



# Together with Nature Blog

## Turning four losses into four returns: the future of our landscapes lies in our own hands

- By Willem Ferwerda, CEO and founder [Commonland](#) -

Amid a health pandemic, the climate emergency, and a global economic crisis, the most crucial task humanity is facing in this century will be the recovery of our broken relationship with nature and the reversal of ecosystem degradation. Ecosystem degradation is the real global emergency since it touches our existence to the core. Not only are we dependent on ecosystems for our food, water, clean air, climate stability, for social and economic prosperity, wellness and happiness; but we are not separate from nature, its devastation is our devastation.

Nature-based solutions (NBS), therefore, offer the kind of response needed to tackle ecosystem degradation. Yet, not all 'nature-based solutions' are the same. The appeal of technological solutions and quick fixes that may occur with solely 'tree planting' can come at the cost of holistic and systemic approaches designed to tackle the root causes. For long-lasting and deep-rooted change, we need holistic, systemic approaches that can transform landscapes socially, economically, politically and ecologically. Such NBS are not quick fixes but unfold over time, on ecological time-scales of a generation or more.

While significant efforts towards ecosystem restoration continue to gather momentum globally, these tend to be short-lived. Commonland argues that for the recovery to happen at a significant scale, it is essential that policy, research and practices are soundly based on a long-term view and a commitment to long-term partnerships. To make sure that it is transformational, we need to inspire people and create hope.

We realise the complexity of the task ahead. To address the challenge, Commonland recognises that ecosystem degradation results in the loss of biodiversity, the loss of economic development, the loss of social capital, and the loss of human perspective, purpose or meaning. Making good on those losses must begin with the restoration of our ecosystems at the landscape scale and through a holistic approach. The 4 Returns model ([4R, 3 Zones, 20 years](#)) is designed to tackle these losses for the return of social capital, human inspiration, financial and natural capital. By initialising, catalysing and enabling landscape restoration, Commonland is building a proof of concept to [regenerating complex, large-scale landscapes](#) that are driven by communities, farmers and regenerative business models.

The current crises are an opportunity to reassess how we think and address our biggest challenges. Business as usual has brought us here; now we have the chance to make the world a fairer place. Nature-based solutions that are grounded in systemic thinking and long-term vision, are our best hope and a fundamental way forward to bridge the gap between a healthier and fairer future and the action on the ground.

Read more about the 4 Returns model for landscape restoration [here](#).

