

Our Public Design Taxonomy

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This taxonomy is the underlying architecture for our mapped repository of public-sector design in Latin America. It gives form to a diverse field through shared language and clear categories that allow governments, universities, and practitioners to situate and compare their work. By aligning how we describe public innovation, the taxonomy connects experiences across countries and builds a collective regional picture.

It organizes a diverse landscape through shared terms and categories, providing governments and practitioners a common language to compare initiatives and understand the region. By standardizing vocabulary, every lab, project, and publication becomes comparable and part of a cumulative body of knowledge.

Main Variable	Description	Categories	Category Description
Publication Level			
Document ID	Unique document ID		
Document Type	Identifies the type of publication or document contributing to the mapping of public innovation practices	Peer-Reviewed Article	Academic publications contributing to theory or evidence that have undergone blind external review usually published in a journal
		Report	Document that presents findings, analysis, or recommendations, usually produced by organizations or governments
		Thesis / Dissertation	Academic research at master's or doctoral level
		Conference Proceedings	Articles presented as part of a conference, not published in a journal
		Book / Book Chapter	Long format publications usually non-peer reviewed and by invitation of the editor(s)

		Other	Manuals, Toolkits, Workshop Materials, etc.
Document Scope	Indicates whether the document focuses on a single Latin American country or compares multiple countries	Single-country	A study that focuses on one national context only
		Multi-country	A study that focuses on two or more countries
Specific Countries	Lists the Latin American country or countries analyzed or mentioned in the document	Antigua y Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belice, Bolivia (Estado Plurinacional de), Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador. Granada, Guatemala. Guyana, Haití, Honduras, Jamaica, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay. Perú, Puerto Rico, República Dominicana, San Vicente y las Granadinas, Santa Lucía, Saint Kitts y Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad y Tabago, Uruguay, Venezuela (República Bolivariana de)	Encompasses the geopolitical and cultural boundaries of the 34 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.
Research Method	Defines the methodological approach used in the study, as described by the author(s)	Case Study	An in-depth examination of a single case, whether an institution, project, or event
		Comparative Analysis	A study that compares multiple examples to identify similarities and differences
		Systematic Literature Review	An organized review of existing research using predefined methods to identify and evaluate relevant studies
		Interviews	A qualitative research method where data is collected through structured, semi-structured, or open-ended conversations
		Surveys	A tool used to gather data through standardized questionnaires

		Other	Additional methods used in public-sector innovation studies, such as policy document review, design workshops, observational notes, or secondary data analysis.
Topic / Theme	Identifies the main thematic focus or conceptual lens of the publication	Public Innovation Overview	A general description of public-sector innovation concepts, practices, and developments
		Need for initiatives in Public Innovation	Arguments explaining why public-sector innovation is necessary to address institutional or societal challenges
		Influencing Factors for Success	Conditions that shape whether a public innovation initiative can achieve its intended outcomes
		Comparison with other regions (USA/Europe)	Analysis that contrasts local findings with innovation practices in the US or Europe
		Other	A flexible category capturing all supplementary thematic areas, including emerging or specialized topics relevant to public innovation but not encompassed by the primary classifications.
Title	Full title of the publication		
Author(s)	Author(s) or contributor(s) of the document		
Year of Publication	Year when the publication was released		
Research Method (AI)	AI extracted or inferred methodological classification using text-analysis tools		
Research Objective (AI)	AI extracted or inferred summarized statement of the main research objective		
Research Main Conclusions (AI)	AI extracted or inferred summarized statement of key findings or conclusions		
Organizational Level			

Innovation Unit	Semi-autonomous public or public-adjacent teams that use experimental, design-driven, and collaborative methods to explore, prototype, and test alternative approaches to policy problems. They typically operate on a project basis, work across organizational boundaries, and have a mandate to question existing assumptions, generate new knowledge, and support governments or communities in imagining and implementing policy or service innovations.		
Organizations	The institutional homes within which innovation labs are embedded. They define the lab's mandate, authority, resources, and constraints. Parent organizations typically fall into three broad categories: governments, academic institutions or international organizations.		
Operational Level	Indicates the administrative level at which the organization operates	National	Refers to institutions or initiatives operating at the countrywide level
		Regional	Refers to institutions or initiatives operating across several states, provinces, or regions.
		Local	Refers to institutions or initiatives operating at the city, town, or neighborhood level, usually within local governments
Type of Organization	Identifies the organizational/institutional nature of the organization	Public	Refers to government institutions or actors
		Academia	Higher-education organizations focused on generating scientific knowledge, training professionals, and supporting research-driven policy development
		NGO	A non-government, nonprofit organization working independently of the state, but focused on solving social issues

