

Eric Britton



"One of those outstanding innovators whose work will have the greatest likely future significance and impact over the long-term... and likely become or remain "key players" in the technological drama unfolding in coming years." - WTN 2002 Award citation.

Born in Mississippi and educated in New England and Europe, Francis Eric Knight Britton studied science at Amherst and Columbia College, and later the PhD program of the Graduate Faculty of Economics at Columbia University (PhD Can., development economics), with work on a dissertation on technology, development and job creation as Fulbright Fellow in Italy. He has been awarded grants and fellowships for his work from the Ford Foundation, MIT, the Salzburg Seminar, and the International Fellows Program.

While completing his doctoral course work at Columbia, Eric taught economics and statistics at New York University and Mills College. From 1962-1965 he worked as partner to Wolfgang Zuckermann in a three year project which resulted in the creation and running of Sundance, a summer festival for the chamber arts in Bucks County Pennsylvania. He spent two years in the US Army, Infantry/Medical Field Corps/Special Services, and later (1967/68) put some of this background to work during a public health assignment in Vietnam with USAID and the World Health Organization. As a child he grew up with the intention of working with the United Nations because of family involvement with the organization at its founding: an interest which conditioned his education in many ways, has led to a number of UN assignments, and which continues to this day.

In 1967 he co-founded EcoPlan International, a cross-disciplinary thinktank and consultancy providing an independent forum of strategic reflection and decision counsel to government and industry on issues involving the *management of technological change as it affects people in their daily lives*. Britton has participated or led teams counseling several international corporation in setting up small technology-based business units as "test beds for corporate change", including Shell, Volvo, Westinghouse Electric, Renault, Tektronix, Bandag and other into industrial groups. He has served as high level consultant to the United Nations, OECD, European Commission, International Labor Organization, and a long list of national and regional government agencies, and as a visiting lecturer at a number of US and European universities.

Eric has worked and published widely in the fields of new technology, IT, communications, logistics, mobility, city strategies, job creation, work organization and sustainable development. His 1993 report for the European Commission "Rethinking Work: New Ways to Work in an Information Society", was later re-issued as a widely read and cited 'thinking exercise' for managers and policy makers. In 1996 his collection "[The Information Society and Sustainable Development](#)" was published by the European Commission.

Communications, 'distance work' and aggressive use of the internet are important components of my work practices. Short mention might be made here of the process that he and his colleagues have engaged over the years to put technology to work in very practical ways to advance the work of the group. (A list reviewing [IT and Communications Hallmarks](#) can be see here, and another showing a [Sample of Websites](#) here. Also if you [check out the Miscellaneous link here](#), you will see certainly more references on the Web than anyone could conceivable wish to know about. But that's the Web for you.)

Eric devotes considerable time and effort to support pioneering public interest work involving technology, development and social justice. A common theme in his work is the strategic adaptation of technologies, products, services, business practices, and institutional structures to changing technological, resource and environmental requirements (and perceptions). The vehicle for this work is an open cooperative founded in the seventies as, what he then called, an "invisible college". Today it is called [The Commons](#). And behind this all, the unrelenting challenges of sustainable development, sustainable lives and social justice - in part one would hope as least mediated by technology, got right.

A continuing strong current in his work is a steady, public insistence of male/female parity in all planning and policy fora, and certainly in every one that is financed by taxpayer dollars. He is prepared to make himself quite aggressive on this subject if that what's needed to get the job done, and simply fails to understand why with all the clear evidence out there that some people still don't "get it". (Do you? Otherwise we can talk about it.)

In June 2002 Eric was awarded the prestigious [World Technology Network Prize](#) for outstanding achievement in the intersect of technology and the environment. Over 2001-2002 he served as chair of the international jury of the [Stockholm Partnerships for Sustainable Cities](#), a program with which he maintains a long term interest. In 2000 he and Enrique Peñalosa, then mayor of Bogota Colombia, were co-awarded the [Stockholm Challenge Prize](#) for 'outstanding socio-technical innovation'.

Eric is an active Board Member of New Mobility Partnerships Inc., and Leber Planificación e Ingeniería in Bilbao Spain. Eric has the pleasure of regularly consulting with and counseling several distinguished international programs through universities, public agencies and foundations in their search to spot and reward/support for outstanding accomplishment in the areas of his main concern: sustainable development and social justice. His main search criteria: creative people and grassroots groups who are bold and risk taking - including mavericks and others who work outside of conventional reward systems.

For further background on Britton: <http://EricBrittonOnLine.com>

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