

GENDERED URBAN VIOLENCE IN RIO DE JANEIRO: REFLECTIONS FROM A TRANSNATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME

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1. Introductory Notes

This chapter reflects on a transnational research initiative on gendered urban violence across borders. Initiated in 2016, this research, comprising two main projects and various developments, explored the nature of gendered violence and resistance to it among Brazilian migrant women in London, in the United Kingdom (UK), and among women living in the favelas of Maré, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The research has explored how direct and indirect forms gendered violence are written on women's bodies, but also in communities and in cities transnationally and through a multiscalar perspective that moves beyond understanding violence as an individualised act. In addition, the work has examined how women have coped with and resisted gendered urban violence in individual and collective ways that reflect their roles as protagonists rather than victims. This chapter focuses specifically on the transnational activities developed between Cathy McIlwaine (King's College London (KCL) and formerly Queen Mary, University of London (QMUL)) and Miriam Krenzinger (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)).

The research was conducted from an interdisciplinary perspective combining 'traditional' social science data collection methods such as questionnaire surveys, interviews and focus group discussions, as well as creative engagements with artists and arts organizations producing outputs such as multimedia video installations, photography, film, poetry, social memory technology/digital storytelling, Photovoice, a podcast, and a GIS storymap. All the projects in Brazil were deeply rooted in collaborations between universities (King's College London, Queen Mary, University of London and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro), civil society partners (Redes da Maré), arts organizations (People's Palace Projects [PPP] and Museu da Pessoa) together with individual artists (Bia Lessa and Mila de Choch) and activists. Transnational connections were also built with the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), Migrants in Action (MinA) and the Latin America Bureau (LAB) in London.

2. Methodological approach

Across this body of work, the research developed an innovative methodological approach that we have called a 'translocational feminist tracing methodological framework' (McIlwaine et al., 2024a). This is based on co-produced transnational dialogue rooted in a feminist decolonial epistemological approach. The 'tracings' capture connections across borders, but also across disciplines through linking social science and arts-based approaches

from a perspective that acknowledges intersectional and gendered circuits of power, inequalities and oppressions. Our framework aims to generate transnational mutual learning within and beyond the academy as well as pathways to impact, public engagement and praxis.

Translocational feminist tracing methodological framework (Brazil and transnational connections)

Project	Method	Numbers	People interviewed	Artistic outputs
A) Rio de Janeiro Transnational Violence Against Women and Girls (PPP, Redes da Maré and UFRJ) (2016-2018) (funded by ESRC)	Survey	801	Women residents Maré	SCAR by Bia Lessa (multi-media installation with PPP)
	In-depth interviews	20	Women residents Maré	
	Focus groups x7 (52 women and 7 men)	59	Majority women residents Maré (with older women, female members of local religious organizations, LGBTQ+ people, drug users, community activists (male and female))	
	Service provider mapping	14	Women representatives from organizations	
B) Rio de Janeiro Dignity and Resistance (PPP, Redes da Maré/Casa das Mulheres, Museu da Pessoa, UFRJ) (2019-2023) (funded by British Academy)	In-depth interviews	32	Women residents in Maré	Museu da Pessoa (digital storytelling and films) and online exhibition (Women's Lives) Observational drawing of focus groups (artist - Mila de Choch) Body-territory mapping workshops Women Resisting Violence (Rio's Trailblazing Women's House podcast with LAB) Dignity and Resistance exhibition
	Focus groups x5	27	Women residents Maré	
	Interviews with women working with local campaigns linked to COVID-19	9	Women residents/workers in Maré	
	Body-territory mapping workshops x5	10	Women residents Maré	
	Museu da Pessoa oral histories/digital storytelling interviews/films	10	Women artists Maré	
	Participatory territory mapping	7		GIS Storymap

This methodological framework also aims to build ‘empathetic transformation’ across everyone involved in the process. This reflects how, while the research was always focused on women’s voices and the needs of partner organizations and was developed in a collaborative manner throughout, it also created an empathetic way of working with researchers and women survivors that challenged extractive data collection and which was based around an ethics of care (McIlwaine et al., 2024a; Table 1).

