

JOURNAL

PROJECT

RUDI - Rennes Urban
Data Interface

📍 Rennes Metropole,
France

TOPIC

Digital transition

EDIT 08 APRIL 2021

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Rennes Urban Data Interface (Rudi) Journal 1: get an update about Rennes project

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Rennes Urban Data Interface (Rudi) aims to develop a data-sharing platform at the local level. In this journal, UIA Expert Simon Chignard highlights how Rudi's twelve partners managed to collaborate despite the restrictions induced by the pandemic and the challenges they had to face during the first phase of the project.

Executive summary: collaboration in challenging time

When **Covid-19** struck in March 2020, the operational phase of Rudi was about to begin. The 12 partners of the Rudi project had signed a partnership agreement. The team prepared the project's first public appearance, which should have taken place in June 2020. The first workshops with inhabitants of the city were planned.

And then, all of a sudden, France went into lockdown for almost two months. And, for the time being, there's no plan to return to a normal situation due to social distancing rules. *How to adapt to such uncertain times? How could we mobilize the local stakeholders and inhabitants when everyone is stuck at home, and large gatherings are prohibited?* As a community, the project's partners had to face these challenges at the beginning of the project. Hopefully, Rudi could still gain from the **sense of community** built in the past years (see "[Rudi, climbing the learning curve](#)"). This **first journal** will testify how Rudi still managed to go forward, adapting to new conditions and deploying new tools and approaches.

The Covid-19 crisis also revealed how relevant and critical are the questions dealt with by Rudi. Take the issue of **consent**: all across Europe, governments and citizens discussed the challenge on the privacy of contact tracing apps. In France, the public debate forced the government to design and launch a revised version of its official application (Tous Anti-Covid).

Take the issue of **privately-held data** and its use for general interest purposes. During the lockdown, the national

institute of statistics used data from mobile phone companies to evaluate the country's population movements. And French telehealth provider Doctolib is one of the most trusted data sources on the vaccination program's progress.

Finally, the crisis questioned **local authorities' role**, be it to deliver personal protective equipment such as masks or, more recently, to organize vaccinations. As a city, Rennes had to adapt itself to changing conditions. For instance, by developing temporary bicycle lanes or setting up a city-wide distribution of masks in spring 2020. Data proved critical to managing such operations. Like with any major crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic entails many perils but also some opportunities. The sense of urgency, and the adoption of digital tools, enable new ideas and modes of collaboration to be tested.

In this journal, we chose to emphasize a selection of the project's **achievements** during the first period. Each of them illustrates how the partners managed to adapt to new conditions and deliver results on three aspects: design (of the platform), knowledge (of people's attitude towards personal data sharing) and engagement (around the project's achievements). We also analyse the different challenges that Rudi faced during this phase.

Design: discussing the main functionalities of the platform

What actions can a citizen perform in his or her personal space? How do I give my consent to share my data? What services are offered to project developers using Rudi data? How can a data producer interact with the portal? These are the topics that Rudi's partners discussed in **adaylong online workshop** in early October 2020. Most of the work is usually done inside each work package, making even more interesting the truly collective time such as this one.

30 participants with various backgrounds contributed to three brainstorming sessions, each one dedicated to a specific user profile: a **citizen** from Rennes Metropole, a **data reuser** and a **data producer**. Using the collaborative online tool Klaxoon and a creative approach designed by Ouishare (one of Rudi's partners), the participants were asked to design the platforms' main functionalities. On average, **140 ideas** were generated for each brainstorming session. After a clustering based on similarities, the functionalities were discussed and prioritized.



Participants to the workshop

This workshop helped gain **key insights** into the design of the platform.

The **need for reassurance** is one of these. Trust of people regarding using the data they shared on the platform is key. It is true both for citizens and data producers from the public or private sector alike. In terms of functionalities, this entails detailed transparency about the platform's aim, the data and the use cases. Users should also have the right to **withdraw their consent** at any moment. Data producers from the private sectors also expressed concerns about competition risks. **Transparency** about who accessed the data and what purpose is a requisite to lessen fears of a competitor using data against a data producer.

