Monuments and Monumentality – different perspectives

Felix Levenson

"Monumentality (or the XXL phenomena) is not confined to physical scale: the creation of monumental architecture involves a combination of great technical ingenuity, extraordinarily high levels of skill, the devotion of vast amounts of time to build them, the type and range of the resources invested and the sheer size of the task."
Brunke et al. 2016: 250

"Monuments […] are in the eye of the beholder."
Hole 2012: 457

"Monumentality is something more than the shape, or size, or visibility, or permanence of the monument – though these variables absolutely carry their own significance. Monumentality lies in the meaning created by the relationship that is negotiated between object and person, and between object and the surrounding constellation of values and symbols in a culture."
Osborne 2014a: 14

"Monumental architecture embraces large houses, public buildings, and special purpose structures. Its principal defining feature is that its scale and elaboration exceed the requirements of any practical functions that a building is intended to perform."
Trigger 1990: 119

"Monumental ist, was den Maßstab sprengt, Proportionen außer Kraft setzt und die Regel der Angemessenheit um der Wirkung willen bewusst verletzt."
Kirk 2008: 14

"Monuments are ideological statements about social and political relations."
Pollock 1999: 175

"True monumentality is indeed not expressed in the size, but in the relationship to the figure of the observer and, put in highly emotive terms, the inner imbuement [Durchdrungenheit] of a work."
Küster 2009

The task of finding a general and unifying definition for such a complex idea as the 'monumental' is an impossible one. Reading about the cultural phenomenon of monumentality makes one wonder if it actually exists or if it is just something made up anew every time somebody wants to talk about it. This is not only true in modern discussions about this architectural phenomenon but particularly for its study in the archaeological scientific literature. Studying monumentality in a way means studying the unknown, for there is no satisfactory definition of the term. I personally would not agree with all the above statements about monumentality or monuments, nevertheless I do not want to deny the legitimacy of each and every one of them, as Osborne already pointed out in his work (see above). It is the goal of this paper to make the variability and diversity of the terminology and the discussion about it visible.

The discussion of monuments, monumentality, and extra-large projects is in resurgence at the moment, and not only in Berlin – where it seems impossible to construct an airport[1], or in the ever-faster growing megacities of South-West Asia, or with reference to the new skyscrapers in the United Arab Emirates (cf. Osborne 2014b and Brysbaert et al. 2019). In 2012 James Osborne held a conference in Buffalo with the title *Approaching Monumentality in Archaeology* which was published in 2014 under the same title by SUNY Press, and asked – as our forum did – what can archaeology learn from so-called monumental structures and 'extra-large projects' about their societies (cf. Osborne 2014a). While both volumes are on the topic of monumentality, they are of a different nature. In his introduction Osborne starts his explanations with the discussion of an Elamite figurine of a lioness, known as the Guennol Lioness (formerly Guennol Lion),[2] which undoubtedly gained its importance and/or monumentality from its horrendous selling price. Though monumentality is not – as Osborne showed in his introduction (Osborne 2014a) – confined to built structures such as buildings, dams etc., in the present book it will only be discussed in relation to architecture. Even the contribution by Smoak/Mandell, which also deals with the monumentality of texts (Smoak/Mandell this volume), is based in the realm of built structures as it deals with inscriptions as objects rather than focusing on their contents.

Before I go into a discussion of the terminology of the monumental, monuments, and *lieux des mémoires*, I want to point out the main difference between Osborne's volume and the debates held in our discussion forum. The organization of our forum allowed us to have long and uninterrupted discussions[3] about most

1 The new Berlin airport's (BER) construction was started in 2006 after a 15-year planning period. It was initially intended to be opened in 2011, but as of today it still remains a construction site.

2 The name Guennol relates to the previous owner's family name which is Martin and Guennol in Welsh, where the family came from. The lioness gained its fame when it was auctioned in 2007 for $57.200.000.

3 For more on the organization of the forum, see Levenson (this volume).

themes of this volume. For our forum one of the most important conversations was about energetics and the possibility of quantifying monumentality – something that Osborne denies. He speaks more about monumentality as the meaning a structure gains through negotiations between objects and people (Osborne 2014a: 13). What Bourdieu (1992: 163–70) calls symbolic power is what defines a monument for Osborne. However, he ends with the notion that "Monuments, it turns out, are in the eye of the beholder." (Hole 2012: 457) Although I agree with this assessment, I will try to elaborate on how this differs between monuments, monumentality, and communal monuments (see below).

So, what do we mean when we speak about monumentality in relation to the built environment? How can we define monumental architecture and how can we identify monumental structures from the past? Firstly, it is of utmost importance to realize that *nothing is monumental, and everything is monumental* and that there is a distinction between a monument (Denkmal) and something monumental (see below, for a more detailed account of the sociology of the monumental and also cf. Delitz/Levenson this volume).[4]

In the 18th century CE the word monument (from Latin, *monere* – to admonish, to warn, to remind but *not* to remember) referred to sites of memory and places of remembrance. These *lieux de mémoire* (Nora 1989) initially had no connotation of size. The relation to an architectural structure was also not necessary. Megastructures were not included in the term until the 19th century CE when these aspects became relevant to national representation and historical legitimization. At the beginning of the 20th century CE there was a movement that tried to connect the notion of monumentality to the sacred in opposition to the profane (cf. Meyer 1938). This concept is linked to the works of Pseudo-Longinus (1966) and Kant (1990; 1995) on the sublime.[5]

From the beginning of the 20th century CE onward monuments were understood as communicators between past and future, they "[…] are human landmarks, which men have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for their actions. They are intended to outlive the period which originated them and constitute a heritage for future generations." (Brunke et al. 2016: 252) In the 19th and 20th centuries CE monuments that were erected in Europe were mainly linked to structures and symbols from classical Roman and Greek antiquity. The next shift in the history of monumentality in architecture took place during and after World War II – after the time Mussolini enacted his plans to redesign Rome's urban

4 Even though linguistically 'monumental' is the adjective to 'monument', 'monumental' not only describes the attributes of a monument but also has its own separate meaning (cf. Delitz/Levenson in this volume). The German term 'Denkmal' is the closest match to the English 'monument'; however, it mainly relates to statues and memorials and not necessarily buildings.

