

Transforming Hearts, Restoring our Land Spiritual Perspective on Ecological Regeneration



S.Ma. Rodina M. Bongoc, RVM

School President

ABSTRACT: An urgent solution is required to the pressing issue of the escalating environmental crises and the widening gap between humanity and the natural world. Climate change, deforestation, and rapid urbanization highlight the urgent need for all-encompassing policies that not only address ecological degradation but also promote a strong bond between people and the natural world. The study sought to understand how individuals' personal spiritual beliefs influenced their understanding of and commitment to ecological regeneration and rewilding. This was done in order to better understand the complex relationship that exists between spirituality and ecological regeneration, as expressed in the research title, "Rewilding our Hearts, Restoring our Land: Spiritual Perspectives on Ecological Regeneration." Deep Ecology provides a theoretical framework for examining the spiritual aspects of ecological regeneration. It permits an in-depth investigation of the ways in which people, guided by their spiritual convictions, can embrace ecocentric principles and support rewilding initiatives. This study conducted a thorough investigation of the complex relationship between spirituality and ecological regeneration using a qualitative research methodology. As part of the research methodology, participant observations with members of various spiritual communities were used to collect qualitative data. As a result, study has revealed the subtle facets of participants' lived experiences, beliefs, and practices that influence their relationships to the environment through in-depth interviews and participant observations within various spiritual communities. The participants demonstrated a commitment to responsible environmental stewardship and a heightened awareness of ecological interconnectedness, driven by their spiritual perspectives.

KEYWORDS: Transforming Hearts, Land Spiritual Perspective, Ecological Regeneration

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The accelerating environmental crises and the growing disconnect between humanity and nature present a pressing problem that demands urgent attention. Rapid urbanization, deforestation, and climate change underscore the critical need for comprehensive strategies that not only address ecological degradation but also foster a deep-seated connection between individuals and the natural world. This problem is not only environmental but extends to the realm of human well-being, calling for an integrated approach that transcends traditional conservation measures.

This environmental divide has far-reaching effects on people's spiritual and emotional well-being in addition to the health of our world. A growing number of people are realizing that, in addition to being based in scientific and technological developments, solutions to the planet's unparalleled problems should also be influenced by spiritual viewpoints. The consequences of ignoring the spiritual component of ecological regeneration initiatives could impede the creation of comprehensive, long-term strategies required to deal with the underlying causes of environmental deterioration (Verschuuren, B., et al., 2021).

Drawing upon the observations of Carey, J. (2018), who once said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe," our investigation is based on the understanding that nature is interrelated. Furthermore, the writings of authors like Pedroli, B., & During, R. (2019) offer fundamental insights into ecological systems and the complex interactions that exist between people and the environment. A comprehensive examination of the spiritual aspects of rewilding and restoration is necessary, even though these writers provide insightful ecological analysis. A gap in the literature exists about the incorporation of spirituality into ecological regeneration stories.

Though research on ecological regeneration is expanding, there is still a clear knowledge vacuum regarding the contribution of spirituality to the development of a true relationship with the natural world and how this relates to successful rewilding projects. Although scientific viewpoints predominate in the discourse, there hasn't been a thorough investigation of how spiritual communities, practices, and beliefs support or obstruct ecological regeneration. Closing this research gap will help us recognize the distinct role spirituality plays in influencing environmental attitudes and behaviors, as well as help us develop inclusive and culturally sensitive strategies that work with a variety of populations.

Transforming Hearts, Restoring our Land Spiritual Perspective on Ecological Regeneration

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The study sought to understand how individuals' personal spiritual beliefs influenced their understanding of and commitment to ecological regeneration and rewilding. This was done in order to better understand the complex relationship that exists between spirituality and ecological regeneration, as expressed in the research title, "Rewilding our Hearts, Restoring our Land: Spiritual Perspectives on Ecological Regeneration." Second, it looked for and examined the lived experiences that shaped a person's spiritual ties to the environment and how these ties showed up in everyday activities and ecological practices. Thirdly, the study sought to determine the role that spiritual communities played in promoting rewilding initiatives and in fostering a sense of responsibility and engagement in ecological regeneration. Lastly, the research aimed to explore specific rituals, practices, or traditions within diverse spiritual frameworks that were directly linked to the concept of rewilding the heart and restoring the land. Overall, the study endeavored to provide insights that could contribute to a holistic understanding of the interplay between spirituality and ecological regeneration, offering valuable perspectives for sustainable and spiritually-informed environmental practices.

