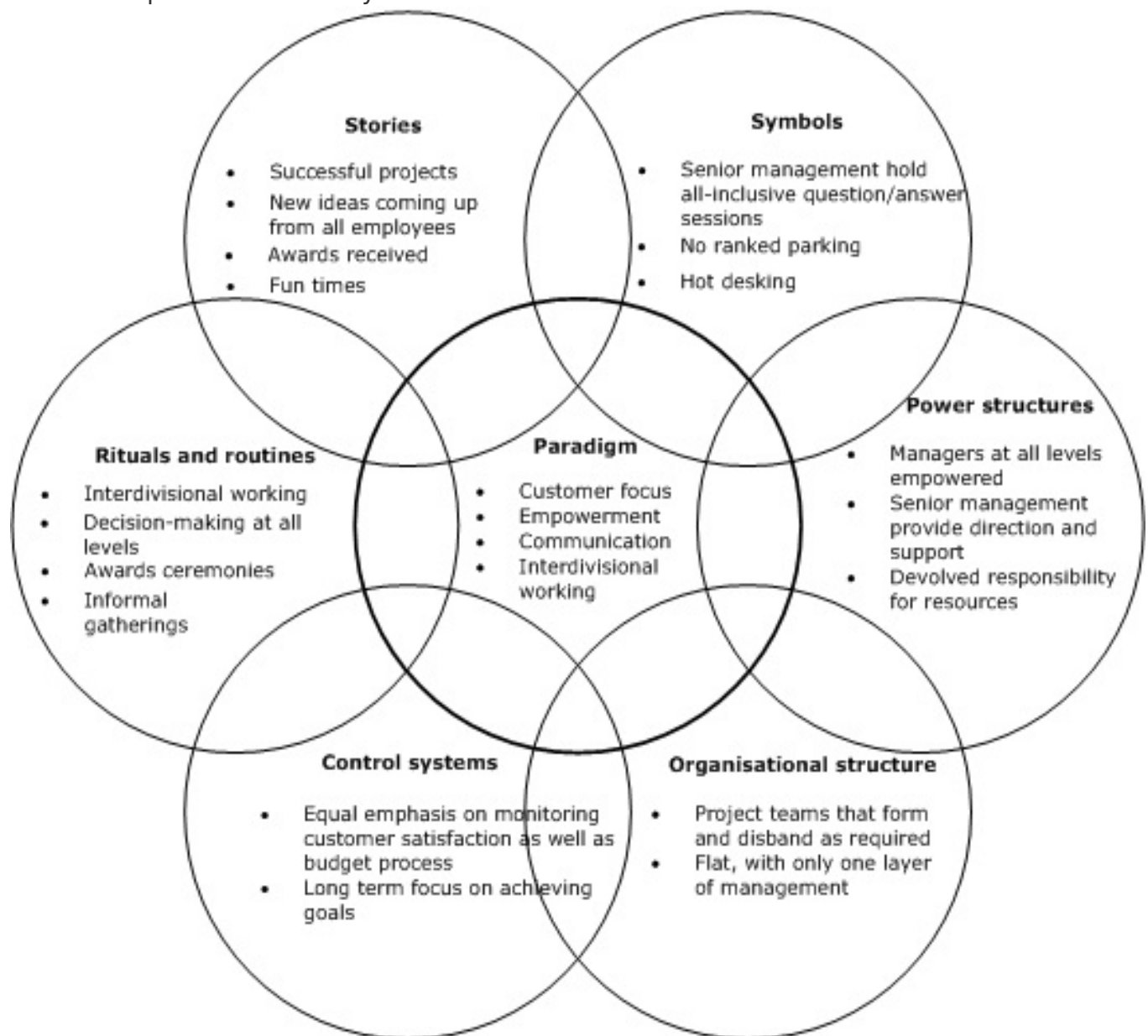


The Cultural Web

The cultural web represents the behavioural manifestations of organisational culture and offers a way of understanding how culture is generated and reinforced. Below is an example of a cultural web that represents the culture of a fictional organisation. Each circle is explained more fully overleaf.



Adapted from: Gerry Johnson, Kevan Scholes & Richard Whittington, *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, Seventh Edition (Pearson Education Ltd 2005). Exhibit 4.11 'The Cultural Web' p202.



Cultural web descriptions

- **Symbols**

Words, gestures, pictures and objects, such as logos, speeches, cars and titles that carry complex meanings for the people within the organisation. Symbols appear on the outer layer of the diagram as they are the most easily eroded or replaced.

- **Rituals and routines**

Rituals are the activities undertaken within the organisation which may not be essential for achieving organisational objectives, but act to consolidate cultural values and social acceptance within the group. They are often celebrations, such as reward ceremonies and special events, or rites such as training programmes or office parties. Routines are the day-to-day tasks and practices that generate and reinforce organisational culture.

- **Stories**

Stories are the tales told by members of the organisation to one another, to outsiders or new recruits. They portray important events, successes and disasters from the organisation's history, and so reinforce what is important to the organisation.

They often involve people who are associated with the organisation, either at the present time or in the past, normally heroes and villains. They may be leaders, strong personalities or respected individuals who portray admired values and behaviours.

- **Power structures**

Power structures within organisations determine where the sources of power lie. The people or groups that hold the power establish the core values and beliefs that influence culture. They can also reinforce the culture by putting in place systems to

encourage the desired behaviour, e.g. performance management systems.

- **Control systems**

Control systems clearly demonstrate what is important to the organisation. Additionally, measurement and reward systems influence the behaviour of individuals and can, therefore, be used to encourage a certain culture. For example, rewards given for volume of sales, are likely to reinforce a competitive culture.

- **Organisational structure**

The structure of an organisation reflects the power systems and important roles and relationships that serve to foster particular cultures. For example, a flat structure is more likely to promote a culture of collaboration and teamworking than a hierarchical structure.

- **The paradigm**

The 'paradigm' at the centre of the web is the assumptions that exist within an organisation – 'the way things are done around here'. These assumptions represent collective experience of organisational life, and are usually the parts that people find most difficult to identify and explain. The behaviours observed in other elements of the cultural web are encapsulated and reinforced in these assumptions.[1]

[1] Gerry Johnson, Kevan Scholes & Richard Whittington, *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, Seventh Edition (Pearson Education Ltd. 2005). Exhibit 4.11 'The Cultural Web' p202.