Shaping Moral Landscapes
Comparing the regulation of public memorials in democratic capitals

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The planning and regulation of public memorials in a capital city significantly shape the representation of a nation’s identity and values, lending it both historical and conceptual grounding. The processes through which commemorative planning for a capital is conducted also reflect a nation’s democratic traditions. In autocratic nations, urban plans are decided and built by a central authority to serve and reflect its specific beliefs and interests. But in multi-party democracies with active civil societies, the development of capitals’ commemorative landscapes is much more complex. Memorials in democratic capitals are often not initiated, funded or designed by the government itself. These commemorative landscapes develop through negotiation between political parties, social movements, interest groups, subject experts, and individual mourners. This paper provides a comparative analysis of national and local government planning approaches that have guided the development of public memorials in a structured sample of four types of capital cities: capitals that have long, pre-democratic histories of physical development; new, masterplanned post-colonial capitals in the New World; ‘international’ capitals that host major international political organisations; and capitals of countries where democratic government has only emerged in the last 25 years from a range of kinds of pre-democratic regimes (dictatorship, communism, apartheid). It is hypothesized that these different polities employ quite different strategic, procurement and regulatory processes for public memorials. The paper’s methodology centres on analysis of policy documents from relevant agencies, including special-purpose strategic plans, policies that establish approval authority and criteria, and codified decision-making processes for approvals, as well as examination of key commemorative precincts and individual cases, and interviews with planning officials. The paper considers the relative prominence of various commemorated themes, the ways strategic plans and policies guide the location, form and theme of individual memorials, and how commemorative masterplanning relates to the cities’ wider spatial planning needs.
Many millions in public and private funding are spent each year on planning, designing and constructing public memorials in national capital cities. Such memorials are prominent, long-lasting investments in national and local identity and collective memory. The planning and regulation of ‘national’ memorials significantly shapes the representation of a nation, lending it both historical and conceptual grounding (Vale 2008, Halbwachs 1992, Huyssen 1994, Nora 1989). In autocratic nations, memorials are decided and built by a central authority to serve and reflect its specific beliefs and interests. But in democracies with multiple parties and active civil societies, the development of capitals’ commemorative landscapes is much more complex. Memorials in democratic capitals are often not initiated, funded or designed by the government itself. These commemorative landscapes develop through negotiation between numerous stakeholders, including political parties, social movements, interest groups, subject experts, and individual mourners. Such processes reflect and contribute to a nation’s democratic traditions. In recent decades, national imaginaries in many democracies have been reshaped by increasing numbers of public memorial proposals that come from a broader diversity of constituencies, serve a wider range of purposes, and have more varied subject matter. As societies seek to commemorate an expanding range of subjects, and negative, socially conflictual memories as well as positive, unifying ones, decision-making processes for memorial planning present opportunities to ‘work through’ difficult issues of social difference, injustice and responsibility.

There is very often public dissatisfaction with the forms, meanings and locations of new public memorials, and with insufficient transparency and opportunities for participation in processes of memorial procurement and regulation. In practice, the regulation of public memorials remains contentious and difficult; planning processes may exacerbate society’s conflicts over identity and history and their representation, rather than resolve them. Problems in delivering broadly-acceptable outcomes suggest the need for a comprehensive examination of the planning processes that have been used and are currently used for public memorials. Such an investigation is particularly timely now as many democratic capitals overhaul their national policies for memorials (NCC 2006, NCPC 2006). Australia has recently had several formal parliamentary inquiries into the regulation of public memorials in Canberra (JSC 2011, 2009, 2004). Understanding the historical development of various capital cities’ memorial landscapes has very practical relevance for national government policy and its administering agencies, as well as the design, planning and art professions, allowing them to understand how different planning and management objectives and approaches shape intangible values linked to collective identity, emotion, and memory.

**Methodology**

This paper provides an international comparative analysis of formal policies, plans and regulatory decisions for public memorials in a range of national capital cities. It explores how strategic plans and policies prefigure the location, form and theme of individual memorials, what kinds of regulations and opportunities shape memorial outcomes, and how commemorative master planning relates to the cities’ wider spatial planning. This approach is informed by the limited existing research into the planning and regulation of capital cities’ memorial landscapes, including individual city case histories by Savage (2009), Bogart (2006), Rosenfeld (2000), Dovey (2001) and Dovey and Permanasari (2009). Burling (2005) provides a unique comparative study of memorial planning...
policies, although it is limited to Washington and two US state capitals and on policy documents, without discussing actual built memorial outcomes.

