



The consequences of institutional design on collaborative arrangements' power to influence urban freight policymaking

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative governance is becoming increasingly important as a mode of urban freight policymaking. Bringing together actors from private and public sectors in forums makes it possible to move beyond general discussions of delivery challenges to the innovation of joint solutions and lasting improvements to the freight transport system. For such cross-sector collaborations to function, participants must experience a sense of power to influence policy. The institutional design, i.e., the inclusiveness of the collaboration and the interdependence between the participants, may condition this possibility. Consequently, this article investigates how the institutional design of collaborative arrangements associated with urban freight affects participants' perceptions of power to influence policymaking. We interviewed 37 participants in three different collaborations in Oslo, Norway. The results indicate that institutional design affects participants' perceptions of power to influence policymaking. Inclusive collaborations, in which participants are not interdependent, provide participants with the most power to influence policy, rather than exclusive collaborations, in which participants are highly interdependent.

1. Introduction

Sustainable urban development, particularly urban freight transport development, usually involves many different, sometimes conflicting, interests, and there is rarely a single problem-owner. Hence, reducing the negative effects of urban freight transport is dependent on the coordination of private and public recourses (Akçin et al., 2019). The complexity of urban freight requires that policymaking be based around negotiation and its ability to compromise between the democratically elected governments and stakeholders in cities, such as business associations, unions, logistics service providers, private businesses and citizens (Lindholm, 2014; Pierre, 2016; Quak et al., 2016).

Interactive or collaborative governance, which brings multiple actors together in forums with public agencies, is one way to achieve collectively defined objectives on how to plan, finance and manage urban freight (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Lindholm, 2014; Quak et al., 2016; Torfing et al., 2012). These governance perspectives highlight cross-sector collaboration in which organisations in public and private sectors share information, resources, activities and capabilities to achieve an outcome jointly (Bryson et al., 2015). The desired result of collaboration between public and private actors is often to formulate policy and engage in political priority-setting (Lindholm, 2014; Torfing

and Sørensen, 2014). Urban freight policymaking in collaborations tends to focus on combining the competing interests of emission cuts and accommodating the increasing number of freight deliveries (Lindholm, 2014). To achieve this, collaborations tend to develop and test new, promising and creative ideas (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). In other words, collaboration results in the innovative solutions necessary to push the urban freight transport system in a more sustainable direction (Quak et al., 2016). Thus, collaboration between affected actors can spur innovation in the public sector (Bekkers and Tummers, 2018; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018a; Voorberg et al., 2015).

Although collaboration between public and private actors is concerned with making policies that solve urgent and complex public problems, it may be challenging to make actors collaborate (Sørensen and Torfing, 2018a). Trust, motivation, a shared understanding or identity, intermediate results and dialogue, participants' resources and history of collaboration, leadership or managerial efforts and legitimacy are factors necessary to achieve a well-functioning collaboration (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Arbo, 2002; Lindholm, 2014; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018a; Steijn et al., 2011). It is also valuable for actors' that collaborative arrangements have the ability to influence future policy (Dablanc, 2011; Lindholm and Browne, 2013) and thus, that the participants, through the collaboration, are provided with some power to influence

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the governing of society (Torfing et al., 2012). Although supplied with the ability to influence policymaking, the institutional design of a collaborative arrangement may condition this possibility (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Torfing et al., 2012). Hence, the institutional design becomes critical for successful collaboration (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018a). Therefore, we investigate how the institutional design of collaborative arrangements affects participants' perceptions of power to influence policymaking.

Governance, power relations and public policy approaches have been neglected but are essential in the literature on urban freight transport (Strale, 2019). Significantly, the consequences of collaborative arrangements' institutional design, as a policy approach, on the power to influence policymaking has been sparsely studied. Until now, the literature on collaboration in urban freight mostly evaluates how collaboration succeeds or fails or highlights why the engagement of industry is necessary for planning and developing policy measures (Lindholm, 2014; Lindholm and Browne, 2013). To fill this gap, we investigate the influence that urban freight stakeholders perceive themselves to have on policymaking when they participate in three collaborative arrangements with different institutional designs. Furthermore, the majority of the studies on public–private collaboration in urban freight are single case studies. If studies include more than one case, the cases are often collaborative arrangements in different cities or countries rather than collaborations within the context of one city in one country that would reduce contextual variation (Allen et al., 2010; Lindholm, 2014; Lindholm and Browne, 2013; Quak et al., 2016). Therefore, to keep contextual variation constant and empirically enrich these studies, we investigate three collaborative arrangements associated with urban freight issues in Oslo, Norway (see Table 1).

