8

Performances of power – the site of public debate

Katrina Grant

In 2009, the protests against the election result in Iran began to play out not just on the streets of the capital Tehran but online. Shortly after the protests, Lev Grossman wrote in *Time* magazine that Twitter (at that point the platform was only three years old) was 'ideal for a mass protest movement, both very easy for the average citizen to use and very hard for any central authority to control' (Grossman, 2009). Over 10 years later, the latter seems to have remained true, but the idea that it is serving the 'average citizen' is now less convincing. The potential for online social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Reddit and others to be subject to manipulation and used for the spread of misinformation and abuse has been in the spotlight in recent years (Geeng et al., 2020). The hope (perhaps always naive) that online platforms would give a voice and a presence to millions of citizens and drive positive democratic change has not really come to pass. Although there are movements that have used the online space to provide visibility for traditionally invisible and marginalised groups in mainstream media (such as #metoo and #blacklivesmatter), there is the flip side of online spaces used to drive coordinated programs of abuse against women (#gamergate), to inflame hatred of religious minorities, and the use of bots to disseminate misinformation and offer counternarratives (Massanari, 2017; Cadwalladr, 2017). Social media has also become a public stage for the performance of power and, in extreme cases, violent acts (Irwin-Rogers and Pinkney, 2017). The prominent role

of social media in the 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch, which was livestreamed on Facebook, has added further weight to calls to regulate online space.

As a historian, there is always a temptation to look for parallels between current trends and those of the past. The new world ushered in by digital connectivity can be compared to other moments when technology transformed communication: the telegraph, when steam allowed faster travel. The purpose of this chapter is to look specifically at how places designed and built for public debate have enabled the performance of power and social hierarchies by certain groups in society. The intention is both to show continuities and to point out distinct differences. This chapter aims to add some depth and background to the comparisons between online spaces of debate, like Twitter, Facebook and other online forums with the public squares, speakers' corners and private spaces of the past that allowed the dissemination of ideas and supported propaganda and reinforcing social hierarchies that benefit some while discriminating against others.

This idea, that a 'space' designed for publics to gather in could be used to reshape society, to give voice to the populace, and offer a challenge to, or a check upon, power, is not new. In the following chapter by Nurmikko-Fuller and Pickering, the long history of public debates about and political responses to the advent of new communication technologies is examined. Here the focus is on digital technology as a public space. For millennia the design of towns and cities has deliberately included, or excluded, types of open, public spaces designed to support the functioning of that society. These places, whether designed as town squares, agora or piazzas, were intended to provide space for gatherings of people to come together to voice opinion and debate, to vote and to be given access and insight into the politics that governed their daily lives. These physical places have performed a role as stages for the symbolic and real enactment of political power, regardless of whether this is the power of a populace as in democracy, an individual (absolutism) or even a religious elite (theocracy). Online social media sites, like Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, etc., are often compared to public squares (Kavanaugh et al., 2010; Mascaro and Goggins, 2012); but, do they share characteristics with the Ancient Greek agora or the twentieth-century civic plaza? This chapter will examine why public space is important in the performance of political power and its links with democracy, governance and ideals of civil society through several case studies. It will also examine not just the

reality of these urban spaces, but the idea of them, and how the symbolic ideal of the 'city square' has come to inform our understanding, use and regulation of online social platforms (Hamilton, 2021).

The Arab Spring and Twitter as a site of protest

The Iranian protests and then the Arab Spring, which saw uprisings against governments across countries in the Middle East, was one of the first times that social media – blogging, Twitter and Facebook – began to be seen as something other than a purely 'social' network or type of media platform (West, 2009; El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2012). The mainstream media, and by extension broader society, began to regard social platforms as something more than just useful tools for connecting with friends. Social media began to be talked about as a site for protest and dissent. It was described as a place analogous to the streets of Tehran or Tahrir Square in Cairo.

