

Embodying the European in the mirror:

corporeal biographies of Brazilian trans and *travestis* sex workers in Lisbon

Visual Ethnography

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to understand the construction of corporeal biographies of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* sex workers who travel to Portugal and/or the European continent. By corporeal biographies we mean the entanglement between the process of body modification and the process of social production of subjectivities during their travels through different social, geographical and historical contexts. The analysis is based on data from comprehensive in-depth interviews with fourteen participants, oriented by a sociology of the individual and the body. Mobility to and through Europe proved to be a significant turning point in their life courses, as it led to the accumulation of economic, social and cultural capital, which is transformed into different types of body and symbolic capital. At the same time, transnational mobility changes the heritage of dispositions related to gender expressions and models of femininity, which are differentiated by factors defined by the subject's body and by generational issues. While geographical transits give substance to different corporeal biographies, they all ultimately converge towards the acquisition of symbolic capital, represented by the embodiment of resources and symbols perceived as aspects of glamour and luxury in the European sex work field.

Keywords

Brazilian trans women and *travestis*; corporeal biographies; sociology at the individual and on a body scale; transnational mobility; sex work field.

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1 We understand *travestis* identity as an expression of transgender limited to the Brazilian reality, like *muxes* in Mexico or *ladyboys/kathoeys* in Thailand. For this reason, in this article we have not translated the expression into English and have used the noun in italics. Roughly speaking, for some time in Brazil, academic discussions affirmed the differences between transvestites and transsexuals in terms of their desire to undergo gender-affirming surgery, a process that transsexuals wanted, and transvestites would not want. However, the greater circulation of information, the advances in public policies and the complexification of gender and sexuality identities and identification processes have demonstrated the difficulties of conceptually framing these identities. As state by Bento (2006), nowadays there is no such thing as a transsexual identity, “but rather identity positions organized through a complex network of identifications that are made effective through movements of denial and affirmation of the models made socially available to define what a ‘true’ man/woman is” (Bento 2006: 201. Our translation). Anyway, in our research it was possible to understand differences in the processes of self-defining the gender identity among the participants, varying namely between the ones defining themselves as *travestis* or as trans people. As concluded by Benedetti (2005) “these conceptions are related to class origin. Informants who self-identify as transsexual are, as a rule, better educated; they therefore have easier access to technical bibliographies on the subject and are socially closer to institutional and scientific explanations of the issue” (Benedetti 2005: 113. Our translation).

2 The reflections made in this article are an offshoot of the doctoral thesis “Embod-

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Theoretical starting point

In this article, we aim to identify the representations of beauty embodied by Brazilian trans and *travestis*¹ sex workers who travel across the European continent, having established their activity in Lisbon, either permanently or for short periods². Our focus is on understanding how different experiences of sex work in Europe are linked to different processes of constructing corporealities, aesthetic perceptions, subjectivities and femininities at the intersection of social markers of class, racialisation and generation.

Theoretically, we start from a conception of the body as a social operator that projects an image of the self onto itself and also (re)presents it socially (Ferreira 2008). The body is living matter - an organic physical basis in becoming - but also an accessory of the self (Le Breton 2003) and an artefact for individual and social recognition (Sullivan 2001). The lived body is a first-person experience, but always acting and experiencing specific historical, socio-cultural and spatial contexts (Young 2003; Ferreira 2013). It is useful here to mobilise the concept of somatic culture to circumscribe the production of the body within a system of specific rules, behaviours and codes of production, perception and consumption associated with it (Ferreira, 2018). Whether related to a specific socio-historical or cultural context, or to objective social conditions such as social class, age, generation, gender or ethnicity, etc., bodily experience is always embedded in specific somatic cultures (Boltanski 2004).

The concept of somatic culture allows us to grasp the contemporary structural conditions within which we can understand the recent processes of objectification and privatisation of the body. The body has been seen as an accessory, an object of manipulation, used, treated, thought of and classified as personal and private property, within a somatic culture characterised by the dictum of bodily improvement through the available technical, technological and (bio)molecular devices and services for bodily (re)production. This historical social context, marked by the development of biotechnologies for body design, has brought about changes in the conditions of socialisation of the body (incorporation), thinking about the body (bodily reflexivity) and experiencing the body (embodiment) (Ferreira 2013).

Regarding the specific condition of migrant sex workers, we can say that their somatic culture is branded by what Preciado (2018) calls the neoliberal logic of appropriation of diversity in the (re)production of capital. As migrants, non-white, undocumented workers, and unrecognised by masculine supremacy, their bodies ‘can be penetrated [by capital], bodies that cause ejaculation at the lowest possible price’ (Preciado 2018: 310. Our translation). From this author’s perspective, the sex industry is part of the communication and entertainment apparatus of contemporary capitalism, in which working bodies are the result of a process of sex-political specialisation: a form of biopolitics that has emerged from capitalism and aims to regulate bodies and (re)produce capitalism (Preciado 2018).

The Transgender Europe (TGEU) report by Fedorko and Berredo (2017) shows that sex work by trans women and *travestis* is one of the few sources of income for migrant and undocumented trans people, due to the structural, institutional and interpersonal violence they experience throughout their lives. Therefore, we analysed how such experiences in different sex work fields in Brazil and Europe shift their embodied subjectivities in terms of gender identifications and gender expressions. At the same time, we seek to under-

stand how social markers such as class, racialisation and generation affect the construction of corporealities and, consequently, access to different fields of sex work in Europe. In this perspective, international mobility is perceived as a turning point in their life trajectories, as it allows for radical transformations in their corporealities and subjectivities.

In this sense, we have formulated the concept of corporeal biographies, i.e. the decision-making processes related to dispositions to modify the body and thus produce and express the self, during the life trajectories of *travestis* and transsexuals who move between different social and historical contexts, namely between different regions of Brazil, Portugal and/or Europe. We operationalise the concept of life trajectory, intertwined with a sociology at the level of the individual and the body, in order to understand the role of different experiences in Brazil in the constitution of a dispositional heritage towards the body, taking into account the processes of its construction, vigilance, reproduction and transformation with new experiences arising from mobility (Lahire 2004). Turning points, crises and ruptures in life trajectories are crucial moments in the processes of subjectivation (Martucelli 2002), because their resolutions are synthesised as updates of dispositional heritages.

What does it mean to do sociology at the individual scale? As suggested by Lahire (2004), the sociology at the individual scale aims to examine how dispositions are constituted and incorporated by actors through the particular relationships they establish with institutions, groups, fields of forces, etc., and in this way to fill the gaps in theories of socialisation. Sociology at the individual scale is based on the idea that there is no single, general principle that guides the actions of actors, as habitus has been conceptualised by Bourdieu (2007), but rather that heterogeneous dispositions are constituted in the relationships between different institutions and social groups within and along the various socialisation processes to which an individual is always exposed.

