# THE HERITAGE OF A MODERNIST CITY

# URBAN PAST, CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND NATIONAL MYTHOLOGY IN THE MAKING OF BRASÍLIA

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY IN FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE

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WORD COUNT: 100,899

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UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
November 2024

I have always relied on a triangle - the past, present, and future - my confidence in planned action, aiming to transmit a kind of structural security to instinctive and intuitive actions. The past contains approved and applicable experience, but also lessons of mistakes to be avoided; the present, observed in its unfolding and its details, shows the hierarchy of needs to be met; the future presents us with a new framework of aspirations to be achieved. - Juscelino Kubitschek

'You are going to Brasília?' He pronounced the name with a special sort of fervour. He started right away to explain that Brasília was not a luxury; it was a necessity. If Brazil were to go on progressing at the rate it had been progressing during the past ten years the centre of population must move westward and northward; the nation needed a crossroads. - John Dos Passos*

* For the above quotations, see Juscelino Kubitschek, *A marcha do amanhecer* (São Paulo: "Bestseller" Importadora de Livros, 1962), 31, and John Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963, ebook), Chapter III: "A Nation in Search of a Capital" – "The Madmen of the Planalto". Unless otherwise specified, translation of Portuguese and other non-English language sources throughout the course of this thesis has been my own.



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# Acknowledgments

Without the help and support of a great many people this thesis would not have been possible. In Oxford, these include my supervisor Eduardo Posada-Carbó, whose guidance, insight, and kindness have been ever present, and my contemporaries André Jockyman Roithmann, Jonathan Madison, Andrés Guiot Isaac, Juan Neves-Sarriegui, Nicolás Prados, Emilie Curryova, Uziel González, Benjamin Rymer, and Olivier Keller, all of whom have provided generous and thoughtful commentary and contributed greatly towards the argument and coherence of the final thesis. I must also thank the Latin America Centre Malcolm Deas Fund, the Faculty of History's Arnold, Bryce, and Read History Fund and Graduate Studies Fund, and the St Antony's College Student Travel and Research (STAR) Grant for the support in funding my belated visit to Brazil in March 2023. In Brasília, I was fortunate to benefit from the warmth and expertise of Ana Karina Fraga, Denise Coelho Silva Rabello, Agnês de Lima Leite, and Denise Mota Pereira da Silva of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Distrito Federal, Morine Mughabghab at the Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal, the staff of the Memorial JK, and Virgílio Caixeta Arraes and Rodrigo Santos de Faria at the Universidade de Brasília. Thanks also to Niels Lindholm, whose enthusiasm for the project and appetite for proofreading has been unrivalled, to Daniel de Marsillac for sharing his contacts and knowledge of Rio de Janeiro, and to Gabe Paquette, without whose initial encouragement the prospect of doctoral study may never have materialised. Above all, I have to thank my parents, John and Xenia, and my wonderful wife Shelley for all of their love throughout.

# Impact Statement

While I am extremely fortunate that neither myself nor my close friends or family were too gravely affected by COVID-19, the particular circumstances imposed by the pandemic had an inevitable impact on the process of researching and writing this thesis. Most particularly, my ability to travel to Brazil – one of the hardest-hit of all countries – was severely delayed. While I had initially anticipated a visit to Brazilian archives in 2020, and was lucky to have been awarded grants to assist in funding the trip, this quickly became impossible. In common with many of my contemporaries, I was instead obliged to research and write the first draft of much of the thesis from home, relying on the not inconsiderable amount of digitised material available online. Thanks to generous funding from a variety of award schemes in Oxford, I was finally able to conduct a brief research trip to Rio de Janeiro and Brasília in March 2023, which proved extremely valuable. While I was unable to access the full range of material I had initially hoped or visit every site of note, the research I was able to undertake reinforced considerably the argument of the final thesis. This was further bolstered by earlier work in British archives, which I had been able to carry out rather earlier once the full force of restrictions had been lifted in the UK. I consider myself doubly lucky that my visit to Brazil was scheduled some weeks after the events of January 2023, when Brasília was the locus of popular unrest and subsequent heightened security. Nevertheless, by the time of my visit some government facilities remained inaccessible. While I remain proud of the thesis as a whole and what archival research I was able to conduct, and do not in any way wish to present as a particular victim of circumstances far more cruelly felt by others, some of the primary material which may have benefited the depth of the final thesis remained, unfortunately, out of reach.

# Short Abstract

This thesis looks to challenge established notions of the planned capital of Brasília as purely a modernist city born of the 1950s. Using individual memoirs and first-hand accounts, political treatises, contemporary print media, speech transcripts, travelogues, diplomatic papers, and the deep body of secondary literature, I argue that Brasília might best be understood as a product not only of its immediate context, but of a far wider range of historical influences. These can be broadly grouped into three categories. First, the lessons learned from the development of Brazil's earlier capitals, and indeed the urbanistic and political trajectory of the nation as a whole, beginning with the earliest years of the colonial period. Second, the long-established advocacy of a wide range of actors championing a capital such as Brasília - inland and centrally located within Brazil's vast territory – the varied motivations and affiliations of which demonstrate the idea's traction across both eras and ideology. Finally, the unique nature of Brazilian Modernist architecture and its exponents, infused as it was with myriad explicit references to the country's architectural heritage, the Brazilian Baroque foremost among them. This thesis suggests that when interpreted in light of these factors, Brasília's potency as a representative symbol of Brazil – a function central to the role of all capital cities amid their respective nations – is profoundly enhanced.

# Extended Abstract

This thesis began life as a straightforward exploration of the capstone project of an extraordinary Brazilian president. During the early research on Brasília and its origins however, it became quickly apparent that the city has, from virtually the earliest moments of its conception and continuing until the present day, been the subject of robust criticism. As one of the world's most prominent planned cities and widely recognised ensembles of modernist architecture, it has nevertheless been the target of repeated condemnation for its purported starkness, as critiqued for its characterlessness as it is held in regard as a key milestone in the history of urban planning. Such descriptions are of particularly keen impact because of the unique potency capital cities carry as symbols of the nations in which they sit. Much like a flag or national anthem, by precise virtue of the distinguished and special role a capital occupies within the perceptions of a nation's citizenry and in the eyes of the world, the key characteristics of these cities – both tangible and emblematic – are powerfully felt. To my anticipated study of the immediate political and logistical challenges of Brasília were therefore added more profound questions of what constitutes a capital city, and how such a city may or may not embody certain characteristics of nationhood.

Given its oft-maligned reputation, in what ways can Brasília, as a 'scratch built' capital, still be understood as a cultural repository, or structural monument, to the nation and people it would come to serve? Which elements of Brazilian lore and heritage were most prized by those taking on the monumental task of conceptualising, planning, and building such a city? How and why did these architects of Brasília, be they political or literal, attempt to imbue and legitimise their work with these elements of national identity? I suggest that when seen in the full light of its historical development, some of the criticisms Brasília continues to face can be robustly challenged.

To do so, I have adopted a necessarily multi-directional approach, one which in the early chapters can be broadly divided into three strands. The first of these is an exploration of the ways in which Brasília might be seen to sit within, rather than stand distinct from, the sweeping arc of

Brazilian urban history, above all that of the nation's two earlier capitals, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. With that in mind, significant sections of the early chapters of the thesis directly address the narrative of Brazilian capital development. This begins with the founding of early-modern Salvador in 1549, the earliest iteration of which operated chiefly as a fortified bastion of military and mercantile authority. As Brazil rose to become the largest and most lucrative of Portugal's overseas possessions, so Salvador bloomed into a thriving export node for the colony's valuable commodities, as well assuming twin purposes as Brazil's preeminent seat of political and religious power.

Following the discovery of gold in the Brazilian interior in the seventeenth century, the need for a port of export proximate to the mining activities precipitated the rise of Rio de Janeiro. Made capital in 1763, by the early nineteenth century Rio was the natural choice for the home-away-from-home of a Portuguese court forced into exile by Napoleonic invasion. The implications of this unique circumstance, whereby the former colony of Brazil was elevated to equal status as the Iberian mother country and Rio de Janeiro named imperial capital, had profound consequences. The city itself was politically, culturally, and architecturally transformed. This metamorphosis did not cease with the proclamation of Brazilian independence in 1822, and the Rio's position as the urban primate of the nation would persist at least until the industrial propulsion of São Paulo in the late nineteenth century.

My goal in charting the shifting faces of Salvador and Rio over this long span is to highlight those elements which appeared central in constituting a 'Brazilian' capital, and to analyse the ways in which the two cities became engrained within the identity of the nation by virtue of their emblematic status. In so doing, I look to prepare the ground for the later discussion of how Brasília ought be interpreted at least in part as conforming to an established paradigm, albeit in a rather different guise. The second of the three narratives driving the early chapters is a mapping of the longstanding advocacy of generations of Brazilians for an inland capital city. Beginning in the late colonial period, the earliest of these actors predated the eventual fulfilment of their wish by almost

two centuries. Thereafter, such voices remained constant in their punctuating the discourse of Brazilian urban development, even if the identities and motivations of the individuals concerned varied dramatically. Arguments in favour ranged from the need for security from foreign attack - impossible for a maritime capital - a desire to unify Brazil's vast territory via a more centrally located hub of government and commerce, the ability of such a city to unlock the exploitation of hitherto inaccessible resources, and, on at least one notable occasion, that the divine had revealed a city of the interior and that His will must be done. Sporadic attempts to materially advance the cause of such a capital were largely token, however. Marked exceptions took the form of a pair of surveying expeditions mounted in the 1890s and 1950s, as well as the notional inclusion of the idea in the articles of the Brazilian Constitution. In stark contrast to the impression given by its striking appearance and the criticism levelled by its many detractors, in principle the notion of Brasília was therefore not one limited to a single presidential administration of the mid twentieth century. Rather, the city was the realisation of an aspiration centuries in the making, with deeply entrenched roots in the long arc of Brazil's capital journey.

A further aim of the second chapter is to illustrate the particular traction of modernism in Brazil in the 1920s and 1930s, with a predictable focus on the key proponents of the movement within the discipline of architecture. In large part thanks to the proclivities of a core group of Brazilian designers and their desire to break from the Euro-centric cultural hegemony that had long overshadowed nativist influences, a sense of heritage quickly became inherent to their work. Where the so-called International Style of modernist architecture, spearheaded by visionaries such as the Swiss-French Le Corbusier, eschewed allusions to the local, the trailblazers of Brazilian Style modernism found inspiration in the colonial baroque structures of their homeland. Above all, the ornate churches and public buildings of colonial Minas Gerais were seized upon as the touchstone for Brazilian architectural excellence. In the hands of emerging designers such as Lúcio Costa and his disciple Oscar Niemeyer, the marriage of the modern and the baroque came to define an era of architecture in Brazil.

The third chapter of the thesis is largely biographical in flavour, focusing on the pre-presidential career of Juscelino Kubitschek. A charismatic orator and the unashamed protégé of populist president Getúlio Vargas, Kubitschek's zeal for development was long evident. Despite two early stints in federal Congress, it was in local politics, first as mayor of Belo Horizonte and then as state governor, that Kubitschek rose to prominence. Pushing an aggressive manifesto of infrastructural investment, he demonstrated an aptitude for concretizing his ambitious ideals. In Belo Horizonte, this included a collaborative project with Niemeyer which firmly established both men as pioneers of Brazilian urban development. In line with the increasingly self-confident stylings of the Brazilian Modernists, the episode also reinforced the role of Brazil's baroque heritage in shaping its most iconic twentieth-century structures. The chapter closes with a short account of Kubitschek's presidential campaign of 1955. Notably, this included a public commitment to raise a new capital in the event of his election.

Once in office, and despite only a narrow victory at the polls, Kubitschek wasted no time in advancing what quickly became his headline policy. The new president's struggle to force the new capital through a bitterly divided legislature forms the basis of the fourth chapter. In line with the wider aims of the thesis, prominence is granted not only to political process, but also to the rhetoric employed by the advocates of Brasília, both in the press and in Congress. Repeatedly, those in favour borrowed from the annals of Brazilian history to justify their position, referencing both the work of earlier generations and the wider canon of national cultural patrimony.

Once legally approved, Brasília needed a design. That of Lúcio Costa, eventually selected from dozens of submissions despite its individual brevity, drew express legitimacy from the ambitions of Brazilian statesmen past. Costa's former student Niemeyer, unilaterally appointed as the chief architect of Brasília's key structures, exhibited similar respect for heritage in his own conceptions, drafted at speed and collectively forming the largest and most coherent ensemble of the Brazilian Style ever created. Both the architect's own testimony and that of subsequent art historians and architectural scholars attribute key features of several of Brasília's most prominent

buildings, the executive residence, national cathedral, congress building, and seat of the ministry of justice among them, to the same baroque structures of Minas Gerais that had earlier inspired Niemeyer's work in Belo Horizonte.

To realise the vision of Kubitschek, Costa, and Niemeyer in the space of a single presidential term required a workforce of titanic size and remarkable ambition. The task of building fell to the so-called *candangos* – working men drawn principally from the poorest regions of Brazil. The final section of this thesis commences with the argument that even in this stage of Brasília's development, parallels with former episodes of Brazilian history were not only tangible, but openly celebrated as evidence of legitimacy. By government officials, news reporters, and advertising sloganeers alike, the *candangos* were depicted as latter-day *bandeirantes*, the intrepid and buccaneering backwoodsmen of the early colonial period who had carved out Brazilian territory in their hunt for gold and glory. Further mythologies penetrated the motivations and superstitions of the Brasília top brass, with chapels built and pilgrimages conducted by some of the construction authority's most senior figures in honour of historic visions of a city deep in the Brazilian interior.

Such sentiments reached a fevered crescendo in the ceremonies marking Brasília's inauguration. The day itself was scheduled to coincide with the anniversary of the martyring of the republican agitator widely heralded as the very first champion of a centralised Brazilian capital away from the Atlantic coast. To demonstrate the desired link between Brasília and the nation, the various events of the inauguration featured colonial-era relics brought from all corners of Brazil and Portugal, and portentous religious and secular speeches and performances celebrating the profound step the completion of Brasília marked within, rather than distinct from, the narrative of Brazilian urbanism. Both to its creators and outside observers, the message was unambiguous: while Brasília may represent a bold new chapter in the chronicle of Brazil's history, it was one which owed its legitimacy to the many era-spanning influences of which it was an indelible product.

The argument of the thesis owes its own debt to a range of primary material, complemented by a variety of secondary literature as broad as the almost five-hundred-year range

of the central narrative. In the early chapters, the most prominent primary sources include the accounts of a wide variety of travellers to Brazil's first two capitals, political treatises and speeches from proto-Brazilian, Portuguese, and British perspectives, and the writings of some of colonial Brazil's most prominent intellectuals. As the narrative approaches the twentieth century, surveying reports, congressional records, and print media assume a larger role, as do the memoirs of some of Brasília's leading progenitors. In the immediate period of the city's construction, to these are added archival speech and interview transcripts, printed periodicals, diplomatic correspondence, published contemporary accounts, and period photography, with the intention of developing as full a picture as possible of Brasília as it began to appear, and the historicized influences shaping its rise.

Interspersed throughout the chapters of the thesis are also references to the development of capitals of other nations, some in passing, others more considered. Be it in the form of Washington D.C., New Delhi, Canberra, or Islamabad, these international points of comparison are intended to contextualise the Brazilian approach to capital building, and to add colour and contrast to the ways in which the attempts to embed the newness of Brasília within the existing symbolism and mythology of nationhood may or may not have been a prevailing priority for capital builders elsewhere. The aim here is to ask not only whether Brasília may, despite its age and appearance, be considered an inherently 'Brazilian' capital, but also how any capital, especially those built afresh, can best fulfil their avowed purpose as a representative monument of the nation.

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# INTRODUCTION

On the evening of 20 March 1961, the Royal Geographical Society met in London to hear a paper delivered by Johannesburg-born architect and urban planner Sir William Holford. Almost exactly four years earlier, in mid-March 1957, Sir William had served as one of seven jurors on the committee to select, from designs submitted via public competition, a masterplan for a new Brazilian capital.[1] While the substance of the address that night will be the subject of considerable attention later in this thesis, the evening's closing remarks, delivered by Sir Dudley Stamp, Emeritus Professor of Geography at the London School of Economics, reveal something of the interested observer's impression of Brasília.[2] Himself something of a Brazilophile having most recently visited the country in the mid 1950s, Sir Dudley captured the essence of the challenge that had faced the new capital's creators:

> We in Europe simply cannot visualise Brasília. If you like to take Whitehall and place it in the north-west Highlands of Scotland, you begin to get some idea of the distance involved; if you took everything to your new Whitehall by air, you would get a little nearer to what has actually been done in Brazil. A country roughly commensurate in size with the United States of America, the United States of Brazil has only some 60-odd million people despite its rapid growth. The people at present are largely concentrated in the few 'million cities.' The idea then has been to take the government centre right away, put it in the heart of the empty interior and make it the magnet, to draw those who will develop that vast interior of Brazil. It is an incredible and wonderful idea.[3]

[1] Sir William's address to the assembled company would later form the basis of a short article published in *The Geographical Journal* in March 1962, and also appears to have drawn heavily from an earlier paper published in *The Architectural Review* in December 1957, in which he had detailed what he described as his 'walking-on part' in the history of Brasília. See Sir William Holford, (later Lord Holford), "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," *The Architectural Review*, no. 122 (Dec 1957), 395-402, and Sir William Holford, (later Lord Holford), "Brasília: The Federal Capital of Brazil," *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 128, no. 1 (Mar 1962), 15-17. This second article and the paper presented by Holford at the Royal Geographical Society share the same title.

[2] Stamp would later serve as the president of the Royal Geographical Society from 1963-1966.

[3] Harry Nathan, Lord Nathan, and Sir Dudley Stamp, "Brasília: The Federal Capital of Brazil: Discussion," *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 128, no. 1 (Mar 1962), 18.

While the analogy of a Highland Whitehall might not be wholly apt - less generous observers have proposed a comparison with English new towns, characterising Brasília as something of a Milton Keynes of the desert - in many ways, the comparison is a helpful one.[4] Brasília, inaugurated one year previously in April 1960, defied logic. Built in the space of a little under four years, the new capital was far from the dominant urban centres dotting the country's Atlantic coastline, located instead amid the boundless scrubland and swirling red dust of the Brazilian Central Plateau.[5] The result was sufficiently alien, so futuristic and seemingly divorced both from the sparseness of its surroundings and any existing urban developments, that on a visit of July 1961 Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was famously prompted to remark that it was as though he had once more departed Earth and 'stepped onto another planet.'[6] The reaction, however sensational, was not atypical. 'A gigantic achievement that might be described as the undertaking of the century' commented contemporary Mexican president Adolfo López Mateos.[7] Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, during a visit of December 1960, described the city as 'worth twenty years in power.'[8]

Such commentary is indicative of the gravity with which the founding of cities, and in particular capital cities, is conventionally ascribed. As Brazilian scholar José Osvaldo de Meira Penna put forward, each and every capital city occupies a 'unique and

[4] For the comparison with Milton Keynes etc, see Matheus Gorovitz, "Unidade de Vizinhança: Brasília's 'Neighborhood Unit,'" in Farés el-Dahdah (ed.) *Brazil Case: Lucio Costa Brasília's Superquadra* (New York: Prestel, 2005), 41-47.

[5] This region - the Planalto Central - stretches across central and western Brazil and encompasses a broad diversity of biomes. The Federal District, wherein Brasília was constructed, is located in a particularly arid corner of the region, sharing many geographical characteristics with the neighbouring *sertão* hinterland of the Northeast.

[6] As quoted in Juscelino Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2000), 10.

[7] As quoted in ibid., 444.

[8] Ernesto Silva, *História de Brasília* (Brasília: Coordenada, 1971), 283.

privileged position' in the nation within which it is situated.[9] This is not by sole virtue of its economic significance, the size of its buildings, or its population, but rather, as Meira Penna puts it, in each capital's 'special and transcendent function of government and unification.'[10] A capital city, Meira Penna suggests, is the place where 'the nation's spiritual resources are expressed', a 'monument erected by the people' and 'the showcase of the nation and the face it shows the world.'[11] Kenneth Bowling, in his analysis of Washington D.C. (hereafter Washington), comes to much the same conclusion. A national capital, Bowling argues, 'is most often something far grander than just the place where the government meets. It is the center of national culture, including educational establishments, museums, professional and learned societies, theatre, fashion, and often the home, or second home, of the so-called rich, well-born, and able. It can also be a center of commerce and finance.'[12] 'A capital', he continues, 'is perhaps most importantly a repository of national identity, a place citizens praise as a seat of virtue or attack as a den of vice – or both.'[13]

Architectural historian Norma Evenson, engaging directly with Meira Penna, goes somewhat further in analysing the precise nature of the symbolism with which capital cities are imbued.[14] All, argues Evenson, 'embody certain mystical and intangible attributes', inherently belonging 'not only to [their] inhabitants, but also symbolically to

[9] José Osvaldo de Meira Penna, *Quando Mudam as Capitais* (Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2002) 19-20.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Kenneth R. Bowling, "From 'Federal Town' to 'National Capital': Ulysses S. Grant and the Reconstruction of Washington, D.C.", *Washington History*, vol. 14, no. 1, (Spring/Summer, 2002), 8-25.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Norma Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasília* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

the nation.'[15] A capital city, she writes, 'does not merely house government functions, it celebrates them, becoming the seat of national, secular shrines.'[16] Not all such cities are equal, however. Some – London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, and Moscow being the examples identified by Evenson– bring together 'in a single city the central focus for many aspects of national life.'[17] Others fulfil a discretely different, more limited but no less sacred function, however. By way of a wider dual comparison of New York City and Washington with Rio de Janeiro and Brasília, Evenson observes that even as New York 'summarizes, exaggerates, and elaborates those qualities generally accepted as American', for these very reasons it may be considered 'unsuitable, in the eyes of many, for a national capital.' [18] In Washington, by contrast, 'the functions of government are exhibited in a serene ambient [*sic*], physically removed from the fleshpots and commercial frenzy of more typical [US] cities.'[19] 'Few of those for whom Washington is a place of pilgrimage', Evenson concludes, 'would wish to discover there an ordinary American city.' [20] Instead, as architecture scholar Isabelle Gourney identifies, 'that Washington belongs to all US citizens, rather than to its inhabitants, is fixed in the national psyche.'[21] While the implications of these observations as they apply to Brazil and Brasília will become apparent throughout the course of this thesis, Evenson's final point is central. No capital city, by its very nature, can ever be an 'ordinary' city.[22]

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[15] Ibid., 208.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 209.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Isabelle Gournay, "Washington: The DC's History of Unresolved Planning Conflicts," in D. Gordon (ed.) *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 115-29.

[22] One dissenter from this approach was Marcelo Roberto, one of three brothers whose practice M. M. M. Roberto submitted an unsuccessful proposal for the masterplan of Brasília. 'I do not believe that a capital

In some distinct instances, what might be termed the 'special characteristics' unique to capital cities are brought into even sharper focus, namely when, by virtue of choice or necessity, a new capital city is established. 'The founding of a new capital', posited Meira Penna, 'is endowed with certain sacramental qualities, as if the act involved the participation of hidden powers, or was, indeed, to mark a solemn moment of creation, the birth of a new era.'[23] On such rare occasions, the founders of these new capitals – their literal and political architects – carry the inherently weighty responsibility of being able to choose the distinct nature of the deeply symbolic settlements they establish. In addition to more obvious questions such as where a new capital might be founded, these architects have innumerable choices to make regarding every detail of such a grand undertaking. These include but are by no means limited to deciding upon the name and basic footprint of the city in question, namely the layout of its streets and avenues, its utilities and infrastructural provisions, and the placement of its key administrative, industrial, commercial, and residential functions. The predominant aesthetic of the city's key buildings must be determined, as well as more granular details such as the location and nature of any green spaces, monuments, and educational and military installations, as well as of any ceremonies which might usually accompany the inaugurating of such ventures.

Conventional narratives surrounding the genesis of Brasília are typically couched in terms of modernity, futurism, and the contemporary 1950s political context of democratic developmentalist nationalism.[24] Long of particular note to observers both domestic and foreign, positive and critical, Brasília's strikingly modernist aesthetic and

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should be a pantheon,' Roberto is reported to have said in 1957, adding that he could not accept 'this nineteenth-century concept of "monumentality."' See Marcelo Roberto, interviewed by Jayne Mauricio, *Correio da Manha*, 24 March 1957.

[23] Meira Penna, *Quando Mudam as Capitais*, 322.

[24] Such narratives will be explored immediately below.

revolutionary urban planning set the tone for what would become a prevailing narrative in which to couch the city, its development, and appearance. 'Brasília is the modern capital of the modern world' asserted Italian art historian and later mayor of Rome Giulio Carlo Argan on a visit of September 1959.[25] The city's layout and modernist aesthetic, the magnum opus of legendary Brazilian urban planner Lúcio Costa and architect Oscar Niemeyer respectively, have been described subsequently by Brazilian scholar Beatriz Jaguaribe as having come to 'directly convey the fabrication of a new national ethos', sharply distinct from that of the preceding centuries and heralding instead a gleaming new beginning.[26] 'The premise of modernist projects like Brasília that would shape Brazil's twentieth century', writes historian Daniel McDonald, 'rested on the idea that there existed a past that could be identified and removed to make way for the future.'[27] Anthropologist James Holston makes much the same argument in his landmark and illustratively titled study of Brasília *The Modernist City*, writing that the 'symbolic appeal of Brasília's modernism' took the form of prioritising the future at the expense of any homage to Brazil's past.[28] Brasília, suggested Holston, represented 'the aesthetic of erasure and reinscription, of the possibility signified in modernist architecture and planning of effacing the old order and of inscribing a new one.'[29] For Evenson, where its predecessor Rio de Janeiro might be seen to represent 'indolence, inefficiency, and corruption', the supposed 'antiseptic modernity and regimentation' of Brasília

[25] As quoted in Silva, *História de Brasília*, 277.

[26] Beatriz Jaguaribe, "Modernist Ruins: National Narratives and Architectural Forms," *Public Culture*, vol. 11 (1999), 295-312.

[27] Daniel L. McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City: Belo Horizonte, 1889-1900," *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 47. (Jul. 2019), 29-49.

[28] James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 208.

[29] Ibid.

symbolized 'a new Brazil – dynamic, progressive, and pioneering.'[30] 'For this reason', she continues, 'the development of Brasília may be regarded not as an effort to recreate a typical Brazilian city, but rather to represent new ideals, attitudes, and images.' Urbanism scholar Sir Peter Hall was even more forthright in looking to dispel any notion of the presence of history in Brasília. The agenda of Brasília's progenitors, Hall claimed, was to 'create a totally new built form as a shell for a new society, without reference to history.'[31] 'The past', he continued, 'was simply to be abolished' in the creation of a capital 'without any sense of historical context: a city created on a clean slate, without reference to the past.'[32]

Among the most stinging such assessments of Brasília (and modernist urban planning in general) has come from political scientist James C. Scott. 'First and foremost,' wrote Scott in his 1998 work *Seeing Like a State*, 'high modernism implies a truly radical break with history and tradition.'[33] To modernism, 'the past is an impediment', he continued, 'a history that must be transcended; the present is the [only] platform for launching plans for a better future.'[34] Of Brasília in particular, Scott claimed that the city 'made no reference to the habits, traditions, and practices of Brazil's past or of its great cities, São Paulo, Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro. […] The goal of making over Brazil and Brazilians necessarily implied a disdain for what Brazil had been.'[35] 'In this sense', suggested Scott, 'the whole point of the new capital was to be a manifest contrast

[30] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 206 and 210.

[31] Peter G. Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design since 1880* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), online resource, "The City of Towers," "Brasília: The Quasi-Corbusian City," paragraph 4.

[32] Ibid.

[33] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 93.

[34] Ibid., 95.

[35] Ibid., 119.

to […] the old Brazil.'[36] In his own reflections on Brasília, American philosopher Marshall Berman came to a more explicitly unflattering conclusion. Characterising the Brazilian capital as 'one of the most dismal cities in the world', Berman contested that in its 'immense empty spaces in which the individual feels lost […] the great tradition of Latin urbanism […] is explicitly rejected.'[37]

This thesis looks to challenge these theoretical and practical frameworks for understanding Brasília in two distinct ways. First, to emphasise the extent to which the city's creation, while an immediate product of the political and cultural moment of the 1950s, had a far longer gestation. With a view to building a holistic picture of how, why, and in what form Brasília was finally manifested, I trace the origins of the city in the *longue durée*. While such a concept might appear redundant for a city built in so short a span of time and with an appearance so superficially futuristic, I argue that as a monument to the nation, Brasília ought be understood as a product of a broad range of influences derived from the Brazilian urban experience, and indeed the wider arc of Brazilian history. To see Brasília is to see an outcome influenced in some form or another by approximately five hundred years of Brazilian urban heritage, a deeply entrenched idea drawing upon centuries of ambition, speculation, and failures.

As made explicit by its creators, Brasília served as a direct response to the failings of previous capitals, namely the coastal hubs of Salvador and subsequently Rio de Janeiro. Located at the geographic periphery of Brazil's vast territory, vulnerable to littoral attack, and with climatic and topographical limitations, Rio in particular had long been derided as an unfit seat of government. Beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century, calls for a new, inland capital and beacon of full territorial and national integration came from diverse quarters, with advocates including would-be

[36] Ibid.

[37] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 6-7.

secessionists, monarchs, ministers, diplomats, and a prophetic Italian clergyman. In short, the idea of Brasília was long-heralded, and by couching the city in its full panoramic context the thesis looks both to add depth to the discussion of the new capital's origins, as well as to establish a frame of reference for the body of historical allusions inherent to its eventual construction.

The nature of these historical references forms the second key strand of this thesis and its fundamental argument. Namely that as eventually conceived, Brasília's modernist veneer masks a profound body of historical, and uniquely Brazilian, influences. In examining the ways in which Brasília's founders developed, designed, constructed, and inaugurated the city, I explore the nature and influence of heritage in the creation of Brazil's new capital, as well as shining a broader light on the function of capital cities, and the ways in which they inherently represent and embody the nation within which they are situated. In the footsteps of Meira Penna, Bowling, Evenson et al, I suggest that a successful capital city occupies a uniquely singular role in reflecting core national characteristics and mythologies, and that in this sense, the origin story of Brasília might be seen as a struggle to coalesce and crystallise what had in many instances been disparate and even contradictory narratives of Brazilian national identity. To situate Brasília within a global context, occasional comparisons with other 'new' capital cities are embedded throughout the thesis, with the cases of Washington, Canberra, New Delhi, and Islamabad highlighted. In so doing, my objective is to offer a fuller exploration of the challenges and decisions inherent to tackling a project so totemic in scope, and the profound stakes of such an undertaking given a capital's role as a representative symbol of the nation.

## *Literature Review*

The existing scholarship of Brasília is sufficiently extensive and diverse that it cannot be adequately addressed over the course of a few pages. What follows is therefore by necessity a selective review, offering only an indication of the works with which this thesis looks to interact, and the areas of scholarship to which it aims to contribute. Such literature can be organised according to various key groupings. These range from macro-level discussions of urban history and city planning, in particular those concerned with capital cities, Latin America, and the twentieth century, to narratives of Brazil's own urban experience and the development of its various seats of government, to more traditional political histories of the country and biographies of relevant individuals. By virtue of the nature of the enterprise of city-founding and the commensurate architectural choices and challenges presented to would-be founders, I also engage with the work of historians of art and architecture, for whom modernist Brasília has long been an object of extensive scrutiny. Where the history of architecture meets the history of capital cities, as the authors already cited have made clear, questions of national identity and culture are also seldom far away. Correspondingly, also relevant are a number of works by sociologists and interdisciplinary scholars who have examined the emergence of a specifically Brazilian series of cultural points of reference, upon which the fathers of Brasília drew in their imagining of a new, 'carte-blanche' capital.

As David Gordon has noted, most contemporary capitals are of relatively modern conception.[38] Amid the fragmentation and collapse of the European empires, in particular in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars, new capitals were established or in some cases re-established to fill the void left by the now-absent metropole.[39] By virtue of their own, earlier path to independence, the Latin American

[38] David L. A. Gordon, "Capital Cities in the Twentieth Century," in Gordon (ed.) *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, 1-7.

[39] Ibid.

nations were, however, somewhat of a forerunner in this respect. Of the forty or so capitals of sovereign states in the year 1900, writes Gordon, approximately half belonged in Latin America.[40] Despite their political independence however, as Arturo Almandoz has described the capital cities of Latin America in the post-independence period continued, as part of a wider cultural trend, to largely remain wedded to European models of development.[41] In the later part of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, French modes of urban planning were preeminent in their popularity and ubiquity.[42] In this, Almandoz echoed the earlier work of US scholar Francis Violich, who in his 1944 work *Cities of Latin America* held that South American leaders maintained an 'Old World' propensity for public works, grand urban development, and 'genuine urban style' that often went overlooked by their North American counterparts.[43] In Brazil, among the most notable expressions of this phenomenon can be seen in the Belle Époque and Beaux-Arts stylings of its second capital, Rio de Janeiro, on which Jeffrey Needell and David Underwood have written extensively.[44] The same phenomenon was also in evidence in neighbouring Argentina and its capital Buenos Aires, labelled by

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Arturo Almandoz, "Introduction," in A. Almandoz (ed.), *Planning Latin America's Capital Cities, 1850-1950* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-5. See also René Davids, *Shaping Terrain: City Building in Latin America* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2016).

[42] Almandoz, "Introduction," 1-5.

[43] Ibid., and Francis Violich, *Cities of Latin America: Housing and Planning to the South* (New York: Reinhold, 1944).

[44] See Jeffrey D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Epoque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), Jeffrey D. Needell, "Making the Carioca Belle Epoque Concrete: The Urban Reforms of Rio de Janeiro under Pereira Passos," *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Aug. 1984), 383-422, Jeffrey D. Needell, "The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904: The Revolt against 'Modernization' in Belle-Époque Rio de Janeiro," *The Hispanic Amerian Historical Review*, vol. 67, no. 2, (May, 1987), 233-69, and Jeffrey D. Needell, "Rio de Janeiro at the Turn of the Century: Modernization and the Parisian Ideal," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Feb. 1983), 83-103. See also David K. Underwood, "'Civilizing' Rio de Janeiro: Four Centuries of Conquest through Architecture," *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 4 (Winter, 1992), 48-56, David K. Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," *Journal of the Society of Architectural History*, vol. 50, no. 2 (Jun., 1991), 130-66, and David K. Underwood, "The Pombaline Style and International Neoclassicism in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro," PhD diss., (University of Pennsylvania, 1988).

Ramón Gutierrez as a 'great European city', as well as in the provincial capitals of Salta, Mendoza, and Corrientes.[45] Additional recent work on the urban history of Latin America in the twentieth century includes Lisa Blackmore's *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space, and Visuality in Venezuela, 1948-1958*, René Davids's *Shaping Terrain: City Building in Latin America*, and Helen Gyger's *Improvised Cities: Architecture, Urbanization, and Innovation in Peru.*[46] While direct parallels between the development of other Latin American alpha cities and Brasília are often imperfect due to the geographic blank slate afforded by the latter, these works provide a useful regional yardstick in looking to understand and contextualise the spirit of progress epitomised by the Brazilian example, and so often compromised elsewhere.

In dialogue with Needell's work, Teresa Meade's *"Civilizing" Rio - Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City, 1889 - 1930* acts as a neat examination of Brazil's former capital as it struggled to remould itself in the image of a progressive and prosperous Brazil during the Old Republic.[47] This was particularly true following the mass urbanisation of the formerly enslaved in the aftermath of the 1888 emancipation law, which saw cities across the nation swell rapidly and slum communities abound at the peripheries. It is in this light, as inherently colonial and pseudo-European Rio de Janeiro sagged under the weight of change, that momentum for a fresh start away from the coast gathered anew.

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[45] See Ramón Gutierrez, "Buenos Aires, A Great European City," in Almandoz (ed.) *Planning Latin America's Capital Cities, 1850-1950*, 45-74, and Ramón Gutierrez, *Buenos Aires: Evolución Histórica* (Bogotá; Escala, 1992). See also James R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870*-1910 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1974). For details of the latter towns, see James R. Scobie, *Secondary Cities of Argentina: The Social History of Corrientes, Salta, and Mendoza, 1850-1910* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

[46] See Lisa Blackmore, *Spectacular Modernity: Dictatorship, Space, and Visuality in Venezuela, 1948-1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), Davids, *Shaping Terrain: City Building in Latin America*, and Helen Gyger, *Improvised Cities: Architecture, Urbanization, and Innovation in Peru* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019).

[47] Teresa A. Meade, *"Civilizing" Rio: reform and resistance in a Brazilian city, 1889-1930* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

Against this European-style landscape of Latin American capitals, it might be tempting to view planned, modernist Brasília as a total reinvention. Indeed, when seen in the context of José Luis Romero's hypothesis that Latin American societies and cultures were shaped by their largely European-esque built environments, the rejection of the old and embracing of the at least semi-indigenous new that Brasília represented is compelling.[48] As modernism emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, the bourgeoisie of Latin America, and of Brazil in particular, began to conceive of new modes of national expression in contrast to the long-hailed European ideals. While cities such as São Paulo industrialized according to European models – a pattern studied extensively by Richard Morse – an early hunger for a uniquely Brazilian, Positivist-inspired future was apparent.[49] As the second chapter of this thesis will look to demonstrate, the shifting cultural sands of the decades immediately prior to Brasília's rise would be reflected directly in the characteristics of the future capital, as a syncretic, Brazilian form of modernism developed and gained pre-eminence.[50] Moreover, both as acknowledged at the time and as recognised by subsequent scholarship, modernism of the Brazilian style was unique in incorporating historic cultural references absent from the norm. Notwithstanding the widespread lack of emphasis placed on this phenomenon in studies of Brasília, of which more to follow, classic works such as those by Philip Goodwin, Henrique Mindlin, and Luis Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara, as well as more recent scholarship by Lauro Cavalcanti, , Hugo Segawa, Yves Bruand, and Angela Starita, has

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[48] José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: las ciudades y las ideas* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1976), 247-318.

[49] See both Richard M. Morse, *From Community to Metropolis: A Biography of São Paulo, Brazil* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1958) and Richard M. Morse, "Latin American Cities in the 19th Century: Approaches and Tentative Generalizations," in R. M. Morse, M. L. Conniff, and J. Wibel (eds.), *The Urban Development of Latin America, 1750-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

[50] For modernism's earliest development in Brazil, see Margareth da Silva Pereira and Cecilia Rodrigues dos Santos, *Le Corbusier e o Brasil* (São Paulo: ProEditores, 1987), Geraldo Ferraz, *Warchavchik e a introdução da nova arquitetura no Brasil: 1925 a 1940* (São Paulo: Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 1965), and Mauro F. Guillén, "Modernism without Modernity: The Rise of Modernist Architecture in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, 1890-1940," Latin American Research Review, vol. 39, no. 2 (2004), 6-34.

testified to the direct influence of Brazilian heritage, in particular that of the colonial baroque, in what became known as Brazilian Style modernist architecture.[51] Notably, this was distinct from purist, Corbusian models, which while of critical inspiration to the movement's Brazilian innovators, harboured no such space for nationalist nostalgia.[52]

Twinned with this rise of a new architectural paradigm was the gradual maturation of town planning as a modern discipline. Without overlooking the Classical origins of the city grid, its widespread use by early European colonists in the Americas, and later examples including the eighteenth-century development of Washington along rectilinear lines, contemporary notions of urban planning can, as Hall writes, be charted back to Victorian Britain.[53] In Brazil, early examples can be seen both in Rio de Janeiro – where French urban planner Alfred Agache attempted a radical remodelling in the late 1920s – and even more pertinently in the Minas Gerais state capital of Belo Horizonte.[54] As explored in recent work by Daniel McDonald, and building upon earlier scholarship

[51] See for example, Philip L. Goodwin, *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1943), Henrique E. Mindlin, *Modern Architecture in Brazil* (London: Architectural Press, 1956), Lauro Cavalcanti, Luis E. Carranza and Fernando Luiz Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), Lauro Cavalcanti, *When Brazil was Modern: Guide to Architecture, 1928-1960* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2003), Lauro Cavalcanti and Marta Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," F*uture Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Winter 2009), 14-31, Lauro Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro: a história de uma nova linguagem na arquitetura (1930-1960)* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2006), Hugo Segawa, *Architecture of Brazil: 1900-1990* (New York: Springer, 2013), Yves Bruand, *Arquitetura Contemporânea no Brasil* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1981), Zilah Quezado Deckker, "Brazil Built: the architecture of the modern movement in Brazil," PhD diss., (University of East Anglia, 1992), and Angela Starita, "Brasilidade in Built Form: Tracing National Identity in Modernist Architecture in Brazil, 1922-1968," PhD diss., (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2020).

[52] Modernist architecture is the subject of a body of literature too vast to capture in full. Seminal works however include Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), and Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For Le Corbusier, see for example William J. R. Curtis, *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* (London: Phaidon, 1994), and Kenneth Frampton, *Le Corbusier: Architect and Visionary* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

[53] For the planning of Washington, see Sue Kohler and Pamela Scott (ed.), *Designing the Nation's Capital: the 1901 Plan for Washington D.C.* (Washington DC: US Commission of Fine Arts, 2006), and Donald E. Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington D.C.*, vol. 50 (1980), 398-420. See also Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow,* "Cities of Imagination," "A Warning: Some Boulders in the Trail," paragraph 9.

[54] For Agache in Rio, see Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil."

by Marshall Eakin and Heliana Angotti-Salgueiro, the city's construction during the 1890s can be seen as a proto-iteration of Brasília. Designed on a strict rectilinear grid pattern featuring broad diagonally intersecting avenues, Belo Horizonte was not only a planned inland (state) capital, but also one explicitly built as an optimistic expression of modernity and socio-economic progress.[55] Decades later in the 1930s, the same city, then in need of rejuvenation, would fittingly bring together two of Brasília's central protagonists, Juscelino Kubitschek and Oscar Niemeyer, in the creation of the Pampulha suburb; the first planned modernist community in the country.[56] Where urban development in so much of Latin America was shaped, as per architect and urbanist Kristine Stiphany, by a combination of 'physical geography, colonization, and informality', Pampulha and later Brasília bucked these trends.[57] Both constituted seminal milestones in the history of Brazilian urban planning, itself long the point of conjecture between an old guard – typified by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda – contesting that unlike in Spanish America, Brazil's cities had grown in haphazard organic fashion as the product of '*semeadores*', rather than the purported '*ladrilhadores*' of New Spain or Peru, and revisionists such as Antonio Risério, who have argued that grid-based planning was in near continuous evidence in Brazil since the earliest days of city building.[58] In the vast,

[55] See McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 29-49, Marshall C. Eakin, *Tropical Capitalism: The Industrialization of Belo Horizonte, Brazil* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 34-38, and Heliana Angotti-Salgueiro, *La Casaque d'Arlequin: Belo Horizonte, une Capitale Éclectique au 19e Siécle* (Paris: EHESS, 1997).

[56] See Fernando Luiz Lara, "One Step Back, Two Steps Forward: The Maneuvering of Brazilian Avant-Garde," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)*, vol. 55, no. 4 (May 2002), 211-19, and Lauro Cavalcanti, *As Preocupações do Belo: Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira dos Anos 30/40* (Rio de Janeiro: Taurus, 1995).

[57] Kristine Stiphany, "Latin American Urbanism after a Right to the City," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 54, no. 4 (Dec. 2019), 1072-81.

[58] For a flavour of this discussion, see Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, 1936), Simone Vegliò, "Planetary Urbanization and Postcolonial Geographies: What Directions for Critical Urban Theory," in J. Cupples and R. Grosfoguel (eds.), *Unsettling Eurocentrism in The Westernized University* (London: Routledge, 2018), 116-30, Antonio Risério, *A cidade no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2013), and Chapter I. In refuting Holanda, Risério points to the examples of early Salvador, the Pombaline cities of the Brazilian interior, and Mariana, the first capital of Minas Gerais, all of which featured regular grid planning.

sweeping curves of Brasília's Plano Piloto, Risério identified a reconfigured continuation of these ancient grids, freshly reinterpreted to (literally) bend the Cartesian rules and create a uniquely modernistic Brazilian footprint.[59]

As Hall has nevertheless observed, attempting to identifying discrete thematic cleavages as a historian of urban planning is a perennial minefield. 'The [history of the] planning of cities', Hall writes, 'merges almost imperceptibly into the problems of cities, and those into the economics and sociology and politics of cities, and those in turn into the entire socio-economic-political-cultural life of the time'.[60] 'There is no end', he continues, 'no boundary, to the relationships, yet one – however arbitrary – must be set.'[61] Urban design and planning scholar Lawrence Vale made much the same point in later observing how 'the planning and design of national capitals is inseparable from the political, economic, and social forces that sited them and moulded their development.'[62] For the purposes of this thesis, I attempt to establish my own boundaries such as to exclude those factors not pertaining to historical antecedents of Brasília's planning, both in Brazilian urban society and culture as well as in the prior work of its chief designers. While inevitable exceptions occasionally break through this partition, my interest remains with understanding the origins of Brasília, rather than a sustained analysis of its sociological, economic, or political successes or failings as a planned capital.

Bearing in mind my goal of interpreting Brasília though the lens of heritage and history, the literature of the city's 'socio-economic-political-cultural' context is nevertheless key, be it in the short, medium, or longer term. With this in mind, I have

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[59] Risério, *A cidade no Brasil*. In this, it was yet another example of the '*brasilidade*' exemplified by so many of the proponents of modernism in Brazil.

[60] Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, "Cities of Imagination," "A Warning: Some Boulders in the Trail," paragraph 7.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Lawrence J. Vale, "The Urban Design of Twentieth Century Capitals," in Gordon (ed.) *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, 15-37. See also Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

again found it helpful to camp together the secondary literature according to various themes, albeit, as Hall suggests, a certain degree of cross-pollination is inevitable. Leslie Bethell's *Colonial Brazil* anthology, most notably contributions therein from Charles Boxer and A. J. R. Russell-Wood, as well as the few secondary histories of Brazil's first capital of Salvador, establish the initial paradigm of urban settlement in Brazil, against which Brasília would later be measured.[63] For both Salvador and its successor as capital Rio de Janeiro, this was as secure ocean-facing outposts designed to facilitate resource exploitation, initially of dyewood, later sugar, gold, and coffee. Internal unification was of secondary concern, with geographical and technological limitations resulting in coastwise maritime travel being the only meaningful conduit for communication, governance, and trade. Thomas Skidmore's overarching history *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, while sacrificing granularity in favour of scope, captures the turbulent impact on the country's urban environments precipitated by Brazil's transition from colony to kingdom to empire to republic, and the corresponding radical shifts in purpose required of the territory's capitals.[64] In addition to the aforementioned work of Needell, Underwood, and Evenson on the transforming face of Rio de Janeiro, both Bruno Carvalho's 2013 cultural history *Porous City* and Fernando Diniz Moreira's thesis "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation" examine the changes faces of Rio beginning in the early nineteenth century, encapsulating both the existing paradigm(s) against which Brasília would be a reaction, as well as various factors that would prove common to both urban centres.[65] Most notably,

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[63] See Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Teodoro Fernandes Sampaio, *História da Fundação da Cidade do Salvador* (Salvador: Tipografia Beneditina, 1949), Pedro de Almeida Vasconcelos, *Salvador: Transformações e Permanências (1549-1999)* (Salvador: SciELO – EDUFBA, 2016), Luiz Walter Coelho Filho, *The Fortress of Salvador in Colonial Brazil*, trans. Catherine V. Howard (Pétropolis: KBR, 2015), and Evergton Sales Souza, Guida Marques, and Hugo R. Silva (eds.), *Salvador da Bahia: retratos de uma cidade atlântica* (Lisboa: EDUFBA-CHAM, 2016).

[64] Thomas E. Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[65] Bruno Carvalho, *Porous City: A Cultural History of Rio de Janeiro* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), and Fernando Diniz Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation: Alfred Agache and the Dream of Modern Urbanism in Brazil (1920-1950)," PhD diss., (University of Pennsylvania, 2004).

these include the melding of external and local planning and design influences (often with limited success), the marginalisation of underprivileged communities, and the long arm of politics and politicians in shaping the urban environment.[66]

The precise nature of these political forces has perhaps best been explored by Skidmore, whose defining *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* serves as the core guide to the Brazilian political realm of the Vargas period and subsequent Fourth Republic, under which Brasília emerged.[67] Moreover, Skidmore's is also one of the very few works to offer a historically grounded account of what Samuel Huntington fleetingly labelled as the 'second short wave of democratisation' in the Latin American context.[68] Skidmore makes plain the departure that the Fourth Republic marked from the two eras of effective dictatorship by which it was both preceded and followed. In the process of describing the shift towards democracy heralded by the toppling of Vargas's corporatist, pseudo-fascistic Estado Novo regime (1937-1946), the author notes the 'immediate and profound consequences for the Brazilian political scene', including 'a new legal structure', 'greater possibilities for the expression of disagreement and conflict', and the institution of a new constitution.[69]

Despite the new freedoms and opportunities for democratic expression afforded by this constitution of 1946, the political champion of Brasília, President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961) was an unapologetic Vargas disciple. A leader of rare charisma, drive, and an ability to bridge partisan divides, Kubitschek – commonly known to

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[66] Carvalho, *Porous City*, ix-xv.

[67] Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967). Also Jordan M. Young (ed.), *Brazil 1954-1964: End of a Civilian Cycle* (New York: Facts on File, 1972).

[68] For Huntington and the 'second short wave', see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 41.

[69] Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 54.

Brazilians as simply Juscelino or JK - had cut his teeth in the regional politics of the 1930s and 1940s in his home state of Minas Gerais. There, he had gained a reputation as an orator and figurehead, with an exuberant and improvisational brand of developmentalist nationalism that rendered him well-equipped to embark on Brasília.[70] The subject of a varied range of biographies and historical treatments, Kubitschek is often esteemed as among the most effective and ambitious of Brazil's leaders.[71] While Brasília was the unambiguous capstone project of his administration, the city spearheaded a widespread programme of development, centred on infrastructure, public health, and education, that, alongside Kubitschek's compelling persona, has led some scholars of his government and wider career to err towards hagiography, a syndrome to which Ronaldo Costa Couto's 2011 biography is perhaps most susceptible.[72] Both Robert Alexander and Claudio Bojunga offer more measured albeit still widely positive assessments of Kubitschek's administration, and while the Brasília project provoked virulent attacks from his opponents in both Congress and the media, that Kubitschek

[70] As Skidmore details, to label Kubitschek's so-called 'Targets Plan' simply as a manifestation of developmentalism does not sufficiently capture the extent to which the plan was presented to the public, whereby Kubitschek entreated that it was 'Brazil's "destiny" to undertake a "drive to development"'. See Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil: 1930-1964*, 166-67. For the Targets Plan, see ibid., 167-70 and Celso Lafer, "The Planning Process and the Political System in Brazil: A Study of Kubitschek's Target Plan-1956-1961," PhD diss., (Cornell University, 1970). For Kubitschek the improviser, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil: 1930-1964*, 185-86. See also Robert Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992).

[71] For treatments of Kubitschek, his upbringing, career, and government, see José Moraes, *Juscelino: o Homen, a Candidatura, a Campanha* (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial de Minas Gerais, 1955), Francisco de Assis Barbosa, *JK: Uma Revisão na Política Brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José Olympio Editôra, 1960), Maria Victoria de Mesquita Benevides, *O governo Kubitschek: Desenvolvimento econômico e estabilidade política* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1976), Miriam Limoeira Cardoso, *Ideologia do desenvolvimento: Brasil JK-JQ* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1977), Ricardo Maranhão, *O governo Juscelino Kubitschek* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1984), Aluizio Napoleão, *Juscelino Jubitschek: Audácia, Energia, Confiança* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch, 1988), Ângela de Castro Gomes (ed.), *O Brasil de JK* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1991), Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, Wander Melo Miranda, *Anos JK: Margens da modernidade* (São Paulo: Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2002), Roniwalter Jatobá, *O Jovem JK* (São Paulo: Nova Alexandrina, 2005), Marco Aurélio Baggio, *Juscelino Kubitschek: Sua Excelência* (Belo Horizonte: Editorab, 2005), Claudio Bojunga, *JK: O Artista do Impossível* (Rio de Janeiro: Ponto da Leitura, 2010), Ronaldo Costa Couto, *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2010), and Ronaldo Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Edições Câmara dos Deputados, 2011).

[72] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*.

was the only president of the Fourth Republic to serve a full term and oversee the peaceful transfer of power to his (opposition) successor is at the very least indicative of the relative stability of his term in office.[73]

Alongside Kubitschek, two of the individuals most directly responsible for Brasília as it was eventually conceived were architect and urban planner Lúcio Costa, and his one-time disciple and likely the most famous of all Brazilian architects, Oscar Niemeyer. Both have been the subject of a wide body of literature, predominantly the work of scholars of the history of art and architecture.[74] Most tellingly in the context of my argument, this corpus has emphasised the very considerable extent to which both men defined modernist architecture in the Brazilian context by integrating heritage elements, most notably including the curving forms of the Brazilian baroque.[75] Costa, the author of Brasília's signature 'Plano Piloto' layout and designer of the city's ubiquitous '*superquadra*' composition, had been among the very first Brazilian architects to adopt the tenets of modernism in the early 1930s. Niemeyer's own trajectory was deeply enmeshed with both Costa and Kubitschek, having been an apprentice at the former's practice in Rio de Janeiro before striking up a close working and personal relationship with the future president beginning in 1942 in Belo Horizonte. Together with a supporting cast of

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[73] As above, Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, and Bojunga, *JK: O Artista do Impossível*. For the handover of power from Kubitschek to his ill-fated successor, Jânio Quadros, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil: 1930-1964*, 190-97.

[74] For Niemeyer and Costa respectively, see David K. Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and the Architecture of Brazil* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), David K. Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer* (London: Assouline, 2002), Styliane Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), Stamo Papadaki, *Oscar Niemeyer: Works in Progress* (New York: Reinhold Pub. Corp, 1956), Stamo Papadaki, *Oscar Niemeyer* (New York: G. Braziller, 1960), Vera Rezende and Geronimo Leitão, "Lúcio Costa e o plano piloto para a barra da Tijuca: a vida é mais rica selvagem que os planos urbanísticos," *Urbana: Revista Eletrônica do Centro Interdisciplinar de Estudos da Cidade*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Apr 2014), 673-93, Jeferson Tavares, "Brasília - As simetrias entre Lúcio Costa e Oscar Niemeyer," *Risco: Revista de Pesquisa em Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, no. 5 (Jan 2005), 4-21, el-Dahdah (ed.) *Brazil Case: Lucio Costa Brasília's Superquadra,* Fernando Diniz Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," *National Identities*, vol. 8, no. 3, 259-75, and Gaia Piccarolo, *Architecture as Civil Commitment: Lúcio Costa's Modernist Project for Brazil* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

[75] See for example Diniz Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," 259-75.

high-ranking government officials, engineers, and a vast and intrepid itinerant workforce, these figures form a key part of my narrative as the key actors who not only raised Brasília from the ground up, but actively sought to anchor the development in *brasilidade* – 'Brazilianess'.

The final strand of this review is the literature of Brasília itself. In some respects, this is a paradoxical body of scholarship. Art historians, anthropologists, and sociologists, many of them already referenced above, have worked extensively to analyse the city's planning and architecture, its successes or failures as a new seat of government and as a new city. While Holston's work remains definitive in these latter respects – as reflected in the title of this thesis – myriad other scholars have ruminated on Brasília's success in the years following its inauguration, drawing often scathing conclusions. Anthropology scholar David Epstein's *Brasília, Plan and Reality* is a typical and insightful example of this kind of work, with a focus on the satellite communities that began to spring up at the city's periphery even prior to its completion.[76] Amid a reflection on the pitfalls that can arise when modernity and modernist ideals meet the actualities of urban growth and socio-economic hardship, Epstein, like Holston and others, allocates scant attention to the gestation of Brasília as an idea, or to the more subtle, historical inspirations that contributed to its location, design, or inauguration. Thomas Deckker's anthology *The Modern City Revisited*, as its title suggests, takes a similar approach in looking to assess Brasília post-facto through the lens of the social scientist, albeit is strong in acknowledging the often-overlooked cultural and historical roots that underpinned much of the work of Costa and Niemeyer.[77] Of the ten essays that make up geographer Aldo Paviani's 1985 volume *Brasília, Ideologia e Realidade*, barely two allot any significance to the

[76] David G. Epstein, *Brasília, Plan and Reality: A Study of Planned and Spontaneous Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

[77] Thomas Deckker (ed.), *The Modern City Revisited* (London: Spon Press, 2000).

new capital's origins, and then only with respect to the long-unfulfilled promise of the idea of an inland capital, and the various merits such a metropolis might hold with regard to national integration and a lessened vulnerability to military attack.[78] While primarily image-based photographic and architectural studies, books such as those by Willy Stäubli and Marcel Gautherot provide striking contemporary snapshots of the new capital from the design and construction process, but again offer little insight on the wider historical context.[79]

The paradox of the literature of Brasília is that while architects, anthropologists, geographers, sociologists et al have found the city a fertile topic of examination, more conventional works of urban history are rather thinner on the ground. Several, of which Fernando Tamanini's *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, Nina Tubino's *Uma Luz na História* and Evenson's aforementioned *Two Brazilian Capitals* are among the best, adopt a sufficiently interdisciplinary approach as to weave a historical narrative through some or even much of the analysis.[80] Nevertheless, in each case the crux of the argument lies elsewhere, and in Evenson's case in particular any linkages between the architecture of Brasília and the historical influences with which it was avowedly imbued are largely overlooked – a point sharply made in a review by Le Corbusier biographer Peter Serenyi shortly after the book's publication in the early 1970s.[81] Other scholars, including Edson Béu and Alexandre Nonato, have written specialised in-depth studies of single aspects of

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[78] Aldo Paviani (ed.), *Brasília, Ideologia e Realidade: Espaço Urbano em Questão* (Brasília: UNB, 2010). See also Aldo Paviani, Frederico Flósculo Pinheiro Barreto, Ignez Costa Barbosa Ferreira, Lúca Costa Faria Cidade, and Sérgio Ulisses Jatobá, *Brasília 50 Anos: Da Capital a Metropole* (Brasília, UNB, 2010).

[79] Willy Staubli, *Brasília* (London: Leonard Hill Books, 1966), Marcel Gautherot, *Brasilia* [*sic*] (Munich: Wilhelm Andermann Verlag, 1966), and Marcel Gautherot and Kenneth Frampton, *Building Brasilia* [*sic*] (London: Thames and Hudson, 2010).

[80] See L. Fernando Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção* (Brasília: Projecto Editorial, 2003), Nina Tubino, *Uma Luz na História* (Goiânia: Editora Kelps, 2015), and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*.

[81] Peter Serenyi, "Review: *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasília* by Norma Evenson," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 57, no. 3 (Sep., 1975), 461-63.

Brasília's origin, respectively an oral history of the migrant construction worker population and a historical-cum-psychological analysis of Kubitschek during the construction period.[82] Similarly useful but rather singular works include those by Laurent Vidal and Jeferson Tavares, each of whom explore the development of the idea of a new inland Brazilian capital from the early colonial period to final realisation, and Aline Costa Braga's examination of the various plans for Brasília which were overlooked by the selection jury in favour of Costa's winning design.[83] Brazilian journalist and lawyer Adirson Vasconcelos is perhaps the writer with the broadest output with regard to Brasília, having authored a varied series of volumes on the city's origins, typically for the general reader. While several of his books, most notably *A mudança da Capital* and *A epopeia da construção de Brasília* provide a concise and straightforward narrative of the immediate circumstances of the city's planning and construction, any systematic analysis or close examination of the influences shaping the decisions of the key actors is largely absent.[84]

Given the relative paucity of emphasis afforded to the influence and incorporation of cultural heritage and urban history into the founding and legitimising of Brasília by historians, I have also intermittently looked to the literature of other planned capitals, specifically those of what might loosely be termed the 'modern' period.[85] Of special relevance are those urban and architectural historians who have examined the

[82] See Edson Béu, *Expresso Brasília: a história contada pelos candagos* (Brasília: Universidade de Brasília, 2012), and Alexandre Nonato, *JK e os Bastidores da Construção de Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Editares, 2010).

[83] See Laurent Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa à Brasília* (Paris: Éditions de L'IHEAL, 2002), Jeferson C. Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a cultura urbanística cultural," Masters diss., (Universidade de São Paulo, 2004), and Aline Moraes Costa Braga, *(Im)possíveis Brasílias: os Projetos Apresentados no Concurso do Plano Piloto da Nova Capital* (São Paulo: Alameda Editorial, 2011).

[84] Adirson Vasconcelos, *A Mudança da Capital* (Brasília: Centro Gráfico do Senado Federal, 1978), and Adirson Vasconcelos, *A epopeia da construção de Brasília* (Brasília: self-pub,. 1989).

[85] Notable exceptions to this tendency include both Vidal and De Souza Santos. For the latter, see Andreza A. de Souza Santos, *The Politics of Memory: Urban Cultural Heritage in Brazil* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 16-30.

influence of historic cultural phenomena in the founding and design of these new capitals, of which several are preeminent. Elinor Sterns, David Yerkes, and Donald Jackson among others have all described the widespread adoption of Neoclassical and Palladian forms in the design of Washington, with the latter quoting Thomas Jefferson's preference that the federal capital be styled on 'models of antiquity', and the 'approbation of thousands of years'.[86] Even if, in Jackson's words, any foreign influences underwent a 'uniquely American evolution in the minds of [Washington master planner Pierre Charles] L'Enfant and his colleagues', Greek, Roman, and French influences formed the basic cultural reference points.[87] In the case of New Delhi, historians Jane Ridley and Andreas Volwahsen and urban design scholar Aseem Inan have detailed how architects Edwin Lutyens and Stanley Baker blended neoclassical architecture with syncretic indigenous elements to produce an ensemble of government buildings demonstrating at least some degree of contextual sensitivity and local patrimonial influences.[88] This was particularly true of the new executive mansion, the Viceroy's House - latterly the Rashtrapati Bhavan - which carried explicit allusions to the symbolism of a wide variety of the subcontinent's cultures, regions, and religions, including but not limited to the Mughal and Mauryan imperial eras, Hindu, Muslim, and Jain iconography, and architectural devices indigenous to nearby Rajasthan. While Inan argues that collectively these elements were predominantly superficial in nature, they nevertheless contributed to a structure that was at least aesthetically distinct from a purely European design and

[86] As quoted in the Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View." See also Elinor Sterns and David Yerkes, *William Thornton: A Renaissance Man in the Federal City* (Washington DC: The American Institute of Architects Foundation, 1976), and Kohler and Scott (eds.), *Designing the Nation's Capital.*

[87] Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View," 402.

[88] See Jane Ridley, "Edwin Lutyens, New Delhi and the architecture of imperialism," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 26, no. 2, 67-83, Andreas Volwahsen, *Imperial Delhi: The British Capital of the Indian Empire* (London: Prestel Publishing, 2003), and Aseem Inan, "Tensions Manifested: Reading the Viceroy's House in New Delhi," in Vinayak Bharne (ed.), *The Emerging Asian City: Concomitant Urbanities and Urbanisms* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

offered myriad points of local familiarity.[89] By contrast, the purpose-built Pakistani capital of Islamabad – directly contemporary to Brasília and the subject of some analysis in my discussion of the latter's design – was conspicuous by the absence of any grounding in national sensibilities. Subject to widespread repudiation, one observer remarked that Islamabad's Western designers had failed to appreciate the 'significance and importance of [Pakistan's] historical and religious background' pertinent to a capital city's role in reflecting and embodying core national characteristics.[90]

It is to this precise discussion that the thesis is intended to contribute. To some, such as Sir Dudley Stamp and his colleagues at the Royal Geographical Society, Brasília might have seemed a fantastical and almost incomprehensible notion, impossibly divorced from the hitherto understood realities of human settlement, capital cities, and urban design. While it would be wrong to suggest that the city was/is not a remarkable product of its time and a reflection of the particular vision and possibilities afforded by the people and circumstances inherent to its creation, I argue there is another, interrelated lens through which Brasília can be interpreted. To do so, I aim to build on the work of scholars like Vidal and Evenson in their contextualisation of Brasília amid the broader pantheon of Brazilian capital development, together with those such as Underwood and Cavalcanti who have detailed the architectural lineage and corresponding heritage influences to which the city was also deeply indebted. Interweaving these two complementary strands constitutes, I hope, the key contribution at the heart of this thesis. In sum, I look to shine a fresh light on Brasília, showing that both by virtue of its prolonged gestation as a long-unfulfilled dream - becoming a deeply ingrained pseudo-mythological aspiration for generations of Brazilian leaders - and the unique historical references and precedents inherent to its planning, construction,

[89] Inan, "Tensions Manifested: Reading the Viceroy's House in New Delhi," 100-02.

[90] Derek Lovejoy, "The Design of Islamabad – New Capital City of Pakistan," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, vol. 114, no. 5123 (October 1966), 923-41.

outwardly futuristic aesthetic, and even inauguration ceremonies, the Modernist City was also one deeply rooted in the traditions of its native land.

### *A Note on Sources*

Be it mass media, memoir, contemporary correspondence, or legislative and diplomatic records, the volume of material documenting Brasília's founding is prodigious. The key questions guiding this thesis, namely regarding the intent behind Brasília's creation and the identity with which its designers wished for the city to be imbued, mean that the testimony of a small cadre of key actors forms one core body of relevant primary sources. The often prodigious rhetorical and written output of these individuals has proved invaluable in lifting the veil of conjecture and explicitly demonstrating the lenses through which each saw the story of Brasília's creation and the significance of historical allusion and legitimacy therein. That a good deal of these materials have been digitized and are available remotely has been of tremendous help, especially given that the majority of the thesis has been written under the pall of pandemic conditions.

Of the key actors in Brasília's construction, Kubitschek, Costa, and Niemeyer all left extensive volumes of recollections. For Kubitschek, most prominent among these are the three volumes of *Meu Caminho para Brasília* and the directly titled *Por que construí Brasília.*[91] While there is a significant amount of replicated text across these various works, the latter in particular offers perhaps the definitive insight into the president's approach to spearheading the work of Brasília, albeit one perhaps unsurprisingly replete in effusive self-justification and hubris. Kubitschek's speeches as president, recently

[91] See Juscelino Kubitschek, *A marcha do amanhecer* (São Paulo: "Bestseller" Importadora de Livros, 1962), Juscelino Kubitschek, *Meu Caminho para Brasília, vol. I, A experiência da humildade* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Bloch, 1974), Juscelino Kubitschek, *Meu Caminho para Brasília, vol. II: A Escalada Política* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Bloch, 1976), Juscelino Kubitschek, *Meu Caminho para Brasília, vol. III: Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Bloch, 1978) and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília.*

republished, are similarly useful in this regard.[92] For Lúcio Costa, the architect's *Sobre arquitetura* and *Registro de uma Vivência* provide the fundamental window into the author's design philosophy, supplemented by numerous articles published throughout the architect's professional life.[93] Similarly, while Niemeyer's various memoirs including *The Curves of Time, Minha Arquitetura*, and the brief *Minha experiência em Brasília* are deeply informative, they constitute only a fraction of his total literary output, a great percentage of which remains available in print.[94] This notably includes the architecture magazine *Módulo*, of which Niemeyer was editor as well as a frequent contributor.[95] A further notable printed source with explicit regard to the planning, construction, and design of Brasília is Ernesto Silva's *História de Brasília*, a firsthand account written in the context of the author's leading role as a director of the executive body charged with overseeing the endeavor.[96]

Relevant archival material accessible in the UK or available online include the digitized minutes of the Congresso Nacional, British diplomatic correspondence available at The National Archives in Kew, and contemporary newspaper archives, particularly those of *O Globo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *Time* magazine. While by virtue of restrictions imposed by the pandemic I was unable to conduct fieldwork in

[92] See *Memórias do Brasil – 1956: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2019), *Memórias do Brasil – 1957: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2020), *Memórias do Brasil – 1958: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2021), *Memórias do Brasil – 1959: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2022), and *Memórias do Brasil – 1960: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2022).

[93] Lúcio Costa, *Sobre arquitetura* (Porto Alegre: Centro dos Estudantes de Arquitetura, 1962), and Lúcio Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência* (São Paulo: Empresa das Artes, 1995). For additional titles, see for example Lúcio Costa, "O Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feira Mundial de Nova York – Arquitetos Lúcio Costa/Oscar Niemeyer Filho," *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, vol 4. (May/June), 470-80, and Lúcio Costa, "Reasons for the new architecture," *Brasil, 1920-1950: De la Antropofagia a Brasília*, IVAM/VEGAP, Valencia, 622-28.

[94] Oscar Niemeyer, *The Curves of Time: The Memoirs of Oscar Niemeyer* (London: Phaidon, 2000), Oscar Niemeyer, *Minha Arquitetura* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan, 2000), and Oscar Niemeyer, *Minha experiência em Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 4th edition, 2006).

[95] See for example, Oscar Niemeyer, "Testemunho," *Módulo*, no. 9 (Feb. 1958), 3-6, and Oscar Niemeyer, "Forma e Função na Arquitetura," *Módulo*, no. 21 (Dec. 1960), 3-7.

[96] Silva, *História de Brasília.*

Brazil until the final stages of this project, the resources available at the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico do Distrito Federal (IHGDF), the Memorial JK, and the Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal (ArPDF) proved nevertheless extremely useful. These included various contemporary chronicles of Brasília's origins including *Brasília: Uma Realização em Marcha* from 1959, *Brasília, A Nova Capital do País*, commissioned by the Conselho Nacional de Geografia to commemorate the city's inauguration in 1960, *Raízes Históricas de Brasília*, printed the same year, and the twelve-volume *Coleção Brasília* series collated and published by the Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República between 1959 and 1960.[97] Of this latter collection, the first three volumes detail Brasília's historical antecedents, the following four a day-by-day account of the planning, construction, and inauguration processes, the next four a selection of domestic and international media coverage pertaining to the new capital, and the last excerpts from legislative proceedings pertinent to the building process. Together, this collection comprises a hoard of raw information for the researcher of Brasília, albeit devoid of context or analysis. Additional contemporary print materials held by the various institutions above include the complete run of *Brasília* magazine, the official publication of the government commission established to oversee every element of the new city's creation, as well as contemporary journal articles pertaining to Brasília's construction and inauguration.[98] As seen most vividly in the fifth and sixth chapters of the thesis, the photographic record of Brasília's origins as held by the ArPDF have further helped to add impact to the discussions of the city's construction and inauguration. Finally, in

[97] Moisés Gicovate, *Brasília: Uma Realização em Marcha* (São Paulo: Edições Melhoramentos, 1959), Maria Magdalena Vieira Pinto, *Brasília: A Nova Capital do País* (Rio de Janeiro: Publicação comemorativa da XX Assembléia Geral do Conselho Nacional de Geografia, 1960), Ismael Pordeus, *Raízes Históricos de Brasília* (Fortaleza: Imprensa Oficial – Ceará, 1960), and *Coleção Brasília*, volumes I-XII (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1959-1960).

