



Northern Landscapes

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REGIONAL AND LOCAL PARTICIPATION AND CO-OPERATION IN IMPLEMENTING THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION - THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORY OF CATALONIA

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Catalonia enjoys a great diversity of landscapes and, fortunately, landscape is now more and more a subject of general interest that transcends specialised fields. It is becoming a fundamental part of territorial planning policies and of even more sectorial policies of a social and cultural character. The following text will develop in two parts. The first part describes in general terms the institutional and regulatory framework that underpins landscape participation and co-operation in Catalonia. The second part shows some examples of these experiences developed by the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia. Finally, some of the challenges facing us today in this field are dealt with in the last part of the paper.

Institutional and regulatory framework for landscape participation and co-operation

The Catalan Parliament joined the European Landscape Convention (ELC) in December 2000, two months after it was approved. Five years later, this Catalan body approved the Act 8/2005 for the Protection, Management and Planning of the Landscape, and set up the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia. The Act is the basic regulation and reference upon which the landscape policies of the Government of Catalonia are founded. The law is a faithful reflection of the aims and spirit of the European Landscape Convention and, in this way, it gives



Image 1. Landscape Observatory offices.

Catalan landscapes legal protection and establishes the corresponding instruments to confront the challenges and guarantee the quality of the landscape.

Five aspects of the law foster participation and co-operation. Firstly, the law is clear and very easy to understand for citizens, associations and institutions alike. Secondly, the law is pragmatic and tangible, and its results are very easy to see. Thirdly, the spirit of the law is positive, rather than limiting or penalising, making it acceptable to all parties. In the fourth place, the Act has a transverse character: although it is from town planning policies that the Act is developed, it also opens the door to a progressive adaptation to the full integration of landscape into all areas of government action. Finally, the Act guarantees public and social participation and co-operation.

The first and most visible result of the Landscape Act was the creation of the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia (www.catpaisatge.net), which has been operative since 2005. The Landscape Observatory has been conceived as an advisory body to the Government of Catalonia and for awakening society to matters of landscape. The Observatory has become a meeting place between the administration (at all levels), universities, professional groups and the whole of society regarding everything related to landscape. The main functions are collaborating with the Catalan administration for the implementation of the ELC; making Catalan society aware of the importance of landscape and the right to enjoy it; and acting as a centre for research, documentation, thought and action on landscape.

The Observatory's structure and organisation are important for fostering the spirit of co-operation and participation. Three aspects can be mentioned in this respect. Firstly, the Landscape Observatory is a public consortium, with its own legal personality. This gives the Observatory an open-ended character, and makes it very flexible in its functions and its activities. Secondly, the composition of the Observatory, which is made up of over thirty public and private institutions gathered in the Governing Board (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/observatori_organigrama.php). The Observatory also has an Advisory Council made up of several economic, business and social groups, as well as academics involved in the subject. This composition allows for a dynamic dialogue between members of the Governing and Advisory Councils, with voices coming in from different places and often with opposing interests. Finally, the Observatory lies halfway between civil society and the administration. This is interesting insofar as it can advise the administration on drawing up landscape policies for the territory, while at the same time communicating concerns felt by society.

We are still very far from some European countries such as France, the Netherlands or United Kingdom, whose population is more landscape-aware and whose laws are years ahead from ours, but it is undeniable that with the Landscape Act passing and implementation and with the creation of the Landscape Observatory, Catalonia has taken a great step forward.

Some experiences of the Landscape Observatory on participation and co-operation in implementing the ELC

Since the approval of the Landscape Act, landscape policies in Catalonia have accumulated a growing body of experience, though they still have many challenges lined up on the table. Below some experiences on local participation and co-operation in implementing the ELC carried out by the Landscape Observatory are shown. For more details, please check the Observatory's website (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/activitat.php). Taking into account that the aim of this publication was to open up a debate on the implementation of the ELC, the experiences on local participation and co-operation have been grouped according to the main European Landscape Convention commitments, which are listed in image 2.

The first two commitments (Division of responsibilities and Recognition of landscapes in law) have already been introduced in the first part of this paper.

