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## Existential Sustainability: An investigation of Loneliness and Belonging in Relation to Sustainable Housing

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# At the Margins of Life: Exploring Existential Sustainability – Technology, Health, and Death

CONFERENCE 23-25 NOV 2022 | CENTRE FOR THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES



## Welcome!

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A warm welcome to participate in the conference *At the Margins of Life!* The aim of the conference is to identify and develop academic research on existential sustainability as an overarching theoretical concept and as applied to three focus areas – technology, health, and death. These areas have been identified as being particularly valuable for the exploration of existential dimensions in relation to the global Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nation Agenda 2030. The conference revolves around the following questions: How can existential perspectives contribute to new understandings of global challenges? What is an existential perspective? How can religion offer valuable resources and insights for creating future sustainable societies?

The presenters are doctoral candidates and researchers in various academic disciplines who are interested in exploring this concept. In addition, different stakeholders will also take part in the conference. Consequently, and contrary to what many of us are used to, the participants at this conference are not experts in our own respective fields of research. This challenges all who are presenting to make their contributions available to those not initiated in the field. We hope that this arrangement will prove to be fruitful for everyone involved. We will dedicate the last session of the conference to discuss possible ways for future collaborations.

The conference is part of the research initiation project *At the Margins of Life: Existential Dimensions of Technology, Health and Death* funded by the LMK foundation.

# PROGRAMME

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## Wednesday, November 23

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- 14:00-15:00 **Registration and coffee** | SOL hörsal, foyer
- 15:00-15:15 **Welcome** | SOL hörsal
- 15:15-16:30 **Keynote** | SOL hörsal  
Allan Kellehear, Clinical Professor at College of Nursing and Health Sciences and The Robert Larner College of Medicine, University of Vermont  
"Existential Sustainability at the End-of-Life: Challenges and Possibilities"
- 16:45-17:45 **Art experience** | SOL hörsal  
Film and presentation by artist Henrik Lund Jørgensen  
"The Disappearance and Return of a Beloved" Film 13 min. (2020)
- 18:00 **Dinner** | Staff dining hall at LUX

## Thursday, November 24

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- 09:00-10:30 **Parallel sessions**  
Session 1: "Existential Health and Consolation" | LUX B:129  
Session 2: "Existential Resources for Ecological Sustainability" | LUX B:336
- 10:30-11:00 **Coffee** | LUX north foyer
- 11:00-12:30 **Parallel sessions**  
Session 3: "Existential Sustainability, Market Mechanisms, and Reflection" | LUX B:129  
Session 4: "Dying and Death: Processing Existential Questions" | LUX B:336
- 12:30-13:45 **Lunch** | SOL Café

- 13:45-15:00 **Keynote** | SOL hörsal  
Noreen Herzfeld, Nicholas and Bernice Reuter Professor of Science and Religion, St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict  
"The Banality of Technological Evil"
- 15:00-15:30 **Coffee** | SOL hörsal foyer
- 15:30-17:00 **Parallel sessions**  
Session 5: "Creating Existentially and Environmentally Sustainable Practices" | LUX B:129  
Session 6: "Existential Sustainability as Interdependence" | LUX B:336
- 17:00-19:00 **Art experience** | SOL hörsal, foyer  
Workshop performance by artist Helena Fernandez-Cavada  
"A Glimpse of Time Sharing. Between Interdependence and Gratitude"
- 19:30 **Dinner** | At restaurant Ihsiri, Bytaregatan 14

## Friday, November 25

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- 09:00-10:30 **Session 7** | SOL hörsal  
"Theoretical Perspectives on Existential Sustainability"
- 10:30-11:00 **Coffee** | SOL hörsal, foyer
- 11:00-12:30 **Workshop** | SOL hörsal  
How do we proceed? Is there an interest to collaborate in smaller groups or on a larger scale?
- 12:30 **Lunch** | SOL Café

# PAPER SESSIONS

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## Thursday, November 24

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### 1 EXISTENTIAL HEALTH AND CONSOLATION | 09:00-10:30

**Marta Gasparin and Rasmus Johnsen** | Associate professors of MPP, Entrepreneurship, philosophy, and organization | Copenhagen Business School | “Craft and the Ethics of Consolation”

**Magali Ljungar-Chapelon** | Artistic researcher in digital representation and performing arts, Department of design sciences | Lund University | “Virtual sensory artistic experiences for existential health: an interdisciplinary perspective”

**Suheel Rasool Mir** | Sociology | University of Kashmir | “Challenges of Motherhood in the Border regions of North Western Himalayan Region of Kashmir”

**Chair: Carl Johan Fürst** | Professor of palliative medicine | The Institute for Palliative Care, Region Skåne and Lund University

