

# From foodscapes to concretescapes – through *crisiscapes*

## The irrigation systems of la Garriga (Barcelona), 12th - 21st C.



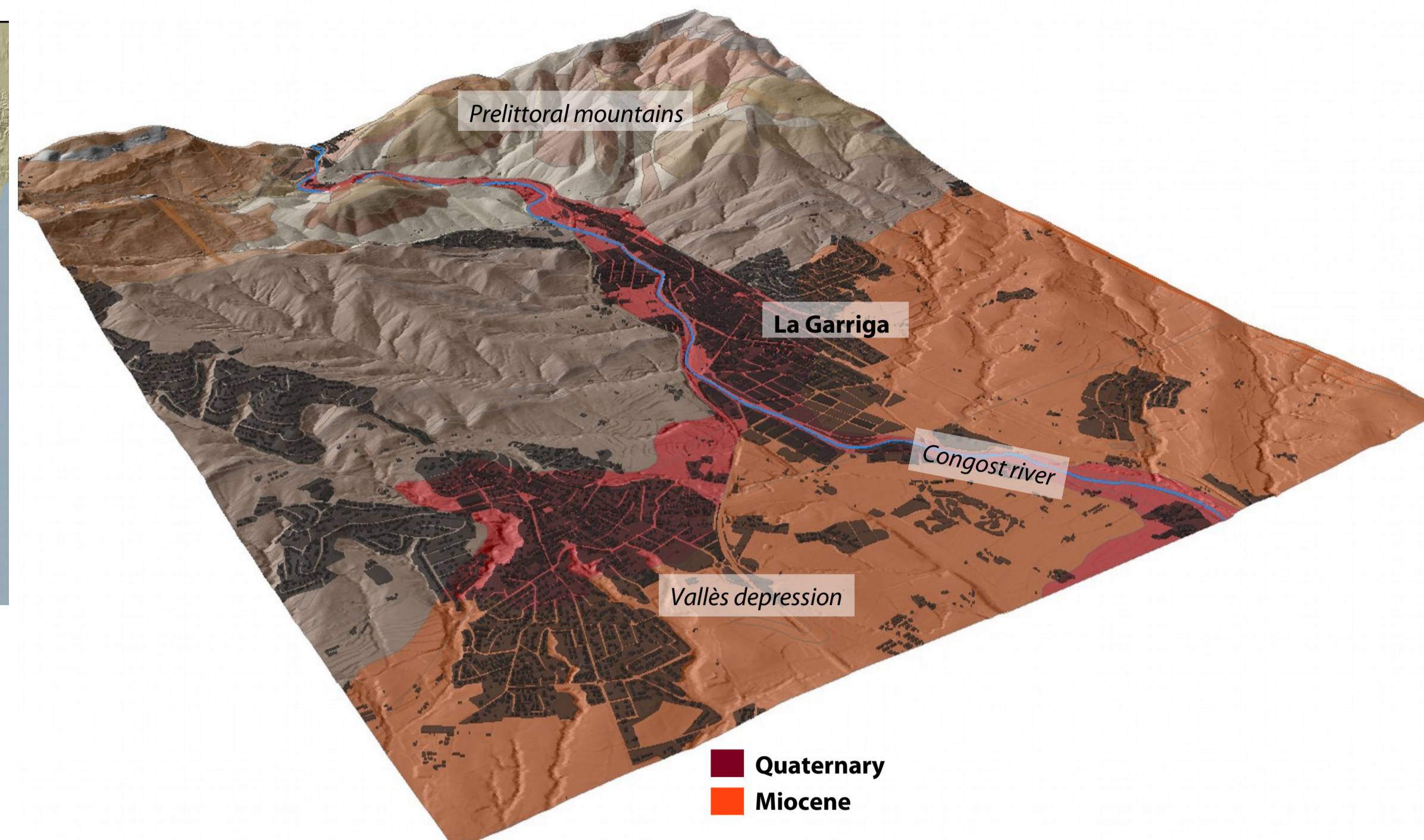
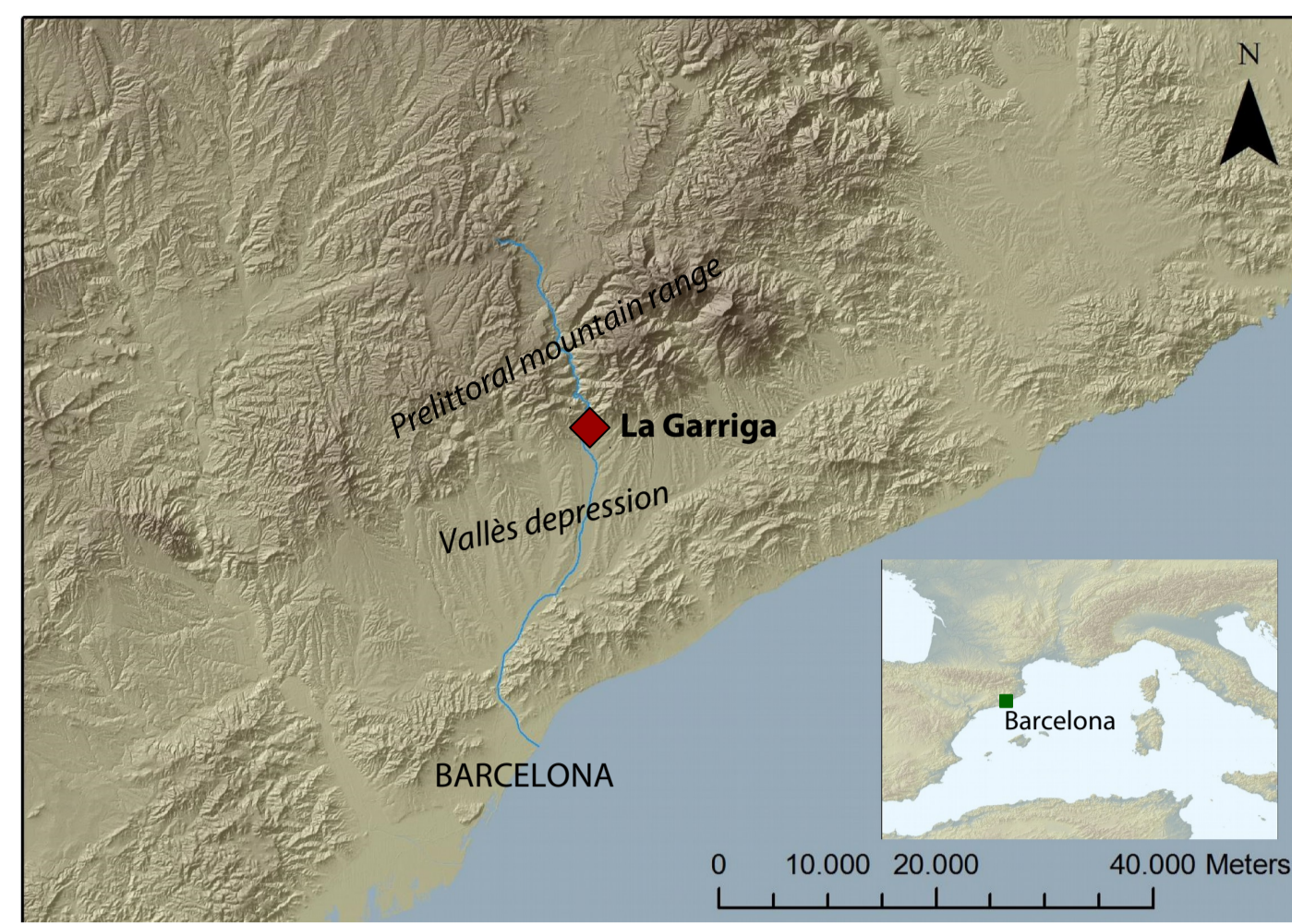
**Arnau Garcia** (Catalan Institute of Classical Archaeology); **Jaume Oliver** (Autonomous University of Barcelona)  
 agarcia@icac.cat; oliverbj@diba.cat

### INTRODUCTION

This contribution detailed the process of creation, expansion and destruction of complex irrigation system documented in the present municipality of La Garriga (Barcelona). It is possible to follow these systems of canals since 12th century until their progressive extinction during the past 150 years.

