“We live in the most urban of centuries. Yet, the Twenty-First Century city-region differs from its predecessors. In *Integral Urbanism*, Nan Ellin provides a clear and compelling portrait of this new urban landscape. *Integral Urbanism* is essential reading for architects and planners—for anyone—who seeks to make sense of our present urban condition. Nan Ellin gives us hope for creating order out of chaos.”

—Frederick Steiner, Dean of the School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin, and author of *The Living Landscape*

“Nan Ellin has written a compassionate, incisive, and necessary manifesto for the design of cities that are sustainable, diverse, and humane. Standing outside the twin dystopias of *Truman Show* neo-traditionalism and *Blade Runner* hyper-modernity, Ellin calls for a third way, an urbanism impatient with any certainty that claims its authenticity simply through form. Like her great predecessor, Jane Jacobs, Ellin understands cities not simply as physical artifacts but as shifting and irreducible skeins of human relations. And, like Jacobs, Ellin is an acute, nuanced, reader of cities and a clear-eyed critic of the theories that seek to describe and remake them.”

—Michael Sorkin, Director of the Graduate Program in Urban Design, City College of New York, and editor of *Variations on a Theme Park* and *Against the Wall*

“Integral Urbanism offers a provocative and rich vocabulary for both understanding and intervening in the contemporary city. In this book, Ellin moves away from the nostalgia of stylized urbanism toward a newer, fresher, and more vital vision of the integrated metropolis.”

—James Corner, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Pennsylvania, and co-author of *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape*

*Integral Urbanism* is an ambitious and forward-looking theory of urbanism that offers a new model of urban life. Nan Ellin’s model stands as an antidote to the pervasive problems engendered by modern and postmodern urban planning and architecture: sprawl, anomie, a pervasive culture—and architecture—of fear in cities, and a disregard for environmental issues. Instead of the reactive and escapist tendencies characterizing so much contemporary urban development, Ellin champions an “integral” approach that reverses the fragmentation of our landscapes and lives through proactive design solutions.

Nan Ellin, Associate Professor of Urban Design at Arizona State University, is the author of *Postmodern Urbanism* and the editor of *Architecture of Fear*. 
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Hybridity & Connectivity

Urbanism is something that creates potential, and architecture is something that exploits potential, exhausts potential. Urbanism is generous, and architecture is egotistical.
Rem Koolhaas

Mercury, with his winged feet, light and airborne, astute, agile, adaptable, free and easy, established the relationships of the gods among themselves and those between the gods and men, between universal laws and individual destinies, between the forces of nature and the forms of culture, between the objects of the world and all thinking subjects.
Italo Calvino

The great challenge of the 21st century is to strengthen the forces of integration and weaken the forces of disintegration and destruction.
Former President Bill Clinton

We live in Flow City. Systems are the roots of design, nourishing the spaces we try to make beautiful... Projects in urban design, architecture, and landscape architecture that aren’t made with an understanding of flows and connectivity are destined to fail.
Kristina Hill

Only connect!... Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.
E.M. Forster

Our concern is for the poetry of movement, for the sense of connectivity.
Alison and Peter Smithson

We are building too many walls and not enough bridges.
Scott Carson

The time has come to conceive of architecture urbanistically and urbanism architecturally.
Aldo Van Eyck

Connections missed
Connections made
Connections Illusive
Longed for and imagined.
Connections lost
Found
Severed
Invented
Disconnected
And secured.
Nan Ellin

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Rem Koolhaas
Porosity

Everything happens in the space between the skin/body and the clothes.
Issay Miyake

The sun never knew how wonderful it was until it fell on the wall of a building.
Louis Kahn

Walls do not contain, they bestow.
Stacy Alaimo

Identity is only a consistent entity in mathematics. The self is formed on relationships . . . How can the city cling to its walls? Doesn’t the opportunity of the city lie in the complexity of integrated worlds that become so likely they want to be realized? This form of urbanity needs transcendence and permeability.
Sabine Kraft

But for the boundary, the mind is still Trapped within a frame
The mind exerts its highest creativity.
Akira Yamamoto

Every thing happens in the space between the skin/body and the clothes.
Issay Miyake
I've been guilty of irony and cynicism, those things that are symptomatic of our times. You can't really blame anybody, in the way irony and cynicism are pounded into everybody's heads in every TV commercial, as if we're all insiders on the big joke here. But there's got to be more than just the joke.

