



STUDENTS
ORGANIZING FOR
SUSTAINABILITY
INTERNATIONAL

Convening **action-oriented coalitions** on campus and beyond: designing **inclusive structures** for transformative ESD

Darren Axe, SOS-International membership & engagement manager

Our global student network



Our transformative ESD-sphere:



image: NASA

to (attempt to) comprehend our complex, inter-dependent, living planet...

Face the realities of our learned agency in this system to co-create agile strategies in line with the knowledge we have assimilated in pursuit of enlightenment:

safe – within planetary boundaries

Rockström et al., 2009

just – equitable access to resources

Raworth, 2018

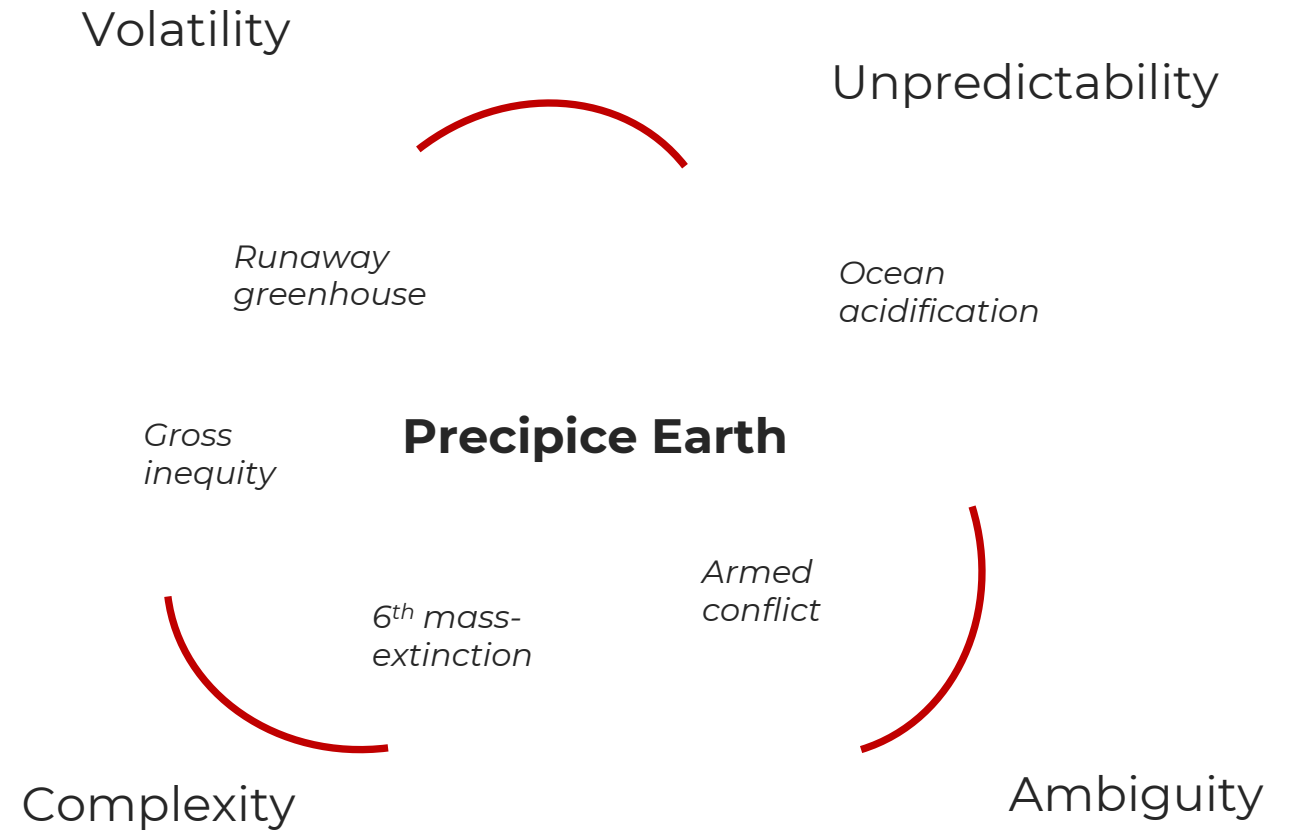
corridor of life – Holocene stability of $14C \pm 0.5$

Röckstrom et al., 2021

Our transformative ESD-sphere



image: World Economic Forum



Decolonising our mechanism of enquiry

What is ~~wrong~~ with this map?