2.1 A complex and territorial approach to the women of Maré

This section explores the specifics of the research conducted by the Brazilian team as part of the international project “Healthy, Safe, and Gender-Equitable Cities: Transnational Perspectives on Urban Violence against Women (VAW) – Rio de Janeiro/Brazil.” The study focused on Maré, an extensive area comprising 16 favelas in Rio de Janeiro, with a population of 140,000, making it the ninth most populous area in the city and larger than more than 90% of Brazilian municipalities.

As noted, the research employed a multiscalar approach to understand VAW in Maré and maintained ongoing collaboration with similar studies in the United Kingdom, coordinated by Prof. Cathy McIlwaine, which investigate VAW experienced by Brazilian migrants in London. Utilizing social science methodologies, the team fostered knowledge co-production between Brazil and the UK, enriching the analysis with comparative and collaborative perspectives.

VAW is considered a complex phenomenon interconnected with fear and urban insecurity and linked to economic, cultural, and relational factors. The research highlights violence in private contexts, such as within the household, and intrafamilial violence, which may involve individuals outside the immediate family. Interpersonal violence, in turn, occurs in spaces like workplaces and educational institutions, often concealed by secrecy and fear. The study also considered how gender roles, reinforced by racism and patriarchy, foster violent relationships and how gender violence is sustained by a masculine symbolic order that legitimizes domination and economic exploitation.

The central premise of the study is that urban and institutional violence, exacerbated by armed groups and police interventions in Maré, influenced the experience and perception of violence against women in the area. The study acknowledges the diversity among the 15 favelas in Maré, noting that territorial particularities impact the forms of violence and the strategies for coping adopted by women. The research concludes that violence against women in Maré reflects both the general dynamics of society and local specificities.

During field activities, the team aimed to construct a complex and participatory perspective on the social perceptions of Maré’s women regarding gendered violence associated with structural racism and conflicts with armed groups. Adopting a complex perspective, the goal was to promote learning without prejudgments about strategies for care, self-care, and resistance, which have proven effective in preventing lethal, intrafamilial, and community violence.

In this process, understanding the role of armed groups, police forces, social movements, and actors in the justice and social protection system was crucial to refining analyses of how armed violence creates barriers to access to justice and basic social protection services, such as family health, mental health, and education. These barriers impose specific hardships on the most vulnerable individuals to victimization and criminalization. Additionally, the research highlighted the importance of local knowledge, passed down through the oral histories of Maré’s women, who share their survival strategies and reinvention of community life, often marked by injustices and inequalities.

3. Publications and outputs

The research process produced many publications in both English and Portuguese, with many produced in both languages. These are detailed in full at the end of the chapter. In summary, they include three books (Krenzinger et al., 2018a; McIlwaine et al., 2024a; Women Resisting Violence Collective, 2022), a large number of reports, book chapters and international journals papers (for example, Krenzinger et al., 2021; Lopes Heimer, 2024 forthcoming; McIlwaine et al., 2021; McIlwaine et al., 2023a, McIlwaine et al., 2023b). We also produced a series of blogs on our own website (Transnational VAWG Blog) as well as the Women Resisting Violence Blog run by the Latin America Bureau.³ Many of the publications are dedicated solely to the research conducted in Rio de Janeiro, while others focus only on the work in London, with many mentioning both contexts. It is also important to note that the publication process continues by the transnational VAWG team in Rio de Janeiro and London. Indeed, some of the publications have been led by those working closely with the Postgraduate Program in Social Work at the School of Social Service at UFRJ (see Rizzini Ansari and Coelho Resende (2023).

