Masterplanning public memorials: an historical comparison of Washington, Ottawa and Canberra

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Masterplanning public memorials: an historical comparison of Washington, Ottawa and Canberra

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This article examines three New World democratic capital cities – Washington, Ottawa and Canberra – where the growing number of public memorials has spurred the development of official plans and policies to regulate the siting and design of future memorial proposals. The historical evolution of these strategies is examined in relation to the designs of individual memorials. The analysis identifies a range of planning strategies that significantly influence the design of individual memorials, including large-scale memorial precinct plans, the social meanings of surrounding sites and structures and existing memorials, and the uses of memorial sites for activities other than grieving. The article examines controversies surrounding the siting, design, meaning and public use of a number of specific memorial examples. The research draws upon existing planning and briefing documents, wider public and professional discourse, and site analysis.

Keywords: memorials; monuments; masterplanning; urban design; landscape; capital cities; national identity; politics; democracy

The physical commemorative landscape of a capital city is a matter of great national significance. A constellation of memorials provides a strong, visible, legible representation of national identity and values, lending a nation both historical and conceptual grounding, and also creates a stage for rituals that reinforce and extend national meanings.\textsuperscript{1} The forms and meanings of such commemorative landscapes are particularly complex in the capital cities of multi-party, multicultural democracies with active civil societies, and so are their development processes. Autocratic governments can conceive and build memorial landscapes exactly to their own wishes. Indeed, the innovations of the European Baroque to ‘create constellations of monumentality ... served the tastes and representational needs of absolutism’.\textsuperscript{2} However, in the three democratic capital cities studied in this article – Washington, Ottawa and Canberra – public memorials are rarely initiated or designed by the executive branch of the national government, but rather by diverse groups with differing interests. Nation-states by their nature have elites with vested interests in promoting particular myths about history and identity.\textsuperscript{3} But these three New World democratic capitals foreground how commemorative landscapes continuously and incrementally develop through decisions negotiated among various political parties, local and national government agencies, civic interest groups, experts in history and design, and mourners, and in evolving historical contexts of struggle between an overarching sense of

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nationhood and the fates and interests of specific social groups. Government planning informs and regulates these decisions. Within this civil, actively political context, commemorative master planning has emerged as a distinct area of design and governance.

**Competing demands for commemoration**

In recent decades, large numbers of new public memorials have been erected in national capitals.\(^4\) Increasing acknowledgment of a diversity of social groups and historical events, and the constant unearthing of more knowledge about the past, have generated many new claims for public recognition and space, and the forms, locations and subjects of commemoration have also diversified.\(^5\) Memorials tend to endure; they are seldom removed, and so new memorials enter into increasingly complex and extensive geographies of memory. Conflicts arise among the panoply of memorials, and between them and other urban land uses. Decisions about the form, location and use of memorial settings must also address the potent representational dimensions of commemoration. There are inevitably tensions between the commemorative interests of various social groups, and differing judgements about the relative importance of particular subjects and eras.\(^6\) A memorial’s meanings arise from its design, as well as through its spatial relationships to other buildings and memorials, and public activities that occur around it.\(^7\) Memorials’ constituencies and their meanings continue to change after they are built, through symbolic discourse that engages with the persons and events being commemorated.\(^8\) While these social debates about memory and meaning have received significant study, the novel focus of this paper is on the spatial and procedural issues about the regulation of public memorials that such debates stimulate, and the technical solutions that official commemorative plans and policies employ to address them. Inevitably, these planning decisions impact back upon national memory and identity.

Given increasing demand for commemorations, and physical and semantic constraints on viable sites, planning agencies in these three capital cities have begun applying to memorials tools traditionally used to rationally allocate other scarce resources. Within the last 15 years, new commemorative master plans, policies and guidelines have been published for all three cities to regulate the arrangement, scale, design and meanings of future memorials. Urban development has also continued to create new potential sites for commemoration. These on-going processes date back to the founding of Washington and Canberra, and to Ottawa’s designation as a capital. While there are many existing studies that compare the general master planning history of capital cities,\(^9\) and several detailed analyses of memorial planning within individual capitals,\(^10\) research is lacking that specifically focuses on memorial layouts and planning approaches used to guide them.\(^11\) This article is a first attempt to compare and evaluate the historical evolution of these three large, modern capital cities’ commemorative strategies in relation to the designs of individual memorials and the cities’ wider spatial planning.

**Methodology**

This article examines the physical plans, policies and decisions that have shaped commemoration in these three capital cities since their founding, and the range of aesthetic, social, economic-development and political objectives which have informed them. It analyses how these values have been translated into general commemorative frameworks and into policies and practices
for governing individual memorials, and the different ways particular memorial forms and themes have been judged against those values. The article draws on existing historical studies and critiques of each city’s planning, analysis of policy documents, spatial and formal analysis of memorial designs, and observation of memorial sites. Following an historical overview of the development of commemorative master planning in each of the three case study cities, comparative analysis explores three key intertwined topics that emerge from the limited existing literature critiquing commemorative development: the definition of memorial sites; the scope of memorial themes and their spatial distribution; and the reciprocal relationships between commemoration and other urban space needs, including general open space amenity and economic development.

Washington

In 1791, when L’Enfant produced the original plan for the new capital of the USA, there were few national events to commemorate. His scheme nonetheless suggested a spatial layout and stimuli for the development of many future commemorative works. Both were very different from what exists today (Figures 1 and 2). His master plan connected topographically prominent

Figure 1. Central Washington (map by Te-Sheng Huang).
L’Enfant expected the 15 states to develop these major intersections, including ‘sponsoring monuments to their own heroes’. These improvements would increase surrounding property values prior to the federal government’s sale of the land, and encourage dispersed, polycentric private-sector development.

