

## The Creative Potential of Regulation

*Sarah Wigglesworth, Emma Street and Rob Imrie with Richard Harral*

It is a commonly held view within the architectural discipline that the regulations and rules that govern design practice - such as planning, building regulations, BREEAM, CfSH - are external impositions that reduce the scope of the architect's creativity. However, regulation comes in many different forms and change over time as society's interests evolve and different problems present themselves. Some regulations set minimal standards (Lifetime Homes), some create policy which is open to negotiation and interpretation (Planning), while others are performance specifications (Building Regulations).

The Government has sought to reduce the amount of regulation in the planning system on the basis that it is seen as hampering development. Equally, housing standards have recently become discretionary, to be flexibly interpreted by local authorities in accordance with their priorities. Building regulation has sought to secure the interests of specific groups in achieving inclusivity and equality (Part M). A forthcoming Part Q will deal with security, raising issues around the design of the public realm in the face of terrorist threats.

This workshop will raise questions such as: is regulation a political instrument? How democratic is regulation? Is it for the greater good? Is regulation good or bad for the economy? Is it not the regulation, but their enactment, that is problematic? Should regulation seek to be more aspirational? How should regulation be expressed? Who ensures conformity and what should the sanctions to infringement be? Who makes, approves and owns regulation? What roles do architects play in the making of regulations? What roles should they play? In addition to debating such themes, this workshop aims to explore how rules and regulations can be a springboard for creative engagement and design opportunity.

The workshop is opened by Richard Harral of DCLG on 'Regulation in Context' and followed by provocations from Rob Imrie and Emma Street 'Beyond Caricatures of Regulation' and Sarah Wigglesworth 'The use and abuse of regulation'. Participants will then work simultaneously in groups (maximum of 6 people) to speculate on the contents of an imaginary new set of regulations that address the needs & desires of older people. We aim to use regulation to embed aspirational criteria focusing on wellbeing and quality of life.

## Biographies:

Rob Imrie is currently Professor of Sociology at Goldsmiths University of London. He has a background in geography, sociology, and planning studies and holds a doctorate in industrial sociology. He was previously Professor of Geography at Kings College London and also at Royal Holloway University of London, prior to that.

Dr Emma Street is a Lecturer in Real Estate and Planning at the University of Reading. Her research interests include architecture, planning, urban politics and governance. Emma has published widely on these topics in a range of outlets, including *Urban Studies* and *The Journal of Architecture*, and is co-author (with Rob Imrie) of *Architectural Design and Regulation* (Blackwell-Wiley, 2011).

Sarah Wigglesworth heads her own architectural practice based in London and is Professor of Architecture at The University of Sheffield where she is Director of Practice-based Research. She is currently undertaking EPSRC-funded design research into exemplary environments for older people and, in her office, designing retirement housing.