

Landscape, Local Knowledge and Democracy: the work of the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

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Introduction

The relationship between democracy and landscape reflects the demands of an increasingly complex and diverse society. The world faces multifaceted situations: increasingly global and interconnected challenges that are difficult to segment or deal with in terms of the specialisations and sector-based points of view we have traditionally constructed (Innerarity 2011). These challenges require us to be innovative, both in terms of content and forms of action.

The increasing heterogeneity of civil society is shedding classical and absolute ideological principles to focus on demands for preserving the local sphere in opposition to logics operating on a larger scale. Society's demand is for something of its own: the local landscape, often under attack from the unfettered growth of urban development and infrastructures resulting from regional (as well as environmental and landscape) policies that are often poorly designed and, above all, poorly explained (Nogué 2010). In this context, landscape acts as a catalyst and its iconic value increases spectacularly. For this reason landscape also enters the political agenda, displacing other environmental concepts that are now slightly worn out and diluted, such as sustainability.

Civil society recognises the importance of linking emotions to places, landscapes and, in general, the management of public space. New projects and attitudes, new values and new forms of social organisation are perceptible, in some cases emerging from virtually nowhere and, in others, reinforced precisely due to the economic, social and cultural crisis. Landscape (as a territorially-related definition of society) is recovering a good part of the leading role it had lost. The place where we live is 're-read' and 'rediscovered' and the desire of people to interact more intensely, deeply and unhurriedly with their own places is detected.

Ultimately, in democratically-mature societies, the public no longer wish to be a passive spectator of transformations in their nearest surroundings and want to become a leading agent in decision-making and the construction of more collective, shared projects. Put another way, the public wish – and have the right – to be jointly responsible for the future of the region where they live.

The principles promoted by the Council of Europe in 2000, with the approval of the European Landscape Convention (ELC), are a mirror of this complex and diverse society of today, understanding that landscape cannot be managed and planned without interaction between all the agents (Council of Europe 2000; 2008). We find ourselves facing a change of paradigm that calls for new forms of participatory democracy (Bouche-Florin 2013). Spain provisionally signed the ELC in October 2000 and shortly afterwards (even before it was ratified in 2007) the Parliament of the autonomous community of Catalonia signed up to it, and passed and began to implement the Landscape Protection, Management and Planning Act 8/2005 (Generalitat de Catalunya

2006) as the basis of landscape policy in Catalonia. With the passing of this Act, landscape ceased to have an exclusively aesthetic connotation and became an active element in the planning and management of region and a driving force for development. A few months before the Act was made, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia was set up (and eventually recognised by the Act). It was envisaged as a centre for thought, study, documentation and action concerning landscape and as a meeting point for all institutions, organisations and people in and outside Catalonia who are concerned with and interested in the subject of landscape.

One of the Landscape Observatory's main activities since 2005 as required by the Landscape Act has been to draw up landscape catalogues of Catalonia as a tool for characterising landscape in order to bring it into regional and sectoral planning. The principal and most visible result of the catalogues has been a map of 135 landscape areas that cover the whole of Catalonia. The catalogues have appeared at this time of paradigm change in relation to the new way of understanding political action and the new forms of regional governance demanded by society. This is the reason for the interest aroused by this reading of Catalonia from a landscape point of view and by its division into 135 landscape units, which are not political/administrative entities but rather living spaces, meeting places, containers of collective memories or even ideal places for rethinking the governance of landscape.

The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, a tool to promote landscape and democracy

With the passing of the Landscape Act, Catalonia became one of the first European regions to institutionalise landscape after the publication of the ELC. The Landscape Act is not the oldest in Europe (those of Switzerland and France came first) but, of the pieces of legislation approved over the last few years, it is one of those that to the greatest extent has taken on board the principles and objectives of the ELC. It has certain qualities that encourage – or in any case facilitate – participation and interaction between different agents. It is, first, a clear and easily understandable Act, bringing it generally closer to institutions, organisations and the public. Its second quality is that it is a pragmatic Act, attempting to achieve objectives through the creation of instruments (landscape catalogues, charters, etc.) and therefore obtaining results that are highly visible to everyone. Thirdly, it is designed with a positive outlook rather than as a tool for restriction or penalisation, arousing sympathy rather than antagonism.