L’Enfant’s Mall only extended as far west as the President’s House, and offered open vistas across the Potomac River to the south and west. L’Enfant proposed a sculpture of Liberty at the foot of the Capitol building, a national church or ‘Pantheon’ sited prominently on the 8th Street cross-axis at the Mall’s mid-point, to celebrate America’s historical figures, and a naval column at the waterfront. The Washington Monument, originally planned as a low equestrian statue, had to be offset from the Mall’s main cross-axis because of marshy terrain. First proposed in 1846, the obelisk was the world’s tallest structure at its completion in 1884. Washington’s nineteenth-century memorials were typically heroic statues of individuals, sponsored by voluntary interest groups, and distributed indiscriminately on prominent intersections. Several memorials spread along two axes leading away from the Mall: East Capitol Street, behind the west-facing Capitol building, where the first Lincoln memorial was erected (1876), and 16th Street, behind the White House, which a local property owner promoted as an ‘Avenue of the Presidents’. Only the Capitol Grounds had formal regulatory review.

The 1902 McMillan Plan established a new, intensive focus of national commemoration on Washington’s Mall. Four minor existing statues were moved off the Mall to nearby institutions.
with which their subjects had been associated. The Botanic Gardens in front of the Capitol were replaced with Union Square and its Grant Memorial (1922). The Mall’s axis was realigned with the recently completed Washington Monument (1884), substantially extended eastwards on landfill, and terminated with the Lincoln Memorial (1922). This prominent commemoration of the Union Army Commander (during the 1860’s Civil War) and later President highlighted the contemporary emphasis on asserting national unity. A Memorial Bridge from the Lincoln Memorial across the Potomac River to Virginia symbolized the reunification of the North and South. Sites for other future national memorials were defined on the Mall’s cross-axis: left and right of the White House, subsequently occupied by memorials to Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman (1903) and the First World War (1924), respectively, and at the southern riverfront termination, which also aligned with the Capitol along Maryland Avenue. Suggested by the McMillan Commission as a potential location for L’Enfant’s proposed Pantheon, and subsequently proposed for a Theodore Roosevelt memorial, this site was ultimately filled in 1943 by the memorial to Jefferson. The Mall was cleared of its many substantial trees. A new formal perimeter of elms opened up axial views between the principal memorials but closed the Mall off from the surrounding city. The 1902 Plan’s concentration of new memorials, museums, and ‘techno-scientific’ institutions around the Mall presented the desired image of the USA as a modern and internationally powerful nation. The memorials given distinction as terminations of the Mall axes defined a particular founding myth for the nation, and also appeared to finalize that story. This kind of large, definitive, monumental statement of values could not take shape through individual memorials, sponsored by different, localized interest groups dependent on political support.

Around 1900, design proposals for individual memorials also came under greater scrutiny. Equestrian statues became less common as horses themselves disappeared from city streets, and rather than simple, freestanding pedestal statues, memorials increasingly involved temple buildings and wider architectural settings, produced by teams of sculptors and architects. Design quality for major memorials was promoted through competitions with expert juries from both professions. Reformers sought to replace less significant statues with fountains or other forms. The US Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) was established in 1910 to provide consistent, apolitical, expert oversight of future memorial proposals. On average one new memorial was approved in Washington every year, a great many of them in the city’s most densely developed Northwest quadrant. Few were in the core, and there were no new military memorials approved between 1936 and 1982.

A third phase of commemorative development began with the 1971 demolition of extensive ‘temporary’ Navy and Munitions offices that had occupied the west Mall since 1917. The new Constitution Gardens provided sites for the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial (VVM) (1982) and the Memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence (1984). The VVM was promoted by a veteran’s group rather than the military establishment, and commemorated an unpopular, unsuccessful and largely unacknowledged war. The ‘antimonumental’ VVM established new kinds of spatial and thematic relationships within the Mall. Its two oblique reflective walls linked it with the Lincoln and Washington memorials, without interposing between them. Its location drew on the nearby Lincoln Memorial’s significance both as a symbol of national reconciliation and as a recent site of pro- and anti-Vietnam War protests. Its form was sunken rather than elevated, and designed for a close-up, introspective, private experience rather than distant viewing and collective ceremony. The VVM’s design was criticized as abstract and negative,
prompting numerous later representational additions, over opposition from the CFA and designer Maya Lin. The VVM kindled support for commemorating the Korean War (1995) and Second World War (2004) in Constitution Gardens. The latter was ultimately re-sited, becoming the first memorial erected on the Mall’s east-west axis since Lincoln’s. The VVM also established the principle of admitting onto the national stage ‘therapeutic’ memorials to commemorate the suffering of a wide range of ‘victim’ groups, including events outside the USA.25 By 2001, there were 155 public memorials in Washington.26

Increasing demand for memorials and the threatened integrity of the McMillan scheme prompted passage of the 1986 Commemorative Works Act (CWA), to ensure consistency in decision-making about appropriate memorial subject matter, siting and design through a 24-stage approvals process.27 The 1986 CWA required that commemorations are delayed until 25 years after the event, and restricted ‘Area I’ around the Mall to only new commemorative works ‘of pre-eminent historical and lasting significance to the United States’ (see Figure 1).

A 1997 strategic vision, Extending the Legacy, recommended protecting the Mall from further development, shifting the symbolic centre to the Capitol and encouraging dispersal of future memorials throughout Washington, including major intersections, the two riverfronts, scenic overlooks, and in particular 8th Street (the mid-point crossing of the East Mall) and the radiating East, North and South Capitol Streets (the latter two of which were relatively unimportant in L’Enfant’s own plan). This dispersal was a conscious revisiting of L’Enfant’s initial economic development strategy.28 The 2001 Memorials and Museums Master Plan evaluated 402 potential sites for future memorials, provided detailed analyses of the best 100 sites in terms of landscape, access, visibility, historic resources and specific commemorative potential, and promoted reserving the 20 best sites with high visibility and strong axial relationships to the Capitol and White House for the most significant commemorations (Figure 3).29 The Master Plan sites embellished L’Enfant’s radial Pennsylvania, New York and Maryland Avenues, terminated the east and south axes, and helped to define the Waterfront Crescent, a new spatial element facing the Potomac (west) and Anacostia (east) Rivers. The Master Plan also proposed a moratorium on new memorials in ‘The Reserve’ (Figure 1), subsequently legislated in the amended CWA of 2003, which defined the Mall as ‘a substantially completed work of civic art’. The National World War II Memorial opened on the Mall’s main axis in 2004. This project was initially considered for six possible off-axis sites within the CWA’s Area I, and approved in 1995 for a site further north in Constitution Gardens. The CFA subsequently decided its siting had to be more significant than that for the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Congress had legislated to expedite the memorial’s construction, pre-empting public or judicial interventions.30 The competition-winning design announced in 1997 was widely criticized for its scale and prominent location, its interruption of the Mall axis, and its conservative, ‘triumphalist’, ‘Fascist’ aesthetics.31

