Final Report

Doing Commons Seminar: Participation, Inclusion, and Public and Digital Innovation

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Brasília, April 7, 2026.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Seminar

The Fazer Comum: Participation, Inclusion, and Public and Digital Innovation seminar was held as part of the activities of the research project on digital commons and social participation conducted by Resocie/IPOL/UnB in partnership with Instituto Cidade Democrática, with support from the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). On April 7, 2026, the event brought together researchers, public officials, civil society organizations, activists, and participants in digital participatory processes to discuss the social, political, and organizational impacts of recent experiences of digital participation in Brazil.

The seminar focused on inclusion and the capacity for mobilization emerging from digital participatory processes. Specifically, it sought to discuss strategies for including historically excluded groups in these processes and how digital participation platforms can contribute not only to expanding consultative mechanisms but also to strengthening communities, organizing processes, and collective capacities to influence public policy. Drawing on experiences related to Brasil Participativo, such as the Participatory Multi-Year Plan, the National Culture Plan, the Participatory Climate Plan, and other recent participatory processes, the event sought to reflect on inclusion, mediation, social mobilization, technological governance, and digital public infrastructure.

Throughout the event, discussions were structured around three interrelated dimensions: the challenges of inclusion in digital participatory processes; the formation and strengthening of communities around participation; and the dilemmas associated with the governance of platforms and digital commons. Rather than addressing these questions only in the abstract, the seminar prioritized concrete experiences of mobilization, policy influence, and collective action described by participants in the participatory processes examined by the research.

The seminar discussions engaged with evidence identified throughout the research, particularly the observation that digital participatory processes can serve as spaces for strengthening organizational capacity, connecting networks, and making collective demands visible. Several accounts analyzed in the research indicate that mobilization

around the platforms produced effects extending beyond simply voting on proposals, strengthening networks, collectives, and shared political identities.

The research findings presented and discussed at the seminar also raised questions about inequalities in participation, accessibility barriers, and the differing mobilization capacities of social groups. In several cases, participation required intensive mediation, community support, and campaigns distributed across social media, WhatsApp and Telegram groups, and face-to-face forums.

1.2 About This Report

This report aims to systematize the main debates, reflections, and lessons arising from the seminar, documenting both the material presented and the collective discussions held throughout its activities.

The document seeks to reconstruct the event's analytical and political trajectory, highlighting key emerging questions about digital participation, community formation, and the governance of digital public infrastructure. In doing so, it aims to preserve the seminar's dialogical character and to recognize the diverse perspectives offered by researchers, public officials, activists, and participants in the processes examined.

The synthesis draws on several records, including the event program, presentations, notes prepared by the organizing team, audiovisual recordings, and transcripts of interviews and discussions associated with the research. The report also engages with empirical evidence produced throughout the project, particularly interviews with participants in digital participatory processes in the fields of culture, climate, and federal public policies.

The document follows the seminar's own structure. Rather than separating content according to the research's theoretical strands, the debates are organized by the activities on the program. This makes it possible to reconstruct how the discussions unfolded and how themes emerged collectively during the event.

2. Seminar Program

The seminar was designed both as a space to publicly present research findings and as a forum for collective discussion of current challenges in digital participation and the development of digital commons in Brazil.

The program was organized into two complementary parts. In the morning, the seminar focused on introducing the research and presenting key findings on inclusion, community mobilization, and the governance of digital participation platforms. In the afternoon, open discussions were held using the “fishbowl” format to collectively explore these topics in greater depth.

The institutional opening brought together representatives of the university, federal government, and international development cooperation, situating the debate on social participation and digital public infrastructure within Brazil's democratic reconstruction and public innovation agendas.

The subsequent research findings panel presented evidence from interviews, workshops, and analyses of recent participatory experiences. The discussions showed how digital participatory processes often mobilize pre-existing social networks, organized communities, and territorially based collectives, generating effects beyond the strictly procedural dimensions of participation. Accounts collected during the research illustrated, for example, how campaigns around participatory proposals involved coordination through forums, trade unions, WhatsApp, Discord and Telegram groups, and various social networks.

The afternoon activities were organized into three thematic fishbowl discussions:

- inclusion in participatory processes;
- strengthening communities and collective organization;
- participatory governance of digital commons.

The format was designed to encourage the exchange of experiences, the collective construction of interpretations, and dialogue among different institutional and territorial perspectives. By prioritizing open discussion circles, the seminar sought to bring

academic research into closer contact with government experiences and concrete practices of social mobilization.

Beyond conceptual discussions, the event also highlighted practical and organizational dimensions of digital participation. Several accounts underscored the mediation required to broaden participation, including assistance with creating Gov.br accounts, producing tutorials, organizing campaigns in messaging groups, and carrying out territorial mobilization. These elements reinforced one of the central hypotheses discussed during the seminar: digital participation depends not only on the existence of technological platforms but also on community organizing capacity, social mediation, and the development of networks of trust.

3. Institutional Opening (9:00–10:00 a.m.)

3.1 Objectives of the Opening Session

The main purpose of the seminar's institutional opening was to situate the research project within broader contemporary debates on digital participation, democratic reconstruction, and the governance of digital public infrastructure in Brazil. The opening remarks introduced the research's central premises, explaining the connections among social participation, digital commons, and the inclusion of historically marginalized groups in participatory processes mediated by digital platforms.