Equal Earth projection (equal-earth.com)

Decolonising our mechanism of enquiry

What is **up** and what is **down**?



Equal Earth projection (equal-earth.com)

Jumping through the third loop: ESD as a learning paradigm

Learning approach	Systems application	Critical thinking	Enquiry
Single loop	Simple	No critique	Are we doing things right?
Double loop	Complicated	Analyse and adjust	Are we doing the right things?
Triple loop learning	Complex	Critique of the underlying assumptions and values	What are the right things to do?

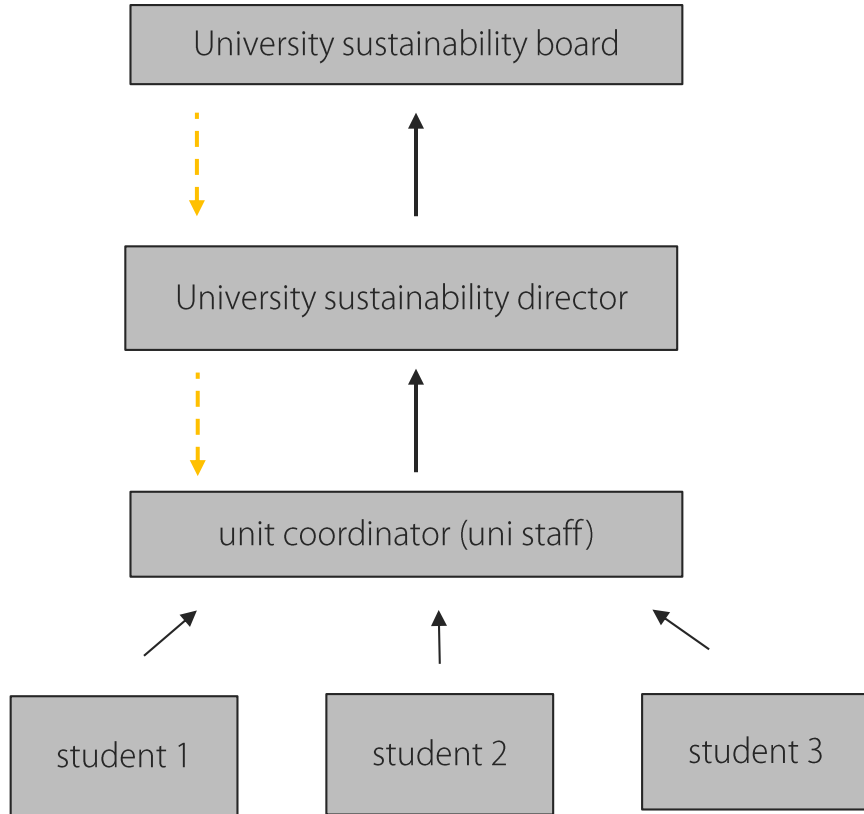
Based on: Argyris and Schon, 1974, 1978, Tosey et al., 2012, Waddel 2011 in Fazey and Colvin 2023, Yuthas et al., 2004

