

“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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Introduction

Institutional culture plays an important role in ‘successful’ public institutions (Parker and Bradley, 2000). This has been shown to be prescient in public natural resource management institutions (Lockwood et al, 2010) who are increasingly attempting to adopt institutional responses to the need for managing complexity (e.g. Scott et al, 2011). This suggests that public intra-institutional cultures that are facilitative of complexity management are more liable to be ‘successful’ as institutions become increasingly cognizant of, and aligned towards, nexus challenges. These public institutional cultures might also effect the forms and effectiveness of intra-institutional (and external) evaluations (Sebedi, 2012).

Research question: “What is the effect of institutional culture(s) on the forms of internal and external evaluative methodologies in natural resource settings?”

Methodology

- Original empirical research programme
- Qualitative research design: semi-structured elite interviews
- 12 interviews conducted over *Skype* in April-June 18
- Interviews transcribed in *GoTranscript*, coded in *Nvivo*

Case study: Natural Resources Wales



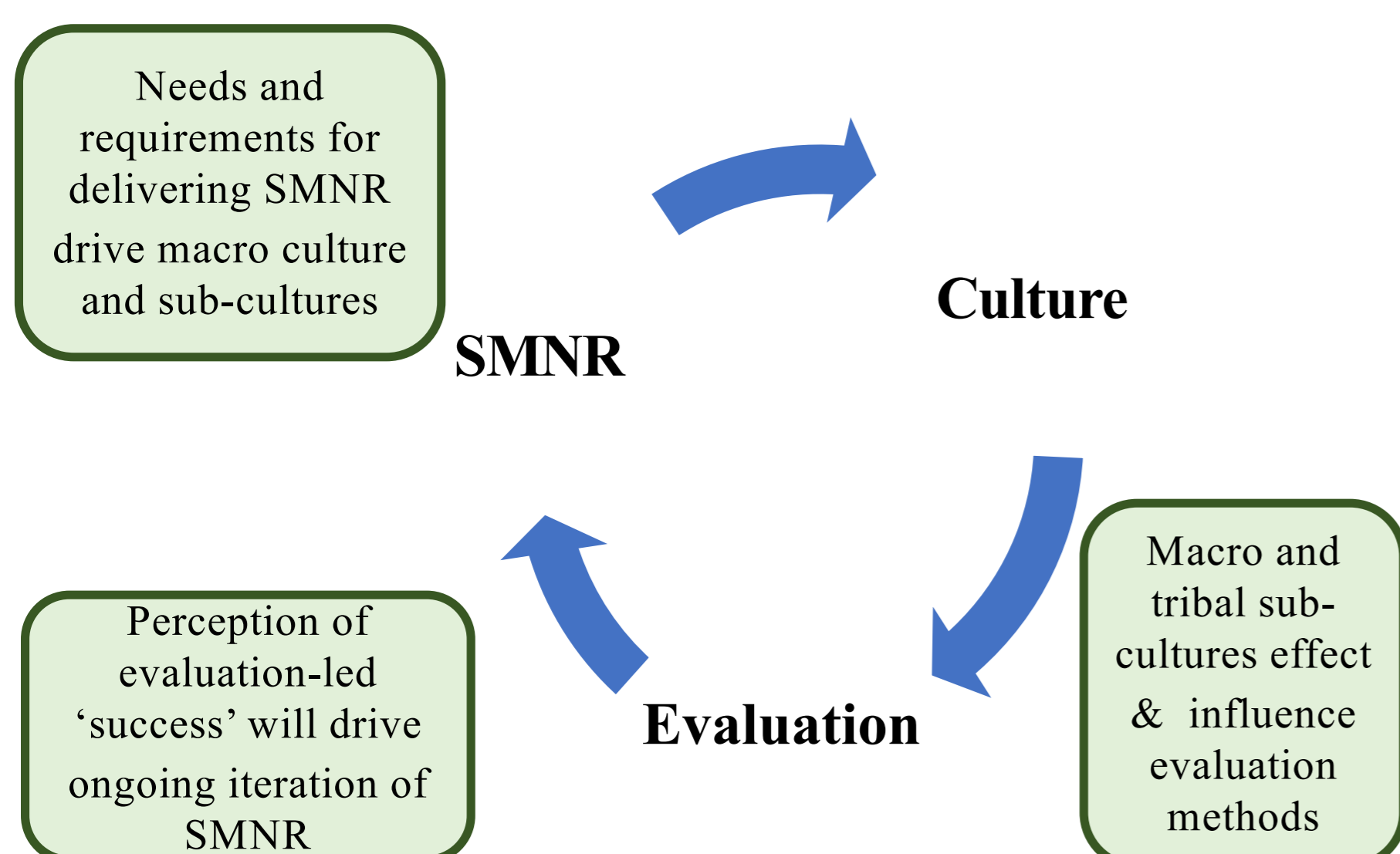
Natural Resources Wales (NRW) were formed in response to the Environment Bill (Wales) (2016). Merging three legacy institutions (Forestry Commission Wales, Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales) NRW sought to trial a novel approach to natural resource management complexity – the ‘sustainable management on natural resources’ (SMNR). SMNR is built upon the ‘ecosystem approach’ (from the Convention for Biological Diversity) and an institutional form of SMNR is very ambitious approach to institutional integrated natural resource management. However, 1) merging three legacy institutions, coupled to 2) institutionalising a novel approach to complexity management, 3) all under public austerity, has impressed upon NRW the need for an new and emergent facilitative institutional culture.

Culture effects evaluation: findings

- Complex relationship between SMNR, NRW’s pan-institutional macro culture (and tribal sub-cultures), and evaluative methodologies
- Institutional culture effects evaluation (e.g. ‘adaptive’), and requirements for certain evaluation effects sub-cultures
- NRW necessarily needs to be multi-culturally constructed to meet the diverse range of drivers and interests from across the business
- Cultural legacies play roles in the emergence of new NRW macro, and tribal sub-cultures
- Further research needed to understand how evaluation is ‘capturing the value’ of SMNR

Emergent culture of systems: findings

- Need emergent pan-institutional macro-culture
- Respect legacy(ies) of sub-culturality
- Cultural *qualities/values*: communication; innovation; empowered; personal responsibility;
- Manifested *behaviours*: tolerance; communication; integrated thinking; respect; co-production; partnership; problem-solving
- *Leadership* needs to be consistent, long-term, vision-aligned and embedded
- Ongoing/long-term *training* and P2P support
- Culturally coherent evaluations that reflect macro culture, and sub-cultural ‘business-led’ and ‘client-led’ requirements



Conclusions

- A layered multi-culture built out of legacy, function, and sub-culture is emerging to deliver SMNR; this will effect the choice of evaluative methodology
- ‘Function’ shapes culture (or sub-culture), which effects evaluation methodology
- Evaluation made more complex by needs of SMNR, though new evaluative methods are emerging
- Significant potential policy learning and transferal for other public institutions of nexus management
- Overall, ‘success’ of SMNR will be substantively based on ‘getting the culture right’, and embracing emergent evaluative methods/models

Substantive results of this Fellowship will be in a number of conference papers this summer:
 Panel 328 at the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). Hamburg 24th August
 ‘Institutionalising and socialising an ecosystem approach’ at the Royal Geographic Society. Cardiff 29th August

References

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