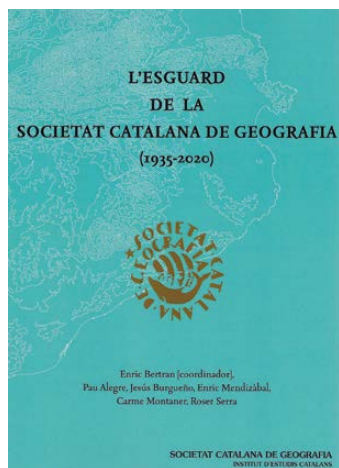


The Catalan Society of Geography: From Times of Turbulence to Consolidation

Enric Bertran González

This chapter presents a summary of *L'esguard de la Societat Catalana de Geografia* (1935–2020) [*A Look Back at the History of the Catalan Society of Geography*], a book that examines and retells the history of this learned geographical society — a history marked by the political vicissitudes experienced from its foundation down to the present day — and which charts the evolution of Geography as a science over those years. In so doing, the book offers an exhaustive analysis of the geographical themes addressed in the activities organised by the Catalan Society of Geography (SCG),



enabling us to appreciate the influence of shifting geographical paradigms and the interdisciplinary vision that has guided the practice of Geography within the Society. What emerges from this historical reflection is that, in the intervening decades, the SCG has been, and continues to be, both a meeting place and a

place for debate and the dissemination of the ideas of all those who have the territory of Catalonia as their field of study.¹

Times of Inception

The Catalan Society of Geography is a subsidiary society of the Institute of Catalan Studies (IEC) and, today, is affiliated to the IEC's Section of Philosophy and Social Sciences (SFCS). This means that, while an autonomous entity in its own right, it forms part of the academic and organisational structure of the IEC. The SCG was founded on 20 May 1935, the date on which the articles of association were drawn up at a meeting of the Governing Council, in the presence of its twenty-seven founding members. At this first meeting, the statutes of the new Society were approved by the Full IEC Assembly and the SCG was formally registered at the offices of the General Government of Catalonia, in accordance with the Law of Associations prevailing during the Second Spanish Republic.

The first lecture delivered from the Society's tribune was given by its first president, Pau Vila i Dinarès. Its title could not be more explicit: "What has been done

1. *L'esguard de la Societat Catalana de Geografia* (1935–2020), published in 2021, is the fruit of a research project promoted by the Institute of Catalan Studies (IEC), undertaken between 2018 and 2020. It was carried out by Pau Alegre, Enric Bertran (co-ordinator), Jesús Burgueño, Enric Mendizábal, Carme Montaner and Roser Serra.

in Geography in Catalonia from the earliest times to the present day". In his talk, Vila was at pains to stress that Geography in Catalonia already boasted a long history. Here, my intention is not to provide a summary of the history of Catalan geography, but rather to identify the most immediate precedents of the foundation of the SCG to show that the Society did not emerge from nothing.

To do so, we need to be aware of the presence of various founding members of the SCG, and that of other original fellows, in institutions of the day dedicated to Geography and to have an understanding of their activities. The oldest was the ephemeral Geographical Society of Barcelona (1895–1897), with clear ties to Eduard Fontserè, the father of Catalan meteorology and a key figure in the eventual foundation of the SCG. Later, we find the Society of Commercial Geography of Barcelona, which enjoyed a longer existence (1909–1927), during which time it organised the II Spanish Congress of Commercial and Mercantile Geography (1913). Again Fontserè was active here along with the historian Carreras Candi, who oversaw the publication of a *Geografia General de Catalunya* (1908–1918) [*General Geography of Catalonia*] in six volumes, and the engineers Josep M. de Rivera and Manuel Ferrer de Franganillo, successive directors of the Geographical Service of Catalonia, responsible for publishing the *Mapa Geogràfic de Catalunya* [*Geographical Map of Catalonia*] 1:100,000 (1922).

Another key place where Geography in Catalonia was being conducted was the *Escola d'Alts Estudis Comercials*, affiliated to the *Escola del Treball* (two schools dedicated to ensuring Catalonia had a qualified workforce). The *Escola* was promoted by the *Mancomunitat* [*Commonwealth*] of Catalonia — an auto-

nomous deliberative assembly representing Catalonia's four provinces — that promoted Geography as an instrument of the movement known as *Noucentisme* and which was to dominate the cultural and political panorama of the early 20th century. In this *Escola* and until his untimely death, Geography was taught by Joan Palau Vera, and later by his replacement Pau Vila, who was called to become a key figure in the advancement of geographical science in Catalonia. Also at this time, Geography was being carried out in the homonymous section of the part-cultural, part-rambling club, the *Centre Excursionista de Catalunya* (CEC), whose members included Fontserè, Faura i Sans, Josep R. Bataller, Jaume Marcet, Carreras Candi, Gonçal de Reparaz Ruiz, Josep Iglésies, Solé Sabarís... and whose president was none other than Pau Vila.

By way of these individuals and institutions, the influence of the French regional school began to permeate its way into Catalonia. Initial contact was established by Ferrer de Franganillo, on visiting the *Institut de Géographie* at the Sorbonne in 1921, where he met leading figures in this geographical school, including Lucien Gallois, Jean Brunhes, Emmanuel de Martonne and Albert Demangeon. A second wave of influence arrived by way of the teacher and pedagogue, Miquel Santaló, and the relationship he forged with Spanish geographer Ricardo Beltrán y Rózpide and, in all likelihood, with Dantín Cereceda, disseminators of the French methodology in Spain. However, the third wave was to prove the most critical: in 1923, Pau Vila, with a scholarship from the *Mancomunitat*, went to the *Institut de Géographie Alpine* in Grenoble, where he met Raoul Blanchard, one of the leading disciples of Vidal de La Blache and whom Vila would later recognise as having been his great influence and master (Oliveras, 2020).

