

# Planning the Spaces of the Dead

A Discursive Look at the Critical Imaginative Potential of Urban Cemeteries

**Hannah Waaler Koppang**

Human Geography

HG04090 - 60 credits

Spring 2023

Word count: 42732

Department of Sociology and Human Geography

Faculty of Social Sciences



# *Abstract*

This thesis will take the cemetery as an object of research in order to shed light on how urban planning discursively contributes to construct and order the city, the assumptions urban planning operates within, and the implications this has for the conditions of existence for the cemetery as an urban space, for urban planning and for the city as a whole.

In both urban planning policy and research, there is a growing interest in urban cemeteries and their role as public green spaces. In an increasingly densifying city, the cemeteries in Oslo are thought to hold important qualities that could be developed to meet the needs of the city in the future. This concerns both climate change mitigation, population increase and changing cultural practices. The cemeteries are traced out to be able to be special, multifunctional green spaces that holds both green, cultural and historical values, and play an important part in the development of a more sustainable and livable city. Despite the value and quality of this research, their approach to cemeteries as urban spaces has tended to take several assumptions about the city for granted. In contrast, by situating the proposed changes to the cemetery within its socio-political context, this thesis is an effort to provide a critical reading of the values that shape the current strategic planning of cemeteries in Oslo, and the implications of these.

The theoretical framework applied is a synthesis of literature on deathscapes, cultural political economy, the production of space, and the concept heterotopia. Heterotopias are discursive and physical Other spaces, both mirroring the current processes of ordering in society, and offering alternative modes of ordering. Cemeteries understood as heterotopias holds a critical imaginative potential by resisting to be known fully and revealing to us the non-necessity of our common-sense knowledge of the world.

Through a discursive analysis of current policy proposals on the development of cemeteries in Oslo, supplemented by interviews with bureaucrats and planning officials, this thesis finds that the discourse on cemeteries as urban green spaces can be understood as an effort to resolve the ‘under-use’ of urban space. Instead of protecting the cemetery from the increased density and accelerating activity within the urban environment, the cemetery is supposed to no longer be pushed aside, but rather be understood as a part of the city and to be integrated into the urban networks of activity and accumulation. The language within this discourse of allowing for more, smarter, and more efficient management and use of the

cemetery space is thus not effectively challenging the problems of densification, but rather tries to shape a heterotopic space – a space disrupting the natural order of things - into a solution to the many problems of an increasingly commodified city.

In addition, the discourse on cemeteries as green urban spaces is in effect trying to make legible and rearticulate the disruptive qualities of the presence of death within the cemetery, by ascribing it certain qualities valued by the urban planning discourse and the economic imaginary it is marked by. By doing so, the imaginative capacity within these spaces as heterotopias are defused, and a specific understanding of urban space, what problems it faces, and how to solve these problems within the logics of a capitalist economic imaginary, is naturalized.

# *Acknowledgements*

Thank you to my supervisor Andrea Joslyn Nightingale for the insightful comments and feedback.

Sofie, thank you for your 'care package' and a much needed outside perspective.

Last but not least, a huge thank you to Harald. Our countless conversations, and your never-ending support and patience, have been invaluable. I couldn't have done it without you.

Hannah Waaler Koppang

Oslo, May 2023

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## *Introduction*

Feeling frustrated due to not finding a topic for my thesis, I went for an evening stroll through my neighborhood in an attempt to clear my mind. Wandering aimlessly between apartment blocks, I suddenly found myself next to Vår Frelzers cemetery, an old cemetery in Oslo where many canonical figures from Norwegian cultural life are buried. Passing through the cemetery gates, and finding myself surrounded by the silent darkness, the large looming trees and the long traces of history, I realized how I rarely have explicitly thought about what kind of space the cemetery is. Most of Oslo's cemeteries are today surrounded by busy intersections, train tracks and arterial roads. But upon entering a cemetery I believe many of us feel like we are crossing a threshold into a space set apart from everyday city life. At Sagene, a borough in the northern part of Oslo, Nordre Aker cemetery stretches out across 160 acres, closed in by roads on all sides. I bicycle past this cemetery every day on my way to the University, but never bicycle through it. While passing by, I often happen upon a running group who runs around and around the cemetery, brushing by the bushes, but never crossing into the cemetery itself. The cemetery seems to demand a reverence, and has a distinct, silent presence to it. It draws us in, while also being markedly different from the rest of the city.

### *1.2 The case*

The case that will be explored in this thesis is the current discourse on cemeteries as urban spaces in Oslo. At present, there are 20 cemeteries in Oslo which are highly varied both in location, layout, size and use (Grabalov and Nordh 2020, 36). As Oslo has grown and swelled, these cemeteries now find themselves in highly dense areas. But even though the cemeteries are centrally located, the areas used for burial have up until now been considered as a space distinct and separate from the rest of the city. In public media, there have often been news articles about unwanted behavior at cemeteries and about what the proper and

respectable ways of using the cemeteries should be, caused by people having used the cemetery for activities you normally would find in a park (Dagbladet 2008; Naghavian 2010). The separation of the cemeteries from the rest of the city is also evident in the legal regulations of these spaces, as cemeteries are currently regulated with their own zoning category (The Planning and Building Act, § 11-7, 2008). As such, they are not considered to be green recreational spaces, such as parks, as they are listed under the category “buildings and constructions” in the map regulations of the Planning and Building act (The Planning and Building Act, § 12-5, 2008).<sup>1</sup> In terms of conduct to be allowed for within the cemeteries, the different acts and regulations for cemeteries lists several demands in terms of general management, maintenance, design, behavior and use of the cemetery space that distinguishes them from other public green spaces. They call for the cemeteries to be kept and used in a ‘proper’ [sømmelig] manner (The Cemetery Regulations, § 9, 1997), and that “peace and quiet should rule” (Statute of Cemeteries, § 3, 2018).

However, while doing background research, I happened upon several news articles on the role of cemeteries in Cities and how cemeteries in Oslo and other Scandinavian cities can become more integrated into the urban fabric (Brochmann 2022; Laukøy and Sørensen 2020; Nordbø 2019; Sandberg 2015). Digging further, this discussion was not only present within public media, but had also been brought up in a policy proposal, years earlier. In Oslo, the cemeteries are currently under a dual ownership, split between The Community Church Council who are the main cemetery authority, and The Cemeteries and Burial Agency who holds the administrative and managerial responsibility, and is subject to The Department of Culture, Sport and Voluntary Work. In 2017, these three authorities collaborated on developing a strategic plan for the cemeteries in Oslo called *The Future Cemetery – Good, Green Urban Spaces* [Fremtidens gravplass – gode, grønne byrom] (Oslo municipality 2017). This strategic plan traces the current situation of the cemeteries in Oslo as well as related challenges and possibilities for development of these spaces in the future, particularly as urban green spaces. This document thus seems to discuss Oslo’s cemeteries, both in form and content, in a different way than their immediate connotations as burial grounds. Instead of as spaces that lie outside the norm, the strategic plan traces out how cemeteries can become multifunctional urban green spaces within the prospect of an increasingly densifying city.

There is also a growing body of research within the a Nordic research community on urban planning, landscape architecture and cultural heritage that, in a similar vein, has been

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<sup>1</sup> All ensuing quotes from Norwegian sources are translated by me, including policy documents and interview transcripts.

concerned with defining the cemetery, as well as its uses, functions, and people's perceptions of them - as an urban green space (Evensen et al. 2017; Grabalov 2018; Grabalov and Nordh 2020; Grabalov and Nordh 2021; Nordh and Evensen 2018; Nordh et al. 2017; Nordh et al. 2023; Skår et al. 2018; Swensen et al. 2016). They discuss how cemeteries, through changes in policy regulations and physical design, while still preserving the cemeteries' distinctness, can be developed into becoming more accommodating for other uses than their primary use as burial grounds. The cemeteries in Oslo actually make up of 7% of the total green space in the city (Nordh and Evensen 2018, 81), and are therefore presented both in the strategic document and in the research literature to hold important qualities that needs to be developed to meet the needs of the city in the future. This concerns both climate change mitigation, population increase and changing cultural practices. The cemeteries are traced out to be able to be special, multifunctional green spaces that holds both green, cultural and historical values, and play an important part in the development of a more sustainable and livable city.

### *1.3 The aim of the study*

I would argue that both the policy discourse and the current research literature on cemeteries as urban green spaces in Oslo is highly pragmatic and utilitarian and skirts over several assumptions about the current state of the city. For instance, multifunctional use of the cemetery is seen as positive and necessary in relation to increased densification, but the idea of the densifying city and why the city is densifying is not questioned. By not questioning the socio-political context, or some of the values that define urban development and planning today, the proposed changes to the cemetery space seem both uncontroversial and necessary. I believe however that it is crucial to become aware of and state explicitly what image of the city and of the drivers of social change this discourse is contributing to create, and not only take these assumptions at face value. This thesis will consequently be positioned as a response to this new discourse on cemeteries as urban spaces in Oslo, and the case will be explored from a more critical, power sensitive and theoretically founded perspective than both the policy proposals and the current research being conducted within the Nordic research community. By scrutinizing how the cemetery is conceptualised as an urban space and how it is shaped into an urban planning issue within this discourse, I believe this case can shed light on how urban planning works and on what assumptions that guide urban planning today.

The main perspective this thesis will take as its starting point is a post-Marxist understanding of the city. Within a post-Marxist reading, capitalism is not just a material



structure determining and constraining the relations of production from the outside. It is rather a rationality, an economic imaginary (Jessop 2004, Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008), that makes the social world legible. In turn this produces how we understand ourselves, our connections, and the possibilities regarding the forms of existence for the city and for urban life (Fisher 2009). Within this perspective, cities across the world are argued to be highly marked by a capitalist mode of production (Brenner et al. 2011). Not only are they arenas for the regulation and distribution of capital, but the city has been argued as having become a “growth machine” (Molotch 1976) and urban space as a driver for capital accumulation in itself (Hall 2002, 416). This has also been argued to be the case for Oslo, and consequently, that the city’s current urban planning regime is operating within a logic which puts primacy on competition and growth as primary drivers of urban change and that to a large degree is geared towards facilitating market-oriented development (Andersen and Skrede 2017).

There is a vast body of literature that traces out how the capitalist city has given life to issues in terms of financialization (Tranøy et al. 2020), gentrification and related affordability and displacement pressures (Slater 2009), environmental degradation (Foster and Clark, 2018), as well as a larger social justice discussion about whom the city is for and what it should be (Marcuse 2011). Nonetheless, this thesis will not discuss why capitalism is at fault for many urban ills, as this has already thoroughly been done. Instead, I will be applying a discourse analytical methodology (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002) to a relational understanding of space (Massey 2005) and a social constructionist perspective on the city as produced by capitalism (Lefebvre [1974] 1991), in order to discuss the possibilities of thinking and imagining a space outside of the capitalist city.

In approaching the cemetery as a special case of urban space, this thesis presents an effort to use the cemetery as an object of research in order to think about these broader conditions of existence for urban life. Within geography, space marked by the presence of death and the creation, management and maintenance of such sites have been conceptualised as ‘deathscapes’ (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010; Maddrell 2020). Deathscapes are products of a complex entanglement of culture and nature and the relations of power going into governing both the living and the dead (Gao et al. 2021). As Muzaini (2017) writes, deathscapes “[...] reveal as much about the living as they do about the dead” (Muzaini 2017, 1). Cemeteries understood as deathscapes are therefore highly political spaces, because how this space is ordered and made meaningful is said to mirror the larger knowledge systems and processes of ordering in society (Kong 2012, 415; Semple and Brookes 2020; 1).

The debate on cemeteries as urban spaces in Oslo has specifically been chosen as a case because it can be seen as a discursive break - an effort to articulate the cemetery and make it meaningful to the current regime of urban planning in new ways. As a space which has previously not been a large part of the planning consciousness or the urban fabric, studying how the cemetery is constructed as an object for urban planning within the development of policy, might then tell us something about the current process of urban planning and how it conceives of the city. The dual ownership over the cemeteries in Oslo is currently expected to change as Oslo municipality has applied to take on full responsibility (Grønnestad 2020). This also makes the discussions this thesis will raise highly relevant as the prospected changes to the cemetery and its functions might become easier to realize, when the choice of change lies fully in the hands of the municipality.

However, within the debate on cemeteries in Oslo, there does not yet seem to be a clear-cut answer on how and on what terms the integration of the cemetery should happen. Within policy circles there seem to be confusion about how to regulate cemeteries in the future, what zoning category they should belong to and what they actually are supposed to be (Nordh and Evensen 2018). There therefore seem to be a distinct difficulty with ordering and categorizing the cemetery within the urban taxonomy. Are they cultural and historical landscapes, are they green spaces in the same way as parks, are they public or private, or are they everything at the same time? Cemeteries seem to hold some type of ambiguity and strangeness - resisting to be known fully.

To conceptualise this ambiguity, I believe it is fruitful to apply the concept heterotopia as a heuristic to think about the cemetery. This concept was first articulated by Michel Foucault ([1967] 1984) to describe a kind of spatial otherness - the qualities and principles of a range of sites that are in some way different, contradictory, and distorting in relation to the rest of space (Johnson 2013, 790). Yet, not only spatially Other, heterotopias are also understood as an alternative mode of ordering society (Hetherington 1997). By discursively and spatially standing on the outside, heterotopias are resisting to be fixed within our common-sense knowledge of the world. Their layered ambiguity makes heterotopias hold what Johnson calls an “imaginative intensity” (Johnson 2012, 5). By both mirroring and contradicting society, heterotopias offer us a space to think outside of our usual categories by reflecting back onto us our processes of meaning making and showing us the arbitrariness of our current structures. Deathscapes, such as cemeteries, are thus powerful places to investigate because they are considered as prime examples of urban heterotopias (Foucault ([1967] 1984, 5). As Meyer and Woodthorpe (2008) write “objects in these spaces are made

meaningful through the expectations associated with their separation from everyday society [...]” (2008, 1). It is therefore highly pertinent to open up a discussion about what happens when there is an effort to plan and order a space like this, and what happens when it is no longer supposed to be separate, but a part of the city and the logics that permeate it.

#### *1.4 Research questions*

The overall goal of this thesis is to show how heterotopic deathscapes, such as the cemetery, can help us think about urban planning and urban space in new ways, within the context of an increasingly commodified city. From this overarching goal, three research questions have been developed:

1. *How are cemeteries made meaningful within the current urban planning regime?*
2. *How do heterotopias stand in relation to the processes of urban planning?*
3. *How can cemeteries offer a space for thinking outside current planning ideals?*

The first question has been developed in order to explore how the current planning regime and its knowledge systems creates the possibilities of how the cemetery can exist within the urban environment. The second question has been developed to further explore how heterotopias, as physical and discursive Other spaces, confronts us with how urban planning operates. The third and final question takes the cemetery as a heterotopic deathscape to explore the critical and imaginative potential the cemetery holds in relation to the rest of urban space. This thesis will consequently not try to determine what kind of public space the cemeteries in Oslo are, or to find the true nature of the real-world object that is the cemetery. Rather, the goal is to interpret the language that is presented within the current planning discourse on cemeteries, and how this language reflects larger ideals of urban planning – how it conceives of and represents the cemetery space, and in turn how this has implications for the possibilities for urban space and urban life as a whole.

The contributions of this thesis will be twofold. Firstly, cemeteries and the phenomenon of death have previously been studied within cultural and historical geography in the context of urban space (see for example Gao et al. 2021; John 2022; Kellaher and Worpole 2010; Kong 1999; Kong 2012). But apart from the research on how to use cemeteries as public spaces outlined above, cemeteries have been relatively absent from more

classical urban geographical studies (Kolnberger 2018). This thesis will therefore create a synthetic theoretical framework that can shed new light on how to study and conceptualise cemeteries within urban geography and show how cemeteries can contribute to important insights into the study of urban policy and planning.<sup>2</sup> In addition, I hope this thesis also can bring a more political contribution. By scrutinizing the chosen case and related empirical material in light of the theoretical framework, I wish to open up a broader discussion about the state of urban planning today, and on the basis of what values and what understanding of the city that urban change is being promoted. In addition, thinking through the cemetery might show us how embracing the heterogeneity of the city and creating room for diverse and different types of urban space can be a political act. The cemetery might offer an opportunity for reflexively thinking about how we choose to order and understand the city, as well as giving room to imagine alternatives to the here and now.

### *1.5 Disposition*

The structure of this thesis will alternate between the more abstract and the empirical in order to answer the research questions presented above. This alternation is important because the arguments that are presented in the discussion of this case will be placed firmly in the more theoretical and conceptual perspectives that are developed. In Chapter 2 I will present the theoretical framework for analysing and discussing the case of the thesis. I first outline how cemeteries previously have been studied within geography and elaborate on the notion of ‘deathscapes’. I will present and position the thesis further in relation to the research done within the Nordic research community on cemeteries as urban spaces. From there I will lay out some core ontological and epistemological assumptions based in a synthesis of cultural political economy and discourse theory in the Foucauldian tradition. Lastly, I will go more in depth of how to conceptualise space, and especially how cemeteries can be understood through the spatial concept heterotopia. Chapter 3 elaborates further on the methodological approach, and the more practical aspects of my analytical strategy as well as sampling and collection of source materials, coding of data and issues related to rigour and positionality and how to deal with uncertainty in research. Chapter 4 is the analytical chapter and consist of two

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<sup>2</sup> Danielle House and Mariske Westendorp recently published the book *New Perspectives on Urban Deathscapes* (2023). Unfortunately, this was after a lot of this thesis had been written, but it seems highly promising in terms of taking seriously how cemeteries and wider spatial concerns related to death are relevant topics for urban geographical research.

main sections in which the source material is presented and discussed. The first section of this chapter will be a brief genealogy of the development of the cemetery as an urban space in Oslo and how it came to be heterotopic. The second section will go in depth into the current planning discourse on cemeteries as urban spaces in Oslo, explore the contents of this discourse and how the cemetery is shaped as an object for urban planning. In Chapter 5 I will return to the more abstract and discuss the workings of the discourse, namely what this discourse does to the cemetery in light of the theoretical framework and the larger implications this has for urban planning today and in the future. Chapter 6 will be the final and concluding chapter, where the contributions of the thesis are highlighted and some avenues for further research is presented.

## *Literature and theory*

### *2.1 Deathscapes*

Social and cultural expressions related to death and burial practice have long been studied in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, archaeology, cultural history and psychology (Francis et al. 2005; Laqueur 2015; Romanillos 2015; Rugg; 2022; Semple and Brookes 2020). Within geography, studies of spaces related to death are a part of a larger strand of research called necrogeography, where the object of study is called ‘deathscapes’ (Maddrell 2020; Maddrell and Sidaway 2010). Deathscapes are defined as “spaces associated with the mourning, management, and remembrance of death, dying, and the dead [...]” (Muzaini 2017, 1). The goal for this strand of research is to study “[...] how these [deathscapes] are physically and symbolically constructed, negotiated, and sometimes contested” (Muzaini 2017, 1).

The concept of deathscapes has been described as a marker of a spatial turn, as it attempts to bring a spatial lens the phenomena of death, dying, mourning and remembrance (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010; Rugg 2022; Semple and Brookes 2020). It is argued that death is not something that is only experienced in time, as the end of the temporal progression we call life, but rather, it is also often both described in spatial terms, and highly experienced and expressed through space (Romanillos 2015, 560). One of the main arguments forwarded across this literature is that death, as the nexus of a range of material and symbolic processes, is not only spatial in itself, but also that it has the ability to transform and produce both material and emotional space (Semple and Brookes 2020, 1). This production of space is mediated through the intersections of social, cultural, economic and political practices related to death. Spaces where death is present is therefore not only a container or a backdrop for death but are particular landscapes that take form through death as a phenomenon, and the need to understand and govern both the living and the dead (Pitas and Shcheglovitova 2019, 19).

One type of space that is highly marked and produced by the phenomenon of death and related practices is the cemetery (Rugg 2000; Rugg 2022). As Francis et al. (2021) write: “The cemetery is a place where space and nature have been appropriated and transformed by management and by the remembrance practices of the bereaved into a legally sanctioned physical setting appropriate for the disposal of the once-living body” (Francis et al. 2021, 3). Cemeteries can be understood as social products of a complex set of interactions between the governing of cultural practices and the biopolitical management of biophysical problems related to the fallout of nature’s inevitable transience, that is, the disposal of dead bodies. In turn, these interactions make up a process that transforms and creates particular natural landscapes and land use patterns which spatially defines the cemetery. Within the literature on deathscapes, the cemetery space can be seen in light of wider land use struggles and contestation over urban space (Kong 2012, 451). As Gao et al. (2021) write:

[...] death, death rituals, and the ways and places in which dead bodies are disposed of/in, not only reflect socio-ecological concerns but are themselves contested spaces that are forged in response to political and environmental struggles over land, resources, and the symbolic meanings attached to nature. (Gao et al. 2021, 3)

The literature on deathscapes has currently evolved from studying the emblematic types of spaces related to death, mourning and remembrance, such as cemeteries, towards more conflictual and everyday expressions of landscapes being produced by death (Maddrell 2020), such as through circulating metabolisms of non-human death in a city (Shcheglovitova and Pitas 2022). The cemetery as a traditional object of study within the research on deathscapes has been criticized for not being as attuned to more contested and uneven aspects and outcomes of death, such as the differential exposure, encounters and experiences with death in the city along lines of class and structural inequality (Pitas and Shcheglovitova 2019). I acknowledge this critique but would argue that the cemetery is still an interesting and highly relevant object of study within the research on deathscapes and especially for urban geography.

Firstly, I would argue that it is relevant to study cemeteries as deathscapes if we conceptualise them as heterotopias. Even though the use of the concept heterotopia is not evidently present within the literature on deathscapes, I have observed descriptions of the qualities of cemeteries that echo the meanings that this concept holds. Francis et al. (2005) for instance, in their research on the experience of the people using and visiting municipal

cemeteries in London, conclude that the significance of cemeteries in people's lives are full of paradoxes and mystery. The activities going on there, like tending graves, are on one hand mundane, ordinary and domestic. On the other hand, they are juxtaposed with "the central secret of the cemetery" (Francis et al. 2005, 214). They also argue that cemeteries "display, contest and invert social relationship; both represent, reinterpret and re-model the relationship of person to nature" (Francis et al. 2005, 23). Their descriptions of the complexity of the cemetery are highly reminiscent on Foucault's writings on heterotopias (Johnson 2012), but do not engage with this concept fully. I would argue that this skirts over the critical potential that lies in this concept and might minimize the full extent of its possible contributions. Through this thesis I would like to show the relevance of the cemetery as an object of study, by taking seriously what it means for the cemetery to be a heterotopia.

