In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics?
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In the Spotlight:
How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics?
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Introduction

Rapid global transformations place governments under intense pressure to perform to ever-higher expectations at a time of shrinking public budgets. Populations are aging, countries are urbanizing, and technology is transforming the future of work. Many citizens have lost trust in the ability of public officials to cope – let alone to excel – under these changing dynamics and constant media scrutiny.

How can governments transform their culture and operations to address such challenges and disruptions? What radical changes lie ahead for the design, delivery and funding of core public services? What is the role of government in helping to change mindsets and prepare citizens for the “new normal”?

Public sector leaders around the world will need imagination and courage to tackle the employment, education, and social security challenges facing their populations and economies. Looking outwards, they will have to find new sources of revenue and new ways to enhance cooperation with the private sector and civil society. Looking inwards, they will have to redeploy, reskill, and reorganize their own resources, staff and departments to embed “intrapreneurship” in public service culture.

Over six rounds, the Public Sector Strategy Round Table has facilitated high-level, cross-sector dialogue on public sector leadership and innovation. Participants, drawn primarily from national governments, come together with sector experts and disruptors to identify and track long-term macro trends as well as short-term priorities. Open and candid exchange helps them anticipate key opportunities and risks and enhance their problem-solving capacities. Together they build understanding of the fault lines that undermine public sector effectiveness, and supports the design and implementation of policies and services that deliver better outcomes to meet public needs.

Founded in 1947, Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit organization that challenges present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. It works with partners and Fellows around the world to bridge divides and foster collaboration for lasting change. From 2017, Salzburg Global has become the politically and geographically neutral new host of what will now become the Public Sector Strategy Network, working in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court and apolitical (apolitical.co), a global impact network for governments.

This meeting of the Public Sector Strategy Round Table took place at Schloss Leopoldskron, home of Salzburg Global Seminar, in June 2017.

“Citizens have turned the spotlight on governments, expecting increasingly more while public budgets shrink and new challenges constantly arise. Keeping their heads down and hiding from the spotlight will not help public officials to serve their citizens’ needs.

Public service has not fundamentally changed over time – the tools have.

We have assembled leading strategic thinkers from around the world, from the centers of government and across sectors, to anticipate new trends and to seek ways to together take the lead.”

Charles E. Ehrlich
Program Director
Salzburg Global Seminar
Session Report

Summary

This report summarizes two days of discussion of an internationally diverse group of politicians, civil servants, and invited experts, focused on how the public sector can innovate and operate most effectively within the constraints and opportunities of the current global environment.

Now in its sixth round, the Public Sector Strategy Round Table formed to facilitate high-level, candid, and off-the-record dialogue on public sector leadership and innovation for national governments. The Round Table provides participants with the opportunity to step back from professional pressures and to uncover the barriers and blockages that stop the public sector from effectively and speedily addressing key challenges, while forming strong and sustained international networks with their counterparts from around the world.

Each Round Table has focused on the need for public sector strategies to enhance government problem solving by combining the impact of long-term macro trends with short-term priorities and risks. The three key words of concern identified by participants at the beginning of the 2017 Round Table session were urgency, trust, and complexity, which form the structure of this report.

Urgency
The dramatic pace of change and the growing number of disruptive influences are creating a situation wherein governments need to be prepared for challenges they do not yet understand or even know will exist. Three particular areas of unknowns with which governments are grappling are future-proofing societies for changes to jobs and skills; harnessing advances in technology to deliver public services more effectively; and increasing tax revenues from new forms of economic activity.

Trust
Levels of trust in government institutions and elected officials have dropped to unprecedented lows, restricting the public sector’s ability to innovate and take risks with new approaches. A shrinking tax base, combined with rising expectations from citizens and the need to balance demands for greater transparency with effective communication techniques are putting a strain on states’ ability to uphold their end of the social contract.

Complexity
Finally, the public sector must employ a complex array of responses and strategies to cope with this environment, whether through adapting internal structures, undertaking large-scale efficiency reviews, establishing new external partnerships or experimenting with new policy intervention approaches.
Top Trends in Government Innovation

Counter-intuitively, we may be living through a golden age of government innovation. The combination of budget cuts with huge, complex problems like climate change, has left governments with no option but to get smarter.

From more than 800 pioneering projects, in dozens of countries, apolitical has isolated a small number of cutting-edge tools for public service.

Source: apolitical.co
Urgency: Planning for an Unpredictable Future

Public servants around the world are working in a period of unprecedented change. Population growth; increasing income inequality and reduced social mobility; high unemployment levels and the prospects for new technologies to eradicate jobs further; in addition to the worsening impacts of climate change, all pose significant constraints to the environment within which governments must operate. This situation is compounded by the fact that the public sector itself is facing secular stagnation, with widespread levels of severe national debt.

At the same time, urbanization; the growth – albeit precarious – of a global middle class; emerging technologies; and the dramatic increases in standards of living caused by “hyperglobalization” all offer a wealth of opportunities for governments to continue to better the lives of their populations.

This dramatic pace of change and growing number of disruptive influences create a situation wherein governments need to be prepared for challenges they do not yet understand or even know will exist. On the whole, public sectors around the world are not ready for the future, but there are overarching principles and approaches which will make their strategies more effective and resilient:

1. Keeping sight of the long term in a world driven by short-termism and populism;
2. Fostering economic growth while ensuring it is converted into supporting the wellbeing of citizens;
3. Harnessing digital technology while ensuring the benefits are shared and without leaving anyone behind;
4. Distributing power to a more local level while building central capability to cope with resilience and crises; and
5. Doing better and more for less in the context of limited resources and higher expectations.

Future-proofing societies for changes to jobs and skills

Planning for the changes that will come in employment and jobs, and providing upcoming generations with relevant skillsets present a particular set of challenges for governments. There can be no doubt that our societies will see significant changes, and that government will have to play a central role in managing transitions for localized communities affected by industry closures, older generations continuing to work, and those currently employed by whole sectors that may cease to exist. As well as current jobs disappearing, many new jobs will depend on skills which are not currently monetized, such as the ability to collaborate.
Urban Population Explosion

By 2050, more than two thirds of global population will be living in urban areas.

The global urban population surpassed the rural one in 2009/2010. However, with this pace of growth it is likely that by 2050, the urban population will be double that of the rural and account for over two thirds of the global population.

Global urban vs. rural populations (in millions, 1950 –2050)

Source: “World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision”, UN
Government policy centered on securing citizens’ wellbeing should aim to mitigate the social effects of future disruptions and direct social welfare accordingly. Similarly, governments are aware that the responsibility lies with them to capture the economic value of new complex patterns and types of employment, so society-at-large benefits over large corporations, and economic benefits are spread more evenly.

But can government also play a role in directing the types of work that will be most affected, to ensure that advances in technology, automation and robotics take away the worst jobs, rather than necessarily those easiest to eradicate?

A lack of consensus around how the job market will change is leading governments to put a focus on supporting life-long learning and flexibility. The data on retraining programs for existing workforces currently shows very poor results, as the incentives are not evident for employers and companies to retrain workforces. This prime example of a collective action problem is an obvious area where government can play a central role – particularly in identifying transferable skills and where they can be applied.

