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Understanding and Challenging Populist Negativity towards Politics: The Perspectives of British Citizens

Journal:	<i>Political Studies</i>
Manuscript ID:	POST-07-14-0203.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Populism, Democracy, Citizens
Abstract:	<p>This article adapts and develops the idea of a "stealth" understanding of politics to explore how citizen's estrangement from formal politics is processed cognitively through a populist lens. Earlier work has shown the widespread presence of stealth attitudes in the USA and Finland. We show that stealth attitudes are well established in Britain, demonstrate their populist character and reveal that age, newspaper readership and concerns about governing practices help predict their adoption by individuals. Yet our survey findings also reveal a larger body of positive attitudes towards the practice of democracy suggesting that there is scope for challenging populist angst. We explore these so-called "sunshine" attitudes and connect them to the reform options favoured by citizens; concluding that improving the operation of representative politics is a factor key to challenging populist negativity</p>

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Introduction

Evidence of mounting negativity towards politics in established democracies predates the economic downturn prompted by the global financial crisis – and it is likely to prove more enduring (Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2004; Stoker, 2006; Torcal and Montero, 2006; Hay, 2007; Norris, 2011). To contribute meaningfully to the debate about disenchantment with the practice of politics and what might be done to alleviate it; political scientists need to provide answers to three questions. What is the form and structure of popular disenchantment? What is the extent of the stranglehold that it now exerts on the body politic? And what reform mechanisms might help to promote a more positive engagement with politics by citizens?

Drawing on evidence from Britain set in a broader comparative context this article tries to answer all three questions. We use established yet innovative survey measures tested in several countries to explore what British citizens think about politics and how it should work. We add additional evidence from focus groups in which citizens were given the opportunity to explore and propose reform measures that might improve politics and we test those ideas in the context of a wider and more representative sample of British citizens.

In answer to the first question we argue that the expression of what irks many citizens about politics takes a modern populist form that we label ‘stealth populism’. We draw on the idea of stealth democracy originally proposed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) but reframe the understanding of stealth attitudes. This mind-set we see less as the expression of a commitment to a particular and preferred vision of democracy and more as an expression of populist angst about the current practice of politics. Stealth populists think

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3 that in a democracy the political system should deliver what the people want without them
4 having to pay continual attention to it. From such a perspective, the perceived failings of
5 the current political system are a product of too much politicking. Politicians talk rather
6 than act, make too many compromises to special interests and do not take sufficient
7 cognizance of expertise to come to sensible decisions. Both the construction of expressed
8 negativity towards politics and its drivers support our argument that stealth populism is a
9 perspective with a populist character and origins.
10

11 Our response to the second question about the depth of stealth populism is to argue that its
12 grip is strong, but far from unbreakable. Public attitudes towards institutions such as the
13 political system, which are rarely at the forefront of their attention, are always layered,
14 regularly ambivalent and sometimes loosely formed. In particular, though citizens may well
15 hold stealth values they typically do so alongside other more positive views about the
16 operation of democratic politics and the potential role they might have in it (Neblo et al,
17 2010a). Our empirical evidence confirms the presence of these more positive
18 understandings. We label them, following the work of Neblo et al (2010a), 'sunshine' views
19 of democratic politics. Their presence indicates an enduring capacity of citizens to see
20 politics as operating in a manner close to long-established and familiar principles of liberal
21 representative democracy. But, in contrast to Neblo et al and Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, we
22 do not see 'stealth' and 'sunshine' views as mutually exclusive, such that evidence of one
23 might disconfirm the presence of the other. Rather, we see them as alternative
24 understandings (pre-formed vernaculars, in effect) in and through which citizens make
25 sense of different (and/or ambivalent) political cues (and which are typically triggered by
26 those cues). Citizens, we suggest, have the capacity to view the politics they witness in
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3 more optimistic or more pessimistic terms. The key question is how our politics might be
4 reformed so as more consistently to trigger or cue their more positive disposition (or,
5 indeed, to lead them to resolve the ambiguity or ambivalence inherent in many political
6 cues in a more forgiving way).
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14 The final contribution of the article tackles this directly, by considering what might be done
15 to reform politics. What kind of political reforms would incline citizens more to express a
16 'sunshine' disposition as opposed to passing an increasingly stealthy populist and cynical
17 judgment of contemporary democratic practice? Our approach is to ask citizens themselves
18 about their reform preferences by giving them the opportunity to reflect and deliberate
19 collectively on the question. Using focus groups alongside new survey evidence we show
20 that the reforms most favoured by British citizens are about restoring representative
21 politics rather than necessarily grabbing new opportunities for participation. Populist
22 negativity towards politics might be challenged so that stealth populism could be trumped
23 by popular endorsement of the nuanced practice of liberal representative democracy
24 providing that the behaviour of politicians changed and the context of the exchange
25 between representatives and citizens was less dominated by spin and playing to the media
26 gallery.
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46 The paper begins with a review of the scope and limitations of our various data sources.
47 Thereafter we connect stealth attitudes to our understanding of populist negativity. We
48 then test empirically that connection using original survey data from 2011/12 before
49 exploring the presence of more positive sunshine attitudes using the same data set. Finally
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3 we report on citizens' reform preferences using material from focus groups conducted in
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5 2011/12 and additional survey work conducted late in 2012.
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8 **Populist Angst in Contemporary Democracy: Beyond Stealth versus Sunshine views**

