Chapter 10
The Economics and Politics of Dedicated Funerary Provision for Migrant and Minority Groups: A Perspective from the Netherlands

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10.1 Introduction

Analysing funerary provision[1] within the mobilities paradigm (for the latter, see Hannam et al., 2006; Jensen, 2009; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2000, 2007) shows how fluid even the 'traditional' cemetery really is: human migration (both pre- and post-mortal), (post)colonial mobility, but also the travel of ideas, practices and expectations, increased by modern means of communication, are not only continuously transforming the demand for funerary provision; they do also transform the 'supply side' of managing current, and planning for future, funerary needs. However, planners, managers, policy makers and politicians must respond to migratory and wider societal changes either by way of hindsight (e.g., after it has become obvious how migration has altered the composition of the population for good) or by way of intrinsically highly uncertain predictions of future developments (e.g., assessing whether or not a newly-arrived, and on average young, refugee group will stay in the municipality/country and might, after many years, need specific funerary provision). It is, therefore, extremely likely for mismatches to occur between the demand and supply sides of funerary provision, especially where the needs of migrant and minority groups are concerned: "Diversity-ready cemeteries, crematoria and remembrance sites are a necessary, but currently neglected aspect of an inclusive and integrated multicultural society" (Maddrell et al., 2018a, p. 11). The challenges are formidable: local funerary service providers need to deal with the transnational character of migrant groups, changing patterns

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[1] In the following, I use the terms 'funerary provision' and 'funerary facilities' as a shorthand for both cemetery and crematorium provision and facilities.

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of repatriation, and a highly complex reality of diversity, which is characterised not only by "variation between different religious or ethnic groups, but also by significant diversities within them" ("diversity within diversity") (Maddrell et al., 2018a, b, p. 36).

Yet, for all those challenges, it *is* an obligation of justice to try for the best available match between funerary needs and services, given the evident importance of adequate funerary provision for the bereaved, and conversely the manifold dangers of doing "(infra)structural harm" to the dead and the bereaved (Ansari, 2007; Maddrell et al., 2021; Beebeejaun et al., this volume). At the same time it is clear that any decision about the best funerary provision a municipality or a regional body can and ought to realise needs to be made on the basis of a clear analysis of the local and regional context.

The present chapter proposes conceptual tools for such a context-aware analysis, based on the Dutch case studies of the CeMi project (see Maddrell et al., introduction to this volume). It discusses the specificity of the Dutch situation, making *inter alia* use of a typology of Dutch municipalities developed by the Dutch government's advisory body WRR (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor Regeringsbeleid*). The chapter then argues that researchers and administrators also need to be aware of significant *diversity within diversity-readiness*. It suggests that there is considerable (historical and contemporary) variation of funerary provision that can claim to 'include' (accommodate, integrate and/or assimilate) in various ways migrant and minority groups. In effect, the creation of dedicated funerary provision is only one (albeit pivotal) option available to municipalities. Finally, the chapter focuses on the issue of dedicated funerary provision for migrant and minority groups. It raises the question of which economic, political and cultural factors enhance or limit the creation of dedicated municipal funerary facilities. It suggests a framework identifying eight such factors ('Eight-Factor Framework,' EFF), which may be useful not only for researchers analysing why specific facilities for specific minorities have or have not been established, but it could also serve as a heuristic tool for municipal administrators who need to decide on such facilities. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the wider implications of the framework for the future planning of dedicated funerary provision.

The chapter thus shares a conceptual reflection that tries to make sense of research articles, governmental data, policy documents and empirical data gained in the Dutch case studies of the CeMi project.[2] In total, 37 interviews were conducted with stakeholders in Leeuwarden and Maastricht, ranging from community members and volunteers to funerary service providers, and from local religious leaders to municipal policy makers and politicians. Additionally, three focus groups were held with elderly citizens in Leeuwarden. The interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed and coded. Moreover, numerous site visits, not only in Leeuwarden and

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Maastricht, but also in Groningen and Zwolle, resulted in observations and encounters with stakeholders that were recorded in written fieldnotes.

All technicalities aside, the chapter analyses a striking dissimilarity between the funerary provision for migrant and minority groups in three Dutch towns: whereas Maastricht has a highly entrepreneurial municipal funerary sector, trying to offer new 'product/market combinations' in its historical cemetery Tongerseweg, and whereas Zwolle has realised and actively promotes a dedicated Chinese cemetery annexed to its municipal cemetery Kranenburg, there is little initiative in Leeuwarden to realise specific funerary facilities for minorities that would go above and beyond the thoughtfully-executed, but rather standard Muslim grave field in its largest municipal cemetery, the Noorderbegraafplaats. How can this difference be explained, and how can we refine our conceptual apparatus to account for the salient issues? To make headway, I begin by presenting the three towns and by analysing their specific political and cultural context in the Netherlands.

10.2   The Dutch Case Study Towns and Their Context

The chapter focuses on the three Dutch case studies researched in the CeMi project: (a) Leeuwarden, the capital of the province of Friesland in the historically Protestant North-West of the Netherlands; (b) Maastricht, the capital of the province of Limburg in the historically Roman-Catholic South of the Netherlands; (c) Zwolle, the capital of the province of Overijssel. The three towns share the characteristic of being mid-sized towns of around 120,000 to 130,000 inhabitants. They all have relatively diverse populations: Leeuwarden has 17.9% inhabitants with a "migration background" (to use the Dutch term), Zwolle 17.6% and Maastricht 33.1% (*Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* [CBS], 2021a).[3] Additionally, the chapter uses field observations from the pilot study in Groningen, the capital of the eponymous North-Eastern province, which is – with more than 230,000 inhabitants (CBS, 2021a) – larger than the three case study towns (see Fig. 10.1 for the location of the towns).

To understand the specific situation in the Netherlands, three aspects need to be sketched: (i) the longitudinal development of migration processes, (ii) changes in the political and economic context of Dutch municipalities, and (iii) how those developments affect municipal funerary provision.

