

Unusual geography in *The Atlas of Unusual Borders* and *The Atlas of Microstates* books

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Abstract:

Boundaries are not usually viewed as either “ordinary” or “unusual”, but some are definitely less common than others. Not that many people would expect countries to have territory inside the territory of another, or know that national borders can run through cities, sometimes dividing a city library or even a honeymoon-suite bed in half! Sometimes, two cities from different sides of a national border join together and celebrate New Year twice, one hour apart, in the shared town square, and the 350-year-old tradition of the change of boundary between two large Western European countries twice a year is an occurrence that would probably surprise almost everyone.

However, such and numerous other unusual border situations exist in many places around our planet. They are the subject of my book *The Atlas of Unusual Borders*, in which unusual geography is presented in simple and engaging language, with accompanying text explaining the historical circumstances that led to that geography. Each article in the book is also accompanied by a map, showing the location of the geographical oddity in question.

The Atlas of Unusual Borders was the overall winner of the atlas category at the 30th International Cartographic Conference in 2021 and was shortlisted for the 2020 Edward Stanford Travel Writing Award.

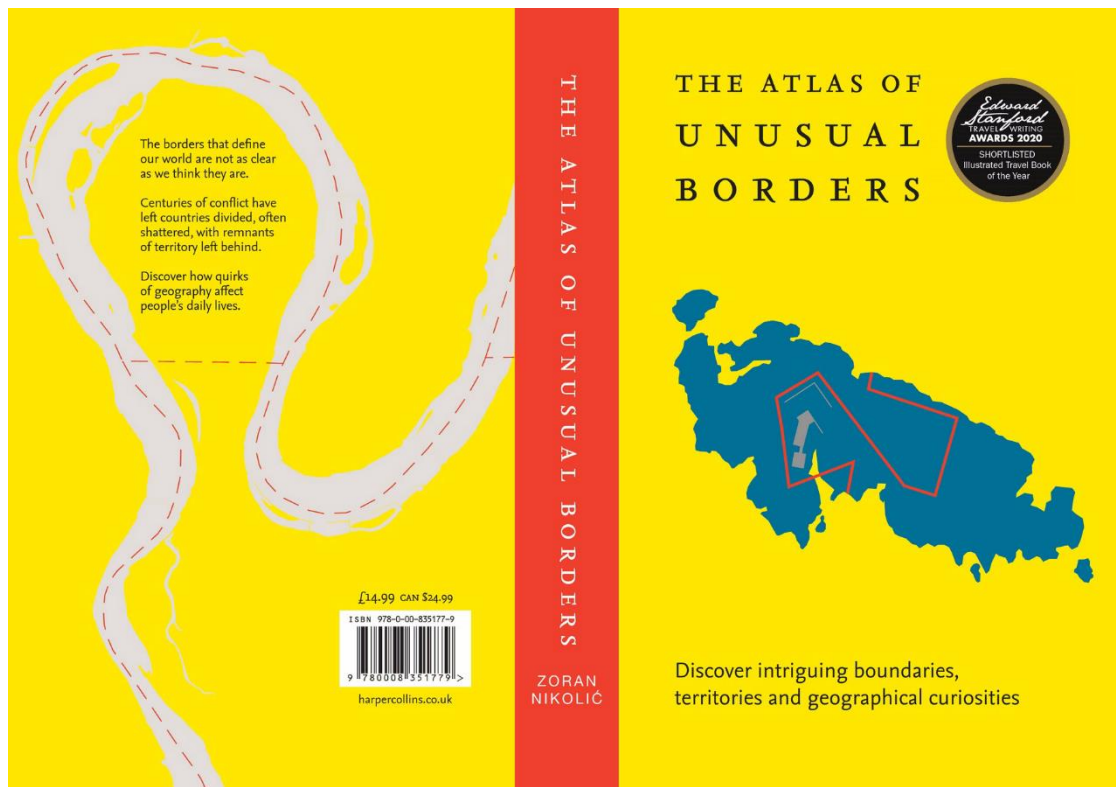


Figure 1. Cover of *The Atlas of Unusual Borders*

The Atlas of Microstates, my forthcoming book, is the logical continuation of *The Atlas of Unusual Borders*. Numerous microstates – a microstate can also be called a ‘mini-state’, a very small country that is internationally recognized as a

sovereign state – are included: both current ones and those that today only exist in historical atlases. I think that the stories of microstates are not told often enough, and believe that my new book will be an interesting read for all lovers of geography, politics and history. It will follow the proven formula of the first book: text, map and photographs. The text will outline and explain the origins of the microstate; then on the entire adjacent page, the map will aid interpretation of the text, and lastly, carefully selected photographs will enrich the content and further engage the reader. A special challenge for me has been finding maps of these long-lost countries, as they often do not exist in modern atlases. A further challenge has been that many former countries did not have precisely defined borders – in fact, inaccuracies created by the old cartographers is sometimes the reason for the existence of some of the microstates covered in my new book.