Against this wall, we sought to analyse and understand the processes of incorporation of the research participants' dispositional legacies from their Brazilian social contexts, taking into account the generated local social markers of difference, along with the changes and updates resulting from the experiences of geographical, social and cultural journeys. In order to do this, we have developed the specificity of looking at these processes through the lens of what we call a sociology at a body scale. This means that the analysis of dispositional legacies and their constitution in specific social contexts, along with their processes of change, adaptation and transfer throughout the life trajectories of the actors, will focus on dispositions towards the body and its different socialisation contexts throughout life trajectories.

This approach seeks to understand the attitudes and practices of trans women and *travestis* in constructing, maintaining and improving their bodies at different points in their lives. This includes analysing the relationship between the body project at the beginning of female embodiment and its social markers of difference; and, after sharing experiences of body modification techniques with other trans women and *travestis* while still in Brazil, entering the field of sex work, mobility and movement across the European continent. All these factors have led to changes in attitudes towards body modification and bodily expression in relation to identity and lifestyle.

The intertwining of sociology at the individual scale and sociology at the body scale is therefore captured in the concept of corporeal biography, in order to analyse the subjective dispositions that are mobilised in the decision-making processes of body modification in specific historical and social somatic cultures, and that are shaped throughout the course of life trajectories. As a result, this perspective overcomes a perceived methodological individualism in a way that makes it possible to identify generational and contextual changes in aesthetic dispositions towards the modification and presentation of the body, in its performances and materiality.

ying the European: corporeal biographies, (i)mobilities and subjectivities of trans and *travesti* sex workers in Lisbon", discussed and approved in January 2020 at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisboa, as part of the Interuniversity Doctoral Programme in Sociology: Knowledge for Open and Inclusive Societies (OpenSoc). The first author was responsible for the first version of this article, on which the second author made substantial theoretical and methodological suggestions and revisions, in his role of thesis supervisor.

Finally, it is also important to define the ways in which the dispositions formed during socialisation processes are converted into specific capitals in the disputes in the field of sex work. We start from a definition of the sex-working field as the space structured by sex workers in the dispute over the accumulation of economic capital (through payments from clients). The sex-working field, as a set of segmented and hierarchical sex-working territories, conditions the actions and practices of sex workers. Their aim is to capture, satisfy and maintain the sexual loyalty of the client (Coelho 2009), the only actor in the field who can convert the various capitals accumulated by sex workers into economic capital.

In this way, we use the concept of capital beyond financial wealth and assets of economic value (economic capital), to include other types of resources that enable the acquisition of symbolic power and that support the agents in disputes in the field (Bourdieu 1983). As examples of other types of capital, we first identify cultural capital, i.e. the resources and skills that help to differentiate sex workers and establish practices that are understood as different and differentiating in a society organised on the basis of class hierarchies. Cultural capital includes computer and language skills, access to local and national knowledge and resources, and forms of protection. There is also social capital, understood as the set of actual or potential resources associated with particular networks of people that make it possible to obtain material or symbolic benefits in the field (Bourdieu 2007). Body capital, on the other hand, can be defined as the set of symbols, experiences, practices, objects, techniques and biotechnologies embodied by research participants throughout their lives and invested in the materiality and performativity of their bodies. All of these elements can be capitalised as elements of social distinction in the contestation of power spaces in the field of sex work, namely in attracting and triggering the client's cycle of arousal/frustration.

Thus, the dispositions reflexively incorporated by the research participants during their life trajectories and their experiences in the different sex-working fields make it possible to select resources, practices and forms of knowledge that can be transformed into different types of capitals that are subsequently mobilised in the field. For example, the disposition towards certain types of body modifications allows the embodiment of biotechnologies, which are simultaneously used as an expression of gender, construction of self and stylisation of life, to be transformed into economic and symbolic capital, i.e. money and reputation in the field, which is ultimately used in the field to attract clients.

However, it is important to stress that the possession of a disposition is not enough to convert it into a specific capital. Capitals require the investment and strategic use of certain dispositions, combined with the investment and capitalisation of other subsidiary knowledge and know-how. In the case of our research participants, for example, the constitution of a mobility capital implies not only the possession of dispositions for mobility, but also the possession of a certain passport, a certain knowledge of languages, legal issues and bureaucracy.

Methods

In order to capture life trajectories and their effects on the constitution of dispositional heritage and the corporeal biographies, we mobilised the comprehensive interview technique for data production (Kaufmann 2013). The comprehensive interview can be defined as a qualitative research technique that mixes the semi-directive interview with the ethnographic interview, being and less standardised than the former and less open than the latter. Its methodological formulation is based on the principle that there is no neutrality in the conduct of an interview, as each question and even the social figure of the interviewer are not impersonal (Ferreira 2014).

The research participants were contacted through their contacts in virtual advertisements on websites for TLovers: www.viptransex.net. Between

January and December 2017, the Ph.D. researcher contacted approximately 130 Brazilian trans women and *travestis* who were passing through or living in Lisbon, according to the advertisements. The aim of the phone calls was to establish a certain affinity and to gain the trust of the potential research participants for an initial face-to-face interview. During the appointment attempts, the common nationality of the researcher and the sex workers, his work as a professor in Brazil, his activism in the LGBTQIA+ and (trans)feminist movements, and the ease of contact and meeting in the city of Lisbon were highlighted. Lack of time was often cited as a reason for not accepting the invitation. Some of the people contacted asked to be called back at another time, but then did not pick up the phone.

Based on the sense of trust established during the phone calls, 14 interviews were conducted with Brazilian trans women and *travestis* who were itinerant or permanent sex workers in Lisbon in 2017. The youngest interviewee was 24 years old and the oldest was 52 years old. The majority of sex workers, eleven, were under the age of 40. Nine identified as trans women or transsexuals, and five as *travestis*. The participants came from all five regions of Brazil. The level of education of the trans women and *travestis* sex workers contacted in this research also varied widely. All agreed to the audio recording of the interviews using a mobile phone. Informed consent (ICF) was obtained verbally.

The material produced a total of 40 hours and 45 minutes of audio, all transcribed verbatim, which took up 1157 pages of transcription in Times New Roman, size 12, 1.5 cm line spacing. The field notes produced throughout the research process amounted to approximately 300 pages of notes. We believe that we have reached a state of saturation in terms of collecting relevant information, enough to reach similar and divergent aspects of trajectories, corporeal biographies and mobility experiences.

An atmosphere of informality was present in all the interviews, allowing moments of exchange about life experiences and trajectories, family relationships and schooling, relationships with LGBT identities, choices related to body modifications and the embodiment of a specific type of femininity, difficulties faced during geographical mobility, resources and strategies used to cope with adversity. Some interviews were initially arranged in a café, and after a few minutes of getting to know each other and talking, the researcher was invited to go to the research participant's home or place of work. This demonstrates the relationship of trust that was established during the interviews. We believe that creating moments of intimacy and trust was crucial in order to capture more sensitive issues, such as transphobic violence, family problems, or even information that we would normally only share with close friends or therapists. As well as providing data for the research, the interviews also provided trans women and *travestis* with moments of reflexivity about their own lives and identities.

