

# MANIFESTO

## A BETTER DEMOCRATIC FUTURE IS POSSIBLE

**01**

### From spectator sport to participatory democracy

Democracy only thrives when we are all invited to participate in everyday solutions and not just at the ballot box. Citizens should no longer be placed on the periphery of power, in the spectator seats or as consumers of politics as a commodity. Citizens must regain the right to participate and be activated as a unique resource in society.

Citizens are the driving force behind creating better solutions in our society – both in decision-making and in implementation. Good democracy grows out of our involvement in local communities, associations, workplaces and communities where we take responsibility and act.

Active participation and citizenship are about collective empowerment. It is about all of us taking part in the democratic community and taking responsibility for ourselves, each other and society.

**02**

### Represent and be represented

Genuine representation is the key to an open and better democracy. We must create spaces where different experiences, lifestyles and perspectives can be brought into play. This leads to better solutions and strengthens legitimacy. Everyone must have the opportunity to help shape solutions that more people can relate to. At the same time, it is part of the premise that at some point, one must step back and make room for new voices.

When many different people and perspectives participate in decisions, they become better. No one can see an issue from all perspectives. Representation must be dynamic, open and based on continuous rotation so that power does not close in on itself or special interests. Far more people must be involved in representing and not just being represented.

**03**

### Open democracy requires radical transparency

Democracy must create solutions that benefit as many people as possible and ensure that everyone has equal access to influence the decisions that shape their lives and the society in which they live. Anything else is both inhumane and destructive. It creates polarisation, instability and the abuse of power.

It requires equal access to decision-making so that special interests and economic power do not take precedence over the needs of the community. Direct democracy, radical transparency and clear mechanisms for regulating power are necessary. When decisions are made openly and the movements of power are traceable. More direct democracy in workplaces and on company boards counteracts the concentration of power. A robust democracy arises when we make decisions that create solutions for the many – rather than the few.

**04**

### Good lives are driven by participation

Democracy must be the framework for everyone to freely participate in public discourse, where freedom and equal rights are a prerequisite for good and meaningful lives. We want to reinvent the democratic ideal of public happiness in a modern society by strengthening citizens' participation in society. Being an active part of a community, built on trust, commitment and security for the individual, improves quality of life.

A vibrant democracy is about each generation being able to help develop society in a direction they find meaningful. Finding meaning, hope and space to live a dignified life – where the community creates a framework for individuals to grow and contribute. We must be able to feel this close to home: in our neighbourhoods, at our workplaces and in the communities where we live our lives.

**05**

### Democracy is something we practise

Democracy is not something we simply have, but something we practise. Participating in democracy requires muscle in the form of skills and self-confidence. We are working to ensure that democratic participation once again becomes part of our education and training. A rich culture of participation in everyday life requires that we practise our ability to listen to each other, empathize with our differences, disagree together and compromise. We must strengthen our courage to fight and argue for a cause, while we mobilize others to join us in creating change.

We must exercise our democratic muscles in all areas – in schools, educational institutions, workplaces and all the daily opportunities for participation, from association boards to activist groups and local community involvement.

**06**

### Those who will live with the solutions must own them

Citizens are the core and the canaries of democracy. We react when decisions are made in oxygen-deprived spaces and when we are treated as an afterthought in solutions – rather than being activated as resources for good decisions. It is essential that those who have to live with the consequences of our decisions in their everyday lives are involved in owning them.

We must see protests and resistance as healthy human reactions to unhealthy systems – where those who are most affected are not involved. This applies when we are too often involved at the back end when we adapt to climate change, place wind turbines, convert infrastructure or make changes in the workplace. We must always involve people at the forefront of solutions rather than conducting consultations at the back end. Because solutions become better, legitimacy is strengthened, and the power of implementation becomes greater.

**07**

### Many hands make light work

We believe in a participation-driven democracy, where we ensure broad and in-depth consultation across society on an informed basis. This enables us to respond to the biggest challenges with the best solutions for everyone. When we move away from the idea that decisions are best made by a select few and instead activate collective intelligence, we can overcome even the greatest challenges. This does not require moon landing projects. It requires the courage to activate everyday experts in close collaboration with professional experts.

We are working towards a future where all citizens are invited at least once in their lives to participate in an open consultation process at local, regional or national level to promote the best solutions on common ground. This requires us to ensure deliberative processes with a decisive mandate and resources to enable individual citizens to participate, and to guard against special interests. In this way, we give more people the opportunity to bring about change for the common good.

**08**

### Listen louder and broader

A viable democracy must be measured by its ability to activate all voices in the solutions – including those who do not have a voice. The future, nature and the climate must be given a natural place in our decision-making space. Future generations must be systematically taken into account through the participation of youth and minority groups, so that the marginalised without the same prerequisites or resources as the majority also count.

Direct democracy, rotation and stratified random selection are tools for bringing more voices into play, but we can do even more to ensure breadth in our decision-making. We must listen more closely to people who feel discriminated against, overlooked and excluded in our communities, at work, in life and in political decision-making. More people need to feel that they belong and are invited in to strengthen social cohesion and common solutions.

**09**

### Local is the new global

The hyperlocal must be empowered. Whether it is neighbourhoods, villages, workplaces, roads, stairwells, voluntary action groups – we must unleash the right and the opportunity to take action in our daily lives.

We must move away from the idea that we can delegate responsibility for welfare to the state alone and for positive change to NGOs and associations. Democratic entrepreneurship and drive must grow from all corners of society and challenge the way we usually create solution. Far too little will happen if we wait for those in charge.

The key to cohesion and social entrepreneurship lies at the local level. We must reform Denmark so that a new, liberated movement can rise up from the bottom and delegate resources so that more people can take responsibility themselves.

**10**

### A better democratic future is possible

Democracy has always been in flux and faced crises, each of which has enabled new responses and opportunities. Our task is to act in the awareness of an open future, where a better democratic future is created by activating our collective imagination. We must build a world based on human rights and liberal values of freedom, where we protect the unique, free human being and healthy communities.

Much of the beauty and significance around us springs from human creativity and the ability to imagine. We need to put culture back at the heart of our society and let values guide our lives. When entrepreneurship and education are combined with diligence and imagination, it often bears fruit. The result can be something we could not have imagined.



# A BETTER DEMOCRATIC FUTURE IS POSSIBLE

We believe that a different and better democratic future is possible. For too long, we have taken democracy for granted and neglected to renew it. We face a major task in developing democracy – in order to preserve it for future generations.

The foundations of our democracy are beginning to crack. It is under threat globally, and many are turning their backs on it locally. Not on democracy itself, but on the way our democracy is being managed. More and more people feel that they are not meaningfully involved in the solutions.

We can only solve the greatest challenges of our time in a well-functioning democracy, where solutions are created together

This requires us to abandon the idea of democracy as a finished design reserved only for the specially selected. We must give the initiative and the power to act back to those who have to live with the solutions. We must rethink the way we manage democracy between the system and citizens

We have done it before. We have radically rethought and reformed democracy. To secure farmers' conditions, workers' rights, women's suffrage and the emergence of joint cooperatives – a struggle for equal participation and rights.

This time, we must renew democracy both as a form of government and a way of life. We must strengthen our democratic muscles at all levels and activate society's collective intelligence. Together, we must promote local agency for a more meaningful and hopeful future.

We must dare to break new ground and learn from democratic experiments from around the world to ensure the resilience of democracy. Technocracy, autocracy and meritocracy do not create better solutions or the capacity for implementation than the sum of us all.

The democratic system is something we ourselves have created – and therefore we also have the opportunity to recreate it. We have to accept that democratic innovation is an ongoing task that we will never finish.

We have set out 10 guiding principles in our manifesto for a better democratic future. These are the principles we ourselves work for and invite everyone else to help implement in everyday life.

**WE DO  
DEMOCRACY**

We are the leading Nordic advisors in democratic innovation and deliberation  
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## Our principles for a better democratic future:

- 01** From spectator sport to participatory democracy
- 02** Represent and be represented
- 03** Open democracy requires radical transparency
- 04** Good lives are driven by participation
- 05** Democracy is something we practise
- 06** Those who will live with the solutions must own them
- 07** Many hands make light work
- 08** Listen louder and broadly
- 09** Local is the new global
- 10** A better democratic future is possible



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TURN PAPER

