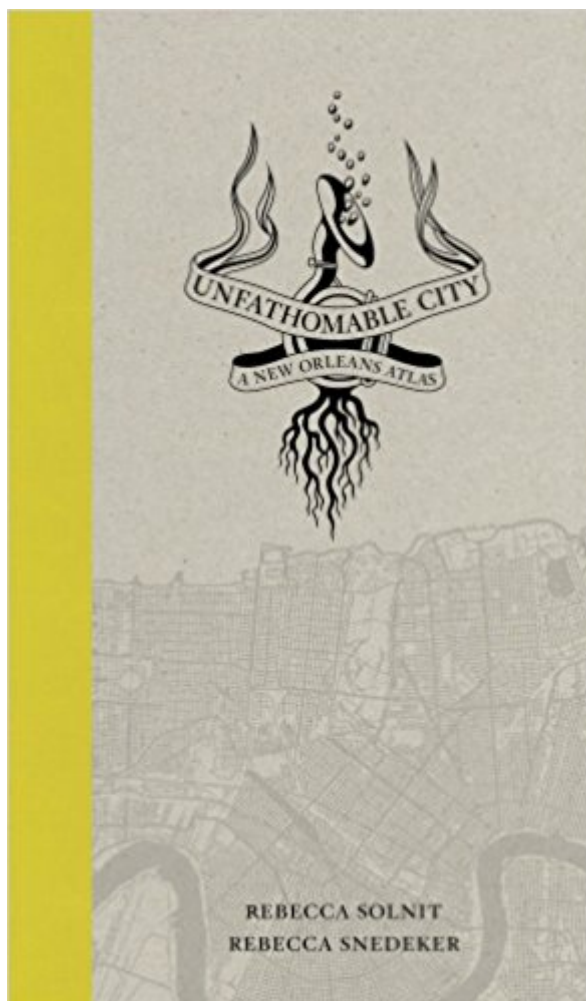


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# Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas



## Synopsis

Like the bestselling *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*, this book is a brilliant reinvention of the traditional atlas, one that provides a vivid, complex look at the multi-faceted nature of New Orleans, a city replete with contradictions. More than twenty essays assemble a chorus of vibrant voices, including geographers, scholars of sugar and bananas, the city's remarkable musicians, prison activists, environmentalists, Arab and Native voices, and local experts, as well as the coauthors' compelling contributions. Featuring 22 full-color two-page-spread maps, *Unfathomable City* plumbs the depths of this major tourist destination, pivotal scene of American history and culture and, most recently, site of monumental disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill. The innovative maps' precision and specificity shift our notions of the Mississippi, the Caribbean, Mardi Gras, jazz, soils and trees, generational roots, and many other subjects, and expand our ideas of how any city is imagined and experienced. Together with the inspired texts, they show New Orleans as both an imperiled city—by erosion, crime, corruption, and sea level rise—and an ageless city that lives in music as a form of cultural resistance. Compact, lively, and completely original, *Unfathomable City* takes readers on a tour that will forever change the way they think about place.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Rebecca Snedeker and Rebecca Solnit's *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas* is a book about New Orleans, but it's also a book about the kind of shared experiences and tensions that could exist in almost any city. Twenty-two maps illustrate ancient and recent histories of the Crescent City, with

