

Bridge of Sighs: Bridge as a boundary

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Abstract

Agua de Dios is a town founded at the end of nineteenth century in Colombia as a leprosy. Following all the sanitary regulations, this town was established in the countryside, crossing *Bogotá River* to keep away any possibility of contagion for healthy population. The public health policy of the time, ordered to transfer any leper to *Agua de Dios* and it was necessary to build a bridge to facilitate the passage. Subsequently with the sanitary conceptions, patients were prohibited to have any contact outside of the town including their families. The Bridge of Sighs become in the frontier where farewell was taking place. Its name, as the one in Venice, came from the idea that families and lepers would sigh at their departure. The construction of the bridge began in 1872 and was commissioned to Timoteo Gutiérrez, one of the first engineers in the country. The bridge was finally opened in 1875. By focusing in this case study, this paper intends to explore the concept of bridge as a boundary or limit instead of linkage between territories. Although paradoxical, the Bridge of Sighs reflected the border between life and death, health and illness, known and unknown and most important between memory and oblivion. Furthermore, this paper address the transformation of the bridge from a symbolic border to cultural heritage landmark while the idea of limit remains as intangible.