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Advertisements for enslaved Black women and female urban dynamics in Desterro

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Abstract: The history of cities is often told based solely on their materiality, neglecting intangible contributions that result from the relations between individuals and space. Moreover, female participation in this production remains relatively inaccessible, due to a lack of sources that specify them. For these reasons, enslaved Black women remain even more invisible. In this study we bring attention to some of the contributions of these women to the production of urban space in Desterro/Florianópolis as intangible dynamics by analyzing advertising found in the local press for the purchase, sale, and rent of these women. Finally, we discuss how their daily lives may have contributed to the signification of public and private spaces, in relation to the urban dynamics of the time.

Keywords: space; representation; omen; slaves.

Anúncios de mulheres negras escravizadas e as dinâmicas urbanas femininas em Desterro

Resumo: A história das cidades, muitas vezes, é contada tendo como base apenas sua materialidade, negligenciando contribuições imateriais, as quais são fruto da relação entre os indivíduos e o espaço. Além disso, a participação feminina nessa produção permanece ainda relativamente inacessível, devido à carência de fontes que a particularize. Esses mesmos atributos fazem com que, perante tal representatividade feminina, as mulheres negras escravizadas restem ainda mais invisibilizadas. No presente trabalho, então, resgatamos as contribuições dessas mulheres à produção do espaço urbano em Desterro/Florianópolis, enquanto dinâmica imaterial, por meio dos seus anúncios de compra, venda e aluguel veiculados na imprensa local. Por fim, discutimos a maneira por meio da qual seus cotidianos, possivelmente, tenham subsidiado a significação quanto aos espaços públicos e privados, relativos à dinâmica urbana da época.

Palavras-chave: espaço urbano; representatividade; mulheres negras; escravas.

Anuncios de mujeres negras esclavizadas y la dinámica urbana femenina en Desterro

Resumen: La historia de las ciudades, muchas veces, es contada con base a su materialidad, descuidando las contribuciones cotidianas de las personas que las experimentaron. Ante esto, la colaboración femenina en esta producción sigue siendo inaccesible, debido a la carencia de fuentes que las particularicen y a la parcialidad de los informes restantes. Estos mismos atributos hacen que las mujeres negras esclavizadas sean aún más invisibles ante tal representatividad femenina. El presente trabajo, entonces, rescata los aportes de estas mujeres a la producción del espacio urbano en Desterro/Florianópolis, en cuanto a la dinámica imaterial, a través de sus anuncios de compra, venta y alquiler presentes en la prensa local. Finalmente, discutimos la forma por el cual su vida cotidiana posiblemente contribuyó a la significación de los espacios públicos y privados, relacionados a la dinámica urbana de la época.

Palabras Clave: espacio; representatividade; mujeres negras; esclavas.

Introduction

The production of urban space is frequently reduced to initiatives that act directly on the materiality of cities. Based on this presumption Paola Jacques (2014, p. 298) argues that the history of our cities is basically concentrated in a "*history of stones*". This configuration thus makes it difficult to capture the daily life of different individuals who experienced and signified it in a particular way. If it is difficult to find manifestations, especially intangible ones, of the diversity of individuals in the daily life of our cities, it is even more difficult to identify the particularity of female production in space that results from the interaction between women and the urban environment (Dolores HAYDEN, 1995; Doreen MASSEY, 1994). This occurs because studies of urban history portrayed the existence of a universal individual, commonly referred to as male, who could embody this diversity in a neutral and single subject (Elizabeth GROSZ, 1992). Moreover, as Antônio Risério argues (2015, p. 267), women "do not define foundations, do not build walls, nor do they design facades". For these reasons, their representation remains adulterated and partial in terms of the conformation of urban memory, as well as their permanence in the social imaginary.

This partiality of the remaining testimony also results from an attempt to homogenize experiences in the urban environment, as a consequence of a media strategy of erasure and pasteurization of the symbolic capital of our cities (JACQUES, 2014). In turn, this narrative priority results, according to Hayden (1995, p. 8), in policies to define heritage declarations and the preservation of historic patrimony, which, for a long time, ignored and neglected the presence of minorities in the urban environment. In this sense, Hayden initiates her discussion by questioning "Why are so few moments in women's history remembered as part of preservation?".

Thus, as a reaction to the presumption of an "public space by men and boys", according to Matrix (1984), exercises arose for the "inclusion" of the female as an analytical category (Margareth RAGO, 1998), an initiative capable of broadening "the traditional notions of what is historically important" (Joan SCOTT, 2017, p. 4). However, this exercise, which was also sought in other fields of knowledge, is subject to analytical particularities, given that the city is commonly treated as a space of masculinity, while the home is seen as the space related to the feminine (Zaida MARTÍNEZ, 2018). Therefore, this imaginary presupposes, at least discursively, the existence of a female retraction in relation to the outside world (Richard SENNETT, 2014), imposing an even greater difficulty to the search for sources that they relate to the urban environment, which creates even greater difficulty for the search for sources that relate them to the urban environment.