5 Kant described the sublime as that "which is beyond all comparison great" and as "awe-inspiring greatness" (Kant 1995: § 65).

space, after Adolf Hitler's architect Albert Speer transformed central Berlin to create a massive parade route to showcase Germany's military strength, and after Stalin transformed Moscow's skyline with 'socialist' skyscrapers. This motivation is also clearly visible in the cinematography of Leni Riefenstahl's films – especially her Olympia films which glorified the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. She uses the monumental structures as a frame, showing them in a specific fashion and thereby making them accessible and visible to everybody, not just to an elite that is able to be in the front rows of the Nazi-parades in Nürnberg or the Olympic Games in Berlin. It is clear that in this case there was an intentional creation of monumentality for the masses and the commoners as well as the political elites. After this instrumentalization of big architecture for political purposes, this kind of architectural expression of quoting ancient monuments and rebuilding them on an extra-large scale fell out of favor, especially in Germany. The era of 'democratic architecture' began (Howell-Ardila 1998). This involved the usage of certain building materials such as concrete, glass and steel. The architecture was very clear and straightforward without extra-large structures, which were even avoided whenever possible. The new German Bundestag in Bonn built in 1992, for example, was a smallish inconspicuous building (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Plenary building of the German Bundestag in Bonn (Photo Courtesy of WorldCCBonn)

It was only after the reunification of the Federal German Republic and the German Democratic Republic that it became desirable to invest in big architecture again,

whether this was a conscious decision or only a 'mood of the country' remains unclear. The rebuilding of the center of Berlin, however, is a striking example of this phenomenon. Just to give some examples:

The Reichstag in Berlin became the seat of the German parliament again and was renovated in such a way that in 1999 it was given back its dome, this time by the 'star-architect' Norman Foster (see Figure 2), after being wrapped in an aluminium-coated fabric by artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude – like a *rite de passage*.

Figure 2: Reichstag building, housing the German parliament (Photo cc/by Jürgen Matern)

The move of the German parliament was enacted in 1999, nine years after German reunification. It was by far not the only change to the urban sphere in Berlin. Potsdamer Platz, right on the border between West and East Berlin, has been completely restructured and was Europe's largest intraurban building site in the 1990s. The shift is therefore apparent: there was a step back towards a reconnaissance of antique architecture and social conservatism which in Berlin culminated in the Humboldtforum, an extra-large building on the site where the Berliner Stadtschloss used to be, which 'quotes' the façade of the old palace. As in the 19th century CE, political power is shown through the means of architecture and the monumental. This shift in the meaning and connotation of monumentality and the monumental is also apparent in the *Denkstil* (Fleck 1980) of the time. The Frankfurt School,[6] for example, influenced thought about architecture a lot in Germany, as did Foucault's work on prisons and mental institutions in France.[7]

6 A group of German philosophers and theorists based in Frankfurt a. M.; well-known members include e. g. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

7 See Foucault (1998). For further discussions on the sociology of the monumental see Delitz/Levenson in this volume.

What makes the monumental?

There is something distinct and yet very indistinct about monuments and monumentality. As I have stated above, there is no single and unifying definition of this phenomenon, yet all things we consider seem to have something in common – somehow, we always seem to be able to decide whether something is monumental or not (see below). In the following I will try to elaborate on this phenomenon.

Affection makes a monument, for there must be either a perceptual impact on a personal or cultural level or a personal or cultural investment in the monument. Either way, social involvement in making or perceiving the monument is more important than, for example, size in the making of monumentality, which as I will explain below is something completely different.

Society makes monumentality. This might not be so difficult to comprehend for 'living' societies where we can talk to witnesses, but for ancient people this seems almost impossible. How can we ever tell what was impressive for the 5th millennium BCE Urukean? Or how do we know what the Roman triumph arches or Trajan's Column (cf. Hageneuer/van der Heyden this volume) meant to a Roman citizen of the early 2nd century CE? For the archaeologist, the question of how to deal with this situation arises – how can a feeling or a sense be proven archaeologically? We have to ask what factors are actually detectable in the archaeological record that can hint us towards an understanding of a concept of ancient monumentality and of ancient monuments.

Events create monumental spaces. Something that can be best captured by the German term *Ortsmonumentalität* describes a structure or built environment that gains its monumentality and thereby its importance from the place it was constructed upon (Brunke et al. 2016: 255). The structure can possibly be very little or very big, this has no influence on its monumentality. This monumentality is purely related to space and position. We have to ask ourselves then, how do certain spaces become so important and so impregnated with meaning and memory? I argue that this is due to events that took place there. This may seem simple and straightforward, but the question "What is an event?" is no less complex that the questions "What is a monument?" and "What is monumentality?" (cf. e. g. Žižek 2014). In a nutshell, I suggest that it would not have mattered what was built on ground zero after the attacks of 9/11, it would have been monumental due the place and position which were embedded in cultural memory (see below) by an event.

One can already see in its history that monumentality is a very dynamic term with a fluid meaning, even when dealing with structures or monuments from our time or from a time with very good written and photographic documentation. It becomes even more problematic when we as Western scholars try to study foreigners as exemplified in ethnographic studies or deal with antiquity as in archaeology. As this volume deals mainly with antiquity I will focus on the latter.

In archaeological literature dealing with architecture the term monumental is most commonly used in relation to large built structures or structures in a particularly meaningful place, an acropolis for example or religious or prestigious buildings for an elite class (see Sievertsen 2010 for one example from the 'Ubaid period [5th millennium BCE] in Mesopotamia). Connotations of the sublime, remembrance and effort do not play a major role even though they do in the texts by Vitruvius (1999) in the 1st century BCE.

