SUMMARY















HOSS FORUM 2026

Sustainable agenda-setting in uncertain times: Collective action and new alliances



TURNING UNCERTAINTY INTO ACTION

The House of Sustainable Society (HoSS) brings together different perspectives to tackle pressing sustainability challenges. By connecting research with business, policy, and practice, the goal is to foster shared understanding and contribute to solutions for a more sustainable future.

The annual HoSS Forum is an important part of this mission. It creates a space where researchers, business leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders can exchange ideas, challenge established thinking, and explore how knowledge can translate into action.

The 2026 theme, “Sustainable agenda-setting in uncertain times: Collective action and new alliances," reflected a growing challenge: how to maintain momentum when economic, political, and environmental conditions are increasingly unpredictable.

Uncertainty can encourage a "wait and see" approach. But uncertain times can also create opportunities to shape the agenda and influence decision-making. This calls for collaboration, shared understanding, and the ability to build alliances across sectors.



Opening remarks: Setting the scene for transformation

Professor Lars Strannegård, President of the Stockholm School of Economics, opened the Forum by highlighting the role of the House of Sustainable Society and its Forums in bringing together different perspectives on sustainability.

He provided a broader context for this year's theme, connecting the Forum's discussions to the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue and the role of academic institutions in addressing complex societal challenges.

By bringing researchers into conversation with decision-makers from business and politics, he applauded ambitions to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and create opportunities for new ideas and collaborations.

Welcome address: Shaping the agenda in uncertain times

Associate Professor Torkel Strömsten, interim Center Director of the House of Sustainable Society, welcomed participants by highlighting the importance of agenda-setting in uncertain times. While uncertainty can encourage decision-makers to delay action, it also creates opportunities to shape what happens next.

He emphasized that the power to set an agenda is also the power to influence decisions. Achieving this requires building alliances, mobilizing collective effort, and bringing together different perspectives.

Strömsten connected this to the mission of the House of Sustainable Society: to create opportunities for academia, business, and policymakers to collaborate beyond disciplinary and organizational boundaries.





Julie Battilana: Making sustainability change happen – and last

Professor Julie Battilana's keynote, "From sustainability agenda to lasting change: Power and collective capacity in uncertain times," explored why sustainability transformations are difficult and what makes them last.

Battilana emphasized that change is rarely straightforward and can be challenged or reversed, particularly during economic and political uncertainty. Sustainability also requires businesses to look beyond financial performance and consider their wider impact on society.

She identified three drivers of change: challenging the status quo, developing innovative solutions, and bringing different actors together. Recognizing the need for change is only the beginning. Turning ideas into lasting results requires coordinated efforts across organizations and society.

Drawing on her research on organizations balancing financial and social goals, Battilana highlighted the importance of aligning incentives, leadership, and organizational practices to manage competing priorities. Rather than eliminating tensions between different objectives, successful organizations find ways to balance them over time.

Battilana also stressed the role of power and collective action in mobilizing support for change. Beyond individual organizations, she called for broader reforms, including taxation and incentive systems that reward businesses for creating societal value.

Her key message was that sustainability requires both organizational innovation and systemic change, supported by collective action and the persistence to continue despite setbacks.



John Hassler: Why the green transition is the safer choice

Professor John Hassler's academic address, "The green transition – a way to reduce uncertainty," challenged the idea that uncertainty provides a reason to delay climate action.

Hassler explained that carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for a very long time, meaning today's emissions affect future temperatures. At the same time, considerable uncertainty surrounds both the extent of future warming and its economic and social consequences.

This creates a fundamental challenge for policymakers. Waiting for more information may seem sensible, but uncertainty is unlikely to disappear, while continued emissions increase the risks.

He argued that moving toward climate neutrality is less risky than continuing with business as usual. If climate risks prove smaller than expected, the costs of a gradual transition may be manageable. But if action is delayed and the consequences are more severe, the losses could be enormous.

Hassler also emphasized that economies can adapt over time, making a steady, well-planned transition possible without excessive economic costs.

Drawing on EU climate policies, he highlighted the importance of credible, long-term commitments to phase out fossil fuels and support a more sustainable economy. Stable policies give businesses the confidence to invest in new technologies and methods.

With the right policies in place, a gradual transition to climate neutrality can reduce uncertainty, limit future climate risks, and give businesses the confidence to invest.



Michael Power: Rethinking accounting for a sustainable future

Professor Michael Power's academic address, "Accounting Temporality and Sustainability," examined how accounting shapes our understanding of sustainability and influences organizational decisions.

Power questioned whether common reporting standards and comparable sustainability data are enough to drive meaningful change. Measurement can improve transparency, but reporting alone does not guarantee action.

