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SPATIAL PLANNING IN BRASILIA: NEW DEMANDS, NEW SCALES, AND NEW APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT: Built a partir of a urbanistic basic plan, Brasília, the federal capital of Brazil, dedicated in 1960, with its rapid population growth and spatial occupation, sees the precocious emergence of a non-planned metropolitan structure. Only after the 1970s, even in a discontinuous way, is formulated various macro scales attempts to spatial planning: of the Federal District, of the Metropolitan Area, and of the Geoeconomic Region. In this article, the various spatial plans and projects proposed for the Federal District and its surrounding área are described in a resumed form.

KEY WORDS: Brasília; Spatial Planning; Urban Projects

RESUMO : Construída a partir de um plano urbanístico básico, Brasília, a capital federal do Brasil, inaugurada em 1960, com o seu rápido crescimento populacional e ocupação territorial, vê o surgimento precoce de uma não planejada estruturação metropolitana. Somente a partir dos anos 1970, ainda que de forma descontínua, implanta-se o planejamento de seu território às escalas macro: do Distrito Federal, da Área Metropolitana e da Região Geoeconômica. Neste artigo busca-se descrever, de forma resumida, os diversos planos e projetos de organização territorial que, desde então, são formulados para o Distrito Federal e seu entorno.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Brasília; Planejamento Territorial; Projetos Urbanos

RESUMEN: Construida a partir de un plano urbanístico básico, Brasilia, la capital federal de Brasil, inaugurada en 1960, con su rápido crecimiento poblacional y ocupación territorial, ve el surgimiento precoz de una no planificada estructura

metropolitana. Sólo a partir de los años 1970, aunque de forma discontinua, se implanta la planificación de su territorio a las escalas macro: del Distrito Federal, del Área Metropolitana y de la Región Geoeconómica. En este artículo se busca describir, de forma resumida, los diversos planes y proyectos de organización territorial que, desde entonces, se formulan para el Distrito Federal y su entorno.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Brasilia; Planificación Territorial; Proyectos Urbanos

Under the national-developmentism ideology which characterizes planning in Brazil in the post-World War II period (the *SALTE Plan*, 1945-1950), more strongly in the mid 1950's - the *TARGETS Plan*, 1955-1960) and even influenced by a certain mysticism (the *dream* of Dom Bosco), the decision to build the new capital of Brazil, Brasilia, in the Central Plateau of the country, more than fifty years ago, is still the focus of debates among a diversity of academic and professional fields. Emphasis to the statements related to the spatial organization of the city -from the original intraurban configuration proposed by urbanist Lucio Costa to its macrorregional articulations, to the emergent (and much elaborated upon) metropolitan scale.

This interest in Brasilia is not only a consequence of the morphologic-functional matrix of its urban plan -based on the european modernist movement, but mainly due to its ideologic and humanist purposes which, explicitly or implicitly, are associated to that movement. To this day, these are attributed to the federal capital, ignoring the fact that the city, designed in the year 1957, no longer exists in its original functionality and spatial configuration. Today, as the third Brazilian metropolis in population, what in fact exists is another Brasilia -real, multifaceted, and in an accelerated process of conurbation that, spatially and sociologically, surpasses the boundaries of its original urban plan. "*It is this real Brasilia that is imposing an urban planning that goes beyond the logic of the rationalization of (its) urban dynamics -that to some extent is corollary to its own urbanistic conception -and includes a multifaceted and complex reality*" (Medeiros & Campos, 2010).

Conceived as an important instrument to operationalize the various geopolitical national movements which existed since the 18th Century *Inconfidencia Mineira* conspiracy, more precisely after the *Marcha para o Oeste* ("The Walk to the West") in

the first half of the 20th Century, the transference of the capital to the Brazilian Central Plateau—relevant to national development—was not associated to any intention of spatial planning. As mentioned by Lucio Costa in his Report of the Brasilia Urban Plan, “*Brasilia will not be a consequence of regional planning, but its cause; it is the foundation of the city that will support the ulterior planned development of the region.*” (Costa, 1957). This process only really started in the mid 1970s (Farret, 2015).

