

## ***"A living community is always a learning community": Yes, but who said it was going to be easy?***

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This paper critically explores in practice the four dimensions of sustainability – Worldview, Social, Ecological and Economical – put forward by the educational program Gaia education, created by GESE (Global Ecovillage Educators for a Sustainable Earth). The main argument of the paper is that beyond this framework for sustainability, there is a need for research into more radical learning-based transformations in individuals and communities so as to transition towards a more reflexive and process-oriented interpretation of sustainability. This is addressed by exploring at multiple levels the processes of social learning taking place in an intentional community in Colombia called Atlántida, stimulated by certain conflicts and dissonances between community members. Drawing on 12 months of ethnographic research, including in depth interviews and community reflection meetings, the data is enriched by two co-researchers from the community who respectively provide an account of the (de)learning process of leadership in the community, and the other into collaborative learning with two other intentional communities in Colombia. Findings shows that despite the shared 'intention' of individuals to live a sustainable life together, risking interpersonal homogeneity, personal dissonances in work rhythms, innovative thinking and values provide a potential for transformative learning if reflexivity and exchanges of experiences are included in the process. Equally important, however, is to take into account that this type of learning involves facing the hard realities of personal conflicts and community dynamics, where what is learnt can often be painful to accept and difficult to practice. This leads to the conclusion that although social learning may be crucial for the transition towards a more sustainable world, much care must be taken into how it is achieved in a practical sense, allowing for dissonance and divergence of opinions and realities to meet in a sometimes tough reflexive environment.

Keywords: Social learning, Sustainability in practice, Intentional community, Collaborative learning

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