

Memorial Planning in Berlin, London and New York

QUENTIN STEVENS

This paper comparatively examines how three major world cities plan for the ongoing development of memorials in their public spaces. The predominant focus is on memorials that have been erected in these cities over the past two decades, many of which have new forms and address new subjects. Each city has strategies for regulating the themes, sites and designs of future memorial proposals, because of significant ongoing demand, and to calibrate commemoration against other land use needs. Drawing upon interviews with city planners and memorial designers, analysis of planning documents and project briefs, and spatial analysis of memorial layouts, the paper analyses the needs, opportunities, constraints and historical contexts that are shaping new memorial development. It identifies the aims, principles and practices of the plans and regulations that guide memorial locations, designs and subject matter. It examines the historical evolution of formal memorial planning strategies and regulations in each city in relation to proposals and designs for individual new memorials and the availability of particular sites.

Berlin, London and New York are the largest, most cosmopolitan cities in three of the most populous first-world democratic nations. In each city, a wide range of commemorative works to different subjects has been erected over several centuries by a diversity of actors. These memorials lend historical and conceptual grounding to their respective cities and nations (Huysen, 2003; Vale, 2008). So do the planning processes that guide them. Commemorative planning in these three cities lacks the importance, scope and level of control it has in planned New World capitals such as Washington, DC and Canberra (Stevens, 2015). While Berlin, London and New York have each served as a national capital for at least part of their history, their urban fabrics have also been indirectly shaped by their broader roles as centres of national and supranational economic and cultural activity. Significant ongoing spatial transformation has occurred in each city, both to meet needs for growth and technological change and through destructive attacks of varying scales. Memorials in these cities thus have to fit within dynamic physical landscapes and commemorate events that actually occur in them. In Berlin, London and New York, planning for memorials thus has to find more modest ways of managing conflicts, clarifying priorities and providing for present and future needs. Nevertheless, in various times and spaces, plans and policies in each city have sought to develop overarching narratives about the cities' pasts and about collective identity.

Historical context

Berlin, London and New York have all developed over hundreds of years through the influence of a wide range of individuals and groups, and as a result of numerous

Quentin Stevens is Associate Professor, School of Architecture and Design, RMIT University, PO Box 2476, Melbourne, VIC 3001, Australia. Telephone: +61-3-9925-8361 Email: quentin.stevens@rmit.edu.au

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important events, both internal and external. Each city thus has hundreds of memorials to a plethora of subjects spread throughout its built fabric. In the mid-nineteenth century, these cities, like many others in North America and Europe, gained major new centrally located plazas and parks (Schuyler, 1986). Examples include Berlin's Tiergarten (opened to the public 1842) and Königsplatz (1867); London's Trafalgar Square (1845) and Parliament Square (1868); and New York's Battery Park (expanded 1872) and Central Park (1873). These spaces either were planned from the start to be punctuated by major memorials or have subsequently served as convenient places to deposit new memorials that do not fit thematically or spatially into other existing commemorative settings.

No entirely new precincts or armatures for placing multiple memorials have been created in the central areas of London, Berlin and New York for at least the past 50 years. New memorials placed in these three cities enter into complex existing contexts of historical sites, events, meanings and public uses. The forms and subject matter of these new memorials do not always sit easily within existing spatial, representational and historical frameworks. Each new memorial also contributes to an ongoing redefinition of priorities for collective memory and identity. These three urban landscapes have also been significantly reorganised over time. As Berlin's transformations after 1933, 1945 and 1989 show, this evolution is not always slow and smooth. New York, though politically stable since 1776, underwent massive physical expansion and reconstruction in the following centuries. London is a relative rarity among cities, having remained as capital of a nation that has been unconquered and has operated under a stable system of government for almost a millennium. Accordingly, few of its memorials have been moved or removed.

This paper examines in turn how planning for memorials in these cities has developed to address recent changes in the spatial types of memorials, new commemorative subjects and the need for sites that are physically, thematically and historically suitable. It then explores how processes of memorial development and approval are shaped through the involvement of elected officials, government agencies, experts in design and history, and the general public.

