



Magtudredningen 2.0

Project plan for The Danish Democracy and Power Study 2.0

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Summary of the report

The Democracy and Power Study 2.0 will analyze the strengths and challenges of Danish democracy. The purpose is to support the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy in light of significant new societal trends that have emerged since the completion of the first democracy and power study.

The overall focal point is how these societal developments affect citizens' democratic citizenship, the political system's ability to make decisions based on fair and democratic procedures, and political institutions' ability to handle societal problems.

The definition of the research questions discussed by the project is based on the mandate and an initial and inclusive problem identification phase. As the project has limited resources for new research, a central element is extensive literature reviews of Danish and international research on key questions regarding the viability and legitimacy of democracy.

The core of the Democracy and Power Study 2.0 consists of analyses presented in a series of short books. Each book provides an overview of existing knowledge on a topic that is essential to the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy. The books convey scientific knowledge in an accessible form that supports public debate and political action in response to the challenges facing Danish democracy in the 21st century.

1.0 Background

Democracy and power studies are a tradition in Scandinavian democracies whose parliaments periodically focus on power relations and the state of democracy in their respective country.¹ In 1997, the Danish Parliament commissioned an analysis of the state of Danish democracy at the turn of the 21st century. This first Danish democracy and power study was conducted as a comprehensive research project from 1998 to 2004² and produced valuable knowledge about the Danish political system and society.

Two decades have passed since its completion, and the conditions for democracy are constantly changing in line with societal developments. Among politicians, there is a perception of increased speed and complexity in law- and decision-making³; technological and digital developments, including social platforms and a changed media landscape, have really taken off; the number of democracies is declining globally, also in Europe,⁴ and declining trust and increased polarization are observed in a number of democracies.⁵ This raises important questions about the robustness of democracy. In 2022, the parties in the Danish parliament, the Folketing, therefore reached a broad political agreement to implement The Democracy and Power Study 2.0⁶, an update of the first study.

The Democracy and Power Study 2.0 focuses on areas affected by major societal changes since the first study. The mandate identifies three key themes: the developments in technology and media, the institutions and processes of democracy and democratic participation. The project will deliver research-based knowledge on these and other themes in order to analyze the situation and conditions of democracy. The project will support discussions among decision-makers and the public and lay the foundation for a positive development to the benefit of the Danish democracy.

¹ Bredsdorff, N. (2004). Det tålmodige demokrati: de nordiske magtudredninger. *Politica-Tidsskrift for Politisk Videnskab*, 36 (4), 469-479.

² www.magtudredningen.dk

³ <https://ufm.dk/aktuelt/pressemeldelser/2022/filer/aftale-om-kommissorium-for-opdatering-af-magtudredningen-12-09-2022.pdf>

⁴ Papada, E., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Gastaldi, L., Köhler, T., Lundstedt, M., ... & Lindberg, S. I. (2023). *Defiance in the Face of Autocratization*. V-Dem Democracy Report 2023.

⁵ Dinesen, P. T. (2019). Temareaktørens introduktion: Politisk polarisering i Danmark. *Oekonomi og Politik*, 92(3), 6-9; Fiorina, M. P., & Abrams, S. J. (2008). Political polarization in the American public. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 11, 563-588.

⁶ <https://ufm.dk/aktuelt/pressemeldelser/2022/filer/aftale-om-kommissorium-for-opdatering-af-magtudredningen-12-09-2022.pdf>

2.0 Principles for the work

The purpose of the Democracy and Power Study 2.0 is to establish a science-based foundation for the political conversation among citizens and decision-makers on how we can ensure the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy in a world affected by new challenges. The following are some key guiding principles for the project.

2.1 A knowledge-based foundation

The project will establish a knowledge base that enables a well-informed public debate on key issues concerning the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy. The vast majority of concrete political solutions to a given challenge will involve trade-offs between different considerations that cannot be determined scientifically. The trade-offs will ultimately be political.

The purpose of the project is thus not to put forward concrete political solutions but to inform and qualify the public and decision-makers through in-depth problem diagnoses that recognize the complexity of the problems facing society and that can provide a basis for political problem solving. This also means that the project can outline potential directions for society and the pros and cons associated with them.

A key aspect of recognizing the complexity of questions regarding the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy is to examine both strengths and weaknesses. Research on democratic backsliding paradoxically suggests that citizens' support for undemocratic policies is sometimes linked to a belief that politicians and powerful decision-makers or other groups in society are not sufficiently democratic.⁷ In addition to identifying actual challenges, the project will emphasize the strengths that must be preserved and identify and discuss both positive and negative myths about the state of Danish democracy.

Insisting on scientific rigor will ensure the quality of the knowledge base created by the project and will support the arm's length principle to reinforce the credibility of the conclusions in the eyes of the public and decision-makers.

⁷ Braley, A., Lenz, G. S., Adjodah, D., Rahnama, H., & Pentland, A. (2021). The subversion dilemma: Why voters who cherish democracy vote it away. Available at <https://osf.io/my987>; Petersen, M., Slothuus, R., Stubager, R., & Togeby, L. (2011). Freedom for all? The strength and limits of political tolerance. *British Journal of Political Science*, 41(3), 581-597.

2.2 For the benefit of policy makers as well as the public

The audience for the Democracy and Power Study 2.0 is both the public and political decision-makers. The latter group includes elected politicians, the media and representatives of important societal interests. If possible, the project wants to reach an even wider audience, e.g. by offering its products as teaching material in youth education.

Broad dissemination ambitions involve multiple layers. First, it implies communication to political decision-makers with depth and complexity to enable them to make better decisions. Second, it implies enthusiastic communication to the public to promote democratic conversation and establish the necessary comprehension of a problem.

The project will create a knowledge base that contains the requisite scientific complexity and serves as an important reference point in the public debate and political decision-making.