Pau Vila (1881-1980), first president of the SCG, circa 1920



Pau Vila was very much the geographer of the moment: he echoed the humanist approach of the themes addressed in the French regional monographs (Vila, 1922); he oversaw the Spanish translation of the *Géographie Universelle* written by Paul Vidal de La Blache and Lucien Gallois; he wrote the monographic study

of the *comarca* (county or traditional Catalan administrative division) of *La Cerdanya* (1926); taught courses at the CEC; and invited Raoul Blanchard to speak on the human geography of the mountain regions at the Monographic Courses organised by the *Mancomunitat* of Catalonia, Daniel Faucher to lecture at the *Escola Normal de la Generalitat*, a teacher training college where Vila was a senior Geography teacher, and Henri Gaussen and Max Sorre, among others, to talk to the CEC during his presidency of the club. The relationship with the French regional school is marked by other milestones, involving members of the future SCG, including Gonçal de Reparaz, who spent time at the Sorbonne as a visiting research student, organised by the Geography Section of the CEC.

However, it is worth pointing out that Catalan geographers were not immune to other schools of geographical thought of the day: Solé Sabarís acted as a guide to the English geographer E. H. G. Dobby on his visit to Catalonia; Gonçal de Reparaz translated Norbert Krebs' *Geografía humana* into Spanish for the *Labor* publishing house (1931), as part of the dissemination of the ideas of the German school; and Jaume Marcet, Miquel Santaló and Pau Vila were present at the main international geography conferences of the decade: Paris (1931), Warsaw (1934) and Amsterdam (1938).

Against this backdrop, Puig i Cadafalch went off in search of Pau Vila. The *Modernista* architect and art historian, Josep Puig i Cadafalch, who had been president of the *Mancomunitat* of Catalonia (1917–1924), was, in the early 1930s, rotating president of the Catalan Institute of Studies, of which he was also a founding member. The Institute sought to attract the scientific elite of the Catalan-speaking world and, in

this way, to advance research and the dissemination of knowledge in all areas of Catalan culture. Pau Vila, who Puig knew from his time with the *Mancomunitat*, his work in promoting Catalan University Studies and his role in the CEC, was the man chosen to promote a new learned Geography society under the auspices of the IEC, which was keen to expand its field of action.

In the first document outlining a possible roadmap for the future foundation of the SCG, Eduard Fontserè, member of the Section of Sciences² of the IEC and vice-president of the CEC, at a CEC council meeting chaired by Pau Vila, talks about Geography as a research science open to everyone, as a valid field of study for university education (with the mention of specific subjects) and of popular dissemination to interested schools, and as a public service responsible for drawing the map of Catalonia. It is clear that Vila was aware of this document and that he adopted it as his own, since he signed another almost identical version that was later presented to the *Generalitat*, the government of Catalonia.

The makeup of the first Governing Council of the SCG, albeit provisional, clearly indicates that the Geography Section of the CEC served very much as its seedbed, with all the posts being taken by members of the Catalan rambling club: Pau Vila, president; Pere Blasi, vice-president and director of publications; Josep Iglésies, secretary; Enric Ribas, treasurer; Lluís Solé Sabarís, vice-secretary and accountant, and Eduard Fontserè, IEC delegate. The Council sent out a letter of invitation to everyone interested in advancing

geography in Catalonia within the scientific domain to which it belongs and in which it enjoyed recognition in other countries.

The very open nature of this invitation meant that the membership of the SCG presented a high degree of intellectual diversity from the outset. Thus, among the founding members alone, we find professors of the natural sciences and geology, engineers and physicists, cartographers, journalists and historians, architects and lawyers engaged in political activity and in historiography, linguists and teachers, teachers of commerce and workers from private firms, and even one or two autodidacts.³ To all of these labels, we need to add that of geographer, because each of them brought to Geography the specific perspective afforded by their own specific personal education and training.

It might surprise the reader that no reference has been made in the above process to the University. Yet, during the early decades of the 20th century, Geography in Catalonia was estranged from its University on both political and scientific grounds: Eduardo Pérez Agudo, full professor of Geography for decades at the University of Barcelona — Geography being limited in those years to just two subjects in the degree in Philosophy and the Arts — was opposed to teaching in Catalan and to steps to transform the University of Barcelona into an autonomous seat of learning. The scientific nature of the Geography taught there was also called into question, being conceived as a tool at the service of History and because of its heavy emphasis on rote learning. Having said that, however,

2. The SCG was initially affiliated to this Section, until that is, in 1968, when the SFCS was created and its affiliation was switched.

3. The complete list of the 27 founding members can be consulted at *ObradorObert* (<https://scg.iec.cat/Scg6/Scg63/S631935.htm>), with links to the brief biographies of each.

the presence of several university professors among the founding members of the SCG, including Joan Coromines, Marià Faura, Eduard Fontserè and Jaume Marcet, cannot be ignored.

The SCG was conceived, therefore, outside the walls and lecture halls of the University, like the *Société de Géographie*, in Paris, and the Royal Geographical Society, in London, before it, albeit some hundred years later. The Society, however, would never command anything like the financial resources of these two institutions, capable of financing expeditions around the world. While the latter enjoyed the support of the State in sponsoring their activities of colonial discovery and exploitation, the SCG has only ever known the support of an autonomous regional government, that of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia. Thus, it is in this political and economic context, that a knowledge and understanding of its own regional territory became the primary objective of SCG initiatives.

