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„*Em Nome do Estado: A Feminist, Decolonial Analysis of
Everyday (In)Securities in Rio de Janeiro’s Favelas*“

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1 INTRODUCTION

When this thesis finally began to take shape in January 2023, a new government was formed after four politically turbulent, polarizing years under the far-right administration of Jair Bolsonaro. In President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's new cabinet, Anielle Franco took office as Brazil's first-ever *Ministra da Igualdade Racial* (Minister of Racial Equality). Anielle Franco was born in the favela of Maré in Rio de Janeiro's *Zona Norte* (North Zone), a neighborhood that one passes on the way to and from Galeão International Airport. She is a Black woman and mother of two who has lived in the US for over ten years after receiving a sports scholarship for volleyball. In college, Anielle Franco came in touch with the work of Black writers, including, amongst others, Angela Davis, upon which she developed a consciousness of her own identity as a Black woman. Furthermore, she is the younger sister of Marielle Franco, whom I am sure many have heard of. Before becoming Minister of Racial Equality, Anielle Franco worked as a journalist, speaker and Executive Director of the Marielle Franco Institute (Instituto Marielle Franco, n.d.). The words of Anielle Franco's speech when she assumed office at the Palácio do Planalto in Brasília—just days after extremist Bolsonaro supporters had invaded the palace—have resonated with me ever since. In her concluding remarks, she said:

“We are here because we have a project for this country. A project for a country where a Black woman can access and exist in various decision-making spaces without having her life taken with five shots to her head. A project for a country where the mother of a young Black man does not suffer every day, wondering whether her son will return home because he is at risk of being murdered by the state itself”¹ (Ministério Igualdade Racial, 2023, my translation).

Closing her speech with these emotional words, the new minister paid tribute to her sister, Marielle Franco, a Black LGBTIQ+ and human rights activist and councilwoman for Rio de Janeiro. Marielle—as she was popularly referred to—was the first bisexual Black *favelada* (female favela resident) who pursued Black feminist politics to be elected to Rio de Janeiro's city council. As a queer Black activist and politician, she persistently criticized racist state violence and police brutality in favelas, advocated for demilitarization and rigorously campaigned for the rights of poor Black populations (de Paula Passos, 2020; Hutta, 2022;

¹ “Nós estamos aqui porque a gente tem um projeto de país. Um projeto de país onde uma mulher negra possa acessar e permanecer em diferentes espaços de tomadas de decisão sem ter a sua vida ceifada com cinco tiros na cabeça. Um projeto de país onde uma mãe de um jovem negro não sofra todos os dias a dúvida se o seu filho vai voltar para casa porque ele corre risco de ser assassinado pelo próprio Estado.”

Loureiro, 2020). Shortly after I had started working on my thesis, Marielle Franco and her driver Anderson Gomes were assassinated in broad daylight in central Rio in March 2018—a crime that remains unsolved to this day. The charismatic politician has significantly influenced many left-wing social movements and has given hope to many Brazilians who imagine the country’s future without violence. Since it is literally impossible to conduct research on urban violence in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas without coming across Marielle’s activism, her legacy has also accompanied me throughout the process of writing this thesis.

When Anielle Franco referred to her sister’s brutal murder in her speech at the Palácio do Planalto, she did not merely cite an individual fate but pointed out the insecurities and dangers a Black woman encounters when “accessing and existing in” a space that is traditionally seen as reserved for economically privileged *white* men (see, e.g., Hutta, 2022; Loureiro, 2020). In other words, occupying political spaces of power in the city council and the federal government is not an obvious trajectory when growing up to become a Black woman from a favela in Brazil. Transgressing societal boundaries and disrupting the racist and sexist norms that seek to place (queer) Black women who pursue a left-wing political agenda in a subordinate position can be extremely dangerous. Marielle’s assassination painfully illustrates this violent demonstration of power when it comes to what spaces are not foreseen for Black women. Relying on a hegemonic understanding of who is guaranteed protection in certain spaces and who is not, her murder is only one of many examples of how space and security are co-constituted in complex ways.

Besides this immediate risk for queer Black feminists who unapologetically claim their legitimate space in political arenas, Anielle also addressed the worries and fears of Black mothers for their Black children because their safety is severely impaired *em nome do Estado* (in the name of the state). The state of Rio de Janeiro has one of the deadliest police forces in the country; young Black men, in particular, are victimized by incarceration, torture, disappearance and lethal police violence perpetrated in impoverished neighborhoods such as favelas and urban peripheries. Both Franco sisters were familiar with this brutal reality and criticized it from their *lugar de fala* (locus of speech) (D. Ribeiro, 2017), a social and political standpoint that profoundly shaped their understanding of intersecting forms of oppression (see also Loureiro, 2020). Yet explicitly naming Black mothers as being impacted by violence and the fear thereof on a daily basis is a notable shift of focus in a nationwide debate about security and violence. While debates about public security center on demanding “more security” in favelas in the form of the presence of a militarized security apparatus, the

literature mostly focuses on men, as they are more likely to be victimized by state violence and, for that matter, any kind of urban violence perpetrated by armed actors (see, e.g., Moura, 2007; L.O. Rocha, 2012; Wilding, 2014).

Placing mothers at the core of the discussion about state violence perpetrated in poor urban neighborhoods is evidence of a consciousness of the vast, multifaceted and intersecting consequences of everyday physical and structural violence in favelas. Black mothers from favelas might not be victimized in the same way as their children, who are ruthlessly murdered by state security forces. However, they suffer the gendered, long-term consequences of everyday urban violence in their communities: injustice, criminalization and trauma. The Minister of Racial Equality explicitly addressing Black mothers and their fear and grief for their children in her inauguration speech is the departure point for a qualitatively different understanding of the extent of how urban violence operates and manifests in everyday urban spaces (see, e.g., Alves, 2014; C.A. Smith, 2016; Vianna & Farias, 2011). Anielle Franco's words quoted above illustrate two essential aspects of the scaffolding of this thesis' argument: that space and security are co-constitutive and that there is a need to center on Black mothers' knowledge and experiences of urban violence in political discussions and academic research. This is what this thesis is about: focusing on the mundane, gendered and racialized impacts of urban violence, the fear thereof and its intersections with multiple other insecurities that structurally and spatially shape everyday life in favelas.

In this thesis, I examine (in)security in favelas through the empirical lens of mothers' movements, a type of social movement mainly driven by mothers whose children—mostly sons—have been tortured, incarcerated or murdered at the hand of the police (see, e.g., E.P. de Araújo et al., 2020; F. Araújo, 2011; Farias et al., 2020; Lacerda, 2014; Ota, 2021; L.O. Rocha, 2014, 2018; Santiago, 2019). In Rio de Janeiro, and in Brazil in general, Black women mobilize to create social movements that aim to reduce anti-Black state violence in favelas and urban peripheries. Unsurprisingly, most of the activists in movements of families of victims of state violence are mothers—or other women connected in some way to the victims—who are Black, poor and live in impoverished neighborhoods. Yet they do not organize because they are mothers or out of biological instinct but because speaking as mothers enables them to occupy one of the few political spaces available to them (Baldez, 2002; Ota & Mason, 2022). Despite their social and spatial positionality that is characterized by multiple discriminations and oppression, they claim their space in the political discussion about violence by mobilizing their emotions as grieving mothers and explicitly turning their

motherhood into a site of resistance. *Movimentos das mães* (mothers' movements) make an immensely important contribution to anti-racist political struggles; by drawing on emotions like grief and pain, they show us a different angle from which to approach everyday urban violence. They do so by focusing on the victims as human beings, as children for whom someone mourns and who are worthy of grief (Kolling, 2021). They make us understand the complexity and ambiguity of how security “works” in everyday urban spaces. In other words, their lived experiences reveal the less direct, invisibilized yet omnipresent effects of everyday urban violence in favelas. Their political struggle, as well as their mundane memory and resistance practices, provides new valuable insights into how insecurities and violence are deeply grounded in urban space. Using the grief over violently losing a child as a departure point for activism and for creating networks of solidarity and care, mothers' movements put the political nature of their motherhood to the fore. Their practices make us understand how agency can be claimed from the oppressive social and spatial relations they are situated in.

1.1 More Security, Less Security

“Violence is a slippery concept—nonlinear, productive, destructive *and* reproductive. It is mimetic, like imitative magic or homeopathy. ‘Like produces like,’ that much we know. Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence—or, as we prefer—a continuum of violence” (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004, p. 1, original emphasis).

Across Latin America, violence and crime are long-standing and everyday problems, but they have significantly increased within the countries of the region over the past few decades. Although violence has been historically inscribed into the subcontinent by the European colonizers, the current and ongoing spikes in violence pose a severe threat to many of the relatively new democracies. While the violence itself is not new, it continues to take on new forms. It has slipped out of the control of (state) security forces and has spread among a range of social actors who exert violence. A variety of phenomena are now subsumed under the term violence, including everyday criminal violence, sexual abuse, police brutality and activities of paramilitary groups and death squads. Moreover, violence is nowadays increasingly concentrated in cities that are characterized by deep socio-economic disparities; violence has become more and more an urban problem, particularly one of the urban margins (see, e.g., Arias & Goldstein, 2010; Auyero & Berti, 2015; Hume, 2009a; Imbusch et al., 2011; Jenss, 2023a; G.A. Jones & Rodgers, 2009; Koonings & Kruijt, 2007).

Brazil is characterized by great social and income inequalities and extremely high homicide rates. As a democracy, the country is “capable of guaranteeing political but no social rights” (Imbusch et al., 2011, p. 115; see also Scheper-Hughes, 2004). Rio de Janeiro stands out among other big cities with regard to violent crime, as it is particularly high. On the one hand, the city is racially and spatially segregated. Favelas and urban peripheries are primarily inhabited by Black and poor residents, who are disproportionately victimized by (lethal) police violence. In the public debate, Rio is often called the divided city, *cidade partida*, referring to the understanding of cities as divided into center and periphery, formal and informal. Indeed, life inside (*dentro*) the favela differs fundamentally from the formal neighborhoods outside (*fora*), where residents live in high-rise condominiums hidden behind walls and guarded by increasingly militarized (private) security personnel (Bittencourt, 2015; Cunha, 2021). On the other hand, the city is also permeable and porous; marginalized living spaces are entrenched in the geography and economy of the wealthy parts of the city. Despite their marginalization, favelas “play a vital role in the workings of the city” (Perlman, 2010, p. 148; see also Bruno Carvalho, 2013). Unlike in other major cities in Brazil, impoverished neighborhoods are not solely located on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, but favelas are firmly woven into the urban fabric. Rio’s topography, with its mountain ranges stretching across the city, has defined its social geography as favelas have developed on these hilltops, “creating a condition in which many favelas are extremely close to neighboring areas—which may be the wealthiest residential zones—yet vertically isolated” (Fabricius, 2008, n.p.).

Researchers agree that (in)security in favelas profoundly differs from (in)security in wealthier, *whiter* neighborhoods with regard to levels of violence, police brutality, urban security governance but also poverty, employment security and environmental risks, such as flooding and landslides. Security and the lack thereof are spatialized and disproportionately dispersed across the city’s geography of inequality. The distinct spatiality of the hundreds of different favelas in the city is thus of crucial importance to how (in)security is created and experienced. In other words, these different insecurities vitally structure how favela residents are able to go about their day. In public and political discussions, there is a hyperfocus on the so-called *guerra às drogas* (war on drugs) that is framed as the main—or even sole—reason for the high levels of violence. These debates mostly center on highly visible, spectacular acts of violence, on shoot-outs and police operations carried out by a heavily militarized security apparatus—pictures that are gladly picked up by the sensationalist media (Pauschinger, 2020a; Vainer, 2011). In this narrative, the combat against drugs justifies the use of

militarized security measures and normalizes excessive state violence against the city's poor Black populations, turning their territories into literal war zones. Yet there is no public outcry over the police brutality perpetrated in favelas. On the contrary, the assumption that is put forward insinuates that if drug gangs did not exist in favelas, favela residents would be able to live in peace. This means that if favela residents did not participate in the illicit drug trade, the police would not have to target them (Buer, 2022a, 2022b; Leite, 2012; Wacquant, 2008). While drug trafficking exists in Rio de Janeiro and indeed poses a severe problem, the reduction of the problem to the equation that "more security" in favelas equals an increase in public security is oversimplifying and neglects the many long-term, less visible and less known effects that violence as a social order has on the society where it is perpetrated (Das, 2006, 2008).

Furthermore, as the high rates of police killings indicate, the state is a severe threat to security in favelas; (lethal) police brutality constantly interrupts everyday life in these territories (see, e.g., Arias, 2006; Moura, 2007; Pauschinger, 2020b; Villenave, 2022). Several empirical studies show that, despite violence being also exercised by drug gangs, favela residents see the police as the main aggressor because they are responsible for abuse, physical aggression and arbitrary killings. In short, the state's "security" appears as war in favelas (see, e.g., Buer, 2022a, 2022b; Haynes, 2023a; Penglase, 2015). The (in)security situation in Rio de Janeiro is thus complex. Overlapping (in)security regimes require favela residents to navigate the rules and expectations and looming dangers that are brought about by the struggle over territorial control fought by different armed actors, including civil and military police, drug trafficking gangs and militias, which are increasingly active in Rio de Janeiro's *Zona Oeste* (West Zone). Moreover, some favelas have been or are still occupied by special police forces. Favela residents thus need to be careful not to be perceived as collaborators by the police when interacting with traffickers or members of militia groups and vice versa (Arias & Rodrigues, 2006; Pope, 2022a; M.A. Richmond, 2018, 2019).

Although researchers do not agree on a common understanding of what makes urban violence *urban* (see, e.g., Pavoni & Tulumello, 2020), it becomes clear that favelas are urban spaces that cannot be imagined without violence, both regarding the residents' everyday experiences and academic research. Favelas are not merely the physical container where violence can be empirically traced; they have been purposefully created as spaces where the state is able to locate and police Blackness. I thus understand urban violence in favelas not as a physically or geographically limited phenomenon but as part of the colonial legacies that the urban elites

have contributed to manifesting in the city of Rio de Janeiro since the emergence of favelas. Everyday urban violence is thus a severe problem in favelas that impedes the residents' livability and reinforces territorial stigma. Also in postcolonial times, the city's specific spatial configuration facilitates the perpetration of racist violence and genocidal politics. As Marta-Laura Haynes puts it, "[T]he structure of slavery is neatly woven into the fabric of public security in Rio de Janeiro" (2023b, p. 8). Several policies that were created in the past few decades to "integrate" favelas into the "formal" parts of the city—be it urbanization or security policies—had at their core the assumption that favelas and their residents were inherently dangerous, criminal and "backward" (see Chapter 2).

1.2 (In)Visible (In)Security: Research Problem

Conceptualizing violence as a continuum (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004) means including not only its physical expressions but also its structural forms, the trauma, pain and shame that often come with, for example, torture and sexual abuse and the fear of violence that persists in contexts of high insecurity (see also Sachseder, 2022). That is, also urban violence is more than its direct, most physical aspects; it manifests in the urban fabric and alters everyday social life (Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). The lingering uncertainty of violence creates a tension that inhibits everyday life, a kind of state of waiting for something—the next violent incident—to happen (Penglase, 2015). There is fear of the highly lethal police operations that cause schools and medical care facilities to close temporarily, make it impossible to go to work on certain days and trigger the trauma of already having lost someone at the hand of the police. Everyday urban violence produces pain for those who live in proximity to death, yet these effects are often invisibilized in society and research (L.O. Rocha, 2012; C.A. Smith, 2016; Wilding, 2010; Zulver, 2023).

The literature on urban violence focuses on men since they are more likely to be victimized and most perpetrators are men. However, this limited scope prevents us from understanding patterns of violence, how violence affects marginalized groups in different ways and how violence is reproduced in many areas of everyday life. While researchers widely agree that gender, class and race are the ordering principles for how favela residents are affected by urban violence, the focus tends to be on the victimization by police killings, thereby also creating an inaccurate dualism between violence that affects men and violence that affects women. As there are different forms of violence, there are also different forms of victimization. Young Black men are usually considered "dangerous blacks" (Vargas, 2006, p.

49); Black mothers face stigmatization for nurturing criminals, and Black women, in general, have historically been exposed to manifold perpetrations of systematic violence (Hutta, 2022; L.O. Rocha, 2012). Yet these effects are interrelated; mothers, in particular, are affected by the killing of their children; they experience the grief and trauma that urban violence causes survivors (Ota & Mason, 2022; L.O. Rocha, 2012, 2014; Vianna, 2014; Vianna & Farias, 2011). How individuals are impacted by urban violence thus needs to be analyzed through the lens of power relations such as gender, race and class to carve out the particularities of affectedness.

There is comparatively little research that focuses on mothers and their experiences with urban violence in marginalized, poor urban spaces in Brazil. It is predominantly Brazilian researchers from different disciplines who contribute to studying the topic in Brazilian cities. This small but growing field in the Brazilian context includes work that addresses the general invisibility of women's and mothers' experiences with urban violence (see, e.g., Moura, 2007; Perry, 2016; C.A. Smith, 2016; Wilding, 2010, 2012, 2014) and the relationship between the state of mourning of mothers of victims of state violence and their political struggle (see, e.g., Alves, 2014; E.P. de Araújo, 2021; F. Araújo, 2007; Bussinger & Novo, 2008; Farias et al., 2020; Lacerda, 2014, 2016; Ota, 2021; L.O. Rocha, 2012, 2014, 2018). Besides the literature on children murdered by the police, there is also some work on the experiences of mothers whose children have disappeared (F. Araújo, 2011; Leite Cruz & de Souza Santos, 2017; Rolim et al., 2018) or have been placed in juvenile detention centers (Motta, 2019a, 2019b). Much of this literature is ethnographic work that radically centers on the experiences of mothers whose children were victimized by state security agents, death squads, drug gangs or militias. What most of them have in common is the perspective on Black motherhood as political in the sense that raising a Black child in a favela is already an act of resistance against a genocidal state, as is fighting for justice and decriminalization after the loss of a child. The scholars listed above point out the distinct ways in which mothers are affected by urban violence, how their experiences are gendered and how many mothers translate the loss of a child into political activism.

Violence creeping into every aspect of daily life profoundly affects those who care for the workings of the everyday—the majority of whom are women. Feminist scholars have criticized that a “focus on body count limits our ability to gain a qualitative perspective on the extent of this violence” (C.A. Smith, 2016, p. 38). Yet the intersections of spatiality, (in)security and gendered, classed and racialized power relations from an everyday

perspective remain underexplored and have only recently come into focus in the literature on urban violence (Hume, 2009a; Hume & Wilding, 2020; Wilding, 2014; Zulver, 2023). As the practices of mothers' movements show, favelas are not merely at the receiving end of top-down security governance; the social cohesion of tight-knit communities in favelas offers a form of security unique to this urban form. In a context of high violence, instability and insecurity, favela residents still claim and appropriate spaces to create security for their communities (see, e.g., Buer, 2022a; Penglase, 2015). Very often, it is mothers who create such networks of support, yet their care work is taken for granted and considered apolitical and trivial. However, mothers fight for the memory of the victims of state violence, for justice and for a peaceful future in favelas. I understand their memory and resistance practices and the creation of spaces in favelas for commemorating the direct and indirect victims of state violence as counter-narratives that offer a different perspective on urban violence and its victims, who are criminalized by the public most of the time (see, e.g., Auchter, 2023; Ota & Mason, 2022; Till, 2008). It is, therefore, imperative to center on the everyday experiences of women and mothers in order to gain a deeper understanding of the extent of everyday urban violence and its intersections with other (structural) insecurities and to shed light on how not only destruction takes place at these intersections but how they also can be used productively and creatively for resistance, solidarity and care.

1.3 Aims and Research Questions

With this thesis, I want to put a spotlight on how power operates in and from the everyday. I translated the research puzzle outlined above into two overarching research questions that guide my empirical analysis:

- *How do gender, race, class and space intersect in producing everyday urban (in)securities in favelas?*
- *How do spatial practices of resistance of mothers of victims of violence articulate the intersections of gender, race, class und urban space?*

My research interest is driven by my curiosity about the concrete spaces where (in)security takes place, for example, in the everyday. I aim to explore the everyday not only as an empirical reality but also as a distinct spatial reality in order to make tangible the gendered, racialized and classed relationship between (in)security and urban space. This relationship is complex because violence, security and insecurity spatially co-exist or, rather, are spatially intertwined in Rio de Janeiro. Moreover, the regulation of space and security is closely linked

to the control of racialized and gendered bodies (see also Zaragocin, 2018a). Going beyond a state-centered understanding of security, these research questions structure my empirical investigations that account for the complexity and ambiguity of (in)security in favelas and how (in)security experiences are predefined by spatialized racial regimes but are also a departure point for resistance practices that have historically shaped and transformed these territories as well.

1.4 Structural Outline

In CHAPTER 1, I traced this study's approach to urban (in)securities. I introduced my research interest, identified the research puzzle and presented the research aims and questions. CHAPTER 2 provides a background of the colonial history of Brazil in general, and Rio de Janeiro in particular. The purpose of this chapter is to situate everyday urban violence in Rio de Janeiro's favelas and its intersections with other socio-economic insecurities in a power matrix established during colonialism. In CHAPTER 3, I develop a theoretical framework that theorizes the spatiality of (in)security by integrating decolonial and feminist theories of security and space. I utilize the everyday as a concept to scrutinize how place-based (in)securities are experienced and spaces of agency and resistance are created. CHAPTER 4 proposes a methodological approach that builds on empirical data produced by the research subjects themselves. Developing a hybrid narrative framework based on feminist and decolonial methodologies, this chapter makes a general plea for centering on mundane experiences in order to gain a qualitative perspective on the extent of multiple intersecting (in)securities operating in marginalized spaces. I present my empirical analysis in two chapters in which I focus on the narratives of women active in mothers' movements. In the PREFACE to these chapters, I introduce the four women whose stories I mainly focus on because they show the diverse ways in which mothers and families are affected by urban violence and because they are also representative of other mothers' experiences. CHAPTER 5 carves out how the brutal direct and the less visible effects of chronic urban violence are inscribed in the urban spaces of favelas and how they (re)produce intersecting insecurities along the lines of gender, race and class. Situating the research subjects' lived realities in a specific postcolonial urban space makes tangible how everyday urban violence spatially and structurally shapes how mothers in favelas are able to go about their day. In CHAPTER 6, I elaborate on the multiplicity of practices of resistance, memory and care of mothers' movements, with which they respond to insecurities. With these practices, they engage in a

struggle over meaning and territory and offer a different, bottom-up narration of violence in favelas and its victims. Finally, CHAPTER 7 provides a brief overview of the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of this thesis and points out reference points for future research that seeks to locate (in)security experiences and practices in urban space and to place the agency of marginalized actors center stage.

2 BACKGROUND: COLONIZATION, URBANIZATION, SECURITIZATION

Before approaching the phenomenon of urban violence in Rio de Janeiro's favelas, it is important to highlight the legacies of colonialism and slavery, which lasted particularly long in Brazil. As Ingri Bøe Buer states, "The history of slavery and colonialism in Brazil does not only explain the origins of favelas, but also sheds light on deep-seated racism and social inequality that are still very much relevant in Brazil today" (2022b, p. 108). The appropriation of land and the (brutal) domination of indigenous and Black bodies are not a thing of the past but are inscribed in power structures that survived the era of colonialism and shape contemporary urban governance. While the state's relationship with favelas is characterized by necropolitics and the naturalization of killing young Black men, favela residents are tightly interwoven with the workings of the city. Not only do favela residents, especially Black women, contribute substantially to the city's economy, but favelas are also tightly woven into Rio's urban fabric and spread across the wealthiest parts of the city, located in areas most desirable for real estate developers and speculators (Freeman, 2012; Gaffney, 2016; Harvey, 2004, 2005). This ambiguous and even conflicting relationship can only be understood by a glance into the past.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate everyday urban violence in Rio de Janeiro's favelas and its intersections with other socio-economic insecurities in a power matrix established during colonialism. Colonial power structures and their contemporary forms have shaped favelas as distinct urban spaces characterized by the lack of urban services and high levels of violence and poverty. Favelas as spaces of violence and poverty are intrinsically linked to slavery and colonialism, the denial of citizenship and access to land to former slaves and their descendants and the dependence of the Brazilian economy on access to cheap Black labor. This chapter provides a brief background on colonial rule in Brazil, the establishment of colonial patterns of power and the (re)production of these power structures in contemporary forms of governance, such as security governance and urban development. I discuss Rio de Janeiro as a postcolonial city that was built on a fundamentally anti-Black ideology and where racialized socio-spatial segregation is perpetuated to this day. Departing from the city level, I zoom further in on favelas as a particular form of urban space within the city of Rio. More

precisely, I elaborate on how favelas emerged as distinct urban spaces for controlling the life and death of Black Brazilians and on how the integration of contemporary top-down urban development and security governance reinforces the colonial gaze on Black territories.

2.1 A Brief History of Colonialism in Brazil

One of the primary pillars of decolonial theory is that long-standing patterns of power established during colonialism continue to shape knowledge production and structure the societies of the colonized and the colonizers. Against this backdrop, I want to give a short overview of Brazil's colonial history before zooming in on Rio de Janeiro as a postcolonial city. I focus on the history of Black territories in this chapter because of their relevance to how favelas are constituted today. However, this comprises only a fraction; to understand colonialism and its legacies in Brazil as a whole, the enslavement and extensive elimination of indigenous people on behalf of the European "civilizing" mission is essential. European and Brazilian elites were convinced that indigenous extinction was inevitable when aspiring to the European ideal of modernity (see, e.g., Bowen, 2021; Dornelles, 2018; Miki, 2018; Reséndez, 2016; A.O. Silva, 2018).

In the early 1400s, the Portuguese arrived in sub-Saharan African coastal regions and began to kidnap Africans, enslaving them to work as domestic servants, mostly in Europe, four decades later. While other systems of slavery existed before, the slave trade of the Portuguese represented a historic caesura for the slave trade from Africa (Klein & Luna, 2010, pp. 6–7). After 1500, the Portuguese established Brazil as their colony, which marked "the beginnings of the modern slave plantation economy of the Americas, which so influenced hemispheric developments for the next four centuries", a system "that would influence the pattern of all future commercial agricultural slave regimes" (ibid., p. 13). Across Brazil, there were different types of slavery according to the local industries in the regions. It is estimated that between four and five million Africans were displaced and enslaved in Brazil, a multiple of the number of slaves brought to the US. In Brazil, the slaves had to live in such terrible conditions that their death rate was too high compared to the birth rate, which is why the Portuguese needed a continuous "influx" of new slaves in order to uphold the economy. The Christian missionaries supported the emerging plantation system. While they created missionary villages to proselyte indigenous peoples and were against the enslavement of the indigenous population, at least at first, they approved of the brutal exploitation of African

slaves. Their suffering was compared to Jesus' suffering on the cross, a legitimate earthly touchstone on the way to paradise (Prutsch & Rodrigues-Moura, 2013, pp. 32–38).

Regulating access to land and property titles was crucial for the colonial project; territory was a central vehicle for expanding the empire, exercising control over populations and manifesting inequalities. To this day, unequal land distribution and the concentration of land in the hands of a few perpetuate spatial and socio-economic inequalities. Because there were no profound rural reforms, racialized land inequality persists in Brazil (Frankema, 2010; Melgaço & Coelho, 2022). For 300 years, until Brazil's independence, besides purchase, inheritance or occupation, land was acquired through royal land grants (*sesmarias*) awarded by the Portuguese Crown. The only requirement for being granted a land grant was to cultivate the land, yet the actual practice of granting land titles was chaotic, and the Crown had little knowledge about the lands and who cultivated them, which also resulted in violent land conflicts. However, essentially, the system of *sesmarias* was a strategy to establish extensive landholdings of the *white* elites, and it substantially influenced future land ownership dominated by the owners of sugar and coffee plantations and their descendants, explicitly excluding former slaves from the right to own land (Bowen, 2021, pp. 27–30; Menendes Motta, 2005). For colonial authorities, property relation was one of the most important issues to tackle because the (legal) power over territory meant transferring the profits to the colonial state (Chattopadhyay, 2012). In 1850, the first Land Law (*Lei da Terra*) was passed in order to regulate the land situation that was out of control by then. The *sesmaria* system was abolished, and henceforth, landownership could only be obtained through purchase, thus requiring private capital. The *Lei da Terra* “enabled the Crown to seize native territories and transform them into [...] public lands for government allocation” (Bowen, 2021, p. 27). Essentially, many originally indigenous territories were declared uninhabited, and indigenous people depended on the state to give them back the land that was already theirs. Displacement of the lower classes was also common because they were not able to prove their right to a particular property or pay the required taxes (see also Miki, 2018, pp. 100–121). Literacy was another prerequisite for owning land, only possible for the *homens bons* (good men). Both of these requirements excluded and continued to exclude Black and indigenous populations, thus a vast number of people, even after the abolition of slavery (Bowen, 2021, pp. 28–29).

Debates about the abolition of slavery preceded the legislative reform, but they were not translated into legislation. In the 19th century, little by little, even conservative circles began

to regard slavery as an embarrassing symbol of backwardness. Especially Great Britain, which abolished the slave trade in 1807, exerted pressure on Brazil to end slavery because of religious abolitionist groups that supported the idea of freedom but also because of Brazil's economic advantage. In 1831, the Feijó Law was passed, a treaty that aimed at ending the Brazilian slave trade. On paper, Brazil declared its willingness to end slavery; however, the Brazilian political economy rested firmly on slavery throughout and even after its official existence. The *Lei Feijó* thus came to be known as the law *para inglês ver*—for the English to see. To this day, the expression *para inglês ver* refers to empty public promises and implementing superficial changes to please other actors, for example, far-reaching promises made in the context of expensive infrastructure projects that remain uncompleted or poorly maintained (Haynes, 2023a; C.A.R. Schneider et al., 2017; Williamson, 2017). During these decades, Brazil was playing for time. In 1871, the *Lei do Ventre Livre* (Law of the Free Womb) was passed, which essentially stipulated in its first article that the children of slaves were born free and remained so until the age of eight. The slave masters were obliged to take care of the child until they reached the age of eight and were even eligible for compensation from the state. In 1885, the *Lei do Sexagenários* (Law of the 60-Year-Olds) was passed, which proposed to free slaves over the age of 60—well aware that slaves seldom reached such an old age. Furthermore, without the ability to own land, freed slaves had limited options to provide for themselves (Lago, 2018; R.G. Soares, 2015). That slavery could be abolished in 1888, despite the inertia and persistence, “was only possible due to a complex interplay of Black resistance, critical journalism, fiery speeches before parliament and international influence” (Prutsch & Rodrigues-Moura, 2013, p. 84, my translation).

After the abolition of slavery, former slaves had few possibilities to go on about their lives as free individuals. The legacies of colonial land politics, which the European elites had shaped and manipulated to their advantage for centuries, still prohibited them from owning any land. Neither were they granted any compensation payments for their and their ancestors' century-long exploitation. The living conditions of former slaves thus did hardly improve at all. Essentially, they had three possibilities to establish their lives as free individuals: “(1) remain on the plantations as wage laborers, sharecroppers, or labor-tenants; (2) join quilombos or small farmer communities of earlier freed and free blacks, growing their own food for subsistence and sale; or (3) migrate to the expanding urban centers” (Bowen, 2021, p. 30). Those who stayed on the properties where they had previously been exploited as slaves did not do so out of loyalty to their ex-masters but because it “represented the possibility of

retaining access to the limited rights and the few bits of property that they had acquired over the course of a lifetime of struggle in slavery” (Fraga, 2016, p. 184). Former slaves who had escaped founded quilombos as refuges and spaces of resistance against slavery and for the preservation of the Afro-Brazilian culture; however, only those who were not caught by *capitães do mato* (captains of the bush) and enslaved again made it to the quilombos. Quilombos were not solely inhabited by former slaves, but also indigenous people and even *white* people joined these microcosmoses. Ursula Prutsch and Enrique Rodrigues-Moura estimate that about 2,500 quilombos still exist today, yet only 290 of them have received a land title. Many of them emerged after slavery came to an end in Brazil, for example, when plantation owners gave land plots to their former slaves (2013, pp. 39–44).

The Brazilian elites sought to perform a seamless transition from an economy heavily dependent on the Atlantic slave trade to a post-slavery society. For the dominant class, it was embarrassing having to justify the particularly long period of slavery in Brazil compared to the other Americas and the Western Hemisphere in general. After independence from the Portuguese, the search for *o povo brasileiro* (the Brazilian people) intensified, which represented the longing to define “a racialized national identity that celebrated their country’s unique racial heritage while affirming its place among its ‘civilized’ European peers” (Miki, 2018, p. 101). However, they also regretted the century-long “miscegenation” and sought to counteract the predominance of the Black population by supporting the mass immigration of *white* Europeans (Alves, 2018, pp. 47–49). The Brazilian state actively supported and controlled politics of assimilation and *embranquecimento* (*whitening*), which included—and still includes—the genocide of Black Brazilians (Maia & Zamora, 2018; L. Rodrigues, 2022; M.A. dos S. Soares, 2019). The politics of *whitening* fundamentally meant interfering with and controlling sexual relations; “[s]ex was attributed a transcendental meaning by many of the nation’s white elite and racial theorists; that is, sex and reproduction had the capacity to erase barriers and served as proof that race could be and had been transcended” (Aidoo, 2018, p. 3). Embedded within this ideological connection of race and sex, the nation-building myth of a racial democracy (*democracia racial*) was created. The anthropologist and sociologist Gilberto Freyre contributed to developing the racial democracy myth, suggesting a post-racial society without racism and discrimination. In the 1930s, Freyre supported the idea that, compared to other systems of slavery, Brazilian slavery was a “mild” version, where the power relations between slaves and masters were somehow “softened”. Freyre was convinced that the mixed “Brazilian race” was best equipped for the future because it consisted of the

best qualities of formerly enslaved women and *white* slave owners (L.O. Rocha, 2016; M.A. dos S. Soares, 2019). After all, sexual relations between them were not unusual, given the many unmarried men who immigrated to Brazil. However, painting such a harmonious picture of sexual relations under colonial rule obscures the sexual violence against and the exploitation of slaves of all genders as a key tool for domination, upholding slavery and perpetuating racial and gender inequalities (Aidoo, 2018; Da Costa, 2016; Nascimento, 1989). Obviously, sexual relations oftentimes were not voluntary but, in fact, rape, and many female slaves were forced into prostitution. Sexualized violence against slaves, including sexual violence outside the heterosexual norm, was legitimized through the discourse of Black women and men as hypersexual and driven by impulses and desires. Because they were not seen as fully human and were reduced to their sexuality, the control of their sexuality and reproduction was central to upholding colonial rule (Aidoo, 2018; Freitas, 2011; Reis, 2022).

However, the romanticized national myth of racial mixing obscures socially effective racism; evoking the idea of progressive racial innocence disregards the state's role in structurally creating post-slavery racial restrictions. In very simple terms, declaring a multiracial society means that this society cannot be racist. Claiming mixed-race ancestry from a privileged position in society is convenient because it does not entail socio-economic disadvantages or undermine *white* supremacy. Those who pass as *white* can proclaim themselves post-racial while not having to experience what it means to be non-*white* in Brazilian society (Da Costa, 2016; Joseph, 2013; Nascimento, 1989; Villenave, 2022, pp. 119–124; Wolfe, 2016, pp. 113–139). In addition, the reinterpretation of racial hierarchies, their reduction to cultural differences and the selective appreciation of Afro-Brazilian cultural practices, such as samba or capoeira, that were marginalized or even prohibited before also contributed to this new politics of assimilation, the romanticization of slavery and the naturalization of *white* supremacy (M.A. dos S. Soares, 2019). However, Brazil's Black populations still occupy "the lowest, most impoverished and exploited positions in society. To this day, [...] the great majority of Blacks are poor and the great majority of the elite are White" (Wolfe, 2016, p. 128). Embracing racial "mixture" thus does not mean perceiving Black and Brown Brazilians as equal or fully human. On the contrary, it reflects the wish for citizens to be as light-skinned as possible, which is still prevalent in Brazilian society, and hides it in a positive narrative. Through the myth of the *democracia racial*, *white* supremacy and patriarchy are sustained on the level of a national ideology "by means of various well-defined mechanisms of oppression and extermination, leaving white supremacy unthreatened in Brazil" (Nascimento, 1989, p.

59). Indeed, the distribution of wealth, education and employment opportunities and the likelihood of being victimized by police violence—in short, all areas that determine one’s living conditions—are structured along the lines of race and class. As Lamonte Aidoo (2018, p. 3) sums up:

“The silencing and sanitization of the nation’s history of rape, sexual violence, and abuse during slavery and its aftermath laid the foundation for an enduring legacy of erasure that then created the illusion of equality and racial progressivism, while in reality, solidifying an antiblack, racist system that preserved white male supremacy in Brazil’s past and present.”

200 years after the country’s independence from Portuguese rule in 1822 and more than 130 years after the abolition of slavery in 1888, colonial power relations and structures of oppression continue to take on new forms that still reproduce extreme inequalities along the lines of race and class, maintained through violent territorial control. Despite Brazil’s long history of colonialism and persistent social inequalities, systemic racism is difficult to address. Not only are colonial legacies continuously reproduced, but they are also obscured by the national ideology of a racial democracy, which suggests a post-racial society because of the historical racial “mixture”. It is common for Brazilians to say that racism is less overt and extreme in Brazil compared to the US. As Lélia Gonzalez pointedly expressed: “Racism? In Brazil? Who said that? That’s an American thing” (Gonzalez, 1984, p. 226, own translation). There were indeed differences between the two systems of slavery; for example, the colonial rule did not impose a legal system of apartheid, and the dividing lines between races were more diffuse, which led to the more than 100 different names for skin colors in Brazilian Portuguese (Prutsch & Rodrigues-Moura, 2013, p. 38). However, the societal structure on the basis of race did not need to be anchored in laws because it was effective enough—and is until today. Brazilian color classifications do not merely represent a form of “diversity” but served to determine which Afro-descendants could partake in *white* society and which were not (socially) *white* enough (Aidoo, 2018; Algranti, 1988; Castilho, 2016; Holston, 2007). Gendered, racialized and classed power relations established during colonial Brazil are, on the one hand, obscured by the nation-building myth of a racial democracy but, on the other hand, effectively structure Brazil’s contemporary society. And while the meaning of gender, race and class has changed over time, there still exists a “commonality between nineteenth century racism and the attitude of the colonizers in regard to differences in degrees of humanity” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 244). That is, today’s ways of being for Black Brazilians are a product of colonialist violence, as certain knowledges and lived experiences are prioritized and deemed more valid than others, which Nelson Maldonado-Torres calls the

“coloniality of being” (ibid.). The long-term exclusion of Afro-Brazilians, Black and Brown Brazilians from the full notion of humanity and citizenship, the impossibility of owning land and the publicly supported racist dehumanization and criminalization of these populations shape social inequalities and legitimize violence (Alves, 2018; Nascimento, 1989).

2.2 Rio de Janeiro: The Anti-Black City

The construction of Rio de Janeiro as a city is intrinsically linked to colonialism, and it was built with the exploitation of slave labor. The city’s development is firmly grounded in the endeavors to conceal Black and indigenous lived realities and to spatialize a certain racial regime, which has changed over time but continues to shape Rio de Janeiro as a city. Rio’s persisting and deepening geography of inequality is thus rooted in the city’s foundations. At the beginning of the 18th century, Rio de Janeiro was of high importance for upholding the slave trade to Brazil, as the city had one of the biggest ports for slave trade worldwide. Rio de Janeiro, nicknamed *Cidade Maravilhosa* (Marvelous City), is built on the forced labor of slaves, which is still visible in its geography of inequality. A historical fact that is downplayed to this day (Friendly & Pimentel Walker, 2022). I consider Rio de Janeiro a postcolonial city, where historical structures of oppression and dehumanization of Black populations have created favelas as distinct urban spaces for controlling the life and death of Black Brazilians. These structures shape contemporary forms of policing and urban development but also enable and constrain the resistance of marginalized populations. Favelas are also spaces of insurgent citizenship, where favela residents utilize their positionality for a political struggle against violence and for citizenship, the right to land and the right to live. The *Cidade Maravilhosa* was built after the model of European city centers, such as Paris and London, and even imported modern urban styles from Buenos Aires; the ideal of the European metropolis, a tropical Paris, also meant striving for an inherently *white* city. Urban planning and the regulation of space were thus heavily informed by race. The “production of elite modernity in the city of Rio de Janeiro was a source of delight and a marker of achievement for the elite” (Robinson, 2006, p. 74). And while the elite needed the labor force of the urban poor, they did not deem them to fit into their picture of the ideal city. Rio as a modern urban capital was constructed on a profoundly anti-Black ideology that viewed Black populations as backward, unsanitary and uncivilized. The undesired populations were thus excluded and pushed to the urban margins (Brandão, 2006; Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; Valladares, 2019).

Other than in many other cities in the Global South, in Rio de Janeiro, informal settlements emerged on the inhospitable forested hills sticking out between wealthier neighborhoods, an image characteristic of the city. The urban logic of Rio de Janeiro is characterized by the “direct proximity of urban areas of extreme social differences” (Fabricius, 2008, n.p.). The division is also visible in the common expression *dentro/fora de favela* (inside/outside the favela), which illustrates that favelas are closed communities in some respects, spatially and socially distanced from the non-favela parts of the city. Favelas emerged out of the need for affordable housing for former slaves, the working poor and former soldiers; favelas’ impoverished residents were (and still are) quite alienated from the city built by the Black slaves. Many former slaves migrated to the cities after the abolition of slavery, where they continued to be exploited for cheap labor. In 1897, after the deadly Canudos Campaign, the soldiers, most of them former slaves, came to Rio de Janeiro, then Brazil’s capital. They had been promised land in return for serving in the war; before fighting in Canudos, they had been living in overcrowded tenements, the *Cabeça de Porco* (Pig’s Head), near today’s Central Station. Just a few years after the abolition of slavery, this was a unique opportunity for them to get access to land other than the options mentioned in the previous section. Compared to other nations in the Global South, Brazil urbanized early, and at the end of the 19th century, Rio was one of the largest cities worldwide. Land in the city was thus a valuable resource. However, the war veterans did not get their plots as promised and squatted near the Ministry of War in order to exert pressure to get compensation for their military service. After a few weeks, a colonel allowed them to squat on his land on a hillside near the port in downtown Rio. The settlement was initially called *Morro da Favella* and is now known as Morro da Providência.² *Morro* means hill and *favela* is a spiny plant that grew in the Canudos region (McCann, 2014, pp. 21–29; Perlman, 2010, pp. 24–25; Valladares, 2019, pp. 14–27; Williamson, 2017, pp. 57–58). The former soldiers started to build houses with mud and brick, based on the shacks they had built near Canudos (Douglas, 2016). In the following decades, many others followed the model of Morro da Providência. From the beginning, favela settlements were present in the city center. They grew in the South near residential areas and in the North where factories were located. Only in the 1960s did they spread out to the West, often alongside infrastructure projects such as highway constructions. Favelas were basically the only option for affordable housing in the city; the formal sector did not meet the

² Licia Do Prado Valladares provides a detailed historical overview of how favelas emerged in her classic anthropological study published as *The Invention of the Favela* (2019). The Portuguese original *A Invenção da Favela: Do Mito de Origem a Favela* was published in 2005.

housing needs of working-class people and the urban poor, “and actors in the informal sector stood ready to extract profit from their ability to control access to terrain” (McCann, 2014, p. 22).

Today, there exist around 1,000 favelas across the city of Rio de Janeiro that are characterized by great diversity with regard to the number of residents, geographical conditions, the level of public services available, the socio-economic and security situation, etc. The variety makes it challenging to agree on a common definition. Geographically, favelas and peripheral neighborhoods grew differently in Rio de Janeiro compared to other cities. They were originally built on the steep hills in the city’s South to house the urban poor, freed slaves and migrants, but they are not slums or the only areas with poor residents. In Rio, there are neighborhoods that are poor but are not favelas. In addition, favelas have changed fundamentally over the last decades. To identify a neighborhood as a favela means to contrast it with the “formal” parts of the city. While there is some degree of truth in the sharp distinction between formal and informal, *favela* and *asfalto*, that exists in public opinion, the binary understanding is oversimplifying and suggests two opposed, homogenous entities, which cannot capture what characterizes Rio as an urban space (McCann, 2014, p. 21).

It is important to emphasize, however, that favelas are not simply at the “receiving end” of policies. Despite naturalized racial hierarchies that shape the city’s social geography and political power, Rio de Janeiro’s urbanization has not only produced spatial and social segregation in the city. The anthropologist Jaime Amparo Alves states, for example, “that black urbanity is lived through diverse practices and that black urban life is more than tragedies and suffering” (2018, p. 44; see also Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021; Reyes-Carranza, 2021a). In addition to (re)producing social inequality and oppression, power relations shaped by coloniality also create opportunities for favela residents to claim their right to the city and their right to citizenship. Favelas are spaces with a high degree of self-organization and a strong sense of community; with collective action, residents have creatively replaced everyday urban services not provided by the government and have successfully resisted many demolitions and forced removals (L.M. Barbosa & Coates, 2021; Williamson, 2017). The urban fabric in favelas is a model for grassroots approaches to urban planning. They offer a couple of characteristics that urban planners regard as sustainable, such as “affordable housing in central areas, housing near work, low-rise/high-density construction, mixed-use developments, pedestrian-first roads, high use of bicycles and transit, organic (flexible) architecture, high degree of collective action” (Williamson, 2017, p. 60).