The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia was set up a few months before the Act was passed, as a body to advise the Catalan administration and raise awareness of landscape in society in general. It was given little decision-making power, but it was endowed with considerable capacity to generate knowledge and create synergies, close relationships and interdependencies based on closeness and everyday experience. Its basic and general aim is to observe the landscapes of Catalonia; in other words to study, identify, monitor, document and publicise Catalan landscapes and their transformations, without ignoring other landscapes or ceasing to reflect on landscape in general. It also cooperates with the regional government (the Generalitat de Catalunya) when it comes

to implementing landscape policy. It is therefore a centre that seeks to influence the definition and design of future trends, acting as a broad umbrella under which anyone interested in landscape can find a place.

A flexible, agile structure

The structure and functions of the Landscape Observatory help make it a flexible, agile, permeable, inclusive body encouraging the confluence of different points of view about landscape and aspiring to generate trust. This is made easier by the fact that the Landscape Observatory is organised in the form of a consortium, with its own full legal identity, independent of its members, and consisting of more than thirty public and private institutions, including the Government of Catalonia, the public universities, official professional associations and very diverse social, cultural and economic groups. This structure facilitates dialogue between all kinds of points of view and sensitivities, although not always with the same continuity and intensity, including voices from different places and often with opposing interests.

Other advantages of the Observatory's flexibility are its capacity to reinvent itself, constantly evolving and being redefined, and to test new initiatives going beyond the limits of the administration's activity, as will be seen in the examples below.

Space for dialogue between different agents

After ten years of existence, the Observatory has, in many respects, become the perfect meeting point between the Government of Catalonia, local government, universities, professional groups and social and cultural groups it has direct or indirect relations with concerning everything referring to the management and culture of landscape, with different degrees of participation depending on the context and interest.

The Observatory also promotes a culture of dialogue between society and the authorities and also between different authorities (and different levels of the same authority). However, this dialogue is not always easy. Different views are often very far from one another and laden with mutual mistrust. It is not easy to bridge them or to find points midway between often directly opposing views. Mixed bodies of this kind, serving to connect the population with public institutions, are uncommon. And they are uncommon because the role they have to play is not always easy or comfortable.

Meanwhile, the Observatory works at different levels with European and international institutions and associations such as the Council of Europe, governments of different States and regions, Civilscape, Uniscape, the Latin American Landscape Initiative. Such bodies share the common objective of disseminating the principles and proposals of the European Landscape Convention and exchanging information, methodologies (such as that of landscape catalogues) and experiences or promoting specific actions.

Towards new forms of governance

The Landscape Observatory has always started from the basis that the landscape is a good way to deal with the complexity of regional management and planning and that the new forms of involvement and governance are good ways of achieving this.

Ultimately, the Observatory is, by nature, open to creative and imaginative initiatives which means that it acts as a real hothouse for innovative projects, based on pluralism and diversity, which may not have been tried out previously. It can promote new methodologies and topics always based on an interdisciplinary approach, respecting the different sensitivities on the issue; it has capacity to move flexibly and independently; it is half way between civil society, the authorities and the professional and technical sectors, forming a bridge between the three, connecting ideas and people and constructing dialogue between the public and private sphere. However, involving economic agents is not an easy task at all. It is easier in the case of agents that directly or indirectly see a potential in the issue of landscape, such as the tourism sector. But it can be very difficult to persuade other sectors to see that by becoming involved at some point they too could benefit from the landscape idea.

The Landscape Catalogues of Catalonia

From (collective) knowledge to planning and action

Knowledge is the basis for being able to make decisions on the landscape. Landscape catalogues are therefore the main project for generating knowledge about landscape, which did not exist before the creation of the Landscape Observatory. Ordered to be drawn up by the Department of Regional Planning and Sustainability of the Government of Catalonia, the catalogues are technical documents conceived by the Landscape Protection, Management and Planning Act 8/2005 as tools for planning and managing landscape from a territorial planning point of view (Sala 2010). The Act defines them as ‘Descriptive and prospective documents determining the typology of the landscapes of Catalonia, identifying their values and state of conservation and proposing quality targets they must meet’. Their main aim is to contribute to the incorporation of landscape objectives into regional and town planning, although they also form a reference for sectoral strategies associated with landscape (related to agriculture or tourism, for example) or for social awareness-raising campaigns concerning landscape diversity.