In addition to the research publications, we produced a range of artistic and creative outputs, as well as exhibition catalogues (for example, McIlwaine, Pepl and Santos, 2022) and reports focusing on key findings (Krenzinger et al., 2018b; McIlwaine et al., 2022a) and specific aspects of the research process such as the digital storytelling (McIlwaine et al., 2022x) and body-territory mapping (McIlwaine et al., 2022b). We also published several accounts of the impact and influence of the research (Casa das Mulheres, 2019; McIlwaine et al., 2024b; Tiller, 2018).

4. Impact and influence types

Next, we will present the main results of the study⁴, conducted by Cathy McIlwaine and her team, aiming to assess the impacts and influences of the various initiatives that have been carried out since 2016 by researchers from both countries.

In terms of the effects of the research, there have been a large number of influences beyond the academic publications. Here we discuss these following the typology outlined in Figure 1 focusing on Rio de Janeiro, but also mentioning the research in London as relevant.

4.1 Shaping understanding

This is one of the key aspects of impact. While much research focuses on a specific location, our body of work is transnational in nature, working with Brazilian migrant women

³ Transnational VAWG Blog see here: <https://transnationalviolenceagainstwomen.org/blog/>; Women Resisting Violence Blog see here: <https://lab.org.uk/wrv/wrv-news/> (accessed 18/7/2024).

⁴ McIlwaine, C., Coelho Resende, N., Rizzini Ansari, M., & Pepl, R. (2024). *Gendered Urban Violence Across Borders: Assessing Impact in Rio de Janeiro and London*. King's College London: London. https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/274863675/Researching_Gendered_Urban_Violence_across_Borders_web_26_06.pdf

in London and the women of the favelas of Maré in Rio de Janeiro as well as engaging with civil society partners and artists across borders.

A core aim of the research was to shape understanding of the nature of gendered violence in both contexts. This was especially important given that this violence has long been invisible and ignored by wider society. It was also important for the organisations involved in that they did not have the empirical evidence available from which to start trying to address the problem.

In Rio de Janeiro, it allowed an existing research relationship between Eliana Sousa Silva, the director of Redes da Maré and Miriam Krenzinger from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) to focus on gender-based violence. Since 2007, they had worked on the defence of access to rights, but they were both aware of the need to work on violence against women and girls in Maré.

Shaping understanding therefore also entails academic research giving legitimacy to the issues that many civil society organisations are already aware of. This was discussed by Eliana Sousa Silva from Redes da Maré in relation to a partnership with an international university: ‘And this undoubtedly, in our case, brings greater legitimacy to what we are researching.’ Increasing knowledge about gendered urban violence and of its multiscale and structural nature emerged as important linked to shaping understanding.

A critical insight from the research was recognizing that urban violence and rights violations are deeply gendered. This was particularly evident for those involved in studying armed confrontations and the conflicts between armed groups and the police. The research highlighted that addressing these issues necessitates examining various forms of violence beyond those initially focused on. It became clear that ongoing work, including initiatives proposed by Casa das Mulheres da Maré, was shaped by the findings of this gender-focused research. Additionally, the research underscored the importance of allowing women to shape the understanding and responses to these issues themselves.

4.2 Influencing policy and advocacy

Advocacy aimed at influencing policy has been a core focus for Redes da Maré/Casa das Mulheres in Rio de Janeiro. The research on resistance has been instrumental in shaping policy by reflecting the experiences of women directly affected by these issues. This approach ensures that new policies are grounded in real-life impacts rather than theoretical or disconnected strategies.

The Director of Casa das Mulheres, Julia Leal, highlighted how the research findings were utilized in training sessions for the Women’s Policy Secretariat and the Municipal Council for Women’s Rights in Rio de Janeiro. The ability to present and train with research data at these institutions was a significant achievement, reflecting the high value and recognition of the research.

The credibility of the research contributed to policymakers taking the data seriously and incorporating it into public policy interventions. For instance, the research revealed that women in vulnerable situations were not being reached by existing public services, a point made evident during discussions with police officers responsible for victim support programs. This direct presentation of data highlighted gaps in service delivery and underscored the need for more effective outreach and support mechanisms.