Most of the systems are now buried under modern buildings. Therefore, the study had to be based on a regressive use of textual and cartographic sources. An archaeological approach is only possible through the reports of small rescue interventions.

### SITUATION & STUDY AREA



The municipality of la Garriga is situated on the Congost river basin.

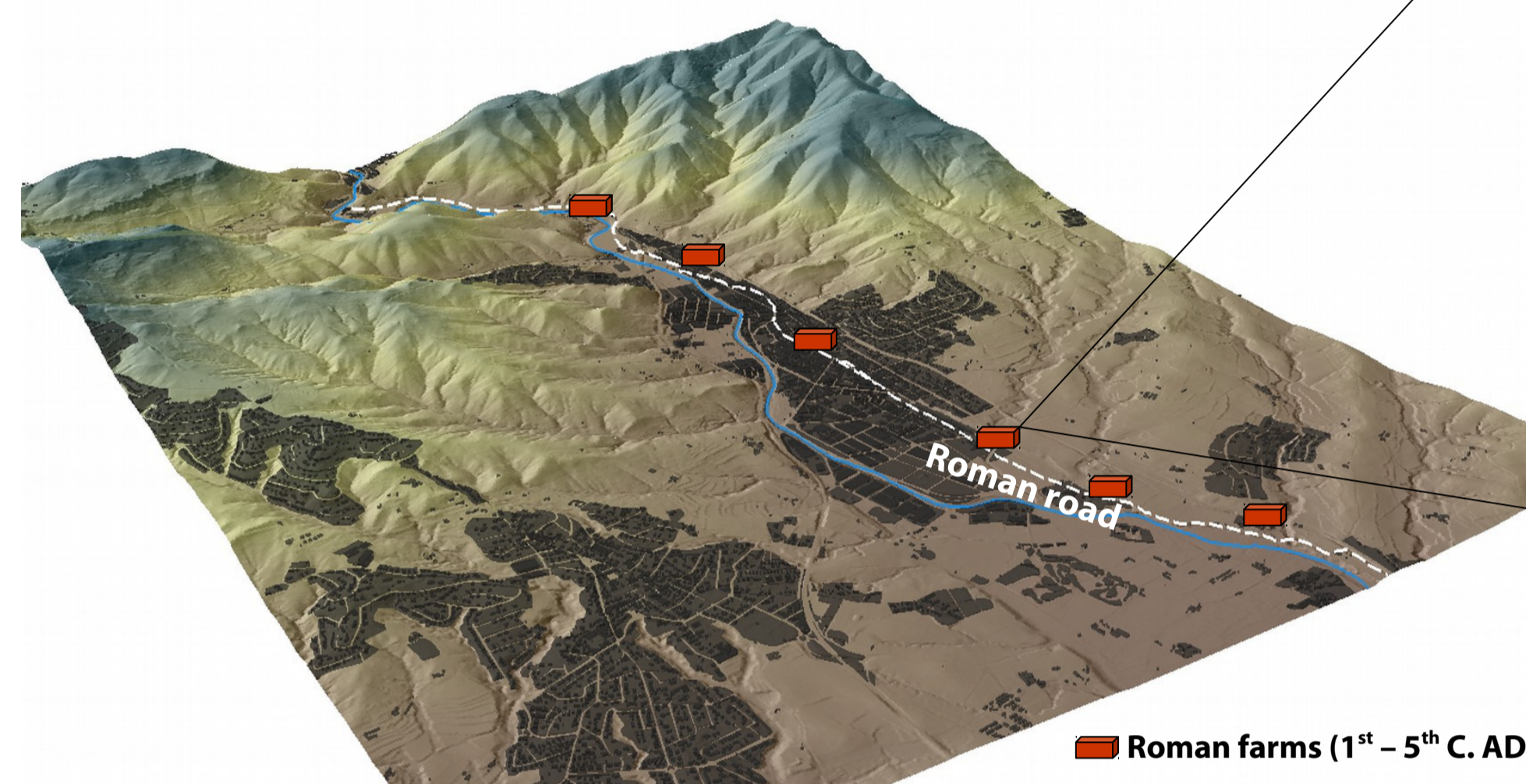
This work analyses the lower areas, close to the river.

