



Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Faculty of Landscape and Society
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Urban cemeteries as public spaces: A comparison of cases from Scandinavia and Russia

Gravplasser som offentlige byrom:
En sammenligning av eksempler fra
Skandinavia og Russland

Pavel Grabalov

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A comparison of cases from Scandinavia and Russia

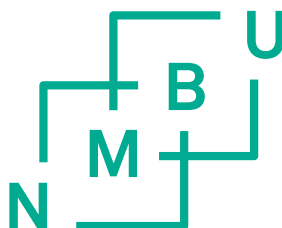
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My first visit to a Scandinavian cemetery: the main alley and the physicist Niels Bohr's grave in Assistens cemetery in Copenhagen. April 2011

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This study grew from a short paper about jogging in cemeteries which I wrote at the master's programme in urban studies at Malmö University. A journey from that paper to this PhD thesis would not have been possible without the support, knowledge and trust of many people.

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Pavel Grabalov
Oslo, December 2021

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List of papers

This thesis is an outcome of the three scientific publications. Their summaries can be found in Chapter 5, full texts are placed at the end of the thesis.

1.1 Paper I

Grabalov, P. & Nordh, H. (2020). "Philosophical park": Cemeteries in the Scandinavian urban context. *Sociální studia / Social Studies*, 17(1), 33–54.

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1.2 Paper II

Grabalov, P. & Nordh, H. (2021). The future of urban cemeteries as public spaces: Insights from Oslo and Copenhagen. *Planning Theory & Practice*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2021.1993973>

Status: published online (November 2021).

1.3 Paper III

Grabalov, P. Invisible public spaces: The role of cemeteries in urban planning and development in Moscow.

Status: submitted to Urban Geography (December 2021).

Abstract

Insights from the field of cemetery research demonstrate that urban cemeteries have a variety of functions, not limited to their primary purpose of providing space for interment of human remains and commemoration of loved ones. This multiplicity of functions and meanings shapes cemeteries' special place in contemporary cities and calls for a sensitive framework for their planning and management. This thesis sets out to explore the role of cemeteries with two foci: densification processes, which can reconfigure functions of urban green spaces, and postsecular debates, which highlight the relationships between the secular and the spiritual/religious. In many cities, cemeteries indeed function as publicly accessible green spaces and accommodate intrinsic spiritual aspects, yet it remains unclear how their role might be reshaped in dense postsecular cities.

This research is situated within the interdisciplinary field of urban studies and employs the concept of public space as the main theoretical lens. I also draw on the idea of municipal spirituality — a discursive tool intended to integrate the spiritual aspects of places into planning. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to existing research with new knowledge and understanding of the role of urban cemeteries as public spaces with an empirical focus on the policy context. The thesis consists of three scientific papers and an introductory essay.

Inspired by a recent call for more global urban studies, this thesis employs a comparative methodology and uses three cities (Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow) as case studies in a multiple-case research design. The empirical material (policy documents and interviews with experts) is analysed qualitatively, in both inductive and deductive manners, and supplemented with field observations.

This thesis contributes to the existing body of literature in three ways. First, it establishes a multidimensional framework for the analysis of cemeteries as public spaces and demonstrates how different dimensions are manifested in the three case study cities. The framework illuminates both dimensions inherent to cemeteries (liminal and spiritual) and dimensions common to public spaces in general (multifunctional, multicultural and commercial). Second, the thesis outlines a comparative methodology that enables an assessment of the role of cemeteries in different contexts, as understood by planners and policymakers. While in Oslo and Copenhagen cemeteries are seen as multifunctional green spaces, Moscow cemeteries are viewed predominantly as burial spaces and places for commemoration and their other functions are overlooked. Third, this thesis extends an invitation to revisit

debates around the notion of public space. The conceptualisation of urban cemeteries as a special type of public space emphasises the importance of the spiritual aspects — often forgotten in these debates — and points to the demand for a greater diversity of public spaces to fulfil citizen's varied needs.

Sammendrag

Urbane gravplasser har, ifølge forskning på feltet, en rekke ulike funksjoner utover deres primære formål, som er å tilby et sted for gravlegging og å minnes sine kjære. Disse mangfoldige funksjonene og betydningene gir gravplasser en spesiell plass i moderne byer som må tas spesielt hensyn til i planleggingsprosesser og forvaltning. Denne avhandlingen tar sikte på å utforske rollen til urbane gravplasser i lys av to fenomener: fortettingsprosesser, som kan bidra til å endre på funksjonene til grønne byrom, og postsekulære debatter, som fremhever forholdet mellom det sekulære og det åndelige/religiøse. I mange byer fungerer gravplasser som offentlig tilgjengelige grøntområder med iboende åndelige aspekter, men det er fortsatt uklart hvilken rolle de kan komme til å spille i fortattede, postsekulære byer.

Dette forskningsprosjektet befinner seg innenfor det tverrfaglige feltet urbane studier og bruker konseptet offentlig rom (*public space*) som det viktigste teoretiske perspektivet. Jeg trekker også på ideen om kommunal åndelighet (*municipal spirituality*) – et diskursivt verktøy for å innlemme åndelige aspekter i stedsplanlegging. Målet med studien er å bidra med ny kunnskap til eksisterende forskning om urbane gravplassers rolle som offentlige rom, med et empirisk fokus på politiske strategier. Avhandlingen består av tre vitenskapelige artikler og en kappe.

Inspirert av oppfordringen til å gjøre urbane studier mer globale, har dette prosjektet tatt i bruk en komparativ metodikk med tre byer (Oslo, København og Moskva) som case-studier. Det empiriske materialet (politiske strategidokumenter og intervjuer med eksperter, samt feltobservasjoner) har blitt analysert kvalitativt, både på induktiv og deduktiv måte.

Denne avhandlingen bidrar til det eksisterende forskningsfeltet på tre måter. For det første etablerer den et flerdimensjonalt rammeverk for å analysere gravplasser som offentlige rom og demonstrerer hvordan de ulike dimensjonene kommer til uttrykk i de tre case-study byene. Rammeverket belyser både dimensjoner som er spesielle for gravplasser (liminal og spirituell) og dimensjoner som er felles for offentlige rom generelt (multifunksjonell, multikulturell og kommersiell). For det andre beskriver avhandlingen en komparativ metodikk for å analysere gravplassers rolle i ulike kontekster, slik denne rollen blir forstått av planleggere og beslutningstakere. Mens gravplassene i Oslo og København blir sett på som multifunksjonelle grøntområder, blir gravplassene i Moskva hovedsakelig sett på som gravsteder og plasser for å minnes de døde mens deres andre funksjoner blir ignorert. For det tredje oppmuntrer avhandlingen til en fornyet debatt om konseptet offentlig rom. Konseptualiseringen av urbane gravplasser som en spesiell type

offentlig rom understreker viktigheten av åndelige aspekter – ofte glemt i disse debattene – og fremhever behovet for et større mangfold av former for offentlige rom for å imøtekomme folks ulike behov.

Аннотация

Как показывают исследования, функции городских кладбищ не ограничиваются лишь предоставлением мест захоронения и сохранением памяти. Множественность функций и смыслов предопределяет особое место кладбищ в современных городах и требует деликатного подхода к их планированию и организации управления. В рамках настоящего диссертационного исследования я рассматриваю роль кладбищ в свете двух феноменов: уплотнения городской застройки, которое может трансформировать функции городских зелёных пространств, и постсекулярной парадигмы, которая заостряет внимание на взаимоотношениях светского и духовного/религиозного. Кладбища во многих городах мира служат общедоступными зелёными пространствами и содержат неотъемлемые духовные аспекты, и пока неизвестно, как роль кладбищ может измениться в плотно-застроенных постсекулярных городах.

Данная диссертация относится к междисциплинарной области городских исследований и применяет понятие общественного пространства как основного теоретического подхода. В этом исследовании я также использую идею «муниципальной духовности»: понятийного механизма, задуманного для интеграции духовных аспектов в городское планирование. Цель настоящей диссертации — создание нового знания и переосмысления роли городских кладбищ как общественных пространств с эмпирическим фокусом на управленческий и планировочный контекст. Диссертация состоит из трёх научных статей и вступительного эссе.

В русле недавней инициативы по созданию более глобальных городских исследований в данной диссертации я применяю сравнительную методологию и использую три города (Осло, Копенгаген и Москва) в качестве конкретных примеров или кейсов. Эмпирический материал (программные документы и интервью с экспертами) проанализирован с использованием качественных методов и дополнен полевыми наблюдениями.

Можно выделить три направления, по которым данное исследование совершает вклад в научное знание. Во-первых, в диссертации разработана многомерная концептуальная модель для анализа кладбищ как общественных пространств, показавшая, как разные параметры проявляются в трёх городах проведения исследования. Модель включает как параметры, присущие непосредственно кладбищам (лиминальный и духовный), а также параметры,

свойственные общественным пространствам в целом (многофункциональный, мультикультурный, коммерческий). Во-вторых, описанная в исследовании сравнительная методология позволяет определить, как планировщики и управленцы понимают роль кладбищ, и сравнить разные контексты. В то время как в Осло и Копенгагене кладбища расцениваются в качестве многофункциональных зелёных пространств, московские кладбища рассматриваются, главным образом, как места захоронений и сохранения памяти, а их прочие функции упускаются из виду. В-третьих, данная диссертация — это ещё и приглашение пересмотреть теоретические дискуссии о самом понятии общественного пространства. Концептуализация городских кладбищ как особого типа общественных пространств подчёркивает важность духовных аспектов — часто забытых в этих дискуссиях — и обращает внимание на необходимость большего разнообразия общественных пространств для того, чтобы удовлетворить разные нужды горожан.

1 Introduction

In 2011, I visited the Danish capital of Copenhagen and stayed near the famous Assistens cemetery. The contrast between the activities that took place there and my own experiences of cemeteries in the Russian city of Kaliningrad, where I come from, was astonishing. People in Copenhagen used Assistens cemetery for a great variety of reasons, not limited to interment and commemoration practices. They strolled, had picnics, did sports and walked their dogs. At the same time, there were people who visited graves of their loved ones, placed flowers and had some moments of reflections there. To my surprise, the multifunctional Assistens cemetery was experienced as a very harmonic place without a clear conflict between different users and activities. This first encounter with a “foreign” cemetery led me to a PhD study of the role of urban cemeteries across cultures, which is presented in this thesis.

Due to their emotional significance (Rugg, 2020), cemeteries are very special places in urban environments. The presence of death in physical settings makes the role of cemeteries exceptional and complex. Different meanings and functions constitute this role. Cemeteries are simultaneously landscapes of emotion, commerce and community (Woodthorpe, 2011). They significantly contribute to green infrastructure, civic identity and local place attachment (McClymont, 2016). Urban cemeteries provide space not only for the disposal of human remains but also for recreation and cultural encounters (Skår, Nordh, & Swensen, 2018). They are restorative environments that support relaxation, reflection and contemplation (Nordh, Evensen, & Skår, 2017).

Cemeteries’ meanings and functions vary across cultures but always shape a complexity that requires a sensitive framework for planning and management. To date, however, we witness that planners and policymakers lack — to a different degree — an adequate and consistent framework for working with cemeteries and their qualities. Evidence from different regions and countries demonstrates similar problems: Scandinavia (Kjøller, 2012; Nordh & Evensen, 2018), Britain (McClymont, 2014), the USA (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010), Australia (Bennett & Davies, 2015) and Poland (Długozima & Kosiacka-Beck, 2020).

The role of cemeteries in contemporary cities — and general attitudes towards death and memorialisation — is shaped by wider patterns of economic, cultural and political changes in our societies (Walter, 2020). The lack of comprehensive knowledge of the role

of cemeteries can be especially problematic in cities in times of change. Migration and diversification of societies, a parade of neoliberal policies, new relationships between the spiritual and the secular, growing public health concerns and environmental movements — all contribute to redefining the role of cemeteries. How urban cemeteries will be affected by these processes is not clear, and Rugg (2019) even suspects that we might move to a “post-cemetery” world with no “centralised urban location that serves as a focus for commemorative activity” (p. 56). Without radically questioning the presence of cemeteries in the future, this thesis provides an in-depth overview of the meanings and functions associated with urban cemeteries. Acknowledging the complexity of the role cemeteries play in contemporary cities provides grounds for their future relevance.

I explore the role of cemeteries in the context of two processes or phenomena: densification and postsecularity. First, densification — manifested in the compact city model — became a mainstream planning strategy to hold back carbon emissions, mitigate climate change and achieve sustainability goals over the last couple of decades (Næss, Saglie, & Richardson, 2020). Coupled with population growth, this strategy, however, can foster conflicts between different land uses within cities and increase pressure on green spaces (Haaland & van den Bosch, 2015; Tappert, Klöti, & Drilling, 2018) which are also instrumental for climate change adaptation and mitigation (Erlwein & Pauleit, 2021; Madureira & Monteiro, 2021) and provide social benefits (Kabisch, Qureshi, & Haase, 2015). Cemeteries in many cities are green spaces and how densification might change their role and relevance is yet uncertain.

Second, despite the proclaimed theoretical premise that modernisation inevitably leads to secularisation, spirituality and religion did not disappear from our cities but rather reconfigured their position (Furseth, Kühle, Lundby, & Lövheim, 2019). Such observations were brought forward and lifted to a theoretical level in debates around postsecularity (Habermas, 2006; Kong, 2010; Stoeckl & Uzlaner, 2019a) and postsecular cities (Beaumont & Baker, 2011), presented in detail in Section 3.3. Spirituality is an intrinsic characteristic of cemeteries; thus, cemetery research can benefit from engagement with postsecular literature. Urban cemeteries themselves can provide valuable insights into the dynamic relations between the spiritual and the secular in contemporary cities.

In this thesis, I use the concept of public space as a theoretical point of departure and theorise urban cemeteries as a special type of public space. For centuries, public space has been believed to be a key ingredient of social cohesive, liveable and prosperous cities (Low, 2020; Madanipour, 2017b; Mehaffy, Haas, & Elmlund, 2019). Public spaces contain different meanings, play different functions and address different audiences (Carmona, 2015). Some cities already have a number of cemeteries that play the role of green public

spaces (Evensen, Nordh, & Skår, 2017; Rae, 2021), but without proper efforts in planning and management, a balance between different functions can be challenging to achieve. In a Columbian context, Klaufus (2018a) pointed out that “public cemeteries are increasingly envisioned as urban infrastructure rather than as a shared public space, which makes it more difficult to govern deathscapes as a public good” (p. 207).

Globalisation is blurring distinctions between cities across the world. However, urban cemeteries are still highly dependent on the local context. The way they are planned, managed and used varies greatly across countries and depends on culture, religion, infrastructure, legal framework, climate, design traditions, etc. To date, comparative research on cemeteries is not very common (some examples are: Kong, 2012; Nordh & Evensen, 2018; Nordh et al., 2021; Rae, 2021; Swensen, 2018) and a need for such research is highlighted (Kjøller, 2012; Walter, 2008). Rugg (2000) calls to establish “a common grammar for international, comparative and multidisciplinary studies” (p. 259) of cemeteries, but emphasises that it would be a mistake to generalise understandings of a cemetery as a cultural phenomenon across different contexts (Rugg, 2018a). Nevertheless, it seems highly useful to look at what meanings and functions are prescribed to cemeteries in different cultures for more nuanced theoretical insights into the role of urban cemeteries. A cemetery grammar can serve as an answer to Worpole (2003) passionate critique of the lack of attention to cemeteries in contemporary urban planning:

One reason for the lack of thought or respect given to the cemetery in modern urban societies could be that people no longer possess or share a vocabulary for describing what these unsettling landscapes mean culturally, in the midst of their streets, towns and cities. Are they religious or secular, places of despair or places of hope and reconciliation? Does the reminder of mortality in the heart of daily life help to assuage the fear of death or accentuate it? In societies that now claim to celebrate cultural diversity more than the values of civic commonality, is the cemetery or memorial garden today a culturally exclusive territory, one of a number of new kinds of landscapes that privilege differentiation, while stressing the wholly personal nature of belief and mortality? (p. 35)

This PhD thesis sets up to contribute to such cemetery grammar, or cemetery vocabulary, through a comparative research strategy with empirical material from Oslo (Norway), Copenhagen (Denmark) and Moscow (Russia). The investigation of cases from different cultural contexts — Scandinavian and Russian — aims to generate more nuanced and deeper insights into the role of urban cemeteries rather than to initiate a conventional comparativist study that would look for a “law-like explanation” (Nijman, 2007, p. 5). This thesis is inspired by a recent call to reframe urban comparative research (Ward, 2010), or

as Robinson (2016) put it, to think cities “through elsewhere” (p. 5), meaning to expand the repertoire of cases, contexts, theoretical and conceptual approaches. While Scandinavian cemeteries have been studied before (see, for example, Kjærsgaard, 2018; Nordh & Evensen, 2018; Wingren, 2013), Russian cemeteries are indeed such an “elsewhere”, with a limited number of previous studies, especially from a spatial perspective. Moreover, Russian cities are generally overlooked in international urban research, failing to fit the dichotomy of the Global South and Global North, and they can be seen as one of many diffuse “Global Easts” (Müller & Trubina, 2020).

Drawing on Woodthorpe (2011) observation of cemetery research as a disciplinary fragmented field of inquiry, this thesis is intended as an interdisciplinary endeavour that brings together insights from social and natural sciences as well as humanities. The thesis is situated within urban studies, an interdisciplinary research field “dealing with the urban environment in terms of *form* and *process*” (Haarstad et al., 2021, p. 5, italic in the original). The interdisciplinary approach employed in this thesis aims to overcome the limitations of narrow disciplinary findings and to facilitate greater integration between cemetery research and urban studies in order to understand cemeteries’ role from a spatial perspective.

1.1 Aim, research questions and contribution

This PhD thesis aims to contribute to the existing body of literature with new knowledge and understanding of the role of urban cemeteries as public spaces with an empirical focus on the policy context in Scandinavia and Russia. I address this overall aim by answering the following research questions:

1. How do the public space dimensions of cemeteries manifest in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow?
2. How do planners and policymakers in the three cities articulate the role of cemeteries in the urban fabric? What are the similarities and differences, and possible reasons for those?
3. How can the conceptualisation of urban cemeteries as a special type of public space inform the current theoretical debates around the notion of public space?

This thesis contributes to research and practice on different levels. Empirically, it provides insights into Russian cemeteries, which is an underrepresented area in cemetery research, and juxtaposes these insights with findings from Scandinavian cemeteries. Theoretically, the thesis brings forward the conceptualisation of cemeteries as a special type of public space and adds a spiritual dimension to the wider public space debate. The comparative research strategy employed in this thesis also contributes to advancing the

methodology of cemetery research and of more global urban studies. The societal contribution of the thesis lies in insights for planners, managers, landscape architects and policymakers into how to plan and develop cemeteries.

1.2 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of an introductory essay and three papers. The introductory essay is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 follows the present introduction (Chapter 1) and provides an overview of the existing body of literature devoted to the variety of functions of urban cemeteries, starting from a brief historical sketch. Chapter 3 presents a theoretical background focused around three concepts: public space, postsecularity and municipal spirituality. Chapter 4 outlines the research strategy, empirical material and methods, and justifies the choice of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow as cases. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the three papers and their contributions. Chapter 6 synthesises and discusses the main results by answering the research questions. Chapter 7 offers the conclusions of the thesis together with policy implications and avenues for future research. Chapter 7 is followed by a reference list, appendices and full texts of the three papers. The appendices display a sample of the interview guides and lists of interviewees and analysed documents.

2 State of the art: cemetery research

This chapter reviews the existing literature on cemeteries — relevant for the aim of the thesis — and has three ambitions. First, it defines a cemetery as an object of study referring to the literature on cemetery historical development and to the contexts of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow. Second, the chapter presents a variety of functions of urban cemeteries identified or discussed in academic research. Third, it highlights the scholarly debate on the multifunctionality of cemeteries.

2.1 Defining cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow

Intuitively, “cemetery” seems to have a clear meaning as a place reserved for the interment of human remains. There is, however, a significant contextual and historical diversity regarding the subject matter of this phenomenon and its key differences from other types of burial spaces¹ — or “what makes a cemetery a cemetery”, as Rugg (2000) once asked. The word “cemetery” also has particular linguistic connotations. That makes the task of providing a working definition even more relevant and challenging for this thesis, which is written in the English language by a non-native speaker and devoted to cemeteries in non-English countries: Norway, Denmark and Russia.

A modern cemetery dates back to the late 18th century when new and bigger burial spaces were established outside of the settlements in many European countries (Rugg, 2000). Walter (2005) argues that at that time, Western countries, being in the processes of urbanisation and industrialisation, faced rapid population growth and burial crises that could not be handled just by the traditional re-use of graves in churchyards; a new rational way of dealing with the dead was needed. Vast, thoroughly planned and well-maintained cemeteries were contrasted to small, full and “dirty” churchyards. This transition is often understood not as simply a physical transformation of burial spaces but as a sign of a more fundamental change in attitudes towards death, an aftermath of modernity that led to medicalisation, secularisation and disenchantment of death (Walter, 2020). However, as Laqueur (2015) points out, such claims overlook that new modern cemeteries did not become just utilitarian spaces for burial: “Science did not, in fact, end up in exclusive command over death and the dead body. The dead did not become secular. History,

¹ In this thesis, I follow the lead of Rugg (2000) and use “burial space” as a generic term referring to all types of spaces for burial and other kinds of disposal of human remains.

memory, and politics, with the deep time of the dead as their resource, created a new enchantment of the dead” (p. 186).

It is interesting to note that although European societies shared a response to the burial crisis by establishing suburban cemeteries, the speed and outcomes of this process — including such “a new enchantment of the dead” — varied significantly. In many countries the idea of cemeteries was inspired by the Enlightenment movement and focused on hygiene and sanitary requirements (Rugg, 1998). Russia, Norway and Denmark followed this track. In Russia, the Empress Catherine the Great, empowered by such thinking and confronted with a plague pandemic in Moscow, prohibited burials within cities and prescribed the construction of suburban cemeteries in 1771 (Dushkina, 1995). In 1805 in Norway and Denmark, burial in city churches was prohibited and new burial spaces were prescribed to be moved outside of dense city centres (Anthony, 2016; Klingberg, 2016). New transitional cemeteries were often called “assisting churchyards” (*hjælpekirkegård* in Norwegian, *assistenskirkegårde*¹ in Danish) as they assisted overcrowded parochial churchyards. Copenhagen’s cemeteries were originally consecrated and established within the national Church in Denmark, but were municipalised to achieve better management at the end of the 19th century (Sommer, 2003). New cemeteries in Moscow were run initially by the city authorities in collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church (or with religious minority communities), but in the beginning of the 19th century, their management was entirely moved to religious organisations (Shokarev, 2020). In that sense, cemeteries in these cities were initially not secular institutions in contrast to the religious churchyards, as it is often portrayed in the literature on the emergence of modern cemeteries in other countries. Rather, the evolution of cemeteries occurred as a spatial, not ideological, development from churchyards.

Modern cemeteries were not just supposed to deal with hygiene and sanitation, but were believed to provide a new way of consolation and to lift the morale of citizens. Woodthorpe (2011) notes that new English cemeteries were designed to improve the quality of life for citizens who could not use the benefits of urban parks, like working class people. As Sloane (2018) points out, “the cemetery was a civic and spiritual project, a part of the improvement campaign to clean up, beautify, uplift, and order the emerging cities” (p. 30). Some new landscape — garden or rural — cemeteries designed and constructed in the 19th century in Europe and the USA became well-known models of inspiration, including Père Lachaise in Paris (established in 1804), Mount Auburn in Boston (1831),

¹ That is well reflected in the name of the most famous cemetery in Copenhagen — Assistens cemetery — which was established even earlier, in 1760, and assisted five city parishes and two institutions (Anthony, 2016).

Kensal Green (1833) and Highgate (1839) in London, and Ohlsdorf in Hamburg (1877). Vanderstraeten (2009) suggests that “until today, we build upon, and react to, some of the choices made during that period” (p. 2).

Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow — the three cities that this thesis focuses on — were slow in adopting this trend and lacked “grandeur” projects of the same scale: initially, their suburban cemeteries aimed to deal with epidemics and burial of the urban poor. In Copenhagen, the Vestre cemetery, which demonstrated elaborate planning and landscaping, was established in 1870. Oslo’s most ornamented cemetery — with the same name as in Copenhagen, Vestre — was opened in 1902 (Klingberg, 2016). Bratskoe cemetery, the only Moscow cemetery designed with references to Western European examples, was inaugurated in 1915 as a memorial burial ground for victims of World War I but demolished in the 1930s by the Soviet authorities (Pirogov, 2014).

Kolnberger (2018) argues that as a spatial phenomenon, a cemetery is rather “conservative”: its “structure and character express continuities and reflect cultural transitions over the long term” (p. 136). However, cemeteries, even slowly, are always in transformation and far from being just frozen traces of the past, as they are sometimes portrayed. Rather, a cemetery is “a political, contested and dynamic space accessed by a wide range of people who carry with them varying expectations and demands” (Woodthorpe, 2011, p. 272). Transformation of cemeteries is shaped by a complex combination of social, cultural and political processes and intentional actions of landscape architects, managers and users.

In all three countries, the 20th century introduced the egalitarian ideas into cemetery design and management, but with different aftermath. The 1917 Russian Revolution, aiming to build a classless society, dramatically changed how Moscow cemeteries looked and were used, but led to cemeteries’ deterioration and neglect (Malysheva, 2020; Sokolova, 2019). In post-WWII Norway, the efforts of landscape architects to improve cemeteries were inspired by functionalism and social-democratic ideals and led to the proliferation of the lawn cemetery landscape (Dietze-Schirdewahn & Lunde, 2019; Jørgensen, 2014). A similar trend in the egalitarian organisation of graves was noticed in 20th-century Denmark, but the integration of individual graves in the overall design was achieved mainly through the incorporation of individual hedges into a common structure (Kjøller, 2014; Sommer, 2003). Cemeteries’ surroundings have also been changing; although in the 18–19th centuries, Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow aimed to move cemeteries outside of the cities and established big suburban cemeteries, due to subsequent urban development and expansion, they are now situated within the cities.

To propose her definition of a cemetery, Rugg (2000) compared a cemetery to other types of burial spaces (namely, churchyards, burial grounds for specific groups, mass graves, war cemeteries and pantheons) regarding several elements: “physical characteristics, ownership and purpose, sacredness and the site’s ability to promote or protect the individuality of the deceased” (p. 260). According to her analysis, cemeteries are usually situated close to settlements, have an established perimeter with entrance gates, accommodate individual identifiable graves, serve as secular institutions, play an important role for communities beyond providing a place for burial and can be regarded as sacred spaces with various social and political meanings. How do cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow correspond to such a definition?

To start, I provide a sketch of the language matter of cemeteries in the three cities, as it gives some valuable insights. In both Norwegian and Danish, cemeteries have been traditionally called *kirkegård*, which literally means “churchyard”. In Denmark, this word is still used for the majority of burial spaces, even if they do not have a church and are open to all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, because they are usually sites consecrated by the Lutheran Christian Church in Denmark. Each of the five cemeteries for which the Copenhagen municipality is in charge is *kirkegård*. For strictly confessional burial grounds of other religious communities, the word *begravelsesplads* (“burial ground”) can be applied.

In Norway, *kirkegård* is still widely used, especially in everyday speech. However, since 2012, a religious-neutral word *gravplads* (“burial ground”) has been used in official discourse aiming to “communicate that cemeteries [*kirkegårder*] are public burial grounds and are not reserved only for members of the Church of Norway or other Christian religious communities” (Ministry of Government Administration, 2010–2011, pp. 7–8, my translation). While the Oslo municipality uses *gravplads* for its cemeteries as a general word, each of the 20 cemeteries the city runs either keeps *kirkegård* in its name (for example, Gamle Aker kirkegård) or uses a neutral word *gravlund*, “burial grove”, depicting more park-like organisation of these cemeteries (for example, Nordre gravlund).

In the Russian language, “cemetery” can be translated as *кладбище* (*kladbishche*), which etymologically comes from the verb *klast’* (“to put or place something on a surface”). All 136 cemeteries that the Moscow government manages have *kladbishche* in their names. Two other words can be used to refer to Russian cemeteries: *погост* (*pogost*), for small cemeteries in rural areas or poetically to cemeteries in general, and *некрополь* (*necropol’*), usually for historically significant cemeteries or for an assembly of all burial spaces in a city. In the discussion around heritage aspects of cemeteries, *necropol’* has wide prominence (see, for example, Kucheryavaya, 2021; Shokarev, 2020).

This thesis examines a cemetery as a spatial phenomenon, while acknowledging that it belongs to a broader institutional framework for dealing with the disposal of the dead — something that Rugg (2020) called a “cemetery system”. Returning to Rugg’s (2000) definition of a cemetery described above, I depict cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow as green, spiritually significant, situated within the cities, operated by the city authorities, designated and demarcated spaces for burials and disposal of ashes, open for disposal of all citizens and a variety of memorialisation forms, including individual graves. Such a description provides a point of departure, and the papers in this thesis will display a more nuanced picture, while Chapter 6 will highlight similarities and differences between the cities.

It is useful to emphasise that in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow it is required to dispose human remains in cemeteries. Such a demand is mentioned in the legislation implicitly (in Oslo and Copenhagen) or explicitly (in Moscow). In Norway and Denmark, there are some exceptions, mostly for scattering ashes in natural areas, but very few use them (Danske Krematoriers Landsforening, 2021; Fjell, 2020; Hadders, 2021; Høeg, 2019). This demand means that cemeteries in the three cities are not necessarily losing their relevance as spaces for interment compared to cemeteries in jurisdictions where more diverse post-committal practices are allowed (Nordh et al., 2021), like keeping an urn with ashes at home. As cemeteries are designated spaces both for coffin burial and cremated remains, in the three cities there is also no difference between cemeteries for burials and crematoria gardens for cremated remains, as in other countries (Nordh et al., 2021).

This thesis focuses on “mundane” or “ordinary” active (working) cemeteries, which provide physical space for dealing with “everyday” death as opposed to war memorials, national pantheons and memorial shrines in public spaces — exceptional places that attract a significant amount of scholarly attention (see, for example, Petersson & Wingren, 2011; Stevens & Franck, 2015). Moreover, I delimit this inquiry to urban cemeteries, those situated within cities.

An important note should be made regarding the scale of this thesis. While the authorities of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow manage diverse groups of cemeteries — already different in history, size, location and organisation within each city (see the papers for images and maps) — I look at them not at individual, but at aggregated, city scale. That is the scale where policies, the focus of this thesis, are made. At the same time, I acknowledge that the functions individual cemeteries in the three cities have — and, subsequently, the role they play — can differ greatly. This chapter continues with an overview of cemetery functions identified in academic literature.

2.2 Functions of urban cemeteries

Cemetery research comprises literature from a variety of disciplines, including, among others, anthropology, archaeology, environmental science, geography, history, landscape architecture, sociology and urban planning. Researchers from these disciplines share their focus on cemeteries as the main object of inquiry but have different theoretical and methodological stances. Moreover, cemetery research is fragmented through publications in discipline-specific journals (Woodthorpe, 2011) or incorporated into death studies journals (*Mortality*, *OMEGA — Journal of Death and Dying*, and *Death Studies*). The lack of cross-disciplinary dialogue poses some difficulties for anyone aiming to review this scholarship.

In recent decades, cemetery research has expanded significantly. In geographical disciplines, there have been several recent attempts to review existing literature on cemeteries and other places associated with death: Kong (1999) and Romanillos (2015) in human geography, Stevenson, Kenten, and Maddrell (2016) in social geography and Nash (2018) in physical geography. However, there is a lack of a comprehensive review that would bring studies from the disciplines of social and natural sciences and humanities together. This section attends to such a task by drawing together papers from a wide spectrum of scientific branches but keeps the domain of this thesis — spatial social sciences — in focus. The review is organised around different functions of contemporary urban cemeteries. I understand the role of urban cemeteries as a combination of the functions they play; thus, this review contributes to the overarching aim of the thesis to provide new knowledge on the holistic role of cemeteries in contemporary cities.

The review follows a narrative, not a systematic, approach (Greenhalgh, Thorne, & Malterud, 2018). To gain insights and deeper understanding, it aims attention at interpretation of the literature, rather than at including all the studies written on the topic and summarising data. Through the interpretation of the literature, I compose a list of functions that urban cemeteries have, illustrate each function with relevant studies and outline the main lines of debate. The review is built on a literature search during the PhD project. It focuses on scientific peer-reviewed publications (articles, chapters in anthologies, books) but also includes dissertations, conference papers and “grey” literature. My search strategy involved working in general scholarly literature databases (Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, the Norwegian library system Oria, the Russian library of scientific publications eLIBRARY.RU), engagement with an existing bibliography

of cemetery research¹ and a snowballing process. The latter starts in references and “cited by” lists of relevant papers. I focus on the last 21 years of research, 2000–2021, as the most relevant for the topic of contemporary cemeteries, but also employ older papers if necessary. Although this section draws on international cemetery research, it underscores studies devoted to Norwegian, Danish and Russian cemeteries.

Figure 1 shows the identified functions of urban cemeteries. In this thesis I understand the primary function of cemeteries both as provision of space for disposal of human remains and for consolation and commemoration. I consider all other functions secondary. The functions on the list are interconnected and not necessarily exclusive. Moreover, cemetery functions are context dependent, so they cannot be generalised. Nevertheless, I believe that such a review can serve as a useful point of departure for exploring the multifaceted role of urban cemeteries across different contexts.

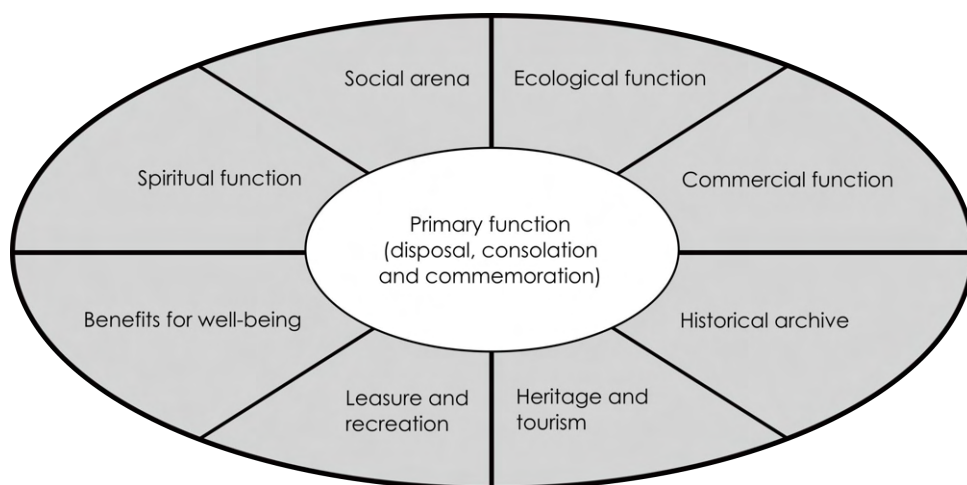


Figure 1. Cemetery functions identified in the literature review, with the primary function in the centre and the secondary functions around it.

Primary function (disposal, consolation and commemoration)

I recognise the primary functions as accommodation of disposal, consolation and commemoration. While we can imagine these three parts operating separately (for example, graves can be used just for body decomposition and lack any signs of commemoration or digital memorials can have no direct connection to remains), this study focuses on physical spaces where these three aspects interrelate. Cemeteries are designed

¹ Cemetery Research Group at University of York
<https://www.york.ac.uk/spsw/research/cemetery-research-group/about-cemeteries/select-bibliography/>.

to deal with our losses, both physically by disposing of human remains in different forms, as well as symbolically and emotionally, by providing space for funeral rituals, commemoration activities and memorialisation. As Romanillos (2015) notes, “people’s relationships to death and the dead are spatial, as much as temporal, phenomena” (p. 560).

Cemeteries are places where we, as a society, leave dead bodies (or already cremated remains) for decomposition in an ethically acceptable and safe manner. While what is considered ethically acceptable varies across contexts (see the discussion around “the proper” in the papers and Chapter 6), a safety in body decomposition follows more general criteria and has been explored in research. The environmental risks a cemetery can pose depend on where and how a cemetery is established and how it operates. First, the choice of location for a cemetery has to consider the position of the groundwater table, land relief and quality of soil (Oliveira et al., 2013; Żychowski, 2012). In the worst cases, inappropriate location of a cemetery can lead to contamination of water reservoirs and wells, a problem mostly relevant for smaller settlements lacking a centralised system for drinking water provision (Karavaeva, 2007). Cemeteries with soil not suitable for burials pose difficulties for body decomposition, which is especially problematic for timely re-use of graves and working conditions of grave-diggers (Økland & Haraldsen, 2020).

Second, an incorrect mode of funeral and cemetery work can also threaten body decomposition; for example, the use of synthetic materials in bedding and coffins can lead to the formation of adipocere, or “grave wax” (Fiedler et al., 2012), a difficult challenge Norwegian cemeteries face (Fjell, 2020; Gimmedstad, 2016; Klingberg, 2016). Cremated remains themselves do not have a notable negative environmental impact, but the process of cremation produces pollution, especially in places with poor regulatory control (Mari & Domingo, 2010). Scholars agree that cemeteries might pose environmental and health risks, but there is evidence that, at least in some contexts, such risks are relatively low (see, for example, Massas, Kefalogianni, & Chatzipavlidis, 2018). Sound cemetery planning and management can neutralise such risks.

Cemeteries accommodate not just the physical process of body decomposition, but also facilitate an emotional response to the loss of our beloved ones. There is a limited amount of research focusing on the cemeteries’ mission to provide space for sorrow and grief, noted by Jedan, Maddrell, and Venbrux (2018). Some advances in this theme are studies of Bachelor (2004) in the Australian context, Francis, Kellaher, and Neophytou (2005) in the British context and Kjærsgaard (2018) in the Danish one. The extent to which cemeteries are instrumental in the process of consolation depends on both the personal circumstances of the bereaved and the characteristics of the cemetery. Not every bereaved person will find consolation in a cemetery and not every cemetery can provide consolation

for grief. A cemetery can contain a range of feelings the bereaved experience — from sadness to anger and frustration (Woodthorpe, 2011) — and provide settings for dealing with grief. Exploring Danish cemeteries as consolation spaces, Kjærsgaard (2018) shows that dealing with losses in a regulated and managed cemetery space can be difficult for people who want to seek consolation in a non-dogmatic way.

Commemoration practices, which include grave visits and different types of memorialisation, “serve to stave off the social death of the deceased” (Kjærsgaard & Venbrux, 2016, p. 20) and help the bereaved to maintain bonds with the deceased. Buckham (2003) argues that commemoration can differ from burial and can include several stages, meaning that not all people are commemorated immediately after death or at all. In some regions — particularly in Eastern Europe (Kupisiński, 2020; Stasulane, 2021) — commemoration activities are connected to particular days of mass visitation of the cemeteries.

There is a significant body of research devoted to the materiality of death, dying and disposal and physical forms of memorialisation, from epitaphs and grave tombs to design solutions for a cemetery in general. For example, Wingren (2013) explores the qualities that landscape architects put into the design of cemeteries in Sweden and how they have changed over time. Williams (2011) demonstrates that memorial groves (*minnelund*) — an increasingly wide-spread collective memorial form in Scandinavia — “serve as architectonic environments that facilitate the staging of the presence of the cremated dead and encouraging ongoing relationships between the living and the dead through personal commemorative practice” (p. 113). According to Silvén (2018), who looks at the balance of private and public in Swedish cemeteries through personal memorabilia on a grave, sorrow can be materialised in a cemetery space through objects from everyday life.

Memorialising processes and forms of memorials are constantly changing and, at least in some cultural contexts, intensely personalised: “While the need to find meaning in death is not a new phenomenon, it is the trend towards the creation of personal meaning rather than the taking of meaning from traditional and socially prescribed forms and practices which governs the shaping of memorialisation today” (Holloway, Hukelova, & Bailey, 2018, p. 1). Vanderstraeten (2009) warns that “individualisation is not a one-dimensional and unidirectional process of change” and that “the choice for such traditional practices can be perceived as an intentional one and/or criticised as being outdated or old-fashioned” (p. 5).

