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Successes and Failings of an Urban Freight Quality Partnership – The Story of the Gothenburg Local Freight Network

Maria Lindholm*

Chalmers University of Technology, Division for Logistics and Transportation, S-412 96 Göteborg, Sweden

Abstract

Freight Quality Partnerships (FQPs) for urban areas have gained interest during the last decade, as a way of including stakeholders in the discussions of freight problems and possible solutions. However, there is little knowledge of how those FQPs succeed. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the partnerships can be developed over time, identifying problems and how they have been handled in order to be overcome as well as what experiences that could be transferred to other cities. This paper is presented as a narrative of a specific urban freight quality partnership, namely the one in Gothenburg, Sweden. The research is based on document analysis, interviews, a survey and a workshop amongst participants of the partnership as well as on participation at regular partnership meetings. Results suggest that the partnership approach is valuable in creating a good urban freight environment as well as for discussing potential solutions to specific problems. However, to gain good results from the partnership and the necessary long-term perspective, the partnership demands time and careful effort by the management in order to develop the partnership as well as to maintain interest amongst its stakeholders. Other cities are recommended to use a partnership approach in order to create good cooperation between freight stakeholders on a long-term basis, and in order to find possible solutions to urban freight problems that avoid sub-optimisation.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +46-31-725788774.

E-mail address: maria.lindholm@lindholmen.se

1. Introduction

Freight quality partnerships (FQPs) in urban areas have gained interest during the last decade as a way of including stakeholders in the discussions of problems and solutions. However, there is little widespread knowledge of how those FQPs succeed. A recent study comparing different urban FQPs shows the success and failure factors for the development, concerning the areas of formation, managing and outcomes of partnership approaches in urban areas (Lindholm and Browne, 2013). This paper will present a study, that follows the recent research presented, and focuses on one of those specific urban FQPs, looking at the start-up and the development of this partnership over its whole life up until now. Urban freight transport is a complex matter, with many aspects to consider in planning processes: urban form and context; detailed restrictions and regulations; overall strategic plans; many actors and stakeholders with varying amount of interest in utilities and profit; different possible policy measures that could be implemented, etc. One way of handling the above could be to include the stakeholders in the transport planning process (e.g. Quak, 2008; Browne, Allen and Atlassy, 2007). However, identification of the actors and stakeholders as well as their complex relationships and effect on urban freight is not always easy (Ballantyne and Lindholm, 2012). Hence, there is a large amount of work to carry out before the formation of a partnership.

The overall view illustrates the need for research regarding FQPs in urban areas, in order to present important components, validate those and not the least to present implications for local authorities as well as private stakeholders. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to see how the partnerships can be developed over time, identifying different problems and how they have been handled in order to be overcome as well as what learning experiences could be transferred to other cities where the development of urban FQPs are discussed. This paper is presented as a narrative of a certain urban freight quality partnership, namely the “Local freight network” in Gothenburg (hereafter called the LFNG), Sweden. Narratives are lacking in the field of urban freight transport and could serve as a valuable input to the general discussions and development of research approaches to complement traditional research reporting on results of specific urban freight transport measures and transport planning models.

This paper is structured as follows. An introduction to urban freight and stakeholder involvement from a local authority perspective is presented as a starting point for the paper, followed by the research approach. The LFNG is then presented as a narrative of how it has been developed and structured throughout the years. The paper ends with an analysis and discussion of the impacts of the research performed, what lessons that could be learnt and how the research indicates further development of FQPs.

