



Digitization Strategies and Digitization Policies

Conceptual Differences and some Cues from Practice

Dr. Justus Henke

5th STS-CH Conference 2021

Lausanne, 17 February 2021

Recent „HoF Halle-Wittenberg“ publications on digitization



	Institut für Hochschulforschung (HoF) an der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg	
	Justus Henke Norman Richter Sebastian Schneider Susen Seidel Disruption oder Evolution? Systemische Rahmenbedingungen der Digitalisierung in der Hochschulbildung	
109	HoF-ARBEITSBERICHTE	

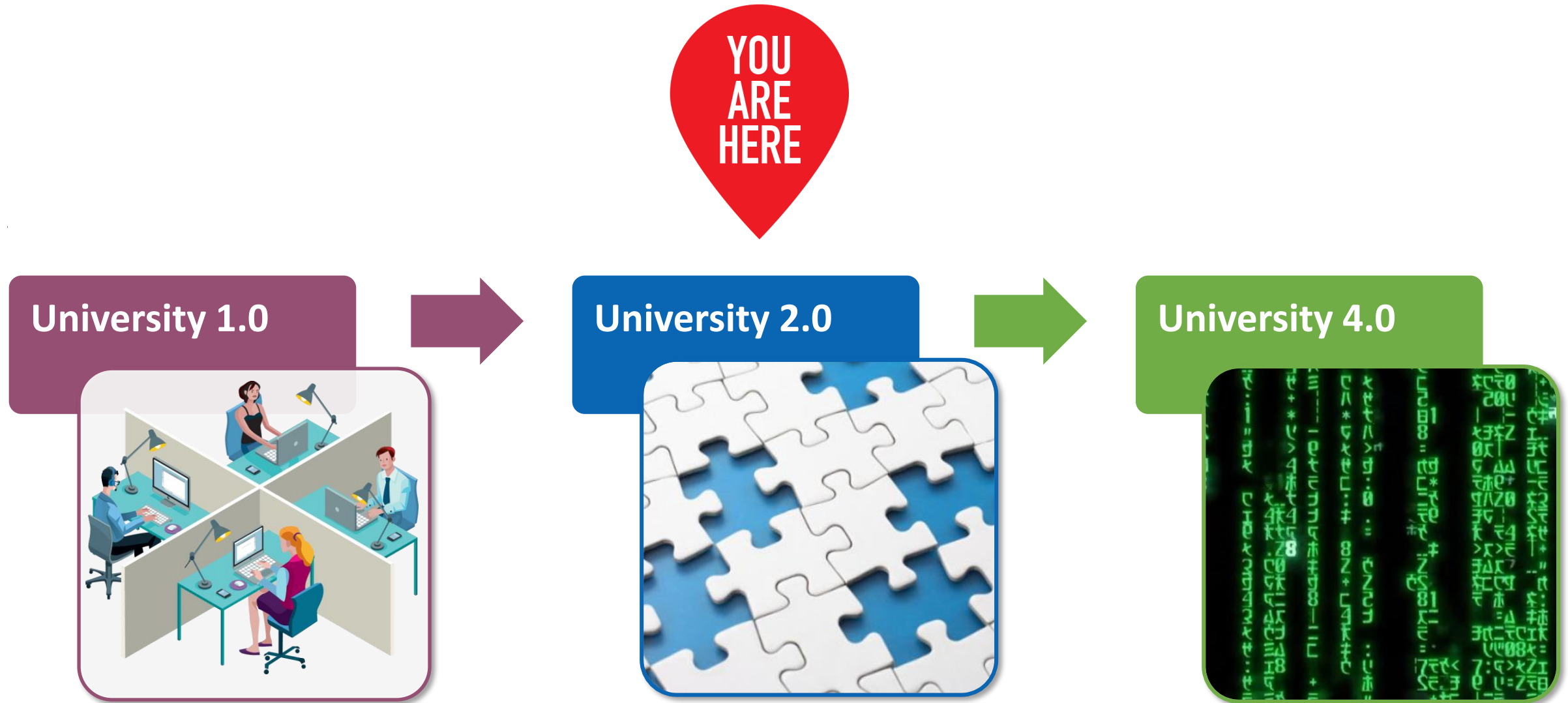


→ Overall conclusion: **organizational aspects** still get to little attention

THE PROBLEM

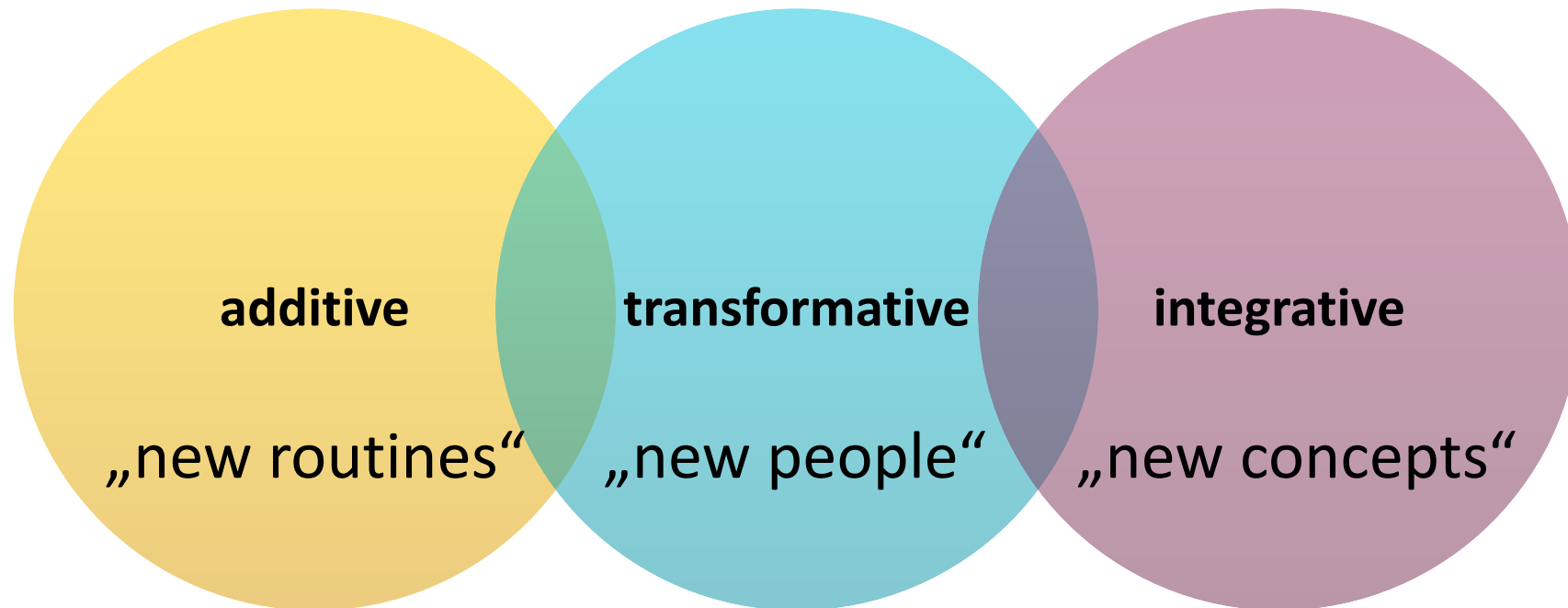
“The biggest part of digital transformation is the way we think”





1) digitization is a media-revolutionary **social transformation**

- at the same it is a genuine **development opportunity for universities**
- that goes far beyond **adaptation to social conditions**



- 2) **digitization at universities** cannot take place only selectively, but must be treated and processed as a **cross-cutting issue**
- because it happens in **research, teaching and administration**
 - it depends on the **specific character** of the university as an **organization**



→ knowledge transfer,
→ gender equality,
→ internationalization
→ ...

SORTING OUT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

“Think of digital transformation less as a technology project to be finished than as a state of perpetual agility”



The concept of digitization strategy

- cross-cutting **topics** that shape HEI strategies

Legal Framework &
Priorities

Org./Tech.
Infrastructures

Logics of Teaching,
Research, Admin

- **levels** of strategy formation

Political Programs

Organizational
Programs

The concept of digitization strategy (2)

A **digitization strategy** describes the **challenges of digitization**, derives **goals** from them, systematizes **decision-making** situations, formulates **routines** for achieving the goals, and provides **criteria** for the decision-making situations.