Urban freight is a particularly interesting area in which to study collaboration between public and private actors since it is a private matter driven by commercial interests. However, over time, the public sector has identified a strong interest in its execution due to its negative externalities and impact on urban life (Akgün et al., 2019; Cré et al., 2016). Public authorities have realised that urban transportation of goods and services is a critical element of countries' commercial and

industrial policies, with links to transport, business, environment and urban development (Agronoff and McGuire, 2004). Since urban freight is a recent concern for public authorities, the collaborative arrangements associated with urban freight tend to have different labels, such as partnerships, networks or living labs (Lindholm, 2014; Quak et al., 2016; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018b; Torfing et al., 2012). The collaborative arrangements we investigate are primarily organised as business and urban development networks.

This article is structured as follows. First, we introduce the literature on interactive and collaborative governance within the context of urban freight transport. After that, we present the methods used in this study before discussing how the participants perceive their influence on policymaking. Before we conclude our main findings, we discuss how institutional design affects the power that participants in cross-sector collaborations have on influencing policy.

2. The power of collaborative governance in urban freight policymaking

An increasing number of private actors, such as interest groups, non-governmental organisations, citizen groups and private businesses, are involved in public policy (Torfing et al., 2012). The inclusion of these actors is particularly vital in urban freight policymaking (Katsela and Browne, 2019). Policy problems related to urban development, where urban freight is key, are caused by several actors, and stakeholder engagement is therefore a success factor for implementing urban freight solutions (Gash, 2016; Kiba-Janiak et al., 2018). Thus, to be effective, urban freight policies need to be formulated with input from private actors (Lindholm and Browne, 2013). These multi-actor collaborations also constitute the basis for public sector innovation; hence, it is possible to achieve the development of innovative solutions that improve the urban freight transport system (Quak et al., 2016; Sørensen and Torfing, 2011).

Multi-actor collaboration is one way of organising the processes of steering society and the economy following commonly defined objectives. This steering process is called governance (Sørensen and Torfing, 2018b; Torfing et al., 2012). The literature on multi-actor collaboration in politics occurs under several slightly different headings. The two concepts suitable in this study are collaborative and interactive governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Torfing et al., 2012). The former is restrictively defined, but they more or less refer to the same phenomenon. Interactive governance is the process by which both 'social and political actors interact to formulate, promote, and achieve common objectives by mobilising, exchanging, and deploying ideas, rules, and resources' (Torfing et al., 2012: 2). Hence, affected actors participate in the decision-making processes dealing with complex public issues, e.g., urban development and liveability of city districts (Edelenbos and Meerkerk, 2016). With this definition, multi-actor collaboration also includes collaborative arrangements such as public hearings and consultations (Sørensen and Torfing, 2018b). However, since collaborations associated with urban freight often rely on multilateral deliberation, we base our understanding of multi-actor collaboration on Ansell and Gash's (2008) collaborative governance. This excludes public hearings and consultations, focussing on deliberative collaborative arrangements for which the goal is to achieve some consensus across a broad range of affected actors. It is defined as 'a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets' (544). Following this definition, collaborations are initiated by public agencies or institutions and formally organised as consensus-oriented public policy collaborations. The participants are non-state actors, not only consulted but engaged directly in decision-making (Ansell and Gash, 2008). These similar terms capture the phenomenon of cross-sector collaboration, in which 'actors in public and private sectors combine information, resources, activities,

Table 1
Characteristics of the analysed collaborative arrangements.

