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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The BRIDGE project Journal N° 4

Project led by the City of Rotterdam



**JOBS & SKILLS
IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY**



THE BRIDGE PROJECT

BRIDGE addresses the urgent urban challenge of better aligning young people's educational choices with future labour market needs. Rapid transformation of many sectors of the Rotterdam economy has already started to change the skills that are required from the workforce. The associated unprecedented new economic opportunities and challenges will drastically change labour market needs. Consequently, qualification and skill gaps are expected to grow significantly. The target area of South Rotterdam (200.000 inhabitants) has major disadvantages across key socio-economic indicators compared to the rest of Rotterdam and the country. Unemployment is at 21%, 32% of the children grow up in poverty and 39% have parents with no/low formal education. First and second-generation migrants make up 74% of the population in the focus areas of South Rotterdam. In this context, young people often make career choices that lack a realistic labour market perspective. The result is a persistent situation in which although the work is there, many of the 2.000 young people from South Rotterdam annually entering the labour market cannot realistically compete, either in the current, or in the EU vision of a green digital economy.

The proposed innovative urban action ensures that by 2020, 50% of secondary vocational training students in South Rotterdam, will have chosen a career in one of the major growth sectors. This ambitious goal will be achieved through close cooperation between employers, schools, national and local government. Pupils will follow a programme centred on the opportunities relating to the Green Digital Economy major growth sectors. Bringing together all 68 primary schools, 20 secondary schools and 3 vocational schools in South Rotterdam, all pupils and their parents will take part in the programme. This career and talent orientation programme will start in primary school (age 9) and end when students enter the labour market.

Partnership:

- Gemeente Rotterdam
- Metropoolregio Rotterdam Den Haag
- SEOR B.V.
- Hogeschool Rotterdam - Rotterdam University of Applied Science
- RebelGroup Executives BV

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we enter the final year of the Bridge project, attention shifts to the next stage. Although it may not continue in exactly the same format, there are clear signs of its future legacy.

The new city administration remains committed to investing in the effective functioning of Rotterdam's labour market. A new high-level Work Learning Agreement between the City, Lead Industry bodies and vocational schools is evidence of this. The involvement of educational partners from the outset has been a key lesson from Bridge here. So too is the continued focus on Career Start Guarantees (CSGs) which will also be extended to unemployed adults.

This continued commitment reflects the high level consensus of the need to improve the articulation between education and the labour market, particularly in areas like Rotterdam South. Political support has been important for the Bridge pilot, particularly as the UIA timescales have been too short to generate robust impact data relating to the interventions.

This innovation challenge was identified at the start of the project. The absence of impact data at this stage has also affected the project's plans to investigate and pilot alternative finance mechanisms. However, Bridge is supporting the design and development of a digital social impact token (RIKX) which may help improve the functioning of the city's SROI fund.

The difficulty of identifying a neat single unit cost for its social impacts partly stems from the Bridge's wide range of interventions. These continue to be taken up by Rotterdam South Schools in significant

numbers. Chief amongst these is the CSG, with 537 of the target 600 now in place.

The Bridge team continues to work hard to maintain momentum amongst schools and young people. A major event in January 2019 attracted 1,500 students to engage in tasters in the project's key vocational areas. This forms part of an ongoing campaign to heighten understanding of what these jobs involve.

Key influencers in the lives of young people also have an important role to play here. These include teachers and parents. Our March 2019 Expert visit focused especially on them.

A group session with teachers underlined that many feel devalued and under pressure. This dissuades them from embracing 'additional' tasks – particularly when career guidance may not be seen as a core part of their role.

However, these teachers value the additional support that Bridge offers – in terms of people, practical resources and expertise. Like their pupils and their parents, many teachers also struggle to understand the changing world of work, and the project assists with this. It also helps schools work more effectively with parents, through the provision of resources and the specific tools. One school had seen the rate of parental participation increase from 30 to 97% as a result.