Nevertheless, the prerogative of female construction in cities over history cannot go deeply in the category "women", given that "the individual woman's experience of it varies according to factors such as class, race, personality and sexual preference" (MATRIX, 1984, p. 12). Thus, we suggest that this prerogative would be pertinent only to elite white women, given that poor women have always been cast into urban space, due to their survival needs (Heleieth SAFFIOTI, 2013), "whether to look for sources of water, go to the places for washing clothes or to the markets" (Michelle PERROT, 1998, p. 47).

For Brazilian cities, few vestiges remain of these women along history (Rachel SOIHET, 2017), and those subjected to slavery are even more invisible. The lack of interest in the routines of enslaved women is evident, given that many accounts at most make reference to "images of dark figures wrapped in black clothes with almost nothing more added about their living conditions" (Antônio MORGÁ, 1996, p. 22). Or the accounts are highly prejudiced and hostile (Maria Odila DIAS, 1983). In this regard, Sonia Giacomini (1988, p. 20) comments on the challenge of speaking about the Black woman, given that "the available sources are extremely poor", considering their "dispersion and inconsistency", due to the partiality with which these primary documents were drafted. Considering that enslaved Black women were the females most present on the streets of our cities, this absence of references to them in historic documents of the nineteenth century is contradictory.

Despite the lack of sources, efforts to recuperate and react to this invisibility have revealed how representative were the influences of these women in daily urban life, such as the works of Dias (1995), in São Paulo, as well as Sandra Graham (1992) and Juliana Farias (2012) in Rio de Janeiro.

Our objective in this article is to discuss the contributions of enslaved Black women to the urban dynamics in Desterro/Florianópolis, materializing them in urban space of the time – based on representations of them found in the local press, given that newspapers serve as a tool to institute behavioral norms. Specifically, we work with commercial advertising about enslaved women, given that in addition to intermediating commercial exchanges these ads influence the destinies and daily lives of the women involved. This is because, according to Graham (1992), the trade in these woman represents a form of punishment because of its potential to undo ties constructed by these women, requiring them to renegotiate their territorialities.

For the context proposed in this article, we find that other difficulties are imposed, basing our work on Karla Rascke (2014) who affirms that in Desterro/Florianópolis these people were silenced and there was a consequent disregard of their contribution to the construction of local society. This is clear in the passage from Virgílio Várzea (1984, p. 22): "it is rare to find the physiological trait of

the black [...] so that the Catarinense people are essentially Aryan [...] whose populations will be [...] a new interesting, superior and perfect Brazilian type". Thus, by investigating the approximation between these women and the city we intend to reveal their possible territorialities and get closer to their subjectivities, given that "body and city are mutually configured, because bodies are inscribed in the city at the same time that the city is inscribed in bodies" (JACQUES, 2014, p. 114).

Research Procedures

The strategy sought to access passages that reveal the ties of these women to specific territorialities, by consulting the archives of the Hemeroteca Digital Catarinense (HDC) [The Santa Catarina Digital Newspaper Library],¹ for newspapers that circulated in Desterro/Florianópolis beginning in the early nineteenth century². A first evaluation of the narratives present in these newspapers sought to exclude those with little to add to the study. As a result of this selection, 20,959 newspapers were consulted, distributed in a relatively homogeneous manner in relation to the time period proposed for the study. The consultation of these journals took place both through a search for keywords³ and by the reading of newspapers, which served as a preliminary evaluation of the structure of each issue, and the later reading of sections⁴ with greater potential. To develop the map on which we presented the distribution of the data collected, which we call the Base-Map, we compiled both the evolution of the (i) street grid as well as the (ii) buildings,⁵ based on the available historic maps, as constructed by Eliane Veiga (2010).

Most of the passages collected in the newspapers are accompanied by a street name and number of a residence. However, in terms of the transposition of these locations to the Base-Map, it was only possible to identify the streets to which the information referred, while the building numbers were not accessible, given that contemporary numbering is different from that used in the period of the study. For this reason, due to the imprecision of the exact location of the addresses mentioned, the symbols related to the passages collected from the newspapers were distributed homogenously along the length of the streets, which allowed comparing different streets, and not necessarily the concentrations along them.

Figure 1 – Characterization of Desterro/Florianópolis



Left, Direction of urban expansion of Desterro/Florianópolis.

At the center, the northern portion of the territory, an area with a low density of buildings.

Right, the Southern portion of the territory, a territory of initial occupation and area of high density of buildings.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

ForAllToSee Three different images are organized in this figure. The first shows the urban expansion of Desterro/Florianópolis towards the north. This same expansion characterized the various morphologies observed in the location, identified in the second and third figures, with the north portion having low density and the southern portion high density.

Characterization of Desterro/Florianópolis

Before we examine these ads in relation to the territory of Desterro/Florianópolis, we will present some of the main factors in the evolution of its urban design. The region of the Island of Florianópolis chosen for the first settlement, which occurred in the mid-seventeenth century, was the promontory that juts out towards the mainland. Figure 1 shows that the territory was bordered by the Morro da Cruz ("a") to the east, and by the North and South Bays [Baías Norte e

¹ Of the newspapers consulted in the HDC, those that had results, and for this reason are included in the data in this article, were: O Argos, O Cacique, O Catharinense, Correio Catharinense, Despertador, Estrella, O Mercantil, O Progressista, A Regeneração, República, O Mensageiro, O Novo Íris, O Conservador and O Dia.

