HIGHLIGHTS THIS MONTH:

- The remarkable heritage trees of Cape Town
  SEEPG 6
- The UN, biodiversity, & the new urban agenda
  SEEPG 8

Nature holds the key to our aesthetic, intellectual, cognitive and even spiritual satisfaction.
E.Q. Willson

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Cover image: View over the Ecological District, Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei.
The City of Cape Town, one of ICLEI’s LAB Pioneers since 2007 has been recognised as the leading metro in South Africa for its sustainability best practice through its approach to governance in general and its innovative projects which are changing the lives of its residents in a sustainable manner. The Mayor’s Portfolio of Urban Sustainability has won in the prestigious Municipalities Award category of the Eco-Logic Awards.

The City of Cape Town’s endorsement at the prestigious Eco-Logic Awards, following the success of the Mayor’s Portfolio of Urban Sustainability shows that this City has the desire to make sustainability best practice part of its DNA.

Above all, this recognition shows that Cape Town is serious about using sustainable best practice to increase service delivery, to improve the lives of its residents and to ensure that a sustainable city for future generations is created.

The Mayor’s Portfolio of Urban Sustainability has also been named as a World Design Capital (WDC) 2014 project as it demonstrates how the City is trying to change lives through design.

This portfolio profiles 34 key City projects, each featuring elements of sustainability best practice and it demonstrates Cape Town’s status as the African leader in urban sustainability. It aims to mainstream urban sustainability principles throughout the City, to promote collaboration and partnerships, and to profile Cape Town’s innovative approach to working with the natural environment.

Some of the profiled projects in the portfolio include the Kraaifontein Integrated Waste Management Facility, the Integrated Rapid Transport project (both of these projects have been awarded a gold-star rating for having achieved excellence in all areas of sustainability), the Witsands low-cost housing project, the energy-efficient retrofitting programme, and the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrades programme.

Councillor Johan van der Merwe, Mayoral Committee Member for Energy, Environmental and Spatial Planning stated that, “We want to ensure that the Mayor’s Portfolio is an ongoing project. We want to ensure that these lessons learnt are continually implemented, and that they form the basis of sustainability best practice across all departments within the City.”

Because each of the projects profiled in the Portfolio demonstrates unique strengths, they provide the opportunity for future project planning and implementation in City projects. The Portfolio seeks to uphold multidisciplinary interaction, ensuring that City departments interact meaningfully in order to implement sustainably driven practices. As a result, in order to design more holistic projects, the Portfolio encourages ideas sharing as well as transferring of strengths and success stories even between departments that, seemingly, have vastly different functions.

“Matters of ensuring sustainability and sustainable best practice are universal. They need to be tackled through partnership and collaboration. This is the only way that we will be able to make sustainable progress possible. We are pleased with the honour bestowed upon us by the Eco-Logic Awards and it recognises the hard work that City officials are doing to realise our commitment of becoming a more sustainable city,” said Councillor van der Merwe

Furthermore, it is wonderful that so many organisations across South Africa are driving the conversation of sustainability and finding solutions to the problems posed by an ever-expanding world.

The road to creating a fully sustainable City is a long one, but with continued practice, conversation, partnerships and a holistic approach to implementation, we will begin to see the fruits of our labour.

Contributed by: Stephen Granger, Manager, Major Projects and Programmes, EMD, CoCT

Above: Aerial shot of the City of Cape Town (Source: Wiki Commons)
Marie-Céline Godin is Project Coordinator for biodiversity strategic plans in Brussels Environment, working closely with ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center on the LAB project for Brussels Capital Region. As someone who is a passionate environmental practitioner, we asked her to tell us a bit more about herself and her work in Brussels Environment.

Marie-Céline, tell us a little bit about the work you do, and what motivates and inspires you?

