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Sky-blue. Tracking shot. Cropped treetops. The camera slowly sinks to the grey surface of the motorway. Then, on the horizon, a mammoth structure looms. Inescapable, unavoidable, as if exerting a magnetic pull. A flashing arrow warns of a lane closure. The cars seem to be taking a run-up. Like lemmings they begin a climb of indeterminate conclusion. Because from here, there is no end in sight. The sky seems to be the only destination for the approaching vehicles. Hard cut. Side view of bridge piers. With monumental grandeur it divides the landscape of grass and bushes into a before and an after. Once again, the camera offers the viewer no causalities, no architectural logic. It doesn't show the muddy green water of the Kiel Canal, flowing between retaining walls of sunken sheet piling, and for quite some time there is no long shot of the structure – at 2.8 kilometres one of the longest in Germany – the **Hochbrücke Brunsbüttel (Brunsbüttel High Level Bridge)**.

The eponymous film by Karsten Wiesel adds structural details – the bridge's concrete piles, walls, hollow spaces, stairs and struts. And it presents them with the gravitas and mystic idealization one normally associates with the sight of a sacred monument. Wiesel and cameraman Sin Huh portray the bridge as a kind of superhuman obstacle or the exclamation mark of a godlike builder, contradicting its mundane purpose of providing a link between the two banks of the canal. The film breaks up the bridge's practical function into individual forms and subverts its original meaning via abstraction.

Shafts of vertical concrete are not at all out of place in a horizontal, manmade landscape in which neither water nor vegetation have anything to do with nature or a naturalness.

All of this serves a studied and yet sensual formalism, which the film also carries over into the acoustic realm. Because what we hear is a composition made up of noises, sounds and atmospheres recorded on location by Gregory Büttner and Clemens Endreß. The hissing of approaching vehicles, a mixture of motors and wind. The ominous creaking and groaning of the bridge piers and steel girders. Suspension systems and tyres are transposed into the rumble and clatter of cars and trucks driving over the metal plates at the ends of the bridge.

Sounds from the spaces inside the bridge are juxtaposed with shots of its external architecture, almost creating the impression that the 40-year-old structure is speaking. We also hear the sounds made by the maintenance workers, stoically tapping every centimetre of the bridge for faults. The echoes resounding through chambers, shafts and stairways, the humming sound made by a steel strip under pressure – all of these are placed under an acoustic magnifying glass and presented to the viewer.

Although the external structure of the bridge appears as clear and logical in long shots, there are still moments when – in spite of all architectural symmetry – the viewer's sense of up and down, right and left is deliberately disturbed, giving rise to a feeling of being lost in this world. Sometimes the structure seems to be claustrophobically constricted, sometimes monstrously wide. In the film, the high level bridge – in the 1980s a symbol for society's dream of unrestricted mobility – is transformed into a unique sound board and becomes the protagonist of a remarkable cinematic experience.