² The editions of the newspapers that are available do not represent all of the publications, but only those that were well preserved.

³ Among the variations, are the expressions *crioula*, *creoula*, *preta* [black] and *escrava* [slave].

⁴ Titles of these sections included "diz-se por ahi" [That's what they're saying], "dizia-se baixinho" [Softly Spoken] and "fatos e boatos" [Facts and Rumors].

⁵ Respectively related to the years 1760-1770, 1876 and 1921 and from 1754-1764, from 1876 and 1916.

Sul (“b” and “c”), in front is the main square, Praça XV de Novembro (“d”), and the main buildings (Lisabete CORADINI, 1995). The urbanized area is limited to this first dense settlement until the mid-nineteenth century, when it began to expand slowly towards the North Bay (Oswaldo CABRAL, 1979). Despite this, the north and south portions of the territory, indicated in Figure 1, have distinct spatial conformations, because the first is dominated by homes for rest and leisure for the elites, and the second, residences and commerce (VEIGA, 2010).

Territorialities of enslaved Black women

The search for spaces related to enslaved Black women in the newspapers demonstrated that the expectations related to female behavior in public space – although they were all subject to constant vigilance – varied according to race and class. According to Soihet (2017, p. 365), wealthy women were stimulated to frequent public space, but should be accompanied and comply with bourgeois norms of behavior. This prescription was not in keeping with the routines of poor women, given that “their entire form of survival implied a freedom of circulation through the city”. In this sense, Black women suffered greater constraints and coercion and could be constantly disturbed by the police. This was clear to the degree that, despite the different issues and narratives that referred to these women in the local press, we note the repetition of a pattern that sought to disqualify them, in a discursive effort that associated them to negative aspects inherent to the urban dynamic. Thus, in an attempt to control their behaviors, reports found in the newspapers called “the attention of those who encounter a black woman carrying ferocious tigers⁶ through the busiest streets of this capital, requiring passersby to run covering their nose”.⁷ Or, even condemns them, perhaps indirectly, as in the accusation against an individual who “is so shameless that in full light of day, and even in the square, speaks with a *crioula*”.⁸ These persecutions towards urban space constantly culminated in the arrest of these women, as in the note “the brown woman Silvana Maria de Mello was taken to jail for drunkenness”.⁹

Advertisements

Despite the themes cited previously, we identified that the main way in which enslaved women marked a presence in the newspapers, considering the effort to understand their spatial dynamics, is in ads in the press for buying, selling, renting and even donating these women. With a discourse that explicitly reduces them to a commodity, these ads describe both their physical qualities – as in “a very robust and healthy *crioula* slave”¹⁰ – as well as behavioral – as in “has good temper, humble and without any vice”.¹¹ This promotion of the enslaved women was articulated solely for the purpose of enhancing their value as property, and strongly contrasted with other narratives articulated in the newspapers that sought to decrease their integrity, and to restrict their liberties and tarnish their identities. Moreover, we note that these passages associate these women to specific locations, given that most of them present the address where the transaction would possibly be made – as in “rent a slave at Rua do Vigário, 19”¹² – which represented a potential way to associate these women to the city.

Quantity and distribution of frequencies

Table 1 demonstrates the number of ads found and their varied frequencies, according to the time periods of the study. The beginning and ending dates respectively correspond to the dates of the first and last ads found, defining the period from 1849 to 1886. As can be seen, there was a reduction in the number of ads over time, possibly due to a proportional decrease in the category as a part of the labor force – coherent with the disaggregation of the slave order as seen by Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Octávio Ianni (1960, p. 88) – or a possible hesitance by people to link their names to slavery, due to the abolitionist campaigns at the time.

Table 1 – Ads for purchase, sale and renting of enslaved Black women

	1849-1858	1858-1867	1867-1876	1876-1886	TOTAL
ADS	101	97	133	25	356

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

#Foralltosee The Table presents the number of ads for each period of the study, with 101 ads for the years 1849 to 1858; 97 for 1858 to 1867; 133 ads for 1867 to 1876, and 25 ads for 1876 to 1886, totaling 356 ads for the purchase, sale and rent of enslaved women.

⁶ “Tigres ferozes” [Literally ferocious tigers] refers to the wooden barrels and casks loaded with excrement and waste and their odor.

⁷ O Binóculo, de 11/05/1902

⁸ In O Livro Negro, 16/10/1861.

⁹ O Mercantil – Edição 00392, 1864.

¹⁰ O Mercantil – Edição 00265, 1863.

