

# Enterramiento natural



Constelación  
de los Comunes

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**Barcelona**

Name of the collective  
**Enterramiento Natural**

Interviewees  
**Jordi Miralles**

Interviewer  
**Palmar Álvarez-Blanco**



Website  
**<https://enterramientonatural.org/>**

**It is November 24th. We are in Barcelona today interviewing Jordi Miralles. Thank you for being here, Jordi. We are going to talk about the Enterramiento Natural (Natural Burial) association. The first question is, what is your connection with this association?**

**Jordi:** Right now, I am the president of this association. It was founded in 2019 by María Vecino, a very multifaceted person who had attended deathS. And she didn't like the existing system in this country, so in 2019, she created the association for Enterramiento Natural. She had also founded another "association," another project called La Última Fiesta (The Last Party,) precisely to make funeral ceremonies a little different. But then came spring 2020, the pandemic and the association's activities were cut a little bit short. At the end of 2021,when she founded the association, she was not aware of the existence of Funeral Natural, and therefore of me. It is true that it is a small audience that visits the website, which had just been launched, so the search engines were not on board yet. But she finally found me, contacted me, and we participated in an event at Biocultura Madrid together. That's when she told me about the association, which I didn't know about either, of course. And a small relationship began, in the sense that she commented that the association was a little stalled and that she wanted to revive it, and proposed that I join. I told her about the team, and then she mentioned that there was another person, Montserrat Janet, also here in Barcelona, Celona, who was very interested. And we created a small core group to revive it. And then 2023, 2024 and now 2025. It's been the rebirth of the Association. Now María Vecino has other products and projects, and isn't involved. But there is a small team, and the association has a few members, because this topic is not very simple. Well, it's moving forward.

**Very good. And you are a biologist by training? How does a biologist come to connect with this idea of natural burials? Is that what draws you to this story, what makes you get involved in this way?**

**Jordi:** I'm a biologist, and biologists are supposed to study life. For me, ever since I was little, life has been linked to death. Although I never witnessed any deaths as a child, I would find dead animals. Even as a little kid, I would bury them, and after a few days, I would unbury them again, and then worms would appear. I would ask myself questions, but nobody answered because, in reality, this topic is avoided. And so it has always been a focus of my interest. In 2005 I was working with a foundation that I created in 1994. We had a relationship with the university and helped students with internships and capstone projects. I was, so to speak, the mentor of the foundation. And a young student came to us who had lost a close friend and was in the throes of grief, but of course, life goes on, as they say, and she had to do her capstone project. Coincidentally, here



in Barcelona, Greenpeace had launched a very powerful campaign against tropical woods being used in coffins. At the time, Barcelona's funeral services were public. It was a public coffin factory. Now it's been transferred to a private company. It occurred to me to take the opportunity to tell the City Council that perhaps we could help them solve this environmental problem they had. And to involve this woman in the whole funeral process because it would surely help her. She was a biology student, so perhaps it would help her understand the whole grieving process as well. So that allowed us to enter the bowels of funeral services and get to know them from the inside. And as a result, a publication called EcoFunerales was created, which is the first environmental analysis of this service. Interestingly, the monograph was originally written in Catalan, but it was translated into Spanish. And it was the beginning of our thinking, as a foundation at that time, about helping funeral services become more environmentally friendly. There was a small attempt between 2011 and 2014, but it didn't quite take off. So in 2018, I left the foundation, because I had worked there for 25 years and felt like I'd done enough. The Foundation went in a new direction, and I decided to continue this work of raising awareness about everything related to death.

**Returning to the Enterremiento Natural association, can you tell us what legal structure you adopted to establish it, or what structure was adopted at the time to establish it? Why an association and not a cooperative or a foundation?**

**Jordi:** Initially the association-- of course, I didn't create it. Some friends and I created it. The association framework was for an initial objective, which was to promote an alternative form of burial. "Promote." Well, it wasn't valued, as I imagine. And when I got involved, I thought it seemed like a good idea as an association. It's another thing entirely if there were a cooperative or even a company that offered, let's say, this type of approach. But I think we are still a bit far from that. Yes, it is true that here in Catalonia right now there is a small cooperative that also works on these issues, but it is very focused on grief and considering the end-of-life process, and it's also a little more related to the issue of death doulas.

**Based on my research, this is the the only Spanish organization dedicated to promoting this alternative, ecological vision for burials. Why aren't there more?**

**Jordi:** The question is not that there aren't more. I mean, there really isn't any more. But the reality is that death is scary. When you say "Hey, are you from any association?" I say "Yes, I am working to promote natural burial." They respond "Oh! Do you have a problem? Are you perhaps dying ?" I say "No, no, it's just because..." It must be said that in our society, nobody wants to die. We're all going to die, but deep down, nobody wants to die. They offer us all sorts of products to extend life to further and further points. And now they tell us that it even includes biomechanical parts. For me, this is a misunderstanding of what life is. And then what? Well, yes, there aren't any more organizations. And there aren't any environmentalists who are dedicated to this issue either.