This paper’s analysis of planning documents is augmented by interviews with planning officials, and examination of how policy frameworks have been applied in the development of key commemorative precincts and individual memorial cases, based on case files, site inspections, and existing published critiques. Planning for memorials embraces both the management of past construction (planning as regulation) and proposals for future commemorative development (planning as visioning). The paper explores how different sponsoring groups have fared with erecting memorials and the relative prominence of various commemorative themes within each city, and seeks to identify where policies and their administration have led to innovative outcomes.

The selected capital cities (Table 1) embrace four distinct contexts: ‘evolved’ national capitals with long histories of physical development and complex urban functions (Vale 2008); new-world capitals master planned as showpieces of post-colonial democratic states; capitals of modern nation-states which only became democratic within the last 25 years; and ‘international’ capitals, which Hall (2006) calls ‘super capitals’, that host two major international political organizations, the UN and the EU. This also functions as a control group: two of these cases are not national capitals. They nevertheless have significant roles in shaping and displaying cultural identity at different geopolitical scales. As Hall notes, definitions and categorisations of capitals overlap, particularly because of historical changes in the power and role of particular cities and nations, but in this study, the cases have been selected, analysed and compared to focus on how the ‘capital-like’ function of national commemoration differs across the four key categories. The sample within each category provides a breadth of contexts, embracing cities that originated and grew in different historical eras; varied cultural, geographic and climatic contexts; and democracies that have emerged in the last 25 years from a range of kinds of pre-democratic regimes, including military dictatorship, communism, and apartheid. The sample thus explores how cities and polities with differing pluralism, stability, and history have employed different planning processes for public memorials, and what different outcomes these have produced.

The selected cases are reasonably high on the Democracy Index (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012), both because it confirms that memorials in these nations’ capitals might reflect broad national histories and interests, rather than those of a ruling class, and also as a proxy for knowing which countries might actually have open public discussion about the planning of national memorials. Only the top 25 countries in the Democracy Index are rated fully democratic. Capitals of eight of these are among the selected cases. The nations listed from 26 to 79 are ‘flawed democracies’. City cases have also been selected on the basis of having a sufficient number of large, recent memorials in urban settings which thus required planning decisions.

Although the study is ongoing, data has been compiled for seven of the 12 cases: Berlin, London, Canberra, Ottawa, Washington, Budapest, and New York. These seven cities cover all four analytical categories and span both extremes of the sample’s range of democratic rankings, from 6 to 49. The three completed studies of master planned capitals also allow an in-depth comparison within that category. These three cases are particularly useful because their plans have been self-consciously created and managed by national governments as diagrams which represent myths of national identity, values and history; they thus have particularly detailed plans for national commemoration.
A preliminary analysis of the data from these seven cases thus gives a useful indication of the scope of memorial planning issues and solutions that might be revealed by the entire sample, and suggests further questions, both of which can be fed back into refining the remaining data collection and analysis. This paper reports on preliminary findings from these seven cases.

Table 1: Selected cases of local government regulatory frameworks for major national memorials, showing Democracy Index ranking (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evolved capitals</th>
<th>Master planned democratic capitals</th>
<th>Newly democratic capitals</th>
<th>‘International’ capitals</th>
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<td>Berlin (14)</td>
<td>Canberra (6)</td>
<td>Seoul (20)</td>
<td>Geneva (7)</td>
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<td>Rome (32)</td>
<td>Washington (21)</td>
<td>Budapest (49)</td>
<td>Brussels (24)</td>
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**Memorial forms and sites**

Although new public memorials are still often statues, there has been a significant diversification of forms since the 1980s (Doss 2010). New World capitals and imperial European capitals destroyed by war tend to have ample space for experimentation. Recent memorials are often wider and lower than traditional statues, forming enclosed settings (Savage 2009). The large area of many memorials to large-scale events reflects desires to see each individual person separately commemorated, and for such memorials to make major political statements.

Public memorials occupy a range of kinds of urban locations. Many memorials are located in public open spaces, ranging from minor neighbourhood foci to very central urban locations and from open green parks to tight hardscape plazas. The placement of memorial on major plazas and streets often attempts to harness the visual power of a city’s existing constellations of memorials. Memorials are also often squeezed onto unused, inaccessible traffic islands, as with Canada’s Peacekeeping Monument, New York’s Angels’ Circle and London’s Hyde Park Corner, and several medians on London’s Whitehall. Larger spatial memorials are often placed within public parks, where their designs may be required to contribute to wider open space amenity.

