Second edition

PRAGMATIC SUSTAINABILITY

DISPOSITIONS FOR CRITICAL ADAPTATION

Pragmatic Sustainability

Dispositions for critical adaptation

Second edition

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Chapter 11

Aligning disconnected frames in action

The case of São Paulo's *Zeladoria Ambiental* (Environmental Stewards)

Kristine Stiphany

There are two conditions, among many others, that disproportionately hinder societies of the global south from developing more sustainably: *political volatility* and the orthodox policies of *rational planning*. The first, political volatility, is a condition derived from institutionalizing the abandonment, or wanton destruction of development projects initiated by political party "A," by party "B," as soon as the latter comes into power. As a result of this cannibalistic pattern, very few projects, good ones or bad, ever come to fruition and little of value is learned through experience.

The second condition, rational planning, is one latently adopted by developing economies, but also one externally imposed by global lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. As a result, development efforts tend to be channeled through *a priori* problem classifications, and the corresponding technocracies (departments or secretariats) that manage problems of a specified kind—e.g., housing, the environment, or the economy. Although these are seemingly rational categories of problem solving, they are in fact anything but neutral. Rather, these categories bring with them *frames of perception and interpretation* that frequently have little to do with the context-dependent problems confronting particular people in very particular places.

This observation, learned through five years of ethnographic study in São Paulo among residents of informal settlements, policy makers, and public planners, has helped me to understand how "frame analysis"—a tool first developed by psychologist Erving Goffman in the mid-1970s—might be helpful in understanding the on-going struggle of the *Zeladoria Ambiental*, or environmental stewards, of the São Francisco informal community in São Paulo.[4] Their struggle for housing and environmental security is being transformed by their ability to perceive competing frames of interpretation among competing social groups, appreciate those differences, and then forge common problem redefinition through action. The *Zeladoria's* story is deserving of attention, not only because it is exemplary, but also because outlier examples can provide insight toward generalization.[5]

This chapter begins by establishing the theoretical context of frame analysis, which is followed by a review of the socio-geographic context of São Francisco. These two introductory sections set up my analysis of *frame-realignment* and *-bridging* by the *Zeladoria Ambiental* in the third. The frames employed by the *Zeladoria* to advance their interests include *self-help*, *equity*, and *design*. While not all-inclusive, these frames are reflective of the rise in participatory planning that accompanied Brazil's democratic emergence from military rule after 1984. I examine how the

Zeladoria has appropriated characteristics of these frames into one of synthetic *collaboration*, currently disassociated from governmental intervention.

While not all informal settlements have organized community groups, and not all community groups espouse an environmental ethic, the case offers to those that do insights about resilience amid significant political volatility and imposed rationalities.[6]

Theoretical context

Amid the many upheavals in urban planning of the twentieth century—from CIAM modernism to urban renewal and widespread displacement—Henri Lefebvre's concept of Right to the City (RTC) has persisted and shapes the intellectual foundation for critical approaches to urban development.[7] An alternative to rational planning, RTC appealed to citizens whose everyday concerns were long excluded from planning and development processes. RTC's emphasis on everyday experience inspired mobilization around issues in low-income neighborhoods that emerged in the wake of mid-century mass urbanization, including housing, sanitation, and social services. In Brazil, neighborhood organizing was buttressed by an intellectual movement and culminated in urban reform and the direct insertion of the RTC into the 1988 Constitution and the 2001 Statute of the City. As Fernandes notes, it was not until the Statute that policy tools backed local concerns to "regulate, induce and/or revert urban land and property markets according to criteria of social inclusion and environmental sustainability."[8] The limitations of integrating these two conventionally antagonistic policy goals, and implementing the tenets of the RTC generally, have been widely studied and debated.[9] As a result, any consideration of the relationship between environmentalism and social equity in the Brazilian planning context must be framed in terms of how the RTC has been interpreted over the past thirty years.

Within this context, São Paulo's alternate waves of conservative and progressive governments have deployed development frames that reflect diverse interpretations of a Right to the City. In response, organized community groups mobilize to implement policies that are in their interests, but are often threatened by the succession of one political regime by another. These efforts vary across the city's vast peripheral lands and are as diverse as the projects they attempt to advance. Although such diversity, participation, and the integration of local knowledge have long been championed by the various political regimes that draw from RTC, the articulated goals of particular communities are commonly disregarded by orthodox development strategies—namely that of housing. Resistance to this cycle is evidenced when communities appropriate *partial frames* imposed by top-down planning in order to advance emergent planning agendas.

