

# Third Virtual Colloquium

15<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Note that all timings below are in GMT. You should have received an invitation for all the sessions you have signed up for. Arrive at your session promptly, and make sure that all microphones are turned to silent. Where there is time for questions and comments, please raise your hand, and the chair will invite you to ask your question. There are 30-minute breaks between each session. *Speakers should ensure that the timetable will be strictly adhered to. If you would like to receive questions and comments, please aim to speak for 20 minutes.*

## TIMETABLE

| <i>Session 1: 8:00-10:00</i> |       |   |
|------------------------------|-------|---|
| 08:00                        | 08:15 | <b>Julie Rugg, University of York, UK</b><br><i>Open: welcome comments</i>  |
| 08:15                        | 08:45 | <b>Craig Atkins, University of Queensland, Australia</b><br><i>Defying the tyranny of distance: imported memorials in Australia's Victorian cemeteries</i>    |
| 08:45                        | 09:15 | <b>Fredrik Berg, University of Oslo, Norway</b><br><i>Monumentum mortis : the unavoidable search for national crematoria architecture in Norway 1898-1906</i> |
| 09:15                        | 10:00 | PLENARY<br><b>Andrew Kipnis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong</b><br><i>Ghosts, urbanization and strangers in China and Hong Kong</i>                      |

| <i>Session 2: 10:30-12:30</i> |       |  |
|-------------------------------|-------|--|
| 10:30                         | 11:00 | <b>Vishwambhar Nath Prajapati, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India</b><br><i>Intersection between death, belief and dead disposition technologies in India and China</i>   |
| 11:00                         | 11:30 | <b>Sandeep Viswanath, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, India</b><br><i>Generation matter: Bangalore's Hindu Burial Ground then and now</i>  |
| 11:30                         | 12:00 | <b>Agnieszka Wedeł-Domaradzka, Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz/Institute of Justice, Poland</b><br><i>Cemeteries and war graves in the light of international and national law and practice - the experience of Poland and neighbouring countries</i> |
| 12:00                         | 12:30 | <b>Valérie Madoka Naito, Independent Scholar, Germany</b><br><i>The Making Of GOING TO ÚSTÍ, or how to make a documentary art film about a cemetery</i>  |

| Session 3: 13:00-15:00 |       |   |
|------------------------|-------|---|
| 13:00                  | 13:30 | <b>Ann Tandy-Treiber, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Minnesota, United States</b><br><i>Dickens' dead men tell no tales, but they might show you your future: cemeteries, burial practices, and the transformation of London and its characters</i> |
| 13:30                  | 14:00 | <b>Jennifer Ford, University of Mississippi Libraries, United States</b><br><i>'The very garden of death': the confluence of Mississippi's 1878 yellow fever epidemic, oral history, and the 'science' of cemetery mapping</i>                            |
| 14:00                  | 14:30 | <b>Emily Kelso, Independent Scholar, United Kingdom</b><br><i>Forget me not? Inequalities in 19th-century commemoration practices in York Cemetery</i>  |
| 14:30                  | 15:00 | <b>Bailey Palamar, McMaster University, Canada</b><br><i>The absent elderly? Monumental commemoration rates in Cambridgeshire cemeteries, 1845-1925</i>   |

| Session 4: 15:30-17:45 |       |   |
|------------------------|-------|---|
| 15:30                  | 16:00 | <b>Michelangelo Giampaoli, DePaul University, Chicago, United States</b><br><i>Neofascism in cemeteries: among the dead, thinking of yesterday, without a tomorrow</i>                    |
| 16:00                  | 16:30 | <b>Josie Wall, Caring for God's Acre, United Kingdom</b><br><i>Our Digital Ancestors: English churchyards go online</i>   |
| 16:30                  | 17:00 | <b>Ágnes Sallay, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Gödöllő, Hungary</b><br><i>Multi-functional use of cemeteries based on information from websites and managers</i> |
| 17:00                  | 17:30 | <b>Tamara Ingels, Independent Scholar, Belgium</b><br><i>The intergenerational dialogue as a new approach to cemetery management development</i>  |
| 17:30                  | 17:45 | <b>Julie Rugg, University of York, United Kingdom</b><br><i>Close: Final comments</i>   |

## ABSTRACTS

### Session 1: 08:00-10:30

#### **Craig Atkins, University of Queensland, Australia**

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#### *Defying the tyranny of distance: imported memorials in Australia's Victorian cemeteries*