Spatial memorials

Until recent decades, most of the three cities' memorials were freestanding statues or monoliths in the midst of public space. In London, the Cenotaph (1920) and Earl Haig's statue (1928) were placed on narrow median strips in the middle of busy Whitehall, despite the protestations of the Metropolitan Police and Westminster City Council (Heathorn, 2008). When Wellington Arch (1830) was constructed, bridging over a street at Hyde Park Corner created few problems because there was little traffic, but over time such commemorative sites have come into conflict with the increasing speed and volume of vehicles. Related problems are noise, air pollution and pedestrian circulation, and questions about site ownership and approval authority have also been raised. In 1883, this intersection was expanded and the massive Arch was moved 60 metres to one side and rotated 60 degrees. Because few such road-widening projects were introduced to London's narrow streets until 1962, many memorials continued to accumulate in the margins of the city's public rights-of-way. The oldest statue in New York, of George Washington (1856), originally stood on a traffic island at the

southwest corner of Union Square Park. When that park was redesigned in 1930, the statue was relocated to one of its interior plazas.

In the context of this changing relation between memorials, urban space and traffic, Savage (2009, p 197) charts the development in the late nineteenth century of a new conception of the public memorial as ‘a space to be experienced rather than an object to be revered ... a mental and emotional space of engagement’. Most early ‘spatial’ memorials consisted of a statue surrounded by a wide, raised terrace, with a backing wall incorporating a bench, providing an introspective setting for visitors to linger. Increasingly after the Second World War, spatial memorials lacked focal statues and were predominantly architectural spaces or abstract sculptural landscapes designed with multiple pathways where visitors could circulate and varied seating opportunities. Recent examples include Berlin’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2005), New York’s Irish Hunger Memorial (2002) and London’s Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain (2005) (Figure 1). The themes, aesthetics and materials of such memorials vary. But they all have significant physical and perceptual impacts upon the public realm, which require careful treatment within planning and management policies for open space.

Spatial memorials are not as amenable as their slender, freestanding precursors to being integrated into urban streetscapes or existing commemorative precincts, or to being relocated. London’s Animals in War Memorial (2004), featuring many animal images in relief on an 18-metre-long curved wall, was cleverly positioned within the wide landscaped median of Park Lane at a pedestrian crossing point leading into adjacent Hyde Park. But many spatial memorials are imposed onto existing plazas and parks. London’s Royal Parks have recently accepted large spatial memorials to Lady Diana, the 7 July bombings (2009) and the RAF Bomber Command (2012). The City Parks and Recreation official responsible for authorising New York City’s memorials often rejects and redirects requests to install new memorials in the largest city-controlled sites, Central Park and Riverside Park, because of their potential to compromise recreational space (Kuhn, 2011).

Victims’ memorials

In recent decades, the number and physical scale of public memorials to victims have increased significantly. Memorials are proposed to victims of unexpected



Figure 1: Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, Gustafson and Porter (2005), Hyde Park, London. (Photo: author’s own.)

natural catastrophes and to intentional acts of repression and aggression including genocide and terrorism. As Huyssen (2003) notes, traditional collective, ostensibly objective expressions of history are today challenged by more personal, emotive, difficult engagements with memory. Planning and design for memorials have to adjust to contemporary public perceptions that singular monumental statues, grand axes and other traditional commemorative forms are inappropriate for expressing these kinds of memories and for the ways that individual visitors wish to engage with them. Victims' memorials are often 'spatial', creating large architectural and landscape settings that provide a therapeutic, existential refuge for mourners (Doss, 2010; Griswold, 1986).

Many victims' memorials are also large to accommodate the desire to list each individual's name or to represent each person by a separate physical element. London's memorial to the 7 July bombings comprises 52 steel pillars that represent the number of individuals killed. It provides a central, accessible site for official annual ceremonies, although people also mourn near the four individual explosion sites, three of which were underground. The selected design for New York's National September 11 Memorial (2011) (Figure 2) provides room to display the names of 2,983 victims at a height where visitors can read and touch them.

