



Psychological and Behavioural Science

Talking Death

**How Our Death Practices Can Become More Sustainable: An
Intervention**

Anne Forstmann

George Martin

Mariafernanda Valdez Orezza

Gloria Xu

London School of Economics and Political Science

**PB403 Psychology of Economic Life Summative coursework
May 2022**

**Course convenors: Dr. Fred Basso & Prof. Saadi Lahlou
Other teachers: Dr. Maxi Heitmayer**



Talking Death

How Our Death Practices Can Become More Sustainable: An Intervention

Course: Psychology of Economic Life

Course Code: PB403

Course convenors: Prof. Dr. Frédéric Basso, Prof. Dr. Saadi Lahlou, Dr. Maxi Heitmeyer

Authors: 30778, 30841, 40056, 29059

Due date: 10.05.2022

Word count: 5224

Executive Summary

This intervention aims to address the climate crisis by looking at our current death practices. It has been identified that traditional death practices may be detrimental for our climate and the environment. Therefore, we propose an intervention by means of using installation theory. Before outlining our intervention, we identify varying entry points for such behavioural change by using activity theory. Our intervention has two main goals. Firstly, to minimise the environmental impact of our current death practices in the United Kingdom. Secondly, we want to start a conversation around the topic of our current death practices.

CONTENTS

List of Figures	6
Introduction	7
A Brief History of Death Practices in the UK	7
Environmental Impact of Death Practices	8
Green Death Practices	8
Theoretical Background	9
Activity Theory	9
Installation Theory	10
The Problem Scope: Applying Activity Theory	10
Organ Donor	11
Future-Minded Individual	12
Eco-Conscious Individual	13
The Intervention: Applying Installation Theory	14
Stakeholders	15
Physical Layer and its Affordances	17
Embodied Competencies	20
Social Regulation	22
Limitations	23
Conclusion	24
References	25
Appendix A: Stakeholder Mapping	28
Appendix B: Business Proposal	29

List of Figures

Figure 1: Simplified visualisation of Activity Theory (Lahlou, 2017)	9
Figure 2: Visualisation of Installation Theory (Lahlou, 2017)	10
Figure 3: Illustration of Organ Donor/Green Passer card	11
Figure 4: Activity Theory illustration for Organ Donor.....	12
Figure 5: Activity Theory illustration for Future-Minded Individual	13
Figure 6: Green Passer Advertisement (Part 1).....	13
Figure 7: Activity Theory illustration for Eco-Conscious Individual.....	14
Figure 8: Proposed Installation Theory.....	16
Figure 9: Illustration of Green Passer website	18
Figure 10: Illustration of Green Passer Welcome Kit	19
Figure 11: Proposed Social Media Campaign for Insurance.....	22
Figure 12: Green Passer Advertisement (Part 2).....	23

Introduction

"On the last day of Earth, I would want to plant a tree."

W. S. Merwin

In Western societies, death and death practices are a highly sensitive area, rendering any discussions surrounding the topic taboo. Death is a social matter, involving the passing of an individual, leaving loved ones, acknowledging their life and potential spiritual and religious beliefs concerning the afterlife (Shelvock et al., 2021). As the population increases, and deaths as a result, it is important to progress towards more sustainable death practices, especially considering the negative environmental impact of traditional death practices.

Death practices and rituals vary around the world, with different societies and cultures having their own methods and practices. The scope of this project focuses on the death practices within the United Kingdom (UK), and although some of the learnings are transferable across cultures, our information and understanding is firmly grounded within the cultures and practices of the UK.

A Brief History of Death Practices in the UK

Death practices in the UK have changed over time, with one of the oldest practices being burials (Fulton, 2017). However, in the past decade cremations have become equally if not more popular (Fulton, 2017). Death practices remain steeped in rituals and traditions in the UK, with, for example, the funeral procession, wearing black clothing in mourning, and flowers (Fulton, 2017). Despite the many traditions and rituals that still hold strong today, there has been a shift in death practices in the UK. Small changes such as a growing number of individuals replacing the use of flowers with charitable contributions, to larger changes with more individuals choosing funerals to be a 'celebration of life' and taking the focus away from death. In the UK, post-funeral pub gatherings are popularised, as well as the favourite colour of the deceased being worn and their favourite song being played (Fulton, 2017).

Alongside these changes to death practices, there is a growing demand for 'green goodbyes' with 72% of cemeteries reporting an increased demand for green burials (Konrad, 2020) as more people are becoming aware of the negative environmental implications of traditional death practices – burial and cremation (Fulton, 2017).

Environmental Impact of Death Practices

Although the environmental costs of death practices are rarely discussed, the reality is quite shocking. Burials require a vast number of natural resources to produce the coffins and headstones. Figures from the United States (US) highlight the scale of the issue. The amount of wood used in coffins alone equates to the volume used in building 4.5 million homes, as well as 1.6 million tons of reinforced concrete, and over 100,000 tons of steel being used each year in the US alone (Calderone, 2021). It is important to recognise that this data comes from the US, as little data can be found for the UK. Although a direct comparison should not be drawn, it highlights the scale of the issue at hand. Additionally, embalming is the process of chemically preserving the body for open casket ceremonies or for transporting the body. Embalming uses a formaldehyde-based solution which is carcinogenic (National Cancer Institute, 2011), Groundwater seepage occurs due to the depth that burials take place, with bodies deteriorating deep underground, the heavy metals and toxins released cannot be filtered out by the soil and eventually find their way into water run off areas. On top of all, land management is another key resource under growing strain as over half of the UK's cemeteries will be full by 2030 (Strangwayes-Booth, 2013).

Further, cremations require a huge amount of energy to fully burn the body. One cremation requires 285kWh of gas and 15kWh of electricity, equivalent to the domestic energy use of one person for a whole month (Krososky, 2020). In addition, one cremation produces over 240kg of carbon dioxide, with 110kg coming from the body alone, the same as a 500-mile car journey (Krososky, 2020). Due to the heavy metals that are released from the bodies, scrubbing devices are required to remove them from the gases emitted, however, the required maintenance of these devices is high, and as a result, cases have been found where the gases were not correctly filtered out (Hauke, 2020).

Green Death Practices

Green death practices can be defined as "a statement of personal values for those who seek to minimise their impact on the local and global environment" (Green Burial Society of Canada, 2020).

While modern and complex approaches such as decomposers that turn the body into fertile soil (Kiley, 2016) and fungi bodysuits that decompose the body to create new life are still under development, aquamation – which yields the same results as cremation but uses pressurised water – is newly available and growing in popularity (Lee, 2011; Mental Floss, 2018; Yakowicz, 2021). The most common green death practice is a simple burial that replaces the casket with a linen sheet and swaps

out the headstone for a tree sapling that would go on to create new life from the deceased (Krososky, 2020).

Our intervention is designed in order to incite much needed social change towards death practices in the UK, hopefully increasing the overall demand of green death practices. Our goals are twofold, firstly, to address the environmental problems arising from traditional death practices in the UK. Secondly, we want to spur conversation around the topic of death. Our intervention will utilise activity theory and installation theory as its theoretical basis. Activity theory will serve as a starting point, defining the scope of our intervention. Installation theory will be used to design different aspects of the intervention, whilst bearing in mind the interests and motives of several key stakeholders. The following section will define both theories more in-depth. Afterwards, the scope of our intervention is outlined. Finally, our intervention is proposed and the limitations are discussed.

