

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

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Intersections between home improvements and health: An owner-occupier's perspective.

- **Format:**

Written paper and Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Cardiff University

- **Abstract (300 words):**

The UK has one of the oldest housing stocks in Europe, the upgrading of which presents a unique opportunity to significantly reduce our carbon dioxide emissions whilst adopting a more pro-active approach to improving occupant health. However, whilst a significant body of research confirms the health benefits of energy efficiency improvements, some studies also raise concerns about the potential for detrimental impacts on health. Consequently, health concerns could either support or oppose efforts to encourage greater adoption of energy efficiency measures. Whilst these issues have secured the attention of academics, policymakers and professionals, the adoption of energy efficiency measures remains largely at the discretion of owner-occupiers. Therefore, this paper will examine the role owner-occupiers' health concerns play in inspiring, informing and evaluating improvements including energy efficiency measures.

The paper draws upon thirty-one in-depth qualitative interviews and walk-through tours with owner-occupiers who have recently undertaken home improvements. With a view to capturing diverse health concerns and priorities the sample includes a range of household profiles and home improvement projects. These interviews will be analysed to determine how owner-occupiers describe the intersections between their health concerns and the process of home improvement, from initial intentions, through implementation to final outcomes. These findings will subsequently be compared to determine if and how the influence of health concerns varies depending on the individuals or home improvement measures involved, potentially providing insights into how the appeal of measures beneficial to both health and the environment could be broadened.

The paper concludes by making recommendations regarding opportunities for policy-makers and professionals, from either the health or construction sectors, to influence greater owner-occupier adoption of home improvement measures, in order to realise a healthier, more sustainable future for UK housing.

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

Tara Hipwood is a Chartered Architect and PhD Candidate in the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University.

Between 2003 and 2012 Tara was engaged in architectural education; beginning at the University of Bath and the National Institute of Applied Sciences (INSA) in Strasbourg, France, and followed by postgraduate studies, specialising in Sustainable Building: Performance and Design and RIBA Professional Practice examinations, both at Oxford Brookes University. These studies were combined with periods in architectural practice both in the UK and abroad, working on a variety of projects across the commercial, public, healthcare and social housing sectors, first as an architectural assistant and finally as a qualified architect.

Tara's current research examines owner-occupiers' motivations to undertake low carbon housing retrofit and the insights into this field that might be gained - both empirical and methodological - by combining a social research perspective with the skills and knowledge acquired through architectural practice.