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11 Most contemporary commentators agree that, at its core, populism is an anti-phenomenon
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13 (Mudde, 2004; Mény and Surel, 2002). It relies on the distinction between a pure and
14
15 sovereign people, on the one hand, and corrupt political elite on the other – and, of course,
16
17 the (moral) supremacy of the former over the latter (Deiwiks, 2009 and Akkerman, 2003).
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19 A further distinction can be drawn between populism as a zeitgeist, a way of thinking about
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21 contemporary politics (Mudde, 2004; Mair, 2005), and populism as a political movement or
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23 form of political mobilization (whether of right or left) (Taggart, 2002; Albertazzi and
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25 McDonnell, 2008; Deiwiks, 2009). In what follows we focus on populism as set of ideas that
26
27 is prevalent in the judgement of contemporary democracies by citizens. The challenge is to
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29 find a way of encapsulating and measuring this populist zeitgeist.
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37 The literature on populism helps us towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.
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39 The rise of populism as a prevalent framing for contemporary politics rests on an
40
41 ambiguity at the heart of democracy, as Margaret Canovan (1999) explains. Populism is a
42
43 bi-product of the interplay between the 'two faces of democracy', one 'redemptive', the
44
45 other 'pragmatic'. The former views democracy 'as rule by the people'. Accordingly, it
46
47 regards politics as legitimate when it delivers unambiguously 'what the people want'. By
48
49 contrast, the latter more pragmatic view is more focused on the compromises, deals and
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51 institutional devices that enable different interests to be reconciled without resort to
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53 violence. Regular failures to deliver on the redemptive vision and the murky realities of
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3 pragmatic democratic politics provide the breeding ground for populist attitudes. The
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5 palpable tension between these two understandings provides the space in which populism
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7 flourishes. Populism picks at the gap between a democracy seen through the narrow lens of
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9 rule by the people and that seen through the image of the complexities of liberal
10
11 democratic governance.
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16 Trends in the long-term conduct of politics in contemporary democracies (including
17
18 ostensibly benign processes such as the rise of multiculturalism) have arguably made the
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20 gap between rule by the people and liberal representative politics loom larger. The
21
22 increased professionalization of politics has created a fertile breeding-ground for 'us'
23
24 versus 'them' populist stealth angst. As Mair (2005 p. 20) puts it, 'traditional politics is seen
25
26 less and less as something that belongs to the citizens or to the society, and is instead seen
27
28 as something that is done by politicians'. Parties, lobbyists, think tankers and political
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30 advisors are professionals and operate increasingly within their own world of rules and
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32 norms divorced from standards of pecuniary and discursive honesty favoured by citizens in
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34 general (Allen and Birch, 2014).
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42 Moreover, the breakdown of traditional political platforms has encouraged political elites
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44 to adopt populist rhetoric to counter these trends and to take up, at times, anti-political
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46 stances themselves. It is elites rather than citizens that have led debates about the
47
48 'democratic deficit' in the European Union and politicians have not been slow to run
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50 negative campaigns and accuse their opponents of incompetence, dishonesty, sleaze or
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52 corruption; moreover, it is again political elites who have led the move to the sub-
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54 contracting of their decision-making powers to unelected experts, such as independent
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3 central banks (Hay, 2007). These practices have effects. As Mudde (2004, p. 562) comments,
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5 'after years of reading and hearing about dysfunctional national and supranational
6
7 democracies, more and more people have become both sensitised to the problem, and
8
9 convinced that things can and should be better'.
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13 Another trend credibly reinforcing the proliferation of populist attitudes is the
14
15 'mediatisation' of politics and the role of tabloid coverage in promoting a populist
16
17 negativity towards politics – in effect, a populist anti-politics which pits the people (and
18
19 'the will of the people') against those who claim to represent them. The core role of the
20
21 media in presenting contemporary politics is widely acknowledged (Mair, 2005; Street,
22
23 2011). Moreover, our own work shows it to be widely understood by citizens themselves
24
25 (Authors, 2015). As Mazzoleni (2008, p. 50) notes, 'if we examine the processes of media-
26
27 driven representation and the symbolic construction of favourable opinion climates ... we
28
29 find a significant degree of support for the rise of populist phenomena'. The impact of the
30
31 media is complex in that mainstream media can play a crucial role in challenging populism
32
33 and certainly in scrutinising populist political movements. The breeding ground for
34
35 populist sentiment is, then, more likely to come from the tabloid or popular news media –
36
37 and they have often been keen to present themselves in precisely such terms. Under
38
39 commercial (or, indeed, proprietorial) pressure to maximise audience figures, such media
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41 sources typically present what is regarded as a simplified (more pejoratively, 'dumbed
42
43 down') version of the news and perhaps also a more sensational and sensationalised view
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45 of what the 'news' is (Crick, 2005). The result is a characteristic tendency towards
46
47 sensationalist accounts focused on scandals and personalities, presenting complex
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49 problems in terms of stark choices (Mazzoleni, 2008). Such news media typically present
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3 themselves as guardians and guarantors of the people's interest in a context in which such
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5 interests are in danger of being thwarted by political elites and the machinations of
6
7 political power.
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11 The economic downturn experienced by many contemporary democracies and scandals
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13 over politicians expenses or allegations of corruption have added to the negative mood
14
15 music surrounding politics. But it is the longer term factors identified above in the
16
17 construction and reportage of politics that provide the bedrock to populist angst about
18
19 democratic practice. The evidence relating to political disenchantment points to its
20
21 considerable and sustained presence prior to the crisis, both in the UK (Stoker, 2006; Hay
22
23 2007) and beyond (Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Dalton, 2004).
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29 Our argument is that a populist vernacular about politics has been consolidated over recent
30
31 years, sourcing the negative commentary on its practices with a repertoire of discursive
32
33 resources and an array of florid images and allusions. This picks at the gap between the
34
35 ideal of 'rule by the people' and the complexities of modern representative politics. But
36
37 how can that gap in public attitudes be operationalised and measured? Our solution is to
38
39 turn to the debate about two putative and contrasting visions of democracy, labelled
40
41 'stealth' and 'sunshine' perspectives by their advocates. The stealth view captures (as it
42
43 characterises) the populist angst at the failure to deliver rule by the people and the
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45 sunshine view similarly seeks to capture (and characterise) citizens' comprehension of the
46
47 nuanced practices of liberal democracy. In what follows, we develop concepts originally
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49 developed for other purposes into frameworks for demonstrating the extent of populist
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3 angst in contemporary democracies and the reserve pool of public understanding of the
4 intricacies of democracy.
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9 The stealth framing was originally devised by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) as an
10 attempt empirically to refute the expectations of some normative democratic theorists who
11 emphasized the important of citizen participation to effective democracy. As such, their
12 work makes them the present day inheritors of the perspective on democracy so
13 powerfully articulated, in its modern form, by Schumpeter (1942). This perspective argues
14 the most citizens want to ensure the protection of their interests and rights yet wish also to
15 be disengaged from daily politics, as voting gives them the crucial power to select their
16 leaders. The critics of the stealth model, most prominently Neblo et al (2010), use their
17 own empirical work to rework the case for seeing unconditional participation as central to
18 democracy. They seek to show that citizens exhibit a more positive orientation to the
19 political engagement available to them. This they summarize as a 'sunshine' attitude to
20 democratic practice, an understanding that recognizes both the opportunities afforded by
21 contemporary democracy and its complexities.
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41 As the above discussion suggests, the debate between proponents of the stealth and
42 sunshine theses replays, in a more contemporary context, a long-established debate, both
43 empirical and normative, between elite and participative understandings of democracy
44 (Held, 2006). Our aim is to move the debate on, by seeing stealth and sunshine perspective
45 not as mutually exclusive but as contending vernaculars in and through which citizens
46 might and do make sense of different political experiences. The stealth perspective, we
47 contend, represents less a theory of elite democracy and more a populist expression of
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3 angst, a framework in and through which to rail against the perceived failing of democratic
4 politics. The sunshine perspective represents the other side of the democratic gap picked at
5 by populism, a more nuanced understanding of the nature and limits of liberal
6 representative democracy. Most citizens, we suggest, retain the capacity to understand and
7 make sense of the politics they experience in and through either system of thinking. As
8 such, the presence of one cannot be taken as evidence of the absence of the other. Similarly,
9 evidence of the presence of both cannot be taken as indicative of irrationality in citizens'
10 understandings of politics.
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13 Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) frame their discussion within the context of a strong
14 awareness of popular understandings of the ills of contemporary democracy. Yet they use
15 the term populism, as they put it, 'loosely, to refer to those who want to give the people
16 more power' (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002:52). This rather perverse definition of
17 populism (in contrast to the theoretical landscape laid out above) blinds them to the rather
18 obvious populist features of the stealth democracy that they argue most (US) citizens want.
19 Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's starting point is that most citizens do not want to engage in the
20 detail of politics in part because they assume that most people agree with them and in part
21 because they dislike debate and messy compromise. Politics, for them, should be about
22 getting on with delivering what the people want. Politicians should do what they say and
23 get on with the task of governing – quietly, effectively and efficiently. Yet politics too often
24 appears to be failing, dominated as it is by self-serving politicians, lobbyists and the dark
25 arts of politicking and spin. Frustration with the political elite is such that experts or
26 business leaders might be seen to be more likely to do better in delivering good
27 government.
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3 Our argument is that stealth attitudes among citizens need to be seen as an expression of a
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6 widespread and embedded populist understanding of politics in mature democracies. The
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8
9 stealth perspective gets its leverage from a populist understanding of the gap between how
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11 politics *should be* and how *it is perceived* to be. The drivers of stealth attitudes populism we
12
13 would also expect to reflect its populist character. As such, stealth attitudes might have a
14
15 broader but nonetheless shared constituency with the most strongly mobilised form of
16
17 populism in contemporary UK politics – that expressed by UKIP (Ford and Goodwin, 2013).
18
19 This has consistently been shown to be disproportionately male, of lower social status and
20
21 from older age groups. We suspect that the stealth perspective is, in comparison with UKIP
22
23 support, likely to attract support from individuals from across a broader social spectrum.
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25
26 But we suspect also that some of the demographic factors noted above may be in play, a
27
28 proposition we test directly in what follows. Supporters of stealth populism are more likely
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30 to be users of populist media coverage of politics than those who follow politics through
31
32 the more nuanced coverage from more detailed broadsheet media. In terms of their
33
34 orientation towards politics we would envisage that its supporters would declare
35
36 themselves less interested in politics, resistant to greater involvement in politics but
37
38 confident enough in their own capacities to support a greater direct say for themselves
39
40 over key issues. Those disproportionately inclined to express a stealth disposition do not
41
42 see themselves as incapable citizens but as citizens frustrated by the failure of the political
43
44 system to deliver. These citizens may not be deeply interested in politics but they do fear
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46 that the governing system is failing and they are likely to stand out in expressing that
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48 concern.
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3 The sunshine perspective, in contrast, embraces much more closely a textbook version of
4 liberal representative politics and its (legitimate) limits (Neblo et al. 2010a: 572, fn 18). It
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6 sees value in debate and deliberation and recognises the need to look for compromise.
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9 Accountable elected politicians need to be at the heart of decision-making in order for
10
11 government to be legitimate. Whereas the stealth-oriented citizen will engage with politics
12
13 only under sufferance (and in order to hold those in office in check), the sunshine-oriented
14
15 citizen is a more willing participant as long as the political world corresponds sufficiently
16
17 to the ideal of a level playing field (see also Authors 2015). From the stealth perspective,
18
19 politics is about achieving efficiency in collective action; from the sunshine perspective it is
20
21 about reconciling competing values. Advice from business and other experts in making
22
23 public decisions has its place in this latter world, but the key role remains with elected
24
25 politicians who need to have the final say (and bear the ultimate responsibility). As this
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27 suggests, both perspectives are as much normative as they are empirical.
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35 Neblo et al (2010a: 573) argue the sunshine perspective items tap into an idealised sense of
36
37 what democracy could be: 'how they [citizens] think representative democracy should
38
39 work in principle'. In contrast to the realist, negative judgement about politics captured by
40
41 the stealth perspective, the constituency for this conventional and positive narrative about
42
43 what democracy could be about should be greater than that for the stealth view. Sunshine
44
45 captures a default understanding based on long-standing civic culture norms. As such, we
46
47 might expect that the factors driving its support will not be as distinctive as those driving
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49 the more populist, angst-ridden stealth understanding.
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3 We argue that this framing of stealth views as, at the same time, eroding but existing
4 alongside the bedrock of sunshine perspectives is helpful when trying to understand the
5 dilemmas of contemporary democracies. The issue is not which form of democracy citizens
6 prefer, but rather why so many citizens find the practice of contemporary politics so
7 consistently disappointing and alienating. Stealth views capture an expression of a classic
8 populist anxiety about the gap between democracy as redemptive popular sovereignty and
9 its rather more prosaic and pragmatic contemporary practice that in turn finds idealized
10 expression in the sunshine perspective.
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23 **Research Design: Data collection and methods**

