Chapter 3

Cemeteries as Translocal Contact Zones: Navigating Regulations, Unwritten Rules and Divergent Expectations in Luxembourg City

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3.1 Introduction

Mourning, grieving and taking care of the dead are universal human activities. Despite this universality, material provisions (such as cremation, burial, grave-goods and monuments) are socially and culturally embedded, reflecting national and local differences as well as personal preferences. Consequently, a plurality of funerary practices may coexist within any given locality, e.g., as a result of multiple religious communities and worldviews found in dynamic societies that have been shaped by migration and other forms of mobility. To regulate this plurality and its consequences, states and religious authorities have, over the centuries, sought control over burial grounds and related social spaces. In the modern-day context of hypermobility and accelerated migration, cemetery managers find themselves confronted with an increasing range of needs and desires expressed by the bereaved. Based on the case-study of Luxembourg City (the capital of the small European state of Luxembourg, which borders Germany, France and Belgium), we investigate cemeteries as 'translocal contact zones.'

At cemeteries, people from different cultures and religions come into contact with each other and shape each other's understandings through embodiment, materials and practices – in a hierarchically structured setting. The concept of 'contact zones' has been defined by literary critic Mary Louise Pratt as

> an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. … [It]

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> emphasises how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other … not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (Pratt, 1992, pp. 6-7; see also Pratt, 1991)

Pratt focused on imperial contact zones, but she also conceptualised the classroom as a contact zone. Other scholars have applied the term to additional fields in which contact takes place between individuals who have not previously come into contact with each other (e.g., Isaacs & Otruba, 2019 on ecological systems; Schorch, 2013 on museums; and Yeoh & Willis, 2005 on Chinese cities). This can also be the case in cemeteries, which are "sites of encounter and interaction where different types of people meet, either in person or through encountering the graves and material artefacts of remembrance" (Maddrell et al., 2018, p. 51). Here, encounters take place between, on the one hand, an institutionalised cemetery sector that is bound by national legislation, municipal regulations, and majority cultural norms and traditions, and, on the other hand, diverse users who have their own religious and cultural requirements, expectations and experiences. As such, cemeteries are sites of negotiation, exchange, potential conflict, possibility and synthesis. Viewing cemeteries as contact zones acknowledges this presence of multiple discourses and communities in addition to the power relations shaping the particular space. As we show in this chapter, often these power relations are, or are experienced as, asymmetrical.

This chapter focuses on migrants' lived experiences of cemetery rules and codes of behaviour. As Weissköppel (2013, p. 286) has shown, "from the perspective of immigrants, it is not always the national structures that are the relevant ones, as is conceptually assumed in the transnational paradigm." Rather, migrants engage with a particular local setting, participating in its ongoing construction and development while drawing on their experiences of other local places. The concept of 'translocality' focuses on these types of interactions and allows us to investigate the everyday spaces and actions of migrants. Migrants are often identified by their nationality or country of origin – not only by statistical surveys but also (as we must self-critically admit) by our own study design. However, it transpires that it is more salient to ask about the production of locality "under the conditions of contemporary urban life, which involve national regimes, mass mediation, and intense and irregular commoditisation" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 181). To bring forth the relational production of localities and the politics of space as advocated by Massey (2004), we thus propose the notion of 'translocality.' This notion has been used by scholars to address the *emergence* of networks in which people, resources, practices and ideas circulate (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 375) and "the *outcome* of concrete movements of people, goods, ideas, and symbols which span spatial distances and cross boundaries, be they geographical, cultural or political" (Freitag & Von Oppen, 2010, p. 5, our italics). Contact zones are a product of translocality, because they reveal the impact of encounters between individuals, materials and practices and the resulting *transformation* of the space and of the social actors in it (Askins & Pain, 2011).

Cemeteries as ‘translocal contact zones’ not only engage the living but also involve actions revolving around affective, emotional and spiritual bonds, which the living continue to have and with they maintain with the dead. It is clear that mourning and, more generally, evocation of the dead take place not only at the cemetery but also – even more – outside it (Klass et al., 1996; Klass & Steffen, 2018; Valentine, 2008). Moreover, the “relational tension between the physical absence (not being there) and emotional presence (a sense of still being there)” (Maddrell, 2013, p. 505) is highly dynamic, because it responds to social expectations and life events, such as moving home or finding a new partner (see also Mathijssen, 2018). Still, funeral ceremonies represent a crucial moment in this bonding process, and for some people, as we will show, grave tending continues to be important in maintaining these bonds. It is not merely out of social convention that our interviewees often referred to a funeral as “saying goodbye” and to visiting a grave as “saying hello” to the deceased. Whether religious or secular in their appearance, grave sites “make the ‘absent’ ‘present’ and act as spaces that transcend absence” (Maddrell, 2013, p. 505). Although grave decorations may be standardised and address the living (family members and visitors to neighbouring graves at the cemetery) to show that one cares (Benkel et al., 2019, p. 82), there is also evidence that they are seen as a form of on-going communication with the dead (Francis et al., 2005; Kjærsgaard & Venbrux, 2016). In this chapter, we reveal that these practices are culturally and religiously sensitive, and that they are laden with ritual significance on personal, collective and managerial levels.

In the first part of this chapter, we describe how cemeteries in Luxembourg City function as municipal service providers with specific laws and regulations. The second and longest part of this chapter examines the experiences and lived realities of migrants who use, embody and impact on these spaces, focusing on three contested issues: (i) burial practices and rituals (with a focus on ceremonies that take place at the cemetery); (ii) cemetery architecture and grave design; and (iii) the re-use of grave plots. We conclude this chapter with a discussion of these contested issues and an argument for more emphasis on agency in the acknowledgement of cemeteries as translocal contact zones.