Rudi's main focus is on data sharing. Still, this workshop revealed a strong **need for guidance**. For instance, data reusers should be accompanied by reusing data from a legal and technical point of view. *What are my obligations as a reuser? How should I keep data holders informed about my application? How could Rudi help me promote my*

Knowledge: an exploratory survey on the perception of Rudi by inhabitants

The support of the inhabitants of Rennes Métropole for data sharing is one of the conditions for the Rudi platform's success. *How do these citizens perceive the project? Under what conditions and with what guarantees are they willing to share their data?* To answer these questions, **Christine Petr** and **Pascale Ertus** from the **Laboratoire d'Economie et de Gestion de l'Ouest** (University of Southern Brittany) conducted an exploratory survey in May 2020. The researchers interviewed around thirty inhabitants in semi-directive qualitative interviews.

This survey aims to better **understand citizens' perceptions** and expectations vis-à-vis the local public actor and anticipate their adhesion conditions to the platform. The analysis of these interviews (almost 150 pages of verbatims) provides relevant lessons for Rudi and the development of the platform.

What do we agree to share, and with whom? First of all, there is a certain ambivalence towards the idea of sharing data with the community. There is mistrust regarding the use by the local authority of data relating to household consumption (of water or energy, for example) or individual preferences. Therefore, a large majority of respondents are opposed to the use of micro-targeting techniques by local authorities, similar to what can be done online by the major digital platforms. The fear of surveillance and geolocation of individuals, already identified many times in previous studies, is confirmed. However, the proximity to the local authority is likely to moderate or temper this fear to a certain extent.

Why share data with the public stakeholder? The LEGO survey provides a new and original look at citizens' motivations. The collective interest thus appears to be the primary motivation. Citizens are willing to share their data with the public player if its use contributes to the collective well-being and the general interest, for example, in urban planning and development where data can enable better public decisions. Individual interest is a side effect induced, in particular, by the development of new services that make daily life more comfortable. This result is impressive because it demonstrates the **collective's importance** rather than the individual dimension in the adherence to data sharing. It also runs counter to the usual discourse on individual rationality and the search for personal profit, for example, through the monetisation of individual data. Remarkably, none of the participants in this survey makes the **monetisation of their data** a prerequisite for sharing it with the local public actor.

Towards a conceptual model for the platform Christine Petr and Pascale Ertus propose a first model to understand why and under what conditions citizens would be inclined to participate in the platform set up by Rudi. The starting point is **institutional legitimacy**. The local authority is perceived as legitimate to set up such a data-sharing mechanism. There is also a strong link between proximity and trust: the closer the public actor is considered (e.g. my municipality rather than my region), the higher the trust level. Other surveys, for example, on the perception of elected representatives, had already underlined the importance of this notion of proximity. Thus, over the last ten years, 60% of French people have declared that they trust the mayor of their municipality, compared with 25 to 30% for national decision-makers such as the Prime minister (*Baromètre de la Confiance, Cevipof Sciences Po 2009-2019*).

We can, therefore, see a link between institutional legitimacy and **trust**. But the effective participation of citizens is also strengthened by guarantors who provide security and control. The assurance of **privacy** and the **dynamic control of consent** are part of this. This first part of the model describes how citizens can participate for the first time in the Rudi initiative by agreeing to share their data for a defined purpose and project.

The repeated adhesion of citizens to the platform's use and loyalty is conditioned by two other elements: **guarantees** and **commitments**. Cybersecurity, the territorialisation of data storage or the storage period, are guaranteed; they cannot be effectively controlled by citizens, who must rely on the local authority's declarations. Conversely, individuals are in a position to verify that the commitments made are kept. This concerns, in particular, the **control**, by individuals themselves, of the data they share, but also clear and complete information on the public decisions taken based on these data.

