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Corresponding Author: (\*) [lsakaja@geog.pmf.hr](mailto:lsakaja@geog.pmf.hr)

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Editor: Dr Panos Manetos,  
[pmanetos@uth.gr](mailto:pmanetos@uth.gr)

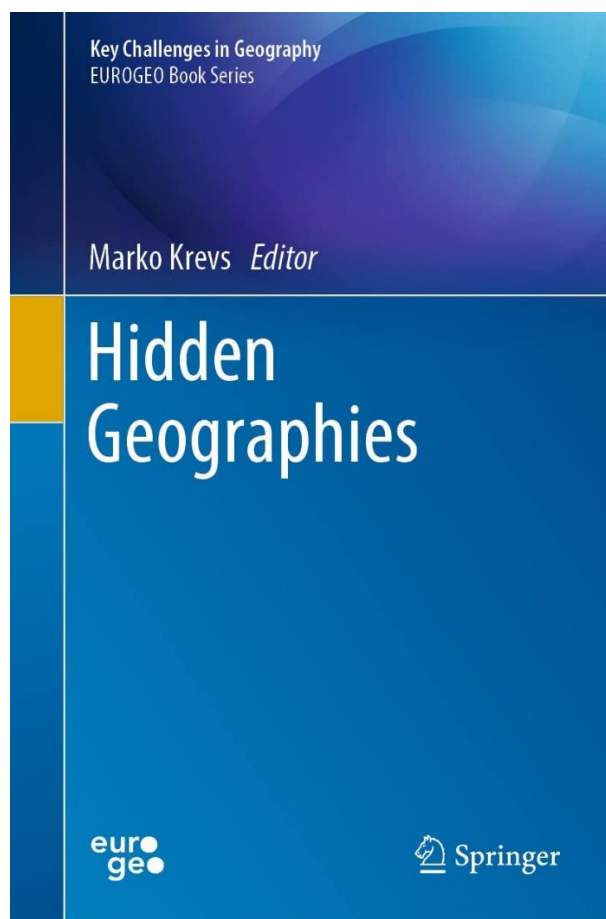
Book Review

## Revealing the hidden.

*On the book Hidden Geographies, Marko Krevs (ed.), Springer. 2021.*

Laura Šakaja <sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Zagreb, Croatia



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The publication of the *European Journal of Geography* (EJG) (<http://eurogeogournal.eu>) is based on the *European Association of Geographers'* goal to make *European Geography* a worldwide reference and standard. Thus, the scope of the EJG is to publish original and innovative papers that will substantially improve, in a theoretical, conceptual or empirical way the quality of research, learning, teaching and applying geography, as well as in promoting the significance of geography as a discipline. Submissions are encouraged to have a European dimension. The *European Journal of Geography* is a peer-reviewed open access journal and is published quarterly.

There are not many topics today that can arouse the interest of geographers who carry out their scientific work in all geographical subdisciplines. One such topic, hidden geographies, is the subject of a collection of works edited by Marko Krevs and recently published by Springer. Given the lack of comprehensive earlier discussions of the concept of "hidden geographies" and the broad possibilities for its interpretation, this book is a welcome attempt to conceptualize the content and scope of the term. Rarely does one find a collection in which 50 different authors in 24 chapters reflect on the issues they deal with scientifically in light of one concept. These issues range from space reflected in the mind (A. Galvani, M. Zaleshina, A. Zaleshin) to regional social change and conflict (O. Harsama, A. Kosovrasti, E. Kola); from soil sequences (B. Repe) to spatial symbols (J. Zupančič). It is clear, therefore, that reading this book is a challenging endeavour that, although it may briefly distract us from the realm of our narrower scholarly interests, returns us to thinking about the epistemological and methodological issues of geography, as do all informed discussions of important geographical concepts.