Secondly, I would argue that studying the change in how cemeteries are understood and how they are given meaning within urban planning and management, might possibly tell us something more general about the contested nature of urban space and the power dynamics inherent in urban planning. Precisely because they are spaces produced by death, cemeteries provide a unique case for exploring the workings and management of urban space. This thesis' approach to cemeteries as deathscapes is therefore part of what Rugg (2022, 31) describes as a growing field of study where the planning and ordering of cemeteries is explored through the lens of professional management and policy development. It is possible to observe the beginnings of a change in how the role of cemeteries in the urban environment in Oslo is understood in policy, making this is a particular relevant case to study. In addition, as written, there is not only a change in how urban policy relates to cemeteries, but also a growing body of research literature within the Nordic research community with a an interest in cemeteries and especially their role as urban spaces. Because of this growing interest and the particular case they provide with regard to urban planning, I hold that cemeteries are still a highly relevant object of study, both for the research done on deathscapes and for urban geography in general.

## *2.2 Living with the dead in urban space*

In the Nordic research community, it is specifically within research on landscape architecture, urban planning, and cultural heritage that cemeteries have gained renewed interest. Studies belonging to this literature have done extensive work into the qualities, uses, experiences, and



functions of Nordic cemeteries, shedding light on how cemeteries can accommodate and evolve with the changing cultural, social, ecological, and spatial needs of the urban future. This research includes observations and behavioral mapping of the activities within cemeteries (Evensen et al. 2017; Grabalov 2018; Swensen et al. 2016), explorations of the experiences and perceptions of the visitors of cemeteries (Nordh et al. 2017; Nordh et al. 2023; Skår et al. 2018; Swensen et al. 2016) and the qualities of the cemeteries as restorative and spiritual environments (Nordh et al. 2017). In addition, this research also investigates planners and professionals' goals and perceptions of the future of urban cemeteries through interviews and planning documents (Grabalov and Nordh 2020; Grabalov and Nordh 2021; Nordh and Evensen 2018). This literature argues that because the cemeteries are already being used in many different ways, the planning trajectory should accommodate these multiple uses as well as develop with the current changes in people's attitudes towards death, bereavement and burial trends. It is discussed how cemeteries could expand as public and green urban spaces and play a more diverse role in the urban space by accommodating "more functions, cultures, forms of disposal and design ideas, thus serving as inclusive public spaces" (Grabalov and Nordh 2021, 13).

In addition to the emphasis on the potential for changing the role of cemeteries within the urban environment to become more distinct urban green spaces, the articles also highlight the special qualities of cemeteries (Skår et al. 2018). They stress the importance and benefits of both preserving and enhancing these qualities in terms of recreation, health, restorative and spiritual depth (Nordh et al. 2017), cultural encounters and diversity (Swensen and Skår 2019), as well as the positive effects cemeteries can have for the environment and ecological well-being of the city. It is therefore not suggested in this literature that cemeteries should become urban green spaces similar to parks. Rather, the negative implications and potential difficulties of increased use of the cemetery space is discussed, both in terms of it possibly reducing the distinctness of the cemeteries by allowing for more and different activities, as well as the potential tensions and conflict it might create between different user groups (Nordh et al. 2023; Swenson and Skår 2019).

While still acknowledging the importance of these studies and the quality of this work, this thesis will take a different approach to the topic and be positioned as a response to this body of literature. Firstly, this is because I would argue that the studies in this literature are highly policy oriented. A lot of the research is focused on debating and suggesting pathways for the future management of cemeteries as urban green spaces, without questioning the premises of these changes. Grabalov and Nordh (2021) for instance write that "We

demonstrate the potential of cemeteries' contribution to the urban environment as multifunctional public spaces – the trajectory envisioned by Oslo and Copenhagen's municipalities” (Grabalov and Nordh 2021, 14). In this respect it is telling that three different articles from this literature (Evensen et al. 2017; Nordh et al. 2017; Swensen et al. 2016) have been used as source material for the strategic plan on cemeteries in Oslo, giving weight to the arguments within this document concerning clarifying the role of the cemeteries as urban green spaces (Oslo municipality 2017). In addition, researchers from this community have participated in and written several commentaries in the public news, about the same topic (Baldersheim 2022; Cogorno 2022; Grande 2018; Swensen et al. 2018). However, certain premises seems to be taken for granted. For example, multifunctional use of space is seen as positive and necessary in relation to increased densification, but the idea of the densifying city is not questioned.

Secondly, I would argue that this literature lacks in critical nuance and analytical depth in terms of theorizing the power relations inherent in producing urban space. This can be seen in how Skår et al. (2018) attempt to argue for a social justice perspective in cemetery planning by using Lefebvre's theories on the production of space and his concept 'the right to the city'. They argue that cemeteries today might to a too large degree be planned and managed as a “dominant representation” (Skår et al. 2018, 377), meaning that cemeteries in Oslo are mainly planned and managed as being burial grounds, and not on the basis of how people experience and use them. Because of this, they argue that the cemeteries are not able to be spaces people can identify themselves with. Therefore, they argue that the varied activities and uses of the cemeteries they found in their study can be understood as “[...] a struggle to ‘de-alienate’ urban space through the appropriation of space [...]” (Skår et al. 2018, 377) by the people who actually use the cemeteries. They conclude with a suggestion for policy to be open to this appropriation from below, but that it should also be “[...] met with careful management and regulations to help meet their original purpose [...]” (Skår et al. 2018, 379), in order to make sure that the activities and groups allowed are appropriate for the space.

I would argue that Skår et al.'s (2018) use of Lefebvre's theories is misrepresenting the full extent of the meaning of the right to the city, and therefore loses Lefebvre's Marxist foundation. As Marcuse (2011) writes, the right to the city is not just any right, such as a right to a service, or to access or to use urban space as you want. Rather it is “*The right to the city* [...]” (Marcuse 2011, 34), meaning that people who live and inhabit a city should have the right to shape, produce and govern it. The right to the city can be seen as a term developed directly in rejection of the prevailing capitalist system and the notion that market forces

should be what determines how urban space takes form (Brenner et al. 2011). I would argue then that using the concept the right to the city in the context of how to manage the tension between increasing recreational activities and the primary use of the cemetery does not engage with some of the fundamental social justice perspectives at the core of this concept, such as how to combat the appropriation of urban space by market forces.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, Grabalov and Nordh (2021) use a similar concept to heterotopia called liminality, meaning a border crossing or threshold between two states of being. They write that cemeteries are liminal both in their spatial character, by being physically separated from the city, and also in holding complex meanings. Because of this they argue that liminality is a fundamental characteristic of cemeteries but add that it needs to be balanced or reduced to some extent in order to make the cemetery more welcoming and accommodating for the expected increased use. The same way as Lefebvre is misrepresented in Skår et al. (2018), I would argue Grabalov and Nordh (2021) does not take seriously the analytical depth of this concept and what this actually entails for what kind of space the cemetery is and how it relates to processes of urban planning.

The goal here is not to suggest that cemeteries cannot be used differently, or that how we understand what these spaces are, the meanings they hold and the functions they could serve, should not change. Rather, I would argue that it is important to open up a critical discussion of the socio-political planning context that makes such changes possible, and what value judgements, what image of the city, death, and space, these are based on. There is a lack of a power sensitive perspective in these studies which I believe is integral to understand the implications of the proposed changes for the cemetery as an urban space. As the body of literature is premised on arguing how the cemeteries are to become more integrated into the urban fabric as green spaces in the future, they do not question what has created the need to use and understand the cemeteries in this way. As mentioned, the Nordic research literature has also been used as ‘evidence’ for the policy proposal that will serve as a basis for my analysis and discussion, and I believe they are contributing to the discourse in terms of understanding what kind of planning issue urban cemeteries are. I will therefore return to some of the Nordic research done on cemeteries and the issues that have been raised here in parts of the analysis and discussion of the case.

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<sup>3</sup> I will not apply the concept right to the city explicitly in this thesis, but the premise of the appropriation of space by capital will run throughout.

### *2.3 Where to go from here? Reflections on ontology and epistemology*

To create a more critical entry point for the exploration of the case, the ontological basis for this thesis will be inspired by work done within a post-Marxist tradition. This is a research tradition which seeks not only to understand the structuring forces of the material basis of society as traditional Marxist research does. Rather this tradition is an effort to overcome the material-ideational divide inherent in structural Marxism, by employing perspectives from post-structural and anti-essentialist thinkers to explore how the world is made and remade within particular knowledge regimes (Callinicos et al. 2020, 1). As Foucault writes: “We must not imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only decipher. The world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favour” (Foucault 1981 as cited in Mills [2004, 47]). Consequently, the project of this thesis is not simply to describe *what* the cemetery is, but *how* it comes to be. Not only does this contrast with a classical Marxist approach, but also the research done on cemeteries within the more policy oriented Nordic research community outlined above. I would argue this strand of research has mainly asked what the cemetery is, how and why people are using them, and what the content of policies on cemeteries are, but not how they come to be what they are.

I have therefore chosen to start out with a discourse theoretical basis for this thesis in order to capture these processes of meaning making. However, because the project is to explore how the cemetery as an urban space is made and remade within the current mode of production that is capitalism, it is required to develop some understanding of the economy as well. Many classical post-structuralists, from which discourse theory has its basis, do not explicitly deal with political economy. This is because post-structuralism, from which discourse theoretical approaches have emerged, does not directly adhere to this kind of structural materialist explanation of the social world (Cresswell 2013, 207). In order to bridge the gap between the ideational and the material, I will start from the concept economic imaginaries, because I believe this concept captures how the economy is not only materiality and structure, but a frame of mind – a particular socially constructed rationality that upholds the validity of certain ways of knowing the world.

The concept of economic imaginaries is developed within the research tradition of cultural political economy (CPE). CPE is described as a post-disciplinary approach which seeks to explore the underlying historical mechanisms and social processes of the political

economy through an understanding of the interconnectedness of the material and the semiotic, of practice and meaning, and their coproduction of the political economic reality, especially through different policy programs (Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008, 1155). Ontologically, CPE stands in contrast with traditional or orthodox political economy as it maintains a more social constructionist position, holding that the process of meaning making is central to the constitution of the social world (Jessop 2004, 160). Coming from a Marxist foundation, but with a social constructionist ontology, CPE thus tries to answer the questions of how the co-evolution of the semiotic and material affect how the current capitalist social formations are ordered, reproduced and transformed, and especially how the semiotic takes part in constructing and stabilizing these (Jessop 2004, 159).

The concept ‘imaginary’ is a term developed in CPE to capture the knowledge systems that help give meaning to a complex and disordered social and material world and the objects within it (Jessop 2004, 162). As Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008) writes:

Imaginaries are semiotic systems that provide the basis for the lived experience of an inordinately complex world; institutions provide the means of embedding lived experience in broader social relations and, perhaps, rendering it consistent across different social spheres. (Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008, 1157)

In other words, imaginaries are the many ways of signifying how we collectively understand the world, our identity, purpose, and relations to others. It is how we “[...] come into being as a collective” (Kaika 2010, 456). Economic imaginaries are in turn described as “[...] discursively constructed subsets of the sum of all economic activities which are in their totality too chaotic and complex to be the object of analysis, management or governance” (Grubbauer 2014, 338). They are therefore systems of signification that order the economy in a certain way, and makes it seem real and rational too us – economic imaginaries are ‘the stories we tell’ about our desires and needs, and about how reality is constituted and progresses (Kaika 2010, 456). Castoriadis argues that the capitalist economy is the prime example of the primacy of the imaginary in the current world, because the economy is thought of as the most rational and ‘real’ construct, but still is the “[...] most ‘arbitrary’, non-natural, non-functional social definition of needs [...]” (Castoriadis 1987 as cited in [Kaika 2010, 457]). Kaika (2010,) also emphasizes that imaginaries are not only expressions or representations of a collective social identity, but also “the reason why and the mechanisms through which this collective identity comes into being in the first place” (Kaika 2010, 457).

Understood in this way, the needs we have under capitalism are not necessarily expressions of our actual needs as a society but packaged and shaped into needs for the purpose of keeping the illusion of the inevitability of the capitalism.

Grubbauer (2014) and Kaika (2010) both show how to apply this concept in urban geographical research by exploring how the knowledge embedded within the capitalist economic system gets articulated through architectural developments, building types and other material changes in urban space. Whether it is the image of the office building and the international, disembedded and mobile life-rhythms these buildings signify (Grubbauer 2014), or the modernization of a skyline to signal transformation, growth and openness to the future and investment (Kaika 2010) - by communicating the logics of the economy within urban space, and by connecting them to the everyday lived life of the urban citizens, the logics of the economy becomes the way in which we imagine and experience the world around us. I therefore think this concept is highly relevant to apply when discussing how the cemetery is created as an urban space within the current planning regime in Oslo.

Despite the weight given to semiosis, Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008, 1157) writes that CPE is critical of what they call reductionist social constructivism, which they consider as leaving little room for the extra-semiotic and structural conditions for meaning and agency, and for the multiple and varied efforts, and activities that wrestle with transforming and resisting the current structures. They especially target some strands of discourse theory for not leaving room for the restraining processes and structures outside of the discursive, and consequently not being able to consider the range of possible imaginaries, why certain economic imaginaries become normalized and institutionalized over others, and the mechanisms behind this selection (Jessop and Oosterlynck 2008, 1156).

In regard to this critique, I would firstly argue that although Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008) give weight to the semiotic, their separation between language and practice is a false dichotomy. Discourse theory has a stricter social constructionist epistemology (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 4), which entails that our knowledge of reality is understood as accessed through language (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 8) and how we give meaning to the world is based on socially shared rules of how to interpret and order information (Dryzek 2013, 9). Yet, this does not mean that reality does not exist, but that how we understand reality - how it come to hold meaning for us - is through the socially shared representations of it (Mills 2004, 49). This also concerns social practice, as practices also become meaningful to us through the signs they communicate (Sæther 2008, 88). As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) put it “[...] language is a ‘machine’ that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world”

(Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 9). By enabling new sets of practices, institutions, spaces and places, discourses literally create the possibilities of existence for the ‘real’ world and the objects and subjects within it (Cresswell 2013, 213).

In line with Asdal’s (2015) reading of Foucault, discourses can be understood as not only the contents of language, but about language *use*, and the intimate relations between language and practice. Discourses are the *practices* that make certain types of knowledge come into being, and in turn shape our understanding of reality, the “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972 as cited in Mills [2004, 15]). Whereas Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008) critiques discourse theory for not being able to capture the processes behind the selection and retention of different economic imaginaries, I would argue that it is precisely the practices and technologies that seemingly give an order to the world around and within us, and the processes in which certain knowledge becomes privileged over other, that discourse theoretical approaches is concerned with. As Foucault writes:

I would like to show with precise examples that in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. These rules define not the dumb existence of a reality, nor the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the ordering of objects. ‘Words and things’ is the entirely serious title of a problem; it is the ironic title of a work that modifies its own form, displaces its own data, and reveals, at the end of the day, a quite different task. A task that consists of not – of no longer – treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. (Foucault 1972 as cited in Asdal [2015, 86])

Analytical approaches based on discourse theory are then about understanding the ordering of society and questioning these practices of ordering.

Secondly, Jessop and Oosterlynck (2008, 1157) argue that the current political economy, and its related semiotic expressions, indeed does leave its mark on society, but that the struggle over the stabilization of certain imaginaries happens within the extra-semiotic. Contrary to this, I would argue that it is actually within language that struggles like this manifest. Because of this, Jessop and Oosterlynck’s (2008) reading minimizes the intimate relation between the production knowledge and the workings of power. A definition of discourse that reflects this is that discourses are a “[...] fixation of meaning within a particular domain [...]” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 141). This fixation happens because different

discourses foreground some ideas and perceptions over others. When these ideas and perceptions become institutionalized, and normalized within particular regimes of knowledge, taken as ‘truths’, some things and actions become knowable and meaningful, and others do not. In this way, the dominating discourse in society becomes a social fact that shapes and delimits the possibility of knowing within a period of time (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 13). Following this, knowledge, and what we deem as truth, is always situated within a social, political, and institutional context (Mills 2004, 9). It is the systems of meaning within a particular time that establishes what is common-sense to us and make it difficult to think outside discourse (Mills 2004, 49). As Foucault writes “as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle” (Foucault 1981 as cited in Mills [2004, 38]). Therefore, it is within the articulation, realization, and practice of language that there is contention, as we are struggling for the very processes of ordering that happens within language that makes it seem like there is no alternative to the here and now, in contrast to Jessop and Oosterlynck’s (2008) position on this struggle being outside of language.

This can be exemplified by the work done by post-Marxist Mark Fisher who has argued, based on a quote often attributed to both Frederic Jameson and Slavoj Žižek, that capitalist thought is currently so all-encompassing and all-consuming, that “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism” (Fisher 2009, 2). Capitalism is thus not an external material basis for society, but a specific image, language, and frame of thought, that has become the only way in which it is possible to know the world. Capitalism, its categories, concepts, and points of reference now delimits what we can imagine. As Fisher (2009) writes “[c]apitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable” (Fisher 2009, 8). This does not mean that there are no alternatives, but that the current hegemony of the capitalist discourse and imagination has made it so that this *seems* like the only possible alternative. Fisher (2009) writes that:

What we are dealing with now is not the incorporation of materials that previously seemed to possess subversive potentials, but instead, their *precorporation*: the pre-emptive formatting and shaping of desires, aspirations and hopes by capitalist culture. (Fisher 2009, 9)

My position then is one that views discourse *as* social practice. This in turn makes language-as-practiced within our institutions, such as the current urban planning regime, central in studies within a discourse theoretical framework, because it directs us to understanding how



certain ideas gets stabilized and normalized within society, and thus how reality comes into being. Moving forward the thesis will continue to use the concept of economic imaginaries from CPE, because I believe it is fruitful in terms of analyzing the articulation of certain knowledge systems within urban space. Still, this concept will be used as something more than simply a group of signs - a semiotic representation of the external economic structure - but rather as referring to a larger system of knowledge and related practices of ordering that creates the material objects of our reality. These philosophical assumptions will consequently lean towards a practice-oriented discourse theory to overcome the separation between discourse and practice found within CPE. I will return to the specificities of the methodological framework in chapter 3, but for now we will dive deeper into the theoretical perspectives that will serve as a foundation for the upcoming analytical exploration of the cemetery as an urban space.

## *2.4 Space and Other spaces*

### *2.4.1 Space as relational and socially produced*

In order to discuss how the cemetery comes into being as an urban space, it is necessary to give an account of how space can be conceptualized. Following the social constructionist foundation outlined above, space is also an entity about which there is struggle and contention. The dominating conceptualization or ‘image’ of space has tended to reduce space to an objective and absolute geographical surface, existing outside us and independent of the objects within it (Massey 2005, 4). Soja (1996, 34) argues that what has characterized many social theorists has been privileging of time and historical context over space. In contrast to this, theories of space have been redeveloped and reformulated within both Marxist- and new cultural geography throughout the last decades, putting space center stage in studies of the social world (Cresswell 2013, 128; Hetherington 1997, 20). A core argument of this strand of research is that space is not something that exist ‘out there’ as an abstract and ahistorical form outside and independent of us, within which events and processes happen. Rather space and place are produced from and constitutive of the production of social events and processes, the relations between them (Hetherington 1997, 20) and importantly how we come to understand and experience these relations. “Space is what happens at the same time as the things that are supposed to occur in space. It is constantly being formed topologically through relations

between things” (Cresswell 2013, 220). Importantly, space is therefore also situated in relations of power, and power in turn is performed and enacted within spatial relations and how space is represented (Hetherington 1997, 20), said another way, space and power are co-constitutive (Gregory 1994, 26).

Doreen Massey (1994; 2005) has explicitly discussed the importance of these ontological assumptions, and their political implications. She argues that how we conceptualize space is often taken for granted and not actively confronted or challenged. She writes that “One of the recurring motifs [...] is just how *little*, actually, space is thought about explicitly” (Massey 2005, 7), and that this implicit reduction of space is not that innocent. How we conceptualize the world around us is never an objective or value neutral description but is rather always contingent on our understanding and interpretation of it. If we think of space as something natural and given, it will normalize and stabilize certain conceptions of reality and hide the always contested and fragmented process of making sense of the world (Massey 2005, 59). Massey exemplifies this through the idea of globalization and explains how our belief in the inevitability of this spatial trajectory is also a part of constructing this trajectory (Massey 2005, 82). When this idea is realized in both our day-to-day practices and in large scale technologies of governing, it reaffirms and legitimizes this particular spatial order by reconfiguring our geographical imagination (Massey 2005, 88). She writes:

We develop ways of incorporating a spatiality into our ways of being in the world, modes of coping with the challenge that the enormous reality of space throws up. Produced through and embedded in practices, from quotidian negotiations to global strategizing, these implicit engagements of space feed back into and sustain wider understandings of the world. (Massey 2005, 8)

When objects, ideas and phenomena are given meaning by being categorized, placed in relation to each other, and borders drawn between them in our spatial imagination, new constellations and social realities emerge. This makes our conceptualization of space have political consequences, because how we think about space shapes our understandings of other processes and phenomena in the world, and in turn makes some things come into being, while others stay hidden; “[...] the spatial organisation of society [...] makes a difference to how it works” (Massey 1994, 254). How we think about space is thus both an act of constructing the possibilities of how it is possible to know the world.

From this, Massey (2005) puts forth three propositions about space. Firstly, that space is *relational*, meaning that space is a product of interacting and intersecting social practices and processes. Following this, space can be understood as *heterogeneous*, as the social relations constituting space are plural and diverse. Lastly, this makes space *dynamic* and *open*, as the meeting of different entities and processes turns space into a state of always being made and remade (Massey 2005, 9). Massey thus sheds light on the multiplicity and contested nature of spatial relations. Realizing this opens up the possibilities of politics, as she writes:

[...] thinking the spatial in a particular way can shake up the manner in which certain political questions are formulated, can contribute to political arguments already under way, and – most deeply – can be essential elements in the imaginative structure which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political. (Massey 2005, 9)

For Massey (2005, 89), understanding space as relational, heterogeneous and becoming, will unfold the possibility of multiple imaginations, understandings and meanings, which are necessary for politics.