Flexibility and continuous learning extends to education policy, where many countries are shifting curricula to focus on instilling an aptitude for learning and adaptability rather than specific knowledge or hard skills. Teachers are being encouraged to focus on nurturing curiosity, problem solving, opportunity finding,
Global Employment Creation

Global employment creation has been almost stagnant, growing slower than any pre-crisis year and with a projected 80 million jobs needed by 2018 to close the crisis-related jobs gap.

Employment is not expanding fast enough to keep up with the growing labor force. If current trends continue, global unemployment is set to worsen further, gradually reaching around 212 million jobseekers by 2019. In 2014, the ILO predicted that around 40 million net new jobs would be created every year, which is less than the 42.6 million people expected to enter the labor market every year. The bulk of the increase in global unemployment is in the East Asia and South Asia regions, which together represent more than 45 percent of additional jobseekers, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe.

Current and pre-crisis employment trend (in millions, 2001–2019)

Jobs Under Threat

With all its potential benefits, the digital revolution is threatening to be job destructive rather than creative.

Fifty percent of US jobs face at least 65% likelihood they will be computerized over the coming decades. The jobs that remain will require a multi-dimensional workforce skilled in technology, problem-solving, and inter-personal relations. While computerization is largely driven by efficiency benefits of technology, global productivity growth has slowed over the past two decades, with total factor productivity dropping below zero in 2013 to −0.1 percent. The productivity gains of the “digital revolution” will be clearer in the future.

Number of job occupations by susceptibility to computerization

![Chart showing the ranks of occupations according to their probability of computerization.](source)

teamwork and core value systems in their students. However, this type of activity-based learning, alongside basic literacy and math skills is very resource-intensive.

Training in digital skills is an essential component of many government efforts. Examples include teaching coding in primary schools, rolling out laptops, tablets and Wi-Fi connections across schools and communities, and creating networks of local centers to offer young people the opportunity to be certified in digital skills and then work remotely on digital tasks, such as transcription for court proceedings.

In an ideal future, new forms of employment will be created by adaptive and self-determining individuals, who decide how they want to work and contribute to society. A continuing challenge for governments will be to make their countries as attractive as possible to the best global talent and to ensure that technological advances do not have a worsening impact on the most vulnerable in society.

**Harnessing technological advances**

A second major question facing governments is the extent to which they embrace emerging and disruptive technology for service delivery and in their own working practices. The right balance has to be struck between modernizing government
systems and applying new technologies to their processes, without becoming too distracted by investments that they lose sight of their duty to provide for the basic needs of their citizens in housing, education, and health care.

The capacity of governments to utilize technology to provide better public services is also highly dependent on widespread levels of public trust. For example, in certain countries, Facebook is more trusted than the government to hold personal data, while in others the opposite is the case.

One area of debate in Salzburg was the extent to which governments should relinquish decision-making powers to computer algorithms, unaffected by human error, emotion or power structures. While is it unlikely that algorithms will be any more effective than humans in providing answers to questions with underlying political and ideological trade-offs, specific policy areas such as housing, energy, and health care may benefit from the analysis, efficiencies and automated decision-making that is emerging from current research trials and developments.

On a more immediate level, with the cost of cyber security to the global economy in 2021 estimated to be $6 trillion per year, safeguarding government-held data on citizens is a growing challenge. While members of the public should not be expected to repeatedly provide the same information, linking up departmental databases increases the vulnerability of data to hacking and abuse. One solution is to employ an “ask only” principle within integrated systems, so different departments and services are limited to accessing only the relevant data they need on each member of the public.

Ownership of citizens’ data and the potential to gain financially from it is another emerging area of debate. Currently, private corporations and a small number of shareholders are reaping significant profits from aggregating data on individuals for advertising purposes. Could governments, who hold similar amounts of data, figure out ways to collaborate with citizens to control this use, to gain financially, and to share the profits directly with the citizen? Alternatively, personal data ownership may move entirely to the individual, under “self-sovereign identity” schemes. This would ease the burden on governments to be responsible for protecting data, but they may will likely need to lead the way in developing the required insurance and support structures.

Finally, national governments or, more likely cities as they are data- and device-dense, will need to collaborate across borders to share innovations and push large-scale adoption of new technologies. There are already small examples, such as in Manchester, UK and Bogotá, Colombia, where the same blockchain-based service is being introduced to provide welfare payments to individuals without bank accounts. In the future, we are likely to see consortia of countries coming together to roll out the same technology simultaneously so its impact can be realized at scale.

“There are new ways of thinking and working that we’re seeing in the private sector that have so much potential when they’re brought in appropriately into the government context. It’s a really exciting space to be in.”

Samantha Hannah-Rankin
Director of Public Service Innovation, Department of Premier and Cabinet (Victoria), Australia
Changing forms of economic activity

Managing the shifts to new forms of economic activity is a third area that poses a series of challenges for governments. Consistently low rates of global productivity arguably point to the fact that value is being created outside of traditional and tracked forms of economic activity, and that inflation is happening outside of central banks. This leaves treasuries grappling with how to tax value movement in a new and increasingly digital economy.

Large and uniform networks of digital money, or sharing platforms such as Uber and Airbnb, can be quite easily taxed by the state because they concentrate significant numbers of individual transactions under one entity and also want to be compliant with state regulations so they can continue to operate and expand. However, one area with which governments will have to contend in the near future is how to levy goods and services taxes on a vast number of unique transactions and products created in individual homes by 3D printers.

Similarly, digital “cryptocurrencies” and tokens such as bitcoin and Ethereum may revolutionize capital markets by introducing a totally new and widespread mechanism for individuals or organizations to generate investment income. It could be that these new forms of currency open markets to a much broader group of individuals, including those on low incomes, who will be able to club together to make investments, thereby expanding the number and forms of transactions that treasuries need to capture.

Finally, the emergence of the concept of the “sharing economy” could have major implications for the distribution of resources across society. While governments’ efforts to redistribute resources have up until now been based on the concept of scarcity, a sharing economy approach raises the prospect of changing the emphasis from ownership of scarce resources to simply providing access to resources shared collectively within a community.
Julian McCrae: “No one has a wonderful experience with change. It’s difficult. It’s messy. You have to persevere.”

Deputy director of the UK’s Institute for Government considers the role of central strategy units and non-profits in helping governments manage change

As deputy director of the Institute for Government in London, Julian McCrae has one main question to answer: How do you help politicians and civil servants in the UK do their jobs better? It’s not the only conundrum he’s looking to solve, but it encompasses the path the Institute is following.

In a bid to get answers to this question, and more, McCrae attended the sixth Public Sector Strategy Round Table – In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics? – in June. Speaking to Salzburg Global Seminar during this session, McCrae said, “This is a brilliant opportunity to meet people from all around the world who are thinking about how do you improve? How do you make government work more effectively for its citizens? It’s really about not just people thinking about it, but people who are actually doing it.”