The activities of the SCG following its inception adhered closely to the roadmap drawn up by Fontserè i Vila (for a full report, see Bertran, 2021, pp. 253–314). Lectures were organised and pamphlets on toponymy were published, but all of its projects came to a shuddering halt with the military uprising of July 1936 and the outbreak the civil war. Plans had been in place to host a group of French geographers, led by Emmanuel de Martonne, director of the *Institut de Géographie* at the University of Paris, to publish studies of the geography of Catalonia and a yearbook including all the lectures delivered from the tribune of the SCG, and to draw up a syllabus for a degree in Geography, based on similar syllabuses being taught in countries such as France, England and Germany (cf. Mendizàbal *et al.*, 2022; Solé Sabarís, 1985). But,

in 1936, the SCG was mired in institutional paralysis and could do no more.

Times of Resistance

The triumph of the rebels in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the imposition of the fascist dictatorship had almost fatal consequences for the Catalan Society of Geography, given that the IEC had been as good as shut down, cut off from all its financial resources and outlawed from its premises in Barcelona's old town, in what had been the Hospital of Santa Creu, on *carrer del Carme*. To fill the gap, a number of provincial institutions were set up (*Instituto de Estudios Ilerdenses*, *Instituto de Estudios Gerundenses* and *Instituto de Estudios Tarraconenses*) in Lleida, Girona and Tarragona, respectively, and in Barcelona the delegation of the *Instituto Juan Sebastián Elcano* (IJSE) was established, affiliated to the Spanish National Research Council (*Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* or CSIC).

The Institute of Catalan Studies, however, proved to be especially resilient, despite the hostile political atmosphere that reigned, bereft of any money and with many of its members dead or living abroad. In 1942, on returning from a brief exile, Puig i Cadafalch, as president of the Historical-Archaeological Section, summoned to his home those members of the Institute that had survived the conflict and not fled abroad (deemed, nevertheless, to be there in spirit). Among the few that showed up was Eduard Fontserè, in representation of the Science Section and on which the SCG depended. In this and other clandestine meetings, two new subsidiary societies were founded,

while those created before the war were reactivated, including the SCG, with more or less immediate and long-lasting results.

With the help of a restructuring commission formed by Eduard Fontserè, who acted as the Institute's delegate (a role he would play until 1969), and the former secretary, Josep Iglésies, who was also his son-in-law, the SCG was slowly revived. They were soon joined by Pere Blasi, vice-president before the war, and the priest, *mossèn* Ramon Bataller, founding member of the SCG and secretary of the Science Section. The first lecture on the resuming of business was delivered by Fontserè on 22 December 1947: "The *tramuntana* and *mestral* winds in Catalonia". Yet, the social landscape was still far from propitious for its work: the SCG operated covertly and, excluding the numerous expatriate fellows, including Pau and Marc-Aureli Vila, Gonçal de Reparaz, Joan Coromines and Miquel Santaló, only about thirty members remained who were not yet ready to resume their work.

Although no formal relations existed between the SCG and the three Barcelona groups of those years dedicated to geographical studies, there is evidence of the participation of members of the SCG, including Salvador Llobet, Josep M. Puchades, Lluís Solé Sabarís, Joaquina Comas, Maria de Bolòs and Joan Vilà-Valentí, in the *Cercle de geògrafs* (Circle of Geographers), led by Pierre Deffontaines at the *Institut Français* in Barcelona. Solé Sabarís and Llobet, on the other hand, would successively preside over the IJSE, located on *carrer de les Egipcíaques* in Barcelona, just across the way from the building that the IEC had been expelled from. And many members from this early period continued to be members of the Geography and Natural Sciences Section of the CEC.

This overlapping of memberships ensured relations between the SCG and these three institutions were on a good footing.

The covert conditions in which it was forced to work and the economic hardships it had to face gave the SCG no other option than to accept the impossibility of conducting its own research and so it settled for disseminating studies developed elsewhere or by scholars working alone. Under the dictatorship, research in Geography in the 1940s was the exclusive concern of the IJSE, aided, of course, by geographers linked to the SCG. Research would later be further promoted in the

Josep Iglésies (1902-1986), circa 1964



Faculty of Philosophy and the Arts, with the creation in 1966 of the Department of Geography on the initiative of Joan Vilà-Valentí. Prior to that, between 1940 and 1965, any relationship with Geography as taught at the University of Barcelona was non-existent: the tenured professors, including Pérez Agudo and, later, Luis García Sainz, had no interest in the academic, associative initiatives of the city and the country.

Under the presidencies of *mossèn* Josep Ramon Bataller (1948–1954) and Josep de Calassanç Serra Ràfols (1954–1970), the SCG concentrated its activities in lectures, prizes and publications. In these years of what bordered on underground activity, the SCG was forced, at first, to hold its meetings at the home of Josep Iglésies or some other private address, and, after 1961, at the seat of *Òmnium Cultural*, a cultural association, in the Palau Dalmases on *carrer* Montcada in Barcelona. The political and cultural repression that was still raging in Catalonia during the 1960s, and which saw the police shut down the headquarters of this association, did not prevent the SCG from holding almost monthly meetings. Records show that 161 lectures were delivered in this period, that is, an average of eight in each academic year.

