



DRAFT

The new New Capital

a proposal for mitigating
Brasilia syndrome



Brasília

UNESCO World Heritage Site

Because of its modernist architecture. Focused on preservation, so changing it is especially hard.

Segregation by design

Physical manifestation of the socioeconomic segregation characteristic of the country.

Unwalkable

Fundamental tension between its monumental scale and the needs of its residents. Made for cars.

“Brasília syndrome”

Exemplary of what not to do, according to basic design principles:

- low density
- streets empty and unsafe
- strict land use

Problem space: transportation

Brasília has too many cars

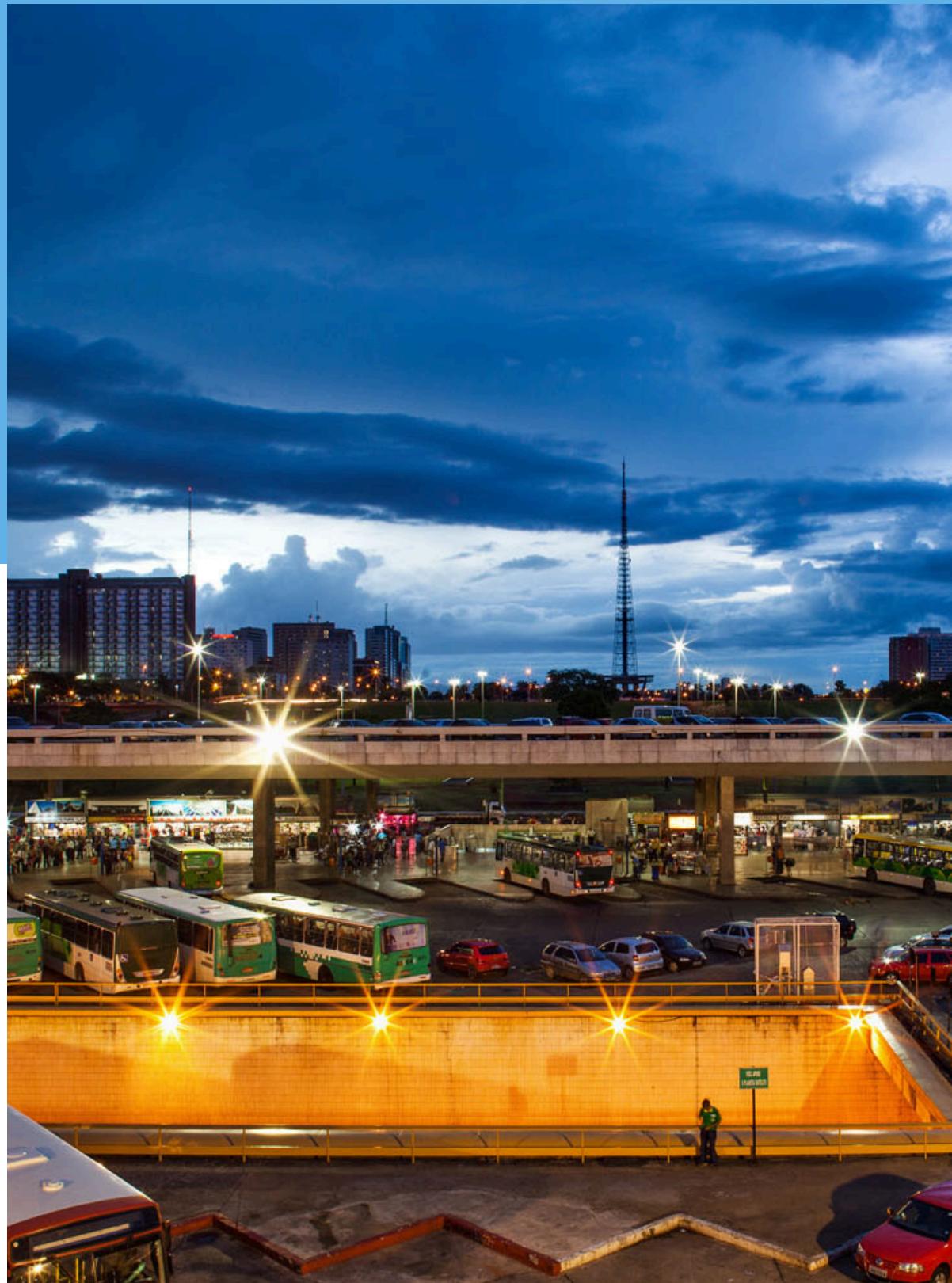
Advantages of cars

- Comfortable
- Safe

Disadvantages of cars

- carbon emissions
- road crashes
- air pollution
- space consumption
- health
- community severance
- noise
- microplastics
- congestion
- urban sprawl





Transportation

affects all aspects of the city.

