

The constitution of the field of Urban Design in Brazil through the Urban Design Seminars (1984-1991)

A constituição do campo do Desenho Urbano no Brasil a partir dos Seminários de Desenho Urbano (1984-1991)

La constitución del Diseño Urbano en Brasil a partir de los Seminarios de Diseño Urbano (1984-1991)

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Abstract

This article explores the constitution of urban design in Brazil, by problematizing its key concepts, references, precedents, repercussions, and contributions, which are essential to understanding the discipline within the national context. This task is undertaken by focusing on the Urban Design Seminars (SEDUR), organized by professors from the University of Brasília and held in the Brazilian capital in 1984, 1986, 1988 and 1991. Taking the proceedings of the seminars as its object of study (while noting that the 1988 edition did not publish the presented papers), this article seeks to understand how urban design constituted a specific field in Brazil. To this end, it presents the context in which the SEDURs took place, analyzes the papers published in the proceedings of the seminars and the trajectory of their authors, and discusses their contribution.

Keywords: Urban design; SEDUR; New Towns; *favelas*; housing complexes.

Resumo

Interessado na constituição do desenho urbano no Brasil, este artigo problematiza conceitos, referências, precedentes, repercussão e contribuições fundamentais para o entendimento da disciplina no âmbito nacional a partir dos Seminários de Desenho Urbano (SEDUR), organizados por professores da Universidade de Brasília (UnB) e realizados na capital federal em 1984, 1986, 1988 e 1991. Tomando como objeto de estudo os anais dos seminários realizados (lembrando que a edição de 1988 não publicou os trabalhos apresentados), este artigo trata de compreender como o Desenho Urbano constituiu um campo específico no Brasil. Para tanto, apresenta o contexto da realização do SEDUR, explora os trabalhos publicados nos anais dos seminários e a trajetória dos seus autores, e discute a sua contribuição.

Palavras-Chave: Desenho urbano; SEDUR; cidades novas; favelas; conjuntos habitacionais.

Resumen

Interesado en la constitución del diseño urbano en Brasil, este artículo problematiza conceptos, referencias, precedentes, repercusiones y contribuciones, fundamentales para la comprensión de la disciplina a nivel nacional a partir de los Seminarios de Diseño Urbano (SEDUR), organizados por profesores de la Universidad de Brasilia. y realizados en la capital en 1984, 1986, 1988 y 1991. Tomando como objeto de estudio los anales de los seminarios realizados (recordando que en la edición de 1988 no se publicaron los trabajos presentados), este artículo busca comprender cómo el diseño urbano constituyó un espacio específico campo en Brasil. Para ello, presenta el contexto de la SEDUR, explora los trabajos publicados en los anales del seminario y la trayectoria de sus autores, y discute su aporte.

Palabras clave: Diseño urbano; SEDUR; Ciudades nuevas; *favelas*; conjuntos habitacionales.

1 Introduction

In the early 1980s, a group of professors from the University of Brasília (UnB) organized a series of four meetings that played a pivotal role in institutionalizing Urban Design in Brazil. The Urban Design Seminars (hereafter referred to as SEDUR) were held in the Brazilian capital in 1984, 1986, 1988, and 1991. These seminars brought together faculty members, researchers, and design professionals from across Brazil, and thereby not only established a vital forum for discussing this emerging field of knowledge, but also documented new practices for understanding and intervening in the urban environment.

A distinctive, recurring feature of the Seminar editions is that, despite their clearly academic nature, the events included guest professionals from municipal governments, state secretariats, and the Federal Government. These participants presented outcomes of professional practices linked to public administration as well as to architecture and engineering firms, alongside applied academic research.

The analysis of the SEDURs was based on the seminar proceedings as the main primary sources, supplemented by interviews with the event organizers¹ and a review of the main texts cited in the papers presented at the seminars. The methodology involved a systematic review of the proceedings, encompassing all the articles, their authors, academic backgrounds, and institutional affiliations, as well as the bibliographic references cited in the texts. This approach enabled an understanding of the main themes addressed, the influence of the institutional backgrounds and academic trajectories of the authors, the prominence of certain bibliographic references, and the transformations and shifts in SEDUR's scope and thematic range over time. Due to the lack of published proceedings from SEDUR III, which were never compiled or published, we conducted additional research in architecture journals from the period, where we encountered notes and summaries regarding the seminar, as well as interviews with speakers. We also consulted the *Lattes* CVs of the participants to help partially reconstruct and compensate for this significant gap.

This analysis has made it possible to comprehend the SEDURs as both spaces for debate and as *loci* for the construction of the field of urban design in Brazil. This has revealed vital aspects of its consolidation and dissemination, as well as its increasing complexity throughout the 1980s – dimensions that have yet to be addressed by Brazilian historiography, whether in terms of their impact on the history of both urbanism and urban planning.

2 The international landscape, the SEDURs, and Urban Design in Brazil

The term *urban design* was popularized in the United States by Josep Lluís Sert in the late 1950s, subsequently lending its name to a new postgraduate course at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) in the early 1960s. As director of the Harvard GSD, Sert envisioned Urban Design as a new discipline capable of bridging the gap between planning and design. He argued that it would provide a shared foundation for the work of architects, landscape architects, and urban planners, while extending beyond the traditional boundaries of these professions to address the physical form of the city (Avermaete;

¹ We interviewed Benamy Turkienicz, organizer of the I and II SEDURs, on February 15, 2022, and Frederico de Holanda, organizer of the III and IV SEDURs, on June 15, 2022.

Gosseye, 2021, p. 10), at an intermediate scale between the building and the city (Sert, 2015).

The growing internal divergences among various groups active in the postwar International Congresses of Modern Architecture, alongside developments in the North American urban context – particularly the renewal of architectural education in cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, to which many European architects had migrated – undoubtedly contributed to this pedagogical shift (Mumford, 2009). The constitution of Urban Design in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and Australia was “part of a profound renewal of architectural discourses and practices concerning the city that appeared around the world as a reaction to the growing autonomy of the planning sphere” (Orillard, 2014, p. 209). In retrospect, however, the constitution of urban design can also be seen as a return to earlier traditions of thought and intervention concerning the physical form of the city, that dates back to mid-nineteenth-century proposals, such as those of Ildefonso Cerdá (1815–1876) for the expansion of Barcelona and his conceptualization of *urbanización*; or in the modernization debates in Vienna where Camillo Sitte (1843–1903) introduced the concept of *Städtebau*, which recovered the morphological qualities of historic European cities and the intricate relationships among buildings, monuments, and public spaces (cf. Porfyriou, 2020; Avermaete; Gosseye, 2021).

