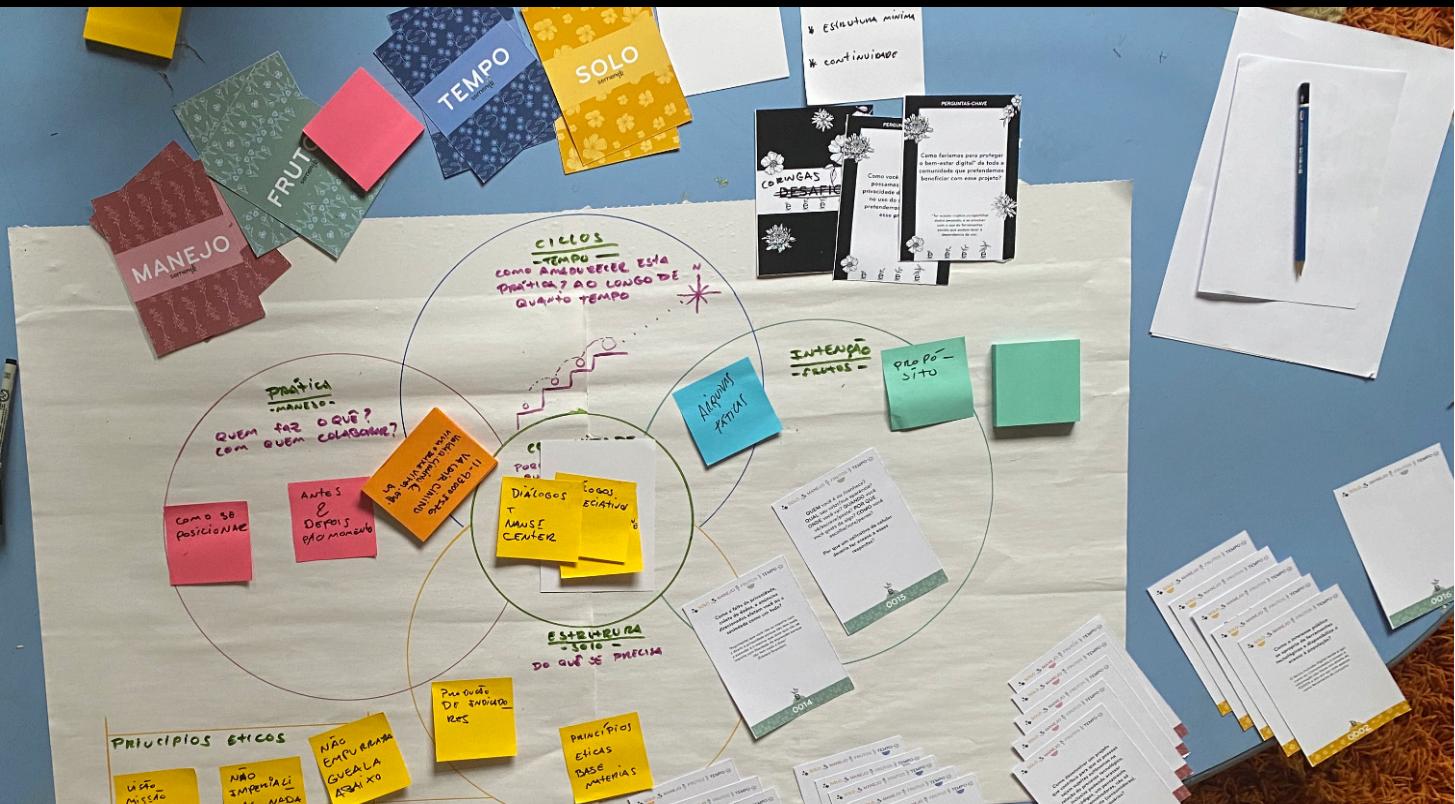




Semente: a nature-inspired critical toolkit for grassroots community action



A toolkit for community-driven socio-environmental change

The Semente toolkit, designed with an anticolonial and collectivist perspective, is a testament to the legacy of collaboration in digital policy-making in Brazil. Crafted by activist and researcher Felipe Schmidt Fonseca in close cooperation with service & social designer Bernardo van de Schepop, the toolkit is a product of Brazil's vibrant history of collective policy-making. During the unconference Tropixel in 2022, in partnership with Instituto Neos, the team refined Semente's card deck and canvas through eight sessions with local leaders, valuing and incorporating crucial feedback. These sessions were instrumental in validating and enhancing critical concepts, which are a culmination of specific elements identified in two prior initiatives, thereby contributing to the consolidation of the framework. Key foundational projects that informed earlier designs include:

- ID21 (2021): A study of grassroots digital initiatives in Brazil based on interviews with community leaders and activists.
- fonte.wiki (2021 - ongoing): An online repository of open educational resources on digital policy and community action.





Emerging during a challenging period of far-right dominance in Brazil's federal politics, the Semente toolkit represents a way to organise hope born from profound questioning of the resilience of communal practices. It transcends being just a tool. Catalysing empowerment enables recognition and addresses communities' strengths and weaknesses. The concept is deeply rooted in well-established non-Western care practices, emphasising generous leadership and respect for time cycles. Semente asserts that values and social awareness are essential for driving positive change, adopting a systems view that prioritises creating solid relationships between interdependent stakeholders. Semente lays the groundwork for sustainable social ecologies, offering a promising vision for the future.

An Adaptable Framework for Collaboration

From the onset, we recognised the significance of creating an open and flexible design solution, empowering each community to adapt to its unique context. The goals and principles of the toolkit are flexible. Still, they are based on evidence and presented in a format that allows knowledge snippets to be mixed and adapted to different levels of digital literacy, organisational maturity, and contexts of use. In 2023, the first iteration of semente was presented to an international audience at the Critical Infrastructure Lab at the University of Amsterdam. The overwhelmingly positive feedback underscored the toolkit's adaptability, extending its potential use far beyond the original focus. A swift pilot demonstrated that its dynamic was well understood and simple enough to be used by audiences far beyond its initial scope, instilling confidence in its versatility.

