**Using Minecraft for Community Participation in Urban Design Projects**

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**Organizer(s)**  
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**Abstract**  
Since 2012, UN-Habitat, the UN programme for sustainable cities, and Mojang, the makers of Minecraft, have been collaborating on an innovative private-public partnership in which Minecraft is used as a community participation tool in the design of urban public spaces. Minecraft is one of the world’s most popular computer games, with over 100 million users, best imagined as a ‘digital Lego’, in which players build complex structures or compete against each other in community-designed competitions.

Experiences from projects in Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia, South Africa, Peru, Mexico, Haiti, Nepal, Bangladesh, Solomon Islands and the Philippines show that Minecraft is a useful tool for engaging communities, particularly youth, women and slum dwellers in urban design processes. Through five-day participatory design workshops, UN-Habitat and partners bring people together to visualize their urban design ideas in Minecraft, and present these to city authorities and local government officials.

The event will explain the methodology, the innovative partnership, showcase examples and case studies from cities in the Global South and give participants an opportunity to experience Minecraft hands-on. It is relevant to both the Habitat and Sustainable Cities and ICT4D thematic areas. In addition, it highlights Experiences from Hands on Models for Engagement and Public-Private Partnerships to Advance Technology for Development.

**Description**  
The focus of the event is to generate discussion around the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), specifically video games, in community participation processes. Participation of citizens in design and decision making, especially of marginalized groups, is often considered a cornerstone of democracy and according to the OECD, governments need to direct special attention towards engaging groups such as women, youth and indigenous communities. ICTs potentially offer new opportunities to engage citizens and improve the quality of political decision-making.
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Description (Cont.)
UN-Habitat will show how Minecraft is used in participatory planning processes, Mojang will highlight experiences of working in a public-private partnership for the first time and UN-Habitat’s civil society and city partners will share experiences of engaging poor and hard-to-reach communities through the use of Minecraft. The aim is to discuss the role of technology companies and public-private partnerships in contributing to sustainable development, the role of technology in the creation smart cities and the importance of bottom-up approaches to cities and technology. It will also highlight the limitations and risks of using video games in this way, for example by raising issues related to access, gender and capacity.

Objectives
This is a new, innovate approach to urban design and participation, and while sharing learning and experiences from the programme, UN-Habitat and Mojang also hope to learn and receive critical feedback from event participants. Therefore, the event will be designed partly as an interactive session, in which participants are given the opportunity to explore Minecraft models, test the building process and contribute critical thoughts. We hope that an interactive session will help further develop and improve the programme and provide critical insights into the approach of using Minecraft for community participation.

Proposed objectives:
1. Share learning from the programme with event participants
2. Explore the methodology in conjunction with participants
3. Provide a hands-on Minecraft participatory experience
4. Feedback session in which participants help develop the approach and methodology

Target Audience
- Development and ICT4D practitioners interested in community participation
- Researchers exploring public participation
- Urban planners, architects and engineers working on city level
- Representatives from national and local government

Proposed Program
To be finalized in January 2016.