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25 The research we report was conducted in partnership with the Hansard Society, a non-
26 partisan think tank based in London that focuses on issues of democratic politics and
27 engagement. The Hansard Society has used annual face-to-face surveys to conduct an audit
28 of political engagement in Britain since 2003. In 2011/12 our research team were able to
29 add questions to their audit survey on stealth and sunshine attitudes, replicating the
30 questions posed in the earlier studies. The survey was conducted through face-to-face
31 interviews with a representative quota sample of 2,454 adults aged 16 or above living in
32 Great Britain, conducted by TNS-BMRB. The interviews took place in two waves (first wave:
33 7-13 December 2011, 1,193 respondents; second wave: 11-15 January 2012, 1,261
34 respondents) and were carried out in respondents' homes.
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50 We had the advantage of using an already established and robust survey and working with
51 an established survey instrument at relatively modest cost. Yet we were also using a survey
52 designed for a broader general purpose and a rather different overall focus. Appending
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3 additional questions to an existing survey also meant that compromises had to be made
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5 about the way questions were asked because of a desire not to overstretch the time
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7 involved in undertaking the survey for respondents. For example, the questions about
8
9 stealth and sunshine attitudes were asked randomly to a sample of half the respondents in
10
11 each wave, providing a substantial (1000 +) sample for each analysis but leaving us unable
12
13 to test, for example, responses from citizens who were strong supporters of both stealth
14
15 and sunshine orientations. There were also limits to the range of questions that could be
16
17 asked that could have provided useful independent variables. The survey is rich in its
18
19 questions and potential insights but some variables which might credibly help explain
20
21 stealth or sunshine attitudes were not incorporated. These include details of respondents'
22
23 educational attainment, attitudes to conflict avoidance and the strength of partisan
24
25 commitments. These missing variables limit what we claim from our survey results but do
26
27 not undermine its capacity to support our reframing of the stealth arguments through a
28
29 populist lens, as we shall demonstrate.
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38 So far we have talked about stealth and sunshine in conceptual terms but not in terms of
39
40 how it they might be gauged and measured. To capture stealth attitudes requires the use of
41
42 innovative survey questions designed and first deployed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse
43
44 (2002) in a representative sample survey in the United States in 1998. That work was
45
46 replicated by Neblo et al (2010a) in the United States; these authors also devised and
47
48 deployed an additional set of sunshine questions in the same study. Bengtsson and Mattila
49
50 (2009) redeployed the same stealth questions in Finland. Webb (2013) replicated both
51
52 stealth and sunshine questions for Britain. Evans et al (2013) did the same for Australia,
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54 whilst Coffe and Michels (2014) have used the stealth measures in a study in the
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3 Netherlands. In sum, the survey instruments that are key to measuring stealth and
4
5 sunshine are relatively new but have been successfully used in a range of countries.
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9 Stealth attitudes were identified by gauging respondents' support for the following four
10
11 statements:
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- 13
14 1. Elected politicians would help the country more if they would stop talking and just
15
16 take action on important problems¹.
17
- 18
19 2. What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out one's principles.
20
- 21
22 3. Our government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business
23
24 people.
25
- 26
27 4. Our government would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected,
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29 independent experts rather than politicians or the people.
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32 However, following the suggestion of Neblo et al (2010b), we offered six responses:
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34 'strongly agree', 'tend to agree', 'neither agree nor disagree' 'tend to disagree', 'strongly
35
36 disagree' and 'don't know'.
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40 The sunshine questions were asked in the two tranches of the 2011/12 survey to half of
41
42 respondents on a random basis. The questions directly replicated those pioneered by Neblo
43
44 et al (2010). Respondents were asked to give one of six responses (strongly agree/tend to
45
46 agree/neither agree or disagree/tend to disagree/strongly disagree/ do not know) to four
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48 statements:
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55 ¹ We substituted the word 'politician' for 'official' as the term 'elected official' is not used so commonly in
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57 Britain.
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3 1. Openness to other people's views and willingness to compromise are important for
4
5 politics in a country like ours².
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8
9 2. It is important for elected politicians to discuss and debate things thoroughly before
10
11 making major policy changes³.
- 12
13
14
15 3. In a democracy like ours, there are some important differences between how
16
17 government should be run and how a business should be managed.
- 18
19
20
21 4. It is important for the people and their elected representatives to have the final say
22
23 in running government, rather than leaving it up to unelected experts.