After several terrorist attacks in the USA, The National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan (2002) encouraged increased regulations, signs, closed-circuit television, guards, security checks and barriers around Washington’s major memorials. These interventions were criticized for being unsightly, compromising the axially of visitor experience of the Mall, reducing available recreation space and posing representational problems for icons ostensibly signifying freedom.32 The draft 2008 National Capital Framework Plan developed detailed urban design thinking to guide investments in government-controlled land surrounding the Mall and around the terminations of the East and South Capitol axes, and established a linked system of waterfront parks.33 This plan emphasized the contextual role of memorials in sustainable place-making, promoting
coordinated development with cultural facilities, workplaces, commercial facilities, public open spaces and transport connections, though the 2009 Monumental Core Framework Plan excised any ambitions for redeveloping the riverfront terminations of East and South Capitol streets. The McMillan ‘legacy’ only seems to have ‘extended’ to the Mall’s immediate surrounds and the Potomac waterfront; the Mall retains pre-eminence.34 The National Capital Planning Commission’s most recent initiative is to consider a 10-year moratorium on any new permanent memorials, and instead encourage temporary memorials and artworks, including reinterpretations of existing works, to renew public reflection on the commemorative landscape as a whole.35

Ottawa
Ottawa (Figure 4) was established in 1826 as an industrial town for constructing the Rideau Canal and milling timber. Since its 1858 selection as capital, numerous government plans
have sought to remake the city to communicate national values, because the inherited gridded layout offered few prominent sites for major memorials. The parliamentary complex begun in 1858 is a hilltop citadel backing onto riverfront cliffs (Figure 5). The wealthy commercial city surrounding it financially restricted its expansion, and precluded development of any grand axial approaches. Early commemorations focused on Parliament Hill’s cliff-top perimeter, where nine bronze statues of statesmen and monarchs were installed between 1885 and 1922. A 92-metre high Peace Tower was added to the main Parliament building in 1927 as a First World War memorial. When Ottawa’s City Hall and an adjacent hotel burned down, the Federal District Commission acquired their sites to create Confederation Place, with a picturesque oblique view to the neo-gothic Parliament nearby. This was Ottawa’s central node, where Wellington Street, fronting the Parliament, bridged the Rideau Canal to the east, as well as its railway terminus. The perpendicular Elgin Street, the central business district’s eastern edge, was widened as a formal approach, and the National War Memorial, The Response, a 21-metre high arch supporting a large sculptural group, was unveiled in 1939.
The statue of former Prime Minister Laurier (1922), mentor to the then-Prime Minister McKenzie King, had been uniquely placed on Parliament Hill’s southeast corner overlooking this site, rather than behind Parliament. Outside the city’s tight commemorative core, a large statue to explorer Samuel de Champlain, founder of New France, was erected in 1915, high on Nepean Point overlooking the river, where he had apparently stood 300 years earlier. A kneeling Native scout statue placed at its base in 1918 was relocated to a nearby park in 1997, after First Nations leaders complained it was demeaning. A 1950 monument to the area’s first settler stands outside a later federal government office complex in what is now the City of Gatineau, directly across the Ottawa River in francophone Quebec. In 2004, Gatineau erected its own memorial to de Champlain.

Other commemorative precincts in Ottawa were gradually developed as waterfront areas and cleared of obsolete buildings. In 1959, the formerly industrial Green Island, perched above Rideau Falls, became the site for the new City Hall and a park containing the World War II Air Force and Artillery memorials. A memorial to Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War was added in 2001. Several smaller memorials occupy surrounding waterfront sites, including an Aid Workers’ Memorial (2001). Confederation Park, between Elgin Street and
the Rideau Canal, opened in 1967 after land clearance and contains memorials to the Boer War (1902), Aboriginal veterans (2001) and Korean War veterans (2002). A statue of city founder Colonel John By was installed in Majors Hill Park, east of the canal, 145 years after the event (1971). Two other 1970s memorials stand outside related government offices, which eventually spread west of Parliament Hill along Wellington Street. Three new commemorative sites were identified on Wellington Street’s western extension into ex-industrial LeBreton Flats. One was filled in 2012 by the Canadian Firefighters Memorial. A National Holocaust Memorial will occupy another.

Ottawa’s two key commemorative sites have continued to accumulate memorials. Five further statues of statesmen and monarchs were added to Parliament Hill between 1957 and 1992, as well as a Police and Peace Officer’s Memorial (1994–2000) and a 2000 memorial honouring five Suffragettes’ 1929 legal victory allowing them to run for Parliament (Figure 6). After several proposed locations for a separate Second World War memorial, the National War Memorial was rededicated in 1982, with dates added for the Second World War and the Korean War. Confederation Place was renovated in 2000; a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was installed. A new staircase leading down to the Rideau Canal was subsequently ornamented with the Valiants Memorial (2006): statues and busts of 14 significant individuals from Canada’s military history.