The tension between home, school and street life was explored in Journal 3. Many parents in Rotterdam South are migrants with low levels of education and limited grasp of the Dutch language. Combined with long inflexible working

hours, these are major deterrents to engaging in their children's schools.

Yet parents have a key role to play in helping their children make better career choices. Research indicates that there is a 'Golden Window' between the ages of 8 and 12 to do this. Bridge also shows that with tailored tools and support, schools can engage with them more effectively.

However, this work has suggested limitations on the scope for innovation within the education system, perhaps due to target-driven pressures, unfamiliarity with design thinking or simply volume of work.

In addition, this Journal explores the barriers which departmentalized behaviours create for public sector innovation, and the ways in which Bridge has tackled this. It concludes with the following 5 key innovation messages for Europe's cities, from Rotterdam's latest activity:

1. ***Introduce agents for systemic reinvention***

Change agents and boundary spanners play a key role working across organizational lines.

2. ***Create safe spaces for multi-agency collaboration***

Funds like UIA provide spaces to combine talents, take risks and innovate.

3. ***Turn your city authority inside out***

City authorities should let go, devolve and rewire 3rd party collaboration.

4. ***Employ the power of invitation***

Avoid stigma and empower users through open invitation.

5. ***Combine old and new networking tools***

Mix leading edge digital tools with established face-to-face approaches.

2. A BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE

2.1 Introduction

The end of the beginning or the beginning of the end? As we enter the final year of the BRIDGE project, our attention shifts to what's ahead. In this opening chapter we focus on the structural dimension. First, we examine proposed changes to Rotterdam's collaboration model which has been influenced by the BRIDGE experience. Then, we return to the core question of results, sharing developments in relation to impact investment and financial innovation.

In the rest of this chapter we include an update on Bridge interventions, and check out the ongoing work relating to communications. Then, Chapter 2 shines a light on two stakeholder groups who are key to this project's success, but who can be hard to mobilise: teachers and parents.

In our closing chapter we revisit our UIA innovation dashboard to review changes to our risk assessment grid. Finally, and most importantly, we set out five key messages for Europe's cities that emerge from BRIDGE's recent work.

2.2 Securing the Bridge legacy

Bridge is a short-life innovation project funded through Urban Innovative Actions (UIA). Designed to challenge and disrupt, it has acted as a catalyst to stimulate new ways of working between employers and schools. The goal¹ has been to encourage young people in Rotterdam South to make different career choices, which will ultimately improve their life chances.

Such projects, externally funded, finite and working across established silos live precarious and vulnerable lives. Their innovative character is a source of hope for some, a threat for others. Survival is not guaranteed. This is particularly so when the project timescales do not allow for the generation of cast iron results, as we discuss below.

Despite this, the prospects for Bridge 2.0 seem hopeful as we enter the final year of the UIA project funding. Following spring 2018 elections, the new city coalition continues to acknowledge

the importance of investment in the effective functioning of the city's labour market. Specifically, there remains a commitment to making it more inclusive, in anticipation of economic transitions. For Rotterdam this relates to the Next Economy shift.

At the city level, this commitment is reflected in a new high-level agreement relating to work and learning. This was signed in February 2019 between a coalition of 13 partners including the City Authority, Lead Industry bodies and vocational schools. The agreement is a pact between the key players which requires each of them to make specific commitments around three pillars:

- Transitions from school to work
- Transitions between jobs
- Transitions back to work

¹ Details of the Bridge goals and targets are included in earlier journals which can be found on the UIA [website](#)

There are clear signs that the experience of Bridge has influenced this new city approach to work and skills. This is evident from the package of interventions within the agreement. Not only does this include a continuation of the Career Start Guarantee (CSG) developed through the UIA project, it also sees the concept extended to adults returning to the labour market. Bridge's lessons are also apparent in the mechanics of the partnership, for example through the inclusion of the key educational partners from the very start.

But the lasting impact of Bridge may be even more significant in the way it has shaped the working relationship between three separate city departments – Work and Income, Education and Economic Development. Although the relationship between learning, skills and the labour market engages all three, a number of widely-recognised barriers, abbreviated as silo behaviours, has limited their collaborative potential.