	Loosely integrated, inclusive collaborative arrangement	Moderately integrated, restricted collaborative arrangement	Strongly integrated, exclusive collaborative arrangement
Inclusiveness	Inclusive (approx. 120 members)	Restricted (approx. 25 members)	Exclusive (approx. 15 members)
Interdependence	Loose interdependence	Moderate interdependence	Strong interdependence
Participants	Civil servants and primarily private businesses	Civil servants and primarily interest groups	Civil servants, private businesses and interest groups
Policy area	Business and urban development with subgroups focussing on urban freight	Business and urban development touching upon urban freight	Business and urban development, primarily focussing on urban freight
Formal status	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory
Objective of the collaboration	Collaboration between the municipality and business on new climate solutions.	Collaboration between the municipality and private actors to develop a vibrant, attractive and accessible city centre.	Collaboration between the municipality and private actors to develop good solutions to challenges on goods distribution to, from and in the city centre.

and capabilities to jointly achieve an outcome' (Bryson et al., 2015: 648).

Collaborative governance arrangements may take the form of public–private partnerships or governance networks (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018b; Torfing et al., 2012). In addition to charters and living labs, these labels are also used within urban freight (Lindholm, 2014; Quak et al., 2016). This variety implies that there are no single empirical models of urban freight collaboration (Lindholm and Browne, 2013). A partnership is the most common term (Gonzalez-Feliu et al., 2018), which within urban freight is often called a freight quality partnership. Such collaborations have a long-term perspective, and urban freight stakeholders formally or informally interact to deliberate on, and sometimes find solutions to, freight-related issues (Browne et al., 2004; Lindholm and Browne, 2014). Therefore, partnerships in this sense refer to loosely organised governance networks and not strict, contract-based agreements (Steijn et al., 2011). The partnership arrangement emerged in the UK from an inclusive approach to policymaking with a goal to achieve efficient and sustainable urban freight (Allen et al., 2010). Hence, partnerships, sometimes in combination with other approaches for bottom-up involvement, are mainly used for dialogue and consultation in policymaking (Lebeau et al., 2018; Lindholm and Browne, 2013).

Developing the idea of freight partnerships, the concept of logistics living labs emerged. A living lab is a more action-driven approach, focussing on developing joint solutions to current issues in urban freight. It aims to tackle problems that partnerships in urban freight mainly discuss rather than develop solutions for (Quak et al., 2016). Living labs involve stakeholders in policy formulation rather than primarily being included in policy implementation, which has been a challenge in urban freight (Gatta et al., 2017; Nesterova and Quak, 2016). This also means that living labs are similar to governance networks, which highlights that collaboration contributes to the production of public purpose (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005: 197, 2018b: 304). Thus, the collaborative governance arrangements investigated in this study are organised as governance networks. With this development from partnerships to living labs, focussing on creative problem-solving in which one contributes with innovative solutions to urgent problems, collaboration in networks between public and private actors fosters public sector innovation in which affected actors actively contribute to fixing societal challenges (Bekkers and Tummers, 2018; Sørensen and Torfing, 2018b).

A crucial factor for collaborative arrangements to be successful is that included actors believe that their participation matters (Dablanc, 2011). Collaboration is a long-term approach, and it will likely lose its attractiveness without materialised outcomes (Lindholm, 2014). Thus, having the power to affect the formulation and implementation of policy is essential for a functioning partnership (Lindholm and Browne, 2013). The ability to shape and secure particular policy outcomes that directly or indirectly influence the decisions of governments at different levels refers to the power of the collaborations (Torfing et al., 2012). Thus, the power of collaborative arrangements over governments relies on the collaborations' capacity to affect governmental regulations (Ran and Qi, 2019; Torfing et al., 2012). Relying on stakeholder theory, collaboration participants have power when they can exercise their influence to achieve their desired outcomes. Being a participant of central importance, meaning that their needs and interests are the priority of the collaboration, further increases a participant's power to influence policy (Grimble and Wellard, 1997; Mitchell et al., 1997). Thus, we operationalise the power of collaborative arrangements as the participants in collaborations' perceived influence on how policy is formulated and implemented. To capture the power of collaboration, we investigate individual participants' perceptions of power in this study. Aggregating these individual perceptions can address collaborations in general.

The political influence of collaborative arrangements is conditional on several attributes, one of which is how collaborative arrangements are designed and institutionalised (Torfing et al., 2012). Institutional design refers to the ground rules for collaboration (Ansell and Gash,

2008). Originating from work on policy networks, collaborations can be placed on a scale from loosely integrated, unstable issue networks to highly integrated, stable policy communities (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992). These networks are distinguished by the inclusiveness and interdependence of the participants, both of which are institutional design issues (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Marsh, 1998; Torfing et al., 2012).

