



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Urban Forestry & Urban Greening

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ufug

Public life among the dead: Jogging in Malmö cemeteries

Pavel Grabalov

Department of Public Health Science, Faculty of Landscape and Society, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Postboks 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Cemetery
Jogging
Malmö
Public space
Social media

ABSTRACT

Urban cemeteries in the Swedish city of Malmö witness a great variety of usages, and are not just limited to commemoration practices. However the social acceptance of nonconventional activities on cemetery sites is still debatable. This research, held in February 2016 in Malmö, investigates jogging as a clearly evident part of the cemeteries' daily life. It aims to explore jogging as one among many activities in Malmö cemeteries and to understand people's opinions about this activity. Three urban cemeteries, differing in size, location and design were examined through three methods: observations of activities, a study of social media and an online questionnaire. The activities in these Malmö cemeteries vary depending on the sites' features. Jogging is an essential part of the activities in each of the cemeteries and does not visibly conflict with the other functions of the cemeteries. At the same time this study demonstrates evidence that for many users cemeteries remain special localities with their own set of behavioural norms where jogging is still questionable. The research proves some similarity between the functions of the urban cemeteries in Malmö and formalized parks and their potential for accommodating a variety of functions which should be explored in future research. In the context of increased urban development a better understanding of the current role of the cemeteries within the urban fabric appears highly relevant for green infrastructure planners.

1. Introduction

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

Urban cemeteries are an intriguing example of shifting public space usage in cities undergoing densification. A classical example of Roman *res nullius*, or nobody's property (Davy, 2012), cemeteries provide space for very personal practices in a very public environment. The place and role of cemeteries in urban spaces can reflect current social and cultural processes. They can supply daily contact with the fact of death and our mortality (Alexander et al., 1977) and thus stake its place in human society. During the last few decades we have witnessed changes in burial practices and variations around perceptions of death as well as a shift to more multicultural societies. These trends determine new discourses in

urban cemeteries already studied from perspectives of landscape design (Wingren, 2013) and social sciences (Young and Light, 2016).

Evensen et al. (2017) demonstrate evidence from two cemeteries in Norway, where everyday activities are not only limited to commemoration practices and note the small amount of empirical studies of such practices. The social acceptance of nonconventional activities on cemetery sites is still questionable, this thereby provides fertile ground for potential conflicts between different activities and users (Woodthorpe, 2011). One example of such activities is jogging. Jogging being a popular leisure and sport activity is usually portrayed as a natural exercise open for everyone (Qviström, 2016). Nevertheless jogging in cemeteries can be observed in different cities (see Fig. 1) and was already registered by Evensen et al. (2017), yet so far this activity has not attracted particular interest from scholars.

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

E-mail address: pavel.grabalov@nmbu.no.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2018.01.027>Received 1 July 2017; Received in revised form 15 October 2017; Accepted 29 January 2018
1618-8667/ © 2018 Elsevier GmbH. All rights reserved.



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

2. Methods

The study was carried out through a mixture of methods which includes observations of activities in the cemeteries, analysis of photographs and text comments from social media and an online questionnaire. The three chosen urban cemeteries in Malmö differ in their size, location and design. I began with systematically observing people's activities on these sites. The observations were conducted by myself over 10 days in February 2016 (average day temperature $+5^{\circ}\text{C}$, no snow coverage during these days, no rain or snow during the observations). To gauge the scope of activities I did the observations over different times of the day: 11:00–13:00, 15:00–19:00 and 20:00–21:00. Depending on the size of the cemetery I chose one or several points of observations. I tried to equally distribute the times of the observations among these points. Within each observation session I chose a period of ten minutes wherein I registered every activity which I could see from that point. During the very first observation session I created a set of the activities' categories based on what I saw. Afterwards I used these

predefined categories with small adjustments for registration of the activities and marked the most common among them. I also wrote a field diary wherein I reflected upon my observations.