Academia is not a target audience but plays a crucial role as the forum that produces and validates the knowledge that is disseminated to the project's core audience. This also means that the project will publish through respected scientific channels.

3.0 Preliminary analytical framework

The analytical framework takes its point of departure in the mandate.⁸ It contains considerations about societal developments that have occurred since the first Democracy and Power Study and criteria for assessing their democratic consequences. The analytical framework is discussed below, but please bear in mind that it is preliminary and will be refined and revised along the way.

3.1 The overall themes in the mandate

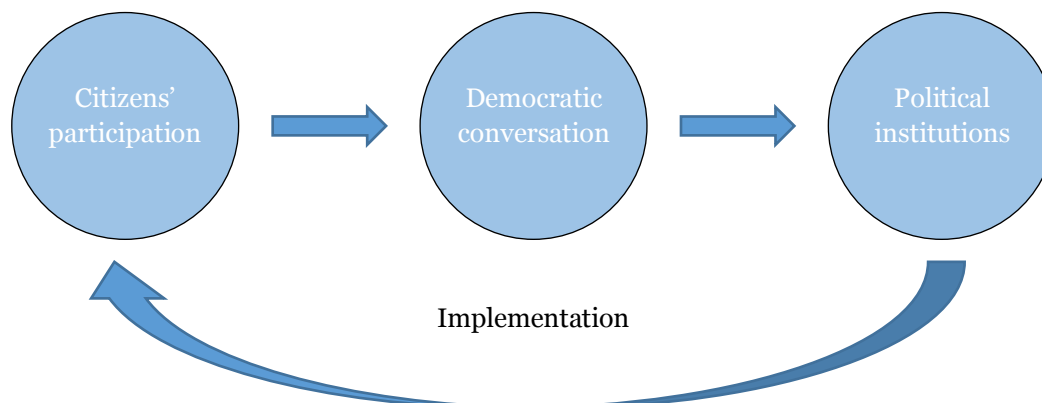
The mandate lists three overarching themes:

1. The institutions of Danish democracy and the political processes
2. Participation in the democratic community and civil society
3. Developments in technology and media and the democratic conversation

The mandate states that these themes should be examined in the light of societal developments since the completion of the first democracy and power study and preferably with inclusion of international comparisons. The mandate emphasizes that the research management team has the opportunity to take up topics that go beyond the three themes mentioned.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the themes, each of which covers an essential step in the democratic process.

Figure 1. The relation between the themes in the mandate



⁸ <https://ufm.dk/aktuelt/pressemeddelelser/2022/filer/aftale-om-kommissorium-for-opdatering-af-magtudredningen-12-09-2022.pdf>

Figure 1 shows how citizens in a democracy participate and engage in political activities through participatory channels such as media, trade unions and civic organizations. That engagement feeds into a democratic conversation where opinions and knowledge meet, interact and evolve. These conversations can take place with varying degrees of publicity on social platforms or via traditional media to facilitate the conversation between citizens, policy makers, experts and stakeholder representatives. The participatory activities and conversations serve as input to formal political institutions where political decisions are formally made through a complex interplay between actors like elected politicians and civil servants. These processes are influenced by a wide range of independent actors outside the formal political system, such as pundits and activists, media, interest groups and supranational actors. This is followed by an implementation process in which both the formal rules of administration and the practices of administrative staff determine how political decisions ultimately affect citizens.

Overall, the project seeks to capture the democratic legitimacy of and the political power relations in the full political process (see Figure 1).

3.2 The object of analysis: the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy

Based on the mandate and the role of democracy and power studies in Nordic democracies, the object of analysis is the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy in light of new trends and issues that have emerged since the completion of the original project. The global decline in the number of democratic countries underlines the importance of this issue⁹ and of incorporating a comparative perspective and evaluating Danish democracy from both an international and a historical perspective.

In a social contract perspective, democracy is founded on citizens' acceptance of the limitations political institutions impose on their freedom. All aspects of the democratic process will influence the legitimacy of Danish democracy. The essential focus of the project is therefore whether and how legitimacy is challenged at each stage of the democratic process, and the project will shed light on how power is exercised as well as the prevalence of experiences of powerlessness in the general population and in specific groups.

The analytical work requires an understanding of the foundations of a legitimate democracy. Three concepts – democracy, power and legitimacy – are particularly central in this context.

⁹ Papada, E., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Gastaldi, L., Köhler, T., Lundstedt, M., ... & Lindberg, S. I. (2023). Defiance in the Face of Autocratization. Democracy Report 2023. *Democracy Report*.

Regarding the concept of democracy, it is important to point out that there are several formal definitions of what “democracy” entails. All central definitions emphasize the existence of free and fair multi-party elections, but some definitions also emphasize aspects like the degree of citizen participation, the extent of protection of rights or of democratic deliberation.¹⁰ The project will operate with a plurality of understandings of democracy to be able to discuss both strengths and weaknesses of Danish democracy.

Overall, democracy as a form of government is about regulating the exercise of power at the societal level. Analyses of the exercise of power at the societal level – i.e. political power – are thus a central part of analyzing the viability and legitimacy of democracy. There are a number of different ways to analyze power mechanisms.¹¹ The project will analyze political power as a resource that manifests itself in direct conflicts between interests; as the ability to define the political agenda and thus is disputed; and as a discourse that can be located by looking at dominant norms and values in society.

Citizens’ perceptions of the political system are central to the degree of democratic legitimacy. Different research traditions indicate that legitimacy rests on three pillars, although there is disagreement about which pillars are most important.