According to James Holston, speeded-up urbanization from 1950 to 1980 was one of the main drivers of “a democratically organized mass political citizenship” (2007, p. 107) in Brazil, in addition to women’s suffrage and electoral democracy or democratization, respectively. Brazil transformed into an urban nation during that time; most Brazilians lived in cities and formulated an independent political citizenship, enhanced by the “unprecedented access to primary education, mass media, market consumption, and above all property ownership, precisely for those poor Brazilians who had always been excluded from these fundamental means of achieving citizen standing” (ibid., p. 108; see also Battaus & Oliveira, 2016). The urban poor taking advantage of their situation and using it as a way to fight for their rights is called insurgent urbanism or citizenship; everyday life is a key arena for favela residents to engage in political struggles, where they fight for security, urban infrastructure and basic rights. Thereby, they create a form of citizenship that goes beyond a legal status and is enacted in other spaces than where citizenship is typically imagined to take place (Holston, 1995, 2007, 2009). The relationship between the state and the civil society in favelas is not clear-cut, as there exist alternative narratives of favelas as urban spaces, how they are made and how they function (Huq, 2020; Miraftab, 2009, 2018; Montuori, 2022). The fight over their territories favela residents need to engage in is also a struggle to claim a space in the city that they are entitled to (Bastia & Montero Bressán, 2018; Holston, 2007; Maziviero, 2016). For example, bottom-up security practices and peace formation is driven by local activists and community organizers. In addition to top-down security policies implemented by the state, grassroots favela actors pursue their own avenues to reduce violence, raise awareness and change the societal perception of favelas as violent and dangerous (Buer, 2022a, 2022b). That is, violence and fear of violence are not necessarily reasons for inaction. Despite high levels of violence and insecurity, residents and community organizers decide to engage in different forms of resistance and activism because they have a great interest in departing from the violence that shapes their everyday lives (Borneman, 2002; Zulver, 2023).

2.2.1 *Favela*: Proximity and Distance

Favelas represent the naturalization of spatialized racial hierarchies; inhabited predominantly by Black, impoverished populations—the undesired urban “Other”—favelas and their residents are vital for the functioning of Rio’s political economy. With their emergence, favelas were seen as a rural phenomenon that had little in common with the tropical Paris envisioned by the *white* elites. At the beginning of the 20th century, the city underwent a period of extensive urban renewal, and the remaining urban relics from colonial times were

demolished. For the working-class and poor urban dwellers, the remodeling of central Rio meant that their housing was demolished for the sake of building grand avenues and squares, leaving very few alternatives for affordable housing and making favelas necessary for housing the urban poor (Brandão, 2006; Robinson, 2006). Favelas did not disappear, nor could their emergence be contained, despite many different policy efforts throughout the last century. The forced removal of favelas dramatically increased during the right-wing military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985 when the “favela problem” was sought to be resolved through forced removal and violent police operations. During these two decades, many favelas were demolished, and tens of thousands of residents were relocated. The tolerance and encouragement of violence consolidated a system of police violence perpetrated against marginalized populations. But favelas were also spaces of successful mobilization against the military dictatorship not only in Rio but across Brazil (Freeman, 2012; McCann, 2014, pp. 4–6). Until the end of the dictatorship, the project of urban renewal was informed by the narrative of *higienização*, the “ideal of a rationally ordered and ‘hygienic’ city in the European model” (L.M. Barbosa & Coates, 2021, p. 1). After the dictatorship ended, the ambition to erase favelas was dropped because the favela populations constituted one-third of the voters in the new democracy. And indeed, the gratification to finally be able to vote resulted in a high turnout of 80 percent in the first democratic election for president after the dictatorship (Holston, 2007, p. 106). Yet the government remained unresponsive to the police brutality and the violence of criminals and armed gangs favela residents faced on an everyday basis. For example, under the administration of Wellington Moreira Franco, governor of the state of Rio from 1987 to 1991, the number of police operations in favelas increased drastically, and police violence amplified with them (Arias, 2006, p. 29; Perlman, 2010, p. 40). The state’s response to increasing social suffering and impoverishment was deploying even more police to already disenfranchised neighborhoods and incarcerating their populations. Hyperpoliced, racialized communities provided access to Black bodies for mass incarceration, constituting what Alves calls “the favela-prison pipeline” (2018).

Already during the dictatorship, drug cartels started filling the power vacuum in favelas left by the state. While *milicias*, parastatal militias, exist since the time of the dictatorship, they only rose to serious power within the last two decades. The first drug gang emerged already in the 1970s. Common prisoners and members of (armed) political groups were imprisoned in the same prison unit on Ilha Grande, just 140 kilometers west of Rio. The common prisoners learned from the political prisoners how to organize and care for themselves, enforcing discipline within the prison unit *Galeria B* and thereby creating the foundation to form prison

gangs. Upon their release, the former prisoners could consolidate their influence in Rio de Janeiro, especially in the favelas. The earliest of these gangs was the *Comando Vermelho (CV)*, and its influence subsequently spread to other prisons as inmates were transferred (Amar, 2003; Arias, 2006, pp. 28–29; Penglase, 2008). Manguinhos, for example, is historically dominated by the *CV* (M. Cavalcanti, 2013, p. 208). After the mid-1980s, drug gangs established their control in the favelas, which are ideal locations for the drug trade because of their often steep hills, especially in the *Zona Sul* (South Zone), and the narrow, winding pathways. They also have convenient logistical features, as they often are in proximity to important routes into the city or, in the case of the South Zone, are located right next to the wealthy and touristy neighborhoods. Today, Rio de Janeiro is a center of drug trade in Latin America. The public face of drug trafficking in the city is the male, young, Black favela resident that also determines the state’s policies against the drug trade. The drug trade in Rio is dominated by four factions (*facções*): *Comando Vermelho (CV)*, Red Command), the oldest and largest one, *Comando Vermelho Jovem (CVJ)*, Young Red Command), *Amigos dos Amigos (ADA)*, Friends of Friends) and *Terceiro Comando (TC)*, Third Command), which emerged as an opposition to the *CV*. Drug gangs are part of the complex web of organizations that govern favelas, besides *associações de moradores* (residents’ associations), religious groups and NGOs. However, it is first and foremost the drug traffickers who enforce and police the social order in their “parallel states” (Arias, 2006, pp. 31–35; Perlman, 2009).

Security in favelas is complex; over time, different (armed) actors have sought to install territorial control. In the last 20 years, the emergence of armed militias has been the biggest change in Rio’s favelas across the city and especially in the *Zona Oeste*. The percentage of favelas controlled by militias is estimated at 58 percent (Perlman, 2009; Pope, 2022b, 2022a). *Milicias* consist of “self-appointed, off-duty or retired policemen [who] take ‘law and order’ into their own hands – sometimes in opposition to ‘the traffic’ (drug trade), sometimes in complicity with it” (Perlman, 2009, p. 53). Armed actors’ official competition and covert complicity and corruption with authorities and economic actors is thus also a part of the violence-stricken everyday reality of favela residents. In comparison to drug gangs, however, the scholarly interest in the phenomenon of militias has been comparatively small (Pope, 2020, 2022b, 2022a).

What favelas and urban peripheries have in common, generally speaking, is the stigma that rests upon their residents, as well as criminalization and dehumanization. As McCann (2014, p. 2) points out, “the only thing that today’s Vidigal [a favela in the South Zone of Rio] has in

common with the same neighborhood in 1978 is the absence of property title and the continuing discrimination against its residents, yet everyone still recognizes it as a favela”. That is, there is great diversity among favelas. For example, there is a great economic divide between Rio’s *Zona Sul* and *Zona Norte*, the first generally being wealthier than the latter. Even favelas are not exempted from this division, as favelas in the North and West are usually poorer than in the South. In other words, *favela* and *asfalto* are interrelated with regard to their spatial proximity, with favelas crawling up the steep hills of the wealthy neighborhoods in the *Zona Sul*, and their economic codependency. Favelas “play a vital role in the workings of the city” and are firmly incorporated into the system “but in a perversely asymmetrical manner” (Perlman, 2010, p. 148). While the class disparities are wide and even intensifying, the wealthier classes depend on access to the cheap labor of the urban poor (Brandão, 2006; Bruno Carvalho, 2013; L.C. de Q. Ribeiro & Santos Junior, 2017). In her outstanding empirical in-depth study of life in favelas spanning more than 40 years, Janice Perlman (2010) showed how the marginalization of the urban poor has deepened and the stigma of race, class and place persists despite improvements with regard to urban services. Favela residents remain “pseudo citizens” despite their vital role in the functioning of the city’s economic system; racism and classism restrict their right to the city. Since their emergence and throughout their existence, favelas and their residents have been painted as the opposite of the formal city, as a danger to the “city of privilege” (ibid., p. 26), and they have, therefore, been exposed to displacement and demolition. The stigmatization as unsanitary and backward, the denial of rights and the cheap labor favela residents conveniently offered for the *white* society characterize the wish to perpetuate a society that rests upon a political-economic structure of slavery (Williamson, 2017, pp. 58–59).

Sabrina Villenave argues (2018, 2022) that the socio-economic structure of the plantation during the times of slavery is replicated in Brazil’s contemporary socio-economic structure and feeds into today’s notions of race. Favelas are the continuation of the slave quarters, and mass incarceration is a contemporary means of controlling Black populations (see also Alves, 2018, pp. 117–120). This also becomes brutally visible in the racist practices of disappearances and police killings concentrated in the favelas of Brazil, following a colonial logic of governmentality. Rio’s urban fabric is characterized by the many favelas that are tightly woven into the wealthy neighborhoods. This spatial structure enables about 30 percent of favela residents to work as domestic servants, gardeners and doormen in the homes of the wealthy class (Villenave, 2022, pp. 141–145). Black women, for example, are the lowest-paid

group in Brazil's labor market. Many of them work as domestic workers and embody the myth of the "Black mothers" who actually were enslaved Black women without any rights and a fixed part of the middle-class family ideal. They spend their entire lives serving; they are the "gem" of the bourgeois family, which they never become part of. As such, they represent the nostalgia for slavery in Brazil (Lovell, 2006; Roncador, 2008; J.C. Teixeira, 2020).

2.2.2 Urban Security Transformations and Violent Security

Throughout their existence, favelas have been framed as "security problems" in various ways. Today, the repressive state apparatus seeks to implement law and order and regain control over Black territories by invoking the historical stigma and fear of the favela as dangerous and criminal (Vargas, 2013; Wacquant, 2008). In addition to forced removals and police operations, the state implements patronizing policies in the name of protection, including hygiene and sanitation as well as environmental protection. Sanitization policies date back to the first half of the 20th century, with a sanitation campaign realized as early as 1907; however, viewing favelas as unsanitary is still implied in the dominant representations of favelas (Valladares, 2019, pp. 16–18). Protecting lives in favelas from environmental hazards serves as justification for implementing removal policies. This was particularly fueled after April 2010, when floods and landslides caused one of the biggest environmental disasters in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The tragic incident provided a welcome opportunity for authorities to enforce favela clearance in the name of risk assessment and protecting lives (L.M. Barbosa & Coates, 2021; L.M. Barbosa & Walker, 2020). While serious problems with violence, environmental risks and a lack of urban sanitation and access to clean water exist in favelas, state policies utilize these issues to justify the demolition of favelas and the forced relocation of their residents. Paternalistic measures that aim to protect favela residents from themselves—from the violence of "their" drug gangs and their built environment choices that expose them to environmental risks—coincide with depriving them of basic urban services and citizenship rights, leaving favela residents vulnerable and exposed to governmental arbitrariness.

To keep up with the times, politicians and authorities had to find new ways of weaving security into favela policies. With the emergence of the entrepreneurial ideology in urban development, security policies were integrated into programs that aimed at the formalization, modernization and beautification of favelas. Already after "the shift from Fordist industry to

business services as the main economic motor of the metropolis has shattered the material basis of the black American ghetto and the Brazilian favela alike” (Wacquant, 2008, p. 67), there was a need for a fundamental economic reorganization. In the 1980s and 1990s, Rio was unattractive for investments, leading to a period of urban crisis and the *Cidade Maravilhosa* falling behind other, more lucrative cities in the inter-urban competition to attract global capital (M.A. Richmond & Garmany, 2016). In the 1990s, slum upgrading was discovered as a (well-intentioned) housing policy instrument to get poverty under control and pave the way for a series of sports mega-events the city was hosting (Becerill Miranda, 2015, pp. 210–212; Gay, 2009; M.A. de F. Nogueira & Cola, 2018). The city has made several attempts to beautify the territories that are in the way of its entrepreneurial approach to urban development, with urbanization programs such as the favela-upgrading program *Favela-Bairro* in the 1990s, the 2007 growth-acceleration program PAC (*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento*) and the 2010 program *Morar Carioca*. However, even after extensive urbanization programs, “there is little doubt as to where the *asfalto* (pavement) ends and the *morro* begins” (Perlman, 2010, p. 30, original emphasis). The ideology of entrepreneurial urbanism aiming for a city’s remake and the language of “modernization” and “progress” render invisible the racism that underpins urban planning practices, which leads to further marginalization of urban poor populations. Urban realities that do not fit into the picture of a competitive city, which promises to attract investments and enhance economic development, because they are poor or visually unappealing are beautified, disciplined, hidden or displaced (Broudehoux, 2016; Gaffney, 2016). Ultimately, although public investments in predominantly Black and poor neighborhoods are highly needed, such state expenditures have proven to do “little to challenge the historical investment in White property and White access to the city and its benefits” (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022, p. 18).

A focus on urban redevelopment did not mean, however, that the municipality (*Prefeitura*) and the state government of Rio de Janeiro desisted from militarized security policies directed at favelas. On the contrary, security policies and urban development were integrated and formed a new way of policing Black populations. Today, Brazil is facing a new military urbanism (Graham, 2011) that treats the city as a war zone. The use of war tactics and strategies against urban disorder, such as constant surveillance, access control and territorial occupation, is ever more present. Favela residents face armed invasions and the normalization of militarized occupations of their living spaces and everyday lives (Amar, 2003; Cardoso, 2019; Fahlberg, 2018; Pauschinger, 2023; L. de M. Rocha, 2019). The turn to urban

revitalization was accelerated by the systematic incorporation of sports mega-events into urban development agendas. They were expected to create new investment opportunities and catalyze economic development to leave behind the image of a “Third-World city” (M.A. Richmond & Garmany, 2016). The period of mega-event hosting, particularly the 2014 FIFA Men’s World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics, is key to Rio de Janeiro’s recent urban development. The city seized the chance for a neoliberal reorganization of the city utilizing mega-event investments (Barbassa, 2017; Pauschinger, 2020b). Central to the pursuit of a hypermodern city image through mega-events and other gigantic, futuristic urbanization projects was “to hide and to undermine the spatialised history of the transatlantic slave trade” (Friendly & Pimentel Walker, 2022, p. 1180).

Rio was turned down as Olympic host twice because of major security concerns. It thus became a “political priority for the city to overcome its hyper-violent reputation and rebrand itself as a desirable, international tourist destination” (Rekow, 2016, p. 4). One of the most important legacies of this time was certainly the creation of a new police unit in 2008, the *Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora (UPP, Pacifying Police Unit)*. Initially, the idea behind the Pacifying Police Units was to reduce drug trafficking in favelas through proximity policing, which usually aims at the police’s approximation to the respective community, building a closer relationship between the police and the policed (Denyer Willis, 2017; Pinto & Do Carmo, 2016; Vilarouca et al., 2021). As of 2008, the UPPs were implemented in certain favelas that were of strategic importance for Rio to increase their appeal for tourism or had particularly high levels of violence (see Figure 1). The “pacification” of favelas was part of a wider urbanization strategy; however, many favela residents, security experts and activists raised concerns that the militaristic approach of the UPPs, consisting of operations of the military police and the subsequent permanent occupation of UPPs, would not be sufficient to “integrate” favelas into the formal city (M. Cavalcanti, 2013; L. de M. Rocha, 2019; L. de M. Rocha & Carvalho, 2018; Vilarouca et al., 2021). They were worried about the “regulation of collective life during the transition to another ‘regime’, with the possible end of the supposed domination of local drug trafficking groups” (L. de M. Rocha & Carvalho, 2018, p. 911, my translation). Despite the UPP having been originally planned as a form of community policing project, though vaguely defined, the social program, the so-called *UPP Social*, was abandoned soon. Without the *UPP Social*, the UPP failed to incorporate new actors and basically turned into a (military) police project (Cano et al., 2012). The installation of UPPs remained controversial as the further militarization of everyday life by a heavily armed

military police unit did not break with the historical connotations of the military police with human rights violations, the harassment of residents and unlawful killings (Fahlberg, 2018; Hoff & Blanco, 2020; L. de M. Rocha, 2019). Furthermore, the implementation of UPPs symbolically stands for a broader conceptualization of “historical and contemporary efforts by (neo)colonial and capitalist states to suppress conflict and subdue unruly, marginalised populations” (M.A. Richmond, 2021, p. 2). Ultimately, the logic of pacifying Black neighborhoods justifies the permanent occupation of favelas, exerting militarized control to get a grip on organized drug trafficking and turning certain urban spaces into literal war zones, in which the state of emergency becomes the norm (Pauschinger, 2023; L.C. de Q. Ribeiro & Santos Junior, 2017).

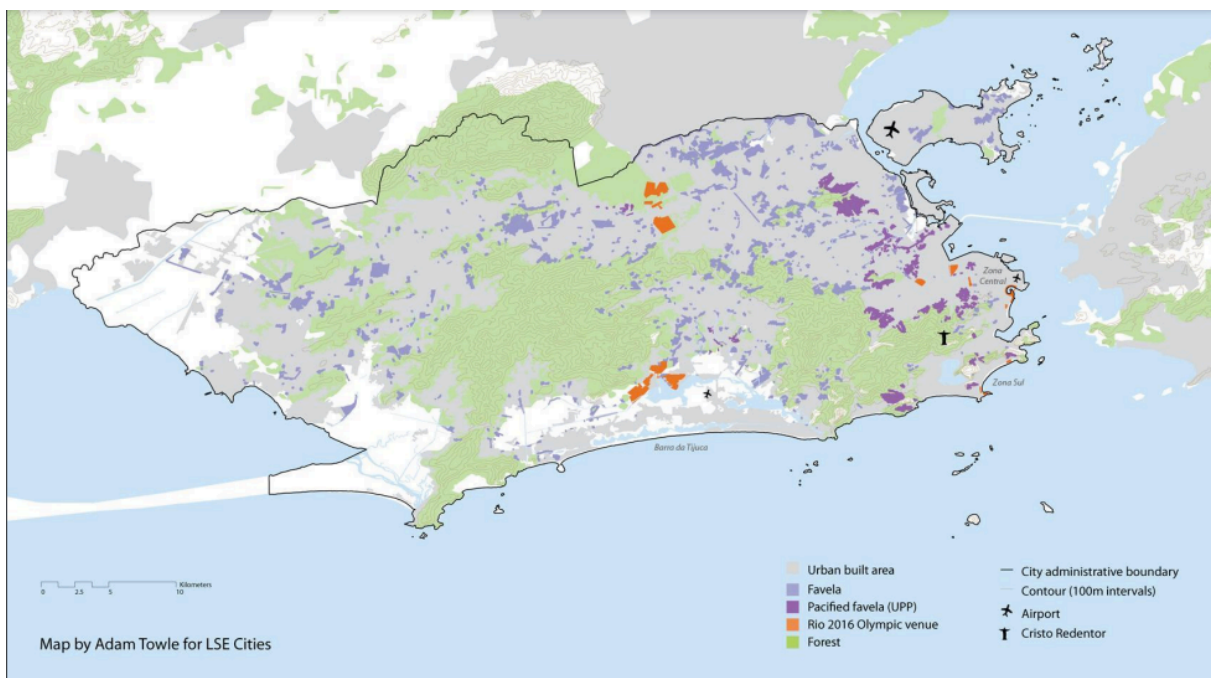


Figure 1: Map of favelas in Rio de Janeiro (Source: Adam Towle / LSE Cities)

I regard the integration of security governance and urban redevelopment policies as a continuation of the historical criminalization of Black populations and their exclusion from the *white* spaces of the city. It expresses the need to adapt the control of Black territories to contemporary forms of governance. Following Giorgio Agamben, Carlos Vainer (2011) calls the redefinition of power relations the *cidade de exceção* (city of exception), where stakeholders like sports federations that are not democratically legitimized hold a lot of power, which allows them to evade certain laws and human rights. Exceptions made for powerful economic interests are typical of neoliberal (urban) governance. Ultimately, Vainer argues, even states can circumvent legal protocol, for example, for sports mega-event

preparations (see also Freeman, 2012; M.A. Richmond & Garmany, 2016). The state of emergency rendered permanent also allows for the “physical elimination [...] of entire categories of citizens” (Sánchez, 2018, p. 181). These are not side effects but politically desired and intended outcomes of this new kind of urban policies that rely on image reconstruction to attract tourism and capital. In order to keep up with the ideal of Western cities, Rio de Janeiro went to great lengths to visually and physically exclude “the poor, the black, the homeless, and the ‘unmodern’” (Broudehoux, 2016, p. 114). The mega-event-driven urban renewal policies did thus not only contribute to the further exclusion of already marginalized Black and poor populations but also actively perpetuated historical colonial patterns of anti-Blackness rationalized with narratives of progress and economic development (Amar, 2013; Vargas, 2013). Embedded within this ideology of hypermodernity is the erasure of Black experiences, histories and space-making through urban planning. For example, during construction works for the 2016 Olympics, mass graves of slaves were discovered. However, they were not turned into memorial sites but into the Olympic media village (Blakemore, 2016; Watts & Gross, 2016). Furthermore, the port area was revitalized as Porto Maravilha with a public-private partnership; the massive redevelopment project ultimately retold the port’s history and its key importance for the slave trade. In 2011, during the revitalization of the port district, the archeological site Cais do Valongo (Valongo Wharf) was unearthed and later declared a UNESCO world heritage site. It is estimated that up to 900,000 enslaved Africans were trafficked to the Americas via Cais do Valongo. The wharf is not only material evidence of a logistics hub that was key to upholding the Atlantic slave trade but also a symbol of how violence against Black bodies is an essential part of Rio’s history. However, as Victoria Adams states, “The fenced-off paving stones that comprise Valongo Wharf today provide little sense that this corner of Rio de Janeiro’s port area has long served as a dynamic site of racialised and exclusionary capital accumulation” (2021, p. 696; see also M. Lima, 2018; Vassallo & Cicalo, 2015). While, in general, Rio de Janeiro has attempted to hide spatial evidence of the history of slavery since its abolition, the Cais do Valongo is an example of the manipulation of “the entrenched histories of Black Brazilians in Rio’s port for touristic consumption” (Friendly & Pimentel Walker, 2022, p. 1179; see also Reyes-Carranza, 2021a).

Even years after the Olympic Games, urban security governance in Rio de Janeiro clings obstinately to the concept of the state of emergency. For example, combating drug trafficking in favelas is framed as a *guerra às drogas*, a language that legitimizes the further

militarization of security and urban warfare. Lethality is accepted as inevitable and proof of police efficiency despite raging violence against young Black men from poor backgrounds (Ferrugem, 2020; Graham, 2011; Leite, 2012). The hyperfocus on the “state of exception” in favelas “draws attention away from the structural inequality and racism of the colonial city and its failure or unwillingness to provide genuine social development and public services” (Buer, 2022a, p. 154). The long-standing connection of urban development and security governance makes it almost impossible to design different approaches to improve the living conditions in favelas.

Also the most recent attempt of the state of Rio de Janeiro to modernize Black territories, *Cidade Integrada* (Integrated City) was initiated by the military occupation of selected favelas (Santos Filho, 2022). As of 2022, the program was supposed to improve the living conditions in six of the city’s favelas within a year, for example, Manguinhos and Jacarezinho in northern Rio. It includes the construction of new housing, the cleaning of the rivers Salgado and Jacaré and the installation of a new battalion of the *Polícia Militar*, among others (Governo do Estado Rio de Janeiro, n.d.). The program even promised to give land titles to the favela residents where it was taking place. Police operations conducted by the military police are an integral part of the program’s implementation, which many associate with the beginnings of the Pacifying Police Units (T. Lima, 2022; Magalhães & Schmidt, 2022; Santos Filho, 2022). The initiation of the *Cidade Integrada* program was accompanied by critique and the fear that, in effect, it would just be more of the same, basically reactivating the UPP, a policy that led to an intensive militarization of everyday life in many favelas. The Integrated City program could just repeat the promise of public policies that is ultimately conflated into continuous police operations and permanent police occupation. That is, even in 2022, public policies directed at favelas strongly emphasize the role of military and civil police, which rigidifies the stigma of favelas as the “criminal other”, as Black violent territories that need to be policed with extensive force. Already four months after the launching of *Cidade Integrada* in Jacarezinho, the residents made clear that the promised improvements did not arrive. While, for example, the basic sanitation and canalization projects have not been initiated, the presence of military police and reports of abusive behavior, human rights violations and the random invasion of private homes overshadow the program’s objectives. Even the initiative *Observatório Cidade Integrada* (Integrated City Observatory) was founded in order to monitor police violence and collect data. In an RJ2 report, a resident stated: “The police enter. They go on a rampage. They come all masked. We are human beings, not animals” (M.

Teixeira & Alves, 2022, own translation).

Regardless of the policy directed at favelas—upgrading, demolition or removal—new favelas were growing. While the city’s favela residents have been “othered” as the dangerous class since their emergence, the perception of favelas and *favelados* as the source of all the evil associated with violence and crime in the city intensified in the mid-1980s when the location of favelas in the international drug trade was a constant challenge for the police. The spatial proximity of favela residents to drug traffickers was translated as complicity; if they were not *bandidos* (bandits) themselves, they were at least *quase bandidos*—basically criminals, as opposed to the good citizens living outside the favela. During this time, the stigma against them and the fear of living close to them increased drastically. As a result of this framing, the war metaphor emerged, a path-breaking way to justify public security policies that rely on violent confrontation, militarization and mass killings. Favela residents, *quase bandidos*, as part of the dangerous classes, are treated as internal enemies of the city’s public security (Arias, 2006, pp. 27–30; Leite, 2012; Oosterbaan & van Wijk, 2015; Perlman, 2010, pp. 1–23).

During these decades, the youth homicide epidemic or genocide of the Black youth has grown into a massive problem for Brazil, yet the public outrage is considerably small. The narrative *bandido bom é bandido morto morto* (a good criminal is a dead criminal), the framing of the *guerra às drogas* in favelas and the sensationalist media reporting that often broadcasts police operations live on television contribute to a normalization of these incredibly high levels of lethal violence that have favelas in a chokehold. It is evident that by equating favelas with violence, the alleged war on drugs does not merely target traffickers and their networks but whole neighborhoods. Favelas are “treated as domestic ‘war zones’ harboring an alien population stripped of the normal protections and privileges of the law” (Wacquant, 2008, p. 70).

The image of the *bandido* is constructed through public morality, police and criminal laws and rests upon the firm foundations of the colonial dehumanization of Black men and the myth of Black male violence (Amar, 2003; Misse, 2010). The *bandido* “is not just any criminal subject but a ‘special’ subject, so to speak, one whose death or disappearance can be widely desired” (Misse, 2010, p. 17, own translation). The criminal activities of the *bandido* trigger “the most repulsive moral feelings”, which is why he deserves “the harshest punishment: [...] the desire for his definitive incapacitation by physical death” (ibid., own translation). It is important to emphasize that the stigma of being a bandit does not require any

proof of actual crime. It is imposed on Black favela residents because poverty is criminalized (Barcellos & Barreto, 2017; L.F. de Oliveira, 2019; Viana & Chaves, 2016). Incidentally, poverty as such is not neutral but has been feminized in recent decades, particularly in cities. The growing percentage of households led by women is an urban phenomenon, particularly in low-income, marginalized areas. When women take over the lead of the household, for example, due to separation, many of them become impoverished. An additional factor for the feminization of poverty in urban Brazil is women's overrepresentation in the informal work sector and their already low socio-economic status (V. de Souza et al., 2020; Ipea et al., 2011; J.M. Silva, 2007).

To this day, favelas remain spaces where predominantly Afro-Brazilian populations who do not have access to full citizenship and land live. The stigmatized status of favelas and their dwellers as deviant, dangerous and criminal remains the main focus in urban security governance and urban redevelopment programs. This perpetuates historical inequalities along the lines of race and class and feeds into a cycle of urban violence, in which police and armed actors fight over territorial control at the expense of the residents. Favelas emerged out of the necessity to house former slaves and their descendants who migrated to the city at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The historical and continuous exclusion of Black populations has created favelas as distinct spaces for controlling the life and death of Black and Brown Brazilians. Gendered anti-Black violence emerges from a “necropolitical spatiality” (Alves, 2018, p. 56) that produces social life in favelas and urban peripheries and provides the legitimization for a macabre security governance that seeks to conquer Black “uncivilized” territories (see also Hutta, 2022; C.A. Smith, 2016). Today, the state of exception created by extensive mega-event hosting and the so-called war on drugs characterize everyday life in the favelas; urban warfare and a militarized security apparatus predominantly victimize poor Black men whose deaths are legitimized through narratives of the dangerous racialized “Other” (Buer, 2022a; Pauschinger, 2020b; L.C. de Q. Ribeiro & Santos Junior, 2017).

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TOWARD A FEMINIST, DECOLONIAL THEORY OF URBAN (IN)SECURITY

From the previous chapter, it has become clear that favelas in Rio de Janeiro are produced as particular urban spaces where, on the one hand, bodies racialized as Black and gendered as male are criminalized and penalized and, on the other hand, the suffering, the lethality and the extreme insecurities of favela residents are normalized and invisibilized. As Denise Ferreira da Silva puts it, essentially, “raciality immediately justifies the state’s decision to kill certain persons—mostly (but not only) young men and women of colour—in the name of self-preservation. Such killings do not unleash an ethical crisis because these persons’ bodies and the territories they inhabit always-already signify violence” (2009, p. 213; see also Alves, 2018; Mbembe, 2019). This quote already addresses the underlying concepts of this thesis, and there is a lot to unpack with regard to gender, race, territoriality and the state; violence, security and insecurity are more complex than their most visible impacts, and insecurities, violence and the fear thereof creep into the everyday lives and daily routines of the people exposed to it. Security and insecurity are highly selective; who is worthy of protection and who is not is based on racist, sexist and class-based perceptions of deservingness (R.P. Cavalcanti, 2020; Hume, 2009a; Jenss, 2023a; Sachseder, 2022). I thus argue that, in order to comprehend how (in)security is experienced in Rio’s favelas, we need to theorize security as place-based and the production of space as profoundly shaped by (post)colonial power relations.

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate feminist and decolonial approaches to cities and security in order to develop a theoretical framework. The aim is to advance new ways of thinking about how security and insecurity manifest in everyday urban spaces and how affected populations engage in resistance practices in order to fight violence and create security. At the outset of my elaborations, I want to emphasize that I understand the concepts underlying this theoretical framework as social constructs and not as given in any form. I regard gender, race and class as historically developed ordering principles of this world that inform social hierarchies that are also reflected in a spatial ordering. While assumptions about gender and race fundamentally shape how persons are perceived and how gender and racial

formations become socially effective, they are not fixed biological traits or grounded in nature. As social constructs, society ascribes meaning to them, which is contextual and changes over time (Bertoncello, 2016; Bhambra, 2017; Sjoberg, 2017; Wibben, 2011). That is, I understand the term woman as an identity that is *made* as it is shaped by social norms, values and expectations and contrasted with the term man. What it means to be a woman changes over time and depends on other factors, such as race, class, sexuality, disability and age. The idea of race was constructed as a hierarchization by the colonizers in order to subordinate and exploit the colonized and cement their *white* selves as superior. Yet race, too, does not refer to a genetic basis but to a social construct without biological meaning that shapes human experience (Lugones, 2007, 2010; Mendoza, 2016).

In the following chapter, I will theorize gender, race and class as social categories that are fundamental for granting or denying security and regulating access to urban spaces. These systems of inequality operate in an intersectional way. As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, the significance of race in Brazilian society is still hidden behind the ideological myth of racial democracy. Class is usually privileged over race to explain socio-economic inequalities; “[r]ace is not commonly thought to be the primary source of stigma, nor is it considered the ‘real’ barrier to social mobility” (Roth-Gordon, 2017, p. 9). The intersections of class and race are particularly important because a person’s social status, education and wealth can *whiten* their racial designation. For example, “[a] black doctor [...] would be listed as mulatto [mixed race], while a mulatto with a Ph.D. might be called *moreno claro* (light moreno [Brown]) or white” (Perlman, 2010, p. 170, original emphasis). As Alves argues, “While class may be a proxy for race in places where the poor are predominantly black, an exclusively class-based analysis denies the much broader implications of race in informing state [violence]” (Alves, 2016, p. 230). I do not want to disregard class; however, I privilege the intersections of gender and race in order to carve out how racism fundamentally shapes lived realities in favelas.

I build on the feminist theorization of security and insecurity. Feminist security studies (FSS) utilizes gender analyses in order to understand how security and insecurity find entrance into everyday spaces and routines in gendered ways and, subsequently, shape how people are able to go about their day. In doing so, feminist security researchers express the complexity and ambiguity of security in the notion of (in)security in order to demonstrate how security and insecurity are mutually constitutive (Chisholm & Stachowitsch, 2016; Enloe, 1990; Gentry et al., 2018; Sjoberg, 2010; Stachowitsch, 2019; Väyrynen et al., 2021; Wibben, 2011, 2016a,

2020). Furthermore, FSS has shown how (in)security is intrinsically linked to a (binary) notion of gender and a biologicistic understanding of the term woman, which builds the foundation for who is seen as deserving of protection: The ideal of the typical woman is only granted when she subordinates herself to a man (Young, 2003). However, because of their strong emphasis on gender, FSS scholars have tended to undertheorize the *white* privilege that enables a certain security for some, while it denies security to others (Peterson, 2021; Rutazibwa, 2016).

Yet it is crucial to also pay close attention to race as intersecting with gender in order to understand how security “works”. As I have already mentioned above, these relations of inequality structure how security is imagined to be achieved and at whose expense (Adamson, 2020; Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019; Sachseder et al., 2022; Stachowitsch & Sachseder, 2019; Wibben, 2016b). I draw on decolonial approaches (Bhambra, 2014; Cusicanqui, 2012; Lugones, 2007, 2010; Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2016; Mendoza, 2016, 2018; Mignolo, 2007a, 2007b; Quijano, 2000, 2007) not only to understand how (in)security is produced at the intersections of gender, race and class but also to theorize how cities are organized along the lines of these power relations. Decolonial urban thinkers and geographers have dislocated spatial knowledge production to lived (urban) realities beyond “the West”. They call for a theorization “from below” in order to explain unequal urbanization processes and lived realities, especially of marginalized populations in postcolonial cities (Beebeejaun, 2022; Edensor & Jayne, 2012a; Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021; Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; Robinson, 2003, 2006; Roy, 2011). (Post)colonial power relations operate through the continuous dehumanization of Black and Brown populations, the devaluation of Black territories and their association with poverty and criminality. These power relations are also spatialized, and so is the resistance that aims at dismantling them.

The aim of this thesis is to scrutinize how (in)security operates in urban spaces in (re)producing gendered, racialized and class-based inequalities and how counter-hegemonic practices challenge top-down understandings of security and urbanization. I argue that how insecurity is experienced, what kind of resistance is possible and how security is created depends on the configuration of the particular space (in)security practices take place in. While FSS has dealt with the questions of who is doing security and how it is imagined to a great extent, I develop a perspective on (in)security as grounded in a distinct space. Therefore, I also draw on diverse literature that focuses on different forms of violence and (in)security in marginalized territories and helps to situate specific forms of insecurity in (urban) space. This

includes the work of decolonial feminist geographers, who illuminate how the regulation of space, security and gendered and racialized bodies are closely linked (Lopes-Heimer, 2021, 2022; Zaragocin, 2018a, 2018b, 2021, 2023; Zaragocin & Caretta, 2021), anthropology on Black urban life (Alves, 2014, 2018; Alves & Vargas, 2017; L.O. Rocha, 2012, 2014, 2018; Vargas, 2005a, 2006, 2008; Vargas & Alves, 2010) and an emerging strand of research that advances a spatial theory of conflict, (in)security and peace (Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel, 2016a; Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017, 2021; Blomqvist et al., 2021; Forde et al., 2021; Mannergren Selimovic, 2019, 2022; Olivius & Hedström, 2021). In the following sections, I will integrate these strands of literature through the concept of the everyday, which I utilize in order to connect the questions of how urban space is imagined and regulated and what this means for the security of gendered and racialized subjects. For this project, the everyday is thus not only an empirical reality but also a particular location of security policy and urban governance and thus a pillar of theorization. Simply put, feminist security studies would benefit from a theorization of (urban) space, as would feminist spatial theories from a more nuanced theorization of (in)security.

3.1 Approaching Everyday (In)Securities With Feminist and Decolonial Theory

For a long time, international relations (IR) has provided the disciplinary background against which security was conceptualized and, therefore, has had a lasting influence on how security is thought of and what even counts as a security issue. When IR emerged as a discipline in the early 20th century, it was predominantly preoccupied with the interactions between sovereign nation-states and the question of why wars emerge, and to a high degree, these are still the main subject areas of mainstream IR. Feminist and decolonial IR scholars have criticized that traditional IR theories and methods prove inadequate for an understanding of the lived realities of women but also marginalized communities and minorities. For example, Anievas, Manchanda and Shilliam argue that IR was founded “as a policy science designed to solve the dilemmas posed by empire-building and colonial administration facing the white Western powers expanding into and occupying the so-called ‘waste places of the earth’” (2015, p. 2). Not only have traditional security studies privileged the interests of states located in the so-called Global North while marginalizing perspectives on security and global politics from the so-called Global South. They have also described powerful (Western) states as the only actors that can provide security while presenting their theories as objective, universal and superior

(Adamson, 2020; Agathangelou & Turcotte, 2015; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Chowdhry & Nair, 2004; Gruffydd Jones, 2006; Khalid, 2018).

3.1.1 Security as Gendered

The neglect of gender and power relations in research on security in general does not mean that this work is gender-neutral. Security is hierarchy-producing; these hierarchies and their effects are gendered, racialized and class-based (Blanchard, 2003; Shepherd, 2013; Sjoberg, 2009). Rejecting the idea of security as neutral, security can instead be understood as “a set of power relations and governing regimes that are dynamic but do specific work for capital, colonization and, hence, race-making” (Machold & Charrett, 2021, p. 39). Security is a site where power operates, and it is thus inherently political—as is security scholarship. The politics of security become tangible through the struggle over the meaning of security—how security is constructed, enacted and imagined (Wibben, 2016b). Feminist researchers of numerous disciplines have criticized artificial binaries such as public/private that depoliticize and naturalize all work that is done—mostly by women—in the so-called domestic sphere. The everyday is not simply the other half of high politics, and everyday (reproductive) work done by women is not merely a different form of work that one can choose to ignore or not. Similar to the international political economy relying on women’s unpaid work that is essentialized as feminine or motherly care, naturalized and taken for granted, “international security practice often relies on the invisibility of women” (Sjoberg, 2009, p. 200).

However, the mundane practices of women cannot be disregarded as a less important, less political realm. It has been successfully feminized, “conveniently partitioned off as private space, rendering acts of violence invisible, personal and somehow unrelated to ‘formal’ politics of the state” (Sharp, 2022, p. 2; see also Hyndman, 2019; Massaro & Williams, 2013). Feminist scholars in geography and geopolitics have centered on the everyday routines of women in order to demonstrate that mundane practices are, in fact, indispensable for the workings of global politics. Geographer Gillian Rose argues that “[f]or feminists, the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women” (1993, p. 17). Women’s everyday activities are shaped by what and where society expects them to be and what it expects them to do in different spaces (ibid.).

I thus understand the everyday as localized and grounded in a specific context. While the private sphere is indeed mostly occupied by women, the everyday encompasses private and

public spheres and everything in between—daily commutes, trips to supermarkets and shops, dropping children off at school and picking them up, using public space for demonstrations, leisure or simply spending time there, etc. In the everyday, little, even insignificant, practices take place with which people shape and transform the world they live in (Bertolini, 2006; Hanson, 2010; Hyndman, 2004; Peake et al., 2021; Rose, 1993; Sue Ruddick et al., 2018). In other words, I understand the everyday as a set of practices that create, challenge and reproduce social power relations. The everyday is inhabited and experienced by people who actively, though not necessarily consciously, make everyday practices happen as actors. The everyday is thus dynamic; how people are able to navigate through the everyday is shaped, enabled and constrained by societal power relations and the built environment. Where high levels of insecurity characterize the everyday, navigating under these circumstances means knowing physical places that are safe and identifying dangerous ones but also being aware of who is dangerous and where to obtain protection, among other things. For example, for the racialized “Other”, moving around the everyday is unsafe in many contexts. As I have already explained above, this is not happening accidentally; who is framed as dangerous and whose bodies are associated with violence is informed by race, gender and class (Sachseder et al., 2022; Stachowitsch & Sachseder, 2019; Young, 2003).

Drawing on feminist approaches to security, (in)security is ambiguous and contradictory; it impacts populations in different ways and can mean different things to different people. Security is not an objectifiable, achievable good, nor is it the opposite of insecurity; it thus does not have a predefined meaning but only gets its meaning when security is enacted. When focusing entirely “on the needs of (nation) states, traditional security narratives make it almost impossible to think differently of security” (Wibben, 2011, p. 65), disregarding other forms of security, other places where security is made and insecurities that are produced by the state (see also Parashar, 2016a). Or, rather, everyday productions of security are taken for granted. FSS foregrounds how security is created in the everyday by mundane practices of “normal” people. (In)security can have various meanings, and multiple versions of a security event exist even when a singular security narrative prevails and is presented as the only truth. Critical feminist theorization of security includes manifold (in)securities such as gender-based violence, poverty and economic and ecological destruction as threatening factors for security (Enloe, 2010; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Shepherd, 2013; Sjoberg, 2009; Tickner & Sjoberg, 2021).

(In)security is entrenched in the spaces that it takes place in. It is thus not merely an area of concern for high politics, but it permeates all of society and affects the members of each society in different ways. Moreover, (in)security is created on many different levels; security is not only created top-down, and insecurity is not only produced by other states or “dangerous subjects” from within (Katsikana, 2021; Ocasio & Mullings, 2021; Young, 2003). A state-centered notion of security neglects the perspectives of those who are affected by the implementation of state security policies, “of variously located women, where multiple allegiances lead to intersecting and mutually reinforcing insecurities” (Wibben, 2011, p. 65; see also Zaragocin, 2018a). Paying “close attention to the impact of security policies on the everyday lives of people” (Wibben, 2020, p. 116; see also Chisholm & Stachowitsch, 2016) reveals how war and conflict are not violent events with a starting and end point but permeate everyday life. Conceptualizing violence as a continuum that includes structural violence and violence that characterizes the aftermath of war and conflict lets us understand how the everyday presence of violence structures social relations and social life in general. When a state has ended a war or has signed a peace agreement, violence does not end for everyone. Violence, war and peace are thus not separate stages but closely intertwined (Meger & Sachseder, 2020; Sachseder, 2022; Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004; Shepherd, 2009; Vastapuu, 2018).

What kind of violence is chosen to be problematized and acted against relies heavily on gender, race and class. Dedicated to make the lived realities of women a point of departure for theorizing, feminist scholars from all disciplines challenged academic knowledge production rooted in the experiences of *white* men but disguised as objective and neutral. For example, by foregrounding the question “Where are the women?” (Enloe, 1990), feminist IR scholars have started to analyze international politics through a gender lens. FSS, in particular, demonstrated that security is made in the most commonplace settings and that masculine high politics rely on allegedly private relationships and the indivisibility of women’s unpaid labor, care and security work. Feminist theorization of security problematizes not only narrow definitions of security but also the fact that many foundational theoretical assumptions of security studies in particular, and IR in general, rely on traditional knowledge about gender. Viewing war and security “through a gender lens [...] means seeing how a certain logic of gendered meanings and images helps organize the way people interpret events and circumstances, along with the positions and possibilities for action within them” (Young, 2003, p. 2). That is, FSS understands gender as an ordering principle of the world that informs

who is deemed (un)worthy of protection and who is able to claim the role of the legitimate protector. Masculinity is associated with power, strength and domination, and most importantly, it is seen as the opposite of femininity. It is important to emphasize that (binary) assumptions about gender are not rooted in biology but are socially constructed characteristics that determine societal expectations of how men and women should be.

Within the gendered logic of protection, the protector is masculine in relation to “women and children” (Enloe, 2014, p. 2), who are assigned an obedient, dependent position of subordination; they are seen as weak and agency-less and thus need to be protected. Giving up certain freedoms for a certain promise of security and protection is key to this subordination. While these gendered representations of the protected and the protector are oversimplified and a myth, they are not static but reproduced and contested through everyday interactions. Yet they have material effects on (in)security. Drawing on what I have already said above, it is essential who expresses perceptions, interpretations and needs of security because security, insecurity and threat are not objectively definable. While defining what constitutes a threat might be more obvious in contexts of war—or at least we think so—in many contexts, identifying someone as a threat also brings fundamental insecurities for them. Implementing policies that are supposed to reduce the insecurities of some population groups always produces insecurities for other populations, mostly those already marginalized in society, for example, migrants, sex workers and racialized persons, among others. Who is worthy of protection is legitimized through feminization and paternalistic notions of women’s vulnerability, but this applies only to certain women. That is, women who are “honorable”, *white*, heterosexual and economically privileged (Åse, 2018; Khalid, 2018; Listerborn, 2016; Sachseder et al., 2022). For example, Black women do not benefit from state protection because they will never be able to embody the “heterosexually desirable ‘white femininity’ as the requirement for being one of ‘our’ protected women” (Åse, 2018, p. 274). Black women are not only outside of this scope, but they are also degraded as not fully human and inferior to the default notion of a woman who is racialized as *white*—a dehumanizing colonial legacy (Collins, 1987; Sachseder, 2022).