Due to this all, and with the weight of being a modernist project, a Unesco World Heritage Site, and having a high rate of populational growth, today Brasilia faces the emergence of new spatial problems whose origin and solutions go beyond the limits of the city contained in Costa’s urban plan. These demand new technical and institutional architectures. More importantly, Brasilia faces the challenge of having its spatial dynamics reconciled with -but not exclusively focused on -the preservation of its original spatial plan. As relevant or perhaps more so in these architectures is the need for incorporating the demands of a growing population in the local neighborhoods as well as in the metropolitan (*Entorno*) and regional (*Geoeconomica*) communities.

To some extent, planning actions in that direction have been erratically undertaken since the mid 1970s. Without aiming to exhaust the subject, this text presents a short description of the many planning proposals which, in the last 50 years, were designed to address these spatial challenges of the federal capital.

The Spatial Plans for Brasilia: a long and winding road

Spatial planning in Brasília, in all its scales, has occurred in a non-systematic and punctual way during its more than 50 years of existence. There never was a political background that, believed and respected, could orient the actions of the successive governments of the federal capital.

It must be said that even before the inauguration of Brasilia, in 1960, Lucio Costa’s urban plan had already undergone changes aimed at adjusting it not only to physical environmental conditions, but also to social and political pressures, reflecting not always legitimate demands.

These planning initiatives can be identified with three moments of the city’s evolution: (i) those suggested by the jury of the city plan competition, therefore, before the beginning of the city implementation; (ii) those occurred during the city

implementation and after the inauguration of the city, derived from decisions both by Novacap (the Urbanizing Company of the New Capital) and by urbanist Lucio Costa's team; and, finally, (iii) those that emerge after the 1970s, when the city begins to assume functions beyond its main role of federal capital.

While the first of these planning initiatives started at the intraurban scale, the continuous population growth, potentialized after the 1970s—more intensively during the 1990s—makes Brasilia extrapolate its original conception of capital city to become the dynamic center of a metropolitan area that includes more than twenty municipalities of the states of Goiás and Minas Gerais. As corollary of this process, urban problems become more socially and geographically complex, therefore demanding new planning approaches and scales.

It must be emphasized that even during the first decades of the new capital plans were designed without achieving a broader spatial scope. These were almost exclusively focused on the preservation of the original Lucio Costa urban plan, which is under constant pressure to have its ideological, sociological and environmental purposes -its original integrity -modified. It is not uncommon for these plans to be formulated to legitimate/accomodate irregular actions, reinforcing the old story of *the dog chasing its own tail!* In a brief description, we describe these plans.

PLANIDRO: sanitarian urbanism and planned segregation

Since the announcement of the intention of building the new capital city of Brazil, a massive urban migration movement began. This population growth resulted in an intensive urbanization process, which greatly exceeded the planners' initial expectations.

In the second half of the decade of 1950, during the city implementation, and mostly in the next decade, with the city officially inaugurated, this immigrant population, mostly of low income families, is settled in building sites and in *invasões* (squatter settlements), while the middle income population -lesser in number -is settled in public housing projects built by the *Fundação da Casa Popular* ("Public Housing Foundation") and the social security agencies.

In order to face this rapid and disorganized occupation process, the local government starts to build the first satellite towns, by expanding existing local

communities (Planaltina, Brazlândia) and by creating new local communities (Núcleo Bandeirante, Taguatinga, Sobradinho, Gama, Guará, and Ceilândia). It must be said that the implementation of these cities, located at an average distance of 19 mi to the city center (*Plano Piloto*), goes against Lucio Costa's recommendation (intent?) in his official report: "they must only be implemented after the *Plano Piloto* is completed."

The removal of this population and the location of these settlements are recommended, in most cases, in the 1960s *Planidro - Plano Diretor de Água, Esgoto e Controle da Poluição* ("Water, Sewage, and Pollution Control Master Plan"), a name borrowed from the consulting firm responsible for its formulation. This plan established a population threshold for the Paranoá Lake basin. This strategy, aiming at preserving the areas around the *Plano Piloto*, is justified by the ideology of sanitarian urbanism, beginning the process that Campos calls "*planned segregation*" (Campos, 1988).