A third of these lectures were given by the SCG's most active members: Josep Iglésies (17 papers), Serra Ràfols (16), Solé Sabarís (7), Pau Vila (7) and Francesc Gurri (6). They were followed by Oriol de Bolòs and Joan Vilà-Valentí, Maria de Bolòs, *mossèn* Bataller, and Pere Català-Roca, offering an extensive list with a rich thematic diversity that highlights the vitality of the SCG, despite the obstacles faced. At these meetings, both local and regional research was disseminated by university professors and lecturers, but also by scholars, experts and cultural activists interested in

Geography and other disciplines, taking care to maintain an academic rigour that went beyond simplistic accounts rooted in folklore. The speakers were primarily residents of Catalonia, with a very small presence of speakers from other Catalan-speaking territories and none from beyond these borders. The lectures are the subject of a detailed analysis carried out by Pau Alegre who classifies them thematically according to whether they constituted regional monographs or discussed Catalan territory and society, physical geography, urban or local geography, prehistory or history, toponymy and toponomastics, in territories outside Catalonia (cf. Bertran, 2021, p. 61–118).

Among all these lectures, it is worth highlighting the eighteen that made up the series “Lleida forms an integral part of Catalonia as strictly defined”, given in the 1966–67 academic year, at the headquarters of CSIC. This was a joint enterprise involving the SCG and the *Centre Lleidatà* in Barcelona and centred on the decision of the Ministry of National Education to segregate the province of Lleida from Catalonia and to incorporate it within the *Región del Ebro* in high school geography books, a ruling that, fortunately, would later not be enforced. The texts of the talks were published some time later (AADD, 1971); however, the front matter of the book, in the same way as the initial call for papers, makes no mention of the role played by the SCG.

The rest of the SCG's activities in this period were concentrated on the Eduard Brossa Prize for toponymic studies and the publication of various geographical works. The prize, endowed with a thousand pesetas (taken, more often than not, straight from Josep Iglésies' wallet), was awarded annually between 1953 and 1976 (for a list of winners, see Bertran, 2021, p.

119). A couple of these toponymic studies, as well as the texts of two of the papers delivered at the inaugural sessions of the academic year — those delivered by Eduard Fontserè and Oriol de Bolòs, on seismicity in Catalonia and its vegetation zones, respectively — were published by the SCG and later reissued in no. 25 of the Society's journal, *Treballs de la SCG*. Most of the Eduard Brossa Prize winners, therefore, remained unpublished at the time, due to budgetary restrictions. Only two studies of historical demography written by Josep Iglésies saw light of day, being published privately by the author.

In this overview of the period, what is evidently missing is any mention of the support from the university geography departments for a programme of activities that aligned with the national and international development of the discipline. Especially notable by its absence is the lack of any explicit references to the publication of the work, *Geografia de Catalunya* (1958–74) [*Geography of Catalonia*], edited by Lluís Solé Sabarís and published by AEDOS. Several of the authors of these three volumes lectured at the SCG, their papers subsequently being exploited in a variety of ways. Solé Sabarís himself delivered lectures on more than one occasion, but must not have considered it opportune to present his *Geografia* to the Society.

This period of political and cultural resistance terminated with the virtual paralysis of the SCG. Between 1969 and 1970, the Society was even at risk of disappearing altogether, owing essentially to the adverse personal circumstances faced by certain members of the Governing Council who had been in office for a long time (in particular, the deaths of the SCG president, Serra Ràfols, and the IEC delegate, Eduard Fontserè) and to the successive states of emergency decreed by

Franco to deal with the social instability of the day. As such, expectations for the 1970–71 academic year were far from optimistic. And yet, for the new generation of university geographers, it was clear that the Governing Council needed to be overhauled in order to redress the situation and a programme of activities needed to be designed that reflected the new methodological approaches being developed in Geography.

Times of Normalisation

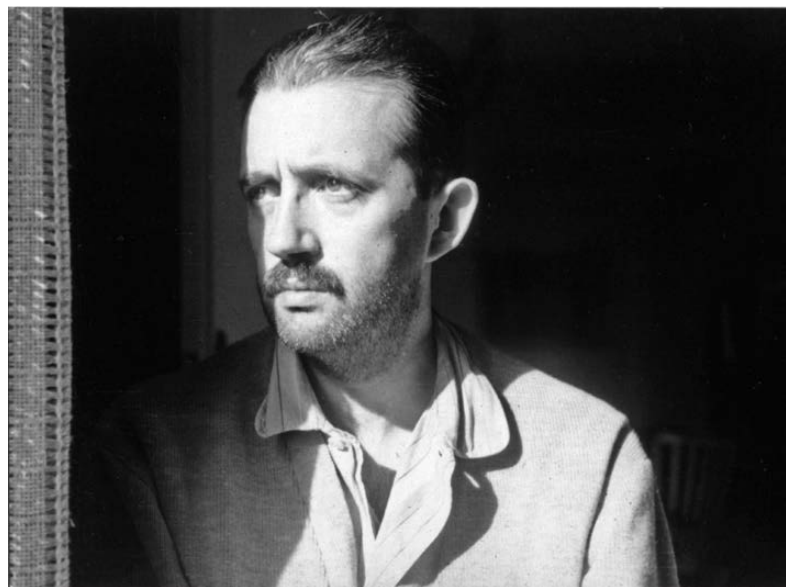
The Institute of Catalan Studies quickly filled the void left by Fontserè by appointing Pau Vila — who had been a numerary member of the IEC since 1968 — as the new delegate to the Governing Council of the SCG, in the autumn of 1970. Vila did not take long to set up a new Council, elected unanimously at the General Assembly of Members on December 10 of that year: Josep Iglésies, president; Enric Lluch, vice president; Carles Alabart, secretary; Lluís Casassas, treasurer; and Jordi Borja, voting member (replaced after a few months by Maria de Bolòs). Thus, four geographers straight from the university took up office with two longstanding SCG members, Vila and Iglésies. Indeed 1970 has rightly been identified as the year in which the Society might be said to have been re-founded, with university professors taking their seats on the Governing Council of the SCG.

