

DEFINING ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION PROJECT BOUNDARIES; LESSONS FROM FOUR EXAMPLES

John H. Stubbs / USA

Vice President for Field Projects ,World Monuments Fund

Properly defining the physical scope of an architectural conservation project at complex heritage sites is crucial to both accomplishing the desired task and launching additional conservation measures. The question mainly falls under the topic of strategies for implementation within the conservation master planning process.

At large scale historic architectural resources such as palaces, monasteries, parks, and urban enclaves the usual concerns of defining significance, condition, and urgency serve as the factual basis for determining possibilities for contemporary use and interpretation. However, yet more must be taken into consideration when large, multi-year projects are undertaken for which complete funding may be uncertain. Answers to such challenges are usually found in the wise selection of projects in the first place, the careful determination of a project's proper *curtilage* (the physical envelope which surrounds a project), and detailed conservation planning where implementation phases are clear and manageable. The successful execution of thoughtfully scoped and timed project development phases can lead to additional support, useful expansion upon original project scopes, and further accomplishments.

Lessons from artfully scoped conservation projects of different types will be examined in the examples of the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe in Spain, Lednice-Valtice Castles and Cultural Landscape in the Czech Republic, the Brancusi Endless Column Ensemble in Romania, and Prasat Phnom Bakheng at Angkor, Cambodia, all of which are national heritage sites and/or UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The Cloister of the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe, Extremadura, Spain

Dating from the 14th century the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe in western Spain played a significant role in both the social and architectural history of the country. In parts of the sprawling complex are found the now rarely seen Moorish influence in Spanish architecture called the Mudejar style. The most historically and artistically

significant of four courtyards within the monastery—called the Mudejar Cloister—consists of a square-shaped courtyard which frames a Moorish style garden in the middle of which is special building, the *templete* (small temple), which it is key building in Spanish architectural history.

In 1990 a partnership between the Ministry of Culture of Spain and the World Monuments Fund to restore and feature the templete structure in time for the quincentennial of the discovery of the New World in 1492. (It is believed that it is from this Royal Monastery that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued their final approval of financial support for Christopher Columbus's first voyage to America.) This restoration scheme was aimed at being a symbolic gesture of friendship between Spain and the United States, as well as a salute to Spain's role in the discovery of the New World.

The task that fell to architectural conservation professionals working on the project was to determine both the proper scope of the project, within a budget of US\$ 1million dollars; and the proper techniques for conserving the stucco, masonry and ceramic tile used in the construction of the templete structure. With this charge the material conservators carried out all kinds of materials analyses ranging from microscopic examinations of lime mixtures, tile firing techniques, and biodeterioration affecting the fabric of the templete structure, and had completed their research when architects and planners with a different set of objectives stated that to long term conservation of the structure will depend on replacing its present overgrown garden with something that resembled its original garden setting. The elevation of the modern garden surrounding the templete had risen though debris accumulation over the years to 1.2 meters above its elevation in the 1400's, with there now being water supply and drainage problems, and a harmful new micro-climate that was negatively affecting historic fabric.

Thus, after commencing the project the scope of the architectural conservation project for the templete was enlarged to include its garden setting. As this revision was being reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Culture, it

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was proposed as well that the optimum conservation project, from a practical standpoint, should also include the walls of the cloister that enclose both the temple and its surrounding garden. As a result the *project limit line* was extended to include the architectural envelope that contained the temple structure and its green context. The expanded project in this case was determined not only by the physical boundaries of the courtyard restoration project with construction logistics in mind, but *more importantly by what the eye takes in of the entire ensemble from key viewing positions.*

While the scope of the temple restoration project grew from the restoration of a single building to include the entire artistic conception of the cloister that enframed it, the effort proved worthwhile. Since landscape and water features of the garden were now in the scope of work whole new aesthetic concerns came to light that must have been the concerns of its original builders. Of course, the project became more expensive and called for the assistance of additional specialists such as archaeologists, historic landscape architects, landscape historians and the like, but in the end it proved to be the most appropriate approach, i.e. the one that should have been used in the first place.

A key lesson learned here in the scoping of conservation projects for such an architectural ensemble was the importance of determining project limit lines with respect to the likely intentions of the original designer or builder. Another lesson learned was to remain flexible on matters of project scoping though the conservation planning process.