Henri Lefebvre also shows the inherent power and politics of space, but with a heavier focus on the process by which a hegemonic discourse or ideology within the current political economy is implicated in the production of space. Writing from a Marxist position, he theorizes how space takes its form on the basis of the dominant mode of production (Lefebvre [1974] 1991), but also with a commitment to overcome the perceived dichotomy between the material and ideational in structural Marxism (Ribera-Fumaz 2009, 453).

Lefebvre conceptualize space as being produced through a complex trialectic interaction between the physical, mental, and social dimensions of space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 38-39). The first part of Lefebvre's triad is *spatial practice*. This is the space of social production and reproduction, and space as it is *perceived*. It is the product of the physical and geographical practices of our individual and collective everyday routines and rhythms interacting with the material world (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 38). The second is *representations of space*. This is space as how it is *conceived* and conceptualized. This is the abstract knowledge, language, codes and categories of planners, bureaucrats, architects, urbanists and other 'experts' taking part in making space legible through technologies and instruments that organize and order space based on the relations of production (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 38). The third part of the triad is *representational spaces*. This is *lived* space, and space as it is experienced socially and in the individual body of those inhabiting space, which imbues

physical space with the ever-accumulating traces and symbolic imprints of history and culture (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 39).

The three dimensions of this triad are not separate spaces, but are rather highly interlinked, co-existing, and interacting. Lefebvre emphasizes that there need not be coherence or agreement between the three dimensions, as seen when efforts of ordering urban space from above break apart when met with the actual use and lived reality of urban space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 40). Still, the relationship between representations of space and representational spaces, that is, the conceived and lived space, is said to often take on the form of the dominating and the dominated (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 39). As different professionals that claim to hold the authority of knowledge construct space in their image, their conceptualization of space might become institutionalized and become the 'right' way of knowing the social world, in turn making up the ground on which political decisions are made. Lefebvre argues therefore that conceived space often becomes the official and dominating spatial element, rationalizing the often disorderly, heterogenous, and dynamic reality of lived space (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 41-42).

Importantly, every political trajectory and mode of production has its particular social norms and relations, knowledge basis and practices that create a particular spatial product. (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 31). Lefebvre's focus is to show how, within modern Western society, space is thoroughly produced by capitalism, and that it is through understanding how space both constitutes and is produced by capitalism that we can start critiquing and changing this social reality. As space is both the context of production, a tool in production, and is itself a product (Cresswell 2013, 132), capitalism conceives of urban lived reality, and the spatial forms this produces, only within the measures and categories meaningful to the capitalist political economic structure. When the social relations, knowledges and practices of capitalism are concretized and reproduced within urban space, the city then becomes appropriated for the destruction-reconstruction dynamics and incessant growth inherent within capitalist reproduction, in order to keep up with the need for continuous capital accumulation (Junior 2014, 147).

Even though I could not find Lefebvre explicitly referenced in the CPE literature, I would argue that his spatial triad can be seen in relation to the concept economic imaginaries, and the exploration of urban space as an arena for the realization and reproduction of these. Grubbauer's (2014) study for instance, empirically shows how the practices and instruments of the professionals that represent and communicate current urban policies is based in a capitalist economic imaginary, and construct what Lefebvre would call conceived space

through this imaginary, and in turn lays restrictions on spatial practice and experience. She explores how these actors reproduce the economic imaginary by “discursively and visually anchoring economic imaginaries in urban space and the built environment” (Grubbauer 2014, 339), and thus the process by which capital creates space in its own image (Junior 2014, 151).

In light of this, although Lefebvre’s and Massey’s work are focused on the interactional and relational aspects of space, the oppositions and confrontations between different agents, their particular interests, and the spatial elements they contribute to produce (Junior 2014, 149), taking into account this thesis’ discourse theoretical approach, and the related interventions made above on the relations between the material and ideational, between practice and language, I will concentrate on the representations of space - the second dimension of Lefebvre’s triad. Because it is theorized that it is this dimension that lays restrictions on and create the possibilities of existence in the other two, I would argue that it is crucial to try to poke at the discursive practices that create space, and especially on what terms and in what form this happens.

#### *2.4.2 The Other spaces of death*

Bringing the relational and constructivist ontological perspective on space presented above into the study of cemeteries as deathscapes, the cemetery can be understood as not being bounded and discrete with essential qualities, but rather as being formed and produced through the socio-political context, and therefore also through how it relates to and evolves with the space around it, and in an urban context, with the larger city. Maddrell (2020) writes that the notion of ‘scape’ in deathscape is the “nexus of a number of fluid interrelated and coproducing elements that link individuals, families, and communities with wider, often global influences and forces” (Maddrell 2020, 167). This shows how sites where death is present, such as the cemetery, are not only shaped by the processes and entities within that space but also in the way they are connected – how these spaces “[...] intersect and interact with other moments and topographies [...]” (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 5).

Even though Massey and Lefebvre describe the relational qualities of space in general, there is something about cemeteries that seems to hold a relational quality that is imbued with a layered ambiguity and otherness that makes them apart from urban space. A concept that can help us explain this otherness is the notion of heterotopia. This concept was initially conceived of by Michel Foucault, most famously presented in a lecture he held for the Cercle

d'Etudes Architecturales in Paris March 14, 1967, and later published as text in the article *Of Other Spaces* (Foucault [1967] 1984). In this lecture, he traces the feeble beginnings of a spatial theory that describes this spatial otherness - the qualities and principles of a range of ambiguous spaces that are in some way different, contradictory, and distorting in relation to the rest of space (Johnson 2013, 790).

The concept heterotopia has previously been applied to studies of urban space (Dehaene and De Cauwer 2008) and architecture (Defert 1997), but several sites and places have been described as heterotopias. Among those mentioned by Foucault are prisons, retirement homes, brothels, mental hospitals, and cemeteries (Foucault 1984), but also waste infrastructure (Campos 2013; Sandin 2008), shopping malls (Kern 2008), sites for climate change mitigation (Edwards and Bulkley 2017), and even the moon (Damjanova 2013), are spaces which have been described as heterotopias. Not to come as a surprise, the concept has been contested and criticized for being poorly defined, both too broad and too near-sighted, far reaching and overutilized. Soja laments how Foucault's writings on heterotopias are "[...] frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, and incoherent" (Soja 1996, 162). Despite this, seeing this concept in light of Foucault's larger academic project as well as in conversation with Lefebvre's writings on the same concept, I would argue that the notion of heterotopia still holds interpretive weight, even if only used as a heuristic.

Based on Foucault's elaboration on the relationship between knowledge, power and space, Foucault makes use of a genealogical inquiry in order to reflect society back onto ourselves and show how it is from and within the discursive, cultural, and institutional margins, and who and what we place there, we can learn the most about our society (see for example Foucault 1965). As Soja and Hooper (1993) write "Hegemonic power does not simply manipulate naïvely given differences between individuals and social groups, it actively *produces and reproduces difference* as a key strategy to create and maintain modes of social and spatial division that are advantageous to its continued empowerment" (Soja and Hooper 1993, 184-185; original emphasis). The margins show us that what we deem as normal and true is entangled with practices of power that produce certain knowledges, which order and delimit insides and outsides, inclusions and exclusions, and continue to uphold the very knowledge-systems that produced this difference. The Other, the different and marginal presents to us the arbitrariness of the current order of reality, and also reveal the multiple possibilities of order and structure (Hetherington 1997, 7).

Interestingly, the first mention of heterotopia by Foucault is not in regard to urban space or architecture, as it has come to be associated with. Rather it showed up in the preface

to his book *The Order of Things* ([1966] 1991) and is used to describe other spaces within language. Referencing Borges' famous Chinese encyclopedia, in which objects are juxtaposed in relation to each other in a manner which seems both absurd and arbitrary, Foucault shows our tendency to having the desire to fix reality into ordered categories, and the non-necessity in how words and things usually are related to each other.<sup>4</sup> Borges' encyclopedia is therefore a heterotopia, because his categories being both ordered and incoherent at the same time, subverts our usual systems of signification. Sandin (2008, 86n12) interprets the discursive understanding of heterotopias as a "category of linguistic *resistance*, as entities that in their ability to 'destroy syntax in advance' escape any common locus applied to them, even language itself" (Sandin 2008, 86n12). From this, heterotopia, as it has come to be conceptualized, can be understood as the spatial fragments of these 'possible orders' (Cenzatti 2008, 75), as they are able to "organize a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them" (Hetherington 1997, viii), and they show us alternative ways of doing and understanding the world by embodying several meanings that straddle the lines between the excluded and included, the margins and the center.<sup>5</sup>

Firstly, heterotopias can be described as the space-times that show us the transformative thresholds of life. Whether it is the cemetery, the asylum, or the retirement home – they all refer to limits to time, our existence, and of rationality, that mark the borders of transition into the unknown, the unwanted, or different. As Defert (1997) writes:

These spatio-temporal units, these space-times, shared the fact of being places where I am and yet I am not, as in the mirror or the cemetery, or where I am another, as in the brothel, the vacation resort or the festival: carnival transformations of ordinary existence, which ritualize splits, thresholds, and deviations, and localize them as well. (Defert 1997, 275)

For cemeteries this tension relates both to thresholds in time and conduct, as the presence of death within cemeteries can be said to make them transcend the here and now, marking a border into something different and unknown by inscribing the finitude of existence in space

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault quotes Borges' classification of animals as strange as: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied (j) innumerable. (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies (Foucault [1966] 1991, xv).

<sup>5</sup> Heterotopias, and what qualities they hold, have been interpreted in a range of different ways. Foucault himself lists six principles of heterotopias, but not all of the principles need to be present for it to be a heterotopia. Here I choose to draw out two qualities that I deem fitting for the case and the argument I will present.

(Romanillos 2011, 2359). They are spaces for remembrance, as well as spatial *memento mori*, and thus bring together both the past and the future. This heterochrony, a simultaneous layering and stilling of time, opens a timeless space that creates a particular atmosphere and prescribes a certain conduct both inside and outside of the everyday (Foucault [1967] 1984, 6).

Secondly, many of the sites presented as examples of heterotopias are also marked by being spaces of undesirable, disturbing or strange bodies, individuals, social groups or objects (Campos 2013; Cenzatti 2008). They are spaces “[...] in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the average or norm, are placed” (Foucault 1978 as cited in Cenzatti [2008, 77]). The cemetery is inherently marked by the disturbing presence of the dead body and the fundamental secrecy and unknowability of death. Within the city, cemeteries as heterotopias simultaneously belong to and are separated from the city, “[...] they relate to it and underline its normality; yet they stick out, claiming their extraneity to normal social life” (Cenzatti 2008, 77), coming together as a space that is both intimate and strange, ordinary and extraordinary.

To further explain the role of heterotopias in society, Foucault shows how they relate to the spatial concept utopia (Foucault 1984, 3-4). Utopias are “imaginary non-places” (Boyer 2008, 55). They are sites which has no physical location in reality, but exist in our collective imagination, reflecting onto society in its idealized and perfect form. Utopias are ordered and coherent entities and represent that which we wish society was. In contrast, heterotopias are real social spaces (Clements 2017, 470), actually existing in space as emplaced, but imperfect utopias – the up-side-downs of the current perceived structure. Heterotopias are contestations of all other spaces, by showing the illusions and imaginations from which we order society (Boyer 2008, 54), at the same time separated and interpenetrated, disturbing and mirroring the space it connects with (Johnson 2013, 790-791).

Foucault’s elaborations on heterotopias helps us capture how space is connected to knowledge production. Yet, since I have already established that this thesis operates from a post-Marxist position, I believe it necessary to supplement Foucault’s elaboration on heterotopias with a perspective that can place these Other spaces in relation to the production of space by the knowledges and imaginaries of capital. Although it has been noted that Lefebvre criticized Foucault for his “fragmented micro-geographies” (Soja 1996, 162),<sup>6</sup> heterotopias are also present within Lefebvre’s work. In his studies of the production of urban

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault often studied particular sites such as prisons, clinics or asylums as both constructing and constituting a discourse.



space, Lefebvre often explored the actual periphery of the urban, such as the in-between spaces of the urban and rural, and current studies within fields such as urban political ecology and studies on suburbanization are heavily influenced by Lefebvre's elaboration on these urban marginal spaces (Keil 2018). But the margin is not necessarily only to be understood in this sense as a measure of a geographical distance, a shift in physical space from the center (Biagi 2020, 217). Rather the margin is used as "a point of view that redefines radically the glance over the remaining urban space" (Biagi 2020, 217), and "[...] the point that unfolds the reality pertaining to the city's narrative" (Biagi 2020, 215). This resembles how Foucault writes about the marginal in that it is a space outside the current order of society, but there are also important differences between the two, as Lefebvre has a different emphasis which I would argue is significant for developing a comprehensive concept of heterotopia.

Because Lefebvre emphasizes the production of space within the current political economy, his theoretical framework is both more all-encompassing in scope and more concrete when describing heterotopias. Within a Lefebvrian perspective, heterotopias are lived spaces that are excluded and stand apart from dominant representations of space and the appropriation of space by capital (Hetherington 1997, 23). Heterotopias are spaces that find themselves "in tension with the rationalized spatial order of capitalism (what is) and with utopian desire (what could be)" (Clements 2017, 471). Due to this, they are valorized by Lefebvre in terms of holding potential for resistance or transgression in relation to the ideology that dominates urban space (Harvey 2012, xvii). I

would argue that the simultaneous layering and stilling of time which Foucault describes, can be seen as heterotopian in a Lefebvrian sense as well if we view this heterochrony as a break with the accelerating metabolism of capitalism. When time elsewhere is increasingly speeding up, and the circulation of people, objects, ideas and capital are forever more rapid (Sheller and Urry 2006), the cemetery as a heterotopia offers a space outside these rhythms. In light of this, cemeteries can be understood as both power disrupting in a Foucauldian sense, as it allows for other types of subjects and other types of conduct as it stands outside both the physical and discursive space of power, and in a Lefebvrian sense, as it opens up a space of disruption in relation to the circulation of capital and the space that this produces.

For Lefebvre then, heterotopias are directly linked to the ideology of the political economy, as islands within the hegemonic, with potential for realizing a different reality. This stands in contrast to heterotopias in a more Foucauldian tradition as they are not necessarily directly sites of resistance, but rather spaces that order the social in an alternative way

(Hetherington 1997, 9). While heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense is concerned with the possibility to act, that is, showing that specific modes of ordering are contingent, in the Lefebvrian sense the concept leads us towards thinking about the possibility to react or resist current dominant modes of production. There is therefore a difference in the emphasis on the freedom allowed within heterotopias, opposite the controlling functions of the current ideology in Lefebvrian terms, or discourse, to use the language of Foucault (Hetherington 197, 23). These are not strictly opposites, as the Foucauldian emphasis on contingency is a prerequisite for the Lefebvrian act of resistance. Other spaces are thus present in the work of both, but for Foucault this is mainly expressed through relations of power and control, but for Lefebvre it is analyzed through resistance to the current structure of social production (Soja 1996, 162). Going forward I will bring with me a synthesis of these two positions and understand heterotopias as both reflections, and an alternative mode of ordering, in relation to the dominant economic imaginary that urban planning use to understand and order urban space.

## *2.5 Summary*

Bringing together the elements of this theoretical chapter, I arrive at an anti-essentialist ontology of space. Space is something that happens – it is produced, and emerges from overlapping and intersecting social processes, often with uneven consequences, and is highly influenced by the relations of power within the dominant regime of production. Because this social world is constituted by and co-constitutes language as reproduced in discourse, the production of space is then inherently entangled with discourse. Discourses are a particular way of knowing the world, or an object in the world, a particular ordering, and can thus directly be part of producing space. Due to this, how we think about space matters as it is always political, contested and value laden.

Economic imaginaries are ‘the stories we tell’, the collective understanding we have of how the economy and the social is connected, of our needs and desires, and how to organize these. Economic imaginaries can therefore also be understood as a particular discursive ordering. By articulating a particular imaginary through urban space, the economic imaginary makes itself known and ‘real’ by producing space in its image and making space meaningful within a certain framework of knowledge. Whereas the economic imaginaries are the established collective understandings of the ordering of society in relation to the economy,

heterotopias can be understood as alternative discursive orderings. Understood spatially, they are fragments of possible alternative discursive orderings. They stand both inside and outside time and space, being similar but different to the established practices of ordering.

## *Methodology*

[...] what is the ground on which we are able to establish the validity of this classification with complete certainty? On what ‘table’, according to what grid of identities, similitudes, analogies, have we become accustomed to sort out so many different and similar things? (Foucault [1966] 1991, xix)

This chapter will elaborate further on the methodological approach of this thesis. This includes the practical aspects of the analytical strategy, such as sampling and collection of source materials and coding of data, as well issues related to rigor, positionality, and how to deal with uncertainty in research. Rigor is a term describing how to ensure the trustworthiness of research (Stratford and Bradshaw 2021, 92), meaning how to separate scientific research from other inquiries. Due to the unspecified nature of how to conduct discourse analysis some might argue that this methodology is not sufficiently rigorous (Cruickshank 2012; Greckhamer and Cilesiz 2014). In addition, discourse analysis, as with many other qualitative methods, is conducted through interpretation of the social world, and not neutral and objective observation, which also might raise issues of rigor (Greckhamer and Cilesiz 2014, 13). Nevertheless, I hope to show throughout this chapter that, both because of the epistemological scrutiny which all knowledge production is put under within discourse analysis and through reflections on specific issues pertaining to this thesis, it is possible to uphold the validity of the research that is conducted.

### *3.1 Delimiting the field of study*

As all discourses develop within historical and spatial contexts, discourse about cemeteries, death and burial practices are also relationally contingent on both local culture, and the national institutional and legal framework, making highly variegated deathscapes. The same could be said about urban planning discourses, as the trajectory envisioned for a city will be

highly contextually embedded (Wachsmuth and Angelo 2018, 1042). The focus will therefore be on cemeteries in relation to urban planning in Oslo to narrow the scope of inquiry. The individual cemeteries in Oslo also emerge within particular contexts, whether it is in how they relate to the surrounding area, local ‘myths’ about that particular cemetery, stories about the people who are buried there, or in what time it was established. Here I have chosen to concentrate on the current overall discourse on cemeteries in Oslo, and it is not narrowed down to any particular cemetery. This is because, although the cemeteries in Oslo are highly varied, the goal is to discuss the change in how the object ‘the cemetery’ is constructed, and not trace the development of a narrative about a particular cemetery.

Case studies might raise issues in terms of generalizability or transferability, meaning whether a study produces insights that are applicable for other cases of a similar phenomenon (Baxter 20, 121). However, I believe that the analysis of the case in question will be able to provide some analytical generalizability through creating a theoretical framework that can be applicable for other studies. In addition, as this thesis already has established a relational ontology of space, the processes of urban planning in Oslo might be seen as relationally contingent on processes elsewhere. As Wachsmuth and Angelo (2018, 1042) argues, even though discourses are dependent on historical and geographical circumstances, some features of current urban planning, such as a faith in market-oriented solutions are widespread. Therefore, although the case is situated in Oslo, some of the findings might represent larger trends within urban planning as a whole.

### *3.2 Approaching the field - discourse analysis*

The main methodological approach this thesis makes use of is discourse analysis. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) emphasize that this kind of approach is “not just a method for data analysis, but a theoretical and methodological whole – a complete package” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 4). This approach then cannot be used as a method for analysis disregarding its underlying philosophical assumptions. As written in chapter 2.3, discourse analysis builds on a particular ontology and epistemology, which is reflected in a commitment to conceptualising the connections between language, knowledge and power, the relations between meaning and materiality, and how language works on the world. Instead of prescribing concrete analytical strategies, these commitments give directions towards what objects to study and what questions to ask.

Despite shared philosophical commitments, discourse analysis is not one coherent research strategy. Rather, the approach includes multiple conceptualizations of the relation between language and social processes, the role of agency within discourse and the weight given to historical analysis versus current power relations and politics (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 20). The main strands of discourse analysis are Foucauldian discourse analysis, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, discursive psychology, and critical discourse analysis as developed by Norman Fairclough (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). This thesis will mainly draw on Foucauldian discourse analysis, but my goal here is not to outline one analytical approach. Rather, I want to attempt to use the theoretical perspectives provided by discourse analytical approaches as a conceptual toolbox for interpretation and problematization of the source material. In this chapter, I will first go through the analytical strategy for this thesis, before going into describing the process of collecting data, as the analytical framework lays the foundation for how and what source material is relevant to study.

Within discourse analytical approaches, language as reproduced in discourse is the central object of study, as discourse can be defined as “[...] all the ways we communicate with one another, to that vast network of signs, symbols, and practices through which we make our world(s) meaningful to ourselves and to other” (Gregory 1994, 11). Discourse analysis concerns analyzing different “ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality” (Given 2008, 2). But, as noted earlier, this is not only a form of analysis concerned with what language expresses, that is, what it *contains*, but also what it *does* (Kahn and MacEchean 2021, 5). This is because language is thought to not only reflect reality, as a channel through which we communicate, but also constitutes and constructs reality through our socially shared representations of it (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 9).

Laclau and Mouffe describe this creative capacity of language as an *articulation*, which is defined as a particular combination of elements or signs that give them a different meaning and identity (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 140). When linguistic or other elements are positioned in relation to each other in new ways through a new articulation, this relationality will create certain meanings as well as exclude other possible meanings (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 29). Again, as noted earlier, this entails that language is highly imbricated in the exercise of power, as it constructs certain knowledges about the world, where some understandings are deemed more meaningful than others, which in turn determines what is possible to know (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 9). To analyze this process of meaning making is not only to investigate how difference is produced, as Foucault did in *Madness and Civilization* (1965), but also how similitude and propinquity is established to create new

meanings within language. As he writes in *The Order of Things*, we must also investigate “[...] their relationships and the order by which they must be considered” (Foucault [1966] 1991, xxiv).

To analyze discourse can therefore be seen as a method for “identifying and analyzing the contingency of meaning” (Sæther 2008, 85), that is, to analyze the possibilities of thought and the conditions that creates these possibilities. The purpose with using discourse analysis as the methodological approach of this thesis is therefore, as Given (2008, 3) notes, something more than a close reading of semantics. It is rather used to understand the social and cultural mechanisms and processes in which cemeteries are ordered and ascribed meaning, on what ground the validity of certain articulations of the cemetery is made and what fixations of meaning has become natural and conventional to us. Doing discourse analysis of the production of space is to zoom into the becoming of space and investigate a particular articulation of spatial elements and the power relations that make this articulation seem natural. It is about freezing space-time in its emergence, and questioning how it is becoming exactly what it is. Discourse analysis is therefore especially suited to study urban policy and the planning discourse surrounding the cemetery, as urban policy can be seen as the institutionalization and particular forms of knowledge about the city which serve to legitimize a particular perspective and ordering of urban reality and the objects that constitute it (Kahn and MacEchean 2021, 2).