3.1.1 Methods

The data analysed in this chapter were collected in Luxembourg City between July 2019 and October 2020. During this time, we held interviews with 21 stakeholders (representatives from religious and ethnic communities, the municipality, cemeteries and funeral parlours, so-called *pompes funèbres*) and sixteen individual users of cemeteries. The interviews were held by one or both of the authors in person (except for one, which was done using Facetime), and the interviews lasted for between half an hour and three hours. They were held at the offices of stakeholders, or in cafés in the city centre. The interviews were conducted in English, French, German or

Luxembourgish. In addition, we held five focus-group discussions with eighteen participants in total. Four of these discussions were held during the *Festival des Migrations, Cultures et de la Citoyenneté* (29 February-1 March 2020); the other was held online (via Zoom). Information about the national and religious backgrounds of the interviewed cemetery users and the participants in the focus-group discussions is represented in Table 3.1. In terms of gender, there were eight men and 26 women. Age-wise, our participants ranged between 19 and 78 years. There were significant differences between the participants in terms of how long they have been in Luxembourg, with some arriving in the country less than a year before the interview or focus group and others having lived there for most of their life; further analysis could explore whether length of stay and country of origin have any influence on how people negotiate and experience the soft boundaries and informal rules and customs of Luxembourg's funeral sector. At the *Festival* we also set up a Memorial Café, where we discussed the subject of burial and cremation practices with (walk-in) visitors. At the café we used a variety of creative elicitation methods, which led to a collection of written and visual material. All interviews and conversations were audio-recorded, transcribed, encoded and analysed using Atlas.ti. Recurrent topics were examined and compared with national burial acts and official statistical data.

Table 3.1 Overview of interviewees and focus group participants

	Interviews		Focus groups	
	Religion	Country of origin	Religion	Country of origin
	(Roman) Catholicism (3)	Algeria (1)	(Roman) Catholicism (4)	Afghanistan (1)
	Protestantism (2)	Cape Verde (4)	Protestantism (6)	Belgium (1)
	Orthodox Christianity (3)	China (1)	Orthodox Christianity (2)	Brazil (1)
	Islam (2)	Egypt (1)	Islam (3)	Egypt (1)
	No religion (3)	Indonesia (1)	No religion (3)	Ireland (1)
	Ancestor worship with Christian elements (3)	Luxembourg (1)		Luxembourg (2)
		Madagascar (1)		Montenegro (1)
		Netherlands (1)		Netherlands (6)
		Russia (1)		Portugal (2)
		Togo (2)		Serbia (1)
		UK (1)		Turkey (1)
		Ukraine (1)		
TOTAL	16	16	18	18

3.2 Luxembourg City: Small and Diverse

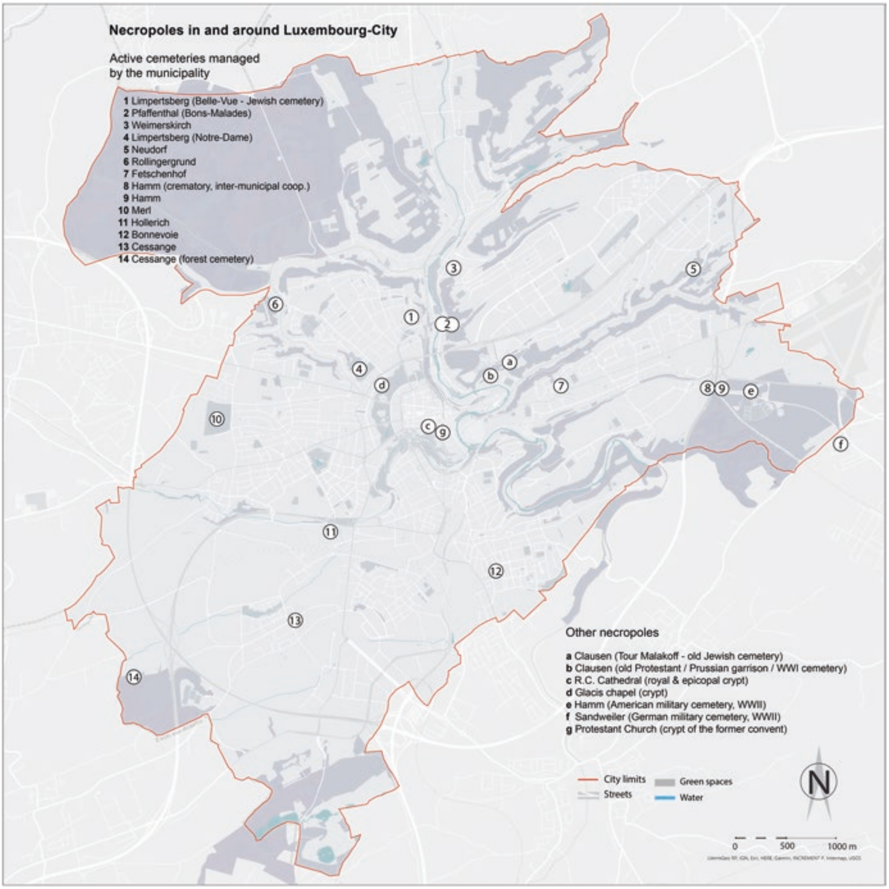
Luxembourg City is a particularly interesting case study for research into transnational lived citizenship on the one hand, and bureaucratised practices surrounding burials on the other. Luxembourg has high levels of migration and diversity because it hosts European Union institutions, multinational financial institutions, and associated service and construction industries. Over 70% of Luxembourg City's 120,000 inhabitants are non-nationals, which makes the capital city a 'node' in transnational networks spanning 164 countries around the world (see Table 3.2). Around 10% of

Table 3.2 Luxembourg City's population as at 31 December 2019 (Source: VDL, 2019)

Population by continent of origin (n = 122,273)			European population by country of origin (n = 122,273)		
Continent	Number	Percentage	Country	Number	Percentage
Europe	110,984	90.77	Luxembourg	35,913	29.37
Asia	5460	4.47	France	20,889	17.08
America	2879	2.35	Portugal	12,209	9.98
Africa	2788	2.28	Italy	8601	7.03
Oceania	97	0.08	Belgium	4622	3.78
Unknown	40	0.03	Germany	3904	3.19
No nationality	25	0.02	Spain	3872	3.17
TOTAL	122,273	100.00	Rumania	2254	1.84
			UK	2029	1.66
			Greece	1915	1.57
			Poland	1700	1.39
			Netherlands	972	0.79
			Ireland	943	0.77
			Sweden	929	0.76
			Bulgaria	928	0.76
			Hungary	767	0.63
			Finland	743	0.61
			Denmark	640	0.52
			Lithuania	631	0.52
			Croatia	520	0.43
			Czech Republic	493	0.40
			Estonia	417	0.34
			Slovakia	402	0.33
			Austria	373	0.31
			Latvia	351	0.29
			Slovenia	323	0.26
			Malta	135	0.11
			Cyprus	128	0.10
			Other	3381	2.77
			TOTAL	110,984	90.77

these non-nationals are non-European Union citizens (VDL, 2019, 2020a). These figures must be interpreted with caution, as not all non-nationals are foreign-born and some hold dual citizenship. Nonetheless, as Callens et al. (2019, p. 287) have noted, “based on migration background instead of nationality, the minority group actually outnumbers the native population [and] this particular minority/majority composition offers a unique research site.”