Another important objective was to highlight the project's collaborative and hybrid character, based on cooperation among the university, organized civil society, the federal government, and international development cooperation. The remarks emphasized the partnership among Resocie/IPOL/UnB, Instituto Cidade Democrática, the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), presenting the research not only as an academic undertaking but also as an initiative to produce applied knowledge and practical improvements to social participation policies and infrastructures.

The speakers also contextualized the importance of digital participation in Brazil's contemporary political landscape, particularly the rebuilding of social participation policies following the previous years of institutional dismantling. In this context, the Brasil Participativo platform was presented as a strategic initiative to expand citizen participation in federal public policymaking, linking digital processes, national conferences, and public consultations on a nationwide scale.

The opening also introduced the main analytical strands structuring both the research and the seminar: inclusion in digital participatory processes; strengthening communities and collective organization; and governance of digital commons. These themes were presented as interdependent dimensions for understanding both the potential and limitations of digital participation platforms in strengthening democracy and expanding society's influence on public policies.

3.2 Main Institutional Remarks

University / Academic Coordination

Professor Marisa von Bülow, Director of UnB's Institute of Political Science and a member of the research team, emphasized the project's research-intervention approach. She stressed that its purpose was not merely to examine the Brasil Participativo platform from an external or descriptive standpoint, but also to develop insights that could directly improve digital participatory processes in Brazil. The research methodology was described as combining qualitative interviews, territorial workshops, participant observation, and analysis of platform data, consistently seeking to connect academic rigor with public impact.

The research coordination team presented the project's three major analytical strands. The first, inclusion, sought to understand how historically marginalized groups could participate more meaningfully and gain greater capacity to influence digital participatory processes. The second, communities, emerged during the research itself as it became apparent that many participatory processes mobilized collective networks, organizations, and forms of community coordination extending beyond the platforms' individualized logic. The third strand addressed the governance of digital commons, particularly the case of the open-source software Decidim and the challenges of developing participatory governance models for digital public infrastructure.

The importance of cooperation among universities, government, and civil society in building the project was also emphasized. The speakers highlighted that the research was conceived from the outset as a space for listening to and engaging with public managers, social movements, platform participants, and technology developers. Accordingly, workshops held in different territories and close observation of processes such as the Participatory Climate Plan and National Culture Plan were presented as central features of the project's methodology.

General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic

The representative of the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, Dannytha Rayres Lopes Câmara, General Coordinator for Digital Participation, presented Brasil Participativo as the federal government's principal digital platform for social participation. She highlighted its role in bringing together several forms of participation, including public consultations, national conferences, participatory plans, and information about in-person participation opportunities. She noted that the platform had been developed in partnership with the University of Brasília, with support from Dataprev and institutional coordination with the Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services.

Her remarks situated the platform within the rebuilding of democracy and the resumption of social participation policies at the federal level. She emphasized the institutional effort to consolidate Brasil Participativo as the federal government's unified platform for digital participation, progressively expanding its use across public agencies and national participatory processes. She cited major recent initiatives, including the Participatory Climate Plan, National Culture Plan, G20 Social, public consultations related to Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS), and future initiatives such as Orçamento do Povo (the People's Budget).

The representative also emphasized the platform's rapid growth in institutional use. Whereas at the start of the period analyzed there were only three active processes, mainly linked to national conferences, by the following year dozens of different participatory processes had been made available, demonstrating significant expansion in the use of digital public infrastructure for participation.

French Development Agency (AFD)

AFD representative Stéphanie Leyronas emphasized the agency's institutional commitment to projects involving democracy, citizen participation, and public

innovation. She placed the agency's support for the research within a broader international agenda of promoting development models grounded in social participation, cooperation, and democratic strengthening.

She presented AFD's understanding of commons not merely as shared resources, but as systems of collective governance structured around rules, cooperation, and shared responsibility among social actors. In this context, “commoning” was highlighted as a continuous process of collective construction, negotiation, and co-production, making it possible to rethink participation beyond one-off consultations or isolated events.

Her remarks also underscored the agency's interest in understanding how digital platforms such as Brasil Participativo might evolve toward models closer to digital commons, in which governance of both the technological infrastructure and the participatory processes themselves could be shared among the state, civil society, communities, and users. This perspective was presented as an alternative to strictly instrumental views of digital participation.

Finally, the AFD representative stressed the value of connecting academic research and institutional practice, noting that one of the project's main strengths lay in combining rigorous conceptual reflection with concrete experiences of implementation, social mobilization, and public management. The project was presented as an example of knowledge production applied to contemporary challenges in democratic participation and digital public infrastructure.

4. Presentation of Research Findings (10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.)

4.1 Introduction to the Panel

The research findings panel brought together researchers responsible for the project's different analytical strands to share results, interpretations, and lessons from two years of investigation. The session revolved around three interrelated topics: inclusion in digital participatory processes, strengthening communities and collective organization, and governance of digital commons.

The panel's moderator emphasized that the event was intended not only to present consolidated academic results but also to open a public debate on contemporary challenges to digital participation in Brazil. The presentations therefore combined

empirical research evidence with methodological and political reflections on building participatory digital public infrastructure.

The session consisted of successive presentations on each research strand, followed by comments from invited discussants and an extended discussion with participants. This structure was intended to foster dialogue among academic, government, technical, and territorial perspectives, bringing conceptual analysis closer to the concrete experiences of those who participate in and manage the processes studied.

The presentations made clear that the three research strands were deeply interdependent. Discussions of inclusion often led to questions of collective organization and community mediation, while debates over technological governance revealed direct implications for accessibility, participation, and the democratic sustainability of the digital platforms examined.

