

1 **Public life among the dead: jogging in Malmö cemeteries**

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6 **Abstract**

7 Urban cemeteries in the Swedish city of Malmö witness a great variety of usages, and are
8 not just limited to commemoration practices. However the social acceptance of
9 nonconventional activities on cemetery sites is still debatable. This research, held in
10 February 2016 in Malmö, investigates jogging as a clearly evident part of the cemeteries'
11 daily life. It aims to explore jogging as one among many activities in Malmö cemeteries
12 and to understand people's opinions about this activity. Three urban cemeteries,
13 differing in size, location and design were examined through three methods:
14 observations of activities, a study of social media and an online questionnaire. The
15 activities in these Malmö cemeteries vary depending on the sites' features, and are never
16 limited to the primary functions of these spaces. Jogging is an essential part of the
17 activities in each of the cemeteries and does not visibly conflict with the other functions
18 of the cemeteries. At the same time this study demonstrates evidence that for many
19 users cemeteries remain special localities with their own set of behavioural norms where
20 jogging is still questionable. The research proves some similarity between the functions
21 of the urban cemeteries in Malmö and formalized parks and their potential for
22 accommodating a variety of functions which should be explored in future research. In
23 the context of increased urban development a better understanding of the current role
24 of the cemeteries within the urban fabric appears highly relevant for green
25 infrastructure planners.

26 *Keywords:* Cemetery, Public space, Jogging, Social media, Malmö.

27 **1. Introduction**

28 Due to political, social and economic restructuring public spaces in contemporary cities
29 have been reshaped from "a place where strangers meet" (Sennett, 2010, 261) to a
30 contested field between the 'common good' and private interests. The tendency to view
31 compact cities as the most sustainable form of urban development (Burton et al., 2002)
32 puts urban space, including public areas, green zones and urban cemeteries, under
33 increasing pressure. Urban densification processes may lead to the deterioration and
34 decrease of recreation possibilities due to the lack of green space (Haaland and van den
35 Bosch, 2015). As a result, the remaining public space needs to accommodate several
36 functions and be designed and managed as an open system (Sennett, 2010) providing
37 for a variety of land uses and resulting activities.

38 Urban cemeteries are an intriguing example of shifting public space usage in cities
39 undergoing densification. A classical example of Roman *res nullius*, or nobody's
40 property (Davy, 2012), cemeteries provide space for very personal practices in a very
41 public environment. The place and role of cemeteries in urban spaces can reflect current
42 social and cultural processes. They can supply daily contact with the fact of death and
43 our mortality (Alexander et al., 1977) and thus stake its place in human society. During
44 the last few decades we have witnessed changes in burial practices and variations

45 around perceptions of death as well as a shift to more multicultural societies. These
46 trends determine new discourses in urban cemeteries already studied from perspectives
47 of landscape design (Wingren, 2013) and social sciences (Young and Light, 2016).

48 Evensen, et al. (2017) demonstrate evidence from two cemeteries in Norway, where
49 everyday activities are not only limited to commemoration practices and note the small
50 amount of empirical studies of such practices. The social acceptance of nonconventional
51 activities on cemetery sites is still questionable, this thereby provides fertile ground for
52 potential conflicts between different activities and users (Woodthorpe, 2011). One
53 example of such activities is jogging. Jogging being a popular leisure and sport activity is
54 usually portrayed as a natural exercise open for everyone (Qviström, 2016).

55 Nevertheless jogging in cemeteries can be observed in different cities (see Fig. 1) and
56 was already registered by Evensen, et al. (2017), yet so far this activity has not attracted
57 particular interest from scholars.

58 A better understanding of jogging in cemeteries and people's attitude to it can provide
59 valuable insights into the present and future of urban cemeteries, especially in compact
60 cities under the process of densification. The Swedish city of Malmö where this research
61 was undertaken illustrates these types of cities well. This research investigates jogging
62 as a clearly evident part of the cemeteries' daily life in Malmö. This study aims to
63 explore jogging as one among many activities in Malmö's cemeteries and to understand
64 people's opinions about the activity. The paper emerges as relevant for green
65 infrastructure planners in densifying cities and opens up new directions for future
66 research of the possible roles of an urban cemetery.

