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Bipolar Brasilia

55 years of a constructed utopia

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&
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Dreamchild

Genesis

Site

Project

Construction

Life

Territorial form

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Brasilia,

The projection of an entire city at once
A geometric plan born from one man's hand
A capital erected in 1000 days in the middle of nowhere
A constructed Utopia

What is a Utopia?

What are its essential conditions?

What contributes to its emergence?

What form does it take physically?

Can utopia be considered as such once realized?

These are some of the issues and questions which emerged during the course of our research on the city of Brasília, which served as its backbone, and to which we tried to give answers.

We investigated the concept of Utopia, its origin and its inherent characteristics, by analyzing a set of specific parameters, which we have gathered from Thomas More's fundamental writings on the subject. These essential conditions of Utopia will permit us to later look at Brasília from a specific prism. We also studied the aesthetic context at that time, in order to apprehend the conception of space related to Brasília.

The historical background allowed us to understand which conditions and protagonists were essential to give birth to such a project and the meaning attached to it at that moment of history.

We then focused on the project itself. The analysis of Lucio Costa's proposal through the characteristics related to Utopia, permitted us to appreciate how far the project followed the concept.

Similarly, we investigated how sketches became a reality, and what remains of Utopia as social dynamics take possession of the living project. Is Brasília still a Utopia?

Finally, we tried to formulate a hypothesis regarding the future. How far should Utopia be included in the planning of a future development?



Dream-child

In order to understand the construction of Brasilia it is essential to contextualize it, both theoretically and artistically. Indeed, this contextualization will enable us to understand the conception its identity and society, which are inevitably related to a very specific conception of space.



Dream- child

utopia

brazilian -ism

new spatiality

utopia

A word derived from the Greek word (ou), «not», and topos (τόπος), «place», meaning literally the place that doesn't exist.

origins

The word Utopia was used for the first time in the book *Utopia- De optimo rei publicae statu deque nova insula Utopia* literally translates as "Of a republic's best state and of the new island Utopia" by Thomas More in 1516.

Thomas More wrote this book, to criticize the European contemporary society. However, he wanted it to be subtle in order not to be caught with political criticism.

So, he created a story written through the eyes of a sailor, Raphael Hythlodæus, just coming back from Utopia and telling him (Morus) his journey. Hythlodæus criticizes the king, servants and the nobles, a manner for Thomas More to put some distance between himself and his beliefs, making them live through the characters of the book. Simultaneously, he retains some doubt about the possibility of this egalitarian society.

In his story, he also plays with the meaning behind the word Utopia. In fact, besides meaning "the place that doesn't exist", utopia is also pronounced like the word "eutopia", that means "the right place". This ambiguity is preserved all along the story, and he concludes by saying: "There are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments"

Raphael Hythlodæus is a Portuguese sailor who lived 5 years on an island called Utopia. Hythlodæus described the perfect harmony present in the heart of that society through its social, political, work, law and religion habits.

In the first book, Raphael Hythlodæus is introduced to Morus (Thomas More). He criticizes the king, his will for expansion and the useless people that serves him (noblemen, valets,..). He also instigates his reservations about the way the power is conducted regarding crimes punishment, robbery and land affectation changes which causes, in his perspective, people impoverishment.

In the second book, Raphael shares his knowledge of the things he learned with Utopia's inhabitants. At first, he describes to Morus how Utopia has been originated and its first steps in history. Then, he explains the civilians way of living by describing their towns, trades, manners, slaves, marriages,

military discipline and finally religion.

Throughout the reading of the story, Utopia is described as an ideal of perfection through politics, economy and society, in which great achievements could only be possible through the constructive will of men.

He distinguished various fundamental ideas behind the longevity of the perfect city. These beliefs are the foundations to the comprehension of a utopian society project. There are five fundamental features behind Utopia's ideal, which are the conception of insularity, equality, science, nature and education.

Modern Western society began to emerge in the Renaissance, around the same time when the concept of "utopia" emerged, as well as that of the opposition between "city of men" and "kingdom of gods."

This is also the time of the great maritime discoveries that created new promises. The new discovered territories made new constructions possible made by the strength of men, without the help of god. The enhancement of technique, science and the victory of reason spread a wave of optimism inside the society of the time. Modern man believed he could sculpt the world the way he wanted, and thus, in such context, political humility gave way to confident and conquering speeches.

There is an interesting theory from 1929, by Karl Mannheim, which said that utopia is defined by the extreme opposition that exists between utopia and the social order during which utopia emerged. According to him, utopia is what can contribute to a change in society – it is the "explosive material", the motor of the historical movement.

insularity

Utopia was a peninsula called Abraxa that became an island after Utopos destroyed its isthmus, the part that connected it to the continent.

That strong initial action was a symbol to express both the need for separation and the need for autonomy:

The island status of Utopia is fundamental to the balance inside the country, as it is believed that any try for expansion would bring contamination to the perfect machine that Utopia embodies.

It's also stands as symbol of the capacity of the utopians people in protecting themselves from damages of time. Utopians don't need anybody to work perfectly. People just need to follow the rules that were established by Utopos as this new country was founded.

Nevertheless, nothing prevents the utopians from going beyond the borders to discover other countries.

equality

The citizens are the most valuable asset on Utopia.

The utopians are all equal, which explains why the individual freedom is not needed. Therefore, the egalitarian status could only be achieved, if the individuality of each other were to be replaced by the common interest of the group.

The indigenes that lived in the island before Utopos' arrival took part on the destruction of the isthmus. Taking part in this action made them implicated in the whole project, and also be considered as equal.

Equality among men is also provided by the general standardization and the shared disgust capitalism motivates. The language, customs and laws but also the cities, houses and gardens are the same for everyone.

The work's schedules is also standardized. People have to work between 9am to noon and from 2 to 5pm, with meals between noon and 2pm. The rest hours are from 9 to 6pm.



As everybody possess exactly the same things, Utopia is the opposit of a materialistic society: what could be taken from the citizen is not considered with any value.

That's why the utopian inhabitants are very suspicious of propriety rights because they consider them as the symbol of private interest and thus, against equality principles.

nature

Nature is very respected by people from Utopia. Since there is no God for them, Nature is the closest thing that could be compared to a divinity.

The perfection found in the country is inspired by nature (law legitimacy, universal stability. etc). By imitating nature, they can transpose its laws into society, and replace the natural ones. Again the relation of domination is reversed.

Descartes affirmed: «Turning man into master and possessor of Nature.» This sentence could be one of Utopia's maxims. Nature only exists to serve humanity's triumph, all resistance must be dragged out.

One could speculate that the symmetry present in the urbanism so many cities is nothing more than a clear manifestation of the human power detaching itself from nature, as demonstrated in the isthmus part of this story.

science

The citizens of Utopia could be spiritual people, but their inner faith go to science in priority,

The utopian inhabitants are very curious about the occurrences outside the island. Since the law allows them to leave the country and to welcome strangers, they are very aware of other cultures.

Since the beginning, at the time of the isthmus' destruction, Utopians believe that man can control God's nature through science. Thanks to knowledge, human become a sort of demiurge, above God.

« Nobody owns anything but everyone is rich - for what greater wealth can there be than cheerfulness, peace of mind, and freedom from anxiety? »

Thomas More

Man surpass God through science. The state created by human is less fragile than the creation of God (man), since, unlike man, it can't suffer from deceases and doesn't create any conflict.

Its composition do not follow the structure of some sort of metaphoric image like the human body (head/parts) or family (father/son) but is rather a machine that is not created by nature/God and thus the product of man.

education

Human is originally bad and could only escape from his status through education.

When they are not working, the civilians can enjoy their free time, although, all is done to prevent them to develop their private sphere, which could turn them from the right path they have to follow.

For that purpose, educational contents are implanted into architecture, images, music, and many kinds of classes are proposed every morning, to stimulate their intellect and controll them. This also contributes to turn the utopians into very cultivated people.

Any infractions or drifts made out of the established order are considered as criminal acts, because they are perturbing the maintained state of perfection. So when some kind of mischief occurs a process of reeducation is applied as punishment for those who still have chances to be reasoned. If this is not possible, they are cleared out.

«*Turning
man into
master
and pos-
sessor of
nature.*»

R.Descartes

brazilian -ism

It is a common belief, that art often imitates life.

But art has also the capacity to inspire people. Just as the concept of Utopia, it can be a driving force to change a society: art can be the inspiration that brings a country to build its own identity.

barroco mineiro

Barroco Mineiro is an evolution of the baroque style, developed in Minas Gerais in Brasil, a place where native Brazilians discovered gold in the late 17th.

Antonio Francisco Lisboa, also known as Aleijadinho (little cripple), was born in Ouro Preto, the capital of colonial Minas Gerais. He owed this nickname because of a disease that marked his body with infirmities.

In 1738, he was one of the most famous sculptors/architects of his time. He developed an original architecture style, different from the European one. In fact, because of the originality of his work and his status of black and disabled person, Aleijadinho became the artist that most symbolizes the emancipation of Brazilian art from the Portuguese. He showed strong abilities to go beyond the colonial style imitations frequent at the time.

His main work is the church of São Francisco de Assis in Ouro Preto, São Francisco de Assis in São João del Rei and the Sanctuary Church at Congonhas do Campo.

In the second half of the 18th century, the decrease of colonial power led the architecture in Brazilian centers, originally made by the Portuguese colonists, to evolve. “Estilo Aleijadinho” emerged in this context. The term was suggested by John Bury in reference to the original architecture inspired by the baroque forms and the rococo style.

The “Estilo Aleijadinho” was not a new style but rather an approach that was harmonized by the artist. Its main features were the harmonious use of curved walls and their meeting with flat surfaces.

Before Antonio Francisco Lisboa, there were no churches, neither in Portugal nor Brazil, with curved form ground plans.

The Cathedral Mariana represents the traditional rectangular plan of the Portuguese mannerist style. However, the church of São Francisco in Mariana already shows clearly the transition to the rococo style. Finally, the most characteristic church of that style is the church of São Francisco de Assis at São João del Rei.



cathedral Mariana



São Francisco de Assis

modernism

modern art week of 1922

The modern art week of 1922 was decisive in the emergence of modernism in Brazil. It took place in São Paulo, from the 11th to the 17th of February, in a very troubled context. In fact, Brazil was disturbed by great changes in its territory. The urban and industrial evolutions of the country began to raise questions about the way the world was conceived and the government's legitimacy.

Through art, questions about modernity began to rise. It created for the first time a reflection around it, through its expression and its new spirit of urban life.

The European Avant-garde of that time was a great inspiration for Brazilian artists who were questioning the traditional ways of expression common in the twenties.

The reproduction of European art in Brazil could have been a way for the new modern Brazilian society to express itself, but they did not really assimilate the modern approach. Therefore, Brazilians began to look for their own modern sense, and in the same time, began the search of their own identity as a new nation. This distance from the European style became a societal statement.

While the art week of Sao Paolo was expected to have increased the acknowledgment of the international modern point of view, it instead bred new considerations regarding national identity – it introduced a new critical thinking about the construction of a specific Brazilian modernity, one that took into account its native culture.

from neocolonialism to modernism

In the beginning of the 20th century, a lot of Brazilian architects built constructions in a neocolonialism style. This was a way to return to the origins of the national architecture and to reaffirm the Brazilian identity. It



SEMANA DE ARTE •
MODERNA ~ CATÁLOGO
DA EXPOSIÇÃO • S. PAVLO
1922

was the symbol of a national awakening.

But after the art week in Sao Paolo, they changed their way of thinking and began to reflect upon a new identity that would enable the Brazilian society to distinguish itself substantially and culturally as a modern society. In addition, the first writings of Le Corbusier also contributed to make the Brazilian architects change their conceptions and turn them into pioneers of the Corbusier architectural style, very popular at the time.

In 1928, Gregori Warchavchik realized the “vila Mariana” the first “modern” house in Brazil. One year later, the presence of Le Corbusier in Brazil, affected greatly others architects, as Lucio Costa. In fact, it conducted them to adopt the conceptions described in his books “Vers une architecture”, “L’urbanisme” and “l’art decoratif d’aujourd’hui” instead of the neocolonialist style.

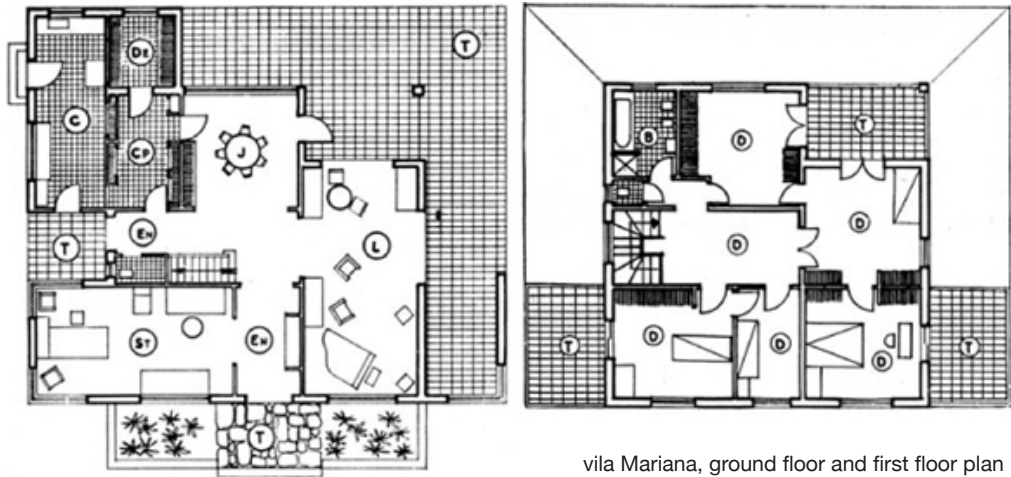
In 1930, Getulio Vargas new government restructured the ENBA (Escola Nacional das Belas artes – National School of fine arts). He requested as director Lucio Costa, devoted to Corbusier and to the modern movement since Le Corbusier first stay in Brazil. Others architects, also followers of the modern movement, were nominated as professors like Warchavchik and Affonso Eduardo Reidy.

These radical modifications in the fine arts field, from traditionalists to the pioneers of modern architecture were critical for the new Brazilian architecture emergence and consolidation.

Le Corbusier

Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris, better known as Le Corbusier was a famous Swiss architect who lived and worked in the beginning of the 20th century. He was one of the main representatives of modern architecture and dedicated most of his work to developing his theories around the «ville nouvelle» – «the new city»

Le Corbusier came to Brazil for the first time in 1929, to take part in conferences in Rio and São Paolo. During his travel, he took the opportunity to



vila Mariana, ground floor and first floor plan



vila Warchavchik

visit the Vila Mariana in São Paulo, made by Gregori Warchavchik. At the time, young Brazilian architects who were questioning the issue of national identity, were very impressed with the revolutionary theories of Le Corbusier. They saw in him the clues towards a freedom from the classical fundamentals of the time.

athena's charter

This text is revealed in 1933, during the 4th CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture). During the travel from Marseille to Athena, the architects established rules that would define the functional modern city.

At the time, architects believed that man was losing relevance in the era of the industrial city and that the only way to reestablish balance and to avoid a revolution was through architecture.

Le Corbusier defended the «tabula rasa», because he didn't want to see the new city adapted to the historical center. Four distinct areas were created upon the territory, according to function: life, work, leisure and transport infrastructures.

Introverted building should compose the residential area. The view of the apartments upon interior streets was conceived to enable the inhabitants to live independently from the rest of the city. Le Corbusier called these residences “machines à habiter”- “machines for living”, because the residential areas should be autonomous from the rest of the city. These same buildings were to be constructed upon “pilotis”. The freed ground-floor space would thus allow for the creation of a public that could be compared to a roman forum.

The five points that dictate this modern architecture and are part of the program for the rationalization of the city are:

- **Roof gardens**, to replace pitched roofs,
- **Free Plan**, made possible by the use of load-bearing columns in place of load-bearing walls, allowing for more flexibility in the division of space.
- **Pilotis**, so that the ground floor can become a new public area.

LIFE

WORK

LEISURE

TRANSPORT

- **Free design of the facades**, because the facade now is separated from the building's structure.

- **Horizontal windows**, because of the free facade one can cut horizontal windows all along the building.

education ministry

In 1935, an architectural competition was launched for the Education Ministry in Rio.

The winner was announced but Gustavo Capanema, Education Minister at the time, thought that the project was too classical.

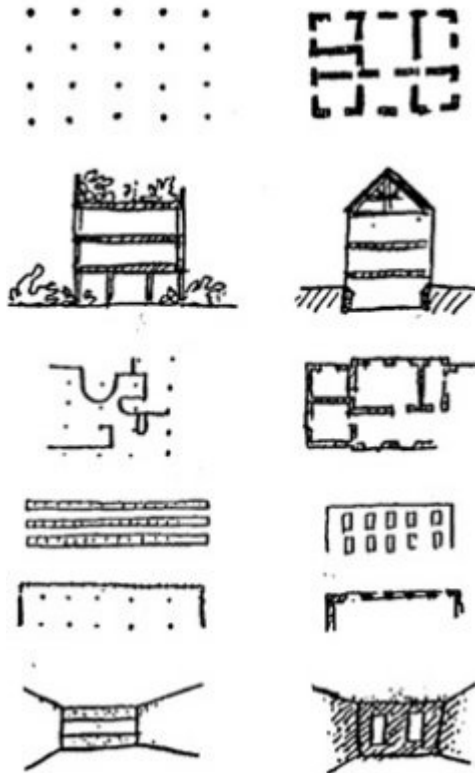
Therefore, he asked Lucio Costa, one of the main representatives of modern architecture in Brazil, to realize a new project. Costa put together a team including, Oscar Niemeyer, an architect, and Roberto Burle Marx, a landscaper. They were both recently graduated from the ENBA.

Le Corbusier and the Athena's Charter had huge repercussions in Brazil. That led Costa to ask Capanema to call the Swiss architect for help in the creation of the new project for the Ministry. So, Corbusier came back to Brazil in 1936, in order to assist the Brazilian team in the construction of the education minister project in Rio.

Le Corbusier proposed a project in a seaside location, 200m away from the given spot in the business center. In fact, he didn't agree with this choice. As the government didn't want to change the location, he finally proposed a new project there before leaving Rio.

Oscar Niemeyer, one of Costa team's architects, designed a new solution, more in accord with the first suggestion of Le Corbusier, in a location with more light. He wanted to give the building more weightlessness by adding pillars of 10 meters long instead of the 4 meters initially designed. Nevertheless, Niemeyer was very young at the time and didn't have the courage to expose his design. He threw it outside the window, but Costa asked him to retrieve it.

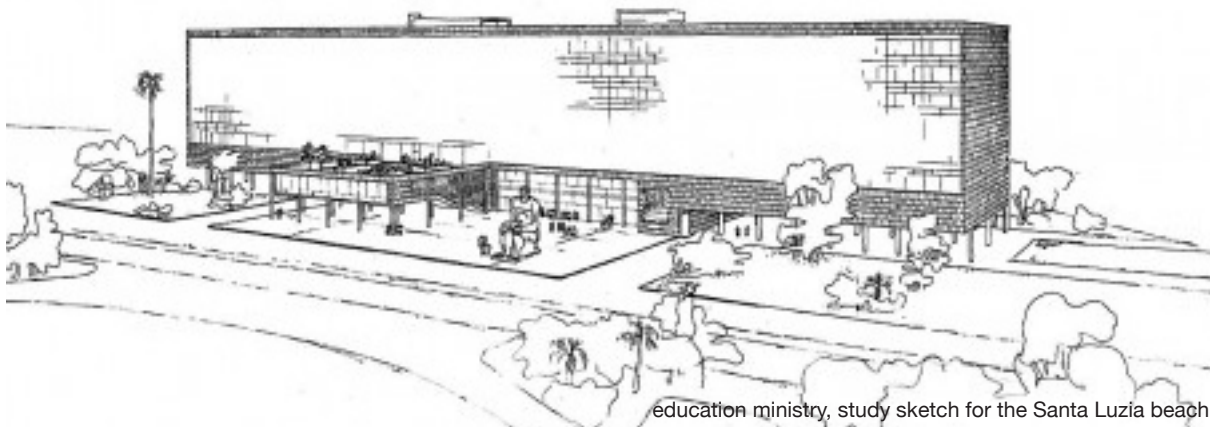
Niemeyer's proposal was approved and they began. This construction was



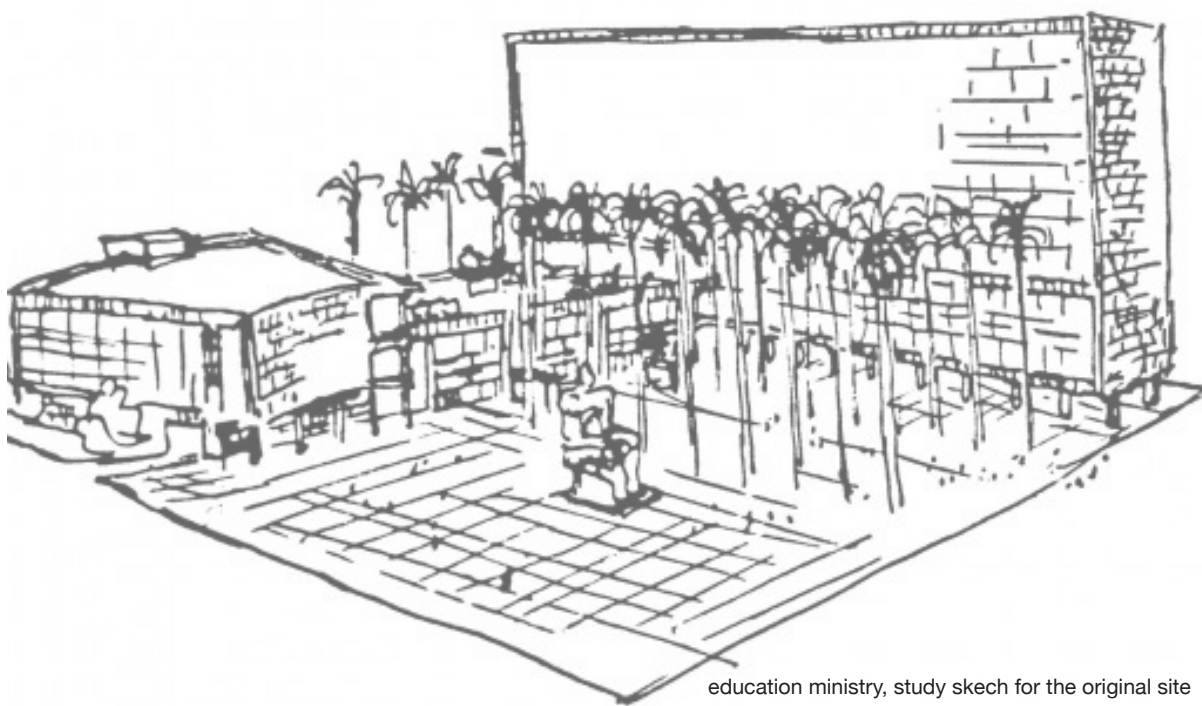
built following Le Corbusier's precepts but possessed a national character, in regard of the weightlessness it was built with.