Heidi Campbell and Diana Hawk analysed the ways in which Al Jazeera described the use of social media during the Arab Spring and they report that social media was frequently described not just as a news medium but as 'a site itself' (Campbell and Hawk, 2012). They quote a report from the Qatari news outlet from February 2011 that described 'the battle in Egypt fought on the pages of Elvis Bok [Facebook]' (Campbell and Hawk, 2012). Specific Facebook sites set up to protest police brutality were described as 'rallying points' (BBC, 2011; El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2012). Social media users were also described as 'online citizens' or 'netizens', a use of language usually applied to people who share residence in a physical place, a city, region or country (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2012). Also of significance, and discussed at the time, was the default public nature of Twitter, which set it apart from other social media such as Facebook. Grossman in *Time* described it as follows: 'e-mail and Facebook … those media aren't public. They don't broadcast, as Twitter does' (Grossman, 2009). This created an identity for Twitter in particular as the new public square, accessible by anyone and designed to facilitate open discussion.

Quite soon after the protest movements had finished, or at least faded from daily global reporting, a more critical discussion began to take place. The role of social media was questioned: was it exaggerated by the Western journalists? Were the 'real-time' updates, pictures and videos put on Twitter specifically for a global audience, rather than those on the ground? Evgeny Morozov critiqued the Western media's breathless excitement over the power of social media to unseat authoritarian governments. He wrote: 'Whether technology was actually driving the protests remains a big unknown. It is certainly a theory that many in the West find endearing' (Morozov, 2009). A report from 2012 observed that Twitter participation inside Iran at the time was actually quite low, with only '8500 Twitter users who self-reported as Iranian in May 2009 … [and] less than 1000 of those were active during the election period' (Aday et al., 2010). What this report concluded, however, was that Twitter and other online media platforms mattered because they became the main source of information about what was happening on the ground. The new platforms circumvented the restrictions placed on journalists and that meant that 'the outside world's perceptions of the protests were crucially shaped by Twitter (as conveyed through blogs and other means), amateur videos uploaded to YouTube and Facebook, and other sources' (Aday et al., 2010). Even while the protests themselves unfolded in real space, Twitter and Facebook became sites where these social movements were opened up to larger publics who were not necessarily physically located in the cities themselves.

This ideal of the city public space and its link to democracy has a long history; the Ancient Greek and early modern Italian city states attained an iconic status as symbols of the connection between urban design and politics (Low, 2009). Designers who laid or replanned cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries privileged civic spaces as symbols of democracy, though often with mixed success in terms of their actual use. In the twenty-first century the rise of online spaces like Twitter and Facebook have offered an alternative gathering place for citizens, yet the city itself retains both a symbolic and real importance as a driver for civic engagement and the preservation of democratic government. Both online and offline spaces remain important for real and symbolic performances of power by the populace, and both are susceptible to manipulation by individuals or groups who wish to manipulate public opinion and reshape political power structures.

The case of ancient Greece and Rome

The origins of the idea of an urban space for public debate as a key part of democracy, or at least egalitarian politics, are strongly linked to places like the Agora of Athens in ancient Greece and the Forum Romanum in ancient Rome. These spaces have come to represent an ideal of a public space that enabled, and even encouraged, democracy, free speech and allowed the populace, or *polis*, to access and scrutinise political representatives and leaders. The name agora means 'to meet' and also 'to speak publicly', 'place of assembly', 'to proclaim', 'to harangue' and so on (Liddell and Scott, 1940). This demonstrates the extent to which the place itself was aligned with the act of speaking publicly at the time. Of course, it was not necessarily a space of free speech for all. In ancient Greece, the agora 'was the property of male citizens' (Rotroff and Lamberton, 2006), meaning that slaves and women were excluded (although the reality, as explained by Rotroff and Lamberton, was more complex). On the other hand, Athens distinguished itself by including the poor in this space, by offering them pay that allowed them to attend the assembly and therefore offered them a level of equality in terms of public speech (Bejan, 2017).