Geologically corresponds to Quaternary sediments linked to fluvial dynamics.

Although nowadays most of the area is occupied by residential and industrial areas, historically has been characterized by agriculture and livestock activities related to wet environments.

### FIRST STEPS

#### PRE-MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT



«Can Terrers»: baths of the Roman villa.



#### FIRST FEUDAL MILLS AND THE «REC MONAR»

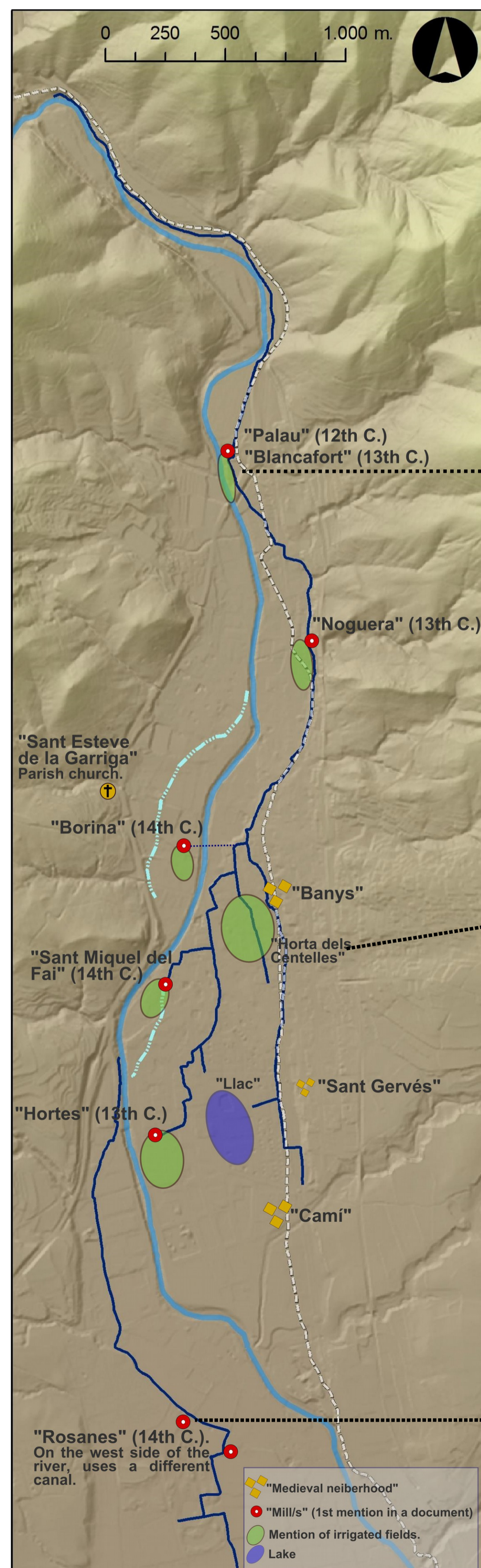
The Blancafort mill, first recorded in 1297, was built near an earlier one (12th-13th c.) named Palau, which was abandoned that same year. It is possible that the Blancafort mill had used part of the hydraulic infrastructure of El Palau-dam and first sections of the canal-but, in any case, it is clear that since 1297 the canal was enlarged to successively install other mills. That was the origin of El Rec Monar, the main irrigation system of La Garriga (<monario < molinario).



«Blancafert mill» as it's represented in a middle 19th C. map & in a early 20th C. photography

Human presence is punctually documented since prehistory on the areas surrounding the riverbed. In the Roman period a road ran parallel to the river. That itinerary continued to be used during Medieval and Modern times without significant variations. Along this Road -as it is recorded in middle 19th C. Cartography- have been localized several settlements corresponding to different types of Roman farms.

#### «GRAIN LANDSCAPE»



#### 12th – 15th C.

Until mid 16th century, el Rec Monar was used almost only to make flour mills work, as grain was the chief crop of the area. The only spaces irrigated with water coming from El Rec Monar were the little vegetable gardens owned by millers, and, exceptionally, a bigger one belonging to the Centelles noble family, barons and feudal lords of La Garriga.