local tabs that inspire hums of pride. . . . Though many of those labels are specific to New Orleans, the themes they highlight exist other places, making the book not only a local's guide to the city, but also an anthropologist's guide to the idea of metropolis." (Jeanie Riess Gambit 2013-11-01)"Unique maps and eclectic essays pair to create a thought-provoking portrait of a singular city." (Anita Perala Manhattan 2013-10-01)"An elegant and fascinating volume of maps, essays and artwork. . . . The result is intelligent, often beautiful prose and compelling maps in an exciting exploration of the idiosyncratic details, gestures and rituals that determine how people inhabit, love and perceive this elusive and entrancing city." (Katie Walenter Gambit 2013-11-19)"Unfathomable City's' secret weapon is its imaginative cartography. . . . Each chart, like a plate in a restaurant, has ingredients and flavors that take the reader deep into the city's history. If you think you know these streets, this atlas will make you want to walk them again." (David D'Arcy San Francisco Chronicle 2013-11-24)"A deeply illuminating assemblage of maps and essays." (Lynell George Chicago Tribune 2013-12-06) "A vivid portrait of one of America's most culturally rich cities. More than an atlas or a travel guide, the book provides a compendium of perspectives and histories, comprised of 22 short essays and numerous colorful and beautifully illustrated companion maps. . . . A captivating read for tourists, Louisiana residents, and just about anyone looking to gain familiarity with United States history, folklore, and myth-culture." ★ STARRED REVIEW (Publishers Weekly 2013-12-06) "Unfathomable City is no standard atlas. . . . With beautiful maps and challenging essays, Unfathomable City presents New Orleans as infinitely complex and ultimately unknowable. The result is not a comprehensive guide, but an invitation." ★ STARRED REVIEW (Pamela Toler Shelf Awareness 2013-12-10)"New Orleans natives tell the same story in boardrooms and bus stops: Their city is a puzzle wrapped in a tease, a mystery scented by sweet olive and garbage, veiled by humidity, echoing with brass bands and the occasional gunshot. That's the mystery probed on each page of 'Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas,' the grand, map-laden anthology assembled by local filmmaker Rebecca Snedeker and the celebrated essayist and thinker Rebecca Solnit." (Chris Waddington New Orleans Times-Picayune 2013-12-09)"The maps are playful, colorful and alive—in contrast to the utility we're used to with online mapping sites and apps. They're a joy to study; New Orleanians will no doubt pore over the map depicting the ongoing revival of once moribund St. Claude Avenue and the parade routes of the city's archaic but surviving social-aid and pleasure clubs. Tourists familiarizing themselves with the city may spend more time on the "Repercussions" map, tracing jazz history and club locations, or Billy Sothern's "sites of contemplation and delight," featuring sculpture gardens, synagogues and Meyer the Hatter. . . . Ms. Solnit and Ms. Snedeker prove that atlases can still fire the imagination and incite wonder."

(Wayne Curtis Wall Street Journal 2013-12-06)"Packed with colorful maps and essays by star writers, this atlas-with-attitude 'encompasses second-line parades, the banana trade, bounce music, the revival along the St. Claude Avenue corridor, and conversations with such iconic musicians as George Porter Jr. and Donald Harrison Jr.'"

• TOP 10 BOOKS OF 2013 FOR NEW ORLEANS READERS (Chris Waddington New Orleans Times-Picayune 2013-12-17)"A brilliant reinvention of the traditional atlas. . . . Compact, lively, and completely original, Unfathomable City takes readers on a tour that will forever change the way they think about place." (Alan Petrucelli Examiner.com 2013-12-19)"With "Unfathomable City," Solnit and Snedeker have produced an idiosyncratic, luminous tribute to the greatest human creation defined by its audience participants: the city itself." (Daniel Brook New York Times 2014-01-03)"The New Orleans the book charts is unfathomable 'because no two people live in quite the same city.' The twenty-two vignettes in this collection speak to that individual appreciation in twenty-three distinct voices, yet whatever the topic—apothecaries, lead poisoning, lemon ice, institutional abominations, sugar, bounce music, environmental calamities, shifts in the road, bananas—they burn bright, both breaking and gladdening your heart; and the handsome cartography is illuminating in the best tradition of maps: taking you there, for better or worse. . . . New Orleans may be porous as a sponge—in many ways, from its acceptance of refugees to water-charged soil types—but the writing here has a high specific gravity, a chewiness that makes you want to pay close attention and count your bites." (Peter Lewis B&N Review 2014-01-15)"A fascinating look at New Orleans. Through 22 maps varying in their strange detail and beauty, each accompanied by an essay, Solnit and Snedeker put together a deep portrait of the city and so much of what makes it unique." (Vikas Turakhia Cleveland Plain Dealer 2014-01-30)"Importantly, the book never fetishizes New Orleans. By addressing both the vibrant culture of public celebration (the second lines and the krewe parades and the near-constant festivals) and New Orleans's bleaker side (environmental exploitation, the opportunism of the banana industry, the failures of post-Katrina authority), Solnit and Snedeker present an honest portrait. They delve deep into the city's history, as far back as pre-European colonization, and resurface in the present, with bounce music and housing projects. Moreover, unlike many recent New Orleans books, they don't overly dwell on Katrina to milk sympathy or a morbid interest from their readers. In short, Unfathomable City is beautifully balanced." (Delaney Nolan Oxford American 2014-01-31)"A treasure trove of rich reminiscences that will be appreciated by the native, and appeal to past and future tourists." (Aron Row City Book Review 2014-02-03)"The effect of Unfathomable City and the series of which it is a part is that of a healthy and bracing critique—one that we urgently need in this time of

