20TH CENTURY NEW TOWNS
Archetypes and Uncertainties
Book of Abstracts

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Brasília is built from a rigorous and magnificently designed ground. It is visible to those who wander the city that its composition rests on an extraordinarily modelled ground: the streets and buildings are linked to the land as if on skin that not only welcomes but also amplifies its tri-dimensionality.

The perception of this plasticity is evident at all scales, intersecting the shape of road infrastructures, the layout of buildings in Superquadras and strongly pronouncing itself in the Esplanada platform. Also, it is admirably expressed on Central Rodoviária, known as 'marco zero', a sublime moment where the various brasiliense scales articulate and mould together.

This modelling is a fundamental ally in the 'modern monumentality' of Brasilia. Engaging and integrating the infrastructural technique, the moulding of the land appears as a subtle backdrop, resulting from its absolute 'naturalness', insinuating that the topographic support was always present, a feature of the territory that the planner found and, from this 'natural condition', conceived and developed the urban design. But one substantial intervention on the original topography is evident in the photographic records taken during the construction of the city, demonstrating that this 'naturalness' is deliberate and controlled through careful design. However, the disciplinary literature we know systematically represents the city in plan and shows no section at urban-scale that relates to the design of the settlement with the corresponding manipulation of the land.

This communication perceives the modelling of the ground as a fundament of the urban design and aims to contribute to the reading of the Plano Piloto by comparing the project(s) of the city – in plan and section – and determining how the topography upon where it is set was interpreted.
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