### 2 EXISTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY | 09:00-10:30

**Anna Petersson** | Senior lecturer and Associate professor of Theoretical and applied aesthetics, Department of Architecture and Built Environment | Lund University | “Making space in the city for diverse life worlds and temporalities: an explorative investigation of the affordance and territoriality of urban cemeteries”

**Ive Brissman** | Phd History of religions, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University | “Existential Sustainability – Living with Wonder and Wounds”

**Robert Rae** | Theology | Nazarene Theological College | “Wesleyan-Holiness Resources for Eco-Theology”

**Chair: Valentin Jeutner** | Associate professor of law, Faculty of law | Lund University

### 3 EXISTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY, MARKET MECHANISMS, AND REFLECTION | 11:00-12:30

**Hanna Wittrock and Philip Warkander** | Phd Textile management | Swedish School of Textiles | “Fashion and Existential Sustainability: An Insurmountable Paradox?”

**Ida Simonsson** | Senior lecturer of Systematic theology | University college Stockholm | “Just price and sustainable markets – a theological reflection”

**Gunnar Sandin** | Professor of Architecture, planning and spatial design, Architecture and built environment | Lund university | “Architecture for existential reflection”

**Chair: Ida Sandström**, Associate senior lecturer of Architecture | LTH-LU

### 4 DYING AND DEATH: PROCESSING EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS | 11:00-12:30

**Stina Wessman** | Senior guest lecturer of Gestalt and Design for sustainable development | Konstfack | “The Bed Book - including visiting children when someone close is being cared for at the end of life”

**Johanna Gustafsson Lundberg (and Josefin Gustafsson Andersson)** | Associate professor of studies in faith and worldviews, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University | “No funeral – other rituals – perceptions on farewell practices for ‘direktare’”

**Birgit Rasmussen** | Nursing, The Institute for Palliative Care, Region Skåne and Lund University Department of Health Sciences | Lund University | “Dying patients’ wishes and priorities”

**Chair: Magdalena Nordin**, Associate Professor of Sociology of Religion | University of Gothenburg

## 5 CREATING EXISTENTIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES | 15:30-17:00

**Andreas Hopf** | Senior lecturer of Industrial design | Lund University School of Industrial Design | “Alternative facts”

**Juliet Jacobsen** | Researcher | Lund University and Harvard Medical School | “Response to existential threat: Developing a comprehensive rubric”

**Suchismita Das** | Sociology | Jadavpur University | “Death, Ancestral Worship and Environmental Sustainability in Village India”

**Chair: Martin Garwicz** | Professor of neurophysiology, Director of Birgit Rausing Centre for Medical Humanities | Lund university

## 6 EXISTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY AS INTERDEPENDENCE | 15:30-17:00

**Sandra Kopljar** and **Ida Sandström** | Associate senior lecturer of Architecture, Architecture and built environment | LTH-LU | “Existential Sustainability: An Investigation of Loneliness and Belonging in Relation to Sustainable Housing”

**Lizette Larson-Miller** | Liturgical Studies, Huron University College | Univ. of Western Ontario | “In the Midst of Death We Are in Life: Meaning in existence at the hour of our death”

**Jamie Woodworth** | PhD Candidate, Gender Studies & Institute for Palliative Care | Lund University | “Dependency work and sustainable social relations of care in the end-of-life: Feminist perspectives from Sweden”

**Chair: Johanna Gustafsson Lundberg** | Associate professor of studies in faith and worldviews, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University

## Friday, November 25

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## 7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EXISTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY | 09:00-10:30

**Anna Cabak Rédei** | Reader in Cognitive Semiotics, Centre for Languages and Literature | Lund University | “The choreography of human relations: the mise en scène of existential spleen”

**Aaron James Goldman** | Researcher Philosophy of religion, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University | “Is there a tension between de-anthropocentrism and sustainability?: On one potential pitfall of ecotheologies’ use of empirical science”

**Ervik Cejvan** | Phd Philosophy of religion, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University | “Existential Sustainability: Theoretical and Conceptual Development”

**Chair: Ida Simonsson** | Senior lecturer of Systematic theology | University college Stockholm

# ABSTRACTS

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## Keynotes

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**Allan Kellehear** | Clinical Professor at College of Nursing and Health Sciences and The Robert Larner College of Medicine | University of Vermont:

### “Existential Sustainability at the End-of-Life: Challenges and Possibilities”

There are several fundamental challenges to designing an inclusive model of existential sustainability for the end of life. These challenges are: (1) That not all end-of-life conduct can be characterized as ‘dying’; (2) That current public health data for place of death do not indicate place while ‘dying’; (3) That current data for cause of death do not indicate the social character of dying, and; (4) That an over-attention to the predicament of dying marginalizes two equally important players at the end-of-life – caregivers and the bereaved. This talk will present a quick overview of these challenges – describing the character of the problem they pose for the design of programs in end-of-life care and for existential sustainability. Finally, I will argue for the necessity of developing civic-style, public health models of end-of-life care for existential sustainability that are interdisciplinary, multisectoral, and spiritually eclectic. This is necessary if we are to address both the pluralism of our modern deathways and the challenge of creating models of care that are capable of being both ‘existential’ and ‘sustainable’.

