

CHAPTER

# 4

## Fluid Publics: The public-making power of hashtags in digital public spaces

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... hereby tongues are known, judgement increaseth, books are dispersed, the Scripture is seen ... times be compared, truth discerned, falsehood detected ... and all ... through the benefit of printing.

Wherefore I suppose, that either the pope must abolish printing or he must seek a new world to reign over; for else, as this world standeth, printing doubtless will abolish him.

— John Foxe, ‘The Invention and Benefit of Printing’

[Digital technology] can flatten organizations, globalize society, decentralize control, and help harmonize people ... there is a parallel ... between open and closed systems and open and closed societies. In the same way that proprietary systems were the downfall of once great companies, overly hierarchical and status-conscious societies will erode.

— Nicholas Negroponte, ‘Being Digital’

John Foxe, one of the first best-selling authors of the modern printing age, was convinced that printing would end the power of the papacy, just as Nicholas Negroponte, one of the champions of the digital age, believed that the Internet would challenge the nation state and other hierarchies. Three centuries apart, they were both writing at times of revolutionary changes in communications tech-