What is of interest in this essay is not so much the reality of the agora in ancient Greece, but the idea of it, both at the time – in the writings that have survived – and in the millennia since the agora has been presented as a place that allows free, public speech; and that this ability to speak and debate publicly in turn supports a democratic society (Urbinati, 2002; Saxonhouse, 2005; Arendt, 2019). In other words, without this particular urban space, the society itself would have been different. The development of cities is often linked to the development of civilised society (at least in the Western tradition). The shift to living in a city transformed the laws and actions that governed life from individualistic, concerned only with one's own family group, to public (Frampton, 2017). At the heart of these early city states, like Athens, was the agora, a place deliberately designed and denoted as one in which the ideals of the society would be practised in public. The reasons for the success of the Greek city states are obviously complex, but the *idea* of the agora as either instrumental in its success, or as a material realisation of it values, is powerful. Saul Frampton has asked 'was the rise of the polis somehow the astonishing aftereffect of the simple act of drawing a line?' (Frampton, 2017). Hannah Arendt, in her 1958 book *The Human Condition*, proposed that the public realm in its simplest form was the coming together of people in 'the manner of speech

and action' and that wherever people 'gather together … civilisations can rise and fall' (Arendt, 2019). The actual design and layout of the place is not then so important; what matters is that there is a kind of space where people can come together to share 'words and deeds'.

The agora was not a place of complete freedom; however, it was governed by rules and expectations. The freedom to speak and to debate came with a requirement that certain standards of behaviour be kept. And, despite these standards, the agora often became a place of quarrels rather than discussion (Finley, 2002); words were used in civil debate, but they were also weapons to harangue and humiliate, and beyond that disagreements would descend into brawls and even killings (Frampton, 2017). But this too had its value: it was a designated space for a 'controlled explosion', a 'triangle of violence'. This brings us to the idea of the public space as a stage for performance. In the fifth century BCE, the Athenian general and politician Cleon described the Athenians as 'spectators of speeches' (McGlew, 1996), while Plato coined the word *theatrokratia*, 'theatrocracy' of politics as spectator sport (Meineck, 2017). The spectacle of public speech and the role of civility in public debate – especially within the political realm – has been explored in-depth in the previous chapter by Kenny.

The Forum Romanum was similar to the agora, but also different. Nicholas Purcell outlines that open spaces like the forum were much more than just 'voids between buildings' (Purcell, 1989). The forum was a site for transactions of social power, where behaviour, speech and society could be asserted, debated and challenged. The Forum Romanum, in particular, was much more than just a public space; it began as a marketplace and a site for temples, but it also included sites for public speeches and meetings of councils, and for spectacle (Purcell, 2007). Amanda Claridge (1998) writes that it was a 'general purpose open public space for political assemblies (and riots and rallies), committee meetings, lawsuits, public funerals … and public feasts'. Our understanding of both the Agora of Athens and the Forum Romanum as sites for free speech and the practice (or indeed performance) of democracy are coloured by stories and mythologies. The idea that there is a place where debate can occur and a range of opinions may be heard is seen as fundamental to democracy. With the revival of ancient texts and philosophies in the Renaissance in Europe, these ideas became central to the rise of the republican city states in early modern Europe.

The rise and fall of republican civic space in Florence

The performance of power (both real and ideal) was central to the practice of politics in early modern Europe. The public spaces in cities belonged to the public but they were also sites for the performance of political power where rulers could strike a balance between visibility and control. This period is generally characterised as one that saw the rise of absolutism, as in France, and, in turn, saw challenges to this type of rule, such as in the English Civil War. The popes at the head of the papal states maintained a difficult balance between being head of the church and secular rulers. At the same time there were shifts across Europe as many small republican city states formed in the early Renaissance gradually came under the rule of ducal or princely families. Performances of different kinds were used to demonstrate both the power of rulers and of the people, to create mythologies and to enact social hierarchies.