The period covered in this section (1970–1992) were years of change in world Geography. Moreover, in Catalonia and Spain, the first decade coincided with the death of the dictator Franco and the transition to democracy and the decentralisation of political life. Precisely because of the innovations that Geography

in Catalonia underwent in this period – due essentially to influences from abroad, and because the previous political obstacles we speak of the idea of *normalisation* in their analysis of this stage in the history of the SCG. A symbolic milestone in this *normalisation* was the recovery of the IEC's former premises in the Hospital de la Santa Creu and, as a result, the transfer of the SCG's lectures to the *Casa de Convalescència* of this hospital. From an epistemological point of view, in little more than twenty years, other ways of doing Geography in Catalonia were added to that of regional possibilism, with the incorporation, among others, of theoretical-quantitative, radical, and humanistic approaches. These new geographies would all find a home in the SCG, through the active role played by the lecturers at Catalonia's universities, which were undergoing far-reaching changes with the creation of the first Geography departments.

In addition to the presidency of Iglésies (1970–73), during this period there were to be three more presidential mandates, each overseen by a university professor: Lluís Solé i Sabarís (1973–81), Salvador Llobet (1981–85) and Lluís Casassas (1985–91). The IEC delegates in these years were Pau Vila (1970–80), who was also made honorary president of the SCG, Josep Iglésies (1981–86) and Marc-Aureli Vila (1989–2001). During the first of these three mandates, the SCG was recast as a scientific institution not only for discovering the country but now, and above all, for the analysis and discussion of everything that impacted the territory. This shift is attributable to the increasing presence of young university geographers — most notably, Carles Carreras, Josep Oliveras, Maria Sala, Josep M. Panareda and Lluís Riudor — who also took on managerial tasks alongside the members mentioned above.

Lluís Casassas (1922-1992), circa 1950



The renewed drive was quickly reflected in the organisation of monthly meetings throughout the academic year centred around a given theme, specialised courses and seminars, and field trips around Catalonia. Later, the SCG would consolidate relations with other geographical societies and begin its publishing work with much greater regularity. Finally, the Society took to the organisation of local conferences, international meetings and, above all, the First Catalan Congress of Geography. Among the conferences, mention should be made to those dedicated, in the 1973–74 academic year, to the *Atles Temàtic de Catalunya* [*Thematic Atlas of Catalonia*], those in the 1975–76 year to *El pensament geogràfic a Catalunya* [*Geographical thought in Catalonia*], in 1986–87 to *La Geografia catalana i els corrents actuals de la Geografia* [*Catalan Geography and current trends in Geography*], in 1987–88 to *L'anàlisi*

comparativa de l'organització de l'espai urbà [The comparative analysis of the organisation of urban space] and, in 1989–90, *La diversitat dels paisatges, dels emplaçaments i de les activitats econòmiques* [The diversity of economic landscapes, locations and activities]. While in 1973 lectures by foreign professors from the Society's tribune began with a paper read by Jean Tricart. Many others would follow (including Milton Santos, Georges Bertrand and Paul Claval), when subsidies from the *Generalitat* were once again made available via the *Comissió Interdepartamental de Recerca i Innovació Tecnològica* CIRIT (Interdepartmental Commission for Research and Technological Innovation).

These lectures, despite the existence of a common thread, combined too with courses and seminars, were remarkably diverse in content, with a progressive variety of invited speakers — albeit that the Society was still some way from achieving parity of the sexes (Bertran, 2021, p. 186) — and with an increasing presence of local and also foreign university teachers (Moshe Inbar, Gary McDonogh, Jeanne Fagnani and Anne Buttimer, to name only a few), thanks to the international relations forged by Council members such as Maria Sala, Carles Carreras, Roser Majoral and Maria Dolores Garcia Ramon (Bertran, 2021, p. 150 and 154). Having said that, logically, the specific disciplines of the history of geography, economic geography, regional planning, cartography and urban geography continued to dominate with more than thirty sessions each. What stands out in the list of lecturers, however, is the consolidation of the presence of young Catalan university geographers alongside those of the old-school, together with researchers from related disciplines and the appearance of key figures in the field from abroad. Indeed, in this period, we can speak of the internatio-

nalisation of the SCG which, without ceasing to be a place for the discussion and dissemination of the geography reported in Catalonia, was gradually opening up to the world.

Field trips were also consolidated as one of the main activities of the SCG, to the point that they became one of the Society's defining features. They were conceived and implemented with the aim of exploring Catalonia's rich geographical diversity, physical and human, as well as social and economic. The Society went to great lengths to invite experts — be they university lecturers or local scholars — in the particular features and themes associated with each destination. The field trip leaders accompanied members on many different itineraries and participated in round table discussions of local problems, in close collaboration with local research groups and, often, with the financial support of local institutions. The first field trips — to Girona and Manresa — were organised in 1973. Many others followed, covering most of the Catalan territory (Bertran, 2021, p. 308-314). Here, we shall highlight just one: to Cerdanya, at the beginning of June 1976, to mark the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Pau Vila's monographic study of this cross-border *comarca*.

