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Governance and the stakeholders' engagement in city logistics: the SULPiTER methodology and the Bologna application

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Abstract

Many actors are involved in the urban freight delivery system. They hold different visions, perceptions, goals. However, city logistics affects a well-defined set of subjects: their acceptance of (and even positive contribution to) policy can be enhanced by continuing consultation. This evidence stresses the need for the stakeholders' engagement as a strategic factor of any decision-making process. The paper presents the guidelines of the EU-funded project SULPiTER (Interreg Central Europe Programme) for the stakeholders' involvement (both public and private) in the definition of city logistics policies. In particular, the FQP (Freight Quality Partnership) tool is analyzed and discussed. After an overview of the institutional references and the implemented experiences, a methodological approach is presented, describing the steps for an effective FQP implementation. The case of the Metropolitan city of Bologna is presented as the local application of the SULPiTER methodology, considering two aspects: the way of defining the *governance* for combining horizontally different public authorities, and the tool for *engaging the private stakeholders* in the definition of Sustainable Urban Logistics Plans (SULPs).

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1. Introduction

1.1. The relevance of governance in planning urban freight distribution

Despite the well-known need to change behaviors to avoid the negative prospects of climate change, there is still a certain inertia in identifying real and effective actions to modify the current actions and practices of both citizens and government structures.

The economic-territorial system is rapidly evolving and is characterized by decisions made by a multiplicity of subjects, each one pursuing its own specific objectives, based on partial visions and evaluations.

The fact that some of these objectives in conflict with each other, together with the incidence of external costs (externalities), determines a general inefficiency, in terms of resources consumption and costs (both direct and indirect). Thus, there is a need for appropriate actions to govern the territorial planning decisions, aimed at limiting the consumption of resources and at internalizing costs and optimizing social benefits / costs.

The wide range of tools made available by technology seems to make the definition of clear guidelines for action even more difficult, with the result of passively strengthening current behavioral practices. The freight transport markets push towards transformations, not always consistent with sustainability goals, but mainly influenced by efficiency and competition needs of private companies.

These considerations suggest that there is a clear need to implement new instruments aimed at filling a gap, that is not of a technological or infrastructural nature, but of governance. The contribution of technology to sustainable development should only take place within a path of clear identification of the problems and definition of the objectives that includes a real and effective strategy for communicating, sharing and verifying results.

No public or private decision-maker holds, on its own, the adequate knowledge and information and all the regulatory, operational, and financial tools to implement effective governance actions. The issue of rationalizing decision-making processes in complex areas such as mobility, transport and the territory in general, has been tackled in different ways in Europe and in the world.

The most successful initiatives have shown that the quality of the results is greatly influenced by the ways in which stakeholders are involved in the various phases of the process. Appropriate forms of involvement and participation of public and private subjects have proved to be decisive for the effectiveness of the initiatives in several aspects:

- The mutual exchange of information leads to better knowledge and awareness of problems;
- The exchange of information contributes to the reduction of critical issues in the management of conflicts;
- Convergence of resources toward shared objectives is facilitated;
- Drastic reduction of decision times;
- Recovery of mutual trust between subjects, otherwise in conflict and competition;

This paper provides a description of work carried out within the framework of the EU-funded project SULPiTER (Interreg Central Europe Programme), in the effort to identify useful tools for the stakeholders' involvement (both public and private). The focus is on the specific experience of Bologna, whose administration decided to firmly undertake a revision of the governance processes of urban mobility and specifically of City Logistics.

1.2. Methodological references

The setting of the Bologna administration project is inspired by the best practices emerging from the most advanced international experiences. Two main groups of methodological references can be identified:

- Based on a top-down logic, inspired by the general methodological references established by the European guidelines for the preparation of SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans) and the related Sulp (Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan) module;
- Based on a bottom-up approach, inspired by the best international operational experiences related to the governance procedures that can be identified in the FQP (Freight Quality Partnership)

A strong input for the development of new governance tools can be identified in the European Commission guidelines for the preparation of SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans) adopted in 2013. The guidelines prescribe an approach to the governance of mobility based on appropriate forms of involvement, information, communication and participation.