**Noreen Herzfeld** | Nicholas and Bernice Reuter Professor of Science and Religion | St. John’s University and the College of St. Benedict:

### “The Banality of Technological Evil”

Computer technology, as opposed to traditional manufacturing, has long been labeled a “clean” technology. However, computing actually consumes a vast amount of resources and is ecologically destructive in multiple ways. Its ecological footprint is hidden behind banal terminology, metaphorical thinking, and business plans that promote addictive and unnecessary usage.

# Paper sessions

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## 1 EXISTENTIAL HEALTH AND CONSOLATION

**Marta Gasparin and Rasmus Johnsen** | Associate professors of MPP, Entrepreneurship, philosophy, and organization | Copenhagen Business School:

### “Craft and the Ethics of Consolation”

In this paper, we explore craft and slow design as a dialogically affirmative force of consolation. Although consolation may be a pat on the head in bad times, we argue that it has a more complex anthropological function, embracing and soothing an existential vulnerability for which there ultimately is no solace. To develop this thought, we draw on the work of Hans Blumenberg, who claims that consolation has played a decisive role in anthropogenesis. The setting for our paper is a 2-year study of craft practices in Vietnam. Through ethnographic accounts we explore first-hand experiences of the general acceleration of societies, with rapid economic development of the cities and consequential loss of the historical heritage, green spaces, and increase in inequalities. However, the ethnographic study also holds a more hopeful force: that of consolatory practices related to craft and slow design. These practices, we argue, presuppose a complex intersubjective and cognitive reflexivity as well as an empathic perspective-taking capacity, which is a source of ethical reflection. The primary aim with consolation is not to change the factual situation. Instead, it operates on the level of our reaction to pain, the “suffering from suffering”. In this light, the anthropological function of consolation is to make human life not only possible, but livable, by creating meandering ‘detours’, practices containing possible points of attachment and recognition with others.

**Magali Ljungar-Chapelon** | Artistic researcher in digital representation and performing arts, Department of design sciences | Lund University:

### “Virtual sensory artistic experiences for existential health: an interdisciplinary perspective”

Etymologically, the word Existence means ‘come into being’ i.e., to stand forth, arise. It also encompasses the notions of continuation, survival. Existential health refers to intertwined physical, mental, and social aptitudes enabling human beings to reflexively experience disease, infirmity and well-being and is a sine qua non for existential sustainability. Art as a decipherer of signs and revelator of truths enlightens life in all its complexity from the most absurd or horrific to the sublime. In the pyramid of human needs art is often wrongly placed at the last level whereas it instead should be depicted as grounding mortar at its basement, binding all levels together because, by expressing what it

means to be human, art deeply can contribute to give life a meaning and keep us going. Nowadays artistic and cultural experiences get prescribed in medical contexts to frame health and Virtual Reality-based experiences can be used during medical treatments to reduce stress and physical pain. This presentation deals with the ongoing interdisciplinary theoretical questioning and explorative sketching process regarding the development of a research project at the borderline between art, medicine, and technology, namely that of designing a Virtual Reality-based sensory experience that would immerse patients in a three-dimensional surrealistic visual, choreographical, and musical world. The aim of this research project would be to help patients to distance themselves from suffering in a breathing room beyond time and space opening for a shift of perspective in their perception of reality.

**Suheel Rasool Mir** | Sociology | University of Kashmir:

#### **“Challenges of Motherhood in the Border regions of North Western Himalayan Region of Kashmir”**

The socio-psychological wellbeing of ‘Mothers’ of marginalized communities, who enter the reproductive age, is worrisome. Mothers of borderland in north western Himalayas of Kashmir experience the most difficult challenge in terms of reproductive health and standard of reproductive health care. Besides this the climatic variability has effects on the health and the lives of these mothers dwelling in these inhospitable and inaccessible geographical terrains of Kashmir. The paper titled “Challenges of Motherhood in the Border regions of the North Western Region of Kashmir” aims to examine the challenges of being a mother in border regions of the northwestern Himalayan region of Kashmir. The paper studied the perceptions on Motherhood among the marginalized women in northwestern Himalayas of Kashmir. Keeping the aforementioned vulnerabilities into consideration, a qualitative study based on case study approach was carried out in highlighting the vulnerabilities faced these mothers. The study tried to locate the natality in the stream of social perceptions which has been least studied in ‘Borderland spaces’. In order to have the innovative and comprehensive framework regarding the ‘Motherhood’ experiences, the research conducted in-depth interviews regarding the perceptions of motherhood, the experiences of it, and the issues and challenges of motherhood in the borderland region of northwestern Himalayas of Kashmir.

