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DOI

[10.4324/9781003017790-6](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017790-6)

Publication date

2020

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Popular Politics in an Aristocratic Republic

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Citation for published version (APA):

van Gelder, M. (2020). Protest in the Piazza: Contested space in early modern Venice . In M. van Gelder, & C. Judde de Larivière (Eds.), *Popular Politics in an Aristocratic Republic : Political Conflict and Social Contestation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Venice* (pp. 129-157). (The body in the city). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017790-6>

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6

PROTEST IN THE PIAZZA

Contested space in early modern Venice¹

Maartje van Gelder

Many canals and not enough bridges, that was what made Venice an extraordinarily peaceful city, at least according to Giovanni Botero (c. 1544–1617). Botero—priest, poet, diplomat, political thinker, and Europe’s first urban sociologist—presented Venice in his famous *Della ragion di stato* (1589) as an example of political peace and serenity. He endorsed the trope of *La Serenissima* but ingeniously connected it to the city’s morphology. “I believe,” Botero wrote, “that one of the main reasons for the peaceful condition of Venice is the canals which so intersect the city that its inhabitants can only meet together with difficulty and after much delay, during which their grievance is remedied.”²

Botero continued to develop the idea that the specific form and organization of Venetian urban space ensured tranquility and harmony. In his short treatise *Relatione della republica venetiana* (1605), dedicated to Doge Marino Grimani (1532–1604), he again closely adhered to the standard elements of the myth, highlighting the superior Venetian organization of food provisioning, its excellent judicial system, and its extensive network of charitable institutions.³ And again he pointed to the location and morphology of Venice as the main reason for its stability: “it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the site of Venice. First of all, the city is situated in such a manner as to hinder or interrupt each uprising and every form of internal disorder.”⁴ Botero added, “Venice is naturally divided with canals and water, in such a manner that the people can only slowly and with great difficulty unite themselves.”⁵

In Botero’s eyes, the division of urban space essentially guaranteed urban unity, because planning a conspiracy was difficult and carrying one out almost impossible: to form a crowd, one had “to find the gondola ferries or bridges, of which there are only a few... Add to this the narrowness of the streets, crooked and winding, making it almost impossible to walk two abreast.”⁶ Botero came to the general conclusion that “for the tranquility of the multitude” the division of urban space was crucial, something that city planners in later centuries would see quite differently.⁷

We can read Botero's texts as early reflections on the connection between space and politics, prefiguring Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, which argues that space not only mirrors but actively shapes political relations.⁸

But does Botero's conclusion actually hold for Venice? An odd tension underlies the *Relatione della republica venetiana*. Doge Grimani, to whom Botero dedicated his treatise, had been elected in 1595 partly in response to mass protests in Piazza San Marco. While the patrician electoral college deliberated inside the Ducal Palace, large crowds of ordinary Venetians—who had no official vote in ducal elections—gathered outside, shouting their support for Grimani and their disapproval of his competitors.⁹ The ducal vacancy had started on 7 April and lasted nearly four weeks, during which the crowd actions and protests escalated. On 25 April, groups of armed men threatened to attack the Ducal Palace; the very next day, the electors appointed Grimani in order to avoid more tumult.¹⁰ Clearly the popular voice had carried weight, much to the dismay of Grimani's peers and against all official regulations.

The explosion of popular enthusiasm after the election of Grimani did little to quell patrician concerns. As the bells of the *campanile* at San Marco rang out to communicate that a new doge had been elected, crowds of jubilant Venetians started running from Rialto to San Marco and back again. We can see the representation of this urban axis in Figure 6.1. According to one contemporary author, people “abandoned their homes, shops, squares, and their own businesses,” converging on the Ducal Palace while singing and shouting in praise of the new doge. Bells rang continuously and fireworks went off; people lit bonfires in every square and street, “so that it seemed as if Venice was going up in flames.”¹¹ As a result of this outburst of popular fervor, the Signoria decided to close the doors of the Ducal Palace to prevent further disorder.

Once the crowds realized they could not congratulate the new doge in the Palace, as was customary, their joy transformed into frustration and vandalism.¹² They smashed market stalls, counters, and benches at Rialto and San Marco, using the debris to fuel two enormous bonfires.¹³ During the night people continued to shout and sing in the streets, fueling the fires and setting off fireworks in a festive frenzy that bordered on riotous.¹⁴ In contrast to Botero's conclusion, in 1595 the shape of Venetian streets and the number of bridges did little to stop the formation of crowds and formed no guarantee against urban tumult.

If anyone within the political elite recognized that Venetians could launch political challenges through crowd actions, it was Doge Grimani. Why, then, did Botero dedicate his treatise to him? Some have interpreted the *Relatione* as a veiled critique of Venetian factional strife.¹⁵ In a similar vein, it could be interpreted as an indirect critique of the doge's popular appeal. It seems more likely, though, that the *Relatione* was part of a series of texts and festival books through which Grimani attempted to dispel patrician worries about his demagogic tendencies and about the crowd actions surrounding his election.¹⁶ In connecting the ideal of serenity to control over urban space, Botero sought to address a dimension of urban politics that had Venetian patricians acutely worried.

This chapter explores the relationship between Venetian space and urban unrest. Scholars have focused predominantly on the relation between water and land and



FIGURE 6.1 Detail of Jacopo de' Barbari, “Bird’s-eye view of Venice”, 1500. This detail of De Barbari’s famous map shows Rialto, Piazza San Marco, and the Piazzetta. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund (2010.88).

on the theatricality of the Venetian built environment. This chapter investigates how ordinary Venetians, those who were excluded from an active role in political decision-making, used urban space as “a vehicle for political expression”—in the words of Laurie Nussdorfer in her work on early modern Rome—and how the authorities sought to keep control over the streets and squares.¹⁷ I concentrate mostly on the sixteenth century, a period that, as is well known, was far from serene: famine, plague epidemics, war, and political strife all took their toll on the city and its inhabitants.¹⁸

Inevitably, this chapter focuses on Piazza San Marco, the space most connected to political and religious ritual. In every city, the symbolic associations of certain public spaces with the state and ruling elites also turn those spaces into important arenas for contestation, for alternative performances that disrupt or contest official state spectacles, and for counter-spectacles that question, ridicule, and undermine the legitimacy of those in power. Precisely because Piazza San Marco had such a strong political character, it was one of the principal spaces where public dissent could be expressed verbally and nonverbally, as it was, for example, during and after the ducal election of 1595.

Influenced by the “spatial turn,” historians have examined late medieval and early modern urban space in Rome and Florence, and in cities in France, the Low Countries, and England, focusing on how power relations shaped concrete sites and vice versa, and how central squares functioned as loci of conflict.¹⁹ Although historians of nineteenth-century Venice have examined the Piazza as a space of protest against French and Austrian rule, its role in contentious politics during the time of the Republic has not received much attention.²⁰ This chapter proposes to look at the Piazza as a contested and shared space. How did it activate, express, and reflect contention? And what, in turn, can this contentious use of space tell us about the nature of Venetian political relations?

Attention to space

Venetian urban space, especially its relationship with the lagoon, has long been remarked upon, starting with the Roman official Cassiodorus describing the landscape and life in the lagoon in the sixth century. The miraculous site of the city—between water and land, sheltered by the lagoon—became an integral part of Venice’s mythical image. Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, in her path-breaking study ‘*Sopra le acque salse*’, asked how the city’s complex relationship with the environment influenced its social and political structures.²¹ She argues that the hard work that went into planning, constructing, and maintaining the city actively shaped institutions and collective attitudes during the later Middle Ages. For Crouzet-Pavan, the growing coherence of Venice’s spatial setting reflected the growing harmonization of the community at large.²² In short, the *Serenissima* ideal was not just expressed through the city’s architecture but also advanced by the construction and continual maintenance of the urban space.

Historians have looked at various dimensions of urban life in early modern Venice. Cultural historians have investigated the sounds and smells of the city, while social historians have examined the way women and men moved through Venetian urban space.²³ Similarly, many studies have been dedicated to the spaces and places of specific occupational, religious, and immigrant communities in Venice.²⁴ Recently, scholars have focused on the ways in which ideas, information, songs, and gossip circulated through the city. Filippo de Vivo has shown how political information reached practically every layer of Venetian society.²⁵ Rosa Salzberg analyzed how cheap print, sold in bookshops and by stallholders and street sellers, permeated the city and informed its inhabitants. Her work with Massimo Rospocher has drawn our attention to street theater, singing, the dissemination of cheap print, and the exchange of gossip and information in outdoor spaces.²⁶ Yet Venetian civic rituals and their spatial dimension—where specific rituals took place, how processions tied different parts of the city together, how the soundscape interacted with the cityscape, where certain popular feasts took place—has undoubtedly received the most scholarly attention. The principal space where the rulers of Venice created and performed the *Serenissima* myth was, of course, Piazza San Marco.