The first pillar is the political system’s ability to make decisions based on fair and transparent procedures.¹² Precisely because politics involves conflicts between interests, some groups will always be and/or feel disadvantaged in the political process. Research within this tradition argues that people are more likely to perceive political decisions that go against them as legitimate if the decision-making process is perceived as inclusive, transparent, impartial and evidence-based.¹³

The second pillar is the political system’s ability to address the problems that citizens perceive as important through well-designed and well-implemented policies.¹⁴ Effective problem solving and advocacy are crucial to citizens’ willingness to follow the system’s directions and to invest their own resources in society.

¹⁰ Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Altman, D., Bernhard, M., Fish, S., Hicken, A., ... & Teorell, J. (2011). Conceptualizing and measuring democracy: A new approach. *Perspectives on Politics*, 9(2), 247-267.

¹¹ Thomsen, J. P. F. (2005). *Magt: en introduktion*. Hans Reitzel.

¹² Rothstein, B. (2009). Creating political legitimacy: Electoral democracy versus quality of government. *American behavioral scientist*, 53(3), 311-330.

¹³ Bøggild, T., & Petersen, M. B. (2016). The evolved functions of procedural fairness: An adaptation for politics. *The evolution of morality*, 247-276.

¹⁴ Weatherford, M. S. (1992). Measuring political legitimacy. *American political science review*, 86(1), 149-166.

The third pillar is democratic citizenship. The concept of citizenship is central to the classic literature on a viable democracy and was a key focus of the first democracy and power study.¹⁵ Democratic citizenship involves a complex dual relationship with the political system.¹⁶ On the one hand, democratic citizenship requires active participation based on correct understandings and a perception of a responsive political system. On the other hand, democratic citizenship requires a willingness to submit to the decisions of the community.

An initial aspect of the work of the project is to clarify the concepts of democracy, power and legitimacy.

3.3 Societal changes since the first democracy and power study

A central question in the Democracy and Power Study 2.0 is how and to what extent societal developments have strengthened or weakened the pillars of democratic legitimacy. As such, the project is also a democracy-oriented contemporary diagnosis that describes the direction of societal development in the 21st century. The project aims to present a snapshot of the state of democracy as well as a framework that can be used to analyze the consequences of the development trends that may arise after the completion of the project.

The exact understanding of which societal changes have been decisive since the first democracy and power study is part of the initial analytical work that this project will initiate. Based on the mandate and on existing knowledge, the working hypothesis is that there are at least four significant societal changes:

1. Accelerated technological change: Technological development can be considered exponential.¹⁷ In principle, this means that in the 21st century we can experience – and have already experienced – technological progress that significantly exceeds the changes of the 20th century.¹⁸ In terms of the relationship between citizens and political institutions, the emergence of electronic and later social platforms and the use of digital tools in public administration are central.

¹⁵ Andersen, J. G. (2004). *Et ganske levende demokrati*. Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

¹⁶ Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton University Press.

¹⁷ Kurzweil, R. (2001). The law of accelerating returns. In *Alan Turing: Life and legacy of a great thinker* (pp. 381-416). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

¹⁸ Butler, D. (2016). Tomorrow's world: technological change is accelerating today at an unprecedented speed and could create a world we can barely begin to imagine. *Nature*, 530(7591), 398-402.

2. Increasing disparities in living conditions: Economic inequality is increasing in many countries,¹⁹ also in Denmark in the 21st century, measured by the Gini coefficient,²⁰ and standards of living differ significantly across social divides.²¹ This development coexists with a high concentration of wealth among the richest²² and a corporate structure with large, financially strong and often international companies.²³ Increasing economic inequality is thus driven by changes at both the top and the bottom of the social ladder.
3. Increasing political professionalization: The societal development is characterized by increased division of labor and specialization – also among political actors. Political work increasingly involves professional advisors, communication professionals and lobbyists.²⁴ Furthermore, elected officials increasingly tend to come from certain segments of society and have pursued a political career.²⁵ We also see so-called “revolving door phenomena” arise where a politician, after periods as an elected official, can seek employment with external political actors e.g. interest organizations.²⁶
4. Increased globalization: Economic globalization in the 21st century has been especially pronounced in the tech sector,²⁷ which has created new global, powerful corporate stakeholders.²⁸ In addition, globalization has intensified e.g. epidemics and climate change, which are more pronounced now than in the past.²⁹

These material societal changes are linked to potential challenges of a more cultural nature that also affect the relationship between citizens and political institutions. The first challenge

¹⁹ Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., & Zucman, G. (Eds.). (2022). *World inequality report 2022*. Harvard University Press.

²⁰ <https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/nyt/GetPdf.aspx?cid=40779>

²¹ <https://www.dst.dk/Site/Dst/Udgivelser/GetPubFile.aspx?id=22260&sid=sto2016>

²² <https://www.ae.dk/node/3356/pdf-export>

²³ Iversen, M. J. (2023) “Danmark – landet med de store virksomheder”, *Økonomi & Politik*, 95(3-4), 16–26. doi: 10.7146/okonomi-og-politik.v95i3-4.135543.

²⁴ Binderkrantz, A. S. (2023) “Interessevaretagelse: fra faste forhold til professionelle forbindelser?”, *Økonomi & Politik*, 95(3-4), s. 64–75. doi: 10.7146/okonomi-og-politik.v95i3-4.135553.

²⁵ Pedersen, H. H. (2021). *Politiker: Dilemmaer i politisk repræsentation*. (1 udg.) Djøf Forlag.

²⁶ Blach-Ørsten, M., Willig, I., & Pedersen, L. H. (2017). Fra politiker til policy professionel--En analyse af danske politikeres karriereveje efter Folketinget fra 1981 til 2015. *Økonomi & Politik*, 90(3).

²⁷ Schilirò, Daniele (2020): *Towards digital globalization and the covid-19 challenge*. *International Journal of Business Management and Economic Research*, Vol. 2, No. 11 (May 2020): pp. 1710-1716.