Alongside other duties, I am in charge of preparing the Brussels Capital Region’s strategy for the development of green infrastructures and biodiversity. I am very grateful to be able to use my capabilities for such a noble cause. I am really convinced that cities and their citizens can feel happier and healthier thanks to the increasing opportunities to experience nature and in a sense, to feel “human” again. I am also in charge of following and reporting back on international biodiversity news and issues. It is really inspiring to learn from others and to compare this with our own experience and visions. It really help us to continuously improve our actions and we are very fortunate to take part in the LAB network!

What changes to the urban landscape have you seen since you started working at Brussels Environment? And what visions do you have for Brussels in the next 5 years?

I have worked at Brussels Environment since 2008. This is not really enough time to notice changes in the urban landscape, however, the most prominent change that I have seen is the desire of the population to see and feel more and more nature in the heart of the city. You can see a real increase in wild flowers and other bee-friendly vegetation grown in the front of houses or on balconies. People organize themselves to convert public spaces or derelict lands into communally managed gardens where vegetables and wild flora gently merge. We support them very enthusiastically.

For the future, with our new LBSAP, I expect urban development to become more in line with this citizen desire to develop a greener city where you can enjoy being in contact with nature, even in the city centre. I hope we’ll be able to help guide city planners and property developers to evolve that way. Our new LBSAP foresees several tools for that very purpose.

In the last newsletter, we profiled the participation process that you have recently gone through in the development of your Local Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (LBSAP). With your experience of the developing a LBSAP, what is your ‘top tip’ that you have learnt that you can share with other cities?

The participation process was a wonderful experience. We get so much positive return and energy from the participants! My top tip would be to concentrate yourself on the elaboration of a shared vision. Don’t try to go too deep in the technical details, don’t make it too complicated. Use the opportunity offered by such a process to meet and contact the people that will help you going further and don’t hesitate to go back to them again afterwards to shape the action plan through which you (together) will transform the common vision into reality.

Finally, what do you think are the most pressing challenges for biodiversity management in urban areas?

I would say the densification process. We are in a cities boom that challenges us from both sides: (1) avoid urban sprawl to conserve wild and productive lands while at the same time (2) keeping our cities liveable. Avoiding urban sprawl while welcoming increases in the population means that you must densify the cities. Keeping cities liveable means that you must keep them green and biodiverse. We’ll have to be creative in the way we use spaces, especially public spaces. We’ll have to ban concrete where possible and give more places for people and nature. We’ll also have to manage our green spaces differently in order to help nature develop in a broader sense and in doing so, improve the ecological quality of those spaces. Well shaped, connected and managed green and blue infrastructure in the city is the key for sustainable and biodiverse cities.
A study undertaken in a recently created protected area in the City of São Paulo has found that 20% of the fish species in the area were considered endangered for the State of São Paulo. Seven species were newly recorded in the area, compared to a study in 2008.

The Atlantic Forest Environmental Protection Area (APA Capivari-Monos) was created in 2001 to protect the water resources and biodiversity of a portion of the Upper Tietê River basin, an area that is critical to the water supply of the City of São Paulo. Located in one of the most urbanized regions of São Paulo State, the rivers and streams have been adversely impacted by several anthropogenic activities, including deforestation, mining, agriculture and industry. The Upper Tietê River basin is one of the 23 areas in the Atlantic Forest regarded as a hotspot for fish conservation by the Brazilian Environmental Authorities and an area where a large number of endemic fish species are found.

The study, undertaken by researchers from the Fisheries Institute of the State of São Paulo and supported by the City of São Paulo which manages the APA Capivari-Monos, aimed to describe the composition and structure of the fish assemblages distributed along the three main rivers within this conservation unit and relate them to the local environmental conditions.

According to the City’s Management Plan of the APA, the water quality of the different basins ranges from poor close to the most urbanized areas to satisfactory in the more preserved Capivari River basin. Therefore the assessment of the freshwater biodiversity and an understanding of the distribution of this diversity are considered major challenges for the appropriate management of freshwater resources. The results of the study intend to assist with defining appropriate conservation strategies and improve the limited knowledge on fish fauna in the area.