Concerning inclusiveness, issue networks include many members, while policy communities practice highly restricted membership (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992). The literature emphasises that a successful collaboration that achieves political influence is inclusive. However, to avoid constant negotiations between a large number of participants, collaborations might restrict who are included (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Inclusiveness strengthens the democratic quality of a network (Hendriks, 2008). Interdependence is an essential precondition of inclusion in collaborative governance. Interdependence increases the chances of participation (Ansell et al., 2020). High interdependencies between participants occur because the resources to solve problems are owned by different actors. It is also possible that participants share service delivery responsibilities (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2015; Rhodes and Marsh, 1992). If one questions the other participants' truthfulness and feels manipulated, the collaboration often fails, providing no power to influence policymaking (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Collaborative governance relies on relationships between, rather than fear of, other participants (Gash, 2016). Therefore, an inclusive collaboration with limited interdependence between the participants might facilitate consensus-building and lead to public sector innovation of policy, while an exclusive, highly restricted and interdependent collaboration may block new policy initiatives to secure the status quo (Torfing et al., 2012).

To summarise, we conceptualise the collaborative governance arrangements of urban freight partnerships, charters and living labs as governance networks. Considering the power of these arrangements, we analyse how the different participants consider how they, by participating in a collaboration, can influence politics.

3. Methods

To answer how the institutional design of a collaborative arrangement affects the power to influence policymaking, we study three cases of collaborations initiated by local authorities and organised as networks including public and private actors associated with urban freight issues in Oslo, Norway. In a European context, Oslo is a medium-sized city of approximately 700,000 citizens. Until recently, urban freight policy has been neglected in Oslo, as in many other European cities. However, this is rapidly changing, and urban freight in Oslo is now increasingly included in business and urban development policies. Urban freight issues in this policymaking also emphasise the inclusion of and collaboration with the private sector. Such collaboration is crucial for the formulation of an optimal policy since the solutions for urban freight are both public and private (Quak et al., 2016). Oslo is chosen for its representativeness because the city shares characteristics within a larger population of how urban freight policymaking is practised in other mid-sized European cities. Like most other cities, urban freight is not high on Oslo's political agenda; neither is it absent. It is increasingly relevant as climate and environmental issues become more pressing (Bjørger et al., 2021; Lindholm and Blinge, 2014).

Investigating institutional design implies that we include three collaborations located at different places on the scale, from loosely connected and relatively inclusive collaborations to strongly integrated and relatively exclusive collaborations. Thus, our cases differ in terms of their inclusiveness and the interdependency of the members. Despite these differences, the collaborations have the same purpose, cover similar policy areas, include both public and private actors and are governed by the same departments and municipal agencies in Oslo.

The first collaboration consists of a large number of members, around 120, who are not particularly interdependent. The members are diverse, including most of the commercial interests affected by business

and urban development. Within urban freight, all stakeholder groups (i.e., carriers, authorities and receivers) are included (Björger et al., 2019), for example, logistics and transport companies, politicians and civil servants and public entities receiving goods, such as hospitals and universities. The membership basis of this collaboration is relatively unstable. The second collaboration has a more limited membership, approximately 25 members, and the members are somewhat interdependent. The members are politicians and civil servants and economic interest groups such as logistics and transport employers' organisations, trade unions, tourism associations, real estate associations and city-centre retail, business and residents' associations. The third collaboration is highly restricted in its membership to around 15 members who are highly interdependent and serve the profession's interests. These members are civil servants and logistics and transport companies and their respective interest groups (i.e., employer organisations and trade unions). Since this is a typology, the collaborations do not fit perfectly, but the differences between them vary along these dimensions.

In summary, the first collaboration is a loosely integrated and inclusive collaborative arrangement, the second is a moderately integrated and restricted collaborative arrangement and the third is a strongly integrated and exclusive collaborative arrangement. According to Rhodes and Marsh (1992), the first collaboration can be defined as an issue network, the second as a producer network and the third as a professional network (14).