As such, a polinucleate pattern of spatial occupation was designed for the Federal District, characterized by scattered urban agglomerations, low housing densities, strong social segregation, and high costs of infrastructure, including public transportation.

PEOT: anticipating the urban chaos

In the 1970s, the city was approaching a population of 1 million and its urban sprawl was starting to cross the boundaries with the state of Goiás, with huge sanitarian and transportation problems. The Federal Government, by means of a special agreement, literally intervened in the Federal District spatial planning management: it created a specific chapter in the *II Plano Nacional de Desenvolvimento - PND II* ("2nd National Development Plan"). (We must remember that, until the Constitution of 1988, the mayor of the Federal District was appointed by the President of Brazil after the approval of the Senate). All this with the objective of reversing the incipient process of social and spatial degradation of the Federal District, mainly in its urban areas.

In order to do so, a special Working Group, including officials of both levels of government, worked on two planning scales: a regional one, resulting in the *PERGEB - Plano Estratégico da Região Geoeconômica de Brasília* ("Strategic Plan for the Geoeconomic Region of Brasília"), and another specifically designed for the territory of

the Federal District: the *PEOT – Plano Estrutural de Organização Territorial* (“Structural Plan for Spatial Organization”).

While the PERGEB never made it beyond a plan of intentions, the PEOT, mainly focused in sanitation and transportation, had two defined -and to some extent contradictory -objectives: on the one hand, the preservation of the Paranoá Lake basin as a reserve to supply potable water, interdicting new urban uses of the area; on the other hand, the reduction of cost and travel time for the population which, as a matter of fact, would require an urban structure more compact than the one presented by the polinucleated pattern.

The sanitarian approach is dominant, and the PEOT proposes an axis of urban expansion far from the Paranoá Lake basin: along Highway BR-040, in the southwest side of the Federal District. Currently conurbated with the territory of the state of Goiás, this axis is now home to the area of greatest urban growth in the region.

Considering the institute of public ownership of land in the Federal District and, therefore, a greater control of land use, the fact is that Brasília “exports” the burden of this urban expansion to the state of Goiás (where land use and occupation controls are less strict), overloading an already inefficient urban transportation system.

Brasilia Revisited: forgetting the sanitarian approach

The 1980s witness a very peculiar situation in the Federal District urbanization process: the increase of land and housing rent prices in the *Plano Piloto* as well as in some satellite cities, and the closing down of the *BNH - Banco Nacional de Habitação* (National Housing Bank) highly restrain the demand to access the housing market for low and middle income populations.

As a result, a high number of irregular land subdivisions in public and private lands emerge, due to the (still today) confusing land ownership problems in the Federal District. Promoted by private land and building entrepreneurs, these land subdivisions originate the so-called *condomínios irregulares* (“irregular condominiums”), some of them occupied by middle and high income families, with high housing costs; but all implemented outside the legal property and urban legislation. These settlements, today, account for 40% of the total urbanized area of the Federal

District, housing a population of more than 500 thousand inhabitants; this is the great legal-institutional impediment to the spatial organization of the federal capital.

In 1987, under the pressure of this growing irregular and non-controlled process of occupation, Lucio Costa himself leaves aside his sanitarian ideology and formulates the *Brasília Revisitada* (“Brasília Revisited”). The plan proposes the implementation of “proletarian superblocs” along the main roads of access to the *Plano Piloto* (only one of which has been implemented, between Taguatinga and the *Plano Piloto*); as well as the regularization of existing irregular settlements or implementation of new ones for middle income families, adjacent to the *Plano Piloto*: Vila Planalto, the Setor Octogonal (Octogonal Sector), and the Setor Nordeste (Norwest Sector).

PDOT: decentralization and the formation of the young metropolis

By force of the Constitution of the Federal District, in 1997 the government formulates the *I Plano Diretor de Ordenamento Territorial - PDOT-1* (1st Master Plan for Spatial Organization), the first macro planning proposal for the Federal District. For the micro-scale -that of neighborhoods/satellite cities -*Planos Diretores Locais - PDL* (Local Master Plans) would be formulated, aiming to identify economic, social, and land use measures for the development of the Federal District. Only five -but very populated -satellite cities have their PDLs: Sobradinho, Candangolandia, Taguatinga, Samambaia, and Ceilandia.

