

Bridges in the townscape – poetics of the image

Agata Bonenberg Ph.D.
Architect
Faculty of Architecture,
Poznan University of
technology,
Poznan, Poland
agata.bonenberg@gmail.com



Agata Bonenberg graduated from the University of Technology in Krakow, Faculty of Architecture. She also studied at Fachhochschule Münster. She worked as an architect in Germany, Australia and Scotland. An important career stage was a position in Renzo Piano Building Workshop in Genoa, Italy. She has been employed at the Faculty of Architecture of Poznan University of Technology since she completed her doctorate.

Summary

The bond between built environment and community is the essence of a city as a system. A system of bridges plays an important role as a visible sign and manifestation of adapting surroundings according to people's needs and ambitions. In the following paper I discuss major determinants of perception of a bridge in a townscape, and subsequently, the poetics of this image. My paper concentrates on the following aspects: bridge as a source of information about urban space, as a factor of a cultural identity giving sense of territory, a symbol of prestige and an image of a place.

Keywords: landmarks, perception, territorial behaviour, identity

Introduction

Cities are a physical manifestation of a community life: a living, dynamic composition of the built substance and the social structure. Architecture creates a scene for a changeable, flexible and expansive composition. These are the bridges that are the most palpable manifestation of this expansion, showing desire to overcome natural boundaries and manage the space divided by water. Bridge architecture is one of the most individual, crucial features which identify urban space. Looking at the pattern of crossings of the river Arno in Florence as well as the bridges over the channels in Venice one sees perseverance and determination to overcome barriers and limitations. Bridges located in the central areas of a town or a city are surrounded by an extraordinary aura - result of an exceptional position in the street network. They are built, due to their purpose, in places where water, earth and air come together. When located outside cities, bridges introduce an element of human creation into the natural landscape. On that score a bridge constitutes a link between nature, landscape, technology and culture. It symbolizes domination over the environment, representing engineering and technological challenges. Watching this physical manifestation of human creativity and talent, resisting against river currents and stormy skies, reveals emotional element of admiration for human achievements and potential of technology and imagination. No wonder a bridge became a subject of many associations, metaphorical meanings which arose in the social consciousness. From there they penetrate into literature, poetry and paintings.

In this paper, I would like to focus on emotional, cultural and psychological meaning of a bridge in the townscape of both historical and modern cities. Discussing this *ethics and social responsibility* related to this particular research area, I would like to mention the following subjects: