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How to establish the interface between sanctity, functionality and public open space in urban cemeteries

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ABSTRACT

Cemeteries are one of the critical components of town planning as they provide service to one of the essential rights of life.The cemetery sector in South Africa is currently facing challenges of land availability and allocation, insufficient budgetary resources as well as the religious and cultural constraints attached to burial practice. Urban cemeteries, by design, claim vast amounts of space, are dispositioned to be undisturbed, sacred-heritage spaces and serve a singular and highly prescriptive function. Urban cemeteries have been observed to be located in strategic areas within the urban fabric where they superimpose the existing grid and hinder continuity and connectivity while deprive the probability of much needed open space. Therefore, my research is focused on the prospect of land rehabilitation and uncovering the potential that previously engineered land might still hold. **My research questions seeks to unpack how to establish the interface between sanctity, functionality and public open space in urban cemeteries through** negotiating the space between the living and the dead. I aim to uncover alternative planning and design thinking around cemeteries, introduce the notion of a multifunctional open space with complementary uses while maintaining sanctity across various cultural and religious frontiers and to explore alternative burial practices in order to demonstrate the potential increase of burial capacity.

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