



Belgeo

1 (2004)

Special issue : 30th International Geographical Congress

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Geography in Spain

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Référence électronique

Manuel Valenzuela, Manuel Mollá et M^a Luisa de Lázaro, « Geography in Spain », *Belgeo* [En ligne], 1 | 2004, mis en ligne le 17 octobre 2013, consulté le 02 septembre 2014. URL : <http://belgeo.revues.org/10084>

Éditeur : National Committee of Geography of Belgium / Société Royale Belge de Géographie

<http://belgeo.revues.org>

<http://www.revues.org>

Document accessible en ligne sur :

<http://belgeo.revues.org/10084>

Document généré automatiquement le 02 septembre 2014.

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Geography in Spain

Pagination de l'édition papier : p. 145-162

The diffusion of geographical thought and its place in civil society

- 1 The Spanish accept that a knowledge of geography is useful for society and that therefore it should be taught to the new generations. Moreover, whenever a debate arises on the educational shortcomings in primary and secondary schools and how these could be compensated, it is often said that children and young adults should receive more extensive and better geographical education. In short, geography is considered in a positive light and there is no doubt that knowledge of the subject should form part of the average individual's education.
- 2 However, such a positive outlook does not coincide with the increasingly lower level of geographical content in primary and secondary schools, where geography is consistently subordinate to history. Furthermore, the presence of geography in the school curricula is seriously lacking in material and human resources and, even worse, is traditionally included in subjects with names that mask its identity, such as Environmental Knowledge, Social Sciences, etc. Such a poor situation not only restricts and impoverishes the geographical message, but also conditions the future of geography at the higher education and University level. Naturally, this situation does nothing to promote recognition of its contributions or public image.
- 3 Herein lies the root of geography's difficulty in its quest to gain sufficient exposure, which should begin with the acknowledgement of its identity as a scientific discipline and the acceptance of its potential social value. Besides geography's description of basic physical land elements, such as rivers, coasts, mountains, towns, etc., its analytical, interpreting and propositive capacities are largely unknown. Neither modern foci and paradigms nor the efficient methodological tools which are used in geography today are known or socially valued by sectors ranging from the media to public administrations. In short, the general public does not understand or attach sufficient importance to the whys and wherefores of work carried out by geographers.
- 4 Unfortunately, the general conception of geography continues to be one based on enumeration which, at most, can locate the basic features of the Earth's surface. Consequently, the main task facing the community of geographers is that of acquiring public acknowledgement and recognition of its work. In this sense, it is fundamental to convey a clear message regarding which social challenges geography can provide answers to, in order to both understand and solve them on the same scale on which they arise.
- 5 These goals can be found extensively in the programmes of all geographical organisations in Spain. Progress has been made but the results are insufficient. The problem indubitably lies in the difficulty of geographers to communicate well, but also in the lack of sensitivity shown by the mass media, who seem to have little interest in promoting geography as a socially-committed and technologically-advanced discipline : this could in part be due to the survival of certain topics inherited from a school geography of the past. Nor have the issues raised by geographical organisations had much impact with the public administrations with decision-making capacities in educational organisation on preventing the gradual disappearance of geographical content in the school curriculum each time it is restructured.
- 6 Although the battle to establish geography's scientific identity and social value has not yet been won in Spain, the way is gradually being paved towards the acknowledgement of geography's contribution to solving problems of social concern. Clear proof of this can be seen in the presence of geographers in local and autonomous community administrations and in their active participation in programmes and projects of a territorial nature, such as land and town planning, environmental policy, local development, tourism, etc. : professional

activity in such themes depends on the growing presence of geographers and, moreover, at a decision-making level. There are, however, two important barriers to be overcome before the professional competence of geographers in applied tasks is fully accepted: the opposition of other professionals, such as architects and engineers, above all, who have traditionally performed these tasks and have better practical training, and the still inadequate instrumental training of geographers.

Geography's place in the Spanish education system

Geography's place at school

- 7 The specific relevance of geography in the Spanish education system changed quantitatively and qualitatively throughout the 20th century. During the last few years, the number of weekly school hours dedicated to the subject has decreased, even though the traditional focus on rote-learning has given way to an approach based on reasoning and the handling of various sources of information. In this way, the idea is to disseminate practical and informed geographical knowledge and concepts that may enable students to analyse spatial reality, even though the scientific concepts are not always fully understood and assimilated. At the same time, there is growing concern regarding the incorporation of procedural aspects in the teaching of geography (Zárate, 1996). Progress made in working methodology and approaches is restricted by the inadequate distribution of geographical content throughout the school system (Gil, 1981, p. 24).
- 8 The *Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE)* (School System General Planning Act), passed in 1990, has extended the compulsory school period over two more years (from 14 to 16 years of age), which results in a two-year delay in the entry of young people in the job market. In 2002, the *Ley Orgánica sobre la Calidad de la Enseñanza (LOCE)* (Teaching Quality Act) emphasised the participation of Information and Communication Technology in schools (Lázaro, 2003) as well as the importance of foreign language training. This act has also identified the need to pay individual attention to students' previous learning as well as re-introducing the possibility of repeating the school year in certain circumstances. Table 1 illustrates how Geography appears within the new legal framework.

