



Integral City | Evolutionary Intelligences for the Human Hive

Marilyn Hamilton
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Review by Robin Wood

Integral Cities is a tour de force: for the first time we find a truly holistic approach being taken to a fragmented, over-specialized subject. In a world where over half of the population lives in a city, and where the front-lines of the battle against climate change must be fought and won, what could be more timely than a guide to creating thriving cities?

As I write, the residents of New Orleans have been evacuated from the path of hurricane Gustav, only three years after Katrina devastated their lives. Mega-cities with mega-pollution have sprung up almost overnight in places such as Shanghai, and are being designed in Dubai, Qatar, and other unsustainable places which rely on peak oil for their energy. While we have an unprecedented number of architects, developers, engineers, designers and town planners creating and renewing urban environments, it seems that many of our cities have become more dangerous, more crowded and less pleasant places to live in than ever before.

While the poor, the young and the ambitious flock to the cities to improve their economic prospects, many who can afford to leave the world's big cities are voting with their feet and downsizing to smaller, more attractive locations. I write this from Perpignan, a wind and solar powered town of 120,000 inhabitants, ten minutes from the Mediterranean and twenty minutes from the wild Pyrenees, having escaped stressed out, wetter than ever, coal fired London. I heartily recommend this book to London's new Mayor, Boris Johnson, and his advisors, as they have a tough challenge on their hands indeed.

Hamilton is a veteran campaigner for healthier organizations and environments, better healthcare systems and holistic ways of leading and managing large scale systems. This book is packed full of practical case studies and frameworks which demonstrate how the leaders, managers and inhabitants of the world's cities, from small towns of 50,000 to the 60 mega-cities of 5 million or more inhabitants, can create alive, thriving places and spaces where people work, play, learn and grow.

In synthesizing the first integrated philosophy on which a science of sustainable human settlement can be built, Hamilton invites the reader to consider the complex web of relationships and systems which must be aligned and resonant to create a coherent, liveable, and loveable city. We are taken beyond the reductionist limits of the 'evidence-based' statistical approaches to

government and planning so fashionable today, to consider the dynamics of cities: horizontal (cultural and demographic); vertical (evolutionary and developmental) and diagonal (shifting patterns of transition and transformation), along with their exteriors and interiors.

It turns out that what we all sense as the spirit of a city is a direct reflection of the human collective intelligences which come alive in the processes, cultures and values of each place. Healthy leadership, vibrant connections and 'meshworks' which enable the systems and inhabitants of a city to adapt and transcend the silos and stovepipes of bureaucracy are all essential, along with the multiple intelligences required to make the human hive buzz with energy and wellbeing.

From Curitiba to Chicago, Vancouver to New York, Bogota to Bombay, we see examples of enlightened mayors in action, demonstrating aspects of the 14 kinds of intelligence which lead to thriving cities: the basic survival intelligences (ecosphere, adaptive, integral and living intelligences); the personal intelligences (inner and outer); the design intelligences (buildings, stories and inquiries); and the strategic intelligences (meshing, navigating and evolving).

Most impressively, we find a precision around sustainability which is completely lacking in most of the woolly thinking that passes for concern or activism, which are conspicuously failing to preserve the future of our species and biosphere. An integral sustainability framework is developed, which can be applied at multiple scales and is supported by an integral vital signs monitoring approach which provides critical information for the optimum healthy performance of a sustainable life. Imagine a version of Google Earth with an integral dashboard for each place on the planet, tracking the vital signs of life conditions from water, food, shelter and clothing to quality of family life to personal empowerment to governance systems, to progressive enterprises to vibrant social networks.

Major Canadian and European cities have already begun to apply this kind of approach to planning and risk management. Hamilton outlines an integral monitoring and policy cycle which leads to the development of economic, environmental and socio-cultural indicators and benchmarks, which enable a more integrated view and better policy recommendations at both local and regional levels.

Renaissance2 is proud to announce that our 'Book of the Month' award for September 2008 has been given to *Integral City*. As a leading city planner recently put it: "Take care of yourself. Take care of each other. Take care of this place." Help create an integral city, wherever you may live.

Dr. Robin Wood is President of Renaissance2, a foundation focused on creating a sustainable business model for a thriving planet through a global network. www.renaissance2.eu