The second key element in this so-called process of *normalisation* was the SCG's publishing work, one of the activities that had been paralysed by the outbreak of war and which was inconceivable during the years of dictatorship due to the many different political and cultural challenges and vicissitudes, not to mention budgetary limitations. The Society's longstanding aspirations in this regard were aptly captured in a frequently cited claim made by Solé Sabarís: “a society that does not publish is a dead society”. The first works

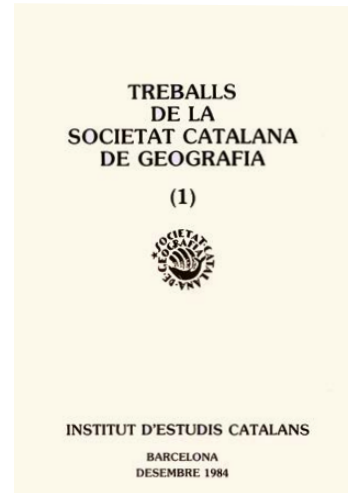
to be published in this period were *Miscell·lània Pau Vila* [*Collected Works of Pau Vila*] (1975), by Josep M. Puchades' publishing house *Montblanc-Martín*, and *Geografia dels Països Catalans* [*Geography of the Catalan Countries*] (1978) by Pierre Deffontaines, a co-edition with *Ariel*. Puchades was also responsible for the patronage and direction, together with an editorial board appointed by the SCG, of the *Revista Catalana de Geografia* (RCG) [*Catalan Journal of Geography*], of which eighteen issues were published in eight volumes, between 1978 and 1982.

In June 1984, the first issue of the journal, *Treballs de la Societat Catalana de Geografia*, was published, with financial support initially from IEC and, later, from the *Diputació de Barcelona*. From the outset, the Society's journal published a good number of the lectures given to its members, research articles by geographers, including those written by the Society's members, reports of SCG events and field trips, gradually establishing itself as a key reference for the 20th century geography of Catalonia. By 1992, with Lluís Casassas as editor, a total of 34 issues had been published, with contributions from leading figures in the field and covering a wide variety of themes.

A third aspect of this process of *normalisation* was the organisation of international meetings. The first to be held was the III Plenary Session of the Permanent International Working Group on the Geography of Textiles in 1985. This event owed much to the personal relationship between the then president of the SCG, Lluís Casassas, and the Polish geographer Ludwik

Straszewicz.⁴ Subsequent actions in this field included the role played by Casassas as a local organiser of the International Commission on Changes in Trade, of the International Geographical Union in 1986 (Casassas and Metton, 1986)⁵. Both events helped open the SCG up to the new currents emerging at that time in Geography.

This desire to reach a broader public led the SCG to participate in the Week of Urban Studies (Lleida), in the Catalan-Magyar Colloquium on regional and urban planning and in the Regional Conference of the International Geographical Union (Barcelona), and, most significantly, in April 1989, to organise the JRCEI or the Conference on the Regionalisation of Catalonia and Intermediary Entities (Casassas, 1990). These events brought together geographers and professionals from other disciplines with overlapping interests from both the University and Government at home and abroad. These meetings served to highlight both the consolidation of a university Geography, which now echoed geographical paradigms from around the world, and the professional activity of geographers holding technical posts in



4. The papers presented at this meeting and reviews of the different events held can be consulted in *Treballs de la SCG*, nº 3, 4 and 5 (<https://scg.iec.cat/Scg8/Scg81/S819.htm>).

5. The papers presented were edited in mimeo format by Lluís Casassas and Alain Metton, at the request of the SCG, and can be consulted in the SCG's bulletin, *Obrador Obert* (<https://scg.iec.cat/Scg82/S821987a.htm>)

Government and within interdisciplinary teams. After the resounding success of the JRCEI, the time was right to convene the SCG's own congress — at least this is how it seemed to Lluís Casassas — who put these ideas in writing in a letter of invitation to all of Catalonia's geographers (reproduced in Bertran, 2021, p. 160).

The First Catalan Congress of Geography, held from 11 to 15 March 1991, called on the geographers of Catalonia to take stock of the current state of Geography (Casassas, 1991). It was structured around nine separate talks, plus an inaugural paper, addressing new themes (Joan Vilà-Valentí, Jordi Borja, Vicenç M. Rosselló, Anna M. Cabré, Bartomeu Barceló, Miquel de Moragas, Juli Esteban, Josep M. Carreras and Pilar Benejam) delivered, somewhat uniquely, at nine dif-

ferent locations around Catalonia. Back in Barcelona, the Council invited three plenary speakers (Nicolàs Ortega, Paul Claval and Peter Gould), and organised a total of 24 presentations and 68 papers. The Congress had the support of a Scientific Advisory Council with representatives from almost all the schools and centres dedicated to geographical research in the Catalan-speaking territories. The title of the inaugural paper, "The continuity of Catalan geography", delivered by Lluís Casassas, captured the spirit of the address given by Pau Vila on founding the SCG in 1935.

Many of the papers were read by their authors in sessions moderated by a speaker who first provided a presentation of the theme under discussion: geographical thinking, regional planning, communications and transport, the pedagogy of Geography, the

Organizing committee of the First Catalan Geography Congress, 1991, at the headquarters of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans in Barcelona.



urbanisation of the territory, population and settlement, agriculture and industry, tourism and tertiary activities, cities and the metropolitan reality, ecology and natural resources, cartography, the State of Spain's Autonomies and the construction of Europe.

The First Catalan Congress of Geography had a significant impact: first, in terms of the public recognition expressed by many in the world of Geography and related disciplines for the event and, in particular, the respect garnered by Lluís Casassas, widely considered the driving force behind the congress; second, in terms of the role played by the SCG as a meeting place for all the geographers of Catalonia, united from an interdisciplinary perspective that embraced a range of theoretical approaches; and third, in terms of the dissemination of the annals of the congress to all Catalan and Spanish university libraries, numerous schools and among all its participants. However, the Congress left the SCG in dire financial straits and, just one year after the congress, Lluís Casassas was to die before his time. The moment called for all members to put their shoulders to the wheel.

