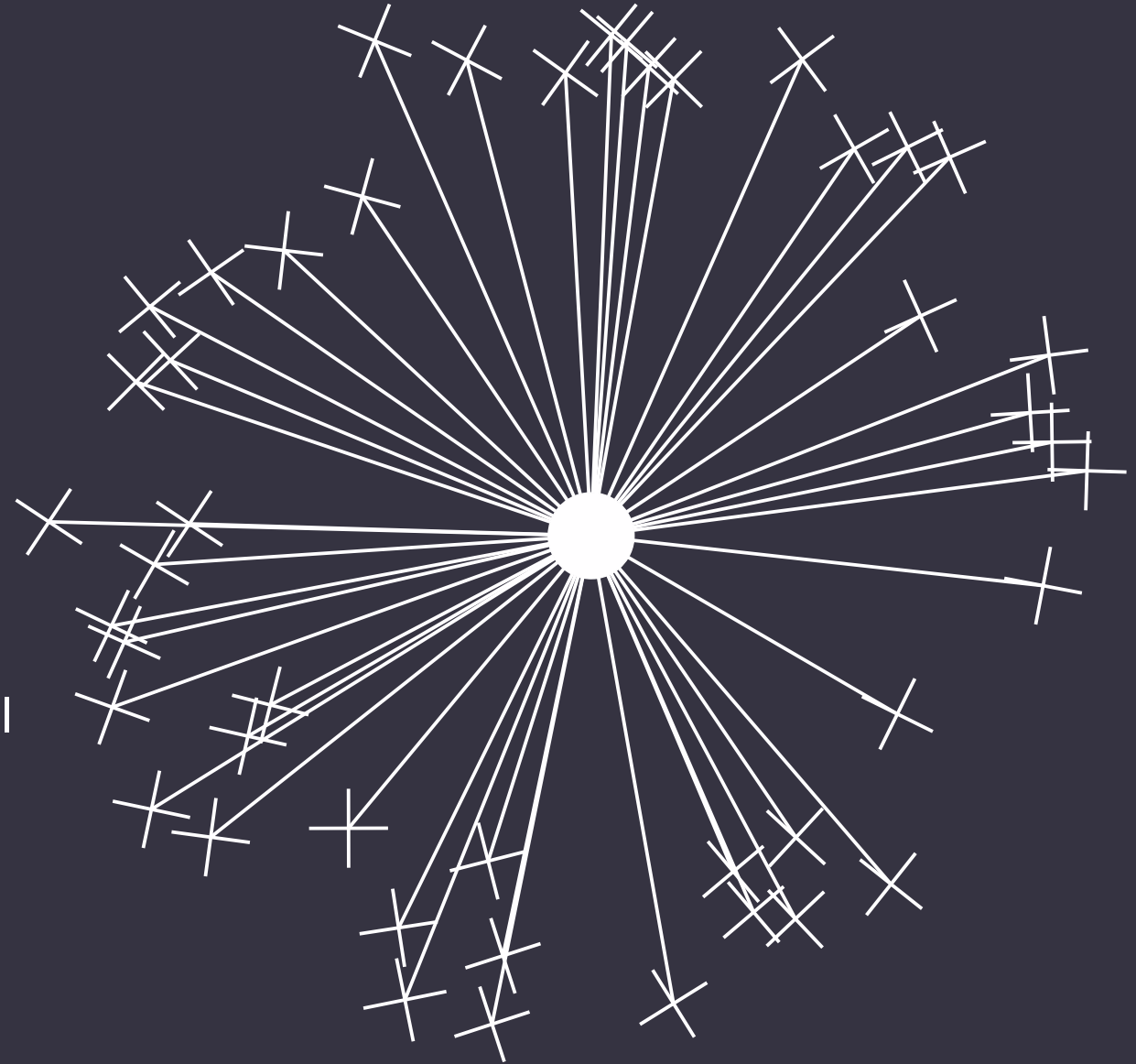


THETA

Democratic
Digital Infrastructure
for Civil Society

A proposal for how civil society and Danish
foundations can sustain and safeguard digital
democracy



Indhold

- 1 Five well substantiated claims
- 2 The State of Democracy: Good and Bad News
- 3 A Proposed Solution: A New Digital Infrastructure for Civil Society
Democratic Ownership and Operation
- 4 A new and Democratic Business Model
- 5 The Project's Core Pillars and Initiatives
- 6 A budget estimate
- 7 Inspiration, Cases and Potential Partnerships
- 8 Appendix: Other Tracks and More Insights Coming

1

Five well-substantiated Claims

Claim1

The digitalization of civil society and citizenship in Denmark is more extensive than previously understood – and it is here to stay.

Claim2

Digital civil society already plays a leading role in sustaining democracy, public debate, civil society and social cohesion in Denmark

Claim 3

Digital democracy is not broken, but the foundation is mouldy.

Claim 4

Civil society and Danish foundations have a role to play on Denmark's digital sovereignty – and can make a decisive difference for digital democracy.



Claim 5

The social digital infrastructure of the future, must be owned and led **democratically** by the users themselves, and **built with civil society** as its starting point.

According to
Whom?

Line Pommerencke-Vildmand
Sociologist specializing in
vulnerable groups

Niels Chemnitz
Computer Scientist with focus
on robust and secure digital
infrastructure

Mikkeline Skjerning Thomsen
Rhetorician and expert in
digital civil society



Den kooperative erhvervsdrivende forening Os & Data

Asger Neesgaard Sand
Data Scientist and Algorithm
Engineer

Tali Mørch
Sociologist, statistician, facilitator
and expert in the value of digital
communities for vulnerable groups

Mira Rosen Sørensen
Sociology student with focus
on qualitative analysis,
administration and economics

And our scientific partners:



Karen Rønne
Lawyer and CEO of DPCMO,
Expert in big tech and rights



Rebecca Adler-Nissen
Professor of Political Science and head
of centre at CAISA, the National
Center for AI in Society



Sarah Steinitz
Chair of the Board at Os & Data and
expert in power and digital democracy



Serge Belongie
Professor in Data Science and chief
of
Pioneer centre for ai

On what basis?

Angreb i den offentlige debat på Facebook

Analysen af Twitter & Facebook har med støtte fra Trygfonden udsendt den første med avancerede datalogiske algoritmer til detektion af angreb i den offentlige debat på Facebook. Baseret på avanceret maskinlæring og deep learning teknologier er det nu muligt at kortlægge angreb af this angreb, anvendeligt og tildelt spring i kommentarstrømme på offentlige debat Facebooksider.

Analysen af Twitter & Facebook - Maj 2023

Ytringsklimaet for skeive på Twitter & Facebook

Reporten fra Analyse & Tal på vegne af Amnesty International handler om...

Analysen af Twitter & Facebook - Juni 2023

Kartlegning af udenlandsk informations-påvirkning på sociale medier før, under og efter kommunestyre- og fylkestingsvalget 2023

FFI-RAPPORT

23/02302

FFI Forskningsinstitut

Analysen af Twitter & Facebook - 23/02302

En hverdag af data

En kortlægning af digitale tjenesters datindsamling og hvad befolkningen ved og mener om den.

Report udarbejdet af Analyse & Tal på vegne af Danmarks Tid - januar 2023

The angry internet

A threat to gender equality, democracy & well-being

Social work in new media

CFDP

Unge oplevelser af online-risici på sociale medier

Kvalitativ analyse af, hvad unge oplever af risici på sociale medier. Hvordan det påvirker dem og hvordan det påvirker og forstærker ulovligheder og ulovlige aktiviteter.