Ecological function

While in the beginning, modern cemeteries as a new type of burial space aimed to mitigate the negative environmental impact of the disposal of human remains, now there is a growing amount of literature exploring cemeteries' benefits for the environment. This function is especially relevant considering how prominent the sustainability agenda is in urban planning and development. Such benefits, combined in this review under ecological function, include the provision of habitat for vegetation and wildlife, land conservation and the supply of ecosystem services.

Cemeteries in many cities are nature-like environments that can provide space for different types of plants, animals, birds and insects. Researchers have paid significant attention to cemeteries' role as habitats for trees (Jaganmohan, Vailshery, Mundoli, & Nagendra, 2018; Quinton, Östberg, & Duinker, 2020) and birds (see, for example, Morelli, Mikula, Benedetti, Bussière, & Tryjanowski, 2018). In their review of the existing literature on the biodiversity potential of burial places, Löki, Deák, Lukács, and Molnár (2019) emphasise urban cemeteries' role in providing refuges for rare and endangered species. Cemeteries, as spiritually special places, exist for a longer time in undisturbed conditions compared to other urban places. The capacity of cemeteries to serve as such natural habitats depends on vegetation structure, human behaviour, site management and surrounding landscape (Tryjanowski et al., 2017; Villaseñor & Escobar, 2019). Cemeteries' biodiversity potential can be threatened by intensified management with frequent mowing and logging, the introduction of invasive species, and a decrease in grasslands (Löki et al., 2019).

Cemeteries can be seen as land conservation tools, as they may safeguard nature-like areas for future generations when using environmentally friendly solutions. Such a solution can be natural burial, which Coutts, Basmajian, Sehee, Kelty, and Williams (2018) contrast with the American tradition of "maintaining single-use gravesites in perpetuity, a practice that results in ever expanding cemeteries and involves highly resource consumptive burial practices" (p. 131) — an ecologically and economically unsustainable practice. They advocate the use of natural burial sites as multifunctional greenspaces and instruments to conserve undeveloped land. Similarly, Scalenghe and Pantani (2020) call for using natural burial sites as green corridors and emphasise their ability to conserve high-quality soils, as such soils are required for burial sites.

To capture the ecological function of urban cemeteries, few studies (Clayden, Green, Hockey, & Powell, 2017; Kowarik, Buchholz, Von Der Lippe, & Seitz, 2016; Quinton & Duinker, 2019) employed the concept of ecosystem services, which focuses on the linkages between ecosystems and human well-being. Clayden et al. (2017) demonstrate that

abandoning practices of cutting cemetery lawns can make municipal cemeteries an important source of ecosystem services in cities and also promote new, more environmentally friendly solutions among the population.

Commercial function

Countries differ significantly in the models of funeral industry and cemetery provision (Walter, 2005) and in the role of market mechanisms within such models. Private cemeteries — not common in Scandinavia and Russia — are prominent in some contexts (see, for example, the case of the USA in Sloane, 2018) and often emerge in response to burial crises that public cemeteries cannot handle (Klaufus, 2018b; Rusu, 2020). However, the commercial interests of private companies frequently lead to an increase in inequality in cemetery provision (Rugg, 2020). Even in contexts where cemeteries are a public responsibility, their management can employ commercial attitudes. Woodthorpe (2011) demonstrates how a cemetery in London has moved towards a more commercial model of operation due to a societal shift to cost-efficient organisation. She shows that some visitors to the cemetery found it contradictory to the idea of a cemetery as a municipal service, which made the bereaved “consumers”. In general, the economic and financial aspects of cemeteries have, as far as I know, not caught the attention of researchers yet, with just a few exceptions (Faye & Channac, 2017; Paraskevopoulou, 2019; Van Steen & Pellenbarg, 2006) even though it is stated that the cost for grave space varies across countries (Nordh et al. 2021). Moreover, the financial aspect of cemeteries — public or private — is essential to sustaining cemeteries in the long run.

Historical archive

The organisation and development of cemeteries reflect the society in which we live and from a historical perspective is a valuable source of information about our past. The ways our ancestors dealt with their deceased is the focus of many disciplines, especially in the humanities. Anthony (2016) provides a good overview of the archaeology of modern cemeteries, which, due to their relatively short life — from the end of the 18th century — are not so frequent objects of archaeological studies.

The design and content of grave tombs and other types of memorials have attracted significant attention from scholars who are focusing on the cultural processes that they represent. For example, pictorial symbols and epitaphs on gravestones helped Gustavsson (2015) to see the difference between Norwegian and Swedish attitudes to commemoration and the evolution of such attitudes over time. Another example is a study by Streb (2017), who demonstrated sociocultural transformation from a rank society to a capitalist class society by looking at 19th-century gravestones in the German region of the Palatinate. In

that sense, cemeteries can also be useful destinations for school visits during which students can be introduced to the topics of economics, geography, immigration history, public health and architecture (Groce, Wilson, & Poling, 2013).

When looking at cemeteries as historical archives, there is a temptation to consider them as static mirrors that simply reflect societal transformations. However, cemeteries are dynamic spaces that not only reflect society but also distort and shape it, representing “an idealized, manipulated social configuration” (Streb, 2017, p. 241). Attention should be paid not only to what is visible but also to what is omitted, as a cemetery is “simultaneously a dense text on the history of society and an assortment of gaps and palimpsests in this text” (Malysheva, 2018, p. 353).

Heritage and tourism

The historical function of cemeteries is tightly connected to heritage. In many cities, cemeteries are important heritage sites, both as collections of culturally and historically important monuments, as well as whole entities. Moreover, there is a growing interest in cemetery culture as a part of intangible heritage. Since 2020, cemetery culture has been recognised as such by the German office of UNESCO and includes “the design of cemeteries, burial practices and mourning and commemoration rituals” but also “the use of the cultural space of the cemetery as a social meeting place and cultural venue” (Deutsche UNESCO-Kommision, 2020).

Discussing cemeteries as cultural heritage, it is important to ask what is special about cemetery heritage and what distinguishes cemeteries from other heritage sites. Paraskevopoulou (2019) suggests that “death is the reason why the cemetery is still socially relevant and, therefore, the reason why the cemetery has both a first life as a service and a second one as heritage” (p. 267). However, as demonstrated by Rugg (2018b), death and mortality are surprisingly absent in cemetery conservation in England: “Cemeteries are very rarely valued because of the ways they speak of mortality, either at the level of authorised heritage discourse or at localised, community levels” (p. 57). The stories cemeteries are capable of telling are often more special than those that could easily be presented as heritage.

Cemetery heritage often attracts tourists. Pliberšek, Basle, and Lebe (2019) argue that “the transformation of cemeteries from burial places, traditionally connected with mourning and sorrow, to green places of peace in the middle of noisy cities, or outstanding spaces of art and culture, has encouraged religious and secular visitation” (p. 81). They suggest that time is important for such transformation, as people might stop having

personal connections to the deceased and be more eager to see a cemetery as public heritage.

Alongside battlefields, sites of concentration camps, places associated with genocide and war crimes, cemeteries are often mentioned as examples of destinations of “dark tourism” (Young & Light, 2016). Scholars debate whether death itself is a driving force of cemetery tourism or other aspects are much more important, for example, folk culture, as a study from Romania demonstrates (Mionel, 2020). The same concern is shared by Pécsek (2015), who argues that cemeteries in the Hungarian capital of Budapest are complex tourist attractions representing both natural and cultural values and not “dark aspects”.

Leisure and recreation

Different types of recreational activities, especially quiet and peaceful ones, are an essential part of the everyday lives of many cemeteries worldwide. Some recreational activities are tightly connected to the primary function of cemeteries, such as heritage visits or meditative walks, but many others are common in other types of green spaces (Deering, 2016). My own interest in the role of urban cemeteries started with an inquiry into jogging in cemeteries of the Swedish city of Malmö (Grabalov, 2018). Strolling, short recreational stays, jogging, cycling and picnicking were observed in cemeteries in, for example, the USA (Harvey, 2006) and Norway (Evensen et al., 2017). The latter study, based in Oslo, shows that the extent of recreational activities differs among two examined cemeteries and explains it by cemeteries’ positions in the urban fabric, layout and landscape design. This observation is also relevant for cemeteries in different contexts: Their recreational potential varies greatly and depends on their surroundings, organisation, management and the legal, cultural and religious norms of the cities in which they are situated. Rae (2021) compares cemeteries in Malmö (Sweden) and New York (the USA), and demonstrates that while in New York only passive — meaning quiet and contemplative — recreation was allowed, a Swedish cemetery supported more active use, such as biking, walking dogs and jogging.

The perception and acceptance of recreational activities within cemeteries also differ among contexts. Some activities can generate stronger opposition from cemetery visitors, especially mourners: for example, the Pokémon-Go game (Feldman, 2018) or anti-social behaviour, such as drinking, having sex and creating general disturbance (Deering, 2016). Goh and Ching (2020) have studied perceptions of recreational activities in the Chinese cemeteries of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. They found that educational visits to cemeteries were favoured by the respondents and that younger generations were more eager to accept different types of recreational activities.

Cemetery authorities can also encourage — or hinder — some types of recreational activities by physical reconstruction, organising events and information campaigns. Harnik and Merolli (2010) observe efforts that some cemeteries in the USA take to accommodate different recreational activities, such as running, picnicking, bicycling, jazz concerts, dog walking, bird watching, bench sitting, art classes, ghost hunting, etc., and argue that the prevalence of such activities makes cemeteries function as parks. In the context of Taipei (Taiwan), Huang (2007) finds that the authorities' project of beautification of public cemeteries has changed the way citizens perceive cemeteries just to some extent, and "they still didn't consider the 'park-like' cemeteries as regular parks" (p. 219). As this thesis demonstrates further, accommodation and promotion of recreational activities in cemeteries have some benefits for different user groups, but should be done in a manner sensitive to the primary function of cemeteries.

Benefits for well-being

Cemeteries' primary function as places for dealing with the loss of beloved ones is beneficial for the mental health of some mourners, as Bachelor (2004) demonstrates. Moreover, as green spaces, many urban cemeteries have benefits for the health and well-being of other groups of visitors and even the whole population of the city. Hartig, Mitchell, De Vries, and Frumkin (2014) suggest four pathways linking nature to health: air quality, physical activity, social cohesion and stress reduction. An individual cemetery — depending on its location and characteristics — can contribute to health and well-being in all four pathways. So far, the first three pathways have not received much attention in cemetery research, while the last one — stress reduction — has some advancements.

Cemeteries are increasingly recognised in research as restorative environments that provide space for stress reduction. Using evidence from two cemeteries in Oslo, Nordh et al. (2017) demonstrate that many visitors experience cemeteries as places for mental restoration. The combination of nature, culture and history as well as spiritual aspects give people an opportunity to get away from chaotic everyday life and make cemeteries suitable for relaxation, reflection and contemplation. Similar findings also come from Edinburgh in Scotland (Lai, Scott, & Sun, 2019). In this city, the restorative potential of urban cemeteries was found to be equal to that of parks (Lai, Sarkar, Sun, & Scott, 2020).

Spiritual function

Dealing with our fundamental emotions, cemeteries are spaces of spiritual and religious significance — destinations for spiritual pilgrimages. I discuss the meaning and manifestation of spirituality in contemporary cities later in the thesis (see Section 3.3) but would like to emphasise here that urban cemeteries pose important spiritual aspects that

attract different groups of visitors, not only — and not necessarily — mourners. Like other cemetery functions, spiritual function reveals very differently depending on the context. For example, in some informal settlements of the Peruvian capital of Lima, cemeteries might function as “spiritual safety nets” where “by sharing experiences as folk saint devotees, vulnerable and marginalised groups find strength” (Klaufus, 2021, p. 7). Moroz (2021) demonstrates how some of the crypts and statues in Vvedenskoe cemetery in Moscow became objects of a special cult, spontaneous spiritual practices through which people pray and ask for help from God or transcendental powers in general. These practices led to changes in the role of the cemetery as a place for commemoration into ritual and spiritual space. The fact that, due to its primary function, the cemetery and the crypts have already been excluded from the everyday urban environment has made such change possible. The cult, described by Moroz (2021), shows the creativity of people’s search for spirituality, which goes beyond doctrines of formal religions: “a statue on the grave of a Lutheran — made by a Catholic artist — with certain modifications becomes a vernacular Orthodox relic” (p. 170, my translation).

Even in settings that seem to be more “rational” and “secular” than Latin American or Russian cemeteries, spirituality and religion do not disappear but just manifest differently, as demonstrated by Kjærsgaard (2018) in Denmark and Goyvaerts and Vande Keere (2020) in Flanders, Belgium. For McClymont (2015), cemeteries are natural sites of spirituality and transcendence, as the presence of death “allows — obliges, even — the purpose of life to be assessed” (p. 544).

Social arena

As Romanillos (2015) points out, throughout history, the dead have been serving in various social practices “as vehicles for the reproduction of social power and distinction; sites for the articulation of territory and property; and forces for symbolic identity at different scales” (pp. 568–569). Burial spaces, including cemeteries, have always been performing as a social arena, but the meaning of this function has been shifting. Looking already at burials of Viking-Age Norway, Moen (2020) demonstrates that these places were essential for maintaining social relations and ties as gathering places where these relations were commemorated. As consecrated places, Norwegian churchyards traditionally fulfilled social functions as places for gathering, proclaiming political decisions and marking the social class of the deceased (Swensen & Brendalsmo, 2018). In the contemporary Russian context, Filippova (2009) demonstrates that the way grave plots are distributed indicates socio-economic stratification and mirrors the societal transformation (from a more egalitarian to a more elitist society) of the last decades.

Cemeteries, however, do not merely reflect the conditions of the society that constructed them. Drawing on the study of a cemetery in Netherlands as a ritual space, Jedan, Kmec, Kolnberger, Venbrux, and Westendorp (2020) demonstrate that “cemeteries do not only form an ensemble of ritual spaces that are reliant on pre-existing communities, they also evoke, produce and maintain communities” (p. 1). Cemeteries contribute to stronger ties of a minority community to a place where they live — such as of Russians to the Estonian city of Narva (Bouchard, 2004) — to allow communities to define their territory. Destroyed and forgotten cemeteries can signify changes in society, sometimes even more vividly than working cemeteries (Krasilnikova, 2016; Puzdrakiewicz, 2020).

Cemeteries can make segregation and inequality in society more visible, as in South Africa during apartheid (Christopher, 1995) or in Latin American megacities (Klaufus, 2016). Cultural and socio-economic differences and inequalities also exist in death (sometimes even more than in life) and bereavement, and need to be tackled accordingly by cemetery managers (Zavattaro, 2020). Cemeteries as public spaces of commemoration are important arenas for the articulation of civic identity and group belonging and thus need inclusive and culturally sensitive policies (McClymont, 2018; Nordh et al., 2021).

The social function of cemeteries is particularly important for the dynamics within multicultural societies (Reimers, 1999). How different migrant communities deal with the end of life can raise legal and political contestation, such as provision for open-air Hindu funeral pyres (Hadders, 2021), planning permissions for burial grounds of Muslim communities (Hunter, 2016) or post-mortal mobility of remains (Akkaymak & Belkhodja, 2020). Maddrell et al. (2018) call for diversity-ready cemeteries that rely “upon openness to and respect for the needs of others, other citizens, other neighbours” (p. 53).

2.3 Cemeteries’ multifunctionality

The cemetery functions presented in the previous section usually co-exist simultaneously, making a cemetery a multifunctional space. The interest in the multifunctionality of cemeteries is not a new topic and goes back to the very idea of the landscape cemetery of the 19th century. However, insights into cemeteries’ multifunctionality are isolated into disciplinary silos and inadequately communicated in planning theory and practice (Basmajian & Coutts, 2010; McClymont, 2014; Nordh & Evensen, 2018; Woodthorpe, 2011). More than 40 years ago Howett (1977) demonstrated the ability of Boston cemeteries to accommodate recreation and serve as a wildlife habitat. She argued that the multi-use of cemeteries would revitalise their social relevance and reflect better values of “post-modern” American society. At the same time, she highlighted a particular context in which a cemetery is situated and admitted that “not every new

cemetery should be developed as a recreational park or a bird and animal sanctuary” (Howett, 1977, p. 17). She also believed that design could minimise potential conflicts between different functions.

The questions posed by Howett (1977) are still relevant today. Which functions do cemeteries have? Are there any conflicts between the different functions? How can different functions be balanced? While many authors have touched on the topic of cemetery multifunctionality (see, for example, Arffmann, 2000; Quinton & Duinker, 2019; Weller, 1989) since then, there is a limited amount of research that empirically demonstrates how multifunctionality manifests in particular cemetery settings. Some exceptions are studies of Swensen, Nordh, and Brendalsmo (2016) and Skår et al. (2018) in Oslo, Rae (2021) in Malmö and New York, and Francis et al. (2005) and Woodthorpe (2011) in London.

Swensen et al. (2016) document the uses and perceptions of a cemetery in Oslo, which was considered by users as a calm green space with an authentically pleasant environment. Based on their observations, they argue that there is no clear contradiction between different user groups at large, but some smaller conflicts still exist. According to the researchers, good maintenance of the cemetery could be a key for a peaceful co-existence of different cemetery functions where “the users have to a large degree become the best managers of the cemetery, keeping an eye on the place and reporting unwanted activities” (Swensen et al., 2016, p. 51).

In the case of London, Woodthorpe (2011) shows what kind of conflicts and different interpretations can arise when diversifying the use of working cemeteries, which are still used for funerals and interments. She describes cemeteries through the simultaneous existence of landscapes of emotion, commerce and community and calls for a systemic approach to their management:

A consequence of the varying ways of interpreting the cemetery are the difficulties surrounding the implementation of change that stresses one interpretation of the landscape over another. As a result, sustainability strategies that emphasise the prominence of one of the three landscapes may end up actually being reductionist in scope, focusing resources and attention onto one particular way of seeing and using the site at the expense of another, to the potential frustration of visitors and staff alike. (p. 271)

A similar idea is articulated by Deering (2016) who emphasises the need for accommodating cemeteries’ multifunctionality into planning and management practices: “The more that cemeteries and churchyards are understood as multiple-use landscapes

and managed to that end, the better one can hope to improve the sites for all users and circumvent conflict” (p. 90).

The multifunctionality of urban cemeteries and the way it is accommodated at the policy level varies among contexts which a comparative study of cemeteries in Malmö and New York indicates (Rae, 2021). Cemeteries in both cities have multiple functions, including recreational, supported by cemetery managers. However, Rae (2021) found different motivations to “open up” cemeteries for more functions explained by the difference in funding models. The papers constituting this thesis and Chapter 6 unfold cemeteries’ multifunctionality further based on the empirical material from Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow. The next chapter of this thesis outlines the theoretical background of the study.

3 Theoretical background

This chapter situates the thesis within the larger theoretical context of public space literature, as well as within debates around religion and spirituality in contemporary cities, with references to the emerging body of research on “postsecular cities”. It starts with a brief review of the concepts used previously in cemetery research, providing their points of departure and giving some empirical examples. Further, the chapter attends to the current debates around the concept of public space, which this thesis draws on and aims to contribute to. The chapter then moves to a theoretical overview of the concept of a postsecular city and the role of religion and spirituality in today’s urban planning and development. I conclude by describing the idea of municipal spirituality introduced by McClymont (2015), which, as this thesis suggests, can be used as an efficient discursive tool to incorporate spiritual aspects into cemetery — and public space — planning and management.

3.1 Theorising cemeteries: review of previous studies

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the scope of cemetery research is characterised by a high level of disciplinary divides. Papers that focus on cemeteries as their main object of study differ in their theoretical and methodological stances. They also vary on the level of conceptual development of the topic. Without aiming to cover all possible concepts applied in previous cemetery research, this section discusses the main concepts that have already been used in this field — deathscape, heterotopia and infrastructure — to preface the theoretical background of this thesis, discussed in following sections.

Deathscape

The primary function of cemeteries — to provide space for the dead and our memories about them — is captured in the concept of the deathscape, originated and advanced in the work of cultural geographers (Kong, 1999). In a very broad sense, deathscapes are sites for the dead and dying: “the sites of a funeral, and the places of final disposition and of remembrance, and representations of all these” (Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010, p. 4). Romanillos (2015) defines deathscapes as “spaces and landscapes of emotional intensity through which the dead continue to be ‘with’ us” (p. 561). The growing literature on deathscapes demonstrates a wide range of interpretations of the concept studied in different contexts.

The social dimension of the deathscapes is essential, as they are constructed in different social practices and rituals. Defining deathscapes as “the material expression in the landscape of practices relating to death”, Teather (2001, p. 185) shows clashes around the traditional and the modern in Chinese cemeteries and columbaria. For Hunter (2016), this concept helps to reveal the power dynamics that shape burial sites of diaspora and migrant communities in the UK. Klafus (2014, 2016, 2018b) uses the concept to unpack social practices and conflicts around burial sites in Latin American cities.

These examples illustrate the strength of the concept in articulating and analysing spatially manifested contestations associated with death and dying. New theoretical advances (Maddrell, 2020) offer a more inclusive understanding of the concept of deathscapes, which can incorporate not only material places of death, funeral practices and disposal, but also spaces of experience and expression of dying, bereavement and remembrance and even virtual arenas and practices. While such conceptual broadness can enrich analyses of “non-traditional” deathscapes and social practices around them, it can be seen as too wide to apply for traditional and institutionalised sites associated with death, such as cemeteries — the research focus of this thesis.

Heterotopia

Another concept used in cemetery research is heterotopia, which was introduced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in a lecture. He ascribed it to “places <...> which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (Foucault, 1986 [1967], p. 24). He used a cemetery as a clear example of heterotopia together with prisons, libraries, museums, fairgrounds, gardens and other places: “simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live” (Foucault, 1986 [1967], p. 17).

The concept of heterotopia inspired many scholars in human geography, cultural studies and urban theory by highlighting “the spatial dimension of difference” (Saldanha, 2008, p. 2081). As Foucault’s lecture was, to a large extent, built on the discussion around cemeteries, cemetery research has been a natural field in which to use this concept and advance it. For example, Clements (2017) studied Highgate Cemetery in London as a heterotopia constructed through three spaces: public, creative and counterpublic. Also in London, Gandy (2012) used the concept of heterotopia to examine Abney Park Cemetery as “an island within the city that is partially separated in ecological, cultural, and political terms” (p. 733). Chesnokova (2018) used the concept of heterotopia for her analysis of mass visitation of Russian cemeteries: she demonstrated that the events transform

cemeteries from “heterotopia of crisis or deviation” into “heterotopia of illusion or compensation”, using Foucauldian classification. However, as Saldanha (2008) reminds researchers, the concept of heterotopia can lose its precision outside of structuralism — a school of thought that focuses on structural relationships. Therefore, this concept can be seen as too narrow for this thesis, which focuses on the cohesive and complex role of urban cemeteries, not limited to underlying structures only.

Infrastructure

Urban cemeteries can be naturally described as elements of infrastructure, “the physical components of interrelated systems that provide commodities and services essential to enable, sustain, or enhance societal living conditions” (Childers et al., 2019, p. 1). Cemeteries, indeed, provide commodities and services for the interment of human remains and memorialisation. Beyond pure description of reality, infrastructure also has conceptual meaning and has been used as such in cemetery research. Scholars have highlighted the contribution of cemeteries into different types of infrastructure: funeral, social and green.

Mokhov (2017a) uses infrastructure as the main theoretical lens to explore the Russian funeral industry, drawing on the work of cultural anthropologists. He argues that infrastructure can have a paramount impact on social practices: funeral infrastructure can shape funeral rites. Through such an infrastructural approach to the analysis, Mokhov (2017a) demonstrates that the Russian funeral industry is a case of “broken” or dysfunctional infrastructure. Such infrastructure includes facilities (for example, morgues and cemeteries) that do not function properly and are occupied by various formal and informal stakeholders who sell their services to “repair” infrastructure (Mokhov & Sokolova, 2020). For the bereaved, “the breakdown / repair of infrastructure is sacred and becomes an essential element of the funeral rite” (Mokhov, 2017a, p. 188).

Another example is a study by Maddrell, McNally, Beebeejaun, McClymont, and Mathijssen (2021), who used the concept of infrastructure to look at how municipal cemetery and crematoria provision accommodates the needs of established minorities and found “long-term infrastructural marginalisation” (p. 10) of specific communities. The concept of infrastructure helped Rugg (2020) to develop an infrastructural framework — cemetery system: a “framework by which each nation state orders the disposal of the dead, and which generally includes burial, cremation and the interment or scattering of cremated ashes” (p. 1). It can be described by three distinct elements: “the agencies, involved in service delivery, modes of committal, and post committal practices” (p. 3).

Moreover, she pointed out that, like schools, churches and hospitals, a cemetery system belongs to social infrastructure and should operate in respect to social justice.

Cemeteries can also be part of another type of infrastructure — green. The concept of green infrastructure incorporates different types of natural and nature-like areas that provide a range of benefits and have multiple functions (Nordh & Olafsson, 2021). In many cities, cemeteries are spaces with rich vegetation and nature-like areas. To capture their role as green spaces, few cemetery studies (Clayden et al., 2017; Kowarik et al., 2016; McClymont, 2016; Nordh & Evensen, 2018) engaged, therefore, with the concept of green infrastructure. Both Nordh and Evensen (2018) and McClymont (2016) — in Scandinavia and the UK, respectively — found that urban cemeteries are distinguished by their functions and management from more traditional elements of green infrastructure.

The concept of infrastructure has proven its value in cemetery research. However, the concept highlights cemeteries' contribution to a particular type of infrastructure, whether funeral, social or green. Section 2.2 of this thesis demonstrates the variety of functions of urban cemeteries and highlights cemeteries' multifunctionality, which can be difficult to grasp by focusing on cemeteries as one type of infrastructure. This thesis is based on a more general theoretical background, as described below. In the next section, I move from cemetery research to public space scholarship.

3.2 Public space

The concept of public space is a central theoretical pillar upon which this thesis is built. While the relationship between the private and the public within a cemetery has attracted the attention of researchers (see, for example, Rae, 2021; Silvén, 2018), just a few of them — like Klaufus (2018a) and Swensen and Brendalmo (2018) — engage with the theoretical debates around the concept of public space. I found the concept of public space to be instrumental as a theoretical lens for the analysis of the multifaceted role of urban cemeteries. This section charts the current academic debate on this concept within urban research.

Public spaces are believed to be one of the key ingredients of sustainable, prosperous and liveable cities. In the main strategic document of the United Nations devoted to urban settlements — the New Urban Agenda — public spaces play a crucial role (Mehaffy et al., 2019). This document calls for the international community to commit to the following:

Promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks, that are multifunctional areas for social interaction and inclusion, human health and well-being, economic exchange and cultural expression and dialogue among a

wide diversity of people and cultures, and that are designed and managed to ensure human development and build peaceful, inclusive and participatory societies, as well as to promote living together, connectivity and social inclusion. (United Nations, 2017, p. 13).

The United Nations defines public space as “all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without profit motive” (United Nations, 2016, p. 12). While recognising the inclusiveness and flexibility of this definition, it is important to emphasise that the theoretical debate around what constitutes public space is profound and includes various — sometimes contradictory — views. This section aims to give an overview of the main strains in this debate and highlight their relevance for cemetery research and this thesis in particular.

Public space has been one of the central topics of urban research during the last 30 years (Mitchell, 2017). There are different stands on how to define public space and which aspects, or “ingredients”, constitute public space. The papers that constitute this thesis consider cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow as public spaces in terms of fulfilling two basic criteria of public space suggested by Zukin (1995): public access and public stewardship or management. In this section, I attend to the two aspects together with a third one — public use — to carry to more normative debates around the concept of public space.

First, access is believed to be one of the most crucial aspects: Public space is a space accessible by everyone in society. Access can be physical (where people *can be*) or symbolic (where people *want to be* or feel welcomed). But is access enough for a space to be public? Hajer and Reijndorp (2001) make a distinction between spaces publicly owned or regulated as public and public domain — space where exchanges between different social groups actually occur. Both private and public spaces can be in the latter category. For example, privately owned and not always freely accessible by all, shopping malls can be used and perceived as public spaces by some user groups (Van Melik & Pijpers, 2017; Vanderbeck & Johnson Jr, 2000). This differentiation emphasises that public access and ownership are not sufficient to make a given space a genuinely public space in the sense of the public domain.

Second, according to Zukin (1995) public stewardship is another aspect that makes space public. By stewardship, she understands the way spaces are managed and how decisions regarding their management and development are made. Management arrangements are important for debates around privatisation of public space and public usage of privately owned spaces (Németh, 2009). Such arrangements can include a range of stakeholders, including the private and voluntary sectors and community organisations

(Magalhães & Carmona, 2006). Within analysis of public space management it is useful to pay attention to who makes decisions, who benefits from such decisions and what are potential tensions between different stakeholders and interests.

Third, public spaces are associated with public use. Staeheli and Mitchell (2008) show that customary use can be more important for making public space genuine public than ownership status. Some authors highlight that public spaces are inheritably multifunctional spaces. Drawing on Hajer and Reijndorp (2001) discussion on the low publicness of monofunctional spaces, we can assume that bringing more functions into spaces can make them more public. Madanipour (2017a) demonstrates that public spaces often accommodate temporal events and allow things to happen without any control. However, one can question whether public spaces are possible in reality without any restrictions? Carmona (2015) notes that public space has rarely, if ever, achieved such a utopian state. Chiodelli and Moroni (2014) identify two types of restrictions: one regarding access and another one regarding behaviour. They note that, in special public spaces where they position cemeteries, both types of restrictions are used and connected to the primary function of such spaces.

This thesis draws on the scholarly argument that public spaces are intrinsically characterised as spaces of contradiction or tension. Mitchell (2017) notes that “public space was the space where the contradictions and changes were fought out” (p. 504). For him, these contradictions are “questions of the relationship between public and private, the domestic and the civic, and the structures of inclusion and exclusion” (Mitchell, 2017, p. 507). Sirowy (2015) demonstrates the difference in mainstream theoretical discourses around the concept of public space in planning and urban design: While planning theory sees public space as a space for political struggles and democracy, in urban design, public space is conceptualised as a site for the social everyday life of citizens. These lines of argument are often interconnected and complex. Bodnar (2015) notes a tension between the political and social functions of public space: The political diversity of people who meet in public space does not automatically lead to the thicker sociability of a community but can discourage it. Amin (2008) points out that “sociality in urban public space is not a sufficient condition for civic and political citizenship” (p. 7).

Public space as a political space follows a normative ideal of city life, which, according to Young (2011 [1990]), “provides public places and forums where anyone can speak and anyone can listen” (p. 240). Her statement is echoed in Mitchell’s (2003) definition of public space as “a place within which political movements can stake out the territory that allows them to be seen (and *heard*)” (p. 129, italic in the original). In that sense, a social justice perspective can be a useful tool for examining the political dimension of public

space by enhancing “the diversity, cultural recognition and social interaction among people who would otherwise not come into contact with one another” (Low, 2020, p. 59). Moreover, in socially just cities, citizens’ right to high quality, easily accessible, multifunctional public spaces is also important. It is interesting to note that social justice is also highly relevant for evaluation of cemetery provision and can be operationalised in a range of aspects: “to the desirability of a right to decent treatment at death; the obligation to be democratically accountable and so responsive to societal expectation; equal access of all people to decent treatment of their dead, irrespective of income; freedom of religious expression; and due regard for environmental sustainability” (Rugg, 2020, p. 11).

For the discussion of the political ideal of public space, the notion of a right to the city has great importance. According to Henri Lefebvre, who introduced this concept into the scholarship, the right to the city is a “transformed and renewed right to urban life” (as cited in Attoh, 2011, p. 674). He operationalises the right to the city in terms of participation (taking part in decision-making on the production of urban space) and appropriation (physically accessing, taking in use, modifying and producing urban space) (Purcell, 2002). Attoh (2011) shows that for many scholars, this right means very different things, including a right to political space, to occupy, design and define public space, to housing, to transportation, to natural resources, to aesthetics, to community or a right against police brutality and surveillance. According to how Mitchell (2003) sees Lefebvre’s notion of the right to the city, publicity demands heterogeneity, which a city facilitates by giving space for very different people with different interests.

The social dimension of the concept of public space — which focuses on everyday urban life — has also received significant attention from scholars. According to Cassegård (2014) public space can be regarded “as a physical site of social interactions — a site defined as much by norms, expectations, and perceptions as by the reference to material settings” (p. 689). Within the urban canon (Amin, 2008), social interactions are believed to be an essential element of well-functioning public spaces and liveable cities in general (Jacobs, 1992 [1961]; Whyte, 1980). Danish urbanist Jan Gehl (2010) notes that “inviting cities must have carefully designed public spaces to support the processes that reinforce city life” (p. 65). Even though Gehl (2010) acknowledges the democratic function of public spaces, in his list of 12 criteria that aim to strengthen the quality of public spaces, the political dimension is not visible.

While scholars focusing on the political aspect of public space consider neoliberalisation and privatisation of the last decades as disruptive forces to the very nature of public space — captured in the sentiment of “the end of public space” (Mitchell, 2017) — researchers dealing with the social aspect are not so pessimistic. Public spaces

still exist and evolve. Using London as a case area, Carmona (2015) demonstrates the complexity of contemporary public spaces and the diversity of social interactions there. He argues against a narrow understanding of public space as an exclusively political notion:

The principle of “cities for all” is fundamental, yet it is also important to acknowledge that not every space will, or should, appeal equally to every citizen. This is a form of inclusion rather than exclusion: it recognises the diversity of lifestyles and preferences amongst urban populations and that cities should offer something for everyone in the right locations, rather than everything for everyone everywhere, which may all too easily lead to lowest common-denominator design and to nothing appealing to anyone anywhere. Inclusion, in that sense, is a strategic concept in terms of addressing the multiplicity of need. It is also a local one in terms of equality of use and access. (Carmona, 2015, pp. 399–400)

Urban cemeteries in many contexts — and importantly in Scandinavia and Russia, the geographical focus of this thesis — have public access, stewardship and use, but are not traditionally recognised as public spaces compared to more emblematic types, such as streets, squares and parks. The theoretical debates around the notion of public space, presented in this section, focus on political and social aspects. Public space, defined as space for political struggles and social encounters, is predominantly viewed as a civic and thus secular space. However, for the discussion on cemeteries as public spaces, their spiritual aspects are important as well. The next section of this chapter is devoted to the theoretical discussion on postsecular cities. Such discussion brings forward the spiritual and religious values in contemporary societies, which are important for this study of the role of urban cemeteries.

3.3 Postsecular cities

This thesis examines the role of urban cemeteries in the postsecular theoretical context, which highlights, if put bluntly, diverse relationships between the spiritual/religious and the secular in our societies. Uzlaner (2013) identifies three ways to look at postsecularity: first, as a changed empirical reality where religion comes back and retains its social importance; second, as a new normative doctrine with a just relationship between the religious and the secular in diverse democratic societies; and third, as a research optics to look at this relationship. This thesis engages mostly with the last two approaches. In this section, I outline some aspects of the theory of postsecularity that are relevant for the aim of this thesis to build new knowledge and understanding of the role of urban cemeteries as public spaces.

I start by providing some clarifications between the concepts of spirituality and religion. Spirituality can be understood as a “search for the sacred” (Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones, & Shafranske, 2013, p. 14) and “experienced as a relationship with that which is intimately ‘inner,’ immanent and personal, within the self and others, and/or as relationship with that which is wholly ‘other,’ transcendent and beyond the self” (Cook, 2004, p. 548). Religion can be defined as a “search for significance that occurs within the context of established institutions that are designed to facilitate spirituality” (Pargament et al., 2013, p. 15) where significance includes a variety of psychological, social, physical and spiritual goals.

For not all people are religious experiences spiritual or do spiritual experiences have to be religious. Oman (2018) notes that religion and spirituality are usually overlapping concepts, as often, but not always, people who are affiliated with religious tradition do it for the sake of spiritual needs, or as Pargament et al. (2013) put it, “the spiritual dimension is the heart and soul of religious life” (p. 12). In scholarship, the concepts of religion and spirituality are often used interchangeably as synonymous or as a joint entity “religion/spirituality” (see, for example, Kao, Peteet, & Cook, 2020; Koenig, 2009; McClymont, 2015; Oman, 2018). Acknowledging the complexity of the relationship between spirituality and religion, in the papers that constitute this thesis, I chose to use spirituality as a more inclusive term and refer to religion as an integral part of spirituality.

Kong (2010) notes that the idea of postsecularism has roots in continental philosophy and the work of critical social theorists such as Jürgen Habermas. It was developed as a reaction to and disappointment with the secularisation premise that dominated social sciences until the 1980s (Furseth et al., 2019). Secularisation suggests that modernisation necessarily led to the decline of religion in the public and private spheres. Such an assumption contradicted empirical observations, for example, of mass media coverage in which spirituality and religion were still apparent (Pargament et al., 2013). Habermas (2006) explains the rise of the idea of postsecularity by “political revitalisation of religion” expressed in the fact that “religious traditions and communities of faith have gained a new, hitherto unexpected political importance” (p. 1).

The idea of postsecular is not in opposition to the secularisation premise but rather shows its limitations and acknowledges the presence of “radically plural societies in terms of religion, faith, belief within and between diverse urban societies” (Beaumont, 2010, p. 6). From that point of view, postsecularism is “simply attention to an already existent phenomenon” (Herman, Beaumont, Cloke, & Walliser, 2012, p. 12). Put differently, it is not a revival of religion itself but a revival of the recognition of religion. For Herman et al. (2012), in the postsecular context, faith provides responses to the challenges associated

with neoliberal capitalism, so postsecularism also has both political and ethical dimensions. Habermas (2006) points out just relationships between the religious and the secular and suggests that postsecularity requires a complementary learning process between religious and secular groups because “fair arrangements can only be found if the parties involved learn to take the perspectives of the others” (p. 4).

The concept of the postsecular also challenges the idea of the urban as necessarily modern and secular. According to Beaumont and Baker (2011), the postsecular city is a contested space where new relations between religion and secularity are constantly being shaped. The theoretical advances behind the idea of a postsecular city were built on the cross-disciplinary collaboration between human geography (and social scientists more generally) and theology (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). Beaumont (2010) points out that cities are good places for observations of “the shift from secular to postsecular in terms of public space, building use, governance and civil society” (p. 3) and can serve as “the locus in which the dynamics of religio-secular change are revealed and expressed with greatest intensity, if not always clarity” (p. 9).

The idea of postsecularity meets some critique in the academic debate. Kong (2010, 763) calls postsecularism “a seductive idea” and warns against “overenthusiasm” around its adoption in geographic research by pointing out that “the dangers of applying the discourse of postsecularisation in a globalizing and totalizing way are that significant continuities are neglected and interpretations of present-day phenomena potentially flawed” (p. 765). In that way, she highlights continuity rather than discontinuity and suggests “to avoid a globalizing discourse of postsecularisation” (Kong, 2010, p. 769). Furseth et al. (2019) characterises the theory of postsecularity as too focused on a single dimension (revival of religion in the public sphere) and not able to recognise the complexity of multiple simultaneous trends. However, my reading of postsecular literature does not provide reasons for such a narrow interpretation of postsecularism; many authors acknowledge the multiplicity of different processes as well.

This debate on postsecularity is also relevant for the discussion of the changing attitudes to death and the premise of “tamed death” developed by Ariès (1974). He sees secularisation — which is also a product of modernisation for him — as a force to forbid death from everyday life. His ideas have shaped the conceptualisation of modern death as medicalised, professionalised and disenchanting but have received mixed reception, especially in contemporary scholarship (Malone, 2019). Walter (2020) notes that “modernity does not necessarily mean secularisation” (p. 163). Laqueur (2015) argues that modernity did not destroy the sacredness of the dead but rather reconfigured it. Like spirituality/religion did not disappear from the modern world, death and the dead also

present and generate a variety of attitudes and ways to deal with. According to Fjell (2020), in the Norwegian context attitudes towards death do change, but very slowly, and more personal attitudes seem to come back: people take care of their dying relatives more often than before, children are more central for organising funerals of their parents, the way obituaries look like change and become more individualised, and death is more present in media.