Table 1. Geography in the Spanish Education System.

Student age (years)	Education stages (length of stage)	Name of Area/Subject and year <i>Main content</i>
Over 18	University or Higher Level of Vocational Education	Bachelor/Master/Ph D. Higher Diploma in Vocational Education
General Examination on Secondary Education: General Certificate of Education		
16 -18	Non-compulsory Upper Secondary School (2 years) <i>Bachillerato</i>	Geography - 2nd Year (Compulsory subject in one of the branches: Humanities & Social Sciences): <i>Spain in the world and in Europe. Nature and environment. Space and economic activities, human resources and space organization.</i>
General Certificate of Secondary Education		
12 - 16	Compulsory Lower Secondary School <i>Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria (E.S.O.)</i> (4 years)	Social Sciences, Geography & History: - First cycle (Geography is linked to History): First Year: <i>The Earth and natural resources.</i> Second Year: <i>Human societies.</i> - Second cycle :Third Year: <i>Geographic spaces</i> Fourth Year: No Geography, only History
5 - 12	Primary School (6 years) <i>Educación Primaria</i>	Sciences, Geography & History: - First cycle (First & Second Year): <i>The world surface, Environment conservation, Public services, Goods producers and consumers.</i> - Second cycle (Third & Fourth Year): <i>The Universe, Earth representation, The climate and its influence, Human activity and landscape, Production and economic activity sectors.</i> - Third cycle (Fifth & Sixth Year): <i>The Earth layers, Spain and its landscape diversity, The Spanish population, Energy, Economy, Spain in Europe The European Union.</i>
3 - 5	Kindergarten (3 years) <i>Educación Infantil</i>	Child surroundings

Source : Authors used Ministry of Education information

- 9 With respect to the various school stages, *Kindergarten* continues to be an educational stage that depends on the parents’ will to take their children to school. Its main objectives are living together, observing and exploring Nature and social and family environments. At *Primary School*, geographical training is devoted to a general learning of space realities, with specific reference made to Spain and the E.U. At the *Compulsory Lower Secondary School (E.S.O.)*, spatial, environmental and land studies on different scales appear in school geography studies. These are of a more general character during the first two years, during which its contents are shared with history, as the third year course is totally dedicated to geography. Maintaining a specific course in this stage has constituted a guarantee of survival for geography, even though the content level is much lower than that taught at the Upper Secondary school. This educational stage presents the highest levels of student failure and teacher frustration ; teacher re-staffing movements and teacher training research bodies collaborate in an attempt to analyse and find solutions to this general state of dissatisfaction.
- 10 Geography courses were always taught at the Spanish *Non-compulsory Upper Secondary School (Bachillerato)* during the second half of the 20th century, and even though nowadays all branches of geography can be taken as optional courses, it is only a compulsory subject within Humanities & Social Sciences. Its goals are : understanding space organisation, linking environment and society, understanding objective location of natural resources in order to learn to use them in a responsible and intelligent manner. The course refers basically to Spain, its relations with Europe and its insertion in the world system (Souto, 1998). The content of geography courses has recently been extended, an aspect that was not welcomed by the teachers who are obliged to teach a wide-ranging programme to students who are usually not well-acquainted with the subject.
- 11 Geography teaching in school is faced with the following challenges :

With respect to the official curriculum, the presence of geography has increased over the last few years, although there is no continuity in the required geographical level between the compulsory secondary school (E.S.O.) and the non-compulsory secondary school. In the geography course taught in the second year of non-compulsory secondary school, students need to know and master many procedures and techniques related to very different spatial scales.

- 12 With respect to the teachers, the study programme for the above-mentioned course is evidently too extensive and teachers find it very difficult to cover it in its entirety, given that compulsory secondary school students have insufficient knowledge of geography and that most geography teachers do not have the required qualifications in the subject. This is due to the fact that the current structure of university studies qualified to teach this geography course is compartmentalised into specialities, resulting in the possibility that a teacher who has never taken a single geography course at university is obliged to teach it, despite the high level of knowledge it requires.
- 13 With regard to the students, especially those at the compulsory secondary school (E.S.O.), it should be emphasised that the students' age (14-16 years), their lack of motivation and the compulsory nature of the course, result in rejection by some students who already want to start working. Therefore, teachers ought to be highly specialized both in content and teaching techniques. There is a need to extend the specificity of geography to every school stage and to adequately train teachers to teach any kind of student, regardless of age or educational stage (Arroyo and Pérez, 1995).
- 14 Therefore, teacher training is a matter of great significance. Primary school and kindergarten teacher training became a college Bachelor's degree in the 1970s (Herrero, 2000, p. 39). However, teacher training does not always correspond to the appropriate scientific geographical education, since geography is taught within the wider field of the social sciences. At this school level, while physical education, foreign languages or music are taught by specialised teachers, it is considered that any teacher can teach geography, even if he/she has only taken a few geography credits/courses in college.
- 15 Much more complex is the case of the secondary school geography teacher ; he/she is a holder of a Master's degree in Geography, educated at a geography university department or school, but whose teacher training comes from specific courses given, since 1970, by the *Institutos de Ciencias de la Educación (I.C.E.)*. These specific courses consist in two parts : a theoretical section and teaching experience carried out in a secondary school. The *Certificado de Aptitud Pedagógica (CAP)* (Teaching Competence Certificate) qualification obtained at the end of the course is required to teach any subject. In the future, the recently passed LOCE Act will establish a specific qualification in teacher training, by thereby closing the present gap between scientific instruction and teacher training for secondary school teachers. There are also many other teacher training courses, workshops, seminars, etc., organized by private and public entities, but with diverse and varied contents and approaches.

