

FROM SATELLITE-TOWNS TO MARKET TOWNS: Remaking Places Around Brasília

Thereza Carvalho Santos

Federal Fluminense University

planning spaces vs. making places.

The object area: Ceilandia and Taguatinga, two of five major planned settlements located around the Federal District of Brasilia, capital of Brazil.

The theme: urban design,

The foci: changes, additions and other alterations made by the residents on the original design of the area and pattern blocks.

The content: analyses these alterations, how they have eventually a 'ripple effect' on the immediately adjacent planned spaces and neighbourhoods.

The character: of these areas, under the impact and influence of these gradually cumulative 'ripple effects', has changed significantly over a relatively short period of time – approximately thirty years. The economic and social rhythm of these two settlements are unparalleled in the Federal District. The original building patterns and urban grid have been appropriated in different ways.

The vector of change: from Taguatinga, the first workers' settlement officially 'plotted' as satellite, 25km from Brasilia, outwards to the next satellite – Ceilandia.

The two settlements: grown towards each other, mingled, blended, substantially reconstructed in many patches, in widely different scales.

A great part of the analytical work on Brasilia, and surrounding settlements, have been developed according to two trends:

'for' the esthetics of the 'product' and the positive political catalyzing aspect of the 'process';
'against' the functionally segregated aspect of the 'product' and social segregation of the 'process'.

One important aspect, however, seems to require further attention:

The fact that these settlements have been undergoing a continued process of cumulative changes, over the last thirty years, which have transformed very positively certain aspects of the role they played in the region.

What are those changes?

What do they look like? What kind of initiative, and whose, made them happen?

For what or which purposes?

What do these indicate?

The analytical framework: derived from performance evaluation of large scale housing estates with a similar focus – changes and alterations of the original design, made by the residents.

Originally orientated towards a different purpose – identifying the “why’s”, it gradually developed towards identifying the “what for’s and how’s”. The move from one target to the other, by the time of the previous research mentioned, was like turning the focus from the past to the present heading to the future.

This move resulted from preliminary findings of that research:

questioned the original assumptions that changes would derive from either design flaw or vandalism.

The alterations carried out by the residents showed a much larger span of choice, mostly geared to making productive the available space provided for whatever other original purpose.

The major 'arena' where these changes took place: the space 'in-between' the semi-private/semi-public areas adjacent to the different building patterns.

They triggered a process of social and economical growth with minimum State investment.

The analysis focus on three major points:

FIRST: identified the different purposes and related perspectives that the various *agents*, or interest groups, introduced, on their own volition, into the process of making real the planned satellite-towns .

SECOND: tested the assumption that a different shape – and scale – would correspond to a different perspective – and interest group – at different times.

THIRD: chose a sample area and to define the approaching scales of observation. Finally the analysis checked whether some of the more specific findings of the mentioned previous research proved valid.

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The object area

Ceilandã is situated 35km away from the cross-shaped Pilot Plan of Brasilia. It was created in 1971 by personal request of General Medici, who was then the President of The Federal Republic of Brazil. He was annoyed with the string of poor settlements, also called *invasões*, that 'lined' his daily route from the ranch where he lived, out of town, to the Presidential Palace of Planalto. As a matter of consequence, the Governor of the Federal District of Brasilia of that time started an official crusade with the purpose of removing these *invasões* - the Campaign to Erradicate *Invasões* - *C.E.I.*. A total of 82.000 people were removed from the area to a site 35km west of the Pilot Plan. The very name *Ceilandia* springs from the acronym, C.E.I. plus the English originated word land, *landia*, thus making fate clearer: *the land of the unwanted ones*. Short memory, hard work, and the 'live one day at a time' rule, that ever so often befalls Brazilians as the one left possible life-motto, for one reason or another, all together apparently helped to, fortunately, boycott the initial stigmatizing attempt on the town and its residents.

Taguatinga is created before Brasilia, in 1958, 25km from the future Capital site. It sprang from the urgent need to remove a pioneer housing settlement of 4.000 families formed close to the *Cidade-Livre* alongside one major federal road that led to what was then the huge building site of Brasilia. Six months later schools, hospitals, houses for the teachers had already been provided even though planning was never a strong aspect in the process nor had any study ever been conducted on the adequacy of the local environmental conditions. The growth of the settlement took place through plotting new sectors when thus required.

Findings and testings

Over the last three decades, the initial settlement of 82.000 people grew to approximately 364.000 inhabitants. It became the largest of all satellite-towns around Brasilia.