The *Zeladoria Ambiental* of the São Francisco informal settlement provides a case study for how a specific community group has undertaken a process of "frame alignment." Settled by people united by the practice of residential self-building in the mid-1970s, São Francisco is located twenty-two kilometers from the city center in the peripheral east zone, an area important for São Paulo's historic patterns of growth. For decades, the overlapping challenges of hazardous land uses, overbuilding of government and self-built housing, and concentration of environmentally sensitive areas have targeted São Francisco and the broader São Mateus district as an area of concern for residents and local government alike—despite the fact that both continue to reproduce these superimpositions. These dynamics have been the focus of the *Zeladoria*, which evolved from a handful of concerned citizens to a formally recognized social organization in 2014. Initially galvanized by the praxis of self-building, the *Zeladoria* has borrowed from three development frames used across the city since the 1980s. In so doing, the group broadly challenges the abstract and global focus of Brazil's generally elitist environmental movement with local practices that advance ecological quality and social welfare.

The tools of frame analysis initially developed by Goffman, and noted above, have been further developed by Snow et al. to examine the relationship between social groups' interpretation of reality and the contexts that shape their everyday lives.[10] The "schemata of interpretation" that result, then, provide insights into how people make sense of what occurs at the intersection of their immediate and broader worlds.[11] Unhinged from political, economic, *or* empirical investigation, this flexible framework provides a *meso-level* lens through which to understand the evolving relationship between individual agency and structural conditions. As Portes argues, such middle-range theorizing is particularly relevant for the Latin American context, the conditions of which have been historically assigned structural explanations that "deproblematize" the world and "diminish the perceived need for empirical study" by targeting the historical roots of underdevelopment.[12] Rather, mid-level thinking is future-oriented toward ways of overcoming inequitable development at the community or national scales.[13] In like manner, frames are a type of metric for not only guiding the interpretation of the present reality, but also thinking inductively about what might transpire in the future.

Goffman's analysis has been expanded toward relational understandings of how such a metric works as people mobilize, collaborate, and navigate complex urban conditions to induce change. For Snow et al., such processes rely on *frame alignments* between the values and beliefs of individuals and those of broader movements and institutions.[14] Frame alignments reveal the dynamic nature of participation, and how it is "a processual, even stage-like or step-wise, phenomenon"[15] that occurs through four discrete but related strategies: *frame transformation*, *frame amplification*, *frame extension*, and *frame bridging*. Each of these strategies, singly or together, can be successful in modifying the frame through which current conditions are interpreted, and potentially transformed, by multiple groups.

Of these strategies, two are most relevant for the case at hand. As will be demonstrated, different political parties tend to employ *frame transformation* to completely reframe old values and/or past, present, and future conditions "in order to garner support and secure participants."[16] In the case of Brazil's urban reform movement, this involved a reframing of how people from informal settlements were treated generally, and their role in urban planning specifically. Once framed as backward, rural newcomers who destroyed the city, the movement's promotion of citizenship elevated these formerly invisible humans to "*gente*" or people with valid perspectives.[17] Alternatively, from the perspective of conservative ex-mayor Paulo Maluf, São Paulo's informal settlements had stolen citizenship that could be revived only when high-density housing towers replaced settlements.[18] Frame transformation's radical benefits, then, can also trigger equally extreme counterforces that, in the case of São Paulo, have toggled back and forth since the 1980s.

Second, *frame bridging* describes the "linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames," such as self-builders and housing movements, or housing movements and human rights.[19] By introducing the RTC as scaffolding within which numerous popular movements could operate, the urban reform movement established the conceptual conditions through which to consolidate power and collect adherents. The group most notoriously successful at frame bridging, of course, is the Worker's Party (PT). Originally a militant group formed in opposition to the dictatorship, the PT gained traction because it shared most citizens' desire for democracy and, specifically, the social emancipation objectives of poorer groups. Since the PT has "left the streets" in its adherence to economic policies indiscernible from conservative opposition, it is no longer a given that people on the city's periphery will vote PT.[20] As a result, for non-partisan community groups (such as the *Zeladoria*) with unorthodox development interests (such as environmental sustainability) frame bridging is not impossible, but has proven challenging.

In highly inequitable contexts, of which Brazil is one, and given social groups whose politics are plural and goals unfamiliar, it is reasonable to consider how the RTC's conceptual framework can be applied to conditions on the ground—and even if it is at all possible. Within planning theory, an

emergent group of scholars has considered this question by analyzing the interface between *invented* spaces of political action in communities and *invited* spaces of obligatory participation conferred by governments.[21] Whereas the former emerges incrementally as locals cope with social service and infrastructure deficits, the latter entails ready-to-hand participation strategies that fit within a discrete development project. Real participation does not happen in either one or the other kind of space, but fluidly between them, "through the entanglement of inclusion and resistance."[22] In the Brazilian context, frame alignment depends, as will be seen, on the exposure of involved actors to planning spaces in community and government scales of decision-making. While it would be easy to pit one against the other, they are, in fact, reciprocally related and productive of hybrid outcomes.