In cities that are not master planned for national identity, memorials sometimes arise on sites that have been cleared and opened up for new uses. In New York, a former African burial ground was discovered when a new federal government office building was being built, and the site’s developer agreed to modify the construction plans to accommodate a memorial. This category includes sites cleared by unexpected large-scale destruction, such as the area destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666, where The Monument was erected in 1677, New York’s National September 11 Memorial, and Washington’s Pentagon Memorial. These latter cases show that even New World capitals have important historical sites which become memorialised.
In capital cities with long, eventful histories, memorials very often have meaningful, historical links to particular spaces or to institutions near them. In Berlin, the memorial underneath Bebelplatz (1995) remembers the Nazi book burnings that occurred there. Memorials to those who died trying to cross the Berlin Wall during the partitioning are also mostly located on the wall’s former alignment. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (MMJE)(2005), also built in this zone, is a notably unrelated exception. The memorial at Berlin’s Grunewald railway station (1991-98) commemorates its use for deporting Jews during the Holocaust. Many different victims’ groups have sought memorial sites near the Reichstag, both to convey the responsibility of the German parliament, and to ensure high public visibility to their fate. This city’s chequered history means that spatial and historical continuities are not always positive or desirable. The proposed National Monument to Freedom and Unity has been criticised for its siting on the pedestal of a former ‘national memorial’ to Kaiser Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany’s First Reich (AKM 2007). In many capitals, public memorials are sited at airports, railway stations and ferry terminals to remember events specifically related to those sites, because disasters, attacks and rescues often occur at such places. Opportunities to install permanent public memorials in large, old, densely-developed cities depend on the resources and interests of sites’ owners. It is difficult to install a substantial memorial at the site of the 1911 fire at New York’s Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, which killed 143 workers, because a privately-owned building still stands there.

Managing memorial space

As history continues to unfold, the total number of memorials in capital cities is increasing, particularly in inner areas. Most choice sites are already taken (Cuthbertson 2012, Kempf 2011). Nevertheless, desires for prominence and meaningful links tend to further concentrate memorials, intensifying meanings and conflicts. Additionally, old memorials are not removed as quickly as new ones are installed. The growing number of memorials since Berlin’s and Germany’s reunification in 1990 has raised the spectre of an ‘inflation of memory’, where each individual memorial and the events they commemorate begin to lose their impact (Bornhöft 2007). Providing adequate space for future memorials in inner-urban locations is also made more difficult by the expansiveness of many contemporary spatial memorials. The three master planned capitals analysed have the greatest need and scope for tackling such problems.

One typical response is to manage demand. In many capitals, memorials can only be erected 10 or 25 years after the commemorated event. Memorials that duplicate themes already commemorated are also generally refused. The United States’ Commemorative Works Act (CWA) slows down the production of new Washington memorials by requiring a 24-stage approvals process (Watkins 2008). The planned capitals, Washington, Canberra and Ottawa, all have clear criteria for what counts as a ‘significant’, ‘national’ memorial, and what does not. Capital planners strongly resist any new memorials in their most hallowed, representative central sites, such as London’s Trafalgar Square and Budapest’s Kossuth Square. The amended CWA of 2003 placed a moratorium on new memorials in the central section of Washington’s Mall. In London, the City of Westminster also generally excludes new memorials from its ‘Saturation Zone’ embracing Whitehall, St James and Aldwych (Westminster ND). Ottawa’s Parliament Hill has a separate approvals process, and historically remained restricted to commemorating monarchs and statesmen, although its scope was deliberately broadened by the Suffragette memorial Women are Persons (2000). Washington’s and
Ottawa’s memorial plans establish hierarchies among available public sites, according to their size and prominence, and criteria for defining worthy subjects (NCPC 2002, NCC 2006). Canberra’s guidelines zone 17 distinct areas, to distribute particular commemorative subjects (NCA 2002). Memorials to foreign persons and events, often unrelated to Australia’s own history, are restricted to areas near the relevant embassies. Washington’s planners direct the frequent memorial ‘gifts’ from foreign nations to sites along Massachusetts Avenue - ‘Embassy Row’ – where 27 memorials currently stand. Planning agencies also encourage sponsors to host memorials they have proposed on their own land (Kempf 2011).

