



COMMONLAND
4 RETURNS FROM LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

Inspiration

Evidence research for inspiration as part of the 4 returns

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Inspiration & the 4 returns

Inspiration is one of Commonland's (CL) 4 returns (the others are: social capital, natural capital, & financial capital) of landscape restoration (LR). The framework of the 4 returns brings a more holistic mindset to impact assessment, demonstrating that both financial & non-financial returns are possible & important through landscape restoration.

What – Inspiration as applied by Commonland

The **return of inspiration** is described by CL as:
“Giving people hope and a sense of purpose”

Inspiration is noted in CL documents to be linked with increased commitment to projects, to seeing LR successes (e.g. field visits), & to entrepreneurial ideas & business cases (Commonland, 2017b). It is also listed as necessary – along with knowledge & skills – for large-scale LR orchestration (Commonland, 2017b). Inspiration is noted to be directed at the public at large through communications, as well as in the landscape specifically through actions (Commonland, 2017a). Landscape project management is noted as being 'inspirational' through *stakeholder mobilization, orchestration & building teams* (Commonland, 2017a). At other times, inspiration is mentioned with cultural & artistic/aesthetic values (Commonland, 2018).

Somewhat separately, but still within Commonland documentation, inspiration is also embedded in Theory U. Theory U is the multi-stakeholder approach to foster bottom-up change & leadership, applied by Commonland in LS orchestration processes (Scharmer, 2007). There are 5 phases: co-initiating, co-sensing, co-strategizing, co-creating & co-evolving. Inspiration is part of the co-strategizing phase: **“Connect to the source of Inspiration and common will – go to the**

place of silence, allow the inner knowing to emerge” (Scharmer, 2007, p 7). This phase allows 'letting go' of non-essentials in order to allow ('letting come') new aspects (of the envisioned future) to emerge.

Monitoring

In the Commonland monitoring, evaluation & learning (MEL) framework, Inspiration is measured as:

Inspired & Connected people:

People are aware of the opportunity of landscape restoration, feel inspired about the 4 returns approach, and start 4 returns initiatives.

As such, there are 3 measurement indices or domains:

Awareness, Participation, & Replication

Awareness – Number of people demonstrating positive attitudes and beliefs towards landscape restoration and its practices (**# of people exposed through on- and offline interactions**).

Participation – Number of people participating in landscape restoration initiatives and/or in 4 returns restorative businesses (**# of people engaged**).

Replication – Number of landscape restoration initiatives and/or enterprises being established inside or outside the respective target landscapes.

Why – solidifying inspiration

As Commonland continues to develop & refine its MEL system, inspiration requires special care as it is the return which really goes furthest outside of the established scope. **Commonland is presenting 'something new' & establishing its validity in promoting inspiration as a return on par with social, environmental & financial capitals.** As such, solidifying our use of the term 'inspiration' and performing research into the inspiration evidence base & how it can be applied to LR is an important step forward.



How – the methodology

The process of creating this brief was as follows:

- a) Looking for & assessing the use & meaning of *inspiration* for Commonland
- b) Performing literature reviews, mostly through Google Scholar, of 'inspiration', combined with other keywords such as 'motivation', 'stewardship', '(environmental) psychology', '(environmental) sociology', 'society', 'behaviour', 'conservation', 'landscape', & 'restoration'
- c) Bringing 'inspiration' into the discussion at the Ecosystem Services Partnership (ESP) conference (October 2019, Hannover Germany) during indicators & impact sessions & speaking directly with delegates working on or interested in similar topics
 - o Follow-up research on related topics & delegates' suggestions
- d) Analysing & grouping the data to develop a framework for consideration & approach towards the question of inspiration
- e) Considering the relation of inspiration to the other returns & within the business sense

The results of «*step (a)*» have already been summarised in the previous section 'What'. The results from the subsequent steps are embedded in the following sections. The final section brings it all together.

Why inspiration? – Formative questions

Throughout my research into inspiration, two main questions came to mind. The need to research into «*what is inspiration?*» was evident, but also the question of «*why inspiration?*» began to develop. My own answer started formulating during the ESP conference. It was in the form of another series of questions:

Why do people care about the land? Why would they restore the land? Why do farmers who have other economic options continue to choose farming? Why would new farmers start? Why do farmers & restorers continue when obstacles arise, failures occur, & the situation gets *tough, tougher, & even tougher?*

I believe that in this series of questions, inspiration may lie at the centre of many of the answers, thus asserting the basis for its use & importance. I try to get to that understanding in this brief.

Another (and perhaps more concrete consideration) of '*why inspiration?*' is as a counter explanation to the «economic rationality theory» of why individuals behave the way they do. In this counter, inspiration could be embedded as part of a different theory such as the 'eco-social rationality' described by Little (2000). Indeed, stewardship (discussed later) is proposed by Brown (1998) as the means to a better framework in order to replace the neo-classical system, first by displacing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) metric. As Commonland seeks to promote a social movement & system change, this use of inspiration is quite important.