Socio-geographic context

Informal settlements are ubiquitous outcomes of this reciprocal relationship, and result from the city's historical patterns of uneven development created by people who need housing and governments that fail to provide it. Beginning in the 1940s, the confinement of zoning and regulation standards to the city center permitted land speculators to illegally sell unserviced peripheral lots to incoming migrants.[23] In contrast to Rio de Janeiro's central hilltop perches, these self-built *loteamentos* at the margins were the city's first informal settlements. Following mid-century mass urbanization, when São Paulo's population quadrupled between 1950 and 1970, a second form of informal settlement, the *favela*, emerged on irregular plots of land, in riparian zones, and along railway tracks.[24] Some of these informal settlements eventually consolidated with the assistance of self-help policies, initiatives that supported communities in fortifying any vital social networks and physical assets that led to enhanced life conditions.

Self-help policies emerged out of a broad consensus among social movement, local government, and international agencies that a user-driven housing process would lower housing deficits inexpensively while empowering communities to be protagonists in urban change.[25] Following their emergence during mid-century rural to urban migration, informal settlements were initially perceived as temporary aberrations on the city, and a form of urban disease. This framing proved untenable, however, as housing deficits mounted across Latin America. Instead, informal settlements came to be reconceptualized as vital incubators of social networks and opportunities required for transition into urban life. Self-help and servicing policies were viewed as viable technical supports to community assets, and each developing country adopted context-appropriate forms throughout the late 1970s and 1980s.[26]

In Brazil, self-help's focus on the preservation of informal settlements expanded to include general strategies of *urbanization* or upgrading: development that weaves in infrastructure and new housing where land is available. Guided by RTC and policy instruments such as ZEIS, *zones of social interest*, were established to relax zoning regulations and open lines of communication between secretariats of housing, environment, and sanitation, and residents of informal settlements. Yet, because the land on which informal settlements are located is publicly owned, residents are legally bound to the development stipulations set forth by these agencies. This problem is exacerbated by agencies that are often ideologically divided, particularly across environmental and social lines. Environmentalists tend to understand sustainability as the preservation of no-build zones around waterways and in areas of risk in order to return these areas to a natural state, which are often the same lands coveted by advocates for the construction of new housing. In both cases, urbanization entails the removal of settlements in areas of risk and environmental sensitivity, creating an antagonistic relationship between social housing proponents and environmentalists, and between the city and residents of informal settlements (Figure 11.1). In other words, urbanization's problem-definitions are extruded through different frames.

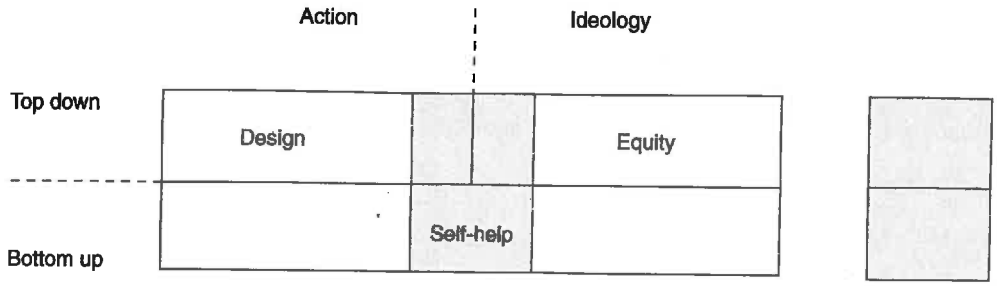

Figure 11.1
Disconnected and synthetic frames.

Disconnected development frames

The Zeladoria's synthetic frame

Residents of informal settlements frame sustainability differently, based on everyday challenges of sanitation, trash, and proximity to hazardous land uses. As these challenges are disassociated with the preservation of once-pristine ecosystems, they remain peripheral to Brazil's mainstream environmental movement's priorities.[27] This disconnect has been echoed by local environmentalists in São Francisco, who claim that "São Mateus has long been a depository for the poor and the city's trash. This is beyond the radar of the environmental elites."[28] In a similar manner, the need to manage environmental amenities at a local level is often beyond the housing secretariat's purview, and to curb housing production is not an option. For one resident, "this [housing] process has to stop. The health clinic, the school, the nursery—they can't support the growth.... The government needs to invest in our existing infrastructure if they want to sustain the people who are coming here."[29] As a result, the adoption of an environmental position means that community groups will face, ironically, some opposition from both environmental and housing agencies.