24
25
26 The design of survey questions is a challenging endeavour. Following others, we offered
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28 closed rather than open-ended questions for practical reasons of survey administration
29
30 and in order to minimize the demands on respondents. Because we offered the option of
31
32 “don't know” and “neither agree nor disagree” (in contrast to Hibbing and Theiss-Morse)
33
34 we hoped to avoid creating forced choices for respondents. But we recognise that there is a
35
36 considerable debate about the advantages or not of this option (Pastek and Krosnick, 2010).
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38 Yet the core criteria for good survey design were met unambiguously in the sense that the
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40 questions asked were relatively easy to answer and they followed conversational
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48 ² The wording used by Neblo et al (2010a) is slightly different, in that it includes at the end the statement, ‘in
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50 a country as diverse as ours’. This, we reasoned, was more suited to the USA context, and might also be seen
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52 as leading the respondent to acquiescence with the statement to a greater degree than our more neutral
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54 wording

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56 ³ Again, as in the equivalent stealth question, we used the phrase ‘elected politicians’ in preference to its US
57
58 counterpart, ‘elected officials’.

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3 conventions, thereby avoiding the potential for misunderstanding (Pastek and Krosnick,
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6 2010).

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9 This said, both the stealth and sunshine battery of questions are, even in the view of their
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This said, both the stealth and sunshine battery of questions are, even in the view of their
respective designers, far from perfect (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002: 143-4; Neblo et al,
2010b: 34-43). Yet ultimately both sets of authors claim, convincingly in our view, that the
questions they pose capture core attributes of stealth and sunshine perspectives. Indeed,
arguably, and crucially when it comes to our own methodological choices, these studies – in
and through the questions they pose – essentially serve to *define* stealth and sunshine
perspectives empirically. As such, if our findings are to be comparable with those of
existing studies, we need to use the same formulation of words. But there are undoubtedly
methodological issues here that need addressing.

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Neblo et al (2010b: 34) note that a key motivation for formulating the sunshine items in the
way they do is to counteract the fear of acquiescence bias. Arguably the best evidence that
they achieved this is their finding, which our own analysis confirms, that the two sets of
survey questions prompted rather different patterns of response and, crucially, have very
different correlates (see also Webb 2013; Evans et al. 2013). Reinforcing this impression is
a further observation – namely, that logistic regression modeling of each of the stealth and
sunshine questions separately, reveals common determinants for each of the stealth
questions and common, but different, determinants for each of the sunshine questions. As
Figure 1 shows, stealth and sunshine do not share the same drivers, with the exception that
both correlate with a tendency to support greater use of direct democratic devices. The

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3 stealth and sunshine questions are capturing something more than people trying to be
4
5 agreeable.
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9 [INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]
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12 That said, the stealth and sunshine questions are related in the sense that the sunshine
13
14 questions are set up, in effect, as a mirror opposite to the original stealth items. So it is
15
16 interesting to note that in some surveys, such as those administered by Neblo et al (2010 a
17
18 and b) in which both tranches of questions were posed to the same respondents, it is clear
19
20 that many individuals that were supporters of a stealth view were also supporters of a
21
22 sunshine view. This does not surprise us, for reasons already alluded to. The explanation
23
24 offered by Neblo et al (2010b; 40-3) is that respondents ostensibly agreeing with stealth
25
26 propositions are passing a judgement on 'actually existing' political systems, whilst their
27
28 support for sunshine responses reflected a more idealised aspiration or ideal (in effect, a
29
30 view of how politics should be). This, we feel, is unconvincing and reads too much like an
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32 attempt to explain away and rationalise a seeming paradox – a paradox premised on the
33
34 assumed incommensurability of stealth and sunshine view (and the irrationality of holding
35
36 both views simultaneously). For us there is simply no such paradox. Public attitudes are,
37
38 like politics itself, conditional and complex – and, in making sense of the complexity of
39
40 politics, citizens inevitably draw on a range of pre-formulated vernaculars or dispositional
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42 orientations which may, on the face of it, appear contradictory. So it is perfectly reasonable
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44 for a person to express agreement with propositions from both sets of ostensibly
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46 competing views, with the stealth set of attitudes available to be triggered by a negative
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48 experience of politics whilst the more positive set of sunshine attitudes are available to be
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3 triggered by a more positive cue. Tests on our data using positive and negative triggers for
4
5 political engagement show the operation of precisely such effects (Authors, 2013).
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9 Finally, we know that question wording, the ordering of questions and the ordering of
10
11 responses can affect survey results (Pastek and Krosnick, 2010). Yet the stealth and
12
13 sunshine items we use are becoming an established part of the range of survey questions
14
15 used within political science. Some may still argue that they prompt certain responses; yet
16
17 the distinct, varied and yet consistent pattern of the responses that we and others generate
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19 using such survey questions we think makes that claim implausible. Notwithstanding any
20
21 shortcomings that exist, we would argue that the stealth and sunshine survey questions do
22
23 what all good questionnaires aim to achieve in that they 'offer a window into political
24
25 attitudes and behaviours that would be impossible to achieve through any other research
26
27 design' (Pastek and Krosnick 2010: 11). Choosing to replicate the original formulation of
28
29 the questions is also crucial to achieving the comparability of our results with that of the
30
31 existing literature that we seek.
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39 Following the practice of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), the Stealth 1-4 questions were
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41 combined in a compound index of the four responses – coded '1' for those respondents
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43 giving a positive answer to each of Stealth 1 and 2 questions and to at least one of the
44
45 Stealth 3 and Stealth 4 questions (and coded '0' for any other set of responses)⁴. The
46
47 production of a dichotomous dependent variable in this way allowed us to deploy binary
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52 ⁴ Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002: 143-4) offer no direct explanation for this choice but suggest that while
53
54 the first two items capture distinctive features of the stealth perspective the responses to the business and
55
56 expert involvement questions capture the shared idea that policy-making would be better if non-elected
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58 independent voices were involved in decision-making rather than professional politicians.
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3 logistic regression modelling techniques to study the influence of a range of independent
4 variables. Neblo et al (2010a) propose a similar procedure for the sunshine questions.
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9 The survey methodology also allowed us to explore the influence of a range of factors
10 identified as potentially significant drivers of stealth perspectives in our discussion of
11 populism. These were grouped under five headings. First the survey enabled us to cover
12 the standard demographic variables such as gender, age and social class often associated
13 with political behaviour. A further set of variables were concerned with interest in, and
14 knowledge of, politics. A third set of variables introduced into the analysis sought to
15 capture the relationship between stealth and expressed attitudes to the system of
16 governing. A fourth set of factors sought to capture citizens' perceived personal efficacy –
17 namely, whether they might or could (if they so wished) influence decision-making at local
18 and national levels. A fifth set of explanatory variables explored perceptions of the
19 influence of the media and evidence on the impact of reported news readership based on
20 distinctions between broadsheet, tabloid and local newspaper readership.⁵ Finally, the
21 Finnish study (Bengtsson and Mattila, 2009) found a strong connection between stealth
22 attitudes and a commitment to greater use of direct democracy. To see if a similar effect
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47 ⁵ The following newspapers – *The Sun, Mirror, People, Daily Star, Daily Record, Sunday Mirror, Sunday People,*
48 *Sunday Sport, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Sunday Express, and Mail on Sunday* - were designated as tabloids. *The*
49 *Daily Telegraph, Times, Guardian, Financial Times, Independent, Sunday Telegraph, Sunday Times, Observer,*
50 *and Independent on Sunday* were similarly designated broadsheets. Sometimes a three-fold distinction is
51 drawn between the tabloids, the broadsheets and an additional category of mid-market papers including the
52 *Daily Mail, the Daily Express* and their Sunday editions. But for our purposes, given our interests in tabloid
53 populism, there is no case for making such a distinction.
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3 was present amongst the British sample we included an additional question formulated in
4
5 the same way (on support for a greater use of referendums).
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9 We accompanied our survey work with 14 focus groups conducted in various locations
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11 throughout Britain in 2011 and 2012. The focus groups were each facilitated by one of the
12
13 research team. They were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The focus groups were
14
15 used to gauge citizens' understandings of politics, their sense of what was wrong or right
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17 with its conduct, and to explore in more detail the criteria by which such judgments were
18
19 made. Each group concluded with a discussion of potential reforms to the political system
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21 and what might be done to improve politics and citizens' experiences of it. We then used
22
23 the ideas emerging from the focus groups to present a series of reform options in a survey
24
25 conducted in Britain in December 2012 by TNS-BMRB. This used face-to-face interviews
26
27 with a representative quota sample of 1128 adults (for more details see Hansard Society,
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29 2013, pp. 103-105).
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36 Despite their limitations, the four stealth and sunshine responses do capture a negative
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38 populist orientation towards politics on the one hand and a more positive commitment to
39
40 the values and processes of representative democracy on the other. In short, they allow us
41
42 to explore empirically some important matters for understanding the degree and nature of
43
44 citizens' estrangement from politics in contemporary democracies.
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49 **Results: the Connection between Stealth and Populism**

