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Living and Sustainability: An Environmental Critique of Design and Building Practices, Locally and Globally

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title:

Sustainable housing and urban place making in extreme climatic conditions: Case study in Runavík, Faroe Islands

2. Format:

Written paper (with substantial image content) and verbal presentation

3. Author(s) Name:

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4. University or Company Affiliation:

University of Edinburgh (UK)

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Heriot-Watt University (UK)

5. Abstract (300 words):

This contribution will present a critical reflection on current practices and processes dealing with the design of novel, sustainable social housing typologies. The basis for this discussion will be a specific project, recently developed by the authors as a

hybrid architectural and urban proposal for a flexible, scalable residential neighbourhood in the municipality of Runavík (Faroe Islands). This project was one of only four finalist entries to the Nordic Built Cities competition, a trans-national initiative to leverage multidisciplinary innovation in the development of urban environments across the eight Nordic countries.

Our proposal was developed as a piece of research by design aiming to overcome the increasingly pervasive disconnect between practices of urban planning, architectural design and industrialised construction within the discourse of sustainability. In doing so, it endeavoured to simultaneously address three scalar domains of operation: "Urbanity, Community and Habitation". The scale of "Urbanity" explored the regional implications of implementing the proposed scheme, not only with regards to social and economic affordances but also in terms of setting a precedent for novel procurement and regional planning processes in the Faroese context. "Community" focused on the specific implementation of the scheme in the competition site, knitting it together with both the existing urban fabric and the social tissue of Runavík. "Habitation" concerned the architectural qualities of individual housing units, and also the particularly nuanced relationship that the proposed scheme established with the existing natural landscape.

The development of the two-stage design process demonstrated that these three scalar domains are interdependent. This revealed a broader set of preoccupations concerning sustainable urbanity but also extending beyond the explicit goals set by the competition brief. We propose to critically reflect on the challenges, affordances and opportunities of this integrative approach to sustainable place making. Such reflection intends to hone future implementation strategies but also to help inform a holistic, trans-scalar approach to policymaking that encompasses site, urban and regional planning. This contribution will be presented in a hybrid format essay, threading together reflective text with images and drawings from the submitted project.

6. Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Miguel Paredes is a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, teaching Architectural Design and supervising research at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels. He explores innovative techniques for digital analysis and representation, and redeploys them as generative design tools in order to produce responsive spatial interventions, transforming and enhancing our collective experience of the urban realm. Miguel holds a PhD in architecture from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. His current research interests lie at the intersection of digital design technologies, urban public space and contemporary design theory.

Ruth Vega is a chartered architect, and a lecturer at both the Universidad de Alcalá and the IE School of Architecture. She combines her teaching, research and professional experience, all of them in the field of architecture, exploring sustainable

systems and new technologies. Ruth holds a PhD in architecture from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, with a dissertation focused on the assessment of sustainability in industrialised building systems.

Ana Miret is a chartered architect and urban designer, as well as a doctoral researcher at Heriot Watt University. She also holds an MSc in Urban Geography from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Ana is a regular visiting critic in the Architectural Design studio at the University of Edinburgh, and also teaches at the MSc in Urban Strategies and Design. Her research explores the role of streets in contemporary urban design, particularly with regards to the emergence of street and urban vitality in new in non-central residential areas. Other interests include creativity in urban design processes, civic participation in urban design and innovative strategies for public space design.

Ana, Ruth and **Miguel** are founding partners of **Cuartoymitad Architecture & Landscape**, an award-winning research and design studio that focuses on the innovative development of the public realm within the context of contemporary culture. Recently completed projects include the conversion of an eighteenth-century fortress in Santoña (Spain) into the Monte Buciero Museum, and the spatial design and ephemeral architecture for the Zinc Shower event in Madrid (COAM Award 2014). The work of Cuartoymitad has been published internationally, and exhibited at the 11th Venice Biennale, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Badajoz, the FreshMadrid exhibition (Madrid, Brussels, Bogotá, Montevideo and Barcelona), and the IV Iberoamerican Architecture Biennial.

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