The conflict between communities, housing advocates, and mainstream environmentalists is also fanned by the influence peddling that drives political cycles and the structure of government itself. Government actors work within the time-bound intervals of development and establish project scope and dimensions endorsed by a particular regime. Alternatively, community leaders work continuously to solve problems. In the unsynchronized cycles of elections and projects, the agency of community leaders applies only to the brief period during which politicians are eager to trade problem-definitions and projects for votes. The tragedy is, of course, that agreements made at election time are often breached following electoral victory. Governments use a rational development frame to position a general approach and corresponding projects, while community groups assimilate parts of the frames to address "wicked problems" whose complexity is immune to political cycles.[30] Often, the public planners, engineers, and social workers that regularly interact with communities undergoing development are caught in the middle.

Frames, then, are important for the Brazilian context for two reasons. First, they serve as a medium through which governments cast external planning ideas such as RTC and sustainability into development terms that are both local and abstract.[31] While the former designation bolsters legitimacy and leads to citizen support, eventually through votes, the latter fosters international endorsement and ultimately funding. Second, community groups leverage aspects of a frame to obtain buy-in for their ongoing planning efforts that exist and evolve beyond intervals defined by government agencies. In the next section, I examine the interface of these two parallel processes as they unfold between local environmentalists in São Francisco and three development frames.

The *Zeladoria Ambiental* through three development frames

The *Zeladoria Ambiental* emerged in the 1980s as a small group of self-builders who became concerned with the increasing environmental degradation of São Francisco's abundant natural resources by hazardous land uses, primarily landfills and a petrochemical complex. As the city's east zone quickly urbanized with self-built and government-constructed housing projects, these concerns extended to overbuilding and culminated in a movement that merged social and environmental change as two components of a single problem. This local movement evolved through successive waves of development and related frames, culminating in its consolidation in 2009, and formal association in 2014. The first frame, *self-help*, was designed to support existing informal settlements and self-builders in creating their own communities. The second *equity frame* rolled out participatory processes intended to extend greater social control over urban resources and development. Third, the *design frame* adhered to the idea of the RTC, but focused largely on the improvement of physical space. In the following sections, I will discuss how each of these development frames has been realigned through their interface with the *Zeladoria*, whose appropriation of partial frames shaped a synthetic *collaboration* frame.

The self-help frame

Self-help's translation to São Paulo was facilitated by its connection to the urban reform movement, the rising Worker's Party (PT), and appeal to social movements that championed self-help as a way for the poor to gain a foothold into the city. This ideal designated the collective construction of housing as a form of achieving a right to the city by negotiating for housing, sanitation, and a range of infrastructures. This exchange established the first conduits of communication and contention between communities and governments—alternatively described as life enhancing and oppressive.[32] As communities made increasingly complex claims, the municipality distributed pipes, wires, and construction materials in sync with election cycles. In parallel, the east zone's vast open lands permitted social movements to encourage large land occupations—leveraged for votes—and provided ample space for the installation of the city's landfills.

When early settlers of São Francisco learned of the Sapopemba landfill in 1982, its expansion had already resulted in sickness among community members and an inability to even consume meals because of the stench. Recognizing the problem as significantly more complex than housing, a handful of local environmentalists saw in self-help some tactics useful for rebutting the environmental degradation imposed on their community. As one self-builder notes, "through all of the mobilization around housing, we realized our mission was to defend the environment."[33] Collective problem solving, a staged, incremental approach to governmental engagement, and direct field actions became characteristic pillars around which residents began to coalesce and articulate grievances about the landfill's harmful impacts.

Local environmentalists used self-help's familiar cache of tools to garner community support for the landfill's closure. Initial conversations about housing deficits extended to topics such as community sanitation and the adverse effects of exposure to pollutants. Through these mobilization tactics, residents' focus shifted from housing to the wellbeing of the community at large. Similarly, by coupling the landfill's closure with other resource acquisitions, São Francisco's citizens convincingly translated the elimination of a hazard into a language understood by politicians as a trade for votes. After residents physically blocked the Sapopemba's two entrances from receiving more trash, and emphasized to local officials the incompatibility of neighborhood upgrades such as a school with the landfill, Mayor Mario Covas permanently closed the Sapopemba. Advocating a balanced environment, local environmentalists managed to direct the gaze of residents upward as they

beckoned that of politicians downward. This temporary frame alignment—catalyzed by self-help yet *cemented through collective experience*—was a precursor to the *Zeladoria*'s future impact on community change.

