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AGILITY FOR AN ACCELERATING WORLD: CAN GOVERNMENTS KEEP UP?

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**AGILITY FOR AN
ACCELERATING WORLD:
CAN GOVERNMENTS KEEP UP?**

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INTRODUCTION

In a fast-moving world, governments need to become more agile to rethink public service and envision institutions fit for new challenges and disruptions. How will innovations in technology affect governance? What are the opportunities presented, or challenges anticipated – are they fundamentally different from those in the past? Can they be dealt with through the same governance mechanisms or do we need to construct different mechanisms? What tools do public servants need to master to be fully equipped?

The 2019 Annual Foresight Retreat of the **Public Sector Strategy Network**, held at Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg, Austria, answered all these questions and more. The Public Sector Strategy Network equips governments to tackle complex challenges through improved foresight, innovation, and implementation. Co-created with senior leaders from around the world, it is building a mutually-supportive coalition of individuals and institutions on the frontline of digital, financial and societal disruption, promoting effective public leadership and strategic communication.

This year's Annual Foresight Retreat, entitled *Agility for an Accelerating World: Can Governments Keep Up?*, saw 30 senior public sector leaders from 19 countries gather at Schloss Leopoldskron, in Salzburg, Austria, exploring these challenges, exchanging their own experiences with each other, and enhancing international relationships across the strategic policy community. As ever, these senior leaders were able to speak openly among peers, focusing on the major disruptive forces confronting governments over the next 10-20 years. The program examined effective planning strategies to face those disruptive forces. Case studies shared in Salzburg are summarized in this report, together with interviews with several of the Network members.

Following on from the retreat in Salzburg, network members from both this and past programs will devise year-

round opportunities for practical exchange and follow-up among involved countries and institutions.

The annual invitation-only retreat is organized by Salzburg Global Seminar and supported by the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court, in partnership with Apolitical. Additional country and institutional partners include the Australian Public Service, the Privy Council Office of Canada, the Irish Public Service, and the Civil Service College of Singapore, with additional programmatic support from Nesta.

The Annual Foresight Retreat is held under the Chatham House Rule, which has been adhered to in this report, with all attribution provided with approval. This report consists of:

- A **summary** of the discussions at the Annual Foresight Retreat accompanied by:
 - Short case studies and examples shared in Salzburg;
 - Links and resources provided by Apolitical;
- A longer **case study** provided by the Civil Service College of Singapore;
- A series of **interviews** with Public Sector Strategy Network members conducted by Salzburg Global Seminar; and
- A **conclusion** from Salzburg Global Program Director Charles Ehrlich.



FORESIGHT RETREAT SUMMARY

By **Amelia Axelsen**, Apolitical, with additional reporting from **Megan Clement**

AGILE WORKING

“Not all forms of agility are equal.”

Public servants continuously trial new ways of working. The “agile” framework for software development and product management, which originated in the tech sector, is gaining traction. Although technology is revolutionizing the way we live and work, Public Sector Strategy Network members in Salzburg expressed that it can be difficult for government to be as innovative as the private sector due to constraints ranging from budgets to public sentiment.

Agile methodology reduces risk by enabling civil servants to make incremental improvements to reduce waste and figure out what is not working so that projects can be scrapped without incurring huge losses. There is less of a political incentive to take risks on innovative solutions in government; as public servants are trialing projects with taxpayers’ money, failures can garner unwanted attention that projects an image of government incompetence or instability.

However, the short timescales involved in agile working allow plenty of room for experimentation and failure, fostering collaboration and continuous feedback. Network members said that agile working provides flexibility for public servants experimenting with new methods and technologies while the quick responses and constant feedback built into agile working allow them to react effectively.

APOLITICAL RESOURCES

Amelia Axelsen, *Explainer: What is agile working for government?*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/what-is-agile-working

Alex Benay, *Leadership Lab: How to be an agile leader*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/alex-benay-leadership/

Megan Clement and Amelia Axelsen, *Agile working solves Chile’s toughest challenges – fast*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/agile-working-solves-chiles-toughest-challenges-fast/

Stephane Vincent, *Meet the French innovators pioneering agile, experiments and user-centrism*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/meet-the-french-innovators

CASE STUDY

HOW AGILE WORKING SOLVES CHILE’S TOUGHEST PROBLEMS – FAST

Chile’s Government Lab solves high response wait times

Every two weeks, a member of Chile’s Government Lab sits down with an advisor to the president to decide what the country’s most urgent problem is. Then, they try and find a new way to fix it.

This fortnightly process, in which tasks are prioritized by urgency, is one part of the “agile” approach to working through problems. Based on breaking down complex problems into simple tasks with basic deliverables, it puts users at the forefront – something that can be uncomfortable for traditional models of public service.

Recently, the team from the Government Lab and the President’s office decided that the most pressing issue was the country’s national health insurance system – a notoriously complex part of any government.

