PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH REPORT · 2026

# Accelerate your Obeya impact

A practice-based research report on Obeya maturity in 41 organisations




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STATE OF
Obeya.

# What makes an Obeya truly impactful?

As passionate Obeya practitioners, this question drives everything we do. We are constantly exploring what turns a good Obeya into an impactful one, and how to accelerate that journey. In this report we combine data from 41 Obeya maturity assessments with our experience of well over a hundred Obeyas, and we are clear about which is which.

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## Who we are

We are Feiko van der Kolk (Brandend Water), Eric Rozemeijer (Eraneos) and Yoram Meijer (Obeya Insights), three Obeya practitioners who share a passion for Obeya and organisational effectiveness. Eric developed the first version of the Obeya maturity model and scan with Dolf Reijnders of the Obeya Association; Feiko joined later. The scan and its 11 Obeya principles belong to the Obeya Association, the knowledge organisation for Obeya. In 2023 Eric and Feiko published a first exploration based on seven maturity assessments (Rozemeijer & Van der Kolk, 2023). This study started in autumn 2025, when Yoram joined, with new research questions and a new round of assessments. Together we have worked with well over a hundred Obeyas.

## Why we wrote this

We want to understand what makes an Obeya mature, and to help decision makers and practitioners get more out of theirs. This report is our contribution to a field that is growing fast but still has little shared evidence.

## Statement of interests

The authors work as Obeya consultants, coaches and trainers. We have a professional interest in the adoption of Obeya. This study received no external funding, and no Obeya software vendor was involved. To limit the influence of our own interest, we separate what our data show from what we advise based on our practice, and we report the limitations of our data in Appendix 1.

## How to read this report

This is a practice-based research report. It combines three kinds of evidence, in line with the principles of evidence-based management (Barends & Rousseau, 2018):

| LABEL | WHAT IT MEANS | HOW YOU RECOGNISE IT |
|---|---|---|
| **Data** | Our analysis of 41 Obeya maturity assessments | Always with the number of organisations (n) |
| **Literature** | Published research and established management thinking | Always with a reference |
| **Practice** | Our own experience with well over a hundred Obeyas | Phrased as "in our practice we see" |

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

- Our data describe the maturity of each Obeya at one moment. They show which factors go together with higher maturity, not what causes it.
- Our scan measures maturity, not business impact. Where we write about impact, we write from practice.
- Many groups in our data are small. We only interpret groups of five or more, and we call findings from groups of fewer than 10 Obeyas indicative.

PART 1

# Management summary: what decision makers need to know

Obeya is spreading across sectors and countries. What began as a Japanese approach to collaborative problem-solving in Toyota's product development (Morgan & Liker, 2006) is now used by organisations to steer strategy, performance and collaboration.

## Why this matters now

Why organisations start matters. In our sample, **13 of the 41 organisations (32%)** started an Obeya mainly to get better at executing their strategy, **9 (22%)** to steer performance, and **7 (17%)** to collaborate across departments. Only 1 organisation named learning and continuous improvement as its main driver, and 2 named customer focus. Most organisations use Obeya first to fix internal problems.

The nine recommendations below each follow the same structure: what our data show, and what we advise. Where our advice rests on our practice rather than on our data, we say so.

## Recommendations for decision makers

### 1. Start at the top, then grow

**What we see.** In our sample, 20 of the 41 Obeyas are Company/Business Obeyas, followed by Program (9), Value Chain (6), Production (4) and Portfolio (2) Obeyas. In our practice, organisations start small, prove that it works, and expand from there.

OUR ADVICE

Begin with a Company/Business Obeya at leadership level rather than an organisation-wide rollout. Let visible results create pull from the rest of the organisation.

### 2. Start from genuine urgency

**What we see.** In our sample, Obeyas that started with high urgency score higher on average (2.68, n = 14) than those with medium (2.31, n = 22) or low urgency (2.05, n = 5). The groups overlap, the low-urgency group is small, and the oldest Obeyas in our sample mostly started with high urgency, so this is an indication, not proof. In our practice we see low-urgency Obeyas stall. This is in line with Kotter's (1995) argument that a sense of urgency is the first condition for lasting change.

**OUR ADVICE**

Be explicit about the business problem the Obeya must solve and why it matters now. Don't start an Obeya because you think you should; start because you must.

### 3. Choose physical or digital deliberately

**What we see.** Before collecting data we expected physical Obeyas to be the most mature. Our data do not confirm this: digital Obeyas score 2.51 (n = 13), physical 2.40 (n = 21) and hybrid 2.21 (n = 7). The differences are small, and outside the public sector physical and digital score the same (2.61).

**OUR ADVICE**

From our practice: start physical where the team is co-located, and digitise once the basics are stable. Commit fully to digital for distributed teams. Avoid hybrid as a standing way of working.

### 4. Stop optimising the room; start owning the outcome

**What we see.** Organisations score relatively high on the attractiveness of the room (2.73) and on the availability of information (2.37), but lower on making informed decisions with it (2.15; all n = 41). In our practice we see teams invest in board design while the decisions themselves stay vague.

**OUR ADVICE**

Steer on outcomes, not on more or better information in the room. The question is not "did the session run well?" but "what changed as a result?" A beautiful Obeya that produces slow, vague decisions is not working; a rough one that drives clear, fast decisions already is.

### 5. Invest in real capabilities

**What we see.** More than 1,000 professionals have been certified by the Obeya Association. Our data do not show whether training raises maturity; this recommendation rests on our practice.

**OUR ADVICE**

Invest in role-specific training: fundamentals for participants, design skills for builders, facilitation skills for hosts and coaching skills for those who guide the change.

### 6. Expect a multi-year journey

**What we see.** 25 of the 40 Obeyas with a known age had been running for a year or less. Obeyas aged 7 to 12 months score lowest (2.13, n = 18); those running 13 to 24 months score 2.50 (n = 11) and the four Obeyas older than two years 3.37. These are different organisations at different ages, not the same Obeyas measured over time.

**OUR ADVICE**

Agree multi-year expectations with sponsors before launch, and don't judge success or failure in the first two quarters. Build the roadmap around the business problem, not around perfecting the room.