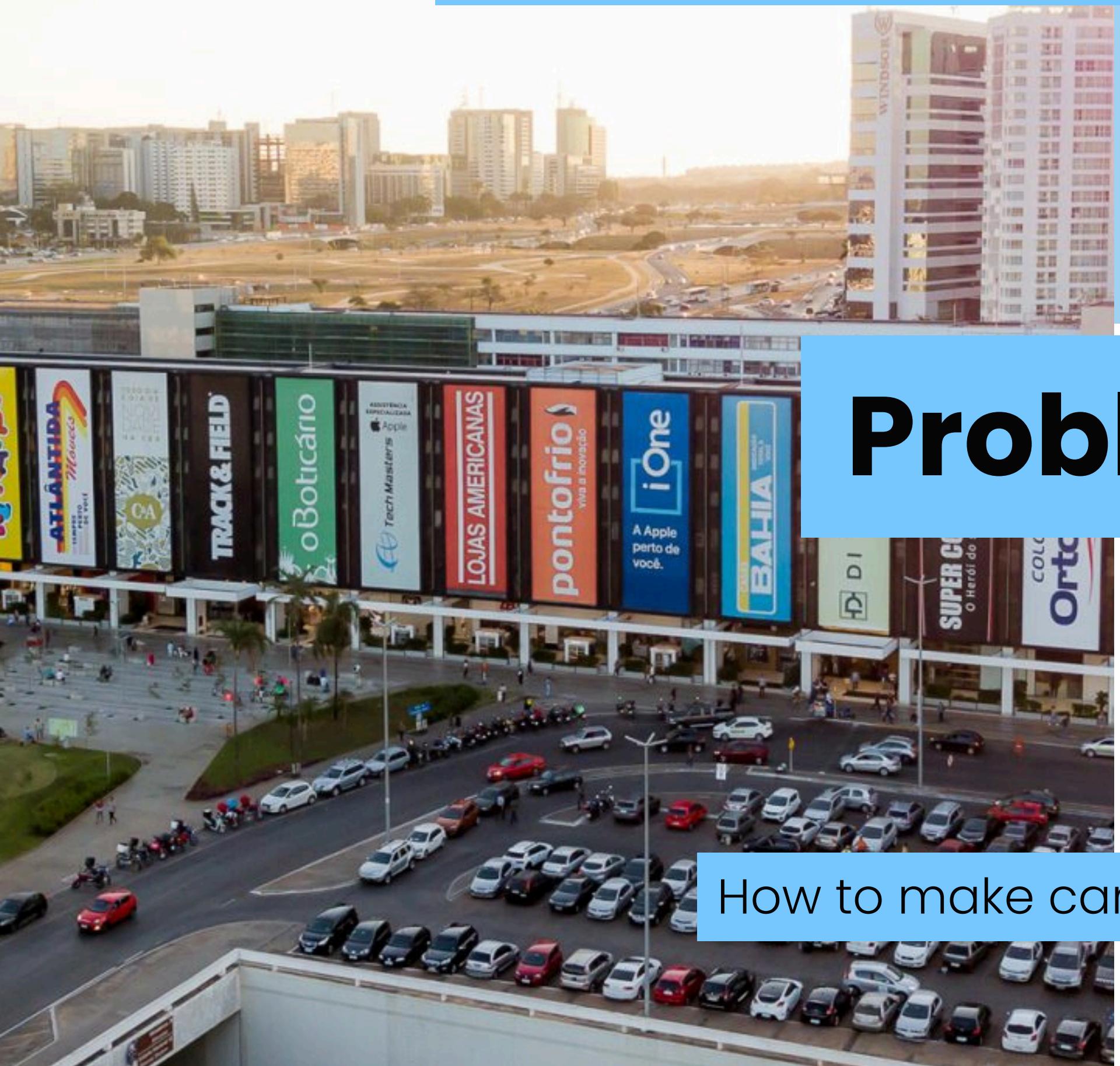
Social

Intimately related to the socioeconomic disparity of the country. When people make money they buy cars

Ecological

How does a park-city generate so much pollution? Cars

How can we increase density while preserving the city?

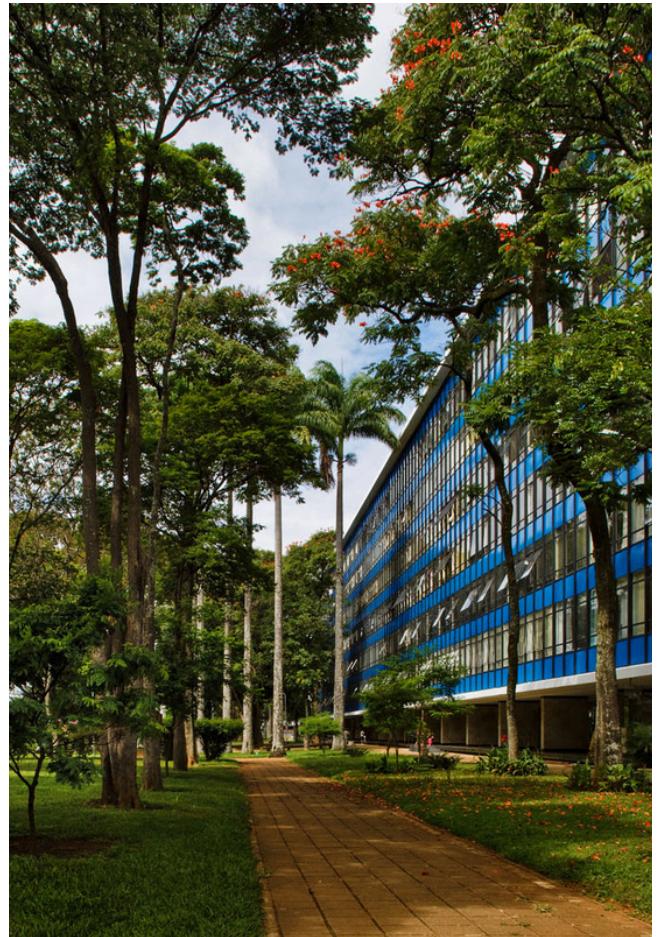


Problems

How to make cars less desirable?



Context



1st

Wealth inequality in the country



2nd

Biggest favela in the country
(Sol Nascente)



30th

Most expensive city in the world
(Mercer 2010)



70%

of employment, though only
10% of residents (Derntl, 2016)



Strengths

- Iconic
- Bucolic scale
- BRT was a success
- Good cycling infrastructure
- Center has highest HDI