The municipality of Luxembourg City manages a total of thirteen ‘active’ cemeteries (covering 27 hectares and containing over 15,000 burial plots), which are scattered throughout the city (see Fig. 3.1). In addition, the municipality has joined a consortium operating the country’s sole crematorium, located in the capital’s district of Hamm. The cemeteries follow strict burial regulations in line with a ‘continental European’ model, which is similar to the situation in neighbouring countries but much stricter than in, for example, the Netherlands or the United Kingdom. In


Necropoles in and around Luxembourg-City
Active cemeteries managed by the municipality
1 Limpertsberg (Belle-Vue - Jewish cemetery)
2 Pfaffenthal (Bons-Malades)
3 Weimerskirch
4 Limpertsberg (Notre-Dame)
5 Neudorf
6 Rollingergrund
7 Fetschenhof
8 Hamm (crematory, inter-municipal coop.)
9 Hamm
10 Merl
11 Hollerich
12 Bonnevoie
13 Cessange
14 Cessange (forest cemetery)
③
⑤
⑥
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⑭
Other necropoles
a Clausen (Tour Malakoff - old Jewish cemetery)
b Clausen (old Protestant / Prussian garrison / WWI cemetery)
c R.C. Cathedral (royal & epicopal crypt)
d Glacis chapel (crypt)
e Hamm (American military cemetery, WWII)
f Sandweiler (German military cemetery, WWII)
g Protestant Church (crypt of the former convent)
City limits
Streets
Green spaces
Water
N
0
500
1000 m

Fig. 3.1 Necropoles in and around Luxembourg-City. (Map by Ville de Luxembourg, Service Topographie et géomatique; adapted by Thomas Kolnberger and Sonja Kmec)

keeping with the Napoleonic tradition, which granted each religious community equal access to burial sites, the 1972 cemetery law stipulates:

> In municipalities where several cults are professed, each cult may have a particular place of burial; in cases where there is only one cemetery, it can be divided into as many parts as there are different cults, with a separate entrance for each, and by proportioning this space to the number of inhabitants of each cult. (Loi, 1972, art. 2, authors' translation)

The key word here is *may*: a modal verb of authority and potential ability, delegating that decision to the municipal level. In Luxembourg City the Jewish community and the Protestant one (the Prussian garrison) have historically been granted their own cemeteries, which are now maintained by the municipality.

The practice of burial at cemeteries in Luxembourg is based on the national funeral legislation of 1972, and the city regulations of 2014. One crucial regulation states that human remains that stay in Luxembourg need to be disposed of within the confines of a cemetery or a plot reserved specifically for that use. Before a crematorium was opened in 1995, there was significant post-mortem cross-border mobility to crematoria abroad and a return of the urns to be buried in Luxembourg (Kolnberger, 2017, 2019). Today, ashes may be scattered in the crematorium garden and in designated areas of an increasing number of cemeteries. Since 2014, the burial of cremated remains has also been allowed in the municipal 'forest cemetery' at Cessange (on motivations for creating and using such alternative sites, see Kmec, 2019; Kmec & Kolnberger, 2020). The important leeway given to municipal authorities is illustrated in a by-law that allowed the laying of ashes on private grounds or any other place, according to the wishes of the deceased, by authorization of the mayor (RGD, 1978, art. 3). In 2018, this option was officially discouraged and the prohibition of keeping the ashes of the deceased at home was reiterated, as doing so would restrict the access provided to family and friends (QP, 2018).

Another key regulation, which has a significant influence on burial practices, is the legal obligation for bodily inhumations to take place in the cemetery of the district where the deceased resided (VDL, 2014, art. 9). The main exception to this regulation regarding location is the cemetery of Merl, which has confessional sections for Jews and Muslims and is open, upon authorisation by the mayor, to faith members from the rest of the city and the entire country. The Muslim section of the cemetery (which consists of rows of graves without stone vaults, oriented to face Mecca, in a demarcated area set apart from the rest of the cemetery, with red beeches planted alongside high hedges, creating a double hedge; see Fig. 3.3) was opened in 2002, after almost two decades of campaigning by Muslim communities (Pirenne, 2019a, b). At present, there is no commercial incentive for or municipal interest in adapting to the wishes of other minority groups (e.g., as can be seen in certain cemeteries in the Netherlands; see Jedan et al., 2020, pp. 14–15). According to the distinction applied by Rugg (2020, p. 7) to the service user as "a citizen, consumer or disenfranchised 'supplicant'," cemetery users are treated as citizens in Luxembourg. However, not all citizens' sensibilities are treated equally.

For one, the Catholic normativity of Luxembourg's funeral sector is not to be underestimated. Although run by the municipalities since 1804, cemeteries are shown on road signs and maps by stylised crosses, reflecting the majority culture. This iconography can also be detected in the cemeteries themselves. In Merl cemetery, which includes a Jewish and a Muslim section, the main entrance gates clearly depict a cross (see Fig. 3.2a, b). In the middle of the cemetery, which has been extended several times since 1915 with the current infrastructure dating from the

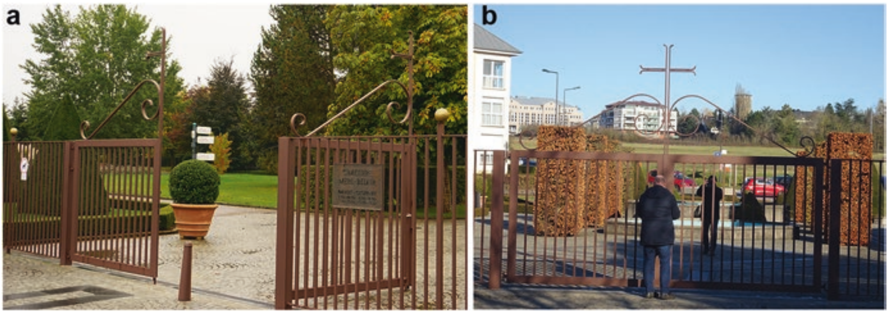

Fig. 3.2 (**a, b**) The gate to the Merl cemetery, open and closed. Upon closing the gate, a cross can be seen. (Photographs by Mariske Westendorp © Photothèque de la Ville de Luxembourg)