Containing demand for remembrance only has limited effectiveness. Contemporary societies appear obsessed with memory and public expression (Doss 2010). Planning thus also seeks to proactively augment the supply of suitable memorial sites. The network of wide axial streets in L’Enfant’s 1791 Washington plan sought to disperse future memorials across a wide area (Savage 2009, Reps 1967). Modern, planned capitals like Washington and Canberra have been able to continue to accommodate future commemorations. They have the advantages of expansive streets, many generous, prominent open spaces, and federal management agencies which can resist economic development pressures and other local interests. Washington’s Lincoln and Jefferson memorials were built on waterfront landfill, following the 1901 McMillan Plan. The recent boom in Washington memorial building began with the 1973 demolition of ‘temporary’ Army offices on the northwest Mall and the creation of Constitution Gardens, subsequently occupied by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Savage 2009). Washington’s Memorials and Museums Masterplan (NCPC 2006) identifies 100 prime sites for future memorials throughout the city, and promotes reserving the best twenty for the most significant commemorations. Canberra developed its main central war memorial precinct, Anzac Parade, in 1965, and only 25 years later it was effectively full. Several new ‘niches’ have been added along it, but other new commemorative precincts have also been developed. The grounds of the Australian War Memorial, a large museum and archive terminating Anzac Parade, accommodate 14 less-significant war memorials. Lakefront parklands at Anzac Parade’s other end accommodate quasi-military memorials to the police and emergency services. The Australian-American Memorial (1954) initiated a third precinct as the centerpiece of the Russell Offices, Australia’s Pentagon. One lakeside park accommodates the few memorials commemorating Canberra’s own 100-year history. In Ottawa, formerly an industrial town on a gridiron plan, space has been created for memorials by clearing obsolete industrial buildings around the riverfront. Many of Ottawa’s recent memorials have been installed along Confederation Boulevard, a looped ceremonial route with two peripheral extensions, which aims to spread economic and commemorative development across the Ottawa River to neighbouring Gatineau, Quebec. This case shows that giving a memorial prominence does not necessarily require placing it on a straight axis.

No major new commemorative axes or precincts have been created in the central areas of Berlin, London, Budapest or New York since World War II, and given increasing demand, finding adequate new spaces is a significant concern for their councils. Sometimes destructive events have created space where those events, or others, can be commemorated, as with the September 11 terrorist attacks and the removal of the Berlin Wall. Berlin’s planners, politicians and citizens are understandably wary of large-scale plans that manipulate national history and identity. Memorials to darker moments of Berlin’s past are often located at sites connected with those events. In many other old capitals, new memorials have continued to be added into existing commemorative
precincts, modifying their meanings and audiences. In London, Waterloo Place (1816) subsequently became a focus for commemorating the Crimean War (1861) and other Victorian luminaries, and in 2010, the commander of the Battle of Britain. Memorials have been built on several narrow traffic medians on nearby Whitehall, including Britain’s national war memorial the Cenotaph (1920) and its recent double, the Monument to the Women of World War II (2005). Parliament Square (1868) has continuously accumulated statues of former UK Prime Ministers, as well as Abraham Lincoln and former South African presidents Jan Smuts and Nelson Mandela. In New York, major plazas at the two southern corners of Central Park were long ago filled by large memorials to explorer Columbus (1892) and Civil War General Sherman (1903). More recent memorials on the two northern corners, in Harlem, commemorate African-American musician Duke Ellington (1997) and statesman and former slave Frederick Douglass (2010). Trafalgar Square (1845), exceptionally, was developed as a set piece, although no statue was ever commissioned for its fourth plinth, now used for temporary art installations (Sumartojo 2012).

