**Description: RMIT University**

**Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form**

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| **Title** | Democratic Urban Development in the Digital Age  Age Age Age |
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| **Chief Investigator/Senior Supervisor** | Dr Ian McShane  Principal Investigator] |
| **Associate Investigator(s)/Associate Supervisor(s)** | Dr Bhavna Middha, Dr Kristin Reichborn-Kjennerud, Dr Sveinung Legard, Dr Jose Ruano, Dr Anthony Giannoumis |

**What does my participation involve?**

**1 Introduction**

You are invited to take part in this research project, which is called *Democratic Urban Development in the Digital Age (DEMUDIG)*. You have been invited because you are, or have been, associated with state or local government, community organisations, the information and communications technology sector, or the urban development sector. Your contact details were obtained from webpages or through your contacts.

This Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved with taking part. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research.

Please read this information carefully. Ask questions about anything that you don’t understand or want to know more about. Before deciding whether or not to take part, you might want to talk about it with a relative, friend or colleague.

Participation in this research is voluntary. If you don’t wish to take part, you don’t have to.

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be asked to sign the consent section. By signing it you are telling us that you:

• Understand what you have read

• Consent to take part in the research project

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

**2 What is the purpose of this research?**

DEMUDIG is an international research project examining citizens’ use of the Internet and social media to participate in urban development and governance processes, and city governments’ efforts to engage and respond to citizens through these channels.

Cities face complex challenges managing social, economic and environmental change, especially in settings characterised by resource constraints and decreasing citizen trust in government. These challenges are often acute in urban development processes, such as projects to improve specific city districts, or new infrastructure or construction projects. Urban development processes often involve conflicting interests, challenging city governments to balance representative and participatory arrangements, with accountable decision-making and governance.

City governments and citizens increasingly use digital information and communication technologies (ICTs) to participate in urban development processes. However, research has yet to fully examine how these technologies influence participation, decision-making and policy in the field of urban development and urban governance. In particular, we know little about how city governments interact with citizens on social media, how they demonstrate responsiveness in practice, and how they channel citizen contributions into policy-making.

DEMUDIG will investigate citizen participation in urban development in Oslo, Madrid and Melbourne, cities with different institutional characteristics and approaches to citizen engagement. Drawing on a range of academic disciplines and data sources, DEMUDIG will systematically focus on the relationship between citizen participation (through various channels, digital and non-digital), decision-making, and urban policy outcomes.

**3 What does participation in this research involve?**

If you are interested in providing your perspective on the use of on-line platforms in urban development and governance processes, we will ask that you complete the attached questionnaire which will ask for your experiences and views on this topic. The questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

Submitting your completed questionnaire is an indication of your consent to participate in the study. You can withdraw your responses any time if you change your mind about having them included in the study, before we have analysed and published the results.

There are no costs associated with participating in this research project, nor will you be paid.

**4 Other relevant information about the research project**

In addition to academic researchers from RMIT, the project also has the participation of Oslo Metropolitan University and the Complutense University of Madrid. We are interested in researching the characteristics and impact of on-line participation in urban development processes in different political and governance systems.

**5 Do I have to take part in this research project?**

Participation in any research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect your relationship with the researchers or with RMIT University.

You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer, in the questionnaire.

**6 What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, you may appreciate contributing to a knowledge gap in this field of research. Possible benefits of the project may include a better understanding of on-line participation in urban governance, better understanding of the impact of participation on decision-making and urban policy, and better tools to facilitate participation.

**7 What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

We do not anticipate that the questionnaire will cause you any personal discomfort or professional disadvantage.

You may feel that some of the questions we ask are discomforting or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go to the next question, or you may stop immediately. If you become upset or uncomfortable as a result of your participation in the research project, members of the research team will be able to discuss appropriate support for you.

**8 What if I withdraw from this research project?**

If you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the project, please notify a member of the research team.

You have the right to have any unprocessed data withdrawn and destroyed, providing it can be reliably identified.

**9 What happens when the research project ends?**

The results of the research will be disseminated via several reports for the benefit of interested governments, professional and policy organisations, and community groups. The project will also utilise data to produce conference papers and journal articles. While it will not be possible, for reasons of cost, to provide every project participant with a copy of these outputs, they will be available for download from a project website. At the conclusion of the project, the team will also prepare a short report for participants, which it will place on the project's website.

**How is the research project being conducted?**

**10 What will happen to information about me?**

Any information obtained in connection with this research project that can identify you will remain confidential. Collected data will remain identifiable but will be used only in accordance with conditions outlined in this document. It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified, except with your express permission.

Questionnaires containing information about you will be accessible to and managed by project researchers only. All data will be stored in password-protected databases during the course of the project, and all electronic data regularly backed up onto the RMIT secure network drive. Hard copies will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the researchers’ offices. At the conclusion of the project, all electronic data will be securely archived in the RMIT secure network drive for a minimum of five years. After that term, the data will either be destroyed or any identifying information in the data will be removed so that participants cannot be re-identified.

In accordance with relevant Victorian and/or Australian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to request access to the information about you that is collected and stored by the research team. You also have the right to request that any information with which you disagree be corrected. Please inform the research team member named at the end of this document if you would like to access your information.

Any information that you provide can be disclosed only if (1) it is protect you or others from harm, (2) if specifically allowed by law, (3) you provide the researchers with written permission. Any information obtained for the purpose of this research that can identify you will be treated as confidential and securely stored.

**11 Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research project is being conducted by Dr Ian McShane, RMIT University, and researchers from Norway and Spain named above, with funding from Norwegian Research Council.

**12 Who has reviewed the research project?**

All research in Australia involving humans is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This research project has been approved by the RMIT University HREC.

This project will be carried out according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

This research project is also reviewed by the Norwegian Research Council, and participation, privacy matters and data handling, storage and use are consistent with the European Union research framework.

**13 Further information and who to contact**

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact the researcher on (03) 9925 8236 or any of the following people:

**Research contact person**

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| Name | Dr Ian McShane |
| Position | Chief investigator |
| Telephone | (03) 9925 8236 |
| Email | [ian.mcshane@rmit.edu.au](mailto:ian.mcshane@rmit.edu.au) |

**14 Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

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| Reviewing HREC name | RMIT University |
| HREC Secretary | Peter Burke |
| Telephone | 03 9925 2251 |
| Email | [human.ethics@rmit.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@rmit.edu.au) |
| Mailing address | Research Ethics Co-ordinator  Research Integrity Governance and Systems  RMIT University  GPO Box 2476  MELBOURNE VIC 3001 |

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