The garden terraces of the building, realized by Burle Marx also broke with the traditional landscaping. He used native vegetation and imagined sinuous drawings, which produced an unprecedented configuration. From that moment, Marx was to be considered one of the most respected modern landscapers of the XXth century.

In the end, the Education Ministry was a turning point for Brazilian architects. It began as a national project, and inspired by the masters of modernism, became the symbol of emancipation of Brazilian architecture.



education ministry, study sketch for the Santa Luzia beach



education ministry, study skech for the original site



brazilian modernism

pampulha

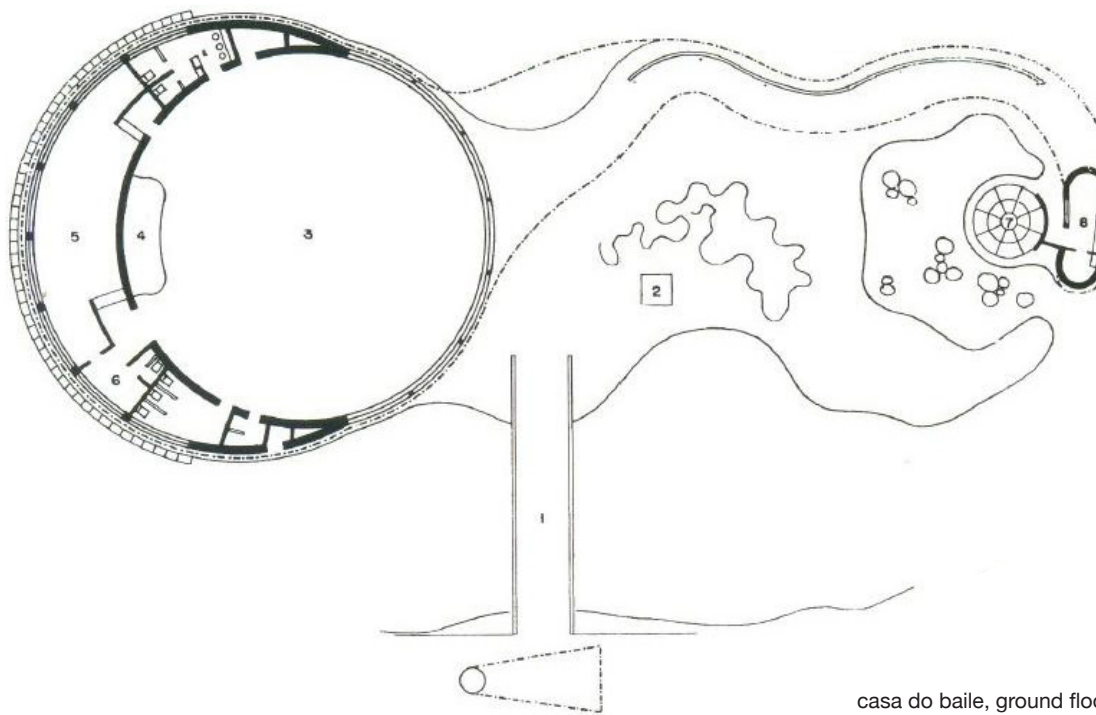
Before the arrival of Le Corbusier in 1936, architects were more oriented towards real estate construction. His stay promoted more liberated thoughts and imagination, through the adoption of his percepts: independence of the structure, pilotis and “brise-soleil”. His visit also inspired Niemeyer, who famously said that “*architecture is invention*”, to free himself and add a tropical touch to his modern architecture.

It is in this context that Juscelino Kubitschek, mayor of Belo Horizonte, proposed Niemeyer to take over the Pampulha project. At the time, Pampulha was a new neighborhood in the Belo Horizonte periphery on a lake coast.

Niemeyer had already built the São Francisco de Assis Church, the casino, and some other public buildings. For Niemeyer, it was an extraordinary opportunity to let his imagination run wild.

Until this moment, Niemeyer had always followed Le Corbusier’s percepts, but felt that his architecture was: “beautiful but rigid, more of a constructivist type”. With the experience he had collected in his last works, Niemeyer began to give a new turn to the multipliable, monotonous and soulless modern architecture. He planned to use the properties of concrete, to turn it more light, more fluid, more Brazilian.

For the Pampulha project, he imagined curves inspired by the Minas Gerais churches of “Alejadinho”, based on the origins of the nation, architecture with more fantasy: a Brazilian architecture.



casa do baile, ground floor plan



casa do baile

«When you're looking for such a big space, the natural solution is a curve, not a straight line. So I covered the church with curves. And architecture became different. It became more bound to our country, more fluid, closer to our old churches of Minas Gerais.»

Oscar Niemeyer





São Francisco church

Brasilia

When we imagine the creation of a new city, we suppose that it would be a modern construction adapted to the social and economical needs of the time. But when we are referring to a capital, it's not possible to focus exclusively in fulfilling the society needs. Indeed, it must be the reflection of the nation, a representation of the social and political organization of the new government.

new spatiality

Lucio Costa, Brasilia's town planner, explained that: *«it could not be the product of the regional planning but the cause: it is the foundation of the city that would later bring the development of the intended area.»*

The purpose at stake is to create a liberal democracy that corresponds to the urbanism. Since, as Frank Lloyd Wright said: *«the democracy has not been built yet»*, the power must be carried out in clear ways. So, the spatial organization of this power must be the reflection of the inhabitant's control over the political institution. Thus, the space must be open and we must understand the relationships that exist between every building and their respective weight.

At the time, architects believed that the urban shape could have an influence on social relations. This is the reason why the different spaces proposed for the community didn't have to be connected to the Brazilian reality. Indeed, the differences, the conflicts and the lack of equality between the Brazilian citizens shouldn't be represented in Brasilia.

Therefore, the city would be conceived through the model of an ideal and universal human being. At the time, the modern city corresponded to the rational and functional city developed by the Athenians' charter.

Beyond the urban shape, but in a smaller measure, architecture should also be the expression of the shifts in society announced by Kubitschek. Wanted modern and developed, the city must also respect the origins of Brazilian culture, by fixing innovation on the principal fundament of the cultural identity, on their roots.

Expert knowledge of construction skills and new solutions brought up by engineers must be compatible with shapes that would allude to the Minas Gerais churches designed by the little cripple.







Genesis

[jen-uh-sis] *noun, plural geneses* The origin or mode of formation of something

Genesis

marcha para o oeste

4 fathers

competition

marcha para o oeste

An omnipresent idea, almost a slogan. Sometimes a distant mirage, sometimes an almost reachable dream: an epic walk West for which 167 years of history were needed to finally become real.

nova lisboa

November 1807, Napoleon drives the Portuguese court into exile. The empire is in danger. Brazil, at that time the richest and most developed portuguese colony, appears to the monarchy as an opportunity to reorganize the empire from a distance.

Until then, this territory was only seen as a supplier of raw material, as well as a point of relay for the boats transiting between India, South Africa and Portugal. So from that moment, Brazil changes from colony to state – a state that would soon need a capital, a new Lisbon.

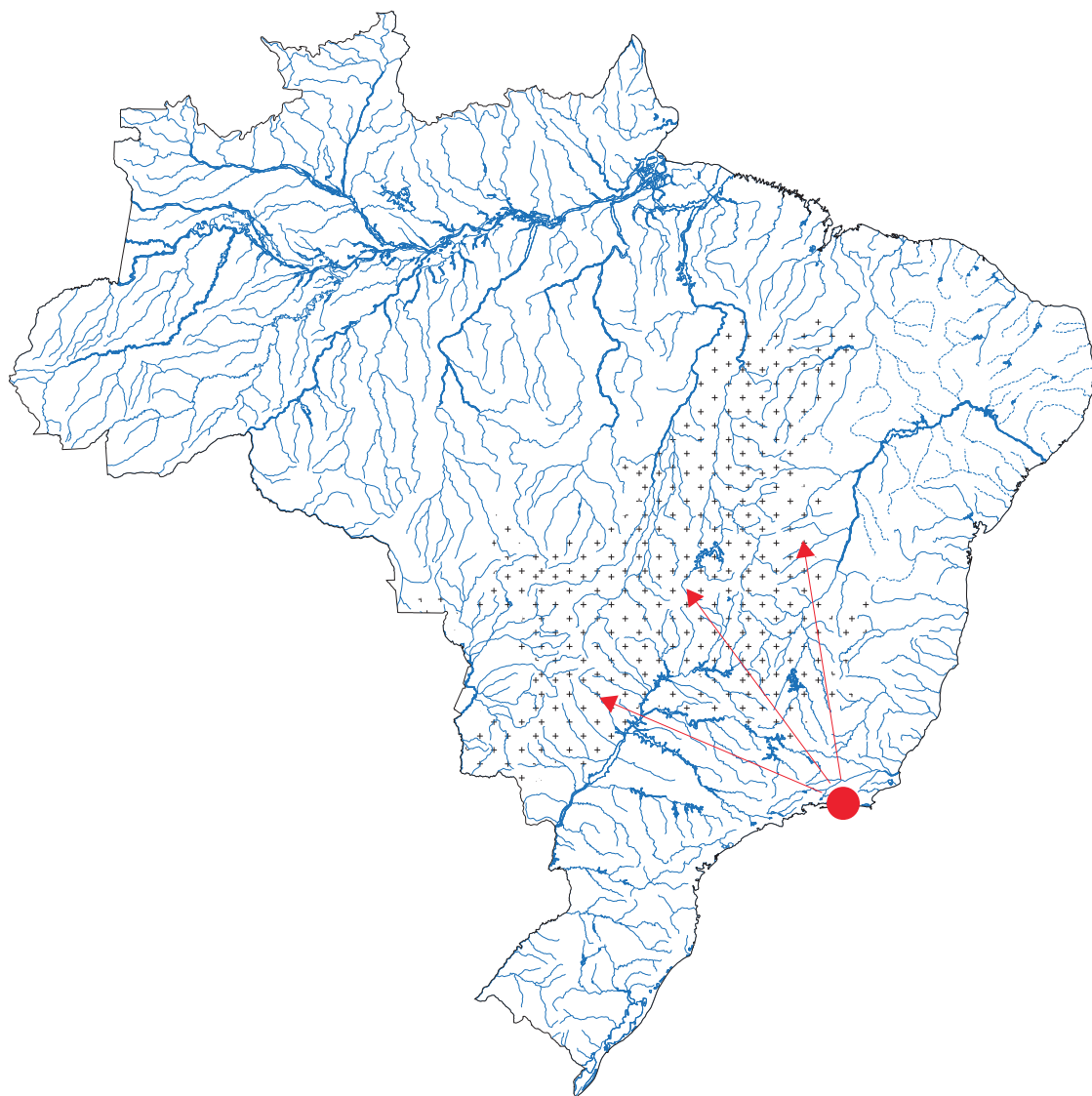
At that point, a choice was to be made between transforming Rio, the then administrative capital, into a political capital with the attributes fit for royalty, or building a new city foreseen for that purpose.

For political reasons, the regent Dom João settles down in Rio. Nevertheless, for the first time, voices arise in support of a new city.

Some of them even imagine it inside the territory.

The arguments put forward are in favor of the development, the valuation and the settlement of the inland in order to best use its, to establish a network into the country. Only a new capital could, from their perspective, supervise this project. On the contrary, a city like Rio is seen as too commercial, too big, too dangerous for the good functioning of a political capital.

This new city must be located inside the mythical region of the «Dourado Lake», in order to activate big movements of inland penetration through the evocation of Brazilian mythology.



petropole

As Brazil becomes independent around 1822, the question of a new capital is again discussed, but this time, it turns into a societal issue. The ancient Portuguese empire is slowly becoming the Brazilian empire, and therefore, its people feel the need of a rupture with the colonial past.

The question is asked again: is coastal Rio to be chosen and strengthened in its position of international commerce? Or would a new inland city be better to completely break with the metropolis?

For the supporters of the inland project, the intention is clear: the de-capitalization of a colonial coastal empire for a re-capitalization of an independent continental empire

The Bonifácio project summarizes well all the desires of that period, around one imagined future capital called «Petrópolis», from the emperor's name Pedro. The reasons for this continental capital are at first security. A coastal city is very vulnerable, easily reachable by boat. An inland capital would also drain the unemployed population of the maritime cities into the inside provinces and create commerce there. This city could also stop the competition between the different capitals of the provinces, all of them wishing to receive the royal court.

Petrópolis would be located near to the São Francisco River, which served as a kind of back-bone, allowing for a lot of fluvial and commercial communications.

Again, the idea is finally forgotten, and Rio is modernized. The reason for that might be because at that time no real national conscience had emerged to sustain an emancipation process. Brazil was still too bound with the ancient administrative structures of colonialism.



imperatoria

1840, eighteen years after independence, Dom Pedro II accedes to the throne at the age of 14. Big expectations are crystallized around him. A national project, the modernization of economical and social structures is expected eagerly – a true distinction between Brazil-nation and Brazil-colony.

At the core of these concerns are the reflexions and actions of the historian Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen. His conception of the Brazilian society is quite surprising: the colonial action of the Portuguese is for him the foundation of Brazilian identity, and therefore, the capital should, in his perspective, also represent this idea of the European empire.

Imperatória, should be populated with white Brazilians as well as European colonists. The climate should therefore be well chosen, the site fresh enough to be adapted to the white race and permit its immigration. The heart of the territory, this high place where sources of three natural tributaries are found, is for him this real heart of the state.

For him, going inland is a way of expressing the pure spirit of the national Brazilian identity, at the heart of the territory. He imagines the creation of a terrestrial transport network, in relation with the natural fluvial connections. The idea is to develop an internal trade, promote the diversification of human activities, and the autonomy and independence of the country.

1877, Varnhagen is 61 years old, sick and tired. He undertakes a trip inside the land to visit the region he suggested for years. During his journey, he found a region perfectly appropriate for the white colonists. Inside a triangle formed by the three lakes Formosa, Feia and Mestre, and containing some highlands areas. This is the famous «Varnhagen's triangle.»

tiradentes

In November 1889, Brazil becomes a republic. From a political point of view, the transfer of the capital become a technical and scientific object of debate. It is even registered as constitutional settlement.

24th of February 1891, the constitution is proclaimed, and therefore, the

obligation of transferring the capital towards the planalto central is made official. As Bolivia took the name of Bolívar and the American republic the one of Washington, Tiradentes is chosen after the name of the martyr embodying Brazil's liberty.

The «Exploration commission of Brazil's central planalto» is created. This group of scientists is lead by Luis Cruls, the director of the astronomical observatory of Rio. Their mission is to study the site in terms of astronomical position, topography, climatic and hygienic conditions, quality of water, nature of the ground, availability of construction's materials etc. Two phases are planned: the delimitation of a 14 400 km² zone for the installation of the future federal district, and then the choice, within that limit, of the ideal site. After 4000km, «Cruls rectangle» is therefore chosen for the future federal district.

Meanwhile in Rio, the first president of the republic is elected: Prudente José de Moraes Barros. Being from São Paulo, he is against this transfer, which would reduce the supremacy of his state. The work is adjourned, the commission is erased, and the project considered as «A world of Utopias»

For the 100th anniversary of independence, the fundamental stone is erected on the planalto. However, the congress still stops every attempt regarding the transfer. In parallel, the usual process goes on: Rio is modernized.

vera cruz

Getúlio Vargas attains power in 1930, and with him, comes to an end the «Republica Velha», that served the interests of an elite.

He takes the lead towards a «coup d'état». A new government and constitution is proclaimed – the «Estado Novo», a dictatorship inspired by Italian fascism. By transforming the relation between federal power and state power, the construction of a truly national government is possible.

In 1938, Vargas creates the Brazilian institute of geography and statistics, and gives it the mission of identifying all the problems of Brazil, and finding solutions. The conclusions are clear: unequal development between the coastline and the inland, weakness of the industrial sector, lack of communication networks, problems with national security. In order to partly solve

the situation, the project of a federal capital placed inland is again clearly mentioned. This is the «marcha para o Oeste», Vargas' political program.

After world war II, a democratization process is set up, Vargas is suspended of duty.

New president of the republic Eurico Dutra, creates the commission for the localization of the new capital of Brazil, as planned in the constitution. The final studies delimit a surface of 52 000km²: the Congress's rectangle.

Getúlio Vargas is re-elected, five potential sites are selected into the rectangle, a project for a new city called Vera Cruz, the first name given to Brazil, is studied.

1955, the commission chooses one of the five sites proposed. The expropriations begin. Part of the population and the army want Vargas to be suspended, he finally commits suicide, facing an ultimatum.

brasília

After Vargas' suicide, Brazil faces a dark period. The country is depressed, traumatized. Brazil's image has been tarnished.

In this extremely tense context, arrives a new president: Juscelino Kubitschek. In only a few months, he succeeds in gathering everybody around a common slogan: «50 years of progress in 5». Hope and confidence are shared by everybody and strengthened by the victory of Brazil in the football world cup, and the creation of a new musical style: Bossa Nova.

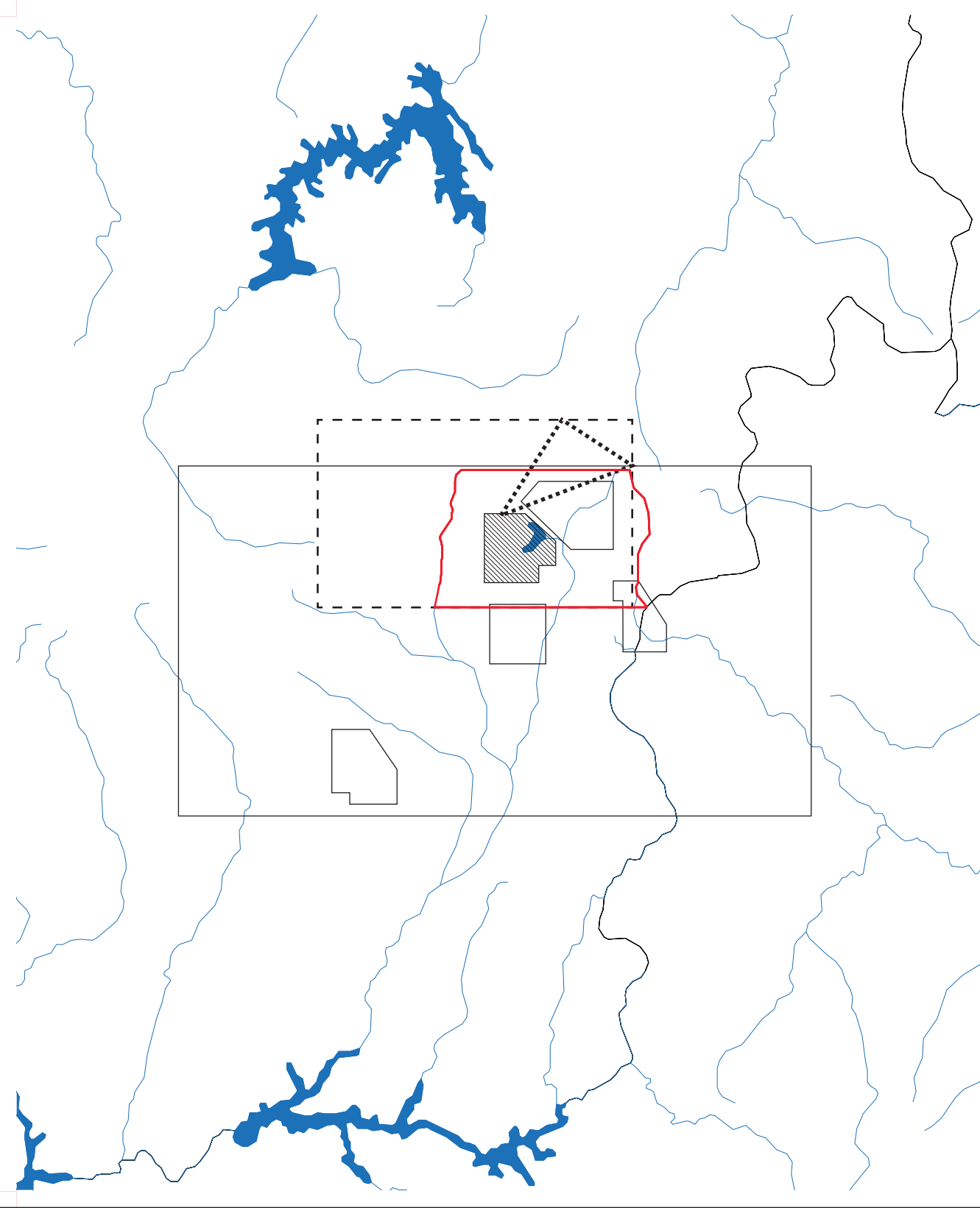
Kubitschek's government is heir of Vargas' politics: «developmentalist nationalism» is its highlight. Urbanization and industrialization is what he proposes for the development of a modern Brazil.