Weaknesses

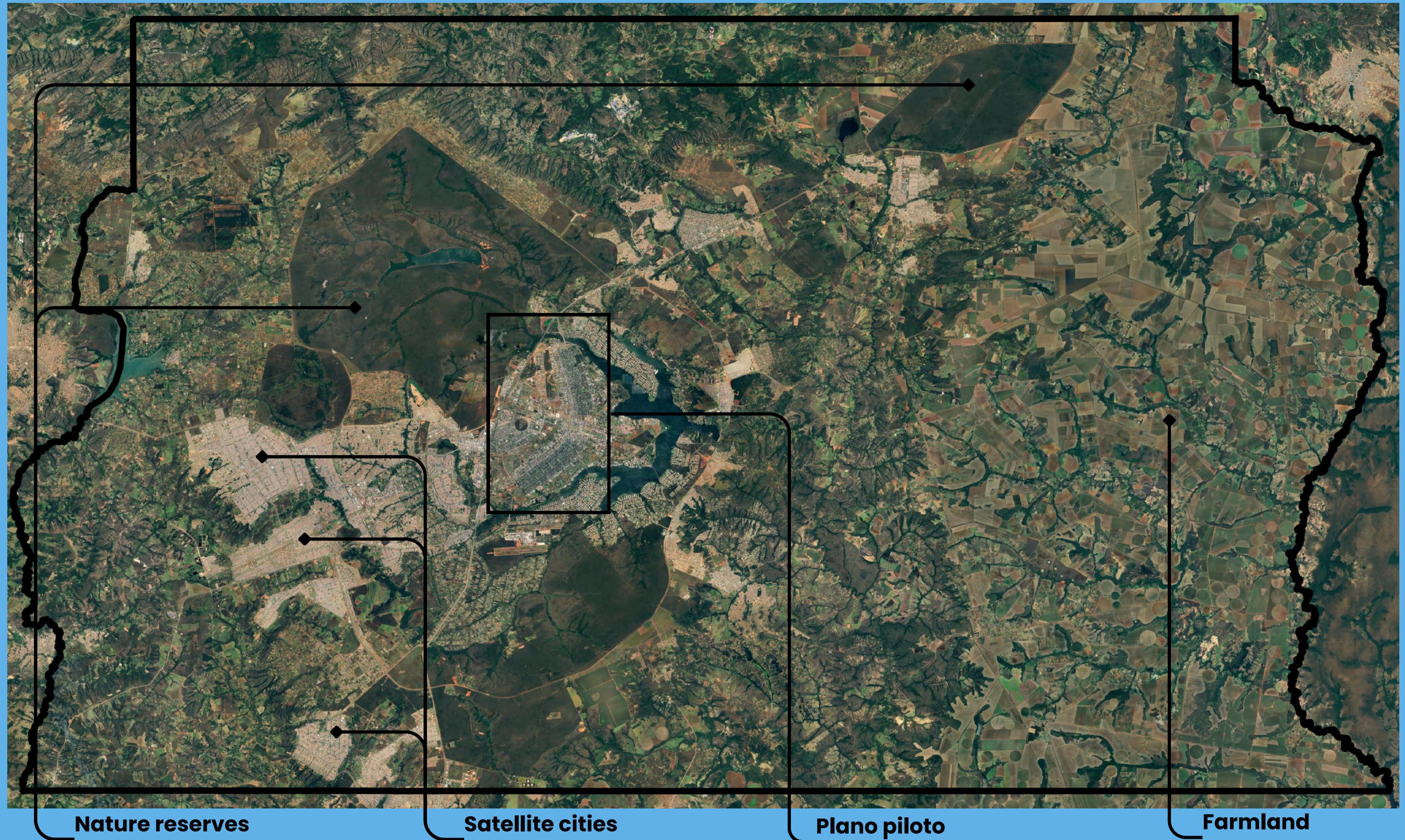
- Strict land use
- Too many cars
- Lacks density
- inequality; cost of living
- Lack of political will
- Risk of losing UNESCO status
- Fossil fuels are subsidised
- Cars are still a symbol of affluence
- Strict land use halts benefit of new transport
- Transport doesn't make money
- Benefits of transport are hard to quantify
- Walled garden of the mind

Opportunities

- PPCUB is increasing density
- Leverage already existing plans
 - VLP
 - BRT
 - park-schools
 - gregarian scale
- Leverage the narrative that worked
 - development
- Well-established. Would gather global attention from urbanists