What is inspiration? – The scientific basis

As could be guessed from the keywords given in the methodology section, there appears to be no clear-cut research as to the full link between inspiration & landscape restoration (as expected). As such, this research starts with inspiration as a psychological/ sociological concept in general, and then goes to the link of inspiration with the environment & LR.

Defining inspiration:

Thrash, et al. (2014) performed a literature review on inspiration to approach a general definition & expand on the substantive findings of the emerging research on inspiration. They proposed that inspiration has 3 characteristics & 2 processes:



Characteristics:

1. First there is an **awareness of new or better possibilities**
2. Inspiration is then 'received', i.e. it comes from **outside oneself & one is 'awoken' to this new idea**
3. Lastly, one feels **compelled to bring the new idea or entity** into fruition or extension

Processes:

1. **'Inspired by'** – part of the 2nd characteristic, one is awoken to the intrinsic value of an entity or idea
2. **'Inspired to'** – part of the 3rd characteristic, one is motivated to act to create or extend the entity/idea

Thrash, et al. (2014) also described evidence as to the *function of inspiration* as the transmission of the intrinsic value of the evocative entity. **An evolutionary basis for this may be that a compelling of motivation to take some action upon seeing better possibilities allowed for human adaptation within changing contexts.** (Such an idea links quite nicely to LR!)

Inspiration was also noted to play a role in attaining elusive, but longed-after, goods such as **creativity, efficiency & productivity, & well-being & happiness** (Thrash, et al. 2014). Notably, **inspiration & effort** were seen to positively relate both at the individual & group level. Such ideas strengthen the importance of inspiration in the LR & 4 returns context.

Inspirational links with the environment

With the general basis of inspiration established, a few main venues were found to take inspiration & link it with the pro-environmental behaviours.

Motivation & the environment

Motivation could be considered as a part or result of inspiration, as it **quite easily falls into the third category & second process of inspiration** (as described in the previous section). Motivation has been more directly studied in regards to environmental behaviours, particularly within the field

of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). It is now being well-noted within the PES field of how at times extrinsic motivators (e.g. money) can 'crowd-out' intrinsic motivation to protect the environment.

What is intrinsic motivation? Steinhorst & Klöckner (2018) state that when behaviours are viewed through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), intrinsic motivation requires the most self-determination. It is the furthest removed from externally regulated behaviour & is performed due to interest, enjoyment & satisfaction. **These higher levels of self-determination are also noted to be related to maintaining pro-environmental behaviours over time & undertaking more & more difficult behaviours** (Steinhorst & Klöckner, 2018).

Ezzine-de-Blas (2019) analysed the literature to create a framework for how incentives may change motivation & behaviours, making use of social psychology, particularly Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) & SDT. These well-established theories have provided us with three main **moderators of motivation**, whilst Ezzine-de-Blas (2019) added the fourth moderator based off of others' research. These 4 moderators determine the psychological satisfaction (which is a basic human need) given by a task.

The moderators are:

- **Autonomy** – feeling of control
- **Competence** – feeling of (self-)capabilities
- **Social relatedness** – feelings of belonging with & connection to others
- **Environmental relatedness** – feelings of belonging with & connection to a natural setting/landscape

Motivation, as such, is based on these moderators, as they fulfil our need for satisfaction in the activities we undertake. This means that activities which fulfil these moderators give us positive feedback, leading to our **motivation to undertake the activity.** Policies & programmes (such as PES) indeed may 'crowd-out' or 'crowd-in' feelings of motivation by decreasing or



increasing various components of these moderators.

If motivation can indeed be seen as the second process of inspiration, then it is important to keep in mind the role that these 4 moderators can play in ultimately increasing motivation (see the final section).

It should be noted that **environmental relatedness** then **can be quite connected to 'a sense of place'** rooted in the emotional, meaningful, and/or spiritual bond people can have with certain areas (Williams & Stewart, 1998). This sense of place is a particularly important component in the landscape approach & in spurring pro-environmentalist actions (Oosten, 2013; Bramston, 2000).

Inspiration & stewardship

Another field which has a greater base of research is that of the psychological basis for stewardship. The encouraging findings here are that the basis for the creation of stewardship behaviours is practically the same as the motivation basis already described.

Stewardship is described by Hernandez (2012) as being driven **by the perception of greater long-term utility in non-selfish behaviours through regarding the welfare of the collective.**

As with motivation, stewardship is moderated through the fulfilment of autonomy & competence, with the other main feature being the valuation of the long-term collective (Hernandez 2012). One could make the link that stronger feelings of social & environmental relatedness (the other moderators) play a role in establishing this valuing.