Some open spaces have been reorganised to accommodate more memorials and more intensive use. In 1830, Constitution Arch was built on London’s Hyde Park Corner, a major traffic intersection between Green and Hyde Parks. The arch was moved to one side in 1883 to allow road widening. World War I memorials to the Royal Artillery (1925) and Machine Gun Corps (1925) were erected on smaller separate traffic islands. In 1963 these were gathered on the current widened roundabout. Two recently-added memorials commemorate the war sacrifices of Commonwealth allies. Both were designed to help shield out the views, noise and fumes of surrounding traffic. The Australian War Memorial (2003) is a curved perimeter water wall on one corner; the New Zealand War Memorial (2006) stands on an earthen berm diagonally opposite. New York’s Battery Park is a ten-hectare site at Manhattan’s southern tip containing 21 separate memorials, including national memorials to World War II, the Merchant Marine, and the Korean War. To improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation and provide a large open lawn for public events, eleven existing memorials are being re-arranged as nodes along a regular perimeter promenade separated from the park proper by a low wall and cycleway. The memorials will be clustered thematically as ‘Explorers’, ‘Defenders’, and ‘Mariners’ (CNYPR&TBC 2010). Memorials have also expanded on an ad hoc basis into urban green spaces intended for general public recreation. In New York, a large area of landfill created in downtown Manhattan in the 1970s, Battery Park City, provided space for two large landscape memorials, the New York City Police Memorial (1997) and the Irish Hunger Memorial (2002). This area lies outside City council jurisdiction. Such supply of lightly-regulated, unprogrammed open space potentially helps stimulate demand for larger memorials. The undeveloped littoral shorelines of adjacent New Jersey and Staten Island also have several large, recent memorials, particularly those to commuters who perished on September 11, 2001. In London, the Royal Parks, which are not managed by Westminster Council, have recently accommodated numerous new memorials. In Hyde Park these include memorials to Lady Diana (2004) and the 7 July terrorist bombings (2009). These illustrate how relatively rapidly demand often arises to permanently commemorate the deaths of innocent victims. Their Royal Park locations avoided the minimum 10-year delay required under Westminster’s memorial policy.
Military themes and symbolism predominate among the memorials of many national capitals, and there is a relative lack of attention to civil concepts such as democracy and diversity (Fischer 1984, Columbijn 2002, Doss 2008). Memorial planners are keenly aware of this imbalance (Kempf 2011, NCA 2002). Although planning policies tend to prevent any particular theme being commemorated twice, there are memorials to many different wars, battles and military branches and units, military accidents, military service of women and indigenous people, and non-combatants including nurses, merchant seamen, and chaplains. Washington’s National World War II Memorial was unveiled 59 years later, and Canberra is planning a memorial to the South African Boer War (1899-1902), 112 years after that war ended. In recent decades, commemorative frameworks have accentuated the State’s importance to order and safety in peacetime, extending the logic of sacrifice to include quasi- and non-military subjects, by admitting centrally-located memorials to international peacekeepers, police, emergency services workers, aid workers, the coast guard, and soldiers killed fighting domestic insurrections. The most recent war commemorated in this capital city sample is the Vietnam War, which the U.S. and Australia lost. Budapest’s most prevalent memorial theme is Hungary’s two popular uprisings in 1848 and 1956, which were both unsuccessful.

War memorials in capitals do not only remember a nation’s own soldiers. Berlin and Budapest were conquered by Soviet forces at the end of World War II, and several of the largest memorials in both cities commemorate fallen Red Army soldiers and the friendship between the USSR and the socialist states subsequently created in Germany and Hungary. These continue to be maintained under reciprocal agreements. Both capitals have relatively few military memorials to their own nations’ losses in the world wars. In 1951, during the Cold War, West Berlin installed a large memorial to the Berlin Airlift. Canberra’s tallest memorial honours Americans who fought to defend Australia in the Pacific during World War II. Another, standing opposite the Australia War Memorial commemorates Kemal Ataturk, enemy commander at Gallipoli (1985, expanded 2007). This was funded by the Australian government to guarantee the official renaming of Gallipoli’s Anzac Cove. Numerous memorials around London’s Hyde Park Corner commemorate Britain’s Commonwealth allies.

During the Cold War, East Berlin’s socialist government erected large-scale statues of Marx, Engels, and Lenin along a new urban axis, Stalinallee, and Hungary’s socialist government also built statues to Stalin, Lenin and a plethora of local socialist political and cultural heroes (Jordan 2006, Ladd 1998, Fowkes 2002, 2004). Democratic societies appear to build relatively fewer didactic national memorials to great individuals, other than soldiers, politicians and explorers, all of whom are important to the practical and mythological founding and defence of the Nation State itself. The recent Martin Luther King, Jnr Memorial is an exception, which has been criticised for its social realism (Margolin 2012). Commemorative policies for the planned capitals Ottawa and Canberra express desires for an increasing number and range of civic commemorative subjects. Ottawa’s seeks “To better reflect the identity and diversity of Canada and Canadians and encourage new commemorations that address the under-represented themes” (NCC 2006:11). It also specifies particular topics that should be given priority among commemorative proposals, to “ensure a better balance in representing the full Canadian experience”: Aboriginal Peoples, Ethnocultural Communities, Women, and Environment (NCC 2006:13). One minor recognition of the struggles of Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples was that a 1918 statue of a kneeling Native scout, which had been
placed at the base of a large 1915 statue of explorer Samuel de Champlain, founder of New France, was relocated to a nearby park in 1997 after First Nations’ leaders complained it was demeaning (Osborne and Osborne 2004). The 17 areas delineated in Canberra’s commemorative plan for particular memorial subjects include ‘Humanities and Sciences’, ‘Arts and Civics’, and public service (NCA 2002). Washington’s memorial policy, by contrast, emphatically “does not suggest which individuals or historic events are suitable subjects for commemoration” (NCPC 2006:1). All proposed subjects require congressional approval. Only four of Washington’s 150 memorials are specifically to women (Kempf 2011).