		Private	Businesses, firms, or market-based actors operating outside the public sector
		Other	Institutions that do not fit into public, private, academic, or NGO categories, such as international bodies
Country	Country in which the innovation unit is based		
Year Started	Year in which the innovation unit was established		
Year Ended	Year in which the innovation unit ceased to operate, if applicable		
Project / Initiative Level			
Project Name	Name or title of the project or initiative referenced in the document		
Innovation Unit	Innovation Unit associated to the project or initiative		
Project Country	Country where the project or initiative is implemented		
Started Year	Year in which the project began implementation		
Ended Year	Year in which the project concluded or was last reported		
Level of Intervention	Indicates whether the project or initiative was implemented at the national/state, regional/departmental, or local/municipal/city level	National	
		Regional	
		Local	

Life Cycle		Foundation	The initial stage in which the innovation unit is created, defining its purpose, structure, and operations
		Consolidation	A development phase where the unit stabilizes its operations, secures resources, and formalizes processes
		Maturity	A stage where the unit operates with high stability, delivering large-scale projects
		Closure	The formal discontinuation of the unit due to strategic, political, or financial reasons
		Transition	A period or organizational change where functions or teams are reconfigured
		Not specified	Not specified
Governance of Project	Identifies institutional actors involved in projects	Government Ministry/Agency/Department	Oversight exercised by a formal government institution with defined bureaucratic roles
		Private Sector	Projects led by for-profit companies or business actors, operating outside formal government structures
		University or Research Center	Projects hosted by high-education actors who support research and innovation activities
		Cooperation or Support Agency	Projects carried out by external organizations that provide funding, technical assistance, or strategic guidance
		Autonomous	Initiatives guided through self-defined processes and with organizational autonomy
		Not applicable / Don't know / No answer	Used when project's governance is unclear
Main Functions of Selected Project Team	Specifies the primary activities carried out by the team responsible for the project	Facilitation of Participatory Processes	Processes focused on enabling inclusive engagement and collective problem-solving among diverse actors
		Evaluation and Monitoring of Programs	Tracking and analyzing program activities to determine effectiveness, impact, or alignment with goals

		Design or Prototyping of Public Policies	Applying design methods to create, test, or refine policy ideas before full-scale implementation
		Applied Research	Conducting studies that inform decision-making and evidence-based design
		Training and Capacity Building	Developing training initiatives that equip participants with tools, methods, or knowledge to support project goals
		Knowledge Communication	Producing reports, guides, or materials that enable dissemination across institutions
		Technological or Digital Service Development	Developing technological solutions that support project goals through innovation in digital delivery
Project/ Team Size	Number of participants that were involved in selected project		
Funding Model	Identifies the financial sources that supported the project	Public Budget	Financing provided directly through government funds or institutional public-sector budgets
		International Funds	External funding provided by global actors
		Private Donations	Funding sourced from philanthropy or private-sector contributions
		University Agreements	Funding derived from formal partnership with academic institutions
		Self-financed	Projects sustained through internal resources without reliance on external funding partners
Determinants of Continuity	Factors that influence whether a project is sustained over time	Funding	The availability of financial resources that enable the project to continue operating or scaling
		Political Changes	Shifts in political leadership, priorities, or agendas that may disrupt support
		Institutional Support	Commitment and backing from the hosting organization that reinforces project

		Leadership Turnover	Changes in personnel or project leadership that disrupts momentum
		I'm Not Sure	Indicates uncertainty regarding influencing factors of continuity
		Institutional Mandate	A statement describing the primary purpose, goals, or problem that the project was created to address
Outcome Goals	The specific changes or benefits the project aims to produce or achieve in terms of value, impact, or improvement	Pilot Solutions	Early-stage prototypes or experimental interventions tested on a limited scale to explore feasibility
		Policy or System Change	Revisions to regulatory or normative structures resulting from project insights or recommendations
		Organizational Change	Modifications to internal structures, processes, or workflows within the institution
		Service Implementation or Improvement	Solutions or service designs that are fully adopted or integrated into regular public service delivery
		Inclusion and Participation	More voice, transparency, plural knowledge, or social legitimacy
		Don't know / No answer	Respondent is unsure of which outcomes the institution prioritizes
Success Indicators	The criteria, metrics, or evidence used to determine whether the outcome goals were achieved, helping validate results and measure progress	Service Performance	Success is determined by whether designed services move into operational use and reach the intended users
		User Satisfaction	Success is evaluated based on feedback, perceptions, or satisfaction levels among service users or communities
		Engagement Metrics	Success is determined by meeting predefined targets, KPIs, or performance indicators set by the institution
		Implementation and Learning	Replication, continuity, documentation, knowledge transfer, scaling

