Frontend – Evitando o vale do desespero: como navegar na transformação digital nos governos – com Alexis Wichowsi.mp3

julho 07, 2021

• 4:56 - 6:52
Olá bom dia a todas e a todos. Sejam muito bem-vindas e bem-vindos, a mais uma edição do nosso evento ENAP Fronteiras e tendências, o Frontend. Meu nome é Joao Vitor, coordenador geral de capacitação de altos executivos da ENAP e pra quem ainda não conhece, o frontend é uma serie de conversas regulares que promove discussões ricas sobre temas atuais e relevantes pro governo, com a participação de renomados especialistas.

• 5:21 - 5:34
E hoje nos temos a satisfação de contar com convidados muito especiais pra abordar o tema da transformação digital em governos, para os quais eu já deixo aqui o agradecimento especial da ENAP.

• 5:34 - 6:15
Então, apresento a vocês a speaker do dia, Alexis Wichowsi, vice-diretora de tecnologia pra inovação da cidade de Nova York e professora de governo, mídia e tecnologia na escola de relações internacionais e publicas da Universidade de Columbia e Ph.D. em ciência da informação pela University at Albany's College de engenharia e ciências aplicadas. E apresento também o debatedor do dia, Tiago Peixoto, cientista politico e especialista sênior em governança do Banco Mundial, desde que ingressou na instituição em 2010, Tiago tem trabalhado com governos no desenvolvimento de soluções digitais para melhores politicas publicas e serviços.

• 6:17 - 7:06
O titulo da conversa de hoje é muito instigante, que é evitando o vale do desespero, como navegar na transformação digital em governo, eu por sinal fiquei curioso pra saber da Alexis sobre o titulo e já convido também todos os participantes a no decorrer do evento, participar ativamente com perguntas no chat, que o nosso debatedor, Tiago, vai na medida do possível endereça-las a Alexis. E o ultimo aviso, a conversa será conduzida em inglês, então pra aqueles que preferem acompanhar o evento pelo o link com tradução simultânea, eu peço aqui pra equipe da ENAP compartilhar o link pelo chat, que serão super bem vindos, então vocês podem ter essa opção de acompanhar o link em inglês ou

com a tradução. Então, passo agora a palavra pro Tiago conduzir a conversa com a Alexis. Muito obrigado, Tiago, a palavra está contigo.

• 7:06 - 7:52

Olá, boa tarde a todos, antes de tudo pedir desculpas, eu vou passar pro inglês. Hello everyone. First of all, I'd like to thank you ENAP for the opportunity. These conversations have been extremely interesting and it's a pleasure to be here again in one more conversation with Alexis. I think I last time I've met Alexis, it's been many years ago, before, um, the world went a bit crazy. Uh, but it's good to see that we're starting to have some promise of normality and then it becomes also the moment to start more conversations on the long-term and how do we go from here.

• 7:52 - 8:19

So, without further, I don't want to get too much into details. I want to give maximum of time for the conversation. So, Alexis is great being here with you again, let's start with a very simple question and then we can take it from there. How do we navigate digital transformation in government, Alexis? Let us know a little bit more about it.

• 8:20 - 8:56

Thank you so much. And thank you so much to ENAP for hosting me and inviting me to speak with you today. I look forward to when I can come back to Brazil in person, sometime in the future. Um, so Tiago for your question. Yes. Very simple question. Navigating digital transformation in government. Um, obviously it's, uh, it's, it's tricky and there's a lot of different components involved, but one of the things that I like to focus on is the way that we approach change in general, in life, and which also transforms into how we approach change in government.

• 8:57 - 9:23

So, we all join government because we want to see some sort of positive change in the world. Uh, but once you're inside government, it's not always clear how to achieve the change that you want to see. You have to go through various processes and get approvals, and there are many obstacles to getting to a successful completion of whatever program you're trying to Institute.

• 9:24 - 9:56

So, the key question really is, how do you navigate any kind of change, especially a massive cultural change, like digital transformation. So, I came across an article, um, a few years ago that really put this in perspective for me, it was by two American psychologists talking about what they called avoiding the valley of despair. And this was a way of explaining how people experience emotional change. But I think you'll see very quickly how it relates to digital change as well.

• 9:57 - 10:34
So, to start with, we all come to a new idea and this place of what they described uninformed optimism. So, we don't really know much about what the undertaking is, but we feel hopeful that we're going to be successful. Then we get to the next stage, which is called informed pessimism. So, the more we learn about the work that's ahead of us, we start to feel a little bit daunted perhaps by the amount of change that we need to bring about the next and most critical stage is what they call the valley of despair.

• 10:34 - 11:06
So, you've started some sort of project you've learned about how much it's going to take to get it done and you just feel like there's no way you're going to be able to make this happen. And it's very easy at this point to abandon the idea of even pursuing this and starting over with something else, just leaving the whole project completely. However, if you push through this pit, this valley of despair, you come back to a stage of what they call informed optimism.

• 11:06 - 11:32
So, you know now what obstacles you face, but you're not letting it stop you. You've got a plan to deal with the obstacles and you're going to push forward to, I t leads you to the final stage, which is some sort of success. So, in terms of avoiding the valley of despair in government, through with the digital transformation process, this is very similar to agile methodologies in programming.