Indeed, in 1960s Europe, amid the crisis of modern architecture and urbanism, a “morphological turn” signaled a shift in both scale and focus from planning to a different more nuanced urban approach. Aldo Rossi’s *L’Architettura della Città* (1966), which underscored the importance of analyzing existing urban forms as the cumulative result of historical processes imbued with collective memory, together with the typomorphological analyses of Saverio Muratori and the work of Carlo Aymonino, helped pave the way for this methodological framework. This new approach occupied a previously overlooked terrain: an intermediate scale between the global concerns of economist-planners and the building as an architectural object (Hebbert, 2006, p. 238; 241).

In the preface to the 1977 book *Formes urbaines: de l’ilot à la barre*, Manuel Solà-Morales (2013, p. VI) observed a definitive break between the morphological studies presented in the volume and the prevailing functionalist orientation. Drawing on work from the schools of Venice, Milan, Genoa, Brussels, and also the Urban Planning Laboratory of Barcelona, architects Philippe Panerai, Jean Castex, and Jean-Charles Depaule disseminated a way of interpreting the city – one that forged strong connections between urban form and architecture. Their approach emphasized the architectural construction of the city, the logic of land subdivision, the typological constants of urban configuration, treating these elements as compositional tools in shaping the urban whole. This perspective laid the groundwork for a radically different idea of urbanism. Solà-Morales also observed that planning had shifted:

[...] the treatment of every spatial project directed toward an abstract, imprecise dimension, where the aspiration for synthesis was often expressed simplistically, with colored pens and grand gestures, made more with the arm than with the hand, more on the boards of municipal meetings than on professional drawing boards. (Solà-Morales, 2013, p. VI)².

² The authors have translated this and all other non-English citations hereafter.

Rarely translated into other languages, outside the Anglophone sphere, the term Urban Design did not correspond to any established professional or academic field. Although it remained undefined for decades, over recent years, this situation has changed, particularly with the publication of anthologies in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (Orillard, 2014).

By analyzing three discursive genres of Urban Design – those of academia, public policy, and critique – and their respective domains of action, Orillard concluded that the United Kingdom played a more central role in the constitution of urban design, whereas the United States remained comparatively isolated, despite being the birthplace of both the term and the field. Urban design curricula appeared in the United States in the mid-1950s and 1960s, in the United Kingdom in the mid-1960s and 1970s, and in Australia in the late 1980s. In this regard, the founding of the Joint Centre for Urban Design in 1972 at the Oxford Polytechnic – now Oxford Brookes University – by a group of academics stands out as a significant milestone, becoming a key reference in the field. While public policies related to Urban Design first emerged in the United States, they gained greater prominence in the United Kingdom and Australia from the 1980s onward.

In the realm of critique, the *Townscape* campaign, launched in 1948 by the British magazine *The Architectural Review*, with Gordon Cullen serving as art editor, had international repercussions. It offered a pointed critique of the trajectory of urban planning, arguing that it was in fact responsible for the deterioration of the urban landscape. This material was included in the bibliography of a 1949 seminar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) entitled “The Visual Form of Cities” given by Kevin Lynch. Years later, *The Image of the City* (1960) became a seminal work in the field of urban design on both sides of the Atlantic (Orillard, 2014).

The unfolding of these international initiatives in Brazil can be traced through the organization, structure, themes, and references of the four editions of SEDUR. The seminars were held during a period of profound political transformation – most notably the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the USSR, alongside the end of military dictatorships and the beginnings of democratic transitions in Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. Understanding the significance of SEDUR in the constitution of Urban Design in Brazil requires considering three key aspects: the country’s redemocratization process and the emergence of social movements; the critique of the modern movement and of rationalist/functionalist ideals; and the critique of technocratic and centralized urban planning – these last two being explicitly addressed in the seminar discussions. The repressive period of the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) had created a major void in academic events across Brazil, including in the fields of architecture and urbanism, which at the time had only a limited number of postgraduate programs³. With redemocratization came increased freedom in critical inquiry and the

³ The main postgraduate programs related to the themes addressed in the SEDURs, along with their founding dates, are listed as follows: the Master’s degree in Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Brasília (1962); CEDEPLAR at the Federal University of Minas Gerais – UFMG (1968); the Institute for Urban and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ (1971), (then known as the Postgraduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning within COPPE); the Master’s degree in Architecture at the São Carlos School of Engineering – EESC-USP (1971); the Postgraduate Program at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo – FAU-USP (1972); the Postgraduate Program in Architecture and Urbanism at the Federal University of Bahia – UFBA (1973); and the Master’s degree in Urban Development at the Federal University of Pernambuco – UFPE (1974).

organization of collective initiatives within universities. It is within this atmosphere of political and cultural effervescence that SEDUR emerged.

This political conjuncture was particularly evident in the fourth edition of SEDUR, which distinguished itself from previous seminars by fostering reflection on more contemporary urban processes and on political strategies for confronting Brazil's pressing urban challenges. Topics such as urban segregation, the formation of peripheral areas, and emergence of urban social movements came to the forefront, marking a new agenda for urban and regional studies. These themes also began to inform public urban policies developed by research groups within the country's higher education institutions.

The first Urban Design Seminar, held in Brasília in 1984, undoubtedly marked the institutionalization of this field in Brazil, although several earlier actions had laid the groundwork for the emergence of Urban Design initiatives. Among these were the pioneering *favela* urbanization projects in Rio de Janeiro, led by architect and anthropologist Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos at the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (IBAM); the international academic training of several Brazilian researchers, especially in the UK; and the publication of *Desenho Urbano* (Del Rio; Cauli, 1982) by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). At that time, the graduate program at COPPE – UFRJ's Alberto Luiz Coimbra Institute for Graduate Studies and Research in Engineering, was already offering a course titled Urban Design I.