**Chair: Carl Johan Fürst** | Professor of palliative medicine, The Institute for Palliative Care | Region Skåne and Lund University

## **2 EXISTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**Anna Petersson** | Senior lecturer and Associate professor of Theoretical and applied aesthetics, Department of Architecture and Built Environment | Lund university:

#### **“Making space in the city for diverse life worlds and temporalities: an explorative investigation of the affordance and territoriality of urban cemeteries”**

The urban cemetery is a built green environment that is both a place of death, belonging to the bereaved and their rituals of care and remembrance, and a recreational space, where people rest, walk their dog, jog, reflect in silence, or just pass through. Urban cemeteries and urban parks share some features and uses in that respect, but they also have very different meanings and functions. The restorative quality of cemeteries can be experienced differently depending on if you have a loved one buried there or not (Lai et al., 2020). In relation to death and bereavement, social and cultural encounters can also become heightened (Hallam, Hockey & Howarth, 1999), creating both conflicts and an acceptance of each other’s differences (Swensen & Skår, 2019). The presence of wild and domesticated animals can additionally have positive as well as negative effects on the contemplative and caretaking aspect of urban cemeteries (Petersson et al., 2018). Our general idea is that cemeteries, as places where existential matters are intensified, reflects views on how people, communities, and society at large make space in the city for diverse life worlds and temporalities (Foucault, 1986). We will in this presentation exploratively identify a set of affordances (Gibson, 1979/2015) and territories (Kärholm & Brighenti, 2020) in the cemetery environment and investigate where they intersect. The aim is to promote existential and ecological sustainability in a rapidly changing urban landscape.

**Ive Brissman** | Phd History of religions, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University:

#### **“Existential Sustainability – Living with Wonder and Wounds”**

The Brundtland Report (1987) defined sustainability in relation to the planetary limits and future generations climate change and the sixth mass extinction has become a new reality. We live on a damaged planet where humans are the cause of the crisis. How can existential sustainability be a tool for approaching this challenge? The fact that humans are the cause of the crisis is an existential challenge: how can humans be part of the solution? This existential dimension range between the emotional dimensions (feelings of grief and sorrow) and the ethical (how to formulate an ethic and implement it in actions). Existential sustainability must recognise these entanglements as well as vulnerability and uncertainty. Donna Haraway suggest that we should stay with the trouble and make kin. Timothy Morton address this predicament as facing humanity as a hyperobject and a future of coexistence with other species. I suggest that the existential dimension calls for



deep time perspectives which pose human species in a proportional relation to the larger-than-human-world. To solve this existential knot, it is necessary to give space for the multitude of voices of the Anthropocene. Existential sustainability can help us to explore the margins of life, to face the deep questions of how to live and survive, and learn to live with wonder and wounds.

**Robert Rae** | Theology | Nazarene Theological College:

### “Wesleyan-Holiness Resources for Eco-Theology”

Studies indicate that Christians, particularly evangelicals, rank among the least ecologically-concerned of religious and non-religious groups alike. While some denominations have made statements in support of ecological initiatives, these token gestures often represent a desire to control debate rather than genuinely engage in it. Furthermore, the lack of ecological resources in the doctrine of these traditions reinforces the assumption that the environment is not a major concern for Christians. The Free Methodist theologian Howard Snyder identifies one key driver of this attitude in evangelical traditions: the continuing ‘great divorce’ between spiritual and material concerns, whereby the primacy of ‘saving souls’ for heaven is balanced by a corresponding denigration of material existence. While this emphasis comes from the early development of many traditions, there is also a history of ecological concern that flows through from the Holiness theology of John Wesley and the early Methodist tradition in which many evangelical churches have an earlier origin. Wesley’s thought represents a unique fusion of Puritan, Anglican, Lutheran, Eastern Orthodox, and Catholic mystic traditions, forming an ‘ecumenical bridge’ between them. This paper will explore the ecological content of Wesleyan-Holiness theology, and ways in which it could be accessed and adopted by evangelical traditions which currently lack the resources for ecological sustainability.

