Culture and strategy

What do we mean by culture?

"The way we do things around here" – ***Charles Handy***

"A cohesion of **values**, **myths**, **heroes** and **symbols** that has come to mean a great deal to the people who work there" – ***Deal & Kennedy***

"The deeper level of basic **assumptions** and **beliefs** that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate **unconsciously**, and that define in a basic **'taken-for-granted'** fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment" – ***Edgar Schein***

Observable elements of culture

Like the branches of a tree, some elements of an organisation's culture are easily visible…

For example…

- **Image, symbols and slogans**
- **Policies and Procedures**
- **Behaviours**
- **Stories**
- **Dress code**
- **Organisational structures**
- **Ceremonies**
- **Vision, Mission and Values 'statements'**

‘Hidden’ elements of culture

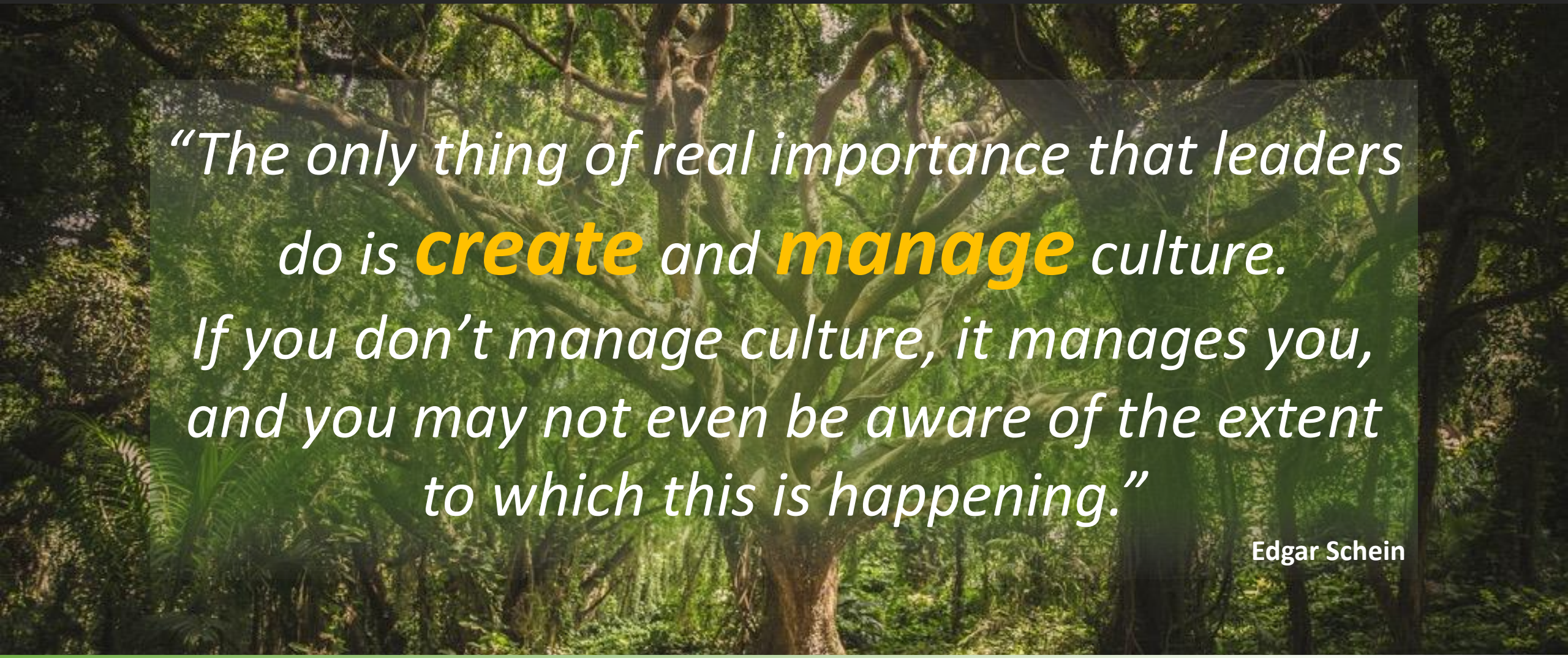
For example…

- **Feelings**
- **Attitudes**
- **Beliefs**
- **Perceptions**
- **Unwritten rules**
- **Shared assumptions**

…but what’s going on, hidden ‘beneath the bark’, that can’t so easily be seen?

What perceptions and attitudes are hidden within the ‘core’?

Culture


"The only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture. If you don't manage culture, it manages you, and you may not even be aware of the extent to which this is happening."
Edgar Schein

The Culture Tree

CaplorHorizons

How can we start to map Culture?