To begin with the first aspect, a recent, wide-ranging report on migration policy written by the Dutch government's advisory body *The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy* (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid*, WRR) offers important insights. The report, entitled *Samenleven in verscheidenheid:*

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[3] For the sake of comparability with other countries it should be noted, however, that Dutch statistics consider an inhabitant with a migration background ("allochthonous") even Dutch nationals who were born and raised in the Netherlands, if at least one of their parents was born outside the Netherlands (CBS, 2021b). This results in official statistics with comparatively larger shares of migrant and minority groups than would be the case in other countries.

Fig. 10.1 Map of the Netherlands, with locations of Leeuwarden, Zwolle, Maastricht and Groningen. (Map by Christoph Jedan)

Beleid voor de migratiesamenleving ('Living together in difference: Policy for the migration society'), was published in December 2020. The following four of the WRR's observations are pivotal:

First, the WRR points out that patterns of migration to the Netherlands have changed. The proportion of the four main countries of origin in the first waves of migration (Turkey, Morocco, and colonial migration from Suriname and the Antilles; see also Bosma, 2012; Oostindie, 2008) has decreased over time. As the WRR puts it: "whereas formerly big groups of migrants came from a small number of countries, today smaller groups come from a multitude of countries" (WRR, 2020, p. 45). Modern travel and holiday patterns, and from the 1990s the increasing influx of knowledge migrants working in research-intensive industries and academia have been drivers of an increased diversity among migrants. Today, migrants come from a wider array of countries and have more diverse cultural and professional backgrounds than ever before.

Second, the duration of migrants' stay in the Netherlands has changed: on average, migrants who come to the Netherlands stay for a shorter period of time. Whereas roughly 60% of those who came to the Netherlands in 1995 were still living there after ten years, this is the case for fewer than 40% of those who came to the Netherlands in 2010 (WRR, 2020, p. 62). This may have to do with altered motives of migration: whereas the earliest waves of migration consisted of lowly skilled workers in search of a better future, an important group today are highly skilled and specialised knowledge workers who are highly mobile internationally. Many lowly-skilled migrants are seasonal workers who do not stay for long.

Third, within the Netherlands, there are important regional and even local differences vis-à-vis migration and minorities. The WRR uses a typology of municipalities. In total, the WRR distinguishes eight different types of municipalities:

1. Majority-minorities cities. These municipalities are characterised by superdiversity; the majority of inhabitants has a migration background and the number of countries of origin is particularly large. The big Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague) fall into this category;
2. Suburban towns. These municipalities are towns in the vicinity of the big Dutch cities (e.g., Capelle aan den Ijssel near Rotterdam). Whilst the majority of inhabitants still has a Dutch background, the diversity increases even more rapidly than in the majority-minority cities;
3. Metropolitan provincial municipalities. This category comprises municipalities that play an important role as centre in their province, and often are its capital. It is noteworthy that our case study towns, the provincial capitals Leeuwarden, Maastricht and Zwolle, fall into this category. In these municipalities, the population is diverse, but the percentage of people with a Dutch background is considerably larger than in the three large cities and their suburban towns;
4. Municipalities with one specific large minority (e.g., Gouda). The population is characterised by the presence of a single large non-European/non-Anglo-Saxon group, which is the result of labour migration from a specific country or the settling of a large group of Antilleans;
5. Expat municipalities (e.g., Wassenaar). These are also municipalities with a large proportion of migrants, but characteristically the migrants are "knowledge migrants" (highly skilled workers and academic researchers) from a wide range of backgrounds. The traditional four big migration backgrounds (Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean) are underrepresented;
6. Horticulture municipalities (e.g., Westland), where a large proportion of workers in the local horticulture industry have a Polish or (in smaller numbers) Bulgarian background;
7. Border-region municipalities (e.g., Kerkrade). In such municipalities there is a substantial minority with German or Belgian background;
8. Homogenous municipalities (e.g., Staphorst). This last category comprises municipalities where the overwhelming majority (more than 90%) has a Dutch background, in the sense that both of their parents were born in the Netherlands. (WRR, 2020, pp. 67–68)

Fourth, the WRR argues that the increasing diversity and the increasing churn rate of migrants puts social cohesion under pressure: inhabitants say they feel less "at home" in their neighbourhood due to those factors. According to the WRR, there is no easy fix for this problem, but they recommend improving the "social infrastructure" (sport fields, neighbourhood shops, libraries and community centres) to strengthen social cohesion (WRR, 2020, pp. 13–14).

Against the background of the WRR's emphasis on the "social infrastructure," it seems curious that the report neglects to mention funerary provision. This absence may be due to the WRR's emphasis on the increasing "churn rate" of migrants, with increasing numbers leaving the Netherlands after short periods of time. However, focusing on young and mobile migrants leaving the Netherlands after a short period of time, it is easy to lose sight of those who fulfil their life span in the Netherlands and need adequate funerary facilities. One should not forget that even if fewer than 40% of migrants can be expected to stay in the Netherlands for more than 10 years, the scale of migration (since 2015, more than 200,000 migrants per annum; WRR, 2020, p. 25) will inevitably result in significant future need of funerary provision. In short, funerary provision needs to be considered as part of an equitable and potentially successful migration and integration policy.

What lessons regarding funerary provision can be drawn from the data assembled and interpreted by the WRR? The key points which stand out are the following: (i) the shifting composition and diversification of the migration streams, away from a few traditional, big migration countries, towards a multitude of small groups; and (ii) the diversity of municipalities in the Netherlands.

Taken together, the two points allow us to reflect on the specific situation of the medium-sized Dutch towns of Leeuwarden, Maastricht and Zwolle. All three of them are, according to the WRR's typology, "metropolitan provincial municipalities," i.e., they share to a large extent the diversity of the "majority-minorities cities," but the smaller size of their total population results in smaller sizes of the respective migrant and minority groups in their midst. In other words, medium-sized towns such as Leeuwarden, Maastricht and Zwolle arguably experience more particular challenges with offering adequate funerary facilities to their minority and migrant groups in the first place, because the respective group sizes are so small in the context of cemetery governance structures which typically respond to diverse needs in the light of group size. The difficulties are exacerbated by the fact that due to the diversification of migrant streams, the number of different groups to cater for has increased dramatically.