Analysen af Twitter & Facebook - Common Connections - 2022

Angreb & had i sportsdebatten på sociale medier

Undersøgelse af Analyse & Tal i samarbejde med Amnesty International Danmark med støtte fra Trygfonden.

Boblberg: Et lokalt digitalt mødested

Analysen af udfordringer og fællesskabsopretter blandt borgere på Boblberg 2023

Byg selv eller GPT-4?

Identifikation af sproglige angreb i den danske offentlige debat på Facebook

En komparativ evaluering af GPT-4 Turbo og Analyse & Tal på vegne af Trygfondens AdTrack-modul

TRACKING ANTI-VACCINE MOBILIZATION

Understanding online anti-vaccine mobilization across Scandinavian countries

Angrep & had i den offentlige debatten på Facebook

Trygt Digitalt Norge

Angreb & had i den offentlige debat på Facebook

Marts 2025

Krig og kærlighed i coronaens tid

En kortlægning af debatten om corona i mediers og politikeres kommentarspor på Facebook

Danmarks Digitale Medborgerhuse

Danske foreninger i samarbejde af borgerne Facebookgrupper har de deltaget i alle de kommuner og parkeer til lokal forvaltning og "aktiviteter"

Anerkendelse i den offentlige debat på Facebook

For 10 years we have mapped the best and worst of the digitalization of democracy.

The best, in particular, merits greater attention – and our support.

Danmarks Digitale Frivillige

— om administratorers og ordstyreres frivillige arbejde i 9000 grupper på Facebook

Trygfonden &#

2

Good
and
bad news

The good news is that digital civil society on Facebook alone consists of:

More than
48.000
Groups with
163 mio.
memberships

450.000
Posts and comments
are written daily

The groups are run and
moderated on voluntary
basis by
100.000
Citizens, who collectively
contribute more than
11.000
full time equivalents of
volunteer time

72%
of Danes are members
and
56%
Of Danes are active on a
weekly basis or more
often.