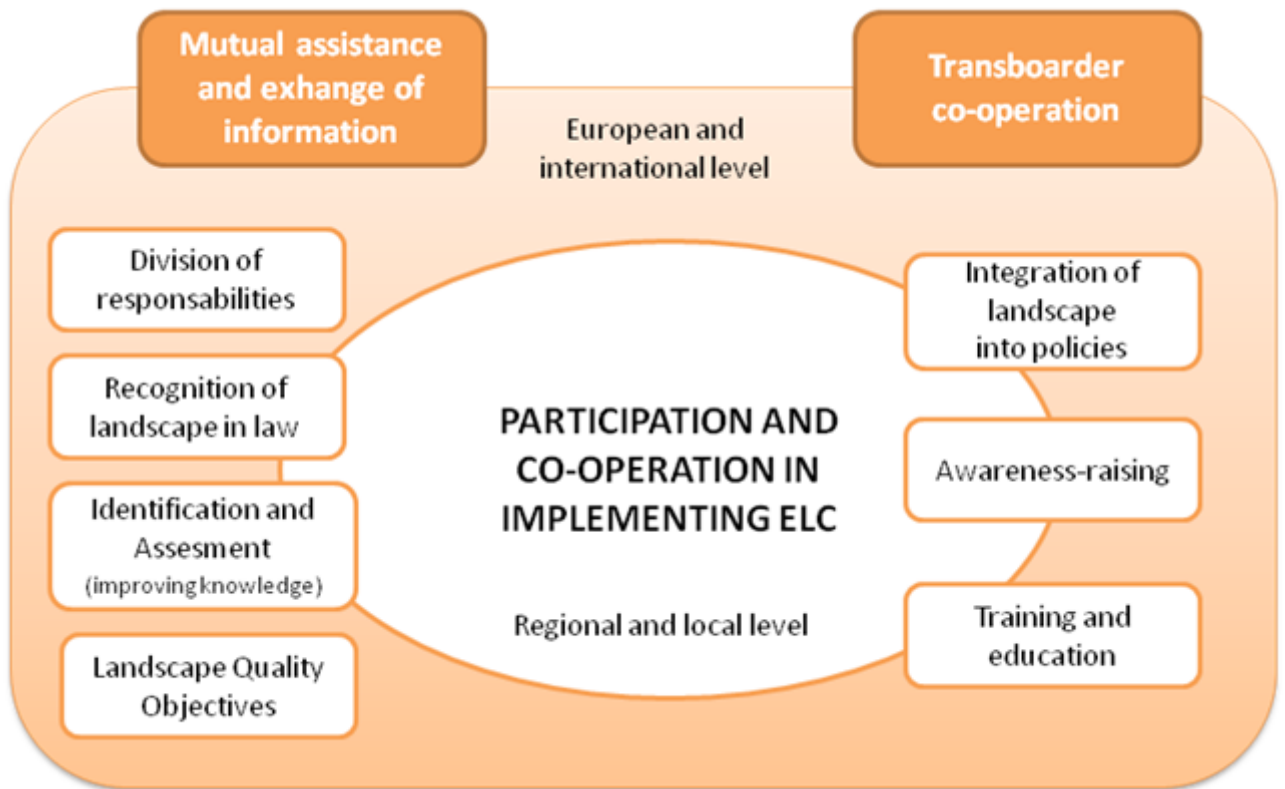


Image 2. Participation and co-operation in implementing the ELC in Catalonia. Contribution of the Landscape Observatory to the ELC commitments.



Image 3. Landscape Catalogues of Catalonia.

Identification, assessment, and definition of landscape quality objectives

One of the main commitments of the ELC, and indeed the basis for any landscape policy, is learning more about landscapes, about all landscapes. Landscape catalogues (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/cataleg.php) are the tool used for this purpose in Catalonia. Landscape catalogues are used for introducing landscape objectives into spatial planning in Catalonia, as well as into sectorial policies, with the co-operation and participation of all the social agents active in the area.