At FONASA, the state health insurer, waiting periods for answers to basic queries were spiraling to a month at a time for users, and there were significant problems with unpaid debts. The insurer covers 14 million Chileans, more than three-quarters of the population.

“We set up a standard that 85% of cases had to be solved immediately,” said Roman Yosif, director of the Government Lab, adding that more complicated queries had to be answered within 24 hours.

To do that, they needed to talk to the people who rely on FONASA to help cover their health costs. In this case, the Government Lab surveyed 1,000 health service users before designing a basic chat tool that allows FONASA workers to provide quick-fire answers to simple customer queries.

The team created a “knowledge base,” which contains answers to the most frequently asked questions at FONASA. When a worker in a branch office anywhere in the country is faced with a question from a user, they can now use the chat tool to get a quick answer drawing from the knowledge base.



POLICY LABS

“Don’t just pick one method; figure out which one actually answers the question you are trying to solve. Are you using a sandbox because it’s right or because you’ve heard the term before and other people are doing it?”

Denmark became a trailblazer for government innovation nearly two decades ago with the inception of MindLab, the world’s first policy lab. Thomas Prehn, the architect of Mind Lab designed it to foster a new, innovative culture within government and provide unconventional tools to solve policy problems. MindLab has since been replaced with Denmark’s Disruption Task Force, and policy labs have emerged all over the world.

For example, the United Arab Emirates has begun experimenting with legislation and artificial intelligence in their policy lab. Canada has solicited the help of students to solve complex policy problems through a data-driven contest. Some governments are even providing cash prizes for technological developments that best address a challenge in a particular policy area.

Policy labs are being used as a way for governments to experiment with novel ideas that can help solve complex policy problems. The mantra of such organizations is: “learn while doing.” New tools such as behavioral insights, hackathons, digital technologies, and public-private partnerships are now being trialed and tested as strategic solutions for projects across government.

These labs offer the best of two worlds: the creativity, speed, and agility of a startup, which is then backed by the experience, money, and power of an established institution, such as the civil service.

CASE STUDY

HOW NUDGES ARE IMPROVING TEST SCORES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Western Cape used behavioral insights to help kids excel in school

The term “growth mindset” was coined by Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck. It represents the belief that someone can improve their abilities over time, as opposed to a “fixed mindset,” in which people believe they are either naturally good at something or they are not, and there is not much to be done about it.

A program designed to switch student mindsets from fixed to growth was recently rolled out in South Africa’s Western Cape province as part of a study by the World Bank, the University of California, and the provincial government. The study involved more than 1,000 students across eight high schools, covering grades 8-10, and 12 primary schools, covering grades three and four.

Ammaarah Martinus, who works on policy and research at the Department of Premier in Western Cape, says the program was designed to make students more resilient in times of difficulty.

As part of normal schooling, “we teach kids about literacy and numeracy,” she said. “But we don’t teach you about the other part of it: how do you build resilience? How

do you build grit? How do you respond to challenges?”

To test whether training children to have a growth mindset could actually improve results, researchers split children into two groups.

The control group were shown National Geographic videos, while the test group watched a set of five three-minute videos about building resilience, starring two monsters. After the videos, the students were asked questions about what they'd seen.

In high schools, children who had been taught the growth mindset showed an 11% improvement in their final math grades that year, and a 17% increase in a subsequent assessment.

Their success at the high school level was enough to convince the provincial government in Western Cape to roll the program out to all 160 high schools in the province, Martinus says.

APOLITICAL RESOURCES

Megan Clement and Amelia Axelsen, *How giving students a growth mindset can improve test scores*
https://apolitical.co/solution_article/encouraging-nudges-are-improving-test-scores-in-south-africa

Jennifer Guay, *From research labs to data training, here's how to bring evidence into policy*
https://apolitical.co/solution_article/bring-evidence-into-policy/

Alex Ryan, *The history of innovation labs: how rebels came to shape policy*
https://apolitical.co/solution_article/the-history-of-innovation-labs-how-rebels-came-to-shape-policy/

Apolitical, *Government Innovation Lab Directory*
<https://apolitical.co/government-innovation-lab-directory/>





CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

“Make the hard choices – nothing will get done if you take everyone’s opinions into account.”

In Reykjavik, Iceland, the city council votes on shortlisted policies made by citizens through an online forum. Citizen engagement initiatives are being used by governments around the globe to promote transparency, engender trust, and give citizens a voice in the policymaking process.

As one Network member in Salzburg remarked, citizen engagement facilitates a dialogue between citizens and public servants, giving residents the opportunity to take ownership of the policies that directly affect their lives.

In order to create a successful citizen engagement initiative, the consensus among the group in Salzburg was that public servants need to focus on three central constructs: curation, purpose, and representation (CPR).

Public servants need to ensure that they are curating citizen engagement processes in a structured way that facilitates open sharing of ideas in a safe environment. Before undertaking a citizen engagement initiative, public servants need to declare the purpose of citizen collaboration and clearly communicate the intended outcomes. Lastly, public servants need to ensure that there is an inclusive group of participants to guarantee that there is representation from all facets of society.