The first analyses of the material were carried out with the tape recorder still on, immediately after the interview. The aim was, firstly, to highlight the main points of the trajectory and corporeal biography, and some insights that might be useful in analysing the material, both in comparison with other trajectories and in the research itself. Secondly, the narrative material produced during the interviews was fully transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis techniques (Nowell et al. 2017; Vaismoradi et al. 2016). After the audio was carefully transcribed, the transcript was validated by adding details about the gestures and feelings expressed by the interviewees with their bodies and tone of voice, i.e. the heuristic context of the moment when the data was produced was recalled (Feixa 2018).

Once the initial analysis had been completed, profile sheets were created containing data on the life trajectories and corporeal biographies of all the participants. The aim of this procedure was to get a general idea of the quality of the material and the possible relationships that could be created between the participants' trajectories and corporeal biographies in an inductive way

(Nowell, et al. 2017). Finally, a list of thematic codes and subcodes was created using MAXQDA 12 software to analyse the interviews.

Ultimately, the use of such qualitative methodological techniques aimed to identify different trajectories and corporeal biographies of sex workers, looking for the divergent and convergent turning points of each life journey and their impact on their subjectivities and corporealities. The diversity of the life stories is not only a reflection of the different contexts and social positions of the participants, but rather the result of the unique way in which each person has embodied and interpreted the social structures and contexts in which their experiences unfold (Amândio et al. 2016). Thus, rather than generalisations or conclusions, the analyses allowed us to delve more deeply into issues arising from the bibliography and unpublished problems that were only possible due to this specific methodological path.

Generational differences in corporeal biographies

For at least the last three decades in Brazil, research on the bodies of trans women and *travestis* has attested to the differences in the expression of their body design, in the development of body modification techniques, and in the perception and valorisation of certain procedures and organs in the construction of their bodies. Silva (1993) shows the countless industrial silicone procedures used by *travestis* in the 1990s in the Lapa district of Rio de Janeiro to create curves in their faces, breasts, buttocks, legs, feet, etc., and already points to changes in the types of bodies embodied by younger *travestis*.

Pelúcio (2007) noticed changes in the body design of the older *travestis*, with a lot of curves and volume, as opposed to the younger *travestis*, with slim curves, smaller breasts and more adolescent clothing, in other words, “doing the ‘patricinha’ line”. The same was said to me by Dalila, 41 years old, white, born in Rio de Janeiro - RJ, with family support, her mother is a psychologist and her father a gynaecologist. Their professions are already an advantage in the process of understanding the subjectivity of their last child, identified at birth as a boy. Dalila, despite having undergone some aesthetic procedures to construct her body throughout her corporeal biography, attributes the importance of this new body model to the success she achieved in the sex industry in the early 2000s, as can be seen in her narrative:

Dalila: There's no longer this... How do you say it? This dictatorship of the big body, big hips, big arse. So now they've joined a gym, they've got breast implants, they've had their teeth whitened, they're already trans. In my day it was all a pilgrimage, you know? [...] And so I made the transition from dinosaur *travestis* to princess *travestis*. Up until then the *travestis* were very big, they were very... they were very...

Emerson: The 90s.

Dalila: You know, it was this big bottom, these big breasts. The kind of hair that you could tell didn't belong to the person. And I was in the Patricinhas phase.

Duque (2011) also noted similarities in his research with teenage *travestis*. According to the author, the use of industrial silicone to build curves was no longer a recurring practice among *travestis* in this age group. According to the author, young trans and *travestis* have only pumped up their legs and buttocks, leaving the construction of their breasts to silicone prostheses. The use of fillers to create breasts is one of the options that trans women and *travestis* find in the constitution of female body capital: “These practices have returned with the new *travestis*, there is a return to the slender body without big silicone curves” (Duque 2011: 98. Our translation).

Indeed, we can see that the group made up of the three youngest research participants - Mariana (24 years old), Verônica (25 years old) and Yara (26

years old) - constituted their bodies only through hormone therapy, clothing and less invasive aesthetic procedures such as laser hair removal. In the words of Mariana, 24 years old, born in the interior of Goiás, with the family support of her university professor mother and military father, we meet the procedures responsible for building her body capital:

Mariana: Ah... just waxing, I've had two... Just a whole body laser. But I've never had hair. Never... with Androcur³, I started... I've been taking it all my life, so it hasn't had time to develop.
Emerson: Yeah.
Mariana: It didn't work. My male hormone production is very low.

If, on the one hand, a simple analysis of the data could confirm that this finding is due to a shorter time to obtain body modifications, on the other hand, a detailed analysis of their perceptions of body projects and idealised identities allows us to affirm that this choice and the carnal reflexivity that underlies it are justified by criteria that refer to different historical contexts in the production and idealisation of their body projects, associated with different somatic cultures. Yara, 26 years old, white, born in the interior of the state of Pernambuco, with no family support from the age of 13 to 14, a mother who works in a pharmacy and a father who is a mechanic, helps us to understand this argument when she is asked about silicone prostheses:

Emerson: So you don't want to get silicone?
Yara: No.
Emerson: No?
Yara: No. Not industrial silicone. Silicone if I...
Emerson: But if you did... Would you put it on your breasts?
Yara: Yes, but not industrial. The prosthesis. I would never use industrial silicone.
Emerson: Why not?
Yara: Oh, because I've seen so many friends suffer with silicone. Problems, reactions. So it might not work for me. My body might react to the liquid in there too. So I get scared.

Yara's narrative therefore shows greater knowledge and concern about the types of procedures used to modify her body. The fears/concerns are justified by knowledge of the unsuccessful experiences of close friends, as well as the risks and side effects of the industrial silicone used by the pumpers. Body capital involves much more than an individual desire, it involves the collective knowledge accumulated and shared by the group, which in turn is embodied individually.

In addition to questions of risk and concerns about the procedures used to build body capital, this group of trans women and *travestis* values and refers to a different model of corporeality from that shared by previous generations. In fact, it is possible to detect in the speeches of the research participants the existence of a new reference model of corporeality among trans women and *travestis*, whose adherence is expressed above all in the speeches of the younger women. If, until the 1990s, trans women and *travestis* invested in countless techno-scientific procedures to produce their identities and corporealities, in the last two decades it is possible to see that the new perception of body modifications for the expression of gender identities does not necessarily imply body modifications as invasive and structuring of morphology as in the recent past.

We can therefore say that the younger trans women and *travestis* in this research have a different perception of the embodiment of their gender identity. A perception that is more concerned with performance and emotion. In other words, they value the bodies of trans women and *travestis* represented by movements and feelings that attest to femininity, to the detriment of the countless signs that were once materialised in their bodies.

