

7. Adapting to ‘one-size-fits-all’: constructing appropriate Islamic burial spaces in Northwestern Europe

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Fate wanted my husband to die and be buried at Merl Cemetery. For him, ... he was not interested in being repatriated to Algeria. [In Algeria] we suffered a lot from terrorism, so he wanted to be buried here [in Luxembourg]. At first, we didn't know there was an Islamic cemetery. ... I didn't know the whole procedure in Luxembourg. It all went through the funeral director. It's very different than how it goes [in Algeria] where we pick up the deceased and bury them where we want. And here the funeral director arranged it and they arranged his burial at the Islamic section. They didn't even ask us; it was a no-brainer to do it like that. That's good, but it would've been nice if we knew how it goes and everything. But until we had that experience, it is difficult [to know the procedure]. ... You know I am, and especially him, and our daughters too, we are very open, we agree with acculturation in this case. At the time [of his death] I didn't realise what was happening. I didn't really think about it. The main thing was that it went well, that he had his prayers, that was important. But in hindsight, why not be buried next to others [i.e., non-Muslims]? ... I'm a believer and a Muslim, everyone knows that. But you have to adapt to the new environment, I think you have to adapt. (Interview with Nouria, Luxembourg, 11 December 2020)¹

Nouria, an Algerian Muslim woman in her 50s, moved to Luxembourg over 20 years ago fleeing the Algerian Civil War and has lived there ever since. Four years ago, her husband suddenly passed away. As she explains, he was buried in the Islamic section of Merl cemetery, the largest cemetery in Luxembourg-city. In retrospect, she was grateful that her husband was buried according to Islamic principles, but she questioned whether burying him in a segregated section of the cemetery was in line with their values. She remains uncertain whether this choice, on the advice of the funeral company she hired, was the right way to bury, mourn, and remember her husband. And his burial has raised questions for her around her sense of belonging; to have, as a migrant long settled in Luxembourg, her husband's grave segregated along cultural and religious identities.

While death is often described as 'the great leveller' (e.g., by seventeenth-century poet James Shirley), differing bereavement and remembrance practices expose unevenness in how disposition and death rituals are experienced and practised. When established disposition and remembrance practices come into contact with ones perceived to be newly introduced, the state, religious organisations, and the funeral industry each play a major role as regulators of such practices and as arbiters of narratives of sacredness and propriety. Recent research in Northwest Europe has demonstrated the uneven ways that minority and migrant communities have been accommodated in funerary services, with differing cultural and religious needs at times presenting a challenge for local providers in countries of settlement, and their lack of provision causing distress for family and friends faced with the difficult task of respectfully sending off the deceased (Ansari, 2007; Hunter, 2016; Maddrell et al., 2018a, 2018b; Mathijssen et al., 2021; Nordh et al., 2021). It has even been argued that ontological harm is experienced by the living and the dead if burial rites and spatial organisation is unsatisfactory (Maddrell et al., 2021). These negotiations often centre on cemeteries and highlight the ways in which cultural minorities produce and experience deathscapes. They also reveal how institutionalised power deals with these struggles – by adopting wider and inclusive views, by negotiating ideologies, or by erasing and domesticating non-normative expressions altogether (Hunter, 2016). In this chapter, we use a comparative approach to explore the nuanced experiences of diverse Muslim communities in diverse social, cultural, and policy contexts. This reveals that current Islamic burial in Northwest Europe is not simply a blending of minority and majority norms, but a much more complex, fluid, and responsive field.

Bereavement, mourning, and remembrance are universal human phenomena, which are located in, and mutually constituted in and through, physical spaces, embodied-psychological spaces, and virtual spaces (Maddrell, 2016). For minority and particularly migrant communities, negotiating dispersal and bereavement is often complicated by ideas of home and belonging. Homemaking, the active process of building the homely and the familiar, is in a constant struggle against domestication, which is marked by the othering and repressing of diasporic communities by nationalistic powers (Hunter, 2016). Illustrating these often-difficult negotiations, practices like body repatriation or symbolically bringing 'home' closer – for example by bringing soil or water from an individual's country of origin to add to their grave – coexist with organised community claims for dedicated burial spaces. At the heart of this is an understanding that "the end of life is a critical juncture in the settlement process for diasporic communities" (Hunter, 2016, p. 247), making deathscapes central to the identity shift that turns a country of settlement into a homeland.

In most urban contexts in Northwest Europe, as in Luxembourg-city, Islamic sections at municipal cemeteries or Islamic confessional cemeteries are now commonplace, and in this chapter we focus specifically on these deathscapes. Through a comparison of disposition practices and experiences in a sample of cases from this diverse geographical area, we gain new perspectives on the nuances of how diverse Muslim communities negotiate burial space in countries where Islamic burial is framed as a ‘minority’ practice. We first outline the terrain of Islamic deathscapes in Northwest Europe, examining the different Muslim communities in our case study towns and locating this within literature on how burial practices are entwined with senses of identity and belonging. We then explore three issues that we find within Islamic burial grounds and the Muslim communities, namely: the choice of whether migrant Muslims are buried in their country of origin or the town they are living in; the physical segregation and experience of Islamic burial spaces; and Islamic memorial and grave aesthetics. In each of these three we find elements of continuity, contestation, and change.