Finally, the exploratory survey also makes it possible to identify points of vigilance. The first concerns the **fear of losing social ties**, the fact that the switchover to digital technology will reduce interpersonal relations. The second point of attention concerns the **respect of commitments**: the failure to comply with guarantees and obligations can seriously jeopardise the community's trust if promises and duties are not respected. Finally, the

individuals surveyed strongly expressed their opposition to the commercial use of their data.

In general, the Rudi project is **perceived favourably** by the inhabitants who took part in this survey. The platform is seen as a tool for public decision-making based on localised and contextualised information. In the end, it is indeed the **general interest** and the search for **collective well-being** that is the common goal of Rudi.

Engagement: Rudi's first highlight event

The partners and the Rudi project team organised the **first highlight event** from 30 November to 3 December 2020. **Four days** of presentation and exchanges around the platform's construction for accessing and sharing territorial data of Rennes Métropole. Due to the pandemic, this first edition took place online.

The organizers listed four main objectives: **show** the project's progress, **discuss** the project's main ideas, **meet** the actors working on the project and **develop** new collaborations. Each session was the opportunity to discuss Rudi's key questions: trust and consent, the anonymisation of personal data, the use of privately-held data for general interest usage, etc. Among these four objectives, three are considered totally or partially achieved. There is room for improvement for the last objective - i.e. develop new collaborations.

A total of **267 unique participants** joined this event. 50% were public actors, 40% were companies and associations, and 10% were people from research and higher education. In terms of territorial **reach**, 40% of the participants were from Rennes Métropole, and most of them were known to the consortium. The second edition will therefore have to ensure that it reaches a wider circle of participants.

	lundi 30 novembre	mardi 1 décembre	mercredi 2 décembre	jeudi 3 décembre	
09:00			09:00 - 10:45 / Débat ouvert Les données d'intérêt général : une ressource essentielle pour le territoire	09:00 - 10:45 / Débat ouvert Plateforme, qu'est-ce qui se cache derrière ce mot vaîse ?	Découvrir l'état d'avancement du projet
10:00					
11:00		11:00 - 12:30 / Débat ouvert Donner ses données, à quelles conditions le faire en toute confiance ?	11:00 - 12:30 / Table ronde Les défis de l'appel à projets RUDI	11:00 - 12:30 / Atelier de travail Quel processus d'accès aux données ?	Ouvrir des coopérations avec des nouveaux acteurs
12:00					
13:00		13:00 - 13:45 / Forum Des questions sur RUDI ?	13:00 - 13:45 / Focus Collaborer à RUDI, qu'en pense le citoyen de Rennes Métropole ?	13:00 - 13:45 / Forum Des questions sur RUDI ?	Débattre autour des idées fortes du projet
14:00			14:00 - 15:30 / Atelier de travail RUDI, une plateforme au service des habitants	14:00 - 15:00 / Focus L'anonymisation comme enjeu de transparence	Rencontrer les acteurs qui collaborent sur ce projet
15:00					
16:00	16:00 - 17:30 / Table ronde Plénière d'ouverture : Comprendre RUDI par le regard de ses partenaires		16:00 - 17:30 / Table ronde Gouverner les données à l'échelle d'un territoire : regards croisés		
17:00		17:00 - 18:30 / Débat ouvert Mon rapport au consentement pour gérer mes données personnelles			
18:00	18:00 - 19:00 / Table ronde RUDI, un projet européen				
19:00					

The program of the online event

Quote

Focus on "Rudi in Europe"



UIA expert Simon Chignard hosted a panel on **"Rudi in Europe"**. *How are cities impacted by the European digital agenda - and vice-versa? How could Europe gain from experience at the local level?* We discussed these questions with our panellists **Serge Novaretti** (DG Connect, European Commission) and **Tim Caulfield** (director of UIA - Urban Innovative actions).