Back in 1992, Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes proposed

6 distinctive interrelated elements

that could be used to uncover cultural assumptions and practices

The Culture Tree

CaplorHorizons

Symbols

Stories

Power Structures

Organisational Structures

Control Systems

Rituals & Routines

Organisational Values

(influencing all elements of culture and at the heart of all decision making)

The Culture Tree

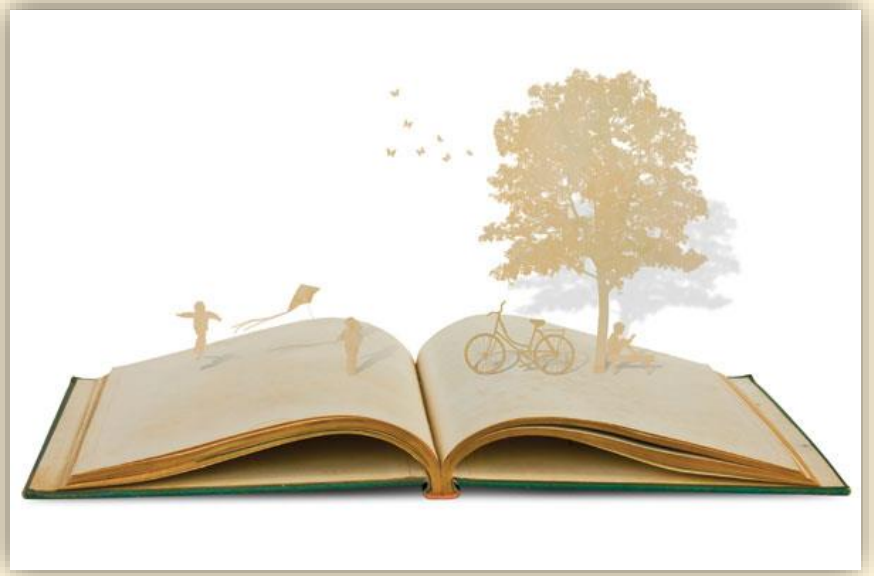
- What are the **Stories** inside the organisation and what do they tell you about who is valued?
- What **Symbols** around the organisation tell people that you value difference and embrace equalities irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age and so on?
- Is there a level playing field for opportunities and progression that is supported by the **Structures**?
- Are your **Control Systems** measuring the right things or do they promote bias?
- Do your **Routines and Rituals** celebrate inclusivity and collaborative behaviours?
- Does the **Power** and influence in the system make it possible to rise to the top or influence outcomes on merit and irrespective of background?

Your Culture Tree

Stories:

These might include...

- Early foundations
- Important achievements
- Significant struggles
- Heroes and mavericks



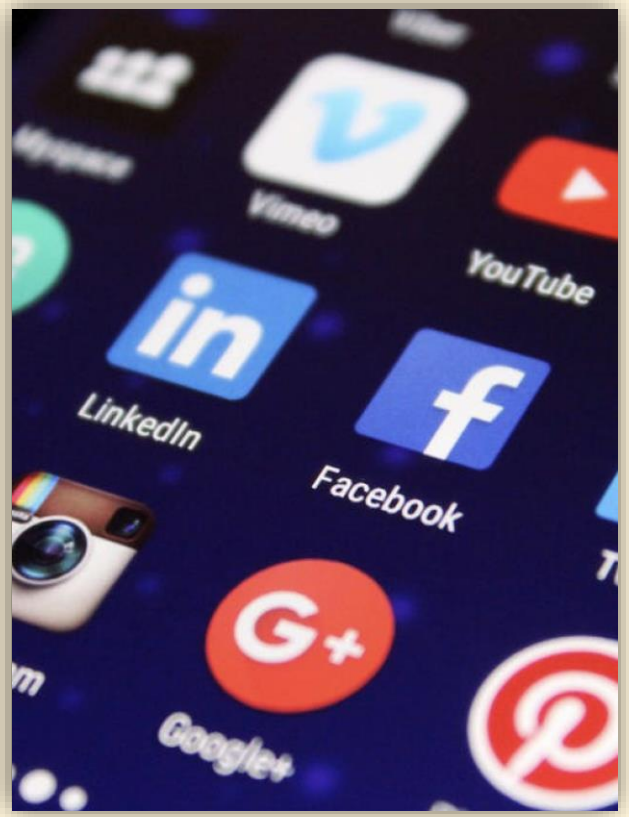
They usually convey a message about what is valued within the organisation

Your Culture Tree

Symbols:

These might include...