Policy aims to broaden the scope of commemorative subjects do not necessarily mean there will necessarily be constituencies or resources to produce any memorials. Canberra’s recent National Workers Memorial (2013) and (impermanent) ‘commemorative artworks’ to the Centenary of Women’s Suffrage (2004) and to “the shared history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians” at Reconciliation Place (2001 onwards) were achieved through direct government funding (DFCSIA&NCA n.d.). Reconciliation Place is rather unique in placing the struggles and successes of Indigenous peoples outdoors on the national stage, and articulating some of the Nation State’s past abuses of power against its Indigenous population. In Washington and Ottawa, such energies were channelled into museums. Reconciliation Place was not, however, driven by politicised Aborigines. In all three of these Canberra examples, the commemorated groups are large but diffuse, and government leadership appears to have strongly shaped the form, location and meanings of the memorials, to tell these histories of otherness in ways that suit the interests of dominant groups.

Many projects commemorating controversial or partisan interests find other, more independent means. Canberra’s Immigration Place, a memorial being built to immigrants’ contributions to Australia’s development, is being funded through public donations. Canberra’s SIEVX memorial, remembering 146 asylum seekers whose boat sank, is a grassroots project constructed through broad-based community involvement. Because both London and New York are very large economic centres with long histories of multicultural immigration, they are homes to diverse, wealthy constituencies who enthusiastically support the representation of their various contributions to local and national history (Bogart 2006). Although contemporary Hungary is, by contrast, ethnically quite homogenous, several small memorials outside Budapest’s main Orthodox church remember the sufferings of Armenian, Ukrainian and Greek Orthodox communities. Numerous memorials have also recently been erected in Budapest marking the fascist genocide of Hungary’s Roma and Jews and remembering numerous ‘righteous gentiles’ who rescued Jews, with significant financial and political support from the diaspora. In 2005, the conservative-right neighbourhood council of Budapest’s District XII facilitated the construction of a memorial to the neighbourhood’s World War II dead, including not just soldiers but civilians killed by fighting or bombing, although the proposal had been rejected by the liberal municipal government. In 2010, the conservative-right national government authorised this memorial post-facto, through legislation devolving the approval process to neighbourhood councils.

One pronounced, widespread shift in commemorative subject matter has been toward so-called ‘victims’ memorials, in contradistinction to heroic monuments (Doss 2010). Since Berlin became the re-unified German capital in 1990, numerous major memorials have been built in the city centre to various victim groups of Nazi persecution. The two-hectare MMJE (2005) lies near the Brandenburg
Gate between the Parliamentary Quarter and the leisure precinct Potsdamer Platz. A memorial to Nazi persecution of homosexuals was installed across the road in 2008, and a memorial to persecuted Sinti and Roma next to the Reichstag in 2012. These examples are on sites unrelated to the national crimes being recognised, and their thematic links to the current seat of government are weak, but their sites were government-owned and provided high visibility to passing tourists. London has recent memorials to Lady Diana (2005), the 2002 Bali bombings (2006) and London’s own bombings on 7 July 2005 (2009). In New York, the National September 11 Memorial (2011) commemorates those who died from the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93 which crashed near Shanksville Pennsylvania. Other significant New York victims’ memorials include the African Burial Ground National Monument (2007), the Irish Hunger Memorial (2002), and a modest fountain commemorating the sinking of the steamboat General Slocum (1906), the city’s second largest civilian tragedy with over 1000 victims. A broad civic coalition is currently seeking to build an on-site memorial to the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. Budapest has a national memorial for traffic accident victims (2005), listing the numbers killed each year since 1972, although not their names. Victims’ memorials are clearly not only built for immediate mourning, but also to teach wider socio-historical lessons.