The concept of postsecularity and the debates it has generated seem highly relevant for research on cemeteries, as cemeteries have valuable spiritual/religious qualities. At the same time, the postsecular theory tends to focus on something new and exceptional, places and situations where a new relationship between the religious and the secular might be clearly visible, like in “postsecular spaces of engagement” (Herman et al., 2012). Cloke and Beaumont (2013), for example, highlight “the emergence of urban spaces of partnership between people of faith and those of no religious faith who come together to offer care, welfare and justice to socially excluded people” (p. 27). But to my mind, cemeteries are examples of places where secular and religious/spiritual values have been in constant dialogue from the very beginning. Even seemingly secular Danish cemeteries serve as places for “lived religion”, practiced and understood by people, and demonstrate in many ways how people can be spiritual/religious (Kjærsgaard, 2017). In that sense, in this thesis, postsecularity does not illuminate a return of religion, but is rather used both as a normative ideal of just relationships between the secular and the spiritual/religious and as a theoretical lens to look at the continuity of these relationships (Uzlaner, 2013). This chapter moves further to present the concept of municipal spirituality, which aims to introduce postsecular debates into urban planning.

3.4 Municipal spirituality

This section describes in detail the idea of municipal spirituality developed by McClymont (2015) which, as this thesis proposes, can function as an efficient discursive tool for incorporating spiritual aspects of urban cemeteries into public space planning. The idea was built on disappointment in the modernist planning agenda challenged in postsecular settings. Beaumont (2010) points out that “if we apply postsecularism to urban thinking we have a robust means for transcending the particularities of difference between diverse social identities in cities” (p. 2). He draws on the idea of postmodern planning tradition, which, contrary to modernist planning with its orientation on rational and scientific arguments, would valourise “the wisdom and tacit knowledge inherent in many local communities and which is unlocked via performative rather than rational consultations” (Beaumont, 2010, p. 8).

Sandercock, Senbel, Beaumont, and Baker (2011) argues that spirituality is essential for dealing with the social and ecological crises we live in, but the planning literature that aims to tackle these crises surprisingly neglects spirituality. Their call to incorporate spirituality into planning is beautiful and inspiring:

Spirituality, then, in the context of urban life and the urban/land professions, we will interpret as a radical practice of connecting with awe: connecting to other people, and reconnecting to the natural world. The paradox at the heart of planning is that we do not discuss what makes that heart beat. We suggest that it is some sense of a relational politics, informed by love. (Sandercock et al., 2011, p. 88)

In light of such criticism of “rational” and “secular” modernist planning, postsecularism, which recognises spiritual and religious values, opens space for more nuanced interpretations. In line with postsecular thinking, Sandercock et al. (2011) emphasise that “spirituality in planning is not about arguing for or against God or for the superiority of a particular dogma. This is about upholding the values of awe and wonder and humility; values that we completely miss when we plan as though we are gods” (p. 94). For McClymont (2015) postsecularism “encompasses a rejection of the idea that places and policies can be completely free of religious or spiritual values, or that these sorts of values hold no meaning in contemporary planned spaces beyond specific places of worship” (p. 537). Such a postsecular critique of contemporary urban planning brought to life the idea of municipal spirituality.

Developing the idea of municipal spirituality, McClymont (2015) was occupied with how postsecularism challenges and changes planning. She argues that the religious and spiritual values of places cannot be measured in instrumental or economic terms, although they can be rearticulated to “add a substantive positive dimension to planning” (p. 535) through the idea of municipal spirituality. Her argument is also built on the observation that “some sort of extra-rational understanding comprises a key part of the majority of people’s lives, even if not expressed in terms of conventional religion” (McClymont, 2015, p. 536). For her, religious and spiritual values are not in opposition to the secular and “progress”, but instead “something which can be inclusive, empowering and can present an alternative to the nihilistic tendencies of modern capitalism, and something not exclusively for members of established religions” (p. 536).

This idea of municipal spirituality was built on the findings from cemetery research in Britain, but has a broader focus and envisions planning for other types of places as well. McClymont (2014) identified the shortcomings of planning for cemeteries in British cities and the lack of an adequate planning policy, which allowed her to call cemeteries

“planning’s ‘skeleton in the closet’” (p. 277) and characterised the approach to their planning as “piecemeal” (p. 279). For her, the inability of the British planning system to adequately address the provision of burial spaces and “continued bonds” between the living and the dead illustrated a broader problem that the system missed or mismanaged the intrinsic values of places and people’s attachment to them. Using cemetery planning as a case, McClymont (2014) asked more general questions about the purpose and rationale of planning.

According to McClymont (2015), under the idea of municipal spirituality, there is a need “to develop a vocabulary to allow for the protection of places without clear instrumental values, which nonetheless are emotionally meaningful to people, as they allow for connections to something beyond material existence” (p. 536). As it is the central theoretical concept of the thesis, I would like to give more space to municipal spirituality and quote in length the definition provided by McClymont (2015, pp. 542–543):

Municipal spirituality offers an inclusive language of public sacredness, rather than rejecting religion as a privatised, under-theorised epiphenomenon of identity. Municipal spirituality describes (an aspect of) a place which allows access to the transcendental and promotes the common good. The spiritual aspect of this is evident. The municipal part comes from the role of the public sector, state, or civic institution in protecting and providing for an undefined and potentially unknown generic public (rather than a specific “faith” community). In the act of this description it names and values something which was previously hidden; unarticulated. It reframes the meaning of a place, countering the hegemonic dominance of instrumental rationality. A place of municipal spirituality gives access to the transcendent, a potentially counter-hegemonic way of being, an alternative set of values underpinned by shared humanity not economic growth.

For McClymont (2015) the notion of spirituality has two important conceptual aspects: it is first, inclusive and nuanced, and second, accessed and located spatially. For her, spirituality is bigger than religion and accommodates the majority of the British population who are not religious *per se* or regularly attend religious services, but “do not think humans are purely material beings with no spiritual element” (p. 540). McClymont (2015) argues that planning should not only accommodate the needs of established religious groups but go further and work with the more general spiritual needs of people and spiritual values associated with particular places by rearticulating religion and secularism not as contrasts but as entities in more complex relations.

The idea of municipal spirituality is built on insights from theology, namely ideas of transcendence and the common good — two core aspects of municipal spirituality. As

McClymont (2015) points out, “the presence (or latent presence) of the transcendent within places offers a different rationale for the value of that place” (p. 541). In that sense, the idea of municipal spirituality offers “a different conceptual framework of place value” (McClymont, 2015, p. 542). For places that offer spirituality, this idea and postsecular vocabulary in planning in general can fulfil two goals: first, to articulate aspects that are hidden but crucial for place management and planning; second, to challenge the negative impact of global neoliberalism. The idea of municipal spirituality brings back issues of morals and provides an alternative, ethical framework for the discussion around planning and development in our cities. The idea of municipal spirituality “allows for an explicit articulation in the planning of places that matter to people” (McClymont, 2015, p. 543).

The writings of McClymont (2015) are full of different linguistic metaphors, such as “vocabulary”, “language”, “discourse” and “to verbalise”. What she offers is not a practical tool, but a discourse or even the very beginning of the discourse, which planning can build around spiritual values of places. So far, this concept has received a limited amount of attention in academia (Nawratek, 2021; Skår et al., 2018), therefore this thesis seeks to move such discourse further. It does so by advancing another linguistic metaphor — cemetery grammar (borrowed from Rugg, 2000), mentioned in Chapter 1. I believe that the idea of municipal spirituality can be efficient in postsecular theoretical context in building a bridge between “secular” public space planning and spiritual aspects of cemeteries.

4 Research strategy, material and methods

This chapter presents the research strategy employed for this thesis and seeks to explain the main methodological decisions that have been made. I begin by briefly describing the ontological and epistemological considerations that underpin the research, namely critical realism. The chapter then attends to the comparative methodology of the thesis before outlining the case study approach and grounding the choice of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow as cases. I continue with a presentation of the empirical material and methods of analysis. The chapter ends with methodological and ethical reflections.

4.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations

Ontologically and epistemologically, this thesis is informed by critical realism, which stands on the assumption that “the world exists independently of our knowledge about it, and this knowledge is fallible and theory-dependent” (Næss, 2015, p. 1230). In that sense, critical realism can be seen as a “third way” between positivism and social constructivism (Fletcher, 2017). While the positivist stance is based on the foundation that an objective reality exists independently of our knowledge of it and can be known through empirical observations, social constructivism presupposes the existence of multiple realities that are subjectively constructed by individuals in particular social contexts and can be revealed through interpretation only (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moon & Blackman, 2014).

Although critical realists do not believe that reality can be transparent and completely understood, they highlight the possibility of improving our knowledge about it by applying a critical position regarding what can be observed empirically and going beyond the observable. Critical realism calls for conducting inquiry in more natural settings, collecting contextual data and reinforcing discovery as an essential part of the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is important to note, though, that this thesis is not critical realist research *per se* (see Fletcher, 2017 for a discussion on critical realist methodology), but rather it is informed by critical realist standpoints. What this thesis brings from critical realism is a number of essential ontological and epistemological concerns this philosophical approach is occupied with, including the idea of the stratified reality, the importance of conceptualisation, an attention to context, and an emphasis on interdisciplinarity.

According to the critical realist point of view, reality is stratified into three interconnected domains: the empirical, the actual and the real (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2001; Fletcher, 2017). The empirical includes whatever can be directly or indirectly observed. The actual comprises all existing phenomena, whether or not we experience or interpret them. The real combines both the empirical and the actual with underlying mechanisms that generate phenomena or events. As Danermark et al. (2001) emphasise, from a critical realist point of view, scientific work is “to investigate and identify relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world” (p. 21). For this thesis focused on the role of urban cemeteries, the idea of the stratified reality is highly relevant, as phenomena that can be observed in the cemetery space (for example, commemoration) are also accompanied by phenomena that are difficult to observe (for example, emotions) and generated by a multitude of unobservable structures and mechanisms (for example, culture).

Another relevant aspect of critical realism is the importance of conceptualisation and abstractions. Sayer (1992) argues that critical realism gives powerful input into the conceptual and methodological frameworks of the research. Danermark et al. (2001) points out that “knowledge is conceptually mediated and thus it is impossible to make neutral observations of ‘facts’ about reality” (p. 41). Critical realism allows researchers to reflect on what theories they use in knowledge production and the tensions between them. The central concept for this thesis — public space — was used to capture the role of urban cemeteries and influenced the analysis of the data but also the choice of sources of empirical material (what kind of documents and interviewees I engaged with). In that sense the knowledge generated in this thesis is clearly theory laden. The thesis also reveals the tensions between the very idea of public space as a civic and thus secular concept and the public dimension of spirituality in a postsecular world (discussed in Section 6.3).

From a critical realist point of view, interdisciplinary integration is necessary to arrive at valid knowledge (Næss, 2015) and allows methodological unity (Price, 2014). To improve our knowledge about reality — fragile and never completely achievable truth — critical realism recognises a diversity of research traditions and approaches. Interdisciplinarity also corresponds to the above-mentioned idea of the stratified reality: some disciplines can deal with a particular domain, but critical realism aims to grasp the complexity and integrate disciplinary knowledge. Such stances are pertinent to this thesis, which seeks to overcome disciplinary barriers and build interdisciplinary knowledge. The review of existing cemetery research presented in Chapter 2 has demonstrated how many disciplines study cemeteries and how often their findings are isolated from each other. Regarding the domains of the stratified reality, natural scientists are often occupied with

the empirical by looking, for example, at cemeteries' role as biodiversity habitat (Kowarik et al., 2016), while social scientists tend to focus on the real when studying, for example, heterotopic representation of cemeteries (Clements, 2017). This thesis recognises the value of diverse disciplinary knowledge in exploring the multifaceted role of urban cemeteries.

Critical realists also highlight the importance of the context of research (Sayer, 1992) and call for accurate and rich evidence (Næss, 2015). Such consideration is especially relevant for the study of cemeteries — highly context-dependent parts of the urban environment. Critical realism is also cautious about the ability of generalisation and prediction across different contexts but does not deny the value of learning between contexts (Bergene, 2007; Næss, 2015). Following such a critical realist standpoint, the next section discusses a need for the critical appraisal of traditional comparative methodology.

4.2 Comparative methodology as a research strategy

For a long time, comparative research has been used by social scientists for two main reasons: to develop an understanding of what a phenomenon is or could be about or to learn how practice could be improved using references from other countries (Booth, 1986). As cemeteries are so embedded into local culture and context, the extent to which the findings from different regions can be transferred into practice is limited. However, the ambition of this thesis is that the analysis of the empirical material from Scandinavia and Russia will contribute to the theoretical understanding of what kinds of spaces urban cemeteries are.

The most recent call for a comparative approach in urban studies does not just highlight the importance of conventional comparison between contexts but focuses on innovation and experimentation within this approach. Robinson (2016), who actively advocates for the reframing of comparison in urban studies and highlights the limitations of formal quasi-scientific comparative methods, explains such an intellectual project in the following way:

I want to attend to the structure of conceptualization and research practice which puts specific urban cases (outcomes, processes, experiences) into conversation with others in order to extend the ways in which we can understand and talk about the nature of the urban (in both its multiplicity and complexity). I want to establish ways to keep conversations going about cities, always in a world of other cities, by opening more opportunities to think through elsewhere, and to build methodologies and practices which require that such conversations be intrinsically open to revision, making space for insights starting from anywhere. (p. 5)

In this thesis I employ cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow as such “elsewhere” in Robinson’s (2016) terms. On the one hand, while Nordic cities — including Oslo and Copenhagen — are famous for their democratic governance, financial stability and high quality of life, “they essentially never figure in our maps of urban theory” which has been dominated by cities in France, Germany, the UK and some other countries (Centner, 2021, p. 21). On the other hand, cities in Eastern Europe — Moscow, among them — are also peripheral to the key areas of urban studies (Müller & Trubina, 2020), despite some theoretical advances regarding a “post-socialist city” (Hirt, Ferenčuhová, & Tuvikene, 2016). Although theoretically the three cities are situated in the “periphery” of urban studies (Centner, 2021), empirically cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen have been studied to a greater extent than cemeteries in Moscow and Eastern Europe in general (Worpole, 2003).

Comparative urban research requires serious consideration of methodological and theoretical issues (Ward, 2010) and attention to interpretation (Nijman, 2007). Discussing the comparative approach within the context of learning of planning policies, Van Assche, Beunen, and Verweij (2020) point out that the methods of comparison are not neutral and suggest cultivating reflexivity. This thesis draws on context-specific comparative methodology, which, foremost, leads to the employment of a case study approach described in the next section.

4.3 Case study approach

Methodologically, this thesis is built on a case study approach, which has proven to generate powerful and valid insights in different branches of social sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This approach allows “investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). More precisely, I employ a qualitative case study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to explore cases of cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow through the analysis of detailed, in-depth and contextually relevant empirical material coming from different sources. These three cities are used to achieve the aim of the thesis to build new knowledge and understanding of the role of urban cemeteries.

The case study approach highlights the role of context and limits of generalisation between the cases, or as Stake (1995) puts it, “We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case” (p. 4). Even though generalisation is not the aim of case study research, this approach can be useful for theory development in line with what Yin (2009) calls “analytical generalisation, in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical

results of the case study” (p. 38). Papers II and III contribute to such analytical generalisation by establishing and empirically testing a framework to theorise cemeteries in the three cities as a special type of public space.

Yin (2009) distinguishes between single- and multiple-case research designs depending on the number of cases a study deals with. This thesis, which operates with three cases, is naturally a multiple-case study; however, there is a difference in approaches to the Scandinavian cases (Oslo and Copenhagen) and the Russian one (Moscow). This difference can be revealed through another distinction emphasised by Yin (2009): between literal and theoretical replication. He points out that a multiple-case research design is built not on a sampling logic (like in surveys) but on a replication logic (like in experiments) that expects similar results (a literal replication) or contrasting results (a theoretical replication) between cases. In line with this, Oslo and Copenhagen are following literal replication as they represent cases from relatively similar Scandinavian contexts (Newman & Thornley, 2002) and are contrasted to Moscow, which exemplifies a culturally different context. Therefore, the whole thesis is built on a theoretical replication of multiple-case design, but the papers vary in their approaches: Papers I and II use the same set of questions to analogous empirical material from Oslo and Copenhagen, while Paper III explores the case of Moscow in a single-case design with different — but relevant for Papers I and II — questions and empirical material.

The following sections extend the difference in these approaches by providing more contextual information (Section 4.4) and presenting the empirical material and methods of analysis (Sections 4.5 and 4.6). For an overview, see Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of empirical material and methods of analysis used in the thesis.

Papers	Case studies	Empirical material	Methods of data analysis
I	Oslo, Copenhagen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Documents (strategies for cemetery development, funeral regulations, cemetery statutes). — Interviews with 10 experts (local cemetery authorities, landscape architects, a politician, a representative of the Church of Norway). — Cemetery visits. 	Inductive qualitative content analysis
II			Deductive qualitative content analysis
III	Moscow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Documents (cemetery and funeral regulations, city spatial plans, construction standards, design manuals, mass media coverage). 	Deductive qualitative content analysis

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Interviews with 23 experts (representing cemetery and funeral industry, planning and architecture, environmental management, cultural heritage and conservation). — Cemetery visits. 	
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4.4 Justification for selection of cases

I would like to highlight five aspects that make Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow rich and relevant cases for this comparative study of the role of urban cemeteries: accessibility for me as a researcher, densification pressure, emphasis on public spaces in urban development, manifestations of postsecularity and configuration of cemetery governance.

First, the choice of the cases is explained by both their physical and cultural accessibility for me as a researcher. Being a complete outsider in terms of language, culture and networks would make research on cemeteries' role a very difficult if not impossible endeavour. I have good access to the Moscow case because I come from Russia and have been living in Moscow for seven years. My points of entry into the Scandinavian context are my current place of residence in Oslo, the supervision team and general academic environment at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences and my experience during my master's studies in Malmö (with Copenhagen just across the bridge).

Second, the development of all three cities is characterised by densification — a strategy that can lead to the reconfiguration of the roles of urban green spaces (Haaland & van den Bosch, 2015; Jørgensen & Thorén, 2012; Tappert et al., 2018; Thorén & Saglie, 2015), including cemeteries. The ideology and practice of densification, however, differ, especially between Oslo and Copenhagen on the one hand and Moscow on the other. Both Oslo and Copenhagen are recognised as “global frontrunners in pushing forward the climate agenda, both locally and internationally” (Hofstad, Millstein, Tønnesen, Vedeld, & Hansen, 2021, p. 3) and use policies for densification as a strategy for more environmentally sustainable development (Cavicchia, 2021; Lilius, 2018; Næss et al., 2020; Zurovac, 2020). In Moscow, densification is not officially proclaimed as a planning strategy, but practiced on a large scale through the so-called “renovation” programme when existing apartment buildings are demolished and replaced by high-rises (Khmelnitskaya & Ihalainen, 2021). The Moscow government runs this programme without any references to sustainable development goals but as a strategy to create a “comfortable urban environment” (Zupan, Smirnova, & Zadorian, 2021).

Third, all three cities emphasise public spaces in their urban development and draw on the ideal of a pedestrian-friendly, liveable and human-centred city promoted by Danish urbanist Jahn Gehl (Carmona et al., 2019; Fossen, 2018; Lilius, 2018; Trubina, 2020). How the authorities of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow realise these ideas in practice and what kind of public spaces they create vary. The Oslo municipality emphasises the health benefits and recreational opportunities provided by public spaces (Carmona et al., 2019), however, as an arena for social interactions, Oslo's new public spaces have some challenges (Aspen, 2013; Sirowy, 2015). While Copenhagen initially concentrated on spectacular and expensive public spaces, after the financial crisis of 2008, the focus moved to improvement of existing "everyday" spaces and their adaptation for multiple-use (Carmona et al., 2019). In Moscow, there is also a focus on spectacular public spaces (Murawski, 2020), and "despite appealing to ideas of openness, liveability and the public good," the city has produced socially divisive and predominantly consumerist public spaces (Kalyukin, Borén, & Byerley, 2015, p. 674). It is also interesting to note that all three cities see public space development as one of the ways to brand themselves as "world leaders" and compete with other cities globally (Carmona et al., 2019; Zupan & Büdenbender, 2019).

Fourth, all three cities are insightful cases regarding debates around postsecularity and reconfiguration of the secular and the spiritual/religious in cities (see Section 3.3 for the theoretical overview). Bäckström (2014) demonstrates that the postsecular turn does not explain a new visibility of religion in the Nordic countries, as religion has never disappeared from this region and suggests several other reasons, including, but not limited to, the continued relationships between the states and the majority churches that have been included in state welfare systems. Cemetery provision can serve as an example of it. These relationships vary among Nordic countries: while the Church in Denmark still has a powerful legal connection to the state (Bäckström, 2014), the Church of Norway was officially separated from the state in 2012 (Morland, 2018) but still participates in different state responsibilities, for example, in cemetery provision. In Russia, postsecularity also has visible manifestations. According to Stoeckl and Uzlaner (2019b) "Orthodox Christianity is being challenged by postsecularity more profoundly than Western Churches" (p. 33), mainly because of religious resurgence after the fall of communism. Contrary to majority churches in Norway and Denmark, the Russian Orthodox Church does not have a nationalised role in the country and is not responsible for welfare provision, but is clearly visible in the Russian state ideology (Stoeckl, 2020a, 2020b): in that sense the Church enjoys "a privileged relationship" with the state, a term used by Rusu (2020, p. 13) to describe a similar situation in Romania.

Finally, the management of cemeteries in the three cities is executed on a city scale: by the municipalities in Oslo and Copenhagen and by the city government in Moscow. In relation to the three models of funeral organisation suggested by Walter (2005) — commercial, municipal and religious — the three cities belong to the municipal type.¹ The papers constituting the thesis describe cemetery governance frameworks in the three cities in more detail, while Chapter 6 discusses the main differences. Table 2 provides a summary of the cemetery contexts. What is important to note here is that the similarity in the level and organisation of cemetery governance — concentrated in city authorities — makes this comparative case study feasible at the policy level and shapes the research design. In cities where cemetery management is dispersed among authorities of different levels, non-governmental organisations, religious communities and businesses, a similar study would require simultaneous attention to different scales, various stakeholders and a wider range of empirical material. The next section describes the empirical material that this thesis employs.

4.5 Empirical material

This thesis is built on the empirical material collected in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow, which could be grouped into three categories: documents, interviews and field observations. Since the cemetery context differs among the three cities, the configuration of empirical material also varies, and this section describes in detail what constitutes the three categories of empirical material in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow. The analysis process is presented in the next section. For methodological inspiration, I drew on existing studies of cemetery-related policies, especially the two research projects: “Green Urban Spaces — the role of the cemetery in multicultural and interreligious urban contexts” in Norway² and “Deathscapes in Latin American metropolises³”.

¹ Walter (2005) positions these three models as “ideal types” (p. 178) and emphasises that reality demonstrates a diversity of mixed types. Although he ascribes the religious model to Scandinavia, large Scandinavian cities, especially capitals (Nordh and Evensen, 2018), are much closer to the municipal model because local authorities play the central role in cemetery governance with very limited or no input from the religious organisation, as Papers I and II show. In most other Scandinavian municipalities, the church organisation is responsible for cemeteries.

² Project leader: Grete Swensen, the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (NIKU). <https://prosjektbanken.forskningsradet.no/project/FORISS/230351?Kilde=FORISS&distribution=Ar&chart=bar&calcType=funding&Sprak=no&sortBy=date&sortOrder=desc&resultCount=30&offset=60&ProgAkt.3=TJENESTER-Helse-+og+omsorgstjenester>

³ Project leader: Christien Klaufus, University of Amsterdam. <https://www.uva.nl/en/profile/k/l/c.j.klaufus/c.j.klaufus.html>

Table 2. Key contextual information (as of 2019 if nothing else is indicated) about the Oslo and Copenhagen municipalities and the city of Moscow and their cemetery governance.

	Oslo	Copenhagen	Moscow
Surface area, km²	131,45	86,7	2 561,5 (without New Moscow ¹ 1 114,5)
Population	677 139	623 404	12 615 279 (without New Moscow 12 228 179)
Density, inhabitants per km²	5 151	7 190	4 950 (without New Moscow 10 972)
Population growth rate	1,8%	1,4%	0,9%
Annual death	3 719	3 559	120 421
National death rate, crude, per 1 000 people	7,6	9,3	13,3
National agencies responsible for cemetery policies	The Department of Consumer, Religious and Life Stance Affairs of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (since 2019); the National cemetery authority, <i>Gravplasmyn-dighet</i> (since 2021)	The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs; cemetery advisors at regional church administrations	None (recent efforts to update the Funeral Law were made by the National Antitrust Agency and the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities)
Number of cemeteries run by the city (total cemetery area)	20 (186 ha)	5 (130 ha)	136 (2 000 ha)

¹ Most of the statistical information regarding Moscow have some limitations regarding the size and spatial organisation of the Russian capital. In 2012 Moscow annexed a part of the territory of the Moscow region, so called “New Moscow”, more than doubling the size of the city (Argenbright, Bityukova, Kirillov, Makhrova, & Nefedova, 2020). That does not mean, however, that the city embraced spatial expansion instead of densification; these processes co-exist, and the territory of “Old Moscow” is being profoundly densified (Khmelnitskaya & Ihalainen, 2021).

Responsibility of cemetery provision on the city level	A collaboration between the Church of Norway (the Community Church Council) and the Municipality of Oslo	The Municipality of Copenhagen	The Government of Moscow
City agency responsible for cemetery management	The Cemeteries and Burials Agency of the Department of Culture and Sport	The City Operations Bureau of the Technical and Environmental Administration	The agency <i>Ritual</i> , owned and run by the Moscow government's Department of Trade and Services
Grave tenure	20 years (with the possibility of extension with a fee)	20 years for coffin burials and 10 years for ashes (with the possibility of extension with a fee)	Perpetuity <i>de facto</i>
Cremation rate (national cremation rate)	76% (44%)	95% (85,5%)	50% (15%)
Allowed committal practices	Burial, cremation	Burial, cremation	Burial, cremation
Physical committal form	Coffin graves, urn graves, common areas for interment of ashes, columbaria (since 2021). Possibility to apply for scattering of ashes over nature or the sea	Coffin graves, urn graves, common areas for interment of ashes, columbaria. Possibility to apply for scattering of ashes over nature or the sea	Coffin graves, urn graves, columbaria

Sources: Oslo (Norsk forening for gravplasskultur, 2021; Oslo municipality, 2017; Statistics Norway, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c); Copenhagen (Copenhagen municipality, 2015; Danske Krematoriernes Landsforening, 2021; StatBank Denmark, 2021a; 2021b; an employee of the Copenhagen municipality, personal communication, February 21, 2019); Moscow (Cremation Society, 2021; EMISS, 2021; Kuznetsova & Levinskaya, 2020; Mosgorstat, 2019; Rosstat, 2021a, 2021b); World Bank Open Data (2021); results of own analysis of the legislation and the official websites of authorities.

Documents

As this thesis is focused on the policy level, documents became the central category of the empirical material (see Appendix C for the full list of the analysed documents). While documents as a source of data are considered to have a range of benefits, such as availability, stability and the lack of obstructiveness (Bowen, 2009), the search for relevant documents can be a challenging process (Bryman, 2016) — something that I have experienced during this study. Due to the digitalisation of public administration both in Scandinavia and Russia, there was no problem with getting online access to most of the documents, including some discussion around them. However, the process of selecting documents relevant to the Moscow case was an enduring process, as described below.

I was interested in the documents that would describe or prescribe the role of cemeteries in the planning and development of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow. As my multiple-case research design (see Section 4.3) allows flexibility in approaches to cases, I used different strategies for the selection of relevant documents in Scandinavia (Papers I and II) and Russia (Paper III).

In Oslo and Copenhagen, I focused on the recent municipal strategies for cemetery development (Copenhagen municipality, 2015; Oslo municipality, 2017) — referred to here and in Papers I and II simply as “strategies” — as well as funerary and cemetery legislation. Such a relatively narrow focus was possible because of existing studies of cemetery legislation and cemetery-related planning documents in these cities or Norway and Denmark in general (Hadders, 2013; Kjølner, 2012; Nordh & Evensen, 2018; Skår et al., 2018; Sørensen, 2009). In Papers I and II, therefore, I could concentrate on the two strategies, which have different formats and approaches, but both bring forward new ideas around the role of urban cemeteries. The cemetery strategies and legislation were complemented by a limited list of documents that served to provide contextual information or illustrate an argument, such as an annual report of the Oslo’s Cemeteries and Burials Agency or a budget proposal for establishing a therapeutic garden in Vestre cemetery in Copenhagen.

In Moscow, however, contemporary policies for cemetery planning, management and development have, as far as I know, never been studied in Russian- or English-language scholarship (studies on the general, not spatial, Russian funeral legislation exist: Mokhov, 2021; Mokhov & Sokolova, 2020), which made me start from a ground level. That does not mean, though, that the Moscow cemeteries lack any legislation and policies — quite the opposite. Russian cemetery-related regulations are gargantuan and dispersed among different branches of legislation, including the

funerary, sanitary and planning fields. Such a starting point led me to engage with a range of diverse documents, including contemporary and current federal and city laws and regulations, planning and sanitary standards, strategic documents for city development and green infrastructure, mass-media outputs, statements of religious organisations and textbooks for architects and landscapes architects. Another reason to broaden the range of documents from Moscow was the problem of recruiting city officials for interviews (this challenge is described in the next subsection). To overcome this, I more actively used materials from mass media, for example, interviews (Kuznetsova & Levinskaya, 2020; Loriya, 2021) with the director of the Moscow government agency responsible for cemeteries called *Ritual*.

Moreover, the Moscow government does not have — or does not publicise — a strategic policy for cemetery development like the above-mentioned documents in Oslo and Copenhagen. One strategy has been briefly mentioned in the media (Shishalova, 2021; Tass, 2015) and by a representative of *Ritual's* public relations office who told me in a phone call that it had the title “Moscow necropolis”. However, such a document is not available online and *Ritual* has not provided me with the text of the strategy. Experts on the Russian funeral industry who I interviewed for this study suggested that such a strategy could be not a written document but more of a vision of the leaders of the agency, or possibly did not exist at all and was mentioned just in a PR campaign (see Paper III).

Interviews

Documents were supplemented by semi-structured interviews with experts. I used purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016) and intended to interview experts with experience relevant to the aim of this thesis: to build new knowledge and understanding of the role of urban cemeteries as public spaces with an empirical focus on the policy context. As with the above-mentioned selection of relevant documents, the sampling strategy for interviewees also differed between Scandinavian and Russian cases. In the more well-studied cases of Oslo and Copenhagen, I could narrow the scope of my research down to experts who work directly with cemetery planning, management and development. In Moscow, I had to be more flexible and involve a broader range of experts.

In total, I conducted 31 interviews with 33 persons in total (two interviews involved two persons each) whose competencies can be grouped into four expert fields (see Table 3 for the distribution around the cases). More detailed information about the interviewees is presented in Appendix B and in the papers.

Table 3. Distribution of interviewees across cases and expert fields.

	Oslo	Copenhagen	Moscow
Cemetery and funeral industries	4	3	4
Planning and architecture	1	1	11
Environmental management			3
Cultural heritage and religion	1		5

All interviews in Oslo and Copenhagen were conducted in person over the course of 2018. Due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, it was impossible to conduct interviews in Moscow in person, but the months of working in home offices introduced digital solutions into the everyday lives of many people. That is why my Moscow interviews were done via digital services, such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, from August 2020 to June 2021. Although I was at first hesitant regarding the remote format of interviews, as it could lead to omission of relevant contextual information, in the end I found this format to be beneficial for my thesis because it allowed me to “meet” digitally more people than in real settings and save time and money by not travelling. Some contextual information (for example, regarding the working environment) could be lost, but for the aim of this thesis, I do not think that it affected the results. The interviews took around one hour each and were conducted in Russian in the case of Moscow and in English in Oslo and Copenhagen.

For the Scandinavian and Russian cases, I also used different strategies for the recruitment of interviewees. In Oslo and Copenhagen, I relied on the already existing network of my supervisor, Helena Nordh. There, I started with interviews with key municipal employees who were in charge of cemetery development and management. They recommended other interviewees, but also described the framework of cemetery governance in these cities, so I could understand representatives of which organisations I should try to get in touch with. In Moscow, I initially expected that organising interviews with representatives of city cemetery authorities (*Ritual*) could be difficult after they had been recently exposed in a journalistic anti-corruption investigation (Golunov, 2019). Therefore, I first made a list of potential interviewees based on the information at the Moscow government’s

websites, websites of other public agencies, public hearings for funeral legislation, discussions at professional conferences and in social media. I contacted all people and organisations on this list. While in Oslo and Copenhagen, I approached interviewees via official email addresses, in Moscow, I used both official emails and Facebook Messenger, which is used by some interviewees as a public channel of communication.

Access to interviewees was a critical aspect of recruiting interviewees in all cities. The preparation phase took a lot of time, effort and unanswered emails. In the end, I managed to interview most of the experts I initially planned, but with some exceptions. Oslo is the most fully covered case, but in Copenhagen, it would have been relevant to interview people involved in drafting the cemetery strategy and a representative of the Church in Denmark engaged with the five cemeteries that the Copenhagen municipality runs. My attempts to reach them failed, but I tried to compensate for it by closely reading a paper written by employees of a consulting company who developed the strategy (Nielsen & Groes, 2014) and by interviewing two representatives of the Church in Denmark. These interviews were not included in the empirical material of the thesis, as the interviewees did not work with the five municipal cemeteries. Nevertheless, they helped me understand the context of cemetery governance in Denmark.

In terms of recruitment, the Moscow case appeared to be the most difficult. It was especially difficult to recruit city officials. In several departments (planning, trade and services, environmental management, tourism), I was told to contact *Ritual* because cemeteries did not belong to the departments' mandate. That was not particularly true, especially for the Department of Trade and Services, which governs *Ritual* and has employees who are in charge of the development of the funeral industry, including cemeteries. I obtained written statements from these departments, which were also helpful for my research, as they demonstrated a narrow view on the role of cemeteries in the Moscow government.

Even though *Ritual* was naturally the most relevant agency, I could not organise an interview with their representatives. All my inquiries were ignored by *Ritual's* public relations office in an interesting manner: first, they promised to find a date and time of an interview with *Ritual's* director, then fed me with empty hopes for three months and finally just ignored my emails and calls. My attempts to gain access to *Ritual* through my personal network also failed. Challenges with access to stakeholders have been noticed by Filippova (2009) who studied the funeral industry in another Russian region. I cannot confirm with certainty that the main explanation

for such a response — or the lack of response — from the agency is a strong reluctance to be studied through independent research, as their activities are claimed to be “shady” by the journalists (Golunov, 2019). However, that could be one of possible explanations and my interviewees from the funeral industry confirmed that *Ritual* is not an open and transparent organisation. Another explanation for such misfortune could be a lack of interest in research in general or a low priority of this activity in a tight schedule during the COVID-19 pandemics.

To navigate interview situations, I developed an interview guide (see Appendix A) that covered such topics as cemetery-related work responsibilities, relationships with other agencies and organisations, legal frameworks for cemetery governance, contemporary conditions of cemeteries and possible development paths for the future. I adapted the guide for each interviewee based on their profile and sent them beforehand so that they could prepare for the questions if they wished. Only one of the interviewees did not get the guide beforehand, as the interview was organised at a very short notice. I feel that providing interview guides beforehand made the conversation more focused and was appreciated by the interviewees, as they knew what to expect. At the same time, it might have reduced some spontaneous opinions. I was also open to new topics emerging from conversations themselves and not covered by the interview guide, which is an important advantage of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). I ended the interviews with a suggestion for an interviewee to add anything that was not mentioned during the conversation, making even more room for new themes and discussions.

With the permission of the interviewees, I recorded the conversations and transcribed them myself (for the Oslo and Copenhagen cases) or with the help of a professional transcription agency (for the Moscow case). Three interviews in Moscow were not recorded properly because of technical problems, so I had to rely on my notes.

Observations

The thesis includes my observations of cemeteries made during field trips. I visited all cemeteries in Oslo (20 cemeteries) and Copenhagen (five operated by the municipality and three operated by the church), and nine cemeteries in Moscow. To document my observations, I took photographs and notes. I was interested in both the spatial arrangement of the cemetery itself (paths, buildings, graves, vegetations) and its interrelation with surroundings (gates, fences, information boards, public

transport connections). I also witnessed some of the people's activities that happened there. Together with the documents and interviews, such *in situ* observations formed the empirical basis for my research and generated insights into the analysis and writing process described in the next section.

4.6 Analysis

To study the documents and interviews presented above, I employed qualitative content analysis in all cases, but approaches varied and could be grasped with a distinction between inductive, bottom-up, and deductive, top-down techniques. In this thesis, I do not see these two techniques as being in a strict opposition but rather intertwined. A deductive approach also involved induction when a theoretical or analytical framework is being refined in regard to the empirical findings. In the same way, the inductive approach included some elements of deduction because my view on reality is initially theory-laden, as described in Section 4.1.

In Paper I, which is devoted to the reasons behind the development of cemetery strategy in Oslo and Copenhagen, the analysis was conducted inductively (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015): the reasons were identified and highlighted in the text of each empirical source, then merged in one document and finally condensed in the writing process. Paper II, which is based on the same empirical material as Paper I, was built on deductive analysis (Kyngäs & Kaakinen, 2020) focused on manifestations of different dimensions of cemeteries as public spaces. Through a review of cemetery research and public space scholarship, a four-dimensional analytical framework — consisting of liminal, spiritual, multicultural and multifunctional dimensions — was developed and applied in the analysis of the empirical material. While I define such an approach as deductive, at the moment of establishing the analytical framework, I already knew the empirical material very well, so in reality the analysis had a more interactive nature.

In Paper III, which is devoted to the role of cemeteries in Moscow urban planning and development, I also employed a deductive approach by applying the established analytical framework to the empirical material. In this case, there was also a place for interaction between top-down and bottom-up approaches as I adapted the framework to the context of Moscow and the empirical material I had. Instead of using the multicultural dimension of the framework, I replaced it with the commercial dimension to fit the empirical material from Moscow.

According to Hansen (2018), “culture underpins policy formation processes, yet at the same time policy-making is also an expression of culture and policy may even

work to change culture” (p. 108). Here, he defines culture as “shared sets — by a group, an organisation or an institution — of values, assumptions, meanings, mentalities, etc., that underpin, or is reflected in, the traditions, habits and practices of processes of spatial development, policy and planning” (p. 107). The analysis of the empirical material aims to reveal some of the elements of the interrelations between policy and culture. It was inspired by interpretative critical policy studies, which call into question values, interests and taken-for-granted political and social assumptions underlying policies (Fischer, Torgerson, Durnová, & Orsini, 2015).

The analysis of the documents for the Scandinavian cases was conducted by me and Helena Nordh, independently from each other. We agreed beforehand on the coding procedure and then shared and discussed our results. The main aim for analysing these documents together was to overcome my limitations in Norwegian and Danish languages and achieve validity as we cross-checked the material. As the interviews were conducted in English, I could analyse them myself, as well as the documents and interviews from Moscow. Navigating myself across different cultures and languages was one of several ethical challenges of this research discussed together with other validity issues I will address in the next section.

To illustrate the findings, I translated extracts from the documents and interviews from original languages into English; Helena Nordh assessed the correction of translations from Scandinavian languages. The quotations from the interviews held in English were edited slightly to improve coherence. For transliteration of Russian names from Cyrillic into Latin, I used BGN/PCGN romanization system if there were no common English versions of these words already. Norwegian and Danish names were left in the original spelling.

