



Dresden.
Dresdner



Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge and World Heritage status

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Is a conflict about the construction of the
Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge and the status
of the World Heritage site unavoidable?

1



Dresden is a city on both sides of the Elbe; the river and its crossings have always been a part of the city's development. A consensus has been reached on the necessity of a new Elbe crossing at the Waldschlößchen. The form of this

crossing, how it will relate to the Elbe Valley and its need to be protected as a World Heritage site are the subjects of a conflict which will be described and commented upon in the following.



Why does Dresden need a bridge?

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■ Until 1911:

Urban development and bridge planning in Dresden were parallel developments related to one another. In the 1862 general construction plan for the city of Dresden, urban development was centred around two concentrically-running ring roads. Where the ring roads met the Elbe, river crossings were planned. By the turn of the century, the Albertbrücke bridge (1875-77) and the Carolabrücke bridge (1892-95) had been built within the inner ring; no bridges were yet planned in the outer ring as they were not yet needed due to the low number of inhabitants. The »Blue Wonder« bridge (1891-93) several kilometres upstream connected the areas of Loschwitz and Blasewitz outside the city. In the 1891 plan, road planning on either side of the Elbe was already related to the other side. In the 1900 building development plan, semi-circular spaces were allowed for on the sites of the planned bridgeheads for the future Elbe bridges. As a result of this development, the Johannstadt borough association proposed the building of a bridge at the Waldschlößchen in 1900 and again in 1911.

The bridge was not built for economic reasons.

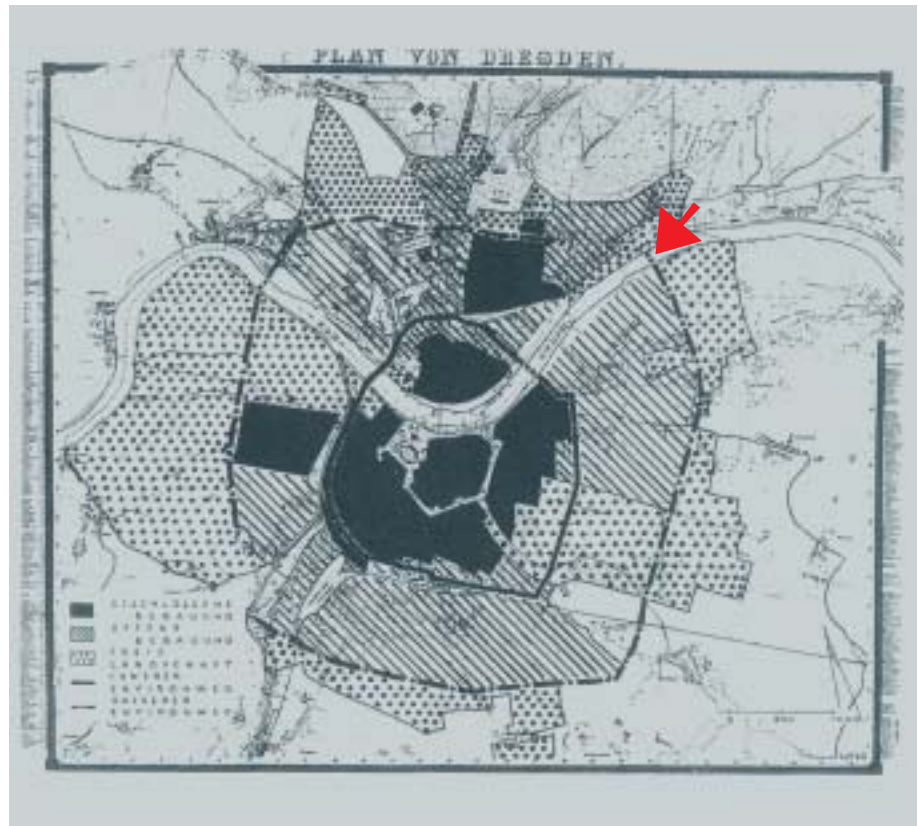


Fig. 1
General Development Plan, 1862

Fig. 2
Development Plan Johannstadt North, 1900

Fig. 3
River Banks Layout Plan, 1934 (Paul Wolf)

Fig. 4
Transport Route Plan, 1937

The planning history of the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge, going back more than one hundred years, is the story of a structure deemed necessary on all sides, which exists on paper and has yet not been completed for reasons of overriding importance.