67 2. Methods

68 The study was carried out through a mixture of methods which includes observations of
69 activities in the cemeteries, analysis of photographs and text comments from social
70 media and an online questionnaire. The three chosen urban cemeteries in Malmö differ
71 in their size, location and design. I began with systematically observing people's
72 activities on these sites. The observations were conducted by myself over 10 days in
73 February 2016 (average day temperature +5 °C, no snow coverage during these days, no
74 rain or snow during the observations). To gauge the scope of activities I did the
75 observations over different times of the day: 11:00–13:00, 15:00–19:00 and 20:00–
76 21:00. Depending on the size of the cemetery I chose one or several points of
77 observations. I tried to equally distribute the times of the observations among these
78 points. Within each observation session I chose a period of ten minutes wherein I
79 registered every activity which I could see from that point. During the very first
80 observation session I created a set of the activities' categories based on what I saw.
81 Afterwards I used these predefined categories with small adjustments for registration of
82 the activities and marked the most common among them. I also wrote a field diary
83 wherein I reflected upon my observations.

84 To obtain a broader picture of the activities people perform in Malmö cemeteries and
85 the cemeteries as places of jogging, photographs from social media websites, together
86 with their corresponding text descriptions and comments, were collected and analysed.
87 Social media is a growing source of data for ethnographical research (Markham, 2017)
88 and a source of rich open-access data on the phenomenon under study. It has no time
89 limitations as it provides insights into data which people shared through the whole year.
90 For my research I used two social media networks with the biggest amount of data for

Fig. 1

91 Malmö: Facebook and Instagram. Among the 1200 photographs geotagged by their
92 users, 270 of them represented particular types of activities. The material from social
93 media was categorized in order to determine the most popular representations (both
94 visual and textual) of activities which people practice in the chosen cemeteries.

95 Although two of the aforementioned methods provided insights into the activity
96 patterns found in Malmö's cemeteries, they did not focus on jogging as part of these
97 patterns and did not add to people's perspective on this phenomenon. To achieve the
98 aim of the study an online questionnaire was therefore designed using the Google Forms
99 platform. This approach was necessary due to the difficulties posed by the practice
100 under study: cemetery joggers were exercising and often listening to music on their
101 headphones so casual encounters were difficult to initiate. The questionnaire was
102 distributed in local Malmö Facebook groups for students and runners, which numbered
103 6330 members in total. In five questions people were asked to reflect on the ways in
104 which they chose places for jogging and their understanding of cemeteries as places for
105 jogging. The form offered several predesigned responses as well as 'other', where people
106 were able to leave their own answer or comment. The data from the answers to the
107 questionnaire was analysed to get a percentage of each of the alternatives.

108 *The cemeteries' sites*

109 This study covered three urban cemeteries in Malmö (see Fig. 2): Gamla kyrkogården
110 (The Old cemetery), S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar (St. Paul cemeteries) and Östra kyrkogården
111 (The Eastern cemetery). These are the biggest cemeteries in Malmö and are all situated
112 close to the city centre, this makes them highly relevant for the discussions both around
113 jogging and the densification process in compact cities. The variety in size, location and
114 design of the three studies cemeteries allows to compare their contexts with the
115 differences in their usage, including in regards to jogging.

116 Gamla kyrkogården (4,5 ha) is the oldest among the cemeteries included in this
117 research. It was consecrated in 1822 and contains several historical graves (Rosengren
118 and Striner, 2013). Its location within the old city of Malmö defines the main features of
119 the site. The cemetery is enclosed by relatively busy roads and a stretch of the canal
120 system which separate the site from the surrounding business district with limited
121 amount of housing. Gamla kyrkogården comprises the area between a major shopping
122 district and a busy bus stop on the one side and a city library and a popular park on the
123 other. The cemetery is actively used as a transit path between these places in the city.

124 S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar (24,5 ha) officially consists of three parts (northern, middle and
125 southern), which are divided from one another by roads but still comprises an organic
126 whole. The northern section of the cemetery was the first one to be opened in 1870
127 (Rosengren and Striner, 2013). Later on the cemetery was extended to the south.
128 Nowadays it is surrounded by a trendy and partly gentrified area to the west and a
129 former industrial zone now under redevelopment to the east. This part of the city lacks
130 formalised parks or other green space.

131 Östra kyrkogården (45,3 ha) is the biggest cemetery in Malmö. It is actively used for new
132 burials. The cemetery was designed by the famous Swedish architect Sigurd Lewerentz
133 in 1916 and was consecrated in 1921 (Wingren, 2013). The cemetery is surrounded by
134 mixed use areas which include motorways, a single-family home neighbourhood, an
135 industrial zone and a multicultural, large-scale, modernist residential district. Due to its

Fig. 2

136 large size, Östra kyrkogården plays an important role in the interconnection of its
137 adjacent areas.

