



Belgeo

Revue belge de géographie

1 | 2004

Special issue : 30th International Geographical Congress

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/10319>

DOI: 10.4000/belgeo.10319

ISSN: 2294-9135

Publisher:

National Committee of Geography of Belgium, Société Royale Belge de Géographie

Printed version

Date of publication: 31 March 2004

Number of pages: 17-34

ISSN: 1377-2368

Electronic reference

Antoni Luna and Enric Mendizàbal, « Geography in Catalonia », *Belgeo* [Online], 1 | 2004, Online since 17 October 2013, connection on 10 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/10319> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/belgeo.10319>

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Geography in Catalonia

Antoni Luna and Enric Mendizàbal

A history of Catalan geography

- 1 The chronological evolution of geography in Catalonia is obviously strongly related to the historical events that took place in Catalonia and in Spain during the same period. Moreover, we should say that the development of Catalan geography follows the same ups and downs of the Catalan national movement over the last century, sometimes becoming the centre of the nationalist discourse with geographical issues such as territorial organization or regional knowledge. Therefore, we can distinguish three extensive historical periods in this evolution. In the first place, the origins and the first developments that took place between 1875 and 1939. This historical period starts with the monarchic restoration after the First Spanish Republic, and ends with the Spanish Civil war that concluded the Second Republican period. In Catalonia, this period is also the moment of Catalan cultural revival “*Renaixença*”, recuperating the language and the culture and evolving into a political nationalist movement at the turn of the century. By the end of this period, Catalonia re-obtained a certain political self-governance with the recovery of old political institutions inspired by those of medieval times. The next historical period coincides with the dictatorship of General Franco between 1939 and 1975. This is a moment of repression and persecution for Catalan intellectuals ; however, despite all the inconveniences, a number of geographers as well as other scientists maintained a strong focus in Catalan issues in their research agendas. The final period of time starts with the restoration of democracy in 1975 in Spain and the recovery and recognition of Catalan institutions as well as the Catalan language and culture.
- 2 Although Catalan geography has played an important role as a scientific discipline and also as an important ideological tool of Catalan nationalism (García-Ramon and Nogue, 2002), we are still pending a comprehensive analysis of the history of geography in Catalonia. What we can find are important analyses of certain aspects, such as those by

Garcia-Ramon, Joan Nogué and Abel Albet (1992), Francesc Nadal (1991) or Joan Vilà-Valentí (2002).

1875-1939, Development and Consolidation

- 3 The end of the nineteenth century is a very important historical period for Catalonia. During the last part of the nineteenth century, the Catalan nationalist movement became increasingly important within cultural and political circles. It should be said that Catalonia as a nation without a state has always been a very conflictive territory for the Spanish state since it maintains its own language, institutions and even its own civil laws.
- 4 The role of geography in the construction of a national identity has been widely studied within nation-states. However, the role of geography in recovering a national identity in a nation without a state, such as in the case of Catalonia is less known. Education, culture, or international relations and defence discourses are important tools used by the state apparatus to increase and strengthen a particular view of national identity. Catalan geography development at the turn of the twentieth century developed to contest a particular exclusionary view of Spanish identity developed by the government in Madrid. While Spanish geography developed to support state apparatus, such as in France or the UK, Catalan geography developed from certain dynamic circles of Catalan civil society. Geography became increasingly important in three areas in Catalonia : the movements of pedagogic renovation in education ; the hiking movement, and the debate in the organization of the territory.
- 5 The Centre Excursionista de Catalunya (CEC), (Catalan excursionists association), was a key institution for the development of geography in Catalonia. The CEC was created in 1876 with the main goal of expanding the knowledge of the Catalan territory among Barcelonan elites. Excursionism was not just tourism, rather it was educated travel with the clear purpose of discovering the Catalan country and learning to value it. The CEC planned numerous excursions and visits to different places with important cultural and national significance, such as the Pyrenean Romanesque churches, the monastery of Poblet (where the graves of the Catalan count-kings are located) and also other areas with an important environmental significance, like the Montseny forests, or a combination of the two, such as in the Montserrat mountains in the sedimentary rock formation where the Benedictine monastery for the worship of the Holy Virgin of Montserrat, one of the symbols of Catalan identity, is located. They particularly visited those locations that had historical relevance during the peak of Catalan splendour at some stage during the medieval period when it was an independent territory. These locations and monuments were used as the basis of the Catalan nationalist movement's differential identity. The CEC published some of these visits and projects in the *Bulletí del CEC* in which important geographers such as the French Raoul Blanchard or the Catalan Pau Vila started to publish some of their regional monographs. The CEC, as well as the rest of the hiking organizations created in this period all over Catalonia, acted as the true discoverers of the territorial essences of Catalan nationalism through their visits and their publications.
- 6 In the field of education, a new way to teach geography based on active pedagogy was replacing the old memory-based approach all over Europe. The active Catalan society of the beginning of the twentieth century rapidly adopted these new pedagogic approaches in which the knowledge of the human and physical environment became a fundamental focus. By applying this new pedagogy among the elitist schools of Barcelona, the new