**You mentioned the membres of the association earlier. Who are they, how many are there and what are the advantages of joining this association?**

**Jordi:** Right now, there are very few people. I think we're around thirty. Keep in mind that we started from scratch. What do we offer? Right now, I'd say that there are some people who say, "Well, I would like to participate." I say, "Well, participating in this topic is not easy." But what we do need is a greater number of people. This

happens in many association platforms. In the beginning, what you need is to bring together people motivated by a certain topic and then, from there, working groups can emerge. Individuals may emerge and become more involved. It is also true that sometimes startups emerge from these kinds of pioneering associations. But of course, we are still in very preliminary phase, so to speak. That's the thing. It is true that last year, we organized a small workshop of almost ten hours precisely to share some of the knowledge we have. Because it is true that there aren't many people who are dedicated to this topic. I am one of the few people in this country who monitors everything related to the funeral industry from outside the funeral sector.

**I understand, then, that you have an associative network in Spain, and I imagine that you work outside of Spain with other associations or types of platforms dedicated to this. Are you in contact with other groups outside of Spain?**

**Jordi:** Right now, we are only in contact with one German group who have promoted composting in one of the northern German states. It's also true that each country has its own peculiarities. For example, in the United Kingdom, they don't have this problem. There are nearly 300 natural cemeteries. There's the association Natural Death Center. The funeral process is very well organized, with funeral directors and companies a little bit separate, each with their own functions. In the case of France, cemeteries can only be public. Each country is a little bit different and so it's not easy to establish relationships. I can tell you that in the case of Germany, there is currently this association focused on the subject of composting. And it's true that right now in Europe, there are several associations promoting composting, because it is only authorized in northern Germany. So since this company, which is also a foundation, was created in Germany, we have started to weave more connections with other associations. But everything is still in its early stages, and what is not "coming together" right now is precisely the promotion of composting within the European framework.

**We are now going to delve into the concept of burial, and the first question everyone is going will ask is: what forms of burial are common in Europe and in the West? What would you say is most common?**

**Jordi:** There are only two: cremation in an accredited oven, that is, certified. And then, inhumation or burial. Burial is usually either in a grave or in a niche. A grave can have concrete or cement walls, or be directly on the ground. Those are the two authorized options. Then there is the donation of the body to science, but this is by contract. You must have contacted a university or hospital that will accept your body. What if you don't do it while you're alive? What if they don't accept it? That's the end of that. It's not an option. So, we are really dealing with two options. It is true that right now there is a third option, which is especially relevant in the Netherlands, which is alkaline hydrolysis. Also aquamation, or green cremation. Well, there are different ones. It's actually an oxidation process, just like cremation, but in this case with a highly reactive chemical, potassium hydroxide. In the United States, there are some states that have it authorized, but very few. Right now, the other system that could emerge is composting, which has in fact appeared in one German state. So, we have two options, and on a small island, a third, which would be composting. And that's it.

**When we think about burying or cremating a body, we are talking about a tradition that has been maintained over time and hasn't changed. Why do you think we have this need to either cremate or to bury and aren't thinking about third options? Where does this limitation come from?**

**Jordi:** Death is closely linked to the cultural processes of each region. If we compare, for example, the Tibetan Plateau, there's little wood and the ground is very stony. So, could you open a grave there? Yes, it's possible, but it's not easy. Therefore, it is normal that excarnation appeared there, which is to allow oneself to be eaten by birds. Traditionally in Iberian villages 2000 years before Christ, cremation was known to have taken place because urnfields were created. We have archaeological remains of that. And then inhumation? Well, yes. Burying it in the ground is a way of avoiding problems, in this case, odors, which are problems for us. But this smell is fundamental to initiating nature's recycling process, because putrefaction, which repulses us so much, is a super natural process that we actually carry within us. Our bacteria at the end of our intestinal tract live without oxygen. The day we die and we our bodies are deprived of oxygen, the floodgates open, and since they are in their own environment, they start to eat us. And then, since they are not going to be able to do everything, they release these substances that create them, consuming a couple of our amino acids, ornithine and lysine. These substances are very volatile; they are called cadaverine and putrescine. The names aren't exactly imaginative. And that attracts flies, because flies will be the first to intervene in our process. Why flies? Because they have a very fast life cycle. Six, seven, eight days, sometimes. And their larvae—when they say “the worms eat you,” they're actually talking about fly larvae—are very voracious because they have to grow, complete their whole life process in just a few days. And then, a huge number of them appear, and that also becomes a feast for other bugs. In reality, we are an ecosystem. Seeing it firsthand is like, “I'm alive, and one day I'll be eaten by worms.” We bury bodies in the ground, and at least we don't see them. So this is the other possibility that exists right now. And then composting in this case comes about because it's a biotechnology. We've used it for waste, primarily. It is very hygienic, because composting is based on a microbial process that generates a temperature increase of up to 60 degrees Celsius. This kills almost all of the most harmful bacteria or bacteria that are not adapted to withstand those temperatures. That's what makes composting generated with urban waste so effective: it can then be delivered to you as humus for your garden because it is sanitized. Then, this process began to be used in the United States for large-scale livestock deaths, especially cows. When hundreds died, a decision had to be made about what to do with them. Because burying them in a hole or burning them were the only options. Then, composting began to be used. It was observed that within a few weeks, nothing remained but the bones. Then, a group of people also interested in changing funeral processes raised the possibility of doing this with humans. So then, the only problem that arises is the ritual aspect: it's one thing to put a cow in the compost pile, and another to do it with a human. That's the work that Katrina Spade initially did in Washington State. Now, there are 14 states in the United States where it's not only regulated, but where companies are offering it.

