

## **Interview with Prof. Anders Hagfeldt - new Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University from 1 January, 2021**

### **Hi! And congratulations to the nomination! How does it feel?**

– Thanks! It was sort of dizzying when it happened. It was not something I thought about, but of course it feels very exciting! It is an appointment you cannot refuse to be interested in. I didn't think of my chances as particularly great. But when I went on in the appointment process, it felt really exciting and challenging at the same time. I am not entirely sure I know what I am getting myself into. Time will tell.

### **But it has sunk in now?**

– Yes, it has, I must say. At first it was quite a lot of work to inform people here, what happened. An ongoing work that continues - to phase out what we have here. Therefore, that is sort of what's been the main focus in my head. It has taken energy. Many people are affected. You realize it when you have made such a decision: that it is not just you yourself who is affected. So we have been working with that. Then I visited Uppsala in the middle of August and when you are there you start to feel that it actually happens. In Uppsala, I had a meeting with Eva Åkesson who informed me a little about what is going on. So it feels like it has sunk in but there is a lot going on and things I need to process.

### **Do you know when the Government will make the official decision?**

– No, no one knows. Eva Åkesson received the decision concerning her appointment in November, so it will take its time and there is nothing you can do about it. Meanwhile, I am proceeding with our plans regarding housing, moving-transport and things like that.

### **Is the moving transport booked?**

– Yes, we are looking in to that now. I have the car here, so I will take the car to Sweden and Uppsala. We will start our journey somewhere around December 12.

### **I heard you did not know who nominated you. Have you found out by now?**

– No, I still do not know. I did not know then and still do not know who it was or how it happened. I received an email from the recruitment consultant stating that I was nominated with a question of whether I was interested or not. That was the beginning of it all.

### **How have you experienced your work at EPFL? Because I know it was a bit of your dream job then, to succeed Grätzel?**

– It has been a great experience, I have to say, if you look at the research and so on. I have enjoyed myself very much here and had really no thoughts of leaving here at all. At least not in a few more years. But the appointment as Vice-Chancellor for Uppsala University was kind of special.

### **From one dream job to another?**

– Yes, that is weird, but that is how it was. I would have turned down almost every other job, I think. But it has always felt like home when I come to Uppsala, it has continued to be my home in some ways. In addition, Vice-Chancellor was something special, so I could not say no to that, as I said. Otherwise, it has been very good here. Grätzel has continued to work so we have worked together,

with extensive activities and at a high pace. Intense and very ambitious people come here. You have really gotten the feeling of that full speed environment. So it's been fun.

**One thing I have heard is that there were many who voted for you because of your focus on renewable energy. What do you think about it?**

– I have always felt that interest. It is always in focus when you do research on solar cells. Several interests combines. It is partly purely scientific and more fundamental how things work, but the connection to solar energy and renewable energy has always felt important. It has been an important piece of the puzzle. Although sometimes in research, one is quite far from such issues. You are more into details and far from applications, perhaps. Nevertheless, that it is still there. The possibility that basic research leads to something that can be important for renewable energy. It has always felt important to me.

**Climate focus is an issue that is raised more and more - also at Uppsala University and there is a lot of research in that area. I also know that there is an active climate network at the university. Is this a issue you are interested in?**

– Absolutely. I also thought that this is what is most exciting as Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University - something that you feel immediately, that “this is cool”: The fact that Uppsala University is a complete university. It is so broad, everything is there, and such issues as climate and sustainable development are broad issues. So spontaneously, you feel that there is a lot Uppsala can do by collaborating across very different areas. From technology to medicine. Therefore, I think that Uppsala has a huge opportunity to find collaboration across all borders for such an issue as climate and sustainable development.

**If I am correctly informed, I understand that you must have another employment registered at the University and that it will probably be with us, at Physical Chemistry? I.e. that you have a basic position from which you are on-leave during your time as Vice-Chancellor?**

– Yes exactly. I look forward to that too! It feels good and natural in some way that you are still a professor at the university and that the Vice-Chancellor is a time-limited job that you do. So it feels very good to get back to chemistry in Uppsala in that way - even as a researcher with teaching etc. Even though as Vice-Chancellor, I do not expect to have much time left for those things.