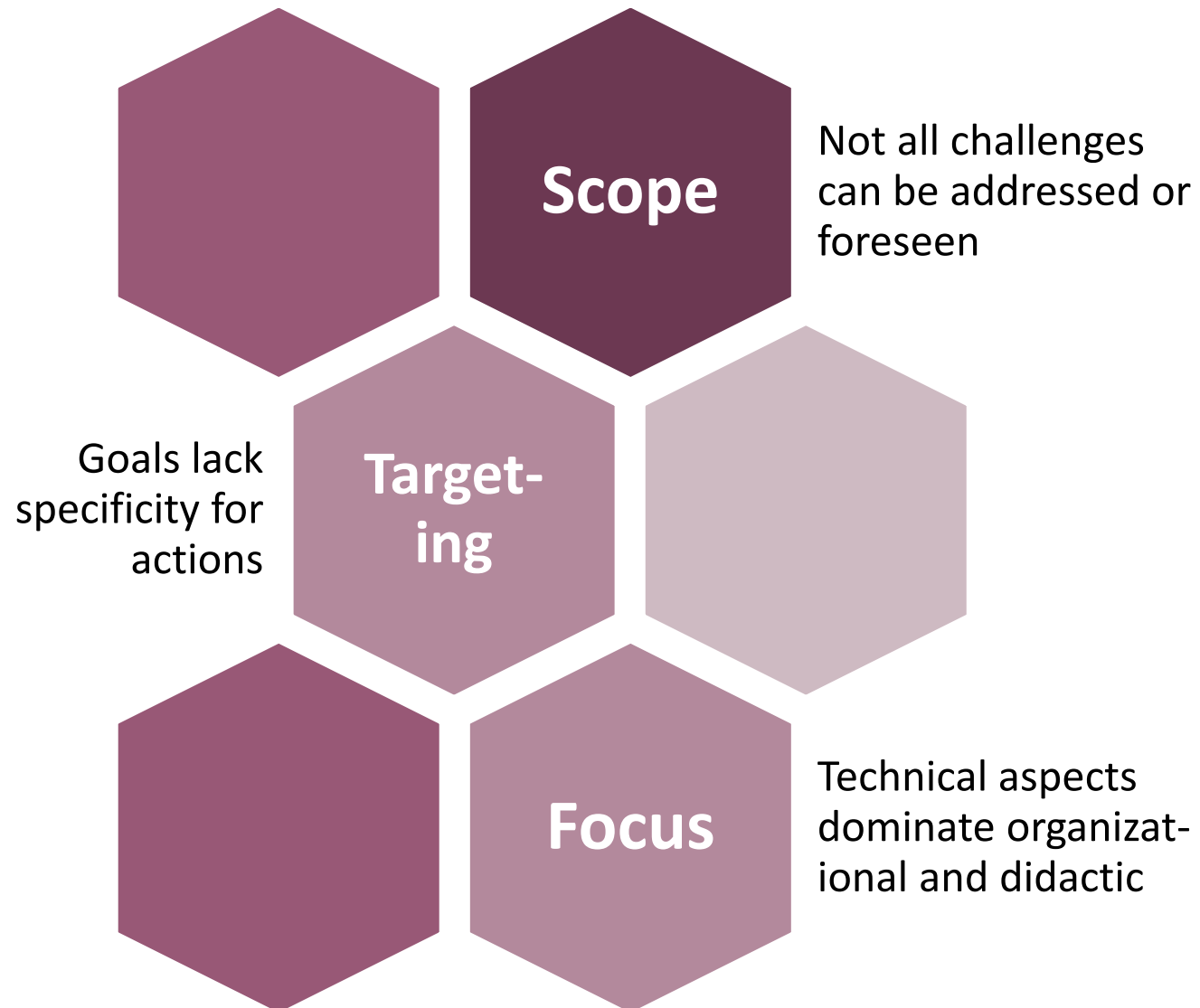
Strengths

- **systematization** of problem sets
- **comparison** (target/actual) and controlled deviation
- promoting external image and generating **legitimacy**

Weaknesses

- **inflexible** towards changing conditions and opportunities
- **bureaucratic hurdles** or conflictual power constellations

What is (mostly) missing?



Assumptions

- **digitization** is a process that **requires** deliberately **unstable strategies** (cf. Mintzberg/Waters 1985)
- Universities as **organized anarchies**: tendency to **erratic** and **non-decisions** (cf. Cohen/March/Olsen 1972)

