



Digital technology and artificial intelligence as a tool for social justice: Initiatives by and for marginalized groups and communities

This exploratory research looks at initiatives using artificial intelligence (AI) or digital deployed locally in different parts of the world by groups, communities, or civil society organizations, to achieve their social justice goals.

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AUTONOMISATION
DES ACTEURS JUDICIAIRES
PAR LA CYBERJUSTICE



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The project objectives

- This research seeks to understand how these underrepresented communities, groups or populations interact with AI and digital technologies. This, irrespective of their geopolitical, social contexts and type of marginality.
- The project thus questions why these groups and communities turn to digital and AI technologies, and what governance models are put in place to achieve their goals.





Why are we talking about this?

Groups and communities under-represented in institutional bodies often suffer systemic discrimination of a social and political nature, making it difficult for them to be visible and heard. Yet these groups are seeking to achieve a certain level of representation within the dominant, majority society. However, it seems important to them that this representation be based on their values and objectives, in order to reestablish a certain degree of equity and social justice, as well as more equitable power relations.

Discover what the research team has observed

What are the reasons for using technological tools?

What are the functions of these tools?

What are these technological tools used for?

What impacts have we observed?

What are the learnings that we can draw from this research?





A few examples of digital tools

- Data Collection Tools
- Mobile Applications
- Data Mapping Tools
- Information Sharing Platforms
- Decision-Making Platforms
- Coding Tools
- Data Visualization Tools
- Real-Time Support Platforms for People in Distress



