

Sustainable Development as Transformative Learning: Reflexivity in Deliberative Environmental Governance

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Social learning plays a prominent role in the discourses and practices of sustainable development. Correspondingly, it is posited in environmental social science as an essential cognitive component of policy change. Much of this literature, however, is instrumental and often technocratic. Given that sustainable development is about societal transformation, such an orientation fails to interrogate the basic social and economic assumptions that stand in the path of the cultural shift required for a sustainable future. The contemporary approach to learning in the planning and policy sciences thus needs to move beyond supplying technical information to include a deliberative, transactional approach to paradigm change. Toward this end, the presentation turns to the literature on transformative learning to suggest what a reflexive approach to social learning would look like and how it might inform the larger societal discourses on sustainable development, ecological transformation and environmental governance more generally.