Since colonisation, Australia's distance from perceived centres of European culture has been a defining feature of its local, national and international identity. Blainey comprehensively challenged the impact of Australia's liminal position in the 1960s, and this misconception is still being readdressed. Studies demonstrate substantial cultural and material exchanges between Europe and colonial Australia. One understudied exchange is the transference of burial preferences, funeral customs, and funeral markers. Consequently, this paper draws on an ongoing project to present a brief history of the material and cultural exchange of memorial designs and structures between Britain and Australia during the Victorian period. The paper contextualises the prevalence of ad hoc burial and commemoration at the colony's inception before identifying how the colonists replicated traditional memorial markers and picturesque churchyard models. Colonists imported expansive pattern books, with this cultural exchange leading to diverse memorials reflecting emerging

European styles. As the colonial media and society labelled local stone inferior, masons responded by importing European stone for projects, accelerating material exchanges. Driven by their aspirations and connections, expatriate officials imported increasingly elaborate and costly memorials. The paper concludes by examining the Gothic Revival monument to Governor Sir Charles Hotham erected in the Melbourne General Cemetery in 1857. With the backing of parliament, his widow, Jane, commissioned Sir George Gilbert Scott to design the memorial. The structure was sculpted in London by John Birney Philip from Scottish granites. Hotham's memorial captures the ongoing material and cultural exchange to the colony, validating that distance did not impede development.

**Fredrik Berg, University of Oslo, Norway**

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*Monumentum Mortis : the unavoidable search for national crematoria architecture in Norway 1898-1906*

The Norwegian Cremation Society celebrated the legalization of cremation as a facultative practice in Norway in 1898. This milestone was followed by an architectural competition in 1906, commissioned by the Society to find a suitable design for the country's first purpose-built crematorium. Leaning on experiences from its international peers, the Society recognized the need for a balanced architectural expression that merged the vague concepts of appropriateness, modernity and tradition. This was essential in order to have the crematorium gain agency on its own and garner support for a changed view on death and funerals. Architect Oscar Hoff eventually ended up winning the competition with his peculiar entry "Monumentum Mortis". While that project, completed in its first stage in 1909, is a familiar historic building today, it alone offers little insight into the diverse preconceptions and expectations that contemporary society had on crematoria architecture. In this paper I wish to nuance our understanding of that and deliberate on why 'Monumentum Mortis' won, by exploring the events preceding the completion of the building, revisit the architectural competition, its numerous and diverse entries, many of which showed significant international influence, as well as discussing the immediate reception of the competition's results in the professional and public discourse. The paper, which is based on preliminary findings from my ongoing PhD research on the architecture of Norwegian crematoria, draws from international scholarship, archival studies of the Norwegian Cremation Society, and analyses of various contemporary professional journals and newspapers.

PLENARY

**Andrew Kipnis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR**

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*Ghosts, Urbanization and Strangers in China and Hong Kong*

Belief in ghosts is often thought of as a relic of the past—an outmoded belief linked to the traditional cultures of rural China. But ghost stories are commonplace in Hong Kong and other large Chinese cities and evidence of the fear of ghosts can be found in the ways that modern urban people treat death, funeral homes, and cemeteries. This talk analyses belief in ghosts as a facet of modern, urban living. I suggest that traditional Chinese beliefs about ghosts have transformed rather than diminished as China has urbanized, and that modern urbanites may harbour more fear of ghosts than anyone did in the past.

Session 2: 10:30-12:30

**Vishwambhar Nath Prajapati, Udit Narayan P G College Padrauna-Kushinagar, Padrauna, India**  
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*Intersection between death, belief and dead disposition technologies in India and China*

The emergence of new disposition technologies such as electric cremation, CNG-based cremation, biomass-based gasifier cremation, and improved wood crematoria (IWC) have opened a new area of death and technology in India. However, in the contemporary science, technology, societies (STS) literature intersection between death, belief and technology is less explored. The socio-political, cultural and economic structure is different in both the countries, India and China. The Confucian belief influences traditional China while, Hindu belief influences disposition technologies in India. It will be fascinating to see the changes in both countries in the methods of disposal of the dead. Traditional Chinese belief encourages burial contrary to conventional Hindu belief which promotes cremation. However, in contemporary China, cremation is also widely practiced in urban regions. In China, with a change in political structure in 1949 the political belief replaced the many of the values and customs of Confucianism. The political ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has impacted the old traditions and culture. In India, there was no radical change in socio-political structure. In India, the first electric cremation was established in 1960 in Kolkata. In China, cremation and green burial are also practiced as a form of disposal of the dead. This paper examines the role of political and religious belief in shaping dead disposition technologies. This study is based on an extensive literature review and insights from my fieldwork in India. We have taken the social and cultural shaping of technology framework to study the contemporary disposition technologies to illustrate the intersection between death, belief and technology.