2. Stakeholder Involvement by Local Authorities in Urban Freight Planning

Freight transport is only marginally included in the transport planning research today, even though several studies show that freight has an important impact on quality of life in urban areas, including emissions, safety, noise and visual intrusion (e.g. Dablanc, 2008; European Commission, 2006; Yannis, Golias and Antoniou, 2006). Furthermore, goods transport is a driver of the urban economy and represents a large proportion of the daily transport activities taking place in an urban area daily among cycling, walking, public transport and private car use. Urban freight is affected by the size of the area as well as of the urban form, including the strategic organisation of product supply chains in terms of the location of warehousing facilities and the fact that the logistics management of road freight operations is affected by geographical location, land use patterns and trade imbalances (Allen, Browne and Cherrett, 2012). Lindholm (2012) concludes that there is a need for information and resources in order to include freight in local authority transport planning, and identifies five areas of interest: measures (pilot actions or demonstration projects); evaluation and urban freight transport indicators; models and tools for urban freight transport planning; transferability and transfer of knowledge between cities; and, stakeholder cooperation and freight partnerships. Freight partnerships are seen as a long-term approach, but few studies acknowledge the possibility to involve stakeholders in a regular discussion and meetings through a partnership or other kind of network activity. In order to reach long-term sustainability there is a need to consider stakeholders’ interests (Carlsson and Janné, 2012) and according to Banister (2002), active citizen support, new forms of communication

between citizens and experts and the involvement of all major stakeholders is needed – the active involvement of actors is the most effective way of achieving change.

Collaboration between actors is needed to create an efficient transport system (Bergqvist, 2007; OECD, 2003; Tornberg and Cars, 2008). One of the success factors for urban freight transport could be identified as stakeholder cooperation (Browne, Nemoto, Visser and Whiteing, 2007; Hesse, 1995). Traditionally urban freight transport is seen as a business problem, that more or less is solving itself (e.g. Dablanc, 2007; Lindholm and Behrends, 2012). However, van Duin (2012) argues that the perspective has recently changed, from a situation wherein logistics is a business problem handled by private parties, to a “more public logistics”, with stronger involvement by public organisations.

2.1. Freight partnerships

Traditionally, a public-private partnership has the meaning of bringing public and private actors together for a partnership regarding e.g. funding construction or maintenance (European Commission, 2004). Browne, Nemoto, Visser and Whiteing (2003) also include consultation and dialogue in the definition of a public-private partnership, in line with the type of partnerships that are discussed in this paper. However, involving stakeholders from both the authorities and private business can be a challenge, considering harmonising different views and exchanging ideas, especially in a changing and developing area (Hensher and Brewer, 2001).

FQPs are a way for local authorities to include stakeholders in discussions of freight transport in urban areas. In the UK, FQPs have been acknowledged by government since 1998 (DETR, 1998). Those partnerships have been evaluated by Allen, Browne, Piotrowska and Woodburn (2010), where it was shown that of 87 identified FQPs there were 38 with an urban focus and furthermore concluding that the partnerships contribute to an increased interaction between private and public actors. Hofenk (2012) concludes that it is important for different stakeholder groups, which might have different interests, that planned measures are in line with each participants values at the same time as the initiator needs to provide good reasons to take part. A FQP has the potential to support these aspects and the stakeholder groups could have the possibility to share their prerequisites and requirements with other stakeholders.

However, FQPs are not always an easy approach or solution to urban freight transport problems. Dablanc (2008) argues that local partnerships are not always useful, since it is difficult to include all types of stakeholders needed. More recently, Dablanc (2011) identified three aspects that should be fulfilled as prerequisites for success: a dedicated consultation process, needs to cover a metropolitan area or region; the responsible institution needs to have sufficient legal and political influence. Furthermore, Hofenk (2012) suggests that the willingness to improve urban freight transport is dependent on the stakeholders’ perceived need for change and their trust in the initiative. Both of which could be gained and understood through a FQP with an appreciation of other stakeholders’ perspectives.

2.2. Stakeholders in urban freight transport

Cooperation is important, but in order to cooperate there is a need to identify the stakeholders that need to be included in this cooperation. In urban freight transport flows (and all other transport flows), the realisation of transport demands results from the decisions taken by many different stakeholders and these stakeholders often show a strong interdependence. Communication and cooperation are possibilities to reduce the barriers between different stakeholders. Stakeholders of urban freight transport have been addressed by numerous authors (e.g. Anand, Yang, van Duin and Tavassy, 2012; Russo and Comi, 2011; Taniguchi and Tamagawa, 2005; van Binsberger and Visser, 2001) and could according to previous research in general be divided into four main groups: authorities, customers, shippers and, transport operators.