There are several factors that need to be considered to allow something to be talked about as monumental, as Brunke et al. (2016) state. These include:

1. *Size*: the spatial dimensions of the object cause it to stand out significantly vis-à-vis the surrounding norm.
2. *Position*: the object's exposed position relative to the surrounding buildings causes it to stand out, e. g. it was sited on a mound or hill or in the center of a settlement, or at a location, possibly even a peripheral location, that developed into a center as a result of the object's presence.
3. *Permanence*: the object dominated the surrounding area over a long period of time.
4. *Investment*: construction of the object involved abnormally large investment relative to the technical or economic potential (skills, knowledge, tools, cultural techniques) of the population and/or its size; construction may even have involved investments and hence risks on a level disproportionate to the population's capacities.
5. *Complexity* […]: the technical knowledge, the artisanal skills and the organizational and logistical effort required to construct the object exceed both qualitatively and quantitatively the levels entailed in construction of a structure reflecting the norm for the surrounding area. Thus, for example, an object that is 'large' in terms of its dimensions but that was formed through the agglomeration of many smaller objects, which themselves reflect the norm for the surrounding area, may not necessarily be 'large' in terms of the complexity of the project object, its impressive size notwithstanding.[8] (Brunke et al. 2016: 255)

Different monumentalities

I would argue that none of the above alone makes a monument monumental, but that a combination of these factors could probably be used as a marker of a more objective approximation of the term. It is clear, however, that the common factor in all these five points is that monumentality is in any case a relational term that

8 Highlights by the author.

defines something through its otherness and opposition to the 'norm'.[9] Therefore, one could argue that everything is monumental for someone due to their personal memory and/or its personal meaning for someone. There are always several monumentalities that exist separately and independently but describe the same monument or structure. There are, for example:

1) *Intended* and built monumentality.
   Every structure has been built with an intent. In many cases, especially in public buildings with a political or religious meaning, this intent is linked to an intended monumentality. The intended function was sometimes to impress viewers, or to intimidate. Cathedrals, for example, were meant to showcase the sublime divinity of God.
2) *Perceived* monumentality, which differs from people to people and peoples to peoples or societies to societies.
   The perceived monumentality or social meaning of a structure not only differs between people or peoples, but also from the intended monumentality. The new Berlin airport for example (see above and below), which has been in the process of being built since 2006, has become a monument to the inability of the State of Berlin to finish a project and has thus gained its monumentality. The intended positive association with the airport has changed into a perceived negative one.
3) *Received* monumentality.
   Received monumentality is the most complex of the three concepts. It is a middle ground between *1)* and *2)*. But it is more than that; it is also the reception of the monument or the monumental through time and its changes within. Received monumentality is the outside perception of the way monumentality is perceived. It is in a way the outsider looking into an already established system and analyzing it, like an ethnographer studies unknown people.

There is a chain of dependencies and dependences. Thus the intent forms the perception, or at least is intended to do so; however, it is important to note that the intent is only there for one generation or less, and is exclusively limited to those who intend (beginning from the 'idea' until the practical implementation of the building process). Even those within the same generation who are not the decision makers are excluded from the 'intent-group'. The following generations can therefore only perceive this intent. In this scheme, intent is a priori temporary. Speaking as an archaeologist: intent is always a hypothetical which we are trying

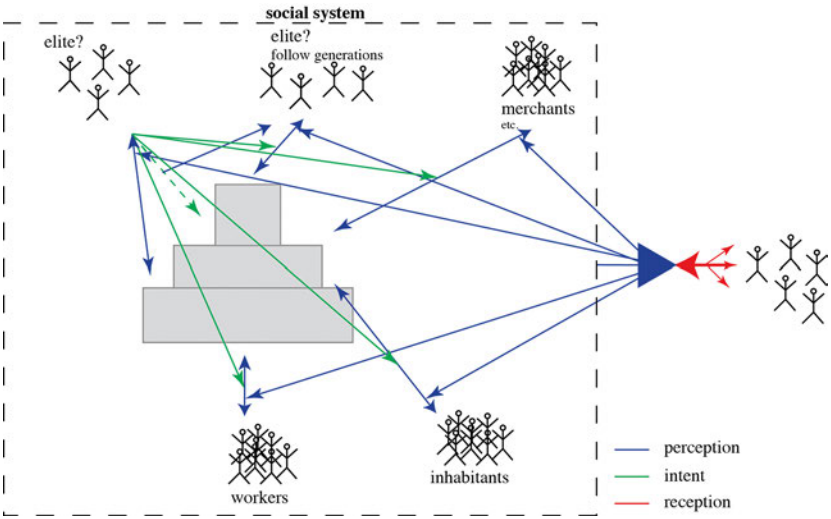
9 Again, this leaves us with the problem of defining the norm as an objective category, which it is not, and which is very difficult indeed. This unfortunately is neither the time nor the place to go into further detail.

to prove as well as possible with studies like this. What we can, however, assume is that the real recipient of the 'elite's' intentions is not the monument or intended monumental structure itself; the aim is to control the perception of the 'general population' – the observers. Intent does not leave the inherent social system.

Perception depends on the social position of the percipients, their social involvement, and social setting. Perception, as described above, changes over time and differs between different social groups. The perception of the monument and its monumentality is thereby highly influenced by the perception of the intending party; however, it never means the same to everyone.

Reception depends on the perception and is therefore also fluid and dynamic. It is, so to say, the perceived perception of someone else or of an alien social system.

