

The Human Observatory for Digital Existence

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This text by the team of the Uppsala Informatics and Media Hub for Digital Existence (the Hub), at Uppsala University, recounts the birth and developments of a particular form of outreach activity and collaborative research, the Human Observatory for Digital Existence, through cooperation between the Hub and a cultural institution: The Sigtuna Foundation. It is structured in three parts. In *Part I. Beginnings: a chronicle by Amanda Lagerkvist*, she tells the story of how she founded this initiative, its rationale, main upshots, a few challenges and the creation of new academic values. *Part II. Experiences and voices from the Human Observatory* is compiled by Matilda Tudor, Jenny Eriksson Lundström and Maria Rogg. Here members of the research environment and Human Observatory report about rewards and experiences of the activities of the past years. A final part, *Part III: Conclusions for the future* is jointly written by Amanda Lagerkvist and Jacek Smolicki, and points toward innovative directions in which the Human Observatory may be taken in its next phase.

PART I. BEGINNINGS: A CHRONICLE BY AMANDA LAGERKVIST

We live at a point in time when advanced technologies co-forged our very idea about *what it means to be human*. To tackle the existential implications of all-pervasive media, we must move beyond the default frameworks of analysis. Similarly, we have to challenge the boundaries of our academic institutions, both between disciplines and towards society at large. This was



Figure 1. The Sigtuna Foundation. Photo: Magnus Aronson

clear to me when I, in 2013, was appointed Wallenberg Academy Fellow, entrusted to head the project “Existential Terrains: Memory and Meaning in Cultures of Connectivity” at Stockholm University (2014–2018). With a unique aim to examine what happens to the most profound existential experiences in an era of digitalization, and a particular but not exclusive focus on death online, commemoration and bereavement, the project could not succeed in scholastic isolation. Through personal experiences of loss, I had been thrown into what the existential philosopher Karl Jaspers calls a “limit situation,” which called on me to search for an existential language outside of disciplinary and academic borders. As life and scholarship merged, my mission was thus to refigure media technologies with the help of existential philosophy in order to “existentialize” media studies. This work – and our international research as well as public outreach activities – resulted in a young conversation that we now call *existential media studies*.

A novel existential conversation about technology at an old cultural institution

Early on, relevant representatives from society as a whole were to be invited into the conversation about an ethical and existentially sustainable future with advanced technologies. That way, the project would allow for early and continuous learning by sharing work in progress with people who experienced existential repercussions of the digitalization of their professional practices, such as support organizations turning from telephone support lines to also include digital lifelines; pastoral care via email and its communicative challenges; or support groups for the bereaved that moved online.

Further, I wanted to enable a network that could last over time, where trust could be built and conversations could be ongoing. The main partner in civil society for existential media studies is and has been from the onset the Sigtuna Foundation: a cultural institution that has for over a hundred years represented and promoted unexpected meetings, boundary crossings and dialogues between culture, art, religion, science, and the humanities (<https://sigtunastiftelsen.se>). Initial exchanges took place already in the spring of 2014.¹ Here, I was given the privilege to build the platform for collaborative research and interventions, with a reference group spanning

NGOs, authorities, cultural institutions, health organizations, public intellectuals, and industry. The Sigtuna Foundation, a peaceful citadel outside of the city, with winding staircases crisscrossing the monastery-like building, has been the home of my outreach work, the organizing of international conferences, numerous network and project meetings, public activities and a book launch.

Initially, and due to the project objectives, stakeholders with a particular interest in the field of bereavement in the digital era were invited: The Swedish Funerary Directors Association, the Red Cross, the Swedish Media Council, MIND (An independent NGO working for promoting psychic health), Nationellt Centrum för Suicidforskning och Prevention, NASP (the National Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention) at Karolinska institutet, the Church of Sweden, SAMS (Collaboration for people in bereavement), and Randiga Huset (The Association for Children in Bereavement). The reference group was to meet annually at the Sigtuna Foundation throughout the Existential Terrains project from 2016–2018, under themes such as *Cyber security in times of exposure; (Digital) grief and security and new privacy protection in the EU; and Existential health and suffering in the digital age.*²

Methods of engagement have over the years included a range of formats: lectures and roundtable discussions in public, an exhibition, a filming session with the Public Service broadcaster, showcasing a documentary film, workshops, meditation and dialogues and discussions in smaller groups in relation to visual materials or other prompts. These interactional modes were also naturally chosen depending on the existing resources, the funding body’s framing and the project aim. Overall, the meeting format often included invited speakers from within or beyond the reference group, who would introduce the thematic focus that members then could react to from their respective fields of experience and expertise. In hindsight, zooming in on a common topic via lectures, has served as an excellent mode of engagement, when working with a reference group with disparate organizational logics and a plurality of experiences.