**Sandeep Viswanath, Indian Institute of Human Settlements, India**

*Generation Matter: Bangalore's Hindu Burial Ground then and now*  
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Someone dies in eastern Bangalore and happens to be Hindu, invariably Sowri Raja gets a call. Sowri Raja is the seventh-generation grave digger working and "living" in the Kalpalli Hindu burial ground. There has been an upgrade in the graveyard two decades ago. The city municipality has developed a high-tech crematorium which is managed by Sowri Raja's brother Kutti. The front office of the cemetery is handled by Sathya, Sowri Raja's daughter. Does it sound like a case of nepotism? In India we call it caste occupation. The concept of caste has been prevalent in India for more than 2500 years. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, examines the concept of endogamy and mechanism in the Indian caste system in his seminal work, *The Annihilation of Caste*. Ambedkar argues that endogamy is one of the most significant practices of the caste system in India. (Ambedkar, 2014). The paper elaborates from my doctoral thesis on Hindu Burial ground of Bangalore, looking at the intersection of caste, labour and society. The objective of the research:

- To trace the life trajectories of the gravediggers in the Hindu crematoriums and burial grounds of Bangalore;
- To understand the role of social institutions of caste, class, gender and religion in the Hindu Crematoriums and burial grounds of Bangalore; and
- To explain the historically inherited socio-economic conditions and issues of the workforce engaged in the burial sites of Bangalore.

Ambedkar, B. R. and Anand, S. (eds) (2014) *The Annihilation of Caste: Annotated Critical Edition*, Verso.

**Agnieszka Wedeł-Domaradzka, Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz/Institute of Justice, Poland**

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*Cemeteries and war graves in the light of international and national law and practice - the experience of Poland and neighbouring countries*

Europe has been the arena for various armed conflicts over the centuries, including two called world wars. As a consequence of these armed conflicts, it was and is also the place where we are confronted with the location of many war cemeteries and individual and mass graves. These places are the burial grounds for the country's citizens on whose territory they are located, the citizens of allied countries, and the citizens of those countries with which the armed conflict took place. The aim is to present and evaluate the regulations of international law (multilateral agreements and bilateral agreements) that relate to the location, ensuring respect and care of cemeteries and graves left after armed conflicts. The analysis will cover Poland's legal regulations and practical experience as an example of a country with several thousand sites of this type, especially near the border with Ukraine and Slovakia. The regulations of internal law will be indicated, as well as examples of actions taken to maintain and adequately secure cemetery areas and grave sites. The regulations presented will also be assessed in the context of the new challenges faced by the law of armed conflict. The extent to which the solutions developed previously, and their application are adequate and possible solutions proposed to optimise protection will also be analysed.

**Valérie Madoka Naito, Independent Scholar, Germany**

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*The Making Of GOING TO ÚSTÍ, or how to make a documentary art film about a cemetery*

The Dresden artist Susan Donath has been dealing with sepulchral culture for many years. In the summer of 2024 Donath was accompanied cinematically on her artproject of grave maintenance in Ústí nad Labem in the Czech Republic. The 30' documentary shows Donath maintaining the German-Czech grave of Lehmann and Ruzička. Donath can be heard off-screen talking about how she came to care for the grave, her motives and what her dream for the future is. Donath's art project has been running since 2008 and is unlimited in time. By presenting the Making Of GOING TO ÚSTÍ the audience will not only learn of the necessities of making a low budget documentary film but also gain insight to what ingredients are necessary to create a film that is also fun to watch. <https://www.susandonath.com/> [www.naito.eu](http://www.naito.eu)

For documentary film artist Valérie Madoka Naito, cemeteries are part of life - an experience that come from childhood cemetery walks with her grandmother. Since then she has always taken a special interest in exploring Remembrance Culture and cemeteries in particular through film. Her first cemetery film premiered on DOK LEIPZIG in 2011. Naito is a documentary film artist as well as an architect for climate-positive building with straw, based in Dresden, Germany.