A review of the published proceedings of the seminars offers insight into the diverse theoretical, conceptual, and empirical trajectories that shaped this emerging field. From these documents it is possible to discern the foundations of a theoretical framework anchored in the practical experiences presented in the papers. While all the editions of SEDUR were marked by a strong critique of the modern movement, significant thematic, methodological, and theoretical variations across the papers and editions of the seminars reflect the field's gradual maturation. This diversity is particularly evident in the fourth and final SEDUR, which featured a notable shift: while the number of papers addressing urban design practice declined, there was a marked increase in contributions focused on theory and history, including critical reflections on the historical and conceptual dimensions of Urban Design. A dedicated section on Brasília was nonetheless retained.

3 The four editions of the SEDUR

3.1 SEDUR I, 1984

SEDUR I was organized by Professor Benamy Turkienicz of the University of Brasília (UnB), with a team that included Professor Geraldo Sá Nogueira Batista (UnB), architect Maurício Malta, from the Federal District Government (GDF), and undergraduate students Maria Sílvia Barros Lorenzetti and Suely Mara Vaz Guimarães (UnB). Papers presented at the event were published across issues 12, 13, and 14 of the journal *Cadernos Brasileiros de Arquitetura* [Brazilian Architecture Reports]. However, the publication did not provide details regarding the structure of the event, nor did it indicate whether the published works represented the full set of presentations. While there was no overarching theme for this first edition, the organizer published an “agenda for a debate” on the form of the city, outlining key thematic areas for discussion. These included: housing complexes; informal settlements, *favelas*, and land occupations; preservation, renovation, and urban transformation; urban expansions and land subdivisions; and new towns.

According to the organizer of SEDUR I, the technocratic model of urban planning that prevailed in Brazil during the second half of the twentieth century, characterized by its detachment from the layout of the city and its constituent parts, compelled Urban Design to reclaim elements intrinsic to the discipline (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 67). Drawing on the perception of architect and anthropologist Carlos Nelson dos Santos, who argued that architects had “broken their propelling pencils” and abandoned design as a distinct field of inquiry and intervention in the city, Turkienicz contended that urban and housing plans had become fundamentally “lacking in design” (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 7). Thus, dissatisfaction with the outcomes of large-scale, centralized plans (urban planning) created an opening for renewed attention to design at the urban scale, and to morphological studies as tools for engaging with the existing city, amid the social, environmental, and economic transformations, as well as the shifting demands brought about by the reorganization of social movements. SEDUR I thus issued a call to “start designing the city” once again.⁴

Despite the emphasis placed on urban form and the clear distinction between Urban Design and urban planning (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 5), the papers presented at SEDUR I reveal “a certain imprecision regarding what urban design actually is” (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 38), which was to be expected in the field’s early stage of development. As Del Rio observed, professional training in Brazil at the time lacked a strong tradition of research, inquiry, or theorization, which contributed to the lack of critical reflection within architectural production (Del Rio, 1990, p. 46). Conceptual and epistemological reflections were scarce, and Urban Design was often understood as an “object contained within the architect’s field of practice” (Kohlsdorf; Kohlsdorf, 1984, p. 55). Hence, this suggested an attempt to reclaim a lost field of practice, coupled with a deliberate preference for the term *urbanist* rather than *urban designer* (cf. Silveira; Vasconcelos, 1984, p. 75). Lacking a systematic set of procedures and theoretical foundations of its own (cf. Holanda, 2022; Kohlsdorf; Kohlsdorf, 1984; Batista, 1984; Malta, 1984), Urban Design had not yet emerged as a distinct discipline, but rather as the renewal of an existing one. Del Rio (1990, p. 52) would later refer to Urban Design as a “specific area within urbanism”.

Del Rio (1990, p. 51), in a position aligned with Sert, viewed Urban Design as a discipline that emerged to bridge the gap between architecture and urban planning. In *Introdução ao desenho urbano no processo de planejamento* (Introduction to Urban Design in the Planning Process), based on his thesis for full professorship at UFRJ, Del Rio proposed an interdisciplinary methodological framework with a fundamentally physical-environmental approach. This approach was grounded in urban morphology, visual analysis, environmental behavior, and environmental perception, which came to characterize the discipline in Brazil. Studies of traditional urban form, some of which are cited by Del Rio, were part of the theoretical arsenal of “polytechnic urbanism”, which prevailed in Brazil during the first half of the twentieth century. Given the earlier publication date (Del Rio; Cauli, 1982) and the first edition of that book, it may be argued that the definition of Urban Design in Brazil owes much to Del Rio. Indeed, his work became a foundational text and a widespread reference in architecture and urbanism programs throughout the country. Notably, by 2004, Del Rio’s book had reached its eighth edition.

⁴ If, on the one hand, the term urban design reflects the intention of “designing the city,” on the other, Turkienicz (2022) explained in an interview that the decision to transcribe the English term, rather than translate it as urban project, as in other Latin American countries, was aimed at sparking interest in the field through the use of this “new” expression.

Despite the initial lack of disciplinary precision, the justification for and promotion of Urban Design at the first SEDUR was grounded in the observation that the analyses and explanations of the city then being produced by architects failed to account for its “morphological attributes” and had become distanced from the notion that human settlements are cultural artifacts (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 5).

As with most academic events, the SEDUR proceedings reflected a mosaic of themes and approaches presented by a range of authors competing to take part in the event. In the case of the first SEDUR, however, participants were invited by the organizing committee. According to the organizers interviewed, this selection process was driven by the desire to ensure alignment with the proposed theme, the approach being emphasized, and the critical positions advocated at the time. Moreover, key institutions, including the Brazilian Institute of Architects (IAB), the Regional Council of Engineering and Agronomy (CREA), and the Brazilian Association for Architectural Education (ABEA), played a vital role in disseminating the event and facilitating contact with prospective contributors (Holanda, 2022; Turkienicz, 2022). Thus, the papers compiled in the first volume of the event’s proceedings shared a critical stance toward “the functionalist parameters of the Athens Charter, which had long guided, and in many cases continue to guide, the planned configuration of Brazilian cities” (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 5).