• 11:33 - 12:09
One of the things that governments have done with technology projects in the past is approach them as these monolithic giant projects that lasts for several years, um, with all of the projections, for the requirements laid out in advance, this is called the waterfall approach. Um, but the key to avoiding this valley of despair is actually to adopt the agile methodologies in any project you undertake in government, um, to introduce more digital kinds of ways of working in digital products.

• 12:09 - 12:40
So, you do quick iterative cycles where you make some progress, you get feedback and you adapt, and therefore you don't ever get to the point where you're dragged down into this pit of despair where you feel like abandoning the whole thing, because you know that there's always going to be opportunity to improve

and change. So, if you stay near the neighborhood of change, you can keep yourself in a place where you're focused on the possibilities of success.

• 12:40 - 13:16
And this is one of the ways I think that digital transformation in government is going to happen. It's not just about the technology, it's not about the tools. It's about the way that we approach the work, all of the work and do the kinds of things that we've seen be successful in the technology sector, like the agile approach and adopt the methodology with all of our programs in government. So, in short digital transformation in government is not just about digitizing processes or digitizing the ways that we've always done things.

• 13:16 - 13:48
It's about adopting a whole different kind of culture and approach that allows for rapid cycles of reflection, feedback, and change. And if we do this, we can avoid ever getting sucked into that pit of despair and hopefully see that change happen, um, in not 10 years or five years, but in just a short cycles of months and even maybe years at a time. So, this is my approach.

• 13:48 - 14:15
Um, we're trying to roll this out in New York city government, and we've had some success with this. So, I'm hopeful that this will work in other governments as well. Um, and whether we all adopt this or just, um, have champions within different parts of government who adopt this, I think this is definitely the starting place for digital transformation to be successful.

• 14:20 - 14:29
And so, with that, I would love to hear, uh, if Tiago has any thoughts or reflections, um, and have a discussion about this.

• 14:29 - 15:00
Yeah. All Right, Alexis. No, fantastic. And it started from one of my favorite subjects, which is, um, which is bringing agile approaches to government, right. I mean, uh, I dropped protests to government against waterfall approaches to government. Uh, we all agree with the principle, but, um, uh, I think all of those would try, uh, bring agile approaches to government as well. They probably have been like in situations of a valley of despair when they try to do it as first.

• 15:00 - 15:27

Right. So, I mean, when I think of agile approaches and in my work with governments that there are many challenges, right? So first of all, in very practical terms, it's how do you bring, uh, agile software development with a culture of public procurement, right. Which has been developed to be, to build bridges, which lends itself a lot to agile, to waterfall models, but not to agile, right.

• 15:27 - 16:17

I think in here, a caveat, we need you to say, right, agile doesn't lend itself to everything, we are going to build bridges in an agile iterative approach but when it comes to software, we want to do it. But then the first things that we have is there is the challenge of procurement, which in Brazil is a problem. Uh, but in so many other countries, any in the United States, we know, uh, it's also another challenge. Then you have also the whole, uh, ecosystem of vendors, which is quite powerful as well. Right. Uh, uh, I remember when the United States presented some of its approaches, we had lots of big vendors coming, coming forth and being naturally how to say kind of like very forthcoming, uh, against that, and then you have also the political behavior, which is one, is the idea of certainty.

• 16:18 - 16:29

What do I get two years from now, right? And the other one is about blame avoidance. Whereas agile builds a build on like prototyping learning, iterating, and improving.

• 16:29 - 16:39

So how do you bring agile in practice and maybe if you could share from your personal experience to public sector work.

• 16:40 - 17:11

So, these are excellent questions and you went right to the heart of the problem, which is, uh, these three pressures that every government faces. Procurement, how do we make sure that we don't just, um, get sort of roped into a project with the biggest vendors, because they have the most influence. Political pressures and the fear of being blamed, if something goes wrong and then, um, needing to see success right away.

• 17:11 - 17:54

So, one of the ways that we've done this is by starting sort of, um, protected programs that are specifically meant for experimentation. Um, we created in the, during the pandemic, a program with volunteers from the tech sector, uh, called the NYCX innovation fellows. And one of the things that we did this for is because in the middle of the worst outbreaks in New York city, we actually had a lot of people from different tech companies sort of raise their hand and say, is there any way that

we can help because everyone was seeing that the community was suffering and wanted to do some more?

• 17:54 - 18:25

So, we decided let's take this free goodwill. Um, there's no harm in putting them on a small project, partnering them with an agency that's working on some sort of emergency response, um, whether it was a dashboard or a program, and just see what we can do in 10 weeks. So, we gave it a very limited time, 10 weeks sprint. We didn't have to invest any funds because these people were volunteers.

• 18:25 - 18:56

So that sidestepped the procurement problem. And in terms of the political pressures, because this was working in partnership with people from outside of government, it was very easy to say, well, if it doesn't work out, this was just an experiment that we didn't waste any taxpayer dollars on, but if it did work out, then of course the political leadership would get to take credit for it. So, this is one of the ways that we, um, had some success in this approach.

