



Indigenous Ecosystem Corridors and Nodes

A joint project of the UIA and the IFLA

The International Union of Architects (UIA) and the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) have a long association one with the other. They also have a Memorandum of Understanding providing for engaging together in joint projects. This project for the development of Indigenous Ecosystem Corridors and Nodes provides for such cooperation between the professions. In doing so it also offers an open invitation for the participation of other professions and relevant organisations.

The Background

As the human enterprise has developed over the millennia so too have humans clustered together in larger and larger groups. We are now more and more urbanised with, it is said, more than half of the human population now living in urban areas. What does this mean for how we relate to the local and global environment? What have we done and is the outcome of past activities and processes sustainable?

These are particularly important questions precisely because they have not been part of the decision-making process through which the current outcome has emerged. Our present urbanisation is not the result of a major strategic decision. Rather it results from the accumulation of a vast number of independent decisions made by individuals and groups. And while this seems to have served well, or at least well enough, in the past there can be no assurance that it, or the processes through which it came into being, will serve us, or the planetary system, well in the future.

Our recent urban history is one of removing or significantly modifying the pre-existing natural systems and replacing them with our preferred biota and constructs. We have created settled agriculture and built cities. Each is the product of the other. Each is now entirely dependent on the other. Together they constitute the core of the human life support system.

In creating this situation humans have broken the natural systems of the environment in two distinct ways. Firstly, they have displaced and sometimes driven to extinction some elements of the natural ecosystem. In doing so, however, they have also fragmented and broken up the continuity of the ecosystem. Both are important. Ecosystems are inevitably exposed to perturbation. To cope with this they need complexity and diversity and they also need continuity. These are the necessary conditions for resilience and the capacity to regenerate. A major, though unintended, outcome of the development of the human enterprise is a depleted ecosystem that is progressively more fragile. The consequence of that is that humans and the human enterprise are also in a more fragile state.

The UIA and the IFLA hold the view that much can be done within urbanised areas and more widely through non-urbanised and remote rural areas to remedy this. This is not of course to suggest that humans can do without agriculture or settlements. What can be done is to modify our agriculture and our settlements so that they support the natural ecosystems and restore connectivity. The UIA and the IFLA also argue that this is not too difficult and need not be an additional cost. What is needed is vision and commitment. The purpose of this project is to develop and advance that vision and commitment within the professions and the wider community.

The Project

The UIA and the IFLA have jointly committed to the establishment locally and globally of an extensive system of indigenous ecosystem corridors and nodes. As their contribution to this vision they are setting out to develop the concept and the methodology and establish these within the professions and the wider community.

To achieve this outcome the UIA and the IFLA have established a joint Working Group to undertake the work on their behalf. To operate this Working Group they have appointed as joint foundation conveners for an initial period of one year Allan Rodger (UIA) and Tony Williams (IFLA).

The Working Group will be,

1. Established for an initial period of three years starting from 30th October 2016.
2. Co-convened by the nominees of the UIA and the IFLA.
3. Report not less than annually to the UIA Bureau and the IFLA Executive Committee.

The Working Group will,

1. Recruit suitable additional participants from within the professions and elsewhere.
2. Contact the various National and Member Sections of the UIA and the IFLA.
3. Contribute to the Newsletters and other communications of UIA and IFLA members.
4. Engage with other professional organisations, international agencies and others in pursuit of the project objectives.

The UIA and the IFLA will provide the Working group with,

1. A Working Group e-mail address and a Working Group website.
2. E-mail access to the member institutes of the UIA and the IFLA.
3. Access to the UIA and IFLA Newsletters and other channels of communications.