4.2 Findings on Inclusion in Digital Participatory Processes

Topics Addressed

The presentation on inclusion began by recognizing that one of the most frequent criticisms of digital participatory processes is their tendency to exclude groups with less internet access, lower digital literacy, or limited organizational capacity. Against this backdrop, the research sought to understand the extent to which the Brasil Participativo platform had succeeded in broadening participation by historically marginalized groups in recent federal participatory processes.

The presenters emphasized that inclusion was understood broadly, not simply as formal access to the platform, but also as the effective ability to participate, have an impact, and influence participatory processes. The research explored the hypothesis that inclusion can take several forms: directly, through individual participation on the platform; through intermediaries, when collective organizations represent particular agendas; and through the agenda itself, when proposals concerning historically excluded groups gain visibility and mobilize support in participatory processes.

It was also emphasized that inclusion does not depend solely on the technology used, but on the political and methodological design of the participatory processes themselves. The

presentations showed how participation rules, authentication procedures, types of consultation, and mobilization strategies directly influence who is able to participate and how.

Examples and Cases Mentioned

Several empirical examples were presented. One of the main cases analyzed was the Participatory Multi-Year Plan (PPA), particularly the qualitative analysis of the two thousand most-voted proposals on the platform. The research identified at least twelve historically excluded groups represented in these proposals, including women, Indigenous peoples, quilombola communities, riverine populations, people with disabilities, and low-income groups.

Territorial workshops held in Belém, João Pessoa, and Brasília were also highlighted as essential settings for understanding concrete challenges to accessibility and participation. Participants were invited to use the platform directly, enabling researchers to identify difficulties with Gov.br login, navigation, understanding the available features, and finding the participatory processes on offer.

Experiences associated with the Participatory Climate Plan and National Culture Plan were also mentioned as relevant cases for understanding collective mobilization and mediation. In several accounts analyzed by the research, social organizations and territorial collectives played a central role in developing proposals, mobilizing supporters, and circulating information about participatory processes.

4.3 Findings on Strengthening Communities

Topics Addressed

The presentation on communities began with the observation that many digital participatory processes generate organizational effects that go beyond the immediate goals of consultation or voting. Throughout the research, it became clear that proposals submitted through the platform often mobilized pre-existing activist networks, territorial organizations, and thematic communities, while also encouraging the creation of new collectives and capacities for political coordination.

The presenters stressed that in several cases digital participatory processes served as spaces for advocacy and public policy influence by organized communities. The platform was understood not merely as a technical channel for participation, but also as an infrastructure capable of making issues visible, strengthening leadership, and encouraging collective mobilization around specific agendas.

The research identified different patterns of mobilization. In some cases, proposals originated with individual activists who subsequently managed to organize collectives around their causes. In others, established organizations, such as trade unions, social movements, or thematic networks, used the platform as an additional means of political advocacy.

Highlighted Cases

One particularly relevant case involved a participant in the National Culture Plan who reported initially submitting a proposal as an individual and then, during the mobilization process, contributing to the formation of a new collective organized around that cultural issue. The research interpreted this as an example of how digital participatory processes can stimulate new forms of collective organization.

Another recurring example was the extensive use of WhatsApp groups, Instagram, and other digital networks as complementary infrastructures for mobilization. The accounts showed that the circulation of proposals relied heavily on distributed communication and engagement strategies, including group sharing, digital campaigns, and territorial coordination.

Cases were also presented in which professional groups and sectoral movements built highly organized campaigns around specific proposals in the Participatory PPA, mobilizing thousands of votes and coordinating in-person activities, leaflet distribution, and institutional support from trade unions.

4.4 Findings on the Governance of Participation Software

Topics Addressed

The presentation on governance focused on the challenges of building sustainable and participatory digital public infrastructure. The research used Decidim—the open-source software underlying Brasil Participativo—as a reference point for discussing the possibilities and limitations of shared governance of digital participation platforms.

The presenters noted that governance is not limited to the software itself; it also encompasses the rules, dynamics, and operation of public services for digital participation. Accordingly, the research sought to shift part of the focus from "software governance" to "governance of the public participation service," including methodological design, mobilization, interaction rules, and democratic institutional arrangements.

The recurring discontinuity of participatory platforms in Brazil and other countries was also emphasized. The research found that many digital initiatives remain excessively dependent on particular governments or small technical teams, hampering the development of more resilient and sustainable models of digital participation.

4.5 Comments from Invited Discussants

The invited discussants made important contributions, both conceptually and based on their direct experience of the workshops held in Belém and João Pessoa.

One central point was the need to better understand the meaning of "territory" in digital participatory processes. Although the notion of territory appeared repeatedly in the research presentations and discussions, it had not been explicitly conceptualized in the documents produced. One intervention suggested that the debate might be less about territory in a strictly geographical sense and more about experiences of territoriality, belonging, and collective organization in the urban and peripheral settings examined by the research.

The speakers also drew attention to concrete inequalities in access to the internet and digital infrastructure. They stressed that formal coverage or connectivity does not necessarily translate into quality access, especially in areas affected by precarious urban conditions and social inequality. The research workshops were considered valuable precisely because they revealed the real limitations of digital access in peripheral and

Amazonian territories, where connectivity problems, network quality, and the cost of access directly affect opportunities for participation.

Another recurring theme was the persistence of distrust toward digital participation. The interventions indicated that some long-standing activists and social movements still show a degree of resistance to digital participatory processes. At the same time, younger activists often develop their political activity directly on privately owned social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok. This raises important challenges for making digital commons and public platforms relevant and appealing to emerging forms of contemporary political activism.

