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Information for Community Services

Do toilets and the internet have anything in common?

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Who is iCOMMS?

- Use of **Information Communication Technologies** to improve **service delivery**
- Socially Responsive Research to **support government in delivering** on its commitments
- **Increasing Democracy and Public Participation** through accountability and transparency



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Gates 2014 Stanford Graduation

“If we have optimism, but we don’t have empathy – then it doesn’t matter how much we master the secrets of science, we’re not really solving problems; we’re just working on puzzles.”



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Information and Service Delivery

- Example of Infrastructure Development and Use of ICTs:

The Cape Town Toilet War or
“Who are you going to phone?”



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What are the issues? Toilet 101...



S. Togawa 'Toilet Wars' in
Cape Town



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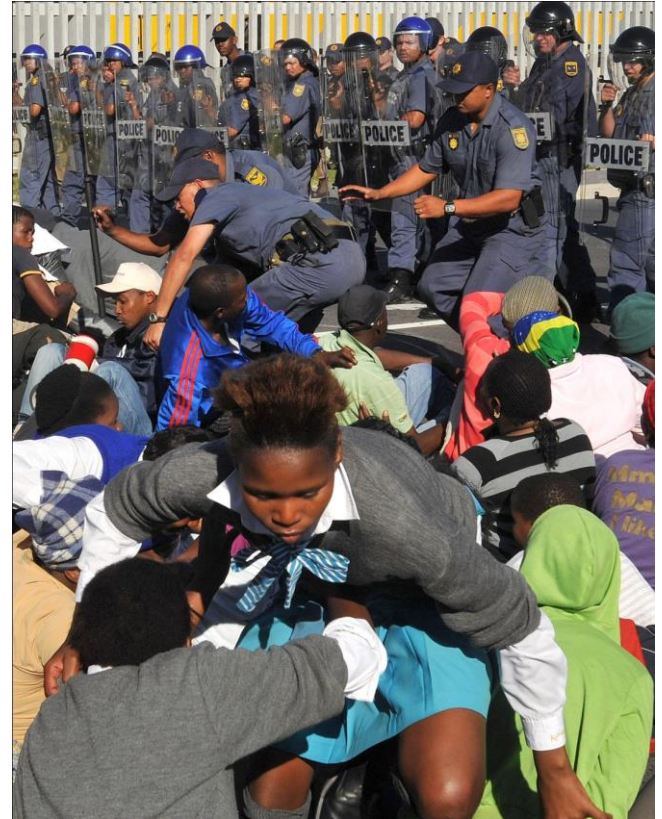
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The “loo” with a “view”