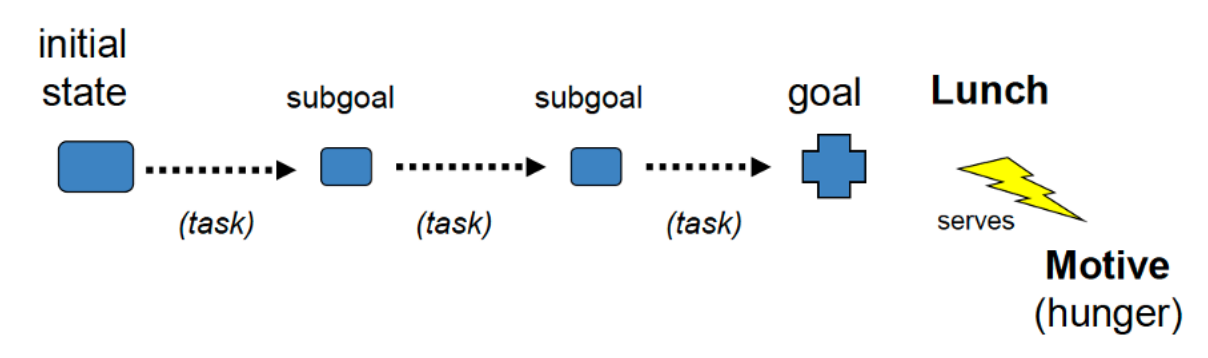
Theoretical Background

Activity Theory

Activities have been described as dynamic as opposed to static (Karanasios & Allen, 2013), and therefore over time activities change and become more complex (Spinuzzi, 2008). Activity theory (AT) constructed an analysis tool for many disciplines to understand and analyse social activities (Karanasios et al., 2015).

AT is a framework that can be used to provide analysis for 'human and communal' behaviour in the world (Kaptelinin et al., 1995). The framework breaks down activities into a series of smaller tasks, which allow the participant to reach a smaller subgoal (Lahlou, 2011). These tasks and subgoals eventually reach the final desired goal to satisfy the motivation of the activity at hand.

Figure 1: Simplified visualisation of Activity Theory (Lahlou, 2017)



Motives are the ultimate driving force for participants and refer to a level of internalised ‘incompleteness’ within oneself. These motives can be satisfied by different goals, allowing for the changing trajectories within an activity.

AT provides a useful tool to disassemble behaviour in a range of settings (Lahlou, 2017), allowing it to be analysed to find key points at which an intervention can be implemented.

Installation Theory

Installation theory (IT) describes the manner in which individuals and collectives are channelled into certain behaviours through ‘installations’ distributed at physical, psychological and societal levels. These installations not only channel behaviour but allow for the replication of cultures and society through practice through the guidance and control of behaviour (Lahlou, 2017).

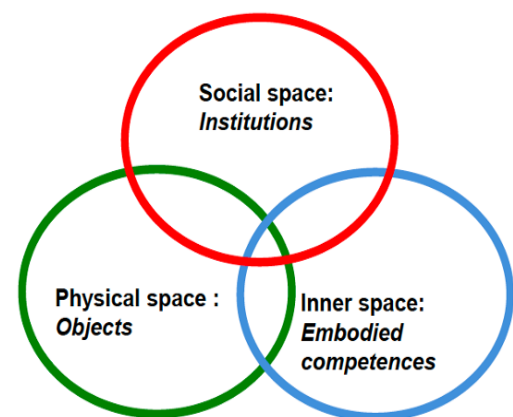
IT provides an analysis of three layers that combine to produce activity; the physical space, inner space, and social space.

The physical layer analyses the objects within the physical space, and physical affordances that allow those activities to take place or prohibit certain activities (Lahlou, 2017). Physical affordances describe the innate ability to understand the personal abilities that our physical surroundings allow us and can be seen as ‘preconditions for activity’ (Greeno, 1994).

The inner space describes the “embodied interpretive systems” within an individual or collective. An embodied interpretive system refers to the internalised knowledge structures such as skills, experiences, habitus, and common sense (Lahlou, 2017).

The social space layer of IT refers to the social regulation at play within an activity, and points to the fact that behaviours are socially influenced by rules developed within “institutions” and enforced by others within the group (Lahlou, 2017).

Figure 2: Visualisation of Installation Theory (Lahlou, 2017)



The Problem Scope: Applying Activity Theory

Before developing and applying the intervention, one must define the scope which is best suited for the intervention. AT provides an appropriate framework to achieve such a magnified view

of the problem (Lahlou, 2017). Considering our problem of making death practices more sustainable, one can assess multiple scenarios with varying behavioural sequences. On one hand, we may analyse what we call the “end-of-life”-scenario in which the soon-to-be deceased makes the final decisions of their passing. On the other hand, we consider the “middle-of-life”-scenario where someone is planning ahead for their life – for example by taking up life insurance or writing their will – in which the decisions or wishes of their passing become salient. Of course, there is also a scenario in which the deceased has not passed on any wishes, in which case relatives or close friends may have to make decisions on their behalf.

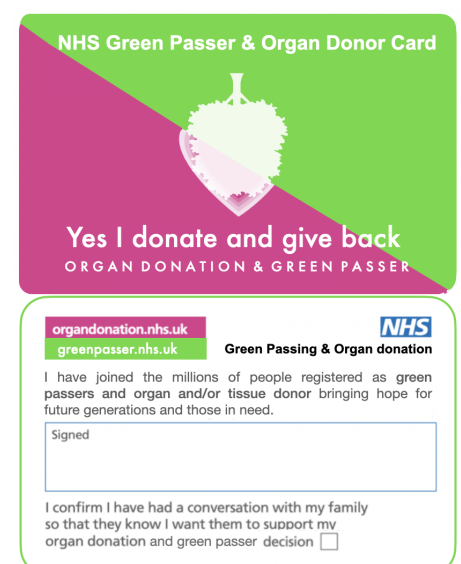
Considering the sensitivity of the topic it is important to target the intervention at a point where the person feels comfortable and may even seek to inform themselves rather than being informed. End-of-life care is particularly sensitive, requiring utmost tact from doctors and caretakers. Often this is not the case and most complaints lodged with the National Health Service (NHS) concern the communication about passing (Sleeman, 2013). Whilst there are successful examples of communicating about death in end-of-life care (Utami et al., 2017), it is still a highly sensitive issue that is, we think, too complex to address.

Instead, we want to focus on various middle-of-life scenarios. Indeed, the findings implicate that millennials are willing to talk about and discuss death (Gerard, 2017). Over half of the participants of this study said that they had already discussed end-of-life care with a close family member (Gerard, 2017). These findings suggest that a middle-of-life scenario may be suitable for an intervention. Ultimately, we hope that our intervention will establish sustainable death practices as the ‘new norm’, starting by breaking down taboos and sparking conversations amongst millennials to drive demand for green burials and funerals. Using activity theory we have identified three different scenarios in which it is ideal to ‘intervene’. Our aim is to design the intervention at a point where people are already actively seeking information about a related topic, and they are assumed to be open to thinking about their passing.