educators fulfilled a double folded target : first, to modernize the school system ; and second, to indoctrinate pupils with a new sense of the nation. School teachers became very active during this period, publishing a great variety of articles about local geographies in school magazines and in local and regional journals. Among all these we should mention the works by Pere Blasi or Francesc Flos i Calcat.

- 7 Finally, there is a topic that has been very important for the development of the Catalan school of geography, and that is the territorial organization of the Catalonia debate. Catalan politicians and scholars have been very interested in defining a new way to organize the territory of Catalonia that responded to the needs of its people and not to those of the centralist organization of the Spanish state. As in any country, Catalans considered their right to organize their geographical space in the best way for the interests of Catalonia (Garcia-Ramon, Nogué i Albet, 1992). The administrative division of Spain was defined in 1833 under the liberal government of Javier de Burgos, which created the provincial system and the judicial territorial organization. Although this law was intended as a provisional division, it is still in use over 170 years later, despite all its limitations and deficiencies. From the perspective of some conservative Catalan nationalists, this division did not correspond to local perceptions of the territory (Burgueño, 1995). The political “catalanism” since then has presented the provincial system as another imposition of the central government on Catalonia, avoiding the use of the traditional system of “*comarques*” much more connected to Catalan identity and way of life.
- 8 During this period, a great number of Catalan intellectuals and politicians participated in a very intense and still open debate on the best system of territorial organization for Catalonia. The role of geography and Catalan geographers in this debate has been fundamental during the whole of this period and even at the present time. In 1931, with the declaration of the Spanish Republic and the creation of an Autonomous Government in Catalonia, the informal debate on territorial organization acquired a more prominent role with the officially supported “Ponencia” of the Territorial Division of Catalonia, in which geographers like Pau Vila, Josep Iglèsies, Pere Blasi and Miquel Santaló, or teachers and pedagogy experts like Manuel Galès or Felip Solé i Olive, played an important role. This project lasted until 1933 with the creation of the new division in 38 “*comarques*” which were not fully implemented due to the Civil War and the repression of General Franco’s dictatorship. There were also very interesting projects in regional planning during the republican period for the organization of all activities and services in the territory by urban planners and architects such as Nicolàs Rubió i Tuduri and his brother Santiago.
- 9 We should mention in this period the important role of Pau Vila as a true father of modern Catalan geography. Vila was one of those teachers interested in the pedagogic renovation in Catalan schools and was very involved in the study and discovery of the country. At the age of forty, Vila went to Grenoble to study with Raoul Blanchard and learned the new regional methodology of the French school of regional geography of Paul Vidal de la Blache. Vila presented and inspired a series of regional studies or “monographs” (like his own work on the Cerdanya, or that on the Gironés by Miquel Santaló or on the Plains of Vic by Gonçal de Reparaz) which were very widely distributed and highlighted the importance of geography in the Catalan society of that era.
- 10 Catalan geography became very active during the republican period (1931-1939) and, as a result, the Catalan Geographical Society (SCG) was created in 1935 to expand and promote

geographical knowledge and to favour the creation of university level studies in geography. Unfortunately, all these plans that would have consolidated geography even further in Catalonia were truncated by the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent repression.