**Nevertheless, you have had regular contact with Physical Chemistry during your time at EPFL?**

– Yes, I have. Both in regards to research collaborations, but my friends are also there, of course. So, I have. Absolutely!

**Speaking of Uppsala, it feels like it is Uppsala, apart from Lausanne, that have mattered the most, from the studies until the last years as dean of the Chemistry section. So maybe your heart beats a little bit extra for chemistry - despite the role as Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University?**

– Well, as Vice-Chancellor for Uppsala University, it beats for the whole university, of course. That is important. Nevertheless, from my studies and along the way, the friends one has made in Uppsala are connected to Physical Chemistry, I must say. So, that is where my heart is really.

**I know that it was you who took the initiative to celebrate the Year of Chemistry 2011 in Uppsala. Among the many different activities, one of the things you worked hard for was the idea to lay tiles in the form of the periodic table on the pedestrian street. However, despite the interest from municipal politicians, you did not manage to get them to approve the project. In the role of Vice-Chancellor, do you think you have the opportunity to get a new chance now?**

– Yes, now damn it, we will get it in place! No, but absolutely. In fact, I think the idea is still very good: The connections to Uppsala and the elements, and the fact that there are many elements that was discovered in Sweden and especially in Uppland. Then we have Scheele with oxygen, etc., and “Uppsala - the city of knowledge” on top of that. So using the pedestrian street for something like that feels like something good. As you said, many people were positive to the idea. The politicians were in favor of it but it got stuck in the technical office. A little tough, but what can you do. There are many reasons to bring it up again. Generally, I think there are more of this type of things that we can show off in Uppsala, what happened here. We have e.g. the Celsius house. When we have international guests, we usually want to show the pedestrian street to show the place where Celsius were active. The Celsius unit is familiar to everyone, but not many people know that he was from Uppsala, for example. I also think it is worth a bigger sign. Today there is a tiny little sign that shows he was there. There are a lot of that in Uppsala that you can show off. Dag Hammarskjöld and other people. I think that sort of things would be fun to work with, the university and the municipality together: To care for the history but also, of course, the future.

**The “third task”, to reach out with the research to the public?**

– Absolutely! I think it is fun, and important. I also think it is important to see that we can attract both international researchers and students. Uppsala is a classic famous university city, but you can do a lot to attract international people in that way too, I think. So, there are a lot of things in that area to consider.

**I believe that I have asked you all my questions but is there anything special that you would like to add, any thoughts?**

– I feel like autumn is a period "listening and learning". Eva Åkesson does the handover very well. We have had three meetings so far, where she has gone through a bit of what is relevant at the moment. You realize that there is a lot going on: Right now, there has been a need of quick decisions regarding the university entrance exams, amongst other things, and then there is issues concerning infrastructure and rules of procedure and everything else that is going on. It is a broad spectra of a lot of things. I have met with the vice-rectors as well, to say hello and get to know them and learn a little bit about how the areas work and so on. So that's what I have in front of me at the moment.

**Is there an ongoing procedure for the appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor?**

– Yes, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor is on the way. On any given day, it is officially who the candidates are.

**Do you have some say in that appointment?**

– The rules of procedure state that the future Vice-Chancellor must be consulted. Therefore, I have been in discussions about candidates with the recruitment group to listen and learn a little who the candidates are and ask any questions that I may have. But then it is up to the Electoral College to decide.

**To provide the best conditions for a good cooperation?**

– Yes, that is important. This person is someone that you will work closely with for several years. And, as I have learned from Eva, it can be a need for both speedy decisions and intense work sometimes, so it is important that we work well together. I look forward to that. It will be exciting to see who it will be eventually.

A transcription of a live interview with Anders Hagfeldt from 29 September, 2020

**Then I want to thank you so much and wish you the best of luck! We look forward to seeing you in Uppsala!**

– Thank you, the same to you!