Rio K'allu Mayu Suspended Footbridge
(Technical Report)

Social Media and Social Controversy:
Platforms' Responses to Their Critics
(Sociotechnical Research Project)

An Undergraduate Thesis Portfolio
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Synthesis

Interpersonal networks may require physical infrastructure, such as bridges, or digital connections, such as social media. In both cases, safe and reliable connections are not given but must be designed.

The technical project was to design a suspended pedestrian bridge in a rural town in Bolivia for the Pocona people over the K'ellu Mayu River. The design group collaborated with Engineers in Action (EIA), which assists student groups at universities across the U.S. with their designs and coordinates bridge construction. The location for the bridge was chosen because the Pocona people must cross the river to reach schools, a medical clinic, markets, and resources. Crossing this river during the rainy season, which is most of the year, risks injury and death. To complete the project, EIA training modules helped us develop the skills to design the bridge. We completed a customized footbridge design, cultural impact statement, construction plan, excavation drawings, and bill of quantities. The EIA team and the local Pocona people will build the bridge summer of 2024.

Social media can compromise the mental health of its users, particularly children. The leaders of social media companies have been publicly criticized for their failure to protect users. The critics include parents, psychologists, and teachers. Companies defend their platforms by claiming that parents are responsible for their children's use of social media and that platform tools give parents the control they need to protect their children. The companies' critics, however, claim that constant supervision is impractical, that parental controls are difficult to deploy and easy to override, and that ultimately the companies appeal to young users as opportunities for data collection.