All of this puts those medium-sized towns at a unique disadvantage when compared to other types of municipalities: majority-minority cities (to use the WRR's terminology) tend to have larger absolute sizes of the different minority and migrant groups; taken together with a better funding base, it is easier for them to offer specific funerary facilities. The suburban towns can often easily share in funerary provision in the metropolitan areas. Similarly-sized municipalities with a specific large minority can focus on provision for their dominant minority in a cost-effective way. Expat and horticulture municipalities have rather transitory migrant groups (knowledge workers moving on internationally, and seasonal workers moving to their

home countries), so there is not an equal pressure to offer group-specific funerary provision. For different reasons, this also holds for border-region and homogenous municipalities: they are characterised by a lack of ritual and funerary diversity, which makes specific provision less urgent. In this chapter case study data focuses on metropolitan provincial municipalities which face particular challenges when it comes to equitable group-specific funerary provision for minority and migrant groups.

In addition to the trends in migration processes analysed in the WRR report, there have been considerable changes in the financial situation of municipalities in the Netherlands. In general, municipalities have three main sources of income: (i) most importantly, the "municipality fund" through which the national government contributes to the financing of the municipalities; (ii) special investment programs financed by the central government; and (iii) a very small number of direct taxes and levies, such as the real estate tax, the sewage levy and, indeed, funerary fees (*Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties*, 2021). It should be noted that governmental contribution to the municipalities fund varies with the overall economic context, since the contribution is tied to overall national expenditure. This means that in times of economic crisis, municipalities have to deal with shrinking incomes. In addition to these structural facts of Dutch municipal funding, the national government has enforced a dramatic expansion of municipal responsibilities through the *Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning* 2015 ('Social Support Act 2015'). The law stipulates that municipalities are now fully responsible for financing, and if needs be arranging the support for, inhabitants who are not self-reliant (e.g., assisted living, youth care services and all forms of psycho-social support). This has created a huge category of costs in 'the social domain' for municipal budgets, yet the state has never fully compensated the municipalities for those extra tasks. The result of this expansion of municipal responsibilities is two-fold. First, municipal budgets have come under increased pressure. For instance, four out of five Dutch municipalities expect that they cannot break even in 2021 (BDO, 2021). Second, the new responsibilities and lack of funding have dramatically changed municipal expenditure patterns. A vivid illustration was provided by Jos and Paul, two senior civil servants working in the municipal funerary sector of Maastricht.[4] Previously, the municipality of Maastricht put 60–70% of its budget into town planning, development and maintenance, resulting for instance in the landmark transformation of a former industrial estate into the sparkling new Céramique district at the turn of the millennium. Today, 60% of the municipal budget is tied up in the 'social domain,' with expenditure for youth services, unemployment and psycho-social services claiming a large part of the budget.

In turn, this has exacerbated financial pressures on other services, including municipal funerary provision. As Jos and Paul relate, cost-awareness and attempts at cost-cutting have become regular traits of municipal administration, even in the funerary sector, which is part of the administrative unit 'public space,' sharing in the

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

overarching business-like approach. In this context, loss-making services are eyed with suspicion, and at different stages of their careers Jos and Paul have therefore felt the need to come up with innovative plans that promise the minimisation of losses, perhaps even the possibility of approaching the break-even point, in the face of all available evidence: as a general rule, relates Jos, no cemetery without its own crematorium has ever managed to become cost-effective. In Maastricht, where the monumental cemetery Tongerseweg is the last remaining municipal cemetery, this has led to a cooperation with a newly-erected commercial crematorium nearby, to offer add-on services, such as an ash-dispersal site and a columbarium. The need to come up with optimistic plans has also led to the expansion of the historical cemetery to offer space for planting memorial trees. The thinking behind these plans was that green cemeteries are *en vogue* in the Netherlands, but that many citizens experience current natural burials as "anonymous." The offer of planting memorial trees in the grounds of an atmospheric historical cemetery is seen as an interesting proposition for people who are considering a natural burial. At the same time, Jos and Paul emphasise the importance of offering convincing traditional burial services for the (shrinking) demand. In this regard, catering for the wishes of Muslims and funerary conservative Armenian (Apostolic) Christians could generate income for the cemetery. With these and similar initiatives, the civil servants expect that they can increase the rate of cost coverage from currently around 80% to 90%. Paul claimed that over time full cost recovery for funerals may be possible, but this may be optimistic given the general difficulty of cemeteries without attached crematorium.

The 'entrepreneurial,' business-like mindset that is evident in Maastricht cemetery management policy is not unique to the locality; in fact, it is all but universal within the sector. A good example of this mindset is the recent report *De begraafplaats van de toekomst* ('The Cemetery of the Future'), which Mariska Overman and Rob Bruntink have drafted for the National Organisation of Cemeteries (*Landelijke organisatie van Begraafplaatsen* [LOB]). The LOB report is somewhat instrumentalist, including, for instance, a SWOT analysis (Strengths-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats), and calls for cemetery staff to "think as an entrepreneur, think commercially, think in opportunities"; "never cease to draw the attention of municipalities and churches"; and "appeal to the values of human beings: influence the emotion, not reason" (Overman & Bruntink, 2020). To this end, the cemeteries' communication needs to professionalise: positive "frames" ought to be repeated as often as possible over an extended period of time (ibid.). The report's overarching strategic recommendation is that Dutch cemeteries have to up their game by broadening their perceived usefulness; just as libraries, so cemeteries have to take on new, hitherto unimagined functions (see Jedan, 2021).

To sum up, migratory trends, the political and economic trends at the municipal level, and their knock-on effects for municipal funerary provision suggest a thoroughly 'neo-liberal' dynamic: financial pressures lead municipal managers and policy makers to adopt an "entrepreneurial," business-like mindset and stimulate them to come up with innovative services. In the context of openness to change, the creation of funerary facilities geared towards specific migrant and minority groups becomes more likely. However, the typology of municipalities established by the

WRR also suggests that some types of municipality face bigger obstacles than others in their path towards creating such dedicated funerary facilities. How can these counteracting trends be combined in a single integrative framework, and are there other factors besides financial pressure and type of municipality to reckon with? This is the question to be tackled in the remainder of this chapter.