The city of Florence is an ideal example. The Palazzo della Signoria in the centre of Florence was the most important civic space, a place for the populace to vote, to observe their rulers and for rulers to perform their power. The first popular government of the small city republic in the thirteenth century passed laws to control the height of towers on private buildings, a law designed to curtail the domination of public space by various family clans (Atkinson, 2013). The chronicler Giovanni Cavalcanti wrote in the early decades of the fifteenth century that 'whoever holds the piazza [della Signoria], always is master of the city' (Rubinstein, 1995), a statement that should be read not as a declaration of the need for physical control, but of the importance of symbolic and intellectual control of the main civic space and the populace who gathered there. Florence and its civic spaces make an interesting case study for several reasons. The classical origins evoked by the Renaissance humanists demonstrate the importance of historic examples of the role of civic space and the belief that these spaces themselves had a role to play in creating the conditions for a government of the *popolo* (people). The use and events that unfolded in the space demonstrate how civic spaces are subject to control, loss of control and instability, and, finally, the way that civic, or, as we may think of them, 'democratic', spaces can ultimately be subject to manipulation by an oligarchy, and become stages for the performance of civics and liberty that no longer exist in reality.

During the fourteenth century, Florence's central civic square, the Piazza della Signoria, was redesigned into what Marvin Trachtenberg has described as a 'spatiovisual production of power' (Trachtenberg, 1997). This space stood for the civic values of republican Florence, in contrast to the nearby Piazza del Duomo, a symbol of religious power (MacKenney, 2004) and in contrast to the preceding period when powerful families had carved out enclaves within the city and controlled these with force and the construction of towers and other fortifications. The piazza was a symbolic space, framing the seat of republican government in the Palazzo Vecchio, but it was also a real space where militias could assemble, or public events could be held to demonstrate the authority of the government (Trachtenberg, 1997). Spaces like this belonged to the public and their design as open spaces with many streets that fed into it meant that they could as easily become places where crowds could gather and become mobs, or stage an assault on the palazzo itself. This is exactly what happened during the Ciompi revolt in 1378 when woolworkers, who were excluded from guild membership and therefore from positions in the Florentine Government, staged an assault on the piazza and seized the palazzo in an attempt (which ultimately failed) to extend Florentine *libertas* (essentially the freedom from authoritarian or oligarchical rule) from the elites to the workers (Brucker, 1997).

The piazza was used as a gathering place for citizens to participate in plebiscites and to attend the regular inductions of new governments. These 'social spaces' in the early modern republican city state were 'central to the formation, expression and modification of individual and group identities' (Trexler, 1991). Public ceremonies and festivals were transformed into civic ceremonies and these performances of citizenship played a role in integrating rival groups (Brown, 2000). There was, in a sense, no distinction between the performance of politics and its reality. Alison Brown has outlined how the word *rappresentazione* (performance) in Italian had, at the time, as it does now, a double meaning as both a performance of a play and the term for an abstract, symbolic representation of a concept, like 'liberty' (Brown, 2000). So performances were literally conceived of as symbolic depictions of the political system of Florence. The idea of role-playing fitted with the particular system of government in Florence, where office holders were changed every two months, so in a sense the private citizens consciously took on the role of lawmaker and member of government, then exited the stage of government two months later and returned to being a private citizen. When Florence shifted from

being a republic to a dukedom and then a principality, citizens criticised the decision-making of the governing bodies as being 'irrational' because it was not reached by open, public debate.

The idea that the piazza was the place of communication and engagement between the citizens and the government is illustrated by a statement from the historian Francesco Guicciardini that when the republic started to fail in the early sixteenth century there was a 'dense fog, or thick wall, between the government palace and the piazza outside', and that the populace therefore lacked any knowledge about how they were being ruled (Brown, 2000). As the city transitioned from a republic to an oligarchy, one of its richest families, the Medici, carefully manipulated existing systems of government and the favour of different powerful rulers. This oligarchy gradually became cemented, first as a dukedom and then a principality. Performance in public spaces was crucial to this transition; it provided a means to create a myth of their right to rule and to present the family as imbued with the qualities of fair and just rulers. The civic spaces that had been symbols of republican Florence and its *libertas* became instead stages for symbolic demonstrations of princely power, new social structures and hierarchies.