In 1983, the National Capital Commission (NCC) began developing a looped ceremonial route, Confederation Boulevard, connecting Ottawa and Gatineau across the Ottawa River,
essentially following a plan from 1915. This incorporates treatment of Elgin Street, Sussex Drive (the two kilometre procession route from the Governor-General’s residence to Parliament), and key intersections with other approach roads, including Wellington Street (Figure 4). In name and form, ‘Confederation Boulevard’ seeks to further Canada’s ongoing task of uniting diverse strands of national identity by linking a range of individual historical memorials, federal institutions, and, conceptually, the British heritage of Ontario and the French heritage of Quebec. It does not, however, say anything specific about the history or nature of Canada’s Confederation. The winding, branching Boulevard demonstrates one alternative to the rigidity of Baroque axiality. Its development has served as an organizing framework which links various existing commemorative precincts and which shapes future memorial siting decisions, distributing them along the route. The arch-shaped Canadian Tribute to Human Rights (1989) forms a southern gateway to Confederation Boulevard along Elgin Street. The Peacekeeping Monument (1992) occupies the key roundabout where the Boulevard’s main loop meets Sussex Drive. One intersection in Gatineau hosts a statue of a famous Montreal hockey player (2001), but the Gatineau section of the Boulevard has few memorials, despite massive urban renewal projects there since the 1970s, including the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Gatineau’s four other small memorials, to the area’s French discoverer (2004), its first settler (1950), Peace and Remembrance (1992) and a local painter (2001), are all located in downtown open spaces away from Confederation Boulevard. Two major Boulevard nodes await proposals. A new Navy Monument (2012) occupies a small peninsula in the Ottawa River, with uninterrupted views to Parliament Hill.

Parliament Hill and the Governor-General’s residence at Rideau Hall each have their own approval processes, which constrain their potential scope for commemorations. The National Capital Act (1958) broadly empowers the NCC to shape the capital’s development; there is no specific legislation regulating commemorative issues. Several urban design and policy studies since 1971 led to the current 2006 Canada’s Capital Commemoration Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Commemoration Program and Policy. These studies identify a range of different forms that commemorations might take, including statues, archetypal structures, land art, and fountains. They define a three-order hierarchy of potential sites, from key locations along Confederation Boulevard, to small gardens and edge spaces for minor subjects. The NCC maintains an inventory analysing 90 sites. It suggests some sites may lend themselves to linear commemorations on a connected theme. Following an analytical framework for historic sites developed by Parks Canada, the Strategic Plan notes most existing commemorations have political or military themes, and aspires to prioritize under-represented themes including foreign relations, cultural and intellectual life, social and community life, and technological developments. It also highlights commemorative under-representation of Aboriginal peoples, ethnic identities, women and the environment. The Plan circumscribes commemoration until 10 years after a subject’s death and 20 years after an event occurs, and precludes duplicate commemoration of subjects.

Canberra

Griffin’s winning 1913 Canberra plan (Figure 7) centred on a ‘Land Axis’ stretching north from the focal point at Capital Hill to the summit of Mount Ainslie, two symmetrical radiating avenues leading to the ‘Civic’ and ‘Market’ centres, a perpendicular Municipal Axis linking them, and a central, artificial lake as a perpendicular ‘Water Axis’. The city would occupy
Figure 7. Detail of central portion of Walter Burley Griffin’s 1913 plan for Canberra, showing eventual locations of built and proposed memorials (courtesy of the National Library of Australia).
Griffin felt the capital should incorporate a ‘cumulative National Memorial’ for recognizing ‘Australian deeds, services and achievements’. He reserved space on Capital Hill for ‘isolated monuments in the lower portion or congregated monuments on the crowning slopes’. The first commemorative construction was three foundation stones laid in 1913 for a ‘Commencement Column’ on the wide land axis between Capitol Hill and Camp Hill, proposed site of the permanent Parliament House, although they were originally placed off-alignment, 26 metres east. The column’s six-sided base acknowledges the Commonwealth’s founding states. The column was never constructed, and the stones were moved to their current site on axis in front of the new Parliament House after its opening in 1988.

Three different memorials were created to commemorate the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) shortly after the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign in Turkey. This first major World War I engagement by Australian forces became fundamental to the development of national consciousness for the newly independent country. The first memorial, Bellona, a 1906 bust of the Roman goddess of War, only reached Canberra in 1927. Briefly considered for siting outside the new, provisional Parliament House, it originally stood inconspicuously in the landscaped median of Commonwealth Avenue, the axis linking Capital Hill to Canberra’s commercial centre, and has since moved seven times. The second, the grave of Major-General William Bridges (1916), founding commander of Canberra’s military college and subsequent leader of the Australian Army, was designed by Griffin and sited high on Mount Pleasant, overlooking the college; not, as Griffin has proposed, at the Capital. Third and most prominent was the Australian War Memorial (AWM), a large national monument, museum and archive which finally opened in 1941, having been expanded to honour Australia’s military history generally. Conceived in 1919, this edifice was inspired by the design and the siting of Washington’s contemporaneous Lincoln Memorial. It stands at the base of Mount Ainslie, terminating the major land axis from the Capital to the mountain, where Griffin had proposed a public leisure precinct. The execution of Griffin’s plan thus reverses his intended principal vista, emphasizing the view north to a military ‘burial mound’, rather than south to the government precinct.

Early proposals in 1916 for memorial statues to two civic statesmen, a poet and Sydney’s Catholic cardinal, could not be taken forward in the absence of a plan for the Capital site. Griffin ended his involvement with the city’s planning in 1920, and the Capital idea departed with him. In 1926, the federal cabinet endorsed a statue in front of the provisional Parliament House of Sir Henry Parkes, widely regarded as the Father of the Federation, but costs were prohibitive. In 1935, this location was filled by a statue of King George V, who had opened Australia’s first parliament. This 13.5-metre-high memorial blocked the axial view from Parliament to the AWM, and in 1968 it was moved to one side. Following a 1946 proposal to build a replica of the Statue of Liberty on a Canberra hilltop to honour Americans killed in the Australian theatre of war, an Australian-American Memorial was approved, provided that it was not near the AWM. A 74-metre-high, eagle-topped obelisk flanked by two murals, each measuring 11 metres by 36 metres, was then proposed on the northern lakeshore of the central Parliament-War Memorial axis. Consternation over the blocking of this view, and the symbolized transfer of allegiance from Britain to America, shifted its construction in 1954 to an alternate site on Kings Avenue, 200 metres short of its crossing with Constitution Avenue, the then-undeveloped ‘Market’ vertex of Griffin’s triangular core. Two smaller military memorials have been added nearby, as the memorial has become the centerpiece of the
defence department’s Russell Offices complex, sited symmetrically around Kings Avenue. This formation ultimately evinces the true change in Australia’s political commitments with the 1951 ANZUS joint defence treaty, and ignores Griffin’s geometry.