**Chair: Valentin Jeutner** | Associate professor of law, Faculty of law | Lund university

### 3 EXISTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY, MARKET MECHANISMS, AND REFLECTION

**Hanna Wittrock** and **Philip Warkander** | Phd Textile management | Swedish School of Textiles:

#### “Fashion and Existential Sustainability: An Insurmountable Paradox?”

The fashion industry is, despite its involvement in many ambitious projects - in search of the holy grail of sustainability - one of the most toxic industries. Research on how to make fashion more sustainable can be divided into two fields: consumption and production, where the latter also includes ideas on how to make fashion production (both on the

level of garments and fibres) circular. What these research fields both lack is the inclusion of a holistic understanding of the role that fashion as a cultural phenomenon has played in modern and contemporary culture. Fashion, in its most primary sense defined by constant change, is a materialized form of the acceleration of society that has been ongoing for several hundreds of years. In addition, in an increasingly secular society, fashion has become fetishized and its symbolic value has for its consumers become almost mythical. Without addressing these deeply existential issues, fashion can never, fundamentally, be transformed into a more sustainable industry. The question of how to discuss fashion from an existential point of view spans over all three dimensions – ecological, economic and social – of sustainability, as it encompasses both of the current two fields of research on sustainable fashion. The question addresses in equal ways the organization of work (and subsequently production fashion), how free time is used (including consumer culture) and how we relate to one another and the world we live in – and where fashion plays a significant role.

**Ida Simonsson** | Senior lecturer of Systematic theology | University college Stockholm:

#### “Just price and sustainable markets – a theological reflection”

This paper explores possible resources in medieval just price doctrine for rethinking the market economy in sustainable ways. Our global economy has been deemed problematic in relation to ecological, social, and existential sustainability. There is arguably a need to rethink the market economy in relation to multiple dimensions of sustainability, also from a theological perspective. The reasons for returning to just price doctrine to look for resources for such a critical reflection are, first, that the concept of just price was a theological and economic idea, concerned with the problem of injustice, and anchored in a theological narrative of the telos of human existence – thus corresponding to different aspects of the concept of sustainability. Second, though an ethically oriented conceptualization of trade, just price was not a mere moralizing: research in the history of economic thought has shown it to be a sophisticated framework for economic analysis, containing seeds for today’s economic thought. Methodologically, the paper makes constructive use of the historical insight that ideas central to the organization of the contemporary market economy were born in the context of Christian theology. Just price doctrine and the modern market economy are worlds apart yet share critical principles. Maybe those shared principles can be used as leverage for a critical and constructive theological reflection on the existential dimensions of today’s market economy.

**Gunnar Sandin** | Professor of Architecture, planning and spatial design, Architecture and built environment | Lund University:

#### **“Architecture for existential reflection”**

Recently, there seem to be an apparent need for spaces in the city that make it possible for people to spend a moment of rest in a safe, calm and welcoming architectural environment. Apart from traditional places like libraries, cafés and churches that can offer a certain measure of serenity, there is also an increase of the number and types of so called “silent rooms”, i.e. spaces specifically designed to host prayer, reflection or short moments of recreation. These rooms may appear in institutions like hospitals, universities and airports, and in some cases such facilities are also given as architecturally designed free-standing buildings in the city or in rural context. A reason for this trend towards silent spaces could be existential reactions to the stress caused by overwhelming information, or by a reigning planning trend to densify cities, a trend that leads to fewer free spots to be in. Another more current reason could be the sudden experience of freedom resulting from states of isolation caused by the Covid-19 epidemic. What kind of demands then, could be put on design of spaces for existential reflection? Can such design even influence our habits of rest and recreation. This paper suggests that such existentially sustainable architecture is possible to achieve, providing a careful balancing of the needs of different religions, individual wishes and specific spatial circumstances are carefully weighed against each other.

**Chair: Ida Sandström** | Associate senior lecturer of Architecture, LTH-LU

#### **4 DYING AND DEATH: PROCESSING EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS**

**Stina Wessman** | Senior guest lecturer of Gestalt and Design for sustainable development | Konstfack:

#### **“The Bed Book - including visiting children when someone close is being cared for at the end of life”**

Palliative care is caring at the end of life and the most common activity relatives do when visiting kindred in palliative care is to sit around the bed and talk about everyday life. There are however many boundaries in the visiting situation when someone close is being cared for at the end of their life. You might not know what to say and the whole situation can be perceived as frightening especially from a child’s perspective. In order to offer relief to the relatives, the patient and especially the visiting child, ‘The Bed Book’ was form given as an including space in this challenging context. Through a participatory process with caregivers, families and children a set of calm activities were created as an including, playful and interactive solution. These activities build up the physical and digital version of

‘The Bed Book’. The concept is respectfully designed for the context and the visiting child aged 5-10 years. The concept consists of 3 parts; (1) a physical ‘Bed Book’ that is mounted on the bed, (2) a set of accessories designed for the context (3) a digital version that enable co creation. Some of the activities take place in relation to the care unit and some activities the child can access later to support their grief process. During autumn 2022 ‘The Bed Book’ is applied and tested at a Palliative Care Center in Stockholm.