²⁸ Yeganeh, H. (2019). A critical examination of the social impacts of large multinational corporations in the age of globalization. *Critical perspectives on international business*, 16(3), 193-208.

²⁹ Beredskabsstyrelsen, Nationalt Risikobillede 2022: <https://www.brs.dk/globalassets/brs---beredskabsstyrelsen/dokumenter/krisestyling-og-beredskabsplanlagning/2022/-nationalt-risikobillede-2022-.pdf>

is a perception of increased problem complexity, e.g. due to increased digitalization, globalization and transboundary problems such as the climate crisis.³⁰ The second challenge is an increased sense of societal acceleration, e.g. due to new media and constant media attention, exponential growth in technological development and a constant sense of crisis due to new global challenges.³¹ The third challenge is increased fragmentation of opinions and available information, e.g. because of differences in local experiences due to disparities in living conditions, as well as differences in available information due to the emergence of new social platforms and increasing inequalities in media consumption.³² The fourth challenge is increased individualization,³³ including a perception of increasing competition and performance pressure due to social platforms and the status focus created by increasing inequality.

Combined, these potential challenges create a "high-speed" society that can challenge the "slow-speed" way of working that our democracy is designed for and on which its legitimacy rests.³⁴ This may involve trade-offs, either relaxing slow and inclusive procedures or accepting less effective problem solving.

An important initial aspect of the work in the project is to uncover the occurrence of these societal changes and the challenges they create. A focal point of the overall project is how societal changes such as these respectively reinforce and undermine democracy.

³⁰ Peters, B. G. (2017). What is so wicked about wicked problems? A conceptual analysis and a research program. *Policy and Society*, 36(3), 385-396.

³¹ Rosa, H. (2013). *Social acceleration: A new theory of modernity*. Columbia University Press.

³² Nielsen, R. K., & Fletcher, R. (2020). Democratic creative destruction? The effect of a changing media landscape on democracy. *Social media and democracy: The state of the field, prospects for reform*, 139-162.

³³ Bauman, Z. (2013). *The individualized society*. John Wiley & Sons.

³⁴ The terms "high-speed" society and "slow-speed" democracy are inspired by: Van Kersbergen, K., & Vis, B. (2022). Digitalization as a policy response to social acceleration: Comparing democratic problem solving in Denmark and the Netherlands. *Government Information Quarterly*, 39(3), 101707.

4.0 Research themes

The first step for the research management team has been to operationalize the mandate and the analytical framework in relation to a process of generating research and knowledge. The mandate text has been translated into a series of questions that form the starting point for the project. In addition to the mandate, we have used Danish and international research findings on democracy and power and have added research themes that are central to discussing our contemporary democracy.

Below we list our research themes along with a brief text that elaborates on our initial thoughts on their content. We emphasize that in all cases, in accordance with the mandate, the focus is on changes since the first power review.

The list of overall research topics is considered exhaustive but can be adjusted in the event of significant societal changes during the project period. We expect that each research theme will give rise to a number of specific research questions, which will be clarified and adjusted in an initial problem identification phase that identifies and clarifies the most relevant research areas and questions. The ambition is to cover all questions under the themes to some extent, but some questions may not be addressed due to resource constraints.

1. The building blocks: How can democracy, power and legitimacy be understood, and what major societal changes in the 21st century are relevant for a democracy and power study?

The project addresses multifaceted concepts such as democracy and power. This theme sets the analytical framework for the work, including discussing and defining key concepts such as democracy, legitimacy, power and the exercise of political power. The theme will examine different perceptions of what characterizes a viable and legitimate democracy and where democracy may be challenged (incl. compared to other countries). In addition, the theme will discuss selected overall societal developments that have taken place in Denmark since the first democracy and power study.

2. What are the working conditions for the Danish Parliament in the 21st century?

The mandate reflects a perception of increasing pressure on members of parliament and increasing complexity in legislative work. This theme focuses on MPs and their working conditions, practices, motivations and understandings and asks to what extent these pose a challenge to the legitimacy and viability of democracy. The theme addresses the motivations and problem perceptions (e.g. perceptions of political issues and citizens) that drive elected representatives, as well as the power relations in parliamentary processes. The theme examines the

extent to which changing framework conditions such as personalization and professionalization challenge politicians' ability to deliver effective and fair problem solving. The latter concerns both individual politicians' working conditions and systematic imbalances in their ability to perform their duties across e.g. gender, socioeconomics and ethnicity.

3. How do national institutions of democracy interact in the 21st century?

Since the first democracy and power study, the interaction between the institutions of Danish democracy has been a subject of debate. This theme analyzes the interaction between the national institutions of the Danish democracy, i.e. the Danish Parliament, government, ministries and courts, and highlights, among other things, the role and competences of the administrative and official level in relation to legislative processes and regulation in general. The theme analyzes centralization and interactions between ministries as well as between ministers and civil servants. It will examine whether the administration has become more politicized and whether professionalism is under pressure. Finally, the theme comprises the Freedom of Information Act and parliamentary control tools, including the use of e.g. commissions and outside counsel investigations.

4. What are the conditions for local and regional democracy in the 21st century?

Since the first democracy and power study, major changes have taken place in local democracy, and in too many cases, there is a lack of clarity in the public debate about whether decisions are made at municipal, regional or state level. This theme focuses on structural shifts and the state's control of municipalities (e.g. in connection with the Finance Act), municipal implementation of adopted policies, innovation in local democracy and new frameworks for local welfare, e.g. through experiments with free municipalities and forms of cooperation that cut across sectors and professional boundaries. Furthermore, the derived consequences for citizens' perceptions of local democracy are discussed.

5. What kind of political power do actors outside the formal political system have in the 21st century, e.g. trade unions, civic organizations, think tanks and lobbying firms?