The Catalogues thus translate the ELC’s philosophy into an instrument for regional planning and their approval by the Government of Catalonia makes them a tool for public use by society and a compulsory reference for any public initiative affecting the landscape. They are not mere inventories of items, spaces or values, as their name might suggest. They are much more than that. They are the tools making it possible to know what the landscape of Catalonia is like and the values it contains; the factors that explain why we have certain landscapes and not others; the way these landscapes are evolving depending on current economic and social dynamics and, finally, the type of landscape we want and how we can achieve it. This means the landscape catalogues provide information of great interest about all Catalan landscapes and their patent or latent values and, in this way, contribute to defining and applying landscape policies, which need the cooperation and active participation of all social agents involved in the territory.

The construction and continuous updating of methodology

The minimum content indicated by the Landscape Act for the landscape catalogues is:

- an inventory of landscape values;
- activities and processes affecting or with an important effect on the current configuration of the landscape;
- main routes and spaces from where the landscape is perceived;
- landscape units understood as structurally, functionally and/or visually coherent areas;
- landscape quality objectives representing a meeting point between public aspirations, expert opinions and policies in relation to the landscape, and
- the measures and actions necessary for achieving the landscape quality objectives.

Drawing up landscape catalogues involved – and continues to involve – a great methodological challenge, as they are a new tool with few precursors at international level. In fact, there is no universally recognised method for characterising and evaluating diverse landscapes and still less for applying the resulting guidelines in regional planning. In this sense, it is appropriate to stress the broad experience of Landscape Character Assessments built up in European countries like the United Kingdom (through the government agencies Countryside Commission, English Heritage and Natural England and their renamed successor bodies) and Ireland, and with landscape atlases in France, Portugal and Spain. The main difference between the experiments mentioned and the Catalan Landscape Catalogues lies in their final objective and their integration into the process of approval of partial regional plans.

There was, therefore, a real challenge. For this reason, before beginning to draw up the catalogues, the Landscape Observatory prepared a prototype catalogue, the *Prototipus de catàleg de paisatge* (Nogué and Sala 2006), which established basic conceptual, methodological and procedural frameworks for drawing up the planned seven catalogues in a coherent, coordinated way. This document was the result of a complex interconnection of the viewpoints of more than seventy institutions, research groups, and experts in order to obtain the maximum consensus. As could not be otherwise, this methodology follows the principles of the ELC, notably the four phases of identifying and characterising the landscape, landscape assessment, the setting the landscape quality objectives, and the establishment of criteria and proposals for action.

The catalogues are not the result of a mere compilation and accumulation of data and information but of the development of knowledge generation and reflection processes in conjunction with the regional agents. This approach has contributed to overcoming the fragmentation of discourses on landscape and has promoted the co-responsibility of society as a whole, managing to transmit passion and sensitivity for preserving landscape values.

Participation

The catalogues have also been an attempt to overcome classical sector-based logic and have developed participatory and interdisciplinary ways of working and generating

knowledge. The absence of a unanimously recognised participatory methodology in the area of landscape has led to the process being pioneering, experimental and under permanent construction (Nogué et al eds. 2010). In order to have an impact on all phases of drawing up the catalogue, and seeking maximum representativeness, various participation techniques were combined, such as telephone interviews, opinion studies, consultations via the Internet, interviews with agents and experts, workshops, information sessions, etc.

The participatory process affected the definition of the landscape units, based on their character and the feeling of belonging attributed by people, which is difficult to identify through fieldwork alone. It also influenced the identification of values in the landscape (ecological, social, aesthetic, symbolic, productive and spiritual) and the definition of points and routes for observing the landscape. In addition, it made it possible to discover new landscape dynamics that would have been difficult to identify in other ways. Finally, participation contributed to the definition and specification of the landscape quality objectives and many proposals.

