(045) Proposal to permit designation of a new neotype when a previously designated neotype has been lost or destroyed

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According to the Melbourne Code (ICN, McNeill & al. in Regnum Veg. 154, 2012) if the previously designated lectotype has been lost or destroyed, a new lectotype or a neotype as a substitute for it may be designated (Art. 9.11). However, if a previously designated neotype has been lost or destroyed, the Code does not permit explicitly the designation of a new neotype, nor does it confer any particular status to the isoneotypes in such a case, although, paradoxically, it advises the use of the latter term (Rec. 9C).

The loss of a neotype is perhaps a rare event but it does happen. Indeed we have come across a concrete case. The neotype of Psilocybe atrobrunnea (Lasch: Fr.) Gillet (Fungi) deposited at LE (Borovička & al. in Persoonia 34: 1–9. 2015), according to information received from the curator, is lost.

According to the logic (merely implied) of the Code, when a neotype is lost it should be possible to designate a replacement for it: preferably an isoneotype, and if none exists, another suitable element. But, contrary to the Zoological Code (Rede & al., International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, 1999: Art. 75.4.1), the ICN does not address this situation in any way. Therefore, such a procedure currently has no formal basis.

Currently, the single explicit “legal” solution in the situation described is to designate an epitype to support the lost neotype. Article 9.8 explicitly states that an epitype may be designated when a holotype, lectotype or a neotype cannot be critically identified for purposes of the precise application of the name to a taxon. Indeed, a lost neotype demonstrably cannot be identified. The Code requires that the supported type be cited, but does not specify that it must really (still) exist. However, that epitype would lose its status as soon as the current logical gap in the Code is filled and the lost neotype can be replaced (Art. 9 Note 7).

We believe it to be far preferable to avoid the described circuitous practice and directly amend the Code instead, as logic demands. We therefore make the following proposal.

(045) Add a new provision after Art. 9.16 (or in any other place the Editorial Committee may find suitable), paralling provisions in Art. 9.11 and 9.12 for other kinds of type:

“9.1. When a previously designated neotype has been lost or destroyed, a substitute for it may be designated from among the isoneotypes, if such exist. If none exists, another suitable element may be designated as neotype.”