The local authority is an important stakeholder in urban freight transport, since they are responsible for regulations on the local road network and have the opportunity to create possibilities or barriers towards freight transport in the urban area.

The customers can be both the consignees, for example offices, shops or restaurants, or the residents and visitors (end-consumers) in the urban area who for instance buy something and therefore affect the need for goods, but will perform the final link of the goods transport operation by various kinds of private modes.

The shippers, or the consignors, are those who send the goods, hence the ones mainly ordering the transport operation. But could also be responsible for their own transport operations.

The transport operators are responsible for the transport operations taking place in the urban area, in forms of e.g. third-party logistics operator or haulier. But, also other types of transport could be categorised within this group: e.g. maintenance, service transport and construction logistics.

Those four groups of stakeholders could be seen as actors with a direct impact on the urban freight transport. However, Ballantyne and Lindholm (2012) also identify indirect stakeholders of urban freight transport who play an important role for the outcome of freight transport operations. Those indirect stakeholders could include: the drivers of the vehicles, vehicle manufacturers, trade associations, commercial organisations, land owners/property owners, public transport operators and non-consuming citizens and visitors.

3. Research Approach

The narrative is based on interviews with the persons that have managed the LFNG during the eight years that it has existed (two persons), interviews with participants that have been part of the LFNG for various lengths of time (5 people) participation at meetings (in the start-up of the LFNG in 2005 as well as during a two year period in 2010-2012), results of a questionnaire and a workshop, and finally on document analysis of all agendas and minutes from the start of the LFNG until now (23 meeting agendas including participant lists and minutes). Results from the interviews gives good insights into the development and effects of the LFNG as well as views of the benefits and drawbacks that have been encountered. The meeting minutes and participation lists gives observational views on the development of the discussions as well as outcomes of the LFNG. Participation at meetings has provided the possibility to observe the interactions between participants and notice the discussion environment throughout meetings.

As the title of the paper implies, the analysis regards the successes and failings of the LFNG. Thus, the discussion needs to start with a comment on the definition of success and failure. When analysing the LFNG, that is a matter of whom you talk to or which perspective you choose to look from. The criteria for successes or failings will be divided in two parts: 1) physical outcomes, and, 2) the interaction between stakeholders in a long-term perspective.

4. The Local Freight Network in Gothenburg

Gothenburg has 500,000 inhabitants, which makes it the second largest city in Sweden. Gothenburg has a long tradition of trade and industry and the city hosts the biggest port in Scandinavia (Gothenburg, 2012). Since 2000, the city transport authority ("Traffic and public transport authority") has spent a lot of time establishing close relations to transport businesses and stakeholders in order to develop sustainable logistics solutions. As part of this process, Gothenburg introduced a "Local freight network". The LFNG was founded in 2005 during a EU project named START (2009) within the CIVITAS Initiative (2012). Since then, the partnership has had 23 regular meetings, with between 11 and 27 participants. In 2007 there was a shift of the chair of the LFNG and, the partnership moved into a new phase. The LFNG is discussed here in two parts: the first phase of start-up (8 meetings), and the second phase of development and maintaining of the LFNG (15 meetings).

4.1. Start-up of the partnership

The very first meeting of the LFNG was in 2005, and the partnership was then not called the LFNG. This first meeting had the purpose of gathering a number of representatives from transport operators as well as authorities in order to discuss the continuation of an urban freight pilot action that had been on-going in Gothenburg for a couple of years. The meeting had 11 participants and formed the basis for the invitation to the following meeting that was

the formal start-up of the LFNG in early 2006. During this second meeting, the focus was to discuss the purpose and objectives of having an urban freight partnership, how the partnership would be organised and managed. In addition to the stakeholders attending the first meeting, the hauler association in West Sweden as well as a property owner in the urban area was invited to participate. The local authority (the traffic and public transport authority) in Gothenburg chaired the meetings of the LFNG.

