THE MODERNIST CITY
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF BRASÍLIA

JAMES HOLSTON

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James Holston is assistant professor of anthropology at the University of California, San Diego.

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If the fundamental premise of Brasília's foundation is that it should signal the dawn of a new Brazil, then it is precisely its exemplary uniqueness among Brazilian cities that defines it as a blueprint of development. This utopian difference between capital and nation meant that the planning of Brasília had to negate Brazil as it existed. Thus, the Master Plan presents the founding of the city as if it had no history. Similarly, the government intended to unveil the built city as if it were without a history of construction and occupation. On inauguration day, it planned to reveal a miracle: a gleaming city, empty and ready to receive its intended occupants. This presentation of an inhabitable idea denied the Brazil that the city had already acquired: its population of builders.

However, whereas Costa's narrative dehistoricized Brasília by mythologizing its first principles, the government's planners paradoxically rehistoricized it. This paradox in planning efforts follows from an inherent contradiction of utopia: to be different, an imagined utopia must negate the prevailing order that generates a desire for it and to be autonomous, it must remain dehistoricized. Yet, in so doing, it becomes powerless to achieve autonomy since whatever substance it might have comes from that very order. This contradiction is unavoidable in utopian projects because any attempt to use the prevailing order destroys the utopian difference that is the project's premise. The Master Plan defuses this contradiction by concealing the historical origins and intentions of Brasília in a cloak of mytho-poetics. Thus, as an imagined utopia, it remains silent about the details of the city's construction, settlement, and organization, for these would have negated its objective: freedom from existing conditions, from what was inadequate and unacceptable in Brazil. They would have violated the strictures of utopian discourse and compromised the idea of a capital city.

In giving this idea substance, however, the government could not avoid compromising its own intention to break with Brazilian history: it could not entirely negate the prevailing order that it had to use to construct the city. The solution it attempted to

this paradox was to recruit a labor force for the purposes of construction, but to use its executive and police powers to remove that labor force from the built capital. By denying residential rights to the construction workers, it intended to keep the Brazil they represented from taking root in the inaugural city. The difficulty with this solution is that it destroyed the utopian project. The government planners necessarily and even unconsciously used the only means available to secure their objective: the mechanisms of social stratification and repression that constitute the very society they sought to exclude. In so doing, they introduced the principles and processes of this society into the foundations of Brasília.

This Brazilianization of the city is not, however, a simple reversal of the initial inversion. The counter-*brincadeira* in the story is not merely a reflection of the order of the realm back to the capital. Founded on a paradox, Brasiliense society developed from the interaction of its utopic and dystopic elements. This dialectic generated new administrative initiatives as planners tried to keep the actual in line with the imagined. These directives, however, only reiterated the initial paradox: for planners responded to the deformation of their plans by exorcising the factors they held responsible (such as illegal squatter settlements, chaotic growth, and subversive political organization) by the same dystopic measures (such as denying political rights, repressing voluntary associations, and restricting the distribution of public goods). Thus, in compounding the basic contradictions of Brasília's premises, they created an exaggerated version—almost a caricature—of what they had sought to escape. Their initiatives produced a unique city, but not the one they imagined. Rather, they turned Brasília into an exemplar of social and spatial stratification—one that clearly demonstrates, moreover, the role of government in promoting inequality.

In the following chapters, I analyze this paradoxical development and establish its initial conditions in the stratified recruitment of Brasília's inaugural population, the mobilization of pioneers to rebel against their exclusion from the built capital, and the consequences of their rebellion. Although these chapters are, therefore, partly studies in social history, I want to say at the outset that they have an anthropological motivation: my purpose is to account for the distribution of political relations that I found in the city during my fieldwork and that I could only understand by inquiring into the history of Brasília's settlement. Thus, the questions I ask of this past are those formulated to illuminate the ethnographic present, a configuration I seek to understand as a result of historical transformation—in this case,

one constituted in the denial and paradoxical recovery of history.[1]

6.1 Populating an Idea: Differential Incorporation

President Juscelino Kubitschek celebrated the foundation of Brasília with a First Mass on 3 May 1957. In so doing, he ritually reenacted the founding of Brazil as marked on 3 May 1500 by Pedro Álvares Cabral's First Mass in the New World. Kubitschek's objective in reenacting a primordial moment of Brazilian history was not unlike Costa's in using ancient cities and sacred symbols to inspire his Master Plan. Both intended to legitimate their efforts by historical analogy. For Kubitschek, the analogy enabled him to claim that by marking the epicenter of national space, the foundation of Brasília signified nothing less than the refoundation of Brazil itself at a national rather than a colonial stage of development. Assuming the epithet of his imperial predecessor, King D. João III, the Populator, Kubitschek saw this act of founding a capital city as the means to establish a radiating sovereignty, as the means to consolidate, civilize, and populate his nation-continent.

However, in keeping with the kaleidoscopic appropriations typical of this kind of legitimation, Kubitschek's analogy was also with Brazil's first governor-general, Tomé de Sousa. In his memoirs (1975: 369), he describes Tomé de Sousa's mission as the avatar of his own development project. Both rulers, he suggests, arrived on the "shores" of an "empty" land with two plans in hand: one for the construction of the capital city (Salvador and Brasília); the other for the institutional organization of the polity (the Rules of Government of the colony of Brazil and the Organic Laws of Brasília). In Kubitschek's own terms, what united the destiny of both cases was their inversion of the usual ontological relation between a state and its people: the plans were intended to create the polities (in the sense of both the social units and the political systems) to which they would later belong. As Kubitschek (ibid.) observes, "In point of fact, there did not exist the Brazil that the governor-general had to govern." Rather, both rulers arrived before the populations for whom they built their cities, and both prepared models of their respective polities before these polities had citizens to organize accordingly. Neither considered the prior inhabitants, namely, the Amerindians or the construction workers of Brasília, entitled to full membership in their imaginary domains. Instead, both rulers viewed their capital cities as the means to

mark the arrival of a civilizing order destined to rule an as yet unconsolidated territory. In this sense, both capitals were means to create an empire of signs in polities as yet without substance, in polities awaiting their predestined civilizations.