Mariana, Verônica and Yara's body projects are based on new, generational conceptions of trans women and *travestis* bodies and their relationship to the construction of gender. The body of this new generation of trans women and *travestis* has as its symbolic reference a model of the body with few curves, following the hegemonic models of beauty emanating from the cis body and currently promoted by the fashion and body design industries. For example, in the case of Valentina Sampaio, now 27 years old, a Brazilian trans woman, LGBTQIA+ rights activist and model with national and international fame, her body reminds us of the findings of the younger research participants in the study: small breasts, moderate curves, slim and slender body, following the current/most prized of the fashion models and beauty industry, as seen on the cover of Vogue Brazil magazine in December 2017.

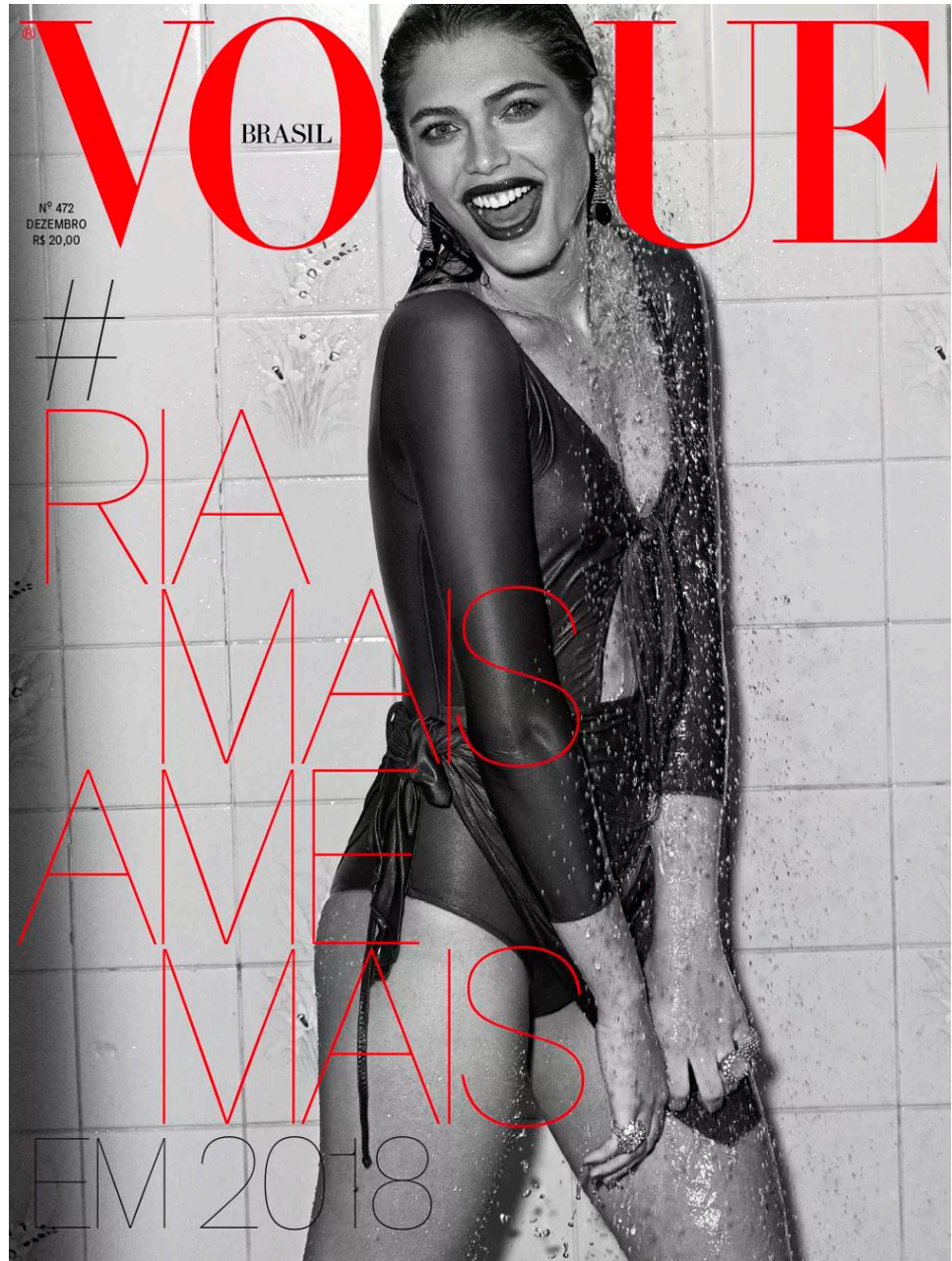


Figure 1 Valentina Sampaio on the cover of Vogue Brazil December 2017 by Gui Paganini, 2017.

The hegemony of this new model of corporeality is also felt by some of the older research participants, whose bodies are built on different reference models, rooted in a different somatic culture. The corporeality of Tainá, 35, born in Manaus, who's the embodiment of your gender identity was undertaken with the support, built mainly on the Brazilian models of the 1990s, expresses another type of femininity, limited to the possibilities available for its construction, that is, through lay biotechnologies shared between trans women and *travestis*. Tainá is aware of the generational and class inequalities that permeate her corporeality at the beginning of her corporeal biography, as well as the limits imposed by her body in the embodiment of other, more recent models:

Tainá: When my friend said: "If you want, I'll put it on now," I said: "Let's go and buy the oil! I already knew all the evils, all the... I knew everything that could happen. I knew I could die right there with her at that moment. But I wanted that body so much. Not because I saw the other one and the other one didn't... We see! But I really wanted my body. And I wanted it to be more shapely and feminine. I used that mechanism, that's what I had. For example, if you say: "Would you build your body today? Like, I'd build my body today, again, but not the way I... no, with the resources I had. For example, today I wouldn't want to be like this, more like a playboy body, because I'm busty, I've got big legs. If I put on weight, I get all chubby, as the Portuguese say, you know? I'm the Carla Perez type because I'm from that generation. If you look at my body, my body is based on the bodies of Carla Perez and Sheila Carvalho. Because it has the standards of the time. And that's the standard of the time when I started bombing. Now, today, with today's standards, I wouldn't use silicone. No, because it's very bad. Today it's even worse, because it's not the same product anymore, the product has got worse. But because today I find the tops, the slim women, so beautiful. I want to wear these loose trousers, I'm already short and busty, so it doesn't look nice, like overalls. There are certain kind of fashions I want to wear, patterns I want to get into, and I can't get into them because I can't go back. I can only go up. I don't think I can go down [emphasis added].

The narratives of trans women and *travestis* reveal the generational shifts in body projects and body modification techniques associated with somatic cultures that have changed in recent years in terms of reference corporealities and attitudes towards certain body modification techniques once shared by trans women and *travestis*. The experiences of the research participants also reveal a greater concern about the types of procedures used in the embodiment of gender identity, a reflection of the countless stories of unsuccessful procedures using industrial silicone by previous generations.