EXAMPLES

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Costa Rica is harnessing citizen engagement to fight climate change. Grassroots organizing has both popularized environmental policies and driven decision-makers to rally behind them with citizens’ ideas integrated into governments’ narratives. Today, some 98% of the country’s energy comes from renewable sources.

Portugal has announced the world’s first participatory budget on a national scale. The innovative project will let people submit ideas for what the government should spend its money on, and then vote on which ideas are adopted.

HIGHLIGHTS

FROM SALZBURG:

- Try to engage as many people as possible, but manage your expectations;
- Target who you want to speak to: going broader doesn’t necessarily mean going deeper;
- Ensure that you reach a diverse group of people;
- Know exactly what you’re trying to achieve before beginning a citizen engagement project;
- If you pose problems and solutions to citizens, ensure you are capable of delivering on the outcome; and
- Remember a lot of people will have entrenched opinions, but it’s important to listen.

APOLITICAL RESOURCES

Tiago Peixoto, *We need good data – not more data – to involve citizens in policymaking*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/tiago-peixoto-citizen-engagement-participatory-budgeting/

Mary Leong, *Civic networks: a new paradigm for online citizen engagement*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/civic-networks-new-paradigm-online-engagement/

PUBLIC SERVANTS ON SPEED

“Public servants need to anticipate problems and find the right tools. Teams need to be open-minded to change their thinking, flexible to work with and across other teams, and activate and be agile with the private sector so they gain the knowledge and know-how.”

Public servants are required to tackle complex problems – from climate change to inequality – in a rapidly changing and uncertain policymaking environment. As the private sector continuously streamlines ordinary tasks with technological advancements, citizens expect the same level of services from government. People can hail a ride, order food, and pay their bills at the touch of a button – so they are often wondering why they cannot use or complete government services online in a similarly simple manner.

The group consensus was that it is difficult for the public sector to compete with the private sector for top talent that can create new technology for government services. Often, public servants are lacking the digital skills to transform services or undertake new projects. One Network member suggested that public-private partnerships and more integration between government departments are one way to bridge the divide. Collaborative networks encourage creative approaches to build new solutions. Public servants need to be armed with new tools, skills, and procedures to adapt to the digital world – public service training and education is one way to solve it.

EXAMPLES

GIVING PUBLIC SERVANTS THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

- **Canada’s Free Agents:** The Free Agent program gives Canada’s most innovative civil servants the freedom to choose which projects they work on and allows them to change departments every six to 12 months, depending on their skills and interests.
- **Argentina’s Design Academy:** The government-run Design Academy (LabGobAR) has trained more than 20,000 public servants in skills and disciplines integral to the future of government work, from human-centered design and artificial intelligence to evidence-based policymaking. For every class a public servant takes, they earn points, which are a prerequisite for promotions and pay raises.
- **Dubai’s tech campus for government:** In an industrial warehouse in the emirate’s vibrant art district, inspired by tech campuses like Googleplex, civil servants from different agencies gather to reimagine public services through design thinking and other innovation techniques.

APOLITICAL RESOURCES

Apolitical, *The digital government atlas: the world’s best tools and resources*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/the-digital-government-atlas-the-worlds-best-tools-and-resources/

Aare Laponin, *How to build digital government*

https://apolitical.co/solution_article/how-to-build-digital-government/



CASE STUDY: KEEPING PACE WITH GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES IN SINGAPORE

By **Whee Jim Yeo**, **Aaron Maniam**, and **James Low**, Civil Service College, Singapore

In Singapore, the government harnesses technology to keep pace with external changes, while attending to the demands of the citizenry. The Smart Nation initiative builds on previous efforts, like e-Government in the 1990s, to take Singapore's economy and society into the future. The Digital Government Blueprint initiative attempts to better serve citizens in a personalized manner, beyond delivering efficient public services. It is an aspiration to be high-tech and high-touch.

Government in Singapore experienced five transformative shifts since our independence in 1965. Each focused on particular dominant concerns:

- Providing basic services to citizens (1960s);
- Becoming cost-efficient that involved industrialization and opening up to multi-national companies (1970s);
- Establishing institutions to entrench efficiency in response to internal and external volatility (1980s);
- Steering institutions to be adaptive and innovative, ready to navigate growing complexity and uncertainty amidst globalization and accelerating change (1990s); and
- Moving towards governance that is relational, empathetic and engaging to deal with diversity of citizen and stakeholder expectations (2000s).

These are by no means “stages” in a deterministic or linear sense. They are instead over-riding issues and concerns that preoccupy the government. Phase 2 added to, rather than replaced 1, and so on. As a result, the demands on government

have grown and intensified over time, and public sector agencies today grapple with a complex mix of all five sets of issues. Currently, the government faces the following major priorities:

- Making difficult trade-offs against the backdrop of limited resources;
- Being creative to find new sources of ideas, innovation and productivity;
- Harnessing the potential of private and people sectors to better serve citizens;
- Constantly adapting and innovating, while preparing for the future; and
- Working beyond “hard” policy options to embrace “softer” aspects and enhance service delivery to citizens.

