



IAEA

60 Years

*Atoms for Peace and Development*

# Observations



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# Types of observations

*Task observations* where the focus is on noticing the flow and execution of work activities relative to prescribed expectations and standards

These are **NOT**  
part of cultural  
observation



# Types of Observations

## Two types of Cultural observations

### *Naturalistic observations*

where people are observed in their normal settings performing activities without any manipulation or interference by the observers

### *Participant observations*

where the assessor is, to a greater or lesser extent, immersed in the day-to-day activities of the people being observed.

# Advantages of Observations

- Do not require an underlying hypothesis that can introduce bias
- Visible manifestations of culture
- What you see is factual – whether it should have happened or not!
- A self-assessment should involve a large number of observations in different areas and with different people across the organization to ensure the validity of the findings

# Advantages of observations

## (cont'd)

- The process of observing provides opportunities to interact with the people and provides insight on intentions, motifs and contextual information
- Can gain important information for the interpretation of data

# Risks

- Presence can affect what is happening - need to minimise distractions from observer presence
- Focus on individual rather than cultural issues
- Potential to over-generalize from too few observations
- Untrained/unskilled observers may miss things or misunderstand

# Role of the observers

- Self-assessments involve organizational members shifting from being:
  - ‘members’ engaged in the normal flow of their assigned work activities, to
    - ✓ ‘participant observers’ that are actively noticing what, when, where and why from the perspective of seeing organizational patterns as cultural expressions, and where possible, to
    - ✓ ‘naturalistic observers’ in areas that may otherwise fall outside their normal role.



# Role of observers (cont'd)

- Observations are more focused on relational dynamics and thinking styles than on the specific content of interactions
- Important for the assessors to be mindful of the impact of their presence

# Degrees of participation

- *Passive participation* (where the observer is a passive bystander, recording the activities, sometimes unknown to those interacting)
- *Moderate participation* (where the observer is identified by those interacting as an observer, but interaction between observer and personnel to be observed is limited),
- *Active participation* (where the observer actively takes part in the activities at hand)
- *Complete participation*, where the observer actually becomes part of the group studied
- In SCSA, participation will most likely be moderate or active

# Forms of information

- *Descriptive information* where the assessor notes what was seen.
- *Inferential observations* whereby the observer makes inferences about underlying dynamics.
- *Evaluative observations* where the assessor both makes an inference and a judgment about the behaviour.
- When documenting observations, they become narrated, losing some of their initial objectivity

# Preparing for Observations

- Select the activity to be observed
- Ensure that the person(s) being observed are comfortable with it
- Understand any risks or hazards associated with the activity
- Adhere to all safety requirements