The size of the National September 11 Memorial also reflects contemporary views about the scale of that event's political ramifications. The memorial to New York City's second-largest civilian tragedy, the accidental sinking of the steamboat *General Slocum* (1906), is just a discreet, modest fountain. Although London has a memorial to the firefighters who died in service during the Second World War, it has none to the 40,000 civilian casualties of the Blitz. When the scale, centrality and prominence of existing and proposed memorials to victims of various events are compared, it is evident that public perceptions of the historical significance of those events vary. Likewise, such comparisons reveal differences in the resources and political clout of particular social groups who wish to commemorate them.

In Berlin, in particular, significant questions arise as to the relative importance and suffering of various victim groups, and about victims and events that remain



Figure 2: National September 11 Memorial, Arad and Walker (2011), World Trade Center, New York. (Photo: author's own.)

uncommemorated. Since Berlin became the capital of a reunified Germany in 1990, several major new memorials have been built there to victim groups of Nazi persecution. The 2-hectare Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2005) and smaller memorials to Nazi persecution of homosexuals (2008) and Sinti and Roma (2012) were all erected on sites close to the German Parliament, the Reichstag. This area was chosen partly to highlight the German state's acknowledged accountability as perpetrator of these acts and partly to give the subjects high visibility to passing tourists. But not all victims' groups have sufficient money and influence to obtain large, prominent sites. The inflationary impact of Berlin's memory boom has been to increase competition among memorials while also perhaps lessening their individual effect (Huyssen, 2003).

In many cases, victims' memorials are also in tension with existing commemorative plans and strategies because their sponsors seek to erect them in relative haste. Westminster City Council, which regulates many of London's major commemorative precincts, requires a minimum 10-year delay between an event and its commemoration. London's memorials to Diana, Princess of Wales and the 7 July bombings, unveiled only seven and four years respectively after the events, illustrate how quickly demand can arise for permanent commemoration of the deaths of civilian victims. Both these memorials avoided Westminster's constraint by obtaining sites within Hyde Park, managed by the national Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

Historic sites

Some memorials in Berlin, London and New York occupy sites directly connected with the people or events being commemorated. Even memorials that address national themes are often sited in places within these cities that have particular historical relevance.

Many memorials erected in Berlin since it became capital of reunified Germany are located at central sites that are connected with past events. The memorial beneath Berlin's Bebelplatz (1995), opposite the library of Humboldt University, remembers the Nazi book burnings that occurred there, and the memorial at Grunewald railway station (1991–98) commemorates its use for the deportation of Jews during the Holocaust. One memorial to murdered communist leader Rosa Luxemburg (2006) stands near the former German Communist Party headquarters; another from 1987 stands next to the Tiergarten canal where the Nazis clandestinely killed her and dumped her body. Memorials to those killed trying to cross the Berlin Wall during the partitioning are mostly located on the wall's former alignment (Figure 3). The placement of Berlin's proposed celebratory National Monument to Freedom and Unity has been criticised because it is the pedestal of a former 'national memorial' to Kaiser Wilhelm, Emperor of Germany's First Reich. Some parliamentarians have argued this memorial should not imply that today's social unity is built on the base of past imperialism (Ausschuss für Kultur und Medien, 2007). Given Berlin's chequered history, spatial and thematic continuities with existing or former memorials are not always desirable.

Despite New York's intensive development, several recent memorials have been developed on sites that have an intrinsic historical connection. The African Burial Ground National Monument was initiated in 1991 when excavation work for a new high-rise federal government office building uncovered a large