McCrae was one of 28 participants to take part in the two-day program, held by Salzburg Global Seminar for the first time this year. Together, the cohort represented 15 countries. McCrae said, “There’s nothing better than listening and talking to people who are facing the same challenges as you are in different environments; bringing that all together, aggregating it up, and getting a real sense of momentum into some of the key challenges all our societies face.”
Among the challenges discussed, McCrae suggested the changing nature of technology was both an opportunity and a threat. That being said, the issue of resources and how to use them is also pertinent. McCrae said, “How do we make [the use of resources] work in a way that our citizens feel this is far [and] this is equitable?”

Before joining the Institute for Government, an independent non-profit organization, McCrae spent half a decade working for former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, serving as deputy director in his strategy unit. Discussing his experience, McCrae said, “I think one of the things about working in a strategy unit at the heart of government, it’s in a way about great analysis. It’s about really, really good people who can look at a problem from new dimensions and give insight to that.”

Beyond garnering insights, the next step requires effective communication of the insight that has been acquired. McCrae said one had to think how to get the relevant information in the hands of the decision-makers. He said, “When we were working in the UK, and we had Tony Blair as the prime minister, he wanted strategic advice. He saw us as his people... He’d set us a problem and he didn’t want us drawn into the day-to-day crises of government.” Instead, Blair wanted McCrae and his colleagues to think about the long-term solutions. McCrae, however, conceded that each prime minister is different in their way of thinking.

McCrae joined the Institute for Government in 2009. He is currently responsible for leading the Institute’s work on professionalizing Whitehall, the performance of public services, fiscal policy, and spending consolidations. McCrae said, “We’re focused primarily on what we might describe as the machine of government. We’re not a policy think-tank. We don’t tell governments [they] should be this, or that, or the other. We’re certainly not political. We have to stay out of the party politics. What we’re about saying is, ‘If you want to achieve these things, how can you set up government [and] how can you run a government in a better way to make it more likely that these things you really want to do will be achieved?’”

The two-day program at Salzburg Global Seminar brought forward several ideas and examples of good practice taking place around the world. McCrae said he hoped to leave with a set of concrete ideas he could point to and show others. Most of all, he was interested in the personal connections.

McCrae said, “Virtually, no one has a wonderful experience with change. It’s difficult. It’s messy. You have to persevere at it. So, actually, being able to pick up the conversations about how you deal with the difficulties [and] how you overcome it – that comes from knowing people.

“That’s what I think Salzburg Global Seminar is really about – bringing those ideas together, bringing those people together, to create that shared network going forward.”
John Edge: Bringing private sector innovation and risk-taking to the public sector

Co-founder and chairman of ID2020 discusses bringing an entrepreneurial perspective to public sector discussions

John Edge, the co-founder, and chairman of public-private partnership, ID2020, came to the sixth meeting of the Public Sector Round Table, In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel under Changing Dynamics? to provide an entrepreneur’s perspective. At the Round Table, Edge wanted to explore the opportunities for applying private sector innovation, entrepreneurial strategies and tactics to public sector transformation.

In Edge’s mind, the public sector “by nature” does not transform as quickly as the private sector. Speaking to Salzburg Global prior to the Session, he said, “There are very good questions to why that’s the case... One of the challenges is how do you explain to your public that you have taken a risk and failed? [The way] the public sector can and do breakthrough transformation is inhibited by [its] ability to take risks.”

If the public sector is unable to take risks, it is unable to change quickly. One way to resolve this, according to Edge, is to look at how new public-private organizations could be created, which take on the requirements of the public sector’s mission but also have the
ability to take risks in the way a private sector company does. As things stand, Edge said the compensation models within the public sector do not incentivize risk taking.

As governments come to terms with the rapid pace of the digital revolution, Edge put forward an alternative proposal: “You look at it and go, ‘Well, everyone’s got a mobile phone in their hand – give or take – so that’s infrastructure that’s already out there. So, why do we have to go through the government to get new services?’ Maybe we should be building new services that citizens want and asking the government to integrate or let those services run in a free market. It’s a very good question.”

Edge said he had asked himself what the role of government was and, for the time being, had settled on an answer from the Greek philosopher Plato: “Plato goes with [the theory that] the government’s job is the distribution of scarce resources. That’s about as good as I’ve found. That can make perfect sense to me. If you’ve got a population and you only have a limited amount of resources, then if it is the strongest resource, you’re going to have a tale of the weak who get nothing and that creates inequality in society. Inequality in society creates problems. That’s where you end up in war.” Edge said if it came down to the distribution of scarce resources, then the question concerned whether the model of government was up to the distribution of said resources.

Speaking ahead of the Round Table, Edge discussed what he hoped to learn from his fellow participants. “There’s no substitute for experience,” he said.

“It’s important to come to these forums to get an understanding and insight into how the world’s currently working now. It’s all good and well to come up with a model for change but if you don’t have context on what’s going on in the current environment then you won’t get effective outcomes.”

Recently, Edge has been working with the UK government through a private sector start-up, which has built a system for the distribution of digital cash. Commenting on this project, Edge said, “That is at a fraction of the cost. It’s more accessible and provides better services for citizens. That is a good example of building a new way of doing things using digital technologies.” By doing something new and efficient, you are affecting something older and less efficient, Edge believes, adding that the challenge of improving the public sector is to make the incumbent people feel incentivized to make it happen.

In his position at ID2020, Edge is looking to solve a problem that affects more than one billion people – the lack of an official recognized identity, which is especially vital for accessing online public services. He said, “I founded ID2020 because I saw a technology emerging – or a set of technologies emerging – that indicated they could be very useful in the provision of identities for vulnerable children – specifically stateless vulnerable children. The idea that if you happen to be not born in a state, how you get a birth certificate when there’s no one to issue it to you? Yet, if you look at refugee camps, everybody’s got a phone. If everybody’s got a phone but no one’s got a birth certificate, there’s something in that.”

With ID2020, Edge hypothesized creating an alliance similar to Gavi – the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations. He said, “If we have 1.2 billion people without [an official] identity, the chances are that the current way of doing things has a problem. [We’re] creating a specific organization to look at improving the efficiency of a public sector gathering of
organizations to get a better outcome. Gavi has proven it – and there are a number of others – and that’s what ID2020 is aiming to do for identity.”

In addition to his work with ID2020, Edge is the co-chair and founder of the Whitechapel Think Tank, through which the Bank of England, the UK government, regulators, and the private sector have come together to collaborate on the potential for blockchain and distributed ledger technologies. Edge said, “The outcome of that was the UK managed to establish itself – for a time – the leading player in this space because the government understood it to be a transformative technology quicker than other governments did.” The purpose of the forum was to enable stakeholders to feel comfortable to ask the question: what is this?

Discussing the benefits of these forums involving different sectors, Edge said, “I think that it is valuable at the start to make sure that topics don’t get killed. It becomes challenging when you talk about actually getting stuff done because you run straight into the blocks of, ‘Why would we do this? What’s the upside? Why should I take this risk?’”

