



Announcement of the 2026 VEGA Symposium on **"Navigating Humanity's Future on Earth"**

Date: 11 May 2026, 08:30–12:30

Venue: Beijersalen, Royal Academy of Science, Stockholm
(Metro: Universitetet; bus stop: Universitetet norra)

The 2026 Vega Symposium honors Professor Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and Professor in Earth System Science at the University of Potsdam, who has been awarded Vega Medal 2026 for his scientific contributions to Physical geography. Johan Rockström is an internationally recognized scientist on global sustainability and Earth resilience. He led the development of the Planetary Boundaries framework for human development in the current era of rapid global change. He is deeply involved in research on the future trajectory of the Anthropocene and tipping points in the Earth system.

After 11,000 years of remarkable climatic stability, humanity now faces a convergence of crises affecting both built and natural environments, public health and well-being, economic security, and overall societal resilience. There is no doubt that Earth is undergoing multiple, interacting global environmental changes that collectively threaten the stability of the Earth system and, consequently, the foundations for human development. Professor Rockström's talk provides an updated scientific assessment of the risks associated with destabilizing our planet and our climate, redefining the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. Evidence shows that six of the nine Planetary Boundaries have already been transgressed. The science is unequivocal: increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events is one of the consequences of surpassing 1.5 °C of global warming a true biophysical limit beyond which numerous Earth system tipping points are not only likely to be triggered but may also cascade.

Professor Katherine Richardson contributes her expertise on the role of life in the Earth system, emphasizing how interactions between the biosphere and geosphere shape the state and functioning of the planet. Professor Emily Boyd offers an interdisciplinary perspective on poverty, livelihoods, and resilience in the context of global environmental change, focusing on No Return to Ithaca? Who Gets to Stay in a Warming World. She explores a central question: Why do people stay? What does the act of staying whether driven by necessity, attachment, or resistance reveal about justice, loss, and unequal rights to remain in a warming world? Navigating humanity's future involves not only where people may go, but also who is able, or permitted, to stay. Professor Louis Kotzé adds the legal dimension by examining how the emerging understanding of the Earth as a complex system is reshaping the field of law. His presentation interrogates the slow but increasingly evident re-orientation of legal frameworks toward planetary or Earth-system perspectives. Traditional approaches to environmental law are being re-imagined in light of innovative concepts such as Earth system law, planetary law, planetary boundaries law, and Anthropocene law each informed by the latest insights from Earth system science.

Programme

8:30 *Opening of the Vega Symposium.*
Associate professor Madeleine Bonow,
President of SSAG and Chair of the
symposium.

08:40 *Introduction, Associate professor*
Lina Polvi Sjöberg, Moderator of the
symposium.

08:50 *Update of the State of the Planet*
Professor Johan Rockström, The Potsdam
Institute for Climate Impact Research,
Germany.

09:30 *The role of life in the Earth system*
Professor Katherine Richardson,
University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

10:00 Coffee and poster session.

11:00. *The Earth System: A New
Constitution for Law?* Professor Louis J.
Kotzé, Wageningen University &
Research, Netherlands.

11:30 *No Return to Ithaca? Who Gets to
Stay in a Warming World,* Professor Emily
Boyd, Director of the Beijer Institute,
Stockholm Sweden.

12:00 Discussion.

12:30 Closing of the Symposium.

12:30-13:00 poster session continues with
Best poster award

The symposium is free of charge and open to anyone.
Most Welcome!

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