

ABSTRACT

Landscape architecture is about finding new ways to understand and to deal with the complex problems in everyday environments, problems that often result from human actions, needs and desires. Integral Ecology provides us with ways to look at problems of landscape architecture differently, more broadly and systematically and may possibly influence our own approaches towards integrated design theory. Integral ecology questions what we mean by nature, recognizing that we are not always talking about the same thing when we talk about nature.

Integral ecology is a metatheoretical approach to theories of nature. It is about thinking about how we think about nature (ontological in the sense of what constitutes knowledge about nature, epistemological in the sense of uncovering our relationship to specific kinds of knowledge, and methodological in terms of how we go about using different forms of knowledge). Its goal is to unite, coordinate, and mutually enrich knowledge generated from different disciplines and approaches. In their seminal text on integral ecology, Esbjörn-Hargens and Zimmerman have identified over 200 different perspectives on the natural world. These perspectives, range from deeply established disciplinary approaches to very spiritual approaches to the nature of being. Integral ecology is a framework that seeks to “sort through these many approaches and connect them in pragmatic a way that honors their unique insights on their own terms.” In this project the studio serves as the setting for sorting through perspectives on nature, by considering what it means to connect them in pragmatic ways for landscape architecture, by considering how perspectives may be operationalized in modeling, mapping and developed into design intentions. Investigations involve using three selected perspectives on nature as part of the directed design inquiry.