For the past three years, Edge has been focused on bringing private sector innovation and an entrepreneurial approach to the public sector, something which Edge describes as “darn difficult, to say the least.” However, our approach toward this moving forward is what might make all the difference. He said, “We can either look at it negatively and say society is going to break, or positively in that there’s a whole new model of technology-led services on the way and maybe we could look at what roles the public sector plays and [ask] do they need to be playing all those roles?”

As the Public Sector Strategy Round Table goes forward as the new Public Sector Strategy Network, Salzburg Global Seminar, its partners and Fellows will continue to address these fundamental questions – and develop coherent answers.
Mobile Innovations

Online solutions have eased economic transactions by moving physical dealings to the online space, giving room for greater opportunities.

The Internet has revolutionized the way people connect with each other, driving growth in most economies. The ability to connect sensors to objects or things on the Internet, to extract and analyze growing amounts of data, and then to use that analysis in both automated and non-automated processes promises enormous potential for further economic growth.

Accounts in formal financial institutions and mobile phone usage for paying bills in selected countries
(In % of population aged 15 years and older, 2011)

Source: World Bank Financial Inclusion Data
Constrained by the many external forces beyond their control, governments continue to be bound by a social contract with their citizens to deliver security, public goods, and reasonable standards of social welfare. Globally, trust in public and state institutions is at an all-time low, and against this backdrop, governments are trying to manage growing public expectations, communicate effectively and strategically, and deal with increasing social inequalities.

Supporting more equitable economic growth and distribution
Governments around the world are faced with unprecedented levels of public debt. According to the Institute for International Finance, total global government debt currently stands at 325% of GDP (2016 Q3), and Citigroup reported in 2016 that the OECD countries collectively have $78 trillion of unfunded social security liabilities. While governments have for the large part stopped expanding, they are all facing fiscal limitations to increases in spending.

Raising tax revenue is becoming more difficult for two reasons:
1. The concentration of wealth in the top one percent of the global population, who are highly mobile and effective at avoiding tax;
2. The nature of the largest growing industries, which are focused on new forms of services and non-tangible products such as branding, the sharing economy, and intellectual property, which are taxed at very low rates.
Global Debt

Global debt is growing faster than real GDP, with public debt growing fastest after the financial crisis.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute, total world debt increased by US$57 trillion between 2007 and 2014, growing an average of 5.3% per year. At the same time, average growth in world GDP has slowed from its pre-crisis peak down to an average of 3.3% per year, creating a world that is increasingly leveraged. While household and financial sector debt were the primary drivers behind world debt expansion from 2000–2007, since the recession governments and the corporate sector have taken the lead, growing at 9.3% and 5.9% per year respectively.

Global Debt and Real GDP Growth Over Time
(In US$trillion at 2013 prices and average % annual change, Q4 2000, Q4 2007, and Q2 2014)

Sources: McKinsey Global Institute; IMF

1 Average real GDP growth represents average of 7 years prior to year listed (Example: 2000 represents average annual growth from 1993-2000)

2 Q2 2014 data for advanced economies and China
Unable to secure income tax revenue from the wealthy, governments are relying more on consumption taxes, even in the knowledge that they are regressive and have a worsening impact on inequality and social mobility. Even apparently enlightened “green” taxes such as fuel taxes, affect the poor disproportionately. In developing countries, taxes levied on the middle classes are being relied upon to prop up welfare payments and services primarily targeted at the poorest in society, which is increasing middle class distrust and disillusion in the state.

States are starting to make progress to collaborate and employ new technologies to reduce jurisdiction-hopping by the very wealthy. Efforts to increase transnational cooperation on transparency, led by the OECD’s Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project, are creating common reporting standards and exchanges of financial information across countries. This means that income can be taxed by the jurisdiction wherein which it was created regardless of where it ends up. In the future, this may help with creating greater social equity.

Companies’ assets are also exceptionally mobile and countries find themselves in competition with one another to keep corporation taxes low to attract jobs and investment. Only states with a significant comparative advantage can afford to charge high taxes. Within the European Union for example, companies can locate themselves in the member state with the lowest tax rate and gain equal access to the single market.

While private philanthropy has become a new important financing partner for government projects and welfare provision, corporate social responsibility programs still have a significant way to go. Meeting the United Nations’

“If you look at the financial crisis of 2008 and if you look at some of the leadership issues we have on the world stage today, I think these are not bad leaders per se but they are people who have lost their compass and their true north – but they have the capability and skillset to deliver...

I think if we could put mindfulness back into the equation, into people who have skillsets, into people who could take time to reconnect with themselves and become the person that they want to be, not just the person everybody wants them to be, then I think we will have a much better generation of leaders, a much better outcome, and a much more inclusive sustainable and better world.”

Penny Low
Founder and President, Social Innovation Park Ltd, Singapore
Sustainable Development Goals will require an additional $2.5 trillion of funding, and the private sector is the only feasible source to fill this gap.

Governments are trialling different mechanisms to encourage corporations to contribute their fair share. For example, businesses can pay part of their tax bill in the form of financing for an infrastructure project for the surrounding community. The incentive for the company is that its operations and bottom line will also benefit from these improvements. Some countries are experimenting with new forms of public-private partnership – where the government absorbs the risk of the joint venture – to encourage more private funding into government programs and schemes. These partnerships often sit with a marketing department concerned with corporate reputation and brand, rather than with the tax or finance functions.

Whether dealing with a company or an individual, governments need to find a way of reaffirming the social contract of the “entrepreneurial state.” They need to make the case that success in creating large profits is only possible because of the enabling environment provided by the state: from infrastructure and investments, from the rule of law and regulation, and from a well-educated workforce, for example. Business leaders and governments operate in a symbiotic relationship, and the state needs to impress upon the private sector its obligations to pay its due contribution.

Strategic and effective communication in an era of transparency and “infobesity”

While the world has seen a surge in the availability of information, many would argue that this has not yet translated into transparency in governmental style and practices. Nevertheless, public officials around the world feel they are working under a “tyranny of transparency,” where there is always someone looking over
their shoulder. In this era of increased demands for access to information, the challenge for government is to understand how much detail and data to produce, how it can be most effectively presented, and what channels to use to communicate with the public.

The key to any successful strategic communication plan is that it has to have a well-articulated strategy behind it: It has to be audience-specific, targeted to different interest groups, and easy to comprehend. Government departments and agencies are now employing professional communications consultants to advise on messaging and the best platforms to use. However, to the irritation of many public servants, strategic communication is often seen as a political issue for a minister to determine, and extensive focus group work to refine messaging can sometimes be discarded on the whim or gut-feeling of senior ministry staff.

While governments around the world know that traditional media platforms are primarily only good for reaching older generations, experiments with new forms of communication and the use of social media platforms have shown mixed results. Establishing how to use social media to personalize messages to specific individuals or communities, and to actually reach new audiences rather than just to keep in touch with existing followers is no easy task. A significantly limiting factor in finding new ways to engage is the low levels of trust in government messaging. For example, proactive efforts to improve citizen-government engagement through mobile phone apps can be easily viewed by the public as an attempt at government surveillance.