The Smart Nation effort reflects this current mix of policy challenges. It is not only a response to inherent scarcity of resources, but also a quest to harness the potential of digital technology to enhance the service delivery to citizens.





SMART NATION: CATCHING THE NEXT WIND

Building up the ICT infrastructure and developing digitally literate human capital help to position Singapore to catch the next wind of growth.

Even as Singapore pulls in leading technological companies with cutting edge technology such as Ant Financial, Dyson, Facebook, Google, Huawei and Microsoft, the government continues to invest in attracting tech giants, facilitating scale-ups of medium-sized firms and seeding start-ups through incubators like Block 71, and offering sandbox regulations for experimentation. The Economic Development Board continues to play a leadership role in engaging larger tech players, as part of efforts to bring in major economic actors – a role that it has been performing since 1963.

An agency established in 2017, Enterprise Singapore, amalgamated the efforts of SPRING Singapore that focused on the domestic needs of small-medium enterprises, and International Enterprise Singapore that focused on the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises. This paves the way to meet the needs of such firms in a more integrated and targeted manner.

To prepare the next generation of digitally-ready human capital, education harnesses technology extensively from use of IT platforms to seeding interest in coding, robotics, 3D printing, and so forth. Digital courses form a large proportion of offerings by SkillsFuture Singapore, an agency focused on re-skilling the workforce and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT BLUEPRINT: PERSONALIZED AND ENGAGING PUBLIC SERVICES

Digital Government harnesses technology to provide personalized and engaging public services to connect with citizens and cater to their diverse needs and expectations.

Some agencies are progressively rolling out mobile apps to solve everyday problems and employ user-friendly designs, such as municipal services and paying for parking. Injecting a “fun” element by layering gamification over technology nudges citizens towards healthier lifestyles in the 10,000 step challenge by the Health Promotion Board.

To bridge the digital divide between the haves and have-nots, the government provides complementary IT infrastructure such as free desktops and internet access. Older segments of the population are taught IT skills through SkillsFuture courses at nearby community clubs. Efforts are also made to engage with these senior citizens on the Smart Nation initiative, such as the video “My Smart Ahma (grandmother)” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiYyvxTHnps>

FIXING A WORKING WHEEL

The Smart Nation story is one of constant effort, agility, and adaptation. Singapore has been adopting technology for many years – starting with the computerization drive of the 1980s – so we have started from a high base. The challenge is to ensure that today’s digital solutions adequately address citizens’ needs and pain points, and provide sufficient incentives to adopt them.

For instance, Singaporeans have been less than enthusiastic about mobile retail transactions (such as QR code payments) because of the widespread availability of automated teller machines. Petty traders and hawkers also

prefer cash transactions as a result of the costs incurred for such transactions. As financial institutions are unwilling to absorb costs to fuel uptake, should government draw on taxpayers’ money to encourage uptake?

Even Parking.Sg was adopted only 18 months ago, after many years of paper coupons that were not necessarily the best solution, but which did not involve pain points of particular magnitude. This has been largely a challenge in the psychology of behavioural change, not just the analytical aspects of policy formulation or the mechanics of implementation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- After the government-led computerization drive in the 1980s and e-government in the 1990s, how can the government nudge citizens to embrace our Smart Nation initiatives, while continuing to deliver public services in a relational and empathetic manner?
- The Singapore government has steadily built up trust with the citizenry through consistently delivering efficient and reliable public services to citizens. How should the government tweak its compact with citizens in this digital age? Can Public Service be “high-tech” and “high touch”? For instance, our public housing agency, the Housing and Development Board has been automating and moving simple transactions online, while moving its officers to handle complex “high touch” cases like hoarding and neighbour disputes that only affect a handful of citizens - how does this affect government-citizen relations? Related to this issue is how we need to quickly upskill and deploy public officers away from routine transactions to handle complex “high touch” cases?
- As we move public services and citizen data online, we open ourselves more to increasingly sophisticated cyberattacks, and unauthorized access. How can the Public Service grow citizens’ trust in the government, against the backdrop of increasingly sophisticated and frequent cyberattacks?
- How can Singapore find the space – both physically and figuratively – to plan and experiment with creative destruction? In countries where space is not a constraint, brand new towns can be built from scratch to trial the latest technology with roads and infrastructure for autonomous vehicles. Could Singapore’s legacy advantages ironically inhibit the uptake of technological advancements? For instance, the growth and network of ATMs, NETS (Network for Electronic Transfers that was rolled out in 1985), and credit card facilities combined to help establish Singapore’s place at the apex of the financial world. Will these legacy advantages end up holding some of us back from embracing greater use of mobile banking and payments? How should we handle our legacy advantages?