Aspects of class and racialisation

Analysing the corporeal biographies of the research participants in this study also means understanding the importance of the markers of racialisation as producers of body difference and social inequality. As Mbembe puts it, 'the principle of race should be understood as a spectral form of human division and difference that can be mobilised for the purposes of stigmatisation, exclusion and segregation, through which a particular human group is isolated, eliminated and even physically destroyed' (Mbembe 2018: 106. Our translation). In this way, understanding the corporeal biographies of some trans women and *travestis* also means questioning how racist structural violence in a global world marked by colonialism and Eurocentrism legitimises inequalities, stigmatises and subjects trajectories.

Mbembe (2018a) - by mobilising Foucauldian analyses of knowledge, power and the production of discourses of truth and postcolonial studies -

shows that the creation of the category of race by modern techno-scientific discourses legitimised the exploitation, violent techniques of governance and subjugation of non-European/non-white peoples around the world. The Cartesian epistemology that created the oppositions/binaries between the categories of nature/culture, woman/man, black/white, homosexual/heterosexual, transgender/cisgender, etc., legitimated the “European-white-cisheterosexual-male” as the holder of the episteme and as responsible for the colonisation of the world. Thus, discourses of black and/or non-white subalternity have been used as a tool to naturalise oppression, enslavement, colonial violence and reproductive control:

In the colonial order, race functioned as a principle of the body politic, allowing for the classification of human beings into distinct categories, supposedly endowed with their own physical and mental characteristics. Bureaucracy then emerged as an instrument of domination, a network that linked death and business and functioned as the essential matrix of power. Violence became law and law became racialised (Mbembe 2018a: 109. Our translation).

Examples of this are the eugenic discourses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, translated in Brazil through discussions that linked physiological traits to moral characteristics, and the discourse on the importance of whitening the Brazilian population, of which Nina Rodrigues (1956) is one of the main proponents.

The technologies of racialisation are easily perceptible in contemporary Brazil. Jarrin (2017b), who conducts research on plastic surgery in the country, shows how the aesthetic devaluation of black bodies is intertwined with other material realities, such as police violence, lack of access to education and health, in a process that naturalises the differences between light-skinned and black people. In Brazil, plastic surgeons contribute to the reproduction and representation of racialised characteristics as traits to be corrected, such as the noses of people of African descent, which are considered “ugly” and closely associated with people from disadvantaged classes. Plastic surgeons’ discourses thus perpetuate the biopolitical desire to produce a homogeneous nation (Jarrin 2017a), which more or less allows for the myth of racial democracy and the whitening of the population.

In Brazil, issues of race are inextricably linked to class and to processes of exclusion, marginalisation, spatial segregation and marginalisation/exploitation of the black population, reflecting colonisation and enslavement. The country is predominantly made up of people of African descent (55.6%) - although only 10.1% of the population identify themselves as ‘black’ - and more than 70% of the poorest people are of African descent. Therefore, to understand the processes of exclusion of people of African descent in Brazil is to understand how the discourses of truth elaborated by modern science and its Cartesian view of the world have been used in the processes of exclusion, marginalisation and silencing of non-white people. An eloquent example was the creation of the myth of racial democracy by white elites to make invisible the stigmas and inequalities associated with black and Afro-descendant people in the country (Sales Junior 2006; Carneiro 2003).

In this sense, the reality of Afro-descendant people in Brazil establishes a relationship with what Butler (2017) calls the precarious condition:

[...] the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from inadequate social and economic support networks and are more vulnerable to violations, violence and death. These populations are more vulnerable to disease, poverty, hunger, displacement and violence. The precarious condition also characterises the politically induced condition of maximising the precariousness of populations exposed to arbitrary

state violence, who often have no choice but to turn to the very state from which they need protection. In other words, they turn to the state for protection, but the state is precisely what they need to be protected from (Butler 2017: 47. Our translation).

In our research, only Safira and Luna self-identified as black, reflecting the processes of vulnerability, marginalisation and representations attributed to both throughout their lives. The situation of vulnerability experienced by both highlights the marginalisation of the black population following the abolition of slavery in 1888. With the end of slavery, no policies were put in place for the economic and social integration of black people into Brazilian society. On the contrary, a policy of whitening was adopted, supported by eugenic scientific discourses aimed at the immigration of white Europeans, who were already granted various privileges on Brazilian soil in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Fernandes 1978).

Luna's corporeal biography is marked by multiple forms of exclusion and silencing. Luna, 38 years old, was born on the outskirts of Campinas, São Paulo, with some family support: her mother was a cleaner and her father worked in a ceramics factory. The couple had seven biological children - including Luna - and adopted two more after their last child died at the age of two and a half. Luna only attended primary school up to grade 8. The reason for dropping out of school was threats of violence related to her sexuality and blackness, given the hegemonic representations that she was subjected to, referring to the interconnectedness of markers of blackness, masculinity and cisheteronormativity.

In this sense, Megg Oliveira (2017: 174. Our translation) states that: "The mechanisms of control that affect an adult effeminate gay, faggot and black queer are observed during their childhood with the deliberate intention of ensuring white cisheteronormativity as the only possible existence". Luma de Andrade (2012) also supports the understanding of institutional transphobia in schools. The researcher concludes that *travestis* drop out of school as a result of stigmas and representations as deviant and undesirable. Dropping out is understood as if it were the *travestis*' choice, in an attempt to hide the school's failure to manage difference and to conceal the involuntary dropout caused by the institution itself.

The constitution of Luna's body capital and the embodiment of her gender identity went through countless processes of negotiation between her, her family and her work. At the age of 16, she began the process of hormone replacement through a travesti cousin and her friends. At this point, Luna was afraid to experience body modification in her parents' home, so she decided to move in with her cousin and aunt. It was also during this time that Luna began sex work. At the age of 18, after some changes to her body, Luna decided to stop the female hormone treatment and start taking male hormones, determined to return to her parents' house.

However, after her mother discovered that her daughter was smoking cannabis, Luna decided to move out of her parents' house to live with some friends. During this time, Luna worked as a telemarketer and supplemented her financial income by giving concerts and performances in LGBT night-clubs in Campinas-SP, accompanied by her cousin. However, due to the low income from formal work (R\$350.00), Luna began to deal drugs through the people she shared a house with. The profits from the drug trade were often used for parties, boyfriends and financial help for her parents, who until then had believed that Luna was a successful artist. After three years of dealing, Luna was caught red-handed at the age of 21. Prison was a turning point in her life. The experience of prison made Luna rethink her actions and the importance of family affection in the constitution of her subjectivity. Despite the crisis in her family relationships, her mother continued to give her emotional support.

Luna spent four years in prison. After her release, she returned to live with her family and to work. The low salary was not enough to cover her personal and family expenses, and she was unable to express her femininity at work. In this context of deprivation, Luna decided to return to sex work at night in Jardim Itatinga, leading a “double life”: working in a security company during the day and as a sex worker at night.