In 1589 Florentines were brought onto the streets to celebrate the wedding of the new Duke Ferdinando de'Medici I to Christine of Lorraine. This wedding, one of the most expensive of the Italian Renaissance, represented an alliance between the Medici family and the Duchy of Loraine, part of a program of aligning the Medici with powerful hereditary ruling families across Europe and to further move the city away from its republican history (Blumenthal, 1980). For the arrival of the bride in Florence, the urban and architectural fabric of the city itself was changed through the use of temporary structures and sets. The Via del Proconsolo, which led the wedding party from the cathedral to the old centre of republican government at the Palazzo Vecchio, was adorned with statues of kings of Spain and scenes of great victories of the Spanish over their enemies. This was intended to symbolise Florence's allegiance to Spain, and to present the Medici Grand Dukes as on par with the emperors and kings of Europe's ruling families. As they arrived in the Piazza della Signoria, now renamed the Piazza del Gran Duca, crowds called out Ferdinando's name and he was crowned in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, the old seat of republican government (Gualterotti, 1589). Acts like this allowed the Medici to perform the role of hereditary rulers. They recast the former civic space as a stage for the performance of their

princely power and the people of Florence as subjects instead of citizens. Such performances also had an afterlife: they were carefully documented in text and engravings, and records of the more famous events would find their way into the hands of people across Europe. Over the following centuries these performances also gradually shifted from public to private spaces. While some events continued to be held in the streets and piazzas of the city, new spaces, such as large-scale princely gardens and courtyards attached to palaces, were created to host large-scale performances in private or semi-private spaces where rulers had more control over who was present (Wright, 1996). There was a constant tension between control and visible presence. This shift in the use of public space in Florence demonstrates how spaces created to promote free speech, liberty, equality and just rule by the people could be exploited for gaining power and performing a very different type of political power.

The modern city

Over the past century or so the ideal of civic space as a necessary ingredient in the development and maintenance of a democratic society has been at the forefront of many discussions of city design and urban planning. The design of cities and the practice of democracy are frequently linked and the urban space described as a laboratory or an experimental space (Keane, 2013). New designs or redesigns of cities are regarded as having power to shape the future of democracy, implying that they will change the behaviour of citizens. The role of open spaces or civic spaces where citizens come together is often central to these discussions. In 2013, then-Australian Senator Scott Ludlam said that public spaces and 'public experience of face-to-face mixing and mingling of people reminds them of their diversity and commonality, as equals' (Keane, 2013). And cities where this mingling is inhibited by design (whether deliberate or not) are criticised. In Minneapolis, covered walkways above the ground, designed to facilitate ease of movement during cold winters, have separated middle-class office workers from street-level 'have-nots' (Parkinson, 2012), creating inequality and a divided community.

The ideal of a public square and an open civic space in front of, and around, parliament buildings has become central to the design of a modern democratic city. Despite ongoing recognition of the importance of public space in cities, there is debate over whether these spaces are truly

a function of democratic government in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, or just symbolic. In Canberra, a city designed from the ground up as a capital city and imbued with ideals of modern democracy, the National Capital Authority boasts that, 'as the seat of Australia's robust democracy, Canberra provides the Australian community with public spaces for vibrant exchange between the citizenry and their parliamentary representatives' (NCA, 2021). Yet, as John Parkinson, a researcher in public policy has observed, the symbolic openness of Canberra does not actually encourage mingling and engagement between citizens and representatives. On the one hand, the sheer size of the vast open spaces designed to create attractive vistas across the city and surrounding landscape discourages human-scale activity, such as walking, congregating, and incidental or deliberate assemblies. On the other, since 11 September, security and control has limited openness; the Australian Parliament building, which was designed to be easily accessed and walked over, is now restricted by security fencing (Parkinson, 2012). Civic spaces now can be vibrant community spaces, but they can also be tightly controlled and restricted. They might be open for symbolic and approved community engagement such as festivals, but difficult to access for reasons of protest (Hatuka, 2016).