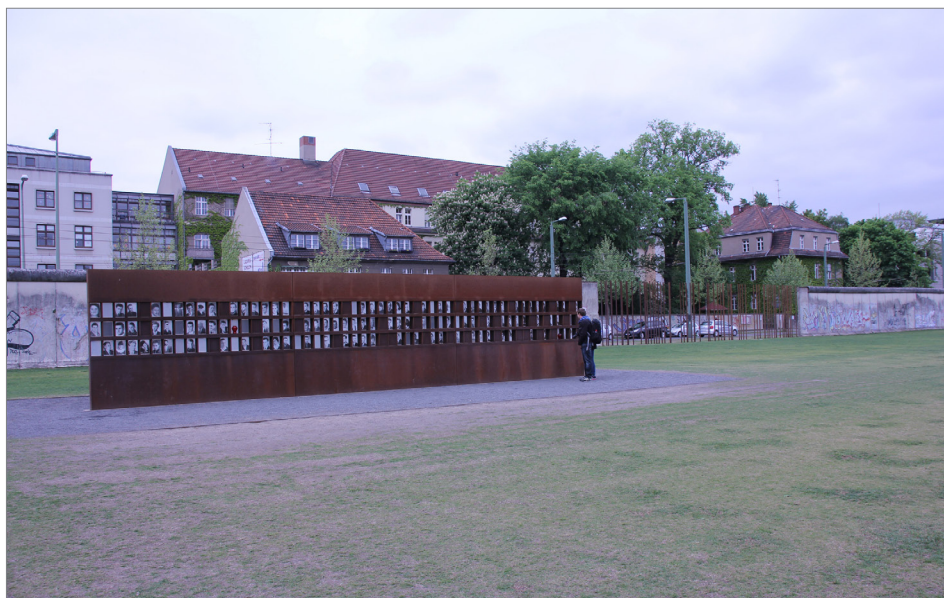


Figure 3: Berlin Wall Memorial, sinai/
ON architektur (2012), Bernauer
Strasse, Berlin. (Photo: author's own.)

archaeological site where tens of thousands of former slaves had been interred between 1626 and 1794 outside the defensive wall of the former New Amsterdam settlement (Moore, undated). The building's plans were modified, and one quarter of the site was left vacant for a permanent memorial and for re-interment of excavated remains (Bogart, 1999; Katz, 2006). The National September 11 Memorial occupies the footprints of the destroyed World Trade Center towers.

Few among London's memorials are located where tragic events occurred, considering the city's long history and its many famous residents. Small memorials at the Tower of London and nearby Tower Hill remember their use for executions. Two recent memorials at Liverpool Street Station (2003, 2006) commemorate the arrival point of Jewish children rescued and resettled from Nazi Germany before the Second World War. It is not always easy to place a memorial in a site directly connected with events. In the case of the 7 July terrorist attacks, three of the bombs were detonated inside different underground train tunnels; the locations are not visible at ground level. Diana, Princess of Wales died outside the United Kingdom; her London memorial sits near her former residence, Kensington Palace.

Making space available

Given the increasing demand for memorials, all three cities have had to find adequate new sites without compromising other needs for open space. Since the Second World War, no major new commemorative precincts were created in the central areas of Berlin, London or New York, and their planning agencies now struggle to meet demand. Memorial planners seek to increase the supply of attractive sites by reorganising and expanding existing precincts, identifying or creating entirely new sites, and taking advantage of destructive events that clear urban land.

Many sponsors of new memorials want them placed within existing national commemorative precincts and other key public spaces, to confirm the general importance of their subject and maximise visibility, or close to specific memorials