- Your organisation's brand character, logo and 'image' (web-site, etc.)
- How you celebrate and recognise success (i.e. awards)
- How status is recognised (private offices, parking spaces, etc.)
- Geographical location and type of building



Your Culture Tree

Organisational Structures:

How does your organisation operate?

- Hierarchical or distributed leadership?
- Autocratic or collaborative?
- Team structures?
- Geographical locations?

Your Culture Tree

Power Structures:

(Not necessarily hierarchical)

- Who's really in charge?
- Who has influence?
- Who 'makes things happen'?
- Who has a veto?

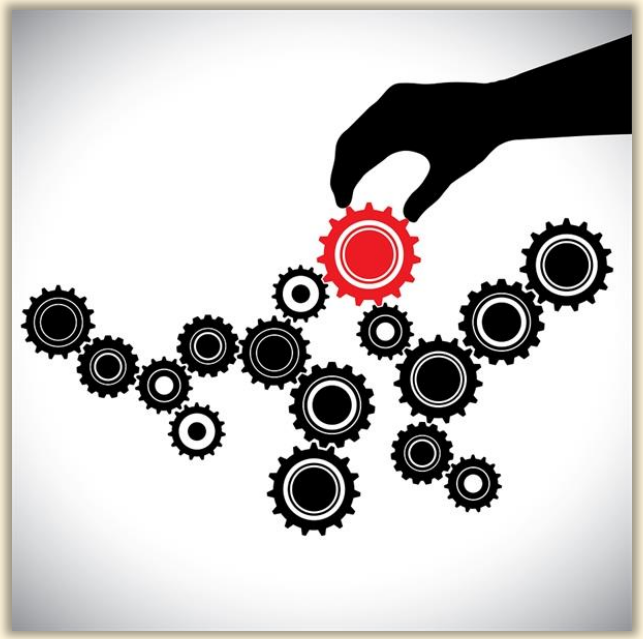
How widely spread is power and on what is power based?

Your Culture Tree

Control systems:

How 'controlling' is your organisation?

- How is the organisation monitored?
- Is decision making centralised or regional/local?
- What are the autonomy limits?
- What reports are issued to keep control of operations?



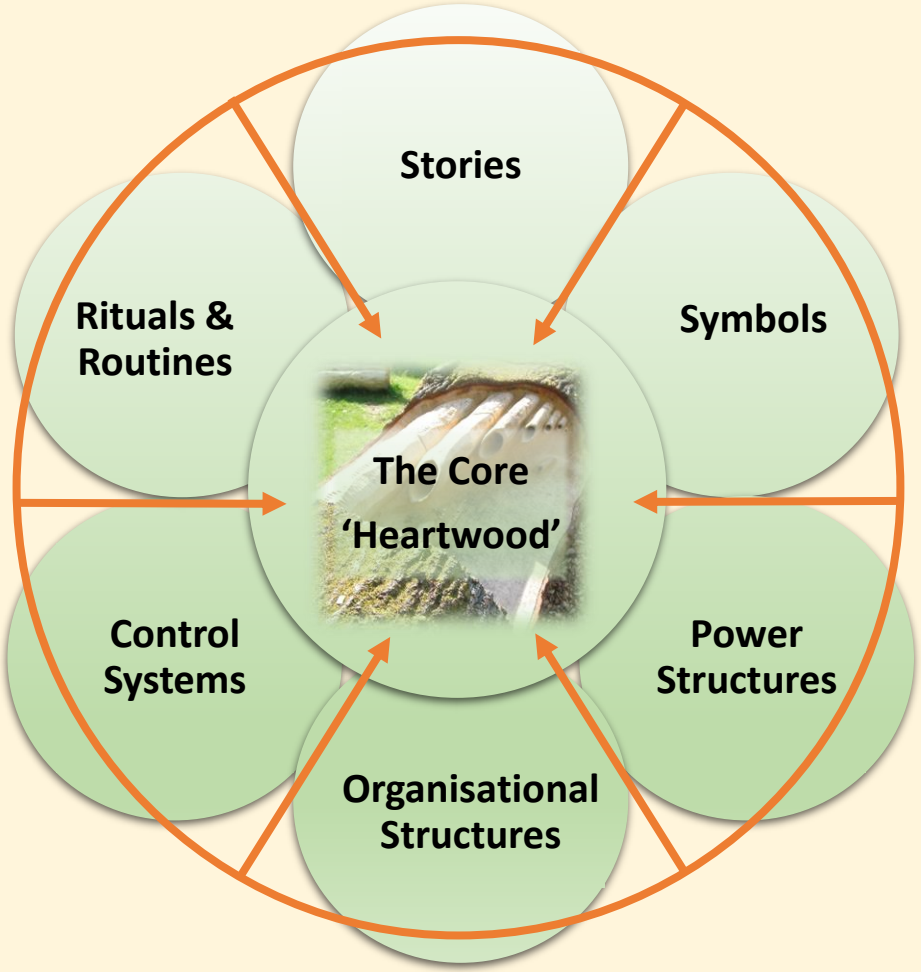
Your Culture Tree

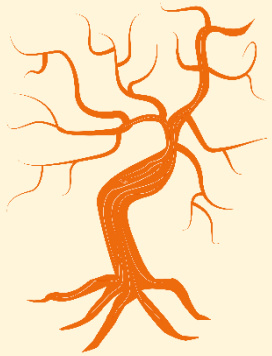
Routines & Rituals:

- What things are taken ‘for granted’?
- Are there regular communication updates?
- What are the organisation’s ‘habits’?
- How do you celebrate success?

Diagnosing Your Culture Tree

When **diagnosing** the culture of an organisation, start at the outside and work **inwards** to identify how each interconnecting element is manifested in terms of day-to-day behaviour





Diagnosing Your Culture Tree

CaplorHorizons

What are your
Symbols?

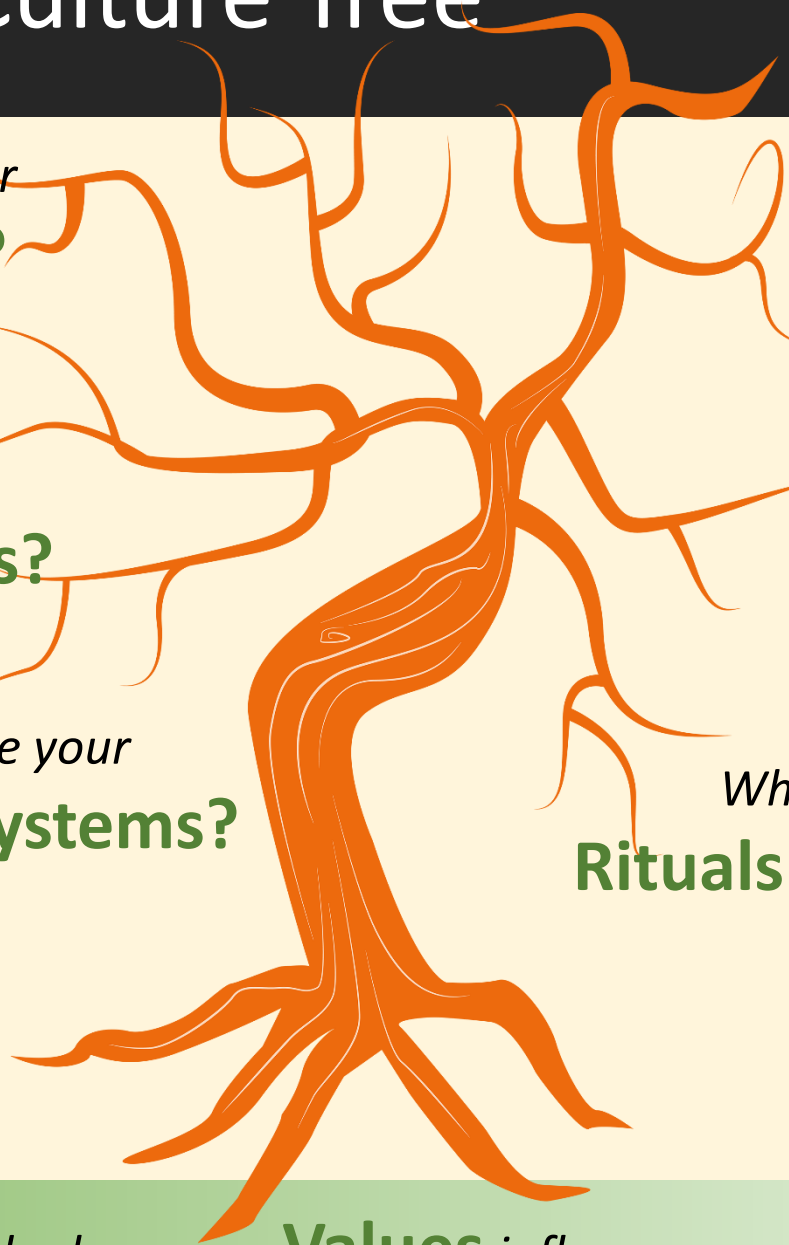
What are your
Stories?