What made these meetings deeply meaningful was also what united the members, despite the different environments they represented, in their thirst for articulating lived, professional and existential experiences in an

¹ I must acknowledge the role of Professor Mia Lövheim for connecting Existential Terrains to the Foundation very early on. In the spring of 2014, meetings took place with the Executive Director Alf Linderman and Communications’ Manager Sofia af Geijerstam who strongly supported us, as the project was in affinity with one of their profiles within the research division at the Foundation: “media, culture and religion.”

² See: <https://urplay.se/program/205980-ur-samtiden-att-vara-manniska-i-en-digital-varld-digitaliserings-inverkan-pa-var-halsa>



Figure 2. The Tower Room. Photo: Magnus Aronson

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In 2019 I was granted funding within the WASP-HS program (<https://wasp-hs.org/>) for the project “BioMe: Existential Challenges and Ethical Imperatives of Biometric AI in Everyday Lifeworlds.” It is hosted by The Uppsala Informatics and Media Hub for Digital Existence, in the Department of Informatics and Media at Uppsala University. The purpose of the project is to investigate how people live with automation and to address the existential possibilities and ethical risks of increased digital-human vulnerability, as our embodied existence and everyday lifeworld become ever more entangled with biometrics.

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Humanobservatorium för digital existens: <https://sigtunastiftelsen.se/projekt/humanobservatorium-for-digital-existens/>.

era of technological transformation. For me, this required having a strong vision that could encompass difference as well as tentative trials to formulate a common ground: *the existential terrain*. As one member said to me: “You are both captain and helmsman,” and indeed the project was initiated by me, but then guided and fueled by the clout of my vision itself, and by the commitment of all aboard.

One challenging aspect of inviting experts from different fields outside of media studies to share their apprehensions about the digital landscape, is of course to be able to harbor tensions and allow for discrepancies in basic understandings of media and communication models. Patience and generosity are required for achieving a good conversation, despite different vantage points between the research team and the invited members or guests. Furthermore, a challenge but also a great opportunity in a culture of digital buzz, individualism and micro-celebrification, is to create a solemn and collective space in which all voices and experiences are equal, and where we are there as human beings with a shared cause. In a few situations, members may have misunderstood the aims, and felt there is an opportunity for them to pursue their own more specialized and breakneck agenda, in the name of the group. In these situations, clear leadership and candid communication about what the group is about and what it cannot be, is of the essence. These have however been rare exceptions. One lesson though is that to keep the group on track, it is important to formulate a shared vision or declaration of intent early on. Both the conditions for the collaborative research itself and the terms for our external communication about our objectives, must be repeatedly communicated.

Thanks to new funding,³ our cooperation with society in continued collaboration with The Sigtuna Foundation takes place since 2022 within The Human Observatory for Digital Existence,⁴ inaugurated as a regenerated form of the reference group and a platform for collaborative research. It continues to invite society into the conversation about an ethical and existentially sustainable future with technologies, now with an enhanced focus on automation. Our declaration of intent is: to monitor what happens to human value and the human condition in an era of dramatic technological change. While the word “observatory” invokes something standing sentinel, overlooking and watching – thus stressing

the sense of sight – the intentions are more diverse. The term was first of all inspired by “citizen observatories” within environmental movements of our time, but the idea, it turned out, also resonated with the legacies of the Foundation itself. For us the term underlines the fact that we are observers, that is observant of and thus followers of “human values.” In addition, the Human Observatory invokes at once a sense of being attentive to and tending to our inner worlds – our inmost human compass – as key for cultivating a healthy society with technology. As will be discussed further on in detail, an open, personal and trustful dialogue has continued to lead the way for our meetings. However, with an intention to not only invite society into the research process through collaborative research, but also to bring our collaborative conversations back to society, we have enhanced the cooperation with further cultural institutions and initiated more outward activities in combination with our intimate meetings at the Sigtuna Foundation. In this respect, the vision has been to create encounters across divides of traditional scientific boundaries, and across vastly different fields such as theology, media studies and AI engineering, and to engage a broader Swedish audience with an increasing interest in existential issues in an era of rapid technological development.