Times of Maturity

Over the last three decades, thanks to the concerted efforts of successive Governing Councils, the SCG has become an increasingly mature, active and open society. Under the presidencies of Vicenç Biete (1992–2000), Maria Dolors Garcia Ramon (2000–2006), Francesc Nadal (2006–2012) and Josep Oliveras (2012–2021), its work has grown and diversified,

despite the challenges posed by the economic and health crises of the last decade. Modest support has been provided to research, and the SCG has carved out a presence in the digital world. Its finances have been put on a solid footing, underpinned by a current membership of half a thousand, among whom we find an increasing number of women, and the Society can count on the backing of the IEC and the *Diputació* of Barcelona (the provincial deputation). The institutional relationship forged with the Institute of Catalan Studies — fundamental in the continuing survival of the SCG — has been guaranteed by the three members of the SFCS who have successively served as IEC delegates: Marc-Aureli Vila (until 2001), Joan Vilà-Valentí (2002–2017) and Oriol Nel·lo (since 2017).

A brief look at the SCG's monthly lectures indicates that the traditional thematic thread linking each academic year has gradually been abandoned in favour of diversity.⁶ Indeed, the analysis conducted by Jesús Burgueño and Roser Serra highlights the marked influence in this respect of the four respective presidencies and Councils in the choice of topics to be addressed. Thus, during the 1990s, geopolitical issues predominated, reflecting the shift that was being experienced globally in international relations. In this decade, speakers included Mechtild Rössler, John Naylor, György Enyedi, Jean Bisson and Gita Kewalramani, alongside a host of local Spanish and Catalan experts. In the first years of the present century, the Society's first female president, Maria Dolors Garcia Ramon, contributed to the uptake of epistemological innovations and the incorporation of a gender perspective. Indeed the number of female guest speakers

6. Many of the lectures delivered after 2000 have been published in *Treballs de la SCG* and are listed in the *Obrador Obert* (<https://seg.iec.cat/Seg9/Seg90/S90a.htm>).

from abroad was greater than in any other mandate. The list, while far from complete, saw Jacqueline Bonnamour, Doreen Massey, Janice Monk, Dina Vaiou and Nina Berg, among others, take to the floor of the SCG.


During the presidency of Francesc Nadal, the number of conferences held reached a historic high, reflecting a conceptual boom in the Geography of the first decade of the century. The long list of lecturers included eminent scholars from the English-speaking world, Matthew H. Edney and Rita Gardner, and the Francophone, Roland Courtot and Céline Rozenblat, and, of course, from the Iberian peninsula, most notably, Josefina Gómez Mendoza and João Carlos Garcia. The mandate of Josep Oliveras, the longest of the four, has overcome two major obstacles, the economic crisis and the suspension of all public acts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, by resorting to strict budgetary control and digital tools. In these years of crisis, the SCG has stood firm, continuing to organise its activities in uninterrupted style, and showing, as we shall see, a broad diversity of initiatives.

Over the last thirty years, the SCG has continued to offer courses and seminars disseminating different aspects of the fields of geographical science and providing training in the tools required to work in them. For example, courses have been dedicated to aspects of geomorphology, climatology, cartography and toponymy, demography and tourism, droughts, floods and forest fires and research in Geography education. Courses have also been taught in digital photography, thematic mapping and geographic information systems.

The SCG has always been keen to express a debt of gratitude to its most distinguished members and has

organised various events in their memory, including those dedicated to Lluís Casassas (1992, 2002 and 2017) and Marc Aureli Vila (2008), as well as those in earlier times, dedicated to Eduard Fontserè (1960 and 1970), Pierre Deffontaines (1979), Pau Vila (to whom the 1980–81 academic year was dedicated on the occasion of his centenary), Solé Sabarís (to whom the 1985–86 academic year was dedicated) and Josep Iglésies (1979). Similarly, and with the aim of supporting early research in Geography, the Society created the Lluís Casassas Award for young university students, and, as of 2020, the Joan Vilà-Valentí Prize (formerly the Joan Palau Vera Prize), awarded to research studies undertaken by high school students.

In 2008, the Second Catalan Congress of Geography was held, entitled “The map as the language of geography”. The conference comprised six papers, including one read by Mark Monmonier, the opening and closing plenary sessions and four lectures on cartography. Here, it is worth adding a series of other academic activities in which the SCG has been involved, either as an organiser or participant, and which have played an important role in projecting its public image both home and abroad: *Eurocongrés 2000 dels espais occitans i catalans* (2000-2003) [*Eurocongress 2000 of Occitan and Catalan spaces*], *Geografies dissidents* (2001) [*Dissident geographies*], *XVIII Congrès de l'Asociación de Geografía Española* (2003) [*18th Conference of the Spanish Geographical Association*], *Geografia i gènere al món: qüestionant l'hegemonia americana* (2006) [*Geography and gender in the world: questioning American hegemony*], *Les transformacions territorials a banda i banda dels Pirineus* (2010) [*Territorial change on both sides of the Pyrenees*], among others. This international projection has been strengthened with the




SEGON CONGRÉS CATALÀ DE GEOGRAFIA

EL MAPA COM A LENGUATGE GEOGRÀFIC

SOCIETAT CATALANA DE GEOGRAFIA
Institut d'Estudis Catalans


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Barcelona / Vilanova i la Geltrú

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active participation of Maria Dolors Garcia Ramon (2002), as president of the SCG, at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG), and at various conferences organised by the International Geographical Union and the publication of the entry “Catalan Society of Geography” (2014), written by Josep Oliveras, in “The International Encyclopedia of Geography” of the AAG.

