

DIGITAL MAPPING IN WARWICK JUNCTION AND THE REMAKING OF 'SPACE': NOTES FROM SOUTH AFRICA



RESEARCH BRIEF

KATHLEEN DIGA



Cover photo: Network by artworkbean from the Noun Project, Marketplace by Gregor Cresnar from the Noun Project

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 **CONTEXT: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND ICTS**
- 2 **INEQUALITY IN ICT ACCESS FOR CITIZEN
ENGAGEMENT**
- 3 **AN NGO-LED INITIATIVE ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
AND SAFETY OF INFORMAL TRADERS**
- 4 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Context: citizen engagement and ICTs

There have been significant shifts in the policy environment of South Africa that are transforming the way citizen engagement takes place in the country. While the constitution guarantees rights to basic needs through provisioning of public services, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) coordinates and implements strategies to meet the mandate of citizen engagement and accountability especially in service provision. The DPME does this mainly through a frontline service delivery monitoring system (Republic of South Africa 2009)¹. The government has been able to solidify modalities for citizen monitoring and feedback based on field pilots, but the use of information and communication technologies for citizen engagement still remains novel and is in its early stages (Diga 2016)². Recently initiated ICT mechanisms such as the Presidential hotline allow citizens to send immediate feedback on public service performance through the use of mobile phones and Internet. Despite the high rate of resolution of complaints/grievances, the hotline's current use amongst citizens has been limited to addressing under 200,000 issues in four years (in a population of over 50 million citizens). Policy attention to ICT infrastructural upgrades at the national level has led to the construction of public WiFi infrastructure and the consolidation of telecentres as one-stop-shop public venues for citizens to access e-Services with face-to-face support assistance. With greater ICT availability, there is a growing possibility for citizens to use ICTs to hold government accountable, particularly around local public service delivery.

2. Inequality in ICT access for citizen engagement

South Africa offers widespread ICT infrastructure in the country and adoption is high amongst the population, at 51.92% (ITU 2016)³. The country ranks in the top twenty globally for the provision of international Internet bandwidth (World Economic Forum, 2016: 26)⁴. Use of mobile devices is widespread, and Internet penetration is increasing rapidly.

High income inequality in South Africa extends to the differentiated experiences of ICT-mediated engagement amongst citizens. Some municipal governments have been using customer service web portals to interact with citizens. However, these platforms help a small section of mostly wealthy consumers. Such ICT services, which translate the 'state-citizen relationship' into a 'service provider-customer interface' fail to meet the needs of marginalised citizens who lack access to water, electricity and other public services. Furthermore, there is a gap in knowledge on service provisioning for those in the informal economy and even less understanding about their use of ICTs for local governance. Those working in the informal economy, or those who fall outside of the formal services system have differentiated access to government services. ICT response mechanisms are not well defined with respect to sub-populations who may work or live in less formalised and undocumented settings. In some cases, their entitlement to public services becomes more difficult to legitimise.

It is in this context that the NGO *Asiye eTafuleni* attempted to pilot an ICT-mediated participatory mapping exercise on occupational health and safety, amongst informal traders in the *eThekweni* municipality of Durban, to support their claims-making for a safe workplace.

1 Republic of South Africa. (2009). State of the Nation Address by His Excellency JG Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, Joint Sitting of Parliament, Cape Town. Pretoria

2 Diga, K. (2016). State of the Art report on ICT mediated citizen engagement in South Africa. Research Report No. 1. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban

3 International Telecommunications Union (2016). Measuring the Information Society Report 2016. Geneva. <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/misr2016/MISR2016-w4.pdf>

4 World Economic Forum. (2016). The Global InformationTechnology Report 2016. Geneva.

3. An NGO-led initiative on occupational health and safety of informal traders

Given the paucity of research in the area of informal traders, public service delivery and ICT-mediated engagement, our case study hopes to provide analytical insight on a project around ICT use for citizen-government engagement. It looks at an under-reported sector, the informal economy, and reflects on ICT use for improving working conditions amongst informal traders. Informal workers comprise a significant proportion of the labour market nationally, nearly 30 percent in South Africa (Budlender, 2011)⁵. ICTs are used by the traders for their work needs, but not so much for organising. The historical tension between traders and government has also rendered many of the workers invisible or unaccounted for and therefore support structures usually available to formal sector work are not extended to them (Alfers et al., 2016)⁶. However, more recently, the *eThekweni* Municipality's policy has mandated the setting up of a participatory mechanism to enable market traders from the informal sector to voice their needs. Given that the forum is newly established, the objective of addressing the developmental needs of market traders is yet to be realised. This initiative is embedded in the broader municipal plan of ensuring the "presence of mechanisms and procedures for swift recourse on unfair practices and avenues for the community to articulate issues requiring local governance assistance" (Integrated Development Plan, p.366)⁷. Although traders are learning about their rights to occupational health and safety, the absence of public resources to address their needs is a serious impediment. The environmental health services of the city lack targeted ICT interventions on occupational health and do not reach out to informal traders.

