. 166). Multiple space and place relationships are produced within territories. Territories are composed of multifaceted, complex and interrelated forms, situated and functioning in power relations. (CLARE; HABERMEHL; MASON-DEESE, 2018).

According to Paasi (1995, p. 42), territories “can be simultaneously historical, natural, cultural,

political or symbolic phenomena, and each of these dimensions can be explored in divergent ways in the construction of territoriality". In this respect, territory is not only something concrete or material, but a network of social relations and a historically constructed field of forces (ALBAGLI, 2004). Thus, the territory becomes concomitantly one and multiple, singular and plural (and singular in the plural), concrete, abstract and living space (KNOPP; ALCOFORADO, 2010).

In Raffestin's (1993) perspective, the territory can be understood as the result of the relation between three elements: time, space and social relations. Whereas, while social relations are materialized in space, it becomes a territory. The relation of the territory with construction and maintenance of identity must be considered, since,

the territory is the support and product of the formation of individual and collective identities, arousing feelings of belonging and specificity. Social representations, images, symbols and myths are projected and materialized in space, transforming themselves into geographical symbols, providing references and models common to social actors and crystallizing a territorial identity (ALBAGLI, 2004, p. 49).

The territory is delimited by power relations, for in appropriating a space, concretely or abstractly, the actor territorializes the space (RAFFESTIN, 1993). We understand as deterritorialization the movement of (re) appropriation of the territory, of the physical and symbolic spaces (GUATTARI, 1993), that is, the mechanisms that empty the territory of the social and cultural roots recognized by the subjects; in turn, reterritorialization deals with the creation of new links in place of those who have been lost (PAGÈS et al., 1993).

Considering the particularities of the prostitution spaces of low-class Brazilian prostitution, the discussions developed here are pertinent to understand the actions of the actors and the construction of a demarcated space, with rules and re-significances for the prostitute's own identity.

3. Methodological Path

To reach the goal of this study, we conducted a descriptive research with a qualitative approach, in which the unit of analysis was the prostitution zone called Guaicurus. The units of observation were the internal spaces of prostitution hotels (rooms and corridors), their surroundings (facades of brothels), as well as the prostitutes.

Data were collected through 27 in-depth interviews (GASKELL; BAUER, 2002), which were finished with the application of a projective technique. During this second phase, we asked the interviewees to take a photograph of any place inside their rooms and explain the reason for their choice. All the interviews were carried out in loco and were conducted with the authorization of the interviewees.

The interviewees were chosen according to the accessibility criteria. In this way, it is important to emphasize that they had a very diversified profile. The interviewees' age ranged from 18 to 59 years old, and four of them started working with prostitution when they were under 18 years old. They have different natures, where only four of them were from Belo Horizonte, other from cities in the interior of the state of Minas Gerais and most of them from other parts of Brazil. The average number of daily attendance is 30 programs. This number doubles around the fifth day of the month, with reports of reaching 80 men on the same day. This is due to the payment period of most of Brazilian companies.

This study also included the photographic documentation of the brothels facades as a means to observe the surroundings, aiming at the incorporation of visual data capable of revealing sociological knowledge that is difficult to access through other means.

The data were submitted to French discourse analysis (PÊCHEUX, 1969), aiming at the interpretation not only of the text but also of the historical, social and ideological context behind the construction of meanings. Along these lines, interviews and images function as semiotic elements from

which information about social practices and their relations to the processes of territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization are extracted.

In this study, we resorted to the following discursive strategies:

- 1) social conditions of discourse production;
- 2) themes and figures;
- 3) lexical analysis of the characters, implicit and explicit;
- 4) silenced discourse;
- 5) semantic paths;
- 6) interdiscursive aspects; and,
- 7) reflected and refracted aspects of discourse.

4. Analysis of Results and Discussion

As we approach the Guaicurus zone, we notice a process of sexualization of space, since the “regular establishments” gradually give way to “sexual establishments”, such as strip clubs, adult theaters and sex booths.

However, the region is permeated by several complex and paradoxical issues in the Brazilian socio-historical-cultural context, for sacred images divide the space with sexual and political references, among others (Figure 2).



Figura 2. Paradoxicalities of Guaicurus
Source: Private photo by the authors.