In this era of “infobesity,” another factor with which governments must contend is the optimal amount of information to communicate, without leading to adverse outcomes. For example, in the case of referenda or plebiscites on key policy areas, governments can produce an array of documents about the merits of their position, under the premise that if the information is available to consume, the public will absorb it. This tends to backfire, however, as simpler messages from non-governmental opposition groups win votes. Less information more strategically communicated can often be more effective.

Finally, in times of crisis or during a security threat, governments have to be able to alert but not alarm citizens through their communication and messaging. Successful examples highlight the importance of adopting an ethos of transparency and honesty about risks, and most importantly focusing on community-level face-to-face engagement. Citizen engagement programs have been effective in combating sectarian tensions following terrorist attacks, and the visibility of public servants and elected officials abiding by health guidelines and procedures during pandemic outbreaks gives confidence to the public to follow suit.

Something that has been emphasized here is the importance of collaboration across sectors that may not seem to be related — that learning can be acquired through just bringing together different sets of actors is huge."

Wanja Michuki
Managing Director, Be Bold Consulting and Advisory, Kenya
Liis Kasemets: E-governance offers openness, transparency – and great efficiency gains

Senior advisor on governance at the Government Office of Estonia discusses the digital solutions the Baltic nation is applying to its public sector challenges – and what others can learn from them

Estonia is often held up as an innovative example for other countries to follow. As the e-estonia.com government website declares: “We have built a digital society and so can you.” So it was natural fit that a public sector representative of the small Baltic country take part in the sixth Public Service Strategy Round Table – In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics?

That representative was Liis Kasemets, the senior advisor on governance at the Government Office of Estonia. As part of a team, she is responsible for developing and coordinating the system and principles of good governance in the government decision-making process, fostering the quality and openness of policy-making, and encouraging civic engagement and regulatory impact assessment. She said, “Our task is to translate the political agenda into an actionable government program which means that we have to cover quite a lot of issues and try to take into account the longer perspective as well.”

Her main focus, however, is fostering good governance, which includes raising the standard of the policymaking process. She said, “This also [concerns] the broader and
longer perspectives, as well as the everyday workings of the government. [This involves] institutionalizing or rooting deeper into everyday workings of the government: the impact analysis, the good engagement practices, and instituting it well into the government decision-making process.”

Hearing what other participants had said about long-term issues piqued her interest.

The feeling has been mutual, with other participants equally interested to hear about Estonia’s experiences and its growing reputation for efficiency when it comes to practices in e-governance. Discussing its origins, Kasemets said, “It was, in the beginning, quite a conscious political choice to go along with it. One of the reasons behind it was that we saw a great efficiency gain in that—time-wise and in financial terms. Also, while we do it, we can see greater transparency and openness for the citizen. In this sense, we kind of gain two things at the same time. So, maybe this is one of the reasons why we have stuck to that, trying to develop it further.”

Kasemets said as Estonia’s population is lower than others, the government has been able to interlink and keep the citizens at the center of the work which takes place. She said, “Of course, this remains to be judged by the citizens whether we are good at it or not, but this is something we would strive for. Maybe this is one of the reasons behind this e-governance as well.”

Despite this openness and transparency, Kasemets highlighted a few challenges the government is facing. She said, “One of the main things is that we have a population that is aging and decreasing... Our working population is annually decreasing by one percent. This is quite a noticeable decrease. This is one of the main challenges of how to create a better tomorrow for our citizens. We also have to look at the economy and the prospects for people to really have fulfilling lives to uplift their wellbeing continuously.”

In order to provide good opportunities for its citizens and attract new ideas, Kasemets suggests the Estonian government has to keep up with the pace of development.

During the two-day program, there was an opportunity for a free flow of ideas from people with different backgrounds, a positive outcome noted by many of the participants, including Kasemets. She said, “I think that when you put into a session people with so different backgrounds and so different experiences, this is where we can create innovative or new solutions to the things that we seek solutions for.

“At the moment, globally, so many countries are searching for solutions for quite similar problems. We're all tackling the same things but how can we do it better? This vibrant environment is very good to seek out whether we can find some of the solutions that we can try out.”
Complexity:  
Public Sector Delivery Mechanisms and Strategies

This challenging environment requires the public sector to continually develop new ways of working; create strategies to deliver services more effectively; weed out inefficiencies; and experiment and learn from past mistakes.

Experiences of central policy, innovation and delivery units

Central units take many forms within different governments and national contexts. The most common three tasks are:

1. Strategy, providing advice, strategic planning, horizon-scanning, and support decision-making;

2. Delivery or implementation, working with departments to achieve certain objectives or acting as a SWAT team to implements cross-government or one-off projects; and

3. Reform, identifying blind spots, building capacity and processes, and assessing how government can change and improve as a whole.

Comprising very small teams, central units often have a remit to harmonize the approach to foresight, horizon scanning, and strategy development across government ministries. Some countries are experimenting with policy innovation labs, or social labs that engage with a community directly to understand a particular service. These set-ups allow for public money to be used in a limited way on trial and error. However, a criticism of these units is their scale – when the problems and opportunities facing governments are so large, piloting policy experimentation can seem like a drop in the ocean.
The optimal structure of central units can often depend on the leadership style and priorities of the sitting prime minister or president. Some leaders will want analysis and advice on very specific areas, while others will want to focus instead on implementation. A strategy unit’s role often evolves under different leadership, although its role as mediator between various ministries and the prime minister or president is a constant.

Drawing on a range of various examples, a core set of attributes of successful central units comes to light. A central unit needs:

- Proximity to leadership, for quick decision-making and rapid briefing and communication;
- A continued focus on the big picture without getting sucked into immediate events;
- Targeted work around a specific problem or challenge, to focus efforts and build support;
- To avoid being pulled into any domain, sticking to its remit and keeping a low profile – it should always remain with ministries to interact with their stakeholders and undertake public-facing communications;
- A strong exit strategy when starting up new initiatives or projects, so the work is handed over to a ministry or dedicated team for longer-term implementation;
- Distance from budgetary discussions;
- Agility to build teams, maintain momentum, and then exit the process;
- An ability to build buy-in across government for new initiatives or reforms and to motivate colleagues to with the central unit; and
- A focus on building analytical capacity into individual ministries.

A key lesson from experienced ministers and public servants is that existing legislation, systems or processes that are not in need of obvious reform should not be tinkered with. Implementing changes for minor gains can backfire significantly, either by having unforeseen negative consequences, which can attract high levels of bad publicity, or by wasting significant time and resources and losing buy-in internally for future projects.

**Making efficiencies in government**

Efficiency in the public sector is very complicated to measure, and can tend to be avoided on these grounds, but the potential gains are significant. Efficiency gains are not just about reducing spending, but about the smarter use of public funds and turning public money into better outcomes. For example, a report by the Institute of Government highlighted that in the UK a 20% cut in the policing and prison budgets resulted in better performance overall. However, when the prison

“You can’t think about these things in a silo because public sector challenges are essentially a web of interconnected issues.”

Nitika Agarwal  
Chief Operating Officer, apolitical

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budget was cut further, levels of violence rose significantly, to the extent that it is now difficult to recruit staff into the prison service.