SUMP is a tool for decision-making support based on a new planning concept that can be adopted to address transport-related challenges and problems of urban areas in a more sustainable and integrated way (Ruprecht, 2014).

The main characteristics of a SUMP are:

- A long-term vision for mobility and logistics regarding an entire urban area, and a short-term implementation plan defining timing, budget, resources and responsibilities.
- A participatory approach that involves citizens and other stakeholders throughout the whole process.
- A balanced and integrated development of all transport modes, encouraging a shift to more eco-friendly modes.
- Integration and collaboration between local and governmental authorities and between neighboring institutions.
- An assessment of current and future performance of the transport system through specific indicators useful for measuring the degree of achievement of the stated objectives.
- Regular monitoring of the implementation and effects of the SUMP and, if necessary, application of appropriate corrective actions.
- Consideration of all external costs and benefits, including the societal ones.

A good Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan can lead to important benefits:

- Significant improvement of the quality of life in the urban area.
- Reduction of costs to the local community and attraction of new businesses and investors.
- Better conflict management.
- Recovery of mutual understanding among the competing stakeholders.
- Implementation of multi-modal solutions to transport problems.
- More effective use of limited resources.
- A stronger public support achieved through a suitable participation strategy.
- An integrated and interdisciplinary approach that guarantees a balanced development of the plan.
- Effective fulfillment of legal obligations (e.g. air quality improvement and noise abatement standards).
- Since urban mobility problems are often relevant to multiple administrative areas, a SUMP inspires a collaborative planning approach.
- Creation of a new “mobility culture”.

The procedure is conceived as a cyclical continuous improvement process with four main phases:

- Rational and transparent goal setting
- Elaborating the plan
- Implementing the plan
- Monitoring the results.

SULP (Sustainable Urban Logistic Plan) should be considered as an integral part of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. It should focus on freight issues within the wider mobility framework. “The Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan is a useful tool supporting Local Public decision-makers and stakeholders in “governing” city logistics measures and enhancing freight distribution processes towards economic, social, environmental sustainability and efficiency. The plan involves strategies, measures and rules that can be adopted with a cooperative approach among different actors for reaching common objectives aimed at an overall urban sustainability” (Ambrosino, 2015). There are close mutual relations between SUMP and SULP, for example:

- SULP supports SUMP towards the achievement of the main goal of decreasing external impacts and costs (congestion, pollution, safety, etc.).
- SULP supports SUMP in identifying some common mobility scenarios such as the traffic situation.
- SULP and SUMP have mutual feedbacks on issues related to the road network and its control, an aspect that concerns both logistics and mobility.

The integration between the two planning frameworks is even more relevant in small and medium cities, where some planning tools are not clearly separated and there may be no resources exclusively devoted to the freight transport sector. Similarly to the SUMP, the SULP should comply with regional and national plans and, at a local level, with the indications contained in Urban Traffic Plan, Urban Parking Plan, Urban Governance Plan, etc.

1.3. Stakeholders' involvement: the FQP approach

One of the key-factors for implementing sustainable policies in the urban freight transport is the stakeholder cooperation (Browne, Nemoto, Visser and Whiteing, 2007; Lindholm, 2014). In the last decades, urban freight transport has been identified as a business problem, that more or less is solving itself (e.g. Dablanc, 2007; Lindholm and Behrends, 2012). However, 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 organizations.

This concept has been recently stressed again by the European Commission in the scope of a comprehensive Study on Urban Logistics (EC, 2018). Logistics activities depend on the interaction between a large number of stakeholders, often with unique characteristics, strategies, business models, objectives or roles. Local authorities attempt to mitigate the external challenges presented by urban freight logistics such as emissions, congestion or accidents; while working to create conditions that will promote the efficiency of operations and processes. The scope of intervention of (local) authorities is, however, limited. Logistics activities are essentially of a private nature and EU regulation sets clear limits to the lawful level of influence of public authorities. Secondly, when urban freight logistics is the end part, or last mile, of either longer supply chains or larger distribution networks, stakeholders have to measure the impact of the (local) policy measures on their chains and networks. The actual impact of the measures may be lower than initially expected.