Feedback in our expert exchanges with key city stakeholders has consistently identified the importance of EU-funded projects to enable spaces for such collaborative experimental ventures. UIA funding, with its emphasis on risk, innovation and experimentation, is recognised as a specifically important part of this funding ecosystem.

The potential for systemic shift, expressed in this new Agile Agreement, may be one of Bridge's most significant legacies.

So, although the brand and the name may disappear as it is absorbed into the body of city government, the influence and reach of Bridge will continue. As such we should consider this transplant as a success – particularly when the initial risk of the patient rejecting this alien body was potentially high.

But it is not only at city level that the influence of Bridge is evident. Another result of the spring 2019 elections was an enhanced commitment to invest in the renewal of Rotterdam South, through the NPRZ². In the context of the skills debate, this translates into additional investment to extend the school day for students in the area. Specifically, this includes resources to enhance the career guidance offer, which is at the heart of Bridge's activities.

This acknowledgment of the value of Bridge's lessons comes in spite of the fact that the project cannot yet demonstrate results and impact. Some may see this as blind faith. In reality, continued support for the Bridge concept reflects the consensus around the need to improve the articulation between education and the labour market. At the policy level Bridge has not really had to worry about the questions of 'Why' and 'What'. However, it does raise serious questions relating to 'How'.

That it has been able to do so, and survive, is evidence not only that it is well-positioned in relation to the leading wicked issues cities like Rotterdam face, but also because it enjoys political support at the highest level. Without this, such challenging innovations often struggle beyond the pilot phase.

² Funded through national and city-level resources, NPRZ is the organisation responsible for the regeneration of Rotterdam South

HET ROTTERDAMSE LEERWERKAKKOORD

SAMEN MAKEN WE ER WERK VAN!



OVERHEID, ONDERWIJS EN BEDRIJFSLEVEN

Overheid, onderwijs en bedrijfsleven bundelen hun krachten in het Rotterdamse Leerwerkakkoord. De komende zes jaar werken zij samen aan het structureel beter op elkaar aansluiten van vraag en aanbod van werk. Dit doen zij vanuit een gezamenlijke integrale investeringsagenda.



2.3 Making the money work: Impact Investing

The previous section refers to the challenge of gathering robust evidence of impact during the relatively short lifespan of the Bridge UIA project. Journal three focused on the state of play relating to monitoring and evaluation at the end of 2018. This remains the position, although a number of final activities are scheduled for the remainder of this year. These include:

- The second and final monitoring and evaluation report which will
- An employer survey focused on the relevant Bridge sectors reporting in September
- Another Regioplan survey of pupils, students and schools

Although these will add important and useful information on the effects of Bridge, as we have

already explained, a number of technical factors place limitations upon this work.

In turn, these limitations impact upon the ability of project stakeholders to generate additional revenue sources through innovative mechanisms like Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). SIBs are already in operation in Rotterdam, where a sophisticated SROI fund is also well established. As we discussed in Journal 3, Bridge has been exploring the potential to address identified shortcomings in the operation of this through the development of a social coin mechanism. This would allow a closer relationship between SROI contributions and eventual social impact.

Within Bridge, the aim has been to explore innovative finance mechanisms linked to social impact, with the aspiration that these might

generate future alternative income streams for the project. Existing limitations affecting the Rotterdam SROI fund have provided a platform for this work. One of these is the disconnection between the fund contributions and the resulting social impacts. Another is the limited range of ways employers can fulfill their SROI obligations.

Having already ruled out the possibility of an SIB for Bridge, due to the relatively short timescales and the absence of a single unit cost per beneficiary, the project has explored other options. Chief amongst these has been a way to better align the SROI contribution with the end result in terms of social impact. In this final phase of Bridge this has led to the design of a concept labeled RIKX.