As a footnote here, it is worth noting the a kind of synergy developed during the development of this project which led to more restoration elsewhere in the complex, and the listing of the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

The Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, Southern Moravia, Czech Republic

In 1991 an institution called the Valtice Music Festival sought the assistance of the Ministry of Culture of Czechoslovakia and the World Monuments Fund in restoring parts of a large 15th-19th century castle complex called Valtice Zamek in southern Moravia as home to the Valtice Music Festival. After success in fundraising, the institutions followed the advice of conservation planners and conducted a specialized workshop, called a *charrette*, to

determine physical scopes, priorities, and ways and means for conserving whole parts of the large Valtice Castle and grounds.

Our inquiry soon revealed Valtice to be but one key element within a vast and intricately planned estate created the influential Lichtenstein family based in Vienna, Austria. Surprising as it may seem this significant history had been obfuscated by the tumultuous history of the region since World War I. Even the leaders of the Valtice Music Festival were unaware of the role of Valtice within the Lichtenstein property estate that had developed steadily since the early 1600's to a size of over 80 square kilometers.

During the project research and preliminary planning process it was the landscape architects and historians who first realized the extent of the original estate, and who brought to the attention of the others that Valtice not only had a sister zamek called Lednice, which was even more important, but that both castles were in the midst of a vast planned agricultural reserve, that fortunately was well preserved. Through research other features were discovered such as an elaborate systems of roadways and trails, vistas, and a system of some eighteen magnificent garden follies.

So a seemingly simple inquiry into the restoration and presentation of an individual castle and grounds grew during the process of research to include restoration planning for an additional castle, the vast gardens and agricultural lands that surrounded them, plus its remarkable system of architectural follies that punctuated the landscape. As good fortune would have it, the original conservation planning team for Valtice zamek included the noted cultural landscape specialist, Dr. Mechteld Roessler, from the World Heritage Centre in Paris. Dr. Roessler and others saw early on that the Valtice-Lednice Cultural Landscape was eligible for nomination to the World Heritage List.

The general documentation and the scoping of the conservation challenges faced at Valtice-Lednice served to satisfy many of the submission requirements for nomination to the World Heritage List. As a result Valtice-Lednice was inscribed as a World Heritage site within two years. Funding to the project via a variety of sources has grown from a trickle of practically nothing in the early 90's to nearly US\$ one million per year through public, corporate and private contributions plus ticket and gift shop revenues. Positive change has occurred on other levels as well with the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic and capable local administrators continuing with impressive restoration and

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museum activities at Lednice-Valtice.

Lessons learned here include: *the power of pilot projects, the importance of maintaining an open mind to addressing issues which relate to the topic at hand, flexibility in approach, and the merits of 'thinking big' and 'thinking small' at the same time.*

The Brancusi Endless Column Ensemble, Western Romania

The following is an example of conserving what is at once a work of art, a work of architecture, a work of engineering, and what survived of a carefully conceived landscape setting dating from the recent past. In 1932 the famous modernist sculptor Constantin Brancusi constructed the Endless Column complex in his hometown of Targu Jiu in western Romania as a war memorial. It consisted of three principle elements, a 30-meter tall steel and cast iron work of sculpture with a bronze finish that he called the Column of Infinity, and two travertine monuments, all aligned along a one-kilometer axial way rising from a local river to a hilltop where the Column was placed.

Despite its relative youth as an artistic and architectural creation, the Endless Column ensemble suffered serious neglect from 1945 through the early 1980's. The column structure rusted, and the axial park that contained all three structures was intruded upon along its edges and a train track bisected the site. An effort to restore the complex began in the early 90's and the whole project was completed only recently.

Here there was little doubt of defining the correct *curtilage*, or proper physical boundaries of the project, since this work of public art existed on recognized municipal property. The conservation plan for the ensemble called for starting with the most urgent challenge—the deteriorating Column. Afterwards the project development team addressed the two other stone monuments, and finally the landscape that served as its context. As such the conservation project, another international public-private partnership, took seven years to mobilize, fund and implement, this time with high profile participation from the World Bank.

There were many challenges faced and lessons from this project, which time will not permit me to go into here, but *a main lesson was the issue of dealing with the interface areas between the protected heritage site, and its immediate*

environs. Non-descript public housing had been subsequently erected at the borders of the high park that contained the Endless Column, and during the restoration process, there were local proposals for yet more insensitively designed buildings in the immediate environs of the ensemble, mainly for the purpose of exploiting the views of the ensemble and capitalizing with commercial venues.

There was one vacant parcel of land located to the northwest of the high park, that should have obviously be secured for use other than a possible new high rise construction. One of the proponents of the project, with the approval of Romanian government officials and the projects foreign funders, purchased the parcel for the purpose of erecting a discretely designed interpretive center.