Whee Jim Yeo is Institute Director, Aaron Maniam is Senior Principal Researcher, and (Dr) James Low is Principal Researcher, from the Civil Service College, Singapore. All views in this paper are the authors’. They do not represent the official views of the Civil Service College.

This case study was prepared for discussion at the 2019 Annual Foresight Retreat of the Public Sector Strategy Network in Salzburg and is not to be cited without the prior permission from the authors.

INTERVIEWS WITH NETWORK MEMBERS

By **Martin Silva Rey** and **Oscar Tollast**, Salzburg Global Seminar

RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION AND REACHING A DYNAMIC BALANCE

Leading policymaker Aaron Maniam analyzes Singapore's approach toward innovation and digitalization

“There’s a responsibility to the now... in terms of the current system and how it functions. There’s a responsibility to the future in terms of innovation, and there’s a responsibility to what could be better in terms of stewardship... I think we need to have all three of those in dynamic balance with each other,” reflects Aaron Maniam on the role of public officers. A founding head of the Centre for Strategic Futures at the Prime Minister’s Office in Singapore, he has occupied several important positions in his country’s public administration.

“I found that in order to represent Singapore well, I had to understand the whole of our governance system, our ports, our education, the financial services we’ve got, our manufacturing, and make sure that I could represent that well to a whole range of different people,” Maniam said.

Singapore, a small island city-state in Southeast Asia, gained independence in 1965 from Malaysia and has always been governed by the same political party, the People’s Action Party. The country went on to become one of the original Four Asian Tigers and has evolved into a highly developed market economy, supported by a public administration that seeks constant innovation.

Committed to continuing that modernization, Maniam while in Salzburg shared his recent experience working on the Smart Nation Program: “A really comprehensive way of taking on digital technology and seeing how it will affect the economy and businesses, society and citizens, as well as government itself...”

“Those three prongs are what’s guiding our current transformation process. I would say it’s a situation where we will probably never arrive because the idea is that the minute you finish one set of transformations, there will be new tech out there that you need to adjust to.”

Technological improvements may be uneven in different areas of the state. However, he does not see this necessarily as a problem, since various agencies can present different requirements.

“What we’ve done is we’ve tried to make sure that digitization is meaningful to people in all the different

agencies that they’re in... For some parts of the system, in the education system, for instance, using computers in schools, using apps for education might be really key for what they’re trying to do... Whereas if you’re at the foreign service, then actually a website that allows people to apply for visas, to report losses of passports might actually be sufficient...”

“I think we are trying to leave it up to agencies to figure out what the best digitalization plan is for them, rather than force it down. But what we do do is give them broad guidelines, which is to say, ‘If you can use technology rather than manpower, do that. If you can move things from paper to digital, try and do that.’ And then, how they go about doing it is something that they actually work on themselves.”

The question arises on whether the replacement of humans by machines hurts the labor market. Is it easy to replace civil servants with robots and machines that can do their job better?

“Yes and no,” says Maniam. “We don’t think of it so much as a zero-sum game where if you bring in machines that people will definitely have to be replaced... We believe much more in augmentation, whereby when you bring a machine in, the mix of machines and humans generates new complex types of jobs that need to be done. The idea is that we move people to more complex jobs – kind of upgrade them rather than get rid of them.”

“I’ve never seen any ministry that transforms digitally, where they’ve had to say ‘Okay, we’re gonna have to lay off people.’ They invariably find that they need more people than before, but the demands on those people are much, much greater... I think those who are willing can always be, will always be helped and supported to find ways for them to do new jobs...”

“We’re kind of removing what I would call the 3D-type jobs – dirty, dangerous, and dreary... Routine-type jobs. We’re trying to eliminate those and make the jobs much more interesting, much more safe, and ones where there is actually value and skill in the individual’s role.”

But, as Maniam points out, improving the quality

of public administration cannot rely on technological breakthroughs alone.

“High tech and high touch is really how we balance between both the technical and the human requirements of a government system. High tech means we need to use technology wherever possible to enable [us to] streamline

and make more efficient the existing processes. High touch means we want to make sure that those processes are designed around actual citizen needs, and not just responding to what the bureaucrat thinks citizens might want. What that looks like is very different in different agencies.”



THIS IS ONE WAY CHILE'S GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGING INNOVATION

Roman Yosif, executive director of the Government Lab in Chile discusses the initiative's impact on public administration

“I had the motivation that, at some point, my professional career would be linked with public policies since public policies can have an impact at the national level in a much stronger way than when you work in private business.” That motivation turned into reality when Roman Yosif was hired by the Chilean government to launch what's thought to be the first government lab in Latin America. After five years, he now leads Laboratorio de Gobierno.

So, how does the Chilean Government Lab work?