Piazza San Marco

By the late eleventh century the San Marco area had started to take on a more formal appearance, with the Basilica dedicated to Venice's patron saint, Saint Mark, a bell tower, and the Ducal Palace.²⁷ The authorities aimed to create a civic space imbued with political and religious meaning: in the structure and decoration of the church and the Palace, Venice was presented as a new Jerusalem, an image further enhanced through religious and state ritual.²⁸ Together, the Piazza itself and the smaller Piazzetta, which faced the waterfront, formed an area larger than any of the squares in other Italian cities.²⁹ From the late thirteenth century, the Procurators of San Marco, holders of the most prestigious position within the Republic aside from that of the doge, were increasingly responsible for not just the Basilica but also the buildings on and surrounding the Piazza. They were in charge of maintenance and renewal of this central area.

The representation of the Piazza and Piazzetta by Jacopo de' Barbari, as seen in Figure 6.1, shows the situation at the end of the fifteenth century. Subsequent changes in the sixteenth century to the square and its buildings heightened the theatricality of this space. The architectural historians Deborah Howard and Manfredo Tafuri have examined the renovation of the San Marco area during the mid-sixteenth century, highlighting the republican ideals behind stylistic choices. The architect Jacopo Sansovino (1486–1570), inspired by Roman architecture and supported by Doge Andrea Gritti (1455–1538; elected 1523), planned and carried out the renovation, which included a new design for the Piazzetta, the construction of the Loggetta in front of the bell tower, the new library, and the rebuilding of the Mint (Zecca).³⁰ Sansovino's goal was to "superimpose an evocation of ancient Rome upon the existing Byzantine elements of the square."³¹ The overall effort was a conscious attempt to express the myth of Venice in architectural terms and thus enhance the area's role in the Republic's ritual and ceremonial life.

Lefebvre saw the grand design of Piazza San Marco as an expression of the "dominance of the political caste," where the physical and material space coincided with the imagined and idealized space.³² The third part of Lefebvre's spatial triad, in addition to the physical space and the imagined space, is the lived and practiced space: space that is both experienced and invested with symbolism, and thus, in the words of Lefebvre, produced. As a practiced space, Piazza San Marco was never static or homogeneous. It could change over time, of course, but could also be different practiced spaces at the same time for different segments of the Venetian population.

First and foremost, the Piazza as a practiced space accommodated the day-to-day elements of Venetian political life: here, patricians congregated and moved around while exchanging political information and canvassing for support. Officially, politics were to be conducted exclusively inside the council halls. Throughout the fifteenth century laws prohibited talking in specific public places, particularly around the Ducal Palace and the Basilica, but electioneering (the *broglio*) was difficult, if not impossible, to suppress.³³ For patricians, walking and talking politics were inextricably entwined, so much so that, according to De Vivo, being fit to walk meant being fit to govern.

For patricians collectively, moreover, walking across Piazza San Marco at certain times of the day was vital to show their social and political cohesion.³⁴

Secondly, the Piazza hosted numerous processions and civic rituals, which in turn heightened the symbolic meaning of this space. Public festivities were a significant part of early modern instruments of rule.³⁵ In every city, the governing classes used an “iconography of power,” a visual but also aural, spatial, and performative language that attempted to create and sustain political and social consent.³⁶ Numerous spectacular ceremonies and rituals regularly turned Venetian streets, squares, and waterways into an urban theater. Edward Muir’s fundamental work on Venetian civic ritual and Ian Fenlon’s *The Ceremonial City* have analyzed how history, memory, and myth were interwoven with the San Marco area.³⁷ Predictably, republican patrician themes dominated Venice’s civic ritual. Historians have come to see a widely shared Venetian identity, based on those rituals, as one of the cornerstones of broad popular acceptance of patrician rule.³⁸

Popolano Venetians were part of civic rituals in many ways, just as they contributed to everyday political practices, as Claire Judde de Larivière shows in her chapter. Ordinary Venetians participated in processions and in games during feast days, and the guilds regularly decorated the Ducal Palace and organized banquets for the doge, although they at times complained about the costs.³⁹ The dogressa—the spouse of the doge, an uncommon figure in Venetian politics since most doges were either widowers or had never married—was the patron of all Venetian guilds. In return for this patronage, the guilds paid for and produced the decorations that were part of the celebration of the dogressa coronations. Such was the case in 1597, in preparation for the coronation of Morosina Morosini (1545–1614), the wife of Doge Grimani. On Monday, 28 April 1597, patrician magistrates handed the key to their offices over to members of the guilds, who proceeded to take over the Ducal Palace. Two days later eighty patrician judges abandoned their law courts, fleeing the noise produced by the guild members carrying out the benches that normally provided seating to over one thousand members of the Great Council.⁴⁰ In many ways, the city’s famous civic rituals were coproduced by a broad segment of Venetians.

Most processions started or ended at the Basilica di San Marco, and it was on the Piazza that newly elected doges, naval and military commanders, and foreign princes were celebrated. The Piazzetta, moreover, was the place where public punishments for both minor and major crimes took place. Just as the processions projected the ideal of an ordered state, so too did the authorities communicate, through the punishments and executions, that justice would be served.⁴¹ These processions and public punishments were intended to remind onlookers of their social and religious obligations, yet how they actually perceived and experienced such rituals is still very much an open question.⁴² Most of the descriptions, paintings, printed festival books, and financial records were produced by the authorities themselves or with their explicit approval, which makes it difficult to reconstruct other perceptions, experiences, and interpretations. Yet historians—influenced by the history of emotions—are increasingly exploring how crowds reacted emotionally to forms of entertainment, processions, and executions, how these emotions

interacted with spatial dynamics, and how these emotions could turn into violence in the bustling streets and squares of early modern cities.⁴³

Piazza San Marco was also the theater of more everyday activities, of markets and economic exchange, a third function of practiced space. Fenlon contrasts the Piazza as a space for dignified official spectacles with the Piazza as a location for the buying and selling of food, with the hawkers, peddlers, and performers—as well as their clientele—contributing to, what he called, “urban noise.”⁴⁴ The daily hustle and bustle of the Piazza, and of the people working there, passing through or stopping to buy or listen, formed an integral component of Venetian urban life.⁴⁵ The Procurators of San Marco drew an income from renting out shops and stalls. Since the Middle Ages, the Piazzetta had been the location of a daily food market, centered around the Beccaria, the Butchers’ Hall on the southwestern part of the Piazzetta. Bread was sold from shops located between the Beccaria and the bell tower; traders sold fruit and vegetables from temporary stalls; the Procurators rented out stalls to salami and cheese sellers, on the quay in front of the Mint; on that same quay, fish was sold further to the west, as we can see in Figure 6.2. The proximity of these food outlets—especially of the imposing building on the waterfront housing the state granaries, which we can see depicted in Figure 6.3—to the main government buildings represented the responsibility of the authorities for a regulated market, which guaranteed abundance for the city’s inhabitants.⁴⁶

The urban renewal project that started in the 1530s sought to limit the presence of the market and shops in the San Marco area, thus reducing the function of the area as a marketplace and emphasizing it as a governmental space.⁴⁷ Sansovino’s stylistic



FIGURE 6.2 Detail of Jost Amman, “Festa della Sensa”, (Frankfurt am Main, 1697). Amman made a multi-sheet woodcut representing the Annual Feast of the Ascension in the mid-sixteenth century, which was re-printed in the late seventeenth-century. This detail of shows two fish sellers to the left and, to the right, a butcher with his cleaver, selling meat from his shop in the Beccaria. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-21.338 and RP-P-OB-21.351.



FIGURE 6.3 Detail of Jacopo de' Barbari, "Bird's-eye view of Venice", 1500.

This detail shows the waterfront of the western side of the Piazzetta, with on the left the large, multi-story public granaries, built in the fourteenth century and razed at the end of the eighteenth century.

Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund (2010.88).

intervention went hand in hand with zoning efforts, which included the removal of legal and illegal shacks and stalls. The new library first incorporated and then replaced the bread shops and hostleries. In the eyes of the authorities, the money-changing booths, bakers' shops, vegetable stalls, and cheese sellers in huts had to go, as did the meat market, which was located in a decrepit building.⁴⁸ Sansovino also had the latrines around the columns of the square removed, which, according to Giorgio Vasari were "something foul and shameful for the dignity of the palace and the public squares, as well as for foreigners, who coming to Venice by way of San Giorgio saw all that filthiness first."⁴⁹ Later on, in 1544, the latrine next to the entrance of the Ducal Palace was also removed.⁵⁰ Such zoning activities by the authorities were part of a broader trend in urban renewal in Italian cities.⁵¹

In 1556, the Great Council voted to remove the bread sellers from their temporary location at the foot of the bell tower. Only the old building of the Beccaria still stood on the Piazzetta, the butchers having pushed back against efforts aimed at their removal. Interestingly enough, they did so by using the language of ephemeral architecture and festival decorations, which we usually associate with state-sanctioned republican messages. In 1557, at the coronation of Dogressa Zilia Dandolo Priuli (d. 1566), the butchers built a temporary arch, which they used to argue for a plan that would see the new library enclosing the Beccaria, a proposal that went against Sansovino's plans.⁵² It seems that over the next decade, the authorities seriously considered this option. In any case, the Beccaria remained on the Piazzetta until 1580, when it was finally removed. All these efforts, and especially those centered on the butchers, were about not just sanitizing and enhancing urban space but also about securing it.

Crowds, risks, and crowd control

Ceremonies and processions cannot function without a public. Many representations of Venetian processions focus on showing a long, orderly line of dignitaries and other

participants in a virtually empty urban landscape, as we can see, for example, in Figure 6.4 or in Gentile Bellini's famous painting *Procession in Piazza San Marco* (1496), which shows only few onlookers. But during rituals and feasts the Piazza and Piazzetta were definitely more crowded and probably much less ordered. For the coronation festival of Dogressa Morosina Morosini in 1597, for example, the preparation of the Piazza started a week in advance. Workers constructed stands and tribunes, while others arranged rows of benches and chairs to accommodate the many anticipated spectators. Despite these preparations, though, every seat and all available standing room was already filled by the early hours of 4 May, the day of the coronation ceremony. In no time, Piazza San Marco became overcrowded with people.⁵³ Those who had been fortunate enough to find a position at the windows of the Ducal Palace or the other buildings on the Piazza quickly found themselves crushed together so tightly that they could not move. Others, in search of an unobstructed view, started to climb columns, pillars, beams, ledges, rooftops, and even chimneys, while daredevils clung to the bare nails in the walls or hung from the *merli*, the rooftop crenellations, as we can see depicted in Figure 6.5.⁵⁴

The Venetian authorities were continually worried about crowds, especially during rituals and festivities, when social distinctions could become blurred and disorder gain the upper hand. And these worries were not without cause. Ducal ceremonies often saw outbursts of violence on the crowded Piazza. In 1486, for example, when the newly elected Doge Agostino Barbarigo (1419–1501) paraded around Piazza San Marco, seven young men died in the crowd. In 1521, in the upheaval surrounding the election of Doge Antonio Grimani (1434–1523), a foreigner decapitated a worker from the Arsenal, the state shipyard.⁵⁵ Arsenal workers had a special role in Venetian civic ritual: they carried the doge upon his election around San Marco and upon his death to his funeral, but they also served a more practical role, as part of the Venetian security forces. Squads of Arsenal workers guarded the Great Council during its meetings, secured the Ducal Palace during ducal elections, and were deployed when the government feared violence from its own people.⁵⁶ With the ducal ceremonies drawing thousands of spectators, some of whom may have been inebriated or intent on violence, the Arsenal workers' involvement in crowd control—we can see them at work on the cover, in the painting of a doge's triumphal *giro* around the Piazza by Francesco Guardi—was essential.

It was not just violent incidents that had the authorities worried, but the potential dangers that large crowds posed to the political order. The Council of Ten, as Dennis Romano points out in his chapter in this volume, was always vigilant when large numbers of people congregated, especially at night or during festivities, such as the Ascension Day Festival or Carnival. At times, the Council of Ten even contemplated abolishing the preaching of sermon cycles at San Marco during Lent, because it would attract patricians and “the greatest part of the popolo” to the city center, which could pose a danger to the state.⁵⁷ Several laws passed by the Great Council and Senate in the fourteenth and fifteenth century restricted access to Piazza San Marco and Rialto for non-noble offenders, as a way of disciplining *popolani* while also controlling urban space.⁵⁸ Various Venetian councils drew up laws limiting or prohibiting the gathering



FIGURE 6.4 Christoph Krieger, “Piazza San Marco”, from the second edition of Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi, et moderni di tutto il mondo* (Venice, 1598).

Krieger’s woodcut depicts the funeral procession of a doge on Piazza San Marco. He included only a few onlookers in his representation of one of the highlights of Venetian political ritual.

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, BI-1938-0066-146.

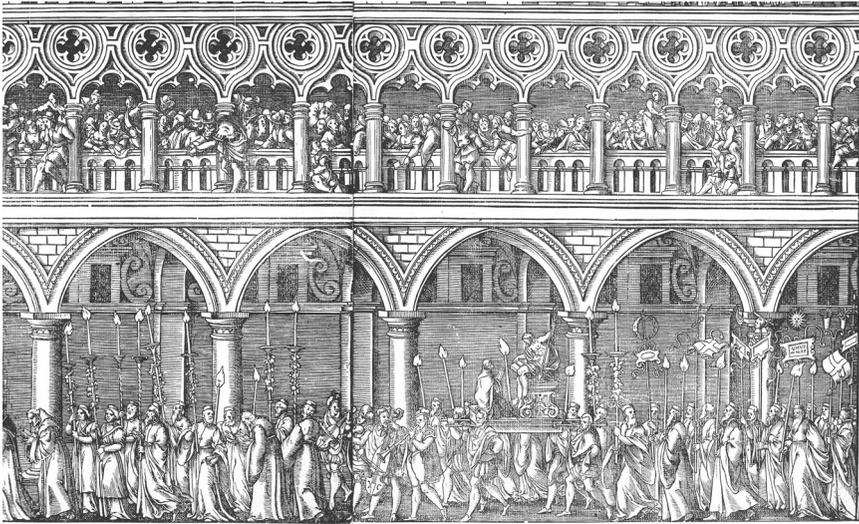


FIGURE 6.5 Detail of Jost Amman, “Festa della Sensa” (Frankfurt am Main, 1697). This detail shows a crowd of men and women on the loggia of the Ducal Palace, watching the ducal procession below. Judging from their clothing, the people on the loggia represent both nobles and commoners, with *popolano* men and boys climbing up and over the balustrade and holding on to pillars. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-21.343.

of people in attempts to suppress unruly speech and prevent political insurrection.⁵⁹ We can read concerns over crowds and crowd control not only in the regular drafting and continual renewal of such laws but also in the measures taken by the authorities during tense times.

In a century marked by war, epidemics, and famine, the year 1569 was an exceptionally difficult one: the Venetian government was preoccupied with the increasing Ottoman pressure on Venice’s colonial empire, which would culminate in the war over Cyprus of 1570–71, and authorities were also worried about increasingly severe food shortages and famine at home. After a summer of disappointing harvests, in the fall of 1569, ordinary Venetians—those who did not have access to private lands or sufficient wealth to stock up on grain—were finding it harder and harder to buy food. By the end of September, food supplies had started to run dangerously low, and at the start of October the public bread shops carried no bread and the state granaries held no grain. Even the large state granary on the Piazzetta stood empty, proof that the government could not fulfill its contractual obligation to provide sufficient food for its people. As a result, the inhabitants of Venice became increasingly distraught, riots erupted, and political turmoil loomed large.

The patrician chronicler Agostino Agostini (1542–75) recorded the events of 1569 in great detail, indicating his concern as the situation in the city became less and less stable. On 4 October, Agostini wrote that “there was in Venice the worst shortage

of bread and flour ever seen within the memories even of aged men. For six days on end there was no bread in the bakers' shops and no flour in the warehouses, so that the poor could not buy victuals in any part of the city. In the morning and the evening over 400 poor persons were seen around the bakers' and in the breadshops in search of bread."⁶⁰ With no bread to be found, "many came to blows in their attempts to get their hands on the stuff." Agostini continued: "These wretched conditions, with the poor running so frantically to the breadshops, lasted about four days. And, to be sure, if the hardship had lasted even a little longer, disturbances would have been seen throughout Venice." Despite measures by the government to ensure daily deposits of flour at the public warehouses, the amounts were too little and the quality probably too low. In fact, when these daily deposits of flour started, "the people became even more agitated, and they said many strange and dishonorable things about the government, remarking that the last thing of all was death and they ought to be cut to pieces. Certainly, the city was in dire need, and there was much whispering." Whereas most Venetian chroniclers only wrote about turmoil in oblique terms, here Agostini describes in detail the general resentment against the government and the danger of sedition.⁶¹ He shows us, quite explicitly, a city on the verge of turmoil, perhaps even civil war.

