

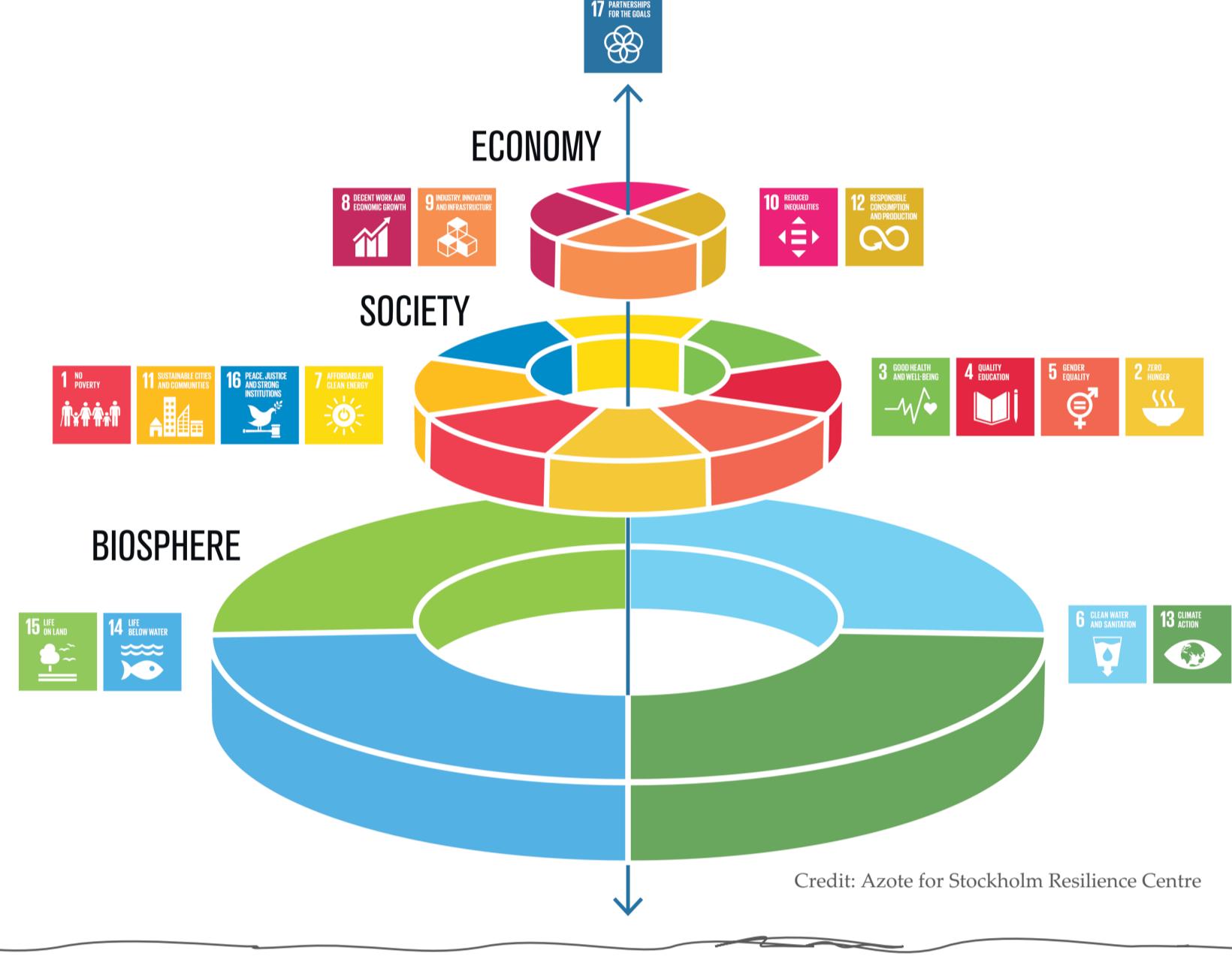
# Fostering sustainability transformation