In 1965, the lake was finally filled with water. For the 50th anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, the broad landscape parkway forming the north half of Canberra’s land axis was developed into Anzac Parade (Figure 8). This axis remains a focus for national commemorative marches to the War Memorial. Raised lawns along each side contained thick allées of native trees, between which 10 gravel ‘niches’ stood available for sculptural monuments. Two of the earliest memorials erected here replicated destroyed originals elsewhere, recognizing specific Army divisions. The Royal Australian Air Force’s early, abstract memorial (1973) stimulated more figurative commemorations for the Navy (1986) and Army (1989). Later memorials commemorating Australian participation in wars in Vietnam (1992) and Korea (2000) and military nurses (1999) were complex spatial settings rather than solid objects. By 2000, all of Anzac Parade’s original niches had been filled. Two new sites had been added on the Parade’s northern corners, opposite the AWM, which became occupied by memorials to Atatürk (1985), Turkish commander at Gallipoli, and an Australian Hellenic Memorial (1988).50 The 2001 New Zealand Memorial is two giant basket handles framing Anzac Parade’s southern entry. This gift from New Zealand marking Australia’s centenary of Federation symbolizes the close historic relationship between the two countries, of which joint military operations are only a part. Two more added niches are reserved for a memorial to the 1899–1902 Boer War in South Africa and an Australian Peacekeeping Memorial. Anzac Parade’s physical and conceptual scopes have expanded into a ‘Sculpture Garden’ within the AWM grounds (1999), and with construction of national memorials to the emergency services (2004) and police (2006) in Kings Park, immediately south. Beyond the Anzac Parade area, in 1970 two tall memorials were installed in Lake Burley Griffin, wide to either side of the main land axis. A 150-metre water jet commemorates the bicentenary of Captain Cook’s 1770 claiming of Australia. A 50-metre Carillon on a small island is Britain’s gift celebrating Canberra’s 50th anniversary.51 Canberra’s National Capital Development Commission had earlier suggested such a carillon be constructed on the land axis in front of a lakeside Parliament House.52 A park on a minor lakeside peninsula accommodates the few memorials that commemorate Canberra’s own 100-year history.

Since 1928, the National Memorial Ordinance has empowered the Canberra National Memorial Committee (CNMC) to vet national commemorative proposals. The CNMC has since approved over 50 memorials, but like Washington’s CFA, it has no mandate or budget to either plan for or commission memorials or define commemorative agendas; it merely reacts to proposals by others. The tight thematic and physical concentration of Canberra’s existing memorials – around wars and the land axis – was one key stimulus for the 2002 publication of the Guidelines for Commemorative Works.53 The Guidelines focus mostly on principles circumscribing suitable justifications, themes and characters for memorials. Commemorations must wait 10 years after the event and cannot duplicate existing themes. Natural disasters are generally considered inappropriate because they are not nationally significant. Seventeen different precincts are delineated for particular commemorative subjects (Figure 9). Most areas north of Lake Burley Griffin are reserved for remembering military sacrifices and achievements, especially Anzac Parade (Area 1), the AWM (Area 2) and the summit of Mount Ainslie. Kings Park (Area 6) is reserved for ‘non-military sacrifice, service and achievement’ as well as ‘non-military war efforts ... such as peace-keeping’, although the forthcoming Peacekeeping
Figure 8. Anzac Parade and surrounds, Canberra.
Memorial was actually approved for Anzac Parade. South of the lake, numerous distinct ‘campuses’ are delineated within the parliamentary triangle, for memorials honouring organizations and individuals in ‘Humanities and Sciences’ (Area 10), ‘Arts and Civics’ (Area 11) and public service (Area 12). The land axis around Old Parliament House is organized chronologically for commemorating events before, during and since Federation. Outside Canberra’s centre, sites are identified near the national university, museum and other institutions for related commemorations. The Guidelines restrict commemorations of foreigners to the relevant embassy grounds (Area 17).

Figure 9. Commemorative Siting Classifications, Canberra. Adapted from Guidelines for Commemorative Works in the National Capital, 2002. Maps supplied courtesy of the National Capital Authority. Commonwealth copyright. All rights reserved.
The guidelines also define precincts not intended for memorials. Precincts for commemorating reconciliation with Australia’s indigenous peoples (Area 14), and an open space set aside for public activity (Area 13), are both prescribed as being available for interpretive artworks, installations and events, but explicitly not permanent memorials. The former site, since developed as Reconciliation Place (2001), forms a new cross-axis between old Parliament House and the lakeshore, and is composed of numerous fragmentary ‘slivers’ by various designers with different forms and themes (Figure 10). The master plan intends for new works to be added as the reconciliation process unfolds. Both the layout and themes of this precinct contest the State’s hegemony in defining the past, although SueAnne Ware argues the project draws attention away from the aesthetically and politically challenging Aboriginal tent embassy which has stood for 40 years directly in front of the former Parliament House.\(^{54}\) Proposed commemorations of the centenary of women’s suffrage in Australia (2003) and immigrants’ contributions to Australia (2006) were designed for the relevant precincts, but met with opposition because their proposed forms would impact heritage views and recreational uses of the lake, and due to questions about fiscal and technical feasibility. Both were ultimately revised to other, less conspicuous forms and locations. Master plan studies for redeveloping both Anzac Parade (1990) and the ‘Civic’ vertex City Hill (1992) for public pedestrian use and civil (non-military) symbols were never taken forward.\(^{55}\)

The paucity of forward-looking strategies, and controversies over CNMC decision-making on several recent commemorative proposals, gave rise to a wide-ranging parliamentary inquiry
in 2011 into memorial planning for Canberra. Four key issues brought out in this inquiry are germane to the following comparative analysis of the three city cases. Canberra’s simple urban geometry and its inviolable main axis mean there are few significant sites where future memorials can be placed. Some innovative memorial forms have substantial visual impact within the cityscape, and require careful expert scrutiny of their feasibility. Military themes predominate, while many other worthy subjects go uncommemorated. Finally, federal agencies lack adequate mechanisms for gaining input from both experts and the general public.