The RIKX concept is of a digital social impact token which is recognised by the City Authority and which can be traded between organisations. Drawing upon the model established for carbon trading, it will enable employers to see a closer relationship between their SROI contributions and social impact on the ground. During the pilot phase of the project, a set of employers has been identified together with a group of social enterprises, in which they can invest. Preliminary work is under way to specify the menu of social impact options available and their respective values.

This leading edge approach is being complemented by a much more traditional one, as Bridge seeks to generate finance for its future operations. This involves securing a commitment from 20 large city-based employers to each

commit to an investment of €25,000 per annum over a three year period.

There is some disappointment within the team that this has become necessary. However, on reflection they identify a number of factors which have inhibited the speed of financial innovation developments. One of these is the complexity of the Bridge interventions, resulting in the absence of a neat unit cost, as we have already noted. Linked to this has been the challenge of working with schools, who respond to different policy drivers. Reliance on them for data, for example, has been a learning curve on all sides. In the words of one Bridge partner working on financial innovation:

“In another world we’d have taken on board the autonomous nature of schools and teachers. We would probably have selected specific schools to work with. “

However, it’s important not to regard this as failure. These are important learning points, particularly as they help cement the relationship between key players with limited previous collaborative experience.

In addition to these operational activities around finance and social impact, Rotterdam has very recently established a new strategic platform to better coordinate work in this area. The Social Impact Bureau, now operational with its first staff, has also been influenced in some ways by Bridge, which has highlighted the need for a coherent strategic approach at city level in respect of investment and social impact.

2.4 The BRIDGE interventions

Journal 3 included a detailed examination of the Career Start Guarantee (CSG) in operation. To date, 537 of the target 600 CSGs are in place, with the team confident that it will achieve the

target by October 2019. As we have seen from the earlier discussion around the new Work Learning Agreement, the CSG remains one of the highest profile of the 20 Bridge interventions.

The Regioplan survey results, also discussed in Journal 3, identified the other most popular interventions, which include the Harbour and employer visits. These both featured in our focus group session with teachers, discussed in the next section of this journal.

Schools continue to engage across the range of interventions, with the Bridge team continuing to work hard to sustain these hard-earned relationships. Feedback that their support is appreciated within schools also comes through strongly in the next section.

Collaboration between the Bridge interventions team, the NPRZ team, employers and schools resulted in a highly successful Gaan voor een Baan (Go for a Job) event in January 2019. In a huge arena over two days, 1,500 young people participated in occupational tasters and activities designed to showcase Bridge's key sectors. The interactive nature of the event was one of the keys to its success, together with meticulous

organisation. These were key learning points from the 2018 event, which was less effective.

The enthusiasm of participants was reflected in the social media results which included:

- 7000 retweets
- 11000 Facebook views of the event video
- 47,000 likes on Linked In

The event was also covered on [regional television](#).

The Interventions team are currently following up the success of this event through a comprehensive programme of school visits. They too are building a better understanding of what works best in engaging these young people through experiences like this. As an NPRZ team member noted:

'The closer you get to these kids the better the results. You need to get in their faces using language they understand'



2.5 Helping youth make sense of the Next Economy Labour Market

BRIDGE has consistently identified the importance of positive role models to help influence the career choices of young people in Rotterdam South. This was underlined in Journal 2, which focused on the role of the student mentors. It was also addressed in the examination of the media campaign fronted by Edson da Graça, an ex-teacher turned stand-up comedian who brings energy, humour and street credibility to the role.

The media campaign continues, with an ever-sophisticated approach to ensuring that the right messages reach the target audience. The campaign is widening its repertoire of tools to do this, for example through the use of geo-targeting, which utilises a user's geographical location as the basis for tailored content delivery. Narrowcasting is also being used to pinpoint specific messages at BRIDGE's priority audience based on an understanding of their key values and assumptions.

The professionalism of the campaign acknowledges the media-savvy nature of the target group. These are digital natives who are growing up surrounded by the 24/7 messaging of the most successful global brands. To have any credibility with its target audience, the campaign approach requires a baseline degree of sophistication.

It also needs content which is informed by their perceptions. Amongst these, as we have noted before, are low levels of awareness about some of

the key professional areas in the sectors promoted by BRIDGE. To address this, the project has created a series of short [videos](#) providing insights into these roles. Presented by Edson da Graça, the modern tone of these is engaging and cool, whilst containing important messages about skills requirements, attitudinal traits and income levels. They also challenge gender stereotypes and present positive role models of young people from different backgrounds.



As the UIA project completes, this reflects an alignment in two key elements of its work. The first is the need to identify and understand future labour market opportunities. The second is to package and communicate key messages in ways that young people in South will understand and engage with.

3. INFLUENCING THE INFLUENCERS: PARENTS AND TEACHERS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the work focused on two key stakeholder groups which are often less visible in the exchanges about young people and work: parents and teachers. Both present challenges around involvement in the innovation process.

We have already discussed the issue of departmental silos, where each is shaped by a particular culture and driven by a specific set of targets. Teachers embody this as they are immersed in a classic target-driven environment, often struggling with time pressures and with little space for reflection and experimentation. As for parents, they can struggle to feel part of the education system, especially as their children get

older. They may also be unfamiliar with the curriculum and working of schools.

These challenges are found in most places, but a number of factors exacerbate them in Rotterdam South. Teachers in local schools rarely live in the area, and they may struggle to understand the lives of their pupils, or the fast-changing local environment. Parents are often migrants with low levels of education and a limited command of Dutch, which means they may lack confidence engaging with the education system.

Yet, both groups are crucial to the future career choices young people in South make. Consequently, they are high value stakeholders for the Bridge project.

3.2 Mobilising the teachers

This expert visit included a focus group discussion with six teachers from a variety of schools in Rotterdam South. Some of the key messages from this session are summarised in this short [video](#).

When we focus on schools, it is important to consider the working context within the education system. In many countries, teachers feel under pressure and devalued³. This is exacerbated by teacher shortages and regular systemic and curricular demands from government. For example, these teachers noted the recent legislation to extend the school day for pupils in Rotterdam South. Although positive for

students, they felt that this was likely to increase their workloads.



³ This was a key message from the 2013 OECD [Teaching and Learning International Survey](#)

This pressure does not encourage teachers to devote time and attention to career guidance. Although this group were positive about their experience relating to Bridge, they had many colleagues who were too demotivated to participate, and others who did not see career guidance as part of their teaching role.

Activities outside school take time to organise – particularly if they are done well. These teachers had participated in a variety of Bridge interventions and they were grateful for the support and very positive about the menu of options open to them. They were also complementary about the Bridge contractor who is providing career guidance training in schools, as this helps build their confidence around advising children.

These teachers felt that a key function of Bridge interventions was to stimulate curiosity and enthusiasm amongst the students. They discussed the importance of intrinsic motivation, which was identified as being a key factor to instill. As a primary teacher in the group noted:

“They need guidance in taking a decision. Because if something is decided by someone else, they will never be motivated.”

The question of motivation is complex, especially for young children growing up in disadvantaged areas like Rotterdam South, whose lives can be chaotic and unstructured. Teachers noted that, like many children, they live for today and tend not to speculate too much about the future. However, through exposure to new experiences via Bridge, they might latch onto something that sparks their imagination.

The key role teachers can play here is to recognise ‘that moment’ when children might connect with something potentially life changing. It is teachers who can help them make sense of these

experiences, and the implications for their school choices. This does happen, but group sizes and time pressures remain the main obstacles. The teachers working in schools with student mentors (featured in Journal 2) acknowledged that they played an important role here, spending time with the students and helping them process their experiences. In every way these young mentors are positive role models.

This led to the bigger question of how schools – and teachers – engage with and understand the world of work. A teacher from STC, providing courses linked to the port, noted that they used to be able to guarantee a job for life, but that this was no longer the case. He argued that as schools increasingly struggle to keep up with the fast-changing labour market, their focus is less on technical skills and more on producing people with core skills and the right attitude to navigate a precarious working life. Focusing too narrowly on specific skills risks making graduates redundant in five years time.