**I understand from what you're saying that we obviously want to avoid contact with putrefaction. That is an almost anthropological limitation, but we also have legal limitations. In Spain, what does the law say about burials?**

**Jordi:** Spain is a sociopolitical curiosity. The 1974 Funeral Law, even back when the dictator was still alive, has never been touched. Then the autonomous communities emerged in the 1980s. Based on this 1974 legislation, they began to make small modifications, especially because in 1995 and 1996, Europe liberalized its markets, and the funeral industry followed suit. So, some modifications were made, mainly in this regard. This is the reality of the legal framework. This legal framework is very much geared towards making funerals quick. Here, we are working with what the industry recommends, we make it possible in 24 hours. The law makes it clear that you can

“have the body at home” for 48 hours. From 48 to 72 hours, there must be some process in place to prevent “putrefaction.” Between 72 and 96 hours, thanatopraxia, which is the replacement of fluids and is otherwise known as embalming, must be performed. This is a practice that is standard in the United States. In the United States, environmentalists have problems with embalming, and obviously can avoid it, but it is traditionally accepted by the American people. Here, the issue is about timing. This makes it all the more difficult to think about funeral arrangements, because you have the deceased and then they have already been taken away.

**So legally, there's no way to do natural burials.**

**Jordi:** The law makes it clear that burial must be in permeable soil. So the question is: what about concrete? That brings us to another problem, that is more anthropological, which is the idea that death is toxic. If this were true, all forensic scientists would be dead. There would be no forensic scientists left on Earth's because they all work with the dead and therefore would all be dead. This is not the case, but it is a concept that has been ingrained in us, and it's true that the natural putrefaction process is rather disgusting, from an aesthetic point of view. The body swells, becomes filled with insects, liquefies, gets fatter. It is a very well organized process, and it so organized that forensics can actually determine, just by looking at the body, the exact time of death. Because even if it's been nine or ten days, if a certain insect is present, we know, through the biology of the thanatobiome, what has happened. But in the case of Spain, this led to a law being passed at the end of the 19th century requiring cemeteries to be located outside of urban centers. This model is not universal. For example, here in Barcelona, the first cemetery, Poblenou, was almost two kilometers from the city center. It was a half-hour walk. It was entirely composed of niches, and this is the standard model, but the law doesn't prevent burials in the ground. The problem is that no one dares to bring it up. What happened? With immigration, a significant number of Muslims arrived in Spain, and Islam says “No, we're going straight into the ground in a shroud.” And then here, they said that “in Spain we will say that it is also mandatory, because the law does not say that it is mandatory to use a coffin.” So, each autonomous community has done what it wanted. But in the case of Andalusia, the law makes it clear that in this case, Muslims can be buried directly in the ground with a shrouds and only have to use the coffin for transport. So the question is: Is Andalusia Spain, or are the other autonomous regions not Spain? I don't quite understand. All of this stems from the 1974 law, which no one dares to touch. There was an attempt in 2011, but it stalled. Now we are simply dealing with something called the consensus guide, where supposedly the autonomous communities agree to follow these guidelines that they have all drafted together. And on the other hand, there is the issue of religious law, which is supposed to guarantee that you can perform your ritual according to religious customs or traditions. The thing is: if religious people can, why can't secular people? This is the debate that the association is currently focusing on.

**So basically we are at the beginning of what could become if we achieve a change in legislation.**

**Jordi:** Think about it: in the Western world, cremation took almost a century to be accepted. Cremation in ovens. Now times move faster, but it is true that there are many difficulties of character, tradition, and belief. Think about it: in the case of death, if you, who belong to a certain religion, choose cremation, I say “well, I won't be cremated.” If you bury them in the ground, well, I will bury them in a coffin. It's a way to differentiate oneself. It's not something people talk about, but it is true.

In fact, let's say in the case of the West-- because in the East they were already cremating-- technology was developed, no longer just with woodpiles, but with technology, diesel, electricity, gas. Well, it was very difficult. Why? Because in the Catholic sphere, not long ago, a document had to be issued from the Vatican to say that Catholics must take the ashes to the cemetery. "Okay, we'll let them burn." That was another Vatican document that surfaced in the 60s, until then, it was not allowed. It's this world where, when you start to explain what a funeral home is, people break down, but why do they break? Because their beliefs are very deeply ingrained.

**Ultimately, we're talking about a paradigm shift, that's what we're discussing here today. You mentioned earlier that concrete and wood are toxic. Ecologically speaking, burying in a niche or a coffin is polluting, if I understand correctly.**

**Jordi:** Yes, that needs to be clarified. Concrete is an inert, non-toxic material, but it has a very high ecological footprint. So, for building houses, it's fine, because a house will last for hundreds of years. We are using a material that has a significant ecological footprint, but it's acceptable. For example, a niche for a body that will be there for two or five years, and then will totally disappear, even if you plan to use it for 50 years-- it doesn't make sense. That's on the one hand. In the case of wood, it itself is not toxic, but varnished wood, finished with looms, with the bed inside made with synthetic textiles, especially when burned or buried-- well, in this case we are adding toxins. And to that, in the case of bodies that undergo embalming, we would add another toxin. In fact, right now, for example, in the United Kingdom, in the United States, even in France, they are beginning to see that the areas around some cemeteries are full of toxins. Well, embalming is less common in Spain. It is done, but not for everyone. It's important to clearly state that wood and concrete are not toxic, but the processes we use with them are.