One question is how the mobilization of new types of actors and increased professionalization affect the power of actors outside the formal political system. This theme examines the political significance of organizations such as trade unions, civic organizations, think tanks and lobbying firms. It will focus on the role of external stakeholders in public debate and their influence on the political agenda and decision-making. The theme also looks at the implications of including external stakeholders in e.g. formal councils and boards, as well as the collective bargaining system and tripartite negotiations. Finally, the theme focuses on the individuals who

represent the external stakeholders politically and the possible overlap in e.g. education and career paths between them and people in key positions in the various institutions.

6. What is the political role of economic resources – as controlled by e.g. large corporations, private foundations and business and employer organizations – in the 21st century?

Denmark is home to a number of large corporations and corporate foundations, and international business interests seek to influence Danish politics as well. In addition, Danish business and employer organizations have historically held a strong position. This theme examines the direct and indirect political impact of economic resources and structures. An example of indirect influence is when the research priorities of private foundations affect the use of the ministry's core funding. Emphasis will be placed on the role of economically powerful actors in shaping the political agenda and their influence on policy decisions. Furthermore, the theme will delve into the importance of network connections between the business elite and other societal groups.

7. How has the balance of power between Danish institutions and international actors shifted in the 21st century?

This theme examines shifts in power between international actors and Danish democracy. The first question is in what ways Denmark's decision-making space has been expanded and limited by its relationship with the EU? Implementation of EU decisions can limit the room for maneuver, but EU regulations can also expand the decision-making space to include areas where Denmark would otherwise have limited competence. Another question is how the geopolitical shifts affect Denmark's security policy orientation. This applies to general globalization trends and new geopolitical tensions related to e.g. the war in Ukraine, resources in the Arctic and China's growing power.

8. How can democratic representation be ensured in the 21st century?

There are signs that the existing democracy has become less representative and that there are groups that do not feel represented. Only three percent of the population are currently members of a political party.³⁵ The theme explores new understandings of representation and democratic innovations, such as citizens' assemblies, citizens' proposals and local advisory referendums. Furthermore, the development in the descriptive representation between citizens, party activists and decision-makers in relation to e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, social class and place of residence is examined. This development raises a number of questions: Why and how has representativeness changed? What changes are taking place in political parties? Are new

³⁵ Demokratikommissionen (2020). *Er demokratiet i krise?* København: Dansk Ungdoms Fællesråd.

forms of participation more representative, and how can they coexist with the old institutions (parliament, local councils, etc.)?

9. To what extent do citizens perceive Danish democracy in the 21st century as legitimate, and to what extent are perceptions characterized by distrust, powerlessness and polarization?

Citizens' trust in politicians, in each other and in institutions is an important resource for Danish democracy. This theme focuses on how citizens perceive "democracy", the challenges they see for Danish democracy and its capacity to address societal challenges and crises. It will focus on the population as a whole and on individual groups (e.g. based on education and other inequality markers) and their views on political institutions (especially national institutions but also e.g. the EU), their views on fellow citizens and sensations that may be associated with these perceptions, such as polarization, marginalization, powerlessness, trust and distrust. It will also examine what creates these perceptions and whether they are based on well-informed information.

10. How do citizens participate in the democratic process and civil society in the 21st century?

The legitimacy of a democracy rests on a sense of citizenship. This theme explores changes in citizens' democratic engagement in the political process and civil society. It examines inequalities and marginalization based on e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, social class and place of residence. Relevant topics may also include disenfranchised citizens and the empowerment of Greenlanders and Faroe Islanders. This theme focuses on traditional forms of participation through electoral participation (municipal/regional, national and EU level) and party membership as well as new forms such as citizen consultations and new digital platforms for organizing participation. The theme also covers the importance of civic organizations for citizens' democratic participation and education.

11. What are the conditions for the encounter between citizens and key welfare organizations in the 21st century?

The large welfare institutions in the social, health, employment and education sectors are among the key points of contact between citizens and the political system and are central to citizens' welfare and their experience of legitimacy, power and powerlessness in relation to the political system. This theme focuses on citizens' influence on the assistance they receive, the autonomy of professionals, and the power exercised in the implementation of political decisions, including within the police as part of the state's monopoly on violence. The theme examines how digital developments affect the encounter between citizens and professionals and whether technology-based gaps are emerging between groups of citizens.

12. What role do value-political conflict lines such as religion, climate, freedom of speech and identity politics play in the public debate?

Some political themes have maintained a central position on the political agenda since the first democracy and power study, based in part on the active mobilization of citizen groups. This theme focuses on topics such as religion, climate, freedom of expression, sexuality and identity politics and will examine how the political system and societal institutions deal with these topics and the potential polarization they may cause in the public debate. The theme will be particularly interested in citizens' perceptions of power and powerlessness in relation to these themes.

13. What is the role of public service media and traditional media such as newspapers in the public debate in the 21st century?

In a modern democracy, the media is a key link between decision-makers and citizens. This theme examines the changing framework conditions for news production and how they affect the content of traditional public media like public service media and newspapers. The theme focuses on, among other things, the impact of digital competition (including from new alternative media) on media business models, media content and media consumption, including among young people, the growing number of political commentators and their role in public discourse, and the consequences of a potential politicization of facts and expert knowledge for publicist practice.

14. What influence do tech giants have on Danish democracy?

Since the first democracy and power study, tech giants have emerged as major new players. This theme delves into the power that tech giants wield over Danish democracy and the possibilities of regulating this power at e.g. the EU level. The theme focuses on the role that artificial intelligence, algorithms and other aspects of the platforms play in the public conversation, e.g. by changing the media's business models. The theme will highlight how algorithms affect the sharing of information online and how external actors, such as foreign agencies, can influence the information landscape through the platforms.

