Introduction

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The symposium 'SIZE matters – Extra Large Projects in the Ancient World', held in Berlin on October 9–11, 2017 marked the end of the five-year research period of the Research Group B-2 'Monumentalized Knowledge' of the Cluster of Excellence 264 TOPOI – The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations. The Research Group was one of the most diverse groups in TOPOI with research projects ranging from the 'Size of Rome', Scythian tombs in the Eurasian steppes, 'Big Buildings – Big Architecture?' in the ancient Near East and to the 'Ritual Landscape of the Royal Tomb of Seddin' in Brandenburg (Germany). Each project had its own focus and scope, nevertheless there were recurring questions that linked the different projects and were the starting point of many discussions held during our five-year research period. Firstly, there were questions of the terminological framework – What is monumentality? Does size really matter? These questions were followed by others, such as – Who profits from big architecture? What does it actually cost? Who built monuments and how were they built?

Having explored these questions within our own research foci, we decided to think outside the box and broaden our scope even further, inviting a wide range of scholars to participate in a symposium related to size and monumentality. Might other disciplines and other scholars working on similar problems have found alternative solutions?

The result of the symposium is an inter- and multidisciplinary volume dealing with the topic of Size and Monumentality in Ancient Architecture, which focuses not only on a single geographic or cultural region but covers much of the ancient world, including Mesoamerica (Pacheco), Syria (Butterlin; Hof), Babylonia (Cousin), Sumer (Hageneuer & Schmidt), Italy (Mogetta), and Ancient Judeah (Smoak & Mandell), also giving a broad overview (White & Lane), and even touching on sociology (Delitz & Levenson) and economics (Bernbeck).

The volume is divided in two main parts: a first section examining concepts relating to size and monumentality, followed by a series of case studies which were presented by speakers at the symposium. The symposium itself was organised inversely. First, case studies were presented in sessions with a short discussion

following each session, then a longer discussion was held on the final day touching on many of the theoretical and methodological aspects which linked all of the papers presented. After the symposium the editors (for more on the symposium itself see the preface to this volume) used the material from that final discussion to elaborate a theoretical framework and a discussion of relevant methodological approaches to monumentality, not only with the goal of introducing the volume and the case studies presented therein, but also to discuss approaches and problems associated with the study of monumentality in the ancient world.

The article by Felix Levenson considers theoretical aspects of monumentality as relating to size, as well as elements of labor and the type of construction under consideration. Federico Buccellati gives an overview of methods used in the study of monumentality, discussing their applicability in research environments as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the methods as they relate to the study of monumentality. Sebastian Hageneuer and Sylva van der Heyden discuss object biography as it relates to diverse moments of a structure, beginning with the pre-construction moment and ending with reproductions of constructions considered monumental. These articles do not aim to present a 'final definition' of monumentality – they instead present the complexity of the topic, discussing the many facets (as seen from a wide range of scholarly viewpoints) and commonalities which link these approaches. Additionally, we asked several scholars for their responses to this discussion of theories and methods in order to keep the spirit of the symposium from which the volume stems.

The second section of the volume presents twelve case studies which reflect the spatial, temporal, and inter-disciplinary breadth of the symposium and the study of monumentality in general. These case studies show how individual scholars or teams approached the question of monumentality in very interesting and challenging contexts; when considered against the backdrop of the first section, they show how specific examples fit into an overarching framework while also presenting unique aspects which call into question certain elements of that framework.

Articles in this volume

Heike Delitz and Felix Levenson describe four heterogeneous structures in an attempt to investigate sociological aspects of monumentality through a comparison between societies with and without 'big' monumental structures. The sociological approach is twofold: from the perspective of a collective existence and from one where artefacts are socially active. The authors make the case that the absence of monumentality does not reflect a lack of ability to create such structures, but is rather the result of a decision to abstain from their construction.

