

What role did collaboration play in the overall success of these analytic interventions?

Initially we might consider what constitutes collaborative activity, and whether we see any evidence of this type of activity. We might ask ourselves some of the questions in the table below. You'll notice that some of the questions relate quite closely to questions in our case exercise template.

<i>Questions we might ask ourselves</i>	<i>Examples of associated activities we might detail</i>
Who might be involved in the collaboration?	Engaging with stakeholders
Where in the CRISP-DM process did the analysts start telling the story?	Work associated with understanding the business
Who helped the team with validation and verification?	Checking the translation from business problem to analytics problem is appropriate and accurate
Was any missing data sought, or new data gathered?	Working to source or gather missing datasets
Who was involved in the data preparation?	Working with subject matter experts to determine appropriate assumptions to enable data cleansing

Answers to these questions might help us to form our view as to whether the analysts approached these cases with a collaborative mindset. We might also consider the flip of this question – are there any indications of a lack of collaborative mindset?

Here are some details taken from the three cases:

Case 1: The analysts recognised that “boundaries blur across industries and technologies” (p7) and the criticality of expert views within the case context. A few snippets of text support this: “Partnership established in 2023” (p7); looking for a “collective view” (p8); co-designed workshops. Decision Conferences and MCDA tools were chosen and are described as being appropriate to “tackling complex choices **when evidence is scarce and opinions differ**” (p8, emphasis added). Later it is noted that the process supported “more informed conversations and strengthened collaboration” (p10).

Case 2: The case introduction identifies that implementation requires “convergence and coordination of three different departments” (p47). However, it may be noted that the game theoretical framing of the problem assumes that the analysts know what is

best. We could pause for thought and consider whether this was a valid assumption, was this framing appropriate to the specific context? Within the case, it did drive collaboration and results that appear to be desirable for all parties, so that in this instance we might feel that the analysts' promotion of a single frame was appropriate (this has the potential to lead into a discussion of ethics, asking when it is ethical for analysts to promote a preferred frame, but for this cohort not an angle to push for if it doesn't emerge naturally).

Case 3: The opening sentences refer to “combining optimisation with ‘structured engagement’” (p50). The “data paradox” section (p51) gives us insight into the people involved (see also figure 1). PartiSim and PartiOpt are described as facilitated workshop approaches, involving participants in co-creation (not consultation). Overall, there appears to be a consistent focus upon collaboration, achieved through a deliberate combination of data and people focused analytics (optimisation and ‘structured engagement’), consistent involvement of people from across the organisation, and outputs associated with co-creative work (the core transformation statement and rich pictures). We can also note that effective engagement with participants enabled the analysts to build a relationship with the organisation's employees such that they were willing to acknowledge the “gap between perception and reality” (p51) and work together on the scenario testing (see workshop journey, figure 2, p52).

Finally, we can try and link the collaborative work with an evaluation of the extent to which we believe the projects were successful. And although these cases were chosen to illustrate good practice, it is again relevant to consider the flip of the question – was the collaborative work helpful or unhelpful, and if it did not help, why might that have been? The “limitations” section of a paper or article might provide some ideas, although it's also worth trying to identify any unacknowledged limitations. It is also important to recognise that it is to the credit of the authors when limitations are acknowledged and is often the first step toward addressing them in a further phase of analysis and/or future work.

Again, here are some details from the three cases:

Case 1: It was the process of engagement with that wide group of stakeholders that enabled the creation of an output that revealed patterns that supported more informed conversation.

However, it is noted (p11) that averages may mask polarisation of views (think there's a typo in the text here too, as the masking fails to reveal “marmite” issues). The authors are also careful to point out that “the outputs should therefore be seen as a starting point for discussion rather than a substitute for detailed analysis” (p10).

Overall, it is concluded that the “work provides a springboard for deeper collaboration” (p10).

Whilst the case makes no mention of any difficulties experienced in obtaining engagement from participants (at individual or organisational level), this is often a challenge when initiating qualitative, participatory activities.

Case 2: Through the results section, it is clearly indicated that the collaboration between departments played a key part in the project success. The database that was collaboratively populated formed the basis of the action that increased the number of beneficiaries.

It would be interesting to know what was done in other blocks, and how the success of this project might have affected future policy decisions around this funding. Note the closing comment “a proposal to integrate the three aforementioned databases at the state level under a single online portal is under development to achieve 100% beneficiary enrolment...” (p48).

Case 3: Right at the outset, this article refers to its project as a “successful story”. So, we could begin by asking ourselves what the optimisation and ‘structured engagement’ achieved or enabled, then considering whether we agree that the intervention was successful and to what extent the ‘structure engagement’ element contributed to that success.

Some examples of what was achieved/enabled:

1. As in case 1 “masking” is referred to (p51). This time in relation to the use of aggregated numbers in making funding decisions. The ‘structured engagement’ designed into the project can be interpreted as contributing to an unmasking as people are brought together to see everyone’s data.
2. Adaptation of PartiSim to become PartiOpt delivered an agreed core service transformation or objective, that everyone could agree to, before exploring and sharing perceptions of the current system.
3. Sharing analysis in facilitated workshops enabled discussion of patterns in the data, the building, validation and refinement of an optimisation model, and using the model in “collaborative problem solving (p52).

Our previous exercise identified benefits suggesting that the project was successful, and with each of the three examples above being associated with collaborative work, we could argue that the ‘structured engagement’ was critical to the overall project success.