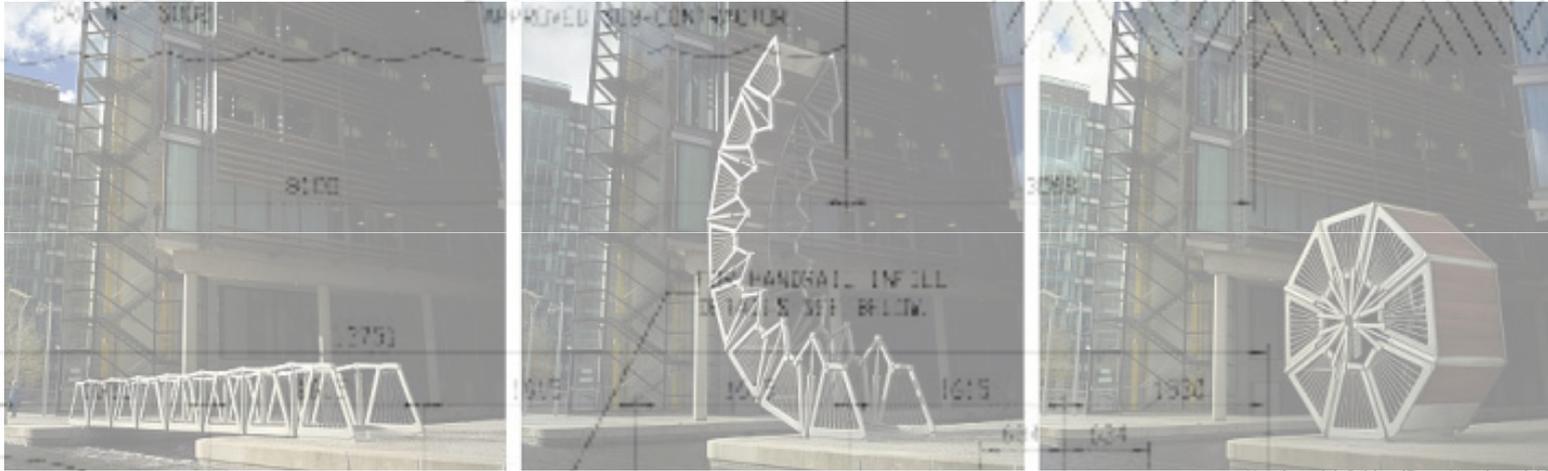


# Bridge Salons on Social Sustainability: (Post-)Heroic Leadership of Organisations, Ecosystems, Societies and Ourselves



Heatherwick-Bridge (Foto: Heatherwick)

**UPDATE (August 2022)**

*Due to the Corona pandemic, we had to postpone the physical “Bridge Salons” planned for the summer of 2020. And we purposefully decided against making them virtual. The nature of our “Bridge Salons” simply requires the holistic resources of fully present human beings.*

*However, it has also become more and more obvious that “Covid-19” made our topics originally planned even more relevant than already before: In times of obvious uncertainty, citizens demand simple and clear messages to release themselves from their own burden to deal with ambiguity and not-knowing. They reward those politicians who do them the favour. Weighing ethical dilemmas is perceived as weakness. Instead, people just want*

*to believe the categorical imperatives and the war rhetoric of heroically acting leaders and hence the illusion of control they promise. Wow! We had expected a lot, but the degree to what intelligent human beings escape their own uncertainty by delegating hope to somewhere in the hierarchy exceeds even our expectations.*

*As soon as possible, we will therefore make another attempt to conduct the physical “Bridge Salons”. The questions around “(Post-)Heroic Leadership” seem to be more crucial than ever! Let’s hope that the “Bridge Salons” can finally take place! We will keep you posted with more details on places and dates. :-)*

*January 2020.*

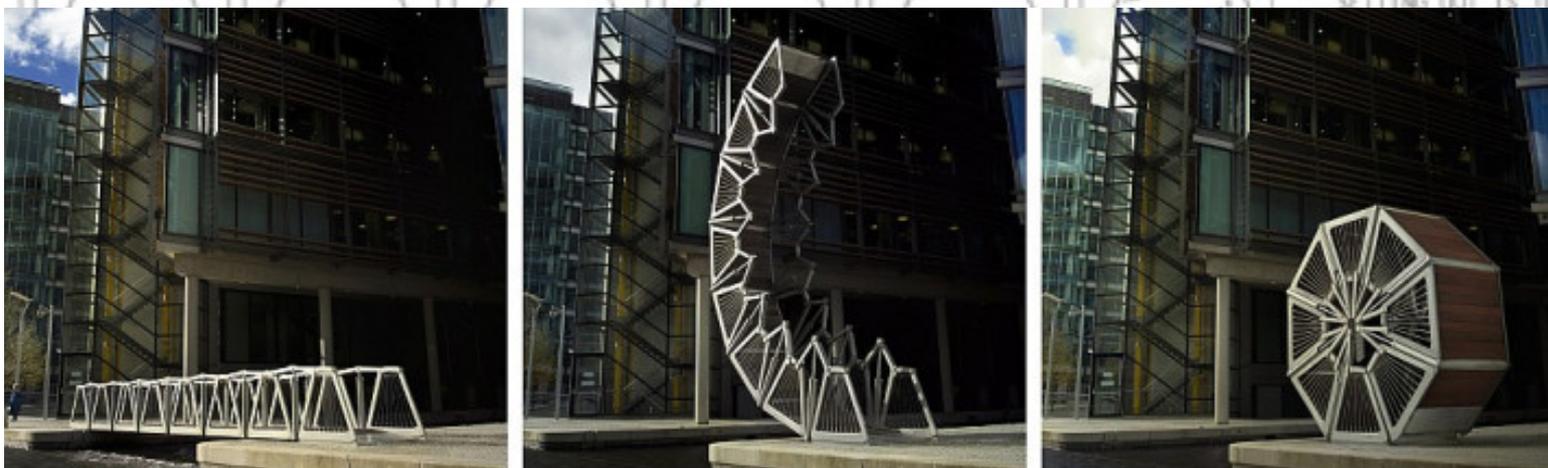
Work.