[98] For example, see J. V. Freitas Marcondes, "Brasilia: The New Capital of Brazil," *The Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 4 (Fall 1959), 157-67, Walter McQuade, "Brasília's Beginning," *Architectural Forum*, no. 110 (April 1959), and Wolf Von Eckardt, "Brasília: Symbol in the Mud," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, no. 36 (November 1961).

addition to the wealth of secondary literature, a range of unpublished dissertations have proved of exceptional interest.[99] While the majority of these do not constitute primary materials, that of Hollister Kent, written after the author's key role in mapping the site for Brasília and published in 1956, is a notable exception. [100]

Due to the impossibility of conducting archival research in Brazil until rather later than anticipated due to the impact of national lockdowns and the wider circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, some sources remained beyond my reach, however. Notably, prolonged access to the vast wealth of documents held at the ArPDF relating to the construction of Brasília itself was not possible, nor was I able to personally visit the Arquivo Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. While this latter institution does not maintain extensive collections relating to Brasília per se, it's broader holdings, only some of which are available remotely, may have offered fruitful ground for further research.

### *Thesis Structure*

This thesis is structured around six core chapters. The key aim of the first of these is to explore the centuries-old paradigm of Brazilian capitals within and against which Brasília would later sit. Consequently, the chapter sketches the trajectory and functionality of the city of Salvador during the early colonial period, before shifting to Rio de Janeiro following the 1763 relocation of the Brazilian capital to Guanabara Bay. By exploring the consistencies of purpose shared by both cities, and the evolving nature of Rio precipitated by economic and geo-political upheaval during the late colonial, co-kingdom, and post-independence imperial periods, the chapter looks to establish a base frame of reference for Brazilian capital cities, their development, and symbolic and

[99] These include Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," and Starita, "Brasilidade in Built Form."

[100] Hollister Kent, "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," PhD diss., (Cornell University, 1956).

practical value. Simultaneously, the chapter is interspersed with an exploration of the earliest calls for a new, inland capital city, demonstrating the persistent and growing momentum behind an initiative many years in the making.

The second chapter begins amid the fall of the Brazilian Empire in 1889, following which the nation's first republican constitution formally enshrined the demarcation of an inland federal district and the construction therein of a new capital for the first time. Over the next sixty years, a multitude of surveying expeditions and planning commissions worked to facilitate the project. In 1922, then-president Epitácio Pessoa even sanctioned the placing of a 'foundation stone' intended to mark the symbolic establishment of the new city. Fundamentally however, such efforts remained largely token. Meanwhile, the chapter also traces the ongoing urban development of Rio de Janeiro as it continued to redefine the function of a Brazilian capital, as well as the explosive emergence of a newly syncretic national culture beginning in the 1920s and 30s, which challenged notions of what it was to be 'Brazilian'. While this was true of literature, music, cuisine, and even sport, the marriage of this newfound *brasilidade* with the pioneering forms and materials of modernist architecture began to produce a distinct national style. Influenced by the Swiss-French visionary Le Corbusier, a new generation of architects including Costa and Niemeyer began to (re)imagine the purpose and possibilities of Brazilian urban design. The final element of the chapter features a detailed examination of the birth of this new modernist movement, and the ways in which the creative forces later at the heart of crafting Brasília's identity conceived and moulded their style. I suggest that by choosing to chiefly interpret Brasília as phenomenon of the 1950s, such arcs key to the city's historical tapestry are overlooked.

Marking an apparent departure from discussions of capital cities, architecture, and urban development, the third chapter instead focusses on the rise of Juscelino Kubitschek. In charting Kubitschek's political ascendancy, I detail the various

experiences prior to taking executive office that rendered him uniquely placed to execute Brasília, so long in the making. Chief among these were spells as mayor of Belo Horizonte and subsequently as governor of his native state of Minas Gerais. On both occasions, the future president oversaw substantial infrastructural reform programmes, facilitated in large part by a fierce conviction in the unifying and uplifting power of development. In the instance of Belo Horizonte and his sponsoring of the Pampulha project in particular, Kubitschek also began a collaborative relationship with Niemeyer which served as a direct precursor to the pair's subsequent partnership in the building of Brasília. I argue that in the form of Pampulha, Niemeyer's undertaking of the grandest expression of the nascent Brazilian modernism theretofore attempted further reinforces the importance of context in understanding the later forms of the new capital.

Having taken presidential office in January 1956, Kubitschek's struggle to win legislative approval for Brasília saw him utilise a variant of the conciliatory and pragmatic tactics he had earlier honed in local government. The successful navigation of this process forms the basis of the fourth chapter, which culminates with an exploration of the formation of the executive body that would oversee Brasília's construction, as well as the president and his entourage's first visit to the would-be construction site. With reference to the process of legislating and commissioning of the new city, I look to reinforce the link between Brasília and its historical context - a context with which its political champion was intimately familiar. Within this realm, the chapter will demonstrate how the siting of Brasília in the milieu of Brazilian history and culture was used as a key means by which to legitimise a project otherwise repeatedly subject to criticisms of cost and questions of necessity.

There followed a controversy-courting tender process, in which Lúcio Costa's design for the newly approved city was ultimately declared successful. In line with the wider argument of the thesis, in the fifth chapter I demonstrate how Costa's submission,

and indeed the architect's wider oeuvre and writings, played heavily on historical allusion and a synthesis of heritage inspiration with modern methods and materials. This was also true of Costa's one-time mentee Niemeyer, who in designing the buildings to populate Costa's Plano Piloto footprint for Brasília similarly incorporated references, some subtle, others more overt, to Brazil's urban and cultural patrimony.

The final chapter of the thesis examines the process of Brasília's construction and inauguration, with added attention paid to the symbolic elements therein. Built by a migratory workforce some forty thousand strong, the narrative of the human actors at the frontline of building the new national capital served as a tacit echo of prior episodes of internal migration and racial and class-based segregation, all amid an ongoing and multi-faceted effort to harmonise Brazil and its people into one unified nation. As above, this effort had begun in the early part of the century, and was itself inherent to the Brasília project and the questions of national identity and representation it entailed. This discussion paves the way for an analysis of the long-awaited ceremonies surrounding Brasília's completion. Organised as portentous displays of legitimacy, the inauguration proceedings were perhaps the most blatant co-opting of Brazilian history yet seen in relation to the new capital. As such, and alongside an exploration of the vision and motivation of their organisers, they serve as a natural and fitting endpoint to the narrative of the thesis and as a crescendo of its central argument; that amid the soaring concrete and glass structures of modernist Brasília, the long and twisting thread of Brazilian history is seldom far away.

# CHAPTER I

## *The Capitals of Brazil and the Genesis of Brasília, 1549-1889*

> I do not refer to the width of the territory of Brazil from the sea inland, because, up until now, no one has traversed its extent due to the neglect of the Portuguese who, despite being great conquerors of lands, do not take advantage of them, but content themselves with scratching along the shore like crabs.[1]

As the above excerpt from Frei Vicente do Salvador's pioneering *História do Brasil* of 1627 suggests, the early Brazilian experience of urban development was characterised by coastwise settlement. For most of the five centuries following the first arrival of Portuguese mariners, the colony, later co-kingdom, empire, and republic's capitals have adhered to, even defined, this paradigm.[2] From 1500, when India-seeking Pedro Álvares Cabral made landfall near to modern Porto Seguro in the north-eastern state of Bahia, until 1549, the territory of Brazil had no single designated urban hub, with few permanent settlements.[3] Known as the 'factory period' of Portuguese colonialism, urban development was predominantly limited to fortified trading outposts and mission stations, the former established at sporadic intervals along the coastline and most

[1] Vicente do Salvador, *História do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Publicação da Bibliotheca Nacional, 1889), as quoted in Geraldo Nogueira Batista, Sylvia Ficher, Francisco Leitão and Dionísio Alves de França, "Brasília: A Capital in the Hinterland," in Gordon (ed.), *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, 164-81.

[2] There exist several quasi additions to this number, including the key settlements pertaining to rival nations' claims to parcels of Brazilian territory during the early colonial period. Recife and São Luis had served as the capitals of New Holland and Equinoctial France respectively during the first half of the seventeenth century (the latter for a period of just three years), with Recife in particular, then named Mauritsstad, a haven of commerce and scientific exploration. The Portuguese defeat of Dutch forces at the Second Battle of Guararapes in 1649 proved a turning point in the trajectory of the Dutch Republic's Brazilian endeavor, and has also come to be seen as a major step in the fomenting of Brazilian nationalism due to the lack of assistance local forces received from Lisbon in overcoming their Dutch rivals. See Frédéric Mauro, "Political and economic structures of the empire, 1580-1750," in Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, 47-48, Charles R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1973), and Guy Martinière, "São Luis, Capitale du Maranhão, Capitale Rêvée de la France Équinoxiale: The Dream Capital of Equinoctial France," *História (São Paulo)*, vol. 30, no. 111 (Jun 2011), 252-63.

[3] See H. B. Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," in Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, 7-19.

famously serving to facilitate the gathering and export of dyewood.[4] In 1549, Salvador, Bahia, became established as the capital of the increasingly profitable colony, a position it retained for over two hundred years until 1763, with only a brief interlude in 1624-25 when the city was sacked and occupied by Dutch forces pushing south from their foothold in Pernambuco.[5] Thereafter, the capital was moved southwards to Rio de Janeiro, where it remained for a further two centuries until the era of coastal capitals ended with the inauguration of Brasília in 1960.[6]

This opening chapter traces the trajectory of Brazil's two former maritime capitals, concluding with the proclamation of the First Brazilian Republic in 1889. The key objectives are as follows. First, to illustrate the symbolic roles and real-world functionalities of the settlements in question, in a bid to understand Brazil and Brazilian elites' relationship with the colony and later nation's foremost seats of power, identity, and government. Second, to map and contextualise the growing momentum for a new, inland capital, beginning in the mid part of the eighteenth century. By establishing this

[4] Ibid. Among several notable exceptions to this pattern are the settlements of São Vicente, established in 1532, and São Paulo, founded shortly after Salvador in 1554. Under the auspices of donatory Martim Afonso de Sousa, São Vicente operated as an early base of sugar production and slave trading, while inland São Paulo was the project of Jesuit priests José de Anchieta and Manuel da Nóbrega. See both ibid., 13-16, and Eduardo Bueno (ed.) *Os nascimentos de São Paulo* (Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2004).

[5] Charles Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil: 1695-1750, Growing Pains of a Colonial Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 126-27.

[6] Again, the precise number of former capitals can be seen as a point of technical conjecture. At various points during the history of Portuguese America, the territory roughly corresponding to modern Brazil was split into various subdivisions, beginning with the original captaincies established in 1534. The dual states of Brazil and Maranhão were subsequently formed in 1621, with their capitals at Salvador and São Luis respectively. During the Pombaline Reforms, in 1751 Maranhão - its capital now at Belém - was amalgamated with additional previously unincorporated territory to form the State of Grão-Para and Maranhão. In 1772, this territory was subdivided, with Belém remaining the capital of the newly formed State of Grão-Para and Rio Negro, while a reorganized State of Maranhão and Piauí had its capital at São Luis. In 1775, these various divisions were merged into the State of Brazil, unifying Portugal's colonial holdings on the continent. For the sake of this dissertation, I will not treat either Belém or São Luis as de facto Brazilian 'national capitals', with two primary justifications. First, in somewhat of a technicality, neither was ever the capital of the State of Brazil or of any administrative polity bearing that name. Second, during the periods in question Salvador and then Rio de Janeiro remained the dominant cities in wider 'Brazilian' territory, and as such are commonly considered the lineal predecessors of Brasília. See Mauro, "Political and economic structures of the empire, 1580-1750," 44-45, and Andrée Mansuy-Diniz Silva, "Imperial re-organization, 1750-1808," in Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, 253-54.

latter narrative and highlighting some of the preeminent early advocates of such a city, the aim is to demonstrate how the premise upon which Brasília was founded was, by the time of its eventual construction, far from new.[7] With the panoramic perspective afforded by this twin approach, my goal is to establish the foundational frame of reference for the later discussion, detailing the strands of Brazilian urban and cultural heritage that informed Brasília's conception, design, and construction, and influenced its immediate architects. In mapping the form and function of the cities of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, I look to situate Brasília not just as a political and architectural product of the 1950s, but of almost five centuries of Brazilian urban development: from the fortress city and sugar hub of Salvador serving as a bulwark to protect Portuguese mercantilist interests from external attack - both native and European - to the bullion port of Rio, later uniquely endowed as colonial metropole and subsequently the seat of an independent empire. Ending this first part of the discussion in 1889 is convenient on two fronts. First, as a seminal date in the history of the Brazilian nation, that year the country broke from the rule of the monarchical dynasty that had, in one form or another, governed the territory since the arrival of Europeans at the dawn of the sixteenth century. Second, in drawing up Brazil's first republican constitution, to be promulgated in 1891, the architects of the empire's demise would go on to make the first substantial provisions for moving the government away from Rio to a new site inland. While conspirators and polemicists alike had, as this chapter will serve to demonstrate, already raised the question of such a venture on repeated occasions, this constitution marked the first material departure away from the hypothetical, thereby rendering the republican moment a doubly appropriate breakwater. Here - predominantly via the existing historiography - I will examine the first part of the story of two of Brazil's most

[7] For a comprehensive account I defer both to the exhaustive mid-century efforts of the Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República and, more recently, the work of Laurent Vidal. See *Coleção Brasília I: Antecedentes Históricos*, *Coleção Brasília II: Antecedentes Históricos*, *Coleção Brasília III: Antecedentes Históricos, Coleção Brasília IIIa: História de uma Idéia,* and Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa a Brasília.*

influential urban centres, in order to better situate Brasília in the pantheon of the nation's capitals. In so doing, this chapter will serve as an overture to my argument that Brasília's symbolism and functionality can be best grasped within the wider context of its predecessors.

Set against these ambitions, a brief and perhaps self-evident caveat. From the sixteenth century until the upheaval of the Peninsular War, neither Salvador nor Rio de Janeiro were capitals of a sovereign nation. To compare, as this chapter sets out to, a colonial primate city with a fully-fledged national or even imperial capital might correspondingly appear somewhat unfair. As this chapter will come to show however, both Salvador and colonial Rio undoubtedly fulfilled a great many of the criteria associated with typical conceptions of a capital city, as itemised by the various authors cited in the Introduction to this thesis. While they housed viceroys rather than monarchs and lacked some (but by no means all) of the paraphernalia of government, there is no coherent suggestion that either occupied anything other than the status of capital within Brazilian territory.[8] Just as, to my knowledge, Madrid and London have seldom ever been cast as the (former) capitals of Peru and India, so there is little argument that if any colony can be said to have a 'true' capital – a discussion perhaps beyond the limits of this thesis - Salvador's position alongside Rio and latterly Brasília in the trifecta of Brazilian capitals is beyond contention. As such it forms a natural beginning, just as it would in the minds of Brasília's creators.

## *Salvador da Bahia*

Straddling the bluffs of Brazil's largest natural harbour, the Cidade do São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos reputedly owes its name to enigmatic Florentine

[8] The same argument holds in my later exploration of the building of New Delhi and Canberra. See Chapter V.

sea captain Amerigo Vespucci.[9] While Vespucci's voyages to the Brazilian coast are shrouded by a lack of secondary accounts, he is widely held to have named Bahia's eponymous bay after a church in his Tuscan homeland in either 1501 or 1502.[10] The city itself was founded by another of the early trailblazers of the Portuguese colonial endeavour, Tomé de Sousa, whose peripatetic career included spells across four continents on behalf of the Portuguese monarchy.[11] The history of Salvador as colonial capital, from 1549 to 1763, is delineated by two distinct periods, illustrating the shifting fortunes of the city, the trajectory of contemporary Brazil, and the wider narrative of early modern Portugal and its imperial venture.

As identified by urban historian Pedro de Almeida Vasconcelos, Salvador first became established as the preeminent settlement in Brazil for reasons both of proximity and security.[12] Its harbour an easily navigable haven from Atlantic storms, the siting of the city in the north-eastern part of the colony was also of primary concern due to prevailing wind patterns, offering the most accessible and rapid travel to and from Lisbon, typically via the Azores or Cape Verde islands.[13] Although the more southerly Guanabara Bay - later the site of Rio de Janeiro - was already known to the Portuguese, the added duration of voyages down the Brazilian coast rendered that location inferior. Moreover, while the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas had nominally divided the New World -

[9] Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 6.

[10] The church in question still stands in Florence. Chiesa di San Salvatore di Ognissanti, wherein lies the Vespucci chapel, contains the remains and likenesses of several members of the Vespucci family, including an alleged portrait of Amerigo. See Piero Bargellini et al., *Le Strade di Firenze, vol. 2* (Florence: Bonechi, 1977), 337-40.

[11] See Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 20-22. Tomé de Sousa remains an influential figure in Salvador's cultural identity, with the Thomé de Souza [*sic*] medal an award granted by the city's municipal council to those who have 'rendered relevant services to the municipality of Salvador.' See "Títulos e Honrarias," Câmara Municipal de Salvador, accessed 13 April 2020.

[12] Vasconcelos, *Salvador: Transformações e Permanências*, 29-75.

[13] "Bahia, the Ancient Capital of Brazil," *The Illustrated Magazine of Art*, vol. 3, no. 17 (1854), 323-25, and Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 7-8.

and indeed much of the globe - between the crowns of Portugal and Castile, the threat of incursion from rival powers remained real.[14] As a consequence, Salvador's location was selected precisely thanks to the elevated defensive escarpment provided by the rocky peninsula at the entrance of the Baía de Todos os Santos. During the factory period, the area had been the site of Vila Velha, a shoreline outpost itself located in the vicinity of the home of Bahia's semi-legendary first European resident, shipwrecked Portuguese sailor Diogo Álvares Correia, better known by his adopted Tupí name Caramuru.[15] With the arrival of Tomé de Sousa as Brazil's first governor-general on 28 March 1549 however, a more easily defensible settlement was mandated.[16] The task of designing such a fortified redoubt fell to Miguel de Arruda, in all likelihood Brazil's very first urban planner despite seemingly never himself crossing the Atlantic.[17] Trusted advisor and chief architect to Portuguese king Dom João III, Arruda's plan for Salvador was one of many such commissions undertaken across the early Portuguese empire, and came shortly after his oversight of the construction of the vast port-fortress of Magazão on the western coast of Morocco.[18] Implementation of Arruda's design was entrusted to Luís Dias, a

[14] This was particularly true in the case of France, which in the mid sixteenth century sponsored an attempt to seize Guanabara Bay, establishing France Antarctique and constructing a fort on Serigipe Island. Under the command of Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon - after whom the island would subsequently be renamed - the French effort persisted until 1563, when it was overcome by a Portuguese expedition ordered by then-Governor-general Mem de Sá. See Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 27-29 and Francis Parkman, *Pioneers of France in the New World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

[15] Vila Velha was eventually abandoned in 1546 following heightened tensions with the local indigenous population. For Caramuru, see Michel Riaudel, "Caramuru: entre histoire et épopée," *Mémoire(s), identité(s), marginalité(s) dans le monde occidental contemporain*, vol. 9 (2013).

[16] For the precise procedural and legal background to Salvador's founding, see Eni Puccinelli Orlandi, "A Fundação de uma Estado: Cidade de São Salvador, Brasil," *Universidade Estadual de Campinas – Cadernos de Estudos Linguísticos*, vol. 53, no. 2, (2011), 101-12. Also "Fundação da Cidade do Salvador," in *Coleção Brasília I: Antecedentes Históricos (1549-1896)* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1960), 11-13, and Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 39-42.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Magazão was also known historically as Magazan, and currently as El Jadida. See José Giraldo Simões Júnior and Candido Malta Campos, "Permanências do urbanismo de colina como tradição luso-brasileira: os casos de Salvador e São Paulo," *Revista Brasileira de Gestão Urbana*, vol. 5., no. 1, (Jan.-Jun. 2013) 47-69.

nobleman among de Sousa's retinue who had carried Arruda's 'maps and samples' with him from Lisbon.[19]

Virtually from the outset, the upper and lower areas of the city were distinguishable by the relative salubriousness of their conditions and functionality of purpose, with administrative, military, and religious centres concentrated in the higher town, while the lower quickly became the home of maritime and commercial activities.[20] The effect, write Manuel Teixeira and Margarida Valla, was of a 'synthesis of multiple references: vernacular and erudite, medieval and renaissance.'[21] As Viennese man of letters Stefan Zweig commented of Salvador's founding, 'with the establishment of a capital city and the installation of a governor, the Brazil that was previously only an amorphous organism […] gained a heart and a mind.'[22]

Beginning in 1580, concerns of security became doubly pressing with regard to Portugal's colonial possessions. The Iberian Union, a dynastic merging of the Portuguese and Spanish crowns following the much-mythologised disappearance of Portuguese king Dom Sebastião while campaigning in north Africa, obliged Portugal to forgo its established alliances and align with Spanish foreign policy.[23] The nascent Dutch Republic, having itself seceded from Spanish rule in 1581 and looking to forge its own transatlantic empire, took advantage, capturing the city of Recife in 1630.[24] Although Dutch attempts to challenge the Portuguese in Brazil were ultimately and costly rebuffed, the latter's

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[19] Rafael O. Moreira, "O arquiteto Miguel de Arruda e o primeiro projeto para Salvador," *Anais do 4º Congresso de Historia da Bahia*, vol. 1, 123-47.

[20] Manuel C. Teixeira and Margarida Valla, *O urbanismo portugûes: séculos XIII-XVIII: Portugal-Brasil* (Lisbon: Horizonte, 1999), 227.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Stefan Zweig, *Brazil: A Land of the Future*, trans. Lowell A. Bangerter (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 2000), 27.

[23] See Stuart B. Schwartz, *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) 162.

[24] Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654*, 32-66.

success demonstrated the key defensive role of the few major settlements.[25] While maritime strongholds were far from unique to Portuguese imperialism, their acute significance was amplified by the vast spread of Portugal's colonial interests - from Macau and Mozambique to Goa and Guinea-Bissau - and its relatively limited resources and population. 'Their country was small, their population was limited, and their domains scattered widely across the globe' wrote Salvador historian Luiz Walter Coelho Filho. 'The symbol of Lusitanian occupation overseas was the fortress,' he continued, 'which demonstrated the need for protection, defending the inhabitants from native peoples and other Europeans, including the French, Dutch, British, and Spanish.' 'Salvador,' Coelho Filho concluded, 'is probably the best example of this tendency'.[26]

By the mid seventeenth century, and with Portugal in the process of reclaiming its autonomy from Spain with the drawn-out Portuguese Restoration War (1640-1688), Salvador moved into its second phase of urban development.[27] Labelled by Almeida Vasconcelos as the city's 'golden age', the hundred years or so from 1650 to the moving of the capital to Rio de Janeiro in 1763 marked the apogee of Salvador's influence.[28] Central to the city's growing wealth and power was the access it granted to the valleys of the Bahian Recôncavo. An area roughly corresponding to the floodplain of the Baía de Todos os Santos, the alluvial soil of the region offered some of the richest plantation land in Portuguese America. Beginning as early as 1550 and built on a foundation of indentured indigenous and later African labour, Bahia rose to become one of the

[25] Among the best early cartographic representations of Salvador date from this period of prolonged Dutch aggression, which lasted from approximately 1599-1649. These include works by Dutch artists Claes Visscher and Hessel Gerritz, as well as Portuguese map maker Jõao Teixeira Albernaz. See Simões Júnior and Campos, "Permanências do urbanismo de colina como tradição luso-brasileira: os casos de Salvador e São Paulo," 51.

[26] Coelho Filho, trans. Howard, *The Fortress of Salvador*, 55-56.

[27] Mauro, "Political and economic structures of the empire, 1580-1750," 41.

[28] Almeida Vasconcelos, *Salvador: Transformações e Permanências*, 77-134.

defining players in global sugar and tobacco production.[29] As the key port catering to the plantations and *engenhos*, Salvador's importance as a hub of trade in commodities and enslaved persons formed a central pillar of its identity.[30] By the end of the seventeenth century, the profitability of Bahia's plantation economy ensured that Salvador had, in the words of historian Charles Boxer, 'long since outstripped "Golden Goa" to become the second city in the Portuguese empire, surpassed only by Lisbon in population and importance.'[31] This newfound status was exemplified in contemporary descriptions of the city as the 'Cabeça do Estado do Brasil' and an 'Empório Universal' – labels evoking the role the city had assumed as a lynchpin of transatlantic commerce.[32] Moreover, as Guida Marques has convincingly argued, as a tangible and impressive manifestation of Portuguese sovereignty, and of the power of the monarch themselves, the city served as a potent instrument in projecting colonial authority and legitimacy, both domestically and to external onlookers.[33]

As Salvador matured beyond its security-focussed earliest years into a thriving metropolis, it continued to assume the idiosyncratic identity of a particularly Portuguese city, standing in clear contrast to those of Spain's American colonies. Boxer described Salvador's 'upper and [...] lower city, connected by narrow, tortuous, and steep streets

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[29] Schwartz, *Tropical Babylons*, 158-87.

[30] Salvador's only rival in this sense was Recife, which similarly boomed on the wealth of sugar production. See ibid., and Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 35. For a recent history of Brazilian slavery during the colonial period, see Laurentino Gomes, *Escravidão – Vol. I* (Porto Alegre: Editora Globo, 2019), and Laurentino Gomes, *Escravidão – Vol. II* (Porto Alegre: Editora Globo, 2021). For Bahian sugar production in particular, see Esterzilda Bernstein de Azevedo, *Arquitectura do açúcar: engenhos do recôncavo Baiano no periodo colonial* (São Paulo: Nobel, 1990).

[31] Boxer estimates the population of Salvador around the year 1699 at approximately 100,000, albeit acknowledges the impossibility of arriving at an accurate figure. See ibid., 127. This figure appears to represent the beginning of a plateauing in the city's size, with German explorer and naturalist Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied providing a similar estimate in light of his visit of the mid 1810s. See Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied, *Viagem ao Brasil* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1989), 469.

[32] As quoted in Avanete Pereira Sousa, "A centralidade/capitalidade econômica de Salvador no século XVIII," in Sales Souza, Marques, and Silva (eds.), *Salvador da Bahia: retratos de uma cidade atlântica*, 99-128.

[33] Guida Marques, "'Por ser cabeça do Estado do Brasil.' As representações da cidade da Bahia no século XVII," in Sales Souza, Marques, and Silva (eds.), *Salvador da Bahia: retratos de uma cidade atlântica*, 17-48.

and alleys' as being reminiscent of a 'typical Portuguese city, medieval in its lack of planning and in its haphazard growth, forming a strong contrast to the methodically laid-out Spanish-American towns.'[34] As discussed by historians Robert Smith, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Simone Vegliò, and others, the gridiron pattern employed by the Spanish in designing their colonial urban centres was not only distinct from the Portuguese approach of 'picturesque confusion', but also from Spanish settlements in Iberia, where free and organic growth had long proliferated.[35] Despite the two colonial models sharing priorities in function, namely 'control, defence, and the very production of the colony', both Portugal's colonial and metropolitan early modern cities have been characterised as adhering to the 'medieval acropolis form[s] of Lisbon and Oporto.'[36] Later, the disparity between the inherently Portuguese labyrinth of Salvador and the fiercely post-colonial, assuredly Brazilian boulevards of the Plano Piloto could not offer a more apparent subversion of the earlier paradigm.[37]

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[34] Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 127-28.

[35] See Robert C. Smith, "Colonial Towns of Spanish and Portuguese America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, no. 14 (1955), 3-12. Also Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brazil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, 1969), 61-66 and 76, and Simone Vegliò, "Planetary Urbanization and Postcolonial Geographies: What Directions for Critical Urban Theory", in J. Cupples and R. Grosfoguel (eds.), *Unsettling Eurocentrism in The Westernized University* (London: Routledge, 2018). It is worth also noting that much the same could be said of cities and towns across the European continent, with John Schofield observing that London at the dawn of the seventeenth century still retained many of the characteristics of a fundamentally medieval settlement. See John Schofield, *London 1100-1600: The Archaeology of a Capital City* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2011).

[36] For Holanda, this stemmed from the inherent differences in spirit between the Portuguese and Spanish colonial enterprises. Whereas the Spanish and their rectilinear designs embodied a Roman sense of strenuous military and political control and organisational zeal, the Portuguese attempt, speculated Holanda, epitomised instead the commercial priorities of the Phoenicians See Holanda, *Raízes do Brazil*, 61-76, Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 116-30 and Richard M. Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1974), 39-72.

[37] In contrast to the prevailing view, Morse has strongly suggested that differences between Spanish and Portuguese urbanism during the early colonial period have been overstated. He argues that not only do 'early maps of Salvador, Rio, São Luis, and other coastal cities show a basic geometric design whose irregularities were scarcely less than those which topography and fortification imposed on many Spanish-American ports', but that any distinction between Spanish and Portuguese colonial town planning 'was not so much a commitment to different principles as a differing pace of evolution'. See Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," 39-41. For additional details regarding town planning in colonial Brazil, see Roberta Marx Delson, *New Towns for Colonial Brazil: Spatial and Social Planning of the Eighteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979), Nestor Goulart Reis Filho, *Evolução Urbana*

Sitting among the central functions of Salvador in the projection of colonial authority was the city's religious primacy. In addition to being variously 'the seat of the governors-general and viceroys', 'a thriving entrepôt of trade with Portugal and West Africa', 'the chief whaling station in the Atlantic' and 'the seat of a Relação or High Court', Salvador had, since 1675, been the home of the sole archbishopric in Portuguese America.[38] The city also boasted a large and influential Jesuit college, which was the focus of both clerical and secular education, as well as installations belonging to the Benedictine, Carmelite, and Franciscan orders.[39] 'Nearly all visitors to eighteenth-century Bahia were deeply impressed by the number and magnificence of its convents and churches', writes Boxer, while Vasconcelos describes contemporary Salvador as being defined by 'opulence and religiosity.'[40] In testimony indicative of the city's grandiosity and wealth, one contemporary visitor from France described the sacristy of Salvador's baroque Jesuit church as being able to 'pass as one of the most beautiful in the world, such was the grandeur of the exquisite paintings with which it was adorned, its fathers having employed the most celebrated Italian painters.'[41] These ostentatious displays exhibited not only the power and wealth of the Church, but also the competitive patronage of an expanding circle of lay elites, who jostled for prestige within what Bruno Feitler and Evergton Sales Souza have described as the 'ecclesiastic metropolis' that

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*no Brasil (1500/1720)* (São Paulo: Pioneira, 1968), and Richard M. Morse, "A Prolegomenon to Latin American Urban History," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, no. 52 (1972), 378-91.

[38] Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 127-28. The supremacy of the episcopal see of the archdiocese of Salvador also extended to Portugal's African possessions, including Angola and São Tomé. The Archbishopric of Salvador retained the primacy of the Brazilian Catholic Church until 1907. See Pedro de Almeida Vasconcelos, "Salvador, rainha destronada? (1763-1823)," *História (São Paulo)*, vol. 30, no. 1, 174-88. For a detailed study of colonial justice in Salvador, see Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sovereignty and Society in Colonial Brazil: The High Court of Bahia and its Judges: 1609-1751* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

[39] Ibid., 158 and Simões Júnior and Campos, "Permanências do urbanismo de colina como tradição luso-brasileira: os casos de Salvador e São Paulo," 51.

[40] Ibid., 129 and Almeida Vasconcelos, *Salvador: Transformações e Permanências*, 77.

[41] As quoted in Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 129.

Salvador represented within the wider network of Portugal's overseas dominions.[42] This phenomenon is reflected in the increasing proliferation of Salvador's religious institutions as recorded by eighteenth century lawyer, historian, and Bahia native Sebastião da Rocha Pita. In a volume of 1730, Rocha Pita noted that Salvador, then a city of six thousand dwellings and two main squares occupied by the viceroy's palace, mint, jailhouse, chamber of commerce and Relação, was also home to at least seven major churches and monasteries.[43] If it is hardly surprising for a prosperous early modern colonial capital to have also acted as the locus of regional religious influence and lavishness, it was nevertheless a defining characteristic.[44] In designing a new capital some two hundred and fifty years later, it is perhaps equally unsurprising that a bold new cathedral stood among the centrepieces of Niemeyer's Brasília. That the latter city has been interpreted as an active attempt to channel 'an aura of the sacred' serves as a nod both to the prevailing religiosity of Brazil's citizenry and to a key function of the city's predecessors.[45]

As Salvador was booming, to the south a civil conflict in a hitherto largely overlooked backwater heralded a radical altering of the landscape, foreshadowing the rise of the successor to Salvador's throne as dominant metropolis and capital. The protagonists of the War of the Emboabas, fought in two stages between 1706 and 1709, both reflected the nature of contemporary Brazilian frontier society and formed the basis of several mythologies that would later prove influential symbols in the founding of

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[42] Bruno Feitler and Evergton Sales Souza, "Uma metropole no ultramar português. A Igreja de São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos," in Sales Souza, Marques, and Silva (eds.), *Salvador da Bahia: retratos de uma cidade atlântica*, 129-62.

[43] See both Sebastião da Rocha Pita, *História da América Portuguesa* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia, 1976) and Simões Júnior and Campos, "Permanências do urbanismo de colina como tradição luso-brasileira: os casos de Salvador e São Paulo," 51-52.

[44] For the political and societal role of the clergy in colonial Salvador, see Hugo Ribeiro da Silva, "O Cabido da Sé de Salvador da Bahia: Quadro institucional e mecanismos de acesso (1755-1799)," in Sales Souza, Marques, and Silva (eds.), *Salvador da Bahia: retratos de uma cidade atlântica*, 163-90.

[45] See Caroline S. Tauxe, "Mystics, Modernists, and Constructions of Brasília," *Ecumene*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Jan 1996), 43-61.

Brasília. [46] The conflict pitted the *bandeirantes* – 'flag-bearers' known primarily as paramilitary slave hunters and treasure seekers competing to penetrate the unmapped Brazilian interior - against a tide of newcomers. This latter party, the so-called *emboabas*, or 'foreigners', were opportunists, drawn to the first Brazilian gold strikes in the mountains of Minas Gerais.

*Bandeirantes* had long pushed into the Brazilian interior, making piecemeal expeditions from their base in the nascent São Paulo in groups numbering up to several thousand.[47] Pioneering brigands, they developed a romantic reputation, to borrow from Russell-Wood, as adventurers 'of mixed blood with a strong Indian element, bilingual in Portuguese and Tupí-Guaraní, nomadic, consummate backwoodsmen, successful gold discoverers, with a well developed entrepreneurial streak, and distasteful of authority.'[48] *Bandeirante* expeditions were key both to expanding and mapping Brazilian territory, and to the mythologizing of the interior. Paradoxically, this came in two forms. First, the expeditions of the *bandeirantes* encapsulated the pull of the El Dorado legend of untold riches waiting to be discovered in the untamed wilderness of Goiás, Mato Grosso and Minas Gerais. Simultaneously however, the explorers' attritional experiences of the forested backlands marked the geography and indigenous peoples of the territory as being hostile, unwelcoming, and of the other. As José Osvaldo de Meira Penna and historian Clodomir Viana Moog identify, these twin perceptions long served both to

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[46] For a concise history of the conflict, see Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 61-84 and Manoel Cardozo, "The Guerra Dos Emboabas, Civil War in Minas Gerais, 1708-1709," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 22, no. 3 (Aug., 1942), 470-92. For a wider history of the *bandeirantes*, see Clodomir Viana Moog, *Bandeirantes and Pioneers*, trans. L. L. Barrett (New York: G. Braziller, 1964).

[47] Indeed, the legacy of the *bandeirantes* remains strong in the city. Completed in 1954, the imposing *Monumento às Bandeiras* in São Paulo's Parque Ibirapuera memorialises the efforts of Brazil's inland explorers, while offering a - perhaps too faint - nod to the racial prejudice and exploitation inherent to the phenomenon. See Ana Araujo (ed.), *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 202.

[48] A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "The gold cycle, c. 1690-1750," in Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, 215. Also A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "New Directions in Bandeirismo Studies in Colonial Brazil," *The Americas*, vol. 61, no. 3, (Jan., 2005), 353-71.

tantalise and deter the colonial authorities from attempting to sponsor wholesale incursions into the Brazilian interior.[49] In this sense, Brasília proved the ultimate statement of reclamation. Meira Penna would later comment how 'the new capital symbolizes the will to move forward, to grow, to discover El Dorado. [...] the founder's [i.e. Kubitschek's] work signifies the return to the hinterland that is within the purest tradition of the *bandeirantes*.'[50]

In the immediate term however, the gold and diamond deposits discovered by the swashbuckling and often brutally savage flag-bearers gave rise to frenzy.[51] As prospectors and other would-be profiteers from across Brazil and rural Portugal raced to the goldfields, the plantations of Bahia and Pernambuco were drained of free and enslaved workers alike, much to the despair of the colonial authorities.[52] While Salvador's economy suffered, new thoroughfares linked Minas Gerais to the Brazilian coast. Simultaneously, and in an attempt to slow the mass exodus to the mining operations, the roads from Salvador to Minas were forcibly closed.[53] Amid this turbulence, Rio de Janeiro rose to prominence. The city - the 'natural entrepôt of Minas Gerais' - offered a far more convenient port to serve the colony's new focus of industry and wealth than north-eastern Salvador.[54] This gravitational shift is perhaps best represented by Cardozo's assertion that 'within a few years after the discovery of gold Rio had become the recognized headquarters of the Brazilian slave trade' - with indentured labour an

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[49] See Viana Moog, *Bandeirantes and Pioneers*, and Meira Penna, *Quando Mudam as Capitais*, 337.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Manoel Cardozo, "The Brazilian Gold Rush," *The Americas*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Oct. 1946), 137-60.

[52] Ibid., 139-40. Citing Furtado, Morse estimates that during the century or so following the first discoveries of gold, Brazil's European immigrant population rose from approximately 100,000 to 400,000. See Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," 49.

[53] Cardozo, "The Brazilian Gold Rush," 150.

[54] Ibid., 139.

inevitably central element of the gold rush.[55] Even the bombardment and ransoming of Rio by French forces in 1711 - a by-product of Portugal's reluctant role in the War of the Spanish Succession – failed to impede the town's rise to prominence.[56] This did not go unnoticed in Salvador, where the city council vainly petitioned the Portuguese crown for a ban on all mining activities in response to the apparent threat posed to the city's status and prosperity.[57]

If Rio de Janeiro had remained relatively small throughout the early colonial period, the mineral boom in Minas Gerais was the catalyst for the settlement's growth in both size and status - a transformation at least partly directed by the Portuguese authorities. As identified by historian Preston James, 'the desire of the Portuguese crown to control completely the export of gold and later of diamonds resulted in the imposition of legal restrictions limiting all export to one route only - to Rio de Janeiro.'[58] While São Paulo too offered a logistically feasible path to the goldfields and was therefore also a contender in the bid to assume urban primacy, the eventual defeat of the São Paulo-

[55] Ibid., 150.

[56] Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 84-105.

[57] Russell-Wood, "The gold cycle," 194. Based in part on the observations of contemporary British historian and Poet Laureate Robert Southey and Brazilian historian the Visconde de Carnaxide, Vasconelos has argued convincingly however that even after the gold rush and the subsequent transfer of the capital to Rio de Janeiro, Salvador's wealth and status was only affected in the longer term. In particular, the 1791 Haitian Revolution precipitated an increase in demand for Bahian sugar to such an extent that Carnaxide described the period 1795-97 as the 'most economically prosperous period, of the most prosperous province, of what was the most prosperous Portuguese colony.' According to Southey, 'with the transfer of the seat of government to Rio de Janeiro, São Salvador [*sic*] suffered no other loss than that of dignity, continuing to be one of the greatest, most opulent and flourishing cities of the New World.' Almeida Vasconcelos and fellow historian Wanderley Pinho hold that the true precipitator of Salvador's relative decline was instead the damaging violence Bahia experienced during the independence process of the early 1820s, as well as the slave revolts of the following decade, most notably the Malê Revolt of 1835. See Almeida Vasconcelos, "Salvador, rainha destronada? (1763-1823)," 176, Robert Southey, *História do Brasil, vol. 3* (São Paulo: Edusp, 1981), 433, Visconde de Carnaxide, *O Brasil na Administração Pombalina* (São Paulo: Nacional, 1979), 75, and José Wanderley de Araújo Pinho, "A Bahia - 1808-1856," in Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (ed.), *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira, II, O Brasil Monárquico, Dispersão e Unidade* (São Paulo: D.E.L., 1972), 242-311.

[58] Preston E. James, "Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo," *Geographical Review*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Apr. 1933), 271-98.

based *bandeirantes* in the War of the Emboabas rendered such a possibility moot.[59] If sugar had underpinned the second stage of Salvador's hegemony, 'gold made Rio de Janeiro.'[60] With the Northeast beginning to stagnate and the vibrant mining economy of the Southeast continuing to blossom, the growing status and wealth Rio derived from its position as the 'bottleneck port of entry to the mines' marked an ascendancy keenly noted in Lisbon.[61] Overseen by Portuguese statesman the Marquês de Pombal - then titled Conde de Oeiras and serving as Dom José I's de facto prime minister – the transfer of capital status from Salvador to Rio formed part of the wider series of efficiency-seeking imperial reforms enacted by Pombal between approximately 1755 and his dismissal in 1777.[62] As Russell-Wood observed, the bestowing of supremacy on Rio de Janeiro represented 'the most dramatic indication of the transfer of strategic, demographic, economic, and political importance' in Brazil during the colonial period, coming as the 'final step in a process which had started with the first gold strikes in Rio das Velhas some 70 years earlier.'[63] It is hard to disagree with his conclusion that the ripples of Rio's newfound pre-eminence were to have 'profound effects on Brazil's future regional development.'[64]

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[59] Ibid., 275.

[60] Ibid., 274.

[61] Brian J. Godfrey, "Revisiting Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo," *Geographical Review*, vol. 89, no. 1 (Jan. 1999), 94-121. See above note with regard to the resurgence in the prosperity of Bahia's sugar economy in the 1790s.

[62] For an examination of this period and the wider programme of Pombaline Reforms as they affected Brazil, see Carnaxide, *O Brasil na Administração Pombalina*, Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, *O Marquês do Pombal e o Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1960) and Kenneth R. Maxwell, *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Of these reforms, among the most prominent was the expulsion of the Jesuit order from Brazil in 1759, for which see Kenneth R. Maxwell, "The Spark: Pombal, the Amazon and the Jesuits," *Portuguese Studies*, 2001, vol. 17, 168-83, and Dauril Alden, "Late colonial Brazil, 1750-1808," in Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, 296-302. Pombal's reforms also saw the introduction of a suite of fiscal reforms, as detailed in Angelo Alves Carrara, "O reformismo fiscal pombalino no Brasil," *Historia Caribe*, vol. 11, 83-111.

[63] Russell-Wood, "The gold cycle," 204.

[64] Ibid.

## *A City of Gold and Kings*

Founded by Portuguese governor-general Mem de Sá in 1565, Rio de Janeiro had been initially established precisely within the security-orientated paradigm that had Salvador as its crowning example.[65] By the mid eighteenth century however, the city had expanded from this initial role as a naval defence fortress into a heaving node of commerce and shipping, serving to channel the flow of precious metals and gemstones from the Brazilian hinterland into the coffers of Europe.[66] In the years immediately prior to 1763 Rio had already begun to assume the trappings of colonial power hitherto the exclusive preserve of Salvador, with the colony's second Relação established there in 1752.[67] Even after 1763 however, the city's influence over the wider expanse of Portuguese America was constrained, in part by limitations of communication technology, in part by design. Despite its new status having been reinforced with the various institutions of colonial government, Rio and its incumbent viceroy governed the totality of Brazil largely via a diffuse model intended to prevent any notions of pan-Brazilianism that might pose a threat to Peninsular authority. As Andrée Mansuy-Diniz Silva writes of the viceroys of the late eighteenth century:

> The holder of this office was given such wide powers that the absolute power of the sovereign, with authority over all the captaincies, appeared to be delegated to him. In practice, his only real authority [...] was over the captaincy in which he lived, previously Bahia, now Rio de Janeiro. Only the governors of the subordinate captaincies of Rio de Janeiro were under his control: all the governors of captaincies general [a sub-authority to the constituent 'states' of the colony] were directly dependent on the Ministry for the Navy and Overseas Territories in Lisbon, to which they were answerable and from

[65] Godfrey, "Revisiting Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo," 98. For Rio's early history, see Daryle Williams, Amy Chazkel, and Paulo Knauss de Mendonça (eds.), *The Rio de Janeiro Reader: History, Culture, Politics, Part I: Colonial Rio.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[66] Several historians have noted that much, if not a majority, of the gold mined in Brazil did not end up in Lisbon, but abroad, where it was 'used very largely to pay for articles of luxury and ostentation,' helping to balance Portugal's trade deficit. See Cardozo, "The Brazilian Gold Rush," 148-49 and Russell-Wood, "The gold cycle," 232-36 and 242. Security unsurprisingly remained a preoccupation of Portuguese - and subsequently, Brazilian - authorities, with Andrée Mansuy-Diniz Silva observing that during the reforms of Pombal, three additional elite regiments from Portugal were assigned to the city's defence in 1767 to address a perceived lack of effective personnel. See Andrée Mansuy-Diniz Silva, "Imperial re-organization, 1750-1808," in Bethell (ed.), *Colonial Brazil*, 257.

[67] Russell-Wood, "The gold cycle," 206.

> which they took their orders. Only in an emergency could the viceroy request direct military aid from them.[68]

Perversely, it would not be long before these Lisbon ministries would themselves come to Rio, subverting the established colonial order and providing the latter city with profound fresh impetus and function.

It was at this juncture however that events in Minas Gerais again began to influence the future narrative of Brazil's capital city. In the midst of an extended depression following the eventual exhaustion of the gold mines in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the city of Ouro Preto's prior reputation as among the most cosmopolitan and wealthiest settlements in the Americas was beginning to fade.[69] The capital of Minas from 1720 until 1897 and formerly boasting the apt name Vila Rica, in December 1788 a cabal of the city's petty intelligentsia begin plotting in opposition to colonial rule.[70] They were led by Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, a junior military officer-cum-dentist better known by the sobriquet Tiradentes – 'the tooth puller.'[71] With the ambition of founding an independent republic in the Brazilian interior, the conspirators produced a manifesto detailing the blueprint for their imagined society. Although the historical record is fragmented, statements obtained by colonial authorities from the conspirators make clear that the plans included provisions for the establishing of a capital

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[68] Silva, "Imperial re-organization, 1750-1808," 257.

[69] For details of the decline in bullion production and the consequent depression, see Alden, "Late colonial Brazil, 1750-1808", 284 and 303-04. For Ouro Preto's waning, see De Souza Santos, *The Politics of Memory*, 10 and 21.

[70] Morse has questioned the prevailing interpretation of this plot as one inspired by the 'idealism of a few patriot intellectuals', instead suggesting that the economic interests of local mineral magnates were preeminent. See Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," 51.

[71] Ouro Preto's successor as the capital of Minas Gerais, the planned city of Belo Horizonte, was in many ways a predecessor to Brasília. See Chapter III for an extended discussion. For the Minas conspiracy, see Kenneth R. Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal 1750–1808* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 1973), 251-371, Márcio Jardim, *A Inconfidência Mineira: Uma Síntese Factual* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 1989), and Dimas Perrin, *Inconfidência Mineira: Causas e Consequências* (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial, 1985).

at São João del-Rei, to the southwest of Ouro Preto.[72] The town was to serve as the seat of the republic's *parlamento principal*, with authority over a slew of lesser parliaments operating within each of the polity's constituent towns.[73] This progressive system of proto-federalism owed much to the enlightened model of the nascent United States, which served as an avowed source of inspiration for the conspirators.[74] In addition to this parliamentary hierarchy, the rebels' plans included the establishing of a mint in their new capital, while Ouro Preto would become home to a university, an institution hitherto entirely lacking in Portuguese America.[75] Although the Minas Conspiracy would ultimately be stifled in its infancy, the plotters' ideals of a federally constituted republic, governed by an inland capital, has since been recognised as one of the moments of Brasília's spiritual founding.[76] As a special edition of *Brasília* magazine would declaim almost three centuries later, 'ever since Tiradentes, whenever a profound political situation arose, or the institutions [of the state] were in crisis, the idea of the interiorization of the Capital reappeared.'[77] The shared spaces occupied by Ouro Preto and Brasília in the national consciousness would later be consummated in the form of

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[72] Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies*, 271. Several excerpts from these statements are reproduced in the first volume of the *Coleção Brasília* anthology. See "A Capital Interiorizada do Brasil nos Planos dos Inconfidentes Mineiros, in Autos de Devassa da Inconfidência Mineira, Rio de Janeiro, Edição da Biblioteca Nacional, 1938," in *Coleção Brasília* I, 25-28.

[73] Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies*, 267-77.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 271. Notwithstanding the aforementioned Jesuit colleges established in Salvador and elsewhere - forcibly closed following the expulsion of the order from Brazil in 1759 - higher education across the empire had been virtually monopolised by the University of Coimbra. From 1772, Rio de Janeiro was briefly home to the lusophone world's first scientific school, the Academia Científica. In essence a technical college geared towards the study of the natural sciences, chemistry, and agriculture, the academy was intended to bolster economic productivity, rather than serve as a seat of intellectual pursuit. Despite surviving only until 1779, its brief existence nevertheless provided the first instance of the capital - and indeed Brazil - as a place of more advanced education. See Silva, "Imperial re-organization, 1750-1808," 272. For the hegemony of Coimbra, see Gabriel Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions: The Luso-Brazilian World, c.1770-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 21.

[76] For example, see Freitas Marcondes, "Brasilia: The New Capital of Brazil," 157-67.

[77] "Apresentação," *Brasília*, no. 40 (April 1960), 3.

the latter's inauguration day, enshrined in law by President Kubitschek as 21 April - the anniversary of Tiradentes's public execution.[78] In the words of anthropologist Andreza de Souza Santos, 'there was no better day for the birth of Brasília and for the reinforcement of nationalistic imagery than the anniversary of the death of the martyr of Brazilian independence.'[79]

For Rio de Janeiro, if the late eighteenth century spelled a gradual slowing of bullion exports, any fears of a wider malaise would be forgotten amid a seismic shift precipitated by events in Europe. Facing the threat of Napoleonic aggression and caught between opposing factions at court, in the autumn of 1807 prince regent Dom João had dithered between severing ties with Britain or defying French demands and continuing to honour Portugal's longest standing alliance.[80] Ultimately favouring the latter, Dom João did not wait to suffer the consequences. In chaotic fashion amid a Lisbon rainstorm on 29 November, the royal family, much of the nobility, several thousand attendant bureaucrats, military personnel, and servants took flight to Brazil.[81] Such a contingency was far from new. In a letter of June 1691, Jesuit priest and former royal councillor Padre António Vieira of Bahia attested that Dom João IV, the restorer of Portuguese independence, had in the 1650s devised a routemap (*'roteiro'*) to transfer the court to the

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[78] De Souza Santos, *The Politics of Memory*, 16-20 and 28-30.

[79] Ibid., 28 and Chapter VI. A further, somewhat surreal physical link between Ouro Preto and the new capital also stands in the centre of town, where the Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and with gardens mapped by Roberto Burle Marx, opened its doors in 1940. See Ibid., 27 and Michael Hensel, Rumi Kubokawa, and Oscar Niemeyer, "Building Brazil: Part I: 1900-1964," *AA Files*, no. 37 (1998), 48-54. See also Chapter III.

[80] Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 88-89. Among the key advocates for departing to Brazil had been Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, Conde de Linhares, who on 30 September 1807 wrote that 'it appears that all dictums of prudence, of love, and of fidelity come together to suggest that the safest choice is that of Your Royal Highness moving to whichever part of your vast dominions in Brazil my lord might deem most convenient for your temporary residence.' As quoted in Alexandre José de Mello Morais, *História da trasladação da côrte portuguêsa para o Brasil em 1807-1808* (Rio de Janeiro: Livro. da Casa Imperial de E. Dupont Ed., 1872), 44.

[81] See Lilia M. Schwarcz and Heloisa M. Starling, *Brazil: A Biography* (London: Penguin: 2019), 169-79 and Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 98.

erstwhile Dutch stronghold of Recife, there to be safeguarded from resurgent Spanish ambition.[82] Later, in 1738, envoy Luís da Cunha wrote to Dom João V from the former's posting in France, suggesting that the monarch take up residence in the Americas and be proclaimed 'Emperor of the West.'[83]

With French forces approaching the capital, and under pressure from the British government, come 1807 what had previously appeared fanciful conjecture became dire necessity. In London, Portuguese vulnerability to a French invasion had long been cause for concern. A year earlier, prime minister William Pitt had advocated publicly for the founding of a secure 'New Lisbon' in central Brazil, 'whence the royal roads would radiate like the rivers that flow to the periphery, leading from New Lisbon to Porto Belo, Pará, Rio de Janeiro, Olinda, Salvador, Callao etc.'[84] Escorted by the Royal Navy, the convoy arrived at Salvador on 22 January 1808, where, again at Britain's behest, royal assent was given to a law that for the first time opened Brazilian ports to foreign commerce.[85] Proceeding thereafter to Rio, in March Dom João and his mother, Dona Maria 'the Mad', were welcomed with a series of secular and religious pageants heralding the start of a new era for both Brazil and its capital.[86] Roderick Barman makes plain the impact of Rio de Janeiro's newfound importance as de facto capital of not only Brazil but of the Portuguese empire, particularly in its relations with the other urban centres of Portuguese America:

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[82] Mello Morais, *História da trasladação da côrte portuguêsa para o Brasil em 1807-1808*, 18.

[83] As quoted in Boxer, *The Golden Age of Brazil*, 323. A similar idea had also been posited by the aforementioned Conde de Linhares in 1797. See Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 98.

[84] *Discurso do Imortal Guilherme Pit* [*sic*] *pronunciado pouco anos antes de seu falecimento, no Parlamento Imperial dos Reinos-Unidos da Grã-Bretanha e Irlanda. Contém reflexões e progrnósticos dignos da perpétua lembrança dos vencedores dêste grande homem de Estado* (Lisboa: Impressão Régia, 1809), 9.

[85] Schwarcz and Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, 182.

[86] Ibid., 187-89.

> If, prior to 1808, Rio de Janeiro had been no more than a leading port city in the Portuguese New World, it now established, as the capital of the royal dominions, a political, economic, and cultural hegemony which reduced the other five regions of Portuguese America [the remaining subdivisions approximately comprising modern Brazilian territory] to dependence and subservience.[87]

The Rio which received the royal family was not - striking geography aside – a settlement of any great grandiosity, however. At the start of nineteenth century, the city was still largely limited to occupying territory within the four hills of Castelo, São Bento, Santo Antônio, and Conceição that had been the site of its primary defences since foundation.[88] It had just four urban parishes, made up of a paltry handful of potholed streets and alleyways, a dozen or so public squares of beaten earth, open sewers, and was replete with uninhabitable areas of sporadic marshland.[89] Only at the very centre of town, the location of the main square - the Largo do Paço - and the former Carmelite monastery-turned-vice regal palace (fig. 1.1) was there any hint of civic grandeur or cosmopolitanism.[90] The surrounding area had been paved over as part of series of improvements conducted under the auspices of viceroy Dom Luís de Vasconelos e Sousa in the 1780s, which also included a programme of land reclamation from the lagoon and the building of a new hospital, opera house, and the ornate Igreja da Candelária (see fig. 1.2).[91] Nevertheless, as a soon-to-be royal city, 'Rio de Janeiro left much to be desired.'[92]

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[87] Roderick J. Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation, 1798-1852* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 45.

[88] Schwarcz and Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, 185.

[89] Gastão Cruls, *Aparêncio do Rio de Janeiro: Notícia histórica e descritiva da cidade, vol. 1* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1952), 238.

[90] Luís Edmundo, *O Rio de Janeiro no tempo dos vice-reis* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2000), 34.

[91] For the improvements conducted during the Vasconcelos e Sousa administration, see Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation: Alfred Agache and the Dream of Modern Urbanism in Brazil (1920-1950)," 16, Underwood, "The Pombaline Style and International Classicism in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro," 303-04, and Ciro Flamarion Cardoso and Paulo Henrique Araujo, *Rio de Janeiro* (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1992), 114-15.

[92] Schwarcz and Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, 185.



Fig. 1.1: Paço Imperial, formerly the residence of Brazil's governors and viceroys.

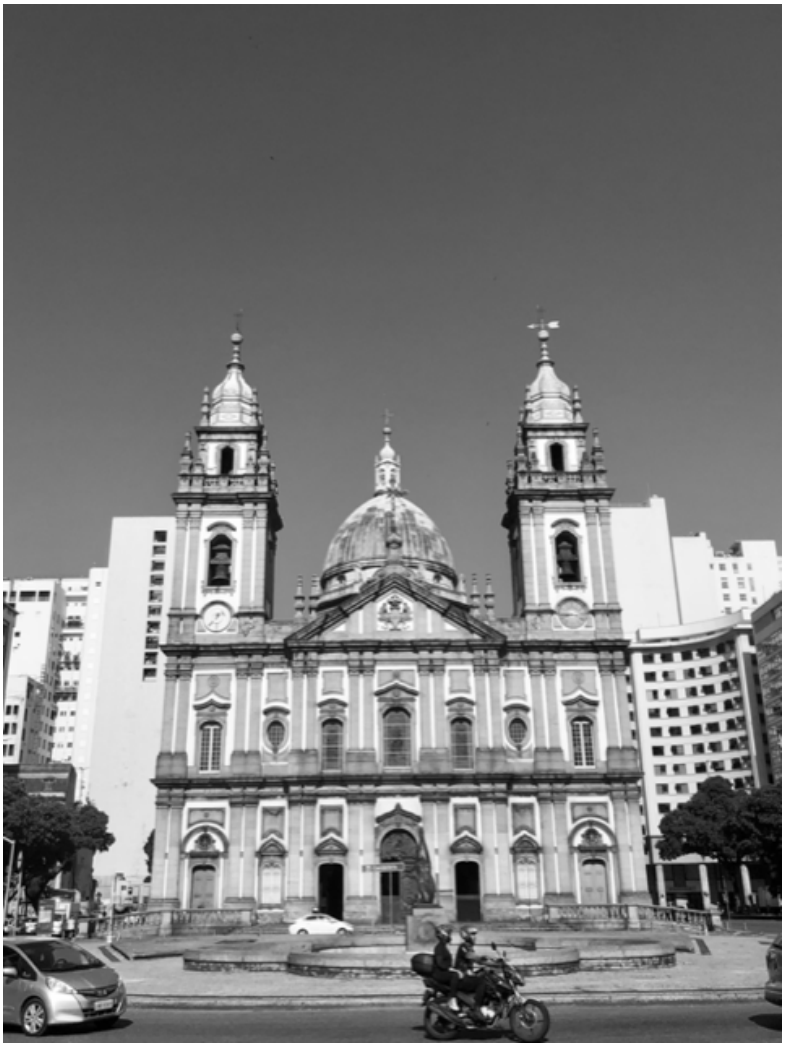


Fig. 1.2: Igreja da Candelária.

Despite its initially insalubrious urban landscape, the transfer of the court catapulted Rio to a new level of influence and prosperity, even if, initially, the focus of government affairs remained with Portugal.[93] Hallmarks of the city's new status began to arise almost from the first moments of the court's arrival. In May 1808, Rio (shortly followed by Salvador) became the site of the first authorised printing press in the colony, precipitating the launch of an official municipal newspaper (and government

[93] There remains debate regarding the nature and chronology of the waxing of Brazil's fortunes at the expense of the Iberian motherland. Although the transfer of the court and the consequent realigning of the colonial hierarchy appears to fit within the prevailing wider narrative of imperial fragmentation and Portuguese decline, this was not reflected in the intentions of the Crown. Even while Portugal's 'centrality diminished and Brazil enjoyed unprecedented autonomy and became the new imperial center', the administration's strategy was best characterised as 'together and unequal.' Despite their new locale, as far as the Portuguese authorities were concerned, 'the Peninsula remained the intended primary beneficiary of all policies.' See Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 19-20.

mouthpiece), the *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro*.[94] October saw the founding of the Banco do Brasil, issuing Brazil's first banknotes and guaranteeing loans to the Crown.[95] In December 1810, the Real Academia Militar was established with the remit of training engineers and artillerymen for the armed forces, for which a specialised school of surgery had also been established.[96] While Rio had been the location of a Relação from midway through the previous century, now the full legal apparatus of Lisbon took root. This included the Casa de Suplicação do Brasil, or supreme court, the Tribunal da Mesa do Desembargo do Paço, and the ecclesiastical Mesa da Consciência e Ordens, which claimed jurisdiction over the archdiocese of Brazil.[97]

Alongside this host of institutions, the court's presence in Rio also triggered a series of changes to the appearance and scale of the city. Dissatisfied with the small and impersonal viceregal palace, Dom João accepted the offer of local merchant Elias António Lopes and took up residence in the latter's villa at Quinta da Boa Vista.[98] Extensively remodelled, the resulting Paço de São Cristóvão would serve as the primary home of Braganza monarchs until 1889 (see fig. 1.3).[99] Meanwhile, virtually all of the prime real estate in Rio proper had already been evacuated and requisitioned for the needs of the freshly disembarked Portuguese aristocracy, much to the chagrin of the

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[94] Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 47. As Paquette notes, the prior absence of a press in Brazil and rigorous censorship had not prevented the growth of an 'active intellectual culture', which subsisted on a semi-legal influx of printed material, including anti-Napoleonic literature, into Brazil prior to the arrival of the court. See Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 115. Also Maria Beatriz Nizza da Silva, *D João, Príncipe e Rei no Brasil* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2008), 153, and Luiz Carlos Villalta, "Reforma Ilustrado, Censura e Práticas de Leitura: Usos do Livro na América Portuguesa," PhD diss., (Universidade de São Paulo, 1999).

[95] Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 47.

[96] Ibid.

[97] See Alan K. Manchester, "The Growth of Bureaucracy in Brazil, 1808-21," *The Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1972), 77-83, Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 96, and Erik Lars Myrup, "Kings, Colonies, and Councilors, Brazil and the Making of Portugal's Overseas Council, 1642-1833," *The Americas*, vol. 67, no. 2 (October 2010), 185-218.

[98] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 34.

[99] The building would later be repurposed as the Museu Nacional, itself largely destroyed by fire in 2018.

local population.[100] A massive public works program was initiated, largely paid for by public subscription, while the bureaucracy ballooned in size, new judicial institutions proliferated, and fresh taxes were levied.[101] Signs of a cultural awakening included the foundation in 1813 of the grand Real Teatro de São João, and in August 1816 the inauguration of the Escola Real de Ciências, Artes e Ofícios, to which in 1818 was attached the Museu Real.[102] This process, whereby Rio began to acquire the superficial trappings of a European royal capital, exaggerated to a further degree the identity that Salvador had found itself assuming over previous centuries: that of a Portuguese city. Even after Brazil achieved independence, Rio would continue to look primarily to Europe for its stylistic and cultural precedents.[103]

[100] Cruls, *Aparêncio do Rio de Janeiro*, 241-42. Holston estimates the total number of Portuguese arrivals in Rio at 24,000. See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 111.

[101] See Manchester, "The Growth of Bureaucracy in Brazil, 1808-21," 78-79, Arno Wehling, "Estado, Governo e Administração no Brasil Joanino," *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, vol. 168 (2007), 75-92, da Silva, *D João, Príncipe e Rei no Brasil*, p. 109, and Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 96.

[102] Ibid., 97, and Holston, *The Modernist City*, 111.

[103] For roughly contemporary illustrations of Rio de Janeiro following the arrival of the court, see Jean Baptiste Debret, *Viagem Pitoresca e Histórica ao Brasil (1834-39)* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1978).


Fig. 1.3: Paço de São Cristóvão.

Despite this programme of works however, Rio de Janeiro still faced criticism as offering only a poor facsimile of the conditions typically enjoyed by European royalty. British merchant John Luccock, living in Rio between 1808 and 1818, was sufficiently unimpressed as to characterise the city as 'one of the dirtiest congregations of human beings under the sun', dismissing the many new buildings as 'wretchedly defective copies of the [European] originals, which they pretend to imitate.'[104] Such complaints were far from unique. Similar criticisms were voiced in 1810 by Dom João's chancellor and confidante Veloso de Oliveira, who urged that the royal court 'should not settle in a seaport', but rather found a capital 'in a healthy, agreeable location free from the confusion of the clamorous multitudes of people indiscriminately thrown together.'[105]

[104] John Luccock, *Notes on Rio de Janeiro and the Southern Ports of Brazil, taken during a Residence Ten years in that Country, from 1808 to 1818* (London, 1820), 52, as quoted in Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 97.

[105] As quoted in Henrique Luttgardes Cardoso de Castro, *Brasília e o desenvolvimento nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: DASP, 1960), 11. These misgivings were perhaps in part due to the radical swell in the city's population in the years following 1808, and the accompanying difficulty of providing adequate accommodation and

Not all new arrivals saw Rio with such distaste, however. In a reflection of the wholesale development precipitated by the installation of the court, sometime British resident Maria Graham recorded that 'some solid works have been executed since I last saw Rio; new fountains opened, aqueducts repaired [fig. 1.4], all the forts and public works visibly improved. There is everywhere an air of business.'[106]



Fig. 1.4: The Carioca Aqueduct, more commonly known as the Arcos da Lapa.

Following the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the outlook for Brazil as a whole and Rio in particular shifted once again. At the Congress of Vienna - convened in the aftermath of the First French Empire's fall - a fresh innovation in the makeup of

sanitation. Rio's growth had remained modest throughout the eighteenth century, from a reported 30,000 in 1760 to approximately 50,000 residents by the time of the transfer of the court. By 1817, visiting Bavarian botanists Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Phillipp von Martius estimated that the city had more than doubled in size to 110,000, of which approximately forty-five percent were enslaved. See J. B. von Spix and C. F. P. von Martius, *Viagem pelo Brasil* (São Paulo: Edusp, 1981), 159, Alden, "Late colonial Brazil, 1750-1808," 288, and Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 97. As Morse relates, in 1820 Alexander von Humboldt estimated that the Americas possessed only six cities of 100,000 residents or more, namely New York, Philadelphia, Mexico City, Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador. See Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," 56.

[106] Maria Graham, *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil, and Residence There, during Part of the Years 1821, 1822, 1823* (London: 1824), 219.

Portugal's imperial administration was born. Acting on the advice of both his own plenipotentiary at the congress, Pedro de Sousa Holstein, Conde de Palmela, as well as that of French prime minister the Prince of Talleyrand, on 16 December 1815 Dom João signed into law an act elevating Brazil to the status of kingdom, on nominal par with Portugal.[107] As a formal crystallization of the new order heralded in 1808, the law was not met with universal celebration and acclaim across Brazil, with de jure political centralization corresponding to a further decline in regional autonomy.[108] Perceptions of exploitation by Rio de Janeiro subsequently also led to a rise in regional dissent, with both Barman and Morse identifying such resentment as a central cause of the separatist Pernambucan revolt of 1817.[109] In a letter of 30 March 1817, leading secessionist Padre João Ribeiro even suggested the need for any breakaway republic to 'build a central city as a capital', 'at least thirty to forty leagues away from the sea-coast, as a residence for the Congress and Government.'[110] Such a possibility had been foreshadowed by Pombal in 1761, when he had posited that rather than a coastal capital, a seat of government in the interior of the kingdom's richest colony would serve to better cement control over the resources of the Brazilian hinterland. One day, the minister posited, this imagined city might even supersede Lisbon as capital of the empire. Pombal speculated that a city in the heart of the Amazon basin might, as he imagined it, be able to profit from straddling the trade routes from Africa and the Indies.[111] The idea was supported by the first maps of the Brazilian interior, charted by Genoese cartographer Francisco Tosi Colombina in

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[107] Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 42-45 and Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 99.

[108] Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 45-47.

[109] Ibid., 45 and Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," 66.

[110]As quoted in Raul de Sá Barbosa, "Brasília, evolução, História de uma ideia," *Módulo*, no. 18 (June 1960), 34 and "A Interiorização da Capital nos Planos dos Revolucionários Pernambucanos em 1817," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 38-39.

[111] See "Antecedentes da Trasladação da Côrte Portuguêsa para o Brasil," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 22-23.

1750, and which had highlighted the centrally located captaincy of Goiás as a strategically sound location for such a city.[112] Pombal's plan, which as opposed to the defence-orientated Salvador and Rio de Janeiro couched a city of the interior as an offensive proposition poised to seize control of the riches of a continent, stands as the very first expression of the dream that would eventually lead to Brasília.

The elevation of Brazil to co-kingdom also prompted substantial hubbub within the imperial administration. Among the interested observers was Portuguese government official Ambrosio Joaquim dos Reis. In a letter of 24 August 1816 to António de Araújo e Azevedo, Conde da Barca, Reis hypothesised that the raising of Brazil to kingdom might best be accompanied with the founding of a new capital, to be located far in the interior.[113] His vision was motivated by a desire to encourage the more even distribution of Brazil's population away from the vulnerable coastline, to stimulate internal commerce, travel, and communication, and to reinforce Portuguese control over the sparsely populated hinterland.[114] Reis further speculated that climatic conditions in the middle of the newly christened kingdom might be more conducive to the business of government, in contrast to Rio de Janeiro, 'where the heat makes impossible sustained activity and saps one's energy.'[115] In this, he echoed Dom João, whose dislike of Rio's climate had been noted in British diplomatic dispatches of 24 July 1808, when ambassador Lord Strangford informed foreign secretary George Canning that the prince regent had concluded that 'Rio de Janeiro was not so suitable for royal residence; the weather of the province was extremely unhealthy; so he [Dom João] had decided to make a foray into the southern part of the territory in the hope of finding a site more

[112] "Primeira Referência à Interiorização da Capital do Brasil," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 19-22.

[113] See Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 100.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

suited to his court and government.'[116] As Meira Penna makes clear, the concerns of Reis and Dom João were still being lamented even as Brasília itself was later taking shape. In summarising the core motivations for a new capital in 1957, Meira Penna highlighted Rio's failings as being 'due to its climate, moral environment, cosmopolitanism, peripheral location, and possible military vulnerability.'[117] Continuing, he argues that:

> In Rio, fertile ground for parasitic bureaucracy, there is no climate, either physical or mental, for an efficient public service, capable of meeting the urgent problems of a growing colossus. A summer city, surrounded by all the seductions of nature and bathed in a lush atmosphere, where the carioca can lie in the sun, swim in the mild waters and enjoy the charms of a life without responsibilities, Rio certainly did not represent an ideal location for good governance.[118]

It is striking that not only should the apparent failings of Rio de Janeiro as a hub of government bridge the century and more separating Reis and Meira Penna, but also that the theoretical benefits of a more central and secure capital had been so consistently apparent.

## *Seat of a Brazilian Empire*

With civil unrest in Portugal precipitating the eventual return of the court to Lisbon in 1821, Dom João's heir and regent in Rio, the autocratic Dom Pedro, quickly threw off the paternal yoke and declared the independence of the duly created Empire of Brazil at São Paulo on 7 September 1822.[119] Having lost its status as the paradoxical capital of an Old World empire, Rio was now the cradle of a new one. Of the key architects of independence, Santos-born statesman and academic José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva (hereafter José Bonifácio, also commonly known as 'o Patriarca da

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[116] As quoted in Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa à Brasília*, 31-32.

[117] Meira Penna, *Quando Mudam as Capitais*, 322-23.

[118] Ibid., 328.