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■ Until 1945:

In the thirties a bridge at the Waldschlößchen was planned for in Paul Wolf's 1934 large-scale plan for the layout of the banks of the Elbe, and in 1937 in the plan of Dresden's main transport routes: it was considered in the overall context of the city and the landscape. Preliminary construction studies were made.

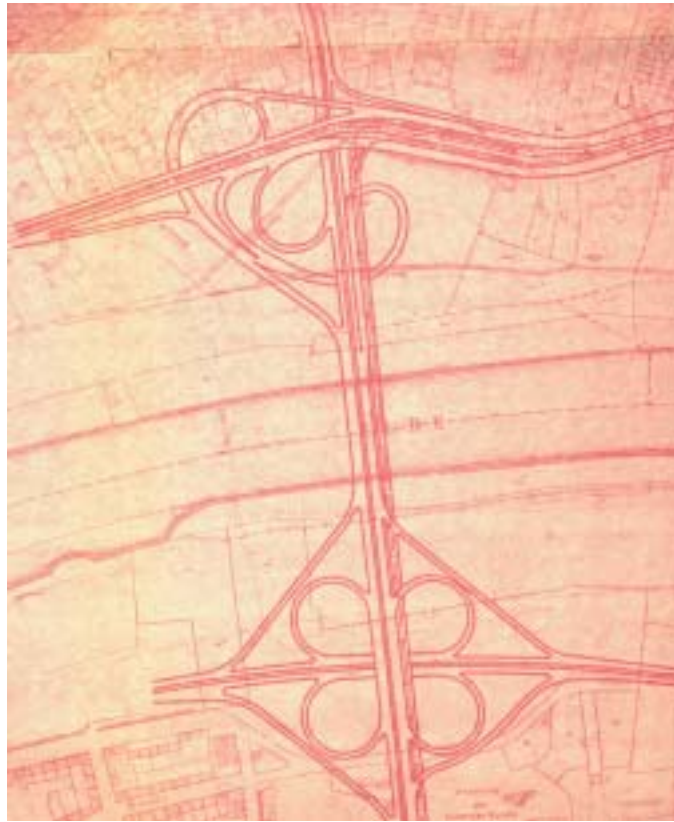
The bridge was not built because of the outbreak of war.



■ Until 1989:

In the sixties, seventies and eighties various versions of a bridge at the Waldschlößchen were planned. The 1978-79 version comprised an outsized bridgehead and an eight-lane carriageway. In 1988 the decision was made to build a four-lane bridge for road traffic with interchanges at the bridgeheads. In a 1989 competition a decision was made in favour of a cable-stayed bridge and the Dresden road construction department was assigned the task of developing it further. The starting date for construction was set as 1990; this was confirmed by the highest competent authority in the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

The bridge was not built due to the breakdown of the GDR in 1989.



