

# PROJECT PORTRAIT

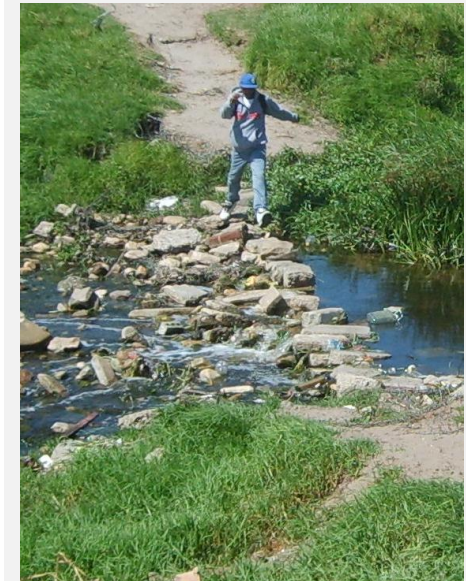
## Determining the Necessity of a Footbridge in Statice Heights #21 (2011)

### What is this project about?

The research stemmed from a request from The Women's Circle (TWC), an NGO that works in Statice Heights and other areas. TWC's aim is to encourage and assist people in finding solutions to the challenges they face in their context. In this particular case TWC requested assistance in motivating for the building of a footbridge, by the City of Cape Town, across the canal in a location currently used to access services in Bridgetown. TWC argue that the current infrastructure is inadequate.

### The research

The research looks at the reasons for a footbridge, which mostly result from problems linked to a makeshift crossing point that poses health and safety risks. This temporary bridge is used out of the increased fear of being a victim of crime that exists on indirect journeys via existing crossing points. The types of questions were, who crosses the canal and why, why are present routes avoided, why the temporary bridge is inadequate, what benefits would the building of a footbridge bring, what action has been taken so far to motivate the City of Cape Town to build a footbridge?



**Path currently used by residents to cross the canal.**

**What you need to know:** There is evidence that the fear of crime continues to control the movement of residents in their immediate neighborhoods in parts of Cape Town. When the idea of building a footbridge is asserted by an NGO member on behalf of the community, she feels her voice is not heard. This state of affairs impacts on perceptions of the democratic process. *University based research can help to support communities in accessing resources from the municipality.*

## The research findings

The study found that the canal is mostly used by children to attend schools on the other side of the canal. Adults need access to the rehabilitation centre and other services in Bridgetown, Kewtown and Silvertown that do not exist in Statice Heights.

The narrow crossing point has been made by the community from canal debris that is unbalanced. Residents' worry about children falling in the water that is stagnant and dirty. Children's shoes are routinely damaged, which means frequently replacing children's footwear which is costly. Routes over existing bridges were avoided due to fear of being the victim of crime.

The potential benefits of building a footbridge in the position of the improvised crossing, varied from researcher to researcher. Some saw how it could contribute to crime prevention strategies, feeding into the City of Cape Town's public safety and security goals. Others focused on the role that community action resulting in a tangible outcome, could play in restoring a sense of pride in the area.

So far contact has been made with the Transport Department and a representative of the City of Cape Town has visited the site. As of April 2012, no plans to build a footbridge were evident.

## Using the research

This could provide a starting point for further research into processes of community engagement with local political organisations. The research proposals give background to an area of Cape Town that is relatively recent. This could be useful for policy makers when planning future housing developments. It underlines the need to take into account the dangers created by locating housing near water, and ensuring that infrastructure does not inadvertently create unsafe spaces, providing potential breeding grounds for street crime. The process followed in this study could be used elsewhere to assist community groups to lobby decision makers.

The study was completed in [October 2011](#).

## Want to know more?

Data was collected during April 2011 by students in the Anthropology of Development Masters course: Reika Shucart, Kattleho Shoro, Conor Smith and Karin Eriksson under the oversight of Prof Mugsy Spiegel.

**Keywords:** *Cape Town development, town planning, street crime, fear of crime, environmental poverty, local government and politics, NGOs, advocacy.*

To [reference](#) this Project Portrait, cite UCT Knowledge Co-op as the author.

Project portraits are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/za/deed.en>

## The Knowledge Co-Op at the University of Cape Town

The UCT Knowledge Co-op aims to make it easier for community partners to access UCT's skills, resources and professional expertise. It helps initiate joint projects that benefit both the community partner and the university. The Co-op links community groups with appropriately qualified staff and students at UCT, and supports both partners throughout the project – from initial planning to final product.

[know-op@uct.ac.za](mailto:know-op@uct.ac.za)

[www.knowledgeco-op.uct.ac.za](http://www.knowledgeco-op.uct.ac.za)

Tel: 021 – 650 4415