4.7 Methodological and ethical reflections

This study fulfils formal ethical requirements¹ and treats the research data in accordance with the regulations of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences.² Research ethics, however, stretch beyond formal regulations and are essentially important for all steps of a qualitative inquiry, which “generally involves emergent and flexible research designs and usually entails collecting relatively unstructured data in naturalistic settings” (Traianou, 2020, pp. 95-96). In this thesis I see research

¹ The study was notified to and recommended by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), Case No. 60056.

² https://www.nmbu.no/en/research/for_researchers/researchdata/node/34680

ethics as especially relevant for the choice of methods and considerations around research quality. Markham (2006) reminds researchers to think about their ethical choices as methodological choices and *vice versa*: to treat methodological choices as ethical choices. In this section, I reflect on my methodological and ethical choices together and discuss them in relation to such issues as respect for individual autonomy, the preservation of privacy, my own positionality and research quality in terms of limitations and validity.

In this thesis, informed consent was a tool to respect the autonomy of interviewees — “their capacity and right to make decisions about their own lives” (Traianou, 2020, p. 89). I provided detailed information about my research already in the initial communication and started all interviews by presenting myself and the aim of my study together with a brief description of handling of the data (recordings of interviews and following transcripts). After that, I sought verbal consent.

I aimed to keep the anonymity of the interviewees and used pseudonyms when referring to them in the papers and in Appendix B of this thesis. However, background information could also make interviewees identifiable, especially for people from the same organisations or close professional communities. How much could I reveal about interviewees’ backgrounds to maintain the integrity of the study and describe the context, but also keep interviewees’ privacy? I aimed to find a balance for each interviewee by presenting only background information essential to grasping the context. Even if some interviewees themselves had no objections to being mentioned by full names in the thesis, I could not be sure that they would be comfortable with it when their words were situated in my findings. It is important to emphasise that I interviewed people in their professional role, even though sometimes it was difficult to distinguish between their professional opinions, corporate statements and personal attitudes.

My positionality as a researcher is also an important point for methodological and ethical reflections. During the study, I often felt like an outsider. Being a Russian person, I was looking at the cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen as “other” without much previous experience, while in Russia, being a researcher from a Norwegian institution made me also to some extent “other”. Such positionality had both advantages and challenges. On the one hand, I could be more open-minded, ready to be surprised and always have another setting for comparison. On the other hand, I could be a subject of misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Coming now to the methodological limitations of the thesis, I would like to start with an omission of two groups of relevant stakeholders who were left outside of the

thesis: private funeral companies and cemetery visitors. The main reason for not engaging with representatives of private funeral agencies was the scope of the papers, which focused on city policies. In the cases of Oslo and Copenhagen, there were no indicators that funeral agencies contributed to the development of cemetery strategies, the empirical backbone of Papers I and II. In the case of Moscow, I had one interview with a private agent who gave me valuable insights into the Russian funeral industry, but also showed the lack of influence of private funeral companies on city cemetery policies.

In Moscow, there was another reason not to go deep into the commercial side of cemeteries. As described in Paper III, the Russian funeral industry is considered strongly connected to criminal activities and corruption. A series of incidents (fabricated arrests, physical attacks) happened to people who investigated it, including an activist (Pisarev, 2020), a journalist (Zhegulev, 2019) and a researcher (Kartsev, 2020). So far, there is no explicit evidence that these incidents were connected to their funeral investigations, but it was always one of the main explanations discussed in the media. Thus, safety reasons were also relevant to my methodological choices. Moreover, if I had aimed to reveal hidden agencies and structures associated with Moscow cemeteries, I would have to use other methods (cf. an ethnographic study of a funeral business in other Russian regions by Mokhov, 2017b).

I also chose not to engage with cemetery visitors and use only *in situ* observations of cemeteries (described in Section 4.5). However, I acknowledge that cemeteries as public spaces are constructed not only by governance structures and policies, but also — and often predominantly — by people's activities and perceptions. While the use of Oslo and Copenhagen cemeteries has been documented (Evensen et al., 2017; Nielsen & Groes, 2014), Moscow cemeteries lack similar studies. When designing this thesis, I planned to fill this gap and to provide a detailed ethnographic description of the use and experience of a cemetery in Moscow, but at the final stage, I decided to focus on the policy level only due to time concerns. However, in June 2018, I conducted a study in Vvedenskoe cemetery in Moscow where I did short interviews with visitors, systematically recorded their activities, and looked at how the cemetery was portrayed in social media. I hope to use this empirical material in future publications outside of the thesis.

Another methodological issue I would like to reflect on is related to the very attempt to compare in one study the cases of cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow — so different not only in cultural, political and institutional contexts but

also in scale. Oslo and Copenhagen are often compared as belonging to quite similar cultures, which makes it possible to define the best practices (see, for example, Carmona et al., 2019; Hofstad et al., 2021; Nordh & Evensen, 2018). Moscow differs substantially from the two Scandinavian capitals both in terms of planning and development but also in numbers: population, size and number of cemeteries. Such differences determined diversity in the research questions and methodology of the papers.

I would like to conclude this section with some reflections on the validity of the research this thesis lays out. Validity refers “to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). There are many approaches to ascertaining validity in qualitative research (see, for example, Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009). I focus on three aspects. First, a thick description of the cases and transparency in description of methods contribute to the validity of the findings presented in the thesis. Second, triangulation of sources of empirical material (documents, interviews, field observations) advances the credibility of research. At the early stages of this thesis, expert interviews were planned as a supplement to the documents in a way that they could help to identify relevant documents, explain how professionals work with them and which aspects raise debates. Looking back, I must admit that the expert interviews gave much more than that. For example, they helped me to better understand changes in cemetery governance over time, as many of the interviewees had been working in this field for some time. My *in situ* observations of cemeteries in the three cities provided me with reach contextual information and contributed to both preparation for collecting empirical material (for example, developing of interview guides) and cross-checking findings from the analysis of documents and interviews. Finally, peer review process, involved in co-authoring Papers I and II with Helena Nordh and publishing them in peer-reviewed journals, also strengthens validity.

5 Summary of papers

Paper I

“Philosophical park”: Cemeteries in the Scandinavian urban context

Co-author: Helena Nordh

Background and aim

Paper I stems from the observation that in cities under densification pressure, green spaces may shift their role and accommodate more functions. This trend is relevant for cemeteries, which in many cities are green spaces with park-like settings and rich vegetation and are used both for the dead and by the living (Evensen et al., 2017). The multifaceted role of urban cemeteries requires a more nuanced approach to their planning and management. Two Scandinavian cities, Oslo and Copenhagen, have recently adopted new strategies for cemetery planning and management. Both cities are known as proponents of sustainability, liveability and innovation in planning and governance (Næss et al., 2020), capital cities of modern and predominantly secular societies with strong religious organisations (see Kjærsgaard, 2017, for a debate), places with high cremation rates, a long tradition of grave re-use and recreational use of cemeteries (Kjøller, 2012). Using Oslo and Copenhagen as case studies, the paper aims to explore the reasons why both cities recently developed cemetery-specific strategies and, through this, unfold cemeteries as a special type of green space.

Methods

Paper I is built on a qualitative analysis of the texts of the cemetery strategies in Oslo and Copenhagen, supplemented by semi-structured interviews with ten experts working with the cemeteries. The analysis is guided by a bottom-up, inductive approach and focuses on the explanations for the development of the strategies.

Results and contributions

Paper I describes the current legal and administrative context of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen — in particular the Norwegian and Danish focus on “proper” cemetery design, management and use — and thus lays the foundation for the interpretation of the empirical material both in Papers I and II. The findings presented

here demonstrate that both municipalities share many reasons that prompted development of the cemetery strategies, including densification pressure and a growing demand for green urban spaces, cemeteries' existing recreational potential, the presence of spiritual aspects and the need to safeguard the future of the cemeteries and to address the increasing diversity of disposal practices and memorial forms. The strategies, however, have different focuses in line with the two cities' general political ambitions and administrative contexts. While Oslo's strategy highlights the environmental potential of the cemeteries in line with "green shift" of the municipality (Hofstad & Torfing, 2017), Copenhagen's strategy brings forward social aspects in agreement with the municipal focus on innovation, liveability and provision of services (Munthe-Kaas, 2015). To my knowledge, this paper demonstrates for the first time that densification strategy leads to reconfiguration of the role of urban cemeteries at the policy level.

Paper I devotes special attention to the spiritual or "philosophical" aspects of the cemeteries, which distinguish them from other green spaces and are recognised by practitioners in both cities but less visible in the texts of the strategies. From the very beginning, the cemetery as a type of burial space has been associated with the idea of sanctuary (Sloane, 2018). In contemporary Scandinavia, this idea has a new representation, making cemeteries to be perceived as restorative environments (Nordh et al., 2017). Drawing on the idea of municipal spirituality, framed by McClymont (2015), Paper I calls for the systematic incorporation of spiritual values into planning and governance in postsecular cities. The main contribution of Paper I is a better understanding of the planning of cemeteries as a special type of urban green space, which might be relevant for planning in other cities pursuing sustainability agenda and densification strategy.

Paper II

The future of urban cemeteries as public spaces: Insights from Oslo and Copenhagen

Co-author: Helena Nordh

Background and aim

Public space has been a key focus of both urban development policies (Mehaffy et al., 2019) and urban research (Mitchell, 2017). Cities are believed to benefit substantially from creating high-quality public spaces, among which parks and squares have been studied the most. The vast literature on public spaces avoids

cemeteries that, in many cities, contain two essential ingredients of public space (Zukin, 1995): open access and public management. Oslo and Copenhagen are examples of such cities: cemeteries there are park-like, well-maintained environments and accommodate many secondary functions, including recreation (Skår et al., 2018). Paper II aims to discuss urban cemeteries as a special type of public space by examining how cemeteries in the two cities are described by policymakers and practitioners and what kind of future is envisioned in municipal strategies for cemetery development.

Methods

Paper II is based on the qualitative analysis of the texts of the cemetery strategies and interviews with ten practitioners (the same empirical material as Paper I) and employs top-down, deductive, qualitative content analysis. The framework was established for the analysis through the review of public space scholarship and cemetery research and includes four dimensions: liminal, spiritual, multicultural and multifunctional.

Results and contributions

Following the lead of Woodthorpe (2011) who suggests seeing a cemetery as a simultaneous coexistence of different meanings or landscapes, this paper examines Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries through the lens of four analytical dimensions. It highlights a juxtaposition of the dimensions and identifies that in the future, urban cemeteries in the two cities have the potential to be more public with a more diverse role. Although the findings from this article based on the Scandinavian context cannot be generalised and directly applied to other regions, the analytical framework developed here might be a useful point of departure to study and compare cemeteries' role in other jurisdictions.

The main empirical contribution of the paper is a better understanding of cemeteries' role — and its transformation — in contemporary cities and planning agendas. Paper II demonstrates that the Oslo and Copenhagen municipalities recognise cemeteries as multifunctional public spaces. The paper recognises the positive sides of this vision but highlight a need for a sensitive framework for cemetery planning and management that would support spiritual aspects of cemeteries. The idea of municipal spirituality (McClymont, 2015) can be an effective approach for such a framework.

The main theoretical contribution of the paper lies in the conceptualisation of urban cemeteries as a special type of public space, thus developing and challenging existing academic debates on the essence of the concept of public space and its functions and meanings. While research has been focused on the social and political aspects of public space for a long time, the case of urban cemeteries demonstrates that public space can also accommodate spirituality and facilitate reflections and contemplations — necessary and often neglected qualities in contemporary cities under densification pressure. This case exemplifies the need for a diversity of public spaces and the recognition of various urban lifestyles and choices.

Paper III

Invisible public spaces: The role of cemeteries in urban planning and development in Moscow

Background and aim

Cities vary in the way they ascribe the role of urban cemeteries in urban planning and development. Urban cemeteries in Western Europe and North America are getting recognition as multifunctional public spaces with the potential to contribute to sustainable development (Quinton & Duinker, 2019; Skår et al., 2018). Eastern Europe, and Russia in particular, is overlooked in research on cemeteries' multifunctional role. Paper III fulfils this empirical gap by examining the case of cemeteries of the Russian capital of Moscow. This city is an insightful case due to three trends: increasing densification, large-scale efforts to improve public spaces and the emphasis on memorialisation in the state cultural ideology. Drawing on the analytical approach and findings of Paper II, Paper III aims to explore to what extent cemeteries are being envisioned as public spaces in Moscow's planning policy and development practices.

Methods

The paper is built on a critical qualitative study of policy documents for Moscow cemeteries and general spatial development and semi-structured interviews with experts complemented by field observations conducted in nine cemeteries. For the qualitative analysis, I used the framework developed in Paper II and adopted it to the empirical material from Moscow. The framework consisted of four dimensions: liminal, spiritual, commercial and multifunctional.

Results and contributions

The findings presented in Paper III show that federal and city policymakers and practitioners view cemeteries primarily in terms of burial provision. Moscow cemeteries are considered a utilitarian part of the city. Therefore, they are absent in the Moscow government's recent campaign to improve the quality of public spaces, which, as noted before by Trubina (2020), focuses on the "spectacular" part of urban environment. Moscow cemeteries have, however, a range of qualities that make them valuable public spaces, revealed through the description of the four analytical dimensions. Each of these dimensions can be better accommodated into the city's planning and development processes by closer interplay between cemetery and funeral legislation and spatial planning policies, which now have very limited points of interaction.

The main contribution of Paper III is in demonstrating the challenges policymakers and practitioners face and also exacerbate when dealing with the multifaceted role of Moscow cemeteries. The paper reveals the neglect Moscow cemeteries experience in city planning and governance and the ambiguity of policymakers and practitioners in addressing the multifaceted role cemeteries play or might play in urban environments. Paper III contributes to the body of international cemetery research by examining cases outside the common geographical areas of this field. Paper III also describes the historical and contemporary development of the city's cemeteries with a focus on the differences from more well-studied cemeteries in Western Europe and North America and with regards to public space aspects. Such a description is essential for the comparative methodology employed in this thesis.

6 Results and discussion

This chapter synthesises and discusses the results of the three papers with regard to the three research questions posed in Chapter 1. Special attention in the chapter is devoted to the comparison of the findings from the Scandinavian and Russian cases.

6.1 A multidimensional framework as cemetery grammar

How do the public space dimensions of cemeteries manifest in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow?

To unfold cemeteries as a special type of public space, I developed an analytical framework consisting of several dimensions based on a review of cemetery research and public space scholarship. The framework was first outlined for the study of Scandinavian cemeteries in Paper II and then adapted to the empirical material from Russia in Paper III. By establishing and applying the framework to different contexts, I contribute to “a common grammar for international, comparative and multidisciplinary studies” (Rugg, 2000, p. 259) of cemeteries. The framework articulates qualities that can be relevant to cemeteries in different contexts and, therefore, can serve as a cohesive and culturally sensitive approach to cemetery grammar.

The dimensions of the framework have a different nature. While liminality and spirituality are intrinsic to cemeteries and are likely to be found in cemeteries across contexts, other dimensions — multifunctional, multicultural and commercial — are more general aspects of public spaces that may or may not be present in specific cases. This thesis demonstrates that well: In both Scandinavian and Russian cases, the framework consisted of four dimensions, but due to the contextual differences, one of four dimensions altered between Oslo and Copenhagen (liminal, spiritual, multifunctional and multicultural) on one hand and Moscow (liminal, spiritual, multifunctional and commercial) on the other. This section describes the main findings across Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow regarding all five dimensions used in the thesis and highlights some similarities and differences.

Liminal space

Liminality is a quality fundamental to cemeteries, as they are thresholds between the worlds of the living and the dead (Deering, 2012; Francis et al., 2005). Because of

the presence of the dead, cemeteries stand out from the everyday urban environment and link together different meanings and functions. This thesis demonstrates the variety of ways liminality manifests in cemeteries in the three cities and explores it through a series of tensions between different meanings associated with cemeteries. Here, I discuss two themes relevant to the liminal dimension: physical exclusion from the rest of the city and a tension between privateness and publicness within cemeteries.

First, Paper III illustrates the liminality of Moscow cemeteries with the case of buffer zones around them, which exclude cemeteries from everyday urban environments, both physically and mentally. The Russian funeral and planning legislations tend to view cemeteries as potentially hazardous environments; for that reason, Moscow cemeteries are surrounded — at least legally — by sanitary buffer zones. Public health concerns were one of the factors in moving cemeteries outside of the cities in the 18th–19th centuries both in Russia and Western Europe (Dushkina, 1995; Laqueur, 2015). The Norwegian funeral legislation (Norwegian government, 1997) also recommends buffer zones around cemeteries, but except for the general recommendation, it leaves it to the actual planning process. Paper I demonstrates that in the Scandinavian context, the public health perception of cemeteries has changed from a negative image of dangerous places to a positive picture of quite green spaces with potential restorative qualities.

Second, cemeteries in the three cities provide space for private graves and activities but keep, nonetheless, public access and public management. The liminal tension between the private and the public within cemeteries is revealed differently in the Scandinavian and Russian cases. Paper III shows a more private organisation of cemeteries in Moscow compared to the cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen, described in Papers I and II. The privateness of Moscow cemeteries entails a high share of cemetery territory devoted to individual graves, a wide diversity in grave design and visible “privatisation” of graves by individual fences. Scandinavian cemeteries display a clearer separation between graves and public areas, more homogeneous aesthetics of graves, and closer integration of individual graves into the landscape. I suggest that the lack of attention to the initial landscape organisation of Moscow cemeteries led to a more visible tension between the public and the private there. This thesis describes cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen as, to a large extent, an organised — and thus controlled — part of the urban environment, while Moscow cemeteries are among the most unconstrained places.

Liminal space is an elusive space that poses challenges for planners and policymakers who lean to favour clear boundaries and divisions. Therefore, the liminality of urban cemeteries — not necessarily a negative quality — can be problematic from an urban planning and development point of view. Paper II suggests that in the future, the liminality of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen may be reduced due to some measures the cemetery strategies analysed in the thesis propose, for example, stronger communication efforts or increased physical access and lighting.

Spiritual space

The meaning of spirituality varies across contexts, communities and individuals. This thesis employs a flexible definition of spirituality as “the search for the sacred” (Pargament et al., 2013, p. 14) and locates religion within spirituality while recognising the challenges of such interpretation (see Section 3.3). As places where we deal with the most profound losses and fundamental questions of human mortality, cemeteries are natural containers of spiritual qualities. This thesis explores how spirituality is embodied in cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow.

The spiritual dimension of urban cemeteries can include various aspects for different groups of visitors. Paper III demonstrates a great diversity in the ways the spiritual dimension manifests in Moscow cemeteries. While previous research (Moroz, 2021) suggests that Moscow cemeteries as places for spiritual rituals grew during the Soviet antireligious campaign and became a substitute for visits to religious buildings, Paper III shows that spiritual dimensions of Moscow cemeteries are prominent even now when there is no lack of open religious buildings, especially Orthodox churches, in the city. Cemeteries in the Russian capital — especially older ones — function as sites of spiritual pilgrimage and provide space for such activities as meditative walks, visits to “special” graves, and spiritual rituals. These findings suggest a greater variety and intensity of spiritual practices in Moscow cemeteries compared to the Scandinavian cases where reflective strolling is the most visible spiritual activity.

This thesis examines “cemetery labour” in Moscow cemeteries and the role of spiritual aspects in such activity. Paper III argues that a grave visitor of Moscow cemeteries is a labourer who actively changes the environment by taking care of a grave and thus appropriates public space — more than in other types of public space. Paper III also asks whether this appropriation is voluntary and addresses citizens’ spiritual needs to communicate with their loved ones through labour and thus make

commemoration and memorialisation more personal, or an evidence of failure of cemetery infrastructure and lack of centralised maintenance, similar to “DIY-funerals” described by Mokhov and Sokolova (2020). In the Scandinavian cases, taking care of a grave usually requires much less work of the bereaved due to the size and organisations of the graves, and is often outsourced to cemetery administration; there is also an interest in less maintenance-demanding alternatives such as collective memorials (*minnelund*). However, as Paper II suggests, Oslo’s and Copenhagen’s cemeteries are likely to accommodate more individualised choices in terms of interment practices and memorialisation forms. So far, there is not enough evidence to foresee whether such changes will lead to more diverse spiritual practices and how they can be incorporated into functionalist in its origin (Dietze-Schirdewahn & Lunde, 2019) approach to Scandinavian cemetery design.

Multifunctional space

Multifunctionality is an essential characteristic of public space (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). As demonstrated in the review of cemetery research (section 2.2), apart from the primary function of burial grounds and places for memorialisation, urban cemeteries have a variety of secondary functions, but their combination varies significantly across the contexts. This thesis highlights three functions: cemeteries as sites of heritage, recreation and environmental qualities. Here, I briefly outline and contrast how these three functions play out in cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow, while the next section will discuss how they are accommodated by planners and policymakers.

I start by describing the heritage function of urban cemeteries in the three cities. Paper III demonstrates that old Moscow cemeteries comprise a significant amount of heritage sites and serve as outdoor museums. Museumification of a cemetery — conservation and transformation into a place of pilgrimage — does not contradict an Orthodox view on cemeteries but follows it: graves and cemeteries should be visited and remembered. Cemeteries attract individual and organised excursions devoted to arts, history and the life and death of famous people. In terms of the division between heritage interpretation and death-related interpretation of historical cemeteries, as suggested by Rugg (2018b), Moscow cemeteries are interpreted as heritage sites and not as deathscapes. In the Scandinavian cases, heritage function was less visible in the empirical material with the new cemetery strategy — suggesting new thinking around the role of urban cemeteries — as a backbone. Old cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen also serve as heritage sites, and this function is addressed in previous

research from the region (Nordh & Evensen, 2018) and in Oslo's cemetery strategy (Oslo municipality, 2017).

The second function of urban cemeteries that evolved in the analysis is recreation. Paper I and II describes cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen as active recreational spaces based on previous research (Evensen et al., 2017; Skår et al., 2018), the cemetery strategies (Copenhagen municipality, 2015; Oslo municipality, 2017) and interviews. In Moscow, I observed a very limited number of recreational activities, mostly limited to strolling and excursions. Although such contrast between recreational usage of cemeteries in Scandinavia and Russia can be explained by cultural differences, this thesis suggests that the initial planning and spatial organisation of cemeteries also play a significant role. While Oslo and Copenhagen cemeteries were designed as park-like environments and recreational usage does not look so alien there, Moscow cemeteries lack landscape organisation and maintenance and would experience difficulties in accommodating active recreation common for Scandinavian cemeteries (Rae, 2021), such as jogging, dog walking, picnics and even walking through (as many of the Moscow cemeteries have just one entrance).

I conclude the discussion of the multifunctional dimension with a description of cemeteries' environmental qualities. In all three cities, cemeteries are green spaces where vegetation covers almost the whole territory. It seems likely that cemeteries in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow are important habitats for urban wildlife, contribute to local climate and biodiversity and provide ecosystem services as part of green infrastructure, similar to cemeteries in other European cities (Kowarik et al., 2016). However, vegetation in the Scandinavian and Russian cases differ significantly. While cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen were planned and developed as park-like environments and their vegetation was centrally arranged (except for the small planting in front of headstone, which is private and decorated in accordance with individual wishes), vegetation in Moscow cemeteries was planted by the bereaved and developed spontaneously, which makes maintenance difficult.

Multicultural space

The multicultural dimension of urban cemeteries was used only in the analytical framework applied to the Scandinavian cases. This dimension emphasises the increased cultural and ethnic diversity of urban populations and the need to include a wider variety of disposal and memorialisation practices in cemetery development. Cemeteries in the three cities are open to all citizens, regardless of people's religious affiliation and cultural background. Paper II describes how the municipalities in Oslo

and Copenhagen accommodate diversity of population through the organisation of special sections for minorities within existing cemeteries. According to one interviewee, the sections were established following the wishes of the communities themselves. However, what they represent — inclusion or exclusion — is another question that requires an additional study.

Although Paper III does not discuss the multicultural dimension of Moscow cemeteries, it describes the idea of religious sections and religious cemeteries and the growing interest in cemetery management by religious organisations. So far, religious organisations do not have formal power in cemetery planning and management in Moscow. Paper I shows that cemeteries in Oslo are owned by the Church of Norway, but due to a special arrangement, are run by the municipality. Cemeteries in Copenhagen are owned and run by the city but are considered consecrated grounds (by the Church in Denmark); burial grounds owned by religious communities were not included in the scope of the thesis. Thus, this thesis shows diversity in how religious organisations can be involved in cemetery provision, which is especially relevant for the postsecular debate.

Commercial space

The commercial dimension of Oslo and Copenhagen cemeteries was left out in this research, as it was not named as important in the interviews or strategies. Paper I suggests that compared to other contexts, for example, the British one, where cemeteries need to accommodate new activities to survive financially (Nordh et al., 2021; Paraskevopoulou, 2019), the municipalities of Oslo and Copenhagen have a much stronger financial role in cemetery management and do not consider cemeteries for income generation.

A different picture was revealed in Moscow. Paper III views commercial dimensions to be devoted to efforts to use cemeteries for profit and connects it to the general debates on the privatisation of public space (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008) and the neoliberal development of post-socialist cities (Zupan & Büdenbender, 2019). It demonstrates that although Russian cemetery legislation has a clear welfare focus, different actors make attempts to use cemeteries to earn, for example, through attempts to introduce private profit-seeking cemeteries into legislation and the practice of selling plots for graves. Corruption associated with the Russian funeral industry was left out of the scope of this thesis but served as a contextual background. Paper III demonstrates the potential increase in social inequality by selling plots for “family (ancestral) graves”. This contradicts the cemeteries’ ideal role as inclusive and

socially just public spaces due to inequality in access to disposal in particular cemeteries, as well as by destruction of existing cemetery space by these new plots.

6.2 Between a burden and an asset

How do planners and policymakers in the three cities articulate the role of cemeteries in the urban fabric? What are the similarities and differences, and possible reasons for those?

This thesis demonstrates that the role of urban cemeteries is highly context-dependent and, as revealed through the multidimensional model, varies substantially among the contexts. Moreover, there are multiple ways in which such a role is understood and expressed by planners and policymakers. Based on the findings outlined in the papers, in this section I highlight the similarities and differences between Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow regarding several aspects: overall focus of cemetery planning and development, attitude towards cemeteries' environmental qualities, recognition of actual use of cemeteries, tensions associated with cemeteries and articulation of spiritual values. After describing the similarities and differences, I will discuss potential reasons for these, which relate to cultural values, design aspects, administrative and political contexts of the cities and general planning trajectories.

Similarities and differences

While all three cities recognise the primary function of cemeteries as burial grounds and places for memorialisation — in all cases, remains have to be disposed in cemeteries, with very few exceptions (see Section 2.1) — there are substantial differences in the overall focus of cemetery planning and development. Paper I demonstrates that policymakers in Oslo and Copenhagen see cemeteries as valuable assets, multifunctional public spaces that provide access to green space for citizens and supplement cities' recreational areas. The cemetery strategies of the two cities have, however, different focuses. Oslo's strategy highlights the environmental benefits of cemeteries and their contribution to climate adaptation and mitigation; the Copenhagen municipality brings forward benefits for the city's liveability. The findings of Paper III show that Moscow's planning policies and practices focus predominantly on the primary function of urban cemeteries and view cemeteries as utilitarian monofunctional spaces and even a burden for urban development. However, as the previous section demonstrated, Moscow cemeteries have a range of secondary functions that were uncovered in sectoral planning and management documents and field observations.

The difference in the attitudes towards environmental qualities of urban cemeteries was a striking finding of the thesis. While cemeteries in the three cities are green spaces with a lot of vegetation, this aspect is approached differently. In Oslo, the “green” function of urban cemeteries is the most articulated among the three cities. Oslo’s policymakers recognise cemeteries’ contribution to local climate and biodiversity, green infrastructure and supporting contact with nature for citizens. In the Copenhagen cemeteries, greenery is mostly understood as a crucial ingredient of cemeteries’ image of a “green oasis”, which provides quiet places for reflection in the middle of the vibrant city — in this sense, greenery lays the foundation for recreational and restorative qualities. In contrast to the Scandinavian cases, the case of Moscow shows that, in terms of greenery, cemeteries are considered a technical and utilitarian part of the city’s green infrastructure, different from public green spaces. At the policy level, it is not recognised that cemeteries also provide access to nature to citizens and habitats for wildlife. Moreover, Moscow cemeteries are portrayed as hazardous environments in sanitary legislation and must have sanitary protection zones around them. Papers I and II did not observe a negative attitude towards the environmental qualities of urban cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen.

Another insightful aspect for the comparative approach of this thesis is the way in which the actual use of cemeteries is recognised and accommodated by planners and policymakers. Both Oslo’s and Copenhagen’s strategies aim to fill a gap between planning and management intentions and the actual use of cemeteries. This is especially relevant for recreational activities, which the Oslo and Copenhagen municipalities recognise as existing in cemeteries but admit that cemeteries are not planned and designed for that purpose and that varying usage could lead to conflicts. In Moscow, active recreation is not visible in cemeteries, but through “cemetery labour”, visitors actively interact with the physical environment of cemeteries. Paper III shows that while the Moscow cemetery authorities accommodate individual care of graves, there is a general dissatisfaction of people’s preferences, for example, in terms of instalment of fences. The authorities focus on aesthetic qualities of individual practices of grave arrangement and maintenance — and consider them problematic without paying attention to the fact that these practices seek to solve more fundamental problems, such as uncertainty of property rights and failures of centralised maintenance. In the analysis of empirical material from the Scandinavian cases, “cemetery labour” was not revealed. This could be due to the focus on policy level because citizens have a right to plant flowers near the gravestones. However, the extent of such activities is lower and more regulated than in Moscow and less

influential for the general landscape organisation of the cemeteries based on my observations.

A significant part of the analysis in this thesis focuses on tensions played out in cemetery spaces, as well as in cemetery and planning policies. The thesis demonstrates that the three cities reveal different levels of planners' and policymakers' engagement with such tensions. Paper II highlights the efforts of the Copenhagen municipality to build the cemetery strategy along five tensions: a public resource/a private place; a place for recreation/a place for grief; a place for all/a place for certain activities; a familiar place/an unknown and sometimes scary place; a timeless place/a place in transformation. Rather than trying to fix these tensions, the strategy seeks to find a balance between each of them.

One of the tensions this thesis focuses on is between different activities and functions. Paper II argues that the cemetery strategies in Oslo and Copenhagen acknowledge the primary function of urban cemeteries and aim to develop all other functions as secondary ones. Policymakers and practitioners recognise the possibility of conflicts between different functions of the cemeteries but also consider some of functions to be beneficial for each other, like health benefits of restoration and spiritual aspects. Paper III demonstrates a neglect of tensions in Moscow cemeteries and spatial policies. However, such omission at the policy level does not indicate a lack of real tensions in cemetery use and planning.

The last aspect discussed in this section unfolds how the spiritual values of urban cemeteries are articulated — or ignored — by planners and policymakers in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow. This aspect became central to the thesis. Paper I shows that the embodied spirituality of Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries distinguishes them from other types of green spaces and has motivated policymakers to develop cemetery-specific strategies. However, the strategies themselves do not provide a systematic approach for working with spiritual aspects, although the interviewees demonstrated greater awareness of these "philosophical" aspects. Paper I argues that working closely with different religious groups can be a way to accommodate spirituality in planning and provide a liberal and inclusive cemetery management system, a need that has been articulated by others (McClymont, 2018; Nordh et al., 2021; Rugg, 2020). However, as argued in this thesis (see Section 3.3), spirituality is not limited to formal religious practices only, which makes its systematic incorporation into planning so difficult. If McClymont's (2015) idea of municipal spirituality is "an inclusive language of public sacredness" (p. 542), then this thesis shows that policymakers in Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow are not "fluent speakers"

of this language; however, the Scandinavian cemetery strategies exhibit some promise. There was, nevertheless, an interesting consonance in how two interviewees in Copenhagen and Moscow were talking about the spiritual aspects of cemeteries:

Copenhagen

[In cemeteries] you are reminded that life is short and that it is going to end sadly for all of us. And it's a good thing. And especially these days, when we are all just concerned about now, now, now... Interviewee 7

Paper II, pp. 8–9

Moscow

In this sense, a cemetery is a unique place not only because of its historical potential and culture, but because a cemetery tells us that life is temporal: you can jump around now, pretending to be a boss, but everyone ends up here. This psychotherapeutic nature and role of the cemeteries are unique. Interviewee H

Paper III, p. 16

Possible reasons for similarities and differences

This subsection sets out to discuss potential reasons behind the similarities and differences in the articulation of the role of cemeteries in the three cities and starts with consideration of cultural values. This thesis acknowledges the distinctive character of the Norwegian and Danish cultures but considers them as two Scandinavian cases coming from relatively similar cultural and institutional contexts (Newman & Thornley, 2002). The Scandinavian cases are compared with each other and with the Russian case of Moscow using different approaches of the replication logic in the multiple-case research design (see Section 4.3). How are the cultural values of these contexts mirrored in cemetery policies? Based on the findings of this thesis, I suggest that the influence of cultural values on the role of urban cemeteries — at least at the policy level — is limited and less sound than suggested in some previous studies, mainly in sociology of death (see, for example, Walter, 2005). An example of “proper” cemeteries illustrates this observation well. The cemetery legislation in all three cities — but to different extents — promotes “proper” (*sømmelig* in Norwegian and Danish, *надлежащий* in Russian) cemetery management and maintenance. The documents do not provide a clear definition of what proper means. The Russian cemetery legislation connects proper with the will of the deceased and the relatives but does not prescribe rigid rules on how “proper” should be practiced. The Norwegian and Danish cemetery regulations are more explicit in providing some rules — both at the scale of the whole cemetery and individual graves — but also quite general in these frameworks. In all three cities, “proper” refers to dignity in cemetery practices and does not alter dramatically.

The only significant cultural difference that this thesis grasps is revealed in the analysis of a range of attitudes of Russian planners and policymakers to ordinary or mundane Moscow cemeteries and the idea of special memorial parks. The former is understood as a place of private and unspectacular grief, while the latter is a place of public memory and national pride. In terms of cultural values, this example can be interpreted as in Russia grief is regarded more as a private emotion but memory as a public notion and their combination is considered problematic, while in Scandinavia they both can be accommodated in public spaces such as cemeteries.

According to Worpole (2003), the design of cemeteries, as well as of other public spaces, is strongly connected “to powerful belief systems that cities develop and enact” (p. 11), where a belief system includes religious, political and social aspects. But what does really come first: cultural values and expectations around cemeteries or the way cemeteries are designed and managed to shape the cultural norms around them? In this thesis I suggest that they have a mutual effect on each other. Moreover, the history of cemeteries’ landscape design is based on a series of innovations, discoveries and trends, often coming in a top-down process (Laqueur, 2015). For example, since the end of 1940s, Norway has had the position of national cemetery advisor¹, for which landscape architects have been hired (Jørgensen, 1995, 2014). Dietze-Schirdewahn and Lunde (2019) show that the landscape transformation of Norwegian cemeteries in the post-WWII period was under the influence of functionalist ideas. One can argue that acceptance of functionalism in Scandinavia can be explained by its consistency with Scandinavian values, but I would suggest that this is a two-way street. It is likely to suggest that neglected and poorly organised, from the landscape point of view, Moscow cemeteries are not an outcome of Russian cultural values but rather a result of the lack of integration of different policies and a symptom of a corrupted system². This thesis, thus, highlights the importance of quality in landscape design and maintenance of urban cemeteries, which can lead to better incorporation and accessibility of cemeteries’ unique qualities.

I move now to the discussion of the influence of administrative and political contexts into articulation of the role of cemeteries at the policy level. Three different city agencies are in charge of cemeteries in the three cities: the Department of Culture

¹ From 2021, the Norwegian national cemetery competency has been transferred from the church governance (*bispedømmeråd*) to a government agency (*statsforvalteren*) by creating the cemetery authority (*gravplassmyndighet*) consisting of five employees led by a former cemetery advisor and landscape architect Åse Skrøvset (Grønnestad, 2021).

² It can be added that Russia does not have a federal authority overlooking cemetery provision and being responsible for central policies.

and Sport (by the Cemeteries and Burial Agency, *Gravferdsetaten*) in Oslo, the Technical and Environmental Administration in Copenhagen and the Department of Trade and Services (by the specialised agency *Ritual*) in Moscow. In the case of Oslo, the profile of the managing department is surprisingly marginally mirrored in how the role of cemeteries is understood. Oslo's cemetery strategy just briefly mentions heritage aspects and does not discuss cemeteries in relation to possible cultural events. Instead, the general political orientation of the city government on the "green shift" (Hofstad & Torfing, 2017) has influenced the strategy more significantly. In Copenhagen, administration of cemeteries is dispersed among different units and merged with management and maintenance of other public spaces, which can contribute to a more inclusive and recreation-friendly approach to cemeteries in the city. In Moscow, the Department of Trade and Services is in charge of the commercial sector, such as retail, food and household services, which could lead to a more prominent articulation of the provision of funeral services in cemetery management and orientation on profit generation.

The results from the Russian case seem to be similar to the findings of Klaufus (2016, 2018a, 2018b) who studied cemetery policies and use in Latin American cities. The similarities include the lack of recognition of existing social practices (Klaufus, 2018b), focus on the primary function of cemeteries to the disadvantage of cemeteries' benefits for society in general (Klaufus, 2018a), and financialisation of the field (Klaufus, 2016). What makes Russian and Latin American policy responses to cemetery development so seemingly similar? I suggest that neoliberalisation can be an answer to this question. Although Scandinavia is not immune to neoliberalism (Falleth & Nordahl, 2018; Gulsrud, Gooding, & van Den Bosch, 2013), it manifests there in a much more subtle way than in Russia — or Latin America — and was not visible in the analysis of the empirical material from Oslo and Copenhagen. Paper III discusses the role of Moscow cemeteries in the context of neoliberal restructuring of a post-socialist city. Rugg (2020) warns against the financialisation of cemetery provision as "the incidence and severity of social injustice is likely to be exacerbated" (p. 10).

The last set of possible explanations of the similarities and differences in how the role of cemeteries is articulated at the policy level is devoted to planning trajectories of Oslo, Copenhagen and Moscow. All three cities experience population growth and employ densification strategies. However, there is a fundamental difference in the rationales of these strategies: sustainability concerns and climate change adaptation and mitigation in Oslo and Copenhagen (Næss et al., 2020) *versus* fulfilling the financial interests of developers and the advancement of authoritarian governance

through urban development (Khmelnitskaya & Ihalainen, 2021; Zupan et al., 2021). That is not to say that Moscow densification is necessarily evil, while Scandinavian densification is always a blessing. Densification in the Scandinavian context can also increase pressure in urban green spaces (Thorén & Saglie, 2015) and exacerbate social inequalities (Cavicchia, 2021). The Scandinavian model of densification can have, however, promise for the multifaceted role of urban cemeteries. The sustainability agenda motivates planners and policymakers in Oslo and Copenhagen to re-evaluate values of a range of places in the city, including green infrastructure (Thorén & Saglie, 2015). A framework for such re-evaluation can — and should — be comprehensive and include non-instrumental, including spiritual, values rather than just financial and utilitarian ones.

6.3 The place of spirituality in public space debates

How can the conceptualisation of urban cemeteries as a special type of public space inform the current theoretical debates around the notion of public space?

Section 3.2 describes an academic debate on the notion of public space as a diverse and intricate terrain. This thesis uses the concept of public space as the main theoretical lens to explore the role of urban cemeteries and argues that cemeteries are a special type of public space. In this section, I will elaborate on the contribution of such conceptualisation to public space literature.