The extensive territorial scope of the catalogue is far from the normal perception society has of landscape, and this could only be communicated through highly abstract representations, a quality accessible to only a few people with particular technical knowledge. In some cases, the scale of the landscape units made it possible to get round this problem, as they are much closer to the public.

The drawing up of a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary catalogue together with the heads of institutions, specialists from the academic sphere, professionals such as town planners, geographers, environmentalists, architects, sociologists and even artists, as well as the public themselves, enormously enriches the processes. It has however also been a source of difficulties. These difficulties are diverse and hard to overcome: very inward-looking disciplinary and methodological traditions, difficulties in working as a team considering the lack of tradition and experience ('yes' in theory but 'no' in practice), or corporate interests defended by the respective official professional associations which often interfere too much in interdisciplinary dialogue. This has been a key point since the beginning, but it is one of the most difficult to put into practice.

Landscape units, new areas of reference for planning

Drawing up the seven landscape catalogues has made it possible to obtain a map of the landscape units (landscapes) of Catalonia for the first time. With 135 landscapes, the map shows the great diversity and wealth of landscapes in Catalonia – among the highest levels anywhere in Europe – which make landscape the most important type of heritage. The landscape units, similar to the *character areas* of the English *Landscape Character Assessment* methodology, and covering an average area of 23,700 ha (most falling into the 10,000 to 30,000 ha range), are areas that have landscape of the same character. In other words they are characterised by a distinctive combination of elements (climate, vegetation, thousands of years of human activity in the region, landscape dynamics, emotional links and a feeling of place, among many other factors) that make them idiosyncratically different from the rest of the region and contribute to making one landscape different from another (but neither better nor worse). It would not

have been possible to identify these most intangible aspects without the participation of the population.

The experience of landscape catalogues shows the tremendous usefulness of defining landscape areas or units, not just as an area for the comprehension and description of a particular landscape, but also as an area for management, planning and action (Sala 2012). The map of 135 landscapes is therefore something more than a mere landscape map, and the landscape units become truly functional areas of reference, making it possible to move from the general to the specific. They are basic territories within which to apply initiatives and local strategies, to implement landscape directives, give guidelines for open spaces, and apply rules or design projects for specific landscapes. To these qualities must be added their great capacity for education and awareness-raising.

An unexpected result of participation is that some of the people or local authorities most active in the construction of the landscape map are discovering in landscape units a source of inspiration for managing certain areas or for beginning new landscape strategies. Among other factors, the fact that the units have been ‘christened’ by the population with well-known, popular names belonging to the collective memory has also helped.

Using landscape catalogues in regional and sectoral policies

Another of the main distinguishing features of the landscape catalogues is that the landscape directives established by the Landscape Act are derived from them. These include the landscape targets from the catalogues introduced as standards into the regional plans approved by the government. The Act determines that the Department of Regional Planning and Sustainability must after public consultation incorporate them into the seven regional plans and the regional master plans. The preparation of landscape directives has involved a true exercise in innovation and planning, as there are few international references.

An issue still to be tackled concerning directives is their effect on smaller scale instruments, such as urban development ones, and on direct action affecting the region. Some examples are beginning to appear, such as the municipal urban development plan in Margalef and the by-law regulating the open spaces of Espolla, but there is still a long way to go. Another government initiative currently using the contents of the catalogues is the wine tourism urban development master plan for Catalonia, which takes the landscape units as a basis for the future regulation of activities and infrastructures in the wine-growing landscapes of Catalonia.

The knowledge provided by the catalogues is also beginning to be useful in sectoral policy. In the energy sphere, for example, the Observatory has drawn up guidelines for wind generation (Sala, co-ord. 2014) aimed at developers and professionals to help fit these infrastructures into the region in accordance with the diverse landscapes of Catalonia and their values recognised in the seven catalogues. Meanwhile, the Department of Culture of the Government of Catalonia has taken the basis of the map of landscape units to adapt the National Cultural Landscape Plan to heritage and landscape policies in Catalonia. Another initiative concerns industrial

colonies. There are currently two master plans in Catalonia concerning the industrial colonies of the rivers Ter and Llobregat. Both of them, however, have failed because they have not been capable of capturing the value of this historic landscape as a whole and have focused on isolated elements of great heritage value. It is precisely to give the two plans this overall, landscape-based view that the Landscape Observatory has been asked to be an active member of the academic committee to revive them.

