the populist signal

WHY POLITICS AND DEMOCRACY NEED TO CHANGE

CLAUDIA CHWALISZ

THE POPULIST SIGNAL

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CONTENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This publication is about the turbulent political scene unfolding in Britain and across western Europe. About the rise of populists as a product of disillusionment with political parties and elections, of people feeling like they do not have a voice in the decisions being taken by those who are meant to represent them. It focuses not on the economic and cultural determinants of populism, but on why large swathes of voters feel that politics does not work and how this fuels support for insurgent parties and actors.

The social and economic shifts of the past few decades have hardened the deeply held scepticism and distrust of 'the establishment'. The ability of policies devised by national governments to achieve their desired aims has been diminished by factors beyond national borders. In an age of historically low party membership, party identification, voter volatility, rising abstentionism and greater individualism, mainstream parties are struggling to be representative. In the 2015 British election, only 25 per cent of the total electorate voted Conservative and 20 per cent Labour. This means that once again the biggest party was non-voters, comprising 34 per cent of those eligible to vote.

A change in values has exacerbated resentment towards the mainstream elite. Older generations grew up in a society that was mainly white, less educated, with strict rules about sex, marriage, speech and morals. They had confidence in collective organisations such as

political parties and trade unions to represent their interests. With the changing face of society towards greater diversity, openness to the world, and individualism, as well as the decline of these collective institutions, older citizens are left alienated. On the other hand, the young, creative, entrepreneurial generation feels equally estranged from traditionally closed, top-down, leader-driven politics.

Technology has been a catalyst as well as a driver of this value change. It has altered power relationships. New forms of politics have emerged, changing the way political movements can engage with their members and creating new expressions of identity. It has also exposed a whole series of political scandals, previously undetected, fuelling distrust as the stream of discoveries about elites abusing privileges continues to flow.

These feelings of political disaffection, increasingly felt by everybody, are particularly strong amongst populist party supporters. As the sentiment hardens amongst the general population, there is a danger that the shift away from mainstream actors will continue.

Drawing on new survey data in the UK, as well as interviews and case studies, the publication shows that people are concerned with the process of politics, not merely its performance, and that they have a genuine desire for greater political participation in the decision-making process. Innovative forums – such as citizens' assemblies, the use of drawing participants by lot, deliberation and online engagement – allow political institutions to involve citizens in making the decisions that affect them. This is a crucial step in the move away from a classic, hierarchical 19th century representative democracy towards a decentralised 21st century deliberative democracy. People demand a more engaging, open, digital society. New institutions that empower the individual to contribute and collaborate with others are badly needed.

These new forms of political engagement should not feel like a threat to formal systems of government, but as much-needed additions that enrich democracy. The parties that ignore these trends are at risk of entering existential defeat, swept away by the turbulent trends of populism, individualism and further economic, social and technological change.

INTRODUCTION

The shock reverberated as David Dimbleby announced the exit poll at 10pm on 7 May. As the results poured in over the course of the night, it became clear that the pollsters, commentators and academics, confidently predicting a hung parliament for months, were utterly wrong. There was no hung parliament. The Conservatives were not only the biggest party; they had a majority. While the Conservative victory is remarkable, a closer look at the results highlights the fundamental transformation of British politics. A regional divide has never been clearer. The Scottish National party (SNP) won almost every seat in Scotland. Labour held on to its northern heartlands and urban centres, and remains the largest party in Wales. The Democratic Unionist party (DUP) continue to be the largest party in Northern Ireland. And the Conservatives dominated in England, particularly in southern England outside of London, where Labour's position has sunk back to the lows of the 1980s. The two-party system has morphed into a multi-party democracy, a trend which has been underway, unevenly at times, since 1974, producing skewed electoral results. Although it only won a single seat, the populist United Kingdom Independent party (Ukip) played a disruptive role, coming second in over 100 seats and third in terms of vote share with almost 4 million votes. The Green party also saw its most successful election ever, quadrupling its votes to over 1.1 million.

Ukip and the Greens are only considered 'fringe' parties because of the electoral system; together they garnered 5 million votes – almost half of the Conservatives' 11.3 million. Yet the biggest party was non-voters, comprising 34 per cent of the electorate.

In many ways, the UK's political scene has come to increasingly resemble the fragmented European landscape. Smaller parties are eating into the core vote of Labour and the Tories, who, once upon a time, comfortably shared up to 90 per cent of the vote throughout most of the postwar period. In the 2015 election, they only won 67 per cent of the vote between them, and only 45 per cent of all voters. Previously unimaginable, Britons witnessed a seven-way leaders' debate. Populists are thriving off anger and resentment against the ruling political class. The BBC Question Time special on 30 April, forcing David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg – the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders respectively – to face the electorate, unleashed the audience's rage and resentment towards all three. None was left unscathed by their gruelling attacks. British politics has become more volatile and fragmented. Like elsewhere in Europe, this kaleidoscope politics appears to be a new norm rather than a passing phase.

Arguably, the Westminster shake up is a welcome development. Political parties no longer have the option of being complacent. Recent shifts in party membership figures reflect this further. The latest parliamentary briefing on party membership by Keen (2015) indicates that since 1983, membership of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties has fallen from 3.8 per cent to a mere one per cent of the total population. Since 2010, those numbers have remained relatively stable: the Conservatives have gained about 10,000 while Labour has gained around 4,000. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, have lost more than 20,000 members.[1]

It is the smaller parties that have made startling leaps and bounds over the past five years, more precisely over the past two years. The Green party's numbers more than quadrupled, surging from 13,000 members to over 55,000, many of whom are disillusioned Liberal Democrats, as well as previous Labour supporters

and non-voters (Dennison, 2015). The SNP's story is even more astounding. From 16,000 members in 2010, they have become the third largest party with around 110,000 members. Ukip, starting from a similar point with 15,000, has more than doubled to over 40,000 members – putting it neck and neck with the Liberal Democrats. While the SNP's rise has knocked out Scottish Labour, Ukip's newfound members have overwhelmingly come from 2010 Conservative voters – a substantial number of whom voted Labour in 2005 (Evans and Mellon, 2015).

Swings from party to party are normal between elections. But the SNP's meteoric rise and its complete and utter decimation of Scottish Labour in a Westminster election is unprecedented. Before the independence referendum in September 2014, the SNP was hovering around 30 per cent of support in Scotland. Yet 50 per cent of Scots voted for the party on 7 May. The SNP took 56 seats, up from six in 2010. Labour, which held 42 per cent of the Scottish vote at the last general election, received a mere 24 per cent this time, clinging on to one seat.

The election of one Ukip MP to Westminster is another historic moment, even if it is less than some initial predictions by pundits. After becoming the largest party in the European parliament elections last year, Ukip's euphoria was short-lived. The party's leader, Nigel Farage, lost in South Thanet, resigned and then 'unresigned' three days later. That being said, the party increased its national share of the vote from 3.2 to 12.6 per cent in five years and came second in 120 seats. Only the perversities of the first-past-the-post system prevented Ukip from taking over 80 seats, which would have been the case under a proportional representation system. (It would have replaced the SNP as the third largest party, whose cohort would have shrank to 31. The Greens would have had 24 seats instead of one, and the Liberal Democrats 51 instead of eight. The Conservatives and Labour would have lost seats, 89 and 33 respectively.) Depending on if the party resists disintegration from infighting, UKIP will either fall into political irrelevance or continue to cause disruption – potentially in a radical way – to

Britain's party system in 2020. Its greatest damage was in Labour heartlands in this election. In the Midlands and the north, the biggest share of Labour's 2010 vote went to Ukip; if the party had managed to keep even a small number of these voters, they would have kept or held 13 seats which they lost to the Conservatives (Survation, 2015).

Regardless, the party's impact on the nature of British politics has already been felt. Both the Conservatives and Labour have moved towards a harsher stance on immigration. David Cameron's promise to hold an in-out referendum on EU membership was interpreted by some as an attempt to halt Ukip's rise. In his first post-election speech, Cameron emphasised that the referendum on Britain's future in Europe is on. Even if a majority vote to stay in the EU, the campaign could tear the Conservatives apart, fuelling Ukip's fire for a second round of political destruction. It could leave the Tories equally vulnerable as Labour in 2020, as Ukip came second in many southern seats as well.

This fragmentation of the political system and rise of populist actors sends us an important signal about the health of representative democracy today. For a long time, commentators, politicians and even academics rehearsed the line that declining voter turnout and party membership figures were purely down to apathy and disinterest; people don't care about politics. What has crystallised in this electoral period is precisely the opposite. As Jonathan Freedland of the *Guardian* wrote after the BBC Question Time special: "However watchful and untrusting voters might be, they are also intensely, even ruthlessly engaged." Voters are not indifferent; they are angry.

POPULISM IN AN AGE OF DEMOCRATIC DISCONTENT

This publication is about the turbulent political scene unfolding in Britain and across western Europe; about the rise of populist parties as a product of disillusionment with political parties and elections, of people feeling like they do not have a voice in the decisions being

taken by those who are meant to represent them. Of course, it must be recognised that in many ways, a certain level of disillusionment with politics and distrust of members of parliament has always existed (Hansard Society, 2014; Michels, 1915; Follett, 1918). Demands for constitutional change, for the expansion of political rights, for more direct democracy have been present since the establishment of our contemporary systems of representative democracy in the late 18th century. And there has certainly been a democratic evolution over time – the importance of universal suffrage, female representation, the decline of religious influence in state affairs, and the expansion of gay rights is not to be underestimated.

Yet the social and economic shifts of the past few decades have deepened and hardened the deeply held scepticism and distrust in 'the establishment'. Whereas in 1986, one in 10 Britons said they almost never trusted the government, that figure has now risen to one in three (Park *et al.*, 2012). New actors and catalysts for democratic stress are part of the 21st century picture. The development of the world economy has been an extraordinary achievement, but not without challenges. The largely unquestioning embrace of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s created a divide between the 'winners' and 'losers' of globalisation. The previous worker-owner divide was undermined as the working class became socially fragmented with the decline of trade unions.

Alongside the downfall of collective organisations and institutions has been the growing individualisation of Europe's people. With the rise in global trade and competition, Europe's relatively privileged place in the world has shrunk. The ability of national socioeconomic policies to achieve their desired aims has been diminished by factors beyond national borders. Inequality within developed countries has been rising. Greater international mobility has been accompanied by an embrace of multiculturalism. A generational divide has grown. In place of the hierarchical, top-down ways of traditional politics, young people in particular seek open, dynamic and emotionally engaging relationships with each other, with business and with political parties and movements (see, for example, Gould, 2015).

Most European countries experienced the rise of populist (mostly rightwing) parties at the start of this transformative period in the 1990s, a reaction to the failure of mainstream political parties to adequately respond to the aforementioned economic and cultural changes. Political disillusionment led some sections of the electorate into apathy, choosing not to participate in politics at all. Others were attracted to new, radical alternatives, presented in the shape of populists promising simple, common sense solutions to the complex weave of society's problems (McDonnell and Albertazzi, 2007).

While there is some debate about whether populism is an ideology or a style, many definitions tend to share a few common traits. Populists tend to be defined by their claim to represent the "general will of the people" (Mudde, 2004), offering a "politics of redemption" in sharp contrast to the establishment's "politics of pragmatism" (Canovan, 1999). It is a thin-centred "ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice" (Mudde and Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012; McDonnell and Albertazzi, 2007). Amongst rightwing populists, the 'others' are usually seen as immigrants, minorities and Muslims, who do not belong to the national community sharing racial and cultural attributes. On the left, the community tends to be framed in socioeconomic terms; populists claim to champion the 'underdogs' against discrimination by a corrupt establishment.

The spread of populism in western Europe has been partially aided by the prevalence of proportional representation systems, providing an easier entry into politics for new parties. Populists were able to gain an electoral foothold in many countries. Britain's first-past-the-post system helped to keep the far right British National party (BNP) on the very fringes of the UK's politics. It was the introduction of new electoral systems – for the Greater London assembly (GLA) and European elections – which gave the party an unprecedented degree of electoral representation in 2008–9 with a seat on the GLA and two in the European parliament.

The overwhelming analysis for explaining populist success was the "cartel party" thesis, which argues that mainstream parties took to functioning like cartels by using state resources to limit political competition and safeguard electoral victory (Katz and Mair, 1995; Katz and Mair, 2009). Britain was not unique in having a main centre-right and centre-left party which took turns in government, sharing 80 to 95 per cent of the combined vote; this was a phenomenon across much of western Europe. In reaction to the lack of true political choice, populist parties emerged, campaigning on the issues that were ignored by the mainstream – typically a platform based on an anti-immigrant, anti-Islam, welfare chauvinist (a premise that taxes should be raised from all who work, but benefits should be for nationals only), anti-globalisation, and, above all, anti-establishment agenda. This helps explain why populist parties were receiving upwards of 20 per cent of support and even being part of government in countries that were both economically stagnating and economically performing. While the cartel party thesis was challenged by other academics and eventually turned into a narrative about a democratic void (Mair, 2013), it still holds some relevance in explaining the burst of rightwing populist success.

Today the picture is slightly more complex, as populist parties on both the right and the left have become serious challengers to the establishment, forming governments and draining ever more support from the centrists. The populist surge in the 1990s highlights that economic factors alone are not the driving forces of discontent. Nonetheless, the financial crisis of 2008 and the European sovereign debt crisis of 2010 have undoubtedly brought a fresh wave of economic dislocation and a renewed challenge to established political parties. The uniting force amongst them is a challenge to 'politics-as-usual'. In an age of historically low party membership, party identification, voter volatility, rising abstentionism, and greater individualism, parties are no longer representative of the individuals they still claim to represent (Mair, 2013). Heightened by the dramatic mediatisation phenomenon, whereby politicians and governments professionalise their communications (Kriesi, 2014),

the public is left with a craving for less 'spin' (Hansard Society, 2014; see also Figure 1.1).

UNDERSTANDING THE POPULIST SIGNAL

The key question is what signal does populism send about the health of modern day governance and political representation? Some academics consider populism as a political pathology, seeking to construct a political system that counters the principles of liberal democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008; Alonso *et al.*, 2011; Taggart, 2002; Müller, 2014). They argue that populists are anti-pluralist and thus anti-liberal. They aim to dismantle checks and balances, ultimately to establish a regime where political power is in the hands of the 'unified' people rather than in those of corrupt, elected elites and unelected, technocratic institutions. However, while populism's relationship with liberal democracy is ambivalent, simply dismissing populists as bad or illegitimate is problematic. Liberal democracy is by no means a perfect system; its constant evolution from a system dominated by wealthy, white men indicates that pressures and criticisms of the status quo are a vital part of progress. In this sense, populism can be seen as both a threat and a corrective to democracy (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). The threat, which should not be overlooked, comes from provoking hyperbolic and divisive political debates, proposing simplistic solutions for complex issues such as immigration, Europe and welfare, pressuring the mainstream to react and adapt, and creating expectations that cannot then be met. However, populism can also be seen as a corrective if we view it as a warning signal to parties and politicians to revisit their approaches to governance and political representation. Populists ask legitimate questions about the state of democracy, which mainstream actors should answer from their own point of view.

The newest group of populist parties in the centre and on the left, such as Italy's Five Star Movement, Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, have been able to grow by radically altering the traditional,

hierarchical party structure in a way that accommodates more voices. The use of technology, online voting on internal party matters and open primaries represent just a few of the ways that they have managed to engage a disillusioned electorate. It remains to be seen whether the open, decentralised methods of these new parties can be reconciled with the compromise required of governing. This should not deter mainstream parties from trying. Recent research has shown that people are concerned with the *process* of politics, not just its output (Stoker, 2013; Webb, 2013). In this sense, populist parties will not collapse simply by the pursuit of a certain policy agenda. If anything, research has shown that when mainstream parties adopt populist rhetoric or proposals, especially on immigration, this only strengthens the populists by legitimising their discourse and increasing issue salience (Mudde, 2011; Bale 2003). On its own, it is a losing strategy as the votes that are potentially won by shifting closer to the populist position are balanced by those lost from more moderate voters, alienated by a move from the centre (Akkerman, 2012).

In a paper with Anthony Painter on *Democratic Stress, the Populist Signal and Extremist Threat* (2013), we proposed that a mainstream response to populism should entail a new statecraft and building a "contact democracy". Statecraft is the sense of combining party management, developing a winning electoral strategy, political argument hegemony and governing competence, drawing on Bulpitt's (2006) original definition and Buller and James' updated analysis (2012). An important facet of this approach is its focus on public policy, specifically in the areas of jobs, welfare and housing. Complementing the elite-driven change should be a new contact democracy – a bottom-up focus on grassroots action and community organising, bringing communities closer together. The notion of contact democracy stems from three seminal studies – by Zick, Kupper and Hovermann (2011), Lennox (2012), and Sturgis, Brunton-Smith, Kuha and Jackson (2013) – on ethnic diversity and social cohesion. Each shows compelling evidence that racial and ethnic diversity reduces prejudice and stereotyping when individuals of various ethnic groups directly interact with one another.

Whilst these congruent strategies remain valid today, the following report builds further on the idea of contact democracy. To complement community-level campaigns and organisations, a more systemic approach is required to entrench more equal citizen engagement and rebalance power between elected and non-elected citizens. That is not to say that the economic and socio-cultural drivers of populism (concerns about immigration, Europe, welfare and inequality) can be ignored. Much work has already been done, and must continue, on how to address these issues. Drawing on new survey data, interviews and case studies, this pamphlet will explore three key questions related to how to address the *political* drivers of populism:

- How to engage people again in a meaningful political project?
- Do we need more decentralisation and new forms of institution-building?
- And do we need more direct democracy?

HOW DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS CAN TEMPER AN AGE OF DISCONTENT

The analysis concentrates largely on democratic innovations: "institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process" (Smith, 2009). The public policy changes – which are undeniably necessary – are only part of the long-term solution to alleviating democratic malaise. Making politicians more accountable and giving citizens more of a say in how decisions are made are the two top democratic reforms favoured by the public to improve the system (Hansard Society, 2014; see Figure 1.1). They go hand in hand. The aim is not *just* about making better or more efficient policies (although the potential for this exists too), but about finding new ways to truly include the voices of marginalised groups and individuals into political debate on a regular and recurring basis. A healthy democracy should be based on the premise that individuals have confidence in the system to represent their interests.

Other 2

Use lotteries to directly involve ordinary citizens in political decision-making 5

Democratically elect members of the House of Lords 12

More positive media coverage of politics 11

Have MPs elected on a more proportional voting system 18

Better information and education about politics for all citizens 26

Make politics more visible and open 26

More MPs with a background similar to the people they represent 29

Less 'spin' in political communication 31

Give citizens more of a say in how decisions are made 33

Make politicians more accountable 41

Figure 1.1   Favoured democratic reforms to the British political system in 2015. Which of the following changes do you think would improve the British political system most?

The analysis in this publication focuses on Great Britain. The opening section lays out the current political context, focusing on the long-term trends in the public's perception of democratic processes. Large swathes of voters no longer feel that traditional politics represents or works for them, undermining community cohesion and political stability. Furthermore, the variation in electoral representation across the country makes it difficult to imagine how the current constitutional arrangements are sustainable. Original polling data, questioning the public on their openness to participating in certain democratic innovations involving the use of drawing participants by lot, deliberation and online engagement is presented and analysed thereafter. One element of this relates to the public's perceptions about a constitutional convention, where ordinary citizens would have a say in deciding future changes to the UK's division of power. It is complemented by a series of case studies from Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Canada and Australia to highlight some of the new ways that the nature of politics is slowly changing across the world. As the polling data and case studies indicate, the political as well as democratic rewards are there to be reaped by finding new ways of reconnecting people with politics.

NOTE

1. These figures reflect the pre-election landscape. After the election, party membership of all the parties spiked, which is a regular post-election occurrence.