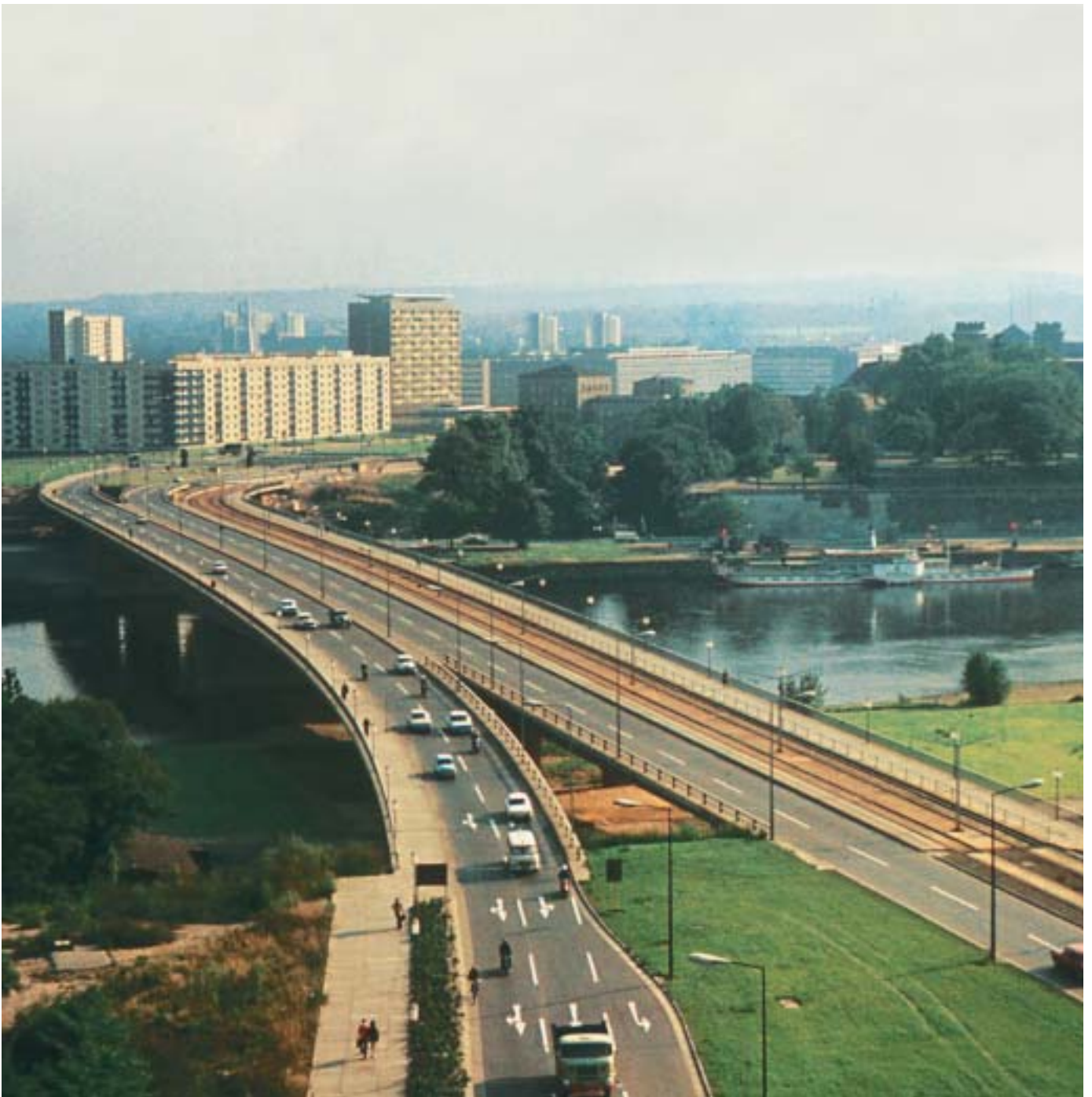
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Fig. 5
Plan, 1978-79

Fig. 6
Bridge competition, 1989

Fig. 7
Carolabrücke bridge, 1985
(built in 1969-71)





■ **Until 2006:**

In the early nineties, the plans for a bridge were taken up once more. Directly after the breakdown of the GDR, the »Group of 20« dealt with all questions of urban development; this had been the leading opposition group in Dresden during the peaceful revolution of 1989-90. The group forced the authorities into discussion; among other things it initiated a wide-ranging dialogue with the people of the city in seventeen working groups. It laid the foundations for the City of Dresden's future local affairs policies and for the creation of the Free State of Saxony. One result of its work was the »Concept for Future Transport Policy in the Dresden Metropolitan Area«. The Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge was an essential element of this concept approved by Dresden City Parliament as one of its first resolutions in January 1990. The Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge also played a key role in the »Transport Route Concept of the City of Dresden« of 1994.

In 1996 the plans for a bridge were once more the subject of critical analysis, at a workshop of well-known architects, planners, sociologists, preservationists, environmental experts and municipal politicians. Based on the unambiguous vote by these experts, the city council resolved to build a bridge. The resulting call for entries for an international

competition stipulated that the bridge should be blended into the landscape, with a low gradient. The dimensions of the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge, with a width of 28.6 m and a height of 12.96 m above the road, remained lower than those of the pre-existing bridges (width of the Carolabrücke bridge 35 m, width of the Marienbrücke bridge 29.75 m, height of the »Blue Wonder« 28 m above the road). In an extensive planning coordination process following the competition, the successful design was brought into accord with the special requirements of conservation, urban development and nature preservation.

