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Cities and Memory: a history of memorials in urban design from the Renaissance to Canberra

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In recent decades, there has been a significant revival of interest and growth in numbers of public memorials – sculptures and structures in public spaces that convey information and social attitudes towards past persons, events and ideas, sometimes on sites associated with them, but which are themselves not historic material. This renaissance has been most marked in national capital cities, and is often traced back to the 1982 Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, a city which at that time had not erected any major new memorials in its key national space for almost four decades. By 2001, with increasing requests for new commemorative works, Washington's National Capital Planning Commission found it necessary to produce a master plan for future memorials that set out key principles and identified 100 potential sites, and numerous other capitals have followed suit. There is at present very little comparative historical research that can guide such policy.

To better understand this recent revival of interest in memorials and the modes of contemporary planning for them, this paper examines the historical evolution of the role and form of memorials within the overall planning and development of capital cities, both existing and new, from the Renaissance to the beginning of Modernism. It explores the contributions that memorials have made to the role of the capital city as a diagram that defines and communicates national history, identity and politics. Four main historical periods are considered: the re-planning and enlargement of Rome in the Sixteenth Century, especially under Pope Sixtus V; Neoclassical planning in Enlightenment Europe such as that of London, Edinburgh, Berlin and Vienna; the planning of colonial and post-colonial capitals in the New World, including Richmond, Virginia, Washington DC and Mexico City; and the City Beautiful Movement in North

America at the end of the Nineteenth Century, leading to Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin's 1913 plan for Canberra.

The paper draws on a wide range of existing planning and urban design research that has studied the general principles, geometries, rules and processes used for planning and building capital cities, to extract from these studies the limited details that pertain specifically to memorials. It combines this with existing analyses of specific plans for a range of individual memorials and commemorative precincts, including Michelangelo's *Campidoglio* in Rome, Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square and Waterloo Place in London, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1902 McMillan Plan for Washington's National Mall; and analysis of policies and agencies that shaped memorials and decisions about them, such as the UK's 1854 Public Statues (Metropolis) Act. The paper also draws upon first-hand analysis of the plans of a range of capital cities and the locations and forms of their memorials over time, through mapping and site analysis, to examine developing spatial relationships of memorials' alignments, orientations, scales and themes. These materials are brought together to conduct a comparative and diachronic analysis of the varying forms, locations, subject matter, and planning frameworks of memorials erected in capital cities over the past four hundred years.

The paper explores a number of key themes and issues that arise from this comparison. The analysis delineates a broad and enduring European consensus, inspired by classical Greece and Rome, that memorials were not just discrete objects to be designed, judged and visited on their own merits, and that their scale and location were not necessarily to be limited by the commemorated events and audiences, but that memorials should be incorporated more generally within urban spatial plans and regulatory regimes through a careful, regulated synthesis of art, architecture, landscape and urban design. This belief was propagated to varying degrees in new capitals in colonies in the New World, Australasia, India and Africa. A second theme is regular evidence of planners' consciousness of practical problems and benefits linked to the planning of memorials, in terms of wayfinding, traffic, economic development, and public amenity. This is best conveyed in Camilllo Sitte's treatise, which in its attention to aesthetic aspects of urban design is often overlooked as a careful study of

numerous functional aspects of city planning in connection with memorials. Linked to both these themes is the unfolding historical changes in public use of urban open spaces, and the shifting relationships between open spaces and memorial objects. The examples and models of plazas and memorials handed down from ancient and medieval Europe were not always well-fitted to these changing needs. A third theme examined is the continued use of memorials, and memorial regulations, by controlling and colonizing powers to mark cultural and political authority onto urban space. This includes the transformation of existing urban fabric within cities for new commemorative purposes.

This third theme in particular reflects a wider point. While memorials are inspired by looking to the past, they serve current political needs. Autocratic regimes have a tendency to invest heavily in stone monuments to their power and their lineage at precisely the time that power is threatened or waning. Memorials also serve current practical needs. They very often have a role in urban expansion, being located to add visibility, amenity and land value to areas of urban growth and redevelopment. By identifying these kinds of issues, this paper seeks to inform future policy, planning and design for memorials and for capital cities more broadly.

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