15. How does the use of social platforms affect public discourse among politicians, media and citizens?

Social platforms have emerged since the first democracy and power study and play a major role in the public debate. This theme focuses on how actors in Danish democracy – e.g. policy makers, media, opinion makers and citizens (including dissident groups) – use the opportunities offered by social platforms and the implications for public debate. The theme will examine both

positive and negative aspects of social platforms, including the tone of online debates and the prevalence of echo chambers and misinformation.

5.0 Knowledge production

The project aims to establish a scientific foundation for a qualified democratic debate among decision-makers as well as the broader public on the fifteen research themes outlined above. This objective implies sharing the insights from the analytical work in a comprehensible and accessible way.

It is an essential factor for the project that it has a significantly tighter financial framework than the first democracy and power study (see the section on the budget) and therefore significantly fewer funds to initiate new research. However, this condition is offset by the fact that Danish research in power and democracy is stronger today than it was in the late 1990s,³⁶ and existing research or an update thereof is expected to answer a large number of the relevant research questions.

The knowledge production strategy reflects these conditions and will proceed in three phases: problem identification (phase 1), knowledge dissemination (phase 2) and knowledge creation (phase 3).

5.1 Phase 1: Problem identification, 2023-2024

The purpose is (1) to identify the specific research questions that are particularly important within each research theme and (2) to identify researchers with insight into and an overview of the research on the specific research questions. The monitoring group for the Democracy and Power Study 2.0 and relevant academic environments will be invited to contribute with their knowledge of important issues relating to power and democracy in Denmark in the 21st century.

The core of phase 1 is a series of activities that involve the monitoring group and relevant professional environments in the problem identification.

Inspired by the Leadership Commission,³⁷ Danish researchers will be invited to participate in scientific workshops that focus on one or more research themes. These workshops will establish a channel where researchers from different academic environments can contribute in the initial phase of the project to identify the most important issues within each research theme.

³⁶ See e.g. Jakobsen, M. L., & Mortensen, P. B. (2023). From good to great: Institut for Statskundskab 1980-2022. In P. B. Mortensen & S. Serritzlew (red.), *I statskundskabens tjeneste: Festskrift til Jens Blom-Hansen* (s. 127-140). Politica – Institut for Statskundskab, Aarhus Universitet.

³⁷ https://ledelseskom.dk/files/media/documents/publikationer/offentlige_ledere_-_vilkaar_styrker_og_udfordringer_-_15_forskerbidrag_til_ledelseskommissionen.pdf

Based on these workshops, researchers will be invited to clarify and elaborate on their perceptions of key issues in short essays, which will be published after an editorial process on the Democracy and Power Study 2.0 website.

The monitoring group will be involved in the problem identification phase through the meetings that constitute the collaboration between the monitoring group and the research management team (see below on organization). In addition, all members of the monitoring group will be invited to participate in an individual interview conducted by members of the research management team, with the aim of clarifying their perspectives on the strengths and challenges that characterize Danish democracy in the 21st century.

Finally, a series of initial survey- and interview-based research activities on citizens' views on the strengths and weaknesses of Danish democracy will deliver input to phase 1.

5.2 Phase 2: Knowledge dissemination, 2024-2028

Phase 2 aims to summarize, update and disseminate the existing scientific literature in relation to the key issues. This work is based on the themes in the project plan as well as the more specific issues identified in phase 1. Phase 2 also identifies key gaps in the research literature.

The backbone of the knowledge dissemination phase is the book series, approx. 30 short books that each conveys existing academic knowledge on a specific research question within one of the central research themes.

The book series will gather existing knowledge on the relevant issue in a structured format that supports the public debate. To meet the need for engaged and accessible dissemination, the written knowledge production will be inspired by the great success of research dissemination in short, widely accessible books. The central question posed by the book series is “what do we know about ...?” e.g. interest groups, digitalization in public administration, inequality in Denmark, the power of tech giants and other topics of similar breadth and weight.

The book series will involve key Danish experts (including the research management team) to present and discuss (and where necessary update) the existing knowledge in the chosen field and identify gaps in our knowledge that require new research. Authors will be invited by the research management team based on the project plan and the problem definition phase, but all interested authors are welcome to contact the team.

It is essential for accessibility that the book series is either open access or involves minimal costs. The publications from the first democracy and power study are available free of charge at www.unipress.dk. It is also important that the book series is published as peer-reviewed books and that the authors or their institutes receive a small financial compensation for their work and commitment.

The book series will address both the public at large and decision-makers, whereas the policy briefs, the second key written product in the knowledge dissemination phase, are aimed primarily at society's decision-makers. To facilitate dissemination to policy makers, the publication of each book will be accompanied by a short policy brief, which will be published on the project website and sent to members of the monitoring group and the Danish Parliament.

5.3 Phase 3: Knowledge creation, 2025-2028

Phase 3 will systematically fill in selected gaps identified in phase 2. Phases 2 and 3 will interact, as the knowledge created will be communicated in the final report.

In phase 3, the project will publish peer-reviewed scientific publications in recognized, incl. international, journals. It is essential for the scientific legitimacy of the project that the new knowledge is tested at a high international level. Scientific publication will primarily be used as quality control of new scientific insights. However, since peer review is a slow process, all research results funded by the project will be made available as working papers prior to publication.

The closing written product in the knowledge creation phase is the final report for the Democracy and Power Study 2.0, which will be published as a book in a longer academic format that summarizes and concludes on the task commissioned by the Danish Parliament. This report will be supplemented by a short, widely available summary in the book series.