The bridge, now set very low in the meadows along the Elbe, and the planting of grass at the mouths of the tunnel in the banks of the Elbe, were accepted from the point of view of conservation. From the point of view of traffic planning, and also of conservation, a new bridge would make a major contribution to reducing the traffic load on the Altstadt and its bridges, as well as the streets parallel to the Elbe Valley and the »Blue Wonder«. The »Blue Wonder« in particular is a unique work of architecture and a very valuable part of the composition of the city as it has developed historically, as concerns both cultural history and tourism; until now, there has been no alternative route for it. The reduction of the traffic load on the »Blue Wonder« by the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge is a factor of some significance, of benefit to the neighbouring city districts.

When the choice between a bridge and a tunnel was weighed up, a bridge was considered of greater benefit for several reasons. Only a bridge can also integrate pedestrian, cycle and public traffic. Moreover, a bridge has major advantages over a tunnel in terms of restrictions during flooding, as was proved very clearly during the hundred-year flood in 2002. During the Elbe flooding, only the Albertbrücke bridge could be used for private



Fig. 11
Load reduction on the bridges in the city centre
Source: PTV Report of 21 Nov 2003

Fig. 12
Visualisation: view towards Loschwitz

Fig. 13
Visualisation: view towards Altstadt

Bridge	Mon-Fri, Load reduction in vehicles/ 24 h
Marienbrücke bridge	- 1.500
Augustusbrücke bridge	- 2.000
Carolabrücke bridge	- 7.000
Albertbrücke bridge	- 12.500
»Blue Wonder« bridge, Loschwitz	- 3.500



traffic in the city centre, as several bridges could not be crossed and the Carolabrücke bridge had to be kept clear for rescue and emergency vehicles. If flooding occurred, a bridge at this spot would be indispensable for disaster control and to ensure the city was properly supplied. In its construction it would be far easier to protect against high water levels than a tunnel, which requires highly complex construction for the design to be flood-proof and would do really great damage to the Elbe floodplains. The costs for the construction and maintenance of a bridge would also be lower than those for a tunnel.

The interference with nature can be offset by measures to counterbalance it. Various individual clauses in the planning permission resolution ensure that construction and operation will have as little effect as possible on the things in need of protection: people, animals, plants, the soil, water, the air, the climate and the landscape. In December 2005, when stating its case for rejecting complaints about the planning permission resolution in the summary proceedings, the Saxon Higher Administrative Court drew attention to the fact that no substantial impairments would result from the anticipated noise and pollutant levels. The immission values, which were obtained in methodologically correct ways, were given careful consideration, and compensatory measures were requested. Further, there were no objections as regards questions of nature conservation.

Because of this final-instance decision, construction is authorised to begin from a legal perspective.



In February 2005, as demanded by a citizens' initiative, a referendum was held on the construction of the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge. It is important to note that the referendum was about the pros and cons of the bridge and that no connection was made to the World Heritage status. With a voter participation of 50.8%, higher than at previous city council polls, 67.9% or 137,152 citizens entitled to vote spoke out in favour of building the bridge.

Because of the binding effect of the referendum, construction must begin from a legal perspective.

Since then, both a public invitation to tender for construction and bidders' meetings with the operating companies have taken place. The date for construction to begin was set as March 2006. Because of the commitments which have been entered into, every postponement of the start of construction has financial consequences for the city.

It was not until the objection raised by the World Heritage Centre in November 2005 that a new situation arose; for the first time a conflict was established between the World Heritage status of the Elbe Valley and the building of a bridge. Both parties agreed upon a »pause for reflection« until July 2006 to solve the conflict amicably.

The construction of the bridge has now been postponed due to the objection by the World Heritage Centre.

What different things can a bridge be?