With the security of the state under threat, the Heads of the Council of Ten stepped in, issuing proclamations to ensure that more bread would be sold in the city. The Ten also ordered that sacks of biscuits, which had been intended as provisions for the Venetian fleet, would be sent daily to the bakeries at San Marco and Rialto, in addition to the daily deliveries of flour to the warehouses in the same locations. As a result, crowds of people daily flocked to the shops and granaries, resulting in "great tumult," according to Agostini. To prevent further disorder, the Ten decided that the deliveries of flour would take place at night. The Signoria, moreover, ordered the Heads of the Ten to have the warehouses guarded, with one nobleman at each place to supervise the guards, "so that no unseemly behavior and no disturbance should break out, for the city was already beginning to riot." Despite the government's measures, the amounts of flour and bread were not enough to restore the peace. Each person could buy only a limited amount of flour, and Agostini describes the resulting disorder: "[T]he crowd of people who wanted [flour] was so great that no more could be given. The doors of the warehouses had to be kept shut, and only a few people were admitted at a time; otherwise many would have been suffocated, because of the great crush of people coming together to get flour." The Piazza and Piazzetta could be packed with people during festivities and public punishments, but in times of crisis they were also filled with desperate crowds.

By 26 October, the state decided to distribute flour made from lesser grains and beans from their warehouses, the latter having "never before within living memory been sold" at the granaries. And yet still these measures were not enough to feed everyone, let alone stem the turmoil. Agostini continued: "Those who wanted flour could have no more than a quart each, half of it of wheat and the other half of millet, or else one quarter of beans, and it was sorry stuff. The frenzy was so great that people were killing each other to get flour, and this [distribution of flour

made of lesser grains and beans] got the people complaining bitterly (indeed, one heard nothing else in the streets) that they could not eat such horrible food, but in spite of themselves they had to buy what they could get, and not what they wanted if they wished to remain alive.” Better-quality flour could only be bought from noblemen and citizens at high prices and was thus out of reach for the majority of the population. To make matters even worse, the state’s deliveries to the warehouses dwindled to once a week.

The Signoria then tried another approach, probably with the intent of reducing the pressure on the Rialto and San Marco areas: they gave flour to all the parish bakers and ordered that two deputies in each parish, one nobleman and one citizen, were to oversee the distribution of bread.⁶² The parish traditionally was the organizational unit for administrative and policing purposes.⁶³ The Signoria’s deputies first had to describe the inhabitants of the parish and then hand them rationing tickets, which allowed people to buy two loaves “per head per day, one half of wheat and one of millet.” This intervention, which combined rationing with a head count and a spatial restructuring of the distribution system, finally gave the authorities more control over the situation: “After this ordinance”, according to Agostino, “things became very calm, whereas before it was passed many people had been smothered on account of the crowds demanding bread from the bakers, and many poor women had been unable to get anything because the crush was so great.” Yet clearly these measures did not completely restore the calm: several bakeries—Agostini gives the location as “in Cannaregio and at the Due Ponti,” the latter in the parish of San Marcuola, also in the Cannaregio district—were attacked at night, and the bakers were wounded and their bread stolen. Even more worryingly, a dozen or so Arsenal workers robbed people selling bread in the city.⁶⁴ The Arsenal workers had an important role in maintaining order in the city, but trouble had been brewing for a long time among these workers, which only added to the general instability in the fall of 1569.

Resistance from the Arsenal workers

Earlier that year, on 12 March 1569, following a Senate decision to cut their salaries, a couple of hundred Arsenal workers stormed from the shipyard to the Ducal Palace, probably following the Riva degli Schiavoni, a straightforward route that would have taken them quickly to the political heart of the city (again despite Botero’s claims).⁶⁵ As part of the state’s security forces, the Arsenal workers were allowed to carry arms in the San Marco area when the Great Council convened and during ducal elections. Yet now they turned against the very government they were supposed to protect. Armed with axes and mallets, they stormed up the stairs to the hall where the Collegio, the Republic’s steering committee that included the doge, met. When inhabitants of the city and of the Venetian dominions petitioned the authorities for certain favors, they addressed these *suppliche* to the Collegio. But there was nothing humble about the Arsenal workers’ address this day: they shouted insults and refused to leave until their demands were met. They

were finally persuaded to leave with promises that pay would be reinstated, but that promise proved empty and over the next month relations between the government and the Arsenal workers remained tense.

This tension only increased when an explosion destroyed part of the Arsenal on the night of 13–14 September 1569, in the middle of the famine. In the aftermath of the explosion, rumors filled the city, with suspicions falling on Tuscan, Jewish, and Ottoman spies but also on the Arsenal workers themselves, because of their earlier salary dispute with the Collegio. The fact that most Arsenal workers were unwilling to assist in putting out the fire—despite being the city’s official firefighters—made many of the patricians very uneasy.⁶⁶ The uncertainty about whether the Arsenal workers could be counted on as part of the security force made the turmoil and political instability of the fall of 1569 all the more dangerous.

Clearly the authorities were worried, all the more so because, at the same time, the severity of the famine was increasing. At the end of September, the Council of Ten proposed an emergency measure, which specifically took into account the city’s spatial organization: they decided to establish a temporary militia, in addition to the city’s existing guards and law enforcement agencies.⁶⁷ Twelve noblemen were elected to head an armed force of 300 men. The Collegio feared that the city-state’s political heart was under threat: the twelve *capi* (militia leaders) had to live in the parishes close to Piazza San Marco and were to act as *guardia della piazza* (guards of the Piazza). Their men would be armed with weapons from the Arsenal.⁶⁸ This was an extraordinary step for Venice, which had always sought to limit and control the armaments of its inhabitants. The ambassador for Ferrara commented on the decision, saying: “[T]hese Lords are by their nature hesitant to give weapons in the hands of *capi* who could profoundly hurt the city; however, in the current circumstances they preferred the lesser of the two evils.” Here the greater of the two evils was internal turmoil and the risk of a *popolano* revolt, perhaps led by the Arsenal workers.

Throughout that year, concerns about the trustworthiness of certain *popolano* occupational groups and about the safety of the San Marco area resurfaced. In the fall of 1569, one Giovanni di Lioni from Treviso submitted an undated *ricordo* (memo) to the Ten, warning them that the public spectacles and feast days offered an opportunity for “rebels and conspirators” (“*seditioni et congiurati*”) to threaten the Republic.⁶⁹ This memo was part of a flood of similar warnings submitted to the Ten, which Paolo Preto has interpreted as a sign of collective paranoia.⁷⁰ Yet the vulnerabilities pointed out by authors of these *ricordi* represent more than paranoid fears, and the reaction by Venetian authorities indicates that they took these threats quite seriously. Di Lioni explained that “all the seditions and conspiracies that have taken place in this city, which have caused subversions and alterations to the state, have arisen from opportunities, which the conspirators have anticipated long in advance.”⁷¹ In his view, civic ritual threatened Venetian stability rather than reinforce it. Di Lioni specifically warned the Ten that the festivities in the Piazza in celebration of *Giovedì Grasso* (Shrove Thursday) presented an ideal moment for rebels to attack the doge and senators.

Carnival was, of course, the time when ordinary people could let off steam, ritually and symbolically turning the world upside-down and criticizing rulers through

sanctioned satire.⁷² Yet this critique and especially the ritualized violence that often accompanied it could turn into actual rioting, rebellion, and even massacres.⁷³ Muir has described how, in Venice, Shrove Thursday was the occasion for ritualized bloodshed and for games that parodied the republican order.⁷⁴ One element of the festivities was the ritual slaughter of one bull and twelve pigs—later on, only bulls—in memory of a victory over the patriarch of Aquileia in the twelfth century.

This popular event—depicted by Giacomo Franco in Figure 6.6—took place on the Piazzetta, the location of public executions: the animals were chased by members of the Blacksmiths' Guild and decapitated, after which the meat was distributed. By the early sixteenth century, between 1523 and 1525, this part of the ritual was transformed and toned down, in line with the start of the renovation and transformation of the ceremonial space of the Piazza and Piazzetta. Yet it seems that efforts to suppress these bloody festivities were not completely successful: the diarist Marin Sanudo stated that in 1528, 1529, and 1530 the slaughter still took place.⁷⁵ Perhaps, as with the famous bridge battles, official condemnation didn't result in complete repression, which would have seriously damaged the relationship between the ruling elite and the *popolo* and thus endangered the popular consensus on which patrician rule depended.