The research in Rio also supported a legal process that will potentially bring significant changes to policies for women in Brazil in the medium term. Based on research data, Redes da Maré acts as *amicus curiae* with the Federal Supreme Court in the context of Action for Non-compliance with Fundamental Precept 989, which deals with barriers to accessing abortion permitted by law, highlighting the specificity of gender violence in favela contexts and in relation to black women. Casa das Mulheres has since developed new research and advocacy on accessing legal abortion.

4.3 Changing practices of organisations

A third main type of impact relates to changing practices of organisations. Redes da Maré and specifically, Casa das Mulheres, have been working to influence the practices of state and non-state organisations in relation to ensuring that the rights of the residents of Maré are respected. Our research allowed Redes da Maré and Casa das Mulheres to expand their own practices developed institutionally by organisations, in 2016, Redes da Maré created Casa das Mulheres da Maré as a space where women from the territory could work together to improve their lives and living conditions. Our research established the groundwork for the organization's work. During our survey involving 801 women, one of the field researchers, who was a resident of Maré, observed that many women initially did not fully understand the purpose of the initiative but appreciated that it was a space dedicated to their needs and concerns.

In the subsequent phase, which focused on resistance, the research continued to have a notable impact. It facilitated awareness and engagement with the organization, allowing women who were previously unfamiliar with its services to discover and utilize them. Some women even returned for additional activities or services, underscoring the value of the space for providing care and support.

The organization, Casa das Mulheres, recognized the significance of the research, particularly after the initial phase. They saw the research as a crucial step in developing strategies to address the issues identified and highlighting the urgent need for solutions. The research and its associated funding directly contributed to enhancing service provision, including supporting the hiring of a supervisor for the psychosocial reception team.

Even after the research funding concluded, the organization chose to maintain the space for supervision, which became a lasting legacy of the research. This model has been adopted and replicated in other areas within Redes da Maré.

Furthermore, the research underscored the value of collective listening as a form of care, leading to the establishment of an additional therapeutic group at Casa das Mulheres. This group was created in response to the positive feedback from women who participated in the research and valued the collective support environment.

In 2021, Casa das Mulheres formalized a partnership with the Institute of Psychiatry at UFRJ. This collaboration has provided a residence space for students from the Institute, including nursing residents, social workers, and occupational therapists, further integrating academic and practical support into their services.

4.4 Building capacity

We define building capacity as i) transnational knowledge exchange and dialogue; ii) training university and civil society researchers (see also below); and iii) institutional and financial sustainability of partner organisations.

Transnational knowledge exchange and production were central to the research, providing valuable insights and benefits to all involved. The opportunity to engage with different realities and perspectives was seen as both personally and professionally enriching. The research facilitated a deeper understanding of Brazilian migration experiences and the specific challenges faced by migrant women, which would not have been possible without this cross-border collaboration.

Between March and April 2023, a transnational knowledge exchange took place between LAWRS and Redes da Maré/Casa das Mulheres da Maré. This exchange involved mutual learning, which both organizations found highly beneficial. LAWRS was encouraged to integrate community mobilization and leverage art and culture in its outreach efforts, while Redes da Maré expressed interest in learning from LAWRS's expertise in political advocacy strategies.

Both organizations envisioned exploring further transnational partnership projects, aiming to develop joint approaches to community support, policy, advocacy, and campaigning. This collaborative effort seeks to bring expertise and knowledge from the Global South to the Global North, in contrast to the usual direction of knowledge transfer.

For the team as a whole, the transnational exchanges played a crucial role, providing researchers with a valuable opportunity to share ideas on policy and advocacy. Through integration seminars and mutual visits between London and Brazil, feedback spaces were created for the women of Maré and London, enabling enriching interactions between the different target audiences. Furthermore, participation in the WOW Festival (Women of the World) in London and the presentation of the research results at the Brazilian Embassy highlighted the importance of establishing spaces not only for political advocacy but also for the dissemination of information

In addition to attending seminars and workshops, three members of staff from the School of Social Service at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro undertook 6-month sabbatical leave periods at King's College London under the supervision of Cathy McIlwaine (Rosana Morgado, Joana Garcia and Patricia Farias) between 2018 and 2020. In addition, Cathy McIlwaine was a Visiting Professor at the School of Social Service at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro in 2022 and 2024.