Organ Donor

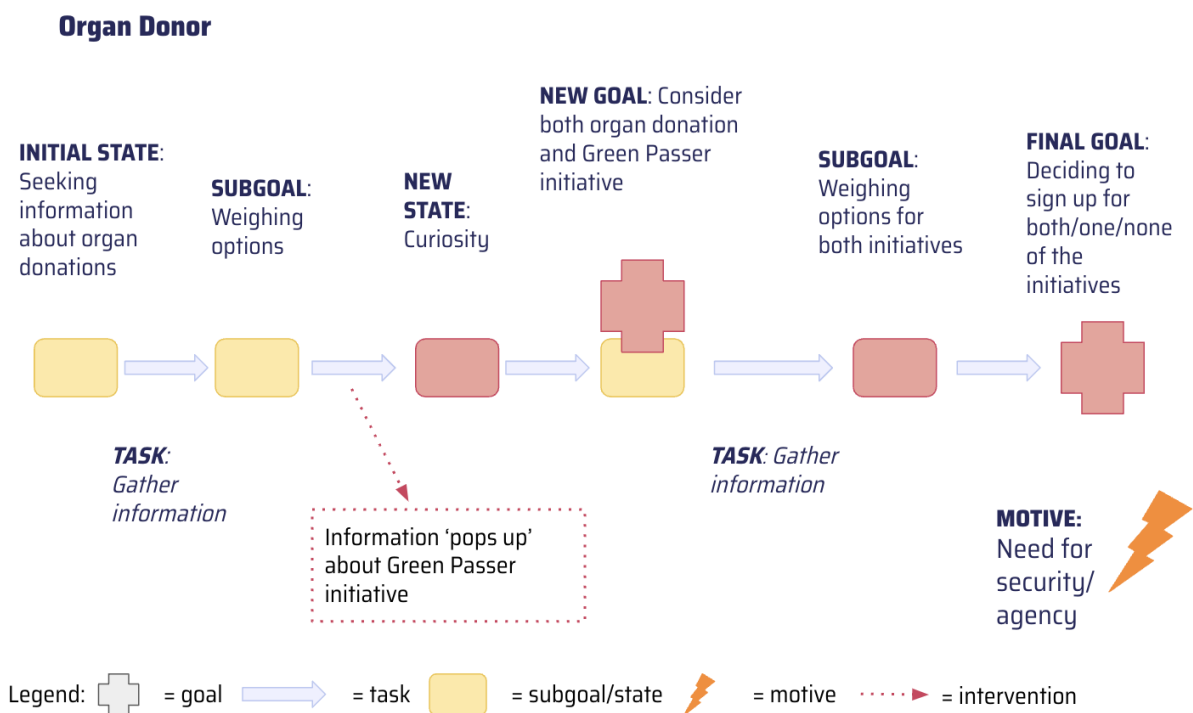
The first scenario will be illustrated by Benjamin. Benjamin is 26 and has recently heard about the new ‘opt-out’ system the UK adopted with regards to organ donations (NHS, n.d.). He wants to learn more about organ donations to decide whether he wants to

Figure 3: Illustration of Organ Donor/Green Passer card



'opt-out' or not. Whilst he is gathering information and weighing his options, he sees an article on the NHS website, about a Green Passer initiative. Intrigued, he decides to look at the article and sees that similarly to the Organ Donation Scheme there is an initiative where you can register to become a Green Passer. Finding out more about both, he decides that he would like to sign up to become both an organ donor and a Green Passer (illustration of an organ donation and Green Passer card in figure 3). Figure 4 illustrates the process of Benjamin's decision using AT.

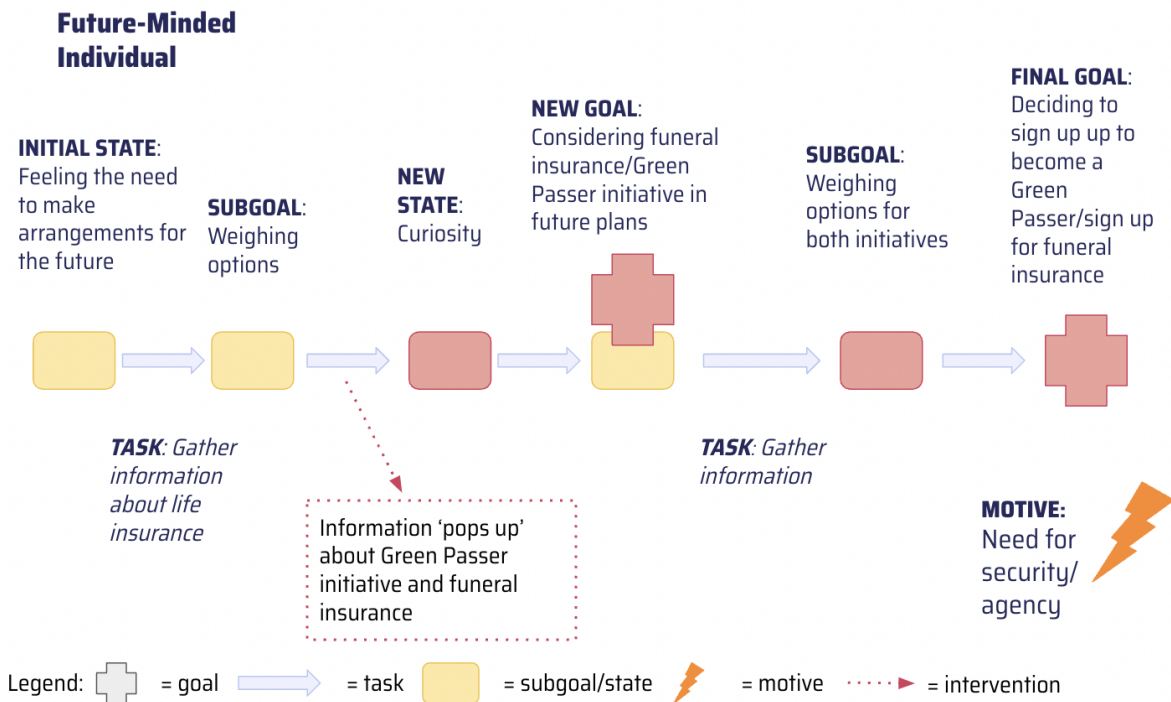
Figure 4: Activity Theory illustration for Organ Donor



Future-Minded Individual

The second scenario will be illustrated by Alice. Alice is a 35-year-old mother of three, who has recently bought a house with her husband Marc. Being a mother and new homeowner has made her conscious of the future and she wants to make arrangements in case something should ever happen to her. She wants to inform herself about life insurances. Whilst on the insurance website, she sees an offer for a funeral insurance plan within the Green Passer initiative. She is curious to find out more and after weighing her options she decides to sign up for a funeral plan and become a Green Passer. She also convinces her husband and her parents to join her.

Figure 5: Activity Theory illustration for Future-Minded Individual



Eco-Conscious Individual

The final scenario will be illustrated by Beth. Beth is 27 years old and very conscious of the current state of our environment. She is trying to do her part by following a vegan diet and partakes in the Fridays for Future movement. While she is on her way to university, she sees an advertisement on the tube for the Green Passer initiative and is curious to find out more. Beth bookmarks the website and gathers more information. In the end, she decides to sign up as the initiative is in line with her values. She loves that she can wear the bracelet that she is sent for signing up, to signal to her peers that she is part of this green movement.

Figure 6: Green Passer Advertisement (Part 1)