10.3   Diversity Within Diversity-Readiness: Four Types of 'Inclusive' Funerary Provision

Cemeteries in Europe are mostly shaped by European Judaeo-Christian traditions and their secular inflections. The cemeteries tend to operate on the basis of – frequently unacknowledged – aesthetic and religious-ritual norms that make it difficult to create "design justice" for migrant and minority groups outside the cultural majority (Jensen, 2017; Maddrell et al., introduction to this volume). However, it would be wrong to deny that municipalities, cemetery planners and management have tried to provide what they consider equitable and inclusive spaces for migrant and minorities. Cemetery staff interviewed report that they have tried to be "diversity-ready" and inclusive, but even to the casual visitor of European cemeteries it is visible that quite different models of diversity-readiness and inclusion seem to exist. In short, we need to acknowledge that there is considerable variation within the diversity-readiness of cemeteries.

   I suggest that there are four types of minority provision within Dutch cemeteries which regularly (but not always) seem to follow a historical timeline:

 (i) Small numbers of graves of new migrant-refugee and minority groups are assimilated into the existing cemetery structure, with minimal disruption to its aesthetic. In a Protestant cultural context, with a norm of visual restraint and uniformity, graves of such small migrant-refugee and minority groups would hardly stand out. The inclusion of those groups that is afforded within this model emphasises that the migrant and minority group members are part of the people who lived in a place.
 (ii) Once there is clearer awareness of the divergent religious-ritual needs of such migrant and minority groups, increased by factors such as their longer presence and relatively larger size, there is some form of accommodation of ritual difference, again often with minimal disruption to the overall design of the cemetery. Striking examples of this type of inclusion are afforded by a second phase of Muslim graves in Tongerseweg Cemetery Maastricht (Jedan et al., 2020; Jedan & Westendorp, 2020; Jedan et al., 2023). Here the rectangular path structure of the cemetery was continued, but the individual Muslim graves were 'slanted' relative to the path structure (see Fig. 10.2a), so as to allow individual bodies to face Mecca. This model of inclusion tends to put more emphasis on the individual graves, whose difference from the aesthetic and ritual normativity of majority grave culture is underscored by their positioning.
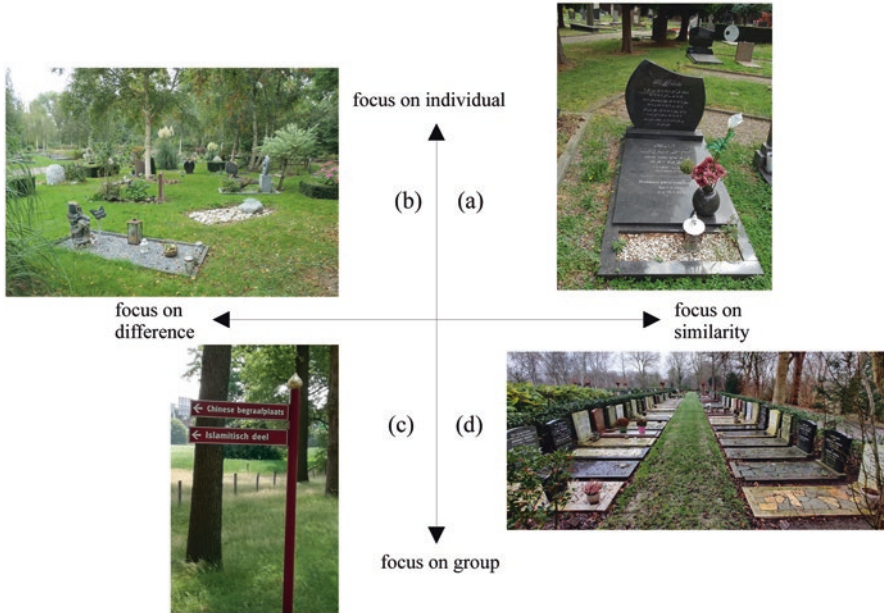
Fig. 10.2 Four types of inclusion. (Photographs by Christoph Jedan)

(iii) The third type is the provision of separate cemetery sections for specific ethnic and/or religious groups, which prioritises the self-expression and representation of the distinct ethnic and/or religious identity of a group. There, the shared characteristics of the group define a separate space and aesthetic. Separate Muslim cemetery sections, with specific characteristics such as their separation by means of gates and fences utilising Islamic symbols, the provision of attributes such as canopied biers, and the orientation of the graves towards Mecca, are cases in point. It should be noted that in spite of this type's relatively recent rise in importance for public/municipal cemeteries, the model of separate cemeteries and cemetery sections in and of itself has a long history – European funerary culture is replete with separate cemeteries along religious lines (for instance Jewish cemeteries since the Middle Ages; cemeteries for different Christian denominations since the Age of the Reformation; Non-conformist or Socialist cemetery sections separated from the majority sections since the nineteenth century).

(iv) A relatively new phenomenon seems to be a cemetery design in which a larger space, for instance a lawn section, is provided for the free orientation and adornment of the graves. There is no clear path structure, and the graves are very different in terms of adornment and religious or cultural text and iconography. Overall, this informal lay-out, compared to typically highly structured cemeteries, can seem slightly unorganised, and even 'messy' in appearance, e.g., the 'free field' at Groningen municipal cemetery Selwerderhof (see Fig. 10.2b).

How can we account for the difference of the four types? I suggest that the four types engage, and provide different emphases among, four foci: difference, similarity, individual, and group. The expression of the specific identity and distinctness of one group in society can be combined with expressions of similarity (for instance, civic equality in death), but the two values do seem to point towards different spatial arrangements and practices that need careful negotiation. The same holds for a focus on the individual and a focus on an overarching group.

On this basis, it makes sense to arrange the foci and the four types in a diagram, identifying four different quadrants, each offering a characteristic combination of, or trade-off between, the different foci (Fig. 10.2).