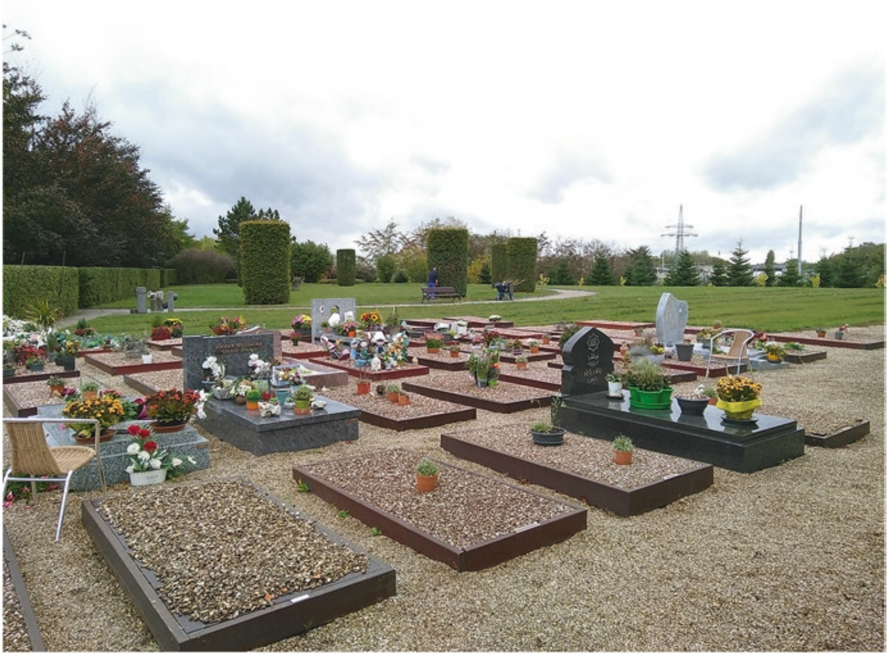

Fig. 3.3 The Muslim section of the Merl cemetery. While all the grave plots are of a similar size and orientation, the decorations reflect personal preferences and traditions in various countries of origin. (Photograph by Mariske Westendorp © Photothèque de la Ville de Luxembourg)

1980s (Philippart, 2020), the *chapelle* displays Christian artefacts, including a cross hanging from the ceiling and a massive candelabra adorned with a cross. Visitors to the cemetery administration office, the morgue (*Leichenhalle / morgue*) and the viewing rooms (*Aufbahrungssaal / salle d'adieu*) are greeted by a statue of Saint Andrew (Jesus's first disciple) and a Catholic priest's memorial plaque depicting a chalice and host with a cross.

Second, unwritten rules seem to be in place which favour some citizens' rituals and practices over others. In our interviews, cemetery users and stakeholders expressed ideas about "how things are done in Luxembourg," that are persistent enough for people to believe they are regulations, even though they are not included in the official body of cemetery and funerary laws. These unwritten rules, sometimes even more than the official regulations, shape the expectations of people in general, and migrants in particular, who might feel restricted in what they can and should do. We illustrate this in the next section, by focusing on three contested issues: burial practices and rituals, cemetery architecture and grave design, and the re-use of grave plots in Luxembourg.

3.3 Cemeteries as Translocal Contact Zones: Contested Issues

Fenced off from the outside world and closed at night, cemeteries in Luxembourg City – as in most towns in North-west Europe – have their own rules and regulations. There is a well-defined division of labour, and hierarchies are clear; values such as quietness and decorum are rather specific to the cemeteries. However, these behavioural norms are not set in stone. They are changing due to a variety of influences, such as leisure culture, heritage tourism, and reactions to users' experiences in other cemeteries.

In line with earlier research by Maddrell et al. (2021), we propose that cemeteries should be seen not as bounded spaces, but as sites where majority behaviour and rules are tested, challenged and potentially adapted through interactions with various minorities (whether of migrant or other heritage), raising questions about everyday 'lived citizenship' (Maddrell et al., 2021, p. 11, 20). Citizenship is not limited to the duties and rights linked to one's status as a certified member of a nation state (*Staatsbürgerschaft*); rather, it is understood here as lived practice, emphasising "the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens" (Hall & Williamson, 1999, p. 2). Citizenship in this sense is expressed in the everyday actions of people negotiating their membership of a particular (political) community. As such, lived citizenship is the result of a "dual process of self-making and being made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (Ong, 1999, p. 738). To study citizenship is therefore to study "how we live with others in a political community" (Lazar, 2013, p. 1), recognising multiple scales and sites. The scale we focus on here is the local, albeit in terms of its connections to other localities. In such *translocal* spaces movements of goods, capital, people, ideas, emotions and practices can foster intercultural and interreligious encounters based on compassion (Swensen & Skår, 2019), or create tensions, that may even amount to (infra)structural violence (Maddrell et al., 2021). In this section, we show how official regulations and unwritten rules affect migrants' expectations, appropriation and experience of cemeteries. Using an actor-oriented approach, we focus on people who were born or raised abroad and socialised into other sites and practices of mourning, and we explore how they engage with the provisions available to them in cemeteries in Luxembourg City. Some of these migrants identify as members of minority communities: groups with specific social, religious, ethnic, racial, linguistic or other characteristics that are perceived by their members and by the majority as different from the 'mainstream.' Others may refuse to adopt a minority position but find themselves cast as 'different' nonetheless or are ascribed diasporic identities (Délano Alonso & Mylonas, 2019).

When confronted with their future death, migrants often face the question about where they want to be buried: in the country where they are currently residing or in their country of origin, perhaps in a traditional family grave. Choosing a cemetery situated close to their 'new home' rather than repatriation is often seen as a sign of a migrant's symbolic and affective place-attachment to their 'host' country. Hunter (2016), for example, argues that repatriation might reinforce the temporary nature of the stay in a host country, whereas local burial (in Hunter's article: in France) can serve as the foundation of home-making in the diaspora (see also Hunter's contribution to this volume). Likewise, Maddrell et al. (2018, 2021) and Beebeejaun et al. (2021) observe in England and Wales a clear shift away from repatriation, especially among younger generations, due to family ties, sense of place, costs and practicalities, in addition to changing theological prescriptions (and adherence to these prescriptions).