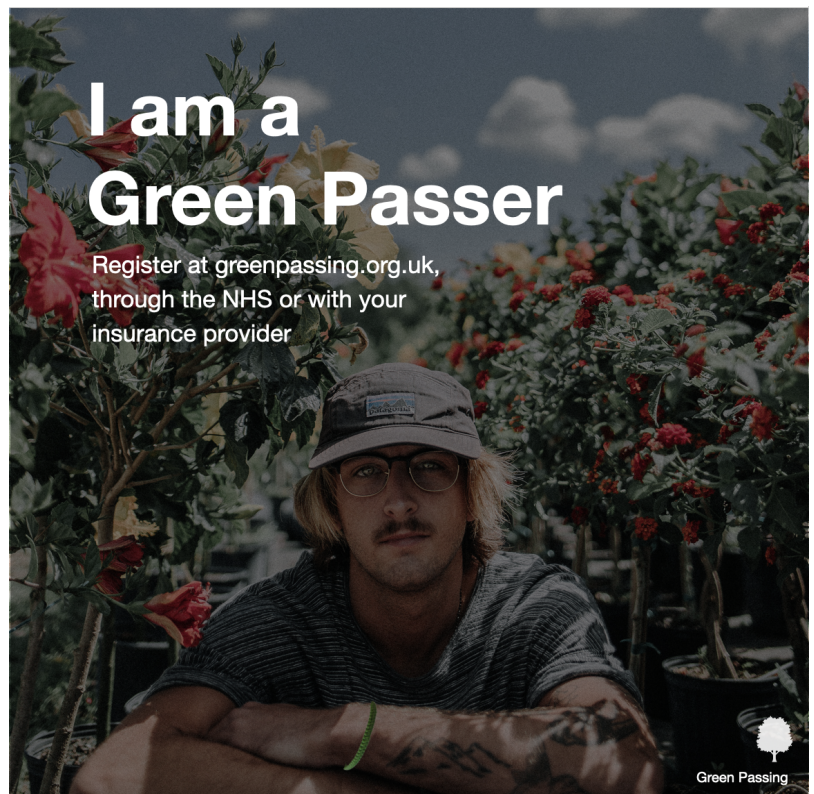
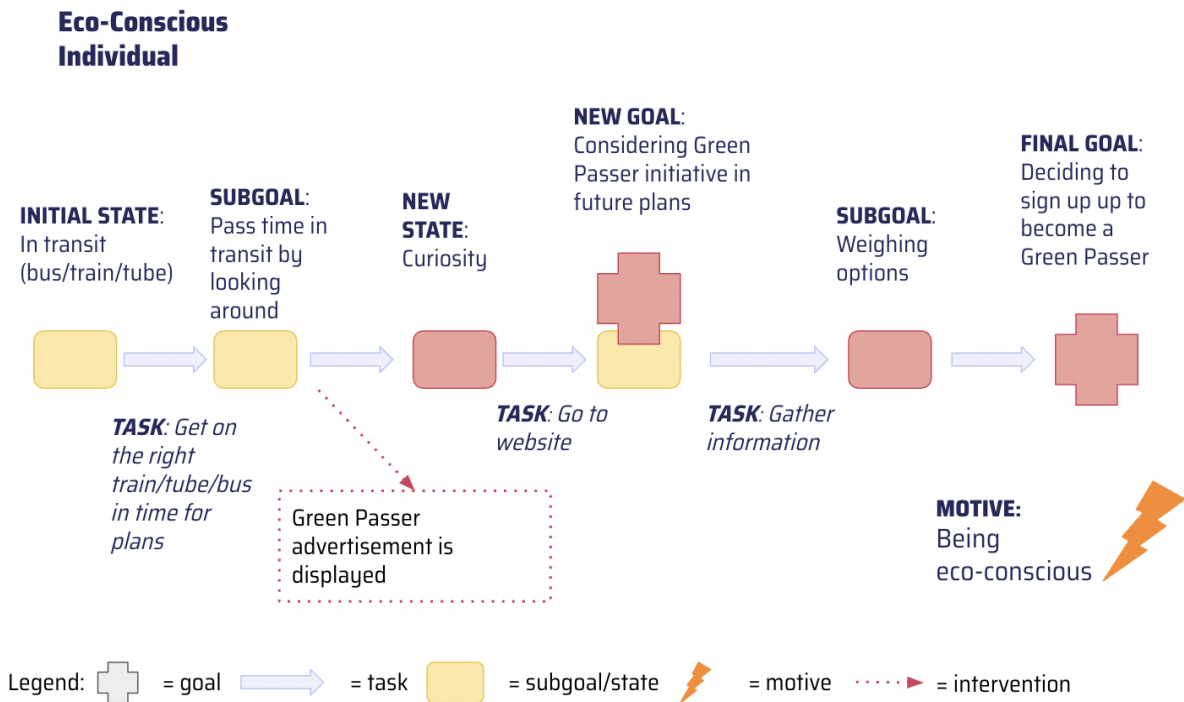


Figure 7: Activity Theory illustration for Eco-Conscious Individual



The Intervention: Applying Installation Theory

The three scenarios illustrated above reveal possible intervention points that can be addressed using IT (Table 1).

Table 1

Table 1: Summary of Issues Found and Proposed Installations

Activity Layer	Issues Found	Proposed Installation
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of space to registers interest or agreement to own green burial for those to see when they pass Lack of awareness of green passing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration and Database Platform Green Passer Welcome Rituals (e.g., tree planting, Green Passer Bracelet)

Activity Layer	Issues Found	Proposed Installation
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of green passing • Unsustainable ritual practices currently in place, with little alternative at time of grieving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Signalling (e.g., bracelet, card or obituaries)
Embodied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of willingness to be proactive in planning own passing • Lack of public communications surrounding alternative death practices and the negative impacts of current systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHS Donor x Green Passer • Funeral Plan Advisors and Financial Advisors

Stakeholders

An integral step of creating lasting behaviour change is understanding the current settings of an existing system through which behaviours are channelled (Lahlou, 2017). This requires a thorough assessment of the interests and motives of stakeholders that are involved in the process.

In the context of death and funeral planning, numerous stakeholders were identified and mapped (Appendix A). Due to the limited scope of this assignment, we have decided to focus on the high-influence stakeholders outlined below.

Individuals (to-be deceased)

As the largest and most influential generation, millennials are also the “death positive” generation (Cummins, 2020). They are marked by a movement away from formal religious observations and memberships, especially in the UK (Percy, 2019). These individuals are more open to having a conversation about death and funeral planning, and this is reflected in the recent emergence of ‘Death apps’, which are digital platforms designed to help millennials plan their own funerals by streamlining the arrangement process (Amirtha, 2016). In the same way people are personalising wedding ceremonies, there is a growing trend of customising funerals and finding a unique and authentic way of being memorialised (Morrison, 2019). More specific to the context of sustainable death, millennials are known to be more health conscious and environmentally

responsible than previous generations, leading to a rise in the interest of natural and green burials (Ford, 2018).

Relatives of the (to-be) deceased

An important group to consider is the bereaved, who in addition to the pain of a lost one are also confronted with the financial burden and responsibility of making funeral decisions to best honour the wishes of the deceased. Though this process can be complicated, painful, and formidable, these discomforts may be alleviated by planning ahead. Funeral insurance plans are a way to protect one's family from the rising costs of traditional funerals, and open communication channels can help family members better understand one's wishes.

Funeral Insurance Plan Providers and Financial Advisors

Pre-paid funerals are a common way to assert one's wishes, secure funeral prices against rising costs, and alleviate the burden and financial stress on the bereaved. These can be directly coordinated with a funeral guide or a plan provider, with coverage varying from plan to plan (Cole, 2020). Pre-paid funeral plans are usually provided by organisations that have established ties with a large network of funeral directors, and sold by third parties such as funeral homes, strategic partners, and direct sales operations.

National Health Service (NHS)

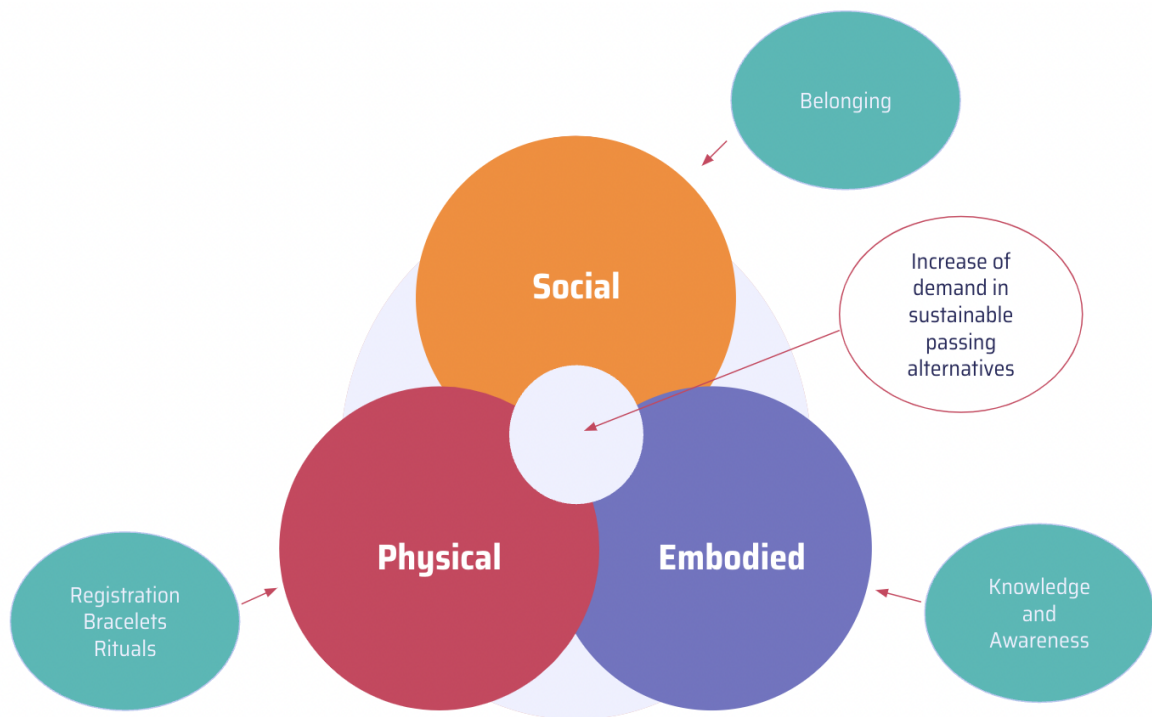
The NHS's Organ Donor Register is a non-intrusive way to introduce the Green Passer Initiative to the general population. Already primed by the thought of mortality, this approach is a delicate and seamless segue into the topic of funeral planning.