1940-1975, Repression and Survival

- 11 The end of the Spanish Civil War meant a terrible drawback for Spanish and Catalan society. Nationalist intellectuals and politicians were forced to leave the country or were persecuted and their works were proscribed. The economic and political isolation of the first two decades of the dictatorship delayed recovery from the effects of the war, and therefore Spain did not reach the level of development of 1935 until the mid-1960s. Some geographers lived and developed their work in exile, like Pau Vila and his son Marc-Aureli Vila (who introduced modern geography in Venezuela) or Gonçal de Reparaz Jr, Pere Blasi, or Miquel de Santaló, amongst many others.
- 12 Despite the discouraging context, some individuals were able to find ways to maintain a certain scientific level in the geography of Spain and, of course, also in Catalonia. Three geographers should be mentioned in this period : Lluís Solé i Sabarís, Salvador Llobet and Josep Iglèsies. Lluís Solé i Sabarís occupied a chair in physical geography at the College of Sciences of the University of Barcelona. He developed very influential research in physical geography as well as human geography from the regional perspective. His work “*Los Pirineos*” can be considered an excellent example of the French regional geography approach where Solé i Sabarís applied the terms of *milieu*, *genre de vie*, *circulation* and *paysage* with good judgment. He was also very active organizing scientific meetings of great interest for the development of geography. Salvador Llobet was a disciple of Solé i Sabarís and the French geographer Pierre Deffontaines, who during this period was the director of the French Institute of Barcelona. Deffontaines used the free, open intellectual space of the French Institute to organize meetings and lectures outside the control of the repressive apparatus of the dictatorship, for whom any reunion of Catalan intellectuals was suspicious, even if it dealt with the geomorphology of the Pyrenees. Llobet started by working on regional monographs such as those on the Montseny mountains and Andorra, to end up working on geomorphology. He was one of the first geographers in Spain in the 1970s to conduct research on the topic of periglacial morphology. Finally, Josep Iglèsies was able to keep the activities of the SCG by hosting most of the meetings in his own house. Iglèsies conducted his own research on historical demography and edited most of the population censuses of Catalonia from the fifteenth century until the first half of the nineteenth century.
- 13 Meanwhile, geography was almost inexistent at the University level until the institution of the chair of Geography at the University of Barcelona in 1966, assumed by Professor Joan Vilà-Valentí, and the creation of the geography department. Vilà-Valentí promoted the first university degree in geography in Spain in 1969. The department attracted new professors who shifted from the classical regional approach to new methodologies and theories in geography. In 1967, the department created the *Revista de Geografia*. A new department of geography was created in 1969 at the new Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona under the direction of Enric Lluch and a small group of younger geographers who, influenced by the Anglo-Saxon geographical schools, introduced new theoretical approaches, such as the quantitative and radical approaches, into the Catalan scene.

- 14 One of the most important contributions of this period is the *Geografia de Catalunya* edited by Lluís Solé i Sabarís with the collaboration of de Iglésies, Llobet and Vilà-Valentí between 1958 and 1974. This vast work is divided into three volumes, one a general approach to the geography of Catalonia and the other two offering a review of the geography of the “comarques” defined in the 1930s by Pau Vila. It also included some territories that form the extended Catalan cultural and historical space, such as the Eastern territories of Aragon and the French region of Rosselló. This geography was a very influential piece of work not only for its scholar quality and its comprehensive geographical approach but also because it was used to maintain Catalan identity during the dictatorship’s cultural repression.
- 15 At the same time, the movement of pedagogic renovation created the Teachers Association Rosa Sensat and maintained the traditional link between geography and the education of its predecessors. Despite the strict control of the Francoist education department, the association was able to introduce some of the new innovations in the teaching of geography and the environment that were developed in Europe.
- 16 During this period, 1940-1975, the SCG maintained a very important role of resistance to avoid vanishing from the Catalan social scene. Geographers in Catalonia had a clear idea of their task to maintain the flame of Catalan identity burning through the knowledge of the land and the landscape of Catalonia. During this period, and despite the prohibition, the SCG was able to organize over 170 conferences. It had limited public projection due to police persecution, its publications were scarce and rudimentary, and field trips were not reinstated until 1973.