**Analysis**

**Sites**
Washington is defined by an essentially Baroque plan, with radiating axes connecting public buildings and plazas on elevated points. Ottawa reflects an older convention of a central, segregated citadel within a quotidian urban landscape. Canberra combines elements of both approaches. Most new memorials harness the power of these cities’ existing diagrammatic plans. Despite L’Enfant’s forward-thinking proposal for widely distributed memorials, most commemorations in all three cities remain confined to either a central open space (from which other, implicitly ‘lesser’ memorials are excluded), or the nodes and edges of a few major axes. Such clustering increases the physical and representational potency of these sites. Although memorials seem to have always been spatially concentrated, it was only many decades after each city’s founding that its commemorative sites were formally circumscribed, and several problematic extant memorials were moved. Some recent memorial subjects and forms recommend themselves to more idiosyncratic, marginal locations. Other memorials have meaningful links to particular sites, such as those to city founders and leaders of specific institutions, and Washington’s memorial to the September 11 Pentagon attack. But for most projects, locations in existing precincts or visibility along axes are key determinants. This is partly because few memorials are tall enough to be widely legible as landmarks.

In terms of formal, spatial types, memorials have generally become wider and lower, to form enclosed settings, define axial relations to other sites, and allow more names and information to be displayed where visitors can read and touch them (for example, Washington’s Vietnam and Korean War memorials, and all three cities’ national police memorials). Such memorials cannot easily be integrated into existing commemorative precincts or tight urban spaces; they generally have to sit isolated within wider landscape settings. As such, they are increasingly being called upon to contribute to wider public amenity.

In all three capital cities, the majority of the most obvious sites for major memorials are already occupied and new proposals are often controversial. The four broad planning responses to the threat of demand for key memorial sites overwhelming supply have been zoning areas for particular subjects or levels of significance, using moratoria and 10- to 25-year delays to slow demands and put them into historical perspective, enhancing information about potential sites and their merits through mapping and databases, and proactively increasing supply by opening up new sites. In all three capitals, federal agencies own and regulate most potential memorial sites, so they can generally resist economic development pressures and other local interests. More land for commemoration has been won through landfill (as with Washington’s west Mall) or demolition of old buildings (in both Washington and Ottawa). Sometimes sites
become available because of tragic events, such as the crash of hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 into the US Pentagon. The need is for a quantitative increase in desirable sites, not just dispersal.

Major memorials such as Canberra’s Australian-American Memorial have set precedents for locating other future memorials; they have also encouraged and focused wider urban development schemes. Older precinct-scale commemorative schemes such as the McMillan Plan and Anzac Parade defined new sites around existing foci. The Waterfront Crescent in Washington, Confederation Boulevard, and Reconciliation Place all establish completely new and different commemorative settings, both geographically and formally. Such projects seek to maintain visual and circulatory links to existing foci, for example, as extensions of existing axes, new cross-axes or newly defined perimeters to existing precincts. All three cities’ recognition of the potential of their waterfronts as new commemorative settings reflects wider revalorization of urban waterfronts. In the absence of formal plans, another typical solution is placing new memorials into parks or the verges of rights-of-way.

Commemorative planning documents in all three cities prize the original city plan and existing built fabric, but the approval processes’ generally cautious custodianship of these legacies belies the fact that many cherished commemorative precincts are much more recent than, and physically different to, what the cities’ earlier planners originally intended: Anzac Parade dates only from 1965, Confederation Park from 1967 and the Washington Mall’s main memorials from the 1920s onwards. Extensive government-led redevelopment of the capitals’ urban fabric continues to directly, materially shape memorial site options, thereby reshaping myths about national identity, values and history. The relative importance of various axes has changed over time, as streets are widened and realigned, old buildings are removed, and new open spaces and institutions are constructed. Although existing topographies and shorelines are used as key organizing principles, in all three cases, these topographies have themselves been changed and augmented to allow expansion of commemorative networks, through landfill, damming and construction of bridges. Numerous older memorials have also been relocated; implementing Washington’s 1902 McMillan Plan involved removing four extant statues from the Mall.

Not all memorials should or can occupy prime positions. Some memories are more important to more people. Increasing demand has required planning agencies to set priorities. Ottawa’s planning places potential sites in a formal hierarchy according to size and prominence, with the intention that memorials will be assigned to them according to the likely numbers of people who will visit them, without presupposing any hierarchy of subjects. The challenge is to develop frameworks which reinforce recognized spaces and hierarchies, which set aside key open sites well in advance, but which also are open to unknown future contingencies in terms of what might be commemorated, where and in what form. Some new memorials will be located where the commemorated events will happen, but these events are by their nature unplanned. Such unknowns present a challenge for planning, which seeks to be comprehensive and long-range. There is a problem that public-sector investments in existing commemorative settings generally encourage clustering, whereas dispersal remains a policy aspiration lacking incentives. L’Enfant imagined dispersed memorial investments by 15 state governments encouraging other private investments, but most memorial sponsors seek centrality, partly for lack of knowledge of other possibilities. Master plans, inventories and advice seek to valorize peripheral sites. The best way to ensure this appears to be providing relevant information on an
ample range of alternatives. Efforts to shape commemoration have also shifted from physically and thematically prescriptive master plans towards principles and guidelines that offer more formal flexibility, but accordingly less certainty about future outcomes. Commemorative planners and decision-making committees are reacting to external proposals, and their key guidance tool appears to be moral suasion rather than incentives.61

