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Community pathways for resisting gendered urban violence in Rio de Janeiro and London.

3rd May to 13th May 2022
1. The act and refusal to accept or comply with something

2. A force that acts to stop the progress of something or make it slower

**DIG.NI.TY**

1. The importance and value that a person has, that makes other people themselves

**RE.SIS.TAN.CE**

1. The act and refusal to accept or comply with something

2. A force that acts to stop the progress of something or make it slower
Although geographically and culturally focused on the Brazilian community, the interdisciplinary and multi-method approaches capture the many forms in which direct and indirect violence occur, and the ways they are embedded in women’s everyday lives yet stretching from the scale of the body to the global. When women are targeted by an unimaginable variety of forms of gendered urban violence, they are also agents of coping with this same violence - from individual small daily acts to collective and structural political actions.

This exhibition explores the multilayered, formal and informal initiatives built by women to create community agency and map individual and collective routes for resistance against gendered urban violence. It draws on the recent body of collaborative research led by Professor Cathy McIlwaine (Department of Geography, King’s College London) with a number of international and local partners, gathering evidence around the pathways that women living in peripheral communities in Brazil, and Brazilian migrants in London develop - consciously and unconsciously - to resist direct and indirect gender-based violence.

The exhibition traces a number of creative research methods that are used to capture findings and disseminate them, highlighting the power of co-creation, co-production and protagonism of women’s voices in harnessing resistance and raising awareness.

Recent findings from the research Resisting Violence, Creating Dignity: negotiating Violence Against Women and Girls through community history-making in Rio de Janeiro (2019-2021), and arts-based and multimedia projects We still fight in the dark (2021-2022) and Women Resisting Violence (2020-2022) aim to shed light on innovative ways that women develop resistance, and suggest that the use of arts-based methods are an effective tool in understanding multiplicity and complexity of violence against women and girls in ways that the written word simply cannot.

Please note the exhibition uses QR codes to interact with viewers, and we recommend that audiences use a smartphone and headphones to access the multimedia content.

This showcase has been possible with funding by The British Academy, via the Global Challenges Research Fund, with support from King’s College London, People’s Palace Projects, Queen Mary University of London and Redes da Maré.
TERRITORY AND RESISTANCE: fighting gendered urban violence in the Favelas of Maré (Rio de Janeiro)

‘Resisting Violence, Creating Dignity: negotiating Violence Against Women and Girls through community history-making in Rio de Janeiro’ is a multidisciplinary research project which maps the formal and informal, individual and collective pathways that women living in peripheral urban communities, particularly the favelas of Maré (Rio de Janeiro/Brazil), develop in order to resist gendered urban violence.

The research analysed these processes in order to weave a story, composed of the practices of resistance created by women throughout their lives – a collective memory – about women’s struggles in the territory. Working collaboratively with grassroots organisation Redes da Maré, through the Women’s House of Maré (Casa das Mulheres da Maré), the research used a range of mixed-methods: in-depth interviews, focus groups (and observational drawing), creative body mapping workshops, and social memory technology/digital storytelling, which are presented in this part of the exhibition.

To access the full report with findings from in-depth interviews and focus groups, scan the QR code.

*The research is led by King’s College London (Department of Geography) and Redes da Maré in partnership with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, People’s Palace Projects, Queen Mary University of London and Museum of the Person and is supported by the British Academy via the GCRF - Global Challenges Research Fund (Heritage, Dignity and Violence programme) (HDV190030).
Favelas of Maré

Maré is an agglomeration of 16 favelas in Rio de Janeiro’s North Zone, the largest grouping of favelas in the city. It is home to approximately 140,000 people, who began occupying the area in the early 1960s coming from different regions of Brazil at the height of the industrialisation era in the country.

Each favela in Maré has its own history, yet the overarching narrative are of communities formed quite literally out of the water in the Guanabara Bay simultaneously through informal and formal processes.

It is widely acknowledged that favelas and peripheries in Brazil suffer from the criminalization of poverty, State neglect, the constant threat of drug lords and local militia and many other human rights violations, as well as police operations that frequently end in the death of residents and in trauma for the community. Like favelas throughout Brazil, Maré with all its complexities and challenges, is also a place for incredible potency and strength, where women have paved the way for key structural transformations over the course of 80 years.

The universal element which binds Maré together, apart from its geography, and ties it to other favelas, is the right to resist and the claim for a voice. Grassroots NGOs like Redes da Maré are one of many organisations founded by residents to improve the quality of life and access to basic rights for the communities.

Women’s House of Maré

Founded in October 2016, the Women’s House of Maré is a space created by NGO Redes da Maré as a reference centre for women living in the community, offering a series of programmes that contribute to the improvement of their quality of life and, consequently, of everyone around them. It is about acknowledgement: the Women’s House of Maré is a safe space for recognition of the historical role of women in Maré as protagonists of social movements, social change and improvements related to ensuring access to basic rights. It draws from Maré women’s past, to shape a better present and future.

I set myself to research the history of Maré and I noticed that it all started with a bunch of women.