THE POLITICAL DRIVERS OF POPULISM

A deep sense of political alienation is a fertile breeding ground for populists. While a debate flares on whether or not we are living in a time of 'anti-politics' (Painter, 2014; Wood, 2014), the contention comes down to vocabulary over substance. In effect, those on both sides agree that the flourishing of nationalisms across the UK and Europe, the success of Ukip and other rightwing populist parties, and the struggle of mainstream parties everywhere reflect a highly political moment in history. All of these simultaneous phenomena reveal an anxious electorate, frustrated with the dilapidated institutions of a hierarchical, top-down administrative elite. The Conservative victory should not distract from the fact that it was more a case of the other side losing rather than a heroic win, much like the Swedish elections last year and, most likely, the Danish ones this autumn. In all of these cases, the 'winning party' barely increased its share of the vote since the last election, if at all. They may have managed to get away less scathed by populists than their opponents, but not without some cuts and bruises too.

Though their battle lines are at opposite ends of the front, and they are very different parties, Ukip and the SNP share a common enemy: Westminster. Both parties have been able to make the Conservatives and Labour bleed (evidently the latter more so than

the former) through vehement attacks on an estranged elite, living in a London bubble unconcerned with 'the people'. They have tapped into a growing feeling, to a certain extent justifiably, that political elites simply do not understand or care to understand the everyday experience of the population. Only the populists and nationalists have their 'true' interests at heart. The SNP claims to speak for all Scots, painting an image of a leftwing, socially just nation unfairly ruled by a rightwing government hundreds of miles away. South of the border, Ukip denounces the Westminster establishment for 'selling out' the UK to Brussels, letting the EU dictate its rules, especially on immigration. It asserts itself as the true protector of British sovereignty. Both attack the status quo, the establishment, politics as usual. But both parties have been around for decades – the SNP since 1934 and Ukip since 1993 – with little national success. Much larger, simultaneous trends are converging, propagating their recent accomplishments. Profound political alienation, changing values, structural economic change and technology have together altered the political landscape. The longer mainstream parties cover their eyes and ignore these shifts, the longer populists and new political movements will thrive.

DEEPENING POLITICAL DISAFFECTION

As Robert Michels (1915) argued long ago, political parties have never been loved by the public, their alleged susceptibility to oligarchy and self-serving corruption provoking disdain. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the picture has been one of 'parties in crisis'. Levels of party membership and affiliation have been dwindling, voting is more volatile, the historical links between parties and interest groups are shrinking in their intensity, quantity and political significance, and parties have transformed from mass citizen organisations into state agencies. The gap between what the democratic ideal has promised and what has been delivered is wide. Yet one can contend that the most recent series of crises and scandals have left the

public even more disillusioned than in the past. Confidence in formal politics and its practice has been on the decline.

Jennings, Stoker, Clarke and Moss (2014) highlight how the public's disappointment with politics has expanded since 1944 (see Figure 2.1). The proportion of the population who believe that politicians put their own interests above their country has grown from 35 to 48 per cent. Only one in 10 people thinks the opposite. By considering figures from 1972, roughly halfway between the two data points, they show that public opinion moved only slightly between 1944 and 1972, diving deeply since then. Their data also give a clue as to why Ukip is winning over voters who traditionally supported either one of the two main parties. Ukip voters are steadfastly more negative than the general public. Whereas 48 per cent of people believe that British politicians are merely out for themselves, this jumps to 74 per cent amongst Ukip voters. A mere three per cent believe they are out to do the best for the country.

This anger towards the establishment has been interpreted in various ways. Mainstream party activists and commentators have been quick to dismiss it, blaming austerity, inequality, immigration,
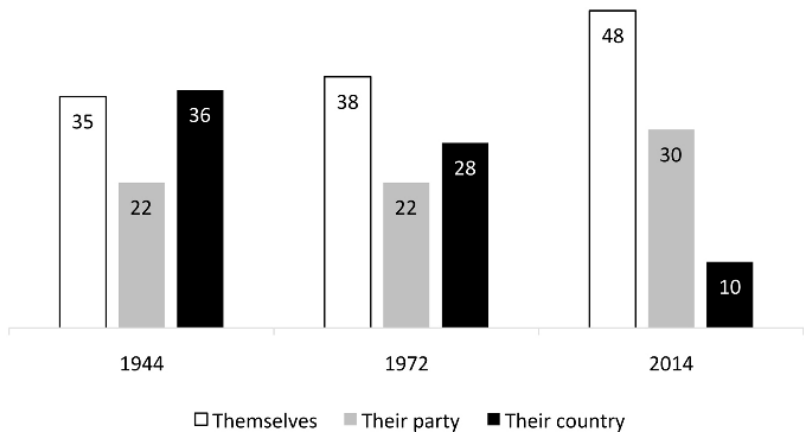
Figure 2.1   Increasing political disaffection since 1944. Do you think that British politicians are out merely for themselves, for their party, or to do the best for their country? *Source*: 1944 and 1972 results from Gallup, 2014 results from YouGov.
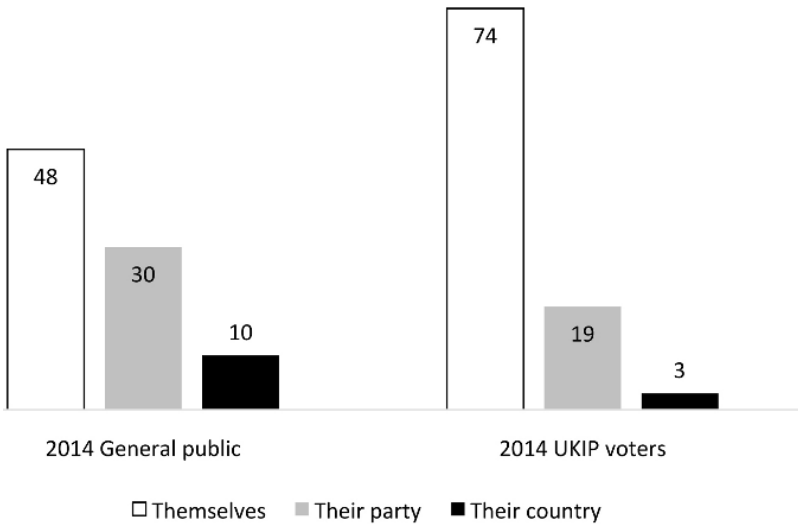
Figure 2.2   Heightened political disaffection amongst UKIP voters. Do you think that British politicians are out merely for themselves, for their party, or to do the best for their country? *Source*: YouGov.

Europe, the cost of living, taxes, a forgotten middle class, regional imbalances and other specific topics. While there is no doubt that these issues are also important to voters, it does not mean that policy solutions are the key to resolving anger directed at Westminster. A closer look at Jennings *et al.*'s findings indicates that Ukip voters are driven by political disenchantment to the same extent as their opposition to immigration or the EU. There have been competing narratives as to the party's support base; a divide has emerged on whether Labour or the Conservatives need to worry most about Ukip's rise. Most commentators seem to agree that Ukip voters tend to be older, male, more working class and less likely to have a university degree. The point of contention is whether working-class defection to Ukip comes from Labour or Conservative working-class voters. Ford and Goodwin's (2014a) narrative in *Revolt on the Right* tells a story of a group of voters "left behind" in Britain's rapid socioeconomic transformation, led by an out-of-touch political and economic elite. Yet 52 per cent of Ukip voters in the 2014

European elections reported voting Conservative in 2010, while only 15 per cent were former Labour voters (Ashcroft Polls, 2014).

Evans and Mellon (2015) provide a compelling explanation for these conflicting analyses. Their argument is about sequencing: while most Ukip supporters had indeed voted Conservative in 2010, going back another five years shows that many of those same voters had defected from Labour since the 2005 election. With Labour's embrace of neoliberalism, pro-Europeanism and open stance on immigration, many of the party's former core voters were alienated a long time before they joined Ukip. Before the populist party became seen as any sort of serious electoral contender, a dissatisfied electorate faced the choice of switching to the Conservatives to satisfy their Euroscepticism or anti-immigrant stance. After half a decade in power, however, the Tories have been involved in the EU project to a certain extent, with internal party rifts about an in-out referendum. The topic of EU free movement has become intertwined with the immigration debate, and the fact that the Conservatives failed spectacularly to meet their pledge of reducing numbers has left the public feeling distrustful. Even if around 80 percent of the public support Conservative proposals to reduce net immigration to "tens of thousands", around 80 per cent also believe that David Cameron is unlikely to deliver that pledge (Duffy and Frere-Smith, 2014). Seventy-two per cent of Britons believe the UK government has done a poor or very poor job of managing immigration (Transatlantic Trends, 2013). Let down by New Labour and now the Conservatives, Ukip has thus appealed to this alienated demographic, disappointed by both main parties of the political establishment.

So wouldn't just solving the immigration and Europe 'problems' tame the beast? Populists are wonderful at winning over a disillusioned public with simple solutions to complex problems. The stealth democracy argument, portraying a citizenry frustrated with the complexities of the political process, wanting democracy to be run by experts and functioning efficiently, would make it seem as though the right mix of policies would be enough to extinguish the populist flame (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). Yet Paul Webb's (2013)

recent research into testing this thesis in the UK throws up a few snags. A small minority of voters could indeed be considered stealth democrats, disgruntled and unwilling to participate in politics except for the direct form of referenda. However, 'dissatisfied democrats' are much more prevalent in Britain. They are unhappy with the current state of democracy, but are enthusiastic about all forms of political participation, which are more active and deliberative. It is why aping the populists' policies and rhetoric on the contentious issues such as Europe and immigration may seem like a winning strategy at first, but it is highly problematic and dangerous for numerous reasons. This strategy also underestimates the public's ability to comprehend complexity, as there is little evidence to suggest that most people expect simple solutions to their problems (Richards and Smith, 2015; Seymour, 2014).

Giving in to the demand for referenda as an appeasement tactic fails in the long term as well. As past experience shows – with the Scottish referendum being somewhat of an anomaly – both stealth and dissatisfied democrats tend to give up their opportunity to even vote. Switzerland is a case in point: referenda take place on a regular basis, yet populists have continued to thrive. Direct democracy in this instance is a key institutional opportunity structure, helping the rightwing populist Swiss People's party to mobilise its constituencies, promote its identity, set the political agenda and exert pressure on policy-making (Skenderovic, 2013). The reduction of multi-faceted issues into binary and polarising questions does not promote wider engagement with them, instead forcing voters to make a choice about what they think when they do not think.

Research also shows that reforms to the process of politics are much more likely to ease populists' establishment fury than traditional policy solutions (Stoker, 2013; Stoker and Evans, 2014; Hansard Society, 2014). In the latest Hansard Society Audit of Political Engagement (2014), only 58 out of 450 reform suggestions were directly related to specific policies, such as immigration, Europe or the NHS. The vast majority were "focused on issues of process in terms of how politics is conducted, who should be involved and

who should be involved and who should be more influential and who less influential". Original polling for this research points to the same conclusion. Making politicians more accountable and giving citizens more of a say in how decisions are made are the two most popular reform options (see Figure 1.1). It should not be surprising that more and more people are unhappy with the political system as it stands. In 2003, around 60 per cent of the population believed that the system of government needed significant improvement. In 2013, this figure rose to 69 per cent. Two years later, a poll commissioned for this research found the same. This latest survey is in line with Jennings *et al.*'s (2014) findings that Ukip voters are more disillusioned than the general public, with this negative sentiment climbing to 83 per cent amongst them. They are not alone in their heightened disapproval of the status quo; SNP and Welsh nationalist voters are even more disparaging, with 90 per cent reporting that the system could be improved a lot or needs a great deal of improvement (Figure 2.3). Labour voters seem to find themselves somewhere in between the average and the populists, with 73 per cent sharing this feeling. Unsurprisingly, only the Conservatives seem content with the status quo; four per cent think the system works extremely well
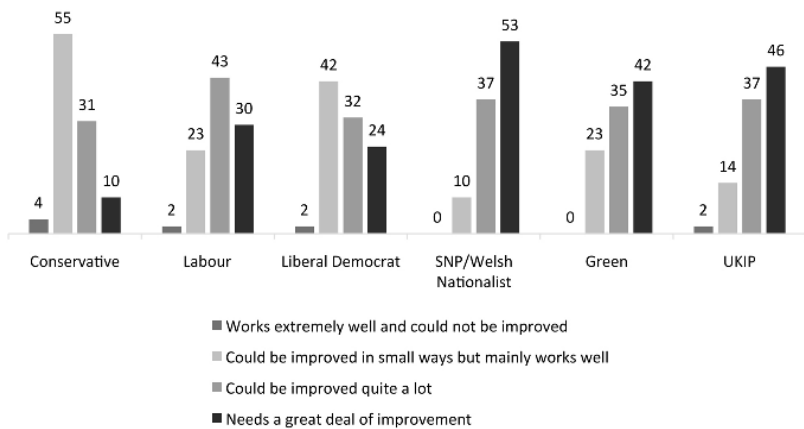
Figure 2.3   Views on the political system in Britain in 2015. Which of these statements best describes your opinion on the present system of governing Britain?
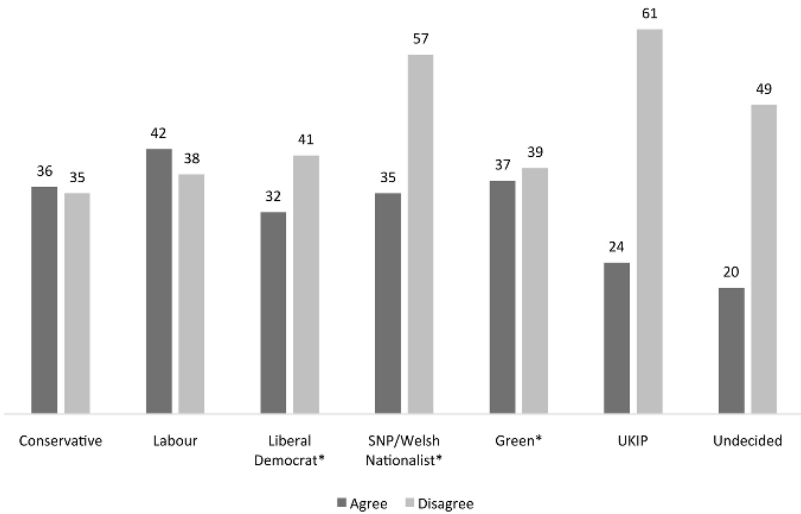
Figure 2.4   Feeling of political voice in political decision-making at local level in Great Britain in 2015. How strongly, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? I believe my voice counts in the decisions taken by local politicians.

as it is. A further 55 per cent believe it works mainly well, but could be improved in small ways.

A similar story unfolds when it comes to questions about political voice. When asked whether they believe that their voice counts in the decisions taken by local politicians, 44 per cent disagree. Amongst Ukip voters, this number shoots up to 61 per cent. Once again, the level of dissatisfaction is equally felt by SNP voters, 57 per cent of whom believe their voices are ignored (Figure 2.4). This is in stark contrast to Conservative and Labour voters, 35 and 38 per cent of whom respectively disagree. When the same question is asked in relation to the national level, the feeling of being voiceless intensifies – for everyone. Compared to 59 per cent of the overall population who feels like their voice does not count, the figure jumps to 70 per cent amongst Ukip voters and 68 per cent amongst SNP voters. In this case, only the Greens feel even more left out of the national political conversation, with 80 per cent feeling voiceless (Figure 2.5).[1] While Conservative and Labour voters
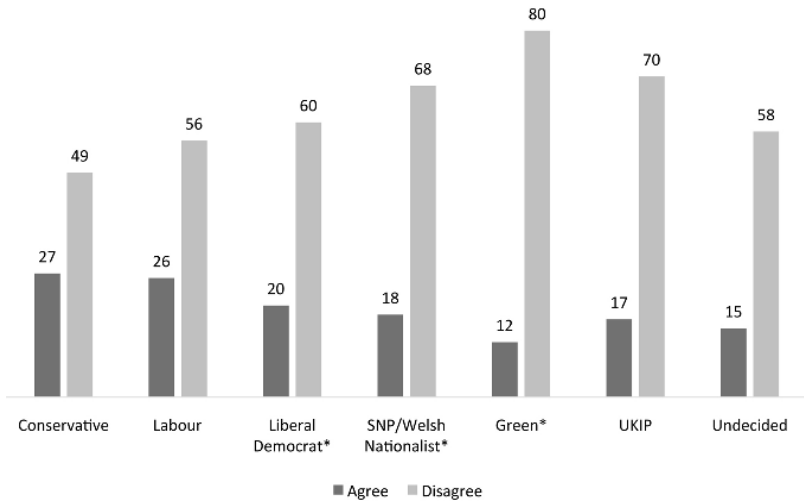
Figure 2.5   Feeling of political voice in political decision-making at national level in Great Britain in 2015. How strongly, if at all, do you agree with the following statements? I believe my voice counts in the decisions taken by national politicians.

are under the average, with 49 and 56 per cent respectively feeling discounted, these figures are still strikingly high for supporters of the two main parties. They may not feel as disenfranchised, but there is clearly a risk of these voters being tempted by populists in the future.

It is this mood of political alienation that Ukip and the SNP have seized with both hands. Both parties on the centre left and centre right have failed to grasp that it has been the central factor in their slow and steady demise. People have not suddenly become more rightwing in England, or more leftwing in Scotland. Instead, they have turned to parties who claim to offer them an alternative to the political class, portrayed as morally corrupt, self-serving and completely out-of-touch.

Labour has been losing Scotland – and 40 out of 48 seats they lost at the general election fell by huge margins – for at least a decade. While this is partially due to the SNP's claim of being the true leftwing voice in Scotland, it is rather the renewed civic engagement from the referendum campaign that has changed the

nature of politics in the nation. The campaign had drawn people into town halls, giving them a chance to deliberate about complex policy and outcomes and leaving them with an appetite to engage on many more levels. Turnout in Scotland was the highest in the country, up from 63 per cent in 2010 to 71.1 per cent in 2015, five per cent above the national average of 66.1 per cent. With the SNP pushing a strong participatory government agenda, driving forward democratic innovations to incorporate greater deliberation on policy, it is making a serious effort to engage on many levels and keep the momentum going.

Labour's troubles were by no means limited to Scotland, however. Its 'southern discomfort' – an insuperable weakness in southern England – was a hindrance in 2010 and is even more acute today (Diamond and Radice, 2011). The party is left with a single seat in the south-east (outside of London) and five in the south-west. It has become estranged from large parts of the Midlands and eastern England. Ukip's support surged in seats with large concentrations of poorer, white working-class English nationalists, "many of whom sympathised with Labour's economic message but not the people delivering it" (Ford, 2015). It will not be easy for the party to win them back as Ukip will continue to target working- class voters in its northern heartlands as part of its 2020 strategy aimed at Labour voters.

On the other hand, while the Conservatives fended off Labour in key marginals, their support fell in big cities, with large concentrations of ethnic minority and student voters, as well as the poorest parts of England and Wales (Ford, 2015). They did not do as well in London, Yorkshire and the north-west. The party will likely struggle to remain united over issues that cannot be traditionally identified as left-right, especially with the promised in-out referendum on the EU.

Deep political divides by geography, ethnicity and age are a huge challenge to both Labour and the Conservatives. It is hard to see how either party will build the coalitions of support needed to win through policy offers alone. There is an utter lack of recognition that reforming the practice of politics needs to be a priority in the

long-term battle against eroding public trust. As Simon Burrall of Involve outlined in his review of the party manifestos (2015):

> [Neither the Conservatives or Labour] has a coherent view on the role that citizens should play in a modern representative democracy. Both appear wedded to the idea that transferring powers between different levels of decision-makers will magically solve the problems the country faces. At a time of significant public disillusionment and disengagement from politics a much more coherent and realistic view is needed.