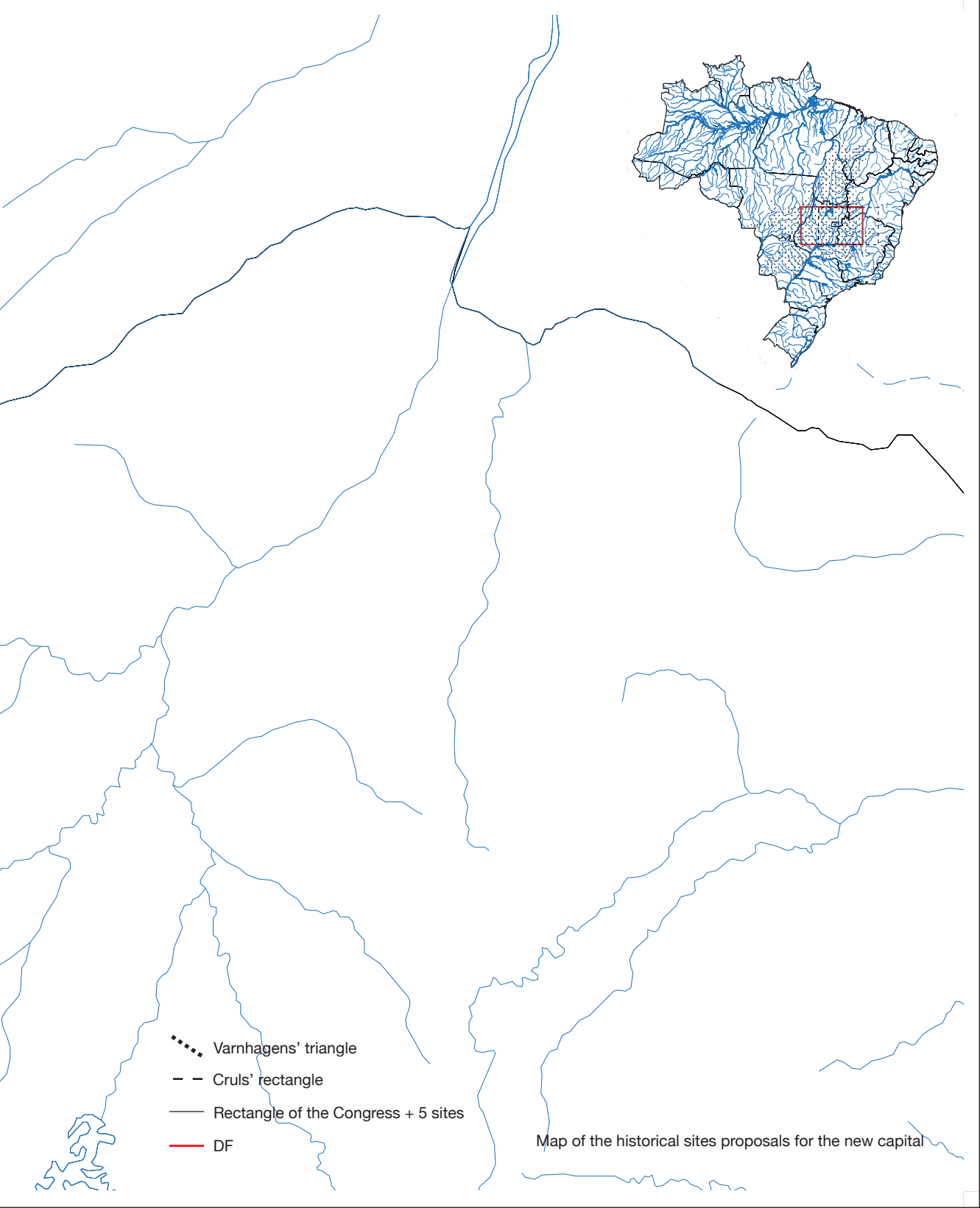
Kubitschek is known for his optimism and confidence in democracy, able in his perspective, to gather everybody around one idea: progress. He is also known for his big sense of improvisation: in an interview he promised to respect the whole constitution, and as a man asked if that meant he would transfer the capital inland, he simply answered that as he said it, he would. Actually, the project of a new inland capital expresses perfectly the entire politics of the president. This is a synthesis of it, as well as the physical form

of the new Brazilian modernity.

In fact, Walking West means developing the inside of the territory, the networks, offering more work, using the resources of the ground. Building a new capital in the middle of nowhere permits to reflect a new government, a new modern society, and a newly independent Brazilian man.

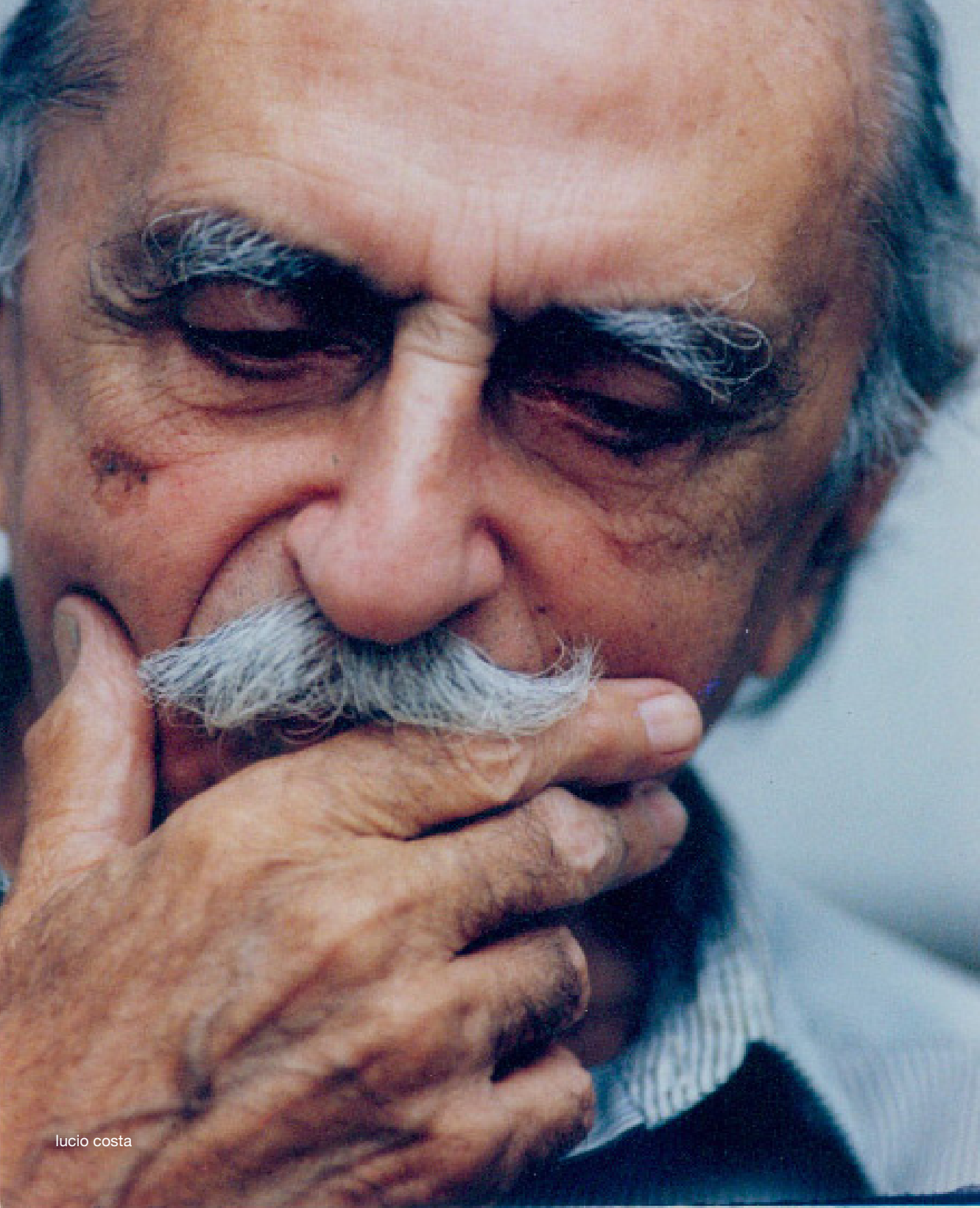
This is how, after centuries, this old project of a «Marcha para o Oeste» ended and how the effective «Walk West» began.





4 fathers

Among the hundreds of people who participated in the creation of Brasília's new capital, four main characters are inseparable of its design. Four men, who had already met each other in their lifetime.



«His biggest contribution was seeking a balance between the modern problems of technology, that becomes outdated every day, and human values of an earlier age.»

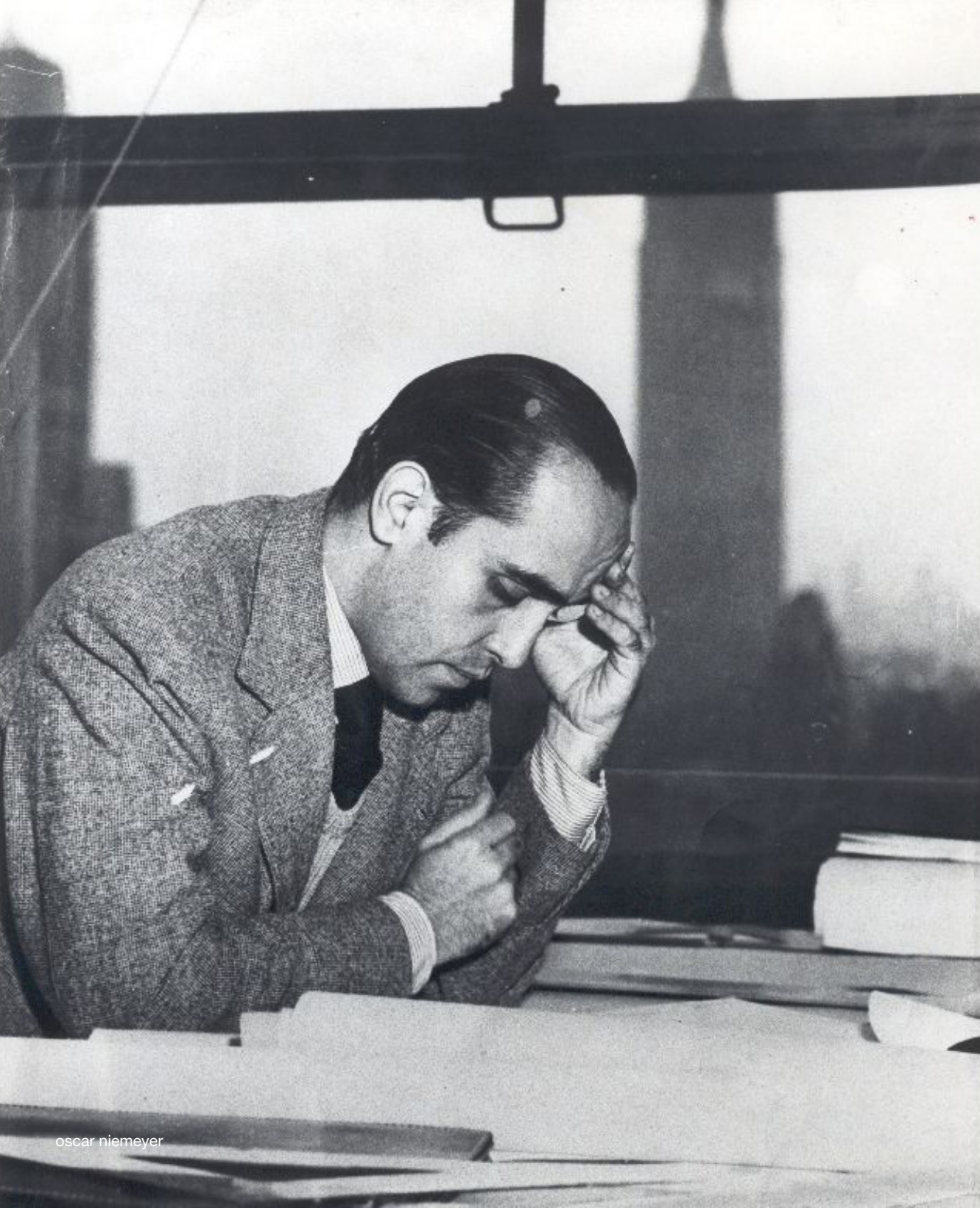
Julio Roberto



roberto burle marx

«It would be impossible to write the history of Brazilian architecture without reserving a special place to the painter Burle Marx. Artist above all, Burle Marx arrived to architecture through painting. He approached the garden as a painter.»

Mario Pedrosa



I don't think architecture is something so important, that my work is so important. Nothing of that. I think the important thing is life. Keeping space to manifest yourself, to have a coherent political stance, in accordance with your country. Life is important my friends, architecture is a hobby.»

Oscar Niemeyer



juscelino kubitschek

«*I believe in the
final and inexo-
rable victory of
Brasil as a na-
tion.*»

J. Kubitschek

leme

In 1918 in Leme, a neighborhood of Rio, a friendship is born. Roberto Burle Marx meets Lucio Costa.

At that time, Roberto is a ten-year-old boy. Since childhood, his mother teaches him the love for music and plants, for which he quickly develops an all-consuming passion. By then, he already had a kind of workplace, where he used to collect and grow all kinds of vegetation.

Lucio Costa is seven years older than him, and is living in the same neighborhood for two years. Son of a diplomat, he studied in the United Kingdom and in Switzerland before coming back to Rio.

A decade passes, and he becomes an architect. Famous for his colonial residences, his clientele grows rapidly. Soon, he is appointed to the post of director of the fine arts.

fine arts

Still in contact with Roberto Burle Marx and detecting in him a natural artistic talent, Lucio Costa encourages him to enroll in the Fine Arts School, in the plastic arts section. Roberto follows his advice.

That very same year, Le Corbusier gives a conference in Brazil about modernism. This is a revelation for Lúcio Costa. Immediately swept away, he converts to modernism radically.

From that moment, he refuses every traditional-style project. His new way of considering architecture is not appreciated; he is fired from the fine arts only ten months after his nomination.

«At that time, I had abandoned this style of architectural eclecticism and the client related to this kind of constructions. I couldn't do these things anymore. I had entirely abandoned this tradition.» Lucio Costa

Burle Marx stops his studies at the fine arts. However, during his studies he met important people like Gregori Warchavchik, one of his professor and precursor of Brazilian modernism, along with Lucio Costa. Together they will collaborate on the project for Alfredo Schwartz's residence, a few years later. This is one of the first modernist projects, for which Burle Marx

realizes his first garden.

In fine arts he also met a certain Oscar Ribeiro de Almeida de Niemeyer Soares, studying there...

lucio costa's office

Oscar Niemeyer was born in Rio. He gets his architecture diploma in 1934 at the age of 25. At that time, he is already married and father of one little girl.

Touched by Lúcio Costa's way of doing architecture he applies for an internship in his architecture office at the end of his studies. Lúcio Costa's answer is negative: his office does not go that well, contemporary solutions he gives don't please the clients, and so he can't have extra people in his office.

Nevertheless, convinced by the fact that Lúcio Costa is the only one who could teach him how to do good architecture, Oscar Niemeyer accepts to work for him without being remunerated.

In spite of the lack of recognition of his concurrent peers, Lúcio Costa will soon become the ideologue of the modern Brazilian movement, able to synthesize traditional and modern architecture.

ministry of education

In 1936, the tide turns for Lúcio Costa's office.

The minister of education, Gustavo Capanema, had organized a competition for the Ministry of education in Rio. Unhappy with the proposals made by the competitors and desiring a modern project, he writes to Costa and proposes the project to him.

Of course Costa accepts and composes a team, of which Oscar Niemeyer claims the right to be part. To this team, are then added a painter, a sculptor and a landscaper: Roberto Burle Marx...

This is the first time that the three protagonists are united on a common

project, and they realize the first modern public building that represents a rupture with the traditional architecture in Brazil.

This project reveals the talent of Oscar Niemeyer, ordinary student and architect so far.

In the same way, Roberto Burle Marx, multiple artist, also painter, poet, cook, tapestry and jewels creator will be from that moment considered as one of the most respected modern landscapers of the XXth century.

pampulha

Four years later, when the governor of Minas Juscelino Kubitschek asks the director of the historical heritage to propose an architect to construct a chapel and two other buildings in Pampulha, Oscar Niemeyer is obviously suggested.

The encounter of the future president with Niemeyer seals the beginning of a long friendship and collaboration between the two men:

«Oscar and Kubitschek were very similar mentally. Violent changes and courageous proposals had to be accepted. And so, a fundamental friendship was established between them.»

Lucio Costa

In Pampulha, Niemeyer realizes his first big command. He uses reinforced concrete to realize free and sensual curves he loves so much. For him should, as Baudelaire said, *«create surprise.»*

But for him this is secondary. A humanist and a communist, for Oscar the important is life as well as the end of injustices.

brasília

1950 Juscelino Kubitschek becomes governor of the Minas Gerais. Six years later he is elected president of the republic.

As president, this charismatic man will succeed in gathering everybody

from every region, social rank or religion around the project of Brasília. His propaganda is well constructed in order to make everyone concerned by this national West Walk. He evokes history, myths, religion, and endless richness of the territory. He really becomes the leader of this epic story, one of Brasília's fathers.

When time comes to begin the transfer of the future capital, Kubitschek creates the NOVACAP, a state's company in charge for the implantation and construction of Brasília. This company has all powers and freedom and is only under his authority.

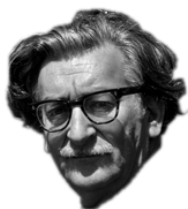
Oscar Niemeyer is chosen to be the president of the urbanism and architecture department and asked to project the pilot plan and the main public buildings of the future city. Niemeyer accepts the architectural part of the project but prefers to give other architects the possibility to realize the urban part of it.

Soon the design team will be reunited again. Under the benevolent gaze of Kubitschek, they undertake the construction of a whole city, the new capital of Brazil: Brasília.

Leme

Beaux-Arts

*Costa's
office*





*Education's
Ministry*



Pampulha



Brasilia



the 4 fathers meeting points

competition

A competition for Brazil's future capital: the opportunity to realize from nothing the design of a whole city, to leave a lasting mark for the ages. Which architect or urbanist wouldn't dream to be «the one» to win such a big competition ?

jury

Oscar Niemeyer could have been this one. However, he decided to let the other Brazilian architects a chance to realize it. He gathered an international Jury at this goal.

This proposition had the advantage of legitimizing Brasilia in the eyes of the brazilian architects' community, and in particular in the eyes of the IAB (institute of Brazilian architects) of which he is the vice-president. Another advantage is that having an international jury offers the construction an international coverage.

Israël Pinheiro, Kubitscheck's representatives, also president of the NO-VACAP, is at the head of the Jury. Six other men compose this group of experts: three Brazilians and three foreigners. the Brazilians are Oscar Niemeyer and two other members of the IAB. The three foreigners have all been chosen by him and one of them has just published a book about his work.

program

Pragmatically, the program of a governmental city is given by the simple lecture of one federal state's constitution: Residence of the president, three powers' seat, ministries and administrations, big national's institutions, cultural establishments and all the commodities serving them. That's why the city is planned for only 500 000 inhabitants.

But such a city can not be similar as others: a simple organism able to fulfill functions of any city. This is at least Kubitscheck's point of view. Brasilia summarizes his will to give the country a new political, social and economical structure, to modify the actual society. The capital should therefore physically show the very essence of Brazilian modernity.

The competitors have to establish the pilot plan for the city. That means its whole planification, the organisation of all the urban life's aspects by creating spaces, zones, use of the ground. The buildings are not to be designed but localised.

However, the program and the conditions of the competition published in the official Journal are not the ones written by the architects' association during

a collective work. The competitors only received an unclear program giving the number of inhabitants, a map of the site topography with the delineation of the future artificial lake as well as the position of the future presidential residence already in construction under Niemeyer's direction. In addition, the delay is very short and no engagement is promised for the winner.

This produces a crisis. A lot of architects decide not to participate to the competition considering the problem badly exposed.

proposals

Finally 26 competitors out of 79 registered participate in the competition.

On March the 12th of 1957, a first reunion is held in the ministry of education, a strong symbol of the birth of Brazilian modernism. Ten projects are selected. They all include two documents: a plan of the projected city (scale 1/25 000), and a short explanation.

One only project does not contain this document: Number 22, Lucio Costa. The project contains only hand-sketches without any consideration of scale nor topography. This is however the one which produced the greatest interest from the jury and the final vote gives it the first price.

The image of Brasilia is so familiar to us nowadays that we forgot that other solutions had been proposed, that other choices could have been made.

Looking closer to some of the other projects that have received a price, it is interesting to notice the similarities as well as the differences these propositions contain.

In fact they all organize the city around the four main functions following the Athens charter. They all have a new conception of street giving priority to open spaces. Geometry is always regular. In short, they all propose a modern urban solution without any specific reference to Brazilian's history.

Nevertheless, strong cleavages are visible concerning political or philosophical orientations given to the new capital. Some of them use monumentality to

express power while others prefer discretion in order to make democracy triumph on monarchy or authoritarian systems.

rewarded projects

The plan proposed by Boruch Milman is organized in three main zones. Next to the lake, the governmental neighborhood including the administrative buildings in its center, then the commercial center, another zone of residence for the employees of industry and finally the industrial sector.

The project is discarded because of its rigid conception of the functional separations. It is also considered as socially segregating.

The team of Enrique Mindlin proposes an organization of the city around two curved axis.

A monumental axis containing the civic programs; ministries on one side, embassies on the other. The other axis is residential and divided in quadras.

The project is refused partly because of the lack of organization of the monumental axis. No spatial hierarchy is proposed between the administrative functions. However, clear similarities are to be seen with the project of Lucio Costa.

The proposal of the Roberto brothers is one of the two most representative project of the non-monumental conception of the political urbanism.

The city is divided in seven concentric urban units of 72 000 inhabitants. Each residential unit is totally autonomous. However, each of them has a different administrative function. one for the regional administration, another for communication, for finance etc. The government center is situated between the fourth unity, the fifth and the lake. No monumental dimension is given.

The jury criticized the lack of metropolitan nature of this polynuclear configuration unworthy, to their point of view, of a capital.

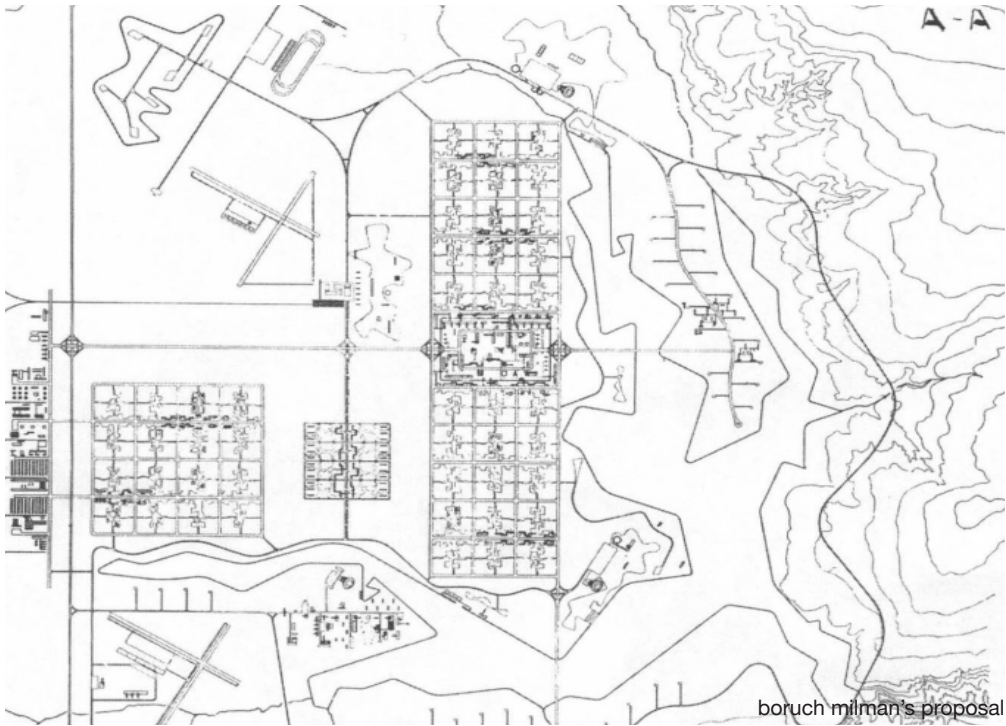
Rino Levi's team proposal goes even further. The idea is to change the traditional idea of monumentality by applying it to the residential buildings instead of applying it to the power structures. the plan is the first modern urbanism's attempt to create vertical neighborhoods.

Each bloc is composed by eight towers measuring 350 meters high and can receive 16 000 inhabitants. The city is then composed by these blocs which permit to let free wide spaces on the surface, all at less than one kilometer of the commercial and government center.