We consider these Islamic deathscapes as part of ‘Islam mondain,’ indicating how Muslims are professing their faith in contemporary, secularising societies and spheres (Soares & Osella, 2009). This is done in individual and complex ways. Already in the 1980s, Talal Asad (1986) indicated that Islam is not a blueprint for society, or even a ‘culture’, but rather a discursive tradition, based on doctrine and practice. Following his insights, other anthropologists, such as Charles Hirschkind (2006) and Saba Mahmood (2005, 2006), analysed the practices of Middle Eastern Muslims from the perspective of modes of ethical self-fashioning, focusing on individual experiences and behaviours related to how to be a good and pious Muslim. According to Benjamin Soares and Filippo Osella (2009), this focus on ethical self-fashioning should be understood as taking into account the contexts in which Muslims live, marked by a variety of available, and sometimes competing, styles and practices. Their notion of Islam mondain emphasises how Muslims live in a world in which Islam is not the only identity marker, and at times not the privileged one. Instead, focus is placed on the heterogeneity of the Muslim experience, and the complexity of everyday Muslim life – perhaps especially so in minority contexts. Migrant and minority community Islamic identities and aspirations are shaped by the political, legal, social, and economic contexts of the majority culture (Özyürek, 2009). Seeing Islamic deathscapes in Northwest Europe from this perspective highlights the many different ways in which Muslims relate to their faith from a multiplicity of other ideas and behaviours.

The findings of this chapter are drawn from research on a wider project examining migrant and minority experience of cemeteries, crematoria, and funerary services in eight medium- to large-sized towns in Northwest Europe: Cork (Ireland), Dundee (Scotland), Maastricht and Leeuwarden (The Netherlands),

Luxembourg-city (Luxembourg), Drammen (Norway), and Eskilstuna and Umeå (Sweden). We focus on towns and smaller cities as these urban spaces have been relatively neglected in urban and ethnicity studies (Clayton, 2008; Dwyer & Bressey, 2008) despite being equally interesting dynamic sites of demographic change (Maddrell et al., 2021). The towns in our research share Christian heritage which informs historic and contemporary funerary practices, alongside growing (post)secular practices, notably, increased cremation, individualisation of funerary and memorial practices, and religious and ethnic diversity (Nordh et al., 2021). Although some have much longer-established Muslim communities, in each of the towns we found ageing Muslim communities who, alongside local authorities, cemetery managers, and funeral providers, are confronting the question of providing space for Islamic burial, in line with general trends across Northwest Europe (Ansari, 2007; Ahaddour & Broeckart, 2017; Maddrell et al., 2018a). Research was conducted in these towns between July 2019 and February 2021. Empirical data included visiting the town's cemeteries and making observations, as well as semi-structured interviews with almost 70 cemetery providers and managers, funeral service providers, imams, and other Muslim community representatives in all towns. In addition, we spoke to over 20 people who identified as Muslim in culture or faith in focus groups or in biographical interviews.

ISLAMIC DEATHSCAPES IN NORTHWEST EUROPE

Deathscapes, and the memorials and other material markers and locations that constitute them, are often private and convey personal emotions while surrounded by institutional power relations (Hartig & Dunn, 1998; Petersson, 2010). Deathscapes are therefore mutually constituted with identities, perceptions, and emotions around death and bereavement – both the bereaved and those within institutions – and their production reflects prescriptive and hegemonic meanings and practices, as well as their contradictions and contestation (Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010; Stevenson, Kenten & Maddrell, 2016). In this sense, the idea of what is proper in relation to dispersal and funerary rituals is constantly negotiated by communities, the burial industry, and regulatory bodies, and these struggles are often visible in the sites associated with death and the dead.

Increased global and intra-European migration flows since the 1990s present significant social change in Northwest Europe, which impacts the production of deathscapes due to the addition of different religious rituals and embodied-psychological aspects of loss and bereavement. For migrants particularly, death and burial rituals and sites change in time and across space, and these changes are part of the experience of belonging, becoming, and participating in the country of settlement (Baker, 2016; Hunter, 2016; Maddrell et

al., 2021). In fact, in the British context, Nazneen Ahmed (2016, pp. 110–11) argues that “the accommodation of Islamic burial space in British cemeteries is [...] an agent for the transformation of a community’s sense of home from being nationally and territorially based, to being manifested through the incorporeal affiliations of the global Islamic *ummah*.” Contemporary Islamic deathscapes build upon past experiences (often negative, such as local community resistance against the provision of Islamic burial space) of bereavement in migrant diaspora (Beebeejaun et al., 2021; Hunter, 2016; Maddrell et al., 2021), where struggles for space are expressed both symbolically and materially (Ahmed, 2016; Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010). Islamic deathscapes, as any religious or cultural deathscape, are therefore contested spaces, territories of identity formation which to some extent evidence inclusion into the country of settlement, but can at the same time be perceived by some within majority populations as a threat to cultural unity and uniformity (Hunter, 2016; see also Ansari, 2007; Balkan & Masarwa, 2022; Kadrouch-Outmany, 2014, 2015; Venhorst, Venbrux & Quartier, 2011).