While there is a vast body of literature dealing with repatriation and what is generally described as a shift towards burial in one's country of residence, most of the research focuses on a particular country (e.g., Marjavaara, 2012 on internal mobilities in Sweden; Maddrell et al., 2018 on manifold international networks of repatriation from England and Wales) or compare different national settings (e.g., Ahaddour & Broeckaert, 2017). Mertz (2019) offers a statistical comparison between the attitudes of various migrant communities in Luxembourg. He distinguishes between the wish for burial in Luxembourg expressed by French, Italian and Portuguese respondents and a preference for post-mortem repatriation given by respondents from Cape Verde and the Balkans. The reasons behind these preferences have not yet been researched, but they may be linked to more or less entrenched social and emotional ties to Luxembourg or to more or less pronounced religious and cultural differences in terms of funerary practices. The high percentage of undecided respondents (of all origins) found by Mertz is particularly poignant, as it shows that the answer to the question of where one wishes to be laid to rest is far from being clear.

Choosing to be buried in Luxembourg instead of opting for post-mortem repatriation results in the bereaved actively engaging with a social space that is highly bureaucratised and regulated, both on the national level and the local municipal level. In the next section, we explore how and why migrants choose to bury their dead and be buried in Luxembourg, and *how* they do this. We bring together the perspective of the regulatory framework and those who convey its content (cemetery employees and the municipality[1]) with the perspective of cemetery users (visitors, grave tenders and funeral attendees) to understand the particularly sensitive intercultural and translocal 'contact zones' that cemeteries constitute.

3.3.1 Burial Practices and Rituals

Municipal rules and regulations insist on "decent behaviour" and "respect for the dead" and give as examples of deviant behaviour littering, peddling, drunkenness, and climbing on tombs. Those engaging in such deviant behaviour can be expelled from the cemetery grounds (VDL, 2014, art. 39–42; see also Deering, 2010). In the Luxembourgish regulations, there is no mention of sound (levels), yet loud lamentations – a traditional feature of funerals in many cultures – may be seen as 'improper' in Luxembourg, not necessarily by the cemetery management but by migrants themselves, who wish not to stand out as 'different,' as the following example illustrates.

When we spoke to Joana,[2] a Cape Verdean migrant in her late sixties, who had been living in Luxembourg for fifty years, she shared her experiences of burying her mother and her husband. She chose to do both funerals, in her own words, "the Luxembourgish way": in a very small circle, with no onlookers and no lamenters (usually female family members or community volunteers). This was criticised by other members of the Cape Verdean community, who believed that a proper farewell should be more inclusive and communal. To do it "her way," Joana had to be assertive with her friends, family and the larger Cape Verdean community. Reflecting on the same situation, her sister Ana, whom we talked to on a separate occasion, sees this choice as depriving other funeral attendees of their way of mourning:

> My aunt does it [lamentation], one of my aunts does it still. She was also at the funeral of my mother. The people came to make her stop. Not the people from the cemetery, but the members of the family. Because there is this acculturation, you know. And the family, the people were ashamed of this, because they know that others don't understand. So they want to wipe this typical Cape Verdean tradition out, in order to just adjust. (authors' translation)

The response to these unwritten rules and norms thus depends on each individual, and is a clear example of the cemetery as a translocal contact zone. The choice to keep or break with cultural traditions reflects the wish to fulfil (often unspoken) expectations about fitting in rather than the desire to abide by official regulations.

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[1] Funeral undertakers are also important actors, who seek to reconcile regulations and the wishes of their customers, and may deal with the bureaucracy on their customers' behalf. Further research will elucidate the role of these important brokers ('*kommunikativer Knotenpunkt*,' Coenen, 2020, pp. 137–142).

[2] For reasons of confidentiality, interviewees and other research participants have been given pseudonyms, unless there is a specific agreed reason to name a participant.

Another example of a potential contest between expected behaviour in cemeteries and divergent cultural habits or practices relates to the question of who can be present when a coffin or urn is entombed: the immediate family, the entire funeral party or only the cemetery employees whose job it is to close the grave. In Luxembourg, the actual burial of a coffin is generally a backstage practice (Goffman, 1956), carried out by cemetery workers in a quick and efficient manner in the absence of funeral attendees. The mourners may attend a funeral ceremony elsewhere (at a church or a non-denominational farewell hall) while the burial takes place, and only come to the grave once it has been covered. Migrants from different backgrounds told us that they would wish for a more frontstage and solemn ceremonial burial of the coffin with the whole funeral party present. Mette, a Danish woman in her forties, shared how she experienced the funeral of a member of the Danish church community:

> It was a large funeral. It was not possible for the rest [non-family members] to come and see when the coffin was put in the ground. And it was the workmen, the people working on the cemetery, who did that. And that's not the Danish way. It was not put down very elegant as well. … So because it was so strange for the people working at the cemetery that the whole group was there to seeing them putting the coffin in the ground. For me, that's all natural, that we are there and see it. … The working men did it, and we all watched. And it didn't go easy. That's not good to see.

This type of shock is experienced not only by migrants but also by those socialised in Luxembourg when they attend funerals that "go against the grain." In another conversation, Monique, a Luxembourgish woman also in her forties, mentioned that when she witnessed an urn burial in the Notre-Dame cemetery, organised by a friend of German origin, she was aghast when she saw cemetery workers in fluorescent orange jackets in the midst of the mourners, waiting impatiently for the ceremony to end so they could finally finish their job. Here, we can clearly see how in the contact zone of the cemetery, different – and, at times, divergent – values and experiences come together.

The separation of everyday frontstage and backstage behaviour and languages, as developed by Goffman (1956), is seen as crucial by Coenen (2020), who examines modern rituals and bureaucracy surrounding farewell ceremonies. Coenen, using Mary Douglas's theory of 'matter out of place', argues that

> [n]o 'unclean' actions relating to the backstage are allowed to interfere with the course of a funeral. They rather have to be strictly separated and carried out covertly, as exemplified by the closing of the grave. With the exception of Muslim burials, where the grave is refilled collectively as part of the ritual chain, the closing of the grave generally takes place in Germany in the absence of the mourners. (Coenen, 2020, p. 152, authors' translation)

As 'matters out of place,' grave diggers' tools and work clothes are expected to remain hidden and in all cases separate from the mourners. When they are not, the experience is jarring. Reflecting on this, Mette, who had only recently arrived in Luxembourg, said that to avoid this type of situation it would have been important to be more explicit about her wishes. Similarly, Isabelle (who grew up in Togo and had been living in Luxembourg for 25 years) was equally displeased by the exclusion of the funeral party from the burial. She explained that there is a way to 'solve' the backstage handling of the coffin; namely, by insisting that one's own wishes are fulfilled:

> To be able to bury our dead, that means to throw the earth on it, approach the grave as you put the body, in Luxembourg, it is forbidden. … But we pushed. We pushed, because we absolutely wanted to say goodbye and throw the last earth on him, so we forced, and it was accepted. But we had to call the one who was there and he had to call his boss or the municipality. So much asking permission. But otherwise, it would have been bad, we couldn't get close to the grave. (authors' translation)

Isabelle believed that it was not only her right but her duty to make the burial happen in the 'proper' way. In other words, she insisted on her request and did not let prohibitions – whether written or unwritten – hold her back. This is a clear case of individual agency and negotiation, which is discussed in the next section as an act of lived citizenship.

