



Rapa Nui and the value in its land

Samuel Cortese

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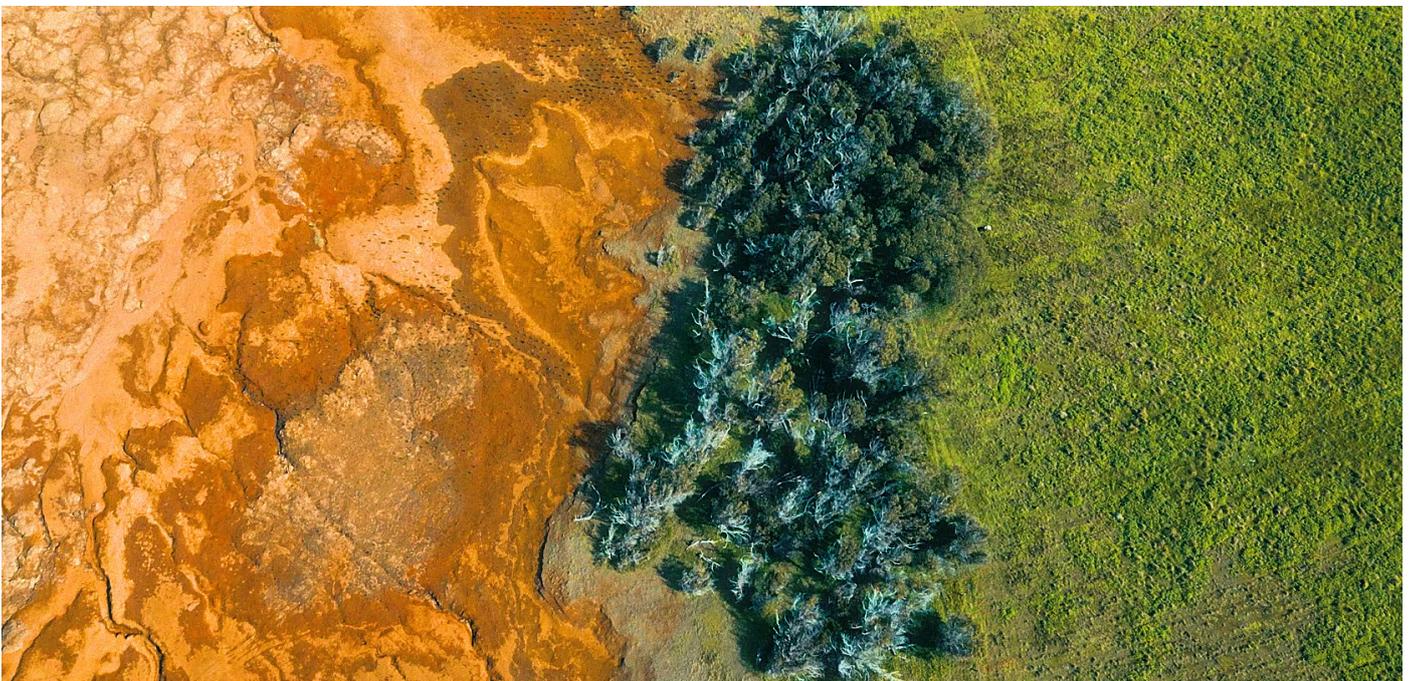
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However, the island eventually became a place of exploitation instead of balance and prosperity. Initially, traders sacked and pillaged Rapa Nui, eventually a deal was struck and Chile annexed the territory as its own. With this came religion, sheep and further oppression, but also, new crops and more importantly a new planting philosophy. This involved more traditional western ideals of monoculture, and a lack of regard towards the soil that had been so carefully engineered to sustain life by generations of natives. Even when the Ley Pascua was passed, and the Rapa Nui were considered citizens, the Mana Vai and stone gardens remained mostly forgotten.

This would have been so, if it not for the resilience and curiosity of some individuals that have looked into the Rapa Nui culture and traditions in search for answers to a pressing problem.

During my stay in the island, I experienced a kind of revelation when a local guide took me to the crater of the Rano Kau volcano where it became evident that plant interactions with the shelter of rock and shade can form thriving ecosystems. As I descended into the flooded basin of the crater I saw a natural richness that was absent elsewhere in the island, and I believe that this is can maybe provide a blue print for the balance missing in current agriculture.

Currently, monocrops are widely used in the island, they are treated heavily with synthetic fertilizers as well as with pesticides. The treatment of soil for the last several decades highlights a troubling negligence towards its value, and the importance of its basic health and improvement. This of course is mainly due to a lack of knowledge and conflicting agricultural views. And this is precisely what many modern initiatives are working to combat in a sort of return to Rapa Nui tradition.



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