Within Christian-heritage majority Europe, simplified and generalised understandings of Islam as a religion, its practices, and those who identify as Muslim, can prevail. This in turn has contributed to the distorted understanding of seemingly distinct Muslim characteristics and communities that share common ground across diverse nationalities and denominations. Consequently, cemetery managers and funeral providers often see Muslims as belonging to one category, for whom ‘one-size-fits-all’ facilities can be arranged, overlooking the “diversity within diversity” (Maddrell et al., 2018a; Mathijssen et al., 2021). Nonetheless, Islam *is* a religion emphasising ‘oneness’ (*tawhid*). There is a sense of commonality for and of all, and Muslim scholars, clergy, and laity emphasise this element. As Tariq Modood (2009, p. 194) indicates, “Muslims do have the most extensive and developed discourses of unity, common circumstances and common victimhood among non-EU origin peoples in the EU.” Oneness shapes the normalising narrative around burial expectations, both of Muslims and of cemetery management. A desired dispersal for all Muslims has come to be defined by performing certain rituals and prayers, burial before the sun sets on the day of death or within 24 hours, bodies buried in white shrouds, bodies placed on their right-side facing Mecca, and a desire for perpetual grave rest. One imam in Cork explained:

Islam is [a] religion for all different parts of the world, the same ritual, no difference if somebody dies from Middle East, somebody from Africa, Pakistan, Ireland. They want everything the same. (Interview with imam, Cork, 27 September 2019)

In practice, however, and especially for migrant communities, differences around burial practices and rituals abound. These differences can be explained

by a diverse range of intersectional factors or competing aspirations related to nationality, class, gender, age, generation, and political, economic, and cultural development on local, national, and transnational levels (Beebeejaun, 2012; Beebeejaun et al., 2021; Hopkins, Kwan & Aitchison, 2007; Sorgenfrei, 2021). Based on research on Islamic burial in the Netherlands and Belgium, Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany (2015, p. 103) argues that “although Islamic burial rituals might seem to have been fixed for eternity and composed of immutable constants writ large in faith and doctrine, this hypothesis has to be rejected.” In this chapter we seek to do this.

Across the countries in our research there is huge diversity in Muslim communities and in national burial and dispersal norms and expectations (Nordh et al., 2021). As a post-colonial country, Scotland has long established Muslim communities of Bengali and Pakistani origin, with large numbers of people settling in the country from the 1960s. In the Netherlands, most Muslim communities are of Indonesian, Moroccan, and Turkish descent who came to the country from the mid-twentieth century onwards, and recent migrants from Syria and Eritrea diversify the communities further. Most Muslims living in Luxembourg are ex-Yugoslavian who came to the country from the 1990s onwards. The Scandinavian countries have seen a more recent arrival of Muslim migrants from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, amongst others. And in the 1990s, Ireland experienced a notable increase in immigration in general due to economic growth, and Muslim migrants came from South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Moreover, cemetery provision in the towns differs dependent on national contexts (Nordh et al., 2021). In Sweden and Norway, cemeteries are owned by Protestant national churches, whereas in Luxembourg, Scotland, and Ireland, the majority of cemeteries studied are run by municipalities. The Netherlands has a greater mixture of municipal and private (commercial and confessional) cemeteries. These national but also local contextual factors result in diversity within Islamic funerary provision across the eight case study towns.

In carrying interwoven personal and shared meanings attributed to death and bereavement, deathscapes illuminate identity intersections and their role in the production of space (Kong, 1999). Race/ethnicity, religion, gender, and class are some of the markers on which countless value systems are reinforced, reified, challenged, and/or erased upon death and memorialisation. A Syrian Muslim woman in her 40s now living in Leeuwarden explained this:

As Muslims, we follow the *Sunnah* [traditions and practices of the prophet Muhammed]. Muhammed has shown us what is *haram* [forbidden]. But this can be changed in different contexts. You need to do as you are expected to in the country where you are. (Interview with Fatima, Leeuwarden, 18 January 2021)

Echoing Nouria's experience in Luxembourg, Fatima felt as a migrant there was some expectation to adapt or assimilate to the country where she had settled. Therefore, while theologically emphasising unity and continuity throughout space and time, Islamic burial also shows the complex negotiation of continuity and change over time and throughout locations. It is only through listening to personal narratives that the "very wide variety of adaptive strategies developed and pursued by Muslims in response to changing social and political conditions" are understood (Gale & Hopkins, 2009, p. 2).