Training university and civil society researchers was a major aspect of the body of work. While part of this was linked to methodological innovation (see below), there was also considerable training undertaken in new methodologies. In the resistance project in Maré, we provided training and conducted research using two 'new' methodologies. The first was 'social memory technology' led by the Museu da Pessoa (Worcman and Garde- Hansen, 2016) entailing digital storytelling with ten women artists from Maré (McIlwaine et al., 2022b). The short films of the women were then included in an online exhibition 'Women's Lives' developed by the museum as well as a short video that captured the views of all ten women.

The researchers evaluated their experiences and discussed how they plan to apply the methodologies in their future projects. They noted that while they had previous experience with interviews, the new methodologies offered fresh perspectives and deeper ways to engage with personal narratives and memories. They emphasized the value of these stories, recognizing the extraordinary aspects within seemingly ordinary experiences. They expressed their intention to adapt and replicate these methodologies, incorporating the insights gained into their own work.

One researcher highlighted their ongoing project involving the mapping of favela residents and memory sites using social memory technology. The experience and training received from the research project were cited as essential for their current work, underscoring the impact of the methodological training on their practice.

Similarly, the training in body-territory mapping, which included creating life-size maps to represent feelings, attitudes, violence, and resistance, was highly regarded. The incorporation of this innovative approach into their work was seen as a significant development. The training and subsequent use of body mapping have influenced their research practices, and they plan to continue employing these techniques in their future projects.

The multiple forms of creative engagements in Rio de Janeiro that aimed to understand gendered violence more fully, as well as raise awareness and ensure public engagement and dissemination formed the cornerstone of building capacity. While these engagements entailed working with artists and arts organisations together with using arts-based methods such as body-territory mapping, the overall process focused on constructing capability across the research in the process of working across the social sciences and the arts.

Improving the institutional and financial sustainability of partner organisations emerged as a final key element of building capacity. This research led to additional seven academic projects that were related to our work beyond those led by us (Table 1). These included Building the Barricades led by People's Palace Projects between 2018 and 2021 examining the effects of violence on the health of the population in Maré (funded by the ESRC and the AHRC through the GCRF and Art Council England). Another example was the development of a *Health and Services Guide for Women* created in 2020 in collaboration with Redes da Maré/Casa das Mulheres led by Moniza Rizzini Ansari with funding through Birkbeck University of London and GCRF and involving undergraduate and graduate students from UFRJ. Another project in partnership with Redes da Maré, the Universities of Cardiff and Warwick in 2022-23 mapped care strategies and protection networks for women victims of violence in the territory.

Several additional projects were funded by Brazilian research organisation, Capes, to carry out an institutional visit by a Brazilian co-researcher to London (Patricia Farias in 2020), another to fund the publication of a book *Dores que Libertam* (Krenzinger et al., 2018a), and a more recent to fund a knowledge exchange for Cathy McIlwaine as Visiting Professor at UFRJ in 2024. Also at UFRJ has been the Digital Social Cartography project led by Moniza Rizzini Ansari and Noelle Coelho Resende (2024) between 2021 and 2022, funded by the UFRJ Technological Park. This funded post-doctoral, doctoral, masters and undergraduate research.