• 18:57 - 19:39

And the other piece of this was getting people in leadership positions to see the art of the possible. So, one of the, uh, strategies that some of our tech volunteers, uh, recommended to us and worked very well was what we call the sacrificial prototype. So, this was just creating a mock-up or a kind of suggestion of what an outcome might look like. And this could be whether you're looking at, um, a visualization of what a dashboard could be, or even, um, a press release at the start of a project saying, this is the kind of story we're going to be able to tell when this is finished.

• 19:40 - 20:11

Now being able to show leadership people in decision-making positions that this is the kind of credit they're going to be able to take for a project when it works out, turns out to be very motivating and opens a lot of doors. So, with these different practices, having very limited sprints, partnering with people from the outside and showing leadership, what it might look like when they could finally tell that success story gave us a lot of opportunities that we wouldn't have had otherwise.

• 20:14 - 20:44

Fantastic, Alexis. Fantastic. And, but then, I mean, that solves part of the problem, right? To show how agile works, right. That doesn't change the way a procurement

works for instance. Right. So, but then my question brings to something else. I mean, you're probably one of the best examples of what we call a new generation of digital services approach.

• 20:44 - 21:19
And part of that approach has also been agile, agile iterative models, service design. And this is like, this is a user centric approach, but part of that as well has been about the insourcing of tech skills, uh, into the public sector that did not exist before. Right. I mean, that bit of, there was a bit of a heterodoxy in the 90's, which is like, let's outsourcing everything. And then when we realized that it wasn't working now, we're getting back into like, we need to insource great tech skills.

• 21:19 - 21:50
So, I assume, uh, that in your role, one of the things that we have to do as well, it is to in-source great tech skills into your teams as well. The question that we ask in many countries like Brazil, middle incomes, but also in low incomes where I am working. It is how do you keep competition with private sector to bring those best people in the job to help us doing that digital transformation?

• 21:51 - 22:40
Yeah. It's so important that you ask this question, because this is the biggest challenge that we have is government is never going to be able to pay as much for tech talent as the private sector will. It's not going to be able to compete with Google or Amazon or one of those. So we need to figure out ways to give people in the tech sector opportunities to contribute to government, maybe for short tours of duty, short periods of time, help make, uh, advance the digital transformation within government, but also recognize that they're probably not going to stay in the public sector for their whole careers, because frankly not only about not making as much money, but they, their tech skills might become out of date if they stay in the public sector for too long.

• 22:41 - 22:51
So, in the United States and many other countries, there are now programs where people can join the federal government.

• 22:51 - 23:35
For instance, in the US it's called the presidential innovation fellows' program. You come in for a year or 18 months to the public sector, work on some projects, help advance digital transformation and teach the in-house tech talent, the most

up-to-date methodologies and tools. And then they go back to their jobs in the private sector. So, we're trying to figure out ways to create more of these sorts of short term, um, opportunities where people can share knowledge from the private sector to the public sector, because we recognize that government is always going to be a little bit behind in terms of technological sophistication, where it comes to the private sector.

• 23:35 - 23:49
Now, in terms of, I want to do want to get back to your question about procurement, because it's one of these kind of nasty words nobody wants to talk about in government, but it's a nightmare for all of us is how you actually get the money to support these initiatives.

• 23:49 - 24:26
So, one of the ways that we've approached it here with things like the innovation fellows' programs is by showing in these very small examples, proof of concept. So, we have these innovation fellows work on a project for 10 weeks. Maybe it's a website, maybe it's a dashboard, maybe it's an app, whatever it might be. And it's not enough to solve governments, service delivery problems, but it's enough to give the, our partner agencies an idea of how much they would be able to accomplish if they did hire in-house tech.

• 24:26 - 24:52
So, our other goal is to work with our management and budget office to get them to approach procurement differently. Now, many other countries like in the UK, they've done this in Canada, they've done this, they have this sort of phased approach to budgeting where instead of just saying, okay, we're going to give you $5 million to go work with a private vendor to create something.

• 24:53 - 25:29
They turn to an agency and say, okay, show me your prototype. And if you show a prototype that's functional, and that meets all the requirements of user centered design and has been tested in all of these kinds of things, then they release a second bucket of money to go hire more developers, for instance, to create a larger scale version of it, the alpha version, and then once that's live and has been tested, it's ready to go on. Then the budget office releases another chunk of money. So, I think that the key to digital transformation in government, it's not just about hiring technologists.

• 25:29 - 25:52

It's about fixing the procurement problem too. We have to get our budget office to see that throwing a ton of money at a large it project. That's not going to deliver for five years is like throwing money away. Instead, we need to think about having these sorts of phased approaches to releasing funds so that you're only paying for stuff that you know is going to work.

• 25:56 - 26:29
Excellent. Alexis. And I'm going to probably come back to procurement later because I think it's something that most of the people in the audience are here, are familiar with, actually, by the way, curiosity in Brazil, our procurement law in Brazil ends with the number 666, which is the number of the beast as we know. Um, so, uh, we might come back to that issue later, or maybe on the questions, but I have an excellent question here or a comment, uh, just a very quickly for Marcel Chaves, who talks about it.