Geography at University

- 16 The university degree in geography was created in the 1990s ; until that moment, the devotion of university geography professors guaranteed the quality of this university discipline. It should be taken into account that the first university geography course (Regional Geography) was created in 1901 at the Philosophy and Humanities School at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, and that it took almost 90 years until the Master's Degree in Geography (*Licenciatura*) was created. The introduction of this degree leads to the matching of Spanish university geography teaching to European models both in length of studies and in the definition of a curriculum specialising in geography separated from history. The two cycles, however, are still maintained.
- 17 In the present study programme, the Ministry of Education reserves the competence to set basic compulsory courses (or trunk courses) for every Spanish university that offers the geography degree. A detailed analysis of the courses reveals the clear decision to train professional geographers. In other words, the old conception of training people to teach at university

or secondary schools is replaced by a new vision more in keeping with social needs, the aspirations of geography students and the general feeling of the staff that teach the subject. Together with other traditional courses such as Physical Geography, Human Geography or Geography of Spain or Europe, there are some courses related to the new role played by the professional geographer in our society. Thus, trunk courses are Geographical Technologies (12 credits), in the first cycle, and Land Planning, Applied Physical Geography and Applied Human Geography (12 credits each) in the second cycle (Alvargonzález, 2001). This new approach was very appropriate, as the political power share among the central government and the autonomous communities had just been completed, which led to most of the land-related competencies being transferred to the regional governments.

18 Apart from these basic subject matters, each university was able to define its own curricula through the inclusion of the so-called compulsory and optional courses. The present study programme excludes the Bachelor's degree in Geography (the *Diplomatura* degree) in the first cycle, which many geography departments considered a good career opening and one that would meet market demands (for instance, with qualified mapping technicians) as well as specialities in the second cycle. Therefore, the new study programme only approved the Master's degree in Geography, within which specialization was only possible through the optional subjects offered by each department to be freely chosen by the students, although these are not officially recognised in their academic records.

19 The creation of new degrees according to the University Studies Reform Act of 1983 made possible the inclusion of geography courses (even some trunk courses) in the new curricula ; therefore, geography departments are able to offer some new qualifications in such a Master's degree as Environmental Sciences and Social and Cultural Anthropology or in the Bachelor's degree in Tourism.

20 It seemed that the Master's degree in Geography would develop and create new professionals that could compete in the labour market ; however, the Spanish Ministry of Education imposed a strict condition in the approval of new study programmes which restricted all the new possibilities : the blocking of staff. This meant that only the existing human resources were provided, which indubitably affected the curriculum designed by each department and forced the existing professors to adjust to the new curriculum.

21 In any case, there is a wide range of possibilities as many universities offer the Master's degree in Geography. For the future, the reforms set by the Bologna agreements will cause the curricula to become more streamlined as Spanish and other European universities will see that student capture becomes increasingly difficult.

Post-graduate teaching in Geography

22 As this paper is being written (November 2003), a new regulation for post-graduate studies is on the verge of being approved, based on the Bologna Declaration on "European Space for Higher Education, (ESHE)", and legally supported by the new University Act (L.O.U.) dated December 2001. Until the University Studies Reform Act of 1983, the first Democratic one, the purpose of the third cycle was to train graduate students to complete their PhD dissertation ; once they had successfully obtained their post-graduate degree, they had two different career possibilities : teaching at university or research at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (C.S.I.C.) (Scientific Research High Council). Since 1983, all Spanish universities have become autonomous and have a certain amount of freedom in the organization of their graduate studies according to the following double approach :

1. PhD programmes : The students' goal is to be granted the doctorate ; therefore, they must prove their researching competence by taking high-level scientific courses (20 credits) and carrying out conducted research (12 credits). In any case, the final objective is to produce a PhD thesis and to be granted a doctorate.
2. Master's programmes. Students must take specialized courses in order to become qualified for applied work in the Public Administration sector, in a private company or in a consultant agency. There are different types of professional post-graduate

qualifications (*Master, Magister, Experto, Especialista*), according to the credit load and the qualification required. All must conclude in an applied work project.