The victory of the Sapopemba's closure in 1984 was curtailed when the subsequent Quadros administration opened the São João landfill less than a kilometer away—yet another example of political volatility. By framing the closure of the Sapopemba landfill as an immediate neighborhood threat, residents' claims lacked the breadth necessary to reach a broader public audience. This limitation led to the realization that environmental issues were too dynamic for a frame reliant on the regime of *clientelism*—the trading of votes for (hollow) promises. This misalignment revealed to local environmentalists and reform activists alike that collective action in communities did not present a strategic enough front to resist the uneven distribution of hazardous land uses or unmask the complexity of local issues to a broader policy context. A distinct frame was required to situate environmentalism relative to context but legible beyond it.

The equity frame

In the decade since the signing of the 1988 Constitution, the empowerment of communities envisioned by the architects of the urban reform movement failed to fully materialize.[34] This limitation brought equity to bear on development, ushering in guidelines for citizen participation in the creation of urban master plans, district-level plans, informal settlement redevelopment, collective budgeting of public resources, and municipal and community governance councils.[35] In São Paulo, a PT administration introduced citywide initiatives for expanding self-help into dimensions of an emergent citizenship: self-development, cooperation, self-sufficiency, and participation.[36] Advocates championed these ideals by linking them simultaneously to self-building practices and the RTC's emancipatory tenets. Instead of the street, communities were encouraged to articulate claims in public forums from which were formed local working groups. This process reversed self-help organization, whereby people formed alliances through physical proximity, into social mobilization around themes of interest e.g., public health, education, and the environment. These unions evidenced the complexity of informal settlements that had evolved over the course of thirty years, and the limitation of any singular development approach to grasp it.

The creation of district-level working groups fostered unprecedented exchange between citizens, planners, and other professionals around the topic of equitable urban management. In 2002, a working group was established in São Francisco to draw out the finer points of the area's environmental issues. Qualitative analysis was undertaken between biologists from the Secretary for the Environment (VERDE) and local environmentalists, who engaged community members within riparian zones, at the edges of forests, and under overpasses. As a local environmentalist recalls, "We walked along creeks lined with shacks, and talked to people about their concerns and their connection to the broader hydrologic system."[37] This survey revealed the most obvious conclusion that people built on leftover pieces of land for lack of other options. Yet it also disclosed an unanticipated need for increased recreational spaces—not because a lack of leisure space in informal settlements is atypical, but in the words of a participant, "it was not what we were seeking. We thought we were talking about water ... they [the residents] saw sustainability as public space."[38] How the working group framed environmental issues and how community members framed them proved to be very different.

The government, however, was looking for a large project. Elections were approaching, and the Worker's Party (PT) promise—that participatory practices would yield concrete outcomes—came under public scrutiny. A conceptual bridge between the needs of VERDE, local environmentalists, and residents culminated in the proposal for an Olympic Park project, presented by local

environmentalists as a way to remediate and transform the vast area of the old Sapopemba landfill into a valuable public resource. In the original plan, the community conceived of the landfill as an open-air arena with courts, pools, running and walking tracks, enclosed community spaces, and a daycare center to support all generations of area residents. It is unclear as to who made the connection and why it eventually dissolved, however, the plan was initially framed as a socio-environmental partnership between VERDE and the Secretary for Sports and Culture. When the latter secretariat receded, VERDE reframed the project as a beneficiary of carbon offset credits earned from the São João landfill. Had this experiment been tested, it was precisely what proponents of Clean Development Mechanisms have in mind when they claim "everyone wins"—developed countries write off their polluting behavior and developing countries compensate the communities most immediately impacted by environmental degradation.[39]

The PT's defeat in the 2005 municipal elections had far-reaching impacts. Amid the general chaos that accompanies political turnover in any country, the Olympic Park project was shelved and the unprecedented partnership unrealized. In 2006, an "abaixo assinado" (a grievance signed from below) by local environmentalists and residents sued the city for default on an international accord and failure to comply with its own social equity policies. VERDE did eventually acquiesce, although not by implementing the original plan. Instead, the private consortium responsible for managing half of São Paulo's trash was allowed to fund a park project in lieu of paying routine pollution fees. In so doing, VERDE permitted the distillation of the community's Olympic Park vision to a paltry project of two courts, a walking trail, and an entrance marquis or, as locals refer to it, "a park for the poor." The irony found in the betrayal of the Secretary of the Environment is that it was not inconsistent with their framing of the problem. VERDE was simply unable to see social equity as an environmental issue for which they were ultimately responsible.

What the equity frame gained in discourse, it lost in project management and implementation. Unique for its emphasis on fostering the community-identification of problems and solutions, the equity frame's approach was severely limited by its failure to extend experimental feedback loops to scales of problem resolution and project implementation. These limitations fueled a political shift back to conservative governance and a professionalized development approach framed through the lens of technical intelligence and good design.