Making children aware of these core attitudes that employers want is therefore an important part of schools’ role. This is perhaps more the case now than in the past, particularly in neighbourhoods like Rotterdam South, where there are lower levels of social capital in most households.

This connection with families – particularly with parents – was raised in the session by the teachers. All of them agreed that it was important, but also that schools find it challenging. One participant spoke about the range of different approaches their school had tried to raise levels of parental participation. She now prepares a short report every two weeks, which is sent to parents for a reaction. This is showing results, but it is labour intensive work. She worried that it may be unsustainable, and that other tools – such as the school website – have been less effective.

Countering this, the teacher from STC, one of the pilot schools working with the Bridge parental intervention, agreed that this is a tough area, but explained that they had seen significant improvements. Utilising a set of tools and approaches (discussed in the following section) the school had seen an increase in parental involvement at information evenings from 30% to 97%. Results in other local schools – like De Hef, mentioned in Journal 1 – have seen similar levels of improvement.

Finally, the teachers suggested a number of ways in which the Bridge offer might be improved.

3.3 Where do the parents come in?

Journal 2 referred to the work of Ilias El Hadioui and the tension young people can face between life at home, at school and on the street⁴. The importance of aligning home and school values is supported by extensive research showing the pivotal role of parents in supporting young people's education and their career choices.

Despite this, schools in Rotterdam are not used to working with parents. This is a general issue, but it is particularly so in Rotterdam South, where children and their parents are less likely to understand the Dutch education systems and the pathways into different employment avenues.

For parents, many things can deter their involvement in schools: long inflexible working hours; unfamiliarity with the school system and weak Dutch language skills are amongst them. From the teacher's perspective, barriers can include time pressure and, quite simply, a lack of practical knowledge about how to engage parents.

It is evident that most schools are open to engaging with parents, and see the potential

One, resources permitting, would be to provide a more differentiated offer, acknowledging that whole-class based initiatives will always be quite scattergun. Another was to repeat the same experiences, but with a different focus each time, becoming increasingly more specific. This would acknowledge that the initial excitement and novelty of being out of school sometimes obscures some of the career-related experiences. A third suggestion was for longer internships for older students, who may not get much out of the very short flash interventions.

benefits, but they lack the know-how. To help address this, Bridge has a clear focus on working with them and to helping schools to engage them more effectively. This takes the form of specific interventions supporting schools' work with parents, which includes the design and piloting of processes and the production of support materials for teachers.

The aim is to encourage and support more parents to engage as active partners in their children's career choices. This also involves providing teachers with mechanisms to do this effectively. Two of these have been widely applied.

The first, which was referred to in Journal 1, is the series of three-way meetings between students, parents and teachers. This series of exchanges starts with the child giving a presentation on their strengths, interests and potential future career choices. This then forms the basis of an ongoing dialogue between the three actors at key points in the school year.

⁴ The street/school tension is also explored in our Bridge [animation](#)

The second activity is labeled 'Interactive Homework Assignments'. Here, students are given an assignment to actively conduct at home with their parents, which involves them discussing the child's talents and interests, the available options, and their potential study paths.

Both are meaningful ways to involve parents, which teachers can easily understand and implement.

These interventions are offered to all children, rather than being targeted at those who may need more help. This universal approach avoids the risk of stigma attaching to participants.

What have we learned from this experience so far?

A key message is that although schools may be willing, they often lack the resources and materials to implement change. Perhaps more importantly, there is not a strong culture of innovation and design-thinking in the education system, so this external input is highly valuable. This was underlined by a teacher, working in schools as a change agent, who noted that:

"Schools are not used to working like designers and around innovation. In education this is not common; teachers are often uncomfortable with failure and principles of groupwork and experimentation are alien. These are all key elements of innovation – and this work shows that we have a long way to go if we want to build a movement"

Interesting messages are also emerging about the optimum age when parents can influence

a child's decisions. Research suggests that even though the relationship may be more difficult when they are teenagers, parents' opinions and advice remain important to young people. However, it seems that the age range 8-12 is something of a 'Golden Window' when children are old enough to grasp concepts about their future careers, young enough to make choices within the system, and still comfortable discussing these things with their parents and guardians.