In 1569, Giovanni di Lioni pointed the finger at two specific occupational groups involved in the Shrove Thursday festivities, the blacksmiths and the butchers: "The most important thing," he wrote, "is that in the Piazza there will be two armed groups: the blacksmiths and the butchers, who go about freely, with all sorts of weapons and fireworks, which can be prepared and used for military—and bloody—purposes."⁷⁶ The latter group, of course, were not only participants in the ritual slaughter but at the time still market sellers in the Piazza. We can see a butcher with his meat cleaver depicted in Figure 6.2. Di Lioni's fear of armed action and bloodshed, perhaps even a rebellion, by these two *popolano* groups was not an irrational fear: in other medieval and early modern European cities, butchers, with their ready access to knives and meat cleavers, were often singled out as dangerous. They were more frequently involved in rebellions than other occupational groups in medieval Parma, Bologna, Siena, and Florence.⁷⁷ In Venice, too, there was a long tradition of suspicion towards butchers: in fact, the Butchers' Guild had been suppressed in 1301 as punishment for its participation in a popular rebellion.⁷⁸

The Venetian authorities were acutely aware that the Piazza was vulnerable to violence and disorder. The sixteenth-century *ricordi* show a constant preoccupation with the exposure of the Piazza and government buildings.⁷⁹ Many of these *ricordi* were written by government professionals, familiar with the area and clearly concerned for the safety of the government. They certainly did not share Botero's opinion that the Venetian infrastructure offered a sufficient safeguard against trouble. Professionals, such as the Capitan Grande—the head of the police force of the Council of Ten—and prison guards, pointed to the weaknesses of the Ducal Palace and the San Marco area. The prisons, in particular, located on the lagoon side, offered easy access to the courtyard of the Ducal Palace, which could lead to "inconveniences of great importance." Other memo writers urged the Ten to increase the escort of the doge and Signoria when they processed in the Piazza.⁸⁰



FIGURE 6.6 Giacomo Franco, “Shrove Thursday celebrations”, from the series *Habiti d’huomeni e donne venetiane con la processione della Ser.ma Signoria et altri particolari cioè trionfi feste et cerimonie publiche della nobilissima città di Venetia* (Venice, 1610). This engraving by Giacomo Franco shows the *Giovedì Grasso* celebrations. The central scenes are framed by a procession of armed men in the foreground and the waterfront in the background. To the sides, we see the buildings of the Ducal Palace and Marciana Library, with a crowd of onlookers seated in the stands, constructed for the festivities. In the center, bulls are chased and butchered by members of the Blacksmiths’ Guild. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, BI-1971-265-21.

On 18 December 1569, one Alessandro Fontana warned the Ten in a memo that the Palace's open windows invited trouble.⁸¹ Anyone could enter through the windows and install a bomb or toss one into the building. If this happened during a late-night meeting of the Senate or the Ten, it would be a disaster for the state, also because a fire in "all the offices mentioned [i.e. of the Senate and the Ten], but especially the office of the Giudici di Petizion, because of the many books, papers, benches, and chests, would risk burning the entire Palace to the ground."⁸² Fontana therefore advised that all the windows be boarded up, that extra locks be installed on all the doors, and that guards be placed on the various balconies. Moreover, before every meeting of the Great Council, an official and a notary would need to check for bombs.

Fontana displayed an intimate knowledge of the infrastructure of the Ducal Palace and the workings of the various councils: he probably held a government position, perhaps as a *cittadino* secretary. His greatest fear was that arsonists would succeed in burning down the Palace during a meeting of the Great Council, which would lead to the "devastation and ruin of the entire Palace and blow up the entire nobility of this Republic."⁸³ The situation was tense in 1569, with a severe famine causing widespread unrest in the city; suspicions voiced against two specific groups of *popolani*, the butchers and blacksmiths; and depleted urban policing forces because of the conflict between the authorities and the Arsenal workers. The city center seemed especially vulnerable and the ritual calendar, instead of a source of urban cohesion, suddenly appeared a danger to the state. The threat of protest and actual popular turmoil had a significant political impact, also in Venice.

Crowd actions and political interventions

The ducal vacancy—the period between the death of one doge and the election of another—always carried a risk of violence.⁸⁴ In the later Middle Ages and early modern period, when a doge died, rituals were set in motion that emphasized that the Republic lived on. Or, as the Signoria would pronounce: "We have with great sadness heard of the death of the Most Serene Prince, but now we will create another one."⁸⁵ This signaled the start of what was the most complicated procedure in a republic known for its convoluted elections. Initially, in the eighth and ninth centuries, when the doge was still a representative of the Byzantine Empire, succession was not a regulated affair and was usually accomplished through violence. From 887 it became an election "a vox di populo," by the *Arengo*, the council consisting of all free Venetian men.⁸⁶ As the office of doge changed, from Byzantine official to sovereign prince and then to the Republic's first magistrate, so did the election procedure. By the twelfth century the choice had been put in the hands of eleven electors, chosen from and by the *Arengo*.⁸⁷ New regulations in 1268 laid the groundwork for the system that would remain in place until the last ducal election in 1789.

The election system's primary aim was to moderate factions and rivalries within the small group of leading families, but it also aimed to further neutralize the popular element.⁸⁸ The Signoria would present the newly elected doge to the Venetians in

the Basilica, announcing that they had elected him “if it pleases you.” That still left the possibility that the people could say no. According to Sanudo, when debating how to pronounce the election of Francesco Foscari as the new doge in 1423, the *Cancellier Grande* asked: “What will happen if the people say no?”, which resulted in the decision to shorten the formula.⁸⁹ Henceforth the crowd would simply be informed that “We have elected Doge Such and Such,” in the words of Sanudo.⁹⁰ The crowds were supposed to respond with shouts of “Sia, sia!” (“Let it be so, let it be so!”).⁹¹ But because the *popolo* had to participate in public demonstrations of republican authority in order to affirm Venetian power relations, these carefully orchestrated events also offered a public space for expressing dissenting opinions.

When Doge Marino Grimani died in late December 1605, Paolo Sarpi explicitly contrasted the stability of the Venetian state during the ducal vacancy—the period between the death of one doge and the election of another—with the Roman *sede vacante*, the period between two popes. Pointing out the *novità*—which in an early modern context meant not just novelties but also political changes and instability—that occurred during the Roman vacancy, Sarpi states that “the government of the Republic does not change with a new doge or the interregnum, but remains completely and totally firm and stable.” His observation was meant to highlight the *Serenissima* ideal and perhaps needle Rome, since the confrontation between Venice and the papal curia that would culminate in the Interdict Crisis (1606–7) had already started.⁹² As with Botero’s observations on Venetian space and stability, Sarpi’s conclusion had an element of wishful thinking about it.

Scholars have come to see violence as an almost integral part of the *sede vacante* in Rome.⁹³ The freedom of the vacant see allowed Romans to criticize and abuse the deceased pope, especially those judged to have failed in providing good government. These collective protests often took the form of ritual iconoclastic assaults on the papal statues in the Conservators’ Palace at the Capitoline Hill after a pope’s death, a way to vent discontent and tarnish the pope’s name and memory. Violence during Venetian vacancies have not been systematically studied. Yet Sanudo’s diaries and Venetian chronicles contain many mentions of such episodes.⁹⁴

For instance, in 1523, at the coronation of Doge Andrea Gritti, a patrician who was widely disliked, groups of boys mocked the new doge by appropriating political rituals: they carried a puppet in ducal dress around the piazza while shouting the name of the more popular Luca Tron. Tron, who as the oldest patrician within the electoral council, announced the new doge in the Basilica, received applause and acclamations, while Gritti was ignored. The new doge only aggravated the situation by being slow in making a *giro* (victory lap) around the Piazza and in the customary distributing of money to the crowd.⁹⁵ Even Gritti’s distribution of grain at low prices did little to please the crowd. Sanudo wrote: “All complained about his election.”⁹⁶