**I think you've clarified that perfectly. Let's now approach the concept of natural burial, which is something we don't think about because it's not part of our collective imagination. What makes a burial natural?**

**Jordi:** For us, natural training has two basic characteristics. The first is that it obviously has to follow or facilitate the process of decomposition that nature would carry out. Because for many years we have nature has been providing us, that is, giving us nutrition and materials that we have used to grow and develop. The logical thing is that one day, we will return this nutrition, and the way to return it is through our own recycling into the Earth. Imagine if the trees dropped their leaves and there was a street sweeper who removed all the leaves. The forest would eventually die. In our case, it's not quite like that with animals, but there is still this concept of returning the body to the earth to nourish other organisms. This is the first idea and therefore, composting facilitates this. And cremation? We aren't providing organic matter, instead, we are converting it into inorganic matter. Inorganic matter doesn't allow anything to take seed. Yes, it can be combined with organic matter and, therefore, enrich it. But if you directly take ashes and plant a seed, it won't grow. Yes, it is true that ash mixed with soil, containing phosphate and calcium, will mineralize over time and enter the nutrient cycle. But cremation itself would not fall under the category of natural burial. Although sometimes people say, "Well, we can bury the ashes in nature." Yes, they can be buried and they will not be toxic and they will do "good" to nature. But this wouldn't exactly be natural burial. The second idea linked to natural burial is that in life, it's good for us to have things for our use, but the moment we cease to exist in our physical body, it doesn't make sense for us to continue occupying spaces

we own. People say, "But we have to remember those who came before us." Well, those who have preceded us can be remembered in a natural space that we create as a memorial space where we could bury them the ground, and where there are no markers indicating whether Pepito or María or whoever is there ; rather, it's a civic space, the space for the community. Natural burial also leads to this dissolution of personality so as not to continue to generate property. This contradicts all beliefs where it is said that on Judgment Day, they have to find us to be able to take us, we have to be identified somewhere. With all due respect, from our perspective, we have fulfilled a certain function in our environment, and on the day that ends, the memory resides in love. That which has no material form, but it is what nourishes us for all eternity.

**This is a very uncapitalist vision, if you think about it in terms of also appropriating our own bodies when we die. I'm thinking about the costs involved in both ways. And the question is: what are the steps of composting the body, what does it cost to do this, how is it done, and what other costs does a natural burial entail?**

**Jordi:** Each country is a different world when it comes to funerary matters, but in the case of Spain, to give a general overview, it is a market with business expectations that exceed those of any other industry. Why do I say that? Because in Spain, we have 7,000 funeral parlors, and the average number of deaths in Spain does not exceed 1,500. I mean, we have a surplus of funeral parlors. Furthermore, we have 530 crematoriums, which represent 300% of our country's cremation capacity. Right now, our average cremation rate in Spain is around 46%. Well, we have capacity for 300%. And we have ten people for every deceased person in the funeral homes. To handle all that, funerals have to be expensive. Imagine you walk into a store and there are ten people advising you on everything. That's the first point: the market has been organized in such a way that it is difficult for it to become cheap. The second point is, can it be done cheaper? Yes, of course. In Spain, the law only requires three things: that the deceased must be transported in a coffin and a casket. In other countries, the law simply says that the dead cannot be visible, so it can be wrapped in a shroud, a sheet, or paper. But in the case of Spain, there must be a coffin. In addition, this coffin must be certified. Apparently, making a box is very complicated, it could break down right in the middle of the ceremony. The second requirement is that the transport of this coffin must also be in a certified vehicle. Because dead people are very dangerous, they must be held inside a container where everything is made of stainless steel and separated from the driver of the car, lest the dead person emerge and strangle the driver. I don't know, that's what I imagine. The third requirement is the process, which is either incineration or cremation, unless the body is donated to science. But in any case, these are the three mandatory requirements. The question is: how much do they cost and how many people are involved? Well, very little. In fact, right now, especially with cremation, there are companies that are offering it for less than €2,000. So you need flowers, you need mementos, you need dresses, you need everything. Okay, well, no. If you're choosing cremation, the law doesn't require you to have an urn. You can go in a can of carrots. I mean, you could be stored in a metal or glass box, or whatever you want-- one of those tins for storing nuts. But of course, socially, it doesn't look good to have just that to say goodbye to a loved one. So we censor ourselves and say yes to everything. The other day I attended a funeral for an important person, and there was a hearse carrying the body full of flowers, and other cars, even empty ones, were also full of flowers. Well, I guess that's fine. I'm not saying anything, but is all that necessary to say goodbye to someone? Flowers that also come with an ecological footprint; most of the ones that arrive in Spain come from Latin America by plane. Floral wreaths come with a whole circle of some kind of

polystyrene foam to keep the flowers moist, which is super toxic. They come tied all together with plastic to hold them in place. So, it's expensive, because, strictly speaking, almost nobody wants what's strictly required. Because what we should do is turn the farewell-- what we call the funeral right now-- into something that's personalized. But no. I always say to a couple, "Hey, wouldn't you like it if you didn't decide anything about your wedding?" And the answer is: "No! We want to decide where we are going to eat, where we want to get married, if it is in church or in a secular place, what clothes we are going to wear, and so on." Well, not in death. On top of that, in Spain it is mixed with another problem that also comes from the dictatorship, which is funeral insurance. That means that there are people who start paying for the funeral practically the moment they are born. I think that right now, about 50% of people have insurance, and when they die, they call the insurance company, and the insurance company assembles a package for them based on the money they've accumulated. And so you say well, since I'm no longer here, I don't have to worry. So, where does the problem with the price begin? In the fact that we don't worry?