For civil society partners, overheads fees from research projects have been crucial to institutional sustainability. For example, the research brought financial security (in the short-term) for the Latin America Bureau as noted by Rebecca Wilson:

‘This project allowed us to access other funding ... which helped keep me working here, helped the sustainability of the LAB, to be funded to continue doing the work I think, 100%, that these projects have helped LAB to continue and to allow other people within our network access to other work ... thanks to the *Women Resisting Violence* project. So as far as the LAB as an organisation is concerned, it has definitely helped the development of this kind of work, and it just turns out that this kind of work is basically what funds the whole organisation at this point’. (McIlwaine, C., Coelho Resende, N., Rizzini Ansari, M., & Pepl, R. , p. 24, 2024)

5. Pathways to impact

5.1 Generating public engagement and awareness

Our work has been actively oriented towards generating public engagement and awareness. While we have developed this through ‘traditional’ dissemination activities such as presenting at conferences, running workshops, and writing blogs, we have made an effort to write ‘key findings’ reports in English and Portuguese from all the main aspects of the research (see above).

In relation our research in Maré, a multimedia installation entitled SCAR was created by Brazilian theatre maker and director, Bia Lessa. It was staged at the Women of the World (WOW) Festival at London’s Southbank Centre over three days in March 2018. SCAR aimed to influence audiences and to develop a transnational dialogue. British writer, Chrissie Tiller evaluated the installation over the three days of festival, capturing the views of audience members. Raising awareness was central to the work as was transnational dialogue across borders:

I’m happy because the installation is raising public awareness. I’ve read about it in academic research, but these stories need to be shared and exposed in a different way in the eyes of the public [...]. The messages and stories of women are impressive and powerful. In this way, they can have a real impact instead of just being stuck on a shelf: a report that nobody reads. (Tiller, 2018, p. 7).

At times when I saw these women speaking out’, she tells me, ‘I wondered, “did they make it up?” then I realised this is what happens. It even happens in their families. They are not believed. And that’s why it’s so important we hear their voices. Because they are saying, ‘whatever has happened to me, I am still worth something. (Tiller, 2018, p.5).

The social memory work with the Museu da Pessoa with ten women artists from Maré that resulted in 10 videos aimed explicitly to raise awareness of the lives and histories of favelas residents, something which is often ignored. These are displayed in a virtual exhibition, *Women’s Lives* providing a permanent recollection of these women’s narratives.⁵ An additional video was made by PPP to combine the themes into one short video.⁶ Also

⁵ Visit the exhibition here.

⁶ See video here.

important has been didactic material aimed at teachers, students and schools for use in the classroom at primary or secondary level.⁷

5.2 Developing innovative research methodologies

As noted above, the research involved developing and using innovative research methodologies such as body-territory maps and social memory technology as well as working across the social sciences and the arts. Yet we have also created an epistemological approach that we have named a ‘translocational feminist tracing methodological framework’ (McIlwaine et al., 2024). This incorporates working across actual and disciplinary borders within and beyond academic research and through close and long-term collaboration with civil society and creative organisations and artists. It also reflects an approach that is both transformative and empathetic and aims to reflect the needs and desires of women survivors as protagonists rather than victims.

Underpinning all of this was a horizontal, co-produced way of working based on genuine and long-term sustainability as noted by Julia Leal (*Casa das Mulheres/Redes da Maré*):

We were able to create a methodology that really values the people who are in the territory, the field team that is working, not having this division like “these people are going to do the fieldwork and these others are going to produce theory and are going to be the ones who will sign the articles, who will define the main paths to be followed”[...]. This methodology was something that worked very well, because everyone on this side felt very valued, which doesn't always happen, and everyone felt like they were participating at all times and collaborating with the processes. This is especially important because, once again, listening to those who are hands-on is also valuing local knowledge. (McIlwaine, C., Coelho Resende, N., Rizzini Ansari, M., & Pepl, R. , p. 24, 2024)

The creation of counter maps also proved to be innovative. Here, we used multiple forms of collecting data to approach the territorial singularities of the phenomenon of violence. We developed a GIS Storymap that included a range of other maps where we combined mapping of our survey data with qualitative interpretations of issues such as the provision of services for women (McIlwaine et al., 2023a).⁸

The importance of confronting and reshaping prevailing narratives about women and their communities has always been emphasized. The research aimed to create alternative narratives through innovative methods such as countermapping. These efforts were crucial in challenging the established perceptions of their communities, which are often framed negatively in both academic and broader social contexts. By questioning these dominant narratives, the research sought to provide a more nuanced and empowering representation of both the women and their environments.