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52 Table 1 provides the details of the responses obtained from our British survey. It confirms
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54 majority support for the first two stealth propositions on the need for more action and less
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56 talk from politics and the importance of politicians sticking to their stated principles. The
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3 idea of a greater role in governing by experts or business leaders receives a more balanced
4 response with roughly equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing. Subtracting those
5 disagreeing from those in agreement reveals more still about the shape of the responses.
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7 For the 'talk' item, the result is +64.7; for the 'compromise' item +38.8; for the 'experts'
8 item +1.3; and for the 'business' -3.9.
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16 Support for the first two items on the stealth list is higher than support on the second two,
17 a finding that is matched in other comparative work (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002;
18 Neblo et al, 2010a; Bengtsson and Mattila, 2009, Webb, 2013). Citizens are bothered about
19 politics being "all talk and no action" and "too much about compromises" but are not so
20 willing to the same degree to express 'a broad fondness for nondemocratic decision-making
21 structures' (Neblo et al, 2010, p. 580). When they do support a greater role for business
22 people or experts, this seems to be associated with a clear and palpable frustration with the
23 job of governing being done by elected politicians (a finding confirmed in the focus group
24 data). Stealth, in this light, we would argue is less about being opposed to a vision of more
25 expansive democracy and more about a concern and frustration about the way democratic
26 politics works. In short, it is about a populist angst.
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43 **TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE**

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46 The heart of the stealth perspective, then, is support for the first two propositions. We can
47 judge the depth of that support by following the procedure suggested by Hibbing and
48 Theiss-Morse – namely, by counting those respondents that support both propositions and
49 either one of the last two stealth statement. Three or more stealth democratic traits are in
50 the case of our British respondents supported by 35.5 per cent of respondents.
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3 Interestingly, the strength of support for such views in Britain is higher than that recorded
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5 either by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's (2002) in the USA (27.2 per cent) or by Bengtsson
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7 and Mattila(2009) in Finland (25.7 per cent).
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11 Our argument for the populist character of stealth attitudes is reinforced if we examine the
12
13 correlates and drivers of such a stealth orientation in more detail. Figure 1 confirms stealth
14
15 and sunshine drivers are different. Table 2 displays the results of an estimated logistic
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17 regression analysis with accumulated support for stealth as the dependent variable. In
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19 terms of demographic factors, and in contrast to the American and Finnish samples, in
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21 Britain age is a pronounced driver of stealth attitudes for those aged 35-54. Support for
22
23 stealth was also stronger among those aged 55+. Among other significant factors driving
24
25 stealth support are a set of attitudinal tie-ups that fit with our broad designation of stealth
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27 as a populist response to the contingencies of modern politics. Citizens who think that the
28
29 system of governing is working well are roughly half as likely to adopt a stealth perspective
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31 compared to those who think that the system of governing works less well. Another
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33 attitudinal response that would appear to fit with a populist framing of stealth is that those
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35 who express an interest in politics are roughly half as likely to adopt a stealth attitude,
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37 compared to those who profess no such interest. Yet those citizens who support greater
38
39 use of referendums to decide important questions are at least twice as likely to adopt a
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41 stealth world view as those who do not support the proposition. Again we see a populist
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43 framing in stealth views, as frustrated citizens favour a more direct say for "the people" in
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45 decision-making as a result. These various findings largely confirm our view of stealth
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47 consciousness as part of a populist vernacular. Stealth attitudes are more prominent
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3 amongst older voters, those who are disaffected and turned-off politics and would in their
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5 frustration like to see more chance for direct control by citizens.
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9 **TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**