**Johanna Gustafsson Lundberg** (and **Josefin Gustafsson Andersson**) | Associate professor of studies in faith and worldviews, Centre for Theology and Religious studies | Lund University:

#### **“No funeral – other rituals – perceptions on farewell practices for ‘direktare’”**

Recent research on funerals shows that the amount of church funerals has decreased during the last decade. In 2010 there 81% of all funerals were conducted in Church of Sweden and in 2020 only 65%. Apart from different secular funerals replacing church funerals there is also a renewed phenomenon that has become a gradually growing practice during the period which is labeled “direktare”. The concept regards people for whom there is no kind of traditional funeral arranged; sometimes formally labeled as “funeral without known ceremony”. Instead, the body is sent direct to cremation and the ash is spread out in a memorial grove. The reasons for this practice could be many, there might be no relatives, the person who died didn’t want a funeral or there might be economical reasons. An interesting aspect with this practice is that there seems to be other less ceremonial, but existentially important practices developed that frames the farewell situation in new ways that are experienced as existentially meaningful. This paper explores these new practices and analyzes them from a theological point of view where traditional theological dichotomies such as church – world, secular – religious and Christian – non-Christian are critically examined.

**Birgit Rasmussen** | Nursing, The Institute for Palliative Care, Region Skåne and Lund University. Department of Health Sciences | Lund University:

#### **“Dying patients’ wishes and priorities”**

Palliative care is an approach aiming to improve the quality of life for patients and their families and takes patients’ needs, values, and priorities as its starting point. However, previous research show that health care professionals find it difficult to start such a conversation. Certain tools have the potential to facilitate smoother conversations in this matter. The objective of the study was to explore the experiences of patients in using statement cards to talk about their wishes and priorities. Cards with 46 statements of wishes and priorities were developed and tested for feasibility with 39 patients from five palliative-care units in Sweden who chose the 10 most important cards. Six participants

died within one month of the interviews. Data from interviews and field notes were analysed using content analysis. The results showed that patients appreciated discussing wishes and priorities and the cards were considered a helpful tool in facilitating such a conversation by helping the participants to understand and verbalizing their wishes and priorities. “To be free from pain” was ranked as the highest priority by the majority and “To have staff I feel comfortable with” was ranked highest by the six most ill participants. The 20 cards developed from the study cover physical, psychological, social, existential, and practical aspects and are helpful for formulating goals of care for patients and informing the development of a core outcome set for palliative care.

**Chair: Magdalena Nordin** | Associate Professor of Sociology of Religion, University of Gothenburg

## 5 CREATING EXISTENTIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

**Andreas Hopf** | Senior lecturer of Industrial design | Lund University School of Industrial Design:

### “Alternative facts”

In 1987 the Brundtland Report “Our Common Future” proposed that sustainability must be derived from a coequal trinity of ecology, society, and economy. So far, paternalistic, and authoritarian approaches towards sustainability were and still are top-heavy, non-inclusive, even neo-colonial. This is especially true where citizens lack objective information made available in a comprehensible manner. They are kept guessing about the actual condition of their lifeworld. While a region may score well with respect to certain SDGs, local environmental factors affecting fauna and flora may still be intolerable – the problem of statistical averages. Institutions often lack the resources, and sometimes willingness, to monitor environmental factors on a highly detailed level, let alone allowing citizens to monitor the monitors. Citizen science is the voluntary participation of the public in the scientific process. It is an approach to raise awareness through collection and interpretation of environmental data where it is lacking, obfuscated, or falsified. Awareness based on inclusion in the fact-finding process allows the public to hold decisionmakers accountable and influence policymaking on many levels. Citizen science is mainly practiced by a minority of technologically skilled people, enthusiasts. To promote citizen science and foster inclusion, students of two MA industrial design courses in 2020 and 2021 were tasked to design devices that become part of the everyday life of people.

**Juliet Jacobsen** | Researcher | Lund University and Harvard Medical School:

### “Response to existential threat: Developing a comprehensive rubric”

When existential threat is salient, it can be so terrifying that it impairs cognition. Our thinking becomes tribal -- we prefer people like us and punish or exclude those who are different. Additionally, in an effort to preserve the ability to cope, the human brain instinctively creates psychological distance from the threat by categorizing death as an event that exclusively befalls others. This instinct often manifests itself as denial or unrealistic hopefulness. At the same time as cognition is impaired, a wide range of decisions must often be made in response to the threat, which may be individual (such as a cancer) or social (such as climate change). Decisions may relate to immediate survival (how to turn the wheel of a car that is out of control or choose the right chemotherapy) or more long term (how to cope and live with, or even diminish, the threat). To improve decision making in response to existential threat, we discuss the need for a rubric that accounts for and prioritizes the most relevant social, cultural, individual, and material factors that influence the human response, such as moral courage, laws and norms, social structures (fire departments), and religion, to name a few. Once we can measure the capacity of an individual or society to respond to existential threat, we can imagine making systematic improvements.