The most common tool for Public Authorities for including stakeholders in the decision making process is the Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) (Browne et al., 2007; Lindholm et al., 2013): partnerships between local authorities, local community, freight industry, private sector, environmental groups and other stakeholders. Their goal is to develop an agreement related to freight transport issues.

These tools promote the adoption of best practices with the purpose to obtain an economic, safe, efficient and sustainable freight transport. This topic is very complex and heterogeneous since it involves different goals, time-scales, structures, operating procedures and subjects. Therefore, it is important to create a forum where stakeholders can interact with each other to reach an agreement about a given question.

Different types of FQPs are possible, depending on forms, objectives, territorial extension, type and number of stakeholders involved, modes of transport considered, amount of funding and other specific issues.

FQPs were introduced in the UK in the mid-90's by the Freight Transport Association (FTA) as a tool for bringing together the interested stakeholders in order to:

- identify problems perceived by each interest group regarding the movement and delivery of goods,
- identify measures to solve such problems,
- identify best practice measures and principles for action by local authorities and industry to promote eco-friendly, economic and efficient delivery of merchandise.

In Italy, the FQP concept was imported and applied in a number of contexts. Among them, the city of Turin is an interesting example (Marciani et al., 2016).

2. The contribution of the European Project SULPiTER to the FQP implementation

With the purpose of sharing knowledge and decisions among different stakeholders involved in urban transport policies, the EU-funded project SULPITER (Central Europe Programme) has dealt with all the related issues with the ultimate goal of providing clear and easy to use tools for the implementation of SULP. Among the various activities, a specific part of the work focused on the FQP tool.

In the framework of the project, a detailed analysis of available information has been carried out¹. It has considered the large spectrum of data sources, both institutional-academic and empirical, arising from real experiences in the field. The research has identified several “success cases” that have led to develop and implement practical measures in the involved territories.

This extensive review allowed to identify a few effective steps for fruitful implementation of a FQP tool. Besides the natural need to tailor each experience to the specific context, it has been possible to identify some common features and implementation stages. These have been outlined in 5 simple steps that could be used as a checklist for typical implementations. Simple and clear questions have been picked out to help the FQP coordinator:

STEP 1 – STRATEGY DESIGN. The goal is to set up strategic priorities for stakeholders’ engagement within the scope of the specific Sustainable Urban Logistics Plan (SULP). This stage is crucial to ensuring the identification of issues and stakeholders, within three main areas: Strategic, Thematic, Territorial.

STEP 2 – SETTING UP THE FQP’S OBJECTIVES & REQUIREMENTS. This step aims at the identification of Freight Quality Partnership (FQP)’s goals within the SULP, i.e. the most important objectives that the Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) has to achieve and which benefits are expected.

Starting from the identification of FQP’s goals within the SULP, the purpose is to identify which are the stakeholders’ categories that have to be involved for a good FQP. Participation can be measured on a continuous scale, ranging from a low level to a high level of stakeholders’ participation.

STEP 3 – MAPPING THE STAKEHOLDERS. The goal is to ensure that, as far as possible, all relevant stakeholders are identified, and the output of this step is a list (table / database) indicating: Name of the stakeholder, Contacts, Stakeholder’s category, Relation between the stakeholder and the SULP’s decision making process (i.e. stakeholders with legal, financial or operational responsibilities in the city logistics issues, stakeholders just affected by the SULP’s measures, etc.)

Furthermore, a qualitative description of each stakeholder (i.e. preliminary pieces of information useful to define the role of the stakeholder in its supply chain, etc.) is needed. Interests / goals / expectations of the stakeholders should be identified.

STEP 4 – PRIORITIZING THE STAKEHOLDERS. Once the stakeholders have been identified, it is crucial to reach the most relevant stakeholders to involve. Engaging all stakeholders in all issues is neither possible nor desirable. Therefore, it is necessary to prioritize stakeholders and issues to ensure that time, resources and expectations are well managed. The aim of this step is to produce a short list of 20 private stakeholders. The criteria to select them are basically based on three issues:

- Influence within the SULP’s decision making process;
- Relation with the SULP’s decision making process;
- Willingness and ability of stakeholders to engage.