138 Aside from the physical features which affect the usage of the three cemeteries, an array
139 of regulations has an impact on how people interact with the different cemetery
140 environments. The Swedish Church, which administrates the cemeteries in Malmö, has
141 set slightly different rules for the three cemeteries. Östra kyrkogården remains open
142 during the night. In contrast, the gates of Gamla kyrkogården and S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar
143 are closed at nighttime. Cycling is allowed only in Östra kyrkogården, while it is
144 prohibited in Gamla kyrkogården and S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar. Dogs are allowed but only
145 on leash in all three cemeteries and there is no sign prohibiting or limiting jogging.

146 **3. Findings**

147 *Observed activities*

148 The observations gathered in the cemeteries revealed a nuanced picture of the variety of
149 ways in which people use these locations. While each cemetery was characterized by its
150 own unique pattern of practices, they also exhibited commonalities in their usage
151 trends. The most popular observed activities among all three cemeteries were walking,
152 cycling, walking dogs and practicing sports. Other activities included visiting graves,
153 playing with children, and touristic sightseeing. Some material findings from Östra
154 kyrkogården indicated that the bushes provided cover for covert sexual activities. Table
155 1 shows the activities observed in each cemetery separated into the most common and
156 other groups. It demonstrates the great variety of practices and some differences among
157 the three cemeteries. S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar accommodates a more diverse set of
158 activities than the two other cemeteries. Jogging was part of the observed activities in
159 each cemetery but never the most prevalent one. The on-site observations of cemetery
160 activities in Malmö were strengthened by the addition of data from social media.

161 *Cemetery activities on social media*

162 All three cemeteries were widely featured in the two social media platforms surveyed
163 (Facebook and Instagram). The amount and the content of photographs together with
164 text descriptions did differ between the sites. Being the most centrally located, Gamla
165 kyrkogården was portrayed in the majority of geotagged photographs. Östra
166 kyrkogården was exhibited the least. Gamla kyrkogården appears to be a popular setting
167 for people to take photographs of well-groomed urban nature or of 'heritage' graves. A
168 lot of photographs taken by tourists at Gamla kyrkogården pictures it to be one of the
169 main landmarks of Malmö. People who took photographs in Östra kyrkogården usually
170 depicted the graves of their relatives, as well as the landscape or its architectural sights.
171 Some comments in social media revealed the controversial nature of contemporary
172 cemeteries as places for both the dead and the living: "*walk in the dead park...*", "*nice*
173 *walk in a park... Gosh, it is a cemetery*".

174 Table 1 shows the results of the categorization of the data from social media according to
175 the activities which were represented in each of the cemeteries. The images of S:t Pauli
176 kyrkogårdar which people shared on social media offered a much wider picture of
177 activities undertaken in the cemetery compared to the other two. Images from this
178 cemetery showed cycling, picnics, walking dogs, children's games, book reading and
179 various sporting activities, including jogging. Images from two other cemeteries under
180 study also represented the variety of activities but to a lesser extent.

181 Several people shared images of their jogging there. The act of sharing one's jogging
182 within a cemetery setting on social media indicates both a social acceptance of such
183 practices and an individual's intention to provoke. Some comments were devoted to the
184 sporting activities undertaken at cemetery sites and represented examples of the
185 individuals' self-reflections:

186 *"A quiet, comfortable jog filled with lovely autumn colours and a sinking sun gilded the*
187 *afternoon. On the way home I ran past the cemetery and gave some thoughts to those*
188 *who are no longer with us, and who can no longer do what they love. It is important to*
189 *take advantage of the days, you never know how many you have left".*

190 *Attitude towards jogging in cemeteries*

191 The variety of observed activities and the various social media depictions described in
192 the sections above pictures the studied cemeteries as multifunctional places where
193 commemoration is not the only visible practice. However, people's opinions about
194 jogging in the cemeteries as an essential part of these activities were not clear from the
195 data retrieved by the first two methods. The online questionnaire gave an opportunity to
196 look closer into the ways in which people choose places to run and how they feel about
197 jogging in cemeteries. This section discusses some of the findings from the answers and
198 complements them with comments which the respondents left. In total, 149 responses
199 were collected, 76 % of which were by joggers. Non-joggers were also included into the
200 selection as their answers gave a valuable perspective into more general attitude to and
201 acceptance of jogging in urban cemeteries as public spaces.