• 26:29 - 26:51
All right. And as you mentioned, right, digital transformation, it's not about digitalization, but it's about changing culture. And this is one of the things that have been seen, and you talked a little bit about of it. But what I find interesting is if you look at the UK at the beginning, they started to talk about digital services standards, right?

• 26:51 - 27:27
And now they migrated into services standards. We don't talk about digitalization anymore. We talk about service standards and, I know that, uh, New York itself started to think about like service design and issues like this. Can you talk to us about how you have like this kind of, I don't know, like this spillover or this transition where the conversation maybe starts through digital, and you have this culture later going into more into culture of service design, and what's your perspective to that. And for people who like to be promoting that kind of like culture change, what do you think are things that should be bearing in mind.

• 27:28 - 27:59
As an excellent example, it's one of the things that I constantly point to, um, I teach part-time at Columbia and I try to get my students to understand that it's technology has this very special role to play in the digital transformation of government, but it's not necessarily the one we think it is. It's very difficult to walk into a meeting for instance, with your boss and say, this process of delivering services is terrible.

• 28:01 - 28:35

But what you can do is say, if we add some sort of technology to facilitate this process, we can improve it. So, it's much easier to sell people on the idea that technology is part of the solution rather than say, the process itself is really not working. Um, so part of it is about how you frame it. Technology can be this kind of useful distraction, where it gets everyone focused and excited because it's shiny and new and, you know, it's the future.

• 28:35 - 29:06
Um, but really, it's kind of like a Trojan horse for change that we're addressing actually the underlying problematic processes while we make that transition to using the technology. Because if you just digitize a service, that's flawed, it's just going to be a flawed digital service instead of a flawed analog service. So, you really need to get at that kind of baseline foundation of how to make the service work better for people.

• 29:06 - 29:44
And this is where this question of, um, user centered design comes up as well is very often in government. We roll out technology projects or any kind of service, really without actually talking to the people who are going to be interacting with the service or benefiting from those services. We don't necessarily know if it's working for them. So, introducing technology as the solution is kind of a sneaky way to get the conversation started about, well, if we're going to have money spent on this new technology, maybe we should test it.

• 29:44 - 30:17
You test it with real people. You don't have to call it user centered design, but really what you're doing is creating that culture where people get into the habit of asking for people to test products before they roll out large scale and where you're getting feedback from the citizens that you're trying to serve. So that service delivery is improved along the way. So, it's kind of a long way of saying technology is again, it's like the way you sneak it in the room, um, that the digital transformation that you're trying to achieve.

• 30:22 - 30:24
Great, great.

• 30:24 - 30:57
I liked this one question too, that there's, there's a conversation here in the background that I'm following, which people are, some people are saying, well at the sub national level, the valley of despair is much bigger, right? Because of, uh, maybe issues of capacity, resources, and, but other people here, for example,

Fatima highlights well, but it's the one that is closest to the people or most problems are, and maybe that's why we should be starting. And I think one of the things that ENAP does is to cater for those working at both levels.

• 30:57 - 31:29
Uh, I know you're working at the sub national level, but interacting all the time and very much, uh, in touch and what happens with the federal level, if you could say, what's the difference that you say? I mean, if you could say like doing digital transformation at sub national level or at the federal level versus a Federation in many ways, very similar to the United States, how do you see, uh, how do you see this plane out? Or is there any difference at all? Or is that a distinction that is not worth making?

• 31:29 - 32:01
Oh, I totally agree that it's a distinction worth acknowledging because it is different when you are working. So, I used to work for the state department for, um, at the federal level here in the US and then moved now to working at the city level. Now, granted New York, city's like the size of a country when, in terms of its budget and its diversity in its size, but it's a local government. So, the interactions with, and the relationships with the people we're serving are very different at the federal level it's a little bit more abstract.

• 32:01 - 32:30
You're sort of a level or two removed from the people that you're directly serving because you need to create systems and processes that are going to work for the whole country. I think there's actually a lot more opportunity to experiment and try things out at the local level because you have that proximity to the people that you're serving and can access, uh, in real time, the kinds of challenges that they are facing.

• 32:30 - 33:01
So, I'll give you an example. We have a program here that we call collab's, which just means community laboratory. And what we do is we go to a neighborhood in somewhere in New York city that we know is having some challenges, whether it's economic or in terms of safety. And we don't go in as the government and say, you know, here's what we're going to do to fix your problem. We say to them, what problem do we even want to work on? Like, what do you see as the biggest problem?

• 33:01 - 33:25

So, we've got done this in a few different neighborhoods now with a lot of community engagement, which to be really clear about this means sitting with people in the community. Sometimes it takes a while of letting them vent and be upset and express their complaints about government. But eventually if you just listen long enough, they will tell you, these are the things that really concern us.