The academic debate on public space has been dominated by scholarly attention to democratic and social aspects (Sirowy, 2015). Public space has been understood as a space where civic community is shaped and where strangers meet. The empirical focus has been on “conventional” types of public spaces: parks, squares, streets and markets. By unfolding the case of urban cemeteries as a special type of public space, I am broadening the empirical repertoire of public space research and demonstrating how “non-traditional” spaces, such as urban cemeteries, are increasingly used and understood as public spaces, in line with an observation of Mehta and Palazzo (2020). Neither necessarily civic nor social, urban cemeteries challenge, therefore, the rigorous interpretation of the concept of public space. The case of urban cemeteries also expands existing knowledge on how the key ingredients of public space — access, management and use — manifest in cities.

Both recreational activities in Oslo and Copenhagen and “cemetery labour” in Moscow can be seen as ways to appropriate public space. This thesis follows the lead of Skår, Nordh, and Swensen (2018) who looked at cemeteries’ recreational use in Oslo through the prism of Henri Lefebvre’s notion of the right to the city, and asks

who has the right to the cemetery, what this right contains and how it is met at the policy level. Talking about different stakeholders who shape urban cemeteries, we can ask the same question as Attoh (2011): “If the right to the city is a group right, does it come at the expense of individual rights?” (p. 672). If we look at an urban cemetery as an oeuvre — similar to the way Henri Lefebvre looked at a city in general (Attoh, 2011) — that is shaped by the daily actions of citizens and their labour, then both recreational and commemorating activities are equally important if dignity is observed. Purcell (2002) argues that “the use value aspect of urban space must therefore be the primary consideration in decisions that produce urban space” (p. 103). Cemetery policies, with which this thesis is occupied, are one of the arenas where different uses are articulated.

This thesis expands public space scholarship not only empirically but also conceptually by bringing forward liminal and spiritual aspects of urban cemeteries. While multifunctional, multicultural and commercial dimensions of the multidimensional model established in this thesis can be applied generally to almost any type of public space, liminal and spiritual ones are inherent to cemeteries. This does not mean, however, that other public spaces lack these dimensions (see, for example, Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001 for the discussion around liminality of public spaces). Rather, the case of urban cemeteries highlights these aspects and problematises their articulation in urban planning and development by pointing at a different category of public spaces that has spiritual and liminal character and therefore addresses different kinds of needs.

Recognition of spiritual values of public spaces is especially relevant in the context of postsecular cities (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). In line with the literature on postsecularism, cemeteries can be seen as continuous “places of postsecular engagement” (Herman et al., 2012) — public spaces for a dialogue between religious and secular groups. This role is somehow similar to the function of public space for social encounters and exchange which rarely includes discussion of spiritual aspects. Moreover, the spiritual exchange in cemeteries does not necessarily requires social contacts as in other types of public space but can function through the very materiality of memorialisation and rituals. The unique role of cemeteries as public spaces whose spiritual values are intrinsic can support recognition of spirituality of other public spaces and challenge the predominant neoliberal mode of urban development (McClymont, 2015).

This thesis adds to the growing body of literature on the importance of the spiritual aspects in, for example, planning (Sandercock, 2006), landscape architecture

(van den Bosch, 2019) and public health (Oman, 2018). Spiritual aspects and restorative qualities are interrelated and support each other (Bell, Foley, Houghton, Maddrell, & Williams, 2018; Ouellette, Kaplan, & Kaplan, 2005). Cemeteries' restorative and spiritual qualities are recognised by policymakers and practitioners in Oslo and Copenhagen and add to the understanding of the different functions public spaces can have. Being alone and having space for reflections, including questions on life, death and memory, is an overlooked need in contemporary urban development, which often focuses on active public spaces favouring consumerism (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). The thesis, therefore, highlights the diversity of types of public spaces our cities require in order to fulfil the needs of different groups of citizens (Carmona, 2015). The comparative approach of the thesis also supports the call for a critical and self-reflective approach to public space research (Kalyukin et al., 2015; Radović, 2020) by emphasising context dependency of both urban cemeteries and public space in general.

7 Conclusions

My interest in urban cemeteries started from an observation that cemeteries in Scandinavia and Russia are designed, used and experienced differently. This thesis is an attempt to transform such a personal and mundane observation into academic research by asking focused questions, applying theoretical and methodological frameworks and situating findings within the body of existing scholarship. This last chapter summarises the main findings of the thesis, highlights implications for practices and suggests avenues for future research.

7.1 Main findings

An initial aim of the thesis was to contribute to the existing body of literature with new knowledge and understanding of the role of urban cemeteries as public spaces with an empirical focus on the policy context in Scandinavia and Russia. My contribution to the research literature is threefold.

First, in this thesis I developed an analytical multidimensional framework that illuminated the roles of cemeteries as public spaces across different contexts. Based on reviews of cemetery research and public space literature, this framework included both cemetery inherent dimensions (liminal and spiritual) and more general dimensions visible in other types of public space (multifunctional, multicultural and commercial). The framework allowed comparison of cases across contexts as well as enabled discussion around the possible future of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen. Following the lead of Woodthorpe (2011), this thesis looked at urban cemeteries as spaces where different dimensions co-exist simultaneously and in a juxtaposition.

Second, the flexible comparative methodology employed in this thesis allowed me to compare findings from the Scandinavian and Russian cases without unnecessary generalisations and explore how the role of urban cemeteries is articulated in urban planning and development in these cities. I found that while the Oslo and Copenhagen municipalities tend to consider cemeteries as multifunctional public spaces, the planners and policymakers in Moscow focus on their primary function as burial grounds and places for memorialisation and overlook other functions of the cemeteries. Oslo and Copenhagen displayed many similarities in their visions for cemetery development but differed in focal points. The Oslo municipality highlighted cemeteries' contribution to "green shift" and climate change mitigation and adaptation, while the Copenhagen authorities emphasise the role of cemeteries in the

city's "liveability" through providing space for community life and physically connecting urban fabric.

Third, by conceptualising cemeteries as a special type of public space, I contributed to the theoretical debates on public space regarding its qualities, diversity and transformation. Cemeteries in all three cities fulfil two basic principles of public space (Zukin, 1995): being publicly accessible and managed by public authorities. The case of urban cemeteries demonstrated the magnitude of functions public spaces can have and citizens' needs they can fulfil, beyond democratic and social aspects, which the literature on public space focuses on. I argued that the spiritual values of urban cemeteries are essential for other types of public space and should not be ignored in practice and research.

7.2 Implications for practice

What does such knowledge generated through comparative cemetery research mean for the planning and development of cities of tomorrow? I consider here several implications for practices that follow from the findings of the thesis.

As shown in this thesis, cemeteries are a highly context-dependent part of the urban environment, so a direct transfer of some elements of cemetery policies — even proved to be successful in the place of their origin — can be problematic. However, I suggest that practitioners in both Scandinavia and Russia can benefit from this comparison by seeing more clearly distinctive characteristics of cemetery planning and development in their own countries, as well as by opening space for new ideas and approaches.

Russian cemetery authorities, planners and policymakers can benefit from initiating strategic planning of cemeteries, which would include attention to cemeteries' multifunctional role, tensions between different functions and careful landscape design. Such initiative would also raise awareness of cemeteries' role across different fields and agencies and fill the gap between sectoral policies (cemetery and funeral industry specific) and spatial planning. Sensitive reframing of Moscow cemeteries as multifunctional public spaces could be a solution to the constant lack of cemetery space, as it might encourage new forms of disposal, memorialisation and higher levels of maintenance. In this thesis, I do not call for promotion of active recreation in Russian cemeteries, like in cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen. I believe, however, that Russian cemeteries with more park-like organisation will attract recreational visitors and push a demand for policymakers to facilitate a balance between different functions.

For Scandinavia, a lesson from Russia can involve attention to personal expressions in cemeteries. Scandinavian cemeteries are heading towards better incorporation of citizens' individual choices in cemeteries, which will challenge the current uniformity of Scandinavian cemeteries. This is especially relevant for more sensitivity to the multicultural dimension of cemetery planning and management. Moscow cemeteries demonstrate a variety of ways people can appropriate space and a variety of ways spirituality can manifest there. The case of Moscow also shows that the diversity of individual choices has its own price and without proper assistance could be damaging for a cemetery as a whole. Such a remark should be acknowledged at the policy level and in landscape design.

Planners and policymakers — not only in Scandinavia and Russia, but in Europe or even all over the world — should pay attention to the articulation of unique qualities of urban cemeteries in planning and development to keep cemeteries' relevant in the future. The relevance of urban cemeteries as only places for disposal and memorialisation is being tested by new memorialisation forms (including digital and in public spaces) and burial practices, high population mobility and the rise of environmental concerns (Sloane, 2018). Urban cemeteries confront the need to change to compete with other types of land use, especially in cities undergoing densification. The thesis expanded the understanding of cemeteries' role in urban planning and development and highlighted the unique qualities of cemeteries that should be protected for future generations of citizens. Articulation of spiritual dimension of urban cemeteries can be one of the most prominent directions for this, and the idea of municipal spirituality can help to achieve it in planning discourse.

The thesis also demonstrates the role of research in policy development and calls for a more active dialogue between urban research and policymaking. Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemetery strategies benefited from the incorporation of the results of the research. In the case of Oslo, the studies were conducted independently from the process of drafting the strategy (Oslo municipality, 2017), while the Copenhagen municipality ordered an ethnographic study to a consultant company in order to prepare the strategy (Nielsen & Groes, 2014). Moreover, the evidence from Copenhagen where ethnographic research shaped the trajectory of the strategy and involved qualitative methods — not always favoured by policymakers — demonstrates the benefits of such an approach. In Moscow, there is no open evidence that the city government is currently interested in backing up their development plan with research, except running public opinion polls.

7.3 Avenues for future research

This thesis filled some lacunae in scholarship — especially in comparative cemetery research and urban studies — but also revealed demand for new directions in research. Here, I outline three avenues for future research.

The first direction is to explore how visitors use and experience a cemetery in Moscow, or in the Russian context in general. While the use of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen has been studied — more systematically in Oslo (Evensen et al., 2017; Nordh et al., 2017) than in Copenhagen (Nielsen & Groes, 2014) — Moscow cemeteries do not have such an inquiry. Although this thesis relied on field observations in nine Moscow cemeteries, the scholarship lacks a systematic study of visitors' perspectives, practices and meanings associated with cemetery visitations in Russia. Visitors' points of view are essential for constructions of cemeteries as public spaces and can differ substantially from policymakers' stands. Such a study should also explore the multicultural dimension of Russian cemeteries — an aspect almost entirely left out in cemetery policies.

The second avenue for future research is to explore cemetery policies and practices across different scales — an important aspect for spatial social sciences. Rugg (2018a) points out that “the scale of mortality drives change in funerary practice” (p. 63), including burial spaces. This thesis engaged with empirical material from the three big metropolises. It is likely to suggest that findings from Oslo and Copenhagen are more relevant to metropolitan cities in other Nordic and North European countries than to small settlements situated in Norway and Denmark. Similarly, the case of Moscow can be more telling for post-socialist capital cities than for smaller towns in other Russian regions. Following Robinson (2016) call for more global urban studies, there is also a need for more global cemetery research that would study cemeteries not only across cultures (including outside of the European context), but also across scales. The multidimensional analytical framework established in this thesis can provide an inspiring point for departure and advance international cemetery grammar.

The third line of future research could develop the idea of municipal spirituality further and explore the spiritual values of other types of public spaces and their articulation at the policy level. Such studies should aim to reveal the perspectives of both visitors and policymakers and highlight tensions among these. The idea of municipal spirituality was developed by McClymont (2015) in British cemetery research as a discursive tool to articulate the spiritual aspects of urban places. While this thesis advanced the idea by exploring how the spirituality of urban cemeteries is

articulated in other cultural contexts, municipal spirituality seems to be useful for the analysis of other policies, for example, in planning of public space and green infrastructure, urban development and public health.

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Appendix A. Sample of interview guides

This interview guide was used for an interview with the representatives of Oslo's Cemeteries and Burials Agency (*Gravferdsetaten*) and served as a starting point for preparing guides for all other interviews. The questions were adapted for each interviewee's field of expertise and local context.

Daily work/cooperation with others

- Could you please say a few words about your daily work and areas of responsibility?
- What are the main working tasks and responsibilities of *Gravferdsetaten*?
- How many people work at *Gravferdsetaten*? Could you please describe its structure?
- Which other departments and agencies of the Oslo municipality work with urban cemeteries?
- Are there public sector organisations involved in decisions regarding the urban cemeteries? If so, how?
- Are there private companies (like landscape architects) involved in development and design of the municipal cemeteries? If so, do you cooperate with any particular?

Documents

- What official laws, regulations and other documents guide your work?
- What do you think about them?
- Are there individual plans or strategies for each of the municipal cemeteries?

The strategy "Future cemeteries — Great green urban space"

- Could you please say a few words about the way how and why this document was developed?
- Was there any discussion on the criteria which framed the document?
- How does your *Gravferdsetaten* use it in its work with cemeteries?

Current situation: opportunities and challenges

- What is your favourite cemetery in Oslo and why?
- Are there any conflicting interests regarding cemetery management and development from the perspective of *Gravferdsetaten*?
- Is there any form of public participation for the development of Oslo cemeteries?

- Do you use any techniques, like mapping of behaviour, or surveys, to understand how people use urban cemeteries?
- Do you get any complaints from cemeteries visitors? If so, what do they complain about?
- What kind of recreational activities are encouraged in Oslo cemeteries? Could you describe in what way the municipality facilitates for these types of activities?
- *Gravferdsetaten* is active on Instagram. What is the aim of this activity? Is there a particular image of Oslo cemeteries you are trying to promote?

Changes and vision of the future

- Do you see any particular changes in visitor's use of cemeteries in Oslo in the last years? What are they?
- Have working tasks of *Gravferdsetaten* changed accordingly during the period?
- Have the laws, strategies and instructions changed accordingly?
- What do you think will be the functions of *Gravferdsetaten* in a ten-year period and why?

Appendix B. List of interviewees

Oslo

#	Pseudonym	Job description or expert area	Duration	Date
1	Interviewee 1	Representative of the Cemeteries and Burials Agency of the Oslo municipality	1 h 20 min	May 2018
2	Interviewee 2	Representative of the Cemeteries and Burials Agency of the Oslo municipality	1 h 30 min	May 2018
3	Interviewees 3 and 4	Representatives of the Department of Culture and Sports of the Oslo municipality	1 h	October 2018
4	Interviewee 5	Landscape architect	1 h 20 min	September 2018
5	Interviewee 6	Representative of the Oslo Community Church Council of the Church of Norway	1 h	October 2018

Copenhagen

#	Pseudonym	Job description or expert area	Duration	Date
1	Interviewee 7	Representative of the City Operations Bureau of the Technical and Environmental Administration of the Copenhagen municipality	1 h 05 min	November 2018
2	Interviewee 8	Representative of the City Operations Bureau of the Technical and Environmental Administration of the Copenhagen municipality	1 h 20 min	April 2018
3	Interviewee 9	Representative of the City Operations Bureau of the Technical and Environmental Administration of the Copenhagen municipality	1 h	November 2018
4	Interviewee 10	Landscape architect	30 min	November 2018

Moscow

#	Pseudonym	Job description or expert area	Duration	Date
1	Interviewee A	Funeral industry expert	3 h	August 2020
2	Interviewee B	Funeral industry expert	1 h 31 min	October 2020
3	Interviewee C	Funeral industry expert with previous experience of working at <i>Ritual</i>	1 h 20 min	August 2020
4	Interviewee D	Representative of a private funeral agency	1 h 43 min	December 2020
5	Interviewee E	Architect, university lecturer involved into the development of funeral regulations	3 h 28 min	August 2020
6	Interviewee F	Representative of an urban design consulting company involved into public space improvement campaign	1 h 30 min	October 2020
7	Interviewee G	Representative of an urban design consulting company involved into public space improvement campaign	1 h 05 min	December 2020
8	Interviewee H	Social infrastructure planner at a Moscow government's planning institution	51 min	November 2020
9	Interviewee I	Urban planner at a Moscow government's planning institution	1 h 37 min	November 2020
10	Interviewee J	Urban planner, university lecturer with previous experience of working at a Moscow government's planning institution	54 min	October 2020
11	Interviewee K	Urban planner, university lecturer with previous experience of working at a Moscow government's planning institution	45 min	October 2020
12	Interviewee L	Urban planner, university lecturer with previous experience of working at a Moscow government's planning institution	57 min	June 2021
13	Interviewees M and N	Architects with experience of reconstructing a historical cemetery in another Russian region	1 h 7 min	November 2020

14	Interviewee O	Independent urban planner	1 h 30 min	October 2020
15	Interviewee P	Green infrastructure expert	1 h 57 min	October 2020
16	Interviewee Q	Environmental activist, lawyer	49 min	November 2020
17	Interviewee R	Environmental management expert, researcher in cemetery soil	43 min	November 2020
18	Interviewee S	Representative of the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Moscow government	1 h 51 min	September 2020
19	Interviewee T	Representative of the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Moscow government	1 h 2 min	October 2020
20	Interviewee U	Heritage activist, cemetery tour-guide	1 h 47 min	October 2020
21	Interviewee V	Heritage activist, cemetery tour-guide	56 min	October 2020
22	Interviewee W	Representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, expert in Moscow cemetery history	1 h	January 2021

Appendix C. List of analysed documents

The list consists of the documents used for the analysis (approaches to the analysis are described in Section 4.6). Due to the length of the original titles of some documents, English translations were simplified; original titles of the documents are given in full.

Oslo

#	English title	Original title	Publication year (last changes)	Available at
Cemetery strategy				
1	Future Cemeteries – Great Green Urban Space	Frøtidens gravplass – gode, grønne byrom. Byrådssak 253/17	2017	https://tjenester.oslo.kommune.no/ekstern/einnsyn-fillager/filtjeneste/fil?virksomhet=976819837&filnavn=byr%2F2017%2Fbr1%2F2017061041-1814017.pdf
Laws and regulations				
2	The Act on Cemeteries, Cremation and Burials (the Funeral Act)	Lov om gravplasser, kremasjon og gravferd (Gravferdsloven). LOV-1996-06-07-32	1997 (2021)	https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1996-06-07-32
3	Regulations for the Act on Cemeteries, Cremation and Burials (the Funeral Act)	Forskrift til lov om gravplasser, kremasjon og gravferd (Gravferdsforskriften). FOR-1997-01-10-16	1997 (2020)	https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/1997-01-10-16
4	Statute of Cemeteries in Oslo	Vedtekter for gravplassene. Oslo kommune. FOR-2018-11-13-1687	2018	https://lovdata.no/dokument/LF/forskrift/2018-11-13-1687
Other documents				
5	Proposal for the Parliament: Amendments to the Funeral Act	Proposisjon til Stortinget (forslag til lovvedtak). Endringer i gravferdsloven og enkelte andre lover. Prop. 81L.	2010-2011	https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/prop-81-20102011/id637277/

6	Local Elections Programme 2019–2023 of the Centre Party	Oslo Senterparti. Lokalvalgsprogram 2019–2023	2019	https://www.senterpartiet.no/lokal-lag-og-fylkeslag/oslo/politikk/2019-2023BystyreprogramBokm%C3%A5I/_/attachment/inline/c7c4aa5a-44b7-4093-894e-bbe41c155687:b27eb45f1779b82a8c9ed1f53a1db30e179117c5/Parti-program.pdf
7	Programme of the Christian Democratic Party in Oslo, 2019-2023	Sammen for et Varmere Oslo: Oslo Krfs Program for Bystyreperioden 2019–2023	2019	
8	The Cemeteries and Burials Agency: Annual Report 2018	Gravferdsetaten: Årsberetning 2018	2019	https://www.oslo.kommune.no/geftfile.php/13312251-1551359386/tjenester%20og%20tilbud/Politikk%20og%20administrasjon/Etater%2C%20foretak%20og%20ombud/Gravferdsetaten/Dokumenter%20Gravferdsetaten/%C3%85rsberetning%202018%20Gravferdsetaten.pdf

Copenhagen

#	English title	Original title	Publication year (last changes)	Available at
Cemetery strategy				
1	Policy for the Development of Copenhagen's five Cemeteries towards 2065	Politik for udvikling af Københavns Kommunes fem kirkegårde mod 2065	2015	https://kk.sites.itera.dk/apps/kk_pub2/index.asp?mode=detalje&id=1454#:~:text=Politik%20for%20udvikling%20af%20K%C3%B8benhavns%20Kommunes%20fem%20kirkeg%C3%A5rde%20mod%202065,-2015&text=Kirkeg%C3%A5rdene%20skal%20fremover%20kunne%20im%C3%B8dekomme,del%20af%20k%C3%B8benhavnerne%20rekrutive%20liv

Laws and regulations				
2	Regulations for Church Buildings and Churchyards of the National Church	Bekendtgørelse om folkekirkens kirkebygninger og kirkegårde. BEK nr 1172 af 19/09/2016	2016	https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/fta/2016/1172
3	Regulations for the Act on Church Buildings and Churchyards of the National Church	Bekendtgørelse af lov om folkekirkens kirkebygninger og kirkegårde. LBK nr 1156 af 01/09/2016	2016	https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/fta/2016/1156
4	Regulations for the Act on Burial and Cremation	Bekendtgørelse af lov om begravelse og ligbrænding	2020	https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/fta/2020/43
5	Statute of Copenhagen Burials	Vedtægt for Københavns Begravelsesvæsen	1987	
Other documents				
6	Implementation of a Grant in Budget 2019 for a Therapy Garden in Vestre Cemetery	Udmøntning af bevilling i budget 2019 til terapihave. Dokumentnr. 2019-0111848-1	2019	

Moscow

#	English title	Original title	Publication year (last changes)	Available at
Federal level: Funeral and cemetery specific legislation				
1	Funeral Law	Федеральный закон N 8-ФЗ "О погребении и похоронном деле"	1996 (2021)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/9015335
2	Sanitary Regulations for Cemeteries and Funeral Infrastructure	СанПиН 2.1.2882-11 "Гигиенические требования к размещению, устройству и содержанию кладбищ, зданий и сооружений похоронного назначения"	2011	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/902287293

3	Regulations for Sanitary Protection Zones	СанПин 2.2.1/2.1.1.1200-03 "Санитарно-защитные зоны и санитарная классификация предприятий, сооружений и иных объектов"	2007 (2014)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/902065388
4	Funerary and Cemetery Recommendations	МДК 11-01.2002 "Рекомендации о порядке похорон и содержании кладбищ в Российской Федерации"	2002	https://ritual.mos.ru/normativnyea_kty/MDK11-01.2002.pdf
Federal level: Governance, planning and land use				
5	Law on Local Self-Determination	Федеральный закон N 131-ФЗ "Об общих принципах организации местного самоуправления в Российской Федерации"	2003 (2021)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901876063
6	Urban Planning Code	Градостроительный кодекс Российской Федерации	2004 (2021)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901919338
7	Land Code	Земельный кодекс Российской Федерации	2001 (2021)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/744100004
8	Policy documents of the national project "Housing and urban environment"	Документы национального проекта "Жильё и городская среда"	2017 (2021)	
City level: Funeral and cemetery specific legislation				
9	City Funeral Law	Закон города Москвы N 11 "О погребении и похоронном деле в городе Москве"	1997 (2014)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3601419
10	Decree on the Conditions of Funeral Service in Moscow	Постановление N 260-ПП "О состоянии и мерах по улучшению похоронного обслуживания в городе Москве"	2008 (2020)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3688619
11	Moscow Construction Norms for Funeral Infrastructure	МГСН 4.11-97 "Здания, сооружения и комплексы похоронного назначения"	1997	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1200000477

12	Rules for Application for Graves in Cemeteries Closed for New Interments	Постановление N 802-ПП "Об утверждении Порядка подготовки и выдачи разрешений на захоронение на закрытых для свободного захоронения кладбищах города Москвы (кроме семейных (родовых) и родственных захоронений) в режиме 'одного окна'"	2006 (2018)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3668320?marker=65A0IQ
13	Regulations for an Experiment of Allocation of Family (Ancestral) Graves in Moscow Cemeteries	Постановление N 570-ПП "О проведении в городе Москве эксперимента по размещению семейных (родовых) захоронений на городских кладбищах города Москвы"	2015 (2021)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/537979864
14	Statute of <i>Ritual</i>	Распоряжение ДТиУ г. Москвы 2015 N 499 "Об утверждении новой редакции Устава государственного бюджетного учреждения города Москвы 'Ритуал'"	2015	
15	Regulations for guardianship of abandoned burials in Moscow's cemeteries	Постановление N 21-ПП "О порядке опекуинства над брошенными захоронениями на кладбищах в городе Москве"	2009 (2015)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3708099
City level: Non-funeral regulations				
16	Moscow Urban Planning Code	Градостроительный кодекс города Москвы	2008 (2019)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3692117
17	Moscow General Plan	Генеральный план города Москвы	2010 (2017)	https://genplanmos.ru/project/generalnyy_plan_moskvy_do_2035_goda/
18	Moscow Land Use Plan	Правила землепользования и застройки города Москвы	2017 (2020)	https://www.mos.ru/mka/documents/pravila-zemlepolzovaniya-i-zastrojki-goroda-moskvy/

19	Moscow Planning Norms	МГСН 1.01-99 "Нормы и правила проектирования планировки и застройки города Москвы"	2000	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1200003977
20	Urban Planning Programme	Государственная программа города Москвы "Градостроительная политика"	2011 (2018)	https://stroi.mos.ru/uploads/media/file/0001/78/78cd17722cdc16cafa28b134dc67ba0429914015.pdf
21	Moscow Development Programme "Moscow — city comfortable for life"	Программа развития Москвы "Москва — город, удобный для жизни"	2014	https://dszn.ru/department/Gosudarstvennye-i-gorodskie-programmy/Programma-razvitiya-Moskvy
22	Moscow Urban Environment Strategy	Государственная программа города Москвы "Развитие городской среды"	2011 (2019)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/537907624
23	Green Space Regulations	Постановление N 743-ПП "Об утверждении правил создания, содержания и охраны зеленых насаждений города Москвы"	2002 (2019)	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3638729
Historical documents				
24	Sanitary Regulations for Cemeteries	Санитарные правила устройства и содержания кладбищ	1977	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/1200007278
25	Funeral and Cemetery Management Instruction	Инструкция о порядке похорон и содержания кладбищ в РСФСР	1979	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/9011254
Manuals for architects and landscape architects				
26	Tavrovskiy, A., Limonad, M., & Benyamovskiy, D. Buildings and constructions of funeral civil rituals. Moscow: Stroyizdat	Тавровский, А. Л., М. Ю. Лимонад, Д. К. Беньямовский. Здания и сооружения траурной гражданской обрядности. Москва: Стройиздат.	1985	
27	Gorokhov, V. Urban green construction. Moscow: Stroyizdat.	Горохов, В. А. Городское зелёное строительство. Москва: Стройиздат.	1991	

28	Bogovaya, I., Teodoronskiy, V. Objects of landscape architecture. Saint Petersburg: Lan ¹	Боговая, И. О., Теодоронский, В. С. Объекты ландшафтной архитектуры. Санкт-Петербург: Лань	2014	
Other documents				
29	Drafts of the Funeral Law	Законопроект N 1063916-7 "О похоронном деле в Российской Федерации и о внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации" Проект Федерального закона "О похоронном деле в Российской Федерации и о внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации"	2020 2016	https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/1063916-7 https://minstroyrf.gov.ru/docs/11109/
30	Russian president's directives based on the revision of the funeral industry	Н Пр-1330 "Перечень поручений Президента Российской Федерации по результатам проверки исполнения законодательства и решений Президента Российской Федерации по вопросам организации погребения и похоронного дела, проведенной Контрольным управлением Президента Российской Федерации"	2017	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/456084200
31	Draft of the Strategy of Development of the Russian Housing and Utilities infrastructure	Проект стратегии развития жилищно-коммунального хозяйства в Российской Федерации на период до 2020 года	2016	https://acato.ru/media/downloads/news/Strategia_GKH_2020.pdf
32	Report on Moscow environment in 2019	Доклад о состоянии окружающей среды в городе Москве в 2019 году	2020	https://www.mos.ru/eco/documents/doklady/view/240948220/

33	Public Opinion Fond. Practices and meanings of visiting cemeteries: Results of the public opinion poll	Фонд Общественное мнение. Практики и смыслы посещения кладбищ: результаты опроса	2014	https://fom.ru/TSennosti/11810
34	Annual public opinion polls about the Moscow funeral industry, ordered by the Department of Trade and Services	Социологические отчёты по мониторингу общественного мнения о системе ритуального обслуживания в Москве	2014-2019	https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/3519/Ritual.pdf (2014) https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/1676/ritual.pdf (2015) https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/3643/Ritual(2).pdf (2016) https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/3128/Smi17.pdf (2017) https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/1676/Rityal2018.pdf (2018) https://www.mos.ru/upload/documents/files/7868/Rityal2019.pdf (2019)
35	Heritage Protection Order for Vvedenskoe Cemetery	Приказ N 508 "Об утверждении охранного обязательства собственника или иного законного владельца объекта культурного наследия регионального значения (ансамбля) 'Комплекс иновечерского кладбища на Введенских горах, XIX - начало XX вв.'"	2019	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/554839732
36	Moscow Government Act for Establishing a Jewish Cemetery	Постановление N 1088-ПП "О строительстве вероисповедального (иудейского) кладбища с ритуальным комплексом по Боровскому шоссе, проектируемый проезд 634"	2002	https://docs.cntd.ru/document/3642216

37	Statement of the Russian Orthodox Church on Christian burials and cremation	Русская Православная Церковь. О христианском погребении усопших	2015	http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/4067729.html
38	Erofeev, K. (2012). Confessional cemeteries]. Prikhod, 3 (105).	Ерофеев, К. Вероисповедальные кладбища. "Приход". 3 (105), 2012	2012	http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/2259343.html

Paper I

Pavel Grabalov and Helena Nordh

“Philosophical park”: Cemeteries in the Scandinavian urban context

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“Philosophical Park”: Cemeteries in the Scandinavian Urban Context

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ABSTRACT Cemeteries in densifying cities are undergoing a shift into spaces used both for the dead and by the living; this in turn calls for a more nuanced approach to planning. Using Oslo and Copenhagen as cases, this paper explores why both cities recently developed strategies for cemetery planning and management. In analyses of the written policy strategies and interviews with ten experts working with the cemeteries, we observe that both municipalities share many reasons, including a growing demand for green urban spaces, cemeteries’ recreational potential and increasing diversity of burial practices and memorial forms. The policymakers and practitioners in both cities recognise the spiritual or “philosophical” aspects of the cemeteries, which distinguish them from other green spaces and direct attention to a need for a specific management strategy. Our findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of cemeteries as a special type of green space and can hopefully inspire practitioners in other densifying cities.

KEYWORDS graveyards, densification, green space, planning, spirituality, Oslo, Copenhagen

A New Role for Urban Cemeteries?

Since 2007, a cemetery in the Norwegian city of Arendal has been serving as one of the scenes for a music festival. A stage, sound equipment and seats for the audience occupy a small spot in front of the chapel. Many people bring their own folding-chairs and sit on the paths between the graves, while they listen to live music. The cemetery is famous for its beautiful greenery, hilly landscape, and historical graves surrounded by low iron fences. We attended a concert there in July 2018, and the melancholic jazz music rippling through the dusk made it easy to feel how special the atmosphere of this place was (see Figure 1).

This paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of planning of cemeteries as a special type of green space in cities experiencing population growth and densification pressure. Pursuing sustainability agendas, some such cities have already started to highlight cemeteries in their planning processes. Our study qualitatively examines recent strategic documents for the cemeteries in two Scandinavian capital cities (Oslo in Norway and Copenhagen in Denmark) and aims to reveal the reasons for the development of these strategies. By “reasons” we mean a set of trends, processes and arguments which motivated the municipalities

to look closely at the cemeteries they manage and introduce the above-mentioned strategic documents. This paper belongs to the field of urban planning and builds on the relatively new concept of “municipal spirituality” developed by McClymont (2015), as described below.

Figure 1: The audience at the concert of Sigvart Dagsland as part of the Canal Street Music Festival. Arendal Cemetery, Norway. July 2018



Source: Mona Hauglid, Canal Street: <https://flic.kr/p/26JAh3C>. Distributed under CC BY-ND 2.0 license.

In the postsecular world, where the fundamental relationship between people and spirituality is shifting (Herman et al. 2012), practices of memorialisation are increasingly personalised (Holloway et al. 2018) and contested (Woodthorpe 2010). Cemeteries as embodiments of such processes should also change. Indeed, we witness that the role of cemeteries is being redefined in many cities around the globe (see, for example, Cloke and Jones 2004; Kong 2012; Deering 2016; Sloane 2018; Paraskevopoulou 2019). This change is not always restricted to the primary function of a cemetery, which we understand as being a burial ground with space for memorialisation. The above-mentioned concert in Arendal illustrates one of many secondary cemetery functions.

Looking at the British urban context, McClymont (2014) describes cemeteries as planning’s “skeleton in the closet”, meaning that planners have no proper guidance for dealing with these places. According to her, planning currently plays no active role in guiding cemeteries’ development and maintenance nor has an inclusive vocabulary for articulating the specific non-instrumental values which differentiate cemeteries from other green urban spaces (McClymont 2015). To deal with this challenge she introduces

the concept of "municipal spirituality" which "describes (an aspect of) a place which allows access to the transcendental and promotes the common good" (ibid: 542). Transcendental, or spiritual, aspects are difficult issues to deal with in design and planning practices (van den Bosch 2019). However, we can only agree with Sandercock (2006) who emphasises the necessity "to recognize that spirituality may be embodied in planning work, whether we care to name it or not" (66). Furthermore, spirituality is receiving increasing attention as a factor relevant for effective public health practices (Oman 2018). We believe that spiritual values cannot be neglected in cemetery planning and are interested to see how they are addressed in new cemetery strategies.

This paper also draws on findings from Norwegian researchers who previously studied planning documents to identify what qualities the municipalities of Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm (Sweden) ascribe to their cemeteries (Nordh and Evensen 2018). They found that cemeteries are mostly described as an integral part of public green infrastructure but treated as private green spaces in the planning context. In this paper we move to lower levels of planning documents and assess cemetery-specific strategies and regulations in Oslo and Copenhagen. The reason for choosing these two as case studies is that both cities have recently created and adopted strategic documents for the development and management of existing cemeteries (Copenhagen Municipality 2015; Oslo Municipality 2017). These documents are referred to here simply as "strategies". The municipalities of Oslo and Copenhagen manage their cemeteries internally, in contrast to other cities where cemeteries are run by businesses, NGOs or religious organisations. This similarity between the cities allows for these strategies to be analysed together.

There are additional reasons why these Scandinavian cities make interesting case studies. Firstly, Scandinavian cities have taken the lead in incorporating the concepts of sustainability, liveability and innovation into their planning and governance practices (Næss et al. 2019). It is therefore interesting to investigate where cemeteries are positioned in these new urban paradigms. Secondly, this part of Europe is considered to be one of the most secular regions in the world (see Kjaersgaard [2017] for a debate); this secularism might provide new development opportunities for cemeteries which have historically been governed by national churches. Thirdly, Scandinavia is notable for its high rates of cremation (Sørensen 2009; Kjølner 2012), which is a less space-intensive practice than the use of coffin graves. In both Norway and Denmark there is also a practice of reuse of grave space. Both these aspects affect the way cemeteries are developed. Finally, the presence of activities not connected to burial and memorialisation practices seems to be common in Scandinavian cemeteries (see, for example, Wingren 2013; Evensen et al. 2017; Nordh et al. 2017; Grabalov 2018).

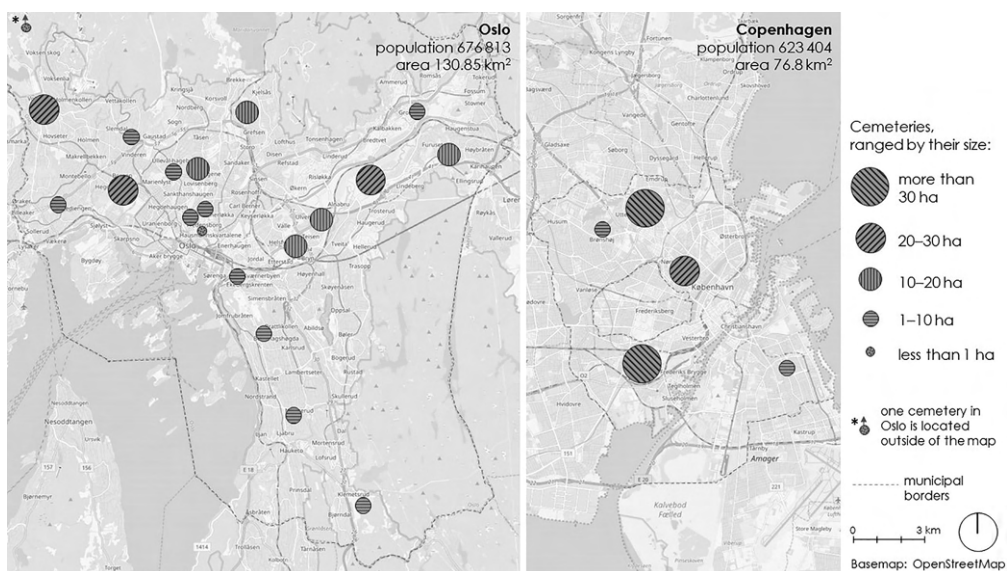
In this article we begin by describing the current legal and administrative context of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen. We then outline our research methods and present our findings, before providing discussion and concluding remarks.

The Scandinavian Context: *Proper* Cemeteries

In both Oslo and Copenhagen cemeteries comprise a significant percentage of the total green space: 7% (186 ha) in Oslo (Nordh and Evensen 2018; Oslo Municipality 2019a) and 6%

(130 ha) in Copenhagen (Nordh and Evensen 2018). Many of the old spacious nineteenth-century cemeteries originally located on the outskirts of the city have found themselves, as the cities have expanded, situated within densely built environments. Twenty cemeteries are operated by the Oslo Municipality, while only five by the Copenhagen Municipality. The Oslo Municipality manages a substantial number of small cemeteries in comparison to Copenhagen (see Figure 2). A further three cemeteries in Copenhagen are owned and administrated by the Church of Denmark and are not included in the scope of this paper. Currently, both cities do not plan to establish any new cemeteries as they have enough space in the existing ones. The systems of management of cemeteries differ in the two cities and the following sections aim to present the local contexts of the cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen separately.

Figure 2: The cemeteries operated by the municipalities in Oslo and Copenhagen



Sources: Copenhagen municipality (2015), Oslo municipality (2017), StatBank Denmark (2020), Statistics Norway (2020)

Oslo: Outcomes of Functionalism

The 20 cemeteries in Oslo differ in size, position in the urban fabric, and layout. Describing the history of Norwegian cemetery design in the twentieth century, Dietze-Schirdewahn and Lunde (2019) demonstrate how it changed dramatically under the influence of functionalism in the middle of the century. They note that cemeteries at this time adopted a more organised layout, with plenty of open, grassy landscaping, modest gravestones decorated with flowers, and without fences around each individual grave. According to Dietze-Schirdewahn and Lunde (2019), these changes formed the basis for the contemporary multifunctionality of many Norwegian cemeteries.

Along with traditional coffin graves, Oslo cemeteries also offer large areas for cremated remains: individual and shared ashes burials, including anonymous memorials (see Figure 3). The cremation rate in the city is 75%, much higher than the national rate of 43% (Norsk forening for gravplasskultur et al. 2019). As outlined by Hadders (2013), potential explanations for the differences in cremation rates around Norway might be a lack of access to crematoria, additional costs of cremation comparing to coffin burial, lack of cemetery space designated for interment of ashes, and Christian traditions of funerary practice. Regulations prescribe ashes to be disposed of in the ground; other types of disposal, including columbaria, are not permitted. At the request of a relative and with a documented wish from the deceased, a regional government can grant an exception from this rule and give permission to scatter ashes (Høeg 2019). According to the laws, a grave is protected for 20 years after the burial. After this period, protection can be renewed for a fee or a cemetery administration may reuse a grave for another burial.