To obtain a broader picture of the activities people perform in Malmö cemeteries and the cemeteries as places of jogging, photographs from social media websites, together with their corresponding text descriptions and comments, were collected and analysed. Social media is a growing source of data for ethnographical research (Markham, 2017) and a source of rich open-access data on the phenomenon under study. It has no time limitations as it provides insights into data which people shared through the whole year. For my research I used two social media networks with the biggest amount of data for Malmö: Facebook and Instagram. Among the 1200 photographs geotagged by their users, 270 of them represented particular types of activities. The material from social media was categorized in order to determine the most popular representations (both visual and textual) of activities which people practice in the chosen cemeteries.

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

The cemeteries' sites

This study covered three urban cemeteries in Malmö (see Fig. 2): Gamla kyrkogården (The Old cemetery), S:t Pauli kyrkogårdar (St. Paul

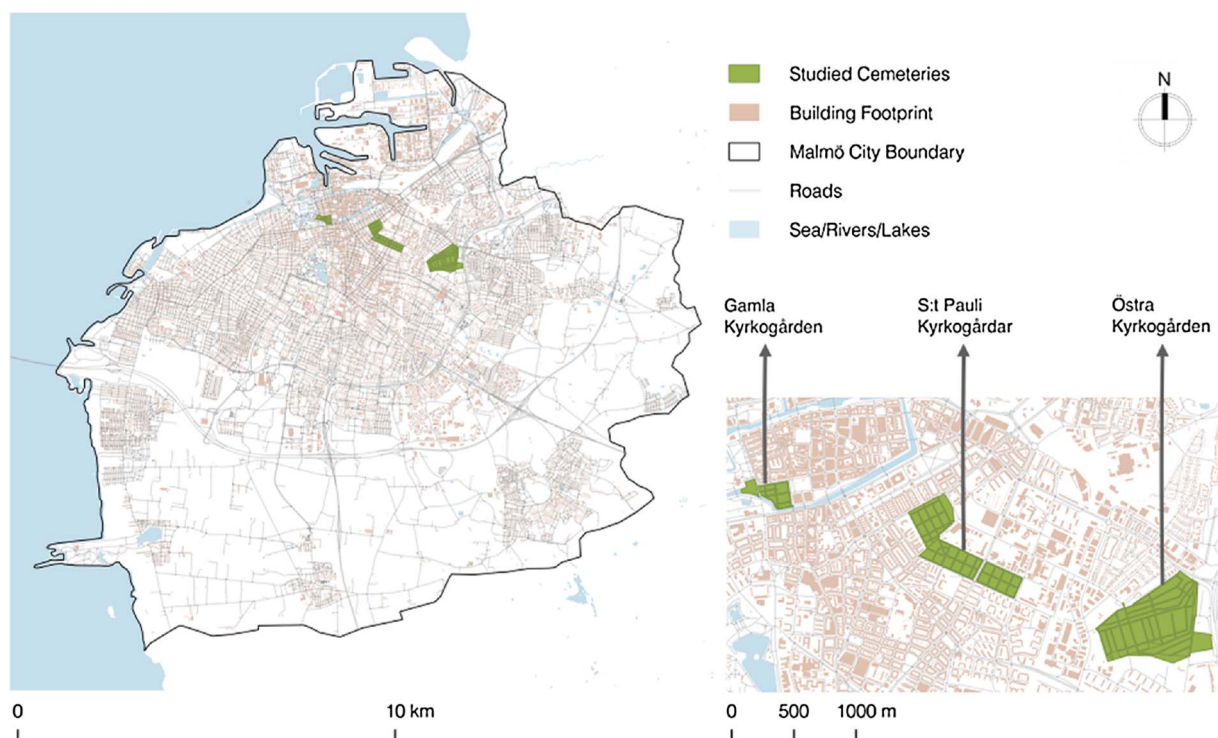


Fig. 2. Three studied urban cemeteries on the map of Malmö. Source of the data: Stadsbyggnadskontoret, Malmö stad, 2013. Map by Oscar Damerham.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6549132>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6549132>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)