

Eric Britton

Francis Eric Knight Britton is Managing Director of EcoPlan International, an independent advisory group in Paris specializing in providing counsel for government and business on issues involving social-technical innovation.

Born in Mississippi, Eric studied the physical sciences at Amherst and Columbia College, and later the doctoral program of the Graduate Faculty of Economics at Columbia University (PhD Cand.), with a dissertation on development, technology change, job creation and public policy in the Italian South. Over this period he was an Amherst and Columbia Scholar, and later in the Graduate Faculties an International Fellow, winner of the Dante Alighieri Prize, and recipient of a doctoral research grant from the Italian government as well as a Fulbright Fellowship.



Benchmark those tires first

While teaching economics and working on his dissertation at the University of Rome, Eric founded EcoPlan in 1966, an independent forum of observation, reflection and counsel on issues involving technological change as it effects us ordinary people in our day to day lives. Over the years he has initiated, participated in and carried to completion a wide range of advisory assignments aimed at providing decision counsel to government, business and the volunteer sector on thorny issues of technology, economy, environment and society.

Eric devotes considerable time to pioneering and supporting public interest projects involving technology change, sustainable development and social justice. A common theme in his work is the strategic adaptation of technologies, products, services, and institutional structures to changing resource and environmental conditions (and perceptions). The vehicle for this work is an open cooperative founded in the early seventies, The Commons: Open Society Sustainability Initiative.

In his work he has created and supported more than twenty international collaborative problem-solving networks which bring together the brainpower and good will of several thousands of experts, activists and groups around the world that are looking into new and often unusual ideas for sustainability and long term economic viability in cities. One of the most active of these is the New Mobility Agenda originally created in 1988 and for which you can find full information at <http://invent.newmobility.org>.

The geographic focus of his work extends to all continents, with advisory assignments in cities ranging from the compact Westport CT and path-breaking Ahmanson Ranch project in CA, to work in places as far ranging as Adelaide, Bilbao, Paris, Perth, Saigon, Sao Paulo, Toronto, and Zurich. He has served as high level consultant to the United Nations, OECD, European Commission, to a long list of national and regional government agencies, and as a visiting lecturer at a number of US and European universities.

In June 2002 he was awarded the World Technology Environment Prize for outstanding achievement in his international work. Over 2001-2002 he served as advisor to and 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 Bogotá Colombia, were co-awarded the Stockholm Environment Challenge Prize for 'outstanding socio-technical innovation'.

Eric's interest in city bikes arises in part as someone who has used his own bike for daily transport in Paris for decades, for better and worse especially over those long years when city cycling was a survival art. As early as 1974 he led a bike strategy study and work plan for the French Ministry of the Environment – a study that ended up in a closed ministerial drawer at the time. Eric has worked over the last year to pull together the present collaborative program with a group of outstanding international expert associates, because he sees city bikes as catalytic building blocks in the direction of the creating a base for the high performance bouquet of New Mobility services that are needed to improve quality of life in and the economics of our cities, and in the process give our poor planet a much-needed break.