Figure 3: Anonymous memorial in Østre Cemetery in Oslo. The sign says: “The memory grove [literal translation of the Norwegian word ‘minnelund’, anonymous memorial] is a burial ground where individual graves do not have inscriptions. Capture a memory, feel grief – for each of us sorrow has a different name”. September 2019



Source: Pavel Grabalov

In Oslo, the Community Church Council (*Kirkelig fellesråd*; part of the Lutheran Church of Norway) holds legal responsibility for cemeteries, but it is a specialised Cemeteries and Burials Agency (*Gravferdsetaten*) within the Municipality which undertakes their management and maintenance. Such an arrangement is unusual in the Norwegian context, where in most municipalities the church councils are in charge of all aspects of cemetery management (Hadders 2013) even though the cemeteries are open to all citizens, regardless of their beliefs. However, the arrangement is common in other Scandinavian capitals (Nordh and Evensen 2018). Oslo's Cemeteries and Burials Agency falls under the Department of Culture and Sport (*Byråd for kultur, idrett og frivillighet*). Such a structure mirrored the national level, where cemeteries as well as religious organisations were concerns of the Ministry of Culture (*Kulturdepartementet*) until 2019 and are now the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs (*Barne- og familiedepartementet*).

Norwegian acts and regulations (a list of these can be found at the end of the bibliography below) require cemeteries to be held in a “proper” manner. Without explicit definition, “proper” (*sømmelig* in Norwegian) is one of the central concepts of cemetery laws. It applies to the general management of cemeteries, maintenance work, care of individual graves by grave owners, the design of gravestones and visitors' behaviour. For example, it requires owners to walk dogs on a short leash and prohibits such activities as playing, skiing, sledging, jogging, cycling, horse-riding and sunbathing. As pointed out by Skår et al. (2018), cemetery regulations in Oslo do not promote the recreational potential of cemeteries as public green spaces. However, previous research demonstrates that many of these recreational activities, and especially jogging and cycling, are an integral part of everyday life in at least two Oslo cemeteries (Evensen et al. 2017). The laws prescribe that cemeteries should be fenced and gated; driving through them is discouraged.

In December 2017 the Oslo City Council adopted the “Future Cemeteries – Great Green Urban Space” (*Fremtidens gravplass – Gode, grønne byrom*) strategy (Oslo Municipality 2017). It was developed by the staff of the Cemeteries and Burials Agency and the Department of Culture and Sport in cooperation with other municipal agencies. As a supplement to this document, the authors included references to three research papers devoted to two cemeteries in Oslo (Evensen et al. 2017; Nordh et al. 2017; Swensen et al. 2016). The strategy describes the current situation of the cemeteries in Oslo, highlights their role as urban spaces and their contribution to local climate and environmental objectives, and proposes directions for future development.

Copenhagen: The City of Cremation

Similar to the context in Norway, Danish acts and regulations (a list of these can be found at the end of the bibliography) also emphasise the importance of running a cemetery in a “proper” (*sømmelig* in Danish as well) and respectful manner, and provide a legal framework for doing so. Unlike Oslo, Copenhagen does not have a specialised cemetery agency; management of Copenhagen cemeteries is part of the wider City Operations Bureau (*Byens drift*) which belongs to the Technical and Environmental Administration (*Teknik- og miljøforvaltningen*) of the Copenhagen Municipality. In practice this means that,

in management and maintenance, cemeteries are merged with other public spaces, including streets and parks.

The laws require grave owners (for example, the relative of a deceased) to maintain their graves in a "proper" condition; failure to do so gives the cemetery administration the right to take over the grave. The documents explain that a grave maintained in a "proper" condition should be clean, free from weeds and covered with trimmed grass or gravel. Hedges around a grave – one of the most distinct features of Danish cemeteries – should be trimmed regularly as well. Like those in Oslo, the cemeteries in Copenhagen also have vast areas set aside for interment of ashes. This is especially important as the cremation rate in the city is very high – 94% (an employee of the Copenhagen Municipality, personal communication, February 21, 2019) – even compared to the Danish national figure of 84% (Danske krematoriers landsforening 2019). Similar to the Norwegian legislation, Danish regulations prescribe ashes to be interred in a cemetery, although an exception is offered for ashes scattered at sea.

A cemetery in general should also be kept "properly": for example, public roads and pedestrian paths cannot be built to cross a cemetery; a cemetery should be fenced; and the aesthetic values of a cemetery and its relationship with the church and surroundings should be preserved. Copenhagen cemeteries have information boards prescribing rules for visitors' behaviour (see an example in Figure 4): unauthorised persons are not allowed to move in the burial grounds, play and ball games should take place in a location other than the cemetery, and visitors should take into consideration the bereaved.

Figure 4: Information point near the entrance to Vestre Cemetery (from left to right): "Welcome to the cemetery" sign with guidelines for visitors' behaviour, map of the cemetery, and leaflets. Copenhagen. May 2018



Source: Pavel Grabalov

According to the laws and regulations of Copenhagen’s cemeteries, a coffin grave is protected for a period of 20 years. For an urn burial this period is 10 years. After this time, a grave can be renewed for up to 40 years at a time upon payment. The local regulations also limit the timeframe for how long a grave at each Copenhagen cemetery can be renewed. This provides the opportunity for the Municipality to re-designate cemetery space for other uses after a set period; for example, the Municipality plans to turn the old part of Sundby Cemetery into a park in 2020.

Copenhagen cemeteries got their strategic document “Five Cemeteries Towards 2065” (*Fem kirkegårde mod 2065*) in June 2015 (Copenhagen Municipality 2015). The strategy was prepared by a consulting company, which conducted an ethnographic study as a basis for their recommendations (Nielsen and Groes 2014). The strategy group also included employees of the City Operations Bureau of the Technical and Environmental Administration of the Copenhagen Municipality. The strategy consists of an introduction of the cemeteries’ current challenges and contradictions, a presentation of an overarching policy, and specific guidelines for each cemetery. This document also serves as a starting point for the individual development plans for each of the five municipal cemeteries. A contracted landscape architecture studio prepared these individual plans, and the last one, for Assistens Cemetery, was adopted by the Municipality in 2019.

Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative content analysis of the written strategy documents, supplemented by interviews with experts who work daily with cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen. We determined the sources of relevant data in a snowball sampling process which started with an interview with municipal employees in both cities. We asked practitioners to pinpoint the documents they use and the organisations they contact in their daily work. In total we identified two strategic documents and interviewed ten people, six in Oslo and four in Copenhagen, over the course of 2018 (see Figure 5 for a list of all data sources). Since we have chosen to focus this research on cemetery planning policies, we did not include individuals and organisations which were not referenced by the strategies or the interviewees (e.g. funeral companies).

Figure 5: Data sources in Oslo and Copenhagen

Type of Data	Oslo	Copenhagen
Documents	"Future Cemeteries – Great Green Urban Space" (Oslo Municipality 2017)	"Five Cemeteries Towards 2065" (Copenhagen Municipality 2015)
Interviews	The Cemeteries and Burials Agency: 2 interviewees	The City Operations Bureau: 3 interviewees
	The Department of Culture and Sport: 2 interviewees	Landscape Architect: 1 interviewee
	Landscape Architect: 1 interviewee	
	The Community Church Council: 1 interviewee	

The interviews took approximately one hour each and were conducted in English. We provided an interview guide to all participants (there was one participant who did not have time to read the guide before the interview). The guide helped us to consistently cover different aspects of the participants' work with cemeteries but at the same time left space for other topics to emerge from the conversation. It included themes such as participants' daily work and cooperation with other organisations, legal and strategic documents which guide their work, current challenges cemeteries face, and directions for the future.

First, we analysed the texts of the strategies and the interview transcripts separately but using the same method. Based on Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), we highlighted relevant fragments of the texts which could give us explanations for the development of the strategies. We grouped the highlighted fragments into categories of similar reasons. Each category was described, named and supplemented with illustrative quotes from either the strategies or the interviews.

Secondly, we merged our initial findings from the strategies and the interviews together. We looked for overarching categories which could connect the reasons revealed during the analysis. We included both the reasons mentioned only in the strategies or the interviews, and reasons mentioned in both sources of data at once.

For the presentation of our findings, we have translated the quotations from the written strategies into English from Norwegian and Danish. In addition, we have slightly edited the language of the interview quotations in order to improve coherence while preserving the original meaning. We have anonymised the interviewees by assigning each a number, which follows each direct quotation below.

Why do Oslo and Copenhagen Need New Cemetery Strategies?

We identified several explanations for the need for new strategies for the development of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen. Figure 6 gives an overview of the results of the analysis. Both cities share many of the same reasons, but they also have separate motivations. In the sections below we explore and discuss these reasons in detail and illustrate them by using quotes from the interviews and the strategies.

Figure 6: Reasons for the development of new cemetery strategies in Oslo and Copenhagen

Oslo	Copenhagen
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Densification and demand for green spaces • Existing recreational activities within the cemeteries • Need to safeguard the future of the cemeteries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of spiritual aspects • Diversity of burial practices and memorial forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality's focus on climate change adaptation and mitigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surplus of burial space • Administrative challenges

Densification and Demand for Green Spaces

In both cities, policymakers and practitioners view cemeteries as resources to provide access to green space for citizens. The strategic documents and interviewees referenced population

growth, densification and greater demand for green areas as well-understood reasons to use cemeteries in new ways: “[i]n a densifying city, the land must be used smarter and more efficiently; in this process the cemeteries will increase their role as green elements of the city” (Oslo Municipality 2017: 2). A representative of the Community Church Council from Oslo explained that the decrease in the amount of green spaces in the city has led to more active use of cemeteries for recreational activities. The representatives of the Department of Culture and Sport in Oslo also emphasised the pressure on green areas, including cemeteries, in times of densification of the city. According to them, the new cemetery strategy has helped to raise awareness about the role of cemeteries among other departments of the Oslo Municipality participating in the development of the strategy.

Existing Recreational Activities within the Cemeteries

The authors of Copenhagen’s strategy note that despite a lack of intentional planning for it, recreational use of cemeteries has increased in recent years. In Oslo, while recreation is visible (see Figure 7), it is not recognised in official planning and management documents. According to our interviewee from the Department of Culture and Sport, the Oslo Municipality wants to understand “how we, as a city, can develop them [cemeteries] so that they’re more in line with what people actually use them for” (Interviewee 3).

Figure 7: A visitor walking dogs in Vår Frelsers Cemetery in Oslo. May 2018



Source: Pavel Grabalov

Making cemeteries more accommodating for recreational purposes will potentially bring more people to these places, which can be positive in terms of safety. Some of our interviewees touched upon this issue, while the strategic documents only briefly recognise it. As a representative of the Oslo Department of Culture and Sport noted:

We know that from other areas of urban planning that more people is one factor that makes places more secure and safer. So having more people there actually also makes these areas safer places in the city which is definitely only a good thing (Interviewee 3).

Need to Safeguard the Future of the Cemeteries

According to the authors of Copenhagen's strategy, the document should serve as an instrument to safeguard and renovate the cemetery space in the city. At the same time, several interviewees from Copenhagen noted that the current strategy does not involve a separate budget. Each new project instead follows a standard budget process, which might lead to partial or slow realisation of the strategy.

In the case of Oslo, the strategy does not explicitly acknowledge secure future of cemeteries as one of its aims. However, a couple of interviewees mentioned it, such as a Norwegian landscape architect who said:

I like if people feel connected to the cemetery. They also will fight for it as cemeteries are under pressure all the time because they want to build closer to them or even sometimes take parts of them to other things. And I think if people like or feel connected to the cemetery they would help to fight to keep it like that (Interviewee 5).

To find resources to safeguard the future of the cemeteries was also important:

It's easier if you can argue that cemeteries also are parks, they are recreational areas, they have values for everybody in the society, not only for those who have family buried here. It's just easier to keep them in the way we want them (Interviewee 5).

However, compared to British cemeteries, which need to attract audience and accommodate new activities in pursuit of financial survival (Paraskevopoulou 2019), Oslo's and Copenhagen's strategies as well as the statements of our interviewees, do not include financial concern as a reason for their development. This may be due to the fact that the municipalities have a stronger role in managing cemeteries in the Scandinavian cities than in Britain.

Presence of Spiritual Aspects

In both Copenhagen and Oslo, we found that the strategies and interviewees presented cemeteries as a special type of green space with its own unique qualities and meanings, defined by the presence of the dead. This distinctive character of cemeteries is a reason to develop specific strategies, different from those for other green public spaces. According to one municipal employee from Copenhagen, the cemeteries provide special benefits as quiet spaces imbued with memories and history. This interviewee used the expression

“philosophical park” (Interviewee 7) to conceptualise the unique character of urban cemeteries.

Such a conceptualisation resonates with an explanation of why people should come to the cemetery, given by the representative of the Oslo Department of Culture and Sport:

Being more aware that there is death connects people more to life. That might not be a political project, but more a philosophical one. I think on an overall societal level that death is very isolated from modern life. Very much. You don't have your parents in your home on their last day anymore, they are in retirement houses or in hospitals. I also think that people need to be more connected to death as such because it's a part of life (Interviewee 3).

The importance of this death-related aspect of the cemeteries, whether it is “philosophical”, spiritual or transcendental, as a reason to develop cemetery-specific strategies, was more evident in the interviews than in the documents.

For example, the landscape architect from Norway reflected on how attitudes towards spiritual aspects vary across time and among different people:

I think maybe the relationship to death is changing, I don't know. Because I think lots of people like the quietness you can find in the cemeteries and they don't feel uncomfortable walking around, looking at tombstones, reading names, real stories of people who lived before but now are dead and it isn't painful. It's kind of a green beautiful park in the city, but even something more because it has another meaning (Interviewee 5).

For an interviewee from the Copenhagen Municipality the development of the strategy also reflects a change in the public view of cemeteries:

Especially in the [19]60–70's, a cemetery has been something that was hidden behind walls. And I think the walls were very much a symbol of the old way of thinking of cemeteries as something you visit only if you visit a grave. So, the policy moves to open up a cemetery and to use it for [different activities]. Not that you should allow all kinds of playing soccer and stuff in the cemetery but it's to say the cemetery can be something special in the city. And people should use that (Interviewee 8).

The authors of Copenhagen's strategy express the same sentiment when they write that the cemeteries have important common values, including cultural, historical and natural ones, and should be open to everyone.

Diversity of Burial Practices and Memorial Forms

In both cities, the cemetery strategies call for greater diversity in terms of the burial practices and memorial forms to be supported. They aim to promote diversity on different levels. Examples of new burial and memorial practices which Oslo's strategy proposes include woodland burials, columbaria and pre-defined places for ash scattering. Both cities intend to promote less space-consuming practices: cremation in the case of Oslo and woodland burials in Copenhagen. Burial and memorial practices are constantly evolving, so Copenhagen's strategy prescribes the development plans for each of the five municipal

cemeteries to be flexible and open. This is especially important considering the long, fifty-year time frame of Copenhagen's strategy.

Oslo's strategy was also motivated by another type of diversity: Oslo is a city open to all religious beliefs and non-beliefs. According to the authors of the strategy, the cemeteries should accommodate the diverse religious and spiritual needs of all citizens. Although Oslo and Copenhagen are primarily Protestant Christian cities, both have diverse populations. Therefore, many religious groups have their own sections in municipal cemeteries (e.g. Catholics, Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians). The representative from the Oslo Department of Culture and Sport confirmed that the religious aspect is important for the future development of the cemeteries because of the great number of belief systems in the city. However, the strategic document itself includes only general phrases about religious diversity without providing concrete solutions. The representative of the Community Church Council of Oslo thinks that a clear weak point in the strategy is that religious groups were not consulted during its development. Without immersing ourselves in the discussion about similarities and differences between religion and spirituality (see, for example, Oman 2018), we should acknowledge that working closely with religious groups is one way of dealing with spirituality in planning. Here it seems there is a lot of work to do in both cities.

Surplus of Burial Space

According to Copenhagen's strategy, the cemeteries there face specific challenges due to a surplus of burial space. Two factors explain such a surplus. First, the rate of cremation has increased, which correlates with less space-consuming burial practices. Compared to coffin graves, for example, shared areas for the interment of ashes require less space. Second, as mentioned earlier, after 20 years it becomes a grave-owner's responsibility to renew and pay for a grave, which not all people choose to do. The strategy notes that unused burial space leads to degradation of traditional cemetery qualities. The authors of the strategy explained that it is "unfavourable for the cemeteries" since "when areas lose structure and identity, it discourages customers to choose such areas for burial because they are characterised by openness and lack of identity. The room for grief no longer exists" (Copenhagen Municipality 2015: 6).

The use of this extra space for other purposes, including recreation, is not programmed. Hence policymakers need to look for new ways of using extra cemetery space or even, as in the case of the old part of Sundby cemetery, to transform it into a park completely. The surplus of space is unique for Copenhagen and our interviewees from Oslo do not acknowledge facing such a problem in the city now.

Administrative Challenges

Copenhagen's strategy aimed to address the Municipality's internal administrative challenges. As mentioned by one of the interviewees, the city needed the strategy after a change of managers and the dispersal of cemetery responsibilities across different municipal agencies. The development of Copenhagen's strategy was also in line with the innovation

agenda of the Technical and Environmental Administration of Copenhagen, inspired by the ideas of liveability and provision of services for citizens (Munthe-Kaas 2015). Innovation is part of the Oslo Municipality's agenda as well, and one interviewee mentioned that it helped inspire the strategy. According to the strategy, the Oslo Municipality wants the Cemeteries and Burials Agency to be more innovative in introducing new burial forms and environmentally-friendly solutions.

After its approval, Oslo's strategy was discussed in a national newspaper as a part of the political agenda of the city's left-green government (Sørgjerd 2018), which begs the question of to what degree politics influenced the development of the strategy. The representative of the Department of Culture and Sport noted that while cemeteries had not been on the political radar in Oslo for a long time, they are a "very important area to develop on the political level because everyone has a relation to the cemeteries" and they are a "large part of the city" (Interviewee 3). According to this interviewee, local politicians welcomed the strategy because they got "a chance to discuss the role of cemeteries and actually in what direction we should go" (Interviewee 3).

Contrary to this, the interviewee from the Cemeteries and Burials Agency explained the lack of political interest in the cemeteries in the past as follows: "if you are a politician, you can't win an election saying that we have made very nice graveyards" (Interviewee 1). To quantify these comments, we reviewed the political programmes prepared by ten parties which entered the city council after the recent municipal election in Oslo in September 2019 and found that cemeteries were not in their focus. Only two parties – the Christian Democratic Party (KrF 2019) and the Centre Party (Oslo Senterparti 2019) – briefly mentioned cemeteries, both aiming to safeguard land for them in the planning and development process. Other parties did not even touch upon this topic.

Focus of the Oslo Municipality on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Compared to Copenhagen, Oslo's strategy is more focused on the environmental aspect of the development of cemeteries and their contribution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Discussing the background of Oslo's strategy, one interviewee pointed to a local political focus on green and environmentally-friendly development – the so-called "green shift" (Hofstad and Torfing 2017). Oslo has ambitious goals in climate adaptation and mitigation and was the European Green Capital of 2019. Another interviewee from the Cemeteries and Burials Agency confirmed that the green and environmental focus of the current government of Oslo was important for the strategy's development because "we are mainstreaming environmental issues in all departments" and the first draft of the strategy was written with significant input from an employee of the Agency who was "very interested in green work" (Interviewee 2). In general such attention to the "green" role of cemeteries is in line with a long history of green infrastructure planning in Oslo (Jørgensen and Thorén 2012). The authors of the strategy think that cemeteries can support Oslo's green infrastructure because of their significance for recreation, biodiversity, local climate and flood prevention.

The landscape architect in Copenhagen also recognised cemeteries' potential for adaptation to climate change through storm water management. However, unlike Oslo, such

adaptation is not part of the municipal cemetery strategy. Indeed, a cemetery functioning as a green space can infiltrate a large amount of runoff through its permeable surfaces with vegetation and recharge ground water. In addition, the cemetery as a green space in an urban setting can provide room for nature-based solutions for water retention. Currently Copenhagen's cemetery strategy does not cover environmental issues. The landscape architect believed that if the Municipality were to write the strategy today, it would include a focus on climate change adaptation. This interviewee gave an example of a new storm water management project planned for Vestre cemetery, which was developed independently of the cemetery strategy written in 2014.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This paper has explored the various reasons behind the development of the cemetery strategies in Oslo and Copenhagen. We wanted to understand what motivated policymakers to infuse these strategic documents with new directions for the planning and management of cemeteries. In these concluding remarks we outline our key findings and discuss some similarities and differences between the two cities, as well as the limitations of our study and possible directions for future research.

In both cities, the municipal authorities are in charge of management and maintenance of the cemeteries but distribute such duties differently. While Oslo concentrates cemetery responsibilities in a specialised agency, in Copenhagen the same responsibilities are spread across different divisions and merged with maintenance of other public spaces. This might explain the more inclusive approach to the cemeteries by Copenhagen municipality, which actively promotes their recreational potential as "green oases" (Nordh and Evensen 2018).

Looking at cemetery rules and regulations, we have seen that both cities use the word "proper" to define the required maintenance of the cemeteries in general and individual graves, as well as visitors' behaviour. Lacking a precise description, this concept relies upon national culture and values, many of which are shared across Scandinavian countries. Being such a fluid concept, the idea of "proper" is likely to change over time and to be understood differently by various actors, thus leaving space for interpretation. Contrary to Deering (2016), who discussed conflicts over notions of a cemetery's primary function and recreation in the British context, in this study we did not discover any significant disagreements. Both cities' strategies and the interviewees express appreciation for the peacefulness and tranquillity of cemeteries and seek to promote activities which suit the essence of the space as a "philosophical park". As Skår et al. (2018) demonstrated in the case of Oslo, a similar idea is also shared by cemetery users.

We found that Oslo and Copenhagen have in common many reasons for the development of their cemetery strategies. In both cities densification and a growing demand for green spaces provide a basis for the new strategic visions for cemeteries. Furthermore, Oslo and Copenhagen both recognise the recreational potential of their cemeteries as well as the variety of activities already taking place there. In Copenhagen, a surplus of cemetery space contributed to the development of the strategy to maintain quality and secure the future of cemeteries. Long-term safeguarding of cemeteries is also noted in Oslo. Both

municipalities are interested in increasing diversity in terms of supporting different forms of burial and memorialisation and accommodating religious or spiritual needs.

We noticed that the policymakers and practitioners in both cities recognise the spiritual or “philosophical” aspects of cemeteries. Compared to other types of green spaces, such aspects define the character of the cemeteries and call attention to their need for a specific strategy. We believe that this shared recognition of the spiritual aspects of cemeteries fits the concept of “municipal spirituality” established by McClymont (2015), which “offers an inclusive language of public sacredness, rather than rejecting religion as a privatised, under-theorised epiphenomenon of identity” (542). The idea of the cemetery as a sanctuary is not a novelty and can be traced back to nineteenth century park cemeteries in Britain and rural cemeteries in the USA (Sloane 2018), but it has a new representation in contemporary Scandinavia.

Our findings demonstrate that the interviewees in both Oslo and Copenhagen reflected significantly on the spiritual aspects of the municipal cemeteries, but that the strategies themselves do not pay enough attention to this topic. We also noticed that the Copenhagen Municipality demonstrates more cohesive results in this direction. Spirituality, including its impact on public health (Oman 2018), is an important issue in planning, but is often neglected for a variety of reasons (Sandercock 2006). As we know from previous research, some of Oslo’s cemeteries are perceived as restorative environments (Nordh et al. 2017) and their spiritual qualities is one of the factors which affects such a perception. Thus, working with the spirituality of urban cemeteries might positively contribute to the municipality’s efforts to promote public health across different sectors. According to van den Bosch (2019), landscape architecture as a field has been successful in incorporating spiritual values and may provide powerful insights into how to embody spirituality in cemeteries’ development and management in practice.

Looking at postsecularism as a positive agenda, Herman et al. (2012) note that it recognises “values, ethics and spirituality, in a broad sense, as potentially useful building blocks in the creation of a city” (61). By acknowledging the embodied spirituality of the cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen, the strategies for their development contribute to bringing such values forward in overall city planning discourses. Memorial forms and memorialisation practices are important areas through which spirituality is materialised. Holloway et al. (2018) demonstrate the lack of scholarly knowledge on the role and function of spirituality in contemporary memorialisation. The strategies which we studied seek to satisfy the changing demands of citizens by introducing new burial forms and promoting greater diversity among them. However, they do not provide policies for systematic work with the spiritual values of cemeteries.

Despite a scholarly discussion about the possible negative environmental impact of cemeteries and funeral practices due to body decomposition (Fiedler et al. 2012) and cremation (Mari and Domingo 2010), we did not encounter any mentions of this from the interviewees or in the texts of the strategies. We could identify only the positive perception of cemeteries as green urban spaces, especially in Oslo.

Along with many similar reasons for the development of the strategies in the two cities, we found a few differences. Oslo’s strategy focuses on strengthening the environmental

potential of the cemeteries, while the Copenhagen Municipality concentrates more on social aspects. The environmental focus of Oslo's policy is influenced by the more general "green shift" of Oslo towards becoming a sustainable and environmentally-friendly city (Hofstad and Torfing 2017). Although Copenhagen also has ambitious environmental targets, the development of its cemetery strategy was more in line with the Municipality's emphasis on innovation, liveability and provision of services for citizens (Munthe-Kaas 2015).

Both cities adopted their strategies quite recently, and thus it is too early to analyse their full implications. However, we have made some observations which support our findings. During the programme of the European Green Capital in 2019, the Oslo Municipality chose a cemetery gardener as an "ambassador". He shared his experience of the "green shift" in cemetery management, including the use of electric machines (Oslo Municipality 2019b). In Copenhagen we noticed how the Municipality has facilitated recreational activities at the cemeteries, including provision of extra toilets, trash cans and information signs to accommodate visitors who came to see cherry trees blossom in Bispebjerg cemetery (see Figure 8). Nevertheless, how the strategy might shape the future of the cemeteries requires additional study.

Figure 8: Cherry trees blossom in Bispebjerg Cemetery, Copenhagen. April 2018



Source: Helena Nordh

A further difference was that while Copenhagen's strategy deals with the internal administrative challenges of scattering cemetery responsibilities across municipal departments, Oslo's strategy is more integrated into the politics of the city. In our analysis

we saw that Oslo's strategy significantly reflects the Municipality's "green" focus, which the left-green city government of 2014–2019 inherited from their forerunners and strengthened substantially. However, the interviewees expressed ambivalence regarding the importance of the cemeteries themselves in municipal politics. Do they only help to illustrate the general "green" goals of the local politicians, or do they have their own important place on the agenda, separate from other green spaces? Our limited findings in this direction do not allow us to answer this question with certainty, but we can suggest that so far cemeteries attract quite limited political interest.

One of the potential topics for discussion around cemeteries is collaboration between the Municipality of Oslo, which manages the cemeteries, and the Church of Norway, which is responsible for the cemeteries by law. Rather than providing new directions for such collaboration, the strategy ignored this question. In broader terms, the Scandinavian cemeteries can give useful insights into debates on the relationship between the public (municipal) and the private (religious or spiritual) in contemporary cities – a topic we aim to cover in future publications.

We narrowed our analysis to the cemeteries of only two Scandinavian capital cities; thus, we cannot claim that our findings are general enough to apply to other cemeteries in Scandinavia, let alone other parts of the world. At the same time, the results of our analysis contribute to a more nuanced understanding of cemeteries as a special type of green space, which might be relevant for planning in other densifying cities with strong sustainability agendas. Other cities might learn from the experiences of Oslo and Copenhagen how to address the complexity of urban cemeteries in strategic planning, including how to consider the spiritual aspects. Looking ahead, we would like to explore what kind of future policymakers and practitioners envision for Scandinavian urban cemeteries.

The concert in Arendal cemetery ended when it started to get dark. The festival staff began dismantling the stage and taking away the seats. In the main alley, lamps were lit. The audience walked out of the concert area in a variety of directions and along different paths. Some decided to visit the graves of their relatives or friends on the way home. We overheard many discussing how special it was to be in the cemetery in the dark for the first time. Such cemetery events vividly demonstrate how versatile urban cemeteries can be.

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Paper II

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The future of urban cemeteries as public spaces: Insights from Oslo and Copenhagen

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The Future of Urban Cemeteries as Public Spaces: Insights from Oslo and Copenhagen

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ABSTRACT

Public spaces are believed to make cities more liveable, healthy and socially equal. To date, discussions about public spaces have primarily revolved around emblematic types, such as squares and parks, while little attention has been paid to cemeteries. Drawing on a review of public space scholarship and cemetery research, an analysis of strategies for cemetery development in two Scandinavian capitals, Oslo and Copenhagen, and interviews with stakeholders, this paper elaborates on the cemetery as a special type of public space. Our findings demonstrate the potential of cemeteries' contribution to the urban environment as multifunctional public spaces – the trajectory envisioned by the two municipalities.

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Introduction

Inclusive, accessible and green public spaces are a key focus of the UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda, which emphasises these spaces' critical role "in the formation and regeneration of healthy, prosperous and equitable cities" (Mehaffy et al., 2019, p. 134). The concept of public space is of central interest to urban studies (Mitchell, 2017). In this growing body of literature, researchers have examined different types of space, such as squares (Whyte, 1980), parks (Neal et al., 2015), and markets (Watson, 2009). However, little has been done to explore cemeteries as public spaces.

In Copenhagen (Denmark) and Oslo (Norway), the two Scandinavian cities in this study, cemeteries fulfil two basic principles of public space (Zukin, 1995): open access and public stewardship. Furthermore, they are well-maintained park-like environments (Skår et al., 2018) aimed at covering all citizens' burial and cremation needs (Cabinet of Denmark, 2020; Norwegian government, 1996). We see a need for a discussion about Scandinavian urban cemeteries as one special type of public space which helps to unpack the "nature of public space, its meanings and functions, and especially its transformations in the contemporary cities" (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008, p. xix). To push such debates forward, we examined how Scandinavian cemeteries are described by practitioners involved in cemetery development and what future is imagined for cemeteries, as portrayed in strategic policy documents for Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemetery development. We aim to contribute to theories on public space and deepen the understanding of the cemetery's role in contemporary Scandinavian cities and planning agendas.

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Public spaces are neither permanently fixed nor defined and thus need to be examined from temporal perspectives. Cemeteries are especially interesting places to study over time, as they point towards eternity. Swensen and Brendalmo (2018) discovered that Norwegian cemeteries have been in an in-between area of the private–public realms for centuries. Drawing on these findings, we focused on exploring the future of cemeteries in two Scandinavian cities, Oslo and Copenhagen. Such an analysis of cemeteries' transformation pathways will allow us to capture the essential characteristics of cemeteries as public spaces, which is difficult just by looking at their current status.

The use, experience and development of cemeteries strongly depend on contextual aspects (Nordh et al., 2021; Quinton et al., 2020; Rae, 2021), such as the physical settings, culture and national institutions as well as global processes (Walter, 2020). Davies and Bennett (2016) examined cemetery trends in Australia and argued that, due to lower visitation rates and changing burial practices, the social relevance of cemeteries was being challenged. Sloane (2018) explored challenges posed for the future of cemeteries by significant cultural shifts in the USA, such as secularisation, the critique of the death industry's professionalisation, the rise of environmentalism, and the growing popularity of public and digital mourning. But what do we know about current cemetery trends in Scandinavia, the region where this study is situated?

Previous research from Scandinavia has shown that the primary function of cemeteries – as a burial ground and place for memorialisation – often interplays with other functions (Skår et al., 2018; Wingren, 2013). Some urban cemeteries in Oslo are found to accommodate recreational activities, including walking, jogging, dog walking and picnicking (Evensen et al., 2017). In a study of two Norwegian cemeteries, Skår et al. (2018), inspired by Henri Lefebvre's ideas, noted that “one can see the varied use of this cemetery as ‘the right to the city’, a struggle to ‘de-alienate’ urban space through the appropriation of space” (p. 377). Unlike the studies above, which focus on people's use and perception, we take a bird's-eye view of the cemetery's role in contemporary cities and explore Oslo's and Copenhagen's municipal perspectives on cemeteries and cemetery futures.

In another study from Scandinavia, Kjølner (2012) showed the administrative ambiguity of Danish cemeteries, recognised as part of green infrastructure but managed by the Church in Denmark with little consideration of the objectives of green infrastructure management. Nordh and Evensen (2018) identified a similar ambiguity in the planning documents of Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm (Sweden). These municipalities categorise cemeteries as green infrastructure, but do not ascribe them the same qualities as other types of public green spaces. Our paper goes a step further, moving from city-level plans to considering cemetery-specific strategic policy documents that Oslo's and Copenhagen's municipalities produced recently (Copenhagen municipality, 2015; Oslo municipality, 2017), hereafter called *strategies*. Despite differences in their lengths and formats, both strategies demonstrate new thinking that enables interesting discussions regarding the role of urban cemeteries as public spaces. The similarities between Oslo's and Copenhagen's cultural and administrative contexts allowed us to contrast the documents, which would be difficult to do if they came from significantly different settings.

We organised this paper as follows: first, we outline our analytical framework built on public space scholarship and cemetery research; second, we summarise the cemetery contexts in Oslo and Copenhagen and the research methods employed; third, we present and discuss the findings by elaborating on the analytical framework's dimensions (liminal, spiritual, multicultural and multi-functional spaces). We continue with some suggestions regarding what kinds of public spaces the dimensions shape and how the dimensions could change. The paper concludes with a summary of our findings and ideas for implications for planning practice and future research avenues.

Analytical Framework

In this paper, while acknowledging the ongoing debate about the essence of the concept of public space (Qian, 2020), we demonstrate how the case of urban cemeteries challenges rigid interpretations of public space. If access is one of the key issues of being public (Madanipour, 2017), we question what kind of access. Staeheli and Mitchell (2008) recognised not only physical access but also issues connected to feelings of receptivity, hospitality and comfort as well as allowed and acceptable actions and activities. In this sense, public space is where the public *can* be (physical access) and *wants* to be (symbolic access). Access to public space is never absolute and varies across places and cultures, something Bodnar (2015) called “graduated publicness” (p. 2099). To situate cemeteries within the spectrum, we developed an analytical framework consisting of four dimensions – *liminal*, *spiritual*, *multicultural* and *multifunctional* – which this section elaborates on.

Type-classifying public spaces is a powerful analytical tool that demonstrates the magnitude of such spaces’ roles in cities (Franck & Huang, 2020). While cemeteries are sometimes mentioned as examples of public spaces, position of cemeteries in such typologies is inconsistent. Carmona (2010), in his comprehensive classification of public spaces, places cemeteries in a category of public open space with parks, gardens, commons and urban forests. For Chiodelli and Moroni (2014), cemeteries, schools and hospitals are special public spaces designated for particular functions. In these typologies, cemeteries seem to be between different categories, being *liminal* spaces, the first dimension of our analytical framework.

The concept of liminality describes border crossings: spaces where different worlds interweave (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). Depending on the object of study, liminality can be operationalised in various ways (see, e.g. Zukin, 1991). The concept has been used in cemetery research by Deering (2012) and Francis et al. (2005), who pointed out that cemeteries combine a real, locatable place with a metaphorical place of pure emotions and senses. Maddrell (2016) has discussed the cemetery as a place that connects the bereaved and the deceased. Liminality also relates to planning documents’ ambiguity regarding treating cemeteries as part of the green infrastructure (Nordh & Evensen, 2018). Cemeteries’ liminality lies not only in their spatial character but also in their ability to accommodate complex meanings, different from other urban spaces. Such liminality situates cemeteries between clear positions and static forms, both in public space discourse and in people’s everyday lives. The liminal dimension can be discovered in the tensions between various sets of meanings played out in cemeteries.

The second dimension of our framework is *spiritual* space. The presence of death brings spirituality, which we understand as “the search for the sacred” (Pargament et al., 2013, p. 17), into a physical space. Avoiding immersing ourselves in a discussion about the relationship between spirituality and religion (Pargament et al., 2013), we consider religion an integral part of spirituality. Regardless of religious views, cemeteries bring thoughts of something bigger than we as humans and individuals are. Religion and spirituality are often rejected by urban planners as part of the private sphere, irrelevant to the secular nature of the profession and even something potentially divisive (Sandercock, 2006). However, religion and spirituality have important spatial implications (Greed, 2016) and can contribute to public health (Oman, 2018). Calling for more active incorporation of spiritual aspects into planning practice, McClymont (2015) proposed the concept of “municipal spirituality”, which pertains to public sacredness. The spiritual dimension is interrelated with the restorative aspects of spaces: spirituality can enable the perception of an environment as restorative (Bell et al., 2018), and restorative environments can lead to spiritual discoveries

(Ouellette et al., 2005). The cemetery as a restorative environment has been explored further by others (e.g. Lai et al., 2019; Nordh et al., 2017).

Young (2011) pointed out that public space allows encounters with people “whose social perspectives, experience, and affiliations are different” (p. 119). In diversifying Scandinavian societies, cemeteries are open for all, both in terms of physical access and as burial space, regardless of religion or culture. Thus, we can explore a cemetery as a *multicultural* space, the third dimension of our framework, which highlights the presence of different ethnic and religious groups in society and their right to positive inclusion (Cianetti, 2020).

Madanipour (2016) argued that public spaces can encourage diverse and tolerant public cultures but with some challenges. Researchers have already engaged with challenges around cemeteries in multicultural societies (see, e.g. Maddrell et al., 2018, 2021; McClymont, 2018; Wingren, 2013).¹ The right to religious expression is one of the key principles of socially just cemetery systems (Rugg, 2020), and is particularly relevant from a public space perspective. In the Norwegian context, Swensen and Skår (2019) discovered that cemeteries can stimulate intercultural contacts and bridge differences by sharing compassion.

We will now describe the last dimension, the cemetery as a *multifunctional* space. Public spaces are functionally programmed for particular types of activities and behaviours, but the range of activities differ. Hajer and Reijndorp (2001) argued that predefined monofunctionality of some spaces (for example, shopping malls) does not allow them to become genuinely public, even if they are publicly accessible. However, actual use can differ from planned functionality: for instance, shopping malls are experienced as public spaces by some groups (Vanderbeck & Johnson, 2000; Van Melik & Pijpers, 2017). Cemeteries can be considered monofunctional. They are created primarily as burial grounds and places for memorialisation but play many secondary functions (Evensen et al., 2017; Quinton & Duinker, 2019; Woodthorpe, 2011). Based on the British context, McClymont (2016) demonstrated that while cemetery functions may conflict, they usually coexist peacefully.

Woodthorpe (2011) described cemeteries as simultaneously containing different meanings and functions and called for holistic studies of such a complex phenomenon. In our analysis, we aim to follow this lead and explore our empirical material from Oslo and Copenhagen through the four dimensions described above.

Context and Methods

Both Oslo and Copenhagen acknowledge the value of public spaces and their contribution to public health, sustainability, liveability, integration and economic competitiveness (Carmona et al., 2019). Such attention to public spaces at the municipal level, together with recent cemetery-specific strategies, makes Oslo and Copenhagen rich cases for a discussion about cemeteries as a special type of public space.

Cemeteries occupy a substantial amount of Oslo’s and Copenhagen’s green space (for an overview of the cemetery context in both cities, see Table 1). Although the cemeteries were often established in the outskirts of the cities, due to urban expansion many of them are now situated in built-up areas. Because of high cremation rates and grave-reuse practices, Oslo’s and Copenhagen’s cemeteries (unlike many cities worldwide) do not lack space. Some cemeteries in Copenhagen even have a surplus of burial space (Grabalov & Nordh, 2020).

Both cities manage their cemeteries themselves, so municipalities play the leading role in determining and financing cemetery development. In Oslo, the Lutheran Christian Church of Norway, through the Community Church Council, owns the cemeteries’ land and has legal responsibility for

Table 1. Cemetery contexts in the municipalities of Oslo and Copenhagen (based on Grabalov & Nordh, 2020).

