



# Deliberative Environmental Politics: Democracy and Ecological Rationality

*Walter F. Baber*

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In *Deliberative Environmental Politics*, Walter Baber and Robert Bartlett link political theory with the practice of environmental politics, arguing that the "deliberative turn" in democratic theory presents an opportunity to move beyond the policy stalemates of interest-group liberalism and offers a foundation for reconciling rationality, strong democracy, and demanding environmentalism. Deliberative democracy, which presumes that the essence of democracy is deliberation -- thoughtful and discursive public participation in decision making -- rather than voting, interest aggregation, or rights, has the potential to produce more environmentally sound policy decisions and a more ecologically rational form of environmental governance. Baber and Bartlett defend deliberative democracy's relevance to environmental politics in the twenty-first century against criticisms from other theorists. They critically examine three major models for deliberative democracy -- those of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and advocates of full liberalism such as Amy Gutmann, Dennis Thompson, and James Bohman -- and analyze the implications of each of these approaches for ecologically rational environmental politics as well as for institutions, citizens, experts, and social movements. In order to establish that democracy is ecologically sustainable and that environmental protection can (and must) become a norm of culture rather than a mere fact of government, they argue, new models of ecological deliberation and deliberative environmentalism are required.

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