The *PDOT-1* is characterized by two proposals with high impacts in the spatial structure of the Federal District. The first, the decentralization of economic activities, thus far highly concentrated in the *Plano Piloto*. To achieve this, the plan proposes:

- (i) the creation of new satellite towns (São Sebastião, Samambaia, Santa Maria, Recanto das Emas, Riacho Fundo, and, the most important of all, Águas Claras), some of them resulting from the removal of large squatter settlements, with semi-urbanized plots of land donated to families as its trademark - a measure with a clear populist appeal. It is a sequence of the policy for the occupation of urban empty plots adjacent to urbanized settlements, main strategy of the 1970s PEOT. As such, for example, Águas Claras is designed as a linear settlement, instrumental to the feasibility of the metro;

- (ii) the creation of new urban centralities, of which the most important is the new Government Administrative Center, close to Taguatinga and Ceilândia; and
- (iii) the densification of existing urban settlements, by verticalizing occupational patterns.

New Urban Framework and Institutional Architecture

More recently, during the 1990s and 2000s, besides the sociospatial problems so far accumulated, new urban problems and new institutional frameworks emerge, which demand new planning approaches to the Federal District, which is far from being only the federal capital city. They are:

Non-institutionalized metropolization

The DF population growth in the years 2000 shows an increase in the migration of families to the surrounding borders in the state of Goiás. The rate of population growth in the DF, in spite of being decrescent, is still higher than the average of metropolitan areas in Brazil. This, alongside the *Plano Piloto* being a Unesco World Heritage Site, has meant the growth of real estate prices in general (currently among the highest in Brazil). As a result, new migrants as well as families resident in the DF move to the metropolitan periphery, generating an intensive commuting system. As such, there exists *de facto* a Brasilia Metropolitan Area (BMA), having the capital city as dominant pole in terms of income, supply of jobs, GDP, human development index, etc.

The BMA, officially named *Região Integrada de Desenvolvimento do Distrito Federal e Entorno (RIDE)* (Integrated Region of Development of the Federal District and Surrounding Areas), covers 22 municipalities of two states (Goiás and Minas Gerais) and the Federal District, and has a population of 3.5 million (the third in Brazil), with an average annual rate of population growth around 3.4%.

The difficulties for metropolitan planning in Brasilia -a recurrent fact in other states of Brazil as well -leave the Federal District with the burden of creating the infrastructure (transportation, education, and health) to supply a “foreign” population, while a metropolitan government is not officially created.

Regional desarticulation

Since the attempt to implement the PERGEB in the mid 1970s there has not been a regional plan for Brasilia, in spite of the existence of a federal agency responsible for this in the Center-west part of the country, the *Sudeco*.

As a result, the DF continues to have a double role: one, negative, as it must provide primary health services to the region, overloading its public health system; the other, positive, is that a significant part of the regional savings and consumption of goods and services is drained to its local market.

Metropolitan mobility

The great commuting flow between the surrounding *Entorno* and the DF, particularly to the *Plano Piloto*, overloads the road system of Brasilia, increasingly demanding heavy investments (duplication of roads, construction of viaducts, etc.), therefore draining financial resources that could otherwise be applied in public works and services needed by the local population. Besides that, the lack of control of the metropolitan transportation system negatively reflects in the mobility and productivity of the workforce employed in the DF.

Land property disorder

Among the big problems that present challenges to spatial planning in the DF, the most serious may be that of land property disorder, involving the property of urban and rural lands as well as its use and occupation outside urban legislation. Today, the Terracap -the DF public agency in charge of the ownership and trade of public land - owns 64% of all land in the DF, while private owners have 24%, and the Federal Government the remaining 12%.

In short, the problem is due to the incomplete process of land expropriation for the building of the new federal capital in the years before the city inauguration in 1960. The hurried land expropriation process adopted, the inaccuracy of local land registration of the farms where the DF would be located, the rapid population growth, and the evolution of land prices are all componentes that amplify this irregular pattern of urban occupation, therefore increasing the scale of land disorder, not rarely resulting in social conflicts.