[119] For the return of Dom João to Europe, see Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the age of Atlantic Revolutions*, 107-12. For a comprehensive account of Brazilian independence, see, Roderick Cavaliero, *The Independence of Brazil* (London: British Academic Press, 1993) and Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 65-96.

Independência') had already added his name to the growing list of agitators seeking to relocate the new nation's capital away from the Atlantic coast.[120]

In 1821, while vice-president of the Junta Governativa of the province of São Paulo, José Bonifácio had drafted instructions for local deputies travelling to take up their seats in the Cortes Gerais, Extraordinárias e Constituintes da Nação Portuguesa in Lisbon. In this document, he argued that the São Paulo hinterland would be an ideal location for the establishment of 'a city in the interior of Brazil, to serve as the seat of the court or regency, at a latitude of more or less fifteen degrees, in a healthy, mild, fertile place, irrigated by a navigable river and free from surprise attack.'[121] He continued by suggesting that from such a location 'many roads ought to open to the various provinces and seaports, so that government orders might be communicated and circulated swiftly, thus favouring the internal commerce of the vast Brazilian dominions.'[122] Later, in 1823 - the same year that the independent Assembléia Constituinte met for the first time in Rio to determine the country's constitution - José Bonifácio reiterated his idea.[123] On 9 June 1823, he presented a memo to the assembly, again arguing in favour of a more centrally located inland capital, which he suggested 'might be called Petrópolis or Brasília.'[124]

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[120] José Bonifácio had a volatile relationship with the emperor, resulting in a series of senior ministerial appointments punctuated by accusations of treason, exile, and pardoning. For a full insight into a fascinating character, see Octavio Tarquinio de Sousa, *José Bonifácio* (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia, 1988), José Theodoro Mascarenhas Menck, *José Bonifácio de Andrada: Patriarca da Nacionalidade* (Brasília: Edições Câmara, 1998), and Miriam Dolhnikoff, *José Bonifácio* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012).

[121] José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, "Idéias sôbre a organização política do Brasil, quer como Reino Unido quer como Estado independente. Constituição para o. Notas para as instruções do Govêrno provisório de São Paulo aos Deputados às Côrtes de Lisboa," in Octaciano Nogueira (ed.), *Obra Política de José Bonifácio, vol. 3* (Brasília: Centro Gráfico do Senado Federal), 7-14.

[122] Ibid.

[123] The Assembléia Constituinte was quickly dissolved by Dom Pedro, who, questioning the anti-absolutist agenda of the key factions, instead imposed his own constitution on the nation in 1824, concentrating power in his own hands and with a highly centralized government in Rio. See Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 107-29.

[124] "Memória de José Bonifácio apresentada à Assembléia Constituinte e Legislativa do Brasil pelo Deputado França, lida na sessão de 9 de junho de 1823," as quoted in *Coleção Brasília I*, 118-20. José Bonifácio later suggested the town of Paracatu in Minas Gerais as a suitable location for his would-be metropolis, to which he also attached the sobriquet 'New Jerusalem'. See ibid., 45-46.

José Bonifácio's convictions appear to have in part originated from the writings of statesman-in-exile Hipólito da Costa, in whose London-based newspaper *Correio Braziliense* in March 1813 had appeared the first of five articles positing that while Rio de Janeiro was ideally poised to take advantage of maritime trade, its location rendered the city 'always subject to enemy invasion by any seaborne power' and 'summarily inadequate as the Capital of Brazil.'[125] Costa further argued that the city's peripheral location within wider Brazilian territory meant that 'communication with Pará and the other provinces is immensely difficult.'[126] Rio, he wrote:

> possesses none of the qualities required of a city destined to be the capital of the Brazilian Empire. If the courtiers who came from Lisbon have sufficient patriotism and gratitude to the land which welcomed them in their time of trouble, they will generously sacrifice the comforts and luxuries which they enjoy in Rio de Janeiro and establish themselves in the interior lands near the headwaters of the great rivers.

Costa continued:

> They must build there a new city, and begin to open up roads leading to all the sea ports, removing the natural obstacles to navigating the various rivers, and in this way spread the foundations for the most extensive, united, well defended and powerful empire which can exist on the surface of the globe, according to the current state of the nations which populate it. This central point can be found in the headwaters of the famous S. Francisco river. In its vicinities are streams of running water, that flow to north and south, to the northeast and southeast, vast pastureland for the rearing of cattle, stone in abundance for every sort of building, timber for whatever construction might be necessary, and rich mines of every quality of metal; in a word, a site that can compare with any description we have of earthly paradise.[127]

Such bombastic rhetoric, with its explicit distinction between the displaced so-called *reinóis* of Lisbon and Rio's 'Brazilian' residents, made clear not only a coalescing of intra-imperial identities, but more pertinently the explicit favour with which a new generation

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[125] Hipólito da Costa, *Correio Braziliense* (London, 1822) vol. X, (March 1813), 373-77. For selected writings of a man colloquially described as the 'first statesman of Brazil', see both Carlos Rizzini, *Hipólito da Costa e o Correio Braziliense* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1957), and Sergio Goes de Paula (ed.), *Hipólito José da Costa* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2001).

[126] Costa, *Correio Braziliense*, vol. X, 373-77.

[127] Ibid.

of Brazilian elites looked upon the idea of an inland seat of government.[128] In February 1823, Costa wrote to José Bonifácio directly, suggesting – among a swathe of other administrative recommendations - that their shared vision of a capital of the interior be implemented as soon as possible.[129]

Amid escalating civil disruption in both Brazil and Portugal, in April 1831 Dom Pedro abdicated the Brazilian throne in favour of his infant son and namesake, the new Pedro II.[130] The news prompted a flurry of raucous public demonstrations in the capital.[131] Notwithstanding his dynastic heritage, the younger Pedro was seen as a truly 'Brazilian' monarch, born and raised in the Americas.[132] During his long reign, Rio de Janeiro would undergo a series of radical transformations. In part funded by rising coffee prices, from the mid 1840s systematic urbanization began in earnest.[133] In 1843, ambitious plans were put forward by the city's director of public works, Henrique de Beaurepaire Rohan, who advocated for the demolition and redevelopment of up to a third of Rio's built-up area, with the aim of improving circulation and housing

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[128] *Reinóis* might be best thought of as analogous to the Spanish American *peninsulares*, as opposed to *criollos*.

[129] Hipólito da Costa, "Apontamentos para um Plano de Correios, Estradas e Colonização do Brasil," as quoted in Mecenas Dourado, *Hipólito da Costa e o "Correio Brasiliense"* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Exército Editora, 1957), 535.

[130] In Brazil, this took the form of a bitter dispute between the liberal constitutionalists of the 'Partido Brasileiro and the absolutist 'Partido Português.' Tensions had arisen immediately following independence, and in November 1830 turned violent with the murder of liberal journalist Libero Badaró and subsequent riots on the streets of Rio. Meanwhile, Portugal was caught in the grip of dynastic conflict between Dom Pedro's daughter, crowned Maria II after her father's brief reign of 1826, and his brother and Maria's fiancé Dom Miguel I. See Barman, *Brazil: The Forging of a Nation*, 150-59, Roderick J. Barman, *Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825-1891* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 29, and Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions,* 235-315.

[131] Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 30-32.

[132] Ibid. The new emperor's youth and the necessity for lengthy regency also suggested a degree of malleability that temporarily mollified both political factions, who spent the next nine years jockeying for supremacy prior to Pedro's premature majority and coronation, aged just fourteen, in July 1840. See ibid., 30-73.

[133] See Margareth da Silva Pereira, "The Time of the Capitals: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Words, Actors and Plans," in Almandoz (ed.), *Planning Latin America's Capital Cities, 1850-1950*, 81-84. For the case of São Paulo specifically, see Morse, *From Community to Metropolis*.

conditions.[134] Although the proposal was not fully carried out, a thorough remodelling and modernization of the city's harbour by British engineer Charles Neate in 1851 allowed Rio's merchants to further harness the profits of the coffee boom.[135] Slavery's mark on the city also remained indelible, with data from 1849 showing a population of 110,000 slaves living alongside 266,000 whites and free people of colour.[136] Affluent bourgeois neighbourhoods came to be intermingled with mixed-race, working-class areas, inhabited predominantly by slaves, freemen, and the white urban poor.[137] Across the third quarter of the nineteenth century, Rio's parallel role as a crucible for the burgeoning abolitionist movement amplified the city's rampant - and often ramshackle - growth, with progressive waves of escaping and freed slaves flocking to the city's periphery, latterly via the railways that had begun to crisscross the country.[138] The first of these had been constructed in Rio de Janeiro itself in 1856 - the same year that the city played host to the nation's first electric telegraph - with a short line linking the apex of Guanabara Bay to the foot of the littoral mountains.[139] Other modern amenities introduced to Rio under Dom Pedro II included the paving of the city's busiest streets with cobblestones in 1853, the installation the following year of gas-fired street lamps, an underground sewage network completed in 1862, and piped potable water beginning in 1874.[140]

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[134] Pereira, "The Time of the Capitals," 81-82.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Schwarcz and Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, 306.

[137] Ibid.

[138] See J. H. Galloway, "The Last Years of Slavery on the Sugar Plantations of Northeastern Brazil," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 51. no. 4 (1971), 586-605.

[139] Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 132.

[140] Schwarcz and Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, 307 and Vivaldo Coaracy, *Memória da cidade do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José Olympio Editora, 1955), 584.

In accordance with its rising status as a cosmopolitan city, and abetted by the proclivities of the emperor as a patron of the arts, Rio's cultural scene also prospered.[141] Both the aforementioned Real Teatro de São João and the new Lírico Fluminense theatre staged Italian and Brazilian operatic performances, while balls and soirées hosted by the prosperous landowners and newly moneyed business elite heralded an explosion in the demand for the latest European fashion.[142] French couturiers, Belgian lace makers, English tailors, as well as jewellers, tobacconists, florists, and elegant cafés were concentrated on the Rua do Ouvidor, Rio's main thoroughfare and a destination for the sophisticated and the wealthy, as well as journalists, poets, and writers.[143] The emperor's own hand was evident in the expansion of the Escola Real de Ciências, Artes e Ofícios - founded by Dom Pedro I in 1816 – into the Academia Imperial das Belas Artes. In 1838 Dom Pedro authorised the establishment in the city of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro, operating under the explicit protection of the monarch.[144] This followed the 1837 creation in the capital of both the Academia Imperial de Música e Ópera Nacional and the Colégio Pedro II, a publicly funded high school ceremonially founded on the emperor's birthday.[145]

Outside of the gilded bubble however, mass poverty proliferated. In his landmark cultural examination of Rio during the long nineteenth century, Bruno Carvalho writes that two cities existed contemporaneously, 'Rio the capital of Brazil and "another city" altogether, a semi-suburban milieu of barefooted blacks and a more morose, unhurried

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[141] Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador: D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998), 126.

[142] Schwarcz and Starling, *Brazil: A Biography*, 307-09.

[143] Ibid., 307.

[144] See Lúcia Maria Paschoal Guimarães, *Debaixo da imediata proteção de Sua Majestade Imperial: o Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (1838-89)* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, 1994).

[145] Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador*, 150-52.

rhythm.'[146] In this second Rio, Black communities became subject to ever-increasing cultural squeezing, as behaviour and customs considered retrograde were consistently suppressed.[147] Around the Praça Onze in the Cidade Nova area however, Afro-Brazilian culture established its most concentrated haven, with the emergence of a neighbourhood known as 'Pequena África'.[148] Of Pequena África's denizens, many originated from the Brazilian Northeast, where they and their enslaved ancestors - predominantly of Yoruba descent - had worked the plantations of Pernambuco and Bahia.[149] Now in Rio de Janeiro, the homes of these new arrivals became 'bastions of Afro-Brazilian spiritual, cultural, and social life.'[150] When seen in the context of the construction of Brasília, these marginalised, migrant-heavy communities offer a certain foreshadowing of the future capital and those tasked with the labour inherent to its birthing.

Amidst the changing physical and cultural landscape of Rio de Janeiro - and indeed of Brazil - the final decades of the nineteenth century also played host to several episodes directly instrumental to the origin story of Brasília. In line with the growth of the arts in Rio, the 1850s had seen the publishing of the first modern histories of Brazil, as written by the vanguard of politically independent Brazilians. The figurehead in this endeavour was Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, Visconde de Porto Seguro, a first generation Brazilian born to German immigrant parents in 1816 and labelled by Stuart Schwartz as the 'father of modern Brazilian historical scholarship.'[151] A prolific essayist

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[146] Carvalho, *Porous City*, 80.

[147] Ibid., 80-82.

[148] Ibid., 82.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Stuart B. Schwartz, "Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen: Diplomat, Patriot, Historian," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 47, no. 2 (May, 1967), 185-202. Varnhagen's magnum opus, the aptly titled *História Geral do Brazil* [*sic*], was published between 1854 and 1857. See ibid., 185-88, and Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, *História Geral do Brazil* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert & C. Editores, 1907). Central to Varnhagen's writing was the positivist notion of progress. In this, his work carried echoes of French

on topics ranging from historical treatises to methods for the proper cultivation of tobacco and maté, Varnhagen first postulated a change of capital in his wide-ranging polemic *Memorial Orgânico*, originally published in two volumes in 1849 and 1850.[152] Citing the twin dangers of yellow fever and vulnerability to maritime attack – the author invoked the July 1850 shelling of the port of Paranaguá by Royal Navy gunboats seeking to enforce the terms of the anti-slave trade Aberdeen Act – Varnhagen questioned whether the Brazilian authorities 'lack[ed] the courage, political strength, or faith, to legislate a change of capital?'[153] As a preliminary step, wrote Varnhagen, in times of strife 'let us at least decree the convening of the general assembly of the nation in some place other than Rio […] as the ancient kings of Spain and Portugal did with their courts, so that the representatives of the nation should come to know it with their own eyes, as was once also done in France and England.'[154] While Rio de Janeiro 'would be a good capital if Brazil had it in mind to conquer Africa', posited Varnhagen, 'if our mission is only to preserve intact the lands that belonged to our fathers, and to improve them as much as possible, a strong and central capital is best.'[155] As an independent nation no longer subservient to Lisbon, any advantages conferred by Rio's – or indeed Salvador's – oceanfront disposition could not compensate, Varnhagen argued, 'for the weakness and

philosopher Auguste Comte, the father of the modern positivist movement, which was shortly to have a central role in Brazilian affairs. 'By strict neutrality and devotion to veracity', writes Schwartz, Varnhagen 'could maintain a position outside the events and thereby attain that impartiality which could entitle him to make historical judgments', adding that 'like the nineteenth-century positivist historians Varnhagen became a master of detail, seeing in its collection the key to understanding.' One cannot help but imagine that were he to have seen the positivist motto of Ordem e Progresso flying amid a new capital city in the Goiás hinterland, Varnhagen might have been well satisfied. See Schwartz, "Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen: Diplomat, Patriot, Historian," 190-94. For Comte's exposition of his positivist philosophy, see Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1865). For a more recent scholarly analysis, see Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[152] Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, *Memorial Orgânico: Uma proposta para o Brasil em meados do século XIX* (Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2016).

[153] Ibid., 208.

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid., 209.

compromises that this causes to the nation.'[156] After all, he concluded, 'would China, that great and colossal nation which counts upon the greatest number of subjects, have yielded to England in the question of poisonous opium, had the residence of its emperor not been in maritime Peking?'[157]

Not content to expostulate on the need for a new capital, Varnhagen opined at length on a suitable location for such a city. With his reasoning rooted in the climatic theories of Montesquieu and 'the great Humboldt', Varnhagen put forward a twelve-point argument in favour of founding a new city – he vehemently opposed naming an existing settlement as capital due to its inevitable 'original vice' – followed by a further six criteria necessary for any would-be location.[158] These requirements included a plateau of 'at least 3,000 feet above sea level' 'with little deviations in elevation', 'awash with fresh air and possessing sufficient drainage', and with abundant accessible raw materials for construction.[159] Just such a location, Varnhagen proposed, could be found 'where the headwaters of the Tocantins and Paraná tributaries – the birthplace of the two great rivers that embrace the Empire, the Amazon and the Prata – meet with those of the São Francisco.'[160] 'It is in this central and elevated spot, from which so many veins and arteries originate that circulate throughout the body of the State,' he wrote, 'that we imagine it's true heart might be; that is where we believe the seat of government of the

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156 Ibid., 115.

157 Ibid. Varnhagen had previously drawn attention to various other capitals, both in Europe and the Americas, with regard to their security from waterborne threats: 'What fleet would dare sail up the Thames, with all of its twists and turns, until reaching London? What good are the small craft that can sail up the Seine to Paris, or the Elbe and the Spree to Berlin? How many obstacles does the Baltic and the Gulf of Finland offer a powerful nation like Russia to defend St. Petersburg? […] And here we have new examples in America. As well as the capitals of Mexico, New Granada, Venezuela, Ecuador etc., how would the Argentine Republic have so audaciously resisted France, England, and all others, if its capital had been situated like Montevideo, and not on the banks of a river?' See ibid., 113-14.

158 Ibid., 123-33.

159 Ibid., 128.

160 Ibid., 127.

Empire ought to be fixed.'[161] Comparing such a project to the founding of ancient Thebes, Palmyra, Tyre, Alexandria, and Carthage, Varnhagen ended his treatise with the following appeal:

> For us Brazilians, it is enough to remember the founding of all of Brazil's cities. Bahia [Salvador], was founded by Tomé de Souza in 1550. It and Rio de Janeiro had until recently not a single dwelling. We must recall that the lives of cities as well as of nations are told not in years, but centuries, and Rio has barely seen even three. Brazil is so fertile that any place we choose to exert our resources is bound to prosper, depending only on lesser circumstances. For the new city destined to be the seat of the Empire, we propose the name Imperatória, which makes clear its goal.[162]

Such was his contemporary popularity, Varnhagen's proselytizing did not go unnoticed in government. In a bill of 9 July 1852, Senator Holanda Cavalcanti of Pernambuco called for the reconnaissance of a parcel of the 'notoriously salubrious' terrain between the three rivers identified by Varnhagen, with 'such a territory being destined for the foundation of the capital of the Empire.'[163] Over the course of ten articles, Holanda Cavalcanti laid out provisions for the expropriation of territory, the building of palaces and the paraphernalia of government, and the immediate construction of railways linking the territory to the nearest navigable rivers.[164] In an impassioned second hearing on 10 June 1853, the bill faced considerable opposition, however. Chief opponent Antônio Luís Dantas de Barros Leite unfavourably compared the endeavour to the building of Washington, 'created in much the same way as the noble Senator suggests,' and which was still, according to Dantas, 'little more than a project, with barely more than thirty thousand inhabitants, and with extremely poor trade.'[165] As evidenced by the Unites States example, the senator concluded, 'one cannot

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[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid., 132-33.

[163] See "A Interiorização da Capital do Império," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 54, and "Anexo XV" in ibid., 142-44.

[164] Ibid.

[165] For a full transcript of the congressional exchange, see Pordeus, *Raízes Hisróricos de Brasília*, 59-74.

build a capital from nothing.'[166] In the aftermath of the debate, the bill was sent to the senatorial statistics commission, from which it never emerged.[167] In September 1875 however, the cause again found voice on the senate floor thanks to José Martins da Cruz Jobim of Espírito Santo. Describing Rio de Janeiro as 'fit for a commercial warehouse, but not as the capital of the Empire', Cruz Jobim reiterated the by now well-worn refrain that the capital should be in 'some internal place', 'in the highlands, on the banks of the rivers, where there is an abundance of water.'[168] Once again however, stasis prevailed.

Despite this lack of political traction, Varnhagen persisted in his advocacy. Published in 1877, the pamphlet *A Questão da Capital: Marítima ou no Interior?* brought together both the aforementioned sections from his earlier work and fresh observations following a solo expedition to the Goiás hinterland..[169] Varnhagen reiterated three core factors in favour of an inland capital, namely security from external attack, public health, and the fresh potential a new capital city would grant to promote European migration to Brazil.[170] Whereas maintaining a maritime capital would signify a continuation of the colonial status quo, a central capital, 'as the heart is in the body', would, Varnhagen posited, better serve to integrate Brazil as a sovereign whole.[171] As Morse has astutely observed, in his ambition Varnhagen appreciated that the 'expansionary potential for economic development lay in the politico-administrative, not the mercantile, institutions'

166 Ibid., 67

167 "A Interiorização da Capital do Império," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 54-55.

168 Senador Jobim, "Discurso," in *Anais do Senado Federal*, vol. V, 135, sessão de 10 de setembro de 1875. As quoted in *Coleção Brasília I*, 56-57.

169 See Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, *A Questão da Capital: Marítima ou no Interior?* (Vienna: Imprensa do filho de Carlos Gerold, 1877).

170 Ibid., 11.

171 Ibid., 7.

of the capital.[172] The distinction would prove to be of supreme relevance in the decades and centuries to follow.

Also dreaming of Goiás was a man never to visit Brazil, but whose impact on the narrative of Brasília was and remains enduring. In the final years of a life lived predominantly in and around the city of Turin, on 30 August 1883 Catholic clergyman and children's educator Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco - better known to history as John Bosco, and to Brazilians as Dom Bosco - awoke from a dream the details of which now adorn the Ermida Dom Bosco, a small stone pyramid designed by Oscar Niemeyer and situated across the artificial Lago Paranoá from downtown Brasília:

> Between the fifteenth and twentieth degrees of latitude [a span including the eventual location of the new capital] there was a long and wide stretch of land which arose at a point where a lake was forming. Then a voice said repeatedly: when the mines hidden in the middle of these mountains are dug, there will appear in this place the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey. It will be of inconceivable richness.[173]

Bosco added that his New World vision would become reality following a delay of three generations. Well-known and respected during his lifetime, he was canonized as a saint by the Vatican in 1934.[174] While the following chapters will demonstrate the significant impact of Bosco's vision on the cadre of politicians and designers responsible for Brasília's immediate birth, suffice here to say that in writing his own memoirs, President Kubitschek was keen to situate himself among the third generation of which Bosco had foretold. 'The mysterious forces that rule the world,' wrote Kubitschek, 'have acted in such as a way as to [...] create the opportunity to convert the old dream into reality.'[175] Bosco's importance - perceived or concrete - to the Brasília narrative can be further

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[172] Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," 58.

[173] As reproduced in Holston, *The Modernist City*, 16. For a concise biography of Bosco, see W. R. Ainsworth, *St. John Bosco: The Priest, The Man, The Times* (Leominster: Gracewing Ltd, 1988).

[174] Bosco's fame during his own life is illustrated by the publishing in 1883, the same year of his prophetic dream, of an article detailing his charitable work with the poor children of Turin in Irish periodical *The Irish Monthly*. See M.J.M. "Dom Bosco," *The Irish Monthly*, vol. 11, no. 124 (Oct. 1883), 541-47.

[175] As quoted in Costa Couto, *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*, 34-35.

found not only in the physical spaces of the new capital, where in addition to Niemeyer's shrine both the Santuário Dom Bosco church and the Colégio Dom Bosco stand in his honour, but also his status as Brasília's official patron saint.[176] Although it is not apparent whether or not Bosco had encountered Varnhagen's writings prior to his night of prophetic dreaming, the impact of the pair's visions, be they divinely inspired or not, was certainly profound.

Back in Rio de Janeiro, and following in the lineage of the politically active clubs and societies first established in the city during the 1830s, June 1887 saw the foundation in the capital of the Clube Militar.[177] As Barman writes, from its earliest years the club 'did not hesitate to intervene in political affairs' - a trope epitomised by its first president, Manuel Deodoro da Fonseca.[178] A decorated veteran of the Paraguayan War (1864-70), by the late 1880s Fonseca had become the ringleader of a disaffected group of military officers who viewed the armed forces as being consistently neglected and underfunded.[179] Despite the army's newfound prominence won in light of its bloody intervention against Paraguayan tyrant Francisco Solano López, the number of senior soldiers wielding political sway had nevertheless dwindled during the years immediately following the war.[180] Simultaneously, a younger group of army officers had fallen heavily under the thrall of Comte's positivism, advocating for a 'dictatorial republic as the key to

[176] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 16.

[177] Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 355.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Ibid., 353. For the Paraguayan War – also the War of the Triple Alliance - and its seismic impact on the region, see Thomas L. Whigham, *The Road to Armageddon: Paraguay Versus the Triple Alliance, 1866-70* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017).

[180] Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 353. The so-called 'Military Question', regarding the influences of positivism, republicanism and a corresponding lack of identification with and trust in the monarchy, and a growing degree of bad blood between the armed forces and the government, was a key concern in Brazil throughout the 1870s and 1880s. See Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 65-67.

their country's rapid development.'[181] In the halls of the Clube Militar and with Fonseca at their head, these two marginalised and increasingly radical military factions coalesced into the tip of a republican spear that had already been frustrated in Congress and was poised for more extreme action.[182]

Prior to 1888 however, the focus of even the most ardent republicans had been diverted by the cause of abolition.[183] The story of the emancipation of the slaves in Brazil is one of protracted and piecemeal reform, occurring in fits and starts throughout the duration of Pedro II's reign.[184] Taken from a strict perspective of the urban history of Rio de Janeiro, the impact of emancipation had begun to tell most significantly on the city in the 1870s. A combination of qualified emancipation laws, accelerating industrialisation, and new transport infrastructure encouraged the relocation of thousands of former slaves to Rio and the other urban centres of the Brazilian Southeast.[185] This influx was compounded by a simultaneous and dramatic upswing in international immigration, with waves of Italians, Portuguese, and Germans drawn to the Brazilian capital by the promise of plentiful employment.[186] By the late 1880s, a combination of public opinion among the urban population and economic prerogatives

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[181] Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 353.

[182] This came in spite of the increasing stagnation of the national republican movement - formally established in 1870 - which pockets of rebel students aside had been largely concentrated in the provinces, where its adherents were more preoccupied with winning further local autonomy than galvanising all-out revolution. Attempts to promote the republican cause had found a powerful opponent in congress in the form of Afonso Celso de Assis Figueiredo, Visconde de Ouro Preto. Leader of the Liberal Party and the final president of the Council of Ministers under Dom Pedro II, he had pushed back hard against pro-republican sentiment, much to the resentment of his opponents. See Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 348-56.

[183] Ibid., 348.

[184] For the progression and ultimate success of Brazilian abolitionism, see Laurentino Gomes, *Escravidão – Vol. III* (Porto Alegre: Editora Globo, 2022), Celso Thomas Castilho, *Slave Emancipations and Transformations in Brazilian Political Citizenship* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), and Richard Graham, "Causes for the Abolition of Negro Slavery in Brazil: An Interpretive Essay," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 46, no. 2 (1966), 123-37.

[185] See both Galloway, "The Last Years of Slavery on the Sugar Plantations of Northeastern Brazil," 590, and Graham, "Causes for the Abolition of Negro Slavery in Brazil," 133.

[186] Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 71-73, including an annual breakdown of immigrant numbers.

dictated that both the Liberal and Conservative parties in Congress had officially adopted abolition as a core policy.[187] With final and absolute emancipation signed into law by the emperor's daughter Dona Isabel on 13 May 1888, Fonseca and his colleagues turned their full attention to the goal of establishing a republic.

Come July 1889, it appeared that republican sentiment was gaining traction among the ordinary citizenry of Rio as well as with the military hardliners. On the evening of 15 July, the imperial family were heckled with pro-republican jeers as they left a theatrical performance, before a would-be assassin fired wildly at the royal carriage. Conversely, this brush with regicide shocked ordinary Brazilians to such an extent that support for the monarchical regime was bolstered.[188] The public thus alienated, the army's eventual coup and proclamation of the Brazilian Republic - latterly also known as the Old Republic, or República Velha - in November 1889 was met largely with apathy.[189] With Fonseca installed as the nascent republic's first president, Rio de Janeiro was once again the stage for a fresh iteration of Brazilian self-determinism.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter has attempted to tackle two primary questions. First, to examine how Brazil's first two capitals developed, to understand the factors that influenced this development, and to get a glimpse of what Brazil and Brazilians of the colonial and imperial periods might recognise as being inherent to their capital city in terms of form, function, and appearance. Second, amidst the evolving narrative of urban and cultural history which comes together to tell this first story, I have looked to map the origins of Brasília as an idea, fomented over the decades in the minds of Portuguese imperialists,

[187] Percy Alvin Martin, "Slavery and Abolition in Brazil," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1933), 151-96.

[188] Barman, *Citizen Emperor*, 352.

[189] Ibid., 360-63.

Brazilian polymaths, and Italian seers alike. While I have not attempted the lofty task of documenting every instance of what might be termed 'proto-Brasília' sentiment during the long period of Brazilian history prior to the city's eventual construction, those episodes I have identified demonstrate a clear and consistent thread. From Pombal to Reis and José Bonifácio, to Varnhagen and Dom Bosco, the diverse pantheon of Brasília's heralds have punctuated the narrative of Brazil's modern history with reliable consistency.

As will be made increasingly apparent during the remainder of this thesis, this first chapter has also served a third purpose. Namely, I have looked to establish, sometimes explicitly, those elements within the arc of Brazilian urban history that have formed part of national lore, particularly in the realm of urban heritage and patrimony. Cabral, Tomé de Sousa, the intrepid and brutal *bandeirantes*, the hitherto unbreakable relationship between Brazil's capital cities and its coastline - a relationship defined by both advantages and vulnerabilities - the Inconfidência Mineira and its plotters' dream of a republic of the interior, Varnhagen, and Dom Bosco; all would be invoked by Brasília's builders in their attempt to situate and legitimize their project as being one to serve not only as a symbol of modernity, but as a symbol of Brazil. By drawing on such a frame of reference, I will establish how in creating their capital of the future, Kubitschek, Costa, Niemeyer et al looked expressly to history, and in so doing attempted to build not just a city of the future, but a city imbued with Brazil's past. As Kubitschek would later proclaim in a speech of March 1957, the founding of Brasília, then near at hand, marked the 'continuation of a journey which began with the arrival of Cabral's fleet in Bahia, and continued with Mem de Sá in Rio de Janeiro.'[190]

[190] "Mensagem do Presidente Juscelino Kubitschek à I Semanal Nacional Mudancista (16 de março de 1957)," in *Coleção Brasília IV: Diário de Brasília, 1956-1957* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1960), 199-203.

# CHAPTER II

## *Preliminary Steps Towards a New Capital, 1889-1955*

With the toppling of Dom Pedro II in November 1889, Rio de Janeiro became overnight the crucible of a young republic. As detailed in the previous chapter, despite the extensive list of advocates for a new capital having grown consistently throughout the colonial era and the years following independence, the so-called Cidade Maravilhosa nevertheless continued to function both as the centre of government authority, as well as serving as one of the key symbols of the nation in the minds of both Brazilians and foreigners alike.[1] While the city would continue as capital for a further seven decades, 1889 marked a key turning point. Beginning in the immediate aftermath of the republican coup and continuing in piecemeal fashion until the eve of the Kubitschek presidency in the mid 1950s, legislators from across the political spectrum began the convoluted process of transforming previously unfulfilled ambitions into concrete reality. While none were either willing or able to achieve the ultimate aim of raising a new capital, the law making, surveying, and even symbolic founding that occurred during this period served as the prelude to the events of 1956-1960. Indeed, although some of these preliminary measures yielded little apparent return, or seem just as likely to have arisen from short-sighted politicking as from any genuine intent, all would have some part to play in the eventual construction of Brasília.

A central element in the formalisation of this new era of the Brazilian state was the ratification in early 1891 of a new constitution for the fledgling republic. With its articles drafted in large part by Salvador-born diplomat, abolitionist, and future finance

[1] For the origins of Rio's now ubiquitous epithet and perceptions of the city at the turn of the twentieth century, see Priscilla Oliveira Xavier, "Cidade Maravilhosa: o Rio de Janeiro representado pelas letras," *PragMATIZES - Revista Latino-Americana de Estudos em Cultura*, no. 7 (March 2017), 57-70.

minister Rui Barbosa, the 1891 constitution established Brazil as a federally organised union of twenty states, with a separation of powers modelled on that of the United States.[2] Of the document's ninety-one articles, the second and third read as follows:

> Art. 2 - Each of the former provinces will form a state, and the former Neutral Municipality will constitute the Federal District, continuing to be the Capital of the Union, until the provisions of the following article are implemented.
>
> Art. 3 - Belonging to the Union, on the central plateau of the Republic, a zone of 14,400 square kilometres, to be demarcated in due course for the establishment therein of the future federal capital.[3]

By establishing Rio de Janeiro as the seat of a federal district and providing a constitutionally enshrined provision for the future founding of a new national capital inland, these two short articles marked, for the first time, a formal commitment from the Brazilian state to move away from the coastal hubs and found a supreme seat of government in the interior.

Debates surrounding the inclusion and precise wording of the articles had proved protracted.[4] Broad support was not in doubt. Of the three independently composed draft constitutions produced by the Commissão Especial de Juristas – specially convened for the purpose - all included provision for a change of capital, which it was hoped would enable a consolidation and integration of the national territory, increase security, and provide a more convenient base for resource exploitation and population growth.[5] Despite such backing for the initiative however, progress was slowed by the number of

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[2] For details of the 1891 constitution and Barbosa's role therein, see *Constituicão da Republica dos Estados Unidos do Brasil de 1891* (Rio de Janeiro: Congresso Nacional, 1891), and Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 75.

[3] *Constituicão da Republica dos Estados Unidos do Brasil de 1891.*

[4] For an extensive congressional transcript, see Pordeus, *Raízes Hisróricos de Brasília*, 116-45.

[5] See *Coleção Brasília IIIa: Histôria de uma Idéia* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidëncia da República, 1960), 71.

delegates wishing to influence the debate.[6] Federal deputy and famed artist Pedro Américo captured the sentiments of many of his colleagues when, addressing the chamber in a speech of 27 January 1891, he spoke of the absolute necessity 'to suppress, as soon as possible, the harmful influence of this terrible city [Rio de Janeiro], so saturated with elements harmful to the moral life of the Nation.'[7] Similarly impassioned, Thomaz Delphino argued that while a 'seat of Government on the shore of Bahia, first, and later in Rio de Janeiro was natural in the colonial period', it would be both 'patriotic and politically sound' to move the capital to the interior, thus 'solving, almost involuntarily, the great problem of utilizing the territory of the Nation.'[8] An amendment put forward by Lauro Müller cited Varnhagen in its advocacy of the demarcation of an area of 'four hundred square leagues in the central highlands', there to establish a new federal capital, while his colleague Virgílio Damásio suggested that any such city be named Cidade de Tiradentes after the leader of the 1789 Inconfidência Mineira.[9]

Drafting the legislative machinery to facilitate any future change was contested. This was particularly true with regard to the jurisdictional fate of Rio de Janeiro, its surrounding Município Neutro (established in 1834), and the formation, territorial composition, and governance of any proposed federal district.[10] With consensus eventually reached in February 1891 however, provision for a new capital would

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[6] For examples of advocacy in favour of the move, see "Debates em Tôrno do Art. 2º do Projeto de Constituição, que Dispõe sôbre a Mudança da Capital do País," in *Coleção Brasília* I, 63-64. See also Holston, *The Modernist City*, 17.

[7] Pedro Américo, "discurso", in *Anais da Câmara dos Deputados, 1891* (Rio de Janeiro: Publicação oficial da Câmara dos Deputados, 1891), vol. III, 226. See "Debates em Tôrno do Art. 2º do Projeto de Constituição, que Dispõe sôbre a Mudança da Capital do País," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 67-68.

[8] As quoted in *Coleção Brasília IIIa*, 72.

[9] Ibid., 73.

[10] For a variety of preliminary and rejected drafts of the two constitutional articles, as well as a summary of proceedings, see "Dispositivos sôbre a Localização da Capital da República Segundo Diferentes Projetos da Constituição," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 59-70.

ultimately outlast the Old Republic, being reiterated in similar form in the subsequent constitutions of 1934, 1937, and 1946.[11]

This chapter is broadly divided into three core narratives. The first is the continued tracking of the growth of Rio de Janeiro in that city's decades as capital of the Brazilian republic, prioritising those elements indicative of a trajectory of urban development relevant to the forms of Brasília. I chart various key milestones in Rio's development, and the transformative impact of urban planners, architects, and infrastructure initiatives between the 1890s and the 1950s. The culmination of this discussion forms the second key section; an analysis of the birth of modernism and modernist architecture in the Brazilian context. While I do not attempt a comprehensive survey of the movement, by highlighting a few notable early proponents and examples of modernism in Brazil the intention is to demonstrate the traction of the style in country. As will become evident, Brazilian modernism flourished in a manner somewhat unlike its manifestations elsewhere, with some of the movement's first and most prominent adherents – the architects of Brasília chief among them - incorporating into their work allusions to history and heritage in a way that is central to the wider argument of this thesis. The third and final element of this chapter details the slow but steady progression of what might be called Brasília's early groundwork. Beginning shortly after 1891, the relevant articles of the constitution were followed by a variety of additional measures intended to advance the cause of a new capital city. Over the next sixty years, these comprised the establishment of various commissions and the mounting of a catalogue of government-sponsored expeditions to the interior, initially to delineate the future Distrito Federal and later to conduct geographical surveys of the identified region to determine a more precise location for the would-be city. Not only were these important

[11] Ana Valderez Ayres Neves de Alencar and Leyla Castello Branco Rangel, *Constituições do Brasil: de 1824, 1891, 1934, 1937, 1946 e 1967 e suas alterações* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 1986).

steps on the road towards Brasília, but were also directly informed by prior historic episodes. By analysing and contextualising this process, my aim is to reinforce the argument that to see Brasília divorced from its wider historical arc is to obscure the importance of elements as fundamental to the city's founding as the very land upon which it came to be built.

## *Rejuvenation and Revolt in Rio de Janeiro*

From the perspective of Rio de Janeiro, the four decades of the Old Republic were marked by urbanization, continued waves of international immigration, and the economic and political influence of the city and its hinterland being subject to robust and lasting challenges from the growing economic powerhouses of São Paulo and Minas Gerais.[12] This latter phenomenon, commonly known as *café com leite* after the preeminent coffee and dairy industries of the two states respectively, not only steered political power into the hands of the landed oligarchs so characteristic of the Old Republic, but also marked somewhat of a shift in the role of Brazilian capitals.[13] Previously, both Salvador and earlier incarnations of Rio had been dominant centres of economic gravity as well as political authority, with the latter having risen to prominence as the coastal terminus serving the Minas goldfields.[14] In the era of *café com leite*, São Paulo's new coffee barons instead shipped their crop from the burgeoning port of Santos, home from 1914 to the national Bolsa Oficial de Café and connected to the state capital via a British-built rail

[12] See both José Murilo de Carvalho, *Os bestializados: O Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi* (Rio de Janeiro: Cia. das Letras, 1987) and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 37-40.

[13] For further details, see Cláudia Maria Ribeiro, *O teatro das oligarquias: uma revisão da "política do café com leite"* (Belo Horizonte: Viscardi, 2001).

[14] See Chapter I.

line that was among the most lucrative on the continent.[15] This shifting of urban supremacy can be read as the establishment of a trope – foreseen by Varnhagen the previous century - whereby Brazil's federal capital was functionally distinct from the role of preeminent commercial hub.[16] In the forthcoming administrative sanctuary of Brasília, this notion would be concretized fully.

Alongside its waning economic influence, Rio was also falling behind both in terms of material appearance and the living conditions of its citizens. Between 1890 and 1906, the population of the city near doubled to approximately 800,000.[17] Housing shortages proliferated. The city's poorest inhabitants, including large numbers of former slaves, occupied overcrowded and unsanitary tenement *cortiços*. At the dawn of the Old Republic, approximately twenty percent of Rio's population lived in such conditions.[18] 'As Brazil entered the twentieth century,' wrote Skidmore, 'its cities retained many of the sights, sounds, and smells of their colonial past' - a heady concoction creating 'an ambiance that repelled many foreign visitors.'[19] Barring a number of minor civic projects undertaken during the 1870s under the leadership of the Visconde do Rio Branco, the capital appeared largely the same as it had at the beginning of the previous century. Its streets remained 'narrow, unhygienic, and difficult to navigate', being essentially an iteration of the same medieval-cum-baroque patchwork evident in early Salvador.[20] 'In

[15] The São Paulo-Santos railway, while the most notable example of foreign investment in Brazilian transport infrastructure, was far from unique. Indeed, the role of both road and rail development in facilitating the rapid growth of Brazil's inland cities during the Old Republic was a precursor to the massive programme of highway and air transport investment of the following decades. In linking the coast to the interior, these new transport routes were later key to facilitating the Brasília project in the 1950s. See Robert H. Mattoon Jr., "Railroads, Coffee, and the Growth of Big Business in São Paulo, Brazil," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 57, no. 2 (May 1977), 273-95.

[16] See Chapter I.

[17] Statistics taken from Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 20.

[18] Ibid., 22-23.

[19] Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 76.

[20] Ibid.

short,' opined Skidmore, 'Rio was a poor advertisement for a country hoping to join the North Atlantic march to modernity.'[21]

Despite its retrograde amenities, the city was, as referenced in part during the previous chapter, not wholly unfamiliar with the modernizing efforts of architects and administrators alike. Since Rio de Janeiro's investment as colonial capital in 1763, these initiatives had typically relied on French ideals.[22] Architectural historian David Underwood categorizes these attempts into a series of phases, beginning with the increased reliance of colonial viceroys on 'French military engineering and the artistic models of international neoclassicism' to mould Rio into a city to rival Paris, London, or Lisbon.[23] Beginning in 1902, President Francisco de Paula Rodrigues Alves commissioned a fresh Francophile rejuvenation of the city centre. While Rodrigues Alves himself showed little personal interest in an architectural renaissance - fiscal and political stability being instead paramount - under the auspices of Rio's prefect, Francisco Pereira Passos, a programme of 'building, improvement, beautification, and rationalization' saw downtown Rio morph into a passable imitation of Haussmann's Paris.[24] The development also involved an extensive remodelling of the city's port, which was now

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[21] Ibid.

[22] See Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 130-66.

[23] Ibid., 130, and Underwood, "The Pombaline Style and International Neoclassicism in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro." Following the downfall of Napoleon I, French influence accelerated with the introduction to Rio of the Beaux-Arts style, first initiated in the Brazilian context by the arrival of a French artistic mission led by architect Grandjean de Montigny in 1816. See Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 131. French architects were not universally popular among Brazilian politicians however, with Liberals in the city of Recife bemoaning the former's preeminence to the detriment of native Brazilian architects in the context of a programme of civic works in the 1840s. See Izabel Andrade Marson, "Monarquia, empreendimentos e revolução: entre o laissez-faire e a proteção à 'industria nacional' - origens da Revolução Praieira (1842-1848)," in Izabel Andrade Marson and Cecília H. L. de S. Oliveira (eds.), *Monarquia, Liberalismo e Negócios no Brazil: 1780-1860* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 2013), 253-70.

[24] Chosen to remodel Paris by Napoleon III, Georges-Eugène Haussmann oversaw a radical renovation of the city during the years 1853-70. See David H. Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 25-39. See also Jeffrey D. Needell, "Making the Carioca Belle Epoque Concrete," 400-06, and Needell, "The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904," 243.

joined to the commercial and industrial areas via broad boulevards again strongly reminiscent of the French capital.[25] In commissioning the project, historian Jeff Needell is convincing in suggesting that Rodrigues Alves aimed to 'dramatically strengthen Rio's role as the nation's port-capital – [a] symbolic and functional neocolonial nexus between North-Atlantic civilization and economy and a "modernizing" Brazil.'[26] In the eyes of the government and high society, Rio's 'Parisian metamorphosis' represented a wholesale attempt to 'signal the advance of Brazil into the ranks of the modern.'[27] Grand new public buildings, including the Biblioteca Nacional and Theatro Municipal [*sic*] (see fig. 2.1), typified this aspiration, even if, as Underwood suggests, the overall result was more an 'eclectic hodgepodge of structures [...] than a unified urban ensemble.'[28]



(fig. 2.1: Theatro Municipal)

[25] See Needell, "Making the Carioca Belle Epoque Concrete:," 400-06.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Needell, "Rio de Janeiro at the Turn of the Century: Modernization and the Parisian Ideal," 83-103.

[28] Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 77 and Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 131.

Nevertheless, revitalized Rio demonstrated the indelible perceptual link between urban development and 'modern' civilization. 'Rio became civilized to the extent she became modern', writes Needell, 'and, in doing so, she served notice that Brazil was "coming of age."'[29] While the planned avenues and boulevards of newly reconfigured central Rio are not perfectly analogous to the radicalism of the Plano Piloto, the reforms marked another step in the heritage of Brazilian urban planning. The restoration of Rio, President Rodrigues Alves claimed, 'in the eyes of the world, will be the start of a new life, the beginning of work in the far-reaching areas of the country which has land for all cultures, climates for all peoples, investment potential for all sorts of capital.'[30]

Despite this grandiose rhetoric however, the president's master plan did not benefit all of Rio's residents. Racial prejudice underpinned the programme of works. The urban planners of Rodrigues Alves's commission had intended their project to propagate the myth of a Europeanized, prosperous, and modern capital.[31] In pursuing this goal, hundreds of tenements and slum dwellings in the centre of the city were ignominiously razed, their occupants displaced to the periphery of town, away from the eyes of visitors. In rebuilding the Avenida Central alone, 640 buildings were levelled - the majority the dwellings of low income, predominantly Black and mestizo occupants.[32] In total, upwards of 1,225 buildings were destroyed.[33] Fundamentally, Rodrigues Alves's 'Europeanization' was not for the benefit of Rio's masses, but rather the elite and

[29] Needell, "Rio de Janeiro at the Turn of the Century: Modernization and the Parisian Ideal," 93.

[30] As quoted in Underwood, "'Civilizing' Rio de Janeiro: Four Centuries of Conquest through Architecture," 48-56.

[31] Needell, *A Tropical Belle Epoque*, 62-68, 115-28, 132-33.

[32] See Carvalho, *Os bestializados*, 93.

[33] Underwood, "'Civilizing' Rio de Janeiro: Four Centuries of Conquest through Architecture," 55.

international visitors.[34] As Brazilian writer Mário de Andrade sardonically commented some years later, Rio still had 'as many shacks as coconut palms.'[35] With explicit regard to the inherent prejudice of the slum clearing, Underwood makes clear that hand in hand with the regeneration and the 'obliteration of much of Rio's so-called primitive or colonial urban fabric', came a 'vicious drive against the "backward" (especially African) elements of Brazilian culture.'[36] 'For the vast majority of Cariocas in the hillside *favelas* or on the streets of modern Rio', he concluded, 'the city's Europeanization may have been at best just a huge white facade.'[37] In the push to make the centre of Rio an island of 'civility', wealth, and whiteness, the effects of the city's regeneration also foreshadowed the societal makeup of downtown Brasília, itself destined to become a haven of the elite and the white. While African and indigenous identities were marginalised, Rio continued to look to Europe as a model of 'civilization.'[38]

In 1904, Rodrigues Alves's mission to revitalise Rio had been briefly interrupted by outbreaks of yellow fever, smallpox, and public disorder, peaking in November with

[34] Jeffrey D. Needell, "Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires: Public Space and Public Consciousness in Fin-de-Siecle Latin America," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 37, no. 3 (July 1995), 519-40.

[35] Mário de Andrade, *O turista aprendiz* (São Paulo: Livraria Duas Cidades, 1976), 20.

[36] Underwood, "'Civilizing' Rio de Janeiro: Four Centuries of Conquest through Architecture," 55.

[37] Ibid.

[38] In no arena was this more telling than in sport and recreation. Following the British model, horse racing tracks and cricket and rowing clubs had been established in both Rio and São Paulo in the 1880s and 1890s. These however were rapidly replaced as the pastime of choice by football, another British export and stereotypically working-class game initially reinvented in Brazil as the exclusive preserve of the Europhile elite. By 1905, Fluminense, one of Rio's most cloistered clubs, had overseen the construction of the city's first stadium, the Palladian Estádio das Laranjeiras, virtually adjacent to the palace formerly occupied by the Princess Imperial Dona Isabel. While the rampant growth of football in Rio and across Brazil is not the preserve of this discussion, the teams and stadia that sprang up across Rio de Janeiro during the following half-century had and continue to have an undeniable and culturally profound impact on the city and its people. In Brasília, a plot of land directly at the junction of the central Eixo Monumental and the northern wing of the curving Eixo Rodoviário was left vacant during the city's initial construction. In 1974, the space was filled with the construction of the Éstadio Nacional de Brasília - a paean to an unmistakeable touchstone of Brazilian culture located at the heart of the new capital. See David Goldblatt, *Futebol Nation: A Footballing History of Brazil* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 4-10.

rioting against a government-sponsored vaccination campaign.[39] The initiative was in large part the brainchild of physician Oswaldo Cruz, whose efforts against yellow fever in particular eventually proved highly successful. Nevertheless, Cruz's scheme was perceived as an intensely unwelcome intrusion into the domestic sphere. Local newspaper *Correio da Manhã* lambasted the vaccination programme as a 'monster that pollutes the pure and innocent blood of our children.'[40] In the riots that followed, public fury was not limited to health policy, but was directed also against the wider modernization measures, which continued to alienate many of the city's poor.[41] In contextualising what became known as the Revolta da Vacina as a rejection of the prevailing winds of 'progress', both Needell and Teresa Meade have argued that the events of 1904 represented 'the negation of the *belle époque* and this particular "modernization" in political and symbolic terms.'[42] Simultaneously, the impact of the revolts and the corresponding slowing of Cruz's health initiatives reinforced perceptions of Rio de Janeiro as a place of squalor and sickness. In so doing, and in keeping with the complaints of Reis, Varnhagen, Meira Penna et al detailed in the previous chapter, the capital's suitability as a salubrious site of government was again brought in question.

1910 heralded an even graver form of unrest in the form of military rebellion, throwing again into sharp relief the perils of Rio de Janeiro as a maritime capital. Previously, in a series of revolts in 1893 and 1894, the city had been threatened with naval blockade and bombardment during an uprising of admirals in response to the

[39] Needell, "The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904," 234-44.

[40] As quoted in ibid., 234.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 244 and Needell, "Making the Carioca Belle Epoque Concrete," 400-06. See also Teresa Meade, "'Civilizing Rio de Janeiro': The Public Health Campaign and the Riot of 1904," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 20, no. 2 (Winter, 1986), 301-22.

perceived injustice of the navy's senior officers being excluded from politics.[43] Almost two decades later, the so-called Revolta da Chibata would serve as a fresh demonstration of both racial bigotry and the persistent if indirect influence of the armed forces in policy making, as well as the capital's inherent vulnerability as a seat of government. Against a backdrop of heated racial tensions and poor conditions in the Brazilian Navy, sailors aboard four vessels moored in Guanabara Bay rose up in mutiny.[44] Rio was threatened with bombardment if a series of proposed reforms were not enacted.[45] While the political and military hierarchies argued whether to bow to the sailors' demands, or overpower the mutineers via military intervention, rebel gunners fired intermittent salvoes over the city.[46] Visiting Rio at the time, British politician and intellectual Lord Bryce noted that while at lunch with Brazilian officials, 'suddenly the heavy boom of the guns was heard, and continued at intervals all through the repast', much to the embarrassment of his hosts.[47] While the uprising was eventually quelled following the promise of an amnesty, the vulnerability of littoral Rio de Janeiro to hostility by sea remained painfully

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[43] For a concise summary of the Revolta da Armada, see Shawn C. Smallman, *Fear & Memory in the Brazilian Army and Society, 1889-1954* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 21-22.

[44] In the midst of a turn-of-the-century naval arms race pitting against one another Brazil, Argentina and Chile, the Brazilian admiralty had ordered from British shipyards three state-of-the-art dreadnought battleships, the first two of which - *Minas Geraes* [sic] and *São Paulo* - entered service in April and July 1910 respectively. The third ship, *Rio de Janeiro*, was never delivered, having been sold by the Brazilian government to the Ottoman Empire prior to its completion. The vessel was subsequently confiscated by the British under the auspices of the then First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, presciently fearing an Ottoman alliance with Germany. Despite this investment in materiel however, conditions for Brazilian sailors were uniquely poor. Corporal punishment was ubiquitous for even minor infractions, administered by the overwhelmingly white officer corps to mariners invariably of Black or mixed-race heritage. Only one generation removed from the abolition of slavery, most sailors were the sons of former slaves and had been forcibly enlisted for a mandatory fifteen years of service. See Seward W. Livermore, "Battleship Diplomacy in Latin America: 1905-1925," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 16, no. 1 (Mar. 1944), 31-48, Joseph L. Love, *The Revolt of the Whip* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 20-22 and Shawn C. Smallman, "Military Terror and Silence in Brazil, 1910-1945," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies/ Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, vol. 24, no. 47 (1999), 5-27.

[45] For a full account of the immediate revolt as it unfolded, see Love, *The Revolt of the Whip*, 23-65.

[46] Ibid., 31-33.

[47] As quoted in Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 89. For Bryce's time in Brazil more broadly, see James Bryce, Viscount Bryce, *South America: observations and impressions* (London: Macmillan, 1912).

apparent.[48]

As the twentieth century progressed, the industrialization of Rio continued apace, largely via private enterprise and a growing finance sector cultivated by the city's burgeoning migrant communities.[49] However, even as factories were springing up across the city, the shadow of military unrest again plagued the capital. On 5 July 1922, a group of junior military officers garrisoning the Forte de Copacabana turned the emplacement's guns on the city, looking to extract concessions in favour of a cause soon-to-be known as *tenentismo*. Pushing for wide-ranging political reforms including the institution of the secret ballot and improvements to public education, the *tenentes* served as the latest iteration of the military interventionism apparent in the events of 1889. While the rebels were swiftly apprehended, the *tenentismo* movement continued to grow throughout the decade, its sympathisers including a young politician from Rio Grande do Sul by the name of Getúlio Vargas.[50] Seen together, the military threats posed to Rio de Janeiro in the form of the 1893-94 rebellions, the Revolta da Chibata, and the early actions of the *tenentes* provided consistent evidence that the city's oceanfront topography did not lend itself to that of a secure capital.

Against this backdrop of continued national unrest, on 25 June 1927 French architect Donat-Alfred Agache arrived in Rio de Janeiro.[51] A co-founder of the Société Française d'Urbanistes (SFU) and architect to the French government, Agache had been

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[48] In resolving the Revolta da Chibata, the need to avert the destruction of Rio saw the more liberal-minded faction - spearheaded by Rui Barbosa - initially win out. The subsequent amnesty issued by Congress infuriated the military however, who despite having regained control of the rebel warships compelled President Hermes da Fonseca to pass a decree allowing the Minister of the Navy to discharge without trial sailors judged to be detrimental to discipline. Rebellious sailors were arrested and jailed, where several died from inhumane treatment. See Smallman, "Military Terror and Silence in Brazil, 1910-1945," 8-9.

[49] Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 84-86.

[50] For a summary of the 1922 revolt and the trajectory of *tenentismo* as a whole, see Ilan Rachum, "From young rebels to brokers of national politics: The *tenentes* of Brazil (1922-1967," *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, no. 23 (December 1977), 41-60.

[51] Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 156.

invited to the Brazilian capital by the city's then mayor Antônio Prado Júnior to deliver a series of lectures on urban planning.[52] With Rio in the midst of a crisis of confidence, whereby the modernizing aspirations of the city's administrators and wealthy elite were stymied by the conspicuous absence of coherent organisation or a clarity of vision, Agache had been summoned following his acclaimed presentation at the 1925 Exposition International des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.[53] His initial lectures well received, Agache together with a small group of French and Brazilian associates opened an office in Rio in May 1928.[54] On a retainer from the municipal government, work began on a comprehensive plan to revitalize the city.

Advocating a positivist-influenced model underpinned by his training as a sociologist, Agache proposed a radical reengineering of Rio based on a 'circulation plan' of his own design. Intended to promote 'controlled growth' via a system of efficiently laid out streets complemented by new sanitation, communications, and transport infrastructure, the plan was informed by Agache's philosophy that a city designed to propagate social ideals would act as a moralising force on its inhabitants.[55] Key to this was the notion of zoning, a central tenet of the SFU whereby specific areas of the city were to be allocated specialized functions. The zones Agache proposed encompassed not only those corresponding to administration, industry, and commerce, but also a hierarchical series of residential districts segregated on the basis of socioeconomic

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[52] Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 141. Agache had cut his teeth in city planning in the early part of the century, and in 1912 had placed third in a competition organized by the Australian Department of Home Affairs to design a fresh capital for the new Commonwealth. See Tom Lawrence, "The competition for the plan of Canberra," *The Canberra Times*, 1 January 2001.

[53] Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 132 and 140.

[54] Ibid., 160. Several of the disciples Agache gathered around him in Rio would go on to play central roles in the urban projects of the Vargas era, including in Salvador, Porto Alegre, and in Rio itself. See ibid., 239-40.

[55] Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 145.

means.[56] A monumental 'Porta do Brasil' waterfront plaza was envisioned to serve as the centrepiece of the design, while the industrial quarter of the city would be upgraded with the addition of what Underwood describes as 'unified building blocks with integrated office, shopping, and banking facilities that would promote Rio's capitalist development.'[57] Agache also drew up plans for a series of three axes to better connect the various zones he envisioned, utilizing in part the boulevards built during the earlier Pereira Passos programme of reforms.[58] In line with Meira Penna's comments in the introduction to this thesis with regard to a capital serving as the 'showcase of the nation and the face it shows to the world', Agache's preoccupation with Rio's image and the impression it gave to '*les yeux du monde*' were apparent.[59] To create his supposed idyll, whereby in Agache's own words Rio could become 'among all the tropical regions, the one in which the white man can most easily adapt', further mass clearances of slums and the removal of thousands of 'undesirables' would be required.[60] The displaced were to be rehoused in peripheral 'satellite' communities – a phenomenon later endemic to Brasília - which Agache equated medically to the cutting away of diseased tissue from the healthy whole.[61]

On the eve of the Old Republic's fall and the revolution in which Getúlio Vargas swept to power, and having faced increasingly vocal complaints over delays and alleged

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[56] Ibid., 146 and Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 164-67.

[57] Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 164-67. For a specific study of the proposed Porta do Brasil – also referred to as the Entrada do Brasil, see Lucia M. Costa, "Paisagem e Cultura: Agache e a Entrada do Brasil," *Paisagem e Ambiente*, no. 13, 147-57.

[58] Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 142 and 148.

[59] As quoted in ibid., 133.

[60] See Donat-Alfred Agache, *Cidade do Rio de Janeiro: Extensão, remodelação, embellezamento* (Paris: Foyer Brésilien, 1930), 84, and Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 156.

[61] Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 157.

plagiarism, in August 1930 Agache submitted his proposal, entitled *Cidade do Rio de Janeiro: Extensão, remodelação, embellezamento* [*sic*].[62] Prado Júnior's successor as mayor, Adolfo Bergamini, established the initially short-lived Comissão do Plano da Cidade to decide how best to implement Agache's plan, which included young architect and future master planner of Brasília Lúcio Costa.[63] Unfortunately for both Bergamini and the commission, in September 1931 the former was replaced by populist politician and erstwhile surgeon Pedro Ernesto Baptista, whose policies of education and healthcare reform left little room for expensive townscaping.[64] The commission was officially suspended in 1934, and its provisional approval of an extensive suite of Agache's suggestions was disregarded, in part due to financial uncertainty and the increasingly unfashionable neocolonial French overtones of some of the plan's most monumental elements.[65]

With the establishment of the Estado Novo in 1937, and yet another new mayor in the form of Henrique Dodsworth, Agache's plan for Rio was resurrected. Recognising a harmony of vision between the ideals of the Estado Novo and those espoused by Agache, Dodsworth reformed the Comissão do Plano da Cidade and began rapidly implementing many of Agache's technical infrastructure recommendations, while tending to omit the more grandiose aesthetic components.[66] Transport infrastructure dominated the programme of works, while Agache's zoning policies were apparent both in new regulations governing building height and the redevelopment of the city's historic Castelo

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[62] See Agache, *Cidade do Rio de Janeiro*. A translation into French would follow in 1932, albeit with the titular reference to Rio removed with the intent that the plan could serve as a more general study in capital planning. See ibid., 163 and Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 182-86.

[63] Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 251.

[64] Ibid., 252 and Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 158.

[65] Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 158.

[66] Ibid., 159-60 and Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 255-60.

district.[67] At the entrance to the XI Feira Internacional de Amostras do Rio de Janeiro in 1938, a large-scale map of the city showed all of the ongoing projects, displayed next to a bust of Vargas and a streaming Brazilian flag.[68] The long arm of the president was also evident in the ease with which Dodsworth was able to execute his version of Agache's plan. José de Oliveira Reis, the engineer overseeing the project, later commented that though local interest groups ensured that 'the pressure on Dodsworth was tough, [...] with the support of the president these obstacles were removed and the conclusion guaranteed.'[69] That Dodsworth remained in office throughout the entirety of the Estado Novo period was also an undoubted factor in the scope and success of the programme.

The lineage between Agache's vision for Rio and the reality of Brasília is readily apparent in the fundamental layout of the two cities, one imagined, the other still to rise. Both had footprints based around dominating arterial axes, and zoning intended to create districts of unified function while keeping apart those populations deemed superfluous or unbecoming.[70] Ideologically, Agache's commitment to imposing 'social change from above' would also underpin Lúcio Costa's Plano Piloto, with the latter's 'politico-administrative' core of the Praça dos Três Poderes echoing Agache's would-be command centre of the Porta do Brasil.[71] While Costa would dub his iteration 'the Versailles of the People', the intention of both was to create a nouveau 'absolutist court', designed to 'colonize the social order [...] in the name of some vaguely defined

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[67] For an exhaustive survey of the projects overseen by the Dodsworth administration, see Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 255-88. The Castelo district itself had previously been an archetype of Portuguese Rio. The area was initially razed in the early 1920s by mayor Carlos Sampaio, but had yet to be redeveloped. See ibid., 47-48.

[68] Ibid., 259-60.

[69] José de Oliveira Reis, *O Rio de Janeiro e seus prefeitos: Projetos de alinhamento* (Rio de Janeiro: Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1977), 111.

[70] See for example Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 40-52 and Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 162-63.

[71] Ibid.

consensus', which inherently excluded the poor, the working class, and the non-white.[72] Underwood and Yves Bruand are both forthright on the significance of Agache to Costa and his generation of Brazilian architects and urban planners, a group also heavily influenced by Swiss-French modernist pioneer Le Corbusier.[73] Without the 'introductory course' provided by Agache, asserts Underwood, 'the Brazilians' rapid assimilation of the principles of Le Corbusier is hardly imaginable.'[74]

## *The Birth of Brazilian Modernism*

While urban planners worked to remodel Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's architects, alongside their contemporaries across the creative fields, were quick to channel the growing influence of the newly emerging European modernist movement and make it their own. Le Corbusier himself first visited Brazil in 1929, as part of a South American lecture tour that included stops in Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Asunción.[75] Like Agache, he made extensive use of aerial observation to gain a fuller perspective of the cities he visited, which in the case of Rio culminated in his sketching of a plan to redesign the city just as Agache was finalising his own.[76] Aware of the latter's project however, Le Corbusier wrote that he had ultimately 'excluded Rio' from his

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[72] Ibid. and Lúcio Costa, *Sobre arquitetura*, 344.

[73] Born Charles-Édouard Jeanneret in 1887, Le Corbusier was one of the twentieth century's most influential architects and urban planners, and an early pioneer of the modernist movement. A founder member of CIAM (see below), examples of his work can be found across Europe and the Americas, as well as in India, where he was responsible for the planned city of Chandigarh. His enigmatic sobriquet, meaning 'the crow-like one' was an adaptation of his grandfather's surname and first adopted by the architect in 1920. For reference, see for example Curtis, *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*, and Frampton, *Le Corbusier: Architect and Visionary*.

[74] See both Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 162, and Bruand, *Arquitetura Contemporânea no Brasil*, 336.

[75] See Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 188-98, and Adnan Morshed, "The Cultural Politics of Aerial Vision: Le Corbusier in Brazil (1929)," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)*, vol. 55, no. 4 (May 2002), 201-10.

[76] See Morshed, "The Cultural Politics of Aerial Vision: Le Corbusier in Brazil (1929)" for the profound influence of air travel on Le Corbusier's Brazilian odyssey and his work as a whole.

'architectural mission in South America, because […] Agache of Paris is at the moment working on the plans for the development of the city, and one should never disturb another in their work.'[77] Fittingly, Le Corbusier's interest in Brazil stemmed from a rumour circulating among the Brazilian artistic community in Paris. Via his friend and compatriot Blaise Cendrars, in July 1926 Le Corbusier had learned of a suggestion that the Brazilian government was considering the prospect of building a new capital city, away from the coast.[78] Convinced of his own suitability for such a project, in a letter of December 1927 Le Corbusier lamented that it appeared as though Agache - who he sneeringly described as being known only 'for his picturesque and romantic little compositions' - had made such a possibility redundant with his redesign of Rio.[79] Departing Brazil in December 1929, Le Corbusier's influence on the country's modernist designers and urban planners would have to wait.[80]

São Paulo, rather than Rio de Janeiro, had played host to the very first incarnation of modernist architecture in Brazil, when in 1928 Soviet expatriate architect Gregori Warchavchik completed his Casa Modernista da Rua Santa Cruz, a personal residence widely acknowledged as 'the first modernist building in all of Latin America', and which was described in the local press as a 'rational house, comfortable, purely utilitarian, full of air, light, [and] joy.'[81] Warchavchik quickly became a figurehead for aspiring young Brazilian architects, assembling a coterie of disciples including the up-and-coming Costa. Le Corbusier had met Warchavchik on his trip of 1929, and later

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[77] Le Corbusier, *Precisions: On the Present State of Architecture and City Planning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 236.

[78] See Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 187 and Silva Pereira and Rodrigues dos Santos, *Le Corbusier e o Brasil*, 42.

[79] As quoted in Pereira et al, *Le Corbusier e o Brasil*, 43.

[80] Moreira suggests that in fact it would not be until after World War II that the full force of Le Corbusier's influence would be felt in Brazil. See Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 5 and 198.

[81] See Ferraz, *Warchavchik e a introdução da nova arquitetura no Brasil*, 27.

nominated him as the South American representative to the Congrés Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) - a hugely influential body with which Costa in particular was to become closely associated.[82] In 1930, Warchavchik and Costa opened an architecture studio together in Rio, where in 1932 they were joined by Oscar Neimeyer, then a young apprentice draughtsman.[83] Alongside landscape designer and fellow Brasília progenitor Roberto Burle Marx, Neimeyer had previously studied under Costa at the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes - a faculty of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro where Costa had served briefly as director.[84]

Warchavchik's pioneering work constituted the architectural vanguard of a wider modernist movement, which in Brazil would take on a particular and unique local flavour. Previously, and as seen in the earlier reforms of Rio, 'European' had been a byword for culture and sophistication, with colonialism 'interpreted as a gift or at least bearing ennobling gifts' of language, culture, and race.[85] Beginning in the 1920s however, Brazilians had begun to reject these traditional attitudes regarding what constituted the pinnacle of cultural aspiration.[86] Sparked by the Semana de Arte Moderna festival held in São Paulo in February 1922, visual artists, musicians, and writers such as Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Heitor Villa-Lobos, Tarsila do Amaral, Mário de Andrade, Menotti Del Picchia, Graça Aranha, Ronald de Carvalho, and Oswald de Andrade began to embrace

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[82] Hensel, Kubokawa, and Niemeyer, "Building Brazil: Part I: 1900-1964," 48-54.

[83] Cavalcanti, *When Brazil was Modern*, 348-49.

[84] Hensel et al, "Building Brazil: Part I: 1900-1964," 50.

[85] Styliane Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil, or How to Brew a Brazilian Stew," *National Identities*, vol. 7, no. 3 (September 2005), 245-64.

[86] Among the early champions of this reexamining of Brazilian cultural heritage in the political realm was then-president Epitácio Pessoa, who in 1922 signed into law the creation of the Museu Histórico Nacional, with the intention of creating, in the President's own words, a permanent 'school of patriotism for the understanding of our past.' Pessoa also decreed that the neocolonial style of architecture be mandatory for any new buildings officially representing Brazil overseas. See Decreto no. 15.596, signed 2 August 1922, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação, and Daryle Williams, "'Ad perpetuam rei memoriam': The Vargas Regime and Brazil's National Historical Patrimony, 1930-1945," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, (Winter 1994), 45-75.

native Brazilian themes, including indigenous and Black subjects, while rejecting European influences.[87] In 1922, Del Picchia called for the 'Brazilianisation of Brazil', while de Carvalho exhorted his countrymen to 'forget the marble of the Acropolis and the towers of the Gothic cathedrals.'[88] In a São Paulo newspaper in 1925, architecture student Rino Levi advocated that Brazil's cities ought adopt their own unique architectural and cultural flavour, writing of the need for 'city aesthetics of a Brazilian nature.'[89] Quite what this 'Brazilian nature' constituted remained a topic of profound debate, however.

Influenced by the then-contemporary works of pioneering sociologist Gilberto Freyre, Brazilian intellectuals and artists were adopting a new conception of what it was to be Brazilian and modern.[90] Hallmarks of Brazil's ethnic diversity, including the festival of *carnaval*, *samba* music, *cachaça* cane rum, the black bean stew *feijoada*, and the previously outlawed martial art of *capoeira* were all appropriated by Freyre and his ilk as symbols of a euphemistically labelled '*mestiço* nationalism.'[91] The intention, however naïve, was to demonstrate that Brazil had overcome its history of racial prejudice and emerged with a

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[87] See Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 249 and Starita, "Brasilidade in Built Form," 34-55.

[88] As quoted in E. Bradford Burns, *A History of Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 274, and Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 249.

[89] Rino Levi, "The architecture and aesthetics of the city," in *Brasil, 1920-1950: De la Antropofagia a Brasília* (exhibition catalogue) (Valencia: IVAM/VEGAP, 2000), 619-20.

[90] First published in 1933, Freyre's most notable work, *Casa-Grande e Senzala* - commonly translated as *The Masters and the Slaves* - explored in romanticized terms the literal and cultural miscegenation resulting from Brazil's heritage of slavery, characterising the result as a virtuous and uniquely Brazilian trait. As per Peter Robb, Freyre's work provided a seductive and seemingly guilt-free tonic for those looking to sanitize the country's diversity and forge a new sense of national identity. See both Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande e Senzala: formação da família brasileira sob o regime de economia patriarcal* (Lisbon: Livros do Brasil, 1962), and Peter Robb, *A Death in Brazil* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 24-25. For a direct examination of the link Freyre identified between Brazilian national identity and architecture, see Starita, "Brasilidade in Built Form," 126-32.

[91] Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 253.

harmonious and syncretic culture all its own.[92] In his 1928 work *Manifesto Antropófago*, Oswald de Andrade typified this freshly concocted national mythology. In Brazil, he asserted, the Old World opera of Wagner 'yields to the samba schools of Botafogo. Barbaric, but ours.'[93] Freyre's work extrapolated this redefinition of the colonial artistic legacy as something uniquely Brazilian, which came to embody 'Brazilian high art heritage.'[94]

Architecturally, the baroque of Minas Gerais was heralded as the archetypal blend of (colonial) heritage and inherent *brasilidade*; in part a product of the region's historic prosperity and relative isolation.[95] Philippou described how:

> Brazil's Age of Gold became an idealised Brazilian Golden Age, centred on the cities of Minas Gerais, the christened cradle of the national past, the creation of Portuguese and African prospectors, embodied in the Baroque landmarks of Brazilianness. The reappraisal of the Indian, the African and the popular did not overthrow the colonial. The artists and architects who embraced Modernism turned towards the colonial past in search of their cultural roots.[96]

Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, the founding director of the Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (SPHAN) articulated this phenomenon when, in 1936, he declared that 'the poetry of the Brazilian church of the colonial period is, for us, more moving than the Parthenon, and any statue that Aleijadinho carved into soapstone for the churchyard of Congonhas speaks to our imagination more loudly than

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[92] Ibid. See also Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974).

