The criticality of culture in delivering and evaluating public institutional approaches to managing complexity across the nexus: the case of Natural Resources Wales

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Context

1. CECAN Fellowship

2. Finishes in September

3. How complex frameworks for Natural Resource Management (NRM) are translated/operationalised?

4. Presentation (and poster) are **preliminary** results/findings

5. Three principal findings

6. Working paper based on results/Fellowship at Royal Geographic Society 2018 (Cardiff) on 27-29th August and European Consortium of Political Research 2018 (Hamburg)

Literature/argumentation

1. 'Culture' is a 'common language, processes, forms, signs, understanding etc'.

2. 'Culture' important role/factor in public sector

3. Especially in institutions attempting to operationalise (new/experimental) framework approaches for managing across nexus

4. Cultures that are *facilitative* of NRM complexity more likely to be successful, sustainable, and innovative (in nexus contexts)

5. A number of queries = how to shape/shift culture(s), what do 'facilitative cultures' look like, and how does culture(s) effect evaluation?

Question = How does culture(s) effect evaluative methodologies used in complex NRM institutional settings?

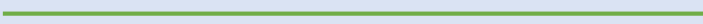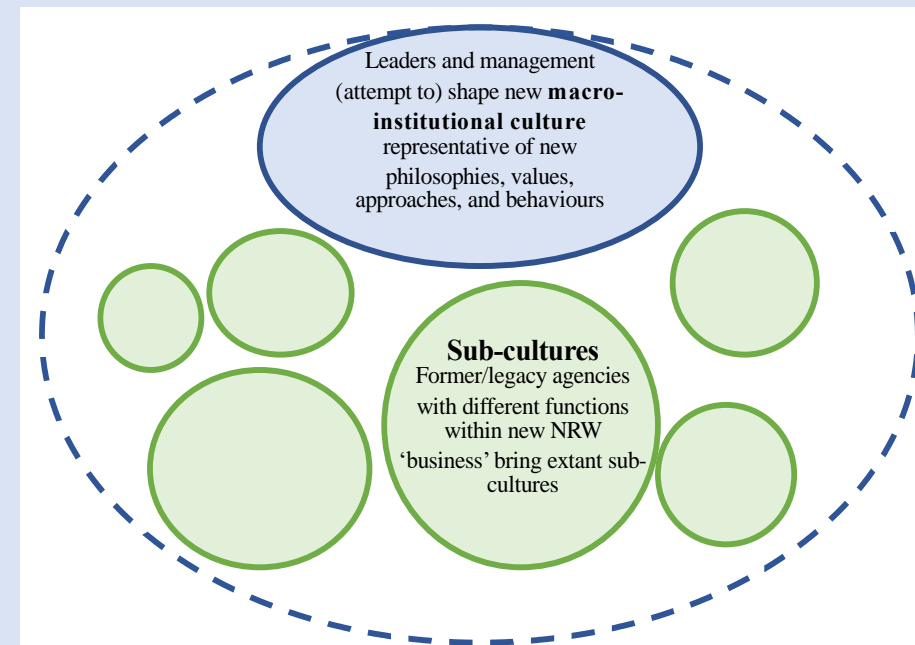# Case selection/method

- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as case study

- The 'NRW trilemma':

  a) A new institution based on three legacy agencies (EA, CCW, WFC)

  b) Radical new approach to integrated NRM – 'Sustainable management of natural resources' (SMNR)

  c) Undertaken during time of pressure - austerity period (35% reduction in funding since inception)

- Qualitative research design, semi-structured elite interviews conducted

  in April-June 2018

A. Criticality of culture

1. Leadership, processes and structures all important, however…
2. **Positive** and **facilitative 'culture'** is critical for:

    1. Cohesion and broader 'success' of new amalgamated institution
    2. The operationalisation of new SMNR framework approach
    3. Moving 'beyond' state of legacy sub-cultures towards …. (more to follow….)

- *Broadly*, culture 'emerges' from intersection of institutional purposes, leadership, vision, and legacies

- 'Culture' at multi-levels:

- High-level aspiration to 'move beyond' sub-cultures to single macro-culture – *possible? desirable?*

Leaders and management (attempt to) shape new **macro-institutional culture** representative of new philosophies, values, approaches, and behaviours

Sub-cultures
Former/legacy agencies with different functions within new NRW 'business' bring extant sub-cultures

B. Culture effects evaluation

1. Choice of evaluation method effected by many drivers…

2. A *cyclical relationship* between SMNR, Culture, and evaluation:

   a) Needs and requirements for delivering SMNR fundamentally influence culture

   b) Macro and sub cultures effect the choice and utilisation of evaluative methodologies

   c) Evaluation(s) effect how the operationalisation of SMNR (in long-term) is adaptively manifested

3. Macro-culture driving *choice* of methods (e.g. more qual.), in addition to other drivers (e.g. external statutory)

4. Sub-cultures more likely effecting the *frequency*, *utilisation*, *interpretation* of evaluative methods

5. Degree of **tension** between sub-cultures about choice and use of evaluative methods – (*perceptions* of) legitimacy, value, and accountability

SMNR

Culture
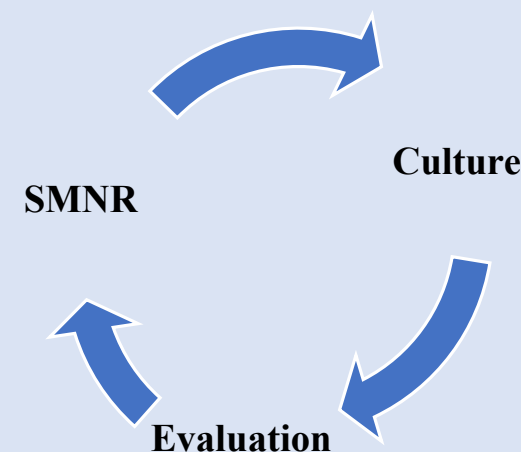
Evaluation

C. Towards a 'culture of systems'?

- Expressed need emergent pan-institutional 'NRW macro-culture'

- Not 'evaluative', 'adaptive', or 'communicative' culture *per se*, but a 'culture of systems'

- Culture facilitative for complex SMNR

Leadership: consistent, long-term, vision-aligned and embedded

Values: communication; innovation; empowerment; personal/individual responsibility; tolerant of mistakes leading to co-learning and innovation

Behaviours: tolerance; communication; integrated/wide thinking; respect; co-production; partnership; problem-solving; looking for 'added-value' in decision making

Activities: ongoing training; ongoing sharing and co-production leading to innovation; rapid and rich communications

Conclusions

Conclusions will lead to a series of rules for consideration of culture and sub-culturality in complex nexus-facing organisations including:

1. How to influence-facilitate cultural change in nexus-facing organisations
2. Larger characterisation of a 'culture of systems'
3. Considerations for how evaluative methods can better reflect complex cultures

Working paper will have more about this….

Thank you, are there any questions?

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