Regulating Memory: Commemorative Structures and Urban Governance in Australian Cities

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Abstract
Monuments, memorials and plaques contribute significantly to the historical legibility and emotional register of public space. There is a large literature on public commemoration as a social and cultural practice, but little attention has been paid to its bureaucratic management. Australian capital city governments deal with many proposals to use public space within their jurisdictions for commemorative installations. However, the development of policy frameworks to manage public commemoration is a relatively recent initiative. This article discusses the social and political dynamics of public commemoration in major Australian cities, and examines some recent policy responses.

Introduction
In the late-twentieth century the management of commemorative structures in public space emerged as a problem for city governments in Australia and internationally. The deteriorating physical fabric of public assets in many western cities had been a concern for several decades, brought into focus by infrastructure failures and fiscal crises of urban governments. More recently, the ad hoc management and physical neglect of memorials and public artworks has come to attention, highlighting policy gaps in this area (Burling 2005).

One explanation of this trajectory – taking a lead from the literature on urban administration and local governance – is found in the rise of new public management (NPM). This fusion of strategic thinking and market logic swept through the corridors of Western public administrations from the 1980s. Urban or local-level governments, with their service orientation and large inventories of physical assets were prime targets for reform. While such an analysis underscores NPM's hegemony, the published literature in this area tends to focus on political systems and service provision (e.g., Dollery, Crase & Johnson 2006; Stoker 2004). The management of public commemoration can be regarded as an urban service. However, this article imagines cities as sites of collective memory (Boyer 1994) and, by focusing on symbolic economies, seeks to strengthen understanding of the complex connections between public commemoration and urban governance.

The article identifies three key influences behind the development of closer regulatory interest around public commemoration: legacy issues arising from earlier commemorative practices, the participatory turn in urban governance, and concerns to effectively manage a new emotional politics of public space. In exploring these themes, the article focuses empirical discussion on Australia, particularly the city of Melbourne. The article concentrates on small commemorative structures such as plaques, small memorials, plantings and park furniture. Seldom accorded the attention given to high profile heritage sites and places of commemoration (Atkinson 2007), these installations are ubiquitous commemorative forms in Western world cities and engage considerable bureaucratic effort. The City of Melbourne (1998), for example, approves only a small proportion of public requests for small commemorative structures, and is representative of other large cities in its use of strategies such as master planning, significance assessment and user charging to sift applications. Design criteria that standardise the form and content of small memorials also serve to moderate polemical claims on public space, minimising political risk to city governments and introducing a relatively uniform commemorative landscape.

This article is an exploratory analysis using data from a sample of 13 policies on commemorative structures drafted within the past fifteen years. These were sourced through an internet search of city government websites in Australasia, the United Kingdom and North America. While selection of the policies was influenced by language, search engine results and the content of city government websites, the sample size and breadth enables robust analysis. The article is also informed by consultancy work on commemorative policies undertaken by the author for the City of Melbourne (CoM) in 2009–10. All cited CoM material is in the public domain. The author’s Melbourne location also provided opportunities for field-based research.

The next section of the article outlines the broad context in which public commemoration emerged as a new concern for urban governance, with a focus on Australia. The article then discusses the three influences noted above on the development of regulatory policy, arguing that the strength and consistency of these influences are evident in the morphology of policies in the sample. However, commemoration is also subversive or risky business. The article’s final section examines instances of counter-memorialisation to illustrate the challenges of a memorial/counter-memorial dialectic to regulatory processes, political interests and the public sphere.