In 2011 in Egypt the retaking of the physical public space of Tahrir Square was arguably as important as the virtual manifestation of protest. Mohamed Elshahed has argued that not only was the physical protest important, but also it symbolised that a public square was a key part of democratic government (Elshahed, 2011). The Mubarak government had recognised the power of public space and deliberately changed the design of the square to inhibit mass gatherings, so the retaking of it was necessary. The real and the virtual public spaces both played a role in the revolutions of 2011.

Twitter as public space

If we decide, then, to accept that Twitter is the virtual version of a public space – if it is our modern equivalent of the town square or the speakers' corner or the agora – we should not forget the inherent inequalities and manipulations of those very spaces. We need to remember that these spaces, while real, also have a mythic, idealised existence. The agora, for example, was essentially off limits to women, at least as a space of speech

and influence. We could regard this exclusion as the result of a different time; after all, our modern democracies are more open to diverse genders. However, it can also be a prompt to ask: Who is excluded from spaces of debate now, and how? When historians look back at Twitter, will they observe that it was a place of free speech and democratic debate? Or will they note that it was easily manipulated by those hungry for power with the skills and resources to stage performances and game the system? Will they see the sexual harassment and trolling of women as evidence that, although women were allowed to join Twitter, their voices were not considered equal? What will they make of the manipulation that was allowed to flourish in the name of data collection and the sale of ads: that the importance of commerce trumped democracy?

The performative aspect is also important; visibility in public space is not just about those gathered to watch you, but the afterlife of the performance. In Medici Florence, the appropriation of the public space and its reconfiguration as a stage for the performance of princely power was not just observed by those present. Performances were dutifully recorded by court diarists and engravers, and commemorative booklets were created that were distributed across the courts of Europe. Diplomats present wrote letters describing the events. Likewise, Twitter has become a stage with a much larger audience than just those watching tweets flow past in real time. Various studies have demonstrated that Twitter users are not representative of broader society. A 2019 Pew Research Center study found that Twitter users in the US were:

> Younger, more likely to identify as Democrats, more highly educated and have higher incomes than US adults overall. Twitter users also differ from the broader population on some key social issues. (Wojcik and Hughes, 2019)

However, the audience for Twitter is much larger than just those registered and active as users. In 2012 Donald Trump described Twitter as like ‘owning your own newspaper without the losses’ (Trump, 2012). Twitter, especially since leaders like Trump have taken to it as a platform of direct and unmediated communication, gets reported on more broadly in newspapers, radio and television. Just like the public square, it is a performance of politics, status and ideology. Just as the Medici shared their conspicuous consumption, the performance of right to rule, it does not matter that everyone is not on Twitter because the audience for the performance is much bigger.

On one level, Twitter is a bit of a mess as a public space: part newspaper, part public square, part commercial platform, part political stage, part virtual water cooler. However, this chaos also perhaps makes it a true civic space. The historian Jacob Burckhardt argued that the word for the activity that described that act of being in the agora, *agorazein*, was intended to convey a mixture of commerce and proximity to temples and offices that was 'mingled with delightful loafing and standing around together' (Burckhardt, 2013). So perhaps online sites like Twitter are indeed civic spaces, just ones that are more real and therefore more messy than our mythic ideal of the historical agora or town square. In the wake of the Christchurch attack in which social media figured so prominently, we might also ponder whether digital space is also more dangerous. The difficulty of control by a central power that Grossman identified in 2009 as a positive when a populace stood up to institutional authority in Iran, has a flipside, where it can be used as a global stage for violent acts against the vulnerable.

