

## **Bridge over the Tagus: urban transformation and social segregation**

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### **Abstract**

In 1961, the Portuguese government signed a contract to the construction of a suspended bridge over the Tagus river that would connect the capital Lisbon to the south bank of the Tagus, opening up a whole new world of opportunities for people and businesses alike. The following year, the work was definitively allocated to the United States Steel Export Company, with a scheduled completion period of four years. About six months before the expected deadline, the bridge was opened on the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1966.

When the road infrastructures of access to the bridge were built, in the area of the Alcântara valley, on the river shore, the demographic tissue and the territorial property in this zone was characterized by a high diversity, of housing, palaces, warehouses, and a dense population in majority of working class that had been providing the industries established for more than two centuries in the area.

It was on this urban landscape that deep urban transformations were imposed by expropriating land and the demolition of inhabited areas to erect the structures to support the construction of the bridge and its accesses.

Articulated between the state and the municipal authorities, a phased and large-scale joint operation was devised. Execution would be far inferior to theoretical drawing, either because of the state's ineptitude or because of the inability to overcome critical circumstances.

Starting from the notion of territorial and symbolic frontier and the correlations between socioeconomic exclusion and spatial segregation, this paper seeks to articulate, from a historical and anthropological perspective, the displacement process, and the proposed relocation project, with the impact of the measures applied, through the relocation of slums, the construction of temporary housing, as well as the eviction of populations to the city's outskirts.