From 1975 to the present : back to normality and beyond

- 17 With the death of General Franco in 1975, Spain and Catalonia re-obtained a democratic government and a return to normality in intellectual and scientific life. Geography developed very quickly in the Catalan universities at the beginning of this period. In 1975, there were only two small geography departments compared to the present situation of over one hundred geographers working in any of the Catalan universities (Autònoma of Barcelona, Barcelona, Lleida, Girona, Pompeu Fabra of Barcelona, and Rovira i Virgili of Tarragona). The scientific dynamism of this period can be noticed through all the geographical journals that appeared during this period and still continue to do so, such as : *Documents d’Anàlisi Geogràfica* (edited by the geography departments of the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona and Universitat of Girona), *Revista de Geografia* (edited by the departments of the Universities of Barcelona, Lleida and Tarragona), *Scripta Nova* (an on-line journal of the Human Geography department of the University of Barcelona). There are also a number of journals that became quite influential during this period but which no longer exist, like *Geocrítica*, *Notes de Geografia Física* and *Tarraco*.
- 18 The analysis of these journals has proved that Catalan geography during this period was quite innovative introducing all the “new” geographies and new approaches (radical, quantitative, humanistic, post-modern, gender, GIS) in the Spanish academic context (García Ramon, 1986).
- 19 The development of university level geography also helped to bring about the reformation of geography in secondary and primary level education. Text books used by pupils in Catalan schools have substituted the ideological content of the dictatorship and

the long list of raw geographical data with more sophisticated models of interpretation of the territory and social reality. However, in the last few years changes in the education laws in Spain have produced a reversal in the forms and content of geographical education toward more conservative models.

- 20 Between 1975 and 1991, the SCG expanded its social visibility under the presidency of university professors such as Lluís Solé i Sabarís, Salvador Llobet and Lluís Casassas. These years meant the return to full normality of this institution, and took up again the old function of disseminating geographical research and knowledge beyond the walls of University colleges.

The role of geography and geographers

- 21 As we have seen, there are two main topics that have been very important for Catalan society and in which geography and geographers have been particularly active: the debate on the territorial organization of Catalonia and the conflicts on the uses and abuses of the territory.

The discussion on territorial organization : Spanish versus Catalan proposals

- 22 This topic can be considered the most important differential trait of the school of Catalan geography and also the point of connection between the discipline and civil society. Since the creation of the division in “*comarques*” during the republican period in the 1930s, this territorial division was relatively important for Catalan political nationalist movements. Moreover, and despite the cultural and political repression of the dictatorship, the debate on the territorial organization of Catalonia was very active between 1939 and 1983 (Lluch and Nel lo, 1984).
- 23 With the recuperation of democracy and the regional autonomy in Catalonia, the discussion on this topic has been one of the most relevant in the political agenda of the Catalan regional parliament among all political parties and, of course, one in which geographers have been more active. It is worth mentioning one of the most innovative contributions to this debate during this period (Casassas and Clusa, 1981), which proposed a different approach to the classical and static organization of the 1930s. The proposal by Casassas and Clusa presented a much more practical organization similar to those that were implemented in the 1970s in countries like Sweden or the United Kingdom. This new territorial organization was based on a new type of data such as population mobility and information flows gathered with modern technology that resulted in a more functional proposal.
- 24 However, despite this new attempt to adapt the territorial division to the new reality of Catalonia, the conservative nationalist parties in charge of the regional government and based on romantic rather than practical reasoning, rescued the old republican division. Therefore, in 1987, the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Autonomous Government of Catalonia) approved a new law that with minor changes and with an unclear division of administrative competencies reinstated the territorial organization of 1931. In any case, the debate is still open and active between those that accept one model and those that consider the need to find new systems according to the new metropolitan reality of

Catalonia. In 2000, the Parliament of Catalonia created a special commission formed mostly of geographers (Jesús Burgueño, Robert Casadevall, Xavier Rubio, Enric Lluch among others) to prepare a new proposal to organize the public administration and the territory, that was called the “Roca Report”. At the same time, the *Diputació de Catalunya* (the provincial organization of municipalities) also prepared another report with the participation of Joaquim Clusa and Jordi Cortés to respond to the ideas articulated in the Roca Report. Therefore, this debate is still far from over and we are seeing a continuous flow of contributions from all disciplines, but especially from geography, that incorporates new theoretical approaches and tendencies to the debate.

