



Rapa Nui and the value in its land

Samuel Cortese

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There are programs to implement communal gardens and plantations that follow the traditional techniques, in coordination with sustainable agriculture practices that involve modern techniques that aim to rescue the available farming land. To achieve this, the island's native plants, alongside the crops brought by the Rapa Nui are being widely planted again. This is combined with the harnessing of nature's processes in order to: develop organic fertilizers and insecticides, further cultivate beneficial microbial communities and implement symbiotic plant relationships. Collectively this constructs a truly significant impact on the improvement of the soil in Rapa Nui.

It is rewarding to catch a glimpse of hope in an otherwise desolating context. Nonetheless, there is much work that needs to be done. During my time in Rapa Nui, I learned a lot about the many solutions that are being proposed, however, three in particular stuck with me. Before talking about them I want to highlight the importance of a coordinated effort, that joins people and resources to help remediate and maintain the agricultural soil in the island. With the combination of community, local government, and international organizations, the necessary resources for an island wide restructuring of agricultural practices can be implemented. Rapa Nui is no place for mass production of any crop, but instead a place for the production of the unique species that have enabled survival there for generations. The change will of course take time, and that is precisely why it's so imperative to build a community wide conscience on the importance of soil sustainability.

I believe that the three solutions in combination with this can truly make an impact, so here they are.

The first is pretty obvious by this point: to plant on the island, you have to plant with rock. Rock gives the best shelter towards the harsh environment found in Rapa Nui, it has worked for generations, and it will feed many more if done right. Traditional stone gardens and Mana Vai are already spread throughout the island, and going back to use them, as well as building new ones will provide a more nurturing environment than synthetic fertilizers and pesticides ever will.

The second solution is to plant in density and diversity. Planting many different species in the same environment leads to interactions between them that favor a truly sustainable ecosystem. When you plant many individuals so closely together, the induced state of competition favors those most fit for survival, ensuring longer and more sturdy harvests with less vulnerability to sources of biotic and abiotic stress. Plants in the wild are not meant to grow by themselves, as can be seen in the Rano Kau crater. The same should apply to crops.

Finally, the third solution is that water is planted, every tree fixes a very considerable amount of water in soil, so planting many trees brings water into the soil, and of course, into the island. Water helps nutrients be absorbed, and favors beneficial microbial communities. An ecosystem with a steady supply of water thrives and resists. An absolute sense of wonder, and nothing less, is what one should feel towards the might and complexity of the natural world, and transmitting this has to be the duty of the current and future generations.



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