[93] Oswald de Andrade, "Manifesto Antropófago," *Brasil, 1920-1950: De la Antropofagia a Brasília*, 591-92.

[94] Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 252. In 1936, the publication of Freyre's fellow sociologist and historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's landmark text *Raízes do Brasil* further explored the historical origins of Brazilian culture and the national psyche. Via his analogy of the 'cordial man', moulded from Brazil's indigenous, African, and European influences and the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and oligarchy, Holanda shone a light on what he perceived to be the nation's failure to embrace progress and engage in critical public discourse. See Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*.

[95] Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 252. For a broader examination of Brazilian baroque, see Maurice Pianzola, *Brasil barroco* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1975), Affonso Avila, *Iniciação ao barroco mineiro* (São Paulo: Nobel, 1984), and Washington Peluso Albino de Souza, *Minas do ouro e do barroco* (Belo Horizonte: Barlavaneto, 2000).

[96] As quoted in Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 252.

Michelangelo's *Moses*.'[97] As a tool to champion his own brand of nationalism, Vargas seized upon the opportunity offered by this new interpretation. Minas's Ouro Preto was pronounced 'the Mecca of tradition.'[98] From afar, Le Corbusier also weighed in on the debate, encouraging artists across the continent to cast aside European ideals. 'Bourgeois Europe is a weight for Latin America' he announced. 'Free yourselves! Bourgeois Europe is virtually dead. The time has come.'[99] According to Philippou, 'European Modernism was not rejected, but Brazilians were not proselytised either; they appropriated Modernism and transformed it in the manner their forefathers had transformed Catholicism: they made [to quote Oswald de Andrade] "Christ to be born in Bahia. Or in Belém do Pará."'[100]

Lúcio Costa, another of SPHANs founder members, was at the heart of this paradoxical bridging of worlds.[101] Modernist architecture of the European and North

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[97] As quoted in Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 105. For the role of SPHAN in the modernist movement, see Starita, "Brasilidade in Built Form," 74-83. Sculptor Aleijadinho – the sobriquet of Antônio Francisco Lisboa – was born in Vila Rica (Ouro Preto) in 1730. Despite suffering from what appears to have been acute leprosy throughout his working life and active exclusively in Minas Gerais, he has become consistently recognized as the preeminent exponent of Brazilian baroque. While concrete biographical details are subject to conjecture, he has nevertheless been the topic of a diverse range of scholarly attention. By way of example, see Fernando Jorge, *O Aleijadinho: sua vida, sua obra, seu gênio* (São Paulo: Difel, 1984), and Fábio Magalhães (ed.), *Aleijadinho e seu tempo: fé, engenho e arte* (Rio de Janeiro: CCBB, 2007). The *Moses* in question was created by Michelangelo to adorn the tomb of Pope Julius II, of which more to follow.

[98] See Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, 254.

[99] As quoted in Pereira et al, *Le Corbusier e o Brasil*, 70-71. Notwithstanding Le Corbusier's stirring exhortation, the adoption and adaptation of modernism and modernist architecture across Latin America varied widely. Mauro Guillén's comparison of the movement's impact in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina shows that while Mexican architects such as Juan O'Gorman embraced the modernist functionalism of Le Corbusier, neocolonial styles were still widely exalted, particularly under the auspices of Minister of Education José Vasconcelos (1920-24). In a manner not wholly dissimilar to the early exponents of Freyre-inspired *brasilidade*, Vasconcelos promoted a widespread programme of mural painting on public buildings across Mexico, seeking to celebrate the 'local dimensions of art and architecture' using nativist themes to glorify the post-revolutionary regime. By contrast, in Argentina European-inspired neocolonial and neoclassical styles continued to dominate, particularly under the Perón government of the 1940s and 1950s. While the country did play host to isolated manifestations of modernist art and architecture, most notably thanks to the efforts of the short-lived Grupo Austral, the movement struggled to gain a foothold and remained largely marginalized. See Guillén, "Modernism without Modernity," 6-34.

[100] Andrade, "Manifesto Antropófago," 591.

[101] For Costa's seminal role with SPHAN, see Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 237-38.

American school - often simply called the International Style - was built upon the cold, machine-age principles of rationalism, with efficiency, precision, simplicity, and functionality central. For Alfred Barr - the first director of New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) - three core tenets underscored the movement:

> Emphasis upon volume-space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and, lastly, dependence on the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament.[102]

Signposted by his own early career as an exponent of neo-colonial architecture, however, Costa mirrored his countrymen in the literary and visual arts by subverting the International Style with a uniquely Brazilian interpretation that recalled the newly esteemed aesthetic of the colonial period - an era he too understood as the seed of Brazilian identity.[103] Lauro Cavalcanti, among the foremost scholars of Brazilian modernist architecture, writes that:

> While embracing the new doctrine [of modernism], Costa did not forget the qualities found in past colonial architecture [...] Costa found that these properties had direct affinity to the modernist principles of structural truth and decorative restraint, thus claiming for Brazilian modernist architects the simultaneous role of innovators and followers of traditional principles.[104]

In advocating for his interpretation of modernism as reimagined in Brazil, Costa himself argued for the new architecture to be 'linked [...] to the purest Mediterranean traditions.'[105] Indeed, in Costa's eyes a modernist interpretation was the most authentic approach with which to pay homage to the baroque, denigrating as 'superficial' the more straightforward copycat designs preferred by the neo-colonialists.[106] Scholar José Pessôa

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[102] Alfred H. Barr Jr. "Preface," in Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 29.

[103] See Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 14-31.

[104] Ibid., 16.

[105] Lúcio Costa, "Reasons for the new architecture," 637.

[106] Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 17.

succinctly captured the subliminal, uniquely Brazilian lineage of this new architecture:

> From the 1930s onwards, modernists constructed a Brazilian identity based on a collection of colonial churches and fortresses, vernacular architecture of eighteenth-century historical city centers, and nineteenth-century neoclassical palaces. Modern architecture appeared along this heritage continuum as an extension of a colonial aesthetic identity that projected Brazil into the future. The unadorned simplicity of colonial architecture made of mud walls and wood provided an alibi for nationalizing an international and functionalist architecture while countering the dominant academicist style: if in the past there were free-standing wooden structures filled in with mud bricks, then in the present there will be freestanding reinforced concrete structures that could be either glazed or filled with masonry. A national character would therefore find its natural expression in modern functionalist architecture by combining the project of an industrialized future with the perfect translation of Portuguese America's aesthetic tradition.[107]

Urban historian Fernando Diniz Moreira has argued that Costa's interpretation sought inspiration from the simple authenticity the latter ascribed to 'anonymous, simple and functional buildings that demonstrated honesty of construction, patterns of living, and appropriateness to their time and place.'[108] As Costa himself wrote in 1987, 'Bahia, Recife, and the old cities of Minas Gerais made me understand the real architecture… A contemporary architecture, according to our materials and conditions, habits and culture. Nothing more, only this.'[109] In this assertion, Costa firmly rejected the neo-colonial work of his youth as decorative, decadent, and dishonest, arguing that 'real' colonial architecture 'tells the truth, [and] does not lie.'[110] Instead, by incorporating the key tenets of colonial architecture into the modern, Costa proposed how a suitably nuanced and culturally sensitive response might be found to the 'challenge of the new age.'[111] In his 1995 memoir *Registro de uma Vivência*, Costa expanded on his notion that at its root, 'authentic' Brazilian architecture was the product of a marriage between simple

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[107] José Pessôa, "Protected by Law: The Superquadra's 'Historic' Modernity," in el-Dahdah (ed.), *Brazil Case: Lucio Costa Brasília's Superquadra*, 79-89.

[108] Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," 259-75.

[109] Lúcio Costa, "Uma Escola Viva de Belas Artes," in A. Xavier (ed.), *Depoimento de uma Geração* (São Paulo: PINI, 1987), 48.

[110] Ibid., 46.

[111] Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," 266.

Portuguese colonial models – themselves heavily influenced by Moorish designs, the legacy of which remained in the *brises-soleil* and *pilotis* so prevalent in Costa's work – and local Brazilian conditions.[112] Arriving at this realisation, wrote the architect, 'I felt into the past in its simplicity, purity, a real past. That was new for me. It was a revelation.'[113] Scholars have typified this process of discovery and development as fundamentally a reconciliation of 'old and new', 'adaptable to different constraints and changes, without losing its essential characteristics.'[114] In so doing, Costa established a school of Brazilian architecture, the so-called Escola Carioca, of which Niemeyer would come to be the crowning exponent.[115] In Costa's own analysis, the movement would see its natural conclusion in the form of Brasília.[116]

In 1935, Costa, Niemeyer, and several colleagues were commissioned by minister for education Gustavo Capanema to design a building for the newly amalgamated Ministério da Educação e Saúde (hereafter the 'MES Building', see figs. 2.2 and 2.3), to comprise part of the redesigned Castelo district of Rio de Janeiro.[117] When the project, featuring consultancy from Le Corbusier, was completed in 1943, Costa described it as the 'final milestone of the new Brazilian architecture.'[118] As the most striking early

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[112] Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência*, 71. For Moorish influence, see Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," 270.

[113] Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência*, 27.

[114] Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," 273.

[115] Ibid., 266.

[116] Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência*, 157-58.

[117] Hensel et al, "Building Brazil: Part I: 1900-1964," 50. Capanema was also the driving force behind the foundation of SPHAN in January 1937, reflected in the affiliation of the latter to the Ministry of Education and Health. The MES Building was subsequently renamed the Palácio Gustavo Capanema, a name it retains today.

[118] As quoted in ibid. Le Corbusier returned to Brazil to provide consultancy services on the project in June 1936, remaining for approximately a month. It was during this period that Niemeyer in particular became enamoured with the European's approach, with the former being described as striking up such a close working relationship with Le Corbusier as to be described the latter's 'sacristan.' Under the tutelage of Le Corbusier, Niemeyer was transformed, from a hitherto 'mediocre student and discreet architect' to an awakened genius in his own right. Costa later wrote that 'Le Corbusier's greatest legacy was Oscar

example of a high-rise slab block in Latin America, and certainly in Brazil, the building attracted admiring glances. Curator Philip Goodwin, visiting from MoMA, described the structure as 'the most advanced building of the Americas'.[119] In his catalogue accompanying MoMA's 1943 exhibition 'Brazil Builds', Goodwin proclaimed that 'while Federal classic in Washington, Royal Academy archaeology in London, and Nazi classic in Munich are still triumphant... Rio can boast the most beautiful government building in the Western hemisphere.'[120]



Fig. 2.2: Palácio Gustavo Capanema, previously home to the Ministério da Educação e Saúde.

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Niemeyer himself.' As quoted in Márcia Abos, "Pesquisadores ressaltam legado de Niemeyer para a arquitetura," *O Globo*, 6 June 2012, Acervo O Globo. For additional information regarding the role of Le Corbusier in the MES project, see Carlos Eduardo Comas, "Modern Architecture, Brazilian Corollary," *AA Files*, no. 36 (Summer 1998), 3-13.

[119] Goodwin, *Brazil Builds*, 92

[120] Ibid., and Hensel et al, "Building Brazil: Part I: 1900-1964," 50. Such was the influence of Goodwin's assessment that it prompted Brazilian architect Henrique Mindlin to comment, during a lecture at London's Royal College of Art in 1961, that Brazil 'was discovered twice, once in 1500 by Pedro Alvares Cabral [*sic*], the Portuguese navigator; the second time in 1942 by Philip Goodwin.' As quoted in Zilah Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil* (London: Spon Press, 2001), 192. See also Patricio del Real, "Building a Continent: The Idea of Latin American Architecture in the Early Postwar," PhD diss., (Columbia University, 2012), 165-91.

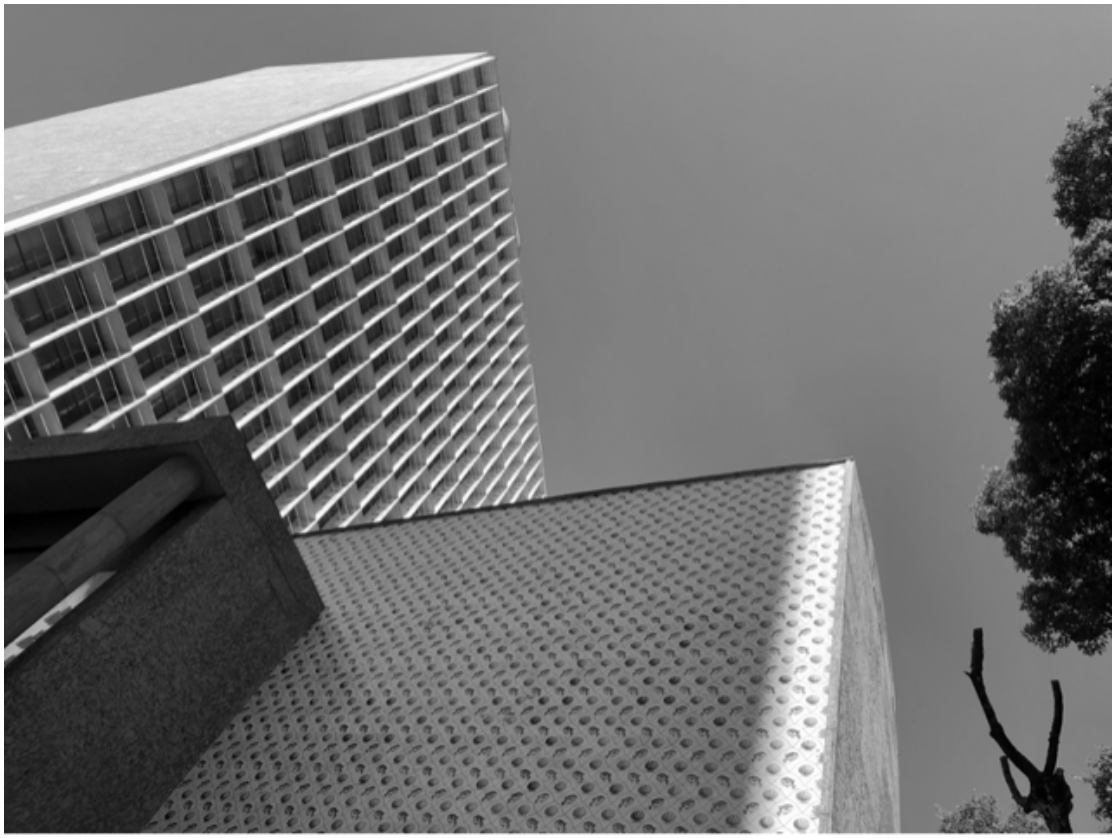


Fig. 2.3: Palácio Gustavo Capanema (II).

In its design and finishing details, the MES Building was the first prominent example of the 'tropical rereading' of modernist architecture that would become the hallmark of the movement in Brazil.[121] Allusions to the country's colonial heritage were manifold. Arranged by artist Cândido Portinari, murals of *azulejos* - the ubiquitous blue and white hand-painted tiles of Portuguese origin so typical of the baroque era - adorned the building's façade and interiors, with designs symbolizing the sugarcane and coffee that had defined the narrative of Brazilian international commerce.[122] Evoking the traditional construction materials of the region, the *pilotis* upon which the building was supported were faced with rose-hued granite, while shutter-like *brises-soleil* shielded the

[121] Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 15

[122] Jaguaribe, "Modernist Ruins," 295-312.

windows on the upper floors.[123] Elizabeth Mock, a colleague of Goodwin at MoMA and a key early voice in articulating the linkages between the new Brazilian modernism and the country's baroque heritage to Anglophone audiences, observed that these seemingly humble sun shades spoke to a wider trend. In reference to the MES Building's *brises-soleil*, Mock described how 'for centuries Brazilians had shaded their houses with covered verandas and projecting eaves, with lattice-work and shutters. The same insistence on façade though in very different terms is found in the bold outlines and elaborately sculpted fronts of Brazil's eighteenth century baroque churches.'[124] Similarly, the American characterized the building's *pilotis* as borrowing from the 'old houses of [the] region', which had historically employed similar structures to insulate against cold and damp, while the arrangements of *azulejos* were rooted in the 'ample historical precedent' of the colonial-era structures of Bahia and Minas Gerais.[125] In combination, these features typified a hybridized approach that would come to define modernist architecture in Brazil. 'The "new" modernity of the MES', wrote scholar of Brazilian culture Beatriz Jaguaribe, 'was inserted into a pattern of allegorical prefigurations wherein the "new" referred to the past in order to project the future.'[126]

Designed by Burle Marx, the MES Building also featured entrance-level and rooftop gardens comprised abstract compositions of indigenous flora, hitherto largely overlooked in Brazil in favour of more regimented and manicured arrangements inspired by the gardens of the French and English aristocracy.[127] At the behest of Le Corbusier, a

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[123] See Valerie Fraser, "Cannibalizing Le Corbusier," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Jun. 2000), 180-93, and Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 15.

[124] Elizabeth B. Mock, "Building for Tomorrow," *Travel*, June 1943, 29-32.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Jaguaribe, "Modernist Ruins," 304.

[127] See both Fraser, "Cannibalizing Le Corbusier," 188 and Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 15.

file of mature *Roystonea oleracea* palms was installed to separate the ministry premises from the street.[128] The trees - the same variety as had been first introduced to Rio under Dom João in 1808 - had since become a favourite of Brazilian landscaper gardeners, being somewhat sensationally described by Philippou as 'the most celebrated import of colonial times.'[129] Inserted into the MES ensemble, the soaring imperial palms provided a further 'legitimate physical framework [and] indispensable element of Brazilian Modernist architecture.'[130] In concert, the completed project later prompted Jaguaribe to observe that the 'new modern Brazilian architecture [as manifested in the MES Building] sought to encompass a multicultural heritage not by folklorist [*sic*] appropriation but by means of the evocation of atemporal universal forms that expressed its historical process.'[131]

With its marrying of the more orthodox modernist stylings of Le Corbusier and the *brasilidade* sensibilities of Costa, Burle Marx, et al, the MES Building demonstrated a direction of travel that would culminate in Brasília. In the intervening period, the careers of the key protagonists prospered. As the 'foremost theoretician of modern Brazilian architecture', Costa continued to '[denounce] as false the opposition between past and future, proposing instead to link the new forms to colonial architecture.'[132] This philosophy was particularly evident in Costa's 1937 museum project at São Miguel das Missões. Located near the Rio Grande do Sul/Argentina frontier amid the ruins of the eponymous Spanish-built Jesuit mission station, the museum

> protected the existing ruins and established a dialogue between new transparent glass

[128] Fraser, "Cannibalizing Le Corbusier," 188.

[129] See Philippou, "Modernism and National Identity in Brazil," 260.

[130] Ibid. These references were seemingly lost on several international modernist pioneers, with American architect Richard Neutra commenting to Burle Marx that he found 'no roots of the past' in the latter's work, which he instead described as 'absolutely original.' As quoted in Pietro Maria Bardi, *The Tropical Gardens of Burle Marx* (Amsterdam: Colibris Editore, 1964), 12.

[131] Jaguaribe, "Modernist Ruins," 304.

[132] See Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 4, and Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 16.

> facades and the vestiges of the historic architecture. The transparent museum walls allowed the ruins to be seen, showing the provenance of the pieces on display. At the same time, due to its location between historic elements, the small glass construction was delicately nestled in the historic fabric, demonstrating that the coexistence of colonial architecture and the modern vanguard was not only possible but also visually striking.[133]

Although in sum the project might be described as somewhat unimposing, as a physical representation of the metaphorical dialogue between past and present inherent to the work of the Brazilian modernists, the museum serves as a neat and timely symbol.

In 1938, Costa and SPHAN collaborated with the government of Minas Gerais to design a new hotel for the centre of historic Ouro Preto. Having rejected the proposal of initial tender winner and MES Building collaborator Carlos Leão as overbearingly neo-colonial, Costa instead put forward Niemeyer for the project.[134] The pair's relationship was freshly consolidated, after they had collaborated earlier that year to design Brazil's award-winning pavilion for the forthcoming New York World's Fair.[135] As Hugo Segawa wrote in his survey of twentieth century Brazilian architecture, 'Niemeyer's association with Lúcio Costa in New York and the stimulus of his protector turned the dull Niemeyer into an architect responsible for larger and more demanding works.'[136] The collaboration also prompted Costa to further articulate in writing the link between Brazilian modernism and tradition. 'This breaking of rigidity,' wrote Costa with regard to the Brazilian pavilion in New York, 'this ordered movement that moves from one extreme of the composition to the other had indeed some baroque style in it, which is very important to us because it represents, in a way, a link with the traditional spirit of

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[133] Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 16.

[134] Ibid., 21-22.

[135] For an examination of the pavilion as a maturation point in Brazilian and Latin American twentieth century architectural identity, see del Real, "Building a Continent," 88-127.

[136] Segawa, *Architecture of Brazil: 1900-1990*, 105.

Luso-Brazilian architecture.'[137]

If the World's Fair pavilion represented something of a soft landing for Niemeyer, working in conjunction with his great mentor, in the newly christened Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto he would have his breakout solo success. Nestled amid the baroque structures of the town, the hotel paid discreet homage to its surroundings, standing in unprepossessing contrast to its colonial environs. The design included *pilotis* and *brises-soleil* similar to those of the ministry building in Rio, as well as wooden trellises and squared columns intended to 'accentuate the similarity between [modernist and baroque] techniques within the limits imposed by good architecture and without recurring to any simulation process.'[138] Prompted by Costa, Niemeyer also adapted his initial flat-roofed concept to incorporate a sloped clay-tiled design more in keeping with those of the rest of the town.[139] In a letter to SPHAN director Rodrigo de Andrade upon the hotel's completion, Costa wrote that Niemeyer's work tied together the modern and the historic:

> Now, the project of ONS [Oscar Niemeyer Soares] has at least two things in common with them [the modern and the baroque]: beauty and truth... in spite of their difference, the project should not look strange in the vicinity of other works of art, because good architecture of a certain period always goes well with good architecture of any other previous period - what does not combine with anything else is the lack of architecture.[140]

Costa continued:

> [In] the same way that a good ventilator and telephone on a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century table cannot be a reason for awkwardness for those who truly like historical things - only the nouveau riche would try to hide them or fabricate them in the same style, so that they would not contrast with the environment...the construction of a modern hotel, of good architecture, will in no way impair Ouro Preto.[141]

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[137] Costa, "O Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feira Mundial de Nova York – Arquitetos Lúcio Costa/Oscar Niemeyer Filho," 470-80.

[138] Lúcio Costa in a letter to SPHAN director Rodrigo de Andrade, as quoted in Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro*, 114. See also Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 21-22.

[139] Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro*, 114.

[140] As quoted in ibid., 112-14.

[141] Ibid.

In his own memoirs, Niemeyer himself offered only a sourly humorous assessment of the Grande Hotel, describing it as a project he had 'designed with great care and affection', but which had been 'poorly executed' and 'disfigured' by last-minute alterations conducted with an 'innocent yet invariable lack of sensitivity.'[142] Nevertheless, as a precursor to his later work, most pertinently in Brasília, the building remains highly informative. For Segawa, the hotel in Ouro Preto 'was the starting point of an attitude in which the coexistence of the "new" and the "old" takes place with the ethics of evidencing that new insertion into the old mesh, assigning its own identity to it.'[143] 'In other words,' the author continued, 'the new does not copy the old in an attempt to confuse the present with the past.'[144] Rather, the modern 'exists in a way to allow the old architecture to be recognized and valued for being genuine, making itself different from imitations.'[145] Segawa's interpretation, namely that heritage architectural forms served as a central kernel of inspiration within the modernist work of Niemeyer and his contemporaries, captures the unique nature of the movement in Brazil. From the foundation provided by the MES Building and the Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto, among other examples, Brazilian Modernism would go on to flourish. Later, in Brasília, it would reach its apogee.

## *A New Federal District, and Beyond*

While Rio de Janeiro played host to episodic development initiatives and civil and military insurrections, and as Brazilian modernism uttered its first gasps, the promises of the 1891 constitution with regard to a new federal district and capital did not go wholly

[142] Niemeyer, *The Curves of Time*, 63.

[143] Segawa, *Architecture of Brazil: 1900-1990*, 106.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

ignored. Efforts to definitively map a suitable site began the following year, with President Floriano Peixoto's establishment on 17 May 1892 of the Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central do Brasil, headed by the director of the Observatório Astronômico do Rio de Janeiro, Belgian-born Luís Cruls.[146] In June 1892, Cruls and his team of geologists and surveyors set out for the interior.[147] The result of this expedition, laid out in the *Relatório da Comissão Explorada do Planalto Central do Brasil*, published in late 1894, was the demarcation of a parcel of land - the 'Quadrilátero Cruls' - measuring 14,400 square kilometres as per the constitutional article, at the juncture of the Tocantins, São Francisco, and Paranaíba rivers.[148] Of the selection criteria, Hollister Kent – an American urban planner and academic who oversaw a subsequent expedition of 1954/55 – offered the following forthright opinion:

> In the sections of [Cruls's] report concerning the demarcation of the rectangle, by reading between the lines it is apparent that a certain amount of coin flipping took place and that some basic decisions were reached on the limits of the area because of ease in surveying. It must be realised that some of these men had civil engineering training and they thought as surveyors rather than as planners.[149]

For his own part, Cruls defended his methods as following a precedent established by his counterparts in the United States. '[We were] following the example of the United States of North America [*sic*]', he wrote, 'where the boundaries of the states are simply arcs of

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[146] The commission is also known as the 'Comissão Cruls' or 'Missão Cruls', after its leader. For details, see Moema de Rezende Vergara, "Ciência e história no Relatório da Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central na Primeira República," *História, Ciências, Saúde--Manguinhos*, vol. 13 (2006), 909-25. Also "Comissão Demarcadora da Área da Futura Capital," in *Coleção Brasília I*, 72-73. In his role as chief surveyor of the federal district, Cruls might best be understood as a Brazilian equivalent to Andrew Ellicott, leader of the efforts to demarcate the District of Columbia in the nascent United States. Ellicott would later serve as tutor to Meriweather Lewis, of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition. See Silvio A. Bedini, "The Survey of the Federal Territory: Andrew Ellicott and Benjamin Banneker," *Washington History*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1991), 76-95, and William J. Morton, *Andrew Ellicott: The Stargazer who Defined America* (Atlanta: Georgia History Press, 2015).

[147] Rezende Vergara, "Ciência e história no Relatório da Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central na Primeira República," 909-25.

[148] See both Luís Cruls, *Relatório Cruls: Relatório da Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1947) and Djalma Polli Coelho, "A Localização da Nova Capital do Brasil," *Revista Geográfica*, vol. 15, no. 41 (September 1954), 1-31.

[149] Kent, "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 9, and Cruls, *Relatório Cruls*, 36-41.

meridian and arcs of parallel.'[150] In the opening sections of the report, Cruls included additional remarks regarding one location in particular within the broader territory of the quadrilateral. Quoting at length the considerations of Frenchman Auguste Glaziou, a landscape architect attached to the expedition, Cruls identified a valley near the falls of the Paranoá river as offering soil quality, water supply, climate, character, and natural beauty superior to any other, ideally suited to the 'laying out of boulevards and buildings in any direction.'[151] In a letter of December 1894 reproduced in its entirety by Cruls in his report, Glaziou described how the area formed an 'immense plain, with a surface so gently sinuous, [and] rich in clear and delicious watercourses that flow from a slight depression in the terrain.'[152] Twinned with 'magnificent green pastures […] superior to any I have seen in Central Brazil,' the landscape, Glaziou wrote, had no parallel 'except in miniature in old English gardens, designed by Le Nôtre or Paxton.'[153] 'The beauty of the location is so deeply engraved in my memory that I have it constantly in mind', Glaziou concluded.[154] Over the coming decades these observations, as well as the wider improvisational approach of Cruls and his expedition, would come to define much of Brasília's development.

Any corner-cutting notwithstanding, the chosen location of the Quadrilátero Cruls boasted admirers of various stripes. Described by Brazilian general Djalma Polli Coelho as the 'most beautiful of the Mesopotamias' in reference to the siting of ancient

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[150] Cruls, *Relatório Cruls*, 37.

[151] Ibid., 19-21 and Kent, "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 14-15. Despite being characterised by Kent as very much an ancillary character in Cruls's expedition, Glaziou was both well-established in Brazil and a veteran of elite patronage. As testified by a commemorative bust in the estate's grounds, prior to 1889 the Frenchman had been responsible for the re-landscaping of Quinta da Boa Vista, the parkland surrounding the principal imperial residence in Rio de Janeiro.

[152] Cruls, *Relatório Cruls*, 20.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

Babylon amid the Euphrates and the Tigris, the area corresponded closely both to the vision of Dom Bosco and the triple river basin identified by Varnhagen earlier in the century.[155] Indeed, in what historian Moema de Rezende Vergara has explicitly labelled as an attempt to legitimize his mission, in the opening sections of his report Cruls included lengthy excerpts from both Varnhagen and the earlier advocacy of Hipólito da Costa.[156] In so doing, wrote Rezende Vergara, Cruls looked to 'reinforce [...] the idea that the project was an old one, and not conceived in the heated hour of republican revolution.'[157] In his wider writings as well as in the text of the 1894 report, Cruls echoed the by now long-argued benefits of an inland capital. He reiterated Varnhagen in describing how his chosen location 'enjoys an extremely salubrious climate, in which the European migrant does not require acclimatization, as there can be found climatic conditions similar to those offered by the healthiest regions of the European temperate zone.'[158]

In the aftermath of the Cruls expedition, however, stasis once again prevailed in the ambition for a new capital. 'It was not difficult to find proponents who would agree that it would be best for the development of the country to move the Capital,' wrote Hollister Kent, 'but to find enough men in the Government who would push the project

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155 Coelho, "A Localização da Nova Capital do Brasil," 3.

156 Cruls, *Relatório Cruls*, 27-29, and Rezende Vergara, "Ciência e história no Relatório da Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central na Primeira República," 914. For Hipólito da Costa, see Chapter I.

157 Rezende Vergara, "Ciência e história no Relatório da Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central na Primeira República," 914.

158 Luís Cruls, *Planalto Central do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1957), 108. Several years later, a similarly-minded opinion would be championed in somewhat surreal fashion by Theodore Roosevelt, who after losing the 1912 presidential election to Woodrow Wilson had embarked as co-leader of the Expedição Científica Rondon-Roosevelt to map the Amazon basin. Having traversed the western Planalto, Roosevelt wrote in his highly successful memoir of the undertaking that 'the air was wonderful; the vast open spaces gave a sense of abounding vigor and freedom.' 'Surely in the future', the erstwhile president continued, 'this region will be the home of a healthy, highly civilized population […] Any sound northern race could live here; and in such land, with such a climate, there would be much joy of living.' Such notions persisted well into the 1950s, when military engineer General Djalma Polli Coelho wrote that Cruls's location 'would be suitable for those of European blood, including Nordic blood', due to the 'extraordinary amenity of its climate.' See both Theodore Roosevelt Jr., *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* (New York: Scribner's, 1914), 174-76, and Coelho, "A Localização da Nova Capital do Brasil," 6.

actively was another story.'[159] Under Prudente de Morais, Peixoto's successor and Brazil's first civilian president, funds earmarked for the further surveying of the prospective location were reallocated to developing the country's rail network.[160] As Rezende Vergara wrote, 'it can be seen that if in the government of the military-minded Floriano Peixoto the solution to federalism was a geopolitical question of moving the capital, in the civilian phase of the First Republic the realization of federalism was found in the extravagance of political agents.'[161] In December 1905, prominent '*mudancista*' deputy Joaquim Nogueira Paranaguá of Piauí attempted to compel the government once again to act upon the relevant terms of the constitution, with a bill that was rapidly approved and forwarded to constitutional, financial, and diplomatic subcommittees for further scrutiny.[162] Despite the outspoken public support of nationally acclaimed poet and journalist Olavo Bilac, when the bill returned to congress in June 1907 it was soundly defeated, however.[163]

Not until the administration of President Epitácio Pessoa some fifteen years later would further steps be taken towards realising a new capital. Having assumed office in July 1919, and overseeing an administration marked by near continuous civil and military unrest, on 18 January 1922 Pessoa signed a decree providing for the laying of a 'foundation stone' for the new capital, in anticipation later that year of the one-

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159 Kent, "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 15.

160 Rezende Vergara, "Ciência e história no Relatório da Comissão Exploradora do Planalto Central na Primeira República," 919.

161 Ibid. '*Mudancista'* refers to those in favour of moving the capital away from Rio de Janeiro.

162 *Anais do Senado Federal, 1905* (Rio de Janeiro: Publicação oficial da Câmara dos Deputados, 1905), vols. III and IV, 243. As quoted in "O Senado Federal Autoriza a Mudança da Capital para a Área do Interior do País Já Demarcada," in *Coleção Brasília II: Antecedentes Históricos (1897-1945)* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1960), 12.

163 "Olavo Bilac e a Interiorização," in ibid., 12-13.

hundredth anniversary of independence.[164] As per the terms of this latter decree's second article, at noon on 7 September 1922 a whitewashed obelisk was erected on a rocky outcrop in the Quadrilátero Cruls, named the Morro do Centenário in recognition of the occasion.[165] While the gesture offered little more than an occasion of fleeting ceremony, the foundation stone demonstrated an ongoing, if constrained, engagement with constitutional provision for a new federal capital.

Notwithstanding the reiteration of the goal to establish a new capital in the various new constitutions of the 1930s and 1940s, the frequency with which these were promulgated is indicative of the degree to which the focus of those in power was preoccupied with other affairs.[166] While the matter was the subject of some debate during the sitting of the Assembléia Nacional Constituinte, convened from November 1933 to July 1934, the language used in the resulting constitution differed little from the commitments already established at the dawn of the Old Republic.[167] In 1946, immediately following the fall of Vargas's Estado Novo regime and with Brazil having emerged amongst the victors of the Second World War, material efforts finally resumed.[168] Bound by a clause in the new constitution of that year, which stipulated that

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[164] See Decreto no. 4.494, signed 18 January 1922, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação. See also "Projeto de Lei para Execução 'Imediata' da Transferência da Capital para o Interior," in *Coleção Brasília II*, 22-29 and "Anexo XI," in ibid., 117.

[165] Decreto no. 4.494.

[166] Centralization of authority, the feverish promotion of corporatist economic policies, a fascistic undermining of the judiciary, and an increasingly paranoid fixation with suppressing Communist uprisings defined the Vargas-dominated years of 1930-1945. For a concise history of the period, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 4-47 and Paulo Brandi, *Vargas: Da Vida para a História* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar Editores SA, 1983). See also Kent, "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 16-17 and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 108-09.

[167] For relevant excerpts in the debates of the assembly, see "A Capital Federal na Assembléia Nacional Constituinte," in *Coleção Brasília II*, 41-52.

[168] For Brazil in WWII, the fall of the Estado Novo, and the return of democracy, see Frank D. McCann, "Brazil, the United States, and World War II: A Commentary," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1979), 59-76, Leslie Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under Vargas, 1930-1945," in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America, Volume IX: Brazil since 1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 70-86, Leslie Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic, 1945-1964," in ibid., 87-100, and Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 48-80.

'the President of Brazil, within 60 days, shall select a Commission of reliable technicians to conduct studies for the location of the New Capital,' democratically elected president Eurico Gaspar Dutra established the Comissão de Estudos para a Localização da Nova Capital do Brasil, headed by the aforementioned Djalma Polli Coelho.[169] Despite a personal predisposition towards the findings of the earlier Cruls commission, Coelho's initial efforts were stymied by a lack of internal consensus and political indecision. While multiple expeditions and surveying teams were despatched to the interior, tangible results were scarce.[170]

After five further years of purgatory, during which time Dutra was succeeded by the returning Getúlio Vargas, an area of 5,850 square kilometres of territory - of which almost all fell within the original Quadrilátero Cruls – was demarcated by law in January 1953 as the definitive area within which the future capital would be located.[171] For the selection of a precise construction site, an aerial photographic survey was commissioned from Brazilian firm Aerofoto, while the task of drawing up a shortlist of five potential locations within the territory delineated by the law of 1953 was awarded to American firm Donald J. Belcher & Associates of Ithaca, New York.[172] Responsibility for the choosing of which of these shortlisted locations – code-named Amarelo, Azul, Vermelho, Verde, and Castanho - should be selected was delegated to the newly formed

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169 As per article 4 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (Ato das Disposições Constitucionais Transitórias), signed 18 September 1946. See also Lei no. 34, signed 16 May 1947, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação, and Vieira Pinto, *Brasília: A Nova Capital do País*, 6.

170 Kent, "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 44-47 and Vieira Pinto, *Brasília: A Nova Capital do País*, 6.

171 See Lei no. 1,803, signed 5 January 1953, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação.

172 Kent served as the general manager of the American firm's surveying mission in Brazil, as per the terms of a contract signed on 20 April 1954. For his extensive account, see Kent "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 57-293. As both Kent and Evenson describe, the decision to hire foreign contractors was not without controversy, with certain government officials suggesting that to do so for a project of such nationally symbolic importance constituted 'a slur upon Brazilian abilities.' See ibid., 54-56 and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 110. For the full Belcher report, see *Relatório Belcher: o relatório técnico sobre a nova capital da república* (Brasília: Companhia do Desenvolvimento do Planalto Central, 1984).

Comissão de Localização da Nova Capital Federal, initially headed by Vargas acolyte General Aguinaldo Caiado de Castro.[173] By the time the Belcher team had completed their survey, however, the president's suicide in August 1954 had prompted a change in the commission's leadership, with Caiado replaced by Marshal José Pessoa.[174] In Kent's telling, the selection process was sufficiently rushed and haphazard that three of the commission's seven members refused on principle to side in favour of Pessoa's preferred Sítio Castanho (see fig. 2.4).[175] After several weeks of internal wrangling, in a final vote of mid-April 1955 Castanho won out. It was, Kent noted, the exact location identified by Cruls and Glaziou some sixty years earlier.[176]

[173] The commission has been formed by order of Decreto no. 32.976, signed 8 June 1953, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação. See also Kent "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 51, and Vieira Pinto, *Brasília: A Nova Capital do País*, 7.

[174] Kent "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 208-09. Pioneering Brasília ran in the Pessoa family, José being the nephew of President Epitácio Pessoa of the Foundation Stone. For Pessoa's own account, see José Pessoa Cavalcanti de Albuquerque, *Nova Metrópole do Brasil: relatório geral de sua localização* (Rio de Janeiro: BIBLIEx, 2019).

[175] Kent "Vera Cruz: Brazil's New Federal Capital," 255-58. Kent speculates that political influence was at play here, with one site in particular being seemingly rejected due to the unwillingness of the state governments of Minas Gerais and Goiás – the boundaries of which the site straddled – to negotiate on land expropriation. Kent notes that the governor of Minas Gerais, one Juscelino Kubitschek, was particularly intractable in this regard. See ibid., 257.

[176] Ibid., 257-58.



Fig. 2.4: Nov-D-4-4-B-19 (1950), "Mapa do Sítio Castanho, 1956-1960, Brasília DF," ArPDF.

With elections scheduled for October, political attention for the remainder of 1955 was thereafter largely diverted.[177] In mid-May, Pessoa nevertheless made front page news after formally putting forward the name of Vera Cruz for the new capital, stating that 'the capital must have a historical name of great significance', and that his choice evoked 'a venerable tradition of our country' as the name that 'first came to the lips of the great discoverer.'[178] Vera Cruz, Pessoa continued, 'represents to us Brazilians the historical continuity of our civilized homeland across the centuries.'[179] While the name would not stick, Pessoa's eagerness to embed his project within this continuum speaks to a wider pattern of historicization within the arc of Brasília's origins.

Late in 1955, and with a new president-elect waiting in the wings, the

[177] See Chapter III for further details.

[178] "Sugerido o nome de Vera Cruz para a futura Capital da Republica," *Folha da Manhã*, 17 May 1955, Acervo Folha.

[179] Ibid. In an interview with *O Globo* earlier in the month, Pessoa had opined that such was the importance of the new capital that it would 'save Brazil from the social and economic calamity which is holding it back.' See "Salvará o Brasil da Calamidade Social e Econômica que o Deprime," *O Globo*, 9 May 1955, Acervo O Globo.

government of interim leader Nereu Ramos enacted a decree mandating the completion of a range of preliminary measures in the new Distrito Federal prior to the start of any construction efforts, to be undertaken within a span of five years.[180] These included the commissioning of studies to facilitate the provision of electricity, water, sewage, and telephone lines to the region, as well as plans to connect the new capital to the nation's transport infrastructure network, an immigration plan, and the drafting of the necessary legislation to facilitate the intricacies of each stage of the process.[181] In the immediate term, however, any tangible progress would have to wait. Whether or not Brazil's next president would adhere to the fresh legislation, or indeed to the terms of the constitution regarding a new capital, remained to be seen.

## *Conclusion*

Despite the prompt demarcation of a new federal district as the site of a prospective inland capital in adherence with the articles of the 1891 constitution, the six or so decades of Brazil's Old Republic and the ensuing Vargas Era did not usher in such a city. Nevertheless, this chapter has aimed to demonstrate that movement towards such a goal during these years was not entirely absent. As events in Rio, be it overcrowding, plague, or the threat of seaborne destruction, continued to make clear the wisdom of an inland political sanctuary, the efforts of generations of innovators upon the material fabric of Brazil's capital, its cities and its towns, set in motion a stylistic movement that would later provide the impetus for when the moment of Brasília finally arrived. In the lineage marked by the Pereira Passos reforms, the Agache plan, the influence of Le Corbusier, and the birth of a uniquely Brazilian form of modernism grounded in a newly

[180] See Decreto no. 38.281, signed 9 December 1955, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação. Also Holston, *The Modernist City*, 17 and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 110.

[181] Decreto no. 38.281.

mythologized past and conception of national identity, the early twentieth century was fertile territory for the germination of ideas and the maturation of the key protagonists that would later sit at the heart of the Brasília project. The figure at the very centre of that endeavour will be the preserve of the next chapter. Here, however, I have highlighted the various phenomena which can be seen as laying the foundations for Brasília's eventual rise, and the seminal early steps of the various designers for whom Brasília would form both the pinnacle of their careers and constitute the peak of the movement they have, to a great extent, come to personify. The final section of this chapter is - to borrow a metaphor from the favoured building material of the modernists - more concrete in its scope, namely to chart the physical and/or logistical preparation for a new inland capital. In almost every instance, a sense of 'necessary but insufficient' might be applied to the halting steps taken by successive administrations and regimes towards a new seat of government. By mid-century, and with the country emerging into a new, albeit ultimately fleeting, period of democratic government, the stage was increasingly set for a leader to capitalise (quite literally) on the conditions theretofore established. Perhaps fittingly given the revered position of Minas Gerais baroque in the modernist canon, it was from those very same gold towns that just such a leader emerged.

# CHAPTER III

## *Cidadão K: The Rise of Kubitschek, 1902-1956*

In its edition of 13 February 1956, *Time* magazine reported on the inauguration of a new Brazilian president:

> The clanging of church bells, scream of sirens and thud of artillery salutes penetrated as a confused blend of sound in the blossom-bedecked Chamber of Deputies in Rio's Tiradentes Palace, but the spectators seemed unaware of the background noise or the extravagant colors of the tropical flowers. All attention centred on a pale, slender man in white tie and black tailcoat. 'I swear,' he said, tense with emotion, 'to uphold, defend and obey the Constitution of the Republic, and to maintain its union, integrity and independence.' Intoned the presiding officer of the Chamber of Deputies: 'I proclaim you, Juscelino Kubitschek, President of the Republic for a period of five years.'[1]

The new leader had won his narrow mandate - just thirty-six percent of the vote - not in the big city metropolises of São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, but in the backlands of Brazil, criss-crossing the country in a specially adapted Douglas DC-3 aircraft to reach the myriad small rural communities typically ignored by national politics.[2] With a correspondingly direct series of campaign slogans including '*Energia, Transporte, Indústria, Educação e Alimentação*' and '*Cinquenta Anos em Cinco*', Kubitschek had tested his model of leadership throughout the preceding fifteen years, spent raising up his home state of Minas Gerais as he himself climbed the political ladder.[3] Now president, he was poised to roll out his ambitions on the grandest stage.[4]

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[1] "The Man from Minas," *Time*, 13 February 1956, 28-31.

[2] Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic," 123, and Edward Anthony Riedinger, *Como se faz um presidente: a campanha de JK* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1988), 153. For the wider election campaign, see both ibid., José Moraes, *Juscelino: o homem, a candidatura, a campanha* (Belo Horizonte: Imprensa Oficial de Minas Gerais, 1955), and Roland Corbisier, *JK e a luta pela presidência: uma campanha civilista* (São Paulo: Livraria Duas Cidades, 1976).

[3] "The Man from Minas," 28.

[4] Commensurate with the material scale of his legacy, Kubitschek has attracted the attention of a diverse range of biographers and historians. For an extensive bibliography, see Introduction.

In this chapter, having already set the scene for the construction of Brasília within the wider context of Brazilian history and that of its capital cities, focus will turn to the man and moment behind the new capital. In so doing, I emphasise those elements of Kubitschek's biography that served directly to prepare him to tackle a development project of Brasília's magnitude, and one that, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, had substantively eluded all previous Brazilian leaders. The chapter will specifically emphasise the origins and maturation of Kubitschek's developmentalist inclinations, both in relation to key episodes which informed his political philosophy and the widespread programmes of civic development which characterised his years in local office. In this vein, I will focus particularly on then-Mayor Kubitschek's revitalisation of the city of Belo Horizonte - itself a planned city and capital of the state of Minas Gerais - and the collaborative relationships he established there with a group of designers and architects who would go on to form a central part of the team later assembled to spearhead Brasília. The subsequent exploration of Kubitschek's later work as governor of his home state to accelerate the industrialization of Minas Gerais and the redevelopment of its infrastructure will establish key strategies subsequently at the heart of his capital building efforts. In doing so, I aim to reinforce the extent to which the manifestation and ultimate form of Brasília relied not upon spontaneous and isolated notions of modernity and futurism from the 1950s, but rather upon a rich and uniquely Brazilian tapestry of influences and actors, whose contributions originated long before the first cutting of steel and pouring of concrete in the new Distrito Federal.

The final element of this third chapter will assess Kubitschek's presidential run of 1955 and the promise of Brasília therein. Conversely, the building of a new capital was not initially among the core tenets of Kubitschek's candidacy, which instead focussed on a wider programme of national development. As will become evident, the policy of raising a new capital was instead introduced by virtual accident, the idea adopted by a

momentarily flustered candidate in an off-the-cuff manner while on campaign in the Brazilian interior. Fittingly, Kubitschek's recollections of the first moments in which the notion took root would nevertheless be deeply enmeshed with historicized justification. As later chapters will show, the impromptu way in which Kubitschek adopted such a commitment would itself be reflected in the approach the future president would establish in fulfilling the promises made during this run of 1955, with all their monumental ramifications.

## *The Moço from Minas*[5]

Born in the faded baroque mining town of Diamantina in the state of Minas Gerais on 12 September 1902, Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira's early life was largely defined by poverty.[6] The second surviving child and only son of single mother Júlia – Kubitschek's father João César de Oliveira died of tuberculosis in 1904 - the young Juscelino attended a local Catholic seminary school on a bursary.[7] Ambition was clear from an early age. As recounted by biographer José Moraes, one morning during his primary school years Kubitschek left home without permission to watch the ceremonial return of Diamantina's mayor at the town's railway station. When asked to explain his disobedience, the boy reportedly replied that it was important to understand how a mayor might behave on such an occasion, given he planned on one day occupying the

[5] *Moço* being a colloquial and affectionate term for 'young man', reportedly used by President Vargas to refer to a young Kubitschek. See Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 96.

[6] In its waning splendour, Diamantina was very much akin to other former centres of the mining boom scattered across Minas Gerais, of which Ouro Preto is perhaps the preeminent example. The Historic Centre of the Town of Diamantina was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. For biographical details of Kubitschek's earliest years, see Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 1-34, and Barbosa, *JK: Uma Revisão na Política Brasileira*, 183-208.

[7] Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 34-36. Both of Kubitschek's parents were natives of Minas Gerais, with his maternal surname deriving from immigrant great-grandfather Johann Kubitschek, an ethnic German carpenter who had come to Brazil from the then Kingdom of Bohemia in approximately 1835. For this and extensive further details of Kubitschek's antecedents, see Barbosa, *JK: Uma Revisão na Política Brasileira*, 31-182.

office himself.[8] In 1919, armed only with 'one spare shirt and a roast chicken', he left Diamantina for the promise of work in the state capital of Belo Horizonte, finding employment as a telegraph operator for the state postal service.[9] Reputedly inspired by a hometown doctor who had tended to him as a child, in 1922 Kubitschek entered the school of medicine at what would later become the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), from which he graduated in December 1927.[10] Having resigned his job at the telegraph office, where he had continued to work during his years of medical training, Kubitschek joined the surgical practice of his brother-in-law Júlio Soares in Belo Horizonte, a role he combined with medical graduate work and a position as the doctor attached to the state's Fundo de Beneficiência da Imprensa Oficial.[11] In April 1930, Kubitschek briefly departed Brazil for Europe, learning of the fall of the Old Republic and seizing of power by Getúlio Vargas from officials at the Brazilian embassy in Paris.[12] With typical dramatic flair, Kubitschek later recounted the moment in his memoirs:

> On leaving the Embassy, walking down the Avenue des Champs Elysées, still perplexed, I asked myself what would be happening in Belo Horizonte at that moment. I had the sudden sensation, in a kind of mysterious premonition, that not only had Brazil changed its destiny, but so had I, in my simplicity. And it is true that the course of my life from that day on, under the influence of the victorious Revolution, was to undergo a profound transformation.[13]

Having returned home, Kubitschek established his own private practice in Belo Horizonte, before in March 1931 being commissioned *capitão-médico* at the city's military

[8] See Moraes, *Juscelino: o Homen, a Candidatura, a Campanha*, 16-17.

[9] See "The Man from Minas," 29, and Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 65-73.

[10] Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 30 and 76-78, and Barbosa, *JK: Uma Revisão na Política Brasileira*, 277-302.

[11] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 53, and Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 78.

[12] Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 93-94 and Barbosa, *JK: Uma Revisão na Política Brasileira*, 303-35.

[13] Kubitschek, *A expriência da humildade*, 126.

hospital.[14] It was in this latter capacity that Kubitschek would begin to attract the attention of the region's political elites.

In May 1932, and with President Vargas exerting executive power via an improvised system of decrees while riding roughshod over the hitherto institutionalised *café com leite* political dominance of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, the killing by federal forces of four student protesters in downtown São Paulo sparked revolt.[15] The state government, with the support of its considerable security forces, fought a short but vicious conflict against the Vargas regime lasting from July to October, when the uprising was finally supressed.[16] The Revolução Constitucionalista - so-named after the rebels' central demand of a new constitution to constrain the behaviour of the Vargas government – saw *capitão-médico* Kubitschek deployed to the city of Passa Quatro, close to the Minas Gerais/São Paulo state border.[17] There, while attending to wounded federal servicemen returning from fighting in the Mantiqueira mountains, Kubitschek became personally acquainted with Benedito Valadares, a Vargas hardliner and then-mayor of the centrally located Minas Gerais municipality of Pará de Minas.[18] The two *mineiros* rapidly struck up a 'sincere and enduring' friendship that would go on to have a defining impact in kickstarting Kubitschek's career in politics.[19]

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[14] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 54-55 and Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 99-100.

[15] For details of the Second Brazilian Republic and Vargas's ostracizing of the São Paulo elite, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 3-21. For details of the *café com leite* political balancing act, see Chapter II.

[16] For a full account of the conflict, see Stanley E. Hilton, *A Guerra Civil Brasileira: História da Revolução Constitucionalista de 1932* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1982).

[17] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 56-57. For Kubitschek's own account, see Kubitschek, *A experiência da humildade*, 155-91.

[18] Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 112 and Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 56. Note that Valadares is also variously referred to as Benedito Valladares and Benedicto Valladares.

[19] Kubitschek, *A experiência da humildade*, 177.

On 5 September 1933, the sudden death in Belo Horizonte of Minas Gerais state president Olegário Maciel prompted a shake-up of the state's executive bureaucracy.[20] Vargas appointed Valadares as the new state premier, a position now delineated with the official title of *interventor federal* in a reflection of the tightly centralized organization of the regime. In need of a chief of staff, Valadares turned to Kubitschek, who initially refused the offer, claiming he possessed no ambition to enter politics.[21] Valadares persisted, and having ambushed Kubitschek at the military hospital where the latter was still working, announced in an impromptu speech that he had chosen his friend for the role and would not countenance a refusal.[22] Thus appointed by virtual imposition, Kubitschek exchanged his medical coat for the suit of local government, where he combined organizing Valadares's affairs with a series of preliminary forays into municipal preservation and development. Familiar Diamantina served as the primary staging ground for these efforts, where Kubitschek oversaw the opening of new roads, a project to conserve several of the city's historic buildings, and most notably the construction of a bridge spanning the Ribeirão do Inferno and linking the city to neighbouring Rio Vermelho.[23] After just over a year alongside Valadares, in October 1934 Kubitschek launched his first election campaign, winning a seat in the federal Câmara dos Deputados to represent his home state on a ticket sponsored by the newly founded Partido Progressista (PP).[24] Beginning in May the following year, Kubitschek's first term in Congress was largely unremarkable. Obliged to now base himself in Rio de Janeiro, the new congressman

[20] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 61. Note that the title of *presidente de estado* was a hangover from the Old Republic, analogous to governor.

[21] Ibid., 64.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 118.

[24] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 69. The PP was not a party of any unified ideology, but rather a party of power built upon personal connections. See Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil,* 45.

nevertheless spent a majority of his time back in Minas Gerais, corralling regional party officials and drumming up local support.[25]

In 1936, once again at Valadares's request, Kubitschek campaigned to add the unofficial title of *chefe politico* of Diamantina to his role in Congress. Kubitschek's hometown had hitherto resisted the efforts of the *progressistas*, something Valadares was keen to redress in the municipal elections scheduled for June of that year.[26] Unlike his push for Congress, where, as noted by Robert Alexander, he had won on the strength of party nepotism rather than particular personal merit or popularity, in leading the cause of the PP in Diamantina, Kubitschek acquired a first true taste of electoral politics.[27] While coercion and bribery were the typical weapons of contemporary candidacy, Kubitschek chose a different approach.[28] On behalf of the various local PP hopefuls, the congressman spent two months on the doorstep, pressing the flesh and breaking bread with the poor and disenfranchised.[29] In this endeavour he was aided by his physician's background. Voters in the more isolated satellite communities reportedly formed long queues in the hope of free medical advice, a desire which trumped any particular urge to engage in party politics.[30] On the eve of the election, Kubitschek gave one final public speech, held at the local Clube Flamengo. As he later recalled:

> When I began to speak, I was in a cold sweat. But my voice, in the beginning hesitant, soon became sure. I spoke about peace and progress. I promised the conservation and restoration of Diamantina, as an archaeological relic. I announced the construction of roads, of bridges, of schools, and of hotels. But I did not do so vaguely, as was the practice at the time. I cited the name of each road, indicating its course and its length. I

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[25] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 69-71, and Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil,* 45-46.

[26] Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil,* 46-47. As per typical Portuguese naming conventions, members of the PP were known individually and collectively as *progressista*(*s*).

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 47.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

> gave the number of bridges and said where they would be constructed. I spoke of the schools, indicating the place where each would be built, and how many students they would hold. And, concerning the hotel, I proclaimed its need since, if I was victorious at the ballot box, I would convert Diamantina into a centre of tourism. It was a developmentalist message, albeit in embryo.[31]

Given added weight by the success of his earlier efforts in Diamantina while Valadares's aide-de-camp, the message bore fruit. The *progressistas* won eleven of the fifteen seats on the municipal council, with Kubitschek duly confirmed as the local figurehead.[32] While the stakes might have been modest, the 1936 campaign afforded Kubitschek the opportunity to refine the brand of intensely personal, charismatic politics that would later become his signature.[33] While the teleological pitfalls of overemphasising the importance of the Diamantina elections are apparent, in both manifesto and style Kubitschek appeared to have landed upon a winning formula.

With presidential elections slated for the following year, in 1937 Kubitschek lent his backing to the leadership bid of José Américo de Almeida, a university professor-cum-politician from the northeastern state of Paraíba who already boasted the endorsement of President Vargas.[34] In a radio broadcast of 10 November 1937 however, Vargas addressed the nation. Invoking the supposed threat of a communist plot to overthrow the government, the president announced a state of emergency and dissolved the legislature. Shortly thereafter, a new constitution was proclaimed, with power concentrated further in the hands of the executive, now effectively a dictatorship. Elections were cancelled. Vargas labelled his newly remoulded regime the Estado Novo,

[31] Kubitschek, *A expriência da humildade*, 254.

[32] Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil,* 48.

[33] Ibid., 47.

[34] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 69-71. As per the 1934 Constitution, Vargas was unable to stand for reelection.

and focussed on supressing dissenters, curtailing the power and independence of the judiciary, and promoting a programme of economic and cultural nationalism.[35]

For Kubitschek, the personal impact of the Estado Novo was initially straightforward. With his seat in Congress redundant, the erstwhile deputy returned to the Belo Horizonte military hospital where he had been first approached by Valadares some four years earlier.[36] Re-ensconced in the medical world, the Kubitschek of the final years of the 1930s appeared to be one who, after a relatively brief flirtation, had abandoned politics for good. Once again however, Valadares had other ideas. In February 1940, he summoned Kubitschek to the Palácio da Liberdade - the French Renaissance Revival-style governor's mansion in Belo Horizonte - where he offered his protégé the mayorship of the city.[37] In a repeat of the events of 1933, Kubitschek refused, reiterating his renewed commitment to medicine even as Valadares assured him that Brazil was 'on the road towards democracy', and that as mayor, Kubitschek would have a central role in any forthcoming elections.[38] 'The news almost changed my mind' Kubitschek recalled.[39] Nevertheless, the younger man was not to be swayed. As before, Valadares paid little heed. On the morning of 15 April 1940, Kubitschek received a phone call at the hospital from the director of the Minas Gerais state press, informing him that his official nomination as mayor would be announced the following day.[40] Further protestation, he was warned, would be futile.[41]

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[35] For an account of the proclamation of the Estado Novo and its impact, including the so-called Cohen Plan which saw the fabrication of an imminent communist coup, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 21-29. For the rise of modernism under the Estado Novo, see Chapter II.

[36] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 75.

[37] Ibid., 75-80, and Kubitschek, *A expriência da humildade*, 348-49.

[38] Kubitschek, *A expriência da humildade*, 349. Jatobá extrapolates further by arguing that by his (initial) refusal, Kubitschek was expressing his personal reluctance to implicitly endorse the dictatorial regime of the Estado Novo by returning to government. See Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 121.

[39] Kubitschek, *A expriência da humildade*, 349.

[40] Ibid., 350.

*Mayor and Governor*

As a de facto apprenticeship for the later building of Brasília, Kubitschek's time in Belo Horizonte was profoundly instructive. Built between 1894 and 1897 under the direction of master planner Aarão Reis, the city had marked a profound departure from its colonial-era predecessor Ouro Preto, providing Minas Gerais with a cosmopolitan centre of commerce, industry, and bureaucracy.[42] Conceived of as the 'Chicago of Brazil' at the height of the Old Republic, the city's positivist backers, former Minas president João Pinheiro chief among them, had aimed for the new state capital to reflect the sanitised economic prosperity they hoped would characterise their regime.[43][44] In 1905, erstwhile imperial minister Afonso Celso, Visconde de Ouro Preto, even advocated that Belo Horizonte assume the status of federal capital, such was the acclaim with which the development had been initially met.[45] Forty years on from its founding however, the city

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[41] Ibid.

[42] For a summary of Belo Horizonte's origins and early development, see Daniel L. McDonald, "The City of Minas: The Founding of Belo Horizonte, Brazil and Modernity in the First Republic, 1889-1897," Master's diss., (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2014), McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 29-49, and Eakin, *Tropical Capitalism*, 34-38. See also Angotti-Salgueiro, *La Casaque d'Arlequin*.

[43] See McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 30-33. Also Helena Bomeny, "Utopias de cidade: as capitais do modernismo," in Angela de Castro Gomes (ed.), *O Brasil de JK* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. da Fundação Getulio Vargas/CPDOC, 1991), 201-23. In the ambition of its backers, Belo Horizonte fit closely with the contemporary, predominantly North American, City Beautiful Movement. Initially a product of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the movement had a particular impact on the face of Washington D.C., in the form of the partially fulfilled 1902 McMillan Plan, which called for the prioritisation of urban beautification and monumentality. See Kohler and Scott (eds.), *Designing the Nation's Capital*, and McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 30.

[44] As explored by McDonald, central to the conception of Belo Horizonte were prevailing 'racist conceptions of progress and modernity.' With its legacy of mining and slavery, by the close of the nineteenth century Minas Gerais was home to the largest Afro-Brazilian population in the nation. 'Like their counterparts elsewhere in Brazil,' writes McDonald, '*mineiro* […] elites embraced an ideology of "racial whitening"', and were 'dismayed […] that few European immigrants came to Minas Gerais.' It was hoped that a new, modern capital 'would encourage European immigration and command an economic hinterland like their model, Chicago.' See McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 30-31.

[45] See Horácio Mendes, "Brasília e seus antecedentes," *Brasília*, no. 40 (April 1960), 38.

was marked by a degree of stagnation, hard hit by the economic and political turbulence that had accompanied the fall of the Old Republic.[46] Following his appointment to city hall, Kubitschek moved quickly. 'I will conduct my administration on the streets, not hidden away in an office' announced the new mayor at the outset of his term.[47] Nicknamed by his constituents and colleagues as the 'Prefeito Furacão', Kubitschek began a programme to assuage the 'sickness' he perceived to be afflicting the city.[48] In a pragmatic move later mirrored in his presidency, among the first steps was a series of improvements to Belo Horizonte's transport network.[49] Potholed streets in the inner city were repaved, alongside the building of a new avenue, the Avenida do Contorno, running along the southern periphery of the original town centre.[50] The new mayor's major focus would lie elsewhere, however. In the northern part of the city, a project to dam the Ribeirão da Onça - a minor tributary of the Rio São Francisco - had begun during the 1935-1938 mayoralty of Otacílio Negrão de Lima. Once completed in the early part of Kubitschek's term, the resulting Lagoa da Pampulha, approximately eighteen kilometres in diameter, would serve as the location for the Prefeito Furacão's most famed undertaking.

Envisaging a modern waterfront complex of public buildings, leisure and tourist facilities, and luxury homes, in June 1940 Kubitschek invited none other than veteran

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[46] Eakin, *Tropical Capitalism*, 60.

[47] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 80-83.

[48] Ibid.

[49] In conjunction with Brasília, one of the other major construction projects of Kubitschek's later presidency involved linking the new capital to the country's neglected Amazon region. Completed in 1960, the resulting Belém-Brasília Highway, though unpaved and dangerous, revitalized the region. See both Catarina V. Dias, "The Belém-Brasília Highway," *Revista Geográfica*, no. 65, December 1966, 195-98, and Romina Bandura et al., "Sustainable Infrastructure in the Amazon: Connecting Environmental Preservation with Governance, Security, and Economic Development," Center of Strategic and International Studies, Oct. 2020, Annex A.

[50] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 34-35. For details of Kubitschek's revitalization of Belo Horizonte, in particular the city's ailing infrastructure, see Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 58-66.

urban planner Alfred Agache to survey the site. As detailed in the previous chapter, Agache had already undertaken a substantial redesign of Rio de Janeiro, and while his plans for the city were ultimately only ever partially enacted, the Frenchman's impact on Brazilian urban design remained keenly felt.[51] For Pampulha, Agache proposed a satellite working-class residential community, in line with his broader commitments to the principles of urban zoning, and of segregating residential neighbourhoods according to a hierarchy of socioeconomic means.[52] Kubitschek was unimpressed, however.[53] Instead, following a prompt from SPHAN director Rodrigo Melo Franco, the mayor summoned a young Oscar Niemeyer, fresh from overseeing the completion of the ground-breaking Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto.[54] As Kubitschek recounted in an interview published posthumously in 1978, his brief to the budding architect had consisted of a simple challenge to 'come up with some beautiful, flowing, architectural fantasies on the lake shore.'[55] Presented the following day with some preliminary sketches, Kubitschek was ebullient with praise. 'When I saw [the designs], I said: "This is dazzling. This is just the thing. We are going to start a new wave in art, in contemporary architecture. It's going to be formidable […] We'll start work tomorrow.'[56] The resulting collaboration between the

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[51] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 35-36. For Agache's substantial prior experience in Brazil, see Chapter II.

[52] See Chapter II, Underwood, "Alfred Agache, French Sociology, and Modern Urbanism in France and Brazil," 145, and Moreira, "Shaping Cities, Building a Nation," 164-67.

[53] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 37. Despite Kubitschek's predilections, peripheral working-class settlements of the sort Agache suggested were nevertheless a key element of Belo Horizonte's urban geography. As McDonald observed, 'prioritization of land's speculative value forced the [largely Afro-Brazilian] workers who built Belo Horizonte into unplanned and precarious settlements just like their counterparts sixty years later in Brasília.' See McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 30.

[54] McDonald, "The Origins of Informality in a Brazilian Planned City," 30, and Chapter II.

[55] Juscelino Kubitschek in interview with Argemiro Ferreira, *Pasquim*, April 1978, as reproduced in L. Fernando Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção: Documentário* (Brasília: Projecto Editorial, 2003), 109-10.

[56] Ibid., 110. From the political perspective, in his ability to virtually single-handedly oversee the Pampulha development, Kubitschek undoubtedly benefited from the authoritarian political culture of the Estado Novo. As identified by Rio-based urban planner and Agache ally Armando de Godoy among others, urbanism and authoritarian regimes made natural bedfellows, with dictators such as Ataturk, Mussolini,

two men – the 'daring realization of a daring pair' - would come to resonate not only on the shores of the Lagoa da Pampulha, but later in the monumental structures of the future national capital.[57] In Belo Horizonte, Niemeyer designed for Kubitschek four buildings - a casino, dancing hall, yacht club, and chapel - all of which were completed between 1942 and 1943.[58] Plans for a fifth, a hotel for the affluent and glamorous, never progressed beyond the drawing board.[59] Privately, the mayor also commissioned Niemeyer to build him a personal weekend residence adjacent to the main development, subsequently repurposed as the Museu Casa Kubitschek.[60]

Of the four main projects, the chapel, the Igreja de São Francisco de Assis, has attracted particular attention as the 'most innovate yet at the same time most baroque' of Niemeyer's early creations.[61] Although the architect's pioneering curvaceous concrete design was provocative in its modernity, historians of Brazilian art and architecture have consistently identified a particular historical resonance in the building's most eye-catching

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and Stalin all pushing through sweeping programmes of urban development. In the Brazilian case, José Estelita made clear in a polemic from 1941 the streamlining impact of the Estado Novo in facilitating development: 'In the past, before the Estado Novo, corrupt and bad politics dominated the cities; and where politics dominated could not exist either discipline or respect for the law. The urban lack of discipline was a reflection of the country's general lack of discipline. Before the Estado Novo, to talk about urbanism... would have been utopian. Today, the environment is different and we can already exchange ideas in congresses and adopt measures to improve cities.' Just as in the case of Dodsworth's contemporaneous work in Rio, where administrative roadblocks may have derailed the project under the Old Republic, Kubitschek's vision for Pampulha was allowed instead to materialise unhindered. See Armando Augusto de Godoy, "Duas cidades industriais modelares," *Revista da Direotira de Engenharia*, no. 2 (1932), 9-14, and Chapter II for Dodsworth in Rio.

[57] As described by a journalist writing on the occasion of Kubitschek's fourth anniversary as mayor. See "Prefeitura de Belo Horizonte: O Quarto Aniversário da Administração Juscelino Kubitschek," *Folha da Manhã*, 3 May 1944, Acervo Folha.

[58] Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro*. 412-424.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 19. As an archetypal expression of Brazilian modernism, the Conjunto Moderno da Pampulha was eventually afforded World Heritage status by UNESCO in 2016.

[61] Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*, 56.

features.[62] While the yacht club and indeed Kubitschek's personal residence featured inverted pitched (or butterfly) roofs, *azulejos* arrangements, and *brises-soleil* - all, as Underwood characterizes them, derive[d] from colonial practice' - in tone the buildings were nevertheless largely adherent to the Corbusian ideals of the International Style.[63] In the case of the Igreja however, Niemeyer went further. With its parabolic vaults evoking 'the sculptural lyricism of the Brazilian baroque' and adorned with miniature ceramic *pastilhas* typical of the colonial period, the church has long been earmarked as a key point of departure, both in Niemeyer's work and for Brazilian modernism more widely.[64] On the external rear wall, a sweeping mural of *azulejos* arranged by Cândido Portinari – whose work had earlier featured heavily as part of the MES Building in Rio de Janeiro – reinforced the building's inherently Luso-Brazilian credentials, as well as reflecting the central tension at the heart of Brazilian modernism, specifically that of 'the colonial past and the culture of Catholicism on the one hand, and the […] freedom of an imagined future, on the other.'[65] Characterized by Lauro Cavalcanti as the 'starting point of a genuinely Brazilian modernism', clearer than ever before Pampulha marked a reconciliation between the modern and the baroque, the colonial and the republican,

[62] See Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 108-12. Such was its ground-breaking subversiveness, the building prompted a tussle between Kubitschek and the ecclesiastical authorities of Belo Horizonte, with archbishop Antônio Cabral's umbrage at the building's supposedly sacrilegious frescoes and abstract forms leading to it lying unconsecrated for seventeen years following completion. Criticism was not limited to the clergy. One of Belo Horizonte's subsequent mayors expressed a violent desire to tear down the chapel and replace it with a nouveau replica of a baroque church from Ouro Preto. Eduardo Friero, a writer and friend of the mayor playfully dubbed the building the 'Hangar of God.' The chapel was finally consecrated on 11 April 1959, during Kubitschek's presidency. See Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 37-41, Cavalcanti and Caldeira, "The Role of Modernists in the Establishment of Brazilian Cultural Heritage," 20, Papadaki, *Oscar Niemeyer*, 24, and Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 83.

[63] Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and the Architecture of Brazil*, 60-61.

[64] Ibid., 62 and Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 110.