To construct his city and to recruit its legitimate population, Kubitschek created a number of federal agencies, enterprises, and commissions of a statutory type. Of these, there were two principal umbrella organizations, one for each fundamental objective. Part of his so-called indirect administration of government, the first was the state enterprise Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital do Brasil (henceforth, Novacap).[2] It was launched in 1956 by legislative act under the directorship of Israel Pinheiro and charged with building the city and administering its affairs during the construction period. Having sponsored the national competition, which Lúcio Costa won, Novacap organized technical teams to develop and coordinate the realization of his Master Plan. These teams produced blueprints for the city's buildings, roadways, electrical power, water supply, communications, hospitals, schools, and the like. In addition, Novacap was responsible for the affairs of the vast construction camp itself—for the recruitment of personnel, for the supply of building materials, for the contractual obligations and overall supervision of the construction, for the organization of goods and services for construction crews, and for the maintenance of law and order. Between 1956 and 1960, Novacap exercised these functions as a ministate ruling an island of activity in the Central Plateau. For all practical purposes, it exercised absolute power over a frontier population of pioneers that had reached almost one hundred thousand by inauguration day.

The second organization that Kubitschek created was responsible for the recruitment of the population for which the capital had been built: the civil servants of the federal bureaucracy. Part of the Kubitschek's direct administration, the Grupo de Trabalho de Brasília (henceforth, GTB) was a task force founded in 1958 under the presidency of João Guilherme de Aragão in his capacity as director general of DASP.[3] Kubitschek charged the GTB with preparing suggestions, in the form of plans and schedules, for all matters concerning the transfer of the federal institutions of government and their employees. To accomplish this task, the GTB gathered representatives from all civilian and military ministries, from the various institutions of the legislative and judicial branches of government, and from Novacap. In addition to actually recruiting federal functionaries for the transfer, its various subgroups prepared proposals to organize the bureaucracy and its employees in postinaugural Brasília. These proposals included a constitutional reform covering all

aspects of law affected by the transfer of the capital, the Organic Law of political organization, the Law of Judicial Organization, a budget, and a number of other projects that altogether defined the legal status of the Federal District, its administrative and political structures, and its residential organization. I shall use the term the Organic Laws of Brasília to refer to the combined intentions of these proposals including, in a wider sense, those of Novacap and the GTB for both the pre- and the postinaugural organization of the city.

To understand the nature of these intentions, it is necessary to focus on the organization of those people that the government included as full members in the bureaucratic polity in relation to those that it excluded, or considered to have less than full rights. We must focus on this differentiation because the government's project was to organize its own corps of employees into a localized corporate unit, a Federal District, with unique identities, determinate boundaries and memberships, autonomy in relation to other municipalities, presumptive perpetuity, and organization and procedures necessary to regulate its collective affairs. This project of incorporation therefore rests on a set of minimal criteria that constitutes and differentiates the population of Brasília. These criteria are expressed in membership rules and conditions that regulate the status of members, their participation in the public domain of their social units, and their obligations, privileges, and powers. For this reason, if we are to understand the government's intentions in populating Brasília, we must analyze the basis on which it incorporated the population of civil servants as full citizens of the city in contrast to those that it sought to exclude as having no such rights.[4]

The principal criteria of incorporation were those that regulated who would have rights to reside in the new city. These rights of residence referred to access to housing in the Plano Piloto, the only planned, permanent, and authorized new settlement in the Federal District. Specifically, they were expressed in the rules and conditions regulating access to the *superquadra* apartments and row houses constructed and owned by the government, as these were the only authorized residences available in the Plano Piloto at the time of its inauguration. As these residences were public property and constituted the major resource of Brasília's public domain, the rules relating to their distribution both reflected and established basic conditions of participation in this domain. Therefore, to expose the nature and consequences of the government's plan for incorporation, we shall focus on the distribution of rights to residence as revealing basic criteria that established different statuses among Brasília's inaugural population.

These criteria segmented the population into two recruitment units with differential access to the public domain: the one recruited by Novacap for the city's construction, which the government deprived of rights to reside in the city; and the other recruited by the GTB for the bureaucracy of the capital, which the government endowed with a variety of settlement rights, the most important of which was the right to reside in the apartments the construction workers had built. Moreover, although the Novacap unit was incorporated with unique identities, memberships, and boundaries, its members lacked the autonomous political organization and administrative procedures necessary for collective action or representation. In contrast, the GTB unit was organized as a corporate group through two types of representative councils. Thus, although all of the Brazilians recruited to Brasília were citizens of Brazil, not all citizens were equally enrolled in Brasília's public domain. This differential distribution of rights to closed sections of the population defined Brasília as a differentially incorporated polity within the federation of Brazilian states and territories.[5]

This stratified recruitment of Brasília's inaugural populations constituted the essence of the government's plan to settle and organize the new capital. It determined their structure and articulation, and therefore established the terms of their subsequent social and political transformations: on the one hand, the construction workers transformed themselves politically by mobilizing into representative associations to protest their lack of rights to the city; on the other, the bureaucrats lost their urban political organization with the dissolution of one of their representative councils. This demise left the Plano Piloto residents as a whole without legitimate means for collective action or representation in the city's public domain. Moreover, for that very reason, it freed the elite sectors of society from collective sanctions, allowing them to pursue their own interests in the city at the expense of the less powerful.

The significance of differential incorporation in understanding these developments is not diminished by the fact that the construction camp was planned as a temporary settlement. In the first place, while the government's plan assumed, however unwisely, that the majority of construction workers would go home after the inauguration, they did not. Second, this assumption was patently contradicted by the need, known from the beginning, for massive numbers of workers to continue building the bareley inhabitable Brasília after its due date. These workers remained systematically excluded from the Plano Piloto. Finally, the very conception of a city dedicated to a single function necessarily presumes some form of differential incorporation of

the population, if full access to its public domain is restricted to residents who exercise this function. In this case, the single function is administration. But the presumption applies equally to ritual and military cities, for example, ruled by status groups exercising authority over a more inclusive polity. Thus, Brasília's identity as a solely administrative city necessarily entails differential access to its public domain for those who either are or are not prior members of the bureaucracy. As we shall see shortly, this identity was clearly stated as a founding principle of Brasília's Organic Laws.[6]

Thus, even if planners intended that the disadvantaged population of construction workers should eventually disappear, the two recruitment units cannot be isolated from each other in understanding the development of Brasiliense society. Rather, our methodological challenge is to grasp this development as a relational process. For in fact, the government did not create a city *of* bureaucrats, unveiled on inauguration day to consist largely of a population of federal functionaries enjoying equal access to the public residences. Rather, it created a city *for* bureaucrats who were a minority population with privileged access to a public domain of resources which excluded the vast majority. Therefore, even before its inauguration, Brasília was a stratified city in which differential incorporation was the fundamental condition of social organization.