Of the twenty-one papers published in the proceedings of the first meeting, seven were authored by individuals who had completed postgraduate studies at British universities (Oxford Brookes/ Oxford Polytechnic, University of London, University College London, and the University of Edinburgh). Many of these authors had attended the same postgraduate program abroad, facilitated by scholarships offered by the British government.

Brazilian critique of modernist thought emerged later than its international counterpart and, notably, often failed to acknowledge certain internal transformations already underway within the modern movement itself. Indeed, the SEDUR proceedings make no reference to Sert or to the broader revisionist discourse and self-critique that the modern movement had undergone. As a result, the Athens Charter continued to serve as a primary reference, frequently cited in a critical light, whereby “the flagship of functionalist urbanism” was explicitly criticized for its deterministic, authoritarian, disciplinary, and controlling nature (Turkienicz, 1984, p. 14). Traditional urban form, contiguous and continuous, thus regained value in contrast to the construction of these self-sufficient and spatially discontinuous geographic units.

With an emphasis on the valorization of traditional urban form, the papers presented at SEDUR I predominantly focused on the scale of the city and pedestrian space. The prevailing tone was one of critique, directed at the functionalist city, and a search for tools to support design practice in the real city and in everyday life, and was attentive to sociocultural specificities. There was a clear insistence on engaging with the real city and the challenges of the present time, standing in latent opposition to the abstract and disruptive city idealized by the modern movement. Broadly speaking, the contributions sought to address “the design of cities,” understanding them as “cultural artifacts” (Turkienicz, 1984b, p. 5). A widespread critique of rationalist urbanism and of the Brasília model (Turkienicz, 1984a) is evident throughout the proceedings. Within this climate of strong opposition toward modernism, the design (re)emerged from a postmodern, more humanist perspective, open to popular participation in the design process and incorporating other theoretical and methodological approaches.

Overall, the papers presented encompassed a variety of case studies and some instances of conceptual and epistemological reflections. The topics addressed included urban revitalization and renewal, housing complexes, the planning of new towns and university campuses, the environment, and interventions in *favelas*. A consistent emphasis was placed on the pedestrian scale and space. The overarching tone was one of critique toward the functionalist city model and a search for tools capable of supporting design practices in the real city and in everyday life, with attention to sociocultural particularities. The most prominently represented institutions at the 1984 seminar were the University of Brasília (UnB), the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG).

Several studies and projects related to interventions in *favelas* were presented at the seminar. These included the case of Vila Paranoá (Federal District) by technicians from GEPAFI – the Executive Group for Informal Settlements and Favelas of the Federal District Government; the case of Favela do Gato (São Paulo), by a team from the Fluminense Federal University; and an analysis of Profavela – the Favela Regularization Program in Belo Horizonte, within the framework of the Metropolitan Plan of Belo Horizonte (Plambel). Two additional papers addressed the new city of Nova Floresta (in the state of Mato Grosso), as well as a study on the housing policy of the National Housing Bank (BNH). These contributions reinforced the organizers' perspective that the design should be reclaimed as a political and practical space for transforming and improving urban conditions. A common theme in the papers addressing new cities was a clear rejection of the dominance of modernist thought (cf. Oliveira, 1984; Ribeiro Filho, 1984).

Opposition to rationalist parameters was accompanied by a rejection of the standardized urban image, devoid of cultural identity. The architecture and relocation project for the city of Itá, in the state of Santa Catarina – undertaken in response to the impending submersion of its territory by the reservoir of a hydroelectric power plant – was guided by kinship relations, neighborhood ties, a strong sense of place, and the preservation of local customs, identity, and the collective memory of the city that was to be submerged. The design of the new city incorporated common building materials, traditional construction techniques, and ornamentation, since “housing proposals that primarily aim at constructional rationality and the systematization of building components have given rise to dwellings in which two key dimensions are absent: collective identification – local culture - leading to the loss of tradition: and individual identification – leading to the loss of personality” (Silva; Rego, 1986, p. 348).

In the proceedings of SEDUR I, there were three papers on Brasília: one presented a proposal for urban expansion; another discussed the preservation of the capital as an urban heritage site; and a third offered a visual analysis of the Plano Piloto. Additionally, two other papers described the re-urbanization of a *favela* within the federal capital. By contrast, the proceedings of SEDUR II, held in 1986, included just one paper referring to Brasília, which addressed the preservation of the spatiality of the Plano Piloto. Indeed, Brasília was recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987, and its urban and architectural ensemble was officially listed by the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) in 1990.

Authors commonly associated with postmodernist perspectives were frequently cited, especially Kevin Lynch, Christopher Alexander, Amos Rapoport, Edward T. Hall, Ian McHarg, Jane Jacobs, Bill Hillier, Gordon Cullen, Aldo Rossi, Carlo Aymonino, and Philippe Panerai. One of the few papers presented at the seminar that focused on analyzing Urban

Design studies in Brazil highlighted the influence of certain international authors who contributed both to critiques of rationalist urbanism and to approaches broadly understood as postmodernist (Malta, 1984). Among these influences are: the “morphological analysis (Aymonino, Rossi, Panerai),” which “seeks to understand the formation and transformation of the city’s physical structure”; the “studies on the environmental perception of the Townscape movement (Cullen)”, which “rooted in the work of Camillo Sitte, go on to develop the analysis of urban space as a city stage shaped by its relationship with users”, aiming “to define patterns of urban landscape capable of evoking ‘feelings of comfort’ in individuals”; the “urban Gestalt, derived from German psychological studies”, which “attempts to analyze urban spaces as psychological experiences for users”; the “analysis of urban space by American psychologists from the ‘behaviorist’ school”, which “aims to explore how the built environment influences collective public behavior, in line with the work developed by Jacobs and Rapoport”; “Lynch’s investigations into the spatial elements of the city that are crucial for orientation, legibility, and a sense of identity for the inhabitants”; and “Alexander’s critique of the rigid urban structures proposed by rationalist and culturalist schools, along with his proposals for more flexible urban spaces, adaptable to social processes” (Malta, 1984, p. 51).