**Suchismita Das** | Sociology | Jadavpur University:

### “Death, Ancestral Worship and Environmental Sustainability in Village India”

Sociology of Death believes that life becomes more transparent against the background of death. In Indian culture death is never the end of life but it invigorates the social value system, hierarchy, beliefs and property relations of the concerned person. This paper will try to focus on how death and several forms of funerary rituals in India maintain an integrity with life and ecological sustainability. Ancestral worship is closely interwoven in Indian culture. In some Indian villages food is offered to the animals and birds in the name of dead ancestors. At the time of cremation among the Korwa tribes an ecological pyramid is usually drawn on the wall of their houses. All the stages of food cycle from worms to human is elaborated. Among the Gond tribe every part of forest bear a spiritual significance. The traditional burning ritual requires piles of wood the Gond tribe have dropped their cremation ritual to save trees to prevent shrinking of forest area. The Korwa people often bury their ancestors in the cultivation fields of the family believing their ancestors will protect them and make their fields fertile. In some parts of India clay pots full of freshly cooked food are hung from trees for the dead to eat this in turn feeds the monkeys and birds of the village. This paper will envisage how myriad forms of traditional burial customs and ancestral worships are basically fabricated to safeguard the nature which Indian people learn from their traditional way of living.

**Chair: Martin Garwicz** | Professor of neurophysiology, Director of Birgit Rausing Centre for Medical Humanities | Lund university

## 6 EXISTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY AS INTERDEPENDENCE

**Sandra Kopljar** and **Ida Sandström** | Associate senior lecturer of Architecture, Architecture and built environment | LTH-LU:

### “Existential Sustainability: An Investigation of Loneliness and Belonging in Relation to Sustainable Housing”

The strive to create sustainable societies is often addressed through the lens of social, economic-, or environmental sustainability. However, this division fails to acknowledge existential dimensions of sustainability, i.e., the fundamental concern to sustain a good and meaningful life. This paper expands the notion of Existential Sustainability in relation to socio-material dimensions and built environments. The paper responds to a double crisis in Sweden with growing loneliness and a severe housing crisis. 40% of Sweden's households are single households and the production of new homes is characterized by small apartments. At the same time mental health problems among young adults have increased, as well as the experienced loneliness among elderly. This paper explores the rich relation between housing and existential sustainability through earlier research, statistics, and data from an ongoing project with Uppsala municipality. By doing so this paper aim to further expand and deepen the discussion on existential dimensions of housing in relation to UN's SDG.

**Lizette Larson-Miller** | Liturgical Studies, Huron University College | Univ. of Western Ontario:

### “In the Midst of Death We Are in Life: Meaning in existence at the hour of our death”

For sixty years, several Christian communions have rejected the terminology of “last rites”. Within Roman Catholicism the official rejection of ‘last rites’, with its focus on the last (extreme) unction, was set aside to return to ecclesial rites and a focus on viaticum, the last communion. Anglicanism also rejected the terminology of “last rites” as the direction of twentieth century theology returned to earlier articulations of death, and a need to re-orient the prayer and ritual languages accompanying the dying. But ecclesial rites with the dying, in the midst of a dominant secular worldview, have kept a hold on the imagination of many within and beyond those who self-identify with Christian churches. The persistence of the term “last rites”, in spite of its absence in official rituals, reveals a desire to be accompanied in dying – to be in the midst of life and community in the process of dying, and to be remembered in the rites with the dead. Part of this is the

theological return to praying for the dead, to remember that in Christian theology, the dead are not yet done, they journey into the heart of God until the end of all things in the second coming of Christ. For those who do not articulate theology in classical language it is about community, and about being accompanied at the hour of our death. This essay addresses these issues through the lens of the conference's focus on existential sustainability, here through and beyond death in Christian theology.

**Jamie Woodworth** | PhD Candidate, Gender Studies & Institute for Palliative Care | Lund University:

### “Dependency work and sustainable social relations of care in the end-of-life: Feminist perspectives from Sweden”

Today's healthcare systems face considerable challenges considering demographic changes which predict a tripling of the 80+ population and a doubling of the 65+ population within the next few decades. In response to this, many countries are implementing public health strategies in palliative care to build capacity in communities to care for the sick, frail and dying. The renewed interest in research and practice in informal caregiving provokes several sociological, ethical, and philosophical questions pertaining to power, relationality, and sustainability in “dependency work” – i.e., the care of dependent others. Public health strategies in palliative care underscore the importance of public responsibility to care and social interdependency. But how can community-based dependency work be organized in a way that does not re-establish a gendered division of labor in domestic care-work, and in what way can dependency or inter-dependency be articulated in a Western culture that deeply values autonomy and choice? Such questions are at the heart of the “care crisis” in the West, and paramount to public health movements which may uncritically appeal for augmented informal caregiving and community responsibility. Using a feminist analytical perspective, this presentation will discuss the intersection of dependency work in the end-of-life – and the existential, social, and political complexities in fostering a sustainable social contract of care in the West.