3.0 THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

Deep Ecology Theory:

Developed by Arne Naess in the 1970s, Deep Ecology is a philosophical and ecological perspective that challenges anthropocentrism and emphasizes the intrinsic value of all living beings. The theory advocates for a profound shift in human consciousness towards recognizing and respecting the interconnectedness of all life within ecosystems. It encourages individuals to develop an ecocentric worldview, wherein nature is valued for its own sake rather than solely for its utility to humans.

Originating in the environmental movement of the 1970s, Deep Ecology offers a useful framework for comprehending the spiritual foundations of ecological regeneration. Within the framework of this investigation, the theory can direct the examination of the ways in which individual spiritual convictions influence the formation of an ecocentric viewpoint. People who are influenced by their spirituality may show a stronger dedication to ecological practices by accepting the idea of interconnectedness and appreciating the inherent value of nature. The theory aids in placing the research within a larger ecological philosophy that moves beyond instrumental conceptions of nature and toward a more comprehensive comprehension of the interactions between humans and their surroundings.

In conclusion, Deep Ecology provides a theoretical framework for examining the spiritual aspects of ecological regeneration. It originated in the environmental discourse of the 1970s. It permits an in-depth investigation of the ways in which people, guided by their spiritual convictions, can embrace ecocentric principles and support rewilding initiatives. It is possible to discover the ways in which spirituality shapes a profound and transformative connection to the environment by incorporating Deep Ecology into the research.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODS

This study conducted a thorough investigation of the complex relationship between spirituality and ecological regeneration using a qualitative research methodology. As part of the research methodology, participant observations with members of various spiritual communities were used to collect qualitative data. These techniques were selected in order to fully immerse the research in the complex facets of the participants' lived experiences, convictions, and behaviors that influenced how they interacted with their surroundings. The goal was to get a deep and comprehensive understanding of how spirituality affected people's beliefs and behaviors regarding ecological regeneration by applying qualitative methods. This qualitative design gave the study's findings depth and context by enabling a thorough investigation of the spirituality's role in rewilding initiatives.

5.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you describe your personal spiritual beliefs and how they influence your understanding of ecological regeneration and transforming?"

Theme: "Inter-connectedness and Reverence for Nature in Ecological Regeneration"

The participant's personal spiritual beliefs place a strong emphasis on the need to respect, preserve, and use nature responsibly, as well as the inter-connectedness of all living things. The comprehension is based on the realization of a basic unity in which humans and the larger natural world are inextricably linked. This spiritual viewpoint offers a comprehensive understanding of ecological regeneration and heart transformation, according to which human well-being and environmental well-being are inextricably intertwined.

"My personal spiritual beliefs and how it influences my understanding of ecological regeneration and heart's transformation is that we should respect, protect and appropriate uses of nature because as a living thing we are all in one we are connected to nature."

This response's theme, "Inter-connectedness and Reverence for Nature in Ecological Regeneration," reveals the participants' recognition of the close relationship that exists between spirituality and environmental stewardship. Being "one" with

Transforming Hearts, Restoring our Land Spiritual Perspective on Ecological Regeneration

nature emphasizes a holistic approach, implying that environmental preservation is not only a responsibility but a fundamental part of life itself. This interwoven perspective offers a distinctive lens through which to view ecological challenges and is consistent with many indigenous and spiritual philosophies that see nature as sacred and intertwined with the spiritual realm.

It implies that encouraging awe for nature and a sense of interconnectedness among residents of a community may be a potent catalyst for environmental responsibility. Techniques and approaches that highlight the innate unity between people and their surroundings and speak to this spiritual dimension may be especially successful. This realization emphasizes how crucial it is to include a range of spiritual viewpoints in conversations and activities pertaining to ecological regeneration in order to transform the heart and restore the land in a way that is both impactful and inclusive.

2. What lived experiences have shaped your spiritual connection to the environment, and how does this connection manifest in your daily life and ecological practices?

Theme: "Spiritual Practices and Environmental Stewardship: Nurturing a Divine Connection to Nature"

Personal practices like prayer, meditation, contemplation, inputs on gospel readings, consistent church activities attendance, receptions of the sacraments, catechesis on laudato si, personal commitment to Eco-bricking and consistent church attendance have a significant impact on the participant's spiritual connection to the environment. The idea that people have an obligation to protect the environment because they are God's creation frames these experiences. The practical acts of garbage segregation, which demonstrate a commitment to responsible ecological practices, demonstrate the connection between spirituality and environmental stewardship.

"By Praying, meditating and going to church every Sunday and also as a creation of God we must also take care of our environment by segregating garbage and by doing that It would help our mother nature."