## Collaborative action research at HSG

### Context and stance

- We live in a time of systematic eco-social crises and grand challenges.
- Sustainability transformations – fundamental changes in societal cultures, structures and practices through which established socio-technical systems shift to more sustainable modes of production and consumption (Markard et al., 2012; Loorbach and Wijsman, 2013) – are now needed more than ever.
- Business schools are important leverage points for a sustainability transformation with our impacts through teaching, research and societal engagement. These impacts are currently not just positive (e.g. Ghoshal, 2005; Nyberg & Wright, 2022).
- Calls are increasing in frequency and urgency for management scholars to help tackle grand challenges (George et al., 2016), conducting engaged (Van de Ven, 2007; Bansal & al., 2018; Hoffman, 2021) or activist (Gray, 2023) scholarship in general or action research in particular (Bradbury et al., 2019; Langley et al., 2023).

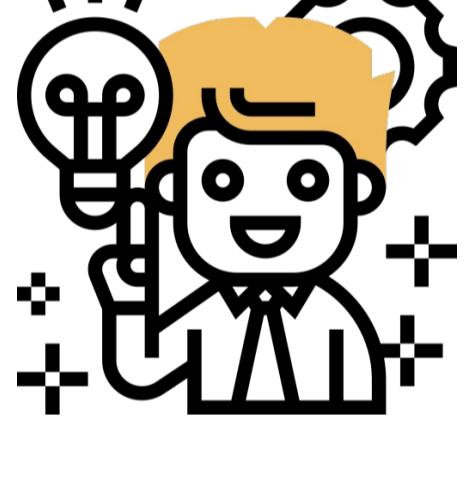
More than a third into the Decade of Action, we are convinced that as young researchers, we have the best chance of positively contributing to tackling our grand challenges in an action research mode.



"We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide. It is in our hands."

– Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, 2022

### Insider change agents for long-term sustainability transformation within organizations

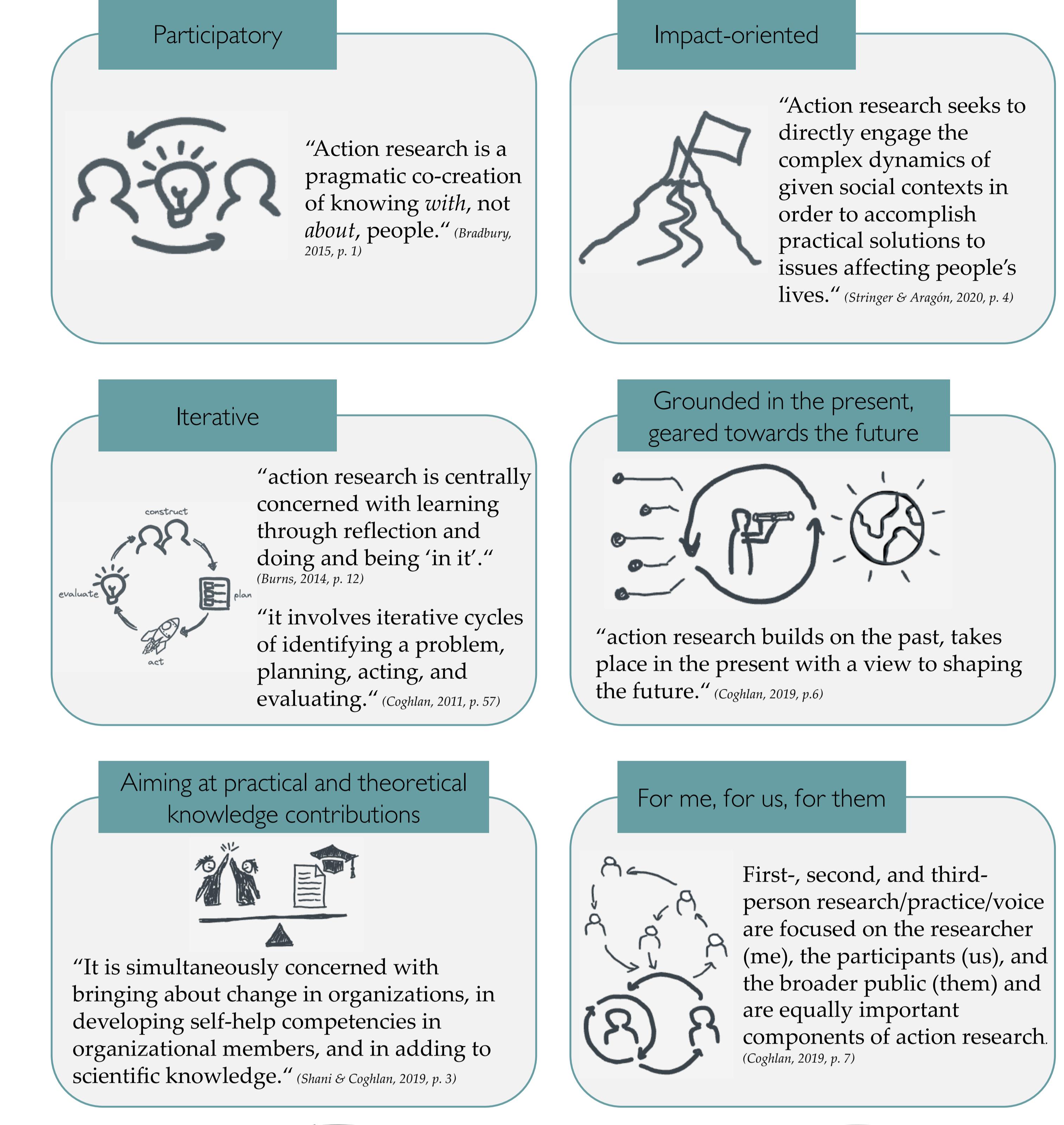


Tempered radicals (Meyerson & Scully, 1995), institutional entrepreneurs (Bettilana et al, 2009), social intrapreneurs (Alt & Gerardts, 2019), internal activists (Carrington et al., 2019) are all internal change agents participating to the sustainability transformation of their own organizations.

- Working towards transformation requires change agents inside organizations to initiate it, implement it and scale it.
- My action research focuses on the insider change agents phenomenon at the individual/group level within HSG.
- Focus on the role of the individuals in the sustainability transformation process: how do they create lasting change? How can it be leveraged?