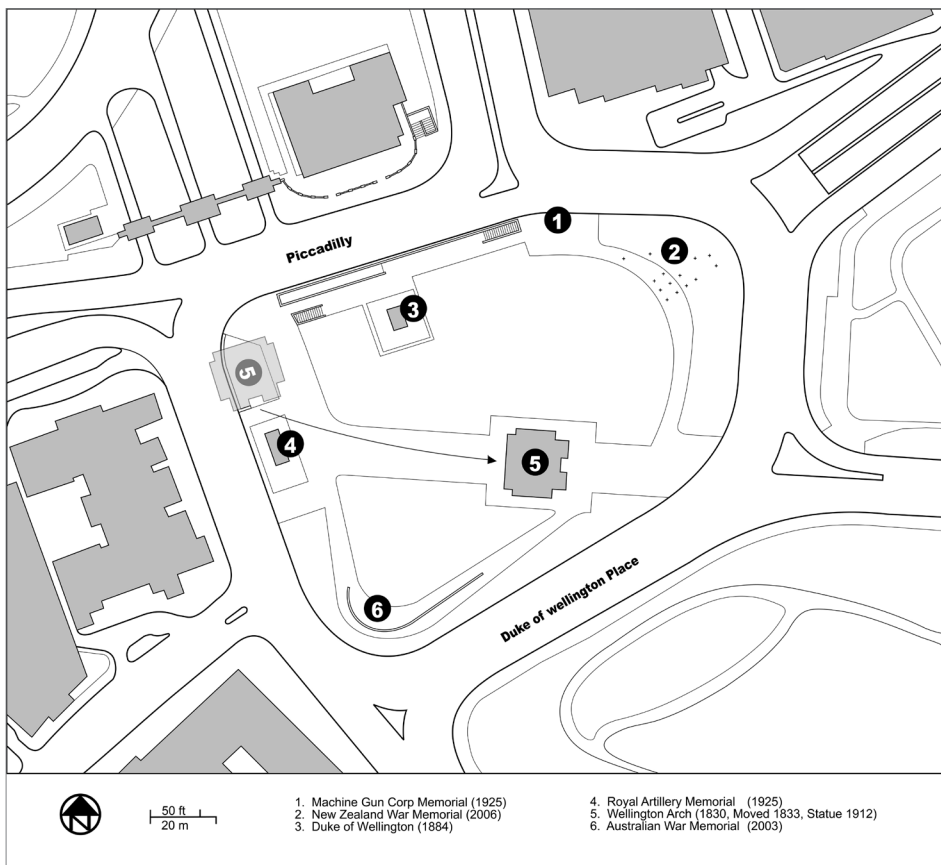
to draw symbolic power from their meanings. New memorials have thus continued to be placed in and around New York's Battery and Central Parks, and London's four major memorial precincts – Waterloo Place, Hyde Park Corner, Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square. The first three London sites all originally commemorated Britain's victories in the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15), but the first two have subsequently been reorganised to accommodate many other memorials to later wars and events. The original focus of Waterloo Place (1816) was the 40-metre column topped by the statue of the Army Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York (1834). Subsequently, it was joined by a memorial to the 1853–56 Crimean War (1861) and progressively thereafter by seven memorials to Victorian-era soldiers, nurses, statesmen and explorers, two of them brought from prior locations. One soldier statue was moved elsewhere in 1921 to accommodate a memorial to Edward VII. In 2010, a memorial was added to Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park, who led the repulsion of the Germans in the Battle of Britain. Its sponsors had sought to locate it on the fourth plinth of Trafalgar Square, which had stood empty from 1843 to 1999 (Sumartojo, 2012).

The Women of World War Two memorial (2005) had also initially been proposed for that plinth. A 1959 statue of Walter Raleigh in the middle of Whitehall was relocated so that the women's memorial could stand near the Cenotaph, to which it has a close formal and thematic relationship. A statue of Nelson Mandela (2007) had also been designed and proposed for Trafalgar Square, given the proximity to South Africa House and the square's prior use by anti-apartheid protestors. It was ultimately steered to Parliament Square, which contains not only statues of seven former Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom but also memorials to former US president Abraham Lincoln (1920) and former South African president Jan Smuts (1956). Because all these commemorative works take a narrow statue form, they are relatively easy to incorporate into existing assemblages or move to new locations.

London's Hyde Park Corner (Figure 4) is the only commemorative precinct to be developed in the city's centre since the Second World War. The addition of First World War memorials to the Royal Artillery (1925) and Machine Gun Corps (1925) extended its original Napoleonic War theme. The small, separate traffic islands on which these memorials originally stood were linked in 1963 to form the current widened roundabout. The precinct's theme was further expanded by commemorations of the war sacrifices of Commonwealth allies. The Australian War Memorial (2003) is a curved perimeter water wall specifically designed to shield out the intersection's surrounding traffic. The New Zealand War Memorial (2006) is a field of 16 black-painted bronze posts spaced out across a landscape berm on the opposite corner. These projects thus also enhance the experiential quality of the site for visitors. The Memorial Gates (2002) directly east of Hyde Park Corner commemorate the armed forces of the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Caribbean. Canada's war memorial (1992) stands 500 metres away.