Pedagogically, these methodological innovations proved to be useful. In Rio de Janeiro, Moniza Rizzini Ansari and Noelle Coelho Resende (2023), under the coordination of Miriam Krenzinger (PPGS/UFRJ), developed a methodological transfer project focusing on cartographies and struggles, working with UFRJ students. In London, under the coordination of Cathy McIlwaine (KCL), the use of podcasts in teaching about gender,

⁷ See here.

⁸ See the GIS storymap here.

violence, and migration stands out as an effective tool to support the decolonisation of the curriculum. The podcasts, by addressing people's lives clearly and in different languages, help to value their perspectives. By incorporating these experiences and research into the university curriculum, the aim is not to adopt a paternalistic view but to significantly integrate the knowledge produced by these communities.

5.3 Personal and professional development among researchers and partners

The research had a profound impact on the participants, influencing their sense of self-respect, visibility, and dignity, especially in contexts where they had previously been overlooked. Many participants reported that simply being heard and having their experiences acknowledged was empowering. This recognition fostered a sense of resilience and a renewed ability to confront challenges.

The core theme emerging from the projects was the transformation of pain into self-determination, achieved through empathetic engagement. Both focus group discussions and workshops emerged as crucial spaces of support and care, allowing individuals to share their experiences and gain strength from mutual recognition and collective support.

The research also had significant personal and professional effects on researchers and partners. It offered opportunities for growth and new experiences, enhancing their understanding of issues and enriching their academic and professional journeys. For instance, the interdisciplinary nature of the project allowed participants to gain insights from various fields, broadening their perspectives and expertise.

For women researchers from the favelas, the research process was particularly transformative. It provided them with a new perspective on their community and influenced their career paths. Many expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to engage in gender-focused research, which shaped their professional trajectories and affirmed their commitment to gender issues and their community.

The research also facilitated a reevaluation of personal histories and academic roles. For some, it marked a significant shift from being seen as subjects of research to becoming researchers themselves, thus challenging historical narratives of vulnerability and fostering a sense of empowerment.

Overall, the research not only contributed to personal development but also reinforced the importance of involving local perspectives in academic and policy-making spaces. This involvement led to a more inclusive approach to research and advocacy, with lasting impacts on both the participants and the broader community.

For those based in universities, participating in the research was a transformative experience, particularly in learning new methods. The process was methodologically challenging, offering the opportunity to explore very different and unexpected realities. Collaboration played a crucial role, with all research instruments being developed jointly, which allowed for significant growth as researchers and deep learning in the field of knowledge.

Over time, there was an important shift in perspective, moving from simply mapping violence to emphasizing the resistance and protagonism of the communities involved. This

development also reflected in the methodological innovations and impacts observed throughout the process. Initially, the methods used were quite traditional, including in the artistic approach. However, as the work progressed, it became much more collaborative and co-produced, marking a new phase in how the research was conducted and how interactions with the artists were managed.

6. Conclusions

As we both note above, this research initiative has been both a productive and exciting journey and a major learning process for everyone involved. As well as the extensive nature of the research that we have conducted and the numerous academic publications, it has had an influence within and far beyond the universities where we work. Our students in London and Rio de Janeiro have benefitted from the research and the methodologies and approaches have been adapted and extended beyond the original projects. This body of transnational research also highlights the importance of developing long-term and sustainable work rather than one-off projects. Furthermore, we have shown that the process must be based on mutual trust and horizontal forms of decision-making rather than extractive approaches that are common in research that is funded by research agencies based in countries of the Global North (Rizzini Ansari et al., 2022; also Jiménez and McIlwaine, 2021). Given the importance of violence against women and girls as an issue in Brazil, evidenced by the recent annual report by the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety (2024) that showed that such violence continues to increase alarmingly, this research must and will continue.

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