



The Beach Beneath the Streets: Contesting New York City's Public Spaces

Benjamin Heim Shepard, Gregory Smithsimon

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Examines New York City as a paradigmatic example of the tensions between privatization and public uses of space in the contemporary U.S.

Focusing on the liberating promise of public space, *The Beach Beneath the Streets* examines the activist struggles of communities in New York City—queer youth of color, gardeners, cyclists, and anti-gentrification activists—as they transform streets, piers, and vacant lots into everyday sites for autonomy, imagination, identity formation, creativity, problem solving, and even democratic renewal. Through ethnographic accounts of contests over New York City's public spaces that highlight the tension between resistance and repression, Shepard and Smithsimon identify how changes in the control of public spaces—parks, street corners, and plazas—have reliably foreshadowed elites' shifting designs on the city at large. With an innovative taxonomy of public space, the authors frame the ways spaces as diverse as gated enclaves, luxury shopping malls, collapsing piers and street protests can be understood in relation to one another. Synthesizing the fifty-year history of New York's neoliberal transformation and the social movements which have opposed the process, *The Beach Beneath the Streets* captures the dynamics at work in the ongoing shaping of urban spaces into places of repression, expression, control, and creativity.

Benjamin Shepard is Assistant Professor of Human Services at New York City College of Technology, CUNY. He is the author or editor of several books, including *White Nights and Ascending Shadows: An Oral History of the San Francisco AIDS Epidemic*, and *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*.

Gregory Smithsimon is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College, CUNY.

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