- 23 Since 1985, most Spanish universities have doctorate studies that offer the grade of Doctor in Geography ; on some occasions, the same department offers several programmes. Mostly, these programmes are related to a certain speciality located in the same geographical area of the university or to some speciality implemented in the department. Moreover, within these doctorate programmes there appear increasingly more methodological and technical courses (mapping, GIS, etc.), while applied land planning research is gaining importance. Recently, there is a tendency for departments to offer a single doctorate programme in which the three areas of geographical knowledge (Physical Geography, Human Geography and Regional Geography) are balanced, although some programmes follow a specialized line such as physical environment, land planning, innovation techniques, etc. (Rodríguez-Martínez, 1995-96, p. 146). The information available on 2003-2004 doctorate programmes shows that in 34 Spanish universities geography is present in 53 doctorate programmes, 25 of them organized by Geography departments ; the subject-matter range is very wide : from geographical thought to land planning ; geography's environmental and landscape perspective is well represented as well as other recent subjects such as heritage or land economic development.
- 24 The second professional approach is indubitably much more heterogeneous as it is based on the autonomy of each university. Thus, many Spanish universities issue qualifications for the professional activity of degree-holders, and geography is very well represented at this level. The norm is for geography to share cross-section third-cycle programmes with other disciplines, such as environment, land planning, local development or tourism. There are cases where geography departments direct professional post-graduate teaching and engage professors from other disciplines. According to the information available for 2003-2004, the Spanish public universities teach at least 36 professional post-graduate programmes at different levels. The subject-matter is varied as well, although there is a prevalence of instrumental issues (GIS, mapping, remote-sensing) and those regarding the professionalism of geographers in land and urban analysis, management and planning. Obviously, these qualifications have a short period of life because, although they depend on the university's decision to offer them and on their demand, their cost and organisation requirements usually do not make them feasible.
- 25 Geographers are also actively contributing to research university centres or institutes that in many cases are multidisciplinary. Such is the case of the *Instituto Cabanilles de Altos Estudios Turísticos (Cabanilles Institute of Advanced Tourism Studies)*, ruled by the Valencian universities and specializing in Tourism research, or the *Centro de Cooperación y Desarrollo Territorial (Centre for Cooperation and Land Development)*, linked to the University of Oviedo (Asturias) and oriented towards land economic development.

Relations between Geography and the media

- 26 At present, Internet is the means of communication *par excellence*. The Web offers great opportunities for the diffusion of geography and Spanish geographical bodies have created and maintain their own web pages. Table 2 indicates the addresses of some institutions referred to in the text.

Table 2. Spanish Geographical Institutions.

Name of the Institution	Approach	Remarks	URL
Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles (AGE)	Academic	Each group has its own web page that can be reached from the URL address	http://www.age.es/ http://www.ieg.csic.es/age/grupos.htm
Colegio de Geógrafos	Professional	There are autonomous delegations	http://www.geografos.org
Instituto de Geografía y Economía	Research	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas	http://www.ieg.csic.es/
Centro Geográfico del Ejército	Mapping	The whole range of Spanish maps	http://www.ejercito.mde.es/publicaciones/igef/
Instituto Geográfico Nacional (IGN)	Mapping	The whole range of Spanish maps	http://www.cnig.ign.es/
Real Sociedad Geográfica	Geography promotion	Interesting documentary funds	http://www.ieg.csic.es/rsg/
Asociación de Geógrafos Profesionales	Professional	Specific branches in some regions	Several addresses
Instituto de Cartografía de Andalucía	Mapping	A complete collection of Andalusian maps	http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/braspublicasytransportes/psf/tema.jsp?ct=6
Instituto Cartográfico de Cataluña	Mapping	A complete collection of Catalan maps	http://www.icc.es/
Instituto Cartográfico Valenciano	Mapping	A complete collection of Valencian maps	http://www.gva.es/icv

Source : Authors own making

27 Most university geography departments have their own web page and their URL addresses are available through campusred.net (it is necessary to search for degree names) or through the corresponding link on the web page of the *Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles (AGE)* (*Association of Spanish Geographers*) : ([http://www.ieg.csic.es/ age/enlaces/dep_espana.htm](http://www.ieg.csic.es/age/enlaces/dep_espana.htm)). They differ in geographical content, quality and quantity and some of them are a clear interactive on-line invitation to the visitor, while in other cases the web page is just an introduction to the department in question.

28 Geographical journals have also arrived on the Internet ; some dependent on geography departments and others promoted by various geographical bodies. Some journals are complete and fully downloadable and in other cases only the table of contents is available. Certain journals cannot be obtained in hard copy but can only be consulted on the Web (table 3).

Table 3. Geographical journals on-line.