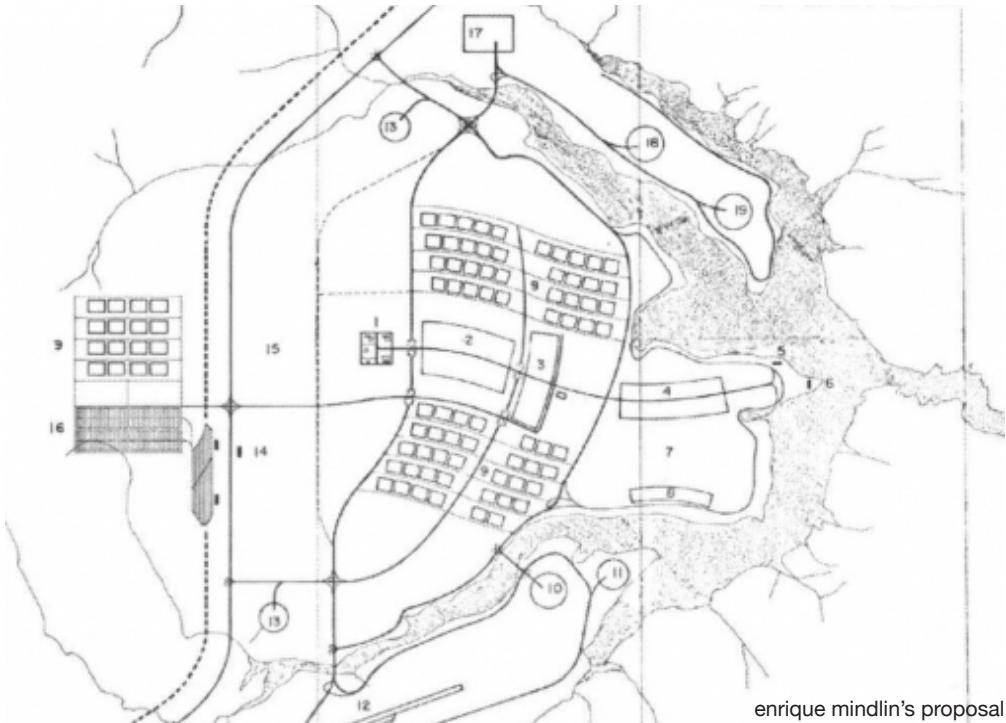
The lack of valuation of the administrative part is missed by the jury for which residential monumentality is not able to confer a city the dimension of a capital.

These proposals, even if multiple and diversified didn't succeed in fully solving the specific question of a new Brazilian capital.

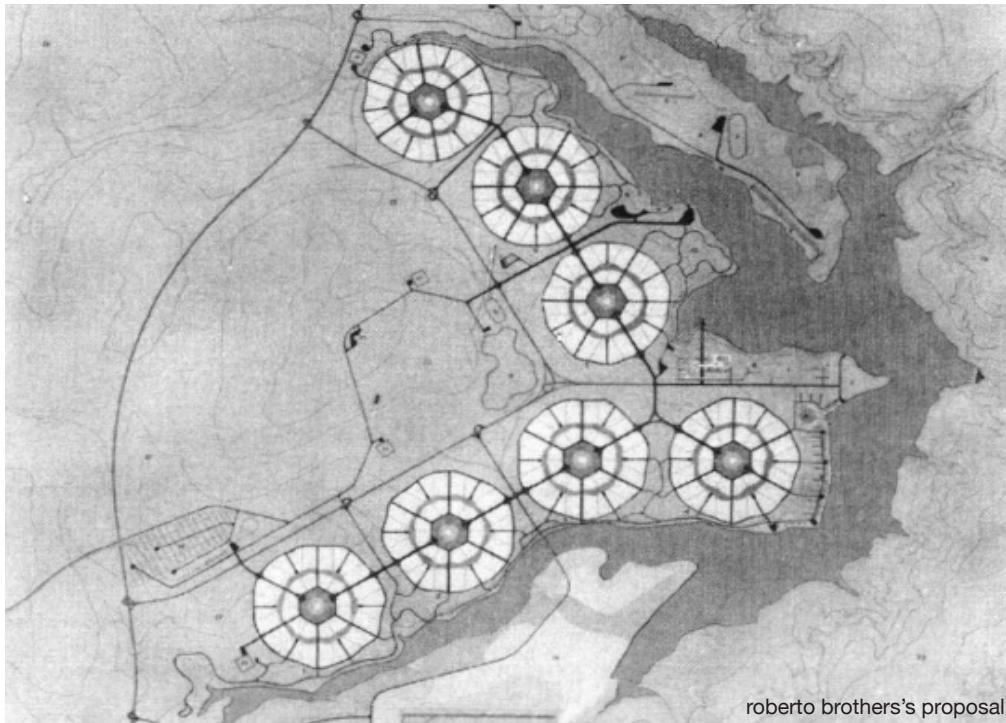
The administrative buildings too often drown among the others or isolated. In short, badly articulated with the rest of the city.



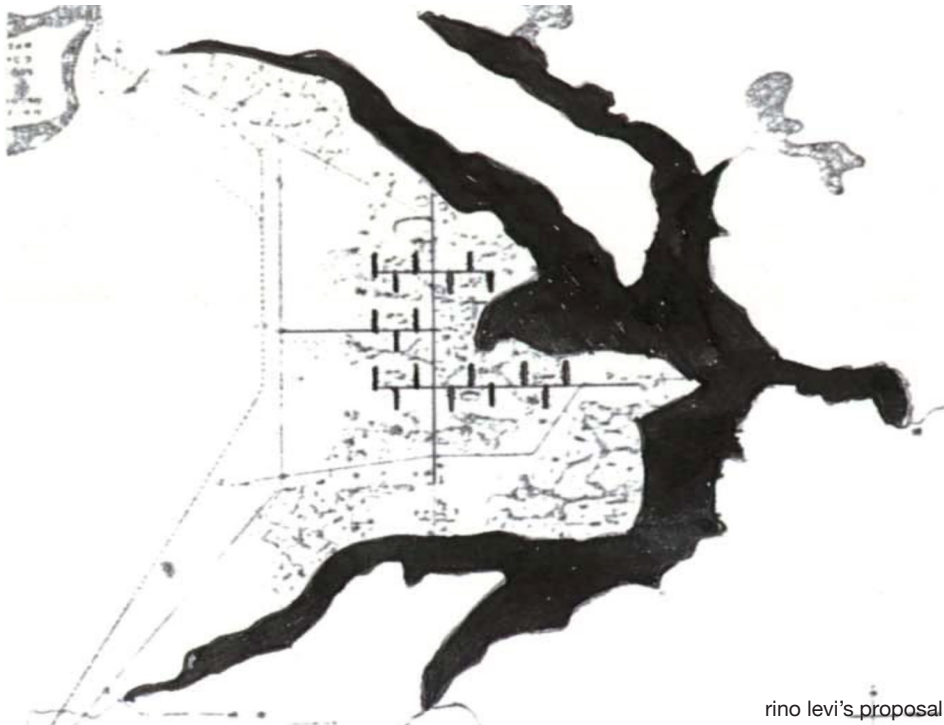
boruch milman's proposal



enrique mindlin's proposal



roberto brothers's proposal



rino levi's proposal

Brasília is located in the Centre-West region which covers 18% of the national territory. That region was composed by of three states: Goiás, Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. That's the region where the agricultural pioneer front was developed in the 1930's.

The region where Brasília was built is located at the source of important hydrographical basins (Paraná, São Francisco) and has therefore important hydraulic resources.

Before the construction, the expeditions looking for the perfect site for a future capital city gave a lot of informations concerning the nature of that place. Indeed, the criteria for the choice of the site were written in the law 1803 of the 5th of January 1953 were:

Positive climate and salubrity
Water and electric supply
Appropriate topography
Reachable by car and by plane
Building land
Existence of building material
Proximity of farmland
Attractive landscape
Easy to expropriate

The area of the "Distrito Federal" (Federal District) is a rectangle of about 50 x 100km.

The "Planalto Central" is the name of the big plateau that forms the region. It is 1000m high and surrounded by 4 rivers and their big valleys. Therefore, it is pleasurable place, bright and temperate. Nevertheless it was a bit too dry in the

winter, between May and September.

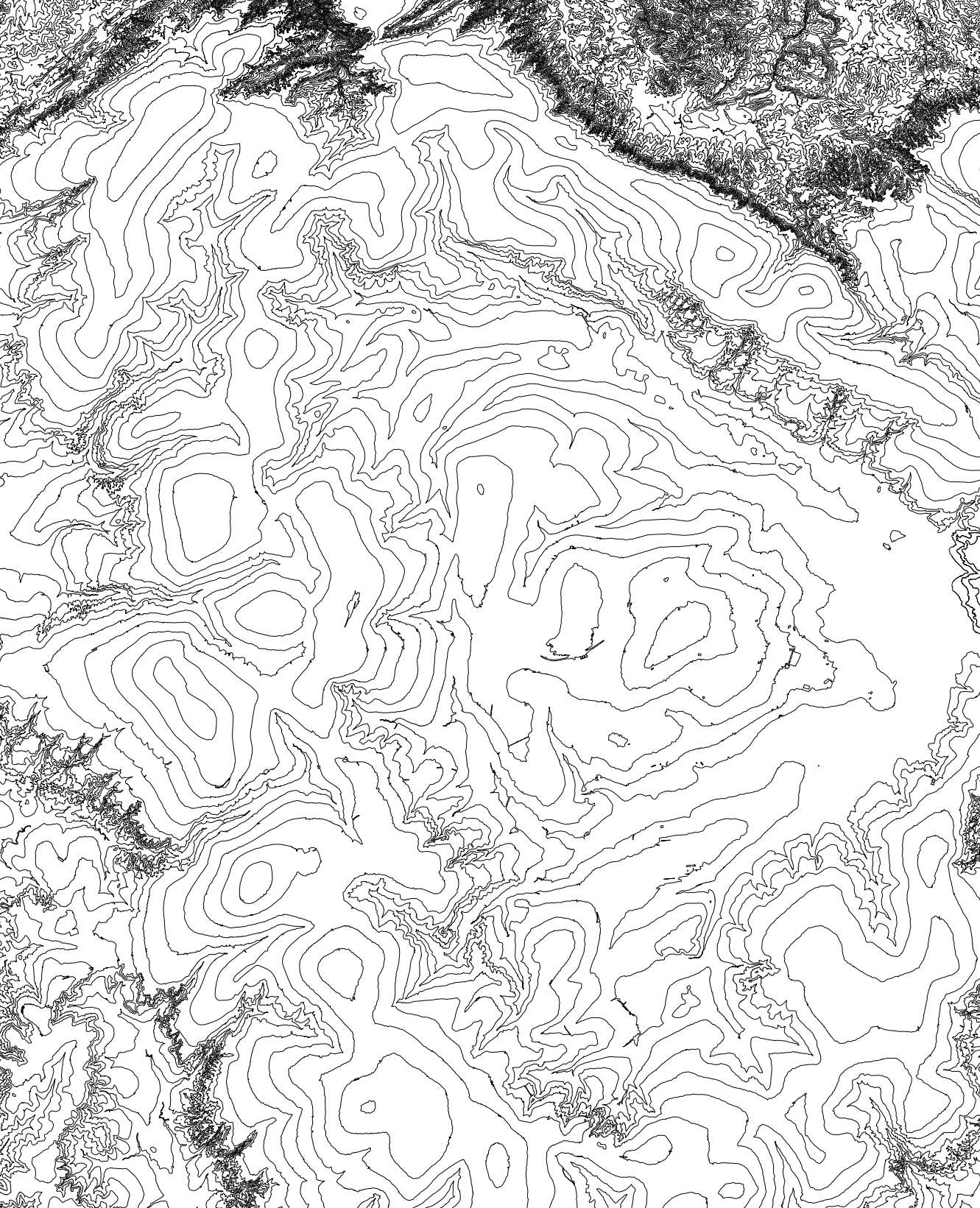
This place is located in the heart of the Brazilian savannah called "cerrado". At the time, the cerrado covered 14 states and 22% of the Brazilian territory. So, the Federal District is a rich botanical place.

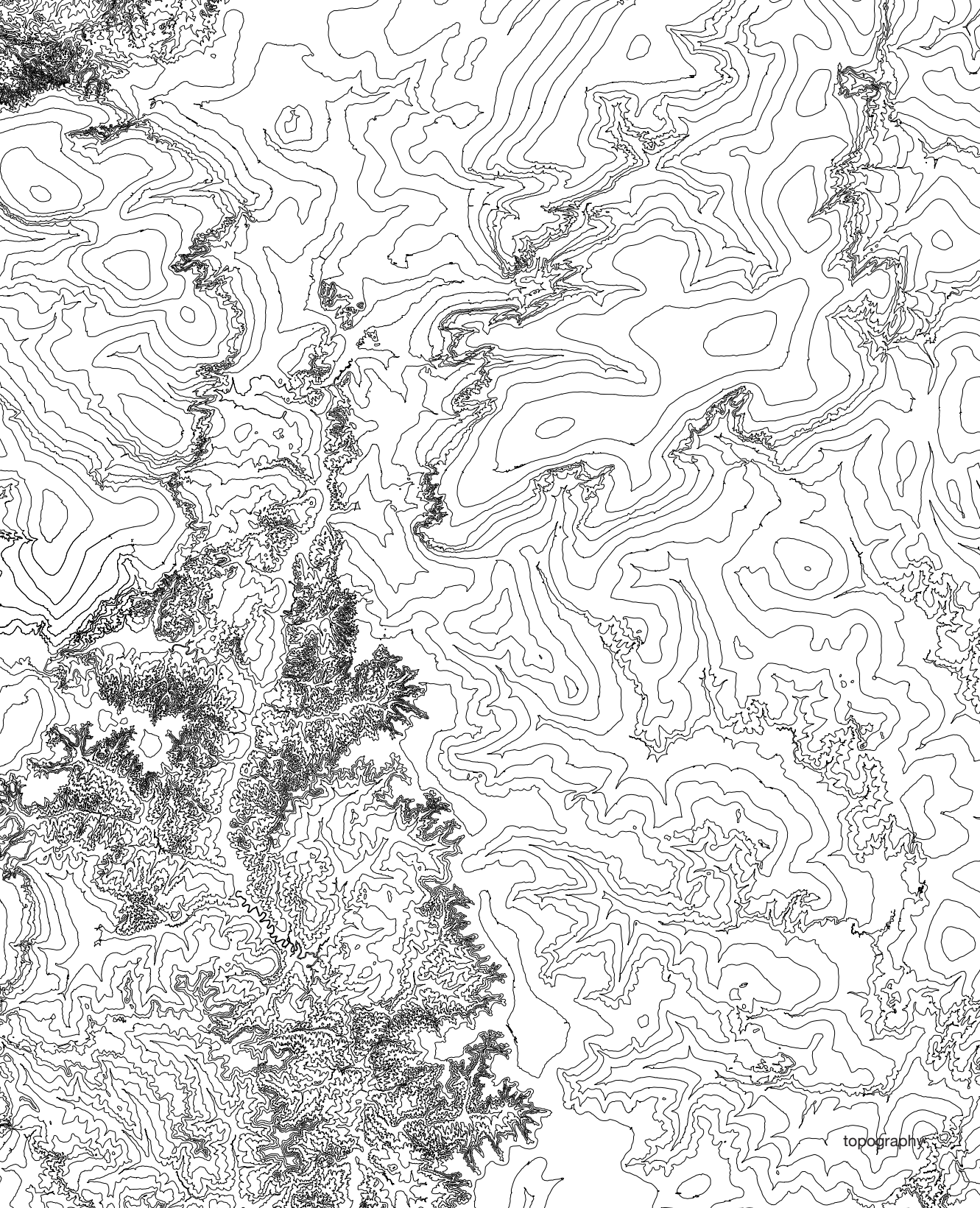
There is a slight and regular declivity, which makes easier the drainage. Furthermore, the rainwater will be used to fill the artificial lake. The creation of the lake at the confluence of 4 rivers is the founding act of Brasília. It increases moisture in air, in the winter and provides a beautiful place for the population to enjoy.

Before Brasília was built, there were only a few thousand people living in that area. There were over a hundred farms and two agricultural villages: Planaltina and Brazlândia with respectively 3000 and 1000 inhabitants. Moreover, with the exception of dirt roads, there was no other transport route.

