

Acknowledgments

The name for this book was hatched in one of New York's great public spaces, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, during the birthday party of Scarlett, Ben's younger daughter. In much of the United States, public birthday parties are unusual, but New York's small apartments and big parks mean that a sunny day can find three or four kids' parties going on in sight of each other. Kids were hula hooping and chasing each other with squirt guns. The two of us were taking a break from the action, standing in the shade of a tree and talking to another parent when we hit upon the title of the book. That moment captures the many debts we owe: to our families, to the intellectual fecundity of New York's public spaces, and to the many people who provided interviews, insight, inspiration, and action that made this book possible.

Much of *The Beach Beneath the Streets* was born of conversations during play dates, in New York's parks and streets, its art galleries and restaurants—with our kids, Dodi and Scarlett, Eamon and Una. It is their creative energy and our need to find abundant space for them to play and grow in a healthy, imaginative way, which propelled this project from idea to book. Caroline Shepard and Molly Smithsimon, our wives, were there to support the project as we moved from play dates to dinners and ongoing conversations, and occasional struggles just to move forward. Caroline also provided us with early photos of the streets of New York as well as the cover art for this project (www.carolineshepard.com). Other artists, activists from FIERCE and RTS, and photographers, contributed historic images that are just as irreplaceable. The Times Up! archive as well as activist photographers were tremendously generous with their time and photos.

The research on the history of bonus plazas relied on interviews from people who could have felt no compulsion to be as generous as they were. Among the many architects interviewed, the meetings with Richard Roth in an Upper West Side diner stand out as particularly revealing and representative of a classic use of public space: of how a generation of influential New York city builders eschew their offices or homes and set up meetings in bustling diners. There the sound quality is poor, but the energy of New York's street life energizes the interview. Likewise, the help of Philip Schneider, who

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continues to advocate for better plazas in the offices of the Department of Planning (although he has nominally retired) was invaluable.

Moving to the Hudson River Piers, we would like to thank Kate Crane, Michael Fabricant, Kerwin Kaye, and Bob Kohler for their close readings of Chapter 4. Thanks to Barton Benes for sharing his story and allowing us to republish copies of photos from his 1978 work *Pier 48: Letters from My Aunt Evelyn*. Several interviewees, including the legendary Bob Kohler, told their stories in some of the final days of their lives. Two interviewees were sent back to jail. And two of the chroniclers of life on the piers, Allan Bérubé and David Wojnarowicz, died before their time. They are sorely missed.

We could only write this book because earlier writers, theorists, and activists created the questions, stories, and movements of New York's public spaces. Activists welcomed us as participant observers into their meetings, and walked us through their movements. People like Alex Vitale could walk through a crowded event on Broadway, explaining how the activists' perception of police practices had influenced how they planned an event and organized a group. Groups such as RTS, FIERCE, Time's Up! and its Bike Lane Clowns marched, danced, and pedaled across Manhattan's streets to establish our right to the city. They in turn were building on the insights from queer theorists, the generation of 1968, Emma Goldman, and others who helped invent the idea of a pulsing democratic public space by and for the people. Only because they dreamed there could be a beach beneath the streets could we see it for ourselves.

Our respective academic departments, both vital parts of New York's besieged yet still thriving public sphere, the City University of New York, were just as helpful and just as present in public space. The Brooklyn College sociology department, Gregory's home base, has been a model of an academic department engaged in public space, whether playing softball or participating in a road race together in Brooklyn's parks. Their support, intellectual and collegial, has made working on this book a pleasure. The offices of the Department of Human Services at City Tech are surrounded by some of downtown Brooklyn's best public spaces, and have been the starting point from which Ben has investigated New York—from its activism to its waterfront.

We benefited immensely from discussions with colleagues. Dave Madden can parse a sentence like no one else, even while walking across 34th Street after hours spent in a local bar discussing friends' manuscripts. Among the many people whose input have made this book better are Herbert Gans, Sudhir Venkatesh, Charles Tilly, Sharon Zukin, Harvey Molotch, and Cuz Potter. Gregory also wants to thank Michael Donnelly at Bard College, who pressed me to explain the significance of my bonus plaza research. Though it is a delayed response, this book is the answer. We also benefited from reviews

from *Urban Affairs Review*, *Liminalities*, *Working USA*, and the *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest*, and the book *Altered States: Politics after Democracy*, where earlier versions of some of these chapters were published.

We'd like to thank Larin McLaughlin and Kelli W. LeRoux of SUNY Press for first seeing promise in the proposal and for supporting, guiding and helping us pull together the book. We also thank the anonymous reviewers for their prescient suggestions for the project. We would also like to thank the PSC-CUNY 63251-00 41 University Committee on Research Award for support to complete the final production of this manuscript.

And finally, our debt of gratitude to the people who use and bring alive New York's public spaces. New Yorkers have an undeserved reputation for being hard. Conditions in the city are hard, but the people retain their humanity through it all, and let it shine in our shared spaces. We will always have something to share, and to struggle for, in public space.

For updates and reviews on this project, see www.benjaminheim-shepard.com.