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■ »Die Brücke«

In June 1905, four students of architecture, Bleyl, Heckel, Kirchner and Schmidt-Rottluff, founded the group which was to revolutionise the fine arts in Germany: »die Brücke« – »The Bridge«. In Dresden, the word »bridge« seems to stand for the fusion of different interests, for the interrelation of old and new – of the past and the future, for finding new forms of artistic expression, opening up new horizons. The naming of the group was not related to their works; the group of artists was open to new members, new currents and socio-political discussions. The naming was also evocative of Dresden: the young architecture students knew the value placed upon bridges in the city of Dresden.

The group was named at a time when modernisation of the Augustusbrücke bridge was being discussed. The more than 20-year-old debate about the different interests involved in building the Loschwitz bridge – the »Blue Wonder« – had nearly been forgotten when in its place, the dispute about what form the »new Augustusbrücke bridge« would take began to cause a stir. The place under discussion was, after all, the location of the oldest stone bridge in Saxony, from the 13th century. The Baroque supports of Daniel Pöppelmann's Friedrich-August-Brücke had to be removed as they could no longer stand up to the strain. The plan used since 1902, by the engineer Herrmann Klette, envisioned a reinforced concrete construction in various possible versions. The discussion flared up around the design of the bridge. It was not until Wilhelm Kreis's 1905 plan that a historicised design was agreed upon which was then implemented from 1908 to 1910 – a reinforced concrete construction with sandstone cladding, which is still in use.

For the young group of artists, the word »bridge« was more than just an answer to a



traffic problem. The word »bridge« was meant to suggest the potentials of transforming one's inner world. The word »bridge« included the place, the community and the individual's encounter with changes in society. The word »bridge« had a positive connotation even though in Dresden the construction of nearly every bridge over the Elbe had turned into a sociopolitical fiasco. The city's bridges were and are places which civil society can relate to. The unique development of city planning in Dresden would be unimaginable without the disputes about the city bridges.

The artists' choice of the name »die Brücke« does not only express how much they valued the place where the group was established, the name they chose also draws out what the idea of a bridge really means. Bridges are actually more than constructions which link two places.

■ Over or under

The current discussions about the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge thrust practical traffic problems into the background. The need for another Elbe crossing has been conclusively proved. Investigations into alternative locations have supported the choice of the Waldschlößchen as a location. The alternative to a bridge is a tunnel. Both constructions for crossing the river solve traffic problems. The tunnel is preferred by people who believe the bridge will destroy the natural-seeming cultural area along the Elbe floodplains or who lament the changes to the view of Dresden's Altstadt from the Waldschlößchen terraces. Taking everything into account, even with longer ramps a tunnel would not look as conspicuous as a bridge. However, the actual interference with the geomorphological system of the Elbe floodplains if a tunnel were built would be greater than with a bridge, even though this interference would not be visible once the construction was finished.

The arguments against the bridge largely depend upon the parameters of conservation. The legitimate desire to preserve outstanding architecture or unique ensembles generally leads to a certain historical setting being frozen in time. The Free State of Saxony's wish to be inscribed on the list of World Heritage sites because of the Elbe ensemble implied that the Altstadt would be more strongly preserved as it was – even though the city's monuments were not the reason it was

As well as its engineering and infrastructural qualities, a bridge can also develop social and aesthetic potential if what starts out as a simple traffic route turns into

a place where people spend time and meet, and if the surroundings and the bridge form a harmonious blend.

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awarded World Heritage status. In the statement made by ICOMOS and the World Heritage Centre, the formal aspects of the bridge design were at the heart of their argument. For this reason, the »conservationists« far prefer a historicised design such as that by Wilhelm Kreis (Augustusbrücke bridge) to engineering innovation along the lines of Claus Köpcke (»Blue Wonder«). In the image of the city, the Augustusbrücke bridge is the »older« bridge.

If the bridges are rated according to their distinguishing features, the apparently younger bridge – the »Blue Wonder« – comes before the apparently older bridge, the Augustusbrücke bridge. The actual date of construction plays no role; it is not a criterion of how well the Dresden bridges are received by the public. What is more important, then: fulfilling formal criteria, or the historical facts?