Subjects

The approval of subject matter for commemorative works depends on interpretations of ‘national significance’ by those with decision-making power. Several analysts have noted the spatial and numerical dominance of military themes in commemoration in Canberra and Washington, and the paucity of attention to civil concepts such as democracy and diversity.62 Even after every war and military branch has been commemorated, all three capitals have extended the logic of sacrifice to include quasi- and non-military subjects, including peacekeeping, police, emergency services, aid workers and war nurses. Memorials have also been erected to military accidents. Reflection on past wars has expanded by reinstating destroyed war memorials from elsewhere, adding new wars’ dates to existing memorials and creating more prominent memorials to earlier wars and battles which were deemed inadequately represented. The most recent war commemorated is Vietnam: a war that the USA and Australia lost. The most recently constructed memorials in both countries’ capitals are to the Second World War, from which few veterans now remain alive. Women and minorities are more prominently and more comprehensively commemorated for their foreign military service than for their domestic struggles for recognition and rights. In Ottawa, this struggle involved altering an earlier memorial to eliminate its colonialist overtones. The prominence of war memorials in Canberra’s layout is particularly striking considering Griffin’s 1913 plan did not anticipate any. No wars had then been fought in Australia, except unacknowledged colonial wars against indigenous populations.63 By 1917, the central land axis intended as a leisure precinct was already converted to war commemoration, and in 1954 the defence department also claimed the ‘Market’ vertex.

Memorials to the development of democracy and its leaders have generally been funded by the three national governments, as have memorials to the discoverers and founders of the respective cities and nations. In all three capitals, nation-defining concepts and events are commemorated almost exclusively through statues of the individuals associated with them. In Ottawa, the word Confederation is ubiquitous, but the only memorial that explicitly commemorates the concept and events is the Centennial Flame on Parliament Hill (1967), with the coats-of-arms of Canada’s then 12 provinces and territories, which was intended to be temporary. Canberra has a Commonwealth Place, which includes a speaker’s corner gifted by the Canadian Government, but Federation Mall is currently empty except for the state-signifying foundation stones of the ‘Commencement Column’. Washington’s first and tallest memorial signifies America’s full independence from Britain, and there is no commemoration of the nation’s colonial origins, and little mention of its legacy of slavery.

Ottawa’s and Canberra’s policies specify many desired civic commemorative subjects, but they lack strategic mechanisms to promote delivery. Washington’s plan emphatically ‘does not suggest which individuals or historic events are suitable subjects for commemoration’.64 Only four of the city’s 155 memorials specifically commemorate women.65 The representation of particular ethnic groups generally depends on their own resources and resolves to be represented.
Despite criticisms, Canberra’s Reconciliation Place is unique in its attempt to place the struggles and successes of indigenous peoples outdoors on the national stage. In Washington and Ottawa, such energies were channelled into museums.

Representational imbalances highlight the very different levels of engagement, interest, power, finance and contacts among different constituencies for commemoration. The formal commemoration of Reconciliation was driven not by politicized Aborigines – they had already been publicly representing themselves in Canberra for 40 years – but by a government seeking to project a particular narrative. Immigrants and women are large but diffuse groups. By contrast, military institutions are highly organized, and have a specific, ongoing need to promote an ethic of sacrifice. In Canberra and Ottawa, military memorials have generally remained confined to core precincts and have not spread, as in Washington, throughout the city. Non-military memorials have encountered difficulties in entering these cities’ prime symbolic precincts, although the introduction of a suffragette memorial within Ottawa’s hallowed core was justified ‘because it is Parliament Hill and this Parliament which they changed’.

Governments in both countries have sought to give relevant administrative agencies the task of funding and procuring memorials to under-represented groups, but implementation has been slow. Proposed memorials in Canberra to immigrants, suffragettes and indigenous people, all of whom had limited political and design input from their large, heterogeneous constituencies, were ultimately compromised in form, location and meaning to suit the interests of dominant groups, and ended up with timid designs on low-profile sites. Canberra’s parliamentary inquiries have highlighted that building sufficient public and bureaucratic support for changes in the commemorative landscape relies on enhancing public engagement in the decision-making processes themselves. One of the challenges here is to balance the vocal interests of local residents and of other citizens against the empowered views of experts and elected representatives who claim to represent wider, longer-term public interests.

Relations between commemoration and other urban space needs

The very particular meanings, functions and forms of major public memorials, and their national constituencies, often militate against them also serving a wide range of other desired local objectives. On the positive side, capital planning agencies have seized opportunities to further some strategic objectives through commemorative proposals. In Canberra, wider pedestrian accessibility was enhanced through the linear form of Reconciliation Place, which links the freestanding modernist icons of the National Gallery and the National Library. The National Capital Authority had also suggested the idea of a 400-metre-long pedestrian bridge to an organization that wanted to commemorate immigration, as a means to link the government quarter across the lake to the National Museum. Ottawa’s Confederation Boulevard aligned with the federal government’s wider push to redistribute investment, tourism and jobs across the river to Quebecois Gatineau, against the strong centralizing pull of the capital in Ontario. Washington’s Navy Memorial (1987) was placed at the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue to attract tourists and become a catalyst for economic development in its surroundings, although similar ambitions for more peripheral neighbourhoods have waned.

The increase and spread of memorials within these national capitals are not unqualified benefits. Ottawa’s successful development as a capital has obliterated much of the earlier vernacular city’s history. Some scholars argue that the growth in sacralized, guarded memorial
space in densely developed central Washington compromises general open space provisions, and that the many signs, guards, rules and security checks deemed necessary to defend against terrorist acts at the Mall’s memorials contradict the spirit of liberty that these national icons are meant to represent. But this issue seems to be limited to central Washington, and is, even there, predominantly an interim problem of aesthetics and representation rather than general amenity. The long-term security guidelines and physical installations that have been developed for Washington’s memorials have ensured that its major commemorative sites remain very accessible, and there is still a lot of useful open space around them. In many cases, the construction of new memorials has actually led to quantitative increases in public space, and qualitative enhancements in its amenity. The physical prominence and meticulous landscaping of contemporary memorials tends to make them very attractive for use by the general public. In spite of their narrowness of purpose, contemporary memorials are in fact usually better regulated and better considered, in terms of how they make a general, positive contribution to the public realm, than many other types of ostensibly ‘public’ art, which are often designed as isolated objects and dropped in the middle of public spaces.