3.1.2 Security as Gendered and Racialized

Because security studies “has had a close link with the policy interests (and worldviews) of the most powerful” (Adamson, 2020, p. 133), dominant meanings of security are inherently tied to *whiteness*. The continuous reproduction of *whiteness* is necessary to create the illusion

of a state security promise. However, even critical and feminist security studies have tended to neglect race as an ordering principle of the world and have thus normalized *white* experience as universal (Bhambra, 2017; Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019; Sabaratnam, 2011). *White* privilege refers to the “social condition of whiteness” that affords “taken-for-granted benefits and protections [...] to whites” (Bonds & Inwood, 2016, p. 716). Blackness and *whiteness* were violently introduced by the colonizers in order to distance their *white* selves from the colonized “Other”, cementing their own position of superiority through the devaluation of all non-*white* subjects. Race as a socially constructed idea thus refers to a social position rather than a skin color. While the concept of race has changed over time, it remains a form of hierarchization that is co-constituted by gender. That is, not only do security policies target subjects differently, but racism as a state practice denies certain subjects their worthiness of protection entirely and targets them with, for example, routinized police brutality. Their subordination and marginalization considerably benefit the privileged; this becomes visible, for example, in the modern prison system that disproportionately incarcerates Black and Brown people, who are also excessively victimized by lethal police violence (Alves, 2016; Alves & Vargas, 2017; Denyer Willis, 2022; Maldonado-Torres, 2016). In other words, the systematic violation of rights perpetrated through state security is rooted in social and political hierarchies that are co-constituted by race, gender, class and place.

It is important to emphasize that the perpetuation of privilege causes the naturalization and invisibilization of the underlying power relations that maintain socio-economic, political and territorial domination. This is also evident in IR and security studies, as for those who benefit from the system, it remains a choice to see structural inequalities and power relations, constituting what Allan G. Johnson calls the “luxury of obliviousness” (2006, p. 22). Postcolonial and decolonial scholars make us realize that “the liberal assumption of security as the basis of freedom and modern society itself” (Jenss, 2023a, p. 11) is firmly embedded in a logic of modernity and coloniality (see also Adamson, 2020; Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019; Parashar, 2016a). A central argument of decolonial thought is that European modernity is inseparable from the colonial project; one presupposes the other. The narrative of modernity and superiority of rational thought only made possible the brutal subordination and exploitation of the colonized in the first place (Mignolo, 2002). In other words, the European “civilizing mission” never aimed at guaranteeing the human rights the colonizers claimed for

themselves to the colonized subjects. The denial and violation of rights still unfold today in contemporary forms of governance and policing (Mendoza, 2018).

Aníbal Quijano (see, e.g., 2000) describes the gendered and racialized hegemonic power relations that emerged during colonialism as the modernist project was established and continue to structure global inequalities as coloniality of power. While colonialism denotes a specific historical phenomenon, coloniality “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). As Nelson Maldonado-Torres argues elsewhere (2016), colonialism is an event in the past, whereas coloniality is the legacy of colonization that has penetrated and transformed local social relations by violently implementing colonial hierarchical power structures. Thus, coloniality outlasts colonialism beyond the abolition of slavery and the independence from colonial rule. Decoloniality, in this sense, is the process of breaking these hierarchical structures that dehumanize the colonized.

That is, racism and *white* supremacy are not “an unfortunate cultural artifact” (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019, p. 4) but a global system of oppression and expropriation. Race is further fundamental for assigning or denying the status of being human (Peterson, 2021; Rutazibwa, 2016; Stachowitsch & Sachseder, 2019). Human security implicitly draws on a certain notion of what “being human” means. The violent implementation of the “civilizing mission” through colonialism legitimized the systematic terror, brutal exploitation and sexual violation of the colonial “Other” (see, e.g., Fanon, 1963), who were denied the status of human beings. Indigenous people, enslaved Africans and their descendants were classified as uncivilized, non-human and subordinated to the colonizer, who was classified as civilized, fully human and thus “fit for rule” (Lugones, 2010, p. 743, see also 2007). While race is not a fixed category, regimes of dehumanization, oppression and exploitation of the formerly colonized have also been transformed into contemporary forms that perpetuate gendered and racialized hierarchies (Wolfe, 2016).

Decolonial scholars have theorized that the ideal notion of the human being is *white* (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007b) and male (Lugones, 2010; Mendoza, 2016). Colonized men were dehumanized as overly aggressive, “animalistic” and thus dangerous, which, to this day, justifies their continuous lower social, political and economic status. While, today, their subordination is not enforced by the colonizer, it is maintained by (post)colonial power relations that are, for example, incorporated into “modern” forms of

governance and policing. Those who are wild and “bestial” do not need protection; others need to be protected from them. This creates gendered and racialized hierarchies with regard to whom to protect and also serves as a legitimation for responding to the “dangerous other” with (brutal) force; bodies gendered as male and racialized as Black and Brown are treated in a punitive way in the name of security. Embedded in this logic is that when Black neighborhoods are riddled with violence or when Black and Brown populations represent the majority of those incarcerated, society or politics do not feel compelled to act because if Black populations were less criminal or less violent, they would be able to live their lives in peace (Alves & Vargas, 2017; Runyan & Peterson, 2014).

Historicizing not only race but also gender as co-constitutive and a marker of difference between the colonized and the colonizers is an important and persistent critique of feminist decolonial scholars (C. de L. Costa, 2013, 2016; Lugones, 2007, 2010; Mendoza, 2016, 2018; Mohanty, 2003; Parashar, 2016a; Walsh, 2016). Decolonial feminists argue that a binary gender logic and hegemonic heteronormativity were violently enforced by colonial regimes and created a global system of power. To establish colonial rule, not only the invention of the colonized was crucial but also the disruption of existing social patterns and the enforcement of gender dualism as a vehicle for devaluation and subordination (Bhambra, 2014). Colonized subjects were denied their gender by the colonizers; gender was only conceded to the “civilized”, hence, the colonizers. Women who were excluded from the ideal of the *white* bourgeois woman were not only subordinated; they were also seen to be animals, hypersexual and promiscuous. They were “sexually marked as female, but without the characteristics of femininity” (Lugones, 2007, pp. 202–203). Not being granted the status of a woman or a man is equivalent to not being human at all and justified the violence the colonizers exerted for centuries. This strategy of devaluation leaves colonized women without femininity which is essential for being seen as worthy of protection. Moreover, it makes their bodies available for the colonizers’ sexual gratification. Their fertility was considered a source for the multiplication of slave labor; even today, Black women being seen as providing cheap workforce is a persisting colonial representation (Mendoza, 2016; Ota, 2021; J.C. Teixeira, 2020).

Considering the colonial imposition of a binary, heterosexual gender relation is thus crucial to understand racialized and gendered violence against Black populations today and the lack of a public outcry over the disproportionate and overly brutal violence. Security, risk and protection are infused with dehumanizing stereotypes that determine who is not worthy of

surviving and against whom it is justified to exercise coercion forcefully. Maldonado-Torres argues that “[k]illability’ and ‘rapeability’ are inscribed into the images of the colonial bodies” (2007, p. 255). Those who are not seen as (fully) human will thus never be able to achieve a certain security as coloniality continues to unfold. This is also true for times of peace and, as I will show later, contexts of urban conflict, where spaces of peace and violence are dynamically intertwined and exist next to each other (Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017, p. 3). For instance, mass incarceration, (lethal) police violence and forced disappearances reveal “the often obfuscated relation between Black subjugation and white protection by the law” (Alves & Vargas, 2017, p. 259). This social logic that encourages racism as a state practice is crucial to grasp what prevents Black populations from receiving security; Black subjugation and death inherently benefit *white* populations (ibid.). That is, through the coloniality of power, Blackness is to be eliminated not only in times of brutal imperialist projects but also in times of peace. Achille Mbembe conceptualizes the use of social and political power to “dictate who is able to live and who must die” (2019, p. 66) as necropolitics. Simply put, as state security policies do not aim at securing Black life, ending violence against and ensuring peace for Black populations, it is not considered problematic when violence erupts in post-war or conflict settings. The implementation of a “militarized peace” (Meger & Sachseder, 2020), which is reflected in high levels of violence in times of alleged peace, can be found in many settings, including in post-war El Salvador (Hume, 2008, 2009a), in Colombia after the peace deal (Jenss, 2023a; Sachseder, 2020, 2022) and in urban Brazil, where the state-led security project increases violence affecting the poor Black population (Buer, 2022a, 2022b). When we look back at the violent histories that were produced in the name of security to spur the project of imperial capitalism, we can understand the colonial patterns that still underpin security today.

However, while contemporary racialized and gendered relations of oppression enable and normalize a continuum of anti-Black violence in postcolonial states, Black life is more than top-down imposed suffering and misery (Alves, 2018; Parashar, 2016a; Reyes-Carranza, 2021b). Therefore, it is imperative to pay attention to sites where other forms of security are created and to other security actors than the state, for example, communities. Coming back to a central argument that my theoretical framework builds on—that security means different things to different people—I also argue that it is crucial to consider the particular site where security takes place. I argue that (in)security does not take place in isolation but in actual spaces and also manifests in the everyday (Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel, 2016a, 2022;

Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017; Olivius & Hedström, 2021). A perspective on space does not only reveal specific place-based (in)securities and threats; it also enables us to understand that, ultimately, coloniality is place-dependent (Blomqvist et al., 2021; Zaragocin, 2018a).

3.2 Theorizing the Spatiality of (In)Security

What feminist theories within urban theory and international relations have in common is that they refuse to treat concepts such as space or security as neutral phenomena. Feminist notions of security and space see them as fundamentally based on gender, race, class, disability, sexuality and other categories of power that structure society. In both fields, feminist scholars have criticized understandings that ignore, and thus invisibilize, how power relations infuse, for example, security and, consequently, establish the gaze of the *white*, able-bodied, heterosexual man as the allegedly objective norm. Feminist scholars seek to crack open well-established binaries such as private/public, female/male, the local / the global, the everyday / high politics, etc. Gender as an ordering principle of (urban) space intersects with other power relations such as race, class, age and disability; a certain notion of gender and the corresponding assumptions also shape how spaces are designed and who has access to them. Furthermore, there are processes of naturalization with regard to race that create a certain norm (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022). Similar to the mechanisms that naturalize binary gender relations, *whiteness* is naturalized as the norm in urban planning and urban theory; “whiteness is so deeply entrenched as ‘the norm’ that white people fail to recognize they too have a race/ethnicity” (Valentine, 2007, p. 12). Urban planners that rely on a traditional, binary understanding of gender create a certain normality that reinforces and naturalizes a gender dualism grounded in presumed biological differences (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Sandercock & Forsyth, 1992; van Hoven & Hörschelmann, 2004).

A binary understanding of gender is rooted in the assumption that the population is divided into women and men and that women and men have fundamentally different needs with regard to urban space. In addition, the association of women with so-called private spaces and men with public spaces also comes with the devaluation of the private sphere and the focus on the public sphere in both urban planning and urban theory. “Western” urban planning has historically been androcentric and primarily occupied with the activities of *white* men (Berg & Longhurst, 2003; Listerborn, 2016; Rakodi, 1991). No matter whether urban theory and planning pretend to be “gender-blind” (Rakodi, 1991, p. 541) or “color-blind” (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022, p. 1), there is a masculine and *white* standard when it comes to how urban

spaces are designed. Racial discrimination in the housing market, the perpetuation of racial segregation in cities and racial profiling in public spaces are examples of how governing place relies on assumptions about race and gender. As power relations, gender and race permeate society and manifest in urban spaces. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the colonial endeavor was to construct Rio de Janeiro following the *white* European model. Most importantly, this was not a neutral process but a deliberate decision of city-making. In doing so, certain spaces were ascribed more value than others and “[w]hite spaces are still perceived as more desirable and valuable than undervalued Black spaces. Those logics are forming the basis for planning practices and choices” (ibid., p. 18). In other words, the regulation of bodies, security, threat and space “are intimately linked” (Zaragocin, 2018a, p. 376).

Both in traditional security studies and in urban studies, the binary notion of public and private has determined which spaces were of interest for academic research; while “the public” has been viewed as the arena of politics, “the private” has been deemed apolitical and unimportant for global politics (Chisholm & Stachowitsch, 2016; H. Gray, 2016). The domestic sphere is feminized; it is mostly women who perform unpaid and invisible reproductive work. However, not only is their work essential to uphold global social, political and economic structures, violence and everyday insecurities also do not stop at the doorsteps of private homes. The private/public dualism ascribes value to the “public” and devalues the private sphere and, above all, has proven to be impractical for studying (in)security and (urban) violence (Hume & Wilding, 2020). Returning to Cynthia Enloe’s question “Where are the women?” (1990), while *white* women were expected to stay in and care for their homes, Black women were never confined to the domestic sphere in the same way. With their taken-for-granted, unpaid or cheap labor, Black women are to be found in the homes of others, as domestic workers, and in the informal work sector in general as the invisible backbone of society (Collins, 2002; Harrington, 2021; Lovell, 2006; J.C. Teixeira, 2020).

Building on an emerging strand of research within peace and conflict studies that advances the spatialization of war, conflict and peace, I argue that it is imperative to pay attention to where the everyday is located in order to study (in)security. Space is socially made and not a static, material container because certain locations require appropriate behavior and restrict access for certain groups while facilitating access for others (see, e.g., Björkdahl et al., 2016; Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel, 2016b; Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017; Buckley-Zistel, 2016; Kappler, 2015). As Susanne Buckley-Zistel argues, particular spaces “determine, inter alia, the agents’ potential to interact (for instance, due to their physical proximity or accessibility),

their social status, and related power hierarchies, as well as their political opportunity structures” (2016, pp. 18–19). Most importantly, as the example of favelas shows, space is purposefully created and utilized to implement certain security policies. Ordinary spaces are transformed into sites of crime where “extraordinary” activities such as killings, torture and abuse happen (Ocasio & Mullings, 2021; Volčič & Simić, 2016). How (urban) spaces are shaped, governed and policed poses grave insecurities for those who inhabit them. For this project, I thus theorize the everyday as a particular location for the integration of security policy and urban governance. Centering on the mundane as a location where theory is produced embodies an important critique of traditional binaries such as private/public and personal/political prevalent in security and urban scholarship. The everyday is not only a location of security politics (Basham, 2016; Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel, 2022; Chisholm & Stachowitsch, 2016) but also integral to how urban space is constituted (Graham, 2011; Massey, 1994; Rose, 1993).

While the everyday is often associated with the private sphere, where practices deemed banal and unimportant for a wider political context take place, I understand the everyday as a set of practices that create, challenge and reproduce social power relations. The everyday is inhabited and experienced by people who actively, though not necessarily consciously, make everyday practices happen as actors. The everyday is thus dynamic; how people are able to navigate through the everyday is shaped, enabled and constrained by societal power relations and the built environment (see, e.g., Listerborn, 2016; Rose, 1993; Sharp, 2022). Where high levels of insecurity characterize the everyday, navigating under these circumstances means knowing physical places that are safe and identifying dangerous ones but also being aware of who is dangerous and where to obtain protection, among other things. For example, for the racialized “Other”, moving around the everyday is unsafe in many contexts. As I have already explained above, this is not happening accidentally; who is framed as dangerous and whose bodies are associated with violence is informed by race, gender and class (Sachseder et al., 2022; Stachowitsch & Sachseder, 2019; Young, 2003).

3.2.1 Coloniality of Place

To develop my theoretical framework, I locate the everyday in cities. More precisely, in a postcolonial city, where historical structures of oppression and an anti-Black ideology have fundamentally shaped the geographies of life and death (Buer, 2022b; Vargas, 2005a). As Maria Eduarda Ota and Robert Mason put it, “In few places is the coloniality of the modern

Brazilian state clearer than in the cityscape of Rio de Janeiro” (2022, p. 117). I argue that in order to comprehend how security works and how (in)security is experienced in favelas in Rio de Janeiro, we need an understanding of how the production of space is inherently tied to colonial power relations. The appropriation of space was not only key for the colonial project—as every empire needs a territory—it also informs neo-colonial processes of urbanization and urban security governance. How cities are built spatializes hierarchical racial and gendered regimes and assigns value to life based on these hierarchies. That is, there is a stark difference between how Black and *white* spaces are approached with security practices and how the population groups associated with the respective spaces are treated. Even democratic regimes employ “autocratic state violence, massive urban destruction, the forced devastation of livelihoods, and even mass death” (Graham, 2004a, p. 34). The destruction of informal settlements and Black and poor neighborhoods is legitimized through narratives of modernization and security but relies heavily on the ideology of an anti-Black city. Graham calls this the “‘dark side’ of urban modernity” (2004a, p. 33; see also Harvey, 2003; Porter, 2018; Yiftachel, 1998).

The coloniality of place—the manifestation of colonial power structures in certain places through which the dehumanization of (former) colonial subjects is justified—thus enables violent state practices. In Rio de Janeiro, racism and socio-economic disparities intersect in producing the city’s geography of inequality (Buer, 2022a). Poverty is maintained through the lack of citizenship, rights and access to formal employment and stigma, yet impoverished populations are made responsible for their own low socio-economic status and are seen as the dangerous class. In Rio’s favelas, the discursive connection of poverty and criminality that is translated into urban security governance legitimizes the denial of protection to the poor because if they were good citizens, they could live in peace. In this narrative, favela residents have brought on themselves the violence they experience every day and their general living situation (Alves, 2016; Barcellos & Barreto, 2017; L.F. de Oliveira, 2019). Consequently, the violent domination of people and territories reinforces social inequalities based on class, gender and race (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; Zaragocin, 2018b). Moreover, it reproduces the ideology of the city as a normatively *white* space, to which only citizens who meet the requirement of contributing to the space with their own *whiteness* have full access (Baker, 2021; A.L.V. Silva et al., 2021; F.L. da Silva et al., 2021).

It is thus imperative to challenge the dominant Western epistemic traditions in urban theory that take for granted how cities in the so-called Global North function and thereby devalue

urban realities in the so-called Global South as the “urban other”. As Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne argue, “[U]rban theorists have tended to remain entrenched in conceptual and empirical approaches that have barely moved beyond the study of a small number of ‘Western’ cities which act as the template against which all other cities are judged” (2012b, p. 1). Western cities have traditionally been perceived as the locus where urban theory is produced, while non-Western cities have rather been seen in the realm of development studies. In this understanding, the right planning measures can transform non-Western cities into the urban spaces that they are measured against. Until then, they will remain “off the map” as spaces not considered urban or even relevant to urban theory (Robinson, 2002). This kind of urban knowledge is regarded as universal and neutral in Western urban theory, while, in fact, it devalues “informal” forms of urban life and reproduces (neo)colonial viewpoints of Black settlements as unmodern and backward. It also reinforces hierarchical differences and colonial paternalism (see also Arabindoo, 2011; Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2011; Watson, 2009). As I have already pointed out in the previous chapter, this is a standard cities like Rio de Janeiro strive for as they seek to overcome the image as underdeveloped and unmodern (M.A. Richmond & Garmany, 2016).

Eurocentrism in academic knowledge production—not only but also concerning cities—created and maintains binary categories that devalue non-Western forms of knowing as primitive, non-scientific and mythic. Gayatri Spivak has conceptualized this process as “epistemic violence” (1988). In other words, Western rational thought and belief in objectivity have narrowed down the ways of knowing to one epistemic tradition that determines how the world can be envisioned. The concept of objectivity disguises the standpoint from where research questions are asked and hides underlying assumptions. The associated theoretical concept is coined as the “coloniality of knowledge” (Giraldo, 2016; Quijano, 2007; Quijano & Ennis, 2000). While these theorists have not centered their work on cities, their concepts have proven useful for investigating how the instrumentalization of knowledge upholds power relations and urban inequalities. Their work provides the basis for criticizing “the production of Latin America as a long-standing exercise of power, and of course resistance, that began in 1492 and in multiple and multifaceted ways contributed to the articulation of Latin America as a stable and coherent geographical concept” (Duer & Vegliò, 2019, p. 12). The materiality of coloniality in the form of the exercise of colonial power and resistance against it becomes tangible in cities and their diverse geographies.

There is a myriad of ways of how to think about cities and to understand their geographies and what people do there. Moreover, the largest contemporary urban agglomerations are not located in the West—an empirical reality that is hard to ignore (Edensor & Jayne, 2012b; Jaguaribe & Salmon, 2012). An urban theory that is to explain unequal urbanization processes and lived realities, especially of marginalized populations in postcolonial cities, thus needs to theorize from below. Consequently, the pluralization of urban knowledge production also means its decolonization (Grubbauer, 2019; Robinson, 2002, 2006; Roy, 2011; Schwarz & Streule, 2016; Watson, 2009). This means challenging common assumptions about urban realities in cities of the Global South and how they are constituted. For example, I argue that there is a need to denormalize urban violence in racialized and impoverished neighborhoods because relying on Western urban knowledge has normalized Black geographies of death. In other words, police lethality, state neglect and the blatant lack of urban services have been framed as not resulting from necropolitical urban governance (Alves, 2014, 2018) but from how Black populations live their lives. Urban planning and the knowledge it produces play a central “role in protecting White property through Black dispossession, even in recently-implemented progressive urban policies” (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022, p. 2), and are thus complicit in the naturalization of Black suffering. Moreover, incorporating security as a central vehicle into urban governance pretends that state security policies provide actual solutions for urban violence and insecure living conditions. However, security is mostly imposed by the state, not against it. Urban theory that approaches Black and poor urban life with a template of a Western metropolis such as Paris cannot explain everyday urban violence other than by relating it to Blackness and poverty. Violence in Black and poor settlements is not extraordinary but has been made ordinary by the colonizers and their descendants and continues to be normalized by the power structures they have implemented and were careful to maintain.

Cities in postcolonial countries, in particular, are specific places where gendered, racialized and classed forms of violence overlap in producing the lived experiences of city dwellers. As I argue, this violence and the continuous misuse and abuse of power are both structural and spatial and produce “chronic urban trauma” (Pain, 2019). Raging levels of violence pose a severe threat to everyday life in Latin American countries today. Who experiences what kind of violence and insecurities drastically varies across cities worldwide and also within cities’ social geographies (see, e.g., Auyero & Berti, 2015; Imbusch et al., 2011; Zulver, 2022). While it is argued that due to the rapid urbanization around the world, the specificity of urban

security challenges is becoming increasingly important (Graham, 2004b; Ljungkvist, 2021), urban planner Leonie Sandercock states that “[p]lanning and urban management discourses are, and always have been, saturated with fear. The history of planning could be rewritten as the attempt to manage fear in the city” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 108; see also Wekerle & Jackson, 2005). Yet this is not to say that there are no qualities of urban security that are inherently new to contemporary times. The integration of security governance and urban planning transforms their practices and actors. Cities increasingly function as laboratories for security governance, where military expenditures are skyrocketing even in times of peace. Critical urbanists speak of a “new military urbanism” that blurs the boundaries between civil and military spheres and reconfigures citizens as enemies who are targeted with military intervention. The urbanization of militarism and security includes the use of war tactics and strategies against urban disorder, such as constant surveillance, access control, territorial occupation and the militarization of everyday (urban) life in general. Cities are not merely the backdrop of this development; they are turned into sites of battle, and their dwellers become combatants. Violence and the fear thereof play a central role in the (re)building and (re)configuration of cities (Björkdahl, 2013; Graham, 2011; Huberman & Nasser, 2019; Pauschinger, 2020b; L.A.F. de Souza & Serra, 2020).

Using militarized security as a vehicle, the spatialized social order shapes distinct territories to locate and control Blackness. For instance, security governance in the middle-class areas of Rio differs fundamentally from the security policies employed in informal settlements, urban peripheries and favelas. In other words, security practices are inseparable from spatial practices because “exceptional” spaces require “exceptional” security measures (Vainer, 2011). Yet the spatial confinement of racialized populations includes more than militarized police presence and “spectacular security” (Pauschinger, 2020b). Besides direct, hyper-visible war gear and the urbanization and thus normalization of war, militarized urban life also has less direct and less visible impacts in cities because military ideologies also transform the realms of politics, economy and culture. Territory is utilized as a central vehicle for the domination and elimination of undesired subjects; place-based tactics of displacement can also include state abandonment, pollution or the strategic use of sexual violence.

Rob Nixon (2011) calls this phenomenon “slow violence”, which is the more hidden form of violence perpetrated against poor communities through environmental hazards, deforestation or conflicts over resources but also through the lack of taking protective measures and the failure to provide and maintain infrastructure in time. These forms of violence are not exerted

directly but through the structures, or rather the lack thereof, that leave impoverished, racialized communities vulnerable. Perpetrators of slow violence can hide behind these structures because it “typically occurs in the passive voice—without clearly articulated agency” (Nixon, 2011, p. 136). This does not mean, however, that slow death is invisible; Sofia Zaragocin shows for the case of the indigenous Epera women who face severe place-based insecurities because of environmental racism, pollution and extractivism how different, less direct practices of state abandonment lead to slow deaths; “[w]omen’s narratives vividly draw attention to the multifaceted forms of neglect and substandard state investments that together result in ill health and degraded environments” (2021, p. 382).

3.2.2 Appropriating Space, Claiming Agency

Within these oppressive structures, where physical and structural violence and their respective consequences shape the lived experience of Black urbanity, the affected populations also claim spaces of agency. As I have carved out throughout this chapter, space is not a material condition reflected by the built environment, but it is socially constructed and thus also a site of political struggle. As Annika Björkdahl and Susanne Buckley-Zistel argue, “In a circular way, space provides the structures that enable and constrain agency. There is thus a mutually constitutive relationship between space and the societies that inhabit it: space is shaped by social interactions and at the same time it shapes these interactions” (2016b, p. 3, see also 2022). Indeed, cities are spaces that are occupied by many different social movements. In Latin America in particular, territory—in urban and rural areas—is central to political struggles from below (see also Buer, 2022a; Haesbaert, 2013; Mott, 2018; Zibechi, 2012). Space is thus not only predefined from above by (post)colonial spatial regimes, but it is also historically marked by resistance practices that diverge from this logic and in the course of which residents of marginalized territories use their local embodied knowledge to their advantage (Halvorsen, 2018; Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021).

In marginalized urban settings, the fight for rights and full citizenship “is constructed through the process of claiming one’s place in the city” (Bastia & Montero Bressán, 2018, p. 35). How the city is made, who has access to it and who is not part of the picture has fundamental implications for society as a whole. As David Harvey puts it, “The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire” (2008, p. 23). The right to the city is not so much an individual as a common right since the transformation of cities and urban

spaces depends on a collective power (ibid.). Racism denies favela residents their collective right to the city, which they are struggling to claim within their own communities with their own (spatial) agency. (Full) citizenship (*cidadania*) is a key concern for Brazilians in favelas and urban peripheries when claiming their right to urban livelihood and fighting against normalized inequalities. Following James Holston and his research in Brazilian cities (1995, 1998, 2007, 2009), I see these local, bottom-up struggles as “insurgent citizenship”. This concept describes the struggles of residents of impoverished urban peripheries and informal settlements who create “new movements of insurgent citizenship based on their claims to have a right to the city and a right to rights” (Holston, 2009, p. 245). It is based on an understanding of citizenship that goes beyond the legal status or being granted certain rights and of cities as important arenas for disputing and developing citizenship. Insurgent citizenship is a form of everyday political struggle of marginalized groups that takes place at a different locus than where citizenship is traditionally imagined (Bastia & Montero Bressán, 2018; Lazar & Nuijten, 2013). Its actors are the “barely citizens” (Holston, 2009, p. 255) who fight for security, basic urban infrastructure, affordable housing, property titles, etc.

The key locus for enacting diverse forms of citizenship is the everyday, where marginalized urban populations engage in political struggles and resistance practices (Holston, 2009). In a postcolonial city like Rio de Janeiro, such practices transform the spaces they take place in and also the knowledge about these places. For example, the social and spatial marginalization of favelas and their residents has been naturalized since the first favela emerged. Counter-hegemonic practices move beyond state structures to improve and transform the lived realities of favela residents and create different narratives about, for example, why urban violence is happening in favelas (Friendly, 2022; Montuori, 2022). Such practices are also acts of decolonization because they seek “to dismantle ongoing practices of colonial place making” (Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021, p. 123). While these acts are not “inherently decolonial” (ibid., p. 124), pluralizing the knowledge about favelas grounded in local experiences helps us to unlearn assumptions that are shaped by traditional narratives about favelas as criminal and dangerous. Moreover, insurgent practices challenge the place in the city that is assigned to favelas as informal, underdeveloped and thus inferior (see also Halvorsen, 2018; Schwarz & Streule, 2016).

Enacting agency and resistance is complex and can be expressed in different ways; resistance does not have to be loud and visible, and it does not have to take place where (male) political activism is usually imagined. By asking “whose agency matters when discussing violence and

why” (Hume & Wilding, 2020, p. 251), it becomes clear that the context in which people are able to act depends on the social and spatial positionality they speak from. This is particularly true for contexts of deep social disparities because their systems for political participation center on protestors racialized as *white*. Civil society is imagined as *white*, and the political spaces associated with it have never existed for Black protest and resistance. Moreover, activists racialized as Black do not incite empathy for expressing their concerns (Alves, 2014; Vargas, 2016). That is, not getting active does not necessarily mean that the person has no agency or is passive but may result from a lack of (safe) options for action. In this sense, agency is “a process, rather than an end goal” (Zulver, 2023, p. 4).

How agency can be claimed from a position of oppression is thus a key concern of feminist researchers who criticize the oversimplifying dualism of agency/passivity. Although “the state is the object to which security policy refers” (Shepherd, 2013, p. 2), there are various forms of security that are created in bottom-up ways (see also Wibben, 2011). Shifting the focus to mundane expressions of agency, we can concentrate on little, subtle acts and counteract the invisibilization of certain actors and activists. In this thesis, these acts are the everyday spatial practices of solidarity, resistance and memory of mothers of victims of state violence in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. Motherhood is usually not seen as politically relevant, and mothers are not viewed as political actors. Yet creating social cohesion and working for peace and against violence constitutes an inherent part of their daily lives in many contexts of war and conflict; their practices of protest are embedded within gendered “micropolitics of solidarity” that focus on the collective rather than the individual (Mott, 2018; see also Katsikana, 2021; Ota, 2021; L.O. Rocha, 2014; Sara Ruddick, 1998). Indeed, the political resistance to the (neocolonial) destruction of their basis of existence is often conducted by women, although they are often considered less affected by urban violence (see also McCaffrey, 2008; Sachseder, 2020, 2022; Zaragocin, 2018a). In Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, mothers of victims of state violence form political movements to denounce the violence that killed their children and the subsequent public criminalization of the victims of this violence and create networks of solidarity and mutual support. As I will show in detail in the empirical chapters, they strategically invoke their identity as mothers grieving over the loss of a murdered child in order to claim a position from which they can speak to and be heard by society (E.P. de Araújo, 2021; Lacerda, 2016; Moura, 2007; Ota & Mason, 2022; L.O. Rocha, 2012, 2020a; Santiago & Fernández, 2017; Stanchi, 2019). At this point, I want to emphasize that while their agency is gendered, mothers do not organize in political movements because they are

women. Rather, as I have also addressed above, agency takes place at the intersections of race, gender, class and space and is enabled and constrained by these power relations. That is, for mothers who are Black and live in impoverished neighborhoods, there are limited options for mobilization; drawing on motherhood and a shared understanding of gender is thus also a strategic decision. However, “finding” agency also comes with certain risks for mothers when challenging the state and its security practices or when making their own inquiries into the murders of their children—cases that are hardly ever investigated by the authorities (Baldez, 2002; Zulver, 2022, 2023). Indeed, insecurities for Black mothers in favelas, for example, do not necessarily include the fear of being assassinated by the police but the elimination of Blackness with genocidal security politics that destroy women’s everyday care and security work. Their lived realities also make us understand that everyday formations of violence are central to security policies imposed by the state (Alves, 2014; Haynes, 2023b; Ota & Mason, 2022; L.O. Rocha, 2012).

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have developed my theoretical framework to study the intersections of race, class, gender, security and urban space based on the assumption that urban security governance spatializes racial regimes and assigns value to life based on racial hierarchies. Building on feminist and decolonial theories of security and space, I have utilized the concept of the everyday in order to understand how the regulation of gendered and racialized bodies in particular spaces provides the basis for implementing state (in)security and the resistance against such state practices. I have argued that how urban space and security are imagined and configured is inherently tied to racialized, classed and gendered constructions of deservingness. That is, which populations and territories are seen as worthy of protection and which are regarded as needing to be controlled with punitive, militarized security (Vargas & Alves, 2010). Being racialized as *white* is a key prerequisite for being able to access state protection, particularly in combination with a desired *white* femininity that is also economically privileged (Peterson, 2021). The location of these populations demarcates the urban spaces as superior, worthy of protection and deserving of privilege. Neighborhoods that do not conform with these desired features, even though it is the state that produces this difference, are subjected to a “necropolitical spatiality” (Alves, 2018, p. 56), where poverty, the lack of basic urban services and killings are not only normalized but also framed as necessary in order to protect the *white* city.

In Rio de Janeiro—a postcolonial city where historical structures have spatially cemented geographies of inequality—security governance in the economically privileged *white* neighborhoods is not only different from that in the impoverished Black neighborhoods (Buer, 2022b); favelas have been and still are created specifically to spatially confine Black populations and hide certain forms of violence perpetrated against these populations and their effects on local security. In short, the gender-, class- and race-based regulation of bodies, security and space is grounded in (post)colonial power relations that co-constitutively devalue Blackness and normalize Black suffering and death (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; Vargas, 2005a). Through the dehumanization of Black populations, they themselves are made responsible for their socio-economic deprivation and the everyday lethal violence they are exposed to and that characterizes their territories. The connection of Blackness and poverty with certain spaces provides the basis for implementing security governance, legitimized by the construction of the dangerous racialized “Other” located in the favelas.

How favela residents are able to go about their day and move through everyday spaces is confined and enabled by structural and spatial configurations of power. I regard the everyday as a distinct location where urban social life is organized and that provides the basis for various actors for space- and (in)security-making. It is thus also an empirical reality for studying how (in)security is experienced, how various (in)securities intersect and how certain forms of resistance can emerge. Empirically, I am interested in how everyday formations of (in)security and space intersect in producing lived realities in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. While the “spectacular” forms of militarized urban security governance (see, e.g., Pauschinger, 2020b) provide the background, I look at the everyday as a structural and spatial reality, where local actors experience multiple, intersecting (in)securities but also challenge urban violence and appropriate everyday spaces for their resistance. I do so by centering on the lived realities of mothers of victims of state violence who claim agency and engage in resistance practices from a position of oppression. Their stories provide a methodological entry point to study the complex ways in which space, violence, security and insecurity intersect in producing particular experiences and forms of resistance. As such, the narratives of mothers of victims of state violence pluralize urban security knowledge and dismantle colonial representations of favelas and their residents because they reconfigure what we know about favelas as urban spaces and the everyday violence that is happening there (Farias et al., 2020; Lacerda, 2014; L.O. Rocha, 2014).

4 METHODOLOGY: A HYBRID NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter, I formulate a methodological approach to navigate my study on everyday (in)securities of Black mothers of victims of state violence in favelas through a research field that is rooted both in offline and online spheres. Developing a hybrid narrative framework based on feminist and decolonial methodologies, I depart from a narrative approach to security that offers key insights into how (in)security is experienced and constructed beyond grand singular narratives (Wibben, 2011). More precisely, I take narratives of Black mothers of victims of state violence living in favelas in Rio de Janeiro as a methodological entry point to investigate how gender, race and class intersect in shaping everyday urban (in)securities and resistance in Rio's favelas. By centering the narratives of those whose security is not prioritized in state security policies, I ask how multiple insecurities intersect, how security can be achieved and what even counts as security for those affected. In order to "find" narratives, I use hybrid empirical material (Przybylski, 2021) that consists of field notes from an on-site research visit to Rio de Janeiro in 2019 and video data from virtual conversations from 2020 and 2021 collected through online fieldwork. The study builds on ten videos (14 hours) with 30 participants as the main data, in which Black women who have lost a close family member due to police violence speak about everyday violence in favelas, how it intersects with other insecurities, how activist mothers, in particular, seek to change the racist narratives about what constitutes violence in favelas and how they create other forms of security beyond the state's policies that are based on the mobilization of a heavily militarized security apparatus. From the beginning of the pandemic onwards, community organizers, activists, researchers and favela residents used online panels to connect about issues concerning dealing with the new coronavirus in favelas, such as the provision of healthcare, violence and local solutions to cope with the effects of the virus. The video data consists of both rather informal conversations and conversations organized more like panel discussions. Within these self-organized online conversations, I focus on a body of video material that centers on the experiences and the resistance of Black mothers of victims of state violence who became activists after the killings of their children.

In my analysis, I focus on the stories of four women who are all known activists and are experienced in talking to a public audience: Patrícia, Eliene and Ana Paula from Manguinhos (*Zona Norte*) and Deize from Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho (*Zona Sul*). Deize's son Andreu was tortured to death by agents of a youth correctional facility, and Ana Paula's son was killed by a shot in the lower back when passing by a dispute between Manguinho residents and the local UPP. Eliene's son was shot during a police operation and then incarcerated and tortured in prison. Patrícia is Ana Paula's sister, and she is active in the mothers' movement for her nephew. During my field visit in 2019, I visited both favelas and met Patrícia personally; the information and experiences gathered during this time helped in defining the selection criteria for the online material. Based on my field notes from these two favelas, I could link the narratives I encountered online to physical, offline spaces. In view of the sheer endless amount of data available in online spheres, these two favelas provided a point of reference for going about my data. In both favelas, I had talked to residents who were also local activists, and thus I already had an idea of the neighborhoods when analyzing the online data. Grappling with the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak on my research and the unpredictable situation in Brazil that put favelas at an extremely high risk, I developed an innovative methodology that enabled me to continue my research. This qualitative study is based on the assumptions that digital technologies constitute an inherent part of everyday life and that the online sphere is not a distinct world but realities are co-constituted by online and offline worlds (Antunes & Dhoest, 2019). Being in the field is necessary for ethnographic research; however, "being there" can also take place online (Hine, 2000; Morrow et al., 2015; Postill, 2017; Shaw, 2013). Most importantly, the use of data produced by the research participants themselves, on their own terms and about issues that are relevant to them, provided the opportunity to access local knowledge from afar in an ethical way without putting an additional burden on the research participants who had to cope with the impact of the virus under increased vulnerable conditions.

In addition to a narrative approach to (in)security and a hybrid understanding of the research field, my methodological choices are embedded in feminist (Ackerly et al., 2006; Väyrynen et al., 2021; Wibben, 2011, 2016a) and decolonial methodologies (L.T. Smith, 1999; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021; Zavala, 2013) that enable me to interpret the narratives of Black mothers as embedded in distinct social and spatial relations. Broadly speaking, these methodological approaches see knowledge both as a resource and a practice; the question of power is thus central to (academic) knowledge production. Through the lens of the mothers'

experiences and resistance, I address questions of who is the source of academic knowledge production, on whose terms we conduct research and whose lives academic research is based on. That is, the aim of this chapter is to develop a methodological framework that facilitates these questions and accounts for a variety of narratives, different truths and experiences and, ultimately, various, ambiguous and contradictory meanings of (in)security. Most importantly, with my methodological framework, I focus on the lived realities of those who are seldom at the center of academic knowledge production. Parts of this chapter were published in a research article in the online journal *Urban Matters* (Stiegler, 2022).

4.1 Making Sense of a Hybrid Field

The methodological framework of my qualitative interpretive study “grapple[s] with the reality of [a] research field that was both on and offline” (Przybylski, 2021, p. xiii). Recording and documenting events is no longer the privilege of the researcher, yet online and offline worlds are often treated as two different realities in research. In combining offline field notes and online video data, I was inspired by the concept of hybrid ethnography, as discussed in Liz Przybylski’s book of the same name. The first sentence in this book’s preface is: “This book was inspired by a need” (ibid.). This sentence spoke to me and picked me up where I was standing when I could not revisit the physical field in Rio de Janeiro because of the outbreak of a global pandemic. Since I had already gathered some data during a visit to Rio in 2019 and continued to gather data online in 2020 and 2021, I had to make sense of the messiness and inconsistency of the empirical material I had collected.

Using the term hybrid ethnography as a kind of working definition helped me to continue with my research but also to redefine its purpose, develop new research questions and adapt my whole research design to the new, partly online research conditions. It provided the foundation for understanding how the everyday life of the research participants is constituted across online and offline spaces. As Przybylski (2021, p. xiii) emphasizes, hybrid ethnography adds the understanding that “many ethnographic fieldsites [...] exist across digital and physical spaces” to traditional ethnographic research methods. When modes of communication and their tools change, ethnographers also need to respond to these circumstances; researchers are very unlikely to engage with study areas that are either entirely offline or online (Przybylski, 2021, p. 3). That is, I regard knowledge as co-constituted by all the elements surrounding the particular research object. The Internet, therefore, does not

merely enable knowledge production but is part of this knowledge production itself (Antunes & Dhoest, 2019; Kaufmann & Tzanetakis, 2020; Pink et al., 2016, pp. 1–3).

The Internet is omnipresent in most of our lives. It is, therefore, a logical consequence that academics from different disciplines use the Internet as a tool and also study it as a field of research (P.A. Gray, 2016; Hine, 2000; Pink, 2013; Pink et al., 2016; Postill, 2017; Seymour, 2001). The global Covid-19 pandemic created a fertile ground for a wider use of remote research methods, and for many academics, their research—and lives—continue to be affected by the pandemic. Researchers are often required to adapt to the conditions they find in their respective research fields. Covid-19 is just an illustrative example that many researchers had to face at the same time and where they yet had very unequal conditions to deal with it. From early on, (early-career) researchers have shared their accounts of adjusting to the exceptional circumstances. Their candid pieces helped me to ground my experiences in a field that had suddenly changed and put my doubts and the feeling of being overwhelmed into perspective (see, e.g., Arya, 2020; Gorski, 2020; Herbert, 2020; Howlett, 2021). This was important to be able to appreciate the messiness of data collection that often disappears in the polished narratives we seek to publish (Bliesemann de Guevara & Bøås, 2020a). Research conducted during times of Covid-19 offers the opportunity to make visible challenges when adapting to unpredictable circumstances.

It should be noted that researchers conducted research remotely long before the pandemic and even before the invention of the Internet. For example, anthropologists studied countries like Germany or Japan from afar during World War II. The difference is that, nowadays, we can access a plethora of media in real time (Postill, 2017). Already in 1999, Steve Jones stated that the Internet should not be studied as something disconnected from the offline world. In the preface to the edited volume *Doing Internet Research*, he even pointed out that users have manifold experiences when using the Internet, which, in turn, enables diverse forms of use (S. Jones, 1999a, p. xii). The Internet is not merely a communication tool researchers utilize to delve into virtual realities. For many Internet users, it is not necessary to emphasize its distinct features and peculiarities or even distinguish between an offline and an online world because “the Internet has become part of the infrastructure of our social existence” (Hine, 2017, p. 27). For example, using a smartphone is widely perceived as an everyday practice, not a special activity that one consciously does, because, ultimately, online and offline comprise the same reality (Antunes & Dhoest, 2019). Discourses that have emerged in an online environment have an impact on how discourses are led offline (Shaw, 2013); a very

recent example would be the #MeToo movement. Therefore, conducting parts of or all research online is not as special as it used to be 20 years ago. Rather, it is a logical consequence for researchers to use the Internet in a mundane way but still integral to their research.

Patty Gray describes how she was sucked into the events of an online experience when researching street demonstrations in Moscow from 2011 to 2012; “I am *not* in Moscow; I am in Dublin, but I *felt* like I was in Moscow, and I want to go back. I feed the cat, give him a scratch behind the ears, then return to Moscow” (2016, p. 501, original emphasis). When I was doing my research, I repeatedly “visited” the same homes, saw different angles of their rooms and noticed that some research participants always used the same camera position. I recognized colored walls, saw decorations in the background changing and noticed a process of professionalization in dealing with video conference tools.

My field notes from 2019 helped me to revisit the geographical field. I tried to use Google Maps and Google Street View to go back to the places I visited and relive my experiences. I tried to trace my activities chronologically in order to construct a comprehensive story (Emerson et al., 2011, pp. 45–52). While favelas and urban peripheries are barely accessible through Google Street View, especially not the ones built on steep hills, I could revisit some places, such as train stations, roads surrounding and some going through favelas, and notice what has changed and what has stayed the same. This was a very useful way for me to maintain a feeling of connection to the offline field and being emerged in the field. “Being there” has long been assumed to be indispensable for ethnographic research that privileges data gathered in face-to-face settings as inherently more authentic and valid. While “being there” is indeed an unconditional requirement for ethnography, it is no longer worthwhile to tie it solely to offline life (Hine, 2000; Morrow et al., 2015; Postill, 2017; Shaw, 2013). It will definitely be interesting to see to what extent online research methods will leave a lasting impression on fields that have rarely been in contact with them before the pandemic. Or if online and hybrid research tools did not manage to make an impact beyond being a temporary emergency solution during the initial period of Covid-19.