What are your
Power Structures?

What are your
Organisational Structures?

What are your
Control Systems?

What are your
Rituals & Routines?



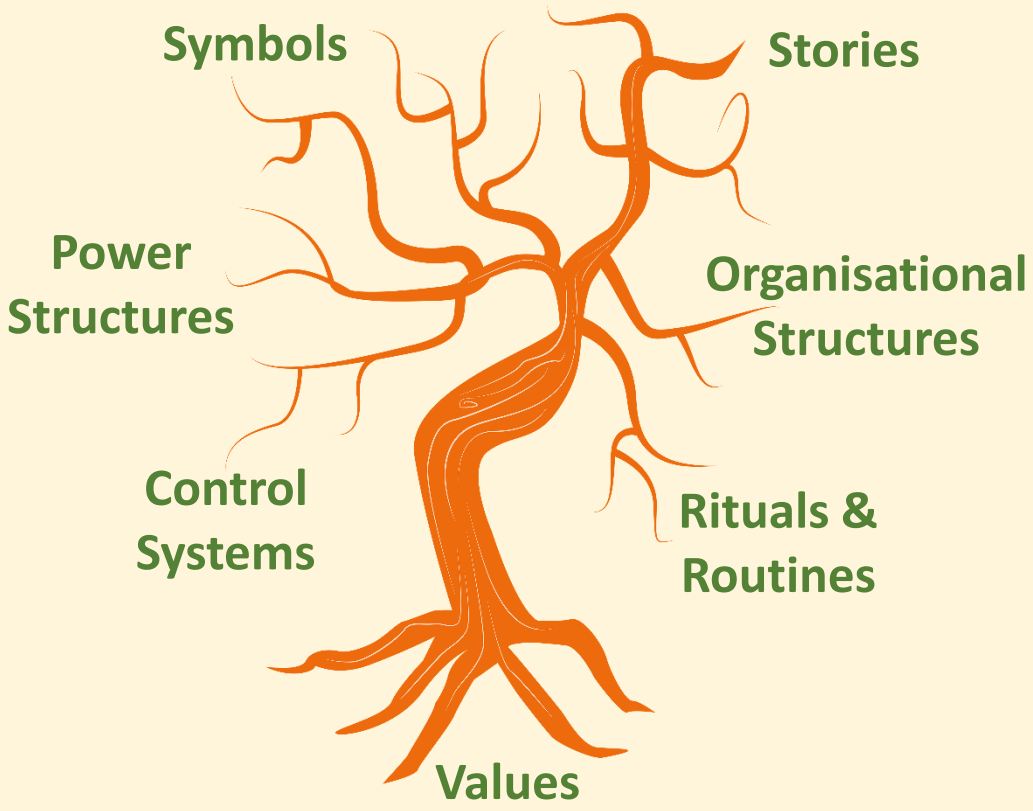
Consider how your **Values** *influence your culture*

Diagnosing Your Culture Tree

Group Exercise

In teams of four people, discuss each observable **element** of your Culture Tree and then record the findings you are all agreed on.

