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Ecological restoration: A new frontier for nature conservation and economics

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Summary

Ecological restoration is still perceived by many conservationists, and the majority of economists, as a diversion, a delusion, and – far worse – a waste of money. In this paper we point out that restoration is in fact complementary not only to nature conservation but also to sustainable, equitable socio-economic development. This is because restoring and augmenting the natural capital base generates jobs and improves livelihoods and the quality of life of all in the economy.

In developing countries, where most biodiversity hotspots occur, both conservation of nature and the restoration of degraded ecosystems will find local support only if they are clearly linked to socio-economic development. Conversely, sound socio-economic development in the environmentally damaged portions of those countries undoubtedly will require ecological restoration of the natural capital base. Nature conservation, ecological restoration, and sustainable economic development policies should therefore be planned, budgeted and executed conjointly.

Keywords

Biodiversity; Ecological restoration; Ecosystem services; Natural capital; Social capital