A millstone was chose to represent the Blancafort house and family



The feudal family of Centelles -in this picture Bernat of Centelles is represented next to the King of Aragon in the conquest of Mallorca (1229)- had a central role in the development of the canal system of la Garriga during the Middle Ages.



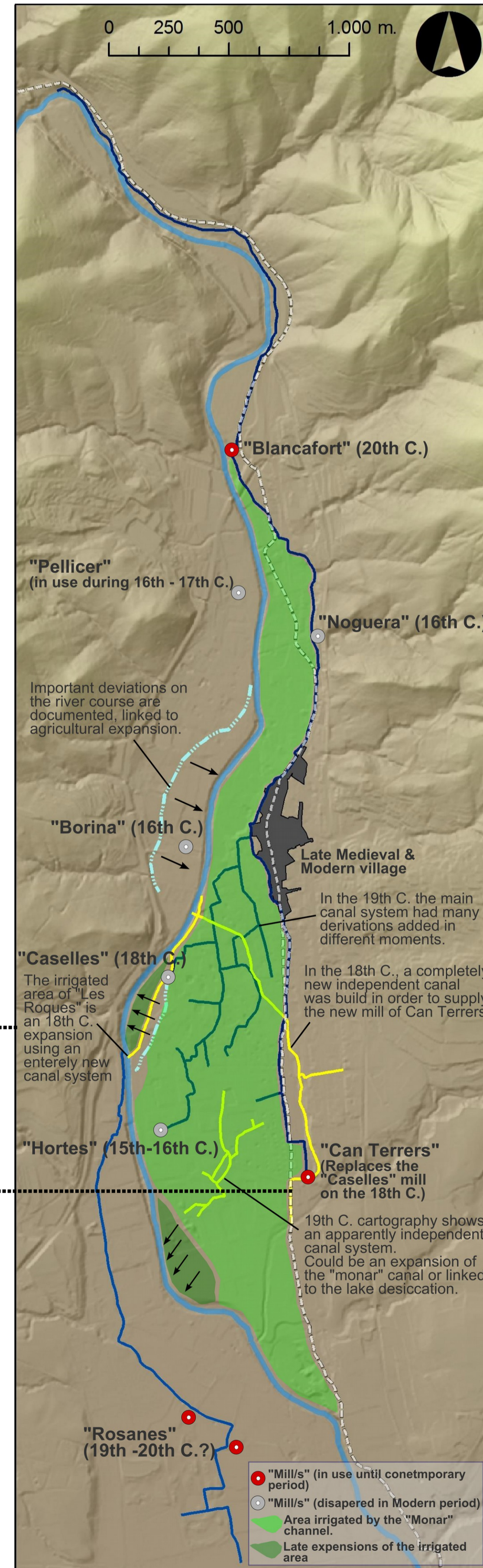
#### «LATE-FEUDAL IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE»

#### 15th – 19th C.

In the mid 16th century, the reorganization of productive forces and social relationships following the Crisis of the Late Middle Ages lead to changes in El Rec Monar: most of the flour mills disappeared and the water was used to irrigate a large area given over to vegetable gardens, which included the former medieval irrigated spaces.

This change converted La Garriga into a production centre of horticultural products, tied to supralocal markets, as a consequence of a process related to the regional productive diversification in Catalonia.

In the 18th century appeared a new irrigated space, El Regadiu de les Roques d'en Nualart, and a new irrigation system, specially created for Can Terrers' mill –the last one built in La Garriga.