3.3.2 Cemetery Architecture and Grave Design

Cemeteries at Luxembourg City are maintained by 56 employees of the municipal Cemetery Department, who care for the paths, trees, hedges and architectural features, in addition to managing the digging and filling of graves. Consequently, almost all the cemeteries – with the exception of Merl, which was planned in the 1970s and 1980s with a park-like infrastructure – are similar in their overall appearance. They are large, square spaces with rectangular grave markers, mostly constructed in marble or stone. The paths between the graves are covered with light-grey or red gravel, and the bushes – placed primarily to separate different burial sections – are neatly trimmed (see Fig. 3.4).

The individual grave markers are often similar in appearance too. Most include a horizontal slab, generally adorned with the family name, a large but plain cross and a container for holy water at the foot end, indicative of Luxembourg's majority Catholic culture. All grave markers need to adhere to regulations that are as strict as they are vague, and their construction must be approved by the mayor:

> Tombstones and other funerary monuments need to be adapted to the character of the cemetery or the section of the cemetery where they are placed. (…) Monuments and ornamental accessories must be made of natural stone, wood, cast iron, wrought iron, bronze, copper or other materials approved by the municipal council. Ornamental accessories made of other materials, as well as photographs fixed on the monuments are not allowed. (…) The construction and transformation of a funerary monument must be authorised by the mayor. (VDL, 2014, art. 47, authors' translation)

Despite these regulations, photographs can be seen on quite a number of grave markers at cemeteries, particularly on gravestones of people with Italian or Portuguese backgrounds, as are personal objects made from all kinds of material, especially on children's graves.

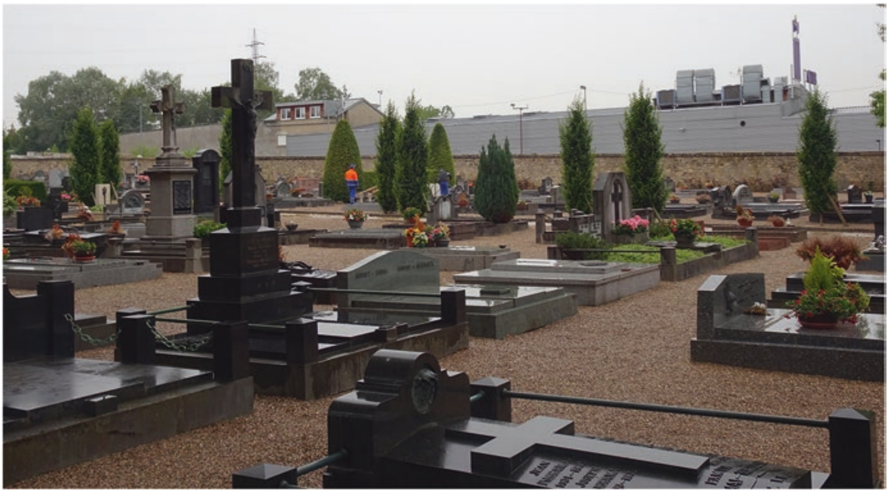

Fig. 3.4 Hollerich cemetery. (Photograph by Mariske Westendorp © Photothèque de la Ville de Luxembourg)

Conformity is imposed more rigorously when it comes to urn graves. In recent years, some cemeteries have added sections containing individual urn graves and columbaria. Some of these columbaria only allow for a small grey plaque on which is written ‘*famille*’ and the family name(s) of the deceased, usually all in capital letters. The only variance is whether the first name is mentioned (see Fig. 3.5). These plaques are supplied by the municipal administration, and their material and typography are predetermined.

Such homogenising directives can cause emotional and spiritual harm (Maddrell et al., 2018; Maddrell et al., 2021), as Robin, a Christian priest who had visited the columbarium with a mourner, witnessed:

> You know, in this wall, they are all alike, with the name and ‘*famille*.’ This Belgium man said to the undertaker at the cemetery: “It should not say ‘*famille*,’ but only her name. She didn’t have family, so only her name should be put there.” And he couldn’t get that through. He came and he saw ‘*famille*.’ He was so sad about that, every time we go.

Here, the experience of difference is not necessarily based on enculturation in different (trans)local contexts, but on one’s individual circumstances and background. Experiences are thus not only communal or national, but also highly individual, relational and translocal.

Lastly, the municipality of Luxembourg has set regulations regarding the temporary adornments that can or cannot be placed on top of graves. Cemetery workers have the right to remove any objects deemed ‘unfit’ for the cemetery’s appearance and “deposit them in a place where the owner can reclaim them” (VDL, 2014, art. 47); they may also dispose of faded floral decorations “that give cemeteries a neglected and unworthy appearance” (VDL, 2014, art. 59–61). The resulting appearance was appreciated by some of our research participants. For example, Andras, a