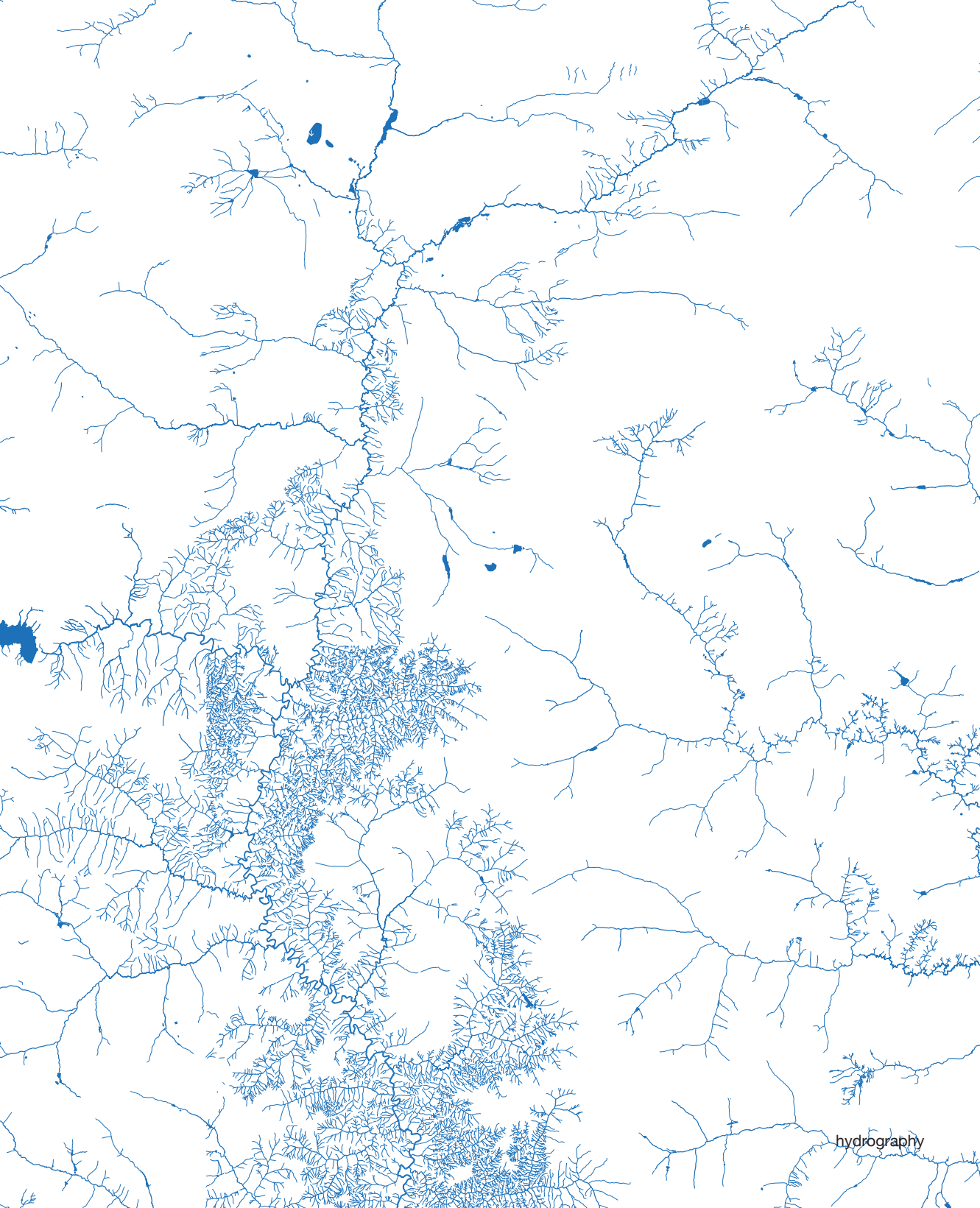
Site

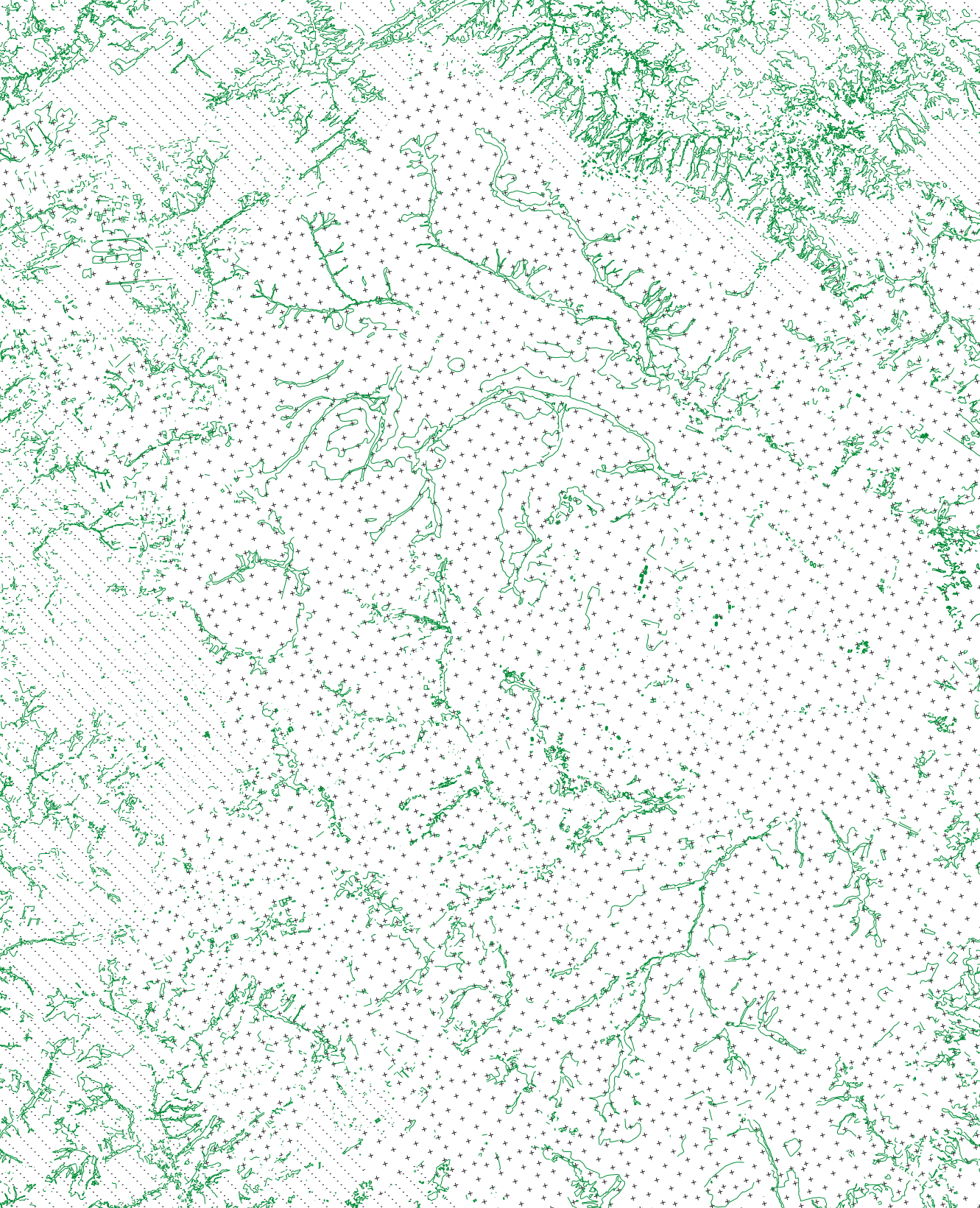


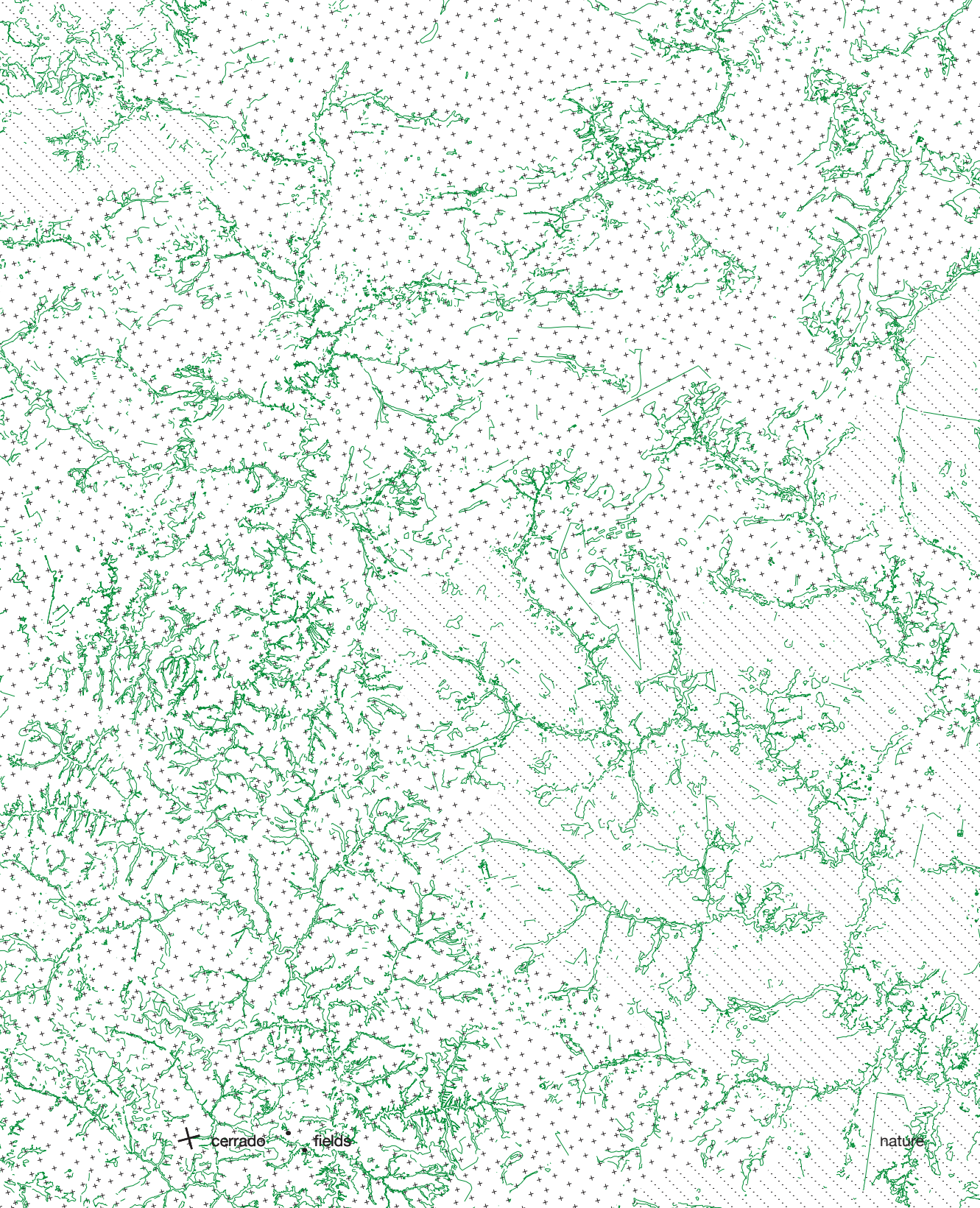












cerrado



fields

nature



An aerial photograph of a city grid, likely New York City, with a large, thick black 'X' drawn over it. The word 'Project' is written in a large, bold, black serif font across the center of the image.

Project

Lucioa Costa's sketches and descriptions are rather an essay about an ideal place for a country's governance than a technical description. A try to understand how such a meaningful program could be materialized, how political ideas could be translated into a physical project.

Project

insularity

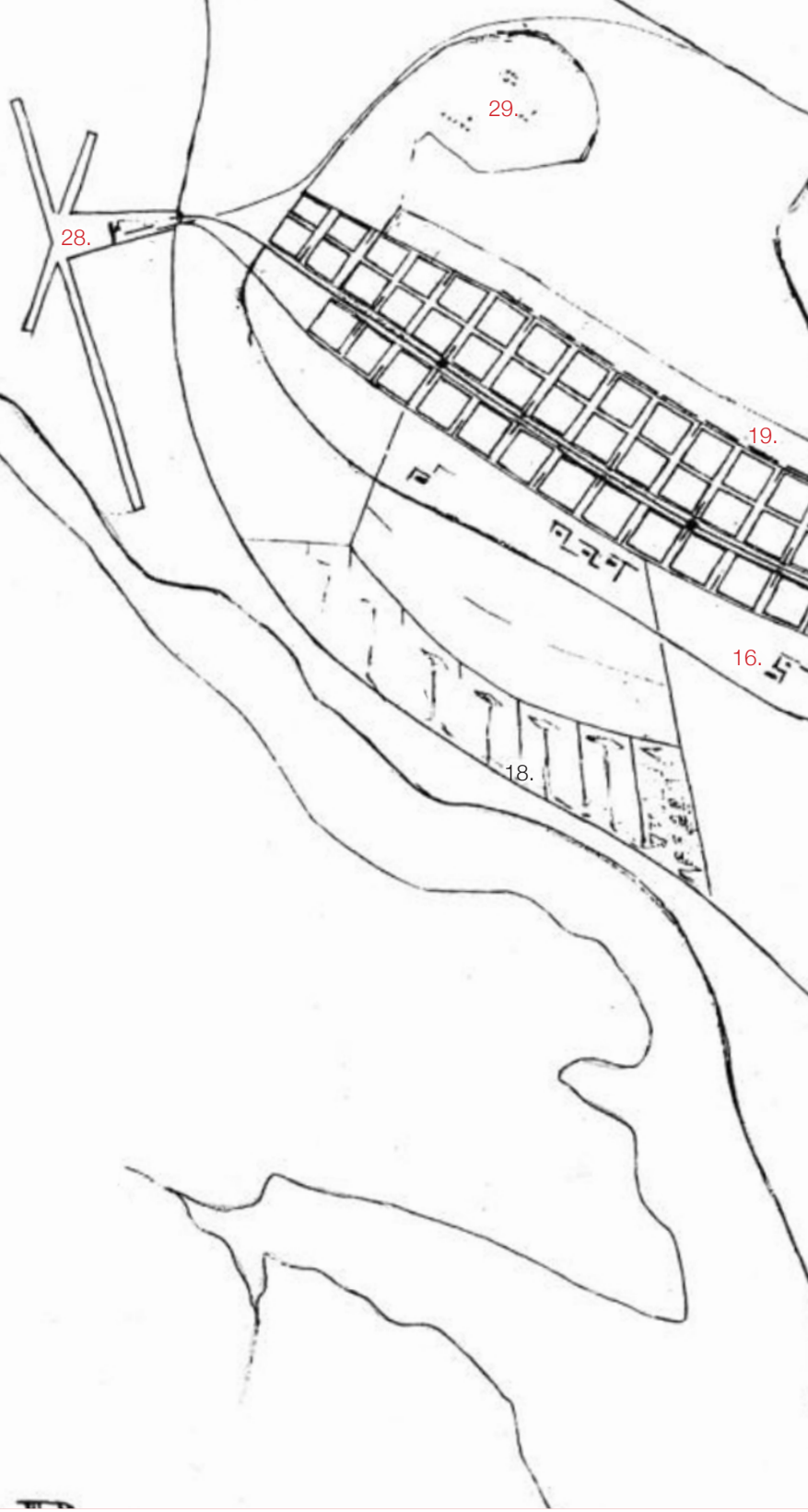
equality

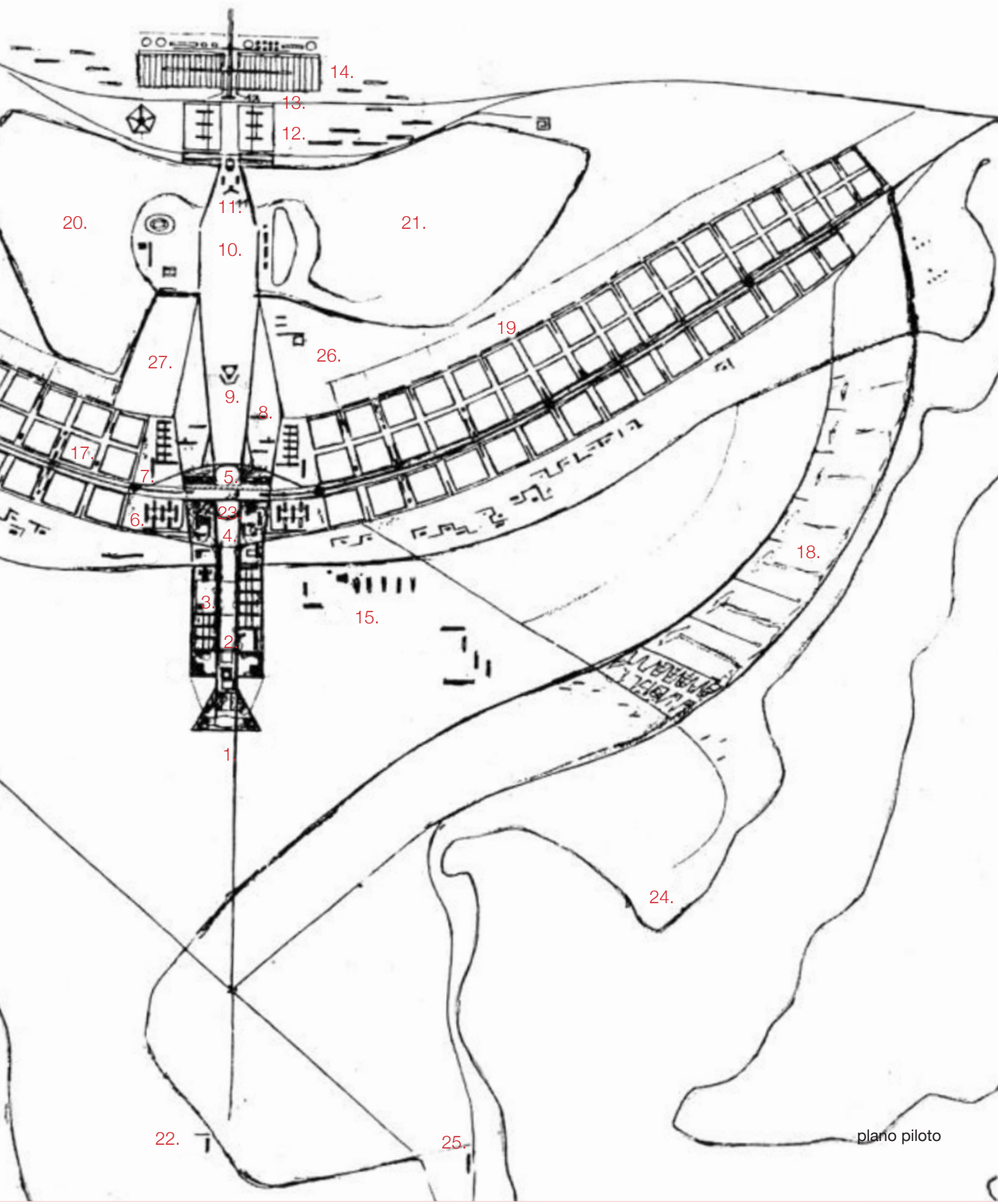
nature

science

education

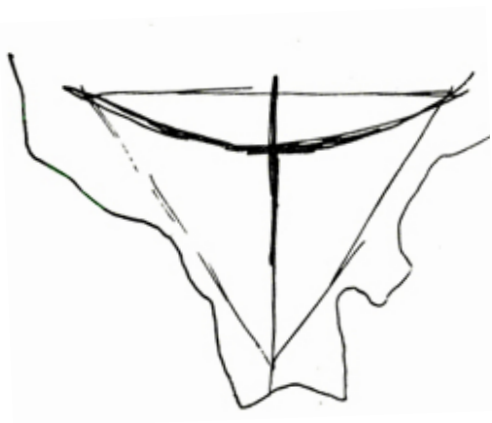
1. Place of the three powers
2. Esplanade of the ministries
3. Cathedral
4. Cultural Sector
5. Entertainment sector
6. Banks and offices sector
7. Commercial sector
8. Hotels
9. Radio and TV tower
10. Sport sector
11. Municipal place
12. Military sector
13. Railway station
14. Little insutries and stock
15. University campus
16. Embassies
17. Residential sector
18. Individual houses
19. Horticulture and Floriculture
20. Botanical garden
21. Zoological garden
22. Golf club
23. Bus station
24. Yacht club
25. Presidential residence
26. Horse club
27. Market place
28. Airport
29. Cemetery





« The solution is born from this geste premier of someone taking possession of a place, two axis crossing at right angle, which is the symbol of a cross. Then I tried to adapt the axis to the topography and the natural run off of the waters, the best orientation, bending one axis in order to insert it inside an equilateral triangle defining the surface of the urban zone. »

Lucio Costa



insularity

The island status of Utopia is fundamental to the balance inside the country, as it is believed that any try for expansion would bring contamination to the perfect machine that Utopia embodies.

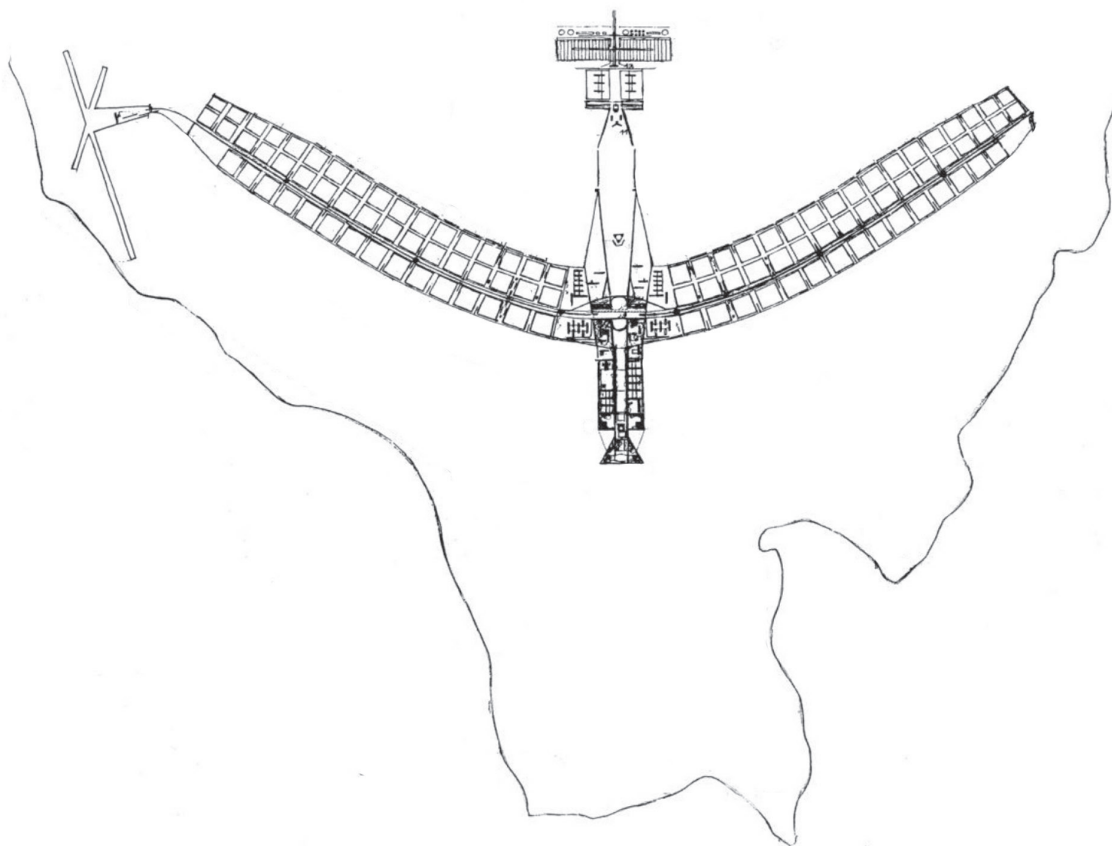
limited plan

Brasilia is planned to welcome 500 000 people, most of them privileged employees of the government.

Lucio Costa is one of the very few to propose a limited city model allowing no extension, enclosed by a green belt

This is actually a kind of self-sufficient island like Utopia, where the elite of the new modern society of Brazil would live, protected from the outside.

Later, when the limit of 500 000 people will be reached, the idea is to have two or three satellite cities in order to house the exceeding people.



equality

The citizens are the most valuable asset on Utopia. They are all equal, which explains why the individual freedom is not needed.

eixo monumental

A spatially different city from the usual unequal cities of Brazil is imagined.

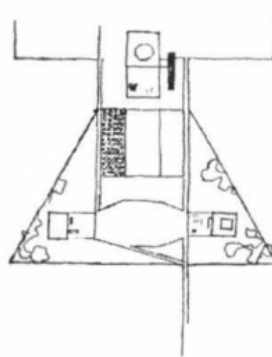
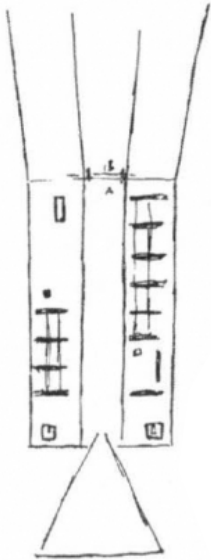
An open city for every class, where private propriety is excluded, and everybody is perfectly equal. The ground is offered to all, Brasilia is one big public space. No idea of rampart, walls. Another way of living on earth.

Lucio Costa imagines the layout of the civic buildings along a monumental axis measuring 6 km long, in a very readable way. They are gradually disposed according to their administrative and politic importance. From the municipal place to the three powers' place going through the ministries, the cultural sector, and the cathedral, this 250 meters wide avenue is considered by the Brazilians to be the widest avenue of the world.

It gives the pedestrian the image of a noble and dignified activity of power serving the whole nation. The idea is a full transparence towards the citizens.

The three powers' place, as the royal old french place of the XXth, is a monumental ensemble erected for the state's glory. The three powers's buildings form a triangle. At its tip, the congress.

Representation of the legislative power, this symbol of democracy is pushed forward. while the presidential palace representing the executive power as well as the High court of Justice representing the judiciary power are a bit further down.







monumental axis

eixo residential

For the residential part, the idea is to have every type of economic model along a 20 km long curved axis, in order to make the whole population inhabit inside of the city rather than in the periphery.

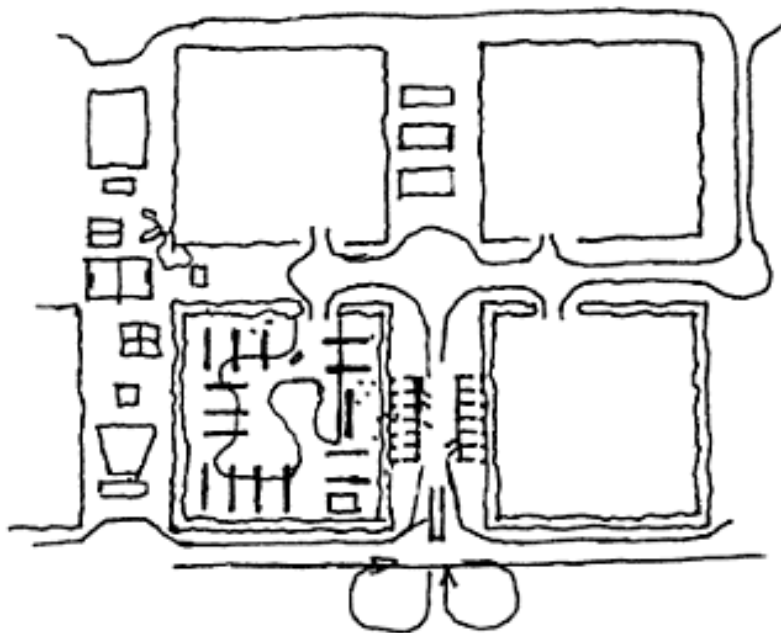
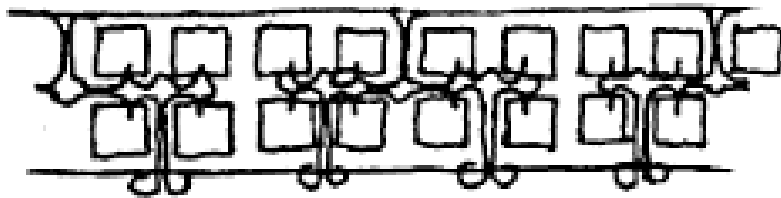
The residential six storeys buildings are organized into quadras and grouped in superquadra, a group of four quadras, each planned for 3000 persons. Those units are projected to be like autonomous protected islands, each superquadra possessing a church, schools, sport facilities, shops etc.

They are conceived for a new domestic organization where private propriety is radically reduced compared to the use of collective installations. Protected from the street and circulation, the inside of a quadra is meant to be the privileged heart of sociability.

They are all constructed on pilotis, in order to let the ground free and accessible to everyone. The only difference which could be made between different social classes is the location or the materiality of their quadra.

Oscar Niemeyer, for its part, designs apartments totally in rupture with the traditional patriarchal model. He removes all spaces which permit informal meetings of the family: balcony, veranda and copa (an annex of the kitchen).

The idea is to have one main family space for true and conscient sharing. He even designs extra small maid's room secretly hoping that the owners would refuse to use them as such, transform them into storages and integrate the domestics to the family.







residential axis, aerial view

nature

The perfection found in the country is inspired by nature. By imitating nature, Utopians can transpose its laws into society, and replace the natural ones. The relation of domination is reversed.

paranoa lake

In Brasilia, an artificial lake has been created.