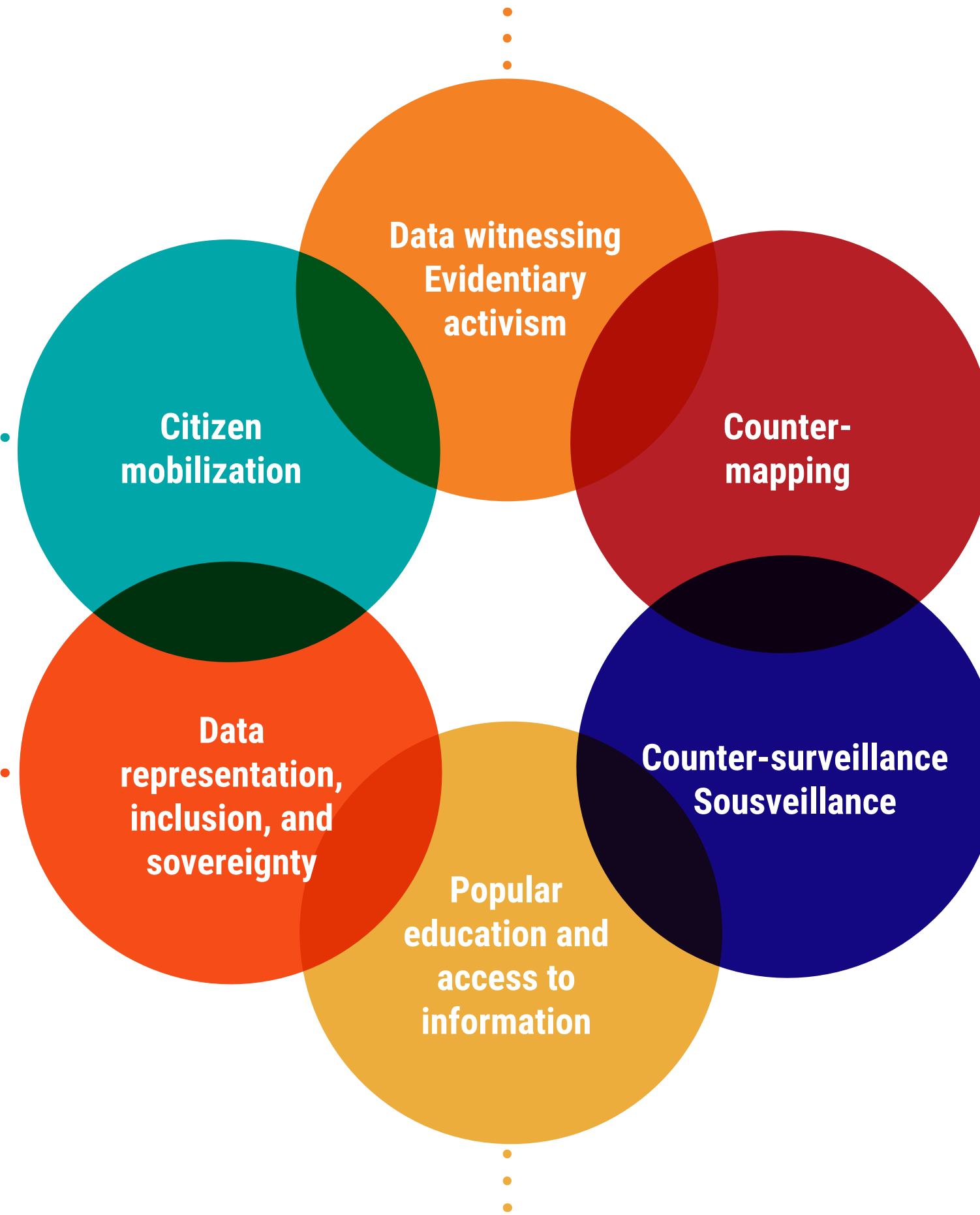


What are the functions of these tools?

Certain tools can gather evidence by using data, often in large quantities, to shed light on situations of injustice. It is a collective process that can highlight and prove the existence of injustices on a systematic scale, beyond geographical and temporal constraints.

Digital tools allow the gathering of forces, actions, and positions from various types of social actors. They have the potential to facilitate citizen mobilization in initiatives aimed at social justice goals.

Access, creation, control, and utilization of databases are crucial measures to promote social justice. They can address challenges and inequalities associated with official and hegemonic databases while restoring control over data related to individuals, groups, and communities from which they were extracted.



Through the innovative use of cartographic processes, certain tools challenge the hegemonic cartographic conventions and biases. Counter-mapping initiatives, through their creation of new maps, challenge dominant and discriminating representations of the territory.

This modality entails the monitoring, by individuals or civil society organizations, of the activities or expenditures of those in power. While it is usually the authorities in power that monitor or oversee the population and marginalized groups and communities, counter-surveillance or sousveillance initiatives undertake surveillance in the opposite direction.

The use of digital tools can disseminate information to various audiences, or, alternatively, the use of popular educational resources can inform audiences about the deleterious effects of digital surveillance practices.