Beck

Whoever attempts to solve the riddle of space in the abstract, will construct the outlines of emptiness and call it space... whoever attempts to meet men in the abstract will speak with this echo and call this a dialogue. Alas van Eyck

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Beck
Vulnerability

Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.
Pascale

Zig zag is the way to success. A straight line leads to failure.
Masai proverb

Although Bigness is a blueprint for perpetual intensity, it also offers degrees of serenity and even blandness. It is simply impossible to animate its entire mass with intention. Its vastness exhausts architecture’s compulsive need to decide and determine. Zones will be left out, free from architecture . . .
Rem Koolhaas

A touch of irrationality is a saving grace for us, a stroke of luck which gives us some breathing space, a loose fit in the machine which makes us alive. Life, intelligence, goodness probably came out of this free play and this lack of restraint. Leave some ears of wheat in the field for the gleaners, he said. Perhaps we shall learn one day that the most reliable machines leave room for the unexpected.
Michel Serres

When the world was created, God made everything a little bit incomplete. Rather than making bread grow out of the earth, God made wheat grow so that we might bake it into bread. Rather than making the earth of bricks, God made it of clay so that we might bake the clay into bricks. Why? So that we may become partners in completing the work of creation.
The Midrash

The Next Big Thing may be a whole lot of little things - call it economic pointillism.
Richard D. Parsons

Designing is like improvisation, finding a sound for each place.
Walter Hood
As ecological success is measured by the capacity of our planet to support all life forms, urban design success should be measured by its capacity to support humanity.

Learning from best practices, an Integral Urbanism offers guideposts along that path toward a more sustainable human habitat.
In contrast to escapist, cynical, or purely mercenary tendencies, Integral Urbanism aims to heal wounds inflicted upon the landscape by the modern and postmodern eras as manifest in:

- Visually unappealing places
- Impoverishment of public space and heightened perception of fear
- Diminished sense of place and sense of community &
- Environmental degradation.
To accomplish this, Integral Urbanism demonstrates five qualities:

**Hybridity**

**Connectivity**

**Porosity**

**Authenticity**

**Vulnerability**

**Hybridity** and **Connectivity** bring activities and people together, rather than isolate objects and separate functions. These qualities also treat people and nature as symbiotic—as well as buildings and landscape—rather than oppositional.

**Porosity** preserves the integrity of that which is brought together while allowing mutual access through permeable membranes, rather than the modernist attempt to dismantle boundaries or postmodernist fortification.

**Authenticity** involves actively engaging and drawing inspiration from actual social and physical conditions with an ethic of care, respect, and honesty. Like all healthy organisms, the authenti-City is always growing and evolving according to new needs that arise thanks to a self-adjusting feedback loop that measures and monitors success and failure.

And **Vulnerability** calls upon us to relinquish control, listen deeply, value process as well as product, and re-integrate space with time.
In contrast to the master-planned functionally-zoned city which separates, isolates, alienates, and retreats, Integral Urbanism emphasizes connection, communication, and celebration.
As we are a part of nature, so are our habitats including our cities. Over the last century, however, urban development has treated the city as a machine for efficiently sheltering and protecting and for moving people, money, and goods.
The city-as-machine approach has privileged building upon a tabula rasa, or clean slate. This is manifest in leaving older cities behind to build further out on pristine or agricultural land. It is also manifest in razing large swaths of older cities to build anew.

Another by-product of the quest for efficiency is zoning. Introduced one century ago as industrial production and the car were transforming the urban experience, zoning segregated functions that had been integrated from time immemorial.

As people are mutually interdependent, however, so are our activities as expressed in city form. Cities and communities only thrive (are only sustainable) when these interdependencies are allowed to flourish.
We are now belatedly recognizing the problems wrought by the clean-slate tendency and land-use zoning. However well-intended, these efforts to “renew” our cities and render them more efficient have gone too far, ultimately draining the life from them and contributing to threaten our sense of community, security, and physical and emotional health.

Rather than neglect, abandon, or erase our urban heritage, Integral Urbanism preserves buildings, neighborhoods, and natural landscapes that we value; rehabilitates, reclaims, restores, or renovates what is underperforming; and adds what we do not have yet but would like, as informed by effective community involvement.
Whether applied to existing urban fabrics or new development, Integral Urbanism activates places by creating thresholds—places of intensity—where a range of people and activities may converge. Providing places to congregate along with synergies and efficiencies, Integral Urbanism offers settings—while also liberating time and energy—for collaboratively envisioning and implementing desired change.