The analysis is based on qualitative data collected from 35 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 37 respondents, consisting of the civil servants and private actors (i.e., businesses and interest groups) comprising the collaborations described previously. Seventeen of these were civil servants organising and participating in the collaborations, and the remaining were managers in business or interest groups. The respondents were identified through already established professional contacts, lists of participants in meeting minutes, searching official websites and snowballing. This paper omits the names of the collaborations and refers to respondents by their occupations when using quotes to ensure confidentiality. All respondents were recruited voluntarily.

The interview data were collected between December 2019 and November 2020. The interviews were primarily conducted individually, both in person in workplaces and online during office hours. Two interviews were conducted in pairs. All respondents were given information sheets and asked to provide written informed consent. Each interview lasted approximately 45 min, and, with one exception, the interviews were recorded electronically and fully transcribed. The interview questions dealt with willingness to participate in cross-sector collaborations, whether participants believed that participation increased their power to influence policymaking and the extent to which they experienced that their input was used in policymaking.

Due to the theoretically driven research question, a deductive approach was applied when coding the interview data in NVivo. The codes were the definitions of the theoretical concepts of political influence (i.e., power) grouped by institutional design (i.e., inclusiveness and the interdependence). Therefore, data excerpts about 'impact', 'being heard', 'acknowledged', 'affect plans, policy and politics', 'provide input', 'value our opinion', 'input used' and 'importance' were assigned the code 'political influence' and sorted by the type of actor and collaborative arrangement: loosely integrated inclusive, moderately integrated restricted or strongly integrated exclusive collaborative arrangement. In the coding and results, we differentiated between the perceptions of civil servants and private actors.

4. Results

Initially, we found that almost all interviewed private businesses and interest groups were willing to participate in collaborative arrangements. An invitation from the municipality triggered participation. The primary motivation for participation was obtaining information from the municipality regarding plans or policies that might affect the

participants. Participants were also motivated by the opportunity to meet other actors in the industry and learn from their expertise. Having established that urban-freight-related businesses and interest groups gladly participate in collaborative arrangements, in the following subsections, we provide results on whether and how this participation provided participants with the power to influence policymaking.

4.1. Loosely integrated, inclusive collaborative arrangement

The civil servants expressed that private actors gained power to influence policymaking from participating in the loosely integrated, inclusive collaborative arrangement. Almost all these respondents believed that input from this collaborative arrangement was used to formulate urban freight policy. A senior advisor in the municipality summarised the collaboration in the following way:

I believe participation gives them [private businesses and interest groups] greater influence than what they believe. From the participant's side, it is attractive that politicians actively participate in the collaboration. [We] value the collaboration for our increased knowledge in these issues. (Interview, 18.12.2019)

The increased knowledge civil servants gained from this cross-sector collaboration strengthened their ability to suggest or make policy. To ensure that the views, suggestions and arguments presented at the collaboration can be used in policymaking, the participants reflected most of Oslo's commercial activities. The civil servants highlighted that a large number of participants who vary in size, the sectors they operate and their economic resources were included in order to avoid missing important perspectives. Participants who covered the broad policy area of commercial activities were loosely interdependent. Several participants had similar resources in solving the problems discussed in the collaboration.

Civil servants believed that private businesses could influence policymaking in the collaboration by voicing their concerns regarding future policy, regulations and requirements that were presented to them. Cross-sector collaboration became one way for these actors to influence reaching policy targets, for example, the target of zero-emission urban freight transport by 2030. A senior civil servant explained that the collaboration was an arena to test future policy on affected interests, especially since the politicians who decide on policy participated in this collaboration. Politicians seemed to participate in this collaboration because they believed they were dependent on local businesses to achieve their political goals. This recognition of private businesses may have increased their opportunity to influence policymaking.

The private businesses believed that this loosely integrated but inclusive collaborative arrangement provided them with power to influence policymaking. In itself, the invitation to participate and share perspectives on urban freight measures gave private businesses influential powers. When civil servants 'listen and cheer us on' (Interview, 24.01.2020) concerning developing climate-friendly and environmentally friendly solutions, influencing policy was perceived as the purpose of the collaboration. Civil servants listened to the full breadth of commercial interests in Oslo, implying that the participants were loosely interdependent. With an inclusive collaboration, a large number of actors across sectors, regardless of economic resources or interests, are provided with the opportunity to influence policymaking. One respondent from a private business explained that even though policymaking is a long-term process, participation at least makes it possible to influence the direction of policy. Almost all businesses shared the perception that they could influence policymaking through this collaborative arrangement.

