**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is the Atlas for the End of the World ?**

After 3 years work the Atlas is a collection of maps which cover 2 important subjects: the first is the amount of protected area in the world’s 35 biodiversity hotspots to audit how these regions are tracking in regard to meeting 2020 United Nations targets. The second is an assessment of which cities in these hotspots are growing on collision courses with remnant habitat and endangered species. The Atlas also includes a new collection of world maps, relevant data, and a collection of photographs from the Singaporean artist Zhao Renhui.

**What is a biodiversity hotspot?**

These are regions of the world recognized by the global scientific and conservation community as containing an exceptional and irreplaceable diversity of life that is threatened with extinction. Put together, the hotspots are the sum total of the world’s genetic inheritance. The cultural equivalent to destroying these landscapes is akin to bulldozing the world’s libraries and burning all the books. The way to save these places is to formally place them under protection.

**What are the 2020 UN targets for protected areas?**

The overarching framework for the project of protecting and reconstructing a biodiverse global landscape is provided by the United Nations Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. The key mechanisms of this plan are brokered and administered through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), one of the three ‘Rio Conventions’ emerging from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the ‘Earth Summit’) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The convention sets out 20 targets known as the ‘Aichi’ Targets. The target this Atlas specifically addresses is Target 11 which states that by 2020 17% of the world’s terrestrial area will be protected.

**What is a protected Area?**

Protected areas are areas of land where conservation and preservation values are prioritized over other possible land uses such as mining, logging or clearance for agriculture and urbanization. Not all, but most protected areas are listed and classified according to 6 different degrees of conservation management, by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) headquartered in Gland, Switzerland. The IUCN defines a protected area as "[a] clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values”.

**How much of the world is protected?**

In 2015 about 15.4% of the world’s terrestrial area and 3.4 % of the oceans is formally protected. This means that to reach the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi target 11 of securing 17% terrestrial protected area by 2020, an additional 1.6% of global terrestrial area needs to be secured under the IUCN’s standards. 1.6% of the earth’s terrestrial surface is 2,327,800 km2, the equivalent of nearly 700,000 Central Parks!

**Why is it an Atlas for the *End* of the world ?**

Because for much its main subject matter – the world’s biodiversity – it is in fact the end of the world. For us and much other life on the planet of course its not the end of the world at all and we don't mean it literally as such. We mean it as the end of a certain world, in particular a world where, since the first Atlas that was written in 1570, the dominant paradigm has been that nature is a resource to be exploited without consequence. That world is over. This is now the Anthropocene. Everything we do is consequential.

**Who is the Atlas for?**

Firstly, it’s for the 142 nations who preside over the world’s hotspots who have agreed to meet certain UN targets for protected areas by 2020. It’s also for the communities who live in these regions and have a vested interest in land use policy and their long-term environmental well-being. Additionally, it might help the global conservation and development community prioritize their efforts around the world and also encourage landscape architects and planners to get out there and make a difference. But like any Atlas its really just for the adventurous, the imaginative and the inquisitive and hopefully school kids around the world will check it out – after all – this is the world we are bequeathing to them.

**What are the main findings of this research?**

The main findings are that currently (2015/16) only 14 of 35 hotspots have achieved the United Nation’s Convention on Biological Diversity (Aichi) target of 17% protected area. 21 fall well short. We also break this down into the various ecoregions in the hotspots. Of the 391 ecoregions that make up the hotspots only 170 have 17% or more protected area. 221 do not. And finally we have found that of the 422 main cities in the world’s hotspots 383 of them are forecast to sprawl directly into remnant habitat containing threatened species. Less precisely quantifiable but no less alarming is that many of these cities do not have urban planning strategies to avoid this calamity. Similarly, many of the nation’s presiding over the hotspots don't have national land use plans which seriously incorporate the preservation of biodiversity.

**Which hotspot is doing the best in regard to its percentage of protected area and which one is doing the worst?**

The three best are New Zealand, the Tropical Andes (a part of Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia) and the Cape Floristic Province in South Africa. The worst are Madagascar, the Caucasus (parts of Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Iran) and the Atlantic Forest which runs along the coast of Brazil and down into Paraguay and Argentina.

**What do you hope to achieve with this Atlas?**

The Atlas lays down the base maps upon which land use and urban planning strategies which better integrate development and biodiversity can be made. If this planning was to be conducted by research teams of planners, scientists and local communities it would help ensure that local development imperatives and global conservation values could better coexist. In short, a better world.

**What’s this got to do with landscape architecture?**

We, the authors of this research are landscape architects and as a discipline and profession landscape architecture has a mandate to design and plan the landscape from local to regional scales. Over the last 50 years our profession has done a good job of creating good public space in many of the world’s richest cities, but it hasn’t done so well in regard to the broader, conservation landscape.