Other examples of the use of information from landscape catalogues taking landscape units as functional and planning spheres are described in greater detail in the next section because of the importance they have acquired in the relationship between democracy and landscape.

Landscape and Democracy: the Impact of the Landscape Catalogues

In the last few years, the Government of Catalonia has promoted a large number of initiatives using information from the catalogues as a basis. In some of these, the landscape units come to be functional areas of reference, as they are showing themselves to be increasingly valid means for moving from characterisation to action and from the general to the specific, as well as being ultimately very useful for the management and planning of land (Sala et al eds. 2015).

Alongside this, the local world is increasingly interested in landscape, as was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. As a result of this, landscape management and planning initiatives emerge, led or co-led by the Administration and by civil society, and these to some degree question the effectiveness of some of the instruments and strategies on which regional and landscape tools and policies have been based to date. Many of them are experiences that enrich readings of the landscape and its social recognition and are based on collective and collaborative work. They create new spaces for dialogue and agreement between agents, facilitate the construction of consensus, promote co-responsibility with the application of landscape policies and actions, and above all see the landscape as an essential element of quality of life – a common good – as well as an expression of regional and collective diversity. They are not always local planning initiatives, but they can affect planning.

This remainder of this chapter summarises six exemplary initiatives, and the role played by the Observatory.

Rethinking regional planning: the landscape plans for La Cerdanya and Cervera

The landscape is increasingly being seen as an essential factor for the development of a region and a way of increasing levels of public self-esteem, identity and quality of life, particularly on a local scale. The landscape plans for La Cerdanya (Cerdagne in France) and the municipality of Cervera are two good examples of the role played by the Observatory to contribute to rethinking regions based on landscape at a time when local authorities are seeking imaginative alternative formulas for planning and managing the landscape. Both plans begin with information provided by the landscape catalogues and also – and it is important to highlight this – the landscape quality objectives set in these catalogues, which ensures coherence between two documents on different scales and

with different objectives. Landscape plans are not regulated by the Landscape Act. However, they are emerging as very valid instruments for developing landscape policies on a local scale, as already happens in France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Cross-border landscape plan for La Cerdanya

Although the French and Catalan parts of La Cerdanya/ Cerdagne share a landscape identity, and various other landscape planning instruments on either side of the border between Catalonia and France (the Alt Pirineu and Aran Landscape Catalogue, the Languedoc Roussillon Landscape Atlas), they have never been provided with a landscape tool that deals with the region as a whole. The Cross-border landscape plan for La Cerdanya promotes landscape as a factor for increasing the feeling of belonging to a region and also as a factor for regional competitiveness and the creation of economic opportunities. It is a joint initiative by the Landscape Observatory, La Cerdanya County Council, Llivia Town Council, the Community of Municipalities of Cerdagne and the Catalan Pyrenees Regional Natural Park. The plan brings together efforts and intentions when it comes to thinking and jointly lays the basis for a future that makes the most of this cross-border landscape, with the involvement of the main social and economic agents from the area.

Starting, then, from the Alt Pirineu and Aran Landscape Catalogue and the Languedoc Roussillon Landscape Atlas, different actions have been developed since 2012: the establishment of a steering committee (formed by representatives of the French and Catalan municipal authorities to monitor the initiative); the publication of an informative treatise on the cross-border landscape; maps of the landscape values and landscape quality objectives (based on cartographic information available on both sides of the border, and the results of consultation with the public, agents from the region and the municipal authorities), and the organisation of training sessions for council officers and the general public.

The cross-border landscape plan for La Cerdanya is therefore an instrument for knowledge, action, awareness-raising and commitment by the main social and economic agents, as well as the population of La Cerdanya as a whole. The development of this whole network of organisations and local administrations does not prevent the suspicions that often traditionally exist between territories separated by an administrative frontier, which forces them to continually create and weave the necessary close involvement. This experiment is also raising new questions for which the intention is to continually provide answers: how can social agents and economic sectors be involved in the management and improvement of a landscape administratively divided by a political frontier?