The objectives of the partnership was decided to include:

- being an arena for discussions;
- sharing knowledge and experiences between stakeholders;
- increase the level of understanding of different stakeholders' perspectives; and,
- through shared experiences reach well established propositions within the area of urban freight transport.

The organisation and management was decided to include:

- four meetings per year (half a day, ending with lunch),
- that the agenda for meetings will be sent out in good time before each meeting,
- that the same persons should be invited and participate in each meeting,
- that the forum should be flexible and that new participants can be invited for a specific meeting,
- that the forum should have possibilities to invite speakers and do study visits, and,
- to ensure that discussions of urban freight transport are valid.

A month after the initial meeting, the LFNG had its second meeting. During this meeting it was highlighted that the purpose from the authority's side was for the partnership to be on-going and take a long-term perspective, even though in this first phase (until beginning of 2009) it would be a part of the START project.

During the first phase of the LFNG the meetings were quite similar and the main focus was on *inspiration*, through listening to presentations of different pilot actions and types of projects in other cities. Questions and discussions were held on a quite general level during this period of the LFNG, even though some focus was made on loading zone problems together with deliveries of goods after 6pm in the urban area.

The first phase of the LFNG more or less had the same participants at each meeting, there were many invited guests to hold presentations at the meetings and the discussions were general. During the period the *informal networking* of getting to know each other played an important role. Thus, the focus was mainly on the three first points of the objectives whereas the last one was not addressed to any great extent.

During the last meeting of the first phase, an evaluation form was handed out to the participants. One of the conclusions of the survey was that the participants did not consider information about authority planning regarding freight transport to be enough as the sole topic at the meetings. Furthermore, participants wanted to take part in forming the agenda for the meetings. Suggestions for development of the topics for the LFNG mainly included discussing physical outcomes of the partnership, including, discussion of time windows and mapping of freight movements in the urban area. However, suggestions from the survey also included increasing the length of meetings, in order to discuss in a more creative way what and how to do things in the LFNG.

4.2. Developing and maintaining the partnership

The second phase of the partnership discussed in this paper can be seen as starting when there was a change of chair in 2007. The chair was still held by the local authority, but a new person was employed as responsible for freight transport issues at the authority and therefore also became responsible for the LFNG. In the beginning there was not much change, the number of participants was more or less the same until 2009 (between 11-14 participants at each meeting).

However, with the new chair, a change in the structure of meetings was noted towards the end of 2007 and, from the first meeting in the new phase, a stakeholder representing the vehicle industry attended. Furthermore, during the first meeting of the second phase, a workshop was held to discuss the outcomes of the evaluation form.

From the result of the questionnaire, the possibility of inviting additional participants was discussed as well as suggestions for invited speakers and an updated objective for the following years. Additional stakeholders that were suggested to become participants were representatives from retailers and transport buyers (consignors and consignees). The new objective was formulated as, “*The LFNG should be formed and managed so that all stakeholders in the transport chain within urban freight transport, with supporting functions are represented in the partnership. The LFNG should be a forum for discussion without restrictions.*”

At the end of 2009 the number of participants started to increase at the meetings, becoming around 20 participants at each meeting by the end of 2010. Apart from the additional stakeholders now attending (retailer and vehicle industry) the participants representing the authority increased with a better representation of other departments in the authority.

During the second phase of the LFNG, the focus of the agenda shifted from mainly listening to presentations, to also *discussing new ideas* for urban freight transports, demo projects with attendants from the LFNG and a more thorough *discussion of the problems* in the area – focusing on what could be done to solve those problems.

Restrictions, regulations and, most of all, the enforcement of regulations and restrictions in the urban area were discussed to a greater extent during this phase. Statistics of vehicles and regulations in the area showed an alarming amount not complying with regulations. The solution to this has been through a number of meetings with the partnership that discussed both more enforcement, mainly through higher presence of cycling police officers in the area, as well as changing the regulations in the streets. The previous restriction against driving at all in one of the streets became a time window restriction on the pedestrian streets, which reduced the number of violations against the regulation. An additional regulation of the length of vehicles allowed to drive within the area was discussed because of problems with too many long vehicles blocking streets in the area (long vehicles could have problems with 90° turns in narrow corners) and a special working group was dedicated to investigate a suitable length.