Funeral Directors

As millennials begin understanding the wishes for their parents' death – in addition to their own – funeral directors should brace for the impact that these increasingly secular and eco-conscious millennials will have on the funeral industry (Crowe, 2021). Innovative service offerings and strategic partnerships with green burial sites and arboretums would allow traditional funeral homes to be more adaptive and resilient against the changing funeral landscape.

Having identified the varying stakeholders, we can now have a closer look at the intervention design, starting with the physical layer. Figure 8 illustrates our proposed interventions for each layer.

Figure 8: Proposed Installation Theory



Physical Layer and its Affordances

The physical layer and its affordances are vital components that shape our interventions and significantly increase their chances of success. We propose three interventions that will act as scaffolds to channel desired behaviours. The first is a platform allowing individuals to register and be entered into a database.

One of the findings present during the analysis of the culture around death practices in the middle-of-life scenario is that if not presented, the subject of death is something that will not be brought organically on to people's minds. In general, people are reluctant to think about death (Jong, 2016), which acts as a barrier towards reaching the behaviour of planning their own death rituals. If the topic of death is thought about, it is likely that the thought or conversation with family members about after death preferences will remain as something to be dealt with in the future. Any intentions discussed in these conversations will therefore fail to translate into future actions, making it difficult for family members to know and carry out the person's wishes when the time comes.

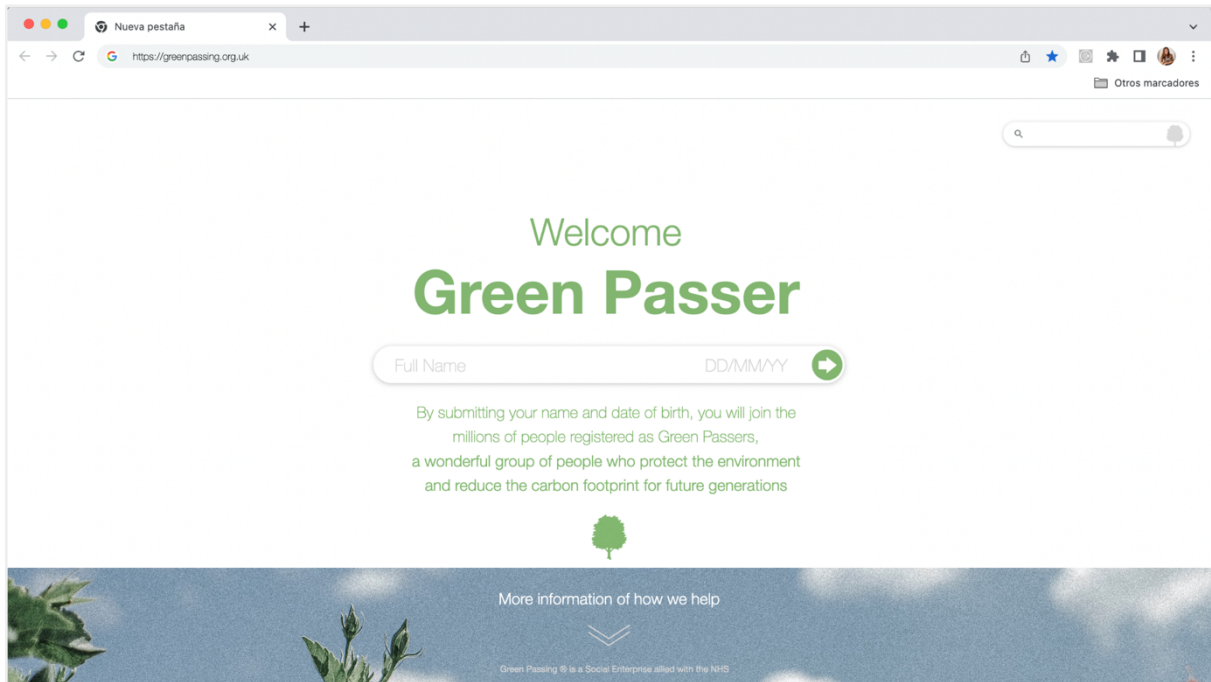
With that in mind, we designed a website where people can register themselves as Green Passers, thereby declaring their interest in having a green burial upon passing.

Registration Website

The aim of this intervention is twofold: firstly, to create an otherwise inexistent opportunity for an individual to register their interest in having a green burial in the distant future. Secondly, the

website would serve as a public search database for families to look up their loved ones to understand their burial preferences when the time comes. Privacy concerns can be mitigated as individuals who sign up could declare whether they would like to be found online or not. If they opt out of being searchable in the database, they would be asked to confirm that they have talked to a close relative about their decision, to ensure that their loved ones are aware of their choices.

Figure 9: Illustration of Green Passer website



Green Passer Welcome Kit

The second intervention in the physical layer is the Green Passer Welcome Kit that would be posted to their homes upon registering. This Kit would include a Welcome letter, a Green Passer Card, and a Green Passer bracelet, made from biodegradable materials.

The Welcome Letter welcomes the individual to the Green Passer community, providing them with further information regarding the environmental impact of their decision, and providing them with a list of partnering organisations including funeral plan providers and green burial service providers. The goal of these interventions is to consolidate previous knowledge, enforce their commitment to a green passing, and encourage them to take action in their purchase of a green funeral service from the list provided – all in an intimate context of their own homes, allowing them to evaluate their options privately and mindfully.

Figure 10: Illustration of Green Passer Welcome Kit



The Green Passer card and bracelet would act as social signalling devices that signify the owner's eco-conscious qualities by publicly advertising their preference for green burials. The bracelet would also serve as a tool of distributed cognition, prompting conversations and shifting norms as the Green Passer initiative becomes more widely recognised (Lahlou, 2017). **D**istributed cognition knowledge is distributed across members in groups and societies and can also be represented through, for example, artefacts (Lahlou, 2017). **I**n the unfortunate event of an unexpected death, a bracelet worn on the wrist of the deceased, or a Green Passer card found in their wallet, can inform relatives of their wishes for a green burial.

Tree Planting

Another intervention at the physical layer is the use of trees as physical representations of the bodies once they are buried. Green Passers will have the option to have a tree planted in their name, marking the completion of their cycle of life. Depending on the plan purchased, they can go for more customisation and select a specific type of tree from one of our partnering arboretums. This provides an object and space for families and friends to gather and grieve over the loss of a loved one. This also opens up the possibility for green family plots where families can be buried together, creating tiny forests for their trees to grow together. Aside from the obvious environmental contribution, the symbolic contribution of this intervention is less overt but even more significant. The planting of the

tree becomes a symbolic enactment that supports all three pillars of the bereavement process: transformation, transition, and connection (Romanoff, 1988).

Addressing Rituals using Affordances

Rituals are a key aspect in the grieving process and the grieving resolution (Romanoff, 1988). As such, our intervention includes the ritual of planting a tree from the Green Passer bracelet, which is made from biodegradable materials to facilitate this grieving process (Table 2).