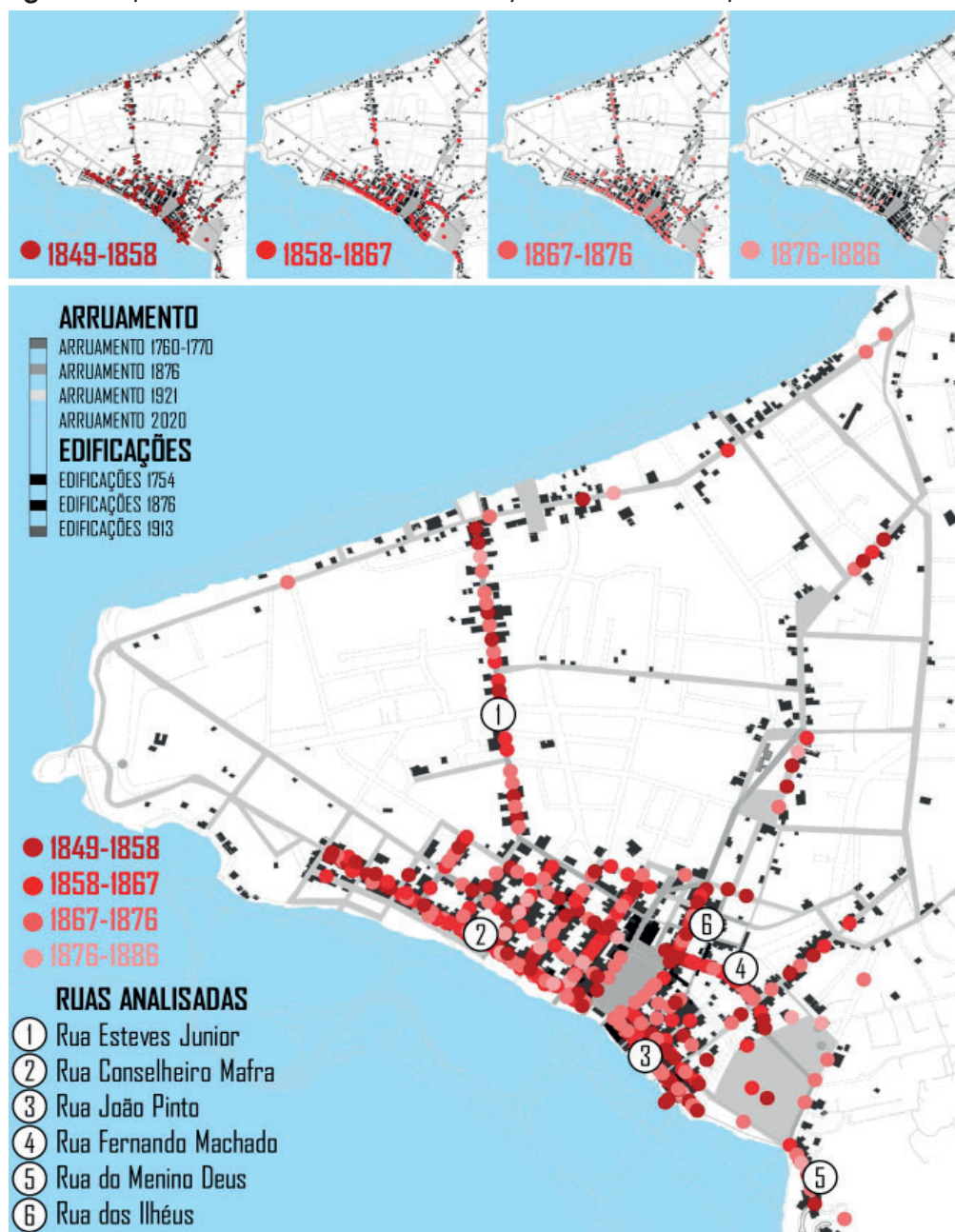
¹¹ O Argos – Edição 00103, 1857.

¹² O Novo Íris, 1850.

Territorialization of the ads

Figure 2 presents the spatialization of the ads in the urban environment of Desterro/Florianópolis. In general, it can be affirmed that the highest incidence of ads seeking the purchase, sale or rent of enslaved Black women is concentrated in the area of initial urbanization of the city, with the exception of Rua Esteves Junior, indicated at "1". Despite the expressive decrease in the number of ads in the final period considered, we can affirm that, in relation to the central portion of the city, which is the densest area, the distribution is relatively homogeneous. For this reason, we opt to discuss the territorialities of these women based on a single map, and based on the distinction between "low density" and "high density" areas (presented in Figure 1), and on the differentiation between "public space" and "private space".

Figure 2 – Spatialization of the ads in the territory of Desterro/Florianópolis



STREET GRID. BUILDINGS. STREETS ANALYZED

Above, spatial distribution of the ads by temporality of study.

Below, overlapping of the different temporalities of ads.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

#PraTodoMundoVer The image presents a map of the central region of Desterro/Florianópolis, over which was plotted a series of points that represent each one of the ads collected, which are also classified by the time interval to which they pertain.