[65] Carranza and Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 108-12, and Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*, 14.

heritage and progress.[66] In so doing, the development struck once again at something unique to Brazilian modernism:

> If, for the traditional modernist avant-garde, the past is used as an alterity - as something to be opposed to - the Brazilian case is singular for the use of historical memory in the construction of identity. It should be noted that not every past history was chosen, but a carefully designed and chosen myth of origin. By using the past to create an identity rather than an alterity, the Brazilian modern project was able to solve many of the complex conflicts of the twentieth century: ancient and modern would be put together. And, although it proposed a continuation with an older baroque past, this new combination successfully denied the importance of the beaux-arts ideals of the nineteenth century. Such articulation also joined the international concerns with the local identity in the argument for modernist architecture. In it, the *Barroco Mineiro* was taken as the first Brazilian architecture. In addition, the presence of baroque rhetoric and narrative on the exuberant Pampulha buildings was the result and materialization of such intellectually designed identity. Memory was manufactured and used to anchor the modernist project both in the useful past and the prospective future.[67]

Writing in the late 1960s, Carranza and Luiz Lara argued that as 'modern buildings strongly rooted in past traditions, the structures in Pampulha solidified, as early as 1941, the conceptual foundation that Brazilian architecture would adhere and respond to throughout the rest of the twentieth century.'[68] Critically, the blending of modern and baroque architecture established a line of reference that would go on, the authors argue, to become 'the dominant historiographical paradigm after Pampulha, establishing a link between the Brazilian past and the formal experiments of the young designers.'[69] If the earlier Grande Hotel de Ouro Preto had represented the first attempt at 'stitching the modern with the baroque', the Igreja de São Francisco de Assis - and the Pampulha complex as a whole - was the next step in this progression of marrying heritage with progress via architecture.[70]

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[66] Cavalcanti, *Moderno e Brasileiro*, 408.

[67] Luiz Lara, "One Step Back, Two Steps Forward," 211-19.

[68] Carranza and Luiz Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 112.

[69] Ibid.

[70] See ibid., 108, Luiz Lara, "One Step Back, Two Steps Forward," and Chapter II.

Writing in his memoirs, Niemeyer eulogized Pampulha as his first real opportunity to 'challenge the monotony of contemporary architecture, the wave of misinterpreted functionalism that hindered it, and the dogmas of form and function that had emerged, counteracting the plastic freedom that reinforced concrete introduced.'[71] While his materials may have been new and liberating however, inspiration remained rooted in the colonial baroque. The 'sensual curve suggested by the possibilities of new technology', wrote Niemeyer, was 'so often recalled in venerable old baroque churches.'[72] Le Corbusier, responsible for Niemeyer's architectural awakening the previous decade, reportedly commented of the Pampulha buildings: 'Oscar, what you are doing is baroque, but it's very well done.'[73] Niemeyer himself later claimed that via Pampulha, Le Corbusier 'caught wind of the premise of a new baroque', prompting the latter to 'leave aside the honest right-angle, which [he had] tended to regard as his private domain for so long', and instead embrace the sinuous curves that constituted the Brazilian's distinctive hallmark.[74]

In analysing Pampulha in the wider lineage of Brazilian urbanism, it is undoubtedly the case that a development initially comprising barely a handful of structures cast a long shadow. Articulating the link from Pampulha to Brasília, Helena Bomeny's work brings to the fore a wider comparison between the city of Belo Horizonte and Kubitschek and Niemeyer's own city of the interior. Where the former stands as the would-be urban utopia of its day - the 'only-child city of the Republic of 1889' in Bomeny's characterization - Brasília represented a later incarnation of the same

[71] Niemeyer, *The Curves of Time*, 66.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 67.

[74] Ibid.

aspiration.[75] Between the two sits Pampulha. Unlike the slab construction of the MES Building, the Pampulha ensemble reconciled the 'orthogonal' rationalism of Costa and Le Corbusier with the baroque-evoking curves of Niemeyer.[76] Not only does the link between Pampulha and Brasília 'strengthen the nexus between the two eras of Minas modernism' by bringing together Belo Horizonte old and new, but the path of Kubitschek and Niemeyer from Minas to the Distrito Federal 'reinforced the importance of *mineiro* modernism in the establishment of architectural politics in Brazil.'[77] As Niemeyer himself observed in an interview of 1999, 'I started my architecture with Pampulha. Brasília was a natural conclusion.'[78]

In a eulogistic article published on the fourth anniversary of Kubitschek taking mayoral office, national broadsheet *Folha da Manhã* described how the mayor's focus on development had 'greatly contributed to the transformation of the Capital into a magnificent metropolis of the *mineiros*.' Kubitschek, the article continued, 'awakens in the population a confidence in the plans and capabilities of public authority […] making them realise that they have on their hands a hardworking and progressive community administration.' 'Above it all,' the paper announced, 'the Pampulha ensemble stands out for its importance in the progress of the city, in all of its magnificence and architectural beauty.'[79] In a speech to the Rotari Clube de Belo Horizonte celebrating the forty-sixth anniversary of the city's founding, Kubitschek himself made special note of Pampulha amid the other achievements of his mayorship: 'Pampulha came like a mellifluous rhyme at the end of a verse, filling the tranquil and quiet life of an incipient metropolis with

[75] Bomeny, "Utopias de cidade," 148.

[76] Ibid., 146.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Oscar Niemeyer in conversation with Ronaldo Costa Couto, 29 December 1999. As quoted in Costa Couto, *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*, 382.

[79] "Prefeitura de Belo Horizonte: O Quarto Aniversário da Administração Juscelino Kubitschek."

harmony. In the metallic mirror of its waters, in the light and aristocratic grace of its curves, in the illuminated transparency of its structures, the city found the whimsical and slender forms of its artistic dreams.'[80] Quoting a speech by Francisco Sá – a senator during the Old Republic and a fellow son of Diamantina – delivered at Belo Horizonte's inauguration, Kubitschek articulated the artistic ideal driving his preferred brand of urban development: 'the "*urbs*" is created, barren, but the "*civitas*," that I hope will be at the heart of glorious Minas, is a bastion of intelligence, of patriotism, and of confraternity. The "*civitas*" is made of art and culture. Its imponderable spiritual essence is detached from the urban environment, fluid and palpitating like a flame that rises from burning firewood.'[81] Seen through the prism of Brasília, such high-minded symbolism would later be echoed directly in the manifestos of the future capital's founders.[82]

## *New Republic, New JK*

On 29 October 1945, Kubitschek's trajectory was shaken by the ousting of Getúlio Vargas from power. Despite the dictatorial and pseudo-fascistic inclinations of his regime, the president had eventually sided with the Allies during the Second World War, meanwhile attempting to allay the Brazilian middle classes with the promise of a redemocratization process to begin upon the conflict's conclusion.[83] Barely eight weeks after the end of hostilities however, a coup orchestrated by senior staff within the war

[80] As reproduced in "O Impressionante Progresso da Capital Mineira," *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 21 December 1943, Acervo Estadão.

[81] Ibid.

[82] See Chapter V.

[83] For the Estado Novo's flirtation with the Axis powers and Vargas's eventual alignment with and contribution to the Allied war effort, see Neill Lochery, *Brazil: The Fortunes of War, World War II and the Making of Modern Brazil* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

ministry took the process out of Vargas's hands.[84] Interim president José Linhares called for an immediate general election, won by former minister of war and candidate of the newly formed Partido Social Democrático (PSD), Eurico Gaspar Dutra. A party founded by Vargas's former *interventores federais* and with its powerbase concentrated in the agrarian elite, the PSD was one of several to emerge amid the breakup of the Estado Novo. These also included the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB), established by Vargas himself to purportedly represent the concerns of the urban workers. Completing the trio of the most influential of the newly founded parties was the União Democrática Nacional (UDN). Fervently anti-*getulista*, anti-populist, and with a classical liberal ideology designed to appeal to the educated middle classes, the UDN also maintained close ties to the armed forces, and was frequently arrayed against the often cooperative PSD and PTB.[85] Having taken office in January 1946, that September Dutra presided over the enacting of a fresh constitution - the nation's fifth - which mandated the guaranteeing of political freedoms, a devolution of federal power to the states, a reduction in the authority of the executive, and an independent and impartial judiciary. For the next eighteen years until the military coup of 1964, Brazil would function as a fragile democracy.[86]

From the personal perspective of Juscelino Kubitschek, the immediate result of the redemocratization of the late 1940s was marked by a certain irony. Following the deposition of Vargas in October 1945, among caretaker-president Linhares's first actions had been the suspension of all *interventores federais* and mayors until the holding of state

[84] See Stanley E. Hilton, "The Overthrow of Getúlio Vargas in 1945: Diplomatic Intervention, Defence of Democracy, or Political Retribution?" *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 67, no. 1 (Feb. 1987), 1-37.

[85] For a concise guide to the various parties and their platforms, see Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 24-26.

[86] For an account of the fall of the Estado Novo and the formation of the Fourth Brazilian Republic, see Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 48-80.

elections.[87] As a result, the man who would later serve as the figurehead president of an era of relative democratic opening was, having been appointed by nepotistic imposition, forcibly removed from power. This time however, he would not withdraw to the doctor's surgery. During his years as mayor, Kubitschek had kept a punishing schedule, rising at six o'clock each morning to conduct a tour of any ongoing construction projects.[88] He would then resume his surgical activities in the city's hospitals, operating on his constituents before returning to political and administrative matters during the afternoon.[89] With the disintegration of the Estado Novo however, and seeing the sands of national politics shifting rapidly before him, such a compromise could no longer serve. Thus, at the age of forty-two, Kubitschek walked away from the medical profession for the second and final time and fully embraced a career in politics.[90] Some years later, he recalled how 'the choice upon which I had hesitated for so long had just been made. I was no longer a doctor. But a politician.'[91]

The elections of 2 December 1945 returned Kubitschek to the Câmara dos Deputados as a representative for the state of Minas Gerais under the banner of the PSD.[92] This second spell in Congress proved rather more influential than Kubitschek's first. Not only was the now two-time deputy more active on the floor, where he championed social housing projects and sat as a member of the transport and communications commission, but also in the development and shaping of Kubitschek's

[87] Ibid., 54 and 163.

[88] Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 61.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., 70.

[91] Kubitschek, *A Escalada Política*, 61-62

[92] Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 80-83.

own views.[93] Two experiences in particular had a lasting impact on the future president and his policy ambitions, both with regard to Brasília and his broader series of national development initiatives - the Plano de Metas - that the new capital would later come to symbolise. In July 1946, Kubitschek travelled among a group of politicians on an official visit to the state of Pará. The trip was Kubitschek's first to Brazil's impoverished North Region. 'If the beauty of the scenery seduced and dazzled me,' he later commented, 'on the other hand I had the opportunity to live the drama of those disinherited populations, lost amid the deviations of an immense territory and virtually without any profound connection to the capital of the Republic."[94] Two years later, in May 1948, Kubitschek and his wife Sarah travelled privately to the United States and Canada, visiting New York, Montreal, Detroit, Chicago, Washington, and Philadelphia.[95] There, he witnessed the magnitude of the North American industrial complex first-hand. The visit seems to have been instrumental in opening his eyes to the centrality of diversified industrialization as a fundamental component of progress:

> The spectacle of those two functioning civilizations - of the United States and Canada - aroused in me the feeling for the needs of Brazil. I saw the road we must follow. The effort which must be made. [...] I understood the role which Brazil could represent in the world if its development was oriented towards industrialisation... The image which I had of Brazil was that of mediocrity of governmental initiatives. It worked on a Lilliputian scale, when dealing with a giant country. [...] It was then that I understood the importance of having audacity so that the giant could be awakened... the dream must be converted into reality, for this one needed courage, audacity, and determination.[96]

With urban development and regeneration already a well-worn feature of Kubitschek's policy armoury in light of his work in Belo Horizonte, the visits of 1946 and 1948 appear to have had a powerful influence on the further coalescing of the then-deputy's political

[93] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 85-101.

[94] As quoted in Jatobá, *O Jovem JK*, 126.

[95] See Kubitschek, *A Escalada Política*, 153

[96] Ibid., 153-54.

ideals, and served to foreshadow the core elements of his subsequent presidential manifesto.

On 3 October 1950, Brazil went to the polls. Getúlio Vargas, returning to the national arena following his ousting five years earlier, was elected as the successor to the outgoing Dutra. Vargas's own brand of nationalist developmentalism and the corresponding economic growth of the Estado Novo period had seen his popularity sustained in the intervening years, during which time the Dutra administration had instead prioritized the enticing and safeguarding of foreign - largely US - investment at the expense of domestic interests.[97] In Minas Gerais, where state elections were conducted in parallel to the nationwide vote, Kubitschek emerged victorious in the gubernatorial contest, convincingly defeating his UDN opponent - and brother-in-law - Gabriel Passos.[98] Kubitschek had won the PSD nomination for governor that July, having declined to run for the same office in the previous elections of 1947 due to his committed support of PSD contender José Francisco Bias Fortes.[99] If the redevelopment of Belo Horizonte during his term as mayor served as a precursor to Brasília, Kubitschek's governorship of Minas Gerais can in turn be seen as the platform upon which his wider ambitions of development were tried and tested.[100]

Now presiding over a territory larger than metropolitan France and accounting for approximately ten percent of the Brazilian population, Governor Kubitschek adopted a two-pronged approach in addressing what he perceived to be the state's most pressing concerns. The resulting policy, labelled the Binômio Energia e Transporte, demonstrated

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[97] See both Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 48-80 and Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic," 100-08.

[98] Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 93.

[99] Ibid., 85-86.

[100] Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 163-64.

the same nous for sloganeering evident throughout Kubitschek's political career.[101] Prioritising - as the name suggests - the improvement of Minas Gerais's power and transportation infrastructure, the plan also showed the same focussed ambition and strategic approach which, under the guise of the Plano de Metas, defined his later premiership. In a move to address the energy demands of his mission to shift Minas Gerais away from its traditional base of arable and livestock agriculture and into an industrial future, Kubitschek authorised the creation of a series of public regional energy companies, controlled by holding entity Centrais Elétricas de Minas Gerais (CEMIG).[102] New generating facilities built across the state resulted in electricity production trebling between 1951 and 1955, from 200,000 to 605,000 kilowatts.[103] 3,000 kilometres of roads were paved, while 137 new schools, 160 medical centres and clinics, 251 bridges, and dozens of airstrips dotted the landscape.[104] Foreign investment in newer industries built on this infrastructural development and surge in energy capacity, notably steel production. New mills were built across the state, headlined by a facility on the outskirts of Belo Horizonte undertaken in partnership with German conglomerate Mannesmann.[105] To oversee the modernisation of the preeminent existing sectors of the

[101] Eakin, *Tropical Capitalism*, 115-18.

[102] Ibid., 101-02.

[103] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 111.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid. The Mannesmann facility was inaugurated on 12 August 1954, in a ceremony attended by both Kubitschek and President Vargas, then beset by a political crisis precipitated by an assassination attempt on UDN heavyweight and Vargas opponent Carlos Lacerda. Though Lacerda survived with minor injuries, a bodyguard was killed and Vargas's personal guards were implicated. The resulting scandal would prove the end of Vargas, who committed suicide on 24 August. The Mannesmann opening ceremony was his final public appearance. Kubitschek was the only state governor to attend the late president's funeral. See ibid., 115-22, and Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 107-9.

state's economy, more new companies were established, such as Fertilizantes de Minas Gerais (FERMISA), and the Companhia de Frigoríficos de Minas Gerais (FRIMISA).[106]

Seen in the context of the growth metrics of his presidency, a consistency of approach is apparent in Kubitschek's work as governor. Moreover, in his propensity for the establishment of specialised public or public-private partnership entities such as CEMIG, FERMISA, and FRIMISA, Kubitschek developed a model that, both in his drive to modernise and industrialise Brazil and in the building of Brasília, would be repeated on an even grander scale. As the then former president himself admitted some twenty-five years later, the success of the initiative would also stand him in excellent stead on the way to higher office. Not only did the results in Minas Gerais serve to unify a swathe of regional officials usually preoccupied only with personal advancement, they also crystallized Kubitschek as the heir-apparent, at least in a national development sense, to the persistently-popular Vargas. Writing with his usual buoyant immodesty in *Status* magazine in 1976, Kubitschek explained how:

> PSD men used to come and tell me: 'Governor, what interests us are the fortunes of particular leaders, of the delegates [overseeing each project], because that is what gives a politician prestige.' I would say: 'we need to change this mentality, you will see that things will be different with development.' I shocked a lot of people. Deputies came to me to ask why it was important to build a power plant in the north of Minas, if their municipality was in the south. I explained that it would favour their municipality regardless, because it would improve the whole state, but that they needed to be calm, because I could not raise Minas out of poverty with one decree. By the end of my term, everyone accepted this. The Binômio Energia e Transporte was a powerful weapon in my campaign for the Presidency of the Republic.[107]

Thus successful in corralling the local PSD, as his biographer Ronaldo Costa Couto has convincingly demonstrated, Kubitschek's impact as governor also extended his influence to the PTB - the party then headed by President Vargas. By harnessing the 'political capital inherited from the Vargas myth', wrote Costa Couto, Kubitschek became 'the

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[106] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 111. For a fuller summary of Kubitschek's development agenda as governor, see Alexander, *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*, 94-112.

[107] Juscelino Kubitschek, *Status*, 27 May 1976, 17.

standard-bearer of the Vargas push for progress. The candidate of development, of democracy, of renovation, of modernization, and of hope.'[108]

## *Chasing the Presidency, Formulating Brasília*

As Kubitschek himself recalled, 'it all started in the city of Jataí, in Goiás, on 4 April 1955, during my campaign as a candidate for the Presidency of the Republic.'[109] Having won the PSD nomination in February of that year, Kubitschek had formalised a coalition with the PTB, naming as his running mate Vargas's favoured deputy and erstwhile minister of labour João Goulart.[110] As he later acknowledged in an interview of April 1974, 'only a really strong alliance could face the opposition and emerge victorious. And even then, only with a candidate that could manage a reconciliation between the rural vote of the PSD and the urban vote of PTB.'[111] With the national political situation still incendiary following Vargas's suicide in August 1954, on 30 March 1955 Kubitschek resigned as governor and hit the campaign trail.[112] Rather than beginning his bid for Brazil's highest office in the traditional battlegrounds of the major cities, Kubitschek resolved instead to follow the unusual path of first attempting to appeal to voters in the interior of the country.[113] Such a strategy was in keeping, however, with one of the PSD's

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[108] Costa Couto, *Juscelino Kubitschek*, 112.

[109] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 5.

[110] Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic," 119-23.

[111] "Entrevista particular com o ex-presidente Juscelino Kubitschek (no Rio de Janeiro, 19 de Abril de 1974)" in Benevides, *O governo Kubitschek*, 289-94.

[112] As referenced in ibid.

[113] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 6. Kubitschek's strategy of first campaigning in rural communities was a reflection of the PSD's core support. The party had been founded largely at the initiative of Vargas's state interventors, and had successfully contested its first election campaign in 1945 by appealing to the rural powerbrokers groomed by the interventors to secure the latter's influence and power. Party policy had long looked to reinforce and appease the agrarian electorate, including championing rural education and infrastructure projects to better connect the interior to the urban centres on the coast. In its first manifesto, the party correspondingly described agriculture as 'the base of national labour', entitled to

core policies of the Dutra era; in a speech of September 1945 Dutra had proclaimed that the necessary 'social transformations' of Brazilian democracy could only be spearheaded by investment in both rural education and transport infrastructure to better connect the interior to the coastal urban centres.[114]

Jataí, a cattle town 'lost in the endlessness of Goiás', was correspondingly playing host to an early campaign rally when Kubitschek affirmed that, if elected, he would comply rigorously with the terms of the constitution.[115] Suddenly, a voice called out from the crowd. Given this commitment to the constitution, demanded the voice, would the candidate put into practice that element of the 'Magna Carta' that provided for the transfer of the federal capital to the Planalto Central?[116] Kubitschek was momentarily taken aback:

> The question was embarrassing. I had already laid out my Plano de Metas, and in no part of it existed any reference whatsoever to that particular issue. I responded, however, off the top of my head: 'I have just promised that I will adhere to the Constitution in its entirety, and I see no reason why that provision should be ignored. If I am elected, I will build a new Capital and change the seat of Government.'[117]

The assembled crowd, sheltering from a sudden rainstorm inside a shed attached to a local car dealership, burst into applause.[118] In his memoirs, Kubitschek later admitted that, at least initially, his remarks in that moment had been 'to some extent political',

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receive 'permanent assistance from the state.' See "Programa do Partido Social Democrático" Rio de Janeiro, 14 June 1945, Tribunal Superior Eleitoral.

[114] See "Constituiu Memoravel Acontecimento o Comicio do Partido Social Democratico Realizado Ontem em Belo Horizonte," *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 2 September 1945, Acervo Estadão, and Riedinger, *Como se faz um presidente*, 153.

[115] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 6.

[116] Ibid. The voice was later identified as belonging to António Soares Neto, known locally as Toniquinho, whose death in 2019 aged ninety-four prompted a range of obituaries celebrating the life of the 'true father of Brasília.' See for example Deborah Fortuna, "Morre, aos 94 anos, António Soares, que convenceu JK a construir Brasília," *Correio Braziliense*, 21 November 2019. For details of the constitution and the presence therein of the stipulation for the relocating of the capital, see Chapter II.

[117] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 6.

[118] See ibid., and Lúcio Flávio, "Toniquinho, o verdadeiro 'pai de Brasília'," *Agência Brasília*, 28 November 2019.

pandering to a disenfranchised audience longing for relevance.[119] Directly abutting the already demarcated future Distrito Federal, Goiás was, after all, among the most likely beneficiaries of a grand civic project of Brasília's magnitude. Nevertheless, as his airborne campaign continued to tour the Brazilian hinterland, the idea began to take root. Kubitschek appears to have clearly understood the established littoral 'axis of development' as constituting one of the key inhibitors of Brazil's progress. A new 'population nucleus, established in that distant region [the Planalto Central], would,' he hypothesised, 'spread like an oil slick, making the entire interior open its eyes to the country's great future.'[120] 'The idea', Kubitschek continued, 'had been born in 1789 [amid the Inconfidência Mineira], but had been dragging on, without anything having been done to substantiate it.'[121] 'I said to myself', he would later reflect in a speech of January 1960, 'that the time had come to supplant the daydreams of cartographers with objective reality.'[122] Now, the project, 'the great challenge of our history', would allow Brazil 'to take possession of its immense territory. And the moving of the Capital would be the vehicle. The instrument. The factor that would trigger a new *bandeirante* cycle.'[123] The prospect, he went on to write, 'fixed itself in me. And, as a result of this fixation, to the thirty items of the Plano de Metas I added one more - the construction of the new Capital - to which I later added the label, the "Meta-Síntese."'[124]

Autobiographical license aside, it is hard to pinpoint the exact moment in which the future president began to couch this new addition to the Plano de Metas, this 'Meta-

[119] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 7.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., 6-7.

[122] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Brasíilia, 3 January 1960: Nas Solenidades Comemorativas do Aniversário do Presidente da Novacap Doutor Israel Pinheiro (Discurso Lido pelo Chefe da Casa Civil, Ministro José Sette Câmara Filho)," *Memórias do Brasil – 1960*, 24-35.

[123] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 7. For a discussion of *bandeirante* mythology, see Chapters I and VI.

[124] Kubitschek, *Por que Construí Brasília*, 7.

Síntese' of policy and symbolism, in the language and imagery of Brazilian history. However as these few lines demonstrate, in the very same passages in which Kubitschek recounts the fateful moments of that rain-soaked gathering in Jataí, an awareness of both the antecedents of a new inland capital and a sense of the uniquely 'Brazilian' historical significance of such an endeavour is apparent. Perhaps surprisingly, the PSD candidate's pronouncement in Goiás failed to make an immediate splash in the national media. Only on 20 May did the Rio press question Kubitschek on the issue, summarised in a short paragraph included in a feature otherwise dedicated to the formalisation of the PSD-PTB election pact. Asked by a reporter from *O Globo* whether he would give his 'full support to the measures and works necessary for the relocation of the Federal Capital to the Planalto Central', Kubitschek confirmed that he would.[125] The candidate caveated this backing however by adding that the 'technicians from whom he had heard had stressed that, given the volume of the work required, it could not be completed in less than ten years.'[126] Whether the intention was to deliberately moderate expectations, or had he yet to fully commit to the endeavour that would greatly define his premiership, Kubitschek's coolness appears to have encouraged Brazil's journalists to look to other issues for their election reportage. In the months that followed, the question of a new capital appears to have barely registered as the various candidates canvassed their way across the nation. Even in historical treatments of the campaign, mention of the events of 4 April or Kubitschek's commitment to moving the capital are scarce.[127] In his contemporary day-by-day account, José Moraes's observations from Jataí record only Kubitschek's debuting

[125] "Não Renunciará Nem Que Todos os Candidatos Desistam Para a União Das Forças Políticas," *O Globo*, 20 May 1955, Acervo O Globo.

[126] Ibid.

[127] See Moraes, *Juscelino: o homem, a candidatura, a campanha*, Corbisier, *JK e a luta pela presidência: uma campanha civilista*, and Riedinger, *Como se faz um presidente.*

of his tactic of inviting questions from the crowd - 'a novelty as audacious as it was friendly' - but omit entirely any reference to the issue of the federal capital.[128]

Come election day, Kubitschek had been on the road for almost a year, having staged a lavish campaign supported by a bevy of commercial backers keen to profit from his developmentalist manifesto.[129] Of the nine million votes cast (from a national population of fifty-eight million), Kubitschek won a plurality of approximately thirty-five percent, of which a quarter came from Minas Gerais alone.[130] Even after this victory at the polls however, the new president-elect's inauguration was far from guaranteed. In keeping with what had become their established modus operandi, the UDN claimed that Kubitschek's narrow margin of victory and lack of absolute majority was evidence of his unsuitability for executive office. Together with a confederacy of high-ranking soldiers and government ministers reportedly including President João Café Filho, UDN leaders plotted an intervention. Faced with the apparent prospect of civil war, only the firm and unwavering adherence to the terms of the constitution of the minister of war, General Henrique Teixeira Lott, prevented anarchy.[131] On 11 November 1955, Lott mobilised loyalist elements of the army to counter the threat of an imminent coup attempt. In so doing, he ensured that the conspiracy was unable to seize control.[132] On Lott's insistence, former vice president Nereu Ramos assumed power on an interim basis until Kubitschek could finally be inaugurated on 31 January 1956.[133] Reflected in his oath of office reproduced at the start of this chapter, Kubitschek's avowed intention to uphold the constitution, already questioned in Jataí, would soon be subject to the ultimate test.

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[128] Moraes, *Juscelino: o homem, a candidatura, a campanha*, 134-35.

[129] Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic," 123.

[130] Ibid.

[131] For a brief summary of the affair, also known as the *Novembrada*, see ibid., 124-26.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

*Conclusion*

It is impossible to verify Kubitschek's claim that his journey towards Brasília only began beneath a tin-roofed shed at a small-town campaign rally in Goiás. While the soon-to-be president wrote in his memoirs that the suggestion of building a new capital in accordance with the constitution caught him off guard, whether or not the idea had ever occurred to him previously remains unknown. Two points can be made with some confidence however. First, that as a crowning goal of his already entrenched Plano de Metas initiative, the prospect of Brasília was a symbol both potent and easily recognised. Second, that when seen in the broader context of his career to date, Kubitschek's preparation for such an endeavour had begun long before that rainy day in April 1955. This is not to suggest any degree of pre-ordination or destiny, but rather that were it possible to devise an ideal candidate for such an undertaking, Kubitschek's credentials and prior accomplishments would see him score highly. A son of the interior, Kubitschek's experience in the mayoral and governor's mansions of Belo Horizonte, his broad-church school of politics, and history of civil and urban development all provided a sound foundation in the pursuit of both higher office and a rolling out of his developmentalist principles on a national scale. In the form of his specific collaboration with Oscar Niemeyer in Pampulha, Kubitschek had established a relationship that would have a profound impact on the eventual form of Brasília. For his part, the Pampulha complex offered Niemeyer the opportunity to emerge fully as among the foremost exponents and pioneers of Brazilian modernism, with all its colonial/baroque inheritance. The early ambitions of Kubitschek and Niemeyer together ought therefore be seen as a vital staging post in the trajectory of Brasília's development, both from the perspective of its leading proponents but also in siting the project within the wider history of Brazilian urban planning.

For Kubitschek himself, his career in Congress granted a familiarity with due process and political power brokering, albeit his relatively low profile and frequent absenteeism as a representative rendered him less exposed to the vicious infighting often typical of the halls of Brazil's federal government. Also crucial was Kubitschek's positioning as a perpetuator of Vargas's most popular policies, inheriting a degree of political capital and popular approval without the baggage of having been the late president's right-hand man. In João Goulart - perhaps the foremost candidate for this latter title - and the inter-party alliance between the would-be president and vice-president, Kubitschek was instead able to enjoy the best of both worlds. As the next chapter will serve to show, these political alliances would prove central in navigating the legislative hurdles his Meta-Síntese would need to overcome.

# CHAPTER IV

## *An Idea on the March: Legislating and Commissioning a New Capital, 1956*

On 3 October 1954, exactly one year before the election of Juscelino Kubitschek as President of the Republic and on the twenty-fourth anniversary of the 1930 revolution that lent the date its national significance, Brazilians voted in a legislative election to decide seats in the country's two chambers of congress. As was typical of the period, the results were highly fragmented. The PSD captured the largest share of votes in the contests for both the Câmara dos Deputados and the Senado Federal, winning one hundred and fourteen of a total of three hundred and twenty-six seats in the former and sixteen of the forty-two contested in the latter.[1] The PTB marginally increased their presence in the lower house with fifty-six seats, while winning ten in the upper. Nominally led by Arthur dos Santos but increasingly under the influence of former journalist and erstwhile Vargas nemesis Carlos Lacerda, the UDN also returned ten senators, on top of seventy-four deputies.[2] Many candidates for the Câmara dos Deputados ran on coalition tickets, purportedly representing the interests of up to six parties.[3] As Skidmore has noted, the results of the election were both surprising and

[1] As per the articles of the Constitution, the entire Chamber of Deputies was (and remains) up for reelection every four years, while senators, with term lengths of eight years, are elected on a split cycle of one-third/two-thirds. The forty-two senators elected in the 1954 contest constituted two-thirds of the chamber, with the PSD correspondingly having a total of twenty-two senators, the PTB sixteen, and the UDN thirteen. The remaining senate seats were held by representatives of smaller parties, none of which boasted more than five senators. See Jordan M. Young (ed.), *Brazil 1954-1964: End of a Civilian Cycle* (New York: Facts on File, 1972), 19.

[2] For the full results of the election see ibid. For Lacerda, see John W. F. Dulles, *Carlos Lacerda, Brazilian Crusader: Volume I: The Years 1914-1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991).

[3] Ibid.

marked a substantive continuation of the previous legislature.[4] Despite the suicide of Vargas earlier in the year and subsequent political crisis, voters' opinions appeared little affected, with all three major parties returning similar numbers as they had in the previous elections four years earlier.[5] The PSD showed the most consistency, winning just two additional congressional representatives, while the PTB gained five and the UDN saw a loss of seven.[6] In the words of Skidmore, 'the election results indicated that whoever was elected President in 1955 would confront a Congress of substantially the same political complexion as Vargas had faced.'[7]

In this chapter, I will examine the relationship between this legislature of 1954 - the third of the post-Estado Novo era and the fortieth since the convening of the imperial Assembleia Geral in 1823 - and Kubitschek's vision for a new capital. How did the supremely ambitious prospect of raising such a city successfully pass through what remained a deeply divided Congress? In what ways did the rhetoric of the president and his government make reference to history and heritage in legitimising the project before lawmakers, both friendly and otherwise? As will rapidly become apparent, some factions would never wholly buy into the vision of a geographically distant, ferociously expensive endeavour that, if somehow manifested, would serve to heap prestige on a few individuals and their party allies. That being the case, by what mechanism could the planning commissions and construction teams of Brasília begin their work so soon after the new president's inauguration in January 1956? Concurrently, this chapter will address the formation, political oversight, and role of the governmental bodies established to oversee Brasília's construction. As shown in Chapter II, entities such as Dutra's

[4] Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 143-47.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic," 97 and 119.

[7] Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 145-46.

Comissão de Estudos para a Localização da Nova Capital do Brasil had come into existence prior to the Kubitschek administration, and indeed had succeeded in both finalising the approximate location of the would-be city and linking the site with various key infrastructural provisions. At Kubitschek's behest however, the speed of development shifted radically. In large part, this acceleration was made possible by the rapid and definitive quelling of the most radical legacies of the turbulence of November 1955. [8]

Perhaps to a greater extent than any other phase of Brasília's development, the historiography of this topic is noticeably limited, both in works addressing the city itself and those examining Kubitschek's broader administration. In José Adirson de Vasconcelos's *A Mudança da Capital* - ostensibly a sweeping narrative of the new capital city's origins - the legislative process surrounding the project is covered in a few scant paragraphs.[9] Even Fernando Tamanini's standout work *Memória da Construção* is restrained in this respect, providing only an episodic narrative of the process and reproducing a handful of key documents.[10] However, despite being superficially somewhat drier than the more tangibly dramatic, boots-on-the-ground construction process, I contest that the mechanisms and processes inherent to the legislative enabling of Brasília constitute a central element in understanding how the city eventually progressed beyond simple conjecture. With the aim of better appreciating the historical underpinnings of the project, the voices of several key actors, Kubitschek chief among them, are necessarily preeminent. Although often preoccupied with a perhaps unsurprising degree of self-aggrandisement and an emphasis on the role of the individual - be it himself or one of a close-knit band of other key protagonists - in his various memoirs the president offers a

[8] See Chapter III.

[9] Vasconcelos, *A Mudança da Capital*, 352.

[10] See Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 173-263.

compelling series of episodic vignettes expressing his strategy, ambition, and frustrations with regard to facilitating Brasília in law. While these volumes frequently echo one another in their accounts - to the extent that some passages are repeated virtually verbatim - they nevertheless offer the best insight into the mind of Brasília's key political architect, and consequently form the central resource in attempting to decipher not only his intentions, but also the extent to which historical awareness was influential in informing the decision-making process. Similarly, the writings and speeches of those closest to the project in its preliminary stages, Brasília's key engineers Israel Pinheiro and Ernesto Silva, as well as visionary architect Oscar Niemeyer foremost among them, have been critical in reconstructing the very first steps in realising the Brasília dream. As the final element of this chapter explores, even before formal congressional ratification was attained these men had mobilised for the immense endeavour to come. Their efforts would be crucial in facilitating their president's ultimate ambition.

## *Preparing the Ground*

As evidenced by the prevailing judgement of historians, and especially when seen in contrast to the upheaval of the preceding eighteen months or so, Kubitschek's administration constituted a relatively calm sea amid the tempestuous waters of the wider Fourth Republic.[11] This stability was far from immediately apparent however. Following General Lott's counter coup in November 1955 and Kubitschek's inauguration two months thereafter, the new president was quickly called to prioritise issues of national security when rebel elements within the military attempted once more to undermine federal authority.[12] On 10 February 1956, two air force officers absconded with a stolen

[11] See both Bethell, "Politics in Brazil under the Liberal Republic," 126-29, and Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 163-86.

[12] For the events prior to Kubitschek's inauguration, see Chapter III.

military aircraft from the Afonsos Air Force Base in Rio de Janeiro, flying to the remote garrison at Jacareacanga near the Pará/Mato Grosso state border. From their isolated redoubt, the pair incited a revolt that succeeded in occupying the nearby city of Santarém, and which was only suppressed following swift and decisive action by the army.[13] If it had not already been apparent, the Kubitschek government was again reminded of the armed forces' potential to jeopardise national stability and undercut democracy. In the aftermath of the unrest, pragmatism and appeasement reigned, with the seemingly unimpeachable Lott working with the president to cut a deal which saw both the granting of amnesty to the military insurrectionists, and the appointing of a bevy of senior military figures to prominent positions within the government.[14] Moreover, in the bringing together of the PSD and PTB in an alliance made manifest by the executive pairing of Kubitschek and his vice-president João Goulart, the worst of the demons left over from the fall of Vargas appeared to have been placated, if not definitively slain.[15] The planning of Brasília would soon put the policy-making credentials of this new coalition government to the test.

In a series of events strongly reminiscent to the impromptu commitment to a new capital he had made in Jataí the previous year, Kubitschek's early moves towards enacting his plan for Brasília were defined by a sense of improvisation. Amid a delicate moment for Brazilian politics, in Kubitschek's own words, 'the situation required

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[13] For full reference to the incident, see Glauco Carneiro, *História das Revoluções Brasileiras, 2' Volume* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições o Cruzeiro, 1965), 504-17. As Kubitschek described in an interview of April 1974, initial attempts to put down the revolt using the air force met with recalcitrance. The new president reported ordering the arrest of 500 air force personnel in just 48 hours, insisting that he would only leave the Palácio do Catete in either victory or death. The Jacacareacanga uprising was, Kubitschek suggested, 'a matter of great importance and even fear […] I really did not know if I would survive it.' See "April 6, 1974: Jacareacanga Uprising," in Edward A. Riedinger, *Interviews with Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira (President of Brazil, 1956-1961)* (Rio de Janeiro: self-pub.,1975).

[14] Carneiro, *História das Revoluções Brasileiras*, 504-17, and Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964*, 170-73.

[15] For this coalition, see Chapter III.

caution.'[16] Acutely aware of the possibility that any enabling legislation regarding the construction of his new capital would, in all likelihood, become mired in protracted political manoeuvring and debate, Kubitschek sought to streamline the process by synthesising the necessary provisions into a single legal instrument.[17] To assist with this task, in March 1956 the president called upon Francisco San Tiago Dantas, a lawyer and academic then serving as the chair of the Rio-based Inter-American Committee of Jurists.[18] 'Make me a law so that I don't need congress throughout the whole construction of the city, otherwise it will be hell,' Kubitschek was reported to have commented.[19] Working alongside his colleague Sigismundo Melo, San Tiago Dantas drafted a bill of thirty-four articles, centring on two key pillars. First, the final confirmation of the site of the future city within the new Distrito Federal, with a precisely defined parcel of territory identified for the purpose between the Preto and Descoberto rivers.[20] Second, the establishment of a new body with explicit authority to oversee all elements of the planning and execution of the future capital's 'siting, urbanization and construction [...] directly or via federal, state, or municipal agencies, or through reputable companies with which to contract.'[21] This entity, provisionally named the Companhia Urbanizadora da Capital Federal and later renamed as the Companhia

[16] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 7.

[17] Ibid.

[18] In addition to his legal career, San Tiago Dantas was also a journalist and scholar in the field of political theory, later serving as the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the presidency of João Goulart. Although a member of the PTB rather than the PSD, he was held in high regard by Kubitschek, who invited him to serve on the Conselho de Desenvolvimento Econômico and to form part of Brazil's delegation to the United Nations, both of which San Tiago Dantas ultimately declined. See Renato Ferreira Ribeiro, "San Tiago Dantas e a política externa para o desenvolvimento na década de 1950," *Revista NEIBA: Cadernos Argentina-Brasil*, volume V, 2016, 1-10.

[19] Ernesto Silva, Depoimento: Projeto "Museu Nacional da Imagem e do Som," Brasília, ArPDF, 2007, 30.

[20] For the full text of the bill and subsequent law (no. 2,874), see "Mensagem de Anapolis," in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 157-65 and "Lei no. 2.874 – de 19 de Setembro de 1956," in ibid., 167-75.

[21] Ibid., 161-64 and 169-73. For the founding manifesto of Novacap, see "Manifesto da Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital do Brasil," in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 197-98.

Urbanizadora da Nova Capital do Brasil, or Novacap, was allocated a share capital of five hundred million cruzeiros, of which up to forty-nine percent was to be made available for acquisition by private enterprise.[22] The bill mandated that Novacap would receive guaranteed credit from the Tesouro Nacional, both in relation to domestic and foreign contractors.[23] The company would also be granted rights to expropriate territory and resources from the state of Goiás where necessary, as well as enjoying a suite of privileges including exemption from a range of duties and taxes.[24] Novacap's board of directors and administrative and fiscal councils would be appointed directly by the president, albeit with a mandatory third of post-holders being chosen from long-lists provided to the government by the largest opposition party, in practice the UDN.[25] The president was also granted the express power to alter any of the company's statutes by executive decree.[26] Regular congressional disclosures were mandated to facilitate cross-party scrutiny, albeit this requirement was subsequently circumvented by Novacap's establishment of the widely-distributed *Brasília* magazine, the final few pages of which were routinely given over to the legally-mandated bulletin.[27] San Tiago Dantas reassured the president that should the bill pass into law, the government would have 'the power and authority for practically everything related to the construction' of the city.[28] Just one proviso would remain, namely that by the terms of the Constitution, the exact date of the

[22] Ibid. As Evenson notes, the eventual cost of Brasília up to inauguration was estimated to total approximately six hundred million US dollars, with a further billion dollars in expenses accrued by 1966. Having a firm grasp on these figures in cruzeiros is complicated by the dramatic fluctuations in exchange rates during the period, with sixty-five cruzeiros to the dollar in December 1956 compared with one hundred and eighty-seven to the dollar in June 1960. Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 156.

[23] "Mensagem de Anapolis," *Coleção Brasília IV*, 160.

[24] Ibid., 160-64.

[25] Ibid., 162-63 and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 45.

[26] "Mensagem de Anapolis," *Coleção Brasília IV*, 162-63.

[27] Ibid., 163-64, and Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 269.

[28] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 81.

transfer of the capital would need to be explicitly approved by Congress - a fact that San Tiago Dantas highlighted to the president as a possible roadblock.[29] For the moment however, this final consideration could wait.

With the legislative framework in hand, Kubitschek's desire for expediency and ever-present pragmatism nevertheless compelled him to adopt a somewhat circuitous approach in bringing the bill to Congress. Given the spectre of staunch UDN opposition, the president conceived an innovative solution.[30] In a move seemingly inspired by his prior experience of corralling bickering factions as governor of Minas Gerais, and recognising that the promise of individual prestige often outweighed broader party loyalties, Kubitschek's plan was deceptively simple. Rather than introduce the bill to Congress himself and invite partisan conflict, he instead sought to transfer sponsorship of the scheme to the third party most well placed to benefit, namely the state government of Goiás. By dangling the carrot of development, Kubitschek hoped to rally a base of local cross-party support from stakeholders across the political spectrum.[31] Crucially, the strategy would also help Kubitschek shield the bill from UDN opposition. 'For my part,' wrote the president in his memoirs, 'it would not have been politically wise to demonstrate undue interest in the matter. To do so would be to mobilise against the project all of my adversaries in Congress. The attitude to assume would be to give the impression that the proposed change of capital was purely to meet the demands of the *goianos*.'[32] Goiás's governor, former pharmacist and PSD loyalist José 'Juca' Ludovico, keenly agreed to the ploy, which Kubitschek would later eulogise as one that would allow

[29] Ibid., 80-81.

[30] As Kubitschek himself recalled, the early months of his administration had been dominated in part by his government's attempts to force through a programme of taxation reform. The bill was bitterly contested and delayed by the opposition factions in Congress - a fate the president was keen to avoid in the case of Brasília. See Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 8.

[31] Ibid., 31.

[32] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 80.

him to 'work with state representatives - including *udenistas* - in creating a favourable environment for the idea.'[33] To further push the 'regionalist' nature of the scheme, Kubitschek called for a public ceremony to be held in the main square of the state capital of Goiânia, where before the eyes of the public he would sign the bill to be sent to Congress.[34]

Correspondingly, late on the evening of 17 April 1956 Kubitschek and a small delegation took off from Rio. Despite the minister of aeronautics advising against a night flight into the interior, the president had waved away concerns only for the pilot to become lost, eventually re-establishing his bearings and proceeding to Goiânia.[35] Thousands had taken to the streets, and the city was decoratively adorned in anticipation of the occasion. At the last moment however, a blanket of cloud 'like a huge flake of cotton' enveloped the runway, and the plane was forced to divert to the nearby town of Anápolis.[36] There, the presidential party disembarked and entered the terminal building, only to find it largely deserted. The group repaired to a café next to the airfield, where over breakfast they were eventually joined by the town mayor and a smattering of local dignitaries. Due to continue on to Manaus later that day on his way to inspect new oil wells in the Amazon, the president's schedule did not now allow sufficient time to make good the original idea of a grand civil ceremony. Instead, on the morning of 18 April 1956, the bill to launch Brasília was signed in somewhat farcical fashion amid coffee cups and bread rolls in an airport café, with 'half a dozen curious people in attendance.'[37]

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[33] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 8. *Udenista* was a term commonly used to refer to members of the UDN.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., 9.

[37] Ibid., 9-10.

The bill itself comprised barely four pages of typewritten text, modified at the last minute such that the anticipated signing place of Goiânia had been scratched out and replaced in Kubitschek's own hand with 'Anapolis'.[38] Directly following the ceremonial preamble, the document's second paragraph detailed the immediate influence of historic factors by way of justifying the project at hand. 'The idea of the transfer of the capital constitutes one of the most important problems in our historic evolution, recalling our own Inconfidência Mineira,' it began.[39] 'The Constitutions of 1891, 1934 and 1946 expressly welcomed general aspirations in this sense, establishing in an exhaustive way that the transfer would be made to the central highlands of the Country,' the bill continued.[40] Thereafter making direct reference to the 'various technical commissions' which, at Congress's behest and 'with efficiency, zeal and patriotism' had mapped and surveyed the interior for just such a purpose, the document made clear that in particular light of the prior work of the Comissão de Localização da Nova Capital Federal and Lei no. 1.803 of 1953, Congress was beholden to 'create the indispensable conditions for the continuation of concrete measures' without delay.[41] The creation of the publicly administered Novacap, mandated to oversee the implementation of the transfer, was characterised as having 'happy precedent with the [October 1953] creation of [state-oil company] Petrobras.'[42] 'In view of the experience of [the planned cities of] Belo Horizonte and, more recently, of Goiânia', as well as the pre-existing technical studies, the bill continued, the cost of the undertaking was forecast, with remarkable optimism,

[38] "Mensagem de Anápolis," Arquivo Histórico do Senado Federal, Brasília, as reproduced in Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 106.

[39] Ibid., 103. For Tiradentes et al, see Chapter I.

[40] Ibid., 103-04.

[41] Ibid., 104. See also Chapter II.

[42] Ibid., 105-06. For the formation of Petrobrás, see Getúlio Carvalho, *Petrobrás: do monopólio aos ccontratos de risco* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Forense-Universitária, 1976).

as likely to be 'practically limited' to no more than thirty million cruzeiros.[43] 'I am certain', Kubitschek signed off, 'that the Congresso Nacional will dedicate to the subject the attention dictated by its sense of patriotism and its exact notion of the public interest.'[44] In his memoirs, the president was not shy in marking the historical significance of the occasion of the bill's signing. 'It would become a landmark in our evolution, delineating the frontier between two Brazils,' Kubitschek later wrote in *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*.[45] 'Just as when Dom João VI opened "the ports of the colony to friendly nations", thus establishing the basis for a new kingdom,' he continued, 'I, in determining the transfer of the capital, created the foundation upon which to support the structure of a new Brazil.'[46] Brasília, the president wrote, 'is not an improvisation, it is a maturation.'[47]

## *Divide and Conquer*

Hitherto, Kubitschek's plan had passed off largely without tangible resistance. Obtaining approval from Congress would prove somewhat more troublesome, however. In the president's own words, a sense of 'profound resentment' permeated the chambers of government, with the opposition, spearheaded by the UDN, having adopted the hard-line tactic of creating 'every possible difficulty' for the new administration.[48] The Ministério da Aeronáutica (MAER), which remained in a state of agitation in the aftermath of the Jacareacanga affair, was a key battleground in these internecine tensions.

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[43] "Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 106.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 48.

[46] Ibid.

[47] As quoted in Barbosa, "Brasília, evolução, História de uma ideia," 29.

[48] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 43.

As Kubitschek later remembered, the UDN 'did everything in their power to keep that department [the MAER] in a state of permanent turmoil', while simultaneously 'attempting to torpedo every project of value' the government proposed.[49] As neatly summarised by chancery staff at the British embassy, objection to Brasília - as manifested both within the halls of Congress and elsewhere - could largely be characterised as coalescing behind four key arguments.[50] First among these was a scepticism towards both the chosen site, judged as 'too remote from the main centres of the population', and the government's ability to conduct the project in such an otherwise isolated part of the country.[51] This position contested that the Planalto Central was a wholly inappropriate location for a would-be capital, 'populated, if inhabited at all, by Indians - which is to say barely Brazilian and hardly suitable for the center of national government.'[52] A second angle of critique adopted by opponents pointed out that a single presidential mandate could never hope to offer sufficient time to complete such an ambitious scheme, and that it was 'absurd to rush the project in an attempt to achieve it in four years.'[53] Moreover, this opinion held that Kubitschek's successor - whoever they might be - would inevitably refuse to take up the reigns, and assume the risks, of such an ambitious and costly venture.[54] Third, adversaries suggested that to even attempt the project was a 'waste of enormous financial and other resources, which Brazil needs more urgently in other directions.'[55] Instead, went the thinking, if infrastructural development was to

[49] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 67 and 80.

[50] (90303/57), 7 March 1957, AB1016/2, FO 371/126215, The National Archives. Much the same categorization was later put forward by Holston. See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 20.

[51] (90303/57), 7 March 1957.

[52] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 20.

[53] (90303/57), 7 March 1957.

[54] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 20.

[55] (90303/57), 7 March 1957.

feature prominently on the president's agenda, better to channel available funds into already developed regions that were 'at least inhabited.'[56] Finally, adversaries noted that the enormous costs could only increase already acute inflationary pressures, and would inherently constitute irresponsible 'economic madness.'[57]

Typifying political opposition was the UDN duo of Herbet Levy of São Paulo, who reportedly described Kubitschek's plan as 'craziness', and party standard-bearer Carlos Lacerda.[58] The latter attacked the president for his apparent reversal from the position espoused in a pamphlet from early in the 1955 election campaign, wherein Kubitschek had described the transfer of the capital as the 'problem of a generation' that would be impossible to achieve in less than fifteen years.[59] 'When was the president mistaken', quipped Lacerda, 'when he spoke of fifteen years, or now, when he announced that three would be sufficient? […] The problem will be resolved with time: either Juscelino finishes Brasília or Brasília finishes him!'[60] In response to these recalcitrant voices, Kubitschek countered, in Holston's words, with a 'skilful and successful campaign to legitimate the city's construction.'[61] This drew upon two intertwined ideas, namely the president's own brand of nationalist developmentalism combined with the 'New World mythology' that had grown up around the notion of an interior capital, from Tiradentes to the contemporary moment.[62] This enticing cocktail of development, national identity, and mythmaking would be called upon by Kubtischek

[56] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 20.

[57] Ibid., and (90303/57), 7 March 1957.

[58] As quoted in Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 257-58

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid. See also Chapter III.

[61] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 20.

[62] Ibid. As Holston acknowledges, this linkage between mythology and development had been used repeatedly during previous attempts to propose a new capital, from the colonial period to the prior administrations of the Fourth Republic. See Chapters I, II, and III.

repeatedly during the legislative process, as well as more broadly once the project began, finally, to get off the ground.

After its April introduction to Congress, procedure dictated that the Brasília bill pass to the Comissão de Justiça to undergo cross-party scrutiny. There it was easy prey for UDN saboteurs. Five months of stasis followed, during which time Kubitschek, with the assistance of Governor Ludovico, repeatedly lobbied the opposition deputies from Goiás, deeming them most susceptible to turning.[63] Exasperated, the president declared that if the bill had not passed by October he would abandon the project.[64] Kubitschek's rationale here appears twofold. On the one hand, as an act of simple brinksmanship it can be assumed that by putting an apparent hard deadline on the process, the president was looking to increase the pressure on those deputies whose conflicted loyalties to party and state were most under strain. On the other, however, and as Kubitschek himself admitted, the October cut-off was an act of self-immunisation. Already six months into his term, it was apparent that time was of the essence. Delay too long, and constitutionally barred from seeking immediate re-election, Kubitschek would be obliged to depart office leaving behind a half-built ghost town as the ultimate symbol of failure. 'I would not start the construction of the capital', he wrote later in the safe knowledge of success, 'to leave it, at the end of my government, unfinished. My successors would [surely] abandon it, and the idea would die yet again.'[65]

Fortunately for both Kubitschek and the future of Brasília, a saviour was on hand. Newly elected to Congress as a UDN deputy for Goiás as part of the class of 1954, erstwhile lawyer Emival Ramos Caiado fit precisely the template Kubitschek had been

[63] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 81.

[64] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 44.

[65] Ibid.

targeting in his attempt to fragment opposition to the bill.[66] Charged by the president with the task of rescuing the legislation from the purgatory imposed by his *udenista* colleagues, in August 1956 Caiado was successful. With the opposition convinced that any attempt to build Brasília would end only in dramatic failure for their adversaries, the Goiás representative was able to strike a bargain with UDN protagonists Lacerda and Adauto Lúcio Cardoso.[67] In exchange for votes to sink a government measure proposing lifetime senatorial appointments for former presidents, Caiado brokered a deal which would garner sufficient support for the Brasília legislation to pass.[68] During the course of the congressional debate, several additional articles were added to the bill's terms. As per a newly-added thirty-second article, the Comissão de Localização da Nova Capital Federal of 1953 would be dissolved, with all of the latter's responsibilities and contractual obligations passing to Novacap.[69] The document further designated as a matter of 'primary urgency' the construction of highways 'linking the new Distrito Federal to the industrial centres of São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, as well as to the riverport of Pirapora, in the State of Minas Gerais.'[70] Also added was the thirty-third and penultimate article, the bill's shortest, which had been heavily influenced by Francisco Pereira da Silva, a PSD senator from the state of Amazonas with a flair for the poetic.[71] Directly inspired by the early nineteenth-century writings of José Bonifácio and Hipólito da

[66] Caiado had previously served as the UDN representative for Anápolis, the town where Kubitschek had signed the bill that April.

[67] See Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 257-58.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Lei no. 2.874 – de 19 de Setembro de 1956, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação. As per Decreto no. 38.281, the commission had been renamed as the Comissão de Planejamento da Construção e da Mudança da Capital Federal in December 1955. See Chapter II.

[70] Lei no. 2.874.

[71] While a young man and political agitator in Manaus in the 1920s, Pereira da Silva had published a popular volume of nature poetry, subsequently reprinted in various new editions throughout the century. See Francisco Pereira da Silva, *Poemas Amazónicos* (Manaus: Augusto Reis, 1927).

Costa, Pereira da Silva approached Kubitschek with a suggestion, heartily approved by the president who described the alteration as 'perfectly suited to the integrationist purpose of the new capital.'[72] 'To the new Federal Capital is given the name "Brasília"' it read simply.[73]

On 13 August 1956, Caiado addressed the chamber, congratulating his colleagues for the near unanimity with which the bill had eventually met.[74] In a lengthy speech, the UDN deputy paid detailed service to the long path to Brasília. 'The idea of the interiorization of the Brazilian Capital, one might say, is intertwined with the very forming of the nation itself,' Caiado began, thereafter embarking on a richly referenced narrative tracing the project's origins from the Inconfidência Mineira, through the pages of the *Correio Braziliense*, the advocacy of José Bonifácio, Varnhagen, and Holanda Cavalcanti, the constitutionalists of the Old Republic, the Cruls expeditions, the subsequent constitutions of the Vargas era, and touching in turn on the work of each of the multitude of commissions and surveys conducted in the years immediately prior to the contemporary administration.[75] After a prolonged series of arguments in favour of the transfer, principally regarding national integration and security, Caiado concluded by personally addressing the leader of the chamber, Ulysses Guimarães:

> Mr President, we believe in the transfer of the Federal Capital because we believe in the patriotism of Brazilians. We believe in the transfer because we do not doubt in our capacity to achieve.
>
> We believe in the transfer because we consider that we have already built on this southern shore a first-rate tropical civilization.
>
> We believe in the transfer because we trust in the heritage of a people that explored oceans and continents.

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[72] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 81, and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 49-50. For José Bonifácio and Hipólito da Costa, see Chapter I.

[73] Lei no. 2.874

[74] "Discurso do Sr. Deputado Emival Caiado, proferido na sessão do dia 13 de agosto de 1956, cuja publicação seria feita posteriormente," *Diário do Congresso Nacional*, 18 August 1956, 7059-65.

[75] Ibid., 7060-62.

> We believe in the transfer because we believe in the epic of the *bandeirantes* and in the future of a nation that will set Brasília in the central highlands of the country in decisive attestation of its unified civilization, coming to shine from that day forth in the constellation of the great powers of the world.[76]

Following its passage through Congress, all that remained was for the bill to be signed by the president and become law. Even at this late stage, however, Kubitschek's predilection for pragmatism prevailed. By the president's thinking, 'it would be counterproductive to brag about the initiative', which would serve only to goad the opposition into making 'endless enquiries' and so cause further delay.[77] Instead, a quieter approach was preferred. Correspondingly, on the evening of 19 September 1956, Kubitschek dined with his wife Sarah and daughters Márcia and Maria Estela in the presidential apartments of the Palácio das Laranjeiras in Rio.[78] Repairing to his study and surrounded only by his immediate family, the president put his signature to Lei no. 2,874, entitled 'Dispõe sobre a mudança da Capital Federal e dá outras providências [*sic*].'[79] Subsequently countersigned by eleven ministers including Governor of the Banco do Brasil Sebastião Pães de Almeida and Minister of Transport and Public Works Lúcio Martins Meira, the law was published the following day in the national gazette the *Diário Oficial da União*.[80] Even then, Kubitschek's light-touch approach was in evidence. 'I gave orders', he wrote, 'that even the publication of the decree be carried out with the greatest reserve, including the act together with [a range] of other administrative measures, without the slightest emphasis.'[81]

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[76] Ibid., 7065.

[77] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 44.

[78] Ibid.

[79] See ibid. and Lei no. 2.874 – de 19 de Setembro de 1956, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação. Also Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 256.

[80] See Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 44-47 and "Lei no. 2.874 – de 19 de Setembro de 1956," in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 175.

[81] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 44.

However it gained approval, the green light offered by the legislature did not shield the project from the attacks of journalists in the national media. 'A capital is not changed by decree,' posited a *Correio Paulistano* reporter in October 1956, 'especially in Brazil, where nobody believes in the transfer, nor wants it.'[82] 'A lunatic enterprise' that would surely see the president 'go down in the history of ridicule and demagoguery' wrote another in *O Mundo*.[83] What 'astronomical financial sacrifices' would Brasília require, asked São Paulo's *Diário Popular*, adding that only 'disturbing and unpredictable repercussions' could possibly result from President Kubitschek's 'excesses of imagination.'[84] From the embassy in Rio de Janeiro, the British diplomatic corps appeared to share similar concerns. 'This sounds a hare-brained scheme' wrote one chancery official, lamenting that it appeared 'unfortunately […] impossible for us to "lobby" against the proposed transfer.'[85] 'A most depressing prospect from every point of view […] I think it is an appalling idea!' added another.[86]

More positive commentary typically came from those local to the development site. Goiás paper *O Popular* reported that while the prospect of building Brasília initially provoked 'the inevitable conclusion that the undertaking is reckless given the limits of the time allotted', the success of Goiânia itself as a planned city – a 'true miracle' – rendered the prospect of a new federal capital entirely within reason.[87] Such sentiments were corroborated in a report filed by a Mr Robb on behalf of the British embassy in

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[82] "A Mudança da Capital Federal" *Correio Paulistano*, 27 October 1956, in *Coleção Brasília VIII*, 77-79.

[83] "Começou a safra na nova Pampulha," *O Mundo*, 7 November 1956, in ibid., 94-95.

[84] A mudança da capital do país e os excessos de uma publicidade insensate," *Diário Popular*, 9 October 1956, in ibid., 51-52.

[85] "Transfer of Brazilian Capital," 30 August 1956, AB1016/1, FO 371/119915, The National Archives.

[86] "Transfer of Brazilian Capital," 7 December 1956, AB1016/3, FO 371/119915, The National Archives.

[87] "Dúvida Injustificável," *O Popular*, 7 October 1956, in *Coleção Brasília VIII*, 44-45. For the history of Goiânia, see Tarcísio Rodrigues Botelho et al., *Goiânia: cidade pensada* (Goiânia: Editora UFG, 2002).

February 1957, which described how 'those from Goias [*sic*] were enthusiastic about the prospects for the new capital,' and had been 'very annoyed by the criticisms' facing the project both in the press and in Congress.[88] As soon-to-be Novacap director Ernesto Silva later recalled in an interview towards the end of his life, the notion of Brasília 'made all the *goianos* euphoric […] they helped us with everything.'[89]

Even before the enabling law had passed, Kubitschek and his administration had not allowed the Brasília effort to be stymied by a few disgruntled journalists, diplomats, and *udenistas* however. In the interim, the president had undertaken 'numerous and important measures, largely of an administrative nature, in anticipation of the offensive that would be unleashed after legislative approval was granted.'[90] Several forces were at play here. In addition to the president, who had himself despatched a delegation of twelve experts from the Ministério da Agricultura to the site to conduct 'preliminary studies', both the local government of Goiás and the planning commission had been hard at work.[91] At Kubitschek's request, Governor Ludovico had overseen the setting up of a liaison office in the new Distrito Federal, to better facilitate cooperation between local and federal authorities.[92] In this capacity, Ludovico worked closely with Ernesto Silva, who on 7 June 1956 had replaced his former boss Marshal José Pessoa at the head of the planning commission.[93] Pessoa had tendered his resignation to Kubitschek the previous month, with the pair having disagreed on how best to approach the construction of the new city. Pessoa - perhaps influenced, Kubitschek hypothesised, by

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[88] "Tour of Northern Brazil – January 30 to February 22, 1957, Section VI: 'Brasília'," 23 February 1957, AB1016/2, FO 371/126215, The National Archives.

[89] Ernesto Silva, Depoimento – Programa de História Oral, Brasília, ArPDF, 2009, 26.

[90] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 49.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 46.

his supposedly close relationship with the American consultants from Donald J. Belcher & Associates - had wanted to adopt a measured approach to the project, building 'step by step' and over the course of successive administrations.[94] Such an approach was radically at odds with Kubitschek's own sensibilities. The pair nevertheless parted on amicable terms, with the president joking to Pessoa that he would be guaranteed an invitation to the city's ceremonial inauguration.[95] Ernesto Silva would later comment of his former boss that Pessoa, alongside Juca Ludovico, had formed the 'cornerstone of the construction of Brasília.'[96] The two men, Silva continued, 'left everything absolutely clean and ready for the President to get started. If he [Kubitschek] had been elected and [then] had to select the site and expropriate [the land], he never could have built Brasília'.

With the eventual signing of the bill into law, efforts redoubled. On 24 September 1956, the president set about appointing the members of the board of Novacap. As leader of the new body, Kubitschek selected Israel Pinheiro, a PSD congressman hitherto serving as the head of the finance commission within the Câmara dos Deputados.[97] Born into an illustrious *mineiro* family - his father João Pinheiro da Silva had served as state governor during the Old Republic - Pinheiro, like Kubitschek, had climbed the political ladder under the patronage of Minas Gerais heavyweight Benedito Valadares.[98] An engineering graduate who had both contributed to the drafting of the

[94] Ibid. At Pessoa's direction, in February 1954 Belcher had been awarded a contract to undertake a topographical survey of the Planalto Central. See Chapter II.

[95] Ibid. Pessoa would not ultimately live long enough to make this a reality, dying in August 1959.

[96] Silva, Depoimento: Projeto "Museu Nacional da Imagem e do Som," 23-24.

[97] See Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 45, Silva, *História de Brasília*, 92, and Vasconelos, *A Mudança da Capital*, 343.

[98] In addition to his work with Novacap for which he is perhaps best remembered, Pinheiro went on to serve as Brasília's first mayor, before following in the footsteps both of his father and his two political patrons in assuming the governorship of his home state in 1966. Despite this latter appointment coinciding with the era of Brazil's military regime, Pinheiro developed a reputation as a moderate who frequently stood at odds with federal policy. As referenced in Chapter III, Pinheiro's father João had been among the foremost political architects behind the building of Minas Gerais's planned capital of Belo Horizonte in the final years of the nineteenth century. For a comprehensive biography, see both Kao Martins and Sebastião

1946 constitution and been a leading proponent of the establishment Petrobras in 1953, Pinheiro was in many ways the ideal candidate to spearhead the realisation of Kubitschek's vision.[99] More renowned as a technocrat and devoted committee member than charismatic orator, he boasted considerable reputation in industry, bolstered by his role during the early 1940s as inaugural president of newly founded state-owned mining enterprise Companhia Vale do Rio Doce.[100] Hailed by his congressional peers as possessing 'the soul of a pioneer', in a farewell speech delivered to Congress on 4 October 1956 prior to assuming his new role, Pinheiro stressed the importance of his own personal history in affirming his passion to deliver Brasília:

> I came from the interior and to the interior I now return. I was born in the centre of Brazilian mineral opulence, in the city of Caeté. Even as a boy it was soon impressed upon me the contrast between the immense potential wealth that surrounded us and the extreme penury of the people working there. From the ancient prosperity of the gold cycle, Caeté, like so many other cities in Minas, is reduced to the conditions of a village, maintaining only the myth of its rich past. [...] I go now to a greater fight in the service of the same ideal, with great power, great responsibilities, and - well I know it - great difficulties. I return to the interior to seek to deeply implant in the centre of the country the roots of a new Brazilian civilization.[101]

In a subsequent speech to students in São Paulo in March 1957, the new Novacap leader spoke again of his conviction in the notion of a new capital. Via extensive reference to the Minas Gerais rebels of 1789, royal administrator Veloso de Oliveira, José Bonifácio, and the constitutional debates of the early republican era, Pinheiro observed that the 'problem [of an inland capital] has been agitated every time that political or social factors have altered the conditions of national life. During the Inconfidência, with the arrival of Dom João VI, with Independence, and in the Assembléias Constituintes

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Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia: Israel Pinheiro e seu Tempo* (Belo Horizonte: Armazém de Idéias Ltda, 1992) and Alisson Mascarenhas Vaz, *Israel: Uma Vida para a História* (Rio de Janeiro: Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, 1996).

[99] Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 95-110.

[100] Ibid., 87-93. The company, privatized in 1997 and renamed Vale SA in 2007, remains among the world's largest producers of metal ores.

[101] As quoted in ibid., 141-42.

Republicanas.'[102] It is in such moments, he continued, 'that sensitivity is sharpened, when the inflamed and active patriotic zeal of public men is made manifest, who then feel the courage and capacity to solve the gravest of national problems, which in normal times are relegated to eternal postponement.'[103] With the 'enthusiasm and determination' of President Kubitschek, a man 'devoted to the redemption of the interior', just such a moment, Pinheiro suggested, was once again afoot.[104] 'No other national problem,' he later wrote in a magazine article of June 1957, 'has been debated and analysed over so long a period of our history – from colonial times up to the present day.'[105]

To work alongside Novacap's suitably impassioned leader, Kubitschek named as directors Ernesto Silva - a natural continuity choice given the latter's experience with the planning commission - and Bernardo Sayão, a fellow *pessedista* who between January and March 1955 had served briefly as Juca Ludovico's predecessor as governor of Goiás.[106] Like Pinheiro, Sayão had trained as an engineer, albeit unlike his new boss was renowned as the epitome of charm and personal gravitas.[107] As stipulated by law, for the final seat on the board of directors Kubitschek was obliged to select from a shortlist of three names nominated by the opposition. Presented with a trio that also included former president João Café Filho and Goiás deputy Jales Machado, Kubitschek chose Íris

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[102] "Aspectos Gerais da Mudança: Conferência proferida pelo Dr. Israel Pinheiro durante a Semana Nacional Mudancista, em São Paulo, em 11 de março de 1957," in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 189-94.

[103] Ibid., 193.

[104] Ibid., 191.

[105] Israel Pinheiro, "Uma realidade: Brasília," *Módulo* (June 1957), 3-8.

[106] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 45. *Pessedista* signifies a member or supporter of the PSD.

[107] Visiting American writer John Dos Passos would later describe Sayão as having 'the greatest quality of leadership of any man I ever met.' See Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, Chapter I: "The People the Lord Put There" – "The Man Himself". Unlike his Novacap colleagues, Sayão would not live to see the project to completion. While overseeing forest clearances as part of the construction of the Belém to Brasília highway, in January 1959 he was fatally crushed by a mistakenly felled tree. See *Bernardo Sayão: Bandeirante Moderno* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1959).

Meinberg, another Minas Gerais native with strong ties to agricultural interest groups.[108] Notwithstanding Meinberg's inclusion, the formal creation of Novacap and the appointment of the body's first executives met with some scepticism in the national press, which remained largely in the grip of the UDN and its leader Lacerda.[109] As one journalist quipped, 'another company, set up by the government to give comfortable jobs to their friends in Rio.'[110] 'Many [who accepted a position with Novacap] see the Company as just another sinecure or, for the more daring, the chance of a new adventure,' suggested another.[111]

If the final months of the work of the planning commission under Ernesto Silva were anything to go by, however, the lives of Novacap's new directors – contrary to the opinion of some sections of the press – were far from comfortable.[112] Upon the completion of his short tenure at the head of the commission prior to its dissolution, Silva had filed a report with General Nélson de Melo, head of the Gabinete Militar da Presidência, to which the commission had been directly subordinate.[113] The report's ten items reinforce the extent of the challenges presented by the founding of a new city. In addition to studies conducted to finalise the costs inherent to physically demarcating the border of the new Distrito Federal and surveys of the region's economic potential, hosts of experts had been consulted and committees convened to determine how best to provide for Brasília's anticipated five hundred thousand inhabitants.[114] This included the

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[108] Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 144.

[109] For the contemporary UDN and its press connections, see Dulles, *Carlos Lacerda, Brazilian Crusader*, 231-78.

[110] As quoted in Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 46.

[111] "Mais uma sinecura," *O Jornal*, 30 October 1956, in *Coleção Brasília VIII: Brasília e a Opinão Nacional (1956-1957)* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1960), 82-83.

[112] For the earlier work of the commission, see Chapter II.

[113] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 95.

[114] Ibid., 95-96.

marking off of nearby agricultural zones for arable farming and the rearing of livestock, the commissioning of a team of hydrobiologists from Rio's Instituto Oswaldo Cruz to assess the fish stocks of nearby lakes, consulting with waste management firms to oversee a preliminary plan for water treatment and recirculation, and a series of meetings with the Departamento Nacional de Endemias Rurais, with the aim of formulating a public health plan tailored to local conditions.[115]

In addition to his own report back to Rio de Janeiro, Silva had at the end of his initial mandate himself received a slew of documents prepared by secondary authorities. Among these were the mayors of six newly incorporated municipalities within the Distrito Federal, who together with Silva had devised a plan to develop a network of peripheral satellite communities, providing housing and amenities to the migrant workers central to Brasília's construction.[116] 'We knew', Silva wrote in his *História de Brasília*, 'that the start of the construction of the new Capital would see northeasterners, *goianos* and *mineiros* flock to these places in search of better pay and better compensated jobs than they could ever have secured in their home states.'[117] To cater to this 'great mass of Brazilians [...] attracted by a better life', Silva and his colleagues worked to foster favourable conditions in these neighbouring municipalities, several of which would serve as farming communities or hubs of light industry as well as dormitory settlements.[118] Clinics and schools were endowed, as well as a litany of other preparations such that the 'excess of migrants' might contribute to making Brasília 'what it ought to be in reality: a modest city of 500,000 inhabitants, where the Three Powers [the executive, judiciary, and

[115] Ibid., 95. Note that the namesake of the Instituto Oswaldo Cruz was the same Oswaldo Cruz as had worked to combat Rio's yellow fever epidemic at the dawn of the century. See Chapter II.