• 33:25 - 34:08
So, we did this one first in, um, an area of Brooklyn that had a lot of safety issues. They wanted to work on safety and see what kind of technology we could introduce to make people feel more safe, but they didn't want more surveillance. That was definitely something that they were opposed to. So, we said, okay, let's see what we can do. So, we had an innovation challenge where we asked technologists all over the world. What do you think would be a good solution for this community? And we had a competition, we picked some winners and we introduced this pilot test program in this community to, um, address this issue about safety in, in their community that did not involve surveillance.

• 34:08 - 34:20
So, one of my point is with the local level, you can try things out in small scales with real people in a way that at the federal level might be a little bit too distant or abstract.

• 34:21 - 34:52
It's not easy. I'm not gonna pretend that it is. Um, generally if you show up in a community, that's got some sort of problems and you represent a government, you're going to hear a lot of complaining. First, the people are angry, people are upset, but if you just get past that and acknowledge their frustrations, then you can really engage in a dialogue and start working with them in this hyperlocal way, in this collaborative way to see how technology might play a role in addressing some of those problems.

• 34:52 - 35:00
So, I think there's a lot to be done at the local level, um, that wouldn't be possible if you're trying to deal with the whole country.

• 35:02 - 35:19
Fantastic. And yes, and if you remember, for instance, even in the United States, many of the innovations that now are national, they started this sub national level, right? Including, uh, public schooling. So, uh, laboratories of democracy. So, they speak in the United States, right? Uh, the local level.

• 35:20 - 36:09

Uh, one great thing is, and I mean, uh, civic technologies, which is a bit different, right? One thing is digital services the other thing is civic technologies. And you kind of alluded this working with grassroots organizations. But one thing is working with grassroots organizations to working on services, on digital services that are going to be done. The other thing is about leveraging technologies to give people a voice. So, for example, in New York city, uh, you had like some wards that would have, uh, for example, participatory budgeting with mobile voting and issues like this, there's internet voting actually in mobile campaigns.

• 36:09 - 36:52

Um, but some people say, well, maybe the government should be taking just care of digital government part. And they've civic tech's been more like participatory democracy, tech side. Maybe we should believe in just to a grassroots organizations, as long as the government is porous to that. What's your take on that or do you think there's a space for the government to be really promoting civic technologists or spaces for people to impact decision-making on things that are maybe not just about a service, but it's about a policy priority about the budget and so on and so forth, or are we, are those of us working in the technology space.

• 36:52 - 36:59

Should we start maybe first, just focusing on doing more with less, uh, and focusing just on services.

• 37:01 - 37:33

It's an excellent question. And I have actually, uh, a very strong opinion about this. Um, I truly believe that there are so many things that civic technologists can do better than government because they're closer to the communities because they don't represent some large institution and they need to play a very, um, engaged and sustained role in making sure that they deliver those, uh, services and make those connections.

• 37:33 - 38:14

However, only government is required to serve everyone equally and fairly. This means we have to not just connect with the community organizations who are eager to work with us. We need to reach the hardest to reach people, the most vulnerable populations and make sure they have the same opportunities to be engaged and to express their voice as everyone else, that's really hard. And it means that we're not going to be as efficient or fast as the private sector or the

civic technology organizations, but it's our responsibility as a government to reach everyone.

• 38:14 - 38:44
So, I think that the key is partnerships to make sure that we are connecting with civic tech space, the private sector, community organizations, everyone that's out doing good in their community. But remember, government has a special responsibility that no one else has, to make sure we don't leave anyone behind. So, one of the examples that I use in the New York city context is about the digital divide.

• 38:44 - 39:17
Most people think of this as a rural problem or a problem with developing countries, not so much as, um, more economically mature countries, New York city has over 1.5 million residents. So that's 18% of the population that have no internet access in their homes, no phone access, no internet access, nothing which during the pandemic, as you can imagine is hugely problematic. So, one of the things that we've realized is that the private sector for years has ignored these lower income areas.

• 39:18 - 39:48
Um, not put in the infrastructure for internet service because it wasn't worth their time to, they weren't gonna make a lot of money off of it. So, we have stepped in as a city to put public assets up for use, to build infrastructure in these lower income neighborhoods. And the deal is like, you can come work with us, we'll, we'll help fund and subsidize some of these, um, internet expansion activities, but you have to work in these neighborhoods that everyone's ignored for all these years.

• 39:48 - 40:09
So, I think that government needs to think about where they can fill the gaps that the private markets are not filling and that even community organizations and civic tech organizations, maybe aren't filling. So, I think that, um, we just have to kind of keep that responsibility in mind, but recognized we really need all the help we can get. It's all about partnerships.

• 40:11 - 40:53
Yes. So, I think we're going to come back to procurement after that, and it's just an on, on one issue, right? I mean, I'm sure you're familiar and I mean, your book dialogues with it, your, uh, your recent book about the role of the private sector, and it's pretty much, uh, private sector works kind of like one type of freedom, which is I can do whatever, uh, unless it's forbidden by law, whereas the public

sectors is the opposite, I can only do what all laws allow me to do. Right. And, uh, so for example, if I'm an airline and I obliged everybody should do check in, uh, if people who cannot do check-in on their own, they cannot check in and never fly, never take a plane anywhere in their land.