In collaboration, private businesses influence policy through setting the agenda of the biggest challenges for urban freight in Oslo, consulting plans and strategies or suggesting sustainable urban freight measures. Some respondents even believed that the opportunity to present

themselves at meetings influenced policymaking. Private businesses also accepted that they could not have all their wants and needs realised. Most interviewed private businesses acknowledged and appreciated that politicians were present in the collaboration, providing them with potentially even greater opportunities to influence policy. However, some dissatisfaction was expressed that politicians rarely participated for an entire session, as well as about a lack of continuity concerning the politicians who participated. The sceptical respondents were questioning whether any measurable policy output resulted from the collaboration.

4.2. Moderately integrated, restricted collaborative arrangement

Concerning the power to influence policymaking, civil servants in this moderately integrated, restricted collaborative arrangement believed that participants were provided with opportunities to influence the broad topic of Oslo's urban development. Since the collaboration covered a broad topic, interdependence between participants was moderate. A senior advisor for a state agency commented that 'I would say that it [participating in this collaboration] is an opportunity to enter into dialogue at a very high [political] level' (Interview, 24.03.2020). However, participation in this collaboration was restricted to those interest groups that the civil servants defined as 'key players' in urban development, potentially limiting opportunities to influence policy. Despite this restrictive inclusion, most respondents were open to and reflected upon the need to invite additional participants if those who were the key players changed.

Several respondents among the civil servants expressed that, since the collaboration often became involved at an early stage in policymaking, private businesses and interest groups' influence was mostly on formulating policy. An advisor in a municipal agency also explained that 'one challenge with the collaboration format is that discussions, comments and arguments may not have as much influence as they could because it is difficult to remember everything that was said' (Interview, 15.04.2020). However, the discussions and information provided by private sector actors in the collaboration gave the civil servant insights they would otherwise be without. These insights may improve how policy is made. Influencing policy through participation in this collaboration became even more likely since politicians participated. What further emerged was that civil servants experienced that the interest groups initially believed that this collaboration had decision-making authority; hence, interest groups expected the collaboration to influence policy to a more significant extent. Only a few respondents had concerns regarding the interest groups' understanding of decision-making authority. The majority of the civil servant respondents emphasised that the interest groups were listened to, but the decision-making authority lay elsewhere.

Interest groups believed that participation in this moderately integrated collaborative arrangement provided them with powers to influence policymaking. However, influencing policy is time consuming, requiring multiple meetings. In addition, the interest groups acknowledged that they sometimes had to accept compromises or not achieve what they initially intended. Since a few resourceful interest groups were included in this collaboration, the interviewed interest groups argued that the affected interests were included indirectly through representation and thus had an opportunity to influence policy. The participating interest groups covered different sectors, meaning that they were only somewhat interdependent. As the manager of an association explained,

I believe that we can influence policy and even decision-making through collaborations such as this one. The most important task we as the industry have, when invited to participate, or when we invite ourselves to participate, is to give the politicians a lot of information and knowledge so that they can make the best decisions possible. (Interview, 24.02.2020)

Interest groups in this collaboration influenced policymaking by using their knowledge to express views on local plans, projects and strategies. Individual participants were also encouraged to formulate individual written consultation statements. The interest groups experienced that policy, plans, strategies and regulations were adjusted to accommodate the views they expressed in the collaboration. Thus, interest groups that influenced policymaking found public authorities responsive to what they said and did in the collaboration. Most of these respondents believed that the collaboration resulted in the municipality adjusting or evaluating plans.

The interest group respondents explained that having politicians participate in the collaboration increased their perception of influencing policymaking. The manager of an interest group eagerly stated that participation was influential because 'I [...] feel that politicians value the collaboration and the views that emerge' (Interview, 26.03.2020). Most interest groups acknowledged that politicians must make decisions considering society as a whole, which does not always benefit those participating in the collaboration. Contrary to what the civil servants expressed in the interviews, several private business and interest group respondents understood that the politicians, rather than the collaboration, had decision-making authority. An important task of participating in this collaboration was to provide politicians with a basis to make well-informed decisions.