Figure 10.2 uses four photographs from the case study towns to illustrate the types of inclusion in question. Figure 10.2d shows a highly uniform Protestant cemetery aesthetic which leaves little space for the expression of difference. The emphasis here is on the group of all citizens and their similarity (Noorderbegraafplaats Leeuwarden). The picture in the top right corner shows one of the 'slanted' Muslim graves on Tongerseweg Cemetery Maastricht. It represents the cemetery type which attempts the difficult trade-off between similarity and individuality, by maintaining a mainstream overall aesthetic as mandated by the pre-existing cemetery design and lay-out, but also by accommodating ritual exigencies at the level of individual graves. Figure 10.2c is the picture of a signpost at Kranenburg Cemetery, Zwolle, symbolising the provision of separate cemeteries or cemetery sections. This type prioritises the self-expression and representation of the distinct ethnic and/or religious identity of a minority or migrant group, with the shared characteristics of the group defining a separate space and aesthetic. Finally, Fig. 10.2b shows an image of the 'free field' on Cemetery Selwerderhof, Groningen.

These four types indicate how different emphases of, and trade-offs between, foci can result in characteristically different cemetery designs, each of which can sincerely lay claim to pursuing the inclusion of migrant and minority groups, albeit in strikingly different ways. The highly individualised memorialisation available in the 'free field' at Groningen's Selwerderhof Cemetery offers a different type of inclusion than the strongly group-focused creation of separate cemetery sections on the basis of ethnicity or religion. Yet, also those cemeteries evincing minimal minority provision may claim with sincerity that they are offering equitable and inclusive space. Ultimately, inclusion and diversity-readiness of cemeteries can be understood, and has in fact been understood, in strikingly different ways.

The differentiation of these four types also makes clear how cemeteries can embrace different designs of inclusivity in the course of their history, because the underlying value trade-offs can change along an historical axis. It is easy to conceive how a cemetery may begin, for instance with a rigid, uniform design fitting a particular type (Fig. 10.2d) in the 1940s and 1950s, go on to responding to migration processes by adding a dedicated Muslim cemetery section (Fig. 10.2c), and finally, around the turn of the century, respond to declining revenues by catering for the amorphous and spiritually diverse group of post-Christian and post-conventionalist citizens with the creation of a largely unstructured 'free field' (Fig. 10.2b). And, given the "obduracy" (Hommels, 2005) of cemetery design, it is more than likely

that the different phases in a cemetery's 'biography' remain visible as historical layers on its map. Also, cemeteries do not necessarily have to abandon any of their earlier design-types as they go forward; they might maintain and develop them in parallel. A good example of this is the municipal cemetery Selwerderhof in Groningen. The cemetery has, and continues to use, highly uniform cemetery sections where members of migrant and minority groups are buried with relatively little space for the expression of individuality and difference. However, the cemetery also has a more recent well-equipped and much-used dedicated Muslim cemetery section near the entrance. Finally, it also has the aforementioned 'free field' that caters for a maximum of individual expression.

In what follows, I want to focus on *one particular* type of inclusive cemetery, the creation of dedicated funerary provision for migrant and minority groups (symbolised with a picture from Kranenburg Cemetery, Zwolle; see Fig. 10.2c), in order to address the question: What are the factors that help us account for the differences between Leeuwarden, Maastricht, and Zwolle regarding the creation of such dedicated funerary provision?

10.4   Factors Explaining Dedicated Funerary Provision

An interview with Douwe, an alderman with responsibility for overseeing the management of municipal cemeteries in the municipality of Leeuwarden, provides a useful starting point. Interestingly, Douwe claims that funerary matters are little-discussed and eminently non-political: "Within municipal councils, there is hardly ever talk about cemeteries." If there is discussion, it is about the following three issues: (i) the accessibility of cemeteries, for instance by public transport, (ii) the level of maintenance in and around a cemetery, which should signal due respect for the deceased, and (iii) the rates for municipal funerary services, such as the rent of burial plots. However, Douwe underscores that such decisions are usually taken in a sphere of great harmony and even unanimity: there are hardly any political differences between parties on these matters, it is important that fees are not too high and that the level of maintenance is good.

The non-controversial nature and low political importance of funerary matters stand in stark contrast with the clearly neo-liberal, entrepreneurial language in recent business plans for municipal cemeteries across the Netherlands (Jedan, 2021; Jedan & Westendorp, 2021). The southern Dutch provincial capital Maastricht, for instance, published in 2018 a business plan for its monumental cemetery Tongerseweg (Jedan et al., 2020). The plan offers an optimistic view: by expanding the "range of products" (*productenaanbod*) the "exploitation" (*exploitatie*) can be improved (Kaptein et al., 2018, p. 10). It suggests new "product/market combinations," which result, after initial investments, in a positive balance (Kaptein et al., 2018, pp. 18–19). The latter focuses strategically on an important established group (the Muslim population) as well as a new, but potentially important group (the Armenian (Apostolic) minority in the region of Maastricht).

Even though the rhetoric of the municipality of Leeuwarden is less aggressively 'neo-liberal,' it has issued a 'Policy Framework Cemeteries 2018 Leeuwarden' (Gemeente Leeuwarden, 2019). Leeuwarden faces similar challenges as Maastricht, notably the cost effectiveness of municipal cemeteries. The policy framework reports that the current cost coverage level of 74% is under pressure: apparently the municipality has reached rock-bottom with the staffing of the cemetery and is unable even to remove obsolete grave markers according to plan. Also, there is no money for larger maintenance work (ibid., p. 8). The policy framework also discusses Leeuwarden's competitive position: Leeuwarden is a medium-priced funerary location compared to other Frisian municipalities, but relatively cheap compared to Alkmaar and Zwolle, two similarly-sized towns in other provinces. The policy framework determines, without further argument, that fees should not be increased and the cost coverage level of 74% should be maintained (ibid., p. 8).

Douwe emphasises the legal context: whilst there is pressure to break even, Dutch municipalities are prohibited from making profits on public services. But, he explains, there is a grey area around the exact ways of accounting for costs incurred by the municipalities. It is, for instance, unclear whether or to what extent central municipal staff is included in the cost calculation: "Should one include centralised staff in the costs, and if so, with what share – should one include 50% of a manager's time as related costs?" Douwe also explains that municipalities in general are anxious not to be perceived as too expensive with their services: there are regular publications of "rankings" of Dutch municipalities on aspects such as their tax burden and service costs in widely-circulating Dutch magazines and news outlets. Municipalities are conscious of their reputation and try not to be perceived as "greedy." Douwe reiterates that in his experience there is great unanimity on funerary matters in municipal politics: prices should not be too high, and the maintenance level should be good, those are the primary concerns: "There *must* not arise discussion about this," and unless a letter of complaint about perceived shortcomings is sent to the municipality, funerary issues stay out of municipal political discussions.