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11 We are further reinforced in this view by the evidence that connects stealth attitudes to
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13 reported behaviour, in particular to newspaper readership. By far the strongest factor
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15 driving stealth attitudes in the entire analysis is readership of a national tabloid newspaper.
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17 Within the British sample, respondents are nearly four times as likely to adopt a stealth
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19 perspective if they read a tabloid newspaper compared to a broadsheet. The effect is still
20
21 quite strong and in the same direction for readers of both a tabloid and a broadsheet.
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23 Reading a local newspaper, many of which now also take a tabloid form, also appears to be
24
25 a significant driver of stealth attitudes, although the impact is not quite as strong as for
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27 readership of a national tabloid. But such respondents are still more than twice as likely to
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29 adopt stealth views compared to a broadsheet reader.
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37 We have clearly demonstrated a correlation between the stealth perspective and
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39 newspaper readership. However, we recognise that the direction of causation is, as ever, a
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41 deal more difficult to establish definitively. First, as is widely recognised in the literature
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43 (for a review see Street, 2011, pp. 101-118), media effects on politics are difficult to
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45 demonstrate. The evidence is tantalizing in the sense that we cannot be sure if those
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47 holding stealth attitudes favour tabloid newspapers, or, conversely, whether reading
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49 tabloid papers is driving stealth attitudes. If ever there were a 'chicken-and-egg' problem,
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51 this is it (see also Newton & Brynin 2001, p. 265): is it that readers choose newspapers
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53 aligned to their views or do newspapers by their presentation of the news influence
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3 readers' views? The challenge is partly methodological and given access to only one set of
4
5 survey results, it is largely irresolvable. It could be addressed by carefully constructed
6
7 experiments or through the use of time series panel data. But, as neither of those options
8
9 were open to us, we are left with the observation that to connect tabloid readership with
10
11 stealth attitudes goes with the grain of the insight emerging from most political
12
13 communication scholarship (Street, 2011). An emphasis on work that argues that media
14
15 effects are relatively weak and likely merely to reinforce existing attitudes has given way to
16
17 an alternate view that is prepared to concede that the media may have more direct and
18
19 powerful effects on citizens' views and behaviour. Moreover, while much of the early work
20
21 focused on the impact on voting behaviour, some of the more recent trends have been
22
23 towards work looking at broader impacts and cumulative impacts of the media on citizens'
24
25 attitudes (Gavin and Sanders, 2003; for a more general discussion, see Whiteley 2011). This
26
27 work generally tends to the view that impacts of a significant scale do occur, at least on
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29 specific groups of voters. Our study is entirely consistent with such a conclusion.
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38 Our core argument is that stealth attitudes constitute a distinctive type of negativity
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40 towards politics, reflecting in turn a populist orientation in all contemporary democracies
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42 created by the tension between the promise of democracy and its more messy delivery. A
43
44 strong stealth orientation is not tied significantly to a perceived sense of powerlessness as
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46 measured by various efficacy questions. Stealth supporters do want to have more of a say
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48 through referendums but we argue that such a stance is consistent with a broader populist
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50 perspective.
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The limits to populist angst: let the sunshine in

A stealth orientation exists among a substantial section of British citizens. But, as suggested for the USA by Neblo et al (2010), it is also possible to find even larger support for a set of more positive propositions about the way that politics works. Table 3 shows support for the four sunshine propositions we tested. The pattern of support is generally greater than that shown for the equivalent items that constitute the test of the prevalence of stealth values. The exception is the 'talk' item which achieved 71.6% agreement in its stealth form but only 67.7% in the sunshine form. On the other three items the sunshine "agree" responses comfortably outstripped the stealth ones. Taking agree responses away from disagrees reveals a strong pattern of support with the talk item at +62.2, the openness item at +74, the business item at +60.1 and the expert item at +59.9.

If we accumulate the sunshine responses in a manner equivalent to that we used for stealth responses (by selecting those respondents who agree with the first two sunshine statements and at least one of the last two) we get an idea of the depth of support for the sunshine perspective. We find that 64 per cent of respondents supported three or more sunshine traits. In short, it is clear that sunshine values outstrip stealth values by a large degree in the British sample, nearly doubling accumulated stealth support. The lesson to be drawn from these findings appears clear. Populist angst about the way politics works exists, but against a background in which other more positive folk intuitions about politics persist.

The issue thus becomes, for us, what might trigger in citizens an understanding of politics and political experience couched more in terms of such positive dispositions. How, in other words, might politics be reformed so as to crowd out stealth and let the sunshine in?

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3 Neblo et al (2010) suggest that more opportunities for deliberation with the system of
4
5 democratic decision-making are the way forward. We think that rather than going for one
6
7 pre-ordained solution it might be better to explore reform options more widely (and,
8
9 indeed, inductively). After all, our survey found relatively high levels of support for greater
10
11 levels of direct democracy through the use of referendums (72% agreed with the statement
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13 that 'important questions should be determined by referendums more often than today'). It
14
15 also found that strong supporters of stealth and sunshine perspectives were more likely to
16
17 be backers of that option. Rather than assume a priori what might trigger a more positive
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19 orientation towards politics we thought it preferable to ask citizens themselves.
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25 26 **Reforming politics: Citizens' Preferences**

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29 Accordingly, at the end of the focus group sessions we asked the participants to identify, in
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31 writing, three reform ideas for improving politics, whether mentioned in the prior
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33 discussion or not. The 153 participants gave us a potential 459 reform ideas. Only a few
34
35 members of the focus groups did not offer three ideas and even fewer offered ideas that
36
37 were difficult to fathom. We gave our focus group participants no steer as to what type of
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39 reforms they might identify; their task was merely to propose reforms which they felt had
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41 some credible chance of improving the politics they are currently offered. We received 450
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43 useable suggestions (these are summarised in Table 4).
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49 **TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE**

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52 As Table 4 shows the top preference, in terms of reform ideas, was to ensure that those
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54 who made decisions, especially elected representatives, were open in what they did and
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56 accountable for their performance. In the discussion in the focus groups there were many
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3 occasions when unfavourable comparisons were made between the mechanisms of
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5 accountability that people found themselves subject to in their own working lives and the
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7 perceived unaccountability of elected representatives. Similarly, repeated emphasis was
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9 placed on the perceived basic lack of performance delivery mechanisms available to
10
11 citizens to hold politics in check, or even to account. Another big concern was improving
12
13 communication and ensuring that fair and accessible information about decisions (and
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15 their underlying rationale) is provided. A further concern was about broadening the social
16
17 base and experience of those standing for office as elected representatives.
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24 In a wider representative sample survey undertaken as part of the Hansard Society's Audit
25
26 of Political Engagement 2013 (Hansard Society, 2013) we were able to test whether the
27
28 reform options selected by the focus groups were favoured more generally by the public.
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30 The results (see Table 5) do indeed show very similar reform preferences among citizens in
31
32 this representative sample to those identified through the focus groups.
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36 **TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE**