Report back your key points



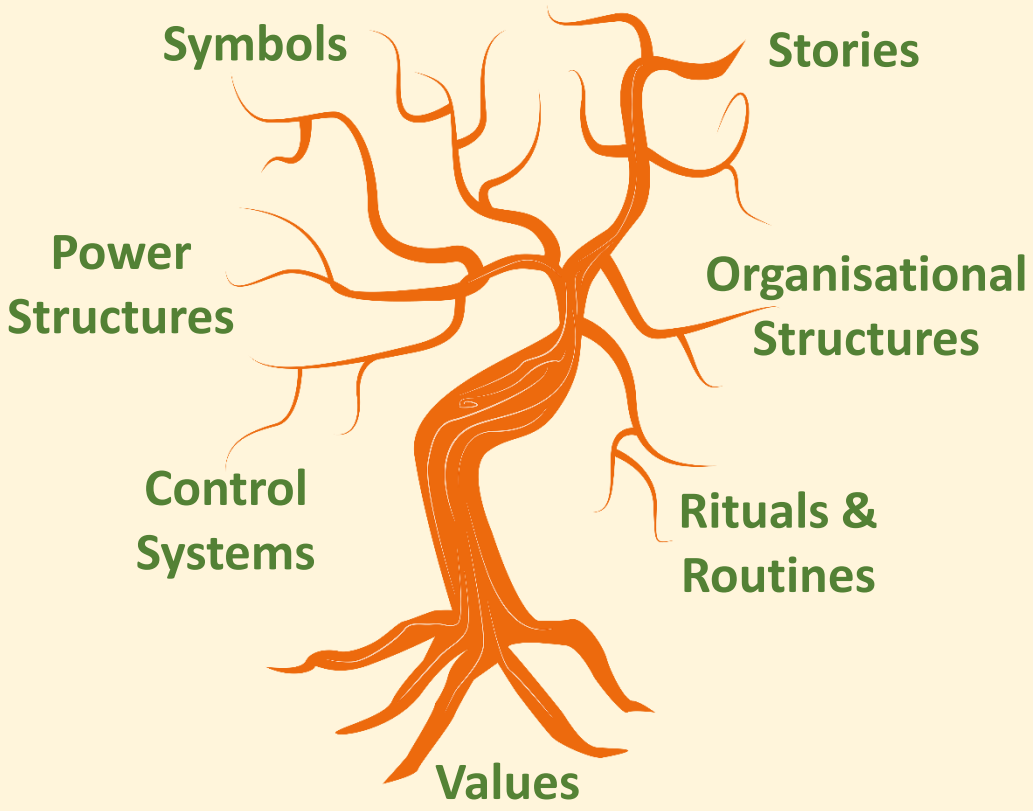
Diagnosing Your Culture Tree

CaplorHorizons

Review:

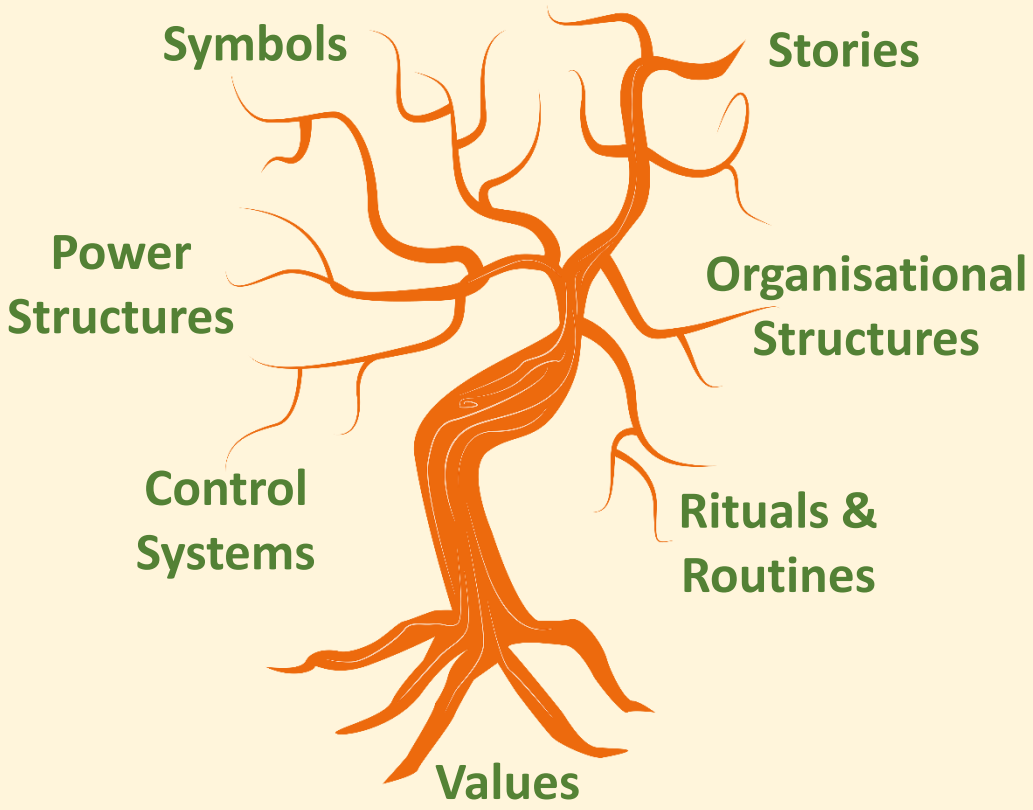
What were the common findings?

What does this tell you about your existing culture?