Denmark's digital community houses cover the entire country

72%

of the population over 18 are members of a citizen-led Facebook group

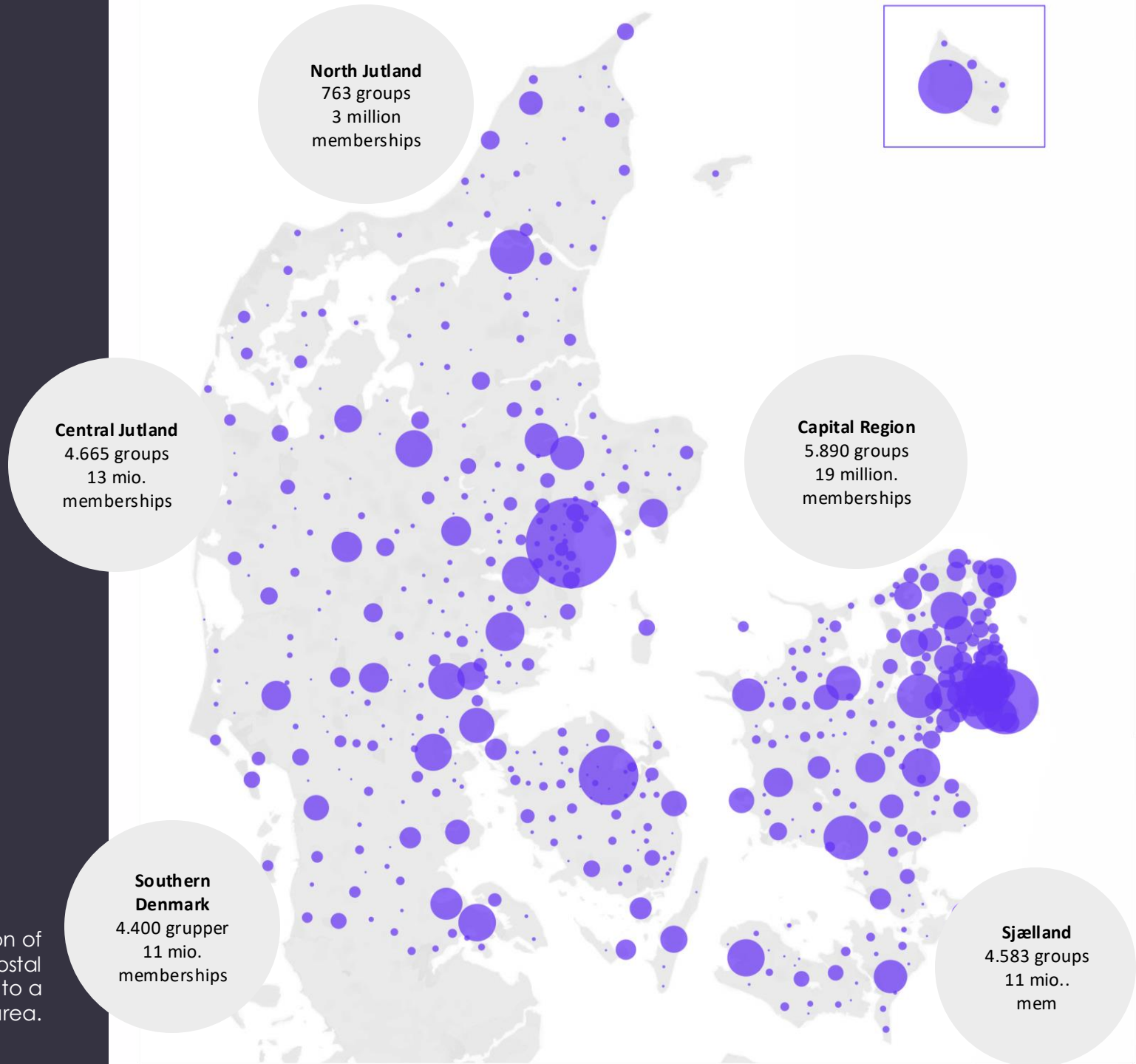
56%

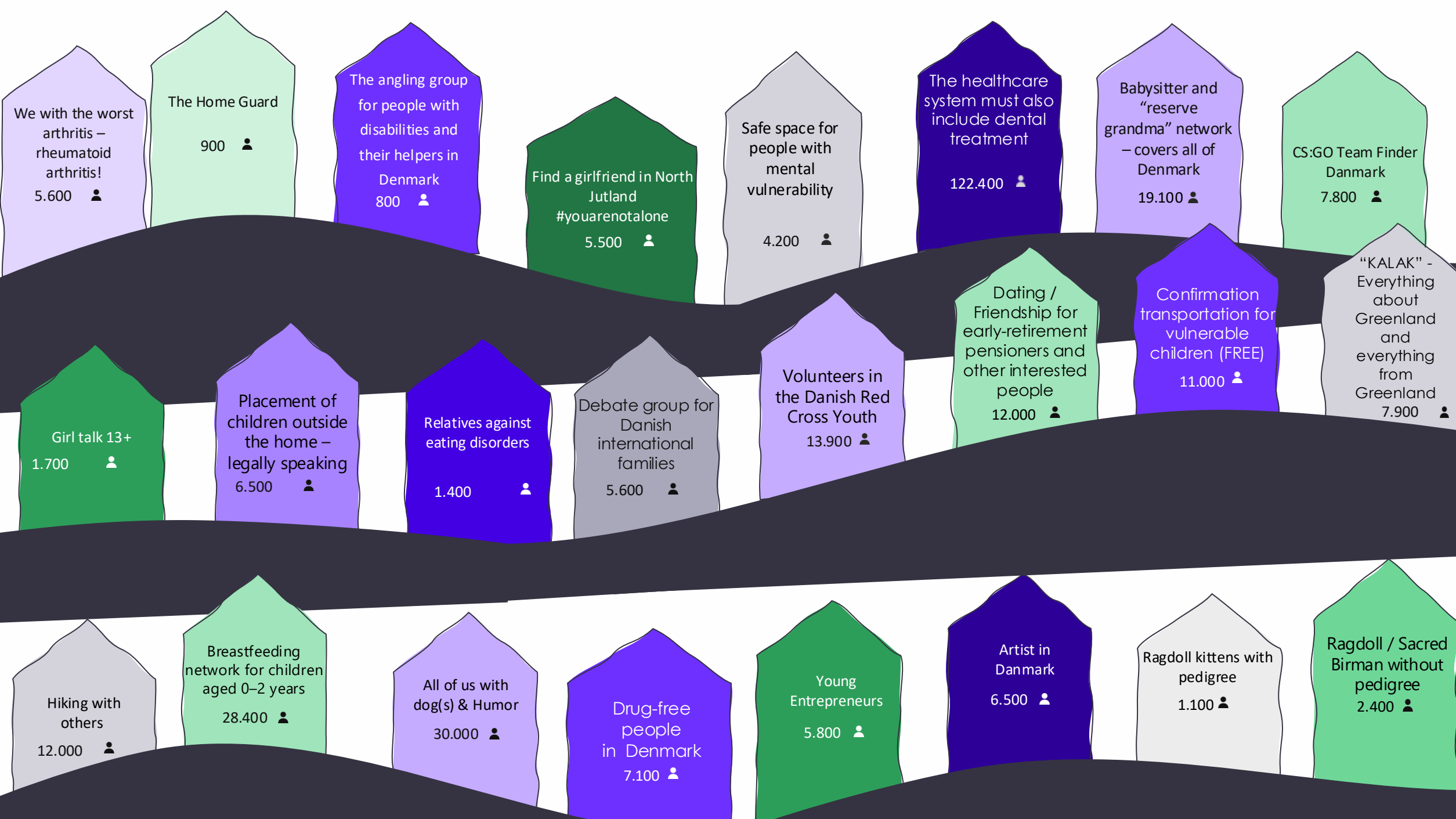
of the population over 18 are active in a citizen-led Facebook group weekly or more often

Borgere

groups are used across genders, age, educational levels, and occupations.

The illustration shows the geographic distribution of Facebook groups associated with different postal codes. The remaining groups are not connected to a specific geographic area.





Digital Civil Society Constitutes Social Media's Largest and Most Overlooked Success Story

Whatever your area of interest may be...

- local communities • vulnerability • children and youth • health • mental well-being • participation • education • poverty • emergency preparedness • activism • professional organizing • crime and fraud • sustainability • public debate

... digital communities are a fundamental part of the infrastructure that enables

- help • advice • knowledge sharing • venting • boasting • mobilization • organizing • debate • protest and volunteering •

Meet JACOB



”

Unconventional individuals have a different opportunity to participate in local communities through the groups without being judged as much. For example, you can't see on Facebook what diagnoses you have, whether you're homeless, or if you're missing a tooth.

Digital community center:

Allerød Municipality - Help each other! 👍

Remember no buying/selling

11,500 members

Created in 2015

MØD KIRSTEN



”

The small islands are losing more and more cohesion. The Facebook groups have truly been core infrastructure in that regard. Without them, I would be worried about areas like ours.”

Digital community center:
Lolland Falster Lovestorm
46,500 members
Created in 2015

The large digital civil demonstrates:

1. Dedicated volunteers **willingt** take on the role of hosting and stewarding digital communities.
2. Citiznez ready to **participate constructively** when the right conditions and structures are in place.
3. Digital communities, in a number of situatuons, succed in **contributing** to improved life quality and welfare through voluntary action and civic engagement.
4. That the digital welfare society has in many situations succeeded in **heading core welfare tasks** on voluntary basis.
5. That digital communities can deliver the **democratic education** that everyone is longing for.

A grassroots movement that deserves a better home

In April 2024, we held Denmark's first summit for digital volunteers. We gathered 150 administrators and moderators of digital community centers. Their 150 groups have a combined total of 4.5 million memberships.

Both the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Digitalization delivered speeches.

In 2026, we will hold another summit.

One of the themes will be the digital civil society's future independence from tech giants.



The first piece of bad news is...

... that the foundation under digital civil society has mold.

1. Groups are shut down without warning and the content and community are lost
2. Groups are flooded with bots
3. The platforms prioritize quantity, interactions, and retention over quality on all parameters – and it shows.
4. There is more and more AI-generated and commercial content designed to keep users on the platform when they use the groups. The phenomenon is called "enshittification"
5. The major American social media platforms have "kissed the ring" and rolled back inclusion initiatives, fact-checking, and moderation.



”

"Big tech has become so large that they don't care about Denmark, the Danes, and Danish regulation. If we want platforms that protect and respect children, young people, consumers, citizens, democracy, copyright, etc., we must create them ourselves. Denmark has a unique opportunity to lead the way because the stakeholders here can actually collaborate."

- Karen Rønde
Media Lawyer and Director, DPCMO



”

We are in a vulnerable position from an emergency preparedness standpoint if Facebook suddenly shuts down. This is where we coordinate and share knowledge with each other in my squadron and the other Home Guard groups

Administrator of several home guard groups



”

The security policy developments force us not only to strengthen our military, but also to strengthen our democracy. A large part of our democratic conversation today takes place on social media.

Digital democracy is too important to be left to a few tech giants.

- Caroline Stage

Minister of Digitalization Caroline Stage

The second piece of bad news is...

...that it is difficult to identify good and sustainable alternatives

1. There is still (with some justification) limited trust or support for state-owned digital infrastructure. And the government has itself announced that a state-owned social media platform is not a viable alternative.
2. Public IT projects like Aula (which cost ~500 million DKK to build and costs 70 million DKK annually to operate) have a poor reputation for being inflexible and expensive.
3. Several initiatives have started building alternatives, but all alternatives lack the bridge-building to Danish media, politicians, civil society actors, and not least the digital volunteers who drive the digital communities.
4. Waiting for a young guy in a basement with "good values" and enough private capital is risky (and has been tried before).
5. Foundations and private actors have gradually begun financing digital platforms for civil society (e.g., LuluTalk and Cyberhus), though each faces expenses for data security, moderation development, operations and maintenance, and struggles to attract enough users.
6. Many different platforms with different logins and interfaces are a barrier to participation for many (especially vulnerable) citizens.



”

I was 'forced' back onto Facebook because my son's cycling club has a group there. It's still 'the way' to be connected to associations and civil society. Artists, musicians, media, politicians, and civil society all exist today at the mercy of a few tech giants

- Troels Abrahamsen

Founder at BLCK and Continuous Engagement

But another really good piece of news is...

