



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Accounting for residents' health in modular housing – Architects' views and approaches

- **Format:**

Written paper

- **Author(s) Name:**

Sonja Oliveira, James Burch, Karl Hutchison and Matthew Jones

- **University or Company Affiliation:**

University of the West of England

- **Abstract (300 words):**

This paper examines architects approaches to designing for resident health needs in modular housing projects in the UK. Resident needs are often ill described whether associated with social, economic or physical 'health' requirements in modular housing in particular. In most instances, needs are referred to as 'levels' of satisfaction or ranges of 'experiences' largely derived from interpreting resident feedback derived from large scale postal surveys. Architects' and design professionals' accounts of designing for at times 'unknown' residents and their health needs are largely overlooked in academic as well as practitioner research. This study draws on qualitative in-depth interviews with four architecture firms in the UK, viewed as leading in modular housing delivery. A range of architect roles were interviewed including partners, directors, associates and Part 1 architects with a focus on how resident needs regarding health are designed for. Findings suggest architects in most instances do not account for how they design for residents,

rather their needs are articulated and defined by a particular client approach. In some cases, designing for predefined resident needs is viewed as an obstacle or constraint. The paper makes several key contributions. First, the findings make a timely contribution to the growing agenda of modular housing in the UK as well as healthy housing more widely. Second, the study presents a qualitative method for analyzing a problem often approached through quantitative means. Third, the analysis has implications for developing discussions on post occupancy evaluation in housing.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Sonja trained in architecture and has held numerous senior design posts in award winning firms in the UK and internationally. Her interests span consultancy practice, research and teaching in architecture, creative digital and physical evaluative processes, innovative sustainability education approaches and institutional theory. Her PhD work explored sustainability evaluation practices in architectural awards drawing on institutional logics and work.

Currently she is exploring dimensions of energy literacy in architectural education, the interface between digital and physical energy evaluation in design as well as health in low carbon housing in the UK and India. Sonja's work engages with research domains within architecture, management, institutional theory and education communities. Sonja is a member of the European Group of Organization Studies (EGOS), Sustainable Society Network (SSN), Society of Building Science Educators (SBSE) and the Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA). She also frequently collaborates with artists, sculptors, photographers and installation performance modellers to develop novel methods in visualising and communicating energy and health in challenging design contexts.