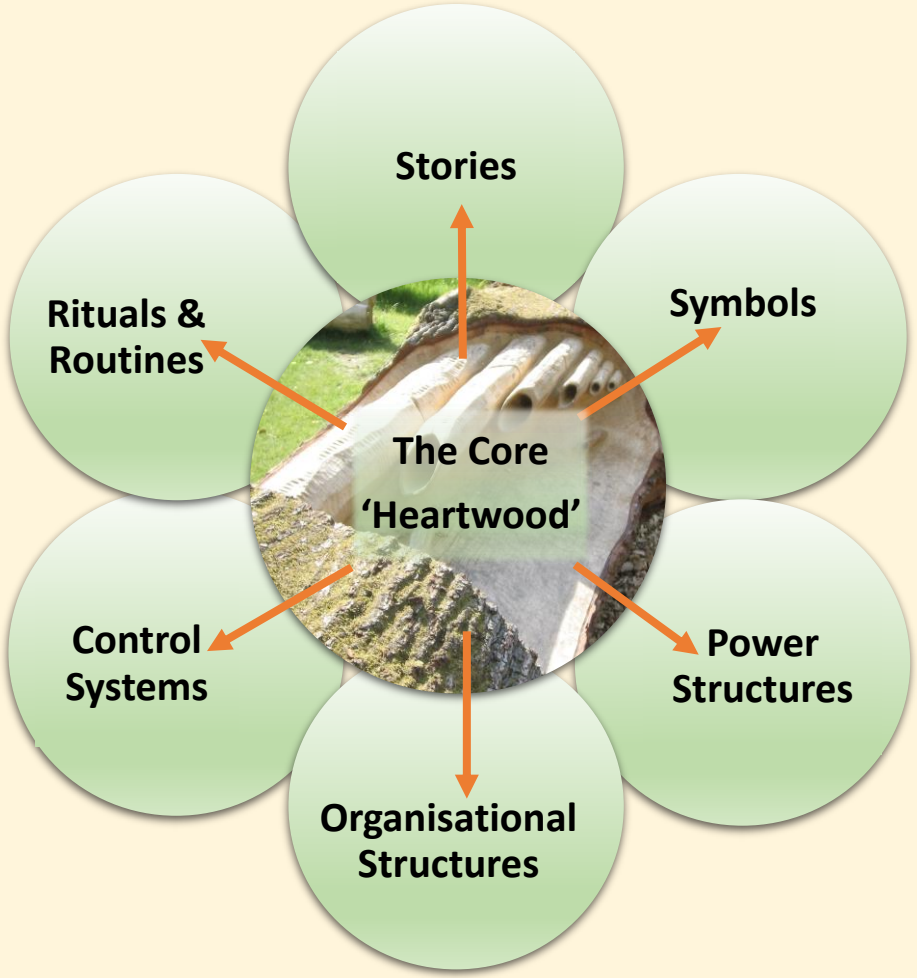
Shaping Culture

How can culture be *created*, *strengthened* or *managed*?



Shaping Culture

If you want to **change** the culture of an organisation, start by defining the type of organisation that you want and then work **outwards** to identify the structures and behaviours needed to support it