Efficiency reviews can assess both technical efficiency – doing things right and getting more from the current spend; and allocative efficiency – doing the right things and looking for new and different ways of working. They should be done in the spirit of collaboration and peer-learning and bring economists and finance professionals together to create a dialogue, and share and interrogate data.

An effective methodology for working around the difficulties of measuring efficiency is to triangulate different datasets to produce an estimate. Government-led reviews can be combined with external reports and analysis by consultants to build a sufficiently strong evidence base from which to direct reforms.

There are five key drivers for creating efficiencies in the public sector:

1. **Markets and competition**: utilizing markets and benchmarking to achieve efficiency aims;
2. **Service redesign and alternative delivery mechanisms**: user testing and consultation and reinvention;
3. **Public sector workforce and organizational issues**: leadership, salaries, incentive structures, and best-practice sharing;
4. **Technology**: more intelligent use of data and machine learning; and
5. **Hard budget constraints**: the imperative of having to save money in an expedient manner.

The five drivers interact together, although sometimes to different timescales, for example, hard budget lines will force quick changes, but the introduction of new technology will constitute a big change over time.

**Tools for delivery**

States are working more than ever before with external partners through forms of public-private partnerships (PPPs). These partnerships often take one of three models:

1. **Shared services**, for example a partnership with a private taxi company to bring pregnant women to hospital for labor;
2. **Blended financing**, for example the provision of free Wi-Fi hubs in public areas with space for private advertising; and
3. **Where the government is a convener and coordinator of private sector parties**, for example to bring companies together to agree on standards for sustainable cotton farming.

“In many countries different sorts of dedicated innovation labs have been set up. But I think now the question is how to spread or mainstream that work also to other government departments. It’s also a question about what are the skills that civil servants, for example, require or need to be better innovators.”

Juhani Lemmik
Senior Advisor, OECD
Successful PPPs tend to have three guiding principles:

- Openness to any actors with innovative ideas relevant to the project;
- Agreements to share learning throughout the project; and
- A commitment to collaboration.

All parties need to see a strong articulation of the value they will gain from a partnership. The risk expectation also needs to be made clear from the beginning, with each partner outlining what risks they are unwilling to take on or are unable to manage. For the government partner, the overriding focus has to be on balancing priorities and trade-offs to ensure that the partnership will result in a public good.
Another area of government innovation in service delivery and policy is the adoption of behavioral insights techniques.

This school of policy development aims to understand the drivers of why individuals act in a particular way or take certain decisions, and focuses on how to create incentives, provide information most effectively, or create an enabling environment for citizens to make choices that will improve their wellbeing.

A behavioral insights lens draws out pitfalls in the design of policy interventions including: understanding how to best match the intervention with when decision points happen in time; how individuals weigh up the economic cost and burden of accessing public services; and how to communicate new information most effectively to those with entrenched viewpoints.

While individual decision-making is very contextual and there are no simple rules, nudge tactics such as comparing people’s behavior to that of their neighbors or peer group; encouraging individuals to think through a step-by-step plan of action rather than simply focus on a final goal; and highlighting the potential economic savings of behavior changes have shown on average to be effective.

To make best use of behavioral insights, the practice should be broadly applied across government rather than tied to a specific delivery unit. The approach can then be streamlined through identifying change agents inside every state institution who come up with new innovations within their own fields. This means that a behavioral insights approach is more institutionalized, does not have a specific budget line attached to it, and if done correctly means it can be directed towards large-scale problems rather than being limited to niche pilot areas.

The application of behavioral insights does not have to be only for consumers of services and the public – it can also be employed within government to affect change within the public sector itself.
Paula Acosta: The “tremendous challenge” of implementing peace, fighting fires and thinking long-term

Director for government and strategic areas in Colombia discusses balancing the challenges facing the country’s public sector after decades of civil war

In June 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country’s largest rebel group, signed a ceasefire and disarmament agreement, a forerunner to a peace deal that was later signed in September. This formally brought to an end more than 50 years of armed conflict. One month later, voters were asked whether the peace deal should be approved. In a surprising turn of events, this deal was rejected by the people, some of whom believed the conditions to be too favorable toward FARC. The agreement was revised and signed again in November. In June this year, FARC formally ended their existence as an armed group.

This is one of the myriad challenges the Colombian government has had to face, but the implementation of this agreement is “only one issue,” according to Paula Acosta, director for government and strategic areas in the Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. Acosta is responsible for monitoring the strategic goals of the president and the cross-cutting coordination of his regional strategic initiatives. While she described the implementation as a “tremendous challenge,” she also recognized there were other areas which required attention.

Acosta made this observation while attending the sixth Public Sector Strategy Round Table
In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics?

Speaking to Salzburg Global Seminar during the session, she said, “I believe once you’re in government, you get to focus on the day-to-day. I see this session as a great opportunity to actually be able to look a little bit ahead. That’s also part of what public servants are supposed to do. It’s not only attending the fire that’s in front of them.”

The implementation of the peace agreement with FARC has already begun. Acosta said, “The main priority today in Colombia is to actually implement the agreement and to continue with all of the other policies. Although [the peace agreement] is probably the most important issue, it is only one issue. Then you have to keep on governing all of the other sectors and all of the other programs.”

Acosta said this was a “very hard balance” as it presented a question of how you distribute resources. Gaining credibility to the implementation of the agreement is as important as being able to sign the agreement itself. While the implementation began more than seven months ago, Acosta said it was too soon to draw any lessons from the process. The main focus remains on keeping the government running. Acosta said, “Peace is such a big issue in Colombia. We have this over 50-year conflict, so everyone wants to work in peace, but it’s not the only thing.”

Acosta said Colombia’s main cities have faced the “truths of the conflict” for many years but the government has had to maintain its focus on running all of the other departments. She said, “Finding that balance, it is I think the main challenge that I have to help to coordinate because it is a network for many different parts within the government.”

The discussions at Salzburg Global provided participants the opportunity to hear of similar, and different problems faced by the public sector in other countries. Acosta said, “There are a number of different countries here but most of the representatives come from very developed countries that pose a set of questions that we usually do not formulate ourselves.”

Remaining part of the newly established Public Sector Strategy Network was “the most important thing,” according to Acosta, and to fully understand the consequences and the deep causes of the challenges being faced by the public sector, more time would be needed than just one – albeit very fruitful – weekend in Salzburg.
Conclusion

This meeting marked the sixth iteration of the Public Sector Strategy Round Table. Each session has sought to share ideas and strategies for advancing the work of the public sector. It has now built up a core network of policy strategists and practitioners, who continue to work together to further understand what global trends mean for those tasked with managing taxpayers’ money, and how best to communicate and connect with the citizens they serve.

In addition to the three drivers articulated at the opening of the Round Table – urgency, trust and complexity – a fourth word, solidarity, was added to highlight the strength that comes from sharing ideas and collaborating internationally to further the effectiveness of public sector strategy.

This year’s Round Table highlighted the need for governments to be leaders and consensus builders. They need to be mission-oriented, not only addressing market failures, but shaping economic activity and the impacts of new technologies on society. They should develop socially inclusive models, which are human-centered, have wellbeing as their priority, and tackle growing economic inequality. And they should direct policy to address the full lifespan of their citizens and have more transparent and targeted communication with the public.