4.1.1 The Location of the Field: From Offline to Online to Hybrid

To briefly illustrate my methodological journey, in this section, I want to describe the departure from my on-site field and from the research objectives I originally had. Initially, I

planned to conduct ethnographic field research for the empirical study of my PhD research during two research visits to Rio de Janeiro for three weeks in August 2019 and three months from May to July 2020. My plan was to conduct two case studies in two favelas (Manguinhos in the North and Babilônia in the South of Rio) to study the long-term effects of security policies that were implemented during a period of mega-event hosting in Rio de Janeiro. I wanted to study the impact of top-down security policies from the perspective of the affected residents in the favelas. The city of Rio de Janeiro went to great lengths to position itself in the global interurban competition and host several major events. The ones that received the most attention were certainly the 2014 FIFA Men's World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. For Rio's event bidding, security was the biggest concern and the reason several bids were rejected; especially the favelas posed a severe image problem for the city (Barbassa, 2017). Several measures were introduced as part of the city's objective "to overcome its hyper-violent reputation and rebrand itself as a desirable, international tourist destination" (Rekow, 2016, p. 4). For instance, the UPPs were established in 2008 in strategically located favelas in preparation for mega-event hosting (Rekow, 2016; Savell, 2021; Steinbrink, 2013) (see Chapter 2).

The purpose of the first and shorter research visit in 2019 was to establish contact with local actors, such as NGO workers, activists, residents and scholars. Before my arrival, I had been in contact with Julio, a professor at the Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and Theresa, the executive director of a local NGO that focuses on sustainability and urban and community development. The NGO had worked extensively on sports mega-events and their repercussions for local communities as well as unequal urban development in Rio in general. Apart from that, I left the course of the research visit quite open; I wanted to get an impression of how the city worked and how it would feel for me to actually be there and experience everyday life. I had read a lot about urban security governance in Rio, about social inequalities, racism and high levels of violence and already had a certain idea in my head upon my arrival. For example, I was convinced that I would get robbed at some point during my stay—which did not happen, luckily, and I even felt quite safe during my entire time in the city. I visited several favelas, and two of them remained the geographical focus of my study, Manguinhos and Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho. I visited Manguinhos (North Zone) just a few days after I had arrived in Rio. I was able to join a field trip to the favela with a group of architecture students from UFRJ. Julio had put me in touch with Pablo, a professor of architecture at UFRJ, who led the group on this trip. Our guide for

the excursion was Patrícia, a Manguinhos resident, architect and urbanist herself, who had collaborated with Pablo on several occasions. Patrícia showed us the project *Casa da Lala*, where she is building a housing and working space for her friend Lala. Lala's house was demolished in the course of the "slum upgrading" program *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* (PAC), an infrastructure project funded by the Brazilian federal government. Patrícia is also part of the local mothers' movement *Mães de Manguinhos* that was founded after the murder of Patrícia's nephew Johnatha. I told Patrícia about my research project and that I would be coming back in 2020, and she gave me her contact details. The tour through Manguinhos and the contact with Patrícia, in particular, were crucial for the later course of my research. She acted as an important stakeholder as she even tried to support my efforts in the summer of 2020 to realize a more participatory research. Then, I tried to design a study that included the possibility of photo or video diaries, a collaborative way of documenting everyday lived experiences from multiple perspectives (Morrow et al., 2015, 2015; Vastapu, 2018). While this attempt did not work out because of the precarious and unpredictable Covid-19 situation in Brazil and my loose network with stakeholders in Rio, Patrícia's participation in various online conversations about violence, housing insecurity and her architecture practice provided the means of access to my online data collection.

At the beginning of the pandemic, I was unsure whether I would be able to do my fieldwork later on. However, it became apparent quite quickly that it would not have made sense to postpone the research stay in Rio de Janeiro to an uncertain date and that the original fieldwork plan would not be feasible within the scope of my PhD project. I thus started looking for alternatives that were possible to implement from afar. Thankfully, Meropi, my colleague at the time, pointed out the possibility of doing a digital ethnography. Since I had never actively dealt with online research in general, let alone conducted an online ethnography, our conversation was an important entry point for grappling with the methodological challenges of my project.

To familiarize myself with what kind of content was available online, I started following several activist movements and NGOs on social media and came across various online conversation formats that were announced there. At the beginning of my digital encounters, I did not know what focus would provide enough data and was worthwhile to pursue. I quickly realized that I would not be able to follow my original research interest in the security legacies of sports mega-events because this was not a pressing issue to discuss for community organizers during the pandemic. Moreover, André, an activist and researcher from

Manguinhos I got in contact with in the autumn of 2020, told me that an urban development program named PAC had far more extensive impacts on the favela than any mega-event-induced policies. I thus broadened my scope, and after reviewing many videos about urban violence in general, militias as violent actors in favelas and urban peripheries and the militarization of public security, I came across a conversation led by two Black activists and researchers. They spoke with activist mothers whose sons had been victimized by police violence and addressed the issue of state violence from the perspective of Black women (Julho Negro, 2020). Talking about their experience with state violence, they constructed bottom-up narratives as they traced the wider political implications from the personal experiences of the mothers. I had the impression that these mothers were important actors in local security debates and had an important status within their communities. For me, this provided the entry point into the topic because the whole conversation gave me an idea of how I could approach the broader topic of (in)securities in favelas through the narratives of activist mothers. Subsequently, I started to look specifically for conversations with mothers and also the YouTube algorithm delivered recommendation based on what content I have liked. I also contacted one of the researchers, Luciane Rocha, who was generous enough to meet with me online and whose work has inspired this research to a great extent (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020b, 2020a). I became increasingly interested in the phenomenon of mothers' resistance against state violence in favelas and very curious about how they use motherhood as a strategic space of resistance and their straightforward critique of the state's racist security politics.

This also led to fundamental changes in my research design—new research participants, a partly new geographical focus (Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho instead of Babilônia), new methods, etc. I needed to make myself familiar with a whole new body of literature on research from afar, online research and, finally, hybrid research methods (Antunes & Dhoest, 2019; P.A. Gray, 2016; S. Jones, 1999b; Madge, 2007; Pink, 2013; Pink et al., 2016; Postill, 2017; Przybylski, 2021; Seymour, 2001; Shaw, 2013). This was not a linear journey but one characterized by many doubts, questions and feedback loops. In the spring of 2021, I wrote a workshop paper that discussed the location of urban research and asked whether research on physical space had to be conducted offline or whether urban research could be dislocated to the online sphere. Then, I had read up on digital ethnography and online research, but I had not made the connection between online and offline yet. I, too, was thinking of my online and offline data as separated and could not make sense of them as part of the same reality. While I

was aware that my offline experiences during the research visit somehow shaped how I approached online data, I could not yet put it into words. Instead, I was focusing on reading up on digital ethnography literature and trying to craft a research design based thereon. During a feedback session at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, where I was employed as a doctoral researcher at the time, my former colleague Lukas pointed out that my research was actually a hybrid form. This valuable comment, a light-bulb moment, enabled me to take seriously the on-site data I gathered as well as my physical, embodied experiences from the geographical field. Before, I had thought that the research visit to Rio did not have much value for my overall research design because I thought the visit was too short, I did not establish many contacts and did not collect much data. In other words, I was not confident about the significance of this data.

Having to adapt your research design and handling challenges in the course of a PhD project is not unique to times of a global pandemic. There are various other reasons why researchers are not able to travel to their fieldwork sites and conduct their research remotely, for example, in contexts of war and conflict (Postill, 2017, pp. 63–64; Sangaré & Bleck, 2020). Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, I had not anticipated such a possibility. I felt disappointed to let go of my research design, which I had put a lot of work into, and I was looking forward to finally being able to conduct the research I had planned. For me, the process of accepting these challenges was difficult, and I seriously doubted the purpose of pursuing a PhD at all. When reflecting upon how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected my research project, it felt difficult at times to not sound bitter or for the words to not come across as self-pity. Because I *did* feel sorry for myself for a while in the year 2020. I *was* bitter about the blatant lack of support from the university. It *was* inconceivable to me that I had to fight for financial support from the university for months and did not get any after all. I cannot imagine this process without negative sentiments.

The realization that I needed to step back from my initial research interest and instead adapt to what the research participants chose to focus on was essential. Ultimately, the changes were more about giving up being in control, “waiting and learning patience rather than concrete adjustments” (Nikolić, 2021, n.p.). In addition to recurring doubts, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, my research is also infused by being proud of myself and how I managed to overcome challenges and obstacles and become somewhat more resilient. For me, this was a learning process that will be crucial for my future career. This was only possible through collective reflection with peers and the support of my supervisor and colleagues, with whom I

was able to contextualize the way I was affected as an individual within broader structures of inequality within academia. I am grateful for the vital support I received from peers; I regard how we interact with each other in solidarity as researchers as a central part of feminist research practice.

4.1.2 A Feminist Narrative Approach to (In)Security

To make analytical sense of the hybrid empirical data, I draw on the feminist narrative approach to studying (in)securities as proposed by Annick Wibben (2011). I operationalize experiences as narratives in order to make visible the multiple and even contradictory meanings of (in)security that do not fit into dominant narratives (see also Aharoni, 2014; Caldeira, 2004; Mehta & Wibben, 2018). From a feminist and decolonial perspective, security is never neutral, objectifiable or simply the opposite of insecurity, but constructions of race, class, gender and other power relations are central for deciding who is seen as worthy of protection, who as a threat and who as a legitimate protector (Enloe, 1990; Peterson, 2021; Sjoberg, 2010; Tickner, 1992). That is, a feminist narrative approach to (in)security connects theory and methodology; it is a way to investigate how the theoretical notion of (in)security comes into effect in the lived realities of the affected populations. The dominant framing of an event in a certain narrative always excludes other actors, their experiences and their stories; a singular security narrative limits whose security matters and what even counts as a security issue. Narratives are thus always a vehicle to exercise and contest power (Shepherd, 2013; Wibben, 2011). On the one hand, narratives “can insist on grand singular meanings that confirm social orders and power structures” (Mehta & Wibben, 2018, p. 49). On the other hand, counter-narratives to hegemonic discourses can challenge dominant views and provide an entry point to examine power relations underlying a grand singular meaning.

Narratives are a particular kind of story to make sense of and ascribe meaning to experiences, events and their effects (see, e.g., Moulin, 2016). Recollecting memories to narrate can happen in online and offline spheres; memories can be of offline and online experiences. A narrative approach is thus suitable for studying a hybrid research field because it captures all kinds of experiences that constitute everyday life. Narratives do not simply exist “out there” for us to hear, but they only get their meaning when they are told. Researchers do not retell a narrative but participate in its construction themselves (Neander & Skott, 2006; Riessman, 2008, p. 21). In other words, narratives always have a narrator, someone who is making sense of an event or experience through retelling. This is not only true for the research participant

but also for the researcher. The process of sense-making is key to narratives; they are not merely recounts of a specific event but distinct biographical accounts that can be used strategically (Ewick & Silbey, 2003; A.D.C.C. de Lima & Mafra, 2022).

There are multiple ways to define a narrative unit, from the recollection of a defined, limited incident to the entire life story (Riessman, 2008, pp. 74–75). In my study, I define the narrative unit with regard to the life-changing experience of mothers of victims of state violence; the violent loss of a child clearly marks a “before” and an “after” in their biography when mothers need to renegotiate their motherhood. This is a traumatic experience that some mothers make sense of by translating their grief into a political struggle. It redefines their identity and biography, which is why the experience of loss and subsequent activism is not merely a “segment” in their life story; trauma, pain and outrage accompany their resistance and will be there for the rest of their lives. However, while the sudden loss of a child severely disturbs the expected life course of the mother and her child, it does not represent a mother’s entire biography. Moreover, evoking grief and outrage can also be utilized for political resistance; how narratives are constructed, what is emphasized and what is omitted can serve a strategic purpose (Mehta & Wibben, 2018). For example, I found that research participants focused solely on the state and its security actors when painting the picture of how violence is constituted in Rio’s favelas. Other armed actors, such as drug gangs or militias, were left out of the stories apart from a few exceptions.

Narratives provide insight into how the narrator views the world; they can serve as explanations for why something happened or to find someone to make responsible for a grave injustice someone experienced. That is, this process of meaning-making is interpretive, which is “inherent to any recollection of experience” (Wibben, 2011, p. 44). Most importantly for this project, narratives do not simply coexist or are valued equally but are shaped by power relations. Narratives can confirm power relations and fix meaning but also disrupt established meanings and discourses. The disruptive element of counter-narratives is central to a feminist narrative approach because feminist research is always critical of any knowledge that is displayed as neutral or objective. However, while “some narratives have the power to produce effects and others do not” (Floersch et al., 2010, p. 412), effects as such are difficult to “measure”. For some, it might be sufficient to just be able to tell their story; others might pursue the goal to challenge and change a dominant narrative by repeating their story again and again. A feminist narrative approach to (in)security values and explicitly acknowledges that various truths exist; it is thus not the aim to identify “polished” narratives but to be open

to contradictions and ambiguities that are inherent to the stories of human beings. Moreover, such an approach allows to center “the personal narratives of those rarely listened to” (Wibben, 2011, p. 99).

4.3 Collecting Empirical Material

As I already mentioned, I was looking for narratives in virtual conversations streamed online. The Internet offers an endless array of data. In addition, new content is produced constantly, quickly and dynamically. In the 21st century, it is no longer only researchers who record events and share information about it. On the contrary, the research participants are often just as connected as the researchers, despite unequal access to technology (Bliesemann de Guevara & Bøås, 2020b, p. 4; Przybylski, 2021, p. 2; Sommer, 2018, p. 108). That is, researchers need to adapt to changing technologies and, consequently, change their ways of communication. In my research, I could thankfully utilize the normality of (global) connectedness, and I benefitted greatly from favela activists and residents sharing details about their everyday life with others online. The availability of data literally all over the place raises crucial questions about how and where to set the limits. Of course, this not only applies to online research (Przybylski, 2021). Qualitative research always goes hand in hand with considerations about how to limit the scope of data in a meaningful way. What are reasonable parameters to narrow down the vast number of data available online? How do we decide on the platforms we use? How do we come to an end, and how can we process the data for our analyses? Many of these questions also arise in empirical studies because there is no objective way to handle our data. How can we identify theoretical saturation when we are in the middle of data collection, maybe even overwhelmed by it? Of course, the research question(s) is an important indicator to approach data collection and guide you through it. But since qualitative research is a cyclical process, one regularly needs to revise one’s research question(s) in order to strengthen the backbone of data collection. Using data already available online for my research project was a matter of ethics; publicly streamed videos available on YouTube meant that no additional efforts were required from the research participants. I focused on YouTube and not on other platforms because live recordings were saved and still accessible later without having to create an account. Because of the time difference, in the majority of cases, I watched the recording and not the live stream. YouTube was the platform most suitable for data collection, as on Instagram, for example, live streams are not always saved to the account that has streamed them. I used my field notes from 2019 as a geographical anchor point for

the online data; a requirement for sampling was that at least one of the participants in the online conversations was either from Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho or Manguinhos.

At first, I used a form of digital snowball sampling that was facilitated or, rather, determined by the YouTube algorithm. For example, I started following the *Mães de Manguinhos* on Facebook at the beginning of the pandemic because Patrícia, whom I had met, was an active member. On the Mothers of Manguinhos' Facebook page, they posted information on different online events, which I then included in my preliminary material collection. They also shared information on events by other organizers, for example, research networks on urban violence or favela social forums, which I also started following. With every video I liked and every channel I followed, YouTube suggested other videos for me, both online conversations that had already been streamed and future events, for which I enabled notifications to remind me when they were taking place. This can be criticized for enhancing a selection bias with regard to a lack of diversity of the research subjects, representativeness of experiences and validity. However, adopting research strategies that seek to avoid harm is imperative for feminist research ethics. Thus, snowball sampling also provides the opportunity to let the researched define the focus for data collection (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013; Woodley & Lockard, 2016). Since I did not seek to produce generalizable results, exhaustive sampling was not necessary for data collection. From the body of videos that I found and that were suggested on the basis of the algorithm, I purposefully selected those that fit my criteria, addressed my broader research questions and involved actors from the two selected favelas. I was looking for a specific experience of a specific group of people and, therefore, used theory-based purposeful sampling for selecting and narrowing down the empirical material (see, e.g., Suri, 2011). Data collection took place from July 2020 to September 2021. While the Internet offers a plethora of data, the data that was eligible for my study was limited because of my selection criteria with regard to the research participants (female activists who have lost a close family member due to police violence) and their geographical location in one of the selected favelas.

4.3.1 Online Data: Virtual Conversations

Virtual conversations that center on the narratives of Black mothers of victims of violence were “a way to enter the realm of women’s lived experiences and how they make sense of what they survived” (Sachseder, 2022, p. 62). I understand the video data as recordings of the everyday life, not only because mothers speak about their everyday experiences after the

brutal loss of a child but also because for those who frequently appeared in public debates and are known for their activism participating in online conversations became some form of routine in their everyday lives. They frequently participated in multiple formats, continued their political struggle in the online sphere and talked about the structural inequalities and violence that motivate their activism. There is also the possibility of self-censorship (Lawrence, 2022, pp. 159–160) in online settings, and mothers’ criticism of the state also bears the risk of, for example, falling victim to state violence. However, even before Covid-19, many women whose narratives I analyzed were familiar with speaking in public and using the public to voice their concerns. I argue that, especially in times of Covid-19, digital technologies constitute an inherent part of everyday life, and we often cannot make clear distinctions between an online and an offline world since they “constitute the same reality” (Antunes & Dhoest, 2019, p. 2).

At first, I watched the virtual conversations as a listener. I watched countless videos, skimmed through many and watched just as many until the end. I preliminarily analyzed around 40 videos (60 hours) and then narrowed the number down to ten (14 hours, 30 participants) for a systematic analysis. I obtained consent from the women whose narratives I wanted to use before analyzing them. These ten videos provide the basis for my analysis, but I only quote the speakers of whom I got formal consent. However, I reference these videos without having obtained consent from every participant. Since all the videos are publicly available and I do not quote or name any other speakers, I consider the other speakers’ privacy rights protected. Here is a brief overview of the videos that I reference in the empirical chapters:

Canal Pororoça. (2021). *Violência e Memória Social nas Favelas*. YouTube. August 19. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LVpjFsBMwU> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, Patrícia and another member of a network of mothers of victims of state violence in the Baixada Fluminense area talk about the importance of creating memory because the state and society destroy and invisibilize the history of Black Brazilians and the violence they have to endure. They present different initiatives, such as murals, monuments and other artwork, to appropriate public space for memory politics in favelas and urban peripheries.

Cria Latina. (2021). *Rio 21 #08: A Casa Da Lala: Praticando a Inclusividade*. YouTube. September 22. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W71F2Tfuo6c> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, Patrícia presents her project *Casa da Lala*, a house for her friend Lala, which will have room for her living space and her beauty parlor. Patrícia talks about the difficulties

Lala encountered as a trans woman with regard to security, the progress of *Casa da Lala* and her architecture philosophy in general. Patrícia calls herself the *favelada arquiteta*, which refers to her positionality as a favela resident as crucial for her approach to building homes.

Fórum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade. (2021). *Deize Carvalho - Mães-Pesquisadoras: “Não Somos Objeto, Somos Protagonistas”*. YouTube. May 9. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9q5ick6q7o> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, Deize talks about her story and her experiences as a Black mother of a victim of state violence. Her son Andreu was tortured to death by agents of a youth correctional facility in 2008. She talks about her resistance and her decision to become a lawyer in order to be able to help other marginalized mothers and families who seek justice after the loss of a family member.

Julho Negro. (2020). *Mulheres Negras Analisam a Violência do Estado*. YouTube. July 29. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkX04DDlfr4> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, four mothers of victims of state violence share their narratives and experiences with state violence. All of them have a daughter or son who was shot by the police, most of them were killed, and one was left paralyzed. What they also have in common is their anger and indignation about what happened to their children and the courage to denounce the genocidal security practices of the state that affect their everyday lives. The conversation is moderated by two researchers who are also activists.

LILITHS. (2021). *Movimento Mães de Manguinhos, com Ana Paula Oliveira, Patrícia Oliveira e Cíntia Dias Rodrigues*. YouTube. May 11. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2gApKQ6KNG> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, Ana Paula and Patrícia, among others, talk about their work in a movement of mothers of victims of state violence. Ana Paula recounts the assassination of her son in 2014 and her subsequent fight for justice, joining forces with another mother from her favela. Ana Paula's sister Patrícia talks about broader issues of structural violence that manifest in the urban space they live in, such as the lack of basic sanitation and access to health care.

Muro Pequeno. (2019). *#PotênciasNegras 28: MÃES DE MANGUINHOS*. YouTube. November 30. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay9Xas0k5wI> (March 17, 2023).

This is an interview with Ana Paula from prepandemic times. In the interview, she talks about the murder of her son in detail, how she struggled with his sudden and violent death, how she tried to make sense of it and how the fight for justice in a mothers' movement gives her strength for her everyday life.

Núcleo de Estudos da Violência. (2021). *Lançamento da Pesquisa “Tortura como Marca Cotidiana”*. YouTube. July 1. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XH52grru5Qw> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, Eliene shares her experiences with the prison system, in which her son was tortured and had to fear for his life. She talks about how she took over the state’s responsibility to care for her son in prison and about her activism for decarceration. She regards the disproportionate incarceration of Black youths as part of the Black genocide of the Brazilian state.

Núcleo de Memória Política da UNIRIO. (2021). *Como se constrói a memória na favela?*. YouTube. September 9. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Chmi7_dkgM (March 17, 2023).

In this video, activists from several favelas talk about how to create and shape memory in their favelas. Ana Paula specifically talks about spaces of memory, politics of remembrance and how mothers and families of victims of state violence have to defend the remembrance of their loved ones against public criminalization and dehumanization. For example, she talks about the memorial the Mothers of Manguinhos have inaugurated to commemorate the young men killed by the police in the favela.

rede nacional de mães e familiares de vítimas. (2021). *DIREITOS À JUSTIÇA: A TRAJETÓRIA DAS LUTAS E CONQUISTAS*. YouTube. May 6. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBZUAG0DQm8> (March 17, 2023).

In this video, six women from different favelas talk about their struggle for justice. They are active in different networks of families and mothers of victims of state violence. Patrícia and Deize are both participants in the conversation and talk about the structural inequalities and their everyday experiences that motivate their political fight.

Violência e Saúde. (2020). *Luta e resistência das mães e familiares de vítimas de violência de Estado*. YouTube. October 15. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vckNBabR_o (March 17, 2023).

In this video, Eliene and Ana Paula engage in a conversation with a researcher from the *Fundação Oswaldo Cruz* (Fiocruz), a public health research institution that is located in Manguinhos and renowned around the world, about armed violence, the criminalization of favela residents and their resistance and political struggles. They talk about the decarceration agenda and the fight for justice for victims of state violence, inter alia in times of a global pandemic that hit favelas and other impoverished, marginalized neighborhoods particularly hard.

I realized later that I was able to seize a window of opportunity with the use of the material described above. Like in many other settings, the exchange between activists, civil societies and researchers gradually moved from the online sphere to offline settings again when living with the virus got more normalized. While many events were streamed online, especially in the first one and a half years of the pandemic, it has become difficult to find events not held offline, at least when it comes to my topic.

4.3.2 Offline Data: Ethnographic Field Notes

Writing field notes is an important technique in ethnographic data collection. The purpose of field notes is to describe, document and remember the experiences, insights, feelings, noises, smells, etc. a researcher encounters during fieldwork. After exiting the field, the notes help to recollect the particularities of being in the field, to look back at those moments and to put oneself in the respective situation. As such, they produce an understanding of the social phenomenon at hand and, at the same time, create meaning. In addition to a description of the (physical) setting as accurate as possible, field notes also contain reflective information, in which the researcher reexamines, criticizes and analyzes her own observations, as well as open questions (Kalthoff, 2013; Schwandt, 2015). A key element to field notes is that they are subjective; they are “shorthand statements, *aides-mémoire* that stimulate the re-creation, the renewal, of things past” (Bond, 1990, p. 274, original emphasis). Consequently, field notes do not simply reflect an observed or lived reality in the field but the researcher’s perspective and interpretation (Emerson et al., 2011).

The term “field notes” suggests they are notes taken in the field. But where is the field? As I have already discussed throughout this chapter, the field does not need to be a physically distinct space, and my research field is located both online and offline. Xymena Kurowska suggests that the field “begins when we encounter others through a process of self-decentering” (2020, p. 433). I further lean on Roger Sanjek’s reasoning that they are notes *of* the field rather than necessarily notes written *in* the field that is geographically located elsewhere (1990, pp. 94–95). I wrote most of the field notes and memos back in Vienna because I did not plan to carefully write down my impressions and experiences when I was in Rio. While I collected some references and jotted down ideas when I visited Rio de Janeiro, I thought I would come back soon for the “real” fieldwork. This perspective changed with the start of the pandemic when I realized that I had to put my memories to paper since they were the only traces I would have of the geographical field. In this sense, I regard taking field notes

as part of a broader data collection process, which does not automatically end with the change of location. Some of the recollections that guided my research process later on would not have appeared as something worth writing down in 2019. Writing field notes is an important part of the process of sense-making, going beyond data collection. The different stages of research are not clearly separated, identifiable tasks but change during the research process. In my case, this means that the notes I took at a later moment in time, already knowing that I would not be able to go back to my geographical field, are most likely written in a different manner and with a different focus than they would have been when written on-site.

It is important to emphasize that my field notes are not accounts of some kind of “truth” or objectifiable observations, but they are experiences from my subjective point of view, informed by my background, interests and positionality. The purpose of the memories recorded in writing was not necessarily to contrast them with the narratives in my material. The field notes show that security is situated and that my experiences in the favelas were fundamentally different, which did not come as a surprise. Rather, they were tools for me to have a feeling of connection to the geographical field. For example, when Patrícia talked about *Casa da Lala* or when Ana Paula referred to the monument the *Mães de Manguinhos* initiated for the victims of lethal police violence in their community, I had at least an offline memory of these spaces. I do not claim to be familiar with the neighborhoods of Manguinhos and Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho, but my visits provided an important frame of reference for narrowing down and selecting the material to be analyzed. It was helpful for me to proceed with my research to choose the narratives of women whose neighborhoods I have visited at least once.

In addition, the field notes helped me to reflect upon my own bias and prejudice. While before my research stay in Brazil I was convinced that I would at least once find myself in a dangerous situation, such as being robbed or threatened with a gun, I noticed during my online fieldwork that I had internalized the trope favela residents create to counter the dominant state security narrative of favelas as dangerous: “that favelas are actually safer and friendlier than Rio’s crowded streets and anonymous middle-class apartment buildings” (Penglase, 2015, p. 4). I absolutely stand in solidarity with families and mothers of victims of state violence in Rio de Janeiro and throughout Brazil, and I have no intention to question whether their experiences are “true”, nor do I feel the need to verify them. Rather, the critical engagement with what was said in the videos, the literature and my memories and interpretations of experiences made obvious the different meanings security can have. It,

however, also pointed out the limits of my study and the levels of knowledge I could get to; at times, I was also thinking in binary terms of (in)security and was considering the state and its security forces as entirely evil. Believing the experiences of the favela residents, I still know that this kind of singular meaning is rarely a reality. In future research, I would thus focus on the overlapping security regimes of multiple (armed) actors that constitute everyday life in the favelas (see, e.g., Beraldo, 2021; Beraldo et al., 2022; Pope, 2022a, 2022b; M.A. Richmond, 2019).

4.3.3 Ethical Considerations

Before I go into more detail about the analytical process, I want to address some ethical considerations concerning this research project. My approach to research ethics is guided by principles of feminist research practice. Studying power is a key concern of feminist research, despite many different approaches to the meaning of feminism itself (Ackerly et al., 2006; Ackerly & Attanasi, 2009; Ackerly & True, 2020; Travis & Haskins, 2021). Guiding questions can be: “Who is my research for? Who am I accountable to?” (Dupuis, 2022, p. 49).

I submitted an application to the ethics committee of the University of Vienna that voted in favor of the empirical study I originally proposed after a resubmission with minor changes in October 2019. Additionally, I received a positive vote for conducting the empirical study with digital methods in July 2020. While I found the reflections in preparation for the application useful for the design of my study, I am critical of procedures to get clearance from an ethics committee because they have proven lengthy, rigid and bureaucratic. I do not consider ethical research as something you can achieve by simply “ticking” some boxes. The approval of an ethics board does not automatically make an empirical study ethical. As, for example, Helen Kara (2015, p. 39) points out, one needs to revise decisions throughout the research process because it is not possible to anticipate every eventuality and plan for every challenge one might face. For ethics committees, a procedure is either ethical or unethical; there is little room for debate. Furthermore, they seldom allow for situations where consent cannot be obtained in written form since it is seen as the sine qua non of ethical research. Furthermore, research ethics as approached by (university) ethics boards are based on the Eurocentric idea that ethical guidelines can be applied universally (Decoloniality Europe, 2013; Madge, 2007).

As a feminist researcher, I do not see myself as an outside observer but as entangled in power relations myself, for example, in relation to the research subjects. This is especially important when conducting research from afar that does involve little interaction with the research

participants (Mwambari et al., 2021). From the four women whose narratives I center in my analysis and whose statements I quote, I obtained formal consent. I reached out to Patrícia via WhatsApp, explained the purpose of my study, which videos I wanted to use for my analysis, how I would use the data and for what kind of publications and the possibility to withdraw consent at any time until the write-up of the thesis. I sent the links to the videos in question and asked whether I was allowed to use parts of what they said in them and whether I should use a pseudonym or whether I was allowed to include personal information, such as their names, the names of their children and in what kind of movements they participate. Patrícia forwarded this set of questions to Eliene and Ana Paula, the other Manguinhos' mothers. I also offered to provide more information about my research project and myself. I reached out to a researcher in whose research Deize participated to ask if they had her contact details because, at first, I did not feel comfortable to reach out to her via my private social media platform. I was hesitant to mix private and professional. However, I then contacted Deize on Instagram and further connected with her on WhatsApp. Again, I explained my study's purpose and sent her the videos I intended to use. I also asked her whether I could mention her real name, her son's name and her place of residence.

On the one hand, the availability of large amounts of public data (for example, on YouTube or other social media platforms) does not mean one can use it for research without obtaining consent. On the other hand, research ethics are not a checklist that guarantees your research is ethical when followed thoroughly. In some contexts, mostly public and semi-public, it is not possible to obtain consent from everybody. This applies to both offline and online spaces. There is, indeed, a fine line between public and private data available on the Internet, and it can be challenging to determine whether users are conscious of the public availability of their contributions (Legewie & Nassauer, 2018; Linabary & Corple, 2019; Sugiura et al., 2017). For example, Legewie and Nassauer argue that "on platforms such as YouTube maximum visibility can be expected to be either the user's explicit goal or an accepted fact" (2018, n.p.). But this does not necessarily mean that they would agree to be part of scientific research, not even when it comes to individuals who appear in public frequently.

Using self-produced online content was an ethical choice to go about these ethical challenges because the research participants set their own priorities and shared what they were comfortable with. I chose the stories of four women to center in my thesis because these women are all known activists; when searching for their names on Google, information on them and their stories will come up because they all have been speaking publicly for years.

Against this backdrop, I could think they have an interest in their names and stories being published for an international audience. The ethics committee of the University of Vienna specifically made this comment on my first application, pointing out that some of the research participants might actually want the readers to be able to find more information on their activities. I am extremely grateful for their willingness to let me use their information, and I hope that, with my research, I can make their narratives known to a wider academic audience.

4.3.4 Analyzing Hybrid Ethnographic Material

I operationalize experiences as expressed in narratives to “make explicit the operations that produce particular kinds of meaning, and to draw out the implications this meaning has for understanding human existence” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 6; see also Sachseder, 2022; Wibben, 2011). Narratives can be found everywhere, and “they require interpretation when used as data in social research” (Riessman, 2005, p. 1); narratives are, first and foremost, interpretations and not meticulous reports of what has happened. There are many different approaches to analyzing narratives, and even within these approaches, there is no unilateral method. For this particular research project, I was inspired by Catherine Kohler Riessman’s version of thematic analysis (1993, 2005, 2008) because it allows for an own interpretation of the method and analytical process and offers enough guidance through the amount of data (see also Braun & Clarke, 2006; Floersch et al., 2010). Before approaching the empirical material, it was important to ask myself what I wanted to know from the data. The research questions guide and shape the process, but there is still the question of how to find the answers. Drawing on Riessman, I directed my attention toward the content, toward “‘what’ is said more than ‘how’ it is said, the ‘told’ rather than the ‘telling’” (Riessman, 2005, p. 2, see also 2008, pp. 53–54). While I agree with Riessman that, in thematic analysis, it is less important “how” something is said, I cannot completely disregard the audience to which the narrators wish to speak because, especially in contexts of social movements and resistance, the sense-making does not only serve a personal but also a collective purpose (A.D.C.C. de Lima & Mafra, 2022).

In addition to Riessman, I also draw on Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke to define thematic analysis; it is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (2006, p. 79). The objective of this method is to find themes (patterns) in the qualitative data and to invite “the reader to think beyond the surface of a text” (Riessman, 2008, p. 13). Similarly to narratives,

which we cannot simply “find” as researchers, themes do not just “emerge” from the data, but the researcher needs to identify them. Indeed, the analysis is an active process shaped by the researcher’s decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). In order to look for themes in the empirical material, “theme” thus needs to be defined. Drawing on Braun and Clarke, “[a] theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of *patterned* response of meaning within the data set” (2006, p. 82, original emphasis). Themes still differ in shape, size and form; for example, themes do not need to be dominant quantitatively in order to be most important (ibid.).

Following thematic analysis, I searched for themes across the data set (the number of virtual conversations) to find how meaning is created (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This procedure was suitable for my particular research topic because mothers’ movements are collective movements that seek to pursue a political agenda based on shared experiences and also a shared understanding of a certain problem. For example, no mother expressed any doubt that the state was the single most dangerous actor in her everyday life. While “narrative analysis is case-centered” (Riessman, 2008, p. 74) and seeks to keep stories intact, the scale of the case also differs from research project to research project. The “case” in my research is the resistance of female favela residents who have lost a close family member due to urban violence. This focus allows for analyzing both individual and collective processes of sense-making; mothers of victims of state violence need to process their own loss and pain, but they also express their grief collectively. I define the narrative unit with regard to this life-changing experience; the violent loss of a child, as well as the grief and the outrage that accompany this experience, is the departure point for the mothers’ resistance. I explored how speakers in online spaces would “politicize seemingly personal and everyday practices [...] and provide venues for critical discussions around power and inequality” (Morrow et al., 2015, p. 529).

I used the transcripts of the virtual conversations as texts, pursuing an interpretive approach to studying everyday urban (in)securities and the meaning that the research participants ascribed to their experiences (Aharoni, 2014). There are different approaches to structure a thematic analysis; I followed the six steps of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The authors propose the following phases: 1) familiarizing yourself with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes and 6) producing the report (ibid., p. 87). These phases offer structure, but they are not a step-by-step checklist; analyzing empirical data is always a circular and not a

linear process. It is necessary to go back to a previous phase, adjust and adapt. I will now briefly describe how I interpreted the implementation of these phases for my analytical process.

After selecting the material, in the first step, I once again watched and listened to the recordings of the virtual conversations without having the transcripts at hand in order to get an initial idea about the content without feeling the urge to already start coding. Then, I started to familiarize myself with the transcripts and listened to the recordings while reading the written version. In doing so, I generated initial ideas for interesting themes and familiarized myself with my data, which was particularly important because I did not transcribe the virtual conversations myself. As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest, I carefully compared the transcripts with the recordings in order to check for accuracy. This is important in any analytical process but even more so when transcription is outsourced. Indeed, the transcripts I received contained errors, false facts and omissions. That is, I worked closely with the recordings, transcribing some passages myself. Interestingly enough, the transcripts created by automated transcription services were more accurate than those transcribed by human beings, even with regard to colloquial language or very specific facts.

The second step, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), requires generating initial codes. However, there is no specific coding technique in thematic analysis (Floersch et al., 2010, p. 409). The coding process of my online material was data-driven; however, “data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), and my situatedness, theoretical choices and epistemological beliefs inevitably shaped the coding process and my interpretations of the data. In addition, both the data collection and the analysis were driven by my broader research interest and the more specific research questions. I was already familiar with the prevalence of certain topics from the literature, for example, the state as a central actor producing insecurities in favelas. I did not need to look specifically for content about violence because it was already a central issue for the research participants to address. I did not derive codes for police and other (state) security actors inductively from the data, yet I did not define what to look for in my data beforehand. I expected other armed security actors to be mentioned in the data as well because I knew from the literature that favelas are characterized by overlapping security regimes. While in some instances drug trafficking was hesitantly named as a phenomenon that is present in favelas, there was no critique of (in)security regimes imposed by drug gangs or militias. While some absences are striking, omissions are also essential to build a singular narrative (see, e.g., Mehta & Wibben, 2018).

The initial codes are not the same as the themes later used as units of analysis. I produced these codes in order to “identify a feature of the data [...] that appear[ed] interesting” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Similar to narratives, codes do not simply have meanings or can be found residing in the data. As the analyst of the data, I organized elements of the raw data into meaningful entities (see also Tuckett, 2005). For coding, I used the software MAXQDA. It is not possible, nor is it necessary, to approach data objectively; however, I still wanted to avoid simply “finding” in the data what I was looking for and thereby confirming my expectations. Although argued for Grounded Theory, I followed Kathy Charmaz’s proposal to bring playfulness into the work with the data; “[w]e play with the ideas we gain from the data. We become involved with our data and learn from them” (2014, p. 137). Initial codes were, for example, “everyday life is interrupted”, “*filho morto* (dead son)”, “right to live”, “*pele braço armado do Estado* (by the armed hand of the state)” or “*em nome do Estado* (on behalf of the state)”, “genocide against Black youth”, “mutual support/together”, “gaining strength from resistance”, “missing out as mother”, “experiencing stigma”, “influence on mental health”, “remembrance” and “visibility”. I also coded references to class, race and gender, for example, “we as Black women”, “strong Black woman”, “trans woman”, “the Black and poor are dying” or “when you are poor like us”. While coding, I tried to think in different directions with regard to themes; for example, I only coded “right to see child grow up” two times; however, the code fit into more than one theme, for example, “violation and denial of rights/making the state responsible” or the broader experience of a life caesura as a mother of a victim of state violence.

The third phase, searching for themes, consists of organizing the codes into overarching themes or patterns. Codes can be subsumed under more than one theme, and themes can consist of different numbers of codes. Furthermore, not every code has to fit into a theme. Essentially, this stage is about “thinking about the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). I used MAXQDA to organize the codes into themes. The software also has a function to create maps from coded segments, categories and themes; however, as I am not the visual type, I simply created a list of themes under which I subsumed the codes. Grouping codes into themes also serves the function of developing a feeling for how significant the themes are. I will exemplify the creation of themes and subthemes using the overarching theme of “space/territory”. The theme “spatial favela identity” consists of the codes “spaces of memory”, “space of life”, “appropriating space”, “the state enters the favela”, “the state

comes here to kill”, “(experienced) criminalization of favelas”, “favela knowledge production”, “basic sanitation”, “hostile territory”, “sense of (not) belonging” and “urban needs”. The theme “identifying as mother of a victim of state violence”, for example, consists of the codes “blaming the mother”, “missing out as mother”, “mothers’ movements”, “risk of activism”, “special status of mother”, “gaining strength through resistance”, “having to function” and “too emotional”.

The themes generated in the third phase are revised in the fourth phase. This reviewing process includes combining two originally separate themes into one or breaking up one theme into several. First, I “read all the collated extracts for each theme” to find out whether they seemed “to form a coherent pattern” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Themes should “adequately capture the contours of the coded data” (ibid.) after the reviewing process. In the second step, I examined whether the themes captured and reflected the meanings in the whole data set. While Braun and Clarke distinguish the fifth phase, “defining and naming themes” (2006, p. 92), from the fourth stage, in my analytical process, these two phases were not as clear-cut. In the fifth stage, I worked in depth with the codes and themes, narrowing down broader themes into more detailed ones. In this stage, the analyst identifies “the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall)” (ibid.). The authors caution against wanting too much from a theme or trying to increase complexity. I realized at this stage, for example, that most of the subthemes under the overarching theme “everyday violence” also fit under the theme “the state” but that there was no overarching theme that described the practices of any other armed actor. I put the themes to the test by describing each theme with a couple of sentences.

Finally, in phase six, the final analysis takes place. The purpose of this stage “is to tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The authors emphasize that the write-up needs to “provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data” (ibid.) and that presenting the final analysis is also constructing a certain narrative. Writing is central to analysis; in qualitative research, writing does not take place after all data is collected and analyzed. Analyzing and writing are thus both part of a back-and-forth process. Within this process, researchers need to decide when to expose themselves to other literature because it can either limit the analytic vision or enhance analytical sharpness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are different standpoints regarding the engagement with relevant literature. Because I started the data collection with the broader topic of urban (in)securities in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas and

gradually narrowed the topic down to the experiences of mothers of victims of state violence, engaging with the relevant literature was important for my analytical process. Prior to my analysis, I only had a very limited understanding and knowledge of mothers' movements in Rio's favelas. I consider this an advantage when initially engaging with the empirical material because it allowed me to be playful and be surprised by the themes I identified in the data. After the initial contact with the material, literature research and reading during the processes of coding and analyzing thus enhanced my analytical field of vision. While there is little research on mothers' movements in favelas, particularly in English, I still wanted to pursue my own focus. When I came across four master's and PhD theses in Portuguese during my analysis phase, I was "shocked" at first because many of the issues they addressed I had identified in my thesis as well. I was worried that I did not have anything new to contribute. However, encountering the themes of my data in other literature was also reassuring that I was on the right track with my analysis and, ultimately, my focus on a feminist reading of (in)securities was a unique angle that none of these theses had.

Not every theme fit into the final write-up of the empirical chapters because some of them were already well described in the literature, for example, the theme "more security, less security" (implementing "security" in favelas through the means of militarized security policies and control causes major insecurities for favela residents). I was more interested in the spaces of agency that research participants claimed within such an oppressive and violent context. I found that the research participants' narratives served two purposes: on an individual level, to make sense of their experience of loss, their pain and their outrage and, on a structural level, to tell counter-narratives, that is, a different story about the violence favela residents experience, as well as to rehumanize the victims of state violence who are portrayed as *bandidos* in the dominant narrative. I examined the narratives' thematic meanings and identified common themes around the characterization of the actors involved (for example, state as perpetrator, mothers as protectors), spatiality (where narratives take place and how space enables how different actors can act) and temporality (how mothers' resistance practices produce material evidence of the violent past and envision a future with less violence). In the second step, I analyzed how gender, race and class constituted the narrative storylines. While in their narratives the research participants make sense of their experiences of extreme violence and injustice (for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic), they also generate alternative meanings about favelas as urban spaces and about favela residents as citizens, about the victims of violence as human beings and about mothers as security actors

who protect their families and care for their communities. Black mothers of victims of state violence also demonstrate how they can appropriate official avenues of the state in their political fight against violence in favelas.

In the process of identifying codes and grouping them into themes, I found that the research participants were very clear and direct in identifying the reasons for their insecurities, which are the state, its security policies and its security actors. They were also aware of the power relations that shaped their identities, positionalities and experiences as Black women from the favela. While it did not surprise me that they were aware of the systems of oppression they are situated in, I was nonetheless amazed to listen to their analyses. The challenge was, therefore, to “dig deeper” and carve out how gender, race and class shaped their narrative storylines beyond what was told and addressed explicitly. As Riessman states, “A good narrative analysis prompts the reader to think beyond the surface of a text” (2008, p. 13). I thus engaged with the transcripts and recordings repeatedly, many times during the analytical process and the write-up, which is also part of the analysis. Moreover, grounding thematic analysis in a theoretical framework is necessary in order to enhance its “interpretative power beyond mere description” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97; see also Ewick & Silbey, 2003; A.D.C.C. de Lima & Mafra, 2022).

Interpreting and denaturalizing hegemonic narratives “from the experiences of those who have been criminalised and placed in a position of subalternity” (A.D.C.C. de Lima & Mafra, 2022, p. 7) is a central aim of this thesis. I asked how security is perceived and how groups are affected differently by security practices but also how they create security themselves. I thereby uncovered the discriminatory practices mothers of victims of state violence experience and carved out how these experiences are shaped by gender, race and class. For example, I found that many mothers implicitly perpetuated the narrative of police fighting (or, rather, killing) drug traffickers in their operations. Many emphasized that their sons never did anything wrong and thus did not deserve to be killed. While the facts are certainly right, and many victims of lethal police violence have never been in conflict with the law, distinguishing between “criminal victims” and “noncriminal victims” contributes to the state’s narrative and implicitly justifies the murder of “criminals”. However, mothers whose sons had been convicted of a criminal offense or involved in petty crime insist that the state nonetheless had no right to kill their children because, legally, there is no death penalty in Brazil. In other words, mothers of victims themselves have internalized the powerful racist narrative of violence in favelas. Another example of an internalized narrative is the emphasis on the *mãe*

guerreira, the warrior mother. Many mothers stress the strength they gain from their political struggle and are also depicted as strong, fearless Black mothers by others. I only found one occasion where the stereotypical representation of the “Black strong woman” was questioned. The cultural expectation of Black women to function for society and to be strong and resilient is a coping mechanism for many Black women but also has profound negative effects on their mental and physical health (see, e.g., Donovan & West, 2015; Liao et al., 2020).