This stands in contrast with studying a certain dominant ideology about urban space, which would constitute a more classical Marxist project. This form of analysis would rely on an objective truth outside of discourse waiting to be revealed, as well as the researcher being a knowing subject that is able to peel away the obfuscating layer of ideology (Creswell 2013, 211). This approach can be seen in how Lefebvre in his spatial triad puts primacy on lived space as the ‘truer’ and more subversive spatial element opposite the domination of conceived space. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, does not find truth outside of discourse, but rather seeks to understand how truth is produced and how this production has had consequences for how it is possible to understand the world. The methodological project of this thesis is therefore not to describe the truth about what the cemetery is, but how it comes to be known within the current urban planning regime and the economic imaginaries that permeate it.

Waitt (2021, 336) lists several concrete considerations that are important to engage with when conducting discourse analysis. Here, I have chosen to highlight his point regarding an awareness of the assertion of truth claims, as well as inconsistencies or ambiguities that

break with what is presented as common-sense and absolute knowledge. Discursive breaks or discontinuities are important because they reveal moments of re-articulation and re-stabilization of meaning. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) write: “[...] *changes* in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed. Struggles at the discursive level take part in changing, as well as reproducing social reality” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 9). Foucault himself has been called an “archeologist of the gaze” (Defert 1997, 276) because his project has been to lay out the scenes of these breaks, these moments in history where things were made visible in new ways and became shown as coherent, ordered and meaningful objects to knowledge or power (Gregory 1994, 277). This point is highly relevant for the case of this thesis, as well as the stated research questions, as I believe it is possible to observe the beginning of a break in the common conceptualization of the cemetery. The goal is thus to explore what this change contains and what consequences it has, both for how we understand what kind of space the cemetery space is, and the wider implications it has for urban space and urban planning as a whole.

### *3.3 Constructing and making sense of data*

Often, we talk about the researcher as finding and collecting data, in a way where the world is laid out in front of the researcher to then observe and describe. Mayan (2023, 153) rather suggest that we should call this a process of construction. This is because there are always choices being made, about what to study, what questions to ask, and what is deemed as relevant to present through the analysis. Even the language we use to represent the findings already has layer of interpretation (Mayan 2023, 154). The social constructionist epistemology of discourse analysis also stands in direct opposition to the claim that reality can be objectively, accurately, and univocally described (Foucault [1970] 1999, 13), and delineating the content and extent of a discourse might thus be seen as creating a false picture of order. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, 143) suggest in this regard to treat discourses as an analytical category, as discourses are never whole and self-contained objects ‘out there’ for the researcher to discover and observe but is rather also constructed through the research project. To be open about this process of construction is therefore crucial for the transparency and validity of the research project.

The main empirical basis for this thesis is the discursive articulations of the cemetery as it is produced through text. As Given (2008) writes: “Texts are both product of and in turn,



produce, discursive-based understandings of aspects of reality” (Given 2008, 3). This point of ‘aspects of reality’ is important because a text will never present the full picture. Texts are never neutral or objective representations of reality but rather a partial perspective, creating an image of reality based on what is possible to be seen through this perspective. When studying texts then, using Givens (2008) words, we need to ask ourselves: “Why was this said and not that? Why these words? Where do the connotations of the words fit with different ways of talking about the world?” (Given 2008, 3). The texts I have used as source materials are archival documents, different contemporary policy documents, laws and regulations, as well as interview transcripts. In the following sections the choices of selection and creation of these documents are further elaborated upon.

### *3.3.1 Documents*

In contrast with quantitative research, qualitative research such as discourse analysis, does not have the same requirements for representative samples in regard to the source material. Instead, source materials are chosen depending on their relevance for the project, and how meaningful they are within the context one is studying. In order to ensure rigorous sampling, it is therefore required that one to develop a deep familiarity with both the source material and the social context within it is embedded (Waitt 2021, 336). The strategy for creating data has therefore been theoretical or purposeful sampling (Waitt 2021, 338), where I have sifted out the relevant sources during the background research while getting to know the field which the discourse I am trying to explore belongs to.

Before going into the analysis of the current discourse on cemeteries, I will outline a brief genealogical development of the understanding of the cemetery as a space and cemeteries as a planning and management issue in Oslo, based on archival work in the Oslo City Archives. This is chosen because as Roche (2021, 223) writes, archival work offers a unique window into the geography and geographical understanding of a different time. In terms of discourse analysis, by understanding the historical circumstances that lay the foundation for the situation today, one might become more aware non-necessity of the current discourse, and more generally highlight the contextuality and dynamism of knowledge-production. But the problem with delineating and limiting source material was also highly relevant during this archival work because the potentially relevant sources are so large. I came to the conclusion that the source material would be mainly based on municipal reports written

every 50 years starting from 1837 up until 2011 (Christiania municipality 1892; Kristiania municipality 1914; Oslo municipality 1952; Oslo municipality Lund 2000; Holm et al. 2018). These reports are chosen because they are texts which are supposed to ‘wrap up’ the work of the municipality in relation to what they have done and what has been their central concerns for the last 50 years. I believe that these documents are telling in terms of the discursive construction of the cemetery during this period of time.

During my work at the city archive I also discovered a debate on the decommissioning of a specific cemetery, now park, called Sofienberg cemetery. The decommissioning of this cemetery was mentioned in the municipal report of 1912-1947 (Oslo Municipality 1952, 334), with reference to two articles in the newspaper *Social-demokraten* from 1916 (Social-demokraten 1916a, Social-demokraten 1916b), which sparked the debate of the future of Sofienberg cemetery. Even though the current discourse will not focus on any particular cemetery I have chosen to highlight this discussion as I believe it captures both some important continuities as well as differences from the current discourse. The news articles debating the future of Sofienberg cemetery are therefore also part of the source material for this thesis.

Cemeteries in Oslo are today subject to the Cemetery Act (1997), the Cemetery Regulations (1997) and the Statutes for Cemeteries (2018). In addition, the report *Believe it or not – The Future of Religious Politics in Oslo* [Tro det eller ei: Fremtidens tros- og livssynspolitik i Oslo] (Oslo municipality 2020), is the policy document outlining the overall principles and guidelines for the management of cemeteries. This report is concerned with cultural and religious policies, and the management of cemeteries is only mentioned as a part of the document in terms of diversity and inclusion of religious beliefs and related burial practices. There have therefore mainly been discussions on the management and planning of cemeteries by virtue of these being burial grounds. Cemeteries are also mentioned within the planning documents Oslo’s Municipal master plan (Oslo municipality 2014) and Green infrastructure plan (Oslo municipality 2010), but aside from this, cemeteries and cemetery management have not been particularly present as an object or issue relevant for urban planning in the capacity of being an urban space, and consequently there does not really exist a lot of other policy documents regarding this topic.

In the analysis of the current discourse, I will reference the documents mentioned above. Nevertheless, the main source material will simply be one document – the strategic plan called *The Future Cemetery – Good, Green Urban Spaces* [Fremtidens gravplass – gode, grønne byrom] from 2017 (Oslo municipality 2017). This is a 13-page document which traces

the current situation of the cemeteries in Oslo as well as related challenges and possibilities for development of this space in the future, particularly as an urban green space. This selection might seem like a ‘thin’ empirical basis for the analysis, which might create issues in terms of credibility, meaning the ability to represent the field being studied in an authentic and trustworthy way (Baxter and Eyles 1997, 512). Said in another way, how can one show that the findings of the research accurately describe the reality that is being studied? And in this case, is this enough data to accurately represent the discourse that is supposed to be explored? These questions would be valid interventions, but again through background research and checking in with the participant community, I found that up until the release of this document, cemeteries have not had a central position in the consciousness of urban planning in Oslo.

Reading through the municipal reports, I noticed that what started as long chapters dedicated to cemeteries and burial planning and management within the earliest reports from the 1800s, gradually turn into fewer pages, and then only to a paragraph. Finally, within the last municipal report outlining the work done between 1987 and 2011 (Holm et al. 2018), there is no mention of planning for cemeteries at all. This came up during the interviews as well and how the role of The Cemeteries and Burials Agency has been understood, as Interviewee 2 expressed: “The Cemeteries and Burials Agency is the agency we have which is the most managerial agency, where there really isn’t much politics. What is politics is really that cemetery strategy [(Oslo municipality 2017)]” (Interviewee 2). In addition, the newer articles within the Nordic literature on cemeteries focusing on document analysis also use the strategic plan as their primary source material for current policy on cemeteries in Oslo (Grabalov and Nordh 2020; Grabalov and Nordh 2021). As I will argue throughout the analysis, this strategic plan then might signal a discursive break, and a change in what type of urban planning issue cemetery management is. I therefore find it highly relevant to take a deep dive into this document and explore how the cemetery as an object for urban planning is being articulated within this.

The choice of having this one particular document as the main source material can also be justified if seen in connection to Asdal’s (2015) approach to document analysis. This is a practice-oriented approach which tries to hold both a semiotic and material understanding of documents by combining the Foucauldian perspective on how language works on the world, with the material and flat ontology of actor-network theory. Asdal (2015) argues that the creation of specific documents is important to study as documents have the ability to direct attention and make visible certain issues and also define the contents of these. Documents

therefore give certain issues primacy over others, and in this process also rework how we understand the central objects of these issues (Asdal 2015, 75). Policy documents in particular, rework and produce the issues we understand as relevant for political intervention and policy development, and the goal is to not only explore that something *is* an issue, but also “[...] analyze carefully both how issues emerge in the first place, and then what kind of issue and with which effect for the relevant nature object or issue” (Asdal 2015, 75). Although I will not be adhering to the flat ontology of actor-network theory in this thesis, Asdal’s (2015) approach echoes the theoretical and methodological framework I have developed, as policy documents can be seen as central parts of the fixation of certain discursive – and spatial – realities that act upon and modify these. Thus, the strategic plan can be seen as *the* document pertaining to policy development on cemeteries today.

### 3.3.2 Interviews

In addition to the documents, I also chose to conduct interviews as supplements to the document analysis. Within a discourse-oriented methodology, conducting interviews is not necessarily a prescribed method. This is partially because interviews often are conducted to get an understanding of an individual’s own opinions, thoughts and reflections concerning a particular issue (Patton 2002, 335), which is not what this thesis is looking to study. As written, discourse analysis is concerned with the larger representational systems that creates the possibility of thought, that is, what objects or subjects the discourse allows for. This is on a higher level of abstraction than the more experiential which interviews usually are employed to capture. Secondly, Cruickshank (2012, 43) argues that the type of text an interview produces, the interview transcript, can be seen as a product of the discursive setting of the interview, and not the discourse outside the interview which is the object of the research. This might have implications for credibility, as the findings might not accurately capture what has been indicated is supposed to be studied.

Despite this, I chose to conduct interviews as I would argue that interviews might give insight into how the discourse is being articulated through the answers of the interviewees. The discourse will always frame what is expressed during the interviews, and how something is said may reflect not only the individuals’ opinions, but the larger discursive system the participants both are a part of producing and is produced by. As earlier mentioned, Waitt (2021, 352) emphasize, doing discourse analysis is supposed to explore the geographical and

historical circumstances that has made some discourses hold primacy. This requires background research into the socio-material context of the texts in which the discourse is reproduced. Conducting interviews where, in relation to this, an important part in providing me with insight into the practices of the professionals, and how the discourse came alive in these practices.

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of the planning and management bureaucracy of cemeteries in Oslo, to produce the interview transcripts used in the analysis. One interview was carried out with two interviewees, which makes a total of six interviewees. The semi-structured interview was chosen because of the flexibility of this method of interviewing, which allows for the natural flow of conversation to develop, while still having the structure necessary to direct the focus of the interview towards the topics that were relevant for this thesis (Dunn 2021, 158). The sampling method used for the interviews was criterion sampling (Stratford and Bradshaw 2021, 100), as I wanted to talk to actors that in different ways are professionals connected to the cemeteries in Oslo. The choice of only interviewing professionals and not anyone from the public was made because even though discourses, and the power to bring knowledge in to being, permeate all of society, professionals are in a position to both determine the terms of the discourse, and mobilize urban space to make the political and economic strategies based on these discourses meaningful and valid (Grubbauer 2013, 339). As Mills (2004) writes: “[...] entry into a discourse is seen to be inextricably linked to questions of authority and legitimacy” (Mills 2004, 46). The discourse on how to plan for cemeteries is a specialized one, and although the general public would have had feelings and thoughts about the topic, there are certain people, like bureaucrats and planners within the formal government institutions, who have primacy in delimiting the rules of the game within this discourse.

The challenge of scope as described above also applies here, as there are no prescriptions of how many interviewees to recruit when doing qualitative studies (Stratford and Bradshaw 2021, 101). Although five interviews were conducted, only two of the interviews will serve as sources for the analysis, and in total three interviewees. This is because, after having conducted the interviews, I realized it was only some of the interviewees chosen that were directly related to the production of the strategic plan. Therefore, I wanted to place the most weight on the findings from these interviews, as to limit the impact on credibility. Still the other interviews served as important background work and made me more familiar with the field of study, how to approach it and how to delineate the discourse. Nevertheless, the sampling process is something I would have been more rigorous

about and done more initial work on, if this project had been redone, in order to ensure that the interviewees chosen actually represented the discourse that is explored. The caveat regarding the discursive setting of the interview still remains as the answers might have been skewed by the relationship and rapport between the interviewees and me, influenced by our subject positions, the types of questions that were asked, what type of answers the professionals thought was wanted or needed, or them wanting to be seen in a good light or not wanting to touch upon controversial topics. Yet, these are all so called interview effects, which might affect qualitative interviews done on any methodological basis (Dunn 2021, 163). Taking these caveats into account, the interview transcripts are limited to serving as supplements and context for interpreting the strategic plan for the cemeteries from Oslo municipality.

### *3.3.3 Coding*

A code is a word or a phrase that represent some notable feature of a specific part of the data material, called a datum (Saldaña 2013, 3). Coding is used in an iterative process of placing a sign to the data with the aim of making the data meaningful (Saldaña 2013, 194). Depending on what type of research design that has been developed, and types of data material, there are many ways to conduct coding and different stages and patterns one can work through (Cope 2021, 359). When adhering to a more post-structural methodology, coding might be considered as being too positivistic, as it tends to reduce the data, make it more comprehensible, and gives the impression of order and structure. But any form of analysis needs to rework the data from in its initial form (Mayan 2023, 187), and Waitt (2021, 345) argues in this respect that coding is relevant for discourse analysis as it makes the process of interpretation and identifying discursive patterns more systematic and transparent, which helps to ensure validity of the analytical processes. The data material has therefore been coded first for organization, then for preliminary analysis as a tool for reflexively thinking about the source material and how to make sense of it. At the same time, I have attempted to remain sensitive to the fact that this is a reduction for the purpose of analysis and will always be influenced by the way I choose to represent it.

This thesis has a clear theoretical perspective framing the analysis and discussion of the data, and two already developed concepts - heterotopia and economic imaginary. However, when trying to work out the contents of the current discourse, the aim has been to

not analyze the data deductively by having any pre-formed codes, but rather let the codes develop from the data, in a reflexive conversation with the theoretical framework. The goal is to describe *how* the cemetery is presented, and using a deductive analytical process would not have been conducive, and the process has therefore rather taken a more explorative form. Yet, the discussion of the findings from the analysis is placed firmly within the theoretical framework.

During the first stage of data analysis, I read through the source material and wrote down codes using low inference descriptors to represent the datums. The next round of coding was to start organizing these initial codes and develop more analytical codes, in conversation with the theoretical perspective, abstracting the contents of the data further, and also revising some of the theoretical perspectives as the data revealed new insights. These were then grouped into three overall analytical themes which will serve as the structure for the discussion on the contents of the current discourse. These are 1) the cemetery as a multifunctional space, 2) the cemetery as a space providing green resources and 3) the cemetery as a special urban space. These three themes have been chosen because I believe they encompass a set of representations on the cemetery in relation to the urban environment that creates the conditions of how this space can exist as an urban space in Oslo. The historical sources have not been strictly coded but was rather used to paint the picture of a development of the understanding of the cemetery in urban space, in conversation with literature outlining the same developments elsewhere.

### *3.4 Positionality*

A requirement for limiting uncertainty of data and increase the trustworthiness of research is that of confirmability, meaning that the findings, and interpretations of these, need to actually be acquired from the data, and not from the specific agenda or biases of the one conducting the research (Baxter and Eyles 1997, 517). Yet, as aforementioned, because discourse theory does not establish there ever being an objective truth out there to be found and described, there will always exist uncertainty regarding interpretation (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 21). The research process will thus always in some way be shaped by the researchers' own insights and previous knowledge and experiences, based in a range of different subject positions such as class, gender and age (Kahn and MacEachen 2021, 1).

What this requires is a critical reflexivity throughout the research processes (Bailey et al. 1999), not as an effort to reach some form of objectivity, suppressing any preconceived ideas, or strive to be able to come close to some sort of true depiction of the field that is studied (Catungal and Dowling 2021, 25). Rather, critical reflexivity is concerned with reflecting upon the constructed nature of all knowledge. It is about situating yourself within the research project and be transparent about your own academic ‘baggage’, the purpose of the research, one’s choice of theory and concepts, as well as your positionality in relation to the field that is studied (Stratford and Bradshaw 2021, 103). Critical reflexivity can be seen as an integral part of discourse analysis as Waitt (2021, 339) emphasizes that one of the main strategies of discourse analysis is to make strange what is known and take a part what is common sense. This is especially important if the researcher is close to the discourse, or part of the field being studied, because it might then be difficult to see what is taken-for-granted within this field (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 22).

When I started writing this thesis, apart from having consumed representations of the cemetery through pop-culture, I had no explicit personal connection to the field I am studying. However, during the process of working with the thesis, there was an unexpected death in my family. Going from not hardly having been to a funeral, and my only relationship to cemeteries was cycling past Nordre Aker cemetery on my way to the university campus, I found myself participating in a ceremony within the space I was studying. The goal of this thesis has never been to study the appropriateness of using the cemetery for other activities than its primary purpose, and neither is it about people’s feelings about this space. But actually being within this space and experiencing something tragic and emotional, made me reflect more on the purpose of the cemetery and the many points of contention there might be in trying to make this space into something more than a cemetery. Nonetheless, I don’t think that this experience has colored the discussions of the topic, as mentioned, the project does not come from an experiential perspective, but rather a more critical and political one. Still, this experience is something I continue to bring with me and is something which casts another dimension to this thesis and my relationship to the project.

In addition, my critical and political position is also worth mentioning here. As stated, I am writing from a post-Marxist perspective, and this thesis is therefore heavily critical of capitalism as the dominating mode of production. Everything from formulating the research questions, my choice of theory, and using a discourse theoretical approach to analysis is influenced by this position. This will in turn have a large effect on how I see and interpret my source material and what are relevant findings from these. This thesis is therefore also



inherently political, and someone else without the same political commitments might interpret the same source material differently. However, the purpose of discourse analytical approaches is, as mentioned, not to determine the truth about the world, but about what is possible to know within a particular understanding of it. Different political positions are therefore not obfuscating the access to how the world ‘really is’ but serve as frames of thought or ways of accessing it.

Importantly, Rose (1997) emphasizes that critical reflexivity is not about announcing your subject positions, as if saying them out loud would somehow make them less pertinent. Me saying that this is a political project does not rid it of critical punch. Rather it is about understanding how the researcher never is detached from the society they are trying to study, but rather that they are always constituted by it and take part in creating the objects being studied. Especially within a post structural methodology, scientific knowledge is put under the same scrutiny as other types of knowledge (Foucault [1970] 1999, 13), and it is necessary to reflect on what might be the consequences of the power inherent in the practices of academic knowledge production, and how this will have an effect on what is studied.

I would argue that tackling the discursive constructions of the cemetery is a way of poking at some power relations inherent in the production of urban space, by implicitly asking who has power to decide how urban space should be, and on what value judgments and on what ideals these are premised. Even the fact that I have asked these questions and they are raised within the context I am studying might have an influence on the field, because I have put the spotlight onto some things that might have been seen as uncontroversial or insignificant and made it big and significant. This was also clear through my interviews, as several of my interviewees expressed that the questions I raised, made them think of this topic in a new way. I have made the issue visible, and thus contribute to the discourse I am trying to study. In light of this, being critical of seemingly ‘good’ and beneficial changes to an urban space might seem like a hindrance to changes for a greener and more livable urban environment. I am not inherently opposed to sustainability programs, or creating good, green urban spaces, but I believe it is crucial to understand what these programs are built on, and what the effects of these are, in order to actually contribute to substantial change that does not only reproduce the inequalities that took part in creating our current urban issues in the first place.

## *Analysis*

In the analytical part of this thesis, some parts of the historical debate on cemetery planning and management in Oslo will first be outlined. Through this, I will try to show how cemeteries came to be heterotopic spaces, as to touch upon the second research question concerning *how heterotopias relate to processes of urban planning*. In the second part of this chapter, I will turn to the current discourse on cemeteries and explore how cemeteries are articulated as urban spaces. The current discourse will also be contrasted with the historical material, to show the development and change in the different ways the municipality has understood and related to these spaces. I believe this will highlight the changes in how the cemetery is being created as an urban planning issue, and in turn answers the first research question concerning *how the cemetery is made meaningful as an urban space within the current urban planning regime*.

### *4.1 The cemetery as abject in a densifying city*

During the Middle Ages throughout Western Europe the dead were placed in a churchyard, which was a central part of the urban and social fabric. This place was highly connected to the church, both physically, symbolically, and culturally, and was because of this also a major part the everyday life of the city (Damjanova 2013, 160; Laqueur 2015, 12; Sohn 2008, 46). These historical burial grounds can be said to have been placed “at the heart of the city” (Foucault [1967] 1984, 5). At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the cemeteries were beginning to be displaced from the city centers, and instead located towards the peripheral borders of the city and its margins (Alsvik 1998). This shift meant that the cemeteries were to become “[...] no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place” (Foucault 1984, 6).

