

# **Scaling Angkor: Perceptions of Scale in the Interpretation and Management of Cultural Heritage**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Increasing interest in the creation of heritage places and the protection of cultural landscapes has seen a shift within cultural heritage management. A movement away from the conservation of isolated objects and monuments is indicative of a broader transition within cultural heritage management towards perceiving and understanding heritage as inextricably linked to its wider spatial and temporal context. The recognition and inclusion of associative values has seen expansion, spatially, of the influences of heritage protection and management. Heritage sites can no longer be considered in isolation from their settings. Although considerable attention has been given to the impacts of modern development on heritage areas, there has been little research into the implications that heritage management practices have for areas surrounding heritage sites. This thesis investigates the nature of the relationship between heritage sites and their surrounding areas, by exploring the implications of an expanding spatial definition of heritage. The study is grounded in a theoretical approach that examines the social and political construction of scale. Such theories have been applied to the analysis of economic and political activities, and this research demonstrates that culture and heritage management are also scaled processes. The research investigates how scale is socially and culturally constructed within the discourse of cultural heritage management by different stakeholders. In particular, it attempts to understand how the boundaries between the 'significant' and the 'insignificant' are continually recreated in the process of cultural heritage interpretation and management.

As the site of UNESCO's first cultural heritage zoning plan, the Angkor World Heritage Area (Cambodia) provides a unique opportunity to explore the scaling of heritage spaces. Over the past 20 years, there has been a refocusing within management discourse from the protection of heritage monuments, to the creation of a heritage place, and lastly a growing desire to ensure the conservation of a vast cultural landscape. As with most World Heritage sites there are a multitude of stakeholders at Angkor, including local residents, domestic and international tourists, Cambodian and foreign heritage professionals and governments. Despite the presence of these diverse and potentially conflicting perspectives, there is

limited knowledge of the multiple understandings of heritage and non-heritage space. This research utilises interviews, discourse and textual analysis of archival documents, and detailed field observation, integrated through spatial analysis to explore the spatial influences, impacts and perceptions of cultural heritage management, and to encourage a more inclusive representation of Angkor and its surrounds.

The study confirms that heritage spaces are scaled with distinct hierarchies, extents and relationships, and different understandings of these scales have spatial and physical consequences. The international community perceive heritage spaces within at least two scales: the scale of heritage and the scale of non-heritage. The scale of heritage serves as a monumental space reminding visitors of past glories. Angkor feeds the development of the surrounding area, the scale of non-heritage, but that same development must be controlled to protect those areas which are valued. The scale of heritage is expanding and transforming, creating further levels of significance and imposing more restrictions on the areas surrounding the heritage site. In contrast residents of the landscape that surrounds Angkor have a more complex perception of the relationship between modern and historical spaces. Different scales of heritage are created, and assigned economic and social roles. Whilst, Angkor is the economic and social centre of the community, there is a mutual relationship between the scales of heritage. The Cambodian government and heritage professionals seek to balance global, national and local interests. For the Cambodian government, Angkor has increasingly become a scale and space disconnected from its surrounds, but exploitable for success in the modern world. In contrast, Cambodian heritage professionals must balance professional and personal interests. It is this latter stakeholder who illustrates most effectively the manner in which scales of heritage are socially constructed. The management of cultural heritage is a spatial process concerned with levels of valued space that have different preservation and management controls. Conflict may result from management plans that emphasise particular understandings of heritage to the detriment of other perceptions. Understanding the ways in which heritage scales are constructed for political and social purposes allows these multiple perceptions to be incorporated in management.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information only and duly acknowledged. No material previously published or written by another person has been used in this thesis without due acknowledgement, or does this thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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Rowena Butland

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Date

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Some parts of this thesis are either published or in the process of being published. Where there is more than one author, the thesis contains only the portions of these works that were written by the author of this thesis. The following list indicates the components of the thesis that are either published or in the process of being published.

Aspects of the methods and results are reported in:

Butland, R. (2005) *Peripheral Vision: Implications of Spatial Contextualisation for Communities Surrounding Heritage Sites*. Historic Environment, v.19, no.1, Dec 2005: 30-35

Aspects of the theoretical material and results are also presented in the forthcoming paper:

Butland, R. (in Press) *In the Footsteps of the Past. The Role of Recent Memory in the Interpretation of the Angkor World Heritage Area*. Chapter In Heritage in the making: reflecting on and practicing the spirit of place. To be published by the University of Laval and ICOMOS in late 2009

## **ETHICS APPROVAL**

Approval for the research undertaken for this thesis, particularly primary data collection through interviews with members of the Angkor-Siem Reap community and APSARA Authority, was obtained through The University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee (valid: 2004-2009). All data collected as part of this project is being kept in accordance with the requirements of this approval.

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