**Chair: Johanna Gustafsson Lundberg** | Associate professor of studies in faith and worldviews | Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University

## 7 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EXISTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY

**Anna Cabak Rédei** | Reader in Cognitive Semiotics, Centre for Languages and Literature | Lund University:

### “The choreography of human relations: the mise en scène of existential spleen”

At the core of cultural semiotics lies the question about how the mechanisms behind the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion operates in the cultural system. To belong to something experienced as larger than ourselves gives us a sense of meaning in existence, as the psychiatrist, writer, and founder of Logotherapy Viktor E. Frankl (1990) so eminently has shown us. Today the sense of loss of meaning is one criterium for the diagnosis of depression. In 2020, 4% of the population 16-84 years old answered that they had got the diagnosis during the last year (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2022). Might even the notion of meaning in this sense be synonymous with existential health? The aim of this presentation is to shed some light on the issue of human relations and existential health. Relations are of an existential importance to us since the human, at some point in the evolution, became a “social cultural animal” (László, 2002). Research shows that loneliness is many times a larger risk factor in connection to premature mortality than exercise, air pollution and obesity (Holt-Lunstad, 2021). Mary Shelley’s novel about Frankenstein (1818/1831) and his “monster” is very much preoccupied with the question about exclusion and despair, the “being” was not born a monster he became one. Perhaps is her fictive narrative one of the most important commentaries in literature on scientific materialism (Hogsette, 2011) and what that can do to the human being? Some examples from Frankenstein, or the modern Prometheus will also be presented.

**Aaron James Goldman** | Researcher Philosophy of Religion, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University:

### “Is there a tension between de-anthropocentrism and sustainability?: On one potential pitfall of ecotheologies’ use of empirical science”

From a standpoint sympathetic to environmentalist concerns, this paper identifies and probes a tension internal to theologies that aim to de-anthropocentrize religion (usually Christianity) to pursue the ethical ideal of sustainability. Such theologies include ecotheologies (like McFague’s), theocentrism (like Gustafson’s), and other scientifically-informed posthumanist (or adjacent) thought (like Rubenstein’s critical pantheism) that build from Lynn White’s 1967 claim that entrenched dualisms associated with classical theology and Enlightenment science set the stage for environmental catastrophe. This tension, I argue, emerges from these theologies’ simultaneous commitments (a) to defend the significance of empirical discoveries in physical cosmology, evolutionary history, and geology that decenter *Homo sapiens* in the context of God’s (broader) creation, and (b) to foster

sustainable relationships between humanity and non-human nature, including animals, landforms, ecosystems, and natural processes. Despite each commitment ostensibly bolstering the other, I contend that in some contexts, they undermine one another: To achieve its ethical goal, such theologies recruit scientific insights that decenter human beings by contextualizing humanity within older and farther-reaching natural processes. Yet by so doing, the goal of sustaining non-human nature and natural processes as they are is paradoxically revealed as indexical to (some) humans’ desire to retain a status quo.

**Ervik Cejvan** | Phd Philosophy of Religion, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies | Lund University:

### “Existential Sustainability: Theoretical and Conceptual Development”

This paper proposes a direction for the conceptual and theoretical development of existential sustainability and its application as the fundamental perspective for any sustainability discourse; social, environmental, economical, technological and so on. The question of existential sustainability is radically challenging the current notion of sustainability, as it will be discussed in four steps. First, the existential is becoming through change, with implications for the notion of sustainability as a continuity without change. Second, the existential unfolds through gaps, breaks and disruptions. Sustainability attempts to secure continuity. Third, the existential is resilient to regulation. Sustainability is achieved by systematic implementation. Fourth, existential sustainability offers a pregnant critique of the current notion of sustainability: in the blind spot of the unconditional reorganisation urging a sustainable society, the new social formation will necessarily have to control the unpredictable formations of becoming through change; the sustainable society develops and innovates the same system. Finally, three principles are revealed through the critical potential of existential sustainability. Existence does not sustain repetition. The unconditional is not a demand but the unfolding of existence beyond control. Life is sustained by existence, not by optimisation.

**Chair: Ida Simonsson** | Senior lecturer of systematic theology | University college Stockholm

## Contact details

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For more information regarding the practicalities of the conference, please get in touch with Lovisa Nyman ([lovisa.nyman@ctr.lu.se](mailto:lovisa.nyman@ctr.lu.se)).

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