Territorial Conflicts : a growing field for Catalan geographers

- 25 We can affirm that almost all social conflicts have an impact on the territory to some degree. Conflicts over the territory have become a central issue in the political debate in Catalonia during the last few years; and geographers have become increasingly influential and active in professionalising geographical analysis. We can observe four main tendencies in this process.
- 26 In the first place, there has been an interest in the analysis of the effects of internal migration flows in Catalonia over the last fifty years. This process created what some geographers called the “Silent Catalonia” or the empty Catalonia (Mendizàbal, 1993). This migration flow from rural to urban areas has been an important focus of analysis and research for geographers worried about the rural exodus and its territorial consequences. The result has been the increase in forested areas (Catalonia now has a larger forested area than at any moment during the last 300 years), and the obvious decay of agricultural land. It has also entailed the loss of environmental and cultural resources and the abandonment of many rural villages, especially in mountain regions. All these aspects have had an obvious impact on politics and geographers have actively participated in the development of surveys that have been used by policy makers and different government bodies.
- 27 A second important geographical issue has been the consequent urban speculation due, in part, to the rural exodus not only from Catalonia but from all over Spain. It has been calculated that in the period between 1950 and 1975, Catalonia received over 1.5 million immigrants from the rest of Spain that flocked to the most important urban areas. In Spain in the 1950s, urban areas were still suffering from the effects of the war and the economic stagnation of the country. As a consequence, the urban areas of Spain, and Catalonia in particular, were unable to provide appropriate housing to this growing flow of people, and shantytowns proliferated in the peripheries of big cities. The lack of urban infrastructures and appropriate housing together with a corrupt government eventually favoured the rise of speculative movements in the inner city and also in the suburbs. The result was the sprawl of new neighbourhoods of very poor quality apartment buildings and inefficient infrastructures on the outskirts of major cities. Catalonia experienced metropolitan growth in this speculative and corrupted environment and this was not corrected until the return of the democratic municipal governments in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, today the urban speculative forces have expanded all over Catalonia, becoming one of the most lucrative businesses in the last fifteen years. The effects of urban sprawl and gentrification have also become an important topic for urban geographers in Catalonia (Vilagrà, 1997).

- 28 A third aspect of interest for Catalan geographers has been tourism, a social and cultural phenomenon that has grown to become one of the most important economic activities in the country. Obviously, it has a tremendous impact on the territory and on the customs and organization of local residents. During the last year, Catalonia alone hosted over 15 million tourists from outside Catalonia, which were not evenly distributed in space and time. Most of these tourists were concentrated during the summer season in one of the many Mediterranean beach resorts that have flourished in Catalonia over the last forty years. Small fishing villages have become internationally-recognized destinations, such as Salou or Lloret de Mar, that have been forced to adapt their local infrastructures for international customers. Small villages that have just 5000 inhabitants over the winter become thriving urban sites with in excess of 100,000 inhabitants during the summer. The constant sprawl of other forms of leisure and new tastes for adventure, sport and culture have spread out the tourist phenomenon to all four corners of Catalan geography.
- 29 Finally, we should mention the types of territorial conflicts that make up a part of the constant negotiation between policy makers and civil society. In a recent book edited by Oriol Nel.lo (2003), a group of professionals, mostly geographers, exposed the most important controversial issues regarding the territory in Catalonia in the last twenty years. In most cases, they are examples of what have been called NIMBY's or the refusal of the community to allow certain services and activities that although important for the society (such as rubbish dumps, prisons or dangerous industries) produce a local nuisance. It also covers the controversy over certain decisions that regard particular social habits, such as new leisure activities (golf courses, ski resorts), new energy uses (wind energy) or the distribution and management of natural resources (water distribution, forest fire control) etc. In all these examples, geographers have participated quite actively and their opinion has acquired public recognition. Over the last twenty years, Catalan geographers have been able to move geography outside the classroom back to society, as in their origins in the late nineteenth century, with a clear goal of public and community service.
- 30 As we have seen, geography in Catalonia has become increasingly professionalized or maybe it would be more appropriate to say that certain issues under the present socio-economic conditions in Catalonia demand a comprehensive approach that only geographers can provide. Issues such as the environment, tourism, infrastructures and risk management are increasingly a source of debate and it is only the geographical voices that contribute with a holistic view. In fact, the creation of the Association of Professional Geographers (AGPC) showed this increasing professional profile of Catalan geographers. Created in the late 1988, at the moment in which the new democratic local and regional administrations were hiring more professionals, it soon came to be an organization that gathered over 200 geographers. The AGPC also led the process of creation of the Colegio de Geógrafos (an official institution recognized by the central government that establishes the competencies and liabilities of geographers as professionals). At present, the Colegio de Geógrafos has over 700 members of which over 200 are from Catalonia. This process of professionalization has also favoured an increasing debate about the type of geography that should be taught in higher education.

