

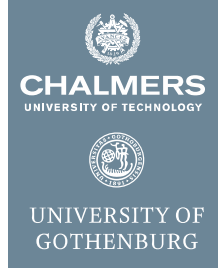
# Collaborative supply chain reconfigurations in the transforming Swedish retail context

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## Problem and Purpose

Urban freight transport is a major contributor to climate change and congestion. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration across sectors, between retailers, municipalities, transport providers, and property owners. Yet many such collaborative initiatives fail to create lasting impact, remaining as short-lived pilots with limited systemic effect.

**Aim:** To contribute to the understanding of conditions for favourable outcomes in urban retail transport collaborations by identifying and analysing the tensions involved.

- What tensions arise in collaborative urban retail transport initiatives?
- How do these tensions interrelate and what are their implications for planning, implementing, and evaluating collaborative projects?

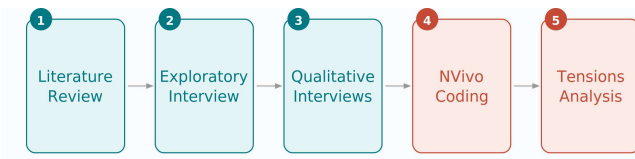


Figure 1: Research design overview

## Realization

Qualitative interview study anchored in current and retrospective collaborative supply chain transformation initiatives in Sweden (2024 – 2025).

**Sampling:** Exploratory interview followed by snowball sampling. Each interviewee had experience from at least two collaborative initiatives.

**Informants:** 12 interviews with participants from universities, research institutes, public funding agencies, the Swedish Transport Administration, private firms (automotive, transport, logistics), and city administration.

**Data:** Interviews (1–2 hrs, Zoom/Teams), observations, and document analysis. All interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim.

**Analysis:** NVivo content coding with iterative theme development. Complemented by systematic literature review using Elicit, Google Scholar, and Scopus.

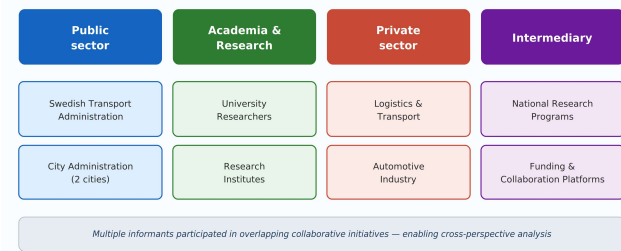


Figure 2: Study context: informant background across Swedish urban freight ecosystem



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## Results

Analysis identified six tensions inherent to collaborative urban transport projects, each involving competing but equally legitimate demands (see figure).

**T1 Unique perspectives vs. shared understanding:** Diverse sector knowledge and viewpoints are a prerequisite for innovation, yet divergent 'languages', expectations, and views on what collaboration means obstruct progress.

**T2 Familiar actor constellations vs. strategic actor selection:** Established trust and shared working history ease collaboration, yet tend to exclude actors who are strategically essential or who own the problem.

**T3 Formal control vs. informal flexibility:** Clear goals, contracts, and mandates provide direction and accountability, yet effective collaboration also requires trust, openness, and willingness to develop beyond what was originally agreed.

**T4 Short-term project goals vs. long-term system change:** Room for experimentation and learning from failure drives innovation, yet project timelines, reporting cultures, and shifting market conditions work against sustained development.

**T5 Commercial viability vs. societal utility:** Actors must see economic gains for collaboration to be sustainable, yet societal benefits are rarely sufficient to justify private investment without regulatory intervention.

**T6 Isolated pilots vs. systemic change:** Bounded pilot projects allow for controlled testing and learning, yet permanent implementation requires political will, regulatory change, and building on prior work.

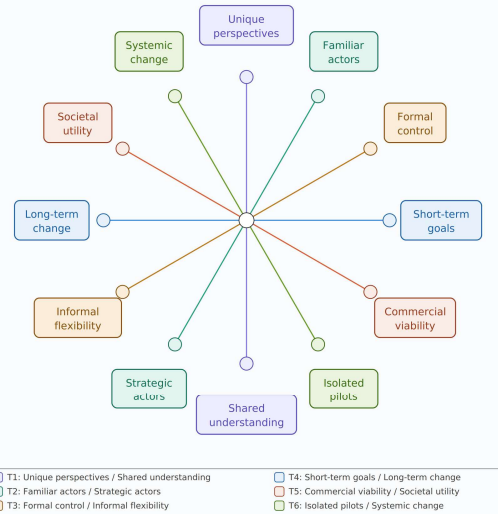


Figure 3: Six tensions in urban transport collaboration

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