The design frame

Whereas the self-help and equity frames were linked to the urban reform movement and its emancipatory objectives, the design frame envisioned equity as extending design decision-making to people often excluded from its benefits. Conducted by a highly technical team within São Paulo's housing secretariat (SEHAB), the Urbanization of *Favelas* (UF) program envisioned the social function of public space as predicated upon experimental approaches to physical improvement that learned from existing conditions.[40] Until the mid-2000s, focus rested on the regularization and preservation of informal settlements *or* the production of low-quality standardized housing blocks. The UF program integrated these approaches, but also hired the country's best architects to design housing and public spaces in informal settlements. In parallel, a community engagement program was launched to support existing community organizations, and where none existed, create new ones. Finally, SEHAB developed an unprecedented mapping tool, HABISP, to increase the transparency of its process. In contrast to the widespread inclusion of citizenry advocated by the equity frame, the design frame strategically engaged the community's most involved individuals.

In São Francisco, SEHAB contracted a social worker to foster a community group devoted to the topic of sustainability, "a very enriching experience because environmentalism typically plays a subordinate role in informal settlement development."[41] Various leaders were approached, including

Figure 11.2
Jardim São Francisco.

the local environmentalists, and many consolidated into what became known as the *Zeladoria Ambiental*. Several members were provided with a seven-month leadership-training course, which led to the formation of project groups around the topics of water, recycling, education, and green infrastructure. Out of these, an ecological sidewalk with openings for trees was incorporated into the development project. From approximately ten projects undertaken between 2009 and 2012, from children's art courses to *Cole Ole*, a cooking oil collection program, two critical projects emerged as the group's long term commitments: the springs mapping and an environmental guide training course, precursors to the *Zeladoria*'s current focus on Ecotourism.

According to residents, the springs project emerged from an unfinished self-help project of the early 1990s intended to link the area's springs with walking paths, and the participatory mapping of the area's water resources in the early 2000s. This history inspired the analysis and design proposals for eleven springs by members of the *Zeladoria* and the social worker, culminating in a report titled "Our Everyday Water." In parallel, community youth were invited to participate in a three-month environmental guides course, led by members of the *Zeladoria* who extended their knowledge about São Francisco's ecological history and tactics for locating springs according to smell, soil, and flora, "an unwritten history that the youth here need to know about. Maybe they'll do something with it in the future."[42] Through the implementation of projects that revealed the area's hidden water infrastructure and involved youth, the *Zeladoria* was finally able to frame environmentalism through a social equity lens.

The *Zeladoria*'s achievements had little upward mobility, however, once a political shift back to the PT led to SEHAB's fiscal strangulation. The *Zeladoria* was suddenly confronted with no prospect for funding as SEHAB's development project was stalled and the São Francisco team dismantled. Amid this uncertainty, approximately half of the *Zeladoria* dissolved, leaving only the most committed to seek support for the Springs and Environmental Guides projects from VERDE,

Figure 11.3
Environmental guides field course.

the Rotary Club, and SENAI (an industrial foundation), none of which have gained traction. Some members argue that acceptance of funding from the landfill owner, Ecourbs, would permit them to jumpstart Ecotourism activities. Others, however, condemn such a proposal for its participation in a cycle whereby money indemnifies the region's largest pollutants. Equipped with the equity and environmental components of a project that lacks, as Oden in Chapter 2 of this volume argues, the third "e": economic sustainability, the *Zeladorians* remain faced with an undetermined future. Recognizing its limited partnership with the government, and now economic vulnerability, the *Zeladoria* seeks to expand its own frame in order to include the interests and realities of others. Time will tell the extent to which core beliefs are maintained as this expansion extends into the private market.

In summary, self-help induced a development process through which social learning transpired and consciousness was raised, creating environments of direct reciprocity between people and place.[43] Self-help's appeal to global and local constituents stems from its radical departure from authoritarian regimes, and its modification by a range of institutional, community, and individual actors. This multi-scale advocacy reframed informal settlement removal as unjust, and preservation as a segue into place-based development. Despite contradictions, self-help policies facilitated the self-development goals set forth by the urban reform movement for some citizens.

By promoting data development that was ultimately divorced from its application, the *Zeladoria*'s interface with the equity frame led participants to seek a middle ground focused on the values of citizenship, participation, and democracy. The experimental cross-pollinations that ensued—albeit fleeting—gave rise to the idea that community building need not only derive from the joining of bricks to mortar. Rather, local environmentalists recognized the need to expand their frame in order to better link data development and concrete results. For a time, the answer seemed

to lie in design, presented as a way for residents to be involved in decisions about immediate neighborhood spaces. SEHAB exposed members of the *Zeladoria* to design as a catalyst for change, even though the group's most significant projects lacked integration into the development project.