This study revealed an increase in the number of known species for the city of São Paulo: of the 25 recorded species, Characidium oiticicaí, Astyanax bockmanni, Glandulocauda melano-pleura, Hisonotus depressicauda, Imparfinis mirini, Trichomycterus iheringi and T. paolence were recorded for the first time when compared to the previous study in 2008.

More available [HERE](www.cbc.iclei.org)

Above: A view over São Paulo (Image: Mauricio Rummens)
Arbor Week in South Africa (1-7 September) is a time in which trees are remembered and celebrated. This year, it fell within Heritage Month which has the theme of “reclaiming, restoring and celebrating our living heritage”. As a contribution to these festivities, on Wednesday 3 September, the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), Cape Town Partnership (CTP) SANBI, with help from ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center, partnered to organise an event, entitled, “Know your roots”. The event examined the role of trees in urban sustainability and place-making, paying special attention to the city’s heritage trees.

Many remarkable old trees can be found in Cape Town. Owing to their longevity and the fact that most were intentionally planted, these trees can shed light on the value systems and economic priorities of bygone generations. They serve as excellent starting points for journeys of learning about the City’s culture and history. According to SANBI’s Russell Galt, who gave a talk on the subject and guided a walking tour, “if trees can be likened to people, then heritage trees are the characters with the strongest personalities; those which by virtue of their extraordinary appearance, age, cultural symbolism, or historical significance most readily capture our imaginations.”

Some of these heritage trees are protected as National Monuments. For example, the Treaty Tree in Woodstock which is well over 500 years old and has witnessed the revenge murder of a Portuguese Viceroy, the hanging of convicts, and the capitulation of Batavian Forces.

Others are protected as ‘Champion Trees’ under the National Forests Act of 1998. Several colossal trees in Arderne Gardens have been designated as such, including what may be the largest Aleppo Pine in the world.

Some were lost before they could be protected. All that remains of the Old Slave Tree on Spin Street – under which countless souls were bartered away like cattle – is a varnished stump on exhibit in the District Six Museum. The tree was felled during the Great War.
Some trees including many Stone Pines and Blue Gums have become part of the City’s heritage at the expense of native species. Should such aliens that corrode native biodiversity yet have significant heritage value, also receive protection? This question has spurred many heated debates.

Some heritage trees, thousands of years old, will remain forever, petrified as fossils. Such examples can be found in the Company’s Garden and Kirstenbosch.

Together, the participants discussed whether and how the City’s heritage trees should receive greater recognition and protection. Suggestions included documenting each tree and its location, creating a centralized geospatial database, installing information plaques, publishing a walking guide, and developing a phone app or website.

The event culminated in a 1-hour guided walk around the City’s Foreshore. Although the Foreshore is a relatively young neighbourhood (having been built in the 1930s and 1940s on land reclaimed from Table Bay using materials excavated from the Duncan Dock), it is already home to many impressive trees. The participants examined Natal Mahoganies, Beefwoods, Fever Trees, Moreton Bay Figs, Mexican Fan Palms, Quiver Trees, Cape Ash Trees, New Zealand Christmas Trees, Forest Saffron, Brazilian Pepper Trees, Carob Trees and many others. Discussions ensued on the functional roles of such trees in the urban landscape and likely reasons why they were planted. Participants considered how public spaces can be enriched or impaired by certain types of vegetation and proposed practical recommendations for further improving parts of the Foreshore. The walk ended on Cullinan Street where participants harvested and feasted on a bounty of sweet carob pods.

For further information please contact Russell Galt (r.galt@sanbi.org.za).

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the European Union’s political assembly of sub-national and local government representatives. It has 353 members from all 28 EU Member States. The CoR understands multi-level governance to mean coordinated action by the EU, its Member States and local & subnational governments, based on partnership and taking the form of operational and institutional cooperation in all phases of the policy cycle, from drafting to implementing policies.