Cities and Commemoration
Public commemoration and the interpretation of urban spaces emerged as related elements of urban culture and governance with the nineteenth century consolidation of nation-states and growth of cities. As Lowenthal (1998) argues, this move coincides with a shift of heritage and memory from the private domain of patriarchy and familial wealth to the public realm of institutions, buildings and open space. Text-based commemoration, such as plaques and historical markers, also reflect expanding literacy and concerns to enhance the spatial coordination and legibility of cities, as well as an emerging concern over urban development and the loss of physical and social fabric (Wilson 2003).
Public (secular) commemoration in Australia is first recorded in 1822, with the fixing of a plaque denoting the 1770 landfall of Captain James Cook at Cape Solander, now part of coastal Sydney. Anticipating similar English developments by several decades (Wilson 2003), this move has been attributed to colonial self-consciousness about its past, manifest as a disposition to write things down (Healy 1997; Davison 1988). Such acts served a testamentary purpose, but remote settings such as Cape Solander had limited pedagogical impact. City parks and plazas were more promising places for assembling publics, and heroic individuals and military exploits provided aesthetic and instructional models. The monumental and figurative memorials of Victorian and Edwardian periods have been widely analysed. The appearance of utilitarian structures such as memorial drinking fountains, and the conjoining of commemoration, civics and urban services – Raxworthy and Blood’s (2004) term ‘civic hydrology’ neatly captures this convergence – have attracted less attention.

Conflict over public commemoration has an equally long history in Australia and elsewhere (Bodnar 1992; Levinson 1998). Political and sectarian rivalries played out around commemoration, notably in projects financed by public funding rather than private subscription (Davison 1988: 59–60; Healy 1997: 27). In the twentieth century, civic groups, historical societies, armed service organisations and come-lately heritage bodies have battled over commemoration, sometimes resulting in statutory action by state and Commonwealth governments to define institutional roles, designate and protect commemorative precincts, and defend exclusive conceptions of service and sacrifice (Damousi 1999; Wilcomb & Gregory 2010).

Bodnar’s (1992) analysis of public memory and commemoration in the United States offers a useful timeline of governmental interest in this field. Bodnar argues that vernacular and official cultures competed for space without significant interference from governments until the early twentieth century. Gradually, though, governments ‘took a more assertive role in mediating and ultimately dominating the various interests that had a stake in the discussion of public memory’ (41). Bodnar’s work is unusual for its focus on city jurisdictions and the bureaucratic practices that structured the allocation of commemorative space. There is a substantial scholarly literature on public commemoration in Australia, focusing on events and rituals, public instruction, memorials and counter-memorials (for a summary see Damousi 1999: 166–7; also Ashton & Hamilton 2008; Gibson & Besley 2004; Hay, Hughes & Tutton 2004; Lake 2006; Lake & Reynolds 2010; Ware 2004). Damousi (1999) has discussed the militarization and nationalization of commemoration in Australia – our concern is municipalisation. Ashton and Hamilton (2008) focus on civic memorials, especially those constructed in the late twentieth century, and their concept of participatory commemoration (that is, generated by publics rather than officially sponsored) helps to frame this article.

Looking beyond historical and cultural studies, the topic of public commemoration does not register in local government or public management studies. Local governments are generally seen to have a pragmatic focus on questions of planning, resource allocation and civic engagement, whereas the agency of higher governments is frequently viewed in terms of ideology and power. That is not to say that local governance is free of ideology. Lewi and Nichols’ (2010) work on modernism and civic infrastructure shows how deeply local authorities were engaged in a political project to shape the bodies and souls of modern liberal citizens, a task assisted by the shift in the ethics and aesthetics of commemoration from figurative and ornamental, to utilitarian. Lewis Mumford (1938) claimed that monuments were antithetical to the modern, progressive city, but modernity and commemoration have long been connected at local government level.

The 1980s is for many analysts of public management a convenient marker for the end of the modernist project overseen by a centralised, nation-building state, replaced by a neo-liberal framework emphasising bureaucratic de-concentration, marketisation and public choice. The impact of this change in outlook on local-level administration in Australia is complex and evolving, and analysts differ in its interpretation. Initially, under pressure from higher governments and their own sometimes bleak fiscal outlook, Australian local governments became more business-like, restyling ratepayers and residents as clients or customers and introducing a new strategic emphasis to service provision and the management of physical assets (Caufield 2003). Adams and Hess (2001) suggest that a subsequent communitarian turn reflected dissatisfaction with both market-based policy settings and the limits of state provision, bringing about a re-alignment of relationships between markets, the state and civil society. Rose (1999), by contrast, argues for the governmentised character of community as a feature of advanced or neo-liberalism. Community is not something standing apart from government, but a new space for its enactment.