The *Phephanathi* project (translated to "Be safe with us" in the *isiZulu* local language) implemented in Warwick market, one of the largest inner city 'informal' open air markets in Durban, encouraged informal traders to re-imagine their work-place as safe spaces where they enjoy rights to their occupational health (Alfers et al. 2016)⁸. The project uses participatory mapping to help establish mechanisms for traders to work with the municipality, via the NGO *Asiye eTafuleni*, on their health and safety needs. ICTs are used to send messages related to health to traders and to get feedback from traders through geo-tagging of health and safety hazards in the market. Risk management committees (elected amongst the traders) have been set up to provide training to traders on health and safety issues as well as to use the ICT platform. The project saw the local fire department, provincial disaster management and traders work together for the first time to map out hazards (such as blocked entrances or inappropriate storage of gas tanks) in the Warwick market and create a disaster response plan.

What the case study has demonstrated is that ICTs can be used to legitimise the public resources needed for safe and healthy work spaces for informal traders (Diga, 2017)⁹. The findings however suggest that further ICT training is necessary to improve the online dialogue between traders and local government, enabling the former to demand improved sanitation and health service delivery. Also, high cost of data and telephonic connectivity limits the participation of traders.

5 Budlender, (2011). Measuring informal employment in South Africa: the new quarterly labour force survey. WEIGO Statistical Brief No 7. May 2011. http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Budlender_WIEGO_SB7.pdf

6 Alfers, Laura, Xulu, Phumzile, Dobson, Richard, & Hariparsad, Sujatha. (2016). Extending Occupational Health and Safety to Urban Street Vendors Reflections From a Project in Durban, South Africa. *NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, 26(2), 271-288.

7 eThekweni Municipality (2016). Integrated Development Plan (2016-17). Durban. http://www.durban.gov.za/City_Government/City_Vision/IDP/Pages/default.aspx

8 See 6

9 Diga, K. (2017). Country Case Study: Durban, eThekweni Municipality, South Africa - Voice or Chatter? Using Structuration Framework Towards a Theory of ICT mediated Citizen Engagement. University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban

4. Recommendations

The legitimisation of the health rights of marginalised sub-populations, such as market traders, can be advanced using ICT-mediated citizen engagement tools. As this case study shows, one such approach is participatory digital mapping for evidence-based dialogue between local government authorities and informal traders. As a pilot project, this initiative opens up possibilities for traders to re-imagine ways of engaging with government and demonstrating alternative forms of governance where public services are non-existent.

An approach that blends ICT strategies with face-to-face dialogue can certainly enhance citizen engagement. However, in informal settings, this needs a carefully planned, incremental transition with regard to the use of ICTs. It also needs allocation of resources towards digital training and to make public WiFi free.

Author profile



Kathleen Diga is a Research Project Manager for the DST/NRF South African Research Chair in Applied Poverty Assessment based at School of Built Environment & Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban South Africa. She is currently working on her PhD at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

About the project

This research has been produced with the financial support of Making All Voices Count. Making All Voices Count is a programme working towards a world in which open, effective and participatory governance is the norm and not the exception. This Grand Challenge focuses global attention on creative and cutting-edge solutions to transform the relationship between citizens and their governments. Making All Voices Count is supported by the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and Omidyar Network (ON), and is implemented by a consortium consisting of Hivos, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Ushahidi. The programme is inspired by and supports the goals of the Open Government Partnership.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of Making All Voices Count or our funders.

Research coordination team

Lead Researcher: Anita Gurumurthy

Research Associates: Deepti Bharthur & Nandini Chami

Design - Deepti Bharthur & Swati Mehta

Editorial Support - Swati Mehta



Copyright: Research outputs from this project are licensed under a Creative Commons License Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



MAKING ALL
VOICES COUNT

A GRAND CHALLENGE
FOR DEVELOPMENT