Between wigs, make-up, self-hormonisation and industrial silicone, Luna has invested in her body capital in a provisional way, never having had the chance to fully experience her gender identity and femininity, either at work or at home. Therefore, Luna’s body capital not only demonstrates the plastic and technical aspect of gender, but also how the system, transphobia and racism prevent many *travestis* and transsexuals from fully embracing their gender identities. Luna’s body capital is the result of industrial silicone body modification techniques developed by Brazilian trans women and *travestis*, which carry high health risks. These risks are overridden by the low cost of the procedure and the desire to realise the body project.

The intertwining of markers of class, race and gender identity has not only constrained the process of constituting Luna’s body capital, but also her subjectivity and the representations she makes of herself: “Like, when I go out on the street, I know I’m going to attract attention. I know, like, I’m almost six feet tall, I’m black, I like to wear light hair, so I know I attract attention, you know?”. Luna’s fears and anxieties about accessing public space were built up throughout her trajectory as a travesti, black, poor, a sex worker, a person living in a situation of detention, and a victim of physical and symbolic violence that marked her body and subjectivity in conditions of permanent precarity. “To affirm that life is precarious is to affirm that the possibility of sustaining it depends fundamentally on social and political conditions, and not only on an internal impulse to live” (Butler 2017: 40. Our translation).

Travestis and trans identities can only be fully understood in relation to other social markers of difference. Luna’s life trajectory and corporeal biography in Brazil demonstrates the complexity of analysing lives based on class and race markers, as well as the exclusions and silences that target the poor and black population. In addition to bodily and subjective inequalities, her trajectory also demonstrates, from the beginning of her life, the processes of agency and resilience of people who are not at the centre of the economic-ethnic system that (re)produces the exclusionary social structure.

A Barbie in the mirror

Understanding the corporeal biographies of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* in transnational mobility also means going through the life trajectories of the research participants in search of the signifiers and meanings inherent in the processes of embodiment, as well as the changes in dispositional legacies with transits to Portugal and/or other countries on the European continent. Experiences in the European sex market allow for the accumulation of economic capital and its conversion into body capital, in other words, it is a turning point in corporeal biographies. The embodiment of the European experience acquires meaning in/through the body, whether through changes in the body project and/or access to biotechnologies for transforming the body.

When analysing the trajectories of the research participants, Débora’s corporeal biography shows the profound importance of mobility in the accumulation/conversion of economic/body capital and the constitution of a positive image and self-esteem regarding gender identity. Débora, 35, white, born in Fortaleza-CE, with partial family support, a seamstress mother and waiter father, left home at the age of 17, motivated to live out her female gender identity in São Paulo. Débora arrived in Lisbon in 2003, aged 21-22, after four or five years of living and working in the capital, São Paulo. Through the sex market in Brazil, Débora accumulated economic capital and transformed it into bodily capital, represented by the silicone prostheses in her breasts and the industrial

silicone in her hips. Sex work also gave her autonomy, financial security and mobility capital. After working in Portugal for a while, Débora spent a year travelling in Spain, even before the 2008 crisis: “When I was in Spain, which was the part I told you about, I was in the whole interior of Spain. And in Spain we made a lot of money, Emerson, it was also the time of the fat cow”. This trip allowed her to accumulate the economic capital to buy a house in Fortaleza, in the same neighbourhood as her parents and siblings, and to have her nose job. At this point in Débora’s life, the surgery represented her success as a transgender sex worker and the embodiment of her dream of being a Barbie:

4 An emic term for a handsome man.

Débora: Nobody had a nose job, so very few trans women did. And there was a very famous surgeon there, Dr [name of doctor], and I said: “How much is a nose job?”. And he said: “Oh, 2,500, 2,000 euros.” And I said: “I want to have my nose done”. My nose wasn’t ugly, but it was a Bofinho⁴ nose. So he was known as one of the best, you know? When I went in for the operation, he said to me: “You’re so beautiful!”. “Oh, thank you!”. “Do you want a woman’s nose or a doll’s nose?”. And I said: “I want a doll’s nose!”. And he said: “Barbie doll?” And I said: “Yes, yes!” [laughs]. When I woke up, my nose was swollen and he said: “Your nose is going to be beautiful!”. And I said: “I hope so! I hope so! And when I came back to Portugal, I came back... I was always blonde, but I came back with a nose like this, beautiful, tiny, and everyone said: “Look, you were lucky, huh!”. So I stayed here for a long time.

Débora’s first three years in Europe were marked by the accumulation of mobility, bodily, economic and cultural capital. In this sense, Vartabedian (2010: 49. Our translation) states that: “Symbolic and social well-being and bodily embellishment are some of the factors that contribute to understanding their migration to Europe as a project of personal empowerment”. The experience of prostitution on the European continent made it necessary to learn English. “To speak a language is to assume a world, a culture” (Fanon 2008: 50. Our translation), but more than that, language allows migrants to access the status of subject (Mombaça 2015). Thus, Débora began to study English on her own in Lisbon, and the accumulation of this resource allowed it to be transformed into mobility capital. Once again, it was through friendship networks and social capital with other sex workers that Débora was able to work in Greece and France.

The move to Paris at the age of 24-25 is another turning point in Débora’s corporeal biography. In the French capital, she worked both as a stripper and in sex work. This provided opportunities to meet trans women of different nationalities and expand her network of people and social capital, while also changing her aesthetic dispositions. It was through the French health system that Débora gained access to the process of gender confirmation surgery, following an HIV test at a sex worker support centre.

Faced with the possibility of realising her dream of gender confirmation surgery, Débora invested resources in time and money in order to undergo the procedure. During her experiences in Paris, she updated her mobility dispositions, her aesthetic dispositions, the accumulation of economic capital through sex work and learning French with the help of public policies offered by the French state, in other words, the accumulation of cultural capital as well as mobility. After a year and a half of medical appointments, sometimes preventing her from working, the surgery was scheduled. A week before the operation, Débora received the news that it wouldn’t be possible to carry out the surgery due to the lack of a medical board. Determined to have the operation at this point in her life, and with the economic capital to have it done in a private hospital, Débora requested her file and contacted some surgeons in Bangkok and London. This once again demonstrates the conversion of economic capital into body capital. The gender confirmation surgery took place

in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. In addition to that operation, Débora had a facial implant to round off her cheekbones.

Débora's body capital demonstrates the myriad insights that other models of femininity provided in the process of reflecting on her experiences during her mobility, such as her relationship with facial feminisation surgery. After a friend who, according to Débora, "had a very masculine face" had good results with a Peruvian surgeon, Débora felt motivated to invest more resources in her body capital. After contacting the surgeon and discussing the details of the procedure, Débora travelled to Lima.