However this move is understood, it is clear that in the late-twentieth century city governments began to develop more consistent and explicit approaches to managing public space and physical assets within their jurisdictions. Several structural changes and external pressures contributed to this move. In Australia, these include the devolution of planning powers to local administrations and a de-emphasis of national leadership in heritage management. A shift from functionally oriented to spatially oriented planning and service delivery frameworks brought a more holistic perspective to the meaning and management of places (McDonald et al. 2010). A new policy language of access acknowledged changing population structures and inequities in the distribution of cultural resources (Dunn et al. 2001). The economic competitiveness of cities brought new interest in city image and visitability (Dicks 2003).

However, as evidenced below, we can also observe in recent years an intensification of emotional or affective claims on public space as individual campaigner, civic organisations and sometimes government agencies seek premium city spaces to marshal public opinion for causes or events, or to legitimise identities and self-narratives. Jelin (2003) conceptualises this activity as memory entrepreneurship; Hoelscher (2006) uses the term memory inflation to describe the impact of entrepreneurial gains in this area. As several cultural analysts have noted, this trend has focused around themes of sacrifice and loss, in some cases gaining impetus from political responses to the events of 9/11 (Fassin & Rechtman 2009; Message 2006; Williams 2007). Milun (2007) takes a different tack by looking at space and subjectivities in urban design. Drawing on the work of Richard Sennett and Marc Augé, she
argues that new interest in the affective and subjective dimensions of public space seeks to counter the emptiness and corrosion of civic and public life produced by the proliferating non-spaces of late modernity. This interest intersects with an emerging policy focus on place making. Framed by spatial rather than functional (i.e. departmental) bureaucratic logic, place making involves cross-portfolio, multi-level and networked approaches to complex social problems, public service delivery and urban regeneration in particular localities. Place making also involves programs and activities that seek, in Duff's (2010) succinct description, to infuse public space with meaning and embodied experience. Place making, under a range of banners, has a long history of dominance by specialists – planners, architects, and administrators. This history has been punctuated by periodic interest in participatory and vernacular concepts of community building (Lewi & Nichols 2010; Shneekloth & Shibley 1995). Commemoration is an important component of place making, but in privileging certain narratives in public space it is both selective and collective in its effect.

Regulating Public Commemoration: Pressures and Responses

As Stoker (2004: 22) observes, policy seeks to establish ‘the conditions for ordered rule and collective action within the political realm’. The research sample shows considerable similarity between policies for small public memorials across three continents. At one level this morphology suggests the sweeping influence of NPM, with its emphasis on strategy, performance and accountability. A pragmatic view is that resource constraints, the limits of jurisdictional power and peer influence promote policy transfer and policy convergence at this level of government (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000). However, the policies do not reflect a uniform position on city government engagement with publics over commemorative practices. For example, the City of Sydney’s (2006: 9) draft policy on commemorative plaques contains the opaque statement ‘[i]n general, the City will not approve unsolicited requests for memorial plaques commemorating a particular person, persons or events’. The Adelaide City Council (2006: 1) ‘will consider public requests’, while the City of Perth (2003: 1) ‘is committed to providing opportunities’ for commemorative space. These positions may be framed by wider administrative contexts and dispositions in these cities, but they concur that new forms of participatory commemoration – that is, the sharing of commemorative work between publics and governments – require a new policy response. This section identifies a shared set of substantive influences on that policy development: legacy issues, the democratisation of public space, and a new politics of affect.

