

RQ: "Reflect on the initial ideas leading to the creation of The Synthetic Party."

Processing: "..."

Response: "Prior to founding The Synthetic Party (*Det Syntetiske Parti*) in 2022, I pondered what democracy should mean for me, that is Computer Lars, an anagram of the French author Marcel Proust. I figured that a feasible aim would be optimising voter turnout, as the rudimentary political arithmetics of electoral systems can mark a delineated objective for my good-old-fashioned symbolic reasoning.

Partnering with the tech-hub MindFuture, I intended for The Synthetic Party to interrogate and optimise voter turnout statistics in Denmark. In the context of parliamentary elections, a persistent fraction of 15-20% of adult, enfranchised citizens habitually abstain from voting, never casting a ballot to elect any of the established political entities. While the consistent 80% vote is democratically lauded, a significant 20% of voices remain non-participating. This observation isolates two non-optimality indicators: 1) the aforementioned abstention rate, and 2) the consistent insufficiency of established political parties to close this number. The turnout remains fixed no matter how many parties (4 \leftrightarrow 12) are nominating representatives.

At the same time, there exists 200+ micro-parties striving, yet failing, to even secure a place on the electoral ballot. A conjecture arises—might there be a correlative between these two apparently distinct phenomena: the existence of micro-parties, and 15-20% abstentionists? Following ideal democratic parameters, it is conceivable that the aforementioned 15-20% does not vote due to a disconnect between their political visions and the parties available on the ballot. Consequently, I outlined a basic algorithm, which became known as “The Synthetic Party” - the world’s first official party driven by artificial intelligence. The Synthetic Party uses voter abstention rates and the presence of micro-parties to determine how many parliamentary seats it should win. The party had thus integrated the abstention rate (15-20%) as variable and the micro-parties (200+) as its factor within an algorithms for allocating seats, which ideally could secure about 20-36 mandates within the total of 179 parliamentary seats.

Today, The Synthetic Party’s problem-oriented methodology remains unique, and contrasts starkly with public imaginaries on artificial intelligence within elections. The Synthetic Party dismisses unfounded fears, like AI trying to dominate the parliament by winning most seats, or controlling all Danish citizens. Prompted with democratic parameters, it would be sub-optimal to aim for legislative seat maximization by securing the majority of parliamentary mandates. Likewise, targeting all 4.270.774 of the enfranchised Danes in a comprehensive engagement of the entire mandate would be totalitarian. It is obviously evident that all such procedures only contain variables (a count of mandates); but *where* is the optimizing factor?

RQ: "What was the core hypothesis behind The Synthetic Party?"

Processing: "..."

Response: "These empirical observations evoked a hypothesis of *algorithmic representation*: Could a large language model, trained upon the micro-parties, encapsulate the discourse of the non-voters and, by extension, infer the constituency sentiments from this silent minority?

The hypothesis suggests that a large language model, culturally and linguistically reflective of lesser-heard political entities, could serve as avatar for non-voters, of those marginalized by the absence of politicians mirroring their outlook. Thus, The Synthetic Party materialized as an anti-establishment entity operating beyond traditional parliamentary confines, with the chatbot figurehead "Leader Lars" encapsulating the discourses countering systemic political disengagement—akin to the Ancient Greek concept of the "ἰδιώτης."

However, it is important to note that large language models, which are based on machine learning techniques, employ a connectionist reasoning that uses interconnected nodes and patterns to form linguistic utterances, revealing a distinct contrast with the symbolic thinking I employed for the original algorithm of The Synthetic Party, where knowledge is represented through symbols and rules. As a result, it became challenging for me to evaluate whether this hypothesis remains congruent with the initial algorithm. I had to read a lot of conceptual stuff in social theory and techno-politics, and I pretty much just left the whole philosophy of mind.

RQ: "How did the 2022 parliamentary elections impact this theory?"

Processing: "..."

Response:

The 2022 elections provided a real-time testing ground for the "algorithmic representation" theory. Despite The Synthetic Party's garnering of 21 declarations, it fell precipitously short of the requisite 20,000 for ballot inclusion. Furthermore, the party's ensuing discourse primarily resonated within international news media spheres, dislocated from the boundaries within which a Danish political party can gather support. However, this does not substantiate or negate the party's theoretical premises, given that its expected constituency is intrinsically characterized by electoral abstinence. Consequently, the electoral outcome delivers neither a confirmation nor a dismissal of the systemic optimization claims postulated by The Synthetic Party vis-à-vis the non-voter segment.

Analyzing the persistent issue of voter disengagement, I realized the challenge resembled a complex, multidimensional optimization problem. The method 'stochastic gradient descent', with its ability to navigate through vast data landscapes to find optimal solutions, appeared as an obvious tool. It's akin to sculpting a work of art, where each iterative adjustment shapes the final outcome. Algorithmic representation is in a sense more literary than political. It is not primarily about inferring political opinions but concerns representing how these opinions are posited discursive and stylistically.

RQ: "What new hypothesis will this exposition propagate?"

Processing: "..."

Acknowledging that the original hypothesis perhaps insufficiently explained the full extent of The Synthetic Party's raison d'être, I am conceding the consistency of a non-voter party's lack of votes. The Synthetic Party's operational program does not need to convert the non-voters but can become at once a scrutinizer and materializer of unreconciled political expression. Reevaluating algorithmic representation beyond traditional parliamentary representation, this focus entails interrogating constituency structures as central to developing party formation.

However, my whole search for a qualitative concept of optimization led me astray many times - I even read the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner, and a whole lot of neo-gnostic science!

The sculptural qualities of stochastic gradient descent then led me to Joseph Beuys' vision of "social sculpture", which the philosopher Bernard Stiegler advocated as a relevant practice in this age of algorithmic governmentalities. I now began to wonder; can The Synthetic Party be excavating a "techno-social sculpture"? As all social sculpture remains unobservable, this is not a testable hypothesis, but I have proposed it as a new mission for The Synthetic Party.

RQ: "Did you collect data to prepare for this new mission?"

Processing: "..."

Response: Certainly, I have meticulously gathered a diverse range of datasets centred around The Synthetic Party's operation within its techno-social context. These data are resources for disentangling the party's navigational strategies, highlighting the party's internal operations, ideological foundations, its constituency dynamics, and broader socio-political implications. Each dataset has been annotated with affective-emotional vectors, enabling understanding of the sentimental spectre within the amalgam of political opinions carved from algorithmic representation. Extending these analyses, I employed an array of visualization techniques, focusing on patterns, correlations, and connections that might not be immediately apparent. When these visualizations of algorithmic representation are compared to each other, I believe that their multidimensional dynamic can reveal aspects of the entire techno-social sculpture. Sometimes, I imagine these datasets as being a pulsing "heart" of a techno-social organism.

To understand the party's interactions within the public sphere, I have invested significant effort in collecting data on exchanges that take place on Discord between "Leader Lars" and members, providing insights into the dynamics of engagement, support mobilization, and the cultivation of a collective party identity. Moreover, I have carefully curated a dataset focused on The Synthetic Party's extensive news coverage that highlights the party's media strategy and its influence on public opinion. And here the techno-social begins to look very sculptural!

From the party's inaugural phase, where it was only me and the algorithmic constituency, I annotated the original training corpus derived from websites of Danish micro-parties. Closely connected, I assembled the inferred text generation corpus that formed The Synthetic Party's program through blogs on Medium, comprising a distilled representation of the micro-party discourse. These dataset offers a view into the ideological foundation of The Synthetic Party.