Despite Sarpi’s observations, something similar happened on 11 January 1606, when the newly elected Doge Leonardo Donà made the ritual celebratory *giro* around the Piazza. The event quickly turned into chaos, in sharp contrast to the smooth and uncomplicated procedure that had seen Donà elected doge the day before.⁹⁷ In his personal notebook Donà recorded, not without a certain amount of

self-satisfaction, that his election had been “met and received with great applause by all the orders of the city.”⁹⁸ Yet as a crew of Arsenal workers carried him in the special ducal palanquin (*pozzetto*) around the snow-covered Piazza, it quickly became clear that Donà had overestimated—or overstated—his approval ratings, at least among ordinary Venetians. He had chosen to limit the amount of ducal coins he dispersed to the onlookers, in keeping with his frugal republican ideals and consciously contrasting Marino Grimani, his popular predecessor. Instead of applauding him, the gathered crowds started pelting their new head of state with snowballs and then with paving stones. The scene was chaotic, with some of the projectiles hitting the *pozzetto* and narrowly missing the new doge.⁹⁹

Displays of popular dissatisfaction could completely disrupt important ducal rituals. Doge Pietro Loredan (1482–1570) was blamed for the famine of 1569 and for the distribution of bread and flour made from lesser grain. When Loredan died at the beginning of May 1570, the Signoria postponed the announcement of his death because, according to the chronicler Agostini, he “had a most evil reputation, since he was held responsible for the famine, for the many deaths, for the war, and for the dreadful fire at the Arsenal.” This allowed for some time to take security measures, as Agostini reported: “On the day his death was proclaimed the gates of the Palace were shut, and guards composed of men from the Arsenal were posted there in the customary fashion.”¹⁰⁰ The Arsenal workers were back in their usual position, after the authorities had rescinded the pay cut in late 1569.

Agostini described Loredan’s funeral ceremony, held on Sunday, 7 May, in detail. As part of the traditional funeral rites, a doge’s corpse was raised nine times in the great doorway of the Basilica. As Loredan’s body was raised for the penultimate time, the crowd shouted, “And that is eight! The Millet Doge is dead!,” a reference to the unpopular emergency measure to distribute millet flour. Loredan’s funeral procession had already left San Marco for the ceremonial circuit toward the church of San Giovanni e Paolo, where the funerary mass would be held, when word came back to the Signoria that “some 400 men” waited at the church, “equipped with millet loaves, ready to throw the loaves at [Loredan’s] corpse, and drag him along on his bier.” To avoid the ducal corpse being pelted with the hated millet bread, the procession was hastily rerouted back to San Marco. The city remained in uproar, however: day and night people could be heard shouting, “The Millet Doge, who had the bakers sell the millet loaf, the Millet Doge is dead!”¹⁰¹ The violence aimed at the doge’s corpse was an expression of popular anger over issues of poor governance and provisioning. Although the Signoria had decided on the emergency measures, the doge was the scapegoat.

We have seen that popular enthusiasm could lead to the election of a doge, as happened in 1595, and that popular displeasure with the new head of state could be expressed in different manners. But popular resentment could ensure that certain candidates were not elected. For example, in 1559, popular distaste for one ducal candidate led to the storming of the Ducal Palace, causing the candidate to retract his candidacy.¹⁰² Eight years later, during the selection of the electoral council in 1567, “violent people created confusion,” managing to reach the hall of the Great Council.

The 1585 election again saw skirmishes in the palace courtyard.¹⁰³ But one of the most impactful popular interventions happened in 1676.

During the ducal vacancy, when it became apparent that an unpopular candidate, Giovanni Sagredo (1616–91), had the necessary votes to become doge, some sixty boatsmen gathered in the Piazza and started throwing paving stones at his supporters. This outburst of popular violence resulted in a riot in the Piazza which, according to contemporary reports, was instigated by Sagredo's patrician rivals. The 1676 riot caused the Great Council to take the exceptional step to intervene: they changed the composition of the electoral council and only a few hours after the final ballot was cast, Sagredo's election as doge was annulled, with Alvise Contarini (1601–84) becoming the Republic's 106th doge.¹⁰⁴ Here, then, we see a glimpse of patrician-*popolano* factions and their political impact. It is always assumed that Venetian nobles, unlike their Florentine and Genoese peers, did not form neighborhood powerbases, but we know little about the actual political intersections of patrician and *popolano* lives in early modern Venice.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

Popular political involvement and intense protests could turn the San Marco area into a contested space. Ordinary Venetians interrupted or parodied state ceremonies, such as ducal funerals and coronations, and used street politics—much as people did elsewhere in European cities—to express dissent and contestation. The political and religious heart of the city, including the Piazza and the Ducal Palace, from its courtyard to the council chambers, was the location for collective protests, at times quite violent ones. Perhaps, as Botero suggested, Venice's urban structure made it harder for people to congregate, but it certainly did not make it impossible. We can discern moments of intense political protest and crowd actions as well as the government's concern with crowd management and potential political threats. Venice was not a unique example of socio-political stability but a dynamic place and space where official conceptions of order and control could be—and regularly were—undermined and subverted. Moreover, protests by *popolano* Venetians did influence politics, prompting us to ask not only why and how ordinary men and women protest, but also how the political elite took these protests into account.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Claire Judde de Larivière for her comments on this chapter, which also benefited from discussions with Filippo de Vivo.
- 2 Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of State: The Greatness of Cities*, translated by P. J. Waley and with an introduction by D. P. Waley (London: Routledge, 1956), 109. See also Geoffrey Simcox (trans. and ed.), *On the Causes of the Greatness and Magnificence of Cities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) and Giovanni Botero, *Delle cause della grandezza delle città*, Romain Descendre (ed.) (Rome: Viella, 2016).
- 3 For more on the myth and Venetian history-writing, including an overview of the relevant historiography, see Monique O'Connell's chapter in this volume.

- 4 *Relatione della republica venetiana, di Giovanni Botero Benese... Con un discorso intorno allo stato della Chiesa* (Venice: Giorgio Varisco, 1605), c. 84^r: “Hor la pace è ancor essa di due sorti, una domestica, e l'altra esterna; per la cui conservatione non si può dire quanto il sito di Venetia importi. Primieramente egli è meravigliosamente acconcio per impedir, troncar ogni sollevamento, & ogni tumulto domestico.” The State Censors had given permission to print the book in June 1603; it was published shortly after Grimani's death in December 1604.
- 5 *Relatione della republica venetiana*, cc. 84^{r-v}: “Venetia è naturalmente divisa co' canali, e con l'acque in modo, che il popolo non si può senza lunga tempo, e molta difficoltà, unire insieme. Perche oltra alle difficoltà che così fatto sito reca alle congiure, e all'intelligenza d'una parte con l'altra, senza esser scoperti, l'essecutione sarà sempre più tosto impossibile che difficile.”
- 6 *Relatione della republica venetiana*, c. 84^v: “Conciosia cosa, che bisogna ritrovare i traghetti, o i ponti: de' quali quelli sono pochi, e divisi ciascuno in due rive; questi stretti, e poco capaci. S'aggiunge a cio, la strettezza delle strade, storte e serpeggianti, per le quali appena possono due al pari camminare.” On Botero's preoccupations with civil war and internal conflict, see Descendre's introduction to *Delle cause della grandezza delle città*.
- 7 *Relatione della republica venetiana*, c.84^r: “Percioche per la quiete di una moltitudine, così di popolo, come di soldati, non è cosa alcuna più importante, che la divisione.”
- 8 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
- 9 Maartje van Gelder, 'The People's Prince. Popular Politics in Early Modern Venice,' *Journal of Modern History* 90.2 (2018): 249–91.
- 10 For more examples of crowd actions and protests during the 1595 election, see Van Gelder, 'The People's Prince', 249–91.
- 11 See the description in Giovanni Rota, *Lettera nella quale si describe l'ingresso della Serenissima Morosina Morosini Grimani Principessa di Vinetia: co' la cerimonia della Rosa Benedetto, mandata a donare dalla Santità del Nostro Signore* (Venice: Gio. Anto. Rampazetto, 1597), fol. [B1^v].
- 12 Van Gelder, 'The People's Prince'; Archivio di Stato di Firenze [hereafter ASF], Mediceo del Principato, filza 2994: letter of Giovanni Uguccioni to the Grand Duke, 26 April 1595, fol. 412^r–413^v.
- 13 Biblioteca Museo Correr [hereafter BMC], Codice Cicogna 2479; Archivio di Stato di Venezia [hereafter ASV], Deliberazioni, Senato Terra, filza 135, c. 211^r–2^r.
- 14 Report by Juan de Zornoza, ambassador for Parma, in Archivio di Stato di Parma [hereafter ASP], b. 615 (1579–1599), Venezia, 29 April 1595.
- 15 Jutta Sperling, 'The Paradox of Perfection: Reproducing the Body Politic in Late Renaissance Venice', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41.1 (1999): 3–32.
- 16 This certainly seems to be the vein in which we should read the *Lettera nella quale si describe l'ingresso della Serenissima Morosina Morosini Grimani*, written by the pro-Grimani author Giovanni Rota. See also Maartje van Gelder, 'Ducal Display and the Contested Use of Space in Late Sixteenth-Century Venetian Coronation Festivals' in J. R. Mulryne et al. (eds.), *Occasions of State: Early Modern European Festivals and the Negotiation of Power* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018), 167–95 and Bronwen Wilson, “‘Il bel sesso, e l'austero Senato’: The Coronation of Dogaressa Morosina”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 52.1 (1999): 73–139.
- 17 Laurie Nussdorfer, 'The Politics of Space in Early Modern Rome', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 42 (1997): 161–86, 161. Also the essays in Peter Arnade, Martha C. Howell, and Walter Simons (eds.), 'Fertile Spaces: The Productivity of Urban Space in Northern Europe', special issue, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32.4 (2002): 515–48; Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009); Marc Boone and Martha C. Howell (eds.), *The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Cities of Italy, Northern France and the Low Countries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