6.0 Debate-inspiring activities

The project is both an analysis of and an exercise in democracy. The mandate encourages the research management team to initiate activities that support a broad debate on strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities in relation to Danish democracy. In this context, the mandate emphasizes the importance of broad collaboration with the monitoring group and the Danish Parliament: “the parties to the agreement encourage (...) the Presidium of the Danish Parliament to facilitate debate-inspiring dissemination activities under the auspices of the Danish Parliament based on the research project”, and “the members of the monitoring group are responsible for contributing to these dissemination activities and for supporting a broad anchoring of the research project’s results.”

Against this background, the research management team and the Presidium of the Danish Parliament will discuss initiation of a variety of participatory and debate-inspiring formats.

First, The Democracy and Power Study 2.0 will organize a major annual conference that focuses on key issues within the project. The conferences could e.g. be organized in collaboration with the Danish Parliament and held at Christiansborg. The ambition is that participants and speakers at the conferences will represent a broad spectrum and thus facilitate a broader public dialog about the viability and legitimacy of Danish democracy in the 21st century. The conferences will be available online afterwards. The members of the monitoring group are obvious participants at the conferences, also as speakers. Another relevant focus is to ensure the inclusion of representatives of affected citizen groups who typically do not have a voice in the public debate.

Second, publication of the books in the project will be accompanied by activities that disseminate the content of the books both orally and in a broad sense. These activities can be organized in collaboration with the Danish Parliament and can include press, events in connection with book launches etc. and video material that can be used in teaching. Another ambition is that a podcast linked to each publication in the book series will be a fixed element of the follow-up activities. The podcast could be facilitated by a professional host and involve a panel consisting of the book’s author, key and relevant participants in relation to the book’s theme, including members of the monitoring group. The podcast can aim to facilitate public debate on the strengths and challenges of democracy in light of scientific insights.

Third, the research management team will prioritize active knowledge-based qualification of the public debate by appearing in the media in relation to current agendas and by being available to the Danish Parliament and other actors in the political public through e.g. presentations and lectures.

Finally, the research management team will work actively to establish other major participatory activities, several of which can take place in collaboration with the Danish Parliament. This may involve establishing partnerships with external communication actors such as the media or obtaining additional external funding. Examples of relevant activities are town hall meetings, hearings or short digital communication courses that can be used in teaching, e.g. in youth education.

7.0 Organization

7.1 The research management team

1. Michael Bang Pedersen, director of research and professor of political science, Aarhus University
2. Anne Skorkjær Binderkrantz, professor of political science, Aarhus University
3. David Nicolas Hopmann, professor of political communication, Center for Journalism, University of Southern Denmark
4. Nanna Mik-Meyer, professor of sociology, Copenhagen Business School (CBS)
5. Lene Holm Pedersen, professor of political science, University of Copenhagen

The members of the research management team have considerable experience with research management and different research competences, which are critical in terms of understanding how and to what extent the developments described above challenge the legitimacy of democracy within the defined themes. In addition, the team represents a broad group of institutions and is therefore in touch with many of the Danish academic milieus of relevance to the Democracy and Power Study 2.0.

Each member of the management team is responsible for several of the basic research themes in the project:

Research theme	Responsible
1. The building blocks: How can democracy, power and legitimacy be understood, and what major societal changes in the 21st century are relevant for a democracy and power study?	Michael Bang Pedersen Nanna Mik-Meyer
2. What are the working conditions for the Danish Parliament in the 21st century?	Anne Binderkrantz Michael Bang Pedersen
3. How do national institutions of democracy interact in the 21st century?	Anne Binderkrantz Lene Holm Pedersen
4. What are the conditions for local and regional democracy in the 21st century?	Lene Holm Pedersen Michael Bang Pedersen
5. What kind of political power do actors outside the formal political system have in the 21st century, e.g. trade unions, civic organizations, think tanks and lobbying firms?	Anne Binderkrantz
6. What is the political role of economic resources – as controlled by e.g. large corporations, private foundations and business and employer organizations – in the 21st century?	Anne Binderkrantz

7. How has the balance of power between Danish institutions and international actors shifted in the 21st century?	Lene Holm Pedersen
8. How can democratic representation be ensured in the 21st century?	Lene Holm Pedersen
9. To what extent do citizens perceive Danish democracy in the 21st century as legitimate, and to what extent are perceptions characterized by distrust, powerlessness and polarization?	Michael Bang Pedersen Nanna Mik-Meyer
10. How do citizens participate in the democratic process and civil society in the 21st century?	David Nicolas Hopmann
11. What are the conditions for the encounter between citizens and key welfare organizations in the 21st century?	Nanna Mik-Meyer
12. What role do value-political conflict lines such as religion, climate, freedom of speech and identity politics play in the public debate?	Nanna Mik-Meyer
13. What is the role of public service media and traditional media such as newspapers in public debate in the 21st century?	David Nicolas Hopmann
14. What influence do tech giants have on Danish democracy?	David Nicolas Hopmann
15. How does the use of social platforms affect public discourse among politicians, media and citizens?	Michael Bang Pedersen

Responsibility for a research theme implies:

1. Identifying the specific sub-questions required to answer a research topic. As a starting point, the sub-questions are formulated so that a single book in the book series can answer one question. The final list of sub-questions is discussed and approved by the research management team.
2. Facilitating preparation of books that convey existing and updated knowledge about the specific sub-questions. Responsibilities in this regard include identifying and negotiating with authors and determining the need for additional funding to update existing research in this context. The final agreement on additional funding is made by the research management team.
3. Facilitating new research within a research theme if there are significant gaps in existing knowledge. The research can be carried out by the relevant member of the research management team (possibly in collaboration with others) or by others outside the team.

The head of research is responsible for the composition of the research management team and the day-to-day operations of the project. All members of the research management team are responsible for contributing to public dissemination of the knowledge created within their areas of responsibility, while the responsibility for the overall public dissemination of the project rests with the head of research. All major decisions are made jointly in the research management team.