High Density Areas

Among the streets with more expressive results we highlight Rua Conselheiro Mafra, indicated at “2”, for the locality of Figueira, and Rua João Pinto, indicated at “3”, for the location of Pedreira, which are each parallel to the shoreline. This representation also takes place when we compare the performance of these two streets in terms of the changes from 1849 to 1876. This is because even with the decrease in the number of ads we can see that these streets still had more than the others. According to Glaucia Müller (2002), the two streets are dominated by commerce and services, a characteristic that may contribute to the high number of ads. This is probably due to both the greater dynamic of business transactions and the greater dependence on the services provided by these women. It is also possible that these locations were only points of intermediation, given that the families living in more distant areas, because they had their businesses in the central region, perhaps prefer to conduct the trading in slave women there, which suggests that some of these women did not necessarily have their daily life associated to the center of the city.

Other streets stand out for the number of ads in which they are mentioned although they do not have the same characteristics as the two leading ones. These include the streets Fernando Machado, indicated at “4”, Menino Deus, indicated at “5”, and Ilhéus, at “6”, which in addition to being far from the *centro* region were, according to Veiga (2010), residential, and home to a less privileged portion of the population.

Low Density Areas

We know that most of the large and comfortable residences of the local elite were located on streets in the less dense regions. In this sense, we suppose that these areas could have a greater dependence on the services executed by enslaved Black women, and consequently, would have a higher concentration of ads. However, these areas did not stand out in the searches, except for Rua Esteves Junior, which had a significant number of occurrences, and were mentioned in a similar number of ads as streets located in the center of the city. This circumstance reinforces the previously constructed argument that although these women work in less dense regions, the women are traded in the more central portions of the city.

The public and private Division of urban space

The next category of analysis of the urban implications of the services provided by the enslaved Black women is the division of space into public and private, which distinguishes outside and inside in architecture and urban affairs, both theoretically and empirically (MARTÍNEZ, 2018; MASSEY, 2008). This differentiation contributed significantly to the reiteration of the normative female roles – or behavioral expectations (Roberto DAMATTA, 1987) – from society, limiting the experience of women and giving distinct opportunities to men and women in our cities (Nadja MONNET, 2013). This is because women were commonly associated to private space, while men were associated to public space, based on the understanding that women should occupy the invisible spaces of private life, to support the discourse of the public man (MARTÍNEZ, 2018, p. 25).

However, this argument is based on the experience of elite white women, given that the urban experience of Black women is quite different. We exemplify the argument with a passage taken from the newspapers of Desterro/Florianópolis, “offer of a 6-year-old *crioulinha* to work in the house and take girls to school”.¹³ The need for agility in the space imposed on the child reveals the absence of a restraint on these women in relation to the city, compared to those placed on elite white girls.

It is also necessary to recognize that the differentiation between public and private did not always have the same conformation which we find today, given that it was characterized by an alternation between phases of broadening and contraction between one and the other (SENNETT, 2014). For this article, we thus presume that the tasks executed by these women were one of the elements that contributed to the significations that defined this division in Desterro/Florianópolis, as we discussed previously.

Next, we evaluated the female territorialities with the presumption that enslaved Black women had different behavior in public and private spaces of Desterro/Florianópolis. The viability of this approach was possible because the ads collected were accompanied by the specification of the work to be conducted by the women. Given that the location of their work ranged from the bedroom of the *senhora* to the sale of products in the streets (Daniela SBRAVATI, 2008), these tasks were divided between those linked to intimate spaces and those that sent them into the city, and respectively corresponded to a division between the public and private in urban space.

This division especially influenced behavioral expectations related to the tasks specific to each of these spheres, given that different hierarchies applied to the control of each. For example, women who assumed tasks linked to family intimacy such as nursemaids and mucamas [house

¹³ O Mercantil – Edição 675 of 1867.

slaves] were overseen with greater vigilance, due to their greater incursion into the privacy of the family. In contrast, those who worked in public space had greater liberty, given that vigilance over them was weaker in the daily life of the city, despite the collective effort to discipline their habits (MÜLLER, 2002). Despite the proposed distinction between “house slaves” and “street slaves”, we call attention to the fact that it is very possible that slaves did not rigidly fit into these categories. According to Joana Maria Pedro (1992), the need for sustenance required that these women execute various classes of tasks, as suggested by the ad that read “is suitable for any service, mainly in the fields”.¹⁴

Services said to be “indoors”¹⁵ arose concern in men and women slave owners about excessive exposure to the private life of the family, as suggested in the ad that sought to rent an enslaved woman “under the condition, however, that she would not go into the street”,¹⁶ suggesting that she would be required to remain in the domestic environment. In this sense, both house slaves and nursemaids were required to have good attributes of both behavior, as in “well-mannered Black woman, Rua do Senado”,¹⁷ and physical, as in “a 12-year-old brown girl, good for work in the home of any family, as she is pretty”.¹⁸