The result is:
more conservation & less waste,
more quality public space & less distrust and fear,
more quality time & less “screen time” and commuting time,
more proaction & less reaction.

Whereas the modern paradigm discouraged convergences through its emphasis on separation and control, this new paradigm encourages them. Convergences in space and time of people, activities, businesses, and so forth generate new hybrids. These hybrids allow new convergences and the process continues. This is, in fact, the definition of development.
convergence
Integral Urbanism veers away from master planning which, in its focus on controlling everything, ironically tends to generate fragmented cities without soul or character. Instead, Integral Urbanism proposes more punctual interventions that have a tentacular or domino effect, catalyzing other interventions in an ongoing dynamic process.

If master planning were a form of surgery on an anaesthetized city, Integral Urbanism might be a form of acupuncture on a fully alert and engaged city. By opening up blockages along “urban meridians,” just as acupuncture and other forms of bioenergetic healing open blockages along the energy meridians of our bodies, this approach can liberate the life force of a city and its vibrant communities.

From the machine as model (modernism), to cities of the past as model (postmodernism), Integral Urbanism finds models simultaneously in ecology and new information technologies such as thresholds, ecotones, tentacles, rhizomes, webs, networks, the World Wide Web, and the Internet. It also reveals a fascination with the border, edge, and in-between, as concepts as well as actual places.

In contrast to earlier models, these suggest the importance of connectedness and dynamism as well as the principle of complementarity. On the ecological threshold where two ecosystems meet, for instance, there is competition and conflict along with synergy and harmony. There is fear along with adventure and excitement. It is not about good or bad, safety or danger, pleasure or pain, winners or losers. All of these occur on the threshold if it is thriving.
While integrating the functions that the modern city separated, Integral Urbanism also seeks to integrate:

- conventional notions of urban, suburban, and rural to produce a new model for the contemporary city
- design with nature
- local character with global forces
- the design professions and
- people of different ethnicities, incomes, ages, and abilities.

Integral Urbanism is about:

Networks **not** boundaries

  Relationships and connections **not** isolated objects
  Interdependence **not** independence or dependence

Natural and social communities **not** just individuals

Transparency or translucency **not** opacity

Permeability **not** walls

Flux or flow **not** stasis

Connections with nature and relinquishing control, **not** controlling nature

Catalysts, armatures, frameworks, punctuation marks, **not** final products, master plans, or utopias.
authenticity
The urban and environmental challenges of the last century have prompted a reconsideration of values, goals, and means of achieving them, particularly over the last decade.

In contrast to the fast-paced more-is-more mentality, the appeals of simplicity, slowness, spirituality, sincerity, and sustainability are clearly on the rise.

Side by side with the still prevalent reactive tendencies of form to follow fiction, finesse, finance, and fear, myriad proactive initiatives from a wide range of contributors to shaping the environment are shifting the paradigm toward integration.
Although there remain numerous obstacles along this path, we are nonetheless passing through a rare historic moment when what is good for urban growth and development is aligning with political, economic, and social trends.

We have been coming full circle or, more accurately, full spiral.

Learning from the inherent wisdom of nature and cities of the past, we are infusing it with contemporary sensibilities.
Rather than choosing to continue or abandon the modern project, our hyper-rational reliance upon information technologies along with a simultaneous revalorization of process, relationships, and complementarity is conspiring to eradicate the either/or proposition. We are doing both simultaneously, each providing feedback for and adjusting the other accordingly, holding potential for achieving integration at another level.
The modern era divided the world and our thinking about it into fragments and our landscape followed. We are suffering the results.

Integrating disciplines and professions, Integral Urbanism seeks to mend seams and darn holes in the urban and social fabrics.

Resolutely refusing to idealize the past or escape the present, Integral Urbanism envisions and realizes a new integration for an enriched future.
Crises and stress incite growth and change in all life forms. The kind of change that occurs may support or detract from the health and well-being of the system depending upon its level of resilience and intelligence.

Applying the five qualities of Integral Urbanism can offer the soul food necessary for our cities and communities to blossom and truly thrive. Not merely survive.