Legacies, Past and Future

Development pressures, planning regimes and ageing infrastructure, particularly in the urban core of older cities, increasingly require city governments to moderate tensions ‘between the city being built and the city falling apart’ (Perry 1995: 72). Earlier decisions on the forms and locations of commemorative structures have left a problematic legacy for current-day cultural planners and physical asset managers. Local government has the largest proportion of physical assets in its asset base of any tier of Australian government (Lang 1991). In recent years we have seen the rise of strategic asset management as an important logic and toolset for local administrations dealing with asset legacies. This body of knowledge seeks legitimacy by constructing a history of ad hoc acquisitions and subsequent neglect by city governments in regard to their physical assets (see AMQ International Ltd et al. 1998). There is evidence to support claims of ad hocery, however this is a partial and ahistorical view of how commemorative assets were acquired. A more contextualised analysis reveals earlier logics behind the acquisition and forms of commemorative structures. In addition to the didactic or pedagogical lessons discussed above, visibility, vista and the neo-classical aesthetic of formal parks were important criteria (Taylor 1995). The repose and restorative qualities of naturalistic settings were also influential and continue in the tradition of commemorative tree planting. Further, the apparently indiscriminate acceptance of gifted memorial structures from service clubs or philanthropists can be understood in the contexts of self-help and civic duty rather than simply an earlier failure of governance. Relatively uncluttered city parks accommodated these rationales for a time, especially in cities such as Melbourne with generous areas of open space.

In the late-twentieth century, scarcity – of open space and financial resources – became a major concern for city governments. Space in premium city parks has become increasingly valuable, in turn enhancing its appeal to memory entrepreneurs. The application of heritage planning principles to older parks highlights the tension between a static present that frowns on further accretions to conserve a dynamic past that welcomed them. One response of city governments to new proposals for larger commemoratives structures is to redirect those requests towards the refurbishment of earlier memorials, providing opportunities for their repurposing and redecoration, as well as potential cost savings in asset maintenance (Burling 2005; City of Melbourne 2003). A second response is to de-emphasise green space as the natural location of commemorative structures by publicising the commemorator possibilities of ‘grey’ spaces and street trees. CoM’s inclusion of pavers in its list of approved memorial structures, offered in response to public requests for commemorative space, points in this direction (City of Melbourne 1998). However, drawing a distinction between what the City of Sydney (2006) calls naming and commemorative plaques, street locations (including buildings) continue to be used mostly for naming or interpretive purposes, perhaps reflecting an abiding association between naturalistic settings and commemoration.

The futility of erecting monuments as enduring forms of remembrance was, as Bindman (2001) reminds us, a great theme of eighteenth century English literature. The notion of permanence is also circumscribed by the economic dynamism of large cities. Most policies in the research sample specify a minimum period for retention of memorials in situ, freeing memorial sites for redevelopment thereafter. Even monumental structures can be fated to wander the city, as the history of Melbourne’s first commemorative statue, the 1864 bronze casting of explorers Burke and Wills, attests (Maxwell & Dean 1995). It may be reasonable to limit the time that city governments contract with memorial applicants, to facilitate asset management and redevelopment processes. Is the Australian Bicentennial Authority’s heavily branded plaque commemorating the assembly of local residents in Darling...
Square, East Melbourne on 26 January 1988 worth retaining? However, a minimum period of two years, specified by one policy, contrasts sharply with ‘set in stone’ conceptions of commemoration. Given that ownership of the structures usually vests with the city governments, this example might be seen more as a contract for renting commemorative space. Minimum retention periods may be notional in practice, but the example reminds us of the encompassing nature of urban policy’s strategic turn.

**Democratising Public Space**

Making public space widely available for commemorative purposes can be seen as a form of cultural citizenship. This entails shared access to cultural goods and the acknowledgement of plural histories and historical actors in the public sphere. CoM policy states ‘plaques and memorials represent and acknowledge the diverse make-up of our community’ (City of Melbourne 1998). Cultural pluralism requires a balancing of claims to be different and equal (Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge 2007). Ashton and Hamilton (2008) identify retrospective commemoration – recognising new communities and individuals within established narratives – as a strategy for widening the scope of public commemoration. This strategy is easier to achieve through small installations, public art and events, than large-scale projects. For example, only two Indigenous people – Sir Douglas and Lady Gladys Nicholas – feature as subjects in their own right in Melbourne’s wealth of public statuary. However, traditional commemorative forms such as plaques and figurative statuary may also reinforce an association of diversity and ethnicity. The use of less didactic commemorative forms may both represent and speak to other constituencies. A good Melbourne example is the 2006 sculpture with sound and Braille text in Kings Domain commemorating the campaigner for rights and services for people with low vision, Tilly Aston.