Table 2: Rituals and Affordances

<i>Transformational Rituals</i>	<i>Transitional Rituals</i>	<i>Connectional Rituals</i>
Selecting an item to represent the deceased (ex: tree planting, quilt making and memory boxes)	Taking part in a leave-taking ceremony during which symbolic objects are burned, buried or given away	Establishing an ongoing connection with the deceased; creating a supportive community for the bereaved
Possible Interventions		
Tree Planting		Green Passer Bracelet
Partnership with arboretums to facilitate both <i>transformational</i> and <i>connectional</i> rituals		<i>Transformational</i> if kept by loved ones, <i>transitional</i> if buried with the body or planted into a tree

Embodied Competencies

With traditional religious funerals on the decline, people in the UK are turning to direct cremation – a cheaper, no-frills alternative (Smithers, 2019). While cremations have been touted as the more sustainable option compared to traditional burials, they are not exonerated from hefty energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. To facilitate the adoption of sustainable death practices, individuals must be informed and made aware of alternative options. With the Green Passer initiative, this knowledge will reach individuals via three avenues: NHS partnership, funeral insurance and financial advisors, and social media campaigns including public advertisements and obituaries.

Green Passer Website and Welcome Letter

Recall Benjamin, who was browsing the NHS website to learn about the organ donor program when he saw an embedded article linking to the Green Passer Initiative. On this page, he is surprised

to learn about the negative impacts of traditional funeral practices, and decides to register as a Green Passer to plan ahead.

In the second and third scenarios, Alice learns about Green Passing through a funeral plan provider, and Beth learns about it through an advertisement in the tube. Once an intention to acquire more knowledge about the initiative has been developed, all actors are enabled to do so through this website.

The Green Passer Welcome Letter will contain a list of Green Burial partners (including funeral homes that offer green burial services), and another list of funeral plan providers for those ready to begin making arrangements. The letter will also encompass infographics and statistics to illustrate the quantifiable impact a Green Passer has made by deciding to go with a natural burial, accompanied by the Green Passer Card and Bracelet to further reinforce and signal their self identity as an eco-conscious individual.

Strategic Partnerships with Key Stakeholders

Partnering with Green Passer would benefit funeral plan providers and funeral homes in several ways (Appendix B). As green burials are typically less costly than traditional burials (Qureshi, 2020), providers may be able to increase profit margins by reducing material costs while introducing innovative service-based offerings to maintain current revenue figures. This could look like partnering with an arboretum and charging a subscription fee for the upkeep of the tree that has been planted with the bracelet of the deceased, or hosting events and support groups to establish a community. Taking inspiration from the aforementioned death apps and online funeral concierges, individuals can also pay for extra features such as creating multimedia memorial portfolios, making digital estate arrangement, or even passing off the passwords of all their digital accounts to loved ones after passing (Amirtha, 2016). The capability to generate new revenue streams and adapt to changing consumer needs is a core competency for today's companies. In recognizing this, Green Passer will also be providing ongoing advisory services to support partnering funeral homes and plan providers in navigating the evolving funeral industry.

Another benefit for these green burial sites, funeral homes, and plan providers would be the additional exposure and publicity, as joining the Green Passer Initiative allows partners to piggyback off our social media campaigns (Figure 11). Essentially, we are providing them with the added service of lead generation, identifying and funnelling through a specific group of individuals who are the perfect target market for their businesses.

Figure 11: Proposed Social Media Campaign for Insurance



Social Regulation

The awareness campaigns will aim to create social regulation through imitation, portraying role and status along with the Green Passer behaviour, and induce influence and persuasion towards becoming a Green Passer. By carrying the card or wearing the bracelet, people can signal their membership in the Green Passer initiative. Signalling theory states that information is shared between two people via signalling (Connelly et al., 2011). Along the messages, are one's social status or membership in a group (Connelly et al., 2011). In our intervention, different identities and social memberships may be addressed or signalled, as our previous examples of Benjamin, Alice and Beth show.

Beth is environmentally conscious, and wearing the bracelet for her might work as pro-environmental signalling. The bracelet will become an object that enforces her identity of being an eco-friendly citizen and signals to others that she cares for the environment. Her friends may be inclined to imitate her as they identify with similar values. The fact that people can identify with the "green" values being portrayed by the images and messages in the ads, will create a need for them to signal themselves as part of this group in order to enforce their green identity.

Benjamin and Alice on the other hand, are more driven by a need for security and agency, whilst also being eco-conscious. They want to make conscious decisions that they feel comfortable with. The Green Passer initiative offers this by planning ahead, and, again, by wearing the card or the bracelet they can signal to others that they have thought about their death and made arrangements.

In addition to using the bracelets and cards as a signalling tool, other strategies for social regulation and bonding may look like including one's decision to have a green burial in their obituary postings. This is another way to generate awareness and inform the general public about these sustainable alternatives. Finally, there are opportunities for arboretums to plant more trees in the name of the deceased (independent of their green burial choice) to signal that these people have added to the "circle of life".

Figure 12: Green Passer Advertisement (Part 2)



Limitations

As with any intervention, the proposed has a variety of limitations that shall be addressed. Firstly, we are aware that our initial analysis of the scope of the problem within activity theory is at times vague. Considering the complexity of the issue, it is nearly impossible to predict every scenario in which an intervention is feasible. We have decided on three scenarios where the individual has agency and control over their choices. Ultimately, considering death has a less predictable behavioural pattern than, for example, buying a specific product. We hope that this initiative may spur a behavioural change that will ripple on, with our intervention being the starting point.

Further, we must also address forms of resistance towards an intervention such as ours. Of course, there is the subject of religion in which there are traditional death practices in line with certain beliefs. We have not addressed these in our intervention due to the extremely intricate and personal issue with every religion having different practices and beliefs. Whilst that may be a weakness to our

intervention, our aim is, to first address millennials who show higher willingness to talk about death, higher eco-consciousness and overall less religious attitudes (see Ford, 2018; Gerard, 2017; Percy, 2019). Considering this first target group as an ideal starting point, we hope that in time other people will be convinced to sign up for the project and a conversation at the societal-level will be sparked. Of course, it is also advisable to continue working with religious leaders to educate ourselves and exercise sensitivity with regards to religion.

Finally, we have to address the fact that we are targeting millennials when it is the 'boomer' generation that will pass in the next decades with there being less space for burials nowadays (Strangways-Booth, 2013). We are aware that we are addressing a 'less pressing' population. Nonetheless, millennials are often more open to talk about and address issues of death and sustainability. As displayed in the example of Alice, the mother of three that just bought a house with her husband, we hope that people signing up for the Green Passer initiative will further persuade their peers (in her case her parents). Thus, we hope there is a knock-on effect that is sensitive, organic, and self-induced rather than forced.

Conclusion

To conclude, our intervention aims to make death practices in the UK more sustainable in the long-run. Having used activity theory, we have identified three example scenarios in which it is feasible to intervene and address a behavioural change. By means of using installation theory, we have identified the physical affordances, the embodied competences and the social factors that would make such interventions successful. Whilst we want death practices to become more sustainable in the UK and beyond, we are aware that this issue is highly sensitive and emotional, therefore, we stress the importance that our intervention targets individuals who actively educate themselves or have an interest in informing themselves. We hope that by targeting individuals who are open to addressing the issue of death, there will be a shift in the cultural view of death in the UK long term, allowing the mitigation of the environmental impact of death practices and influence the conversation surrounding the topic of death.