In June, the CoR adopted its Opinion on ‘Multilevel governance in promoting the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and implementing the international Aichi Targets’. This opinion was accompanied by a study in cooperation with the SCBD, UNEP Europe and the European Commission, carried out by ICLEI Europe and Ecologic.

The CoR Opinion ‘considers Decision CBD X/22 unique in the sense that it presents the most advanced ‘multi-level governance’ decision of a Multilateral Environment Agreement’ – from which the UNFCCC parties could for example learn. The CoR and UNEP signed at Rio+20 a Memorandum of Understanding, in which they commit to cooperate in particular on the implementation of CBD Decision X/22.

With the Opinion and the study, the CoR provides detailed recommendations for advancing implementation of CBD Decision X/22 within the EU, including a compilation of best practices; cooperates with the European Commission, UNEP, and the CBD Secretariat in promoting multi-level governance to achieve delivery of EU and CBD biodiversity targets; provides recommendations to the European Commission for its mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy due in 2015.

Members of the CoR will join as observers the EU delegation to CBD COP 12 and present the CoR work at the Biodiversity Summit for Cities & Subnational Governments, and in side-events. They offer to share the experience with local & subnational governments from other world regions.


Submitted by: Carsten Brauns, Administrator EU Environmental Policy, Directorate of Consultative Work, CoR.
The theme of integration has been identified by cities and subnational governments as important for effective implementation of biodiversity measures, as well as for sustainable development. The Biodiversity Summit will therefore also explore and provide opportunities for discussion on how to better integrate biodiversity horizontally across government sectors.

Of great relevance to the work of the CBD, and organizations such as ICLEI and other partners, the past several months have witnessed a lengthy process of consultation with countries, major groups and experts, and coordinated by the United Nations to propose 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to take the place of the soon-to-expire Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Most relevant for the urban agenda are Goal 11 (making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) – in some circles this has fondly become known as the Urban SDG; and Goal 16 (promoting just and inclusive societies for sustainable development). Biodiversity underpins many of the goals, but is most directly addressed in Goal 15 (protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combatting desertification, reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss). It is imperative that all of these goals remain in the final version of the SDGs – the arguments being the same as those that have been made by the advocates for the crucial role of cities and for biodiversity for years. Now, more than ever, these voices need to be united, as the goals themselves may be pared down to 10 - the Urban SDG; and Goal 15 and 16 therefore require continuing support and lobbying so that they are not eliminated in the next round. In order for the SDGs to be implemented effectively, one of the next steps is to confirm quantitative targets for each goal, so that progress and success can be monitored. The SDG targets will also require the development of specific indicators, which will require very serious thought and deliberation by scientists and other groups.

At the Biodiversity Summit, the Gangwon/Pyeongchang Resolution for Cities and Subnational Governments for Biodiversity – a key outcome demonstrating the will and spirit of cooperation of cities and subnational governments with regards to biodiversity, to the Parties – will be finalised. Within the Gangwon/Pyeongchang Resolution there is support for the SDG process, and particular reference to maintaining the Goal 11 in the suite of SDGs. Session 2: Local and Subnational Governments for Sustainable Development, will specifically provide an opportunity to share the current status and next steps for the SDGs with the delegates, including how cities and subnational governments can support the inclusion of both the urban and biodiversity agendas.

“The Biodiversity Summit will explore and provide opportunities for discussion on how to better integrate biodiversity horizontally across government sectors.”

In the same session, and working for similar global goals, the Advisory Committee of Cities and the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments to the Global Partnership on Local and Subnational Action for Biodiversity, will describe their activities in support of the Plan of Action. Facilitated by the SCBD, the Global Partnership – a growing alliance of the key players in the global cities and subnational governments’ biodiversity movement – aims to provide models for subnational implementation of the Plan of Action and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity through various programs and initiatives.

