

Book Review

The Design and Development of Sustainable Cities

International and Thai Perspectives on Urban Design in the 21st Century

Horayangkura, V., Jamieson, W., & Mallikamarl, P. (2012)

Bangkok, Thailand: G.B.P. Center Co., Ltd.

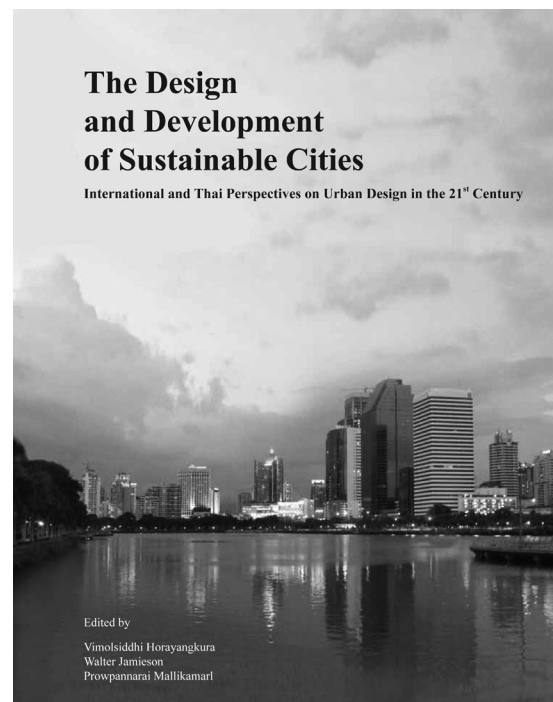
386 pp.

The recent publication of *The Design and Development of Sustainable Cities*, edited by Vimolsiddhi Horayangkura, Walter Jamieson and Prowpannarai Mallikamarl, makes a valuable contribution to the growing literature on the city and urban sustainability.

After a well-rounded and thoughtful introduction to the subject by the volume's editors, among several admirable features, the volume then offers a unique English-language account of coteremporary Thai thinking about urban design largely for the first time.

Although persistent throughout, this emphasis comes through most strongly in part two of the book where authors consider urban design and a sustainable context, primarily in Bangkok, from the vantage point of various sectors like agriculture, transportation, housing, commercial development and retail trade, as well as by way of urban structure, urban geography and governance. Here, comparisons with experiences and practices further afield in the world also help to situate discussion of Bangkok and Thailand in sharper perspective.

Also, for a readership knowing little about the local circumstances, the chapters provide a useful introductory account, although also with enough depth and detail to satisfy those more knowledgeable about Bangkok and Thailand.



Another admirable feature occurs in part three of the book with a discussion of the complementary roles that urban design can play and one that rarely finds its way into otherwise comparable accounts. Moreover, these roles are of both general and local importance and interest, concerned as they are with tourism, heritage, public health and social justice. In broaching the subject of sustainability, the editors and authors are aware that this otherwise slippery term stands on at least three legs of the proverbial stool, encompassing the interaction of environmental issues, matters of continued economic development, and questions of equitable distribution of benefits.

If there is a weakness in this coverage it concerns the environment with its emphasis only on what amounts to climate change and energy conservation. Particularly for an outsider, it would have been interesting to read more comprehensively about the environmental issues actually confronting Bangkok's and Thailand's urbanization.

Finally, another admirable aspect of the volume is discussion that recognizes that urban design is about the physical aspect, corporeality and thingness of cities by way of numerous explicit references to specific plans, projects and constructed environmental outcomes.

Professor Peter G. Rowe

*Department of Urban Planning and Design,
Harvard University, USA*