3.2 SEDUR II, 1986

The second edition of SEDUR was also organized by Turkienicz, with the collaboration of colleagues Geraldo Sá Nogueira Batista, Gunter Roland Kohlsdorf Spiller, Jaime Gonçalves de Almeida, Maria Elaine Kohlsdorf, Soraya Nór Güttler, Maria Silvia Lorenzetti, Maurício Freire Santiago Malta, and Suley Mara Vaz Guimarães. The proceedings were published as a standalone volume by PINI Publishing, with support from CNPq and FINEP⁵, thereby underscoring the event’s growing relevance and recognition. The papers were grouped into six “themes and dimensions of analysis”, namely: 1) Theory and Methodology of Urban Design; 2) Urban Design – Technology and Infrastructure; 3) Urban Morphology Analysis; 4) Urban Preservation and Renovation; 5) Informal Settlements; and 6) New Town Projects and Urban Expansions. It is evident that the “agenda for a debate” (Turkienicz, 1984a, p. 10) established during the first seminar served as the foundation for this systematization, thereby broadening the scope of discussion and opening new avenues of research.

The number of participants grew significantly: while the first edition featured 39 authors and co-authors, the second included 62. The contributors to the published papers were predominantly architects, university professors, and technical professionals, especially those working in public institutions. Their institutional affiliations included universities, municipal and federal district governments, development companies, planning and research agencies, and housing finance institutions based in Brasília, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre, and Belo Horizonte. This composition fostered a dialogue between the theoretical knowledge produced and debated in academic settings and the practical demands and challenges faced within public-sector professional practice. The organizers explicitly expressed their intent to integrate Urban Design into architectural education and

⁵ CNPq – *Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* [National Council for Scientific and Technological Development], a federal government agency that supports research and development in Brazil. FINEP – *Financiadora de Estudos e Projetos* [Funding Authority for Studies and Projects], a public company under the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation that provides funding for science, technology, and innovation initiatives.

to critically reassess aspects of professional practice within public administration—a concern that gained prominence amid the debates of the Constitutional Assembly, which was underway that same year and was referenced in the proceedings.

Interestingly, a paper published in these proceedings entitled *As dimensões morfológicas do processo de urbanização: uma possível (e necessária) metodologia de pesquisa* [The Morphological Dimensions of the Urbanization Process: a Possible (and Necessary) Research Methodology] (Turkienicz *et al.*, 1986) would later define the foundational scope of the research laboratory at UnB known as DIMPU – an acronym derived from the title of the paper, and to this day, the name of a research group registered in the CNPq Research Group Directory. Researchers affiliated with DIMPU include Professors Benamy Turkienicz, Gunter Rolland Kohlsdorf Spiller, Maria Elaine Kohlsdorf, and Frederico Rosa Borges de Holanda, who continues to serve as the group’s coordinator.

The first section of the SEDUR II proceedings was dedicated to theoretical and methodological debates on urban design. Of particular note is the paper by Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos, later published as a book under the same title: *A cidade como se fosse um jogo de cartas* [The City as if It Were a Game of Cards]. Employing the metaphor of a card game governed by explicit rules that structure both the game and the players’ actions, Santos proposed an interpretation of the production of the city and urban space in which the shared rules of the game should be transparent to all citizens. Likewise, he emphasized that everyone should understand the constitutive elements of urban space, thereby enabling actors to navigate between organizational strategies and multiple tactics of appropriation, in line with Michel de Certeau’s formulation (Santos, 1986). Also of significance is the contribution by Carlos Eduardo Comas, entitled *O espaço da arbitrariedade: considerações sobre o conjunto habitacional BNH e o projeto de cidade brasileira* [The Space of Arbitrariness: Considerations on the BNH Housing Complex and the Brazilian City Project]. In this paper, Comas examines the production of BNH housing developments and their impacts on urban form (Comas, 1986). Questioning the normative pattern of design solutions for low-income housing in Brazil, especially those based on the modernist superblock, he called for a reevaluation of the street, square, courtyard, and backyard, *i.e.*, the common elements in the historical formation of Brazilian cities, as a means to better integrate low-incomes neighborhoods into the urban fabric.

The articles on Urban Design methods and theories were underpinned by a bibliographic foundation that drew from a broad spectrum of international sources. North American authors were particularly prominent, with frequent references to Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, and Christopher Alexander (an Austrian-born scholar based in the US). Anglo-Saxon literature was represented by figures such as Gordon Cullen and Bill Hillier, while Italian contributions included works by Carlo Aymonino and Aldo Rossi. French authors were present through the writings of Philippe Panerai, Jean Castex, and Jean-Charles Depaule. The bibliography also included critical urban studies by Henri Lefebvre and Nuno Portas. These international references were consistently cross-referenced with Brazilian urban design and planning practices and, in several instances, complemented by Latin American perspectives. Authors such as Aníbal Quijano, Jorge Hardoy, and Eduardo Neira offered reflections on the specificities of urbanization processes in Latin American contexts.

The second section of the proceedings presented articles that addressed the relationship between Urban Design, technology, and infrastructure, exploring topics that link urban design to infrastructure costs, bioclimatic principles, environmental impact assessments, and cartographic techniques. Juan Luís Mascaró, professor at the Federal University of Rio

Grande do Sul (UFRGS), and author of seminal works on land subdivision and urban infrastructure that would become foundational texts in architectural education over the following decades, presented a paper analyzing the relationship between urbanization costs and the different forms of spatial organization. He argued that costs could serve as an additional parameter in urban design, since they vary according to density, the height of buildings, and patterns of land occupation (Mascaró J., 1986). Lucia Mascaró, also a professor at UFRGS, presented her research on the relationship between climate and Urban Design as a means of developing strategies for energy efficiency (Mascaró L., 1986). Among the key bibliographic references in this set of articles were the works of Ian McHarg, Kevin Lynch, and research publications by Lucia and Juan Mascaró themselves.