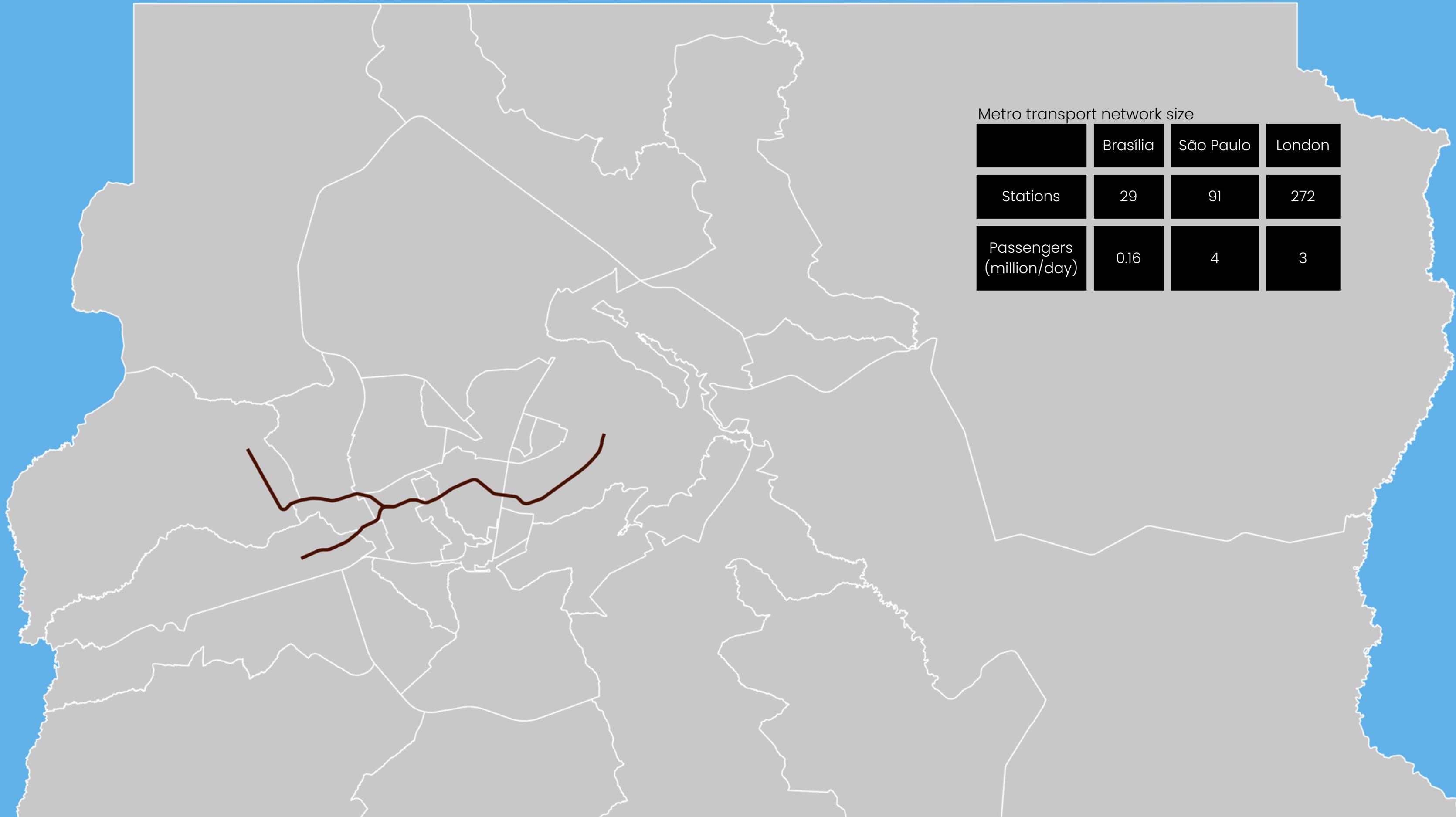




Total population



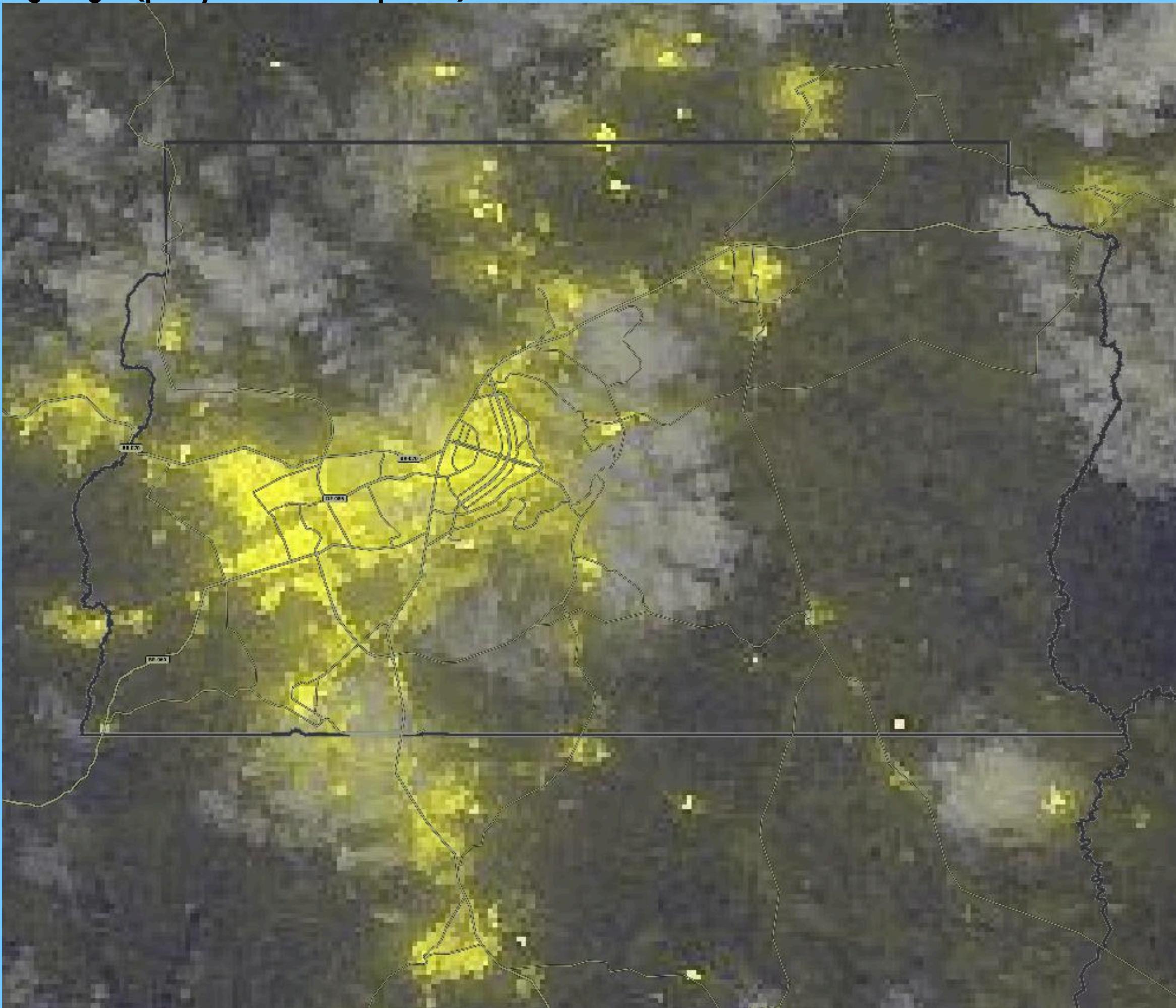
Metro



Metro transport network size

	Brasília	São Paulo	London
Stations	29	91	272
Passengers (million/day)	0.16	4	3

Night light (proxy for land occupation)







633km

Cycling infrastructure
(not generally used
for transportation)

Ecology

Nature

- restores attention and stress
- Large green areas
- Important for biodiversity
- Threatened
- Water scarcity
- Hydro energy