“At first, we had a series of very standardized programs that we went out to sell. And now what we do is a logic of agile consultancy in innovation projects, where we capture demand from public institutions that require innovation, where we filter when it's really necessary that the lab works with them, but where at the same time that agile logic allows you to transfer capacities. [It] allows you to address problems that really are [a] priority,” Yosif explains.

Yosif and his team see themselves as advisors in public innovation and recognize the significance and logic of working in partnership with others. He said, “We are not a McKinsey-like consultant that only gives recommendations, and later others implement, but we are part of the implementation... The base of the lab is co-creation, co-design, and how public policies really focus on people's needs [and] different types of users. Sometimes, they are a hospital's patients. Sometimes, [they are] entrepreneurs who need to develop in a market. Sometimes, non-governmental agencies.”

By having a network of public innovators, knowledge is decentralized, and there is an increased motivation to innovate and share, according to Yosif. He says, “It breaks the chain not only between ministers and sectors but also between the central government and local governments. And it also invites the private sector, the third sector,

entrepreneurs, and other ordinary citizens to join this network of people.”

One of the main challenges that he and his team have had to face was a shift from a leftist government that created the lab to a more conservative one.

“Usually, when these small agencies are created in Chile, with a specific target, and by a specific administration, if the political color changes, in the following government, they are eliminated. And if they are not eliminated, they are completely changed, teams totally change, and thus perspectives change—sometimes too drastically.

“So, we had the challenge of transitioning from one administration to the other, and also of reviewing what we had done at a very initial state of the lab, and say, ‘well, what works and what does not?’ And when I had the first conversations with the authorities, basically the authorities told us, ‘A laboratory inside a government draws our attention, but innovation just for innovation... Honestly, this is not what we are looking for. We are looking for concrete results, in a short time, with delivery to the people, and 100% connected with the president’s agenda.’”

A week was the time they had to adapt to the new conditions. Yosif says, “The team was resilient and had the capacity to critique what we had done... and present a proposition to the president and his advisors on how Laboratorio de Gobierno 2.0 should be.”

In Salzburg, Yosif found himself in the company of 29 other public leaders from 18 more countries, exploring similar challenges and exchanging familiar experiences.

He says, “When you have structural social problems that have not been solved yet, and when you have precarious management from the state, that is when innovation happens in the most latent way... It is about how we turn a problem upside down, from the user’s point of view, with an agile work logic where there is not a six-month planning horizon, but daily, weekly, [and] monthly you are discovering what the best way is, what is the best design. You test it, you evaluate it, and then you scale it...”

“[In this model] there isn’t a group of experts to tell us what we have to do but it’s users who have the best knowledge about the problems that they live day by day in transport, public health care, and other areas. And it is public officers who must capture those insights at a massive level, who must have the abilities to transform them in pertinent solutions, and they also need to have the mindset to say, ‘Well, we are at their service.’ We are partners in the development of these innovations... and we always have to be alert about new technologies [and] new trends. Therefore, we need to connect ourselves in a public-private system of public innovation.”

Yosif’s next challenge is to make the lab a long-lasting institution with long-term effects. He says, “For me, this is... more than a job, [it is] a super personal life mission. I am absolutely convinced that the way to add value where one is has to do with how you change paradigms, how you motivate and invite people to see new scenarios, to test those new scenarios and to have the courage, and to have as well the will to learn how to develop those new scenarios.”





HIGH TECH IN KENYA: OPPORTUNITIES IN MODERNIZING GOVERNMENT

Katherine Getao, CEO of Kenya's ICT authority, takes stock of achievements and challenges for the country's public administration

"Perhaps I had not understood that there are many things that need to come together in order for technology to work," admits researcher, policymaker and expert in ICT and education Katherine Getao. "There's education, yes, which I was doing, but there's also infrastructure. And there's also business innovation that needs to all come together, and appropriate applications, which all need to come together."

Getao was headhunted nine years ago by the Kenyan Government, and last year she was appointed CEO of that country's ICT authority. Since then, one of her main achievements has been Huduma Kenya, an initiative to enhance the access and delivery of government services to the citizens.

When asked about the main challenges Kenya faces to continue modernizing the government, Getao says, "The will is there, but sometimes the skill is not." The lack of management skills concerns her.

"I'm not talking just about the technological skill because that you can hire. But there's the strategic skill and the tactical skill. Strategy means knowing when and how to choose technology—and the tactics, how to deploy it..."

"That can be very challenging because there's a tradition in government about the way things are done, and

somebody told me when I first joined the civil service that government is all about power. So whenever you ask for a shift in government, part of the interpretation is: how is it going to affect my power structures? Am I going to lose status as a result of the introduction of technology? ...There's this myth that technology is going to make everything easy, but technology has to be managed and managed very well in order for it to work appropriately."

Getao is not worried about possible shifts in government. "I think the advantage is that through the efforts of the private sector, the majority of the citizenry have taken the technology to heart. So as a politician, it's difficult to take things backwards because, you know, citizens are used to doing things through technology. So yes, you hear political noises about some of the projects... but usually what happens is eventually the people see the benefit... anything where obviously a large number of people see their benefit, politicians will find it hard to mess up with it."