Although the house was considered a safe place and the street an unsafe location, life in the street offered these women a more egalitarian environment of social exchange and interaction, different from the hierarchic domestic environment. During their movement in the streets they could interact with other women in the windows of houses and on corners, mapping the spaces according to the experiences of these women. However, this appropriation of the public space was ambiguous, given that these women were also subject to violence and judgements, as in the suggestion that “if a slave went to the street it was assumed that she is not a virgin” (GRAHAM, 1992, p. 54). However, it is still possible to affirm that these women have “a richer repertoire of social relations than the senhoras of the large houses” (RISÉRIO, 2015, p. 220) because, by exercising their tasks, these women appropriated public space to survive (CORADINI, 1995). In this sense, Karla Rascke (2013) discusses the existence of Black territories in Desterro/Florianópolis, and how many of them materialized in streets and squares, even on the stairs of the cathedral. The ads could be explicit about the performances of these women in relation to space, as in “good cook, knows how to wash and starch, although does not serve for going into the street”.¹⁹ Analysis of the passage suggests that it may indicate the woman’s lack of ability in public space, but that she was “too agile” in relation to the socialization experienced in the streets of the city, which would make it difficult to control her, to the point that this reduced her value as a commodity, as also suggested in “rent a slave for all services, except street sales”.²⁰

The verification of the representativity of each one of these tasks in the ads results in their classification in four categories, based on their relations with public and private space. The first and the second of these categories directly represent (i) Inside Services – when the work takes place exclusively in private space – and (ii) Outside Services – when the work takes place exclusively in public space. The third category presumes a conjunction of these tasks, compiled in (iii) Inside and Outside Service, when the work occurs in both public and private space, as in “servant needed to work inside the house and in the street”.²¹ The fourth category (iv), Not Specified, groups those ads that do not identify the service, as in “humble slave for sale in Largo do Palácio”.²² Table 2 presents the numbers of ads in each one of these categories, indicating that most of the ads refer to slaves who can work outdoors and in the house. We found few ads exclusively for “street slaves”, especially when compared to the number of those for “house slaves”. Another significant part refers to the ads that do not specify the service executed.

Table 2 – Specification of services offered

INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SERVICE	213	(59,8%)
OUTDOOR SERVICE	3	(0,8%)
INDOOR SERVICE	60	(16,9%)
NOT SPECIFIED	80	(22,4%)
TOTAL	356	

Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

¹⁴ O Mercantil – Edição 00265, 1863.

¹⁵ O Argos – Edição 00829, 1861, and O Despertador – Edição 00562, 1867.

¹⁶ O Mercantil – Edição 675, 1867.

¹⁷ O Argos – 05/02/1856.

¹⁸ O Argos – Edição 00844, 1861.

¹⁹ O Despertador – Edição 00259 1865.

²⁰ O Argos – Edição 00039 1856.

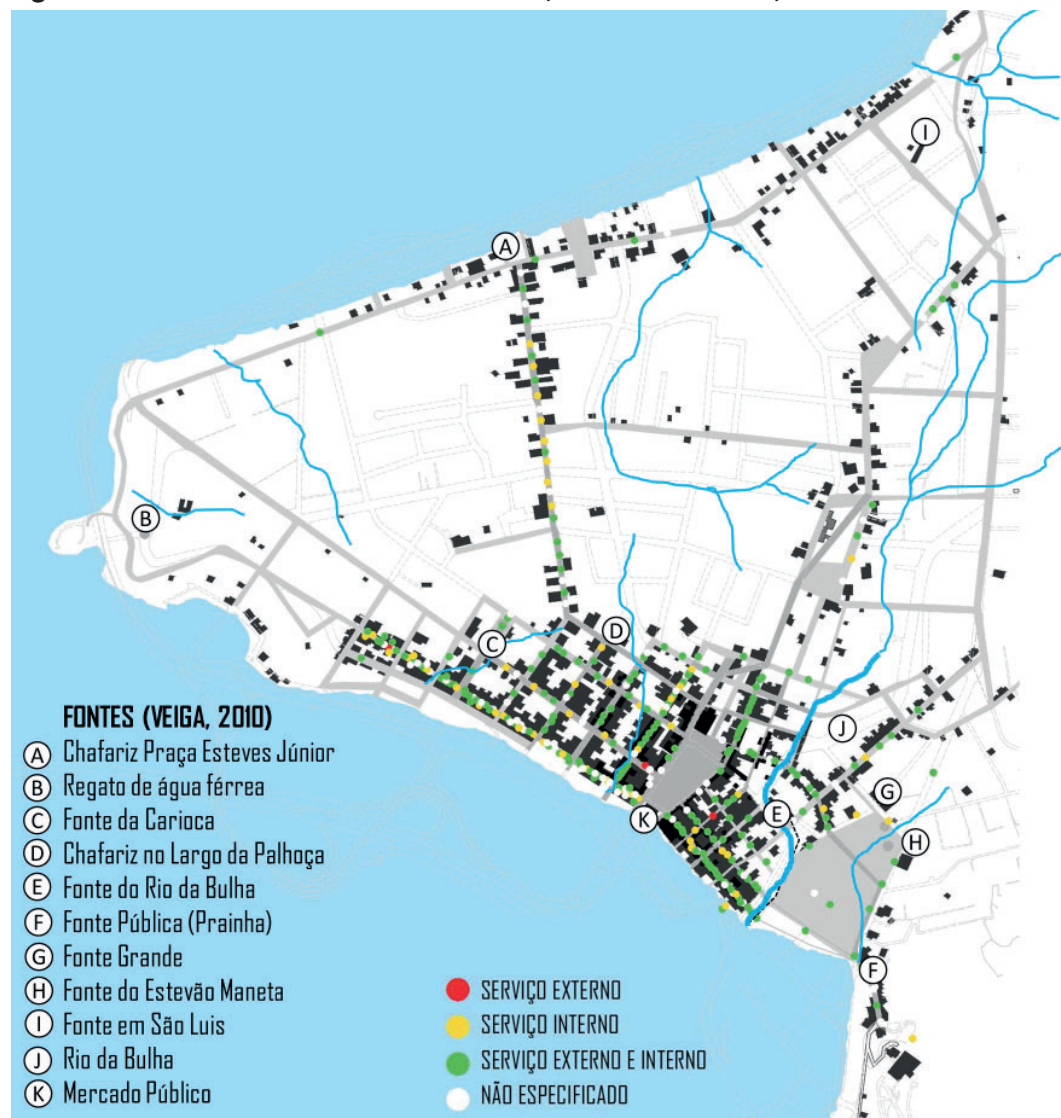
²¹ O Despertador – Edição 01088 1873.