The basis of recruitment to this organization was occupation. Thus, among those recruited by Novacap for the construction project, we find engineers, architects, skilled and unskilled workers, merchants, agriculturalists, and administrative functionaries of the enterprise itself. Similarly, among those recruited by the GTB for the bureaucracy, we find ministers of state, department heads, technical advisors, clerks, stenographers, chauffeurs, janitors, and coffee-boys. It is thus evident that each group was composed of members occupying vastly different class and status positions. Nevertheless, by virtue of their recruitment and regardless of their backgrounds, all of them came to Brasília to find themselves in one of two situations with respect to their rights or lack of rights to the city. This recruitment defined what was peculiar and fundamental to Brasília's inaugural populations: both the Novacap and the GTB units were composed of people who usually belonged to different social groups and categories but who found themselves united in their status with respect to the distribution of rights to the city. It was the incorporation of such differences into the same recruitment group that established not only what was socially radical about the constitution of Brasília's collective domain, but also the terms of the social conflicts that destroyed it.

On the one hand, the GTB planners had as an objective the leveling of previous status differences by distributing the same rights to the city to different social classes; that is, they sought to create one status group out of several different ones in relation to residence in the *superquadras*. This "principle of equality," as the planners called it, established an egalitarian mixing of different classes in the same residential unit. However, the mixture proved explosive, igniting class and status conflicts among the residents. In turn, these conflicts led to the demise of the planned collective structure of the *superquadras*, to alliances between the privileged GTB class and their social counterparts among those not originally entitled to reside in the government apartments, and eventually to the marginalization of the lowest class of civil servants from the city. On the other hand, for most of the Novacap recruits, their collective disabilities established the basis for interclass alliances around demands for rights to reside in the Federal District. These demands led, rebelliously, to political mobilization, to violent confrontation with the state, and eventually to the creation of the satellite cities.

To understand the structure of these events is to grasp the way they developed as a field of possible actions and thus the way historical change is organized. The first step is to reveal the principles of Novacap's recruitment of pioneers and their internal differentiation in terms of (*a*) market relations (i.e., recruitment to construction or to commerce), (*b*) status relations (i.e., eligibility for settlement rights and housing privileges), and (*c*) power relations (i.e., political organization and capacity for collective action). In this chapter, our concern is with the constitution of these relations and with the structures of meaning that rendered them significant for the development of collective interests; in the next, with the actions, processes, and transformations that engage them.

6.2 The Recruitment of Pioneers

In early 1957, the Kubitschek regime began a national campaign to enlist people for the construction of Brasília. It sought volunteers for three purposes: to build the capital, to supply the construction, and to plan and administer the project. For these purposes, it recruited laborers and building professionals, entrepreneurs of various sorts, and functionaries of Novacap and other state agencies. All of these people lived at the construction site of the future capital and were called "pioneers." The recruitment campaign focused on popularizing the construction of Brasília as the means to forge a new national identity. Broadcast to the nation as a media event, the core of this campaign was an appeal for Brazilians from all regions and backgrounds to participate in a public works project intended to produce national integration. The participation of difference in the creation of a new national identity was thus the principle of its rhetorical legitimation. This discourse of participation was in turn reinforced by another concerning the frontier solidarity and democracy of the pioneers, a discourse propagated both in their own testaments about the construction era and in official publications on Brasília.

Both aspects of this legitimation were, however, in fundamental conflict with the actual instruments of national integration. The discourse of participation was contradicted by the regime's plan to incorporate the inaugural populations of Brasília differentially: it sought to recruit massive numbers of pioneers who would ultimately be excluded from the city they built. The discourse of frontier solidarity and democracy was contradicted by the labor conditions and recruitment processes of the construction project: these stratified the pioneers into various classes with different interests, privileges, and powers in relation to each other—establishing a structure of differences that generated struggles and alliances among these classes, one that we need to understand in order to account for the political destiny of the pioneers as a whole.

In the following discussion, therefore, I shall first analyze these discourses of recruitment and then the processes of stratification that contradict them. My concern in discussing the former is to show how the government presented its intentions to the nation rather than to look at the actual motivations of migrants. These motivations we shall examine in relation to the labor market of the construction project. In addition, I am concerned to show how the regime's discourses of participation—contradicted by its practices in establishing market, status, and power relations in the construction territory—structured subsequent collective actions by pioneers and the state's response to them.

6.2.1 Discourses of Participation: Reinventing the Nation

Kubitschek waged his recruitment campaign in the press, radio, and television. It was not as if this campaign was absolutely necessary to get the project underway. For that, he had only to conquer the opposition in congress. It was more that he made Brasília the metasymbol of his developmentalism so that in generating enthusiasm for it, he was at the same time justifying

his entire administration and its enormous expenditures, his policies of economic development, and ultimately his vision of the future of Brazil. He made his case to the nation through a skillful media campaign which presented all aspects of the construction and inauguration of Brasília as a pageant of Brazilian progress, magnifying his own charisma by appearing at its animating center.

In this context, Brasília's legitimation involved three basic rhetorical strategies. The first is one we have already encountered in relation to the symbolic appeal of Brasília's modernism. It is 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. This discourse of rupture with the past that simultaneously posits a radiant future was adopted by the industrial concerns that stood to gain from Kubitschek's policies. If we look, for example, at their advertising campaigns during those years, we see how important participants in the project of building the new Brazil interpreted Kubitschek's recruitment appeal and rebroadcast it. Thus, to take a sample of newspaper and magazine advertisements announcing the participation of firms in the construction of the capital, we find: "Here begins a new Brazil!—Rupturita Explosives Incorporated (a pioneer in the explosives industry)"; "Brasília: The dawn of a new era—Bimetal Incorporated"; "The decisive mark of national progress—Mercedes Benz of Brazil"; and "Brasília: A new path—Cobrasma Incorporated."[7]

While the past is being put aside in these texts, one also finds the equally dominant theme of legitimation by historical analogy. Thus, we find Phillips Petroleum announcing that in Brasília "Brazil sees realized the dream of the Inconfidentes [the independence movement of 1789] and the Ideal of the Republicans." Other common historical analogies found in such advertisements include "Brasília realizes the dream of Dom Bosco" and "fulfills the discovery of Brazil." In Kubitschek's brand of heady optimism for progress, these two types of legitimation—by historical rupture and by historical recapitulation—are complementary not contradictory. While the one breaks with the past as it leaps into the future, the other identifies that future as the true realization of Brazil's initial promise, which the intervening years had failed to achieve. The simultaneity of rupture and recapitulation in creating a second new nation is exactly the meaning of the declaration of *Manchete*, the popular weekly magazine, on the title page of its special inaugural edition, 21 April 1960: "The ringing of the bell that announced the death of Tiradentes [the executed leader of the Inconfidentes] proclaimed the inauguration of Brasília."