References

Aday, S., Farrell, H., Lynch, M., Sides, J. & Zuckerman, E. (2010). *Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from www.usip.org/publications/2010/09/blogs-and-bullets-new-media-contentious-politics.

Arendt, Hannah. (2019). *The Human Condition*. Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Atkinson, N. (2013). The republic of sound: Listening to Florence at the threshold of the Renaissance. *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 16(1/2), 57–84. doi.org/10.1086/673411.

BBC. (2011, 9 February). Profile: Egypt's Wael Ghonim. *BBC News*. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-12400529.

Bejan, T. M. (2017, 2 December). The two clashing meanings of 'free speech'. *Atlantic*. Retrieved from www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/12/two-concepts-of-freedom-of-speech/546791/.

Blumenthal, A. (1980). *Theatre Art of the Medici*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Brown, A. (2000). De-masking Renaissance republicanism. In J. Hankins (Ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism* (pp. 179–99). Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558474.

Brucker, G. A. (1997). The Ciompi Revolution. In N. Rubinstein (Ed.), *The Government of Florence under the Medici* (pp. 314–56). London: Faber & Faber.

Burckhardt, J. (2013). *History of Greek Culture*. Courier Corporation.

Cadwalladr, C. (2017, 7 May). The great British Brexit robbery: How our democracy was hijacked. *Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy.

Campbell, H. A. & Hawk, D. (2012). Al Jazeera's framing of social media during the Arab Spring. *CyberOrient*, 6(2), 34–51. doi.org/10.1002/j.cyo2.20120601.0003.

Claridge, A. (1998). *Rome. An Oxford Archaeological Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

El-Nawawy, M. & Khamis, S. (2012). Political activism 2.0: Comparing the role of social media in Egypt's 'Facebook revolution' and Iran's 'Twitter uprising'. *CyberOrient*, 6(1), 8–33. doi.org/10.1002/j.cyo2.20120601.0002.

Elshahed, M. (2011). Tahrir Square: Social media, public space. *Places Journal*. doi.org/10.22269/110227.

Finley, M. I. (2002). *The World of Odysseus*. New York: New York Review Books.

Frampton, S. (2017). Democracy is a clash not a consensus: Why we need the agora. *Aeon*. Retrieved from aeon.co/essays/democracy-is-a-clash-not-a-consensus-why-we-need-the-agora.

Geeng, C., Yee, S. & Roesner, F. (2020). Fake news on Facebook and Twitter: Investigating how people (don't) investigate. *Proceedings of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–14. doi.org/10.1145/3313831.3376784.

Grossman, L. (2009, 17 June). Iran protests: Twitter, the medium of the movement. *Time*. Retrieved from content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html.

Gualterotti, R. (1589). *Descrizione del regale apparato per le nozze della Madama Cristina di Lorenzo moglie Del Don Ferdinando Medici III. Granduca di Toscana*. Antonio Padovani. Retrieved from archive.org/details/descrizionedelre00gual.

Hamilton, J. (2021, 1 March). Social media: Publishers, platforms or something else? *Politics.Co.Uk*. Retrieved from www.politics.co.uk/comment/2021/03/01/social-media-publishers-platforms-or-something-else/.

Hatuka, T. (2016). Public space. In K. Fahlenbrach, M. Klimke & J. Scharloth (Eds), *Protest Cultures* (1st ed., pp. 284–93). New York: Berghahn Books.

Irwin-Rogers, K. & Pinkney C. (2017) Social media as a catalyst and trigger for youth violence. *Catch22*. Retrieved from www.catch-22.org.uk/social-media-as-a-catalyst-and-trigger-for-youth-violence/.

Kavanaugh, A., Perez-Quinones, M. A., Tedesco, J. C. & Sanders, W. (2010). Toward a virtual town square in the era of web 2.0. In J. Hunsinger, L. Klastrup & M. Allen (Eds), *International Handbook of Internet Research* (pp. 279–94). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9789-8_17.