STEP 5 – ENGAGING THE STAKEHOLDERS. This step consists in planning and effectively carrying out engagement activities with the selected stakeholders. Once the stakeholders have been identified with respect to “why, which and for what” they should be engaged, it is crucial to finalize the approach to ensure their full

¹ This activity has been coordinated by the SULPiTER project’s partner Unioncamere del Veneto (IT).

participation. FQP with public authorities should be the first, followed by the FQP with the private stakeholders. They must be considered as two separated bodies running alongside. Nevertheless, overlapping and joint work is possible according to the Partner's strategy.

These general steps, together with some more detailed indications on how to manage the FQP, have been adopted in the framework of SULPITER Project for real implementation in seven case studies. In this paper the application to the Bologna case study is described.

3. The SULPiTER approach application: Bologna case-study

The Metropolitan City of Bologna is a local authority with policy and institutional competence on the whole Bologna Functional Urban Area (according to the OECD classification). This role was played in the past by the Provinces. This authority is no more active in Italy since 2014 according to an institutional reform, which has identified 10 Metropolitan Cities corresponding to the major Italian conurbations. The Metropolitan City of Bologna includes 55 Municipalities, with a population of 1.009.267. Its capital is the city of Bologna; with 388.884 inhabitants, it is the seventh largest city in Italy. Bologna Metropolitan City is a complex urban system, with two major national transport nodes (rail and road) and a strong industrial character, especially in the mechanical, machinery and logistics sectors.

In September 2017 the Metropolitan City of Bologna has started the development of a new Mobility Plan. The process is an interesting example of an integrated approach to mobility planning at the metropolitan level, the first in Italy with this territorial extension. The plan integrates three thematic and territorial areas into a single planning tool:

- The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), at the metropolitan level, addressing the whole mobility system, with specific focus on passenger transport.
- The Sustainable Urban Logistic Plan (SULP), at the metropolitan level, focusing on freight transport in the inner city and its relation with the wide metropolitan area.
- The Urban Traffic Plan (PGTU), for the city of Bologna, as a detailed study of possible solutions to reduce private traffic flows, along with their impacts at urban level.

The analysis assesses this process from two points of view: the factors beyond the integrated approach to the urban mobility planning and how the public-private partnerships are activated. The analysis focuses on this second aspect in the case of the urban distribution of goods. The review of the “Freight Board” (“Tavolo Merci”) in Bologna, as a tool for collaboration with private stakeholders, will promote the discussion on the transferability of the SULPiTER guidelines.

The first aspect to be observed is the method of building the governance by public entities. The reasons that have sustained an integrated approach are strategic in the first place; it was seen as an opportunity for enhancing the competitiveness in attracting resources and funding (both Italian and European). This aspect has even more relevance after the release of the National Guidelines for implementing SUMPs by the Italian Ministry of Transport (MIT, 2017). Moreover, the past experiences of the Province of Bologna in collaborating with Municipalities on some specific mobility issues, such as cycling, supported the choice of adopting this integrated approach for the New Plan.

In addition to these strategic reasons, other "structural" factors must be considered, such as the convergence between the policies of the Metropolitan City and the City of Bologna: the metropolitan mayor is the mayor of the provincial capital (Bologna). Moreover, the territorial pattern of the metropolitan city requires, in particular for public transport, a collaborative approach between the various entities. For example, since 1994 the Metropolitan Railway Service (SFM) has been operating as a commuter railway service with 8 lines and 22 stations within the same metropolitan area.

The governance of the Plan was started officially by a Memorandum (2017) between the Metropolitan City and the City of Bologna, which aims at establishing a unique technical-administrative department for mobility in the forthcoming years. From a political point of view, the coordination with the municipalities is instead guaranteed by a

bureau formed by the seven "Unions of Municipalities", an intermediate subject between the metropolitan and municipal levels.