Of the many analogies linking Brasília to the glorious spirit of History, perhaps none received greater national attention than the denomination of all those who participated in the construction of the capital as "the *bandeirantes* of the twentieth century." As a manufacturer of building materials put it, "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." During Brazil's colonial period, *bandeirantes* were groups of armed adventurers who penetrated to the heartlands of South America seeking gold, diamonds, Indian slaves, African runaways, and the land of eternal youth.[8] They marched through the backlands of the continent, raiding Indian villages and procreating with Indian women. In addition to miscegenation, their most lasting legacy is an ideology of marching westward, of expanding the frontier, and above all of taming the land, known as *bandeirismo*. Although Vargas appealed to this frontier legacy throughout the Estado Novo to stimulate the agricultural colonization of the central west, it was rather to the columns of migrants on the road to Brasília in the late fifties that the popular press dedicated the epithet of latter-day *bandeirante*.[9] With this dedication, the term *bandeirante* came to mean not a frontier marauder but rather the builder of a new Brazil.

Initially, however, there were two distinct categories of Brasília *bandeirantes*. There were "pioneers" and there were *candangos* among those the government recruited during the years 1956 to 1960. At the beginning of this period, the term *pioneer* referred specifically to "the firsts" (another category of honor): to the first state officials, professionals, merchants, cultivators (Nippo-Brazilian specialists from São Paulo), and the like in the construction territory; to all, that is, except the construction workers from the interior (skilled or unskilled) who constituted the mass of *bandeirantes*. Those were *candangos*. While the term *pioneer* was used as an honorific, the term *candango* was derogatory, almost offensive. It signified a man without qualities, without culture, a vagabond lower-class lowbrow.

The etymology of this word encapsulates a good bit of the history of Luso-African and Luso-Brazilian class relations before it undergoes a fundamental but brief redefinition in the course of Brasília's construction. Until Brasília, it was for centuries an omnibus word of derogation. According to most authorities, it is a corruption of *candongo*, a word from the Quimbundo or Quilombo language of the Southwestern Bantu of Angola. It was the term by which the Africans referred, disparagingly, to the Portuguese colonizers. As such, it came to the New World

with Angolan slaves. In Brazil, it first appears on northeastern sugar cane plantations where slaves applied it in derision to their Lusitanian and later Brazilian masters. However, at some point, the Brazilians managed to invert the referent of denigration: the word *candango* becomes a synonym of *cafuzo*, the offspring of an Amerindian and a Negro; or, more exactly in the congeries of Brazilian racial types, the offspring of a *mameluco* (Amerindian + Caucasian) and a Negro. As these racial mixtures constitute a great part of Brazil's backland population, the word *candango* became a general term for people from the interior as opposed to the coast, and especially for the poor itinerant laborers whom the interior has produced in such quantities.

With these laborers, the term came to Brasília. During the course of the capital's construction, however, both its sense and its referent fundamentally changed. Brasília's recruitment campaign identified the new nation-builder as "the common man." It placed at center stage, in the limelight of national attention and faith, those who had previously been excluded from principal roles in Brazil's development: the unskilled, uneducated, and itinerant laborers from the interior; the declassed and impoverished; the masses of northeasterners, Mineiros, and Goianos; the culturally and racially non-European; the miscegenated Brazilian (the *cafuzo*, *mulato*, *mameluco*); the unorganized laborers of both rural and urban origins who migrate seasonally to and from all regions of Brazil, known by such terms as *cabeça-chata* ('flat-head'), *pau-de-arara* ('parrot's-perch'), and *bahiano* (after the state of Bahia). The campaign declared all of these *candangos* to be key constituents in a new pact of national development. Claiming that Brasília would "mark the dawn of a people," as tire manufacturer Pirelli put it in a commemorative advertisement, it promoted the *candangos* as national heroes.

The change from pejorative to honorific was thus forged in the rhetoric of nation-building. It was promoted both as the intended effect of Brasília on the national will and as evidence of the generation of a new common man, the modern *bandeirante*, capable of achieving Brazil's great destiny. In the words of Kubitschek, it represented the construction of new national identities for the masses of forgotten Brazilians:

> Future interpreters of Brazilian civilization, in analyzing 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 skeptics 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 dejected invalid, with which Euclides da Cunha portrayed our *sertanejo* [backlander], is fading out of the Brazilian panorama. You will not find it in the fellow of the *candango*, to whom we owe this city. (Juscelino Kubitschek, *Diário Carioca*, 5 January 1960)

The emergence of this "anonymous titan" as nation-builder synthesizes all three of the rhetorical strategies of Brasília's legitimation campaign: that of historical rupture in the creation of the modern future, historical analogy in the reiteration of the patriotic past, and the participation of the formerly excluded in the construction of a democratic and charismatic present.

Figure 6.1, a full-page advertisement taken out by the Esso Oil Corporation of Brazil to celebrate the inauguration of the capital, captures all three legitimations in a typical image of the period. It also reveals a perhaps not unexpected development: as the *candangos* became heroes, everyone became a *candango*. The advertisement begins with the physical type and expressions of an "original" *candango*, a worker from the interior. But midway through the text, the term *candango* is used to refer to all pioneers, "from the administrators and technical experts to the workers." Thus, the pioneers declared themselves *candangos*, and the *candangos* were declared pioneers and the epitome of the modern *bandeirante*. From unskilled worker to the president of Novacap, the term was generalized as one of prestige to include all associated with the construction. During the construction years, this process of semantic transformation was promoted both by national elites and by local elites (i.e., "the firsts") who began to include themselves in the term's denotation. It proceeded to such an extent that *candango* became the unrivaled epithet of all those born in or adopted by Brasília, as *carioca* is the name for the people of Rio de Janeiro. We might consider this process as one in which the word *candango* was resignified by having its original class referent widened to include all classes of migrants. It was thus dehistoricized, depoliticized, and generalized to such an extent that its original class basis was eclipsed.

It is in this context of redefinitions that we may understand the *candangos'* own recollections of "frontier solidarity and democracy" during the construction of Brasília. Before I started to record this oral history, I supposed that the *candangos* would have internalized an ideal portrait both of their role and of Brasília's in building a new Brazil. I further imagined that this idealization would have strongly influenced their reaction to the disadvantages actually accorded them. However, I did not find that it was a significant factor in this reaction, or indeed that

" 'Buddy . . . I built this city! I mean, I didn't build all of it, but I helped a lot!' Like him, thousands of other *'candangos'* . . . thousands of new *bandeirantes* are proud of having made Brasília. Each one of them contributed with his share of know-how, talent, and work to turn into reality this beautiful Brazilian dream. Today Brasília opens its doors to the world and sings its glory. But the glory that remains is that of the Brazilian *'candangos'*—from the administrators and technical experts to the workers. They engraved in the epic of the construction of Brasília the mark of Brazilian boldness, the worth of its intelligence, and the unwavering faith in the future of this country.