In the foreground, we observe the central image, a graffiti of a Catholic saint associated with the words “patroness saint of whores”; it is possible to identify an interdiscourse regarding morality and socially acceptable behaviors inserted within a Catholic logic, which is the predominant religion in Brazil (ALVES et al., 2017). It is worth highlighting the lexical structure associated with this image when the term “whores” is used, for it refers to a pejorative, vulgar and demeaned idea of prostitutes.

In contrast, the image on the lower right corner alludes to the female reproductive system, depicting a vagina at its center, an organ that is linked to at least three perspectives:

- 1) immorality, since its exposure goes against socially accepted standards;
- 2) religiosity, which gives rise to the idea of purity tied to the figure of the womb, an organ that creates life; and,
- 3) labor, since the vagina is the main working tool of prostitutes.

The last paradox comes from the graffiti text that says, “as long as there’s inequality, there will be us”, painted above the image of the saint. Such representation reflects one of the country’s realities since the structuring inequality of the Brazilian society stimulates such a precarious and stigmatized labor activity. The meaning of the sentence highlights the interdiscourse of labor precarization, while the lexical structure of the discourse stretch reflects the precariousness of education in Brazil.

We can also observe that all three human representations have their eyes closed, reflecting the interdiscourse of silencing of both the appropriated space for prostitution and the prostitutes themselves. This invisibility interdiscourse is corroborated by several interviewees, such as in the following account: “The ‘good citizens’ spot us, but they can’t see us. We’re a blot” (Michelle). We also highlight the irony present in the term “good citizens” as a figure of language that exposes the hypocrisy of a society grounded on pseudo moral and religious values (BARROS, 2005). In this sense, we emphasize that most participants in this study come from other Brazilian regions, attracted by the national popularity of Guaicurus, a territory that lends them meaning and legitimizes their experiences and actions (BENFORD; SNOW, 2000).

Generally, brothels do not have identification signs, an attempt to hide what is regarded as immoral in the traditional Brazilian society. In the entrances, long and narrow staircases are blended in the socio-spatial dynamics of the region. These stairways can be perceived as an inter-place, that is, a transitory, ephemeral passageway (CASTROGIOVANNI, 2007), which function as a link between outer and internal space, where the power relations involved in prostitution become more noticeable.

The buildings have three floors: on the ground floor, there is a “regular establishment” (snack bars, car parts stores, parking lots, shops etc.); on the other ones, there are large corridors and numerous small rooms, where the prostitutes expose themselves as products, amid an intense presence of male individuals, which reflects their domination in that territory (OLIVEIRA; GUIMARÃES; FERREIRA, 2017). Agglomerations of men were observed at the doors of several rooms, where power relations are delimited by a mercantilist view in which the female body is stripped of its subjectivities and transformed into a commodity.

Inside the rooms, the power relationship seems to be reversed and the women become the dominant figure. Upon entering there, we identify a process of spatial-temporal reterritorialization, for the dominated temporarily assume the role of dominant, even if in a contradictory way, as they must serve their female bodies to male pleasure. Therein, the place can be fragmented so that each part is redefined and assumes a new identity (Figure 3).



Figura 3. Mitigating the pains of a loathsome place
Source: Photograph taken by interviewee Malu.

The flowers on the wall of one of the rooms, according to the prostitute working in it, are an attempt to fill the void of the environment. That is, it is a way of resisting and reterritorializing her workspace, which, in turn, can attenuate emotional exhaustion and safeguard her well-being (BROWN; LAWRENCE; ROBINSON, 2005; LAURENCE; FRIED; SLOWIK, 2013), so as to make it more livable and familiar, and less aversive and repulsive.

Another form of resignification of the space can be perceived, for example, when the interviewee Sabrina tells us that the bathroom in her room is the most important place for her. In fact, she chose to snap a photo of the bidet, because that is where she washes herself and feels “the impurity coming out of her body.”