### 7. Close the purpose gap early

**What we see.** Communicating a strong sense of purpose is the lowest-scoring of the 11 principles (2.10, n = 41). It scores higher in Obeyas that started with high urgency (2.61, n = 14) than in those with medium or low urgency (1.86 and 1.70).

**OUR ADVICE**

Before launch, answer three questions as a leadership team: Why is this better than our current governance? How does it connect to our strategy? What specific outcomes are we driving toward?

### 8. Match the ambition to the organisation's readiness

**What we see.** Maturity differs little between Obeya types (from 2.27 to 2.48), and some types are rare in our sample (Portfolio: n = 2; Production: n = 4). Our data therefore say little about type. In our practice, Portfolio and Value Chain Obeyas demand more: prioritisation across programmes, aligned processes and advanced facilitation.

**OUR ADVICE**

Treat a Portfolio or Value Chain Obeya as a capability to grow into. If that is where your problem sits, start simple, for example with a funnel, and build complexity over time.

### 9. Make the Obeya your single decision rhythm

**What we see.** Obeyas are good at establishing a meeting rhythm (2.98, n = 41). Synchronising that rhythm with the organisation's own steering cycle scores lower (2.55), although this was only measured in the 11 assessments that used the latest scan version. In our practice, the Obeya is usually added on top of existing steering meetings instead of replacing them.

**OUR ADVICE**

Use the launch of an Obeya to retire or merge competing governance meetings. The Obeya should become the place where decisions are made, not one more meeting.

## The bottom line

Our data show where Obeyas are strong (engagement, rhythm, an attractive room) and where they struggle (purpose, customer orientation and decision-making). Higher maturity goes together with genuine urgency and with time. Our practice adds what the data cannot show: the Obeyas that create the most value are the ones that are built around a real business problem, led visibly, and judged by the decisions they produce.

PART 2

# Findings and practice: the Obeya state of practice

This part presents what we found about the context of the 41 Obeyas: why they started, where they started, how they are set up, how old they are and how urgent the reason to start was. Each topic follows the same structure: **what we measured** (data, with n), **what we see in practice** (our interpretation and experience), and a **practitioner recommendation**. Where published literature speaks to a topic, we say so. Unless stated otherwise, scores run from 1 to 5 and the overall average across all 41 Obeyas is 2.40 (SD 0.68).

Topics marked *exploratory* were not part of our hypotheses; we report them because they are useful, but they deserve extra caution (see Appendix 1).

## Obeya is taking off

### WHAT WE MEASURED

More than 1,000 professionals have now been certified by the Obeya Association, as builder, host or coach. Our own sample is mainly Dutch: 36 of the 41 organisations are based in the Netherlands, 5 elsewhere (France, Albania, Canada and India).

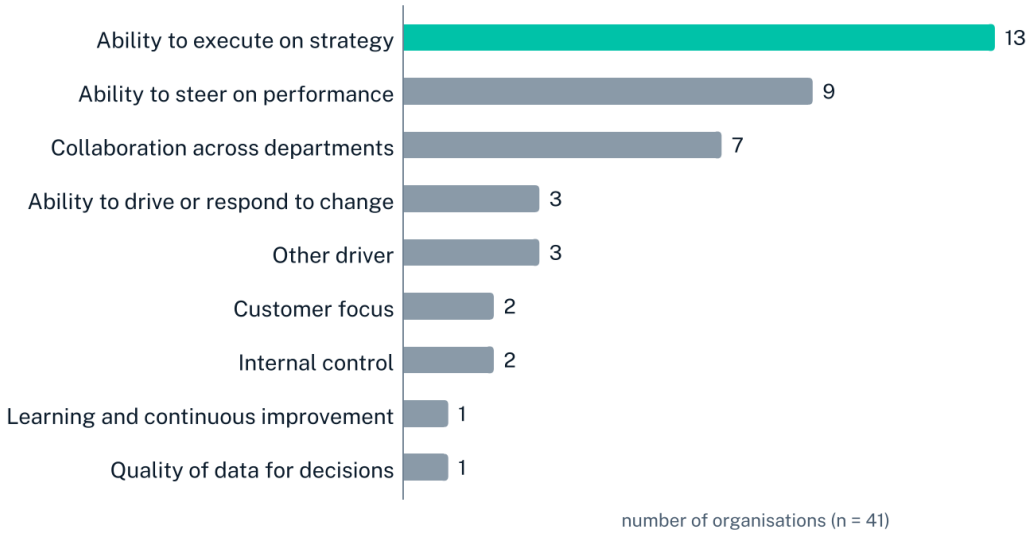
### WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE

Obeya is moving beyond manufacturing into public services, finance, technology and services. In our practice, more organisations now ask how to make their Obeya work, not whether to start one.

## Key drivers for adopting Obeya

### WHAT WE MEASURED

We asked for each Obeya what the main reason was for starting it.




Main driver for starting an Obeya, number of organisations (n = 41).
Source: State of Obeya maturity scan · n = 41

Strategy execution (13 of 41), steering on performance (9) and collaboration across departments (7) together account for 29 of the 41 Obeyas. Learning and continuous improvement (1) and customer focus (2) are rarely the main reason, even though both are core principles of Obeya and Lean.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Most organisations use Obeya first as a remedy for internal friction: strategies that don't land, reports that come too late, departments that don't work together. That is a valid starting point. But it means many organisations use only part of what Obeya can offer: an organisation that keeps learning and stays focused on what its customers need. The gap between strategy and execution that drives most of these Obeyas is well documented in management literature (Sull, Homkes & Sull, 2015).

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Even when an Obeya starts from an internal driver, build customer and learning signals into its rhythm from the start:

- A recurring agenda slot for a customer story, complaint or satisfaction metric
- A customer-facing colleague who regularly joins the sessions
- A standing "voice of the customer" element on the wall

Without deliberate design, an internally triggered Obeya stays internally focused.