These current global processes and agendas, alongside many other global as well as regional initiatives, are all ultimately striving for the same goals – a world where natural resources are used sustainably, biodiversity is respected and integrated into decision-making, and development is sustainable. Cities are at the centre of achieving these objectives, and there needs to be a collective effort to ensure that these messages supporting the global biodiversity agenda are integrated and collaborative.
A member of the Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) programme since 2007, the City of Edmonton in Canada continues to make headway in urban biodiversity conservation with the release of a new app to identify invasive plants in the city. The ‘Alberta Weed Spotter’ is a free application that gives local residents the opportunity to participate and enhance biodiversity management across the city, encouraging citizens to engage with nature and help identify areas where invasive alien plant species are present.

A major threat to biodiversity, invasive alien species are plants and animals which out-compete local species, impacting ecosystems and disrupting the vital services that they provide. As such, invasive alien species can become a burden on municipalities, both in terms of management costs and from loss of critical ecosystem services.

The Alberta Weed Spotter helps users to identify the region’s most notorious and damaging invaders such as the Broad-leaved Pepper-grass, which infest damp areas such as wetlands and floodplains, displacing native vegetation and disrupting waterfowl nesting sites. When a listed species is spotted, the app user can use their cell phone to report the species, providing the municipality with locality and species information and allowing them to identify areas of concern quicker and more efficiently.

Edmonton is well-supported by an active community, and much of the work done to date has been accomplished through partnerships with citizen groups. The app further encourages Edmontonians to help support the municipality’s efforts to eradicate invasive alien species and to work together with the City to enhance biodiversity. It also provides an excellent way of connecting citizens with biodiversity matters, encouraging them to engage with nature and to learn about biodiversity and the threats.

For more information, visit https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/alberta-weed-spotter/id889877970?mt=8
Within the UN system, biodiversity is largely the domain of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), especially its biodiversity-related conventions. Among these, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the largest and responsible for the broadest range of issues. Urban development, on the other hand, is primarily the realm of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). As discussed at length in various ICLEI forums and elsewhere, biodiversity and urban development need to be better integrated if sustainable development is to be achieved. Biodiversity must be considered an integral part of urban development; and cities must be considered a key focus of biodiversity conservation efforts. The latter has received increasing momentum thanks, to a large extent, to ongoing cooperation between ICLEI and the Secretariat of the CBD.

In June 2011 ICLEI’s Cities Biodiversity Center seconded Senior Professional Officer André Mader to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) in Montreal, Canada. This continuing, unique, arrangement brings much-needed capacity to the sub-national implementation work of the Secretariat, while placing ICLEI at the center of the United Nations’ biodiversity decision-making processes.

Biodiversity’s incorporation into the UN-Habitat discussion on sustainable urban development is less well established. Earlier this year I accompanied the Executive Secretary of the CBD, Mr Braulio Dias, on mission to the 7th World Urban Forum (WUF) in Medellin, Colombia. This impressive conference, attracting more than 20,000 visitors and participants this year, is organized biennially by UN-Habitat. Amidst the variety of exhibits and events, however, biodiversity hardly featured at the WUF. During a scheduled meeting that we had with UN-Habitat’s Executive Director (previously Mayor of Barcelona) Mr Joan Clos, just before the opening of the WUF, Mr Dias reviewed the reasons why biodiversity is such a critical consideration in pursuit of sustainable urban development. Although unlikely to be related to the discussion, in Mr Clos’ keynote speech later on he identified the need for more open space and better access to it as one of five key lessons learned over the past 20 years of striving for more sustainable cities. Open space design is clearly a key area for potential intersection between biodiversity priorities and urban development priorities. Later we attended the “Special Session: United Nations High-Level Inter-Agency Meeting” - a gathering of UN agencies “to advance on a new urban agenda”. An invitation by Mr Clos to this Special Session was the main reason for Mr Dias’ attendance of the WUF and he used the opportunity again to illustrate, before about 25 other UN agency representatives, the role of biodiversity in enabling sustainable urban development, and the CBD Secretariat’s commitment to fulfilling that role.