Geography and the media

- 31 Another important function of geography in our society is its role in relation to the media. In Catalonia, geography has had an important role in four different areas: weather forecast maps, travel journals and magazines; regional newspapers and finally the increasing presence of Catalan geography in Internet.
- 32 It is well known the importance of weather forecasts for modern societies that need to plan their leisure activities according to these forecasts. In Catalonia, there are two important scientific groups working on this subject matter: these are meteorologists and geographers who in many cases collaborate together in academic and research programs (e.g. the master of applied climatology [http:// www.am.ub.es/~carmell/master/index.htm](http://www.am.ub.es/~carmell/master/index.htm)). The Physical Geography section of the University of Barcelona has been particularly active in the area of weather forecasting and climatology and has organised an important group of professional geographers who prepare weather information for newspapers, radio and TV in Catalonia.
- 33 Another area of social dissemination of geographical information are journals and magazines on travel, excursions and mountain hiking. In these types of publications, traditional descriptive geography is still demanded and is a source of income for many geographers. Specialized journals like *Vertex*, published since 1966 by the Federation of Excursionists Associations of Catalonia; or *Muntanya*, published by CEC, provide information on different routes for hikers and climbers together with detailed geographical information about the physical and human geography of these areas. Other journals and magazines are attracting wider audiences, such as *Descobrir Catalunya* (Discovering Catalonia), published since 1997 and concentrating on the Catalan region, beyond the normative borders of Catalonia; or *Altair*, since 1991, focusing on the entire world. These last two journals concentrate more on social and cultural topics and less on physical features.
- 34 As we have already mentioned in the previous section, geographical topics generate considerable interest for the wider public in Catalonia and therefore national (*El País*, *El Periódico de Catalunya*, or *La Vanguardia*) and regional newspapers (*Diari de Girona*; *Punt Diari*, *Diari de Tarragona*; *La Mañana*, *Segre*, *Diari de Sabadell*, *Diari de Terrassa*, *Regió 7* or *El 9 nou*) dedicate weekly sections or monographs to geographical issues. In many of those journals there are frequent collaborations in the form of articles by recognized geographers coming from private companies or from the education sector, higher or secondary education. Among the topics that most frequently appear in these journals, we should point out the debate over the organization of the territory and also the conflicts regarding the uses of the territory that are mentioned in the previous section.
- 35 Finally, we would like to point out the increasing importance of the Internet as a source of information and communication for Catalan geography. Beside the increasing role played by the various websites of geography departments in Catalan universities, we should also mention those of the SCG, [http:// www.iec.es/institució/societats/SCGeografia/S0.htm](http://www.iec.es/institució/societats/SCGeografia/S0.htm), the AGPC, <http://www.agpc.com> and the Catalan branch of the Colegio de Geógrafos, <http://www.geografos.org/Catalunya/index.htm>, that provide an important source of information for young graduates and professionals interested in geographical issues. However, one of the most important means of discussion among geographers has been the discussion board “territori”, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/>

territori, created in 1999 by Alex Tarroja, who also became the first president of the recently created Colegio de Geografos, and has reached over 700 participants. This discussion board has become an important forum for the discussion and exchange of information about territorial dynamics and policies in all their aspects: social, environmental, economic, urban, cultural etc.

Conclusion

- 36 As we have seen in this paper, there is one significant difference in the role of geography in Catalonia compared to other areas of the Spanish state and elsewhere, and that is the importance that geography and geographers have and have had in the development of Catalonia. While in other countries (including Spain) geography has been an important strategic and ideological tool used by the State apparatus, in Catalonia, geography has played an important role of self recognition and community-building for civil society. We have stressed this point throughout this paper by providing examples of the thriving dynamism of geographers and the geographical debate in Catalonia particularly in the areas of education, and territorial struggles and conflicts.
- 37 Over the last few years there has also been an increasingly greater role played by applied geography, that has presented a challenge in the design of geography for higher education in our universities. Areas such as geographical information systems, urban planning and environmental management have increasingly attracted more students and, in some cases, the creation of new studies such as environmental studies or tourist studies has fragmented interest in geographical issues among different university departments. Under the present situation, and with the new European higher education integration following the agreements of Bologna, geography and geographical education in Catalonia (and also in Spain and the rest of Europe) finds itself yet again at a crossroads. However, we can be quite optimistic in our case, based on the strong dynamism of geographers and the institutions that represent them and also, and more importantly, because geography is strongly and historically embedded in Catalan society.
- 38 The role of the SCG at this crossroads is fundamental since it brings together all the historical traditions in Catalan geography, the excursionists, the planners, the education professionals and the scientific community. Under the presidency of Maria Dolors Garcia Ramon, the SCG has also initiated a process of internationalisation by fostering links with other national geographical societies and associations. The future challenge for the SCG is to be able to find ways of enlightening the new geography professionals by providing access to the methodologies and information gathered by Catalan geographers over the last century, and to maintain, therefore, the unity of the discipline as well as to promote geographical knowledge not only in the local community but also at the global level.