The contributions also strongly emphasized the importance of human mediation in digital participatory processes. The workshops demonstrated that effective use of the platforms depends on mediators who can explain features, assist with navigation, provide political context for participatory processes, and facilitate engagement. Participants therefore argued for developing networks of multipliers and trained agents working across states and municipalities to expand territorial capacities for mobilization and support for digital participation.

Another finding that the discussants considered particularly relevant concerned the relationship between individual participation and collective action. They noted that the research challenges recent accounts of digital activism that focus excessively on individuals and the logic of the "individual activist," showing that participatory processes are in practice deeply shaped by collective networks, organized groups, and community-based mobilization. In this light, they suggested that participation platforms could evolve to incorporate mechanisms better suited to submitting collective proposals on behalf of organizations, movements, and collectives.

The workshops were also recognized as one of the research's main methodological outputs. The in-person experiences were described as essential for understanding both platform usability limitations and the ways in which social groups appropriate digital technologies in their territories. The workshops also revealed creative uses of existing digital platforms and social networks among social movements, cultural collectives, and community organizations.

Another important strand of the interventions concerned the dissemination and reach of participatory platforms. It was noted that many people had not even heard of Brasil

Participativo before attending the workshops, underscoring the need for broader public communication strategies, including beyond digital channels. Suggestions included displaying physical promotional materials in public facilities, such as health centers, schools, and community spaces.

The speakers also deepened the debate about open platforms and technological sovereignty. They valued the use of Decidim and open-source software as the foundation of participatory infrastructure, particularly as an alternative to dependence on private platforms and big tech companies. At the same time, the discussants acknowledged the practical difficulties of building public alternatives in a context where much of the population relies daily on private services such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Google Drive, and other commercial platforms.

The discontinuity of social participation policies in Brazil was another strongly emphasized theme. The speakers recalled the institutional dismantling of recent years and argued that Brasil Participativo should be consolidated as a state policy, rather than merely an initiative of a particular administration. In this context, they also suggested extending the platform to states and municipalities in the future to prevent local governments from becoming dependent on proprietary solutions sold by companies.

Finally, the discussants returned to various issues associated with structural digital exclusion in Brazil. They mentioned poor internet quality, the technical limitations of mobile phones, illiteracy, generational barriers to digital literacy, and obstacles associated with using Gov.br for authentication. They also proposed expanding audiovisual features and more accessible participation formats, such as audio recording and multimedia tools, to include people who experience difficulties with reading, writing, or more complex digital navigation.

4.6 Open Discussion with Participants

Contributions from the audience broadened the dialogue between the research findings and concrete problems faced in designing and implementing digital participatory processes.

One participant questioned the extent to which existing digital participatory processes remain overly focused on preference aggregation models—based on votes, likes, or

proposal rankings—at the expense of more deliberative and dialogical formats. This prompted reflections on the limits of processes that offer little interaction among diverging positions and on the need to develop experiences capable of fostering more collective construction, public debate, and the shared development of agreements and disagreements.

Another contribution raised concerns about the use of private messaging platforms, particularly WhatsApp, as infrastructure for political mobilization and digital participation. The participant highlighted the tension between the tremendous reach and inclusion potential of these tools and the risks of technological dependence on private infrastructures controlled by large multinational corporations. The discussion connected debates on digital participation with the agendas of technological sovereignty and digital public infrastructure.

The discussion also addressed the role of political leaders, social organizations, and territorial actors in the mobilization processes observed in the research. One participant asked which kinds of actors had effectively managed to organize campaigns, activate local networks, and transform participatory proposals into broader processes of political coordination and public policy influence. This reinforced the understanding that digital participatory processes often depend on intermediary organizations, collectives, and leaders already embedded in territorial and community dynamics.

Another relevant question linked the debate on digital commons to struggles over natural and territorial commons. One participant noted that many historically excluded groups mobilized in participatory processes—especially Indigenous peoples, traditional populations, and territorially rooted communities—often make demands related to the defense of territories, water, the environment, and natural resources. The intervention suggested that these experiences could broaden the understanding of commons itself by connecting digital participation with concrete struggles over territories and the preservation of natural collective goods.

Concerns were also raised about the subjective and organizational effects of digital participatory processes. One participant observed that such processes often generate strong expectations of change, recognition, and political influence, yet do not always produce institutional feedback commensurate with the mobilization achieved. The discussion linked research findings on frustration with feedback to wider reflections on the institutional limitations of social participation and the risks of political

disillusionment when institutions have limited capacity to implement collectively developed proposals.

Finally, one contribution deepened the debate on technological governance by questioning the distinction between software governance and governance of the digital public participation service. The participant argued that although most users primarily experience the service itself, technological decisions continue to determine the limits of possible forms of participation. The discussion showed that seemingly technical choices—such as interaction formats, accepted media types, or communication options—have direct political consequences for inclusion, the participatory experience, and participants' ability to express themselves.

5. Deepening the Debate — Fishbowl Discussions (2:00–4:00 p.m.)

The afternoon activities used a “fishbowl” format, chosen to encourage the circulation of ideas, collective listening, and shared interpretations of the topics discussed during the morning. The format was intended to broaden dialogue among researchers, government representatives, participatory process participants, and civil society organizations, creating a space less focused on presentations and more on exchanging concrete experiences.

