

Reading Tips and Study Questions: For Session 23
Taking Stock of Self—December 5th

Required reading:

1. Pp.59-69, 290-303 in **Donald Schön**, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
2. Chapter 11 in **Charles Hoch**, *What Planners Do: Power, Politics, and Persuasion* (Chicago: Planners Press, 1994).

Tips and questions

The late **Don Schön** was a DUSP faculty member for many years. His special interest was the ways in which practitioners thought about their work *as they worked*, i.e. when confronted by practice problems, and also the ways in which we human beings set up prideful “defensive routines” and other barriers that thwart our own learning. Note the parallels between Schön’s examples of reflection in action and James Scott’s descriptive examples of craft knowledge, such as that possessed by riverboat captains, in his chapter on *mētis*, which you read in mid-October.

Charles Hoch’s chapter is an effort to summarize the range of roles planners find themselves in and the strategies they employ for succeeding, coping, limiting the risk to self and others, and meeting other professional challenges or seizing opportunities. He briefly outlines several different kinds of politics—adversary or more cooperative, for example—that define the contexts in which planners work.

In class, I’ll draw on several of the cases we’ve worked on, and I’m asking you to think about a few simple questions in preparation:

1. What **strengths** do you bring to planning—as the ambitious, often technical and just as often political, ethically demanding enterprise we’ve explored? Think about *skills* as well as special commitments or *values* you hold.
2. What special **challenges**, if any, can you identify for yourself as a practitioner, whether based on personality (emotional make-up and “inner resources”), educational and work background so far, the nature of the contexts in which you expect to work, or other factors?

Please jot some notes on these two questions, and bring your notes to class. Consider Schön’s call for reflection in action to replace technical rationality as the sole source of expert claims, and Hoch’s argument about flexibly employing “practical reason,” as part of your self-assessment.