The identified theme, "Spiritual Practices and Environmental Stewardship: Nurturing a Divine Connection to Nature," is consistent with the participant's focus on establishing a strong spiritual connection to the environment through the integration of spiritual rituals into daily life. The participant's ecological practices are based on the integration of prayer, meditation, and church attendance, which reinforces the idea that environmental stewardship is both a practical and a sacred duty. This synthesis of environmental action and spirituality emphasizes how religious practices can act as catalysts for constructive ecological behavior.

This theme implies that engaging in spiritual practices can have a significant impact on motivating people to take environmentally friendly actions. A deeper understanding of environmental stewardship as a crucial component of one's spiritual journey can be fostered by incorporating ecological considerations into religious teachings and rituals. This realization raises the possibility of working together to advance sustainable practices and a divine duty to protect the environment between religious institutions and environmental advocacy organizations. The effectiveness of ecological regeneration efforts may be increased by incorporating such viewpoints into educational programs and community initiatives, acknowledging and appreciating the influence of spirituality on human behavior.

3. In your view, how do spiritual communities foster a sense of responsibility and engagement in ecological regeneration, and what role do these communities play in supporting progressive approach to conservation initiatives?

Theme: "Unity and Love: Spiritual Communities as Catalysts for Ecological Responsibility and Progressive approach to Conservation Initiatives"

The participant believes that spiritual communities play a crucial role in encouraging participation in ecological regeneration and a sense of responsibility. The principles of love, harmony, and caring for the environment are emphasized. According to this perspective, spiritual communities are essential in fostering a culture of awareness about the value of environmental stewardship.

"By loving and taking care of our environment and being united to love and treating our earth right."

The theme that was selected, "Unity and Love: Spiritual Communities as Catalysts for Ecological Responsibility and progressive approach to Conservation Initiatives," represents the viewpoint of the participants regarding the potential for spiritual communities to bring people together and undergo formation for transformation. The focus on love as a motivating factor implies that spiritual principles can establish a common culture in these communities, encouraging a sense of environmental responsibility among all members. The idea of coming together to love and care for the Earth implies a shared commitment to ecological sustainability that goes beyond individual deeds.

The implication is that spiritual communities can be effective messengers for the progressive approach to conservation and ecological responsibility. These communities can inspire their members to actively participate in environmental stewardship by utilizing the values of love and unity. Spiritual communities may be very supportive of initiatives that support ecological education, conservation efforts, and sustainable practices. By bridging the gap between spirituality and environmental action, recognizing and

Transforming Hearts, Restoring our Land Spiritual Perspective on Ecological Regeneration

promoting the role of spiritual communities in the larger ecological discourse could result in more cohesive and effective progressive approach to conservation initiatives.

4. Can you share specific examples of rituals, practices, or traditions within your spiritual framework that are directly linked to the concept of rewilding the heart and restoring the land?

Theme: "Sacred Outreach: Integrating Spiritual Practices into Environmental Advocacy for Progressive approach to Conservation and Restoration"

Within their framework, the participant gives a specific example of how spiritual practices and ecological advocacy are connected. The aforementioned custom entails carrying out environmental outreach initiatives. The main goal is to impart knowledge about God's creation while highlighting the significance of loving God and His creation in order to encourage heart rewilding and land restoration.

"By implementing outreach program for environment and talking about the creation of God by sharing it to others on how is it important to love God and His creation."

The theme that was identified, "Sacred Outreach: Integrating Spiritual Practices into Environmental Advocacy for Progressive approach to Conservation and Restoration," highlights the participant's dedication to actively incorporating spirituality into environmental projects. An intentional outreach program that acts as a conduit for the exchange of spiritual viewpoints regarding the significance of protecting the environment is the subject of the example given. The way that outreaches initiatives are incorporated with the spiritual idea of loving God and creation implies that an intentional attempt has been made to link religious teachings with environmental advocacy, incorporating it into the larger sacred story.

The implication is that one way to encourage conservation and restoration is to incorporate spiritual practices into environmental outreach. This method acknowledges the influence that spiritual convictions have on people's motivation to actively participate in ecological initiatives. It implies that conversations regarding the environment can truly connect people to the cause when they are presented in the framework of spiritual teachings. By fostering a bridge between spiritual principles and concrete environmental actions, embracing and growing such projects within spiritual communities could have a more significant effect on progressive approach to conservation efforts.