For this level of analysis, I drew on feminist and decolonial approaches in order to relate the individual stories to the structural level that constitutes inequalities. While the research participants described their own experiences, problems, challenges and visions, these are always shaped by power relations, which can be enabling or constraining. Personal stories are always “micro-manifestations of broader social, political, and economic structures” (Sachseder, 2022, p. 61; see also Sylvester, 2012). Without the theoretical anchor points, the interpretive possibilities would be limited; why mothers of victims of state violence choose to become activists, for example, could then only be linked to their role as caring mothers. Mothers do not inevitably organize because they are mothers or women. How they choose to mobilize is also grounded in what avenue of resistance they regard as most promising for achieving their goals and what society expects from them, and, most importantly, they also perpetuate stereotypical and constraining images of gender and race, despite their activism being “progressive” (Baldez, 2002; Kashani-Sabet, 2011; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018).

To carve out how the individual and the structural level are intertwined in shaping lived realities in an extremely violent context, I related themes from the data to Brazil’s colonial history, the coloniality of urban space and the self-evidence with which the everyday work of Black and poor women is taken for granted in postcolonial Brazil. Black women have the lowest socio-economic status in Brazil, which is rooted in nostalgia for slavery and their work being usually viewed as something to be accessed cheaply (Lovell, 2006; J.C. Teixeira, 2020). Doing so has enabled me to capture the intersecting insecurities as well as the security-generating practices of Black mothers of victims of state violence in favelas. While their stories focus predominantly on the killings of their children, they also reveal the less visible, long-term impacts of everyday urban violence on, for example, the mental and physical health of Black mothers who are already marginalized and vulnerable in Brazil’s racist, classist and patriarchal society. Feminist and decolonial scholarships are thus important for creating the methodological scaffolding for this thesis. Integrating decolonial and feminist approaches

with the broader hybrid framework, most importantly online ethnographic data, constitutes an innovative methodology to access local marginalized knowledge.

4.4 Feminist and Decolonial Methodologies

Decolonial and feminist methodologies build the foundation of this study to focus on ways of knowing that have been sidelined in mainstream studies in order to construct (academic) knowledge that privileges the experiences of non-Western, non-*white* and non-male individuals. For example, Swati Parashar criticizes that patriarchal power has “the ability to hide women’s experiences that are common, or make them appear deviant” (2016b, p. 44). This is true for many groups whose stories have been marginalized both in research and in society as a whole, such as indigenous peoples, Black communities and other groups that are racialized as Black and LGBTIQ+ communities (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; hooks, 2015a).

Neither of these methodological approaches, however, offers agreed-upon procedures; they are attempts to deconstruct traditional ways of academic knowledge production in order to conduct research that is based on the knowledge of those who are not heard in traditional academia. Feminist and decolonial methodological approaches inspire, in short, what kind of research I want to conduct and how I can pursue such an approach. The integration of feminist and decolonial approaches is fruitful to conduct research that is sensitive to the process of how knowledge is produced and whose knowledge is valued in the first place; they cannot just be lumped together into one comprehensive methodology. On the contrary, methodologies that emerge from decolonial theory and practices are often an explicit critique of feminist research that privileges Western knowledge and neglects ways of knowing situated in contexts of the so-called Global South. Decolonial methodologies, however, are not merely relevant when studying non-Western lived realities; it is an approach that aims to identify the Eurocentrism (academic) knowledge is based on and to advance “the positive project of reformulating and reconstructing epistemic norms” (Alcoff, 2007, p. 81).

For this project, the two most important reference points of feminist approaches to methodology are, first, refusing to accept any knowledge as objective and value-neutral and, instead, accepting that every form of knowledge production produces exclusions and is always produced from a certain situatedness and viewpoint. Second, explicitly conducting research as a political project with normative aims, making political claims in order to improve the lives of the researched communities (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2021; Tickner, 2006; Wibben, 2021). Essentially, feminist perspectives uncover how gender is

central to how we understand and experience the world around us, not as a biological characteristic but as a power structure. Feminist inquiry is about “deconstructing silences” (Kronsell, 2006, p. 110). This does not simply mean to study what is still unknown and to add to existing research but to center on knowledge that has been systematically sidelined and to investigate how power relations such as gender come into effect in shaping social inequalities, the distribution of power and various forms of exploitation and oppression. The aim is to produce alternative knowledge that unhinges traditional ways of knowing in “modern” science (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2021).

I regard it as liberating to be able to express solidarity with the research participants because I am convinced that research is not produced for the libraries but for improving the lives of those whose lives I am researching. This is not to say that this project will directly contribute to a better life for the research participants; from the political nature of every aspect of the research process also arise ethical challenges and dilemmas, for example, how to care for research participants who are vulnerable, marginalized and oppressed (Ackerly & True, 2008; Basini, 2016; Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2016). At this point, I also want to emphasize the fact that the stories we encounter as researchers can be deeply unsettling for the narrators to tell and for us to hear. Narratives about (in)security involve violent experiences that were traumatizing for the research participants and that the researcher might not be prepared to process. (In)security narratives are also about intense emotions, extreme pain and suffering, for which the researcher cannot easily handle or alleviate. Furthermore, survivors of violence do not always have the vocabulary to speak about their difficult experiences (Mehta & Wibben, 2018; Riessman, 1993, p. 3, 2008, p. 45). On the other hand, finally being able to talk to someone about experiences with violence can also be liberating for the research subjects who feel guilt and shame that often revolve around these experiences (Sachseder, 2022; Vastapuu, 2018). It is thus imperative to work with these issues that inevitably occur in any research context characterized by high levels of violence and inequality and to follow the principle of “doing no harm” (Basini, 2016). Particularly feminist research ethics go beyond an understanding of research ethics as a “checklist” that guarantees your research is ethical when followed thoroughly (Basini, 2016; Corple & Linabary, 2020; Eriksson Baaz & Stern, 2016). Offering a new understanding of how everyday insecurities in urban spaces are constituted by gendered, racialized and classed power relations coming into effect based on empirical material that the research participants created themselves is an important

(methodological) contribution of this project. Building my study on self-produced data was an important decision to reduce the potential harm caused by my research.

Feminist methodologies—I mostly use the plural form because there is no singular feminist methodological approach—have been developed by feminist researchers who criticized traditional methodologies that envisioned research as objective, neutral and apolitical. Feminist scholars are concerned about the inability of traditional research practices to capture the lived realities of variously located women and other marginalized populations whose experiences and knowledge were neglected in academic research (Ackerly et al., 2006; Ackerly & True, 2020; Väyrynen et al., 2021; Wibben, 2011, 2016a). Historically, “feminist knowledge has emerged from a deep skepticism about knowledge which claims to be universal and objective” (Tickner, 2006, p. 21) but is, in fact, primarily concerned with studying spaces of power predominantly occupied by men. Adopting a feminist methodology might be obvious in order to center women’s lived realities; however, feminist theory, methodology and research practice are much more than “just” focusing on women; feminist perspectives shape the research process as a whole. Feminist researchers are concerned with their own “role in constructing facts we set out to collect” (Jorgenson, 2011, p. 115). This fits well with the narrative approach of this study because feminists insist that stories, or “facts”, do not simply reside somewhere for us to reproduce but that the knowledge we produce is always co-constructed. Knowledge is produced from somewhere; it depends on the questions that are asked, the researcher’s social location, political viewpoints, etc. (C. de L. Costa, 2013, 2016; L.T. Smith, 1999). Consequently, writing my positionality into my research practice also means positioning myself in relation to the research participants. Positionality is not merely about geographical distance, in my case between Brazil and Austria, but about the power relations and privileges that inevitably shape how I can go about my research. I am thus not trying “to hanker after some idealized equality” (McDowell, 1996, p. 409) between the research participants and me or to brush over the power asymmetries I reproduce in my research and the knowledge I create (see also D’Costa, 2006; Sachseder, 2022). I regard this as one of the greatest strengths of feminist research: not having to hide behind the false idea of neutral and objective knowledge but making transparent the inequalities that exist in research relationships. Reflecting upon the differences and similarities between the research subjects and me is not a flaw but makes visible the limits and constraints of my perspectives, which is a necessary departure point for asking questions about how I construct knowledge in my research (Jorgenson, 2011).

In order to be able to address the differences between my research subjects and me with regard to race, socio-economical and professional status, etc., I draw on decolonizing methodologies. I consider it imperative to reflect on and make transparent the unequal power relations that shape this research project. Postcolonial and decolonial critique are closely intertwined with questions of how (academic) knowledge is acquired, whose perspectives are valued and whose knowledge is neglected and devalued—that is, the politics of knowledge production. Decolonizing researchers argue that colonial discourses produce knowledge *about* the “Other”, alienating non-Western forms of knowing as primitive, non-scientific and mythic (D’Costa, 2006; Decoloniality Europe, 2013; L.T. Smith, 1999). As a *white* European researcher, I am inevitably situated in the “colonial power matrix” (Quijano, 2000) and reproduce, at least to some extent, the presumed totality and superiority of Western epistemology (Mignolo, 2008; L.T. Smith, 1999; Zavala, 2013). The colonial matrix of power is the complex, indivisible relation between “the rhetoric of modernity (progress, development, growth) and the logic of coloniality (poverty, misery, inequality)” (Bhambra, 2014, p. 119) that is central in shaping today’s global inequalities and their historical roots in colonialism.

Decolonial dialogues, in particular, are relevant to my research project because it is guided by the experiences of those affected and situated in a marginalized context in Latin America. Decolonial approaches provide an important framework to discuss colonial legacies and how they are sustained through knowledge production. Drawing on Walter Mignolo, Linda Martín Alcoff argues that “the epistemic effects of colonialism are among its most damaging, far-reaching, and least understood” (2007, p. 80). Eurocentrism in academic knowledge production created and maintains binary categories that attribute value to “hegemony-seeking power-knowledges that arose in the context of European colonialism” (ibid.) and subjugate local forms of knowledge. Knowledge in general, and academic knowledge in particular, is an instrument of power that is used to discipline the colonized, destroy their language, memory and ways of knowing and subsequently brutally replace precolonial knowledge of the “Other” with the knowledge of the colonizer (Mendoza, 2016; L.T. Smith, 1999; Spivak, 1988). The instrumentalization of knowledge to uphold global power relations should thus be a key concern for academics. Eurocentric science entangles itself in some kind of vicious circle; racist and sexist societies produce racist and sexist knowledge and thereby legitimate racist and sexist power relations (Bhambra, 2014; Harding, 2016; L.T. Smith, 1999). Gayatri Spivak has conceptualized this process as “epistemic violence” (Spivak, 1988). In other words,

Western rational thought and believing in objectivity narrowed down the ways of knowing to one epistemic tradition that determines how the world can be envisioned. Anibal Quijano coined this theoretical concept as the “coloniality of knowledge” (Quijano, 2007; Quijano & Ennis, 2000).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that “[f]rom the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (1999, p. 1). The development of disciplines in Western science and the creation of methods and belief systems rooted in Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies determine how knowledge about the “Other” is produced. This triggers the question of whether it is even possible to conduct research about marginalized, racialized populations in the Global South with conventional tools of Western scholarship. How can I as a *white* researcher from a Western university even engage with decolonial research? To grapple with these questions, decolonial feminist scholars make use of explorative mixed methods that make it possible to address the unequal power relations between the research participants and the researcher, for example, ethnography (Sachseder, 2022), autoethnography (Chisholm, 2017; Eriksen, 2022), participatory visual methods (Lykes et al., 2021; Sultana, 2007; Vastapuu, 2018) or even the rejection of a particular methodology (Rhee, 2021). Vivetha Thambinathan and Elizabeth Kinsella propose, among others, to embrace “other(ed) ways of knowing”, which means “unlearning and re-imagining how we construct, produce, and value knowledge” (2021, p. 4). For example, as I am guided by feminist research principles, my worldview is also strongly shaped by feminism. In my data, I was confronted with views that were in contrast with my political viewpoints. The women in my data would not call themselves feminists, and they are probably not familiar with the theories, nor do they need to know them because they do not need them for their everyday practice. Black mothers, in particular, play a pivotal role in putting the experiences of Black women on the political agenda. This contrast is crucial to navigate since I did not want to force any political labels on them. Just because my research is driven by a feminist agenda, this does not mean that the research subjects need to agree with it as well. Just because I might think that their activism could be seen as feminist, this does not mean that my assessment matters. Furthermore, I have been repeatedly astonished by the huge significance religion has in these women’s lives and the omnipresence of religion in Brazilian society in general. These might seem like minor issues, but they illustrate how I navigated the

discrepancy between my beliefs and what I found in the data. This is also part of feminist reflexivity: letting go of one's preconceptions and one's way of seeing the world in order to understand a problem.

Like any research, my hybrid research design has some methodological limitations. There are pitfalls of epistemological limitations in distanced research. As David Mwambari, Andrea Purdeková and Aymar Nyenyezi Bisoka (2021) point out for conflict-affected contexts especially, online research methods bear the risk of reducing complexity and corroding the in-depth knowledge of the research field that is sought in ethnographic research. Physical distance and distance to the researched community can deepen social inequalities and reinforce unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched. Studying the "Other" from afar would be perpetuating the colonial gaze of researchers from the West. This is an issue I struggled with a lot throughout the research process. While I cannot, nor is it the aim, dissolve the inherent contradictions of researching the lived realities of Black women in a postcolonial country as a *white* researcher socialized and situated in Central Europe, the hybrid methodological framework of this research carries the potential to reduce "epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1988; see also Vastapuu, 2018; Zavala, 2013). I certainly do not seek to empower or "give voice" to those whose lives I am researching; however, I believe that research can have an empowering and emancipatory potential under certain conditions, for example, participatory research agendas that ensure research participants take control of what kind of knowledge they co-construct and how (Marzi, 2021; Mistry & Berardi, 2012). However, I am aware that I narrate their experiences in another language and in my words; even the first-person data I quote in the empirical chapters are translations of what was originally said. I do not feel comfortable with the idea of giving a voice to or speaking for someone who has not asked me to do so. Most importantly, the research participants in my study do not need nor have they asked me to represent them in any way (Andrews, 2007, pp. 39–44; Wibben, 2011, p. 110).

This is not to romanticize the viewpoints of socially marginalized populations; however, they are able to create spaces of agency from their positionality that are more sustainable than I could ever provide for them. I found it crucial to ask myself why I was interested in the lived realities of whom I do not have a lot in common with and why I conducted the research the way I did. Asking and reflecting on these questions is supposed to be uncomfortable. Much like feminist methodologies, decolonial methodologies do not offer a set of tools one can apply to one's research and hence call it "decolonial" (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). With

the methodological considerations of this research project, I challenge the conditions of *white* hegemonic academic knowledge production by centering the knowledge of marginalized groups and drawing on empirical data produced by the research participants themselves, on their own terms and about issues that are relevant to them. I did so in an ethically sensitive way as I consider it relevant to contribute to new ways of conducting research and constructing academic knowledge. Drawing on feminist and decolonial methodologies, I engage with subjugated knowledge that is not represented in dominant security narratives.

EMPIRICAL PREFACE: MOTHERS OF VICTIMS OF STATE VIOLENCE

In this opening section, I introduce my four research participants Ana Paula, Deize, Eliene and Patrícia. I focus on their narratives in the empirical chapters because they are representative of the experiences of other women who are active in movements of families of victims of state violence. Eliene, Ana Paula and her sister Patrícia live in Manguinhos (*Zona Norte*), and Deize lives in Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho (*Zona Sul*). Deize's son was tortured to death by agents of a youth correctional facility, Ana Paula's son, who is also Patrícia's nephew, was assassinated by a UPP officer, and Eliene's son was incarcerated and tortured in prison. All four women are activists who share their experiences as Black women living in a favela in the city of Rio de Janeiro; their lived realities thus take place at the intersections of (in)security, urban space, gender, race and class. I argue that through their narratives, we not only learn about their personal stories and motives, but we can also understand how violence intersects with other insecurities that shape everyday life in favelas and how local communities are affected. We obtain a deeper understanding of how these women experience security and insecurity, who or what they perceive as a threat, how they think insecurity is created and how they create security themselves.

Before introducing Patrícia, Deize, Eliene and Ana Paula, I draw on a historical example to contextualize the current activism of mothers and families of victims of state violence. In many different contexts of violence, war and armed conflict across the world, mothers who have violently lost their children become activists and fight to reduce violence and its effects in their communities. Their activism has manifold expressions, ranging from subtle and silent to loud and visible (Aharoni, 2016; Blomqvist et al., 2021; Cárdenas & Hedström, 2021; Nikolić-Ristanović, 1998; Tickner, 2004). In contexts of urban violence, the state targets its own population as an internal enemy, especially those who are already in a marginalized position, for instance, in the so-called "war on drugs" (Alves, 2018; Graham, 2011; Jenss, 2023a). In Rio de Janeiro in particular, and in Brazil in general, the state frames poor Black men from favelas as its internal enemies and targets them systematically. At the intersections of this racialized, gendered and classed violence spatially anchored in marginalized spaces like favelas and urban peripheries, mothers whose children have been killed by the police

create activist networks based on their shared experiences in order to support each other, make visible the gendered effects of urban violence on mothers and mobilize Black motherhood as a political identity that enables them to ground their political conversation in everyday experiences (see, e.g., Bussinger & Novo, 2008; Haynes, 2023b; L.O. Rocha, 2012; Santiago, 2019). It is important to emphasize that women and mothers do not fight against violence because they are inherently peaceful but, as I will later show, because of their social and spatial positionality that enables and constrains their practices of resistance. Even when using an essentialized understanding of gender and motherhood, I do not believe that mothers and women mobilize because they are women. I understand motherhood as a set of practices that are enabled and constrained by gendered, racialized and classed norms (see, e.g., Åhäll, 2012; Baldez, 2002; Collins, 1987, 1994; McCaffrey, 2008; Sara Ruddick, 1998). Therefore, I understand activism grounded in experiences of motherhood not as something that is tied to them being female but as something that is produced at the intersections of power relations that shape their identities and the positions society and the violence they experience place them in. In other words, the protection of their children might be key to many forms of motherhood, yet the distinct gendered, racialized and classed positionality of activist mothers of victims of state violence makes it imperative for them to act the way they do because the violence against their children is also spatially expressed in necropolitical urban governance in favelas (Alves, 2014, 2018).

In Brazil, the *Mães de Acari* (Mothers of Acari) protested the forced disappearances of their children in the early 1990s and thereby paved the way for movements of families, mostly mothers, of victims of state violence. In July 1990, a group of men, later identified as police officers, kidnapped eleven children and teenagers, most of them from Acari, a favela in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. Tragically, none of the eleven adolescents ever returned to their families, and their bodies were never found. Some of the mothers started to search for their children and fight for justice and for the responsible police officers to be held accountable. The case became known as *Chacina de Acari*, the Massacre of Acari (F. Araújo, 2007; Vianna, 2014). Just a few years into the new Brazilian democracy, the practice of unlawful killings by paramilitary organizations and *esquadrões da morte* (death squads) linked to the police, a legacy of the right-wing military dictatorship, continued to be a threat in marginalized urban spaces (Alves, 2018; Pope, 2020, 2022b). Denouncing the victims as suspected criminals that posed a threat to society legitimized the death squads' systematic killings. It is thus not surprising that the Mothers of Acari were also discredited as *mães de*

bandidos (mothers of criminals) in order to delegitimize their protest and put the blame for their children's disappearance on them. The narrative is always the same: Had the children not been criminals, they would not have been killed. Therefore, they deserved to disappear and be killed. For this powerful storytelling, it is irrelevant whether the young people were actually involved in criminal activities, as it neglects the fact that they disappeared at the hands of the police, which, in fact, is not police protocol for prosecuting suspects. In July 1993, one of the Acari mothers, Marilene da Silva Souza, said in front of a team of reporters: "A couple of days ago, we heard Colonel Larangeira, who at the time of the massacre commanded the 9th battalion of the military police, say that we could not be called *Mães de Acari* because we were comparing us to the *Mães de Maio* [Madres de Plaza de Mayo]. According to him, we are the mothers of 11 criminals, while the *Mães de Maio* were the mothers of people who died fighting for democracy in Argentina. He insinuated that we are connected to drug trafficking, which is not true" (F. Araújo, 2007, p. 54, my translation).

More than 30 years later, only two of the mothers are still alive. Most of them died after having suffered physical and mental illnesses related to the trauma of violently losing a child. In addition to the negative health impacts of experiencing the violent loss of a child, Black mothers' activism is also extremely dangerous because, unlike *white* mothers, they do not enjoy the privilege of being seen as worthy of protection (Haynes, 2023b; Zulver, 2023). Two *Mães de Acari* activists were killed because they became a real threat to those who had an interest in keeping the Acari case under lock and key: Edméia da Silva Euzébio and her sister-in-law Sheila Conceição were assassinated in 1993. They had been investigating the disappearance of the children of Acari and, apparently, came dangerously close to solving the case and revealing who was responsible for the kidnapping and disappearance of eleven children in 1990 (Andrade, 2021; F. Araújo, 2007, pp. 51–53). This is a very real risk for activist mothers of victims of state violence who become a problem for the police's practices of concealment and secrecy. When mothers interfere too much with its violent practices, the state can simply "get rid of them" (Auyero & Kilanski, 2015; Zulver, 2023).

Since the Bloodbath of Acari, the police and police-linked death squads committed a myriad of other massacres, and countless mothers across Brazil have joined forces to fight the violence perpetrated against their Black children in favelas and urban peripheries. The Mothers of Acari paved the way for mothers' movements in Brazil, and I want to draw a link from their story to today's activism of mothers of victims of violence with a quote from Ana Paula. She is the co-founder of the movement *Mães de Manguinhos*, the movement of

mothers from the favela of Manguinhos that fights to reduce (lethal) state violence in Rio's favelas.

“Today, the movement of the Mothers of Manguinhos is the women's movement. We are all Black women from the favela. Our movement is a movement to welcome other mothers, to try to strengthen these women, to do political training; yes, because we need to have an understanding of our situation. Our children are not killed by accident; the police come prepared. There are no stray bullets. A bullet that just gets lost. We see them only hitting the Black bodies of *favelados*”³ (LILITHS, 2021, my translation).

In her statement, Ana Paula addresses several aspects of the political resistance of mothers and families of victims of state violence that are relevant to my analysis. Firstly, it is mostly mothers who are at the front of the political struggle against lethal state violence in favelas. While there is resistance of other family members, mothers are the most visible and the most vocal. This might seem surprising at first because women are far less likely to be victimized by lethal police violence. This has long been the most important indicator for being affected by urban violence in the literature, creating “a false binary between violence that impacts women (private violence, namely, intimate partner violence) and violence that impacts men (public violence, such as gun crime and other forms of gang-related violence)” (Zulver, 2023, p. 3). Indeed, the omnipresence of violence in highly insecure contexts imbues all areas of everyday life (see also Hume, 2009a; Wilding, 2012). However, violence does not impact everyone in the same way; its effects are shaped by power relations, such as gender, class and race. While it is widely agreed upon that domestic violence is a form of gendered violence, gender—as a power relation—permeates all forms of violence (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgeois, 2004, p. 22; Wilding, 2012, p. 1). For example, the loss of a family member affects women in specific ways because of their traditional roles in the family. As in most societies, also in favelas, mothers are the main caregivers to their children and “arguably suffer the loss of their children in gender-specific ways” (Turpin, 1998, p. 7). The omnipresence of urban violence in general and the murder of their children by state authorities in particular have profound effects on already marginalized women, breaking up social networks and governing forms of communities and disturbing their motherhood that gives them meaning and identity.

Secondly, their social and spatial positionality as poor Black women from the favela is decisive for how they experience and enact motherhood. This provides the basis for their

³ “Então, hoje o movimento das mães de Manguinhos é o movimento de mulheres. Somos todas mulheres negras, moradoras de favelas. O nosso movimento é um movimento de acolher outras mães, de tentar fortalecer essas mulheres, de fazer formação política, sim, porque precisa ter um entendimento da nossa situação. Nossos filhos não foram mortos por um acaso. Nossos filhos não foram mortos por um despreparo da polícia. Não existe bala perdida. Uma bala que só se perde. Só acho os corpos negros de favelados.”

mobilization and organization; losing a child constitutes a common experience for them. It would be oversimplifying to equate favelas with poverty because there are many differences between the almost 1,000 favelas in Rio de Janeiro. While their origin was affordable housing for the urban poor, working class and former slaves, favelas' economies have developed and diversified. As Bryan McCann states, "There are poor neighborhoods in Rio, moreover, that are not favelas. Poverty is no longer a consistent identifying characteristic" (2014, p. 26). Yet the permanent conflict over urban space, the systematic neglect of favelas and the criminalization of poverty led to the lack of access to formal employment and education and the perpetuation of racist and classist stigmas (A.B. de Oliveira et al., 2022; L.F. de Oliveira, 2019; Viana & Chaves, 2016). Poor Black women from favelas are confronted with the stigma of the *mãe de bandido* and "stereotypical gendered, racist ideas of black women as passive and undereducated servants" (Perry, 2016, p. 106). This reality shapes their maternal practices because their Black sons are treated as (potential) criminals who deserve to be executed and are unworthy of grief. Their experiences as mothers are inherently tied to living in the favela, and they have no lobby to advocate for their rights because their marginalization is normalized (Kolling, 2021).

Thirdly, Ana Paula questions the dominant racist narrative of the police only killing criminals and suspects in the favelas. Those killed by stray bullets do not happen to be at the wrong time in the wrong place, but they happen to be Black. While the national myth of the racial democracy suggests blurred racial hierarchies, the state, its security actors and society as a whole "are consistently able to identify black bodies and thereby establish racial boundaries through everyday violence, incarceration and death" (Alves, 2018, p. 11). The criminalization of poverty and the naturalization of killing Black bodies in order to uphold a public security promise are tightly entangled with the dominant narrative *bandido bom é bandido*. This saying informs militarized urban security governance in favelas and is widely agreed upon in Brazilian society (Misse, 2010; Vargas & Alves, 2010; Villenave, 2022). Ana Paula also refuses to accept that stray bullets simply "get lost", as this conceals the fact that there is always someone who pulls the trigger. Police impunity and the lack of justice indicate that murdering poor Black bodies does not need to be prosecuted; in the last decade, 91.3 percent of the homicide cases in which police officers were involved in the state of Rio de Janeiro were not brought to court but archived by the Public Prosecutor's Office (V. Araújo, 2023).

Lastly, Ana Paula explicitly draws on the political nature of their motherhood and their resistance because their sons do not just happen to be at the wrong time in the wrong place

but are explicitly targeted even through stray bullets. Being the mother of a Black child thus already constitutes an act of resistance against the racist security practices of the Brazilian state. Activist mothers challenge the limited public image of Black and poor women lacking “the political sophistication needed to organize social movements. This image, so different from the reality of black women’s actual leadership, stems from these women’s visible social and economic roles” (Perry, 2016, p. 105), mainly in maintaining Afro-Brazilian cultural and religious traditions. In addition, their work as domestic workers, invisibly upholding the Brazilian economy, is extremely undervalued and naturalized as a direct legacy of slave labor (ibid.; see also Harrington, 2021; Haynes, 2023b; Lovell, 2006; J.C. Teixeira, 2020). Black mothers of victims of state violence substantially contribute to the politicization of local communities and their mobilization to demand social change, fight violence and develop a consciousness of the racialized, gendered and classed power dynamics in urban security governance in favelas (Perry, 2016).

The women and mothers in my data identify urban violence as a major problem in their neighborhood that overlaps with other insecurities they experience, for example, the lack of basic urban services and access to health and education and housing insecurity. For them, the location where (in)securities are taking place is essential in shaping their experiences. The central argument of this introductory section is thus that through the experiences of mothers of victims of state violence we can understand how local communities are affected and how urban violence intersects with other (in)securities that shape both everyday life and urban space in favelas. Their (in)securities are not only gendered, racialized and classed but also spatially anchored in the distinct urban space that favelas are. In the following four sections, I briefly introduce the biographies of Patrícia, Ana Paula, Eliene and Deize. I draw on their experiences as sites of (urban) knowledge production in order to exemplify how women active in mothers’ movements help us understand how (in)security permeates all realms of everyday life in marginalized urban spaces.

1 Patrícia

I met Patrícia in August 2019 in Rio de Janeiro. She was the guide for a group of architecture students from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro whose field trip to Mangueiras I was able to join (see Chapter 4). Patrícia was my most important interlocutor; my contact with her remained a critical connection to my physical research field. She helped me during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic when I tried to reach out to potential research

participants, and she provided vital support in obtaining consent from the Manguinhos mothers, for which I will be forever grateful.

Patrícia was born and raised in Manguinhos, a favela complex in an old industrial area in the *Zona Norte* of Rio de Janeiro, where she still lives. She is a member of the local mothers' movement *Mães de Manguinhos*, which her sister Ana Paula co-founded after a UPP officer killed her son and Patrícia's nephew Johnatha in 2014. Patrícia is also an architect and shared her experience and knowledge about the challenges of building houses in a favela like Manguinhos. As an architect, Patrícia embodies local knowledge grounded in the experience of the favela as an urban space that lacks many basic urban services yet enables residents to use the space creatively with insurgent forms of planning. Patrícia has extensive knowledge about Manguinhos' history and urban development and frequently talks about how the favela complex was and is impacted by government programs and security policies (see, e.g., Lopes-Heimer, 2021; Simonsen, 2004; Zaragocin & Caretta, 2021).

As she points out:

“I like to call myself the *favelada arquiteta* [architect from the favela] because I managed to pierce through the social bubble. I graduated in architecture in 2017, but when I hear someone talking about meritocracy, I always bring up an observation; because even though I have made all these efforts, having seen the efforts my parents made for me to have an education, I still have a target on my chest because of my skin color, because of the place where I live”⁴ (LILITHS, 2021, my translation).

Patrícia regards her background and positionality, being a *favelada*, as decisive for how she practices architecture. Building according to favela residents' needs is the most important objective of her profession. That is, building houses in an environment with a strong tradition of self-building and for people who, in general, do not have a lot of money. When I met Patrícia, I learned about an important project she had been working on in Manguinhos since February 2019: a house for her friend Lala. Lala, a trans woman, has had difficulties finding accommodation throughout her life, and her house was demolished in the course of the growth-acceleration program PAC implemented in Manguinhos in 2008. The constant threat of forced demolition and displacement and the general lack of basic urban services turn favelas into “terrains of constant struggle for blacks, women, and poor people in Brazil” (Perry, 2016, p. 98; see also Freeman & Burgos, 2017; Williamson, 2017). In response to the multiple intersecting insecurities her friend Lala was experiencing—discrimination and

⁴ “Eu gosto de me apresentar como a favelada arquiteta, porque eu consegui furar a bolha social. Me formei em arquitetura em 2017, mas ao ouvir falar em meritocracia, eu sempre trago uma observação; porque mesmo eu tendo feito todos esses esforços, tendo visto o esforço que meus pais fizeram pra que eu tivesse educação, eu continuo com um alvo no meio do meu peito pelo fato da minha cor, pelo fato do local de onde eu moro.”

violence because of her gender identity and job and housing insecurity—Patrícia started to realize the project *Casa da Lala* (Lala’s House). Patrícia found a small property to build Lala’s house on, which the residents’ association ceded to Lala, and to get the project up and running, Patrícia asked various people for financial support (something similar to crowdfunding) and got construction materials from companies inside the favela. The purpose of this project is to combine living and working since Lala will be able to have her beauty salon in the same space.

Patrícia practices inclusivity and actively counteracts the negative consequences of state-funded programs like the PAC with her work to provide housing, which is a fundamental human right. Her aim is to build houses that are good, beautiful and affordable, a paradigm that she calls *3B: boa, bonita e barata*. The realization of the project relies entirely on the support of friends, colleagues and community members, and it took two years until the house finally had a roof. It incorporates the needs of the person who will live there and the conditions of the surrounding environment, for example, by elevating the building by 1.5 meters because of the proximity to the river and the regularly occurring floodings. Lala will have a space of her own, enhancing her independence and enabling her to work in her own beauty salon. With *Casa da Lala*, Patrícia made sure to take into account the multiple insecurities Lala was facing in her everyday life, from financial and physical insecurities and discrimination because of her gender to housing and environmental insecurities related to floodings and the lack of basic sanitation. Building housing according to local needs, like in the case of *Casa da Lala*, and engaging with local actors like the residents’ association is thus an important example of insurgent planning practices in favelas. That is, everyday responses to the state’s “shortcomings” and counter-hegemonic practices to shape urban spaces (Friendly, 2022; Maziviero, 2016).

Patrícia is also a political activist with the Mothers of Manguinhos. She is one of the very few women in my data who are not mothers of a victim of state violence but have other close ties to a victim: Patrícia is the aunt of a victim of state violence. Nonetheless, she is very active and frequently speaks on behalf of the movement; she participated in several online conversations about violence, urban development and memory practices in favelas. I noticed that despite her profound knowledge of the many negative impacts of urban violence on mothers in particular, and families in general, Patrícia speaks differently about this violence compared to her sister and other mothers. Instead of mobilizing grief and emotions in her (public) speeches, she shares a more distant representation of her experiences.

2 Ana Paula

Ana Paula was born and raised in Manguinhos. She has two children, but one of them, her son Johnatha, was killed in 2014 aged 19. She is Patrícia's older sister and one of the founders of *Mães de Manguinhos*. The movement was founded in 2014 after the death of Ana Paula's son Johnatha, who was shot in the back by a local UPP officer on his way home. After losing her son, Ana Paula was devastated and unable to leave the house, do any chores or carry out any tasks. Her son's death was life-changing for Ana Paula; she had symptoms of depression but it was also the start of the Mothers of Manguinhos movement. On the day of Johnatha's death, he was taking his girlfriend back to her house, and Ana Paula asked him if he could drop by his grandmother's house to bring her a dessert that Ana Paula had made for her. Before Johnatha's assassination, some residents were having a dispute with UPP officers who then shot into the crowd arbitrarily; this was when Ana Paula's son passed and was killed. Ana Paula received a call that her son was in the emergency room of UPA Manguinhos, a 24-hour emergency care unit (*Unidade de Pronto Atendimento, UPA*). When she arrived there, she was told that her son had been shot in the coccyx area and had died because of internal bleeding. When Ana Paula recalls that moment, she says that she felt like a hole had opened up under her feet and her life was over. Upon the advice of a social worker at the UPA, her brother-in-law went to the police station to file a report. There, he was told that the officers responsible for the incident around Johnatha's death had said that a young man had been shot that night but that his death was the result of crossfire. The media immediately jumped on the bandwagon of categorizing the incident as a confrontation between the police and criminals, to which the police had to react and defend themselves in the crossfire (G1 Rio, 2014). Also in court, the judge asked if Ana Paula's son was involved in drug trafficking, insinuating the police persecuted him because he was a suspect. Ana Paula's brother-in-law talked to the Chief of Police who eventually asked the Homicide Department to examine the body and look for witnesses of the crime. Many people were willing to give their testimonies, and after this, a criminal investigation was opened. Unlike in the majority of other similar cases, Johnatha's killing could not be registered as self-defense, and the case went to court. The judge decided that the case would go to a jury trial, but to this day, no date has been set for the trial, and the responsible officer remains unpunished (Henrique & Inácio, 2023).

After her son's death, Ana Paula joined forces with Fátima, another mother from Manguinhos, whose son was the first victim killed by the UPP in 2013—the year the local

Pacifying Police Unit was installed. They met because Fátima was one of the main witnesses of Johnatha's shooting, as he got killed in front of her house.

"I met her for the first time at the mass for Johnatha at the local chapel. She came wearing a shirt with her son's picture printed on it. She told me: 'You know, my son had a criminal record, but I've never given up on him, and I'll not give up on him now. He made mistakes, which he did pay for, and nobody had the right to kill him. Let's join forces and fight together for our sons.' I remember all of her words very well, but at that moment, I felt so numb and nothing made much sense to me"⁵ (Muro Pequeno, 2019, my translation).

After attending political events together and speaking up about police violence in their community, people started to call them *Mães de Manguinhos*. Subsequently, the two women founded a movement using the name. This helped Ana Paula to make sense of what had happened to her son, contextualize her experience as part of the systematic racist police violence in the favelas and redirect her pain over her loss into political resistance. At the time of my data collection, the *Mães de Manguinhos* had ten active members and could count on the support of many others, not only from Manguinhos, during their rallies and demonstrations. On the banner they bring to their rallies are the pictures and names of ten young Black boys and men who were killed between 2013 and 2019. Ana Paula has been a well-known activist for years, and she frequently appears in the media and at public events as an activist and expert. With her activism, she disrupts the private-public dualism, turning her own grief into a political issue. In the way Ana Paula and other Manguinhos mothers talk about the murder, torture or disappearance of their children, they make the state responsible for their mourning, not accepting the role of the grieving mother as a merely private one.

One year after her son's assassination, Ana Paula even co-directed a documentary with Victor Ribeiro about the murder of her son and her subsequent fight for justice. The 20 minutes long documentary "*Cada luto, uma luta*" ("Every Mourning is a Fight") was published in 2015 (Vito Videomaker, 2015) and is one of the very rare occasions where a father of a murdered child speaks up. In a short sequence of a report of *A Nova Democracia* that aired online on the day of Johnatha's death, his father says he hopes that justice will be done and that such a cowardly act must not remain unpunished. He seems very sad when he says that he will never see his son again, but he is also more introverted. The documentary is available on YouTube

⁵ "A gente se conheceu na missa de sétimo dia do Johnatha na capela São Daniel Profeta. Ela chegou estava com a camiseta com a foto do filho dela. Ela me disse: 'Olha, o meu filho passou pelo sistema socioeducativo, mas eu nunca abandonei o meu filho e não vai ser agora que vou o abandonar agora. Apesar de meu filho fez errado, ele pagou pelo que ele fez e ninguém tem direito de tirar a vida dele. Vamos juntar nossas forças e vamos lutar pelos nossos filhos.' Eu lembro em todas as palavras dela mas naquele momento ainda estava grogue, sei lá, e as coisas ainda não faz muito sentido."

with English subtitles, and it shows how emotions are mobilized and used in mothers' activism.

3 Eliene

Eliene was born in the Northeast of Brazil but has lived in Manguinhos for many years. She was part of *Mães de Manguinhos* and is now active in the *Frente Estadual pelo Desencarceramento* (State Front for Decarceration) and the *Agenda Nacional pelo Desencarceramento* (National Decarceration Agenda). The reason for her commitment in this area is that her son was shot during a police operation in the favela, which he luckily survived. According to Eliene, he was falsely convicted, incarcerated for almost three years and tortured in prison. Being a single mother, Eliene describes how she supported her son throughout his imprisonment and how she needed to take care of him because of the bad treatment he received in prison. What I found interesting is that Eliene never mentions her son's name, unlike the mothers of victims of lethal police violence. Although her son is no longer imprisoned, making his name public might have negative, even dangerous repercussions for him. Even Eliene is at high risk when denouncing state violence in prisons. In her activism, Eliene criticizes the state's negligence and the repressive practices in its correctional facilities, where the majority of the inmates are young Black men. She denounces the state's incarceration practices as racist and condemns the state for causing suffering and perpetrating violations of human rights in juvenile detention centers and prisons. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation worsened, and Eliene emphasizes that the kind of care she provided was vital for her son to survive in an institution under government control because the state failed to do so:

“I was the one who supported my son. It was me who worked and brought him food, medicine and clothes. This state is much more violent than anyone who is within the prison system. The state offered me nothing, no guidance. If my son is alive today, it is because of the struggle for his life and the lives of all the young people from the favelas. It is for him and for all the other young people that I will continue the fight”⁶ (Núcleo de Estudos da Violência, 2021, my translation).

Eliene took over the state's responsibility to care for her imprisoned son, which goes hand in hand with the fear that he might be harmed or even die while incarcerated. Mothers frequently care for their sons during imprisonment. They provide them with food and clothes and accept

⁶ “Quem sustentou a cadeira do meu filho foi eu. Eu que trabalhei, levei comida, remédio, roupa. Esse estado ele é muito mais violador que qualquer pessoa que esteja no sistema prisional. O Estado não me deu nada, nem orientação. Se o meu filho está vivo hoje é porque o grito pela vida dele e pela vida de todos os jovens que estão nas favelas e é por ele e por todos os outros jovens que eu vou seguir na luta.”

long travels and waiting times during visiting hours and humiliation by prison guards (Alves, 2018, pp. 117–119; Motta, 2019a). Eliene criticizes the criminalization of Black people in the favelas that results in killing, incarceration or constant terror through police operations in the favelas. These practices are inherently tied to policing Black territories, as prisons and mass incarceration are central means to control Black populations, constituting what Jaime Amparo Alves calls “the favela-prison pipeline” (2018, pp. 117–166). Brazil not only has comparably high incarceration rates, but Black people are also significantly overrepresented in the Brazilian prison system. Eliene states that “*incarceration is also a form of genocide because it is a slow death*”⁷ (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation). In addition to the rampant police violence, the mass incarceration of Black youths comprises a severe problem for the human rights of the Black Brazilian population and confirms that, in Brazil, “penalty, the subject of mass incarceration, and the social category of fear all collide on one social type: the young Black man” (Denyer Willis, 2022, p. 222; see also Misse, 2010). Moreover, torture in Brazilian prisons has been identified as a structural problem by the human rights commission of the Brazilian *Câmara dos Deputados* (Chamber of Deputies) and the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture. The Bolsonaro government (2019–2022) even reduced national measures to prevent and combat torture. More than 80 percent of the torture cases are committed by the military police, and most victims are Black men. In 2019, a study by the Public Defender (*Defensoria Pública*) of Rio de Janeiro showed that in Rio, at least three prisoners are tortured every day (Barbara Carvalho, 2019; J.C. Oliveira, 2021). The already critical and vulnerable situation of inmates got even worse during the pandemic when accusations of torture in prisons increased by 70 percent. Many of these complaints concerned the right to health during a global pandemic (Minuano, 2021).

Eliene states that if she had had half the legal knowledge she now has when her son was imprisoned, he would not even have been arrested. Many of the mothers refer to several forms of knowledge they acquired in the course of their activism. For example, they regularly mention knowledge of the Brazilian judicial system that disguises the racist exclusion of the Black population from access to justice (see, e.g., T.J.S. de Lima et al., 2019; Harris, 2012). This encompasses not only knowledge of legal procedures but also of the racist working of police investigations and court procedures. Being able to pass on this kind of knowledge to other mothers in the same situation is one of the objectives of the mothers’ movements.

⁷ “O encarceramento também é uma forma de genocídio, porque é uma morte lenta.”

4 Deize

Deize is the founder of the *Núcleo de Mães Vitimas de Violência* (Center for Mothers of Victims of Violence) and a member of the *Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos contra a Violência* (Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence). She even published her autobiography *Vencendo a Adversidade* (Overcoming Adversity) in 2014. Deize is a resident of Cantagalo, which is part of the favela complex Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho in Rio's *Zona Sul*. The complex unites three favelas that have grown together over time and are inhabited by around 10,000 residents. Like Manguinhos, the complex was one of the four locations in Rio de Janeiro where the PAC took place, and it was pacified in late 2009. The favela complex Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho stretches over a hill squeezed in between the wealthy, touristic neighborhoods Ipanema and Copacabana and has been on the radar of several "upgrading" programs, for example, before several major sporting events that took place in Rio de Janeiro.

On January 1st, 2008, Deize's 17-year-old son Andreu was tortured to death by six officers of the *Departamento Geral de Ações Sócio Educativas (DEGASE)*. The DEGASE is a governmental agency of the state of Rio de Janeiro. It is part of the youth correctional system appointed with socio-educational measures for adolescents who were in conflict with the law, mostly because of robberies and drug trafficking. Deize's son Andreu was accused of a theft that, eventually, someone else admitted to having committed. At that point, Andreu was already dead, and his torturers and murderers have not faced any consequences to this day. The Brazilian cartoonist Carlos Latuff even drew a cartoon about the brutal murder of Andreu (see Figure 2).

Deize says she could not sleep for five months after her son's violent death. For her, it was painful when Andreu died, but the dehumanization that followed his death felt even worse.

"Often, they say that we are negligent and that we don't take care of our children properly. They don't only punish the child but also the family. I joined the activism for justice for my son, for all the other young people and for all the other mothers who are unable to be in the fight because they got sick. I have gotten sick; I have a heart problem and diabetes because of all the disruption the state brought upon me"⁸ (Fórum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade, 2021, my translation).

⁸ "Muitas das vezes eles falam que nós somos negligentes, que nós não cuidamos nossos filhos adequadamente. Eles punem também não somente a criança mas também a família. Foi a justiça pelo meu filho que me fez entrar na militância, e por todos outros jovens por todas as outras mães que não têm condições de estar na luta porque ficam adoecida. Eu passei por cima do adoecimento, eu fiquei com problema de coração, eu adquiri a diabetes, devido a esse transtorno todo que o Estado me trouxe."