Like in Utopia, where perfection comes from nature, man was able to imitate natural rules and substitute them with human ones.

That way, they change the natural conditions of their environment, permitting better climatic conditions through humidity as well as a symbol of human domination on nature.

The Paranoa lake has indeed an important foundation's role, and represents a strong gesture in this idea of taking possession of a wild untouched territory.

Projected to be totally public, no neighborhood is to be localized along the lake's shores. Around it one should only find forests, natural spaces for promenade, lovely spots of relaxation of all the urban population.

urban nature

In the same logic, the pilot plan is a park city accessible to all the pedestrians.

Luxuriant vegetation grows everywhere, particularly in and around the quadras, through paths and parks they surround the urban life.

As Lucio Costa said:

« Is there a lot of cities which offer sport places, meeting spots, a promenade for the lovers at the foot of all housing? »







quadra inside view

science

The citizens of Utopia could be spiritual people, but their inner faith go to science in priority.

infrastructures

aerial

United states conquered the West thanks to the train. Brazil undertakes it by plane.

Of course the idea is then to create a road network to join the North, West and East, but this modern mean of transport, allows to implant this connection point in the middle of the territory and to save time. Which is exactly what Kubitschek means with the slogan « 50 years of progress in 5 ».

Each step of the construction is in fact related to plane. The final site, was selected thanks to photographs taken by plane, and the first time Kubitschek visited the site...it was from the plane. In addition, the first major construction realized into the federal district is the airstrip, the only access at that time.

Brasilia is therefore a city imagined and constructed thanks to plane. The new capital of Brazil is the first aeropolis in the history of humanity.

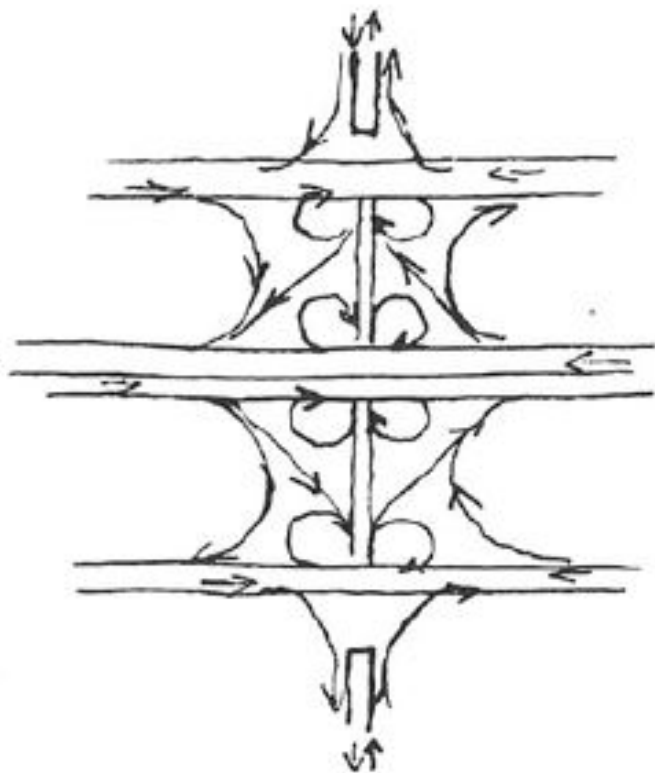
terrestrial

Even more remarkable, Brasilia is the first city imagined from the beginning for cars. At that time, automobile is not a dangerous incompatible enemy of man anymore. Adopted, it is almost part of the family.

The urbanist was therefore concerned, in applying the true principles of modern technic regarding the construction of highways, including the suppression of crossing.

The use of highways ensures a clear and quick connection between the two axis and the different sectors by autonomous tracks permitting a free use of the ground for the pedestrian. It offers thanks to the interchanges a feeling of total continuity. The highways are spread across the whole urban tissue and play the role of cement.

The localization of the bus station at the crossing point of the two axis is a strong gesture embodying the importance of transport in the pilot plan. This symbolic point where every roads converge is in fact also the main meeting place for the population.







Simca advertisement

education

Human is originally bad and could only escape from his status through education.

«A Role Model city, beautiful and monumental, with an innovative urbanism and architecture, full of green spaces, and organized following new conceptions in order to propose and guarantee a better quality of the urban core, without pollution nor stress, where working and living would be compatible occupations.»

J. Kubitschek

«





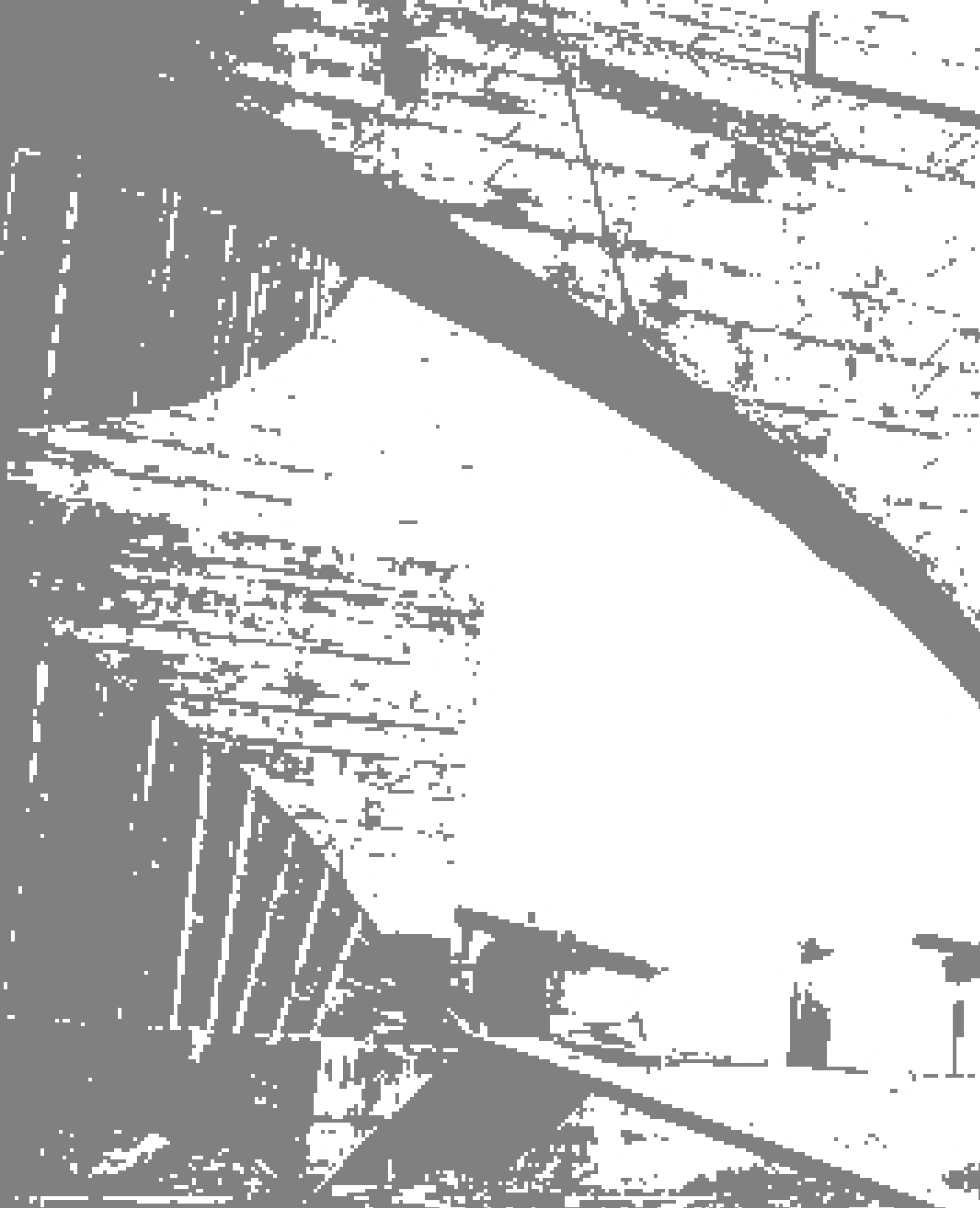
«As a result of the lack of discrimination between the social classes, the inhabitants of the blocs (superquadras) are forced to live as a big family, ensuring a perfect social coexistence, which can be turned into the children's advantage who live, grow, play and study in a spirit of frank camaraderie. (...)

And that's how is educated, on the planalto central, the childhood who will construct the Brazil of tomorrow, because Brasilia is the glorious cradle of a new civilization»

NOVACAP journal 1963









Construction

1'310

days

60'000

workers

12-18

h/day

22.2

years old on average

1

billion dollars

500'000

m² built

20'000

km new roads

5'600

asphalt roads

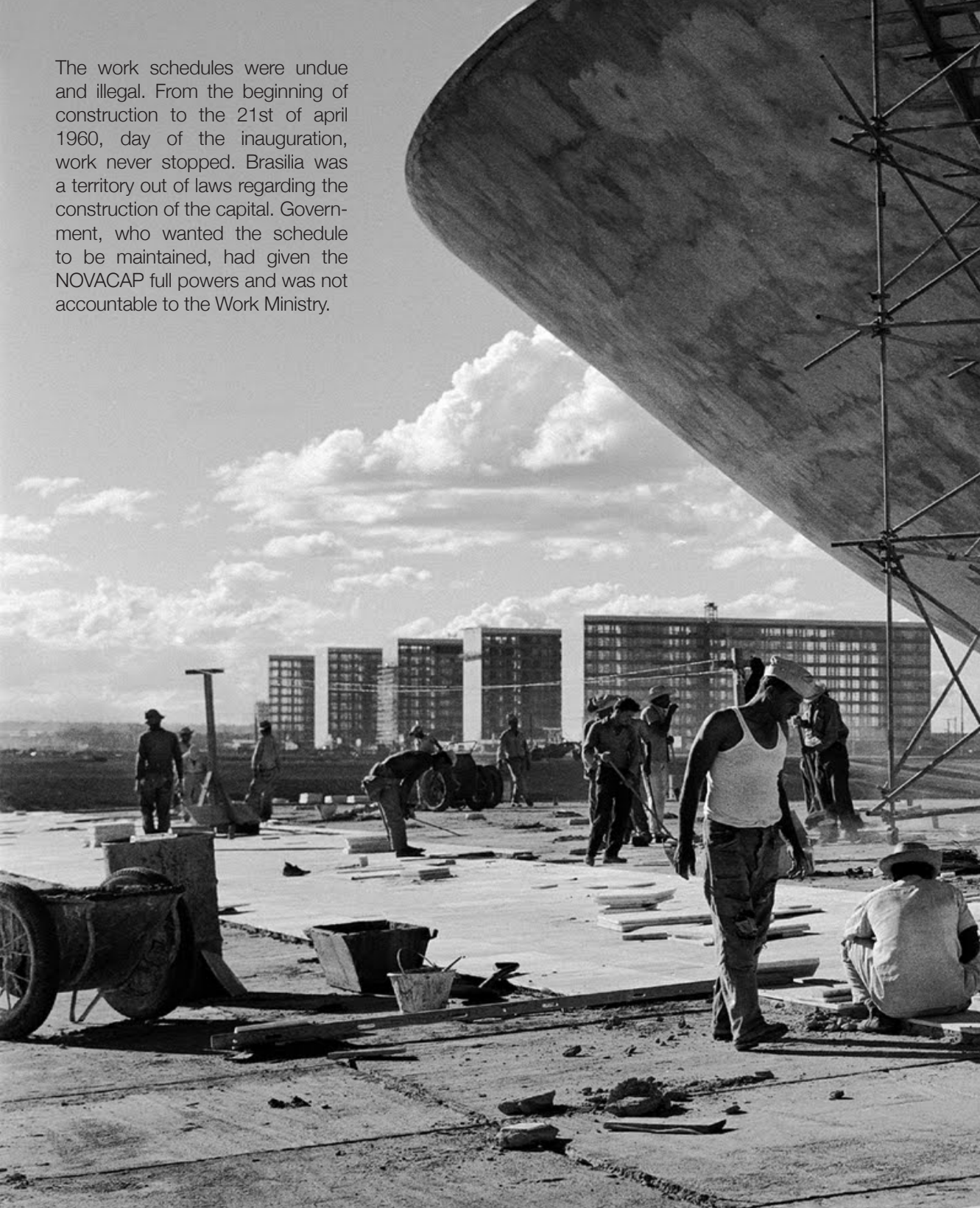
37%

shelters with electricity

22%

shelters with water

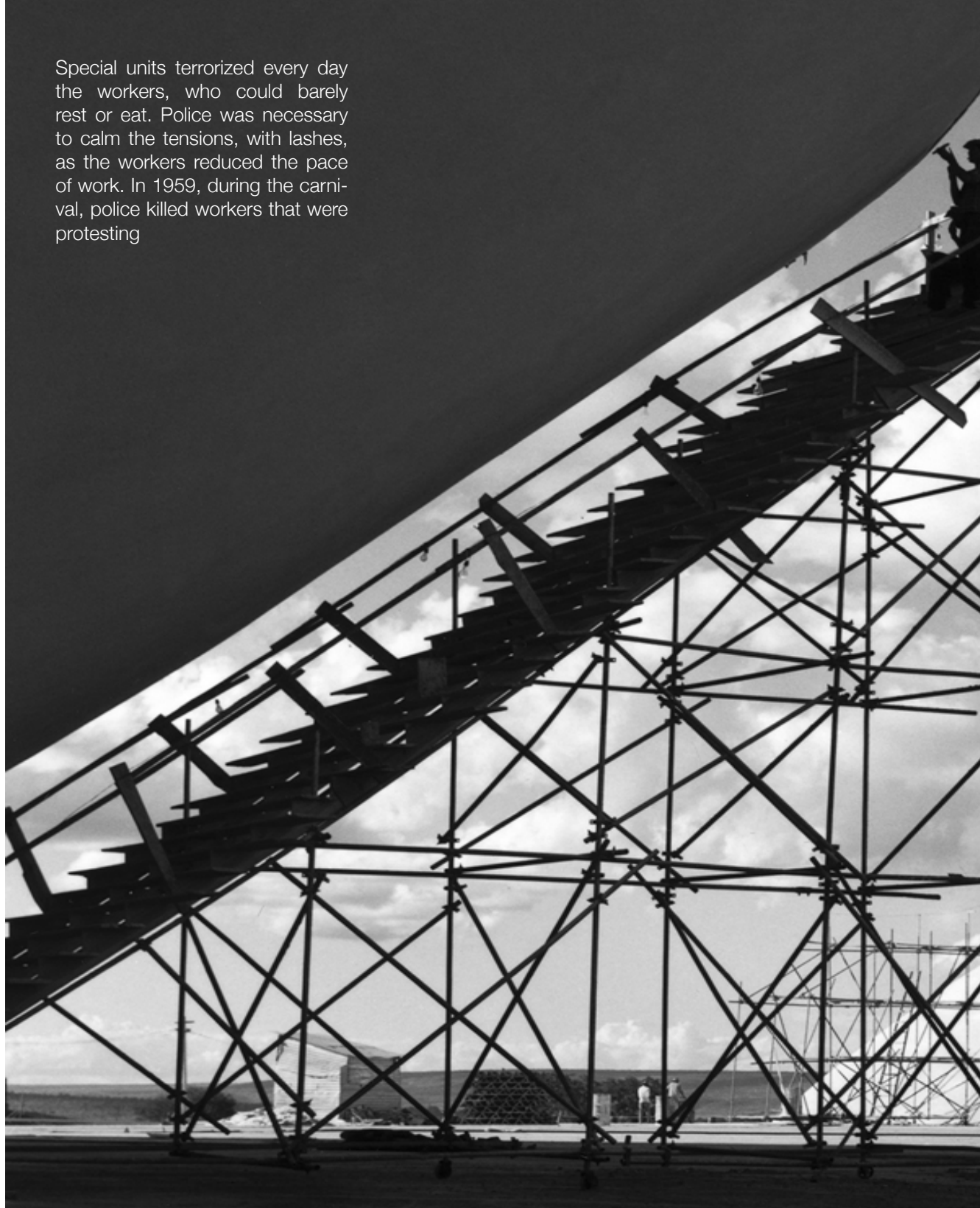
The work schedules were undue and illegal. From the beginning of construction to the 21st of april 1960, day of the inauguration, work never stopped. Brasilia was a territory out of laws regarding the construction of the capital. Government, who wanted the schedule to be maintained, had given the NOVACAP full powers and was not accountable to the Work Ministry.





picture Marcel Gautherot

Special units terrorized every day the workers, who could barely rest or eat. Police was necessary to calm the tensions, with lashes, as the workers reduced the pace of work. In 1959, during the carnival, police killed workers that were protesting





picture Marcel Gautherot

During and after construction, a high number of invalidity, illness and death occurred because of exhaustion, accumulated by the rhythm of work. A lot of workers disappeared. Bodies were covered and removed sometimes even put into mass graves in order not to demoralize the workmen.







138886

Via L2 Sul →
S. Autarquias Sul →
Pça. Tribunais →
S. Bancário Sul →



Life

«Architectural sketches are always silent, whereas cities never are. It is not drawings that live in cities, but people, unpredictable individuals who might at any moment disturb the order that has been designed for them, who may break through the silence of the sketches by making use of that unique instrument that makes a city a city: the human voice.»

Life

insularity

equality

nature

science

education

insularity

The island status of Utopia is fundamental to the balance inside the country, as it is believed that any try for expansion would bring contamination to the perfect machine that Utopia embodies.

limited plan

Brasilia was planned to be a limited city of 500 000 inhabitants. Today Brasilia is an agglomeration of 2.5 millions people.

Looking at the pilot plan, excepted for some changes, the project has been strictly realized under the gaze of the government and functions today more or less as planned. Much attention has been focused on it.

However, this privileged part of the city is, as in Utopia, just a small enclosed island protected from the outside. And its enclosure is rather social than physical, the outside rather a dense urban archipelago than an empty sea.

Since the inauguration, the access to the modern city has been refused to the lower classes, relegated as far as possible, beyond the green protected belt. On this inauguration day of the 21st of April 1960, Brasilia-island is already surrounded by eight populated cities.

« That day as came rich people and the military government, a wall isolated us from the poorest. We felt that Brasilia was simply that: a capitalist society, which had nothing to do with a society from the future. » Oscar Niemeyer

Inside « the pure race of Brasilia » the « Brasilienses », a name claimed by the senators, members of the government and their families at that time. Outside the « Candangos », the workers, which came from all regions of Brazil to erect the city.

Brasilia, planned to embody THE modern city, is actually the only medieval city of Brazil. Even in Rio de Janeiro the big part of the poor population living in favelas is located inside of the city. In Brasilia, social misery is pushed outside, beyond an invisible and impassable wall.

unesco

Worst, this island configuration is not about to change. Indeed, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987, the pilot plan is frozen. No possibility of a future arrangement according to the social conditions.

In addition, it accentuated the process through a politic of valuation of Lucio costas' plan, which attracted the rich while the outside was always more left to its own and under anarchic rules.





UNESCO area

orthophoto of the federal district





UNESCO area

orthophoto of the pilot plan

equality

The citizens are the most valuable things on Utopia. The utopians are all equal, which explains why the individual freedom is not needed.

satellite cities

first workers

60 years ago, only little agglomerations of farms born from agricultural exploitations or from the golden cycle's ways like Brazlandia or Planaltina where to be found on the actual site of Brasilia.

Since december 1956, the workers are grouped 15km away from the future pilot plan in Cidade Livre, meaning « The free city » because it was exempted of taxes and in Paranoa where the dam permitting the future artificial lake is built. These temporary camps are, as their name imply it, meant to be temporary just for the next four years of construction. No concrete is to be found there, the precariousness is strong, the conditions are difficult.

Within months, a strong migration of people in search of work moves next to Cidade Livre and Paranoa which gives birth to the first favelas. They even move to the center of the pilot plan in Cruzeiro.

first satellite cities

Two years before the inauguration, in 1958 the NOVACAP decided to start cleaning the surrounding of the future capital.

They create the first satellite cities, Taguatinga, 25km away, and shortly after Gama, 35 km away, in order to transfer there the populations of the favelas. In fact, the population increased from 12'283 to 64'314 inhabitants between 1957 and 1959.

Sobradinho is also conceived as a rural town, to receive the victims of the lake's impoundment.

But despite the creation of these cities, the first favelas didn't disappear. Erased, some of them directly re-appear. In some other cases, the pioneer spirit produces a strong mobilization and organisation of the inhabitants like in the first camps around Cidade Livre. The population claimed its right to live there even if the living conditions are still miserable and obtain the official recognition in 1961 becoming today's known as Nucleo Bandeirante and Candangolandia cities.

inauguration

The 21st of April 1960, as Brasilia is inaugurated, satellite cities already cover a population of 60 000 people. These satellite cities initially planned to appear long after the pilot plan, appeared actually long before, quickly and in a totally unplanned manner.

middle class invasions

But the lower classes are not the only one to take possession of the soil in order to create cities,

Indeed, even before the inauguration, a privatisation process is initiated by the militaries in the north and later south peninsula of the lake. Private parcels of around 2000 m² are constructed with luxurious residences for the upper class. The beautiful promenades and relaxation places around the lake are not public anymore as they were supposed to be.

Another consequence of this appropriation of the lake is regrettable. In fact, the upper classes, by moving to the lake, refusing a shared life in a building near to the middle class, didn't permit the achievement of the pilot plan. In fact, individual and semi-individual houses were planned in the west part of the residential axis in order to lodge the highest incomes. 1/5 of these terrains are today vacant, and frozen for speculations.

Following the same steps, part of the middle class occupy from 1960 important public spaces in a irregular and illegal manner. Even far from the pilot plan they construct private and secured allotments in co-propriety called condominiums.

urban expansion

1970, the popular migration goes on. This year, 100 000 favelados are identified. That's why in 1971, the military regime introduces the CEI, the commission of invasions' eradication. Their goal, the eradications of the favelas. They construct therefore CElândia, 35km away from the center, where in few weeks 80 000 inhabitants are moved. The city consist in rectangular parcels measuring 10x5m « with water and electricity. » Nevertheless years were needed to finally obtain the minimum collective installation such as a hospital.

At the same time Guara is constructed to lodge NOVACAP functionaries.

Ten years later the same process causes the creation of Samambaia. Together with Ceilandia they form the largest surface of economic and socio-cultural poverty. More than 500 000 inhabitants.

In the 90's migration and birth rate slows down but an even more eccentric and poor cities erupt by their own: Recanto das Emas, Riacho Fundo and Santa Maria 30 and 36 km from the center while rich neighborhood appear inside of the protected green belt.

Brasilia today

The urban sprawl started to overflow the limits of the federal district already since 1970. Luziana' s population, a little town in the south east, reached itself 200 000 inhabitants, 53% coming from the federal district.