Keane, J. (2013, 19 August). Cities in the future of democracy. *Conversation*. Retrieved from theconversation.com/cities-in-the-future-of-democracy-16688.

Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Clarendon Press. Retrieved from www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=a)gora/.

Low, M. (2009). Cities as spaces of democracy: Complexity, scale, and governance. In R. Geenens & R. Tinnevelt (Eds), *Does Truth Matter? Democracy and Public Space* (pp. 115–32). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8849-0_9.

MacKenney, R. (2004). *Renaissances: The Cultures of Italy, 1300–1600*. London: Macmillan Education UK.

Mascaro, C. & Goggins, S. P. (2012). *Twitter as Virtual Town Square: Citizen Engagement During a Nationally Televised Republican Primary Debate* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2108682). Social Science Research Network. Retrieved from papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2108682.

Massanari, A. (2017). #Gamergate and the fappening: How Reddit's algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures. *New Media & Society*, 19(3), 329–46. doi.org/10.1177/1461444815608807.

McGlew, J. (1996). 'Everybody wants to make a speech': Cleon and Aristophanes on politics and fantasy. *Arethusa*, 29(3), 339–61. doi.org/10.1353/are.1996.0022.

Meineck, P. (2017). *Theatrocracy: Greek Drama, Cognition, and the Imperative for Theatre*. London: Routledge. doi.org/10.4324/9781315466576.

Morozov, E. (2009). Iran: Downside to the 'Twitter revolution'. *Dissent*, 56, 10–14. doi.org/10.1353/dss.0.0092.

National Capital Authority. (2021). *Part One – The National Significance of Canberra and the Territory*. Retrieved from www.nca.gov.au/planning/plans-policies-and-guidelines/national-capital-plan/consolidated-national-capital-plan/part-one#.

Parkinson, J. (2012). *Democracy and Public Space: The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Purcell, N. (1989). Rediscovering the Roman Forum. *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, *2*, 156–66. doi.org/10.1017/S1047759400010424.

Purcell, N. (2007). Urban spaces and central places: The Roman world. In S. Alcock & R. Osborne (Eds), *Classical Archaeology* (pp. 182–202). New Jersey: Blackwell.

Rotroff, S. I. & Lamberton, R. (2006). *Women in the Athenian Agora*. Princeton, NJ: ASCSA.

Rubinstein, N. (1995). *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298–1532: Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Saxonhouse, A. W. (2005). *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616068.

Trachtenberg, M. (1997). *Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art, and Power in Early Modern Florence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trexler, R. C. (1991). *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Trump, Donald J. (2012, 10 November). @realDonaldTrump. Twitter.com. I love Twitter … it's like owning your own newspaper – without the losses. Twitter. Retrieved from twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/267286284182118400 [Archived at didtrumptweetit.com/267286284182118400-2/] (site discontinued). See reporting on tweet in Solon, Olivia. (2017, 5 January). Can Donald Trump save Twitter? *Guardian.* Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jan/05/can-donald-trump-save-twitter

Urbinati, N. (2002). *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

West, D. M. (2009). The two faces of Twitter: Revolution in a digital age for Iran. *Brookings*. www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-two-faces-of-twitter-revolution-in-a-digital-age-for-iran/.

Wojcik, S. & Hughes, A. (2019). *Sizing Up Twitter Users*. Pew Research Centre. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org/internet/2019/04/24/sizing-up-twitter-users/.

Wright, D. R. E. (1996). Some Medici gardens of the Florentine Renaissance: An essay in post-aesthetic interpretation. In J. D. Hunt (Ed.), *The Italian Garden: Art, Design and Culture* (pp. 34–59). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This text is taken from *Rethinking Social Media and Extremism*, edited by Shirley Leitch and Paul Pickering, published 2022, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/RSME.2022.08