

Talking to a brick wall? media and campaigning (guest blog)

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This report by POLIS intern Ariadne Kypriadi

There can't be an MP left who hasn't heard of Twitter and some of them are actually using it. But is new media an efficient way to campaign?



The latest Polis Media Dialogue invited LSE alumnus and Labour MP for Walthamstow, Stella Creasy and former Labour pollster Deborah Mattinson, to share their experience and knowledge, as well as their predictions for the future of political campaigning.

Voters now have access to hundreds of channels of information. There is no more a dominant platform for a debate to take place. The public ground is changing, with people turning to the internet for information regarding political life. "People want conversation, not broadcast", says Creasy.

However, being online does not guarantee political success. Creasy criticized politicians who make lovely videos online without thinking how it could be practically used to support their campaign. In Britain, the opportunity to utilize the internet in the same way that the "Tea Party" did has yet to come.



It is better to have no communication, than an inadequate one, says Creasy. There is no reason to spend money on platforms that don't help the party to achieve its goals, that's to say, to win.

On the other hand, the future of political campaigning lies on the capacity of the politicians to engage people. The Obama campaign is one such example, which managed to acquire a mailing list of 30 million people and raise half a billion dollars. However, the Obama machine seems to be time-limited and has not been kept going during the actual Presidency.

She talked about her own engagement to voters through Twitter. Although communicating with the public may require a lot of time and effort, it creates a new model of representation. People's expectations about their relationship with their representative change. The politicians will eventually sacrifice part of their privacy. However, the political engagement should not be perceived as a personal relationship. Online communication is not a popularity contest.

Deborah Mattinson pointed out three major issues in political campaigns:

1. That the national campaign matters less and the local campaign matters more.
2. Voters find the campaigns futile, self-seeking and overall dull.
3. People don't know all that much about politicians and politics.

She also noted how little politicians try.

The author of "Talking to a Brick Wall" mentioned some essential tactics in political campaigns. She put emphasis on the need to change the dynamic of the campaign by introducing a different perspective. In addition, the politicians should never ask for the voters to be grateful for what they have been offered. They will vote for what the candidates will do, not what they have already done. It is also very difficult to set a new trend, so going with current may be a better choice. Abstract words don't assist the candidates' causes. They need to focus on the benefits that their

programme will have for the voters.

So what could be assumed, about the role of the media, especially the new media, in political campaigns? Their dynamic is undeniable. Nevertheless, they need the human power, the desire of the politician to engage with the public. They can assist not only during a campaign, but also in the longer-term development of a much-needed trust and understanding between the citizens and their representatives.

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You can read another [report on this event by LSE lecturer Nick Anstead](#) who was the respondent.

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