Since 2015, UIA helps local authorities to test new solutions and to take risks. The themes are defined according to the European Urban Agenda. The digital transition is one of the topics of this agenda. *"Our focus is on **knowledge capture**: a UIA-funded project doesn't need to succeed, but we need to learn from every project"*, stated Tim Caulfield. The knowledge management strategy aims to disseminate these insights, both at the national and European levels. Hence, UIA contributes to making cities' experiences heard by key decision-makers. *"**Digital sovereignty** is of the utmost importance for the European Commission"*, introduced Serge Novaretti of the DG Connect. The EU helps cities and territories to deploy data sharing platforms and digital twins. Open standards and open source solutions are promoted to avoid vendor lock-in. Asked about the role of cities in defining the European digital agenda, both panellists agreed that they have an **increased influence**. Eurocities and the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights are examples of inspiring organizations where cities can speak their voice about digital policies.

How the project fits in the policy context at the EU, national and regional level

Rudi deals with different topics that are subject to an **active policy debate** in Europe and at the national and regional level, including personal data portability and privately-held data for the public interest.

The first topic is related to the responsible use of personal data and the mechanism of **data portability**. The GDPR (General data protection regulation), which applies in Europe since 25 May 2018, introduced a legal framework guaranteeing the fundamental right to data protection. This regulation proved popular among European citizens: 69% of the EU population above the age of 16 have heard about the GDPR (*Fundamental rights survey, 2019*).

Compared to China or the USA, Europe promotes an **inclusive approach** to digital transition that includes citizens. Still, in the first report on evaluating two years of application of the GDPR, the EU Commission recognized that progress has to be made regarding citizens empowerment. In particular, the right to data portability is said to have *"a clear potential, still not fully used, to put individuals at the centre of the data economy by enabling them to switch between different service providers, to combine different services, use other innovative services and to choose the most data protection-friendly services"*.

Putting **citizens** at the centre of the (local) data ecosystem is also one of Rudi's objectives. By **exploring new ways to manage consent** (in a dynamic approach), the platform could provide a concrete experience of great interest for future public policies.

The second topic of interest is the **access to data collected by the private sector**. Privately-held data could help local administrations to comply with their public-interest mission. **B2G** (business-to-government) **data sharing** is one of the most debated data policy topics both at the national and EU level. In France, the Digital Republic bill (2016) introduced the concept of "*data of general interest*", still the country lacks a formal framework to ease data sharing between the private and public sector. Private companies are worried about potential **competition** issues (the risk that a competitor could use their data) and/or the fact that the public sector could use these data to **regulate** their activities further. All these challenges have been identified by the High-Level expert group of the EU commission. The forthcoming **Data Governance Act** could be the opportunity to address B2G data sharing. The use of privately-held data is of particular interest for cities, for instance, mobility data. In a recent paper, Marina Micheli (European Commission, JRC) defined this topic as "*an emerging field with no established praxis yet*". It is worth noticing that Rennes was among the cities interviewed by the researcher, alongside other cities supported by UIA (Ghent) and European metropolises (Amsterdam Barcelone).

Challenge

Observation

Leadership for
implementation

Challenge level



The project's political support is strong and has been renewed after the local elections in March 2020. The recognition of Rudi by UIA has been central in gaining internal support for the project.

Public procurement

Challenge level



Public procurement is not a central challenge for Rudi, at least during the ongoing prototyping phase. The project team well knows the existing public procurement procedures.

Integrated cross-
departmental
working

Challenge level



The Rudi project team includes three departments. This cross-department collaboration is not new for Rennes Metropole, as it has been deployed on previous projects. Still, this cross-departmental working implies coordinating actors and players with different cultures, objectives and timeframes.

Participative approach
for co-implementation

Challenge level



The participatory approach is in Rudi's DNA. Still, participation beyond the 12 partners is a substantial challenge. The next phase's focus should be on end-users implication and a more diverse range of data producers.


Monitoring and
evaluation

Challenge level




Metrics have been defined to measure the project's success (mainly usage metrics, such as the number of active users of the platform or the number of shared datasets).

Communication with target beneficiaries and users

Challenge level 

Communication with local partners and beneficiaries is identified as a critical challenge. Being able to explain the project's benefits is fundamental to gain trust from the citizens. Hard work has been done during the first phase (including a one-week long online event, the hiring of a dedicated communication officer and the design of a brand-new visual identity). However, there's still a long way to go to engage with beneficiaries of the platform.