"Esso Brasileira de Petróleo has been at the side of these men since the first moment. And they helped us to build there the first service station of Brasília—a pioneer in the land of pioneers—the Tiradentes Esso Service Station, inaugurated on 21 April 1959 by President Juscelino Kubitschek."

Fig. 6.1. Advertisement for the inauguration of Brasília, Esso Oil Company, 1960. From *Brasília: Ediçao Arquitetura e Engenharia* (1960).

Kubitschek's recruitment campaign had motivated many pioneers other than those among the elite of Novacap. Most of the *candangos* I talked with claimed that they had come to Brasília in search of jobs and adventure and that they didn't pay much attention to what they called "the politicans' rap"—though most could recite Kubitschek's catchwords. And although most of them remain quite bitter about their displacement from the city, saying "the *candangos* were forgotten, thrown aside" and the like, it is surprising to find that without exception in my experience their bitterness is directed at the postinaugural period and not at Kubitschek or Novacap.

To the contrary, the construction years are recollected with great nostalgia as a golden era of fraternity among men and fraternization among classes. This recollection of a frontier solidarity and democracy, as both *candangos* and elites sometimes call it, is the pioneers' own idealized version of Brasília's recruitment. I say idealized because it had no foundation in the juro-political conditions of construction camp life and work, as I shall show in a moment—as baseless as Kubitschek's discourse of participation in relation to the policies of exclusion. Yet, from another perspective, its mystification of such conditions is significant because it represents for many, if not most pioneers their memory of participation in the construction of Brasília.

What is important for us to understand is the very specific context in which the memories of solidarity and democracy have meaning for the pioneers, for out of context they can lead one to mistake *sentiments* of human fellowship for specific political rights and institutionalized social relations which did not exist. We must be careful, as some have not, of accepting the folk view uncritically, without examining the actual distribution of class and status advantages either of the construction camps or of what we take to be democracy. One such folk view that has been reprinted many times is represented by Niemeyer's own recollection:

> We really did have a task to accomplish, and we wanted to accomplish it in the allotted time. And it is just this that aroused a fighting spirit, a determination we had never before encountered, striking a common denominator 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 set up. (Niemeyer 1960: 22)

> That human solidarity . . . gave us the impression of living in a different world, in the new and just world we had

> always wished for. At that time 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. (Niemeyer 1961: 64)

It is interesting to compare this elite version of "human solidarity" with that of a *candango:*

> It was like this. There wasn't the club so to speak, you know. There wasn't high society [*soçaite*] either. However, there, the engineers lived in their own camps. That wasn't it [i.e., this residential segregation was normal in Brazil]. [What was unusual about Brasília was that] You saw that the engineer had the same appearance as the worker, dressed in casual pants, boots and all. Right? You didn't see him like this [well dressed]. (Bricklayer, recorded by Lins Ribeiro 1980: 114)

Although this workman contradicts the substance of Niemeyer's claims about a leveling of class and status in residential conditions (in housing, food, leisure, and family life, as I shall show below), it nevertheless confirms what seems essential about these two versions: that under a regime of very hard work, to which everyone was subjected, a set of symbolic exchanges occurred that generated a sense of fellowship across otherwise maintained class and status boundaries.

These symbolic exchanges were defined by two conditions that gave them transcendental meanings (i.e., of solidarity and democracy). For both classes, what counted was (*a*) accessibility at the workplace to the other, almost physical contact, under (*b*) similiar conditions of work. I am not referring to any leveling of status differences (which did not occur), but to a change in the usual pattern of encounters between members of different status groups and classes. Thus, the elite exchanged their usual attire for work clothes and, rubbing sweaty elbows with workers, felt a sense of class transcendence. The workers exchanged their usual workplace segregation for a sense of being important participants at the center of what the elite considered important, who therefore had to come to their "place" to get the job done and with whom they had daily informal contact. The context of these exchanges was an existence entirely devoted to building an inhabitable capital in only three and a half years, in other words, entirely devoted to work. It was the extraordinary work routine of an isolated camp that made these exchanges necessary and meaningful. Indeed, the ideology of hard work was so enshrined at the camps that its regime became the index of

progress for Kubitschek's entire Target Program: it was known throughout Brazil as the "rhythm of Brasília," defined as "36 hours of work a day—12 during the day, 12 at night, and 12 for enthusiasm." This rhythm was an expression of the new time consciousness of modernity, one which believed in the possibility of accelerating history, of mobility in society, and of creating discontinuities in the classbound routines of daily life to generate a new human solidarity.

For the *candangos* especially, the notion of a new solidarity seems to rest on their having had a sense of direct access to elite persons and soon-to-be important places. Their sense of democracy had absolutely nothing to do with political rights or institutions, of which they were entirely deprived. Rather, it had to do with their being proximate to, in a visual, tactile, physical way, "things" elite and charismatic. That this relation should be considered democratic is perhaps perplexing, but also perhaps comprehensible when we consider that these were very poor workers suddenly in the presence of power—of people of power, especially Kubitschek, and of places of power which they were themselves building. Their interpretation of this experience as democratic rests in large part on the inherent charisma of power which touched them and made them feel special, as if they had special access to it, as well as on the fetishism that elites cultivate of their persons and places so that fraternizing with the plebs makes the plebs feel as if their rulers are just like them. These two democratic sentiments—of access to power (and its complement of being recognized by power) and of equivalence between rulers and ruled—are epitomized by the many stories *candangos* tell of Kubitschek's visits to the construction sites. Every *candango* has a "JK story" about his personal encounter with the president of the nation.[10] Similarly, *candangos* tell of the important buildings they built, like the Palace of the Dawn or the Supreme Federal Tribunal, which today they cannot even enter. These stories express the circumstantial nature of Brasília's frontier solidarity and democracy, illustrating their dependence on two sharply bounded conditions—the intense work regime and the opportunities it produced for access to the charisma of power. So great was this dependence that when these conditions ended with the capital's inauguration, the *candangos'* sense of solidarity and democracy immediately dissolved.

This dissolution is nowhere more concisely expressed than in subsequent changes in the meaning and use of the word *candango*. Just as the underclass *candangos* remained disadvantaged and ultimately excluded, the class basis of the term reemerged in common usage soon after the inauguration of the

city. With the transfer of the capital, the government adopted the term *brasiliense*, not *candango*, as the epithet of the city for all official matters. Most members of the local elite followed suit in their public affairs as, for example, in Brasília's daily newspapers (even in the title of one, the *Correio Braziliense*), in other publications, and in the names of social clubs, professional associations, and enterprises. Thus, officially and socially correct usage began to undermine the terms of frontier solidarity. For the elite, a *candango* became, again, someone who was neither officially nor socially correct while those who were both were *brasiliense*. For the *candangos*, too, the term's meaning began to change. For those who lost their jobs in the construction industries after the inauguration, as so many did, the word came to describe someone who was unemployed and excluded from the city he built. In bitter self-descriptions, *candangos* told me that it meant at that time—and still means for them—"a socially declassed individual," "a poor person who is like a tree that has already given its fruit."