CHANGING VALUES: AN EMERGING GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

The second factor compounding resentment towards the mainstream elite is a change in values. While this transformation is ongoing and incomplete, the youngest generation of Britons has grown up in a fundamentally different environment to baby boomers and those who grew up in the postwar years. British people growing up in the 1960s and 1970s were raised in a rather different society – mostly white, where people had very little contact with immigrants or people from abroad. Ninety-five per cent of pensioners were identified as white in the latest British Social Attitudes Survey (2013), compared to less than 80 per cent of under-35s. They grew up during a time of highly polarising debate about immigration led by the National Front and Enoch Powell. Their view of Britain as a country that stands apart from Europe stems from their experiences of Britain as the heart of a once thriving Empire. They were raised with strict rules about sex, marriage, speech and expression. Britain's older generations have also been traditionally dependent on political parties and other collective institutions, such as trade unions and the church, as key interlocutors for their interests. As all of these institutions have declined in relevance, their representative function and role in shaping social identities has left some older citizens in retreat, disaffected and alienated (Webb, 2013; Mair, 2009).

In contrast, younger generations of Britons are much more at ease with cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. Socially mobile and well-integrated into European and international markets, they are also comfortable with globalisation and open borders. They are more educated, less rooted and more individualistic. Young people today are much less likely to feel as though they have 'inherited' their sense of identity from their parents, whether it comes to religion, class or education level. As Georgia Gould demonstrates in *Wasted: How Misunderstanding Britain's Youth Threatens Our Future* (2015), the country's youngest generation has grown up as "pragmatic individualists". They are creative, entrepreneurial, above all aspirational, and are political in their lifestyle choices rather than through formal politics.

Populist parties in Britain and elsewhere in Europe have reacted in two ways to this shift, squeezing the mainstream on either side. Rightwing populists like Ukip have fed off the antagonism to these societal changes, articulating the fears and anger of those who have been "left behind" (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). Distrusting of the political establishment, populists are fuelled by myths about immigration numbers and the negative impact of immigrants on the economy, as well as by a cultural argument that too much diversity creates social problems. While it must be acknowledged that concentrated influxes of migrants can create localised tensions, the proposition of leaving the EU and halting migration is extreme and economically damaging. All of the evidence suggests that the UK benefits from migration (Dustmann and Frattini, 2014), and research on contact theory highlights that neighbourhoods with greater diversity have greater social cohesion (Zick, Kupper and Hovermann, 2011; Lennox, 2012; Sturgis *et al.*, 2013).

On the other hand, leftwing and centrist populists like Podemos in Spain and the Five Star Movement in Italy have surged partly due to their innovative organisational styles that better reflect the interactive, hyper-connected nature of the 21st century. In some ways, they feel more like social movements than political parties. Rather than emphasising communication and spin, they attract new supporters through authenticity and an open, non-hierarchical culture

of engagement, more reflective of today's horizontal relationships. The SNP's move towards making participatory government a priority and incorporating deliberation into the policy-making process is also a significant shift towards a more open style of political decision-making. In an era where the nature of leadership has evolved from making decisions on behalf of people to initiating a process in consultation with them, the traditional, top-down style of mainstream political parties is incredibly outdated. Rightwing and leftwing populists alike rely on the public's underlying disillusionment with the establishment to flourish.

While they are not distinctively populist, the Greens are the party in England that have come closest to winning over this second demographic. (In Scotland, the civic strand of nationalism, tapping into a new identity, has united people of many varying groups, including the young). Electorally, the Green party is still swept aside in the margins. Yet its upsurge in popular support should not be overlooked. Rising from only one per cent of the vote in 2010 to 3.8 per cent in 2015 with over 1 million votes, it is enough of a shift to have impacted on Labour and Liberal Democrat support. According to YouGov's detailed profile, Green voters are likely to be younger, female, atheist, better-educated and more middle class than average (Kellner, 2014). They are characteristic of what Jeremy Cliffe has described as "the emerging cosmopolitan majority", reflective of the societal shift, "generation by generation, in a more relaxed direction" (2015). This group of voters will only become more important with time. Green voters' higher than average distrust in MPs and dissatisfaction with UK democracy is also striking and noteworthy. Only Ukip voters match their levels of disenchantment (Dennison, 2015). The flipside is that amongst all of the parties in Britain, Green supporters are by far the most politically active – they are the most likely to have donated money or paid a membership fee to a campaigning organisation or charity, to have created or signed a petition or e-petition, to have volunteered in community-based activities, and to have boycotted products for political, ethical or environmental reasons (see Figure 2.6). They are dissatisfied with
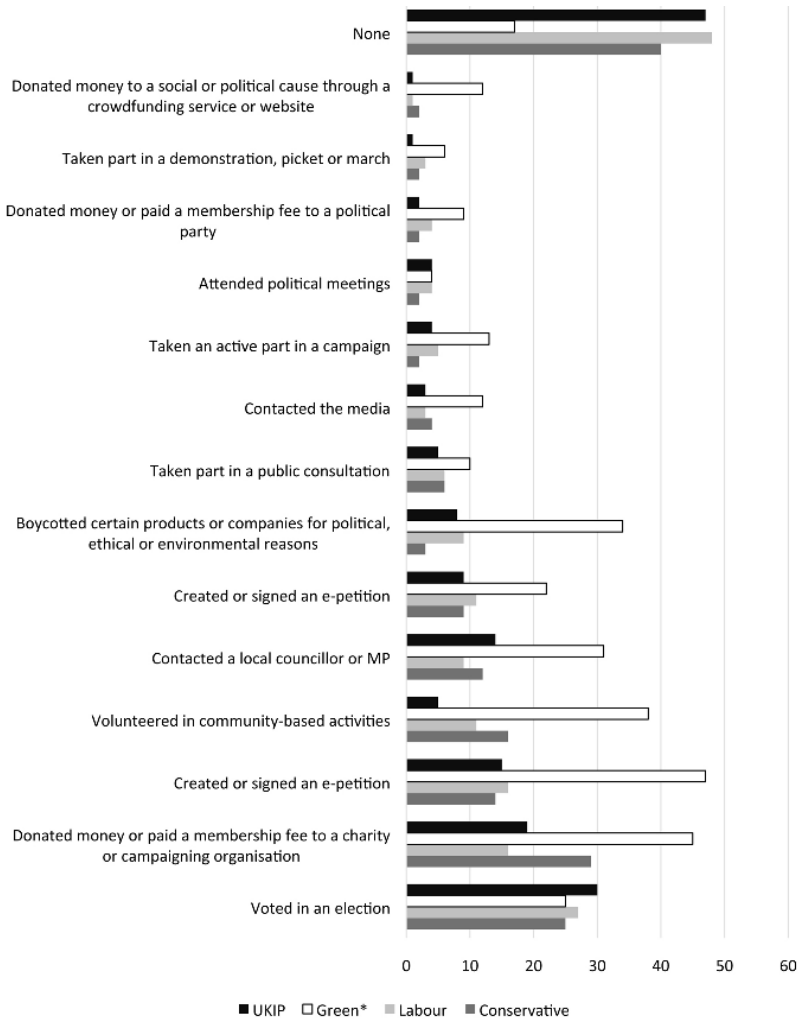
Figure 2.6   Engagement in civic and political activities by political party in Great Britain, 2015. In the last 12 months, have you done any of the following to influence decisions, laws or policies?

traditional politics, but by no means are they apolitical. It would not be surprising if this is how the Liberal Democrats aim to recover, by opening up to a new world of politics, as they did in the 1970s with a hyper-local 'pavement politics' agenda.

TECHNOLOGICAL DISRUPTION:
OLD AND NEW POWER

While it was first seen as merely a catalyst, today technology is a true driver of change. As Moses Naím lays out in *The End of Power*, its ubiquitous nature has completely altered the power relationships of the 20th century. With almost everyone having access to the internet, knowledge and power are diffuse; the concept of unassailable authority is a notion of the past. Technology empowers everyday individuals to live a self-directed life.

This hyper-individualism is complemented with the explosion of our social and political networks. New ways of doing politics have emerged. Podemos and the Five Star Movement may have had huge surges in membership, but it is the way in which they engage with them that differentiates them from traditional parties: open primaries with online voting; online discussions about policy topics; and meeting in 'circles' where everyone has an equal chance to get involved, regardless of their lack of former involvement in politics. Establishment outsiders and political novices are given the opportunity to play a leading role in shaping these movements. While people value their individualism, they are also eager and ready to collaborate. Jeremy Heimans and Henry Trimms describe this in a recent *Harvard Business Review* article about the tensions between old and new power:

> *Old power* works like a currency. It is held by few. Once gained, it is jealously guarded, and the powerful have a substantial store of it to spend. It is closed, inaccessible, and leader-driven. It downloads, and it captures. *New power* operates differently, like a current. It is made by many. It is open, participatory, and peer-driven. It uploads, and it distributes. Like water or electricity, it's most forceful when it surges. The goal with new power is not to hoard it but to channel it.

The challenge is how to balance old and new power to overcome the legitimacy crisis. Exacerbated by technology and values change, the same strategies that worked for mainstream parties before the turn of the century no longer hold. The Conservatives are threatened

by the politics of identity and a looming EU referendum. Meanwhile Labour's social base is cracking, with a disillusioned working class turning to Ukip, disenchanted young, educated people going over to the Greens, and Scots choosing the SNP for its grassroots engagement.

Besides altering the nature of relationships and creating new expressions of identity, technology has also exposed a whole host of political scandals, previously undetected in smoke-filled back rooms, where nobody was tweeting or taking photos on their mobile phones. Open data and demands for transparency have meant that politicians have less and less places to hide their dubious, or sometimes even deceitful or illegal activities. The Jimmy Savile affair, the MPs' expenses scandal, a range of banking scandals around mis-selling products or manipulating the Libor rate, the recent HSBC tax fraud disgrace, and serious questions around phone hacking and the tight links between the media and political elite are just a few examples (Richards and Smith, 2015). These revelations have further deepened the distrust in elected politicians to do their jobs morally and properly. Their exposure has highlighted that the system is in fact self-regulated, with MPs and bankers designing their own structures of accountability, which are clearly at odds with the public's ideas of what is reasonable behaviour. "This distrust was not the result of over-expectation or decadence, but a consequence of elites abusing their privileges" (Richards and Smith, 2015).

The nature of a first-past-the-post electoral system has thrown up a majority government in the UK. A weak majority government, with regionalised support. The notion of 'one nation' has never seemed further from the truth. Like other countries in Europe, the UK is in flux. Deeply rooted political alienation, changing social values, technology as a driver for change, an emerging individualism, and new forms of social networking altering traditional notions of identity pose a significant challenge to mainstream parties. Whereas the relationship between politicians and the people was once uni-dimensional, centred on voting, today it is more complex. People demand a more engaging, open, digital society that empowers the

individual to contribute and collaborate with others. The rise of populists during this time, seizing on the anti-politics-as-usual mood, should be a major signal to centrist parties about the state of representative democracy today. If they want to remain relevant during this existential time, they need to start by looking in the mirror and considering doing politics differently.

NOTE

1. In the Figures, where a political party has one asterisk beside its name, this means that the sampled base was small. It was large enough to be included as a point of comparison, though the numbers should be treated with some caution and not considered fully representative.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS: DELIBERATIVE MINI-PUBLICS, RANDOM SELECTION AND NEW FORMS OF DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

In considering the political drivers of populist support, the word that comes up again and again is voice. The previous section outlined the British political system's steady deterioration of representativeness, as parties have weakened and shed their traditional roles, leaving certain groups behind and alienating others by clinging to their archaic, elite-driven ways. If populism is to be seen as a corrective signal, it is imperative that the mainstream re-evaluates representative democracy for the 21st century. This means a debate that goes beyond considering specific policy reforms or tinkering with the institutions of representative democracy – elections, parties and parliaments. The situation prompts three related questions: about how to engage people again in a meaningful political project; about the need for more decentralisation and institutional renewal; and about the case for more direct democracy – defined here in the sense of participatory and deliberative democracy rather than purely referenda.

This section will outline the reasons for considering these questions as a response to our political crisis. It will then discuss original polling data, commissioned for this research, about public attitudes to democratic innovations that involve sortition (the drawing of participants by lot) and deliberation. The findings indicate that the

most politically disillusioned voters – those attracted to the populist rightwing Ukip and the nationalist leftwing SNP – are most open to participating in these types of initiatives, though the majority of those surveyed are supportive overall. The political and democratic implications of mainstream politicians embracing reform and letting go of some of their power are significant.

An interest in these questions is not altogether new. Democracy enthusiasts and political theorists have been debating different ways of involving people in politics to combat political alienation for decades (Fishkin, 1997; Delli Carpini *et al*., 2004; Patemen, 2012; Van Reybrouck, 2013; Mansbridge *et al.*, 2010). Jane Mansbridge's work, *Beyond Adversary Democracy,* first sparked discussion in 1983. She laid out two contrasting political traditions in the United States: adversary and unitary. The former is hostile, with opposing parties, while the latter is respectful, one where citizens consult one another. Benjamin Barber's *Strong Democracy* (1984) continued in this train of thought, distinguishing between characteristics which make democracy either strong or weak. He argues that conflictual, elected representative democracy should be characterised as weak; its roots in an individualistic perspective that emphasises rights over responsibilities diminishes the role of citizens in democratic governance. The concept of a strong democracy is developed further by Herman Daly, Thomas Prugh and Robert Costanza in *The Local Politics of Global Sustainability* (2000), where they describe it as follows:

> In a strong democracy, people – citizens – govern themselves to the greatest extent possible rather than delegate their power and responsibility to representatives acting in their names. Strong democracy does not mean politics as a way of life, as an all-consuming job, game, and a vocation, as it is for so many professional politicians. But it does mean politics (citizenship) as a way of living: an expected element of one's life. It is a prominent and natural role, such as that of "parent" or "neighbour."

By the late 1980s, James Fishkin launched the idea of a large-scale deliberative poll ahead of the upcoming presidential elections

in an *Atlantic Monthly* article, moving the topic beyond the ivory towers of academic research into the public sphere. He proposed for 1,500 citizens from all over the country to come together for two weeks, faced with all of the Democratic and Republican candidates. Each would have a chance to present their platform and ideas, with citizens asking questions throughout. The deliberation would be broadcast on national media for all citizens to follow and have the chance to become more informed. Fishkin's proposal stemmed directly from the original notion of *demokratia* as practiced in Ancient Athens until the late 18th century – participants would be randomly selected by lot, and they would be compensated to ensure diversity across age, gender, geography and socioeconomic status. It would be more than just an opinion poll, for that measures people's views on topics before they have had an opportunity to reflect. It would be a deliberative poll, as deliberation is the process that precedes choice. The literature on deliberative democracy exploded at this point, yet it would be almost 10 years before Fishkin's idea would be realised. After years of searching for funding and rejected proposals, it was finally held in 1996 ahead of Bill Clinton and Bob Dole's presidential battle. The 'before' and 'after' results were striking. The two week process of becoming exposed to all contradictory arguments made the participants informed and competent, refining their political judgement and raising awareness of the complexity of decision-making. It furthered the wave of interest in deliberative democratic thought, with more deliberative polling experiments taking place in the United States.

Jumping forward another decade, where did all of these discussions about 'democracy by the people, for the people' end up? Arguably the early 2000s marked the second wave of the deliberative democracy phase, as new variations of deliberative events started to take shape in the form of citizens' juries or citizens' assemblies. In more and more countries, representative democracy's 19th century structures are slowly being replaced and adapted to fit a radically different 21st century reality. Democratic experiments are taking place, from participatory budgeting, to citizens' juries on

an issue by issue basis, to citizen-driven constitutional conventions in Ireland and Iceland, as well as 'country cabinets' in Australia or 'citizens' cabinets' in Belgium. These democratic innovations, defined as "institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision-making process" (Smith 2009) highlight an increasing trend towards the use of new methods of citizen engagement that go beyond the traditional institutions of representative democracy (elections and consultations, such as focus groups, opinion polling or community meetings).

Three key principles differentiate them as democratic innovations – deliberation, random selection and direct influence. Deliberation can be defined as a rational communication process of weighing arguments and alternatives that precedes choice, or the forming of one's will. An individual is able to reflect on their own preferences, values and interests, and to ponder numerous solutions before settling upon one of them. During deliberation, information, which was incomplete at the start, becomes firmer. Individuals are able to gain new perspectives, not only in regards to potential solutions, but also in regards to their own preferences. As noted by Bernard Manin (1987): "It is not the kind of pedagogic model in which an enlightened elite is intended to bring the light of science down from its pulpit to a backward people. Rather, the people educate themselves." Studies have found that participating in a deliberative event stimulates political learning, encourages an informed opinion change and increases political efficacy (Suiter *et al.*, 2014; Grönlund *et al*., 2014).

The second complementary aspect of democratic innovations is the use of sortition, or random selection. Deliberation should be open to all individuals affected by a decision. Hence, citizens are quite often chosen by lot to participate; everybody has an equal chance of contributing. It is a neutral way of justly distributing political opportunities. Without the pressure of needing to be re-elected, citizens chosen through sortition do not face the same risks of corruption and electoral fervour; their focus is the common

good. Furthermore, a deliberative system works well if it includes a diversity of individuals, with a range of approaches, information and previously held positions (Sunstein, 2009).

Finally, most of these new forms of citizen involvement in decision-making offer people real influence. Citizens are not brought together to be consulted so that a little box for 'engagement' can be ticked, their proposals put to one side. It must be recognised that not every example described in this publication resulted in a positive outcome; sometimes recommendations were completely ignored. However, both the failed and successful examples offer insights into how this third component of democratic innovations can be designed to optimise outcomes. It requires elected politicians to recognise the merits of involving informed citizen opinions into their sphere of influence. It is imperative for citizens to be taken seriously, to be considered as having common sense and the ability to become informed and reflect.

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE UK

The polling survey[1] commissioned for this report explored the public's views on Britain's current political system, their feelings of voice and their openness to participating in a variety of deliberative innovations. This included citizens' assemblies at the local and national levels, as well as the idea of randomly selected independent councillors. With constitutional questions entering everyday conversations following the Scottish referendum, the survey also tested public support for a constitutional convention. The questions about local citizens' assemblies and the constitutional convention were done using a split sample, with half of the respondents being told that the results would be binding, meaning the results would need to be implemented, while the other half were told that the outcome would be a set of recommendations to be considered by either the local council or the parliament. This would help determine whether the combined principles of deliberation and sortition are compelling

enough reasons for participation on their own, or whether the ability to have direct influence is a strong motivating factor.

Citizens' Assemblies

As it was not generally assumed that the public is aware of what a citizens' assembly entails, the idea was detailed with a concise, but informative description:

> A citizens' assembly is a group formed of randomly selected citizens representing a cross-section of the community brought together with politicians and experts to talk about the most important issues facing their local community. This would include attending a few meetings while your expenses would be covered and your employer would be legally required to give you leave to attend.

It was also not assumed that individuals were aware of what a constitutional convention would entail. The following description was provided:

> Some people have proposed holding a series of meetings and events in which ordinary citizens, politicians and experts from across the UK could develop proposals for how the UK should be governed, including transferring any new powers to local councils or England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This is sometimes referred to as a constitutional convention. All expenses would be covered. Your employer would be legally required to give you leave to attend.

In the first sample for the question about local citizens' assemblies, the description is qualified with the following:

> The outcome would be a set of recommendations that would be considered by your local council. If you were randomly selected to take part, how likely or unlikely would you be to participate in a citizens' assembly with your local council? Please think about whether you personally would attend, regardless of whether or not you think it is a good idea.

In the first sample for the question about the constitutional convention, the wording was the same as above, except the recommendations would be considered by the parliament instead of the local council. In the second sample for the question about local citizens' assemblies, the description is qualified with the following:

> The outcome would be binding meaning your local council must agree to the decisions made by the citizens' assembly. If you were randomly selected to take part, how likely or unlikely would you be to participate in a citizens' assembly with your local council? Please think about whether you personally would attend, regardless of whether or not you think it is a good idea.

In the second sample for the question about the constitutional convention, the description is qualified as follows:

> The outcome would be binding meaning the decisions made by the constitutional convention would become law regardless if the government supports them or not. If you were randomly selected to take part, how likely or unlikely would you be to participate in a constitutional convention? Please think about whether you personally would attend, regardless of whether or not you think it is a good idea.