To apply technology "to the real needs and problems and issues of the people," Getao focuses on four areas. The first is infrastructure, which, she believes, "is the biggest barrier to the use of technology."

The second area concerns skills. “Skills now is not only about learning about the technology, but it’s building digital-age values. Trust is a big issue in the digital age. So how do you build the values that support trust? How do you really shape people to be not just consumers of technology but also producers and manipulators of technology?”

The third area involves understanding services. “How do you deliver public services in a very fast and instantaneous way, so that people don’t have to interrupt their lives? I mean, the private sector has done that for us. I mean, in Kenya, somebody is always under the table paying bills, sending money to their relatives [and] paying fees. So we used to have to ask for permission to leave work for a few hours to go and do any of those things. But now, even if I was sitting with you... one of my hands would just be busy carrying out all those tasks instantaneously on my phone. And citizens are used to that. So I should not have any

public service where they have to interrupt their life flow in order to access the service.”

The final area that Getao considers “the most important”? Work. “Some people think that we’ll just go through the continuum that maybe other parts of the world did, where you go from agricultural to an industrial society and eventually to a knowledge society. I don’t think so because the world has globalized the products that people are demanding, changing the way they live their lives or where they procure their products... Even the climate is changing.

“So what will it be to work? How do you prepare those people for that kind of work? What will they be doing? How do you then shape their environment where they live, where they shop, to facilitate the new work? And what is the new work?”

TAKING RISKS, LEARNING FROM MISTAKES, AND BEING INNOVATIVE

Patrick Borbey, president of Public Service Commission in Canada, discusses applying scientific rigor to public sector experimentation

“Agile means being nimble, being able to be responsive, being able to take issues and rather than try to overcomplicate them try to bring in some simple elements that you can test and try out.” This is the view of Patrick Borbey, president of the Public Service Commission in Canada.

Borbey started in his role in May 2017. Having spent the first few months of his role in “learning mode,” he has since begun engaging with public service employers across Canada to encourage them to take a more future-oriented approach toward staffing, increasing diversity, and recruiting from talent pools previously untapped. Borbey said, “We want a public service that’s representative of the society we serve.”

The Public Service Commission of Canada is “responsible for promoting and safeguarding a merit-based, representative and non-partisan public service that serves all Canadians in collaboration with its stakeholders.” Borbey is keen to maintain a level of excellence traditionally associated with the service and reaffirm the values of bilingualism, diversity, inclusion, and respect.

Borbey also remains interested in learning from other jurisdictions and sharing best practices. Having previously engaged with representatives from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland, coming to Salzburg presented Borbey another opportunity to expand that approach further as he

was able to hear from participants from other countries and continents. He said, “We do have a lot in common, and we can learn from each other.”

During the program, Network members heard about different techniques and methodologies used to tackle challenges and develop policy, including sandbox tests and hackathons. Borbey said, “I was struck by the examples, and I think that’s an area that I’m going to want to explore as well in terms of... when we do our next policy work, can we take some of those approaches that are much more collaborative [and] iterative?”

Changes made to the Public Service Commission’s policy frame for staffing have allowed for flexibility and innovation. Departments and agencies, meanwhile, have also been encouraged to experiment. It is an approach the central agency has tried to foster, particularly in areas which may have been considered risky, according to Borbey.

“Look, we’re supposed to be the watchdogs of the staffing system, and if we’re willing to take a risk and experiment and do things a little bit differently, then that hopefully encourages others.”

Experimenting with new ideas is important, but so is applying scientific rigor. Borbey said, “You have to make sure the criteria are clear. You have to have a risk analysis with

mitigation strategies in order to be able to make sure that the pilot [and] the results will be measurable and that they will be shareable and scalable potentially also to a broader application.

“Unfortunately quite often some of the innovation happens because somebody has a good idea and they say, ‘Let’s just run with it. Let’s just do it,’ without properly framing it and making sure that there’s a performance measurement framework for example—a strategy to be able to report on the results and see what exactly you’ve learned.

“The other thing is you have to also be prepared to deal with failure, and how do you address failure? At what point do you declare this particular experiment is over? ‘It’s a failure, or it’s not leading to the results we wanted. What did we learn and how do we move forward from failure?’ Again that’s all part of the scientific process. Thomas Edison failed hundreds of times before he got the light bulb light. In the public sector, we have to accept that that’s part of also learning and growing.”

During his career, Borbey has held several positions of significant responsibility. He has been president of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency; chair of the Senior Arctic Officials; chair of the Arctic Council; senior assistant deputy minister of Treaties and Aboriginal Government; assistant deputy minister of Northern Affairs; assistant deputy minister of Corporate Services at both the Privy Council Office and Health Canada; and associate assistant deputy minister of the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch at Health Canada. He has also overseen the

departmental mandate for Sport Canada and worked closely with the National Capital Commission and Canada’s six national museums.