**There are so many procedures that we aren't aware of! I understand, then, that natural burial is much simpler and streamlined the whole process; can you tell us what a natural burial would be like?**

**Jordi:** Well, a loved one dies and, as was done before, you keep the body at home and let the closest people in to say goodbye. You have 48 hours to do that. After at 48 hours, you call the funeral home to come. If you are a Christian, you can go to church. It is an intermediate stop; in the case of the church, a small ritual can be performed. Or in the case of a secular ceremony, the body could be taken to a private property where people can go for a small gathering. And then the body goes to the crematorium or to the cemetery. So, it's that simple. If composting were available, well, it would go to be composted, and that covers the cost of the coffin, the transport and the process. And the coffin can be made of simple wood, without any raw materials, or made of cardboard. In Spain, cardboard coffins are authorized, and there are currently two approved models, but they're hardly sold. Because funeral homes aren't interested in cardboard. Because if they tell you that it costs 1500 for a cardboard coffin, it is not believable. But we don't question a wooden coffin. And in the case of Barcelona, for example, there was a time two legislative terms ago when they considered reducing costs and the only option they could think of-- I tried to advise them, but they wouldn't see me-- was to build public funeral homes. I said: public mortuaries for what? There are already funeral homes. In this case they were public, they have also been privatized. But why do you want more funeral homes? Couldn't it be a civic center? "Oh, no, because in a civic center the children are going to see the deceased be carried by, or people who are heading to Zumba." Well, imagine. You go to the civic center to do Zumba, and in another room, people saying goodbye to their loved one. That's what life is, it's life and it's death. And obviously, death has the meaning that it has of pain and of mourning because we are not questioning what life really is. There's a very beautiful scene from the first part of the movie Avatar where they bury someone. And there is a moment when the protagonist, who is actually a human in the avatar of the indigenous people, says "But why do you just put the body in the ground and people simply say goodbye and nothing more? And they say, "We don't do anything else, because this person in life has given us everything he could give us, and now we give him back to nature, and so there is no mourning there." And he says, "Oh, that's another concept."

**So I'm listening to you, and to clarify, not every natural burial means compost.**

**Jordi:** No. All natural burial must be directly in the ground, if possible without a coffin. But, if in the case of the Spanish State, where, I insist, if Arabs and Muslims are buried in an autonomous community, then here, why couldn't it be with a shroud but also directly in the ground? It's that simple. If the composting became legal, then that too would also be considered a natural burial.

**What exactly does composting involve?**

**Jordi:** The only thing it involves is the same as what we would do in the ground. You dig a hole, you put in the body, you cover it and you let nature do its thing. After a while, in this same spot, you could put another body. In composting, we have a container where there is a mixture of plant materials. We submerge the body in this mixture of plant materials and wait two months, and after two months, only the bones are left. What do we do with bones? We crush them and mix them with the humus that has been generated by this composting process with all the material - plant and animal. This mixture is what creates the humus and the bones remain mixed with it. In this case, the calcium phosphate from the bones mixes with the humus that has been created. Thanks to this, and from this point on, this humus is treated the same as ashes. In the case of Germany, it has to be taken to a cemetery, and so, some cemeteries have already designated garden spaces to deposit this humus. Or in the case of the United States, the remains must be placed in natural spaces, which makes more sense, given what we've mentioned earlier: natural burial, whether directly to the ground or through composting, should not be defined by possession; rather, the remains should blend into nature.

**In fact, in the United States there are forests designated for this purpose.**

**Jordi:** Yes.

**And everyone is buried there in some way.**

**Jordi:** At the entrance of the memorial space, perhaps there is a small structure, or statue, or monument with the names of all the people buried there. But not "Where is Maria?" "There." That's a very different concept. In our tradition, on All Saints' Day--and in the West in general--we go to the cemetery and go to the place where Mary is, and that's it. Each family has its place. But if we are also talking about community integration, we can think of the cemetery as a common space to meet with all the ones we have left behind, and not just in a specific place or in our own.