New York's Central Park contains approximately 20 memorial statues and a First World War infantry memorial, but the Parks and Recreation Department resists new incursions. Major plazas at the park's southern corners have long been occupied by large memorials to explorer Christopher Columbus (1892) and Civil War General William Sherman (1903). More recently, the corners at

Figure 4: Hyde Park Corner, London.
(Map by Te-Sheng Huang, modified by
Quentin Stevens.)



the northern (Harlem) end of the park have been developed with memorials to African-American musician Duke Ellington (1997) and statesman and former slave Frederick Douglass (2010). Battery Park, a 10-hectare site at Manhattan’s southern tip, contains 21 separate memorials. Eleven of them are currently being relocated as part of a wider redevelopment to improve circulation through the park for pedestrians and cyclists and provide a large, open lawn for recreation and public events. The proposed plan rearranges these memorials as nodes along a regular perimeter promenade that is separated from the park proper by a low wall and cycleway. The memorials will be clustered thematically as ‘Explorers’, ‘Defenders’ and ‘Mariners’ (New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and the Battery Conservancy, 2009). This example shows that commemorative planning does not only involve placing new memorials in prominent vacant sites; re-planning and new infrastructure can also reframe existing sites, memorials and meanings (Vale, 2008).

Berlin’s current planners are more wary of framing or reframing overarching national narratives, after a series of previous regimes destroyed existing symbolic axes and precincts and developed new ones (Jordan, 2006; Till, 2005). In the nineteenth century, Schinkel master-planned the main east–west axis Unter den Linden, punctuated by the Brandenburg Gate (1791), the Neue Wache (1816) and an equestrian statue of Frederick the Great (1851). In 1901, Kaiser Wilhelm II commissioned the cross-axial ‘Victory Avenue’, which was to be lined with 32 statues and 64 busts of noblemen and to lead to the 1873 Siegestsäule (‘Victory Column’) outside the Reichstag. In 1938, Albert Speer moved the Siegestsäule further into the Tiergarten, and ‘Victory Avenue’ was realigned on a

nearby 'New Victory Avenue' because it had interrupted the massive planned north-south axis of Hitler's *Weltstadt Germania*. Most of Berlin's recent memorials are to victims, not victors; victims' memorials can seldom be incorporated into larger commemorative assemblages because their theme is usually at odds with the affirmative narratives of culture, national identity and heroism under which many statues of heroes have been gathered.

Even though these three cities are large and built-up, each has at certain times had large, empty spaces available for new memorials. The construction of London's Victoria and Albert Embankments in the 1860s extended the city into the Thames River and created walkways and parks that have housed numerous memorials; one recent addition is the Battle of Britain Monument (2005). Similarly, the extension of Battery Park into New York's waterfront created open space next to dense downtown Manhattan. Battery Park City, a much larger landfill area created nearby in 1980, provided scope for two large, landscaped spatial memorials: the New York City Police Memorial (1997) and the Irish Hunger Memorial (2002). Residents of Battery Park City have complained that the number of large memorials for mourners and tourists is growing at the expense of open space that should be provided for recreation by local families (Iovine, 2003). Like London's Royal Parks, Battery Park City is controlled by a state agency with wider objectives, rather than by a municipality with practical space-management obligations. Three large memorials to local victims of the September 11 attack – mostly commuters – have been accommodated on the low-lying shorelines that face onto Manhattan in suburban Staten Island (2004) and New Jersey (2006, 2011) (Figure 5). The attack also cleared such a large area that the 2.4-hectare memorial commemorating the event could be integrated within its new master plan.

Berlin was so completely destroyed in 1945 that the Soviet Red Army was able to erect a large memorial to its fallen right at the intersection of the city's major east-west axis and the former 'Victory Avenue'. The 1989 removal of Berlin's dividing wall also left a wide swathe of open space through the historical centre, much of it in government ownership. This strip accommodated many memorials to those killed during the partitioning, as well as providing space for the 2-hectare Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which commemorates events unrelated to the wall's history.