Figure 3: Graphic model of the interrelationships between intended, perceived and received monumentality



The Austrian author Robert Musil wrote:

> "Denkmale haben außer der Eigenschaft, daß man nicht weiß, ob man Denkmale oder Denkmäler sagen soll, noch allerhand Eigenheiten. Die wichtigste davon ist ein wenig widerspruchsvoll; das Auffallendste an Denkmälern ist nämlich, daß man sie nicht bemerkt. Es gibt nichts auf der Welt, was so unsichtbar wäre wie Denkmäler. Sie werden doch zweifellos aufgestellt, um gesehen zu werden, ja geradezu, um die Aufmerksamkeit zu erregen; aber gleichzeitig sind sie durch irgend etwas gegen Aufmerksamkeit imprägniert, und diese rinnt Wassertropfen-auf-Ölbezug-artig an ihnen ab, ohne auch nur einen Augenblick stehenzu-

> bleiben. Man kann monatelang eine Straße gehen, man wird jede Hausnummer, jede Auslagenscheibe, jeden Schutzmann am Weg kennen, und es wird einem nicht entgehen, wenn ein Zehnpfennigstück auf dem Gehsteig liegt; aber man ist bestimmt jedesmal sehr überrascht, wenn man eines Tages nach einem hübschen Stubenmädchen ins erste Stockwerk schielt und dabei eine metallene, gar nicht kleine, Tafel entdeckt, auf der in unauslöschlichen Lettern eingegraben steht, daß an dieser Stelle von achtzehnhundertsoundsoviel bis achtzehnhundertundeinige-mehr der unvergeßliche Soodernichtso gelebt und geschaffen habe." (Musil 2017)[10]

This illustrates monumentality as a personal and subjective phenomenon most adequately. A monument is only important and thereby monumental due to a personal connection to it or at least due to the knowledge of the same.

Lieux de mémoire, monuments, and monumentality

It is important to state at this point that we are in fact talking about modern scholarly concepts that we are trying to reflect onto ancient societies. Therefore, it is of primary importance to have crystal clear definitions, which I now will discuss *in medias* res.

I want to draw a clear distinction between monuments and structures with monumentality in the sense of the above, and I want to do this by describing a process from personal monument, or *lieu de mémoire* for that matter, via monumentality to communal monuments (cf. Osborne 2014a: 3).

Everything is a monument for somebody (at least potentially), but the monumental is made by the society and by the acceptance of a monument as a communal monument. A monument does not, by this definition, need to be monumental in accordance to the definition provided by Brunke et al. (2016), nor can it be objectively described – it is in its nature to be subjective.

However, the monumental – or communal monument if you will – can be quantified and has an effect on at least a group of people. What Musil wrote connects much more with the notion of a monument than with the monumental. But if a monument does not have to be monumental, one needs to ask if something monumental has to be a monument.

I would argue that this link does exist, as I already mentioned 'communal monuments'. I would even go one step further in calling them 'cultural monuments' in that they represent *lieux des mémoires* of cultural memory, whereas the

10 An English translation of this work by Robert Musil can be found in Musil (2006).

grave of a beloved pet, for example, is surely a *lieu de mémoire* for an individual but not part of cultural memory and not monumental.

Monumental structures are canonized and culturally memorized.[11] To stick to the pet example, one could say that the grave of any beloved pet is not remembered by a society or a people, the grave of the beloved fictional pet-dog Lassie, however, would probably enter the realm of cultural memory for a few generations. Therefore, communal monuments cannot be built, they can only become such over time and by the resonance they create in their perceivers. Although some things – like e. g. Lassie's grave – will be instantly perceived as communal monuments, they only reveal their true importance after at least two generations.

Graveyards also represent this phenomenon. Each of the individual graves represents a monument, an individual's *lieu de mémoire*, whereas the graveyard as a whole is a cultural *lieu de mémoire*. This can be best described as an interrelationship between the part and the whole. The study of graves is an ideal example of how to study the social identity of the deceased and their social group. It is also one of the only ways one can identify canonized social and thereby cultural memory (Roßberger 2014: 202; see also Laneri 2014). Grave goods also reflect how this social identity and memory were materialized (cf. Halbwachs 1985) and may provide analogies towards the study of monumentality, cultural memory, and identity.[12]

Cultural memory – as Aleida (2002) and Jan Assmann (1988a; 1992) describe it – is a fluid and dynamic – ever-changing – concept which nevertheless belongs in the sphere of Braudel's (1979) *longue durée*.

Monuments are being created through circumstance and events (see below) and belong to Braudel's *eventements*. Monumentality, however, is intended and intentionally planned, whereas communal monuments are the reaction of perceived monumentality, hence they have something I call received monumentality – as cultural memory they belong to the *longue durée*. There is a progression in the step from where monumentality is intentionally planned from top-down, to communal monuments that are made by society and are therefore bottom-up. Monumentality not only has a quantifiable axis, but also a temporal one.

Monumentality is, by this definition, also a means of creating extra and special meaning for institutions like palaces or temples and their structures. This might also be considered a way of inventing a tradition that puts institutions deeper into cultural memory (see below).

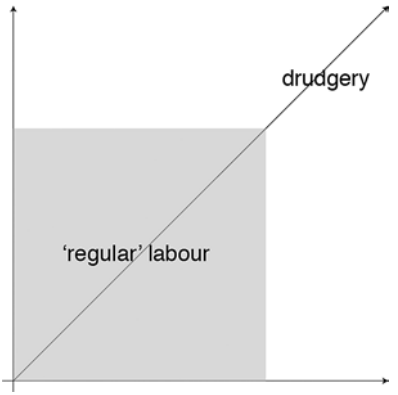
11 This might be best compared to what Aby Warburg described as Mnemosyne (Warburg 2012).

12 This will hopefully be further explored in the research group "Making the dead visible" at the University of Durham and in other projects focusing on the re- and assessment of ancient tombs and graveyards. For further details see e. g. Bradbury et al. (2016).

Tackling monumentality with labor

So how can we even speak about monumentality in a way that is scientifically adequate and acceptable in the archaeological record? I do *not* believe it is possible to give a formula for this and I think every case and every structure needs to be discussed separately and individually. However, there are certain questions one might ask that would lead the discussion in the right direction.[13] I will try to exemplify this by looking at labor (for further insights on labor see Bernbeck in this volume).