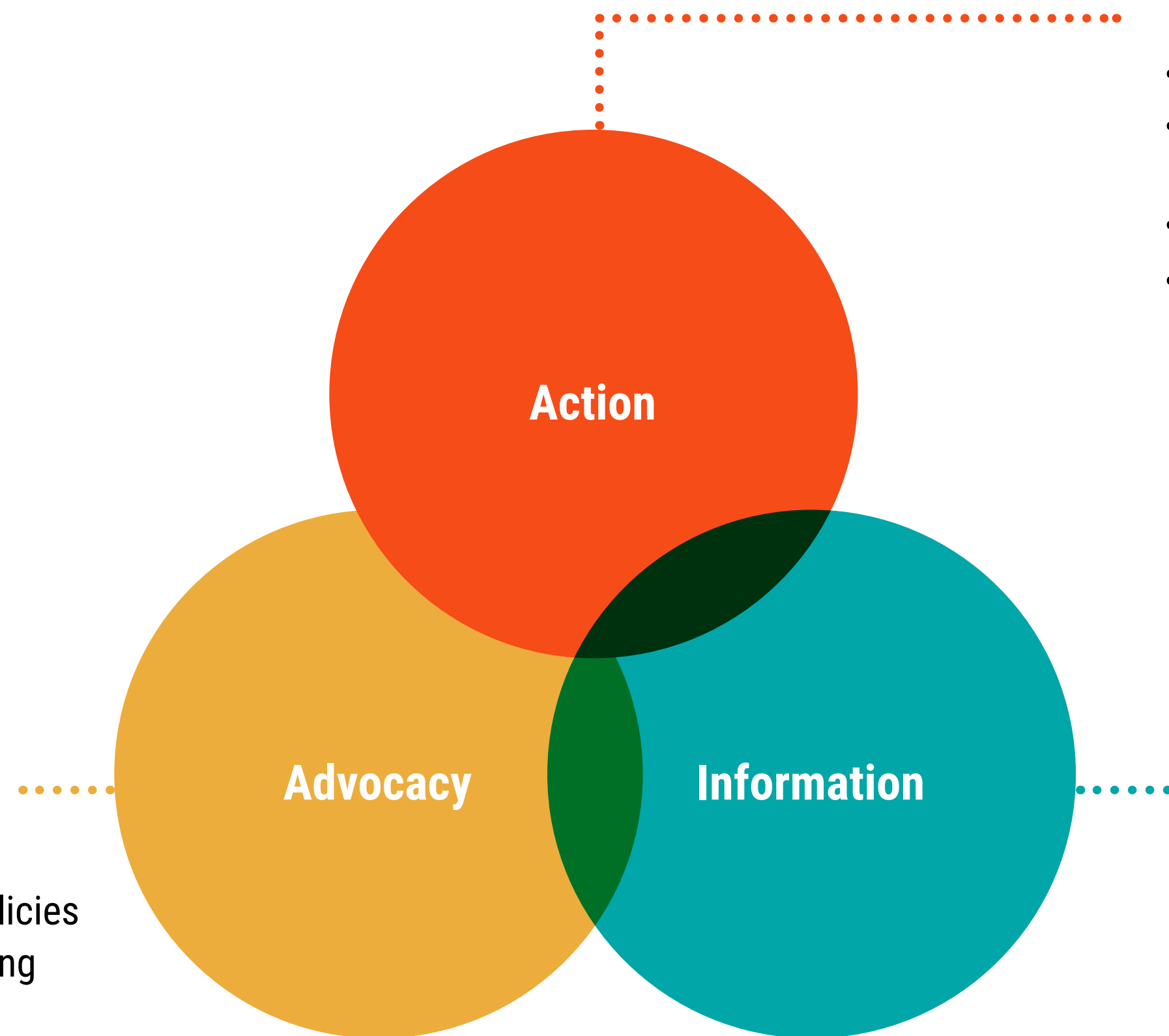




What are these technological tools used for?

To deliver advocacy that enables:

- Documenting lesser-known issues
- Bringing visibility to overlooked needs
- Changes in existing public policies
- Protecting rights and promoting citizen participation



To take actions that support:

- Capacity development or strengthening
- Contextualized interaction with the relevant individuals
- More adequate social representation
- Inclusive decision-making processes

To circulate information that promotes:

- Raising awareness about unmet needs and/or missing data
- Representation of realities
- Implementation of data systems or contribution to existing data systems
- Sharing local knowledge
- Data and information dissemination
- Raising awareness and promoting public education
- Development of channels of expression
- Development and sharing of open-source software and open codes





Justice by design

By participating in the design of digital tools, groups and communities can ensure that the architecture and functionality match their needs and visions. Taking control of the design and decisions related to creating a digital tool empowers these groups and communities to apply social justice in their own terms.

More specifically, we observe:

- Horizontal governance: structural proximity between communities, data and initiatives management.
- Increased trust in initiatives and in those who operate them by the served communities.
- Self-determination, autonomy, and empowerment in decision-making processes.
- Understanding and respect for internal issues, needs, values, goals, and dynamics.
- A long-term vision and a preventive approach to potential societal issues (as opposed to a reactive approach by the public and private sectors).
- Local responses to empirical needs.
- Decisions to avoid working with certain institutional actors





The learnings that we draw from this research



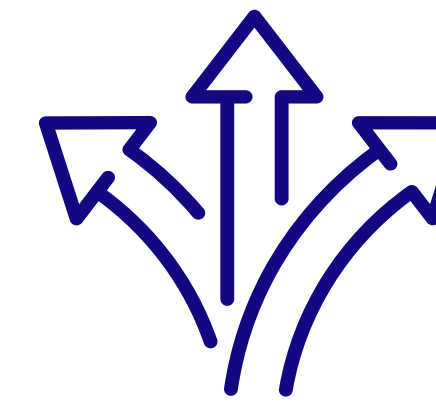
The importance of data, representation, and visibility issues:

- Inclusion of historical and systemic context of discrimination and human rights violations.
- Development of strategies and tools to ensure proportional representation and mitigate societal and historical biases.
- Urgency in paying attention to datasets, including in the judicial domain.e.



Inclusion of cultural contexts and community institutions:

- Actions and decisions informed by the experiential knowledge of the individuals being served, grounded in local context.
- Recognition of the organic values embedded within structures and their inclusion into decision-making processes.
- Field coordinators and small-scale cooperation models.
- Openness to including local epistemologies.



Digital tools to support shifts in power dynamics:

- Agency and willingness to address one's own challenges.
- Autonomy and empowerment at the core of digital tools.
- Inclusion of communities in governance models and decision-making processes, not just in consultations.
- Local anchorage, tools design and governance models "by and for" the people whenever possible: avoid large-scale initiatives.
- Avoid unilateral or one-dimensional processes: prioritize flexible and continuous processes including feedback.





A two-stage methodology

We have carried out a web-based exploratory survey of initiatives meeting several criteria: ongoing initiatives, developed by and for marginalized groups or communities, and responding to a social justice objective using artificial intelligence or digital technologies.

1 This review was conducted on the web in 2019, 2020 and 2021 using keywords in English and French and discovery by browsing, with the aim to:

- Develop the typology of ways of applying social justice and the typology of social justice objectives presented here.
- Identify the motivations behind these initiatives and the geographical regions in which we have identified such initiatives.