4.3. Strongly integrated, exclusive collaborative arrangement

Considering participants' influence on policymaking, the civil servants were unsure whether participation in this strongly integrated, exclusive collaborative arrangement gave private businesses and interest groups influence. One reason for this insecurity was that the interviewed civil servants found this collaboration to be a professional arena where equals discussed issues and raised concerns. A senior advisor in a state agency explained that the collaboration was a 'discussion forum to understand the current [urban freight] situation. It is at best advisory, and at least a knowledge-enhancing collaborative body' (Interview, 16.12.2019). Thus, the collaboration's primary value was to transfer knowledge between those affected. The included participants, speaking on behalf of the affected, primarily focussed on narrower problems that served the interests of the profession, transporting goods and services. Inclusion was also a result of previous collaboration. Thus, the collaboration signalled exclusivity and interdependence, potentially leading to civil servants restricting the influence gained from participating in the collaboration. The idea of restricted influence was a common perception among almost all the interviewed civil servants.

Civil servants, therefore, believed that private businesses and interest groups in this collaboration rarely influenced policy by providing their experiences, knowledge and information. Since this exclusive collaboration was viewed as a professional discussion forum, the political will to prioritise this collaboration was limited. The absence of politicians was likely to reduce the possibility to influence policymaking even further. Thus, this collaboration influencing policy was dependent on administrators bringing knowledge from the collaboration to decision-makers. Like the other collaborations, the civil servants quickly explained that the collaboration does not have decision-making authority. Almost all respondents from the public sector shared these perspectives.

Compared to civil servants, private businesses and interest groups believed that collaboration provided them with some opportunity to influence policymaking. Although the majority of respondents considered the collaboration a professional discussion forum, they expressed that sharing experiences between themselves and with public authorities provided them with an opportunity to indirectly influence policymaking. Some private businesses and interest groups even believed that politicians listened and adjusted their actions to accommodate input from the participants in the collaboration. Most of the participants worked within urban freight, which in their eyes legitimised the input

they provided. Operating within the same industry also made them strongly interdependent. On the other hand, other respondents from private businesses and interest groups did not consider that professional discussions influenced policymaking. A respondent in a management position in an interest group explained that ‘we are concerned with finding collaborative arrangements that have an output. By output, I mean more than a meeting. Something that affects regulations, budgets or urban development’ (Interview, 17.01.2020). These private businesses and interest groups did not believe they had influence on policymaking before they saw their views or ideas implemented. However, although this strongly integrated, exclusive collaborative arrangement was considered inadequate to influence policy, collaboration is currently one of the preferred alternatives. The inclusion of participants relies on contacts, recommendations from others, or visibility in the public debate concerning issues relevant for the collaboration, rather than an open and inclusive selection approach. Thus, local authorities responsible for policymaking may not want to risk that not all affected interests are heard and that they therefore reduce the participants’ power to influence policymaking. Most of the interviewed private businesses and interest groups experienced that politicians occasionally participated in the collaboration, but it varied who turned up. This fluctuating interest may also negatively affect each private business and interest group’s perception of having power to influence policymaking.

5. Discussion

Our findings conclude that urban freight stakeholders generally believe that they increase their power to influence urban freight policy by participating in collaborative arrangements. We also find that the institutional design of a collaboration affects the participants’ opportunities to influence policymaking. In the loosely integrated, inclusive collaborative arrangement, civil servants and private businesses agreed that participation increased the affected actors’ power to influence policy. The same was found in the moderately integrated, restricted collaborative arrangement. Civil servants and interest groups equally believed that participation increased their power to influence policymaking, but participation was not guaranteed influence. To the contrary, participation in the strongly integrated, exclusive collaborative arrangement provided limited power to influence policymaking. However, the private businesses and interest groups believed they had more power to influence policy than what civil servants believed they had. The private actors had a more liberal and flexible understanding of what influencing policy entails than the civil servants. Disagreements concerning the opportunity to influence policy might indicate an unshared understanding of what to collectively achieve by collaborating, and, consequently, the collaboration becomes unsuccessful (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Thus, following Torfing et al. (2012), we argue that the more strongly integrated and exclusive collaborative arrangements are, the less power the participants have to influence policymaking.