Débora's corporeal biography is thus the result of her work as a sex worker, the countless investments in biotechnologies made possible by her work, and the global circulation inherent in her profession. Her body project emerges from the constitution of aesthetic dispositions constituted by experiences with other trans women and *travestis* around the world. Her upward trajectory in the field of sex work has allowed her to accumulate a great deal of economic, bodily, social, cultural and mobility capital, as well as the recurrent conversion between these resources.

In addition to changes in corporeal biographies, mobility to Europe promotes re-significations of life trajectories and a change in the legacy of dispositions due to the new experiences lived during mobility. These transformations are motivated by the reflexivity induced by different and differentiating contexts and/or are the result of strategies to achieve agency and success in sex work. Frequent displacement between different economic, social, cultural and political contexts, while driving or facilitating changes in ways of being in public life, also changes representations of Europe and Brazil.

One of the aspects addressed by the research on the mobility of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* to Europe is the reference to experiences of glamour and luxury, as opposed to the situation of marginality and abjection of their subjectivities and experiences in Brazil. Europe is seen as a way of changing aesthetic dispositions and representations of gender identity and femininity. Therefore, the process of becoming European involves changes in the way femininity and behaviour are performed in public life. The narrative of Safira, 37 years old, black, complete primary education, born in the countryside of Espírito Santo, with no family support, parents who were farmers, shows that becoming European means embodying representations of the upper class and upward social mobility, in other words, being chic and glamorous, according to the narrative:

Emerson: And tell me, what did you learn during your time in Spain?
What has changed in you?

Sapphire: Ahh! Europe! It's a school, isn't it? I came back with a different attitude. I stopped dressing vulgarly, I started to see, right? Just like here, before it could get as cold as it did, it was important that my legs were outside, my breasts on the tray. I realised that in Europe you can be a lady without being vulgar, you can be sensual, attractive, but without showing vulgarity. So I came back to Brazil with that mentality, with that attitude, with that culture.

Experiences on the European continent thus lead to changes in dispositions and consequently to the accumulation of cultural capital. Frequent travels to different countries, travelling between different social and cultural contexts, the heterogeneity of experiences with clients of different nationalities and social classes change the dispositional heritage of sex workers and contribute to the constitution of a positive self-image. At the same time, the accumulation of economic capital, the embodiment of performances of social distinction, the reduction of fears of violence and stigmatisation, as well as passability are conditions that allow access to differentiated and differentiating spaces.

Embodying the European

The amount of economic, bodily, cultural, social and mobility capital accumulated by trans women and *travestis* allows them to reconfigure the place of power/position they occupy in their social circle, especially in their country of origin. The representations of the different and differentiating trajectories, the countries visited, the biotechnologies embodied, the access to privileged sex work territories, the glamour and luxury all play a role in constituting an aura of prestige around the lifestyle of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* who are transnationally mobile sex workers. Therefore, understanding mobility also involves the meanings that trans women and *travestis* construct about their experiences and the recognition and respect of their distinctive trajectories by other people in their social peer group in the broadest sense. These discussions refer to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, i.e. the differences and rarities of capitals that are recognised as symbols of power, responsible for gaining gains of distinction in disputes between people in a given field.

Symbolic capital reveals the classificatory aspects of lifestyles, accumulated capital and hierarchical processes of symbolic differentiation (Bourdieu 2013). Symbolic capital is also related to the distinctive properties of the accumulation and incorporation of capital acquired in the field, in other words, the modification of dispositional legacies and the perception/appreciation schemes for the recognition of the power of these properties by peers. As an example, we can cite the analysis in the previous section of the representations of aesthetic dispositions and performances of femininity by trans women and *travestis* with the experiences of mobility from a hierarchical perspective, i.e. the importance of the body and its performance as a subjective expression of social mobility. Symbolic capital thus demonstrates the importance of the logic of assimilation and dissimilation in agents' attempts to identify with superior groups (reputation) or to snub groups identified as inferior (Bourdieu 2013).

In this way, symbolic capital affects all other capitals. Exactly in this sense, Oliveira and Kulaitis (2017) show how symbolic capital contributes to the constitution of prestige and public recognition of the economic and social capital of people on the move, even when they are of little importance. An example of this is the overcoming of class origins in the country of destination, which is linked to the positive representations of mobility and the acquisition of European status in territories of sex work in Brazil.

Symbolic capital is also linked to the constitution of bodily capital and the embodiment of biotechnologies, since the possibility of accumulating economic capital and transforming it into distinctive bodily capital is only possible for sex workers who are well positioned in the prostitution fields. In this sense, the performance of expensive surgical procedures, especially those performed by a few people and/or by famous plastic surgeons, valorises a person's social position within the group of trans women and *travestis*. Débora contributes to the understanding of these issues by reflecting on the perception, prestige and appreciation of biotechnologies embodied in the constitution of her body capital by other trans women and *travestis*:

Emerson: What changed in your life after the surgery? What do you think happened to Débora after that?

Débora: You're more special in the middle...[whispering]... when there's a crowd here, Emerson...

Emerson: Trans?

Débora: Of trans women... and in this crowd there are blondes, brunettes, redheads, the spectacular ones... but you say, oh... [...] this one's had an operation, everyone's going to do it like that, oh! [laughs]. Everyone, men, people want to know why, but why? because it touches people's imagination. People don't want to accept that a person is, can make a transformation beyond what they think they can do, you know?

However, the relationships between body capital, the incorporation of distinctive experiences and symbolic capital point to the importance of passability in the trajectories of Brazilian trans women and *travestis*. Passability not only provides security in the relationships they establish in social contexts marked by cisnormativity and transphobia, but also becomes an aspect of esteem and prestige for the research participants. Finally, the power apparatuses that produce cisheteronormativity also operate on the subjectivities and corporealities of trans women and *travestis*. Viviane Vergueiro (2015), when reflecting on passability as a strategy of resistance to cissexist violence, highlights the importance of understanding the issue from other markers of difference and as one of the possibilities to confront patriarchy and cissexism. In some trajectories, the strategy of passability is one of the few ways to survive the violence of the system. For the author, there are two prevailing issues:

- (1) the elitist and racist barriers that surround the viability of cisgender passability strategies (i.e. who is excluded from non-passability?), and
- (2) the limits to the 'passable' re-existence of these diversities within cis-colonial occupations (i.e. re+thinking the limits around invisibility, assimilation, the constant threat of 'picking through' what we are) (Vergueiro 2015: 158. Our translation).

For example, Luna's insecurities about accessing public life in Brazil for fear of being "picked through" are related to class issues and the features of racialisation that are intertwined with her trajectory and corporeal biography. On the other hand, the trajectory and embodiment of Dalila's and Mariana's gender identity, with the right family support and endocrine interventions in their teenage years, allowed them to achieve a high degree of passability.