Figure 4: Relationship between 'regular' labor and drudgery



The energetics and labor needed for a building project can be studied objectively. First one needs to calculate the materials needed, then one tries to reconstruct the person power available by using maxima and minima. This plus an estimated timeframe lets us calculate the labor each and every worker had to do in order to finish the building process. Following Marx' distinction between abstract and concrete labor (Marx 1971), there is a certain amount of labor a worker is able to do in one day, this is considered 'regular'. Everything beyond 'regular' work becomes *drudgery (Schinderei)*. As Bernbeck describes in this volume, there are certain strategies that can be used to avoid drudgery to a degree, so the workload remains bearable for the workforce. One could, however, argue that the 'creation of monumentality' and 'meaning' starts with drudgery and that a structure built within

13 For a more detailed view on the methodology of studying monuments and monumentality in the archaeological record, see Buccellati (this volume), for energetics see Buccellati (2016) and Hageneuer/Schmidt (this volume).

the realm of 'normal' or 'regular' work cannot be monumental. This is, of course, only one of the possibilities of convergence with the term of monumentality.

The argument is that the ill-treatment of the workmen or dealing with the 'utility-drudgery threshold' (Bernbeck in this volume) adds to the *materiality* of the building and also shows the political power of the ruling class to use energy at their free will (cf. Trigger 1990). There is a discussion in the literature about whether political power is essential to the concept of monumentality (see Osborne 2014a: 9; Trigger 1990 and above) or if the creation of monumental architecture, which in any case needs to be seen as a communal effort, is in fact one of the creating forces of political power (Joyce 2004; Pauketat 2000).

Trevor Watkins even argues that the creation of monumental structures was a key factor in constituting societies (Watkins 2010). In his argument labor is again the main point. The creation of a structure is more important than the structure in its finished state (see e. g. Russell 1998). In short, banding together to create/make something that is not essential for survival constitutes the Neolithic Revolution (Benz/Gebel/Watkins 2017; Gebel 2017; Helwing/Aliyev 2014; Watkins 2008; 2010; 2017). Labor is only one of the ways to tackle the issue of monumentality among others (cf. Buccellati in this volume), but nevertheless a promising one (cf. Bernbeck this volume).

Motivation behind the monumental

In the realm of the power of politics in relation to temporality, monumentality takes on two roles – an interior and an exterior.

(1) The interior motivation for extra-large projects (or monumental projects) may lie in the building process itself. Contrary to the modern-day view of building sites and building time, the long duration of a project was an indicator for the power of a ruling elite or a king. A prominent example would be gothic cathedrals whose building processes endured for several generations, sometimes even for centuries (e. g. Cologne Cathedral, which was left as a building site for centuries to become a symbol of the 'unfinished' and humankind's hybrid, before it was finally finished by the Prussian emperor [see Hageneuer/van der Heyden in this volume] or Milan Cathedral).

Figure 5: Cologne Cathedral under construction in 1856 (Grefe 1988) (left) and Milan Cathedral (Photo cc/by Jiuguang Wang) (right)

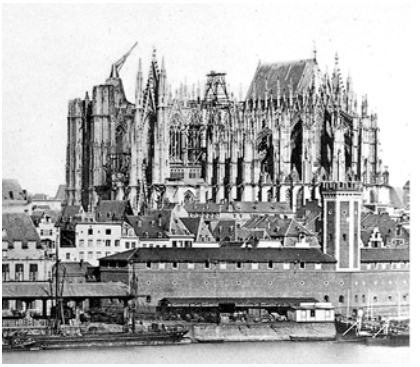
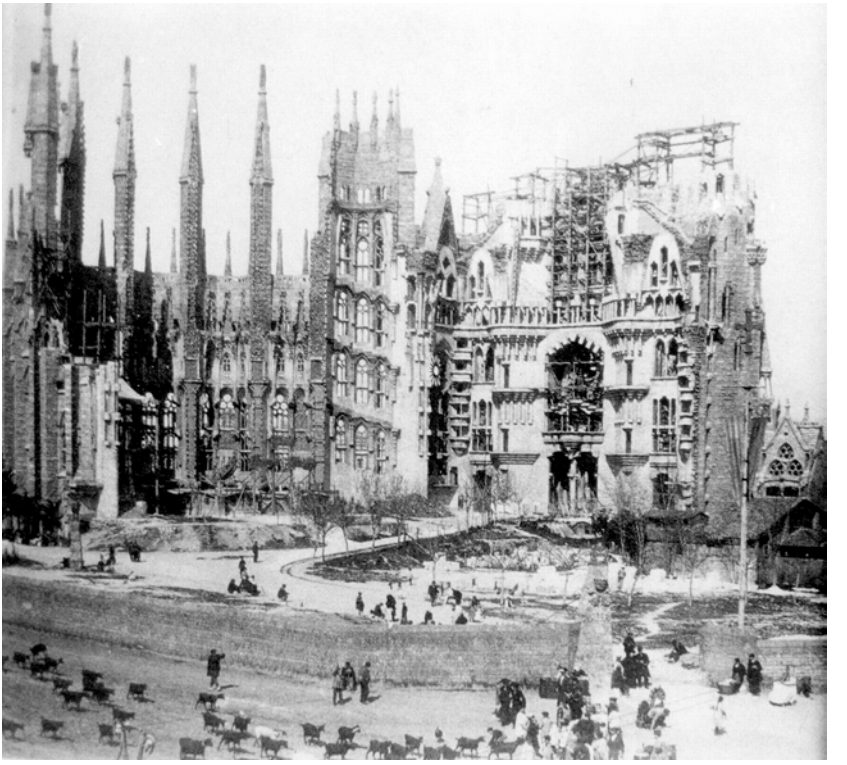


Figure 6: The Sagrada Família in Barcelona under construction in ca. 1915 (Photo Courtesy of Templo Expiatorio de la Sagrada Familia)



I argue that it was a show of power to be able to employ a lot of people for a long time – the king makes the palace. This is recorded countless times for the construction process of the gothic cathedrals. A project that is perceived benevolently in its never-ending building process is Sagrada Família in Barcelona, which has always been financed by the people and not by the Roman-Catholic church.

(2) Exterior motivation is different and works better with shorter construction times. I would argue that these kinds of extra-large projects (or monumental projects) were used to impress outsiders and were comparatively cheap. This might be best exemplified by the ziggurats of Ancient Mesopotamia. These were big buildings and in the eyes of the 'modern scholar' without a doubt monumental. They were also part of every city of a certain scale – so they were not unique or special – they were probably even an expected feature that every merchant, traveler or visitor would expect to see and, as Brunke (2016; 2018) shows, they were relatively cheap. In this case one could probably presume that these structures were intended as monumental structures to show power – the palace makes the king.