Inclusive collaborative arrangements seemingly provide participants more power to influence policymaking than exclusive collaborations. Having numerous participating businesses rather than larger interest groups, and thus more inclusive collaborations (Hendriks, 2008), is rewarded with greater power to influence policy. Broad inclusion of affected actors is in itself a precondition for a successful collaborative arrangement that, for example, achieves political influence (Ansell and Gash, 2008). This finding suggests that decision-makers strive to see, listen and respond to all affected interests. When achieving broader inclusion, the collaboration seems to be awarded power to influence policy, thus avoiding resourceful actors being heard at the expense of disadvantaged actors and securing broad democratic engagement. Exclusive collaborations with less power to influence policy than inclusive collaborations might reduce the implications for the democracy of networks that are generally found to struggle with inclusion (Hendriks, 2008).

The less integrated the participants are, the greater power to

influence policy they believe they gain from participating in the collaboration. We find that the exclusive collaboration with firmly integrated participants is restricted in its power to influence policy. Theoretically, highly interdependent actors who share the same rules, norms and values are expected to create a tight and unified structure that may block new policy initiatives to ensure continuity (Torfing et al., 2012). Less integrated collaborative arrangements facilitate consensus-building between public and private actors that changes policy (Marsh, 1998; Torfing et al., 2012). Our finding that civil servants in particular expected the collaboration with highly interdependent actors to have less power to influence policy indicates that a perception of interdependent actors not changing policy is present among the decision-makers. Since securing the status quo often is the opposite of a collaboration’s purpose (Sørensen and Torfing, 2018b), its influence on policy becomes restricted.

Elected officials’ presence in collaborations seems to be another essential institutional design feature that affects participants’ perceptions of having influence over policymaking. In the collaborations in which politicians regularly participated, the respondents to a greater extent expressed that they had the power to influence policy. The exclusive collaboration without participating politicians had limited access to decision-makers, which might reduce participants’ belief that the collaboration can shape policy outcomes. Having elected officials participate seemed to provide a perception that the collaboration was prioritised and had some decision-making authority. Politicians may also use their presence to facilitate, manage and direct collaborative processes (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011). Anchoring collaborations to elected officials also makes them more inclusive (Hendriks, 2008), which we have found positively affects the perception of having power to influence policy. Our findings support previous studies, which have found that political participation is a crucial factor for collaborations between public and private businesses and interest groups to be successful (Björge et al., 2021). It indicates that collaborations may have legal and political power (Dablanc, 2011). This echoes studies suggesting that institutional design that creates a strong separation between politics and administration hinders successful collaboration (Sørensen and Torfing, 2011).

6. Conclusion

This study has shown that collaborations provide participants power to influence policymaking through commenting on plans and strategies, setting the agenda on urban freight and presenting their interests to politicians and civil servants. However, we find that this power to influence policymaking depends on the institutional design of the collaboration. Supporting what has been discussed theoretically (Torfing et al., 2012), inclusive collaborations with limited interdependence provide participants with more power to influence policy than exclusive collaborations with high interdependence. We also show that the presence of elected officials in a collaboration is an institutional design feature that increases participants’ perceptions of power to influence policy.

In this study, we investigated three collaborations associated with urban freight in Oslo, Norway, which are typical of how collaborations between public and private businesses and interest groups in urban freight are organised in Europe. Thus, our findings may also apply to similar mid-sized European cities. However, we primarily investigated participants’ perceptions of the influence of participation in collaborative arrangements. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore whether, for example, survey or archival data provide similar results. We did not investigate whether public authorities use private businesses and interest groups’ input on policy, plans, strategies or regulations provided in the collaboration. Given this limitation, future studies may explore whether participants’ verbal arguments, comments and suggestions manifest themselves in implemented policy. This could capture the achieved physical outcomes of collaboration between public and

private businesses and interest groups.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Karin Fossheim: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.
Jardar Andersen: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Resources, Project administration, Supervision.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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