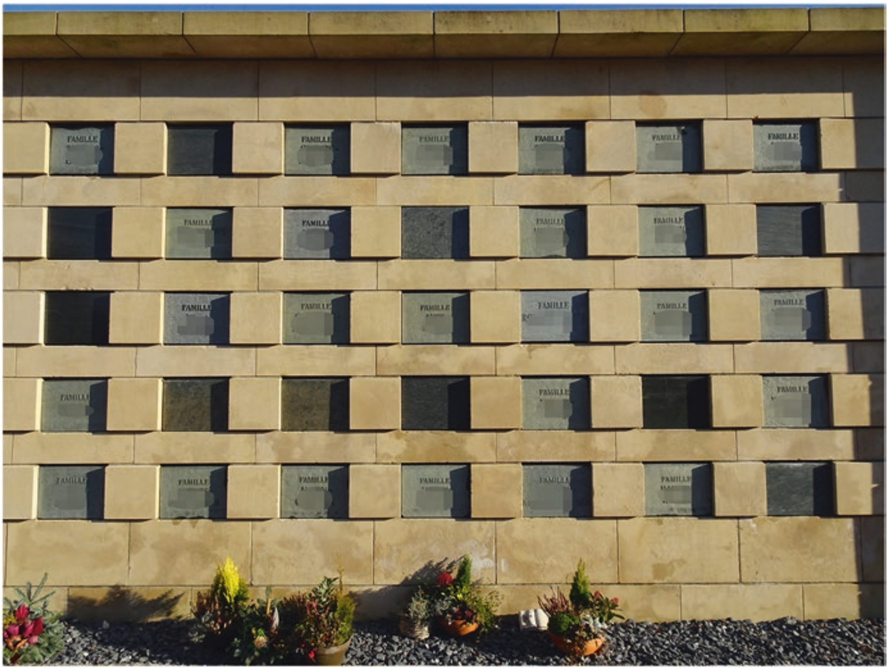

Fig. 3.5 Columbarium at Notre Dame cemetery. Each niche has the same cover, made of grey stone with '*famille*' and the family name in the same black lettering. No alternative designs are offered. (Photograph by Mariske Westendorp © Photothèque de la Ville de Luxembourg)

Coptic Egyptian man, who had buried his mother two years earlier, explained in detail how he managed to secure a family grave in Luxembourg. Upon asking him if his mother did not wish to be buried in Egypt, he answered:

> She was always comparing the graves in Egypt with here. Her wish was to be buried here because the graves in Egypt are normally in the desert, [far] out of the city. It is a lone, sandy place with graves. There are no flowers. There is only cactuses because we put beside every grave a cactus because they do not need water and nobody is coming to water them every day or every week. When she came here she was happy to visit the graves and her wish was: "I would like to be graved in such a garden." Because for her it was a garden. There were flowers, marble … And I think we fulfilled her wish.

Two things stand out in this positive narrative. Firstly, Andras's mother had noticed and appreciated the many flowers that often adorn graves in Luxembourg (especially around All Souls); and secondly, related to this, she has mentioned the close proximity of the cemeteries to residential areas and thus their accessibility.

These examples show that cemeteries in Luxembourg are experienced both positively and negatively. Regardless, in all the narratives a sense of homogeneity comes to the fore. All our informants described a similar picture of cemeteries in Luxembourg. This apparent uniformity is rather perplexing considering the wide diversity of Luxembourg's population. The reasons that may explain the possible discrepancy between the diverse living population and the homogenous deathscape are, as described above, the strict regulatory framework laid out by the municipality and the tendency to do what others do, which results in a "materiality of conformity." The latter is advanced by Streb et al. (2019), who argue that homogeneity might be the result of "neighbouring effects," in other words, the wish to fit in. Schmitt et al. (2018) also highlight the limited commercial options for headstones and so on, which restrict choice. Nevertheless, our interview participants did not consider the design of local cemeteries or grave markers to be problematic. In contrast, the issue that prompted the most lively discussions was the question of the re-use of graves.

3.3.3 Perpetual Grave Rights

In Luxembourg, municipalities can grant the right to use a grave plot for up to thirty years (Loi, 1972, art. 10). In Luxembourg City the temporal frame of these 'concessions' is fifteen or thirty years, and if the fee has not been paid after five years the grave or columbarium compartment may be cleared (VDL, 2014, art. 11). The concession-holder may renew the tenure for another fifteen or thirty years as often as desired, and bequeath the grant to their next of kin. If the grant is not renewed, the municipality may remove the gravestone, displace the remains and reallocate the plot. Although a system of limited grave tenure is practised in most Westernised countries (Rugg, 2020, p. 4), people who are not familiar with it may experience it as a shock that resonates for a long time. For example, when discussing the topic with Rosie, an Irish migrant who had been living in Luxembourg for over twenty years, she expressed how upset she got every time she heard of it.

Even though perpetual grave rights are not the default in Luxembourg, they still exist and may still be acquired. The concession fee for an individual grave of two square meters in a cemetery in Luxembourg City amounts to €200 for fifteen years or €600 for thirty years (VDL, 2015). A perpetual grave is significantly costlier (€2000) and the deed must to be reconfirmed every thirty years (VDL, 2020b). Besides, "perpetual concessions may be granted in places of burial reserved for members of a religious faith, if such is the requirement of this faith" (Loi, 1972, art. 10; VDL, 2014, art. 13, authors' translation). While the Jewish cemetery in Bellevue is mentioned explicitly in the regulations (VDL, 2014, art. 62–66) and perpetual grave rights are also granted for the Jewish section at Merl cemetery, this is less clear for the Muslim section of Merl (see Fig. 3.3). It is only the second Muslim section in the whole country (the first being situated in Esch-sur-Alzette), and it was opened at the request of the *Mutuelle du Centre Culturel Islamique Luxembourg* (CCIL, an insurance organisation that mainly arranges post-mortem repatriations of Muslims, primarily to Balkan countries).

In interviews with different members of the Muslim community, two things stood out. Firstly, as Muslim graves in Luxembourg City are still relatively new, nobody seemed to know exactly what would happen to them once the thirty-year concession period was over. Secondly, opinions were divided on the question of whether perpetuity would be required from a religious perspective. One of Luxembourg's imams mentioned in an interview:

> In Islam, the dead have the right for their own grave. But just as long as the body needs to decompose. As long as the body is decomposed, you can rebury someone. I have a scientific study from Liège, where someone was asked to look in the graves of the 1950s and see what's left. And he found nothing. So, the forty [red.: thirty] years for Luxembourg seems to be okay, it's very fine.

A similar pragmatic view was expressed by Karim, a young Muslim man originally from Afghanistan, during a related focus-group discussion. He considered the question of perpetuity to be less a matter of religion than of available space: "If there is a problem of space, and other people die and there is no space, maybe we can make the graves disappear." Following his answer, Karim mused on how long it would have to be before a grave could be reopened and the remains removed. He concluded that he would rather rely on "medical" than religious experts to advise on this issue, because they would know best when a body would be decomposed.