Neuroscience

Nurture

- air pollution
- noise
- community
- attention
- 4 hours in an uncomfortable bus every day

Behaviour and culture

- the logic of the gated community
- mimesis of public space
- city park -> walled garden
- Outcome:
 - culture inclined towards segregation
 - people will still buy cars





Recovering modernism

Shift of narrative → development is preservation

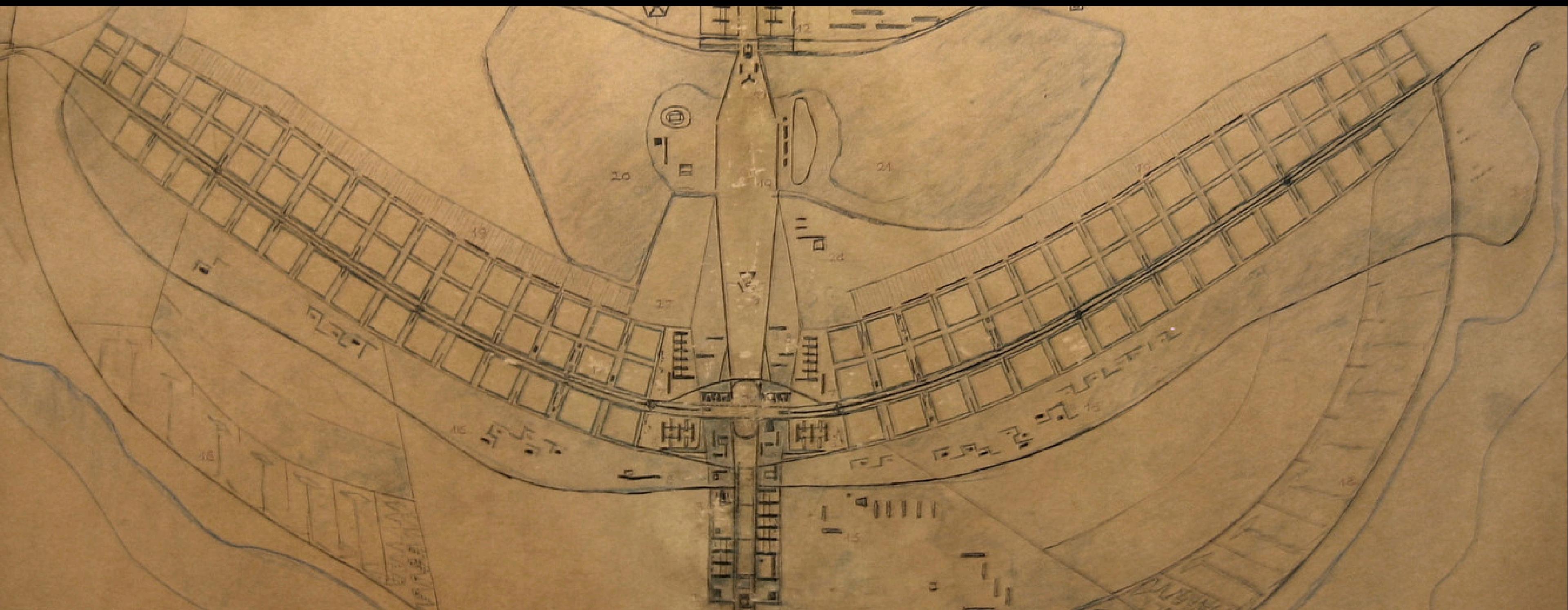
“Brasilia syndrome” is misleading. Many aspects of modernism are shared by new urbanism:

Superblocks are proto-walkable cities

- gregorian scale
- superblocks
- park-schools

This can be recovered. it is “preservation” - of the image of the city and the dream.

