

<b>Institution:</b> Bournemouth University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA20		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Improving the lives of sex workers in Brazil		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2016 - 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor Michael Silk	Deputy Dean Research and Professional Practice	19/01/2015 - current
Dr Amanda De Lisio	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow	01/09/2016 – 31/12/2018
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016 - 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This project provided the first academic study of sex workers which included the voices of the sex workers themselves. The research findings developed an evidence base on how sex work is policed and regulated during sporting mega events, which elevated the voice of sex workers and led to increased protection for sex workers within Brazil. Drawing on project data submitted to the United Nations in collaboration with NGO Davida, the UN Periodic Review (Brazil, 2017) recommended that the Federative Republic of Brazil adopted human rights education, activist protection and the reporting of violence against women; these were integrated into federal law in September 2017.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Media speculation often points to heightened demand for sexual services around sporting mega events (SMEs), with such reports used to justify policing and other social control measures and to rationalise city 'cleansing', displacing sex work from the public spaces. An existing body of research by Professor Silk argues that SMEs are highly mediated commodity spectacles, during which governments seek to erase and / or hide from view those who are antithetical to market 'logics'. However, there existed a dearth of relevant data on the sexual landscapes associated with the Olympics or on the impact of large-scale sporting events on vulnerable sex working populations.</p> <p>The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded project (GBP241,796) 'Sex Work in the Context of Sporting Mega Events', on which Professor Silk was the Principal Investigator, was the first ever funded academic study of the impact of the Olympics on sex workers. The project centred on Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during the 2016 Olympic Games. The project team comprised of Silk and De Lisio (Bournemouth), Blanchette, Murray &amp; Bretas (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro [UFRDJ], Davida &amp; Observatorio Da Prostituição [ODP], Fusco (Toronto) and Hubbard (KCL). There were two key objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine the (socio-legal) strategies used to mitigate sexual commerce in the context of sport mega-events;</li> <li>2. Examine the everyday tactics (material or immaterial) used to overcome event-related challenges.</li> </ol> <p>In conjunction with Rio-based project partners (ODP, located at UFRDJ, who have been collecting data on sex work in Rio for over 10 years) and Davida (an NGO that supports sex workers in Brazil), ethnographic data was collected from over 100 sex workers. Interviews took place with key stakeholders including: clients, sex workers, venue managers, security personnel, police and local support groups. Observational data was collected from sex-related businesses and - in conjunction</p>		

with the sex workers - field diaries and audio-visual data were recorded during and after the 2016 Olympics.

The project found that within the Brazilian context:

- a) Public discourse once again focused on anti-trafficking strategies, which conflated forced migration and sexual exploitation with adult, consensual sex work, and served to reignite the abolitionist agenda in a country where sex work has been legal since 1940 [R1].
- b) Sex workers were denied access to justice: women forcibly evicted and displaced due to rapid event-led urban renewal / development rationalities such as: hygienisation, fear of sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and real-estate price increases, police raids on brothels and heightened harassment from municipal authorities. Women were unable to access justice without first asserting themselves as victims of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, yet they refused to lie about their consensual involvement in adult sex work [R1; R2; R3].
- c) Denial of labour rights, owing to the conflation between sex work, sex trafficking and sexual exploitation (i.e., state and non-profit agencies sought to "protect" women from forced labour but, in so doing, empowered police to use discretionary force and restricted their access to decent labour).
- d) The expected heightened boom from foreign clientele for sex 'programmes' did not materialise; well-intentioned campaigns urged authorities to crack down on "sex tourism" [R3].
- e) Data highlighted a heightened security presence in the street, partially funded by the local commercial and business association [R3].

