

Ecological restoration or ecological rehabilitation? Towards a double vision

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In literature there is a growing attention for the role of metaphor in nature conservation. Metaphors structure how we perceive, think, and act. The metaphor of nature as a book provokes a different attitude and kind of nature management than the metaphor of nature as a machine, an organism, a network, and so on. Metaphors enable the organisation of a practice and the formation of a profession. I will explore the use of metaphors of art and medicine within the field of restoration ecology. Robert Elliot compares e.g. ecological restoration with art reproduction of art forgery whereas Andrew Light claims that it is more akin to art of restoration. Other authors however apply the metaphor of rehabilitation rather than ecological restoration. The metaphor of rehabilitation refers stronger to the domain of medicine in stead of art. While the restoration metaphor highlights structure and composition, the rehabilitation metaphor stresses process and function. Thus different metaphors express different opinions on the meaning and practise of restoration. Metaphors are important since they function as communicative devices within and between social groups or disciplines. However they are also restricted in range and in relevance. In line with the pragmatist Donald Schön I argue that we should adopt a so-called 'double vision': 'the ability to act from a frame while cultivating awareness of alternative frames'. More in particular I will argue that the adoption of such a double vision will facilitate the communication and cooperation across the boundaries that separate different kinds of nature management and groups of experts and lay people.

Keywords: metaphors, art, health, restoration, rehabilitation, communicative devices