202 Some of the results helped this research understand people's motives for choosing a
203 place to run. Among the respondents 68% reported running in places which are situated
204 near their homes. Another important selection factor was the type of running surface,
205 with gravel being the most attractive. The majority of the respondents (53% of them who
206 run) usually jog in parks; cemeteries were chosen by 11% of runners. The most popular
207 cemetery site for running was S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar, as one respondent commented on
208 it: *"It is a beautiful place and also a public one. Why not make a better use – for the*
209 *dead and for those who are still alive".* At the same time none of the regular cemetery
210 runners mentioned Gamla kyrkogården perhaps because of its smaller size and
211 proximity to a large park. In total 41% of the respondents had an experience of running
212 in cemeteries.

213 To operate with people's direct opinions about running in cemeteries I looked into the
214 answers of three groups of respondents: non-runners, runners who do not jog in
215 cemeteries and runners who jog there. The biggest part of non-runners (36%) viewed
216 cemeteries as places with a special atmosphere and rules but accept running there.
217 However, in this group of the respondents two other controversial options positing this
218 phenomenon as 'unacceptable' and 'fully-acceptable' got almost the same amount of
219 responses. Most of the runners who did not jog in cemeteries (58%) perceived
220 cemeteries as places for commemorative practices only and therefore a place where
221 jogging is disrespectful. In contrast most of the people who practice jogging in
222 cemeteries (54%) claimed to hold special feelings when running in cemeteries while 27%
223 of respondents in this group viewed cemeteries as 'normal' green parks.

224 The questionnaire provided the respondents with an opportunity to leave a comment
225 both in special fields and under the post in Facebook where it was distributed. In total I
226 received 15 comments from the respondents where they gave more detailed

227 explanations of their attitudes to jogging in cemeteries. None of these respondents were
228 against jogging in cemeteries; indeed all of them advocated for the activity. The
229 respondents mentioned the design of Malmö cemeteries (“*the open spaces and good*
230 *paths within them means individuals get given a great space to run*”) and reflected on
231 rules and respect to the place (“*if people are visiting their loved ones I try to take*
232 *another path*”, “*it is not necessarily disrespectful to run in a cemetery but one should*
233 *be aware of that others might think so*”). Although the amount and nature of these
234 comments do not provide enough grounds for a qualitative analysis, it seems that these
235 examples are relevant for a better understanding of the complexity of people’s opinions
236 around jogging in cemeteries.

237 **4. Discussion**

238 The aforementioned findings still reveal a multifaceted image of people’s practices in
239 Malmö’s urban cemeteries. People use urban cemeteries in a variety of ways and often
240 share their practices in social media. The research proves some similarity between the
241 functions of urban cemeteries in Malmö and formalized parks. The activities which take
242 place in the cemeteries differ, but are never limited to the primary commemorative
243 functions of these places. Among the studied cemeteries S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar
244 demonstrates the biggest variety of activities, both observed and shared on social media.
245 This might be explained by a relatively large size of the cemetery (comparing to Gamla
246 kyrkogården), its close proximity to the city centre (comparing to Östra kyrkogården)
247 and a lack of green space in this district of Malmö. To get a better explanation of the
248 differences in usage among the cemeteries new research is needed. Jogging is an
249 essential part of the activities taking place in each of the cemeteries and does not have
250 any visible conflict with the other functions of the cemetery. At the same time, this study
251 demonstrates evidence that for many users cemeteries remain special localities with
252 their own set of behavioural norms where jogging is still questionable.

253 Even though a variety of methods were purposefully employed to ensure the collection
254 of valid data, there were certain limitations to the methodology which should be taken
255 into account. The fact that I observed the sites in February definitely limited the variety
256 of activities in the study. However, the involvement of social media as a source of the
257 data helped to minimise this limitation because the provided material was not reduced
258 to this research’s timeframe. Another limitation of the observations was the incapability
259 to distinguish between those visiting graves to from those walking or partaking in other
260 activities without directly questioning people. Also in some cases it seemed difficult to
261 define the main activity of a social media user, thereby providing space for
262 interpretation.

263 Although the results of this research do not provide enough basis for a generalisation to
264 be made about urban cemeteries in other cities, Malmö as an example of a compact city
265 under the pressure of densification, can provide new insights for similar places. The
266 planning strategy of Malmö already calls for better connectivity of the S:t Pauli
267 kyrkogårdar and the areas nearby. The vision of a redevelopment site bordering this
268 cemetery, stipulates that “an important part of planning is the interaction with and the
269 general use of S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar as a walking and recreational area” (Malmö stad,
270 2010, 93).

271 In the context of increased urban development a better understanding of the current
272 role of the cemeteries within the urban fabric appears highly relevant for green

273 infrastructure planners. Can and should cemeteries accommodate more functions in
274 densifying cities? This research does not aim to answer this question but presents
275 findings which should be taken into account in future research. It shows potential for
276 the accommodation of more functions in urban cemeteries, however this does pose
277 some challenges because of the potential conflict this might cause. In more compact and
278 dense cities with cemeteries already situated within the urban fabric people's everyday
279 interactions with death seem to be more frequent. In 1977 the authors of "A Pattern
280 Language" already advocated such a stance saying that "the presence of the dead among
281 the living will be a daily fact in any society which encourages its people to live"
282 (Alexander et al., 1977, 354).

283 **Acknowledgements**

284 This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public,
285 commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. I accomplished an initial stage of data generation
286 within the master's programme in Urban Studies at Malmö University I would like to
287 thank Ioanna Tsoni and three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on
288 earlier drafts of the paper and am particularly grateful for the cartographic and language
289 assistance given by Oscar Damerham.

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322 **Tables**

323 2-column fitting image.

324 **Table 1**

325 Activities in three cemeteries in Malmö according to observations and social media data.

326

	Gamla kyrkogården	S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar	Östra kyrkogården
Most common activities observed	walking, cycling	walking, jogging, cycling, visiting graves, walking dogs	visiting graves, walking, cycling
Other activities observed	jogging, walking dogs, picnic	playing with children	jogging, walking dogs
Most common activities according to the data from social media	walking, walking dogs, visiting graves, cycling	walking, walking dogs, cycling, visiting graves, jogging, picnic, children's games, reading books	visiting graves, walking, walking dogs, cycling, jogging

327

328 **Figure legends**

329 **Fig. 1.** Jogger in S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar, Malmö, February 2017. Photo by Pavel
330 Grabalov.

331 **Fig 2.** Three studied urban cemeteries on the map of Malmö. Source of the data:
332 Stadsbyggnadskontoret, Malmö stad, 2013. Map by Oscar Damerham.

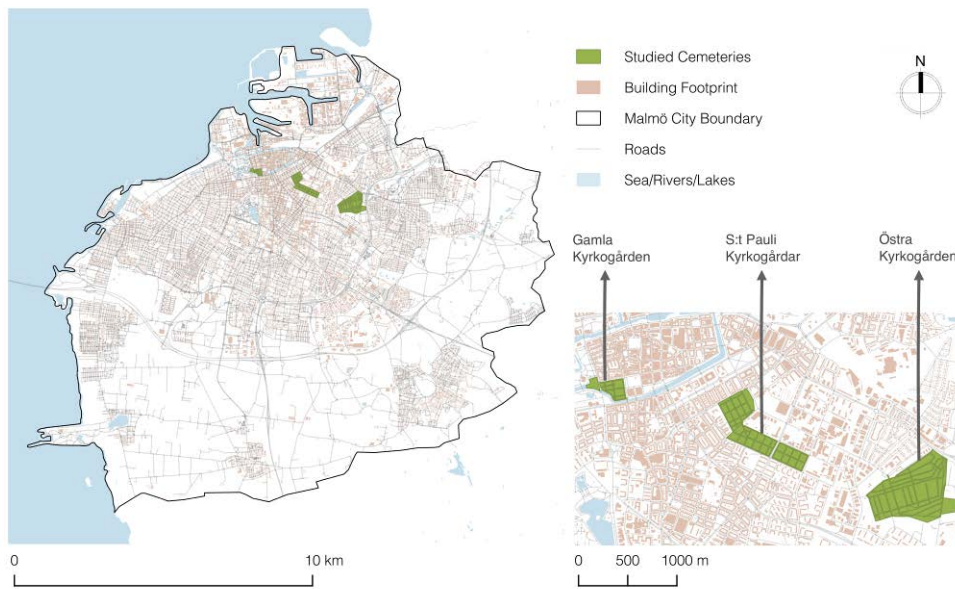
333 **Figures**

334 **Fig. 1.** Single column fitting image.



335

336 **Fig. 2.** 2-column fitting image.



337