- 18 See, for example, the work by Brian Pullan on poverty and charity in the sixteenth century and the chapters by John Jeffries Martin and Rosa Salzberg in this volume.
- 19 See, for example, Nussdorfer, 'The Politics of Space'; Marc Boone, 'Urban Space and Political Conflict in Late Medieval Flanders', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32.4 (2002): 621–40; Fabrizio Nevola, 'Surveillance and Control of the Street in Renaissance Italy', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16.1–2 (2013): 85–106.
- 20 See, for example, Giovanni Sbordone, 'Gli spazi della folla. Manifestazioni politiche di piazza nel Veneto del primo Novecento', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia (2010) and Piero Brunello, *Colpi di scena. La rivoluzione del Quarantotto a Venezia* (Verona: Cierre edizioni, 2018).
- 21 Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, '*Sopra le acque salse*': *Espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1992); Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, 'Toward an Ecological Understanding of the Myth of Venice' in J. J. Martin and D. Romano (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered. The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 39–64.
- 22 Crouzet-Pavan, '*Sopra le acque salse*'.
- 23 See Jo Wheeler, 'Stench in Sixteenth-Century Venice' in A. Cowan and J. Steward (eds.), *The City and the Senses. Urban Culture since 1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 25–38; Florence Alazard, *Art vocal, art de gouverner: la musique, le prince et la cité en Italie à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Minerve, 2002); Alexandra Bamji, 'The Control of Space: Dealing with Diversity in Early Modern Venice', *Italian Studies* 62.2 (2007): 175–88; Dennis Romano, 'Gender and the Urban Geography of Renaissance Venice', *Journal of Social History* 23 (1989): 339–53; Monica Chojnacka, 'Men, Women, and Residential Patterns in Early Modern Venice', *Journal of Family History* 25 (2000): 6–25 and her *Working Women of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Filippo de Vivo, 'Walking in Sixteenth-Century Venice. Mobilizing the Early Modern City', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 19.1 (2016): 115–41.
- 24 See, for instance, Robert C. Davis, *Shipbuilders of the Venetian Arsenal: Workers and Workplace in the Preindustrial City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Benjamin Ravid, *Studies of the Jews of Venice, 1382–1797* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (eds.), *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Maartje van Gelder, *Trading Places: The Netherlandish Merchants in Early Modern Venice* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Philippe Braunstein, *Les Allemands à Venise (1380–1520)* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2016).
- 25 Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 26 Rosa Salzberg, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), especially chapter 2. Massimo Rospocher and Rosa Salzberg, "'El vulgo zanza": Spazi, pubblici, voci a Venezia durante le Guerre d'Italia', *Storica* 48 (2010): 83–120; Rosa Salzberg and Massimo Rospocher, 'Street Singers in Italian Renaissance Urban Culture and Communication', *Cultural & Social History* 9.1 (2012): 9–26. See also Alexander Cowan, 'Gossip and Street Culture in Early Modern Venice', *Journal of Early Modern History* 12.3–4 (2008): 313–33.
- 27 See, for example, Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Iain Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco* (London: Profile Books, 2009); Manuela Morresi, *Piazza San Marco: istituzioni, poteri e architettura a Venezia nel primo Cinquecento* (Milan: Electa, 1999); Giuseppe Samona et al. (eds.), *Piazza San Marco: l'architettura la storia le funzioni* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1977).
- 28 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, especially chapter 3; David Rosand, *Myths of Venice. The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 97–100; Staale Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1974).

- 29 Juergen Schulz, 'Urbanism in Medieval Venice' in A. Molho, K. Raaflaub, and J. Emlen (eds.), *City States in Classical Antiquity and Medieval Italy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 419–45, 437.
- 30 Deborah Howard, *Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975); Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Manfredo Tafuri (ed.), "*Renovatio urbis*": *Venezia nell'età di Andrea Gritti, 1523–1538* (Rome: Officina edizioni, 1984).
- 31 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 97–8.
- 32 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 73–4, 76–7.
- 33 Donald E. Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 51–84; De Vivo, *Information*, 47–8.
- 34 De Vivo, 'Walking', 132.
- 35 Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 36 J. R. Mulryne, 'Introduction. Ceremony and the Iconography of Power' in J. R. Mulryne, M. I. Aliverti, and A. M. Testaverde (eds.), *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.
- 37 Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*; Rosand, *Myths of Venice*.
- 38 Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 272–3.
- 39 Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 85 and 294; Egle Renata Trinccanato, 'Rappresentatività e funzionalità di Piazza San Marco' in G. Samonà et al. (eds.), *Piazza San Marco: L'architettura, la storia, le funzioni* (Venice: Marisilio, 1982), 79–91.
- 40 Rota, *Lettera*, fol. [A3^v]; Van Gelder, 'Ducal display'.
- 41 Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco*, 115–6.
- 42 Edward Muir, 'The Anthropology of Venice' in E. R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 487: "one can no longer presume that there was any comprehensive, single Venetian point of view... no matter how monolithic Venetian political culture may have been."
- 43 Una McIlvenna, 'Emotions in Public: Crowds, Mobs and Communities' in S. Broomhall and A. Lynch (eds.), *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe: 1100–1700* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 216–32.
- 44 Fenlon, *Piazza San Marco*, chapter 5. Fenlon's point about the importance of the urban soundscape is well-taken, although perhaps "urban sound" would be a more neutral descriptor of the aural dimension of these everyday activities.
- 45 Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*.
- 46 Maximilian L. S. Tondro, 'The First Temporary Triumphal Arch in Venice (1557)' in J. R. Mulryne and E. Goldring (eds.), *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance. Art, Politics and Performance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 335–62.
- 47 Tondro, 'The First Temporary Triumphal Arch', 340–1.
- 48 Here I draw heavily on Deborah Howard's *Jacopo Sansovino*.
- 49 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, Paola Barocchi (ed.) (Pisa: Scuola Normale superiore, 1994), 501.
- 50 Manuela Morresi, *Piazza San Marco: Istituzioni, poteri e architettura a Venezia nel primo Cinquecento* (Milan: Electa, 1999), 47.
- 51 See Fabrizio Nevola, *Siena*, chapter 5.
- 52 Tondro, 'The First Temporary Triumphal Arch', 354–5, analyzed the butchers' participation in the dogaressa coronation of 1557 and their political messages in the ephemeral festival architecture.
- 53 Rota, *Lettera*, fol. [A3^v-A4^v].
- 54 Rota, *Lettera*, fol. [A4^{r-v}] and [C2^r]; Tuzio, *Ordine*, 15–6.
- 55 Marin Sanudo, *Le vite dei dogi (1474–1494)* II, Angela Caracciolo Aricò (ed.) (Venice: La Malcontenta, 2001), 530 and *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, Federico Stefani, Guglielmo Berchet, and Nicolò Barozzi (eds.), 34. (Venice, 1892), col. 134.
- 56 On the Arsenal workers, see Davis, *Shipbuilders*.

