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### Why is it so difficult to ensure equality of access to public toilets for all?

Ed Steinfeld

*University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning*

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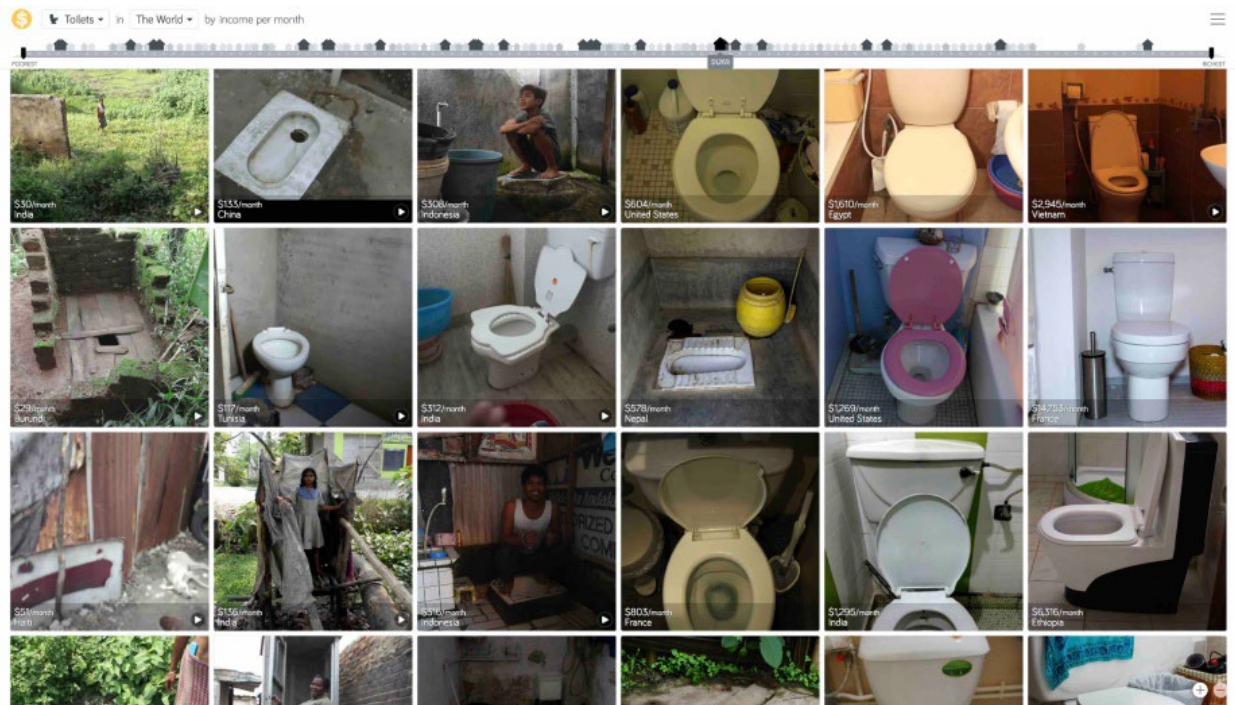
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## Post 22. Edward Steinfeld: Why is it so difficult to ensure equality of access to public toilets for all?



Toilets, In the World, Sorted by Income (search results) courtesy of [DollarStreet/Gapminder](#). DK Screen Capture 2021-11-22.

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**Blog Author:** [Ed Steinfeld](#), ArchD, AIA, SUNY Distinguished Professor, Department of Architecture, UB School of Architecture and Planning

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Why is it so difficult to ensure equality of access to public toilets for all? To find pleasant facilities? To implement design practices that support safety, health, and function? Public toilets have been around for over 2000 years!

In recent years, restrooms have become the major spatial locus of conflict over trans\* rights. But the trans\* population is not the only one that has problems with restrooms. Human rights advocates recognize the importance of access to public toilets for dignity, health, and social participation. In low-income countries, providing safe and secure public toilets to reduce the spread of disease is a major public health initiative, especially important to support access to education and social participation by girls and women. Advocates have identified the “potty parity” problem as evidence that even high-income societies have not physically adapted to full

equality for women. While many countries may have turned the corner on access for people with disabilities, it remains a major issue for people with disabilities in the developing world and, even in high income countries, regulations do not address all the disability issues.

My colleagues, Adam Thibodeaux, Shira Gabriel Klaiman, and I recently started a research initiative on inclusive restroom design. As part of this effort, we are looking for examples of inclusive bathroom designs that not only address the issue of trans\* access but also benefit other groups by improving infection control, reducing inequality of access, and addressing unmet needs of people with disabilities and chronic health conditions. We would love to hear your thoughts on this issue and recommendations of good practice restrooms to document, in the WNY region or beyond! We are also interested in recruiting colleagues to join us in this initiative. [Learn more.](#)