

# Preface

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*Felix Levenson on behalf of the editors*

How often have any of us sat in a conference or workshop session with back-to-back lectures and without the proper time to discuss the matters that are central to the theme of the session? How often did you wish to have less time for presentations and more time for discussion?

The *Cluster of Excellence 264 TOPOI* gave us the chance to broaden our horizons and look beyond the traditional borders of our own research field by inviting fellows from a wide range of disciplines and different parts of the world, but mainly by encouraging junior scholars – like myself – to experiment with different formats of workshop and knowledge transfer.

With the concept of the symposium and also the published volume we took a gamble. The planning phase was long and changed drastically throughout the entire process. The first draft was a three-day-long conference with lectures in several, even parallel sessions and keynote-lectures each evening. We considered inviting many established scholars of the ancient world and spending more time listening to presented papers than discussing the matters that had driven our own research for the past five years.

As interesting this would surely have been, we feared getting stuck with the same questions or hearing answers we could read about by looking at published work. Instead, we were eager to provide a forum where concrete discussions could take place, as well as give new and young voices a chance to share their opinions and their own research questions.

We chose specifically to forge a symposium-style meeting to serve the needs of our research group, but also to provide a chance for junior researchers to connect with scholars working on the same types of questions. It quickly became apparent that a 'traditional' concept of 20-minute presentations and 10-minute discussions – which more often than not turns into "only one quick question because we are running out of time" – was not the format we were looking for.

The idea was to have a conference at which no one reads a single paper – which may, however, seem a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, the concept of the established *Dahlem Konferenzen* is exactly what we searched for and that is why it served as a blueprint for the symposium. We needed to make a few changes

because we did not want to have a five-day schedule or parallel sessions, but we still did not envisage any read papers. The plan was to have different sessions for different topics and themes which were led by research questions we shared with the *TOPOI* researchers of our group in advance. These questions were then released in a *Call for Discussants*, which was specifically directed towards junior researchers, PhD students, and post-docs. In addition to these researchers, we were able to invite, thanks to the generosity of *TOPOI*, some more senior scholars from the world of monumentality research to kick-off each discussion session, which was moderated in turn by a senior scholar.

There were many applications and good feedback in advance, but until the symposium itself, my fellow organisers and I were still afraid that our experiment would backfire – there would be no real discussion and we would sit around in silence for a long time. But our gamble paid off and we had a very successful symposium with four individual discussion sessions on the first two days and a general discussion on the third. This symposium contrasts starkly with the type of congress at which fragments of worth are lost among a ‘phalanx of predictable material’.

This volume of conference proceedings, or rather the results of the symposium *SIZE matters* held in Berlin on October 9–11 2017, marks the end of the DFG-funded research of the *Cluster of Excellence 264 TOPOI*’s research group B-2 ‘Monumentalized Knowledge’, which dealt with the concept of monumentality in antiquity as well as monumental architecture throughout the world, with projects based in the Near East, Rome, Eurasia, and Germany. This broad scope of projects helped our research immensely and also contributed to the success of the symposium.

Due to the symposium’s concept, this volume is not only a collation of different papers on monumentality but a volume presenting the results of the discussions of the symposium and the desire of the contributors to engage in interdisciplinary debate on phenomena that do not separate disciplines, but rather allow the finding of elements common to them.

I am grateful to all the contributors, discussants, and guests for three days of thrilling scientific exchange, to *TOPOI* for providing the funding, to my co-organizers Anton Gass, Federico Buccellati, Sylva van der Heyden, and Sebastian Hageneuer, who joined us in editing the book. Particular thanks and all our gratitude goes to Prof. Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum for supporting the idea and concept and helping in every possible way, from the conceptualization of the symposium to the finished book.

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