In this context, the Metropolitan City decided to stress the relevance of the urban distribution of goods, with a dedicated tool such as the metropolitan Sulp. Within the decision making process of the Sulp, the "Freight Board" has been set up; it is an organism of collaboration with the private stakeholders, which implements at the local level the SulpITER guidelines of Freight Quality Partnership.

The "Freight Board" was established by the Metropolitan City in March 2017, a few months before starting to work on the new Plan. The strategy was to involve private stakeholders in decision-making processes, with three objectives:

- *Inform*: communicate the on-going process in SUMP / Sulp definition.
- *Involve*: work directly with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns are fully understood and considered in decision-making.
- *Collaborate*: test the results of a preliminary round of meetings as a potential starting point to work together to take action.

Table 1 compares the SulpITER methodology to the local implementation in the Bologna case.

Table 1. Strategy for the private stakeholders' engagement: Bologna adoption of the SulpITER guidelines

SulpITER Guidelines: strategy for the private stakeholders' engagement	Application in the Bologna case
Step 1 – Strategy design	The strategy for engaging the stakeholders was defined in the "SUMP guidelines" that included the main objectives of the Bologna SUMP, also for the city logistics related issues.
Step 2 – Set up the FQP's objectives & requirements	The Metropolitan City of Bologna decided to set up a process for engaging the stakeholders with the aims of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Inform</i>: communicate the on-going process to the SUMP / Sulp definition - <i>Involve</i>: Work directly with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns are fully understood and considered in decision-making. - <i>Collaborate</i>: Test the results of a preliminary round of meetings for potentially considering to work together to take action.
Step 3 – Mapping the stakeholders	The mapping activity was shortened by exploiting the "list" of subjects involved in past experiences.
Step 4 – Prioritizing the stakeholders	The selection aims at obtaining the full coverage of the Professional Associations of the city logistics actors: third party transport operators, SMEs, shop owners.
Step 5 –Engage the stakeholders	Setting up the "Tavolo merci" (Freigh Board) with private stakeholders. The participants were invited one by one by calls or email. The "tavolo merci" took place every month.

The methodology mainly favors the involvement of "intermediaries" actors, such as the Professional Associations of the city logistics: third party transport operators, SMEs, shop owners. In the preliminary phase, the territorial area is the historical city center that will be gradually expanded to the entire metropolitan area. The final objective is to consider the metropolitan-level complex economic and freight transport relations between the inner urban centers and the surrounding territories, as well as the transport dynamics taking place outside the downtown area but affecting the urban contexts.

The preliminary phase was carried out by organizing four thematic meetings. Table 2 summarizes the stakeholders involved (both public and private), the objectives, the program and the results of the meetings.

