

# Let's GO for Rights of Nature – 'Onboarding' Nature as a next step

Groene Peper Festival Den Haag, 23 May 2025

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## LET'S GO FOR RIGHTS OF NATURE

#### **Programme**

- Green Office Open Universiteit
- Rights of Nature
- Onboarding Nature
- Interactive: how to get Nature on Board?



### **GREEN OFFICE OPEN UNIVERSITEIT**

#### **OPEN UNIVERSITEIT**

- Facts & Figures Open Universiteit
  - Since 1984
  - Originally: second chance education
  - Currently: life-long learning
  - Modular, mostly online education
  - 15.241 Students (18-88 years old)
  - 14 study centres (Netherlands and Beigium)



#### **GREEN OFFICE OPEN UNIVERSITEIT**

#### **GREEN OFFICE OPEN UNIVERSITEIT**

- Since 2021
- Pilot phase (2021-2023)
- Current Phase (2024-2029)
- OU Employees and Students
  - Pro Team & Volunteers
  - Currently: 10 members (6P/ 4V)
  - Interdisciplinary!
- Mostly online
- See <u>www.ou.nl/green-office</u> for more info (+animation)



- Definition
- Philosophical & legal
- Fastest growing legal concept
- Rights of Nature & Go OU



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#### **RIGHTS OF NATURE**

#### Definition:

"It is the recognition that our ecosystems – including trees, oceans, animals, mountains – have rights just as human beings have rights. Rights of Nature is about balancing what is good for human beings against what is good for other species, what is good for the planet as a world. It is the holistic recognition that all life, all ecosystems on our planet are deeply intertwined.

Rather than treating Nature as property under the law, Rights of Nature acknowledges that Nature in all its life forms has the right to vital cycles.

And we – the people – have the legal authority and responsibility to enforce these rights on behalf of ecosystems. The ecosystem itself can be named as the injured party, with its own legal standing rights, in cases alleging rights violations. For Indigenous cultures around the world, recognizing the Rights of Nature is consistent with their traditions of living in harmony with Nature. All life, including human life, is deeply connected.

Decisions and values are based on what is good for the whole."



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'Philosophical' & Legal:

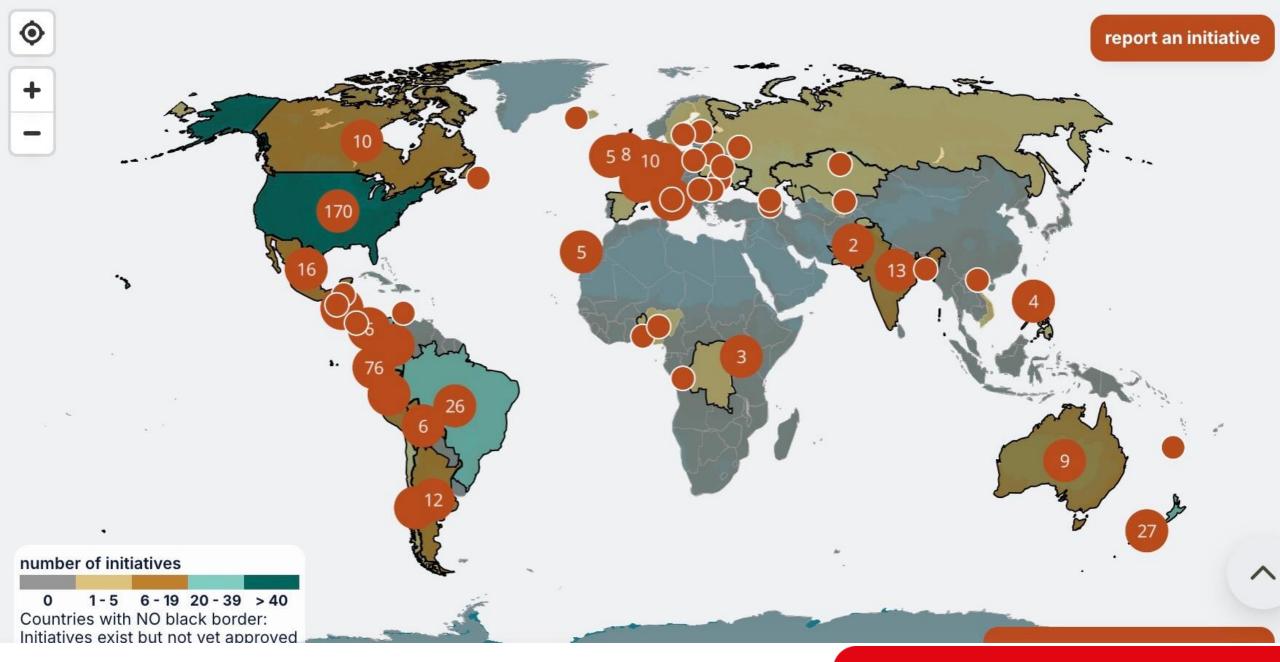
- Open Universiteit curriculum
- Jessica den Outer/ Rechten van de Natuur





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Source: Stichting Rechten van de Natuur: <a href="https://www.rechtenvandenatuur.org">https://www.rechtenvandenatuur.org</a>

Example - Rechten van de Scheldes: <a href="https://rechtenvandescheldes.eu/">https://rechtenvandescheldes.eu/</a>