It must be emphasized that during the 1960s the DF government gives sequence to the process of expropriating private properties. However, the decade is marked by significant budgetary restrictions which, associated with institutional discontinuity, implies in the reduction of the rate of land expropriations effectively operationalized -a situation that lasts into the subsequent decades. As such, the goal of having 100% of land in the hands of the DF government is postponed.

Today, the lands in the DF have a variety of juridic statuses, as follow:

Terras Devolutas: lands whose property is unknown;

Public Lands: publicly owned (by the Federal Government, the DF, and Terracap), acquired by donation or expropriation;

Private Lands: property of private owners;

Public and Private Lands in Common Property: lands in which the government expropriated only part of the land, without clearly specifying the limits between public and private property.

This messy scenario is completed by the incapacity of the DF government to supply housing to middle income families, resulting in a stimulus to the irregular marketing of land plots in areas of controversial property rights. Today this land disorder affects many areas in the DF -involving families of all classes of income -with more than five hundred settlements officially registered (80% in urban areas) and a population of more than 500,000 inhabitants.

Brasilia is probably the only Brazilian city with high income irregular condominiuns (housing with more than 500 m² of building área, garages for two or three cars, swimming pools *etc*). It is interesting to observe that, in spite of being irregular, these properties pay property tax as any other regular property. There is a slow and complicated property regularization process, involving the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary local powers.

New Institutional Status: world heritage site and political autonomy

At the end of the 1980s, two events give a new institutional framework to Brasilia, bringing together new challenges to spatial planning and management of the DF. First, the 1988 Constitution having granted to the DF the same political autonomy as the Brazilian states, with a political autonomy and giving to DF Legislative Chamber

the power for defining land use and occupation; second, the inscription, in 1990, of the Plano Piloto and surrounding neighbourhoods as a Cultural Heritage Site by the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN)* (National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage). Before that, in 1987, Brasilia is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, becoming the first modern city to obtain such a status.

The inscription of Brasilia as a heritage site represents a solution to the threats to the Lucio Costa urban plan, but also brings some non-desired impacts. Until this official procedure the real estate market had attempted to densify the *Plano Piloto* with the (implicit or explicit) argument of reducing the costs of maintenance of its public green areas, the trade mark of this modernist city.

In parallel, a second approach proposes the expansion of the *Plano Piloto*, arguing that the city, because of its linear morphology, could be expanded in both its north and south borders, allowing for the construction of a large number of new superblocks (*superquadras*), for housing middle income families that otherwise would continue to feed the proliferation of irregular patterns of occupation.

As a national and an international heritage site Brasilia has more rigorous urban and building legislations. It must be said that to most real estate agents as well as to the population in general it is not very clear what is really protected by the heritage site regulations, due to the subjectivity of their object: the four scales of Brasilia (*monumental* -the buildings at the Monumental Axis; *day-to-day* -the housing superblocks; *gregarious* -the urban core; and *bucolic* -the sky, the lake, the Brazilian savannah).

As a result, the obligations associated to heritage inscription are subject to technical and political debate, against it and in its favor, depending on the positive or negative impacts. As mentioned by Lucio Costa, the city is subject to two preservation views: “*one that considers the Plano Piloto to be untouchable; another that, on the contrary, believes that life goes on and that therefore the city must be reformulated according to its new needs*” (in IPHAN-DF, 2016). In the first case, as a positive factor, one may point out the results up to now achieved in regard to the urbanistic preservation of the city. In the second case, as a negative impact, one may consider the monopolized real estate prices in a high level, given the absence of equivalent urbanistic alternatives to those of the *Plano Piloto*, and -maybe most importantly -as a result of the *closure*

determined by the inscription as a heritage site, with the government creating a “planned and official elitization.”

This lack of consensus in regard to the inscription as a heritage site leads to some unusual measures. For example, the veto to urban interventions needed to increase the quality of life, as attempted in the proposal of transforming the *Residential Axis* - today a freeway crossing the *Plano Piloto* from north to south -into a pleasant and safe boulevard.