Important messages are also clear about the role of teachers in challenging stereotypical views around gender, as part of these three-way discussions. The ability to spot interest, talent and enthusiasm is a key part of the teaching role. Bridge interventions expose young people to a wide range of occupational areas, and teachers have a key function helping them reflect and process this information. Sometimes this can mean challenging assumptions within communities, and the wider set of Bridge resources – such as the videos mentioned earlier – can help this.

EMI, which is leading on the strand of work with parents, has generated a set of practical materials to support teachers and parents to work together. They are tracking the key lessons and there is a growing volume of positive feedback.

One of the teachers in our group session noted that:

"70% of teachers want to work with parents, but don't know how. These support tools really help us"

4. EMERGING LESSONS FOR EUROPE’S CITIES

4.1 Bringing things together

This final section allows us to revisit the UIA challenges that underpin the city projects and which have formed part of this journal series. It

also provides space to reflect on the most important messages for other cities that are coming from Bridge at this stage.

4.2 Moving the dial

Each of our journals has included analysis of how Bridge fares against each of the set UIA challenges. Using a traffic-light system, we assess the level of risk against each challenge where red is high,

amber medium and green low. Based on the March 2019 expert visit, our latest conclusions are set out below.

TABLE 1: MAPPING BRIDGE AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED UIA CHALLENGES

Challenge	Level	Observations
1. Leadership for implementation	Low	Political support remains strong and Bridge has influenced the city’s new agile education and work agreement.
2. Public procurement	Medium	Minor procurement issues at the commissioning stage of interventions – although the resulting limitations have had an effect on the project.
3. Integrated cross-departmental working	Medium	Work across policy areas remains a challenge. Bridge is a catalyst for change, but the silo-structure remains the norm, limiting innovative behaviours.
4. Adopting a participative approach	Low	High levels of participation evident across stakeholder groups – Agile Agreement suggests rising levels of employer and vocational school buy in
5. Monitoring and evaluation	High	M & E remains a challenge with such a complex long-term project.
6. Financial Sustainability	High	High levels of innovation around investment and social impact, but the UIA timescales are too short to produce evidence required for tools like SIBs
7. Communicating with target beneficiaries	Low	Sophisticated campaign in place – optimising all potential media channels & codesigned with youth.
8. Upscaling	Medium	Upscaling potential low, but much of the Bridge approach is highly transferable

Some of these challenges require some additional comment, as we draw towards the end of the project. The final journal will amplify these, but for now, it is worth noting the following:

- **Leadership for Implementation:**

We have already noted that political support for Bridge remains rock solid. This is despite the fact that the project timescales have not enabled the gathering of robust evidence supporting the project's intervention logic. This underlines the need for such projects to have strong backing at the highest level – ideally across political divides.

The internal mechanism Rotterdam uses to build momentum and consensus for externally-funded projects like this is also an important factor. Many people have remarked that 'No - one sees Bridge as a threat' which also reflects this smart way of securing a strong sense of shared commitment and buy in.

- **Public procurement:**

Bridge has not been affected by public procurement the way some other UIA projects with major capital investments have. However, there is frustration that some interventions

have been too inflexible, as a consequence of the procurement process. Specifically, this means that a service, once procured, tendered and contracted, can be too unresponsive to operational reality once it is being delivered.

As we discuss below, this has led to a growing conclusion that, in future, the city authority should let go more and work in a way where it has delivery partners, rather than contracted suppliers.

- **Integrated cross-departmental working:**

Many of the key people driving and conceptualizing Rotterdam's evolving urban innovation policy are committed to transversal working across departments. They understand the need for greater porosity within these organizational structures and the importance of shared spaces which can support and encourage collaboration. Bridge is highly valued as one of these spaces.

