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Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title: Community-led Approaches and Interventions for the Empowerment of Immigrants and Regeneration of Abandoned Towns in Sicily

2. Format: Verbal Presentation/ Paper

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6. Abstract (300 words):

Defined as towns or villages that have been abandoned by their original inhabitants, the so-called 'ghost towns' are a sub-product of the opposing conditions of excessive urban growth in one hand and decline of rural regions on the other. Natural disasters, economic and demographic decline, armed conflicts, disease and environmental contamination are repeatedly the drivers for their abandonment. An increasing large concentration of these abandoned small villages is found in the impoverished Southern

regions of Italy. To investigate this problem and identify conservation approaches that could generate new dynamics to the abandoned historic villages, the paper starts by identifying the linkages between globalisation, rapid urbanisation and ghost towns. This is followed by an analysis of the root causes of ghost towns in an attempt to define a ghost town typology. With this in mind, this paper investigates integrated conservation approaches, which could promote the restoration of abandoned towns, strengthening their local identity and enhancing resource-efficient local economies. Based on these considerations, the paper focus the attention on three scenarios of rehabilitation: a community-led approach to conservation demonstrated by the medieval village *Torri Superiore* embedded in ecovillage principles; the hospitality concept *albergo diffuso* demonstrated by *Albergo Diffuso Borgo di Castelvetero*, acting as social, cultural and economic stimuli to depopulated villages; the *Riace* village humanitarian approach which has integrated migrants in the social fabric of its aging population. The paper ends by reflecting if *Torri Superiore* and *Riace's* approaches offer a potential solution to the migration crises currently engulfing southern Europe. As a result of imaginative housing and food production practices, these villages have made significantly more progress than mainstream government approaches towards the realisation of sustainable communities by breaking the cycle of food insecurity, strengthening social cohesion, addressing climate change vulnerabilities and improving housing status.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors):

May East is a sustainability educator and designer from Brazil to UK and serves as the CEO of CIFAL Scotland - UNITAR Associated Training Center for Northern Europe. Based at the UN Habitat Best Practice Designation Findhorn Ecovillage since 1992, May has been leading a whole generation of sustainability educators delivering trainings in 39 countries in the most different settings ranging from tribal and traditional communities to intentional ecovillages, from urban slum settings to universities and training centers.

Designated one of the [100 Global SustainAbility Leaders](#) for three years in a row, she works internationally with community-based organisations, local authorities and intergovernmental agencies in the creation of policy guidance for the implementation of sustainable development goals and for delivery of projects seeking to strengthen climate resilience, food security and promote renewable energies solutions.

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