Figure 2: Illustration of Andreu's murder by cartoonist Latuff (Source: ponte.org)

It is very common for a trauma like losing a loved one through violent death to cause mental and physical problems and illnesses. Experiencing the sudden murder of a child can cause depression, PTSD and physical diseases, such as heart problems (Alves, 2018, pp. 37–38; Lacerda, 2014, p. 52; L.O. Rocha, 2014, pp. 190–191; C.A. Smith, 2016, p. 39). This affects mothers in particular, who are the main caretakers in a patriarchal society and also bear the main burden in the fight for justice for their children. Like Deize, many mothers describe the effects the loss of their children, the grieving but also the grueling and demoralizing judicial process and the criminalization of their children by the general public had on their health. Raising awareness for this issue thus means making visible the unseen and ignored effects of everyday violence on women, and mothers in particular. These “secondary”, less direct effects of violence are inseparable from the systematic and racist oppression favela residents face and, in fact, make a large part of the Black population sick. I found that, in their narratives, mothers of victims of state violence often referred to this form of “slow violence” (Nixon, 2011; Zaragocin, 2018a), for example, when a mother suffered from depression and passed away after the murder of her child. This was often referred to as “dying of sorrow” (*morrer de tristeza*). Moreover, when mothers engage in political resistance, they often face threats from state actors or are assassinated, like the two Mothers of Acari activists. Deize was threatened by a UPP officer who asked her if she was not afraid to cross the street, insinuating she could get hit by a car when crossing, which would look like an accident (see also Zulver, 2022, 2023).

After having experienced the racist injustice in the Brazilian legal system, Deize studied to be a lawyer and received her bachelor's degree in 2020. She is also an activist and frequently appears in public. She decided to become an activist and, ultimately, a lawyer in order to help other mothers and families of victims of state violence because, often, they are not able to afford a lawyer or legal counseling. As a lawyer, Deize cannot only provide legal advice, but she is also able to fundamentally understand the struggle, the pain and the challenges mothers and families of victims face before and during a judicial process and in the face of stigmatizing media reports. Just as Patrícia's positionality profoundly defines how she exercises her profession as an architect, Deize's background and experiences motivate why and how she practices law. In 2012, Deize received the Chico Mendes Resistance Prize (*Medalha Chico Mendes de Resistência*) for her work, as did the *Mães de Mangueiras* in 2015.

To conclude, the narratives of Patrícia, Ana Paula, Eliene and Deize illustrate how the brutal direct and the less visible effects of chronic urban violence are inscribed into the urban spaces of favelas and how they (re)produce intersecting insecurities along the lines of gender, race and class. In their speeches, they connect and juxtapose their everyday urban (in)security experiences with racialized, gendered and classed spatial structures in Rio de Janeiro. The purpose of centering on their lived experiences is to create a more complex understanding of urban violence, security and insecurity and how they are created and challenged. Based on the themes I identified in the methodological chapter, I now proceed with two empirical chapters. In the first chapter, I focus on how multiple intersecting (in)securities are shaped by gender, race and class and the distinct spatiality of favelas and how women active in mothers' movements challenge and transform these (in)securities. With a feminist and decolonial analysis, I explicitly carve out how an urban perspective makes women's gendered, racialized and classed (in)securities tangible. In the second chapter, I show how activist mothers respond to chronic urban trauma and intervene in the urban space with their insurgent spatial practices. I focus on their resistance and memory practices, with which they engage not only in a struggle over territory but also in a struggle over meaning. From the narratives of mothers of victims of state violence, we learn how everyday practices of care embedded in spatiality are insightful for understanding how broader social power relations operate in a particular spatial context.

5 GROUNDING EVERYDAY (IN)SECURITIES IN URBAN SPACE

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the first research question: *How do gender, race, class and space intersect in producing everyday urban (in)securities in favelas?* Violence is geographic, racialized and gendered, and so are narratives about violence. To discuss this question, I privilege the narratives of Black women who are active in mothers' movements because their everyday experiences and embodied knowledge provide invaluable insights into how security "works" in the everyday. Their narratives make us able to understand how invisibilized effects of security governance are woven into all areas of everyday life and how women respond to the violence that structurally and spatially shapes how they are able to go about their day. Thereby, I contribute to a strand of research on urban violence in Rio de Janeiro that only recently began to focus on the experiences of women in general, and mothers in particular (Hume & Wilding, 2020; L.O. Rocha, 2012; Wilding, 2010, 2012; Zulver, 2023).

Situating the stories of women who are active in mothers' movements in very specific postcolonial spaces, I build my argument on the understanding of Rio de Janeiro as shaped by postcolonial histories of racist violence and oppression that have produced the city's geographies of inequality and find their expression in contemporary forms of urban governance and policing. I argue that it is imperative to look at the location from which these women produce their embodied knowledge that is shaped by their spatial and social positionality and how they use their situatedness to contest and transform insecurities. In three sections, I illustrate three ways in which gendered, racialized and classed (in)securities in favelas are reproduced and transformed. Firstly, I argue that favelas are spaces of tension where top-down urbanization programs meet bottom-up urban development that consists of counter-hegemonic practices, taking place in the everyday and appropriating public space. Within this field of tension, intersecting (in)securities in favelas are (re)produced, challenged and transformed. Secondly, I argue that the ways in which the gendered, racialized and classed insecurities I addressed above manifest in urban space produce chronic urban trauma (Pain, 2019) and have profound effects on the everyday planning security of favela residents in general, and mothers of victims of violence in particular. Thirdly, I discuss the response to

the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in favelas as an example of how gendered, racialized and classed insecurities spatially anchored in favelas were reproduced.

5.1 Urban Development From Above and Below

In the previous chapter, I have already addressed two major programs that impacted Manguinhos and Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho: the *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* and the *Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora*. The implementation of such programs is usually widely supported by the general public because they draw on the fear of the wealthier classes that “the favela would take over the *asfalto*” (Pacheco de Oliveira, 2014, p. 135, my translation). The Black population taking over Brazil is a fear deeply rooted in the minds of the country’s elite and, I argue, translates into measures such as big infrastructure and security programs that enable the state to continuously exercise control over Black territories (see also Nascimento, 1989; Vargas, 2008). In this section, I discuss the tensions between top-down urbanization programs and bottom-up urbanism that take place in favelas; embedded within these tensions and the struggle over power, favela residents also claim agency and engage in counter-hegemonic practices despite oppressive structures.

Pavão-Pavãozinho and Cantagalo are inhabited by around 10,000 residents, are located on hills squeezed in between the touristy neighborhoods of Ipanema and Copacabana and keep growing together (see Figure 3). Because of their location, the three favelas are of interest for tourism, real estate development and speculation. The high visibility of the favela complex with its brick buildings stacked on top of each other from Ipanema and Copacabana poses a problem for the postcard image Rio de Janeiro seeks to achieve. Manguinhos, on the other hand, is located in the North and has a population of around 40,000 (see Figure 4). While it is relatively far off from any touristic places, it lies on a main route from the airport to the city and the Maracanã Stadium, which was particularly important for the series of sports mega-events Rio hosted (A.L. da S. Lima, 2018; Nogueira Dos Santos, 2017). All of the upgrading, modernization, urban development and security programs thus need to be contextualized within a wider urbanization strategy, with which Rio de Janeiro sought to overcome its image as a violent “third-world city” and to establish a tighter and more formal relationship between the state and informal urban areas for the state to regain territorial control. The slum-upgrading approach aims at eventually turning favelas into lucrative locations for private and public investments and tourism (M. Cavalcanti, 2013; Freeman, 2012; Gaffney, 2016; Veillette & Nunes, 2017).

and Preventório in Niterói. The program's aim was the “upgrading” of these five favelas, including urbanization projects, land regularization and social work in the respective communities (Barros, 2016; M. Cavalcanti, 2013; Fernandes & Costa, 2013; Jurberg, 2018; A.L. da S. Lima, 2018). The UPPs were an attempt to securitize predominantly Black territories and were originally supposed to link “community policing to economic development” (Rekow, 2016, p. 10). Between 2008 and 2014, the “pacification” program was installed in 38 favelas. Manguinhos was pacified in 2012, Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho in 2009. In the wake of a federal intervention in 2018, 18 UPPs were terminated, and the remaining ones were incorporated into regular battalions of the military police. Even before, it was blatantly obvious that the program had missed its aims. On the contrary, it has caused a lot of damage in the favelas where it was installed (see Chapter 2) (L. de M. Rocha, 2019). The paradigm of “integrating” favelas into the so-called formal city by means of militarized security advanced by these programs is sometimes referred to as “PACification” (M. Cavalcanti, 2013; Cunha, 2021).

Manguinhos faces extremely high levels of violence; one of the major roads that constitutes the western boundary of the Manguinhos area, Rua Leopoldo Bulhões, is thus often called *faixa de Gaza*—Gaza strip. The commuter train SuperVia runs along this street, connecting the Central Station in Rio's center with Duque de Caxias, a city in the Rio de Janeiro Metropolitan Region about 40 kilometers North of Rio de Janeiro. Within the scope of the PAC, the train line was elevated (see Figure 5) along two kilometers to create the *Rambla de Manguinhos*, a public walkway inspired by the *Ramblas* in Barcelona that was supposed to “eliminat[e] the division established by the existing walls in a place known locally as the ‘Gaza Strip’, [...] creating a permeable boundary instead” (Jáuregui, 2011, p. 61). A bike lane was created that, according to Patrícia, is not connected to the bike infrastructure of other neighborhoods (see Figure 6). The integration of the favelas of Manguinhos did not work out as planned and other problems persisted, as a properly working sewage system or measures against the regular flooding of the rivers Jacaré and Faria-Timbó were not implemented. During periods of heavy rain, water levels in the houses frequently rise up one to one and a half meters, and waste that the rivers carry is washed to the riverbanks. On social media, there is footage of people wading through waist-high floodwater on the streets and water covering stoves and refrigerators or flowing down stairs. Manguinhos residents in general, and Patrícia in particular, criticize the decision to elevate the train line because this was not a priority for them. The residents wished for proper basic sanitation and investments in housing, health and

education. While the PAC earmarked 106 billion Brazilian real (around 62 billion US dollar at the time) for housing and sanitation, Manguinhos still lacks a functioning basic urban sanitation (Becerill Miranda, 2015, p. 200). Patrícia criticizes that there is a lack of public will because there was enough money mobilized through the PAC so that the problems identified by the residents could have been solved. André and Rachel, two activists and researchers based in Manguinhos that I was in contact with, also pointed out the far-reaching, damaging impacts the PAC had on the neighborhood, both regarding the built environment and the community.



Figure 5: View from Manguinhos train station (Source: author)



Figure 6: Bike lane on Rua Leopoldo Bulhões (Source: author)

While there certainly are also positive effects and not all residents have the same opinion about the legacies of the PAC, the announcement of extensive improvements and vast investments had raised great hopes yet left a bitter taste (M. Cavalcanti, 2013). Ultimately, trust in the state was further undermined; for many residents, the legacies of the PAC and the UPPs are proof that the state does not come to the favelas to improve the living conditions but to pursue its own interests. It seemed to be a priority to focus on big projects with high visibility and prestige instead of functionality. While the UPPs were a showcase of “spectacular security” (Pauschinger, 2020b), including media-effective police operations in favelas to stress that the state fights the “war on drugs” with an iron fist, the works of the PAC relied on fancy, marketable constructions. In addition to the comprehensive restructuring of the Manguinhos train station, a cable car going up the hill was built in Complexo do Alemão to improve the residents’ mobility, based on the model of the gondola lift system in Medellín, Colombia. However, the *Teleférico* in Alemão was closed in 2016 after just five years of operation because the state of Rio stopped paying the operating costs. Many residents and activists have criticized that the cable car was just for show and to impress international tourists while ignoring local needs (Jurberg, 2018). In Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho, the *Mirante da Paz* (Peace Lookout) was built as a viewing platform. The favela was connected with the *Mirante* with an elevator and a bridge construction. The enormous construction also conveniently conceals the undesired messiness of the informal settlements with modern architecture (Freeman & Burgos, 2017; Rego-Fagerlande, 2018; Steinbrink, 2013). Policies to alleviate poverty that are based on major investments mainly “guaranteed profits to the groups already inserted in the logic of the market, be it the owners, the capital agents themselves, or developers” (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022, p. 17). While the profits remain in the hands of a few, the majority of the money does not reach the communities in a way that benefits the residents, and they see no overall improvements in their living conditions (see also Freeman, 2012; Gaffney, 2016; D.S. Rodrigues et al., 2018).

The problem is not only that their living conditions have not improved and that the large urbanization and infrastructure programs have not mitigated the residents’ insecurities. Moreover, their insecurities have even increased because of the prioritization of prestigious projects and top-down “modernization”, which is a structural problem. These insecurities entail housing insecurity because of real estate speculation but also forced removals and the demolition of houses to implement prestigious projects, exposure to police violence and the continuation of the deprivation of basic urban services. I argue that while a participatory

planning approach might have enhanced the residents' identification with and appreciation of the measures that were implemented (Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015), it certainly would not have counteracted the underlying assumptions of how urban spaces in a metropolis are supposed to be. The modernist dualism of urban formality and informality builds on the eradication of the latter, yet it is the state itself that produces informality through its socio-spatial practices. That is, informality is a product of state regulations and policies rather than their object. The devaluation of other urban forms is incorporated into the neoliberal planning paradigm that uses Western metropolises "as the template against which all other cities are judged" (Edensor & Jayne, 2012b, p. 1; see also Otero et al., 2022; Prouse, 2019; Roy, 2005). Without acknowledging the racist and classist beliefs that inform urban transformation programs, such projects will not benefit residents who are discriminated against based on race and class.

In a presentation about *Casa da Lala* (Cria Latina, 2021), for example, Patrícia explained how several houses were demolished during the implementation of the PAC for Rua Leopoldo Bulhões to be widened and the train station to be elevated, including Lala's house. Despite resistance, 1,000 families were evicted due to the PAC in Manguinhos. Even years after the demolition of the houses, the wasteland has remained abandoned and has barely been used for any other purpose. Tons of rubble, debris and garbage dominate the overall picture (Robertson & Southwick, 2016). The issues the state did not resolve were left to the residents to take care of. Ultimately, the program failed to provide the infrastructure improvements it had promised. While profit was concentrated in the hands of some, democratic public spaces for participation and governance were undermined, limiting the residents' right to the city (see also Barros, 2016; A.L. da S. Lima, 2018). The example of the PAC shows, however, that the state is not absent from Manguinhos but that the favela has "functioned as a laboratory for low-income housing policies" (M. Cavalcanti, 2013, p. 196, my translation).

Patrícia frequently asks why these programs do not work in a sense that benefits her favela. While I do not analyze these programs in detail or focus on corruption and fraud, I want to draw attention to another issue that I consider highly relevant to the ineffectiveness of massive urbanization programs. It is more or less impossible for these programs to work because they do not entail a radically different notion of favelas as urban spaces and their residents as citizens. Put simply, no amount of money can solve the problem of the racialized geographies of inequality and death in Rio de Janeiro. I argue that these programs are based on taken-for-granted assumptions about how cities function and are supposed to function,

without leaving space for uncontrolled planning practices (Edensor & Jayne, 2012a; Robinson, 2006; Watson, 2009). They draw on the narrative of necessary top-down solutions for the “favela problem” that devalues local urban development in the favelas, even if based on the residents’ needs. Moreover, local insurgent planning practices offer several features that are desired in sustainable urban planning, such as “affordable housing in central areas, housing near work, low-rise/high-density construction, mixed-use developments, pedestrian-first roads, high use of bicycles and transit, organic (flexible) architecture, high degree of collective action” (Williamson, 2017, p. 60). Favelas are seen as places “off the map” (Robinson, 2002), as places that are not even considered urban. Favela residents are denied their place in and their right to the city, which fundamentally impedes their ability to go about their everyday lives. Top-down urbanization programs perpetuate the stigma of favelas as backward, unsanitary and constituting a problem for the city, thereby reproducing the gender, race and class dynamics of urban development. Favela residents are seen as needing to be saved from themselves, either with drastic, militarized police interventions or through relocation to the outskirts of the city, for example, to remote social housing developments.

Drawing on Patrícia’s experience and practice as a favela resident, activist and architect, I argue that space and agency are intertwined (see also A. Allen, 2022; Caillol, 2018; Perry, 2016). While unequal urbanization practices, forced removals and the demolition of homes intensify socio-spatial segregation along the lines of class and race, Patrícia denormalizes such an approach to planning with her practice. Patrícia exerts her agency directly in spatial terms; with her embodied knowledge, she is able to build according to local needs, taking into account the multiple insecurities favela residents face. The housing project for her friend Lala (*Casa da Lala*) centers on the lived experience of a trans woman who has faced gendered, racialized and classed insecurities, such as housing and job insecurity and discrimination and violence because of her gender identity. Trans people in Brazil are placed in a highly precarious and vulnerable position, which public authorities do not take seriously (see, e.g., S.N.B. Nogueira, 2018; Su & Valiquette, 2022). I argue that as *favelada arquiteta*, Patrícia denormalizes the “master subject” in urban planning—usually *white*, middle-class, heterosexual and male (Listerborn, 2016; Rose, 1993; Roy, 2005). Wanting to use her profession to help people where she lives because she knows the difficulties they face, she emphasizes the importance of housing in an insecure urban environment:

“This space will guarantee Lala’s personal and professional autonomy; she will no longer have to stay in other people’s houses. She will have her own place, and I think that this is a right that everyone should have: to have their own home, where they can have their corner, to

rest after a day's work in this very strange world that we live in, and without having a house everything is more aggravated"⁹ (Cria Latina, 2021, my translation).

Privileging the lived reality of Lala, who is particularly marginalized and vulnerable, accounts for an approach to urban planning that does not only benefit Lala but also other groups who are usually marginalized in planning processes (Ortiz Escalante & Gutiérrez Valdivia, 2015). Prioritizing, for example, to elevate Lala's house protects it from regular floodings—an issue that should have been resolved within the framework of the PAC and a risk that residents are all too familiar with. I thus consider Patrícia's everyday practices a great way to understand how broader social power relations operate in this particular urban space and how inequalities can be subverted. While Patrícia's work as an architect might not be generalizable, I argue that her experiences provide an important intersectional perspective on how multiple insecurities are interwoven with the particular space they take place in and how agency can unfold even in an oppressive context. With her activities as an architect and activist, she makes us understand that the lived realities of favela residents do not become safer when the state implements "more security" in the form of militarized police and security governance. Irrespective of whether permanent police occupation reduces crime and violence, these kinds of security policies do not provide solutions for other everyday insecurities faced in favelas like Manguinhos, for example, housing insecurity or the risk of flooding. With her practices, Patrícia balances out from below what the state fails to provide, both as an architect with embodied knowledge about the particularities of her favela and as an activist in a mothers' movement, where she creates networks of support to enhance social cohesion. As Keisha-Khan Perry (2016) argues, Black women from poor communities are often at the heart of struggles for housing security and struggles in urban areas in general because their material existence is structured by the intersecting insecurities they experience in the everyday. Because of their social and spatial location, many of these women recognize intersecting insecurities grounded in the particular urban space and, consequently, identify necessary political struggles for gender and racial equality and access to urban resources. Many of these struggles take place in the everyday, where these women practice care and solidarity and build networks with local actors and organizations to meet the challenges of their territories (see also Canavêz et al., 2021; Nunes, 2021; Sanches et al., 2022).

⁹ "Nesse espaço, ele vai garantir autonomia pessoal e profissional, ela não vai precisar mais de ficar na casa das outras pessoas. Ela vai ter o local dela e eu acho que isso é um direito que todas as pessoas deveriam ter, de ter a sua própria habitação, onde ter o seu canto, para descansar de um dia de trabalho nesse mundão tão estranho que a gente vive e sem ter uma casa tudo fica mais potencializado."

5.2 Everyday Planning Insecurities

In this section, I argue that the spatialization of inequalities in favelas along the lines of class, gender and race produces particular insecurities for women who usually occupy and work in everyday, private spaces. As I have already addressed above, many of the care practices women are responsible for take place in everyday spaces, which are under the constant threat of violence (Blomqvist et al., 2021; Massey, 2004; Sara Ruddick, 1998). As I have argued before, favelas are a product of an anti-Black spatial regime that shaped them into the marginalized, racialized and impoverished territories they are today. The indifference to, or rather the outright appreciation of, lethal violence against Black bodies in these territories has caused traumas for generations of Black Brazilians. These traumas also manifest in the urban space; cities, too, can have wounds, and the particular histories of displacement, the denial of urban services and arbitrary killings are written into the urban space of favelas (Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). When it comes to this kind of slow violence (Nixon, 2011), the perpetrator is hidden behind power structures but also within spatial structures because it is “spatially disproportionate and compounds uneven development” (Pain, 2019, p. 387), as people who are already made vulnerable are even more affected by the destructive effects of violence. Space conceals slow violence; the socio-spatial logic of Rio de Janeiro invisibilizes Black suffering for the *white* society. In settings of high levels of violence and constant insecurity, violence thus becomes a spatial and social structure; everyday planning tasks that might be considered normal and trivial elsewhere become challenging or impossible. However, violence and other forms of suffering are not exceptional in such contexts but enmeshed in the ordinary (Das, 2006, 2008).

Slow violence, however, can be very visible for those who experience it; it shapes the ways they go about their day and what specific strategies they need to be able to do so. In the online conversations, the women talk about the distinct knowledge they acquired, for example, when to expect a police operation, how to behave during shoot-outs or which corner of the home is less likely to get pierced by bullets. This kind of knowledge is embodied and, at the same time, inherently spatial. They need to acquire it to protect them from and adapt their gendered and racialized bodies to the violence that is perpetrated against them. Thus, knowledge is a survival strategy in an inherently violent (post)colonial urban environment. Yet this knowledge can never be sufficient to reliably protect them from unannounced police operations, stray bullets and other arbitrary violence (Jenss, 2023b; L.O. Rocha, 2014). This ambivalence is illustrated by the following quote by Patrícia:

“I had the opportunity not to have been murdered during my adolescence because I am Black and because I live in a favela that is violated like Manguinhos here in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. And when we start to think that there is a state plan to exterminate our young people and exterminate our people, this mixture of feelings doesn’t leave our minds; we try our best to go about our lives, but we still know that our children, our nephews were murdered because of a genocidal plan directed toward us”¹⁰ (rede nacional de mães e familiares de vítimas, 2021, my translation).

Patrícia’s blunt statement addresses two aspects. Firstly, she voices the very real threat of dying at the hand of the police, which particularly concerns Black youth. There is the risk of both herself and close family members being murdered. In my opinion, the first sentence of her statement sounds casual. It sounds almost cynical to speak of an “opportunity” when it comes to surviving the everyday because the possibility of being killed is part of the ordinary due to the genocidal (security) politics (Alves, 2018; Nascimento, 1989; Vargas, 2008). Secondly, Patrícia describes the embodied fear of death that she cannot always shake off when trying to live a normal everyday life. Patrícia already had her nephew murdered—an experience that shapes how she perceives state violence perpetrated in her favela. That is, not only those who die are victims of violence but also those who survive it. Many of the women in my data state that they had not thought that losing a child would happen to them despite the high levels of violence they are constantly exposed to. Yet when a child, a family member, a neighbor or a friend was murdered, they realized that this could happen again. As Ana Paula states:

“This is something that only those who live here know: what it’s like to wake up, jump out of bed in fear, hearing shots fired by an armored police helicopter. Knowing that several people are leaving at this moment to go to work, that you have already lost a child, that at any moment you can see the news that a neighbor of yours has died, that another relative or friend has died”¹¹ (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation).

The quotes by the two sisters illustrate their care and worry for others to be victimized or otherwise affected by police violence. Other women in my data state that they had to assume responsibility for the family of their murdered child, for example, by taking care of their grandchildren. Eliene lives near a school and has witnessed several times how the police entered the school when chasing a “suspect”. Police operations are reported to often occur

¹⁰ “Tive a oportunidade de não ter sido assassinada durante a minha adolescência pelo fato de ser negra pelo fato de ser moradora de uma favela violentada como Manguinhos, ficar aqui na Zona Norte do Rio de Janeiro. E quando a gente começa a pensar que existe um plano de Estado para exterminar os nossos jovens e exterminar o nosso povo isso nos deixa com um misto de sentimentos que não sei não sei da nossa mente a gente tenta da melhor forma sempre levar a vida mas nos vem à mente que os nossos filhos os nossos sobrinhos foram assassinados por conta de um plano genocida que existe direcionado para nós.”

¹¹ “Isso é uma coisa que só quem mora aqui é que sabe o que é acordar, dar um pulo da cama no susto, ouvindo tiros disparados por um helicóptero blindado da polícia. Sabendo que várias pessoas estão saindo nesse momento para trabalhar, que você já perdeu um filho, que a qualquer momento pode ver a notícia de que um vizinho seu morreu, de que um outro parente ou amigo veio a falecer.”

right when school starts or ends. That is when both children and teachers are on their way to and from school and the streets are busy. This is, of course, also true for people commuting to and from work. When schools are closed, it is mostly women who have to look after the children who are too young to stay at home alone, and they often take them with them to their workplace in the informal sector (J.C. Teixeira, 2020). Not being able to go to work because of shootings and having to arrange childcare because of closed schools disrupts women's everyday planning security.

In patriarchal societies in general, and particularly in contexts of high insecurity, it is mainly women who take on caring responsibilities and do the everyday care work that secures the survival of families and communities (Blomqvist et al., 2021; True, 2019; Turpin, 1998). Vinícius Santiago and Marta Fernández call this “the backstage of war”; through the lethal violence perpetrated against their sons, mothers get inscribed into the “war” that territorializes in their neighborhoods (2017). However, I argue that when we look at everyday urban violence from the perspective of Black mothers of victims of state violence, we see that they are actually located “center stage”. While the murder of a child is central and actively and visibly used in mothers' resistance, their affectedness goes beyond their maternal loss because they are not merely the mother of their own child but care for the social cohesion in the wider community. Everyday violence fundamentally disrupts Black women's everyday work of “mothering, sheltering, nursing the ill, tending the frail elderly, maintaining kin connections” (Sara Ruddick, 1998, p. 216). I argue that the everyday, where this kind of work takes place, is a central location for the “war on drugs”. Targeting the private spaces, disrupting social and family networks by means of militarized urban security governance and thereby purposefully creating vulnerability for racialized women is thus a core element of the state's gendered and racialized territorial control mechanisms (Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Fanon, 1965, pp. 117–119; C.A. Smith, 2016).

While the home is a space of care, comfort and safety for the wealthier classes, the private sphere is not safe for poor Black women in favelas. The safety they try to create in their homes is continuously disrupted. While it would certainly be less accepted by society if state security actors exerted lethal violence against Black women as it is perpetrated against Black men, for example, because their cheap and unpaid labor is needed to uphold Brazilian society, Black women are still not seen as worthy of protection compared to, for example, *white* women (see, e.g., Sachseder, 2022; Zaragocin, 2018a). As Eliene phrases it: *“I'm only alive because the state allows it. Because at any moment they can fake an operation in the favela*

where I live and just say that I was hit by a stray bullet because that's how it happens"¹² (Núcleo de Estudos da Violência, 2021, my translation). In her statement, Eliene also refers to the risk of being an activist mother, which bears the danger of being assassinated by armed actors whose work activist mothers can make a lot more difficult as the case of the Mothers of Acari shows (Auyero & Kilanski, 2015; Stanchi, 2019; Zulver, 2023). Deize as well reports an incident where a UPP officer threatened her to be careful when crossing the street, insinuating that it would look like an accident if a car hit her. Eliene's experience shows several insecurities linked to Black motherhood. In addition to not being granted protection because Black women are not able to project the same "image of motherly purity" (Haynes, 2023b, p. 4) as *white* women, she also has to be careful to protect her son. I found that Eliene never mentions her son's name because being his mother is still characterized by the immediate risk of loss. For the police and the general public, it is irrelevant whether Eliene's son has already been to prison or not; viewing him as a *bandido* is associated with Blackness and poverty, not with him having been convicted of a crime. That is, genocidal instruments to eliminate Blackness fundamentally structure Eliene's possibilities to exercise her motherhood and resistance (Haynes, 2023b; Wilding, 2010; Zulver, 2023).

While Black motherhood is shaped by loss and the fear thereof, the mothers' grief and trauma are not met with compassion because they are seen as "'breeders' as opposed to 'mothers'" (Ota, 2021, p. 533)—a prevailing colonial representation of Black women as a source of slave workforce (ibid.). Black women can never achieve the ideal-typical notion of the *white* bourgeois housewife; Black women in poor urban communities do not have the choice to be a homemaker. They are not only responsible for the care work in their own homes but also take care of the homes of others, mostly as domestic servants, precariously employed and poorly paid. And Brazilian society depends heavily on their invisibilized, naturalized work to uphold its economy (Duarte, 2020; Harrington, 2021; Lovell, 2006; J.C. Teixeira, 2020; Vicente de Paula, 2012). Therefore, Black women are expected to function for their families and society at large because both would crumble without their everyday work. Mothers of victims of state violence risk their jobs when they cannot overcome their grief after violently losing a child. Often, mothers are unable to continue working because of depression and other health conditions caused by the murder of their child (Lacerda, 2014; L.O. Rocha, 2014; Santiago & Fernández, 2017). Some women in my data report that they felt this expectation also in their own community; they are met with a lack of understanding by society when they are

¹² "Eu só estou vivo porque o Estado permite. Porque a qualquer momento eles podem forjar uma operação na favela em que eu moro e simplesmente dizer que eu foi atingida por bala perdida porque é assim que acontece."

incapable to go about their lives even years after the murder of their child. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, grieving is very important for mothers of victims of state violence. They want to mourn their loss and remember their children as human beings, which is constantly sabotaged by criminalizing and dehumanizing public representations in media, politics and the justice system.

Although women's experiences with urban violence are often considered less grave because they are less likely to be killed by the police, the women in my data link the suffering of mothers and families of victims of state violence primarily to the state's doing; *em nome do Estado*. The state produces multiple insecurities for Black women in favelas, ranging from direct, brutal violence perpetrated against their sons to the invisibilized practices of slow violence (Nixon, 2011; see also Pain, 2019; Zaragocin, 2018a). How gendered, racialized and classed insecurities manifest in urban space shapes Black women's ability to plan and go about their everyday lives; by focusing on their everyday routines, this complicated web of (in)securities becomes tangible.

5.3 Covid-19: Between State Neglect and Solidarity From the Inside

My data collection took place during a very sensitive time of the global Covid-19 pandemic. In Brazil, many people died because of the new virus, particularly in marginalized neighborhoods where the risk of contracting the virus intersected with the lack of access to health care and job and food insecurity. Covid-19 spread across Rio de Janeiro's socio-spatial geography along the lines of gender, race and class, affecting the city's population unequally. Initially, the virus was thought to only affect members of the *white*, middle-class population because they were the ones able to travel abroad and get in contact with the virus in the first place. The coronavirus first arrived in wealthier neighborhoods, where residents were privileged enough to receive adequate medical care once infected. For example, the spatial distribution of the virus in mid-March 2020 concentrated mainly on the neighborhoods of the wealthier South Zone and the upper-class neighborhood of Barra da Tijuca in the West Zone. Not even a month later, the virus had spread unevenly across the city. Mortality rates significantly differed between the city's zones, reflecting socio-spatial conditions and revealing the indifference to the specific living conditions in poor neighborhoods (J.L. Barbosa et al., 2020). The wealthier population's behavior was at the cost of racialized, impoverished populations, whose members only travel between their employer and their

home and could not rely on sufficient health care in their own communities (Friendly, 2022). In this sense, a 63-year-old Black female domestic worker being the first Covid-19 fatality in the state of Rio de Janeiro is quite symbolic of the vulnerability of Black and poor women. Cleonice Gonçalves got infected with the virus by her employer, who had been to Italy and tested positive upon her return. She was the first but certainly not the last domestic worker to die from the new coronavirus; domestic workers were among the most vulnerable to die from Covid-19 (Sanches et al., 2022; J.C. Teixeira, 2020).

The women in my data denounce the lack of interest in protecting vulnerable populations in favelas and discuss how the pandemic aggravated existing intersecting insecurities and inequalities. Deize states:

“There is not only violence perpetrated by security forces but also violence within the health system and within education; we don’t have a structure that serves the Black population. Now, with the Covid-19 situation, we see people dying because of a lack of ventilators. Who is dying? The Black, the people of color, the people from the favelas. It was the most vulnerable people who have died”¹³ (Julho Negro, 2020, my translation).

In her statement, Deize addresses the intersecting forms of state violence racialized populations in favelas experienced during the pandemic; she identifies Blackness, poverty and living in a favela as the main factors for vulnerability to Covid-19. It is widely acknowledged that the impacts of the global pandemic exacerbated existing inequalities; I argue that these disparities are inherently shaped by geographies of inequality. Soon after the outbreak of the pandemic in Brazil, socio-spatial hierarchies of deservingness became obvious; mortality was defined by race, Black and Brown Brazilians having a higher risk of dying (Evangelista, n.d.). The initial assumption that Covid-19 only affects wealthier classes has proven wrong quickly, and Wilson Witzel, then governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, implemented more responsible policies compared to the Bolsonaro administration. Yet socio-epidemiological factors did barely enter the public debate (A.B. de Oliveira et al., 2022). There was a severe lack of policies and information tailored to the distinct social, economic and territorial conditions of favelas. For example, the planning of physical space was one of the few effective measures to combat contamination before vaccines were available. Urban planning and public health have strong historical ties and developed out of a need to combat highly lethal epidemics in the 19th century (Baeten, 2021; Corburn, 2004, 2009; Pitter, 2020). Yet, since their emergence, favela settlements were subjected to removals under the paradigm of

¹³ “A violência não é somente na área da segurança, mas na área da saúde, na área da educação, não temos uma estrutura para atender a população negra. Nós vemos aí a situação do COVID-19, muitas pessoas morreram por falta de respiradores. Quem foram essas pessoas que morreram? Negros, pardos, pessoas de favela. São pessoas mais vulnerável que tem morrido.”

“sanitization” instead of creating decent living conditions for the urban poor. The colonial planning system imposed in the *Cidade Maravilhosa* designed for an anti-Black elite urban modernity and not for an inclusive city that would also integrate affordable housing for poor workers whose cheap labor force the Brazilian economy was built on (Brandão, 2006; Valladares, 2019).

Poor neighborhoods, such as favelas, are characterized by spatial proximity, are usually densely populated, highly reliant on public space and often lack basic sanitation and uninterrupted access to clean water. Physical or “social” distancing is thus impossible in these areas (J.L. Barbosa et al., 2020; Duque Franco et al., 2020; Wilkinson, 2020). The troubling state of basic sanitation has been one of the most urgent demands of favela residents for decades, yet not even major infrastructure programs such as the PAC did solve the issue. Moreover, favela residents are overrepresented in the precarious, informal work sector, mostly in the service industry, where working from home is impossible and a high level of mobility between informal and formal neighborhoods and also between cities is required. Black and poor women, who constitute the majority of domestic workers, were particularly affected by unemployment due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. Policies to contain the virus in the state of Rio de Janeiro required workers to provide evidence of formal employment to be able to travel between cities—something many Black and poor people do not possess (Friendly, 2022; A.B. de Oliveira et al., 2022). Favela residents disproportionately lost their employment across Brazil; in Rio de Janeiro, 54 percent lost their jobs (S. da S. Costa, 2020; Janone, 2021). The precarious Covid situation also brought about an increase in domestic violence against women. In March 2020 alone, reports of domestic violence increased by 18 percent throughout Brazil (Gomes & Carvalho, 2021; Vieira et al., 2020).

In Rio de Janeiro, race, class and gender intersect in producing health inequalities; impoverished neighborhoods have significantly fewer resources and less access to health care, making the handling of the pandemic particularly challenging (Caldwell, 2017; Matijasevich et al., 2008; Szwarcwald et al., 2011). The coronavirus outbreak thus compromised an already fragile health care system. In Manguinhos, the lack of access to health care was exacerbated by the shutdown of the UPA Manguinhos in 2021. The UPA Manguinhos is the local 24-hour emergency care unit that neighboring areas depend on as well. Patrícia criticizes:

“During the pandemic, we had all these problems that I thought were surreal. The Secretary of Health closing our emergency care unit [UPA Manguinhos] while Covid notifications were pouring in is very significant because it took a long time for us to get the vaccine and access to testing. The vaccine arrived recently, and the favela of Manguinhos was not

prioritized to be vaccinated. From my point of view, it would be feasible and possible because we are Fiocruz's backyard”¹⁴ (Canal Pororoça, 2021, my translation).

Fiocruz, short for *Fundação Oswaldo Cruz*, is a public health research institution in Manguinhos that is well known around the world. Oswaldo Cruz was a physician and public health officer who lived at the turn of the 20th century. He was responsible for sanitization campaigns during a time of extensive urban renewal in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1900s (Valladares, 2019, p. 186). In 2021, Covid-19 cases were still skyrocketing; nevertheless, the UPA Manguinhos was closed for 100 days at the beginning of the year without informing the residents, and despite protests, it only reopened in April 2021. It is estimated that around 300 to 400 patients rely on the emergency care unit every day (Voz das Comunidades, 2021). I understand the gross negligence of closing a health care unit that tens of thousands of favela residents depend on as an expression of state violence against its Black and poor citizens. Instead of protecting those who were the most vulnerable during the pandemic, the state deprived them even more of their right to life. This is an expression of the state's necropower, that is, the fact that the state has the ultimate control over life and death (Mbembe, 2019).

I argue that the (inadequate) handling of the effects of the pandemic drew on the historic narrative of favelas as “unsanitary” and “uncivilized”. Since their emergence, favelas were labeled through this “deeply biased and inaccurate narrative” (Williamson, 2017, p. 61) that linked the spread of (lethal) diseases to the living conditions of the urban poor and was reproduced by the monopolistic media. This narrative is responsible for maintaining a public view of favelas as un-urban, temporary and “in need of dramatic punitive intervention, whether that be through evictions or policing, and has allowed the authorities to maintain a policy of neglect and poor up-grading [...], keeping favelas in a never-ending spiral of legitimized neglect” (ibid.; see also Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; Valladares, 2019, p. 39). As such, favelas remain a reminder of an undesired, “pre-modern” condition that needs to be eliminated in order to live up to the “hygienic standard” of a modern European metropolis (L.M. Barbosa & Coates, 2021).

The handling and the effects of the Covid-19 crisis in Brazil are prime examples of how race, class and gender are the ordering principles of access to citizenship and protection from the state. The indifference to the specific situation in favelas regarding the exposure to the virus and the lack of information in accessible language is another form of violence (J.L. Barbosa et

¹⁴ “Durante a pandemia nós tivemos todos esses problemas que eu achei surreal. O secretário de Saúde fechar nossa Unidade de Pronto Atendimento sob notificações de Covid aqui no território é muito expressivas porque a vacinação e as testagem que demoraram muito tempo para chegar. A vacina chegou há pouco tempo também e não teve como prioridade o Complexo de Manguinhos para ser vacinado. No meu ponto de vista seria algo viável e possível até porque somos o quintal da Fiocruz.”

al., 2020; Buer, 2022a; Friendly, 2022; Nunes, 2021; Schiray, 2021). In addition to these less direct forms of violence, police operations continued to take place during the most vulnerable times of the pandemic. The women in my data denounced ongoing police violence in a time when they struggled the most with the impacts of the pandemic. Since continuous police operations severely restricted local practices for containing the spread of the virus, activists brought an official claim to the *Supremo Tribunal Federal* (Brazilian Supreme Federal Court) to reduce state violence in favelas during the pandemic. Various movements and NGOs, such as the *Mães de Manguinhos*, built a network to initiate the claim ADPF 635. ADPF stands for *Arguição de Descumprimento de Preceito Fundamental*, which means “claim of non-compliance with a fundamental precept”. The Brazilian Supreme Federal Court held a public hearing where grassroots movements from favelas, movements of families of victims of state violence and researchers were heard. In August 2020, Edson Fachin, a justice of the Supreme Federal Court, decided to restrict police operations in certain areas and ban certain practices (Buer, 2022b, pp. 183–188; Osmo & Fanti, 2021). Among other things, the final decree restricted the use of helicopters to cases where they were strictly necessary, forbade the use of educational or health facilities for operational purposes and urged security agents and health professionals to preserve all evidence related to a crime (Supremo Tribunal Federal, 2020).

“Our collective is small but very strong. We were even active in ADPF 635, which was a decision by Minister Edson Fachin to stop police operations during the pandemic but which unfortunately was not respected either, right? So, if a decision of a minister of the Supreme Court is not respected, imagine how they act inside the favelas”¹⁵ (LILITHS, 2021, my translation).

Ana Paula points out that police operations were not entirely suspended and police violence continued throughout the pandemic. In the years 2021 and 2022, three of the four most lethal police operations in the state of Rio de Janeiro took place, one of them in Jacarezinho, a neighboring favela of Manguinhos. Lethal violence against Black bodies is banalized to such an extent that neither their disproportionate deaths from Covid-19 nor the brutal massacres committed in favelas trigger any public policies to protect their lives and rights as citizens. The normalization of violence against Black people—the “coloniality of violence” (Sachseder, 2022)—and their continuous dehumanization, dispossession and exploitation as the colonial “Other” are only possible because of the subordination of the *favelados* as the urban “Other”. Black populations are not meant to survive or to be protected, not only

¹⁵ “O nosso coletivo é um coletivo pequeno, mas de muita força. Inclusive nós estivemos ativas na ADPF 635 que foi uma decisão do ministro Edson Fachin para que se parasse as operações policiais agora na pandemia, mas que infelizmente também não foi respeitada, né? Então, se uma decisão de um ministro do Supremo Tribunal não é respeitada, imagine como eles agem dentro das favelas.”

because of direct lethal violence but also because of the spatialization of a hierarchical racial regime that devalues the Black urban experience as deviant, criminal and backward (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; A.L.V. Silva et al., 2021; Vargas, 2008).

Embedded within these oppressive (post)colonial structures, however, there is also resistance. In my data, I found that Black mothers try to create a livable environment for their families and communities against all odds. The mothers in my research frequently mention the force of mothers who resist the state's genocidal practices. For example, Ana Paula states: "*So when we talk about the gender issue, this really says it all, right? It's usually women who support each other, who help each other and who give each other strength*"¹⁶ (LILITHS, 2021, my translation). The *Mães de Manguinhos*, for example, participated in bringing the ADPF 635 to the Supreme Federal Court, utilizing democratic state avenues to claim a space for their concerns. Arguably, this is doomed to fail because violence perpetrated by the police is inherently built into the system the state operates on. There were also other initiatives that aimed at alleviating the pandemic's effects. The Mothers of Manguinhos also played an important role in raising donations for the most vulnerable families and distributing *cestas básicas* (baskets with food and other essential products) in times of growing hunger (Cavalcante, 2020). In many favelas, residents, community organizers and communicators took the handling of the new virus in their neighborhoods into their own hands because official information was not tailored to their needs and requirements. These local responses and the implementation of local solutions in reaction to state failure are counter-hegemonic, insurgent practices that aim to influence policies directly and replace a government not offering sufficient solutions (Friendly, 2022; Maziviero, 2016; Miraftab, 2009). As my empirical material indicates, the use of digital tools to stay connected was key to developing coping strategies tailored to the living conditions in favelas and other informal settlements (Duque Franco et al., 2020). The hashtag #CoronaNasFavelas ("corona in favelas") was used on social media to spread information and share experiences. Later, the hashtag #VacinaPraFavelaJa ("vaccine for the favela, now") was used for the state-wide bottom-up campaign of the same name (*Vacina Pra Favela, Já!*) created by collectives and organizations to counteract the state's policies of neglect. Patrícia's statement above also emphasizes the urgency of vaccinating vulnerable populations because their spatial living conditions make it difficult for them to protect themselves from the virus with other measures. In the following

¹⁶ "Então, quando a gente fala dessa questão de gênero, é muito isso, né? Geralmente são as mulheres que se apoiam, que se ajudam, que se dão forças."

chapter, I will discuss spatial practices of resistance against state violence and neglect in more detail.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have elucidated how oppressive spatial regimes not only reflect historical gendered, racialized and class-based power struggles but also fundamentally rely on the invisibilization of Black women and the naturalization of their gender-specific suffering. Urban violence is unevenly spatially distributed, deeply racialized and gendered and has been commonly understood to predominantly victimize Black men (Haynes, 2023b; L.O. Rocha, 2012). As I have shown in this chapter, the narratives of mothers of victims of state violence reveal how “the effects of accumulated social disadvantages” (Vargas & Alves, 2010, p. 629) unfold in the everyday. With their seemingly mundane practices, these women do substantial care and security work to secure social cohesion in their communities. They create and sustain Black life and, therefore, embody the Blackness the state seeks to eliminate. I argue that their victimization is thus at the center of how the state executes necropower; the security policies implemented in the course of the militarization of the everyday life exercise the “killability” of Black men (Maldonado-Torres, 2007) and make life a living hell for those who survive. Targeting the everyday and rendering impossible the practices that take place there is the purposeful victimization of racialized women (Dorries & Harjo, 2020; Fanon, 1965, pp. 117–119; C.A. Smith, 2016). Situating narratives of mothers of victims of state violence in very specific postcolonial spaces shows how the everyday, where the seemingly mundane practices of women take place, is at the center of where the state exercises its necropower. Slow violence—for example, forced removals, the demolition of houses or the gross lack of basic urban services—is usually regarded as less visible because it is less direct and less brutally physical. The perpetrator of slow violence is hidden behind the structures of systematic oppression, as slow violence “is dispersed across time and space” (Nixon, 2011, p. 2; see also Pain, 2019). However, by centering the everyday experiences of women whose lived realities are characterized by high levels of violence, slow violence becomes tangible, as they identify multiple intersecting insecurities in the everyday lives of favela residents. To them, slow violence is not invisible but part of their everyday realities and shapes the spaces they occupy. I have demonstrated that the integration of security and urban governance draws on and reproduces colonial imaginations of Rio de Janeiro as inherently *white* and, thus, anti-Black; in order to sustain such an image, the city needs to eliminate Blackness (Alves, 2018). As

long as modernization and urbanization programs build on the belief that favelas need to be aligned with Rio's *white* neighborhoods, such programs will not benefit their residents but, more importantly, continue to marginalize them and make them vulnerable to dispossession, displacement and death, reproducing the colonial stigmatization of Black and poor populations as backward and uncivilized and reinforcing the discrimination of their residents at the intersections of gender, race and class. The continuous, systemic violence and the denial of rights are spatialized, and chronic trauma becomes urban (Pain, 2019).