The third section of the proceedings turned to analyses of urban morphology. It included articles that examined the urban landscape through the relationship between built and open spaces, urban parks, environmental perception, studies on street design, and the continuity and differentiation of the urban fabric. This section featured a study by Silvio Soares Macedo, professor at the University of São Paulo (USP), on open spaces and their role in shaping the urban landscape (Macedo, 1986); and research by Miranda Magnoli, also a USP professor, on incorporating parks into urbanization and its implications for urban design (Magnoli, 1986). Also included is the research by Mário Kruger and Benamy Turkienicz, both professors at UnB, focusing on the superblock typology in Brasília to analyze continuities and discontinuities in urban space and its relationship to the social occupation of space (Kruger; Turkienicz, 1986). Turning to Rio de Janeiro, the paper by Lilian Vaz and Maria Paula Albernaz, both currently professors at Postgraduate Program In Urban Planning (ProUrb) of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), traced a genealogy of multifamily housing in Rio de Janeiro, assessing the formation of the built environment through this architectural program (Vaz; Albernaz, 1986). The bibliography referenced in this section brings together international authors such as Cullen and Hillier with Brazilian scholars, notably Milton Santos.

The fourth section was dedicated to the themes of urban preservation and renovation. The articles presented ongoing discussions and projects at the time concerning the preservation of historic centers, such as in Rio de Janeiro, São Luís, and Paracatu, as well as the preservation of spaces in Brasília. Additionally, some articles addressed issues of urban intervention, including the reintegration of degraded or underutilized areas. The fifth section focused on the topic of informal settlements, which had already been highlighted on the Urban Design agenda presented at Seminar I. Informal settlements were discussed in articles ranging from analyses of urban form to accounts of experiences in urbanization and regularization of *favelas*, with particular emphasis on new approaches rooted in participatory processes. The sixth section turned to the theme of new cities and urban expansions. The articles examined some of the new cities associated with the construction of hydroelectric plants; Urban Design projects related to the UnB campus; and Urban Design applied to urban expansion or neighborhood reconfiguration, such as the cases of Águas Claras and Fells Point in Baltimore. One study, presented by a recent UnB architecture graduate, analyzed the context of dam-related cities built in the Amazon and presented an intervention proposal in Tucuruí.

It is evident how the agenda set forth in SEDUR I was both expanded and more clearly structured in the second edition of the event. This edition featured the largest number of participants and published works. It also marked the emergence of research groups that established a space for dialogue on various aspects of Urban Design. Many of these

groups, during the following decades, went on to become reference points for research in the field. The organizers of this edition expressed a clear commitment to producing a body of applied knowledge oriented toward professional training and intended to provide technical support to public administrations through discussions on professional practice methods – specific to the field of architecture and urbanism – in relation to the city. The proceedings of SEDUR I and II remain important reference materials for Urban Design studies and continue to be widely included in undergraduate course bibliographies across the country.

3.3 SEDUR III, 1988

SEDUR III maintained the two-year interval of the previous editions and took place in 1988. The proceedings of the event were not published due to a lack of funding (Holanda, 2022), which therefore made data collection more challenging. This necessitated the use of alternative sources of information, such as reports and interviews published in specialized magazines at the time; information found in the *résumés* of participants registered on the Lattes Platform; interviews with professors who organized or participated in the event; and research in the journal *Projeto*, which published notes on the seminar. Additionally, interviews with Paulo Mendes da Rocha and David Gosling, keynote speakers at this edition of the Seminar, were also consulted.

The event was organized by Professors Frederico de Holanda, Márcio Villas Bôas, Marta Adriana Bustos Romero, Antonio Carpintero, Paulo Bicca, and Gunter and Maria Elaine Kohlsdorf. An important milestone of SEDUR III was the departure of Benamy from the organizing team upon returning to Porto Alegre to take up a position at Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). In his absence, Holanda assumed a leading position, serving as the principal organizer of both the third and fourth seminars.

The central theme of the event was “The form of the city: a question of design?,” explored through the following subthemes: The architects' city, The genesis of urban morphologies, Forms and -isms, Urban design in a democratic society, and Theory, form, and design. Urban morphology clearly emerged as a unifying focus across all subthemes. The event included lectures, paper presentation sessions, and an extension course entitled “The genesis of urban morphologies”.

In his lecture, Paulo Mendes da Rocha addressed: the importance of understanding the historical and political context for urban design; the significant housing demand as an “extraordinary” opportunity to build new cities; the limitations of design projects in creating better cities in the face of real estate speculation (analyzing the “degeneration” of the Goiânia project conceived by Atílio Correa Lima); the interplay between territorial economy and urbanization through new cities; the relevance of the field for understanding contemporary urbanization; and the political nature of city and urban design.

Another lecture was delivered by the English architect David Gosling, professor and director of the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield, in the UK. Gosling holds a doctorate on the city of Brasília, where he lived in 1976 while working as a visiting professor at UnB. In the interview, Gosling (1989) discussed his experience with new town projects in the UK during the 1960s and in Brasília in the 1970s.

In discussing the British new towns, Gosling argued that, beyond simply being projects for new towns, the third phase of the plan aimed to develop towns in areas facing economic decline. He spoke specifically about two towns in which he had been involved in the design

process: Runcorn, in England, and Irvine, in Scotland. He highlighted the importance of commercial centers in the central areas, which, through megastructures, integrated both the urban and architectural scales in both towns. In these cases, the shopping centers were not merely commercial hubs but also included services and government support. Gosling offered a pointed critique of the neoliberal urbanism of the Thatcher era in the UK, contending that Urban Design was largely abandoned as new projects succumbed to rentier interests and real estate market demands aimed at revitalizing central areas.

In relation to Brasília, Gosling acknowledged elements of the contemporary criticism, noting that the city fulfilled its intended role as an economic catalyst in Brazil's Central region. However, he emphasized that the modernist urbanism of Lucio Costa's design relied on a highly rigid system, in which strict zoning regulations diminished the vitality of the central areas. Even so, Gosling offered a partially divergent reading of the dominant critique, arguing that "in the monumental sectors and superblocks, the Urban Design is very good due to the landscaping work."