Geography Departments In the following Universities:	Periodicals	URL Addresses
Alicante/Henares	Revista Serie Geográfica	http://www.geogra.uah.es/publicaciones/Serie/Seriem.htm
Alicante/Alicant	Investigaciones Geográficas	http://cervantesvirtual.com/portali/IG/presentacion.shtml
Almería	Nimbus	http://www.uom.es/info/extensio/publicaciones/AEUE/almeria/nimbus.htm
Autónoma Barcelona/Girona	Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica	http://www.bus.usab.es/iegeog/ie/m/
Barcelona	Geocritica	http://www.ub.es/geocrit/menu.htm
Complutense de Madrid	Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense	http://www.uom.es/info/dghum/indexpub.htm
Extremadura	Norba	http://www.fyi-unex.com/foro/publicaciones/norba/index.html
Granada	Cuadernos de Geografía de la Universidad de Granada	http://www.ugr.es/~7E/geofreg/
La Rioja	Cuadernos de Investigación Geográfica	http://www.unirioja.es/dptos/dchs/geo/revgeo.htm
Zaragoza	Geographicalia	http://fyi.unizar.es/geo/revista.htm
Other Organizations		
Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles	Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles	http://www.ieg.csic.es/age/boletin.htm
Instituto de Economía y Geografía	Estudios Geográficos	http://www.csic.es/publica/revistas/estudios_geograficos.html
Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya	Revista Catalana de Geografia	http://www.icc.es/rcg/rcg.html
Universidades de Andalucía	Revista de Estudios Regionales	http://www.revistaestudiosregionales.com/presentacion.php
Societat Catalana de Geografia	Treballs de la Societat Catalana de Geografia	http://www.icc.es/institucio/societat/SCGeografia/Scg%20g%15512.htm
Digital Geographic Periodicals		
Grupo Métodos Cuantitativos (AGE)	Geofocus	http://geofocus.rediris.es/
Universidad de Barcelona	Scripta Nova	http://www.ub.es/geocrit/nova-ig.htm
	Scripta Vetera	http://www.ub.es/geocrit/bv-ig.htm
	Biblio 3W (bibliography)	http://www.ub.es/geocrit/bw-ig.htm
	Online (Internet resources)	http://www.ub.es/geocrit/arac-34.htm

Source : Authors own making

29 Spanish state and autonomous community public bodies are posting increasingly more materials on the Internet, and some of these are very useful in geography teaching and research. For instance, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture offers maps and aerial images on its website, and the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE)* (State Statistics Body) as well as other related regional bodies provide statistics at different scales in relation to various subjects. There are also other educational portals from which interesting geography teaching information can be accessed : the most important are the Ministry of Education's *Centro Nacional de Información y Comunicación Educativa* (National Centre for Educational Information and Communication) (<http://www.cnice.mecd.es>), and the *Educared*, sponsored by the Telefónica Foundation (<http://www.educared.net>). On the Web there are also free teaching materials for different disciplines and levels (geography included) available at <http://www.xtec.es/recursos/clic/>.

30 All these Internet-based teaching resources are very useful for primary and secondary school teachers and students.

- 31 The Spanish contribution to various European and international initiatives on the Web is also worth noting : HERODOT, for instance, emerged from the need to re-organise university curricula according to the Bologna agreements ; SchoolNet assumes the role of promoting school teaching via the Internet ; EUGEO joins European Union geographical societies ; while EUROGEO is formed by European geographical institutions interested in geography teaching in their respective countries.
- 32 Another interesting aspect to be taken into consideration is the media attention given to the geographical dimension when it deals with certain subjects or reports on land-related news (e.g. local development or town planning) or natural disasters, wars, travels and explorations. The Spanish media is not sensitive to the space facet of the news and nor does it explicitly assess the role of geography or the professional contribution of geographers. There is, however, a wider usage of mapping and graphic representation techniques. On the other hand, the press has reported on some of the most relevant events of geographical societies, such as the creation of the *Colegio de Geógrafos* (Professional Association of Geographers). It is the local press which is most interested in the work of geographers, regularly giving details on conferences and other geographical events taking place in the area.

Relations and links between geography and the economic sphere and policy-makers

- 33 In the last two decades, because of the existence of the autonomous communities, geographers have increased their presence in professional activities beyond formalized teaching and research. Previously, geographers participated in applied works and we could mention well-known colleagues who actively took part in town and country planning as well as in their academic duties. However, apart from these well-known academic individuals, the “Philosophy and Humanities” or “History and Geography” degree-holder (areas where geography was located for decades) had very few possibilities to exercise a professional activity and this was almost always within a team led by other professionals, ultimately architects, and playing a secondary role (Valenzuela, 1981).
- 34 However, in the autonomous community governments, it is relatively common to encounter geographers in political roles such as councillors, general directors or members of regional Parliaments. There is no doubt that these new functions have promoted the role of geographers in Spanish regional administration. In 1975, the creation of the AGE helped to diffuse the professional role of geographers and to enhance their social value. An important step in this direction was taken in the 1990s when the Master’s degree in Geography was created ; although even before this some regional professional geographers associations had worked hard to have their members’ work recognized. The final milestone set in this direction was the creation of the *Colegio de Geógrafos*, which required a specific act to be passed in Spanish Parliament (1999). The new Master’s degree in Geography and the informative and lobbying work of many colleagues before parliament members obtained the support needed.
- 35 The *Colegio de Geógrafos* was launched in 2001 with more than 500 members. The fact that the members of the first Board of Directors had an average age of 40 years is clear proof that the new classes of geography degree-holders were entering the professional field. This generational replacement is another step in the right direction to place professional geographers on the same level as other professionals. The *Colegio de Geógrafos* works in autonomous bodies in Andalusia, Cantabria, Catalonia and the Valencia Community. The association reproduces the land-decentralized model in force in Spain. The *Colegio*’s main and primary object is to promote the social recognition of geographers and to transfer this recognition into applied working offers. It is true that Spanish society is still unaware of the role that geography can play and without this previous recognition it will be very difficult for geographers to reach decision-making positions relating to land or town planning or environmental matters.
- 36 The main professional careers open nowadays to Spanish geographers depend on the autonomous community in which they live and work. Among those most worth mentioning are : mapping and Geographical Information Systems ; the planning and management of