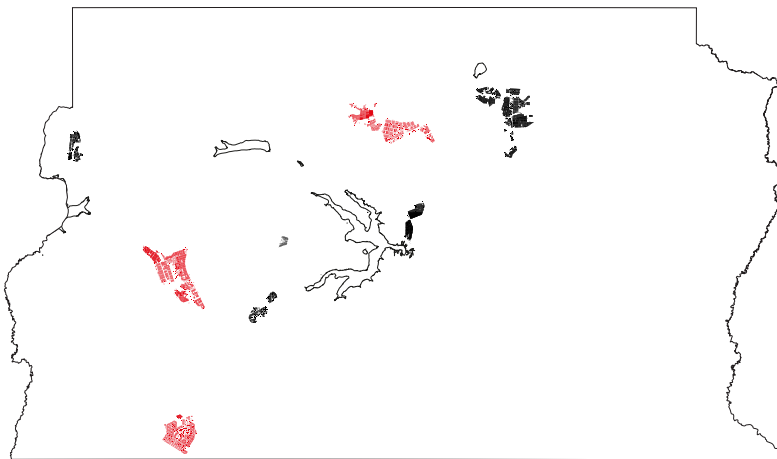
During the last decade, as the growth rate of the federal district is 2.81%, its limitrophe region's growth rate is 4.64%. The conurbation of Brasilia is becoming one of the first of the country.

At the same time, rich neighbourhoods appears inside the green belt bringing closer the pilot plan tow the satellite cities.

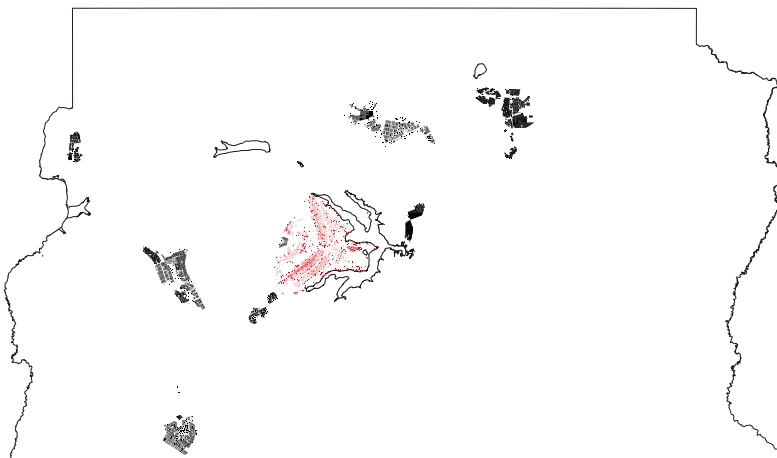
More preoccupying, today, the most populated favela of all south America is growing next to Ceilandia. Sol Nascente is already identified as the poorest, less equipped and most dangerous city in the region.



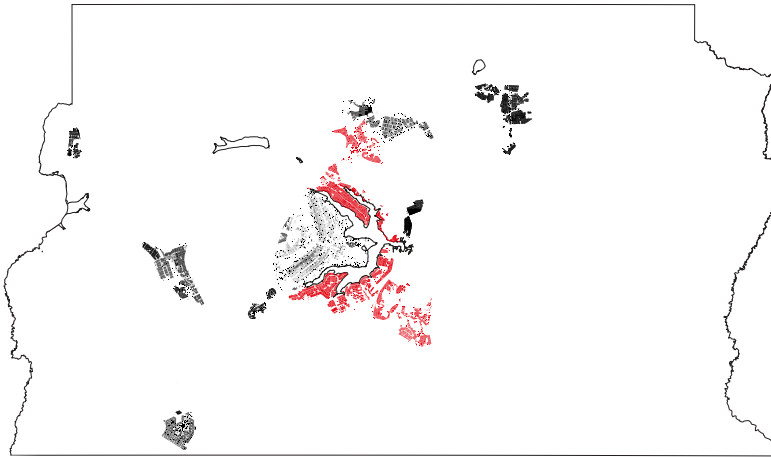
first workers



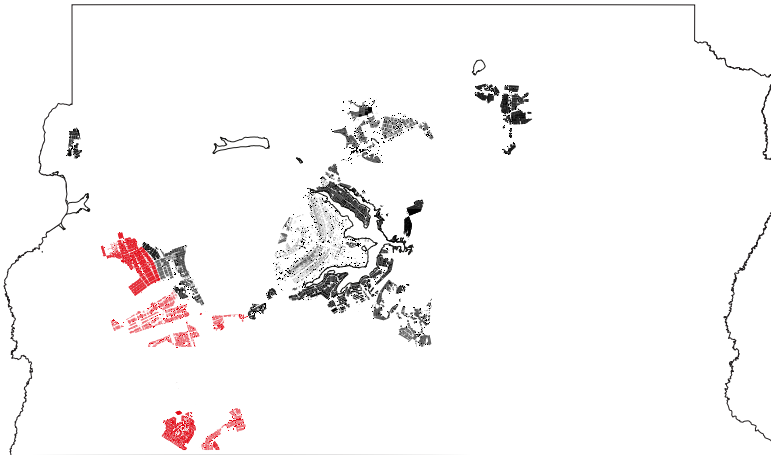
first satellite cities



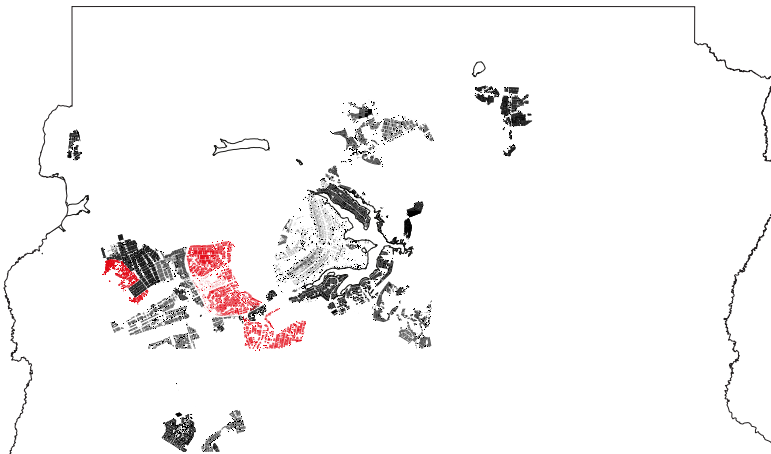
inauguration



middle class invasions



urban expansion



Brasilia today





built area

insularity = segregation + sectorisation

Obviously, insularity produced segregation when understood as a restricted group living in a restricted enclosed area protected from the surrounding misery.

One of the characteristics of such an utopia project is the attraction it produces. Thousands of people from everywhere came following their dream of finding an Eldorado, a job and a shelter as promised by the propaganda around the construction of the city in the middle of nowhere, for which human forces were absolutely needed.

However, hope and promises combined with a limited plan reserved for an elite, automatically produces the impossibility of receiving everybody and consequently the emergence of segregation.

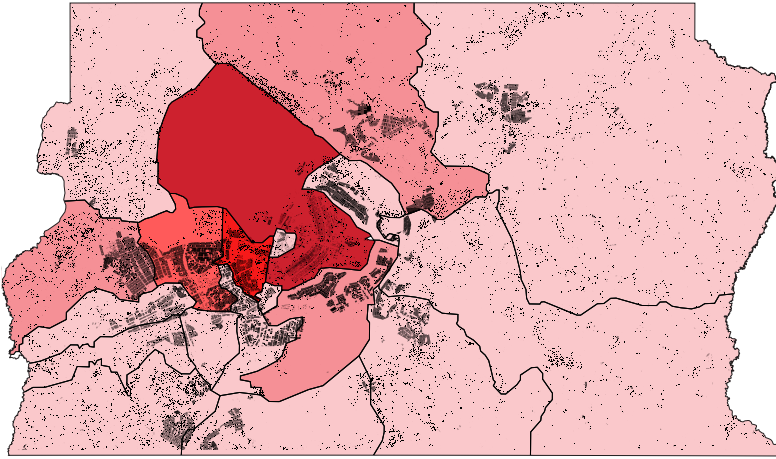
As the inhabitants of the pilot plan, live happily in the quadras, enjoying the transport facilities and the surrounding nature, the middle and lower class, excluded and misled, have to find another solution to get a housing.

One of the consequences of this social geography is a big sectoral division of the activities.

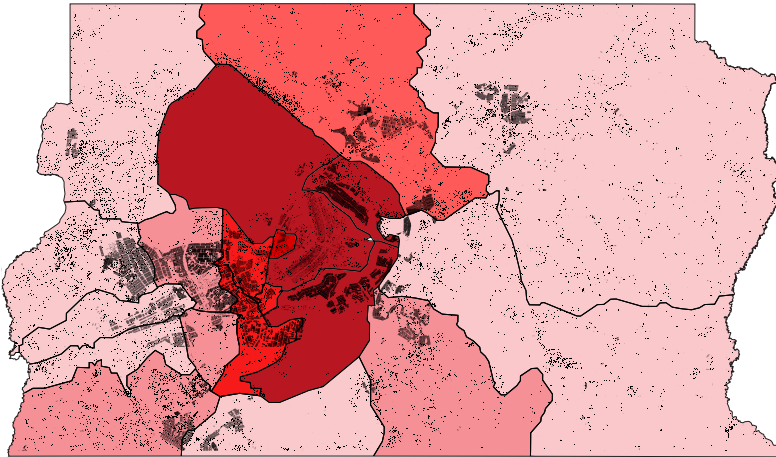
All the noble services sectors and the main source of work are found in the "Plano Piloto", again in a privileged insular position, while the outside contains mostly residences and the other work sectors.

In addition, in the federal district, no big industries belonging to the primary and secondary economic sectors are to be found. Knowing that mass employment is most of the time provided by this kind of activities, the lack of such structures also increases the central position of the pilot plan and its attraction.

Brasilia and its agglomeration is a fragmented body, functioning as an interdependent whole. The workers of the agglomeration depends on the pilot plan's job offer as well as this one needs the workers



sectorisation



monthly income /house

segregation + sectorisation = speculations + invasions

The poorest, following the Bandeirantes's footsteps, often simply take possession of the soil. Invade areas in an irregular manner.

For the middle class in seek for a shelter, exists a big speculative market. In fact, Speculation is born with Brasilia. The first mistake was, in the words of the pioneer Ernesto Silva, « to not have expropriated all the lands of the Federal District ». Researches, of the Land Property Secretariat, showed that only 65% of former properties were bought. What remained in the hands of the former owners, is most of the time located in sensitives natural areas, and became a breeding ground for speculation.

Particular proponents offer plots through an illegal process of parcelling, the possibility to own propriety. These private initiatives are the big problem in the planning of the spatial urban development. Appears a real confrontation between official and spontaneous use of land.

Indeed, the government provides land, but it is made on the basis of the social class. The poorer you are, the further you live. This leads to a strong spatial and social fragmentation. A certain space for a certain class. The social ideal of a shared city has been swallowed.

«Juscelino Kubitschek said no, that it was not possible, that the city was made for the functionaries, the tradesmen, and that for the population which had no money, there would be urban centers in the periphery: « Those people must not move into the pilot plan. »

Oscar Niemeyer

nature

The perfection found in the country is inspired by nature. By imitating nature, Utopians can transpose its laws into society, and replace the natural ones. The relation of domination is reversed.

protection

One year after the inauguration of the city, the national park of Brasilia is created, in the region of Aguas Emendadas in the north of the Plano Piloto. The park was launched to protect the fauna and flora as well as the water of the Santa Maria dam, which provide 30% of the drinking water of Brasilia.

It's only in 1975 that the ecological reserve of the IBGE, in the south of the Pilot Plan is inaugurated. Other kinds of protected areas were set up in the eighties.

Today around 50% of the Federal District is partially or totally protected.

pollution

Nevertheless, the new capital, intended as a model regarding the environment is today reasonably polluted.

There are many reasons, which led to the actual situation, but the most important is the fast urban expansion.

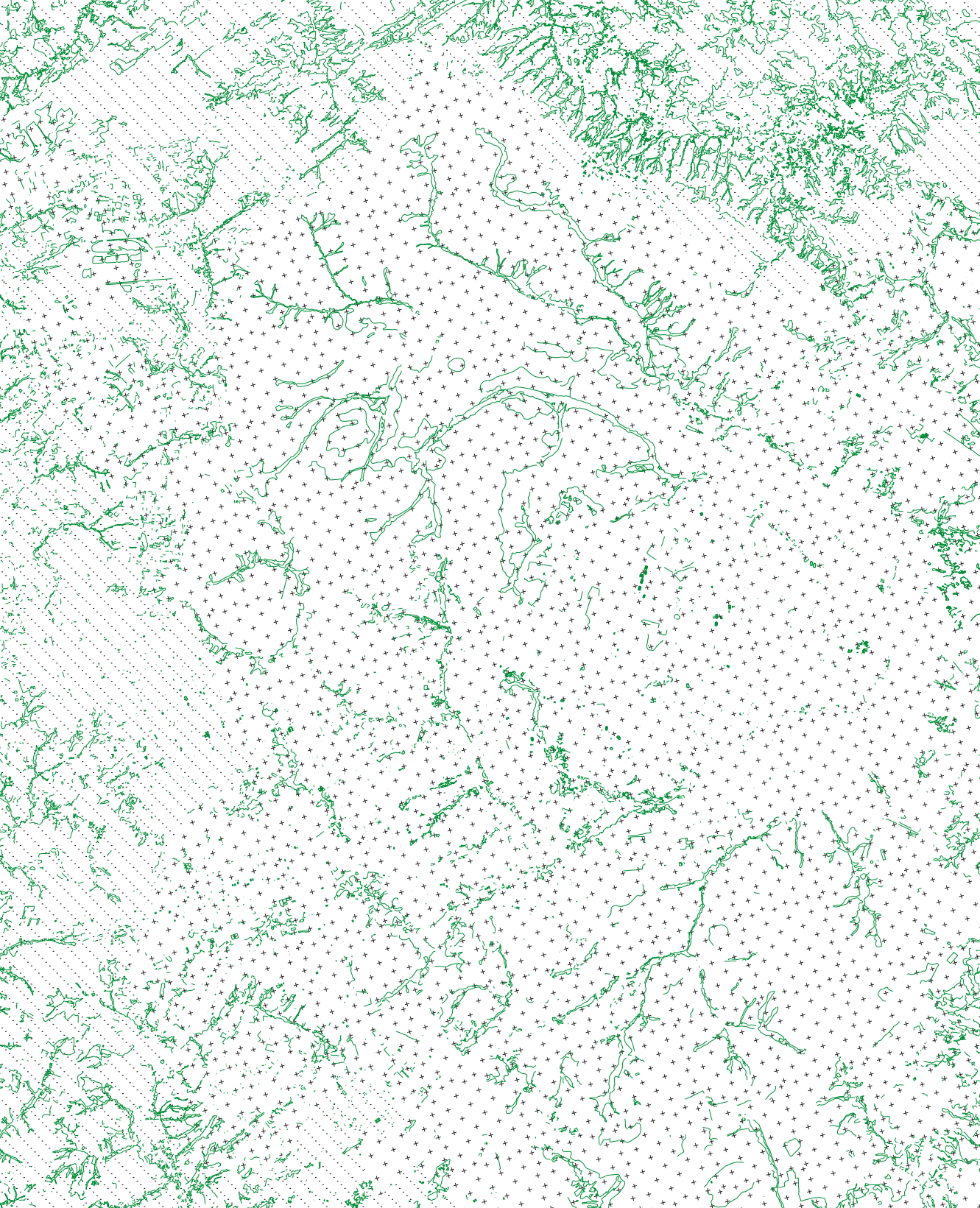
According to the IEMA (Ecology and Environment Institute of the Federal District), the rapid population growth of 20% between 1990 and 1995, outpaces the public planning process and calls into question the lifestyle of Brasilia's inhabitants.

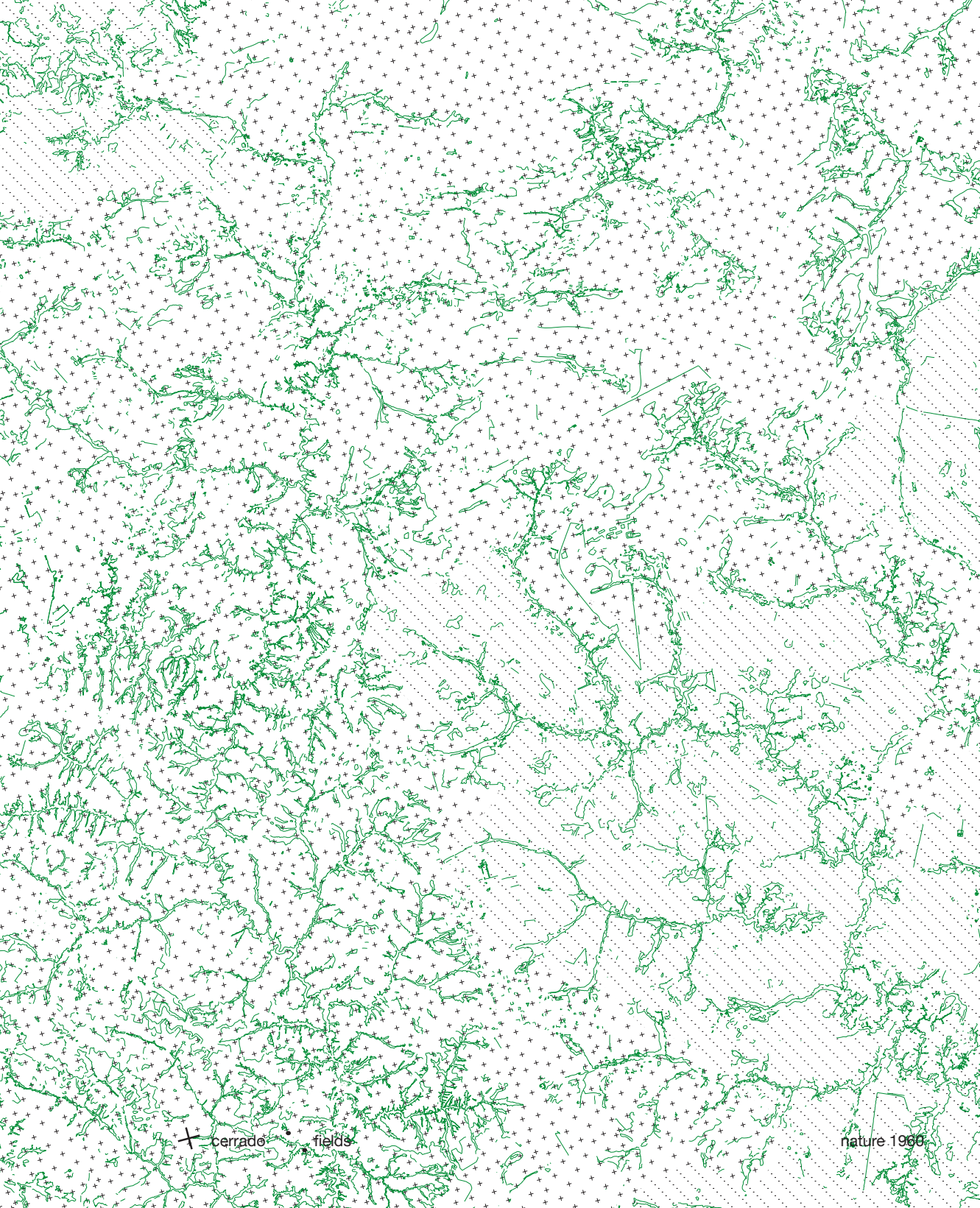
In fact, in 1970, the biggest surface of parks in Brazil and the best drinking water of the country were to be found there. Today more than 10% of the Federal District is urbanized.

Combining this to the damage caused by the extraction of material, we understand that the environment issues are more and more complicated. Indeed, the expansion of rich and poor neighborhoods and the property speculation strike beyond the UNESCO area.

As a matter of fact, new urban areas are the leading cause of the natural environment's changes. For example, The urbanization along the access roads of Taguatinga and Guara created an urban continuum in the river basin which drains water to the Paranoa Lake.

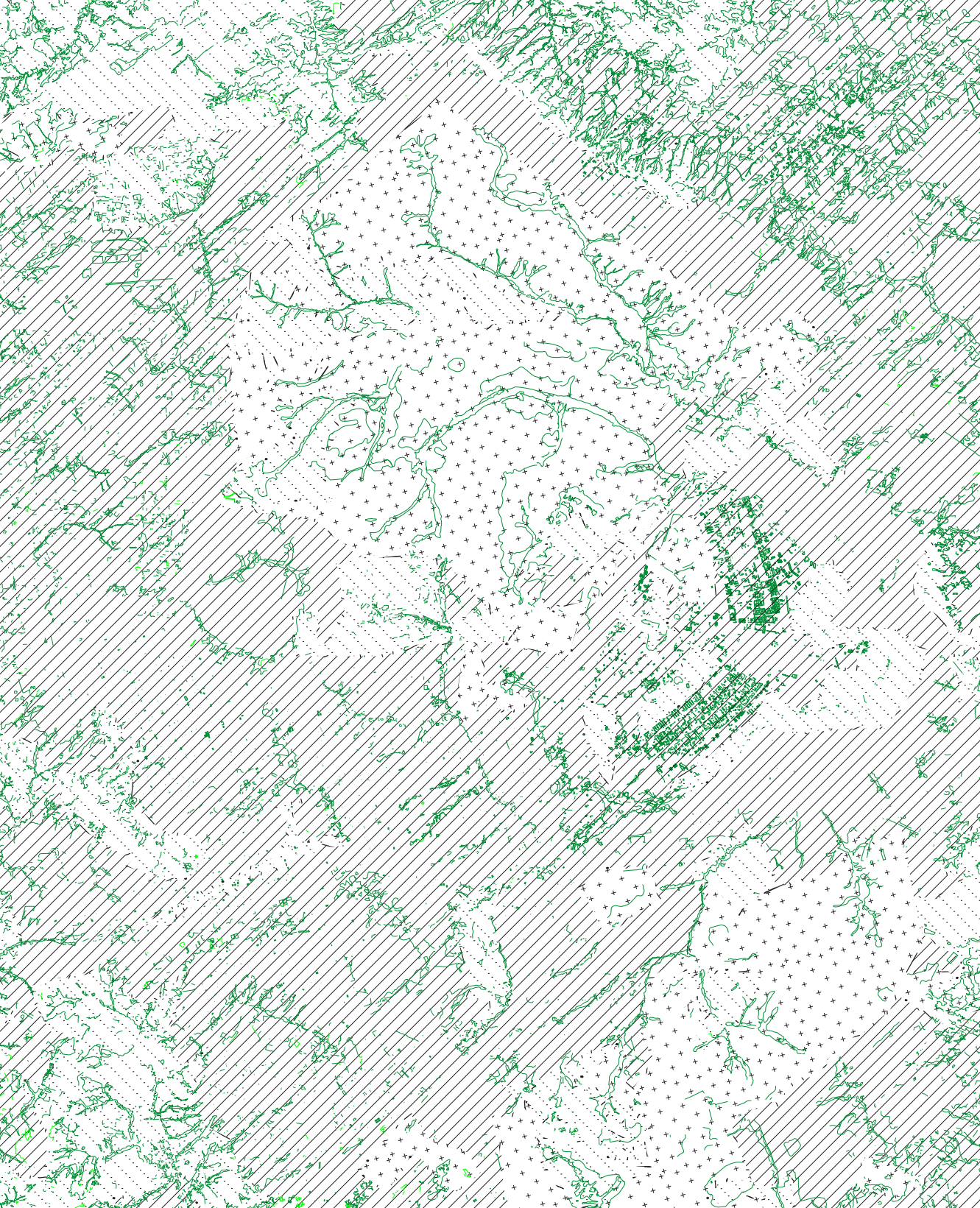
The consequences of the urbanization are environmental damages as erosion and soil sealing and health problem for the poorest sections of the population. In fact, water quality and quantity available for the urban areas supply decrease as well as conservation areas. Moreover, the Paranoá Lake is losing a lot of water because of the river banks' erosion.