During 2010 a noticeable amount of thefts of goods occurred in the urban area during delivery operations. A special working group was dedicated from the LFNG together with the police to discuss how to make deliveries safer. Through the LFNG and a good communication with the authorities as well as the police, it has been possible to increase the awareness of this issue as well as putting more focus on solving it. The special working group have reported back to the LFNG after each meeting, making sure to increase the knowledge and discuss possibilities for solutions. Education, presence of police in the area and information about how to get in contact with the police and chains for text messages when thefts occur are some of the solutions discussed.

During 2011 discussions started on the congestion charge scheme that authorities planned to introduce in Gothenburg in 2013 (which was introduced as planned, the 1st of January 2013) and what the probable effect on freight transport would be. Most participants agreed that it would have a positive effect on transport operations in general, but a lot of effort in the discussions was put into the fact that vehicles from other countries would not have to pay any congestion charge. What kind of negative effect that would have on the transport business was discussed, together with the discussions on what this group could do to influence the government in order to change the regulation for including foreign vehicles. Another issue during late 2010 and 2011 was the rebuilding of streets in the inner city, how deliveries would be affected during this period of time and what possible solutions that could be found to address those problems.

Around eight of the participants have taken part of almost all meetings since the beginning and have a very good view of the development and structure of the LFNG throughout the years, and during the last couple of years there have been more or less the same participants at all meetings, with the addition of different guests at most meetings. The participants have been getting to know each other well and the most valued effect of the LFNG is seen to be the information sharing (increased knowledge and understanding of each other's situations as well as the information of on-going projects). Coffee breaks during the meetings are seen as very valuable together with the lunch after each meeting where the participants get the opportunity to talk with each other in a natural arena. This informal networking is ranked second after the information sharing and has for example the effect that participants feel less hindered to call a fellow member of the LFNG at any time to discuss issues that occur – even though they are competitors. It is noticeable that physical outcomes are not the priority.

4.3. Future of the partnership

At a meeting in 2012, a workshop was held to discuss the development and the future of the LFNG. The meeting with the workshop was very well attended and it was noticeable that the participants found it valuable to discuss and be able to affect the future of how the meetings should be organised. The basis for the workshop was the results from a questionnaire survey conducted amongst the participants of the partnership, where the results pointed to that the main benefit of the LFNG is, “an active cooperation between all stakeholders and better possibilities to work together towards sustainable freight transport in the urban area”. The drawbacks, or negative aspects, of the LFNG as of today were highlighted as: the limitation to the inner city, the risk of lost interest from the stakeholders if there are no results of physical outcomes, to just being a “talking-shop” and that there is a challenge to find and attract the right mix of stakeholders to attend the meetings. Based on this, the workshop aimed at finding possible enhancements to the LFNG in order to keep it going and keep the interest that is seen today. Three main areas were discussed: the topics on the agenda, the participating stakeholders, formation and management of meetings.

Regarding what should be discussed at the meetings, the workshop presented the idea of focusing also a little bit outside the city centre, e.g. external shopping centres that have a large proportion of the goods flows, but also to let every participant at the meetings have the possibility to inform others about their activities or certain issues they want to raise as information for the other participants. A main point that needs to be seen on the agenda is a clear connection between the meetings as well as a long-term plan of the desired outcomes and achievements. In line with this, the purpose of the freight network might need to be rewritten and a suggestion was given as, “To find a balance between the activities that need to be performed in the urban area (goods) and the regulations and prerequisites the authorities need to impose in order to create an attractive city.”

Today, there is seen to be a good mix of stakeholders represented in the LFNG. However, it would be good to include other departments from the authority on a regular basis (e.g. city planning), and representatives from the National Transport Administration, since they have the responsibility for national roads that are also included and affected by distribution activities. For some meetings it would be valuable to invite politicians in order to show the importance of this group and the possibilities it could give.