Constricted by a standard urban grid, with standard plots and plot size, as well as by a 'residence only' land-use regulation, Ceilandia has, literally, gone overboard in all aspects. Commercial developments, for different purposes and scales of capital, have spread over, once again, the *planned spaces for public activities*, and grabbed the 'in-between' semi-public/semi-private areas, with ill defined tenure and worse maintenance, that often characterize modernist urbanism as found in Brasilia and neighbourhood.

The initial part of the survey for the research whose findings this paper discusses, revealed 1.172 commercial establishments which have been gradually added to the original building design and planned intention for the area as well as 1.110 other irregular appropriation of public spaces for well-established commercial purposes.

These changes concentrated in the older and more permanent patches of the town and along the high-street that linked Ceilandia to Taguatinga. The price of the plot in one of these patches can be three times bigger than in any other part of the mentioned satellite-town.

Each type of building in the selected patches, once identified, was mapped and its 'origin' was traced, first in the area of Taguatinga, the oldest of the two towns, and later in Ceilandia.

By 'origin traced' this paper means the search for the original pattern, when this was the case, and the gathering of its 'family', i.e., its multiple variations brought about through alterations carried out for different purposes.

These variations, once analysed revealed a typology of purposes apparently indicating a corresponding typology of perspectives – or non-physical dimensions - of the urban realm which have been, apparently, neglected in the original plans for the selected areas.

They were the economic-productive, the administrative-regulatory and the place-making perspectives - or dimensions.

The economic-productive perspective showed as a matter of consequence of the specific circumstances that marked the creation of the satellite-towns and of Brasilia. The great distances between the Federal District and the main centers of production in the country, distances made even larger by the precarious means of transportation then available, also made 'importing' any goods from anywhere, very expensive, particularly in its first fifteen years of existence. Prohibitive costs stimulated the enterprising initiative and talents of the many migrants that swapped their birth places for the desolate paysage of Brasilia early years.

They bloomed rather in the neighbourhood of the federal capital than in the capital itself thus indicating the next dimension of the process of change that took place despite all planning: the administrative-regulatory or de-regulatory perspective. The severe rules regarding land-use in the Pilot Plan made it very difficult for industry or trade to settle in Brasilia. At the same time, income distribution concentrated in the federal capital made it an attractive market for business (table 1). The average income in Brasilia was three times bigger than in any satellite towns, and the whole Federal District, all together had by far the highest income in the country. Taguatinga was the longest established 'satellite community' with a growing population of desperate fast learners strongly motivated by the previous arguments.

The making-place dimension regarding, for the sake of this paper, a space with a perceived meaning collectively achieved came, in the selected areas, as a consequence of the former two.

The patterns of changes identified, comprising the initial alterations and their ripple-effects, revealed a 'coding-system' made of a check-list of features and forces of change which were found to characterize the process of urban configuration of the selected areas. They have been initially tested and acknowledged, in a subsequent research conducted in another settlement, as indicators of local potential for development and self-government, in a process of continued change with minimum State investment.

The mentioned check-list included static features, such as design patterns, density, scale and size, as well as dynamic features, such as forces of segregation, agglutination and polarization. When and where most of this check-list of features of change was found some common performance criteria were also perceived.

They comprised: grater accessibility to major trade flux and visibility from these routes; perceived availability of whatever goods or services being offered, often implying forces of agglutination multiplying similar patterns of change in the neighbourhood; where singularity of services or goods being offered, regarded important, was identified it often implied forces of polarization defining new trends of change in the urban grid with strong impact on future changes in the area. Permeability to changes as well as environmental adequacy were also acknowledged as conditions to the desired process of change towards making the original 'satellite-dormitories' into better places.

Conclusions and key-issues for further research

The original rigid horizontal skyline that does not, necessarily, correspond to the topography, feels like a 'fixed flat hood' on the city. The predominance of continued horizontal lines is accentuated by the absence of trees and parks, and by the presence of the few planned flat standard shape and volumes of the public buildings.

The gradual changes, here discussed, have significantly altered both the previously described overwhelming flat impression as well as the original planned provisions for, or absence of, industry and trade, and consequent economic growth. A dynamic economy has led Taguatinga to a non-geometric central position in the Federal District finally acknowledged in the last PDOT - Plano Diretor de Ordenamento Territorial do Distrito Federal (Master Plan for the Federal District). This hard fought for affluence now shows in the unprecedented and unplanned business centre clearly marked by several 'unforeseen' high-rise buildings which prolongs the high-street from the ex-satellite now more star-like town of Taguatinga onto the next, Ceilandia.

The question that remains to be answered, through continued monitoring of the area in the future is whether the earlier State-led initiative will bear any significant resemblance, or relation of proportion, with the economic-productive, administrative-regulatory and place-making dimensions which have distinguished both - the process of re-creating the satellite-town - and its product, the 'newly' built environment.