	Oslo	Copenhagen
Area	130.85 km ²	76.8 km ²
Population (2019)	676,813	623,404
Number of cemeteries managed by the municipality	20	5
Total land area (share of total green space)	186 ha (7%)	130 ha (6%)
Cremation rate (2019)	75%	94%
Reuse a grave after	20 years	20 years
Responsibility	The Community Church Council	The Copenhagen municipality
Management	Oslo municipality's Cemeteries and Burials Agency of the Department of Culture and Sport	Copenhagen municipality's City Operations Bureau of the Technical and Environmental Administration

cemeteries; however, due to a special arrangement, management and maintenance is carried out by the Cemeteries and Burials Agency of Oslo municipality (Skår et al., 2018). Among Norwegian municipalities, where the Church of Norway has traditionally been in charge of cemetery provision and management (Hadders, 2021), Oslo is one of the few exceptions (Van den Breemer, 2021). The responsibility for managing cemeteries in Copenhagen is dispersed among sections of the municipal City Operations Bureau, which also manages other public spaces. Besides the five cemeteries operated by the municipality, three burial grounds are owned and managed by the Lutheran Christian Church in Denmark and one by the Jewish community. However, since those cemeteries are not part of Copenhagen's cemetery strategy, we did not include them in the scope of our analysis.

The cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen accommodate both coffin burial and interment of ashes, which means that there is no difference between cemeteries and crematoria gardens, common in other parts of Europe (Nordh et al., 2021). National funeral legislation (Cabinet of Denmark, 2020; Norwegian government, 1996) requires that all human remains should be disposed in a cemetery, except for scattering of ashes in nature, which few have applied for (Høeg, 2019).

The cemeteries in both cities are park-like environments with natural components, such as grass, trees, flowers and sometimes water features. However, they have a unique character (see Figure 1). Oslo's cemeteries are characterised by open grassland with rows of uniform gravestones, whereas



Figure 1. Typical cemetery landscape: left – open grassland in Nordre cemetery in Oslo (June 2020), and right – graves surrounded by hedges in Bispebjerg cemetery in Copenhagen (April 2018). Source: Pavel Grabalov.

secluded areas with hedges around graves are typical of Copenhagen's cemeteries. Maintenance levels are generally high and prized by visitors (Kjøller, 2012; Nordh et al., 2017).

Recently, both cities have developed strategies for their cemeteries' planning and management. Copenhagen's strategy was adopted in 2015 and laid foundations for the city's cemetery development for the next 50 years (Copenhagen municipality, 2015). The project group that prepared the strategy consisted of employees of a consulting company and the City Operations Bureau. The document is based on an ethnographic study (Nielsen & Groes, 2014) through which the authors of the strategy identified five tensions crucial for the development of cemeteries: a public resource/a private place; a place for recreation/a place for grief; a place for all/a place for certain activities; a familiar place/an unknown and sometimes scary place; and a timeless place/a place in transformation (Copenhagen municipality, 2015). In its 36 pages, Copenhagen's strategy provides information about the aims and challenges of cemetery development, discusses the five tensions, and provides general directions for developing each of the five cemeteries.

Oslo's strategy – adopted in 2017 – does not have the same ambitious timeframe and provides more general directions for the management and planning of cemeteries (Oslo municipality, 2017). The 13-page document is organised as follows. First, the strategy's aims presented and connected to the overall perspective of Oslo as a green, inclusive and creative city with space for everyone. Second, the strategy introduces the history of Oslo's cemeteries and their contemporary status and challenges. Third, it discusses cemeteries' functions. Finally, it describes a general vision for the cemeteries and sets goals for cemetery development and management.

Elsewhere we identified that Oslo and Copenhagen share many reasons for developing their cemetery strategies, including a growing demand for green urban spaces, cemeteries' recreational potential, and increasing diversity of memorialisation practices (Grabalov & Nordh, 2020). Unfolding these cases further, we now focus on the future trajectories that these strategies propose.

The strategies are at the core of our empirical material. Additionally, in 2018, we conducted semi-structured interviews with six municipal employees involved in cemetery management, two landscape architects, one politician and one representative from the Lutheran Christian Church. We sought interviewees who represented similar units or fields in both cities; however, this turned out to be challenging. Consequently, we interviewed six people in Oslo and four in Copenhagen. We asked the interviewees questions about their daily work with cemeteries, cooperation with other organisations, changes in cemetery management and design over time, and possible visions for the future. Each interview took around one hour and was recorded and transcribed. The ten stakeholder interviews coupled with the strategy documents provided solid material for analysis. Furthermore, we drew on empirical studies regarding how Scandinavian cemeteries are used and perceived by users (Evensen et al., 2017; Nielsen & Groes, 2014; Nordh et al., 2017).

For the analysis, we employed the four analytical dimensions (liminal, spiritual, multicultural and multifunctional spaces) in a top-down, deductive content analysis (Kyngäs & Kaakinen, 2020). We used the four dimensions as codes and marked relevant fragments of text in the strategies and the interview transcriptions. We were especially interested in identifying the empirical material with explicit or implicit statements regarding the future of cemeteries. At the final stage of analysis, we assessed how the four analytical dimensions could change in the future and visualised such changes with a radar chart. To provide excerpts from the strategies,

we translated them from Norwegian and Danish into English; the interviews were originally held in English.

Findings and Discussion

Liminal Space

The liminality of Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries relies on the tensions of their property status, management and design aspects, and actual use. We found several examples of such tensions. Although publicly accessible, cemeteries accommodate private graves. To make the equation even more complicated, cemeteries in Oslo are owned by the Church of Norway. Debates around whether the Church of Norway is a public or private organisation (Morland, 2018) add to the complexities of categorising cemeteries as public spaces. We suspect that most people may not notice who the owner of a cemetery is or think the owner is the municipality because it maintains the space.

Another tension is in the nature of memorialisation practices. While these practices engage with personal emotions of sorrow and grief, they are socially and publicly accepted and recognised in cemeteries. Through memorialisation, private recollections become part of public history. Copenhagen's strategy explicitly acknowledges the tension by saying that cemeteries are "a common cultural, historical and natural resource – that should be accessible to all – and at the same time a personal space connected to private needs and preferences" (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 8). Nordh et al. (2017) demonstrated that cemeteries in Oslo provide visitors with an opportunity to be alone and reflect, which is an underestimated quality in contemporary urban public spaces. At the same time, visitors are alone while among other people, which differs from private spaces, such as home gardens, and more crowded and active public spaces, such as cafes or libraries, where being alone may signal loneliness.

Copenhagen's strategy acknowledges that cemeteries are spaces for all citizens but not for all types of activities: "All types of users should be invited inside as long as they behave with respect for the deceased and their relatives and the cemetery's primary function as a burial ground" (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 9). Such tension feeds the liminality of cemetery spaces and defines what kinds of public spaces they are. In his principles of good public spaces, Carmona (2015) argued that "cities should offer something for everyone in the right locations, rather than everything for everyone everywhere" (pp. 399–400). The specialisation of public spaces gives users choices but often requires some restrictions (Franck & Huang, 2020). The strategies in Oslo and Copenhagen aim to define what cemeteries can offer citizens without eradicating cemeteries' unique characteristics.

The strategies may change the extent of cemeteries' liminality. One way to do that is to provide better physical access to cemeteries by organising more gates and making navigation in the cemeteries easier for visitors. For example, Oslo's strategy suggests: "To increase security and facilitate the use of the areas, the City Council will search for lighting that can increase the quality of the areas, while preserving the cemeteries' dignity" (Oslo municipality, 2017, p. 11). Such measures are likely to make cemeteries more present in the urban fabric and approachable for people and, by doing so, reduce cemeteries' liminality.

Another effort is a stronger approach to communication, which may improve symbolic access. Even if the two strategies do not explicitly discuss it, interviewees agreed on the importance of communication. In Oslo, the emphasis is on changing signs guiding visitors' behaviour and more active use of social media (see Figure 2). According to a Copenhagen municipality employee,



Figure 2. An Instagram post by Oslo's Cemeteries and Burials Agency showing a dog on a leash in Vår Frelasers cemetery. Comments from other users are hidden for anonymisation purposes. Reproduced with permission from the photographer, Dag Inge Danielsen. Source: Gravferdsetaten (2019).

management aims to communicate rules of behaviour to visitors, both through signs and the help of gardeners. Stronger communication strategies function similarly to increased physical access and lighting by reducing the extent of the liminality of cemeteries as public spaces.

Spiritual Space

Both strategies acknowledge urban cemeteries' primary function as burial grounds and places for memorialisation and are crafted to develop in line with this function:

Here lies our dead who are buried, here you can remember the dead and here you can mourn. In the cemetery, there is an ambiance that can be called elevated. People move here in a markedly different way than in other public spaces. (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 6)

Dealing with emotional and spiritual experiences requires dignity in cemetery maintenance, or, as an interviewee from Oslo's Cemeteries and Burials Agency put it, "in everything we do, we have to think that someone can watch us" (Interviewee 1).

Being spiritually rich places, cemeteries require timeframes different from other public spaces. While Oslo's strategy does not have a defined period, Copenhagen's aim is 50 years. An interviewee from the Copenhagen municipality explained it this way:

If you buy a grave for your mother, then you might be visiting this grave for the next 30 years, and you expect something in the surroundings also. [...] You are reminded that life is short and that it is going to

end sadly for all of us. And it's a good thing. And especially these days, when we are all just concerned about now, now, now ... so I think we can sell that, I think there is an audience for that also in 25 and 35 years. (Interviewee 7)

In that sense, cemeteries can provide qualities missing in contemporary urban cultures that reconfigure their attitudes towards death and mortality (Walter, 2020) and where death and ageing are often avoided.

In the future, cemeteries could better accommodate individualised choices for the deceased and bereaved, as explained by a Copenhagen municipality employee: "I think a new trend is that you not just put flowers on the graves, but you put personal stuff, something that has a special meaning between you and the deceased" (Interviewee 8). A landscape architect from Copenhagen confirmed that people wish for more individualised ways of dealing with the losses, and cemeteries have to adapt.

Both strategies mention new disposal and memorialisation forms, but only the document from Oslo makes new forms a priority and names three to be introduced: a columbarium, predefined places for ash scattering, and forest burial. A politician from Oslo described the latter as "very Norwegian" (Interviewee 3), referring to the national passion for nature. This interviewee also stressed the public character of new burial forms. Compared to the private coffin and urn graves, collective memorial spaces may be perceived as being more public, where strangers can share commemoration.

Nordh et al. (2017) found that Oslo's cemeteries, which combine nature, culture and history, coupled with respect for the deceased and reflection on existential questions, make people perceive them as restorative environments. Spiritual and restorative experiences are somewhat related, as they include components of reflection and contemplation. The strategies recognise cemeteries' restorative aspects for the public, although without an emphasis on mourners. As stated in the strategy, if "tranquillity and peace in a city are increasingly sought after", the cemeteries could answer the question, "Where do Copenhageners have the opportunity to go when they want to be away from the pulsating life of the big city?" (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 13). Cemeteries' restorative aspects are described by the metaphor of a "quiet oasis" (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 25), with nature and heritage as essential elements.

The spiritual dimension of urban cemeteries is difficult to define and can have different meanings for different groups of cemetery visitors. Both the strategies and the interviewees recognised the spiritual importance of cemeteries as places to reflect on life and death and as public spaces for private emotions and individual choices. These meanings are interconnected and together demonstrate how cemeteries can provide Oslo and Copenhagen's citizens with space for "the search for the sacred" (Pargament et al., 2013, p. 17). The cemetery-specific strategies provide insights on how spiritual and thus non-instrumental aspects of urban places can be articulated in planning practices, something that McClymont (2015) urged planners to do by focusing on municipal spirituality.

Multicultural Space

Historically, the national churches in Scandinavia have played an important role in the management of burial grounds, usually constructed around churches, and in Norwegian and Danish, traditionally called *kirkegård*, which literally means "churchyard". While in Denmark this word is still used for any type of burial grounds, in Norwegian a religious-neutral term, *gravplass*, "burial ground" (Ministry of government administration, reform and church affairs, 2010,2011), has been used in official

discourse since 2012. However, *kirkegård* is still commonly used in Norway. Although linguistically knitted to the Lutheran-Christian churches, cemeteries in Norway and Denmark are open to all society members.

While in Oslo and Copenhagen the majority follows Protestant tradition, both cities have special sections for various religious, ethnic and other communities. These include Jews and Muslims in both cities; Buddhists, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, atheists and homosexuals in Copenhagen, and Bahā'ī Faith and Åsatrufellesskapet Bifrost (a Norwegian pagan community) in Oslo. Allowing people to conduct disposal practices in accordance with their belief or tradition is in accordance with inclusive cemetery management and “represent(s) an important part of full citizenship in a multicultural society” (Maddrell et al., 2021, p. 685). One could question whether cemetery sections foster inclusion or exclusion and whether they provide a sense of belonging or unnecessary segregation. However, a Copenhagen municipality employee clarified that these initiatives came from the communities themselves:

We have made no special sections that were not wished for. We don't do it on our own initiative. We only do it because someone comes to us and says we want to lie together. I personally think it would be more beautiful that just [everyone lies together] ... How much together are we? ... But I think it's what people want. (Interviewee 7)

Both cities' strategies mention the cemeteries' openness for all citizens, regardless of beliefs or non-beliefs or ethnic or social identity. Otherwise, the multicultural dimension is almost entirely left out of Oslo's strategy. In Copenhagen, the strategy emphasises the role of cemeteries as a meeting place for different cultures and religions: “You also get the opportunity to experience how other individuals and cultures relate to death and say farewell to their dead – a perspective that is often taboo and difficult to talk about in public” (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 13).

In our interviews, the role of cemeteries as multicultural spaces was a prominent topic. A representative of Oslo's Community Church Council explained that the law prescribed consultation with all registered religious and belief organisations for their input in cemetery management and development, but it was difficult to organise productive consultations. The interviewees in both cities mentioned several intercultural challenges, sometimes even pointing to racism, such as the vandalism of Muslim graves and complaints from other mourners about “disturbances” from Roma funeral rituals. These examples indicate the challenges of inclusive cemetery management, a topic that needs further exploration.

Multifunctional Space

Both municipalities aim to strengthen the multifunctional character of urban cemeteries. Oslo's strategy highlights cemeteries' environmental values, specifically the impacts on the local climate and biodiversity. Cemeteries are highlighted as part of the city's green infrastructure, which has a long planning history in Oslo (Jørgensen & Thorén, 2012). By introducing more functions, Oslo's strategy aims to use cemeteries in a “smarter” way (Oslo municipality, 2017, p. 2). This direction includes a temporary gardening project on land reserved for the future expansion of a cemetery and installing beehives in an active cemetery: “This is a good example of combining the use of burial grounds as urban spaces with important climate action” (Oslo municipality, 2017, p. 9).

Copenhagen's strategy focuses more on cemeteries' recreational uses. Not apparent in cemeteries in Oslo, but quite common in Copenhagen, are private and public events, such as music concerts, theatre performances, guided excursions, art exhibitions and weddings. A Copenhagen

municipality employee explained that the strategy opened doors for more events and allowed employees to be less restrictive: “It’s obviously a political wish that we should open more, so we open more: we grant people the right to do more things than we did ten years ago” (Interviewee 7). As we demonstrated elsewhere (Grabalov & Nordh, 2020), the presence of recreational activities in the cemeteries motivated the municipalities to develop their strategies. Now we notice that the strategies themselves have become drivers of more active recreational use of the cemeteries.

Copenhagen’s strategy more explicitly emphasises the cemeteries’ primary function and the need to subordinate cemetery development to this function. Oslo’s strategy mentions the same idea but focuses primarily on cemeteries’ impact on climate change adaptation and mitigation. This focus can be the reason for the critique raised by Oslo’s Community Church Council representative, who thought that “they don’t have enough focus that these are cemeteries. They are not playgrounds” (Interviewee 6). At the same time, during the interviews, Oslo’s municipality employees emphasised the cemeteries’ primary function in the same strong way as their colleagues from Copenhagen.

Both the strategies and the interviewees highlighted the possible conflicts between different activities in the cemeteries while aiming to find a balance between them. An employee of the Copenhagen municipality explained:

In the summer, we have a lot of people lying on the grass with their blankets and without a lot of clothes on. And next to them there is a grave ... That’s not so good, so we really have to think about how to mix but not to mix. To take people in so they can drink beer and have fun, but still have the distance to people who have some family burials. (Interviewee 9)

Bringing more people and activities into cemeteries is not always considered to conflict with cemeteries’ primary function. Copenhagen’s strategy expresses this complementarity as follows:

For many users – both recreational and bereaved – it is important to be able to “get away” from death in the cemetery. They need death to be demystified by the presence of people and life in the area. Otherwise, the grief can become all-consuming. (Copenhagen municipality, 2015, p. 9)

Moreover, as an interviewee from the Copenhagen municipality noted, “some people might think that it’s actually quite appealing to have children playing on your grave and not be placed in some sad area” (Interviewee 8).

Copenhagen’s strategy promotes zoning, which differentiates areas for burial and ash interment and sections that are inactive (i.e. more park-like). Such separation should be visible and clear to visitors and should balance the more active use of cemeteries with respect for sorrow and grief. An interviewee from the Copenhagen municipality added that even in recreational zones, the city wants to preserve the cemetery’s character (for example, by keeping some heritage tombs), so people, even in 50 years, will know that they are in a cemetery, not a park. A landscape architect from Norway shared a similar idea and stressed the relevance of cemetery gates, which limit access to cemeteries while signalling to visitors that they are entering a special place.

Some of the new burial and memorialisation forms that the strategies propose can better accommodate various activities in the cemeteries. For example, Oslo’s strategy emphasises that a section for forest burial, because of its nature-like organisation, will provide better opportunities for secondary functions. Furthermore, compared to traditional coffin graves, collective memorials for urn interments resonate with multifunctional use. Oslo’s strategy suggests that future cemeteries

will have more of such areas, which would change the traditional landscape of a Norwegian cemetery.

Juxtaposition of the Four Spaces

In our analysis, we observed how the four dimensions (liminal, spiritual, multicultural and multifunctional) of Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries could change. With the empirical material as a foundation, we will now discuss and speculate about what we foresee as the future of cemeteries in these cities.

First, we noticed measures and goals that would change the cemeteries and possibly reduce the tensions within them. These measures could decrease the level of liminality and bring cemeteries more actively into both planning discourses and people's everyday life. At the same time, liminality is inherent in the character of cemeteries and will continue. Balancing the different aspects of liminality is one of the key directions in cemetery development. Second, cemeteries' spiritual dimensions are likely to remain because of the presence of death. By their nature, cemeteries embody spirituality, an asset that requires special attention in planning and management (McClymont, 2015). Third, we expect the multicultural character of Oslo's and Copenhagen's populations to be mirrored more clearly in cemeteries because of increased immigration and the general debate about inclusion and equality in planning practices (Sandercock, 2000). Finally, because of the strategies, and as addressed by our interviewees, urban cemeteries' multifunctionality in both cities could increase, as cemeteries will integrate and facilitate more functions, including recreational and environmental.

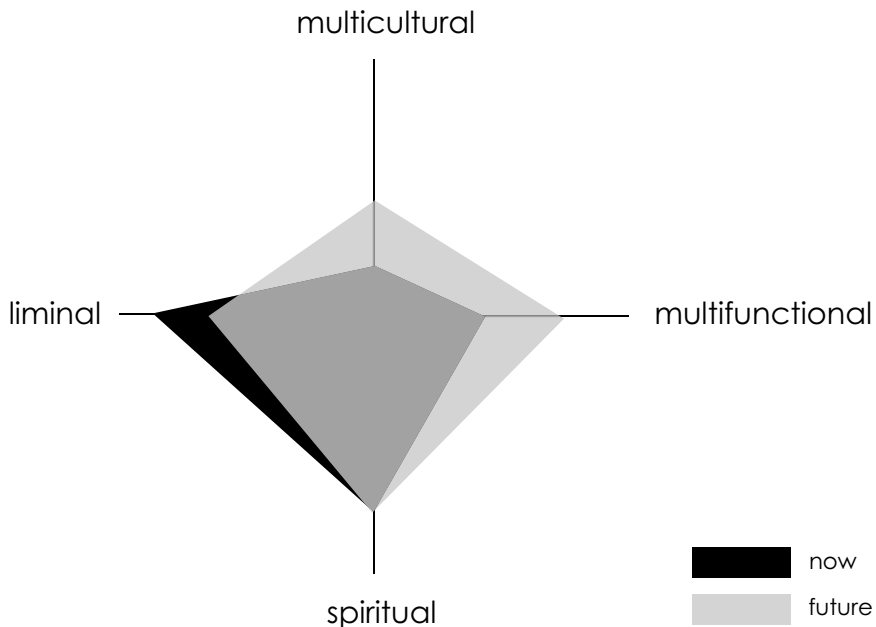


Figure 3. Possible future of cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen as public spaces based on the proposed analytical framework.

A radar chart (see [Figure 3](#)) visualises the changes in the four dimensions and suggests that cemeteries in both cities could expand as public spaces. The transformation of cemeteries should be viewed in the context of the major social, political and cultural shifts discussed in public space literature (see, e.g. [Bodnar, 2015](#)). For Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries, the most relevant trends are the rise of sustainability agendas and environmental concerns, migration and diversification of populations and pursuing more individualised choices. However, cemeteries are also influenced by cemetery-specific trends connected to how people approach death and bereavement ([Walter, 2020](#)). Looking at the planned trajectories for Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries, we argue that they, as public spaces, could play a more diverse role. They could accommodate more functions, cultures, forms of disposal and design ideas, thus serving as inclusive public spaces.

We acknowledge the obstacles in the path to this ideal. Rephrasing Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city ([Skår et al., 2018](#)), we ask, who has the right to the cemetery? Whose interests should come first: the bereaved or other visitors? The strategies suggest some ideas – for example, zoning for different purposes; however, our study demonstrates that policymakers and practitioners tend to view different functions as mutually beneficial. Indeed, cemeteries' primary function and the rules and expectations regarding visitors' behaviours shape certain conditions for other functions. Like [Rugg \(2020\)](#), we argue that the right to the cemetery should be built on principles of social justice, providing dignity and cultural sensitivity.

The interplay between various functions is only one example of the tensions played out in cemeteries. Being truly liminal spaces, cemeteries connect private memories and public history, religious and secular communities and the living and the dead. Returning to Young's (2011) normative ideal of city life, which “provides public places and forums where anyone can speak and anyone can listen” (p. 240), we argue that urban cemeteries can offer special qualities as such forums. However, as [Madanipour \(2016\)](#) noted in his general discussion on culture and tolerance in public spaces, to achieve such an ideal, public spaces – and, we say, cemeteries as well – need to be “a forum for self-expression, discovery and mutual recognition” (p. 53). Otherwise, instead of bringing people closer, cemeteries can do the opposite and manifest the differences and inequalities that already exist in a society. The system of cemetery planning and management has to function as just and equal, and be perceived as such by all communities in the society. We underpin the argument made elsewhere ([Maddrell et al., 2018, 2021](#); [Nordh et al., 2021](#)) that allowing for diversity within disposal practices is important. Here, providing specific cemetery sections for religious communities is one example. Furthermore, acknowledging cemeteries in Scandinavia as green spaces for recreational purposes, such as places to go for a walk or to drink a cup of coffee, makes cemeteries more public without necessarily losing their spiritual atmosphere. We believe that cemeteries can succeed as forums of diversity while maintaining their distinct position and role in an increasingly homogenised physical urban environment.

Conclusions

Based on an analysis of empirical material from Oslo and Copenhagen, we have seen examples of how each of the four analytical dimensions – liminal, spiritual, multicultural and multifunctional – are present in the cities' cemetery strategies. Cemeteries in these cities, being public spaces in the sense of access and stewardship, have their distinguishing features shaped by their primary functions as burial grounds and places for memorialisation. As argued elsewhere ([Grabalov & Nordh, 2020](#)), the role of cemeteries in cities under densification pressure, such as Oslo and Copenhagen, is

shifting. Changing conditions demand that policymakers pay special attention to urban cemeteries and adapt to maintain cemeteries' apparent characteristics and relevance.

In the analysis of the two cities' cemetery strategies, we highlighted a juxtaposition of the four analytical dimensions and identified that cemeteries have the potential to become more public in the future. Based on the empirical material, we expect the cemeteries in these cities to maintain their spiritual dimension while becoming less liminal, more multifunctional and more multicultural. Over time, their role could become more diversified.

We cannot see all the possible changes and trajectories that could shape the future of Oslo's and Copenhagen's cemeteries. The strategies we have analysed can propose such a future, but changes in society and technology often happen with no planning intentions. We have, however, already witnessed developments related to the strategies' objectives. Since 2021, Norwegian legislation has allowed local authorities to establish columbaria in cemeteries, which the Oslo municipality has planned in its cemetery strategy (Sitter, 2020). The same year, the Copenhagen municipality opened a therapeutic garden in Vestre cemetery (Copenhagen municipality, , n.d.), in line with the strategy's aim to develop some of the cemetery for recreation (Copenhagen municipality, 2019).

Public spaces may have various meanings in different societies (Smith & Low, 2013), which is especially true for cemeteries. This study provides a glimpse into some challenges that arise around a sample of Scandinavian cemeteries and may inspire planners in other regions to reflect on the various functions that cemeteries have and the meanings they represent. We demonstrate the potential of cemeteries' contribution to the urban environment as multifunctional public spaces – the trajectory envisioned by Oslo and Copenhagen's municipalities. We acknowledge the benefits of this idea but argue for the cautious introduction of new functions of cemeteries in view of their primary purpose. The idea of municipal spirituality (McClymont, 2015) offers a powerful foundation for such work and can help planners find the proper language to incorporate and articulate cemeteries' intangible values, including spiritual and religious ones. Opening planning for greater recognition of spirituality requires more than adding one more criterion into planners' check lists; we call for greater attention to spiritual values in planning education, policies development, and participation processes more broadly.

The ways cemeteries' spirituality is embodied and recognised vary greatly across contexts. We encourage more geographically diverse research, particularly on multicultural and multifunctional aspects, not least from users' perspectives, which might differ from policymakers' views. The four-dimensional analytical framework proposed here can provide a point of departure for international research.

Our attempt to discuss cemeteries as a special type of public space provides theory for a nuanced and multifaceted interpretation of the concept of public space and how it is manifested in contemporary cities. While research has been focused for a long time on the social and political aspects of public space (see, e.g. Mitchell, 2017), the case of urban cemeteries demonstrates that public space can also accommodate spirituality and facilitate reflections and contemplations – necessary and often neglected qualities in contemporary cities under densification pressure. This case exemplifies the need for diverse public spaces and recognition of various urban lifestyles and choices (Carmona, 2015). The tensions between the different meanings associated with cemeteries in Oslo and Copenhagen are inherent not only to cemeteries but to public space in general. We encourage planning theory and practice to engage more with such tensions by working with them rather than against them.

Note

1. See also the research project “Cemeteries and Crematoria as Public Spaces of Belonging in Europe: A Study of Migrant and Minority Cultural Inclusion, Exclusion and Integration” (<https://cemi-hera.org/>).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on Contributors

Pavel Grabalov is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Public Health Science, Faculty of Landscape and Society, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU). This paper is part of his current PhD project devoted to the role of cemeteries in contemporary Scandinavian and Russian urban contexts.

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Paper III

Pavel Grabalov

Invisible public spaces: The role of cemeteries in urban planning and development in Moscow

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Invisible public spaces: The role of cemeteries in urban planning and development in Moscow

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Abstract

The role of urban cemeteries is highly context-dependent and varies greatly across cities and countries. Despite the growing body of literature on the cemeteries' potential for urban development, Eastern Europe, and in particular Russia, remains underrepresented. Seeking to fill this empirical gap, this paper brings forward the case of cemeteries in Moscow, the capital of Russia. Using the concept of public space as a theoretical lens, I aim to explore the extent to which cemeteries are envisioned as public spaces in planning policies and development practices in Moscow. The study builds on a critical qualitative analysis of relevant policy documents and semi-structured interviews with experts, supplemented by field observations. The empirical material is analysed through the prism of four dimensions: liminal, spiritual, commercial and multifunctional. The findings show that planning policies and development practices view cemeteries primarily in terms of disposal provision. Regarded as an 'unspectacular' part of the urban environment, cemeteries are excluded from the extensive programmes of improvement of public spaces in the city. However, Moscow cemeteries have a range of qualities which make them valuable — although invisible at the policy level — public spaces with a multifaceted role.

Keywords: cemeteries, public space, spirituality, densification, post-socialist city, Moscow

Introduction

While the primary function of cemeteries as burial spaces and places for memorialisation (Bachelor, 2004) is almost universal, the way in which their role is embedded in spatial planning and governance varies in different contexts. National and cultural differences shape how societies deal with death and bereavement (Walter, 2020) and, consequently, plan and facilitate the use of cemeteries (Nordh et al., 2021; Rae, 2021). Moreover, the attitude and vision of policymakers may vary from country to country when it comes to incorporating cemeteries into the overall urban development. For example, the complex role of cemeteries is becoming increasingly acknowledged in large Scandinavian cities (Nordh & Evensen, 2018), whereas the evidence from some other regions, like Britain, is not always so bright (McClymont, 2014). In some cases cemetery planning fails to provide even the primary function of interment and memorialisation (Blagojević, 2013; Rusu, 2020). Despite the growing body of research on the cemeteries' potential for urban development (McClymont, 2016; Quinton & Duinker, 2019; Skår, Nordh, & Swensen, 2018), Eastern Europe, and in particular Russia, remains underrepresented. This paper seeks to fill this empirical gap and brings forward the case of cemeteries in Moscow, the capital of Russia. Although there exist general studies of the Russian funeral industry (Mokhov, 2021; Mokhov & Sokolova, 2020), as far as I am aware, this article is the first English-language paper which focuses on the spatial aspects of cemetery planning and development within a Russian context.

Despite the proclaimed 'end of public space' (Mitchell, 2017), public space continues to be a priority of urban development worldwide (Mehaffy, Haas, & Elmlund, 2019) and manifests in a variety of types designed for and used by different audiences (Carmona, 2015). In the case of urban cemeteries, Klaufus (2018) demonstrates that a lack of recognition of their public space aspects among planners can be problematic. Formally, Moscow cemeteries fulfil two basic criteria of public space (Zukin, 1995): being accessible to everyone and being managed by public authorities. In this article I aim to explore the extent to which cemeteries are envisioned as public spaces in the planning policies and development practices in Moscow.

With a population of 12.7 million people and an area of 2,600 km² (Federal State Statistics Service, 2020), Moscow is the largest city in Europe and a showcase for the

Russian version of authoritarian urbanism (Zupan, Smirnova, & Zadorian, 2021) and post-socialist neoliberal urban development (Golubchikov, Badyina, & Makhrova, 2014). For a discussion of the multifaceted role of urban cemeteries, Moscow is an insightful case due to three current trends: first, increased densification through a so-called housing renovation programme (Khmelnitskaya & Ihalainen, 2021); second, the government's recent ambitious efforts to improve public spaces (Kalyukin, Borén, & Byerley, 2015; Trubina, 2020), including green spaces (Blinnikov & Volkova, 2020; Zupan & Büdenbender, 2019); third, the emphasis on memorialisation in the Russian state cultural ideology (Turoma & Mjør, 2020). As described below, Moscow cemeteries are publicly accessible green spaces and memorial sites, often situated close to or within residential areas undergoing densification (see Figure 1). These trends might have an impact on the role of cemeteries and how it is articulated at the policy level.

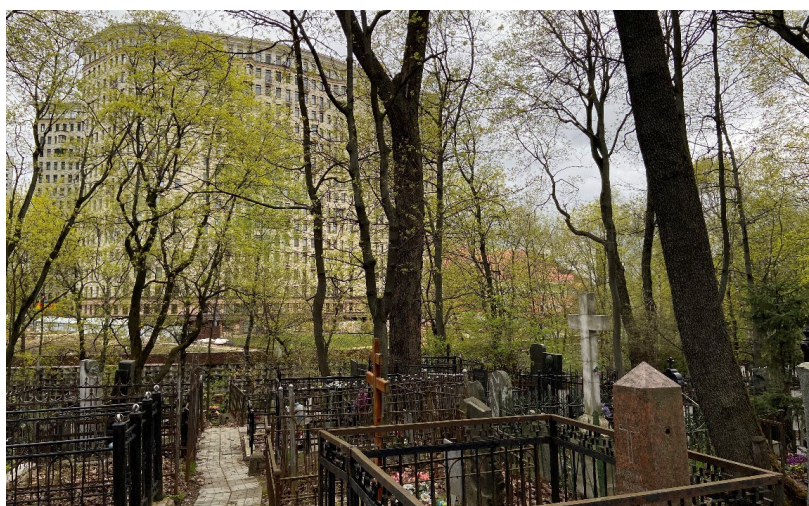


Figure 1. New large-scale housing built in 2016-2021 just outside of Vvedenskoe cemetery in Moscow. May 2021. Photo by Pavel Grabalov.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The first part of the research presents some contextual information about Moscow cemeteries' historical and contemporary development. The second part outlines the conceptual and methodological approaches used in the research. The third part is intended to demonstrate how the analytical dimensions of cemeteries as public spaces manifest in the empirical material from Moscow. Finally, the paper concludes with critical reflections on the policy gaps

surrounding Moscow cemeteries and cemeteries' potential for the urban planning and development of the Russian capital.

Moscow cemeteries: setting the scene

Contrary to many Western European and North American countries, where there was a clear distinction between religious churchyards and secular cemeteries (Laqueur, 2015), the history of the modern Russian cemetery (*кладбище* [*kladbishche*] in Russian, meaning any type of a burial space) has a different trajectory. Starting from the eighteenth century, modern Russian cemeteries had never been completely detached from the religious authorities until the beginning of the twentieth century, when drastic changes to their governance were brought about (Dushkina, 1995; Mokhov, 2021; Shokarev, 2020). To contextualise the discussion of Moscow cemeteries as public spaces, it is worth pointing out some aspects of their historical and contemporary development with a focus on their differences from the cemeteries in Western Europe and North America, which are better described in the literature, and with regards to public space aspects.

History

In 1771, as a response to a plague epidemic, there were nine new cemeteries established in the fields just outside Moscow, aiming to replace the existing inner-city burial spaces next to the city's parish churches and monasteries (Shokarev, 2020). From the beginning of the nineteenth century, all new cemeteries except the cemeteries for religious minorities were managed by the Russian Orthodox Church in collaboration with the city government; private and secular cemeteries did not exist. Contrary to the grand projects of garden cemeteries carried out during the same time in Western Europe and North America (Laqueur, 2015), Moscow cemeteries' landscape organisation and management were neglected. In the nineteenth century, the efforts to physically upgrade the cemeteries were mainly focused on building churches and constructing fences around the cemeteries (Pirogov, 1996). As a result of bad or absent planning, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Moscow's cemeteries were crowded (Sokolova, 2018) and looked like a labyrinth of old graves and informal greenery (Dushkina, 1995). At the same time, cemeteries were also recognised as heritage sites, offering attractive places for strolling and environments with a special atmosphere (Saladin, 1997 [1916]).

The potential of cemeteries as public spaces was widely discussed in the first decades of Soviet Russia, after the 1917 revolution, when all cemeteries were municipalised, becoming the responsibility of city councils, which regarded them as both a burdensome duty and a source of resources and land (Sokolova, 2019). Many monastery burial spaces and several city cemeteries were then torn down and transformed into parks or residential and industrial areas. This demolition, still a sensitive topic for local heritage activists, is usually portrayed as part of a brutal anti-religious campaign (Malysheva, 2020; Shokarev, 2020). However, according to a recent archival study by Sokolova (2018), ‘in most cases, behind the demolition of the cemeteries was not an atheistic propaganda but rather pragmatism of improving rapidly growing cities’ (p. 94, my translation). Unfortunately, most of those projects destroyed the cemetery infrastructure, failing to build high-quality public spaces in their place.

The second half of the twentieth century was characterised by two parallel tendencies. On the one hand, the city focused on the construction of new vast and simplistic-looking suburban cemeteries (Karavaeva, 2007; Merridale, 2003). On the other hand, due to a lack of services provided by the authorities, citizens had to organise funerals and graves within their own social networks, something that Mokhov and Sokolova (2020) call ‘DIY-funerals’. Malysheva (2018) notes that the funeral industry, including cemeteries, was the least controlled and financed area of Soviet ideology; therefore, citizens could express themselves there more freely than in other public spaces. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian funeral industry received many problems, amplified by the state’s withdrawal from public sectors, neoliberalisation and an increase in criminal activities. In the 1990s, Moscow cemeteries suffered from vandalism (Dushkina, 1995) and were associated with mafia activities (Mokhov, 2021).

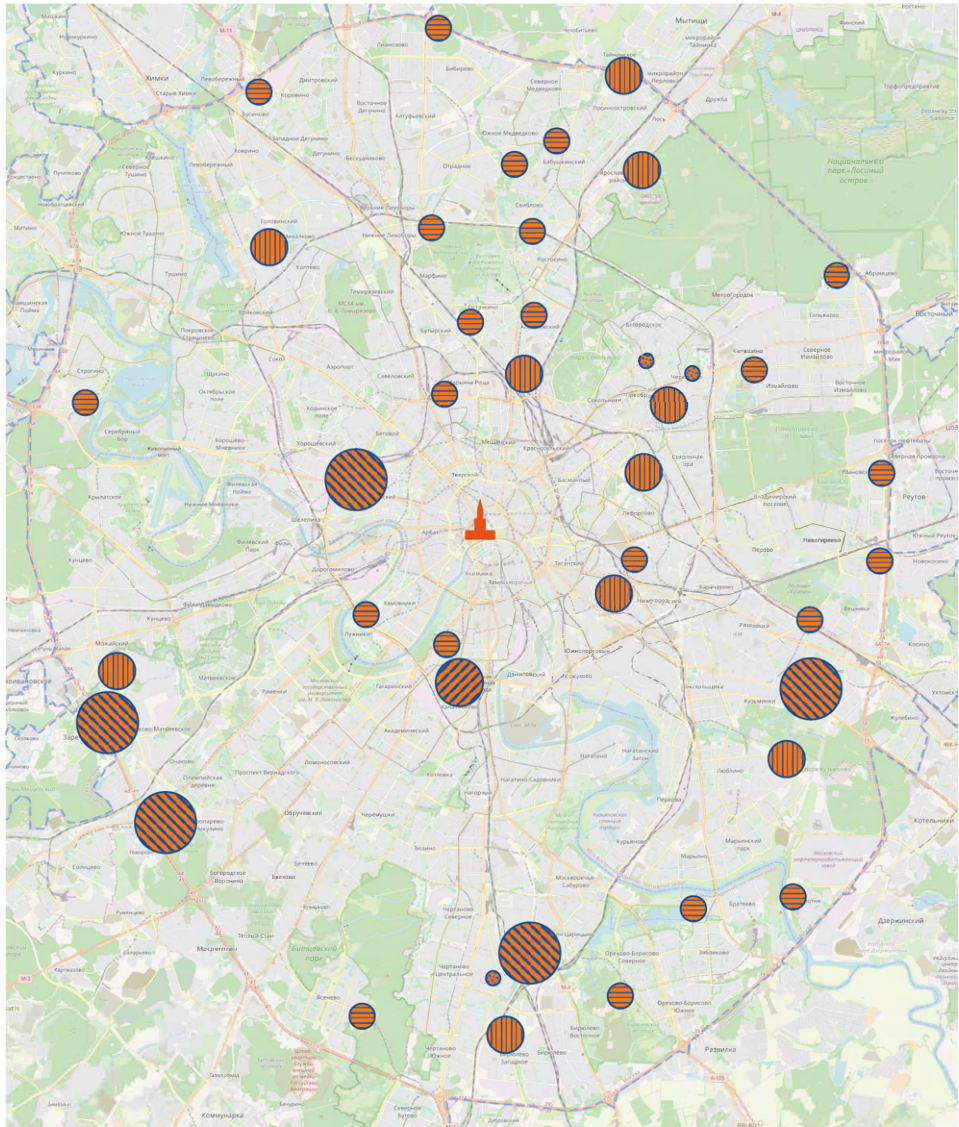
Contemporary cemetery provision

Cemetery provision is a responsibility of local authorities in Russia, and in Moscow, all cemeteries are taken care of by an agency called *Ritual* (ГБУ *Ритуал*), which is owned by the city government and managed by its Department of Trade and Services (Департамент торговли и услуг). The agency is in charge for 136 cemeteries. Apart from running cemeteries, the agency offers all types of commercial funeral services. Mokhov and Sokolova (2020) argue that the contemporary Russian

funeral industry is fundamentally ‘broken’ and functions as an informal network of actors controlling the funeral infrastructure, including the cemeteries. Moscow’s funeral business fits this picture, as demonstrated in a recent anti-corruption exposé (Golunov, 2019).