Self-help established a theoretically equitable development approach, but the *Zeladoria* sustained it by appropriating portions of disconnected development frames. While outcomes were not absorbed into policy realms, this process contributed to the connection of the group's environmental agenda to potential collaborators, which in turn challenged the *Zeladoria* to adapt to changing conditions. *Frame bridging*, whereby a group links to ideologically congruent partners not yet vested in sustainability, came about through three characteristics of the *Zeladoria*'s evolutionary trajectory. *Continuity*, *experimentation*, and *adaptation* are not direct routes to sustainable development, but provided the *Zeladoria* with key waypoints in its efforts to synthesize past experiences into enhanced future conditions.[44]

The synthetic collaboration frame

The *Zeladoria*'s interface with imposed development frames led to key lessons learned and, in turn, the extraction of tactics proven essential to the group's resilience. While self-help provided the opportunity of collective experience and organization around immediate community need and vulnerabilities, its local focus prompted a shift toward reliance on broader ideals and themes to guide experimental, transdisciplinary activities promoted by the equity frame and, in theory, their application to projects of community and regional import. The ultimate failure to apply (on the ground) findings to concrete projects challenged the *Zeladoria* to adapt to changing conditions and use design to envision the future development of São Francisco's unique natural resources.

Continuity

Out of the self-help frame, local environmentalists recognized the potential of transformative projects to foment political action, which together shaped the first synthetic frame contribution of *continuity*. As the *Zeladoria* has demonstrated, continuity emerges not from a smooth, preconceived path, but from the transformation of one phase to another. Concerned citizens lacked the tools to measure the environmental impacts of the old Sapopemba landfill; however, they did have the knowledge and experience to convince politicians of their reasoning for closing the landfill. The confidence gleaned from this interface positioned local environmentalists to seek out increasingly sophisticated techniques in an effort to align their actions with those of others. In conjunction with their daily observations, each engagement expanded their belief that living in an informal settlement did not preclude them from taking action to change its conditions—even when those actions were stunted by political volatility.

Continuity of membership has imbued projects with a historical memory critical for a project's grounding in place. Had those who had not blocked the Sapopemba's entrance not been involved in the Olympic Park project, the link between São Francisco's past and future may not be present in the *Zeladoria*'s current plans to control its own economic resources through Ecotourism. The *Zeladoria*'s historical roots in housing equity are also a source from which it can form future alliances around environmentalism. While some may cringe at the adjacencies such a link may create, the path of the *Zeladorians* has shown that sustainable development has less to do with the achievement of an ideal than whether learning about environmentalism has taken place.

Experimentation

Notwithstanding limitations, the Zeladoria's collective experiences emphasized the role of social learning as a key to environmental development, leading to the second frame contribution of *experimentation*. Many involved in urban planning claim to undertake urban experimentation, yet few actually do it.[45] As Karvonen and Van Heur argue, experimentation is often used as a rhetorical strategy, or more provocatively to "cultivate emancipatory forms of change that could have widespread implications on urban life in the twenty-first century and beyond."[46] The *Zeladoria*'s projects are not immediately recognizable as experiments, nor have members ever described them as such. Many of these projects have failed for lack of continuity, funding, or because they have been destroyed; others exist on paper or in formats difficult to access. Yet, akin to building a house, these projects form part of a broader community of inquiry that problematizes the relationship between site-specific projects and broader ideals of citizenship and participation. From this perspective, the sustainability of the *Zeladoria* depends on the experimental engagement of participants in projects that are immediately relevant and aim to shift seemingly intractable power structures.

The *Zeladoria* has been largely unfunded and works with scarce resources at hand, which limits the potential of its small projects to effect more transformative change. Karvonen and van Heur's suggestion that urban experiments present challenges owing to "uncertainty and the potential for failure" are criticisms that could also be levied against typical development projects.[47] Given that large projects are not themselves fully evaluated suggests that it would be reasonable to support the *Zeladoria*'s smaller incremental projects as a means of actually testing the integration of government-led and community-based development. The evaluation of diverse development projects could be effected using tools such as Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) that incorporate community-determined assessment criteria.

Adaptation

The impact of external change on the *Zeladoria*'s projects has required the group to *adapt* its own frame to the interests of external partners and ideas. This process builds on a tradition whereby members have consistently interacted with their immediate environment in order to learn from it. Along the way, the *Zeladoria* has modified its approach in order to remain relevant to community needs, engage desired partnerships, and galvanize political support. The adoption of a critical stance toward self-building, conservation as a strategy for reducing hazards, and navigation of different political parties are evidence that the *Zeladoria* has balanced central goals with the need to change.