Each fishbowl discussion began with a guiding question related to the research's three central strands—inclusion, communities, and governance—and combined brief opening remarks by invited guests with open audience participation. The methodology sought to connect research evidence with the practical experiences of people directly involved in digital participatory processes, allowing participants to explore tensions, convergences, and challenges identified throughout the seminar.

Across the three discussions, it became clear that the themes were closely interrelated. Contributions frequently connected digital inclusion, territorial mediation, collective organization, and technological governance, reinforcing a central interpretation of the research: digital participation depends not only on technological platforms but also on building trust, community coordination, and shared political responsibility around participatory processes.

5.1 Fishbowl 1 — Inclusion in Participatory Processes

Guiding Question

The first fishbowl discussion focused on the question: “How can we promote more inclusive participatory processes?” The starting point was the recognition that broadening digital participation requires tackling structural inequalities in internet access, digital literacy, organizational capacities, and material conditions for participation.

Summary of Contributions

The opening contributions revisited the main research findings on inclusion, emphasizing that digital participation cannot be understood simply as technical access to a platform. They reiterated that inclusion also involves the effective ability to understand participatory processes, develop proposals, mobilize networks, and influence public decisions.

The importance of social and territorial mediation strategies was also highlighted. Participants emphasized that many historically excluded groups can take part in digital processes only when supported by community organizations, local collectives, or intermediary agents who can provide guidance on using platforms, help with Gov.br registration, and explain participation rules.

The opening remarks also emphasized the limits of an overly individualized understanding of digital participation. Several participants observed that although platforms often operate according to individual-centered logics, actual mobilization takes place collectively, is territorially rooted, and is mediated through social networks and community organizations.

Experiences shared during the fishbowl included concrete examples of mobilization in low-income communities, social movements, and cultural organizations. Participants described collective support strategies for digital participation, including group registration drives, the circulation of tutorials in WhatsApp groups, and in-person sessions offering guidance on how to use participatory platforms.

Experiences involving national conferences and public consultations were also mentioned, particularly those using digital stages to complement in-person participation,

thereby expanding the territorial reach of processes and allowing new participants who had previously been excluded from traditional institutional spaces to join.

Audience contributions explored inequalities in participation among social groups. Participants noted that race, gender, income, disability, and territorial location continue to directly shape opportunities to access and influence digital participatory processes. Concerns were also raised about platform accessibility for people with disabilities and populations with poor connectivity.

Several speakers emphasized that digital participatory processes need to engage more effectively with existing forms of community organization, rather than reproducing overly bureaucratic or technocratic models of participation.

5.2 Fishbowl 2 — Collective Organization and Communities

Guiding Question

The second fishbowl discussion focused on the question: “How can we facilitate collective organization?” It explored the morning's debates on digital communities, distributed mobilization, and organizational strengthening generated through participatory processes.

Summary of Contributions

The opening remarks revisited the research hypothesis that, although participation on digital platforms is formally presented as individual, real mobilization processes often unfold through collective networks, thematic organizations, social movements, and territorial alliances.

Participants also discussed how digital participatory processes can serve as spaces for strengthening organizations and political learning. They shared experiences in which mobilization campaigns around particular proposals helped establish new collectives, strengthen local leaders, and enhance capacities for communication and political advocacy.

Another recurring theme was the role of digital networks—particularly WhatsApp and Instagram—as essential infrastructures for collective organization. Speakers noted that much of the mobilization observed in the processes studied took place through channels

outside institutional platforms, revealing hybrid ecosystems of participation and political coordination.

The discussions highlighted the temporary, distributed, and fluid nature of digital communities associated with participatory processes. Unlike more institutionalized traditional organizations, many collectives form around specific issues, proposals, or campaigns and later develop different forms of connection and continuity.

The potential of digital platforms as advocacy tools was also discussed. Several participants stressed that, even when proposals are not directly incorporated into public policies, participatory processes can strengthen agendas, increase the visibility of issues, and stimulate collective forms of political coordination.

Another important discussion concerned frustration with institutional feedback. Many accounts indicated that the lack of follow-up after participatory processes weakens mobilized networks and hinders the consolidation of more lasting communities around digital participation.

5.3 Fishbowl 3 — Participatory Governance of Digital Commons

Guiding Question

The third fishbowl discussion was organized around the question: “How can we promote participatory governance of a digital commons?” It further examined debates concerning the governance of Brasil Participativo, Decidim software, and digital public infrastructure for participation.

Summary of Contributions

The opening remarks returned to the need to broaden governance spaces beyond public managers and technical developer communities. Participants emphasized that developing digital commons requires lasting mechanisms for participation, shared responsibility, and collective definition of the rules governing digital public services.

The distinction between software governance and governance of the public participation service was also emphasized. Speakers pointed out that methodological design, mobilization approaches, consultation rules, and institutional feedback strategies have

impacts just as significant as technical decisions concerning code or platform architecture.

International experiences involving Decidim also featured in the discussion, particularly the lessons and limitations of participatory governance models in Barcelona and other initiatives in the open-source software ecosystem.

The fishbowl discussions underscored the difficulty of establishing genuinely inclusive and sustainable governance models. Participants noted that, even in advanced experiences with open-source software and digital participation, decision-making processes frequently remain concentrated among technical experts, institutional managers, and already organized actors.

Participants also discussed the need to build greater institutional resilience for participatory platforms by reducing dependence on particular administrations or temporary political conditions. In this context, shared governance emerged as a possible means of strengthening democracy and supporting the long-term sustainability of digital public infrastructure.