natural spaces ; environmental impact assessment ; risk prevention for Civil Protection ; town and country planning ; land bordering, etc. We must point out the active role played by Catalanian geographers in the making of Catalonia's county and municipal maps. Our colleagues perform many different applied works such as editorial work, the production of textbooks, guides, atlases, etc. within publishing houses.

37 In all these fields and in many others that are not described in this paper, geographers contribute specific training and understanding : their knowledge of the land and their capacity to integrate environmental, economic and social dimensions in space, and their ability to synthesise and to interpret. Moreover, their representation of the land is constantly updated using the most advanced techniques (e.g. G.I.S.), which will not only lead to an improvement in their work but also to their increased capacity to convey this knowledge to their clients and to society. There is, however, still much distance to cover until geographers have an ample and varied professional market, as there is strong competition from many other and stronger professional bodies, and geographers do not have enough support from the productive system nor from public administration. The *Colegio de Geógrafos* is aware of these difficulties and since May 2003 has included in its journals a "Geographical Good Practices Bank", a useful tool that is intended to encourage full acceptance and which has been launched with one of the activities which geographers work on most : landscape and land planning. The objective is to diffuse projects, experiences, plans, public policies or studies that are innovative or that are of special interest to the different fields of applied geographical activities.

The organisation of the "geographical society"

38 The corporate organization of Spanish geographers has followed a long and winding road since the last decades of the 19th century. At present, the list of Spanish geographers contains over 3,600 names and it can be said that geography presents a corporate profile similar to those countries in our sphere but with a lesser influence on society and with less scientific and professional recognition.

39 The venerable Geographical Societies still exist, with members from very different disciplines and occupations (secondary school teachers, cartographers, geography engineers, economists, historians, military and, of course, geographers). Therefore, their interests do not always agree with those of other geographical bodies. As they are the older organizations, they count on greater social recognition and perform an important role in the divulgation of geography through their conferences, publications, travels, etc.

40 The *Real Sociedad Geográfica* (Royal Geographical Society) was founded in 1876 as the Geographical Society of Madrid and was honoured with the title of "Royal" in 1901. It has around 500 members and publishes one of the oldest geographical journals in Spanish, *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Geográfica*. The creation of the *Real Sociedad Geográfica*, as that of many other similar bodies, was conditioned by the European colonial expansion of the second half of the 19th century (Rodríguez-Esteban, 1996). Much later, other geographical societies appeared in culturally and linguistically diverse regions such as Catalonia (*Societat Catalana de Geografia*), Galicia (*Sociedade Galega de Xeografía*) or the Basque Country (*Sociedad Instituto Geográfico Vasco "Andrés de Urdaneta"-INGEBA*). Of these, the oldest, most active and with the highest number of members is the *Societat Catalana de Geografia*, created in 1935 ; it has 1388 members and strong social and institutional support in Catalonia, and in 1991 it organized its *Ier. Congrés Català de Geografia* (1st Catalan Geography Congress). It organizes many activities and publications, with a periodical publication : *Treballs de Geografia de la Societat Catalana de Geografia*. The INGEBA also has its own periodical : *Lurralde Investigación*. All of these societies are well integrated in their regions ; they are acknowledged and supported both for their contribution towards a better understanding of land problems and for their work on behalf of their respective national identity.

41 A new period was opened in 1975 when the AGE was created. It has at present 1000 members, most of them holding a Master's degree in Geography. Therefore, it is the representative of academic geography and its main interest is in higher studies research and geography teaching. It is structured in working groups based on the main geographical research lines : the 13

working groups existing in 2003 hold scientific meetings where their members present their contributions (Valenzuela, 2000, pp. 363-365). Besides this, the AGE holds a congress every two years and publishes a quarterly journal (*Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*) with an advisory board and referees that assess the scientific quality of papers. It also publishes monographic issues on subjects of particular interest.