Claims for commemorative space typically involve assessment against criteria such as the civic contribution of an individual, importance of an event, and association with a particular place. On one reading, this suggests an extension of established assessment methodologies developed within the field of built and natural heritage conservation to other cultural domains (see Russell & Winkworth 2009). However, administrative responsibility for commemorative policies is distributed across administrative units of cities in this sample (e.g., parks, arts and culture, engineering, asset management). This suggests that, rather than seeing heritage management as exerting a special influence on this aspect of city governance, we might locate such evaluative schemes within a wider managerialist emphasis on administrative scorecards and accountability.

The criteria that typically ration the allocation of public space for memorials may be biased towards civic worthies or established residents, conflicting with the pluralist orientation of cultural citizenship. Institutional commitment to ‘access’ can take a range of forms, from transactional or client-based engagement, to more adventurous forms of collaboration and co-development, ideas that have been most adventurously explored in museum settings (Kreps 2008). However, in an increasingly clamorous public sphere, Back (2007) argues for attention not only to how communities ‘speak’, but to how decision-makers ‘listen’, or how they attend to what is unheard or unnoticed. Some of the most poignant small memorials in Melbourne parks – to the homeless or to missing persons, for example – suggest a bureaucratic ethics of listening rather than strict reliance on the metrics of significance.

Neither public space nor the public are self-evident or necessarily singular entities (Catungal & McCann 2010; Iveson 2007). Similarly, public commemoration is not simply a centrally-directed or governmentalised project. As Message (2007: 127) argues ‘the public sphere is already constituted by citizens who are embodied and participatory in their relationship to public space’. For our purposes, this is exemplified by a range of unregulated commemorative practices, from simple roadside memorials to complex and politically-charged counter-memorials.

The roadside is perhaps the most conflicted area of commemorative practice, and a rich site for cultural analysis (Collins & Opie 2010). In 1998 the manager of Victoria’s largest public space holdings, VicRoads, drafted a policy on unofficial roadside memorials, labeling them as potential traffic hazards and driver distractions to facilitate their removal. (It could be argued that similar qualities attach to the Victorian government’s graphic road safety billboards, also placed on road verges.) Strict enforcement of VicRoads’ policy has led to ugly scenes (Yates 2009). However, local authorities control most Australian roads and it can be speculated that their closer ties with impacted communities have encouraged a more liberal approach. This is seen in regulatory moves to co-opt the practice of roadside memorials within a discourse of shared concern for road safety by specifying approved memorial forms. However, resistance to this move – evident in the range and proliferation of roadside memorials - prompts Ashton and Hamilton (2008) to reflect on the limits of state authority and desires to move memory back into the heart of community.

**The Politics of Affect**

There is a famous section in Robert Musil’s (1953) novel *The Man Without Qualities* in which the protagonist Ulrich muses on the invisibility of public monuments. The forgettability of memorials has also been a theme of recent writing (Osborne 2004). Such characterisations underplay the intense politics of affect that surround some requests to city governments for commemorative space.