Slowing down: academic value beyond measuring

As a researcher I now have almost 10 years of experience working with cultural and other institutions and agencies in society, and looking back I can conclude that this type of work forces us to slow down. The combination of researching ultimate issues (such as death and mourning online or the existential implications of new emergent technologies) and working extensively with society through one particular cultural institution, has not resulted in a quantitatively impressive number of papers within the conference industry. Rather we have been part of the slow movement. Don’t think about this as a spring board for speed and acceleration. It’s to the contrary part of what I, in *Existential Media: A Media Theory of the Limit Situation* (2022, cf. forthcoming) call a *slow field*. Working both with cultural institutions and on vital, sensitive matters, takes a lot of time and care and fosters and requires a particular ethos of slowness, silence and waiting.

Entering into a slow field, I will caution, may thus seem to ruin your academic resumé. One might wonder if this is a good idea at all for junior scholars? Maybe not within the current system. But it ultimately depends on whether we want to reproduce the prevailing norms of the neoliberal university, or find ways to dispel them. I argue that many secret treasure troves of insight, together with imperative implications for society and technology, are in fact in the balance. Our universities have for a long time devalued these activities. They don't really count, as it were (although this seems to be changing as the Higher Education Act of 2021 reinforces a stress on the importance of outreach as a key task of the Academy). Yet this is how we build new academic values. To produce new critical thinking enabled in these collaborations, and the knowledge needed in what I call the digital limit situation – that is, an era of increased crises of which technologies are also part, and in which we are facing a grand transition – we also welcome new forms of knowledge production to provide existential direction, purpose and provocation. But these are practices that take time. These meetings of the Human Observatory, and reference group before it, have typically produced a particular language, a form of value and a clear “impact” beyond academic metrics. This also means that collaborative efforts with and through cultural and other institutions can be an antidote to the neoliberal university and its individual-centered obsession with quantification and speed, numbers and data, and its detachment from our deepest and most prized relationality; from each other and from a world that howls to us to care for it. So, in a sense this work is about valuing the immeasurable. It may be perceived as an act of rebellion, an unruly practice of worth beyond measuring. The goal as well as incentive for working with cultural institutions must thus be to raise and reformulate the deeply existential and perhaps provocative question, also for us in academia: *Why are we here?*

In the ensuing overview of what has transpired within the realm of the Human Observatory, we in the BioMe research group reflect on experiences and rewards of collaborative research, but also afford room to voices from stakeholders representing different sectors, organizations and professional environments. Part II is written by Matilda Tudor, Jenny Eriksson

Lundström and Maria Rogg, and Part III is a joint conclusion by Amanda Lagerkvist and Jacek Smolicki.

PART II. EXPERIENCES AND VOICES FROM THE HUMAN OBSERVATORY

What happens to humans in the new media and communication society? I have lived with that question as a news journalist, as a teacher in media education and as a leadership consultant in the media sector. Now there is a Human Observatory at the Sigtuna Foundation as a forum for conversations about the human in an increasingly digitalized existence. A far-sighted investment that enables dialogue and meetings across professional boundaries about common challenges in media culture. An observatory founded in a humanistic outlook on life with trust in human creative power and ability to take responsibility for our actions. With the Human Observatory, Professor Amanda Lagerkvist and her colleagues have not only created an urgent meeting place and a timely discussion on media issues, but also brought new life to the Sigtuna Foundation's humanistic ethos.

***Lisbeth Gustafsson,
Journalist, Author and Honorary Doctor of Theology***

Establishing a format for long-term investment

Throughout the BioMe project we have met annually with the Human Observatory under different themes directly related to our research interests. This has been a rare privilege. But how do you establish a format for such long-term investment by a group of professionals and intellectuals, all of which are of course torn between different obligations and expectations, such as we all are? For the kind of research that we are doing, focusing on existential questions that often require a particular mode of conversation, this sense of continuity has been what we aspired to. Building on the structure already established by Amanda Lagerkvist in her previous work together with large parts of the reference group, we have opted for a retreat-like structure with overnight stays, returning to

the Sigtuna Foundation over and over again. This has clearly benefited the consolidation of the group identity and built strong personal bonds between members, which might not always be a top priority in collaborative research. However, it has also been clear that this kind of intensive investment really requires a profound interest in the questions that have brought us together in the first place: *What happens to vulnerability and finitude in a time when embodied presence is no longer relevant? Are there indispensable values that we need to cherish, defend and perhaps enhance in face of rapid technological developments? And how do we take responsibility for an existentially sustainable human future with machines?* The common denominator has thus been individuals either working with existentially charged issues such as death, grief, spirituality and depression with a clear interest in the technological changes within their domain, or individuals working with technological developments with a clear interest in the existential challenges brought about by technology in general and automation in particular.