CONTINUITY, CONTESTATION, AND CHANGE IN ISLAMIC BURIAL IN NORTHWEST EUROPE

The production of Islamic deathscapes in countries which are post-secular and of Christian heritage reflect the influence of and negotiation between institutions, most notably religious and political/managerial authorities (Baker, 2016; Martínez-Ariño, 2019; Nordh et al., 2021). Governance structures, public-private partnerships, religious communities, and interfaith networks and associations all mediate the interplay between official regulations and discourses with non-state actor practices and norms (Martínez-Ariño, 2019). However, a focus on the experiences of individuals who live their religion within these fields of governance, discourse, regulation, and norms demonstrates the capacity that individuals have in shaping policies and regulations (Martínez-Ariño, 2019). We now explore the experiences of people in the burial services and Muslim communities across the towns in our research, with a focus on burial practices. First, we examine the choice of whether one wants to be buried in their country of origin or the town they are living in; second, the physical segregation and experience of Islamic burial spaces; and third, Islamic memorial and grave aesthetics.

Location for Burial

Across our towns, we have found variation in preferences and practices around the location of Islamic burial. By that we mean whether there is a preference for burial in the place of death where a person was living – which seemingly conforms to an Islamic 'norm' – or repatriation to a country to which they are connected, either as a country of origin or where extended family or older generations live. Recent studies from Northwest Europe show an increased preference within specifically migrant communities for burial or cremation where they are living instead of repatriation, especially among younger generations and women who have children in the country of settlement (Ahaddour & Broeckaert, 2017; Gardner, 1998; Maddrell et al., 2021), although elsewhere patterns differ (see e.g., Hadders, 2021). This is to some extent related to

a changing sense of belonging, which a Turkish Muslim man who has lived in Norway for over three years explained when he mentioned how, if he would die today, he would want to be repatriated to Turkey. Being buried in Norway, away from his family, would feel 'uncomfortable' to him, as there would be no one to visit his grave and pray for his soul. But he explained once he establishes his own family in Norway the situation would be different and burial in Norway would feel right. However, across our case study towns and interviewees we found great variation in the choice of place of burial, shaped not only by a feeling of belonging, but also by national and local regulatory contexts, practical constraints and possibilities, and personal considerations and preferences (as also observed by Ahaddour & Broeckeaert, 2017).

For many of our interviewees, burial should take place as soon as possible after death as it is believed a soul cannot leave the body until interred. This has consequences for the preferred location of burial, as expressed by a Muslim woman in her 60s in Dundee:

I want to be buried wherever I die. If I die in Bangladesh, I want to be buried in Bangladesh; if in Dundee, then in Dundee; if in London, then I want to be buried in London. In Islam it is instructed that the burial should be done as soon as possible. Also, the transfer of the body causes pain to the dead person and a hassle for the families. I told my children to bury me by next *salah* [prayer]. If I die in *fazr* [morning prayer], then bury me by *juhon* [noon prayer]. No need to wait for anyone, bury me. (Interview with Afia, via telephone, 9 May 2020)

Once laid in a grave, many Muslims believe a body should be left undisturbed in perpetuity (Balkan, 2015). In the towns we studied, however, burial within 24 hours and with perpetual grave rights is not always possible. Administrative procedures can limit the chances for same day burial, for example in Dundee and Cork the local authorities strive to meet this need but cannot guarantee it, particularly if the death takes place on a weekend, due to cemetery staff not working. In our Scandinavian case study towns, same day burial faces the practical issue of frozen ground in the winter months, although in Eskilstuna we found the cemetery keeps one grave dug and 'open' and ready for burial in the Islamic section. In Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, grave re-use is the norm, and in our examples only Scotland and Ireland practise burial in-perpetuity (Nordh et al., 2021). These regulatory and cultural norms lead to negotiation on Islamic doctrines in terms of their content as well as their application. Multiple Muslim clergy and laity we spoke to recognise the need for adaptations in this regard. Some relate this to ideas on death and resurrection, others argue from a more practical viewpoint. A Muslim man in Eskilstuna reflected: "The body is like a box for the soul. After death, the soul moves to another world" (interview with Omar, 28 October 2020), indicating that what happens after death with the body would not be crucial. An imam

in Luxembourg explained: “In Islam, the dead have the right to their own grave. But just as long as the body needs to decompose. As long as the body is decomposed, you can rebury someone” (interview with imam, Luxembourg, 1 November 2019). And a Muslim funeral provider in Norway explained how, despite a preference for single occupancy graves, some Islamic sections in Oslo practise multiple occupancy family graves.