This spatial shift is also possible to observe in the case of Oslo, named Christiania at the time.<sup>7</sup> During the 19th century, the city was experiencing an explosive growth in population. This was also a period with multiple cholera epidemics, which led to overcrowded churchyards (Alsvik 1998). At least four cholera outbreaks are reported from this time, with the two most severe occurring in 1833 and 1853. In 1883 more than 800 people died, which is more than the average number of deaths during a year at the time. During the outbreak in 1853 there were 2500 cholera-related deaths, with more than a third of the city's population being infected (Elstad 2021, 15). This added up to a dire need for new burial grounds, which can be observed in the municipal report from 1837-1886 with this understated remark: «There is a pressure from necessity when the lack of sufficient burial space has become too noticeable» (Christiania municipality 1892, 280). This report is dominated by discussions related to decisions regarding establishment of new cemeteries, as well as changes in the current ones. The placement and establishment of cemeteries in this period is a top priority for the municipality and is highly connected to the forecasting of population increase and the overall planning and development of the city.

All of the new cemeteries that were established during this period were located on the outskirts or even outside the municipal borders of Christiania. Both Tøyen and Ankerløyken cemetery, now decommissioned, was established in 1833 as a response to the Cholera epidemic (Christiania municipality 1892, 274). Tøyen cemetery was supposed to serve the suburban areas of Christiania and was placed within the adjacent municipality of Aker. Ankerløyken was to serve the inhabitants of Christiania itself but was also placed at the outskirts of the municipality. In 1857, the cholera cemetery Ankerløyken was discovered to be waterlogged, and another cemetery was established called Sofienberg cemetery, which was also located close to the municipal border. Within the municipal report it is argued that the cemeteries needed to be placed away from the city center, but not so far away that people had trouble visiting them or that the distance became a burden for the cemetery workers tasked with moving the bodies (Christiania municipality 1892). It was to be kept at a distance, but still remain a part of the city.

This change in the cemetery's spatial relation to the rest of the urban environment can be seen in light of the development of the heterotopic qualities of the cemetery, both in spatial

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<sup>7</sup> Oslo municipality was called Christiania from 1624 to 1877, and Kristiania from 1877 to 1925. From 1925 the official name was changed to Oslo. Several of the cemeteries that are discussed in the documents were not within the municipal boundaries of Christiania, but the adjacent municipality Aker, which later became part of Christiania during one of the several city expansions. I will use the correct names for Oslo for each period.

location and meaning. At the time, the new knowledge regimes of modern medicine and hygiene were beginning to be developed. These influenced how death, and the dead, was understood, and in turn what kind of urban space the cemetery was. Within these knowledge regimes, death became individualized and personalized, by being reworked into an illness of the individual body (Foucault [1967] 1984, 6). Foucault ([1967] 1984) explains how this personalization and individualization of death happened in conjunction with secularization, modern medicine, and loss in the belief of an eternal soul. When you no longer can be certain that you have a soul or a life after the next, how to take care of the material body becomes important, because the body is the evidence of having ever existed. As he writes: “[...] it is from the beginning of the nineteenth century that everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay [...]” (Foucault [1967] 1984, 5).

Through this, there was a realization that “dead bodies are deadly” (Laqueur 2015, 217), and that the dead body could be the bearer of hazards and illness. One came to understand that “[...] it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the houses, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself” (Foucault [1967] 1984, 6). The result of this was that the dead body became *abject*, meaning something that disturbs or revolts and which is outside the tolerable or thinkable - something which needs to be pushed aside (Kristeva 1982). Death was no longer something intimate and a part of everyday life, but rather something one needed to distance oneself from. Burial grounds then, came to be heterotopic through both the personalized meanings of thresholds and limits of individual life - *memento mori* - as well as through becoming a space where one consigned the unwanted, unknowable, deviant, and Other body that is the corpse. As Kristeva writes “[...] as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. [...] There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being.” (Kristeva 1982, 3; original emphasis).

The change in attitudes towards death made the cemetery become the outsider, both in its function as a place for bodies now deemed as disturbing and other, as well as a space set apart from the daily rhythms of the city. Interesting in this respect, seen in relation to Foucault’s work in *Madness and Civilization* (1965) and his elaborations on how the different and marginal show us the limits to order, in the municipal report of 1837-1886, Nordre Aker was not only considered suitable as burial grounds. This site was deemed fitting as a cemetery, but also as an “insane asylum”, as a lazaretto treating people with infectious diseases, or as some other form of municipal health facility (Christiania Municipality 1892, 283). Similarly, the new cemeteries Ankerløkken and Sofienberg were both developed in

working class areas and were designated to be used by “poor bodies [fattiglig]” (Christiania municipality 1892, 283). Thus, one can observe that all the unwanted individuals and bodies – the poor, the mad, the sick and the dead - were grouped together in space and pushed into marginality. This shows how the development of the cemetery as a heterotopic urban space can be seen as a mirror reflecting the ordering of society, our inclusions and exclusions, and the borders between normality and deviance.

As Kristiania continued to grow at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several of the cemeteries that previously were located at the outskirts now found themselves within highly dense areas. They were no longer in the city margins but had returned to the ‘heart of the city’. Harvey (2006, 295) notes the same phenomenon in cities in the US, where older cemeteries initially were established at the outskirts of the cities, but as populations grew and urbanization and sprawl increased, many cemeteries became surrounded by the city. In Kristiania, this can be seen in the municipal report of 1912-1947, where the chapter on burial- and cemetery management is dominated by a discussion regarding the Sofienberg cemetery (Oslo Municipality 1952). As mentioned, this cemetery was initially established at the city fringes, yet it now found itself surrounded by the highly dense borough of Grünerløkka. In this chapter of the municipal report, two articles in the newspaper *Social-Demokraten* published in the early months of 1916 are referenced. In these articles, a citizen of Grünerløkka laments the presence of Sofienberg cemetery asserting that: «We should have stopped burying our dead in the most heavily populated areas in the midst of the city a long time ago” (Social-demokraten 1916b, 1). The articles note that the demand to decommission Sofienberg cemetery is an old one, stating that the health authorities had for a long time recognized that the location was not suited for a cemetery and that knowledge about modern hygiene indicated that these facilities should be moved away from the city (Social-demokraten 1916b, 1).

What is interesting about these two articles and the discussion on the decommissioning of Sofienberg cemetery is that the hygienic issues regarding the cemetery, and the dead body as unwanted within urban space, is now connected to a discussion about a lack of green space in the city. The health hazards of the dead are contrasted with the acknowledgement of the benefits of nature and green spaces within the urban environment, and that the time has come to restate the demand for a green city (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). This lack of green space is blamed on private developers and their ferocious building out of the city.<sup>8</sup> They are harshly

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<sup>8</sup> Christiania was heavily developed during this period, often from private initiatives and with a lack of comprehensive planning (Oslo byleksikon).

criticized for having “[...] chopped up the fields for housing property and macadamized the green fields for street plots” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3), with no regard for the communities, or leaving space for parks within the growing city “[...] where one could wander under the shade of trees and rest in green fields” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). The crowded city life is also vividly described:

Also, the concern for the thousands of people who live in this dense borough, where the great barracks rise like fortress bastions within which young life is shut inside, locked away from the sun and from happiness. Here and there, there is a small open space. An open square in the dense quarters’. But no park where one can enter and rest and hide from the street noise. Only a couple of playgrounds that are utterly miniscule considering the need. (Social-demokraten 1916b, 1)

This lack of public green space is thus both connected to the increasing densification and private developments at the time, and the presence of dead bodies and cemeteries within the central urban space. In one of the articles, it is written that: “Even if one didn’t think of the living, the dead demanded their rights. They had to be buried in ‘Christian’ soil. And then the cemeteries were built within the city. [...] All of them in the center of the city, surrounded by housing on all sides” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). The articles thus describe an antagonistic relationship between the needs of the dead and the needs of the living and set a sharp distinction between the cemetery and the rest of urban space. To exemplify, Sofienberg cemetery is described in one of the articles as a space of sorrow and sullen silence: “As it lays there now, it sure is closed off. Through the long paths only lone mourners or quiet cemetery workers wander and tend the graves. Then the bells toll, and another is carried out to their last sleep” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). This bleak picture is contrasted with the crowded and bustling city: “And just outside, the busy life of the city passes by. Thousands upon thousands of people live just a few steps away from the cemetery. It lies there in the heart of the densest Kristiania-building developments” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). Moving the cemeteries out of the city and repurposing the cemetery space is here offered as a solution to the issue of brazen urban development that results in insufferable density and lack of green space: “And there lies *Sofienberg*. It stretches out like a wide, green belt between Grünerløkken and Rodeløkken. You couldn’t get a better location for a park” (Social-demokraten 1916b, 1).

The lack of green space in the city is not only blamed on building up of urban space, but also on the church authorities who are said to keep a strict watch over the cemeteries,

which make it hard to change their uses and functions (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). There are also several pleas directly to the dead, and how the living should «conquer» this space (Social-Demokraten 1916b, 1). In one of the articles, it is noted that: “We must demand that the city should be for the living and not the dead” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3), and “Let the living have Sofienberg as a park, and don’t let the dead stand in the way” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). The articles clearly draw a line between the living and the dead, and questions whether the dead have a right to take up space within the city. The dead are here seen as being a hindrance and in opposition to the vibrant, green, living and breathing city that the author wishes for, where “[...] the thousands of children of the barracks frolic on this lovely site, while the mothers got their rest on the benches under the shade of the treetops” (Social-demokraten 1916a, 3). The space-demanding burial practices, together with the abjection of the dead body that characterizes cemeteries, are thus considered to be robbing the city of usable and valuable space for the living.

The change in cultural and social knowledge about contagion, disease, and medicine, thus influenced the shift in perspective regarding death as a phenomenon. The cemeteries of this period came to be heterotopic as the presence of death within these spaces were seen as health hazards and abject, which pushed the cemetery aside into marginality. At the same time, this pushing aside happened within a growing city, which ensured that the cemeteries were still present within the urban space, creating islands of unwantedness. Coupled with a densifying city and the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of green spaces in the city, the abjection of death thus had direct spatial impact in the location of cemeteries within the city (Sohn 2008, 46). But even as they were excluded, I would argue that the cemeteries were also a part of the city in light of being every individual’s final resting place, a place for grief and remembrance, and as a part of the urban movement of work. This can be observed in how there is an acknowledgement throughout the municipal reports that the cemeteries can’t be too far away from the city, both in consideration to visitors, the cemetery workers, and the practical aspects connected to transportation of bodies. Cemeteries are also, as written, connected to the city by reflecting back to us our practices of ordering and revealing our inclusions and exclusions, who we want and who we don’t want in our cities. This oscillation between separation and connection, difference and similitude, by being a part of the city and of society while remaining highly Other, is what made cemeteries heterotopic during this time. The ordering of urban space, and the emergent technologies of urban development and planning in this period, show us the intimate connections between power, knowledge and

space, and the exclusions of bodies and of death within the new knowledge systems reveals the forces of power and normalization within the spatial (Pløger 2008, 52).

#### *4.2 Current discursive entanglements*

Some kinds of under-use will not be so easily resolved. For planners, the most frustrating open spaces to contemplate are the cemeteries of the city. Together, they take up large amount of space ... Many a planner has toyed with the good things that could be done with the land were there a relocation effort. Those who are wise have kept the idea to themselves. (Whyte 1968 as cited in Harvey [2006, 296])

I will now turn to the current discourse on cemeteries as urban spaces in Oslo. Some elements of this discourse are similar to the conflicts shown in the historical development presented above, but there are also important differences. This chapter will outline the discursive entanglements in Oslo municipality's strategic plan and look at both the discursive breaks and the new practices of stabilization that are taking place in regard to giving meaning to the cemeteries as urban spaces in Oslo within the current urban planning regime.

The main stated purpose for creating the strategic plan is that Oslo's cemeteries hold important potential that can be developed in accordance with the city and the inhabitants' need for green urban spaces (Oslo municipality 2017). This purpose is in turn related back to the slogan and goal of Oslo municipality which holds that the city should strive to be a "more green, warm and creative city for all" (Oslo municipality 2017, 1). From this overall purpose three main goals are asserted for the future of cemetery management and planning: 1) the cemeteries function as urban green spaces should be clarified; 2) innovation and development in terms of administration, management and use of the cemeteries should be stimulated; 3) the climate and environment efforts within the cemeteries should be strengthened (Oslo municipality 2017, 1). Each of these will not be elaborated upon explicitly, because even though they are presented as separate chapters in the document, the arguments used to support them are highly entangled and overlapping.

Rather, throughout this chapter the arguments used to assert these goal will be presented and discussed in light of the three analytical themes that were constructed during the process of coding. These themes are: 1) the cemetery as a multifunctional space; 2) the cemetery as a space providing green resources; and 3) the cemetery as a special urban space.



Through these three themes I will try to capture different forms of the cemeteries' relationality as they are presented in the strategic plan and how these are connected to current planning ideals. The first of these is concerned with how the cemetery stands in relation to the surrounding built space. The second, how the cemetery stands in relation to the larger urban environment. The third tries to capture how the cemetery is relationally connected to urban life and cultural practices and experiences of the cemetery. Based on this, in the following chapters it will be argued that the strategic plan encompasses a set of representations of the cemetery in relation to the urban environment which shapes the conditions of how the cemetery can exist as an urban space in Oslo.

#### *4.2.1 The cemetery as a multifunctional space*

Similar to during the 1800s, Oslo municipality is struggling with issues regarding density and population increase. Yet, in contrast to the historical conflict, cemeteries are not being shied away from, but are rather being used in a lot of different ways. Therefore, the strategic plan states that both the physical layout, and our understanding of cemeteries, could and should be developed in order for the cemetery to become multifunctional and serve as supplements to more active urban recreational areas. This section will argue that this line of argumentation can be seen as creating a representation of the cemetery as an urban space by relating it to the surrounding built space, that is, the densifying city, and leveraging this relation as the justification for the need to use the cemetery differently.

In the strategic plan, I would argue that planning and management of cemetery space is firstly presented as an issue of competing land uses and an idea that there is a 'lack of urban space'. As mentioned, this is, as during the 1800s, connected to population increase and city growth. It is stated in the document that: "In the western world, the in-migration to larger cities has increased substantially the last decades, which also is the case for Oslo" (Oslo municipality 2017, 2). But in contrast to the understanding of urban density during the 1800s, where the dead, and in extension the cemeteries, demanded space but had no place in the city and were relegated to the periphery, the current remedy to the issue of lack of space is not to expel the cemeteries from the city. Rather, the strategic plan seems to argue that we need transform how we understand what the cemetery is, what this space is for, and what uses it can accommodate.

This can be seen in how it is argued for the importance of creating a strategic plan for the cemeteries in Oslo by writing that: "In an increasingly dense city, the space needs to be

used *smarter* and more *efficient*, and in that case the cemeteries will become more important serving as green elements in the city” (Oslo municipality 2017, 2; my emphasis), and “[i]ncreasingly less space requires that we need to develop and manage the cemeteries in a more *efficient* way” (Oslo municipality 2017, 3; my emphasis). The solution that is identified is to reintegrate the cemetery space within the city by diversifying and increasing the types of activities happening there. Additionally, not only does the document prescribe multi-use [flerbruk] and joint use [sambruk], but there is also a stated wish for *added* use [merbruk]. The cemeteries should not just be used differently, but *more*. The thought that we need to use the cemetery space smarter and more efficient is corroborated by one of the interviewees:

[...] but this is about observing that we are really pressured on public outdoor recreation areas and green spaces in Oslo, so that is one side of it, that here we have, we have a need, we are becoming increasingly more people, and we are increasingly living more densely, so we need a space outside together, and then one can see that there is not like one has that many new sites to develop these green spaces, so then one has thought that one needs to look at how one can utilize the space we already have in a smarter way [...]. (Interviewee 2)

There therefore seems to be an explicit assumption within the document that there is increasing density within the city, and a decrease in available urban green spaces and sites for recreation.

In addition to the argument on densification, the cemetery is considered to be needed to be more multifunctional because a range of different recreational activities already take place within the cemeteries and people already perceive the cemetery as a part of the green structure of the city. This can be observed in the document under the sub-heading “The cemetery is also for the living” where the Nordic research on cemeteries in Scandinavia is referenced. The strategic plan stresses that this research shows that a high proportion of the people who visit cemeteries in Oslo uses this space for other purposes than for visiting a grave, such as dog-walking, recreation, and other social or cultural activities (Oslo municipality 2017, 6). The document also references people’s reasons for visiting the cemeteries and their perceptions of these spaces and it is written that: “[...] most cemeteries are perceived as a part of the green structure in the every-day and expanded sense of the word” (Oslo Municipality 2017, 5). Referencing both what was written in the document and the Nordic literature on cemeteries, the interviewees also used this argument of existing recreational use and emphasized that: “[...] one can see that they are actually used a lot,

however in a lot of different ways [...]” (Interviewee 2). A reason given for clarifying the cemeteries role as urban green spaces is thus that people are already using the cemetery in a lot of different ways, and that the cemetery needs to adapt to these uses and the possibility of increased multifunctionality. Yet, this argument can also be seen as highly entangled with the argument of densification and the pressure on green urban spaces as the strategic plan also notes that there will be an increase of recreational activities in the cemeteries and that: “it has to be assumed that the cemeteries in the future will have as much or more multi-use and joint use as today” (Oslo municipality 2017, 7).

A desire for effective and smart utilization of the cemetery space can also be observed in a want for less space demanding burial practices. In the strategic plan it is written that: “More varied use, but also new types of burial and design of burial grounds contributes to more use and more effective utilization of space” (Oslo municipality 2017, 8), and also: “Cremation is a lot more space efficient than coffin burial. In a city where we are experiencing less space it is therefore important that the areas are utilized as best as possible” (Oslo municipality 2017, 10). This transition from coffin burial towards cremation is a continuation from the late 1800s, and the establishment of the Association for Cremation [Likbrændingsforeningen] in 1889, where cremation was slowly introduced as a way to dampen the increased need for burial grounds and as a more hygienic burial practice (Kristiania Municipality 1914, 358). Some other space efficient practices that are being considered now are loosening the regulations regarding ash scattering, establishing columbaria, forest cemeteries, and more communal memorial sites in contrast to traditional individual gravestones (Oslo Municipality 2017, 11-12). The need for slowly reevaluating our burial practices was also something that was mentioned during the interviews as Interviewee 1 expressed: “[...] we need to think expansively or turn people’s perception around concerning what types of burial one wants to have” (Interviewee 1). This was said to be better for the climate, and more efficient in terms of land use, although with emphasis on individual choice and considerations for specific religious burial practices:

I think that the things we have highlighted, that we wish for increased cremation, it also says [in the strategic plan] that it is better for the climate, and it is more space efficient, so that is smart, but we know that most people want this, and it is completely unacceptable to stop with coffin burial, because this is both a matter of principle, one should be able to choose what one wants, but also for religious consideration, because there are some religions and religious

communities that needs to be buried in coffins, and the same, some needs to be cremated.  
(Interviewee 2)

Additionally, Interviewee 1 compared the discussion in Norway to the situation in Denmark and stated that Norway is a lot more conservative in terms of daring to discuss what kind of space the cemetery should be and what it can be used for (Interviewee 1). Interestingly, this was connected to burial practices and the large share of cremations in Denmark which frees up a lot of the cemetery space for other activities.

It is important to note that in comparison to Denmark, Denmark now has such high fees on coffin burials that people opt out of coffin burials, so that the urban cemeteries in Denmark experience that they get more and more lawns and less and less burial area. So that also needs to be taken into account, that then you have space where you can consider: here people can sunbathe, play ball and have a picnic. (Interviewee 1)

This directly connects the changes towards less space demanding burial practices to increased activity and use of the cemetery space for other activities - increasing the degree of cremation will open up the space to being more available for multifunctionality and recreation.

I would argue that the understanding of the cemetery as a multifunctional urban space that is posited in the document can be seen as relating to the larger ideals of compact urbanism, also called the compact city model, in urban planning policy in Oslo today (Hanssen et al. 2015). This type of planning policy is premised on creating a particular urban form “[...] based on density, proximity, and co-location of housing, workplaces, services, and public transit” (Haarstad et al. 2022, 2). This rests on evidence of the relation between transportation and density, which shows that increased density reduces energy use and demand for transportation (Næss 2015). The evidence of the positive effects of densification in relation to transportation management has then developed into a larger effort for creating increased density and multifunctionality of urban space as a whole (Hanssen et al. 2015). Increased density has been seen to be positive in some respects such as for reducing emissions and energy consumption, improving conditions for public transportation, and increasing accessibility (Næss 2015). Wachsmuth and Angelo (2018) even calls the belief in the connection between urban density and environmental benefits “something close to a policy consensus” (Wachsmuth and Angelo 2018, 1040).

Næss et al. (2020) argue that although densification is framed as a solution to sustainability issues, the compact city model and related planning practices are intimately connected with a particular capitalist discourse which they call ecological modernization. They describe ecological modernization as a “stage in the integration of environmental issues in policy making and planning” (Næss et al. 2020, 149), which upholds the belief in ‘eco-efficiency’, that is, an anthropocentric reliance on market forces, technological innovation, and new governance forms as the solution to current sustainability issues. Importantly, ecological modernization emphasizes the possibility of a decoupling between continued growth and the negative environmental impacts associated with it (Næss et al. 2020, 149). Within urban planning policy, the compact city can be seen as the spatial expression of ecological modernization as it is thought that the continued growth in building stock will lead to a more sustainable city (Næss et al. 2020, 148).

By operating through the logics of this discourse, the compact city is a representation of the urban in which the needs of profit maximization and circulation of capital coincide with sustainability needs and facilitates a cooption of environmental solutions by the perceived need for growth within the frame of ecological modernization (Andersen and Skrede 2017, 584). The stated goals of the strategic plan for clarifying the cemeteries role as urban green spaces, as well as innovation in management and administration, can be seen as connected to ecological modernization as a rationality. The idea of the compact city as an ecological solution requires densification within the building stock surrounding the cemetery. This leads to the stated need of increased multifunctionality within the cemetery space, because of the pressure on other urban green spaces, as well as the need to change our burial practices to become less space demanding.