Thinking about the intensified public interest in AI, which literally exploded after the launch of the large language model-based chatbot ChatGPT (GPT-3) in November of 2022, it is clear that AI reinforces the need for conversations about eternal, perennial questions of existence that must involve us all. Furthermore, after our initial Human Observatory meeting in March of 2022, it was requested by members that we should continue with and develop further such broader public conversations across society, beyond the realm of our internal meetings. Over the years we have thus developed a structure, within which the group first turns inwards towards each other with different internal activities, and then outwards towards a broader audience with open activities in cooperation with cultural institutions. Since our research group includes artists and artistic research, extending into exhibitory environments and museums has served a natural starting place for developing further collaborations.

First, the research group instigated a long-term collaboration with The Swedish National Museum of Science and Technology in Stockholm, which at the time of the project's initiation was working on the five-year exhibition *Hyper Human*, exploring issues such as AI, genome editing and body hacking together with questions about aging, death and

human values. Being a perfect fit for us, we were invited by the museum's curator Magdalena Tafvelin Heldner, to contribute with an installation in cooperation with industry representatives working with biometric face models. The exhibition and the museum thereafter constituted an exemplary site for the Human Observatory's more public activities and field work. Here, we have arranged open lectures in connection to the exhibition, curated tours involving engineers, but also returned to this living dynamic space for research interviews, workshops and interventions.

Next, Amanda Lagerkvist was invited to contribute to the exhibition catalogue *Evigt Liv (Eternal Life, 2022)* with a piece called "Sex evigheter i den digitala ekologin. Om existentiella gränsmedier" ("Six Eternities of the Digital Ecology: About Existential Media of Limits"). The exhibition, curated by Clara Åhlvik from the Nobel Prize Museum and hosted by Liljevalchs Exhibition Hall in Stockholm, thereafter constituted the ground for the Human Observatory's ensuing public activity in relation to our meeting in January 2023. This was right at the start of the ChatGPT-chock wave, and right before debates began to run high about the potential extinction of the human race and other technologically determinist dystopias. The Human Observatory together with the Nobel Prize Museum co-arranged an open lecture at Liljevalchs by Arch Bishop Emerita Antje Jackelén, entitled "Is conversation possible? AI and communication about eternal issues."

It was followed by a panel consisting of Antje Jackelén, Magnus Sahlgren from AI Sweden, and our own Amanda Lagerkvist, about what it means to be human in a world of language models and chatbots. On stage they tackled several questions, from the more pragmatic issue why we should build a Swedish large language model in a world of giant tech corporations with enormous assets, to issues of whether machines can conduct an existential conversation and whether language is the actual code to the human. No final answers were given – as ChatGPT would have seemed to have done instantly. Instead, attendees testified to being pleased to hear a respectful conversation, without too much certainty and without antagonism. The panelists did not completely concur about the prospects or risks of a world of large language models – that is generative AI – but they respected that difference. The main lesson from this special evening was



Figure 3. Carin Klaesson (Moderator), Amanda Lagerkvist, Magnus Sahlgren & Antje Jackelén at Liljevalchs 19 January, 2023. Photo: Maria Rogg

the need for reclaiming the irreducible value of face-to-face conversation across divides about matters of great importance for our common future. As interlocutors between the university, civil society, cultural and religious institutions and industry, this is what we can contribute with at this moment: enabling conversations that can still matter. Working with cultural institutions provides one avenue for doing so.

Holding space for other ways of knowing

Long-term relationships are, as we know, a precious rarity in the gig economy. And yet this was established with the involved institutions and organizations. How was that possible? First, aiming to draw members of the Observatory into the very heart of the research process, the team have continuously kept participants updated on our sub-projects and preliminary research findings. Doing so has not only been a way to get feedback from members, but also to somehow give something back in terms of a privileged insight into up-to-date knowledge. This has proven to be appreciated by the represented organizations and individuals. This is also something that has been vocalized among several members as an imperative motivator for staying involved. For example, long-term member Ulf Lernéus, CEO of the Swedish Funerary Directors' Association stresses that the digitalization of their sensitive working procedures must stand in dialogue with the research community. When given the chance to reflect on their participation, members thus highlight how they use what they have acquired for their own everyday professional activities in complex areas such as mental health, funeral and bereavement support and governmental policy work. Johanna Nordin, Chief Strategist for Knowledge Development at MIND (The Association for Psychic Health), stresses this type of value and its immediate role for her in her work:

I have appreciated being able to participate in discussions and contexts that leave room for deeply meaningful conversations. We use what I have learned in the form of existential reflections in several parts of our organization's activities, for projects on mental health and in the work and training of the volunteers in our support activities....