As follow-on to Mr Dias’ involvement at Medellin, the CBD Secretariat has provided input into the process of designing the new urban agenda to ensure that biodiversity features strongly therein. This evolving process is set to play an important role in the United Nation’s focus over the upcoming years and perhaps decades. Another encouraging and unprecedented development was a recent invitation to the CBD’s Executive Secretary, to which he duly responded, from the Vice President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to provide biodiversity-oriented input into an ECOSOC Integration Segment on sustainable urbanization. Furthermore, as discussed elsewhere in this newsletter, biodiversity (though not by that name) features strongly on the UN’s proposed Sustainable Development Goals. These examples are all the results of largely behind-the-scenes efforts but their significance should not be underestimated. There is a long way to go, but biodiversity is clearly finding its way onto the UN’s urban agenda. The theme for the 12th CBD COP is therefore fittingly: Biodiversity for Sustainable Development.
Although the Biodiversity Summit for Cities & Subnational Governments may be the highlight for most participants interested in cities and subnational governments at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), there will be plenty of other important happenings in Pyeongchang. COP 12 itself will feature the usual negotiations, and adoption-by-consensus of decisions, including a proposed suite of decisions on the implementation of the United Nations’ Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, potentially under the umbrella “Pyeongchang Roadmap for the enhanced implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”. One of the decisions likely to fall under this umbrella is Item 29 on the agenda: “Cooperation with other Conventions, International Organizations and Stakeholders’ Engagement Including Business”. The cooperation decision is, itself, a compilation of decisions, including one on “Engagement with subnational and local governments” (see page 173 of the “Revised Annotations to the Provisional Agenda” HERE ). This will be the fourth consecutive COP to consider text on subnational implementation, and the first to focus explicitly on sustainable urbanization.

Of less relevance to cities but of great significance in general and on a global scale, Pyeongchang will mark the “First meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing”. The Nagoya Protocol was adopted in Nagoya at COP 10, though it has taken the intervening four years to gather enough signatures (50) to ratify it. The second week of COP 12 will feature this meeting of the Parties (MOP) in parallel with COP 12, as well as the Biodiversity Summit for Cities & Subnational Governments. It therefore promises to be an especially busy time for all. Although perhaps not the first subject to come to mind in relation to cities and subnational implementation, access and benefit-sharing is far from irrelevant and the first meeting on the Protocol deserves the attention of ICLEI and partners, so that opportunities for integration can be identified early on.
INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR GYEONGGI PROVINCE AND ANSAN CITY: LIFE IN CITIES, BIODIVERSITY IN NATURE, 16-17 OCTOBER 2014

The International Workshop for Gyeonggi Province and Ansan City is one of main events of the LAB (Local Action for Biodiversity) Project for Gyeonggi Province, Republic of Korea, implemented by the ICLEI Korea Office and ICLEI CBC in cooperation with Local Agenda 21 for Gyeonggi Province. Ansan City, the co-host, is located on the west coast and is one of the leading local governments in the Gyeonggi Province striving for biodiversity conservation.

Through the workshop, Gyeonggi Province and Ansan City would like to encourage international and national participants to share their achievements and challenges in the conservation and management of urban biodiversity and develop their own approaches to biodiversity management. For more details contact: Yeajun.chun@iclei.org

LAUNCH OF (UNA)FOR AFRICA PROJECT & URBIS DIALOGUES, 15 OCT
ALPENSIA RESORT, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The launch of the Urban Natural Assets for Africa (UNA Africa) Project and the Urban Biosphere Initiative (URBIS) Webinar Series 2015, which will take place on the morning of 15 October (9:00-11:00 am) with a champagne breakfast in the Alpensia Resort, Pyeongchang, the Republic of Korea.