However, Douwe reports that he would be happy to increase minority use of the cemetery to help improve the cost effectiveness of the town's cemeteries, especially its largest and most diverse one, the Noorderbegraafplaats. In this context, he points to the importance of Muslim burials for the Noorderbegraafplaats and to an ongoing project to redesign the cemetery. At the same time, he argues that this should be responsive to community needs rather than financially-driven: "If there are signals [of a clear demand] from society, we certainly follow up on them."

That initiatives coming "from society" are indeed important is also illustrated by the example of Zwolle, where I spoke *inter alia* with Chao, a local Chinese business owner who had been instrumental in the creation of a dedicated Chinese cemetery. *Het paradijs* ('The paradise'), as the Chinese cemetery is called, is located close to the entrance of municipal cemetery Kranenburg and is owned and run by the Kranenburg cemetery staff. Yet, it was co-designed with the Chinese community following Chinese *feng shui* principles, and major design elements, such as a pagoda, have been imported directly from China (see Fig. 10.3).

Fig. 10.3 Entrance to Chinese cemetery Kranenburg, Zwolle. (Photography by Christoph Jedan)

As Chao told me, with hindsight the most important step towards a dedicated Chinese cemetery proved to be the foundation of a senior citizens association *Het zonnetje* (a Dutch diminutive that means 'little sun,' 'dear sun,' or 'limelight') specifically for the Chinese minority in Zwolle. Although there were some initial hesitations about the foundation of such an association from the part of the municipality ("Why an association solely for the Chinese?"), the Chinese community in Zwolle enjoys, according to Chao, a lot of goodwill as a minority group ("Known to be hard-working and constructive"; "doesn't cause problems"), and ultimately, this carried a lot of weight with municipal decision-makers. In the event, the association acted as a stakeholder group and made it possible for the Chinese community to effectively signal its interest in dedicated funerary provision. The municipality needed to be convinced of the financial viability of the plan, but once it realised that there was huge interest among Chinese communities from other parts of the Netherlands, it embraced the initiative with characteristic Dutch pragmatism and business acumen. Today, the municipality uses the Chinese cemetery as a public relations instrument, signalling Zwolle's openness and inclusiveness. The success of the initiative is indeed an interesting counterpoint to the usual financial problems of Dutch municipal cemeteries. Opened in 2016, the plots in cemetery *Het paradijs* sold out quickly, and a new extension and further visual and functional upgrades have been realised. The case of the Chinese cemetery in Zwolle thus points to the importance of migrant and minority groups

taking initiative as well as the importance of a positive attitude towards the groups' rights to funerary expression (Jedan, 2021).

Be that as it may, when compared to Maastricht, the municipal cemeteries in Leeuwarden show no comparable level of entrepreneurialism; the pace of change is decidedly slower. As we have seen above, there are clear initiatives in Maastricht to develop new "product/market combinations," for instance the construction of a memorial woodland section on cemetery Tongerseweg, to cater for the group of (presumably largely native Dutch) post-conventionalists and post-Christians, who variously seek less traditional and/or more ecology-minded funerals. This group is currently targeted by commercial green burial sites in the Netherlands, and Maastricht wants to retain a share of those customers in its municipal funeral system. Also, the municipality of Maastricht plans a new type of urn repository and memorial, to offer an add-on service to cremations conducted at a commercial crematorium in the region. This provides a final place of disposition for cremated remains and a modest income stream for the cemetery.

The relative lack of funerary entrepreneurialism in Leeuwarden compared to Maastricht seems to be due to a whole number of factors. First, there seem to be long-term historical trends that continue to influence attitudes today. After the Reformation, the public display of Roman Catholicism was banned in Leeuwarden, and Friesland more generally. With the exception of the West Frisian island of Ameland, there was no dedicated cemetery available for Roman Catholics living in the deanery of Leeuwarden. Roman Catholics had to bury their dead in cemeteries catering for the Protestant majority and follow their aesthetic (Bok, n.d., pp. 59–61). Only as late as the second half of the nineteenth century were Roman Catholic cemeteries established, first (1859) in Wytgaard (10 km south of Leeuwarden's city centre), and finally (1882) in the city of Leeuwarden itself (St. Vitushof). Up until then, the Roman Catholic minority faced the stark choice between invisibility in the majoritarian cemeteries and funerary mobility (for more on postmodern funerary mobility, see Marjavaara, 2012, 2017; Maddrell, 2013; Maddrell et al., introduction to this volume). The major historical Leeuwarden cemetery (Spanjaardslaan) still illustrates this point. In the monumental cemetery, opened in 1833 and closed in 1969 (Bok, n.d., pp. 23–30), but still accessible for visits and ash dispersals, there is a far-reaching visual uniformity of graves, mainly carved slabs, covering the ground like a church floor. There are no visual clues for the identification of Roman Catholic graves as seen elsewhere at this time, although next to the cemetery, there is a separate Jewish cemetery. By contrast, the monumental cemetery Tongerseweg in Maastricht (opened in 1811) was set up under French rule (1795–1814), according to a French law from 1804, to accommodate different religions and denominations (Jedan et al., 2020). In the context of Leeuwarden history, long-standing homogeneous aesthetic and ritual assimilation of minorities can explain mentalities today, as exemplified by cemetery staff with limited knowledge of diverse needs or provision.

At the same time, a focus group among elderly (autochthonous) inhabitants of Bilgaard, a working-class neighbourhood near the city centre of Leeuwarden, revealed the degree to which a restrained Protestant aesthetic is considered a matter of course. All group members explained their personal stance on religious matters as non-practicing, agnostic or atheist, not believing in an afterlife and declaring matters of funerary protocol as irrelevant. Hendrik, for instance, pointed out: "I'm gone, right? It doesn't matter how they design the cemetery. As far as I am concerned they could staple me on top of others in a grave." Yet, when they were shown photographs of different cemetery layouts, group members all favoured a highly traditional restrained aesthetic: gravel or grass path, small grave plots left and right, horizontal smallish headstones, low hedges behind the headstones to cordon off the graves from those in the next lane. All in all, there was little interest in cemetery innovation on the part of those citizens. Any suggestion of adding new functions to existing cemeteries – e.g., allowing people to walk their dogs in the cemetery, go for a run or to install a children's playground in one corner of a cemetery – resulted in a laughter of disbelief.