In both Cork and Dundee, we found a preference in the Muslim communities for burial in the town, with the exception of temporary workers such as students or migrant workers who have been resident for a short time and have no local relatives. A local funeral director corroborated: “We don’t repatriate that much. Used to be the Muslim community, we would do a lot of repats for the Muslim community, but now [...] they see this as their home” (interview with funeral director, Dundee, 21 November 2019). For most in the Muslim communities of these towns, a ‘proper’ burial is defined as rapid and, with the exception of some bureaucratic issues that can at times slow the burial down, this is accommodated. Yet in our research Scotland and Ireland stand apart as countries where perpetual grave rights are anchored in national burial laws (Nordh et al., 2021). Therefore, the need for perpetual grave rights in Islamic burial is in line with the national norm; no contestation or exceptionalism around the issue exists. Furthermore, in Dundee the Muslim communities are several generations old and established, with surviving family members living locally, and, as we shall see, several options for Islamic burial are available in the town.

Our interviews in the Netherlands revealed a different experience. Most Muslims living in Maastricht and Leeuwarden choose repatriation to a country where extended family members can tend to the grave. In these towns, what is deemed an ideal Islamic burial to the Muslim communities is defined by an eternal resting place, and this takes precedent over the need for burial within 24 hours and other compromises that are inherent with repatriation. In the Netherlands, the regulatory norm is to re-use graves after 15 to 30 years if grave rights are not renewed by the original deed holder. After this period, cemetery management decides what to do with the bodily remains. While some cemeteries keep the remains in the grave, at times putting them deeper into the ground, others empty the grave, but the grave rest is always ‘broken.’ Many of our interviewees shared the discomfort of this regulation, such as a Moroccan Muslim man in his 60s, living in Maastricht:

Theoretically, in Islam, you are buried where you’ve lived. But here we’re only buried for 30 years. That makes it difficult for us. If you can be buried forever here, I think nobody will want to go back. But only 30 years, what will happen after that? Will my grave be thrown away? That is not a lot of respect. (Interview with Mohammed, Maastricht, 25 August 2020)

This uncertainty surrounding grave re-use is one of the reasons why several private Islamic cemeteries are now being planned and opened throughout the Netherlands, such as the Riyadh al Jannah cemetery in Zuidlaren (opened in Spring of 2020), although it is worth noting the creation of private Islamic cemeteries in places where perpetual grave rights *are* secure such as Dundee, to create an ideal cemetery environment and support ritually appropriate burials. In her research on Dutch Muslims, Kadrouch-Outmany (2015) also explains how the regulatory context shapes repatriation levels, but she also finds a sense of belonging to be another factor. She explains: “The choice of where to be buried is not only a matter of being well informed about all the practical, legal, and religious possibilities and impossibilities. It is also (or maybe more so) a matter of how Muslims view themselves and the society of which they are part” (Kadrouch-Outmany, 2015, p. 87).

In Norway and Sweden, we found more nuance to the negotiation of the regulatory systems around Islamic burial which shape decisions around place of burial. As in the Netherlands, the re-use of graves is standard in both Scandinavian countries, where grave rights last between 20 and 25 years with a possibility for extension at a cost. However, at local level it is possible to negotiate these national policies. A cemetery manager in Umeå, Sweden, admitted that in practice they never re-use an Islamic grave. The standard practice at the cemetery is to re-use through burying three coffins at different depths in a plot; each time a lease is expired the headstone is removed and a new coffin is placed into the plot with a new headstone, up to a maximum capacity of three coffins at which point, when the final lease expires, all headstones and memorials are removed. For Islamic burial at this cemetery, a grave is always dug to the shallowest depth, so that another coffin cannot be placed on top. If a lease expires the headstone will still be removed, yet the grave rest will not be disturbed. In practice, if not in policy, Islamic graves are eternal, and as the cemetery manager acknowledged it is disrespectful and might be upsetting to disturb buried bodies. However, this practice is ad hoc and relies on the understanding of the individual cemetery manager rather than becoming institutionalised.

Luxembourg cemeteries also practise the re-use of graves where, after 30 years, failing renewal of the concession, the graves are emptied, headstones are removed, and remains are generally taken to a central ossuary. Additionally, national policy stipulates people must be buried in the municipality where they lived. Across the country, only two municipalities have Islamic sections at their cemeteries: Esch-sur-Alzette and Luxembourg-city. If a Muslim person dies who did not live in either of these municipalities, their next of kin can request burial at one of the cemeteries. Such requests are generally granted, but this could change in the future due to shortage of space. If a request is not made or met, Muslim people are buried in their municipal cemetery where proper

grave orientation might not be provided. This bureaucratic procedure, which potentially delays the process of burial, is one reason behind the high numbers of Islamic repatriation in Luxembourg. Another is the existence and accessibility of repatriation services. Largely to the Balkans and other European countries, in Luxembourg repatriation is managed through the *Mutuelle du Centre Culturel Islamique Luxembourg*, an Islamic insurance association which provides the necessary paperwork, cars, and drivers.

These preferences for place of burial and the regulatory practicalities that shape them are constantly changing, notably across migrant generations. A sense of belonging changes over time, both between and within generations, and religious doctrine is in fact flexible and can be negotiated in light of regulatory contexts, identity, and personal preference.