**You know, that's another cultural paradigm we're talking about. There is one question that I've been asking for some time, and it has to do with the level of pollutants that our bodies harbor. All bodies are capable of becoming that humus that then returns to the earth to nourish it. Should we have to go through some kind of human quality certification before becoming compost? I'm thinking about pharmaceutical pollutants, but also environmental ones.**

**Jordi:** The first thing to know is that nature is even capable of eating oil. Microorganisms have capacities that we suspect, but I want to tell you that, generally speaking, at the this is largely unknown to the general public. But there's no problem. From my point of view, as far as I know about microbial processes, for a body "full

of medication,” you take the medications and the body processes them. We have kidneys, we have a liver. This is the case with those medications distributed through the blood. When you take a medication, it’s not a toxin, because if you didn’t take the medication, you would die. It’s an organic product that is transformed into something that supposedly helps a bodily function. Yes, it is true that right now, through urine and feces, we excrete by-products that we can then find in the water. But it’s been shown that these by-products in the soil disappear. ‘Disappear’ means that they are transformed thanks to microbial activity. That’s in the soil. And the same thing happens in composting. And in cremation-- which would not be the case with natural burial-- they volatilize at 800 degrees. You take a banana skin, heat it to 800 degrees and it turns to ash. Nothing remains. Some small volatile compounds are released that will be trapped in the filters. Furthermore, in radioactive oncological therapies, they mainly use products with short half-lives. A person who undergoing radiotherapy is told not to kiss their partner on the mouth, with any exchange of bodily fluids, for a few days, but they aren’t told you can never kiss again. In the past, perhaps this was not the case, but now less aggressive treatments are being used. If the person dies “full” of radioactivity because they have just had radiological treatment, and you bury them in the ground, that radioactivity is already present in the soil, because in fact some natural materials release natural radioactivity. And that’s why, during springtime in England, people open up their houses to air them out. It is precisely to ventilate these materials, which are mainly silicosis, granites, and so on, which release natural radioactivity. Therefore, it means that in small concentrations, nature already has radiation. All this to say we can rest easy, that no certificate is needed for each body. But it is true that the funeral industry started spreading rumors about ashes, saying that they were toxic and that they had to be deposited in special places, that is, in cemeteries, for a fee. There is also this other myth that says that everything is very natural but that we are full of toxins. To this we must answer that, we may be full of toxins, but nature, whether we like it or not, carries toxins because if it didn’t, there would be nothing left. Another thing is that we know the effects of 40,000 chemicals that we release into the environment, and in some cases, they create serious problems, but in others, if given time, nature defends itself-- look at Chernobyl. We need to take all of this with a grain of salt.

**I have a question related to what you are saying, because right now, bodies have to be cleaned when they die, they are sanitized. Why does this happen? Do we need that step? Do we need to wash and clean the deceased?**

**Jordi:** Biologically, no, but ritually, it can be needed. It can even be beautiful. In actuality, you come from work and... well, you probably don’t need a shower. It depends on where you work. For example, in the office, when you get home, you shouldn’t. But, well, a little sweat, and we take a shower. Let’s say that the body is lifeless. Well, ritual washing has an affectionate meaning for the person. For example, when a baby drools, we clean it with love. The drool isn’t going to do you any harm. We could leave it drooling and just wipe it off without love. But we do it with affection. So there you have it. From my point of view, there is this ritual aspect that I do think is good. On the other hand, right now, in the funeral industry, all of that is done with disinfectant products. That’s where I think we’ve gone overboard. And so, these are “semitoxic” products that should not be necessary. There is no need to wash a body with antibacterial detergent or soap. Not at all.

**Or to disinfect the dead person’s room, which I have seen in some cases.**

**Jordi:** Yes It makes sense if you find a body that’s been there for several days and no one has noticed. In that case, it makes sense, because there can be maggots. Because there has been a process of decomposition. So, there are all the people who do what are called judicial “clean-ups.” Murders, people who die alone. It is true that right now, even in Japan, there is the term Kodokushi, which means to die alone. Today, many people die alone because we don’t live in communities. And although they may have families, they don’t call them every day. The person dies and maybe it takes three, four or five days to notice. So, yes, then you really have to do some clean-up. It’s also true that some diseases are classified as such in the law. They’re very rare. In those cases, even the body has to undergo a special process, which is not the normal funeral process. But we are talking about very, very, very specific and special cases.

**You have a book, Jordi, “Simplicity and Art in Dying” from 2021, where you emphasize of the importance of planning funeral ceremonies, just as we plan baptisms and weddings; we should plan our end. But you also offer a very informed critique of the rush to dispose of those bodies. Can you explain this rush? Where does this rush to dispose of these bodies come from?**

**Jordi:** If we were to base our argument on sociological speculation, we could say that Spain is a hot country, not like India, but hot nonetheless. And that, therefore, natural processes of decomposition can start from the moment we die, but they also develop a little faster. So, the idea is to get rid of the dead body. But for me, it has another meaning, and that’s why I criticize it. And it’s because death, if it’s due to a long illness, we can get a certain idea that it was coming. But it’s also true that medicine is always telling us “Yes, but wait, because we’re going to achieve this, we’re going to do this, we’re going to do this,” and it always seems that death will never come. But it does. So these two things leave us bewildered. And this bewilderment is what funeral companies take advantage of. If you compare, for example, funerals in Spain or France-- I say France because they are our neighbors-- in other countries, it takes longer, at least six or seven days. Okay, a loved one dies. What needs to be done? The funeral home takes it and stores it, or if you want to keep it at home, they bring you dry ice. They bring it to slow down the putrefaction process. And what does that do? That allows you to think. Who do you want to call? Where do you want to hold the ceremony? How do you want to do it? What texts or songs are will you use? All of this makes it easier to empower people regarding the farewell. Because there is time. In the case of Spain, there is no time because it’s all done so fast. You die on a Friday afternoon, on Saturday they take you to the funeral home, and on Sunday at one o’clock in the church or in the funeral home itself, for the secular or religious ceremony, and then off to the crematorium. You practically have to be a demigod to think, to have the texts ready, what you would like to say to the person who has passed. So, to avoid all that, in our country, the key is to have thought it through. In fact, I have a little box. It says “in case of death.” I keep it at home, and everything is there. Everything planned. And not only that, but all the passwords and everything so that whoever finds it-- well, obviously, in principle it will be a family member-- can cancel all the services, bank accounts, everything, everything. In the case of Spain, this rush creates very complex situations not only from an emotional point of view, but also from a pragmatic one. And all that becomes even more complicated in the case of a judicial death. That means an autopsy.

