



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

# Technological Forecasting & Social Change

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/techfore](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/techfore)

From my perspective

## From our perspective: An informal survey on the application of General Morphological Analysis in the private sector

Asunción Álvarez\*, Pablo Toja

InPlanta, C/Marqués del Riscal, 10, Apto. 1, Madrid 28010, Spain

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

General Morphological Analysis  
Private vs public sector  
Wicked problems  
Management strategy  
Methodologies

### ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore the differential factors and issues that arise as regards the application of General Morphological Analysis (GMA) to private sector companies, as opposed to public institutions (its main target so far). In order to identify the specific nature of the challenge posed for application of GMA in private companies, we conducted a survey among a number of managers in 27 companies which we believed had potential for application of GMA. Our aim was to provide insights into the way in which potential candidates for GMA view and approach their own complex problems (and the way in which they define a “complex problem”), as well as into their preferred problem-solving approaches and methodologies. Our findings suggested that there are a number of common issues to private-sector companies, as well as sector-specific issues, which should be taken into account when considering the application of GMA.

General Morphological Analysis (GMA) is not a new methodology, as its origins date back to the mid-20th century, with the work of Fritz Zwicky. It is a tool of remarkable power and flexibility, suitable for the highly complex problems (what are known as “wicked problems”) that are becoming increasingly frequent in a globalised world. And yet, generally speaking, it has not become remotely as widespread or well-known as other methodologies, such as 8D, lean methodologies, AGILE, Design Thinking, Six Sigma, and EFQM. In our exchanges with other practitioners, we also noted that GMA seems to be a methodology that is better known and most frequently applied in public institutions, while remaining relatively untapped in the private sector. Also, and more specifically, in our country of origin, Spain, despite a profusion of methodologies for problem-solving and creativity in business settings, General Morphological Analysis is practically unknown.

In order to investigate what main factors should be taken into account to achieve more widespread use of GMA in the private sector, we conducted a survey among Spanish managers in private companies that we regarded as potential GMA users – that is, companies whose size, turnover, position in the market, and competitive environment mean that they face problems of a relatively high degree of complexity on a regular basis. Due to sample size, the method of choosing the industries and professional categories, and the informal nature of the interviews, this survey makes no claim to any statistical significance. However, it may serve as a guideline to inform future studies of certain issues of interest; especially those involving industry-specific concerns for the future (outlined below). Our aim was to provide insights into the way in

which potential candidates for GMA view and approach their own complex problems (and the way in which they define a “complex problem”), as well as into their preferred problem-solving approaches and methodologies.

Our methodology to conduct the survey was as follows:

#### Step 1: Selection of 27 companies and corporations from a more extensive list.

The companies were organisations which we had come across in our past careers, although none of them had been clients in our GMA practice. We tried to ensure that our sample included different sectors, different sizes, and different development stages. We focused on large companies, as they are those that devote – or should devote – more resources to analysing, thinking, conducting prospecting, have larger and more qualified strategy teams, have access to more qualified staff, etc.

In addition, all the companies were Spanish or the Spanish branches of multinational companies, and all interviewees were Spanish nationals. It could be argued that this introduces a bias into the sample. However, as GMA is currently practically unknown in Spain, we believe that this bias does not damage the investigation, but rather even reinforces the integrity of the results, as, due to ignorance, there were no prior views or prejudices for or against GMA in the sample.

This is a breakdown of the companies in the sample by industry:

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [asuncion.alvarez@inplanta.com](mailto:asuncion.alvarez@inplanta.com) (A. Álvarez), [pablo.toja@inplanta.com](mailto:pablo.toja@inplanta.com) (P. Toja).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.06.010>

Received 14 March 2017; Received in revised form 6 June 2017; Accepted 9 June 2017  
0040-1625/ © 2017 Published by Elsevier Inc.

Industry	No. of companies
Finance	7
Industry, construction, & infrastructure	8
Retail & distribution	6
Other	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Step 2: Identifying the key individuals**

An effort was made to include a good mix of roles and organisation levels, as well as of backgrounds. One person per company was interviewed. Below is the breakdown of the staff members interviewed by professional category:

Professional category	No. of interviewees
C-Level	6
N-1/N-2	18
<i>Strategy</i>	6
<i>Marketing</i>	4
<i>Operations</i>	3
<i>Regulatory &amp; legal affairs</i>	2
<i>Sales</i>	2
<i>Communications</i>	1
Other	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Step 3: Questionnaire and interview**

We designed a questionnaire comprising 17 questions which was administered in face-to-face interviews lasting approximately two hours. The questionnaire comprised open-ended questions on both generic issues and industry- and company-specific issues.

**Bloc 1. Questions regarding the interviewee's industry**

1. How do you understand SCP (Structure-Conduct-Performance) within the context of your industry?
2. What are the old and new stakeholders in your industry?
3. What are the main drivers and forces in your industry?
4. What are the main regulations to take into account in your industry?
5. What are the prospects for your industry?
6. What are the major threats to your industry?

**Bloc 2. Questions regarding the interviewee's company**

7. What specific strategic, organisational, governance, and operational issues do you face in your company?
8. What are your business model challenges?
9. What are the old and new stakeholders for your company?
10. What are the issues that your company is facing as regards competitive advantages and sustainability?
11. What are your company's future prospects?

**Bloc 3. Questions regarding processes**

12. What issues does your company face in terms of strategic processes?
13. What issues does your company face in terms of tactical and operational processes?
14. What issues does your company face in terms of organisational processes?

**Bloc 4. Questions regarding capabilities**

15. What key capabilities are available to your company?
16. What key capabilities does your company lack?
17. How are capabilities developed in your company?

Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to all participants, and companies were assured that they would not be identified in the results. The survey was conducted over a total period of approximately three months (February–April 2016).

As regards common issues to all companies, the main concerns found were the following:

Concern mentioned	Percentage of interviewees
Shortening cycles of all types	92%
Accelerated globalisation	90%
Increasing weight of geostrategic and geopolitical issues	88%
Exponential increase in the number of stakeholders of every kind	87%
Impact of the Internet	85%
Change in ownership models	74%
Regulation and de-regulation	72%
Changes in social values	55%

The following issues were identified as industry-specific concerns:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Finance: The finance industry is possibly the one that is experiencing (as well as causing) a boom in complexity and wickedness in its basis. Of special importance is the essentially wicked problem of the bail-out of multiple private financial institutions with public resources. There are also other matters derived from the extremely high level of interconnection between institutions and systems, such as the risk of bankruptcy of systemic institutions, the huge regulatory asymmetry between the traditional banking system and what is known as the shadow banking system, etc.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Re-regulation</li> <li>■ Newcomers from less regulated sectors</li> <li>■ Capital scarcity</li> <li>■ Loss of customer loyalty</li> <li>■ Challenged business models</li> <li>■ Money laundering</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Industry, construction, &amp; infrastructure: Generally speaking, all the industries that have operated on the basis of the development and exploitation of capital-intensive infrastructures are witnessing how the old barriers to entry and competitive advantages which they entailed are decreasing through successive waves of virtualisation, etc.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Lack of new large infrastructure projects</li> <li>■ Uncertainty of key commodity prices</li> <li>■ On the verge of some technological breakthroughs while others that seemed promising fade away</li> </ul> |

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7255872>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7255872>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)