37 38 39 **Conclusion**

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42 Understanding popular negativity towards politics in contemporary democracies is a
43
44 crucial task, as is diagnosing its causes and potential solutions. Sadly it remains the case
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46 that, as political scientists, we understand a lot more about what drives voting behaviour
47
48 than the more elusive topic of how citizens understand and think about democratic politics.
49
50 Yet, without deepening considerably our understanding of how citizens' orient themselves
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52 to the practices of contemporary democracy it would seem impossible to grasp the
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54 significance and nature of the challenge posed by negativity towards politics, let alone to
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3 respond creatively to that challenge in such a way as to address the concerns from which it
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5 issues. In such a context, the lens provided by the stealth perspective is particularly helpful.
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8 We have shown that stealth attitudes are prevalent and we have argued that such attitudes
9
10 can and should be seen as the expression of a populist angst about the way politics works.
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13 Many British citizens hold stealth views.
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17 However, we have also shown there is a popular base for a more positive understanding of
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19 politics held by an even larger group of citizens. Public opinion can express frustration with
20
21 politics. But equally, it appears that it can just as readily see a way forward that is
22
23 normatively defensible and compatible with the aspirations of many citizens. However,
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25 judging by the expressed aspirations of citizens themselves, the way forward does not only
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27 appear to be the deliberative participation favoured by many deliberative theorists.
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32 The most popular of the reform approaches chosen by citizens in our study seem to match
33
34 with a stealth populist critique of contemporary political practice rather than a strong
35
36 desire for more deliberative participation. The top reform ideas that emerge from citizens
37
38 themselves are all about making representative democracy work in practice the way they
39
40 think it should, such that their confidence in politics as a governing process might be
41
42 restored. The onus of the reform trajectory is on a shift in the behaviour of elected
43
44 representatives in terms of their accountability and responsiveness. In addition what is
45
46 clear is that the populist negativity displayed by citizens may require more effort at
47
48 promoting a better understanding of politics (Flinders, 2012). It is here particularly telling
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50 that better information and education about politics were high on the list of reform options
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52 favoured by citizens.
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3 Designing the mechanisms to produce reforms to convince citizens that such a bringing
4 together of aspiration and reality is possible remains a significant challenge. The reform
5 suggestions from citizens offer some useful guidelines but hardly provide the blueprint
6 designs for institutional reforms. Yet parliaments across established democracies have
7 shown a willingness to undertake some reforms to re-connect with citizens (Beetham,
8 2011) and many of these reforms, on the surface, address some of the concerns outlined in
9 Tables 4 and 5. But there are doubts that the reforms go far enough. We hope that David
10 Beetham (2011, p. 140) is right when he suggests there are forces at work that will open up
11 the existing processes of representative democracy to radical change – whilst also
12 revealing to citizens more of the internal workings of the political process in a way that
13 encourages support for the complex and convoluted dynamics of democracy in complex
14 and divided societies.

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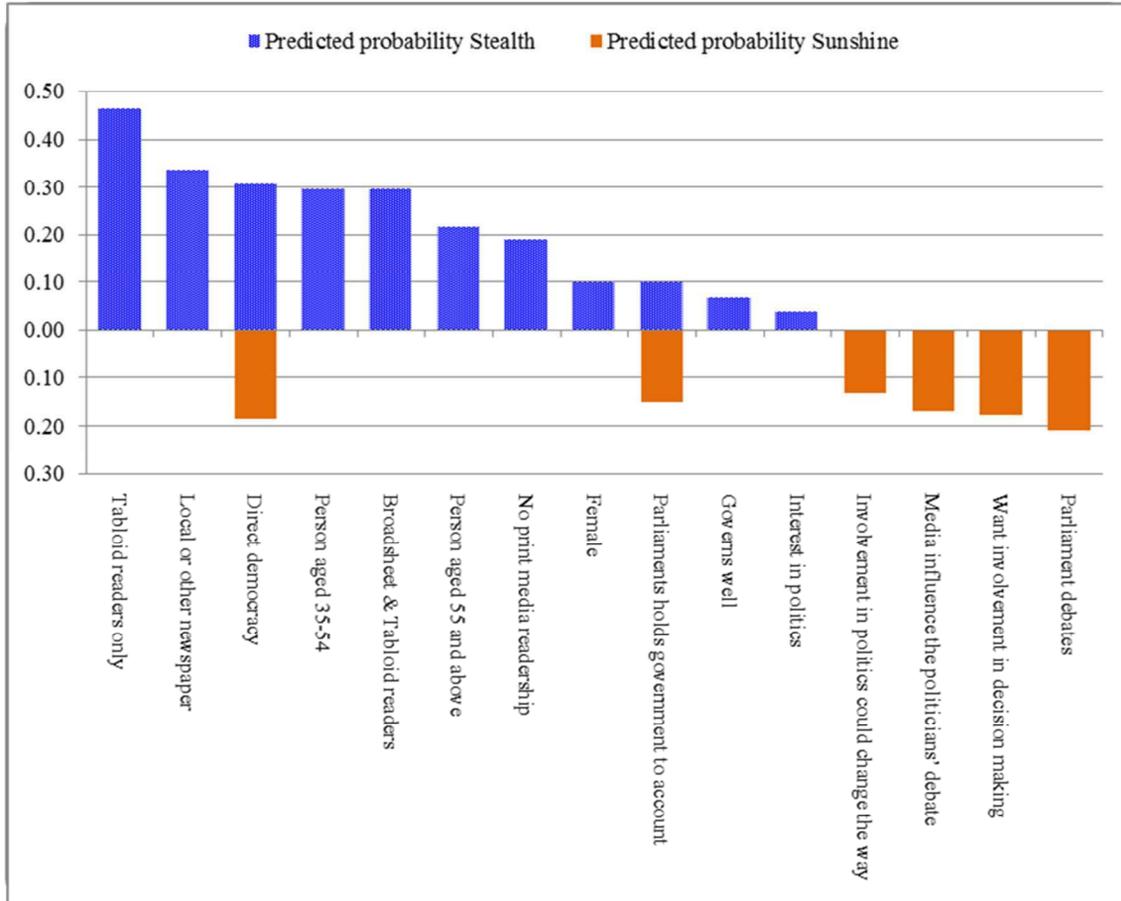
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Figure 1: Predicted probabilities of selected significant drivers of stealth and sunshine democracy in Britain



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Table 1: Responses (%) on stealth items in Britain, 2011-12

STEALTH QUESTIONS									
Response to	Politicians should stop talking and take action		Compromise is selling out one's principles		Leave decisions to successful business people		Leave decisions non-elected experts		
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
SA	37.6	465	19.6	243	10.0	124	8.9	110	
PA	34.0	421	32.3	400	20.8	258	22.4	277	
PD	5.3	66	10.8	134	20.2	250	18.0	223	
SD	1.6	20	2.3	28	14.5	179	12.0	149	
NA/ND	17.3	214	29.4	364	29.7	368	33.1	410	
DK	4.2	52	5.6	69	4.8	59	5.6	69	
Total	100.0	1238	100.0	1238	100.0	1238	100.0	1238	

Key: SA: strongly agree; PA: partly agree; PD: partly disagree; SD: strongly disagree; NA/ND: Neither agree nor disagree
DK: Don't know

Table 2: Parameter estimates for Logistic regression model of responses on Stealth Democracy in Great Britain, 2011-2012 (N=899)