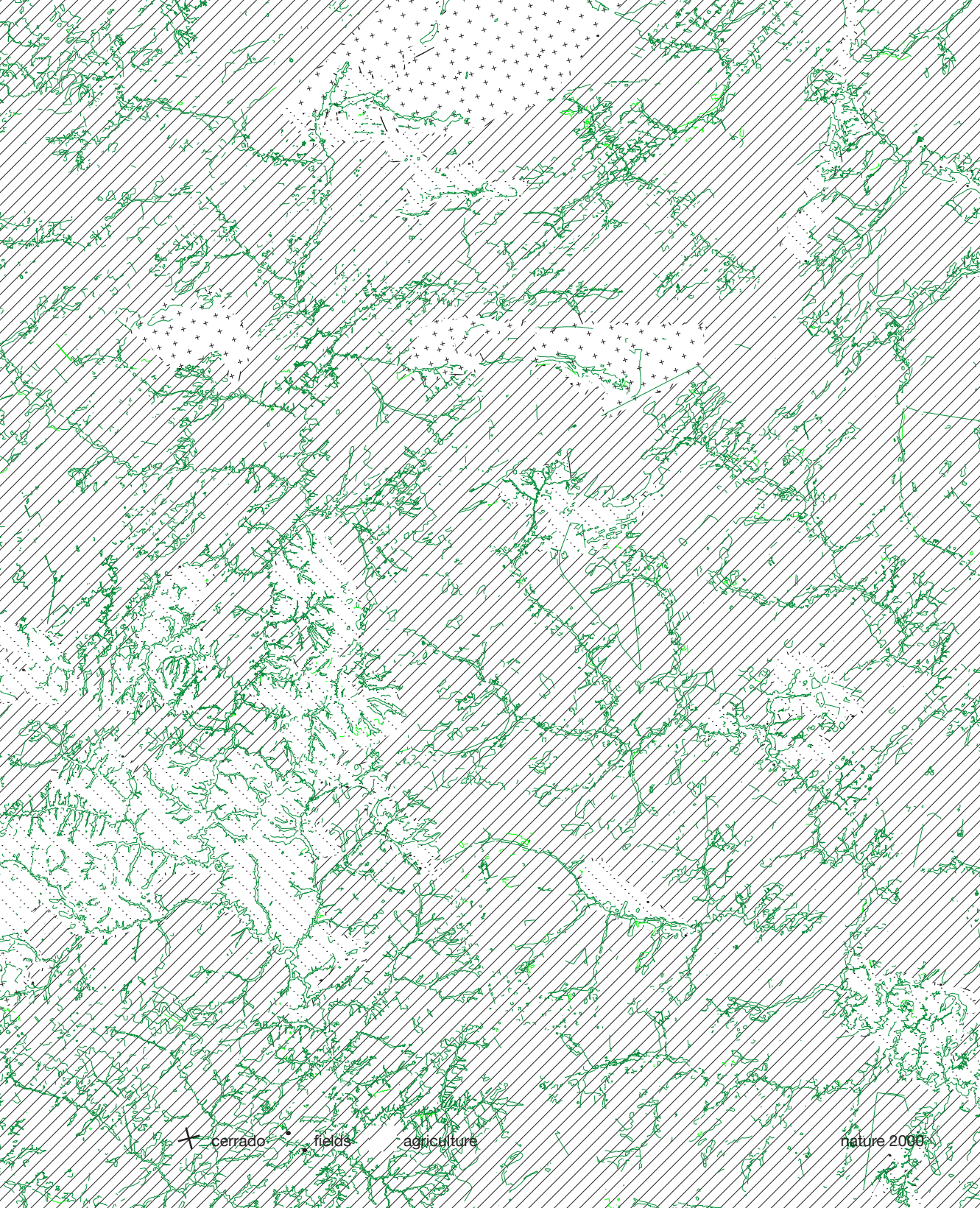




+ cerrado • fields

nature 1990

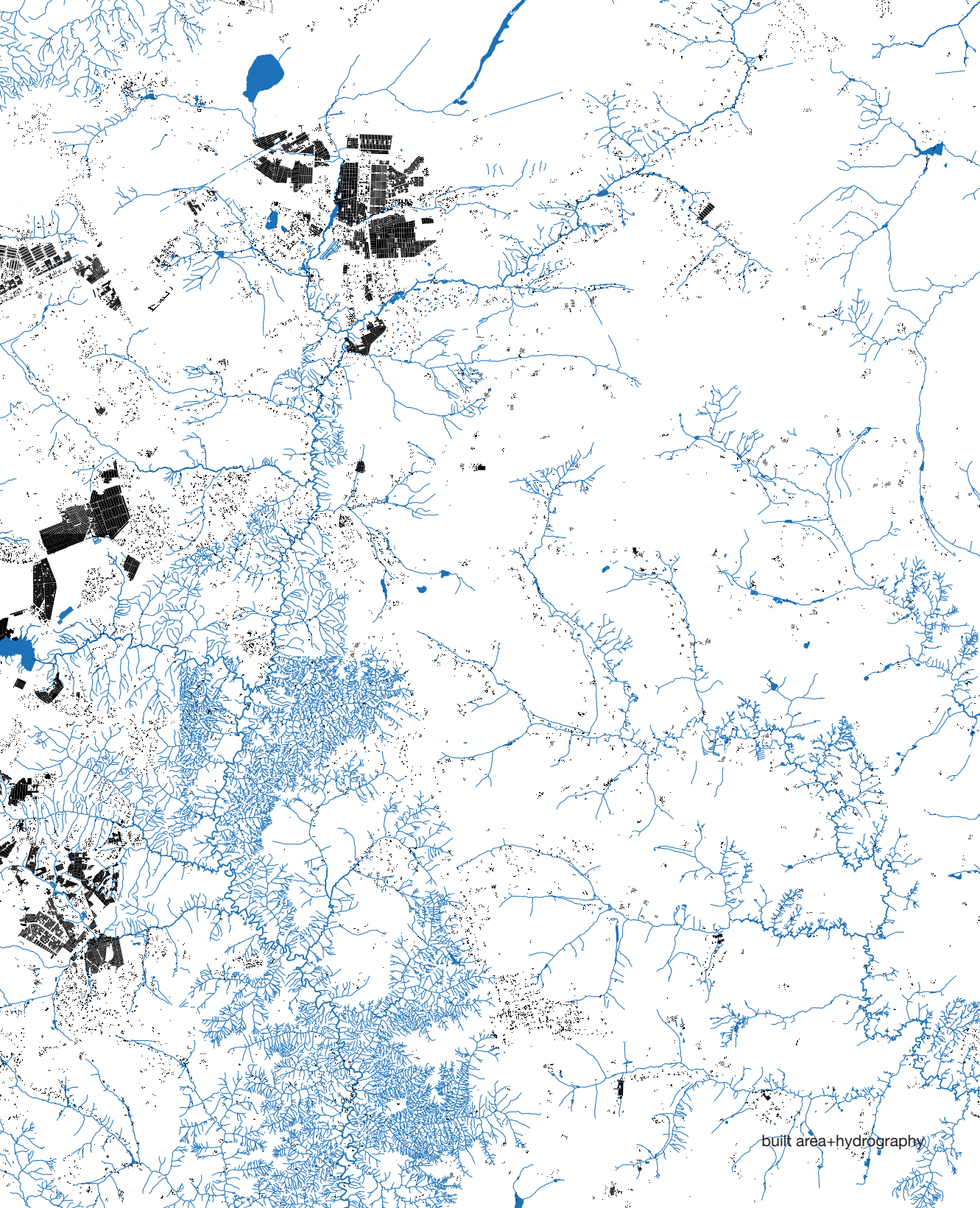




★ cerrado • fields — agriculture

nature 2000





built area+hydrography

science

The citizens of Utopia could be spiritual people, but their inner faith go to science in priority.

infrastructures

The city has been connected with the biggest cities of brasil and a network created. But even if the situation regarding a common brasilian city is more fluid, the infrastructres are more and more crowded, into the pilot plan and even more around it.

As in plenty of Brazilian cities, workers which can't afford a car, are forced to travel several hours a day in old buses with random frequency. The connections with the Pilot Plan are weak, despite of the big number of workers coming every day.

As Utopia, detached from the continent, Brasilia is not easily reachable.

A metro line has been created but it only serves half of the pilot plan, and connect a few cities in the surrounding, making it a small component of the transit system of Brasilia.

Some other infrastructural projects planned during the last years have aborted because of corruption as the "VLT," a tram that should have been built for the World Cup 2014. The project was stopped as Justice discovered that the construction had been assigned to a company because of the favours of the government.

The vastness of the arterial roads, the scarcity of the sidewalks and the precariousness of the public transports make the use of other means of transportations than car impossible or difficult, even inside of the Pilot Plan. Being a pedestrian in Brasilia is not an easy thing, today in a time when everything is always more planned for him.

The ancient «capital of the highways and skyways » does not meet today the new expectations of the civilians.

“Brasília was the ultimate modernistic city, built on all the ideas of the modernistic manifests. It looks fantastic from the airplane. But if you are down at eye level, on your feet and going from one place to another, Brasília is a disaster. Every distance is too wide. Things are not connected. You have to trample for endless miles along completely straight paths.»

Jan Gehl, architect





airport train metro

infrastructures

education

Human is originally bad and could only escape from his status through education.

The capital is facing nowadays a huge crisis since its governor, José Roberto Arruda, was arrested because of a corruption case involving a lot of politicians and revelations of old hidden cases. The “Mansalão do Dem” case, led to the first arrest of a Governor of a Brazilian capital. Therefore, the public opinion is outraged by the immorality of their leaders.









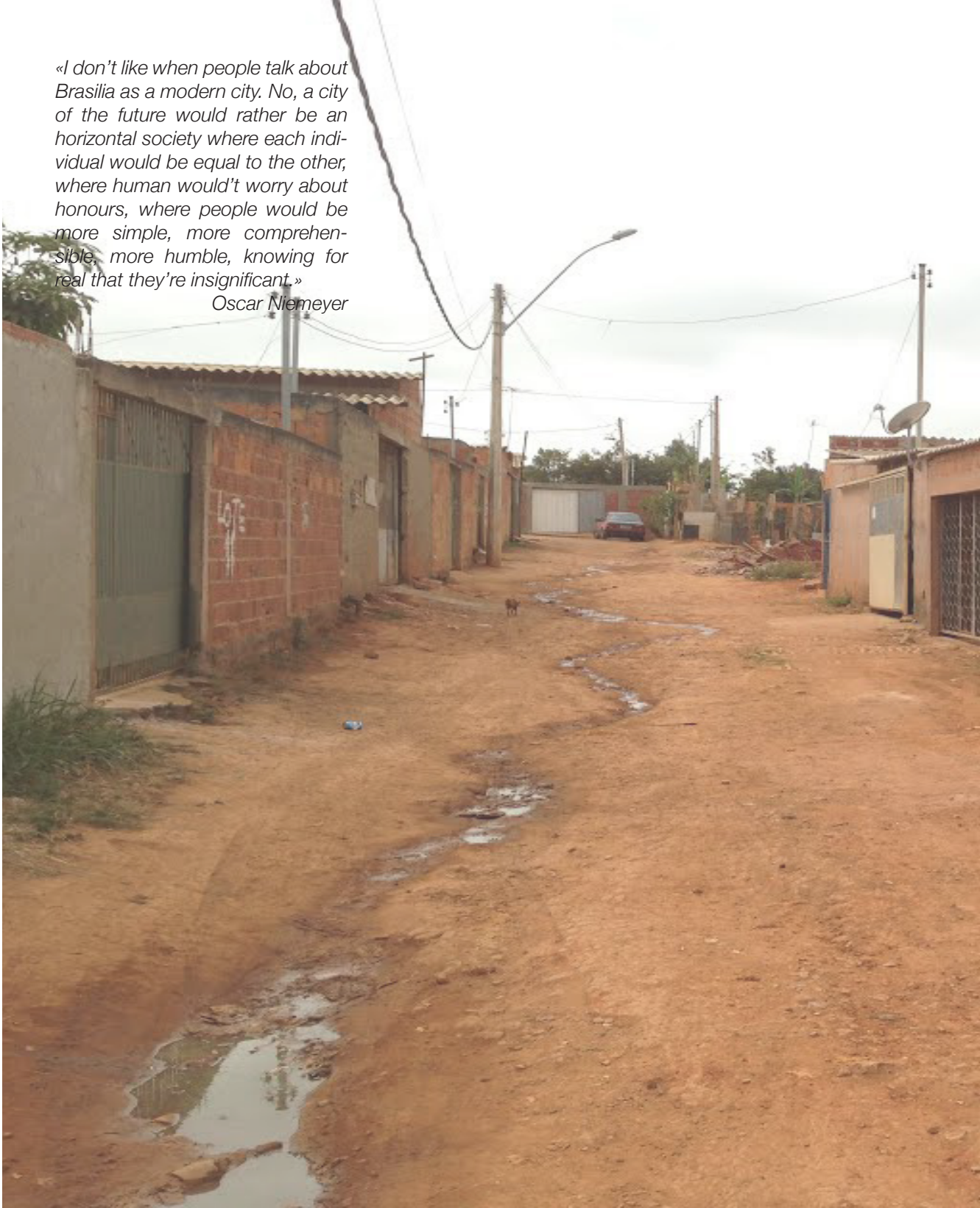
pollution paranoa lake





«I don't like when people talk about Brasília as a modern city. No, a city of the future would rather be an horizontal society where each individual would be equal to the other, where human would't worry about honours, where people would be more simple, more comprehensible, more humble, knowing for real that they're insignificant.»

Oscar Niemeyer





Utopia is an imagined place, or state of things, in which living is perfect. That condition is only reachable when specific guidelines, regarding the themes of insularity, equality, nature, science and education, are respected. Another sine qua non condition for the emergence of a utopia is the faith in man and in the future. According to Karl Mannheim's theory, utopia can contribute to change society — it can be the “explosive material, a motor for historical movements”. Utopia is the unattainable goal that makes society constantly strive towards a better version of itself.

In Brasilia, the need for a fresh national identity, released from colonial trauma, promoted a new movement of artistic emancipation. Indeed, from Aleijadinho to Niemeyer, artists always tried to revisit contemporary styles in ways that could express their proper identity. Brazilian-ism represents their very specific appropriation of the international modern movement, which appeared in Europe at that time.

The Faith in the progress towards a new modern society, where social and political harmony is possible, added to the affirmation of a bold Brazilian identity, led to a new conception of space.

Throughout Brazil's history, the project of transferring the capital from the coastline towards the inland has been repeatedly proposed and studied. Naturally, it has always been attached to political and economical issues, and considered as a strategic tool to gather everybody around a common goal. Again, it embodied the progressive rupture with colonialism and the affirmation of a specific national identity, through a real appropriation of the whole territory.

However, such a project takes time to be accepted as well as organized, and finally materialized. A little something had always been missing until the arrival of a charismatic leader, able to mobilize the whole society to undertake the historical «Marcha para o Oeste».

Three artists of genius were bound to the creation of Brasilia, the future symbol of modern Brazil . Along with the president, they can be considered as the 4 fathers of Brasilia.

Together they imagined an unprecedented city, in the middle of nowhere, which embodied the ideal of the Brazilian society at that time, merged with their own styles and beliefs. Through tabula-rasa urbanism and modern architecture, a new way of living, as well as a new spatiality are imagined for the desired new Brazilian society. The plano piloto of Lucio Costa embodies these ideas. By analyzing his project through the themes found

in Utopia, we noticed that many analogies could be made, and that the winning proposal could be read as a Utopia: limited plan, equal access to infrastructure and housing, and omnipresence of nature. Man-made landscapes and high-tech infrastructures compose the picture of the new modern capital of Brazil.

By confronting Brasilia after 55 years of its life, again through the inherent themes of Utopia, our purpose was to understand how such a project behaves when facing the dynamics of a real city.

We observed that the insular character still is a decisive aspect of the city. The limited plan produced the segregation of a major part of the population and therefore the end of equality. This promoted the proliferation of peripheral settlements, today spatially fragmented and segregated in social zones, with the inhabitants' social class defining the distance to the pilot plan and the type of neighborhood.

These spontaneous settlements have deeply affected the environment. Pollution of water, destruction of nature, and soil erosion have increased at a rate which has severely damaged the original lush environment that surrounded the city. This sprawled uncontrolled growth has also destroyed the initial ideological contrast between city as object and forest as background.

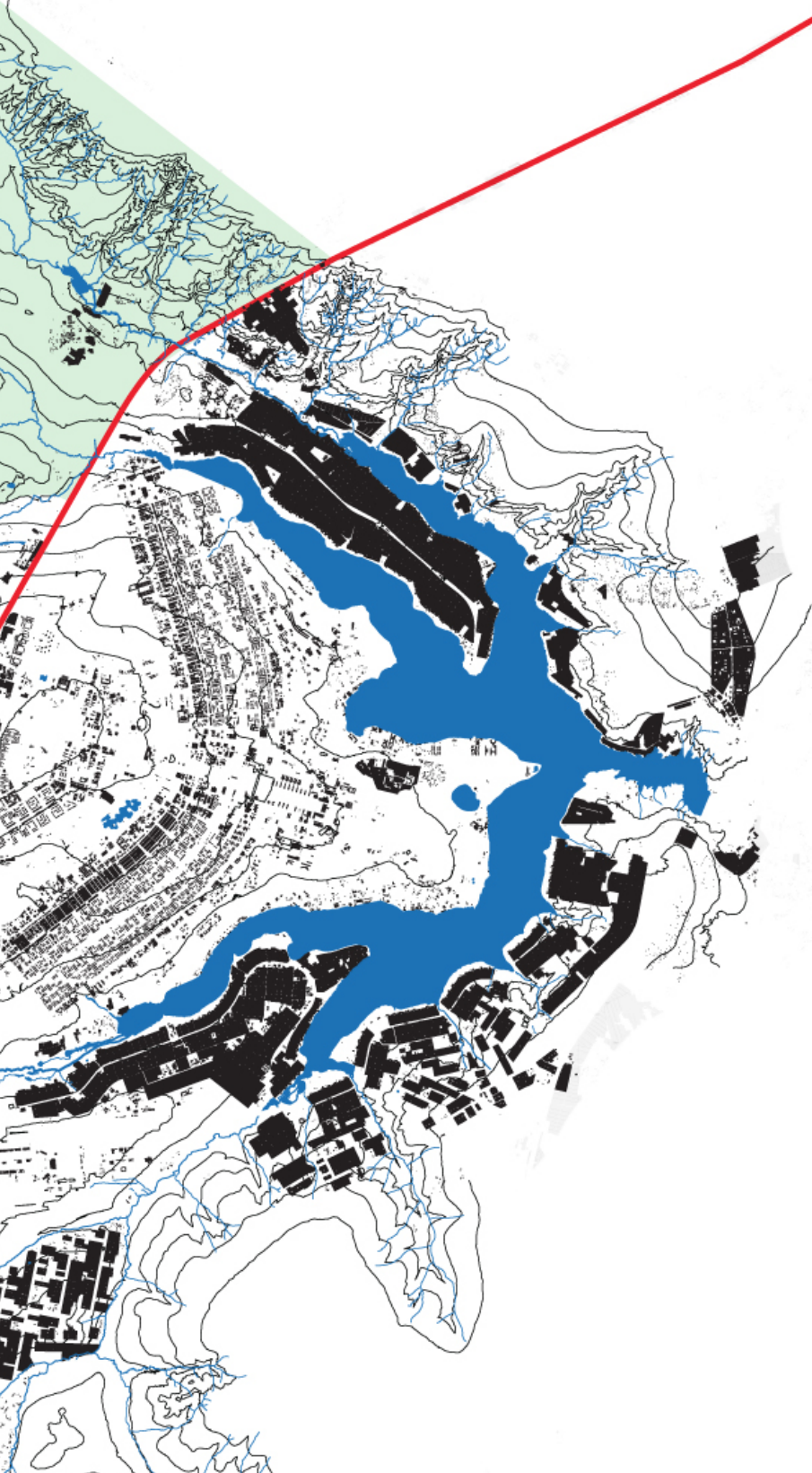
Regarding its infrastructure, the city as it was planned for the car does not meet the demand of today's needs.

The capital of Brazil is far from the image that Lucio Costa projected. We could almost say that it embodies the infamous image of any big contemporary city in Brazil, ruled by corruption and segregation. Utopia has not survived the passage from «concept to reality.»

Nevertheless, would the project of a capital, kilometers away from everything, on a disconnected and wild territory have been possible without the incredible power of Utopia? Would so many workers have migrated to participate in the epic construction of a whole new city in 1000 days? Would Brasilia be proudly spreading its wings in the middle of the Planalto central? Of course not, utopia was the dream that moved them.

This research is a check-up on the life of this utopia, from dreamchild to the afterlife, hoping that we might learn from its mistakes along the way, and dream of new improvements.





Territorial form

new territorial form

Through all these themes, develop a new spatial vision for the territory, trying to find a way of tying together the fixed-form symmetrical city of the plano piloto, sort of spatial and symbolic hinge, with its formless urban sprawl and the protected nature. Find a coherence.

insularity

Break the status of the pilot plan, as privileged island.

equality

Offer mass employment outside of the pilot plan in order to break their total dependance towards it and to stop the spatial fragmentation of the social classes .

nature

Identify/redefine hypothetical interventions's areas, following an environment-friendly vision.

science

Create an infrastructural network, permitting an homogenous irrigation of the whole agglomeration, as well as better connexions between the pilot plan and its satellite cities

education

Preserve the symbolic of Brasilia, as witness of a particular historical time and story, while developping the attractiveness of its agglomeration.





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musics

Tom Jobim

Chico Buarque

figures

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