**We're thinking about the end, in a country where these issues are rarely considered. But we already have a living will that we can create. Does the legal docum include the option of natural burial?**

**Jordi:** Let's see, the first thing to clarify is that humans are experts in making oxymorons and changing the meaning of words. A living will is a document that stems from patient's rights law and is intended to avoid therapeutic cruelty. Because there was a time when they wouldn't let you die, even if you were in a vegetative state. Sometimes someone is dying, and in an attempt to save them, they end up in a vegetative state. They are alive, but in what way? So, to avoid that, the living will was created. It is true that in that case, you are unconscious. In others, you might become paraplegic, remain conscious and still be able to speak, and you can ask that your wishes be respected. The living will, therefore, has a representative, who would be the person to mediate if they did not want to listen. And yes, it is true that currently, in most autonomous communities, the living well allows you to specify your preferred burial method, that is, internment or cremation. Why is that? This must be explained as well. Because there's collusion between funeral homes and hospitals, where the funeral homes are already embedded within the hospital system. Which funeral homes? Those in the area. But isn't the market supposed to be liberalized? Yes, but where there's a will, there's a way. Living wills have now allowed for this. Why? Because that way the funeral home knows if the body should be cremated or buried. But this document is a strictly health-related document. Right now, there is no legal document to guarantee that your funeral ceremony is in accordance with your wishes, partly because no one has defined it. Such a process doesn't exist. And what about a will for property, a notarized will? These aren't opened until 15 days after death, so there can't be anything there about your funeral. So the only possibility is that you have a personal document that you share with family and that they accept. Because sometimes in a family, your spouse doesn't think like you, or your children, or so on. It depends on the love and respect that already exists. But this practice is not being done. It's true that here in Spain right now there are some initiatives by people who are drawing attention to this. For example, there's a lady who has published a file called "More of Me," another who made a booklet called "Sayonara." Another is working on a project to help people create their own ceremony. Everything is very incipient, but ideally, people should to define this aspect of death and not to assume that their living will will be respected, because the living will is exclusively a health document.

**And from everything you've told us, even if I were to say all this in my living will and only give it to my family, the law limits many of the things I would want to do with my body at the end of my life.**

**Jordi:** It depends. If you say you want to be composted and the law doesn't allow it, then there's no possibility there.

**To wrap things up, Jordi, I am thinking about the association's core objectives. They can be summarized in four principles, which you explain very well on the website: 1) the regulation and legalization of natural burials and composting of bodies, 2) promoting and disseminating the need for ecological and natural burials in Spain, 3) promoting natural spaces and facilities in cemeteries for human composting and burial natural, and 4) normalizing this more natural and ecological form of burial. What cultural, legal, social and bureaucratic obstacles do we have to solve as a society so that these five principles can be democratized?**

**Jordi:** Essentially, only one thing needs to change. And that is to start losing our fear of death. The moment we do this, and at a family dinner you could say what music you want when you die or how you want to say goodbye, that would change everything. Because in reality, if we think about other processes of cultural change, they always start from the bottom up. Always. Then, more or less quickly, from the top, they end up signing off. But it starts at the bottom. People aren't complaining about anything. And when funeral homes ask people, "What did you think?" people say it's all good. And then the funeral homes say, "We have the highest satisfaction rating of any business." But imagine that you are a huge Elton John fan. And you want a farewell with one of his songs. And the funeral home tells you it would be better a to have a three or four person band, so that it's not too expensive. Well, the singer is an opera expert and ends up singing the Elton John song in opera format. I mean, if I were the dead one, I'd get up and leave the ceremony. This is an insult. Logically, we then must question the legal system. In the case of the Spanish State, we have to say, "Ladies and gentlemen, 1974 is a little outdated." And the next thing is to point out that if certain exceptions are allowed out of respect for religious freedom, then, we must also be given the go-ahead for ecological reasons. That also must be done. And the third thing is that we should look for those funeral homes or processes that bypass the current protocol and co-organize with them. For example, you could keep the coffin at home if it's certified, because the law simply says that the funeral home must be able to supply it, it doesn't say that only the funeral home can supply it. So, if it's just the coffin, the transport, and the process, that gives you leeway to do what you want from a ritual point of view. I think these three things are among the most important.