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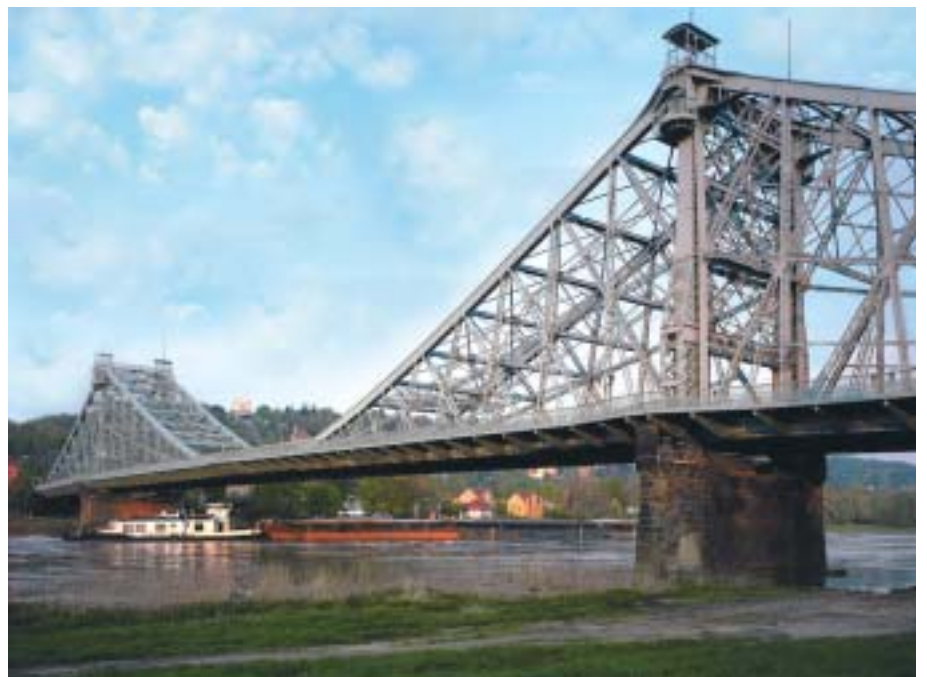


Fig. 1
Logo of the group of artists »Brücke«

Fig. 2
Augustusbrücke bridge, Dresden

Fig. 3
»Blue Wonder« bridge, Dresden

■ A bridge – a whole range of events

As well as the structure itself, users of a bridge perceive it differently from architectural historians or conservationists, although the latter also both appreciate the functional value of a bridge. The user travels a certain distance, whereby the relationship between distance and time is an important factor, but an even more important factor is the experience. A bridge is not only a structure to look at; it is also a place to look from. In the way the bridge comes across to the user, this dual effect of any »point de vue« is more important than the actual form the bridge takes.

■ Bridges over rivers

It is helpful to analyse some bridges whose reception is in terms of this interrelationship. Bridges over rivers are always a part of the landscape, even when they are urban structures. The natural landscape overruns into the cultural landscape, or the urban landscape disturbs nature. The water in a river course will always remain part of nature, even if the river is channelled. The emotional relationship the bridge user has with the water, and thus with nature, is far stronger above the water than on the bank or even below the river bed. For a bridge user, the bridge can become part of the landscape.

■ City bridges

City bridges often provide a panoramic view. The space which a bridge spans in the city generally allows viewers to see and take in a larger part of the city. These panoramic views are an experience rather like a bird's-eye view. For this reason, bridges are inviting places.

■ Pedestrian bridges

A pedestrian bridge is of course ruled out at the Waldschlößchen from a functional point of view. However, the aim to design the bridge itself to make it an inviting place to spend time is right.

■ The tunnel – a non-event

A tunnel can offer none of the above-mentioned experiences, although passing under a river can also be an event. Going through the Greenwich Foot Tunnel under the Thames still carries a touch of adventure for those who use it.

At the end of the 1880s, after visiting the site of the Gotthard Tunnel construction, Friedrich Nietzsche described it in almost euphoric terms as an engineering masterpiece. The train trip through the completed tunnel, however, made him feel anxious.

A direct comparison between the use of a bridge and a tunnel is possible at Dartford, Kent, down the Thames from central London, when passing over or beneath the river on the M25 motorway. When driving north one uses the tunnel, and when driving south, the bridge. The view of the Thames from the bridge is incomparable. Using the tunnel is always a disappointment when one knows what kind of view one is missing. A tunnel is, and will always be, a claustrophobic experience.

