

Annex A – LIST OF KEY STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE ANALYST

- **Key statement (to be kept in mind)**
- **Recommendation (to be checked and ticked)**

A.1 CHAPTER 2 – PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS AND ‘SOFT’ OA

- Three types of a problematic situation can be distinguished: puzzle, problem (proper), mess. Each type is approached somewhat differently. ‘Soft’ OA tends to be more suitable for problems (proper) and messes.
- ‘Hard’ and ‘soft’ OA both support decisions regarding problematic situations. There are however numerous differences between them from a large number of perspectives, although in practice each perspective represents a spectrum.
- Uncertainty is one of the key phenomena that need to be addressed in a problematic situation as it characterises a problematic situation to a large extent.
- ‘Soft’ OA aims to structure problematic situations (with a focus on problems proper and messes), identify stakeholders and their interests and perceptions, include them in the study, use modelling primarily as a means to clarify issues and enhance communication but also to identify possible options for a most preferred way ahead in resolving the problematic situation.
- Messy problems cannot be fully resolved but should rather be managed.
- ‘Soft’ and ‘hard’ OA are in many respects complementary to one another; they are not competing OA approaches.

A.2 CHAPTER 3 – ACHIEVING VALIDITY, CREDIBILITY AND ACCEPTANCE

- The CoBP identifies how validity, credibility and acceptance can be achieved in a ‘soft’ OA study.
- The primary dimensions of validity are objectivity and rigour; credibility and acceptance are not distinct qualities but are rather derived from validity.
- The analyst’s aim should be to make a clear distinction between the reality which is shared amongst the stakeholders, and the sectional perspectives which each may propagate for his own reasons.
- Gathering subjective judgements from experts exposes the analyst and his study to bias which can be motivational or cognitive in nature.
- The biggest threat to validity is ignorance at the design stage of what is likely to be important. This threat can itself be mitigated by creating an iterative design similar to that used in experimentation.
- An analyst needs to conduct activities in an ethical manner that deserves the confidence of all parties involved.

- Credibility and acceptance will be reinforced by independent scrutiny.

A.3 CHAPTER 4 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Many roles and responsibilities are undertaken during the conduct of a ‘soft’ OA study. Moreover, one individual may adopt different roles involving different responsibilities. Each individual involved in the study contributes to its quality and success.
- The analyst, through his design and conduct of the study and through his reporting and interpretation of the study’s outcomes, plays a key role in contributing to the study’s validity, credibility and acceptance.
- The facilitator too, through his management of study process (the way participants interact), plays a key role in contributing to the study’s validity, credibility and acceptance.
- The (primary) client has a responsibility towards the analyst in supporting the execution of the study and should act as a partner to the analyst.
- Good stakeholder management is the responsibility of the analyst and is critical to study success.

A.4 CHAPTER 5 – THE ‘SOFT’ OA STUDY PROCESS

- Consider designing the study as a process with the following phases:
 - *Appreciation* – ‘What is happening’?
 - *Analysis* – ‘Why and how is it happening’?
 - *Assessment* – ‘How can it happen in a better way’?
 - *Action* – ‘What needs to be done’?
- Ensure that the study team and the (group of) client(s) reach an agreement about the following concepts at the end of each of the 4A-phases:
 - *Study plan* (← Appreciation phase)
 - *Problem understanding* (← Analysis phase)
 - *Set of options* (← Assessment phase)
 - *Action plan* (← Action phase)
- Be aware that the people involved in the process belong to one of the following groups, though they should cooperate with each other:
 - *Study Team*: group of people who ‘do the work’ (e.g. the facilitator, the analysts, the SMEs, and subsets of other stakeholder types including clients); and
 - *Client(s)*: group of decision makers (possibly including sponsors and customers).
- Be aware of the iterative (cyclic) and dynamic nature of the process and its phases.
- Recognise the divergent or convergent nature of subsequent phases and accommodate for it.
- Ensure that the plan for application of ‘soft’ methods is understood by participants and clients as part of their programme of progressive development. The same goes for the outputs and their utility.

- Provide a framework which allows decision makers to carry through their decision-making processes in a structured, auditable way.
- Create a roadmap depicting achievements and interrelations, perhaps in a facilitated workshop.

A.5 CHAPTER 6 – DESIGNING THE ‘SOFT’ OA STUDY METHODOLOGY

- Communicate with client(s) including key stakeholders and seek agreement on any assumption, action and delivery.
- Determine the most likely nature of the problematic situation by trying to shed light on key aspects.
- Decide on the appropriateness of a trajectory from perceived mess to either a problem proper or a manageable mess.
- Identify which type(s) of uncertainty exist(s) and contemplate on both the adequate attitude to uncertainty and ways of coping with it.
- Identify stakeholders and their interests and attitudes towards the study by conducting a stakeholder analysis.
- Decide on the appropriateness of a single or a multi-methodology study approach.
- Examine all methods on their merits to the problematic situation at hand and decide on the appropriateness of specific candidate methods. Recognise own limitations in knowledge/expertise and seek assistance.
- Decide on data and other resources needed including the use of software.
- Be aware of the danger of dissipation of results from ‘hard’ OA methods when interleaving ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ OA methods in a multi-methodology approach.
- Maximise objectivity and rigour, gauging the validity of the overall approach in terms appropriate to the problem domain being addressed.
- Document the argumentation and rationale for modelling decisions and keep a record.
- Document the argumentation and rationale for changes in the study’s assumptions and aim (including aims of specific study phases), the definition (or, alternatively, the common understanding) of the problematic situation in order to ensure end-to-end integrity.

A.6 CHAPTER 7 – DATA COLLECTION, EXPERTS AND FACILITATED WORKSHOPS

- Understand what the three viewpoints for using humans as data sources mean for the study: the cognitive, critical and constructive viewpoints. Understand types of bias that are recognised within each perspective’s context.
- Consider carefully what stakeholders (including subject-matter experts) to include in the study, and how they will be invited to participate.
- Design facilitated workshops in order to engage with stakeholders.

- Select the key conditions in the Schuman model that are considered to be critical to conducting workshops in the current study.
- Ensure that the ‘theory of action’ underpinning any considered course of action is understood and documented.
- Design (additional) data gathering to be conducted outside a workshop setting, including what sampling strategy is used.
- Consider using the Human Environment Analysis Reasoning Tool.
- Document all data collection measures taken in a study, including the methods, the sources and the collectors.

A.7 CHAPTER 8 – INTERPRETING, USING AND COMMUNICATING RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

- Document planned method(s) to provide a reference for later scrutiny of results.
- Conduct triangulation of judgement, using documentation and empirical data where possible to increase confidence in and evidence for judgement.
- Determine, in co-operation with the client, where bias should be controlled and where it should be measured to improve understanding.
- Use feedback as a tool to understand sensitivity and vested interests.
- Give careful consideration to the perceived independence of the analyst.
- Develop a clear lexicon by which outputs of the study can be described to the client community.
- Where possible include the client or his stake in the study process in order to generate ownership of the outcomes.
- Consider how learning from the study will take place iteratively, and provide outputs that support this.
- Provide capture and reporting as necessary to provide traceability and transparency in the methods used.