What the sociological analyses of life trajectories show on an individual scale are the different meanings attached to mobility, the unique effects on physical biographies and the different instrumentalisation of sex work that underlies each life trajectory. These aspects can only be fully grasped when they are analysed on the basis of the interweaving of the different social markers of difference and the life capitals accumulated during the trajectories of trans women and *travestis* sex workers. In short, the analyses showed the complexity of the embodiment of the European and the different meanings attributed to the research participants' corporeal biographies and relationships with family members and peer groups, i.e. "there are hierarchies among the deviant bodies themselves, so that there are trans bodies that, because of their colour, their place of origin, their socio-economic conditions, are closer to the ideal of privilege than others" (Lustosa 2016: 91. Our translation).

Reflections in the mirror

Through the operationalisation of the concept of corporeal biography, this article sought to understand the role of life and mobility trajectories in the embodiment of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* sex workers travelling to/in the European continent. The narratives of the participants highlighted the role of structural inequalities in the choices underlying the constitution of their corporeal biographies, showing they affect the processes of (re)producing bodies in contemporary societies.

Thus, through the sociology at the individual scale and of the body scale, we were able to show the different processes and meanings that trans women and *travestis* sex workers, in their circulation from Brazil to Europe, attribute to the embodiment of what they recognize as the European femininity. The subjectivities of gender non-conforming people, the appearance of non-normative bodies and dissident sexualities are silenced, excluded and reduced to the status of abjection in the Brazilian historical, social, cultural and political context. marked by colonialism, patriarchy, cisheteronormativity and economic neoliberalism. Mobility to/in the European field of sex work is, therefore under-

stood by sex workers as a turning point in their life journeys, as it allows them to re-signify the bodily expression of their subjectivities constituted in Brazil.

The corporeal biographies of the younger research participants in this article confirm the changes in representations and perceptions of the body projects of trans women and *travestis* (Pelúcio 2007; Duque 2011). The corpulent, curvy model so favoured in previous decades has been modified in line with the female body standard derived from the body design and fashion industry, i.e. slim and with fewer curves. Younger research participants have a clearer idea and, consequently, more fear of the side effects of industrial silicone due to the stories and knowledge accumulated and shared by other older trans people and *travestis*.

As a result, younger female research participants prefer to incorporate more invasive techniques into their bodies under medical supervision. This new model of corporeality expresses a greater concern with female gender performance at the expense of the embodiment of invasive biotechnologies in the body. At the same time, the narratives of the older female research participants, who have built their corporeality through other types of body projects and with biotechnologies from a different somatic culture, demonstrate the limits of the body in the embodiment of other models, a subject body that subjugates them, however open it becomes to body modification projects.

The research participants' trajectories, marked by aspects of disadvantaged social class and racialisation, allow us to understand the impact of the cisnormativity, processes of abjection and structural and institutional transphobia throughout the lives of trans women and *travestis*. The narratives of these research participants are exemplary for understanding how the intertwining of gender identity, disadvantaged social class and racialisation become predominant for entering the sex market while still in their teens. More than that, their life journeys illustrate the role of the social group of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* sex workers as one of the few or only support networks for this social group in obtaining support and resources for the subsistence of their bodies and subjectivities. Therefore, the results of this research support Transgender Europe's assertions that: "Sex work can also strengthen personal development goals by providing networks and guidance from other, usually more experienced, trans people, serving as a means of gender affirmation in transphobic societies" (Fedorko and Berredo - TGEU 2018: 7. Our translation).

These trajectories also show how the processes of vulnerability and precarity are reinforced by the features of racialisation that are mutually constituted by the class question in Brazil. Although Luna was not expelled from her home, her subjectivity was marked by racist violence and fear of access to public spaces in Brazil. Her life story shows how the interconnections between racism and transphobia make it impossible for black trans and *travestis* people to complete formal education. They are driven to drop out of school due to fear of the violence that exists in the school environment and the relationships that are established between the school institution and the apparatus of white cisheteronormativity as the only way to exist (Oliveira 2017).

Mobility to Europe is seen as a turning point in corporeal biographies, as it allows the economic capital accumulated in prostitution fields to be transformed into bodily capital. The embodiment of the European promotes changes in bodily projects through greater access to biotechnologies of bodily transformation, the impact of different and differentiating experiences in prostitution, public life and bodily projects, experiences linked to changes in aesthetic dispositions. At the same time, the research participants understand the experiences on the European continent as motivating the constitution of responsibilities and changes in dispositions towards culture and education, as they assimilate the cultural differences between the different countries they travel through.

Mobility is perceived as a turning point in corporeal biographies because it allows for changes in ways of being based on experiences in the fields of sex

work and public life, especially those related to luxury and glamour. According to some of the research participants, experiences on the European continent were responsible for the refinement of femininity, i.e. the embodiment of upper class representations and upward social mobility. Mobility is also perceived as a conquest of agency, self-confidence and self-esteem in relation to femininity. This is due to the heterogeneity of experiences with clients of different nationalities and social classes, the accumulation of economic capital, access to public life and biotechnologies of body modification, within a process that confers passability and consequently reduces the fear of transphobic and cisnormative violence that demarcates their life trajectories in Brazil.

Thus, the different and differentiating trajectories, the countless countries visited, the biotechnologies embodied, the access to privileged segments of the field of sex work and to some resources associated with luxury and glamour, make it possible to build a capital of prestigious expressed in the lifestyle of Brazilian trans women and *travestis* sex workers in transnational mobility. These aspects help to affirm their distinct and distinctive trajectories based on hierarchical social classifications. Therefore, the embodiment of the European involves the (re)production of dispositions and practices experienced during mobility, as well as the incorporation of signs of upward social mobility obtained with economic capital to attest the unique aspects of trajectories and corporeal biographies.

What the experiences and corporeal biographies of the research participants show is the complexity that discussions about the body, gender and sexualities have taken on in the public arena as the LGBTQIA+ population has gained citizenship rights and as trans and *travestis* people have entered - albeit reluctantly - reflexive spaces such as universities, the media and others. These processes have widened the possibilities for thinking about the body, gender and sexuality of trans and cisgender people. If in past decades the experiences of trans and *travestis* people were limited to precarious body modifications, prostitution, and abjection, in the current context, and despite the vulnerability and precariousness of a significant part of this social group, we have seen an expansion of the possibilities of their experiences, corporealities and subjectivities, as well as the achievement of better living conditions for themselves and/or their families. The embodiment of the European is the resignification of the abject body as an accessory body, in other words, a bodily capital mobilised during the mobility to the territories of sex work and its conversion into other capitals.

The accumulation of economic capital provided by the different experiences of (i)mobility ensures access to different biotechnologies for transforming the body, convertible into unequal forms of body capital. All of them, however, converge towards the ideal of the embodiment of the European. The difficulties of the country of origin related to class inequalities, structural transphobia and representations of abjection of the body are thus re-signified through their experiences in Europe, leading to the acquisition of symbolic capital whose recognition depends largely on the embodiment of resources and symbols associated with the representations of glamour and luxury attributed to the European experience.

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