The SCG



In this increasingly professionalized environment of geographers, the SCG stands strongly to maintain the roots that make Catalan geography not only an academic matter but an important social asset for the development of the community. At present, the SCG is quite active and maintains a stable and heterogeneous membership of over 400 members. The members of the SCG represent the roots that have been exposed in this paper : college professors, educational professionals, civil servants, and also an important section belonging to the excursionist tradition.

Following the difficult decades of the dictatorship, the SCG is now an important reference for people interested in geography in the country. The goal of this organization is to organize all sorts of rigorous scientific activities and to maintain an open debate in all areas of interest in relation to Catalonia and increasingly elsewhere. The SCG is one of the affiliated institutions of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans - IEC (Institute of Catalan Studies), <http://www.iecat.net/inici.htm>, a historical academic consortium for the development of scientific knowledge and the promotion of Catalan culture created in 1907 by Enric Prat de la Riba. The SCG was founded in 1935 as a branch of the IEC and annexed to its Department of Sciences. The SCG was created by Eduard Fontseré in the 1920s' context of methodological renovation of Catalan geography. Under the first presidency of Pau Vila, the society took off with great dynamism until the events of the Civil War (1936-39) forced it to cease all its activities. The governing board of the SCG has always encouraged the diffusion of its activities to all the realities and aspects of the Catalan country.

Since the return of democracy, the SCG has been very active, organizing more than 300 conferences and 65 courses and workshops as well as over 50 field trips. Moreover, the SCG has also organized two important events that have marked the recent development of Catalan geography. In first place, the congress on regionalization and intermediate government institutions in 1989, gathered together a group of Catalan geographers (Barceló, Carreras Puigdemongas, Casassas, Nadal, Nel.lo, Oliveras, Tulla, Vilà Valentí), Spanish (Cabero, Quirós), and also from other countries (Brunet, Dematteis, Ferras, Raffestin) to discuss the role of administrative units half way between municipalities and the state, particularly in the case of Catalonia, Spain and other European countries.

The second event held by the SCG in this period was the First Congress of Catalan Geography organized in 1991 in nine different locations with over 24 sessions and over eighty papers in many topics such as geographical thought, territorial organization, physical environment, population and settlement, economy and territory, metropolitan issues, the relationship of Catalonia with the exterior, and geography and education.

During this period, the SCG also started producing a series of periodical publications. In first place, the *Revista Catalana Geografia* was published between 1978 and 1982 which eventually, due to economic reasons, became the journal of the Cartographic Institute of Catalonia until 1996. In 1984, the SCG published the first issue of *Treballs de la Societat Catalana de Geografia* (TSCG Papers of the Catalan Geographic Society) which has maintained its periodicity of two yearly issues. At this moment, this journal has become one of the most recognized organs of expression of Catalan

geography and has recently reached number 56 and has become a peer-reviewed journal with an editorial board composed of geographers from universities in Catalonia, Spain and also in Europe, the United States and Japan. Its first director was Lluís Casassas until his death in 1992 ; since then, the journal has been directed by Enric Mendizàbal. The content of this journal combines the papers presented at any of the SCG acts as well as work by people interested in geography from any ambit of Catalan society and elsewhere.