And in the words of Kjell Westerlund, Chair of SAMS (The NGO "Collaboration for People in Bereavement"):

For SAMS and its member organizations, it has been of utmost value to have a close connection to research areas pertaining to existential issues. When life is turned upside down in connection with the death of a close relative, the existential questions are brought to a head. In an organization that works to provide support to vulnerable people in these situations, it is extremely important that that work is anchored in both own experiences and state-of-the-art science. Not least when in recent years we have seen an increasingly rapid development of digital support, the contact with research in this field is most significant.

Second, members obviously see the meetings as a much-needed pause for existential reflection and conversation from and beyond individual and professional boundaries, one that has mostly been lost in working life and public conversation. "In a cultural climate dominated by reductive naturalism, which excludes other world views from the philosophical discourse", says Edward Harris, Minister of the Church of Sweden, "I experience this forum as a dynamic context where different world views can enrich each other, in a spirit of openness, respect and rationality." Another Human Observatory member, Lisbeth Gustafsson, testifies to having lived with these questions about human existence within the new media and communication society her entire life as a news journalist, teacher in media education and as a coach and mentor for leaders in media institutions, but without necessarily having a natural outlet for them. Thus, members have also been the ones to set the tone, by leading different activities during the meetings. This has included Ted Harris' theological contemplation on the existential question: how do I want to live? – providing a theory, history of ideas and approach to living and acting ethically by cultivating intuitive, intentional and contemplative sensibilities beyond cognitive and emotional capacities. Exploring such sensibilities even further, the group has also been led by Lisbeth Gustafsson in a workshop on stillness and dialogue as an existential method, starting with a meditation in the crypt of the Sigtuna Foundation's Refugium. Contemplation was followed by a conversation based on self-reflection, story-telling and intimate dialogue.

Directed by the members' own experiences, yearnings and unique expertise, the Human Observatory meetings have thus assumed forms that might be quite far from our ordinary working methods as researchers and university employees. And not only for us. While such existential working methods might have been common ground for our members representing religious or spiritual institutions, it has presented other members with new insights. For example, long-time member Yvonne Andersson, working as a Senior Analyst and Researcher at the Swedish Media Council, describes the significance of "being able to reflect on questions and dimensions of existence for which we otherwise, whether in our working life or in public conversation, rarely find the place or time." Specifically surveying and compiling the knowledge base for Swedish children's and youth's media lives, the Human Observatory meetings have helped her shed light on other parts of young people's digital existence than the "bad role models" or "harmful content" discourses may cover. The way we see it, this is what this kind of long-term investments can do, when you allow for a common exploration – beyond academic norms of objectivity, detachment, and intellectual debate – to unfold freely. For us as researchers, such working methods raise our awareness to lived and embodied experiences of our fields of interest, in ways that we would never be able to reach only by reading or thinking among ourselves. They have had the ability to cultivate sensibilities, activate new directions, and make possible explorative discussions that entail diverse personal and professional viewpoints on our preliminary work in progress. We have come to think about these as *existential ways of knowing* (cf. Rogg in progress, Lagerkvist 2023).

A more specific existential knowledge can further be nourished from artistic interventions. Working with a reference group within the framework of cultural institutions have provided the possibilities to engage with and interact through aesthetic, material and artistic interfaces. In relation to the *Hyper Human* exhibition, Human Observatory members were divided into smaller groups thematized according to BioMe's three areas of interest: the integrity of the body, the future, and human dignity. The groups were then shown around selected parts of the exhibition that had been chosen for their ability to shed light on the different themes and to evoke questions of particular interest for the team members, provoking

engaged discussions. Similarly, at the *Eternal Life* exhibition members were invited to think about both scientific discoveries and existential questions through the associative movement between art, science and cultural history with the aim of providing different perspectives on our lives. Among other things, through a chatbot developed by AI Sweden, we were encouraged to engage in a friendly and philosophical conversation that focused on the exhibition's theme and eternal life at large. Through such active involvement – moving between the abstract and the concrete, the aesthetic and intellectual, the personal and the collective – the Human Observatory has been able to open up for artistic and existential ways of knowing, in areas otherwise largely governed by metric logics.