# Where organisations start: senior leadership first

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

Company/Business Obeyas are by far the most common type in our sample: 20 of the 41. Our data are a count at one moment. They show which types are common, not in which order organisations introduce them.

| OBEYA TYPE | NUMBER OF OBEYAS |
|---|---|
| Company/Business | 20 |
| Program | 9 |
| Value Chain | 6 |
| Production | 4 |
| Portfolio | 2 |

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

A Company/Business Obeya gives leadership one place to see strategic objectives, follow key results and get departments talking to each other. That value is immediately visible to senior leaders, which explains why so many organisations start there. In the organisations we work with, we have not seen a "big bang" rollout. The pattern we see is incremental:

1. Start with one leadership team or department.
2. Show visible results.
3. Let that success create interest elsewhere.
4. Expand step by step.

Portfolio Obeyas are rare in our sample (2 of 41). In our practice they work best as a capability that organisations grow into, not as a starting point: they require prioritisation across programmes, aligned processes and experienced facilitation.

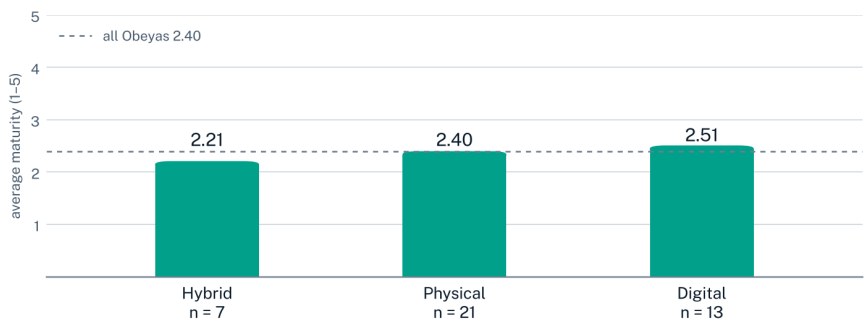
**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Resist the temptation to start at Portfolio or Value Chain level, even if the most pressing problem seems to sit there. Start with a Company/Business Obeya to secure leadership engagement, prove its value, and extend to Program and Value Chain levels once it has traction. If your core challenge really is at portfolio level, use the first Obeya to build what a portfolio Obeya needs: shared prioritisation criteria, facilitation skills across departments and aligned processes.

# The Obeya debate: physical, digital or hybrid

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

Physical Obeyas are the most common choice in our sample: 21 of 41 (51%). Digital Obeyas account for 13 (32%) and hybrid Obeyas for 7 (17%).




Average maturity by modality, with number of Obeyas. SD: digital 0.50, physical 0.85, hybrid 0.34.

Before collecting data, we expected physical Obeyas to show the highest maturity (hypothesis H1, see Appendix 1). Our data do not support this. Digital Obeyas score highest on average, physical ones second and hybrid ones lowest. The differences are small compared with the spread within each group, and the hybrid group is small.

Part of the difference may come from the mix of sectors. Public-sector Obeyas score lower on average (see *Scope and sector*), and 10 of the 21 physical Obeyas are in the public sector. Outside the public sector, physical and digital Obeyas score exactly the same (2.61; n = 11 and n = 8), and hybrid Obeyas lower (2.27; n = 5).

#### WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE

We still advise starting physical where a team works in one place, for reasons that come from our experience rather than from these data. A dedicated room with walls full of visuals creates a sense that something important happens there. It keeps laptops and notifications out of the conversation. Moving a card or pointing at a chart while you make your case connects people to the work. Digital Obeyas solve a different and equally real need: for teams across locations they are essential, and they make real-time data, automatic updates and maintenance easier. That may well be part of why digital Obeyas score well in our sample.

Hybrid is where we see most problems in practice. Remote participants become spectators behind a screen, while the people in the room keep adjusting to them. The result is often a weaker version of both.

#### PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION

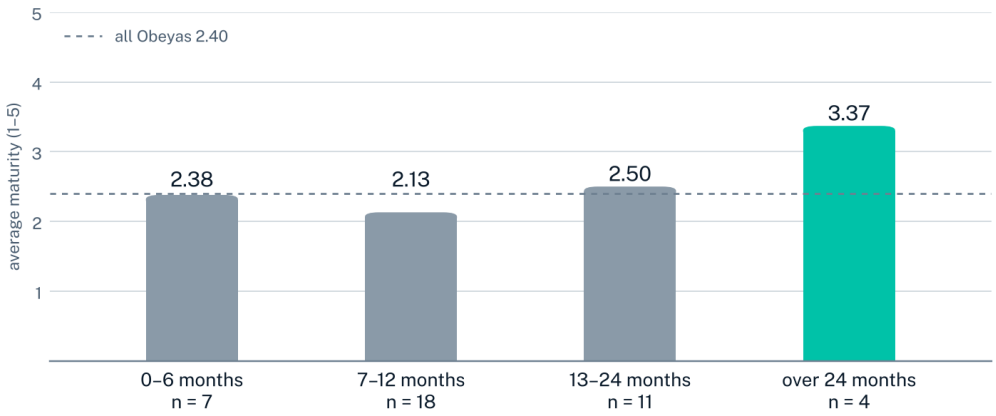
Choose modality based on how your team is spread, not on habit or on trying to please everyone.

- **Co-located teams:** start physical. Keep the room open, near the work floor and available outside scheduled sessions. Once the basics are stable, digitise: first stabilise, then digitise.
- **Distributed teams:** commit fully to digital, and invest early in real-time data and automatic updates.
- **Avoid hybrid as a standing model.** When an occasional remote participant is unavoidable, treat it as an exception and give it dedicated facilitation.

## Maturity develops over time

#### WHAT WE MEASURED

Across all 41 Obeyas, average maturity is 2.40 out of 5 (SD 0.68). Most Obeyas in our sample are young: 25 of the 40 with a known age had been running for a year or less, and 18 of those for 7 to 12 months.




Average maturity by age of the Obeya, with number of Obeyas. Different organisations at different ages, not growth over time.

Obeyas aged 7 to 12 months score lowest; Obeyas running longer score higher. The group older than two years has only four Obeyas, so its high score is an indication at most. Because each Obeya was assessed once, these are differences between organisations of different ages, not growth measured within the same Obeya. Obeyas that stopped are probably not in our data at all, which may make older Obeyas look better than they are.

#### WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE

The low aggregate score of 2.40 does not mean that Obeya underperforms as a method. Most of our sample is still early in the journey. In our practice, organisations that stay committed through the first year are the ones we see mature.

#### PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION

Agree multi-year expectations with sponsors before launch, so that early results don't define the story. Avoid declaring success or failure within the first two quarters.

## Quadrant analysis (exploratory)

#### WHAT WE MEASURED

The maturity model groups the 11 principles into four quadrants. Across all 41 Obeyas, Workspace (2.48) and Mindset (2.46) score slightly higher than Content (2.36) and Alignment (2.32). By age:

| AGE OF THE OBEYA | N | WORKSPACE | MINDSET | CONTENT | ALIGNMENT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0–6 months | 7 | 2.50 | 2.45 | 2.17 | 2.41 |
| 7–12 months | 18 | 2.21 | 2.17 | 2.12 | 2.01 |
| 13–24 months | 11 | 2.54 | 2.61 | 2.45 | 2.40 |
| Over 24 months | 4 | 3.36 | 3.25 | 3.42 | 3.44 |

In Obeyas up to two years old, Workspace and Mindset are on average slightly ahead of Content and Alignment. In the four oldest Obeyas, Content and Alignment have caught up. The differences within each age group are small.

#### WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE

There is a logical order. The workspace and the rituals come first; the mindset drives the step from room to content; alignment with strategy takes longest, because it requires strategic clarity and honest dialogue that grow over time. We also see a bias in our own profession: many Obeya coaches are drawn to perfecting the room and the rituals rather than to the business problem at hand.

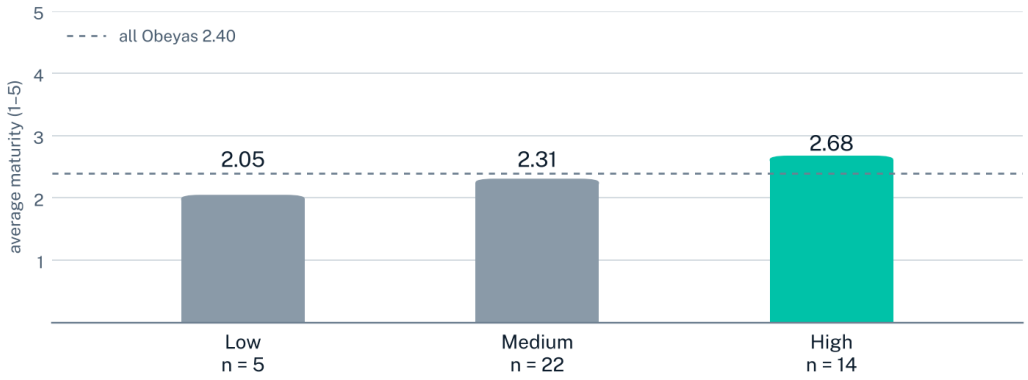
#### PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION

Build your Obeya roadmap around the business problem you are solving, not around perfecting the room. A workspace that works is a means; better and faster decisions are the goal.

# Urgency

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

For each Obeya, the coach recorded how urgent the reason for starting it was. In our sample, 14 Obeyas (34%) started with high urgency, 22 (54%) with medium urgency and 5 (12%) with low urgency.




Average maturity by initial urgency, with number of Obeyas. SD: high 0.82, medium 0.59, low 0.36. Range: high 1.57–4.32, low 1.44–2.33.

Before collecting data, we expected a stronger sense of urgency to go together with higher maturity (hypothesis H2, see Appendix 1). The direction of our data supports this: maturity is highest with high urgency and lowest with low urgency. Three cautions:

- **The groups overlap.** Some high-urgency Obeyas score lower than the best low-urgency ones.
- **The low-urgency group is small** (5 Obeyas), so its average can easily shift.
- **Urgency and age go together.** Three of the four Obeyas older than two years started with high urgency, and none of the low-urgency Obeyas is older than two years. We therefore cannot tell whether low-urgency Obeyas stay at a low level, or are simply younger.

For most assessments, urgency was recorded in 2026, some time after the scan itself. It is the coach's judgement of the starting situation, looking back.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Where there is genuine urgency, people show up, engage respectfully and are willing to tackle difficult issues. Where it is missing, we see Obeyas stall. This is in line with Kotter (1995), who describes the absence of a sense of urgency as the first reason why transformation efforts fail.

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Test for genuine urgency before launch, and treat its absence as a reason to pause, not to proceed.

- **Define the business problem precisely,** and make sure participants understand it rather than assume it.
- **Make leadership commitment visible.** Urgency fades when the Obeya is treated as a delegated initiative.
- **Tie the pressure to a moment in time.** Explain why the problem matters now, in relation to a concrete competitive, operational or strategic deadline.

# Scope and sector (exploratory)

**WHAT WE MEASURED: TYPE OF OBEYA**

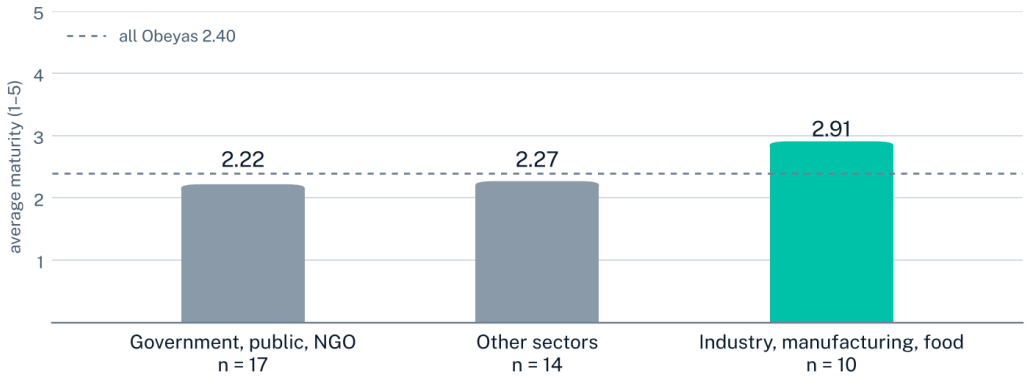
Maturity differs little between types of Obeya.

| TYPE OF OBEYA | N | AVERAGE MATURITY | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Production | 4 | 2.48 | 0.65 |
| Company/Business | 20 | 2.43 | 0.77 |
| Program | 9 | 2.41 | 0.76 |
| Value Chain | 6 | 2.30 | 0.50 |
| Portfolio | 2 | 2.27 | 0.03 |

The gap between the highest and lowest type (0.21) is small compared with the spread within types, and Production and Portfolio Obeyas are too few to interpret. Our data therefore do not show that a broader scope goes with lower maturity.

**WHAT WE MEASURED: SECTOR**

The clearest difference in our sample is between sectors. Sector was not part of our hypotheses.




Average maturity by sector, with number of Obeyas. SD: government 0.32, other 0.72, industry 0.86.

Obeyas in industry score higher on average, and they vary widely. Public-sector Obeyas score lower and are remarkably similar to each other. Because 17 of the 41 Obeyas are in the public sector, this difference may also colour other comparisons, such as the one between physical and digital Obeyas.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Production and industrial Obeyas build on decades of Lean and visual management, and their work is relatively easy to measure: clear indicators, standard processes, predictable cycles. Portfolio and Value Chain Obeyas, in contrast, must align stakeholders with competing priorities, departments without a shared history, and decisions with long feedback loops. In our practice that makes them harder to mature, even if our data cannot show it. Why public-sector Obeyas score lower is an open question; possible explanations, such as more layered decision-making, need further research.

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

- Calibrate maturity expectations to the complexity of the Obeya and its environment, rather than applying one timeline to all.
- Build a Portfolio or Value Chain Obeya in the simplest possible way and add complexity over time. For example, start a Portfolio Obeya with a funnel rather than with managing the entire portfolio at once.
- Don't benchmark a Portfolio or Value Chain Obeya directly against a Production Obeya; the challenges are not comparable.

PART 3

# Strengths and challenges: what works, what doesn't, and why

Part 2 described the context of the 41 Obeyas. This part looks inside them: which of the 11 Obeya principles score highest, which score lowest, what pattern we see behind the weakest ones, and what we know from practice about maturity and impact.

## What's working well in Obeyas: high scores

Five of the 11 principles score above the overall average of 2.40. We highlight three that matter most in practice; the chart further on shows all 11.

### High score #1: People want to be there

> *"People come together in the Obeya to respectfully see, learn and act on vital information."*

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

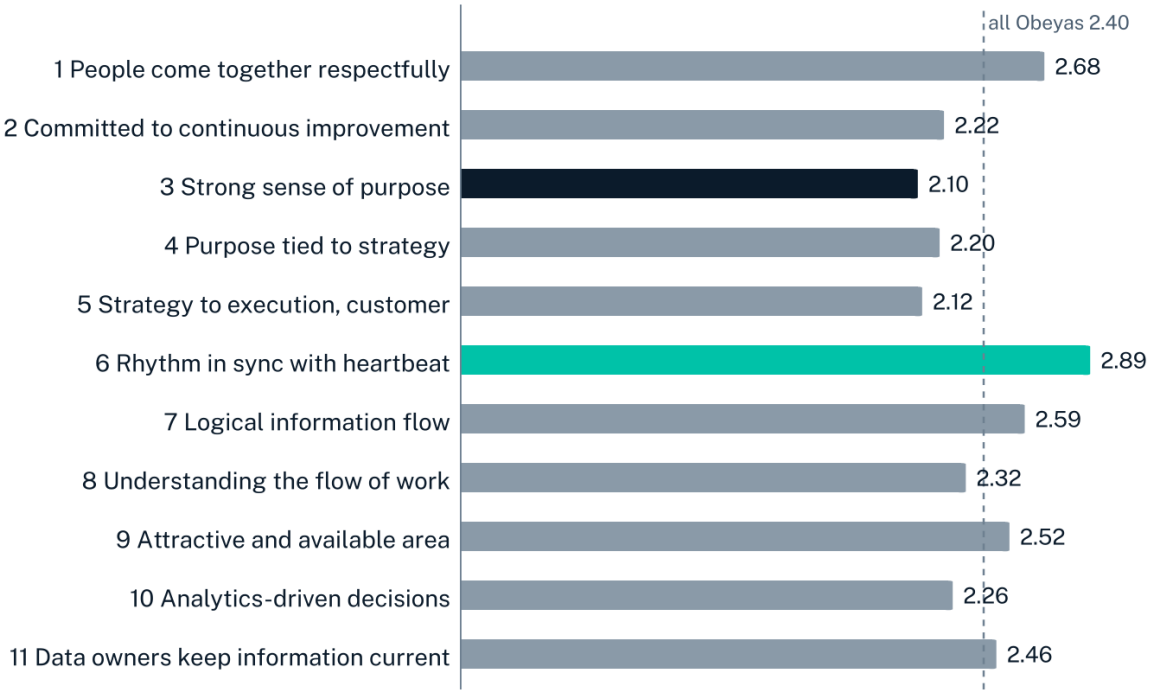
This principle scores 2.68 (SD 0.77, n = 41). It is strongly linked to urgency: 3.07 in Obeyas that started with high urgency (n = 14), 2.58 with medium urgency (n = 22) and 2.07 with low urgency (n = 5).

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Engagement in the room is one of the most robust strengths of Obeya, as long as there is a real reason to be there. Without urgency, the motivation to come together and tackle difficult issues fades (Kotter, 1995).

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Don't assume that a well-designed format creates engagement by itself. When attendance starts to feel like a ritual without real participation, revisit the urgency before you adjust the room or the agenda.




Average score per principle (n = 41). Teal: the highest (6); ink: the lowest (3). Dashed line: overall average.

## High score #2: The rhythm is there; the synchronisation is not yet

> *"The Obeya meetings have a rhythm in sync with the operational heartbeat."*

#### WHAT WE MEASURED

This is the highest-scoring principle (2.89, SD 0.93, n = 41). Its two parts tell different stories:

| COMPONENT | N | AVERAGE | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Having a fixed rhythm | 41 | 2.98 | 0.91 |
| Synchronised with the organisation's steering cycle | 11 | 2.55 | 1.04 |

The second part was only included in the latest version of the scan, so it was measured in 11 of the 41 assessments.

#### WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE

A fixed day, time and format is relatively easy to set up. Aligning that rhythm with the way the organisation actually steers is harder. Most organisations run several overlapping cycles, from team check-ins to monthly reviews and quarterly planning, and in our practice the Obeya is usually added on top of them rather than replacing them.

#### PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION

Before fixing your Obeya's rhythm, map the existing steering committees, reporting cycles and review meetings. Retire or merge overlapping ones, so that the Obeya becomes the main place where decisions are made. Where that is not yet possible, make explicit how the Obeya relates to the other cycles; ambiguity about where decisions are really made undermines the Obeya, even when attendance is good.

### High score #3: People care about the space

> *"The Obeya is an attractive and available area, in proximity to the work floor."*

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

The principle as a whole scores 2.52 (n = 41). Attractiveness stands out at 2.73 (SD 0.92); availability scores lower at 2.29 (SD 1.01). Proximity to the work floor (2.55) was only measured in the 11 assessments with the latest scan version.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Organisations clearly invest in attractive rooms. But we also see beautiful Obeyas that are locked half the time, digital Obeyas that are hard to find, and executive offices turned into Obeyas that the team cannot simply walk into.

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Treat availability as a design requirement. For physical Obeyas: near the work floor, and open outside scheduled sessions. For digital Obeyas: minimise login and navigation steps; if it takes more than one click to find, it won't be used.

## Lowest scores: three areas for improvement

Six of the 11 principles score below the overall average of 2.40. We highlight three, because the four lowest-scoring items in the whole scan all belong to them: communicating purpose (2.00), visible customer experience (2.07), purpose linked to strategy (2.10) and making informed decisions (2.15).

### Challenge #1: The purpose problem

> *"In the Obeya we communicate a strong sense of purpose."*

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

This is the lowest-scoring of the 11 principles (2.10, SD 0.91, n = 41). It is weak in most groups, but not in all. It scores 2.61 in Obeyas that started with high urgency (n = 14), against 1.86 with medium (n = 22) and 1.70 with low urgency (n = 5). The four Obeyas older than two years score 3.25.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Organisations often start an Obeya because it is seen as good practice, without being able to say why it is better than their current way of steering. A clear link to strategy is even rarer. The Obeya then becomes a procedure rather than a purpose.

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Write a one-sentence purpose statement for your Obeya and make it visible: on the wall, or pinned at the top of the digital workspace. Treat it as a living statement and revisit it every quarter.

## Challenge #2: The strategy–customer gap

> *"Obeya connects strategy to execution with visible orientation on customer experience."*

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

This principle scores 2.12 (SD 0.88, n = 41). Connecting strategy to execution scores 2.17; visible customer experience scores 2.07. Production Obeyas score higher on customer experience (2.75), but there are only four of them. Only two organisations named customer focus as their main reason to start, too few to say whether that makes a difference.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

The customer is often simply not in the room, literally or figuratively. The Obeya turns inward, and the outside-in perspective is lost.

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Add a "voice of the customer" element to every session: a quote, a complaint, a metric or a short story. Even a small but consistent dose keeps the external perspective alive.

## Challenge #3: The decision-making dilemma

> *"In the Obeya we use analytically driven information to make business decisions."*

**WHAT WE MEASURED**

This principle scores 2.26 (SD 0.89, n = 41). Having analytically driven information scores 2.37; making informed decisions with it scores 2.15.

**WHAT WE SEE IN PRACTICE**

Organisations often have reasonable information on the wall but struggle to turn it into decisions. Discussions go in circles, or the loudest voice wins over the clearest evidence. Winther (2026) describes how complex organisations struggle with decision quality and how Obeya can help restore it.

**PRACTITIONER RECOMMENDATION**

Introduce a decision log or action wall: for every significant discussion, record what was decided, who owns it and by when. This one habit turns information on display into accountable action.

# The pattern behind the three challenges

*This section is our interpretation, based on our practice.*

None of the three challenges is about tools or process. They are about clarity and intent:

- **Purpose:** why does this Obeya exist?
- **Strategy and customer:** what outcome are we driving, and for whom?
- **Decision-making:** how is the information actually used?

The shared root cause, as we see it: teams optimise the "how" before clarifying the "why" and the "for whom". Process is tangible and easy to implement; purpose and strategic alignment require ongoing reflection, dialogue and sometimes uncomfortable questions.

- **Purpose is the foundation.** When it is unclear, everything built on top of it inherits the ambiguity. Teams copy what they have seen elsewhere, such as boards, stand-ups and KPI walls, without asking whether it serves their need. A room full of metrics is not the same as a room with a mission.
- **The strategy–customer link is about relevance.** An Obeya can run efficiently and still be strategically irrelevant. Teams feel busy and informed while the work does not move what matters outside the organisation.
- **Decision-making is about use.** Information on display does not guarantee better decisions. Without deliberate mechanisms, the Obeya becomes a passive dashboard rather than an active management system.

#### OUR RECOMMENDATION

Fixing an Obeya is rarely about adding tools, metrics or visuals. Pause, and let the leadership team answer three questions explicitly and together:

1. Why does this room exist? (purpose)
2. Who is the work ultimately for, and what does value look like to them? (strategy and customer)
3. How should the information on the wall change our behaviour and decisions? (decision-making)

Without these answers, improvements risk being cosmetic: the Obeya looks better without working better.

## What we see in practice: maturity and impact

One of our research questions was how Obeya maturity relates to the impact an Obeya delivers (RQ3). Our scan measures maturity, not impact, so our data cannot answer this question. What follows is based on our combined experience with well over a hundred Obeyas.

#### OUR WORKING HYPOTHESIS

Before collecting data, we formulated the hypothesis that the largest added value lies in the step from maturity level 2 to level 3 (H3). At level 2 (*Initiated*), an organisation takes its first steps and often focuses on making the Obeya look right, at the expense of its purpose. At level 3 (*Formalised*), a clear process is in place and people follow it consistently. In many Obeyas we recognise the step from a visual start at low maturity to a maturity that enables the team to make decisions. That is also the step from looking back to looking ahead. We distinguish good Obeyas by whether they look at what is coming, or keep looking back at the problems of yesterday. At level 3 the backward-looking pattern falls away, because the Obeya has reached the maturity that makes looking ahead possible, and with it the step to bringing strategy into execution.