Through the course of conserving the Brancusi Ensemble there developed a higher appreciation of the original boundaries of the site, the great artist's design intentions, and the role of vistas both to and from the Endless Column. As such the protection of some of the sites remaining vistas, are being addressed in ways that are more sensitive than might have occurred otherwise. Here, in effect the site's legal curtilage has been expanded over the issue of vistas, for the betterment of the overall project.

Phnom Bakheng, Historic City of Angkor, Cambodia

The 10th century temple mountain conception of Prasat Phnom Bakheng located near the temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia figures large in Angkor's 500-year evolution as an urban form. The state temple of Phnom Bakheng was placed atop a natural *phnom*, or hill, by reshaping natural forms and constructing terraces at its highest point. At an intermediate terrace level below are the remains of additional sacred structures, and at ground level in every direction from at the foot of the hill with a series was King Yasovarman's royal city.

In December 2004 at the invitation of the APSARA Authority which has purview over the Angkor archaeological park, the World Monuments Fund began a project identification and master planning effort which will conclude in January 2006. The first international mission to the site began to address the usual issues of site history, significance, and Phnom Bakheng's conservation and interpretation challenges. For planning purposes at such a large historic resource, the physical parameters of the site

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were conceptually ‘zoned’. The high platform of the temple, which today is a particularly popular tourist destination, was termed Zone 1; the large plateau that served as a lower sacred precinct was termed Zone 2; the steep slopes of the hill that were with steps and sculptural adornments was termed Zone 3; and the flat area at the base of the Phnom running out to the borders of the 16 square kilometer ancient city was termed Zone 4.

The terms of agreement for architectural conservation work at Phnom Bakheng was keyed to this physical zoning—i.e. the determination of project limit lines. All four zones, however, are considered within the purview of the site interpretation specialists, whose task it is to effectively present the character-defining historical and architectural elements of the 1100 year old complex, including its sophisticated original design, changes to the site over time, and even the historiography of modern scholarship at the site.

The four conceptual zones that define former ancient city of Yashodharapura with Phnom Bakheng at its center serve as project limit lines for heritage conservation planning, implementation, and interpretation purposes. Within this system the farther one goes from Zone 1, the greater the scale of physical involvement, and need for the participation of other professional disciplines. Zone 1 conservation issues involve conservation architects and engineers concerned with structural stabilization and conservators who are addressing the conservation of Bakheng-style bas reliefs. Zones 2 and 3 rely heavily on the input of landscape architects and vegetation management specialists. Zone 4, the access area to the monument and beyond, necessarily involves those in charge of park roads, tourism facilities, parking areas, local inhabitants, and the like.

While the whole of Phnom Bakheng and its hinterland is protected within the vast designated park that comprises Angkor World Heritage Site, within that whole, for architectural conservation implementation and interpretation purposes project limit lines which consider specialist interests, physical practicalities and availability of conservation funding must be made. As such, a three-year initial conservation program is underway that is designed to generate conservation funding as the project proceeds. Though only the finalized Master Plan can determine completion date for an optimum conservation project here, it is estimated at this time that the effective long-term conservation work at Phnom Bakheng may take between 6 and 8 years to complete.

One could view the definition of architectural conservation project boundaries, as distinct from legal curtilages and the determination of heritage site boundaries, as an exercise in temporary, or even arbitrary, planning but such conceptualization of sensible conservation project boundaries seems unavoidable for large-scale architectural conservation projects in today’s world of heritage conservation practice.

Abstract

Properly defining the physical scope of an architectural conservation project at complex heritage sites is crucial to both accomplishing the desired task and launching additional conservation measures. The question mainly falls under the topic of strategies for implementation in the conservation master planning process.

In large scale historic architectural resources such as palaces, monasteries, parks, and urban enclaves the usual concerns of condition, urgency, and significance serve as the factual basis for decisions about contemporary use and interpretation and where to begin. Yet more must be taken into consideration when large, multi-year projects are undertaken for which complete funding may be uncertain. The answer to this dilemma lies in strategic project selection and the careful scoping of projects in manageable but impressive phases. The successful execution of such phases can lead to expansion, additional support, and even larger accomplishments.

Lessons from artfully scoped conservation projects of different types will be examined in WMF’s experiences at the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe (Extremadura, Spain), Lednice-Valtice Castles and Cultural Landscape (Czech Republic), the Brancusi Endless Column Ensemble (Romania), and Prasat Phnom Bakheng (Angkor, Cambodia).