Table 2. Preliminary phase of the “Freight Board”: report of the meetings

Meetings	Stakeholders involved (public)	Stakeholders involved (private)	Goals and Meeting agenda	Results
Meeting n1. “Professional Associations”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metropolitan City of Bologna, City of Bologna (<i>coordinators</i>) - Emilia Romagna Region - TPER (Regional Public Transport Operator) - Bologna Airport 	Professional associations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Absea</i> (Carriers); <i>Ascom</i> (SMEs) <i>Caab</i> (Agri-food centre of Bologna); <i>CNA</i> (Craft Industries and Small Businesses); <i>Confcooperative</i> (Cooperatives); <i>ConfEsercenti</i>: (Shop owners); Interporto di Bologna	The goal was to inform the board about the current state of the city logistics in Bologna city centre With this aim, the City of Bologna presented the updated figures of freight distribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commercial activities - Freight vehicles circulating - Heavy vehicles’ access to the Limited Traffic Zone - Park spaces for delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To demonstrate the willingness of the Public Authorities towards a collaboration with private subjects in defining a new Plan on city logistics - To build a joint vision on the current state of the urban freight distribution. - To support the work of the board with reliable data - To test the willingness and ability of stakeholders to engage with each other
Meeting n.2. “Professional Associations”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metropolitan City of Bologna, City of Bologna (<i>coordinators</i>) - Chamber of Commerce 	<i>Ibidem</i>	The goal was to train the participants. With this aim, the Metropolitan City of Bologna presented a portfolio of European best practices on city logistics. For each case, the presentation stressed the transferability to the Bologna case, costs and criticalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To broaden the participants’ perspective by benchmarking the local case of Bologna against the European level - To support the work of the board with a set of measures as a starting point for the discussion
Meeting n3. “Shop-Keeper and SMEs”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metropolitan City of Bologna, City of Bologna (<i>coordinators</i>) 	Professional association (<i>Ascom</i> – SMEs)	The goal was to start the discussion on how to improve the performance of the freight urban distribution (from the receivers’ point of view).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To start the discussion on the measures that could be adopted by the SULP
Meeting n4. “Transport Companies (Third Party)”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metropolitan City of Bologna, City of Bologna (<i>coordinators</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperatives of owner-drivers: <i>Linea Blu</i>, <i>NCV</i> - Couriers: <i>BRT</i>, <i>DHL</i>, <i>TNT</i>, <i>FEDEX</i> - Professional associations: <i>Absea</i> (Carriers); <i>Ascom</i> (SMEs); <i>Ance</i> (Building contractors); <i>CNA</i> (Craft Industries and Small Businesses); 	The goal was to start the discussion on how to improve the performance of the freight urban distribution (from the carriers’ point of view). The board comments upon the European best practices (already presented) and their transferability to the Bologna case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To start the discussion on the measures that could be adopted by the SULP

The next steps will start in the first few months of 2018. The expected results are:

- To widen the "Freight Board" to the metropolitan level
- To obtain stakeholders' feedbacks on analysis, alternatives and / or decisions
- To discuss the specific measures of the Sulp creating a good level of acceptance
- To build the basis for sustainability in the years ahead
- To discuss the method for monitoring the Sulp application

4. Conclusions

As freight transport is a multi-stakeholder activity, the only way to obtain a real change in attitude and behavior is through the involvement of all actors and stakeholders in the development of consensus-based strategies. No single stakeholder is capable of finding the most successful solution to the multiple issues that affect freight mobility in our cities. A properly structured and sound decision-making process has proven to lead to successful measures in cases where multiple stakeholders were actively involved (CIVITAS, 2016)

The European project SulpITER defined a methodology for engaging the stakeholders in the decision-making process on urban freight distribution issues. The methodology is going to be tested in seven cities: Poznan (PL), Brescia (IT), Bologna (IT), Budapest (HU), Rijeka (HR), Maribor (SI) and Stuttgart (DE). The case of the city of Bologna is particularly suitable for understanding the practical aspects of the application. In particular, the case of Bologna appears to be innovative in the Italian context because it promotes an integrated mobility planning process on different territorial and thematic levels.

The innovative aspects of the Bologna case are essentially two: an integrated governance between the metropolitan and municipal level and the construction of partnerships with private subjects towards the definition of an urban logistics plan. This approach is expected to bring benefits at different levels:

- Between the different policy makers responsible for the mobility planning of the Metropolitan area, at the horizontal (local - metropolitan -supra-local) levels, to coordinate freight transport planning policies
- At the horizontal level, in a cross-sectorial perspective, between functional departments of the same Authority
- At the horizontal level between authorities and businesses' representatives

The "Freight Board" is the tool identified by the Metropolitan City of Bologna to engage the private parties within the decision-making process. This activity, currently under way, concluded its preliminary phase.

The main weakness of this approach concerns the way of mapping the actors to be involved, that so far has considered only the "traditional" business operators. With respect to the territorial focus, the most critical aspect in up-scaling the metropolitan dimension must still be tackled, and will be carefully evaluated in the following months. The effectiveness of the process will be assessed especially when stakeholders' involvement will address in detail the city logistics measures to be adopted within the Plan. The strength of the approach was essentially the willingness of coordinators to provide training opportunities to the participants, with two important results: (1) to build a joint vision of the current state of the urban freight distribution, and (2) to broaden the participants' perspective by benchmarking the local case of Bologna against the European level.

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