For quite some time now, management rhetoric has been practicing new vocabulary. Everyone wants to be „agile“ in a „VUCA World“, demands „New Work“ and “Design Thinking”. There are “apps” to measure happiness of the “human capital”. There are “transformations” to multi-dimensional “matrix organisations” and some even dream of “holacracy” as the new ideal. Up until the ever recurring moment of: the annual report! And all of a sudden the organisational chart displayed still resembles the Prussian military administration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Is that only due to a lack of creativity and skill to visualise modern organisational structures? Or is it rather an expression of a deeply rooted devoutness to authority and hierarchy we all still carry? How truly open are all of us for alternative ways of working, cooperating, being-led and leading others, and how much are we truly willing to explore a different way of life in general?

Society.

Somehow our world has become both more transparent and at the same time more confusing in its complexity. In recent years, much has been said and written in how far this plays into favour of populism and neo-authoritarianism. We would challenge all of us: Is it only „the other people“, or don't we all tend to heighten certain individuals and their presumed promises? Has anything changed over the millenniums when looking at the dynamic of personality cults for plebeian tribunes of all colours? Aren't we all followers of alleged heroes (and heroines), eagerly projecting our own yearnings and bourgeois dreams to them? And have we truly realised that a society needs more than just the sum of its individuals? Or how else can one explain the growing analphabetism around the basics of systemic thinking and how all things are somewhat connected? What about our own citizen skills?

## ***Bridge Salons on Social Sustainability: (Post-)Heroic Leadership of Organisations, Ecosystems, Societies and Ourselves***



Heatherwick-Bridge (Foto: Heatherwick)

Our Intention.

To approach these non-trivial questions, we dusted off the paradox-proven thinking model of “post-heroic leadership”. It spells out a constant trade-off we find ourselves exposed to. On the one end: “Special times need more than ever hero(ines) to break off social norms to allow for real disruption”. And on the other opposing end: “It is exactly this type of toxic heroism which prevents true diplomacy, honest collaboration and effective sustainability”. We set out to address this ambiguity with a number of (physical) “Bridge Salons on Social Sustainability” with different focus topics around “(Post-)Heroic Leadership of Organisations, Ecosystems, Societies and Ourselves” in the next months, culminating in a post-heroic conference format (with 48 participants in the Frankfurt Bahnhofsviertel) which will be based on the (hopefully) diverse, fresh and reformatory ideas produced in the „Bridge Salons“.

# **Bridge Salons on Social Sustainability:** *(Post-)Heroic Leadership of Organisations, Ecosystems, Societies and Ourselves*

*“How can the business elite learn democracy competence anew?”*

*“TopSharing instead of single heroes at the top.”*

*“Blind spots in top management: When our very own heroism prevents transformation!”*

*“New heroes for the world?!  
A journey.”*

*“Digital transformation: It is the human being, stupid!”*

*“Top management teams today: Why the yearning for heroes makes us hire the wrong and fire the right individuals!”*

*“Anachronistic start-up world:  
Systemic constellations as disruption.”*

*“Private Equity: Value creators or drivers of a disintegrating world?”*

*“All for me and even more of that: Is it possible at all to upgrade our economic system without changing our own status-driven conduct of life?”*

## **What is a „Bridge Salon on Social Sustainability“?**

Our “Bridge Salons” are no networking events in one’s own filter bubble, nor about deal-making. They are not about self-referentiality in a bourgeois environment and also not about feeling more important among other important people. Rather, we are stepping out of our familiar societal roles and our comfortable routines. To make this happen, everyone is contributing his or her competences and capabilities practicing distinct listening and experimenting with changing perspectives. Depending on the topic, there are 8-10 participants who we invite personally while practicing the art of “selective diversity”. All participants have in common that they want to co-create our society - even if it might not be personally beneficial in the short term.

*„Bridge Symposium“  
„(Post)-Heroic Leadership:  
Challenges and Manifesto“*