

Editorial

Antoni Luna

The first time the editorial board of *Treballs* proposed a special issue of the journal centered on views of Catalonia by foreign geographers we were afraid of not getting enough articles. Enric Mendizàbal, vice-president of the Societat Catalana de Geografia, mentioned another example of these types of initiatives published in 1978 in *Revista Catalana de Geografia* (predecessor of *Treballs*); a translation by Josep Maria Puchades of an article by E.H. G. Dobby that was first published in *Economic Geography* in 1937 (Dobby 1978).

After reading Dobby's article and Puchades' introduction, it is clear that the same type of motives that are moving us to publish this issue were behind the minds of the editors of the 1978 issue. In that article, Puchades explains:

“There are many foreign geographers that for many years have been attracted by the physical and human problems of our lands [...]. Unfortunately, the result of their work is often published in far away places, and in languages and journals that are not always easy to access. Therefore, many examples of research that could generate a wide general interest reach only a few specialists or full time geographers; while they are ignored by many other amateurs and professionals”

(introduction by Puchades to the Dobby's article, 1978 p.637 translated from the original in Catalan).

Obviously, the situation of Catalan geography thirty years later is quite different and the international relationships of Catalan geographers are becoming more intense and frequent. Nowadays, anyone that conducts geographic research is acutely aware of the local and international examples published in scientifically recognized journals and increasingly some of the authors of these foreign publications are Catalan geographers.

While reading the article by Dobby, we realize the extensive web or network of personal relationships among geographers that is in fact the central topic of one of the articles of this issue written by the Australian geographer Jan Monk. Dobby was a young geographer working on his doctoral degree at the University of London when in 1936 he visited the small village of La Riba (Alt Camp) with the Catalan geographer Josep Iglésies. Their observations appeared a few months later in *Economic Geography*.

I was also wondering about what happened to Dobby after his visit to this small village near Valls just before the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and I started to look for more biographical data. Did he ever continue working on the topic of the article? Where did he develop his career? Where did he teach? What I found in my limited research was that the war stopped Dobby's research in Catalonia and also delayed his doctoral degree until the end of the Second World War in 1945. Right after this, Dobby left London to work in the Raffles College in colonial Singapore, (today National University of Singapore) until his retirement in 1969. He became the first geographer of that university. During those years he developed a very intense activity for the development of geography in South East Asia, promoting scientific meetings, conferences, and promoting academic publications such as the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*.

We should also wonder how many times Dobby used examples of their visit to La Riba to explain a Mediterranean example of irrigation in his teaching in Singapore? How many of Dobby's students heard explanations about Catalonia? These types of questions and intellectual links have motivated this special issue. The interest to know more about our closer environment as well as the most distant places is what has always moved geographers to engage in research and exploration. In fact, some of the best geographical texts come from comparing places and cultures that are distant in space.

In this issue, we have seven different examples of the interest of geographers from English speaking countries for our country, for its cities and landscapes. The original articles were all written in English and we have provided a Catalan version thank to the support of different members of the Catalan Geographic Society.

The first group of articles is three examples of research and thought about Catalonia its land and its people by three senior geographers. The first article by Janice Monk, emeritus professor at the University of Arizona, describes her own experience in building up professional and personal links with Catalan geographers during more that two decades. Monk, Australian

by birth, has spent most of her professional life in the US, and has maintained an intense activity in the area of geography education, and specially in the field of gender studies of which she is one of the first to introduce gender perspectives in geography. Likewise, Dr. Monk has been very active fostering the international bonds of academic geography in different geographical associations such as the International Geographic Union or the Association of American Geographers of which she became president in 2002. Monk's paper in this issue is one example of her life long activity promoting international links to Catalan geography.

Daniel Gade, emeritus professor at the University of Vermont in the United States, signs the second article of this group in which he writes about concepts of region and identity from his experiences in La Garrotxa. Gade is one of the representatives of the American School of Cultural Geography and his article has some interesting and emotional musings on the connections between American and Catalan geography. Finally, the paper of emeritus professor of the University of Western Ontario in Canada, Mireia Folch Serra, presents an interesting view of the geographies of the Spanish exile community during the Franco dictatorship from facts that are in part based on experiences of her own family.

The second group of articles is formed by four examples of recent research by geographers from different parts of the world. All four have in common their interest on the social or cultural reality of Catalan/Valencian territories and based their doctoral dissertations on this region. The first article is an analysis of the urban restructuring of Valencia during the last decade by David Prytherch, assistant professor at the University of Miami, Ohio in the United States. According to the author, the process of urban regeneration and the political discourses is embedded in the development of Valencia's new architectural fantasy "Parc de les Arts i les Ciències".

The second article of this group belongs to the Scottish geographer Donald McNeill professor at the University of Western Sydney in Australia, who presents his research about the process of transforming Barcelona during the 1980s and 1990s. In this article, McNeill compares the political context of the urban transformations of the Olympics in Barcelona and those of the Forum of the Cultures. In this sense, as in the article of David Prytherch, McNeill makes an interesting analysis of the political and social changes in Barcelona and how they have been transferred into the city fabric and into a new urban model with different international and national projection. On the same subject of the image of Barcelona, Hunter Shobe professor at Portland State University analyzes the recent changes of the F. C. Barcelona and its international projection. Finally, the article by Oliver Kramtsch of the Radboud Nijmegen University in the Netherlands presents an interesting overview of the publishing world from Barcelona in the 1960s in which the expansion of Latin American writers coincided with the revival of Catalan literature. In this case, Kramtsch affirms that the city of Barcelona in the last

years of the General Franco's dictatorship became the center of the renewal of the worldwide novelistic genre and it demonstrates the strong bonds shared by Latin American literary societies and some sectors of the Catalan intellectual elites of Barcelona.

All these papers present a wide range of topics that have attracted the interest of researchers outside Catalonia. Their views show a different perspective of our reality and also demonstrate the interest and projection that these "local" topics have outside our territory.

References

Dobby, E.H.G 1978 Energia hidràulica i economia de La Riba (Catalunya, Espanya). Un cas excepcional de la indústria catalana. *Revista Catalana de Geografia* vol.1 num 4 pp. 637-654