



Ethical responsibility in post-conflict engagement and moderation

Unit 3: Ethics & Moderation Principles



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Moderation in divided societies



- The complexity of divided societies places additional demands on moderators of citizen engagement in urban planning who must foster an environment where participation is **engaged, fair, respectful, and accessible to all** regardless of age, gender, education, religion, ethnicity, nationality or disability.



Ethical responsibilities of moderators

- **Impartiality:** avoid privileging powerful individuals or groups.
- **Transparency:** explain rules, agenda changes, and decision pathways.
- **Inclusion:** make space for quieter, marginalized, or less confident participants.
- **Accountability:** ensure participants know how their input will be used.
- **Do no harm:** avoid processes that intensify fear, exclusion, or hostility.



City planners as public deliberators

- Forester (1999) argues that **city planners act as mediators** between public agencies, private interests, communities, and political actors.
- Beyond simply communicating between these groups, planners facilitate **public deliberation** by encouraging listening, learning, negotiation, and the development of practical agreements that can guide projects toward implementation or rejection.



Critical pragmatism lens

- *Critical pragmatism* offers a suitable approach to planning and policy-shaping through the lens of consequences and practical significance, by asking **what matters and for whom**, rather than taking actors' intentions as the primary focus of analysis (Forester, 2013).
- For Forester, a crucial function of critical pragmatism is its capacity to assist planners in **reconstructing possibilities**, even in situations when confronted with **distrust, anger, strategic behaviour, inadequate information or power imbalance**.



The Practitioner's Challenge

1 Distrust

Between residents, agencies, and officials

2 Anger

From communities who feel unheard or harmed

3 Strategic behavior

Parties positioning rather than problem-solving

4 Poor information

Incomplete, contested, or asymmetric data

5 Power inequality

Unequal capacity to shape outcomes

Critical Pragmatism — Forester (2013)



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Solutions in practice: how it works?

1 Reflect-in-action

Practitioners think and adjust in the midst of doing, not only afterward

2 Deliberate publicly

Work through public meetings and open, structured dialogue

3 Listen critically, negotiate creatively

Move beyond fixed positions toward joint-gain solutions

4 Share practice stories

Circulate concrete accounts of what worked, and why, for others to learn from

Critical Pragmatism — Forester (2013)



Post-conflict engagement and moderation

- In post-conflict settings, moderation of citizen participation in urban settings **requires stronger attention to trust, diversity awareness, safety, and emotional recognition.**
- Instead of avoiding conflict, the goal is to make disagreement constructive and find common ground, as well as to do no harm to communities that are marginalized or feel unheard.



Main points:

- **Critical pragmatism** reframes planning in cities as political, reflective, and creatively negotiated work — not neutral technical problem-solving.
- **Ethical responsibilities** of the moderator are even more essential when participatory contexts are affected by post-conflict realities, power asymmetries, and unequal voices.





Next: Ethical Dilemma & Interactive Exercise



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