

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

The influence of the individual: Enhancing a city's liveability, ecological sustainability, and sense of community from the bottom up. Case studies from Havana, Cuba.

- **Format:**

Verbal Presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

Most of humanity now resides in cities. The proportion of people living in cities is swiftly rising and by 2050 more than two thirds of all humans will be urbanites. The city therefore must be a vehicle for rapid change as society collectively grapples with changes in climate, declines in ecosystem service provision, and changes in human wellbeing indicators worldwide. This is particularly true in cities in lower to middle income countries, where urbanisation is most rapid. A vital question for the coming decades therefore is: how can cities contribute to rather than deplete the health of people, and the wider ecosystems and climate that cities are parts of? There are many varied approaches to answering this question. Most approaches tend to employ top-down or government-led methods and strategies, despite evidence being clear that the role of individual human behaviour change, and engaged active citizenship is often paramount to lasting urban sustainability solutions. This research examines two examples of effective citizen initiated change in Havana, Cuba, that over medium terms, have led to demonstrable ecological and social benefits. One details an effort to galvanise citizen led protection of urban

trees, while the other relates to the greening of a suburb to enhance community engagement in urban food production. The social conditions leading to these projects and the impacts of them are examined. The case studies demonstrate that the influence of one individual can be significant in creating change in broader communities.

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

Dr. Maibritt Pedersen Zari is a Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Architecture and Interior Architecture at Victoria University's School of Architecture in Wellington, New Zealand. Her areas of expertise are biomimicry, regenerative design, biophilic design, urban ecosystem services, and the practical intersection of ecology with urban and architectural design. She has published extensively in these areas as well as in the relationships between climate change, biodiversity loss and the built environment.

Dr. Fabricio Chicca – Building Science Programme Director at Victoria University of Wellington - Graduated with an Architecture and Urban Design in 1997 and completed his Master's Degree in Architecture and Urban Design in 2007. Following his studies he had a successful 13 year professional career in the international real estate market where he worked as a project manager, urban designer, architect and real estate developer. Throughout his professional career, Fabricio was responsible for large-scale developments and worked for multinational companies. His PhD thesis, defended on March 2013, thoroughly explored sustainability in urban areas. Additionally, Fabricio has also studied the tangible and intangible values of the real estate market, urban agriculture and project management.