It is clear that all sciences, including geography, are concerned in some way with the hidden, the undiscovered, the unknown (see Kumer 2020, Klun 2020, Gekic et al. 2020, Orgin et al. 2020, Kim & Muhič 2020, Planinc 2020). Moreover, interest in phenomena beyond the visible sphere (i.e., hidden) is in the core of geography, even though the name of the discipline itself, as well as its many definitions, imply a concern with the "surface of the earth," its physical features, material, and mappable objects and structures. Many of our illustrious predecessors have inspired geographers to investigate the intangible and the invisible: relations, perceptions, imaginations, contexts, meanings. Recall, for example, Alexander Humboldt's statement that "a new and clearer light shall have been thrown alike on two spheres of the one Cosmos, – the external world perceived by senses, and its internal reflection in the mind" (1851, vol. III, part I, p. 8) – or Carl Ritter's call to geographers "to exhibit the subject of relations rather than to detain [themselves] with descriptions" (1881, p. xxiv). In the middle of the last century, John Kirkland Wright recognized the need to study imagined informal geography "contained in non-scientific works – in books of travel, in magazines, and newspapers, in many a page of fiction and poetry, and on many a canvas" (1947, p. 10). Around the same time, William Kirk introduced the term behavioral environment, which he associated with perceptions and values (1952). Recall William Bunge's (1966) notion of real distance measured in transportation costs and travel time (p. 55), and his call for geographers to be aware that "raw distance may diverge from psychological or social distance" (p. 179). Yu Fu Tuan's sense of place (1974), Peter Gould and Rodney White's mental maps (1974), Edward Said's (1978) and Derek Gregory's (1995) imaginative geographies – all of these terms have to do with imaginations and images. Peter Jackson's call for the study of maps of meanings (1989) and Denis Cosgrove's appeal for geographical exploration of ways of seeing (1984) have contributed significantly to our contemporary awareness of the constructed nature of reality and the need to explore in depth the many hidden contexts of the visible and the material. The current crisis of confidence in presented facts, texts, and images that we are living through makes interest in the hidden even more relevant in geography and the discussion of it even more topical.

But the concept discussed in this collection includes not only perceptions, relations, imaginations, meanings, contexts – invisible, immaterial, and intangible. So what, then, are "hidden geographies"? In the book's introductory first article, editor Marko Krevs aims to provide what he calls a "usable, not necessarily definitive understanding and definition of the concept" (p. 3). As Krevs describes it, the concept of hidden geographies "refers to an existing or imagined, absolute or contextual geography of a material or non-material phenomenon which is hidden for one or more reasons ..." (p. 28). In fact, it is about the part of geographical objects which are still unknown. The concept indicates "missing geographical information, related to our limited knowledge and the weakness of our spatial abilities" (pp. 4–5). It refers to both absolute geography, having to do with individual places or a distribution of several places, and contextual geography, which Krevs links to relative locations, temporal

relationships, characteristics of phenomena or places, subjective information, imagined places. (pp. 6–7). What Krevs presents is in fact a pioneering attempt to record and classify not what we know, what we have studied, discovered, and learned, but what we do not yet know. He thereby singles out four layers of hidden geographies: undiscovered geographies, which exist though no one knows about them, uncognised geographies, discovered by someone but still unknown by the general public, unpublished geographies, including discovered phenomena that have not been made available to the public (for example, omitted from maps), and deliberately hidden geographies, pertaining to violence and fear, military sites and activities, environmental issues (such as pollution and its impact on health), data protection, etc.

The collection *Hidden Geographies* presents many views of the hidden, from hidden objects to hidden meanings, and diverse ways and tools that are used to unveil it. The authors of individual chapters in this volume introduce different interpretations of the concept of hidden geographies based on their particular research.

Perhaps the broadest account on various hidden dimensions and elements is presented in Carles Carreras's outline of the complex realities of contemporary cities. Carreras uses numerous examples to demonstrate the complex and dynamic interrelations of urban variables characterised by different levels of visibility. He draws attention to several dimensions of the city to underline the entanglement between the hidden and the visible. Among the topics explored are the urban forms and the hiddenness of their planned character; the invisibility of some environmental aspects of the city; the importance of the city's invisible underground - sewer systems, drainage, energy, etc; the hiddenness of domestic spaces; the invisibility of the contemporary city's limits. The strong impact of "invisible" economic and social phenomena, such as land ownership, social inequality, power relations, or place marketing is also discussed, as well as some inconsistencies pertaining, for example, to the urban marginal world, which is visible in film and literature while being much less visible in real cities. In urban realities, as we can clearly understand from this extensive analyses, there is a continuity between the visible and the hidden, and the boundaries between are blurred in many ways.