Certain aspects of the catalogues have to be emphasised:

- The Observatory is preparing seven landscape catalogues with the objective of introducing landscape quality objectives into the seven Territorial Zoning Plans that the Government is also preparing.
- One of the first main outcomes of the landscape catalogues is the identification of landscapes units (or landscapes), or areas that share the same landscape character. These landscapes are important because they constitute the basic territorial units to which specific landscape policies are applied. These units are demonstrably the main point of encounter for public debate on lived and perceived landscapes (http://www.catpaisatge.net/eng/cataleg_mapa.php).
- The Landscape Catalogues also study the evolution of historic landscapes.
- They also identify patent and latent values (aesthetic, ecological, historic, cultural, symbolic) attributed to landscapes by social agents and the public. Public consultation has greatly contributed to identifying these values.
- The landscape catalogues study the dynamics of the landscape, as well as the natural and socio-economic factors intervening in its evolution and transformation.
- They also identify, helped by the public consultation, principal routes and areas from which landscape can be observed.
- Public consultation is a basic aspect of the landscape catalogues. This is particularly true regarding assessment and perception of the landscape by individuals and stakeholders (especially in its intangible aspects, e.g. the sense of place, or the sensations and emotions caused by a landscape). Various instruments were used during the whole process of preparation, such as in-depth interviews with the principal actors in the landscape, consultation with experts (e.g. opinions on maps, etc.), work sessions with local people from the area, Landscape Observatory on-line consultations, yielding over 5.000 opinions, or opinion polls, among others.

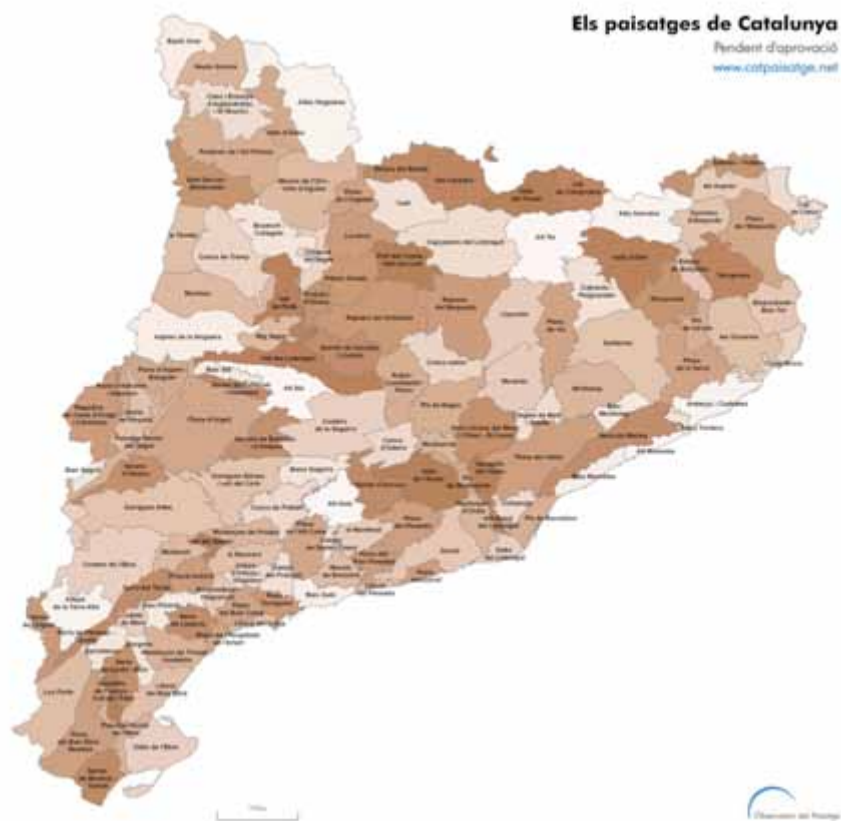


Image 4. Map of the landscapes of Catalonia.

Landscape and Public Participation



Image 5. The publication Landscape and Public Participation describes and evaluates the tools that have been used in Landscape Catalogue, establishing key elements that must be taken into account when carrying out a participatory process of this kind (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/documentacio_doc_1.php)

Besides contributing to knowledge of landscapes, the landscape catalogues define landscape quality objectives, obtained from expert analyses and public participation. As their first point of reference, landscape quality objectives are defined for the whole of Catalonia (<http://www.catpaisatge.net/eng/objectius.php>). On a second level, objectives are defined for the territorial ambit of each landscape catalogue. In an ultimate degree, objectives are defined for each landscape unit. All these quality objectives give rise to a whole heap of criteria and actions which must contribute to achieving them. Criteria and actions are aimed not only at protecting landscapes, but also at managing and planning.