²² O Novo Íris – Edição 00100 1851.

#Foralltosee The Table presents the number of classified ads in terms of the type of service provided by the women as described in the ads, with 213 for outdoor and indoor service; 3 for outdoor service; 60 for indoor, and 80 ads did not specify the work conducted.

About the category NOT SPECIFIED, by insinuating a lack of concern about the specification of their spatial implications, we suggest that these women move through both spaces, and for this reason strengthen the representation of the category INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SERVICE. Thus, we suggest that most of the ads indicate that these slaves fulfilled both functions, demonstrating that they moved through public and private spaces. Based on this classification of the ads we now turn to their distribution in the grid of the city, as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Character of the services executed by slaves in the territory



Source: Prepared by the authors (2020).

Water Sources. Outdoor Service. Indoor Service. Indoor and Outdoor Service. Not specified.

#Foralltosee The image presents a map of the central region of Desterro/Florianópolis, on which was plotted a series of points that represent each one of the ads collected, also classified according to the type of work conducted by these women, with specific colors for each one.

We call attention to the fact that the map shows that the streets Rua Esteves Junior and Rua Conselheiro Mafra, as well as the western portion of Praça XV de Novembro had a slightly higher concentration of woman slaves who conduct essentially domestic services. The reasons for this may be that Rua Conselheiro Mafra had a greater complexity of activities – including commerce and residences, as well as a concentration of capital – which led to a specialization of trades, which required the skill development of these women as labor power. Meanwhile, Rua Esteves Junior had residential houses of the local elite and thus required that the enslaved women provide more sophisticated services. It is thus possible that one characteristic of these locations, parallel to other female spatial meanings, was that the daily lives of the enslaved women were more closely

linked to private space, given that their access to public space was discouraged, thus suggesting the signification of a greater differentiation between public and private space.

Despite this, we emphasize that, among the women who exercised trades limited to private space, the reference to nursemaids exceeded that of *mucamas* (house slaves).²³ We suggest that this task does not necessarily guarantee a preservation of intimacy, in contrast to what was suggested previously, given that the service of nursemaid could be required during the period of early childhood, and may imply a rotation of women who served as nursemaids, or their presence for only short periods. This dynamic could weaken the privacy of the family, both because of the brevity of the ties with these slaves and because these women would have access to the intimate spaces of various families, or even from resentments and tensions between the parties (Bárbara MARTINS, 2012; Lorena TELLES, 2018).

Considering the few occurrences of “street slaves” and the consequent lack of information on the map, we note that even these few ads were associated to the central regions of the city and therefore were distant from families of greater wealth. It is possible that the justification for this is that the trade of street selling, the most representative among the “street slaves”, was required by the less wealthy slave owners, for whom the work conducted by these woman was often the only source of income, as suggested by Farias (2012).

Despite few occurrences of this type of ad, however, we emphasize the importance of these women to the production of urban space, given that, according to Sbravati (2008), they had the greatest presence on the streets of Desterro, and were skillful in avoiding the constant persecution of the authorities against their informal trade. About the reach of their territorialities in the city, there is an apparent concentration in the denser regions, and they would use these streets due to the greater concentration of people. However, we also perceive the possibility that these women were fixed in specific locations, including the Public Market of Desterro, located to the south of Praça XV de Novembro and presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Former Public Market of Desterro



To the left, the Public Market close to Praça XV de Novembro. Source: Carlos Corrêa (2005).

Center, movement on the street along the beach in front of the Public Market. Source: Corrêa (2005).

Right, location on the urban grid of Florianópolis.

Source: Adapted by the authors (2020).

#Foralltosee The image to the left is a photo of Praça XV de Novembro, taken from the Igreja Matriz, which is located above the square. The photo also indicates the old building of the Public Market, located in the lower portion of the square, along the bay. The image at the center shows the surroundings of the Public Market, a space where countless people – mostly men, considering that only one woman is identified in the scene – offer their products to buyers. To the right, the location of the Public Market in front of the map at the center of Florianópolis.