In the more formal institutional arena, between 2014 and 2022 (with the forced parenthesis of the years 2020 and 2021), the society organised, jointly with the *Diputació de Barcelona* a series of conferences (with an itinerant base rotating through Barcelona, Vic, Igualada, Manresa, Sitges and Puigdàlber) dedicated to regional planning, with the papers being published in *Treballs de la SCG*. The SCG has also been represented, on occasions, on three consultative bodies of the *Generalitat* of Catalonia: *Consell Rector de l'Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya* [Governing Council of the Cartographic and Geological Institute of Catalonia], *Consell assessor de l'Observatori del Paisatge* [Advisory Council of the Landscape Observatory] and *Comissió de Delimitació Territorial* [Boundaries Commission].

In 1998, the SCG started publication of a collection of books, which currently exceeds twenty titles. The series was originally conceived with the idea of republishing classic texts of Catalan Geography. Some have served to honour the name of leading

Organizing committee of the Second Catalan Geography Congress, held in 2008



scholars of Catalan geography and key figures in the history of the SCG. However, more recently the collection has expanded to include other topics and other authors. *La nova geografia de la Catalunya post-covid* [*The New Geography of Post-COVID Catalonia*] (2021) brings together the work of a good many of today's Catalan geographers, under the editorial guidance of Jesús Burgueño, and serves as the basis for sections 3 and 4 of this book. The books in this series have all been formally presented by the SCG, as have other titles written by geographers with links to the Society. During the mandate of Josep Oliveras alone, there have been 23 book presentations

The society's flagship publication, however, continues to be its journal, *Treballs*, which is steaming steadily towards its one hundredth issue, appearing every six months and including various monographic volumes, dedicated, respectively to the annals of the V Spanish Population Congress (nº 46, 1998), "Views on the Geography of Catalonia and Valencia from the English-speaking World" (nº 61-62, 2006), regional planning (nº 67-68, 2009) and "A Geographers' Perspective on storm Glòria" (nº 89, 2020). Edited, in the first instance, by Enric Mendizàbal, who passed on the baton, successively, to Lluís Casasas, Jesús Burgueño and, as of 2022, to Valerià Paül, with Joan

Alberich acting as deputy editor, *Treballs de la SCG* seeks to disseminate geographical knowledge rooted in a rigorous scientific approach, to raise awareness of a range of spatial, social and environmental problems, and to enrich the Catalan scientific tradition in relation to the various geographical disciplines. The journal operates an anonymous peer review system that guarantees the quality of its scholarship and is currently seeking to satisfy the requisites that would allow it to be included in academic journal indexes in dedicated databases. For this reason, as of 2022, the Society's *crònica* (diary) is to be published separately, leaving only academic papers and book reviews in *Treballs*.

Since 1992, the SCG has organised more than a hundred field trips, ranging from half-day, full-day and two-day excursions, depending on whether the idea was to make “Urban Discoveries” near Barcelona, explore more distant districts around Catalonia or to hike through one of the region’s mountain ranges. In the footsteps of the inimitable trips led by Lluís Cassasas, the organisers — who include Joan Tort, Jesús Burgueño, Josep Oliveras and Jordi Ramoneda — have striven at all times to provide scholarly academic insights, seeking the contributions of local experts and often ending the day with a talk or debate on aspects associated with the place visited. Particular mention should be made of a dozen guided visits to exhibitions of geographical interest (Bertran, 2021, p. 314), the twenty Easter field trips to destinations in the Mediterranean and parts of the neighbouring Atlantic coast, between 1998 and 2019 (Bertran, 2021, p. 225), and, since 2018, the celebration of Geography Night, in coordination with several European geographical societies.

Between 2000 and 2020, Pau Alegre produced a digital news bulletin, the *Obrador Obert*.⁷ It is worth mentioning here because it offers extensive information on the activities of the SCG throughout its history, a directory of its members and their contributions to the Society, biographical sketches of past members (including all the first one hundred), the complete series of the journal *Treballs de la SCG* and texts from other publications, and more than 500 reviews of books, most of them after 1991, written by geographers associated in one way or another with the SCG. Indeed, the *Obrador Obert* constitutes an essential source for

accessing the history of the Society. The SCG currently operates a modern website (scgeo.iec.cat) that provides all kinds of information about the Society and allows access to a wide range of content, including teaching materials for secondary schools (*recursos-geografia.iec.cat*). The SCG also has an important presence on the social platforms.

Under the mandate of Rafael Giménez-Capdevila, appointed in October 2021, the Catalan Society of Geography continues to address the challenges of increasing its membership (currently standing at around 550), while promoting a whole series of activities that, both quantitatively and qualitatively, serve as a guarantee of its ongoing commitment to the Catalan-speaking territories, the dissemination of geographical knowledge and its dialogue and exchanges with Catalan universities, the associated societies of the IEC (including the Catalan Society of Regional Planning), professional bodies such as the Institute of Geographers, and with other cultural and scientific entities both in and outside Catalonia. In undertaking to organise the 9th EUGEO Congress (Association of Geographical Societies in Europe), in September 2023, in collaboration with the University of Barcelona, the SCG hopes to take a further step in this direction.

7. Currently stalled for technical reasons, but accessible in full at <https://scg.iec.cat>.



Ildefons Cerdà, 1861: *Plano de las alrededores de la ciudad de Barcelona: proyecto de reforma y ensanche*. Col·lecció de la Cartoteca, Institut Cartogràfic i Geològic de Catalunya

9th EUGEO Congress

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