However, there is more to the lack of dedicated minority funerary provision than historically-rooted expectations. In Leeuwarden, there is no clearly delineable, large migrant or minority group to target with specific new cemetery "products," as Maastricht markets to the Armenian (Apostolic) Christians. Another factor that can explain the lack of entrepreneurialism in Leeuwarden has to do with the availability of public funding. As the "Policy framework" and the interview with Douwe show, the municipality is prepared to foot a substantial bill for the sake of competitively-priced municipal funerary services. In Maastricht, by contrast, municipal funerary services seem far less shielded from financial pressures. For instance, the municipality attempted to privatise the Tongerseweg cemetery, but could not find an investor, meaning that financial pressures persist.

Again, local cultural factors appear to be at play, impacting on limited public funding. When quizzed, Jos and Paul, two interviewees from the Maastricht municipality, came up with two interesting explanations. First, that the cremation rate in Maastricht is very high:

> I believe around 75%, this is – possibly with the exception of a small area in the West of the country – the highest in the whole of the Netherlands … This means that seven or eight out of ten inhabitants are lost for a traditional cemetery. Once local politicians and policy makers realise this, it comes as a shock, it's an eye-opener.

With this argument, Jos gestures towards context-specific, cultural factors. His second explanation points in the same direction: "Do you know the inhabitants of Maastricht? They are, to use a local phrase, '*bij het leven*,' they are oriented towards life in the here and now. The typical Maastricht person doesn't talk easily about death," and Jos suggests that this may be different in Leeuwarden, in the Protestant North of the country. As Jos suggests, the lack of interest in funerary culture may reflect wider cultural disinterest in death-related subjects, explaining why the monumental municipal cemetery of Maastricht is far less shielded from financial pressures than cemeteries elsewhere.

10.5   Dedicated Funerary Provision: The Eight-Factor Framework

Offering specific funerary facilities for minority and migrant groups becomes easier and even a compelling option in cases where a number of the following eight criteria are fulfilled: (i) There is only a small number of clearly delineable minority and migrant groups to cater for. (ii) The minority and migrant groups in question are relatively large. (iii) There is a long-standing presence of those groups in society which has led them to seek burial in the 'host' country. (iv) Majority stakeholders have an (ideally, historically grown) acquaintance with, and positive attitude towards, the migrant and minority groups in question. (v) The ritual exigencies of the minority groups are so different from those of the mainstream that an integration into the pre-existing majority aesthetic and ritualistic template must be considered an inadequate response. (vi) The group or groups in question have set up an effective campaign for dedicated provision, which can tap into an existing favourable attitude towards the group. (vii) The public culture, i.e., the outlook of a large proportion of the citizens, is tolerant towards the expression of religious and ethnic difference, at the expense of underscoring similarity (e.g., civic equality in death, traditional aesthetic norms). (viii) Municipal or other public funding of funerary services are under pressure, so that municipalities and/or cemetery managers seek out new streams of revenue.

This prompts the question how the eight factors outlined above provide a framework to explain dedicated funerary provision. Interview material indicates they are plausible ingredients for the following reasons. The first two factors are connected to the elementary feasibility of dedicated funerary provision. If there are too many different migrant and minority groups or such groups are individually too small, it would be hard to envisage the case for one such minority provision for economic reasons alone. Moreover, it would create a costly precedent in respect of other, similarly placed groups.

Factors iii-vii concern the interaction between the migrant and minority groups and members of the majority culture. Research on popular ideas about citizenship in the Netherlands (but very likely applicable also in other countries) has shown that respondents evaluate good citizenship along criteria that put a premium on types of behaviour that make migrants "blend in" with a secular and socially liberal majority culture (Wagenvoorde, 2015). There appear to be certain historically rooted local and regional differences in the tolerance toward the expression of difference (factor vii). However, against the background of a by-and-large assimilationist conception of citizenship, the expression of difference – especially when it comes to difference based on religion and culture – can remain a challenging proposition. The transition towards the creation of dedicated funerary provision, which would appear in the abstract to go against the grain of the majority culture, must be supported in several ways to take effect. The long-standing presence of migrant and minority groups (factor iii) increases familiarity with, and knowledge of, those groups among

members of the majority culture. A positive attitude towards the groups in question (factor iv) will also help, since it creates the goodwill needed for that apparently difficult transition. At the same time, in a context in which the "disruption" of majority cultural expectations is not particularly appreciated, members of the majority culture must be made aware of the specific needs of the migrant and minority groups, and their urgency. This is where the factors of the groups' actively campaigning for their funerary needs (factor v), and their specific needs being perceived as pressing due to the impossibility of fulfilling them within the majority culture's normativity (factor vi) come into play.

Just as factor vii, so factor viii (public funding of funerary services needs to be under pressure) appears to be an important background condition in the Dutch context, because financial pressures cause at the very least a receptiveness on the part of municipal managers and policy makers towards initiatives from migrant and minority groups. If realised to a high degree, factor viii might even lead to managers and policy makers actively contacting migrant and minority groups to offer funerary provision. Factor viii provides a powerful motive for policy makers to respond positively, perhaps even pro-actively, to the funerary needs of migrant and minority groups, even if this means alienating parts of the population who might object to the larger symbolic space and recognition afforded to a specific minority through dedicated funerary provision.

In short, the suggested eight factors at play in the creation of dedicated funerary provision for migrant and minority groups form a network of mutually supporting motives and (background) conditions. They regard the composition of the migrant population (factors i-ii), facts about the interaction with and perception by members of the majority culture (factors iii-vii), and with the general politics of financing public funerary provision an important background condition that adds to a general cultural background condition (factor viii).