Strategic Planning, today: punctual urban interventions

While the PDOT-2, approved in 2009, is under a legal dispute with the District Attorney’s Office in relation to controversial articles related to land use and occupation, and environmental issues (devised to a great extent to support the facilities built for the 2014 Soccer World Cup, in which Brasilia was one of eight host cities), spatial planning in the DF assumes a new feature.

The government of the DF formulates great urban projects, mainly aiming to create new urban centralities. Spatial planning becomes focused -mainly, but not exclusively -on punctual urbanistic interventions, some of which in association with the private sector. In fact, this a strategy largely applied today in many countries: the *Docklands* in London; the *Puerto Madero* in Buenos Aires; the *Largo do Batata Urban Operation* in Sao Paulo, the *Porto Maravilha* in Rio de Janeiro, and the *Guaiba River Wharf* in Porto Alegre, to mention only a few.

In this strategic line, the DF signs two substantial contracts with consulting groups: the Jaime Lerner, to formulate a *Basic Project of Urban Development*; and the Jurong, a Singapore public consulting firm, to formulate the plan *Brasília, World City*. They encompass many urban projects, as follows:

- *Improvement of the Mass Transportation System*
- *Economic Strategic Plan for Brasília, World City*
- *New Administrative Government Center*
- *Urban Plan Avenida Interbairros (interneighborhood avenue)*
- *Digital City*

The *Improvement of the Mass Transportation System* for the Federal District includes the expansion of the current metro network and the implementation of a light rail transit system (VLT). The *Economic Strategic Plan for Brasília, World City*, formulated by contract with Jurong, aims at inserting Brasília in the competitive global cities network through four strategic projects:

- i) *International Financial Center*, with the implementation of a new tertiary district;
- ii) *Logistic City (Aerotropolis)*, cargo airport terminal with warehouses, facilities for truck drivers (motels, restaurants), *etc.*
- iii) *JK Industrial City*, consisting in amplifying the existing JK Industrial Pole (named after President Juscelino Kubitschek), in the borders of the DF and the state of Goiás;
- iv) *TAV, a High Speed Train line*, connecting the four projects above mentioned to Goiânia and Anápolis, two important cities in the geoeconomic region of Brasília, located in state of Goiás.

Each one of such projects includes the creation of microcities with an anchor urban function in each, with a diversity of commerce and services activities, including housing.

The new *Administrative Center* of the Government of the DF, a public-private investment located 19 miles from the *Plano Piloto*, includes a building complex (with convention center, hotel, restaurants *etc.*) where around fifteen thousand public employees will work daily. It is a strategy for creating a new urban centrality in order to decentralize the urban polarization of the *Plano Piloto*.

The *Urban Plan Avenida Interbairros*, more than a transportation axis corridor, is designed to attract public and private service activities: shopping, offices, and housing facilities; it will cut across existing high and middle income neighborhoods: Guara, Parkway, Aguas Claras, Taguatinga and Ceilandia.

The *Digital City*, which is currently under implementation, is an information and communication technology (ICT) complex where some activities have begun to be

implemented—such as the Banco do Brasil Data Center. In the future, it is expected to have strong synergies with the *Logistic City* and the *Plan for Brasília, World City*.

As one can note, the current spatial planning proposals in the DF aim to provide the federal capital with the strategic infrastructures necessary to transform it into a dynamic economic center. This is in the opposite direction to its original conception, that is, the strengthening—to some, the exclusivity—of its role as *civitas*, the country political and administrative capital, reserving the role of industrial economic poles to other cities in the region.

To complete a blurry framework of spatial planning of the DF, the *Zoneamento Econômico-Ecológico do Distrito Federal (ZEE/DF)* (Economic-Ecological Zoning of the Federal District) is nearing conclusion. This plan, addressed in the DF Constitution, should have been implemented many years ago, with general directives for the successive spatial planning proposals mentioned in this paper (GDF, 2013). The ZEE has been in drafting since 2010, so the many plans thereafter did not profit from the economic and ecological directives which it should have provided. Once more, *the dog chasing its own tail!*

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