



A POLIS paper

PERPETUAL ENGAGEMENT

THE POTENTIAL AND PITFALLS OF USING
SOCIAL MEDIA FOR POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

Stella Creasy MP

Preface

We live in an age where the citizen feels increasingly sceptical about and disconnected from those people who run our lives. Paradoxically, this is also an era when the communicative power of new media technologies mean that the potential for interaction between voter and politicians has never been greater. This paper is one politician's attempt to square that circle.

We are past the utopian phase in the adoption of digital communications where we might have hoped that the Internet would automatically bring about more democracy. It's clear that like all good things, digital engagement requires effort, ingenuity and ethics. This paper, based on a lecture given as part of the POLIS Media Dialogues, tries to set out an ideological as well as practical agenda for that task.

Stella Creasy is a committed campaigner for her party and specific progressive causes. As a new MP she now has a place in power. Her challenge is to make it more than a career choice. She believes that the nature of politics in Britain must change and that new communication channels can help in that process – especially at a local level. She is also realistic and honest enough to set out the obstacles and to outline the potential negatives that might result.

This paper is not an instruction manual. Instead it is part testimony and part manifesto for a new kind of networked political campaigning. We hope that anyone interested in the health of political communications and of representative democracy will find it both stimulating and useful.

Here at POLIS and in the LSE's Department of Media and Communications we spend our time teaching, debating and researching political communications. We are delighted that Stella Creasy has taken the time to help us make the connection.

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