Proposal





An integrated strategy with:

- Free passes
- Expensive parking
- Private shuttle
- Car restriction
- Congestion charges
- Expansion of BRT
- Integration between modes
 - New Rodoviarias
 - Retry the gregorian scale

(Nicholas & Kuss, 2022)

A modern light rail train with a white and silver exterior is shown traveling along a curved elevated track. The train is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the frame, moving from the bottom left towards the top right. The background features a dense urban landscape with numerous skyscrapers, some with unique, rounded architectural designs. A tall, thin tower with a distinctive spiral or helix-like structure rises prominently in the center background. The foreground and middle ground are filled with lush green trees and manicured lawns, creating a stark contrast between nature and urban development.

Light Rail

"Brasília, air and road capital; park city." (Costa, 1957)

Light Rail

- Preserves not the structure but the image
 - Suspended – air city
 - Development AND preservation
- Leans into the future
- Induces development
- Reduces car lanes
- Integrated with existing systems (BRT, cycling)
- Deals with increased demand after PPCUB
 - avoids new cars









01

How to change culture

- Buses are not cool; trains are cool.
- This is serious; not a Maglev, not Hyperloop, not a Shweeb. This is a normal light rail.

02

Framing

- Light rail is the future.
- “Just like Europe”.
 - Amsterdam. Copenhagen. Progress. Development
 - This is how brasilia was built.
- Investment in the future. This is not mitigation

03

It needs to be better than a car

- efficient
- sufficient
- comfortable
- safe



Expected benefits

01

Economic

- All kinds of economic benefits

02

Ecological

- less cars!
 - Less pollution
 - Less noise

03

Social

- Reduced segregation
- Less traffic
- Induced development
- More walkable
- More safe
- More community

Stakeholders and audience

Politicians

You can be the one who finally fixed this globally recognised issue.



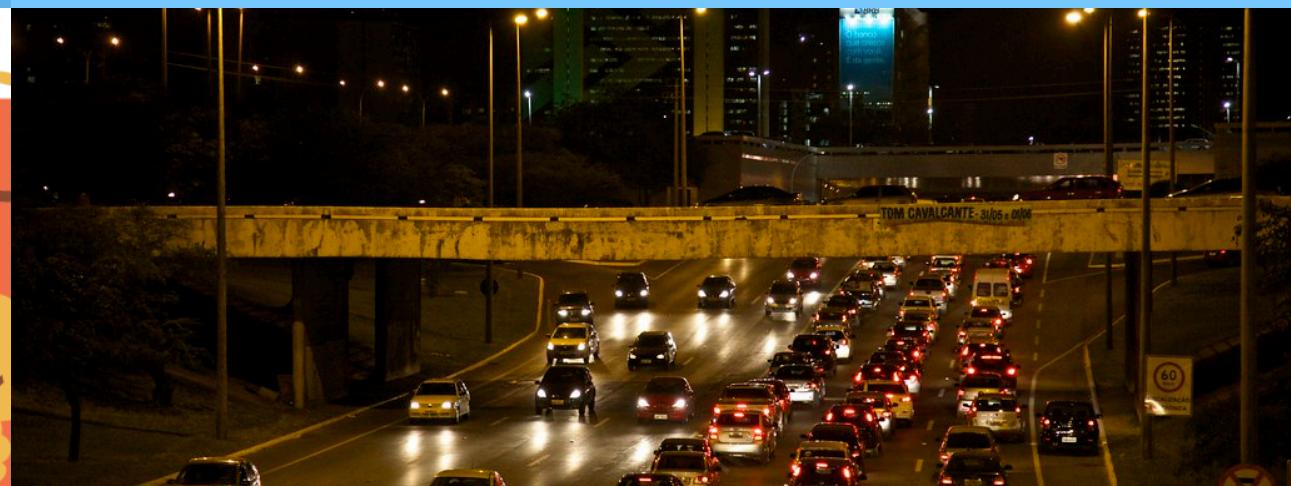
Project managers

- Great value for money
- short term results (whenever it is finished),
- long-term results (increasing development)



Urban Planners

Bold intervention on a frozen city; case study on managing the tension between preservation and development



Summary

Lack of density
Too many cars
Frozen
Enforced segregation
Unwalkable
Cultural and behavioural block

Integrated strategy with the BRT

Decentralization of the Rodoviaria

Light Rail