Speakers will include:

Dr. David Maddox, Founder & Editor, The Nature of Cities and Chief Scientist at Sound Science LLC, New York; URBIS Advisory Board Chair.

Professor Thomas Elmqvist, Theme leader at the Stockholm Resilience Center and lead author of the Cities and Biodiversity Outlook; URBIS Advisory Board.

UNA Africa:

ICLEI, together with project partners SwedBio, Stockholm Resilience Center, JRS-Foundation, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), and the African Center for Cities, are designing a cutting edge program to support the local implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by cities in sub-Saharan Africa, as a project under the Urban Biosphere Initiative (URBIS).

The project will support knowledge exchange between important stakeholders in cities across the African continent, through capacity development with regards to biodiversity and ecosystem services. This capacity building will be based on a thorough needs-assessment in consultation with a variety of cities, and a strong emphasis will be placed on awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing, and the provision of practical tools and tailor-made training for sub-Saharan local governments.

The URBIS Webinar Series 2015:

The 2015 URBIS webinar series will be an exciting URBIS platform for dialogue, held at bi-monthly intervals in association with partners. This webinar series, known as the URBIS Dialogues, will bring together local governments and leading experts in pertinent fields to share experiences, address specific urban challenges, consider new developments, explore collaborative opportunities and strategise on ways forward, with a special focus on city-regions. These events will be facilitated in a highly interactive and participatory manner, conducive to constructive discourse and candid debate. The 2015 URBIS Dialogues will address exciting topics and themes within the urban biodiversity realm, and will contribute towards the establishment of criteria for the URBIS Cities of Distinction Award process.

As space is limited, we ask you to kindly RSVP to liz.metcalfe@iclei.org by Friday 3 October after which you will receive confirmation of your attendance and information on the venue in Alpensia.
Fruit-eating bats play an important role in forest regeneration, collecting and spreading seeds far and wide. However, human development may be limiting bat-mediated dispersal. In a new study published in the British Ecological Society’s Journal of Applied Ecology, Daniel Lewanzik and his team of researchers found that fruit bats avoid feeding in light-polluted areas, which may significantly affect forest growth. This is particularly true in the tropics, where artificial light follows human encroachment in natural habitats at unprecedented rates.

“Policy-makers should ensure artificial light is not excessively used,” Lewanzik said. “Particularly in the tropics, where nocturnal seed dispersers are crucial for ecosystem functioning, maintaining unlit habitats large enough to guarantee viable populations of light-sensitive species should be of high priority.”

Read more HERE

An ambitious but fantastic idea:

“The Greater London National Park”

It is only a “notional park” for now, but geographer Daniel Raven-Ellison is calling for the public to back the idea. “There is this idea that a National Park has to be remote and rural, but cities are incredibly important habitats too.”

“I am proposing a new kind of National Park – a “National Park City” that would aim to conserve and promote London’s awesome ability to be dynamic, innovative and evolve. The Park’s role would be to inform and inspire best practice, while helping to better coordinate and promote London’s biodiversity and recreational opportunities, especially those in outer London.”

Raven-Ellison, a geographer and National Geographic Emerging Explorer, argues that the park would create a new way to see and think about London. “How would being a National Park change the way we live, work and play in the city? How would we educate children, design buildings, plan health services or create new leisure activities differently if we started thinking of London as a National Park?” It’s a bit of an outside-of-the-box curve ball, but sleep on it and you will realise what a great idea it is!

Raven-Ellison is asking the public to support his idea by adding their name to www.greaterlondonnationalpark.org.uk (GLNP).
KEY EVENTS IN 2014

CBD COP 12  Pyeongchang, Korea
6-17 October 2014

BIODIVERSITY SUMMIT FOR CITIES & SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS
Pyeongchang, Korea
12-14 October 2014

IUCN WORLD PARKS CONGRESS
12-19 November
Sydney, Australia

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