Segregated Burial

Some form of dedicated Islamic burial is possible in each of the eight towns in our research. These vary from small sections at municipal cemeteries – some managed by Christian organisations – to private Islamic cemeteries. The creation of separate Islamic sections in cemeteries run by the state or the national Church does not necessarily represent accommodation and successful multicultural policies. They may evidence the seeming inclusion of a minority religious group into post-secular/Christian heritage communities, but they may also demonstrate some imposed conformity, a homogenisation of the diversities of a minority religious community.

Apart from the practicalities of designing Islamic burial grounds, for example the availability of land and the possibility for specific grave orientation, their presence depends on municipal legislation and planning, and community initiatives. The desire for separate Islamic sections or cemeteries, or the possibility for ‘proper’ Islamic burial, is often driven by the communities themselves. But the possibility and realisation of this is also shaped by factors such as how organised the community is, how large and how established it is, and the receptiveness and politics of the local authority.

Most Islamic sections in cemeteries in our case study towns originate from the 1980s or 1990s and reflect the migration patterns of the time, such as in Cork, Umeå, Eskilstuna, and Maastricht. They also reflect the position of Muslim communities within the towns at the time of construction. For example, in the Norwegian and Swedish cases, the Islamic sections are often located on the outskirts of cemeteries. The older Muslim section in Eskilstuna has a stone wall between the main cemetery and the Muslim section. These original sections have already or are now filling up, forcing town and cemetery planners to think about future burial need. In some cases, the growth of the community has led to the opening-up of private Islamic cemeteries, echoing

what we have seen in countries with much longer-established Muslim communities: the Netherlands and Scotland.

In Dundee, Islamic burial developed alongside the changing community over decades. The oldest Islamic section is small, with around 90 graves in the corner of a municipal cemetery, the first of which date from the late 1960s. Two much larger sections were built when a new cemetery was created on the outskirts of the town in the 1990s, together at least four times the burial space of the older section. In 2014, a large private Islamic cemetery was opened by the community. When asked about the management of the private Islamic cemetery, a member of the committee described:

We wanted to run this the same way any cemetery in the Council would be doing otherwise. So we didn't want any differences for us. The only difference was that a lair [plot] here was a wee bit more than what you'd pay in the Council cemetery. (Interview with Ahsan, Dundee, 21 November 2019)

The committee member emphasises conformity rather than difference, an identity that marks commonality, and hence a sense of belonging in Scottish society.

In Luxembourg-city the Muslim community requested a separate section from the 1980s onwards, when the first migrant and convert Muslims died. However, it took until 2001 before a burial site was opened, as explained by one of the instigators of the Islamic section:

We asked to have a separate space. We started in 1985 or maybe 1987. But it took 15 years to have this answer. For more than 15 years we dealt with a Christian political party [in the city government] which we expected would support us, but the opposite happened. They have done nothing at all. Then after elections the people [in government] changed, and then suddenly they answered. It was Mr Helminger [Mayor of Luxembourg-city 1999–2011] who made this possible. (Interview with Laurent, Luxembourg-city, 4 November 2019)

While the current Islamic section has been carefully designed, its location within the cemetery is peripheral and without proper signage indicating its location. Nouria, quoted at the start of the chapter, described: "There's not even signage! ... Fortunately, the girls [i.e., her daughters] and their children are young and have a sense of direction." Yet in Umeå, Sweden, the Muslim community have explicitly stated they do not want signage to the Islamic section, due to fears of Islamophobic vandalism.

These stories indicate how Islamic deathscapes are determined by both the community itself and other parties such as municipal authorities and cemetery managements. For cemetery management, if certain graves need specific requirements, a separate section can be beneficial. One Swedish landscape

architect who designed an Islamic section in a cemetery in Eskilstuna, as well as others we interviewed, felt that a separate section was the only way to allow for the orientation of graves towards Mecca. She felt that integrating Muslim and Christian or non-faith graves would take up “too much space” due to the different needs for specific Islamic orientation (interview with architect, Eskilstuna, 9 January 2020). However, separate sections can pose issues for managers too, for example relating to upkeep or differing regulations. A cemetery manager in Leeuwarden shared his experiences:

The other day we had somebody walking his dog in the Islamic section. That is actually not allowed there, the Muslims don't like that. But should I put a notice board there saying 'no dogs allowed'? ... We already situated the graves differently. We have also painted a compass on the floor. Is that not enough? Do we need to close the space off even more? Why should dogs be allowed at the rest of the cemetery, but not at this part? I have doubts about that. (Interview with Bert, Leeuwarden, 24 September 2019)

This example demonstrates the complexities of expectations of the public or private nature of cemeteries within multicultural contexts.

In Drammen, Norway, we found an example of how cemetery management have tried to negotiate the issue of religious segregation in burial and the ensuing management and social issues. There, the Islamic section is not labelled as such, but all grave plots are oriented towards Mecca. It therefore is a section where anyone can be buried, irrespective of Islamic belief. We do not know, however, how this section came to be, and whether the Muslim communities experience this as accommodating or disrespectful.