Another recurring point was the tension between participatory openness and operational capacity. Speakers observed that broadening participation in governance processes requires time, institutional resources, and clear coordination mechanisms, in order to avoid both overly closed processes and disorganized decision-making.

6. Seminar Analysis

The Fazer Comum: Participation, Inclusion, and Public and Digital Innovation seminar successfully achieved its main objectives. The event situated the research project within contemporary debates on digital participation, democratic reconstruction, social inclusion, and the governance of digital public infrastructure, bringing together academic reflection, concrete public management experiences, and accounts from participants in participatory processes.

One of the seminar's main strengths was that it did not treat digital participation simply as a technological tool or consultative procedure. Instead, the discussions showed that platforms such as Brasil Participativo must be understood as part of broader ecosystems of social mobilization, collective organization, territorial mediation, political learning, and struggles to influence public policy.

The event also achieved the goal of bringing together different actors involved in building and using these platforms. The presence of researchers, public officials, civil society organizations, activists, participants in the processes, and institutional representatives allowed for a plural understanding of the advances, limits, and challenges of digital participation in Brazil.

The morning presentations and afternoon fishbowl discussions showed strong alignment between the research strands and the debates that took place. Inclusion, communities, and governance appeared not as separate themes, but as interdependent dimensions. Inclusion depends on mediation and collective organization; collective organization depends on institutional feedback, continuity, and recognition; and platform governance directly shapes who participates, how they participate, and their capacity to influence decisions.

The seminar therefore reinforced one of the research's central hypotheses: digital participation takes place not only when someone accesses a platform or registers a proposal, but within a broader set of social relationships, networks of trust, distributed mobilizations, territorial mediations, and political struggles over the recognition of collective demands.

6.1 Areas of Convergence

Throughout the seminar, substantial common ground emerged among participants. The first shared understanding was that digital participation cannot be reduced to individual access to a platform. There was broad agreement that participating involves understanding the process, developing proposals, mobilizing networks, competing for visibility, monitoring outcomes, and receiving institutional feedback.

Another important point of agreement was that digital platforms can extend the territorial reach of participation but cannot eliminate structural inequalities. Technology may open new points of access, particularly when linked with conferences, public consultations, and hybrid processes. However, its inclusive potential depends on methodological design, accessibility, plain language, community support, and active mobilization strategies.

Another widely shared understanding was that digital participation is, in practice, far more collective than individual. Although platforms often require individual registration, a CPF identification number, and Gov.br login, the accounts presented showed that many

proposals are developed by collectives, social movements, trade unions, cultural networks, territorial organizations, and thematic communities. One of the seminar's key findings was that the formal participation infrastructure still gives little recognition to the collective nature of actual mobilization.

Accordingly, there was strong agreement on the need for institutional recognition of collective forms of participation. Several accounts showed that proposals developed by movements, trade unions, community organizations, or territorial networks end up formally associated with only one individual. This can make the political, organizational, and community work underpinning participation invisible, reducing complex collective processes to individual platform records.

Participants also agreed on the central role of intermediary organizations. Local collectives, social movements, community leaders, trade unions, sectoral forums, and civil society organizations are essential for expanding participation by historically excluded groups. These actors frequently translate rules into accessible language, help people register, produce tutorials, organize group activities, mobilize networks, and give political meaning to participatory processes.

Another shared insight was that digital participatory processes produce effects extending beyond the immediate outcomes of votes or consultations. Even when a proposal is not directly incorporated into a public policy, mobilization can strengthen networks, create collectives, develop leaders, give visibility to overlooked agendas, and expand advocacy capacity. The seminar thus reinforced a broader understanding of participation's effects: not only as a final decision, but also as a process of building collective capacities.

The discussions also converged on the idea that digital communities formed through these processes have distinctive characteristics. They are often fluid, temporary, distributed, and organized around particular issues, differing from more institutionalized traditional forms of political organization. This does not diminish their importance; rather, it indicates that digital participatory processes can activate new connections, mobilizations, and forms of political coordination.

There was also consensus on the need to improve institutional feedback. Several speakers noted that the absence of clear information about what happens to proposals generates frustration, weakens relationships, and makes it harder for mobilized communities to remain active. Institutional feedback was therefore recognized as an essential dimension of the democratic quality of participatory processes.

In the field of governance, participants broadly agreed that the platform should be understood as digital public infrastructure. This means its governance cannot be limited to the technical management of software; it must also encompass decisions about participation rules, methodological design, consultation formats, visibility criteria, accessibility, moderation, institutional feedback, and continuity.

Finally, a common perspective ran through the entire seminar: digital participation only becomes stronger democratically when connected to relationships of trust, territorial presence, active listening, social mediation, and shared responsibility between the state and society.

6.2 Unresolved Tensions and Challenges

Despite these convergences, the seminar also revealed significant unresolved tensions. The first concerns the limitations of digital participation in the face of social, territorial, and technological inequalities. Internet access, digital literacy, available time, familiarity with platforms, education, income, disability, race, gender, and territorial location continue to strongly condition who can participate and the quality of that participation.

A central challenge, therefore, is to prevent digital participation from reproducing or deepening existing inequalities. Groups with greater organizational capacity, better connectivity, and more structured networks tend to achieve greater visibility and more votes. More vulnerable groups, by contrast, depend on active policies for inclusion, mediation, and support to avoid remaining underrepresented.

