

Book review

The Principles of Green Urbanism

Steffen Lehmann. Earthscan, London, UK, 2010, ISBN 978 1 84407 817 2, £47.71, 911 pp.

Steffen Lehmann has undertaken a mammoth task in preparing his guide to transforming the city for sustainability. In doing so he has called on his long experience as an architect and his role as Unesco chair in sustainable urban development which has given him an insight into the challenges to green urban transformation faced by the developed world. Central to his thesis are 15 core principles of green urbanism. These range across the scales of influence of our urban areas from the macro scale and climatic influences to the micro scale of localism and cultural identity. Core to each are the concepts of limits and place. Limits are seen to be crucial, for example to energy supply (cities must be energy self-sufficient) and waste (the need for

zero waste and closed-loop ecology for cities). The sense and expression of place is seen as vital, for example to the development of cultural identity and to local food security.

The guide rests heavily on case studies of the city of Newcastle in NSW Australia. Whereas this approach serves well by way of illustration of the central themes of the book and does give inspiration, such a heavy reliance on details that may not be readily transferable to other urban contexts has resulted in a publication that at times seems over-long.

The book is superbly illustrated and well referenced and results in a reference guide that will be well used in many working offices where green urbanism is planned and implemented.

Frank Price