Ms Helena told me the story that she and her friends went after water, light. So the women are here while the men go out to work - so we stay here, on the front line. When there’s a police operation, it’s the women who go and defend [the community] - whether it’s the working women, the women take care of the kids so they don’t go out on the street. So women have a key role in making the favela

Rita, 19 years old, resident of Maré

Located in a strategic area within the favelas of Maré, the Women’s House is a place for capacity building, professional development, socio-legal and psychological assistance; sexual and reproductive rights; art and culture; and research. Its holistic approach produces innovative methodologies to address and prevent violence against women and to produce data that can influence and inform public policies for women.
Embodying violence, embodying resistance among women from the favelas of Maré, Rio de Janeiro

Counter-mapping methods give women the power to produce counter-hegemonic narratives about their community history, based on their own knowledge and experiences. The exhibition highlights two sets of participatory counter-mapping practices: body-teritory maps and GIS community counter-mapping of violence and resistance, as well as observational drawings summarising key findings from four focus groups, an artistic tool used to preserve women’s identity during the process of gathering data.

The Body-Territory maps were inspired by Latin American indigenous women’s cosmologies which conceive bodies and territories as part of the same ontological continuum: Cuerpo-Territorio. These maps show how women (cis and trans) living in Maré embody feelings and emotions as effects of and responses to various forms of gendered urban violence. They also show how women articulate powerful resistance that are both individual and collective, institutional and self-organised.

The GIS community counter-mapping records collective territorial knowledge from the embodied positionality of women in Maré. It shows a complex web of unofficial borders landmarked by unsafe sites as well as safe havens made of sites where women-led initiatives challenge gender-based violence and pave the way for broader social transformation.

Together, these maps and illustrations form a visual statement of how women carry, in their own bodies, territorial and ancestral knowledge that helps them cope with and resist violence and become protagonists in achieving safer cities for all genders.
INCIDENCE AND NATURE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MARÉ

Map of Maré in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, showing women residents' knowledge of the territory regarding armed violence, safety, potential...
Networks of support for women in Maré

Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls in Maré
Focus Groups/Visual Documentation

**Figure 1:** We have the right to take care of ourselves, we already take care of everyone else (Visual documentation of focus group with 5 women who are fully dedicated to their household)

**Figure 2:** There are no weak women, there are women who don’t recognise their strength (Focus group with 6 women working outside of their households and/or community)

**Figure 3:** The Pyramid of Oppression (Focus group with 5 younger women who are vocal about feminist and racial perspectives on the social role of the 'favela resident')

**Figure 4:** The subtleties of normalized oppressions in everyday life (Focus group with 5 women who expressed resistance to violence with corporal activities or body awareness)
Digital Stories of Resistance through the Arts: social memory technology creating community histories

Women of Maré: Art, Culture and Resistance is a digital exhibition launched in March 2022 in partnership with Museu da Pessoa (Museum of the Person), using its methodology of Social Memory Technology, as part of the creative outputs of the research ‘Resisting Violence, Creating Dignity: negotiating Violence Against Women and Girls through community history-making in Rio de Janeiro’

The result is the creation of a digital oral history archive, where ten women from Maré have shared not only their life stories but also how, throughout their lives and in different ways, they have turned creativity and the arts as a tool to challenge and resist violence and social vulnerabilities.

The process of creation of these digital narratives was structured through collaborative workshops to train and transfer the social memory technology methodology to ten women appointed by the Women’s House of Maré. Together, they have curated which women would participate in the exhibition, they prepared and took part in the interviews, and supported the editing process for the videos you will find in this section, all now part of the virtual collection of the Museu da Pessoa.

Scan the QR codes in each photos to hear individual stories

Methodology and Interviews: Museum of the Person (Museu da Pessoa), supported by the Women’s House of Maré (Casa das Mulheres da Maré) and People’s Palace Projects
Audiovisual Director: Drika de Oliveira
Editors: Nicholas Andueza and Juliana Ludolf
Final treatment: Nicholas Andueza

“We’ve created a logo (Made in Maré), to name the products made within the favela, made by someone from the favela, someone who was raised in Maré and that really wants Maré to be known for what it really is.

RAFAELA FEITOSA

“Dance has made me strong in ways that, if I’ve never done it before, I wouldn’t have the courage to accomplish other things, I wouldn’t have the courage to go beyond, you know?

LENICE VIEGAS
It was pure joy, as we didn’t have any means to go outside the favela to go to the movies, go somewhere else...The samba here gave us joy, a lot of joy to many people, and they still say to this day: we miss the Gato de Bonsucesso - the local carnival block party.

JUREMA DE SOUZA

It is so beautiful what art can accomplish, how a dance class can change someone’s life, someone who has mobility issues, breathing issues. This is really special, to be able to mediate these experiences, I consider it a privilege.

LUANA BEZERRA

I feel that music is healing me, it’s taking away all the hurt. My path is starting to be revealed and I will follow it, I’m gonna walk my own walk.

JULIANA AGUIAR

...with Slam it’s different, because apart from being the moment I can scream what I’m feeling, not only my accomplishments, but also my pain, I feel supported by the people around me, I can reach a lot of people.