ubiquitous geographic information. It is a critique we should hope will extend to other American places as this lovely series continues." (Matthew Battles Orion 2014-04-01)"A beautifully creative and colorful atlas of New Orleans . . . a rich visual and literary banquet, serving up a kaleidoscopic array of perspectives on the city's multifarious peoples and their struggles and victories." (Ed Conroy San Antonio Express-News 2014-04-20)"New Orleans is suffused with history, with mystery, with violence, and with sublime beauty. From shrimp po-boys to extravagant Mardi Gras floats, from the enormous live oaks lining St. Charles Avenue like silent, ancient sentries to second-line parades with loud brass bands weaving their way over pothole-laden streets, New Orleans leaves an impression. Trying to understand and make sense of all the facets of the place, and all the attendant contradictions, is a task with seemingly no end. The beautiful Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas can help with this, and I'd highly recommend it to anyone the least bit infatuated with the Crescent City. Part coffee table book, part history and culture guide, Unfathomable City is, like New Orleans herself, unique. Filled with twenty-two gorgeously illustrated and colored maps of the city, each spread across two pages, it's an atlas that aims to both educate and challenge." (LouAnn Lofton Mississippi Business Journal 2015-03-06)"Beautiful cartography and from-the-street, intimate essays by lives lived in this city. My wanderlust was sated." (Peace News 2014-04-01) "[New Orleans] history in tantalizing narrative nuggets; This book is part visionary road map, part post-Â- traumatic Katrina therapy and part poetic love ode/lament to our city; After reading this book you'll want to go out and map things that are important or quirky to you." (Orissa Arend New Orleans Tribune 2015-05-01)"I love reading anything Solnit writes, for she is a thinker, and I appreciate her take on things." (Rosemary Rosemary's Blog 2015-12-08)"The book is a must . . . Unfathomable City is a real treasure." (Lili De Barbieri Reference Reviews 2015-10-01)"A series of beautifully designed maps draw visual connections between the shifting landscape and points of human interest. Short and accessible essays discuss topics from reflective political commentary to whimsical points of intrigue . . . Distinctive, inviting, and will help draw you into this unique exploration of New Orleans." (Scout Magazine 2016-04-04)

"This series of atlases is one of my absolute favorites. Vivid, beautiful, and deceptively meaningful, Unfathomable City successfully pushes cartographic conventions. It explores what it means to know a place, not just the street grid. A delight to behold, this is an incredible achievement rarely seen in modern cartography." #151;William McNulty, cartographer, former director of maps at National Geographic, former graphics editor, New York Times "This bright, rolling river of a book carries a chorus of mapmakers, writers, and artists singing of deep memory in New Orleans.

Unfathomable City is a book to cherish and sure to be a classic." Jason Berry, New Orleans-based journalist and coauthor of *Up from the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans Music since World War II* "Race, space, and place: this atlas is a people's ecology of persistent resistance, an open-ended historical geography guiding toward an indomitable future; a permanent revolution no less likely than the city itself. Read this book!" Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences, CUNY Graduate Center

Marvelous in every way. I lived in New Orleans for twelve years, but left before Katrina. Before returning "home" to the city, I read these essays and studied these maps. When I got there, I was well-prepared for the changes. Captures the spirit of the city after Katrina, the complex changes, and the things that have stayed the same.

I love maps, and I love new ways of seeing. This book fills both those desires, and more. I got this for a gift for my wife, a NOLA native. We both love it. It's filled with historical oddities and little-known tidbits that help explain why New Orleans is the way it is, and how the people who live there keep it such a special place. If you've ever been to New Orleans, you will love this book. If you've never been there, what's wrong with you? Get this book and discover things about New Orleans that make it even more fascinating!

I'm a native New Orleanian, so I vigorously identify with the content. Ms Solnit and Snedeker are articulate penmen and have solicited a cadre of competent associates to journal each chapter. I particularly enjoyed "Snakes And Ladders" as it demonstrates the breath of the human psyche. I strongly recommend this volume.

Outstanding book with amazing maps!

This is a beautiful book! Very happy with my purchase

Pardon the pun, but this book is off the charts. Creative, compelling - conceptual geography as a hybrid narrative art. Whoever said the map is not the territory may need to think again. Hoping there is another volume...

Sent out as a gift to a N.O. relative and got rave reviews. I plan to check out the San Francisco Atlas

for myself.

The content is so cool and thought provoking, the presentation is beautiful--it's just a really cool item. Highly recommend.

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