In both cases the structures are prestigious, either to the people building them or to the people perceiving them.

Figure 7: Ur-Namma Ziqqurat in Uruk-Warka (Photo by Felix Levenson)

However, monumentality does not necessarily have to be intended by the planner or architect. Function and action can make something monumental after the fact. Structures can be instrumentalized and become symbols of their institutions – independent of size. The architecture thereby becomes a symbol with the institution it is housing and its symbolic power (monumentality) is much more closely linked to the importance and the perception of said institution than of the structure itself.

Permanence and memory

Meaning, memory, and also fame play a major role when we are trying to look beyond mere size and volume of materials, as do time and temporality. Brunke et al. (2016) list *permanence* as one of the key aspects of monumentality and this permanence may reach into different aspects of life. Permanence in this context means an eternally enduring process, action, or status. There is for example:

1) *Permanence* of one structure or intended permanence of one structure (Hageneuer/Levenson 2018)
2) *Permanence* of a building space and/or place (Lohmann 2018)
3) *Permanence* of a memory (permanent reception)

This permanence of place and/or memory shows itself primarily in the fact that these memories or places can hand down monumentality to whatever structure is built on that space or built with a certain memory. Churches are a good example for this again. For instance, St. Peter's in Rome inherited its monumentality by being built on exactly the spot where St. Peter is said to have died. The structure would be monumental beside these facts, no matter how big, expensive, or sublime it would have been. An even better example might be the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, because it is not big and is not as elaborate as St. Peter's; however its monumentality would not fade even if the structure were long gone, as long as the memory remains.

Figure 8: St. Peter's in Rome (Photo cc/by Jean-Pol Grandmont) (left) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Photo cc/by Jorge Láscar) (right)

So, does a non-permanent structure, or better a structure with no intention of being permanent, have the ability to become monumental? Temporary offices built from shipping containers, refugee camps built from corrugated iron, or visiting platforms for big building sites or other structures – like the Info-Box for the Potsdamer Platz building site or the Humboldt-Box in front of the Humbold-

forum to give just two examples from Berlin – have a special relevance but no air of permanence, though they do live in the memories of many people (although maybe not the temporary offices). I would argue that even structures that were not intended to be permanent can have, gain, or change their monumentality during their lives. However, this is much more difficult to study or to reconstruct in the archaeological record, as temporary structures are often not recognizable in the archaeological record; however, they can still act as a cultural memory.

Thus far we have only considered physical permanence. The situation changes drastically when one starts to consider mental permanence or permanence of memory as well. I would argue that even if the structure has long gone, it can still be monumental or even a communal monument (in spirit), if the same people still hold its memory and remembrance, which again is just a mind game because memory and oral traditions cannot be proven archaeologically. As I mentioned above, these traditions might be made up to evoke a false memory of an 'alternate' history which legitimizes institutions. This comes back to what the British historian Eric Hobsbawm describes as the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm 1983). One could also think of the Seven Wonders of the World, of which only one still physically exists; however, the other six have no less sense of monumentality.

Figure 9: Info-Box at the building site of the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, with a fragment of the Berlin Wall (Photo cc/by Helen Schiffer)

Besides temporary structures that were in fact removed after a certain time (see above), it might also be worth considering structures that were intended as temporary, but gained so much monumentality, fame, and importance that they were

never removed and sometimes even became emblems, like e. g. the Eiffel tower in Paris or the Crystal Palace in London (cf. Wiggington 1997: 44–45). The architecture from world expositions in general is a good example for the monumentality and meaning of temporary architecture.

In ancient Egypt the creation myth involves the emergence of the world from a permanent, infinite, and lifeless sea, which is often associated with the Nile River but also with groundwater (Assmann/Kucharek 2008; Quirke 2015). Besides being made from stone, tombs and temples were also built on deep foundations. Jan Assmann describes the choice of material as a choice of permanence over events, or speaking in Braudel's terms of *longue durée* over *eventements* (Assmann 1988b; 1991; Braudel 1979). He also believes that the depth of the foundations is related to the groundwater and to the notion of connecting the temples to the infinite, eternal, and permanent sea from which the world emerged (Assmann 2018).[14]

This permanence is clearly a factor to be considered when looking at monumentality. This kind of 'invisible permanence' draws on the same principles as the monumentality of temporary structures, for it only exists in the mind or memory of the beholder.

Large technical structures and infrastructure

One other kind of structure that needs discussion are large technical infrastructures like dams, aqueducts, cisterns, streets etc., but also reshaped landscapes and big grave buildings (for cisterns see Hof in this volume; for reshaped landscapes see Pacheco in this volume). These large technical infrastructures are irrefutably a big part of the realm of monumentality, but – at least in the popular discussion of monumentality – are often skipped due to their supposed lack of prestige or symbolic power (Bourdieu 1992). Nevertheless, the energetic investment in such structures is quantifiably higher than that made for almost any palace, temple, or domestic structure.

I am not sure how large technical infrastructure fit into the discussion of monuments and monumentality. Certainly, they fit many aspects of monumentality that I have considered, but they nonetheless have a different quality. Their importance might be best measured in their social impact and entanglement (cf. Levenson forthcoming). Thus large technical infrastructure starts as an innovation, something that makes life easier and is therefore admired by many. There it gains its importance and its monumentality. However, it also creates dependen-

14 This is a notion which is very common in Egyptology; however to my knowledge there is no textual evidence of this idea, nor is there archaeological evidence that the foundations were dug deliberately deeper than necessary for the structural integrity of the temple or tomb above.

cies and entraps us (cf. Hodder 2016). I argue that, similar to the way we use a scaling approach (cf. Buccellati this volume) to investigate monumentality in 'regular' projects, we can also determine the monumentality of infrastructural projects, whose entrapment and interdependencies are even more obvious and graver than, for example, those of palaces, temples, or other public buildings, because their function is inherently more important for the survival of a people.