Reinhard Bernbeck takes a look at the economics of the building process, focusing on labor where he follows Chayanovian ideas on the logic of drudgery and shows how diverse practices and especially institutional arrangements in ancient Mesopotamian societies tried in different ways to reduce tensions in projects with large amounts of laborers. Here he defines the 'utility-drudgery-threshold' as an aid to explanation.

Sabrina N. Autenrieth and Dieuwertje van Boekel investigate why the destruction of architectural monuments and pictorial works by humans always takes place at times of change. Starting with their definition of monuments – containers of memories – they shed light on the possible reasons for the destruction of monuments by choosing examples from the whole range of possible sites and periods: Neolithic UK, pre-classic Mesoamerica, 16th century Low Countries, Germany in 1989, contemporary Afghanistan, and Syria.

In their worldwide case study about the operation of monumentality in low-occupation-density settlements in prehistory, Kirrily White and Rachael Lane discuss the way in which these monuments can be formed by being part of a larger area or a system. In their opinion, monumental objects were not only single points of interest, but were able to expand to regional space and thus stabilize regional populations by connecting these stable points into a larger network of memory, ordering the settlement and cultural territories across a wider landscape. This study is insofar interesting, as rather than discussing individual structures it focuses on how such structures interrelate in a broader system in the wider landscape.

Pascal Butterlin, on the other hand, focuses his study on the Massif Rouge, a multi-phased high terrace in Mari/Syria and the comparison to other Early Dynastic high terraces. In his study, Butterlin suggests that the Massif Rouge is a very particular case, as although it seems to follow the general scheme of sizes at least in the beginning, it does not follow the invention of second storeys like comparable terraces in southern Mesopotamia. He concludes that the development of local building traditions is rooted in local religious topographies, so to say in a form of local monumentality.

Laura Cousin takes a look at the magnificent city of Babylon of the 1st millennium BCE, where she not only considers monumental architecture but also textual evidence describing its monumentality. She argues that Babylon's architecture shows colossal buildings, but its monumentality also stems from the symbolic meaning connected to them. This symbolic meaning is part of the monumentality of ancient Babylon and is clearly expressed by the inscriptions about the city even before its bloom in the 1st millennium BCE.

Catharine Hof takes the cistern of Resefa in Syria – without question a large-scale technological system – as the focus of monumental research. Her research sheds light on the intention of the construction, the building process, and its

impact on society. The assignment of monumentality to this structure, although it is almost invisible, is based on its purpose: to win clean water under the most unfavorable circumstances.

Marcello Mogetta's analysis of Cosa focuses primarily on two structures: the Forum and the so-called Capitolium. Three aspects are brought to the fore – construction materials and labor, chronological sequence, and questions relating to identity. Mogetta uses Cosa as an example showing how innovation in construction practices was not centered on Rome, but could also originate in provincial towns. A discussion relating to identity highlights the arrival of a group of colonists who noticeably alter the needs and construction abilities of the community.

Mónica Pacheco Silva examines Oaxaca in the heartland of Mesoamerica and draws a picture of an area without big architecture but with a completely reworked landscape, which she argues is a truly monumental endeavor. She points out, "[...] urbanized society does not necessarily express itself in monumental architectonics [...]" and underscores the important role of the natural environment and its own monumentality.

Sebastian Hageneuer and Sophie Schmidt investigate the energetic cost of buildings in ancient Uruk and Habuba Kabira, examining the volume of the structures as well as the effort required for their construction. Such an analysis needs to include not only the volumes themselves, but also to consider the diverse materials employed. In order to include the diverse costs of the different materials used, the authors use weighted factors for different material classes. Through this juxtaposition of diverse structures and their material components, their aim is to discover a definition of monumentality.

Jeremy Smoak and Alice Mandell tackle a different kind of monumentality in their chapter as they explore the monumentality of inscriptions in Jerusalem's urban spaces and thereby also texts themselves. They argue that considering inscriptions and texts as monumentality exceeds mere typology and style and is more about the function and "communicative power of the text". Texts and inscriptions respectively convey, they argue, memories of "more distant generations within a larger political or social narrative" than architecture, and thereby become part of the cultural memory.