Other contributions illustrate the dimensions of hidden geographies in more specific ways. I will try to distinguish here the types of hiddenness that these articles refer to.

### **1. *Hidden as inaccessible to human senses***

Bram Vandeninden et al. deal with air pollution, which causes a burden on human health, being paradoxically hidden, unseen, and difficult to detect by human senses. This chapter analyses models that reveal air pollution. It discusses patterns of air pollution exposure during commutes, uncovering a hidden geography of air pollution. Exposure to air pollution depends, the authors show, on a variety of spatio-temporal factors – the day, the time of day, the week, or the season, location, architectural makeup, meteorological conditions, etc. The chapter focuses on high-resolution air pollution models, as valuable tools for uncovering the spatio-temporal air pollution patterns that commuters are exposed to. These tools, it is revealed, could be effective in helping commuters to reduce their air pollution exposure by switching to another route, thus enabling them to avoid previously hidden risks.

### **2. *Hidden as inaccessible or invisible to the majority***

The chapter by Mark Nuttall deals with underground drainage tunnels as hidden from the sight of the majority. This historical geographic analysis focuses on debates over the construction of drainage tunnels beneath Halkyn Mountain in North East Wales. Specifically, the author discusses controversies that surrounded the construction of Milwr Tunnel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and shows how the subsurface of Halkyn Mountain was

imagined, made knowable, and controlled during that time. Nuttall reveals the effect of lead mining on the communities, social relations, and environmental features of the region, showing how the tunnels, though underground and hidden, were involved in the entanglement of people and landscapes and in shaping the network of material and social relations of the Halkyn Mountain area.

Some urban areas could be also defined as "hidden" – in situations when they are associated with excluded social groups and as such are inaccessible and therefore invisible to the general public. Nadezhda Ilieva and Boris Kazakov analyse such "hidden neighbourhoods" with the example of Harman Mahala – a Roma neighbourhood in Plovdiv. This article presents a complex mosaic of numerous factors and aspects of this hiddenness – from the self-isolation of Roma rooted in the sense of rejection, the need for a shield against discrimination, for the provision of security, and for the preservation of cultural identity, to the spatial stigmatization which is derived from negative stereotypes attributed to Roma and their living area by the dominant ethnic group. Ilieva and Kazakov use a broad spectrum of methodologies – including aerial photography with the use of a drone, the analysis of cadastral plans, and a questionnaire survey – to discover objective and subjective aspects of the quality of life in a Roma neighbourhood usually perceived as a fortress that is "different", inaccessible, and hidden from the sight of the majority. The findings presented in this study show that, despite objective drawbacks, such as insufficient urban infrastructure, crowded homes, and illegal housing, the Roma are subjectively highly satisfied with their neighbourhood, which the authors link to the very sense of security and strong sense of place and belonging that living in such an enclosed territorial community gives them.

Michele Stoppa also studies enclosed territorial community – on the example of Carthusian monasteries. He considers Carthusian spaces paradigmatic examples of hidden geography. The peculiar organization of the monks' environment corresponds to their special way of life characterized by silence and contemplative solitude. The regime of a Charterhouse requires isolation, which is achieved in different ways. Stoppa singles out four progressive enclosure levels. Charterhouses are usually located in hardly accessible places, far from settlements and often surrounded by forests. The impenetrable wall of the enclosure, which is allowed to be crossed only in exceptional cases, additionally contributes to the protection of the solitary life of monks. The hidden geography of a Charterhouse is complemented by concentric inside spaces with a division between fathers' and brothers' spaces, isolation of each father's spaces, and the enclosure of the heart – the interior space of contemplation. As Stoppa concludes, the hidden geography of a Carthusian monastery is constituted both by the hiddenness of internal space *ad extra* – isolation from those who live in the external world – and by hiddenness *ad intra* – personal isolation required for silence and conversation with God.