While a nation’s great deeds are usually commemorated by large memorials on prominent locations, more recent public memorials to negative events often have different forms and require very different kinds of sites. Many victims’ memorials are ‘spatial’, providing a therapeutic, existential place of refuge for mourners (Griswold 1986, Savage 2009). Unlike traditional statues, these large, discrete, enclosed settings do not easily fit within dense urban streetscapes or wider commemorative precincts; they tend to have to sit in isolation in large open spaces. They are also usually thematically at odds with the kinds of overarching, positive narratives of culture, national identity and heroism under which statues of prominent individuals can be gathered. The empty library under Berlin’s Bebelplatz (1995) and the ‘reflected absence’ of the destroyed World Trade Center footprints are ‘anti-memorials’ that use dark, sunken, empty forms to evoke the shapes of things now lost (Sturken 1991, Young 1999, Ware 2004). Canberra’s Reconciliation Place and Washington’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial are ‘counter’ or ‘dialogic’ memorials, created as explicit counterpoints to particular extant, affirmative memorials, in order to contest and modify the official stories that they tell about the past. Being effective in critically recontextualising the meanings of these specific memorials requires obtaining sites in close, visible proximity to them (Wijsenbeek 2010, Stevens et al 2012).

**Power and process**

While capital cities’ commemorative planning helps to rationalize the organized violence of war and government authority, it masks urban planning’s own violence. Washington, Ottawa and Canberra are the capitals of post-colonial states. Reconciliation Place is perhaps the only site in any of these cities that mentions, albeit obliquely, the roots of these states and cities and their spatial regulations in the expropriation of indigenous land rights. While these commemorative landscapes suggest that violence against external enemies is noble and necessary, they mostly ignore the internal struggles of Indigenous populations and other groups (Inglis 2008). National capitals’ memorial planning tools, in particular 25-year delays on commemorating subjects, favour the historical inertia of edifying national narratives, and tend to subjugate ordinary citizens’ desires to have their particular grief and
grievances permanently marked in the landscape. Large projects such as Berlin’s MMJE and Canberra’s Reconciliation Place illustrate that when the State wishes to acknowledge its own role as a perpetrator of past crimes through a memorial, it can ensure that this is done prominently.

The commemorative landscapes of Berlin and Budapest are selective in terms of which pasts are commemorated and which older memorials remain visible. The crimes of Nazism are given considerable attention, and Budapest’s 1956 anti-communist uprising is amply commemorated. But most of East Berlin’s socialist-era memorials have been removed. Hungary’s current government is reconstructing their capital’s key national commemorative space in front of the Parliament, Kossuth Square, including only the memorials that stood there in 1944, before the periods of fascism and socialism. Most of Budapest’s socialist-era memorials have been removed to an educational theme park on the city’s outskirts (Foote et al 2000). The large Stalin statue toppled in the 1956 uprising had ostensibly required the demolition of a church. This site is now filled by a large memorial to the uprising. The current government thus appears to be repeating the socialists’s own earlier erasures of unpalatable aspects of history. But these are only the most obvious cases. London, Washington, and even Canberra have also remodelled their key commemorative precincts and moved numerous existing memorials to less prominent locations. History is not entirely frozen in memorials; their history also develops continuously over time. There are as yet few new memorials in Berlin or Budapest remembering the crimes of socialism or its eventual overturning. Washington has a Victims of Communism Memorial, dedicated in 2007 on the 20th anniversary of President Reagan’s “tear down this wall” speech in Berlin.