Using the language of CPE, the compact city model, and in extension the strategic plan on cemeteries in Oslo, can be argued as resting on a capitalist economic imaginary that views economic growth as the basis for urban land use. Cities today are “intensively commodified” (Brenner et al. 2011, 3), and urban space is understood as having to be continually reordered and recreated in order to maintain profit accumulation. Within this economic imaginary, it is the exchange-value of space, meaning the value of space as a commodity, that is prioritized. This takes form as the continuous redevelopment of building stock and intensified land use, because tall and dense buildings mean more rent and income, as well as construction of these buildings in itself fostering circulation of capital (Andersen and Skrede 2017, 584). As Cresswell (2013) writes: “Just as the development of new technologies [...] allows increases in production and profit, so arrangements of space can

facilitate an increase in profit” (Cresswell 2013, 129). As it is the continuous building and rebuilding of the urban environment through the development of property and infrastructure that accumulates capital and creates profits for developers in the current development regime, it is not profitable to maintain or keep large open areas, such as parks, because they do not hold extensive exchange value. Consequently, the city is only valuable when it is developed, activated, and maximized as a commodity (Harvey 1975, 13). Space that is under-used or ‘left alone’ and therefore not capitalized, needs to be appropriated to facilitate continued accumulation, and be integrated into these destruction-reconstruction dynamics (Junior 2014, 147). This can be exemplified in Oslo by how there are several places where new apartment buildings are being developed within courtyards and common spaces of existing apartment buildings (Nilsen 2020, Widing 2021).

The negative effect of increased density is acknowledged by the document, namely that “the green infrastructure in the city is under pressure” (Oslo Municipality 2017, 2). Still, I would argue that the proposed solutions for the pressure put on green infrastructure, that is, allowing for more and different activities within the cemetery space and effectively viewing the cemetery more as a park than as burial grounds, does not question the assumptions behind *why* the city is densifying. Rather, it can be seen as adopting both the language and solutions to this issue from the compact city model. The strategic plan then can be said to take the premise of densification at face value and operates within the economic imaginary inherent in this model. Using the language of Lefebvre, this creates a representation of the cemetery space which supports capitalism's appropriation of urban space.

The argument here is not that the cemetery is being commodified, because the document does not make us understand the cemetery as a place that has exchange value. As per now, at least in Oslo, cemetery grounds are not bought and sold, or being built by private developers for profit. The municipality is also required by law to provide burial space for its inhabitants (The Cemetery Act, § 2, 1997). Rather, the overarching economic imaginary concerning growth and capital accumulation makes us understand the urban space surrounding the cemetery as a commodity, which in turn has created the pressure on urban green spaces. The stated need of using the cemetery smarter and more efficient, both through multifunctionality and changing regulations on burial practices, can therefore be seen as a discursive outgrowth of this economic imaginary. The representation of the cemetery as a multifunctional space therefore creates the conditions for the cemetery as an urban space in relation to the commodification of the built environment that surrounds it.

#### *4.2.2 The cemetery as a space providing green resources*

The second perspective that is presented in the strategic document is also connected to densification and the pressure on urban green space but holds that due to this pressure, the cemetery needs to be understood as a space that provides green resources and amenities for a healthy urban population and environment. In contrast to the argument about multifunctionality above, which related the cemetery to the surrounding built environment, this section will argue that this perspective creates a representation of the cemetery as an urban space in relation to the larger city and what the cemetery can provide for the urban environment as a whole.

Above all, the strategic plan emphasizes that cemeteries are burial grounds, and that the services which the Cemeteries and Burial Agency is supposed to provide for the inhabitants of the city are mainly related to burial management. It is stated that “Oslo has 1831 acres with burial area that primarily should be used for burial of Oslo’s inhabitants” (Oslo municipality 2017, 1). This was corroborated by the interviews, as Interviewee 2 stated:

I think that purely formally, they should function as a [...] tool for fulfilling the demands we have in the law which is that we should bury..., we are supposed to secure burial grounds for people who die in this municipality and we have a duty to have room for 3% of the population or something like that, that is, 3% available plots, and that is the role it formally has.

(Interviewee 2)

But despite the emphasis on the cemetery as being primarily a space for burial, I would argue that throughout the document, the cemeteries in Oslo are reworked into something more than just a space providing a service in terms of the management of death. The strategic plan states that

Oslo’s increasing population makes it necessary to develop good environmental solutions and ensure that the city grows in a sustainable way. Biodiversity, continuous green structure, wellbeing, and aesthetic qualities are important arguments in climate- and environmental work of Oslo municipality. (Oslo municipality 2017, 8)

As with the debate on the decommissioning of Sofienberg cemetery from 1916, a densifying urban environment is thus seen as infringing upon the nature within the city. Yet, instead of

seeing the cemetery as the antithesis to a healthy, green and vibrant urban environment, the cemetery is now supposed to provide these qualities for the city. They are seen, in the same manner as parks and other green urban spaces, as a part of the efforts of creating a sustainable city within the prospects of increased densification. For example, it is stated that:

The municipal council holds the same ambitions for cemeteries as valuable green areas in the city, as those who are applicable for parks and public outdoor recreation areas. The cemeteries are in the same manner supposed to be inviting as good green spaces with good sanitation, plants, and maintenance of vegetation and roads. (Oslo municipality 2017, 10)

In Oslo's Municipal Master Plan (Oslo municipality 2015) there is little mention of cemeteries. However, in the Green Infrastructure Plan, cemeteries are discussed as being a part of the category “overall green structure” (Oslo municipality 2010, 16), as having “general recreational value” (Oslo municipality 2010, 21), and being “quiet parks” (Oslo municipality, 2010, 24). The strategic plan follows this categorization by sketching out how the cemetery space can offer the city other services and be understood as a resource in other ways than just the practical and cultural aspects of burial, especially regarding sustainability and as part of the green infrastructure of the city. This concerns both wellbeing for the inhabitants in terms of green recreational spaces, and larger sustainability goals in terms of climate mitigation and sustaining healthy local environments.

In the section “Cemeteries as urban, green spaces” the document lists several ways in which the cemetery space can serve as a resource and provide positive qualities for the city. First, as discussed in the previous section, they are thought to serve as a supplement to more active recreational areas as “The cemeteries have an important recreational value as places for quiet, calm and social interaction, even though they are not considered as recreational areas in the same manner as parks and public outdoor recreation areas” (Oslo municipality 2017, 6). Second, the cemeteries are thought of as having the potential to become more integrated into the green infrastructure of the city as walking trails and connecting paths between other sites in the city, as it is noted: “The cemeteries can offer beautifully designed landscape spaces along hiking trails and walking- and bicycle paths and be a part of building a fine meshed walk- and hiking trail network [...] (Oslo municipality 2017, 6). Third, the cemeteries are considered as being positive for the local climate as “[...] the cemeteries create green lungs in the city with climate modifying effects and contribute to cleanse the air and lessen noise. Both earth and plants contribute to absorbing sound. Large penetrable surfaces also make the



cemeteries capable of delaying stormwater” (Oslo municipality 2017, 6). Fourth, cemeteries, and especially older ones, are considered to be places with large degrees of biodiversity because of the many, often large, deciduous trees. In connection to this, it is also stated that “Cemeteries can also constitute important buffer zones and serve as corridors between larger or more biodiverse areas” (Oslo municipality 2017, 6).

Interviewee 1 expressed that in terms of the stated goals in the document, most work had been done in making the daily management of the cemeteries more green and environmental friendly, and that it is harder to open up for a discussion on how to accommodate multifunctionality (Interviewee 1). This can be seen reflected in the document as the goals pertaining to daily operations and sustainable management of the cemeteries are heavily operationalized. There are included a lot of concrete suggestions on how to make the cemeteries be a part of the efforts in climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as tackle issues within the local environment. This environmental work is also connected to multi-use and joint use, but in contrast to the emphasis on recreation, joint use in this perspective is in regard to temporary and seasonal measures for increased sustainability: “Multi-use also means that we need to use the space smarter. Alternative and temporary use of the space that currently is not used for burial should be filled with other use where it is possible” (Oslo municipality 2017, 10). Some suggestions for this are insect hotels, beehives, flower meadows and allotment gardens (Oslo municipality 2017, 9). Beehives are especially highlighted as a “good example of combining use of the cemeteries as urban spaces with important climate change measures” (Oslo municipality 2017, 9).

The perspective that is presented on how the cemetery can be understood as a sustainable and green resource for the city could therefore also be seen as connected to densification and the expected population increase previously described. Yet, I would argue that there is in this argument an emphasis that positions the cemetery in relation to the larger urban environment, in contrast to only the built surroundings, in a city where it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure green amenities and healthy environments for all inhabitants. This perspective could again be seen in light of the capitalist economic imaginary that constructs an image of the city as a driver of growth and accumulation as described above. When more and more of the city is redeveloped into building stock, there becomes less room for spaces left alone from the increasing rate of urban development and provide the city much-needed space to breathe (Hanssen et al. 2015, 22). As Harvey (2012) writes “urbanization is about the perpetual production of an urban commons (or its shadow-form of

public spaces and public goods) and its perpetual appropriation and destruction by private interests” (Harvey 2012, 80).

By being burial grounds, the cemetery can be seen as a public good that provides a fundamental service for the city, in that it takes care of the biophysical and practical problems of dealing with dead bodies. This fundamental service makes the cemetery a difficult space to redevelop or change and has therefore not been subject to the destruction of private interests that Harvey (2012) writes about. However, when the city is losing its urban green spaces to densification because of the commodification of urban space, I would argue that the value of the cemetery is being articulated as more closely connected to the value of green spaces, precisely *because* they are the last remaining spaces in the city that circumvent the appropriation of private interest. Seen in relation to the genealogical development of the cemetery outlined above, the abjection of death within the cemetery made it difficult to understand the cemetery as providing green resources for the city. Rather, they were seen as the opposite of a healthy and green urban environment. The abjection of death was so defining of the cemetery space that the cemetery had to be expelled from the city. But as our relationship to death and our burial practices is changing, the cemetery is no longer an urban space that one needs to distance oneself from. Within the contemporary capitalist city, it might then be easier to rearticulate spaces that are hard to get rid of, such as the cemetery, into serving the functions the city is losing under densification, instead of creating new green spaces, due to the intensified competition for land use. Having the need to articulate the cemetery as a space having green values within a city losing its green spaces is corroborated by the interviews:

What is in a way quite new is seeing the cemetery as an environmental measure in the city. So, the cemetery has gotten another value because of this, we are administrating one of the few pieces of nature that is left in the city. (Interviewee 1)

What the need for securing urban public goods, such as green spaces, requires is an appropriate regulatory regime, which can facilitate the distribution of public goods as well as smooth out the uneven development of urban space. Within the hybrid, fragmented and network-oriented planning regime in Oslo however, private and competition reliant urban development are fundamental mechanisms for urban change (Nordahl 2015, 61; Saglie et al. 2015, 30). Oslo municipality and their public agencies has come to be seen more as facilitators for developers and other market actors instead of comprehensive planning

agencies in service of the urban population (Andersen and Skrede 2017, 589). This has created an urban development regime which is very project based and profit motivated, which includes a planning process where Oslo municipality needs to negotiate and bargain with private developers and landowners on specific zoning plans and projects (Saglie et al. 2015, 31). Hanssen et al. (2015, 23) argues that this has “intensified the level of tension in land use planning”, because the municipality needs to operate within a market logic, and navigate a range of competing public and private interests, while still trying to secure long term goals in service of the city. The less quantifiable benefits of creating public green spaces then might often get lost in questions of who should bear the cost of creating these spaces and how to generate profit from them (Skrede 2013, 5).

The competition and bargaining over land use became apparent from the interviews as it was expressed that it was not really the inhabitants that put the most pressure on them regarding how they could use the cemetery. Rather, it mainly came from other planning authorities, either using the cemetery space within their infrastructure plans such as bicycle paths or wanting to develop other public facilities at parts of the cemeteries, and private actors who ‘sell’ the cemeteries as a part of the green structure in new developments (Interviewee 1).

Everyone wants to nibble at our areas. Can we have this small triangle here for a kindergarten, can we have this, can we have this. Even last week I got two inquiries, one was about a site for temporary placement for housing for refugees, and the placement of waste masses from Fornebubanen, so the land desperation is increasing. And we are, thank goodness, in a place where the law is protecting us quite clearly. That there is a zoning category that puts some really clear limitations to what can be allowed, it is not allowed to plan us as a part of their green area, it is not allowed to plan us as a part of the transportation routes, but it is tried all the time. So that is our most ardent struggle, against other regulation authorities. (Interviewee 1)

Again, relating back to the elaboration above on how competition for land use is understood as the basic mechanism for urban development in Oslo, the cemetery therefore needs to not only ‘take up space’ but needs to become a utilized and productive space which provides positive externalities such as offering the urban environment green amenities. It needs to be seen as providing an important resource for the whole city which also holds value and meaning within the current urban planning regime, in order to not be overridden by the competition with other projects and considerations from both private and public agencies.

Even though it was expressed during the interviews that it is burial that “legitimize the use of the space” (Interviewee 1), it was also stated that they are actively trying to change how they articulate the work they do in order to be seen in this new way.

[...] so, thinking that the green areas are something more than just a nice park, but actually critical for the survival of the city, that is new to us. We are practicing using other words than before, and practicing having a stronger voice also politically, because we often are considered being just a cemetery. (Interviewee 1)

The overall strategy of using environmental amenities to secure urban public goods is also discussed by Brand (2007) who argues that the eager engagement with environmental issues that we see from city administrations, is not really due to an “ecological rationality and alternative politics” (Brand 2007, 616), within city government, but rather a particular “spatial transformation and social regulation under neoliberal urbanization” (Brand 2007, 616). I quote in length:

[...] the environment emerged as an arena in which social welfare could, to some degree or another, be discursively constructed and materially produced at a minimum public cost compared to say job creation, housing or health service provision (Brand, 2003). City planning authorities in particular, as coordinators of expert knowledge on environmental problems, could redefine local spatial welfare in terms of the city’s relationship with the physical environment, and posit the quality of life offered by the city not in terms of its social relations but indirectly or ‘mediately’ through natural resource systems, their protection and improvement. (Brand 2007, 620; reference in original)

Instead of making an effort to combat the larger systemic issues of the city and securing welfare and public goods on a structural level, environmental amenities have become an easy way for city administration to show that they still care for and offer the inhabitants of the city support within a slowly privatizing welfare regime. It is still the municipality, and as per now also the church, who holds the power over the development of cemeteries in Oslo, and not private developers. But with the pressure on green space from the more privately driven development of the rest of Oslo, it is difficult to ensure public amenities such as parks and other green spaces in the city (Skrede 2013, 5). This is interesting in light of the strategic plan as they highlight how cemeteries located close to the newly developed areas in the eastern parts of Oslo, such as Hovinbyen and the planned area Kjelsrud, might serve as green

recreational areas for these places (Oslo municipality 2017, 6). As Kjelsrud is currently in a planning stage, it is difficult to say how this area will turn out, but it is interesting to note that parts of Hovinbyen, such as Løren, Økern and Ulven, have received stark criticism for lack of comprehensive planning and prioritizing maximizing land use to the detriment of urban green spaces and neighborhood quality (Brudvik and Campos 2023; Fremstad et al. 2023, Lundgaard and Neegaard 2021).

There is no doubt that cemeteries have important qualities for the urban environment, in terms of biodiversity, climate change mitigation and being recreational ‘green lungs’, especially as they hold such a large share of the overall green structure. What is new in the strategic plan is that the cemetery space is being explicitly conceptualized and articulated in this way. What I would argue gives rise to this need for articulating the cemetery in this way is an overarching economic imaginary that understands the city as a place where competition for location and land use is intensifying. When private developers also have the upper hand in the bargaining for this land use, cemeteries, and the qualities they hold need to be redefined as solutions to the pressures on public goods such as parks and other urban green spaces. To put it simply: we don’t build parks and other public amenities because they are not profitable, but because there still is a demand for green public spaces, we are led to think that we need to understand and use the cemeteries as parks. In this way, the strategic plan creates a representation of the cemeteries as urban spaces which position them as resources in relation to the larger urban environment.

#### *4.2.3 The cemetery as a special urban space*

The third perspective that is presented in the document is that the cemeteries hold particular qualities that makes them stand out from other urban spaces, and that these qualities need to be protected, while still ensuring that the spaces can accommodate the predicted increase in recreational use. In this section it is argued that this perspective creates a representation of the cemetery as an urban space positioned in relation to urban life as a whole, people’s cultural practices and the experiential qualities of different urban spaces.

As mentioned, the rapport report *Believe it or not – The Future of Religious Politics in Oslo* [Tro det eller ei: Fremtidens tros- og livssynspolitik i Oslo] (Oslo municipality 2020), has been the main document outlining the overall principles and guidelines for the management of cemeteries in Oslo. This document views cemetery management mainly as an issue of cultural politics and has been concerned with securing equality in terms of specific

burial practices related to an individual or group's religious or spiritual beliefs. This is also reflected in the strategic plan, where it is written that:

Oslo should be a religiously diverse [livssynsåpen] city, and a good city to live in for all. The Cemeteries and Burial Agency's primary task is to ensure that Oslo's inhabitants are buried with dignity and respect for the faith or spiritual belief [livssyn] of the deceased. (Oslo municipality 2017, 1)

The cemetery has therefore, first and foremost, been considered as embodying both the symbolic and emotional aspects of death, as well as the practical issues arising from this. We need a space in the city which can take care of dead bodies, and the ways we do this should adhere to each individual's specific beliefs and practices and in a manner that is dignified for the bereaved. Even though the main goal of the strategic plan is to discuss why, and suggest how, cemeteries in Oslo can become more integrated into the city as urban green spaces, it is still careful of not treating the cemetery space as any other urban green space. It is stressed that the main purpose of cemeteries is for the burial of the dead, and for the bereaved to have a place to grieve. Recreation is viewed as secondary. It is written that: "The cemeteries have a sort of an in-between role [...]" (Oslo municipality 2017, 5) and that:

[...] it is important to note how cemeteries are distinct from other green areas and parks. The cemeteries unique characters and primary use makes it so that these areas neither can nor should be understood in the same ways as those places that are today regulated as green areas or friområder. (Oslo municipality 2017, 10)

The strategic plan therefore seems to place primacy on the 'unique characters' and 'primary uses' of the cemetery and does not want to change the regulatory zoning category of these spaces. A similar sentiment can be seen in the laws and regulations of cemeteries. In terms of such legislation, the Cemetery Regulations lists several demands in terms of general management, maintenance, design, behavior and use of the cemetery space that distinguishes them from other public green spaces. The regulations call for the cemeteries to be kept and used in a "proper [sømmelig]" manner (The Cemetery Regulations, § 9, 1997), and they state that "peace and quiet should rule" (Statue of cemeteries, § 3, 2018), and that "playing, skiing, sledging, jogging, cycling, horseback-riding, sunbathing and activities like this are not allowed" (The Statutes of Cemeteries, § 3, 2018). This emphasis on the need for a separate

zoning category for cemeteries was corroborated by the interviews. “The law states very clearly what kinds of guidelines should apply, this thing about respect and dignity [...], it is not a park, and it is neither a sports field, but it is a cemetery.” (Interviewee 1). The cemetery has therefore not been fully imagined as a recreational green space in the same way as parks and other urban green spaces.

The interviewees especially took care in pointing out that the main purpose of the cemeteries should be protected. The experiential qualities of these spaces, as slow-paced, calm, and quiet, were presented as essential because they should be spaces for the bereaved and their practices of remembrance, which are acts that deserve dignity and respect (Interviewee 1, 2, 3). The people who participate in a ceremony or are visiting a grave were also thought to always have top priority. It was therefore expressed that cemetery management is a field that is quite conservative, with little contention. Changes both within the morphology, new burial practices, and uses of these spaces do not just happen on a whim. As Interviewee 3 said: “They are very in a way, a constant part of the city. I don’t think you would, it is almost like Marka, it is not something you start messing with, perhaps” (Interviewee 3). If there were to come push-back from inhabitants about certain changes within the cemetery, it was expressed that this would not be taken lightly because: “[...] this is a field where one is, in a way, a lot more sensitive towards that kind of resistance” (Interviewee 3).

From this, I would argue that there seems to be an underlying tension being expressed both in the strategic plan, and through the interviews, between trying to balance the proposed innovation and change in the uses and management of cemeteries, as outlined in the two previous sections, and the touchy and conservative nature of dealing with spaces of death with a related need to preserve the distinct qualities of the cemeteries. This tension was a recurrent topic during the interviews. Interviewee 2 even stated that herein lies the core of the current politics on cemeteries if one is wanting to go beyond thinking that cemetery management is only related to burial and religious diversity and inclusivity:

[...] so, this is what is interesting within this field, because it is precisely here there are oppositions, for yeah, cemeteries have a very interesting function, but one sees that we might need to use them differently, we already see that people are using them differently, but maybe the people who use them are using them because they are different. If one had opened up a lot, maybe that... It is clear that one has a responsibility to take care of the primary uses.  
(Interviewee 2)

This tension can be directly observed in the strategic plan as it is noted that:

[...] the municipal council wishes to facilitate common use of the cemetery area, while still preserving the calmness and dignity, and without devaluing the primary use and functions of the cemetery. (Oslo municipality 2017, 1)

The potential conflicts between different uses within this space is seen as something that must be solved, because: “Oslo is faced with huge challenges in the years to come, and the cemeteries can in multiple ways contribute to a positive development for the city” (Oslo municipality 2017, 1) and that: “It has to be assumed that the cemeteries in the future will have as much or more multi-use and joint use as today. Therefore, the cemetery authorities must ensure multi-use which also is mindful of the dignity and calmness that should be present at cemeteries” (Oslo municipality 2017, 7). The changes and adjustments that are done to accommodate multipurpose and multifunctionality in cemeteries should therefore secure that the primary use is still taken care of in a dignified manner (Oslo municipality 2017, 10).

The main solutions that are presented to relieve the tension between preservation and change, between calmness and multi-use, are somewhat material and based on functional design and architectural choices such as: “Zoning, plants, lighting, and park-elements such as benches” (Oslo municipality 2017, 7), in order to create zoned areas within the larger cemetery space. In the section where they list specific goals and measures in the strategic plan, one of three main measures mentioned is to consider more lighting in order to “[...] create a feeling of safety and facilitate use of the areas [...]” (Oslo municipality 2017, 11). This is said to “increase the quality of the areas, and at the same time protect the cemeteries' dignity” (Oslo municipality 2017, 11). From the interviews it was clear that the issue of lighting has been a controversial topic, as it is balancing yet another tension, between safety and security within urban space, and preserving the darkness and separateness of the cemetery space (Interviewee 2).