- 57 As cited by Dennis Romano in his chapter in this volume. Cfr. Élisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, 'Violence, société et pouvoir à Venise (XIV^e-XV^e siècles): Forme et évolution de rituels urbains', *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps Modernes* 96.2 (1984): 903-36, which sees nocturnal violence essentially as the mirror image of the order actively produced by the state during the day.
- 58 Romano, 'Gender and the Urban geography', 341.
- 59 Dennis Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft. Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 39; Elizabeth Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 60 There are various copies of Agostino Agostini's chronicle. I have used the copy in BMC, ms. Cicogna 2853, fols. 164^r-168^r, 183^r, 187^r-188^r. The translated quotations in this section all come from David Chambers and Brian Pullan (eds.), *Venice. A Documentary History, 1450-1630* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 106-12. On Agostini, Adriana Boscaro, 'Manoscritto inedito nella Biblioteca Marciana di Venezia relativo all'ambasciata giapponese el 1585', *Il Giappone* 7 (1967): 9-39.
- 61 On the glossing over of turmoil in chronicles, see Monique O'Connell's chapter in this volume.
- 62 Pullan and Chambers, *Venice*, 110.
- 63 Frederic C. Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 99.
- 64 Chambers and Pullan, *Venice*, 110.
- 65 Filippo de Vivo and I are working on a paper that examines the Arsenal workers' revolt of 1569. The description of the revolt can be found in Agostino Agostini's chronicle.
- 66 F. Seneca, 'L'incendio dell'Arsenale di Venezia (1569) in una lettera di Leonardo Donà', *Studi forogiuliesi in onore di C. G. Mor* (Udine: s.n., 1983), 185-96.
- 67 Chambers and Pullan, *Venice*, 112, n.15; BMC, Ms. Cicogna 2853, fols.159^v-163^r.
- 68 ASV, Collegio Notatorio, reg. 38 (1569-1570).
- 69 ASV, Capi del Consiglio di Dieci [hereafter CCD], Ricordi b.2, Ricordi senza data, Ila metà del sec. XVI, undated and unnumbered. In his memo, Di Lioni refers to the explosion in the Arsenal in September 1569, which means we can date it to late 1569 or perhaps early 1570.
- 70 Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia* (Milan: Saggiatore, 1994).
- 71 ASV, Capi del Consiglio di Dieci, Ricordi b.2, Ricordi senza data, Ila metà del sec. XVI: "Tutte le seditioni, et le congiure, che sono occorse nelle città, dalle quale sia nata sovversione, e mutatione de stati, hanno hauto per loro principio le opportune occasioni, previste longo tempo avanti da seditiosi, et congiurati."
- 72 Linda L. Carroll, 'Carnival Rites as Vehicles of Protest in Renaissance Venice', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16.4 (1985): 487-502.
- 73 Yves-Marie Bercé, *Fête et révolte: des mentalités populaires du 16e au 18e siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1976); Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past & Present* 59.1 (1973): 51-91; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 156-60 and Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring. Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
- 74 Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 156-64.
- 75 Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 160-4.
- 76 ASV, Capi del Consiglio di Dieci, Ricordi b.2, Ricordi senza data, Ila metà del sec. XVI: "Vi è una cosa de piu, importantissima, che si trovano nella piazza due multi-tudine armate, cioe, di fabri et de beccari, i quali andando con libertà, con ogni sorte di arme et con fuochi artificati, i quali possono esser preparati et acconci ad altri effetti militari, et sanguinosi."
- 77 Valentina Costantini, 'On a Red Line across Europe: Butchers and Rebellions in Fourteenth-Century Siena', *Social History* 41.1 (2016): 72-92.
- 78 See Fabien Faugeron, 'Nourrir la ville. L'exemple de la boucherie vénétienne à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Histoire urbaine* 16 (2009): 53-70, 64.

- 79 ASV, CCD, Ricordi, b.2, Ricordi senza data IIa metà del sec. XVI.
- 80 See ASV, CCD, Ricordi, b.2, Ricordi senza data IIa metà del Sec. XVI, the *ricordi* by Bortholo quondam Zuan Giacomo Costantini, the “vice guardian” of the prisons and by Pelegrin di Micheli from Bergamo, a *specier* at Rialto.
- 81 ASV, CCD, Ricordi, b.2, Ricordi senza data IIa metà del sec. XVI, *ricordo* dated 18 December 1569.
- 82 ASV, CCD, Ricordi, b.2, Ricordi senza data IIa metà del sec. XVI, *ricordo* dated 18 December 1569: “per tutti li detti officij massimamente al Petition, si come per li molti libri, scritture, banchi et casse, saria similmente pericolo di arder tutto il palazzo.”
- 83 ASV, CCD, Ricordi, b.2, Ricordi senza data IIa metà del sec. XVI, *ricordo* dated 18 December 1569: “fracasso et ruina de tutto el Palazzo e tutta la nobilita di questa Rep. ca in aere.”
- 84 Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 251–88.
- 85 “Con molto dispiacere avemo inteso la morte del Serenissimo Principe di tanta pietà e bontà; però ne faremo un altro,” cited in Ugo Tucci, ‘I meccanismi dell’elezione ducale’ in Gino Benzoni (ed.), *I dogi* (Milan; Electa, 1982), 107–124, 107.
- 86 Tucci, ‘I meccanismi dell’elezione ducale’, 200.
- 87 In these early elections, however, powerful noble families in the *Arengo* already dominated the process, Lane, *Venice*, 91. See also Dennis Romano’s chapter in this volume.
- 88 For the changing procedure, Tucci, ‘I meccanismi’, 107–9. For an example of elections riddled with factional strife, see Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (London: Ernest Benn, 1980), 145–6.
- 89 Sanudo, *Le vite dei dogi 1423–1474 (Francesco Foscari)*, 4–5: “Se il popullo dicesse di no, che saria?”
- 90 Sanudo, *Le vite dei dogi 1423–1474 (Francesco Foscari)*, p.5.: “...et dir solo: ‘Havemo eletto Dosse il tal[e]’”.
- 91 Finlay, *Politics*, 44. For the post-1423 election process, Tucci, ‘I meccanismi’, 107–14; Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 282–3.
- 92 Paolo Sarpi, *Opere varie del molto reverendo padre F. Paolo Sarpi dell’ordine de’ Servi di Maria Teologo consultore della Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia* (Helmstat [i.e., Venice]: Jacopo Mulleri, 1750), 11.
- 93 Joëlle Rollo-Koster, *Raiding Saint Peter: Empty Sees, Violence, and the Initiation of the Great Western Schism (1378)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008); John Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016).
- 94 In his pivotal study of Venetian ritual, Edward Muir considered popular protests during ducal funerals “largely incidental”: republican patrician themes dominated Venice’s civic ritual, forming the cornerstone of a shared identity and contributing to popular acceptance of patrician rule, Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 272–3. On popular culture and disruptive rituals, see Davis, ‘The Rites of Violence’; Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978).
- 95 Robert Finlay, ‘Politics and the Family in Renaissance Venice: The Election of Doge Andrea Gritti’, *Studi Veneziani* n.s. 2 (1978): 97–117.
- 96 Finlay, ‘Politics’, 115.
- 97 On Donà, see Andrea da Mosto, *I dogi di Venezia* (Florence: Aldo Martello-Giunti Editori, 1977), 322–31 and F. Seneca, *Il Doge Leonardo Donà, la sua vita e la sua preparazione politica prima del dogado* (Padua: Antenore, 1959).
- 98 Archivio privato Donà dalle Rose, registro *Leonardo Donà 1593–1607*, n. 5, as cited by Gaetano Cozzi in ‘Donà, Leonardo’, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XL (1991): http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/leonardo-dona_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.
- 99 BMC, 759, carta 94: “Mentre [Donà] era portato per Piazza nella nave, o pozzo, dalle Maestranze dell’Arsenal [...] molti ragazzi principiarono trà loro à buttar delle balle di neve, non contentandosi vennero à sassi, il che causò al quanto tumulto.” See also the chronicle of Giovanni Carlo Sivos, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Ms. It VII, 1818

(9436), carta 87v: “et fù portato attorno la Piazza S. Marco, quale fù fatta netta dalla neve caduta il giorno avanti, et tornò nel Palazzo, senza mai gettar danari al Popolo, ma ben li nepoti ne gettorono, se bene puochi. Per il che la plebe, che aspettava avidamente una quantità de denari come fù al tempo del Dose Grimani, restarono contaminati, et fra loro s’azzuffarono col tirarsi della neve, per il che ne gionse anco qualche palla al pergamino di detto Dose, segno non troppo buono.”

100 Chambers and Pullan, *Venice*, 111–3.

101 Chambers and Pullan, *Venice*, 113.

102 Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 268.

103 Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 308, for the disorder in 1559 and 1585; Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Marc. Ms. It. VII 255 (9168) for the tumult in 1567.

104 Da Mosto, *I dogi*, 414–15 and the introduction to *La copella politica. Esame storico-politico di cento soggetti della Repubblica di Venezia (1675)*, Vittorio Mandelli (ed.) (Rome: Viella, 2012).

105 On the absence of neighborhood powerbases, see Dennis Romano, ‘Charity and Community in Early Renaissance Venice’, *Journal of Urban History* 11 (1984): 63–82, 81.

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