Joining the public service as a student, he held low expectations, unsure whether he would enjoy the work ahead. Within time, however, he gained a better understanding and appreciation. “I thought maybe government was going to be a bit boring, and I was completely blown away. My experience was so positive. I had a great manager who was a coach to me. I was given work that not only matched my capabilities but actually pushed me outside of my comfort zone. I was given a fair amount of autonomy, some guidance, and support but then after that a lot of trust in terms of carrying out my duties and I was listened [to] as part of the team, and I thought, ‘Wow this is an organization that meets my expectations in terms of where I would want to work.’ Eventually, I joined, and that has been my experience throughout my career.

“The other thing that I found fascinating about Public Service of Canada is how it’s the largest employer in Canada. There are so many different opportunities to serve your country and all kinds of different ways whether it’s regulatory, working on the environment, on the economy, on social issues, working internationally, working on scientific projects, [or] getting a chance to see parts of Canada that a lot of people would never have a chance to see and represent your country abroad. There [are] so many opportunities, and we don’t talk enough about it to young people when we’re trying to attract the best and the brightest.”



CONCLUSION

By **Charles E. Ehrlich**, Salzburg Global Seminar

The world is moving so rapidly, that governments need to think less about the process and more about the ends: what results their citizens expect. This requires agility to respond to – and often to anticipate – trends, events, and even unforeseeable developments, and to adjust the process on the fly. Some roles traditionally carried out by the public sector will no longer be – but this does not mean that governments abdicate their responsibility to their citizens.

As a representative of one country elaborated: “We are often unclear about what we are trying to achieve when we talk about building public trust. We generally speak about it in terms of the impact on governments’ ability to carry out meaningful reform. But the factors inhibiting reform are far more complex than a simple question of trust, which is unlikely to be the determining factor in our current global context of short termism, populism, and limited political will for unpopular decisions. There is also a question about the importance of trust to facilitate the delivery of services. We know from the private sector that people do not need to trust the intentions of an organization to use their services, they just need to feel that the trade-off in not using the service is too great (e.g. convenience or limited user choice). In other words, they make a calculation about the value proposition, and will trade privacy, for example, against perceived benefit.

We know from our own research that satisfaction levels with our provision of service are roughly double trust levels. Competence, rather than trust, is driving this relationship.”

Another Network member explained: “To maintain and enhance the citizen-government relationship, the public administration must promote public trust and confidence in our institutions. In line with the changing composition and needs of [our country’s] public, we must also strive to meet needs and expectations around the delivery of quality infrastructure and services.”

The Annual Foresight Retreat of the **Public Sector Strategy Network** has explored precisely these challenges, with participants exchanging their own experiences with each other, and enhancing international relationships across the strategic policy community.



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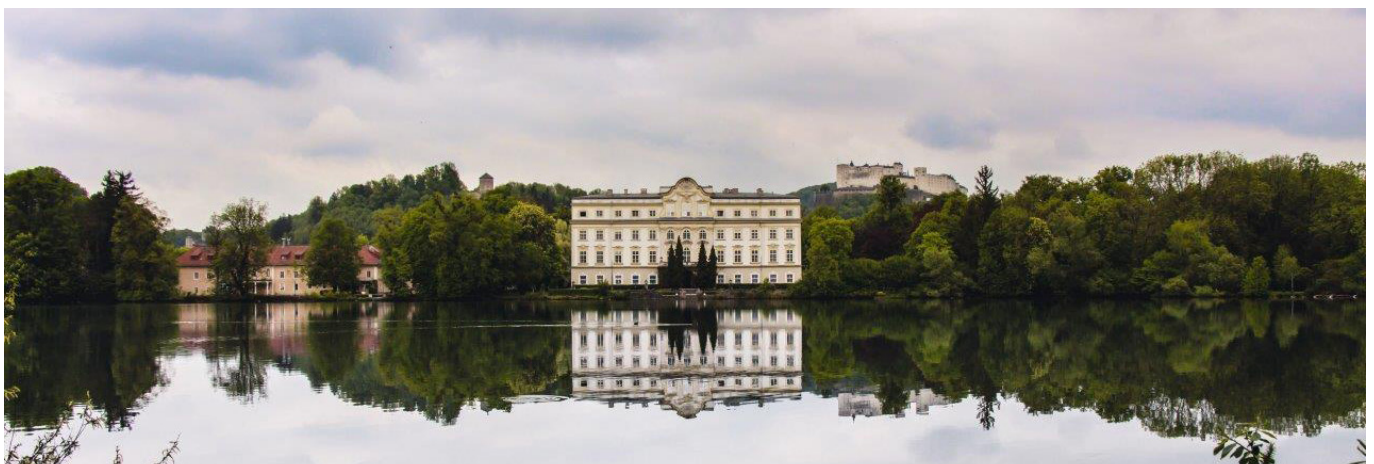
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