		Don't Know / No Answer	Respondent is unsure of how project's success is assessed
Recurring Themes	Describes the primary topics or domains that the project focuses on	Digital Transformation	Projects centered on modernizing public services through digital tools, data, or technological innovation
		Citizen Participation	Projects that promote public engagement in decision-making, co-creation, or collaborative governance
		Urban Inclusion	Projects addressing spatial equity, accessibility, or inclusion within urban environments
		Transparency	Projects that promote openness, accountability, or public access to government information
		Service Delivery (Public Services)	Projects dedicated to improving the quality or efficiency of services delivered to the public
Monitoring After Completion	Identifies mechanisms used to track project outcomes after main activities are completed	No Follow-up is Done	Reflects an absence of any post-implementation review
		Informal Follow-up	Unstructured or ad hoc monitoring based on occasional check-ins, communication, or anecdotal feedback
		Structured Evaluations	Formal assessments conducted using defined indicators, methods, or evaluation frameworks
Methodologies/ Design Frameworks	Broad design frameworks or conceptual models that guide how a project is understood, structured, and executed	Human-Centered Design	A design approach that prioritizes the needs and perspectives of people affected by a service or policy
		Design Thinking	An iterative innovation process involving discovery, ideation, prototyping, and testing to address complex problems
		Service Design	A holistic approach that aligns user needs with organizational processes to enhance service delivery
		Participatory Design / Co-Creation	Methods that involve stockholders directly in shaping ideas and solutions through collaboration
		Behavioral Insights	An approach applying behavioral science to small, evidence-based changes to improve services

Methods Used	Design or research methods employed in the project, as specified in the source document	Participatory: Co-creation Workshop, Interviews, Focus Groups	Methods that directly involve stakeholders or citizens directly in the project process to generate insights, solve problems, and validate assumptions
		Empirical: Survey, Ethnographic Observation, Data Analysis	Methods that collect firsthand data through observation, measurement, or direct responses
		Experimental: Prototyping, Experimental Intervention/Pilot, A/B Testing	Methods that test new ideas through controlled trials, pilots, or prototypes to observe outcomes in real or simulated conditions
		Evaluative: Testing Solutions with Users, KPI tracking, Framework	Methods that assess the effectiveness or usability of a solution during a project to measure impact and guide improvement
		Sensemaking: Experience Maps, Customer Journey, Problem Framing Tools	Methods that organize collected insights into structures or narratives (e.g., experience maps, customer journeys) to interpret findings and guide decision-making within the project
Participants/ Subjects	A classification of the main groups who participate in or are affected by a project, either through direct or indirect involvement	Public Servants	Individuals working in public-sector organizations who participate in or collaborate with the project through institutional roles
		Project Leaders	Key actors responsible for guiding the strategic direction, coordination, and execution of the project
		Project Partners	Individuals that formally support project activities, offering expertise or strategic alignment
		Residents	Members of the general public who are affected by project outcomes
		Other	Stakeholders not captured by predefined groups
Individual Level			
Name	Full name of the individual mentioned in the document		

Category	Identifies the individual's functional area in relation to the project	Design Practitioner	A professional who applies design methods within a project or policy context
		Project Champion	A key individual who drives a project forward and secures support for it
		Stakeholder	Anyone affected by or involved in a project
		Innovation Unit Team	The group of professionals working inside a formal innovation lab or unit
		Not Specified	The document does not identify any actors involved
		Other	Actor roles that do not fit the predefined categories
Innovation Unit	Innovation unit with which the individual is affiliated		
Project Title	Title of the project with which the individual is affiliated		
Role/Position	Job title or position of the individual within the project or organization		
Area of Expertise	Primary professional or disciplinary expertise of the individual		