

IN MEMORIAM

In Memoriam – Community Care Through Dignified Death Detection

Media Kit – Project Q&A

www.in-memoriam.site

What is In Memoriam?

In Memoriam is a discreet two-part detection system that quietly signals when someone may have died in solitude, using smell, not surveillance. The system doesn't notify authorities directly. Instead, it activates a discreet signal – like a shared entrance lamp – to alert a trusted contact. This might be a neighbor, building manager, caregiver, or simply someone the resident assigns. The system creates a quiet prompt for care. Even where traditional community is missing.

For some, that signal reaches an entire house; for others, it's a single friend who checks in. During early research, people strongly rejected apps and automated messages – they felt too invasive, too easy to ignore, or too emotionally overwhelming.

What inspired the project?

The project began after a tragic case in my (Ony) apartment building, where a neighbor passed away and remained undiscovered for weeks. The decomposing body led to unbearable odor, flies in the hallway, and required extensive sanitation. It wasn't just disturbing –

it made me realize how disconnected we've become, even while living next door to each other.

Research confirmed this is a growing global issue – in cities like Berlin, Tokyo, London...

Many people die alone, and are later found by loved ones or neighbors, often in traumatic conditions.

Why smell – and not smart tech?

People don't want surveillance. During user research, apps, smartwatches, thermal sensors, or door tracking were all rejected – either for feeling too invasive or for being impractical. Smell, however, is one of the earliest physical indicators of death, and it doesn't require constant interaction.

We were supported by the State Institute of Forensic Medicine in Berlin and by frontline emergency workers to develop a serious, realistic system that protects dignity without violating privacy.

Why is community at the heart?

Because deaths in solitude are not just medical or logistical problems. They are social failures.

Instead of silently removing a person from their home through emergency services, In Memoriam offers a moment for reflection. A neighbor notices the lamp. Someone makes a call. People start talking again – and maybe next time, they greet each other in the hallway. From my experience, I had never talked as much with my neighbours, as when this one neighbour died unnoticed.

This is how community begins: with small gestures, and shared responsibility.

Who is behind the project?

In Memoriam began as a bachelor thesis at HTW Berlin by Ony Yan, and is now being developed into a functioning product by a growing interdisciplinary team. We are in early-stage development, and welcome feedback and contact from individuals, institutions, and supporters.

Press Contact

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