• 40:53 - 41:03
It's not a problem anymore. Uh, because I'm just looking at my revenues or whereas if I'm in public sector, I need to make sure that everybody gets a check-in and gets the airplane, right.

• 41:03 - 41:45
So, but then the question comes a bit, uh, Mariana Mazzucato talks a bit about like investment in technology early on, which I'm familiar. I'm sure you're familiar with. My question is should we also be putting into public sector procurement a certain degree of, uh, private sector, corporate social responsibility. Uh, and to the extent that I know you talk about digital ambassadors, you talk about the private sector, but I mean, should we have some, some, a certain degree of mission driven development as we did in the past, for example, it's concessions in public transport, you're going to get investment here, but he also needs to put investment there where you don't have returns.

• 41:45 - 41:56
Should we be thinking about that also for technology sector, and maybe we're not thinking enough as such, maybe people did a fifty, a hundred years ago when they're giving.

• 41:57 - 42:31
Thinking about postal services and issues like that. How do we think about this redistributive notion, right? And the fact that even when the government is relaying this maybe to the private sector, whether, uh, we should be thinking about this redistributive role and making sure that the private sector, because if led, how they say like, it will just go where the biggest return is, or should they are, should we just separate these two things and have the state making sure that the private sectors are not going to recovering.

• 42:31 - 43:19
So, you hit the nail right on the head. This is exactly the challenge that we're facing is that if you leave something to the private sector, completely market forces will determine that they invest where there's the biggest return on investment, where they're going to make the most money. So, for instance, with this example of the digital divide, what the city has done, what New York city is doing right now is we're

investing $157 million dollars, bringing that to the table and bringing a hundred thousand city assets to the table and saying to the private sector, you are welcome to build out your infrastructure, your privately-run infrastructure using city assets, but you also have to service these neighborhoods.

• 43:19 - 43:36
You've been ignoring if you want to have access to those resources into that funding. And the reason for this is that most government-run technology, infrastructure projects are not historically as high quality as the private sector run technology projects.

• 43:36 - 44:25
So, we're not saying that we want to own and run the services, but we're saying if you want, we're saying to the private sector, if you want access to the assets that the city has to offer, that the government can provide, and some funding that the government can provide, you got to play by our rules. You got to service these areas too. So, it's a partnership and it's a negotiation. And I think that we're doing this right now through this broadband initiative. Um, and we've seen that instead of having just two or three internet service providers in the city, 30, 50, 70 new internet service providers have come to the table and said, we couldn't compete before with these giant other companies.

• 44:25 - 44:57
But with this new model, maybe we can take this neighborhood that's been ignored, or just this neighborhood that's been ignored. We don't have to service the whole city. So, we're trying to change the marketplace to be more competitive, more diverse, and recognizing that we're not going to run the services as a government. Um, but if we partner with the private sector and provide the right incentives to the private sector, we can help shape the market in a way that's more competitive and diverse and serves more people.

• 44:57 - 45:00
That's the approach we're trying. And so far, it's working pretty well.

• 45:01 - 45:43
Fantastic, fascinating. And I mean, lots of positive ratio reactions here. I'm not read because people are kind of like agreeing and going, and kind of like, uh, uh, I would say like aligned with this one question that I have is when you talk about the disenfranchised people from services, we talk about not having internet access. And obviously one of the paths that we follow is that of like, you can have more internet service providers and offering more internet access to them, right. But we

know that internet access is one of the issues that makes, I mean, sometimes I have people have an iPhone, but they cannot use only 5% of the capabilities of that phone which brings me to one question, Alexis.

• 45:43 - 46:22
Is about, uh, multi-channel services. And, uh, I mean, even voice services, right. Because right now we're extremely dependent on the internet to some extent, because it's very visual interfaces, right. But I mean, what I'm saying is can't, we think of also, I don't know, like a third-generation phone services, third generation, 311, which I can just like call from my phone. I barely need any internet access and everything is running on the back. And what I'm saying is that particularly, and when we look at some of like websites crashing in the United States during the pandemics and everything.

• 46:24 - 47:04
Are we doing incur the risk of underrating the 311-slash traditional good old voice services that I talk and I talk to a person, and that is extremely good. And I feel, I feel there's somebody out there. And particularly for people who are the most excluded, they're the ones who are, who most, may be more, I don't know, more resistant to talk to government. My question is, and just for those who are listening 311 services, it's essentially government call center, municipal government call center. It is, uh, is it the end of 311 services, Alexis, voice-based or not?

• 47:05 - 47:43
It's a great question. And I think you are highlighting something that we often overlook, which is we're constantly chasing the next most sophisticated thing with the new bells and whistles that can do all the fancy stuff and maybe ignoring the opportunities for the technologies that we've had for decades, like phone and radio, text. Um, these are things that not only will make sure that people who don't have great connectivity can still access services, but also, as you mentioned, just because you have the phone, you might not know how to use all of it services.

• 47:44 - 48:05
So digital connection is not enough. We also need digital inclusion, which means making sure that people understand the capabilities of the technologies that are at their disposal. So, I don't think that just because now we're doing video calls all over the world and doing business remotely, that that's going to replace the phone.