Session 3: 13:00-15:00

**Ann Tandy-Treiber, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Minnesota, United States**

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*Dickens' dead men tell no tales, but they might show you your future: cemeteries, burial practices, and the transformation of London and its characters*

An analysis of Victorian cemeteries as intersections of past, present, and future, both in actual urban landscapes and in the novels of Charles Dickens. Highgate and the other garden cemeteries of the Victorian era were one of the responses to changes in life in London: the solutions the garden cemeteries offered borrowed from the latest cultural sensitivities and scientific knowledge and technologies. Charles Dickens, as a resident and writer of London, was familiar with the problems posed by the older urban cemeteries, and uses scenes set in such not to point to the past but to dramatize a release or escape from it in order to move forward into a new future. Characters such as Pip, Scrooge, and Esther Summerson experience transformative moments at gravesites that lead them, either immediately or eventually, to radically new understandings of their pasts and, more importantly, the futures that lie ahead of them, just as the shift from overcrowded urban cemeteries to pleasant garden cemeteries helped transform London itself. I will use contemporary writings about the changes in burial practices as well as Dickens' own creative musings on the subject to establish historical context, and I will draw on current work in death studies to show the cultural and psychological impact of burial practices on individual and social experience.

**Jennifer Ford, University of Mississippi Libraries, United States**

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*The very garden of death': the confluence of Mississippi's 1878 yellow fever epidemic, oral history, and the 'science' of cemetery mapping*

In September 1878, William Holland, the only remaining original member of the Holly Springs, Mississippi Yellow Fever Relief Committee, described the presence of the plague in his small town as, 'living in the midst of the very garden of death'. According to available sources, this epidemic, which relentlessly swept across the state, claimed over four thousand citizens in five months, with the total number of cases exceeding sixteen thousand individuals. Although the pestilence was well-known in the region, the 1878 outbreak differed, as it took several previously 'healthy' Northern Mississippi cities by surprise, decimating their populations. These late nineteenth century 'Bad Deaths' were disturbing to a state reeling from the horrors of enslavement, the violence of the American Civil War, as well as the onset of the brutal 'Jim Crow' period. The memory of the 1878 chaos assumed an almost mythological quality over time, including narratives of horrifying burial scenes with decomposing corpses exposed, shallow graves unearthed, and 'disease-ridden' cemeteries filled to capacity. Tales of yellow fever mass/trench burial in previously 'ordered' cemeteries also endured over the decades. However, a few affected North Mississippi cemeteries were lately mapped using Ground Penetrating Radar, with results often appearing to be inconsistent with the oral record. This paper will address three such cemeteries, including those in Holly Springs, Batesville, and Grenada. The work will postulate various reasons for the reliance upon local legend, as well as the frequently unacknowledged endurance of 'Good Death' burials, even in the midst of the yellow fever disaster.

**Emily Kelso, Independent Scholar**

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*Forget me not? Inequalities in 19th-century commemoration practices in York Cemetery*

It is well-established that the majority of the dead were not commemorated, as supported by studies including the University of Leicester Graveyards Group (2012). The use of funerary monuments to mark graves and commemorate the dead gradually increased across the 18th and 19th centuries – but some of the deceased were better remembered than others. This paper posits we re-examine funerary monuments with a more critical eye and examine the inequalities present in their prose (or lack thereof). It shall be demonstrated that several variables contributed towards whether a person was better commemorated than another, or even commemorated at all. This paper derives from research undertaken for a Masters dissertation investigating the functions of 19th-century funerary monuments erected within York Cemetery. The discussion considers the visibility of such monuments, and the efforts some bereaved took to heighten the profile of their monuments. The order in which individuals are commemorated on these monuments is also very telling of who those monuments were primarily erected for. The discussion concludes by juxtaposing the commemorated and buried populations to understand if monuments accurately convey the buried reality of burial spaces and explore why they may not do so. These results have broader implications for what we consider the purpose of funerary monuments to be, and the function(s) they serve within cemeteries. The results also suggest we should consider funerary monuments in a new light, since this paper will demonstrate to be buried beneath a monument was no guarantee of commemoration.

**Bailey Palamar, McMaster University, Canada**

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*The absent elderly? Monumental commemoration rates in Cambridgeshire cemeteries, 1845-1925*

I examine trends in the commemoration of older adults over the age of 70 by analysing monumental commemoration rates in Cambridgeshire cemeteries from the period 1845-1925. With full access to a database of nearly 80,000 graves, an initial observation showed a lower rate of commemoration for the elderly compared to younger adults. Through historical documentation and basic summary statistics in SPSS, I investigate three hypotheses to attempt to explain these differential commemoration rates: a lack of psychological attachment to the elderly, a lack of financial resources to pay for a gravestone for the elderly, and the loss of a spouse who may have been expected to undertake the purchase of a monument for an elderly person. Further analyses have shown that lower commemoration rates for the elderly occur exclusively in the middle class, refuting these existing hypotheses and opening the door to new ones. Additionally, the decades 1866-1875, 1886-1895, and 1916-1925 have greater differential commemoration rates between the elderly and younger adults. I conclude by discussing some exciting possibilities, such as emulation and historical factors, that may explain this middle-class phenomenon.



