

# Richard Palmer- Part 1: An Innovative Approach To Sanitation In Cape Town?



Photo from the Gates Foundation

*Future of Cape Town.* July 12, 2013. The ‘poo wars’ are taking Cape Town by storm... again. They are politically charged, indelibly tied to Apartheid planning but ultimately about giving people (yes, people) the dignity to poo; safely, in private and without compromising the health of their community – something most people reading this blog take for granted.

On current evidence, it seems the truth of the matter is that providing basic sanitation services to South Africa’s poor seems too big a challenge for our major cities, regardless of who governs them (unpalatable as that might be to many DA supporters). In their defence though, delivering effective sanitation services to informal settlements is a tough ask, with few successful precedents globally.

This post is a response to a ‘*conversation*’ with WC premier, Helen Zille on Twitter (@helenzille) about the failure of The City of Cape Town to commit to a process of getting the problem solved. My biggest grievance is that the current approach has not even begun to test the possible innovative options and is desperately lacking in compassion – neglecting the dignity granted to all people by the bill of rights.

Informal settlements – slums – are a feature of nearly every emerging city. In many ways they provide an optimal, self-organising strategy for allowing people to escape rural poverty within whatever means they have and access the social and economic opportunities of cities. Slums are not, in and of themselves, a problem.

But they are devilishly difficult to service with municipal infrastructure – water, sanitation, waste collection and transport. They’re also a challenge for essential services like health, education and security. In essence this is because our traditional approach to delivering services is that infrastructure comes first and

people come later. When dwellings come first, we don't have good models for fitting infrastructure in afterwards.

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*One:*

<http://futurecapetown.com/an-innovative-approach-to-sanitation-in-Cape-Town>  
Part One

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*Two:* <http://futurecapetown.com/an-innovative-approach-to-sanitation-in-Cape-Town>  
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