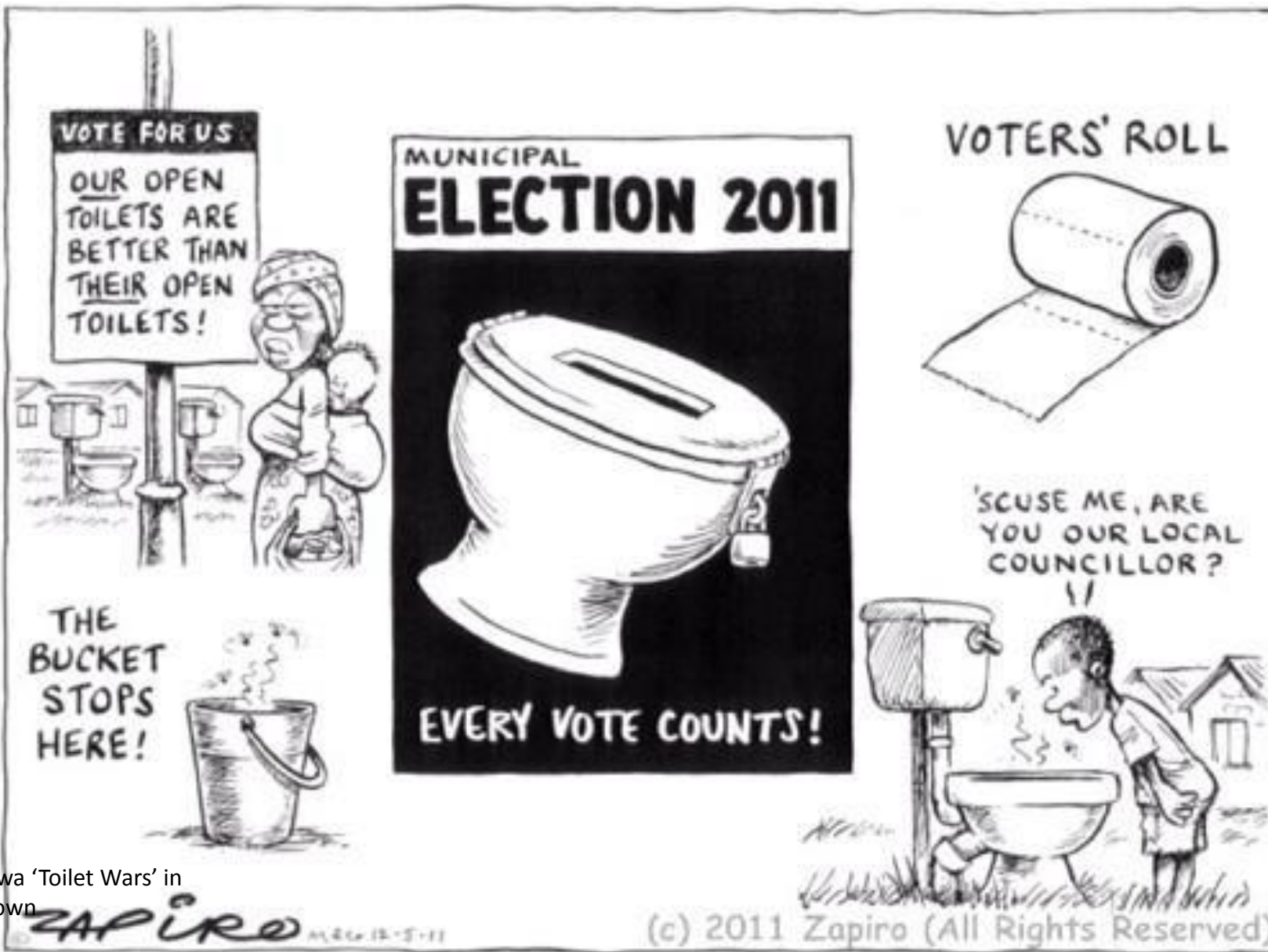


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S. Togawa 'Toilet Wars' in Cape Town



S. Togawa 'Toilet Wars' in
Cape Town

What are the issues?

- Right to dignified sanitation
- What makes a toilet “dignified”?
- Who do you contact when you have a problem?
- How do you contact them?
- Does anyone listen?
- How do you “make” them listen?



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Engaging with the Public/Client

- What is the difficulty with public participation?
 - H. Ford: “If I would have asked them what they wanted, they would have told me “ a faster horse”! “



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Why Public Participation?

- The people who experience the problem should be part of the solution
- Recognition of local knowledge
- Increasing the engagement to increase accountability and transparency
- Holding municipalities and politicians accountable



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Now to the Internet....

- The “Fault Reporting” System
- Premise 1: Everyone has a cellphone
- Premise 2: Everyone uses their cellphone daily
- Premise 3: Cellphones are the solution to engagement and participation



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The Fault Reporting System

- How does the system work?
 - SMS
 - Internet (C3)
 - Call Centre
- How do you get the number?
 - Easiest: On the Internet
 - Impossible: In the Yellow pages



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Imizamo Yethu Study



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The View



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Travel Time to Access Toilets

- General Population 10 min
- Population with Disability 14 min
- Population with Poor Health 15 min
- Elderly Population 20 min



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Number of Days between Cleaning

- General 25 days
- Disability 28 days



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Results of Study

- Declining health, declining cellphone use
- Increasing age, decreasing cellphone use
- Mobile data packages are expensive – spend it on a toilet fault?
- No toll-free reporting



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Technology and Social Problems

- Good news – we have an answer:
Technology cannot solve social problems
- If you use a cellphone to solve the sanitation crisis, you are likely to end up with protest action



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Conclusion

- Access to ICTs is highly unequal
- An sms fault line is a poor fit for combating unequal access to water and sanitation services
- To come back to Gates:
We need empathy and knowledge in order to solve the challenges of our cities and nations – only then will ICTs really have an impact!



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Our current work

- Developing a model of citizen engagement in rural communities
- Assessment of the usefulness of ICTs
- Assessment of incentives to report faults
 - What makes communities report?
- Assessment of structural challenges within municipality
 - Ability to respond to reports
 - Engagement with communities



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Citizen Engagement in the Water Sector

- Engaging communities in water supply monitoring
 - Challenge of non-delivery
 - Mechanism for citizen engagement, e.g. call centre
- Use of ICT: PCM, toll-free line, complaints register



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Thank You !



Questions?