[116] Ibid. The six municipalities in question are identified as Formosa, Luziánia, Corumbá de Goiás, Cristalina, Planaltina, and Unaí.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

legislature] might be installed, with whatever adjunct population necessary to support the substantive population.'[119] The final part of the planning commission's work saw Silva play host to a delegation of experts from the Ministério da Agricultura, led by the then director-general of the Departamento Nacional de Produção Mineral, Dr Avelino Inácio de Oliveira.[120] Having conducted further surveying works on the topography, hydrology, and climate of the Federal District, Inácio de Oliveira submitted to Silva a report detailing his findings:

> I arrived in Goiás full of doubts. Knowing that the area presented the same geology as central Minas Gerais, and thinking of the watershed of the Paranaíba and Tocantins basins, I supposed that I would find a harsh and aggressive topography, and an alarming deficiency of water to supply a great city, albeit I knew that the climate was good. To my surprise, the region showed a mild physiognomy of undulating topography and a beautiful panorama. Above all the question: would the water supply be sufficient? The answer was affirmative.[121]

While the early doubts of technicians were gradually appeased, media cynicism persisted. In the frequent press conferences he began to hold, Israel Pinheiro reported facing regular inquisition from journalists, who questioned the precipitousness of the transfer of the capital, the accelerating inflation linked to the endeavour, and whether the city would, in fact, be ready before the expiry of President Kubitschek's mandate.[122] 'We needed therefore to talk about the historical antecedents of the change,' Pinheiro would later relay, 'until arriving at the Constitution of 1891 and those that came after, informing them [the press] about the technical commissions that had traversed the Planalto Central […] and explaining that the boundaries of the future Distrito Federal had already been approved.'[123] In fending off criticism by grounding Brasília in historical precedent,

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] As quoted in ibid., 97.

[122] Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 271.

[123] Ibid.

Pinheiro's strategy shows the powerful influence the project's heritage was judged to possess, even in the earliest days of its eventual execution.

## *A Flight into the Future*

Early on the morning of 2 October 1956, Kubitschek boarded the presidential DC-3 and, for the first time, travelled to the site of his great undertaking.[124] Typically, a lack of suitable infrastructure dictated that the journey be made in stages, travelling by plane to Goiânia, from there by light aircraft to the municipality of Planaltina in the Distrito Federal, and onwards to the construction zone by off-road vehicle.[125] Seldom one to forego a publicity stunt, however, for the occasion of his first visit Kubitschek chose instead to arrive in style. At the direction of the freshly-instated Sayão, a rudimentary airstrip had been rapidly cleared among the scrub and brush of the plateau, albeit one that by the time of the president's visit was still 'precariously levelled and full of potholes.'[126] Approaching this freshly dubbed 'Aeroporto de Vera Cruz', Kubitschek later claimed he could spot from a distance not only the collection of huts used by the now defunct planning commission, but also the long-ruined basecamp of the Cruls expedition from the previous century.[127] While it is tempting to take the president at his word, the symbolism of the 'Father of Brasília' soaring above the dilapidated remains of prior efforts on his way to finally delivering a new capital is perhaps too alluring to ring wholly true. Nevertheless, be it stone-cold fact or exaggerated flight of fancy, in his

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[124] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 80 and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 51.

[125] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 50. An amusing account of one such early visit to the worksite is provided by the aforementioned Mr Robb of the British embassy, who in his report of 23 February 1957 described the intensely labourious and slow process of travelling to the location by public bus. Taking in excess of eight-and-a-half hours from Goiânia alone, the trip, Robb wrote, could be characterised by the 'comic-opera wild west character of the whole expedition.' See "Tour of Northern Brazil – January 30 to February 22, 1957, Section VI: 'Brasília'," 23 February 1957, AB1016/2, FO 371/126215, The National Archives.

[126] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 50.

[127] Ibid.

bombast Kubitschek again demonstrated both his propagandistic acumen in spotting an opportunity for powerful metaphor, as well as his awareness of and willingness to harness the wider history bound up in the Brasília project. This attitude is further evident in a short passage in the second volume of his extended memoirs, in which the president granted an assessment of the traction the project for a new capital had gained prior to his own administration and early visits:

> The idea of the interiorization of the capital of the Republic germinated, in reality, in 1789, when it was included in the manifesto of the Minas Conspirators. It was propagated by Hipólito José da Costa and José Bonifácio, in 1821. The Constitution of 1891 put it in writing, determining that the move would be to the Central Plateau, proficiently studied by Luís Cruls. The Constitution of 1946 ratified the prior mandate of the Magna Carta, and President Dutra came close to fulfilling it, naming, on 19 November of that year, a commission to proceed with the preliminary works. The idea, however, remained dead words, despite the constitutional prerogative. The only measure taken was the addition of a rectangle, in dotted lines, superimposed on the map of Brazil.[128]

Kubitschek continued:

> The commission named by President Dutra established the location of the new capital, but it was only during my government that the area was finalized, between the Preto and Descoberto rivers. Flying over the site, I had a vision of what Brasília would be. Already, there were men working the savannah - measuring, surveying, levelling. It was the first wave of pioneers - the *bandeirantes* of the twentieth century - demonstrating that the will of the government was mobilizing to create a new Brazil.[129]

The words serve as a distillation of the essence of Kubitschek the politician. The invoking of past efforts and the heritage of his undertaking serves both as a source of legitimacy and a graphic representation of his own ambition and eventual success against the failures of previous generations. The president's personal vision is amplified, with the supremacy of flight reinforcing his own prestige as the man to unleash his self-proclaimed new Brazil. Juxtaposed with the advantages of modern technology is the appropriation yet again of the *bandeirante*, the semi-mythical colonial-age figure of manifest destiny, fortune hunting, and violent subjugation.

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[128] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 67.

[129] Ibid.

Regardless of the precise views afforded him from the skies, when Kubitschek and his travelling entourage disembarked - a group that included Lott, Pinheiro, and architect Oscar Niemeyer - the sight awaiting them was already, as above, one of no little activity. As is often symptomatic of his style, Kubitschek's account of the visit reads somewhat prophetically. According to the president's telling, among his first tasks on the ground was to reassure Lott, his minister of war, that the project was at all viable in the first place. The old soldier and guarantor of Kubitschek's mandate had, upon beholding the site and appreciating the scale of the undertaking at hand, detached himself from the main group, surveying the landscape alone with a 'mixture of curiosity and disbelief.' 'Are you really going to build Brasília, Mr President?' Lott reportedly asked his commander-in-chief.[130] Smiling, Kubitschek replied, 'Not only am I going to build it, General, but I will hand over the presidential sash to my successor with the government already installed here.'[131]

Doubters at least temporarily mollified, the president proceeded with a walking tour of the site, Niemeyer at his side. The architect's exalted position as Kubitschek's immediate confidante and advisor for the occasion is telling. In late June, the pair - already joined, in Niemeyer's words, by an 'old and faithful friendship' following their collaborations in Belo Horizonte the previous decade - had come together with Pinheiro, Silva, and urban planning professors Raul Pena Firme and Roberto Lacombe from the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro to draw up the terms of a public competition for the design of the new capital.[132] Formalised on 19 September 1956 - the same day as the enabling law was passed - and published in the *Diário Oficial da União* on 30 September,

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[130] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 52.

[131] Ibid., and Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta Anos em Cinco*, 82.

[132] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 52 and Silva, *História de Brasília*, 93. For Niemeyer's remarks on his relationship with Kubitschek, see Niemeyer, *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, 12. For the pair's first collaborations, see Chapter III.

the competition called for a '*plano-piloto*' detailing 'the basic layout of the city, indicating the disposition of the principal elements of the urban structure, the location and interconnection of the various sectors, centres, installations, and services, and the distribution of open spaces and communication routes.'[133] The announcement stipulated a window for submissions of one hundred and twenty days following the launch of the competition, which was to be judged by a seven-man jury chaired by Pinheiro and made up of two further Novacap representatives, one member each from the Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil and the Clube de Engenharia, and two 'foreign urbanists.'[134] Cash prizes were announced for the top five entrants, while it was made clear that the planning of Brasília's public buildings fell outside of the scope of the competition, to be addressed subsequently and at the explicit discretion of the planning commission.[135] As Niemeyer himself would go on to acknowledge, however, this latter point had already been rendered largely redundant, if not entirely obfuscatory. In his short volume *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, published in April 1961, Niemeyer described how, when assisting in drawing up the parameters for the design competition, he had declined an express invitation from the president to take part himself, instead 'accepting only the assignment of the projects of the governmental buildings.'[136] To undertake such a commission, Niemeyer was swiftly appointed director of freshly established Novacap division the Departamento de Urbanismo e Arquitetura (DUA).[137] Furthermore, by ruling himself out of the running for the competition he had helped to establish, Niemeyer not only

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[133] See Silva, *História de Brasília*, 94. For the full terms of the competition, see "Edital de concurso para o plano piloto da nova capital do Brasil," *Brasília,* no. 3 (March 1957), 19-20.

[134] "Edital de concurso para o plano piloto da nova capital do Brasil," 19-20. For further detail regarding the composition of this jury, see Chapter V.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Niemeyer, *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, 12-13.

[137] Ibid.

avoided an acute conflict of interest - to the extent any significant attention was paid to such considerations amid the frenzy of the project's organisation - but also, in his capacity with the DUA, cleared a path to occupy one of the influential seven seats on the prize jury.

On the occasion of their initial visit, the president and his architect-in-chief surveyed the nascent worksite from the summit of a nearby knoll. Niemeyer would later comment that while he was 'getting to know the area', he could not help but be impressed by 'the enthusiasm that Juscelino Kubitschek demonstrated in the face of that huge and abandoned expanse, feared by all, dreaming of it urbanized, full of houses and apartments, criss-crossed with roads that would later emerge, bringing progress and comfort to those vast backlands.'[138] From their vantage point, the two men mapped out key locations for the hubs of government, including a 'pioneer nucleus', to serve as the site of the presidential residence and accommodation for visiting dignitaries. [139] Preliminary ideas for a fully operational airport were also discussed, as well as road linkages and locations for various temporary facilities pertaining to the forthcoming building works, including offices for Novacap, brickworks, and sawmills.[140] Moving to discuss the topic of water supply and sanitation for the would-be city, Kubitschek also consulted with engineer Saturnino de Brito Filho, who proposed an ambitious project to dam both of the rivers between which Brasília was to be built, with the intention of creating a substantial lake from which the city might amply be supplied with fresh water.[141] The conversation with Brito purportedly put the president in mind of another episode in the long history of Brasília's genesis. 'I remembered', he later wrote, 'the

[138] Ibid., 29.

[139] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 52.

[140] Ibid., 53.

[141] Ibid.

prophecy of Dom Bosco: "Between the 15th and 20th parallels, there is a very broad and extensive plain, beginning at a point where a lake was formed.'"[142] Indeed, not only was Kubitschek able to call upon the words of the prophetic Italian for legitimacy and inspiration, but the prospect of lakeside urban development in the modernist mould was already, in the form of Pampulha, a tried and tested venture.

At the risk of hagiography, Kubitschek's account of the climax of his visit merits attention for its demonstration, albeit heavily biased, of the president's determination and force of vision. Concluding with a further aerial survey conducted in Governor Ludovico's own private aircraft, Kubitschek wrote that the trip had reinforced in his mind that in the creation of Brasília, he was taking on 'the most dangerous challenge that a head of state could face.'[143] Twinned with this realisation, the president saw with fresh eyes the 'malice' of the opposition deputies who had voted in favour of the transfer of the capital. Reflecting on the scale of the undertaking, Kubitschek appreciated anew how their votes had been forthcoming only in the belief that the project would prove to be the president's 'political tomb.'[144] Back on the ground, Kubitschek was presented with a document 'rather pompously entitled the *Livro de Ouro de Brasília*', with a request to pen a spontaneous preamble.[145] The president's brief remarks reflected the dichotomy of Brasília's birth, as a city of the future deeply grounded in history.[146] 'Appearing a dream, the construction of Brasília is a realistic task', the president began.[147] 'With it we bring to life an ancient initiative: that of the constitutionalists of 1891', he continued. 'It is a

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

[146] For Kubitschek's full contribution, see "Livro de Ouro de Brasília", in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 185-86.

[147] Ibid., 185.

historic ideal, of the *bandeirantes* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', channelling the 'venerable pioneering spirit of the men who braved the *sertão* […] to found a civilization in the heart of Brazil.' With reference to the words of Vicente do Salvador regarding the Portuguese predilection for coastal settlement, Kubitschek observed that Brasília would represent both a 'political and economic revolution', creating a 'new centre of gravity, greater balance, better circulation and more perfect communication between the coastline and the interior, between the north and the south.'[148] At Niemeyer's direction, the final paragraph of Kubitschek's hastily composed contribution would later be inscribed into the lobby walls of the Palácio da Alvorada, Brasília's presidential palace:[149]

> From this Central Plateau, from this solitude that will shortly be transformed into the nerve centre of profound national decisions, I cast my eyes once again towards the future of my Nation and look forward to this dawn, with unshakeable faith and a limitless confidence in its great destiny.[150]

Looking around at the faces of his assembled subordinates, however, Kubitschek reported that his bullishness was met only by 'emptiness, general disbelief, [and] forced smiles on pursed lips.'[151] In typical fashion, the president purportedly responded:

> I would have to dispel this atmosphere of pessimism, and there was nothing better for that than a shock. The shock came next: the deadline for the conclusion of the works - three years and ten months. Brasília was launched. It was an idea on the march. For me, no force would have the power to stop it.[152]

## *Conclusion*

As attested by the pervasive air of uncertainty and scepticism amongst even the president's own retinue, and despite the tangible progress, both political and logistical, of

[148] Ibid. For Frei Vicente do Salvador, see Chapter I.

[149] Ibid., 186. See also Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 55.

[150] "Livro de Ouro de Brasília", in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 185-86.

[151] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 53-54.

[152] Ibid.

the previous eight or so months, by the early Brazilian spring of 1956 the great burden of work on Brasília remained undone. Nevertheless, these first months of the Kubitschek administration were critical in facilitating what followed. Already, the new president had achieved far greater progress than any previous Brazilian leader, despite the centuries of aspiration and decades of constitutional directive that had preceded him. Without doubt, the drafting and successful passage through Congress of Lei no. 2,874 constituted by a distance the most significant single step yet taken towards the realisation of a new capital. In its breadth, the law provided the executive with the almost limitless authority needed to make the sort of rapid progress Kubitschek had promised to jolt his ministers out of their gloom on that October day.

Whether or not the doubters in question were familiar with the prior, half-hearted attempts made by previous Brazilian premiers is not apparent. Either way, it is clear that at least some were fully alive to the new capital's painfully drawn-out genesis, hitherto marked by repeated failure. This time, however, even before Brasília's first buildings had begun to take shape, the outlook was demonstrably different. Where symbolic tokenism or incomplete surveying defined the failed efforts of earlier generations, the passing of the law, the establishing of Novacap, the launching of the design competition, and the painstaking work of Ernesto Silva and his predecessors demonstrated anew that Kubitschek's ambition had graduated from campaign rhetoric to firm action. Even as he gazed into the future however, the president's writings reinforce the extent to which he maintained a strong sense of the patrimonial heritage of both his grand project and the nation he governed, be it in the form of romanticized *bandeirantes*, the legacy of the Comissão Cruls, or the prophetic words of Dom Bosco. The degree to which Kubitschek's invocation of these elements originated from an explicit desire for self-aggrandisement, legitimacy, and a wish to stitch his efforts firmly into the tapestry of Brazilian national mythology can only remain a matter of conjecture. As will become

apparent in subsequent chapters however, the appropriation of symbolism pertinent to Brazilian and Brasília's history would only accelerate as the city, after so many years of hopeful hesitation and false dawns, finally began to rise.

# CHAPTER V

## *Looking Forward into the Past: Designing Brasília, 1957-1959*

As President Kubitschek himself would later admit, even as the preliminary work to prepare the construction site of Brasília was well underway, any details regarding the actual design of the new capital remained almost entirely lacking. 'Despite the enthusiasm with which I dedicated myself to the enterprise', wrote the president in his memoir *Por que construí Brasília*, 'at the beginning I did not have a clear idea of what kind of city I was going to build.'[1] Instead, and with the clock already ticking on his grand ambition, by the end of 1956 Brazil's commander-in-chief had only a handful of generalized 'conceptual expressions' of his own invention to describe the underlying vision.[2] Inspiring and outlandish in equal measure, these included imagining Brasília as a 'metropolis of the future', a 'city of the year 2000', and the particularly idiosyncratic if suitably space-age 'interplanetary *urbis* [*sic*].'[3] In her 1973 work on the architecture and planning of Brasília and Rio de Janeiro, Norma Evenson was more forthright: 'The Brazilian president did not want to plan a city; he wanted to build a city.'[4]

As demonstrated in the expeditious first steps towards realising this ambition detailed in the preceding chapter, speed was among the administration's central considerations with regard to the construction of Brasília as a whole, and its design process in particular. 'Had Kubitschek sought to begin a series of lengthy and probably inconclusive social and economic studies,' Evenson speculates, 'it is unlikely that Brasília

[1] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 69.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 117.

would ever have come into existence.'[5] Instead, time constraints warranted a solution that was, to the greatest extent possible, ready-made. 'What was wanted' writes Evenson, 'was a city that could be built as completely as possible as soon as possible. Brasília needed to be virtually an instant capital if it was to be a capital at all.'[6]

Regardless of any shortcuts however, it would be impossible to embark on the building of the new capital without at least some semblance of coherent design. Previous attempts at planning new urban centres in Brazil and, indeed, across Latin America more broadly, had met with mixed success. For every Belo Horizonte, the turn-of-the-century experiment turned proving ground of some of Brasília's chief progenitors, there existed a Nova Filadélfia, an attempt in the 1840s and 1850s by entrepreneur and republican agitator Teófilo Ottoni to create an industrial metropolis in the Minas Gerais heartlands, stymied by a lack of appetite among working Brazilians to settle in the unforgiving and isolated interior.[7] For the nascent Brasília and its status as the future capital of the nation, ensuring a coherent and cohesive design was of even greater importance. As explored in the Introduction of this thesis, among all urban settlements, capital cities carry particular symbolic and cultural weight. In the words of Brazilian scholar Beatriz Jaguaribe, such places 'tend to exhibit a deliberate architectural symbology,' which not only sets them apart from other cities, but also sees capitals 'symbolize the construction or the several constructions of a national pantheon.'[8]

Previous chapters have already looked to introduce and contextualise the birth, proliferation, and key actors of the Brazilian modernist movement. As has been demonstrated, while seemingly a mode of expression fully focussed on the present and

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 142.

[7] See Heloisa M. Starling, "Where Only Wind was Once Sown: The Tradition of Republicanism and the Agrarian Question in Brazil," *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, vol. 3, 2007, 153-76.

[8] Jaguaribe, "Modernist Ruins: National Narratives and Architectural Forms," 296.

looking ahead into the future, Brazilian modernist architecture in particular still reserved space for allusion to, if not sentimental nostalgia for, the country's colonial heritage. With this understanding in hand, this chapter will introduce the specific constituent architectural and design elements of Brasília and analyse how their various aspects reflected the 'past, present, and future' trichotomy prevalent in much of the wider work of the designers and their peers. Set against this intention, a brief caveat. This dissertation is not one primarily orientated towards the history of art or architecture per se. Moreover, if the literature of Brasília as a whole can be said to specialise in any one aspect of the city and its creation, it would be uncontroversial to suggest that the plans of Lúcio Costa and architectural expressions of Oscar Niemeyer are at the very forefront.[9] While it would be impossible in any discussion of the history of the city not to treat the ground-breaking layout and forms of Brasília with the attention such elements undoubtedly merit, the predominant focus of this chapter will lie specifically with the cultural and historical heritage with which the various designs were, or were not, imbued. In so doing, the ambition is once again to demonstrate that while superficially a pure symbol of modernity and futurism, even in some of its most pioneering elements Brazil's new capital served at least in part as a distillation of the nation's experience hitherto.

## *The Competition and the Costa Plan*

Among the foremost tasks facing Kubitschek and Novacap as 1956 gave way to 1957 was the settling upon of a fundamental plan for a new capital which still remained largely hypothetical. As referenced in the previous chapter, to this end a public competition had been launched in September 1956 with a strict deadline, succinct rubric,

[9] By way of example, see works such Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and the Architecture of Brazil*, Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer*, Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, Papadaki, *Oscar Niemeyer*, el-Dahdah (ed.) *Brazil Case: Lucio Costa Brasília's Superquadra,* Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," and Piccarolo, *Architecture as Civil Commitment: Lúcio Costa's Modernist Project for Brazil.*

and open to 'all architects, engineers, and urbanists licensed in Brazil.'[10] Detailed maps, as well as topographical and climatic information about the site's conditions, were made freely available to all would-be entrants, themselves required to submit just two documents in order to be considered. Namely, these were a 'basic layout of the city' at a scale of 1:25,000, and a 'supporting report.'[11] The jury, chaired in a non-voting capacity by Novacap head Israel Pinheiro, included a total of seven members. The remaining six seats were filled by Oscar Niemeyer, in his new role as director of the Departamento de Urbanismo e Arquitetura, Paulo Antunes Ribeiro of the Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil (IAB), Luiz Horta Barbosa of the Clube de Engenharia, and, in a slight departure from the initial plan, not two but three international representatives.[12] These were Greek-American Stamo Papadaki, Hungarian-born Frenchman André Sive, and Sir William Holford from the United Kingdom.[13] As might be expected, all three were not only well-established architects and urban planners, but also noted proponents of the modernist movement. Prior to immigrating to the United States and a position at New York University, Papadaki had collaborated closely with Le Corbusier in formulating the

[10] See "Edital de concurso para o plano piloto da nova capital do Brasil." For further details regarding the competition and its establishment, see Chapter IV. That the competition was open only to Brazil-based entrants is telling, in concert with Kubitschek's wider manifesto of developmentalist nationalism. More directly, the decision to restrict entries to domestic practices was a result of pressure from the Instituto dos Arquitetos do Brasil, which had intervened following a written offer from Le Corbusier to direct the project. The latter was subsequently approached to fill one of the seats on the jury, but declined. Notably, such limitations were not universally applied in comparable instances of newly built capital cities. The winning design for the city of Canberra, selected via nine rounds of parliamentary voting held in April and May 1912, was that of American husband and wife team Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin of Chicago, while the scheme for Washington D.C. was drawn up by French urbanist Pierre Charles L'Enfant. For Le Corbusier and Brasília, see See Carranza and Luiz Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America*, 200-01. For Canberra and Washington, see both Christopher Vernon, "Canberra: Where Landscape is Pre-Eminent," in Gordon (ed.), *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, 130-49, and Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View," 398-420.

[11] See "Edital de concurso para o plano piloto da nova capital do Brasil."

[12] See both Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 120, and Sir William Holford, (later Lord Holford), "BRASILIA," *Ekistics*, vol. 5, no. 30 (March 1958), 136-38.

[13] Ibid. The inclusion of three non-Brazilian jurors was justified by Papadaki's naming to the DUA alongside Niemeyer, see Holford, "BRASILIA," 136. As per Jeferson Taveres, Holford and Sive were both second-choice selections, after English modernist architect Maxwell Fry and American academic Charles Asher declined to participate. See Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 90.

Athens Charter, a 1933 treatise on urban planning resulting from a series of studies conducted by the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), the transnational organization with which the competition's eventual winner Lúcio Costa was already closely involved.[14] Sive too was something of a Le Corbusier acolyte, with the two men having been founder members of the Atelier des Bâtisseurs (ATBAT), an interdisciplinary group focussed on post-war urban reconstruction, with which Sive had worked as a consultant to his government's Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing.[15] Across the Channel, Holford had likewise been instrumental in rebuilding efforts, formulating a plan for the redevelopment of the badly damaged environs of St Paul's Cathedral in London, as well as undertaking similar projects in both Cambridge and Oxford. At the legislative level, Holford had also worked to draft the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, the statutes of which established the blueprint for urban development and renewal in post-war Britain.[16] A decade later, and almost immediately prior to his cameo role in the history of Brasília, Holford had entered into what would become a longstanding arrangement with the Australian government to consult on the redevelopment of planned Canberra, the century's first such national capital.[17]

Of the twenty-six entrants to have submitted plans by the time of the close of the contest for Brasília's design on 11 March 1957, at Sive's suggestion ten were short-listed for further assessment.[18] On 15 March, the jury's final decision was announced. Lúcio

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[14] Papadaki would go on to write a short biography of Oscar Niemeyer, as well as serving as the Brazilian's publisher in the United States. See Papadaki, *Oscar Niemeyer*.

[15] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 144.

[16] For further details of Holford's extensive career, see Gordon E. Cherry and Leith Penny, *Holford: A Study in Architecture, Planning, and Civic Design* (London: Mansell, 1986).

[17] See ibid., 200. Also "Holford Reviews Griffin's Errors," *The Canberra Times*, 10 May 1958, and "Lord Holford had big role in Canberra," *The Canberra Times*, 29 Oct 1975. For Canberra, see note 10 above.

[18] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 120-21 and Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 91.

Costa's design was determined the winner, with its author awarded an accompanying prize purse of one million cruzeiros.[19] Conciliatory runners-up awards of varying denominations were given to a further six proposals.[20] The decision making was not without drama, however. IAB juryman Paulo Antunes Ribeiro alleged later that not only was Costa's submission too insubstantial to be taken seriously, but that both he and Horta Barbosa had been largely excluded from the process, with an inner cabal of Niemeyer, Papadaki, Sive, and Holford meeting privately to determine the winners amongst themselves.[21] To make plain his dissent, Antunes Ribeiro refused to sign off on the committee's verdict, instead filing a separate report articulating how he did 'not at all agree with the criteria adopted in the judging', as well as sending a letter to the same effect directly to Israel Pinheiro.[22] Rather, the IAB representative suggested that all ten of the short-listed entries, plus an additional submission he had championed but which had failed to make the initial cut, pool resources and collaborate on a final design.[23] In an extensive article published in *The Architectural Review* in December 1957, Holford acknowledged the truth in Antunes Ribeiro's assertions, writing that 'it was the foreign members of the jury who [alongside Nieyemer] were being asked, presumably as the most disinterested and impartial judges, to tip the balance in favour of one scheme as against another.'[24]

Through interviews conducted with unsuccessful participant Jorge Wilheim, Jeferson Tavares has provided some insight into allegations that the jury's deliberations

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[19] Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 91.

[20] Ibid.

[21] See "Atas da Comissão Julgadora do Plano Pilôto [*sic*] de Brasília," *Módulo*, no. 8 (Jul 1957), 17-21.

[22] The text of this ancillary report is reproduced in ibid., 19-20. See also Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 91-92.

[23] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 121, and Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 395-402.

[24] Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 397.

were not entirely impartial.[25] On the topic of the selection of the winning proposal for the design of Brasília, Wilheim described the judging process as 'deeply compromised', to the extent that the documents he and his studio had submitted to the jury were returned unopened, having 'certainly never been seen.'[26] In analysing the merits of Costa's design and the failings of the other proposals put forward by Wilheim et al, the judgments of Papadaki, Sive, and Holford are particularly illuminating. Although, as per Evenson, the various submissions 'by and large [...] produced little which was unexpected and were in many ways united by a similar employment of widely known urban-design devices', including functional zoning, traffic separation, green belts, and 'residential areas ordered by the superblock and neighbourhood unit', several stood out nevertheless.[27] From Holford's perspective, the 'best [...] and the most complete' plan was that of M. M. M. Roberto, a Rio-based practice headed by brothers Marcelo, Milton, and Maurício.[28] With a plan described by Holford as 'astonishing', and which amounted to 'scores of drawings and a full report that took 12 hours of concentrated effort to absorb', the Roberto submission was epitomised by its granular detail and intensely technical approach.[29] 'After admiring this scheme for several days', wrote Holford however, 'my own feeling

[25] Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 91-92. Wilheim was a disciple of both Le Corbusier and American modernist Frank Lloyd Wright, whose participation in the Brasília contest came hot on the heels of his successful planning of the new town of Angélica, built between 1954 and 1957 among the coffee plantations of southern Mato Grosso. Lloyd Wright himself had also dabbled extensively in urban planning, with his unrealized 1932 concept community Broadacre City a landmark in American suburban design. See both Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City* (New York: W. F. Payson, 1932), and Mark Pimlott, "Frank Lloyd Wright & Broadacre City," in Mark Pimlott, *Without and within: Essays on territory and the interior* (Rotterdam: Episode, 2007). For details regarding Wilheim and Angélica, see Jorge Wilheim, *Urbanismo no subdesenvolvimento* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Saga, 1969).

[26] Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 91-92.

[27] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 140. As Evenson notes, few, if any of the submissions for Brasília, 'even those which included elaborate demographic studies', appeared to at all represent the socioeconomic diversity apparent in virtually every other city in contemporary Brazil. Instead, virtually all of the twenty-six appeared 'somewhat like textbook diagrams illustrating theories of urban design, rather than plans based on applied knowledge of real Brazilian cities.' Correspondingly, writes Evenson, 'Brasília was conceived as a city without poor, and free of the technical problems found elsewhere in Brazil.' See ibid.

[28] Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 397.

[29] Ibid.

was that everything in it was worthy of admiration, except its main objective. It was not an Idea [*sic*] for a capital city.'[30] In a summary of the jury's deliberations, published in a special July 1957 edition of the Niemeyer-edited architecture magazine *Módulo*, it was clear that the other jurists concurred.[31] The Roberto plan was derided as being 'not special to Brasília', while similar assessments were ascribed to the collaborative plan put forward by engineers Boruch Milman, João Henrique Rocha, and Ney Fontes Gonçalves: not a 'complete capital city', and to that of the firm Construtécnica: 'no capital city character.'[32]

Writing in *Módulo*, Niemeyer put forth his own opinion that a successful plan must 'not concern […] the projection of an ordinary city, but, benefiting from the achievements of contemporary urbanism, the attainment of a solution which will harmonize the locale and the program of the competition, with the atmosphere of culture, civilization and monumentality which a city of this nature requires.' [33] Collectively, the jury pronounced that 'a Federal Capital, to express the grandeur of a nation-wide desire, should differ from other cities [...] Its principal characteristic is the governmental function, and around this and converging upon it, all the other functions should be grouped.' [34] It was against these criteria, a 'desire for monumentality' as Evenson succinctly puts it, that Lúcio Costa's plan came to the fore. In contrast to the

[30] Ibid.

[31] See *Módulo*, no. 8 (Jul 1957).

[32] See "Atas da Comissão Julgadora do Plano Pilôto [*sic*] de Brasília," 17-21, and "Resumo das apreciações do jurí," *Módulo*, no. 8 (July 1957), 15-16. For additional analysis of the various unsuccessful designs, see Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 121-53, Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 162-346, Milton Braga, *O Concurso de Brasília* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2010), and Costa Braga, *(Im)possíveis Brasílias*.

[33] "O concurso para o plano pilôto de Brasília: declarações de membros do jurí," *Módulo*, no. 8 (July 1957), 28.

[34] "Atas da Comissão Julgadora do Plano Pilôto [*sic*] de Brasília," 17-21.

Roberto dossier, Costa's submission was, in Holford's words, 'at the opposite extreme.'[35] The latter's assessment of Costa's effort bears reproducing at some length:

> Here was an Idea [*sic*] and the skeleton of a metropolitan form - and practically nothing else. Presented on five medium-sized cards (which included the short report) and without a line of mechanical drawing, no models, no land-use schedules, and no population charts, the entry went some way to justifying the criticism of Paulo Antunes Ribeiro that it was hardly worth consideration by a serious jury. And yet, at the first reading of his report, one realised that here was a thinker, an urbanist, of the first order. On second reading one realised that there was not a single unnecessary word in the report, and not a single unnecessary line in the sketch plan or diagrams: yet everything essential was said. And on further reading this member of the jury, at least, became more and more convinced that the direction of advance for a great administrative capital had here been indicated in a masterly way, and the fundamental problems of communication, urban residence, metropolitan character and richness of growth within a unity of artistic conception, had all been recognized and anticipated.[36]

In a letter of 18 March 1957 to Israel Pinheiro, Holford reiterated this notion. The contest, he wrote, was 'a competition of ideas, not of detail. […] All great plans are fundamentally simple. They can be appreciated at once, not only by architects, but by others.'[37] André Sive agreed, observing that in his experience, 'good projects are always those which one may understand at a glance.'[38] Papadaki meanwhile added his opinion that 'the plan of a new capital must present, above all, the essence of unity - we could even say, of a unique personality. It is this characteristic unity which must be easily recognized from above in an airplane, on the ground level, in the streets, from within and without, from the totality and from a fragment of the whole.'[39] For Papadaki, 'the only project presented in the competition for the pilot plan for Brasília which has the seed of unity is that of Lúcio Costa.'[40] In their collective statement confirming the success of

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[35] Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 397-98.

[36] Ibid.

[37] William Holford, "Dr Israel Pinheiro: Answers to 7 questions with reference to the Plan for the New Capital of Brazil: by William Holford, 18 March 1957," Arquivo de Israel Pinheiro, as reproduced in Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção: Documentário*, 165-78.

[38] "O concurso para o plano pilôto de Brasília: declarações de membros do jurí," 23.

[39] Ibid., 22

[40] Ibid.

Costa's plan, the jury announced that his was the only submission which represented a 'well-knit project which would give the city grandeur through the clarity and proper ranking of its components,' and which possessed the key assets of being 'clear, direct, and fundamentally simple, as exemplified by Pompeii, Nancy, Wren's London, [and] Louis XV's Paris.'[41]

Costa's winning design for Brasília, as Holford's earlier characterisation suggests, is typically defined as much for its extreme brevity as merit. The architect, then aged fifty-five and long among Brazil's most acclaimed practitioners and teachers of modernist architecture, had only decided to submit a plan for the city at the last minute, reflected in the almost comically truncated proposal put forward to the jury.[42] Costa himself apologised for the 'sketchy manner' of the presentation in his accompanying statement.[43] 'It was not my intention', he wrote, 'to enter the competition - nor indeed, am I really so doing. I am merely liberating my mind from a possible solution which sprang to it as a complete picture, but one which I had not sought.'[44] At the most basic level, this complete picture might best be described as cross-axial, comprising two intersecting arteries, namely the arrow-straight Eixo Monumental, bisecting the sweeping bow of the Asa Norte and Asa Sul (see figs. 5.1 and 5.2).[45]

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[41] See "Atas da Comissão Julgadora do Plano Pilôto [*sic*] de Brasília," 15, and "Resumo das apreciações do jurí," 13.

[42] As he admitted in a newspaper article published in 1995, Costa only finalised his submission on the day of the deadline, with his daughter delivering the materials in person with minutes to spare. As detailed in Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência*, 319.

[43] See Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 143 and Tavares, "Projetos para Brasília e a Cultura Urbanística Nacional," 92. Various reproductions of Costa's sketches and statement exist, including a full translation included in Holford's 1957 *Architectural Review* article. See Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 399-402.

[44] From Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 399.

[45] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," in Deckker (ed.) *The Modern City Revisited*, 167-93.

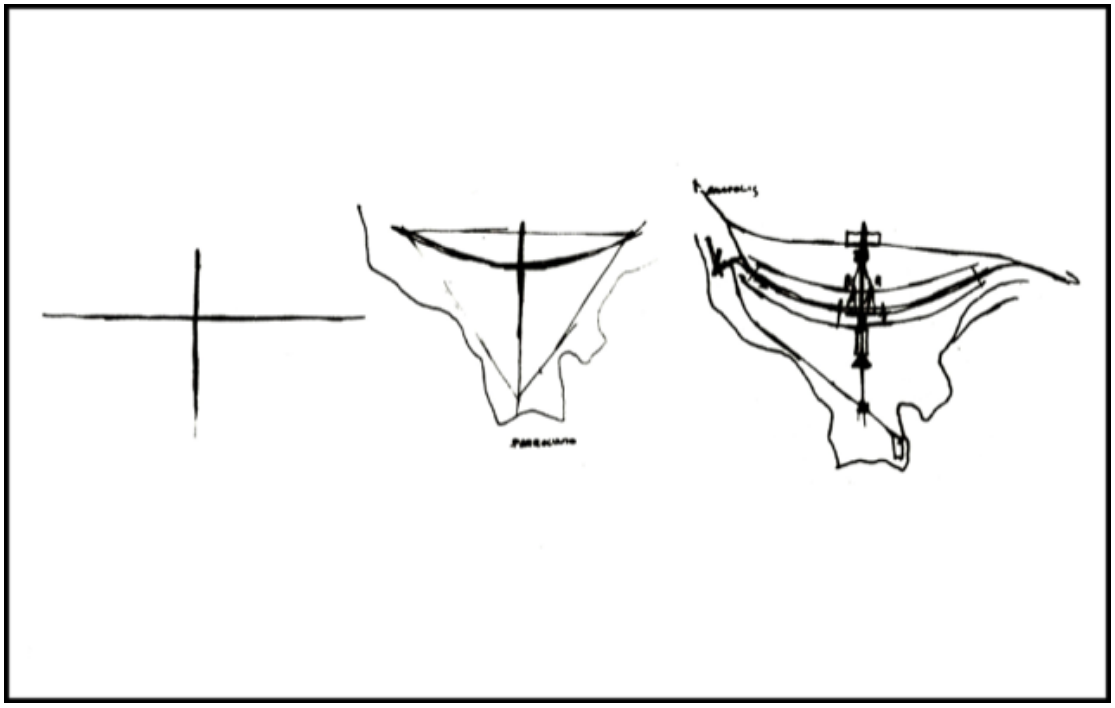


Fig 5.1: Nov–B-19-1, "Eixos que se cruzam na intuição de Lúcio Costa 'Estaca Zero'," ArPDF.




Fig. 5.2: SCS–LF-7-6-E-1 (049596), "Mapa de Brasília DF, 04.06.1987," ArPDF.

Such a template was, as Evenson has noted, hardly new, having been simplistically represented in an Egyptian hieroglyph believed to be the 'earliest symbolic representation of a city.'[46] The same device had later been employed in Roman town

[46] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 146.

planning, as well as in that of various ancient civilizations of the Indian subcontinent.[47] Allusion to the historical did not stop there, with the junction of the two axes - the location for the three primary organs of government - designed as an 'equilateral triangle associated with the very earliest architecture in the world' and built upon a tiered embankment of earth and stone, or terreplein.[48] Intended to serve as Brasília's 'Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and Champs Elysées', this central intersectional space housed the Praça dos Três Poderes, named after the key institutions of the federal government located at the very core of the city.[49] As Costa described, 'to transfer to present-day usage the ancient technique of the terreplein lends a certain harmony to the monumental strength' of the ensemble.[50] This channelling and harmonising of anachronistic elements would become a central theme of Brasília's design. Indeed, the fundamental layout of Costa's Plano Piloto has been variously described as evoking symbols ranging from aeroplanes and hammocks to the Christian Cross, and even the bows and arrows of indigenous warfare and hunting.[51]

As detailed in Chapter II, Costa was no stranger to incorporating allusions to the historical in his work, having begun his career as a proponent of the neo-colonial and neo-baroque Beaux Arts architecture fashionable during the Old Republic. Following his conversion to modernism, Costa continued to pay homage to colonial styles. As identified by Fernando Diniz Moreira, prominent examples include the residential

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[47] Ibid., and Holston, *The Modernist City*, 70-72.

[48] From Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 400.

[49] Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência*, 289.

[50] Ibid.

[51] See for example Jacqueline Barnitz and Patrick Frank, *Twentieth Century Art of Latin America: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 188, and "Brasilia [*sic*] in model form" *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 June 1958, GNM Archive.

complex of three buildings Costa designed to sit within Rio de Janeiro's Parque Guinle (1954, see fig. 5.3), and his Residência Barão de Saavedra in nearby Petrópolis (1942).[52]



Fig. 5.3: Parque Guinle.

With such projects, in addition to those previously addressed including the landmark MES Building, Costa had, in Moreira's words, established and gave concrete form to the 'apparently paradoxical relationship between the heritage system and modern architecture.'[53] This marriage was evident in even the most fundamental element of the Plano Piloto and its two intersecting axes. 'Although the residential axis was dominated

[52] Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil." Costa himself attached particular significance to Parque Guinle, describing the project as 'where it all began.' For this and additional background on the project's influence see both Juan Antonio Zapatal, "Regarding the Superquadra: An Interview with Lucio Costa," in *Brazil Case: Lucio Costa Brasília's Superquadra*, 19-23, and Ana Luiza Nobre, "Guinle Park: A Proto-Superquadra," in ibid., 33-39.

[53] Moreira, "Lúcio Costa: Tradition in the Architecture of Modern Brazil," 264. As Moreira observes, this approach is central to the scholarship of architectural historian William J. R. Curtis, who in 1996 suggested it best to 'leave aside the simplistic notion of modern architecture as a rootless cosmopolitan and implacable functionalist and the idea of national identity as a monolithic entity. Rather, modern architecture allows 'national culture to be framed and formulated in new ways since its abstraction and universality broke with dominant historicising styles, thus helping local architects to concentrate on the fundamental lessons of local tradition. See ibid., 260 and William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982), 372 and 394.

by a motor freeway, giving the city an immediate image of mechanization and modernity', Evenson writes, 'the monumental government axis remained essentially a traditional Beaux-Arts composition.'[54] Costa later offered explicit acknowledgement of this influence in a brief rubric of 'ingredients' central to Brasília's design. In addition to the 'immense English lawns of my childhood' (Costa had lived in the United Kingdom as a young boy, attending school in Newcastle upon Tyne), the 'purity of distant Diamantina,' the Greyhound bus network of the United States, and a collection of 'fabulous photographs of China from the turn of the century', the Plano Piloto, Costa observed, 'while an original, indigenous, Brazilian creation,' was fundamentally 'of the French intellectual tradition.'[55] That the core feature of the design offered a blending of past and future, a meeting of motorized artery with Haussmann-esque boulevard, ought not come as a surprise given the ideals and career trajectory of its author. As renowned scholar of art history Professor Mario Chicó of the Universidade de Lisboa would comment in an interview of November 1958, 'I consider Lúcio Costa, in addition to being the originator of the new Brazilian architecture, the greatest art historian in the Portuguese language.'[56]

Such characterization is in evidence in the manner in which Costa framed his plan in the 'supporting report' demanded by the terms of the competition. 'In 1823,' the text began, 'José Bonifácio suggested transferring the Capital of Brazil to Goiás, and rechristening it Brasília.'[57] Such a city, Costa suggested, would constitute a 'deliberate act

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[54] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 147.

[55] "'Ingredientes' da concepção urbanística de Brasília," in Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção: Documentário*, 93.

[56] Mario Chicó, *Voz de Portugal*, 15 November 1958, in *Brasília e a Opinão Mundial I* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1958), 50-51.

[57] As reproduced in Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 399.

of possession, the gesture of pioneers acting in the spirit of their colonial traditions.'[58] Several pages of detailed discussion later, Costa closed by returning to his historical theme; 'Brasília, capital of the aeroplane and the autostrada, city and park. The century-old dream of the Patriarch.'[59] The choice to overtly moor his design for the new capital in such an explicitly historical context is telling, with two semi-contradictory factors seemingly at play. Seeking legitimacy and justification via an invocation and appropriation of the historic was nothing new, as previous analysis relating to Kubitschek in particular has shown. By linking his ostensibly modern vision for a twentieth century capital to an idea both long-established and deeply associated with one of Brazil's most revered figures of the independence era, Costa promoted his design as the manifestation of a quasi-mythical ideal. Just as Kubitschek referenced Brasília as a herald of the dawning of a new era in Brazil's history, so is there the suggestion in Costa's invocation that the city might mark a second independence moment. Conversely, Costa's words serve both to emphasise and reconcile the many contrasts and contradictions of modernist Brasília and its era-spanning genesis. Indeed, the architect's choice of words succinctly captures the central narrative of this thesis. Despite being an immediate product of mid-century modernism, Brasília could and would be both a city of the car, aeroplane, and highway, and that of a Brazil past. Stressing the character of his own vision, and in striking parallel with the sentiments of Mayor Kubitschek in Belo Horizonte a decade or so prior, Costa continued:

> It [Brasília] should be conceived of, I believe, not as a mere organic entity, able to function effortlessly and vitally like any modern town; not as an *urbs*, therefore, but as a *civitas*, having the virtues and attributes appropriate to a true capital city. To achieve this, the town planner must be imbued with a certain dignity and nobility of purpose, for it is from this basic attitude of his that must spring the sense of order, fitness and proportion which will confer real monumentality on his urban scheme. I use the word not in the sense of ostentation, but as the palpable and conscious expression of true value and

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., 402.

> significance. He must design a city in which orderly and efficient work may be carried out: but also a city of vitality and charm, conducive to reverie and intellectual speculation, capable of becoming not only the seat of Government, the administrative headquarters of the nation, but also a centre of culture which will attract to it the finest and most perceptive intellects in the country.[60]

Both in his subsequent memoirs and in an interview conducted with architect Thomas Deckker in 1988, Costa reiterated the importance of both Brazilian and external historic influences on his Plano Piloto design. These included not only the colonial baroque towns of Minas Gerais, but also the same Parisian spaces that had prompted Evenson's comparison, in particular the ceremonial urban parkland of the Champs de Mars, as well as 'English country houses […] ancient Chinese irrigation works, and the Parkways [Costa] had just seen around the city of New York.'[61] Yet another source of inspiration had been the Corbusian model city of the Ville Radieuse, an unrealised project developed in 1935.[62] In a significant departure however, where Le Corbusier's unmaterialised urban utopia left little room for ceremonial public spaces, Costa's interpretation emphasised the importance of sweeping civic real estate at the heart of urban life.[63] Central to this conception were the *superquadras*, self-contained communities of apartment blocks and communal parkland, each with adjoining amenities ranging from shops and bakeries to churches, cinemas, schools, and libraries.[64] Fanning out along the residential axis, and again inspired by the Parisian model, the *superquadras* built directly upon their designer's

[60] Ibid. The extent to which Costa's words echo those of Meira Penna and Bowling quoted in the Introduction to this thesis demonstrates the extent to which the inherent purpose and function of capital cities was preeminent in the mind of Brasília's designer. For Belo Horizonte as '*civitas*' rather than '*urbs*', see Chapter III.

[61] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 174, and Costa, *Registro de uma Vivência*, 282. As Deckker notes, prior to submitting his plan for Brasília, Costa had been in New York, where he had been lecturing at the Parsons School of Design. See Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 174.

[62] See ibid., and Le Corbusier, *La Ville Radieuse* (Boulogne: Editions de l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1935).

[63] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 174.

[64] Ibid., 175-79 and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 184-88.

earlier work both with the MES Building and in Parque Guinle.[65] Costa conceived that these communities-within-a-community would form the basic urban subunit of the new capital, functioning as prestige accommodation for the middle-class bureaucrats and civil servants anticipated to constitute the bulk of Brasília's future residents.[66] In the lineage of Agache's principles of socioeconomic zoning that had typified that latter's plans for Rio de Janeiro, Costa's *superquadras* were not for the working poor. Indeed, the Plano Piloto allowed for only very limited low-cost housing, and no possibility of expansion beyond the extremities of the two main axes. Any population overspill was instead to be farmed out to informal satellite settlements, far from the gleaming urban core.[67]

For Kubitschek, hitherto only dreaming of the form his fancied 'interplanetary' new capital might take, Costa's Plano Piloto 'coincided exactly' with the president's own vision.[68] 'Brasília could not and should not be just any city, equal or similar to so many others that already existed in the world', recalled Kubitschek in describing his first impressions of the plan.[69] Instead, Brazil's capital called for a 'pioneering system […] a metropolis with different characteristics, that would ignore the contemporary reality and turn instead, with all of its constituent elements, to the future.'[70] It was therefore with a certain irony that in the minds of Brasília's key *auteurs*, inspiration for their leader's city of the future would be so fundamentally derived from themes rooted in the firmament of history, both Brazilian and otherwise. Even in the earliest days of the city's emergence, this dynamic was not lost on international observers. In its edition of July 1958, a

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[65] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 175.

[66] Ibid., 176.

[67] Ibid., 174 and Chapter II. For a specific exploration of Costa's *superquadras* in Brasília, see el-Dahdah (ed.), *Brazil Case: Lúcio Costa Brasília's Superquadra*.

[68] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 72.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

columnist for British magazine *Architecture & Building* avowed that in the form of Brasília, Brazil was in the process of producing 'a contemporary version of plastic forms that delighted artists and audiences in the eighteenth century.'[71] 'If Brasília results in a complete city,' the author continued, 'in spite of all the formidable administrative and financial obstacles that it encounters on its way, it will be the first time in the history of the twentieth century that a civic project of scale will have been accomplished.'[72] For the architectural correspondent of *The Times* of London, the stakes were even higher:

> It does not happen often that one of the major nations of the world decides to build for itself a new capital city on a hitherto unpopulated site. When it does it is an event of rare architectural importance. The last time anything of such a kind was conceived must have been when Canberra was planned as the federal capital of Australia, though even here a small settlement was already established on the site; nor does that city as built fully reflect in its scale or its architecture the idea of a national capital. The more magnificent enterprise at New Delhi does not qualify because old Delhi had been a capital city for centuries, and le Corbusier's Chandigarh is only a provincial, not a national, capital.
>
> One must go as far back as the creation of Washington in 1790 to find any parallel to the enterprise that Brazil has lately undertaken.[73]

Kubitschek too could not resist the allure of symbolic historicization. In a speech of 21 January 1958, the president admitted that, faced with the prospect of Brasília, he often fell prey to 'flights of imagination' and 'approximations with epic', 'straining to hear the footsteps of the heroic and primitive *conquistadores* of our territory sounding in the silence of the interior of the Pátria.'[74] 'For almost two centuries,' he added in an address delivered in Brasília in May 1959, 'the entire Nation has been looking at the difficulties that we would have with the transfer of the Capital, in our fight for the total conquest of

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[71] *Architecture & Building*, 10 July 1958, in *Brasília e a Opinão Mundial I*, 54.

[72] Ibid.

[73] "Architectural Notes: New Capital City for Brazil," *The Times*, 17 March 1958.

[74] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Rio de Janeiro, 21 January 1958: Na Cerimónia de Instalação da Exposição Permanente dos Planos Projetos e 'Maquetes' de Brasília," *Memórias do Brasil – 1958: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 54 -57.

this immense country.'[75] 'If other nations on this continent, like the United States, were able, more than a century ago, to break through from one ocean to another, crossing the whole country, populating and building centres of civilization and becoming a powerful nation,' Kubitschek asked, 'why can Brazil not achieve this same feat, cultivating its civilization, winning its freedom and its independence?'[76] As interpreted by Italian art critic and philosopher Gillo Dorfles, present at the city's inauguration, the winning proposal for Brasília rendered such a possibility within Brazil's grasp. 'The supple pliability of the urban plan of Lúcio Costa,' Dorfles reportedly commented to Ernesto Silva, 'made possible – in my view – the appearance of a true city of the future.'[77] As demonstrated time and again, however, this city of the future was one simultaneously ensconced in historical legend.

## *Niemeyer Baroque*

'Lúcio Costa's plan won, but since the beginning, Oscar Niemeyer has been the general supervisor of the building of Brasília' wrote contemporary academic observer José Vicente Freitas Marcondes of Brazil's emerging new capital in 1959.[78] While the assessment may have been somewhat of a generalisation, the underlying sentiment is hard to contradict. As previous chapters have demonstrated, by 1957 Nieyemer had long enjoyed the patronage, confidence, and friendship of the new president. Since their beginnings in Pampulha, the pair's collaborations had continued during Kubitschek's years in the Minas Gerais governor's residence, during which time Niemeyer had

[75] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Brasília, 1 May 1959: Saudando os Trabalhadores Brasileiros, no Dia do Trabalho," in *Memórias do Brasil – 1959: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 128-34.

[76] Ibid., 130.

[77] As quoted in Silva, *História de Brasília*, 277.

[78] See Freitas Marcondes, "Brasilia, The New Capital Of Brazil," 162.

designed the Escola Estadual Júlia Kubitschek and the Hotel Tijuco, both located in Kubitschek's hometown of Diamantina and completed in 1951, and the Conjunto Governador Kubitschek, a downtown apartment block-cum-shopping mall in Belo Horizonte, finished the following year.[79] Niemeyer had also independently worked on increasingly ambitious commissions both at home and internationally, including a complex of buildings in the ground-breaking Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo, and, perhaps most notably, the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City, designed and built between 1947 and 1952.[80] In both instances, the architect had collaborated extensively with other pioneers of the modernist movement, namely Brazilian landscape designer Roberto Burle Marx and, in New York, Le Corbusier.[81] Far from the junior professional with whom Kubitschek had first worked, the Niemeyer who helmed the DUA was, by the mid 1950s, a seasoned and widely acclaimed campaigner.

Kubitschek and Niemeyer had reportedly first discussed the prospect of Brasília in mid-1956 at the latter's home in the affluent Rio neighbourhood of Barra da Tijuca, where Kubitschek claimed he had successfully wooed the architect by comparing the opportunity of designing the buildings of Brasília to that of Pope Julius II commissioning Michelangelo to lead the rebuilding of St. Peter's.[82] Niemeyer's subsequent remit in Brasília was remarkable in its breadth. While obliged to operate within the overall framework of Costa's Plano Piloto, and excepting the ubiquity of the latter's *superquadra*

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[79] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape", 170, and Juliana da Silveira Figueiro, "Conjunto Governador Kubitschek," Master's diss., (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2006).

[80] For these projects, see Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and the Architecture of Brazil*, 152-81.

[81] Ibid.

[82] See both Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 79, and Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 172. Kubitschek's choice of comparison was particularly apt for two reasons. First, that St. Peter's Basilica is commonly seen as a pioneering example of early baroque architecture, which in its colonial Portuguese variant was so instrumental in underpinning Niemeyer's modernist aesthetic. Second, that as Kubitschek references, Michelangelo's initial responsibility in Rome was the design of Julius II's tomb. Given that the president's political opponents had described Brasília as his own 'political tomb' – see Chapter IV – it seems likely that Kubitschek's remark was at least to some extent knowingly tongue in cheek.

as the primary residential unit, the great remainder of Brasília's buildings, including all of the administrative, civic, and religious structures of the city's government core, fell within the jurisdiction of his drafting table. So great was the volume of work that Niemeyer – working, in Kubitschek's words, at 'incredible speed' - spent a maximum of fifteen days on each of the major buildings, claiming that the pressure resulted in purer and more spontaneous creations.[83] The approach was not without its critics. In an article of 26 January 1960, a *Jornal do Brasil* correspondent observed that, despite the paper's 'favourable position towards the moving of the Federal Capital', 'the speed with which the initial construction was carried out, in particular of those [structures] whose function will be to house the basic organs of the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary, seems to have prevented work from being carried out in a sufficiently methodical manner.'[84] Such concerns notwithstanding, the clarity of vision afforded by such feverish conditions and a near blank slate was reportedly crucial in avoiding the eclecticism and disunity of existing cities. 'It is evident', wrote Niemeyer, 'that in [Brasília's] urban sectors a certain restriction is indispensable in order to maintain the equilibrium and harmony required by the master plan.'[85] He continued:

> One cannot accept that a new planned city should present the same mistakes, the same urbanistic and architectural confusion as existing cities, which expand without control, where each building is treated as an isolated building, without relation to those surrounding it, or to the harmony of the group, which a conscientious architect would know how to preserve.[86]

In searching for a model of such unity, Niemeyer sought out examples across the lusophone world, from Lisbon to Ouro Preto and Kubitschek's own Diamantina, the homogeneity of which he contrasted to the 'deplorable picture of confusion and lack of

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[83] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 67, and Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 194.

[84] "Os Problemas da Mudança," *Jornal do Brasil*, 26 January 1960, in *Coleção Brasília IX: Brasília e a Opinião Nacional* (1960) (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1960), 104-5.

[85] Oscar Niemeyer, as quoted in *Inquérito Nacional de Arquitetura* (Belo Horizonte: UMG, 1963), 115-16.

[86] Ibid.

harmony' prevalent in other towns and cities.[87] For the bulk of Brasília's buildings, the implications of this doctrine of uniformity were straightforward. Under Niemeyer's gaze, subaltern architects drew up plans for schools, neighbourhood shopping facilities, and some smaller residential developments distinct from the *superquadras*, including a five-block complex of one and two-storey homes commissioned by the Banco do Brasil for its employees.[88] Strict regulations limited the autonomy of those driving these ancillary projects, with limitations on building height, profile, orientation, and silhouette ensuring a coherence of approach. Office buildings for the various ministries shared a common design, as did those slated to house the major corporations and private business.[89]

While Niemeyer ensured others stayed firmly on script, he allowed himself far greater room for manoeuvre.[90] The resulting hierarchical distinction between the more 'utilitarian' architecture of the residential and bureaucratic centres – largely left to a cadre of fifteen or so subordinates - and the monumental headline structures was crucial in reinforcing the fundamental nature of Brasília as a seat of power.[91] Within this framework, it is unsurprising that the major part of Niemeyer's efforts would be preoccupied with the complex of buildings occupying the government centre. In its composition, this core prompts clear comparison with that of other planned capitals. The culmination of the landscaped central boulevard of the Eixo Monumental, Costa's so-called Esplanada dos Ministérios carries strong echoes both of Washington's National Mall and the Rajpath of New Delhi, each of which feature monumentalist termini in the

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[87] Oscar Niemeyer, "Imaginação na Arquitetura," *Módulo* , no. 15 (Oct. 1959), 6-13, and Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 255.

[88] These included Ney Fontes Gonçalves and João Henrique Rocha, who having lost out to Costa in the design competition, were drafted in to assist on some of Brasília's more modest commissions. See Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 185.

[89] Ibid., 184.

[90] Ibid., 188.

[91] Ibid.

form of the United States Capitol and Rashtrapati Bhavan respectively. The Indian example in particular offers an effective mirror through which to see Brasília, with the twin blocks of New Delhi's Secretariat Building flanking a central artery in much the same fashion as Niemeyer's series of eleven (later extended to seventeen) identical ministerial office buildings lead towards the crescendo of the Praça dos Três Poderes.[92]

Regarding the design of Brasília's most totemic and symbolically charged structures, Niemeyer observed in the *Módulo* issue of February 1958 that he had reached a 'new stage' in his own development as an architect, one characterized by 'a constant seeking for conciseness and purity.'[93] In December 1960, he wrote in the same publication that in Brasília, his priorities lay with making 'an appeal to the imagination, to things that are new and beautiful, capable of arousing surprise and emotion by their very newness and creativeness; a freedom that provides scope – when desirable – for moods of ecstasy, reverie and poetry.'[94] While it might follow that such exhortations in favour of the new might necessarily contradict the by now well-established link between Brazilian modernism and the nation's cultural and architectural heritage, the architect remained keen to emphasise his work's links to the past, as much as to his vision of the future. In the dramatic inverted dome of his new building for Congress or the sweeping decorative curves of the columns surrounding the Palácio do Planalto (see fig. 5.4) and Palácio da Alvorada, the soon-to-be executive workplace and residence respectively, Niemeyer wrote that he was embracing the 'link with the old architecture of colonial Brazil, not by the obvious use of the elements common to those days, but by expressing the same

[92] See Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 191. For Washington and New Delhi respectively, see Jackson, "L'Enfant's Washington: An Architect's View," Sterns and Yerkes, *William Thornton: A Renaissance Man in the Federal City*, Ridley, "Edwin Lutyens, New Delhi and the architecture of imperialism," Volwahsen, *Imperial Delhi: The British Capital of the Indian Empire*, and Inan, "Tensions Manifested: Reading the Viceroy's House in New Delhi."

[93] Niemeyer, "Testemunho," 3-5.

[94] Niemeyer, "Forma e Função na Arquitetura," 3.

plastic intention, the same love of curves and richly defined forms that is so telling a characteristic of the colonial style."[95]



Fig. 5.4: Palácio do Planalto.

Many of the tools used to evoke this stylistic nostalgia were already familiar weapons in the broader arsenal of the Brazilian modernists. A great number of Brasília's structures incorporated the *brises-soleil*, *pilotis*, and other hallmarks of the baroque in much the same way as Costa, Niemeyer and others had first done with the MES Building decades earlier.[96] In the form of the Palácio Itamaraty, Brasília's new foreign ministry, Niemeyer's architectural flourishes were complemented by landscaping from Roberto Burle Marx, a veteran of both the MES Building and Pampulha, with rooftop gardens and ornamental reflecting pools further unifying the key structures of Brazil's new capital with an architectural language used to boldly assert the country's confidence in its emerging sense

[95] Ibid., 7. The Congress building was latterly renamed the Palácio Nereu Ramos, in tribute to Kubitschek's immediate predecessor as president.

[96] See Chapter II and Deckker, *Brazil Built*, 160.

of national identity.[97] A similar phenomenon can also be seen in the first religious building completed in Brasília, Niemeyer's Igreja Nossa Senhora da Fátima, commonly known as the Igrejiinha (see fig. 5.5).



Fig. 5.5: Igreja Nossa Senhora da Fátima.

In addition to the architect's signature swooping curves and concrete slab construction, the chapel was clad in a regular pattern of checkerboard *azulejos* designed by artist Athos Bulcão, and in its style and scale bears significant similarities to the Igreja de São Francisco de Assis in Pampulha.[98] In their shared features, both buildings encapsulated Niemeyer and his contemporaries' ability to meld tradition with the new possibilities afforded by the modernist style and its cheap and highly plastic materials. Writing in *Art News* magazine in response to the earlier 'Brazil Builds' exhibition of 1942/43, art and architecture critic Robert C. Smith detailed the origins of some of the most prominent

[97] See Chapter II for a fuller discussion on the emergence of modernism and the movement's role at the vanguard of a new sense of a uniquely Brazilian culture. For the Palácio Itamarity, see Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals,* 200.

[98] Ibid., 188, and Chapter III. For Bulcão, in particular his work with *azulejos*, see Bárbara Duarte, "Integração das artes: os azulejos de Athos Bulcão," *Visualidades*, vol. 6 (2012), 48-59.

allusions drawn upon by Niemeyer, utilized both in the striking isosceles roof of the Igrejinha and elsewhere in Brasília:[99]

> Another characteristic of modern Brazilian design is the use of a single sloping roof, inspired perhaps from the old colonial roofing *de uma agua* […] this sloping roof is combined with rough stone masonry that recalls the construction of Minas Gerais and before them the granite farmhouses and granaries of the Oporto region of Portugal. The eighteenth century Luso-Brazilian fondness for the sparingly used curve as the principal decorative note in a formal design reappears in striking form…[100]

A similar sentiment was later succinctly articulated by Lauro Cavalcanti, writing in an anthology volume first published in March 2003 to accompany a major Niemeyer retrospective at the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt:

> For Niemeyer's generation, the preservation of tradition meant designing buildings based on the study and the rehabilitation of local customs. Brazilian Modernism both replaced historicist trends and preserved the national building heritage. Unlike International Modernism, in Brazil a dialectic bridge was built between the past and the future whereby the structural analogy between the simple structures of the 18th century and the new were emphasized.[101]

In her analysis of the unique nature of this particularly Brazilian brand of modernism, Zilah Quezado Deckker suggests that Niemeyer's Brasília represented both the zenith and the final stage of the movement's development, which had begun in earnest with the MES Building.[102] Some critics were less convinced of the historical connection. British architectural historian William Curtis was quick to dismiss the allusions manifested in details such as the modernists' favoured *brises-soleil*, arguing dismissively that such flourishes 'hardly constituted an all-out attempt at designing a tropical regionalist architecture.'[103] Others, however, have been happy to acknowledge what Spanish-Chilean historian Leopoldo Castedo has termed the 'Baroque prevalence in the forms of modern

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[99] For further details of the exhibition and its significance, see Chapter II.

[100] Robert C. Smith, "Brazil Builds: on Tradition and Today," *Art News* (February 1943), 14-19.

[101] Lauro Cavalcanti, "Oscar Niemeyer und die brasilianische Tradition der Moderne/Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Modernism," in Paul Andreas and Ingeborg Flagge (eds.), *Oscar Niemeyer: Eine Legende der Moderne/A Legend of Modernism* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Architekturmuseum, 2013), 30.

[102] Deckker, *Brazil Built*, 170.

[103] Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, 333.

Brazil.'[104] Kenneth Frampton, among the definitive voices on modernist architecture, recognized the pluri-continental origins of Niemeyer's work explicitly, observing that the 'young Brazilian followers of Le Corbusier immediately transformed these Purist components into a highly sensuous native expression which echoed in its plastic exuberance the eighteenth-century Brazilian Baroque.' [105] In Brasília, Niemeyer's ensemble of public buildings represented the grandest and most coherent expression of Brazilian Modernism ever attempted. In the words of Italian expatriate critic and curator Pietro Maria Bardi, also the founder of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, 'the creed introduced by Le Corbusier, but in the language of a traditional experience rich in native idiom and modes of expression assimilated from Portuguese Baroque, has astonished the world.'[106] In a column of June 1958, British critic Basil Marriott described the still-emerging forms of Brasília as 'classic to the Homeric degree, and reflecting the […] Mediterranean flavour of a large period of the history of the New World.'[107] Reflecting in December 1960, months after Brasília's inauguration, Niemeyer himself offered perhaps the final word on the marriage of reinforced concrete and baroque forms which underpinned his approach to architecture:

> Architecture in Brazil, overcoming the stage of orthodox functionalism, is now in search of plastic expression. It is the extreme malleability of present construction methods together with out instinctive love for the curve – real affinity with the Baroque of our colonial times – which suggests unfettered forms of a new and amazing plastic vocabulary.[108]

## *The Government Core*

[104] Leopoldo Castedo, *The Baroque Prevalence in Brazilian Art* (New York: Charles Frank, 1964), 14.

[105] Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, 254.

[106] Pietro Maria Bardi, *Profiles of the New Brazilian Art* (Rio de Janeiro: Kosmos, 1970), 44.

[107] As quoted in *Brasília e a Opinião Mundial II* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1959), 45.

[108] Niemeyer, "Forma e Função na Arquitetura," 3-7.

A thorough analysis of each of Niemeyer's designs for the buildings of Brasília is beyond the remit of this thesis, as acknowledged in the Introduction. Far more accomplished and specialized scholars of architecture and the history of art, many of them cited here, have already attempted such an undertaking with great success. Nevertheless, in looking to home in more closely on some of what might be termed 'hallmarks of heritage', a limited selection of examples demand attention. Among these is the aforementioned Palácio da Alvorada, the executive mansion and the first of Brasília's headline projects to be completed.[109] Standing distinct from the Plano Piloto on a small promontory jutting eastwards into the artificially created Lago Paranoá, the building's design had been the source of mild tension between its designer and first occupant, with Kubitschek rejecting Niemeyer's initial attempt. 'Although it was a masterpiece of artistic conception' wrote the former, 'the building did not, as a whole, reflect what in fact I wanted.'[110] 'With the frankness allowed by the friendship that bound us', Kubitschek explained to the architect that he desired a monumental structure which, 'a hundred years from now, will still be admired.'[111] Upon being presented with revised plans some days later, the president recalled how he 'couldn't help but sigh in admiration':[112]

> Here was a building that was a revelation. Lightness, grandeur, lyricism and panache – the most striking qualities were combined, intermingled, to achieve a miraculous harmony of the whole. I enthusiastically approved the plan and gave the order for construction to begin immediately. It was the Palácio da Alvorada, whose columns in the form of inverted fans, emerging from glistening water, continue to represent to this day the wonderful plastic symbol of Brasília.[113]

Completed in June 1958, the palace quickly won admirers. On a visit later that year, writer John Dos Passos poetically described it as a 'singularly beautiful building of glass

[109] Cavalcanti, *When Brazil was Modern: Guide to Architecture 1928-1960*, 374-77.

[110] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 67-68.

[111] Ibid. The same episode was later recounted by Ernesto Silva in an interview of 2007. See Silva, Depoimento: Projeto "Museu Nacional da Imagem e do Som," 94-95.

[112] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 67-68.

[113] Ibid.

and white concrete, built long and low to fit into the long lines of the hills on the horizon, floating as lightly as a flock of swans on broad mirroring pools of clear water.'[114] Austrian-American architect Richard Neutra opined in a letter to Kubitschek that the building, 'in its beauty and splendor, demonstrates the leadership of Brazil in the architectural projects of the modern world,' while Anglo-German critic Sir Nikolaus Pevsner suggested in 1961 that the building demonstrated how Niemeyer had 'grown wonderfully from dare-devil naughtiness [in Pampulha] to the maturity of the President's Palace.'[115] Architect and historian Styliane Philippou suggests a comparison with the rural *fazendas* of previous eras, with Niemeyer's design simultaneously paying homage to and subverting the '*casa grande*'s traditional insignia of power.'[116] Seemingly fragile concrete and glass replaced the 'forbidding masonry walls of the plantation house', while the 'weight of the colonial pitched roof' was done away with in favour of the 'long curve of the *berimbau.*'[117] The arrow-like columns adorning the building's façade offer a further familiar yet distinct allusion to both the baroque and the classical, while invoking, in Philippou's words, a 'timeless beauty [to be] measured against the revered orders of a golden age.'[118] To reinforce this sense of reinvention and renewal, Philippou goes so far as to posit that in profile and seriality, the colonnade of the Palácio da Alvorada offers a direct proxy both for the arched wooden frame of the colonial covered market of Diamantina's central square, and to the avenues of imperial palms which had long been a

[114] The same author did wonder however 'where, amid all those glass walls, the poor President could find a spot to change his trousers or a private nook to write a letter in.' See Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "A Nation in Search of a Capital", "Construction Site."

[115] See both *Brasília e a Opinião Mundial II*, 14, and Stephen Games (ed.), *Pevsner on Art and Architecture: The Radio Talks* (London: Methuen, 2002), 266-67.

[116] Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 256. Philippou's reference here to Freyre and his 1933 work *Casa-Grande e Senzala* reflects the prevalent notion of Brasília as a transformative moment in Brazilian society and culture. See also Chapter II.

[117] Ibid., 256-57. Traditionally used to accompany the martial art of *capoeira*, the *berimbau* is a musical bow and percussion instrument brought to Brazil by enslaved Africans.

[118] Ibid., 258.

feature of both colonial baroque and Brazilian Style modernism alike.[119] Even the modest private chapel attached to the palace carried subtle hints of a particularly Brazilian heritage, with the gilded wooden retaining wall and window alcoves being, in the words of one American visitor, 'strongly reminiscent […] of the early mission churches' of old Salvador and Belém.[120] Rarely one to provide such specific details regarding the origins of his work, Niemeyer's own assessment of his goal in designing the Palácio da Alvorada was straightforward. Writing at the time of the building's completion, he stated simply that his aim had been to create not just 'an important residence, but […] a true palace, imbued with the spirit of monumentality and tradition.'[121]

Historical references continued to abound in the Praça dos Três Poderes. Unlike the overwhelming majority of Brasília, built of the reinforced concrete that defined and, indeed, facilitated the new forms of the modernist movement, the plaza forming the central ceremonial space of the new capital and of the republic itself was of far more venerable origin. Born of the ancient roadbuilding techniques first brought to Portugal by Roman legionaries and continued by the medieval Arab engineers of al-Andalus, the tessera-like cobblestones known in Europe as *calçada portuguesa* had been repopularised in Lisbon in the mid-nineteenth century, rapidly spreading across the public spaces of Portugal and its African colonies.[122] In Brazil, the fashion of using what were locally

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[119] Ibid., 264.