Cervera landscape plan

The Landscape plan for the town of Cervera, with a population of 9,034, is a living, dynamic, flexible document including a set of specific actions to improve the municipality's landscape, based on landscape quality objectives previously agreed between the main local agents. It is, therefore, a commitment by politicians and the public to promote the quality of the landscape of Cervera. One of the particular features

of the plan is that it transfers the landscape catalogue methodology to a local level, which makes it a real experimental laboratory on this scale.

The document has been drawn up based on the participation of 11 organisations from the municipality that make use of the landscape or have powers to manage it. The agents have ended up determining the actions to be undertaken and have committed themselves to implementing them. One of the main distinguishing features of the landscape plan lies in this last point.

Collaborative management of the landscape as a common good: the Wikipedra project

At times of crisis like the present day, the value of collaborative societies and the collective management of land and landscape sharing a common interest – landscape and heritage – grows (Marcel 2008). The value lies in proximity, everyday experience and direct contact with the local realities. The Observatory's most important initiative in this sphere is the Wikipedra (<http://wikipedra.catpaisatge.net>) project.

Wikipedra is a collaborative database (hence the 'wiki' prefix) on dry stone huts in Catalonia which, firstly, allows consultation on this subject in an intuitive, attractive way (with maps, photographs, files, searches) and, on the other, allows anyone who wishes to do so to enter data related to dry stone huts in Catalonia. Wikipedra is, therefore, a project based on the exchange of knowledge, with trust, reciprocity and cooperation between people with a common interest: the dry stone landscapes that are so characteristic of large parts of the Catalonian landscape. Both the initiative and its everyday operation are exclusively from civil society (specifically the Drac Verd organisation, experts in dry stone heritage, with a long track record in listing and cataloguing it) and here lies the main interest. The Landscape Observatory is merely an observer and an institutional umbrella for the initiative.

In four years of existence, Wikipedra has constructed an inventory of more than 12,000 huts. All this information, because it is provided by civil society (and evaluated by an organisation that is expert in dry stone landscapes) costs the administration nothing and it has begun to be used by the Department of Culture of the Government of Catalonia (when it comes to drawing up their reports), by municipalities in their respective landscape, heritage or tourism policies, and by private initiatives in the areas of tourism and publicity. In addition, the fact that it takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the new digital and communication situation positively alters the distribution of costs for collective action. The Cross-border landscape plan for La Cerdanya served as a stimulus for Wikipedra to cross borders in 2015, and it is also being applied in a broad area of the French department of Pyrénées-Orientales.

New operational infrastructures: the Aspres d'Empordà consortium

Another example of the use of the landscape catalogues is the creation in 2013 in the Girona region of the Aspres d'Empordà consortium. The Aspres d'Empordà covers 114 square kilometres of a hilly area in the north of Catalonia including the municipalities of Cantallops, Capmany, Espolla and Sant Climent Sescebes, coinciding with the landscape unit of the same name (*Aspres d'Empordà*). This initiative is a wonderful example (<http://www.aspresemporda.cat>) of how the landscape identity of a region, the

character of a landscape and, ultimately, a landscape unit has led to four local councils agreeing to promote, improve and protect the landscape, which is considered a major heritage asset. In two years of life, the promoters of the initiative have begun to relate the landscape to local quality products, such as wine or oil, among other products from the area and they are consolidating the Aspres d'Empordà brand to attract a type of tourism that respects the area. An experiment from the same area is the one being carried out by Alt Empordà County Council, setting up and promoting a network of landscape viewpoints, some of them drawn from the Landscape Catalogue that has already been mentioned.

Tools for agreement: landscape charters

Landscape charters are voluntary instruments for achieving agreements between administrations or organisations for a smaller area than a landscape catalogue in order to promote actions and strategies aimed at improving and evaluating the landscape. In the charters, the signatory parties pledge to work together to achieve agreed goals and commitments. This format makes them better appreciated and more attractive, as they can become more innovative and imaginative than other instruments established by law. It is preferable to have few efficient, high-quality charters with a real commitment from the actors in the region, rather than many of them with little substance. The role of the Landscape Observatory is not to promote landscape charters, but rather to provide information and ideas for them, as well as monitoring them. The Observatory website maintains a list of active landscape charters (<http://www.catpaisatge.net/eng/cartes.php>).