#### «CONCRETESCAPES»

#### 20th – 21st C.

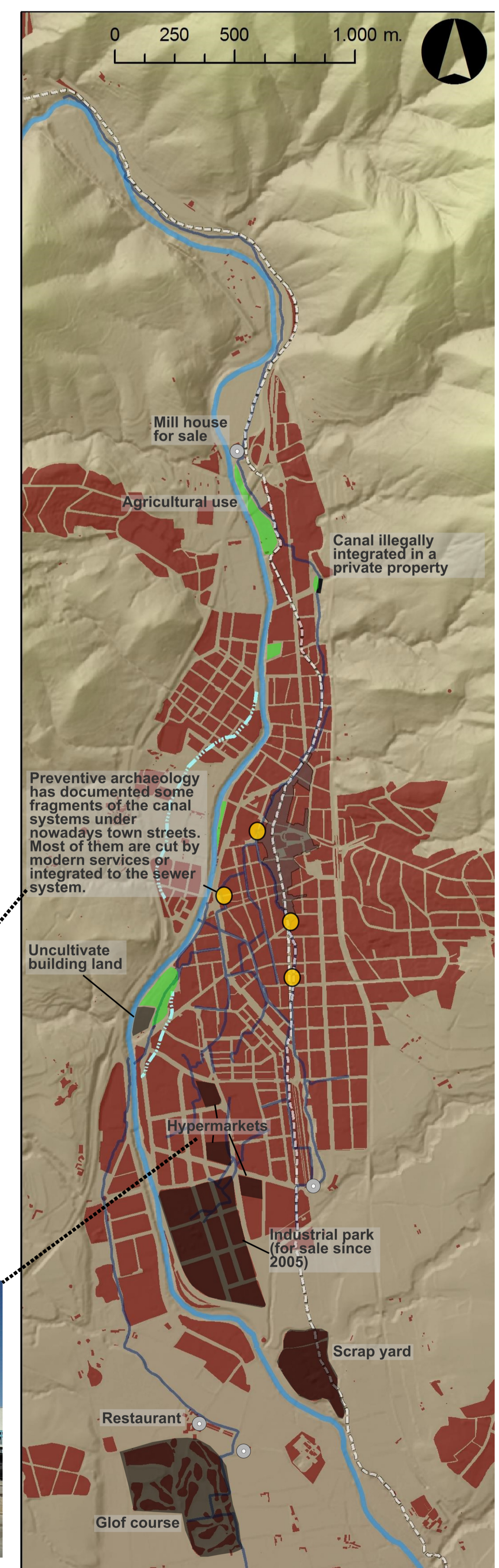
At the beginning of the 21st century, the irrigable space of El Rec Monar provided space for several uses, being the agricultural use a tiny part. This new change in landscape started in the mid 19th century with the building of a regional road over the irrigated spaces, which gradually became town centre, transport network, industrial parks and shopping centres.

Today, the agricultural spaces of El Rec Monar are little irrigated islands in the midst of a typical urban scene that can be found in the outskirts of Barcelona. Only the financial and economic crisis of 2008 has saved those islands from urbanization. Next to empty plots in industrial parks affected by the crisis, they are the only green spaces in the ancient and virtually disappeared irrigated area.

The old foodscapes have become concretescapes, or *crisiscapes*. So nowadays, you only can find food in supermarket shelves, bar counters of an industrial park and the tables of "rustic" restaurants.



Photo: Marc Bosch & Didac Pàmies (Antequem, S. L.)



### References

Barbé, E., Garcia, A., Llimargas, J., Oliver, J., 2015. Història de la Garriga. Dels primers assentaments humans al segle XXI, Ajuntament de la Garriga. ed.

OLIVER, J., "Origen, funcionament i destrucció planificada del Regadiu de les Roques d'en Nualart de la Garriga (segles XVIII-XXI)", Monografies del Montseny, 27 (2012), p. 61-82.

### Documentary & archaeological sources

**PUBLIC ARCHIVES**  
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 Arxiu Episcopal de Vic  
 Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó  
 Arxiu Històric Municipal de la Garriga

**PRIVATE ARCHIVES**  
 Arxiu de Can Blancafort  
 Arxiu de Can Noguera  
 Arxiu de Can Busquets  
 Arxiu de Can Terrers  
 Arxiu de Can Saraueta  
 Arxiu de Can Nualart.

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English translation & correction by Maria Jaime

Crossing Boundaries: the Creation of Foodscapes

AEA spring conference  
 Saturday 28 March 2015, 10.30am-17.00pm  
 A3 Humanities Building, University Park Campus, University of Nottingham, UK