• 48:05 - 48:59

Um, I think the, the, in some ways we've leapfrogged, um, phone calls, the younger generation tends to not make phone calls. I have teenagers, so I speak from experience. Um, but we are, I think, able to look at the other technologies that they do embrace such as SMS, which is, does not require a great internet connectivity. And our, you know, we are able to do a lot with just those very simple kinds of platforms. Um, one of the things that we've done with vaccine rollout here in New York city is use SMS services as ways to book appointments, send reminders, let people ask questions about, uh, various logistics, um, uh, to make sure that if you don't have internet service or you're not comfortable with it, you can still interact with a human being.

• 48:59 - 49:16
So, I think the key is not to get rid of 311 or those kinds of analog ways to connect with government representatives, but just to open more channels, some people don't want to talk to a human being and just want to go on the website and take care of it that way they can do that.

• 49:16 - 49:50
But if someone wants to talk to a person, they should absolutely be able to talk to a person. And if it's maybe someone that just wants to text a question, of course, they should be able to just text a question. Um, I think one of the other things that we're leaving out is radio. Radio is still incredibly pervasive, and you can reach a ton of people that way. So, we need you to use every channel at our disposal. We need to, if we need, if it comes to it, go door to door, knocking on people's, um, residences to make sure that they have the information they need and can ask questions.

• 49:51 - 50:17
So, it's not that one new technology is going to erase all of the previous generations. I just think that it needs to be an additive approach that we integrate into this holistic picture of having many different ways to reach the help that people need, um, depending on their circumstance, their preference, or their capabilities with connectivity and services.

• 50:22 - 50:24
I think you might be muted, or I can't hear you though.

• 50:27 - 51:08
Yes, I was mute. I'm just happy to say, because I'm a big fan. I'm still a big fan of 311 services and about the potential of interfaces that it can have. Uh, um, sometimes, um, I mean, I think the team, uh, already said, uh, our colleagues

organizing here, but if people have questions, please ask her, we have 10 more minutes. Um, in the meantime, uh, some, uh, questions might, uh, come in, I'm just going to ask you very quickly, Alexis, we talked a bit about private sector, uh, talked about her experience in, uh, in the state department and you have something very interesting, which is a bit about, uh, the idea of, uh, of digital or technology diplomats.

• 51:08 - 51:21
So, shifting gears or going from the micro to the very macro, uh, could you just tell a little bit about this just a bit more, just so that we have an idea.

• 51:21 - 51:53
Yeah. Absolutely. So, I realized a few years ago just watching, um, I used to work at the state department. So, I follow diplomacy news that in 2017, Denmark was the first country in the world to appoint an official diplomat to Silicon Valley as if Silicon Valley was a country. Um, so I was fascinated by this. I wanted to interview his name is Casper Klynge. I wanted to interview him for a book I was writing. So, I reached out and we had this great discussion.

• 51:53 - 52:25
Um, and in the intervening years, um, from 2017 to now, several other countries have also appointed diplomatic envoys to big tech. So, the UK, Canada, Austria, France, Australia, et cetera. Um, and I think this is an absolutely fantastic move where governments can figure out other ways to engage with big tech besides just regulating them, finding them or punishing them.

• 52:25 - 52:32
One of the things about diplomacy is that it gives you many channels to communicate with another powerful party.

• 52:33 - 53:09
So, in the US, for instance, we don't have a tech ambassador or a tech diplomat. We have two choices. When we want to talk with big tech, we can regulate them, which is restrict their, uh, operations in some way, or we can find them, um, basically slapped them on the wrist and say, you have to pay a lot of money. When you have a tech ambassador or a tech diplomat you can create partnerships. You can figure out ways to negotiate changes in the way that businesses operate. That don't necessarily have to be about, um, one power exerting punishment over another power.

• 53:09 - 53:40

So, I think this is a great step in the right direction. I wrote an article about this in wired magazine, um, in may and interviewed the French, Austrian and Canadian, uh, tech ambassadors for it. Um, I think we're going to see a lot more countries start appoint these kinds of positions because regulating and finding is hasn't been working as well as I think people had hoped. And when you find even billions of dollars to a company that can earn that back in a week, how effective is that going to be really.

• 53:40 - 53:46
So, I think we need to think of all of our options and diplomacy is a great path to look into.

• 53:49 - 54:20
Fantastic. And I think it's a super provocative idea, and I loved your piece on the wire. There're so many other people that, uh, talked about it, but one question, I mean, there was a, I think it was clouds of it's, are scholar, right? One of the foundations we'd said, like, where's the continuation of politics by other means, but I mean, maybe one could say that diplomacy without an organization for it. It is a war by other means.

• 54:20 - 54:58
So essentially what I'm saying, and I met some tech diplomats, uh, in my role and my feelings that most of the times they're not advocating about data rights or anything like that. It's not, I'm not saying all the time, and that's not a general generalization, but if we started to have many technology diplomats, maybe what we can have or potential risks is a race to the bottom in which they will actually be just trying to attract their business for their countries or are bringing the large firms to their countries, which brings me to another question to you beyond technology diplomats, do we need a digital United nations or an equivalent like that?