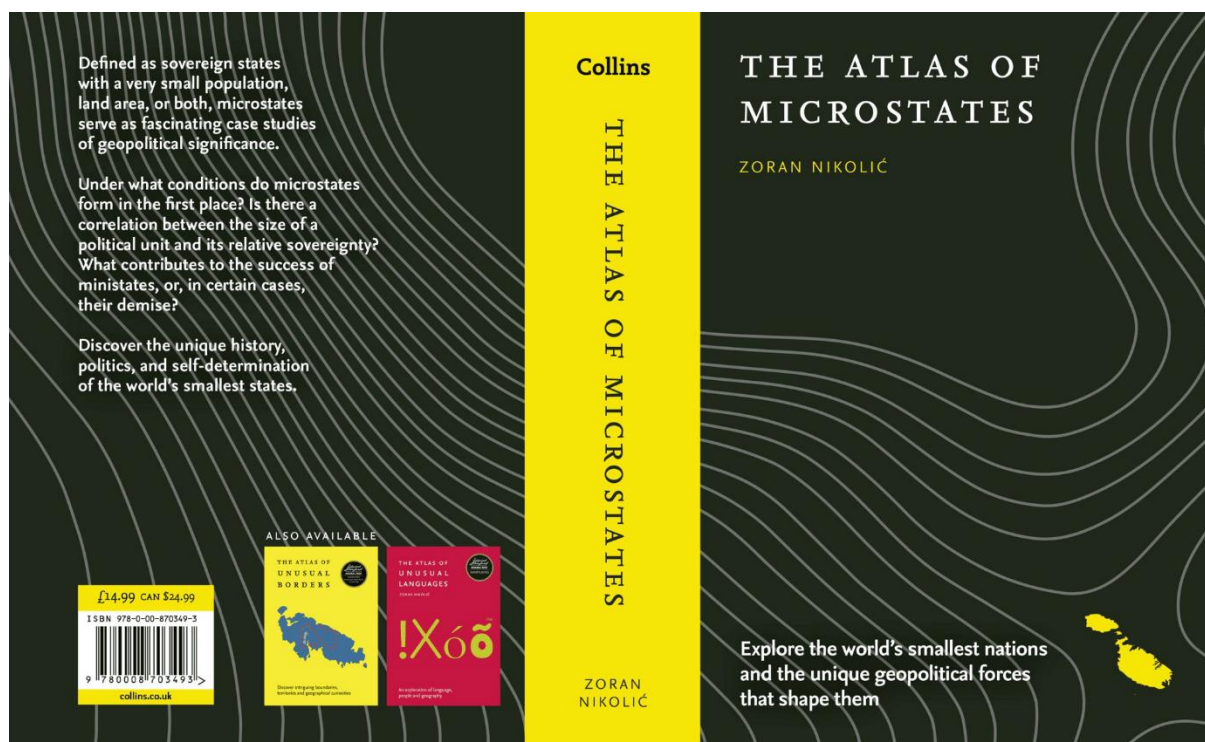


Figure 2. Cover of The Atlas of Microstates

Geographical maps allow the (once) dry story about phenomena related to numerous sciences (geography, history, statistics, biology, economics and politics) to be translated into a visually powerful story. Of course, it is of great importance that the maps are precise, clear and easy to understand in order that they have maximum impact. Only then will the combination of intriguing text and informative maps represent a well-rounded product, ready to provide the reader with new insights.

Short biography:

I was born in 1975 in Gornji Milanovac, Yugoslavia. I spent only the first two years of my life there, as my family often relocated, in the vicinity of Belgrade. These relocations probably influenced me as a youngster, because at one point in my childhood I took a geographical map of the then Yugoslavia to try to find every place where we had lived. This sparked my fascination with geography, and maps and atlases, a fascination that has endured through to today, even though the paper map is sometimes said to be becoming a thing of the past. I have nothing against electronic atlases – on the contrary, I consider them an excellent way of modernizing the representation of geographic objects. However, there must be at least one reference atlas in my house at all times, even if I only glance at it once or twice a year.

Although my diploma says that I am an IT engineer, geography and maps have never stopped occupying my attention, and of all websites, mapping websites are my favourite. Huge amounts of time spent browsing and analyzing different apps has led me to notice a lot of unusual things: this has been the inspiration for my books and my attempts to present, in one place, as many of these intriguing phenomena as possible.