collective structures in HESD

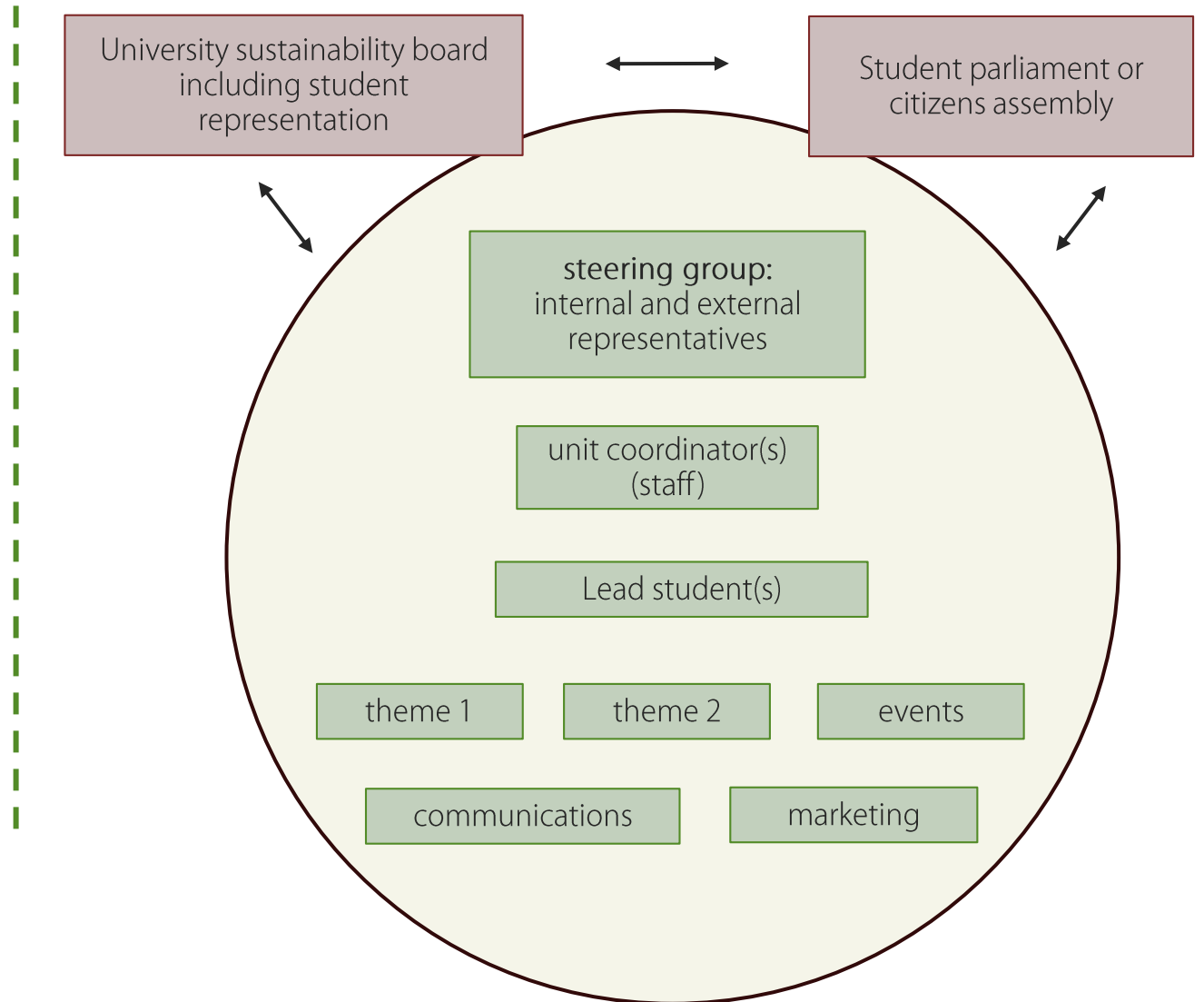
- How do we **navigate the complex web** of human identities that exist across any given population... and create something that everyone can relate to.
- The beauty of ESD is its **unilateral appeal**; engaging human curiosity in exploration of the fundamental building blocks of life, the universe, media, culture and recreation (after all it is a learning paradigm not a delivered solution).
- Through honouring our **common heritage** and empathising with the **loss in change**, it is possible to engage what at first seem like polarising identities (Adaptive Leadership – Heifetz, 2009).
- Have a go in your community...!

towards **integrated governance**

linear model



integrated model



The value of collective structures:

- Collective structures as essential fabric of a learning institution
- Disruptive learning can be the most celebrated graduate attribute of our student leaders when seeking employment and designing their future aspirations.
- Niche space between formal curriculum and delivery of University strategic goals where students co-create, lead, change, design, try and fail within a collaborative community.
- Development of critical skills for navigating complexity of contemporary challenges: interdisciplinary systems thinking, building values-, place- or heritage-based coalitions.
- Citizens assemblies and transparent representation in decision making spaces (boards), e.g. active students, academic staff, professional services staff, senior leaders (university and SU) and key external partner organisations.
- Call to action and motivation for engagement not emerging from the hard science, or numerical aspects of climate and the environment, moreover value of community, partnership, culture, wellbeing and the intrinsic (or instinctive) connection to nature.

global advocacy for curriculum transformation

- Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, Student Action Group (HESI-SAG) with 8 other student networks.
- UNFCCC:
 - Advocacy for inclusion of education in NDC's
- Critical friendship with Times Higher Education:
 - Student delegation and representation at Global Sustainable Development Congress (Sustainability Impact Ratings).
 - Advisory board for International Green Skills Assessment Programme
 - Promoting the value of co-creative structures within HESD.