Participants at the 2017 Round Table shared the many examples in which governments around the world are seeking to embrace these challenges, whether by experimenting with new structures, partnerships and policy interventions, or by embracing emerging technology and seeking to prepare upcoming generations for an unpredictable future.

Initial research has shown that grit, or “staying power,” is a unique trait required for success in the public sector. This fact highlights the scale of the tasks facing public servants working on reform and strategy, and the dedication needed to see through the changes necessary for dealing with tomorrow’s challenges.
Next Steps

A key outcome from the Salzburg meeting was the agreement by participants to transform the Round Table into a more formalized Public Sector Strategy Network.

The Network will build a year-round collaborative resource to sustain and expand the impact of the annual high-level meeting in Salzburg. It aims to support open and ongoing exchange of ideas and practical experiences between public sector innovators with different backgrounds and expertise. As countries search for solutions to quite similar challenges, the Network can contribute to effective partnership through regular institutional and personal engagement. Participants saw real value in ensuring continuity, collective memory, and deeper mutual understanding.

The Network will have four goals:
• Connect the best minds in central government strategy with each other and to top specialists from key sectors to enhance public sector innovation and delivery around the world;
• Facilitate continuous peer-to-peer learning under the values of trust and active exchange, spanning best practices and lessons learned from system failure and recovery;
• Advance thought leadership and effective communication on key trends and innovation opportunities shaping public sector strategy and forward planning; and
• Foster cooperation among different countries and partners.

The invitation-only Network will bring together those participants from each year’s meeting who want to remain actively engaged and to benefit from connections to other alumni. Members of the Network will be encouraged to remain active even after they have left government service, as their institutional memories and experiences increase the intellectual capital. This will allow the Network to expand steadily, building on a multi-year commitment by current and former representatives of some of the most dynamic countries.

The Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court, Salzburg Global Seminar, apolitical, and other partners are now taking the next steps to develop the terms of reference for the Network. The next annual meeting will take place in Salzburg in May 2018.
Mona Hammami: We hope to establish a Public Sector Network

Director from the office of strategic affairs at the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court discusses future of Public Sector Strategy Round Table

Mona Hammami returned to Salzburg Global Seminar with two objectives in mind. Taking part in the sixth Public Sector Strategy Round Table – In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics? – Hammami sought to establish a network of cross-government entities at the center of governments who had the ability to see different portfolios. She also sought to find solutions to some of the challenges the government in the United Arab Emirate of Abu Dhabi is facing experiencing.

Hammami, a director from the office of strategic affairs at the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court, previously came to Schloss Leopoldskron, the venue for the 2017 Round Table and home of Salzburg Global Seminar, in 2015 for Salzburg Global’s June Board Meeting. It was there that Hammami first became aware of the institution’s potential to act as a host and facilitator.

An agreement was later reached where Salzburg Global, for the first time, would act as a politically and geographically neutral host for a meeting of the Public Sector Strategy Round Table, working in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court and apolitical, and with the support of Chatham House.

Here, at the sixth meeting of the Round Table, Hammami and her colleagues searched for further answers on how governments could react to changing dynamics – both on the policy side and on the technical side. Hammami said: “We wanted to be able to get different parties without having preconceived opinions. That is exactly where we are right now, and that’s why we wanted to bring the Round Table here.”

In her position at the office of strategic affairs, Hammami is responsible for analyzing social and
economic developments, globally and locally, in addition to drafting publications and white papers to influence policymaking. Discussing the role of the office further, she said, “The idea behind the office is that it is an internal consultancy for His Highness that also plays the role of a think-tank, and at the same time, we’re the arm that creates functions and incubates them and let them grow on his behalf.”

During this year’s Round Table, participants discussed policymaking and the machinery of government. Hammami said, “That is a core business for us because we as a government entity are struggling to figure out how we become super agile. How do we transform ourselves to deal with many of these issues?” One area Hammami described as “very, very thin” was higher education. She said, “It’s the one area we’re struggling with – and I think every country is struggling with – but also one which has major effects on many other portfolios such as the future of work.”

While education is core to some of the concerns and challenges being faced, governments are also having to come to terms with the rapid pace of technological change. A citizen’s ability to communicate with, engage with, and criticize their government has completely transformed. Social media enables citizens to express themselves and provides opportunities for governments to receive feedback. Hammami said, “That’s one area we’re grappling a lot with – to what extent to allow this sort of expression, which could backfire on you as a government if you open up too much. What is the right level of engagement? What’s the right level of feedback? What’s the right level of listening? That’s another area we see as a government but also: How do we allow for collaboration by using those digital platforms?”

Discussing the next steps for the Public Sector Strategy Round Table, Hammami said, “I think where we go next from here is establishing what we would hope to call – rather than a Public Sector Round Table – a Public Sector Network. [This is a network] we hopefully can expand more but also have some form of commitment from the partners of this for the future, both in terms of the path leadership but also in terms of the ability to partner together cross-borders for bigger causes – helping governments figure out things.”
Lisa Witter: The more we humanize governments, the better we will be at supporting them

Co-founder and executive chairman of apolitical discusses role of platform and bringing together different public servants

At a time when challenges for governments – and the complexities surrounding them – appear to be growing exponentially, one could be forgiven for being wary or over-awed when deciding where to begin to solve them. This does not apply to Lisa Witter, co-founder and executive chairman of apolitical. Indeed, it is something she thrives on. Attending the sixth Public Sector Strategy Round Table – In the Spotlight: How Can the Public Sector Excel Under Changing Dynamics? – she told Salzburg Global, “I’m a bit epicurean in that I really try to enjoy everything I do. I think one thing I’m really committed to is enjoying it when it is hard as well, which is something I think I share as a former person working in government. I like the hard stuff.”

At apolitical, Witter and her team look to serve people in government, find ways to solve problems faster, and bring people together from all over the world. Apolitical provides an online platform for public servants to find ideas, people, and partners to solve the hardest challenges facing our societies. Witter said, “We are trying to bring a bit of a different sensibility – trying to bring both behavioral science and the best of technology to solving problems. It’s happened in every other sector from TripAdvisor for travel, from Bloomberg terminals for finance, so why shouldn’t that same peer-to-peer beautiful technology platform happen for the public sector?”

Designing apolitical involved asking potential users what they needed and what they thought the platform should look like. Witter said, “Some of the things they asked us [included], ‘Make it beautiful and more delightful.’ ‘Make it simple and really easy to use.’ ‘Make it look and feel like news so that it has a sense of urgency and salience.’ ‘Tell me how long it is going to take to read it.’ ‘Help me connect to the people behind it.’”