Formation, organisation and management of the group is good today, but there was an interest to test the possibility of an advisory group to prepare and suggest topics for the agenda.

In general there were some points that need to be put forward. First of all, there was a discussion on how the LFNG could increase its value and status in order to be able to have a greater effect on decisions taken at the authority. The formation and informal status of today fills a purpose and is good and it has an effect on the directions of the decisions taken, but there is a need to increase the connection to politicians who make the final decisions. One possibility could be to formalise the partnership into a consultative body for the authority, but a more viable suggestion was to increase the reporting of the LFNG and in line with this do the following: write an annual report, develop a pamphlet describing the LFNG, formalise the long term objectives and, improve the process to reach those objectives.

5. Analysis

Lindholm and Browne (2013) identify three main areas of interest that need to be considered in developing and managing FQPs, including: *Formation of partnership* (objectives, relevant stakeholders, political involvement); *Management* (action plan, manageable number of participants, regular attendance at meetings, strong project management); and, *Outcomes* (accept complexity and avoid seeking solutions, consider urban freight as business propositions). Those three areas will be analysed below. As discussed in the beginning of the paper, what is then the definition of success and failure and how can this be valued? Two areas of interest regarding success or failure were identified: physical outcomes and long-term interactions between stakeholders.

5.1. Long-term interactions between stakeholders

LFNG activities have been on-going since the start and many members have participated since the beginning.. If that is an issue for success – the LFNG is successful. The LFNG have through the years built on the good relationship between its participants and created a good group dynamic with efficient meetings and interesting discussions. This has created a good understanding and highlighted urban freight issues between partners with a long-term perspective in mind, which is a very positive effect of the LFNG. One example is the good communication between the participants (the different stakeholder groups) and the police, which have increased the understanding of the regulations, decreased violations (95% reduction of violations of regulations in the urban area by goods vehicles), but also created a positive environment of information sharing between stakeholders. With the tradition of sharing information and knowledge exchange, it is easier to find solutions to problems that not necessarily need to be a change of regulation or a specific implemented “logistics solution”, but instead just addressing the problems and discussing solutions that could be much easier.

The informal network activities have been strong in the LFNG from the beginning, but also clearly stated as one of the objectives from the start. However, the participants are requesting more physical outcomes as well, even though this might lead to a broadening of the scope to include not just the urban, city centre area of Gothenburg, but also a wider context of through traffic, goods transport to external shopping centres and large industry areas for example.

The long-term perspective is regarded as the most important for the local authority and the participants of the LFNG and, has increased the observances of restrictions and regulations as well as moving urban freight transport higher on the local authority agenda. Goods transport is now included in transport planning activities to a much higher extent than before the LFNG started.

5.2. Physical outcomes of the partnership

Regarding actual outcomes in terms of physical objects of projects, the LFNG has proved to be quite inefficient, with just a few outputs in forms of e.g. a ‘Parking and unloading practice’, ‘Length restriction for the inner city’ and ‘Walking speed area streets’. From the point of view that this partnership has existed for seven years, that could be seen as a weak outcome. Some also see the risk of the LFNG meetings just becoming informal ‘talking shops’. However, even though this might be seen as a failing, it is important to remember that the physical outcomes are not ranked as high as the informal networking and information exchange between participants of the LFNG.

5.3. Formation, management and outcomes

Formation, management and outcomes were the three areas of interest regarded as important when assessing freight partnerships by Lindholm and Browne (2013). The outcomes have been analysed above. The formation lacks the political involvement that is seen as a success factor. The lack of political involvement is also highlighted by participants who see too little engagement from politics both regarding the partnership and for urban freight transport in general. This is also noticed through the long processes of changing of regulations that have been discussed through the LFNG. The objectives were very clear from the beginning, but have been transformed to something rather vague in the development of the LFNG. The present objective is harder to fulfil. The stakeholders participating at meetings are well represented throughout the different types valuable for such a partnership, but there is still some lacking involvement. Retailers have been most difficult to include and at present there is no stakeholder that perform their own transport involved in the LFNG. The reason why retailers are hard to attract are mainly that they need to be present at their store during the day when meetings are held – at least the smaller retailers.