For members of Muslim communities themselves, the question of whether a separate section is desired or not was equally complex and personal. Their answer is shaped by identity appropriations and attributions: religious identity and associated duties towards death, migrant background, and/or identity as citizens of the towns where they live (Allievi, 2003). While talking to a focus group of five Muslim women in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, all from different countries in the Middle East and Africa, a consensus was quickly reached among them that burial at a private Islamic cemetery would be preferable to the Islamic section at their local cemetery. When asked the reasons behind this preference, one woman explained: “We follow the *Sunnah*. Our prophet chose a separate field for our deceased. That is Islamic law, the law of the Islamic religion” (interview with Saran, Leeuwarden, 18 January 2021). An imam in Luxembourg-city supported this:

Each religion has its differences. You can't celebrate a Catholic mass in a synagogue, or a Jewish service in the mosque. The same thing applies a bit to cemeteries. We have special rules, or cultural differences. We have the orientation [to Mecca].

And then we have for example rules that statues of little angels that people put on their tombs, they are forbidden. So with separate spaces it is easier to apply these rules. (Interview with imam, Luxembourg, 1 November 2019)

Yet across the towns we found examples of people who questioned this segregation in death. Nouria (cited at the beginning of this chapter) is an example of this. She probed whether her husband, who saw himself as integrated into Luxembourg society, should have been buried in the Islamic section rather than the 'general' section, but she worried a decision to bury him in the 'general' section would have been contested by the cemetery management and the Muslim community. Likewise, in Eskilstuna, we spoke to a Muslim man who reflected on cemetery differences between Sweden and his home country of Syria. Upon coming to Sweden, he was positively surprised to find out that Swedish cemeteries offered different sections for different religions. However, when asked if he wanted to be buried there one day, he indicated that he was hesitant, as he would not mind being buried "next to a Christian or Jew" and his preference would be to be "mixed" (interview with Omar, Eskilstuna, 28 October 2020). Lastly, in Dundee we spoke to a Bangladeshi Muslim woman who directly related mixed cemetery sections to fears of standing out, by indicating that "if there is a Muslim-only cemetery, there could be other problems, for example vandalism [...] If we impose difference, there could be race-related problems or hatred in the future" (interview with Rania, via telephone, 31 May 2020), echoing the fears expressed by the Muslim community in Umeå.

Memorials and Headstones

Physical memorials or headstones erected at graves have multiple meanings. They can be a visible sign of the deceased or their relatives' social position (including religious affiliation), a political statement, the location for continuing practices of care towards the deceased, a space for celebrating the deceased's life and memory, and for ensuring the deceased's spiritual well-being after death. Memorials carry often conflicting messages about identity and can communicate disputes between the dead, the bereaved, and institutions (Hartig & Dunn, 1998). It is important to stress that "the choice of burial may be identity-based, but it is not sufficient to mark the identity of the deceased for many mourners" (Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010, p. 10). The material expressions of intersectional identities are at times displayed on a headstone, including ethnic/national heritage, nationality, and identities beyond Muslim culture and faith. Individual memorials can therefore express some collective consensus in the negotiation between policy and culture, at times visibly marking identities and at others obscuring personal differences.

Most Muslim people we spoke to across our case study towns shared that a ‘ritually correct’ grave is sober and simple. As one Moroccan woman in Leeuwarden explained: “Sober and simple means you pay more attention to the ‘inside’ than the ‘outside,’ which is good” (interview with Hanane, Leeuwarden, 18 January 2021). An imam involved in the Dundee private Islamic cemetery explained:

The other thing we did with the headstones is, we made them a universal size. ... We realised it would be better if it was all just the same [stone] colour. And it’s the most popular colour, the standard colour, and it’s the most reasonable price and it’s the standard, not a big one, not a small one, and we’re not going to have differences in sizes. ... That way it looks the same, no differences. ... Islamic teaching is basically simplicity, and equality. (Interview with imam, Dundee, 20 November 2019)

Cemetery management and planning authorities also shape the possibilities for grave memorials. As with Dundee and Cork, in Drammen and Umeå graves cannot have a horizontal slab, as this complicates the mowing of the lawn by cemetery employees. Only vertical headstones are allowed (with some exceptions for historical graves already having horizontal memorial stones), which are relatively small and undecorated. Graves therefore cannot be marked in ways that might be preferred: in the Islamic sections in these towns, cemetery managers have noticed attempts to mark the entirety of the grave by placing stones around the plot, regardless of the regulations. At some cemeteries these are removed, but at others they are allowed to remain, depending on cemetery management.

