I think of this as a book written by a jobbing social scientist, informed as it is by my own experience of working on empirically led research projects investigating topics such as media and political mobilization, market practices and public life, urban politics and policy—projects where the meaning of democracy has often been a background presence. Writing this book has often been a rather solitary experience. It has been a project all of my own, undertaken in the interstices of an overlapping succession of research and teaching commitments that have been collaborative in different ways. I have learned a great deal about the issues addressed in this book, and much more still about the challenges of writing itself, from my more or less occasional cowriters and coeditors: Gary Bridge, Murray Low, and Di Scott, Allan Cochrane and Scott Rogers, Nick Mahony and Janet Newman, Nigel Clark and Mustafa Diikeç, Abbey Halcli and Colin Marx, Nick Clarke, Paul Cloke, and Alice Malpass. Much of how I think about the meanings and expectations associated with democracy has been shaped while trying to do research work in and on South Africa over two decades, not least in conversations with Richard Ballard, Debby Bonnin, Bri Maharaj, Jenny Robinson, and Thokazani Xaba, while trying to make sense of "democracy in Durban." Most of the intellectual legwork for this book was done during the decade when I worked for the Open University, and to all of those alongside whom I worked while there I owe an enormous debt for lessons learned about the responsibilities of democratic education. The arguments and understandings I present in this book have also been informed by more or less fleeting, more or less sustained conversations with various people, from each of whom I have learned more than any of them might realize: John Allen, Akin Akinwumi, Cheeku Bhasin, Felicity Callard, John Clarke, Derek Gregory, Hannah Hilbrandt, Kurt Iveson, Kuba Jablonowski, Craig Jeffrey, Dave Land, Eric Laurier, Ruth Leys, Doreen Massey, Lucila Newell, Sue Parnell, Kellie Payne, Mark Purcell, Jessica Pykett, Jon Pugh, Michael Samers, Mike Saward, Christi Smith, Andy Schaap, Sophie Oldfield, Erik Swyngedouw, and Jane Wills have all at some
point provided either affirmation of my own intuitions or important reminders of other perspectives.

The opportunity to think out loud about some of the arguments elaborated in this book has always been vital. I would like to extend my thanks for the opportunity to collect my thoughts on particular issues to Benedikt Korf and Dave Featherstone, organizers of the workshop “Space, Contestation, and the Political” at the University of Zurich in 2009; to Bice Maiguashca and Raef Marchetti, organizers of the workshop “Political Agency in the Era of Globalisation” in Rome in 2009; to Nick Couldry, for an invitation to speak on emergent publics at the International Communications Association conference in Singapore in 2010; to Lis Lange for an invitation to participate in the workshop “Rethinking the Public(s)” at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein in 2012; to Michael Samers and Sue Roberts for making possible a visit to the Geography Department at the University of Kentucky in 2015, where I first stumbled across the narrative arc of the whole book; and to Jouni Häkli and Kirsi Pauliina Kallio for inviting me to the annual meeting of Finnish geographers in Tampere in 2015, where I first articulated the argument with which the book culminates.

The time for finally sitting down and writing out the argument presented in this book has been provided by the Department of Geography at the University of Exeter. Material support to make the most of that time was provided in part by a Leverhulme Trust Fellowship between 2014 and 2016. The space to write, edit, and finesse the book was afforded by various places, including Cuppa Joy in Kitslano, Vancouver; IT Corner in Melville, Johannesburg; and best of all, Baila in Old Town, Swindon.

At University of Georgia Press, I owe an enormous debt to Nik Heynen for his initial enthusiasm and support for the idea sketched in the proposal for the book and to Mick Gusinde-Duffy for encouraging and supporting the ambition I have had for the book as it has developed from that original idea. Thomas Roche and Joy Margheim provided invaluable help in making the text more readable, and Heather Dubrick in preparing the index. Two critical reviewers of both the original proposal and a full draft of the manuscript provided invaluable criticisms and affirmations, and I thank them wholeheartedly.

Finally, starting and finishing this book would not have been possible without both the love and support of Julie.
The Priority of Injustice