The final project report [R3] made several key recommendations, including:

1. Ceasing conflation between prostitution, trafficking, and sexual exploitation in law, public policies, and popular discourse - there is no evidence of rising sexual exploitation during SMEs.
2. Create opportunities for those involved in sexual commerce to add to the SME narrative.
3. Develop strategies to recognise and act against state-sanctioned violence faced by sexual minorities, and to guarantee social and spatial justice for those marginalised in the development process.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

G1 is a peer-reviewed grant awarded by the ESRC (ES/N018656/1). R1 and R2 are rigorously peer-reviewed research outputs published in high-quality internal journals and based on research arising from G1. R3 was collaboratively developed (at 2 workshops in the UK & Rio) with partner organisations (including Amnesty International), academic & legal experts in future/current Olympic host nations (including Japan, Qatar, Brazil & Russia), sex worker advocacy groups & NGOs (including Red Umbrella and the Prostitution Observatory in Rio), and sex workers from Brazil, Japan and the UK.

#### Grant:

[G1] ESRC (ES/N018656/1): Sex Work in the Context of SMEs (October 2016 – September 2018) - GBP286,486

#### Articles:

[R1] De Lisio, A. & Sodr , J. (2019). FIFA/IOC-Sanctioned Development and the Imminence of Erotic Space. *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 38:3. <https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.12747>

[R2] De Lisio, A., Hubbard, P. and Silk, M. (2018). Economies of (Alleged) Deviance: Sex Work and the Sport Mega-Event. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 16. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13178-018-0319-z>

*Project Report:*

[R3] Silk, M., De Lisio, A., Hubbard, P., Blanchette, T., Fusco, C. & Bretas, T. 'Sex Work in the Context of the Sport Mega-Event: Examining the Impacts of Rio 2016', final project report (2019). <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FN018656%2F1>

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Displacing sex workers during SMEs can have wide-reaching consequences for their safety, particularly in Brazil, where sex work is a legal profession. By providing an evidence base on the spatial regulation of informal sex economies during SMEs, this project has elevated the voice of sex workers in Brazil and shaped policy. The impact has been threefold:

**1. Changing policy in Brazil**

Research informed a submission by Davida to the United Nations Human Rights Council in October 2016 [E1; E2]. The report documented human rights violations against sex workers in Brazil during the staging of SMEs. Findings highlighted in the submission focused on the denial of access to justice [R1, E1 #14], the denial of labour rights [R1, R2, R3, E1 #21] and project data shaped the recommendations [R1, R2, R3, E1 #21]. The report highlighted the eviction of approximately 200 women from a sex venue [E2] in 2014. One evicted woman participated in the project, providing data on the eviction, denial of access to justice and need for empirical evidence in the creation and execution of policies and strategies surrounding sex work [E1].

As a result of the report, this participant was invited to attend the EU Human Rights Defenders First Annual Meeting (Brussels, November 2016). Subsequently, the UN referenced the Davida report in their Universal Periodic Review (Brazil) of February 2017 [E3, para 18]. The following recommendations for the Brazilian government were adopted by the UN:

- Improve underreporting of sexual violence/harassment, and develop policies to punish and prevent such illegalities;
- Protect human rights defenders and their families through the implementation of a National Programme, Policy and/or Plan;
- Combat (police) violence against women through capacity-building programmes for all legal personnel.

In September 2017, the Brazilian government enacted these recommendations into federal law [E2], stating their commitment to integrate human rights education into schools (136.67, Bill No. 6,424/2013), install Cases Da Mulher Brasileira (Houses of the Brazilian Woman) in Brazil's 27 federative units, to run an awareness campaign and set up a hotline to report cases of violence against women (136.181, Law No: 11,340) [E2].

The Davida report to the UN [E1] is available online through the Global Network of Sex Work Projects and supports similar agencies in their efforts to report human rights violations to the United Nations.

**2. Improving the lives and working conditions of sex workers**

An observer allied with Davida states that the project has enabled Davida to "construct links with a generation of people involved in sex work" and "funnel support to these women" [E4, para 4a].

A far-right shift in Brazil's politics has increased the stigma surrounding sex work, but key project evidence on the conflation of sex work, sexual trafficking and exploitation [E4] has enabled Davida to maintain their political legitimacy. Davida have used project data to influence discourse around child labour exploitation, enhance ties with the Brazilian government's anti-trafficking committee, and to ensure "less conflation between sex work and sexual exploitation / trafficking" at government level [E4]. Due to trust built through the project, Davida has strengthened ties with

municipal agencies, including the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Services, advancing its advocacy for two spirit and (trans)women [E4, para 4e].

The ESRC team documented the everyday lives of sex workers by collaborating with local partners to develop a worker-author exhibition, documenting work and life during the Olympics. Participants curated their own pages for the online exhibition [E5], resulting in changes to their lives:

“When I was invited to participate, I was very depressed at home, isolated... I suddenly became more motivated to leave my house, not to be so depressed... it was wonderful.”

“It was such an innovative, motivating process... I feel full of hopes and expectations. It is the expectation of a better future. I felt very, very, very accomplished, the key word for me is achievement, and I feel like I achieved something” [E5].

As a result of the project, two of the trans sex worker photographers have developed careers in the arts.

### 3. Altering perceptions of sex work in the context of SMEs

In response to sensationalist media narratives creating moral panics around SMEs, the project demonstrated the realities of the marginalised within SME host cities [R2, R3]. The Deputy Director of Davida states that “Throughout each stage, worker voice drove action... This allowed stories authored by those directly involved in underground—often viewed as criminal or deviant—economies to challenge the dominant narrative and include voices that are rarely or authentically included in mainstream press” [E2].

The ‘What You Don’t See’ virtual exhibition was curated into a physical exhibition, shown in London, New York and Bournemouth. The exhibition was converted into a film narrated by sex workers (and project participants), which offered accounts of the banality of everyday life, oppression and prejudice, bringing to life the project findings and challenging sensationalist media accounts of sex work during SMEs. The film debuted at the MoMA PS1 Sex Workers’ Festival of Resistance in New York City [E6], attended by 1,000 people, all of whom received a newsletter summarising the ESRC project. Davida state that the project has “broadened cultural and political sensibilities, which might have never expected to see the work of Brazilian women involved in sexual commerce celebrated in art galleries” [E2].

The project led to the publication of two issues of the *Beijo da Rua* newspaper, written for and about sex workers and translated into English and Portuguese, and the publication of two pieces in *The Conversation*, with a combined readership of over 70,000 [E7]. Davida is currently incorporating the data into a project that is digitising sex work histories in Brazil for the State Archives of Rio de Janeiro [E4, para 4d].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[E1] Davida (2016) *Human Rights Violations Of Sex Workers In Brazil*. United Nations Universal Periodic Review of BRAZIL Third Cycle. [online] Available at: <https://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/UPR%20Submission%2C%20Davida%20-%202016.pdf> [Accessed 15 September 2020].

[E2] Observatório da Prostituição (2020) *Testimonial letter*.

[E3] Human Rights Council (2017) *UN-UPR Summary and Final Report, A/HRC/WG.6/27/BRA/3*. [online] Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/045/56/PDF/G1704556.pdf?OpenElement>- Section II.C.2.18 and II.C.2.42 [Accessed 20 August 2020]

[E4] Observatorio da Prostituciao & Davida, n.d. *Report On Post-Olympic Changes In The Rio De*

*Janeiro Commercial Sexscape And The On-Going Effects Of The ESRC Project.*

[E5] Oquevcnaove.hotglue.me. (2016) What You Don't See. [online] Available at: <https://oquevcnaove.hotglue.me/?WhatYouDontSee> [Accessed 9 March 2020].

[E6] What you Don't See (2016) [video] Brazil: Diario de prostituicao. [online]. Available at: <https://youtu.be/RlcC7qN8oHg> [Accessed 9 March, 2020].

[E7] Articles in The Conversation:

a) De Lisio, A. and Silk, M. (2017) After the Olympics: Stories from Rio's Sex Workers. The Conversation, [online] Available at: <https://theconversation.com/after-the-olympics-stories-from-rios-sex-workers-73555> [Accessed 20 May 2017].

b) De Lisio, A. (2017) How Brazil's Sex Workers have been organised and politically effective for 30 years. The Conversation, [online] Available at: <https://theconversation.com/how-brazils-sex-workers-have-been-organised-and-politically-effective-for-30-years-88903> [Accessed 17 December 2017].