He discussed the relationship between accounting and time. Traditional accounting focuses on financial performance and measurable obligations, while consequences for sustainability may not be visible for decades. This raises an important question: when should organizations act on future risks, particularly when their scale and timing remain uncertain?





Waiting for complete evidence can delay necessary action, but anticipating future consequences requires judgment about which risks deserve attention and how to measure them.

Rather than relying on a single accounting framework, Power advocated for diverse reporting approaches that reflect different perspectives, time horizons, and measurement methods. He also encouraged greater openness to forecasting and prediction, emphasizing that estimates need not be perfectly accurate to support decisions.

His message was clear: sustainability reporting must go beyond measurement to also encourage responsibility and action. By recognizing future risks earlier and connecting information to decision-making, accounting can help organizations address sustainability challenges before their consequences become unavoidable.



Panel discussion: Navigating the green transition together

Fredrik Ekström, CFO of Alfa Laval
Thomas Hörnfeldt, VP Sustainability at SSAB
Isabella Lövin, Member of European Parliament
John Hassler, Professor at Stockholm University

The Forum concluded with a panel bringing together perspectives from business, policy, and academia on how to advance sustainability amid economic and political uncertainty.

Ekström highlighted the role of innovation and energy efficiency in advancing sustainability. Despite economic and geopolitical uncertainty, companies should act on opportunities available today rather than wait for future technologies.

Hörnfeldt focused on SSAB's transition to fossil-free steel production, seeing a need for access to clean energy, stable long-term conditions, and collaboration across value chains. He underlined the importance of giving partners confidence to invest and bringing sustainability solutions closer to customers.

Lövin stressed the importance of stable, long-term policies to encourage investment, linking the green transition to energy security, competitiveness, and responsibility toward future generations.

Hassler cautioned against overstating uncertainty, calling for clear policy objectives and flexibility. He also addressed science's role in policymaking, acknowledging that research does not always translate directly into policy.

The panelists agreed on the importance of avoiding polarization and building understanding across different interests.

A common thread ran through the panel: the green transition requires innovation, political commitments, and cooperation between business, policy, and science to turn ambitions into action.



From uncertainty to collective action

The HoSS Forum 2026 brought together different perspectives on a shared challenge: how to advance sustainability when the future is uncertain and the path forward is contested.

Although the speakers approached the issue from different disciplines, their contributions revealed common themes.

Lasting change requires collective action and the ability to mobilize support. Climate neutrality can reduce long-term risks, but it depends on credible policies and coordinated investments. Sustainability reporting must help organizations recognize future challenges and translate knowledge into decisions. And progress depends on collaboration between businesses, policymakers, researchers, and society.

Together, these insights reinforce the importance of creating spaces where different perspectives can meet and challenge one another.

This is central to the mission of the House of Sustainable Society. Addressing society's most complex sustainability challenges requires not only new knowledge, but also the capacity to connect that knowledge with the people, institutions, and decisions that shape our future.

This year’s Forum demonstrated the value of bringing together research, business, and policymaking to build shared understanding and turn ideas into action.

Uncertainty may complicate the path toward sustainability, but it also makes collaboration, leadership, and collective action more important than ever.



PROGRAM

Opening remarks	Professor **Lars Strannegård** President of the Stockholm School of Economics
Welcome address	Associate Professor **Torkel Strömsten** Interim Center Director of the House of Sustainable Society
Keynote address	From sustainability agenda to lasting change: Power and collective capacity in uncertain times – **Julie Battilana**, Professor of Organizational Behavior at Harvard Business School and Social Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School
Academic address	The green transition – a way to reduce uncertainty – **John Hassler**, Professor of Economics at the Institute for International Economic Studies at Stockholm University
Academic address	Accounting, temporality and sustainability – **Michael Power**, Professor of Accounting at the London School of Economics and a Fellow of the British Academy
Panel discussion	Navigating transformation: Business, policy and science in the age of uncertainty – **Fredrik Ekström**, Chief Financial Officer, Alfa Laval – **Thomas Hörnfeldt**, Vice President Sustainability, SSAB – **Isabella Lövin**, Member of the European Parliament – **John Hassler**, Professor of Economics, Stockholm University Moderated by **Catarina Rolfsdotter-Jansson**

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CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

At the House of Sustainable Society (HoSS), we connect research with business, policy, and practice to advance knowledge and action on sustainability.

Through lectures and seminars, we bring together researchers and external stakeholders to exchange ideas and explore pressing societal challenges. By sharing insights from our research, we also make the knowledge more accessible and relevant beyond academia.

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