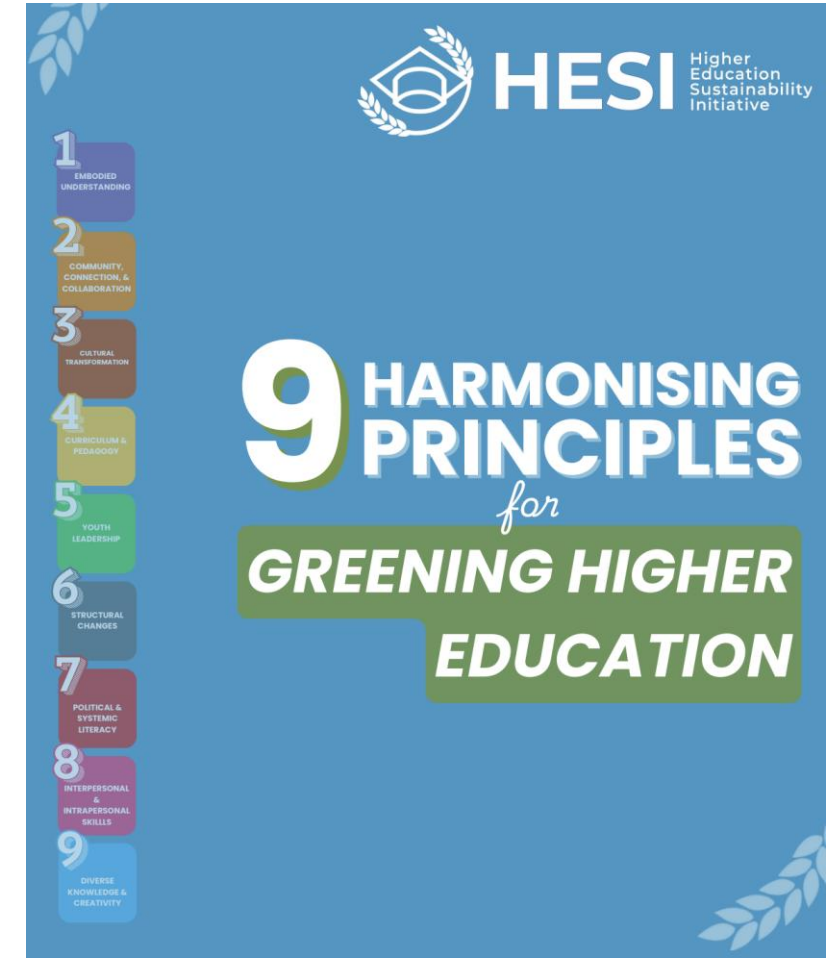
global advocacy for curriculum transformation

9 harmonizing principles:

1. Embodied understanding
2. Community, connection and collaboration
3. Cultural transformation
4. Curriculum and pedagogy
5. Youth leadership
6. Structural changes
7. Political and systemic literacy
8. Interpersonal and intrapersonal skills
9. Diverse knowledge and creativity

Recommendations for HE policymakers:

- Support student-led movements
- Create spaces for collaboration
- Use 9 principles as anchors for learning practices
- Integrate practice-based learning



Report by HESI Student Action Group:

Student/Youth Networks of:



With the support of the HESI Co-Chairs: Sulitest, UNESCO IESALC, UNU & UNDESA

thank you from **SOS International**



- Join our Chapter institutions programme
- SOS International summits in 2027:
 - Europe: University of Stirling, Scotland, May 2027
 - Latin America: PUC Minas, Brazil, Oct/Nov 2027



Darren Axe

darren.axe@sos.earth

sos.earth