### **3. *Hidden as clandestine***

David Lopez-Casado describes the problem of illegal urbanisation in Spain. He analyses the processes and contexts of illegal parcelling and construction that led to emergence of unplanned semi-urban settlements on the fringes of a consolidated city. These settlements, Lopez-Casado argues, could be represented by the term "hidden city" as they are governed by their own rules and created under conditions of clandestinity, outside the sphere of urban planning and the legal system.

### **4. *Hidden factors and contexts behind visible structures***

Blaž Repe reflects on the relationship of the hidden and the revealed in terms of soil formation. Using the example of the Polhograjsko Hills on the western edge of the Ljubljana Basin, Repe studies the variable slope processes in karst geomorphic systems and the corresponding impact of elements of relief on soils. The invisible processes of soil formation that determine the shapes of visible landscapes are analysed. Revealing hidden interlinks in the processes

of soil genesis, Repe shows how the “hidden connection beneath our feet” are revealed in the visible landscape morphology – from dense forests and grassland cover to agricultural fields and suburban residential areas.

Marko Krevs, Ranko Mirić, and Nusret Drešković demonstrate the existence of geographies hidden in the visible post-war landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They discuss the concept of hiddenness in light of the duality between visible landscapes and the diverse hidden contexts of their construction, those related to identity as well as cultural, personal, emotional, ethnic, and other issues. To understand the contemporary post-war landscape, these authors refer to diverse hidden geographies: those of depopulation, ethnic structure, war devastation, post-war renewal, and the return of the displaced, as well as those most difficult to grasp – the hidden geographies of interethnic tensions. To uncover these hidden geographies, multiple sources – including statistical data, maps, publications, personal online blogs, stories, and media news – have been used. In addition, a narrative simulation method as well as Marko Krevs’s concept of hidden geographies (mentioned above) have been applied.

For Roxana-Diana Ilisei, hidden geographies are the stories behind visible structures. She seeks to trace the factors and actors that contributed to the degradation of historic Traian Square in Timișoara (Romania), transformed from a once important cultural area into a marginalized and degraded place. Her study shows that the hidden geography of this decline consists of certain actions – or oftentimes, inaction – of various actors, from the city administration that failed to control the legal side of the settlement process to cultural institutions that failed to preserve the square as a heritage site; from the negligence and indifference of the city’s residents to visible installations of mobile operators which are harmful to the historic image of the square.

##### **5. *Hidden as ignored, neglected, overlooked***

For Natalija Špeh et al., hidden geography comprises issues neglected in the scientific literature and the media alike. For this reason, they include their central topic of research, the problem of waste disposal in the Kornati Archipelago, in this understanding of hidden geography as an often-overlooked issue. They argue that much of the information on marine waste that we desperately need remains unknown: the amount and types of marine debris, its impact on coastal and marine species, human health and economy, the spatial distribution of sea waste, etc. The failure of scientists to address the problem of the increased burden of sea waste along the shores of the Kornati is compounded by neglect of this issue in the media as well as deliberate concealment by locals seeking to preserve the archipelago’s positive image. The methodology for the inventory of solid waste in the coastal zone introduced in this chapter aims to uncover the hidden geography of the Kornati Archipelago’s sea waste, moving the topic to the register of “visible” problems – studied, discussed, assessed, monitored.

Irma Potočnik Slavič deals with the hidden geographies of aging in rural areas of Slovenia. In her view, the geographies of aging are hidden because they refer to issues that largely fall out of the sphere of public awareness, are not monitored, and are not addressed. The research she presents reveals that among the most important characteristics of an ideal environment for elderly rural inhabitants are proximity to one’s children, relatives, and friends; going through the aging process in or near one’s home; and living in an attractive rural area. Potočnik Slavič discusses the complex networks of actors who create the contemporary landscape of aging – including state programs, local infrastructural possibilities, activities of local action groups, etc. – that is necessary to fulfill the hidden needs and expectations of the elderly interested in aging at home.