The management of the LFNG has played an important role. The chair of the LFNG spends 10% of his time managing the contacts of the LFNG, planning meetings and making sure that the agenda is interesting and valuable for the participants. The participants value the present chair of the LFNG and several of the stakeholders attribute the success of the informal network possibilities to him. The number of participants is manageable and is more or less the same each time. There is a limited amount of people that receive the invitation and the meetings are not

open to all, even though an additional stakeholder would not be neglected. Each participant represents not just their own business, but also the overall objectives of that group of stakeholders. However, the LFNG lacks an action plan of what to achieve, which is in line with the rather vague objective. During the last meetings a small decrease in participants has been noticed and, in order to further develop and maintain the LFNG, the issues above need to be addressed soon in order to avoid stakeholders losing interest and terminating their participation.

6. Conclusion

This paper has described urban freight partnerships in general and one partnership specifically – the local freight network in Gothenburg. The purpose of the paper was to see how this specific partnership has developed over time, identifying problems and how they have been handled in order to be overcome as well as what experiences could be transferred to other cities.

Cooperation between stakeholders is important to reach good results and freight stakeholders need to be included in urban transport planning processes. It is clear from the research performed that a freight quality partnership of this kind serves many purposes and could be seen as a necessity in order to get urban freight transport higher on the local authority agenda, but that there are aspects that need to be considered and carefully thought through during its formation and management in order to make the partnership successful.

Conclusions of the research of the LFNG indicates that a partnership:

- has the risk of becoming a talking shop without physical outcomes and with limited effect on freight transport;
- has the risk of lacking important stakeholders, e.g. retailers, with difficulties to attend;
- needs clear objectives and a long-term plan;
- has to ensure information flow to politicians and other decision makers.

However, a partnership approach:

- works well with good management, clear objectives and an interesting agenda;
- has effects that are not only outcomes in terms of physical projects and policy measures – but also knowledge and awareness that serves long-term effects on urban freight transport and transport planning, e.g.
 - is highly valuable in order to increase the urban freight position at local authorities;
 - creates valuable informal connections between urban freight stakeholders that normally do not meet and interact; and,
- creates good possibilities to discuss new ideas and solutions to problems that occur in the urban area.

Partnerships should be seen as a long-term approach and it should be acknowledged that it is time consuming to form, manage and maintain the partnership. Participants of the partnership need to be engaged and therefore need to find good reasons to attend. As a result, the manager of the partnership needs to make a strong effort to keep the agenda and outcomes valuable. Even though information sharing and the informal networking possibilities are considered to be most important for participants, it is not likely that the LFNG would keep its attractiveness amongst stakeholders without any physical outcomes. There is a risk that the LFNG has reached a momentum, where the situation is seen as “good” regarding freight transport in the urban area as well as the fact the participants “already know each other”, leading to less interest to participate in the LFNG. However, to retain the view that the status of the partnership is “good” and to avoid future problems and to develop the attractiveness and sustainability of the urban area, there is a need for good cooperation between all stakeholders of freight in the urban area. Therefore, it is necessary for the management of the LFNG to maintain interest through further development of the partnership, to attract a wider variety of stakeholders (which has not been successful so far) and most importantly, to make sure that politicians and decision makers are aware of the discussions and the views of the participants at the LFNG meetings.

This narrative of the LFNG, and the analysis of its results, could be valuable in the discussion of implementing partnerships in other cities with similar or different contexts. All cities are different in form, scale and context, but it is likely that the urban freight situation is broadly similar. Similar stakeholders and discussions are therefore

valuable in most cities, not just the larger ones. Even though there may not be obvious problems with freight transport operations in a city centre, the partnership approach offers a good arena for open discussions and informal information exchange between stakeholders that could improve a situation in small steps over a long time period.

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