Determinant	Log odds ratio	standard error	Wald-statistic	Df	P-value	Odds ratio
Constant	-2.46***	0.46	28.24	1	0.00	0.09
Demographic						
Gender (male: reference)						
Female	0.17	0.16	1.14	1	0.29	1.19
Age (18-34: reference)						
35-54	0.77***	0.20	14.62	1	0.00	2.16
55+	0.57**	0.21	7.49	1	0.00	1.76
Social class (A or B)						
C1 or C2	0.09	0.22	0.16	1	0.69	1.09
D or E	0.21	0.24	0.76	1	0.38	1.23
Political Interest and Knowledge						
Likely to vote (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.26	0.19	1.83	1	0.18	0.77
Interest (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.92***	0.25	13.44	1	0.00	0.40
Knowledge (no: reference)						
Yes	0.16	0.22	0.51	1	0.48	1.17
Knowledge of parliament (no: reference)						
Yes	0.14	0.22	0.43	1	0.51	1.15
Attitudes to Governing System						
Governing system works well (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.55***	0.18	9.63	1	0.00	0.58
Parliament holds government to account (no: reference)						
Yes	0.50**	0.18	7.70	1	0.01	1.65
Parliament encourages public involvement (no: reference)						
Yes	0.17	0.18	0.92	1	0.34	1.19
Parliament is essential to democracy (no: reference)						
Yes	0.09	0.21	0.20	1	0.66	1.10
Parliament debates matter (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.07	0.18	0.14	1	0.71	0.93
Engagement and Efficacy						
Involvement in politics could change the way country run (no: reference)						
Yes	0.28	0.17	2.67	1	0.10	1.33
Involvement in local community could change the way area is run (no: reference)						
Yes	0.13	0.18	0.54	1	0.46	1.14
Have influence on decision of making in local area (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.22	0.20	1.24	1	0.27	0.80
Have influence on decision making in the country (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.39	0.24	2.67	1	0.10	0.67
Want involvement of decision of making in local area (no: reference)						
Yes	0.16	0.23	0.48	1	0.49	1.17
Want involvement of decision of making in the country (no: reference)						
Yes	0.31	0.23	1.80	1	0.18	1.36
Media: Influence and Readership						
Media influences how people vote (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.24	0.24	0.96	1	0.33	0.79
Media influences the topics politicians' debate (no: reference)						
Yes	0.34	0.21	2.66	1	0.10	1.40
Media influences the decisions politicians make (no: reference)						
Yes	-0.01	0.19	0.00	1	0.98	0.99
Print media readership (Broadsheet readers only: reference)						
Tabloid readers only						
	1.30***	0.26	24.77	1	0.00	3.68
Both	0.89***	0.31	8.22	1	0.00	2.43
Local newspaper or other readers only						
	1.00***	0.32	9.96	1	0.00	2.72
None	0.56*	0.29	3.62	1	0.06	1.75
Greater use of direct democracy						
Support more direct democracy (no: reference)						
Yes	0.78***	0.22	12.85	1	0.00	2.18

*0.10>p ≥0.05; **0.05>p ≥0.01; ***p<0.01; Df: degrees of freedom; Nagelkerke R square: 0.19; -2loglikelihood: 1042.39

Table 3: Responses (%) on sunshine items in Britain, 2011-12

SUNSHINE DEMOCRACY QUESTIONS									
	Elected politicians Need to debate Before making decisions		Openness and willingness to compromise are important to politics		Important differences exists between running a government and business		Important for elected politicians to decide rather than leaving it to experts		
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
SA	29.9	364	49.7	604	26.4	321	31.3	380	
PA	37.8	460	26.6	324	37.9	461	33.7	410	
PD	3.6	44	1.6	20	3.0	36	3.9	48	
SD	1.9	23	0.7	8	1.2	14	1.2	15	
NA/ND	21.5	261	16.7	203	25.2	306	24.2	294	
DK	5.3	64	4.7	57	6.4	78	5.7	69	
Total	100.0	1216	100.0	1216	100.0	1216	100.0	1216	

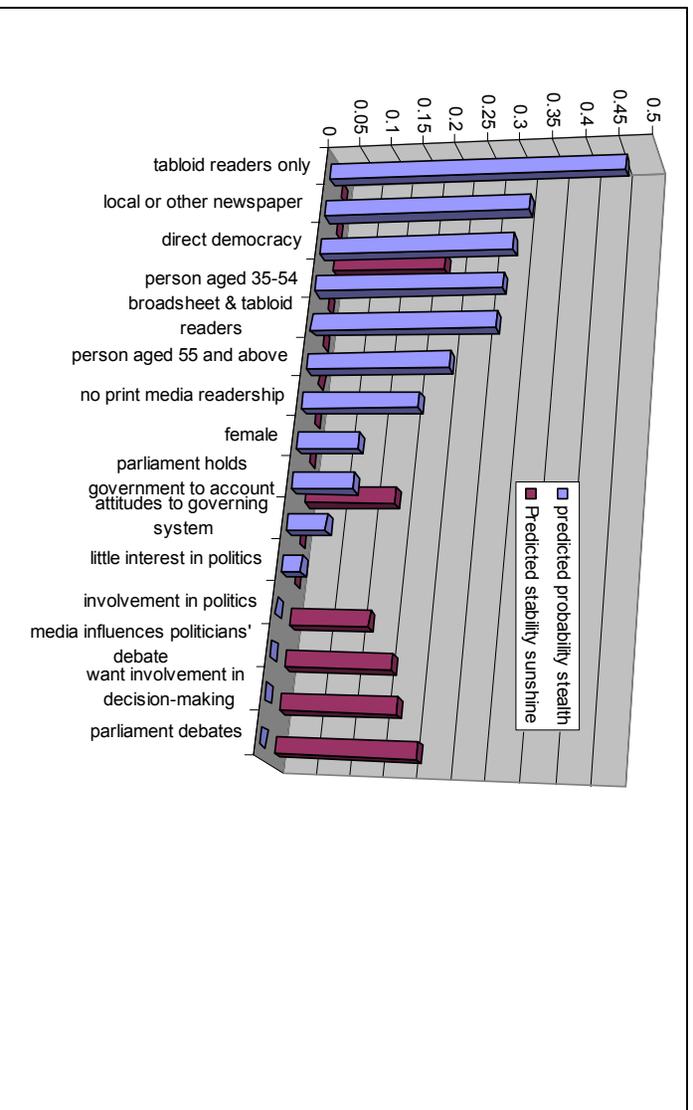
Key: SA: strongly agree; PA: partly agree; PD: partly disagree; SD: strongly disagree; NA/ND: Neither agree nor disagree
DK: Don't know

Table 4: Classification of Political Reform Ideas from Citizens

Reform Idea	Numbers of Mentions (%)
Change processes of politics to make it more accountable and to ensure that what is promised is delivered	128 (28)
Better education, information exchange and less spin in communication	68 (15)
Give citizens more of say (especially through referendums)	73 (16)
Deal with issues that are of concern	58 (13)
Improve representativeness and accessibility of MPs	43 (9)
Institutional changes to parliament, constitution reform or changes to electoral system	41 (9)
Get more experts involved in decision-making	15 (3)
Create a more positive media environment for politics	13 (3)
Give local communities more of a say	7 (-)
Get politicians to be more normal	4 (-)

Table 5	Reform preferences for improving politics	
	Which of the following changes do you think would improve the British political system the most? Please pick up to three.	%
	Make politics more transparent so that it is easier to follow	48
	Make politicians more accountable for their performance between elections	39
	Better information and education about politics for all citizens	32
	Less 'spin' in political communication	26
	Give citizens more of a say (e.g. more referendums, more consultation)	29
	Get experts more involved in decision-making	17
	More positive media coverage of politics	12
	Constitutional changes (e.g. an elected House of Lords, a different voting system)	8
	More people like me as MPs	6
	None of these	11

Source: Data from Hansard Society (2013) *Audit of Political Engagement*



Peer Review

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