## **6. *Hidden as potential yet not realized***

Takumi Isono and Nobunari Itoh discuss astronomical tourism and assess its potentials. On the basis of research conducted in Kumano City, they conclude that, in the era of light pollution that obstructs astronomical observation, a starry sky can be a notable attraction in depopulated regions where there is a lack of tourist resources. Discussing tourist products such as stargazing, the explanation of constellations, etc., as well as tourists' motivations, they conclude that astronomical tourism is likely to develop as a new type of sustainable tourism. As such, it can be considered a hidden (still potential) part of the tourism geography.

Lucija Lapuh's contribution is on high-performance computing (HPC) and the extent of its implementation in the automotive and electronic industry in Slovenia. Her results show that, due to the high costs of HPC, the lack of knowledge about it, and the lack of qualified human resources, the Factories of Future that are actively taking part in the new (fourth) digital revolution by using HPC are very rare in Slovenia and are therefore still hidden within the Slovenian economy.

Mostafa Norouzi and Somayeh Khademi move the discussion of hidden geography to the hidden potentials of the application of geographical knowledge. The focus of their work is on critical regionalism, an approach that rejects modern and postmodern architecture due to its uniformity, its indifference to environmental and cultural conditions, its disregard for place identity. Drawing on the concept of critical regionalism, Norouzi and Khademi refer to geography as a hidden antidote to rescue architecture. The authors argue that a combination of geographical knowledge and modern architectural language would encourage the promotion of architecture that takes into consideration regional identity and enhances place-making. In particular, the authors advocate the architectural use of the geographical knowledge of a site, its climatic conditions, geographical location, environmental context, and local cultural background – to trigger critical regionalism as a powerful architectural paradigm that has an ability to overcome the overwhelming domination of placeless international architectural style.

## **7. *Hidden borders, invisible boundaries***

Matej Gabrovec, Primož Pipan, and Peter Zajc point to the absence of appropriate law as a hidden obstacle to cross-border public passenger transport in Slovenia. These authors claim that the lack of appropriate legal grounding for the long-term operation of cross-border public transport presents a hidden border affecting international passenger public transportation. They call for the inclusion of international lines in public service obligation that will make them eligible for state financial compensation. This change in legislation, in the authors' view, is a necessary condition for the development of cross-border public transport.

## **8. *The little-known history of landscape as hidden***

As Gianfranco Battisti writes in this volume (p. 31), "historical geography is per se concealed not only from our experience but, to a large extent, also from our knowledge." This thesis is well backed by Roman Maisuradze and Tamar Khardziani's contribution, which deals with the sixteenth century road network in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of southern Georgia. They used numerous historic sources – documentary and cartographic material from that period, as well as data from a contemporary field survey, to reveal the hidden history of the landscape. Analyses of written historical sources and of the material remains preserved in the landscapes helped the authors to reconstruct the social and economic relations and the trade of goods in Georgia's portion of the Silk Road. Dealing with a historic road network, now hidden, the authors reconstruct the region's commodity turnover on the background of the East-West trade

relations. Roads of sixteenth century, though now hidden elements of the landscape, were intensively used in the past, providing the economic and cultural development of the region.

## **9. Meanings as hidden**

Matija Zorn and Peter Mikša write about the boundaries of the past, which, although they no longer exist today, are deeply imprinted in the minds of people. They study representations of former borders – boundary stones as markers indicating delimitation within the Hapsburg Monarchy. These stones were constructed to mark division lines between the Duchy of Styria and the Kingdom of Hungary before the First World War and between the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the interwar period. These boundary stones no longer serve their original purpose, and only some of them have been preserved. However, the authors claim, they still represent borders. These borders are “phantom” – they do not exist legally, but they still have an impact on society as they are still meaningful for people and are still present in the cognitive perceptions of the former boundaries mentioned above. As Zorn and Mikša put it, these “phantom boundaries” could be considered as hidden geographies in past borderscapes.