Fig. 4
Firth of Forth Bridge,
Edinburgh, UK

Fig. 5
Deutz Bridge, Cologne,
Germany

Fig. 6
Iron Bridge,
Coalbrookdale, UK

Fig. 7
Bach de Roda Bridge,
Barcelona, Spain

Fig. 8
Golden Gate Bridge,
San Francisco, USA

Fig. 9
Øresund Bridge, connecting
Copenhagen and Malmö

Fig. 10
Blue Wonder Bridge,
Dresden

Fig. 11
Salginatobel Bridge,
Schiers, Switzerland

Fig. 12
Ponte Vecchio, Florence,
Italy

What different things can a bridge be?

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What does the World Heritage status in Dresden mean?

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The Dresden Altstadt as an independent ensemble is not a World Heritage site. The proposal to inscribe Dresden on the World Heritage list was rejected in 1989 with reference to the discussion about the authenticity of buildings which have been destroyed in the war and then rebuilt (see Warsaw).

In 2004 the Dresden Elbe Valley as a developing cultural landscape was inscribed on the World Heritage list. Dresden's Altstadt is an important constituent of this, but is really only one part of a large-scale cultural landscape

made up of many elements; at the core of this landscape is the interplay between nature and artifice. On their own, neither the landscape nor the man-made structures are of such high value that they would qualify for the World Heritage seal of approval. Only their co-relationship qualifies them for World Heritage status.

The relationship between the city and the river is described as utilitarian in the Justification for Inscription. Particular mention is made of the presence and importance of the

river in daily life. The river landscape is not and has never been a »monument« but an object of utility and was put under protection as such. »criterion iv: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an excellent example of a continuously existing cultural site which has been formed by the landscape, which especially during the baroque time and in the 19th century was influenced by the outstanding role of the river and its neighbouring areas for the functions as seat of the government, earning one's living and life of the citizens. This is still reflect-

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Dresden's World Heritage status does not only relate to the Altstadt as an ensemble of historical monuments, but honours the living cultural landscape of the Elbe Valley as an interplay between the landscape

and buildings, in the context of Dresden's development as a city; it thus comprises more than a static, distant view of the Altstadt and is as such not a finished work.

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ed in its structures and monuments.«
(Justification by the State Party, summary.)

The Elbe Valley landscape did not become a cultural landscape because of horticultural alterations as with a landscaped park; it developed through the interaction of the landscape with urban expansion and commercial use. The urban reshaping of the Elbe Valley is explicitly listed in the justification as a criterion for its World Heritage status. "criterion v: The Dresden Elbe Valley is an outstanding example of the form of settlement of a European residence developed through the centuries, which, with suburbs and surrounding villages, including wine-growing hills and fields, grows together into a big city (...)." (Justification by the State Party, summary.)



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Fig. 1
Aerial photograph of Dresden, 2006

Abb. 2
Blue Wonder bridge, Dresden

Abb. 3
Carolabrücke bridge, Dresden

How did the conflict come about and what is it all about?

What is at stake?



The formal conflict between the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge and the World Heritage status is fuelled by the question of whether the dimensions of the planned bridge were described sufficiently in the application process for the World Heritage status, or why its size was not realised from the documents submitted.

From the point of view of the World Heritage Centre, the plans for the bridge were not made clear enough in the application documents. For example, one criticism is that the bridge was only drawn in the land use plan as a broken yellow line and as one of several location options (enclosure). Also, pictures were attached but no plan of the traffic solution. From the point of view of the city, reference must be made here to the materials illustrating the plan, which were supplied in sufficiently fine detail and appropriate quantity (enclosure). These materials were added to the documentation in the first place because a city council resolution stipulated that the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge had to be a part of the application documents!

The application documents were compiled in close consultation with ICOMOS in its function as an assessor for the World Heritage Centre. The experts from ICOMOS were in the city for several days and gathered detailed information about the history and future of the Elbe Valley during inspections of the area. The various appraisals written by ICOMOS formulated a consistently positive report on the upkeep and handling of the Elbe Valley as a World Heritage site. Not least because of this, the Elbe Valley was recognised as a World Heritage site.