The question about the national level was worded as follows:

> Now I'd like you to think about citizens' assemblies at the national level where randomly selected citizens representing a cross-section of Britain are brought together with politicians and experts to talk about the most important issues facing the country, such as the economy, immigration, the NHS, education or Europe. If selected your expenses would be covered and your employer would be legally required to give you leave to attend.

Amongst those who said that they would likely not participate, an open-ended follow-up question was asked: what are your reasons for likely not participating?

Following numerous interviews for the case studies outlined in the following section, the first hypothesis was that a majority of respondents overall would be sceptical about the process. Many people today are not used to the idea of political decisions being made by

individuals chosen by lot. Many organisers and democratic theorists note that there is often a degree of suspicion and uncertainty about the process beforehand, followed by a transformative shift to unanimous support after the event. It is why these considerations are about tackling the underlying drivers of populist support in the long term. If citizens' assemblies were a regular occurrence and happened on a recurring, rather than one-off basis, more people would be able to have these experiences and share them with their networks.

The second hypothesis was that there would be a strong relationship between voting Ukip, and by extension being dissatisfied with the way the political system works and feeling voiceless, and support for citizens' assemblies. If Ukip voters are truly concerned about political processes, not just outputs, then it is reasonable to assume there should be a higher level of support for the idea of citizens' assemblies than amongst other party voters.

The third hypothesis is just the opposite – a weak relationship between voting Ukip and support for citizens' assemblies. This possibility stems from Webb's (2013) analysis of 'stealth democrats' in the UK, characterised by their dissatisfaction with democracy but lack of desire for greater political participation.

The fourth hypothesis is that those aged 18–29 will be the most supportive of citizens' assemblies. Despite the research which shows over-55s are the most disillusioned age group (Jennings *et al.*, 2014), the generational divides and value shifts outlined in the previous section suggest that young people should be more open to new forms of political participation, especially ones that are more egalitarian in nature.

The fifth hypothesis is that AB and C1 demographic categories (upper middle class, middle class, and lower middle class) will be more supportive of citizens' assemblies than C2 and DE (skilled working class, working class and pensioners). Research has shown that the most highly educated and better off individuals are more likely to be involved in political activities than other demographics. Dalton's (2008) work in the US has highlighted that this bias tends to be even stronger in alternative forms of political engagement

besides voting, such as campaigning or protesting. It is expected to find this same bias in these results.

The sixth hypothesis is that there will be a greater level of support in London and other urban areas in the UK than in more rural settings. However, it is also expected that the sample size will not be large enough in every geographical breakdown of the UK to carry out a statistically significant analysis of regional variation in support.

Finally, the eighth hypothesis is that there will be greater support for citizens' assemblies in the second split sample, where the results are said to be binding. It seems intuitive that more people would be willing to devote their time to participating if they were assured that their proposals and recommendations could not later be ignored.

Overall Results

The results are surprising in a few ways. Overall support for all three types of citizens' assemblies is above 50 per cent on average. The only time it dips below this point is in the second split sample about a binding constitutional convention, where it is at 45 per cent, a still higher-than-expected figure. In some ways, this is in line with Webb's (2013) findings that most people in the UK are dissatisfied democrats – unhappy with the political system but willing to partake more actively in other forms of political participation. It also fits with the finding that 'giving citizens more of a say in how decisions are made' is the second most favoured reform to improve the British political system (see Figure 1.1).

In line with hypothesis two, Ukip support is significantly higher than average in all cases except in the non-binding question about the constitutional convention. In the second split sample with the binding variation, Ukip supporters are the only group whose willingness to participate reaches above 50 per cent. It means that Ukip voters are not all stealth democrats after all. SNP and Green party voters are also particularly supportive, although it must be noted that their results are on the basis of a smaller base, which may not be completely representative. Labour and undecided voters hover around the

50 per cent mark. In contrast, Conservatives are by far the least likely to support the idea, with only one proposition attaining majority support – binding local citizens' assemblies. In this sense, it seems that the opportunity to appeal to disillusioned Ukip, SNP and Green voters by promoting reform to the practice of politics exists for the centre left, as Labour voters sit around the average levels of support.

The generational analysis is more nuanced than predicted, as support varies between the questions. The hypothesis about social demographics proves to be positive, as AB and C1 voters are more likely to be open to participating than C2 and DE voters. The regional analysis is also largely supportive, though with a caveat that many of the regional samples were not large enough to provide a statistically significant result. Support is slightly more widespread across the regions than predicted, which again offers the centre left an opportunity in areas where Ukip came second and the Conservatives won in the general election. Willingness to participate in the south west and south east was above average, implying that reforming the practice of politics could be equally popular in Conservative strongholds.

Another surprise is the split sampling about the outcome of the citizens' assembly being binding or non-binding. In the local scenario, support is higher when the results are said to be binding. The opposite is the case when it comes to the split on the constitutional convention. While the idea seems to be popular given overall support levels, it seems that people are nonetheless more hesitant and sceptical in having the future fate of the UK decided through a binding convention.

There was no significant difference in willingness to participate between genders.

Local Citizens' Assembly Results

Of all the variations asked of the public, support is highest at the local level, with 54 per cent of respondents saying they would be likely to participate in both samples. Ukip voters stand out as being the most willing in both scenarios. In the binding case, the other

Figure 3.1   Willingness to participate in a local, non-binding citizens' assembly by political party in Great Britain, 2015.

Figure 3.2   Willingness to participate in a local, binding citizens' assembly by political party in Great Britain, 2015.

striking figure is the difference in willingness to participate amongst undecided voters, 50 per cent in the non-binding case compared to 58 per cent in the binding one. This correlates with the fact that Ukip and undecided voters are most likely to feel that their voice does not count in the decisions taken by local politicians (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 3.3   Willingness to participate in a local, non-binding citizens' assembly by age group in Great Britain, 2015.
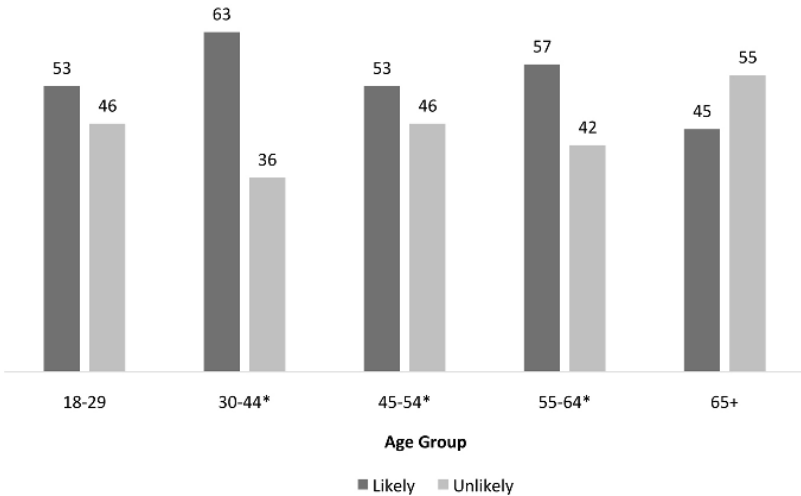
Figure 3.4   Willingness to participate in a local, binding citizens' assembly by age group in Great Britain, 2015.

Conservative voters are the only group to be unwilling to participate overall, which also fits in with the finding that they are most likely to feel that their voice counts in political decision-making, and are much more likely to think that the present system of governing
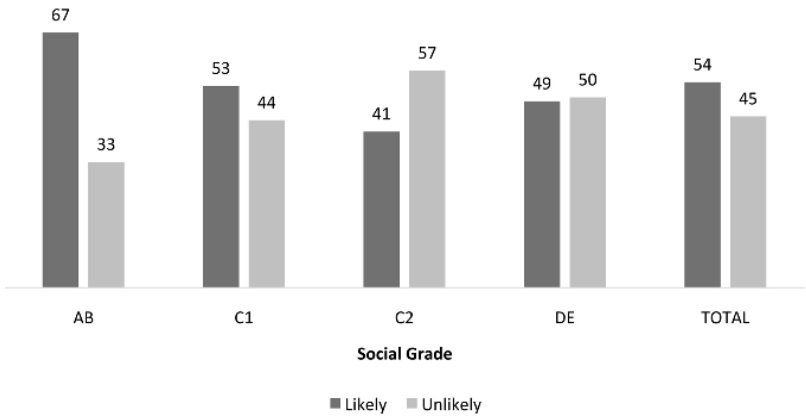
Figure 3.5   Willingness to participate in a local, non-binding citizens' assembly by social grade in Great Britain, 2015.
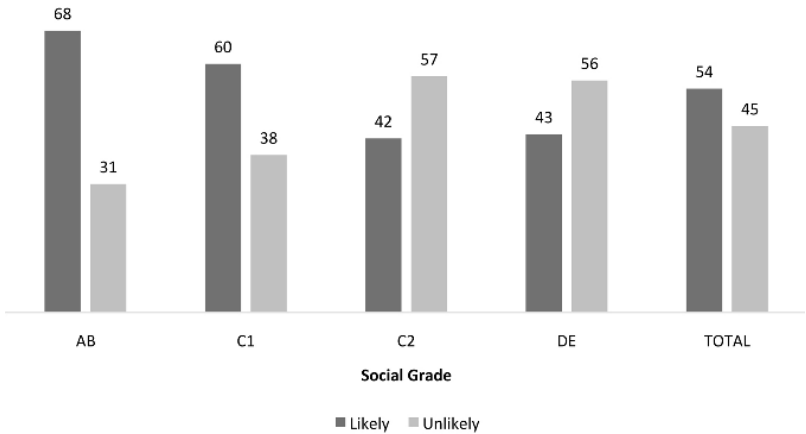
Figure 3.6   Willingness to participate in a local, binding citizens' assembly by social grade in Great Britain, 2015.

Britain functions relatively well (see Figure 2.3), implying they do not see the need to change or complement the current electoral system with other democratic initiatives. Labour voters hover around the average, with 52 per cent in favour of the non-binding assembly, and 53 per cent in favour of the binding one. As this was one of the questions with a split sample, the number of Green, SNP and Liberal Democrat voters is too small to be comparable.
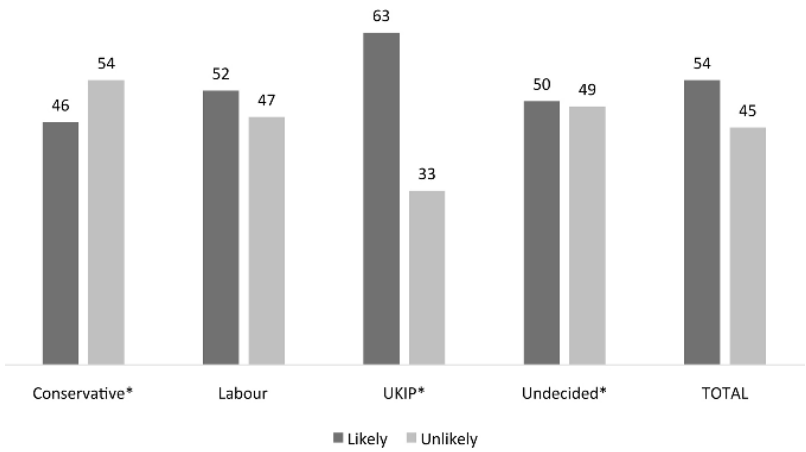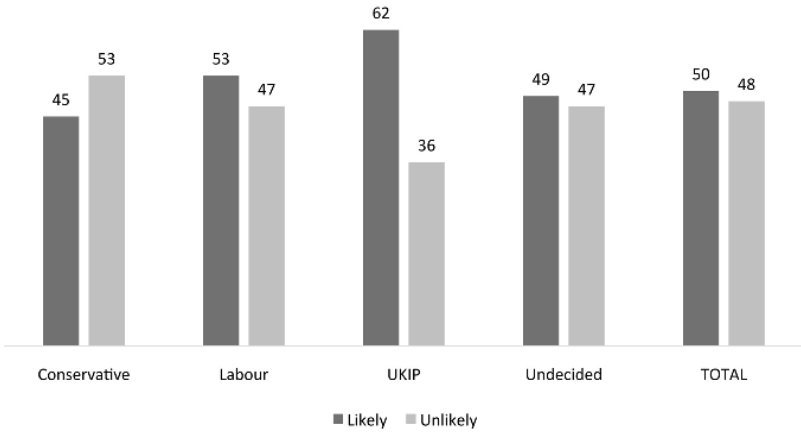
Figure 3.7   Willingness to participate in a national, non-binding citizens' assembly by political party in Great Britain, 2015.
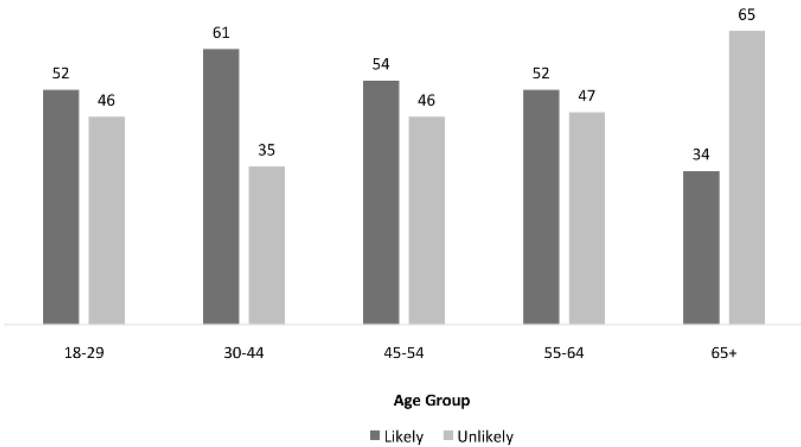
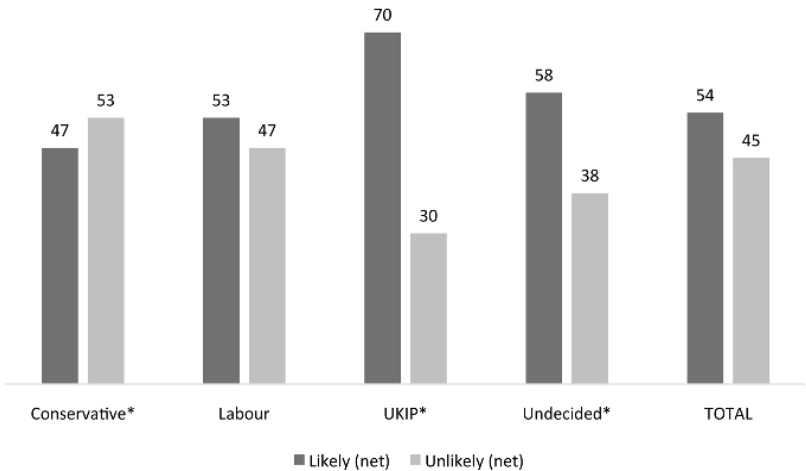**Figure 3.8   Willingness to participate in a national, non-binding citizens' assembly by age group in Great Britain, 2015.**

There is not much variation between support levels of each type of citizens' assembly in the generational divides; in both cases, support ranges between 50 to 63 per cent amongst those under 65. The 65+ group is the only one where support falls to 40 per cent in the non-binding scenario and 45 per cent in the binding one. This may be
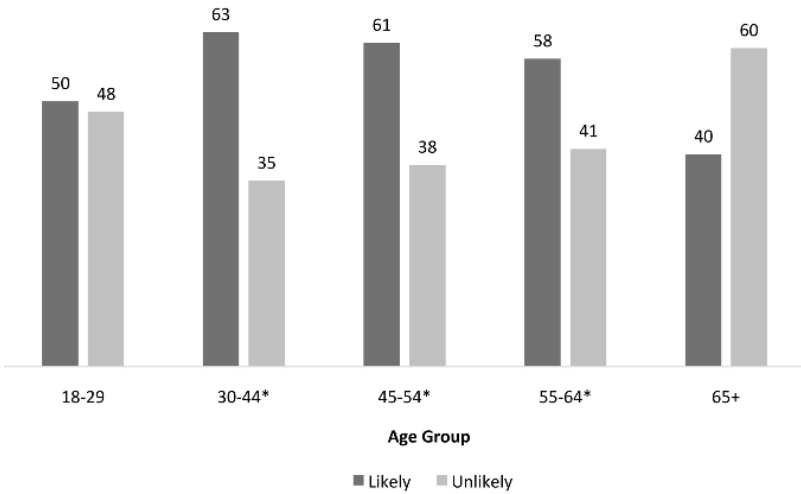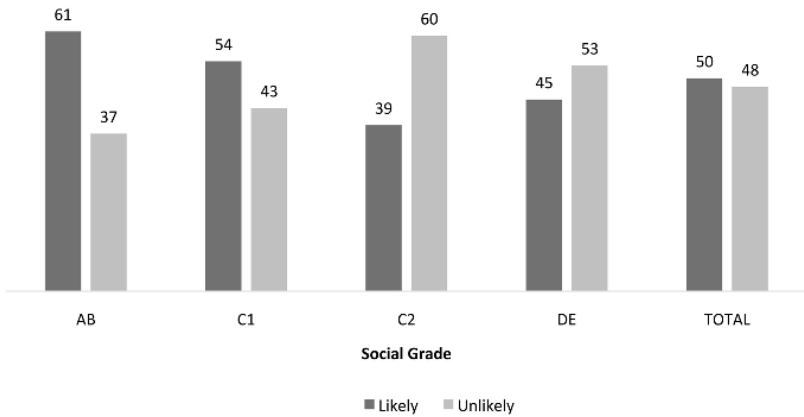
Figure 3.9 Willingness to participate in a national, non-binding citizens' assembly by social grade in Great Britain, 2015.
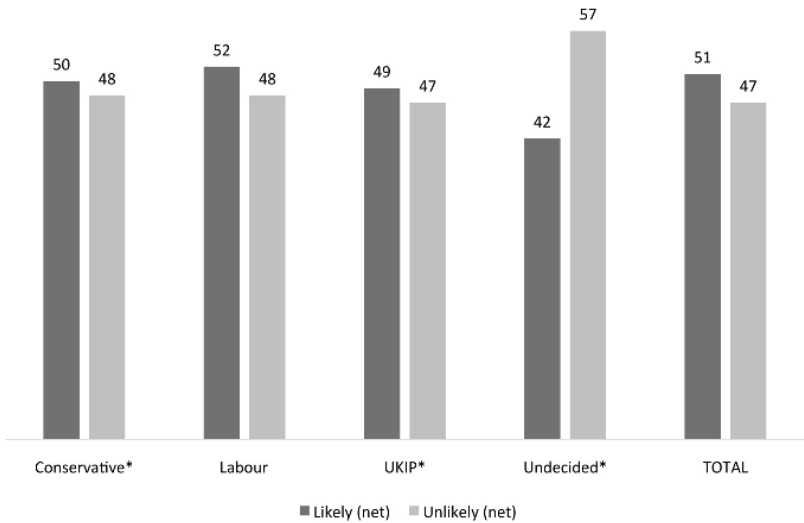
Figure 3.10 Willingness to participate in a non-binding constitutional convention by political party in Great Britain, 2015.