The increased publicness of memorials does nevertheless require increasing attention to the management of site access and visitor behaviour, whether it be through more guards and rules or the installation of explanatory signs. Planning has had difficulties managing the negative externalities of public memorials, partly due to the difficulty of identifying and weighing up the full diversity of local and national interests which might be affected by particular proposals on particular sites when sponsors put them forward. Enhancements of function, history and meaning for some users are often seen negatively by others.

Conclusion

The varieties of memorial subjects in all three planned capitals mostly affirm and personalize the State through its (male) founders, leaders and defenders. More recently, they have accentuated the State’s importance to order and safety in peacetime. Commemorative planning in Washington, Ottawa and Canberra has helped to justify the organized violence of war, and of government’s own authority. Commemorating military participation from women and indigenous persons helps broaden the audience for this subject. These commemorative landscapes generally suggest that violence against foreign enemies is noble and necessary, but they mostly ignore the internal struggles of indigenous populations and other groups. What planning for memorials has tended to keep hidden is the violence of the nation-state itself. Reconciliation Place and Women are Persons are the chief exceptions. Reconciliation Place may be inadequate and digressive in terms of addressing the maltreatment of Australia’s indigenous population, but it is perhaps the only site in these three cities that even mentions the roots of these States and cities in the expropriation of indigenous land rights.

For contemporary local landowners and users of public space, as for their predecessors, national memorials often sit uneasily with everyday needs. Reconciling the vocal interests of local residents with other citizens, senior parliamentarians, and subject and technical experts to form a representative, long-term view about national values is both conceptually and procedurally difficult. Washington’s and Ottawa’s processes for making commemorative planning decisions both pursue systematic input from historians, planners and local residents, and keep decision-making independent of present governments. Procedures seem to be less thorough
and transparent in Canberra, although changes are underway. Memorials are not like normal commercially-driven projects; the complexity of the task means that the time frames within which commemorative plans and individual national memorials develop are very long. The task remains highly political.

A number of existing memorials in Canberra do not conform to current plans and policies. The NCA’s *Guidelines for Commemorative Works* suggests inconsistencies are part of the city’s ‘unique cultural tapestry’, and lists Irreverence as one of its core values. Yet, it is difficult to plan strategically for openness to future diversity and non-conformity, or to know how and where unknown future events might best be commemorated. Commemorative plans for all three capitals appear to recognize the necessity of combining the continuity of existing frameworks, which are essential for the present to link meaningfully to the past, with the fostering of new alternatives, both by plan and by exception. These would seem to be the spatial correlates of the balance between order and openness which are the general hallmarks of democratic governance.

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**Notes**

5. Doss, *Memorial Mania*.
11. A US-focused example of the latter is Burling, “Policy Strategies.”
19. NCPC, *Extending the Legacy*.
26. NCPC, *Extending the Legacy*.
28. NCPC, *Extending the Legacy*.
29. NCPC, *Memorials and Museums*.
32. Benton-Short, “Bollards, Bunkers, and Barriers.”
33. NCPC and CFA, *Destinations and Connections (Brochure)*.
34. NCPC and CFA, *Destinations and Connections*; NCPC and CFA, *Connecting New Destinations*.
35. NCPC et al., “Beyond Granite.”
36. Taylor, “City form.”
37. Osborne and Osborne, “Cast(e)ing of Heroic Landscapes.”
39. Osborne and Osborne, ‘Cast(e)ing of Heroic Landscapes.”
40. Taylor, “City Form.”
41. NCC and du Toit Allsopp Hillier, *Canadian Firefighters Memorial*.
42. Osborne and Osborne, “Cast(e)ing of Heroic Landscapes.”
43. Gordon and Osborne, “Constructing National Identity.”
44. du Toit et al., *National Capital Core Area*; Sonne, *Representing the State*, 94–100.
45. The *Constitution Act, 1867*, formerly the *British North America Act, 1867*.
47. Roberts, “Memorials in the National Capital.”
48. Sonne, *Representing the State*; Fischer, *Canberra: Myths and Models*; Reid, *Canberra Following Griffin*.
49. Roberts, “Memorials in the National Capital.”
50. Inglis, *Sacred Places*.
51. Roberts, “Memorials in the National Capital.”
52. Reid, *Canberra Following Griffin*.
53. NCA, *Guidelines for Commemorative Works*.
54. Strakosch, “Counter-Monuments and Nation-Building”; Ware, “Reconciling This Place.”
55. Reid, *Canberra Following Griffin*, 328–33.
57. Taylor, “City Form.”
59. Savage, Monument Wars.
60. Interview with Lucy Kempf, Planner, National Capital Planning Commission (Washington), 16 June 2011.
61. Interview with Lucy Kempf.
63. Inglis, Sacred Places.
64. NCPC, Memorials and Museums, 1.
65. Interview with Lucy Kempf.
66. Strakosch, “Counter-Monuments and Nation-Building”; Ware, “Reconciling This Place”; Vale, Architecture, Power; Vernon, “Constructing the National Landscape.”
67. Strakosch, “Counter-Monuments and Nation-Building”; Ware, “Reconciling this Place.”
69. Fairbairn, Debates of the Senate.
70. NCPC and CFA, Monumental Core Framework Plan, 23 and 3–4; NCPC and CFA, National Capital Framework Plan, 2–3.
71. Taylor, “City Form.”
72. Benton-Short, “Politics, Public Space”; Savage, Monument Wars; Doss, Memorial Mania.
73. NCPC, The National Capital.
74. Stevens, “Visitor Responses.”
76. Ware, “Reconciling This Place”; Vale, Architecture, Power.
77. NCPC, Memorials and Museums; Watkins, Memorials; NCC, Comprehensive Commemoration Program.
78. Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, A National Capital; Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, Immigration Bridge Proposal; Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories, Etched in Stone?
79. NCA, Guidelines for Commemorative Works, 5–6.

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