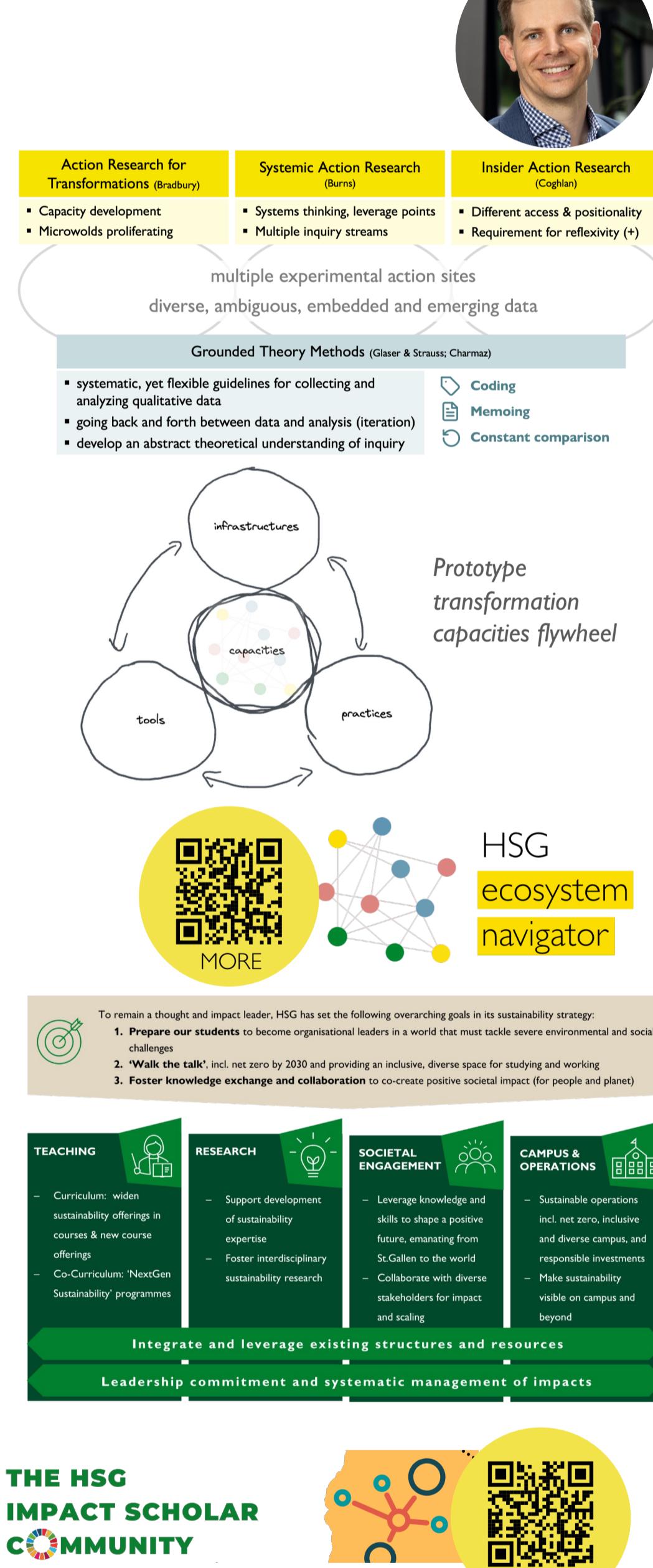
#### Data collection: Cycles with the members of the Positive Impact

Collaboration thematic group 'Change agents' using narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2022); Semi-structured Interviews ; Personal Memos



### Co-creating scaffolding for a sustainability transformation at HSG

- Three experimentation sites / modes of action
  - collaborating with oikos students around ChangeHub and the HSG Ecosystem Navigator
  - co-development of HSG's updated sustainability strategy
  - community development and engagement with HSG Impact Scholar Community and PIC
- I'm blending different flavors of action research (Bradbury, 2022; Burns, 2014; Coghlan, 2019) and use (constructivist) grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2014) as a supporting data analysis infrastructure.
- Robust action (Ferraro et al., 2015; Gehman et al., 2022) as a theoretical framework for tackling grand challenges influences the the development and conceptualization of my action research.
- Working towards transformation requires collaboration and capacity development at the individual, organizational and systemic level.
- Capacity development can be facilitated by co-creating scaffolding in the form of new participatory infrastructures, tools and practices and effectively interweaving those with existing activities
- Guinea pig for an action research PhD at HSG



### Positive Impact Collaboration (PIC)



- WHY**
- Broad range of activities in the HSG ecosystem
  - Lack of awareness and untapped potential for collaboration
  - Scaling positive impact

- HOW**
- Bridge organizational boundaries and stakeholder groups
  - Develop capacities for collaboration and timely action
  - Learn from and support each other, scale impact
  - Regular meetings (4x / year) and self-organized thematic groups
  - Self-organized and open to everyone interested
  - Environment of trust, open-mindedness and appreciating each other

**WHO**

### Developmental Reflexivity

- Bi-weekly sessions with an alternating focus on action and reflection
- Sharing experiences of doing action research at HSG
- Engaging in action research exchanges beyond HSG
- Turning the camera on ourselves, seeing more of ourselves (Bradbury, 2022)

"We invite authors to reflect on what they've learned and acknowledge the role participants, relationships, and experiences in contributing to their own knowledge and transformation." (Bradbury et al., 2020)

"The theory of change in ART [action research for transformations] is that microworlds proliferate. ART invites more change leaders and educators to partner in proliferating tangible positive solutions through stakeholder engagement within their own institutional or informal context." (Bradbury, 2022, p. 4)