purely down to age or health-related reasons. In the follow-up question to those who responded saying they were unlikely to participate, the most commonly cited reasons overall are not having enough time or not being interested in politics. The 65+ group is less likely to
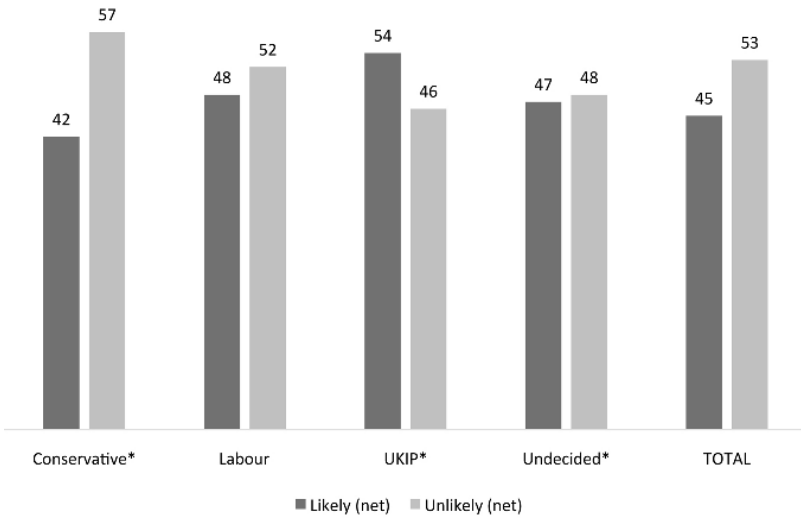
Figure 3.11   Willingness to participate in a binding constitutional convention by political party in Great Britain, 2015.
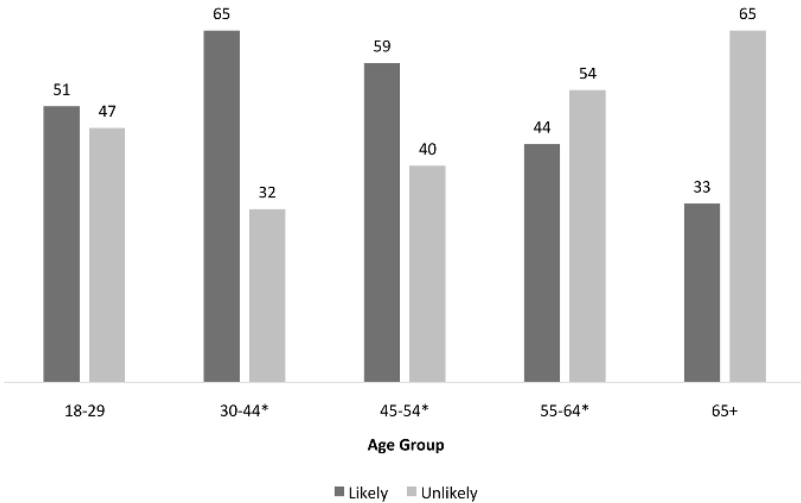
Figure 3.12   Willingness to participate in a non-binding constitutional convention by age group in Great Britain, 2015.
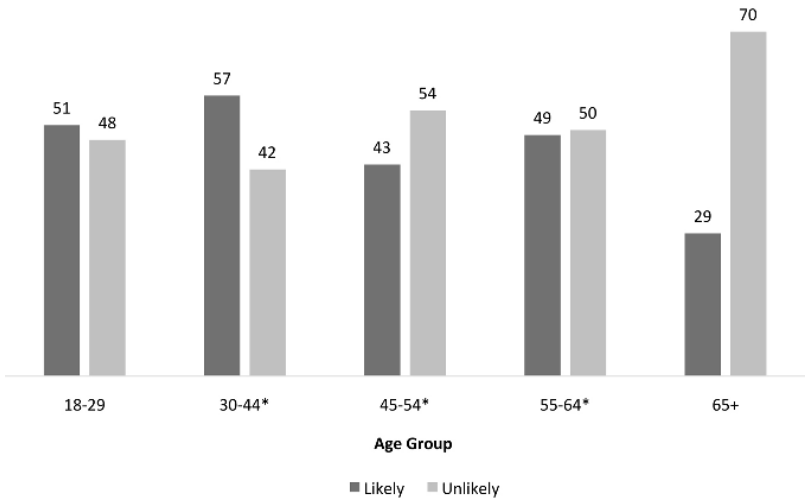
Figure 3.13 Willingness to participate in a binding constitutional convention by age group in Great Britain, 2015.
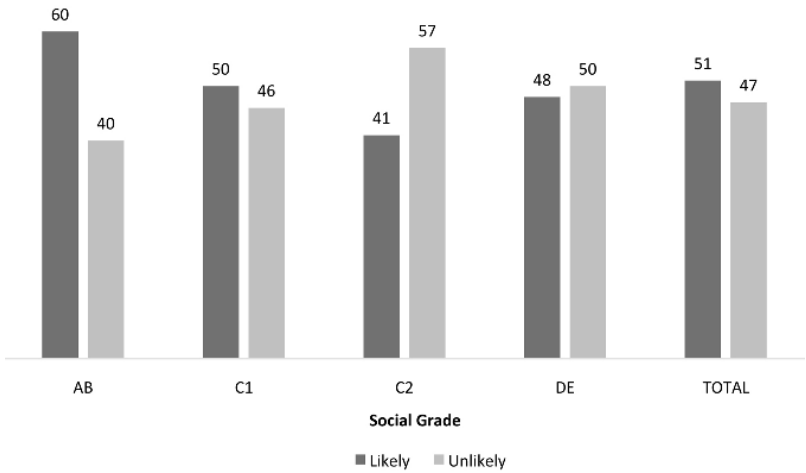
Figure 3.14 Willingness to participate in a non-binding constitutional convention by social grade in Great Britain, 2015.
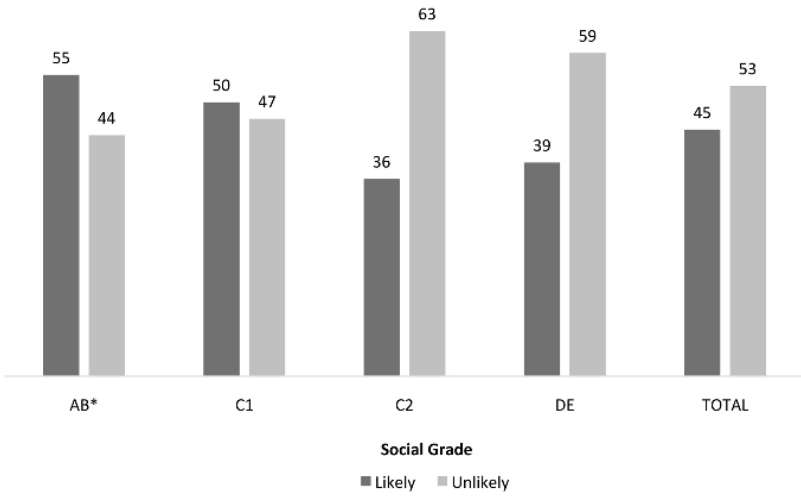
Figure 3.15   Willingness to participate in a binding constitutional convention by social grade in Great Britain, 2015.
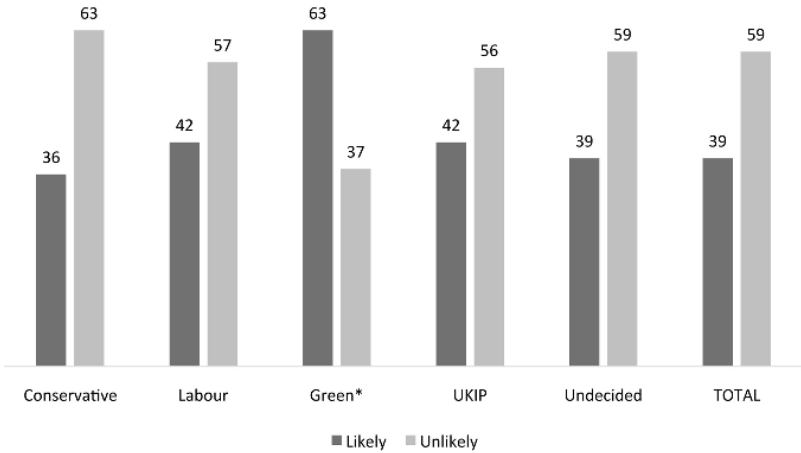
Figure 3.16   Willingness to participate as a randomly selected, independent councillor in local council by political party in Great Britain, 2015.
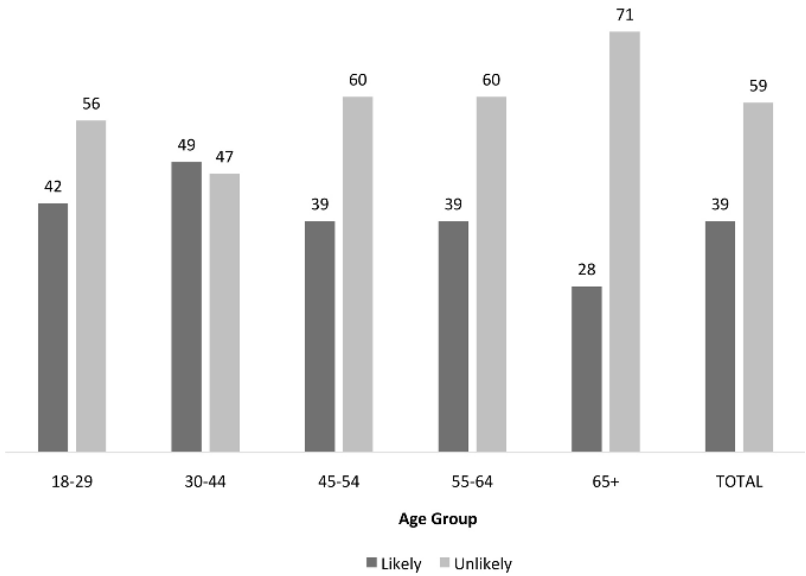
Figure 3.17   Willingness to participate as a randomly selected, independent councillor in local council by age group in Great Britain, 2015.
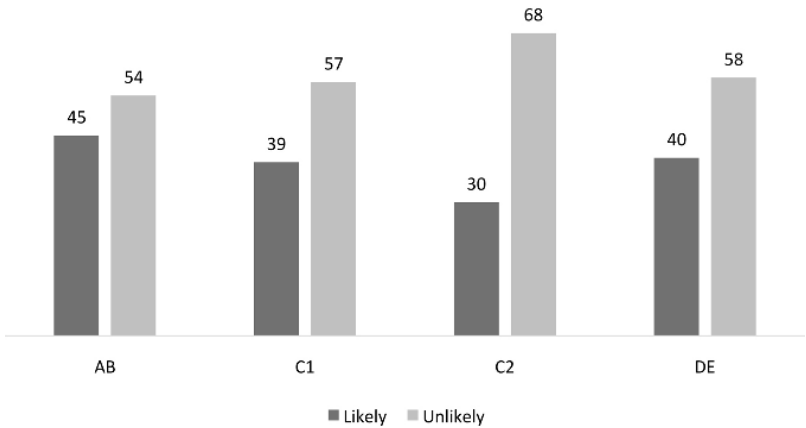
Figure 3.18   Willingness to participate as a randomly selected, independent councillor in local council by social grade in Great Britain, 2015.

have said either of these two options than all the other age groups, mentioning age-related reasons instead.

   In terms of demographics, once again there is no significant difference between the binding and non-binding scenarios, the only noticeable variations being greater support for the binding option amongst C1 voters from 53 to 60 per cent, and less support for the binding option amongst DE voters from 49 to 43 per cent. It is difficult to postulate reasons for these discrepancies. Amongst C1 voters who are unlikely to participate, not having enough time is a stronger reason in the binding scenario, suggesting that perhaps the binding nature of the assembly makes a difference to this demographic as it is perceived as more worthwhile. Amongst DE voters who say they are unlikely to participate, many more voters in the binding sample say that they are not interested in politics. They are also the most likely to think that a deliberation by fellow citizens would not produce sensible decisions. Four per cent also say they think their temperaments are not good, and three per cent think they would not be listened to. While these are very small numbers, and should be taken with the caveat that the sample size for this group is only 68, they are nonetheless the only social grade to mention these reasons at all, and could be helpful in explaining why this group is much less likely to participate in a local citizens' assembly if it is binding.

National Citizens' Assembly Results

At the national level, the split overall between those likely and unlikely to participate is fairly even, 50 and 48 per cent respectively. The political, generational and social breakdowns, however, highlight some interesting incongruities in support. Once again, in the breakdown by political party, Ukip voters are significantly more likely to be willing to participate, with support at 62 per cent. Liberal Democrat, SNP, and Green party voters, the last of which are most supportive with 76 per cent, are not included in the comparative analysis, however, due to the small number of respondents

in these categories. These findings also correlate with the survey results about political voice at the national level (see Figure 2.5), where Green party voters feel the most overlooked (80 per cent), followed by Ukip voters (70 per cent). At the national level, Conservatives are again the only group that is unwilling to participate overall, likely for the same reasons as mentioned in the explanation for local results. Labour voters sit just above the average levels of support again, with 54 per cent in favour. Undecided voters are in line with the average – 49 per cent say they are willing to participate.

In the generational breakdown, a similar pattern emerges as in the local level results, with those over 65 being the only age group that is unlikely to participate. Once again, however, age-related reasons are a commonly cited reason for saying no, though it is worth noting that this age group are also more likely than any other to feel that a citizens' assembly would not make a difference to their community. This may be because 39 per cent of the Conservative respondents in the survey are over 65, the largest party affiliation for this demographic. Thus the explanation that this group of voters already feels that the current system of governing works relatively well and sees no need for new initiatives to ensure its voice is heard, could be plausible.

The breakdown by social grade highlights the divide between, on the one hand, AB and C1 voters and, on the other, C2 and DE voters. The former are more willing to participate than average, with 61 and 54 per cent respectively, while amongst the latter only 39 and 45 per cent are. A lack of interest in politics and a distrust of politicians to act or deliver on the decisions of citizens feature more strongly as reasons cited for not wanting to participate amongst C2 and DE voters, with four per cent of DE voters once again saying they feel that they would not be listened to, the only group to express this concern. Clearly, if a citizens' assembly were to be organised at the national level without compulsory participation, a greater effort would need to be made to encourage turnout by voters who belong to either of these two groups for it to be representative.

Constitutional Convention Results

Finally, the questions about a constitutional convention turned up some unexpected results. As briefly mentioned, the biggest surprise is that overall willingness to participate is greater in the first sample, where respondents are told that the outcome would be a set of recommendations to be considered by the government rather than a binding decision. It was expected that people would consider a binding outcome more appealing, as it would imply that the government could not choose to ignore the recommendations of a representative group of people with the time and resources to deliberate and reach balanced decisions. However, 51 per cent of respondents are willing to participate in the non-binding case, and only 45 per cent in the binding scenario.

The party breakdown of support gives a few indications to explain this result. This time Ukip voters find themselves on opposite sides of majority support: 49 per cent are willing to participate in the non-binding scenario, and 54 per cent in the binding case. Given that Ukip's core concerns are not about constitutional issues, rather focusing on immigration, the EU and welfare, this may be why a constitutional convention would be less likely to appease their feeling of a lack of voice in political decision-making. Despite being asked to think about whether they would be willing to participate regardless of whether or not they think it is a good idea, some respondents may have nonetheless answered the question as though it was in reference to support for the idea itself. Fears of such a process, in which the transferring of powers to the regions is discussed, may have been prompted by concern about the SNP hijacking such a process. The survey took place at the end of March and start of April, as public attention focused on opinion polls suggesting that the party could win a large number of seats in Scotland, and thus play an influential role in parliament.

The extreme mirror image of Ukip voters are SNP voters. While 70 per cent are in favour of the non-binding convention, they are the second least supportive (after the Liberal Democrats) of a binding one, although these figures need to be considered in light of a small

sample size. Only 35 per cent say they are likely to participate in the second scenario. Amongst those who say they are unwilling to participate, in both cases SNP voters list, by a very large margin, that they do not trust politicians to act or deliver on the decisions of citizens. The reluctance to partake in a binding convention could be down to a fear that Scotland's desires would not be fulfilled to their desired extent in negotiations, but would have no chance of being amended.

The two main parties sit around the average levels of support this time. Conservative voters seem much more open to the idea of a constitutional convention than a local or national citizens' assembly, though only in the non-binding case with 50 per cent willing to participate. In the binding results scenario, support is lower at 42 per cent. The Scottish referendum campaign ignited a new debate about English identity and brought to the fore the 'English question', about whether only English MPs should vote on English issues. Conservative voters might be more inclined to participate in a convention that would have to tackle these controversial questions in this post-referendum climate. The survey was also conducted before the election, when the predicted result was a hung parliament. Given that the Conservatives ended up winning a majority, it is possible that Tory voters would be less supportive of this option now if they feel that the government can push through their favoured policies without the support of other parties. As a constitutional convention – though rather undefined as to its nature – was promised in the Labour manifesto, Labour voters are also willing to participate, with 52 per cent in favour of the non-binding option, and 48 per cent in favour for the binding one. Undecided voters are less disposed to participating in a constitutional convention than the local and national citizens' assemblies. However, like Ukip voters, they are more open to the binding option than the non-binding one: 42 percent are willing to participate in the non-binding convention, while 47 per cent in the binding one.

In the generational breakdown, the youngest group, 18–29 year-olds, are equally supportive of either scenario at 51 per cent.

Those aged 30–44 are also supportive in both cases, though to an even larger extent – 65 per cent are willing to participate in the non-binding convention and 57 per cent in the binding one. Support amongst 45–54 year-olds is high for the non-binding convention at 59 per cent, but is weaker in the binding scenario at 43 per cent. Those aged 55 and over are unwilling to participate in either case and those in the 65+ group are least enthusiastic. For the 55–64 group, time seems to be the largest factor influencing the decision. This may be because this generation is at the height of their careers; taking time to participate in a convention may not seem like a priority when they are close to retirement. For the 65+ group, the picture is a bit mixed, with age-related reasons being cited once again.

Looking at the demographics, there is a similar pattern to both the local and national results, with the majority of AB and C1 voters eager to participate in both non-binding and binding constitutional conventions. However, in this case C2 voters are the least likely to participate, with only 41 per cent willing in the non-binding case and 36 per cent in the binding one. DE voters, on the other hand, are relatively open to participation in the non-binding scenario with 48 per cent willing. In the binding case, only 39 per cent are prepared to take part. In the non-binding case, DE voters are the most likely to list their distrust of politicians to act on recommendations, lack of interest in politics and a lack of confidence or experience as reasons why they are not willing to participate. On the other hand, in the binding case, lack of interest in politics is the most commonly given explanation, with almost half of all respondents who said no listing this as their reason. A lack of confidence remains an important reason as well, however. Convincing these voters to participate without coercion or strong incentives would probably be most difficult if a constitutional convention were to happen. Different strategies could be deployed in the design to ease people's concerns about time or lack of confidence and experience, with the reassurance of moderators, compensation for participation, or by choosing days and times that would be convenient for most people. Overcoming a lack of interest in politics is a greater challenge. Further research

could be done to see whether respondents who are uninterested, but reluctantly choose to participate change their minds afterwards. If this were the case, it could strengthen an argument for compulsory participation to ensure representativeness.

Discussion

The results from all three sets of questions about local and national citizens' assemblies, as well as a constitutional convention, provide evidence for the argument in favour of democratic innovations. These ideas have popular support, particularly among those groups in the electorate who currently feel that they do not have a voice in the political decisions being made by their governing elites. Conservative voters seem to be the only group who feel satisfied enough with the governing status quo to reject these proposals. However, this leaves an opportunity for Labour to win back some of the voters they have lost to Ukip, the Green party and the SNP by promising to reform the way politics is done. Furthermore, while Conservatives are the least willing to participate, around 40–50 per cent are nonetheless open to these citizens' assemblies, and a regional breakdown highlights that reforming the practice of politics could be popular in Conservative strongholds, particularly in southern England.

After Labour's resounding defeat in the general election, a period of soul-searching is underway as the party figures out how to become a representative force once again. Without delving into an analysis of why Labour lost the election, what is presented here is merely a proposal to begin again by letting go. The days of centralised authority in the top echelons of the political class, once accepted by the public, are no longer desired by a society that has lost faith in the establishment to represent them. It is not just the disillusioned voters who have turned to populists that are in favour of this change; Labour voters are also supportive. The following section, presenting a series of case studies from around the world, highlights that devolving power directly to the people themselves through citizens' assemblies has benefits for political efficacy as well as political legitimacy.