Decision making

Planning also addresses the demand for memorials in the ways it manages the processes that guide various claims. Planning and decision making for memorials in Berlin, London and New York are not directly controlled by either national or city-wide governments. As befits the democratic constitutions of the three countries in which these cities are located, most memorial proposals are initiated outside the government. The regulation of memorial proposals in both Berlin and New York is far removed from control by elected officials. For both cities it is managed by independent agencies, and decisions are open to broad input from experts and the general public.

Berlin does not have any kind of master plan for future memorials or even a set of preferred sites. The theme, siting and design of each new public memorial must



Figure 5: Empty Sky, New Jersey September 11 memorial, Jessica Jamroz and Frederic Schwartz (2011), Liberty State Park, Jersey City. (Photo: author's own.)

go through extensive public and parliamentary debate. Indeed, some argue that Germany's intensive, ongoing process of debating memorial proposals is itself an important part of the necessary remembering and reckoning with the past (Spielmann, 1995; Young, 2010). Although the German constitution gives Berlin's city-state government prime responsibility for approving memorials, the German parliament's policy for the development and management of commemorative sites encourages partnerships of non-governmental organisations and citizens' initiatives to lead this process (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, 2008).

New York City has a comparatively strong and consistent approach to memorial development. All commemorative proposals are brought forward by non-governmental actors and are privately funded. Most seek sites in the city's parks and plazas, which are generally managed by the Parks and Recreation Department. Since 1898, approval of memorials has also required thematic and aesthetic evaluation by the Public Design Commission, whose peer-nominated members include a range of design professionals and curators (Bogart, 2006; Kuhn, 2011; New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, 2010). The commission holds hearings that are open to public input. Between them, the two agencies maintain a long-term, apolitical view of the wider amenity of public memorials and their potential social and historical significance. Openness to participation from diverse groups of sponsors has allowed recent memorials to address a widening array of social difference, recognising the histories of, for example, African Americans and international allegiances. Some major memorials have eluded New York City's planning regime by locating in the numerous public open spaces that it does not manage, notably Battery Park City and the World Trade Center.

The planning and regulation of memorials in London are quite decentralised and accommodating. Responsibilities are divided among the Borough of Westminster, City of London, the Greater London Authority, which manages

Parliament and Trafalgar Squares, and the national government, which manages the Royal Parks. By judging memorial proposals in terms of local and long-term relevance, the Borough of Westminster and City of London have generally maintained a rather conservative national commemorative discourse. Here it is only relatively recently that memorial constituencies have broadened a little to embrace commemorations of Britain's Commonwealth and Second World War alliances. The Greater London Authority and national government tend to have more permissive, inclusive and even experimental attitudes toward commemorative sites, themes and forms. London accordingly has a differentiated commemorative landscape.

Conclusion

The three cities studied in this paper illustrate a variety of tensions among the commemorative interests of various groups, as well as between commemorative and other uses of public space, and a range of ways in which planning seeks to manage these tensions. For many reasons, cities like Berlin, London and New York perhaps should not seek to plan memorials as comprehensively as cities like Washington, DC and Canberra. The spatial, functional and symbolic relationships among the memorials in each of the cities studied are highly complex. The overall order of these cities is also complex; they have multiple centres of power and of meaning, which befit their rich and still-unfolding histories. Planning for memorials is also difficult because it involves not just talking about the past, but predicting the future: what people might want to remember, when, where and how. In contrast to master-planned capital cities where national governments exercise great spatial and narrative control, the physical, social and representational landscapes around memorials in these three cities will continue to change, often suddenly and dramatically. In Berlin, London and New York, a wide range of actors and land uses competes for space and attention. The three city governments do not necessarily own or even regulate the most suitable sites for new memorials. It is perhaps then inevitable that these cities generally constrain their commemorative ambitions to small, localised precincts, such as Hyde Park Corner and Battery Park, and to relatively undeveloped areas like waterfronts. In these cities, space for commemoration remains just as contested as the memories themselves.

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