2 A dozen semi-structured interviews were then conducted in 2020, 2021 and 2022 with individuals involved in some of the initiatives identified, with the aim to:

- Refine the results of the Internet survey and identify the players involved in the organizational ecosystems that enable these social justice initiatives to be set up and run.
- Understand the objectives and operating methods of these initiatives.





Project

Reasons

Functions

Objectives

Impacts

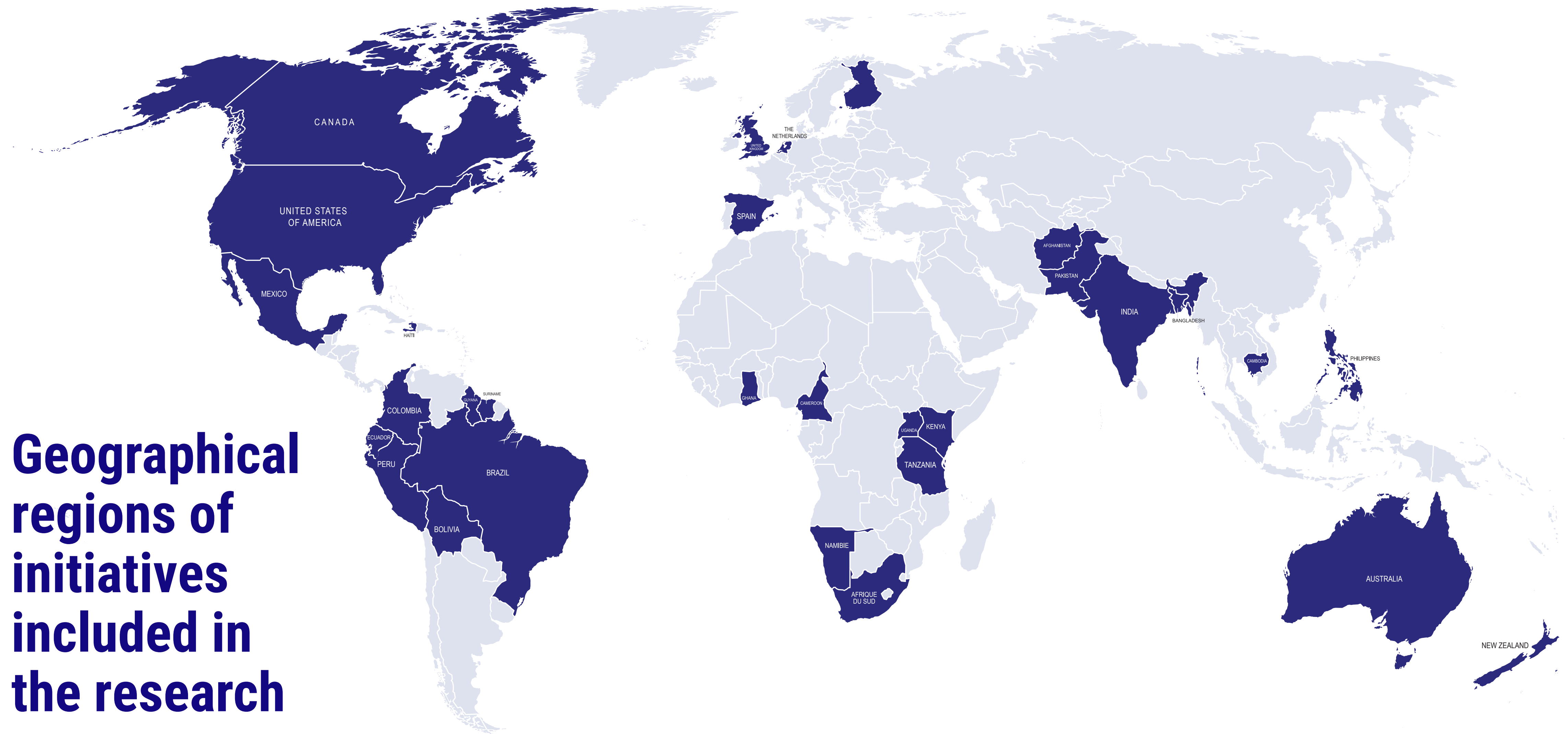
Learnings

Methodology

Credits



Geographical regions of initiatives included in the research



[Project](#)[Reasons](#)[Functions](#)[Objectives](#)[Impacts](#)[Learnings](#)[Methodology](#)[Credits](#)

Credits

Research, analysis, and ideation

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