Upscaling

Challenge level 

At the beginning of the project, upscaling appeared as a long-term objective that would have to be managed later. Still, it seems that upscaling is already a challenge, not in the sense of deploying the platform in other cities or countries, but instead on diversifying the range and type of data producers involved in the platform.

Leadership for implementation

The **public authority** is, de facto, at the centre of Rudi. Rennes Metropole initiated the project and brought together the partners to prepare and submit the application to the UIA's call for projects. Even today, a significant part of the staff working on the project are public authority employees.

Governance is one of the major issues identified at the start of the project. Let's put forward a hypothesis **what if** the Rudi project's governance was different from the governance of the platform itself? In other words, what if Rennes Metropole, in the management of the platform, played a role in facilitating the exchange of data among the other partners and not a central role? For example, in other European cities (London, Ghent or Barcelona), **third party structures** have been created to manage data exchange between actors in consortia or data trusts.

Interestingly, Rudi also raises the question of **digital governance on a territory**. Rennes Métropole has deployed numerous projects and systems in recent years: a digital twin, a network for the Internet of Things, to name a few. In most cases, the public authority plays a significant role in the governance of these systems. It is as if the **digital public** space were managed in the same way as the physical public space. In the city, the public authority **defines and enforces** urban planning rules, for example. To build a new house, you have to apply for a building permit. However, what we see with the digital public space is made of a vast range of actors and initiatives that are mostly beyond the view and public authority control. Organiser, facilitator, matchmaker: the public administration **roles** in the digital public space are potentially multiple.

Public procurement

Public procurement is a necessary passage for innovation projects. The innovative or even exploratory nature of the solutions deployed is sometimes incompatible with public procurement procedures' constraints and rigidities. Fortunately, this is not a difficulty for the Rudi project, at least for this first prototyping phase. Indeed, the Rudi team masters the existing procedures. Furthermore, the public authority Rennes Metropole has experience of innovative procurement from previous projects. However, public procurement could become a challenge in the next phase. Indeed, software publishers have shown interest in providing solutions for the project. Therefore, it will be necessary to clarify the conditions under which these actors can join the project in the following phases.

Integrated cross-departmental working

The Rudi project core team includes three departments of the public authority. This **cross-department collaboration** is not new for Rennes Metropole, as it has been deployed on previous projects, such as the [open data portal](#) launched in 2010 or the digital twin. The Rudi project also questions the public authority's ability to manage digital projects in a transversal manner. This implies coordinating actors and players with different **cultures**, objectives and timeframes. Interestingly, this coordination issue is also a challenge for the collaboration with the 12 partners of the project. Actors from the private sector are sometimes used to faster decision-making

procedures or have to deal with less control and coordination levels.

Participative approach for co-implementation

Rudi's ambition is to facilitate the sharing of data between the actors of the territory. The project's **great strength** is that it includes public actors, companies, and inhabitants of the territory, each of whom can play the **role of producer and/or user** of shared data. One of the challenges is to bring to the table producers with different profiles in terms of size, the field of activity or location.

Among the 12 project partners, most of the economic actors involved are **companies from the public transport or energy sector**, such as Enedis, GRDF and Keolis. These companies have two things in common: they belong to the **utility** sector, and they are national, even **international**, companies. The utility sector (a term generally used to designate water, energy, waste and public transport management activities) has historically been close to public players and, in particular, to local authorities. Indeed, most of these activities are carried out in the form of public service delegation. It is, therefore, easy to understand why these companies are partners of a project such as Rudi. Their participation is an opportunity for Rudi. They know the territory (since they operate a service there) and, above all, they know the public authority and the way the public sector works. However, the local actions of these companies are also guided by a **broader** national or international **framework**. Indeed, a mobility or energy player, by design, operates in several cities or even countries. The question of data sharing is not only a decision that involves the local teams of these companies but is also determined by the **strategies** adopted at the national level.