Despite constant references to female appropriation of this space – as in “I purchased manioc instead of cassava from a peddler in the market”²⁴ – the images, which illustrate the dynamic around the Public Market, suggest that this spatiality was mostly male. Thus, we presume that these women were required to have greater agility in urban space, as were the women responsible for the daily purchases for the residences, which also required these skills, as in “a 10-12 year-old *crioulinha*, for a home with a small family, and only for shopping”.²⁵

As mentioned, ads that do not mention the services to be provided by the women being negotiated could be interpreted to be related to women who could fulfill functions both inside and outside the residences. We see that the distribution of these occurrences on the map of the city of Desterro, as identified in color white on Figure 3, supports the argument presented above, given that most of them are concentrated on Rua Conselheiro Mafra, the busiest commercial street in the city. Thus, these transactions may indicate that these women were only part of a larger transaction and that it was not very important what services they provided.

Among the possible trades that moved between public and private spaces, we mention clothes washing, which although related to the domestic environment, depended on the structure

²³ Nursemaids correspond to approximately 61% of the slaves who conduct indoor services.

²⁴ Jornal O Artista, 29/06/1879.

²⁵ O Mensageiro – Edição 00222, de 1857.

of the city, due to the absence of facilities inside the residences.²⁶ To do the cleaning the women would go to the public fountains and streams in the city, including the Rio da Bulha which, according to Carlos Humberto Corrêa (2005), was commonly associated to the washerwomen. To insinuate the possible movements of these women who wash clothes, we propose a crossing both of the (i) ads for slaves and of the (ii) locations of the streams and public fountains, presented in Figure 3.

As can be seen, the main fountains and streams are mostly at the margins of the denser urban region. This characteristic suggests that the enslaved women – whose occurrences are mostly spread across the territory – had to move in a direction contrary to the flow of greater concentration of people to access the locations for washing clothes, or even go to the eastern portion of the territory of Desterro, to reach the Rio da Bulha. This dispersion of points of origin and destination suggest that their mobility occurred in a diffuse manner throughout the territory. We can also suggest the existence of flows that led them within the streets of the city – which were more dispersed than those that lead towards the fountains located at the margins – due to the need to deliver goods to clients, for example.

Finally, for the trades that linked public and private space it can be supposed that “the space of the street cannot be mixed with the space of the house, without creating some form of serious confusion or even conflict” (DAMATTA, 1987, p. 54). Based on the representativity of this category to the daily urban life of Desterro/Florianópolis, we understand that many of the enslaved black women experienced the transition between the public and private spaces and it was precisely this zone of instability that permeated their daily life, requiring from them a constant negotiation between the house and the street.

Final Considerations

For this study, the search for indications of the spatial experience of enslaved Black women in Desterro/Florianópolis, to identify their contributions to the construction of the urban landscape, was based on representations of these women, more than on their authentic experiences. We are aware that the apprehension of this context was dependent on unilateral sources, which sought to highlight the dynamics on which the oppression of these women obtained success, given that the ads for purchase and sale, on which we based the study, did not qualify them as individuals, but reduced them to commodities. Thus, the partiality of the information meant it was not possible to affirm how diffuse were their real spatial experiences, because spatial marks that represent their encounters remain hidden, whether they were sidewalks, corners, or doorways.

Despite this, shifting the original objective of the content of the ads provided us access to one of their possible strategies of action in the production of urban space. That is, it approximated us to the way by which the “urban body is manifest in the body of these women”. In this sense, we understand that this study joins others with the objective of describing the historic dynamics that involve the Black women of Desterro/Florianópolis, complementing them by inserting a spatial dimension to the theme, and proposing another possibility for the narratives that describe the process of construction of the urban landscape.

We consider that strategies such as that used in this study help clarify aspects that were important to the construction of urban history, revealing new research possibilities and understandings about the issues of cities. Moreover, the context addressed in this article confirms the dependence of these women who are made invisible, on everyday subtleties to make themselves present in the urban dynamic, because it is in these “gaps” that reside the opportunities for women to be revealed (SOIHET, 2007, p. 284). That is a careful look reveals the female spatialities that, because they were overlapped by others, were often not revealed, due to the asymmetric disputes about what composed the script of the history.

According to Lynne Breslin (1996), the offer of visibility, or the possibility for perspectives is one of the definers of the condition of the public sphere, associated to the street. In this sense, we can understand that the opposite, or the private space of the house, would be a place protected from this exposure to the unknown. Based on this presumption, we transpose this argument to the space of Desterro to reinforce the dilution of differentiation between public and private. If we imagine that Black women were “foreign” to the family nucleus, and that most of them fulfilled functions associated both to the house and the street, we suggest that these women had an “outsider’s view” that gave visibility to domestic space that until then was only experienced in the public spaces of the city, and thus compromising the construction of intimacy idealized by the seigniorial urban classes.

²⁶ In Desterro, sanitation projects were only consolidated in the twentieth century. Although there were residences with a private wash tank, as suggested by the ad: “for sale house with source for drinking and washing” (O Argos, 1859), not all the residences of the city had their own tank, which implied the possible need for these slaves to access the public places to conduct the service.

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