Conclusion

So, how can we tell when and how a structure becomes monumental? What properties change in a structure to make it stand out from all the others? And to come back to the primary question, what is monumentality and how can we maybe find a convergence to the term?

This question will remain forever without a satisfactory answer, because it is subjective and individual. There are, however, certain elements that I have tried to show that might encase the term and build a framework around it, thus facilitating a more fruitful discussion of this highly interesting phenomenon in the future.

I have tried to show that monumentality is a fluid and dynamic concept, which correlates strongly with the concept of cultural memory. As I have already stated above there is no way of defining it satisfactorily. But somehow, we seem to always recognize, perceive, and receive the monumental and build monumentality (monumental architecture). There are certain factors that may allow us to empirically quantify the degree of monumentality by studying the energetics (energy costs) of a certain structure in comparison to others in the same region during the same period, or by looking at the social implications of different perceptions and receptions; however the intent remains speculative and can only ever be proven circumstantially. The result would thereby be not a mere calculation of labor costs but also a measurement of the social involvement in the construction. How many men and women were employed? Where did the material come from? How was it transported? How long did it take? Was it paid labor? Forced labor? Voluntary labor? The answers may allow us to speak more objectively of a monumentality that we can 'quantify' through the archaeological record.

There is, however, one more question worth asking. After having discussed how to deal with intended monuments or monumental structures, it is necessary to consider how to deal with unintended monumentality or, to be more precise, with structures that were consciously intended not to be monumental, like the German Plenary Building (Figure 1), which was built in the era where everyone (especially in Germany) made an effort to avoid anything even vaguely resembling what was at this time considered monumental. This had a strong connection to the Frankfurt School and the teachings of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer

(cf. e. g. Adorno 1995; 1967). Again, this shows us the fluidity of the phenomenon of monumentality and the subjectivity of the matter. It is therefore necessary to have a broad perspective when looking at architecture and its potential monumentality. The *Denkstil* of the era is one of the major things to be considered (cf. Fleck 1980 and above). There used to be an artwork by Maurizio Nannucci (*1939) posted above the entrance of the Altes Museum in Berlin that said, "All art has been contemporary" in neon letters. Keeping that in mind when looking at our theme, I argue that it is important to understand every structure as potentially monumental, therefore it is of the utmost importance to create tools and techniques to objectify and thereby make monumentality quantifiable.

Bibliography

Adorno, T. W. (1967): Ohne Leitbild, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Assmann, A. (2002): Erinnerungsräume – Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses, München: Beck.

Assmann, J. (1988a): "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität." In: J. Assmann/T. Hölscher (eds.), Kultur und Gedächtnis, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 9–19.

Assmann, J. (1988b): "Stein und Zeit. Das 'monumentale' Gedächtnis der altägyptischen Kultur." In: J. Assmann/T. Hölscher (eds.), Kultur und Gedächtnis, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, pp. 87–114.

Assmann, J. (1991): Stein und Zeit – Mensch und Gesellschaft im alten Ägypten, München: Fink.

Assmann, J. (1992): Das kulturelle Gedächtnis, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Assmann, J./Kucharek, A. (eds.) (2008) Ägyptische Religion. Totenliteratur, Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag der Weltreligionen.

Assmann, J. (2018): Heliopolitanische Kosmogonie, Public Lecture in Berlin held on July 27 2018.

Benz, M./Gebel, H. G./Watkins, T. (2017): "The construction of Neolithic corporate identities." In: M. Benz/H. G. Gebel/T. Watkins (eds.), Neolithic Corporate Identities, Studies in Early Near Eastern Production, Subsistence, and Environment 20, Berlin: ex oriente.

Bourdieu, P. (1992): Language and Symbolic Power, Cambridge: polity.

Bradbury, J./Davies, D./Jay, M./Philip, G./Roberts, C./Scarre, C. (2016): "Making the Dead Visible: Problems and Solutions for 'Big' Picture Approaches to the Past, and Dealing with Large 'Mortuary' Datasets." In: Journal Archaeological Method and Theory 23, pp. 561–591.

Braudel, F. (1979): La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II, Paris: Libraire Armand Colin.

Brunke, H./Bukowiecki, E./Cancik-Kirschbaum, E./Eichmann, R./van Ess, M./Gass, A./Gussone, M./Hageneuer, S./Hansen, S./Kogge, W./May, J./Parzinger, H./Pedersén, O./Sack, D./Schopper, F./Wulf-Rheidt, U./Ziemssen, H. (2016): "Thinking Big. Research in Monumental Constructions in Antiquity." In: eTopoi Journal of Ancient Studies Special Volume 6, pp. 250–305.

Brysbaert, A./Klinkenberg, V./Gutiérrez-Garcia, M./Vikatou, I. (eds.) (2019): Constructing monuments, perceiving monumentality and the economics of building – Theoretical and methodological approaches to the built environment, Leiden: Sidestone Press.

Buccellati, F. (2016): Three-dimensional Volumetric Analysis in the Archaeological Context – The Palace of Tupkish at Urkesh and its Representation, Bibliotheca Mesopotamica, Malibu: Undena Publications.

Fleck, L. (1980): Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache. Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil und Denkkollektiv, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Foucault, M. (1998[1975]): Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison, Paris: Editions Flammarion.

Gebel, H. G. (2017): "Neolithic corporate identities in the Near East", In: M. Benz/H. G. Gebel/T. Watkins (eds.), Neolithic Corporate Identities, Studies in Early Near Eastern Production, Subsistence, and Environment 20, Berlin: ex oriente.

Grefe, U. (1988): Köln in frühen Photographien 1847–1914, München: Schirmer.

Hageneuer, S./Levenson, F. (2018) "Das Steinstiftgebäude in Uruk – ein gescheitertes Experiment?" In: K. Rheidt/W. Lorenz (eds.), Groß Bauen – Großbaustellen als kulturgeschichtliches Phänomen, Basel: Birkhäuser, pp. 109–121.