The cemeteries owned and managed by the Moscow government are situated both in Moscow and in the Moscow region — a separate administrative unit which surrounds the Russian capital — including the only three cemeteries that are ‘open’ for Muscovites. These cemeteries have available land for new graves provided to citizens free of charge, as guaranteed in the Federal (Russian Federation, 1996) and City (Moscow government, 1997b) Funeral Laws. All other Moscow cemeteries are ‘closed’ for new graves except for interments into relatives’ graves or special ‘family (ancestral) graves’. In reality, the difference between the ‘open’ and ‘closed’ cemeteries is blurred, with the ‘open’ cemeteries catering for only 21% of the city’s 48,000 burials in the ground per year (Kuznetsova & Levinskaya, 2020). Moscow cemeteries vary in terms of their size, location, history, level of maintenance and landscape organisation. This paper focuses on the cemeteries situated within the Moscow Ring Road (see Figure 2) as their range of functions is likely to be larger than at the cemeteries located in the fields outside the city.

Moscow cemeteries occupy 2,000 ha (Kuznetsova & Levinskaya, 2020) and have a permanent shortage of land for new graves due to the disposal and grave management system practised in Moscow, which forces the authorities to open new cemeteries on a regular basis. Disposals include coffin burials and urn interments in the ground or columbaria; 50% of the disposals in the city are cremated remains (Kuznetsova & Levinskaya, 2020). Without explicit provision in the legislation, graves in the Moscow cemeteries are provided in perpetuity; the system of grave re-use is practiced mainly for relative’s graves. Because of a large share of coffin burials, which require more space compared to interment of cremated remains, and the *de facto* perpetual status of the graves, cemeteries quickly become saturated.



Cemeteries, ranged by their size:



Figure 2. Cemeteries within the Moscow Ring Road (MKAD), which demarcates the morphological city of Moscow. The cemeteries' location and size are taken from the official website of Ritual (<https://ritual.mos.ru/perechen/cemetery/>).

Conceptual and methodological approaches

Conceptually, this paper uses the notion of public space as a lens to explore how the role of Moscow cemeteries is articulated in the city's planning policies. The paper is inspired by interpretative critical policy studies, which challenge a positivist approach to the analysis of policies as examination of inputs and outcomes, and instead focuses on the context, values and normative assumptions that are shaping policy processes (Fischer, Torgerson, Durnová, & Orsini, 2015). In its normative understanding, the concept of public space is closely connected to social justice (Low, 2020), which is considered by Fainstein (2015) the principal goal of urban policy. Cemeteries can contribute to socially just cities by fulfilling the right to a decent disposal with respect to people's religious freedom and environmental sustainability (Rugg, 2020) and by providing access to diverse high-quality outdoor environments for recreational activities (Skår et al., 2018) and social encounters (Swensen & Skår, 2019).

This paper builds on a qualitative analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews with experts, complemented by field observations conducted at nine cemeteries in Moscow. The policy documents included various sources, such as cemetery and funeral industry-specific laws and regulations (both on the federal and city levels), general spatial plans of Moscow, programmes and strategies, reports and standards, public opinion polls, mass media coverage and design manuals. Twenty-three experts took part in semi-structured interviews (in Russian) between August 2020 and June 2021, providing insights for four fields: cemetery and funeral industry, planning and architecture, environmental management, and cultural heritage and conservation.

Analysing the documents and interviews, I followed the lead of Woodthorpe (2011), who suggests seeing a cemetery as a simultaneous coexistence of different meanings, or landscapes (analysing London cemeteries, she identifies landscapes of emotion, commerce and community). This paper uses the analytical framework developed recently for the study of Scandinavian cemeteries as public spaces, as outlined in Grabalov and Nordh (2021), and refined for the empirical material from Moscow. This paper focuses on four dimensions: liminal, spiritual, commercial and multifunctional.

As *liminal* spaces, cemeteries function as border crossings between the world of the living and the dead, present and past, physical landscape and emotion (Francis, Kellaher, & Neophytou, 2005). Moscow cemeteries' liminality can be captured by highlighting the tension between the meanings associated with them and the meanings revealed in their planning documents. Spirituality and religion are inherent aspects of cemeteries (Jedan, Kmec, Kolnberger, Venbrux, & Westendorp, 2020) that distinguish them from other types of public and green spaces (Grabalov & Nordh, 2020). The second dimension of the analytical framework — *spiritual* — is especially relevant for theoretical debates on a postsecular city, emphasizing the diversity of the contemporary relations between the spiritual and the secular (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). To articulate spiritual aspects of cemeteries and other urban spaces in planning, McClymont (2015) developed an idea of municipal spirituality, which is an 'inclusive language of public sacredness' that describes 'a place which allows access to the transcendental and promotes the common good' (pp. 542–543).

The *commercial* dimension of the framework covers stakeholders' efforts to profit from cemeteries. This dimension is closely linked to the debates around privatisation of public space (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008) and how neoliberal development shapes the public space of post-socialist cities (Kalyukin et al., 2015). *Multifunctionality*, the fourth framework's dimension, is considered an essential ingredient of a genuine public space (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). Although cemeteries are designed for a particular function (interment and memorialisation), they can also accommodate other functions, such as recreation, reflection or socialisation (Evensen, Nordh, & Skår, 2017; Rae, 2021; Skår et al., 2018). A combination of these secondary functions varies across contexts, and the multifunctionality of cemeteries can have different relevance for the citizens.

Moscow cemeteries through the prism of four dimensions

The analysis of the empirical material revealed a set of common themes which demonstrated how each dimension of the analytical framework manifested in the case of Moscow cemeteries. These themes (see Figure 3) were discovered through an iterative process of analysis and aim to show how public space aspects of Moscow cemeteries are envisioned in planning policies and by experts. This section describes each theme and illustrates them with field observations and extracts from the documents and interviews (translated from Russian into English).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Physical separation of cemeteries from surroundings – Ambiguous positions in planning documents – Tension between general publicness and privateness of graves <p style="text-align: center;">liminal space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Grave visitation and care – ‘Honourable’ graves – Role of religion in cemetery management – Pilgrimage <p style="text-align: center;">spiritual space</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">commercial space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The idea of private cemeteries – Grave spots for sale 	<p style="text-align: center;">multifunctional space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Heritage sites – Contribution to green infrastructure – Actual use, relevant management and design solutions

Figure 3. Analysis result: manifestation of the four dimensions of Moscow cemeteries as public spaces.

Liminal space

The analysis of the empirical material from Moscow shows that the liminal dimension manifests as three themes: physical separation of cemeteries from their surroundings, ambiguous positions in planning documents and the tension between general publicness and privateness of the graves.

The first theme highlights the physical liminality of Moscow cemeteries and their tangible exclusion from the surroundings. A significant part of the cemetery legislation on both federal and city levels is devoted to the sanitary and hygienic requirements for cemeteries. Public health concerns, which were important for the establishment of suburban cemeteries in many Western European cities in the nineteenth centuries (Laqueur, 2015), still guide cemeteries’ planning and management in Russia. While already in the end of the 19th century, Fyodor Erismann (1887), a doctor and a pioneer of hygiene in Russia, emphasised that ‘from the point of view of sanitation, we should be more scared of the living than of the dead’ (p. 387), the current Russian sanitary legislation¹ (Chief Sanitary Inspector, 2011) portrays cemeteries as hazardous places. Prescription to have a sanitary protection (*санитарно-защитная зона*), or buffer, zone around each cemetery is a good illustration of this. According to federal norms (Chief Sanitary Inspector, 2007), the

¹ The Russian sanitary legislation is currently being transformed drastically as part of a regulatory reform but is likely to keep sanitary protection zones for cemeteries. This paper analyses the legislation as of December 2020.

size of the buffer zone depends on the size and status of the cemetery, varying between 500 m for large working cemeteries and 50 m for columbaria and closed cemeteries. However, the zones around older Moscow cemeteries do not fully follow the regulations and sometimes exist only in documents. Nevertheless, as the areas around cemeteries cannot be legally developed, they often end up being used as wasteland with wild vegetation, car storages and depots of construction materials, further isolating cemeteries from the rest of the city.

In general, the purpose of a sanitary protection zone is to decrease the potential harm from objects, mostly industries, for the environment and people's health. The regulations, however, do not explain what kind of danger cemeteries pose. This danger can include contamination of the ground water, but this is unlikely to be mitigated through allocation of buffer zones; the risk is more relevant for smaller settlements without a safe drinking water system (Karavaeva, 2007). Some interviewees were critical of this situation, asserting that it did not reflect the real danger from cemeteries. For example, an interviewed planner said, 'A cemetery is a huge stain on the city's body, causing legally as much harm as a cement factory' (Interviewee O).

According to the Moscow Construction Norms for Funeral Infrastructure (Moscow government, 1997a), the zones around cemeteries are meant to protect the 'health of the people who participate in funerals, visit graves, work at the funeral-related objects, live and work at the territory around the cemetery or crematorium'. An environmental management expert interviewed for this study noted that the zones around cemeteries were meant to not only prevent pollution but also provide 'moral protection,' a term that is also used but not explained in the Federal Funerary and Cemetery Recommendations (Gosstroy, 2002). In this sense, sanitary-protection zones are supposed to take care of the emotionally challenging connotations associated with cemeteries.

The second theme that captures the liminal dimension of Moscow cemeteries is their ambiguous position in the planning legislation: different planning documents place them in different categories. For example, the Federal Urban Planning Code (Russian Federation, 2004) considers cemeteries, along with crematoria, burial grounds for cattle and landfills, part of a 'zone reserved for special use'. According to the Moscow legally binding Land Use Plan (Moscow government, 2017), cemeteries are in the same category as landfills and mentioned as part of 'industrial territories',

while the city's Urban Planning Code (Moscow government, 2008a) and General Plan (Moscow government, 2010) view cemeteries as objects of social infrastructure, similar to the health, education and other services. Several interviewees emphasised a utilitarian stand on cemeteries in Moscow spatial development: cemeteries are intended to fulfil disposal needs, being excluded from all later strategic planning. A planner interviewed for this study explained this attitude as follows:

We [planners] are cynical and utilitarian. It [a cemetery] is a very complex phenomenon. Actually, everything related to the non-material sphere, to the cultural or religious sphere, is a serious problem because it does not fit our material estimation. (Interviewee I)

The third theme sustaining cemeteries' liminality articulates tensions between the public character of cemeteries and the private and intimate nature of graves. Moscow cemeteries are publicly accessible spaces where visitors can enter freely within opening hours and without necessarily being relatives or friends of the people buried there. At the same time, highly personalised graves, which occupy the largest part of cemeteries, are very private spaces (see Figure 4). The relative responsible for a grave has the right to choose how to arrange it and has the property right for the headstones and other constructions at the grave (Moscow government, 2008b), whereas the land is owned by the city. The person officially responsible for a grave must maintain the grave in a proper (*надлежащий*) manner. The cemetery legislation, however, does not clarify what 'proper' – a liminal category in itself – means and in general provides a flexible framework for personalising graves. The Funeral Decree of the Moscow government (Moscow government, 2008b) does not define any characteristics of tombs and other constructions but notes that they should fit the 'architectural and landscape environment of the cemetery' (p. 46) without explaining what this means in practice.

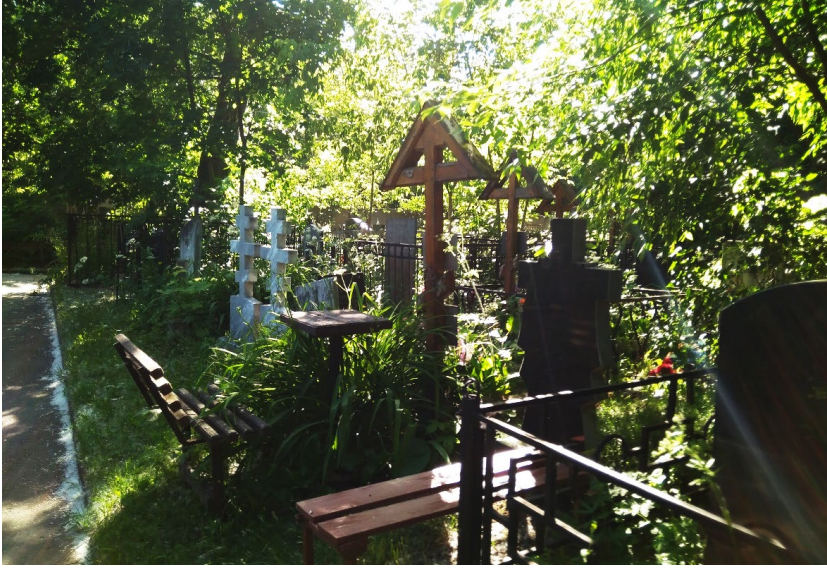


Figure 4. Graves at the Kalitnikovskoe cemetery in Moscow. June 2018. Photo by Pavel Grabalov.

Fences, which are common at Moscow cemeteries, demonstrate the complexity of individual choices in a cemetery space. In a more general context of abnormal exuberance of fences in Russia (Trudolyubov, 2018), fences around individual graves can be seen as a way to protect property rights in a situation when formal legal mechanisms do not function correctly (Mokhov, 2021). A planner, interviewed for this study, explained it as follows: ‘Not from a legal but from a practical point of view, neither in our culture nor everyday life do we have a clear distinction between a public and a private space. <...> Unless you install a fence, you cannot be sure that people will not crush everything by walking there’ (Interviewee J). At Moscow cemeteries, most graves are fenced in a different style, and there are often fences of two adjoined graves standing side by side, compromising their practical purpose.

The legislation demonstrates ambiguous attitudes to this practice: from prohibiting (Ministry of Housing and Utilities, 1979) and discouraging (Chief Sanitary Inspector, 1977) in the 1970s, although with little success, to silence in the current documents. However, the cemetery authorities in Moscow do not approve of such ‘privatisation’ of graves. In an interview published in an online media (Loriya, 2021), the director of *Ritual* agreed that Moscow cemeteries were not as aesthetically impressive as the European ones and explained that *Ritual* was in charge of just 15% of the territory, with everything else being the responsibility of individuals. In that

interpretation, the rest of the cemetery does not belong to public space. In another interview (Kuznetsova & Levinskaya, 2020), *Ritual's* director noted that it was impossible to interfere with the 'memorial self-expression' and 'jumble of fences' at the existing cemeteries. So, instead, *Ritual* developed standards for new cemeteries: the agency is promoting new fence-free cemeteries in its social media accounts as part of their effort to 'educate the population about funeral culture' (gbu_ritualofficial, 2021). In that sense, the cemetery authorities oppose the aesthetics of individual fences rather than acknowledge the rationales behind such 'privatisation'. Feeling insecure about one's formal rights is one of these rationales; desire to taking care of the graves by individuals is another one.

Spiritual space

The spiritual dimension of Moscow cemeteries is disclosed through four themes: grave visitation and care, 'honourable' graves, the role of religion in cemetery management and pilgrimage.

The first theme describes the practice of visiting and maintaining graves, which is an ultimate expression of 'proper' Russian cemetery culture (Bouchard, 2004). Each grave is an object of care for the relatives and a way to commemorate the deceased. A typical visit to the cemetery includes such activities as conversations with the deceased, 'cemetery labour' (cleaning, painting, planting, watering vegetation etc.), bringing fresh and faux flowers, memorabilia and sometimes sweets and vodka. *Ritual* facilitates these practices by providing water, sand and garden tools to borrow and offers a paid grave maintenance service. However, according to the annual public opinion poll (Sinergia, 2016) run by the Department of Trade and Services, the majority of the respondents prefer doing it themselves; the authors of the report explained that as follows: 'Maintenance of a grave is considered an honourable and in most cases pleasant responsibility, a sacred way to communicate with the deceased' (p. 26). Moreover, taking care of a grave is a very active way to interact with the environment for a change, something that is unimaginable in other, more controlled, public spaces of the city.

The results of the poll (Sinergia, 2016) show that 56.4% of the respondents visit cemeteries at least once a year. People come to the graves of their loved ones on the birth or death days of the deceased and during traditional periods of mass visitation (for example, at Orthodox Easter in spring). While visiting a cemetery on Easter day is

not supported by the Russian Orthodox Church, during the Soviet times of oppression of religious practices, cemetery visitation on Easter was the only public religious ritual (Levkievskaya, 2006). Moscow authorities facilitate such mass visits (up to 1 million people came to the cemeteries at Easter time in 2019) by providing extra public transport, tools for maintaining graves and portable toilets (Mayor of Moscow, 2019). Presence of a large number of people in the usually deserted cemeteries transforms these places and adds a public dimension to their character.

The second theme that reveals the spiritual dimension of Moscow cemeteries is a special attitude towards the so-called 'honourable' graves (*почётные захоронения*) that belong to the citizens with some merits to the state and society; such people can be buried in the old and closed cemeteries (Moscow government, 2006). Typically, honourable citizens are veterans, politicians, actors, artists, scientists or journalists. Merits are not specified, and it is the Moscow government that decides to grant plots after an application from trade unions, state agencies or other organisations. The allocation of grave plots is not a transparent process. The Federal Funerary and Cemetery Recommendations (Gosstroy, 2002) prescribe 'honourable' graves to be situated in the 'best' part of the cemetery in terms of their accessibility and view. Usually, such graves are marked with large memorials (Kucheryavaya, 2021). The presence and elimination of 'honourable' graves at Moscow cemeteries adds another spiritual meaning to these places and highlights their publicness. Such graves not only comprise cemeteries heritage sites but also allow cemeteries to serve as spiritual hotspots where visitors can experience proximity to the life and death of famous people.

More than other public spaces, cemeteries are influenced in their use and management by traditions and stereotypes, which often have a religious background. The role of religion and beliefs in cemetery management is the third theme illuminating the spiritual dimension of Moscow cemeteries. The city inherited a secular, or even an atheist, orientation of cemeteries from the Soviet times, but religion (predominantly, Russian Orthodox) is now visible there again: chapels and churches are being restored or constructed and religious symbols are common grave decorations. Talking about the extent to which religion influences decisions in cemetery governance and planning, it can be noted that there are confessional cemeteries (Armenian Orthodox, Jewish and Muslim) within the city-governed Moscow cemetery system, and the laws and regulations prescribe reappearance of

special confessional sections and cemeteries. In the past few decades, there have been attempts to strengthen the role of religious organisations in the funeral industry: a draft of a new Federal Funeral Law (Gosudarstvennaya Duma, 2020) suggested a more active role of religious organisations in managing and even owning confessional burial spaces. An article in the official journal of the Russian Orthodox Church, which participated in drafting the law, highlighted the importance of confessional cemeteries for increasing spirituality in society (Erofeev, 2012). The revision of the Federal Funeral Law has been discussed since 2012 (Mokhov, 2021) but has not been adopted yet, so religious organisations still have very limited formal participation in cemetery governance in Moscow.

The fourth theme defining the spiritual aspects of Moscow cemeteries is their role as pilgrimage sites and spaces for a range of spiritual practices from quiet, meditative walks to spiritual rituals. During my field trips to Moscow cemeteries I observed a variety of such practices: praying at the graves of saints or praised religious people, writing wishes on the walls of mausoleums or leaving small paper notes on special graves, visiting significant graves of famous people or the graves of special artistic or visual value and strolling around the cemetery to feel particular emotions (for example, by the people associated with the gothic subculture). Moroz (2021) considers such cemetery practices examples of spontaneous rites or creative bottom-up search of urban dwellers for spiritual traditions. Although this role is completely ignored by cemetery legislation, field observations and media coverage reveal that spiritual values of the city's cemeteries, especially the old ones, are important for their visitors. In the conducted interviews, acknowledgement of spiritual qualities was also common and considered as something that is not recognised at the policy level. One of the planners connected transcendent values of cemeteries with their potential as restorative environments:

Our lifestyle — I think not only in Moscow — is bereft of humanity. <...> Every day, we need more and more tools for rest, for a deeply emotional, psychological rest. <...> In this sense, a cemetery is a unique place not only because of its historical potential and culture, but because a cemetery tells us that life is temporal: you can jump around now, pretending to be a boss, but everyone ends up here. This psychotherapeutic nature and role of the cemeteries are unique. And you can arrange it with a very respectable design, physical amenities, opportunities to rest... Of course, it is difficult to realise and may take considerable time, but I think it is a very relevant and necessary task. The idea of

integrating cemeteries into human life does not exist at all, no one is talking about it. (Interviewee H)

Commercial space

The Federal Funeral Law (Russian Federation, 1996) has a clear welfare orientation, stipulating that grave plots should be provided by the local authorities free of charge and respecting the wish of the deceased. Therefore, cemeteries are supposed to function to benefit all citizens equally, regardless of their income status. In reality, Moscow cemeteries are far from this because both formal and informal stakeholders try to use cemeteries to gain commercial profit (Golunov, 2019; Mokhov, 2021; Mokhov & Sokolova, 2020). There are two themes which describe Moscow cemeteries as a commercial space: debates around the idea of private cemeteries and the practice of selling grave plots at the existing cemeteries.

One of the most prominent ideas which is believed to be able to solve the problems of the Russian funeral industry is the liberalisation of the market. Recent discussions about introducing private cemeteries based on the revision of the Federal Funeral Law provide rich insights into this idea. The initial draft of the document was written by the Federal Antitrust Agency (*Федеральная антимонопольная служба*) that saw the main cause of the industry's problems in the monopolisation of funeral markets by the local authorities. The Ministry of Construction, Housing and Utilities (*Министерство строительства и жилищно-коммунального хозяйства*) supported the idea of private cemeteries to increase the quality of funeral services and promote investment in the industry (Ministry of Construction, n.d.). The scale of the discussion about private cemeteries, as well as positive attitude to them, is impressive among practitioners (based on the content of the conferences by the Union of Funeral Organizations and Crematoriums, 2021). According to the conducted interviews, the idea of private cemeteries was generally accepted well: a representative of an urban design consulting company considered commercial companies a potential driver of positive changes; an interviewee from a private funeral agency suggested that the need to have a competitive advantage might lead to improved landscape design of private cemeteries. However, the drafts of the revised Funeral Law did not include a mechanism to safeguard the future of private cemeteries, which are dependent on the availability of plots and the financial resources of the owner.

Although Moscow cemeteries are owned and managed by public authorities and are supposed to be used only for common good, they are used to gain profit. Apart from corruption (Golunov, 2019), there is an official way to do it, which is selling grave plots at the existing Moscow cemeteries officially closed for new interments. This is the second theme that is relevant for the commercial dimension of Moscow cemeteries and demonstrates cemeteries' subtle privatisation. *Ritual*, which provides this service, does not call it a 'sale' (sales of grave plots is not allowed by the funeral legislation), but operates with the 'distribution of rights for family (ancestral) graves (*семейные (родовые) захоронения*)'. So, the city government does not sell plots; rather, according to the regulations (Moscow government, 2015), the land is provided for free, and the person buys only the right to dispose of their dead family members. In practice, however, this right is explicitly connected to a particular grave plot, and the price depends on the rank of the cemetery and the plot's location and size.

Although a transparent system of plot selling could fight the corruption associated with the distribution of plots, it would pose challenges for the cemeteries' role as an inclusive and accommodating public space. The price of a 'family (ancestral) grave' at the central Moscow cemeteries can reach up to six million roubles (Loriya, 2021), or roughly € 72,000, which makes these places available for the interment of either rich Muscovites or people whose relatives are buried there. Another negative aspect is that cemetery authorities 'find' new plots at the existing cemeteries: without a grave re-use system, it means that the open space of these already full cemeteries is shrinking further. The photographs of available plots in the online register on the website of the Moscow government (<https://www.mos.ru/ritual/>) confirm it: most plots are organised between the existing graves or between the existing graves and the fences or paths. It can be argued that this profit is channelised within the Moscow cemetery authorities and is supposed to be used for public purposes; however, the system of 'family (ancestral) graves' creates fundamental injustice both for the dead, who cannot be buried where they want to unless they have much money, and the living, who have less physically accessible space.

Multifunctional space

Although Moscow planning documents mostly consider the primary function of cemeteries as burial grounds, the role of the city's cemeteries is multifaceted. Some of the cemeteries' secondary functions can be found in the sectorial planning legislation

(for example, in terms of heritage or green infrastructure), whereas other functions, such as recreation, can be seen only in the observations of visitors' behaviour. Analysing the empirical material from Moscow, cemeteries are explored as multifunctional spaces through three themes: cemeteries as heritage sites; contribution to green infrastructure; the actual use, relevant management and design solutions.

Despite the dramatic loss during the first half of the twentieth century, Moscow cemeteries, some of which are over 200 years old, contain a significant number of the traces of the past and function as heritage sites, constituting the first theme of the multifunctional dimension. The responsibility for the heritage of Moscow cemeteries lies with the city's Department of Cultural Heritage (*Департамент культурного наследия*). About 1,500 graves (Interviewee T) are recognised as heritage objects and being taken care of by the city. There are two types of cemetery cultural heritage objects: the graves of outstanding people or the tombs of artistic value.

There are 29 burial spaces in Moscow registered as cultural heritage sites as whole entities according to the Moscow government Open Data website (<https://data.mos.ru/opendata/530>). Most of these cemeteries are working and open, at least, for the interments into the relatives' graves. The heritage aspects attract visitors to the cemeteries, with numerous excursions held at old cemeteries and organised by the city history and heritage groups, private guides and *Ritual* itself. Therefore, Moscow cemeteries function as outdoor museums and public collections of the city's past. Moscow cemetery conservation, however, focuses more on single graves and buildings than on the protection of the cemetery as an ensemble (see, for example, Moscow government, 2019, for a heritage protection order of Vvedenskoe cemetery), which leads to the fragmentation of cemetery space as acknowledged by a representative of the Moscow Department of Cultural Heritage:

People usually associate a necropolis with abandonment, emergency condition, something not very beautiful visually. There is no understanding that there can be unique things. <...> And when we renovate just some items, you cannot see the value of the whole picture. I would like to tell people about heritage through conservation, to make people perceive a cemetery not as a cemetery but as a cultural place, an outdoor museum. (Interviewee S)

Moscow cemeteries make room not only for heritage sites, but also for greenery. Cemeteries' contribution to green infrastructure is the second theme which reveals their multifunctional dimension. Moscow cemetery vegetation has been planted mostly by the bereaved at the graves and grown without any control or maintenance. Therefore, Moscow cemeteries are green spaces, providing access to urban nature and, perhaps, serving as a biodiversity habitat similar to the historic cemeteries in other countries (Kowarik, Buchholz, Von Der Lippe, & Seitz, 2016). On the negative side, out-of-control mature vegetation, together with the density of individual graves and a lack of a proper system of paths, makes maintenance challenging (Karavaeva, 2007). According to the Moscow Planning and Construction Norms (Moscow government, 2000), no less than 20% of the cemetery territory should be taken by greenery, which, as explained by an expert in environmental management interviewed for this study, is supposed to increase the quality of the soil to facilitate decomposition.

Moscow planning documents ascribe a utilitarian role to cemetery greenery. The City Urban Planning Code (Moscow government, 2008a) divides green spaces into three categories: public usage (accessible to all citizens; e.g. pocket parks, parks, gardens), limited usage (accessible for a particular group; e.g. the courtyards and green spaces adjoining educational and health facilities) and special usage. Cemeteries, alongside technical green spaces (special buffer zones for water and fire protection, areas along roads and railroads) are included in the last category and, thus, distinguished from public green spaces. In the discussion around Moscow's green infrastructure in the City General Plan (Moscow government, 2010) there is no mention of cemeteries, so their role as public green spaces that give citizens access to nature and provide habitat for wildlife and vegetation is overlooked.

The third theme revealed in the analysis is their actual use and the way cemetery authorities accommodate such use. According to the rules for behaviour at Moscow cemeteries (Moscow government, 2008b), visitors must keep public order and must not make noise; some activities (many of them are outdated now) are prohibited, such as walking dogs, using cemeteries as a place for pasture, wood and sand, entering the cemetery outside working hours or providing commercial services. Moscow cemeteries are closed during the night and open from 9:00 to 19:00 from May to September and from 10:00 to 17:00 during the other months of the year (Moscow government, 2008b). During my field visits to Moscow cemeteries, I observed mostly activities centred around visiting graves, but there were also people who strolled quietly around

the cemetery or came for an excursion (see Figure 4). The spread of such cultural leisure activities varied across the cemeteries I visited and was more prominent at the cemeteries situated close to the city centre, within a densely built environment. I did not observe any types of more active recreation, such as doing sports or walking dogs.



Figure 5. An excursion devoted to cemetery art and history. Vvedenskoe cemetery, Moscow. June 2018. Photo by Pavel Grabalov.

Unlike other regions – for example, Scandinavia (Wingren, 2013) – where urban cemeteries are often characterised by a remarkable landscape design and a higher level of upkeep than at parks, Moscow cemeteries demonstrate poor organisation of landscape and a lack of care compared to other public spaces in the city. According to the drafted revised Federal Funeral Law (Gosudarstvennaya Duma, 2020), a cemetery should have lighting and a navigation system and can be divided into functional zones, such as the entrance, ritual, service, burials and greenery. The entrance of the cemetery should have benches, public toilets, water for gardening, sand, rubbish containers and a gardening tools rental service. This basic provision can already be found at some Moscow cemeteries, but more developed infrastructure for recreational visitors, such as a navigation system, a clear path structure and benches, is still missing. *Ritual* has announced a programme called My Cemetery, similar to the famous My Street programme of the Moscow public space improvement campaign (Trubina, 2020). A press-release of the agency claimed that the programme aimed to reconstruct 52 Moscow cemeteries and ensure they are ‘associated not with dark graveyards but with cosy places for visitation’ (Shishalova, 2021, p. 236). However, the

programme My Cemetery has not been formally publicised apart from a brief mention in a press release. A funeral industry expert interviewed for this study suggested that such a programme did not actually exist and could be just a PR effort. Several interviewees noted a lack of motivation of *Ritual* to develop any functions of cemeteries beyond interment provision.

According to a federal public opinion poll devoted to practices and meanings associated with cemetery visitation in Russia (Public Opinion Fond, 2014), 51% of the respondents did not like to be at a cemetery, mostly because of the ‘depressing atmosphere’. Moscow cemeteries are not planned and designed as welcoming multifunctional spaces, so they fit this public opinion. However, analysing the empirical material, I came across an idea of a memorial park featuring some qualities of publicness. According to the authors of guidebooks for architects (Bogovaya & Teodoronskiy, 2014; Gorokhov, 1991), memorial parks are meant to be a special type of urban parks devoted to commemoration of honourable citizens and historical events and are intended to replace cemeteries in the future. A similar vision of future cemeteries as memorial parks was presented in the Soviet cemetery manual for architects (Tavrovskiy, Limonad, & Benyamovskiy, 1985): apart from their primary function as a burial site, future cemeteries, or memorial parks, should become urban public spaces. Transformation of cemeteries into memorial parks was also supported by several interviewees and described as a desirable change. For example, a city planner said that ‘seeing a cemetery not as a place of grief but as a place of memory requires some mental change’ (Interviewee J). Despite the formal recognition of the idea of a memorial park, there are no changes in how ordinary Moscow cemeteries have been planned and managed. Several interviewees pointed out that Moscow cemeteries did not have detailed planning and design documents, ‘dropping out of the architecture and planning and becoming just a utility service’ (Interviewee L).

Some experts interviewed for this study suggested that reconstruction of cemeteries, endowing them with some physical features of city parks, would lead to more recreation: as a representative of a private funeral agency put it, ‘infrastructure would prescribe culture’ (Interviewee D). Many interviewees, however, shared the idea that the utilitarian attitude to Moscow cemeteries at the policy level and the low presence of secondary functions, especially recreation, is related to Russian cultural and religious values. Nevertheless, it seems problematic to find what exactly these values involve and whether poor planning and management of Moscow cemeteries

acknowledge them. For example, a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church denied any contradiction between cemetery excursions and a Christian view on cemeteries:

Cemeteries must be honoured, visited, taken care of. The fifth commandment of God says, 'Honour thy father and thy mother'. Christians always honoured the deceased, but it has changed because death has become a taboo in the consumer society. No one wants to talk about it. Walking through a cemetery, no one wants to see an old epitaph by chance, 'We were like you. You will be like us'. That is why people think that a cemetery is something scary. (Interviewee W)

Although this quote could be interpreted in terms of the spiritual dimension, it also deepens the understanding of what a Russian proper multifunctional cemetery might be and questions to what extent the contemporary Moscow cemeteries are honoured and visited by the bereaved and other citizens.

Discussion and concluding remarks

The four-dimensional analytical framework used in this study helped to reveal essential aspects of Moscow cemeteries as a public space. The cemeteries of the Russian capital are intrinsically liminal in sense of their physical separation from the surroundings, ambiguous positions in planning documents and pronounced tension between private graves and general publicness. Cemeteries are also inherently spiritual as they provide a space for spiritually meaningful practices of grave visiting and pilgrimage. The prominence of the idea of private cemeteries and the practice of selling grave plots support the cemeteries' commercial dimension. Finally, Moscow cemeteries are multifunctional spaces because they accommodate heritage sites, urban greenery, excursions and recreational strolling.

Embodied spiritual aspects are among cemeteries' characteristics which are difficult to incorporate into utilitarian planning policies. Contrary to the Soviet times, in contemporary Moscow, there is no lack of churches and other religious buildings, but the spiritual dimension of the city's cemeteries is still prominent and manifests in a variety of forms and rituals. Cemetery planning and management need to be sensitive to this dimension and accommodate citizens' spiritual needs beyond memorialisation and commemoration practices, which is an especially prominent task in postsecular cities (Beaumont & Baker, 2011). The language of municipal spirituality (McClymont, 2015) that was developed in the British context but is nevertheless

relevant for Moscow allows planners and policymakers to acknowledge the spiritual dimension of urban cemeteries and incorporate spiritual aspects into urban development. Moreover, as international research (Nordh, Evensen, & Skår, 2017) on cemeteries shows, spiritual qualities are essential for cemeteries' restorative potential for different groups of citizens (a similar idea was shared by a social infrastructure planner cited above).

The paper also highlights the interrelation between the policy framework and the way people use cemeteries. According to Rugg (2020), the economics of the cemetery business defines the status of the user as a citizen, consumer or powerless 'supplicant'. In Russian cemeteries, the user is also a labourer who actively takes cares of the grave of the loved one. Through 'cemetery labour', inhabitants can use and physically change the urban environment localised in a grave to an unprecedented for other types of public spaces degree. Following Henri Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city, Moscow cemeteries provide an opportunity for citizens to appropriate space. However, as Purcell (2002, p. 103) notes, 'not only is appropriation the right to occupy already-produced urban space, it is also the right to produce urban space so that it meets the needs of inhabitants'. In this sense, it is not clear if the 'cemetery labour' in Moscow fulfils the need of the citizens to personalise commemoration in public space or can be explained by a lack of resources and the overall low-quality cemetery infrastructure. I think that these two sets of reasons exist side-by-side.

The commercial dimension of Moscow cemeteries can be interpreted in view of the so-called 'end of public space' (Mitchell, 2017), which was proclaimed due to several trends, including privatisation of public space. Being very uncritically adapted in Russia (Golubchikov et al., 2014), neoliberalism laid the foundation for the idea of private cemeteries to be embraced by professionals. Based on the experience in other countries, private cemeteries can provide an alternative to public overcrowded cemeteries although their long-term operation is challenging and can lead to 'aggressive neoliberal managerial practices' (Rusu, 2020, p. 12). Moreover, as argued by Rugg (2020), 'the intervention of the private sector tends to exacerbate inequalities' (p. 11). The system of selling plots for 'family (ancestral) graves' established by *Ritual* contributes to the rise of inequalities with regard to access to burial at Moscow cemeteries and physical reduction of publicly accessible parts of cemeteries in favour of the private ones. An administrative context might also contribute to the commercial dimension of Moscow cemeteries: *Ritual* is managed by the Department of Trade and

Services, which oversees the commercial sector, such as retail, food and household services. Financial resources are essential for the sustainability of cemeteries, and it feels natural that those responsible for the graves should contribute to cemeteries' maintenance and development. However, the system for such contributions should be built on the principles of social justice (Rugg, 2020).

Apart from the primary function of cemeteries, heritage aspects of Moscow cemeteries are the only other function articulated at the policy level. Taking into account the focus of the Russian state cultural policy on memorialisation (Turoma & Mjør, 2020), cemeteries, which are memorial places by their nature, could be used as an ideological resource. However, there is no evidence available. Malysheva (2018) demonstrates that the attempt of the Soviet Union to use cemeteries in ideological work failed as cemeteries 'proved to be one of the most stable and archaic social spheres' (p. 357). One of the reasons why cemeteries have always been absent from the national memorialisation discourse might be that they are viewed as spaces of personal memories rather than national glory, which would explain the lack of attention to ordinary Moscow cemeteries. Not every grave is or has to be a heritage one, but it does not mean that 'ordinary' graves do not deserve public attention. The idea of future cemeteries as memorial parks also demonstrates that public memory is viewed as a contradiction to private grief; however, grief is legitimate in the cemeteries which should be able to provide consolation for everyone who seeks it (Bachelor, 2004). Cemeteries are genuine public spaces because social encounters occur here through sharing private grief and memories in a public setting rather than through physical contact as it is practised in other types of public space. Contemporary cities need a variety of public spaces which fulfil different needs and address different audiences (Carmona, 2015); therefore, cemeteries' unique role as public spaces accommodating grief and contemplation should not be overlooked.

Different aspects and meanings exist simultaneously in cemetery space (Woodthorpe, 2011): Moscow cemeteries are both spiritual and commercial, liminal and multifunctional. The four dimensions nourish and contradict each other, shaping the policy gap this study has identified. The federal and city planning policies view cemeteries primarily in terms of interment provision and overlook their other functions. However, the complexity of the qualities Moscow cemeteries hold, as revealed in this attempt to analyse them as public spaces, should not be ignored if the authorities aim to build a human-centred city with a variety of types of public spaces

available. Evidence from other cities undergoing densification demonstrates that this process might lead to reconfiguration of the role of cemeteries at the policy level and incorporation of cemetery development into larger urban planning goals (Grabalov & Nordh, 2020). This paper shows that Moscow policymakers to date fail to address the complexity of cemeteries' functions and integrate cemetery legislation and spatial development visions and practices. To some extent, this failure explains the neglect and disorder of Moscow cemeteries.

A utilitarian view on cemeteries determines their exclusion from the priorities of Moscow spatial development, including the current public space improvement campaign run by the city government. The campaign was initially inspired by the ideas of human-centred, pedestrian-friendly and liveability-focused urban development (Zupan & Büdenbender, 2019), yet pushing forward public space aesthetics rather than functional and political attributes (Kalyukin et al., 2015). Trubina (2020) sees it as a case of speculative urban development which focuses on attractive visible results and quick fixes, ignoring the 'unspectacular' parts of urban infrastructure. Based on the analysis presented in this paper, Moscow planners and policymakers mainly consider the primary function of cemeteries as burial grounds and places for personal commemoration without paying attention to cemeteries' multifaceted role as public spaces (cf. similar findings of Klaufus, 2018 in Bogotá). At the policy level, cemeteries belong to the unspectacular urban infrastructure and have many meanings, such as their spiritual aspects, which are difficult to address in policies and legislation. Therefore, including cemeteries in the public space improvement campaign seems problematic, and Moscow cemeteries are likely to remain invisible at the policy level public spaces.

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