Another way mentioned for appropriately opening up the cemetery for more recreational use is identified in the qualities of cemeteries holding a symbolic and historical value, and therefore being important cultural heritage sites. It is written in the document that:



Several of the cemeteries in Oslo are of very old age and contain older buildings worth preserving. Cemeteries also have cultural and historical value in terms of landscape architecture, botanical history, and as sites for remembrance of important or interesting Oslo-inhabitants throughout history. (Oslo municipality 2017, 6)

These historical features are considered to constitute important place qualities that can be further developed together with the rest of the urban development. This was expressed during the interviews as well, as Interviewee 1 said “I believe that a cemetery always has a primary purpose, but that it has so many added values. It is still a history book, a living wound for many [...]” (Interviewee 1), and that activities within this space should utilize these features:

But I believe a lot more in that visitors would want, for instance, that a cemetery could be an object for, in a way, a site for a concert for instance, or a walking-theater, or story-telling, or guided tours, where the churchyard or the cemeteries’ history is in focus (Interviewee 1).

Even though the document nor the interviewees want to change the regulations regarding the cemetery into those of a green space, and they are adamant throughout that cemeteries are distinct and different from other green spaces, I would argue that the strategic plan puts emphasis on alleviating this tension. Because the goal of the strategic plan seems to be to slowly start the conversation about multifunctionality and multi-use of the cemetery, while still preserving the special qualities of this space, I would argue the document either tries to relieve some of the strangeness and difference implicated in the fact that the cemeteries are deathscapes, for example with increased lighting with the purpose of making the cemetery less secret and dark, and more welcoming and secure, or that it attempts to package these qualities as attractive - making them ‘selling points’ for recreation.

This latter point can be seen in how the distinctness of the cemetery is used as an argument for why we could, and maybe should, bring the cemetery into urban life, as it is written that:

The cemeteries are not considered green spaces in the same way as parks, recreational areas and so on. At the same time, the uses of the cemeteries are varied and many experience them as green lungs and important recreational areas, especially due to the calmness and tranquility that characterizes these areas. (Oslo municipality 2017, 2)

This can also be seen in the interviews as the qualities of the cemeteries are described as: “important meeting places in the inhabitants’ lives, and then it has green values, the aesthetic, natural features, which I think supports in a way the possibility to make it a special space. A space for reflection, sorrow, but at the same time also recreation” (Interviewee 1). The special qualities of the cemeteries seem therefore to be highlighted as something worth preserving. This is due to the nature of the space as burial grounds and everything this entails, in terms of both being a space for the dignified disposal of the dead, as well as a space for the bereaved and their needs. At the same time, these qualities are understood as precisely what make cemeteries attractive as recreational spaces, but that these qualities need to be balanced and shaped in a way which allows for recreation. The unwanted body of the corpse is still present within the cemetery, as it was during the 1800s, but the qualities this space holds because of being a deathscape needs to be rearticulated. The cemetery as distinct from rest of urban space needs to be represented as a certain 'valuable' distinction in order to integrate the cemetery into the urban fabric and insert this space into circulation.

In light of relieving some of the cemeteries’ difference, it can be seen in the Nordic literature that there also here seems to be a notion that the cemetery shouldn’t be too strange, because by being separate, and a bit ‘secret’, it becomes harder to control what goes on in these spaces. This can be seen in how Swensen et al. (2016) describe an annoyance among their informants concerning behavior at Gamlebyen cemetery where people sometimes use it as a place to sleep for the night, or use the water available there for personal hygiene and sanitation (Swensen et al. 2016, 50). As a response to this, the Cemeteries and Burial Agency had put security as a top priority, and established measures such as patrolling guards and increased maintenance, such as cutting down trees, so that the overview of the area would be better and make the cemetery “a visually pleasant landscape” (Swensen et al. 2016, 51).

However, during the interviews for this thesis it was expressed that unwanted and ‘dangerous’ activities within the cemeteries were actually a very small problem. Rather, they believed that how one is supposed to act in a cemetery is quite ingrained in all of us (Interviewee 1, 2 and 3). Despite this, I would argue that a lot of the measures presented in the strategic plan in order to make the cemetery space more welcoming and accommodating as an urban space, actually might undermine the precise qualities that now makes cemeteries special urban spaces. Instead of the cemetery in itself being a heterotopic deathscape which holds qualities that imbues this space with both secrecy and reverence, and in turn allows for Other sides of the urban life to exist, relieving some of the strangeness of the cemetery would require more explicit control and ordering of the space.

Writing on cemeteries in London from a political ecology perspective, Gandy (2012) observes this phenomenon of ‘tidying and lighting up’ urban nature as an “[...] implicit utilitarianism and new morality of urban public space” (Gandy 2012, 730). He connects this to the increasing presence of CCTV, brighter lighting, and other control mechanisms in urban space which have the function of facilitating certain types of behaviors while excluding others. Such mechanisms can also be directly in conflict with the sustainability and biodiversity goals of the strategic plan as these types of measures can be hostile towards urban wildlife, as Gandy (2012) writes: “brighter lighting, for example, has a deleterious effect on bats, moths, and other night-flying insects” (Gandy 2012, 731). In relation to not only minimizing strangeness, but packaging strangeness in a different way, Gandy argues that the focus on the historical value of cemeteries, like the one described above, taps into “controlling and historicist discourses of heritage preservation (Gandy 2012, 730), which often have the purpose of structuring, reordering and surveillance of spaces. These tidying-up measures might thus be a way of making the strangeness of the cemetery more amenable and ordered. Although they might be rooted in good intentions of creating a welcoming space for all, the effect of them might rather be one of exclusion and control.

According Wachsmuth and Angelo (2018) sustainability programs, such as the strategic plan, are often based in a particular aestheticized image of urban life (Wachsmuth and Angelo 2018, 1044). Instead of allowing for the strange, unwanted, or unpleasant sides of urban life to exist., anomalous spaces need to be translated into a language that make them become valuable in relation to the rest of urban space. The lines between the 'normal' everyday city and the spaces that are Other and different needs to be manipulated and managed (Cenzatti 2008, 77). By positioning the cemetery in relation to urban life, the strategic plan then places value on some types of activities and uses, as well as framing the qualities of the cemetery to be appropriate within a specific image of urban life so as to make it easier to integrate into the urban fabric. The calmness, stillness, darkness, historical layering of time, and restrictions upon entrance, are all qualities of heterotopic deathscapes which then need to be rearticulated within the urban planning discourse in order to reduce or control the strangeness and secrecy of this space and make them attractive and conforming to a particular idea of urban sustainable life. The cemetery cannot be left alone but needs to be experienced as spectacle of historical theater or within recreational zones, separating groups and minimizing any discomfort. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, the distinctness of the cemetery only holds value as a place that is experienced within particular parameters that are understandable and recognizable within this knowledge regime.

In conclusion, I would argue that the emphasis on the special characters of the cemetery and their position in relation to urban life and cultural practices, are used as urban development tools in order to make it easier to realize the image of the cemetery that is presented in the two previous chapters, as multifunctional and providing green resources, so as to bring the cemetery space back into urban circulation and activity. The different representations of the cemeteries' relationality as it is presented in the strategic plan - the cemetery in relation to the surrounding built space, to the larger urban environment, and to urban life are therefore different ways of rearticulating the cemetery as an urban space which creates the conditions of existence for the cemetery in the future.

## *Discussion*

Grabalov and Nordh (2021) show in their study that municipal planners argue for the need to develop strategic plans for cemeteries, is to safeguard the cemetery space for the future. As they highlight, cemeteries are not a hot topic within urban planning and revealing the importance of these spaces might help protect them. As written, I would argue that there is a paradox here, namely that allowing for more use of the space, which the strategic plan tries to facilitate, could possibly destroy the same qualities which the planners want to protect. I hold that this paradox, as well as the tension the planners have met in trying to balance preservation and development, taps into something fundamental with regard to heterotopias. In the analytical part of this thesis, I outlined the contents of the current discourse on cemeteries as urban space. In this chapter I will discuss more in depth the workings of the strategic document and what the new discourse on cemetery does. Through this I will explore this stated tension and discuss on a more abstract level what happens when one tries to plan for the cemetery as a heterotopic space and what implications this has for urban space and urban planning today. This chapter will attempt to answer both the second and third research questions: *how heterotopias stand in relation to the processes of urban planning*, and *how cemeteries can offer a space for thinking outside current planning ideal*.

### *5.1 Becoming an issue – bringing the cemetery back in*

Throughout the source material, management of the cemeteries in Oslo can be seen as a combination between cultural politics and land use management. Burying the dead is a practice which demands space, and not all sites have been considered suitable for burial. During the 1800s the cemetery became an object for urban planning within the knowledge-regimes of contagion and medicine, which pushed the cemetery into the margins. Planning of cemeteries thus become a land use concern related to the efficient and hygienic management of death, and dead bodies were understood as something that was to be kept away from the

rest of urban space and urban life. In a rapidly growing, densifying and increasingly developed city in the beginning of the 1900s, there was also expressed a dire need for urban green spaces. The combination of this need and the understanding of death as abject, had a large effect on how the cemetery was understood as an urban space as it was seen as a hindrance to a healthy and livable urban environment.

Since then, planning of cemeteries has to a large degree been a managerial issue, split between the church and the municipality, and thus outside of the larger political goals of urban development and planning. As interviewee 1 expressed: “Because we have been an agency with a dual ownership, we have been able to live a bit in the shadows, like, cemeteries are not much politics” (Interviewee 1). The cemeteries have thus over time become spatially located within the city, but in contrast to the heated debate over the decommissioning of Sofienberg cemetery in 1916, in terms of discursive space the cemeteries have recently been reserved little room. Yet, a wish for increased visibility of cemeteries and their reinstating as an urban planning issue became clear through both the strategic plan and the interviews. In the interviews this was especially evident in regard to the process of the cemeteries in Oslo fully becoming a responsibility for the municipality, and no longer split with the church. Because of this it was thought to be easier to realize the goals of the strategic plan. Even though it was expressed that there had currently not been done enough work to follow up on the strategic plan, the interviewees were eager to gain full responsibility and slowly start poking at the strict regulations in terms of recreational activities. The dual model has been seen as a hindrance to policy development, and by making the cemetery fully an issue for urban planning again, it would be possible to make visible the potential of the cemetery within the urban environment, as it was expressed that The Community Church Council has tended to be quite conservative in this regard (Interviewee 2):

I hope that when we get full responsibility for it, it makes it much easier for us to do changes and bring up what is politics. It has sort of been like they [The Cemeteries and Burial Agency] has been a management organization that has done their tasks [...], if we were to make some bigger changes then we would have had gone to The Community Church Council [...] so, it is definitely a wish from our side to put it more on the agenda. It is a very interesting field that unfortunately sort of keeps falling behind. (Interviewee 2)

It was therefore expressed that through this transition cemeteries might become more a part of the discussion in urban planning. In addition, it would change the role of The Cemeteries and

Burial Agency from being purely an operative agency, into an agency with a stronger voice within urban planning:

[...] I hope that cemeteries get more space in the municipal discussion, because today I experience that it is completely absent. We are sort of like the janitor, as long as everything works then no one talks about us, and it is on the day it does not work that we sort of get any attention. (Interviewee 1)

In terms of the strategic plan, one interviewee expressed that they wanted to operationalize it further and turn it in to more of a strategic document and not just a description of goals: “[...] I sort of think that we are going to turn it into more of like an internal document, an operative document in terms of strategy” (Interviewee 1). Despite the fact that the stated goals of the strategic plan have not been explicitly realized yet, it is clear that the contents of the document and its work of reinstating the cemetery as an issue of municipal politics and urban planning is something that is wanted.

In addition to becoming an issue, it is also evident from the discussion of the document above that the cemetery is articulated in a new way, and that cemetery management has shifted its focus. Although it has always been a land use concern, by shifting the focus from burial to planning for the space itself, the issue of land use management is becoming more relevant. This can be seen in the analysis of the document above, but also in how The Cemeteries and Burial Agency in Oslo has during the period I have been working on this thesis also changed its name from *Gravferdsetaten*, with an emphasis on the act of burial, to *Gravplassetaten*, which shifts the focus from the act of burial to the site of the burial grounds.<sup>9</sup> This name change is also the case for the cemetery laws, going from the *Funeral Act* to the *Cemetery Act*, which was also pointed out during one of the interviews:

Just the fact that the law has changed name, when it went from funeral [gravferd] to cemetery [gravplass], it says something about what we actually want to describe. We do not want to describe the rituals and the ceremony funeral, but the land and the principles concerning land use management. (Interviewee 1)

This small semantic shift might show how the cemetery management, which before had been closely connected to the act of burial, is now about managing and planning space itself. This

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<sup>9</sup> Gravferd in Norwegian refers to the funerary ritual, while gravplass refers to a burial site.

is reflected throughout the strategic plan as shown in the previous chapters, with the focus on how to make the use of the cemetery space smarter and more efficient, highlighting all the qualities the cemetery as an urban space has for the urban environment and urban life, as well as how to develop these further through physical changes to the space. In contrast to solving the issues of brazen urban development and lack of green space by pushing the cemetery aside in the 1800s, the document brings the cemetery space 'back in', both discursively and in space, by minimizing the aspects of the cemetery relating to death, through a focus on recreation, experience and environmental measures as opposed to burial and commemoration. The transferal of ownership from The Community Church Council to Oslo municipality might make this articulation of the cemetery more pronounced as well, as the cemetery would perhaps lose more of its religious and spiritual connotations. As the cemetery is made into a multifunctional, green and special urban space, and not only a deathscape, it is also made into an issue relevant for urban planning as a whole within the values of the current planning regime, that emphasize sustainability and multifunctionality within a densifying city.

## *5.2 Alternative ordering*

Making the Cemeteries and Burial Agency more relevant in urban planning, and also creating a public discourse on what kind of space the cemetery is and what it should be, is not necessarily negative. Relating back to the theories on the role of heterotopias in society, Hetherington (1997) describes heterotopias as:

[...] sites associated with alternate modes of social ordering that are expressions of a utopic spatial play. They are the spaces, defined as Other, relationally, within a spatializing process, which, I believe, have this distinct utopic associated with them. Almost like laboratories, they can be taken as the site which new ways of experimenting with ordering society are tried out. (Hetherington 1997, 13)

Based on this, one might interpret the image of the cemetery as an open, diverse, sustainable, distinct, and multifunctional urban green space, which the document traces it out to become, as experimenting with alternative orderings – that it is trying out new conceptualizations of this space, what it should be, and what it should mean to us in everyday urban life, and thus change the structure of our previous inclusions and exclusions. Instead of the conservatism of keeping the space as it is, and upholding difference by keeping life and death separate both



conceptually and in space, such as during the 1800s, opening up for a public discussion about the cemetery as well as allowing for new social activity within the cemetery space might be a way of bridging the conceived dichotomies of life and death, of natural space and urban space, of the everyday and the extraordinary. As one interviewee said: "There is a lot of things within a cemetery which are very secret" (Interviewee 1), and they expressed that by making the cemetery more welcoming and accommodating, they hoped that they might be a part of initiating a discussion about death in all its facets and make some of the more existential parts of our collective experience more present in the everyday. Through doing this, it could also possibly change how we relate to what we find disturbing and strange, what was previously abject and perceived as Other, or impossibilities of co-existence, such as the living and the dead sharing the same space, or the city and nature mutually benefiting each other.

Considering Massey's elaboration on the dynamic relationality of space, it might be the implicit, fixed and the taken for granted assumptions and conceptualization we have about space that might be a hindrance to true spatial diversity and inclusivity. As she writes "to conceptualise space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is a prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics" (Massey 2005, 59). In relation to cemeteries, it might then be the many common stereotypes we have about cemeteries as being mysterious, sad, or dark and bounded places and not a part of the life of the city which keeps us from appreciating what the cemetery can teach us about what the rest of the city is missing. By reconceptualizing what the cemetery is, and let it evolve with rest of urban space, it perhaps would therefore open up a conversation about what we want this space to be and what it could provide in relation to the city.

One interviewee also expressed in this regard that through making cemetery management less of a religious issue, it might make the discussion about what kind of space cemeteries are, and what we want them to be, more democratically anchored, inclusive, and sensitive to the diversity of meanings which individuals and groups instill within this space (Interviewee 1). This in turn might possibly open up a conversation about the politics of urban space as a whole, and what values these are based on. By emphasizing that cemetery management is a political and spatial issue, not just an issue of administrating and facilitating burial, and also highlighting and protecting the special qualities of the cemeteries and what it can provide for us as a society and for the city, the strategic plan thus might contribute to further our understanding and acceptance of the multiple and heterogenous spaces that together make up the urban environment. This could be seen as an active effort in combating the homogenizing forces of market driven urban development and would then both adhere to

Lefebvre and Massey's projects, as it might facilitate the reappropriation of urban space by the people actually living in and through these diverse spaces.

### *5.3 Making space legible*

Nevertheless, as shown through the discussion of the findings in the source material above, it is possible to argue that there are points of contention in bringing the cemetery space into the gaze of urban planning. The stated goal in the document of *clarifying* the cemeteries function as urban green spaces could for instance be seen in relation the work done by political scientist James C. Scott on the notion of legibility. In this context, legibility refers to the process by which the state makes sense of its subjects and their environments (Scott 1998, 2). Scott argues that a lot of European government has been concerned with how to efficiently rationalize and standardize the disorder of the social world into a legible, and hence also governable, form. Defert (1997) traces the making of legible urban space to the practices of architects and the development of urban planning as a profession during high modernism which created “[...] the rationalization of forms and the ‘legibility’ of an urban space conceived as a text punctured by ‘landmarks’, whether spaces or buildings” (Defert 1997, 277). This was a progress-oriented urbanism which subjugated urban space to a universal belief in the urbanist reason and rationality, something which echoes Lefebvre's elaboration of the domination of representations of space over the space of representations, that is, how the signs, concepts and codes of planners and other professionals often override the messiness of space as it is produced through actually lived social reality.

Scott (1998) also writes that the process of making legible necessarily requires simplification and reduction, and as such, the efforts to represent society, or space, will never be a complete depiction. Legibility is thus only an illusion of order and totality within a particular knowledge regime. Again, relating back to Massey (2005), she argues that making space legible is in opposition with seeing space as multiple, heterogenous and contested, because it fixes it in a certain position. This means that legibility champions universality instead of diversity and possibility. Whereas death, and in extension the cemetery, was produced as different and abject during the 1800s, I would argue that what the document does is the flipside of this. The strategic plan connects the sign of urban green space with the cemetery, and then not only reproduces difference, but packages the difference of the

cemetery in a certain way, so as to make it legible and knowable within the metrics of the knowledge regime of urban planning.

Urban planning in Oslo today can no longer be said to be characterized by the modernist omniscient and omnipotent urban planner, which Defert (1997) describes. The cemetery does not become legible through the planner's 'rational' imagination from which the urban form is neatly traced out. It is rather, as written, a fragmented and market-oriented planning regime which makes urban space and the many different sites within it come into being in a specific way. Returning to the concept economic imaginaries, I would argue that these could also be understood as the systems of signification that makes the social legible by communicating the logics of the economy within urban space. The knowledge regime and the values that weave together the threads of the logics of urban space is as shown a market-oriented economic imaginary, and urban space can therefore be said to be made legible through the eyes of capital. This reduces social life to competition and growth which are seen as the primary measurements of urban development. Making the cemetery legible within this economic imaginary is then transforming how the cemetery space is conceived of, and thus also shapes the conditions of existence of the cemetery within the process of densification and understands the cemetery as the solution to current urban sustainability issues.

In contrast to the understanding of how the dead took up space and needed to be pushed aside during the 1800s, now the dead are made less strange and abject in order to return their land to the city. Within the current economic imaginary of urban planning, the dead are only allowed to take up space if that space is productive. Because even though the cemetery is not privately owned or a commodified space in itself, its relationship with the rest of urban space subjugates the cemetery to this rationality. Instead of articulating the cemetery with signs such as death or disease, the document puts the sign of the cemetery together with all the valuable signs of the current knowledge regime within urban planning, such as sustainable and green, and reworks the cemetery into a new legible form, so as to bring it back into the urban planning gaze, and make it provide the city with the qualities that that the city is losing under the current logics of capital. Within this reading then, the document might not really be opening up the cemetery space but closing it in by articulating the object 'cemetery' through the category of 'urban green space' and trying to make it fit within this category.

#### 5.4 Making heterotopias legible

I would argue that the rearticulation and remaking of the cemetery does not only have implications for the cemetery, but how we think about urban space as a whole, and the possibilities of other urban futures that are not dominated by the logics of capitalism. Having established heterotopias as spaces which resist or circumvent the hegemonic economic imaginary, the cemetery being a deathscape, highly marked by the disrupting presence of death, has so far been outside of both the commodified space and accelerating time characterizing the rest of the urban environment. Other green spaces such as parks, that are not marked by death, might offer some type of increase of exchange value to the surrounding developments as they might increase the property values of the developments by providing proximity to green areas (Troy and Grove 2008). The cemetery, on the other hand, being a heterotopic space in a Lefebvrian sense, by resisting the dominant representations of space, is a difficult urban space to operate with within a capitalist economic imaginary. As Gandy (2012) argues: “anomalous spaces such as cemeteries have more complex and uncertain relationships with surrounding land and property values” (Gandy 2012, 734). Spaces like cemeteries are also harder to redevelop or repurpose, both because they are tightly connected to an important function for the operation of society, that is, the management of dead bodies, and also because of their more Foucauldian heterotopic separation by being constituted by the symbolic and cultural values of death. Whereas spaces such as streets, highways, squares, or airports are fundamentally imbricated in the reproduction of capital (Junior 2014, 151), cemeteries have for long been resisting the economic imaginary of maximized use and growth.