Halbwachs, M. (1985): Das kollektive Gedächtnis, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Helwing, B./Aliyev, T. (2014): "A Monumental Neolithic? New Results of the Ongoing Azerbaijanian-German Investigations in the Mil Steppe, Azerbaijan." In: P. Bieliński/M. Gawlikowski/R. Koliński/D. Ławecka/A. Sołtysiak/Z. Wygnańska (eds.), Proceedings of the 8th ICAANE (Vol. 2). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 247–258.

Hobsbawm, E. (1983): "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" In: E. Hobsbawm/T. Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–14.

Hodder, I. (2016): Studies in Human-Thing Entanglement, self publishing online.

Hole, F. (2012): "West Asian Perspective on Early Monuments." In: R. L. Burger/R. M. Rosenswig (eds.), Early New World Monumentality, Gainsville: University Press of Florida.

Howell-Ardila, D. (1998): "Berlin's Search for a 'Democratic' Architecture: Post-World War II and Post-unification." In: German Politics & Society 16, pp. 62–85.

Joyce, R. A. (2004): "Unintended Consequences? Monumentality as a Novel Experience in Formative Mesoamerica." In: Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory 11, pp. 5–29.

Kant, I. (1990): Kritik der Urteilskraft, Hamburg: Meiner.

Kant, I. (1995): Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik. 2. Register zur Werkausgabe, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Kirk, T. (2008): "Monströse Monumentalität – Monumentale Monstrositäten." In: Bauwelt 48, pp. 1–25.

Küster, U. (2009): "Monumentalität contra Gigantismus. Alberto Giacometti hat auf das, was um ihn herum geschah, stärker reagiert als bisher angenommen." In: du! – Zeitschrift für Kultur 69, pp. 89–93.

Laneri, N. (2014): "Locating the Social Memory of the Ancestors: Residential Funerary Chambers as Locales of Social Remembrance in Mesopotamia During the Late Third and Early Second Millenia BC." In: P. Pfälzner/H. Niehr/E. Pernicka/S. Lange/T. Köster (eds.), Contextualising Grave Inventories in the Ancient Near East – Proceedings of a Workshop at the 7th ICAANE in April 2010 and an International Symposium in Tübingen in November 2010, both organized by the Tübingen Post-Graduate School "Symbols of the Dead," Qatna Studien Supplementa. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 201–216.

Levenson, F. (forthcoming): "Studying architectural energetics – body and mind in its social setting." In: N. N. (ed.), Proceedings of the 11th ICAANE in Munich, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Lohmann, D. (2018): "Superlative baulicher Art. Zum 'Trilithon' und der Inszenierung von Größe im antiken Jupiterheiligtum in Baalbek." In: K. Rheidt/W. Lorenz (eds.), Groß Bauen – Großbaustellen als kulturgeschichtliches Phänomen, Basel: Birkhäuser, pp. 149–163.

Marx, K. (1971): Das Kapital, Marx-Engels-Werke, Berlin: Dietz Verlag.

Meyer, P. (1938): "Ueberlegungen zum Problem der Monumentalität als Antwort an Hans Schmidt." In: Werk 25/4, pp. 123–128.

Musil, R. (2006): Posthumous Papers of a Living Author, New York: Archipelago.

Musil, R. (2017[1957]): "Denkmale." In: Nachlass zu Lebzeiten, Hamburg: Rowohlt, pp. 62–66.

Nora, P. (1989): "Between Memory and History. Les Lieux de Mémoire." In: Representations 26, pp. 7–24.

Osborne, J. F. (2014a): "Monuments and Monumentality." In: J. F. Osborne (ed.), Approaching Monumentality in Archaeology, IEMA Proceedings. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 1–19.

Osborne, J. F. (ed.) (2014b): Approaching Monumentality in Archaeology, IEMA Proceedings. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Pauketat, T. R. (2000): "The tragedy of the commoners." In: M.-A. Dobres/J. Robb (eds.), Agency in Archaeology, London: Routledge, pp. 113–129.

Pollock, S. (1999): Ancient Mesopotamia – The Eden that never was, Case Studies in Early Societies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pseudo-Longinos (1966): Vom Erhabenen, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Quirke, S. (2015): Exploring Religion in Ancient Egypt, London: Wiley-Blackwell.

Roßberger, E. (2014): "Things to remember – Jewelery, Collective Identity and Memory at the Royal Tomb of Qatna." In: P. Pfälzner/H. Niehr/E. Pernicka/S. Lange/T. Köster (eds.), Contextualising Grave Inventories in the Ancient Near East – Proceedings of a Workshop at the 7th ICAANE in April 2010 and an International Symposium in Tübingen in November 2010, both organized by the Tübingen Post-Graduate School "Symbols of the Dead," Qatna Studien Supplementa, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 201–216.

Russell, J. M. (1998): "The Program of the Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud. Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art." In: American Journal of Archaeology 102, pp. 655–715.

Sievertsen, U. (2010): "Buttress-recess architecture and status symbolism in the Ubaid period." In: R. Carter/G. Philipp (eds.), Beyond the Ubaid. Transformation and Integration in the Late Prehistoric Societies of the Middle East, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 201–226.

Trigger, B. (1990): "Monumental architecture. A thermodynamic explanation of symbolic behaviour." In: World Archaeology 22, pp. 119–132.

Vitruvius (1999): Ten Books on Architecture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Warburg, A. (2012): Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE, Gesammelte Schriften – Studienausgabe, Berlin: De Gruyter.

Watkins, T. (2008): "Supra-regional networks in the Neolithic of southwest Asia." Journal of World Prehistory 21, pp. 139–171.

Watkins, T. (2010): "New Light on Neolithic Revolution in south-west Asia." In: Antiquity 84, pp. 621–634.

Watkins, T. (2017): "Neolithic corporate identities in evolutionary context." In: M. Benz/H. G. Gebel/T. Watkins (eds.), Neolithic Corporate Identities, Studies in Early Near Eastern Production, Subsistence, and Environment 20, Berlin: ex oriente.

Wiggington, M. (1997): Glas in der Architektur, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt.

Žižek, S. (2014): Event, London: Penguin Books.