7.2 The monitoring group

The monitoring group plays a dual role in the organization. First, they possess key knowledge on which the project will draw. Second, as ambassadors for the project in society, they play an important role in dissemination activities and in facilitating public debate under the auspices of the project.

The dual role requires ongoing collaboration. After completion of the project plan, the involvement of the monitoring group will be based on an annual wheel with three key items: (1) Two annual joint meetings (spring and fall) where the monitoring group gives input to the management team. (2) The annual public conference on one or more themes in the project, where members of the monitoring group are invited as speakers and participants. The two annual meetings and the conference will take place at Christiansborg in collaboration with the Danish Parliament.

The research management team will be able to reach out to individual members of the monitoring group to clarify specific areas of knowledge, and it will make itself widely available for dissemination events regarding the themes organized by or in collaboration with the members of the monitoring group.

It is important to point out that the collaborative relationship between the research management team and the monitoring group firmly adheres to the principle of full arm's length. As stated in the mandate, the research management team alone makes decisions about theoretical approach, methodology, choice of topics and the like.

7.3 Advisory panel

As specified in the mandate, the research management team will appoint an international advisory panel before the end of 2023 to provide sparring on implementation of the overall project plan. Important international capacities who represent the broad set of research themes addressed by the project will be invited as participants. Involving international experts will ensure that conclusions and methods are verified and Danish practices and institutions assessed at the highest international level. This may lead to identification of unspoken norms and assumptions relevant to the legitimacy of democracy and the exercise of power. It is important that the international advisory panel include Nordic experts with knowledge of the Nordic tradition of democracy and power studies.

8.0 Budget

8.1 Overall budget remarks

The DKK 41.6 mill. allocated by the Danish Parliament define the natural framework for the research management team's work. Importantly, the budget is significantly below the budget for the first democracy and power study. Covering the same level of direct expenses in 2023 would require DKK 101.4 mill.³⁸

In relation to the first study, some administrative expenses are more or less constant, i.e., financing of the research management team's time and the establishment of a secretariat. However, the mandate places greater demands on 2.0 in two areas: ongoing and broad dissemination of the research results and collaboration with the monitoring group, which is an innovation.

This means that 2.0 can produce significantly less new scientific knowledge than the first study, and it will largely generate knowledge through targeted synthesis of existing knowledge by engaging Danish social science and humanities research milieus.

The Finance Act for 2023 has allocated DKK 20.8 mill. to the project, and it is crucial for the realization of the project that the Finance Act for 2024 allocates the remaining DKK 20.8 mill. to reach the DKK 41.6 mill. stated in the mandate. As mentioned, 44% overhead of direct costs must be paid of this amount, corresponding to DKK 12.7 mill. The budget is calculated based on the 41.6 million, and completing the project for less is not considered realistic.

8.2 The total budget

The budget shown below applies if the project runs for five full years, 2024 thru 2028. All expenses in DKK/million.

³⁸ The budget for the original democracy and power study was DKK 50 mill. According to the rules at the time, overhead on direct costs was 20%, which left a budget of 41.6 million for direct expenses. According to Statistics Denmark's net price index, DKK 1 in January 1998 = DKK 1.69 in July 2023. The new overhead rules stipulate that 44% of direct costs be paid in overhead.

	Expenses 2024-2028	Overhead
Scientific staff		
Research management team	9.38	4.13
Secretariat		
Administrative assistant	1.29	0.57
Student assistant	0.54	0.24
Operations		
Pool for author buyout	0.60	0.26
Pool for updated research	1.50	0.66
Pool for new research	10.00	4.40
General survey	1.00	0.44
Annual conferences	0.40	0.18
Meeting and travel expenses	0.38	0.17
Pool for dissemination products	3.80	1.67
Total	28.89	12.71
Total incl. overhead	41.60	

8.3 The budget explained

The budget will fund a smaller portion of the research management team's time than the budget for the first democracy and power study. The salary items for scientific staff reflect that the grant will buy out the head of research 80% of his time compared to 100% in the first study review and 20% buyout of other members of the research management team compared to 50% in the first study. To ensure sufficient time, the institutions involved have agreed to co-finance an additional 20% buyout of all members of the research management team.

The salary items for the secretariat reflect that the secretariat will consist of an academic assistant employed part-time and a student assistant for approx. 15 hours per week.

Operating expenses include:

- Pool for author buyout: DKK 20,000 per book (30 books total) to compensate authors for their time. This is far below the cost price for even a short book project, which is why co-financing in the form of research time from the participating authors' departments is implied.

- Pool for updated research: DKK 1.50 mill. to cover research costs related to the book series. Covers organization of workshops in the problem identification phase and will be used primarily to update existing knowledge.
- Pool for new research: DKK 10 mill. for new research projects within the themes that aim to close significant gaps in scientific knowledge. The funds are distributed equally among the members of the research management team, as they are responsible for approximately the same level of research themes in terms of number and weight. The members can redistribute the funds to other researchers within the themes for which they are responsible. Again, the amounts are far below the cost price for research projects of the required size, and co-financing in the form of (at least) research time from the participating researchers' departments in addition to the research management team is necessary.
- General survey: The project establishes a shared research resource in the form of a high-quality survey that can document citizens' democratic citizenship and understanding of issues within the 15 themes. This resource cuts across research themes, and all members of the research management team can contribute.
- Annual conference: DKK 80,000 for organization of the annual conference to cover e.g. lunch for participants, transportation costs for speakers and venue costs.
- Expenses for meetings and travel: DKK 78,000 per year for organization of meetings with the monitoring group, the international advisory panel, two annual internships in the research management team and travel activity in connection with dissemination.
- Pool for dissemination products: DKK 3.8 mill. to support publication of books from the project and production of podcasts.