PART III. CONCLUSIONS FOR THE FUTURE

With the past activities of the Human Observatory as a backdrop, we may conclude that it has focused attention on *what it means to be human* in our technological era, through key existential concepts and themes such as death, security, vulnerability, loneliness, suffering, human and data integrity, the ethics of automation and conversation as well as silence as existential methods in the digital noise. In a time of increased crises and unprecedented technology developments, where do we take the Human Observatory in the Future?⁵ Observation (and consequently, the Observatory) is often associated with visual and optical methods of witnessing. The term's close connection to practices of overseeing or monitoring further reinforces this association. However, it is important to bear in mind that observing encompasses much more. This is why in our current and future endeavors with the Human Observatory, we aim to keep on embracing a wider range of modes, senses, and metaphors related to observation. Consequently, we seek to expand the array of conceptual and practical approaches through which we address the contemporary human condition. This expansion can occur in different ways. Firstly, one approach could involve giving precedence to other senses and techniques in guiding or enriching our discussions. This means intentionally shifting focus towards senses, media, registers, and practices that have been underrepresented in our perception of the world around us, such as sonic practices and acts of listening. Secondly, we could work towards broadening the conceptual perspectives from which we seek to understand what it means to be human today. In this regard, we might



Figure 4. The Human Observatory at Hyper Human, the National Museum of Science and Technology in March 2022. Photo: Jacek Smolicki

⁵ Our directions will rely on some of the projects we are already involved in. Find out more here: Uppsala Informatics and Media Hub for Digital Existence



Figure 5. Sofia och Duvan. Photo: Hans Hartman

delve deeper into the concepts of *subjectivity* and *positionality* – as well as reinvest in *existential relationality* and *community* – inviting a range of epistemologies, cosmologies, and worldviews.

Positionality has recently gained importance in studies related to how we listen to each other and the world around us. In the recent surge of interest in sound within humanities and media arts, we are already witnessing a growing inclusion of underrepresented and marginalized perspectives from which the world can be heard. Listening, perhaps more than any other existential or artistic practice, seems to lead us towards this necessary plurality more quickly than practices involving other senses and media (Smolicki 2021). Nevertheless, the task is not without its challenges. Like any form of observing and witnessing, listening always occurs from a particular vantage point. We, as individuals, will never hear each other and the world around us in exactly the same way. Therefore, positionality and inclusiveness in listening might be more about becoming aware of, and respectful towards, this inherent diversity and even incompatibility in how we perceive the world. Similar to spoken language, the act of listening possesses its own dialects. And like spoken languages, acts of listening share similarities, common origins, and resonances. In this context, the role of the Human Observatory could be, and to some extent already is, to create conditions for resonance. It can serve as a temporary space for resonant listening and sounding. In physics, the term “resonance” describes object-subject relationships as a system in which each element stimulates the others in a specific manner.

From an existential standpoint, resonance can be seen, or heard, as a form of coexistence, a dimension in which two or more forms of existence or living entities establish and maintain a certain synchrony and mutual understanding over time. Our Human Observatory meeting in January 2024 was devoted to the theme of *Digital Resonance* and included a public podcast (*På spaning efter själen – “In Search of the Soul”*) recorded by Kerstin Dillmar, Chaplain and Human Observatory member, with guests who use digital media in therapy, counselling and pastoral care.⁶ This evening revolved around the question whether we can “hear” and respond to one another and thus create authentic encounters in an era of digitality. The meeting also highlighted and explored the ethos of listening in

thought and action by placing extensive focus on the concept and practice of listening positionality and by listening to the Sigtuna Foundation in a sound walk exercise. Listening gave us some profound clues, although the real question that inevitably followed is: *how do we proceed after listening?*

In continued partnership with the Sigtuna Foundation we have the aim to both carry on with, and to step up our collaborative research efforts and dialogic endeavors. In this spirit The Human Observatory for Digital Existence continues and reinvents its custodian quest for bringing about an existentially sustainable (life)world, by observing and hearing out that which resonates with our deepest existential needs – that which is audible despite the digital noise – calling on humans to respond and engage in the digital limit situation.

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⁶ På spaning efter själen, Episode 76: Digital resonans: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/4IFzlatziecp90vBLqLdC4>.