Another important tension concerns the individualizing design of platforms. Although many processes are collectively developed, formal participation is attributed to individuals. This creates a mismatch between the platform's institutional logic and the concrete dynamics of social mobilization. As a result, collectives, movements, and organizations that develop proposals, coordinate campaigns, and politically sustain mobilization become partly invisible.

Requirements for Gov.br login, CPF identification, and individual authentication exemplify this tension between individualized institutional platform design and collective, territorially rooted, and mediated dynamics of social participation. On the one hand, there are legitimate needs for security, verification, and process integrity. On the other, these requirements create access barriers, technical difficulties, and

incompatibilities with collective forms of participation. The challenge is to develop models that preserve institutional security without blocking or hindering groups with lower digital familiarity.

Another identified challenge is the difficulty of adequately measuring who participates in digital processes and which groups remain underrepresented. Limited access to detailed participant data makes it difficult to accurately assess inclusion and the distributive effects of participation. The research therefore had to combine complementary qualitative approaches, including interviews, participant observation, territorial workshops, and content analysis of submitted proposals.

This measurement challenge reveals an important methodological and political tension. Without sufficient data, it becomes harder to know whether digital participation is genuinely expanding the presence of historically marginalized groups or merely increasing the visibility of already organized sectors. At the same time, data collection must respect privacy, personal data protection, and participant security. The challenge, then, is to develop inclusion indicators that are robust, ethical, and politically useful.

Continuity is another unresolved issue. Many participatory processes generate intense mobilization during voting or consultation periods but lose momentum once these end. Without institutional feedback, follow-up, and permanent channels for dialogue, mobilized communities may disperse, and participation comes to be viewed as episodic. Institutionalizing continuity is therefore a strategic concern.

This tension directly relates to the concept of digital community discussed at the seminar. If many communities formed around platforms are fluid, temporary, and distributed, it is necessary to consider which mechanisms can sustain organizational ties after consultations close. A lack of institutional continuity can turn powerful mobilizations into isolated experiences, reducing their long-term political impact.

At the same time, the debates showed that the impact of participation should not be measured solely by whether proposals are directly incorporated into public policy. Several interview accounts indicated that the most important effect perceived by participants was the strengthening of collective capacities for mobilization, organization, communication, and political coordination developed during the participatory process. The challenge is to find ways to recognize, support, and sustain these organizational effects.

In the field of governance, the seminar revealed a tension between participatory openness and operational capacity. Expanding platform governance to include civil society, user communities, participants, social movements, and historically marginalized groups is democratically desirable, but it requires resources, time, methodology, clear rules, and permanent coordination arrangements.

One of the key tensions raised concerned the difficulty of creating genuinely inclusive governance models. Even in internationally recognized experiences such as Decidim in Barcelona, governance processes were found to remain largely concentrated among public managers, technical experts, and developer communities, with historically marginalized groups participating more sporadically.

Another challenge is to overcome the concentration of decisions among public managers, technical teams, and specialized development communities. Even in open-source software and digital participation initiatives, decision-making may remain limited to those with technical expertise, institutional access, or organizational resources. Building a digital commons therefore requires concrete mechanisms to democratize not only platform use but also its governance.

Another recurring tension emerged between openness and institutionalization. More open and participatory models can increase diversity, legitimacy, and shared responsibility, but they require permanent coordination structures, institutional resources, and clear decision-making mechanisms. Without these, openness may remain merely formal or generate unsustainable processes.

The seminar also pointed to the need to distinguish more clearly between software governance and governance of the public participation service. Code, technical architecture, and open-source software are important, but insufficient, dimensions. Decisions most consequential for participatory democracy often concern process rules, prioritization criteria, how proposals are presented, search mechanisms, institutional feedback, and connections with in-person participation spaces.

Another issue concerned the relationship between technical and political decisions. The research argued that seemingly technical choices—such as consultation formats, authentication mechanisms, page design, proposal visibility criteria, sorting methods, and interaction features—have direct political consequences for inclusion, mobilization, and society's capacity to influence participatory processes.

Finally, the long-term institutionalization of participatory platforms remains a challenge. Recent history shows that many digital participation initiatives are vulnerable to changes in government, administrative discontinuity, loss of technical teams, and lack of stable funding. Turning platforms such as Brasil Participativo into resilient public infrastructure requires institutional arrangements that transcend individual political cycles.

6.3 Future Perspectives

- The seminar presentations and debates reinforced the need to monitor Brasil Participativo at a moment of major institutional transition, marked both by the expansion of the platform to new agendas and levels of government—including integration into the Gov.br ecosystem, municipal adoption, and possible software-as-a-service (SaaS) models—and by political uncertainty regarding the sustainability of social participation policies after 2026.
- The workshops carried out during the first stage of the research were repeatedly mentioned as one of the project's main methodological findings, reinforcing the value of expanding action research methods, territorial workshops, and community training strategies.
- Discussions of territory, territoriality, and regional inequalities highlighted the importance of further investigating mediation processes and the training of local multipliers who can help organizations, communities, and historically excluded groups appropriate digital participation platforms, especially in contexts marked by barriers to connectivity, digital literacy, and technological infrastructure access.
- Several interventions highlighted the role of communities, social organizations, and territorial networks in the mobilization processes documented by the research. This directly strengthens the research agenda on community formation and the emergence of collective forms of participation around Brasil Participativo.
- The debate on technological dependence and the use of private platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok reinforced the need for deeper reflection on technological sovereignty, digital commons governance, and the development of public, open alternatives for participation.
- The discussions also reinforced the need to produce methodological materials, educational content, and documentation jointly with territorial organizations and

communities, in line with the proposal to strengthen self-management and community knowledge production (envisaged in the research extension).