There is no question about the unfortunate misinformation produced by one ICOMOS expert in his appraisal when he mistakenly described the location of the bridge as five kilometres downstream instead of three kilometres upstream. »The construction of the

bridge is foreseen 5 km down the river from the centre.« Independently of this, however, in the following sentence there was a surprisingly positive assessment of the efforts made to integrate the bridge into the landscape: »Its design results from an international competition. The profile has been kept slender and low in order to reduce impact on landscape.«

The conflict of ideals between the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge and the World Heritage status is based on limited perceptions. On the part of the bridge's opponents, the bridge is seen as a danger for the city's cultural heritage. This is a misjudgement of the real meaning of the World Heritage status for the Elbe Valley. It is not only the unique view from the banks to the Altstadt. Instead, in the World Heritage status justification, what is honoured is the multiple relationships between the natural and constructed elements of a cultural landscape which grew out of the process of Dresden's urbanisation. One, or even several new bridges would be conceivable from this point of view. The obvious misjudgement of these relationships invites the notion that the fixation on the view of the Altstadt results from an unsatisfied desire to see Dresden's Altstadt among the World Heritage sites by itself, and not as part of a cultural landscape.

In 2005 at a conference in Vienna, the UNESCO took a stand on the recurring conflict between the integration of new buildings into a World Heritage site with its »Vienna Memorandum on World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape«. In this declaration, with reference to the expanding notion of heritage and its sites over the past years, the need was determined for a new, forward-looking approach to guidelines for the conservation and use of heritage sites. In the spirit of this declaration, contemporary architecture is not rejected outright in a historical context.

Instead, contemporary planning should be characterised by a participatory process and seeking expert opinions, placing a high value on conservation and keeping impacts on the historical context to a minimum. This particular requirement is satisfied in the case of the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge, whose planning is distinguished by a complex, extremely laborious process (Euro 22.6 million planning and preparation costs). In this planning, the structure itself was specifically not intended to be pseudo-historical, but to meet the highest demands in terms of design.

The proponents of the bridge often reduce it to its infrastructural necessity. While this is the reason for building the bridge, it is not its ultimate purpose: in the cultural landscape of the Elbe Valley a bridge must be more than just an efficient connection between A and B.

The formal level of the conflict is unfortunate but not relevant to its solution. A mutually satisfying solution for adding new structures to the Elbe Valley's cultural landscape can only be found if the conflict is resolved on the conceptual level,

i.e. if a shared understanding can be reached on the World Heritage status and the requirements this sets for the city's future development.

The Dresden conflict must be brought before a mediator, as meaningful urban development and the identities of both the free city of Dresden and the World Heritage status seal of approval could be damaged.

The citizens of Dresden were for the rebuilding of the Frauenkirche church and at the same time, they are for the building of the Waldschlößchenbrücke bridge. Unlike the way heritage was dealt with at the Neumarkt, the authenticity of the World Heritage site in the Elbe Valley would be maintained by the new bridge. Playing off the partially historicised reconstruction of the Altstadt against the developing cultural landscape would set off a new dispute about the justification for the World Heritage status. The bridge can certainly be integrated as an element of the Elbe Valley's cultural landscape without becoming caught up in a conflict between existing historical buildings and historicised substance. If it was not accepted that a bridge could be integrated into the cultural landscape, then its World Heritage status would not be justified.

Passing mention must be made here of the high financial damages which would be incurred upon the city by building companies' recourse claims if the construction work was not carried out.

The UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre are organs of the executive branch which, if they took back Dresden's World Heritage status, would be turning away from the city's and the region's legislative branch (referendum, city council resolution) and judiciary branch (court decision). This could damage both the substance of the World Heritage status and the UNESCO's democratic self-image.

The value of the »World Heritage Site« seal of approval rests upon the UNESCO's decisions in concrete situations being understandable and appropriate, as the criteria of universality, authenticity, integrity etc. are very general and abstract. Wrong decisions carry the danger of lowering the value of the World Heritage seal altogether.



Fig. 1
Frauenkirche Dresden

Fig. 2
World Heritage logo



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