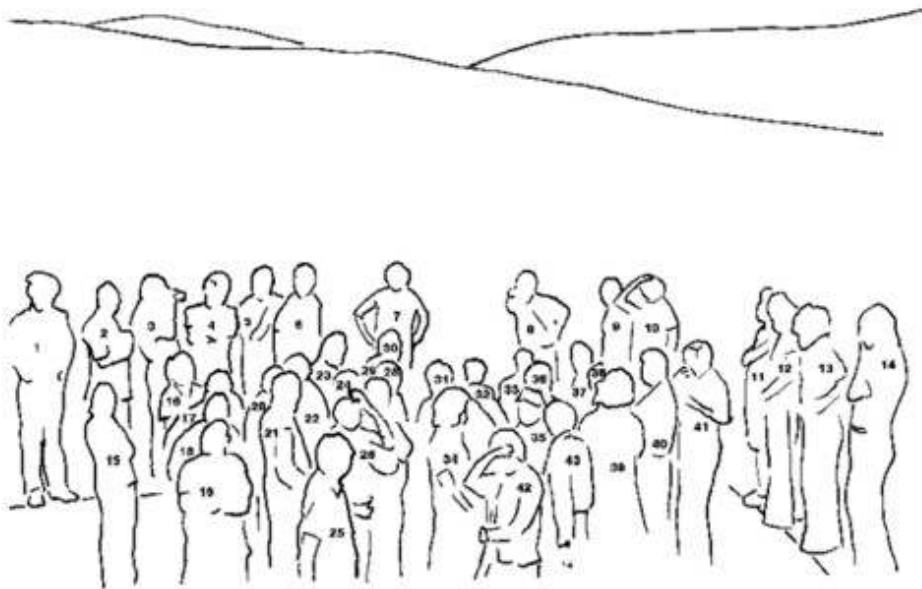
Finally, the SCG also maintains a website called the Obrador Obert, designed and maintained by Pau Alegre i Nadal, <http://www.iecat.net/institucio/societats/SCGeografia/S0.htm>, that contains all the information about the Society's activities. Among the various kinds of information included in this website, attention should be drawn to the "miscellanea" section in which a brief review can be found of over one hundred books published by the members of the society since 1991. This section shows once more the vitality of the geographical community in Catalonia and the diversity of subjects in which geographers are active.



OPENING SESSION OF THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF CATALAN GEOGRAPHY, BARCELONA 1991. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT : JOAN TORT ; JOAQUIM CABEZA ; VIÇENC BIETE ; MONTSERRAT CUXART ; ENRIC BERTRAN ; LLUÍS CASSASAS (PRESIDENT OF THE SCG) ; MARIA DOLORS GARCÍA-RAMON (VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SCG) ; ROSER MAJORAL ; ROSA ASCON, AND ENRIC MENDIZÀBAL.



LECTURE IN THE FIELD BY PROFESSOR LLUÍS SOLÉ SABARÍS IN 1976. CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOOK LA Cerdanya (1926) BY PROFESSOR PAU VILA (ALSO PRESENT IN THE PICTURE). AFTER THE YEARS OF DICTATORSHIP THE SOCIETY RESTARTED THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH RENEWED VITALITY. LECTURE IN THE FIELD BY PROFESSOR LLUÍS SOLÉ SABARÍS IN 1976. CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOOK LA Cerdanya (1926) BY PROFESSOR PAU VILA (ALSO PRESENT IN THE PICTURE). AFTER THE YEARS OF DICTATORSHIP THE SOCIETY RESTARTED THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH RENEWED VITALITY.



1. Josep Oliveras ; 2. ? ; 3. ? ; 4. Pau Alegre ; 5. ? ; 6. Josep Ma. Panareda ; 7. David Serrat ; 8. Lluís Solé ; 9. ? ; 10. Salvador Llobet ; 11. ? ; 12. Anna Ma. Casassas ; 13. ? ; 14. Antonio Gómez ; 15. ? ; 16. ? ; 17. Josep Ma. Puchades ; 18. Josep Iglésies ; 19. ? ; 20. ? ; 21. ? ; 22. ? ; 23. Enric Lluch ; 24. ? ; 25. ? ; 26. Francesc Comas ; 27. Lluís Riudor ; 28. ? ; 29. Carles Carreras ; 30. ? ; 31. ? ; 32. ? ; 33. Maria de Bolòs ; 34. ? ; 35. Helena Estalella ; 36. ? ; 37. Pau Vila ; 38. Maria Sala ; 39. ? ; 40. Lluís Casassas ; 41. Tomàs Vidal ; 42. ? ; 43. Joan Rebagliato

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