This chapter has also elucidated that the militarization of urban security governance creeps into every aspect of everyday life; trauma and suffering inscribed into favelas shape how women can go about their day. In their conversations, the women describe how they are occupied with the fear of having another relative, neighbor or close friend murdered during a police operation. They also express awareness of the grave danger their activism entails; their gender does not guarantee them protection from the state but, intersecting with race, class and place, correlates with their vulnerability to state violence. Activist mothers who become inconvenient for the state are at an extremely high risk of assassination (Alves, 2014; Zulver, 2023). That is, their practices—be it the everyday care for Black life or resistance practices—are directly targeted through the militarization of Black urbanity. The focus on their everyday routines as women, mothers and activists thus makes tangible the complicated web of intersecting insecurities.

Lastly, I have illustrated that how the Covid-19 pandemic was handled exacerbated existing spatial insecurities in favelas. Race, class and gender informed how the new coronavirus arrived in and travelled across the city, who its victims were and where they were located. While *white* middle-class residents of Rio had the privilege to travel to Europe and contracted the virus in the first place, the lethal effects of the pandemic were spatially concentrated in favelas and urban peripheries. This is not to say that wealthier populations did not die from the virus, yet Black people disproportionately lost their lives. I argue that the severe neglect by the authorities drew on and perpetuated a derogatory image of favelas as unsanitary and unmodern, which served as a legitimization for their unconditional removal since their emergence. That is, the responsibility for alleviating the effects of the pandemic was in the hands of the favela residents, who started multiple initiatives that incorporated their local knowledge of the spatial parameters of favelas to combat the distinct effects of the spread of the virus. While everyday life in favelas is profoundly shaped by intersecting, gendered, racialized, class- and place-based insecurities, “black urban life is more than tragedies and

suffering” (Alves, 2018, p. 44). Residents claim their agency and appropriate territory for a political struggle. Trauma, resilience and resistance are interwoven in a complex manner; (urban) trauma is not always lethal but can also be a departure point for activism that creates purpose and hope and the making of bottom-up security. In the next chapter, I will further elaborate on the multiplicity of resistance practices of mothers’ movements with which they respond to the insecurities I have discussed in this chapter (see also Halvorsen, 2018; Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021).

6 SPATIAL PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE OF MOTHERS' MOVEMENTS

Having concluded the previous chapter with the spaces of agency that mothers of victims of state violence claim and create within the multiple intersecting relations of oppression that operate through their everyday lives, in this chapter, I elaborate in depth on spatial resistance practices. In what follows, I discuss my second research question: *How do spatial practices of resistance of mothers of victims of violence articulate the intersections of gender, race, class and urban space?* Expanding upon this question, I develop my argument that their practices and political demands are spatially anchored. While their (in)security experiences are inseparable from the distinct urban environment they live in, how they imagine a peaceful future is also grounded in the urban reality of the favela. In other words, they try to create less violent living conditions by building networks of mutual support and solidarity, appropriating public spaces with various practices of memory work and actively constructing embodied, spatially grounded knowledge about the state as a source of violence, mothers as key security actors and favelas as situated within particular oppressive power relations that produce violence and insecurities. Their (seemingly) mundane practices are part of a struggle over meaning, and with their narratives, they retell security as a whole; their narratives of everyday (in)securities in favelas include the usually normalized and invisibilized suffering of Black women who care for social cohesion and Black life in a hostile urban environment. I argue that with all their practices, ultimately, women active in mothers' movements transform social life and the built environment in favelas and dismantle colonial representations (see also Ota & Mason, 2022).

In their narratives, activist mothers show great awareness of historically produced inequalities and forms of oppression and how they play out in their everyday lives. The urban space of favelas “is not appropriated as an empty ahistorical form in the pursuit of political projects: it is layered over already constituted forms of socio-spatial appropriations in which the modern state and capitalist relations of production are hegemonic” (Halvorsen, 2018, p. 794; see also Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021). The mothers' narratives are not hermetically sealed and isolated from the historically produced, dominant representations of urban violence in favelas and its victims. Let me introduce this chapter with an observation shared by Ana Paula that

illustrates how gendered, racialized and classed spatial narratives are deeply woven into Brazilian society and internalized by mothers who, in fact, want to change the given conditions.

“When I started to talk [about the murder of my son], I remember that, at first, I wanted to say: ‘The police killed my son, but my son was not a criminal.’ It was in the fight, listening to other women, other mothers, when I understood that what I used to be saying gave the state the power to continue entering the favela to kill people. I understood that I had to transform my speech because I met other mothers whose children were juvenile delinquents or went through the [socio-educational] system. I heard those stories and said: ‘*Caramba*, but they still didn’t deserve to be murdered, right?’”¹⁷ (LILITHS, 2021, my translation).

Mothers’ resistance practices are not only in opposition to dominant state narratives of security, but they are also embedded in them. Several mothers emphasized that their sons were good citizens and did not commit any criminal offenses. Because of the criminalization of their dead sons by the media and the general public, they feel pressured to defend their children against such accusations. On the other hand, mothers whose children were in fact involved in criminal activities, such as drug trade or petty crime, point out that there is no death penalty in Brazil and that, therefore, the police were not authorized to kill their sons. Thereby, activist mothers draw on the same kind of language that the police uses, stating that they would only target criminals and suspects. The urge to simultaneously justify what they did and make clear that their sons were not “that kind of criminal” reproduces the narrative of who deserves protection and who does not, even though they might be unaware of this (Villeneuve, 2022, pp. 20–21). That is, even though they denounce state terror, challenge hegemonic narratives and develop local solutions to create security in an environment of constant insecurity, their awareness and analytical understanding cannot be detached from the conditions they live in. I do not want to stress this as something extraordinary, yet it is important to bear in mind that the narratives of mothers of victims of state violence do not exist in a vacuum but in relation to hegemonic storytelling (see also Wibben, 2011). Situating activist mothers’ experiences and resistance practices in a specific power matrix and a specific urban space is thus also important for this chapter.

In the following sections, I elaborate on this argument with three spatial practices of resistance that show how the practices and the political demands of mothers’ movements are spatially anchored. Firstly, I zoom in on mothers’ embodied knowledge and experiences that

¹⁷ “Quando eu comecei a falar, eu lembro no início a primeira coisa que eu queria falar; ‘a polícia matou meu filho, mas meu filho não era bandido.’ E aí foi na luta, ouvindo outras mulheres, outras mães que eu aprendi que aquela minha fala dava poder para que o Estado continuasse entrando na favela para matar as pessoas. E foi ali que eu aprendi que eu tinha que mudar, transformar aquela fala. E aí, porque eu encontrei outras mães, que os seus filhos foram autores de atos infracionais e passaram pelo sistema. Eu ouvi aquelas histórias e falava ‘*Caramba*, mas eles ainda não mereciam ser assassinados, né?’”

facilitate their resistance practices, showing how grief, suffering and trauma can be a departure point for agency. I argue that the relationship between grief, resilience and resistance is complex; while drawing on their gendered identity as grieving mothers affords them a space in the political discussion, it can also be constraining because feeling the need to be in a constant fight makes it very difficult for mothers to get help themselves to be able to handle their trauma. Furthermore, the focus on the mother-child relationship—with a particular emphasis on the mother-son relationship—also renders invisible other close relationships, for example, with fathers and daughters (see also Vianna & Lowenkron, 2017).

Secondly, I argue that the expression of collective mourning in everyday memory practices is a key activity of mothers' movements to spatially anchor their demands for justice and the reduction of violence. They continue their security work as mothers protecting their children's memory. Through the rehumanization of their children who are dehumanized as criminals who deserved to die, mothers create local knowledge about the histories of violence in favelas that centers on the victims—as human beings—and their mothers and families as long-suffering victims of the less direct effects of violence. Lastly, I carve out how mothers of victims of state violence make clear distinctions between the “security” of the state and the security work they themselves do as mothers. By contrasting the state and Black mothers in an adversarial relationship, I argue that mothers of victims of state violence also draw on and reproduce an understanding of favelas and formalized neighborhoods as fundamentally different.

6.1 *Do Luto à Luta: From Mourning to Fight*

Most of the women in my data share the experience of having a child or close family member brutally murdered by the police and not seeing justice served; others' children experienced incarceration or torture (see also Motta, 2019a; Ota & Mason, 2022; L.O. Rocha, 2012). In 2022, the police murdered 1,327 people in the state of Rio de Janeiro alone (S. Ramos, 2023); every year, there are more than a thousand mothers in Rio who become “mothers of victims of state violence”. Cases of police killings are rarely taken to court in Brazil, and police officers hardly ever face any consequences at all. In the last ten years, the vast majority of homicide cases involving police officers (91.3 percent) were archived by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the state of Rio de Janeiro (V. Araújo, 2023). The brutal reality of Black motherhood in marginalized urban neighborhoods is the primary motivation for creating movements for affected mothers and families. Their political struggle is

fundamentally rooted in the shared experience of loss and, even more so, in the almost inevitable injustice, criminalization and dehumanization the families encounter after the murder of a Black adolescent. Mothers and families of victims of state violence mourn their losses in different ways. While grief and resistance do not always have to be loud and visible, a handful of affected families—yet mostly mothers—organize in movements and translate their mourning into a political fight. Mourning plays an essential role in mobilizing the mother identity in public speeches, and for their appearance in general, because it awards mothers’ activism legitimacy. Expressing grief thus has an individual and a collective function. Ana Paula, for example, describes the emotions she felt after her son’s murder as follows:

“I remember that, when my son was murdered, the next day, his picture was shown on television, and they were saying: ‘Another young man murdered in Manguinhos. Police claim he was murdered in a crossfire.’ Hearing that news and seeing the photo of my son was as if they had murdered him again. It was a deep pain; I started to cry; I asked: ‘Who is going to speak? How am I going to get help? I need to talk here. I need to be his voice.’ And I think that’s what lifted me up”¹⁸ (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation).

Ana Paula addresses two aspects of why expressing grief is essential in mothers’ resistance practices: The “deep pain” she felt because of her son’s death, exacerbated by the criminalization in the media, made her feel the need “to be his voice” in order to restore his dignity. Based on the experience of sudden loss, the majority of women in my data are active in movements of mothers and families of victims of state violence. While not all members of such movements are mothers, the vast majority are women (Lacerda, 2014; Zulver, 2022). Women’s social roles are not confined to the role of the mother; however, it is not surprising that the narratives of mothers of victims of state violence center on motherhood. Because of their gendered family roles and care responsibilities, mothers “suffer the loss of their children in gender-specific ways” (Turpin, 1998, p. 7; see also Wilding, 2010); in their narratives, the mothers in my data often say that the state has killed a part of them too when murdering their children and that the pain of this loss will never go away. Though gender is the central hinge for the activism of mothers of victims of state violence, I have found that this way of speaking and evoking the “mater dolorosa” is reserved for mothers. Patrícia does not talk about her nephew’s death in the same way as his mother, Ana Paula. When she narrates the tragic event,

¹⁸ “Eu lembro que quando meu filho foi assassinado, no dia seguinte estava passando na televisão a foto dele e falando ‘mais um jovem assassinado em Manguinhos. A polícia alega que ele foi assassinado numa troca de tiros’. Pra mim, ouvir aquela notícia, ver a foto do meu filho foi como se eles tivessem assassinado ali novamente. Foi uma dor profunda, eu comecei a chorar, eu falei ‘Quem vai falar? Como eu vou conseguir ajuda? Eu preciso falar aqui. Eu preciso ser a voz dele’. E eu acho que isso que me levantou.”

she does not draw on the idea of overwhelming pain and endless mourning but has a more analytical view of racism and the structural conditions that cause such violence.

Mothers explicitly draw on pain and grief to establish an emotional connection with their “audience”. Emotions, pain and tears are their political capital with which they are able to establish their moral authority as mothers. In other words, by mobilizing emotions, activist mothers are able to claim agency and create one of the limited entry points for participating in the public debate about (in)security (Ota, 2021; L.O. Rocha, 2012; Vianna & Farias, 2011; Vianna & Lowenkron, 2017). The mothers do not attend public events without emphasizing the void the assassination or disappearance of their children has left for them and how it fundamentally interfered with their motherhood. It is common for them to say that the state has also killed a part of them when murdering their child. By putting their feelings center stage, they politicize their grief and transgress private/public boundaries because, usually, these feelings are confined to the private sphere. Mothers sustain their political participation and leadership by bringing the politicization of motherhood to the fore. They do so by embracing their domestic identities to emphasize their legitimate public voice in debates about the violence that concerns them in their everyday lives. Their political knowledge is thus grounded in how they experience motherhood. Thereby, they act as representatives of all mothers in Brazil who have suffered the violent loss of a child. They draw on a shared understanding of gender and strategically use this (essentialized) understanding (Baldez, 2002; McCaffrey, 2008; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018). In their speeches, the mothers evoke the gendered image of the suffering mother and embody the figure of the “*mater dolorosa*” (Howe, 2006; Sara Ruddick, 1998; Santiago, 2019). This is also true for how they are portrayed by the media. The centrality of the image of the “*mater dolorosa*” is rooted in “a moral-religious cosmology widely spread across the social fabric” (Vianna, 2014, p. 227, my translation; see also Vianna & Farias, 2011). This is not to say that their emotions are not real, but they serve a purpose that goes beyond individual suffering. The deeply gendered trope draws on religious representations the predominantly Catholic—and increasingly Evangelical—population can relate to.

However, I do not believe that mothers and women mobilize because they are women. I understand motherhood as a set of practices that are enabled and constrained through gender, race and class (see, e.g., Åhäll, 2012; Collins, 1987, 1994; Sara Ruddick, 1998). Therefore, I understand activism grounded in experiences of motherhood not as something that is tied to them being female but as something produced at the intersections of power relations that

shape their identities. In other words, while the protection of their children may be key to many forms of motherhood, the distinct gendered, racialized and class-based positionality of activist mothers of victims of state violence in favelas makes it imperative for them to act the way they do (L.O. Rocha, 2014; Zulver, 2023).

While the loss of a child is a normalized experience for Black mothers from favelas, using it as a departure point for political mobilization is not self-evident. As I have already addressed in the empirical preface, Fátima, another mother from Manguinhos, suggested to Ana Paula to join forces based on their shared experience. It thus had to be pointed out to Ana Paula that she did not have to simply accept her fate. Mothers' movements utilize their victimization to fight for others who have been victimized through the killings of their children. For the mothers, this is a way to redirect the overwhelming feeling of injustice, even though they continue to suffer from the traumatic experience of loss (Åhäll, 2015; Sara Ruddick, 1989). They also create systems of support and care based on "geographical proximity and shared experiences of insecurity" (Jenss, 2023b, p. 9; see also Massey, 2004). The women in my data report that they felt it was their responsibility as mothers to speak up publicly because their children were criminalized and blamed for their deaths; the (passive) state of grieving became unbearable, and they could no longer cope with the feeling of grave injustice. Eliene expresses this in the following statement:

"Unfortunately, even though we are the majority of the people, we are in a poor economic situation. We are killable bodies; we are beings that are disposable to this white society, to this racist, elitist society. When mothers stand up and say 'No' to this state, they turn that grief into a fight. As our companion Ana Paula from the *Mães de Manguinhos* movement uses to say: 'As if they [the mothers] continued to exercise their motherhood, protecting the name of this boy'"¹⁹ (Núcleo de Estudos da Violência, 2021, my translation).

In this quote, Eliene also addresses the importance of expressing grief in a political fight. Linguistically, the Portuguese words for mourning and fight are very close. *Luto* means mourning or grief, *luta* means struggle or fight. *Luto* (I fight) is also the first-person singular of the present tense of the verb *lutar* (to fight). In mothers' movements, the activists often draw on wordplays with *luto* and *luta*. For example, *cada luto, uma luta* (every mourning is a fight), *luta no luto* (fighting in mourning), *do luto à luta* (from mourning to fight), etc. Negotiating this space of tension between grief and political fight is key for mothers'

¹⁹ "Infelizmente como somos a maioria do povo, mas o povo que tem uma condição econômica muito baixa. Somos corpos matáveis, somos seres que somos descartáveis para essa sociedade branca para essa sociedade elitista racista. Quando mães se levantam e dizem 'Não' a esse estado, elas transformam esse luto em luta. Como a nossa companheira Ana Paula do movimento das Mães de Manguinhos costuma falar, como se elas continuassem exercendo a maternidade delas protegendo o nome desse menino."

movements. Black mothers from the favelas have limited possibilities to speak to society and, maybe even more importantly, be listened to by society.

Eliene further identifies Blackness and poverty as decisive in shaping her experience of motherhood and the lived realities in favelas in general. Activist mothers identify a structural problem and recognize their children's deaths as political; they often speak of a "genocide against Black youth", expressed in the deliberate, disproportionate lethal police violence and mass incarceration of young Black men. Genocide is thus not a thing of the past but took on new forms after the abolition of slavery, for example, "threatening, in particular, the economic survival of the formerly enslaved people" (Barreto, 2020, p. 421; see also Nascimento, 1989; L.O. Rocha, 2012; Vargas, 2005b, 2008; Veillette & Nunes, 2017). For example, Ana Paula's son was shot in the back, and Deize's son was tortured to death, which already indicates their deaths were caused by the police's readiness and willingness to kill—by sheer police brutality—and not, as it is often reported in the media, in the context of a confrontation between the police and drug traffickers. Yet they were still discredited as *bandidos* and their mothers, consequently, as *mães de bandidos*. Many mothers describe their children's continuous criminalization and dehumanization as worse than the loss itself because they feel as if their children are being murdered again and again by the media, in court and by society in general.

Black mothers of victims of state violence are constantly reminded that they and their children are seen as unworthy of grief (Kolling, 2021). As Ana Paula states: "*Most mothers like me don't have the right to mourn because they have to go and fight to search for the truth, to show the truth. It's us who have to investigate*"²⁰ (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation). Other women in my data also refer to the "right to mourn" that is taken from them as they encounter stigmatization and are confronted with police impunity and a flawed justice system that prejudges their sons as criminals and thus as deserving to die. In a legal sense, there is no "right to mourn"; however, the invocation of the idea of such rights shows that the state fails to create the necessary preconditions for Black mothers to be able to exercise their motherhood (Kolling, 2021; L.O. Rocha, 2012). Indeed, the fertility of Black women poses a threat to the project of building a *white* Brazilian state because they give birth to "undesired" children (Ota, 2021). Black mothers are blamed for raising children who are potential delinquents from birth, and they are held morally accountable when their children in fact

²⁰ "A maioria das mães como eu não tem direito ao luto porque precisa ir para a luta em busca da verdade, de mostrar a verdade. Nós é que temos que investigar."

choose a criminal path. Blaming the mothers is not new, nor is it incidental; it deflects attention away from assuming accountability for the lethal violence perpetrated by the police (Hume, 2009b; L.O. Rocha, 2012; Santiago, 2020; Wilding, 2010). Women racialized as Black, or indigenous for that matter, are portrayed as hypersexual and promiscuous through the eyes of the colonizers and are thereby “othered” as inferior to the ideal of the noble *white* woman. They are viewed as not fully human and, therefore, not worthy of the same (state) protection *white* women are granted (Lugones, 2007, 2010; Mendoza, 2016; Sachseder, 2020).

On a structural level, we can learn from activist mothers’ experiences that their struggle and how they are impacted is not simply a side effect of violence; they are not collateral damage of the militarized “war on drugs” in favelas. I have found that the mothers were very clear in drawing this connection: The mothers suffer because of the state’s wrongdoing—on behalf of the state (*em nome do Estado*). For example, Deize says: “*I have gotten sick; I have a heart problem and diabetes because of all the disruption the state brought upon me*”²¹ (Fórum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade, 2021, my translation). The trauma and distress caused by the racist media and justice system often lead to depression, PTSD, memory loss and other physical manifestations of the pain the state has brought upon them. Dealing with sorrow and, often, guilt is a deeply gendered effect of living with everyday violence (Lacerda, 2014; L.O. Rocha, 2014, pp. 190–191; Santiago & Fernández, 2017; Villenave, 2022, p. 20; Zulver, 2023). A common expression is “to die of sorrow” (*morrer de tristeza*) or “she couldn’t take it any longer” (*ela não aguentou mais*). In the mothers’ speeches, they hold the state responsible for the physical and mental illnesses and the deaths of grieving mothers. They suffer and die because of the state’s necropolitical governance in favelas. Brazilian society would probably not support the state using the same genocidal practices against Black women as it does against Black men; state forces use more covert, gendered violence against Black and poor women (L.O. Rocha, 2012; Veillette & Nunes, 2017; Zaragocin, 2018a).

In their narratives, the mothers often state that their activism is, first and foremost, for others who are not able to fight. As Deize says: “*I want to fight for others because Andreu is gone. But there are other Andreus and other Deizes who suffer*”²² (Fórum sobre Medicalização da

²¹ “Eu passei por cima do adoecimento, eu fiquei com problema de coração, eu adquiri a diabetes, devido a esse transtorno todo que o Estado me trouxe.”

²² “Eu quero tá lutando por outras pessoas porque o Andreu se foi. Mas existem outras Andreus, outras Deizes que estão sofrendo.”

Educação e da Sociedade, 2021, my translation). Black mothers of victims of state violence do not want other mothers and families to have to live through the same pain and trauma as they did. As I have already pointed out, Deize obtained a law degree in order to provide legal support to mothers and families who are stigmatized and criminalized in the judicial system. While the militarization of everyday life in favelas aims at diluting social cohesion and disrupting community life and livability, mothers' movements work to improve the collective livelihood and secure a livable social environment in their favelas because they are aware of all the negative impacts that everyday violence has on their communities as a whole. I have found that many research participants voiced an existential need to fight for this.

On an individual level, many mothers in my data state that joining forces with other mothers helps them keep their sanity. For them, it is a way to redirect the overwhelming feeling of injustice, even though they continue to suffer from the traumatic experience of loss. Despite the pain and suffering, many mothers in my data state that their resistance also gives them strength. Ana Paula, for example, often says that she gains strength every time she speaks about her son²³, which illustrates her political development: *"I think that if they had not killed my son and if I had not gone through this process of criminalization, I don't know if I would have gotten the strength to be in this fight"*²⁴ (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation). Their strength in the struggle against the state is reproduced by the media and the organizations themselves: mothers raising their fists with serious demeanor during a demonstration, Ana Paula holding a microphone and shouting, visibly agitated, or a group of mothers silently embracing each other. This strength is also reproduced by the mothers' environment as they are often referred to as *mães guerreiras* (warrior mothers) and their political struggle is called *guerra das mães* (war of mothers) (Ota, 2021). This expression implies the strength that is needed to engage in a political fight against state violence despite pain and trauma; many mothers are not able to do so because, for example, they do not have the resources or suffer from mental or physical health problems caused by the loss of their children (see, e.g., Da Silva-Mannel et al., 2013; D. Ramos et al., 2021). Shared experiences and a similar racial and socio-economic background do not necessarily lead to the same degree of mobilization in the violent environment the mothers live in. Julia Zulver argues for activist organizations in Colombia that "without a charismatic leader, high-risk [...] mobilization will not take place" (Zulver, 2022, p. 110). It would be an incorrect conclusion, however, that those who do not

²³ "Cada vez que eu falo do meu filho eu ganho forças."

²⁴ "Eu acho que se não tivessem matado meu filho, e se não tivesse tido esse processo de criminalização, eu não sei se eu teria conseguido forças para estar na luta."

participate in loud and visible actions are passive and without agency. There are many small, mundane acts through which Black women contribute to creating security and community and thereby challenge hegemonic narratives and norms. Ultimately, being an activist mother is time-consuming, legal fees are expensive, and the necessary knowledge is often not accessible; it is thus simply not possible for many (Hume & Wilding, 2020; Zulver, 2023).

While finding strength in activism and collective resistance is enabling for many mothers of victims of state violence because they find agency and a way to express their grief and support each other based on a shared experience, it can also be constraining to be expected to constantly uphold strength. Mothers of victims of state violence must essentially be ready to defend their children at any time, reacting to stigmatizing media reports and biased judges in court. Despite the sadness and pain, mothers of victims of state violence present themselves as strong, knowledgeable and straightforward women who do not refrain from standing their ground against state authorities. The ways to express themselves are restricted, and there is only a small set of emotions they are “allowed” or expected to display, regardless of how they actually feel. The need to be strong and protect the memory of their children conflicts with the overwhelming pain and mourning the trauma of a sudden death causes. Black women are expected to be invisible, and they are far more likely to be perceived as overly aggressive and angry (Collins, 1987; Motro et al., 2022; Walley-Jean, 2009).

The stereotype of the “strong Black woman” or the “superwoman schema” is a cultural ideal that expects Black women to be strong and resilient and not show pain or fragility (A.M. Allen et al., 2019; Leath et al., 2022). While Black women in Brazil account for around 70 percent of women assassinated (ipea, 2021, p. 38) and suffer from many other forms of violence, such as maternal mortality (L.O. Rocha, 2012, p. 60), upholding a strong image conceals the negative effects of racism on their everyday lives and, for example, on their (mental) health. Black women often hide mental distress and are even reticent to seek help and support in order to uphold the cultural expectation of resilience (A.M. Allen et al., 2019; Leath et al., 2022; Liao et al., 2020). This is not merely an image, but Black women actually need to be resilient in order to do the precarious work in the informal sector, for example, as domestic workers. For them, not being resilient means losing their employment (Harrington, 2021). Ana Paula referred to this expectation of resilience in an interview in 2019:

“The stereotype of the strong Black woman is already a burden for us. We don’t need to be strong all the time; we are fragile as well. We all need to be taken care of sometimes. Our

movement offers a lot of support; we are very concerned with this care”²⁵ (Muro Pequeno, 2019, my translation).

In this quote, Ana Paula sums up the restrictive effect the “superwoman schema” has on Black women. Not being granted the possibility of being fragile and feeling weak by one’s own culture is intensified in a state of pain and grief. In addition to the already existing necessity to develop toughness, with being a mother comes the need to be protective of one’s children. This is not only true for Black women, but the combination with the stereotype of the strong Black woman adds another layer. In colonial representations of Black women, they are portrayed as serving in a submissive way, suited for hard work they do not complain about. This romanticized image of Black women is reproduced to this day, particularly in the domestic work sector, where nostalgia for the slavery society comes into play. While Black women are regarded as supposed to care for others, they have to do so adopting “the aesthetics of servitude” (Teixeira, 2020, p. 252; see also Haynes, 2023b). Their care is different from, for example, the one provided by medical personnel; it is not seen as professional but as resulting from a mystical power rather than “their concrete experience of slavery” (Davis 1983, p. 29, as cited in L.O. Rocha, 2014, p. 88) or “any other context of oppression” (L.O. Rocha, 2014, p. 88).

Another effect of the expectation of strength is that mothers are often met with a lack of understanding by society when they are incapable of going about their lives, even when years have passed since the violent incident. That is, while mothers are expected to care for their imprisoned children, search for their disappeared children or fight for justice for their murdered children as part of their maternal duty, this contrasts with the societal need for them to take care of their husbands, other children or family members left behind by the victim of state violence (Zulver, 2023). Put bluntly, it is okay for Black mothers to mobilize emotions for their resistance to everyday state violence, which benefits not only the Black populations in favelas but society as a whole. However, when they are unable to go about their everyday and do chores and the reproductive and security work for their communities, their emotionality is unwanted because Black women are “the invisible pillars of Brazilian society” (Harrington, 2021, p. 234; see also Vicente de Paula, 2012). For society to function, Black women need to function. This again underscores the impossibility of Black motherhood and raising children in a hostile environment.

²⁵ “A gente já tem o estereótipo que a mulher negra tem que ser forte o tempo todo. Nós não temos que ser forte não. Nós somos frágeis também, nós precisamos de cuidado. O movimento das mães de Manguinhos tem muito isso, a gente se preocupa muito com esse cuidado.”

Within this ongoing (post)colonial relation of oppression, mothers of victims of state violence find a space for empowerment and agency; they derive legitimacy from their status as grieving mothers. I argue that the shared experience of Black motherhood rooted in structural racism and spatial segregation is the most important lens through which their mobilization for resistance is to be analyzed. Mothers do not engage in activism and everyday practices to care for Black life in their families and wider communities because of natural instinct. Rather, motherhood is utilized “as a social institution” (Alvarez, 1988, p. 324, as cited in Ota & Mason, 2022, p. 104). Motherhood is central not only because most of the women active in mothers’ movements are mothers but also because by centering on traditional notions of motherhood, activist mothers can uniquely occupy a political space that men, or fathers, are not able to claim (Baldez, 2002, p.16; see also Åhäll, 2015). bell hooks argues that while many feminisms that focus on the lived realities of *white* women often identify motherhood and care responsibilities as “a serious obstacle to women’s liberation, a trap confining women to the home” (2015b, p. 133), Black motherhood is rather restrained by racism and the lack of access to education or formal employment. For Black women, motherhood is not an obstacle to entering the paid workforce because they have always needed to work (ibid.; see also Collins, 2002; Veillette, 2021). With their activism, they thus embed themselves within a historical struggle, using Black motherhood for empowerment and turning it into a space of resistance; they “recall the past into the present, showing how state violence continues to unfold itself through history when the wounds of colonialism have failed to be addressed” (Ota & Mason, 2022, p. 119).

6.2 The Everyday Politics of Collective Mourning

In their activism, mothers choose different ways to address the issue of everyday urban violence in favelas; besides organizing demonstrations and rallies, participating in events hosted by local networks of favela organizations in Rio or more formal forums hosted by the United Nations, these include various forms of memory work. By remembering their children, mothers continue to enact their motherhood and be their children’s voice. As I have pointed out previously, mothers’ movements acknowledge the deaths of their children and family members as political. Therefore, they also frame their mourning as political because they do not only grieve for their loved ones but intervene in a certain narrative that deprives their children of the right to life. In this section, I zoom in on the spatiality of commemorative practices of mothers’ movements. I argue that favelas are sites of memory that make visible

the wounds and traumas that are spatialized in the distinct urban space of favelas; “memory and place constitute the link between the past, the present and the future people imagine for their environments” (Novoa, 2022, p. 1022; see also Olivius & Hedström, 2021; Pain, 2019; Till, 2008, 2012). Mothers of victims of state violence and other family members and friends use the public space in favelas to create memory through various counter-hegemonic practices, ranging from more formal interventions in the built environment, such as creating memorials, to everyday, temporary actions, such as graffiti or tags and wearing T-shirts with a picture of the victim. Many of these practices are fundamentally mundane, yet they contribute to a different imagination of the public space. As Ana Paula says:

“I think that the favela is a very creative space, a space for very diverse, very powerful people. For example, if you walk through the favela, you see several demonstrations of people’s feelings. It’s very normal if you walk through the narrow alleys to see ‘eternal longing’ written on the walls, along with someone’s name. That is the construction of memory”²⁶ (Núcleo de Memória Política da UNIRIO, 2021, my translation).

In her statement, Ana Paula emphasizes the creation of memory through the production of knowledge by the residents themselves. She continues to say that, usually, victims of state violence do not get to be commemorated as human beings; favela residents who die in the “war on drugs” are not honored like soldiers who die in wars abroad. While everyday practices of memory are individual attempts to “repair” a loss so that the memory of the victims is not erased, they are also inherently political, as they counter the dominant narrative of victims of state violence as “criminals” whose deaths were inevitable (E.P. de Araújo, 2021; F. Araújo, 2007; Vianna, 2014). As I will show later, spaces of memory created by affected communities are contested and can be destroyed by state agents. I argue that through their resistance practices, mothers also inscribe themselves in the urban space; thereby, they make us understand that “the private sphere” is not a separate sphere but is enmeshed in the public space. They express their grief—in a way a deeply private matter—and localize it in the public spaces of favelas. Moreover, mothers embody their grief and memory as they move through the urban space. With their memorial work, they make themselves visible as also being affected by state violence through the direct experience of loss and the long-term consequences of grief and pain. For mothers of victims of state violence, memorialization is thus also a part of creating their political identity (M.P.N. Araújo & Santos, 2007; Auchter, 2023; Novoa, 2022; Radonić, 2023).

²⁶ “Acho que a favela é um espaço muito criativo, um espaço de gente muito diversa, muito potente. Por exemplo, se você andar pela favela você vê diversas demonstrações do que a pessoa tá sentindo. Então é muito normal se você andar pelos becos e pelas vielas encontrar escrito nas paredes ‘saudade eterna’ com o nome de alguma pessoa. Isso é a construção de memória.”

Inscribing grief into the urban fabric—in addition to writings on walls, be it simple tags or larger graffiti, streets are sometimes renamed after victims—is a practice that is not limited to favelas. Yet I argue that how favelas are constituted as urban spaces provides the basis for enabling memorial space-making because the residents and other local actors are able to make an impact on the built environment and shape public spaces. For example, in formalized neighborhoods, tags and graffiti might soon be removed from houses and walls, and erecting memorials would probably not be possible because they would most likely not be authorized. Drawing again on Ana Paula’s quote above, these visible artifacts of loss and grief characterize the urban fabric of favelas; the built environment enhances the memorial practices that, in turn, shape the public spaces and make visible the city’s wounds of constant (lethal) violence against Black *favelados*.

Rehumanizing the victims of state violence is a central goal of mothers’ memorial practices. The young Black men murdered by the police are usually seen as an anonymous mass rather than individuals with dreams, aspirations and loving families. One way they do this is by wearing T-shirts with a picture of their child printed on them; it is common to wear them for public appearances, at demonstrations, for media reports and participation in online and offline panels. Ana Paula ascribes the following meaning to this activity: “*I understood that, every day I wear the T-shirt with a picture of his face on it, I am doing justice for him myself*”²⁷ (Muro Pequeno, 2019, my translation). Putting on a T-shirt is a deeply trivial activity that is ascribed a new meaning, which is ritualized and politicized. This subtle practice is accessible to victims’ families; it gives victims a face, a name and an identity and shows that there actually is someone who grieves for them (Ota & Mason, 2022; Vianna, 2014). Mothers wearing T-shirts with their children’s faces show the world how they remember their children and how they want others to remember them. This activity has more meaning than, for example, hanging family photos in the living room because it carries a political message. The Mothers of Manguinhos, for example, often wear T-shirts with pictures of all ten victims of the local UPP, the same pictures that are on the banner they bring to rallies and demonstrations. Sometimes, these T-shirts also have words such as *justice* (justice) or slogans such as *Lute Como as Mães de Manguinhos* (Fight like the Mothers of Manguinhos) printed on them, which already embeds this memorial practice in a wider political meaning. The mothers turn their bodies into spaces of memory, where historical experiences of violence, pain and poverty are inscribed but where the historiography is also

²⁷ “Eu aprendi que cada dia que eu visto a camisa com a foto do meu filho eu tô fazendo justiça.”

challenged and a peaceful future is imagined (M.P.N. Araújo & Santos, 2007; Auchter, 2023; Vianna, 2014).

Besides this memory practice that is “attached” to the body, street art, graffiti and tags are a common form of expressing grief and pain. In Manguinhos, for example, there are now graffiti of the ten UPP victims on the fence of the soccer field where 13-year-old Cristian was assassinated while playing soccer with his friends in 2015 and where the Manguinhos memorial for victims of UPP violence is located (see below). When I visited the favela in 2019, there was a graffiti on the same spot showing silhouettes hovering over little shacks with bullet wounds marking their faceless bodies (see Figure 7). Just before Mother’s Day in May 2023, the *Mães de Manguinhos* did a graffiti on the concrete pillars of the Manguinhos train station. It reads: “Mothers of Manguinhos, fight as one! Memory, truth, justice, reparation. Our dead have a voice. Against the extermination at the hand of the state!!” (see Figure 8).



Figure 7: Graffiti in Manguinhos (Source: author, 2019)



Figure 8: *Mães de Manguinhos* graffiti at Manguinhos train station (Source: *instagram.com*, screenshot)

In 2016, two years after the assassination of Ana Paula's son, a memorial was inaugurated in Manguinhos at the initiative of the Mothers of Manguinhos and the *Fórum Social de Manguinhos* (Social Forum Manguinhos). In a virtual conversation about the creation of memory and memorial politics in favelas, Ana Paula talks about how the memorial was created and its importance for the community to remember the victims (Núcleo de Memória Política da UNIRIO, 2021). Patrícia also talks about the memorial in a conversation about violence and social memory (Canal Pororoca, 2021). Both emphasize the significance of the memorial in calling attention to the impacts of everyday urban violence and creating a collective identity. Around 40,000 residents live in Manguinhos, and they do not always know about all the incidents of state violence, which is why it is so important to create spaces of memory and alternative knowledge about what has happened. The monument was my first encounter with mothers' activism and the everyday politics of collective grieving. When I visited Manguinhos with a group of architecture students in 2019, the monument was the second stop of the tour led by Patrícia. While I am certain that Patrícia mentioned that she was part of the Mothers of Manguinhos and that her sister Ana Paula was the co-founder of the movement, I seem to have missed this contextualization during the tour. Maybe I was standing too far back, or my Portuguese just was not good enough to understand the connection. Back then, I was also not aware of the significance of the small memorial, but its meaning, and the importance of this kind of memory practice in general, became very clear to me when delving into mothers' movements and their resistance.

The monument is made of grey marble and looks like a lectern overlooking the soccer field. On the inclined upper part, there is a silver plaque that reads *NOSSOS MORTOS TEM VOZ* (Our dead have a voice). I find that this already draws an intimate connection between the victims of lethal urban violence and their mothers, who assume a central role by being the victims' voices after their death and defending their memory. Below the lettering *NOSSOS MORTOS TEM VOZ* are the names of seven young men between the ages of 13 and 29 who were killed by the police between 2013 and 2016 (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: Manguinhos memorial (Source: author, 2019)



Figure 10: Manguinhos memorial (Source: author, 2019)

On the lower left corner is the date when the memorial was inaugurated: May 14, 2016. On the bottom part, there are two plaques; on the upper one, there also is the lettering *NOSSOS MORTOS TEM VOZ*, naming three other young men between 23 and 37 years old and their dates of death. They were assassinated in the years following the inauguration, in 2018 and 2019. Different media outlets reported on the deaths of all these children and young men, but there is seldom any follow-up reporting on investigations or trials because these cases hardly ever go to court or it takes many years until a verdict is reached and the media is more interested in sensationalist reporting. For example, Ana Paula and her family are still waiting

for a court date nine years after Johnatha's murder. Five police officers involved in the murder of Paulo Roberto—the son of *Mães de Manguinhos* co-founder Fátima—were convicted after six years in 2019. Paulo Roberto was beaten to death by a group of police officers, some of whom are still unidentified. This is highly unusual because when a victim of police violence has a criminal record like Paulo Roberto, the police are quick to denounce them as criminals. While the judge acknowledged that Paulo Roberto died due to police violence, the officers were sentenced to only two years of imprisonment (de Lannoy, 2019).

As I have already addressed above, with their memorial work, mothers of victims of state violence also inscribe themselves in this memory. On the memorial in Manguinhos, they are explicitly named as victims of state violence. The identity of the “mother of a victim of state violence” is intrinsically linked to the “victim”; as long as there is state violence perpetrated against Black bodies, their identities are constructed through the experience of (lethal) violence and loss. There is another plaque on the lower part of the memorial that pays tribute to the mothers, reading *Homenagem a essas Mulheres Guerreiras que se dedicaram à Luta pelo Direito a VIDA nas favelas e periferias* (Tribute to these warrior women who dedicated themselves to the struggle for the right to LIFE in the favelas and peripheries). The homage is dedicated to Marielle Franco, Vera Lucia Gonzaga dos Santos and Janaína Soares da Silva, all of whom died in 2018 (see Figure 10). It is important to stress that explicitly naming the mothers of victims of state violence emphasizes not only the important status of the mother but also the connection between the direct lethal violence and the indirect, less visible consequences of mothers getting sick after their traumatic loss. The memorial in Manguinhos thereby puts to the forefront the many Black mothers who became “mothers of victims of state violence” who often are invisibilized.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Marielle Franco was a Black LGBTIQ+ and human rights activist and city councilor for the *Partido Socialismo e Liberdade* (PSOL, Socialism and Liberty Party). She grew up in the favela of Maré in northern Rio and was an outspoken critic of police violence in favelas. In March 2018, she and her driver Anderson Gomes were assassinated in their car. The targeted murders made headlines worldwide. A couple of suspects were arrested, some of whom even had close ties to the Bolsonaro family, and there was concrete evidence that the ammunition used to kill Marielle and Anderson was sold to the military police in Brasília in the early 2000s and later stolen. Despite speculations about who had given the order to murder Marielle Franco and Anderson Gomes, the crime has not been solved to this day. Even five years after their assassination, people still use the hashtag

#QuemMandouMatarMarielle (Who ordered to kill Marielle?) on social media. Vera Lúcia Gonzaga dos Santos, a founding member of the movement *Mães de Maio* (Mothers of May) in São Paulo, even visited Manguinhos for the inauguration of the monument. The Mothers of May were founded after the killing of more than 500 people in only two weeks in May 2006. Vera's daughter, who was nine months pregnant at the time, and her daughter's partner were assassinated in 2006. Before her death in 2018, Vera suffered from depression, and even though the forensic medical report mentioned other causes as potential causes of death, such as heart diseases, pulmonary edema and diabetes, it could not be ruled out that she committed suicide (Stabile, 2018). Janaína Soares da Silva was the mother of Cristian, who was killed in Manguinhos in 2015 at the age of 13 by the local pacifying police unit while he was playing soccer. She suffered from health problems after the assassination of her son, and on the day before her death, she felt ill but refused to go to the hospital. Her death certificate does not state a specific cause of death, but she suffered from depression since her son's murder, and for her family and friends, it is clear that she died of sorrow (Prado & Teles, 2018).

All three women to whom the homage on the monument is dedicated died in 2018. As I have already mentioned, Marielle Franco's assassination made global headlines, but while some media reported on the deaths of Vera and Janaína, both died without the world paying attention. Thus placing the names of the women who suffered the trauma of violently losing a child on a memorial for victims who died *em nome do Estado* is a statement; their deaths and the deaths of many other mothers of victims of state violence are not accepted silently. Naming the mothers who got sick after their children's assassination means emphasizing the state's responsibility for their deaths. While the way they died may differ, their deaths are intimately linked and can be traced back to the same actors: the state and its security forces. I have found that it was very important for the women in my data to emphasize that all the victims of police violence have mothers. The tenor is that, for every victim of police violence, there is a mother who suffers, which points out the consequences the violent deaths have on others who remain alive. In their resistance, mothers of victims of state violence often refer to the consequences of everyday violence on mothers' mental and physical health. In the case of the violent death of a child, they are more likely to suffer from depression, PTSD and also physical illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease (Lacerda, 2014; L.O. Rocha, 2014, pp. 190–191; Santiago & Fernández, 2017). I argue that this is key to understanding that the mothers' suffering and slow death is an integral pillar of the state's security apparatus' presence in

favelas. In addition, the memorial practices exemplified here also counteract the marginalized and invisibilized experiences of women and mothers.

Let me introduce a second example of how favela residents in Jacarezinho, the neighboring favela of Mangueiras, sought to commemorate victims of state violence by erecting a memorial in their community. During a police operation in Jacarezinho on May 6, 2021, civil and military police killed 27 people. A police officer also died in the biggest massacre in the history of the city of Rio de Janeiro, which became known as the *Chacina do Jacarezinho*, the Massacre of Jacarezinho (Dos Santos & Alves, 2021). The operation took place at a time when the Supreme Federal Court allowed police operations only under specific circumstances because of the pandemic. However, as I have already addressed in the previous chapter, the complete suspension of police operations did not work. In May 2021, Rio's favelas were still extremely vulnerable due to the Covid-19 situation; the vaccination campaign had just begun and had not reached the favelas yet, and the Brazilian economy was recovering only slowly. In the virtual conversations I have analyzed that took place after May 6, 2021, the massacre always was one of the subjects of discussion because of its tragic status in the history of Rio de Janeiro's necropolitical security governance. For example, in a conversation about the construction of memory in favelas (Núcleo de Memória Política da UNIRIO, 2021), a participant from Jacarezinho pointed out that this favela is the neighborhood with the largest Black population in the city of Rio de Janeiro and has a very low Human Development Index and many incidents of severe violence. As such, they argued, Jacarezinho serves as a laboratory for the police to implement security politics that are based on the criminalization of poverty and Blackness.