Of all the 'live' landscape charters in Catalonia at the moment, the one covering the county of El Priorat, in the south of Catalonia, approved in October 2012, is outstanding. The county of El Priorat, rural in nature, suffered considerable depopulation and impoverishment until a few years ago. Today, it is a very dynamic area, changed completely from the way it was a few decades ago. Through the landscape charter, and the candidature of Priorat-Montsant-Siurana as a UNESCO cultural landscape, among other initiatives, the population has committed itself to the quality of the region, expressed through a harmonious, well-ordered landscape based above all on wine and oil production. Put another way, this community (local political representatives, vineyard owners, designations of origin, cultural and social organisations of all kinds, local media, experts, the public) have seen, in the preservation and promotion of their wine-growing landscape, a great opportunity to strategically direct their future, committed to quality production and a high-added-value quality of life, while recovering local identity and a sense of belonging to the region. This extraordinary transformation is based on many people with particular concerns, knowledge and sensitivities coming together, and it has been constructed over time (Sala 2009). Once again, and similarly to the landscape plans mentioned above, this landscape charter is not based only on the information existing in landscape catalogues but also on its landscape quality objectives. This is a further guarantee of coherence between two documents on different scales with different objectives.

Raising awareness of landscape through mass media: the special edition of the Ara newspaper

Communication is a key element in raising awareness in contemporary societies. We must take advantage of the huge communicative value of landscape, a true bearer of messages that are easy for the public as a whole to decipher. In this sense, the Observatory has worked with various audiovisual and written media to raise awareness and sensitivity about the importance of the landscape, using the content of the landscape catalogues.

One of the most important – and innovative – initiatives was collaboration with the *Ara* newspaper for the publication of a special edition under the headline ‘El país que tenim’ (‘The country we have’) on Sunday, 15 March 2015, fully devoted to landscape (http://www.catpaisatge.net/docs/ara_especial_paisatges.pdf). This newspaper has an average of 150,000 readers on Sundays. The edition included an initial monograph with reports, opinion articles and infographics, including a large map of the 135 landscapes of Catalonia. One of the most innovative elements of this edition was the fact that the landscape was also present in photographic images in all sections of the newspaper, from international politics to sports, showing a broad representation of the variety of landscapes in Catalonia.

Education in the landscape

Another important initiative that took the information from the landscape catalogues as a basis is the innovative education project ‘Ciutat, Territori, Paisatge’ (City, Land, Landscape), set up jointly with the Departments of Education, and Land and Sustainability of the Government of Catalonia and aimed at pupils in compulsory secondary education (http://www.catpaisatge.net/eng/materials_ctp.php). It was established during the 2009-10 academic year in secondary schools in Catalonia to be used by 450,000 pupils, and teachers played an important role in both its design and application.

‘City, Territory, Landscape’ is designed to foster a new culture of landscape in which young students, full citizens of the future, will feel co-responsible for the state of Catalan landscapes. It aims to strengthen the explanatory dimension of landscape and achieve a significant understanding of the city, of the current processes of transformation of land areas, and of the fundamentals of landscape organisation, values and landscape dynamics. The project furthermore stimulates the students to work in groups and to use new technologies at school.

The project is based on three kinds of materials. Firstly, a folder containing twelve large size panoramic leaflets with aerial photographs, maps and information corresponding to 12 different humanised landscapes that are representative of the diversity of landscapes in Catalonia and of the issues affecting them. Secondly, these materials also contain a guide which offers general and specific guidelines to work with the students and to supervise and assess them. Finally, the website (www.catpaisatge.net/educacio) adds to the twelve leaflets by taking advantage of the educational potential of the new technologies. The website shows the landscapes in both an interactive and an attractive way, with many images, animation and sounds that help

students to understand the landscape. It also includes the possibility of creating working groups and of enabling the ongoing supervision of students by the teachers.

