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RECLAIMING VITRUVIUS: A GOVERNANCE LENS FOR PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PERFORMANCE

by Peter Foxley

Institute of Commissioning and Assurance

Global Director | Governance and Policy Integration

Reclaiming Vitruvius: A Dual-Governance Lens for Public Infrastructure Performance

For over two millennia, the **Vitruvian Triad - Firmitas** (strength), **Utilitas** (utility), and **Venustas** (beauty) - has shaped the design of buildings and cities. But in today's age of complex infrastructure systems, climate imperatives, and rising public accountability, these classical principles are not just relevant - they are essential.

When reframed through the **ICxA Outcome Standard Roadmap**, the triad becomes a **credentialed governance tool** - one that validates public-serving design, operational performance, and lifecycle integrity. It is no longer a philosophical ideal; it is a **dual-governance architecture** that embeds commissioning into every phase of infrastructure delivery.

Across the Architecture, Engineering, Construction, and Operations (AECO) sector, legacy methodologies - once designed to manage complexity - are increasingly viewed as ritualised, compliance-driven artefacts. As Robertson Davies once quipped, *"Planning is what people do instead of thinking."* That sentiment echoes across critiques of PMBOK, Six Sigma, JIT, and PERT, where toolsets have drifted from their original intent. What began as innovative and exploratory, now risk becoming executive devices for evading accountability - especially when certification becomes the goal rather than capability.

From Construction to Commissioning: A New AECO Paradigm

The traditional AECO model - Architecture, Engineering, Construction, and Operations - alongside the "Iron Triangle" of scope, cost, and time, has long defined the infrastructure value chain. But as systems grow more complex, integrated, automated, and outcome-driven, construction alone is no longer sufficient. Delivering performance, resilience, and public value now requires a shift toward commissioning-led governance embedded across the entire lifecycle.

ICxA proposes a new paradigm: Architecture, Engineering, Commissioning, and Operations.

- Commissioning is no longer a late-stage technical activity - it is a governance function that bridges design intent with operational reality.
- This shift embeds Outcome Assurance and Outcome Control as core disciplines, ensuring that infrastructure is not just delivered, but validated, trusted, and accountable.

The ICxA Dual Architecture: Outcome Assurance and Outcome Control

At the heart of ICxA's governance model are two interdependent forces that anchor commissioning-led delivery:

- Outcome Assurance ensures that infrastructure systems are designed and delivered to meet stakeholder needs, operational intent, and public value. It activates early - during strategic planning - and continues through design, installation, and integrated testing.
- Outcome Control validates that systems perform as intended—across interfaces, environments, and lifecycle transitions. It governs readiness, resilience, operational handover, and enables accountable, outcome-driven evolution over time.

Together, these forces transform the Vitruvian Triad into a systems-based commissioning framework, embedded across disciplines from concept of operations and planning to capital delivery and long-term use.

Applying the Vitruvian Triad to Critical Transport Infrastructure Networks

Principle	Classical Meaning	Infrastructure Interpretation	ICxA Alignment
Firmitas	Structural integrity and durability	Infrastructure systems must be resilient, safe, and lifecycle-ready - from dynamic field assets and automated control environments to public spaces and health-critical zones.	Outcome Control: Validates readiness, reliability, and resilience, ensuring systems uphold performance and public trust across their entire lifespan.
Utilitas	Functionality and usefulness	Infrastructure must serve its operational purpose - enabling seamless passenger flow, accessibility, and system performance	Outcome Assurance: Ensures systems perform as intended and stakeholder needs are met
Venustas	Aesthetic harmony and delight	Infrastructure must elevate public experience - through intuitive design, civic presence, and spatial dignity	Public Benefit Governance: ICxA validates that beauty is matched by performance, trust, and long-term value

Example: Railway Architecture as Civic Infrastructure

Rail stations, ticketing halls, concourses, and intermodal hubs are not merely transit nodes - they are public institutions. They must:

- Withstand time and stress (Firmitas)
- Serve diverse users and operational needs (Utilitas)
- Inspire civic pride and spatial clarity (Venustas)

The Vitruvian Triad becomes a **governance lens**, ensuring that infrastructure is not just built - but **commissioned, validated, and loved**.

ICxA's Role: Operationalizing the Triad Through Certified Roles

ICxA institutionalises the triad through its **certified practitioner roles**, each aligned with the dual architecture:

- **Commissioning Project Manager (CxPM)** Anchors **Outcome Assurance** by validating system performance, stakeholder alignment, and outcome literacy - ensuring that infrastructure serves its intended purpose.
- **Outcome Authority (CxOA)** Anchors **Outcome Control** by codifying **Firmitas** through readiness reviews, measurement protocols, and lifecycle traceability - ensuring that systems are resilient and reliable.
- **Outcome Assurance Auditor (CxOAA)** safeguards **Venustas** by upholding public benefit and ensuring that what is beautiful also functions - and continues to function - across time, users, and conditions. It links aesthetic value with operational legitimacy through evidence-based assurance.

From Classical Ideal to Global Governance Standard

This reframing turns Vitruvius' timeless principles into a **modern infrastructure governance standard** - anchored in commissioning, validated by evidence, and delivered through credentialed professional practice. It supports:

- **Global interoperability** across institutional delivery frameworks (RIBA, AIA, ICE)
- **Lifecycle performance governance** from strategic intent to operational use
- **Public trust and legitimacy** through transparent assurance and control

In reclaiming Vitruvius, ICxA offers a new blueprint for infrastructure - one that is not only built to last, but built to serve, inspire, and endure. And in redefining AECO to include **Commissioning**, it ensures that infrastructure is not just constructed - but **governed for outcomes**.