Today in Brasília, the sense of *candango* as a class term is firmly entrenched in popular usage: it primarily refers to those who live in the satellite cities, on the periphery of those who call themselves *brasilienses*. Thus, it still evokes unemployment and exclusion, but not so much with its original connotations simply because the number of pioneers is small among those who today consider themselves *candangos*. If one goes to the elite sectors of the Planto Piloto, to Lago Sul for example, and asks the children "Are you *carioca*?" they will way "No, we are *brasiliense*." "Not *candango*?" "*Candango*? Never." But if one goes to the satellite cities and asks the same questions, the children will say without a blink, and their parents will confirm, that they are *candangos*.

The final twist in this story of semantic transformation involves the term *pioneer* itself. Immediately after the inauguration, it became clear to all the pioneers that they would be pushed aside by federal bureaucrats holding residential rights in the city. Having perhaps had greater expectations than the rest of Brasília's preinaugural inhabitants about the just rewards of dedication and sacrifice, the officials of Novacap and the Social Security Institutes became especially disillusioned about their declassé fate. To make matters worse, the "arriviste" bureaucrats took over their name, much as they had done to the *candangos* before: the bureaucrats began to call themselves pioneers, which was perhaps understandable as conditions were still primitive but the height of ingratitude and insensitivity to the earlier pioneers. To this appropriation of their hard won identity, the latter came up with a justly famous response: in mocking revenge, they reserved the term *pioneer* for the

johnny-come-lately bureaucrats, but to highlight the theft of identity they referred to themselves and their cohorts of the construction era as *piotários*—a mixture of *pioneiros*, 'pioneers', and *otários*, 'suckers'.

For the common *candango*, the legacy of Brasília's rhetoric of participation is evident if we look at the city today for commemorations of its construction: we find not a trace memorialized of the once lionized "anonymous titan." Unlike so many of the post-World War II cities of Eastern Europe, for example, where one finds monumental representations of the construction worker as city-society-state builder, Brasília has not one such memorial among its approximately 25 official monuments.[11] The reason for this symbolic absence is obvious (if tactless): as a lot, the pioneers never had a place reserved for them in the capital of the future and thus could not be glorified there. While in the populist rhetoric of recruitment they were included in building this future, in plan, policy, and practice they were excluded. Yet, perhaps the more interesting aspect of Kubitschek's recruitment campaign lies elsewhere than in this contradiction—which is, after all, usual in Brazilian political life. Rather, perhaps it lies in one of those perverse and satisfying twists of history: having based his campaign on a charismatic legitimation that emphasized the values of participation in building a new Brazil, Kubitschek found himself especially vulnerable to these same arguments when made by rebellious workers demanding rights to settle in the capital. In effect, his legitimations provided them with the symbolic strategies of their rebellion.

Nevertheless, the contradictions of Brasília's discourses of participation reveal the underlying social forces of its recruitment. They suggest the actual market, status, and power relations that organized Brasiliense society.

6.2.2 *The Labor Market*

To initiate the epoch of construction, the directorate of Novacap did three things. First, it expropriated all land—with the exception of the two existing settlements, Planaltina and Brazlândia—within the area of the future Federal District. The fact that the Plano Piloto would occupy only 16% of this area meant that rights to reside within close commuting distance of the capital could not be sold through private transaction buy only through the government's concession of public land—a fact that gave the state complete control over the legal settlement of the region surrounding the capital. Second, in late 1956, Novacap divided the site selected for the capital into two zones of planned but

temporary occupation based on a spatial organization of work. One zone was reserved for construction camps and one for commercial establishments providing services and supplies to the work force.

The construction zone was divided into three areas (table 6.1; see pp. 251–52). One was the central camp of Novacap. Another contained the lodgings, offices, and depots of the Social Security Institutes that were responsible—in an arrangement with the Kubitschek administration that I shall describe later—for building the city's residential units. The third area contained the camps of the various private construction firms hired to build the city. In the first two areas resided pioneers who constituted a group of public sector employees. Among this group, approximately 2,600 were employed by Novacap and lodged (some with dependents) in two encampments near the Free City (map 7.2). One, called Novacap Headquarters or Velhacap, contained the enterprise's central offices, a primary school, various installations of the Welfare Institute of Industrial Workers, and residences for about 850 of Novacap's administrators and professional staff. Next to this camp, Novacap built another called Candangolândia, or "Candango-land," to lodge its 1,200 workers. In addition about 100 pioneers were employed by the various federal autarkies (six Social Security Institutes, two federal savings banks, and the Popular Housing Foundation) which had to construct enough residences in the South Wing of the Plano Piloto to accommodate the transfer of the federal government from Rio by the capital's inauguration. The officials of these autarkies were distributed in ten camps, nine defining the sites of *superquadras* and one the site of W-3 row houses (table 6.2). In these and adjacent sites were found the camps of the private construction firms that the autarkies contracted to carry out the actual building.

In contrast to this construction zone of publicly underwritten activities, the commercial zone was an area temporarily reserved for the private initiatives of those who at their own risk would undertake to supply the personnel of the construction camps with goods and services. This zone became known as the Free City (Cidade Livre), though officially it was called the Provisional Pioneer Nucleus or Núcleo Bandeirante.

Novacap's third inaugural act of the construction epoch was the opening, with the initiation of road and airstrip construction in late 1956, of a national labor market in an area of the Central Plateau where one could almost say none had existed before. Its effect was immediately dramatic: in an area that contained only about 6,000 inhabitants, the first 6 months of construction

brought a doubling of the population; 8 months later, it had quintupled; and by May of 1959, just over two years later, it had increased more than tenfold (IBGE 1959: 4). The structure of the labor market that attracted such a torrent of migrants is given for the year 1959 in table 6.3. It reflects an economy based on a gigantic public works project, with two-thirds of the population employed in the secondary sector of construction and related industrial activities. Almost completely focused on the needs of those building the capital, the primary sector of agricultural and mining activities employed 11% of the total while the tertiary sector of services occupied the remaining 23% of the population. Even though the relation between the secondary and the tertiary sectors in 1959 is almost exactly the inverse of what we find ten years later (see table 5.1), the structure of the construction economy evinces the same kind of overwhelming importance of a single sector of activity and nearly total dependence on the patronage of the state that is characteristic of Brasília's postinaugural economy.