Witter said apolitical wasn’t in the habit of building silos, and the technology has enabled them to show how policies connect and impact different parts of people’s lives. This, in turn, improves policymaking.
Apolitical first became involved with the Public Sector Strategy Round Table in 2016 and will remain a partner in the Public Sector Strategy Network going forward. It invited people from around the world to take part in the conversation, all of whom keen to design an agenda to meet the needs of governments. It has used its online platform to share ideas and allow participants to remain connected. Witter said, “We also offer them what we call a concierge service. We support them by answering questions around policy like, ‘I need to find someone who’s an expert in blockchain and government.’ Or one question last year was, ‘What other governments are using cloud computing?’ We were able to connect them to someone else so their governments can consider it.”

In line with this, Witter describes apolitical as “bridge builders with impact” – something that is not just connecting one-to-one, but something which is connecting many to many others. She said, “There are some geopolitical things which I think have made us more prescient between Brexit, Trump, [and] rising populism. People are looking for what’s working – people of all types of political parties. This isn’t just for one party. It’s for everyone.”

Apolitical was recently listed as one of 100 companies considered to have the most potential to influence, change, or create new global markets. Witter, however, doesn’t see the platform as disruptive. She said, “We see us as building a platform to help government disrupt itself by being more efficient about finding ideas. You would never in the private sector bring an idea in front of your board or CEO and not have done some due diligence around it. We hope this is both an inspiration platform for people in government but also a due diligence platform that they can find other people and be able to say, ‘Hey, you did that there, we want to do this here. Help me do it.’”

Apolitical has covered more than 800 stories looking at what is happening in different governments. These trends included tech connectivity, intense citizen engagement, big data, policy labs and design thinking, partnership procurement, and behavioral insights.

“Partnerships have always been important in government, but we could hear today that as tax dollars go down, and problems get more complex, governments need more and more to partner with the private sector – especially the start-up world,” explained Witter. “Start-ups are often innovating around the edges and that’s where a government is needing partners, which has a whole domino effect on how we do procurement. I definitely brought up this procurement point because I think every country is struggling with procurement.”

Witter said the caliber of people attending the sixth Public Sector Strategy Round Table reflected well on the event organizers, but it also reflected well on public service in general. She said, “There’s sort of a feeling that the best and brightest go into business and they don’t go into government but if you were sitting in that room today, you would think the best and brightest went into government, which gives me a sense of relief that we have such smart minds.” Witter said she was hoping to focus much more on the solutions, not just diagnosing the problems.

Every government is at a different place when it comes to innovation. Governments can be better supported, Witter believes, once they are more humanized. She said, “I think the more we humanize government, the better we will be at supporting governments. It’s not the government’s job to solve the problem. We are citizens and we have to be in a collaboration with them to do that.”
### List of Participants

(Positions, organizations and bios correct at time of session – June 2017)

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**Rose P. Abdollahzadeh  United Kingdom**

RAPPORTEUR

Rose Abdollahzadeh is the head of the Director’s Office and Research Partnerships at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, an international affairs policy institute based in London. She has been at Chatham House since 2010 and in her current role supports the development of the institute’s research agenda and key projects in addition to supporting the Director and senior staff with strategic initiatives. Ms. Abdollahzadeh earned her B.A. in international relations from the University of Warwick and an M.Sc. in migration and ethnic studies from the University of Amsterdam.

**Rabih Abouchakra  United Arab Emirates / Canada**

Rabih Abouchakra is the founder and Managing Director of the Office of Strategic Affairs at the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court since 2009, providing socioeconomic thought leadership and strategic advisory. Previously, he was a Partner of Booz & Company based in the firm’s Abu Dhabi office. Mr. Abouchakra served as the head of the “Organization and Strategy” practice in the Middle East focusing on public administration modernization, policy formulation, large-scale transformation, and economic planning. Prior to that Mr. Abouchakra was a Senior Associate Consultant at Bain & Company in...
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Lucy Fallon-Byrne is Assistant Secretary of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform where she is responsible for public service reform, and Program Director of the Reform and Delivery Office. Prior to her current appointment, Dr. Fallon-Byrne was Assistant Director General, Director of Corporate Affairs at the Central Statistics Office (CSO), where she led a significant program of reform. Before joining the CSO, she worked in the Department of Social Protection where she supported a major program of transformation, developing a new streamlined one-stop shop service for jobseekers nationwide. She also developed and led a program of organizational development, the OneDSP program. Dr. Fallon-Byrne was director of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance leading an ambitious program of workplace reform and innovation from 2001 to 2010. Previously she served as assistant chief executive of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment where she oversaw the development and introduction of the new Primary School Curriculum in Ireland. Dr. Fallon-Byrne holds an M.A. in political science and an M.B.A. from University College Dublin, and a Ph.D. in organizational innovation from Dublin City University.
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Liz McKeown is chief economist at the UK Cabinet Office, and head of Analysis & Insight - a multidisciplinary hub that provides analytical expertise, support and challenge to policy areas across the Cabinet Office. She is also the UK representative on the OECD Public Governance Committee and a member of its bureau, which provides the committee’s strategic leadership. She is a continuing fellow at the University of Cambridge’s Centre for Science and Policy. Previously she has been acting director of the Civil Service Group providing leadership of its strategy, policy, delivery and analytical functions. Prior to this Ms. McKeown led the Government’s Horizon Scanning Programme, including providing the secretariat for the Cabinet Secretary’s Advisory Group. She has also previously held a variety of strategy, analysis and policy roles at the Cabinet Office and other UK Government departments. She holds a B.Sc. (First Class Honours) Economics and an M.Sc. (Distinction) Economics from the University of Bristol.

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Charles Ehrlich joined Salzburg Global Seminar as a Program Director in May 2014. He has particular responsibility for designing, developing, and implementing programs on justice, democracy, economics, and rule of law. He has practical experience in legal development working in over a dozen countries, including in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Russian Federation, advising governments and public institutions on strategic planning, drafting legislation, and implementing comprehensive reforms in the justice sector, public administration, property rights, freedom of the media, and constitutional law. Dr. Ehrlich has also worked as legal counsel for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Kosovo, in Georgia, and at its Secretariat in Vienna. At the Claims Resolution Tribunal in Switzerland, he adjudicated claims to Nazi-era bank accounts. He remains affiliated with Wolfson College, Oxford, and has published a book, *Lliga Regionalista – Lliga Catalana, 1901-1936* (in Catalan), and numerous academic articles on constitutional law, justice, and political history. Dr. Ehrlich holds an A.B. in history and classics (Latin) from Harvard University, a J.D. from the College of William and Mary, an M.Sc.Econs. in European studies from the London School of Economics, and a D.Phil. on contemporary Spanish history from the University of Oxford.

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Salzburg Global Seminar

Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1947 with a mission to challenge present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. More than 30,000 people from nearly 170 countries have participated in our programs over seven decades.

Salzburg Global designs multi-year programs to bridge divides and foster collaboration for lasting change. We convene outstanding people across generations, cultures and sectors. Together we seek to achieve long-term impact and results at scale through alliances, networks and projects on the ground.

Our secluded and inspiring home at Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, Austria – built in 1736 by the Archbishop of Salzburg, restored by the Salzburg Festival’s co-founder Max Reinhardt, used by Hollywood for sets in The Sound of Music, and now an award-winning hotel – allows us to welcome all participants in conditions of trust, openness and creativity.

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