


## Chapter 16

# Inclusive Democracy in the Digital Age: The Case of Brasil Participativo Using Decidim Platform

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter examines the impact of digital platforms on democracy, focusing on Brazil's adoption of Decidim for the Brasil Participativo initiative. In the middle of Brazil's democratic challenges and declining public trust, Decidim's introduction represents a pivotal case in using digital tools to enhance democratic engagement. By analyzing the initiative, which boasts 4.3 million accesses and over 1.4 million registered users, this study delves into digital governance's potential to rebuild trust and foster inclusive participation. Employing a case study methodology, it assesses qualitative and quantitative data to understand Decidim's role in facilitating public engagement. This research not only highlights the significance of digital tools in promoting democracy but also offers global insights, making Brazil's experience a valuable lesson for other countries aiming to improve governance through technology.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter analyzes the transformative capacity of digital instruments in augmenting public engagement in governance processes worldwide, emphasizing particularly on the recent adoption of the Decidim digital platform in Brazil. Given the nation's complex political landscape and a discernible pivot towards more democratic governance structures, this research seeks to verify how digital platforms, through Decidim, may act as catalysts in maintaining and improving public trust and promoting inclusive civic participation.

At the center of this investigation is the Brasil Participativo (BP) initiative, platform that centralizes and organizes all participatory processes of the federal government, which adopted Decidim in May 2023. This analysis aims to understand the initiative's objectives, its methodological framework, and its impacts, supported by empirical data (notably, 4.3 million site visits and upwards of 1.4 million registered participants). Through a case study methodology, BP initiative was deeply analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data sets. This encompassed metrics of user engagement, participation rates, and participant feedback to afford a systemic understanding of Decidim's role in facilitating civic engagement and participatory decision-making within Brazil. Furthermore, this chapter intends to contribute to the broader discourse on digital democracy by examining the interplay between technology and participatory governance.

This book chapter is based on the premise that digital tools hold substantial promise in the promotion of democratic governance, aiming to contribute valuable insights into the effectivity of such digital platforms in enhancing civic participation. The Brazilian experience is considered to be a relevant case to understand the adoption of technological solutions to bolster public engagement in governance because, in a short time, more than one million people participated in the new platform. By analyzing the BP initiative's deployment of Decidim, this study explores the dynamics of digital engagement, the identified challenges, and the strategies deployed to overcome these challenges. It delves into the nuances of digital platform implementation, including the design features that facilitate or hinder participatory engagement, the role of digital literacy in participant inclusivity, and the potential of digital tools to democratize policy-making processes.

This analysis will not only provide a comprehensive account of Decidim's impact on public participation in Brazil but also contribute to a nuanced understanding of the conditions under which digital tools can most effectively enhance democratic governance. This exploration underscores the critical importance of aligning digital initiatives with broader governance objectives to ensure that technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier to inclusive public participation.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design with a qualitative approach. The primary aim is to understand and articulate the implications of the BP initiative, which leverages the digital tool Decidim. This design facilitates an in-depth exploration of the initiative's implementation, impact, and overall effectiveness in enhancing public participation in governance.

The research will predominantly rely on secondary and publicly available data. This includes:

Government Publications and Reports: Key documents released by the Brazilian government related to the BP initiative will be scrutinized. These documents may include policy papers, project outlines, progress reports, and post-implementation reviews.

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