42 On the other hand, professional geographers have more recently completed their process of institutionalisation, which was strongly promoted by an Act passed in 1999 by Spanish Parliament upon the creation of the *Colegio de Geógrafos*. The *Colegio* was formally founded in 2001 and today (November 2003) there are 740 geographers registered. Thus ends the long run started in 1993 on the AGE's initiative and supported by both the traditional geographical societies and the regional professional geographers' associations (especially those of Catalonia and Andalusia) that appeared in the autonomous communities from 1980. The return to a democratic political system (1975), the first municipal elections (1979) and the implementation of the autonomic model provided for in the Spanish Constitution (1978) that granted to the "historical regions and nationalities" (Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia) a wide self-government, constituted a strong boost for the consolidation of professional geographers in Spain. Throughout the 1980s, the autonomous communities were incorporated and they began to make decisions regarding a great number of subjects concerning the activities of professional geographer (town planning, environment, land planning, local development, etc.). The great expansion of professional geography during the last two decades is clearly related to the working opportunities derived from local and regional autonomous government ; sometimes geographers work for the municipalities or autonomous governments as contracted civil servants or technicians, or alternatively they work for other consultant agencies that are engaged by the same public bodies. Presently, the *Colegio de Geógrafos* is implementing a decentralized structure, whose demarcations correspond to the political regional units.

43 Geography students and young geographers have also created their own organizations, which are obviously not as solid and whose scope is conditioned by fewer resources and the formative level of their members. The seats of these associations are created in the universities and are aggregated into larger groups (*Federación de Asociaciones de Jóvenes Geógrafos – Federation of Young Geographers' Associations*). These associations, however, gain exposure via their meetings, workshops and working conferences, where they monitor the academic and professional development of geography from a critical and constructive viewpoint. These meetings are used to present proposals and suggestions to established geographical associations.

44 We should also mention those non-geographical bodies and institutions that support academic geographers and provide working opportunities to professional geographers. We refer to the *Instituto Geográfico Nacional (National Geographical Institute)*, the national mapmaker, the *Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (Cartographic Institute of Catalonia)*, the Catalanian mapmaker, the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Institute of Statistics)*, the national statistics body, or the *Instituto de Estudios Turísticos (Institute of Tourism Studies)*, a specialized tourism research agency. Many of these entities have geographers on their staff, although in most cases they are a minority. Despite this, all these institutions are essential to geographical work which is why they have been included within the chapter devoted to "geographical societies".

Concluding remarks

45 In Spain, knowledge of geography is considered useful in cultural terms but its presence has been reduced at the basic levels of school education and, even worse, geography has lost its identity as a differentiated discipline.

46 The last two decades of legal regulations have extended the term of compulsory education and have opened up higher studies to new generations, but they have not, however, resulted in the creation of new opportunities for geographical education.

- 47 The creation of a Master's degree in Geography (*Licenciatura*) does not guarantee a higher quality of geography teaching at the school level as school teaching is taken over by university degree holders in other subjects (mostly historians).
- 48 University geography has broken away from the traditional bias towards teaching and leans in the direction of teaching designed to prepare professionals qualified to solve many different social demands. Therefore, there are no specialities within the Master's degree in Geography study programmes. On the other hand, geography has been accepted as a valuable discipline for various new university degrees such as tourism, environment or anthropology.
- 49 In the wait for new regulations following the Bologna Declaration, post-graduate and doctorate programmes are well represented in the geography departments, although existing geography doctorate degree-holders do not hold out much hope to become university professors or researchers. The professional post-graduate programmes are conditioned by departmental speciality and by the support of the surrounding area and of public administrations.
- 50 Geographical professional activities, other than teaching, have only just been consolidated in Spain. From the 1980s on, there were many opportunities for the professional geographical practice as the decentralized political-administrative State model was implemented and the Master's degree in Geography was created. The establishment of the *Colegio Profesional de Geógrafos* in 1999 led to full recognition of the professional geographer.
- 51 Much older are the Geographical Societies, established more than 100 years ago that re-acquired influence in the country and in the autonomous communities from the 1970s on. The diffusion of initiatives and interests was reinforced in part when most of the geographical entities and societies were integrated in the Spanish Committee of the International Geographic Union (IGU).

The Spanish *Real Sociedad geográfica*, a more than centennial history



In 1901 the *Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid*, created in 1876, was granted by King Alfonso XIII the rank of royal society, which implied the Crown's High Protection and a yearly State's budget support. Like many other 19th-century European geographical societies, the Spanish *Real Sociedad Geográfica* was born in close relation to the political power. In fact, the first President of the *Sociedad Geográfica de Madrid*, Mr. Fermín Caballero, was the Major of the city of Madrid as well as the first Geography Professor in the Universidad Central. Moreover, many other members were well-known politicians, among them several Prime Ministers and of the Borbonic Restoration Period (1875-1931), as well as all kind of public men and scientists (cartographers, engineers, historians, geologists, etc.) beside engineers or high-ranking career officers.