BEATRIZ VIRGINIA
In the favela, many musicians, singers and writers were born to show people that in the favela people also have value. They say in the favelas there are only bad ones, but I’ve had many friends. And it was in the favela that I’ve discovered myself. Today I’m not the same anymore.

IRACI ROSA

Art brings an opportunity for me to look deep within myself... To look deep within me and also look at those around me. I’m able to speak, to touch other people, to reach places few people manage to go...it’s a place made of affection. Art is a place of love.

PRISCILA MONTEIRO

Art is not a privilege. It’s a right, as is access to health, education and social support. Art is a basic right that every single person needs to have access to, they deserve to have access to.

JAQUELINE ANDRADE

Ourselves, as women in the favela, we have to have a lot of strength and grit to claim our fights and search for our dreams. Don’t you ever let anyone say: “You can’t do this, you won’t do that”; no, if you want it, you will make it.

ROSENI OLIVEIRA
Podcasting the voices of Women Resisting Violence

This project focuses on podcasting as a medium to positively influence broader policies around violence against women, foregrounding the voices of women who have both suffered violence and who are building campaigns and initiatives to fight against gendered violence from the grassroots up. Examples of their work are celebrated and held up as case studies in order to positively influence broader policies for women’s rights, both within and beyond Latin America.

It proposes a broader discussion about contemporary forms of activism and collaboration across borders, showcasing the power of podcasting for social change and women’s protagonism in influencing public policies.

Women Resisting Violence was developed through a partnership with the Latin America Bureau and more specifically with council members Marilyn Thomson and Louise Morris and academics at King’s College London, Professors Cathy McIlwaine and Jelke Boesten, and international researcher on gender equality, Patricia Muñoz Cabrera and Rebecca Wilson, LAB’s Managing Editor.

SCAN the QR codes on the images to hear episodes.
EPISODE: Rio’s Trailblazing Women’s House

Located in one of the largest favela complexes in Brazil, Rio’s Casa Das Mulheres (Women’s House) is a haven for those leaving abusive relationships. It has also been a lifeline for the community during Covid-19, when many favela residents lost their jobs - as they provided work and distributed food to starving families as well as dealing with the rise in domestic violence. We hear from the founder and members of the Women’s House (part of the NGO Redes da Mare), about the struggles the women of Maré face and how they have adapted to help each other and transform their neighbourhood in the face of government neglect.

Produced by Louise Morris.

EPISODE: Step up Migrant Women

Gil migrated to the UK from Brazil with her partner and two children as a tourist, and subsequently became undocumented. When she fled abuse, finding the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) changed her life and Gil now works on the group’s Step Up Migrant Women campaign to highlight the vulnerability of migrant women with insecure immigration status who are suffering domestic abuse. LAWRS also works with Migrants in Action (MinA), a community theatre group dedicated to Brazilian women in London who have experienced gendered violence. Using theatre techniques, they create a safe space for women to share stories, identify violence and heal.

Produced by Louise Morris.

BONUS EPISODE: Listening to Women Resisting Violence

“The podcast for me was a breakthrough from being a survivor to being a voice for the community”
(Podcast participant)

This episode contextualises the powerful stories of transformation and solidarity showcased in the Women Resisting Violence podcast. It is based on an online discussion around the power of podcasting for social change, with leading audio producers from Latin America and representatives from the fearless women’s organisations featured in the episodes.

This bonus episode was produced by Janno Media.
Where does your pain hurt?
Where is your deepest scar?
Give me your hand, hold my hand
And together, in sisterhood
We will walk side by side
To heal. To be
(excerpt from a poem written by a participant of the We still fight in the dark workshops)

The audiovisual performance/installation We still fight in the dark was created as a response to the research We can’t fight in the dark - led by Professor Cathy McIlwaine between 2016-2018 in partnership with Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) (funded by the ESRC) - as one of the first research projects to gather data on the nature and types of gender-based violence experienced by Brazilian migrant women in London.

Drawing from the academic evidence, Migrants in Action, a community theatre organisation, worked collaboratively with a group of 12 Brazilian women during eight creative applied arts sessions. Together they have produced a creative response to the alarmingly high levels of gendered violence experience by Brazilian women.

The video performance We still fight in the dark showcases an innovative approach for developing collective creative strategies for community healing and resistance.

MINA is a theatre organisation for Brazilian women survivors of gender-based violence in London. It uses Theatre of the Oppressed methodology and a trauma-informed approach to question the intersections between migration and gender and to explore the nature, causes and consequences of violence in women’s bodies and minds. MinA’s objectives are to nurture individuals and their collective experiences of migration, as well as bringing visibility to struggles and achievements among women in the Brazilian diaspora.

82% of Brazilian women in London experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime
56% of Brazilian women in London never reported an episode of violence
78% of the violence against Brazilian women and girls in London was perpetrated in the public sphere, especially in the workplace
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Further credits for each research/project can be found through the exhibition. For more information, go to transnationalviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk