

# DIY, fanzines and ecofeminism in the Global South: ‘This city is my sister’<sup>1</sup>

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**Paula Guerra** 

Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Institute of Sociology, Griffith Center for Social and Cultural Research, University of Porto, Portugal

## Abstract

In late modernity, artistic-social movements play a central role in renewing societal processes. This article aims to understand how the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos builds bridges of understanding for these challenges, taking the artistic practice of fanzine production of Fernanda Meireles as a starting point. Based on a qualitative methodology, we analyse Meirele’s use of a DIY ethos and practice, contextualised within ecofeminism, the Anthropocene and the Phallocene, as well as in the city of Fortaleza, Brazil, where Meireles resides. Through a DIY lens, we highlight the perspectives that favour the resignification of urban spaces in new territorialities, giving rise to new ways of relating to the city and criticising or contesting it using an ecofeminist perspective of (re)existence in the face of the Anthropocene and the Phallocene.

## Keywords

Fanzines, ecofeminism, Anthropocene, Phallocene, do-it-yourself (DIY), Global South

## Eyes wide open, hands ready to create!

This article<sup>2</sup> explores the theoretical–empirical problematisation of the concept of ecofeminism, based on the do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos of Fernanda Meireles’ work.<sup>3</sup> Meireles’ artistic practice, embodied in the production of fanzines, is understood as a means of denouncing the problems that shape urban territories, namely in terms of the gentrification and touristification of the city of Fortaleza, Brazil. It is also the channel through which Meireles has been able to (re)create narratives, imageries and meanings of individual and collective identity affirmation since the 1990s. Fernanda’s artwork is thus the focal point of discussion in this article for a contemporary ecofeminist praxis of denouncing the Anthropocene and Phallocene eras. The concept of ecofeminism is repeatedly defined as an offshoot of contemporary feminist movements, bolstering this concept as a simple connection between ecology and gender. Independently, both concepts are

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### Corresponding author:

Paula Guerra, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Institute of Sociology, Griffith Center for Social and Cultural Research, University of Porto, Portugal.

Email: [pguerra@letras.up.pt](mailto:pguerra@letras.up.pt)

commonly recognised, identified and characterised; however, together they enter an ideological minefield, where each researcher and active ecofeminist has their definition rooted in personal experience and experiential practices. The same principle can be applied to fanzines in contemporary times. Although recalling the numerous contributions made to the concept's scientific, political, social and media visibility, we assume ecofeminism is defined by its *praxis*, just like DIY. This article thus focuses on understanding Fernanda Meireles' urban-artistic ecofeminism, embodied in the creation of fanzines based on DIY, which prefigures modes of questioning regarding the age of the Anthropocene and Phallogocene viewed from the Global South.

Two points need clarification. The first refers to our theoretical approach, which seeks to present multifaceted and comprehensive theoretical–conceptual inspirations to account for ecofeminism's various specificities by combining it with the Anthropocene. We also introduce contributions related to fanzines and DIY (Guerra and López, 2021; Guerra and Quintela, 2020) both as an artistic practice and as an object that fosters acts of resistance. The urban space is the aggregating factor that unites these two perspectives, specifically the city of Fortaleza, Brazil. The second point concerns the object of study. We speak of Fernanda Meireles, who investigates, portrays and reflects on body–home–city relations through DIY and subversive artistic practice, and works with handwritten language in various media (Gomes, 2017). Her most prominent project is *Loja Sem Paredes*<sup>4</sup> [Shop Without Walls], a travelling *atelier*/shop located in Fortaleza.<sup>5</sup> This activity brings us back to the interventional role of DIY fanzines since the very idea of an *atelier* – a physical space – is contested, giving rise to a shop or a mobile production site, mouldable to the city and the population and, above all, to their living conditions.

The next section of the article will focus on the new social movements and the role of (eco)feminism in contemporary societies – particularly in the artistic creations (zines) of Meireles – during the Anthropocene, especially in countries of the Global South. This demonstrates the critical possibility of the arts in enunciating, debating and unveiling these issues. Next, we will delve into the relationship between Fernanda Meireles' artistic creations and the fight against the Anthropocene and Phallogocene reigning in the city. Finally, Fernanda Meireles' words provide support for the two following sections in an interview conducted with the artist. In these sections, and through the approach of some of Fernanda's fanzines (and related events), we will discuss, in a concrete way, her intervention in the city of Fortaleza in Brazil.

## **Does the liberation of the earth imply the liberation of women?**

bell hooks (2013: 59) said, 'I came to theory because I was hurting ... I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing'. To locate ecofeminism as an offshoot of contemporary feminist movements, we too must penetrate theory and go back a little in our chronological line of reference by rethinking notions such as sex and gender. Notions of the male and female sex, as we know them today, only emerged in the eighteenth century (Laquer, 2001). Until then, the idea that there was only one male sex prevailed. The female sex was viewed as an underdeveloped version of the male sex; women were deemed imperfect men. From the mid-twentieth century, the concept of gender emerged and was used to refer to the social differences between men and women, depending on the space and time in which they existed. According to Scott (1995), gender does not have a biological basis (unlike sex), but has a relational and political component that determines the roles men and women play in society.

The concept of gender was first used by feminist movements in the 1970s to demonstrate the social distinctions between men and women, and women's secondary status. With Bowden and Mummery (2014), we can therefore consider that these discourses have emphasised that gender inequalities are the external face of a problem of oppression and exploitation of women by social institutions. In Western societies, there is a cultural acceptance based on the notion of gender that sees men and women as naturally different

and unambiguously defined as categories and ways of 'being' (Garfinkel, 1967). This argument supported the division of labour and the differentiation of behaviour. The focus on the social construction of gender and its inherent inequalities reinvigorated the feminist movement. The concept of gender can be articulated with another concept, the patriarchy. We are confronted with a set of tools used to perpetuate male domination over women. It is a hegemonic system of male dominance that extends to all social spheres: family, school, world of work and political system, summarised as 'politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics' (Scott, 1989: 23).

Gender inequality governs a system of social practices that views men and women as different (Guerra, 2021b, 2021c). However, these inequalities are not limited to men and women and become more apparent in relation to non-binary genders. In the artistic field, such as the music industry (Strong and Cannizzo, 2017), they are even more evident (Guerra, 2020, 2022). Fernanda addresses these inequalities in her fanzines. This discussion shows how the hegemonic view that artistic products must be produced to please heterosexual men has been changing (Guerra, 2023a). We see the emergence of some codes of queer action that identify differences and question the normative view's forms of control, creating a series of tensions between appearances, obligations and meanings of self. This questioning is evident in Meireles' artwork (Guerra, 2022). If the hegemonic masculine view seeks man's pleasure, a queer view questions any expression taken as 'normal' and emphasises the transformability of identities. Sharp and Nilan (2015) analyse queer as an *umbrella* term for LGBTQI+ minorities to produce counter-spaces of existence and resistance. Thus, artistic interventions are made in the geographies and at the heart of the experiences of the disenfranchised and dispossessed to subvert homogenous stigmatising narratives and achieve new heights of decolonised social and spatial justice (Kilomba, 2020).

Since the 1970s, contemporary feminist movements have received new perspectives and cosmologies from hitherto subaltern actors: black, poor and non-binary bodies. Indeed, these cosmologies are at the root of ecofeminist action that 'involves a feminist sensibility and commitment to paying attention to marginality and power differentials' (Davis and Craven, 2016: 96). Thus, this approach allows us to get to the point that the oppression of women is, at its most basic level, a question of knowledge or epistemology, just as an artistic performance is or can be (Guerra, 2023b). What Evans and Riley (2022) reiterate to us is that the epistemological dimension of oppression – where ideas about knowledge and who justifies it hover – is, in fact, an element that allows this same patriarchal oppression of women and nature to be sustained (Guerra and Oliveira, 2023). We are approaching ecofeminism. We cannot end this section without mentioning that the artistic works we have focused on here are intended to combat this concealment, oppression, devaluation and ignorance of non-male genders.

### **'I hear voices from the earth'. Ecofeminism, the Anthropocene era and contemporaneity**

This section addresses ecofeminism and the Anthropocene as a new typology of contemporary feminist movements, framed within two broader and more encompassing movements: post-capitalist revolutionary movements and ecofeminist movements (Turner and Brownhill, 2010). Ecofeminism is an activist movement that envisions critical links between the domination of nature and the exploitation of female bodies (Lorentzen and Eaton, 2002). First used in 1974, the concept is associated with third-wave feminism. As Warren (1996) suggests, this umbrella term encompasses a diversity of approaches, such as social, cultural, radical and ecowomanist ecofeminism (Turner and Brownhill, 2010).

Authors such as Stefania Barca (2020a) offer important insights highlighting the links between social activities such as ecofeminism and emerging concepts such as the Anthropocene. Barca (2020a) maintains ecofeminism can be associated with the Anthropocene since both perspectives aim to address the multiple

crises deriving from harmful social arrangements that afflict civil society and the biosphere, generated by a destructive capitalist and industrial modernity that identifies the female body as the main point of conflict. But she also identifies the Anthropocene as an indelible inequitable structure. The Anthropocene conforms to the normative model of humanity, particularly as it reiterates and expands the structuring inequalities between sex/gender, racial/colonial, dominant/dominated classes and man/species:

Undoing the Anthropocene master's narrative requires a critical analysis of its four levels of denial and backgrounding: 1) colonial relations: the only civilisation that matters is Western; 2) gender relations: the only historical agency is that of the 'forces of production' (science, technology and industry); 3) class relations: social inequalities and exploitation do not matter; 4) interspecies relations: the non-human living world does not matter. (Barca, 2020b: 42)

The concept of the Anthropocene has emerged more recently, in the twenty-first century, to portray anthropogenic climate change (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). Like ecofeminism, the Anthropocene has generated metanarratives of opposition to the ecological crisis. However, it has proposed techno-economic solutions that can be transposed to ecofeminist movements and to activist practices such as that of Fernanda Meireles, especially in the context of gender, sexual and spatial struggles, initiating an interventional struggle for spatial justice.

Three links are central here, as Lorentzen and Eaton (2002) highlight: the empirical link, the conceptual and cultural/symbolic link and the epistemological link. The empirical connection is essential in this article since it portrays various social problems that disproportionately affect women. These are apparent in Meireles' work about gender, and the social and sexual inequalities evident in Fortaleza. In terms of the conceptual and cultural/symbolic connection, we emphasise ecofeminism as a tool to deconstruct ideals that portray the world in a hierarchical and dualistic way. It seeks to challenge the conceptual structures that associate women with femininity, the body and sexuality, while men are associated with masculinity and power. As Meireles revealed in her interview, 'men have an innate power over both women and nature'.<sup>6</sup> There are thus intense imbrications between ecofeminism and radical feminism (Puleo, 2005).

Regarding the epistemological link, authors such as Ariel Salleh (2016) highlight that the human relationship with nature has become the focus of contemporary thought, resulting in new forms of eco-politics and eco-actions. Salleh (2017) argues that ecofeminism is a theoretical current and a line of action that aims to challenge the marginalisation of forms of tacit knowledge. Based on notions of the sacred feminine, ecofeminism highlights the inevitable approximation between nature, knowledge and women. However, Carolina Teles Lemos (2005) underlines the naturalisations of gender that Christian religions have reinforced and reproduced throughout their history, associating the sacred feminine with motherhood, virginity and the female figure instilled with attributes such as purity, obedience, care and compassion. In no uncertain terms, ecofeminism therefore demarcates itself from the sacred feminine.

Applying this paradigm to Meireles' work, we can see that her fanzines and her interventions in the urban space aim to contest the loss of an organic sense of living by countering the different forms of alienation of advanced capitalism (Guerra, 2021c, 2021d). Salleh (2017) states that ecofeminism can be seen as embodied materialism: materialist because it endorses the essential tools of Marxist sociology and embodied because it sets out to reshape discourse by giving equal weight to organic entities such as man, woman and nature, which have historically been unequally valued.

To broaden this approach to the Global South, Anupam Pandey's (2013) contributions are valuable. When we centre ecofeminism on the Global South, it becomes enmeshed in androcentric ideologies, which are deemed primarily responsible for environmental degradation and the oppression of women. A main postulate of ecofeminism is that male domination and modern civilisations are built on the colonisation of women, nature and nations (Mies, 1986). Thus, ecofeminism is about promoting the inclusion of nature, or the environment, in understanding the actions of the exploited.

Here, we have adopted Pandey's (2013) perspective. Accordingly, when we speak of nature, we mean everything that man – generally white and western – considers inferior and unworthy of being conceived and praised. In other words, we have not relied on a restricted view of the term 'nature'. Inspired by Pandey (2013) and Barca (2020b), we use the same argument as ecofeminist Val Plumwood (1993), who contends that nature is a broad and changing category encompassing different types of colonialism. As a (new) feminist social movement, ecofeminism stems from an ability to examine multiple processes of unequal othering installed in men's imageries, lifetimes and spaces of experience. Thus, this ecofeminist approach serves as a paradigmatic approach to Fernanda's artistic work, as we will see in the next section. Reinforcing this, Fred Besthorn (2012) and Michael Ungar (2002) assert that feminism and ecology create a critical dialectical field, sharing the desire to overcome and supplant the predominant anthropocentric Western frameworks.

Going further, we can even say that Fernanda Meireles' ecofeminism is in line with resistance movements that aim to end the domination of individuals and nature (Klemmer and McNamara, 2019): the end of all domination. This is a cultural feminism (King, 1981) that rejects both the denial of the woman/nature binomial (rationalist feminism) and the belief that women are more naturalistic than men (radical feminism). Fernanda Meireles' ecofeminism is based on a feminist and ecological theory that challenges the domination rooted in the destructive ethos of patriarchy in the city, in bodies, in nature and in gender.

## Fanzines, city, body and phallocene

Encouraged by her mother, Fernanda Meireles awakened to the arts and especially to the literature from an early age, leading her to desire a 'career linked to stories, to storytelling', as she told us. The study of cinema seemed appealing, but the course did not exist in Fortaleza. Besides, she saw writing as easier than filmmaking. In 1996, she entered university to study history and started making fanzines from contacts with a friend who produced them.<sup>7</sup> At first, fanzines circulated only among her closest friends; only later did they begin to spread, being sent by letter to people in the city who wanted to know more. Thus, the zine-catalogue *Esputinique*<sup>8</sup> [Sputnik] was born, a production built by a group of zine correspondents, which Fernanda considers a collective, shared and fragmented field diary.

This was a profoundly disruptive work since the fanzine in question led to her master's thesis. It also reveals a process of self-criticism, self-knowledge and self-reflexivity, breaking with the circuits traditionally associated with fanzines. In line with Guerra (2021b), we found that Fernanda Meireles' process of self-reflection made two simultaneous achievements possible. First, the fanzine was the central vehicle of communication and correspondence between fanzine artists in Brazil and in the world, placing Fernanda in a circuit of dialogue with similar young people on a globalised scale. Second, it was always a vehicle of resistance and opposition to everything that she felt was becoming massified and oppressive in Fortaleza. In light of a DIY practice, *Esputinique* can be seen as an alternative object that portrays a visual space, namely at the level of identifying the encounters that permeated the correspondence between zine creators, as well as alternative forms of communication that fought against sensationalist interpretations of traditional media. In short, *Esputinique* unveiled encounters, senses of belonging to the network, creation and experiences. It was a collective and shared field diary, built bit by bit, in a fragmented manner, with characteristics that perfectly resemble the principles of fanzine essentialism in the scope of the sociology of contemporary culture. This fanzine starts from a solid social context of affinities and connections that are written and drawn on its pages (Hodkinson and Lincoln, 2008).

Considering Fernanda Meireles' path, it is pertinent that numerous fanzines have been created since the 1970s with an environmentalist and ecological footprint (Gimeno-Sánchez, 2022). Allied with the creation

of fanzines and the problems of environmentalism, patriarchy, urbanism and ecology is an idea of resistance and revolt, which are clearly evident in Meireles' designs. In other fanzines, Fernanda highlights the visual image of the lesbian woman – her sexual identification. She portrays the stereotypes of female sexuality, playing with the expression 'to come out of the closet' by openly assuming one's sexuality in society. DIY is intrinsic to the Fernanda's fanzines. This ethos can be seen as a pragmatic response to the need to make art without any commercial support or economic constraint. DIY is literally art internalised and externalised. A main characteristic of DIY – independence, or the ability to assert her artistic independence and defend it alone – is found in several moments of Meireles' work. It is the ability to maintain herself by her own artistic means. Fernanda's DIY has always meant creating a symbolic alternative through (meta-phorical) spaces of self-empowerment, mutual aid and alternative social engagement in the city of Fortaleza. It is a broader lifestyle philosophy and a more diverse approach that extends to a range of daily activities in everyday life (Bennett and Guerra, 2021; Guerra, 2021a).

In addition to these issues related to sexuality, there is a strong activist, spatial, environmental and social component to Meireles' fanzines that gives rise to a community of belonging when disseminated within a broad network of fanzine makers (Thompson, 2004). Returning to the topic of the Anthropocene, we draw on the contributions of LasCanta<sup>9</sup> to focus particularly on the concept of the 'Phallocene', a derivation of the Anthropocene. In our understanding, it is another theoretical–practical ramification of ecofeminism that can be associated with Meireles' artistic work and DIY. As we have seen, the Anthropocene represents an advance in the attempt to identify the specificities of the current geological era, marked by the destruction of the biosphere, which is caused by humans. LasCanta (2017) notes that the concept of the Anthropocene in isolation is not sufficient to draw attention to a persistent feature: the existence of male-registered ecosystems. The Phallocene is concrete evidence of the patriarchal domination of the Anthropocene. Authors such as Laura Pulido (2018), Maristella Svampa (2016) and Stefania Barca (2020a, 2020b) emphasise that an important issue plaguing scholars of this new geological era is the domination of women – they consider that there is insufficient emphasis on the gap between the 'naturalisation' of women and the control of nature. Meireles' works, such as the fanzine/series *Cidade Solar* [Solar City], show a subversion of this paradigm since they emphasise the role of control, appropriation and involvement of women with nature – that is, with the environment; in this specific case, this means city spaces, which tend to be designated and dominated by male bodies. In addition, the fanzine in question is devoted to materialising a symbolic representation, addressing the topics of gentrification and touristification of some cities in Brazil, specifically Fortaleza. Fernanda Meireles criticises the process of change and degradation experienced by cities. With this fanzine, Fernanda recalls the colours of buildings, roads, landscapes, feelings and affections, thus contributing to the affirmation of an alternative social space of existence while inciting cultural participation and questioning.

As a fanzine, *Cidade Solar* similarly portrays Meireles' resistance to the subordination of women, alongside the destruction of places and their fall into forgetfulness. The intersection of sexuality and physical space is latent in Meireles' fanzines and postcards, such as the *Cidade Solar* series, giving it a symbolic and social weight that tends to be discarded or diminished in countries of the Global South. LasCanta (2017) states that women's sexuality had become a commodity long before the emergence of Western civilisation, as women were deprived of rights and seen as a resource that could be acquired, just like a piece of land, thus giving rise to the Phallocene era. This period has endured, and in contemporary times is associated with all physical spaces, whether urban or rural. Like the Anthropocene, the Phallocene has become the patriarchal model of oppression as we know it; this is contested by Meireles, mainly through the resignification of how women have appropriated spaces.

The conceptions of heterotopias (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986) as places of resistance are all the more pressing when one approaches Meireles' works. In relation to the *Cidade Solar* series, we see not only a mode of experiential resistance, particularly the poor housing conditions, but also the promotion of a

cosy feeling of home. Therefore, Meireles' postcards and fanzines are heterotopias – sites in which various epistemes collide and overlap, creating modes of intensification of knowledge and practice and activism. Indeed, they originate other ways of learning about the oppression of women and the repression of nature, as postulated by ecofeminist studies, but also characteristic of DIY since Meireles' artistic approach in the fanzines and postcards is based on principles such as creativity, idealism and historicity. This means the artist's aesthetics remain associated with an underground field of production (Guerra, 2021c).

Meireles calls Fortaleza the 'Solar City', into which she makes incursions and pulverises her artistic work with political ideas, albeit in a poetic manner. She disseminates her artistic objects in the form of 'pollination', as she calls it, because she considers that this movement enhances the return of these stories back to her after passing through people, completing the cycle of activity of what she calls the work of the messenger artist. Meireles considers that she artistically produces relational objects capable of promoting enchantment not only between people but between people and the world around them. This is how we can view her work from a perspective of (de)territoriality. Note the following excerpt from the interview we conducted with Fernanda Meireles:

My relationship with zines is divided into two paths that keep crossing and dividing again: working with art and education, the zine workshop linked to various themes and social events, places, contexts and audiences, making collective zines, in the workshops I give, the zines are always made collectively from decisions that we make together and my zines that I continue to make and between one thing and the other, *Zine-se*<sup>10</sup> happened, which is this meeting that started in 2002.

Moreover, her relationship with the city has a peculiarity: the artist gives a prominent place to the ways of life of peripheral spaces, whether they are cities in the countryside or neighbourhoods and places in the city of Fortaleza that are less privileged, and therefore socially, economically and culturally segregated. Thus, her DIY fanzine practice, particularly in *Cidade Solar*, is related to Marc Augé's (2006) concept of non-place. In the postcards of *Cidade Solar*, we contemplate a time and a space, as well as Meireles' transformation into an *Other*. Thus, this concept of non-place, more than portraying oblivion, addresses the changes that these physical–social time-spaces can experience due to the actions of the self and the other. In the meantime, Fernanda creates *A Loja Sem Paredes* [Shop Without Walls], a travelling intervention in which she performs with a suitcase and the artefacts necessary to produce her artistic work in real time, anywhere she wants. She thus deconstructs the idea of having to incorporate official creative circuits and legitimised institutions to be an artist, to have a place to speak or even to sell her products – *Another Non-Place*. Fernanda Meireles builds a business from the outskirts, from peripheral territories and the areas of the marginalised and discriminated against. As a feminist, non-binary person and artist, Fernanda has unique conditions to build this alternative space to normativity, thus giving rise to the possibility of the (r)existence of a gaze or discourse raised by the subaltern in subaltern places. Again, we give voice to Fernanda:

When I started working in Bom-jardim, which is a neighbourhood far from the city centre [of Fortaleza], and that's a different way of saying: a marginal outlying neighbourhood ... there was no outskirts for me. There it was part of my centre, as a centre ... a place where things work from there.

Fernanda Meireles' words, together with records of other marginal artists in the city, generated a documentary film: *Ceará Marginal* [Marginal Ceará].<sup>11</sup> When we talk about territoriality as a process of constructing a territory, Meireles' wandering activity and her *Loja Sem Paredes* become exemplary for grasping the concept, but also the implications of the Anthropocene and DIY – which, by opposition, imply a dystopian notion of destruction and reconstruction or resignification by human beings. As a construction, they take on a processual character, giving the territory a plastic nature in constant mutation

and redirection of axes – different from the idea of space as a definite instance. As reconstruction or resignification, DIY emerges as a way of reconfiguring the modes of appropriation and interpretation of spaces within the Anthropocene era and regarding the Phallocene. The construction of these *other* territorialities shows the possibility of building an alternative beyond the state and the ruling classes. Constructing specific territorialities inevitably involves questions of political dimensions and power relations. This is particularly so when we focus on the role of the woman artist as an agent of modification of territorialities, as in the case of Fernanda Meireles:

Once I was asked: places in Fortaleza that are good for dating ... imagine that ... it was a nice little list, right? That's what happened ... and this place is in the postcard collection ... I think one of the words I like best, to think about the things I make, is to spread things out, spread things out, spread things out, right? ... to make fragmented things, several pieces that are loose, scattered, and that are ephemeral, outside the grand circuit. So it's very common for someone to say: oh, I have something of yours at home, or I went to a friend's house and I saw something [of yours], or I received a postcard of yours, or a zine, or a mug ... what I write is very scattered, pulverised by the city ...

The most current definition of fanzines considers them artefacts that are non-professional, non-commercial publications with a small circulation, where creators produce, publish and distribute the material themselves (Guerra, 2021b). Fanzines have experienced a tremendous explosion in the Global South in recent years (Guerra, 2021d), with a proliferation of fairs and their growing presence in bookshops and even museums. Based on the idea that self-publishing has always been fundamental in all social movements, an analysis of ecofeminist fanzines such as those produced by Meireles can provide insights into the evolution of ecofeminism in the Global South, as well as clues about urban spaces and processes of spatial ghettoisation, ethnic-race segregation, social gentrification or even cultural touristification. Meireles' words reveal a growing (theoretical) concern about including the voices of minority groups in the narratives that are being postulated. But the truth is that they are very few in number, and in several cases, they are a kind of return to a vision that exalted the exotic. The subversion of this narrative guides Meireles' fanzines such that in both *Esputinique* and *Cidade Solar*, she emphasises local populations. This is a straightforward approach to ecofeminist assumptions in terms of preserving tacit knowledge based on everyday experiences. If earlier we referred to this principle in relation to the destruction of ecosystems, in Meireles' case we can speak of the devaluation of urban spaces and their populations.

Fernanda Meireles' *praxis* fits into a lineage of feminist ethnography. Her postcards and portraits of the city provide a window into how feminism contributes to knowledge production, especially bearing in mind the historical relegation of women from cities and societies. According to Cheryl Rodriguez (2016) and Kathy Davis (2020), feminist ethnography is a theory of feminist politics linked to gender issues and all their intersections. Such readings bring us closer to Meireles, as her work highlights specific contexts and pays attention to the power differentials and inequalities that emerge from the various strands of feminism, particularly in urban environments based on a culture that favours dominant, male, white and cisgender groups.

Fernanda has always emphasised the relationships that can be made with the city. The artist's connection – above all poetic – with the spaces of the town in which she lives has been translated into photographs that Fernanda has collected over the years. A collection that she launched in 2016 with 36 images (alluding to the old 36-pose analogue photographic films) creates a visual and textual narrative intended to condense her experience as well as reaffirm her brand. They ultimately connect with the other in a fragmented, pulverised manner. We can see a profound lack of knowledge of social realities and challenges by a large majority of the world's population – knowledge and cosmologies that, if properly harnessed, will be important to explore new avenues for science with notable impacts on reality. This requires dedication to overcome

the hegemonic epistemic paradigm that values Eurocentric knowledge and devalues or omits all the rest. It is necessary to give voice to the peripheral, to the 'less important' in the conception of 'guiding' thought. There is an urgent need for an articulated movement of (de)territorialisation:

The way I see it, from where I see it, I realise that there are a lot of discussions raised about this and about the space of women and the space that women can chase after and get their foot in the door ... and bringing up issues that no one else was talking about, such as male chauvinism, for example, within photography, comics and rock bands, I do see it.

Meireles' references materialise, above all, in the territories intended to preserve them and their image. They also emerge as a way of writing new narratives, giving them *other* meanings. Thus, by analysing the artist's works, we can see that both environmental activism and ecofeminism stand out as diversified movements, and it is not easy to draw boundaries around them. In this entanglement of artistic production with space and nature (note that nature refers to a broader definition, as we mentioned earlier), Meireles strives to preserve and protect the natural environment she experiences. This protection takes the form of a photograph, a postcard or a fanzine, thus eternalising her experience with the places and praising the transformative potential of those who inhabit them.

Moreover, the artist's works can be seen as subliminal environmentalist struggles and direct actions on spaces, developing an awareness of the creative and collective involvement of the most diverse bodies in shaping the places where they live (Gimeno-Sánchez, 2022). The environmental activism and ecofeminism evident in fanzines such as *Cidade Solar* advocate the need to involve the public in local decision-making – especially women and non-binary bodies:

Unfortunately Fortaleza is one of the cities that kills the most transvestites, the rate of violence against LGBT people is very high, child prostitution here is very high, it has already been higher in some indices but it is not a problem that has disappeared or that has shrunk very much, although we are the capital of the state and although it is one of the five largest cities in Brazil, the problems that we have related to gender violence, whether against women, violence against the LGBT community is very serious, very serious, and then you add all that we've talked about to the youth of today, the attitude of these young people in relation to these issues is much more demanding and even more confrontational, they express themselves clearly and explicitly in this way.

In Meireles' postcards and fanzines, the ideas of ecofeminism and environmental activism are clearly evident. As a means of disseminating ideas, fanzines have not been considered as sources (Guerra, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d) on which we can build a biographical narrative or even sources of contestation to androcentric and anthropogenic problems perpetuated since the era of colonialism. This aspect is still reflected in the artistic career of non-binary and binary bodies in Fortaleza. Fernanda reiterates:

I think one of the difficulties is to deal with a kind of imagery that we were raised on, that our art and our culture where we are is minor. Firstly, because it is the Northeast, within Brazil, and because it is Ceará within the Northeast. There are other centres of culture that are more respected nationally and internationally. For a while, anyone who was an artist here in Fortaleza had to leave and go away, and that has been part of our imagery and our culture for 40 years. Anyone who wanted to make art had to leave and you can see this in several artists, from the people of Ceará who are music people, who went to the South and this movement directly influences the works created as a theme, there is this precept that anywhere you will find a person from Ceará.

If we look at territories from the interactions that constitute them, we realise that spaces should not be seen as homogeneous and timeless totalities. Usually, the people who constitute them are in perennial flux between sites, between parts of the same city, between the countryside and the city, between cities

and between countries, assuming multi-local lives in discontinuous territories of life, work and other activities. This notion raises a relational sense of territory that no longer considers space from an aspect of rootedness and stability. In this way, the work of Fernanda Meireles, the artist of *Cidade Solar*, translates into the demarcation of possibilities of (de)territorialisation, whose working tool is fanzines – postcards, letters and photographs – (quasi-)mutant, pulsating and uprooted objects.

### ‘Shattering illusions, seeding freedom’<sup>12</sup>

In March 2002, after three of the seven workshops of the Yoyô series had been held, *Zine-se* emerged as a direct consequence of the meetings. There were a number of ‘floating’ people among the workshop audience who came for a day or two. Friends of friends (also curious), returning participants, zine makers or not. Today, six years later, I no longer know exactly how this idea came about, but we often talked about creating a periodic meeting involving zines. Once again, the contents of the workshop overflowed their time and space durations and in a self-managed way, *Zine-se* was created to be a situation of exchange of zines outside pedagogical contexts. Not by chance, in Benfica: a place where work, life, prayer, fun and drunkenness are concentrated in a single neighbourhood cut by hundreds of bus lines that cross the city of Fortaleza from north to south and from east to west. (Meireles, 2013: 37)

At this point, we will briefly explore a concept that may be applied to the analysis of the connection between the fanzines of Meireles and the concept of ecofeminism. In line with Andrea Gimeno-Sánchez (2022), the idea of *minor* used in notions such as *minor theory* can offer a fruitful reflection on artistic practices like those of Fernanda Meireles, being that the production of fanzines by Meireles can be understood and a means of resistance inside urban territories, deeply masculine and patriarchal. As Gimeno-Sánchez claims, the minor theory – or the *minor* – concerns sources, archives, and samples, to which we add fanzines. In other words, it can be seen and used as an analytical and reflective lens through which we can analyse the connection between the fanzines created by Meireles, and their connection with ecofeminism, but also with the criticism of the logic of male and patriarchal domination in urban cities, as is the case of Fortaleza. This concept arises from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1986) on the *minor theory*. The authors argue that being considered ‘minor’ does not presume a relationship of sub-alternity to the ‘major’; on the contrary, the concept of ‘minor’ refers instead to a language or form of expression that a minority has constructed from a more significant experiential notion, in this case, we can list Meireles’ contributions, in the sense that she portrays, through fanzines, a tripartite relationship that connects (eco)feminism, urban experience and gender issues in a broader way, thus contributing to the emphasis on ‘minor theories’, since it aims to artistically and verbally represent the experience of those who are considered as subordinates of the ‘major theories’, that is, it portrays the representation of women as the other of men. Therefore, major and minor are considered interdependent and not a dual relationship of dominated versus dominant.

Moreover, the fact the concept of *minor* is used to describe approaches, languages, practices and acts that emerge as an alternative to the major ones – to those that are socially accepted, that is, everything that is done by men – denotes fragmented acts of resistance that are, consequently, also fragmented in themselves and can give rise to other minor concepts, such as the concept of Phallogene in the Global South. The minor becomes the seed for subversion and transformation, an aspect that seems to describe Fernanda Meireles’ work: her fanzines represent minor spaces, minor languages, minor visuals, minor sexuality, minor modes of action, that is, *minor practices* of (eco)feminism and activism.

A vital component of Meireles’ visual work in relation to the concept of minor, can also be viewed in terms of its operative dimension, as it functions critically, challenging norms and canons – in this case, artistic and experiential ones. The same is true about literature, as authors such as Scott Brown (1968)

emphasise the latent power of minor sources – including fanzines, given how they can challenge the mass production of information, in this case, the mass production of patriarchal information regarding urban life and experience. Stoner (2012) also provides a perspective that can be adapted to Meireles' artistic contributions, especially when he states that the minor is, in fact, an opportunistic event that materialises as a response to latent desires to challenge power structures that, we add, tend to be occupied by white, cisgender and Western men, all the more evident in the DIY used to create the *Esputinique* or *Cidade Solar* fanzines. This is a notion that is at the centre of Meireles' (eco)feminist approach and which we portrayed in this article.


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### ORCID iD

Paula Guerra  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2377-8045>

### Notes

1. Title inspired by Lisa Kemmerer (2011).
2. The publication is supported by FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology, within the scope of UIDB/00727/2020.
3. *Ceará Marginal* introduces Fernanda Meireles as follows: 'she is a reference in the area of fanzines in Fortaleza and throughout Brazil. Fernanda has edited numerous publications of different formats and themes. In the early 2000s, she produced the *Zine-se* monthly meetings.' Available at <https://cearamarginal.com.br/fernanda-meireles.php>.
4. It is, in fact, a portable suitcase in which Fernanda carries her fanzines, taking them to different spaces and making them accessible to different populations.
5. Fortaleza is a Brazilian municipality, capital of the state of Ceará, located in the Northeast region of the country. It is a densely populated city-metropolis with a strong tourist sector. Since the end of the twentieth century, it has accumulated numerous major social problems, including poverty, hunger, social segregation, insecurity and crime. A highly polarised area and the result of strong land and real estate speculation, Fortaleza is a deeply unequal city in terms of cultural, economic and symbolic access.
6. The interview with Fernanda Meireles was transcribed and analysed using categorical content analysis. The interview followed the ethical requirements of the American Sociological Association. We obtained informed consent from Fernanda Meireles to use excerpts for sociological analysis.
7. She founded an all-girls band, Devotchkas, with this friend – a reference to the film *A Clockwork Orange*; it was later renamed Alcalina and lasted until 2003.
8. In 2013, *Esputinique* became the research object of her master's thesis at the Federal University of Ceará. She focused on the universe of letters and zines related to modes of subjectivation built among a group of correspondent-zine writers who were organised around encounters that permeated letter writing with elements of literary, affective and artistic construction.
9. A Venezuelan ecofeminist research and action group: [ladantalascanta@gmail.com](mailto:ladantalascanta@gmail.com). See LasCanta (2017).

10. *Zine-se* started happening in 2002, becoming monthly until 2006. It did not belong to a specific location in the city. Each month it took place somewhere different, being a propellant for the discovery of parts of the city not usually known/frequented. Usually, these places were public urban spaces.
11. It is directed by the artist, comic book author and cultural producer from Ceará, Weaver Lima, who aimed to highlight the cultural scene of independent publications produced in the State of Ceará, especially alternative publishing, shedding light on the works and the ‘dangerous minds’ of the scene that sought freedom of action through their self-publications.
12. Retrieved from “One Earth, One Humanity vs. the 1%” (Shiva, 2018).

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