



The Evolution of Planning Thought

John Forester, CV

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John Forester, Professor, Cornell University, earned B.S. and M.S.M.E. Degrees (1970, 1971) before his M.C.P. and Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning (1974, 1977) at U.C. Berkeley. He spent sabbaticals at M.I.T., the Technion, and UvAmsterdam. Forester's early work explored diverse social theories to examine the micro-politics of planning practices. In the 1980s Forester explored selective attention, agenda-setting, the politics of information, and critically interpretive listening in planning. That work culminated in *Planning in the Face of Power* (1989) and (with Norman Krumholz) *Making Equity Planning Work* (1990). In the 1990s Forester increasingly grounded and explored those concerns via a Studs Terkel-like, grounded narrative approach, collecting and analysing practice-focused, first person voice „profiles of practitioners.“ His work inspired earlier by Paulo Freire and Jurgen Habermas became more grounded and ethically more fine-grained through Martha Nussbaum's discourse analysis. This work of Forester's includes the *Deliberative Practitioner* (1999), and, earlier (with Frank Fischer) *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (1993). Forester then explored how planners working in contentious settings could learn from mediators of public disputes. Working in-between parties with conflicting interests and values, ample anger, distrust and fear, experienced mediators can provide planners with wise practical advice (of significant theoretical interest too). This work includes *Dealing with Differences: Dramas of Mediating Public Disputes* (2009) and *Planning in the Face of Conflict* (2013). Forester continues to gather and explore these profiles of practitioners, which he uses as teaching materials. He routinely asks both undergraduate and graduate students to produce, analyse and learn from profiles of practitioners of their choice (see <http://courses2.cit.cornell.edu/fit117/>). His current projects involve New Orleans (with Ken Reardon), street level governance (with David Laws), placemaker profiles, and improvisation in planning.