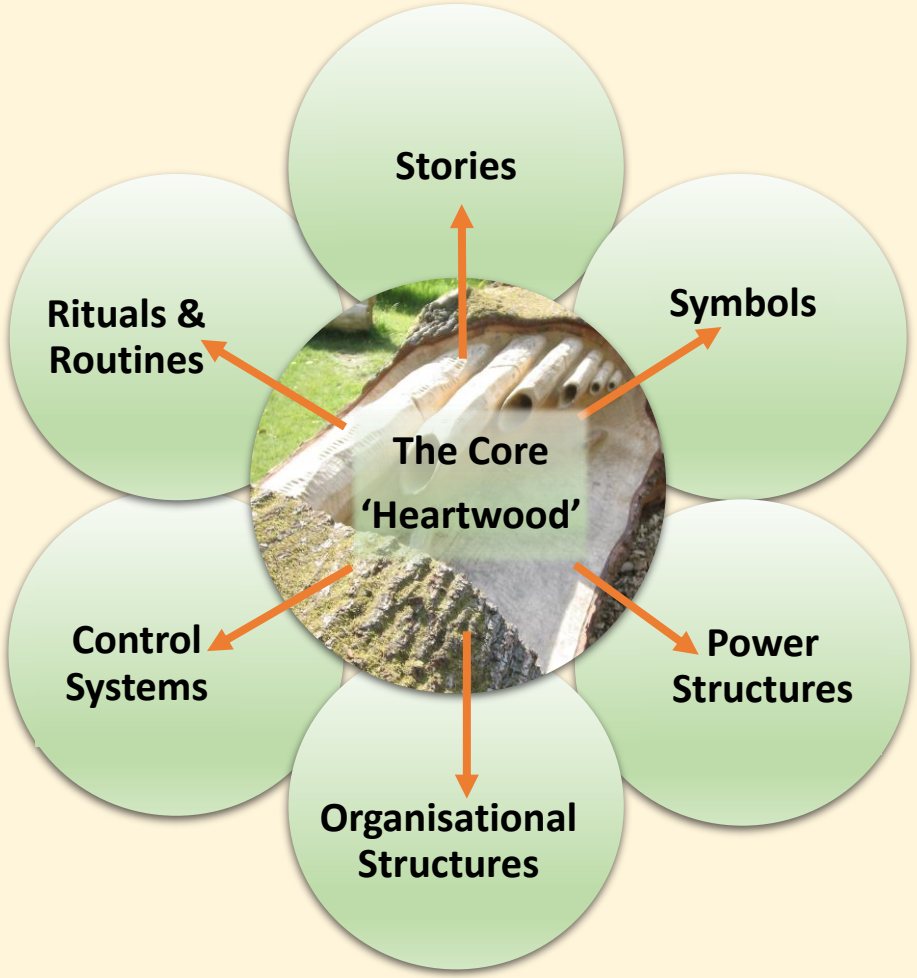


Shaping Culture

In groups:

- **Describe the 'strengthened' cultural model that you envisage for your organisation**
- **What elements need to change to achieve this new model?**
- **How can these changes be brought about?**

Report back your key points



Shaping Culture

CaplorHorizons

Review:

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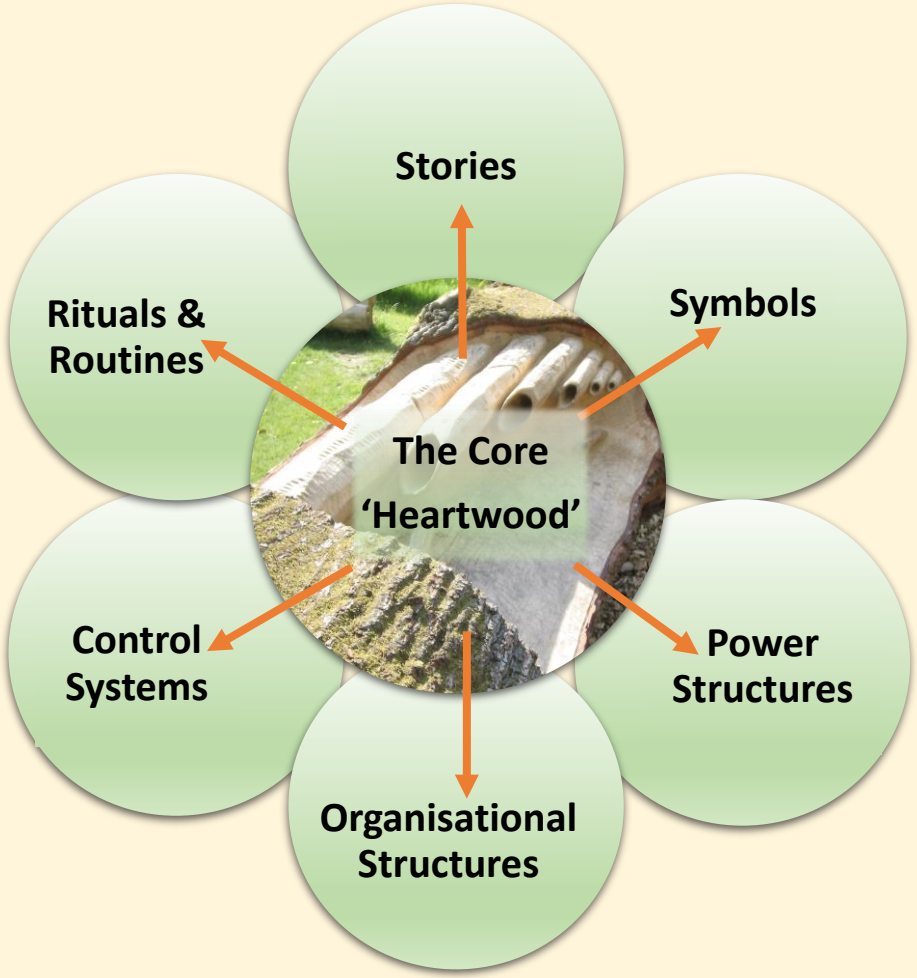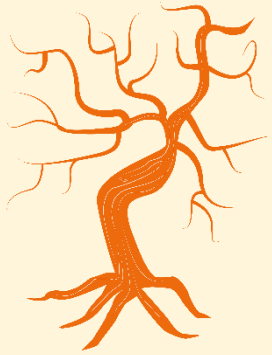
What does this tell you about what changes that you might consider?