ukgovcamp

Session: 4

Room: Banqueting Suit 1

Session title : What can we learn from governments around the world

Session leader : Anthia Kozakou

Volunteer to continue conversation after :

Notes taken by : Glen Ocskó

Notes

- The intention of the session is for us to learn from how different governments around the world offer services, and what makes some of them so good.
- In some countries it's not always clear who is providing which service, which means some of the examples may not always be government-run
- E-visas - especially **Australia's** - are generally considered bad.
- **Dutch** public transport is very well connected - the whole network runs through tap-in technology for payments. **Germany** also has great connections when it comes to train services feeling really joined up.
- In some countries they use I**D cards,** but this isn't the case in the UK.
- **Disability access** can be really difficult when operating in a different language
- One participant was told in an **Austrian** airport that she "wasn't disabled enough" because she didn't have a clear injury that looked like a skiing incident
- **Ukraine** has done huge amounts around digital public services. An example is a single digital app for all Ukrainian services, including ID, car ownership, claims for home damage, reporting damaged infrastructure and more - all in the same app.

- **East African** farming development using digital tools has benefited from a lack of existing infrastructure, which means they've been able to leap ahead without having to modernise legacy systems and technology.
- **Estonia** have been able to take the same approach
- **Moldova** has taken a similar approach to Ukraine, perhaps even repurposing elements of that tool, allowing home ownership to be dealt with.
- **Germany** has decided to make digital sovereignty and open source a key pillar of their plans, and has started collaborating with the French in this area.
    - In terms of risks, it was agreed that this approach was no more risky than using existing COTS tooling
    - It was also highlighted that open source doesn't mean free
- **Denmark** has MIT ID, which is another multi-purpose digital ID. They've done a lot of research around support needs for those with accessibility needs. They've also mandated that documentation is sent digitally rather than by post.
- In the UK we're having to constantly prove that we are human, while other countries have much more integrated tooling based on **digital ID**.
- **India** is enormous and has rolled out an equally enormous digital identity programme.
- **Australia** has banned social media for under 16-year-olds.
- Many countries have decided to reduce reliance on large providers such as Microsoft, and move towards **open source tools** instead.
- Ensuring folk in government making decisions are being advised and informed effectively, and supported to work with experts in a way which has felt strained since covid.
- In **Singapore** central agencies collaborate very closely and well, meaning decision making is exceptionally fast. This is not true in the UK.
- Deciding what we DON'T do with technology is as important as deciding what we DO. We need to examine what has gone wrong elsewhere as well as looking at what has gone well.
- At the moment our entire connected lives and shared digital memories are tied in with a small number of very large suppliers, which is very dangerous.
- There should be clear decoupling between civic infrastructure and any political agendas in a country.
- **Portugal** decriminalised drug possession, but an idea like that would never fly politically in the UK. This isn't in the technical sphere, but is an example of something that's happened abroad that should be considered.
- **Universal Basic Income** is also being trialled in many different countries
- There's an argument to be focusing on the **human element**, rather than the technical elements, but this takes a lot of political courage.
- Finland are trialling putting people up in hotels in order to fight homelessness, for a defined period of time. This is another example of something which would be a problematic discussion in the UK.
- In the UK we're very solution-focused when it comes to conversations. Should we be focusing more on talking about the outcomes when it comes to identifying solutions?
- **South Korea** has a programme in their local districts to encourage participation in local government which was more outcome focused - they introduced a gamified incentive system to award coupons to be spent in the local economy for those undertaking good civic actions and attitudes. The fear was that this would feel like

tracking good deeds, but in reality it's been very well received. The framing of these is key.

- The media has been a real blocker when it comes to things like digital ID.
- The exceptions as to where it might not be appropriate are another blocker for wider adoption
- A general challenge is how investment in one area creates savings in another - with the way budgets are currently set up, many services are only interested in those developments which benefit them personally.
- A regular refrain is "focus on outcomes" when it comes to digital projects.
- Before it gets near those who are tasked with technical development, policy folk are those shaping what should and shouldn't be achieved. **Denmark** are an example who have legislation in place to combat this exact challenge.
  - Too often the operational and delivery elements of a policy are only thought of long after the policy has been agreed.
  - The public don't feel able to get involved in shaping policy decisions and development - government is seen as very opaque, even to those working within it.
- The **Netherlands** publishes a list of policy ideas that the public can vote on to explore further (similar to participatory policy making)
- **Civic education** is a massive gap - most young people don't understand the differences between local and central government, how public democracy works, what government does, what good looks like, etc…
- It's often hard to see democracy in action, and understand how their opinions lead to results (good or bad).
- Taiwan is a notable omission in the discussion around digital democracy.
- A commonality between those who have made great strides is that those countries are generally smaller and have less institutional legacy.
- It's easy to forget how corrupt a lot of countries were before digital evolution - this created a very different set of challenges for them to overcome.
- Those tools which are made for profit are designed to be simple, and people seem to expect something similar without realising that government isn't anywhere near as simple as many of the transactional B2C processes common in the private sector.
- It's really easy to implement good, joined up policy of you're an autocratic government: the UK is a very different environment to work in.