3.4 SEDUR IV, 1991

As with the third edition, SEDUR IV was also organized by a team of professors from the University of Brasília, coordinated by Frederico Holanda and comprising Maria Elaine Kohlsdorf, Frank Svensson, Jaime Gonçalves Almeida, Márcio Villas Boas, and Nícia Boman. Held biennially, the Urban Design Seminars in Brazil had, by that time, established themselves, according to the organizers, as a forum for the presentation and discussion of both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of urban design. To stimulate critical debate, the theme "30 Years of Brasília" was proposed. When the proceedings of the fourth SEDUR were published, four years after the event, the organizers acknowledged that both the thematic scope and the breadth of discussions had expanded beyond the original focus outlined in the call for papers, which had centered on a reflection of the three decades of Brasília's existence. The thirty-one papers presented at the seminar, authored by scholars from a range of institutions, addressed a broader array of topics than initially anticipated. Accordingly, in the volume published by UnB, the articles were organized into the following sections: Theory and History, Methods and Techniques, The Brazilian City – Studies and Projects, and Brasília. Although smaller in scale than previous editions, the event also featured keynote lectures by Stanford Anderson ("The Fiction of Function") and Vladimir Khaiti ("Experiences and Problems in the Construction of New Cities and the Reconstruction of Historic Cities in the USSR") (Holanda; Kohlsdorf, 1995).

The lecture delivered by Stanford Anderson, professor of architectural history at Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1963 to 1991, addressed the debate between modernism and postmodernism as both a continuity and a rupture (Anderson, 1995). Its title, "The Fiction of Function", might initially suggest a reductive or dismissive assessment of the role of function in architectural creation. However, Anderson critiqued functionalism as an inadequate concept for capturing the complexity of modern architecture, arguing that it obscured a deeper understanding of this period as both theoretical discourse and practice. The implications of modernity and postmodernity for Urban Design were further explored by Pasqualino Magnavita, a professor at Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), who examined the tension between totality and fragmentation, drawing on historical, cultural, and anthropological perspectives (Magnavita, 1995). In the seminar's second lecture, architect Vladimir Khaiti addressed the significance of planned new towns in countries undergoing late urbanization, such as the USSR and various Latin American nations (Khait, 1995). His argument concerning the USSR was structured around

three pivotal moments: the urban renewal program initiated after the Revolution; the conceptual formulation of socialist housing between 1929 and 1930; and the trends in new town planning from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Critiquing Brasília and the hegemony of the isolated block, which, he argued, leads to the discontinuity of the urban fabric and a loss of the city's formal coherence, Carlos Monteiro Andrade, a professor at São Carlos School of Engineering (EESC-USP), analyzed divergent strands in the formulation of modern urbanism, grounded in the contrasting perspectives of *tabula rasa* and *genius loci* (Andrade, 1995). He juxtaposed Ledoux's ideal city project with the Urban Design proposals of Camillo Sitte formulated in the late nineteenth century.

Using Rio de Janeiro as a case study, Vicente del Rio examined the paradigms that have shaped public interventions there since the early twentieth century. He offered a critique of the uncritical adoption of paradigms developed for urban contexts markedly different from Brazil's (Del Rio, 1995). By acknowledging the circulation of urban planning ideas and models, often conceived within political, economic, and socio-cultural frameworks foreign to the Brazilian reality, Del Rio aligned himself with the critical thought that emerged during the period in which Brazilian scholars began to establish the historiography of architecture and urbanism. Highlighting the ideological realignment of Brazilian and Latin American scholars in their approach to the study of Brazilian urban form, Glauco Bienenstein proposed an analysis of the relationship between spatial production and society. His work drew on the theoretical contributions of geographer Milton Santos and Argentine sociologist José Luis Coraggio (Bienenstein, 1995).

Among the notable contributions, the undergraduate research project by Luciana Simões exemplified the expansion of academic research in the field. Drawing on the work of Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos, her 1988 study presented the evolving reality of housing conditions for the poorest 70% of the Brazilian population: initially in *favelas*, then in urban peripheries, and eventually in new towns and frontier zones of urbanization. Simões proposed the development of urban planning indicators for ten pioneering settlements in the Legal Amazon region, noting that these urbanization frontiers were a direct outcome of the agrarian policies implemented by the military regime that began in 1964, following the enactment of the Land Statute (*Estatuto da Terra*) (Simões, 1995)..

The paper presented by the administration of the recently elected Mayor Celso Daniel, in the municipality of Santo André, in the state of São Paulo, reported on an intervention in the roadway system of a newly developed neighborhood, Jardim Itapoan (Daniel, 1995). Framing the initiative within the recently enacted 1988 Constitution, the presentation emphasized the role of public participation in the planning process. This intervention proposed an alternative Urban Design for the city that would reverse the car-centric model of public space.

Studies on tourism development gained prominence in response to the sector's increasing economic significance. Flavio Nery Malta analyzed tourism along the coast of São Paulo, adopting Kevin Lynch and Amos Rapoport as key references for reflecting on the quality of urban form. His research investigated the relationship between the typological and morphological characteristics of tourism spaces and the values and needs of their users (Malta, 1995).

SEDUR IV attracted research contributions addressing the history of the city and the history of urbanism. Ana Fernandes and Marco Aurélio Gomes, architecture professors at

UFBA and organizers of the First Urban History Seminar, analyzed how a new Urban Design for the city of Salvador gradually emerged over the course of the nineteenth century, shaped by the actions of public authorities and business sectors. They demonstrated how, in this process of redesign, principles that would later be formalized by modern urbanism began to take shape (Fernandes; Gomes, 1995). In close dialogue with the urban history, several papers examined planned interventions in Brazilian cities, a theme that quickly established itself as a productive area of research. Fernando Diniz Moreira, from Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), addressed the modernization project of Recife in the early twentieth century through three major initiatives: the urban reform of the neighborhood known as Bairro do Recife, sanitation works, and the modernization of the port (Moreira, 1995). Heliodório Sampaio, also a professor at UFBA, discussed the pioneering experience of EPUCS – the Planning Office that operated in Salvador between 1946 and 1952 – as a precursor to Brasília, and examined the planning models it adopted (Sampaio, 1995).

Also contributing to the history of the city, Eneida Mendonça, professor at Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), studied the content of five master plans developed for Greater Vitória, in the state of Espírito Santo, between 1970 and 1990 (Mendonça, 1995). Delia Peixoto and Vera Tângari presented the urbanization project (landscape design and implementation) for the Camburi Canal waterfront in Vitória (Peixoto; Tancredo; Tângari, 1995).