However, the silos remain firmly in place. Although guerilla campaigns like Bridge can catalyse change, shape behaviours and influence policy, they rely on others to complete their work.

4.3 Five lessons for Europe's cities

The Bridge project is rich in important lessons for the many cities across Europe struggling to improve the connection between education and the labour market. It also has things to say about area-based regeneration, which resonate well beyond Rotterdam South. Also, as we have just noted, as an experiment in systemic change in public policy, there are valuable conclusions emerging about how we trigger behaviour change across government departments.

In our final journal, specific focus will be given to the wider legacy and lessons from the Bridge

experience. For now, we would underline the following five points from the March 2019 expert visit.

1. **Introduce agents for systemic reinvention**

Systemic reinvention rarely happens automatically. Large complex public structures are entrenched, well-protected and often move slowly. Bridge has provided many key insights into addressing this, in order to catalyse behaviour change and innovation.

One is the importance of key individuals within the system who, although part of it, are

committed to change. Trusted by their peers and with a deep understanding of their operating systems and cultures, they are comfortable operating in the spaces between structures. It is in these spaces that innovation often takes place.

These change agents and boundary spanners are evident across the Bridge project. Their importance cannot be overstated.

2. Create safe spaces for multi-agency collaboration

This may seem too obvious to say. However, if it matters so much to Rotterdam, one of Europe's most innovative places for public-sector innovation, then it must matter across the board.

Target-driven New Public Management culture continues to prevail across Europe's public sector. Although this promotes efficiency – at least in terms of superficial numbers – it inhibits the cross-sectoral collaboration required to address wicked problems and encourages short-termism. EU-funded mechanisms like UIA and Urbact give a green light for innovation and provide shared spaces to work across established boundaries.

3. Turn your city authority inside out

Increasingly, innovative solutions are less likely to be found through the traditional model of contractors providing a service in response to a tendered brief. Bridge has found that in a fluid and challenging environment, the full scope of the service challenge is only fully understood once that service is operational. However, the rigidity of tendered contracts means that at this point only minor adjustments are possible.

Instead, authorities should be devolving more, letting go and exploring new collaborative

delivery models that transcend the old binary contractual relationship. This assumes a very different collaborative model with delivery providers and a revised approach to service design.

4. Employ the power of invitation

There is growing sensitivity around any sense that particular parts of the community may be receiving preferential treatment. There are also negative consequences for those who may feel singled out for additional support, sometimes leading to a sense of stigma.

Bridge offers good examples of the empowering nature of open invitation. The project's interventions are available to all schools and students in Rotterdam South. As we have seen in the previous section, support is open to all parents with the goal of 100% involvement.

There are many advantages to this approach. As well as being transparently fair, it encourages the willing and is efficient, reducing any administrative burden around eligibility checks.

5. Mobilise a combination of old and new networking tools

A young person in Rotterdam South can physically engage with Bridge in many ways. These might include group visits to an employer, three-way meetings alongside their parents and teachers or through contact with a mentor. They might also participate as one of the 1500 youngsters experiencing the Gaan voor een Baan event.

The variety of these physical touch points with the project respects individuals' preferences, but also the need to continually reinforce the key Bridge messages.

We have seen that these physical experiences are complemented by an increasingly sophisticated repertoire of digital tools. Informed through extensive end-user research, into youth perceptions and attitudes,

they include leading edge features such as geotargeting and narrow casting. These take account of the fact that Bridge is competing for their target market's attention in the face of global brand competition.

4.4 Next steps

In the last important months of the UIA-funded period, Bridge will support a range of significant activities. Some of these have been referred to in this journal, for example the piloting of the RIKX social impact coin, the final sequence of evidence gathering and the securing of the target 600 Career Start Guarantees with Rotterdam companies.

This will be complemented by other activities designed to share and build on the learning

points emerging from the Bridge experience. Amongst these are an exchange dialogue with the UIA MARES Madrid project and an open event to showcase Bridge to external parties taking place in June 2019.

Reflection on these developments, as well as overall project conclusions, will provide the focus for Journal 5.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.



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