Pulling the pieces together

How does these studies relate to Commonland's use of inspiration? I list my own interpretations here, but welcome you to consider your own for sharing before continuing to read.

Inspiration as hope & purpose :

This actually fits quite nicely with the processes of inspiration described earlier, whereby **hope corresponds with 'inspired by' & purpose with 'inspired to'**. Indeed, I believe that the **inspiration of LR brings hope & spurs purpose.**

Awareness, participation & replication :

- **Awareness** fulfils the **first characteristic** of inspiration, first you must know about new or better possibilities
- **Participation** could be a proxy measurement of the second characteristic, **one has been 'awoken' to the idea of restoration & regeneration**
- **Replication** would then fall nicely in the **third characteristic of one being compelled to put into the world a new idea or extend an old one**

As such, one could see the CL MEL approach as measuring the characteristics & processes of inspiration across the landscapes or within LR. Perhaps important is a broad understanding & application of these metrics. The **moderators** could then go the next step **in helping to understand changes in inspiration, or how to work towards increasing inspiration.** Indeed, ensuring that projects foster autonomy & competence may be an important next step. Furthermore, **attempting to measure the changes in feelings of social & environmental connectedness, as well as stewardship-type behaviours, may show how the social change system change aspect of LR is progressing.**

Inspiration integrated

A final piece to the inspiration puzzle being explored was analysis carried out on the business side of LR. Through considerations of the Business Model Canvas (BMC) approach & the 4 returns model of inspiration, we formulated further costs of a lack of inspiration & benefits to a return of inspiration.

- **Costs** – loss of trust, conflict, loss of belonging, loss of dignity/self-confidence, loss of purpose, loss of hope
- **Benefits** – vision & hope, sense of purpose & belonging,



empowerment, cultural identity & art, risk reduction & benefit multiplication

The final two – risk reduction & benefit multiplication – go towards a holistic integration of the 4 returns & the establishment of inspiration as a sort of backbone or binding thread of the impact of LR. The best way to describe this is in showing how inspiration spurs these returns in a positive feedback loop, as shown in Figure 1, on the next page.

Considerations going forward

As stated before, care could be taken in understanding the changes to inspiration & how to foster its increase.

Going back to the moderators of inspiration, Ezzine-de-Blas (2019) gives sub-moderators for each moderator which can be more directly used as characteristics of well-designed programmes or activities:

- Autonomy – inclusive design & participation voluntariness
- Competence – Recognition of skills & personal development
- Social Relatedness – Reciprocity, trust, recognition, inclusiveness, distributive equity, social justice & fairness
- Environmental relatedness – Feeling of belonging (identity & culture) & awareness of wellbeing from healthy environment

Further, as Thrash et al. (2014) notes care needs to be taken on *eliciting inspiration*, whereby inspiration cannot be forced, but needs to occur authentically/spontaneously for people. The authors gave further advice on this:

- Question if the link between the 'inspiration elicitor' & inspiration is solid (is it *really* inspiring?)
- Consider unintended effects – if efforts interfere with basic needs (such as those above for autonomy/competence), it may undermine inspiration
- A specific & actionable goal should be there to direct from *inspired by* to *inspired to*

- Connected to the *push-pull* theory of motivation (Deckers, 2018), whereby motives (desire, want) push people to do activities, but *external objects (incentives, goals)* 'pull' people towards an endpoint
- The *person* part of the equation is equally as important – different elicitors will work for different people & remember that focusing on people (i.e. through promoting openness, effort, thought) is an option
 - Evolutionary history, personal history & individual differences will influence motivation for people (Deckers, 2018)

Further, Steinhorst & Klöckner (2018) found in their study on pro-environmental intrinsic motivation, that environmentally framed behavioural information (i.e. communication materials) reinforced & promoted intrinsic motivations, i.e. intentions, *but did not necessarily change long-term behaviours (which incurred personal effort)*. In short, communication may only go so far, there is more needed to really foster stewardship mentality (actually seeing & doing, education, empowerment & (understanding of) other returns may be further links).

As another, direct option for measurement of inspiration, there is an *Inspiration Scale (IS)* developed by Thrash & Elliot (2003) as an eight-item questionnaire to measure inspiration. Something similar, but more expanded upon & LS specific, could be considered to carry out in the landscapes. Thrash & Elliot's (2003) scale gives a basis, but their agree-disagree statements are a bit vague, encompassing "I experience inspiration", "Something I encounter or experience inspires me", "I am inspired to do something", & "I feel inspired" with the same two sub-questions per statement asking about frequency ('how often') & intensity ('how deeply/strongly?').

Figure 1. Explanatory inspiration 'virtuous circle' feedback loop

Inspiration: a virtuous circle





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