Conclusion

The *Zeladorians* have made significant gains by appropriating the frames of other social groups and applying them to environmental issues. This process was envisioned by self-help's broad emancipatory objectives, but reflects a domain of collective action deeply rooted in São Francisco's unique socio-geographical context. Notwithstanding a difficult historical trajectory, the *Zeladoria*'s navigation of political tumult resulted in practices that cultivate more sophisticated relationships between people in São Francisco, their environment, and urban governance.

The Brazilian participatory process derives from the traditions of self-building and self-development. Those traditions are, however, limited by the fact that the RTC has little to say about how *hybrid* community goals are to be implemented by government institutions limited (conceptually and practically) to the *a priori* rational categories of "housing," "environment," or "recreation." While the *Zeladoria* advances projects that adhere to the RTC's vision of equity and a balanced

environment, these projects are denied full inclusion in development strategies. Unclaimed by discrete institutional silos, the *Zeladoria*'s emergent goals are vulnerable to political machinations and partnerships that threaten its environmental ethics.

Within this shifting socio-geographic context, the Right to the City has provided an opening for frame alignment. The division between government and community-based efforts has been challenged by the *Zeladoria*'s leverage of the RTC's cultural authority to advance alternative framings of development in São Francisco. This is evidenced most obviously by the reframing of housing-centric approaches to environmental ones, but also when experts such as VERDE's biologist recognize the limitations of their own frames to capture the urban periphery's lived experiences. Envisioning and communicating to others different development futures attests to the *Zeladoria*'s capacity to apply the RTC's legacy of equitable city-making.

Continuity, experimentation, and adaption guide the *Zeladoria*'s quest to apply the RTC concept to concrete challenges. Insights gained from these modes of collective action could link plan conceptualization to implementation, and expand the efficacy of current development strategies. For example, the inclusion into implementation processes of a plan's citizen architects ensures its concrete realization. While SEHAB actually constructed the *Zeladoria*'s suggestion of an ecological sidewalk, this contribution is relatively small in comparison to those that were not integrated. In greater number, the use of such urban experiments holds the potential to unite diverse actors over the long term to test novel planning ideas. Data findings could, then, adapt development more intelligently to the ever-changing conditions characteristic of any planning endeavor. These insights have begun to include the *Zeladoria* in implementation processes, but more could be done.

São Paulo's planning agencies have a unique opportunity to follow the *Zeladoria*'s lead by more directly incorporating alternative modes of collective action into development activities. This does not mean the adoption of self-help's original proposal, but recognition of its relevance for socially determined urban change. Such integration is distinct from a courtesy undertaken to fulfill obligatory participation, but defers to citizens whose jurisdiction encompasses spatial and social rights. Explicitly doing so ensures that implementation respects a plan's historical memory, emergent aspirations, and São Francisco's future identity.

The *Zeladoria*'s nascent realizations of a Right to the City do not ensure the Lefevrian ideology will always hold, or guarantee security from future political volatility and rational planning's reductive nature. As is common in Brazilian planning, the *Zeladorians* must continue to hybridize to evade singular framings of development.[48] One way to expand their effectiveness is to draw on the heterogeneity of planning activities in the city's east zone, where a wealth of natural resources and recreational opportunities coexist with environmental degradation, limited social services, and crumbling infrastructure. Rather than introduce sustainability as a development ideal, such challenges provide an opportunity for disparate social groups to build solidarity around equity and urban livability. This continuous revision of the Zeladoria's frame alignment process informs—but does not determine—one path toward sustainability at the periphery.

For additional consideration

Questions

1 Do "frames" of perception and interpretation precede the formation of social "values"?
2 In the democracies of North America and the European Union, what are the structural divisions within government that (attempt to) minimize volatility in policy and action?

3 In your own city, identify how "political volatility" influences the continuity of, and feedback from, infrastructure projects.
4 Stiphany makes many references to the Right to the City (RTC), as it applies to São Paulo. How would you apply the RTC where you live?
5 In this chapter Stiphany has used the tools of "frame analysis" as a strategy to bring two significant citizen groups, from different locales, closer together through collaborative action. In Chapter 2, Oden employs the concept of "regime theory" toward a similar goal, and in Chapter 3 Lanham et al. employ the concept of a "fitness landscape." What are the common assumptions behind these three concepts?

A problem

Determine the different "frames" through which each member of your group perceives its purpose. Do this through the following steps:

- Each member should write down the purpose of the group using no more than five words.
- All participants should then combine the many stated purposes into meta-categories including at least three single-statements. Continue to make higher-level categories until it is seemingly impossible to further reduce the number.
- Identify the assumptions behind each frame, e.g., *people are good, life is hard,* etc.
- What are the opportunities to for collaborative action? What kind of activity can all of the groups agree upon?
- What is the likelihood that collaborative action might lead to a single synthetic frame?

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Notes

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