**And as part of this plan for a cultural paradigm shift, I know that you have a website called funeralnatural.net, where you have films and readings. In some way, you are contributing to social education from this website to support that paradigm shift. Can you tell us a little bit about this website and how you maintain it?**

**Jordi:** This website was launched in 2018 and is a total passion of mine. Right now, even I barely know what's on it anymore. There are almost 300 articles alone, and you can't read them in two minutes, not even close. And then there are film and book reviews. Honestly, that's the way it is. It is the only website in Spain, in Castillian, that has this depth, covering all topics related to death except grief. There are a few articles on grief because that is another aspect. And I maintain that grief is the result of not having accepted death. And we have not accepted death because we have not understood life. But hey, that's a little "politically incorrect," because there are a lot of professionals dedicate themselves to this topic and make a living from it. Which I think is great. But if we analyze the issue, for me this is it. Death scares us because we don't understand life, and when someone passes away, we're reduced to dust. The one who should be reduced to dust is the one who has died. We don't even let him turn to dust. But grief is an added consequence to this incomprehension of this duality. It is life and death.

**And that, in any case, perhaps grief should be an opportunity to rethink the meaning of life. Not to lament the loss of someone who has already left us a legacy that we sometimes fail to recognize. How do you see your participation in educational environments, Jordi? Do you talk about all this at the university? Are there any courses where biologists and future traumatologists are taught about natural burial? Should we be teaching this in schools?**

**Jordi:** I've never been a professor at university; I completed my degree, but I've never been involved in academia. I was involved a bit in the field of environmental education at one point, and that's what, as I said, I started to promote around 2005. It is true that in some elementary schools, there are teachers who address these topics. There is quite a bit of interesting literature on the subject of death. Right now, I'm thinking of a book by a German author called "Pushing Daisies," where she explains it very well. But it is also true that death remains the great stronghold of beliefs. Addressing death means touching something that, right now, the establishment doesn't want to touch. And let's remember that death, like birth, used to be considered completely "natural." We have denatured them. So much so that most women are afraid of giving birth, even though their bodies are perfectly designed to do so. And that when a woman is truly empowered, not just in her mind, a child is born healthy. Well, of course there are the typical complications of a malformation, and so on, because nature makes mistakes. And we have done the same thing with death. We have medicalized both, we have pharmacologized them. And that's a serious mistake, because both the process of dying and processes of death are biologically very well-organized. When a person is dying, they obviously sees things from another dimension, and we say, "I think he's having hallucinations." "Don't worry, we'll increase their dose of anti-anxiety medication or whatever." No. This person is going to experience this as part of their process. Therefore, let's not prevent it. What about the people we find at home, who are dying? They're suffocating. Well, don't give them oxygen. They're dying. Leave them alone. You can help, reduce seizures, if you want, and so on, if the person wants it. Because maybe the person wants to live. It's like giving birth. There's a certain amount of pain. But I want to experience it. It's part of life. And we have misplaced that concept

**What is your opinion on euthanasia, Jordi? Because I'm listening to you talk and it seems like you're advocating for the body to take its course, for nature to take its course until the end of life.**

**Jordi:** Of course, in that sense, we could say that one dies as one lives. There's a bit of everything. Some people die suddenly, and that leaves those left behind quite devastated because it's so hard. But there are also cases of very long illnesses with deep emotional histories, which can lead to a lot of pain or even be completely debilitating. So, in those cases, we shouldn't have to wait until the very end, from my point of view. There's no need to wait for someone to suffocate because they can no longer eat or move. You can probably say goodbye better when they still have some clarity of mind and can say goodbye. And in that case, euthanasia plays a very important role for me. In this sense, I am a defender of euthanasia, even suicide, because when a person reaches a point when they see no way out of their suffering, it doesn't make sense for them to end it in a traumatic way.

**In any case, we are talking about a very personal decision that each person would have to make. But if we had different cultural conditions, we could make them in a more informed and clear-headed way.**

**Jordi:** And above all, without causing harm. When someone throws themselves onto a train track, they die, but behind them is a train driver who will suffer for the rest of their life. So this person, perhaps in this case, could have had the opportunity to die in a "more loving" way. But it is true that we are very attached not to life, but to the material things life gives us. Ideally, we shouldn't be attached to a person's body, but to the love or to the bonds that have been created. And when that person is

gone, the bonds remain. The body is gone, but the bonds continue. So, if this is true, we are facing a paradigm shift that's like an iceberg; we're just touching the tip.

**Indeed. To conclude, two questions that I am asking all the stars in this constellation. The first is a rather personal question. What drives you every day to continue fighting for a natural burial, affordable and open to anyone, despite all the systemic obstacles? What encourages you to make this fight your daily life?**

**Jordi:** More than natural burial, my obsession-- and this has to do with my upbringing or sensibilities-- is to make people understand that life and death go hand in hand. They are not separable. And that what we celebrate in life, when there is no body, must also be celebrated. And that if I'm eating organic food here, I cannot end up in an anti-ecological process. I got here by bike and I am leaving in a Mercedes? Please. It's an insult. So this is my passion.

**And the last question. The constellation is a promising horizon of good news. Can you bring us any good news from this association that you'd like to share?**

**Jordi:** For me, this whole little adventure, let's say, with the association began almost three years ago, and interest is beginning to grow. I'm participating in a training that takes place here in Spain for death doulas. It's only a couple of hours, but I want to tell you that there are starting to be people who are concerned about end-of-life care and want to help. And the fact that in Germany by 2025, natural burial will be authorized. And that I am starting to see this small movement at European level of organizations that promote natural burial with composting included, seems like very good news to me. It's still in its early stages, but here we are.

**As a professional who accompanies others through their transitions, I want to thank you for the interview and for the work you do. I find it incredible.**

**Jordi:** Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

**Thank you very much.**

