

THE LOSS OF THE MOMENT. ON THE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS ON TWITTER (in German)

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Social media changes how we perceive and reflect on contemporaneity and topicality. In this presentation, we discuss how this fact can offer perspective on the phenomenon of loss and disappearing at various levels. The first takes place at a structural level; if we assume that contemporaneity and topicality can only be evoked under the condition that the no-longer-present and no-longer-topical shift out of focus, then it is necessarily coupled to loss and disappearing. Tweets exemplify this process particularly well due to their close resemblance to forms that signify topicality, for instance, by the fact that date-stamping is used and timelines are automatically updated. This structural feature of social media finds its iteration at the material level as well: today's tweet is often deleted tomorrow, contexts can no longer be reconstructed, and links point to pages that no longer exist. This volatility raises the question of whether there are ways to archive this material. But if so, one is quickly confronted – depending on the method – with the loss of significant elements of social media. For one, the dynamics of generated topicality are lost in the process of archiving. Social media has been described in recent publications, such as in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's *Unsere breite Gegenwart* (Berlin, 2010) and Douglas Rushkoff's *Present Shock. When Everything Happens Now* (New York, 2013). In their diagnosis of the times, they suggest that transformations of topicality are experienced as loss. From this point of view, social media itself seems to represent the here and now, displacing older media. Based on these three dimensions, in which the theme of loss plays an integral role in a social media context, this presentation argues that it is exactly this tension between topicality and loss that comprises the characteristic features of social media, and then examines the consequences this could have for research and archiving.