Nevertheless, when visiting Muslim cemetery sections across our case study towns it is clear that some Muslims do choose graves that are larger and more decorative, made of stone or even marble, with Arabic scripture, national flags, or other identity markers on them. The level of decoration seems to be primarily an individual’s choice, which is at times consciously made despite pressures to conform to equality and sobriety. Nouria designed a gravestone for her husband in line with his aesthetic preferences, which included omitting Islamic symbolism, even though the headstone and grave are in an Islamic section of a cemetery. For other people we spoke to, including clear identity markers on gravestones such as names and places of birth is necessary, for example, so that “my children or grandchildren can identify my grave in future,” as one woman in the Muslim community in Dundee explained (interview with Afia, via telephone, 9 May 2020).

By late 2019, the Islamic section at Merl cemetery in Luxembourg-city had almost 70 graves. Some of these were simple: no decoration, at times with only a small placard with the name of the deceased. Other graves were very elaborately decorated, with prayers and verses written in Arabic, statues, and flowers, with chairs in front of them so visitors could sit and reflect. In

Luxembourg, interviews with several laity and clergy revealed different views on memorials, perhaps best summed up by an imam:

I prefer a modest grave. It is best to have it simple. ... Religiously, it's not forbidden [to decorate a grave] but it's not the best thing. So we had complaints from people who had simple tombs and this big tomb next to it. We will discuss with the imams what to do with this. But there are some [Muslims] very religious, some not, so all kinds of different regulations. We have people also who orient themselves to the Luxembourgish tombs. So we have all the diversity, first generation, second generation, we see all these differences. (Interview with imam, Luxembourg, 1 November 2019)

The diversity in grave memorials is shaped by the national or ethnic background of the deceased and their family, their status as first- or second-generation migrant, the financial capacity of the bereaved family, and local cultural and societal norms. These factors combined create a significant diversity in grave memorials, and result in deathscapes marked by individuality while meeting many cultural traditions.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMIC DEATHSCAPES

In all these examples, we see how the influence of cultural upbringing, as well as adaptation to other burial cultures are related to personal values and ideas surrounding death and remembrance, and that these intersect and negotiate with local regulation and cultural norms. Deathscapes are co-produced by a multitude of factors, actors, and policies and are in constant flux; they are the product of ongoing negotiation and mutual constitution of end-of-life spaces, discourses, and experiences. On a societal level, the deathscapes reflect the wider tension of integration. By allowing separate space for Islamic burial, cemetery managements welcome and accommodate those of a different faith and culture, while at the same time keeping them apart by creating (at times community requested, at times not) segregation (Jedan et al., 2020). This process is manifest in the physical deathscape while changing and being changed by complex (and often conflicting) individual and collective experiences. In the experiences of Islamic burial in these eight towns across Northwest Europe, we see the flexible and responsive natures of both regulations and practices, and how nuanced the spatialisation of burial is for minority and/or migrant communities.

In practice, there is no singular 'proper' Islamic burial. While valuing Islamic emphasis of oneness, equality, and unity, and the continuity of some practices across space and time, many Muslim people we spoke to demonstrated how burial practices are constantly contested, changing, and interpreted, often prag-

matically, due to a plethora of social, political, economic, and other factors. In focusing on three aspects of Islamic deathscapes – the location of burial, segregated burial, and memorial design – we see contestation and change over time and location. Local and national burial norms shape Islamic deathscapes, alongside family ties and feelings of belonging. Islamic rituals are situated between theory and practice (Kadrouch-Outmany, 2015), and negotiations have to be made, for example, regarding speed of burial. Moreover, not only the practices themselves change; “there have also been alterations in the functions and meanings of ritual practices” (Kadrouch-Outmany, 2015, p. 104). Burial is one way in which Muslim presence in Northwest Europe is established. Place-making, belonging, and the construction of identity are intermingled in death (Ansari, 2007). Moreover, religious and local traditions often interplay, so practices related to local experiences and traditions cannot be regarded or subsumed as pertaining to, for instance, a certain faith or ethnicity (Jonker, 1997; Valentine, 2006).

Muslim experience of burial and death in Christian heritage or post-secular contexts is underexplored and a growing area of academic research (Maddrell et al., 2018a, 2018b). Our comparative approach that explored the nuanced experiences of diverse Muslim communities in diverse social, cultural, and policy contexts, reveals that current Islamic burial in Northwest Europe is not simply a blending of minority and majority norms, but a much more complex, fluid, and responsive field. It shows not only the diversity within funerary and bereavement experiences of minority and migrant communities, but also the diversity within its diversity (cf. Maddrell et al., 2018a; Sorgenfrei, 2021), and we can counter simplified and generalised understandings of Islamic deathscapes. These insights are not only relevant from an academic perspective but are also important for those working in the field of funeral and burial services. Cemeteries are evolving spaces, which change in character, usage, and organisational form (Maddrell et al., 2021). Municipal cemeteries and their staff recognise and generally strive to respect the needs of local Muslim communities. However, by not taking into account diversity within Muslim communities, as well as other communities, it is a risk that mainstream solutions are applied that do not include, but rather exclude, individual needs and wishes.

NOTE

1. All quotes in this chapter are translated into English by the authors. To protect privacy, the names of all interview partners are rendered by pseudonyms.

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