• 54:59 - 55:30
I think we absolutely need some sort of international forum that can convene not necessarily in the same way that the UN does, but one of the advantages of the United Nations is that it provides some place, some neutral space where everyone can kind of come together and talk about the issues that affect us globally, um, whether it's effective or not as a whole different story.

• 55:30 - 56:20
But if the United nations didn't exist, we would have to invent something like the United nations. So, the question is, do we need something like a digital version of the UN, or should the UN just have another wing or organization that's solely

focused on the digital space? Um, I do think that that kind of entity would be necessary and is increasingly, um, it's becoming increasingly important that, um, we don't have anything other than bilateral, or I guess there are conferences, but there's not some sort of like official neutral space to talk about digital rights, for instance, or other kinds of, um, issues that affect us from big tech.

• 56:20 - 56:52
One of the things also that I think that is valuable about places like the UN is that you can get people who have very countries, for instance, that are very different approaches to these issues. Um, you could take, for example, China's approach to technology and digital rights, and the United States they're very different. It's still important that we have dialogue though. We, that we discuss what these, um, what areas of commonality we do have and figure out how to collaborate in ways that we can.

• 56:53 - 57:12
Um, so I think the absence of this kind of unifying neutral body is something that we are going to feel more and more increasingly over the years, um, whether this should be at the UN itself or its own entity, I don't really know. Um, but I do think that we're going to need something like that in the very near future.

• 57:14 - 57:41
Okay. Great. Yeah. And I think that was the question when I was reading, is that the risks that we might enter, just like with the huge digital bilateralism, whereas you want to have like a space of multilateralism, right. And which institution lends to that as well? I think, yes. It's an open question. I mean, I have one more question for you, but I have one last question before that one before last question, by Luis Felipe.

• 57:41 - 58:09
So, to learning by example, right. Uh, And I know it's a very difficult question because it depends on the problem. Uh, and we don't want to be very solutions driven, but if there's one US or worldwide innovation that you think maybe now it's on top of their mind as a top government innovation or something that we should be paying attention to, uh, what would be that one, maybe one or two, and then I'll come with my last question.

• 58:10 - 58:47

Yes. That's a very difficult question, but I can tell you what's top of mind and part of it is because, um, you brought it up earlier, but part of it is also because I think this is, um, a sign of where we need to go. When you mentioned that gov.uk used to have their digital service standard for service delivery. And now it's just service delivery. The digital is assumed. Um, I think this is the direction we need to move in where we don't differentiate or create some false dichotomy between what's technologically available and what's available through analog means, but just serve people better.

• 58:47 - 59:16
I mean, that's what government is for, is to serve our citizens and to make sure that their needs are met. And so, if we're not doing a good job in person, and we're not doing a good job online, who cares what the modality is, we just need to make our services better. So, I think that looking at the example of what gov.uk has done with their service delivery and having standards and assessments that people are, the government agencies are held accountable to, um, is something that we should all learn from.

• 59:19 - 59:53
Fantastic Alexis. And my last question even though you kind of answered in the middle, but I still to, to give a chance, I mean, you're speaking here, uh, and we have federal employees, state employees, municipal employees, the diversity with the, all the different challenges that each of the government levels have. But if there's was one takeaway, one takeaway, if you, if you met somebody and it's like, I can give you only one message for you to be doing digital transformation better, what would be the one message that you'd be giving them?

• 59:56 - 1:00:32
Oh, this is a great question. It's very challenging as well. Um, I would say back to my original comments about avoiding the valley of despair, there are so many examples of people who joined, let me put it this way. Nobody joins government because they think it's going to be a glamorous job, or it's going to pay wonderfully. Um, they joined government because they legitimately want to help, but somewhere along the way, a lot of people become kind of disheartened and broken down by all the obstacles and the bureaucracy.

• 1:00:33 - 1:01:22
And they sort of just give up and punch a clock and then go home. The most important thing that we can do is keep newcomers to government moving forward and inspired and help reinvigorate people. Who've lost hope in new processes and

programs where they can contribute meaningfully, once again. Nobody wants to just sit at their desk and punch a clock. Everybody wants to help and do something significant and meaningful. So, I think if we can find ways to get, let people really contribute from any position that they have in government, um, this would be the biggest thing that we could do to transform both in terms of digital services, but also just the public sector, um, in any country in the world.

• 1:01:25 - 1:01:34
Fantastic. Alexis, thank you so much. It's been incredible. Uh, I'll stop here as João Vitor is over to you. Thank you, Alexis. Thank you so much.

• 1:01:36 - 1:01:55
Thank you, Alexis. Thank you, Tiago. Muito obrigado. Pois bem, gostaria de agradecer a todos e a todas pela participação no frontend de hoje. Alexis e Tiago, muito obrigado de verdade por esse excelente bate papo tão inspirador a proposta da transformação digital em governos. E pra todos, nos vemos nos próximos eventos aqui da ENAP, pra vocês acompanharem o leque de opções que temos aqui, sigam a ENAP nas redes sociais, acesse o portal enap.gov.br e mais uma vez agradecendo, muito obrigado mais uma vez, tenham um ótimo dia.