References

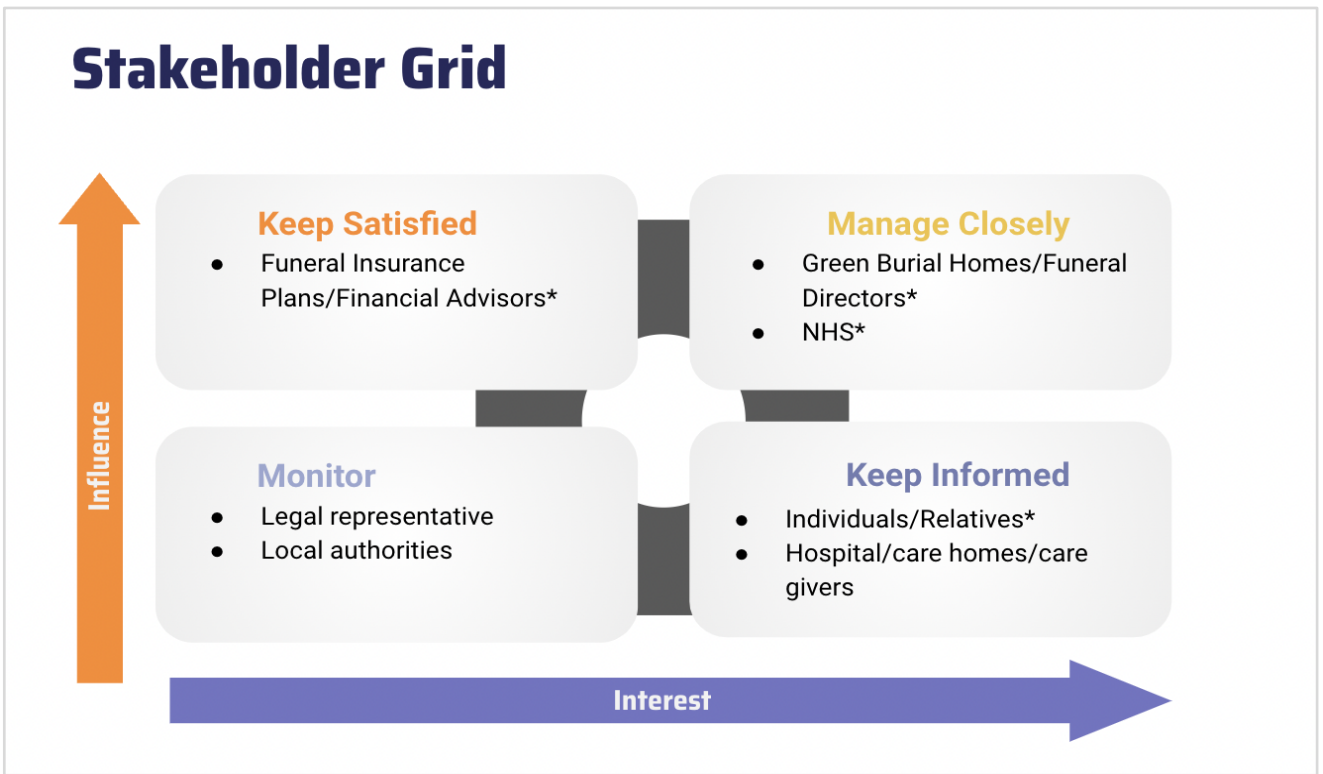
- Amirtha, T. (2016, March 8). Death apps promise to help people curate their afterlives. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/mar/08/death-apps-everest-cake-safebeyond-everplans-afternote-funerals>
- Calderone, J. (2021, October 4). Burying dead bodies takes a surprising toll on the environment. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/burying-dead-bodies-environment-funeral-conservation-2015-10?r=US&IR=T>
- Cole, J. (2020, May 12). *A complete guide to funeral plans*. SunLife. <https://www.sunlife.co.uk/funeral-plans/funeral-plans-guide/>
- Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, R. D., & Reutzel, C. R. (2010). Signaling theory: A review and assessment. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 39-67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310388419>
- Crowe, J. (2021, January 6). *In 17 years de-churching millennials will rock the funeral industry*. Connecting Directors. <https://connectingdirectors.com/52320-de-churching-millennials>
- Cummins, E. (2020, January 22). Why millennials are the "death positive" generation. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2020/1/15/21059189/death-millennials-funeral-planning-cremation-green-positive>
- Heffer, B. (2019, August 16). *Financial advisers and pre-paid funeral planning*. <https://defaqto.com/advisers/insights/financial-advisers-and-pre-paid-funeral-planning/>
- Ford, J. (2018, June 7). *Millennials are paving the way for sustainability*. Enviral. <https://www.enviral.co.uk/millennials-are-paving-the-way-for-sustainability/>
- Fulton, L. (2017, May 14). *The history and traditions of funerals in the UK*. History Is Now Magazine. <http://www.historyisnowmagazine.com/blog/2017/5/14/the-history-and-traditions-of-funerals-in-the-uk#.YaYQnb2mOEs=>
- Gerard, N. (2017). Can millennials talk about death. *Journal of Health Administration Education*, 34(1), 23-48.
- Green Burial Society of Canada. (2020). *What is green burial*. <http://www.greenburialcanada.ca/greenburial>
- Greeno, J. G. (1994). Gibson's affordances. *Psychological Review*, 101(2), 336-342. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.101.2.336>

- Hauke, C. (2020). *The environmental impact and potential human health effects of cremation*. Green Burial Council. https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/environmental_impact_cremation.html
- Jong, J. (2016, February 9). Why contemplating death changes how you think. *BBC Future*. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20160208-why-contemplating-death-changes-how-you-think>
- Kaptelinin, V., Kuutti, K., & Bannon, L. (1995). Activity theory: Basic concepts and applications. In B. Blumenthal, J. Gornostaev, & C. Unger (Eds.), *EWHCI 1995: Human-Computer Interaction* (pp. 189-201). Springer.
- Karanasios, S., & Allen, D. (2013). ICT for development in the context of the closure of chernobyl nuclear power plant: An activity theory perspective. *Information Systems Journal*, 23(4), 287-306. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12011>
- Karanasios, S., Allen, D., & Finnegan, P. (2015). Information systems journal special issue on: Activity theory in information systems research. *Information Systems Journal*, 25(3), 309-313. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12061>
- Kiley, B. (2016, October 31). Seattle could get an urban death project human composter in just 7 years. *The Seattle Times*. <https://www.seattletimes.com/life/from-corpse-to-compost-the-urban-death-projects-modest-proposal/>
- Konrad, W. (2020, December 6). *More Americans are skipping traditional funerals in favor of green burials*. Considerable. <https://www.considerable.com/life/communication/green-burials-are-a-growing-trend/>
- Krososky, A. (2020, November 20). *What are the most Eco-Friendly burial methods?* Green Matters. <https://www.greenmatters.com/p/eco-friendly-burial-methods>
- Lahlou, S. (2011). How can we capture the subject's perspective? An evidence-based approach for the social scientist. *Social Science Information*, 50(3-4), 607-655. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018411411033>
- Lahlou, S. (2017). *Installation theory: The societal construction and regulation of behaviour*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, J. R. (2011, October 14). *Jae Rhim Lee: My mushroom burial suit* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7rS_d1fiUc
- Mental Floss. (2018, January 8). *7 Eco-Friendly options for your body after death*. <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/513564/7-eco-friendly-options-your-body-after-death>

- Morrison, H. (2019, December 3). *Millennials aren't killing the funeral industry – But it is changing*. Rewire. <https://www.rewire.org/funeral-industry-changing/>
- National Cancer Institute. (2011, June 10). *Formaldehyde and cancer risk*. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/substances/formaldehyde/formaldehyde-fact-sheet>
- National Health Service. (n.d.). *What is the opt out system?* <https://www.organdonation.nhs.uk/helping-you-to-decide/about-organ-donation/faq/what-is-the-opt-out-system/>
- Percy, M. (2019). Sketching a shifting landscape: Reflections on emerging patterns of religion and spirituality among millennials. *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*, 9(2), 163–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20440243.2019.1658268>
- Qureshi, H. (2020, September 23). Woodland burials are not only eco-friendly: They're cheaper too. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2007/oct/07/ethicalmoney.ethicalliving>
- Romanoff, B. D. (1998). Rituals and the grieving process. *Death Studies*, 22(8), 697–711. <https://doi.org/10.1080/074811898201227>
- Shelvock, M., Kinsella, E. A., & Harris, D. (2021). Beyond the corporatization of death systems: Towards green death practices. *Illness, Crisis & Loss*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10541373211006882>
- Sleeman, K. (2013). End-of-life communication: Let's talk about death. *The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians Od Edinburgh*, 43(3), 197–199. <https://doi.org/10.4997/jrcpe.2013.302>
- Spinuzzi, C. (2008). *Network: Theorizing knowledge work in telecommunications*. Cambridge University Press.
- Strangwayes-Booth, B. A. (2013, September 27). Burial space in England "could run out in 20 years." *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24283426>
- Utami, D., Bickmore, T., Nikolopoulou, A., & Paasche-Orlow, M. (2017). Talk about death: End of life planning with a virtual agent. In J. Beskow, C. Peters, G. Castellano, C. O'Sullivan, I. Leite, & S. Kopp (Eds.), *Intelligent Virtual Agents* (pp. 441–450). Springer.
- Yakowicz, W. (2021, January 5). *Entrepreneurs find a growing business in eco-friendly burials*. Inc.Com. <https://www.inc.com/will-yakowicz/death-care-gets-eco-friendly-green-burial-services.html>