The landscape catalogues, together with public participation, are thus the main tool for getting to know the landscapes of the towns and cities of Catalonia. Complementing the landscape catalogues, the Observatory has been working on PaHisCat, a project based on the evolution of historic landscapes, carried out in co-operation with the Catalan Government and the University of Lleida. The project has been applied to four of the 135 landscapes of Catalonia. The PaHisCat project has great potential as a guideline for cultural, urbanism and heritage policies, as well as for use in education.

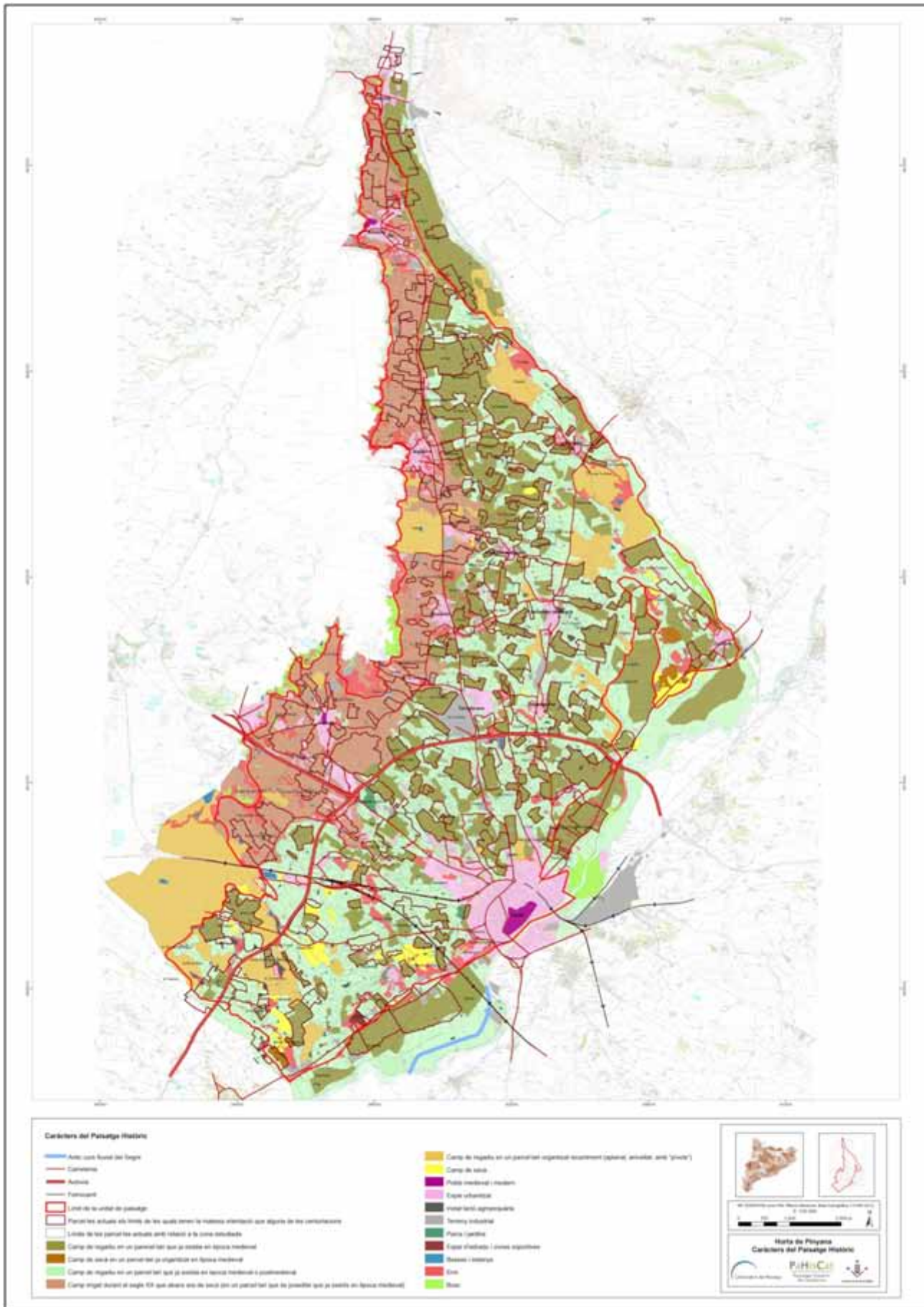


Image 6. Map of the Historic character of the landscape Horta de Pinyana

Integration of landscape into policies

One of the main challenges of the ELC is the integration of landscape into policies. This challenge probably requires the greatest amount of co-ordination among the different sectors involved. I will now outline four experiences taking place in Catalonia at a local level:

- Once the landscape catalogues are approved by the Minister of Land and Sustainability, the Government uses landscape quality objectives to lay down compulsory landscape directives for spatial planning (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/directrius.php), for the seven territorial zoning plans which it prepares. This in turn fosters permanent contact between the Landscape Observatory, the Catalan Government and the municipalities affected. The translation of the landscape quality objectives into landscape directives already exists but it is, at the same time, one of the principal challenges.
- The Observatory collaborates with and provides support for other ministries, town councils and other local authorities, by using information from the landscape catalogues, e.g. for tourism and cultural policies, spatial planning policies, or for creating networks of viewing points, among others.
- The Observatory collaborates with the Government in laying down guidelines for integrating different types of actions and projects into landscape, after consensus with the main economic sectors involved in specific areas. Examples include guidelines for the integration of industrial estates and agricultural buildings.
- Economic policies are of major importance in today's recession, and landscape is a positive resource for economic activity, as long as it does not end up becoming a sellable commodity in detriment to its natural, social and cultural values. The Observatory has undertaken a series of initiatives in this direction: the collaboration with the insurance organization RACC or the farmer trade union Unió de Pagesos; establishing links with the employers' organisation Foment del Treball to discuss how landscape protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation; signing an agreement with an employers' association EURAM that is attempting to include landscape value in their respective economic activities; or creating synergies with major wine and grape producing sectors in Catalonia, with the conviction that landscape quality will benefit this activity.

The last consideration of this part is for Landscape Charters (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/cartes.php). These are proving to be a very powerful tool for use at a local level, in certain circumstances. Landscape charters may be used by local authorities (district councils, municipalities and communities) and/or by associations wishing to draw up agreements between agents in a certain area (administrations, social and economic agents, etc.) in order to promote actions and strategies for landscape assessment and improvement. It is important to point out that the landscape charters require strong leadership, a clear consensual road map, a high level of commitment from all parties involved, and perseverance in carrying out the tasks. In the absence of these four factors, the landscape charter is doomed to failure.

Awareness-raising

In Catalonia, landscape is causing increasing public concern. However, it is essential to raise the general low level of landscape awareness. All the above-mentioned initiatives contribute to raise awareness, as do the following initiatives, which are based on institutional and organisational participation and co-operation:

- Periodic collaborations with TV3 (the main Catalan public television channel) with different types of programmes to help raise awareness of the 135 landscapes in Catalonia.
- Collaboration with "Descobrir Catalonia" (a travel and leisure magazine), with a monthly article on one of the 135 landscapes in Catalonia (<http://www.catpaisatge.net/eng/paisatgemes.php>). The Observatory collaborates with other regional and local cultural and leisure magazines.
- Preparation of seminars, courses and conferences in order to contribute to reflection, training and social sensitisation with respect to the landscape (see also "Mutual assistance and information exchange").
- Prepare publications financed by institutions, foundations and private enterprise (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/publicacions_coleccions.php).

- The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia website, with newsletters, published in four languages, containing information submitted from external sources (www.catpaisatge.net).
- Recent communication and social interaction platforms through Twitter (http://twitter.com/catpaisatge_en) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/catpaisatgeEN), in Catalan, Spanish and English.