As these examples show, ideas about perpetuity are individual and depend on where a person comes from, their recent experiences, their religious and cultural habits, and many other factors. The communities using a cemetery are diverse, and equally there is much diversity within these communities (diversity within diversity; see Maddrell et al., 2018). This diversity is dependent on local and translocal citizenship but it is also, in a way, trans-temporal. Values, experiences and practices change over time: throughout one's lifetime, and over the period in which a migrant community finds itself in a host country. At present in Luxembourg City, where the recently opened Muslim section contains a mere seventy graves, the question of whether perpetuity is required for religious reasons seems not to be at the forefront. How this will change over time – as the graves become older, the number of graves increases, and Muslim communities in Luxembourg develop – is difficult to predict.

As can be detected from the contested issues described in this section, cemeteries are contact zones in which the regulations and unwritten rules are continuously negotiated by those who manage and use these spaces. These negotiations intertwine with expectations based on socialisation in other countries, previous experiences of cemeteries, religious and secular attitudes and beliefs, translocal traditions, and so on. These negotiations, and the potentially problematic discrepancies between what can be done and what should be done, make the cemetery a translocal contact zone.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored how migrants in Luxembourg City experience funeral dispositions and material provisions at cemeteries. As we have shown, Luxembourg is a particularly telling case for the diversity of cemetery experiences, given the high proportion of non-nationals living in the city and the finding that even European and Christian residents socialised elsewhere find some customs peculiar and hard to accept. As indicated, we believe this is linked to the strictness of cemetery and funerary regulations in place in the city. The relative standardisation of grave stones could be an indication of top-down pressure to integrate: migrants are required by the regulations to be buried in a specific cemetery (in the district where they last resided), and with a grave marker that is in keeping with the regulations. However, we have questioned this assumption by showing that the standard grave design does allow some leeway (such as the inclusion of photographs and personal objects) and is generally not a matter of concern for our respondents. The migrants we spoke to rarely objected to the lack of individualisation or the imposed aesthetical conformity that characterises Luxembourgish cemeteries. On the contrary, the experience of conformity was cast mostly in positive terms, with an appreciation of the neatness and the fresh flower arrangements as signs of respect for the dead. The only example where the imposed design was (unsuccessfully) rejected was related to a person's family status rather than migratory (cultural, religious or ethnic) specifics. Similarly, expectations around perpetual grave rights posed less of a challenge than expected, and the regulations were more upsetting to an Irish woman of a Christian upbringing than to our Muslim respondents, who had a more pragmatic outlook. We do not claim that these findings are representative in any way, and a more comprehensive survey of Luxembourg's Muslim population may yield different results. Yet what we can demonstrate is the sheer variety and unpredictability of individual responses and the diversity that exists within a community. For instance, the refusal of one respondent to organise a 'typical' Cape Verdean burial revealed a strong personal assertiveness, even a resistance to family expectations, that resulted in adherence to the 'local' practice because it better fitted her personal preference.

The most sensitive issue was related to burial practices, as service providers' and migrant mourners' interpretations of frontstage and backstage operations performed during the inhumation ritual led to half-hearted changes in procedures and feelings of irritation, presumably on both sides. There is, nonetheless, at least a potential for change, as Mette from Denmark considered taking up this issue with the cemetery administration. The administration was more involved in and responsive to the request of Isabelle from Togo, who had engaged in intensive negotiation *beforehand* and obtained a modification of the standard procedure. Although this might have been an exception, it could also set a precedent. A more collective effort can be seen in the pressures exerted by Muslim communities to obtain a separate section in a cemetery, which led to a new grave site in the cemetery of Merl. These efforts are still on-going in other municipalities, and have intensified after COVID-19-related difficulties with repatriation revealed a lack of adequate local burial grounds.

Transformation is thus an active process driven by individual agents, and not at all an automatic outcome. It needs acts of 'lived citizenship,' as well as political and administrative willingness to acknowledge them. Citizenship in this context means, as stated previously, an active attempt by individuals to become part of a community, regardless of whether they are officially classified as such, and it takes place in matters related not only to life but also to death.

The negotiations that take place in these cemeteries pertain to translocal networks and relations, as users draw on past experiences of other places and ritual experts from their community or country of origin. This transformative process does not entail radical innovation but rather a spectrum ranging from tranquil appreciation to more or less successful attempts to alter ingrained practices. These highly affective acts of contestation and participation involve interactions with gravediggers, cemetery managers, ceremony masters, undertakers and fellow mourners. To be able to address these negotiations and foster 'lived citizenship,' we propose that cemeteries are reconceptualised as 'translocal contact zones' - similar to other micro-publics such as schools, hospitals and even public transport (Back & Sinha, 2016). We argue for the need to be more open to the agentive possibilities of potential citizenship that arise when cemeteries are regarded as open-ended, non-bounded contact zones. Cemeteries should be used as an (educational) opportunity to discuss preconceived notions of various religions and cultures, and present visitors with a range of materialities and embodied practices. Individual agency, alongside structural constraints and asymmetrical power relations, must be highlighted if we are to recognise the potential for transformation.

Municipalities play a key role in Luxembourg, as much authority is delegated to them by the legislator. They are in charge of planning cemeteries and accepting individual requests for access to specific burial sites or use of particular grave marker designs. In the Luxembourg context, municipalities need to become more aware of this responsibility for making cemeteries positive contact zones that allow for conviviality to emerge. This means, for instance, promoting and organising activities at cemeteries such as grave art projects, shared music events, or 'pop-up' cafés where people can come together over a cup of coffee or tea, share their experiences and stories, and learn from and through each other. Just as Askins and Pain (2011) used participatory art in northeast England to explore inclusion, exclusion and notions of belonging, similar activities could be organised in cemeteries. Initiatives such as opening a café could generate exchanges and improve understandings of various positions. At our Memorial Café in March 2020, we asked visitors, for instance, whether people should be allowed to have a picnic at the cemetery. Replies (in the form of Post-Its attached next to the question on the wall) expressed a wide-range of reactions ranging from "NO! A cemetery is a place where we show we always think about a person" (24-year-old Brazilian woman), to "Eating, yes. But there should not be a party with music and alcohol"(56-year-old male from Luxembourg) or even "Yes. Everybody has other coping mechanisms so why not celebrate with the deceased other?" (23-year-old Luxembourgish woman). When asked whether tea rooms should be opened at cemeteries, one person answered "No! It would be too commercial" (53-year-old Belgian man), while another wrote "Good idea, one could talk there with others visitors to the cemetery, cope with difficult times and console each other" (72-year-old Luxembourgish woman). What can be derived from this multitude of answers is that cemeteries as public spaces are sites that require careful negotiation. Rather than shunning the debate, we encourage those who manage these spaces to use and enhance the potential of cemeteries as translocal contact zones.

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