The specialized nature of this public works regime resulted in several peculiar features that became important in conflicts over the rights to settlement. One was the anomaly of having more than an absolute majority of the total population gainfully employed. In fact, for every 10 producers there were only 8 dependents, a ratio significantly different from the national one of 10 producers for 20 dependents or, even more impressively, from that for the surrounding state of Goiás of 10 for 30 (IBGE 1959: 54). Brasília's high ratio of producers to dependents of course reflects the single purpose and consuming work of the enterprise. Yet, the high proportion of economically productive people also reflects the peculiar demographic structure of a construction camp itself: of the 23,000 adults living in the authorized camps, 56% were single and 85% male in contrast to the corresponding national indices of 39% and 50%, respectively (IBGE 1959). Moreover, of the married men, only 36% resided in the camps with their families, the remaining two-thirds either having left their families behind to work in Brasília or having found accommodations for them elsewhere in the construction territory. Therefore, 86% of the adult men in the construction camps lived without mates or families. These figures suggest two critical problems for the mass of laborers: the absence both of women and of families in the authorized construction camps where the work routines and barrack accommodations discouraged the presence of either. For men without women, whether single or married, sexual frustration could be allayed in the red-light district of the Free City. For men with families, how-

ever, the problem of finding legal and affordable accommodations for their dependents within the authorized temporary settlements was much less easily overcome.

The planning of the construction project thus established a number of features that were central to Brasília's subsequent development: government ownership of property, planned settlement, zoned functions, a local economy principally focused on one sector and one patron, and an abiding work ethic. It also generated a set of demographic anomalies that had the effect of a wild card within the constraints of this neat arrangement: in large measure they stimulated an unpredicted and rebellious growth of the commercial city, leading merchants and their working class allies into a classic struggle for a variety of rights, privileges, and powers against the forces of legitimate authority.

6.2.3 *Recruitment*

With the exception of Novacap's directors, very few pioneers were compelled to venture the hazards of the Central Plateau to fulfill a patriotic mission. Rather, men went to the frontier of Brasília for adventure, work, and wages. As the demand for labor was enormous and the supply limited, it became generally known—principally through networks among migrants—that workers in Brasília enjoyed a seller's market: not only were jobs available for the asking in all categories of construction, but also wages were high, hours practically unlimited, on-the-job training standard practice, and promotion on the basis of newly acquired skills rapid. Activities were so intense at the construction site that to keep pace with the schedule of building the capital in three years, both Novacap and the private construction firms encouraged a massive recruitment of even unskilled workers throughout Brazil until the end of 1958. At that time, the seller's market for unskilled labor collapsed: a drought devasted the entire northeast of Brazil, forcing tens of thousands of desperate people—called *flagelados*, 'scourged'—to the south, to wherever jobs were available, and especially to Brasília.

The impact of this drought on the population of the construction site is evident in the migration profile given in table 6.4 for the year 1959, the peak of preinaugural activities. It is worth pausing momentarily to note the regional affiliations of this profile, for these will become important in subsequent political developments. Overwhelmingly composed of workers and their dependents, 96% of the migrants were from three regions: from the northeast (43%), from the southeast (29%, principally from Minas

Gerias), and from the central west (24%, principally from Goiás). There are at least two ways to view their patterns of regional migration: in terms of place of birth or in terms of last residence. As table 6.4 illustrates, the former was demographically most significant, as 71% migrated directly from their place of birth to Brasília.[12] Of the three main regions of migration, 96% of those born in the central west, 67% of those in the southeast, and 59% of those in the northeast migrated directly. These direct migrations established strong regional ties which became the basis for social and cultural solidarities and for political organizations. It is also relevant to note that as a whole the pioneers were not rural migrants—at least not directly—as four out of five migrated to Brasília from an urban residence.

Pioneers were recruited in several ways. Nearly all of the executive, administrative, and professional staff members both of the private and of the public concerns were recruited in advance. They were either already employees of the companies, in which case they were transferred to Brasília, or they were contracted at the home offices for the assignment. In addition, the government, the private firms, and independent recruiters brought many construction workers to Brasília through advanced recruitment. The government utilized the services of the existing National Institute of Immigration and Colonization (INIC) to recruit, process, deliver, and even insert workers into construction jobs. INIC sponsored a network of placement centers, distribution posts, and transit lodges throughout Brazil which directed migrants, often providing free transportation, to the two centers in charge of "regularizing" Brasília's labor force: one center established in the neighboring city of Anápolis, a major distribution point for Brasília's supplies, and one center at Novacap headquarters in Brasília. Those who arrived in Anápolis were screened for their qualifications and given a letter of introduction to the authorities in Brasília to expedite their on-site induction into a specific job.

Although this network delivered a steady flow of potential construction workers, the private firms developed their own strategy for bringing them to Brasília. The firms were motivated by a simple market logic: the enormous demand for laborers had created a wage war. The firms reasoned that if they could recruit workers outside of Brasília, they could hire them at lower wages. Accordingly, they sent trucks to the cities and the hinterlands of especially the poorer states in search of laborers.[13] Often they worked in conjunction with a local politician who rounded up potential migrants with stories of an employment Eldorado. The migrants signed on almost as indentured servants, having to work off the always inflated costs of transpor-

tation at wages that were below market value in Brasília. The traffic in laborers became so profitable that a genre of independent and especially unscrupulous labor recruiters arose to meet the need—typified by the lone operator who went into business with a single truck converted for passenger transportation, in which he scoured the northeastern states for marketable young men.[14]

Whether or not already contracted in one form or another before their arrival, all those who wanted to work in the construction zone had to pass through INIC's recruitment center at Novacap headquarters. The recruitment process began with the presentation of an official work card that stated the applicant's qualifications and employment record; or, if he lacked the card, a series of tests to establish his skills and to procure the necessary papers. Next, the *candango* underwent a medical examination after which he received an identity card from Novacap's Department of Security. Finally, the *candango* was assigned a job from lists of openings that the private firms, the Social Security Institutes, and Novacap were required to register with the recruitment office. After this initial assignment, however, laborers were free to change jobs. Indeed, the construction firms encouraged them to do so as fierce competition motivated one to lure workers from another. After admission to this market, the *candango* found himself in something of a labor free-for-all: lists of available jobs and their competitive hourly wages were broadcast over a ubiquitous loudspeaker system in the Free City; they were even read to audiences before the screening of films and circulated among workers at the construction sites themselves by competitors who sent cars fitted with speakers to advertise jobs with higher wages and more overtime. In spite of this frenetic wage war (which no doubt delighted workers but which Novacap ended in 1959 by establishing a fixed wage scale for all categories of construction work), no employer with work in the construction zone was permitted to hire a worker who had not passed through Novacap-INIC's process of recruitment.

