Today, I'd like to look back at the past 11 years, examining what has taken us from the slightly grim year that was 2019 to today, year 2030, where we are one of the institutions actively powering the transition into a sustainable society.

In 2019, not many could have imagined us being where we are today. The decade had been characterized by increasingly alarming reports on the looming ecological and societal collapse. The scientific community had been sounding alarms for decades - but by 2019, despite children protesting, with millions of people in the streets and movements of civil disobedience only growing stronger, emissions of GHGs were still increasing, and proportional political action was nowhere near in sight.

Instead, the mainstream discussions somehow mostly got stuck on individual action, rather than how to achieve and sustain a systematic, large-scale transition into a sustainable society.

2020 was the year that things changed, at least at LU. Looking back, what set us apart was how we acknowledged our ideal position in society, and our responsibility to use that to be bold, brave, risk-taking and innovative. An esteemed, knowledge-driven, rather than profit-driven institution, with local, regional, national and global connections. We had access to an insurmountable capital in competence and knowledge, employing nearly 7,000 and educating well over 40,000 great minds covering a wide, interdisciplinary spectrum of society. With this in mind, setting our ambition levels to a minimum, only aiming for the goals making up the lower bar - which we weren’t even succeeding with then - would have been a failure.

Instead, we are here today.
At the start of 2020, a central sustainability team was formed at LU, with full- and part-time employees and trainees. No longer was sustainability something that was simply expected to happen spontaneously, under-prioritized, insufficiently resourced, and with an ambition level settling for acceptable. Instead, sustainability became an overarching goal that the university prioritized, using its breadth and depth to tackle. 

**Lund University started working systematically and proactively with sustainability.**

With newfound energy, LU bravely transformed into what we know it to be today - the world's most sustainable university. As part of this, we started by looking at our local impact.

**Do you even remember** how ridiculously poor something as fundamental as waste management used to be at LU? The availability was varying to say the least, and there used to be these bins over at campus that had three openings - paper, plastic, trash, which all just led to the same bag - and this is far from an extreme example of lacking local sustainability. We consumed a of couple thousand single-use cups **every day.** People struggled to find a parking space for their bikes, year in, year out. LUs most common flight destination then was Stockholm, despite the train rides being cheaper and more time effective. The University had funds amounting to 1.6 billion SEK, without having ensured they were financing sustainable initiatives.

**What I listed just now** wasn’t a result of anyone being evil, but rather a symptom of a complete lack of systematic and proactive sustainable leadership. It was a symptom of lack of organizational infrastructure - preventing us from using our full potential to go beyond what most other institutions were capable of.
This has now changed. Within a couple of years, LU become carbon neutral, finally aligning ourselves with, then going beyond, the goals set by the region of Skåne, showing that we can be more than just any other establishment.

And out of all Swedish universities, LU, one of northern Europe's largest, had unique opportunities, being a broad university with a strong position of legitimacy regionally and internationally. We finally made use of that to be bold, brave, and innovative. We acknowledged that the path forward was unknown, unexplored, and would require risk-taking. But who was better equipped than we to help discover what the path to a sustainable future would hold?

Hence, we did more than address the low-hanging fruit. I thought I’d mention some of the landmark changes.

Through a specialized fund, LU enabled researchers and students from all fields to finance initiatives targeting sustainability at small and large-scale in society, accelerating the change we so desperately needed.

LU increased collaboration with regional initiatives and policy makers focused on sustainability, providing students and researchers ways to actively contribute to society within their field, at the same time verifying hypotheses and strengthening the relevance of academia.

This was, for example, what lead to how we today procure food served at LU through partnerships with local sustainable farmers, accelerating the spread of perennial farming.
The university worked to **better include underrepresented groups**, acknowledging that societal sustainability would be necessary to realize fair ecological sustainability.

Moreover, LU made **remote meetings the norm**, and changed the outdated culture in research where long-haul flights was somehow seen as a direct indicator of success and seniority.

Speaking of which, in 2021 we held our **first large-scale digital conference**. It was the first of its kind, where physical rooms were linked across 100 universities all around the globe to organize what became an annual sustainability conference, where academic institutions share findings, innovation, and challenges between themselves and policy-makers. Being a remote conference, we saw participation from all around the world - from Kiruna to Cape Town, Córdoba to Lagos to Kuala Lumpur - a reach that could never have been made possible with a traditional conference. This, without any flight-related emissions.

Another important aspect is how sustainability and the challenges thereof was **brought into all education at LU**. And not only with a small course in the basics of Climate change, but rather on how each individual field impacts, and is impacted by, the societal transformations in motion. We started educating sustainability in a way that went beyond just ticking a box, instead empowering students to become change-agents for a sustainable society, before and after graduation.

Many of the things **mentioned** just now were **already growing in 2019**, and well before that, but they were initiatives led by individuals or small groups of people, having to work against the system, with no infrastructure or resources
to help them realize their ambitions. Needless amounts of energy and time had to be spent on navigating the way to the right people at the right time, between busy schedules and ambiguous leadership. As a result of the change in how LU prioritizes sustainability, LU quickly became a **recognized institution** on the matter, an engine and a hub for collaboration, resulting in new partnerships with both swedish and international actors. Back in 2019, increased sustainability was sometimes argued to be at conflict with **internationalization**. But look at where we are today, with stronger international collaboration and legitimacy than ever before.

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**The challenges of attaining a** society sustainable within our planetary boundaries are far from over - we will need to continue working together for generations to come.

**With that being said,** today in 2030, LU stands as one of the institutions ready to tackle our time’s largest challenge.

With **8 faculties and 65 institutions** covering a wide, **interdisciplinary** spectrum of society, employing and educating great minds, we’re equipped to research, educate and collaborate on all aspects of sustainability. And as the world’s most sustainable university, this mindset pervades all that we do.
As a final thought experiment, I want you to imagine where we would be today, if it had not been for how we acted in 2019 and 2020. If we had continued on the same dangerous path, remaining passive. If we had not started taking the research that we ourselves produce seriously, leading the way to a sustainable society by showing the way and being bold, brave, risk-taking and innovative. Without a doubt, we would have become an obsolete institution, with diminished legitimacy. Instead, we are a catalyst in the transition for a sustainable society, a role model, and an academic institution that can remain relevant for another 400 years.

Thank you.