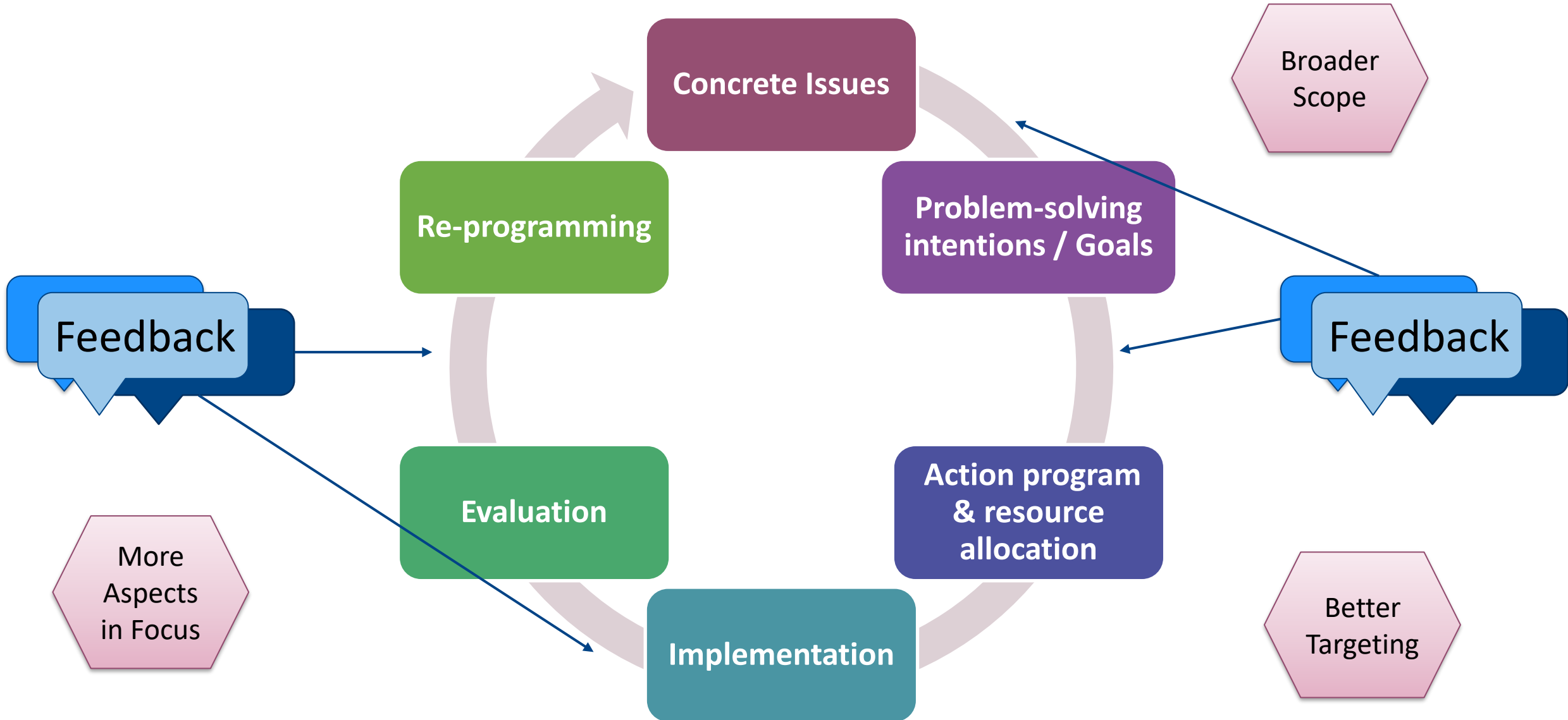
Related concept: **Strategy as Practice** (Whittington 1996, Jarzabkowski 2004)

