

**Abstract for STS Conference Graz**

**“Critical Issues in Science and Technology Studies”**

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**Abstract submitted for SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY theme**

**Materiality and the Governing of Neighbourhoods: commercial areas, communities and sustainability**

Every town and city contains numerous small commercial areas – shops, offices and workshops – that serve local communities. They provide the most immediate opportunities for consumption, employment and sociable interaction. This paper uses a socio-technical studies (STS) perspective to consider the role of such commercial areas at the neighbourhood scale and to assess their contribution to sustainability. It addresses both their environmental performance and the ways in which they meet the needs of diverse local communities. It considers how the term ‘sustainable commercial property’ may be redefined from this perspective and explores the means by which such areas are governed. In doing so, it seeks to expand the application of STS to imbue discussions of governing at the neighbourhood scale with a greater recognition of the importance of the material. Given the relevance of these neighbourhood commercial areas to diverse local communities and, particularly, lower income households, this provides an opportunity to link concerns with diversity and social justice to the ‘material turn’ in social sciences.

Yvonne Rydin

Bartlett School of Planning, University College London

Wates House, 22 Gordon Street, London WC1H 0QB ENGLAND

[Y.Rydin@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Y.Rydin@ucl.ac.uk)

+44 (0)207 679 4805