[120] See ibid., 268, and Elizabeth Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," *The Yale Review*, vol. 94, no. 3, (Jul 2006), 76-114.

[121] Niemeyer, "Testemunho," 3-6. On the occasion of her 1958 visit, American writer Elizabeth Bishop noted another parallel with more traditional palaces of old, both Brazilian and otherwise. The servants quarters attached to the Palácio da Alvorada, observed Bishop, constituted a 'long sunken wing with just a flat roof and a line of narrow windows showing above ground, connected with the Palace by a subterranean passage.' 'In the old days,' she continues, 'slaves were often kept in the dank basements of Rio houses […] surely in Brasília, sometimes referred to as "the most modern city in the world," Niemeyer, of all architects, should not have found it necessary to put them [the servants] underground.' See Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," 93.

[122] See both António Manuel Esteves Henriques, António A. Casal Moura, and Francisco Amado Santos, *Manual da Calçada Portuguesa* (Lisbon: SIG, 2009), 144-45 and Ernesto Matos, *Calçada Portuguesa: uma linguagem universal* (Lisbon: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 2001).

dubbed *pedra portuguesa* to pave large-scale geometric patterns had become popular beginning in rubber-rich Manaus in 1901, before the first iteration of the iconic Copacabana promenade running in parallel to Rio's Avenida Atlântica was laid under the auspices of prefect Paulo de Frontin in the early 1930s.[123] In contrast to the black and white undulating design of the Rio de Janeiro beachfront, in Brasília a uniform expanse of white cobbles connects Niemeyer's homes for the three pillars of government, in subtle recognition of the historic cultural ties linking the new capital and the nation it was built to represent with the shared heritage of the lusophone world.[124]

More abstract allusions to the past can be found in the three buildings themselves. In the exterior flying colonnades of both the Palácio do Supremo Tribunal Federal (see fig. 5.6) and the Palácio do Planalto, Niemeyer biographer David Underwood sees a direct descendant of the protruding buttresses of the same medieval cathedrals that the architect himself directly named as a source of inspiration.[125] Niemeyer also hinted that the structures, broad at the base before tapering upwards to touch each building's overhanging roofs, were a manmade reflection of the 'dry and stunted trees' of the Brazilian highlands, which 'seemed to strain up from the ground as if resisting the soil's attempt to pull them back down into the earth.'[126]

[123] Ibid. The promenade was subsequently redesigned and dramatically expanded in the 1970s by Roberto Burle Marx. See Amy Lifson, "Making the Promenade Modern," *Humanities*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Summer 2019).

[124] See Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 268.

[125] See Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*, 117, and Niemeyer, *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, 19-20.

[126] Niemeyer, *Minha Arquitetura*, 82.



Fig. 5.6: Palácio do Supremo Tribunal Federal.

Niemeyer's Palácio do Congresso Nacional (fig. 5.7), forming the third point of the plaza's triangular array of government structures, stands as the culmination of the Plano Piloto's central Eixo Monumental. Mounted on a horizontal slab structure providing lobby and office space, two hemispheres, one domed, the other inverted, house the senate and chamber of deputies respectively, while overhead soar twin tower blocks housing the secretariat.



Fig. 5.7: "Câmara dos Deputados do Brasil," © Rodolfo Stuckert, CC BY 3.0.

Described by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze as a 'Baroque figure *par excellence*', the flat-topped, UFO-like cupola of the home of the Câmara dos Deputados represents the pinnacle of the Brasília-wide collaboration between Niemeyer and structural engineer Joaquim Cardozo, whose commitment to innovation facilitated the rapid execution of the architect's most challenging ideas.[127] Inside, further abstract *azulejo* murals adorn the corridor spaces, with black granite cladding contrasting with the white marble of the building's exterior and purportedly representing the racial diversity of the Brazilian electorate.[128] Similar symbolism could also be found in the halls of the aforementioned Palácio Itamaraty, where visiting foreign dignitaries could admire both antique and modern furnishings – much of the latter designed by the father and daughter team of both Oscar and Anna Maria Niemeyer - colonial and contemporary art, and stylized sculptural installations inspired by the syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé.[129]

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[127] As quoted in Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 276-82.

[128] Ibid., 279.

[129] Ibid., 290.

One of the few ministerial buildings in Brasília to be the fruit of a genuine architectural collaboration, between Niemeyer and fellow modernist Milton Ramos, the Pálacio da Justiça (fig. 5.8), located directly across the Eixo Monumental from its foreign affairs counterpart, is supported by protruding buttresses similar to those seen in the case of the Palácio do Planalto and Palácio do Supremo Tribunal Federal. Uniquely however, the structure also features a monumental external water feature, with six intermittently spaced curved runnels mounted across the south elevation cascading water into a reflecting pool wrapping two sides of the building.



Fig. 5.8: Palácio da Justiça Raymundo Faoro.

In conversation with designer and academic Julio Roberto Katinsky, Niemeyer described the façade's use of 'architecture and nature hand in hand' as epitomizing a key element of Brazil's 'scared heritage', with the marriage of development and indigenous natural beauty already well articulated within the Brazilian modernist canon.[130] The architect

[130]As quoted in Julio Roberto Katinsky, *Brasília em Três Tempos: A arquitetura de Oscar Niemeyer na Capital* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan, 1991), 32. For the key tenets of modernism in Brazil, see Chapter II.

further proposed a comparison with Rome's Trevi Fountain – an icon of Old World baroque style - albeit in typical fashion argued that his creation was the more accomplished, offering a 'fountain façade' as opposed to being merely a 'façade fountain.'[131] Recent scholarship has also suggested a link to the water gardens of Moorish Iberia, incorporated by way of the Portuguese into the Brazilian vernacular.[132]

Described by Cavalcanti as among 'the most visually interesting buildings of the Distrito Federal', Niemeyer's Catedral Metropolitana de Brasília (fig. 5.9) offers an additional distinct reference point both for the style of the new capital, as well as the symbolism bound up in its emerging structures.[133] Designed in 1958 and eventually completed in May 1970, the cathedral's appearance offers a prime microcosmic example of the tension within Brasília and Brazilian modernism between old and new. Circular in footprint and bound by a ring of sixteen hyperboloid columns forming a quite literal crown of thorns at the apex of the structure, the cathedral was designed by its fiercely atheist architect to offer the 'same purity of vision' to observers approaching the building from any angle.[134]

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[131] As quoted in Underwood, *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*, 132.

[132] Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 283.

[133] Cavalcanti, *When Brazil was Modern*, 382-83.

[134] Oscar Niemeyer, "Cathedral of Brasília," in *Oscar Niemeyer: Notebooks of the Architect* (Brussels: CIVA, 2010).



Fig. 5.9: Catedral Metropolitana de Brasília.

Contemporary observer Tarsila do Amaral, a painter and illustrator at the forefront of the Brazilian modernist movement in the visual arts, described the cathedral as an 'essentially Brazilian' reworking of Minas Gerais baroque.[135] A similar assessment was put forward by the aforementioned Leopoldo Castedo, who even prior to the building's completion and consecration saw in Niemeyer's desire to 'relentlessly attack the conventional' a key hallmark of his baroque forebears.[136] Despite this, many historic tropes were nevertheless cast aside. In *Minha Arquitetura*, Niemeyer set the light-bathed nave and chancel of his work in contrast to the 'old dark cathedrals reminding us of sin', adding that he 'did not want to repeat the traditional contrast of earlier cathedrals,' whereby upon entering the visitor would be immediately pitched into an all-

[135] As quoted in Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 293.

[136] Castedo, *The Baroque Prevalence in Brazilian Art*, 108.

encompassing gloom.[137] 'On the contrary', Niemeyer continued, 'I wanted visitors, entering the nave and passing through the dark gallery, to experience the contrast between light and colour, a feeling of peace and hope.'[138] In his notebooks, a severely abridged selection of which were published in pamphlet form in the final years of the architect's long life, Niemeyer observed that, despite this attempt at reinvention, he nevertheless still sought to project the same imposing exterior long associated with sacral architecture, albeit now rendered in the modernist palette. 'I remembered cathedrals of the past,' he wrote, 'each reflecting the progress of the epoch in which they were built, conquering space with daring structures.'[139] The result, a structure that 'bloomed like a flower in the middle of the desert… dressed in the whimsical fashion of my architecture', was likened by fellow Brazilian architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha to the Florentine masterpiece of Brunelleschi's dome.[140] The cathedral's stained glass windows, stretching floor to ceiling in between each of the soaring columns and installed only in 1971, have meanwhile been interpreted by Philippou as offering a proxy for the 'monumental painted ceilings of eighteenth-century Brazilian Baroque churches.' As a coherent and complete structure, the cathedral encapsulates the defining characteristics and contradictions of Niemeyer's Brasília; modernist and baroque, transformative, groundbreaking, and yet in key respects consistent with what had come before.

## *Conclusion*

As the forms of Niemeyer's Brasília began to coalesce, across the globe in Pakistan another capital city was also beginning to take shape. To highlight the

[137] Niemeyer, *Minha Arquitetura*, 173.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Niemeyer, "Cathedral of Brasília."

[140] Niemeyer, *Minha Arquitetura*, 123, and Paulo Mendes da Rocha in interview from 2006, as quoted in Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 295.

historicized nature of Brasilía's design, and as a concluding reflection, the approach adopted in South Asia bears some exploration. Little more than a decade after the country's independence, in 1958 Pakistan's newly installed military dictator Field Marshal Ayub Khan had determined that the coastal megacity of Karachi was no longer a capital fit for purpose. Desiring a more central, secure, and specialised seat of government, Khan, like Kubitschek, settled on building afresh.[141] In keeping with the defence-orientated priorities of the new government, the location selected was deep inland, straddling the ancient trading artery of the Great Trunk Road near the existing city of Rawalpindi, itself home to the General Headquarters of the Pakistan Army. The planning of the new capital was entrusted to Greek urban designer Constantinos Doxiadis, operating under the auspices of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), while the design of key government buildings was allocated to a coterie of internationally acclaimed Western architects including Dane Arne Jacobsen and American Louis Kahn.[142]

In a document prepared for the CDA in November 1961, Doxiadis demonstrated an awareness of the historical significance of the endeavour his firm was in the grip of undertaking. 'The site for Islamabad', he noted, 'was selected in 1959 in the northern part of West Pakistan […] where the great capitals of this part of Asia have always existed.'[143] 'It is', he continued, 'an area rich in tradition, an area with a great

[141] For a brief historical snapshot of the conditions surrounding Islamabad's genesis, see Lovejoy, "The Design of Islamabad – New Capital City of Pakistan," 923-41. It is possible that the Pakistanis were at least in some part inspired by the Brazilian example. On the occasion of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in August 1958, a Pakistani delegate identified only as M. Khan was reported to have commented of Brasília; 'I never saw anything like it in my life. The moving of the Brazilian capital is not only an act that demands courage and intrepidness to be realised. It also needs a small touch of insanity.' See Silva, *História de Brasília*, 284.

[142] Anthony Walmsley, "ISLAMABAD: Planning the Landscape of Pakistan's Capital," *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, vol. 56, no. 1 (October 1965), 18-25.

[143] Doxiadis Associates, "The Spirit of Islamabad," *Ekistics*, vol. 12, no. 73 (November 1961), 315-35.

history, an area which has played a big role right up to the present day.'[144] Despite the historical gravity of the location however, Doxiadis was explicit in acknowledging the forward-thinking nature of his assignment. Among the four 'long term objectives' he identified as being crucial to the success of the project, creating 'a model of new town building' was given equal billing to the need of the new city to 'serve the nation in the best possible way' and to 'become a symbol for the whole nation.'[145] Doxiadis expounded further on the tension between historic and futuristic symbolism in Islamabad in an article published by *The Town Planning Review* in 1965:

> Existing cities are old cities and thus, both from the technological and cultural points of view, do not represent the future but the past. If this past has value, it should not be spoiled by the creation of new functions in new buildings and facilities; if it has no value, it does not represent any asset.
>
> Seen from this point of view, the creation of a capital city of a newly independent country must either take place in an existing city (whose past is of value and it happens to have ample buildings and facilities), or, if this is not the case (and this is not the case with any city in Pakistan), it is better for it to be created without any commitments to the past. If it cannot represent the great value of the past, it is better to open the road for the values of the future.[146]

Such was the extent to which Doxiadis was committed to modernity and the creation of a futuristic city that, in conjunction with the aforementioned architects responsible for the main structures of Islamabad, any inherently Pakistani element was scarce indeed. As the scholar of landscape architecture Anthony Walmsley observed of the final result, 'one cannot […] escape the fact that the resultant plan [of Islamabad] owes more to an idealized principle informed by Western standards and experience than to either particular physical conditions or indigenous planning prototypes.'[147] Derek Lovejoy, the head of a British firm of landscape designers retained as consultants in Islamabad, added

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[144] Ibid.

[145] Ibid.

[146] C. A. Doxiadis, "Islamabad: The Creation of a New Capital," *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 36, no. 1 (April 1965), 1-28.

[147] Walmsley, "ISLAMABAD: Planning the Landscape of Pakistan's Capital," 20.

that the work of Jacobsen and Kahn, who had been commissioned to design the city's parliament building and presidential palace complex respectively, was 'strongly criticized in that they did not reflect Pakistani character.'[148] Lovejoy continued that in order to be successful, the landscape of Islamabad must 'take into full consideration the historical and religious principles which underly the foundations of Pakistan.'[149] 'The landscape architect', wrote Lovejoy, 'must understand the attitude to nature as it may be revealed in the Koran and other interpretive religious writings and by the spiritual leaders of Pakistan.' [150] 'The difficulties which some of the architects have experienced', he continued, 'are perhaps due to the fact that they have not sufficiently appreciated the significance and importance of the historical and religious background.' [151] Rather, concluded Lovejoy, the 'designers of the new landscapes should reflect and learn from the past while keeping pace with modern technical achievements and theories of design. The Pakistanis are extremely conscious of their historic and religious background and the imposition of foreign styles is quite unacceptable to them.'[152] Put simply, where history and heritage might have been central influences in the manifestation of Islamabad, they were in fact sorely missed. While an all-star international cast of architects were assembled to create a perfect political oasis, their generic designs fell foul of a capital city's role as an embodiment of national, societal, and cultural identity. The central argument of this chapter has been to demonstrate that upon close examination, Brasília ought not be condemned as sharing these failings. While at face value the roughly contemporary Brazilian and Pakistani attempts at capital building shared much in terms

[148] Lovejoy, "The Design of Islamabad – New Capital City of Pakistan," 929.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Ibid., 929-31.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Ibid., 931.

of style, both modernist in aesthetic, and location, being sited far inland, the differences remain nevertheless acute.

Beginning in the second and third chapters and climaxing here in the design of Brasília itself, this thesis has looked to peer beneath the veil of Brasília's superficially antiseptic appearance to reveal the key heritage influences therein. For both Costa and Niemeyer, much, but not all, of this historical influence was of a strictly Brazilian nature. In *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, Niemeyer wrote that he had also 'called to mind the Piazza San Marco in Venice, the Palace of the Doges and the Cathedral of Chartres' while envisioning the singularity of purpose, the 'clear-cut structure that would define the characteristics of the main buildings – the palaces, strictly so-called within the indispensable criterion of simplicity and nobility.'[153] Costa's work was similarly diverse in its source material, albeit in both cases local Brazilian sensibilities remained paramount. Moreover, even in their homage to Old World forms, the designers of Brasília were treading in the footsteps of earlier generations of Brazilian urbanists, who had sought to channel French and Italian influence in their Beaux Arts additions to Brazil's major cities of previous eras.[154] International observers would later extend the chronology of their inspiration even further. During a visit to the still emerging Brasília in August 1959, French writer and statesman André Malraux suggested that Niemeyer's government complex was 'a bit like the Acropolis on its rock.'[155] English architect George Balcombe agreed, enthusing in a 1961 interview that 'perhaps the most exciting [of Brasília's] visual

153 Niemeyer, *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, 19-20.

154 See Chapter II.

155 André Malraux, *Brasília na Palavra de André Malraux* (Rio de Janeiro: Presidência da República, 1959), 10. Malraux and Niemeyer would become close acquaintances, with the former welcoming Niemeyer in France during the latter's five-year exile from Brazil during the harshest years of the military regime (1967-72). The architect undertook a diverse range of commissions during this period, including new headquarters for both the French Communist Party (1971) and automobile manufacturer Renault (1969), an addition to the Dominican monastery at Sainte-Baume (1967), and urban redevelopment projects in the towns of Grasse (1967) and Dieppe (1972). See Cécile Bourgade, "Brésil(s) d'André Malraux: Oscar Niemeyer et Brasilia," *Présence d'André Malraux*, no. 12, (2015), 99-105.

qualities is a reference back to Classical Greece!'[156] As these quotes and indeed this chapter more broadly serves to demonstrate, there exists in Brasília, and perhaps in attempting to parse and categorise the DNA of all architectural forms, a prevailing degree of individual interpretation. As Evenson pointedly observed, the extent to which the city and its key structures are seen as 'essentially innovative or as fundamentally related to older architectural tradition depends somewhat on the sensibilities of the critic and the qualities he chooses to associate.'[157] One key caveat remains, however, one which I have striven to explore in this and each of the various chapters of this thesis that have touched on the architecture of Brasília, its lineage and exponents. Namely, that through their own eyes and in their own words, Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer appear to have believed fundamentally that in their Plano Piloto and *superquadras*, government palaces, churches, and congress halls, the echoes of previous Brazils rang loud. In designing a new capital, and, indeed, in Costa's case formulating a plan chosen above all others as being inherently suitable despite its simplicity and absence of fastidious detail, Brasília's architects chose to conceive of a city which in their own minds paid explicit homage, however discreet, to their nation's past. Philippou captures this function succinctly:

> The architectural form of Brazil's new national centre was not merely an aesthetic matter but a matter of large cultural and ideological significance. Brasília's conception as a concrete symbol of national unity is comparable to the role of the city of Washington as the symbol of the American Union. The Brazilian federal capital did not adopt the classicism of Washington, but architectural coherence was sought and achieved through the adoption of a father architect, with a distinct architectural style. And this was not a personal style but the style in which twentieth-century architects and politicians had sought to imagine the nation – Brazilian *and* modern.[158]

As the final chapter of this thesis will show, in the construction that would transform Brasília from plan to reality, and even more overtly in the ceremonies used to mark the

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[156] George Balcombe, "Conversation in Brasília, between Robert Harbinson and George Balcombe," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, no. 68 (Nov. 1961), 493.

[157] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 207.

[158] Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 255.

inauguration – if not total completion – of Brazil's new capital, such homage would be at its most apparent.

# CHAPTER VI

## *Fulfilling a Monumental Dream: Building and Inaugurating Brasília, 1956-1960*

> 'It was as if the opening of the West had been delayed a hundred years and then done with bulldozers.'[1]

Late at night in the warm October air of 1956, Novacap president Israel Pinheiro rode at the head of a small convoy of offroad vehicles, white hair streaming in the wind. Accompanying President Kubitschek as part of the entourage surveying the site of Brasília for the first time, after an hour's journey across the scrubland of the Planalto the sixty-year-old disembarked and, arms held wide 'in the shape of a cross', proclaimed boldly to the assembled company: 'Here will be the lake!'[2] The announcement was met with general consternation. 'Yes indeed, a lake,' Pinheiro enthused, 'like the dream of Dom Bosco. And it will serve to increase the humidity of the air, which is very dry here. On the other side, over there, do you see? There we will build a water sports club.'[3]

Over the months and years of organisation and labour to follow, this conviction in the seemingly unthinkable would lead to the worksite of Brasília being dubbed the 'Cidade de Israel.'[4] Such was Pinheiro's influence that Brazilian journalist and author Otto Lara Resende later commented of the new capital: 'Brasília is the product of a rare

[1] Douglas P. Haskell, "Brasília: A New Type of National City," *Architectural Forum*, no. 113 (November 1960), 126-33.

[2] Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 145.

[3] Ibid. For details regarding Dom Bosco and his role in Brasília, see Chapter I.

[4] Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 146.

coming together of four crazy men: Juscelino, Israel, Niemeyer, and Lúcio Costa."[5] Barely a month after his first visit, the Novacap president authorised the construction of the very first of Brasília's permanent structures, the nature and circumstance of which offer an insight into the priorities of the man behind its installation. As described by American writer and long-time resident of Brazil Elizabeth Bishop, the 'small white triangle' of the Ermida Dom Bosco (see fig. 6.1) sits on a gentle rise to the southeast of central Brasília, overlooking the waters of Pinheiro's prophesied Lago Paranoá.[6] 'A faithful copy in white marble of an Indian tepee […] but with a cross on top instead of criss-crossed tent-poles', the shrine reveals an alcove containing a plaster cast likeness of the eponymous Piedmontese prophet (fig. 6.2).[7] Pinheiro's son Israel Jr. and wife Dona Coracy later recounted that the statue, a gift from the Salesian congregation founded by Giovanni Bosco in Turin, had presented a challenge to install, with the site of the monument being 'virtually inaccessible' at the time.[8] Symbolically carried from what would become downtown Brasília by a party made up of Pinheiro, Dona Coracy, fellow Novacap director Bernardo Sayão, and the latter's partner Dona Hilda in a laborious quasi-pilgrimage lasting over three hours, Pinheiro's insistence that the structure be the first completed is telling. The symbolic act made apparent the extent to which, alongside Kubitschek, an awareness and embracing of Brasília's long gestation, as well as a strong faith in the divine, was foremost among Pinheiro's guiding principles. In the words of

[5] As quoted in ibid., 142. The epithet appeared not to bother Pinheiro himself, who reportedly claimed that 'it takes madmen to put through a project like Brasília. See Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "A Nation in Search of a Capital", "The Madmen of the Planalto."

[6] Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," 94.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 147.

Dona Coracy: 'Israel always believed that Dom Bosco was the one who made the construction of Brasília possible.'[9]



Fig. 6.1: Ermida Dom Bosco, and fig. 6.2: Ermida Dom Bosco (interior).

This final chapter will situate the building and inaugurating of Brasília within my wider framework of historisation, continuing the fundamental argument that the city was, from birth, imbued with a sense of heritage. In so doing, I will begin by touching briefly on the work of Pinheiro, Niemeyer, Novacap et al in overseeing the construction of Brasília. The chapter will not, however, attempt to address in any great detail the semantics of the process, the precise timeline of works or financial implications, providing instead only a snapshot of the frenzied atmosphere of relentless progress which defined the build site. Rather, focus will lie with a second estate of participants. If Pinheiro and Novacap might be said to constitute one key pillar of the narrative of Brasília's construction, forming the central decision-making directorate of the city-raising enterprise, the human foundation of that effort comprised the men and women upon whose physical labour the construction of the city was predicated. As briefly referenced

[9] Ibid.

in previous chapters, the workers responsible for Brasília were a symbolically diverse group, drawn from across the geographic and socio-ethnic spectrum of the Brazilian working classes. In keeping with the magnitude of their effort and the monumental scale of their legacy, both material and otherwise, the story of those whose extraordinary exertions saw manifested the designs and ambitions of Brasília's 'four crazy men' has been the subject of a strong body of material from which to draw.[10] Within the framework of this thesis, the intent will be to explore what Novacap director Ernesto Silva termed the 'great mass of Brazilians […] attracted by a better life', with emphasis on both the historical parallels and precedents behind this vast, itinerant workforce, and the language and symbolism at play in their recruitment and direction.[11] As I will demonstrate, the builders of Brasília were rapidly characterised precisely within the same historicised tropes of Brazilian heritage and identity that were so widely employed in other facets of the city's genesis.

The last part of this final chapter will focus on the moment(s) of Brasília's inauguration. The political necessity of President Kubitschek's self-imposed deadline for 'completing' his 'Meta-Síntese' had, as detailed in Chapter IV, been evident from the outset. His term set to expire in January 1961, and with a project of the national magnitude of Brasília twinned with Kubitschek's own well-established penchant for the theatrical, it is unsurprising that a series of grand and deeply symbolic ceremonies were intended to herald not only the birth of a new capital and a new era for Brazil, but also the successful fulfilment of an ambition that had long been defined by stasis and failure.[12] In analysing the nature and significance of Brasília's inauguration, Kubitschek's attempt

[10] See for example Beú, *Expresso Candango*, R. D. B. Laraia, *Candangos e pioneiros* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1996), and E. B. Luiz and M. M. M. Kuyumjian, "Candangos: uma história de trabalho e exclusão," *Revista Tempos Históricos*, vol. 14, no. 1, 257-79.

[11] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 96, and Chapter IV.

[12] See Chapters I and II.

to anchor the gleaming structures of the Plano Piloto in the wider sea of Brazilian history will be immediately apparent.

## *'Pompeii […] but in Reverse'*[13]

In late 1958, American writer John Dos Passos visited the construction site of Brasília.[14] In his travelogue *Brazil on the Move*, the author offered a series of lyrical vignettes which captured both the remarkable scale of Brasília and the granular, deeply personal stories of the Brazilians who made it possible. Over dinner, the visitor and his hosts – a group of junior site managers gathered at a 'small house out beyond the great compounds of the construction companies that covered the hillside' – discussed the scale of the undertaking at hand.[15] As a distillation of the optimism, excitement, scepticism, and pride that one imagines was reflected in similar conversations happening across the emerging capital, several passages bear reproducing:

> Round the table they all talked at once. They showered us with statistics. Already forty thousand people at work. The hotel only took twelve months to complete; the palace, thirteen. In twenty months twelve million cubic feet of earth had been excavated. Two hundred and sixty kilometers of paved roads had been built, and more than six hundred kilometers of dirt roads.
>
> […]
>
> 'How can you build an entire city in two years?'
>
> The Oldest Inhabitant [himself a young man and the first of the gathering to have relocated to the new Federal District] answered patly that two years ago nobody would have dreamed that Brazilians would win the world's soccer championship. To complete Brasília would mean the world's championship in city planning and modern architecture.
>
> Everybody laughed when he proclaimed that architecture would outrank football as a national sport. Her architecture is the soul of a new Brazil, he insisted. That's why he

[13] Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "A Nation in Search of a Capital", "Construction Site." Kubitschek was aware of the American's description and appeared to find it deeply flattering, see Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 467.

[14] For much of his life, Dos Passos had held a self-avowed fascination with Brazil, which resulted in his criss-crossing the country during multiple trips undertaken in the 1950s and early 1960s.

[15] Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "A Nation in Search of a Capital", "Construction Site."

> considered Kubitschek a great man; because he understood the three basic impulses behind Brazilian progress: new roads, new cities, new buildings.[16]

Of Niemeyer:

> When Kubitschek's choice of architect came up everybody started arguing hammer and tongs about Niemeyer. Niemeyer's buildings were impractical, said one. His work was magnificent, said another. The rafters rang with argument. 'Niemeyer is only interested in how his buildings look from the outside,' said Dona Leonora in a ringing voice. 'He keeps dumping insoluble problems in the lap of his engineers and contractors. He's not an architect at all. He's a sculptor, a sculptor with building materials.'
>
> This statement bought an approving silence round the table.[17]

However he be best characterised, Niemeyer's role in the construction process serves as a metaphor for the wider patterns of Brasilia's rise. As might be considered unsurprising given the manner of the city's immediate political origins, the building of the new capital was overwhelmingly one of improvisation and ferocious haste.[18] In an article published in March 1960, US designer George Nelson expressed amazement at the apparent chaos and spontaneity with which Niemeyer oversaw proceedings. The architect, wrote Nelson:

> has a drafting table in a construction shack, a telephone, and apparently no secretary. There are perhaps two dozen draftsmen in an adjoining room. One of his chores is the making of hundreds of on-the-sport decisions in the course of a day. 'They are always asking Oscar what to do,' said one of his assistants. 'Don't you have people who could help?' I asked. Outside there were some 45,000 workmen who were doing, in effect, what Niemeyer had told them to do. 'Oscar isn't an organization type,' he replied. Suddenly he laughed. 'You know, if we had been organized we never could have done it.'[19]

Kubitschek himself offered a similar assessment of his adjutant's modus operandi. Niemeyer, he wrote, would frequently instruct the teams of engineers using 'simple doodles', so that foundations might be laid while buying the architect-in-chief

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[16] Ibid., "The Boomtown Feeling."

[17] Ibid. As already noted, Dona Leonora's assessment had and would continue to be echoed by observers of all stripes.

[18] For Kubitschek's political manoeuvring to secure Brasília's authorisation, see Chapter IV.

[19] George Nelson, "Out of the Trackless Bush, a National Capital," *Saturday Review of Literature*, no. 43 (12 March 1960), 39-42.

time to plan the buildings themselves.[20] Characterising the almost haphazard furiosity of Brasília's construction, Niemeyer's fellow architect and architectural scholar Henrique Mindlin suggested a pervading atmosphere of quasi-desperation, born out of the urgent need to demonstrate immediate results. The fervour of Brasília's workers, Mindlin wrote in 1961, reflected 'the spirit in which [the project] was launched, a spirit which in many respects can only be compared to that which prevails in defensive war, when the instinct to survive comes before any practical consideration, [and which] can be seen now as the only spirit that would spark the collective will to the effective and immediate action necessary.'[21] The pervasiveness of this survival instinct was reflected in the working environment of even the most illustrious of Brasília's pioneers. While Niemeyer operated out of one timbered shack, Pinheiro and even Kubitschek did much the same. Sir Geoffrey Harrison, British ambassador to Brazil from 1956 to 1958, observed in a December 1956 report to his colleagues at the Foreign Office that when in Brasília the president worked out of a 'primitive office', built for him that November in little over a week.[22] Diminutively christened the 'Catetinho' after Rio's executive mansion the Catete Palace, this clapperboard two-storey building and his residence therein was described by Kubitschek as a symbol of his commitment to Brasília, 'an inspirational flame' to demonstrate the 'spirit of creation and […] the determination to face and overcome what seemed impossible' (see fig. 6.3). [23] 'The Catetinho,' wrote a Brazilian journalist in 1960,

[20] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 79.

[21] Henrique E. Mindlin, *Brazilian Architecture* (London: Royal College of Art, 1961), 48.

[22] Sir Geoffrey added his own opinion that it seemed to him 'highly doubtful, even with the full weight of the Government behind the project, whether it will be possible to provide the necessary communications, services, and utilities for the Government really to move up to Brasília by 1960.' Noting Kubitschek's determination however, he added that 'It would […] I think be rash to assume that Brasília will not materialise one day, though not for some considerable time yet to come.' Unfortunately, the ambassador would not remain in Brazil long enough to see his assumptions proven incorrect. Sir Geoffrey Harrison, "Transfer of Brazilian Capital," 7 December 1956. AB 1016/3, FO 371/119915, The National Archives.

[23] See Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 60-61.

'with its walls of timber, constituted a memorable page in the history of Brasília,' where for almost two years Kubitschek and his staff worked and received guests visiting the emerging city.[24] Of his own time at the compound, Israel Pinheiro was rather more prosaic. 'I spent 18 months with my wife in a single room in a wooden bunkhouse', the Novacap leader told an American reporter. 'I stayed there for the propaganda. If it was good enough for me, it was good enough for everyone.'[25]



Fig. 6.3: Museu do Catetinho.

With Niemeyer and his skeleton staff directing the progress of the key structures, from his timber eyrie Pinheiro and his assistants marshalled the workforce, procured financing, and organized a logistical supply operation of titanic proportions. By road and rail arrived from all corners of Brazil everything from cut steel to cement and from 'swivel chairs to paperclips', while aircraft set down on Brasília's new runway 'every two

[24] "A História da Construção de Brasília," *Brasília*, no. 40 (April 1960), 47.

[25] "Where Lately the Jaguar Screamed, a Metropolis Now Unfolds," *Time*, 25 April 1960, 34-39.

minutes with Tempelhof-like precision.'[26] Likened by Holston to a 'ministate ruling an island of activity in the Central Plateau', Novacap's spending spiralled.[27] In December 1958, in response to an official congressional request, Pinheiro provided a provisional itemised bill for the construction of the new capital. A brief summary of his assessment, estimated to total at the time of the forthcoming inauguration approximately eight billion cruzeiros, was included in a British diplomatic despatch later that month.[28] The total included funds spent on construction materials and equipment imported from overseas, the majority of which had been purchased from American suppliers and in part financed by a ten million dollar loan from the Export-Import Bank of the United States.[29] The British advised however that Pinheiro's figures be treated with some caution. 'It is generally accepted,' the despatch noted, 'that various items of expenditure on construction in Brasília have been concealed in the Budgets of other Ministries not shown above, e.g. of the Ministry of War.'[30] In an article of 30 April 1957, soon-to-be president of the Academia Brasileira das Letras, Austregésilo de Athayde, made clear his concerns regarding Brasília's spiralling drain on the public finances; 'One hundred and fifty billion cruzeiros, by the most moderate calculations, will be applied to this senseless initiative, just so that our public servants can leave Earth to live on the Moon', he complained.[31]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 202.

[28] "Cost of constructing the new Federal Capital at Brasília," 22 December 1958. AB 1016/3, FO 371/131993, The National Archives, 1-2. As detailed in Chapter IV, providing accurate conversion data on the contemporary value of the cruzeiro is hampered by wildly fluctuating exchange rates, driven by inflation. Some exploration of the latter phenomenon is provided in the coming pages.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid. In response to the deficit spending required by the project, inflation soared. According to one estimate, by April 1960 the cruzeiro had slumped from sixty-five to the dollar to roughly two hundred. See "Where Lately the Jaguar Screamed, a Metropolis Now Unfolds," 34-39.

[31] Austregésilo de Athayde, "O monstro é Brasília," *Diário da Noite*, 30 April 1957, in *Coleção Brasília VIII*, 460-61.

Indeed, as the cost of Brasília became increasingly clear, newspapermen nationwide picked up the baton of objection. 'You don't need to be an economist to know that the construction of Brasília is the direct cause of the tremendous inflation the country is struggling with, leading to the uncontrollable rise in the cost of living', posited a columnist in the *Estado do Paraná*.[32] 'Knowing, as we do, the almost demented obsession of the President of the Republic in relation to the building of the new capital,' the same writer continued, 'little can be expected in favour of a sanitizing of the national economy'.[33] 'Brasília and inflation are now Siamese twins. When speaking of one, the other comes together with it', put the *Jornal do Brasil*.[34] Sir William Holford, his official duties with the design committee long since completed and now no more than an interested observer, confronted Pinheiro directly regarding the ballooning costs of the project.[35] 'When I asked Dr. Pinheiro, the President of Novacap, whether he was bothered by accountants over capital expenditure,' wrote Holford, 'or by capital accounts committees and things of that kind, he said "no, no, no." I said, "Do tell me the secret. How is it that you survive?" He said, "It is quite simple. We have a fixed D-Day – April 21, 1960. The town must be ready then. I have said to Parliament [*sic*], "If you criticize me, you do not get your town."'[36] While budgetary scrutiny and public criticism did not appear to bother Pinheiro, Niemeyer was less indifferent. In an article published shortly following the inauguration of Brasília, the architect vented his frustrations:

> We soon found out that we were not merely facing the technical, economic, and other such problems – themselves big enough – that the construction of a city poses. Others appeared or were made worse by a lack of understanding or by the systematic campaign

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[32] "Não Compensa o Sacrifício," *Estado do Paraná*, 27 January 1959.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Inflação," *Jornal do Brasil*, 18 February 1960.

[35] For Holford's seminal role in the selection of Brasília's design, see Chapter V.

[36] Holford, "Brasília: A New Capital City for Brazil," 158.

> that the opponents of the government waged against Brasília. In the beginning they pursued this campaign somewhat half-heartedly, feeling it was unnecessary; but when they saw that the work was really going ahead, they increased the scale of their attacks and brought them out into the open in a vain attempt, successfully frustrated, to ruin the entire undertaking. The unfairness of the purely negative criticism levelled at us was a perennial source of annoyance. We were especially hurt by the lack of generosity shown in evaluating the immense effort and sacrifice involved. But the disgust that all this aroused in us had a positive effect, driving us to work with greater determination and an increased sense of responsibility.[37]

From early on, it was apparent that much of Brasília's development, and virtually all of the actual construction, would be left to the private sector. While Novacap was responsible for sourcing contractors to complete the government buildings and what Kubitschek termed 'the general layout of blocks, the laying of roads, the installation of parks and playgrounds, [and] basic public utility services such as water, sewage, power, and streetlighting', the remainder fell outside of the administration's self-imposed remit.[38] In the various advertising and promotional materials produced by the multitude of private companies contracted in Brasília, as in the rhetoric of the politicians, public servants, and architects, two marketing strategies were in evidence. In line with the prevailing conventional modernist and developmentalist narratives at play in relation to the building of the new capital, many firms chose to align their contribution to the project accordingly. 'Here begins a new Brazil' announced a magazine advertisement for Brazilian explosives company Rupturita SA Explosivos, while metallurgy outfit Bimetal Indústria Metalúrgica SA promoted their involvement with the tagline 'Brasília: the dawn of a new era.'[39] Similar slogans were put forward by Mercedes-Benz do Brasil; 'the decisive mark of national progress', and railway components firm Companhia Brasileira de Material Ferroviário SA (COBRASMA); 'Brasília: a new path.'[40] Conversely, others in

[37] Oscar Niemeyer, "Minha Experiência em Brasília," *Módulo*, no. 18 (June 1960), 23.

[38] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 78.

[39] See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 208.

[40] Ibid.

the private sector chose an alternative tactic for legitimising and lauding their contribution, namely historical allusion. Many of the tropes employed were distinctly familiar. 'Brazil sees realised the dream of the Inconfidentes and the ideal of the Republicans' declared an advert for US oil firm Phillips Petroleum, invoking the 1789 Minas Conspiracy and its leader Tiradentes's dream of an independent republic, ruled from an inland capital.[41] Others preferred 'Brasília realises the dream of Dom Bosco', or 'Brasília fulfils the discovery of Brazil.'[42] As these messages demonstrate, and as will become further apparent, the appeal of mythologising and historicising Brasília was far from unique to politicians, planners, and architects. Rather, whether as a means to legitimise or simply promote the endeavour and their involvement therein, stakeholders across the spectrum adopted the strategy of linking the emergent city to nationally resonant histories.

On the final evening of his first visit to Brasília – he would return in 1962 – John Dos Passos and his local guide followed in the footsteps of the Novacap top brass. Standing 'in front of a pointed white shrine on the brow of a hill overgrown with scraggly trees and dotted with the red clay of the termites', the pair looked out towards the unfolding drama of Brasília's construction.[43]

> Dom Bosco's statue looked out across a broad shadowy valley towards the streaks of dust that hung level in the evening air over the opposite ridge.
>
> A faint roar came to us from the construction work. Draglines, bulldozers, sheepsfoot rollers, graders: earthmoving machines of every type were at work twenty-four hours a day levelling the summit of the long hogback which formed the centre of Brazil's new capital.
>
> On the horizon beyond, the red sun set in purple behind a smooth distant ridge. Osorio pointed out the white upside-down arches of the palace and the pontoon shape of the hotel and the blocks of apartments shapeless under their scaffolding.

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[41] Ibid. For Tiradentes and the Inconfidência Mineira, see Chapter I.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "A Nation in Search of a Capital", "Dom Bosco's Dream."

> 'Soon you'll see behind them the Triangle of the Three Powers [*sic*] and the downtown district. You can imagine them already," he said, with a catch in his breath. 'The neon lights will go on…You'll see them reflected in the lake.'[44]

## *Pioneers of the Free City*

At the centre of the Praça dos Três Poderes - the public square at the heart of Brasília's complex of government buildings - a bronze statue casts a long shadow. Eight meters tall and designed by Italo-Brazilian artist Bruno Giorgi at Niemeyer's behest, the sculpture depicts two stylised figures, arm in arm as they survey the inner sanctum of the Brazilian Republic (fig. 6.4). Erected in 1959 as the construction of the city was itself reaching fever pitch, the affixed plate reads simply: 'Os Candangos. Monumento aos Construtores de Brasília'.[45]



[44] Ibid.

[45] Despite the neighbouring plaque, the statue is formally known as 'Os Guerreiros.'

Fig. 6.4: "Os Guerreiros," Praça dos Três Poderes.

Purportedly derived from a pejorative term for white Europeans and brought to Brazil by Angolan slaves, *candango* had long become a byword for the itinerant, often mixed-race backlanders of the hitherto widely neglected North, Northeast, and Central-West regions of Brazil.[46] In Brasília however, the epithet was forged anew, assumed by the many thousands of migrant labourers – the 'smiths of Brasília' in the words of Israel Pinheiro - as a collective identity that would become synonymous with the builders of the new capital.[47] Drawn to the city in part by virtue of a bombastic recruitment drive spearheaded by Kubitschek, the *candangos* were quickly – a cynic might suggest opportunistically – co-opted as the face of a new Brazil.[48] In a speech delivered in January 1960, the president articulated the hard-won status of the *candangos* with direct reference to the new monument:

> Future interpreters of Brazilian civilization, in analysing this period of our history, must dwell with astonishment before the bronzed figure of this anonymous titan, who is the *candango*, the obscure and formidable hero of the construction of Brasília. […] While the sceptics laughed at the intended utopia of the new city that I prepared to build, the *candangos* shouldered the responsibility of responding to me, working day and night to accomplish, in my administration, the letter of the Constitution. […] The sad appearance of a downtrodden drifter, with which Euclides da Cunha portrayed our hinterland, is fading out of the Brazilian panorama. You will not find it in the character of the *candango*, to who we owe this city.[49]

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[46] Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 172.

[47] As quoted in ibid., 169-70.

[48] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 207-08. When seen in concert with the parallel (re)adoption of the epithet *bandeirante* among those working at the construction site of Brasília, the widespread use of the term *candango* poses a somewhat awkward paradox. Whereas the majority of *candangos* (but not all) were of Afro-Brazilian or Pardo ethnicity, and with the term itself having its origins in the dialects of enslaved Africans, the historical *bandeirantes* were defined as much by their slave-hunting exploits as any freebooting, treasure-seeking intrepidness. Notwithstanding the degree to which contemporary 1950s sensibilities regarding the term *bandeirante* did not necessarily appreciate the uglier activities with which it is now commonly associated, and while some *bandeirantes* were themselves of Afro or mixed heritage, the use of both terms somewhat interchangeably in early Brasília might therefore be considered rather incongruous to modern observers.

[49] Kubitschek, "Brasíilia, 3 January 1960: Nas Solenidades Comemorativas do Aniversário do Presidente da Novacap Doutor Israel Pinheiro (Discurso Lido pelo Chefe da Casa Civil, Ministro José Sette Câmara Filho)," *Memórias do Brasil – 1960: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 27-30.

Despite this eulogistic rhetoric however, the reality was somewhat different. Unlike the government functionaries whose move to the city would be concierged by newly-established body the Grupo de Trabalho de Brasília, no such provision existed for the legions of *candangos*.[50] Upon arrival at the construction site, they were housed in hastily assembled temporary encampments at the periphery of the Plano Piloto.[51] Directed by Bernardo Sayão, Novacap had initially allocated a relatively modest plot to accommodate the flow of workers, located at the southern tip of the Asa Sul, in an area latterly encompassing the aptly named neighbourhoods of Candangolândia and Núcleo Bandeirante, and subsequently the Jardim Zoológico de Brasília. As the worker population swelled, so the area began to assume the trappings of an impoverished, often squalid, yet lively frontier community. Dubbed the Cidade Livre, in appearance and character this town-at-the-edge-of-town was remembered by Niemeyer as 'the "'Wild West" of the new capital. A broad mud-covered street, full of off-road vehicles, horses and carts, and lined with low brick buildings where the bars, restaurants, night-clubs, and prostitutes of the city could be found' (fig. 6.5).[52]

[50] The second-class status of the *candangos* was not only stratified from the start, but would continue long after Brasília's inauguration rendered the city ostensibly complete due to the ongoing need for labour in the 'barely inhabitable' new capital. All of this despite Novacap's presupposition that the majority of workers would return home once the bulk of the work on Brasília was complete. See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 204.

[51] Deckker, *The Modern City Revisited*, 181-84, and Holston, *The Modernist City*, 228. As Holston identifies, many of the *candangos* viewed the shortage of skilled labour as an opportunity for personal advancement. The author recounts the oft-repeated anecdote of newly arrived labourers borrowing basic tools from one another in order to pose as skilled and suitably equipped craftsmen at the Novacap recruiting office, despite entirely lacking in training or experience. See ibid.

[52] Niemeyer, *The Curves of Time*, 113-14. The bars and nightlife of the Cidade Livre stood in contrast to the official promulgation of the 'Dry Law of Brasília', instituted at the behest of Pinheiro and intended to mitigate drunkenness and disorderly behaviour on the construction site. See Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 146.



Fig. 6.5: Nov-D-4-4-B-1 (0155), "Candangos na cidade livre Núcleo Bandeirante, DF-1957-1960," ArPDF.

When construction activities commenced in earnest, the influx of labourers quickened dramatically. In 1956, the building zone was home to barely more than two hundred and fifty migrant workers, primarily engaged in the preliminary activity of clearing the thick vegetation of the Planalto Central.[53] In 1957, this number rose to over twelve thousand, before reaching approximately twenty-eight thousand by early 1958, with two thousand new arrivals every month.[54] By the time of George Nelson's visit in 1960, the *candango* population of Brasília had peaked at some forty-five thousand.[55] Available jobs were typically announced spontaneously over a tannoy system installed throughout the Cidade Livre, with open vacancies also read out before organised evening entertainment and from loudspeakers mounted on vehicles patrolling the dusty streets.[56] Frontline

[53] Vagner dos Santos, Gelya Frank, and Ana Mizue, "Candangos: occupational reconstruction as a tool to understand social problems and transformative action in the utopian city of Brasília," *Cadernos Brasileiros de Terapia Ocupacional*, 2020, vol. 28., 765-83.

[54] As quoted in ibid. See also Holston, *The Modernist City*, 218-19.

[55] Nelson, "Out of the Trackless Bush, a National Capital," 40.

[56] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 222.

construction roles typically entailed mammoth 90-hour weeks, albeit subsequent claims of twenty-two-hour days and even back-to-back twenty-four-hour shifts proved common from former *candangos*, if perhaps subject to valiant exaggeration.[57] For their efforts, Holston estimates a median monthly wage in the region of thirty-six US dollars.[58]

As early as July 1956, the construction site and workers of Brasília had been served by a hospital, the Hospital Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira, and, from December of that year, by the Hotel Brasília, the latter catering to visiting officials and owned, in a situation indicative of the benefits the city development brought to local politicians, by José Carlos Souza, the mayor of a nearby municipality in the state of Goiás.[59] As its population grew, the Cidade Livre became a melting pot of all those with an interest in the endeavour of Brasília, from the directors of Novacap to the most recently arrived *candangos* from Bahia, Pará, or Pernambuco.[60] Tailors, pharmacies, bakeries, butcher's shops, car dealerships, and travel agents proliferated in a community reminiscent in spirit of the nineteenth-century boomtowns of California or the Klondike, or indeed the colonial-era Minas Gerais mining centres latterly the birthplaces of Kubitschek and Pinheiro alike (fig. 6.6).[61] Characterising the makeshift settlement as a 'human anthill' and a 'kind of Tupiniquim Singapore', in his memoirs the president himself described the phenomenon of the Cidade Livre as encapsulating 'the saga of the gold rush that took place in the North American West, reproduced in identical dramatic colours in the heart

[57] Ibid., 227, and Gustavo S. Lins Ribeiro, "O Capital da Esperança. Brasília: Estudo sobre uma Grande Obra da Construção Civil," Master's diss., (Universidade de Brasília, 1980), 103-12.

[58] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 227. Note that this figure compared extremely favourably to the wages on offer in those parts of the country from which *candangos* were typically recruited, with one of the author's interviewees citing that in their hometown in the Goiás hinterland, a butcher's daily wage was in the region of US$0.15. See ibid.

[59] Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 159.

[60] Ibid., 158-59.

[61] For the Cidade Livre, see ibid., and Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," 98. For reference to the Brazilian gold rush, see Chapter I. For the *mineiro* origins of both Kubitschek and Pinheiro, see Chapters III and V respectively.

of Brazil.'[62] Indeed, while Kubitschek had long grounded his mission to construct a new capital in the language and symbolism of Brazil's *bandeirante* fortune hunters, parallels with the violent influx of so-called *emboabas* into the Minas goldfields several centuries prior also abounded.[63]




Fig. 6.6: Nov-D-4-4-B-1 (0160), "Candangos em uma rua do Núcleo Bandeirante, DF-1957-1960," ArPDF.

Law enforcement in this new community was conspicuous by its absence, shocking foreign visitors. In the words of American architect Alfred Shaw of Chicago, 'everyone [in the Cidade Livre] carries a gun or a knife, and life is as cheap as in a mountain mining town. Police are not in evidence except for traffic.'[64] German-American journalist Wolf Von Eckardt offered a similar assessment. 'All sorts of riffraff and fugitives populate this wide-open shanty-town', he wrote, adding in a note of caution, 'it is not safe to venture

[62] The Tupiniquim being one of the more prominent indigenous peoples of Brazil. See Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 77 and 87.

[63] For the War of the Emboabas, see Chapter I.

[64] As quoted in McQuade, "Brasília's Beginning," 98.

far from the car.'[65] For visitors arriving at the construction site by air, the frontier spirit of the undertaking was immediately apparent. As a *Newsweek* correspondent disembarking at the newly paved airstrip observed in September 1959, 'waiting crowds of restless, sunburned men in blue jeans, broad-brimmed hats, and dusty boots suggests a television Western rather than an ultramodern capital' (fig. 6.7).[66]



Fig. 6.7: Nov-D-4-4-B-1 (0171), "Candangos no Núcleo Bandeirante, DF," ArPDF.

In line with the grandiose rhetoric of Kubitschek and Brasília's other political patrons, the frontier identity was one knowingly and readily adopted by Brasília's workforce as a badge of honour. 'Finding themselves pioneering an unsettled site, accustomed to dust and mud, and adopting the boots and informal dress of the backlands,' writes Evenson, 'the [first] inhabitants of Brasília took pride in identifying themselves with the early pioneers of Brazil.'[67] Niemeyer, among the most exalted of all those working at the construction zone, observed in 1960 that notable in Brasília was a 'common denominator

[65] Von Eckardt, "Brasília: Symbol in the Mud," 42.

[66] "The 'Folly' is a City," *Newsweek*, 7 September 1959, 45.

[67] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 159.

between chiefs and subordinates, workers and engineers, that brought us all to the same level, a natural and spontaneous affinity that the class differences still existing in our country make it difficult if not impossible to establish.'[68] Shortly after the inauguration, he would recall how during the construction period 'we lived as if in a great family, without prejudice and inequality. We lived in the same houses, ate in the same restaurants, frequented the same places of amusement. Even our clothes were similar. We were united by a climate of fraternization resulting from identical discomforts' (figs. 6.8 and 6.9).[69]



Fig. 6.8: Nov-D-4-4-B-5 (0724), "Vista da Esplanada dos Ministérios com candangos, Brasília, DF-03-09-1959," ArPDF.

While the romance of this apparent convivial unity is enticing, some *candangos* remembered a slightly different reality. Interviewed by social historian Gustavo Lins Ribeiro some twenty years later, one anonymous bricklayer remembered that although the 'engineer had the same appearance as the worker, dressed in casual pants, boots and

[68] Niemeyer, "Minha Experiência em Brasília," 19.

[69] Niemeyer, *Minha Experiência em Brasília*, 64.

all', nevertheless 'the engineers lived in their own camps', far from the down-at-heel grime of the Cidade Livre.[70] Whether humble *candango* or highly-skilled engineer however, to all was granted the honorific title 'pioneer.'[71]



Fig. 6.9: Nov-D-4-4-B-11 (1395), "Candangos e família construindo barracos, Brasília 1959," ArPDF.

Positioning himself steadfastly at the head of this column of pioneers was the figure of the president himself. With Brasília representing the apex project of his broader series of infrastructural and development initiatives, Kubitschek saw Brasília as serving a key role in an opening of the interior, the 'symbol of this integration journey.'[72] Determined to link the city via an intranational network of new highways stretching from Amazonas to Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais to Acre, the president again couched his masterplan in historical symbolism. In response to what he described as the hitherto impenetrable vastness of the Amazon rainforest, an 'intricate and closed web of vines – impassable

[70] Lins Riberio, "O Capital da Esperança," 114. Note that other distinctions of class also remained firmly entrenched, with a sharp divide in modes of address, salaries, and benefits afforded to labourers ('*candangos*'), and engineers ('*doutores*'). See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 232-48.

[71] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 206-07.

[72] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 86.

even to the Indians', Kubitschek claimed that he had 're-read the history of the *bandeirantes*, noting the routes of those pathfinders who, facing dangers and privations, had taken the frontiers of Brazil to their western extremities.'[73] Invoking the explorations of notorious seventeenth-century frontiersman Fernão Dias, and 'often recalling' the pioneering completion of the transcontinental railroad in the United States, the president boastfully wrote of his aim to defy the prediction of Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, who on the occasion of his Amazonian expedition of 1800 declared that the 'Green Hell' would not be tamed for two thousand years.[74]

Geographically, logistically, and symbolically, Brasília was central to these ambitions. 'You can't conquer a land to which you don't have access', wrote Kubitschek, positing that in order to 'civilize' Brazil a great web of highways – a 'civilizing element par excellence' – would be required.[75] 'At the centre of the system would be Brasília', he continued, 'a tower from which to contemplate Brazil' (see fig. 6.10).[76] 'The prior construction of Brasília would be essential for the success of that ambitious plan. Any road must have a point of arrival, to justify its implementation. I would not be able to drive it through the interior, make it rip through the forest, without an economic objective. It would be unwise to spend fabulous sums only to arrive at an Indian

[73] Ibid., 83. Of these histories, Clodomir Viana Moog's *Bandeirantes e Pioneiros* was sufficiently impactful for Kubitschek to mention it by name, describing the work as a classic of Brazilian literature. See ibid., 98.

[74] Ibid., 83-84. Curiously, despite an overt desire to situate his ambitions within the historical tableau of pioneering exploration, Kubitschek is mistaken in his attributing of dates in reference to both the American and Humboldt examples. Referring to the completion of the Pacific Railroad, or Overland Route, Kubitschek ascribes the date of 1867, when in fact the symbolic driving of the final 'Golden Spike' did not occur until May 1869. For Humboldt, Kubitschek claims that the former's expedition to the Amazon culminated in 1805, while in reality it was part of a much wider tour of the Americas lasting from June 1799 to August 1804. Humboldt's travels in the (Venezuelan) Amazon were complete by November 1800. See Martin W. Sandler, *Iron Rails, Iron Men, and the Race to Link the Nation: The Story of the Transcontinental Railroad* (Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2015), and Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Lost Hero of Science* (London: John Murray, 2015) respectively.

[75] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 84.

[76] Ibid.

village.'[77] Similar imagery, with particular reference to the United States, was again used by the president in a speech of 2 February 1960. Amid the construction of roads linking Brasília with Porto Alegre, Belém, and Rio de Janeiro, Kubitschek announced that their opening came 'more with a sense of relief than joy.'[78] 'More than a hundred years ago – in 1842 – [John C.] Fremont made the first North American east-west crossing' he continued, adding; 'I confess, it took us too long to reach this result.'[79]

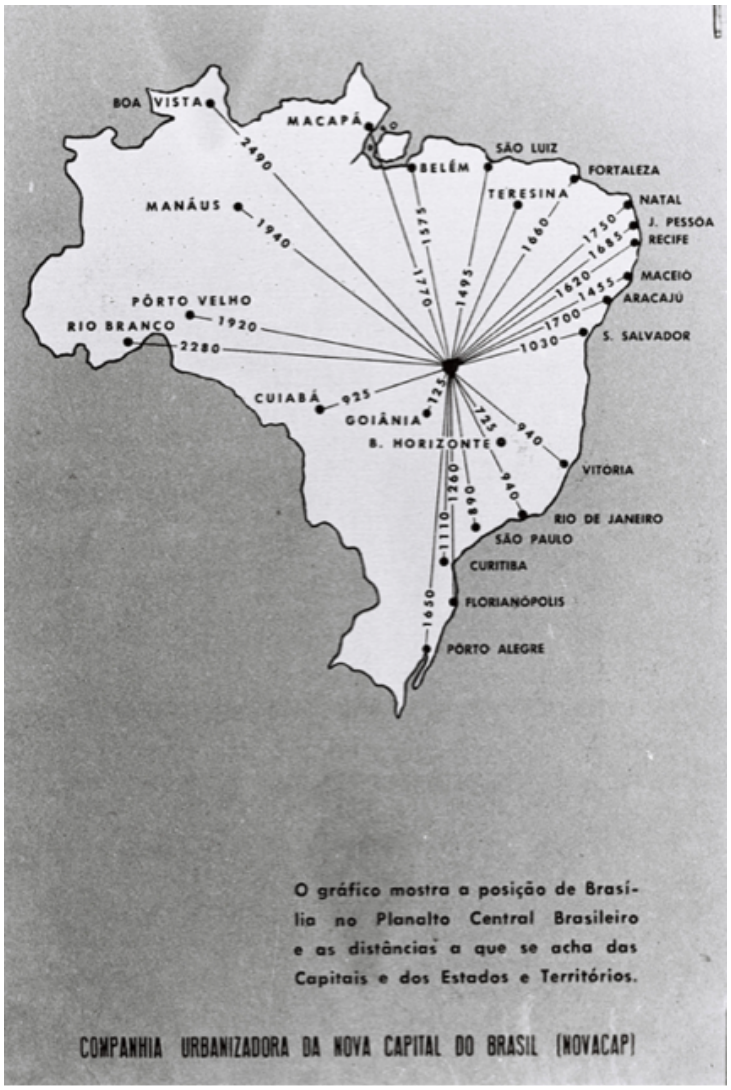


Fig. 6.10: Nov-D-4-4-D-5 (4114), "Mapa (de Distância)," ArPDF.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Brasília, 2 February 1960: Recebendo as Colunas da Caravana da Integração Nacional," in *Memórias do Brasil – 1960: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 64-66.

[79] Ibid.

Such was the extent to which the symbolism and language of Brazilian exploration and intrepidness was keenly adopted by Brasília's propagandists, that the term *bandeirante* itself began to take on new meaning. Formerly an explicit reference to the treasure seekers and brigands of old - 'half-savage frontiersmen' in the words of an unnamed *Time* correspondent - as Holston attests the term increasingly 'came to mean not a frontier marauder but rather the builder of a new Brazil.'[80] A contemporary advertisement for a leading Brazilian concrete manufacturer captured this rebrand in action; 'Eternit salutes the brave *bandeirantes* who with their courage and sacrifice drove in the foundations of the most modern city in the world, confirming the great technical and creative capacity of the Brazilian people.'[81] Oil giant Esso pursued a similar tactic in a flyer used to promote the April 1959 opening of a filling station in Brasília, marrying the reforged *bandeirante* mythology with another symbolic figure familiar to Brazilian history and marketing sloganeers alike. Alongside a sketch of a muscle-bound, helmeted *candango*, the text read as follows:

> 'Hey kid… I built this city! That's to say, I didn't build all of it, but I did my bit.'
>
> Like him, thousands of other '*candangos'*…thousands of new *bandeirantes* are proud of having made Brasília. Each one of them contributed their own share of knowledge, talent, and hard work to make this beautiful Brazilian dream a reality.
>
> Today Brasília opens its doors and sings its glory. But the glory that remains is that of the Brazilian '*candangos*' – from the administrators and the technicians to the workers. They carved into the tale of Brasília the mark of Brazilian audacity, the value of its intelligence and an unshakeable belief in the future of this country.
>
> Esso Brasileira de Petróleo has been at these men's side from the first moment. And they helped us to build here the first service station of Brasília – pioneer in the land of pioneers – the Tiradentes Esso Station, inaugurated on 21 April 1959 by President Juscelino Kubitschek.[82]

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[80] Holston, *The Modernist City*, 209, and "Where Lately the Jaguar Screamed, a Metropolis Now Unfolds," 34-39. For a brief discussion of the historical phenomenon of the *bandeirantes*, see Chapter I.

[81] As quoted in Holston, *The Modernist City*, 209.

[82] As reproduced in Nonato Silva, *Brasília: Edição Arquitetura e Engenharia* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquitetura e Engenharia, Redação e Administração, 1960). Note that the *candango* label, with its newfound implications of pioneering toil and pride, was rapidly reappropriated to encompass not only the impoverished migrant worker, but all contributors to the Brasília project. See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 210-11.

The appropriation of such mythology was evidently effective. In a letter of May 1957 to Israel Pinheiro, Rio surveyor Anacharsis Rattes wrote of his wish to join Novacap at the earliest opportunity, so as to be 'one of the first "Bandeirantes" of the new generation, because this is the best opportunity I will have to succeed."[83]

Whenever chances to reinforce this symbolism with grand ceremony and rhetoric presented themselves, Kubitschek seldom disappointed. In an impromptu speech delivered to the workers of Brasília in September 1959, the president again hammered home the historical scale of their collective undertaking:

> On 2 October 1956, on the temporary airfield here, men disembarked to realise and understand for the first time the grandeur and the dimensions of the task that was being launched. For centuries, Brazil aspired to conquer its territory. When the first Paulistas climbed the Serra do Mar, settled on the Piratininga plateau, and from there, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, spread across Brazil the power of the culture of the flag, pushing back the line of the Treaty of Tordesillas, redrawing the conventional frontiers of Brazil and conquering vast tracts of land for our country, which would remain deserted and abandoned for centuries, they marked, with the immense labour of the *bandeirantes*, the strength, the enthusiasm, and the victorious inspiration of the Brazilian people.
>
> The *bandeirantes* will forever be etched into the secular history of Brazil. They did not, however, have the great mission, the immense task that was entrusted to the current generation. If the *bandeirantes* enlarged our frontiers, they did not populate the country. Much to the contrary, by carrying off and transporting to the coast the primitive and savage inhabitants of the unknown forests, they depopulated Brazil. Now, this task falls to the generations of the twentieth century, the populating of Brazil. The dream is an old one, and its realization always appeared to the eyes of Brazil like a utopia, an ideal without the possibility of realization.[84]

After an extensive litany of praise for the pioneers of Brasília, Israel Pinheiro chief among them, and a bullish re-telling of his own leading role in the endeavour, the president returned to his theme:

> I would like to recall a phrase that dates back to the sixteenth century. Returning from the frontiers of Peru, the *bandeirantes* said to their fellow citizens: 'We have come back from the frontiers of Peru, and this is not a fable. We went on foot and we have

[83] Nov B3, 119/95, "Correspondência, maio 1957," ArPDF.

[84] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Brasília, 12 September 1959: Agradecendo, de Improviso, as Palavras de Saudação do Senhor Israel Pinheiro, na Festa com que os Trabalhadores de Brasília Assinalaram a Passagem de Mais um Aniversário do Presidente da República," in *Memórias do Brasil – 1959: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 268-71.

> returned.' We, the pioneers of Brasília, can say the same. We are not creating a myth. Brasília is a reality. It is rising, its stunning buildings loom over the horizons of these highlands, where the art of Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa has created here an admirable monument of beauty. All this together, all of the effort made here will blossom tomorrow into the prosperity of a new nation, one that is no longer content with a secondary position in the universal rankings. If other nations, and we have formidable continental examples, like the United States, have managed, more than a century ago, to transform themselves into powerful countries, we Brazilians also have the capacity, energy, audacity and inspiration to build a new homeland, to forge the Brazil of the dream of generations past and the present of the generations to come, a strong and powerful nation.[85]

Even when not delivering stirring oratory, the president's hand was evident to all at the construction zone. During the height of the building process, by his own estimation Kubitschek made approximately two hundred and twenty-five visits to Brasília, the majority of which were return trips from Rio de Janeiro each conducted during a single evening.[86] In typically effusive fashion, he described the purpose of each visit as being 'to inspect the work and to stimulate, with my presence, the activity of the *candangos*.'[87] 'I felt good', he wrote in his memoirs, 'experiencing the emotion of witnessing the birth of the metropolis, only made possible by my characteristic spirit of determination.' [88] Notwithstanding the president's similarly characteristic lack of modesty, his frequent presence and willingness to engage personally with the rank and file appears to have had real impact. During the course of his own research, Holston notes that virtually every *candango* he interviewed had 'a "JK story" about his personal encounter with the president of the nation.'[89] Demonstrating the same charisma and interpersonal leadership qualities honed on the streets of Diamantina, the president would regularly tour the construction

[85] Ibid., 271.

[86] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 92.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] See Holston, *The Modernist City*, 215.

site with only minimal security, embracing workers and hosting giant *churrasco*-style barbecues for hundreds of *candangos* at a time.[90]

Away from the worksite however, public scepticism towards the project remained rife. 'Mr Juscelino Kubitschek, unfit for the job of President of the Republic, has now found a function with which he is compatible; as mayor of Brasília on weekends not otherwise filled with more attractive activities', railed a *Diário de Notícias* columnist in Rio. 'The new capital will not come to pass for a long time, especially with Mr Kubitschek "camping" for the "week-end"' the author concluded.[91] As the president's deadline for completion approached however, the combined efforts of the thousands at the construction zone had rendered such discontent increasingly futile. Where in October 1956 Israel Pinheiro had held court in the wilderness, the bare forms of a city now stood.[92]

## *Pomp in the Planalto*

In one sense, the inauguration of Brasília was not one moment, but many. While the main event would, according to law, be held on 21 April 1961, from the earliest months of its construction the city played host to civic and religious ceremonies of myriad denomination, from the Dom Bosco-inspired odyssey of Pinheiro et al with which this chapter opened, to Kubitschek's opening of the somewhat farcical Tiradentes Esso Station. In virtually every instance these events were marked, in some way or

[90] Ibid., note 10, 335. Upon leaving office in 1961, Kubitschek organised an initiative to send a presidential letter of thanks to every 'pioneer' who had worked under the auspices of Novacap, from the most senior bureaucrat to the humblest *candango*. See ibid.

[91] "O Ridículo Engorda," *Diário de Notícias*, 22 November 1956, in *Coleção Brasília VIII*, 110-11.

[92] For the state of completion of Brasília, or lack thereof, come inauguration day, see below. Also Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals*, 162-63.

another, by the appropriation of historical iconography and the co-opting and integration of national mythology.

Among the most significant of these pre-emptive episodes of public ceremony took place on Friday 3 May 1957, with the holding of the city's first Catholic Mass.[93] As a harbinger of the more elaborate occasions that would mark the inauguration itself, the event was steeped in symbolism and historical analogy. The date had been chosen by virtue of its proximity to that upon which, in 1500, Frei Henrique de Coimbra had led the first Mass upon Brazilian shores.[94] In Kubitschek's estimation, 'the two ceremonies were equivalent in symbolism. The first had signalled the discovery of the New World; and the second, four hundred years later, sealed the effective control over the totality of the national territory.'[95] To conduct proceedings, the Archbishop of São Paulo, Cardinal Carlos Carmelo de Vasconcellos Motta, was flown in on the presidential plane, accompanied by the icon of Nossa Senhora Aparecida. In the preceding weeks, the icon – a rudimentary clay statue of The Virgin recovered from the Paraíba do Sul river in 1717 and widely venerated by Brazilian Catholics – had completed an aerial tour of the Republic, visiting every state alongside the nation's celebrated aviation pioneer Ada Rogato.[96]

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[93] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 146-49, and Costa Couto, *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*, 113-14.

[94] The precise date of the first Mass of 1500 is typically ascribed as 26 April, as detailed in the famed letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha. See Leonardo Arroyo, *A Carta de Pero Vaz de Caminha* (São Paulo; Edições Melhoramentos, 1976).

[95] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 87.

[96] Kubitschek and Silva both provide close accounts of the first Mass, with the latter quoting extensively from the various addresses to the assembled crowds. See both ibid., 87-90 and Silva, *História de Brasília*, 146-49.


Fig. 6.11: SCS-JF-10-3-C-1 (31107), "Primeira Missa em Brasília, 3/5/57," ArPDF.

With Niemeyer's cathedral still years from completion, a vast awning was hoisted to provide some relief from the sun to the estimated fifteen thousand in attendance (fig. 6.11). The crowd featured politicians and bureaucrats, bishops and canons from across Brazil, high-society ladies from Rio de Janeiro, thousands of *candangos*, and a delegation of Karajá tribesmen, 'brought' from the indigenous reserve on the Ilha do Bananal.[97] Addressing this diverse congregation, the archbishop fixed his oration not only in the twin languages of spiritual and national progress, but also sought historical inspiration:

> While an exciting dream can sometimes give us the illusion of stark realities, a marvellous reality can on the other hand give us the sensation of a mysterious dream.

[97] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 146-49. The involvement (and indeed co-opting) of indigenous peoples in the establishment of Brasília, of which more to follow, was not unique to the Brazilian example of capital building. At the 9 May 1927 inauguration of Provisional Parliament House in Canberra, elders Jimmy 'King Billy' Clements and John 'Marvellous' Noble of the Wiradjuri people were the sole indigenous Australians present. Unlike in the Brazilian example however, Clements and Noble had not been 'brought', rather having walked for over a week of their own volition from Brungle Mission, NSW in order to attend the ceremony and attest their people's sovereignty over the territory. See Tony Wright, "Power of occasion best expressed by the names of those who were not there," *The Age*, 13 February 2008, and Anna Kelsey-Sugg and Annabelle Quince, "Watershed moments in Indigenous Australians' struggle to be heard," ABC News, 3 July 2018. Also "Aboriginal [Jimmy Clements, a Wiradjuri elder] on steps of Parliament House (King Billy)," NAA A3560, 3108, 3050026, National Archives of Australia, accessed online.

> This is the sensation that Brasília gives to us.
>
> The Easter festivities of the year 1500 constituted, to Pedro Álvares Cabral and to the whole of Portugal, a jubilee of happiness never before experienced; it was the Easter of the discovery of Brazil. Likewise, for all good Brazilians this Easter of 1957 is the joyous one of the discovery of Brazil, in this epiphany, in this dawn of Brasília.
>
> Yes, my Brazilian compatriots, let us all congratulate ourselves, because we are living in one of the three greatest events in the glorious history of our homeland.
>
> Indeed, the discovery of 1500, the independence of 1822 and, in the present moment, the foundation of this new Metropolitan Capital, in the centre of the country, are the three culminating moments of our national life.[98]

With explicit reference to the long-established stereotypes of Brazilian urban history, the cardinal continued:

> Brasília will be the womb, the nourisher and protector of the entirety of an integrated national life. And the giant will not remain lying eternally on the stupefying sands of the coastal beaches. It will awake, rise up and cross the Serra do Mar and the Serra do Mantiqueira, to ascend the sloping Planalto of Brazil. No longer will be repeated the sedentary phrase of the historian friar, chiding Brazilians for having settled on the littoral beaches in the manner of crabs.[99]

Vasconcellos Motta concluded by congratulating the president on his accomplishment, describing Brasília in somewhat surreal terms as a 'magic trampoline' that embodied the 'most formidable unifying and civilising impulse of Brazil.' The city, the cardinal declared, represented a 'tree of national life providentially planted in the Planalto Central of our homeland', while the occasion of the Mass was – in a further reference to the independence proclamation of Dom Pedro I - the country's 'greatest moment since Ipiranga.'[100]

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[98] "Discurso do Cardeal Dom Carlos Carmelo de Vasconcellos Motta (Na cerimônia da Primeira Missa em Brasília, em 3 de maio de 1957)," in *Coleção Brasília IV*, 229-32.