...that the time, technology, and civil society are finally ready alternatives

- Digital social infrastructure has (finally) been elevated to a security policy issue
- The EU is in the midst of a legal confrontation that could ultimately lead to tech giants pulling the plug on Europe.
- Digital independence is the main point in the recommendations from the government's expert group on tech giants' role as digital infrastructure.
- Technology that was very expensive just 5 years ago has quickly become cheaper and more accessible. It is therefore more realistic than ever to build a secure platform.
- Citizens and organizations are increasingly aware of the risks associated with being in the pocket of the big tech giants. 42% of citizens would like to switch to European alternatives.

Secure digitalization is tough nut to crack for civil society

Most people know that digitalization is here to stay, and that we are looking at a future with digital coordination, information sharing, counseling, and organizing.

30% of Facebook groups serve as gathering points for members of a formal association or organization. Civil society has thus largely embraced digital coordination and digital communities.

...And we hear the same concerns and are asked the same, e questions:

“Facebook cannot be our official strategy for dialogue with our target audience and volunteers”

- Digital Director at a civil society organization



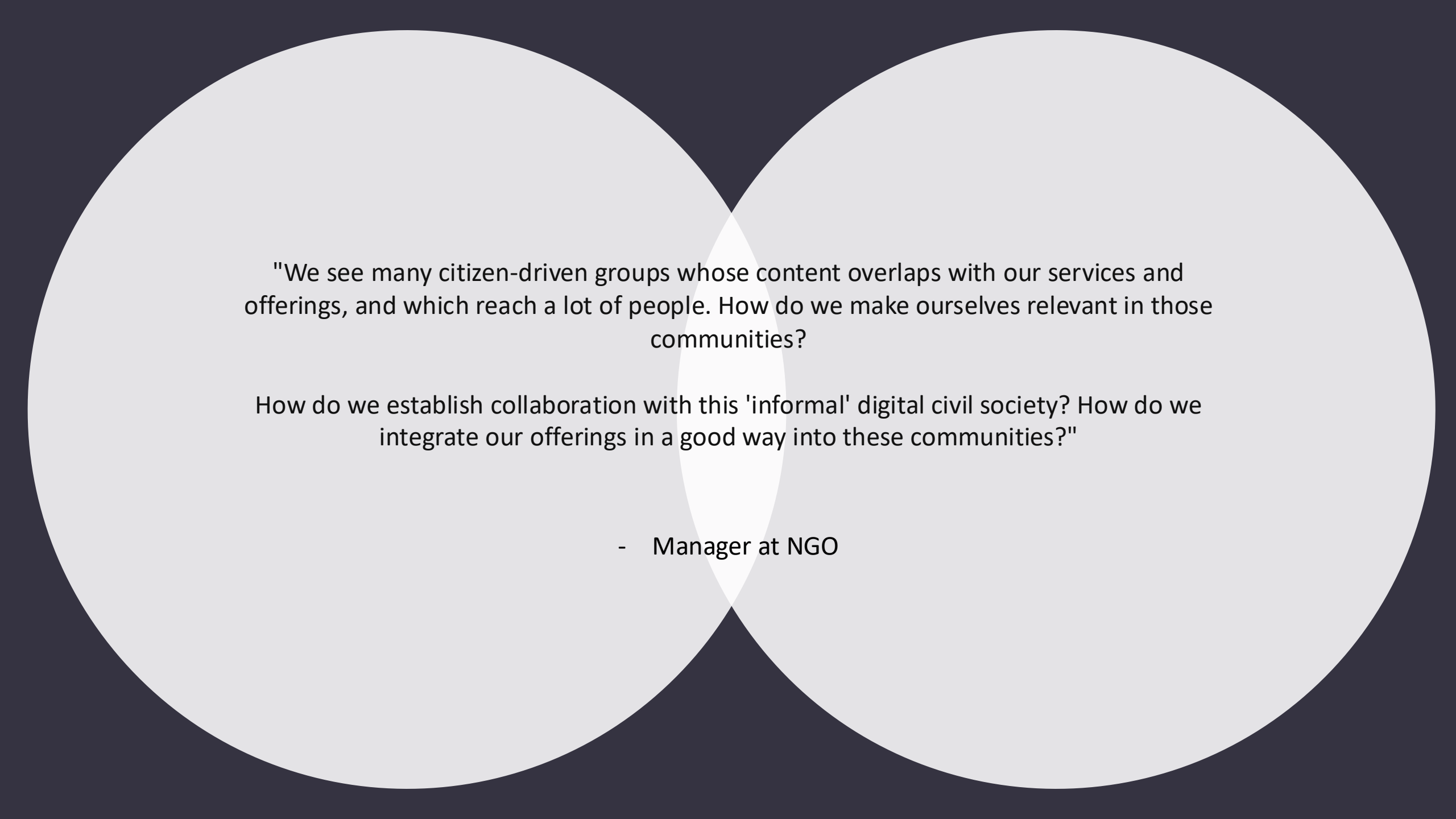
"We cannot encourage our volunteers to organize via groups on Facebook. Both due to ethical issues, but also considerations about data security and GDPR. We know people do it anyway, and that's understandable. Almost all coordination happens digitally."

- Local manager at a large humanitarian organization

"We know that our target audience benefits greatly from digital communities, but it feels somewhat unsafe that Facebook is hosting them."

Our history, personal information, etc. will be stored there, and if Facebook suddenly pulls the plug, or the administrator passes away or forgets their password, the community could be lost."

- Communications Director at a patient association



"We see many citizen-driven groups whose content overlaps with our services and offerings, and which reach a lot of people. How do we make ourselves relevant in those communities?"

How do we establish collaboration with this 'informal' digital civil society? How do we integrate our offerings in a good way into these communities?"

- Manager at NGO

3

A proposed solution:
Civil society's new digital
infrastructure

(working name: Theta)

The core principles for Theta

- 1 Familiar User Experience**

The infrastructure should (especially initially) mirror the functionality and navigation of Facebook groups with the purpose of ensuring the most seamless transition for users from one infrastructure to the other. It should look familiar.
- 2 Adversarial Interoperability for Easy Migration**

We will use adversarial interoperability to ensure a smoother transition from Facebook to the new platform. This means offering a data moving service so Facebook groups can bring their historical content with them.
- 3 Co-Creation with Danish Group Administrators and Civil Society**

Theta must be developed in collaboration with the administrators of Denmark's 9,000 Facebook groups and civil society organizations.

Democratic and Cooperative Ownership
Theta must be owned and operated in a cooperative democratic structure, e.g., through a foundation and/or consumer ownership with a representative assembly.
- 4 Interoperability with Digital Alternatives**

Theta must build on interoperability with existing digital alternatives such as Boblberg, Cyberhus.dk. Different actors should be able to provide different modules into a Danish ecosystem of infrastructure.
- 5**
- 6 Democratically Shaped Business Model**

Theta's business model must be developed democratically together with users, but may be based on a mix of ethical advertising, sharing data with researchers, and discounts through membership from associations and businesses.
- 7 Transparent and Adjustable Algorithms**

Theta's algorithms for moderation, recommendation, and content sorting must be transparent and adjustable and support the communities. The technology should also be used and activated to create access for the most vulnerable groups.
- 8 Exportable and Shareable EU-Ready Architecture**

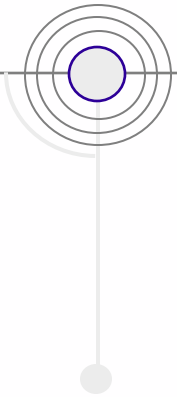
Theta's technical and design building blocks must be shareable with other EU countries with a view to expansion and possible interoperability.
- 9 Long-Term Foundation Support**

The platform should be supported by foundations for the first 10 years (approx. 12 million DKK annually) so that the platform overcomes the notorious network effect and gains enough content to be valuable to users without retention mechanisms.
- 10 Meaningful Use of Time**

Time spent on Theta should create value. Users, administrators, and contributors should only have to invest time on the platform when it genuinely serves a purpose.