Two papers on Porto Alegre focused on urban morphology. Eber Marzulo and Leandro Andrade analyzed a housing complex and a peripheral neighborhood located in neighboring municipalities (Marzulo; Andrade, 1995). Décio Rigatti's work addressed spatial syntax and historical processes in the structuring of Porto Alegre's central area, drawing on the studies of Bill Hillier and Frederico de Holanda (Rigatti, 1995).

In dialogue with the central theme of the fourth SEDUR, the planning of new towns in the northern region of the state of Paraná was examined from two perspectives. Hugo Yamaki, architect, urban planner, and professor at the State University of Londrina (UEL), analyzed the urban layout of newly planned cities in the region, drawing attention to the historical recurrence of the *patte d'oie* as a prominent formal element (Yamaki, 1995). In a second paper, Marcos Fagundes Barnabé, also a professor at the State University of Londrina, discussed the underlying urban planning frameworks of these cities, identifying the influence of rural-urban dynamics and the structuring principles advanced by Ebenezer Howard and Raymond Unwin (Barnabé, 1995). Concluding this thematic thread, the architects and urban planners responsible for the design of Palmas presented their proposal for the new capital of the state of Tocantins, which was then in the implementation phase.

The final section of the proceedings returned to Brasília as the central theme of the event, examined from various perspectives. Frederico de Holanda, the seminar coordinator, discussed the possibility of an aesthetic evaluation of the city (Holanda, 1995), while Elaine Kohlsdorf, also part of the organizing team, presented a morphological analysis of Brasília's commercial sector (Kohlsdorf, 1995). The Historical Heritage Department of the Federal District issued a preliminary draft of a preservation plan for the city's architectural and urban heritage, originally submitted in 1988. Returning to the early stages of the city's construction, a paper presented by a team of technical staff from the Federal District administration proposed a housing project for the population displaced by the construction of Lake Paranoá.

4 Conclusions

The papers presented at the SEDURs helped to consolidate an approach to urban design that was less centered on modern aesthetic principles and conventional urban planning models, and more focused on the citizen and the user. This shift became evident in the growing emphasis placed on the existing conditions and established sociocultural practices, on the surrounding physical environment, on the understanding of spatial appropriations, and on the affirmation of local identity. The physical form of the city could no longer be conceived in isolation from its local history and geography. This emerging approach was particularly evident in the alternative strategies proposed for interventions in *favelas*. The urbanization of informal settlements and the adoption of participatory design methods, grounded in respect for the histories of these residents as expressed in their modes of inhabiting space, became increasingly common practices.

It is striking that the design stances and urbanistic approaches articulated in the papers presented at the SEDUR Seminars can be traced back to postmodernist thought and authors, even though this connection received little attention at the time. The published works underscored a significant gap in the national literature on Urban Design during the period covered by the SEDURs, with the exception of two isolated major publications: *A Cidade como um Jogo de Cartas* by Carlos Nelson Ferreira dos Santos (1988) and *Introdução ao Desenho Urbano no Processo de Planejamento* by Vicente del Rio (1990). This gap undoubtedly contributed to the influential role these two books came to play in shaping the theoretical and methodological foundations of Urban Design in Brazil. Their impact was reinforced by the SEDUR proceedings, especially those from the first seminar, held in 1984 and published that same year by *Projeto* in three volumes of the *Cadernos Brasileiros de Arquitetura* series. The broad distribution of this publication to universities across Brazil was instrumental in disseminating the ideas and debates generated by the event.

However, an active academic intellectual environment took shape during this period, marked by the emergence of new forums for reflection and debate. These were fostered by the regular organization of national seminars, initiated by postgraduate programs and supported by associations such as ANPUR, DOCOMOMO, and later ANPARQ⁶. The increasing specialization of themes addressed at the SEDURs became evident over a relatively short span of time. The ANPUR meetings helped consolidate thematic areas and methodological approaches within the field of urban and regional planning, as did the meetings and groups focused on urban morphology. The Urban History Seminar emerged as an independent initiative and was held in Salvador in 1990. It was pioneering in foregrounding historiographical research on architecture and urbanism, bringing together architects, urban planners, geographers, historians, sociologists, and economists in the auditorium of Architecture School of UFBA to present research that reflected the expansion of postgraduate studies in the humanities. Based on the collection of papers

⁶ ANPUR - Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Planejamento Urbano e Regional [National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Urban and Regional Planning] - is Brazil's national association for graduate programs and research in urban and regional planning, founded in 1979. DOCOMOMO - International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement - is a global organization with a Brazilian chapter dedicated to the preservation of modernist architecture. ANPARQ - Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Arquitetura e Urbanismo [National Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Architecture and Urbanism] - established in 2008, represents Brazilian graduate programs and research in architecture and urbanism.

presented, the second seminar adopted the “Seminar on the History of the City and Urbanism”.

In 2006, the term Urban Design appeared in the national curricular guidelines for architecture and urbanism courses, when the mastery of research techniques and methodologies in urban and regional planning, urbanism, and Urban Design was included among the required professional skills and competencies (MEC, 2006). Until then, the national curricular guidelines in effect had only referred to *urban and regional planning* as the activity involving the study, analysis, and intervention in urban, metropolitan, and regional spaces (MEC, 1994). Prior to that, the minimum curriculum in force until 1969 mentioned only *planning* and *architectural composition*, with no reference to the term *design*. In fact, in the resolution approved in 1969 by the Federal Council of Education, these two terms were merged into *architectural planning* (Monteiro *et al.*, 2013, p. 72; 76). A turning point in this trajectory came with *Carta de Ouro Preto* [Ouro Preto Charter] of 1978, a document produced during discussions held the previous year at an event organized by the Brazilian Association of Architecture and Urbanism Education (ABEA). It explicitly recommended “diminishing the boundaries between building design and urban design” (Monteiro *et al.*, 2013, p. 36).

The inclusion of Urban Design courses in the curricula of architecture and urbanism programs was a long and gradual process, which, in some cases, led to the replacement of courses in urban and regional planning.

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