

new technology can be speedy, but for that reason they may also be superficial. Malcolm Gladwell wrote in 2010 that ‘the revolution will not be tweeted’. He is probably right. Politics change requires more lasting and durable connections. There is a danger that a proliferation of unconventional political campaigns leaves the political class to sew up the lasting connections among themselves.

Above all, there is the danger that Benjamin Constant warned against. If we leave routine politics in the hands of a narrow group of specialists, we won’t know how to take it back from them when we need it. The multiple scandals of the last few years – the banking scandal, the MPs’ expenses scandal, the phone-hacking scandal, the GCHQ/NSA scandal – have tended to generate a widespread sense of powerlessness alongside the occasional spasms of fury. The political elite have been exploiting our inattention to shore up their own position. We would like to hold them to account for their temerity, but we lack the tools to do it: their superior knowledge of how politics works leaves us feeling

impotent. People who think they can pick up politics when they need it often find that when they really need it they don’t know where to find it. The professionals run rings round them. The only way to learn how to do politics is to keep on doing it, in good times as well as bad. We need more politics and we need more politicians.