Thus Novacap strictly regulated the construction labor market by restricting jobs to those who had been inducted through its office. This regulation was effectively, and often brutally, enforced by Novacap's own and much feared army of security agents (the GEB, Guarda Especial de Brasília), who were themselves recruited from among the *candangos*. Novacap insisted on controlling accesss to the construction camps for a number of reasons. Although the private firms operated the camps, the government had built them at its own expense. In this sense, Novacap was policing its investment. Moreover, it was the

authority responsible for maintaining order among a construction force of twenty thousand males living in close quarters under frontier conditions. In this respect, its security problems were logistical, for there were numerous camps (each firm organized its own) dispersed throughout the construction zone. But the most significant reason was simply that this zone was the site of the future capital, and therefore Novacap wanted to preclude the possibility that its labor force might take root. By strictly controlling access to and accommodations within the zone, it wanted to make sure that it would not one day find an enormous population of laborers and their families resolutely installed in shanties. Even after the avalanche of migrants in early 1959 made it impossible for Novacap's recruitment office to accommodate the volume of applicants, Novacap continued to enforce job regulations strictly. It merely decentralized its rule, allowing the firms and the institutes to hire directly, but continued to control job and housing quotas within the construction zone.

If this zone was marshalled as a boot camp, the Free City grew as its opposite under a laissez-faire policy. The government's plan was to encourage entrepreneurs to supply the construction effort at their own risk, and of course profit, and after the city's inauguration to become its commercial and service population. To this end, it reserved a small site at the intersection of the two main highways into the Federal District for "private initiative." It offered two incentives to entrepreneurs: free land and no taxes. In December 1956, Novacap ordered the concession of lots, for a period of four years, to those interested in the venture. The lots were made available under a type of contract known as a 'commercial accommodation' (*regime de comodato*), which guarantees the free loan of something nonfungible for a stipulated period of time.[15] The contract gave the entrepreneur the right to build his commercial establishment in the front part of the lot (in this case defined as the street side) and his own residence in the back. It specified that because all constructions were temporary, they had to be wooden. The combination of laissez-faire governance and temporary wooden buildings turned the Free City into something like a frontier town of the North American Wild West variety, to which it was often compared: it featured false-fronted buildings along the boardwalks of an alternately dusty and muddy main street, which was itself the arena of an overwhelmingly male culture of abundant cash, ambition, and pent up desire.

However, Novacap's commercial contracts stipulated that at the end of the four-year period its wrecking crews had the right to raze the entire city to the ground. With a turn of phrase still

famous in the Free City, the president of Novacap declared: "In April 1960, I will send the tractors to flatten everything." Before that apocalyptic day, the entrepreneurs had the right according to their contracts, and were encouraged according to Novacap settlement policy, to transfer their businesses to commercial lots in the Plano Piloto. Among all the pioneers, only these entrepreneurs and their employees had a preestablished right, thus granted, to a presence in the inaugurated city. This right entitled the entrepreneur to purchase the building rights to one commercial lot in the Plano Piloto (which the state would own, as the land itself was inalienable) upon which to put up a building at his own expense in accordance with uniform planning regulations. I should emphasize that this was not a right to reside in any of the government residences, as the contract made no provisions for the entrepreneur's eventual residence in the *superquadras* of the Plano Piloto.

Although all interested parties were eligible for a lot in the Free City, applicants had to demonstrate the availability of sufficient capital to sustain their proposed venture. Having done so, entrepreneurs received a lot either from the administrator of the city, appointed by Novacap, or directly from one of Novacap's directors. As these enterprises involved no risk to Novacap, the selection of entreprenuers was a relaxed process, one less rigorous than the selection of construction workers. In fact, from the beginning, Novacap maintained little supervision over commerce in the Free City because its objective was to attract commercial enterprise to the new Federal District. To overcome the initial inertia of capitalists to invest in this project, Novacap therefore adopted an extremely laissez-faire attitude. However, this was merely a temporary tactic in its overall economic planning. For Novacap held fast to its trump card that at an already marked hour it would destroy the Free City and transplant its commercial activities into the decidedly un-laissez-faire economic regime of the inaugurated capital.

For a period of four years, therefore, a commercial city arose at the confluence of two transportation routes in classic imperial fashion: a ruling authority created a bazaar at the gates of its noncommercial capital. On the one hand, those whom it recruited in the construction trades were billeted in regimented camps as the work crews of a public building project. On the other, those whom it recruited for their capital investments in all activities except the actual construction of the capital populated the Free City and dominated its capitalist economy. It was called a Free City precisely because it grew in an area free of regulations that applied elsewhere. Its freedoms were rooted in the fact that its preeminent residents, the entrepreneurs, enjoyed

free land grants and paid no taxes. However, for the laboring masses seeking to enter the frontier Eldorado of Brasília, the Free City was free in another sense. It was an open city. In contrast to the construction zone, it was immediately accessible to all: to those just off the bus, to those awaiting documentation for construction work, to those rags-to-riches dreamers, to those who preferred the routines of service sector employment to the rigors of construction, to those in the oldest of professions, to those whose husbands and fathers were laboring in the camps. All migrants could enter the Free City freely, could find a place to live freely, could find work freely—freely meaning, of course, in accordance with individual means.

Thus, the Free City was a capitalist city on the fringes of a planned economy, in which differences in privilege were based on individual differences in income which were not only allowed but encouraged to find their unequal expressions. This open city of difference, of individualism, of entrepreneurial ethic contrasted sharply with the controlled construction zone (as with the built capital after it) in which income differences found little opportunity to express themselves in life-style, and in which differences in social status—although in fact correlated with significant differences in camp privileges—tended to be negated ideologically in the fraternity of hard work.

6.3 Rights, Privileges, and Powers

Having examined the labor market and the recruitment of pioneers, we may now analyze the distribution of advantages that the interaction of class, status, and power relations among recruits engendered. The basis of my analysis is that the distribution of advantages concerning work and residence generated a set of collective interests specific to each subset of pioneers, around which it organized (or failed to organize) collective actions against the state. In this discussion, my main use for the concepts of class, status, and power is to explain the incidence and forms of these collective actions.

Table 6.5 presents an inventory of the various situations of pioneers in the labor market of the construction territory. I shall regard these situations as my criteria of class because they seem best to account for the kinds of interests that united their members as collective actors. The table's assessment is based on the government's *planned* occupation of the construction site. Therefore, it does not include the pioneers in the illegal squatter settlements listed in table 6.1. Later, we shall consider these illegal settlements as a reaction to this plan.[16] In what follows, I