**Michelangelo Giampaoli, DePaul University, Chicago, United States**

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*Neofascism in cemeteries: among the dead, thinking of yesterday, without a tomorrow*

As George Orwell already warned in the 1940s, 'fascism' is one the most used and misused - and least studied – words in the recent history of humanity; however, in no other country except Italy it can still make some sense. Vanished from History with the death of its founder, Benito Mussolini, and basically removed from the Italian political scene after the disappearance of the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) in 1995, fascism nevertheless continues to exercise a fascination in small groups which, from time to time, define themselves as neo-fascists, post-fascists, or even non-fascists. Given that Italian laws make any post-fascist demonstration or rally difficult – but not impossible – these more or less organized groups have learned that cemeteries can be safe and evocative spaces for celebration and commemoration, and places where they can gather in front of the only thing History has left of the men who created and led fascism: their tombs. So, the Mussolini family's mausoleum in Predappio, the tombs of fascist leaders in other Italian cemeteries and, above all, an entire sector of the Cimitero Maggiore in Milan, have become the stages where people of all ages and origins celebrate a past they didn't live through, in a present who does not accept them, and - perhaps - without thinking too much about the future.

**Josie Wall, Caring for God's Acre, United Kingdom**

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*Our Digital Ancestors: English churchyards go online*

The Church of England have embarked on the largest systematic churchyard mapping project ever attempted. The CofE are working with surveying company AG Intl to produce digital maps of all their churchyards (approximately 17,5000 sites) showing the location of churchyard features, all extant monuments, and incorporating data from births, marriages and deaths registers. When completed these maps will be freely available online through the Church Heritage Record and open a wealth of new research avenues. Caring for God's Acre have funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England to run a programme of public engagement alongside the mapping, to teach local people to use their maps and to crowdsource data to enrich the record. The aim is to bring social history and built heritage to life in the heart of every parish. This paper showcases the mapping tools and how they might be used for research and public engagement. It will discuss the challenges so far and outlines our plans for the next 3 years of the 'Our Digital Ancestors' project.

**Ágnes Sallay, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Gödöllő, Hungary**

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*Multi-functional use of cemeteries based on information from websites and managers*

The functions and tasks of cemeteries, especially urban cemeteries, have changed fundamentally in recent decades. In addition to the former almost exclusive functions of burial, memorialisation and cultural history, functions linked to the relatively large green areas of urban park cemeteries have been developed, and city dwellers have started to use cemeteries in a similar way to parks (see recreational and tourist use), which has also had an impact on the operation of cemeteries. In our previous research, we found that the primary function of cemeteries (resting place of the dead,



memorial site) has not changed, but that secondary (green infrastructure, climate protection, cultural heritage protection) and tertiary (education, tourism, recreation, community building) functions have emerged. During our research, we typically have looked at the websites of ASCE member cemeteries in Europe in terms of multifunctional use, and experienced that the information content of each cemetery website differs significantly. In this phase of our research, we contacted several European cemetery operators to complete our questionnaire more detailed regarding multifunctional use. As a result of the completion of the questionnaire, we were able to compare the content of the websites and the information contained in the questionnaire for several cemeteries. By comparing the two research results, we could draw conclusions about the extent to which the operation of the cemeteries is reflected in their websites and the extent to which their website helps to inform the users of the cemeteries about its multifunctional use.

**Tamara Ingels, Independent Scholar, Belgium**

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*The intergenerational dialogue as a new approach to cemetery management development*

Dr Tamara Ingels will bring new and innovative insights on the role, interpretation and possibilities of intergenerational dialogue within our death care and managing (historic) cemeteries. Starting from her own practice as a cemetery consultant and cemetery guide/docent, she developed a set of practical techniques and educational ideas. These focus on an adequate methodology for the intergenerational dialogue in a cemetery context and on the impact of this method on lifelong learning strategies within these unique places. She widens the discussion on the intergenerational dialogue towards possible roles of this methodology within heritage care, landscape care, (super)diversity policy strategies and services given at the office counters of cemeteries and undertakers. She concludes that the intergenerational dialogue is an essential tool for the development of customised cemetery management strategies on education, environmental sustainability, landscape design and remembrance in the future. This places her ideas perfect within the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. Her new approach will be included in a new book 'Memento Mori III – The sustainable cemetery', which she developed with co-project leader Joeri Mertens over the last 1.5 years. In the third volume of the Memento Mori book series, a team of no less than 19 national and international authors have been working together on themes related to sustainability.