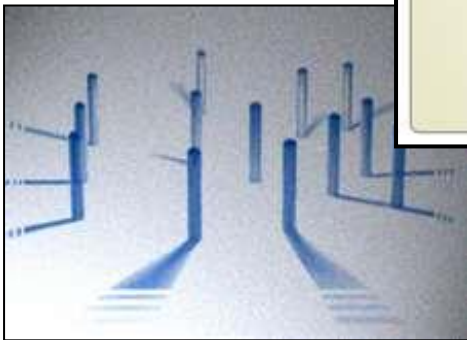
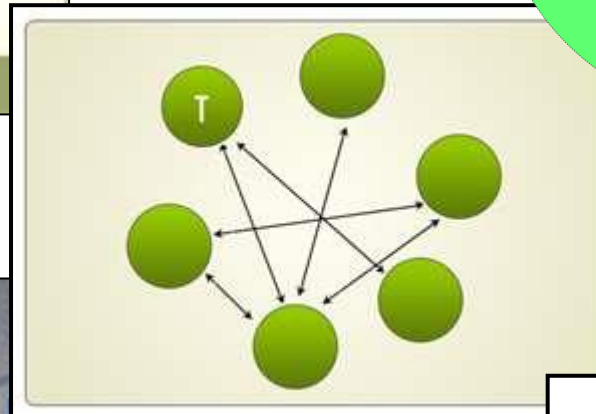
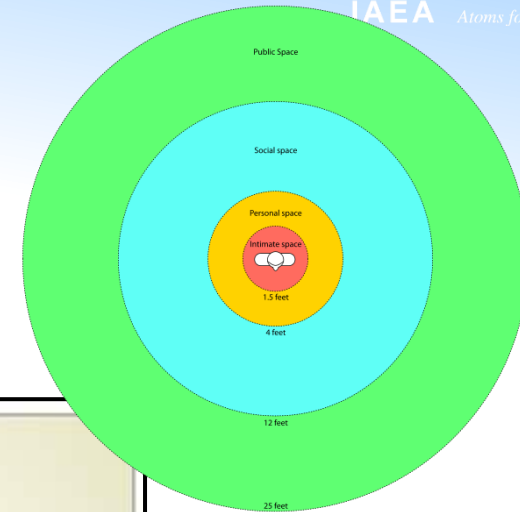
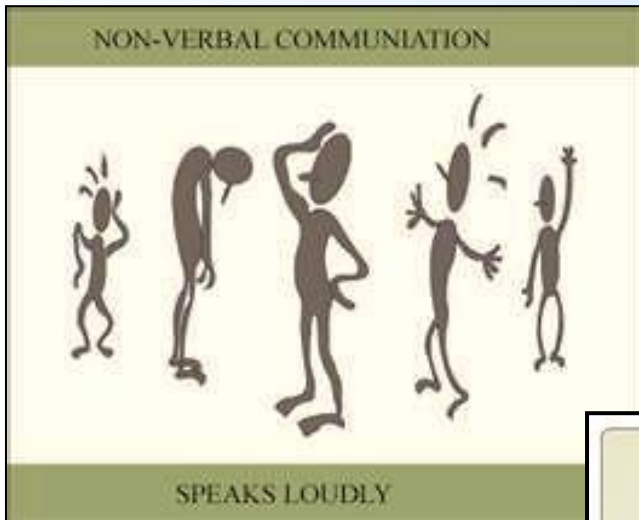
# Observer ethics

Inform those to be observed:

- Need to take notes
- Nothing personal included in notes
- No names or dates
- Looking at *cultural indicators* not *individuals*
- Aim is not to distract them
- If they have concerns they can ask you to leave

# Selecting situations

- Meetings – management review meetings; strategic planning meetings; interactions with licensees, policy/regulation development meetings; hearings; corporate oversight; decision-making
- Field activities – licensee site visits; interactions with government, media, members of the public;
- Other – training, work space distribution and housekeeping, informal situations such as breaks, lunches, and celebrations.



# Things to notice

# Things to notice

- *Body language* - non-verbal communication which consists of body postures, gestures, facial expressions.
- *Constellations* are patterns of positioning that give insight into where people experience themselves relative to others.
- *Interaction mapping* provides a view on how information and support flow between parties. Noting the prevalence of speakers and the types of contributions they make increases understanding of how particular cultural expressions come about.



# Observations of meetings

- Opportunity to observe:
  - the types of issues that are raised
  - who is present
  - how decisions are made
  - the communications that occur
  - the teamwork exhibited
- What meetings?
  - Daily production meetings
  - Management meetings
  - Planning meetings
  - Accountability reviews, etc.

# Observation and Reporting

- Objective statements of what was actually seen or heard without own ideas or opinion
- Clear and complete statements to allow the reader to understand the significance and extent
- Include quotes or opinions provided on why observed conditions or behaviours may exist
- Produce a written summary as soon as possible after the observations

# Summary

- Observations provide factual information on how people behave in the organization
- Important to capture what and where...like a camera
- Be alert for group dynamics and non-verbal messaging
- Avoid influencing situations more than is necessary to conduct the observation
- Avoid introducing personal biases and interpretations – stay descriptive



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*Thank you!*

