

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (20975) - EXPERIENCING CEMETERIES AS PLACES FOR THE LIVING: COMMON USAGE AND MEANING

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Background and objectives

Cemeteries are multifunctional spaces with a myriad of meanings and uses. They are both sacred spaces for burial and memorialization of the dead, and places of restoration and activity for the living. Cemeteries provide public space especially important to their communities for everyday use, and research has shown that a range of activities happen there. Alternative uses of cemeteries, particularly as green spaces for recreation, exercise, and nature-based interests, have provided opportunities to investigate the place attachment narratives of the living.

As geographic spaces, cemeteries hold historical, cultural, and social meanings. Their primary purpose has always been to provide final resting places for the deceased who are memorialized by the living. The living visit cemeteries to remember their dead. As such, gravesites can be places of attachment that have great personal meaning. The tending of the burial sites also reflects place identity since grave care practices involve personalization and territorial marking.

While academic literature on place attachment is prolific, there is rare mention of it in cemetery studies, though it is quite applicable and deserving of consideration. The use of cemeteries as places of open access welcomes everyday use by the living. Cemeteries have evolved as places of significant meaning to those who enjoy them in ways that are less commonly documented or not acknowledged.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

This research examines how various dimensions of place attachment applies to the use of cemeteries as both sacred and public spaces. In bringing these uses and narratives of cemeteries as places of attachment, cemeteries stand to be recognized as places of meaning over the life course. This poses compelling invitations for city planners, public-use policy makers and urban landscape architects, to rethink how cemeteries are used with the living in mind.

Palavras-chave : Cemeteries, Place Attachment, Urban Green Space, Public Space