#### WHAT WE SEE

In our practice, more mature Obeyas are better able to facilitate the conversation that leads to decisions, and to follow those decisions up. Less mature Obeyas tend to report and discuss, but the decisions stay vague or are not followed through. This is consistent with what our data show about decision-making as one of the weakest areas (see *Lowest scores*), but our data cannot show that higher maturity causes better decisions.

#### WHAT IT WOULD TAKE TO MEASURE THIS

To test the link between maturity and impact, future research needs two things our current data lack: impact indicators measured alongside the scan, such as decision lead time or the share of goals achieved on time; and repeated assessments of the same Obeyas over time. We see this as the next step in our research.

APPENDIX 1

# Research design: questions, method and limitations

## Research questions

We formulated our research questions and hypotheses in autumn 2025, before we collected and analysed the data.

- **RQ1.** What differences in Obeya maturity do we see between Obeyas, for example by sector, type, age and modality?
- **RQ2.** Which factors are associated with Obeya maturity as measured by the scan, such as the key driver, the type of Obeya and the sense of urgency?
- **RQ3.** What is the relationship between Obeya maturity and the impact Obeya delivers?

## Hypotheses and outcomes

| | HYPOTHESIS (AUTUMN 2025) | OUTCOME |
|---|---|---|
| H1 | Physical Obeyas reach higher maturity than hybrid and digital ones | **Not supported.** Digital scores highest (2.51, n = 13), then physical (2.40, n = 21) and hybrid (2.21, n = 7). Outside the public sector, physical and digital score the same. |
| H2 | A stronger sense of urgency goes together with higher maturity | **Supported in direction, not conclusive.** High 2.68 (n = 14), medium 2.31 (n = 22), low 2.05 (n = 5). Small low-urgency group; urgency overlaps with age. |
| H3 | The largest added value lies in the step from maturity level 2 to level 3 | **Not testable with these data.** The scan does not measure impact. Addressed from practice in Part 3. |

All other analyses in this report, including age, type of Obeya, sector, country, quadrants and individual principles, are exploratory.

## Factors we did not measure

In designing the study we also considered leadership style, inclusiveness in building the Obeya, a dedicated coach or build team, the starting situation, a growth mindset and learning from others (go-see), the level of ambition, and whether an Obeya had been scaled to other parts of the organisation. The maturity scan does not capture these factors. We consider them relevant, and they form the agenda for further research.

# Method

**Design.** This is a cross-sectional, exploratory analysis of existing Obeya maturity assessments. Each Obeya was assessed once. There was no intervention and no control group.

**Instrument.** The Obeya maturity scan measures maturity on the 11 Obeya principles, grouped into four quadrants: Workspace, Mindset, Content and Alignment. The scan and the principles belong to the Obeya Association, the knowledge organisation for Obeya. Each principle has two or three sub-questions, 27 in total, each scored on five levels, from 1 (start-up/insufficient) to 5 (embedded/transformative); see Appendix 2. A principle's score is the average of its sub-questions. The first version of the model and scan was developed by Eric Rozemeijer and Dolf Reijnders of the Obeya Association; Feiko van der Kolk joined later. It follows the tradition of staged maturity models such as CMMI. The literature on maturity models stresses that their development and testing should be documented (de Bruin et al., 2005; Becker et al., 2009; Pöppelbuß & Röglinger, 2011). The Obeya maturity model has not yet been formally validated. Our assessments used different versions of the scan, from 1.13 to 2.3. The sub-questions are largely the same, but three sub-questions (2.3, 6.2 and 9.3) only appear in the latest version, so they were scored in 11 of the 41 assessments.

**Data collection.** All certified Obeya coaches have access to the maturity scan. In early 2026 we asked our network of current and former coaches for completed assessments, together with context: the type of Obeya, sector, country, modality, the age of the Obeya at the time of assessment, the main driver and the initial sense of urgency. The assessments themselves were carried out between 2021 and 2026; 32 of the 41 before September 2025. All assessments were done by certified Obeya coaches, or by coaches in training whose scores were reviewed in full by an Obeya Sensei. All data were anonymised.

**Sample.** We received 42 assessments, of which 41 could be analysed (one file was empty). The number of Obeyas per group is shown in Appendix 3.

**Analysis.** We report descriptive statistics: the number of Obeyas (n), the average, the standard deviation (SD) and the range. We checked for outliers. We did not interpret groups with fewer than five Obeyas, and we call findings from groups of five to nine indicative. The age of each Obeya was converted to months; for one Obeya the age was unknown. The dataset was frozen on 2 October 2026; all figures in this report refer to that version.

# Limitations

- **Selection.** Assessments were collected through our network of coaches, not drawn at random. Obeyas that were stopped are probably missing, which can make older Obeyas look more mature than they are.
- **Assessors.** Different coaches carried out the assessments. Coaches in training were reviewed by a Sensei, but there was no joint calibration in which several coaches scored the same Obeya. Differences between assessors remain possible.

- **Context recorded afterwards.** For most assessments, urgency, driver and age were recorded in 2026, sometimes years after the scan. Urgency in particular is a judgement looking back.
- **One moment per Obeya.** Differences between young and older Obeyas are differences between organisations, not measured growth.
- **Small groups.** Many subgroups contain fewer than ten Obeyas. Averages of small groups are unstable and tend to exaggerate differences (Button et al., 2013).
- **Many comparisons.** We compared maturity across seven variables. With so many comparisons, some differences will appear by chance.
- **Overlapping factors.** Urgency, age, sector and modality are not independent of each other in our sample. A difference attributed to one may partly reflect another.
- **Different scan versions.** See Instrument above.
- **Maturity is not impact.** The scan measures how mature an Obeya is, not whether the organisation performs better because of it.
- **Geography.** 36 of the 41 organisations are Dutch.