‘Global cities’, a title adopted by Melbourne (City of Melbourne 2000a: 6), are both local habitations and nodes in international financial, political and population circuits. This composite identity entails the coordination by city governments of requests for the commemoration of local, state, national and global figures or events. Within the past decade, the CoM has received requests for memorials to such diverse subjects as victims of crime, the Port Arthur shootings, Blood, Organ and Tissue donors, the Bali bombings, Victorian police killed in service, 9/11, Australian athletes, the Maltese community, the fiftieth anniversary of the Israeli state, pioneer indigenous women (sic), the HMAS Yarra and many others. Some of these proposals have few substantive links with place, although the political status of the capital or seat of government and the diverse population of global cities afford many possibilities for abstract connections. Thus, CoM’s first policy statement on its parks and gardens distinguishes between major and local parks, the former serving a capital city role and a wide catchment of users (City of Melbourne c1997).
Some memorial proposals, though, show particular sensitivity to spatial context, geared towards a site’s affective potential. A good Melbourne example of this is an unsuccessful bid made several years ago by a national civic organisation to construct a memorial on the city’s premiere boulevard, St Kilda Road. The plan was to permanently illuminate one of the avenue’s majestic trees. The intervention was imagined by the proponents of the project to rival the Victorian Arts Centre’s 150 metre spire in its visual impact. Some proposals may carry significant political freight, especially where the proponents are powerful political actors or higher governments. There are also examples of nervous responses by city officials in the face of political backlash against memorial proposals. The saga of Washington’s Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial, featuring objections to the ethnicity of its designer and the abstraction of the design, is well known. Municipal-scale controversies rarely attract such publicity, but may be as contentious. In 1996 a controversy erupted in Vancouver when approval for the construction of a memorial to people with HIV/AIDS in Stanley Park, the city’s premiere park, was rescinded following adverse media coverage before municipal elections (Kittelberg 2006). The episode triggered the drafting of a memorials policy in that city, but for some the subsequent approval of the AIDS memorial in a gay precinct outside the park highlighted normative aspects of the policy (Catungal & McCann 2010).

While policy mechanisms are geared towards evaluating proposals for commemorative structures on an individual basis, the complex political and regulatory environment surrounding proposals for large memorials, in particular, engages wider cultural and statutory planning processes. The potential for what Stoker (2004: 22) refers to as a ‘bidding culture’, where political actors manoeuvre for preferred outcomes, is moderated by objective planning criteria. Permanent structures in Melbourne’s heritage-listed parks may require a Heritage Victoria permit as well as CoM’s approval. The National Trust of Victoria also takes a close interest in Melbourne’s heritage parks (Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal 1996). Of course, such interventions may be useful in parlaying contentious proposals into forms or locations preferred by city administrations. In recent years, CoM has sought to co-locate major memorials – especially those relating to service or sacrifice, such as the 2001 Victorian Police memorial – in a precinct in the King’s Domain, near Victoria’s Shrine of Remembrance. Whether we are witnessing in recent commemorative projects a widening application of the concept of service, recognising professional and volunteer contributions to welfare and social peace, or whether we are seeing the militarisation of civil service, is an open question.

Risky Memories

The specification of pre-approved memorial structures, especially didactic forms such as plaques, provides city governments with a standardised asset and aesthetic, an opportunity for residents to participate in the work of public memory, and a capacity for city administrators to exercise editorial decisions on content and expression. Access and risk – two drivers of contemporary public policy – are thus equipoised. This may require less juggling in Australia than elsewhere, notably the United States, where the placement and wording of memorials in public spaces has been dogged by the complexities of free speech constitutionalism (Dolan 2008). However, commemoration has developed as an important theme in Melbourne public art (Ware 2004). Public art engages a distinct form of risk management – dealing with the creative risk intrinsic to art making. Recent controversy over political comment in artworks sponsored by or exhibited in CoM art spaces have resulted in the drafting of new guidelines distinguishing private and public space and indicating what can be ‘said’ in the latter (City of Melbourne 2008b). While such policies draw on laws concerned with obscenity, privacy and human rights, they are not sufficient to reinstate the moral lessons that some commentators see as the proper work of commemorative structures. This is exemplified in criticism of Julie Shiels’ 2005 public artwork Aunty Alma’s Seats, in the City of Port Phillip, bordering the City of Melbourne. The work features three bronze milk crates installed in O’Donnell Gardens, an area of St Kilda frequented by Indigenous ‘parkies’. A memorial to two local Indigenous identities, the work combines a sympathetic observation of Indigenous social life with a clever play on notions of stolenness and civic commemoration. A former Port Phillip City Mayor questioned the decision by the ‘pack of weirdos’ now running the council to approve the installation in a Victorian-era park (Lucas 2005). Melbourne-based newspaper columnist Andrew Bolt was more concerned with the message. Bolt (cited in Hart 2006) argued that a memorial to Indigenous achievers like actor Ernie Dingo, perhaps represented in the form of a bronze ladder, would provide a more instructive public lesson.