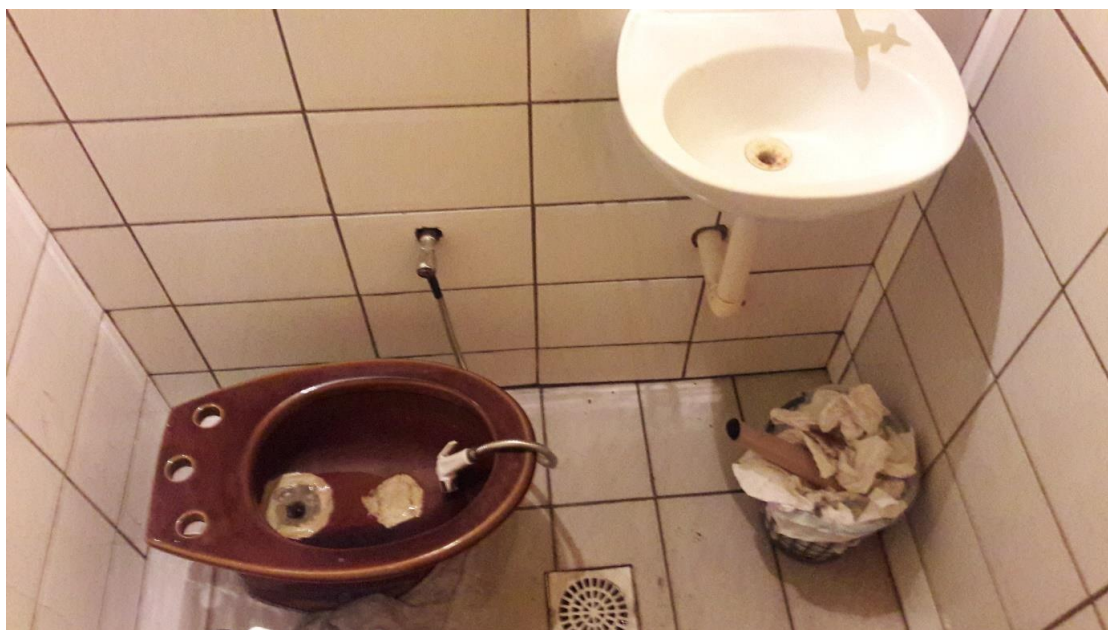


Figura 4. Purifying the body
Source: Photograph taken by interviewee Sabrina.

The stretch “I wash myself” in the interviewee’s speech goes beyond the frontiers of the explicit, bringing the idea that such action is a way of feeling less profane and reducing the taint of sin that she internalizes. This perception is corroborated by several studies that attest to the idea of impurity that is associated with this occupation (BLITHE; WOLFE, 2017).

Another significant spatial configuration was presented by the interviewee Tamires, who places a copy of the book “Fifty shades of gray”, a work known for its sexual and romantic character, in a highlighted spot in her room. We understand this as a personal strategy to deal with the daily demands of this labor activity in a territory that denotes aggression and violence, both physical and symbolic. That is, the book is practically an amulet or a transitional object to soften the worker’s permanence at such an inhospitable place.

Therefore, we can see that the spaces analyzed in this paper are organized strategically, both from the external point of view – the Guaicurus street itself – and from the internal environment of brothels – their rooms and corridors. Externally, we perceive a common structure in the region: it is horizontal and has bright colors; there is a mixture of religious, commercial and prostitution establishments; and the entrances of the brothels are blended in the urban landscape. Internally, the room spaces are configured to reflect the various identities present therein. Personal objects (bibles, suitcases, household utensils) and working instruments (dildos, anesthetic ointments, lubricants) share the same space.

On the other hand, a sense of imprisonment is present in the interviewees’ discourses, in two senses: the first refers to a certain magnetism deriving from the possibility of fast cash and from the national reputation that Guaicurus enjoys; the second deals with the difficulty of quitting both the

occupation and the place. According to the interviewee Sabrina, “there seems to be something in here, (...) an evil spirit. Once you get in, it’s very difficult to leave. I came in six years ago and have tried to leave several times, but I haven’t been able to.” One possible explanation rests on the idea that “time is money” (HARVEY; SOBRAL, 1994), a saying commonly used by prostitutes, based on a system of intensive control of time and space for the sake of profit.

We also highlight the presence of “untouchable spaces” in the brothels that we visited. Most interviewees have a specific resignified place in their rooms, whose representation goes beyond their spatial limits. The prostitutes’ personal belongings are charged with affective and symbolic values, such as the space of penance and prayer, the image of the patron saint at the door, the table with pictures of their children, the bedside book, among others (Figure 5).



