

The Earth is an island ... And other lessons from my visit to Mauritius

By Wayne Visser

 Insights from Mauritius  This past week I had the opportunity to speak at the CIEL Group Sustainability Forum in Mauritius, and to deliver, with **Indira Kartallozi**, a training workshop on Integrated Value Management, plus visit 2 inspiring projects. Here are my 3 takeaways:

Insight 1: Development matters

 I last visited Mauritius in 1997 as part of a KPMG project on tourism carrying capacity (I arrived the day Princess Diana died ☹️). 28 years later, economic development has transformed the island; with less poverty, most people's lives are better. But social challenges remain, including financial vulnerability, domestic violence, drug addiction and alcohol abuse.

 Projects like Lakaz Lespoir, supported by CIEL, helps women to regain control of their lives through their community garden - which allows them to earn a stipend - childcare facilities, clothes recycling and affordable goods for sale. Without economic and social development, sustainability fails.

Insight 2: Nature can recover

 The infamous flightless dodo bird was endemic to Mauritius before humans hunted it to extinction in the 1600s. The Mauritius kestrel may well have gone the same way were it not for the heroic work of environmental groups like **The Mauritian Wildlife Foundation**, **BirdLife International** and **The Peregrine Fund** who brought it back from 4 individuals in 1974 to 300 to 500 today.

 Today, the kestrel finds refuge, among other places, at Ferney Valley, a private nature reserve where CIEL has the goal of planting 100,000 native trees and reforesting 1,000 hectares of forest by 2030. Here, the South East Ladies Agro cooperative also showcases and trains entrepreneurs on agroforestry.

Insight 3: Earth is an island

 In the 1960s, the idea of a circular economy was born when Buckminster Fuller, Barbara Ward and Kenneth Boulding introduced the concept of Spaceship Earth - a closed system where we cannot endlessly exploit resources and increase pollution and waste. Island economies like Mauritius are often highly dependent on imports, but they have the opportunity to become exemplars for the **hashtag#circulareconomy**.

 La Pirogue, one of the CIEL Group hotels where we stayed, is a case in point. Instead of the usual greenwashing ("please pick up your towels so we don't have to wash

them"), I was impressed with their no single-use plastics policy, water refill stations and commitment to renewable energy.

 Every country and every company is on a sustainability journey from responsibility to resilience - and beyond towards regeneration. I believe Mauritius, with the leadership of companies like CIEL, has the potential to show the way on how to become **Nature Positive** without leaving people behind.

My bestselling book is now available in paperback (besides ebook and audiobook)

Source:

First published on Purpose Inspired, May 21, 2025. Available at:
<https://purposeinspired.substack.com/p/the-earth-is-an-island>