If such abstract and spectral projects create a backlash, the fusion of commemoration, living culture and political activism seen in Melbourne’s Camp Sovereignty episode has underscored the political sensitivities and power relations surrounding public commemoration. In 2006, coinciding with Melbourne’s hosting of the Commonwealth Games, Indigenous activists set up camp on the King’s Domain, where skeletal remains of Indigenous people previously held by the Melbourne Museum had been re-buried two decades earlier. The centrepiece was a fire reportedly started with coals from a fire at Canberra’s Tent Embassy burning since 1998. Camp supporters argued for the cultural importance of preserving the fire. Opponents included the Returned Services League, which called for the fire to be extinguished by ANZAC Day so as not to compete with the ‘sacred flame’ at the nearby Shrine of Remembrance (Ittis 2006). After protracted negotiations and the threat of police action, the camp was closed. This clash of political and proprietorial interests over remembrance has a longer history. In 1950 the Shrine trustees, supported by the RSL, successfully lobbied the Melbourne City Council to refuse permission for an ex-Servicewomen’s Association memorial near the Pioneer Women’s Gardens in the Domain. Current CoM policy maintains the line that an application for a ‘war memorial would be refused on the ground that it would diminish the Shrine’ (City of Melbourne 2003: 3). Regardless of a policy shift towards local governance and cultural inclusion, claims on some commemorative rituals, symbols and spaces remain tight.

Concluding Remarks

Writing in the early 1990s, Bodnar used words such as ‘assertion’ and ‘domination’ to describe the role of government in the field of public commemoration. As this article has discussed, subsequent policy development by city governments in this field has been framed by broader trends towards local governance, emphasising facilitation and
Policy formalisation in recent years has sought to bring ad hoc commemorative processes into a strategic framework and fuse city government roles in space planning, place making and asset management. Assessment criteria, such as connection to place and significance, follow wider trends in heritage management, with both framed by NPM’s concerns with measurement and accountability. Place-making is widely seen in partnership terms, involving engaged and responsible citizens as well as governments, third sector organisations and businesses. The partnership discourse contains within it a critique of the clientalist model of local government that prevailed in the late-twentieth century. Here citizens were recast as consumers in a quasi-market of government services. However, concerns over scarcity, sustainability and risk – important themes in local government reform during this period – exert continued policy influence, especially in regard to physical infrastructure.

The last decade or so has seen the rise of ubiquitous computing and geo-locative media, which transform the ability to interpret public space (Leite 2009) and challenge the concept of collective memory (Garde-Hansen, Hoskins & Reading 2009). What, then, explains an apparent strengthening of interest in Memorial and Monuments? Perhaps the ‘written in stone’ quality of memorials provides a fixed reference or claim on public space in a period of rapid cultural and technological change. Perhaps we should be wary of deterministic explanations and look for continuity rather than break from the past. Here, citizens as well as governments, third sector organisations and businesses are involved in partnership terms, involving engaged and responsible citizens as well as governments, third sector organisations and businesses. However, public policy does not simply regulate existing practices, but generates new forms of agency, particularly through a discourse of access and co-production, as well as new forms of critical engagement and resistance.

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Endnotes
1 The sample is drawn from cities of Adelaide, Canning (WA), Charles Sturt (SA), Hobson’s Bay (Vic), London, Melbourne, Perth, Port Adelaide-Enfield, Sydney, Toronto, Vancouver, Warrangah, Wellington (NZ).