

Alluvium

Dhaka, Bangladesh, in the Crossroads of Water

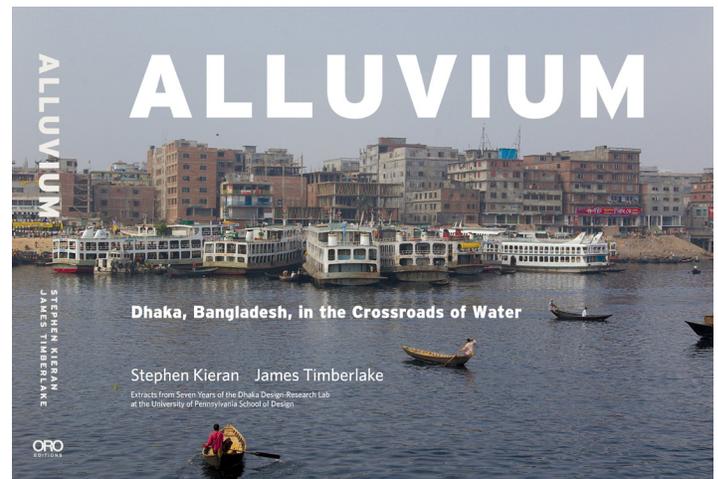
by Stephen Kieran and James Timberlake

San Francisco, CA: Imagine the most extreme urban environment—a place three times as dense as Manhattan, enveloped by a constant flow of water. Beset by legions of rural migrants in search of jobs, with local homes and buildings annually destroyed by torrential monsoons, the whole settlement is caught in the throes of climate change. This is a place where the landscape shifts from wet to dry and back to wet on a regular basis, where categories like “dry” and “wet” in fact mean very little.

Welcome to Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, home to approximately 14.4 million people in 2013—a population that has swelled like the floodwaters that course through the city during monsoon season.

Why visit this astonishing megacity? Since 2007, architects Stephen Kieran and James Timberlake have directed a design-research laboratory on Dhaka for graduate students of the University of Pennsylvania School of Design. What began as a desire to help a city in need became an immersive investigation of its ebbs and flows as they mapped its urban systems and charted its development with each annual visit.

The result of this extended study is *Alluvium: Dhaka, Bangladesh, in the Crossroads of Water*, a multi-genre book that incorporates narrative, analysis, and diverse media to encourage new perspectives through first-person accounts of architects and planners as well as various illustrations that visually represent the intricate connections between people, water, land, and



health in this delta metropolis. Kieran and Timberlake propose a new approach to understanding a given place—an intimate, collaborative, research-based model that holds relevance for both the developing and developed worlds. This is a must-read for designers, planners, students, and anyone interested in how cities grow in the face of climate change.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Stephen Kieran and James Timberlake are partners of KieranTimberlake, an internationally recognized and award-winning practice based in architectural research and sustainable buildings. Inaugural recipients of the prestigious Benjamin Latrobe Fellowship for architectural design research from the AIA College of Fellows in 2001, they have published five books on architecture, including the influential *refabricating ARCHITECTURE*.