In all seven democratic capitals studied, the regulation of themes and sites for individual memorials is distanced from the executive branches of national and municipal governments. Memorial approvals all require majority support from one or more non-partisan bodies - a parliament, a municipal council, or an independent panel of appointed experts – at least in principle. Although anyone can propose a memorial for Budapest, approval processes seem to centre on informal negotiation, which raises questions about transparency and fairness. Planning for commemoration in London is rather decentralised, with sites variously administered by the Borough of Westminster, City of London, Greater London Authority, and Royal Parks. The latter agencies have relatively permissive, inclusive and even experimental attitudes toward commemorative sites, themes and forms. Memorial sponsors can thus ‘shop around’ for amenable regulators. In Budapest, 23 different local councils can now authorise memorials for the capital. Critics have suggested that decisions and planning for Canberra’s public memorials by the National Capital Authority (the administrative agency) and the Canberra National Memorials Committee (the parliamentary decision-making body) sometimes amounted to rubber-stamping particular government leaders’ personal support or opposition for projects (Stephens 2011, JSC 2011, 2009, 2004). Public inquiries have highlighted the need to enhance and broaden public engagement in decision-making processes for Canberra’s commemorative landscape, through such means as public meetings, encouraging online debate, and publishing minutes of meetings. Berlin does not have a masterplan for future memorials. The theme, siting, and design of each new memorial must go through extensive public and parliamentary debate. This process itself aids remembering and reckoning with the past (Spielmann 2005, Young 2010). Germany’s parliamentary policy encourages memorial development to be led by non-governmental agencies, foundations, and citizens’ initiatives (BBKM 2008). This aims to avoid repeating Germany’s history of centralised authority and propaganda.
Memorial approval processes usually follow specific legislation. Some are quite old and general, such as London’s 1854 *Public Statues (Metropolis) Act* and Canberra’s 1928 *National Memorials Ordinance*. Others are quite recent and precise, including Washington’s *Commemorative Works Act* (1986, amended 2003), Germany’s *Updated memorial concept for the Federal Republic* (BBKM 2008) and Budapest’s 2010 *Lex Turul* (Marsovszky 2011). These changes attempt, variously, to ensure consistency in decision-making, to balance the interests of local residents and other ordinary citizens against the empowered views of experts, bureaucrats and elected representatives, and, less frequently, to set specific rules about memorials subjects, sites and designs.

Capital cities’ commemorative landscapes shift slowly, in reflection of changing historical consciousness and values (Young 1992, Till 2005, Bogart 2006, Savage 2009). The caution and conservativism that is typical of most commemorative planning policies belie the fact that many cherished commemorative precincts are actually quite recent, and physically different to earlier incarnations. Canberra’s Anzac Parade dates only from 1965, and the Washington Mall’s main memorials from the 1920s onwards. Many earlier memorials in Berlin and Budapest have been taken down, and some of them later reinstated (Attila 2013). A 1959 statue to Walter Raleigh (1552-1618) was moved from London’s Whitehall as recently as 2001.

**Conclusion**

Central areas in many capitals are saturated with memorials, but all capitals keep accumulating more. Governments make room for commemorative subjects they favour by expanding existing precincts and developing entirely new ones. New memorials also spread, rather unplanned, to sites where commemorated events actually happened and into streets and parks. Older memorials are often removed or moved around, either to change a national narrative or, more pragmatically, to enhance the attractiveness or usefulness of public spaces.

A great many new memorials are to wars; even wars that happened a long time ago and that were lost. Traditional military themes of courage and sacrifice are also extended into the commemoration of peacetime service. Contemporary memorials have increasingly varied subjects and audiences, conveying the achievements of women and ethnic and religious groups, or their victimhood. In some cases commemoration of such subjects serves the government’s shifting understanding of national identity and national interest. In other cases it occurs through the interventions of advocacy groups or local actors, sometimes using ‘grassroots’ means that elude regulatory frameworks. These subjects tend to occupy less prominent sites and have ‘anti-’ or ‘counter-’memorial forms. The increasing diversity of public memorial subjects, audiences and forms requires a rethinking of how they might be regulated.

The extreme decentralisation of responsibility for memorial decision-making in London and Budapest highlights a general finding that ‘capital space’, despite its rhetorical significance, is actually quite limited. Different agencies control different sites, and memorial sponsors can approach different regulators, or erect memorials on private land. German memorial policy encourages third-sector involvement, and elsewhere grassroots groups are increasingly proactive. This shifting field of actors and contexts suggests that in future, commemoration will not be what it used to be. The ongoing diversification of the locations, subjects, constituencies and procurement processes for memorials all suggest that there will probably be increasing controversy and
contestation over future commemorative proposals. But as Spielmann (2005) noted, controversy is not necessarily bad; it opens up history and values to discussion; it makes people remember and makes them think.

Acknowledgements: This project was supported by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship (project number FT0992254) and by a Visiting Fellowship from the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University.

References

Attila S (2013), former head of Budapest Galeria (advisory body on memorials to the Budapest City Council) and former parliamentarian, personal interview, 5 August.


DFCSIA&NCA = Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs / National Capital Authority (no date) Reconciliation Place: A lasting symbol of our shared journey, Canberra, National Capital Authority.