There is also public support for a constitutional convention that results in a non-binding set of recommendations. The general election has resulted in an ever-more divided union; a different party, with diverse goals and visions, dominates in each nation. A case for constitutional reform to resolve these regional divides is more salient and necessary than ever. The purpose here is not to propose a design that could work – Alan Renwick (2015) has already outlined every conceivable detail that should be considered – but to show that the majority of British people want a constitutional convention involving the voices of ordinary people alongside the experts and politicians who normally decide. The Labour party promised an undetailed constitutional convention in its manifesto; this is one pledge that should not be discarded. If anything, it should be fleshed out. The Conservatives also have reason to reconsider a convention. They are on the traditional path of handing down powers from the throne of Westminster. Yet it could be to their benefit if the politically controversial issues around Scottish devolution, the English question, and city regions were to be deliberated upon with a randomly selected sample, representative of the population, who gave them politically neutral recommendations. Even support amongst Conservative voters for this type of constitutional convention is at 50 per cent.

Randomly Selected Councillors

In addition to questioning people about their interest in citizens' assemblies, the survey also tested public opinion about a different kind of democratic innovation. Vernon Bogdanor proposed the idea of randomly selected local councillors in an article in the *Times* in 2010. He suggested that selecting "a small proportion [of councillors] – say a tenth or a twentieth – randomly by lot from the electoral register" could be one way to break the "political class" and to enhance the "democratic spirit". The argument put forth in his piece was that those selected would be groups that are especially underrepresented in local authorities, particularly the young and members

of ethnic minority groups. The position would be voluntary and one could refuse the role. Those who did accept the position would serve as independents rather than party members, freeing them from party politics to work purely in the interest of the community. The proposition tested here does not limit the random selection to under-represented groups, but maintains the notion of randomness from the entire community. The question in the survey is worded as follows:

> As you know, currently local councillors are elected at local elections. There have been suggestions that a number of councillors within local councils should be selected randomly from the community instead of through elections. They would remain independent and not offi-cially represent a political party but would be treated the same as an elected councillor within the council. If you were randomly selected, how likely or unlikely would you be to participate as an independent councillor in your local council? Please think about whether you per-sonally would participate, regardless of whether or not you think it is a good idea.

As with the questions about citizens' assemblies, this last sen-tence was added to try and avoid a bias common in opinion polling towards respondents overestimating their willingness to participate. The hypothesis was that there would be some scepticism of the idea, for the same reason as in the first hypothesis for citizens' assemblies: the population's general unfamiliarity with the principle of drawing of lots could lead them to err on the side of caution, sticking to the status quo with which they are familiar. There are also some valid arguments against the proposal, such as the possibility that a close election result in some councils might mean that the wishes of the electorate would not necessarily be represented in terms of who would control the council. There is also the argument that with only a certain proportion of councillors being chosen by lot, they would not be truly independent, but likely to join the party group with which they feel an allegiance. The real way to achieve independence would be to have all councillors randomly selected by lot. This seemed like it would be too radical an option for most people, unfamiliar with sortition, to consider as a real possibility, so the question was

worded with "a number of councillors". Follow-up research into this proposal could test whether there is a difference in opinion between questions, if one offers the option of "a number of councillors" and another question states "all councillors".

Results

The results fell largely in line with expectations. Overall, willingness to participate is 39 per cent on average. Looking at the breakdown of support by political party, it is relatively even across all of them. The only anomaly is Green party voters, 63 per cent of whom say they would be likely to participate. However, their sample size is small, so there is a possibility that this could be a slight overestimation of their eagerness. This time Ukip voters are in line with the average, 42 per cent saying they would like to participate. For all respondents who say they are unlikely to take up the offer, the biggest factor is by far time, followed by a lack of confidence or experience. For Labour voters, who fall within the average response levels, a lack of interest in politics was, surprisingly, also a significant factor. Contrary to expectations, undecided voters are not that enthusiastic about the proposal. It was expected that they would be more open to the idea of independent councillors, unaffiliated with a political party. However, only 36 per cent are willing to participate.

The age breakdown shows that the 30–44 age group is the only one that is more open to this idea, with the level of willingness rising to 49 per cent. All other age groups fall within the average range. For those under 65, time is the biggest concern, followed by a lack of interest in politics and lack of confidence or experience. For those over 65, the reasons for not participating are more spread out between time, interest, lacking confidence and age-related reasons. Given that in 2013, the average age of councillors was 60.2 (Kettlewell and Phillips, 2014), it may be that this age group is least open to the idea of random selection as they benefit from being overrepresented in the system. It may also explain why this age

group is the most likely to feel that their voice is represented in local decision-making.

Similar to the findings for the binding constitutional convention, the breakdown by demographics shows that C2 voters are much less likely than average to be willing to participate, at only 30 per cent. It is trickier to understand why that is the case for this scenario, however, as they are less likely to cite time as an issue than AB and C1 voters, and are less likely to say they are not interested in politics than DE voters. They are also least likely of all social grades to say they lack the confidence or experience. The demographic data about the respondents does not help much either, as C2 voters are most likely to fit within the 18–29 age category or vote Labour or Ukip – all categories where support was around the average 39 per cent mark.

Discussion

Overall the findings indicate that most people would not be willing to be an independent councillor if randomly selected to be so. However, from studying the reasons behind people's unwillingness, time is by far the biggest factor listed, followed by lack of confidence or experience. Sometimes there is also a lack of interest in politics. This gives some hope as to the future of such an idea. Only a tiny minority of individuals listed reasons indicating that they thought independent councillors would not make a difference to their community, or that it is better to leave these decisions to elected politicians (only a small minority of Conservatives named this as a concern), or that they did not trust their fellow citizens to do the job. It implies that people are not necessarily against the idea itself, but are limited by obstacles that could be overcome by a better designed proposal.

If time is the main hindrance, a greater compensation could be one way of incentivising individuals to accept the position, especially those who may be in less stable jobs where the commitment of being a councillor could impact on their availability. If the introduction of

independent, randomly selected councillors were to happen, it could and should certainly include a training course for all councillors selected, to ease fears about competence for the role. Another option could also be to extend the number of councillors selected by lot to 50 per cent, and eventually to the ideal of 100 per cent once people get accustomed to the idea. This would ease any fears about independent councillors choosing to side with a political party with which they may feel an allegiance. A provision could also be added that councillors selected by lot could not run for election in a subsequent elections in order to try and guarantee their status as independents. However, the ideal situation of all councillors chosen by lottery is the only one where councillors would be truly independent, unconstrained by re-election fears and not beholden to any political party, but the community itself.

NOTE

1. The polling for this report was carried out by Ipsos Mori as part of their face-to-face Capibus survey between 20 March and 14 April 2015. The sample size was 1,252. The data were weighted according to demographic profiles in order to achieve an overall representative sample of Great Britain. The weighted base was 961.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATIONS IN PRACTICE: EXEMPLARY CASE STUDIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Together, old and new institutions are shaping a contact democracy for the 21st century, slowly transforming the hierarchical relationship between ordinary citizens and the elected elites into one that is more reflective of society today. Relationships are much more horizontal; leadership is no longer about making decisions on behalf of people, but about initiating a process in consultation with them. The following case studies demonstrate new forms of engagement that seek to entrench more equal citizen participation to overcome the representation dilemma which is fuelling support for populist parties. With ordinary people feeling like their voices are being ignored by their elected representatives, they have turned to these reactionary forces which claim to represent their concerns and air their grievances. While this pressure on the mainstream to react can be good if it prompts reflection on the state of representative democracy today, it is also harmful if they ignore the underlying drivers of people's frustration and merely give in to the reactionary and divisive debates.

The following case studies offer a number of examples of varying democratic innovations across western Europe, Australia and Canada. While there are many other experiments happening in other countries across the world, the following examples are highlighted due to their democracies being comparable to the UK, as well as

to demonstrate lessons that can be learned from both successful and unsuccessful cases. They are based on semi-structured interviews with key individuals involved in either organising or supporting the initiatives – academics, ministers, and organisers – as well as research about the methodologies used. The case studies are divided into three sections: national and regional level; local level; and constitutional conventions. Together, they highlight how democratic innovations can involve people more directly in political decision-making. How bringing people together to deliberate can build bridges across political and cultural divides (Caluwaerts and Deschower, 2014), emphasising the contact theory argument that interaction between diverse groups breeds social cohesion. In doing so, democratic innovations have the potential to alleviate the underlying drivers of populism: deeply entrenched disillusionment about the power of politics as a force for good.

The quantity of experiments has now reached a point where many of the previously negative assumptions, particularly about the drawing of lots, have been dispelled. The most common critique tends to be about competence. Yet time and time again, deliberative mini-publics have demonstrated that when given the time and the resources to form a balanced opinion, 'ordinary' citizens are more than capable of having thoughtful discussions and making balanced judgements. The competence argument only goes so far. Elected politicians are not some sort of superior beings; they have armies of researchers, assistants and experts who help them navigate the variety of issues on which they are asked to deliberate. People are very much aware of this fact. YouGov polling for the University of Southampton (2013) shows that the majority of British people feel that politicians do not have the technical knowledge to solve the problems facing the country today. At the same time, they believe that politicians can help to make a difference. Using the same logic, there is no reason to think that citizens selected by lot to make decisions for their communities or countries should not have access to the same researchers and experts, or that they would not be capable of reaching the same quality of decisions.

Furthermore, the one part of society where we use selection by lot has already proven that people are competent: juries. Evidence shows that individuals take their roles seriously; it is arguable that citizens randomly chosen for a citizens' assembly would have the same desire to serve the best interests of society. One could take this argument even further; just as serving jury duty is one of our responsibilities for ensuring a healthy democracy, perhaps serving in a citizens' assembly should also be seen as such, not purely as a right. The citizens' assemblies that have taken place in other countries also show that people take these opportunities seriously, surprising the 'experts' in the room with the quality of debate (Fournier *et al.*, 2011). Research indicates that "the many are smarter than the few", with more diverse groups of individuals reaching better decisions than homogeneous ones (Landemore, 2012).

Another argument against the sceptics is that, if we believe that thinktanks, lobbies and other special interest groups can and should influence public policy, why not grant a say to citizens? They are often the people most directly involved. When we consider that Gilens and Page (2014) have compelling evidence to show that the preferences of the average citizen have *zero influence* upon public policy, all illusions of 'government for the people' evaporate. Their study demonstrates that elites also have the power to influence which issues policymakers consider in the first place, and also exhibit a capacity to shape the public's preferences. When empirical evidence is shouting that economic elites are amplifying the voices of the established political class while drowning out the common man and woman, it becomes clear that there is an urgent need to find new *mechanisms* to bring people's voices in, not merely focus on which policies need to be changed.

Besides the opinion polling showing public support for these ideas, as well as the normative arguments for why the public should support them, there are a few important caveats to note. They are not perfect solutions either. Quite often, these kinds of initiatives are costly, though this is not always the case. They also require time to plan and organise and run. However, these are not insurmountable

problems. To a certain extent, the normative points in favour of investing in democratic innovations justify the costs. Democracy is worth it. At the same time, these innovations are often seen as a replacement for palpably undemocratic, unelected, archaic institutions – such as the House of Lords in the UK, or the Senate in Canada and Australia – with new institutions that involve randomly selected citizens, rotating on a regular basis (Sutherland, 2011; Zakaras, 2010; Van Reybrouck, 2013; Barnett and Carter, 2008). The cost of these new initiatives could potentially be offset by the funds recovered from the extinction of old institutions.

Without compulsory participation, another potential problem is the self-selection bias. There is an overrepresentation of better-off, well-educated individuals in political participation, even more so when it comes to newer forms of engagement such as community organising (Dalton, 2008). Many of the initiatives discussed try overcome this problem by using semi-random selection, ensuring that participants are representative of the public in terms of age, gender, geographical spread, education level and socioeconomic status. Ensuring democratic innovations truly give people a voice provides challenges, but creative thinking can help overcome them.

The following case studies provide some examples of how the voices of ordinary people can be brought into political and policy debates. As democratic innovations, they differ from focusing on the traditional forms of engagement, like voting and consultations, opinion polling and focus groups through their use of deliberation, sortition and providing a direct influence on political decisions. Some of them include a digital element, showcasing how technology can be used in new ways besides social media outreach, helping facilitate the expansion of deliberative initiatives on a wider scale. The biggest challenge is how to transform these experiments from one-off trials into new institutions that rebalance power between elected officials (and the powerful, unelected elites who influence them) and ordinary citizens. In this sense, populism can be seen as a corrective signal for democracy if it forces politicians and parties to relinquish their grasp on power and explore

innovative ways of giving people a genuine voice in the decisions affecting them.

I. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

Belgium

Two recent democratic experiments, at the national and regional levels, make Belgium one of the most interesting case studies for considering how to 'scale up' the use of deliberative mini-publics from local or one-time into national or recurring initiatives. The first was the G1000, a three-part event comprised of public agenda setting, a national-level citizens' assembly and a smaller citizens' panel. The second example is the current Flemish Ministry of Culture's citizens' cabinet (*burgerkabinet*).

G1000

The G1000 arose as a citizen outcry to the 2010–11 parliamentary crisis, when the country was left without a government for 589 days. Responding to the increasing ineffectiveness of the representative democracy system – 11 parties were elected to the House of Representatives, none of which won more than 20 per cent of the vote – a group of 27 volunteer organisers developed an innovative experiment in deliberative democracy: the G1000. The organisers were a mix of native speakers from Belgium's three official languages – Dutch, French and German – hailing from a spectrum of occupations in academia, communications and technology, the arts and the non-profit sphere. It was a completely bottom-up initiative, crowdfunded through donations. The idea from the start was that the G1000 would complement, not replace, representative politics. Through three different phases – public agenda-setting, the citizens' summit, and the citizens' panel – the end goal was to publish a manifesto that analysed Belgium's ongoing problems and proposed alternatives and solutions.

The first phase was an online consultation on a grand scale: 6,000 people proposed questions or themes for the citizens' summit. While a group of organisers developed the idea for the process itself, the agenda was open, determined by the public. Thousands of ideas regarding a wide range of social, economic and political issues flowed into the online tool over the course of three months. Those who participated were also allowed to rate others' proposals to mark out the most salient issues. As there was evidently some overlap amongst the suggestions, the ideas were clustered into 25 themes based on their frequency of appearance and their citizen rating. The new list was put online again, in a randomised order, with all citizens being eligible to vote on their top three preferred themes to be discussed at the G1000 citizens' summit. A post-vote IP check ensured that no individual or group engaged in mass voting. The three topics chosen to be discussed were social security, welfare in times of economic crisis, and immigration.

The second phase was the citizens' summit itself. Chosen by a mix of random selection and targeted recruitment, 1,000 citizens were invited to participate in the Brussels-based deliberation on 11 November 2011. The goal of using randomisation was not necessarily representativeness, as individuals were not coerced into accepting the invitation to participate. As soon as one person says no, the sample is no longer representative. The aim was rather to ensure diversity, guided by the view that genuine deliberation can only take place when people are faced with competing opinions (Caluwaerts and Ugarriza, 2012; Landemore, 2012). If one is at a table with other people who share the same point of view, there is little debate within the group, meaning that deliberation is less likely to end up with better-informed and well-considered positions. The organisers therefore hired an independent recruitment agency to invite participants using random digital dialling, which generates random phone numbers to fixed and mobile lines in Belgium. Since everyone has either a fixed or mobile phone, it meant that everyone had an equal chance of being selected to participate. To ensure that there was still some level

of representativeness amongst the participants, the organisers ensured that they at least reflected the Belgian population in terms of gender, age and geographical makeup, especially to achieve a balance between linguistic groups. In the end, 52 per cent were female, 48 per cent male, 61 per cent Dutch-speaking and 39 per cent French-speaking, an accurate resemblance of the population. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 85, ensuring a diversity of generational points of view.

Those who chose to take part in the deliberative event received briefing materials and information about how the day would be organised ahead of time, as well as training in group dynamics. As Belgium is a rather divided country, these steps were necessary to foster an environment where individuals would feel open to speaking with others, especially those of different languages via a translator. The academic researchers following the event found that the quality of deliberation at mixed language tables was higher than at the tables where participants all spoke one language (Caluwaerts and Deschouwer, 2014). They found the same thing at tables where participants differed fundamentally on contentious issues in Belgian politics (determined by pre-summit surveys). Being faced with diverse perspectives helped to avoid the reinforcement of deeply held beliefs and created an openness and willingness to hear the other's point of view.

However, despite the organisers' best efforts, does a procedure of random selection without coercion truly achieve a great diversity of participants when it comes to socioeconomic status? Research by Dalton (2008) has indicated that the better educated are much more likely to take part in political activities, and that this bias is even greater when it comes to other forms of activism, such as protesting or community campaigning, than voting. Given that certain groups are more difficult to reach and this thus exacerbates the effect of a self-selection bias, the organisers complemented the use of random selection for 90 per cent of participants, employing a more targeted strategy for the remaining 10 per cent of places. By getting in touch with various grassroots organisers who work with socially vulnerable

groups, such as homeless people, they were able to ensure a higher level of diversity, even if it was not perfect representation.

The final difficulty was the dropout rate. While 1,000 people said yes, only 704 attended the event. The possible reasons for this are numerous. As with any event, there are always a certain number of people who change their minds or cannot make it at the last minute for a number of personal reasons. Additionally, since participants were not paid (only their train expenses were covered), this is another possible factor in influencing a change of heart. The fact that there was a train strike on the day in question was undoubtedly discouraging for some.

Those who did make it sat at 81 tables of nine people with experienced facilitators and note takers, discussing, reflecting and arguing their views on the summit's three issues. The day started with two expert presentations about each topic, followed by discussions at the tables. Each group of participants put forward their proposals to a 'control desk', where all of the submissions were aggregated and projected to the screens around the room. Everyone voted once again for his or her top two preferences for each topic.

What about those individuals who were not invited or selected to participate? A common criticism against deliberative mini-publics is that they are confined to the few individuals selected to participate. To mitigate this concern, the event in Brussels was enriched with G-Home and G-Offs. The G-Home was a software application making it possible for those who could not make it on the day to participate in online discussion. G-Offs were local initiatives based on self-selection, where individuals could simultaneously deliberate on the same issues that were being live-streamed from the main Brussels event. 730 people joined online, and a further 356 took part in a G-Off.

The final phase of the G1000 was the citizens' panel, a much smaller group of 32 individuals who expanded on and detailed the ideas proposed at the summit, turning them into concrete policy recommendations over the course of three weekends. The panel participants were chosen from those who participated in either the G1000,

G-Homes or G-Offs and who put themselves forwards as candidates to be considered. Out of the 491 people who indicated their wish to take part, the final group was chosen by a process of random selection. Self-selection bias was mitigated by controlling once again for gender, language, region and age, as well as socioeconomic status.

The starting point for the citizens' panel was the set of recommendations from the summit phase which had received the most votes. As it was a much smaller group, the format was slightly different. Rather than resembling a town hall meeting, it took the shape of a consensus conference, a common design used in policy-making processes. This deliberative design was more intensive, with a greater role placed on facilitators to help enable the participants turn their grand ideas into concrete proposals. The participants had the freedom to invite experts or stakeholders to their gatherings, and received more support from the G1000 organisation.

The final outcome was a manifesto, combining an analysis of Belgium's ongoing democratic impasse and potential solutions. Published in five national newspapers, it reached over 10,000 signatories within a few weeks. The main alternatives proposed focused on democratic innovation:

> A democracy that doesn't renew itself will be doomed … Deliberative democracy could well be the democracy of the future. It is a perfect match for this era of user-generated content and Web 2.0. It harnesses the wisdom of the crowd. It's the Wikipedia of politics. It realises that not all knowledge about the future of a society must come from the top. The reason for that is simple: there is no top anymore. There are different branches of knowledge. A society is a network. The masses today may know more than the elite.

Whether this optimistic view will be fully realised in the future is yet to be seen. The Belgian government eventually formed before the end of the G1000 process, halting the government 'crisis'. However, there are three main ways in which the G1000 has had an impact in Belgium and beyond. First, it provided a large-scale democratic experiment with deliberation and random selection. It resulted

in a widely read and supported manifesto calling for change, putting the demand for democratic innovation on the public agenda. Finally, the idea was picked up by citizens and politicians in Belgium and beyond. A number of smaller and local initiatives, such as the K35 in Kortrijk and the G360 in Genk, were organised on the same principles of deliberative democracy. Dutch enthusiasts have expanded their own version of the G1000 in the Netherlands on a widespread local scale, discussed in more detail in this section. The G1000 also influenced culture minister Sven Gatz in the formation of a citizens' cabinet at the regional level in Flanders. Not enough time has passed to discern whether this follow-up enthusiasm is a short-term trend or a long-term shift toward a more deliberative democracy, but the initial signs of eagerness are remarkable nonetheless.