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# B

#### **RIGHTS OF NATURE**

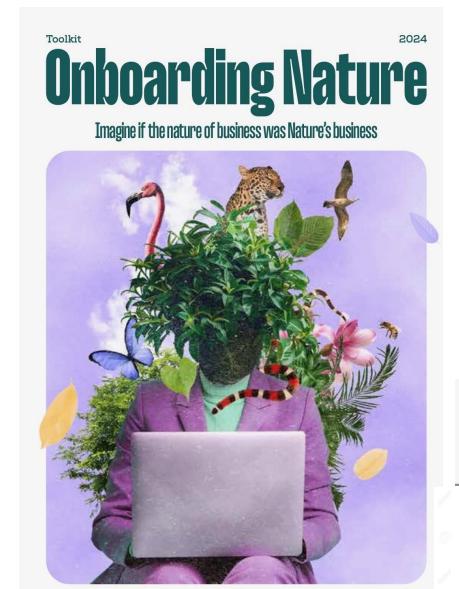
#### **RIGHTS OF NATURE & GO OU**

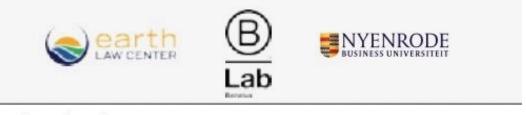
- Go Get Together (November 2023)
- GOUD (June 2024)
- LIRS Conference (November 2024)
- Participation in Round Table 'Onboarding Nature' (January 2025)
- Next step...



# B

#### **ONBOARDING NATURE**





Source: Onboarding Nature Toolkit

https://www.onboarding

nature.com











- Formalizing the role of Nature as a stakeholder
- Nature-inclusive governance
- Alongside & in synergy with Rights of Nature movement
- 4 models





#### **ONBOARDING NATURE: 4 MODELS**

- Nature as Inspiration
- Nature as Advisor
- Nature as Director
- [Nature as Shareholder]



## **Nature as Inspiration**

#### **Conceptual definition**

Nature as Inspiration can either be a policy-based declaration of intent/values; or a legal entrenchment of Nature as Purpose in an organisation's constitutional documents.

#### **Particulars**

Nature as Inspiration, as a policy-based approach, is a cultural entrenchment of Nature and Nature-positive values in an organisation. The most notable example of Nature as Inspiration is the campaign for Mother Nature as CEO, featured in this toolkit (Willicroft, Blyde). This is a purpose- and mission-driven declaration of intent that is a first step onto the journey of formalising Nature as Stakeholder.

In its legal form, Nature as Purpose is an explicit commitment to Nature by the organisation, as included in the constitutional documents/Articles of Incorporation/Articles of Association/Bylaws. Nature as Purpose can operate on its own, and/or be supported by further organisational mechanisms to give Nature as voice

The most notable example is Faith in Nature, featured in this toolkit, where the Objects of the Company were amended to include a double obligation: to promote the success of the company, and to operate the business in a manner that benefits Nature.



Source: Onboarding Nature Toolkit <a href="https://www.onboardingnature.com">https://www.onboardingnature.com</a>

#### Nature as Advisor

#### Conceptual definition

Nature as Advisor can be either a policy or legal commitment, to entrench Nature as a stakeholder in a consultory capacity, within the governance of a company, via the creation of an advisory board, or advisory board seat.

#### **Particulars**

This approach can be either a policy or a legal entrenchment of Nature, depending on the chosen vision and strategy of a company.

Nature as Advisor can be represented through an individual or through a committee; in addition, an advisory board/role can be either internal or external to an organisation.

Where it is legally entrenched (i.e. within a company's organisational constitutional documents), an advisory council has a mandate to advise the board concerning Nature-related decisions.

Where it is a policy-based entrenchment, the advisory board is a conversational space, where key topics are presented for consultation and discussion. The advisory board then makes its (non-binding) recommendations to the Board of Directors.

The most notable example of Nature as Advisor as a policy-based, external/satellite committee framework was developed by Corporate Regeneration, featured in this toolkit.

Companies that have adopted this alternative model of governance include (not featured in this toolkit): Copains (Impact board); Realco (Vision Board); NGroup (Impact Board), Danone BeLux (Stakeholder meeting).

The most notable example of *Nature as Advisor*, via an individual advisory role, was developed by the Zoönomic Institute, featured in this toolkit. The 'Speaker for the Living' has an 'observer board seat in organisations certified as Zoöps.



Source: Onboarding Nature Toolkit <a href="https://www.onboardingnature.com">https://www.onboardingnature.com</a>



#### **Nature as Director**

#### **Conceptual definition**

Nature as Director is a legal commitment to entrench the voice, the vote, and the interests of Nature in the constitutional, strategic and operational governance of the company.

#### **Particulars**

This approach is a legal entrenchment of the status of *Nature as Stakeholder*, within the constitutional and governance DNA of a company. Nature is given protection and rights, through both a revision of the Articles of Association, an upgrading of the Objects of a company, and an amendment to the organisational governance policy framework.

The creation of a directorship role entrenches Nature's input in the decision-making of the company, through a range of rights, including: voting, access to information, reporting review, etc. Nature as Director also has equal rights and duties as other company directors.

Nature as Director can take the form of a singular role, as an executive (operational) or non-executive (strategic) director; or in the form of a collective role, where the whole board acts as proxy for Nature.

The most notable examples of *Nature as Director*, featured in various forms in this toolkit, include Faith in Nature, House of Hackney (interviewed & mentioned), Hub Culture, and Palais de Tokyo.



Source: Onboarding Nature Toolkit <a href="https://www.onboardingnature.com">https://www.onboardingnature.com</a>

#### **INTERACTIVE: HOW TO GET NATURE ON BOARD?**



#### **BRAINSTORM**

- What is an educational institution's relationship with Nature, why would such an institution want to bring Nature on board?
- Which model (from the Onboarding Nature's toolkit) fits educational institutions best?
- Can we 'onboard' Nature together? If so, what could be next steps?

## **QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?**



#### **PLEASE CONTACT US!**

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