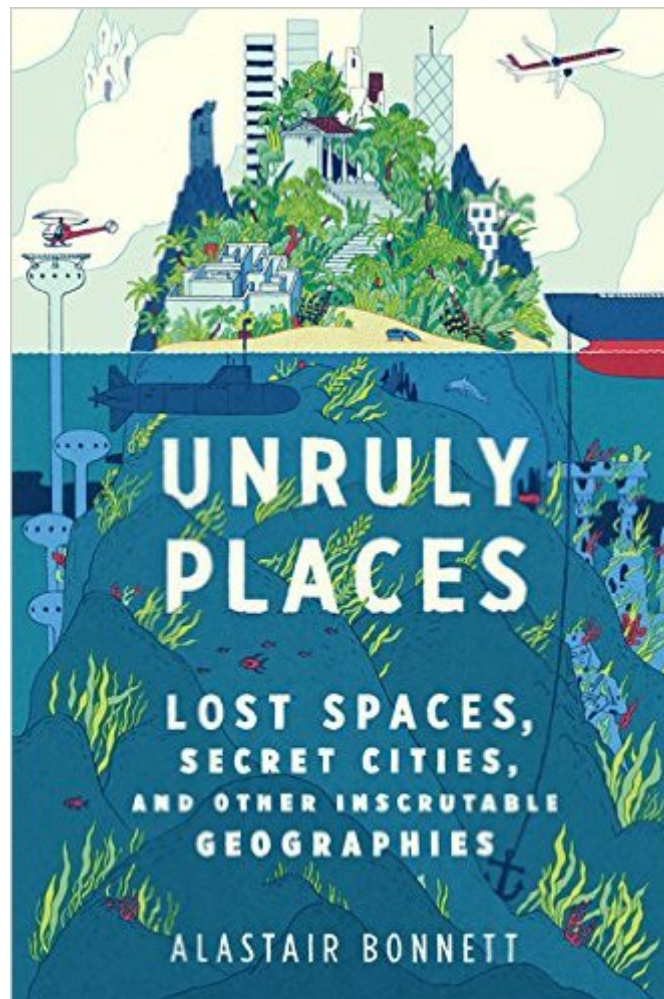


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Unruly Places: Lost Spaces, Secret Cities, And Other Inscrutable Geographies



Synopsis

A tour of the world's hidden geographies "from disappearing islands to forbidden deserts" and a stunning testament to how mysterious the world remains today. At a time when Google Maps Street View can take you on a virtual tour of Yosemite's remotest trails and cell phones double as navigational systems, it's hard to imagine there's any uncharted ground left on the planet. In *Unruly Places*, Alastair Bonnett goes to some of the most unexpected, offbeat places in the world to reinspire our geographical imagination. Bonnett's remarkable tour includes moving villages, secret cities, no man's lands, and floating islands. He explores places as disorienting as Sandy Island, an island included on maps until just two years ago despite the fact that it never existed. Or Sealand, an abandoned gun platform off the English coast that a British citizen claimed as his own sovereign nation, issuing passports and crowning his wife as a princess. Or Baarle, a patchwork of Dutch and Flemish enclaves where walking from the grocery store's produce section to the meat counter can involve crossing national borders. An intrepid guide down the road much less traveled, Bonnett reveals that the most extraordinary places on earth might be hidden in plain sight, just around the corner from your apartment or underfoot on a wooded path. Perfect for urban explorers, wilderness ramblers, and armchair travelers struck by wanderlust, *Unruly Places* will change the way you see the places you inhabit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When Jeremiah Heaton hit the headlines last week for traveling across an arid stretch of southern

Egypt to Bir Tawil and planting a flag on an unclaimed, uninhabited 800-square arid block of land that neither Sudan nor Egypt want, claiming it in the Heaton name as the Kingdom of North Sudan in order to fulfill a promise to his seven-year-old daughter Emily that he would make her a princess, I'm willing to bet that I'm one of a handful of people in the world that knew where the hell this place was or why on earth it was up for grabs in this way. Why? Because I'd read my way through Alastair Bonnett's fascinating assortment of profiles of this and dozens of other geographic oddities, from a 27 kilometer-long road that separates border posts (leaving the land in between technically neither Guinea nor Senegal, or both...) to the dead city of Agdan in Nagorno Karabakh, to tiny "gutterspaces" (available for sale, but just trying occupying one...) in New York City and the vast floating garbage islands in the Pacific. A few of these places I had heard of, like Sealand -- the attempt to build an independent nation on an abandoned oil rig -- but others, like layers of enclaves, were new to me. (Imagine: an Indian community, inside a Bangladeshi enclave, in an Indian village, inside Bangladesh...) This book was a source of endless fascination, and left me pondering an equally endless numbers of questions revolving around our relationship to the space we occupy, and to the ways that our sense of identity is bound up with that space. We may believe that we live in an era where geographical exploration is a thing of the past, but that is less true than we might believe, as Bonnett points out. Part of it may simply be a matter of describing what we mean when we use the phrase.

Warning: This is not a travel guide. It is a book about the history and significance of boundaries, or a lack thereof. It is not meant to be comprehensive. With *Unruly Places*, author Alastair Bonnett challenges readers to rethink the idea of "place" and how people interact with the world. The book consists of eight main sections that contain short essays on 4 to 10 different places that somehow connect to the section title. The essays are only about 4-5 pages each and are easily digestible. One of the challenges of reading the book is orienting to what the author is aiming to do. This is not exactly easy, at the start, but becomes more so the more you get into it. Since Bonnett is a professor of social geography, his expertise is in how we look at the world and the places we inhabit or don't inhabit. There is a philosophical bent throughout the book along with it being filled with locations mundane and extraordinary. While it would be easy to believe that this book is telling you about why this part of the world or that part is unique or inscrutable, what you really get a tour of ideas and concepts regarding people's perception of place. Each essay does not strictly adhere to the heading. Rather, the attempt is to provide background, history, a sense of time, and, in the end, place. Because the idea of place is such an innate part of human existence and how we relate to

our surroundings, a lack of place or feeling that one has no place is just as valid a feeling as seen throughout the book. Some people will love the almost random nature of the writing of *Unruly Places*. Others will likely complain that it feels too disconnected at times. Personally, I quite enjoyed the trip through different theories on the idea of place.

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