The post-participation survey taken by those involved in the G1000, G-Homes and G-Offs also offer valuable insight into the reasons behind participation and the positive, as well as to be improved, aspects of the initiative. The most prevalent reason for participating was a desire to show their personal commitment as a citizen, with 63 per cent indicating this was the case. The other reasons were as follows: 52 per cent were worried about the democratic and political crisis; 43 per cent hoped to help renew democracy; 35 per cent participated out of curiosity and in order not to miss the experience; 29 per cent were interested in the process of dialogue and diversity; and 21 per cent wanted to contribute to restoring the dialogue between different communities in Belgium.

Cultuur Burgerkabinet: The Citizens' Cabinet

The second focus on democratic innovation in Belgium is the Flemish Ministry of Culture's Citizens' Cabinet (*burgerkabinet*). The story begins with a mixture of curiosity and scepticism on the part of the culture minister, Sven Gatz. Having followed the G1000 process, he was familiar with the arguments put forth by the organisers about renewing democracy and proposing deliberative methods

as well as the drawing of lots to update it for the 21st century. In his eyes, it was a good experiment. In an interview for this study, Gatz said that "the organisers were very brave." He believes the project was weakened by the fact that it took too long, and its ambitions were, perhaps, too grand: deciding the future of the country. Nonetheless, he also thinks it would be very useful to continue what had been started, and the initiative demonstrated that citizen involvement in government decision-making need not be limited to a local level. Gatz agreed with the G1000 manifesto proposal to renew democracy by shifting the balance between the people and the elected representatives, saying: "I understand that to make sure the system stays healthy, we have to complete it, renew the balance with citizen participation."

In March 2015, the minister announced a new deliberative initiative in Flanders: the citizens' cabinet. Ahead of forthcoming reforms in 2016, he is expanding the usual sphere of influence beyond traditional interest groups (such as arts and culture associations) to ordinary citizens, thus seeking their input before he puts proposals before the Flemish parliament. As the public finances remain tight, the initiative is not too ambitious, but is rather seen as an experiment – a new way of involving citizens' in political decision-making. The cost is relatively modest, around €70,000. It is a similar budget as that allocated to the annual culture forum, where representatives from the traditional pressure groups have an opportunity to provide their input and feedback to the minister's office.

Through the *Burgerkabinet* official website, anyone can register an interest in participating in the deliberations. Unlike the G1000, where participants were chosen by lot, a representative sample will be selected from all of the candidates for the citizens' cabinet, meaning that it will resemble Flemish demographics in terms of age, socioeconomic status, education level, geographic distribution and gender. The cabinet itself will consist of two groups. The first is a digital group of 1,000 individuals who will begin the process of generating and debating ideas related to the theme of culture and

participation. The second is a panel group of 150 people, chosen from amongst the digital group's 1,000, who will build on these ideas and develop them into concrete proposals in a final report for the minister. They will remain representative of the population at large, and equally represent the larger, digital group.

What topics will be the subject of the deliberations? Given the purpose of the citizens' cabinet is more specific, the agenda is as well. In 2016, there will be major reforms to Flanders' cultural policy. There are many cultural associations and institutions in this field. Historically, they have been attached to political, ideological or religious convictions, a system common in Belgium and the Netherlands known as 'pillarisation'. Society is divided into several 'pillars' according to these differences, whereby each pillar has its own set of associations, political parties, newspapers, banks, clubs, etc. This system worked relatively well until the 1980s. Today, the associations remain, are quite powerful, and people engage with them. However, people are much less interested in the political, religious and ideological links that were once much stronger. Flemish laws are still written based upon this historical point of reference. Old, traditional associations have financial means, power and staff. New associations, on the other hand, face considerable financial and organisational hurdles. The planned reforms are about finding a way to ensure that new associations can receive the same access and finances; that it does not become "a world with a fast lane for the old, and a slow lane for the new," as Gatz suggests. This is why it is seen as imperative to include the views of ordinary citizens and not just the traditional culture associations, who have a vested interest in preserving the status quo.

The second proposed reform, related to the first, is about the best methods for overcoming the barriers different groups face in terms of participating in cultural activities. The *Burgerkabinet* website lists the following questions as the guiding points for discussion, inspired by the Agenda 21 for Culture, a worldwide document promoting policies and actions by cities and local governments for cultural development:

- Why do people take part in cultural activities and why do some not do so?
- How can we get more people to interact with culture?
- How can cultural institutions be more responsive to the needs and requirements of the population?
- How do you bring culture to the people rather than the people to culture?

How will it work? The details will be handled by three independent organisations (Tree Company, Indiville and Levuur), chosen through an open tender, so as to limit the minister's involvement and influence, maintaining the cabinet's independence. The 150 members of the citizens' cabinet will meet over several sessions in September, delivering a final report with recommendations at the end of the month. The cabinet's suggestions will also be presented at the annual culture forum. Both sets of suggestions are meant to feed into policy proposals to the Flemish parliament which Gatz is due to present at the end of October 2015.

As the process has just begun, an evaluation of its effectiveness in terms of engagement, legitimacy and efficiency are yet to be determined. The minister is hopeful, however, that the initiative will be successful in incorporating a more diverse and representative set of voices into his decision-making. He says:

> If it works, we intend to renew the citizens' cabinet every year with a new set of people. We could perhaps widen the scope to broader questions. We could also apply it to my other competences as culture minister – to media policy, youth policy, and the implementation of Flemish policy in Brussels. My hopes are high, but realistic. I hope it works well.

So far the responses have been mixed. While there is a great deal of enthusiasm for a deliberative democratic process at the regional level, there are also sceptics, unconvinced that it is necessary when there are already specialists and experts ready to provide their opinions. Why is he doing this? For Gatz, it is not just about the

recommendations the cabinet eventually comes up with, but about strengthening democracy. Citizens are used to only being asked to participate in democracy in a single moment every few years, when they go to the polls – something which is compulsory in Belgium. While it might not work for certain policy areas, experimenting with how to incorporate deliberative democracy into government decision-making is seen as an important mechanism to bridge the gap between politicians and the people.

Australia

The Better Together program in South Australia is one of the most successful and extensive examples of democratic innovations in practice. The tagline of 'Bringing citizens into government decision-making' is not just a saying, but represents a growing set of initiatives that have institutionalised citizens' involvement in making decisions about the issues that are relevant to them. It is a vision for government decision-making that is directly driven by the voices of communities and stakeholders. Launched by Jay Weatherill's government in 2013, it involves collaborations between government and non-government organisations to fund and provide citizen engagement through nine new initiatives: YourSAy, D3 Digital Challenges, Country Cabinet, Simplify, Fund My Idea, Unleashed Open Data Initiative, GovChat, Brand SA consultations and Citizens' Juries. The list is rather impressive given the program has only been underway for two years. Some of these rely on more traditional methods of engagement, such as participatory budgeting and open consultations. However, in combination with initiatives characterised by their focus on deliberation and equal representation through random selection, the common problems of self-selection bias and overrepresentation of certain interest groups are counteracted to a certain extent. The projects relying on newer methods of engagement will be detailed here: YourSAy, and Fund My Idea for their technological originality, as well as the 'country cabinet' and the citizens' juries for their engagement through sortition and deliberation.

YourSAy is an online consultation hub and a central point of con-
tact and collaboration between government departments and com-
munity members. Technology in and of itself is not a transformative
tool. However, the YourSAy platform is both informative and par-
ticipatory. Individuals can access all ongoing and past engagements,
with the additional opportunity of starting their own engagement as
well. Material about all of the other initiatives mentioned is found on
one incredibly accessible and easy-to-navigate website, designed to
both inform and engage. It provides follow-up reports and informa-
tion about all work that is already underway. In the past two years,
almost one-tenth of the population of South Australia has directly
interacted – that is, not just received information – through one of
the initiatives. As of December 2014, 12,300 people have registered
to be involved in further participation, and 8,500 people responded
through the online engagement tool on 103 different topics (Better
Together, 2015). While, in the end, it is just a website, its design
makes it worth highlighting as an example of how to make online
engagement genuinely a two-way street between government and
the people.

The next initiative is Fund My Idea. Once again, whilst partici-
patory budgeting is not in itself a new initiative – it took off in the
late 1980s – the format here is unique, making an exemplary use of
digital to widen access to participation. Located on the YourSAy
website, it gives citizens the opportunity to pitch their ideas online
to the wider community. Others can vote online – for as many ideas
as they like, but only once for each idea. The top three-ranked ideas
are then considered by the government for funding from a $50,000
pot. The website also shows past ideas and votes in all the regions,
as well as details about the projects that received funding. Of course,
this form of participatory budgeting is also imperfect, as it limits the
participants to those who have access to the internet, and to those
who regularly access the YourSAy website. Nonetheless, it broad-
ens the experience to a much wider audience than decisions taken
in community meetings which are restricted to those people in the
room. It also provides transparency to the wider public about what

happens to the money, as the successful bids receive detailed follow-up online in an accessible way. Given that the Better Together program has only been running for a relatively short amount of time, there is scope for access expanding to a much wider audience over time.

The country cabinet is the government's newest initiative in its participatory government program, the first one taking place in July 2014 in Riverland. It involves Weatherill, the South Australia premier, and cabinet ministers visiting three regional communities each year to hear ideas directly from local communities about how to make their region "a more prosperous and thriving place". It differs from a traditional consultation process in that there are extensive pre-engagement activities ahead of the meeting, as well as a robust process in place to ensure that the government can be held accountable for responding to what it hears. Organised informally, it aims to encourage people of all walks of life to attend, usually on a Sunday evening with a BBQ and a question and answer period.

Ahead of the first event, Fund My Idea was opened for the area, with 71 ideas flowing in from the community. After a three-week voting period, the top three ideas were ranked and the top two received funding. Almost 300 people attended the first cabinet, which took place as a BBQ and public forum. Government agencies are required to respond to the issues raised within their scope of competence and report back to the community within 90 days.

So far, the process seems to be working as intended. The Riverland country cabinet response is online for all to see, with an overview about how the consultation worked, the issues that were raised, what has been done so far to address them, and future plans to deliver on the rest. As with the YourSAy website, the design of the report is extremely atypical for a government document. It is presented in a visual way, using infographics to portray the findings clearly and concisely. The country cabinet is innovative in its reliance on deliberation, use of technology and providing citizens with a more direct influence on government decision-making. The only shortcoming is that the participation process is open to anyone, rather

than using random selection or semi-random selection to ensure a representative sample of the community is there. There is likely to be a self-selection bias in who contributes to the country cabinets, as research highlighted in the previous sections of this publication has shown that educated and better off individuals are typically much more likely to partake in such activities.

The final example highlighted here are the two citizens' juries, organised in July-October 2013 and in October-November 2014. Unlike the country cabinets, the juries were chosen using random selection, controlling for a representative sample of the community. Both were led by the independent, non-partisan organisation, the newDemocracy Foundation. The first citizens' jury deliberated on the question: how can we ensure we have a vibrant and safe Adelaide nightlife? The second citizens' jury tackled how motorists and cyclists can safely share the roads in South Australia. For the purposes of illustration, the second, more recent jury will be detailed here.

The jury was prompted by the problem that South Australia has a strong car culture, with an ever-expanding movement of cyclists and campaigns to encourage people to cycle. These two conflicting pressures prompted increasing concern about road safety. The randomly selected group of individuals met for a first time to hear a large range of evidence, with experts, lobbyists, activists, community groups and citizens from the whole community invited to present their opinions through a formal submissions process ahead of time. The jury deliberated in October, presenting 21 recommendations to the premier on 6 November 2014, which are available on the YourSAy website. The government responded on 22 January 2015 – also available online – supporting 18 of the 21 recommendations, and committing to a further investigation of the remaining three. The process does not end here, however, as the implementation of these recommendations will be monitored and reported online every three months.

The citizens' juries highlight how this type of deliberative process, involving a small group of citizens, but also experts and the wider community in a pre-engagement phase, can help make

government more efficient, as well as legitimate. The incredibly fast turnaround from setting out the problem, and developing proposals to the government implementing them shows what happens when decision-making is less bureaucratic. It is also arguable that they are more legitimate, as the voices of the people affected by the decisions were directly taken into account. Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, founder of the newDemocracy Foundation, also stresses in an interview for this publication how "even on the most complex issues, all of the facilitators, academics [and] 'educated elites' are always astounded to see the depth of the investigation." In his eyes,

> Random selection could definitely be a solution for solving our democratic crisis in the long term. Those who take part have no mandate. Diversity also brings out wisdom that is not achieved in parliament, which is still very unrepresentative despite advances in equal rights.

It is also worth noting that the newDemocracy Foundation has been involved with running other deliberative events across Australia since 2009 – from a citizens' parliament, to participatory budgeting, Melbourne's People's Panel, and other community juries. The examples highlight the need for institutionalising these processes on a regular basis for them to a have a greater impact on the community's awareness. The one-off initiatives are wonderful, but the challenge remains in expanding them and convincing those who are still sceptical about handing power to the people.

The South Australian Better Together program has only been in place for a few years. It will be interesting to see the future impact it has had on people's perceptions of democracy and the premier. So far, support for Weatherill's party has increased from 47 per cent at the time of March 2014's state elections to 54 per cent a year later. Weatherill's lead as preferred premier has also increased from 43 to 47 per cent, and only 41 per cent are dissatisfied with his job as premier (Newspoll, 2015). Of course, these numbers take into account a wider set of factors, but the clear increase in support shows that mainstream parties have nothing to lose by moving towards a more participatory and deliberative form of government.

Canada

Two of the earliest experiments with deliberative mini-publics happened in Canada around a decade ago. British Columbia (BC) had a citizens' assembly on electoral reform in 2004; Ontario had one two years later. As these experiments have now been well documented (Smith, 2009; Fournier *et al.*, 2011; Van Reybrouck, 2013), they will only be discussed briefly here, to emphasise the lessons that can be gleaned from their failure to achieve reform.

Both assemblies consisted of randomly selected participants – 161 in BC and 103 in Ontario – chosen from the Permanent Register of Electors in each province. Interested citizens placed their names in a civic lottery, from which the participants were chosen, controlling for age, gender and geographical representation. The assembly members underwent a learning phase of around six months, meeting twice a month to become informed about the current electoral system, and deliberating on alternative options and whether or not it should be changed (Fournier *et al.*, 2011).

In both cases, there was an overwhelming majority in favour of change. In BC, 146 participants supported the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system (a form of proportional representation) against seven who were opposed. In Ontario, 94 people recommended a mixed member proportional representation system, versus eight who were against. The proposals for two different types of electoral reform highlight how there is not any predetermined expected outcome for citizens' assemblies, where citizens are pointed in the desired direction of the organisers; the groups are guided by expert evidence, reasoning, testing each other's views to arrive at a decision. In each province, the proposals were put to referenda, neither of which achieved the 60 per cent required to pass the change (although it is worth noting that in BC it came frustratingly close, with 57.7 per cent of votes in favour; Ontario's vote was firmly in favour of first past the post with 63 per cent against changing the system).

One of the reasons commonly put forward as to why neither of the citizens' assemblies succeeded in seeing their recommendations

approved by voters is opposition from the media. Coverage during the referenda campaign was overly critical, and Elections Canada, the independent elections monitor, failed to provide a detailed description about the positives and negatives of each system (LeDuc, 2011). Excluded from deliberations, each province's politicians were also heavily against the proposal. After all, they benefitted electorally from maintaining the status quo. The fact that the decision had to be ratified through a referendum brings with it all of the arguments against referenda in general. The entire electorate was not part of the six-month, intensive investigation into the pros and cons of reform, instead being asked to deliver a brute opinion devoid of all relevant information. Referenda tend to result in maintenance of the status quo bias; voters who do not know, say no (Whiteley *et al.*, 2011). Despite the overwhelming support for change by the citizens who were given the time and resources to reach an informed opinion, the public did not seem to take their recommendations into account.

Norway

The Norwegian case study departs from the others in a few small ways. It is about an ongoing proposal for citizens' dialogues which will take place in autumn 2015. It is also an initiative organised by the European Movement in Norway, rather than an experiment supported or instigated by government. Yet arguably it is highly relevant to the UK, given the salience of the European question ahead of the forthcoming in-out referendum. Norway is an equally Eurosceptic country, where feelings about membership of the EU tend to be extremely negative. It is also a country where parties monopolise the political agenda and the debate about Europe. Political discussions about important issues have effectively become gridlocked, where polls about EU membership are a superficial reflection of complex questions. "No politician dares to speak about the EU because they are afraid of the public thinking they are agitating [for] a new EU debate," according to Kirsti Methi, the secretary-general of the European Movement, in an interview for this publication.

With some people in the UK suggesting that it would be better off, like Norway, formally outside the EU but closely linked through membership of the European Economic Area, it is interesting to consider a pro-European Norwegian's perspective about the Europe debate and how it can move beyond a polarising in-out question. Many Norwegians view their relationship with Europe as even more undemocratic than the typical complaints in other countries. Their government is not part of negotiations, yet they must accept new rules and legislation coming from the EU. It is a real democratic deficit.

The European Movement, drawing inspiration from the G1000 and other deliberative initiatives such as the Irish Constitutional Convention, is aiming to start a project in Norway based on the premise of involving the public in thoughtful deliberation that can move them beyond the constraints of the simple in-out debate. Their starting point is to develop a methodology to organise roundtables. They are examining the best way of choosing a random sample that is representative of the wider population, ensuring the deliberation is fact-based and unbiased, but still open to people who are not necessarily in favour of joining the EU, and about how to speak about the EU in a way which truly revitalises the discussion beyond yes-no. The idea is to offer this model to sister organisations across Europe.

The basic principle is that the assemblies should have some politicians involved, but as a minority. According to Methi, politicians have a comparative advantage over citizens who are not used to these kind of debates, and could have an unfair influence over leading discussion. In her eyes, it is also important to ensure that politicians who are not specifically engaged in EU questions are involved. Drawing on lessons learned in some of the other cases, such as in Belgium and Ireland, the involvement of politicians can be helpful in convincing the elected elites that citizens have a role to play in these important debates. Where politicians were excluded, such as in the two Canadian citizens' assemblies on electoral reform, they did not benefit from being exposed to all of the various arguments for and against, sticking to their preconceptions and campaigning

against the change advocated by citizens. "Inviting citizens to take part, listening, and taking them seriously can help overcome some of the basic challenges linked to European integration that Norwegian democracy is facing today," Methi suggests.

II. LOCAL LEVEL

The Netherlands

At 100 tables of 10 are 600 citizens randomly selected from the registered electorate, 100 employers, 50 politicians, 50 civil servants, 100 artists, and 100 secretaries taking notes on digital screens. It is three days after an election. Their task? To develop an agenda for the next governing term in the form of priorities and project proposals. Together, they begin the day with three questions:

• What do you think are the most important issues to tackle in your community for the next four years?
• What has to be done in order to make this happen?
• What are you going to do yourself to help make it happen?

This is how the G1000 citizens' summits (*burgertops*) work in the Netherlands. They are citizen-driven initiatives, developed by a few deliberative democracy pioneers to change the traditional top-down ways of local government, drawing inspiration from the national level G1000 in Belgium. Supported by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior, the first *burgertop* started as a trial in the town of Amersfoort, three days after the municipal election on 22 March 2014. Their idea was to complement representative democracy (the recent elections) with deliberative democracy, bringing citizens together for a dialogue on what the new city council, which they had just voted in, should do.

Similarly to the original Belgian design, participants in the G1000 are based on a random draw in the municipal administration. Given its success, other G1000 citizens' summits have taken place in Uden

and Kruiskamp, a neighbourhood of Amersfoort. So far in 2015, further G1000s are planned in Nijmegen, Amsterdam, Groningen and Eindhoven. The idea is not to have the *burgertop* take place once, but on a regular, recurring basis.