The Platform's Target Groups

Target Group 1



The informal civil society

Existing informal civil-society organisations - such as city-based, interest-based, and peer-counselling groups on Facebook – include communities like *Find a Female Friend*, *Hike with Others*, *Early Retirees with an Edge*, *We Who Love the vegetable Garden*, *Those of Us with Severe Arthritis*, *Rheumatoid Arthritis/ Rheumatoid Arthritis / Carpooling Between Aalborg and Odense*, and *Free Stuff*.

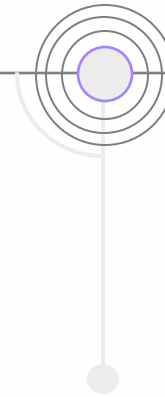
Target Group 2



The formal civil society

Existing formal civil society organizations: DGI's and DUF's members, patient associations Red Cross, social organizations that need to organize volunteers, offer counseling, and engage in dialogue with their members and target groups.

Target Group 3



Danish media and politicians

Danish media and politicians who can share their news and host debates in the same way they currently do via Facebook pages.

Target Group 4



Professional organizations and democratic assemblies

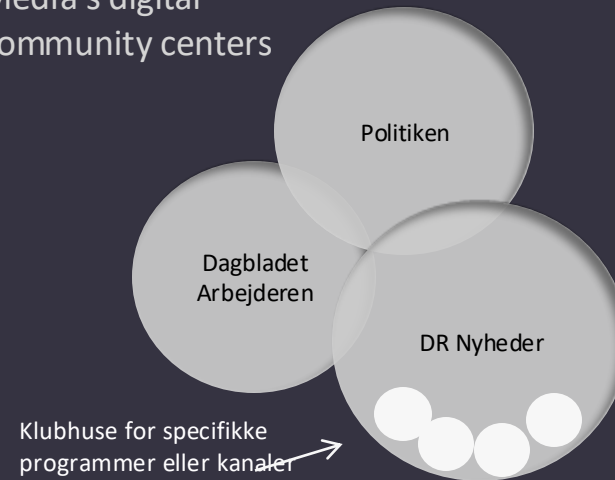
The labor movement and other professional and interest organizations that want to host debates among their members and need to communicate news and organize elections and general assemblies.

Examples of digital community centers that Theta can host

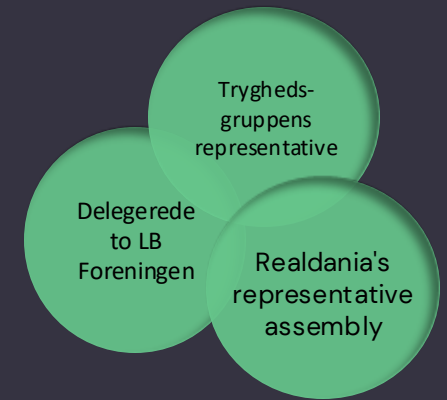
The informal civil society's digital community centers /Facebook groups



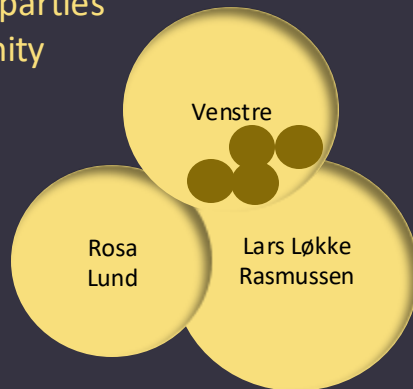
Media's digital community centers



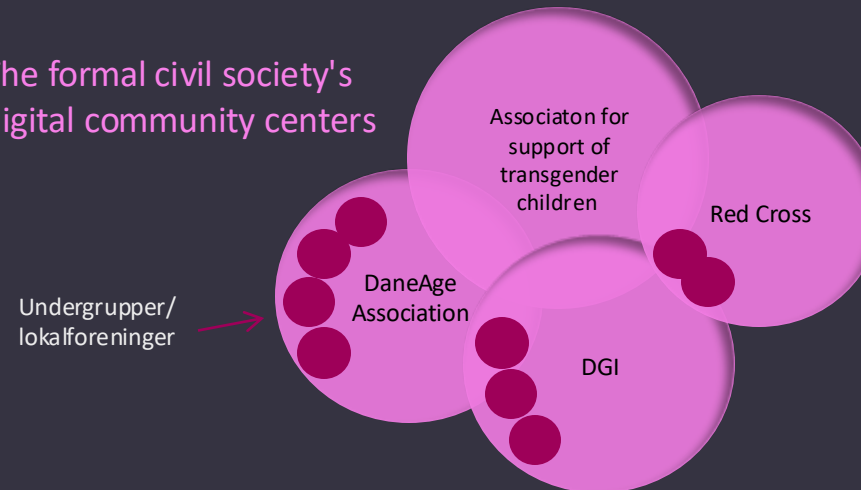
Community centers for representative bodies and delegate assemblies



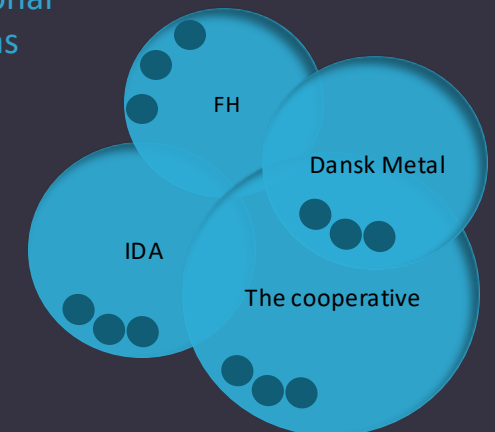
Politicians' and parties' digital community centers



The formal civil society's digital community centers



Community centers for professional organizations



THETA'S FUNCTIONALITY

What can you do in a digital clubhouse/community center on Theta?

Create posts, comment, react, plan events, share images and share files – just like in a Facebook group.

Do you have a feed?

All the clubhouses you are a member of deliver content to a personal feed. Users can adjust between different sorting, suggestion, and content algorithms themselves.

Do you have a profile?

Each user has a profile, which they themselves decide how detailed and open it should be. All users are verified.

Can you not be anonymous then?

There should still be the option for anonymous participation in a community center, if the community center allows it – just like in Facebook groups.

What can you not do?

We do not build modules for video chatting, private chatting, or sharing video-based short formats. You do not share content from your personal profile in the same way and have "followers". You run or participate in communities.

DEMOCRACY-SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGY:

1. Verification and authentication technology

In the digital community center, users must be verified, with the aim of minimizing bots and illegal use.

2. AI-based moderation tool

Our attack and hate algorithm is integrated to support administrators' moderation. Its role is to flag. There must always be a human in the loop. The algorithm will continuously learn from the individual's moderation practices and adapt its suggestions.

3. Administration toolbox

with requirements to formulate community center/clubhouse rules, member approval, admission questions, etc. Users can report content to administrators.

4. Integration with membership data: Associations and media should be able to approve members with membership number/subscription number if desired.

INTEROPERABILITY AS AN OVERARCHING PRINCIPLE

The infrastructure must be built so that multiple platforms can be integrated, and multiple actors can build modules for the ecosystem of digital alternatives.