One year after the massacre, the civil society initiative *Observatório Cidade Integrada* erected a monument to commemorate the 28 victims—the 27 men from Jacarezinho and even the police officer. The observatory for the urbanization program *Cidade Integrada*, launched in January 2022, is an initiative to connect different local organizations in order to gather data and publish reports on human rights violations during the implementation of *Cidade Integrada* in Jacarezinho. It offers bottom-up perspectives of residents on the progress of the program that is built upon permanent police occupation and is supposed to improve basic urban services and infrastructure in the favela (Observatório Cidade Integrada, n.d.). Attached to the simple cuboid memorial is a plaque that reads: “Homage to the victims of the bloodbath of Jacarezinho. On May 6, 2021, 27 residents and one public servant were killed, victims of the genocidal and racist policy of the state of Rio de Janeiro, which makes Jacarezinho a place

of war to fight a drug market that will never cease to exist. No death should be forgotten. No massacre should be normalized”²⁸ (Lopes et al., 2022; Muñoz, 2022).

Shortly after the memorial’s construction, the civil police destroyed it in an act of excessive force. The police first knocked off the plaques with the victims’ names and the contextualization cited in the paragraph above, then tied a rope around the cuboid and removed it using a *caveirão* (big skull), an armored tank-like vehicle used by Rio’s military police. Videos of the destruction can be found on social media; the police’s reaction seems absolutely exaggerated and disproportionate. The spectacle sent a clear message: that police will not allow this memorial and, most importantly, a different narration of urban violence visibly prevails in urban space. The police claimed the memorial would glorify drug trafficking and that it was illegal because the municipality had not authorized the construction of the memorial and the family of the killed police officer had not agreed to him being named on the monument (Albuquerque, 2022; Lopes et al., 2022). The governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro, Cláudio Castro, claimed that the name of the police officer did not deserve to be mentioned among those of the 27 *vagabundos* (“vagabonds”) (C. Rodrigues & Tortella, 2022).

I argue that the brutal intervention is a struggle to claim the power to define this particular event. The framing of the event in a particular narrative is in itself a form of violence because it restricts whose view matters and whose is to be excluded (Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017; Olivius & Hedström, 2021). By saying that the 27 Jacarezinho residents were criminals, Governor Castro, against whom the *Superior Tribunal de Justiça* (Superior Court of Justice) opened an investigation into corruption allegations in April 2023, employs the narrative that “a good criminal is a dead criminal”. In doing so, he insists that the police have the right to kill them and normalizes police work having an extremely high death toll. That is, the deaths of 27 Black men in a single police operation can even be celebrated as a victory at the official level. In this narrative, it is irrelevant whether the dead men had actually committed any crimes because their bodies always already signify violence (Ferreira da Silva, 2009; Mbembe, 2019; Vargas, 2008).

Moreover, the majority of the cases were archived due to an alleged lack of evidence. Official versions do not provide answers to what actually happened during the “operation”, which

²⁸ “Homenagem às vítimas da chacina do Jacarezinho. Em 06/05/2021, 27 moradores e um servidor foram mortos, vítimas da política genocida e racista do estado do Rio de Janeiro, que faz do Jacarezinho um praça de guerra, para combater um mercado varejista de drogas que nunca vai deixar de existir. Nenhuma morte deve ser esquecida. Nenhuma chacina deve ser normalizada.”

once again demonstrates the indifference to the deaths of the Black population. The memorial was an attempt of the civil society to shed light on their perspective on the deadliest police operation in the city of Rio, narrate their own history and produce their own knowledge. Yet this was denied to them. I thus argue that it is not self-evident that favela residents have the possibility to develop their own representations of the favelas, the violence that happens there and how its victims are portrayed. Instead, the dominant narrative of the police going to the favelas to eliminate “suspects” and “criminals” is violently employed, reinforcing the collective trauma created by constant violence in general, and the *Chacina* in particular. In an article published online in *Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil*, the authors argued that the Jacarezinho Bloodbath was a demonstration to the Supreme Federal Court that it cannot control the police; only the police “defines what is exceptional and legitimate in its performance, that it will not submit to any external control, that operations will not be interrupted, and that the police also assumes no commitment to reduce the high lethality rates” (Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil, 2021, my translation). Indeed, the manifestation of sovereignty not only “resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die” (Mbembe, 2019, p. 66; see also Nascimento, 1989; Vargas, 2005b, 2008) but also in the power to dictate the purpose of their deaths.

I understand the memorial practices I have introduced as spatial practices that appropriate certain spaces in the short or long term, drawing attention to the victims of state violence whose deaths are historically normalized. While writing on walls and wearing T-shirts are temporary practices, they still are activities that manifest a different representation of victims of state violence in the urban space (Moura, 2007; Ota & Mason, 2022). Memorials are attempts to intervene in the built environment more permanently, provide material evidence of a violent past and ongoing resistance to that violence and thereby also shape social life (Auchter, 2023; Till, 2008, 2012). In favelas, spatial memorial practices are an integral part of a struggle over who has the right to define the representation of favelas and their residents and the victims of state violence, and thus they are inherently political. Simply put, local actors and the state negotiate “whose conception of the past should prevail in public space” (Till, 2012, p. 7; see also Olivius & Hedström, 2021). The examples from Jacarezinho and Manguinhos show two different ways how local initiatives trigger a response from state actors. The immediate destruction of the memorial in Jacarezinho, in particular, demonstrates how important it is for the state to defend the official narrative, if necessary, with extreme force. Ultimately, the struggle over meaning is intimately linked to the struggle over territory

because stigmatizing and dehumanizing narratives about favelas legitimize their violent control by the state's security actors in the first place. Spaces of memory are not granted but need to be negotiated and appropriated. That is, constructing memorials means dismantling the colonial representation of these places by reshaping them with embodied and localized experiences. I thus argue that the everyday memory politics in favelas, predominantly carried out by mothers, are practices of decolonizing territory and knowledge about that territory (Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021; Reyes-Carranza, 2021b; Schwarz & Streule, 2016).

6.3 Discursive (Re)Definitions of Security and Space

In their narratives, mothers of victims of state violence draw a clear line between their motherly care work and state practices in the favelas in the name of security. I have found that the construction of difference builds on spatiality and security and is negotiated through race, class and gender. The women in my data juxtapose their efforts to protect and secure life in the favelas with the destructive and lethal practices of incarceration, police killings and the lack of justice. As Patrícia points out: *“These are women who struggled to raise their children while the state which should have been taking care of us, of our children, comes here to kill”*²⁹ (Canal Pororoça, 2021, my translation). In their narratives, activist mothers describe the relationship between the state and the favela residents as profoundly hostile; while they feel that the state treats its Black and poor citizens as internal enemies in the “war on drugs” waged in the favelas, the women in my data also make use of a language that describes the state as their common enemy. In this final section, I discuss how activist mothers draw on and (re)produce an understanding of favelas and formalized neighborhoods as fundamentally different. I have found that they do so by speaking from their gendered and racialized spatial identity as Black women from the favela (*faveladas*) who seek to create and sustain life and livability in their favelas. Thereby, they construct favelas as distinct urban spaces that are in opposition to the parts of the city outside of the favela (Veillette & Nunes, 2017).

Patrícia's short quote above shows that the state is viewed as an actor, or, rather, an intruder, that comes from the outside and poses the greatest threat to the everyday work of mothers trying to raise their children. From my data, it becomes clear that the experience of being an internal enemy is spatially tied to living in the favela; expressions like “the state enters the

²⁹ “São mulheres que sofreram para criar seus filhos enquanto o Estado deveria vir para cuidar de nós, cuidar dos nossos filhos ele vem pra matar.”

favela” or the “state comes here” appear frequently in my data. The state comes from the outside, from somewhere else, as it is usually absent in the favelas. Its absence is characterized by a lack of justice, health and education and a general lack of support that mothers of victims of state violence criticize. When the state is present in favelas, it is only in the form of militarized police that perpetrates rampant violence against Black bodies in order to “protect” its *white* citizens. For mothers of Black children in favelas, this kind of “security” is the opposite of protection because their children are targeted and killed, legitimized through the promise of public security. I have found that the understanding of inside/outside or us/them reproduces the notion of Rio de Janeiro as a divided city (*cidade partida*). Favela residents thus also put forward the perception of the favela being different from the rest of the city. This shows that favela residents do not feel part of the wider society because of how the state and its security actors act toward them despite their indispensable role in the Brazilian economy, particularly if they are Black women (Bittencourt, 2015; Cunha, 2021).

In the narratives I have analyzed, the state appears as an emic category from the material and gets its meaning through the perceptions of activist mothers. In this sense, the state is not an institution but is evoked as an active social character—as the state that kills children, creates vulnerability, disrupts family networks and imposes trauma (Haynes, 2023a; Santiago, 2019; Vianna & Lowenkron, 2017). As Eliene states:

“As soon as the state starts to take its role seriously, which is to guarantee our rights, guarantee our health, guarantee our education, it will cease to be our enemy. And the state *is* our enemy because we are made that way; this is how the state sees us”³⁰ (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation).

The women in my data are aware that the state’s security policies are used to marginalize—not protect—they and that the politics of citizenship, race and territory are intertwined. When embedding this finding in a feminist, decolonial perspective, the state appears as the *white*, masculine protector that only defends the wellbeing of its own kind and restricts the agency of the “Other”. The characterization of the “Other” is informed by gender, class and race to define who is worthy of protection and who is the legitimate protector (Åse, 2018; Lugones, 2007; Young, 2003; Zaragocin, 2018a). Black women are seen as inferior to the ideal of the civilized *white* woman, yet they are also viewed as “unnaturally strong”; they are viewed as not fully human and, therefore, not worthy of the same (state) protection *white* women are granted. Black mothers “have historically been denied the normal conveniences of

³⁰ “A partir do momento que o Estado passar a fazer o seu papel de Estado, que é garantir os nossos direitos, garantir a nossa saúde, garantir a nossa educação, ele deixará de ser nosso inimigo. E ele é nosso inimigo porque nós somos postas dessa forma. É dessa forma que o Estado nos enxerga.”

womanhood because of [their] (mis)perceived inferior racial status” (A.M. Allen et al., 2019, p. 107; see also Lugones, 2007, 2010).

Eliene further argues that, instead of investing in education and health, the state criminalizes favela residents to justify a “war on drugs” and blame them for its own failures, for example, its failure to effectively reduce violence. While the security regimes in the favelas are far more complex than the picture “favelas vs. state” could describe, my data do not allow me to make any statements about other violent actors, such as drug gangs, in Manguinhos and Cantagalo-Pavão-Pavãozinho because they are not once mentioned in a way that would let me draw any conclusions about the violence they perpetrate. This is not to say that drug gangs are not violent, yet omissions are also necessary to build a singular narrative (Mehta & Wibben, 2018). Some empirical studies argue that the perception of being able to control their own safety that residents feel when complying with the norms enforced by drug traffickers is, in fact, a myth (see, e.g., Arias & Rodrigues, 2006; Richmond, 2019). However, others state that the violent actions of *facções* are more predictable than those of state forces and that their established power structures provide clearer orientation for social behavior in favelas (Buer, 2022a; Penglase, 2015). Of course, most residents are not active in drug trafficking or militias, but there are “shared histories between residents and the vigilante actors” (Pope, 2020, p. 51) because of their spatial proximity and their prevailing entanglement in the social and political life in favelas. That is, while I do not think that the research participants actively hide the violence perpetrated by drug traffickers and its effects, I argue that the focus on the violent state helps to build the mothers’ stories and support their powerful activism as they make use of a “vocabulary [that] has at its core not only the recognition of a common enemy, but also, and more importantly, a common passion of a method toward justice, equality, and freedom” (Vargas, 2008, p. 156).

Eliene’s statement above also shows that she thinks the state perceives her as an enemy. The figure of the enemy coming from within can be traced back to the time of the right-wing military dictatorship when this trope was used to justify state repression against political opponents. Today, however, the image of the (potential) criminal is built upon the perception of young Black men as a danger to public security; their repression is central for the protection of the wider (*whiter*) society (Beraldo, 2021; Beraldo et al., 2022; Leite, 2012). Moreover, as Black mothers care for Black life in favelas and stand against the elimination of Blackness, they are “the ‘archetypal enemy of the state’, reversing the commonly held notion that Black men, who indeed are most often killed by the state, are the main target of violence”

(Haynes, 2023b, p. 4). In addition to their efforts to create and sustain Black life in the favelas, the mothers' "audacity to protest" (C.A. Smith, 2016, p. 42) makes them the state's targets because they refuse to accept the place where the state wants them to be. Put simply, mothers of victims of state violence are expected to remain in their social and spatial "placelessness" (Alves, 2014), which is enforced with punitive measures. In the racialized spatial order, Black mothers are invisibilized; their pain and suffering are normalized and even romanticized in (post)colonial narratives of the resilient Black woman. As this "mysteriously strong" being, she is indispensable to the Brazilian economy, yet she will never be protected by *whiteness* (see also Alves, 2018; Haynes, 2023b; Perry, 2016). Deize describes her perception of the punitive governance of Blackness as a continuation of slavery in the following statement:

"We, the Black people from the favela, have been marked by prejudice for centuries, since the time of slavery. And this hasn't changed but has become even stronger with time. Today, we don't have the whips and crops of the slave quarters anymore, but we have the operational system of security that is designed to kill us"³¹ (Fórum sobre Medicalização da Educação e da Sociedade, 2021, my translation).

Deize draws a historical connection between the slave quarter (*senzala*) and the favela and how the violence suffered by slaves has transformed into the violence now suffered by favela residents. This is, indeed, a fair description of Black urban life in many Brazilian cities, where favelas succeeded slave labor while Blackness and the visibility of Black suffering are kept out of the formalized neighborhoods (Alves, 2018). Both Eliene and Deize refer to the state's security actors' ability to recognize and locate Blackness. The relevance of race is generally denied in Brazilian society; this stems from the nation-building myth of the racial democracy, which suggests that Brazil has transcended such a category because of its centuries-long history of racial "mixture". That is, while Brazilian elites imagine Brazilian society as *white* as the statements above indicate, the women in my data identify being Black, living in a favela and being the mothers of killable children as the main reasons for their experiences with the state (Alves, 2014; Vargas, 2004; Vargas & Alves, 2010).

Many mothers express that the protection of life in the favelas is part of the motivation for their activism. For example, Eliene states: "*We are defenders of lives today, defenders of young people*"³² (Violência e Saúde, 2020, my translation). While the protection of their children may be key to many forms of motherhood, the distinct gendered, racialized and

³¹ "Nós negros oriundos da favela somos marcados pelo preconceito, há séculos desde o tempo da escravidão. E isso não mudou. Isso vem correndo com mais força ainda com o tempo. Hoje nós não temos os chicotes, as chibatadas dentro das senzalas mas temos o sistema operacional de segurança que é feito para nos matar."

³² "Nós somos hoje defensoras de vidas, defensoras dos jovens."

classed positionality of activist mothers of victims of state violence in favelas makes it imperative for them to act the way they do. In addition, *favelados* “are highly attuned to the stereotypes that outsiders have of their neighborhoods as dangerous and violent areas” (Penglase, 2015, p. 4; see also Perlman, 2010). The opposite trope that favelas are actually much safer because of the sense of community that is lacking in the gated communities of the wealthy can also be found in the mothers’ narratives (ibid.). I think this is important to understand how (in)security is spatially constituted; racism restricts the right to the city for the Black populations, and in the *white* neighborhoods, they might encounter different forms of insecurities, such as racist assaults or even the sense of not-belonging to bourgeois spaces such as universities or theaters. I have found that, by drawing on a vocabulary of the enemy, the women in my data not only question the state’s role as the legitimate protector but even unanimously reject it. In the prevalent security discourse, there is a demand for “more security” in favelas in a militaristic sense, and police presence is very high, yet “stigmatized territories [are] excluded from state protection” (Perlman, 2009, p. 56). Since the mothers in my data do not trust the state to offer them protection, they themselves seek to protect their children from the state’s violence. For example, Eliene provided for her son when he was imprisoned, bringing him food and clothes because he was treated badly when taken into custody. Many other mothers need to provide for their imprisoned sons and endure being treated aggressively, intimidated and humiliated by prison guards during their visits (Alves, 2018, pp. 117–119; Motta, 2019a). This weighs heavily on the shoulders of Black mothers who need to develop their own surviving strategies in order to be able to raise their children in the favela; it is impossible to “balance” the full force of militarized urban security governance in the favelas. Despite their “insistent advising and counseling” (L.O. Rocha, 2014, p. 154; see also Auyero and Kilanski, 2015), ultimately, the state has control over who lives and who dies. The narratives of mothers of victims of state violence illustrate how “slow death” (Zaragocin, 2018a) occurs in everyday spaces that are rarely the focus of (scholarly) attention. Activist mothers’ place-based resistance practices make visible the various intersecting insecurities that are woven into the urban and social fabric of favelas. Their perspectives are crucial to understanding how security works in gendered, classed and racialized ways in the postcolonial urban space. Moreover, their counter-hegemonic memory practices challenge racist and classist dehumanizing representations of Black territories, their residents and the state-induced violence against them. As such, they not only produce knowledge about urban violence based on their own perceptions but also create a different reality that centers on community, solidarity and care.

6.4 Conclusion

With their activism and resistance practices, mothers' movements complicate what we know about violence and (in)security in favelas; I argue that they engage in a struggle over meaning and appropriate physical and discursive spaces to dismantle colonial representations of Black territories and their residents. This struggle is inherently spatial because Black mothers of victims of violence utilize not only their social situatedness but also their distinct spatial location. With their resistance practices, they bring the normalized suffering of Black mothers to the fore and make us understand how they are affected by multiple intersecting insecurities that operate in their favelas. While the literature on urban violence has long assumed that women are less affected by gendered urban violence because they are comparably rarely victimized by police killings, the narratives of activist mothers demonstrate how the long-term effects of urban violence affect them in their daily lives (Wilding, 2014; Zulver, 2023). The localized, deeply embodied knowledge they produce contests gendered and racialized spatial narratives that render mothers of victims of state violence invisible and excluded from a political dialogue about everyday urban violence in favelas.

Firstly, activist mothers subvert the traditional boundaries between private and public because they mobilize their emotions as grieving mothers and claim their legitimate space in a political struggle against violence and for peace, justice and solidarity based on their affectedness. By putting grief and mourning center stage in their activism, they emphasize their shared experience of loss and make us understand how their trauma, pain and the associated mental and physical illnesses are an integral part of the state's gendered security practices. Secondly, women active in mothers' movements translate their mourning not only into a political fight but also into memorial practices that shape public spaces. These practices can be mundane and unobtrusive, but they always have wider implications for the community; as mothers commemorate their own children, they also rehumanize the children of others and honor all victims of state violence. Their ritualized acts of collective mourning are strategies of visibility to open up a space for showing how favela residents are affected by everyday urban violence in different ways, for example, how it impacts mothers. Activist mothers intervene in the built environment and build bridges between a violent past and a future that is imagined as just and peaceful. However, inscribing grief into the urban fabric and thereby narrating a different story about "security" in favelas and its consequences is dangerous because the state can brutally enforce the dominant narrative that criminalizes victims of state violence, and favelas in general. With subtle acts, such as wearing T-shirts

with pictures of their children, mothers of victims of state violence have found non-confrontational ways to appropriate public space for memory work. Thirdly, mothers of victims of state violence clearly distinguish between their motherly care and their security work, with which they want to create and sustain Black life, and the state's security practices that seek to destroy their work and eliminate Blackness. Moreover, they refuse to accept the dominant narrative of the state implementing "security" in favelas. Instead, they present themselves as security actors who protect not only their children in a racist, hostile environment but also their wider community. The focus on survival and the right to exist is central to Black motherhood; the protection of their children and their memory are thus deeply political acts against a racist, genocidal state. As such, Black mothers represent the "archetypal enemy of the state" (Haynes, 2023b, p. 4), which places them at the core of necropolitical security governance in favelas. Ultimately, the narratives of the women in my data rendered useless binary distinctions, such as security/insecurity, public/private and oppression/agency, because their everyday lived realities are impossible to be represented in such dualisms. Not only are insecurity and violence a continuum that exists—unevenly distributed—alongside multiple forms of security in the specific urban locations of favelas. The locus of security production and the sources of insecurity are profoundly troubled by the narratives of mothers of victims of state violence. As political actors, they appropriate space in different ways to dismantle colonial representations about them as Black mothers, about their children and about favelas as a whole. They produce and embody a fundamentally different knowledge about everyday urban violence in favelas—a knowledge that also accounts for the complicated nature of urban violence as intersecting with gender, race, class and space.

7 CONCLUSION: A FEMINIST, DECOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF EVERYDAY (IN)SECURITIES IN RIO'S FAVELAS

In this final chapter, I underline the main contributions of my thesis, particularly my theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions. Firstly, my theoretical contribution is to integrate feminist and decolonial approaches to security and urban space in order to theorize postcolonial cities as distinct analytical spaces. My theoretical framework is an innovative way to understand how the specific configurations of postcolonial cities fundamentally shape how (in)security is implemented, how it is experienced by those affected and how violence is challenged. Methodologically, I advance ethically sensitive feminist qualitative research by using online data produced by the research subjects about what they themselves consider meaningful. My research design proposes an original approach to studying the everyday lives of marginalized populations without predefining the themes of the study. Thirdly, my empirical contribution is to take the place-based experiences and resistance practices of Black women as an entry point for studying everyday urban violence in favelas. Their lived realities are manifestations of a continuum of gendered, classed and racialized violence that is intensified at the intersections of the constant marginalization of favelas as urban spaces, a racist legal and prison system and the state's refusal to provide a secure living environment for them, their families and their wider communities. At the end of this chapter, I sketch out some valuable reference points for future research that seeks to locate (in)security experiences and practices in urban space and to place the agency of marginalized actors center stage.

To these ends, let me briefly reiterate the initial research puzzle of this thesis. From the previous chapters, it has become clear that security is inherently spatial; in Rio de Janeiro, security is unequally dispersed across the city along the lines of (post)colonial constructions of deservingness. The regulation of security is tightly linked to the control of bodies and space. Yet little research on (in)security, violence and peace focuses on the concrete location where these phenomena occur (see, e.g., Björkdahl & Buckley-Zistel, 2016a; Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017; Blomqvist et al., 2021; Olivius & Hedström, 2021). I argue that it is essential to take into account the specific production of urban space in analyses of security in order to

understand why cities fail to provide for racialized populations and deny them their right to the city—and, consequently, their right to citizenship and their right to rights in general. In Rio de Janeiro, favela residents are not only denied their right to protection, which is inherently tied to *white* privilege, but the mobilization and spatialization of security in the name of the “war on drugs” also impedes other rights and exacerbates intersecting insecurities and inequalities. Implementing “more security” in favelas does not make the resident’s lived realities safer; it is thus important to look closely at how (in)security is experienced by those affected by security policies. More precisely, I have identified the need to center on the security knowledge of women in favelas, how they make sense of the violence and insecurities they are exposed to on a daily basis and what entry points for resistance they find.

While urban violence researchers agree that gender, race and class are the organizing principles of suffering (lethal) violence in Rio de Janeiro, they have tended to overlook the mundane, long-term impacts of urban violence (see, e.g., L.O. Rocha, 2012; Wilding, 2010, 2014). The persistent effects of urban violence in favelas are deep-rooted in the everyday lives of women and mothers, whose “ability to create and care for Black life” (Haynes, 2023b, p. 4) is targeted by necropolitical security governance. Because of Black women’s role as primary caregivers, the collective trauma that state terror deliberately produces affects them in gender-specific ways (see also C.A. Smith, 2016). However, while the proximity of death and loss structures everyday life in favelas, Black urban life does not solely consist of precarity and suffering (Alves, 2018; Haynes, 2023b; Reyes-Carranza, 2021b). Black mothers, in particular, utilize their position of social marginalization and “placelessness” (Alves, 2014) in unique ways to take the trauma that manifests in their communities and their living spaces as a departure point for resistance. Paying attention to their narratives of personal and collective (in)security experiences thus provides an exciting opportunity to shift the locus of knowledge production about urban security in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas. I argue that, in order to comprehend how (in)security works, we need to look at the everyday work of Black mothers and situate it in Rio’s very specific postcolonial cityscape.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

In this thesis, I have demonstrated how I grappled with the theoretical, methodological and empirical nature of this research puzzle. As I wanted to understand the gendered and racialized relationship of security and urban space, it was important to theorize both phenomena as dynamic social constructs that constitute each other. I argue that it is

imperative to look at the concrete spaces where security takes place because the regulation of space, security and bodies is tightly interwoven (Zaragocin, 2018a). For a feminist, decolonial theorization of urban (in)security, it is thus key to understand security not only as a power structure but also as a spatial structure. Security produces hierarchies—hierarchies that run along the lines of race, class and gender and are spatialized through urban security governance. For instance, how Rio de Janeiro is configured as a city results from the spatialization of a certain racial regime that assigns value to *whiteness* and devalues Blackness. That is, militarized security governance in favelas does not only disproportionately target Black bodies, but it also serves as a vehicle to produce distinct territories that are identifiable as the Black urban “Other”. How “security” is imagined for favelas relies heavily on (post)colonial representations of Black territories as backward, potentially criminal and a threat to the city’s order; reinstalling state control thus requires the exercise of violent force (Melgaço & Coelho, 2022; Vargas, 2013). In short, what kind of space deserves what kind of security is inseparable from the colonial power structures that inform contemporary modes of domination, such as urban planning and policing. Moreover, the racist dehumanization of the urban “Other” in favelas as not fully human and inherently dangerous legitimizes the killing of Black men and naturalizes the gendered suffering of those who survive (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; C.A. Smith, 2016). Constant urban violence causes trauma for those who are exposed to it on a daily basis and also manifests in the urban fabric where it is perpetrated (Pain, 2019; Till, 2012).

I utilized the concept of the everyday to draw a connection between space, security and the actors who engage in spatial security practices. Foregrounding the everyday has theoretical (and methodological) advantages because it helps to capture a variety of experiences with (in)security, for example, of those who are usually perceived as dangerous (Wibben, 2011). I understand the everyday as a distinct location where (in)security is experienced and produced and marginalized populations appropriate space for their political struggles and resistance practices. The everyday is where community is created that provides other forms of security, solidarity and care (Halvorsen, 2018; Halvorsen & Zaragocin, 2021; Holston, 2009; Sharp, 2022). The everyday routines and the mundane practices of the populations targeted by security policies make us understand the spatial proximity and co-constitution of violence and peace. While peace and war have long been conceptualized in binary, opposite terms, empirical accounts of different forms of conflict or even “post-conflict” settings have elucidated how they are, in fact, intertwined. This is particularly experienced in the everyday

(Björkdahl & Kappler, 2017; Graham, 2011; Sachseder, 2022; Zaragocin, 2018a). The mundane is thus also an empirical reality, a site of knowledge production and thus a locus of theorization (Askins, 2008; Chisholm & Stachowitsch, 2016). Situating the everyday in a specific postcolonial urban context has proven fruitful for comprehending how space is purposefully created to implement security policies and invisibilize certain effects and, moreover, how local actors claim agency and exercise resistance from a marginalized standpoint.

7.2 Methodological Contribution

My main methodological contribution is to advance ethically sensitive feminist qualitative research by relying on empirical material produced by the research subjects about what they themselves consider meaningful. Following the narratives of Black mothers of victims of state violence in virtual conversations enabled me to capture their perspective on and their experiences of multiple intersecting insecurities at a unique moment in time. The hybrid methodological research design I developed can ensure the reduction of “epistemic violence” (Spivak, 1988; see also Vastapuu, 2018; Zavala, 2013) that Western-centered academia reproduces when researching the “Other”. Because I had no power over what content the mothers of victims of state violence produced in their virtual conversations, I had to decenter myself and let my research questions be guided by the issues the women in my data placed emphasis on. From a perspective of ethics, considering the everyday experiences of mothers of victims of state violence as a site of knowledge production is particularly interesting for feminist research. As I do not want to merely “extract” knowledge from women who already are in a vulnerable situation, I consider the networks of solidarity mothers have in place immensely valuable because mothers offer each other comfort, care and support based on their shared experiences. This is not to say that, as a researcher, I can simply “outsource” the care for the research participants, yet I am certain that I could not have offered better support than that which mothers’ movements already provide for themselves. As such, I found a creative way to approach the feminist principle of “doing no harm” (Basini, 2016). While I do not think that feminist research ethics can—or should—propose some sort of checklist, my hybrid research design offers innovative and interesting reference points for feminist research that seeks to place emphasis on the research participants choosing their own ways to narrate their experiences (see also Stiegler, 2022).

Centering on activist mothers' everyday experiences and mundane practices as sites of knowledge production is another strength of my methodological framework. This means not only asking someone who has not been heard in security scholarship but also contextualizing how knowledge is produced, whose knowledge is valued and taken seriously and whose is not (Björkdahl & Mannergren Selimovic, 2021). Asking where security takes place eventually led me to the places of mothers located in the social fabric of favelas and in the political discussion about urban violence. From my previous engagement with FSS in general, and a narrative approach to (in)security (Wibben, 2011; see also Aharoni, 2016; Mehta & Wibben, 2018; Stern, 2005) in particular, I knew that I wanted to focus on how (in)security is experienced and constructed beyond grand singular narratives. Powerful narratives prevent us from knowing how security works in the lived realities of the people most affected by security policies. As Luciane Rocha argues, literature that privileges the Black male experience of urban violence “leaves little room to think about possibilities of resistance since death is the main outcome [of genocide]” (2014, pp. 322–323). I am interested in the ordinary, in mundane narratives and experiences that are inevitably part of the bigger picture. The methodological choices that result from this interest mean to explicitly and actively acknowledge multiple stories, ways of storytelling and, maybe most importantly, various storytellers (Wibben, 2011). Paying close attention to personal stories “shows how identity and security implicate each other in the everyday” (Mehta & Wibben, 2018, p. 49).

Being a feminist scholar, the aim of my research is thus to complicate what we think we know about urban security. I think it is crucial for feminist methodologies to embrace the uncertainties that come with embracing “other(ed) ways of knowing”, which builds on “unlearning and re-imagining how we construct, produce, and value knowledge” (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021, p. 4). Yet there are no templates or clear instructions for how to unthink something you do not even know you are thinking. For instance, before my data collection, I assumed that Black mothers of victims of state violence and their activism have an important social status in favelas; yet I did not anticipate that their resistance practices would offer such rich insights into the spatiality of diverse (in)security practices from above and below. Moreover, only a little further into the data collection, I became aware of the political nature of mothers' movements. The reasons for this can, of course, be manifold; put simply, further engagement with a topic leads to knowing more about it, and I had not read a lot about the political struggle of mothers before. Yet I am certain that I also translated my own bias into my research questions and it was not simply a lack of (factual)

knowledge. My positionality prevents me from developing curiosity in certain directions because I, too, am biased when it comes to what kind of knowledge I consider valuable. This is not to say that I did not find the knowledge of the activist mothers valuable, but it simply was not the first and obvious choice for me. In this sense, I am grateful for the radical shift in my research interest the Covid-19 pandemic forced me to undertake. This enabled me to reflect critically on how to access local knowledge (from afar) in ways that I perhaps would not have chosen otherwise. And it also catalyzed my curiosity for questions about how and what kind of knowledge is produced where and by whom.

7.3 Empirical Contribution

The question of who produces knowledge about everyday urban insecurities in favelas leads me to my empirical contribution. The narrative insights gained during my qualitative analysis demonstrate the importance of paying attention to who produces and embodies knowledge about urban (in)security and where this knowledge is situated. I understand the lived realities of Black mothers as manifestations of a continuum of gendered, classed and racialized violence; focusing on their stories shows the complexity of the multiple (in)securities that are produced and contested in favelas. In short, Black mothers' insecurities are inseparable from the distinct urban environment they live in, and so is their resistance. Situating their stories in the specific cityscape of Rio de Janeiro and linking them to gendered and racialized power relations shows the complexity of how identity and security constitute each other. For example, drawing on a certain notion of Black motherhood is both enabling and constraining. While mobilizing their gendered identity as mothers affords Black mothers of victims of state violence a unique political space, putting forward the image of the "warrior mother" feeds into the cultural expectation of resilience and conceals the negative effects violence has on their mental and physical health (A.M. Allen et al., 2019; Ota, 2021).

I argue that my empirical contribution is twofold: On the one hand, I have demonstrated that the workings of militarized spatial security regimes purposefully create gendered, classed and racialized vulnerabilities for Black women and, at the same time, thrive on the naturalization of their everyday gender-specific suffering; on the other hand, I have elucidated how Black mothers of victims of state violence find unique ways to claim legitimacy for participating in the political discourse on urban violence. Firstly, privileging the narratives of Black mothers of victims of state violence makes us understand how the experience of violence intersects with other insecurities grounded in the specific spatiality of favelas and is woven into the

everyday. I argue that the accumulated gendered, classed and racialized effects of targeting the everyday by disrupting family and community networks, denying justice to the countless families whose children have been murdered, depriving favelas of basic urban services and using a language that devalues and dehumanizes poor Black populations are explicitly desired by the state's militarized territorial control apparatus. These mechanisms purposefully produce vulnerability for Black women, which is hidden behind the naturalized and romanticized colonial image of the resilient female slave who works hard and endures her pain in silence. Gender is thus the central hinge for the "killability" of Black men and the trauma of those who are left behind. Christen A. Smith calls this the "gendered punishment of living death handed down to those who affectively surround the dead" (2016, p. 31). Anti-Black state violence is multifaceted, and even the invisible consequences of the state's violence are intentional; in order to maintain a spatialized racial hierarchy, the state decides to hurt families in this way and, thereby, target Black women as primary caretakers of Black communities (see also Fanon, 1965, pp. 117–119; Haynes, 2023b).

Secondly, the stories of Black mothers whose children have been murdered at the hand of the police qualitatively illustrate how they claim agency from a position of racialized, classed and gendered oppression. For mothers' movements in favelas, the everyday is a key locus of resistance; they engage in counter-hegemonic practices that transform social life and urban space. The struggle over meaning to which they contribute with their spatial practices of resistance and memory transforms the spatial ordering of social life and dismantles (post)colonial narratives of urban violence in favelas and its victims. By commemorating victims of police brutality, they rehumanize them as children of mothers who mourn their deaths (L.O. Rocha, 2012, 2014). They put the often-neglected long-term effects of urban violence center stage and make Black mothers visible as victims of state violence. I argue that their memory work and different forms of activism are spatial practices that not only put their own suffering to the fore but also locate the wounds and traumas of state violence in the distinct spatiality of favelas (see also Pain, 2019; Till, 2012). Activist mothers paint a different picture of state violence on the basis of their own experience, their pain and their resistance. Looking at urban security through their lived realities renders well-established binaries such as peace/war, private/public and passivity/agency useless for studying urban violence and contributes to a better understanding of how violence as a continuum structures the social and urban fabric of distinct urban spaces.

Luciane Rocha argues that “Black motherhood does not depend on genocide to exist. However, genocide would be complete if it were not for Black mothering generating Blackness” (2014, p. 326; see also Haynes, 2023b; Perry, 2016; C.A. Smith, 2016). It is thus imperative to center on Black mothers’ narratives in qualitative analyses of anti-Black state violence and support them in their agency. While the women in my data certainly do not rely on me to tell their stories because they have been doing so themselves for years and even decades, I hope to make their political struggle known in other (academic) contexts.

7.4 Outlook

Concluding this final chapter of my thesis, I am positive that my thesis can provide interesting reference points for future feminist, decolonial analyses of urban (in)securities. While the results of this research are unique to the socio-spatial setting of Rio de Janeiro, there are certainly broader implications for other contexts of violence. In many violent, insecure environments, mothers are at the center of activism for peace and resistance and against everyday violence and the inequalities it (re)produces (see, e.g., Åhäll, 2012; Baldez, 2002; Lacerda, 2014; Zulver, 2022). It would be worthwhile to continue to advance the decolonial feminist theorization of urban (in)securities focusing on urban realities in the so-called Global North. While I myself have located my research in Brazil and I am certain that Western researchers can contribute to decolonial research studying non-Western contexts, I think it is high time to dismantle the coloniality of academic knowledge production in our own scholarly environments. Coloniality is not something we only find in former colonies but also in the countries of the colonizers. Methodologically, my study offers ideas for developing research methods and practices that account for the lived realities of the research participants. In other words, the spaces that the research participants occupy, and the research topics in general, will rarely be exclusively online or offline. I think this is an exciting opportunity to get creative, bring a certain playfulness to the research process and engage with hybrid research fields. Moreover, I propose to decenter ourselves as researchers and our research interests and put emphasis on socially relevant research and the questions of the people whose lived realities we seek to study. Empirically, I see my research as a departure point for future research that focuses on the experiences of fathers, siblings and friends of victims of (urban) violence in order to carve out what limits their opportunities to make their concerns heard and what other practices they engage in to cope with loss and grief. This is not to say that mothers’ lived experiences and mobilization are not important, quite the contrary, yet

centering on the lived realities of other family members and friends would contribute to a deeper understanding of how everyday (in)security intersects with different gender identities. Ultimately, I hope to have offered new perspectives on urban violence in Rio de Janeiro's favelas that will spark future conversations and inspire other researchers.

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

This thesis offers new considerations of urban (in)securities that address the practices, needs and challenges of marginalized, racialized and gendered populations who are exposed to everyday violence at the urban margins of postcolonial cities. The research centers on the narratives of Black women from favelas in Rio de Janeiro who are active in movements formed by mothers of victims of state violence. They mobilize locally and autonomously based on their shared experience of having had a family member killed with the justification of the “war on drugs”. As the family’s main caretakers, mothers suffer from the loss of a child in gender-specific ways; as activists, they mobilize the figure of the grieving mother, which represents an opportunity to claim agency and make political demands. Yet urban violence research has only recently begun to focus on their experiences. The study is based on hybrid empirical material that consists of field notes from an on-site research visit to Rio de Janeiro in 2019 and video data from virtual conversations in 2020 and 2021 collected through online fieldwork. Utilizing the concept of the everyday as an empirical reality and a distinct location, this thesis integrates feminist and decolonial theories of security and (urban) space in order to theoretically grasp how (in)securities are not only gendered, racialized and classed but also grounded in the distinct (postcolonial) spaces they take place in. The study finds that a focus on activist mothers’ everyday routines makes tangible the complex web of intersecting insecurities caused in the name of the state. Black mothers create community and security through micro-politics of solidarity and care; they thus embody the Blackness the state seeks to eliminate. I argue that their victimization through the less direct, long-term consequences of urban violence is thus at the center of how the state executes necropower; urban security governance fundamentally relies on the invisibilization of Black women and the naturalization of their suffering. Moreover, this thesis finds that mothers’ movements inscribe grief in the urban fabric through a multiplicity of memory practices; they rehumanize their children whom the state renders criminals, thereby narrating a different story about “security” in favelas and its consequences. Insecurities, suffering and resilience are interwoven in a complex manner; (urban) trauma is not always lethal but can also be a departure point for activism that creates purpose and hope and the making of bottom-up security. Thereby, Black mothers of victims of state violence engage in a struggle over meaning, appropriating physical and discursive spaces to dismantle colonial representations of Black territories.

ABSTRACT (DEUTSCH)

Diese Dissertation beschäftigt sich mit den verschiedenen urbanen (Un-)Sicherheiten, die das alltägliche Leben an den „Rändern“ postkolonialer Städte charakterisieren. Sie bietet neue Überlegungen, die sich mit den Praktiken, Bedürfnissen und Herausforderungen marginalisierter, rassifizierter und vergeschlechtlichter Bevölkerungsgruppen, die alltäglicher Gewalt ausgesetzt sind, auseinandersetzen. Die Forschung privilegiert die Narrative Schwarzer Frauen aus Favelas in Rio de Janeiro, die in Bewegungen von Müttern von Opfern staatlicher Gewalt aktiv sind. Sie organisieren sich lokal und autonom, basierend auf ihrer gemeinsamen Erfahrung, dass Familienmitglieder im Namen des sogenannten „Kriegs gegen Drogen“ von der Polizei getötet wurden. Als Hauptverantwortliche der familiären Sorgearbeit leiden Mütter auf geschlechtsspezifische Weise unter dem Verlust eines Kindes. Als Aktivistinnen mobilisieren sie die Figur der trauernden Mutter, was für sie eine Möglichkeit darstellt, Handlungsfähigkeit zu erlangen und politische Forderungen zu stellen. Dennoch hat die Forschung zur urbaner Gewalt erst kürzlich begonnen, ihre Erfahrungen ins Zentrum zu stellen. Diese Studie basiert auf hybridem empirischen Material, bestehend aus Feldnotizen von einem Forschungsaufenthalt in Rio de Janeiro im Jahr 2019 und Videodaten aus virtuellen Gesprächen von 2020 und 2021, die im Rahmen einer Online-Feldforschung gesammelt wurden. Unter Verwendung des Konzepts des *everyday* sowohl als empirische Realität als auch spezifischen Ort integriert diese Arbeit feministische und dekoloniale Theorien der Sicherheit und des (urbanen) Raums, um theoretisch zu erfassen, wie (Un-)Sicherheiten nicht nur vergeschlechtlicht, rassifiziert und klassenspezifisch sind, sondern auch in den jeweiligen (postkolonialen) Räumen verankert sind, in denen sie stattfinden. Die Studie zeigt, dass ein Fokus auf den Alltag der Aktivistinnen das komplexe Geflecht aus sich überschneidenden Unsicherheiten, die im Namen des Staates verursacht werden, greifbar macht. Schwarze Mütter schaffen Gemeinschaft und Sicherheit durch Mikropolitiken der Solidarität und Sorge; sie verkörpern somit das Schwarzsein, das der Staat zu eliminieren versucht. Ich argumentiere, dass ihre Viktimisierung durch die weniger direkten, langfristigen Folgen urbaner Gewalt im Fokus der staatlichen Nekropolitik steht; urbane Sicherheitspolitiken stützen sich grundlegend auf die Unsichtbarmachung Schwarzer Frauen und die Naturalisierung ihres Leidens. Darüber hinaus stellt die Arbeit fest, dass die aktivistischen Bewegungen der Mütter durch ihre vielfältigen Erinnerungspraktiken Trauer in

den städtischen Raum einschreiben; sie rehumanisieren ihre Kinder, die vom Staat als Kriminelle dargestellt werden und erzählen somit eine andere Geschichte über „Sicherheit“ in den Favelas und deren Konsequenzen. Unsicherheiten, Leid und Resilienz sind auf komplexe Weise miteinander verflochten; (städtisches) Trauma ist nicht immer tödlich, sondern kann auch ein Ausgangspunkt für Aktivismus sein, der Sinn und Hoffnung stiftet und die Herstellung von Bottom-up-Sicherheit ermöglicht. Dabei engagieren sich Schwarze Mütter von Opfern staatlicher Gewalt in einem Kampf um Bedeutung, indem sie physische und diskursive Räume aneignen, um koloniale Darstellungen Schwarzer Territorien zu demontieren.

RESUMO (PORTUGUÊS)

Esta tese examina os vários tipos de (in)segurança urbanas, praticados por parte do Estado e por parte da população, nas margens de cidades pós-coloniais. O presente trabalho oferece novas considerações que incluem as práticas, necessidades e desafios de populações marginalizadas e diferenciadas por raça e gênero que estão expostas à violência cotidiana. A pesquisa se baseia em narrativas de mulheres negras de favelas do Rio de Janeiro, que são ativas em movimentos formados por mães de vítimas da violência do Estado. Elas se mobilizam localmente e autonomamente baseadas em sua experiência comum de ter tido um familiar morto pela polícia, ato justificado pela “guerra às drogas”. Como principais cuidadoras da família, as mães sofrem a perda de um filho de maneiras específicas, marcadas também pela questão de gênero; como ativistas, mobilizam a figura da mãe enlutada, o que representa uma oportunidade para reivindicar agência e fazer demandas políticas. No entanto, as pesquisas sobre violência urbana só recentemente começaram a se concentrar em suas experiências. O meu estudo é baseado em material empírico híbrido, que consiste em notas de campo de uma visita de pesquisa ao Rio de Janeiro em 2019 e dados de vídeo de conversas virtuais de 2020 e 2021 coletados por meio de pesquisa de campo online. Utilizando o conceito do cotidiano como realidade empírica e localização distintiva, esta tese integra teorias feministas e decoloniais de segurança, urbanismo e geografia para compreender como as políticas de (in)seguranças não são apenas marcadas por gênero, raça e classe, mas também fundamentadas nos espaços (pós-coloniais) particulares em que ocorrem. O estudo constata que um foco nas rotinas cotidianas das mães ativistas torna tangível a complexa rede de (in)seguranças interseccionais causadas em nome do Estado. Mães negras criam comunidade e segurança por meio de micropolíticas de solidariedade e cuidado; assim, elas incorporam a negritude que o Estado busca eliminar. Argumento que sua vitimização por meio das consequências mais indiretas e de longo prazo da violência urbana está no cerne de como o Estado exerce a necropolítica; a governança de segurança urbana depende fundamentalmente da invisibilização das mulheres negras e da naturalização de seu sofrimento. Além disso, a tese constata que os movimentos das mães inscrevem o luto no tecido urbano por meio da multiplicidade de práticas de memória; assim, elas reumanizam seus filhos que o Estado transforma em “bandidos”, narrando uma história diferente sobre “segurança” nas favelas e suas consequências. (In)seguranças, sofrimento e resiliência estão entrelaçados de maneira

complexa; o trauma (urbano) nem sempre é letal, pode também ser um ponto de partida para o ativismo que cria propósito, esperança e segurança de baixo para cima. Dessa forma, as mães negras de vítimas de violência do Estado se engajam em uma luta pelo sentido, apropriando-se de espaços físicos e discursivos para dismantelar representações coloniais dos territórios negros.