The G1000 initiatives in the Netherlands are based on seven complementary pillars: first, random selection to provide all groups with an equal opportunity to participate; second, dialogue; third, participants determine their own agenda; fourth, a cross-section of society is in the room (which is why there is an effort to also include employers, politicians, civil servants and artists alongside the randomly selected citizens); fifth, transparency about all procedures used; sixth, the structure attempts to maintain norms and values; and seventh, it is organised by the citizens themselves. Harm Van Dijk, one of the initiators of project, emphasises in an interview that one of the aims, alongside involving citizens' views in the development of policy proposals, is to help people find things in common:

> In traditional politics, the most important thing is emphasising differences, making society ever more polarised. The chance we have with these new forms of democracy is to search for things in common, to use them as a base for decision making. This common ground is the basis of community.

The deliberations focus on each of the aforementioned questions in turn, with an aim of turning big dreams into practical recommendations and concrete proposals. By the end of the day, 100 proposals are presented, from which the participants choose the top 10.

How does this process feed in to the council's decisions? A few days after the G1000, all of the elected officials come together to discuss their coalition arrangements and goals for their mandated term. With the first few G1000s only having taken place recently, it is still too early to assess the extent to which the recommendations from the citizens' summits have been taken into account. That said, individual parties and politicians have so far mentioned the G1000 outcomes in their social media feeds, and have been open and willing to participate in the summits.

Van Dijk states that the present initiatives underway are pilots, aiming to gather information on how to develop the G1000 and its output to have the greatest impact on the city council. For that reason, G1000.nu, the organisation that facilitates the pilot, is working together with social and political scientists from six universities who are doing research on the G1000s. For the organisers, the big question is how to regain trust by using sortition. Their next goal is to make a push in convincing non-voters to register. However, Van Dijk also notes that, due to the use of dialogue and deliberation throughout the process, "the views of the politicians and civil servants changed just as much as those of the citizens. At first they were hesitant, sceptical, afraid of disappointment. Yet they were very enthusiastic about meeting people who were, in fact, as engaged as themselves." As more and more people have a chance to participate and spread their positive experiences, the hope is that it will encourage non-voters to participate in the future.

The Dutch Ministry of the Interior is financially supporting a group of social scientists from Utrecht University, the Free University Amsterdam and Leiden University to analyse the impacts of the G1000s in terms of the diversity of participants and the impact on policy. The findings from the first three 'experiments' in Amersfoort, Uden and Kruiskamp will inform the organisation of the future G1000s in other cities. Ronald Plasterk, the minister of the interior, is supportive of the process. In a recent interview for this report, he outlines his view that:

> Democracy can and should be more than just representative democracy. We are used to thinking that democracy means 'I vote for somebody who represents me, who then becomes part of the executive, who has a team of civil servants, who usually have other people to help them with their work.' In the end, you are four steps removed from the individual who hopes to be determining what should happen in their environment. Deliberative democracy provides different perspectives and allows you to search your own mind for what you really care about.

Canada

The more recent example of a Canadian deliberative mini-public in action is the Grandview Woodlands Citizens' Assembly currently taking place in Vancouver, British Columbia, which is focused on city planning. It arose out of a particular set of circumstances. Devising the community plan for the next 30 years – concerning issues such as land use, urban design, housing, transportation and community facilities – was initially underway in the traditional manner, led by experts and stakeholders. In 2012, the city organised a number of initiatives to engage community members, with workshops, questionnaires, social media activities and open houses. The following year, they released a draft policy report for Grandview Woodlands, taking into account some citizen proposals as well as commercial interests. While the area is in desperate need of new housing and developments, the plan put forth proposed to increase density with many unaffordable towers concentrated in one part of the town. Andrea Reimer, the deputy Mayor of Vancouver, expressed in an interview for this publication that the community's trust shattered at this point. It is an area in desperate need of a plan; the last one had been 30 years ago. It is the only part of Vancouver with negative population growth. Yet the initial proposal did not seem to take the residents into account, with strong opposition to the proposed vision for the future of the neighbourhood.

The citizens requested that the city council extend its consultation process to address these concerns. But, rather than carry out a second set of consultations in the exact same manner, Reimer, having been an observer of the 2004 Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, suggested an alternative planning process which would give people more power over the decisions being made about their community – a citizens' assembly. The community was consulted through an online questionnaire and two workshops in 2014 about how the assembly would work, after which a mandate was established.

How does it work? About 500 local residents volunteered to put themselves forward as candidates to participate in the new

planning process. Of these, 48 members were randomly chosen, controlling for age, gender, education level, income and racial diversity. It was also ensured that the group was a mix of renters and owners; for the first time ever, renters have had an important say in a town-planning process. Certain groups, such as immigrants and young people, also finally have a voice in a process that typically excluded them. The size of the assembly was one of the most contentious issues to be determined; in the end, the thinking was based on the concept of a class size. After a certain number, it becomes difficult to include all individuals in one conversation without splitting into smaller groups. According to the organisers, 48 was the number which they determined still permitted a quality deliberation to take place, while controlling for representativeness of the community.

Over the course of eight months, the members will have spent 4,000 hours deliberating, as well as running public meetings and including public calls for submissions to include the voices of other community members who are not part of the core assembly group. Although the mayoral office has been supportive of the initiative, they wanted to ensure that the deliberation would remain non-partisan and impartial. MASS LBP, a Canadian company that runs deliberative events, was commissioned to host the assembly process and act as a moderator.

The citizens' assembly is still running its course, with further meetings and public reviews due to take place. As with the other mini-publics, there has been a balance of trade-offs with the initiative. It has been extremely expensive, costing Can$250,000 for less than a year of consultation. With 48 people representing a community of 25,000 there is also the question of whether people will buy into the plan that is ultimately proposed; in short, whether it will be seen as legitimate is still to be determined. Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine how such a process could be perceived as less legitimate than the initial consultation, which gave the impression of citizen engagement, but was ultimately dominated by commercial interests. The idea has also become highly political. There are groups

who have traditionally had a much greater influence in the planning process – such as elected officials and individuals who are largely retired and wealthy with time on their hands – who are extremely opposed for obvious reasons. Their longstanding dominance over less privileged parts of the population is crumbling away. There is also a subset of the opposition who believe that renters should not be allowed to be involved in decision-making, despite the fact that 70 per cent of the population are renters. Once again, the power of a small group of owners is not being permitted to dictate.

On the positive side, there are also many who view the experience in an optimistic light. Reimer says in an interview that "it is amazing to watch 48 people of very different experiences and backgrounds, thinking they won't agree on much, realise that they actually have much more in common than they thought when they come together to deliberate." Her hopes are high. If the experience is positive for the people involved and if it proves effective for planning, there can be scope to approach the provincial level for the basket of tools to use citizens' assemblies for other purposes.

III. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS

Iceland

Iceland has become relatively well-known for its 'crowd-sourced' – albeit failed – constitution. It was not, in fact, entirely crowd-sourced, as the design comprised a handful of varying methods, involving self-selection for candidacy, sortition, elections and online engagement. The process started in 2009 following a general election. The new government appointed a constitutional committee of seven to work together with a national forum comprised of 950 citizens, drawn randomly from the national registry, and a constituent assembly where 25 individuals were elected out of a roster of 523 candidates of all backgrounds and political affiliations using STV. This latter group of 25, known initially as the Constitutional Assembly and later as the Constitutional Council,

was the core institution of the constitution-making process. The council's use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to publicise their drafts and encourage contributions from the public was what caused some to hail it as a 'crowd-sourced' constitution. Over the course of four months, the Council also consulted various experts and ordinary citizens to inform the bill, bringing it to a national referendum in late 2012. Sixty-seven per cent of the electorate voted in favour of the constitutional bill. It appeared a wonderful day for deliberative democracy proponents. However, the referendum was merely advisory, not binding, leaving it open to dismissal by the parliament.

While the constitution and the process by which it was drawn up were widely supported by the public, elected officials were less convinced. The politicians, their positions threatened, did everything in their power to ensure the status quo prevailed. They filibustered the proposal for months. When the bill was put forward as an amendment to another related last-minute bill, the parliamentary president violated procedure by bringing it to a vote before the amendment was presented. This took place at 2am during the last parliamentary session before recess. The general election soon after saw a change in government. Today, the constitutional bill appears unlikely to be revived.

While the whole process was welcomed at the time for its innovative proceedings, drawing admiration and interest from abroad, the fact that it failed to deliver change also calls for reflection. Why? In comparison to the Irish case discussed next, the Icelandic convention excluded politicians from deliberation, making it possible for them to dismiss the entire process afterwards. It appears that this detail is crucial for success, as emphasised in the two Canadian citizens' assemblies on electoral reform. The fact that the council was elected from a self-selected body of candidates also leads to questions about the convention's representativeness. Those elected were well-known public figures in Icelandic society; it seems unlikely that they were truly representative or diverse. In the hypothetical scenario of a constitutional convention in the UK, the Irish case appears to be a better model to follow, though it also has some flaws.

Ireland

The Irish Constitutional Convention took place a few years after the Icelandic one in 2013. It was prompted in a similar way as a response to the financial crisis and ensuing political crisis. Following Fine Gael's win in the 2011 elections, the promise of a citizens' assembly for political and electoral reform was established. The resulting Irish Constitutional Convention comprised 66 randomly selected citizens (though controlled for a gender, age, religion and socioeconomic balance), 33 politicians (one from each of the parties in the Northern Ireland assembly that wanted to participate, as well as members of the Irish parliament in proportion to party strengths), and a chair appointed by the government.

The convention's members worked in small groups with facilitators, note-takers and experts to reach a consensus on eight highly contentious issues: "reducing the presidential term of office to five years and aligning it with the local and European elections; reducing the voting age to 17; review of the Dáil electoral system; giving citizens resident outside the state the right to vote in presidential elections at Irish embassies, or otherwise; provision for same-sex marriage; amending the clause on the role of women in the home and encouraging greater participation of women in public life; increasing the participation of women in politics; and removal of the offence of blasphemy from the Constitution" (Resolution of the Houses of the Oireachtas, 2012). This contrasted greatly with the Icelandic case, where the Constitutional Council drafted a new constitution from scratch.

The Irish Constitutional Convention met on numerous weekends over the course of a year. The participants made their recommendations on the basis of majority votes on each of the topics on the table for discussion, submitting reports to the government. If the government accepted them, any proposed changes were to be ratified by a referendum. Towards the end of the year, the convention additionally discussed other potential reforms which were not included in the list handed down by the government. Ultimately, they added

two more areas, about reforming the Dáil and economic, social and cultural rights. The government accepted the first three reforms proposed by the convention, on reducing the voting age to 16, retaining the length of the presidential term and reducing the minimum age for presidential candidates, and that same-sex marriage should be legalised. The government agreed to hold referenda on the voting age and same-sex marriage by 2015. For the rest, they considered the convention's recommendations but did not commit to any referenda. The first referendum as a result of the convention's recommendations was on legalising same-sex marriage in May 2015. It resulted in a resounding yes, as 62 per cent of the electorate voted in favour. The referendum on voting age, however, was later abandoned following strong opposition from senior members of parliament from both main government parties (Collins, 2015).

In many ways, the Irish case was better than the Icelandic convention. First, the method of choosing participants was more democratic in nature, ensuring that the citizens taking part were representative of Irish society. Additionally, by involving them in the process, it was ensured that politicians would not feel so alienated as to simply ignore or discard proposals as happened in the Icelandic scenario. Although they were sceptical at first, the politicians who were part of the convention have now become its advocates, and are urging the process to continue with new issues put up for debate. The researchers involved with the process, especially the director David Farrell, also found that the politicians did not dominate in the discussions, which was one of the fears of including them in the deliberations. Finally, research from studying the deliberations has led to further affirmation of the thesis that diversity is a prerequisite for good deliberation (Suiter *et al.*, 2014), as was found in the G1000 case study (Caluawerts and Deschouwer, 2014). On the practical side, the convention completed its work within the time frame initially set out by the government and within a relatively tiny budget, proving that such a process need not be expensive.

On the other hand, there were some lessons learned in how the design of the constitutional convention could be improved.

The agenda handed down by the government limited the convention's scope in terms of the issues to be discussed. The topics varied widely, both in their content and in their narrowness or breadth. Some were criticised for being largely irrelevant. A year after the convention ended, four of the nine proposals produced are yet to be debated in parliament. The government has also taken back its promise to hold a referendum on reducing the voting age, one of the recommendations which they had voted to accept. This was done in a newspaper interview. Another proposal on voting rights in presidential elections for citizens outside of the state was also rejected rather undemocratically in "a glossy brochure announcing the government's new diaspora policy" (Farrell, 2015). Beyond the referendum in May 2015 on same-sex marriage, another has been vaguely committed to on blasphemy, and there has been a commitment to establish a commission on the electoral system at an undetermined point within the next government. Despite the pledge for a referendum on voting age, this has also been abandoned. As Farrell (2015) argues:

> The government's disinterest in the recommendations of the convention does a disservice to its members, endangers the brand and – not for the first time – shows up serious shortcomings in the commitment of this administration towards its supposed reform agenda.

These are all important lessons to keep in mind for any future constitutional convention design. Although the opinion polling in the previous chapter shows less public willingness to participate in a binding convention, perhaps some degree of enforced commitment is, in fact, necessary for such a process to be taken seriously by the elected elites, and to prevent proposals thereby not being simply ignored or discarded.

CONCLUSION

As traditional parties in Europe lose ever more voters to new insurgent actors and movements, understanding the drivers behind this phenomenon is increasingly important. Of course, a certain percentage of those flocking to right and leftwing populist parties are doing so for specific reasons, whether about Europe, immigration or cracking down on inequality. However, the research presented here has tried to demonstrate that a vast majority of people attracted by populists are not doing so for economic or cultural reasons alone. They are angry and disillusioned with an elite political class seen as working in their own interests, and who they perceive as morally and politically bankrupt. Yes, they may believe that migrants are straining services in places where there have been particularly concentrated influxes, or that these pressures are resulting in not enough affordable housing or places in good schools. But, fundamentally, these grievances are driven by a feeling that the governing establishment has failed them.

To counter populists who are feeding off of anger and a politics of grievance, mainstream parties need to offer people the prospect of doing things radically differently. This means loosening their grip on power and decentralising not just between different levels of government, but directly to communities and to individuals as

well. Creating new institutions that give people a voice which can empower them to collaborate and contribute to the change they want to see.

The new survey data from the UK presented in this publication makes it clear that people feel that they have no voice in a centralised, top-down and hierarchical political system. That system feels archaic in an age of horizontal relationships and open, devolved and participatory power. The willingness people show in our polling to participating in new democratic innovations involving deliberation and the random selection of participants – in this case, citizens' assemblies – emphasises this further.

The international case studies in this publication demonstrate that there have already been some small steps in the direction of a networked, participatory and deliberative democracy. They highlight that deliberative events, involving a diverse group of people who are representative of the population, can lead to greater social cohesion, as well as more efficient and legitimate policymaking. Diverse groups are shown to make better decisions than expert groups, let alone homogeneous political groups (Page, 2008; Landemore, 2012). When the participants involved are chosen randomly from the population, or semi-randomly with qualified controls to ensure that they reflect the age, gender, socioeconomic and racial makeup of society, they are evidently much more representative than our elected politicians, who are still, by and large, drawn from a similar social and educational background despite progress towards greater equality. Given they will not be seeking re-election, the need to adhere to the party line in order to seek promotion or adhere to the pressures exerted by lobbyists and unions are removed from the equation. Furthermore, these kinds of deliberative initiatives stimulate learning and competence about the issues discussed; evidence compellingly shows that people exhibit much greater competency and judgement than is often assumed and are capable of understanding complex issues. Countless studies have now shown that greater citizen participation in the collective decision-making process is not only fairer, but also leads to better decisions.

So how exactly should parties and governments implement these democratic innovations? There is no 'one size fits all' approach, as the variety of initiatives in the previous section indicate. In general, there are two main ways forward: incremental and radical structural reforms to the political system. The biggest challenge is that the principles behind these ideas – sortition and deliberation – confront the institutionalised party system, requiring the established elite to relinquish some of its power. Most people are not aware that sortition was a dominant form of governance from antiquity to the Renaissance and was replaced by our contemporary notion of elected representative democracy only in the late 18th century. To be clear, the proposal is not to eliminate political parties or an elected body of citizens. It is rather to consider various ways in which those parties and politicians can be complemented with different mechanisms that permit the wisdom of the many to influence the decisions which affect their lives.

In terms of incremental options, an initial approach could be to follow the example of the Netherlands and introduce randomly selected citizens' assemblies at the local level, which come together to deliberate on the issues facing the council and on what individual community members can do to contribute. Other approaches could expand the use of citizens' juries on contentious issues. In Adelaide, Australia, people were chosen to deliberate on how to make the city safer in light of its vibrant nightlife. In Melbourne, a citizens' jury met for four months to deliberate on spending, revenue raising and priorities for the city's 10-year financial plan. At the regional level, a citizens' cabinet will deliver proposals to the Flemish minister of culture in Belgium ahead of his next set of policy announcements.

In the UK, citizens' assemblies to discuss the issue of Britain's membership of the EU, for example, could be a way of balancing the binary and polarising in-out debate. Local councils could organise citizens' assemblies with randomly selected citizens to deliberate about the arguments for and against EU membership. Technology could be used to live stream the deliberations and involve individuals who were not selected to take part. It could be the stepping stone

towards more entrenched citizen involvement in shaping MPs'
and government decision-making on other salient issues, such as
housing and immigration.

London's mayoral election is next year: what if the mayor lobbies
the government to add some rotating, randomly selected citizens
to the London assembly? Or perhaps even lobbies to replace the
London assembly altogether with a rotating group of randomly
selected Londoners? The new mayor could also organise a citizens'
assembly soon after the election, to ensure the ideas and views of the
people of London help inform his or her priorities for the next four
years. The same could happen in Bristol, Salford and Liverpool in
2016, and in Manchester after its mayoral elections in 2017. There
is a lot of scope for creative thinking about how the government's
devolution agenda to city regions could involve citizens' voices
directly in these new institutions. While a constitutional convention
seems off the cards for now, with devolution plans developing in
the traditionally centralised, top-down way from Westminster, the
pressure for holding one should not subside.

However, these incremental steps are only a starting point for
familiarising people – including elected politicians – with the idea
that 'ordinary' citizens can and should be involved in making
important political decisions. The challenge remains of how to insti-
tutionalise these new forms of participation. However, it is difficult
to see how that will be possible without convincing political elites
that decentralising power is to society's benefit, including their own.
It has become so ingrained that elections equal democracy, and that
"elected representatives would be distinguished citizens, socially
distinct from those who elected them" (Manin, 1996). Once again,
the case studies offer some hope; in every example where politicians
were involved in deliberations with ordinary people, their scepticism
morphed into unanimous approval for the process itself. Eventually,
the idea of a citizens' senate (Zakaras, 2010) – a (stratified) ran-
domly selected group of citizens to approve or veto legislation – to
replace the unelected House of Lords could become a reality rather

than simply a radical scheme promoted by political theorists and democracy advocates.

The populist signal is clear. It is a warning to political parties and governments to revisit their approaches to governance and representation. Of course, democratic innovations are not quick-fix solutions for rebuilding trust and alleviating political disaffection. However, they have a real potential to improve the legitimacy and efficacy of our political system in the long term. Innovative forums – such as citizens' assemblies, the use of deliberation and drawing participants randomly by lot – allow political institutions to involve people directly in making important decisions that affect their lives. This is a crucial step in helping to update the archaic 19th century democratic institutions for a hyper-connected, devolved and interactive democracy which reflects the modern age. People demand a more engaging, open, digital society. Populism can be seen as a corrective for democracy if it forces politicians and parties to let go a little and experiment with new ways of reconnecting people with politics. These new forms of political engagement should not be seen as a threat to formal systems of government, but as much-needed additions that enrich democracy itself.

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