The eight factors allow a 'scoring' or mapping of intersecting factors influencing decisions about the creation of local dedicated funerary provision for migrant and minority groups set against a background of cultural inertia and expectations of assimilation. These eight factors may be applicable beyond the specific case of the Netherlands. However, more international empirical work, would be needed to corroborate this point. What can be offered on the basis of the current reflection is at the very least a highly flexible framework, in which the different factors can be fulfilled to a greater or smaller degrees, to explain contextual differences across different municipalities, possibly even across different countries.

The resultant framework should, therefore, be depicted by means of a *radar chart*; the eight factors should be thought of as 'variables' that can take different values for different migrant/minority groups and for different municipalities. The more a factor is fulfilled, the larger the respective 'axis' gets and thus the overall surface of the chart. What is suggested by the material in this chapter is that the more the different factors are fulfilled (i.e., the larger the overall surface of the chart), the more likely it is that the establishment of dedicated funerary facilities
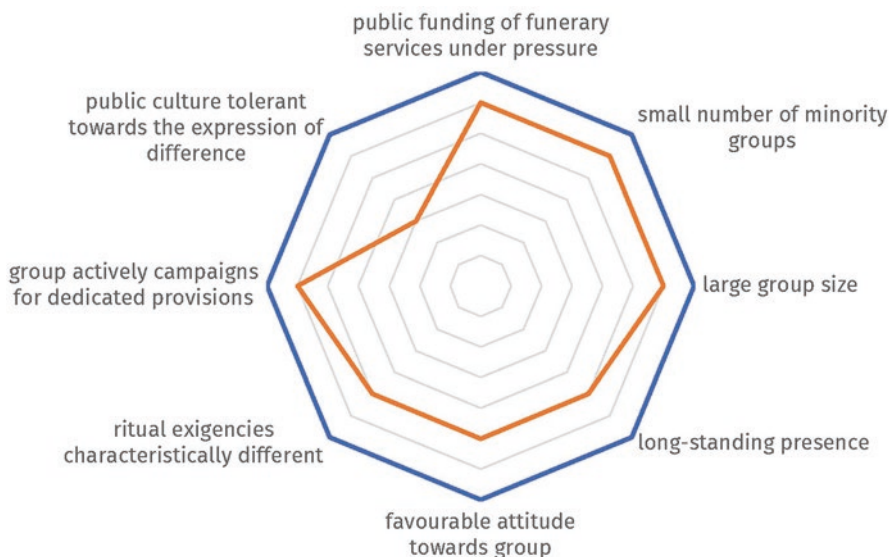
Fig. 10.4 Eight-Factor Framework (EFF) of specific funerary provision for minority and migrant groups, with illustrative example marked. (Diagram by Christoph Jedan)

might be successful. The resultant framework, the 'Eight-Factor Framework' (EFF), might therefore be depicted as follows (see Fig. 10.4).

Due to its design as a radar chart the EFF could quite possibly serve as both an analytic and a heuristic tool. The EFF can help policy makers to understand better *why* certain dedicated funerary facilities have been proposed for a specific migrant or minority group; it can also help them to structure an exploration of different combinations of migrant/minority groups and municipalities for the creation of new funerary facilities.

10.6 Conclusion: A Way Forward?

The case studies in this chapter point towards a surprising conclusion: 'neo-liberal,' market-driven and entrepreneurial approaches to the public administration of cemeteries can be an important driver in the creation of specific funerary facilities for migrant and minority groups. However, it has also become clear that there are more factors at play beyond municipal policy styles: the Eight-Factor Framework (EFF) suggests a multitude of interacting factors that make the creation of dedicated funerary provision in the shape of separate cemeteries or cemetery sections more attractive to politicians, policy makers, and members of the cultural majority, and thus more likely overall. The framework can show why and how mid-sized towns

such as Leeuwarden, Maastricht and Zwolle respond to demand for the creation of such facilities. Many preconditions need to be fulfilled to make such provision an 'easy choice': a small number of migrant and minority groups, relatively large numbers, their long-standing presence, an understanding of their ritual exigencies as clearly different from the mainstream, and a visible campaign for dedicated funerary rights should be met with a pro-attitude towards the groups and their demands. Also, the public culture should be tolerant towards the display of religious and ethnic difference, even if this means that an emphasis of the similarity among citizens must be reduced. In short, a lot of preconditions have to be fulfilled for this scenario. In practice, municipal funerary policies are often a matter of striking pragmatic compromises working with economic and political restraints.

The EFF thus enables us to understand why a town with the history and composition of Leeuwarden undertakes very few initiatives towards group-specific funerary facilities: a long tradition of limited tolerance towards the expression of religious difference has facilitated views of a restrained Protestant aesthetic as the *de facto* standard. Add to this the fact that Leeuwarden, as a typical metropolitan provincial municipality, has inhabitants from many different migration backgrounds and very small respective group sizes, which presents challenges beyond the clear-cut rationale for a historical Jewish cemetery and an Islamic section in the major municipal cemetery Noorderbegraafplaats. In contrast, the towns of Maastricht and Zwolle offer new dedicated funerary facilities for a single well-represented minority and migrant group (Armenian Apostolic Christians and Chinese, respectively), which is mutually beneficial to the minority community and cemetery financial management. However, if ritually adequate self-expression and funerary representation must be considered a fundamental human right, it should be obtainable for *individuals*, irrespective of group sizes.

One potential solution would be the creation of *regional* funerary facilities (note how this worked for the Chinese cemetery in Zwolle). In cases where the needs of relatively small groups exceed the economic means of individual municipalities, the *pooling of resources* among a number of municipalities might be an option. In this vein, it might be possible to create dedicated Surinamese or Moroccan cemeteries at the regional level, even in a less-densely populated province such as Friesland. However, this solution would weaken the link of the dead with the place they lived in, and necessitates additional travel – mobility – on the part of mourners, with associated time and financial costs. Another alternative is to embrace a model in line with the second of the four types of inclusion (see Fig. 10.2b). A cemetery design along the lines of the 'free field' in Groningen's Selwerderhof, a lawn section without a clear path section, combined with the free orientation and adornment of graves, would offer the possibility to accommodate the dead of very different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The tolerance that would be needed on the part of all users to learn to live with the unstructured aesthetics might be a small price to pay.

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