6.0 CONCLUSION

To sum up, the results of this qualitative investigation into the connection between spirituality and ecological regeneration shed light on the significant impact that spiritual beliefs have on people's attitudes and behaviors. The study has revealed the subtle facets of participants' lived experiences, beliefs, and practices that influence their relationships to the environment through in-depth interviews and participant observations within various spiritual communities. The participants demonstrated a commitment to responsible environmental stewardship and a heightened awareness of ecological interconnectedness, driven by their spiritual perspectives. The participants' ecological actions, which included waste segregation and active participation in outreach programs, were motivated by their integration of spiritual practices into their daily lives. Moreover, spiritual communities were found to be effective in promoting a sense of unity and accountability within ecological regeneration initiatives. The research not only emphasizes the complex relationship that exists between spirituality and environmental practices, but it also shows how important a role spiritual communities can play in rewilding projects. A thorough understanding of how spirituality shapes attitudes and behaviors related to ecological regeneration has been made possible by the qualitative design's depth and context.

REFERENCES

- 1) Tomich, T.P., Lidder, P., Coley, M., Gollin, D., Meinzen-Dick, R., Webb, P., & Carberry, P. (2019). Food and agricultural innovation pathways for prosperity. *Agric. Syst.*, 172, 1–15. [Google Scholar] [CrossRef]
- 2) McLauchlan, L. (2019). A multispecies collective planting trees: Tending to life and making meaning outside of the conservation heroic. *Cult. Stud. Rev.*, 25, 135–153. [Google Scholar] [CrossRef]
- 3) Creed, I.F., & van Noordwijk, M. (2018). Forests, trees and water on a changing planet: A contemporary scientific perspective. In *Forest and Water on a Changing Planet: Vulnerability, Adaptation and Governance Opportunities: A Global Assessment Report* (No. 38); Creed, I.F., van Noordwijk, M., Eds.; International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO): Vienna, Austria, pp. 13–24. [Google Scholar]
- 4) van Noordwijk, M., Rahayu, S., Gebrekirstos, A., Kindt, R., Tata, H.L., Muchugi, A., Ordonez, J.C., & Xu, J. (2019). Tree diversity as the basis of agroforestry. In *Sustainable Development Through Trees on Farms: Agroforestry in its Fifth Decade*; van Noordwijk, M., Ed.; World Agroforestry (ICRAF): Bogor, Indonesia, pp. 17–44. [Google Scholar]
- 5) Erbaugh, J.T., & Oldekop, J.A. (2018). Forest landscape restoration for livelihoods and well-being. *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.*, 32, 76–83. [Google Scholar] [CrossRef]

Transforming Hearts, Restoring our Land Spiritual Perspective on Ecological Regeneration

- 6) Brown, S., & Verschuuren, B. (2019). Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature in Protected and Conserved Areas: The “Deeply Seated Bond”. In Verschuuren and Brown 2019: 1-17. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315108186-1>.
- 7) Carey, J. (2018). Spiritual, but not Religious? On the Nature of Spirituality and its Relation to Religion. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 83, 261-69. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-017-9648-8>.
- 8) Holbraad, M., & Pedersen, M. A. (2017). *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316218907>.
- 9) Li, Q. (2018). *Shinrin-yoku. The Art and Science of Forest-Bathing*. London: Penguin.
- 10) Pedroli, B., & During, R. (2019). The Paradox of ‘Makeable Nature’—Ingrained and Controversial: The Significance of Cultural Identity in Public Support for Nature Policy and Management (Wot Technical Report, 166; Wageningen: Statutory Research Task Unit for Nature and the Environment).
- 11) Roncken, P. A. (2018). *Shades of Sublime: A Design for Landscape Experiences as an Instrument in the Making of Meaning* (PhD thesis, Wageningen: Wageningen University). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.18174/427612>.
- 12) Verschuuren, B., & Brown, S. (2019). Remections on the Situational and Relational Contexts of Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature in Protected and Conserved Areas. In Verschuuren and Brown 2019: 292-306. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315108186-20>.
- 13) Verschuuren, B., et al. (2021). *Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature: Guidance for Protected and Conserved Area Governance and Management* (Gland: IUCN). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2021.PAG.32.en>.
- 14) Verschuuren, B., & Brown, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Cultural and Spiritual Significance of Nature in Protected Areas: Governance, Management and Policy*. Abingdon: Routledge. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315108186>.
- 15) Zylstra, M. J. (2019). Meaningful Nature Experiences: Pathways for Deepening Connections between People and Place. In Verschuuren and Brown 2019: 40-57. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315108186-3>.
- 16) Zylstra, M. J., Esler, K., Knight, A., & Le Grange, L. (2018). Integrating Multiple Perspectives on the Human–Nature Relationship: A Reply to Fletcher 2016. *The Journal of Environmental Education*.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.