- Finally, the seminar presentations and discussions consolidated the view that Brasil Participativo is now a strategic case for international research on digital commons, democracy, and large-scale participation, particularly in settings marked by structural inequalities and political instability.

7. Appendices

7.1 Full Program

Detailed Program | Final Seminar

Day 7 — Presentation of the Digital Commons Research

Program

9:00–10:00 a.m. — Opening Session
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. — Presentation of Findings
2:00–4:00 p.m. — In-Depth Discussion

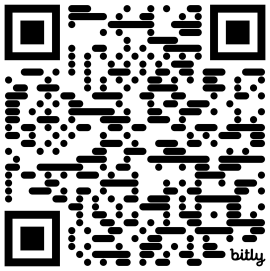
Guiding Outline:
Opening
What is the Digital Commons research project—its objectives and actors? What do we mean by digital commons, and what assumptions guide our work?
How was the research conducted?

Research
What were the research findings on inclusion in digital participatory processes?
What were the research findings on strengthening communities?
What were the research findings on governance of participation software?

What do these findings indicate? What interpretations can we draw for the field of participation?

Discussion
How can we promote more inclusive participatory processes?
How can we facilitate collective participation?
How can we build a digital commons around participation software adopted by the state?

Session	Objective	Format

9:00–10:00 a.m. — Opening	Welcome participants, explain the meeting objectives and program, and introduce perspectives from government, academia, and the funder on digital commons.	*20 min — Allowance for possible delays* 10 min — Opening (Marisa or University Rector) 10 min — Representative of the General Secretariat of the Presidency 10 min — Stéphanie 10 min — Marisa (introduction to the research) > Share the Guide [Preliminary version for the Seminar] → comments in the PDF on Drive.  https://bit.ly/ebookcomuns
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. — Presentation of Findings	Present and discuss the findings of the research on digital commons.	*Option 1* 15 min — Presentation on inclusion (Debora) 15 min — Presentation on communities (Laila) 15 min — Presentation on governance (Poppi) 15 min — General comments (Rayza) 15 min — General comments (Marcelo) 30–45 min — Questions and discussion with participants > Include a Mentimeter link for questions and comments that can be projected at the end. Moderation: Laila
2:00–4:00 p.m. — In-Depth Discussion	Discuss research findings from different audience perspectives and invited	**40 min — Fishbowl 1: How can we promote inclusion in participatory processes?** First 15 minutes allocated as follows:

	experiences.	- Chair 1: Debora (2 min), to recap - Chair 2: Dalva Santos (5 min) - Chair 3: Gabriel Simeone (5 min) - Chair 4: empty One chair always remains empty. Whenever someone wishes to speak, another person must leave their chair. **40 min — Fishbowl 2: How can we facilitate collective organization?** - Chair 1: Henrique Parra (2 min), to recap - Chair 2: Santiago (participant) (5 min) - Chair 3: Samuel Carvalho (5 min) - Chair 4: empty **40 min — Fishbowl 3: How can we promote participatory governance of a digital commons?** - Recap: Poppi (2 min) - Chair 1: Carla Rocha (5 min) - Chair 2: Sanches (Nomad/Decidim -) (5 min) - Chair 3: Alexandre Costa (SGPR) - Chair 4: empty Laila delivers the closing remarks.

7.2 List of Participants

Sector	Institution / Organization	Name
Academia	IPOL/UnB	Debora Rezende
Academia	IPOL/UnB	Rebecca Abers
Academia	IPOL/UnB	Marisa von Bülow
Civil Society	Instituto Cidade Democrática	Laila Bellix
Civil Society	Instituto Cidade Democrática	Ricardo Poppi

Civil Society	Instituto Cidade Democrática	Henrique Parra Parra
Federal Government	General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic	Gabriel Simeone
Federal Government	National Secretariat for Social Participation	Dannytha Câmara
Federal Government	National Secretariat for Social Participation	Gabriel Guerra
Federal Government	National Secretariat for Social Participation	Alexandre Costa Barbosa
Federal Government	Ministry of Education	Manuel Bonduki
Federal Government	Ministry of Education	Bianca Freire
Federal Government	IPEA	Daniel Avelino
Academia	LabLivre - UnB	Carla Rocha
Academia	LabLivre - UnB	Loana Velasco
Academia	LabLivre - UnB	Renato Coral
Academia	LabLivre - UnB	Dalva Santos
Academia	UFPA	Rayza Sarmento
Academia	UFPB	Marcelo Burgos
Decidim Ecosystem	Brazilian Decidim instance	Sanches (Nomadtech)
Civil Society	Open Knowledge	Haydee Svab
Academia	UnB	Jhonatan Bena
Federal Government	Ministry of Labor	Sérgio Godoy
Academia	UnB	Philipp Misell
Academia	UnB	Guilherme Faria
Academia	UnB	Fernanda Lucena
Academia	UnB	Matheus Nunes
Academia	UnB	Maria Eduarda B. Lima
Academia	UnB	Maria Clara Machado

Academia	UnB	Isabela Machado
Academia	UFPB	Alexsandy Rocha
Academia	UnB	Bruno Gama
Academia	UnB	Idalêncio Silva

7.3 Audiovisual Record of the Seminar

Videos of the seminar are available on the YouTube channel of the University of Brasília's Institute of Political Science at https://www.youtube.com/@InstitutodeCi%C3%AAnciaPol%C3%ADticaUnB .