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APPENDIX 2

# The maturity scan: what it measures and how

## What the scan measures

The Obeya maturity scan assesses how mature an Obeya is on the 11 Obeya principles, grouped into four quadrants: Workspace, Mindset, Content and Alignment. Each principle is broken down into two or three sub-questions, 27 in total. The scan and the 11 principles belong to the Obeya Association, the knowledge organisation for Obeya. The first version of the scan was developed by Eric Rozemeijer and Dolf Reijnders of the Obeya Association; Feiko van der Kolk joined later, and Yoram Meijer digitised the scan for this study.

## How the scan works

The scan is completed for one Obeya at a time. For every sub-question, the respondents choose the description that best fits their current practice, on a scale of five maturity levels. A principle's score is the average of its sub-questions; a quadrant's score is the average of its principles. The result is a snapshot: it shows where an Obeya stands at the moment of measurement.

## Five maturity levels

The scan measures Obeya maturity against five maturity levels. Repeated measurements can give insight into its development.

- **Level 1 – Start-up/insufficient.** The organisation is preparing or considering an Obeya; there is little implementation yet.
- **Level 2 – Initiated.** First practical steps: roles, session structure and logistics. The focus is often on making the Obeya look right, at the expense of its purpose.
- **Level 3 – Formalised.** A clear process is in place and people follow it consistently. It can still feel mechanical.
- **Level 4 – Optimised.** Goals and value creation drive the Obeya. It is continuously improved based on its impact.
- **Level 5 – Embedded/transformative.** The Obeya way of thinking is part of the organisation's culture and extends to partners and customers.

The average score per principle for the 41 Obeyas in this study is shown in Appendix 3.

APPENDIX 3

# Data tables

Data frozen on 2 October 2026; 41 assessments. Overall maturity: average 2.40, SD 0.68, median 2.22, range 1.44–4.32.

## Average score per principle

Principle 11 is our translation of the Dutch wording in the scan. n = 41 for all principles.

| # | PRINCIPLE | QUADRANT | AVERAGE | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | People come together in the Obeya to respectfully see, learn and act on vital information | Mindset | 2.68 | 0.77 |
| 2 | People are committed to continuous improvement, resolving obstacles along the way | Mindset | 2.22 | 0.78 |
| 3 | In the Obeya, we communicate a strong sense of purpose | Alignment | 2.10 | 0.91 |
| 4 | Purpose is recognisably tied to the organisational strategy through meaningful objectives | Alignment | 2.20 | 0.87 |
| 5 | The Obeya connects strategy to execution with visible orientation on customer experience | Alignment | 2.12 | 0.88 |
| 6 | The Obeya meetings have a rhythm in sync with the operational heartbeat of the organisation | Alignment | 2.89 | 0.93 |
| 7 | The Obeya visuals provide a logical and practical flow of information and conversation | Workspace | 2.59 | 0.83 |
| 8 | The Obeya reflects a good understanding of the flow of work from start to delivery | Workspace | 2.32 | 0.76 |
| 9 | The Obeya is an attractive and available area, in proximity to the work floor | Workspace | 2.52 | 0.78 |
| 10 | In the Obeya, we use analytically driven evidence to make business decisions | Content | 2.26 | 0.89 |
| 11 | Data owners ensure that information is understandable, available, up to date and visually attractive | Content | 2.46 | 1.00 |

## Overall maturity per group

| VARIABLE | GROUP | N | AVERAGE | SD | RANGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urgency | High | 14 | 2.68 | 0.82 | 1.57–4.32 |
| | Medium | 22 | 2.31 | 0.59 | 1.62–4.29 |
| | Low | 5 | 2.05 | 0.36 | 1.44–2.33 |
| Modality | Digital | 13 | 2.51 | 0.50 | 1.44–3.40 |
| | Physical | 21 | 2.40 | 0.85 | 1.57–4.32 |
| | Hybrid | 7 | 2.21 | 0.34 | 1.75–2.70 |
| Type | Company/Business | 20 | 2.43 | 0.77 | 1.57–4.32 |
| | Program | 9 | 2.41 | 0.76 | 1.62–4.29 |
| | Value Chain | 6 | 2.30 | 0.50 | 1.44–2.81 |
| | Production | 4 | 2.48 | 0.65 | 2.00–3.40 |
| | Portfolio | 2 | 2.27 | 0.03 | 2.25–2.30 |
| Age | 0–6 months | 7 | 2.38 | 0.55 | 1.80–3.40 |
| | 7–12 months | 18 | 2.13 | 0.43 | 1.44–2.81 |
| | 13–24 months | 11 | 2.50 | 0.70 | 2.00–4.29 |
| | Over 24 months | 4 | 3.37 | 1.09 | 2.18–4.32 |
| Sector | Industry, manufacturing, food | 10 | 2.91 | 0.86 | 2.00–4.32 |
| | Government, public, NGO | 17 | 2.22 | 0.32 | 1.57–2.74 |
| | Other sectors combined | 14 | 2.27 | 0.72 | 1.44–4.29 |
| Main driver | Strategy execution | 13 | 2.62 | 0.82 | 1.75–4.32 |
| | Steering on performance | 9 | 2.24 | 0.21 | 2.00–2.74 |
| | Collaboration across departments | 7 | 2.23 | 0.34 | 1.62–2.70 |
| | Six other drivers (each n ≤ 3) | 12 | – | – | – |
| Country | Netherlands | 36 | 2.30 | 0.61 | 1.44–4.32 |
| | Other (France, Albania, Canada, India) | 5 | – | – | – |

**Exploratory tests, for information only.** High versus low urgency: Mann-Whitney U, $p \approx 0.09$; Hedges' $g \approx 0.82$. Modality: Kruskal-Wallis, $p \approx 0.20$. Age and maturity: Spearman's $\rho \approx 0.33$, $p \approx 0.04$. Given the number of comparisons, a single p-value below 0.05 should not be read as evidence.

# About the authors

Three practitioners who build, host and coach Obeyas every day. We would love to hear from you, whether to discuss the findings, test them against your own Obeya, or contribute data to the next round of this research.




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Yoram helps leadership teams turn strategy into execution, with the Obeya as the place where decisions are made. He is co-founder of Obeya Insights and an Obeya Sensei, and in 2026 he published the book *De muur die niet liegt*. He joined this research in 2025, digitised the maturity scan and led the data analysis.

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