[99] Ibid., 231. The 'historian friar' in question refers of course to Frei Vicente do Salvador, whose 'sedentary phrase' forms the opening quote of the first chapter of this thesis. See Chapter I.

[100] Ibid., and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 89. A similar sentiment was issued a year later by the chief of German metalworking firm Stahlunion of Dusseldorf. Visiting the construction site in December 1958, Othard Shule was recorded by Silva as remarking; 'The cry of Ipiranga represents the first phase of Brazilian progress. The second phase, indisputably, is represented by the construction of Brasília, "truly a work of giants."' See Silva, *História de Brasília*, 284.

Kubitschek was the next to speak. As recorded by Ernesto Silva, the president announced the significance of the occasion in typically extravagant fashion:

> We are, all of us, high dignitaries of the Church, soldiers, men of the people, men of the State, all of us, brought together here, living in an hour to be fixed in history.
>
> Today is the day of the Holy Cross, a day on which the recently born Capital receives its Christian baptism, a day on which the city of the future, the city which represents the encounter of the Brazilian nation with its own centre of gravity, gains its eternal soul.
>
> A day upon which Brasília, yesterday only a hope and today, among us all, the newest of Brazil's children, begins to rise, integrated in the Christian spirit, cause, principal and fundament of our national unity. A day upon which Brasília becomes automatically Brazilian.
>
> This is the day of the baptism of the new Brazil. It is the day of Hope. It is the day our city is born.[101]

The formal ceremonies concluded, Kubitschek accepted a tribute from the Karajá delegation. Presented with 'spears, wooden and stone clubs, and arrows', the president was hailed as the 'Great Chief', altogether 'dazzled by the contrast offered by the gathering of humans. On one side, the feathered carajás [*sic*], and on the other, the elegant women of Rio de Janeiro society displaying the latest creations of the Paris couturiers.'[102] Brasília, Kubitschek reflected, 'was born out of the coalescing of our national differences. The two poles of life met there, giving rise to a new stage in the country's evolution.'[103] Later that afternoon, the president received a telegram from the Vatican. In language again drawing directly upon some (seemingly conflated) points of historical reference, the ailing Pope Pius XII added his own 'special apostolic blessing' to the celebrations of Brasília's spiritual birth, which the pontiff described as marking 'the

[101] As quoted in Silva, *História de Brasília*, 147.

[102] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 89.

[103] Ibid.

day of the anniversary of the discovery and of the first Mass in the lands of the Holy Cross.'[104]

Having attended to matters spiritual, temporal and diplomatic prerogatives would also see the construction site of Brasília welcome an extensive litany of foreign politicians prior to inauguration day. First among these was President Francisco Craveiro Lopes of Portugal, whose visit of June 1957 Kubitschek marked in somewhat saccharine fashion by drawing a parallel with that summer's first Mass and its commemoration of the arrival of Cabral five centuries beforehand. The former, observed the Brazilian president to his Portuguese counterpart, carried a 'noble resemblance' of the earlier ceremony performed 'in that distant and almost legendary year of 1500, when the Portuguese, who had just discovered the so-called land of the Holy Cross preferred, as a way of marking their domain, to plant a cross in the ground rather than imposing their authority at the point of a sword.'[105] Similar language accompanied the June 1958 presentation of credentials by Manuel Rocheta, incoming Portuguese ambassador to Brazil and the first foreign diplomat to be officially welcomed at the newly-completed Palácio da Alvorada. In a manner atypical of such occasions, Kubitschek delivered a speech of high symbolism and poignancy to commemorate Rocheta's arrival in Brasília. The new capital, suggested Kubitschek:

> is here, among other reasons, to defend and enrich Brazilian unity. And this Brazilian unity is an inheritance from our ancestors, which is to say a precious legacy that we received from the greatest of the Lusiads.
>
> I have no hesitation in saying that we have dedicated ourselves to the safeguarding of the legacy our discoverers bequeathed to us: a vast territory and no lesser a destiny.

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[104] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 147. Note that Cabral's arrival in Brazil is conventionally held to have occurred on 22 April 1500, while the first Mass is typically described as having taken place on 26 April. See Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 5, and Arroyo, *A Carta de Pero Vaz de Caminha*.

[105] As quoted in "A História da Construção de Brasília," *Brasília*, no. 40 (April 1960), 50. See also Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 84.

> The territory we have maintained intact, and the destiny is being fulfilled. Brasília and our efforts to penetrate the closed heart of this country prove that we are approaching the hour of our fulfilment.
>
> To the Portuguese, our fathers, we owe the foundations of our spirit, our language, our love for the Cross of Christ our Lord, everything that led us to be what we are, and those things we will never deny.[106]

Drawing an unbroken lineage between the travails of the Portuguese and his own government's endeavour, the Brazilian president added:

> We continue, Mr Ambassador, the march of the Portuguese. We may have opened roads with the help of modern machines, but nothing will erase from our memory the heroism of those pioneers whose blood runs in our veins, and who, in the first hour of our existence, trod the uncharted hinterland, amid danger and suffering, to bring to us these fruits that we are striving to gather.[107]

Officials from the Iberian old country aside, further overseas visitors to the worksite of Brasília included a litany of senior politicians, among them the presidents of Italy, Mexico, and Indonesia, newly-ensconced Cuban leader Fidel Castro, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, as well as Rosemary Claire Porter, the British great-granddaughter of Brasília visionary Hipólito da Costa, invited to survey the site at the direct behest of the Brazilian ambassador to the Court of St James's, Assis Chateaubriand.[108] In February 1960, the emerging city played host to a state visit from US president Dwight D. Eisenhower, much-hyped by Kubitschek as a 'pre-inauguration.'[109] In the aftermath of Dulles's visit, the US leader had written to Kubitschek, reportedly describing the nascent Brasília as an 'eloquent attestation of the vigour and imagination of the Brazilian people, now on the threshold of a greater conquest of the vast interior of their blessed country.'[110] In remarks delivered at a civic

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[106] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Na Cerimônia da Entrega de Credenciais do Senhor Manual Rocheta, Embaixador de Portugal," *Brasília*, 30 de junho de 1958, Biblioteca da Presidência da República.

[107] Ibid.

[108] See "A História da Construção de Brasília," 52, Kubitschek, *Por que constrúi Brasília*, 86-89, Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals,* 161, and Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 272-73.

[109] Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals,* 161.

[110] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 202.

reception hosted in his honour in Brasília on 23 February 1960, Eisenhower made reference to various historic episodes, both Brazilian and American in flavour. Brasília, said the US president, 'reminds us [North Americans] of our own decision many years ago to move the capital of our fledgling nation from Philadelphia to the District of Columbia.'[111] The 'pioneering venture', he continued, 'recalls to our minds the rolling advance of our own frontier – the winning of the American West', adding that, in Brasília, 'one senses a "boom" spirit not unlike that which pervaded frontier western communities in the United States such as my boyhood town of Abilene, Kansas.'[112] Turning to Brazilian history and the forthcoming inauguration, the US president [or at least his speechwriters] demonstrated a keen understanding of the local context in which Brasília was to be rooted:

> Our common heritage will be emphasized for us when you inaugurate your new capital next April 21 – Tiradentes Day. It was in 1787, when Thomas Jefferson, then our Minister in France, gave sympathetic counsel to José Joaquim da Maia, emissary of Tiradentes and his little band of Inconfidentes. Those Brazilian patriots – to recall the observation of Joaquim Nabuco – had their eyes fixed on the new democracy to the north at a time when, here, even to think of independence was a crime. Your freedom and ours were won by men of dauntless courage and passionate vision, and it is these qualities in our peoples today that will carry us forward to the brighter future so eloquently dramatized by this new city of the frontier.[113]

Closing with words of solidarity to the workers of Brasília – 'may your hands be firmly clasped with those of the workers of the United States and the entire free world in the building of a richer life, in freedom, for yourselves, your children, and all generations to follow' – Eisenhower's comments made clear the extent to which Brasília's place at the

[111] Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Remarks at the Civic Reception for President Eisenhower in Brasília." Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, University of California, Santa Barbara. For comprehensive histories of the US example in capital building, see Constance McLaughlin Green, *Washington: Village and Capital, 1800-1878* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), Constance McLaughlin Green, *Washington: Capital City, 1878-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), and Tom Lewis, *Washington: A History of our National City* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

[112] Eisenhower, "Remarks at the Civic Reception for President Eisenhower in Brasília."

[113] Ibid.

heart of Brazil's national heritage was not lost on international observers any more than in the minds of the city's creators.[114]

The arrival of the inauguration itself some two months later marked the apogee of this phenomenon of the historisation of Brasília, drawing legitimacy and character from a kaleidoscopic range of historical symbolism. The date had been legally enshrined with the 1 October 1957 passing of Lei no. 3.273, reflecting the long-established ambition to coincide the culmination of his Meta-Síntese with the aforementioned anniversary of the 1789 martyrdom of Tiradentes.[115] In a speech delivered on the eve of the law's passing, the president had described the act as the 'most virile, most energetic step taken by the nation since its political independence', congratulating congress for its 'great discernment and patriotism' in facilitating the 'historical aspiration' of the nation.[116] Come April 1960, the appropriation of the historic legacy of Tiradentes was reinforced by Kubitschek in a speech delivered in Ouro Preto three days prior to Brasília's inauguration. 'On the occasion that Brasília appears' announced the president, 'it is our duty to return to that very human figure of Joaquim José da Silva Xavier [whose] beautiful nativist dream earned him cruel punishment and perennial glory.'[117] During an extended ode which left little doubt as to his appetite to cast himself as a latter-day Tiradentes by proxy, the man from Diamantina described the 'bitter struggle for the maximization of the heritage bequeathed us by those [such as Tiradentes] who built our

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[114] Ibid.

[115] Lei no. 3.273, Portal do Governo Brasileiro – Legislação. The law itself was the product of a bill proposed by Kubitschek's cross-party ally Emival Caiado of the UDN (see Chapter IV), the latter describing how he hoped that formalising such a deadline would have a powerful 'psychological impact' on the wider public, reassuring them that the project would indeed be completed in a timely fashion. See "Entrevista do deputado Emival Caiado," *Brasília*, no. 9 (September 1957), 10-11.

[116] Juscelino Kubischek, "Rio de Janeiro, 30 September 1957: Ao Sancionar a Lei que Fixa a Data de Transferência da Capital da República," *Memórias do Brasil – 1957: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2020), 198-99.

[117] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Ouro Preto, 18 April 1960: Na Comemoração de Tiradentes," in *Memórias do Brasil – 1960: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 121-26.

national unity.'[118] 'On the coming day of the 21st, with the installation of the new Capital,' Kubitschek summarised;

> a new era will begin for Brazil […] For this venerable and glorious Ouro Preto, for this symbol of the Pátria renowned for its fearless son, for this solemnity, simultaneously serious and jubilant, evoking the shining figure of Tiradentes, the thoughts of all Brazilians now converge in the reaffirmation of the noble maxim of the Inconfidentes, which, in these days of struggle for our development, acquires a broad and profound meaning! *Libertas quae sera tamen*.[119]

As will continue to become apparent, as de facto patron of Brasília, Tiradentes would be honoured throughout the course of the city's inauguration. For would-be city founders, especially those of the Latin tradition, 21 April also held additional significance, however. Celebrated in Classical Rome as the Parilia, the festival day of the androgynous shepherd god Pales, the day was customarily viewed as the date of the founding of Rome.[120] The supreme convenience of the parallel was readily seized upon by the Brazilian president and the directors of Novacap, whose vision of Brasília as marking a new era in the history of the nation was only augmented by the appropriation of ancient myth. In the opening to his own account, Ernesto Silva made explicit his belief in the comparison:

> On 21 April, 753BC, Romulus founded on the Palatine Hill a city that would be the mark of a new era in the Pagan World – the Rome of the Caesars – the cradle of Christian Civilization. On the same day, 27 centuries later, Divine Providence willed that a pleiad of valiant men [among whose number Silva presumably counted himself] would give Brasília to Brazil.'[121]

Perhaps mindful of the significant diaspora in Brazil, even the Italian authorities were keen to join in the celebrations. On the occasion of his aforementioned visit two years earlier, President Giovanni Gronchi had reportedly described Brasília as a 'work worthy of Roman times.'[122] For the inauguration, the mayor of Rome, the suitably named

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[118] Ibid., 125.

[119] Ibid., 126.

[120] See Andrea Carandini, *Rome: Day One* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[121] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 7.

[122] As quoted in ibid., 282.

Urbano Ciocetti, continued the analogy by gifting to his Brazilian counterparts a ceremonial column topped with an effigy of the Capitoline Wolf, to be presented on the day of the inauguration (fig. 6.12).[123] Others sought to channel a more metaphysical source of legitimacy to mark the occasion. In an ode to the new city's founding, Brazil's mid-century poet laureate Guilherme de Almeida anchored Brasília in both the spiritual and literal trajectory of Brazilian history:

> Now and here is the Crossroad Time-Space, a Road which comes from the past and goes to the Future, a road from the north, from the south, from the east and from the west, a road traversing the centuries, a road traversing the world: now and here all intersect at the sign of the Holy Cross.[124]

In addition to his thinly veiled references to Kubitschek's national infrastructure initiative and the quasi-religious symbolism of the Plano Piloto, Almeida's verse makes explicit the extent to which, at the moment of its inauguration, Brasília was celebrated not only as a beacon of the new and the modern, but as a waypoint grounded in the firmament of Brazil's historical journey. The message was reinforced in a commemorative issue of the Novacap-produced magazine *Brasília*, with contributor Menotti Del Picchia observing that in the 'great boulevards of integration' and 'gigantic works of Juscelino's audacity', the 'spirit of the *bandeirantes* resurfaced in all its plenitude.'[125] Del Picchia added that the new capital represented not only the ultimate 'dream of the revolutionaries of the Semana de Arte Moderna of [19]22', of which he had himself been a leading figure, but also the 'vision of the Patriarch [José Bonifácio] and the preaching of the modernist generation, who, echoed by Getúlio Vargas, stressed the aspiration of interiorization and the conquest of the hinterland.'[126]

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[123] The column can be seen today installed outside the Palácio do Buriti, the seat of Brasília's municipal administration. Brasília is also one of several cities to be officially partnered with the Italian capital.

[124] Guilherme de Andrada, "Prece Natalícia a Brasília", as reproduced in *Diário de Brasília*, 21 April 1960.

[125] Menotti Del Picchia, "São Paulo e Brasília," *Brasília*, no. 41 (May 1960), 1.

[126] Ibid.



Fig. 6.12: Loba de Roma, installed before the Palácio do Buriti.

The ceremonies to mark the inauguration were themselves as grand and portentous as circumstance might suggest.[127] In a preliminary event held before a crowd of three thousand on the afternoon of 20 April, Kubitschek received from Israel Pinheiro a golden key to the city, accompanied by a speech during which the Novacap leader spoke reverently of Brasília's historic symbolism. The city, declaimed Pinheiro, was 'not the product of a movement which, in the name of renewal, denies the totems of culture, of tradition, and of faith which secure continuity in the history of a people.'[128] Rather, Brasília's story began when, 'in 1500, in Porto Seguro, the Cross of Christ opened its arms to the discovered lands, binding together with Divine Protection the

[127] For thorough secondary accounts of the inauguration proceedings, see Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 303-51 and Vidal, *De Nova Lisboa a Brasília*, 258-81.

[128] "Discurso proferido pelo presidente da Novacap, dr. Israel Pinheiro, no dia 20 de abril de 1960, ao entregar as chaves de Brasília ao president Juscelino Kubitschek," *Brasília*, no. 41 (May 1960), 4-6.

spiritual destination of the men who would populate the Land of the Holy Cross.'[129] 'For two centuries,' Pinheiro continued:

> On the beautiful sprawling beaches of the shores of Bahia the Lord sustained the consolidation of the frontiers, and the unification and the defensive integrity of the Pátria. For a further two centuries, on the cliffs of Guanabara and from the heights of Corcovado, He guided Independence and littoral civilization, which defined our position in the world. Now, amid the ruby-red earth of the Planalto – arms open to the north and south, feet facing the west – He blesses, symbolises, and guides the march to national integration.[130]

Invoking the legacy of Tiradentes – the 'Martyr of Independence' – and the arrival of Cabral, Pinheiro concluded by offering an 'ardent prayer to Saint John Bosco. Tutelary oracle of the new Brazilian civilization. […] Tomorrow, 21 April, in front of the Residential Palace, the dawn will vibrate with festive bugles, and Brazil will awaken.'[131] In his own short address that followed, Kubitschek praised and chided in equal measure. First drawing a parallel between 'the brotherhood of those who worked here' and the 'construction of cathedrals in the Middle Ages, when anonymous artists, masters, and apprentices were animated by faith', in the next breath the president took aim at his opponents. 'Let us leave to oblivion', he boasted, 'and to the judgement of History those who did not understand or love this work.'[132] Across the city, Kubitschek's wife Sarah, accompanied by the couple's two daughters, simultaneously opened the offices of the new capital's first newspaper, *Correio Braziliense*, named in explicit homage to that of the exiled Hípolito da Costa, among the earliest champions not only of Brazilian independence, but of a new inland capital.[133]

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[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132] "Discurso proferido pelo presidente da República, em 20 de abril de 1960, ao receber as chaves das mãos do presidente da Novacap, dr. Israel Pinheiro," 6.

[133] See Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 371, and Chapter I.

Just before midnight, a Mass attended by a reportedly tearful president and a host of officials was led by the visiting Papal Legate and Patriarch of Lisbon Cardinal Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira (see fig. 6.13).[134] The cardinal was not the only Portuguese visitor in attendance, having brought with him from the vaults of Braga Cathedral the cross of Frei Henrique de Coimbra, held to have been that used in the first Mass of 1500.[135] With reference to the altarpiece, the Portuguese clergyman sermonised:

> The history of Brazil continues. As in the hour of its birth, and before the same iron cross that served in the Mass of Discovery, the Holy Sacrifice of Redemption is renewed – the principle of the new man and the new world – to inaugurate Brasília, the New Capital of the Brazil of the future. And I ask myself if this does not signify a second birth.[136]

Cerejeira continued by making reference to the habitual 'audacity of Faith and Hope' of the Brazilian people, epitomised, the cardinal suggested, in Padre António Vieira's 'celebrated sermon of 1640', galvanising the people of Bahia against Dutch aggression.[137] At the stroke of midnight, a bell tolled to mark the commencement of the day of inauguration. In a continuation of the deeply symbolic appropriation of nationally significant relics, the antique instrument had been transported to the Planalto from Ouro Preto. As weekly news magazine *Manchete* announced on the cover of its special issue later that morning, 'The ringing of the bell that announced the death of Tiradentes

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134 Silva, *História de Brasília*, 212. The Cardinal had been selected to preside over the occasion not by Kubitschek or the Brazilian authorities, but by the Pope. In a letter of 10 March 1960, John XXIII wrote to Cerejeira that a divine consecration of the city would be 'the best guarantee of its future development', and that after 'mature reflection' the Pontiff had designated the Portuguese cardinal to 'extend [the Apostolic Blessing] to all the participants in the inaugural ceremonies in Brasília.' See, "CARTA DE SU SANTIDAD JUAN XXIII AL PATRIARCA DE LISBOA, CARDENAL MANUEL GONÇALVES CEREJEIRA, LEGADO PONTIFICIO EN LA INAUGURACÍON DE BRASILIA," AAS 52 (1960), 387-88, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano.

135 Silva, *História de Brasília*, 212.

136 Cardinal Cerejeira, "Oração do cardeal legado," *Brasília*, no. 41, 8. Pinheiro had also referred to the relic during his speech of the previous day, describing it as 'the same Cross that anchored the sailing ships of the discoverers on their unknown and adventurous route. The same Cross that calmed the storms and heard the distressed prayers of the Portuguese mariners. The same Cross of Cabral's Fleet which, five centuries later, returns to reap the grateful prayers of the people who built Brasília.' See "Discurso proferido pelo presidente da Novacap," 4-5.

137 Cerejeira, "Oração do cardeal legado." For Vieira, see Chapter I.

proclaimed the inauguration of Brasília.'[138] Archbishop Vasconcellos Motta, returning to the city following his conducting of the first Mass three years earlier, added in a benediction that Brasília represented 'the zenith, and the solstice of Brazil: it is the Nation at its apogee. If the Easter of 1500 was, for Portugal, a jubilee, never before imagined, of the revelation of the Holy Cross, this Easter of 1960 is one of infinite alleluias for Brazil, for its presentation of Brasília to the eyes of the free world.'[139] The Mass concluded with a live radio broadcast from the Vatican. In Portuguese, Pope John XXIII added his own blessing, once again rich in references to both Brazil's urban and spiritual history:

> From [São Salvador da] Bahia de Todos os Santos to [São Paulo dos Campos de] Piratininga and Rio de Janeiro, under the impetus of the ever-living example of the nobility of [Saint Joseph of] Anchieta, and encouraged by the heroic feats of the 'Flags of the South' and of the 'Journeys of the North', by the boldness of its president, Brazil lays the foundations of its new capital, on the central plateau of its immense and rich territory, as a guardian over the destiny of the Nation. Brasília will constitute a millionaire mark [*sic*] in the already glorious History of the lands of the Holy Cross, opening new horizons of love, hope, and progress among its people who, united in the same faith, will become capable of the greatest commitments.[140]

In referring to Brazil's two former capitals, to the *bandeirante*-inspired 'Flags of the South' and 'Journeys of the North', as well as to the Jesuit mission station-turned-metropolis of São Paulo and one of its two founders in José de Anchieta, the pontiff granted explicit prominence to the arc of the nation's urban history and Brasília's place within, rather than distinct from, that trajectory.[141]

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[138] *Manchete*, Special Edition, 21 April 1960.

[139] "Ave, Brasília!" *Brasília*, no. 41, 10-11.

[140] "Bênção papal," *Brasília*, no. 41, 9.

[141] The other Jesuit responsible for the establishing of the São Paulo dos Campos de Piratininga mission was Manuel da Nóbrega. Both men are venerated as among the most influential religious figures in the early history of colonial Brazil. See Helen G. Dominian, *Apostle of Brazil: The Biography of Padre José de Anchieta, 1534-1597* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), and Edmundo Correia Lopes, *O Padre Manuel da Nóbrega e a formação do Brasil* (Lisbon: Divisão de Publicações e Biblioteca, Agência Geral das Colónias, 1949). For a general history of early São Paulo, see Morse, *From Community to Metropolis*.



Fig. 6.13: Nov-D-4-4-D-3 (3748), "Missa Solene, 20.4.1960, Brasília DF," ArPDF.

The day of 21 April itself was a litany of solemn ceremonies and public celebrations.[142] With the first item beginning at eight o'clock in the morning, a breathless itinerary included military and civilian parades, the reception of foreign diplomats, the formal establishing of the Archdiocese of Brasília and the installation of the first archbishop, the ceremonial openings of Congress and the judiciary, aerial flypasts, firework displays, a vast public party and musical variety show, and, beginning at almost half past ten in the evening, a gala dinner and reception for three thousand guests hosted by Kubitschek at the Palácio do Planalto.[143] The day's official programme left little doubt as to the prominence organisers placed upon the long arc of the city's gestation. In a section entitled *'pequeno histórico'*, the document – a handsome blue booklet distributed among attendees – traced the city's origins from Tiradentes to inauguration, with particular attention paid to Hipólita da Costa, José Bonifácio, Holanda Cavalcanti, and

[142] A full account and itemised itinerary of the day's events, complete with timings and appropriate modes of dress, was recorded by the British diplomatic mission and matches closely with Kubitschek and Silva's account of same. See "Description of Brasília: programme of inauguration ceremonies enclosed," 26 April 1960, AB 1017/11, FO 371/147842, The National Archives.

[143] Silva, *História de Brasília*, 215 and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 373-91.

the constitution of 1891.[144] Similar references were made in addresses by Vice-President Goulart – 'the march to the West, one of the great directives laid out by the immortal genius of Getúlio Vargas, dreamed of by the Inconfidentes, planned by so many statesmen' – and president of the Câmara dos Deputados Ranieri Mazzilli, who quoted at length from José Bonifácio's advocacy for a new capital in his remarks at the opening of Congress.[145] At the culmination of a nationally broadcast speech marking the formal crescendo of proceedings (fig. 6.14) – the installation of executive power in the city – the president too placed historical symbolism alongside forward-looking optimism:

> Brazilians! From here, the centre of the Pátria, I direct my thoughts to your homes and send you my greetings. Explain to your children what is taking place today. It is for them, above all, that this synthesis city has been raised, the harbinger of a fertile revolution in prosperity. They are the ones who will judge us tomorrow.
>
> On this day – 21 April – dedicated to Lieutenant Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, Tiradentes, on the one hundred and thirty-eighth year of Independence and the seventy-first of the Republic, under the protection of God, I declare inaugurated the city of Brasília, Capital of the United States of Brazil.[146]

[144] *Brasília, 21 April 1960: Programa das Solenidades de Instalação do Gôverno Federal em Brasília* (Brasília: Governo Federal, 1960).

[145] See both "Discurso proferido por João Goulart, Vice-Presidente da Republica e Presidente do Congresso Nacional, na solenidade de instalação do Poder Legisliivo em Brasília," as reproduced in Tamanin, *Memória da Construção: Documentário*, 321-22, and "Discurso do Dr. Ranieiri Mazzilli, president da Câmara dos Deputados," in ibid., 322-24.

[146] Juscelino Kubitschek, "Brasília, 21 April 1960: Na Sessão Solene de Instalação do Poder Executivo, no Palácio do Planalto," in *Memórias do Brasil – 1960: Discursos de Juscelino Kubitschek*, 142-44.



Fig. 6.14: Nov-D-4-4-D-3 (3763), "Inauguração de Brasília, Pres. JK, Brasília DF, 21.04.1960," ArPDF.

There followed a parade of civilian workers, headed by Pinheiro, Niemeyer, and Costa, and which stretched for over five kilometres and included thousands of *candangos*, as well as regimented formations of vehicles and construction equipment (fig. 6.15). As the procession concluded and darkness fell, a lone runner approached the central junction of the Plano Piloto. Bearing a votive lamp taken from the altar of the Igreja e Mosteiro de Nossa Senhora da Graça in Salvador on 29 March – the anniversary of that city's founding - and burning oil from the first Brazilian wells located in Lobato, Bahia, the so-called 'Fogo Simbólico da Unidade Nacional' was described by the president as a 'touching tribute from the city of Salvador, the first capital of Brazil, to its youthful sister, born on the Planalto.'[147]

[147] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 386, and Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 331. The Church and Monastery of our Lady of Grace, while not, as Kubitshek claims in his memoirs, Brazil's oldest church, was built on the site of an earlier, sixteenth-century chapel dedicated to Catarina Paraguaçu, an indigenous Tupinambá woman, later baptised and wife of castaway Portuguese sailor Diogo Álvares Pereira, better known by the Tupi name of Caramuru. The couple are held in legend as the first Christian Brazilian family. See André Villaron, *Igrejas Históricas de Salvador* (Brasília: Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2007), 142-47, and Chapter I.


Fig. 6.15: Nov-D-4-4-D-3 (3682), "Inauguração de Brasília DF, 21.04.1960," ArPDF.

The next day saw a further round of commemorative events and ceremonial inaugurations, including that of the Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, the Tribunal Federal de Recursos, and Cine Brasília - a cinema and performance hall which later that evening hosted a memorial concert led by renowned Brazilian conductor Eleazar de Carvalho.[148] In yet another example of 'legendary events' being appropriated as part of the inauguration of the new capital, 22 April was also celebrated in Brazil as the Dia do Descobrimento, marking the date upon which Portuguese navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral had first landed upon Brazilian shores.[149] 23 April saw the last of the inauguration proceedings in the form of a sporting spectacle in line with the most modern aspirations of Brasília, and in striking concert with the historical pageantry of the wider occasion. Held along the entire stretch of the Asa Sul, the Grande Prêmio Juscelino Kubitschek featured some of Brazil's leading racing drivers competing in the most technologically

[148] See Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 341-46.

[149] Holston, *The Modernist City*, note 6, 326, and Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 5.

advanced sportscars then available. The winner, São Paulo native Jean-Louis Lacerda Soares, was handed a prize wristwatch by the president, as well as a memorial trophy awarded by Argentine motor racing legend and five-time Formula One World Champion Juan Manuel Fangio.[150] The contest was followed by the Festival de Brasília, the highlight of which was a dramatic performance entitled *A Alegoria das Três Capitais*, scripted by academic and modernist writer Josué Montello.[151] With actors representing the personifications of Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasília, as well as Tomé de Sousa, Dom João IV, Dom Pedro I, José Bonifácio, and a heroic Tiradentes, whose appearance marked, for Kubitschek, 'the most emotional moment' of proceedings, the performance was a fittingly extravagant apotheosis of the three-day celebration (see fig. 6.16).[152] In a continuation of the adoption of both Portuguese and Brazilian cultural tropes, persistent throughout the show was the recurring appearance of an aged figure. Expressing doubt and angst at each portrayal of the changing of Brazil's capital, this 'villain' of the piece was a reworking of the Velho do Restelo, whose pessimistic warnings had accompanied the departure of Vasco da Gama's fleet in the sixteenth century Camões epic *Os Lusíadas*.[153] In his memoirs, Kubitschek was unable to resist temptation in observing that in thought and deed the part was 'similar in every way to the many deputies and senators against whom I had to fight, to make the transfer of the capital.'[154] Provoking a direct and typically vainglorious comparison between his achievement and the naysaying of his detractors, the president suggested a parallel with another figure of Brazilian history:

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150 Tamanini, *Brasília: Memória da Construção*, 347-48.

151 Ibid., 349-51, and Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 388-90.

152 Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 388-90.

153 Ibid. For the original, see Luís Vaz de Camões, *Os Lusíadas* (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1989). For the role of the Old Man of Restelo specifically, see Gerald M. Moser, "What Did the Old Man of the Restelo Mean?" *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Winter 1980), 139-51.

154 Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 390.

> On the day upon which the spirits will have been disarmed, when the ashes of useless rivalries will have been deposited, when courage will have returned to the hearts of men, justice, until then denied to me by some, would be done, and in a definitive way. It would be enough for them to respect Brasília for me to consider myself worthy among my contemporaries, above passions and dissent, disputes and misunderstandings. Like Dom Pedro II, I too would wait for 'God's justice in the voice of History.'[155]

As the fireworks, drama, music, and revelry of Brasília's inauguration faded away into the autumn air, Brazil's new capital was officially born. Even writing a decade or so later, the man whose name above all others was and would continue to be synonymous with the historic endeavour was clearly confident that his legacy, set in reinforced concrete, would stand the test of time.



Fig. 6.16: Nov-D-4-4-D-3 (3751), "Inauguração de Brasília DF, 23.04.1960," ArPDF.

## *Conclusion*

In the weeks and months following its inauguration, some sense of normalcy descended on Brazil's new capital. It was not to everyone's taste. In a telegram of 19

[155] Ibid., 389.

August 1960, British ambassador to Brazil Sir Geoffrey Wallinger – who had replaced Sir Geoffrey Harrison two years prior - wrote to his colleagues in London following the occasion of his first visit to Brasília since the inauguration proceedings. 'The whole atmosphere of Brasília,' wrote the ambassador, 'has changed as was, I suppose, inevitable.'[156] He continued:

> The sense of pioneering which lightened the whole atmosphere of the place before the inauguration has dwindled; but now both in a moral and the physical sense, the dust-filled air has clogged the eyes of those who have to live there and made them acutely conscious of the disadvantages of their transfer to a place, which is barely fit for habitation, in fulfilment of a politician's dream. The city is no city yet and the services of water, electricity, etc., are spasmodic, so that those who have to work in Government office (as distinct from the actual builders on the sites and roads and bridges) are pretty disconsolate.[157]

'The sight of a different face,' wrote Sir Geoffrey, 'is a joy and a relief and one is able to enter at once into a sort of intimate contact with M.P.s, officials, etc. […] The feeling may be described as: "We are all exiles together."'[158] Similar sentiments were expressed by Elizabeth Bishop, who following visits of 1958 and 1962 bemoaned the 'dreariness and desolation' of the new capital, describing how 'one's first and last impression of Brasília was of miles and miles and miles of blowing red dust.'[159] 'There is little feeling of scale,' continued Bishop, 'the buildings are lost in the surrounding vastness, and even within the city limits the sensation of being on another planet – as everyone puts it – is overwhelming.'[160] Famed Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, opining in an article of March 1960, was similarly unconvinced. 'The seemingly extravagant abundance of space in Brasília' wrote Freyre, 'has been used in a conventional, cramped, old-fashioned way', adding that the new capital was not only deeply un-Brazilian, but not truly fit for purpose

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156 "First visit of H. M. Ambassador to Brasília on his return from leave; atmosphere in Brasília; possible U.K. assistance in Brasília's development programme," 19 August 1960. AB 1017/14, FO 371/147842, 1, The National Archives.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid.

159 Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," 77-78 and 82.

160 Ibid., 78-79.

at all.[161] Brasília, Freyre held, was merely 'a city of architectural sculpture, with its creation ordered exclusively by architects – however illustrious – as by a caste of high-priests, all-powerful and omniscient.'[162]

Other observers were more positive. In the edition of 25 April 1960, a *Time* magazine correspondent described how despite Brasília being in many places 'still a raw clay construction site', any 'criticism ha[d] died away in pride' amid the inauguration.[163] Brazilian writer Osvaldo Orico sought to silence critics by recalling the example of Washington. 'Remember the *Diário Carioca* columnist,' urged Orico, 'who, reporting in 1800 on the transfer of the seat of government from Philadelphia to Washington, [wrote that] the place had only one avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, and a few other sketchy roads.'[164] Without any pretence of impartiality, Novacap director Ernesto Silva dedicated approximately twenty pages of his account of Brasília to reproducing a diverse range of eulogistic reporting from the lead-up to the city's ceremonial opening. As a counterpoint to the negativity of Wallinger, Bishop et al, albeit at the cost of theatrical hyperbole, the selected testimonies nevertheless show some of the excitement that Brasília elicited among those with an enthusiasm for modernism, grand infrastructure projects, and sycophancy. 'It seems to me', wrote Argentine man of letters Bernardo Canal Feijóo in *La Nácion* in November 1958, 'that the most important moment of constitutional history in the nations of Latin America for the last one hundred years is the foundation of Brasília.'[165] Commentators from the other side of the Atlantic could be no less ebullient. 'Without any doubt the world will refer to Brasília as the Brazilian Miracle,' announced a

[161] Gilberto Freyre, "A Brazilian's Critique of Brasília," *The Reporter*, no. 22 (March 1960), 31-32.

[162] Gilberto Freyre, *Brasis, Brasil, Brasília* (Lisbon: Edição Livros no Brasil, 1960), 154.

[163] "Where Lately the Jaguar Screamed, a Metropolis Now Unfolds," 34-39.

[164] Osvaldo Orico, "21 de abril de 1960: a capital do ano 2.000," *Brasília*, no. 40, 104.

[165] Bernardo Canal Feijóo, *La Nácion*, 9 November 1958, as quoted in Silva, *História de Brasília*, 279.

31 January 1959 article published in Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, 'in the same way as were celebrated, with warm eulogies, the principal markers of universal history: the opening of the Suez Canal, the reconstruction of the City of Rotterdam, the German Wirtschaftswunder [also known as the Miracle on the Rhine], [and] the passage of the submarine Nautilus beneath the Arctic ice.'[166] French artist Georges Mathieu went still further, providing perhaps the last word in grandiose praise of the forthcoming new capital. Brasília, wrote Mathieu;

> is to be treated as one of the greatest epics in the history of mankind, perhaps even the greatest. And I saw Brasília from an aeroplane, from a motorcar, walking on foot, and in a helicopter. And I was fascinated. As I said to Niemeyer, one had to be [French writer and philosopher] Paul Valéry to speak about Brasília. And if that name came to me, it wasn't by accident. If Valéry had seen Brasília, he perhaps might have doubted the mortality of civilizations.[167]

In the very final pages of the memoirs which have provided such a source of insight into the character of President Kubitschek and the way in which he wished his great urban legacy to be remembered, one last extended historical analogy appears. Reflecting on Brasília's inauguration, Kubitschek likened his own role to that of a key figure in the earliest colonial administration of Brazilian territory. To fully appreciate the roots of the mission underpinning the new capital, he asserted, only a panoramic appreciation of the long arc of Brazil's post-Cabraline experience would suffice. In Kubitschek's own words:

> We have to go back to the times of Tomé de Souza [*sic*], governor-general of Brazil by appointment of King D. João III, the Settler. When this nobleman arrived in Bahia, he brought with him the famous Statute of Government [typically known as the Statute of the Governor-General – Regimento do Governador-Geral – in effect Brazil's first constitution] – a simulacrum of administrative organization – and founded the city of Salvador.[168] It was, as political analyst João Camilo de Oliveira Torres wrote, "the State

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[166] As reproduced in *Brasília e a Opinião Mundial III* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço de Documentação da Presidência da República, 1959), 38-40.

[167] As quoted in Silva, *História de Brasília*., 274.

[168] For the arrival of de Sousa and the *regimento* of Dom João III, see Johnson, "Portuguese settlement, 1500-1580," 20-22, and Puccinelli Orlandi, "A Fundação de uma Estado: Cidade de São Salvador, Brasil." For early Salvador, see Chapter I.

> of Brazil that was born, with the organs any self-respecting government ought to have. There was only one notable absence, one cloud in the sky, there were no people."[169]
>
> Strictly speaking, the Brazil that the governor-general was to govern did not exist. The land was confined to an unfamiliar coastline, to some centres of settlement, and to certain smugglers' outposts. Beyond the shoreline, was the virgin forest, populated with Indians. And as João Camilo de Oliveira Torres continued: "History has known cases of ontological origin from the State to the people – but to the people as an organized entity, the *republic* [*sic*] of the ancients. There was always a kind of crowd, amorphous and diffuse, over whom authority was exercised, power consolidated. But, in Brazil, the really astonishing fact was the physical precedence of the State before the people; there was, in reality, no one to be governed by Tomé de Souza. That famous *distinguished baron* [*sic*] encountered a situation that, aside from in ancient fables, ought rarely to have happened: a ruler who disembarks in an empty land, arriving before those he is to govern, and builds his capital in the forest."[170]
>
> That *astonishing fact* [*sic*] repeated itself on 2 October 1956. I did not arrive from across the ocean, but from the sky, aboard a DC-3, and disembarked similarly, in an empty land – the Planalto Central - arriving ahead of my subjects, and built in the *cerrado* the new capital of Brazil. On 21 April 1960 – three years and five months later – the city, already fully functioning, was inaugurated. There was repeated, in the twentieth century, another example of the ontological precedence of the State before the people, even though the people already existed, but were confined to the narrow band of the coast, with some greater penetration in the South-Central region.
>
> Contrary to the function for which Salvador was responsible – which was to impose the presence of a dynasty on a wild and unpopulated land -, Brasília had a task far more profound and much greater in scope: to pull, to the West, the populational mass of the coastline, so as to populate Brazil equally and, through this internal migratory thrust, to realize, at most in the period of two decades, true national integration.[171]

Optimism regarding Brasília's anticipated success as a prompt tool of national integration aside, these final words of *Por que construí Brasília* are nevertheless profoundly instructive. In the language chosen by the then former president in the writing of the passage above, the literal and figurative last words on the subject as far as he intended, specifically reinforce how he viewed, or at the very least wished to be seen as viewing, the Brasília project. In this context, the decision to frame Brasília by way of an extended comparison with Salvador is perhaps surprising. While Kubitschek does, in line with Brasília's more

[169] A prolific mid-twentieth-century Brazilian writer and theorist, João Camilo de Oliveira Torres had a particular lasting impact on the Brazilian conservative movement. See Luiz Carlos Ramiro Junior, "Da crise à restauração: o pensamento político de João Camilo de Oliveira Torres," PhD diss., (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2019).

[170] It is perhaps telling that in the four hundred or so years separating de Sousa from de Oliveira Torres, little appears to have changed regarding the recognition, or lack thereof, of the legitimacy of indigenous Brazilians' occupation of the lands upon which the Portuguese disembarked.

[171] Kubitschek, *Por que construí Brasília*, 467-68.

straightforward interpretations, present both himself and his new city as bringers of modernity and progress, he chooses to do so in direct juxtaposition with the most ancient of Brazil's urban endeavours. Where the first governor-general landed by wooden ship on a 'deserted' shore, so Kubitschek paints his own serene jet-age arrival from the skies above the Planalto Central. While the associated prestige is clear, so is the extent to which an integration of Brasília within the full canon of Brazilian history was central to how the project was perceived in the mind of its key champion. With the city's inauguration, the parallel with the founding of Salvador was complete. Replete with the appropriation of colonial relics, the invocation of historic national heroes, and a reinterpretation of the epics of the Age of Discovery, the ceremonies of April 1960 overtly tied Brasília to past glories just as much as to the futuristic promise through which lens it is typically seen. As the destination of the long-travelled, history-rich path to raising a new capital, it was a fitting climax.

# CONCLUSION

> The wilderness has been replaced by a great city, that emerges, sudden as a mirage, from the bare uplands as the jet plane glides in to land. After flying over the desert scrub and raw red earth of the 'cerrado' for hundreds of miles, the passengers are struck with the impression of a strange oasis as the regular blocks of the monumental esplanade come into view, flanked by the twin towers and contrasting domes of the Congress buildings, while the sun flashes on the glazed façades of the residential sections, picked out on the carpet of greensward overlying the red soil, moistened now by the blue waters of an immense branching lake that has changed the whole region and curls lovingly around the outstretched city.[1]

In August 1958, English writer Aldous Huxley visited the worksite of Brasília amid a wider Brazilian tour. In his mid-sixties and by that time a world-renowned public intellectual, Huxley was afforded the courtesy of an extended personal audience with President Kubitschek, at whose direction the pair together visited both Ouro Preto and the emerging new capital. The choice of destinations, wrote Kubitschek, was to allow Huxley the opportunity to see 'the two faces of Brazil.'[2] The Englishman's own impressions of the trip are recorded in the form of a widely reproduced message, often - albeit seemingly erroneously - described as a telegram of thanks to his Brazilian host: 'Coming straight from Ouro Preto to Brasília, what a dramatic journey, through time and history! A journey from yesterday to tomorrow, from what has ended to what has just begun, from old realities to fresh promises.'[3] Much the same sentiment was later

[1] Gautherot, *Brasilia*, 10.

[2] Kubitschek, *Cinqüenta anos em cinco*, 237.

[3] Ibid., Silva, *História de Brasília*, 287, and "Dialogo com Huxley," *Folha da Manhã*, 24 August 1958, Acervo Folha. Huxley's comments are the subject of some conjecture, in form of delivery if not substance. Kubitschek maintained that some weeks later he had received a personal telegram of thanks from the celebrated writer to the above effect. According to Elizabeth Bishop - one of the party that had joined Huxley in Brasília and would accompany him on an onward journey into the Amazon to visit indigenous Yawalapiti tribespeople - the reality was rather different however. While flying over the expanse of the Brazilian interior towards their rainforest destination, Huxley, Bishop wrote, had been confronted by an elderly co-traveler carrying 'a clip-board with "Aldous Huxley" printed in capitals across the top sheet. He presented this and asked if Huxley would write a message on it – his impressions of Brasília, anything at all – for a collection of such messages from all visiting celebrities he was making, to be put in a future Brasília museum. Huxley took out his pen and set to work, and after tearing up two or three sheets of paper he produced a few phrases about the interesting experience of flying from the past (the colonial towns in

expressed by John Dos Passos, returning to Brasília in the summer of 1962, four years on from his experiences of the frenzied era of peak construction:

> You drive out to the airport in the steaming dark over the rackety cobbles of Manaus: you step into a jet plane and in four hours and a half you are in Brasília. It is the greatest contrast imaginable. Manaus is as redolent of the nineteenth century as a story by Jules Verne. The air is dense with green exhalations of the rainforest. Brasília is an arid red. The sun is hot but the air has a cool upland tang. The glimpses, as the plane banks for a landing, of glass and concrete constructions spread like an unfinished world's fair along the red ridge, between the two arms of the lake, are desperately contemporary.[4]

The stated aims of this thesis have looked to test the premise behind Huxley and Dos Passos's asserted comparisons, to highlight and better understand the often-invisible threads linking the various Brazils of history to the 'fresh promises' of Brasília. As per my Introduction, this side of the city has been typically relegated to second billing. While many scholars have made mention to some degree of the city's long gestation, the influences behind its striking architecture, and the attempts by various actors to tie the project into the wider narrative of Brazil's urban and cultural history, to my knowledge none have systematically addressed all three. During the course of the six preceding chapters, I have argued that when synergised as part of a panoramic narrative, these various factors form an important part of understanding the wider picture of Brasília as a new capital. To gloss over these elements is to miss, or at the very least underestimate, a piece of Brasília's significance.

Looking beyond the ambitions of this thesis, one avenue for additional research may be to explore further entrenching the city within Brazilian cultural identity via the prism of utopian thought. From the first moments of European encounter, among the many identities projected onto Brazil, as onto much of the Americas, was that of a biblically endowed paradise:

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Minas) to the future, the brand-new city of Brasília. Two days later this appeared in the Rio papers as a telegram Huxley had sent to President Kubitschek, giving a rather odd impression of the Huxley telegram style.' Given the colour of Bishop's account and the apparent tone of Huxley's message – the substance of which appears uncontested – one is inclined to side with the 'non-official' line. See Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," 102.

[4] Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "Brasília Revisited", "The Bestlaid Plans…"

> Since Columbus, the colonizers who landed on our blinding white beaches, lined with elegant palms, contemplating the wild green seas and pure blue sky, allowed themselves to be seduced by the incomparable beauty of nature in its virgin form. In this aphrodisiac climate, they marvelled at the naked Indians that excited them with the fickle notion of the Noble Savage - friendly, innocent, and pure. The Renaissance imagination had devoted itself to the quest for paradise on Earth, pointing to the utopia of the 'New World' that Iberian navigators would discover for Europe.[5]

Twinned with the expressions of modernist town planners and architects, themselves frequently the object of utopian interpretation, this framework may offer a further opportunity to ground Brasília within traditions of cultural thought long familiar to the Brazilian experience.[6]

## *Brasília as Capital*

As detailed by Meira Penna and Kenneth Bowling in the Introduction to this thesis, capital cities have a particular role in mirroring and moulding the character of the states and peoples they serve as seats of government. To paraphrase Meira Penna, such cities serve a dual function of public expression, both reflecting common ideals to the domestic population and projecting these characteristics to international onlookers. For those tasked with making the countless decisions involved in the shaping of these cities when afforded a more or less blank slate, as in Brasília, the effect is magnified. In such instances, those with the power to do so are obliged to set forth their own visions of national identity and aspiration for the world to see. For Kubitschek, Costa, Niemeyer et al, Brasília therefore represented an opportunity to storytell on a quite literally monumental scale. French modernist architect and academic André Wogenscky spoke

[5] Meira Penna, *Quando Mudam as Capitais*, 335.

[6] For modernism and utopia, see for example David Ayers, Benedikt Hjartarson, Tomu Huttunen, and Harri Veivo (eds.), *Utopia: The Avant-Garde, Modernism and (Im)possible Life* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015). For Brazilian utopianism see José Osvaldo de Meira Penna, *Utopia Brasileira* (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia, 1988) and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Visão do paraíso: os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1969). Conversely, the moment of European encounter was also accompanied by interpretations of the New World as dystopian inferno. See Laura de Mello e Souza, *O diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz: feitiçaria e religiosidade popular no Brasil colonial* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1986), and Laura de Mello e Souza, *Inferno altântico: Demonologia e colonização, séculos XVI-XVII* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1993).

explicitly to this phenomenon in the Brazilian context. 'To undertake the architecture and planning of cities,' Wogenscky was reported to have said, 'it is not sufficient solely to produce something of beauty. It is also necessary to consider the people, the society, [and] the country. The planning of cities and their architecture is a mixture of sociological forces, and Brasília is the best example of this that I know of.'[7]

As demonstrated in Chapters V and VI of this thesis in particular, the narratives selected by Brasília's cadre of storytellers were multi-dimensional. Modernist, progressive, and futuristic themes were obvious in their eminence. As these chapters looked to show however, these were not the only concerns influencing the physical appearance and metaphorical placing of Brasília, be it in terms of the style of its most prominent structures or the nature of the ceremonies and imageries used to mark its inauguration. Put simply, in Brasília's ledger of inspiration and sources of legitimacy, debts were owed as much to Tiradentes as to Le Corbusier. For every pioneering *candango*, a *bandeirante* of old. It is for this reason that so much of the opening two chapters of this thesis are directed towards the wider arc of Brazil's urban trajectory as much as towards any early efforts to manifest a capital city in the interior of the colony, later co-kingdom, empire, and eventually republic. As the final words and underlying sentiment of Kubitschek's memoir dedicated to Brasília's origins make clear, this arc was pre-eminent to the way in which Brasília was understood by those under whose auspices it eventually rose. For this alone, it merits exploration. In so doing, I have looked to provide in as full a manner as possible the context in which conversations about an inland capital were held and perpetuated throughout the centuries.

If the building of capitals such as Brasília is an exercise in narrative, those dictating that narrative cannot be ignored. In introducing the personalities and foundational work of Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer in Chapter II, and, in Chapter

[7] As quoted in Silva, *História de Brasília*, 273.

III, of Juscelino Kubitschek, I have looked to augment the standard interpretation of Brasília with both colour and nuance. Above all others, in their words and deeds these three figures were central to the how, why, and when of Brasília, often in ways not immediately apparent to the casual observer. Whether via a preoccupation with reinventing the baroque of Minas Gerais for a new century, or an infectious, if often self-indulgent, charisma and developmentalist vision, a comprehensive understanding of the individuals behind the undertaking cannot but form one of the key pillars in any attempt to view the origins of Brasília in the round. In analysing and interpreting their writings and reported speech, the aim has been to identify the fine line dividing our understanding of how these men really viewed their respective missions and the importance of historical reference therein, and the extent to which an invocation of heritage was used post facto as a means to confer legitimacy. As is perennially the case however when dealing with individual intent, the reality can only be the subject of an informed estimation.

Among the many publications produced to commemorate Brasília and celebrate its inauguration, most notably the various editions of *Brasília* magazine cited extensively during the course of this thesis, almost all paid explicit homage to the city's historical underpinnings and its place within the wider arc of Brazilian history. Perhaps nowhere was this more immediately apparent than on the cover of the souvenir publication *História de Brasília*, which featured artistic renderings of the discovery of 1500, the 1822 proclamation of independence, and the first Mass in Brasília – the latter anachronistically presented as having occurred in 1960 rather than 1957.[8] Even more striking was the (English) language used in the introduction of fellow commemorative publication *Brasil 1960: Capital Brasília*:

[8] See Carlos Rodrigues (ed.), *História de Brasília: Número Especial de 'Souvenir de Brasília'* (São Paulo: Editora-Monumento SA, 1960).

> The transfer of the Capital of the Country to the tableland in Goiania [*sic*] is really a revolution in the sociological sense of the word, because it signified a qualitative transformation in Brazilian living.
>
> A Revolution such as those which, in the past, provided Brazil with the discovery and the introduction of African slave labour, the creation of the captaincies, which were hereditary, the establishment of the general-government, the introduction of religious orders, the transplainting [*sic*] of the sugar cane, cattle, coffee, the discovery of gold, the pioneering movement, the opening of the ports, independence, the constitutionalist movement, the Alves Branco tariff, the opening of the country of migratory movements, abolition, the Republic, the insurrection of 1930.
>
> A Revolution, specially signalized by the foundation of the cities of Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, four centuries ago, and the transference to Brasil of the Kings and the Court of Portugal, about 150 years ago.
>
> Brasília now represents, at the same time, these four most important events in our history: Salvador is the political center of a nation, just as Rio de Janeiro in 1564 is the advanced trench in the defence of the territory, as São Paulo the basis for the conquest of the west, the head-quarters of the pioneering movement, the pioneers' camp, just as Rio in 1808, the field for the renewal of governmental and administrative practices.[9]

A few pages later, a separate contributor described Brasília not only as the 'most modern and revolutionary city in the world', but also that which had 'given to the Country the historic destiny envisioned by the pioneers.'[10] Yet another used similar and familiar terms to explain the origins of the so-called 'Spirit of Brasília', owed, he suggested, to the 'daring of the pioneers of the Seventeenth Century, who, with the spirit of adventure, bore in their souls a strong feeling of nationality.'[11] This same feeling, the author posited, 'also manifested in the men who built Brasília, not as the dream of a visionary, but in fixed convictions, in the manner, new, but shaped by the [previous] epoch.'[12] 'To know the history of one's country it is not enough to read about it, it has be thoroughly studied and felt, in order to understand that the actions of men must be considered in relation to their surroundings and [the] material possibilities of their time,' wrote sociologist

[9] Enos Sadok de Sa Motta, "Brasília: A Revolution on the March," in *Brasil 1960: Capital Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Revista dos Bancários, 1960).

[10] Henrique Candido Cavalcanti de Albuquerque, "Brasília and the march to the West," in ibid.

[11] Bráulio do Nascimento, "The Spirit of Brasília," in ibid.

[12] Ibid.

Contantino Paleólogo in the same edition.[13] 'In this sense, Brasília is the synthesis and the symbol of the entire Brazilian culture' he concluded.[14] The magazine's final article left no doubt as to the emphasis contemporary commentators placed upon Brasília's long gestation. 'Brasília in History', a concise but detailed summary by Benivaldo do Nascimento, tracked the city's origins from Tiradentes to inauguration, stressing the persistence of concept and breadth of advocates inherent to a city almost two hundred years in the making.[15] To suggest that the patrimonial heritage which underpinned Brasília was more apparent, or at the very least the subject of greater attention, during the period of the city's development appears to be one clear conclusion.

At the westernmost edge of the Praça dos Três Poderes stands a small but striking building the nature and circumstances of which reinforce the importance placed upon the city's historical origins by its builders. The opening of the Museu Histórico de Brasília (fig. 7.1) was afforded a distinct ceremony during the course of the wider programme of 21 April 1960, and features an exterior-mounted bronze effigy of Kubitschek and the same engraved words the president had written into the *Livro de Ouro de Brasília* in October 1956 that had also been inscribed into the walls of the Palácio da Alvorada.[16]

[13] Constantino Paleólogo, "Brasília – Synthesis of Brazilian Culture," in ibid.

[14] Ibid.

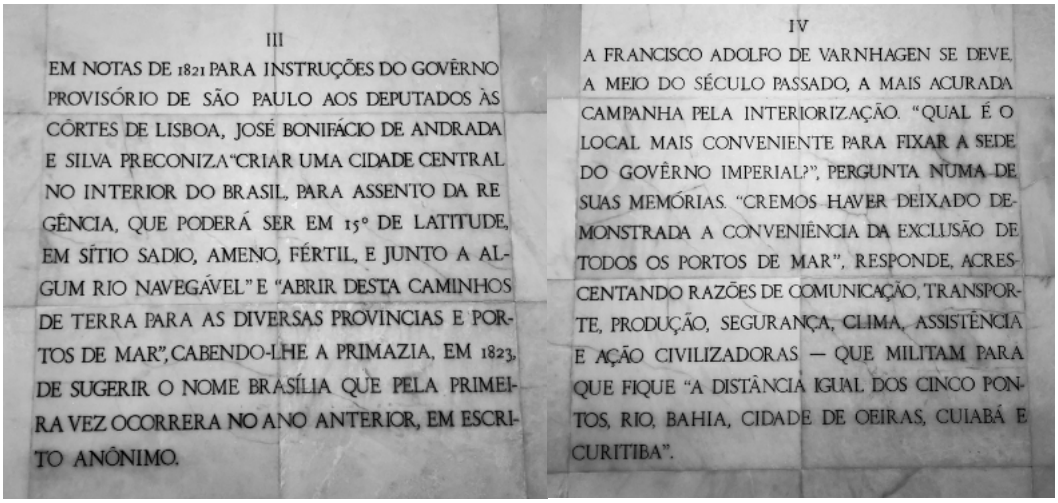
[15] Benivaldo do Nascimento, "Brasília in History," in ibid.

[16] See Chapter IV.



Fig. 7.1: Museu Histórico de Brasília.

Inside, the museum contains no exhibits other than a series of sixteen numbered panels of text, inlaid into the narrow marble corridor that constitutes the structure's interior space. Beginning with the Marquês de Pombal's speculations regarding an Amazonian capital for imperial Portugal, then addressing in turn the advocacy of Tiradentes, José Bonifácio (see fig. 7.2), Varnhagen (fig. 7.3), the relevant clauses in the various iterations of the Brazilian Constitution, the Jataí episode of April 1955, the enabling laws and design competition, the panels trace the genesis of Brasília as well as featuring brief quotations from Kubitschek, Niemeyer, and the May 1957 blessing of Pius XII on the occasion of the first Mass.



(Fig. 7.2: Museu Histórico de Brasília, interior, and fig. 7.3: Museu Histórico de Brasília, interior (II).)

The final two panels consist of a hagiographic eulogy to Kubitschek from an anonymous author, praising the president's 'unbreakable essence […] alert spirit' and 'indomitable vigour', in light of which 'this memorial to Brasília was erected, dedicated to his greatest work – the goal of all goals…' While the museum-cum-memorial can be viewed simply as a vanity project – as demonstrated, some opponents saw Brasília in its entirety through this lens – the focus on the city's venerable origins shows a clear awareness of and desire to promote the role of the project's oldest proponents. Fittingly given the foundational argument of this thesis, during my own visit of April 2023 the museum was occupied only by a lone guard. Visitors appeared but an infrequent annoyance.

## *Brasília after Kubitschek*

While the history of Brasília beyond its inauguration is outside the scope of this thesis, a few very brief observations on the years immediately thereafter can be informative on several fronts. First, on the ways in which the stated intents of the city's designers were subject to corruption and change, and second in how the city itself and the symbolism bound therein was co-opted and even existentially threatened by the course of political events. Thirdly, on the pragmatic impact of the city's founding on the functioning of Brazilian politics and bureaucracy, and, finally, on the image of Brazil on

the international stage. On the subversion of Costa and Niemeyer's singular aesthetic in the years following 1960, Thomas Deckker captures the pattern of consistent adulteration succinctly. 'Any pretence at respecting the Pilot Plan had long been abandoned,' wrote the author, detailing how the projected ninety-two *superquadras* of Costa's imagination had rapidly given way to alternative forms of housing.[17] By 1964, only ten of these blocks had been completed, of which only six carry the complete suite of hallmark features as their designer intended.[18] After 1964 and the imposition of military government, divergence from the plan increased dramatically. Swathes of land were sold off to private developers, whose creations bore 'little relationship to Costa's intentions.'[19] In parallel, the dominance of the satellite cities, the progeny of the Cidade Livre, became quickly apparent. Unlike their ancestor, these communities varied dramatically in socioeconomic conditions, with some emerging as affluent oases while others – typically those further from the urban centre – becoming analogous to the *favelas* ubiquitous to the Brazilian urban landscape.[20] Visiting in 1962, British attaché John Drinkall reported that of the 'grave defects' in Costa's plan, the most serious was the absence of any provision 'for the accommodation of the poorer classes.'[21] 'The results of this omission', continued Drinkall, 'have, however, been disastrous. Favelas, slums constructed of old packing cases and flattened Kerosene tins have sprung up all over the planned area of Brasília and five so-called "satellite towns."'[22] At the turn of the millennium, Deckker noted that of the Distrito Federal's then population of

[17] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 188.

[18] Ibid., 186.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 187-88.

[21] J. K. Drinkall "Impressions of Brasília.," 25 June 1962, AB 10110/1, FO 371/162140, 2, The National Archives.

[22] Ibid.

approximately two million, barely two hundred and fifty thousand lived in Brasília proper. 'The project to develop the interior of Brazil through the construction of Brasília appears to have succeeded beyond all expectations,' the author wryly observed.[23] Renamed Nucléo Bandeirante in 1961, the Cidade Livre itself transformed from frontier town destined for demolition to a 'well-established middle-class suburb.'[24] For the richest and best-connected, detached lakeside dwellings quickly became the norm. Deckker's darkly amusing assessment of these edifices – 'unimaginative suburban villas' in Drinkall's words – demonstrates both the cynicism contemporary Brasília can generate and the degree of departure from the ideals of its modernist pioneers:[25]

> These houses are virtually a satire on architecture: each is what their owners euphemistically describe as 'Colonial', but are really ostentatious and vulgar displays of wealth with little relationship to real colonial architecture, about which their owners know or care very little. They are, almost without exception, bizarrely badly planned, dark, and stuffy; the main design inspiration comes from the fantastically exaggerated fictions of the lives of the super-rich in São Paulo to be seen in the *novelas*.'[26]

It does not seem too much of a stretch to imagine that Costa and Niemeyer might have shared Deckker's distaste.

The significance of 1964 as the juncture whereafter the strict rigour of Brasília's planning was largely abandoned may come as little surprise in the context of wider national events. With the ousting of President João Goulart and the imposition of military government in April of that year, Brasília became the seat of dictatorship. While Kubitschek's short-lived successor Jânio Quadros had been reportedly in favour of moving the capital back to Rio de Janeiro - 'luckily, he didn't stay long', commented Ernesto Silva - the armed forces' reticence towards the city had long been apparent.[27] On

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[23] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 187-88.

[24] Ibid., 188.

[25] Drinkall "Impressions of Brasília," 3.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Silva, Depoimento: Projeto "Museu Nacional da Imagem e do Som," 89.

the occasion of her first visit, Elizabeth Bishop had observed of Brasília that 'the only objections I have heard have been from the Army, which does not feel that an airy, glassy, or floating edifice will represent its view of things.'[28] 'But', she added playfully, 'perhaps all generals secretly yearn for crenellations and drawbridges.'[29] In the aftermath of the 1964 coup, rumours abounded that, like Quadros, the new administration harboured ambitions to remove the capital back to Rio de Janeiro, and even that Brasília could be abandoned altogether.[30] Niemeyer recalled a conversation on the topic between André Malraux and Le Corbusier at the latter's studio. 'They are going to destroy Brasília.' Le Corbusier was reported to have exclaimed. 'Brasília will disappear. But what great ruins they are going to have!'[31]

As it was, the image of Brasília shifted from that of a gleaming, if divisive, symbol of progress and accomplishment in a modern, democratic Brazil, to the somewhat sinister and insular stronghold of military power – a city 'occupied by the army' as Kubitschek put it in an interview of 1973.[32] Where once the modernist forms of Niemeyer might be said to evoke the bold hopefulness of the Fourth Republic, from 1964 comparisons with the architecture of European fascism instead became disquietingly near. In the Italian case in particular, International Style modernism had been blended with the indigenous Classical styles of antiquity in a way that comes strikingly close in spirit to the baroque-inspired Brasília.[33] The effect is testament to the

[28] Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," 86.

[29] Ibid.

[30] See Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence*, 263.

[31] As quoted in ibid.

[32] "Oct. 2, 1973," in Riedinger, *Interviews with Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira.*

[33] For Italian fascist architecture, its inspiration and impact, see Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture: Reception and Legacy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), Brian L. McLaren, *Modern Architecture, Empire, and Race in Fascist Italy* (Boston: Brill, 2021), and George P. Mras, "Italian Fascist Architecture: Theory and Image," *Art Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1961), 7-12.

ways in which the phenomenon of the capital city is, in some respect at least, beholden to the government of the day in projecting and amplifying narratives of authority and national identity.

Among the bureaucracy and the political and diplomatic classes, the move to Brasília prompted a range of responses. Despite the aforementioned fears in some circles that the city had at best an uncertain fate under the government of the generals, it became apparent relatively swiftly that Brasília was to stay. In a telegram of 28 April 1967, British ambassador Sir John Russell wrote that new president Marshal Artur da Costa e Silva had made it 'abundantly plain' that he intended to govern from Brasília, noting that 'the practical consequences of his intention are being felt sooner than most people anticipated.'[34] Moreover, despite the well-documented lack of initial enthusiasm from the British mission, from Russell's despatches a sense of acceptance and even appreciation appeared to be growing, albeit tempered by continued dismay at the lack of local colour. Brasília, wrote the ambassador, contained some of the 'finest public edifices built anywhere since the Italian Renaissance', continuing that he 'like[d] Brasília better every time.' Russell added with regret however that 'for most of our community I fear life in the early Canberra – Ankara – Islamabad bareness of Brasília may be pretty grim. It will be something of a cultural – entertainment – distraction – amenity – domestic servant desert.' [35] For the ambassador's counterparts in the Brazilian bureaucracy, enthusiasm appears to have been rather less ambiguous in its absence. In his report of June 1962, Drinkall described how 'the politicians and senior government officials dislike Brasília intensely.'[36] 'This is especially true of the present members of Congress', he

[34] "Telegram from John Russell to R. H. G. Edmonds," 28 April 1967, AB 1/8, FCO 7/280, 1, The National Archives.

[35] Ibid., 1-3.

[36] Drinkall "Impressions of Brasília.," 4.

continued, adding that due to a lack of eagerness, allied with the inconvenience of travelling to and from the new capital, 'attendance in Congress is very poor except on special occasions and Ministers usually only spend a maximum of two days a week in Brasília.'[37] Drinkall ended his report by observing that 'most wealthier Brazilians will almost certainly continue to escape to Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo on the weekends', and that 'the diplomatic corps will either do likewise or retreat into an artificial and unhealthy world of its own.'[38]

Some of these misgivings would be mitigated, however, by the rapid adoption of a new approach from the Brazilian authorities. While in the earliest years the business of government largely continued to be orchestrated from Rio – Drinkall observes scathingly how 'the Foreign Ministry keeps [only] three to four junior and singularly ineffective Secretaries in Brasília and all business is transacted in Rio de Janeiro' – any attempt to relocate the civil service wholesale from the beachside former capital was rapidly abandoned.[39] As something of a second act to the recruitment of the *candangos*, Deckker describes how a fresh cadre of bureaucrats were instead drafted in to populate the ministry blocks and vacant government-allocated accommodation of Brasília. These new civil servants, like their *candango* forebears, were overwhelmingly children of the Brazilian hinterlands, for whom the city represented a 'dream come true.'[40] 'Apartments were virtually given away to encourage people to move there', writes Deckker.[41] 'It also meant

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 7. Drinkall concluded by rather presciently noting that 'it is primarily the belief that the upper classes of Brazilians will refuse to settle in Brasília in the full sense of the word which leads me to the conclusion that Brasília will fail to develop any attractive personality of its own.' 'I count myself lucky', he added, 'to have been posted to Brasília at a time when an ostrich can still scamper past the Embassy gates and a five metre long anaconda be captured while "contemplating some bathers" by the edge of the lake. But others may think differently.' See ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Deckker, "Brasília: City versus Landscape," 182-84.

[41] Ibid., 184.

jobs: no civil servant lost their job in Rio; the bureaucracy simply increased in number.'[42] 'No Brazilian in their right mind', he continues, 'would want to leave the "luxury and pleasure" of the beaches in Rio, and none did. Today, 90 percent of [the] population is drawn from the interior and north-east, and 5 percent each from Rio and São Paulo.'[43] 'These people', Deckker laments, 'were the least able to cope with the culture of Modernism of Brasília – the way of life of the Modern *brasileiro*.'[44]

At the end of his second visit, John Dos Passos took a private tour of Brasília with Israel Pinheiro. The erstwhile Novacap president had remained in the city following its inauguration, being named mayor by Kubitschek and serving in that capacity from 1960 to 1962, when he 'had been retired' by the Goulart administration that followed.[45] The pair, wrote Dos Passos:

> drove through immense bare expanses of parts of the city that were not even planned yet and around the lake shore to the dam and down to the hydroelectric plant by the waterfall below it. Young Germans from Siemens were putting through the last tests on the two freshly installed generators. There was room for one more when it was needed. Light and power in three weeks, they promised Dr. Israél [*sic*]. He grinned his longtoothed grin and slapped them on the back.
>
> 'You see…They said we'd have no lake. They said we'd have no power.'
>
> He took us to see the frame building at the highest point of the surrounding country where he and President Kubitschek had their quarters in the early days. The place was already a public park and picnic ground, presided over by a new bronze statue of the former president [see fig. 7.4].
>
> You could still see outlines of the old fazenda which had been the only inhabited spot when the city planners first arrived. The great gushing spring of clear water was still there in the gully among the tall trees but it was enclosed in a wire fence to keep the picnickers at the park from straying into the adjacent grounds. The country club had taken over the fazenda's magnificent grove of mangoes for its own private picnickings. Four years before we had looked out from under the great dark trees on an incredibly vast prospect of bare hills occupied only by termites and rheas, the odd longlegged wolves and the striped cats of the region. Now the hills were scarred with roads. There

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "Brasília Revisited", "And He saw that it was good." For Pinheiro's later career, see Martins and Martins, *O Engenheiro da Utopia*, 210-62.

> were crosshatchings of suburban constructions. Scraps of the city's skyline jutted up into the horizon.[46]

As a snapshot of the infant metropolis and a reflection on its meteoric rise over the space of a handful of months and years, the American writer's words serve as a fitting ode to a remarkable project.

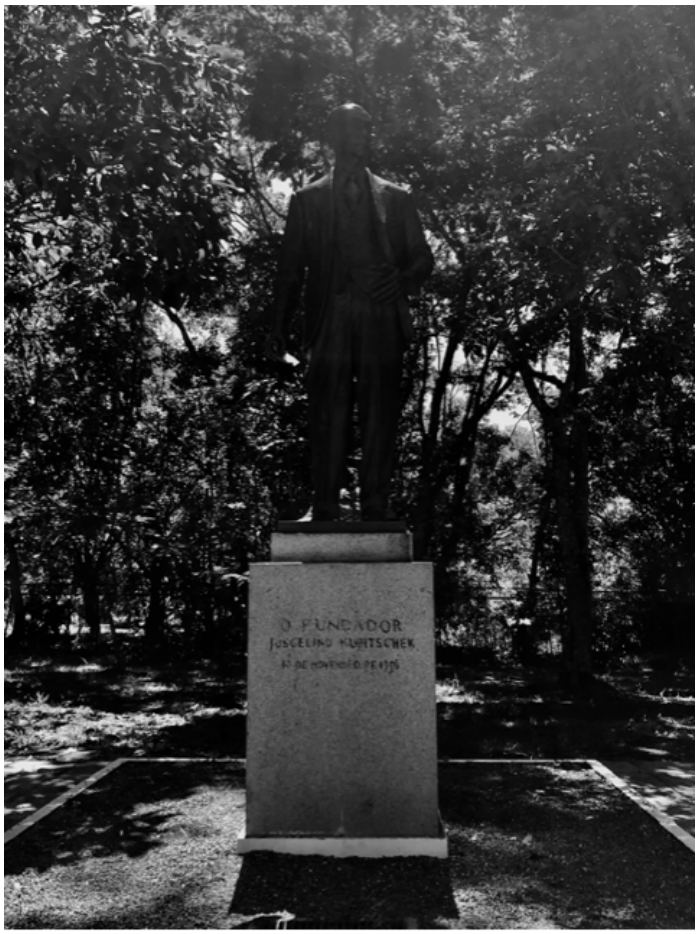


Fig. 7.4: "O Fundador" in the grounds of the Museu do Catetinho.

[46] Dos Passos, *Brazil on the Move*, "Brasília Revisited", "And He saw that it was good."

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