Jernej Zupančič contributes to the discussion on hidden geographies with a topic related to spatial symbols that have both a visible (material) and an invisible (hidden, meaning-related) side. In the theoretical part of the chapter, he writes about the process of intentional symbolization of spatial elements with the aim of strengthening the recognizability of a place or developing that place’s marketing. He singles out four main steps in the process of intentional symbolization: (1) the initial selection of objects with appropriate prerequisites, (2) the identification and interpretation of their content, (3) the determination of their relevance, and finally, (4) representation – putting the chosen and proclaimed spatial symbol into practice. The chapter also presents the results of a qualitative study of symbolic places, on the basis of which specific places that can be considered spatial symbols in Slovenia were singled out. As the author shows, these places vary from strong national symbols, such as Triglav, Slovenia’s highest peak, to typical landscapes characteristic of certain regions.

## **10. Hidden as perceptions beyond media narratives**

Bahar Kaba contrasts opinions based on personal experience with media narratives, in other words, she deals with the hidden geographies beyond predominant stereotypes. Her chapter concerns foreign solo female travellers’ perceptions of risk and safety in Turkey. Comparing the media narratives and pre-travel views on Turkey with the results of content analyses applied to 24 blogs written by solo female travellers in Turkey, she discovered a clear disparity. As she demonstrates, personal experience influences a destination’s image, transforming it from a pre-travel image as a dangerous, unsafe, or uncertain country to a post-visit image as a safe country with gender-related risk that is possible to negotiate using various coping strategies. The chapter suggests that personal experience enables female solo travellers to understand the “hidden meanings of a country” and also helps us to recognize the “hidden geography of the country” by reconstructing an image of the country beyond that of media news.

## **11. Methods and sources used to uncover hidden geographies**

Comprising a wide range of topics and subdisciplines, this collection gives us an excellent insight into both the wide range of methods available to geographers and the variety of sources used in geographic research. Two works, however, seem particularly interesting for reflecting on the reliability of the ways in which geographical knowledge is generated and the sources on which it is based.

In their contribution, Suzana Lovrić Obradović and Gordana Vojković indicate the importance of choosing the right methods. Using their own research as an example, they demonstrate how the application of one method can reveal information that remains hidden by the application of another. Specifically, using the example of fertility variations in municipalities in Serbia, they demonstrate the ability of the local weighted regression model to reveal the disparity of spatial variations in fertility as a hidden content that remains uncovered in the case of using the global weighted regression model.

Gianfranco Battisti's contribution pertains to the question of sources acceptable in scientific geographical enquiry. In particular, he studies the possibility of resorting to mystical literature as a source of knowledge and discusses whether texts of mystics are useful and suitable to derive information on historical landscapes, itineraries, territorial details, or precise locations of events. In his chapter, he takes visions of mystics A. Katarina Emmerich and Maria Valtorta recorded in texts and discusses their potential to contribute to geographical knowledge on the Holy Land. Batista concludes that mystical literature deserves the attention of geographers, pointing not only to reasons for caution towards texts of mystics, especially if they are available through mediators, but also to reasons for their serious consideration, especially after some of the facts cited by mystics have been subsequently confirmed by scientific research.

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It is difficult to disagree with Carles Carreras, who states that "all scientific efforts to search for explanation deal with the development of different reality's hidden dimensions" (p. 279).

This collection contains many concrete examples of the scientifically based uncovering of the hidden in geography and gives us a glimpse of the wide range of topics that geographers deal with and the methods they use. As the contributions therein demonstrate, the notion of "hidden geography" is apt to arouse scholarly curiosity. Marko Krevs summarizes the characteristics of hidden geography in several questions: What is hidden? Hidden by whom and to whom? Why is it hidden? How is it hidden? When is it hidden? Where is it hidden? Of course, many issues related to the presented concept still need to be clarified. For example, in a time when we have rejected many binaries, even such basic ones as the binary of the natural and the social, should we clearly delineate the hidden and the revealed? Is it not a prerequisite for the study of an unknown (hidden) phenomenon or object that we know at least something about it in advance? Does not our object remain unknown to us in many ways, even after we have investigated it? How can the concept of hidden geography be connected to our awareness of the positionality of the researcher and the situatedness of knowledge? In short, there are many questions and issues that are either addressed in this collection or remain to be addressed, with which the discussion of the concept of hidden geography naturally enters into epistemological debates that are important to the discipline as a whole.

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