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Mourning in Bits and Stone

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Mourning in bits and stone: Understanding the materiality, spatiality and temporality of digitally augmented memorial sites.

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We mourn our dead, publicly and privately, online and offline. Cemeteries, web memorials and social network sites make up parts of today's intricately weaved and interrelated network of death, grief and memorialization practices [1]–[5]. Whether cut in stone or made of bits, graves, cemeteries, memorials, monuments, websites and social networking services (SNS) all are alterable, controllable and adaptive. They represent a certain rationale contrary to the emotive state of mourning (e.g. gravesites function as both spaces of internment and places of spiritual and emotional recollection).

Following this theoretical offset the study proposes an alternative and nuanced discourse on the interplay of novel media technologies in relation to their perceived impact on materiality/rationality and incorporeal/emotional states in mourning and remembrance processes. We argue that novel media technologies bridge the divide between 'states of rationale' and 'states of sentiment' and augment the loop of exchanges between the two. We switch interdependently between these states by a seemingly coincidental structure, when subjected to involuntary memories or episodic reminders afforded by trigger parameters such as space, artifacts, situations or sensuous representations.

In this paper we build upon present research on grief-work and propose a methodological contribution to the study of progressions of digital mourning and remembrance practices [6]–[8]. We present a generalized structure of online mourning and memorialization by discussing the publicly and privately digital and social death from a spatial, temporal, physical and digital angle. Further the paper will reflect on how to encompass shifting trends and technologies in 'traditional' spaces of mourning and remembrance.

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Kind regards

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