In short, 'City, Territory, Landscape' develops in students reasoning and critical thinking about the state of the landscapes of Catalonia among the educational community. This educational product is a clear example of the cross-disciplinary aspect so difficult to achieve among authorities, with two government departments and the Observatory working together to obtain specific results. All of these materials are valuable in themselves, both for formal and for non-formal education.

Conclusion

At a time of global challenges and social uncertainty, there is an increasing need for an in-depth discussion on the role of the landscape in contemporary societies. The world faces multifaceted situations, increasingly global and interconnected challenges, which are difficult to deal with in terms of the sectoral specialisations and points of view we have traditionally constructed. The landscape cannot, therefore, be managed and planned without democratic processes ensuring interaction between agents and the public and, in these processes the local world is achieving an undisputed leading role.

The function of the Landscape Observatory is to act as a meeting point between all these institutions, organisations and people who, in and outside Catalonia, are concerned by the subject of landscape, both within the authorities and in the professional, teaching and research spheres. With the simultaneous task of generating knowledge and planning the region based on landscape, it attempts to contribute to truly consolidating a new paradigm that establishes new forms of participative democracy concerning everything related to the government and management of the territory.

In this sense, the landscape catalogues in Catalonia are increasingly providing extraordinary assistance. The catalogues have marked a before and after in the knowledge and management of landscape in Catalonia both concerning their capacity to document and guide public policies and for their potential for educating or raising awareness in society. And surprisingly, they have a growing number of applications apart from those considered in the Landscape Act. In particular, the catalogues are useful to regions seeking new content and answers; for offering authorities and organisations new forms of achieving agreements and acting, and, where the landscape is increasingly seen as a common good, as a driving force for development and a way of improving self-esteem and a sense of identity, as well as the public's quality of life.

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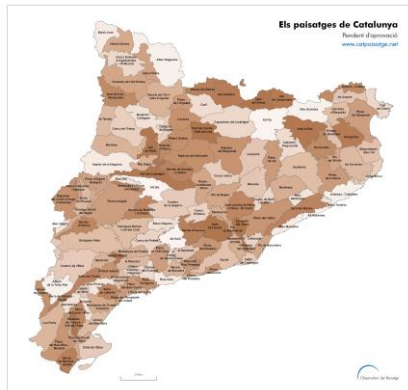


Figure 1. Map of the Landscape Units of Catalonia. (Source: Observatori del paisatge)

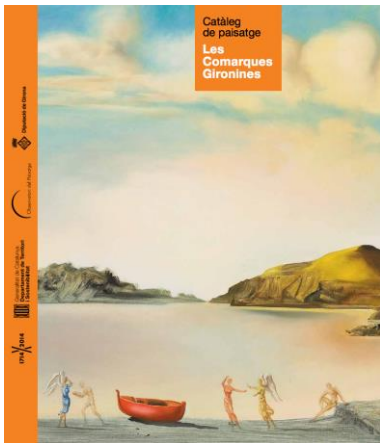


Figure 2. A volume of the Landscape Catalogue for Comarques Gironines. (Source: Observatori del paisatge)

Figure 3. The cross-border Landscape Plan of La Cerdanya (Source: Observatori del paisatge)

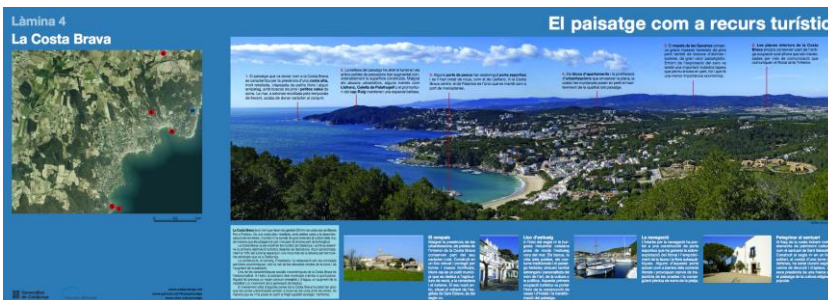


Figure 4. Innovative education project 'Ciutat, Territori, Paisatge' (City, Land, Landscape) (Source: Observatori del paisatge)