Figura 5. The untouchable space

Source: Photograph taken by interviewee Ana.

The “untouchable space” of most interviewees was usually stored in a suitcase, which refers to the idea of escaping and reflects the connection with the identity of a given prostitute when she is out of her workspace: the figure of the “righteous and ordinary woman”, less stained and maculate by her occupation. Let us observe the speech by one of the interviewees (Ana): “When I get my suitcase and walk down those stairs, it’s the happiest moment of my life. I wish I was like a computer that has the ‘delete’ key so that when I left I could press it and forget everything I’ve lived in here.” In view of those findings, the following concluding remarks were drafted.

5. Final Remarks

This research has revealed some myths regarding the appropriation of marginal spaces, such as low-class prostitution. In the Brazilian context, both prostitution and the spaces where it is performed are still marked by taboos, prejudices, stigmas, ambiguities and paradoxes. Thus, we seek to contribute and

advance theoretically in the organizational studies about space, since most management studies do not consider the spatial conditions of organizations (RAULET-CROSET, 2008; LACERDA, 2015; LIMA; PALHARES; CARRIERI, 2020; PALHARES; CORREIA; CARRIERI, 2020).

It is relevant to note that studies on prostitution field are still seen with a certain taboo in the Business Administration Science. However, these studies contribute to shedding light on the dilemmas and challenges in the “new world of work”, which in the Brazilian context is increasingly marked by informality and labor relations’ degradation. Furthermore, prostitution reflects part of this scenario, since in everyday life, especially those women who make this profession their source of income, we can notice several dilemmas about the labor society. One of these is the fact that these women are inserted in a marginalizing work of profane social logic and, at the same time, have to guarantee financial support for for them and their families (PEREIRA et al., 2020). On the other hand, the fact that is a profession directly related to pleasure – the pleasure of the other and never the own, brings new perspectives on the dynamics of pleasure and suffering in work relationship (PAIVA et al., 2020). Thus, the analysis of Brazilian prostitution spaces brings important discussions about a “new dynamics of work” in the Brazilian context.

We have been able to notice ambiguities in the social imaginary concerning such space (the Guaicurus zone), sometimes a place of prostitution, sometimes a psychological prison, whose chains have been forged by the workers themselves; that is, a form of self-imposed imprisonment. This perception reflects the notion of space and territory exposed by Raffestin (1993), according to which space is the original prison and territory is the prison that individuals build for themselves.

To alleviate the suffering arising from this process, some of the interviewees resignify parts of the room spaces by giving them a cozier, more familiar disposition, necessary for their permanence.

However, we have found evidence of the eminence of a territorial dispute between female prostitutes and transvestites, due to the decrease of certain services as a result of the opening of specific spaces for the latter group.

In this sense, future studies on the geographic space of Guaicurus Street as a territory organized by the dynamics of capital – that is, as an object of dispute and domination of the social relations of production (HARVEY, 2001) – can make up a research agenda that transcends prostitution and connects to what Abbott (1998) has called “the system of professions”, which performs the inter and intra-professional struggles for legitimacy over problems and solutions pertaining each professional group. This concerns a question of power. After all, what is the social role of the prostitute? How does this occupation sustain itself?

Moreover, although we accept that prostitution tends to take a gender discourse, since approximately 75% of prostitutes in the world are women aged 13 and 25 (MEIHY, 2015), the prostitution of men and transsexuals should be considered for a future research agenda.

For future research, we suggest going deeper into the dilemmas and challenges of the prostitutes' work, especially with regard to violence, health and psychosocial factors in the work environment of these professionals, themes that were evident in the interviews with prostitutes. Moreover, it would be interesting to also investigate the spatial dynamics in the work of other sex workers in the Guaicurus region, such as transsexuals and transvestites.

The main difficulty of the research was the data collection with the participants, since the interviews were carried out at the place and in the work schedule of the prostitutes and were therefore interrupted at various times by the male audience (clients) who wanted to do the program. However, due to the methodological choice of the authors, all interviews were conducted in the rooms where the professionals provide their services, since spatial aspects of the Guaicurus "battle hotels" would be important in some aspects of the study proposal.

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