Digitization **policies** are a **responsive boundary management**

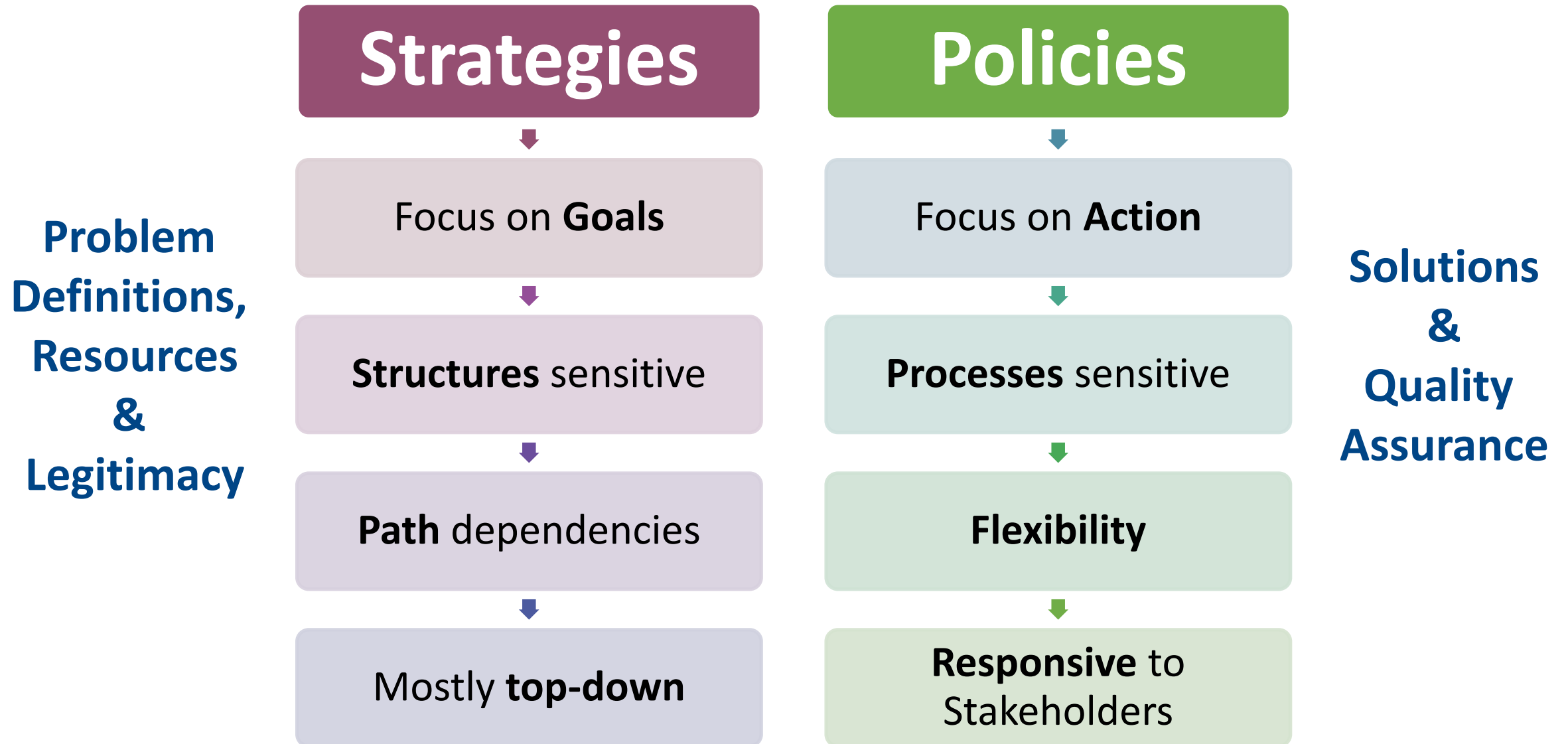
- between **science** and **society** [external] &
- between **teaching, research** and **administration** [internal]

to ensure **problem-solving, action** and **feedback** in digitization related issues

Policy cycle



Comparing strategies and policies



THE PRACTITIONERS VIEW

*“Disruptors don’t set out to beat you at your own game
— they change the rules”*



Example of good practice: HAW Hamburg

- ✓ Top-level **landing page** for Digitization
- ✓ Dedicated **mission statement** and **strategy paper**¹
- ✓ Detailed **action plan**²(→ policies)
- ✓ **Holistic scope**: teaching, research, training, administration, PR & communication, outreach, IT & infrastructures
- ✓ **Participatory** approach to implementation
- ✓ Commitment to **agile principles**



Example of typical practice: TH Nürnberg

- ✓ Detailed **strategy paper** with very **explicit goals** and implementation **measures**
 - ✓ **CIO** central figure in implementation stage
 - x Only **top-level** responsibilities
 - x **No QA/Monitoring** measures
 - x **IT-project** mentality
 - x **Limited scope** on teaching, research and administration
- Such strategic action plans ≠ policies



- Policies are **effective action programs** for strategies
- Policies can help ensure **responsiveness** to capture **speed of progress**
- However: **organizational culture** cannot be altered by digitization alone
- That means: a **balance** has to be struck
 - ...between centralization und decentralization
 - ...between communication cost and follow-up costs
 - ...between changing infrastructures an maintaining mastery thereof

Thank you for your attention!



Institut für Hochschulforschung (HoF)
an der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Contact

Justus.Henke@hof.uni-halle.de



Collegienstraße 62
D-06886 Wittenberg
www.hof.uni-halle.de

References

- Cohen, M. D., March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. *Administrative science quarterly*, 1-25.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2004). Strategy as practice: recursiveness, adaptation, and practices-in-use. *Organization studies*, 25(4), 529-560.
- Mintzberg, H., & Waters, J. A. (1985). Of strategies, deliberate and emergent. *Strategic management journal*, 6(3), 257-272.
- Whittington, R. (1996). Strategy as practice. *Long range planning*, 29(5), 731-735.



elektronisches Hochschulökosystem