Not only spatio-temporally Other, heterotopic deathscapes are discursive breaks that fundamentally resist both the never-ending appropriation of urban space by capital, the economic imaginaries that facilitate this appropriation, and also the very processes of ordering that upholds the legitimacy of a certain imaginary. There is something fundamentally unknowable about death, being the end of life, and thus marking the limits of language, knowledge, and reason. Death is absence and finitude, and by trying to apprehend or represent death it “contaminates and *affects* the very project of knowledge that seeks to address it” (Romanillos 2011, 2534). By being a limit to knowledge, death, and by extension the cemetery, can be seen as breaking with the current economic imaginary by both interrupting the accelerating and linear timeframe of capitalism, by showing us the contingency of binaries

such as life and death or nature and culture, and by providing a refuge from the intensifying and swelling urban environment. In light of this, Worpole (2003) writes that:

It was the renegade French writer Georges Bataille who noted that the major difference between nature and human society (especially late-capitalist society) was that the former didn't include the element of accumulation. Nature is based on growth and entropy, proliferation, but also on dissolution and decay. If death didn't exist, the nightmare of permanent (and increasingly unequal) material accumulation would never end. Sometimes one can only be thankful to death for acting as the last remaining brake on human concupiscence and vanity. (Worpole 2003, 13)

Seen in light of both Lefebvre and Massey, and their writings on the importance of explicitly thinking about space and how it is conceptualized, heterotopic deathscapes within the city could offer us the possibility to critically reflect on the current order of urban space. By standing on the outside both discursively and in space, being ambiguous and Other, cemeteries have the ability to confront us with the rest of society. They are creative sanctuaries for thinking across and beyond. In a similar vein, Soja (1996) writes that the importance of Other spaces, such as heterotopias, is not just that they are something taxonomically Other, a different category than other sites, but rather that they make us think about the spatial in new ways. He writes that:

*[...] that the assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality [...] directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking. They are not just 'other spaces' to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are also 'other than' the established ways of thinking spatially. They are meant to detonate, to deconstruct, not to be comfortably poured back into old containers (Soja 1996, 163; emphasis in the original).*

Heterotopias, such as cemeteries, therefore have an imaginative capacity by discursively resisting to be known fully. Cemeteries and they position outside of the general planning discourse have been refusing to become legible, they have been pockets of difference and possibility, revealing to us the constructed nature of what we think of as normality and order, and thus also a space of possible alternatives.

If we understand space as relational, how we choose to conceptualize a space such as the cemetery could therefore send reverberations into how we understand what urban space is,

who and what it is for, and what values that underpin these understandings. Since it is the green recreational values of the cemetery that current urban planning places value on, by creating a need for having to use cemeteries as parks, the difficulties with categorizing the cemeteries in this way therefore might show us the lack of these qualities in the rest of the urban space, and therefore also open a critical conversation of why we lack these qualities. If the anomaly of the cemeteries were to change on the other hand, as in this case by making them more park-like through increased recreational activities, it would be easier to integrate them into the rest of the urban fabric and also make the cemetery known through the capitalist economic imaginary, and thus also reduce the imaginative and critical reflexivity that this space provides, limiting alternatives to the here and now.

The cemetery being a heterotopia constitutes a space that in many ways might be seen as a ‘problem’ for planners. Urban planners need to inscribe this space within the understanding of the dominant economic imaginary, in order to make sense of it according to the current ordering of society. Yet, as it is fundamentally a fragment of a break in discourse, the cemetery is a space which eludes this act of meaning making. Interesting in this respect, as written, Grabalov and Nordh (2021) also writes about the special qualities of cemeteries but describe these not as heterotopic, but as a form of liminality. They find the liminality of Oslo’s cemeteries in the tensions between their property status (being owned by both the municipality and the church), the different management and design aspects, and their actual use. In concurrence with what this thesis has found, they also describe how the document as a strategic planning document might change the extent of the cemeteries’ liminality.

But instead of questioning this, they go on to provide suggestions of the best ways to facilitate this, for instance through better physical access, lighting, and stronger communication efforts through social media, which highly resembles the plans proposed in the document. They write that “These measures could decrease the level of liminality and bring cemeteries more actively into both planning discourse and people’s everyday life” (Grabalov and Nordh 2021, 12). They also note that liminality is an inherent quality of cemeteries, and a quality which will continue to be present, but that the goal is then to balance the liminality against the wish for these spaces to become multifunctional green spaces. This position stands in contrast to my argument as it is precisely the liminal, the strange and unknowable of heterotopias, and death, that I believe makes the cemetery a special and important urban space. Liminality has elsewhere been defined as “[...] associated with a transgressive middle stage [...] often marked out spatially as a threshold, or margin, at which activities and conditions are most uncertain and in which the normative structure of society is

temporarily suspended or overturned” (Hetherington 1997, 32). Reducing the liminality, or heterotopic qualities, of the cemetery can therefore be interpreted as an active effort to bring back what is different into normality and reduce the imaginative potential that lies in transgression.

In light of this, Scott (1998) emphasizes that the partial representation of space by planners and officials through practices of making legible is always intentional, as “they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer” (Scott 1998, 3). Urban planning thus necessarily must reduce socio-spatial phenomena in order to make them into a packaged object that is governable and manageable within a particular knowledge regime, such as in the way Grabalov and Nordh (2021) suggest through reducing the cemeteries liminality. Planning needs to smooth out what is different and unknowable, in order to keep the illusion of order alive. Based in the understanding of the function of economic imaginaries being to uphold a sense of order and cohesion of the social world, capitalism as the basis for urban planning, can therefore be seen to needing to understand space in order to champion itself and can’t have spaces that does not fit within it. Bourdieu (1998) writes in regards to this that this is especially true with the form of capitalist reason that is dominant today, as he writes that: “[...] this “theory” that is desocialised and dehistoricised at its roots has, today more than ever, the means of *making itself true* and empirically verifiable” (Bourdieu 1998; emphasis in the original).

To conclude this discussion, I would argue that the strategic plan is in effect trying to make legible and rearticulate the disruptive qualities of the presence of death, by ascribing cemeteries qualities valued by the urban planning discourse and the economic imaginary it is marked by. By doing so, the imaginative capacity within these spaces is defused, and a specific understanding of urban space, what problems it faces, and how to solve these problems within the logics of a capitalist economic imaginary, is naturalized. The tension that can be seen both in the document, and the interview, of trying to balance the special qualities of the cemetery with the innovation and development proposed, can be interpreted as a tension emanating from the fact that the cemetery being a heterotopia fundamentally evades order and categorization. As heterotopic deathscapes are spatial and discursive breaks that resist both the never-ending appropriation of urban space by capital, and also the economic imaginaries that facilitate this appropriation, trying to order the cemeteries in Oslo within the measures of the current capitalist economic imaginary thus inherently reduces what the cemetery is. Consequently, this will reduce the critical imaginative potential this space

provides and then also narrow our understanding of what urban space is, as well as who and what it is for, and limit our ability to think outside of the current processes of ordering.



## Conclusion

This thesis has set out to explore how heterotopic deathscapes, such as the cemetery, can help us think about urban planning and urban space in new ways, within the context of an increasingly commodified city. By taking the cemetery as a special case of urban space, this thesis has used the cemetery as an object of research in order to shed light on how urban planning discursively contribute to construct and order urban space, on what assumptions urban planning operates within, and what implications this have for the cemetery as an urban space, for urban planning and for the city as a whole. The particular case that has been explored was the current policy proposals by Oslo municipality that stakes out a path for the cemeteries in Oslo to become multifunctional urban green spaces within the prospect of a densifying city. Through creating a synthetic theoretical framework, combining literature on deathscapes, cultural political economy, discourse theory, the production of space and the concept heterotopia, this thesis has been a response to current research on cemeteries as urban spaces in the Nordic context, and the lack of critical perspectives within this body of work. By situating the proposed changes to the cemetery within its socio-political context I have attempted to discuss the imaginative potential of cemeteries and provide a critical reading of the values that shape the current strategic planning of cemeteries in Oslo, and the implications of these. The research questions that were asked are:

1. *How are cemeteries made meaningful within the current urban planning regime?*
2. *How do heterotopias stand in relation to the processes of urban planning?*
3. *How can cemeteries offer a space for thinking outside current planning ideals?*

Through answering the first research question, a main take away from the case of cemetery planning in Oslo is how planning and management of the cemetery as an urban space is intimately connected to urban development and planning as a whole, as planning of cemetery space can be seen to be made meaningful in tandem with long standing urban planning issues

such as how, who and what urban space is for. Planning and management of cemeteries is, and was, framed as a land use concern, but as the knowledge regimes of urban planning has changed, the particular emphasis on the cemetery as an urban planning issue, its role within the urban environment and its physical placement has changed. In the 1800s the cemetery was created as different, unwanted, and abject, through the individualization and personalization of death, together with the increased knowledge of sanitation, contagion, and hygiene. The cemeteries were therefore placed within the city fringes and grouped together with all the other unwanted subjects in the city. With city growth, increased densification and brazen private developments, the cemetery came to be seen as the antitheses to a livable, vibrant and green city and was again thrust aside.

Despite the shared concerns, the solution that is presented to these issues today is, in contrast, to remake the cemetery into a space providing much needed resources for the city. The strategic plan that Oslo municipality has created for the cemeteries and the stated goals of: 1) clarifying the cemeteries function as urban green spaces; 2) innovation and development in terms of administration, management and use of the cemeteries should be stimulated; and 3) the climate and environment efforts within the cemeteries should be strengthened, might then represent an implicit effort to resolve the 'under-use' of urban space, within the ideals of the compact city model. Instead of protecting the cemetery from the increased density and accelerating activity within the urban environment that this model creates, the cemetery is supposed to no longer be pushed aside, but rather be understood as a part of the city and to be integrated into the urban networks of activity and accumulation.

The language of allowing for more, smarter, and more efficient management and use of the cemetery space is thus not effectively challenging the problems of densification, but rather tries to shape a heterotopic space into a solution to the many problems of an increasingly commodified city, such as lack of recreational space, decreasing biodiversity and difficulties with climate change mitigation, by reducing the anomalies of the cemetery. The special qualities that the cemeteries have by being marked by the presence of death is supposed to be packaged in a specific way in order to be legible and valuable in the eyes of the current urban planning regime, and to make it easier to integrate this space into the activity of the city. The cemetery is therefore remade discursively within the strategic plan through how it stands in relation to the surrounding built environment, to the larger competition for urban land use and pressure on urban green space, and to urban life and activity, by being shaped into a multifunctional urban green space.

By answering the second and third research questions, the line of inquiry of this thesis has shown that the making of cemetery space as an ordered and legible surface that happens within the current planning regime might subjugate the openness and political potential that lies within heterotopic deathscapes in order to keep the wheels of accumulation going, and therefore reduce the critical imaginative potential of the cemetery. Death in many ways confronts us with our limits – limits to life, of circulation, and of what it is possible to know. By being a heterotopic deathscape, the cemetery reminds us that there is an end to growth and a limit to consumption. As heterotopias are alternative modes of ordering, and as mirrors into the non-necessity of our current modes of existence, the detriment of trying to make the cemetery legible is that we might lose the very spaces in our society that can show us that the current way of structuring society need not be the only alternative. If we are to be able to create a different urban condition, we must also first be able to imagine that this is possible.

The goal with this project has not been to argue against comprehensive planning, neither to say that the cemetery should be ‘left alone’. What has been tried to be shown is that the cemetery, by becoming a planning issue, will be shaped by current discursive practices within urban planning and the economic imaginary that permeates these, and not that planning in itself is bad. We will always need to order and categorize phenomena to understand them, but I have tried to shed light on the foundations on which this ordering rests, and the implications of these foundations. By having established the cemetery as a heterotopic space, I believe it is paramount to ask what happens when one tries to order the cemetery and make it legible, in what way it becomes legible anew, and what the consequences of this are. Relating back to both Massey and Lefebvre and how they stress the importance of explicitly thinking about space, we need to ask how urban spaces, such as the cemetery gets known – what knowledge about the city is being constructed, and on what ‘truths’ this is founded on. In light of the post-structural methodological basis of this thesis, this kind of critical reflexivity is paramount for any type of knowledge production. The sustainable and green qualities of the cemetery, being green lungs, and pockets of silence and difference, are already present within this space, and we could therefore ask if we need to order the cemetery explicitly in this way in order to protect it? Do the values the cemetery has for the city need to be articulated within an understanding of the city as densifying, and the values of smart and efficient use?

This thesis has used the concept of heterotopias then, not only to show how the current planning regime deals with and shapes the cemetery, but also how heterotopias reflect back onto planning itself. Heterotopias are relational spaces, that are constituted by the practices of

ordering in society, and planning is inherently an act of ordering. Trying to order a heterotopic space will therefore radiate back onto us what planning takes for granted, both in terms of what values it operates on, and fundamentally what the act of planning is. Understanding cemeteries as heterotopias gives us the possibility to critically reflect on how urban planning works, and what image of the city it creates. The tension of trying to plan for the cemetery, and the difficulties with this, the many conflicting considerations and awkward fit within the current planning paradigm, confronts planning with its own shortcomings. The larger implications of trying to reduce the presence of heterotopias, such as the cemetery, in the city are therefore both that we lose a space to think and imagine a future outside the current economic imaginary within urban planning today, but also that planning might lose the spaces that offers a space for reflexivity.

The topics explored in this thesis might open up several avenues for further research. Firstly, in light of Lefebvre's spatial triad, this thesis has explore the representations of space, that is, how cemeteries are represented, conceived of and produced from above within the eyes of planners and urban policy. But is there a difference if the changes to the cemetery space had come from the actual lived reality of the inhabitants of the city? In light of Massey's (2005) writings on space as relational, dynamic and always becoming, heterotopias being a reflection of current social relations can be seen as not being static, but emerging and developing with the context that it is situated in. An interesting avenue to explore further would be, how the imaginative capacity of heterotopias can open up for appropriating the city through particular moments and acts of resistance. Holleran (2023) discuss how the same mechanisms of densification and appropriation of urban space by capital that is highlighted in this thesis is happening in Berlin. However, in his case, the cemeteries in Berlin has been used as parks as an effort to take the city back. The 'greening' of cemeteries is argued by Holleran (2023) to be a civic act of neighborhood resistance opposite the many other efforts to 'activate' the cemeteries in a city of increasing land values and intensified competition for space. This would be actually taking the critical perspective of the literature on the right to the city seriously, in contrast to Skår et al. (2018), because changing the uses of the cemetery would actually have weight opposite the 'dominant representation'.

Secondly, Junor (2014) writes how heterotopic spaces exist throughout the capitalist city. Through the work of social movements and other collective action groups, several sites can be given new meaning and offer alternatives to the commodified city by being reappropriated from below. From Juniors (2014, 154) reading, heterotopias emerge with these efforts, and it therefore lies a creative, imaginative and subversive capacity in many sites

across the city. Acts of resistance are events which does not only happen in space but produce space. In light of this, because heterotopias can be produced, cemeteries need not be the sole heterotopias in the city. Exploring other urban heterotopias and how they relate to practices of urban planning could possibly continue the efforts of this thesis to think critically about the conditions of existence for urban life.

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### **Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet**

#### ***Urban Cemeteries as Public Spaces?***

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et masterprosjekt hvor formålet er å utforske hvordan urbane gravlunder blir forstått og planlagt som offentlige steder. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

#### **Formål**

Det overordnede formålet med dette prosjektet er å utforske hvordan steder tilknyttet behandling av død i byen blir forstått, snakket om, og planlagt for. Mer spesifikt vil prosjektet undersøke den offentlige diskursen om urbane gravlunder i Oslo, og belyse hvordan gjeldende idealer innenfor dagens byplanlegging legger til rette for hva slags steder gravlunder er og kan være.

Gjennom analyse av offentlige dokumenter samt intervjuer med personer tilknyttet planlegging og styring av gravlundene i Oslo, vil prosjektet diskutere på hvilken måte urbane gravlunder blir forstått som offentlige rom, hva slags planleggingsidealer som påvirker hva slags sted gravlunder er, og hva gravlunder kan fortelle oss om muligheter og utfordringer ved å realisere gode offentlige rom i fremtiden.

Prosjektet er et masterprosjekt ved Universitetet i Oslo ved Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi. I tillegg er prosjektet tilknyttet prosjektet Truly public spaces, som igjen er den del av det tverrfaglige forskningssenteret Include ledet av Senter for utvikling og miljø på Universitet i Oslo.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Da formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke den offentlige diskursen om Oslos gravlunder ønsker jeg å komme i kontakt med et utvalg personer som bidrar til å legge premissene for hvordan disse skal forstås, og på ulikt vis har en politisk eller profesjonell rolle i forbindelse med planlegging og styring av gravlundene. Jeg håper derfor du ønsker å delta i dette prosjektet.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

En del av dataene som skal brukes til prosjektet vil innhentes gjennom semi-strukturerte intervjuer. Da formålet med prosjektet er å diskutere den offentlige diskursen om gravlunder, vil spørsmålene som stilles ikke omhandle personlige holdninger eller perspektiver om temaet. Derimot vil spørsmålene i hovedsak omhandle oppfatninger og meninger, i kraft av din profesjonelle rolle, om gravlundenes posisjon, betydning og framtid i byen.

Hvis du velger å ta del i prosjektet, innebærer det at du deltar i et intervju som vil vare i ca. 40-60 minutter. Under intervjuet vil det bli tatt notater, samt lydopptak for å sikre best gjengivelse av informasjonen som kommer fram i intervjuet. Det vil ikke bli innhentet annen informasjon om deltakerne enn den de ønsker å dele i intervjusituasjonen.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Det vil kun være jeg, Hannah Waaler Koppang, og veileder for prosjektet, professor ved Universitetet i Oslo Andrea Joslyn Nightingale, som har tilgang til informasjonen vi samler inn om deg.

For å sikre at data om deg ikke kommer på avveie, vil navn og kontaktopplysninger erstattes med en kode, hvor kodingsnøkkelen lagres adskilt fra øvrige data. Alt datamateriale vil lagres gjennom UiOs krypterte lagringstjenester under prosjektperioden.

Da jeg er interessert i hvordan deltakerne i intervjuene uttaler seg i kraft av den rollen de har i tilknytning til Oslos gravlunder, vil det være relevant å innhente informasjon om deltakernes arbeidssted. Det er dermed mulig at ditt arbeidssted vil komme fram i den ferdige publikasjonen for eksempel som i en grovkategorisert tabell, og i tilknytning til sitater fra intervjuene. Dette kan føre til at det er en sjanse for at du vil bli identifisert i den ferdige publikasjonen.

### **Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**

Masterprosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes mai 2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med deltakernes personopplysninger anonymiseres ved at kodingsnøkkelen slettes. Lydopptakene av intervjuene vil slettes etter at de er transkribert. Anonymiserte transkripsjoner av intervjuene vil ikke slettes, slik at intervjudataene kan gjenbrukes til senere forskning.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Oslo har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Hannah Waaler Koppang på epost [hannahwk@uio.no](mailto:hannahwk@uio.no) eller på telefon 98 62 32 36
- Andrea Joslyn Nightingale på epost [a.j.nightingale@sosgeo.uio.no](mailto:a.j.nightingale@sosgeo.uio.no) eller på telefon 22 85 51 41
- Personvernombudet ved UiO Roger Markgraf-Bye på epost [personvernombud@uio.no](mailto:personvernombud@uio.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost [personverntjenester@sikt.no](mailto:personverntjenester@sikt.no) eller på telefon 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Hannah Waaler Koppang  
(Student)

Andrea Joslyn Nightingale  
(Veileder)

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## Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Urban Cemeteries as Public Spaces*, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju
- at opplysninger om arbeidssted kommer fram i den ferdige publikasjonen slik at jeg muligens kan gjenkjennes

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

# Annex 2

## Example of interview guide

### Bakgrunnsinformasjon

- Kan du begynne med å kort fortelle om din rolle tilknyttet planlegging og styring av Oslos gravlunder?

### Politikk og styring

- Hvordan er ansvarsfordelingen når det kommer til planlegging, styring og drift av Oslos gravlunder? Hvilke aktører?
  - o Hva er gravferdsetatens ansvar når det kommer til Oslos gravlunder?
  - o Hvem finansierer planer og tiltak for å endre gravlundenes utforming, bruk eller drift?
- Hvilke prinsipper ligger til grunn for å bestemme hvordan gravlundene skal utformes, driftes og brukes? Hvem bestemmer disse?
- Bystyret har vedtatt at de skal be om å ta over gravplassmyndigheten slik at gravlundene blir helkommunale.
  - o Kan du si litt om dette?
  - o Tror du det vil føre til noen endringer i hvilke verdier vi tillegger gravlundene?
- I hvilken grad blir gravlundene påvirket av endringer i politiske idealer?

### Gravlundenes kvaliteter

- Hva slags type steder vil du kategorisere Oslos gravlunder som?
- Hvilke funksjoner skal Oslos gravlunder fylle?
- I hvilken grad tenker du at gravlundene er religiøse steder?
  - o Er gravlundenes religiøse/spirituelle kvaliteter noe man ønsker mer eller mindre av?
- I hvilken grad vil du si at det er behandlingen av de praktiske problemene tilknyttet død som styrer utforming og bruk av gravlundene?
- Flere av de eldre gravlundene i Oslo har en svært sentral plassering. Hva tenker du om gravlundenes plassering i byen?
- Mange gravlunder er store grøntområder, hvordan spiller dette inn i hvordan gravlundene planlegges og driftes?
- Hvilke aktiviteter er gravlundene lagt til rette for?
  - o I hvilken grad er gravlundene et sted for aktiviteter tiltenkt de etterlatte?
  - o I hvilken grad er gravlundene et sted for rekreasjon?
- Er det noen aktiviteter som er mer eller mindre ønskelige på en gravlund

### Fremtidens gravplasser

- Byrådssak 253/17 – «Fremtidens gravplass – gode grønne byrom»
  - Hvem har initiert planene med dette dokumentet?
  - Hvorfor har man ønsket å fremme denne saken?
  - I hvilken grad er dette et dokument --- forholder seg til?
  - Hva tenker du om denne strategien?
    - Har det skapt noen endringer i hvordan dere tenker om hva slags sted gravlundene er?
    - Har det skapt noen endringer i måten dere jobber på?
    - Hvilke hensyn må tas når man skal endre bruken av Gravlundene?
    - Hvilke kvaliteter er viktige å ta vare på, og hvilke ønsker man å endre?
    - Hvilke konflikter eller utfordringer kan oppstå hvis man skal endre bruken av gravlundene?
  - Vil dette dokumentet skape noen endringer med tanke på ansvar rundt gravlundene?
- Er det noen andre styrings- eller plandokumenter som dere bruker eller forholder dere til?

### **Offentlig rom**

- Hva legger du i begrepet offentlig rom?
- Tenker du at begrepet offentlig rom handler mest om eierskap, tilgang eller bruken av stedet?
  - I hvilken grad er Oslos gravlunder offentlige rom?
- Finnes det en diskusjon om å gjøre gravlundene mer offentlige?
  - I så fall hvordan skal dette gjøres?
- Hvem bør gravlundene være for?
- Er det noen bestemte grupper som burde ha mer eller mindre plass på gravlundene?

### **Avslutning**

- Har du kommet på noe underveis som du ikke har fått sagt, eller du ønsker å legge til?