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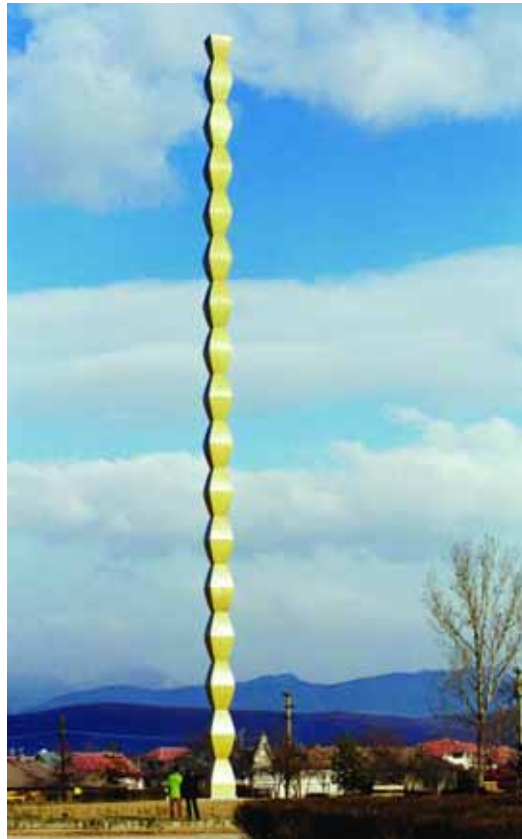


Illus. 1. The scope of restoration work in the 14th century Mudéjar Cloister of the Royal Monastery of Guadalupe (Spain) began with the *templete* structure and was enlarged to include restoration of its surrounding garden, and cloister facades that enframe the ensemble.



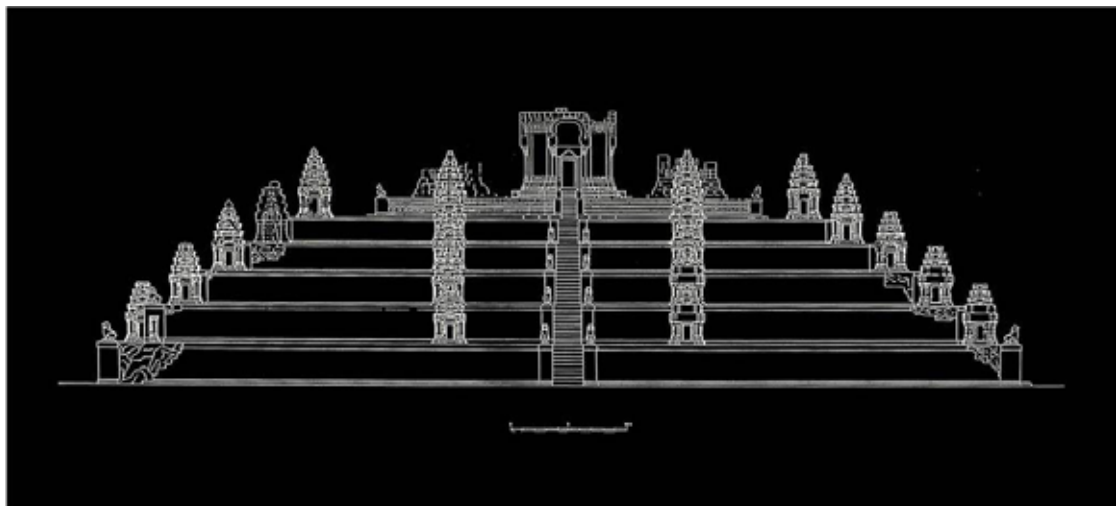
Illus. 2 Valtice Castle in southern Moravia (Czech Republic) proved to be the just first item of attention in the determination of a cultural resource that included and even bigger castle (Lednice), eighteen sizable picturesque landscape follies, all within a 160 square kilometer cultural landscape. One result was the listing of Lednice-Valtice as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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Illustrations 3 & 4. The Brancusi Endless Column Ensemble in western Romania entailed conservation projects, each within having its own project limit lines, but all within the site's legal *curtilege*. Beyond the border of the site in one area, a scenic vista was protected while providing site interpretation.

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Illustrations 5 & 6. Phnom Bakheng at the Angkor in Cambodia for project has conceptually divided into four discrete zones for conservation planning, implementation and interpretation purposes. Each reflects approval and fundraising realities and related practicalities.