FEATURES THAT CAN BE FURTHER DEVELOPED (BY US OR OTHERS)

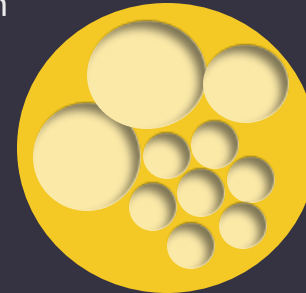
1. Election module
for conducting digital democratic elections
2. Event and shift scheduling module
3. Private messaging module
4. Advisory chat with professionals
5. Video sharing module
6. Instagram-inspired visual content sharing module
7. Music sharing module

We dream of an ecosystem of interoperable digital alternatives...

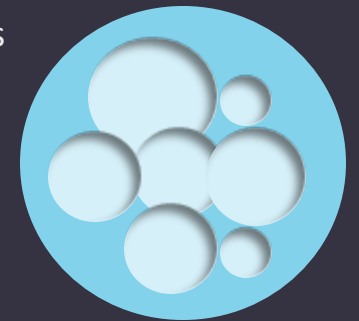


THETA
– The new home for Denmark's digital community centers

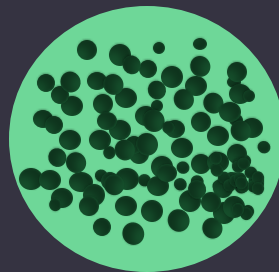
BOBLBERG
– find someone to meet up with



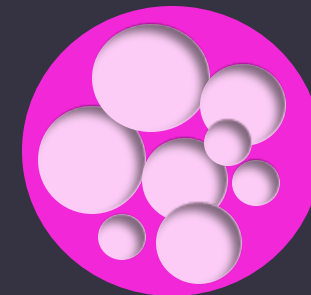
GIRLTALK
– communities and anonymous counseling for girls and young women



OASE
– The safer and better group chat



CYBERHUS.DK/
The Digital Clubhouse:
- The safe clubhouse for children and young people – No access for 25+.



... That users can navigate seamlessly between

Technical assistance for the difficult migration from Facebook:

How do we get digital volunteers and their Facebook groups to migrate to a new infrastructure?

Adversarial Interoperability: The migration will involve (legal) data activism

- We have developed technology that enables us to scrape the content of Facebook groups. This ensures that each community can bring its **historical data and content** with it in anonymized form.
- We are optimistic about the possibility of integrating the existing Facebook groups and **"mirrored" communities on the new infrastructure** in a way that allows communication and responses on both platforms simultaneously during a transition period while the migration takes place.
- In other words, we will offer a **"data moving truck"** for digital communities.

4

Democracy must be
built into the ownership
of Theta



”

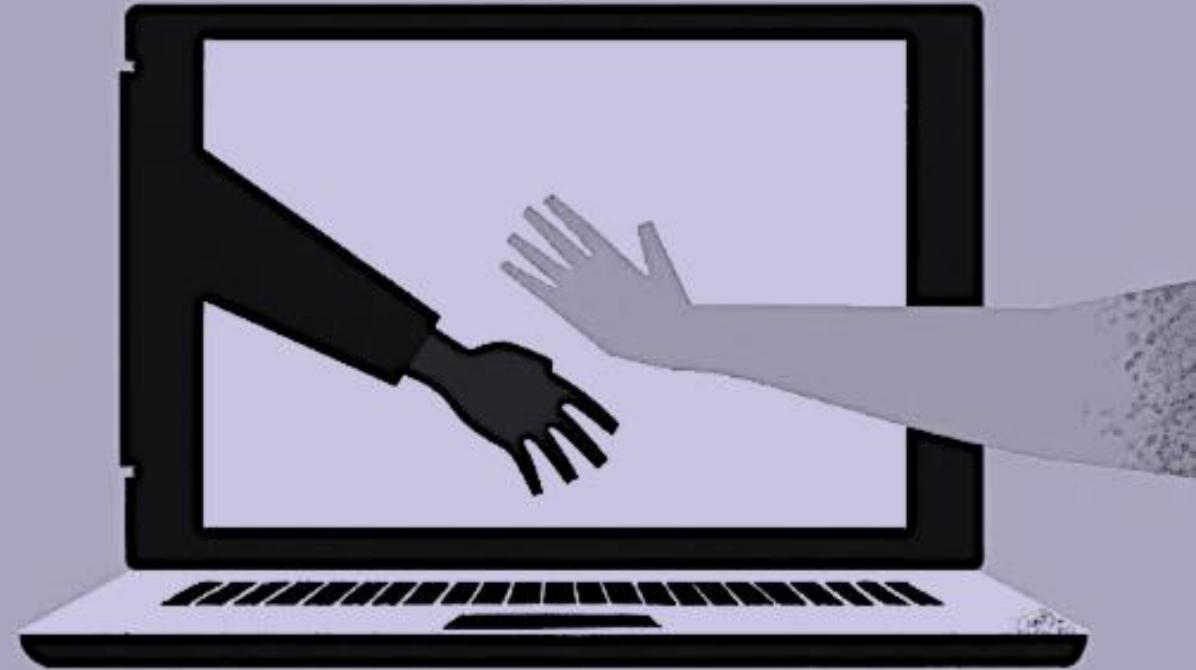
"My group has 120,000 members. Several people have written to me and offered their small, alternative platform.

But no one has been able to offer an alternative that is not owned by one or two entrepreneurs. And when we know that it is a targeted strategy for big tech to acquire competitors, you really need to show me a democratic alternative before I consider it a real alternative."

- Mads Mouritzen

Administrator of "Boykot varer fra USA"

Democratic ownership
in
s.m.b.a-, f.m.b.a- eller
a.m.b.a-structure



Why a democratic enterprise?

1. We do not believe in a public social media with state ownership and control.
2. We have not encountered any demand for a large public IT project that resembles a new Aula or Nets, which is both very expensive and can suddenly be sold off.
3. It is naive to think that the individuals Zuckerberg, Musk, and Altman are the problem in themselves. All three started out with idealistic intentions.
4. Gradually, it has dawned on us that communication infrastructure and social media should be classified as critical infrastructure.





”

“People often ask what products are needed in relation to tech. We should rather ask: what organizations are needed?”

- Anders Søgaard

Professor at the Department of Computer Science

Example of democratic of organization

Associations and business in one

Theta F.M.B.A

The association's members consist of all who are members of the association and have paid membership fees. Use of Theta requires membership. Members may stand for and elect representatives to the Representative Assembly

Repræsentantskab

99 personer

Representatives from informal (51%) and formal civil society (49%)

Task: Ensure democratic legitimacy and democratic debate on relevant dilemmas and values in relation to the association.
Appointment of board members

Foreningsbestyrelse

8-12 personer

7-9 democratically elected board members.
Competency profile: in tech, cybersecurity, democratic organization, volunteering, law, freedom of speech, and civil society. One employee representative from the secretariat that operates Theta. One externally appointed.

Wxample of democratic organization:

Separated association and business

Theta- Association

The association's members consist of all who are members of the association and have paid membership fees. To be a user of Theta, you must be a member.

The association's members can run for - and elect - representatives to the representative assembly.

Representative Assembly 99 persons

Representatives from informal (51%) and formal civil society (49%)

Task: Democratic legitimacy, debate on relevant dilemmas and values in relation to the association.
Appointment of board members to the association.

