



The Evolution of Planning Thought

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My path to a career in urban planning was undoubtedly coloured by a background as a child in the emigration from Nazi Germany and the war-time experience in a family much involved in the war-time struggle from the vantage point of the United States. In college, I was involved in anti-fascist politics, and wanted to get into politics to make a difference. I thought that a law degree would help and after graduating from law school I practiced law for 20 years in an industrial town in Connecticut, doing labour and civil rights work. By the 1970's, deindustrialisation was taking its toll where I was, and the civil rights movement was stabilising. I decided professional knowledge of planning substance as well as legal forms was a useful new direction to go. After completing my Ph.D. in urban planning, I began to teach, first in California, where I became President of the city's City Planning Commission. For family reasons, I returned to the East coast, got a job teaching in Columbia University's Urban Planning program, was retained to do a major research study on rent regulation for the city, and was appointed to the Community Board for my district, where I became chair of its Housing Committee. I have travelled widely since then, exploring issues of social justice and their global ramifications in countries on five continents. Last year I retired, but have remained active in campaigns around housing and planning issues. Most recently, I began working on a campaign that explores the possibilities of community land trusts in housing and participatory budgeting in capital planning. I have also turned to more theoretical work focusing on the ethics of the planning profession and more broadly on strategies for transformative social change through social policy and social movement organisation.