From its beginnings, the *Real Sociedad Geográfica* collaborated actively with European and American geographers ; thus its creation was linked to the attendance of Mr. Francisco Coello de Portugal, one of its most relevant founders, to the Geographical Congress held in Paris in 1875. Later on, the *Real Sociedad Geográfica* was one of the seven societies that incorporated the International Geographical Union in 1922, and its Board of Directors was appointed IGU's Spanish Committee by a Government Order. In 1996 the Spanish Committee has been enlarged and has included the *Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles* (1975) and other State and Regional

geographical bodies and entities (the Catalanian, Galician and Basque geographical societies). The Spanish Ministry of Public Works has always sponsored the *Real Sociedad Geográfica* through the *Instituto Geográfico Nacional*, a permanent member in its Board of Directors with other State specialised and related (Cartography, Geology, Oceanography) bodies plus the *Instituto de Economía y Geografía* in the *Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas* (High Council for Scientific Research). The Society's relations with other royal academies (such as the *Real Academia de la Historia* and the *Real Academia de las Ciencias*) are strong, and they have helped our activity for many years. In this sense, the *Real Sociedad Geográfica* joined as a founding member the *European Society for Geography (EUGEO)* in 1997.

Such a wide and large network of scientific and institutional relations has bloomed into an intense geographic diffusion in meetings, congresses, courses, conferences and publications, from the earliest *Congreso Español de Geografía Colonial y Mercantil* (the Spanish Congress on Colonial and Trading Geography) held in 1883 till 2002, when the Society's Centennial was celebrated with a series of conferences entitled *Un Mundo por descubrir en el Siglo XXI (A World to be discovered in the 21st Century)*. A quite different discovery that that the ones carried out by the young geographical societies in the 19th Century. In the early years since its creation in 1876, the Society took part in relevant discoveries and land penetration actions in the African Spanish-influenced eastern coast (Morocco, West Sahara and the Gulf of Guinea) while the Society's journal *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Geográfica* published contributions on discoveries and colonising actions all over the world. The Society paid also a great attention to any American geographical topics, so very much related to Spain for centuries.

After this colonial concern for enlarging the world, in the first decades of the 20th century the Society was increasingly aware of Spain's needs for improvement. Some of the most relevant representatives of the Spanish regeneration movement (Joaquín Costa or Lucas Mallada) were also members of the *Real Sociedad Geográfica*. Nowadays not many areas in our planet are left to be discovered or explored, but changes are so deep and are happening so fast that past geographical knowledge is getting more and more obsolete. Therefore, the objectives set to the *Real Sociedad Geográfica* by its founding statutes, « *to promote, develop, and disseminate geographic knowledge in all its areas and in its applications to social, political and economic life, and to study in special the territory of Spain and of the peoples linked to Spain by language or other reasons* », keeps their validity.

The *Real Sociedad Geográfica*'s activity in its more than 125 years of history has left as a precious inheritance an excellent specialised library, with more than 11,000 books, 12,700 booklets and 110 Spanish and foreign Geographical Journals, plus a large map collection with more than 700 maps, many of them dated in the 18th and 19th centuries and a few of them manuscript. This bibliographic and cartographic treasure is permanently hosted and available in the *Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*. The *Real Sociedad Geográfica* is proud of its journal, *Boletín de la Real Sociedad Geográfica*, the oldest geographical journal published in Spain since 1876, with only one interruption during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In its 138 volumes, the most relevant geographers, historians, economists, geologists and many other specialists have been edited. The result of the *Real Sociedad Geográfica*'s publishing activity are around 50 books on subjects related to discoveries, expeditions and scientific travels, including the contributions of spanish geographers to different congresses and scientific meetings. Nowadays, the spanish contribution volume to the 30th International Geography Congress (Glasgow, 2004) is in preparation.

With thanks to the *Working Group on Geographic Knowledge of the Spanish Geographer Association* in the web of which I have found the photos sent for illustrating our text :

<http://www.ieg.csic.es/hispengeo/home.htm>

Fermin Caballero (1800-1876)

Francisco de Coello (1822-1898)

Joaquín Costa (1846-1911)

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MAIN INITIALS USED

A.G.E. Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles

C.S.I.C. Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científica

E.S.O. Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria

I.C.E. Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación

I.G.N. Instituto Geográfico Nacional

I.N.E. Instituto Nacional de Estadística

L.O.C.E. Ley Orgánica de Calidad de la Enseñanza

L.O.G.S.E. Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo

L.O.U. Ley Orgánica de Universidades

L.R.U. Ley de Reforma Universitaria

(Note : After the recently elected socialist government took over (April 2004), both the L.O.C.E. and the L.O.U. are going to be deeply changed, following the promises made along the election campaign.)

Pour citer cet article

Référence électronique

Manuel Valenzuela, Manuel Mollá et M^a Luisa de Lázaro, « Geography in Spain », *Belgeo* [En ligne], 1 | 2004, mis en ligne le 17 octobre 2013, consulté le 02 septembre 2014. URL : <http://belgeo.revues.org/10084>

Référence papier

Manuel Valenzuela, Manuel Mollá et M^a Luisa de Lázaro, « Geography in Spain », *Belgeo*, 1 | 2004, 145-162.

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