However, it is crucial to diversify the data producers' profiles from the private sector by seeking out other economic actors from the territory now. Why? On the one hand, to **enrich the range of data** that will eventually be available on the platform: the more diverse and varied this range is, the richer it will be for service and application developers. And secondly, to have **an open dialogue** on the platform's governance, different actors can express complementary voices and positions and their points of view. A third argument to open up the discussion is the need for a better **representativity** of the different territorial actors. The Rudi project team has clearly identified this point.

Let's take the example of urban mobility or waste management. Alongside the major operators in the field, there is a series of **smaller players** with different legal forms (e.g. associations or cooperatives) and sometimes much more restricted areas of action. It would be interesting to include them in defining the platform's governance to have a **complete vision** of the issues and possible solutions.

Monitoring and evaluation

For the time being, monitoring and evaluation are not key challenges for Rudi. In early 2021, Rennes Metropole launched a call for tenders to **identify a contractor** for the project's impact evaluation. Three objectives have been defined:

- assess, by setting up **indicators** of achievement, results and impact, whether the objectives defined at the start of the project have been achieved at the end of the 3-year project and, if not, under what conditions and within what timeframe they could be achieved,
- help steer the project throughout its duration by shedding light on the **project's management** at key moments,
- highlight the elements of the Rudi project that can be **transposed** to other territories.

Communication with target beneficiaries and users

How to explain, in the simplest possible way, the benefits of a data-sharing platform? It is certainly **not an easy task**. During the first phase of the project, a community of stakeholders was mobilised, notably during the first public event in December 2020. 40% of the participants came from the territory, many of whom had already participated in the actions undertaken by Rennes Métropole in recent years. The challenge of the second phase will be to **diversify the audience**, especially at the local level. The call for projects, launched during the first half of 2021, is an opportunity to communicate concretely on service projects that can be carried out using the platform. In this sense, it will be easier to **communicate on goals rather than means**: *"thanks to Rudi, as an inhabitant of this territory, I could benefit from such and such a service that will improve my daily life"*. The pandemic has dramatically reduced our collective capacity to reach out to the solution's beneficiaries and users. Alternative solutions, such as online conferences, do not entirely replace more **informal** meetings. It is reasonable to hope that, if the health situation improves in a few months, it will again be possible to carry out actions to meet the public and beneficiaries, in a **"Rudi hors les murs"** ("away from base") approach, which the project team has well identified. The last question to address is the **editorialisation** of data. To be fully understood by its reusers, each dataset should come with detailed and comprehensive information about its production process and limitations.

Upscaling

At the beginning of the project, **upscaling** appeared as a long-term objective that would have to be managed later. Still, it seems that upscaling is already a challenge, not in the sense of deploying the platform in other cities or countries, but instead on **diversifying the range and type** of data producers involved in the platform. In that sense, it is more appropriate to speak about "**horizontal scaling**". Several actions have been identified to achieve that goal. During the second semester of 2021, workshops, offline and online events will be organised to diversify the range of actors.

Another way to approach the upscaling challenge is to start **defining a sustainable business model** to sustain the initiative after the initial financial support phase by UIA. That is one of the key points we aim to address in a new format, "**Rudi Live Europe**", a series of online discussion with experts and practitioners at the European level. The first edition of Rudi Live Europe, dedicated to data governance at the local level, was organised in April 2021. Marina Micheli (Joint Research Center of the EU Commission), Olivier Thereaux (Open Data Institute, London) and Marion Glatron (Rennes Metropole) discussed the lessons learned by other European cities, such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, London or Ghent.

Conclusion

The least we can say is that the period from March 2020 to March 2021 has been a challenging one, due to the pandemic. **Collaboration** during such a troubled time is not an easy task. Still, as this journal testify, Rudi's partners managed to achieve key results and we can assure that **the project is on track** with his objectives. During this first year, key **lessons** were learned about the design of the platform, the social acceptance of the project or the need for an inclusive and governance model. The next phase will see the delivery of the first version of the platform, a **key milestone** to make Rudi even more concrete for partners and inhabitants of this territory.

Digital transition

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