Appendix A: Stakeholder Mapping

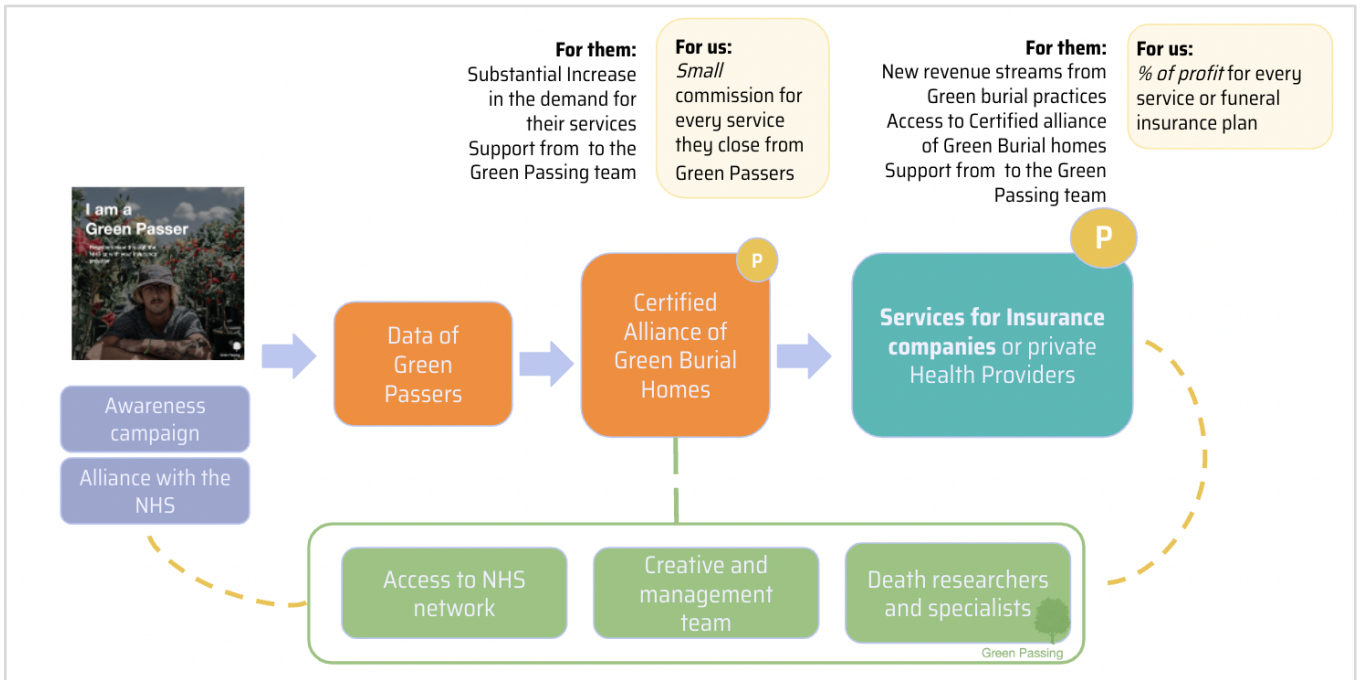
Appendix A1: Stakeholder Mapping



Note. Stakeholders marked with a * are key stakeholders for our planned intervention.

Appendix B: Business Proposal

Appendix B1: Business Model



Appendix B2: Business Proposal

GREEN PASSING® FUNERAL PLANNING

Aviva Insurance

GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK

"A growing number of people are looking for ways to be sustainable in death as well as life"¹

As the cost of funeral planning continue to rise and more eco-friendly consumers turn to sustainable alternatives such as green burials, a partnership with NHS through *Green Passing®* will allow Aviva to capture this growing market.

About Us

Green Passing® is a social enterprise dedicated to changing the way people think about death. We provide:

- Industry expertise to support your ideation of new service-based revenue generating streams
- Strategic awareness campaigns as well as insights to help you craft your marketing messaging
- Liaison with the NHS to facilitate the seamless transition from sign-up to funeral planning
- Access to our network of green burial homes (certified with *Green Passing®*)

The Opportunity

1. Eco-friendly coffins (such as those made of bamboo, cardboard, shroud, flatpack, and pandanus) are generally cheaper to source, representing **a sizeable cost saving opportunity** for Aviva.
2. Consumers are generally not as price sensitive when it comes to funeral planning. This allows Aviva to **reduce costs without compromising revenue growth**, presenting a **low-risk opportunity** for Aviva to explore new revenue streams while further differentiating itself through a variety of innovative service offerings such as Tree Planting rituals
3. Sustainable funeral planning will complement Aviva's other sustainability initiatives and **reinforce its position as a recognized leader on sustainability issues²**

The Solution

Short-Term (1-3 years): UK only

- Primary focus will be driving and responding to demand for green burials
- Work closely with the NHS to implement the roll out of various marketing campaigns and growth strategies

Medium-Term (3-5 years): International expansion

- Leverage Aviva's global presence to introduce green funeral plans to other markets
- Establish partnerships with health authorities in local markets

Long-Term (5-10+ years): All markets

- Gradually introduce alternative solutions such as *Aquamation* to reduce the reliance on land usage

OUR PROPOSAL

i Provide background information, including a brief background on your company and your understanding of the client's needs and specific issues to be addressed. You may also choose to include the results of any related research, project history, and additional factors that impact the client's needs, such as socio-economic trends or impending regulations.

Show your understanding of the benefits the client can expect. For example, describe the risks—what might be lost—if appropriate action is not taken and compare this to the benefits they can achieve with a positive course of action. If applicable, identify potential areas of concern for the client and how you can address them. Such items may be fundamental issues that appear trivial, but are often overlooked by competing proposals.

Describe how your capabilities and proposed solution align with the client's goals for the project, including how your qualifications can uniquely address the current opportunity.

Client's Company has a well-deserved reputation for quality customer service. However, faced with changes in distribution systems, economic impacts to transportation and logistics, and limitations that prevent taking full advantage of improvements in technology, Client's Company faces the possibility of decreasing sales revenues due customer perceptions of slow delivery and services.

We have developed solutions to help businesses stay ahead of customer satisfaction trends and propose that Client's Company implement a logistics solution focused on JIT order management and automation of many manual steps in your delivery process. Our solution easily integrates with a wide range of off-the-shelf CRM solutions and can enable Client's Company to fully realize the benefits of improved productivity throughout the entire sales cycle. Most importantly, we provide the training and support for this new solution that ensures your staff can ramp up quickly and realize concrete improvements in sales closure, customer satisfaction, and sales metrics.

Rationale

i Describe your reasons for developing the project as you have proposed it. You may need to justify why you have chosen your unique approach. Consider including the following points in your rationale.

- Research
- Market opportunities
- Alignment with mission
- Current resources/technology

Execution Strategy

Our execution strategy incorporates proven methodologies, extremely qualified personnel, and a highly responsive approach to managing deliverables. Following is a description of our project methods, including how the project will be developed, a proposed timeline of events, and reasons for why we suggest developing the project as described.

i Summarize your strategy based on your research into the client's needs, your experience in providing similar services to other clients, etc.