Association Board of the Theta Associatioin

7-11 Democratically elected members.
One employee representative from Theta F.M.B.A. Task: The board appoints three of its members to the board of the operating company

Theta F.M.B.A?

Operating company consisting of programmers, designers, UX specialists, support staff, sociologists, finance managers, partnership managers, etc.

Business Board of Theta F.M.B.A.

8-10 persons

4-6 representatives from the association board,
One employee representative from Theta F.M.B.A that operates Theta. Three externally appointed.

5

The business model behind Theta



”

"My members are quite aware of the disadvantages of big tech. So I have also explored a number of other alternatives: Oase, Telegram, Signal, etc. but none of them offer me the features my community needs, or I cannot figure out how they are owned and what their plan is for the future.

I won't get tens of thousands of members to move to a platform that goes under in 2 years"

- Marie Amanda Fiskbæk

Administrator at Bornholms Frie Familieklub and 9 other parent group

Fondenenes fødselshjælp

1. Fondene er i dag civilsamfundets lunger og innovatør og uddelte i 2024 +30 milliarder kroner til forskellige formål. De danske fonde råder over innovativ kapital i mellemrummet mellem det offentlige og det private.
2. De danske fondene skal levere fødselshjælpen i den kritiske etableringsfase, som alle reelle alternativer i dag kvæles af. Den videre forretningsmodel skal udvikles demokratisk med henblik på maksimal tilslutning blandt brugerne.
3. Ingen har historisk etableret et tech-alternativ, som havde økonomisk sikring i det første tiår og dermed mulighed for at overkomme den berygtede netværkseffekt uden at spille på fastholdelse, monopolisering og massivt opkøb af alle konkurrenter.

Birth support in the first decade must:

1. Provide stability and guarantee for users and organizations, so they **dare to move**
2. Overcome the network effect by ensuring **that value consists of content** – rather than in the retention mechanism.
3. **Provide time** to build a business model that has democratic support from users.

During the first decade, a flexible and democratic business model is developed together with users

It is a hope that the most economically vulnerable users (Users with an annual income of less than xxx,xxx DKK are exempt from their personal fee)

Compose your own contribution to the digital civil society

We are committed to transparency about Thea's business model .

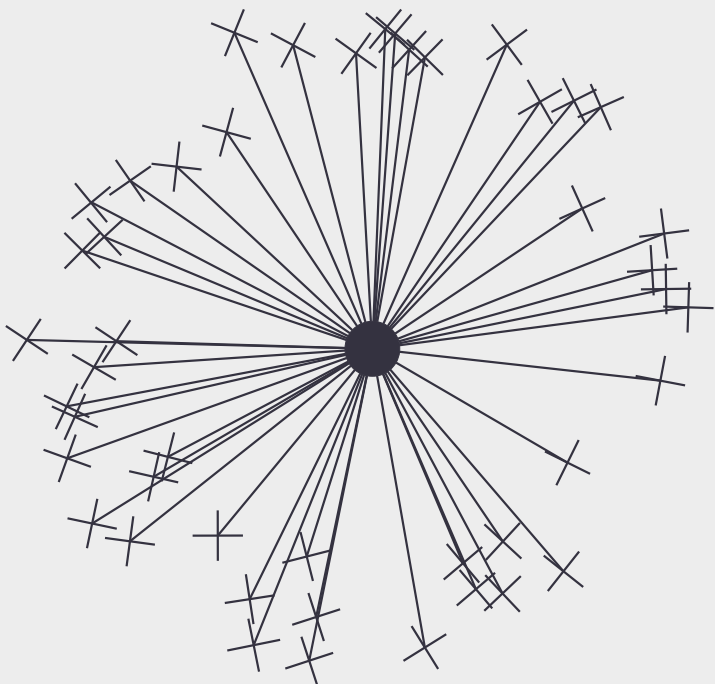
Our platform currently incurs DKK 12 million in annual operating costs. In addition, the Representative Council has allocated DKK 3 million to develop improved moderation support and an election module for associations that conduct digital elections. DKK 15 million / 298,000 users as of today = **DKK 50.33 per user per year.**

Below are the options for financing your use of Theta. It is voluntary how you choose to compose your subscription.

- 20% of the financing of my user may consist of advertising that is approved within the platform's ethical framework. These will constitute every 8th piece of content on your front page.
- 20% of the financing of my user can consist of me being a paying member of a trade union that uses the platform (see the full list here)
- 15% of the financing of my user can consist of me being a paying subscriber to one of the following media outlets that use the platform (see the full list here)
- 10% of the financing of my user can consist of researchers from Danish universities being allowed to use my data (in anonymized form) for research in areas including social dynamics and public debate. (See who and how your data is used here)
- 10% of the financing of my user can consist of me contributing to a citizen panel and answering questionnaire surveys
- I wish to self-pay

EKSEMPEL

Lidt mere om en bæredygtig forretningsmodel



- Foundation birth support and large networks must defeat Independent democratic ownership enables pooling of funds.
- Independent democratic ownership enables pooling of funds.
- Users "pay" - through affiliation with organizations.
- Larger scale ensures that the price becomes quite low per user.
- Democratic development of complementary financing models: advertising, data donation, panel participation.
- Mosaic financing: citizens compose their own contribution and retain control.

6

What do we ask for
initially?

A preliminary project on six legs.

Preliminary Project

NB: We anticipate a three-year project period where several phases run in parallel, but where the project can be stopped if we assess that it is not fruitful.

*Leg 5 is the biggest wildcard. It costs money to build a technically secure platform for many users with responsible hosting and ongoing operations. Additional funding must be found for both, as the idea materializes and the platform grows.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Coalition building	What already exists?	What are the most important features?	Organization and ownership	Democratic organizing and ownership	Dissemination and migration
Establishment of a coalition of digital volunteers, civil society organizations, media, politicians, and professional organizations, which must be prepared for big switch day.	Mapping of existing relevant national and international alternatives to big tech. Who has experience running civil society through other digital platforms? What are the barriers?	We identify the features that digital civil society needs. We develop/select supporting technology for verification, detection of problematic content, and similar.	To develop a democratic ownership structure for civil society's platform with inspiration from the cooperative movement, platform cooperatives, and democratic enterprise in Denmark and abroad.	To establish a community of technicians and practitioners who can build/continue building a digital platform/protocol that can be the home of digital civil society in the future.	We spread the platform and educate organizations, volunteers, and users through digital materials, local workshops, and outreach efforts. We offer migration of data from existing platforms.
Method: Bilateral meetings, advisory boards, ambassadorships, conferences and summit for digital volunteers (2026)	Method: Interviews, desk research, testing of technical solutions, literature review + possible report.	Method: Interviews, mock-ups, user tests, netnography of the most used platforms, possible citizen hearings and future laboratories.	Method: Interviews, literature study, focus group, with target groups, legal expert advice.	Method: hackathons, conference, technical expert advice, development.	Method: campaigns, traveling digital civil society center, press in connection with conferences and big switch day.
Estimated budget DKK: 1.5 million - 2 million	Estimated budget DKK: 800,000	Estimated budget DKK: 1.5 million.	Estimated budget DKK: 1.5 million - 2.0 million.	Estimated budget DKK: 4 million - 6 million.	Estimated budget DKK: 3 million - 5 million
Of which 180,000 in direct expenses for conference	Possible research institution as subcontractor	Of which 700,000 for citizen hearings and user tests	Of which 700,000 for direct expenses for conference and expert advice	Of which 800,000 for direct expenses for conference/events and external services	Of which 3 million in direct expenses for campaigns

The preliminary project is designed so that the six pillars:

1. **Generate new knowledge** – about 1. the technical possibilities and 2. the democratic and social needs, which will benefit us and others who want to build alternatives.
2. **Mature a broad range of societal actors** – from digital volunteers, civil society, media, politicians, and professional organizations towards a future with alternatives.
3. **Explore new legal and organizational models** - to ensure democratic legitimacy for digital alternatives.

... regardless of whether we decide to build the platform, or whether others should beat us to it.

Leg 1

Coalition building



Leg 2

What already exist



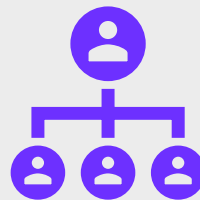
Leg 3

What should it be able to do



Leg 4

Organization and ownership



Leg 5

A functioning pilot version



Leg 6

Dissemination and migration





Potential partners and cases for inspiration

Potential actors in a collaboration

Denmark's digital volunteers*

We manage a Facebook group for administrators and moderators of other Facebook groups, and we are planning to hold a summit for Denmark's digital volunteers in partnership with TrygFonden in 2026. Having the digital volunteers as ambassadors and co-creators is crucial for the migration from Meta to Theta.

Roskilde Festival

Denmark's only democratic festival – organizes many volunteers through digital channels.

Think Tank Democratic Business*

Denmark's Think Tank for supporting and developing democratic business are experts in developing and operating democratic enterprises

DGI*

DGI organizes thousands of volunteers and has itself worked on developing digital alternatives and becoming independent of big tech

The Danish Society of Engineers IDA*

IDA has expressed interest in collaborating on the first parts of the project, where various experts will be gathered and the concept will be qualified and developed.

Ministry of Digitalization's Center for Social Media, Tech and Democracy*

The Center for Social Media, Tech and Democracy was established as part of the Media Agreement 2023–2026, based on the Nordic Think Tank for Tech and Democracy, which Analyse & Tal chaired.

DPCMO*

The umbrella organization for Danish publishing media led by Karen Rønde

Ministry of Culture

The Minister of Culture is engaged in the intersection of civil society, volunteering, culture and digitalization

Red Cross*

The Red Cross has done significant digital innovation through Boblberg and their Red Cross Parat initiatives

DaneAge Association*

DaneAge Association organizes 1,500 IT volunteers who would be well suited to engage in the migration from Meta to Theta. DaneAge Association's communications and digitalization team has expressed interest in a collaboration.

Potential actors in a collaboration

DR*

We have held meetings with DR's social media managers, who have expressed interest in learning more about a potential collaboration.

Danish Patients

Danish Patients has shown interest in the digital civil society and the future of digital health counseling and patient communities

SAGA*

SAGA is currently experimenting with volunteer-administered Discord channels for young people, particularly in rural Denmark, where they discuss life's big and small challenges. SAGA could contribute insights into younger users' wishes and dreams for a safer digital platform for peer-to-peer citizenship.

CAISA

The National Center for AI in Society, which is a collaboration between major Danish universities. Partner in relation to research, hosting and Nordic AI models. Rebecca Adler Nissen, Serge Belongie and Arturo Martinez

Research project Algorithms, Data and Democracy*

We are collaborating with Sine N. Just on writing research articles based on our mapping of the digital civil society. We hope to involve Sine's network of researchers within Algorithms, Data and Democracy.

Experts and researchers*:

Anders Søgaard*, Mikkel Flyverbom*, Henrik Føhns*, Jacob Sorgenfri*, Lisbeth Knudsen, Katrine Mølgaard Thielke, Sine Just*, Astrid Haug, Jonas Toubøl*, Andreas Birkbak* and others.

Grant Thornton*

Advisor in IT security, GDPR, AI Act, NIS2, etc.

Kontra Advokater*

Legal assistance with expertise in complex cases about democratic rights against major actors

The Labor Movement

We can see that digital communities for professional groups and union representative sparring is a very widespread concept. We also know that several unions (with limited success) have attempted to move professional dialogue and organizing to their own platforms.

Existing and historical alternatives for inspiration and collaboration

Boblberg*

Danish platform for finding new acquaintances, which currently has 550,000 users. The platform does not currently facilitate digital communities, but has gained considerable experience in being a secure digital platform without being a giant.

Girltalk*

Girltalk are experts in peer-level digital counseling, and founder Anna Bjerre was one of the first to establish a user-driven digital community center for young women 20 years ago. Anna Bjerre is also chair of the Volunteer Council.

Lulutalk / Q-værk*

A digital community center for violence survivors, offering chat, advice column, activities, webinars and podcasts. A digital community center that has already found its footing outside big tech.

Red Cross Parat

Red Cross Parat has established a large network of citizens who are ready to help other citizens with urgent needs. The Parat helpers are currently working on their first app to make it easier for citizens to step in for each other.

Cyberhus.dk*

Since 2004, the Center for Digital Pedagogy has operated the digital clubhouse Cyberhus.dk for children and young people, which annually has 400,000 visitors. In the period 2025–2027, the organization has received a grant from the Nordea Foundation to modernize digital communities for children and young people - based on 20 years of experience with digital pedagogy.

Hestenettet.dk, bold.dk and minmave.dk and similar

How have the original Danish platforms preserved, further developed and secured their alternative digital communities?

Give a Moment

App for facilitating ad-hoc volunteering supported by Bikubenfonden among others.

OASE*

Oase is a chat app developed in Denmark with the goal of creating a platform that supports our close communities. Whether you are children or adults, on iOS, Android or computer. Owned by Anders Lemcke-Holstein. Member of Nordic Media Lab.

Arto.dk

Denmark's largest social media for children and young people at the time. What happened to Arto? Are there learnings that should be included in the development of a new social media platform.

Existing and historical alternatives for inspiration and collaboration

[HTTPS://NOSTR.COM](https://nostr.com)

Protocol-based infrastructure for sharing text.

[MENINGSPUNKTET.DK](https://meningspunktet.dk)

Alternative under development by the company JTOX. Member of Nordic Media Lab and owned by brothers Tue and Jakob Oxenvad.

Mommunity

One of the failed attempts to move a user group from Facebook to a purpose-built platform. We need to learn from where things go wrong.

ActivityPub

Protocol-based technology e.g. implemented in WordPress

<https://www.kathart.dk/aktivitypub/>

Nochba

Østrigsk platform for digitale lokale hjælpetjenester private imellem

Actor

MS and ActionAid's platform for secure communication between activists.

Assembly

Platform for conducting digital general assemblies, voting and elections.

Hudd

Norwegian platform for connecting with your local area, discovering events and businesses and establishing groups.

Duckling

Platform for production and sharing of documentary video formats among young people.

We hope to ignite the spark



”

"I would be very happy to help make your project succeed, although I think you have plenty of experience, expertise and talent yourselves.

But I also have an urge to make this succeed as a (perhaps) final project before I log off. The anarchist in me is still alive, and he's angry. As the old punk Henry Rollins said about his driving force: Anger and Curiosity! I'll send it to Vestager."

- Henrik Føhns

Former host of Harddisken and current host of Tectopia

The landscape of 48.000 Danish active groups
with more than 100 members. Each dot is a group.
The size is based on member count, the colour is
based on group category assigned by us.
The connections are based on overlapping
words in the group description