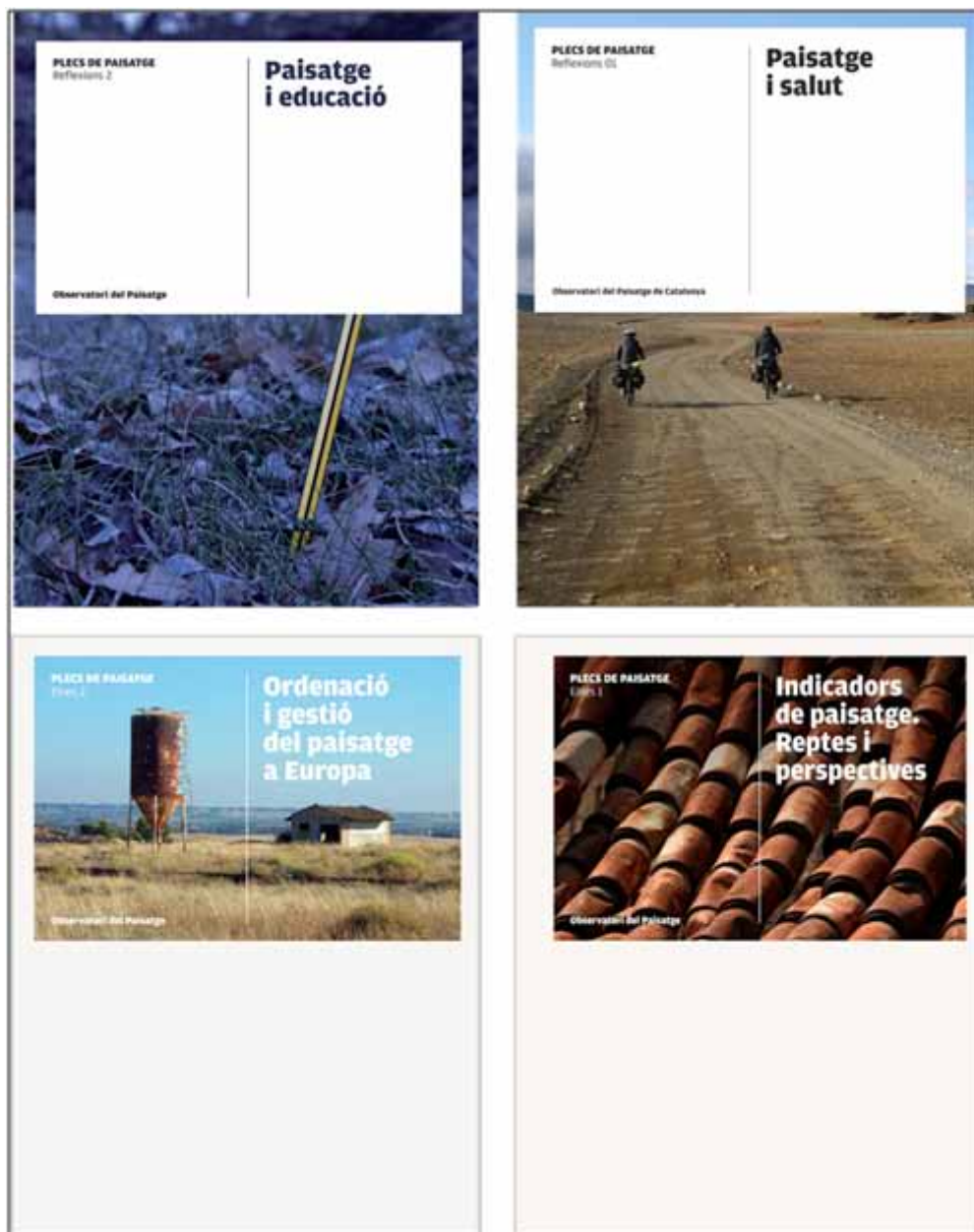


Image 7. The collection "Plocs de Paisatge", with two series ('Reflections' and 'Tools'), includes articles, studies, workshops, conferences which consider a particular aspect or problem related to the landscape, regulations, instruments and methods for the protection, management and planning of landscape.

Before going on the next points, it is necessary to introduce the on-line project Wikipedra, that is the result of public collaboration. Wikipedra (<http://wikipedra.catpaisatge.net/>) is an interactive 2.0 version of a Geographical Information System to introduce, visualise and consult data regarding dry stone huts and shelters in Catalonia. This online application will enable, on the one hand, carrying out intuitive and interesting consultations (with maps, photos, files and searches) and, on the other, it will allow people to introduce and modify data regarding dry-stone constructions in Catalonia. The objective is to gather and update data regarding as many as possible dry-stone constructions. In its six months of existence, Wikipedra has made an inventory of more than 5.000 dry stone huts and shelters all over Catalonia. In this project the Observatory is merely an umbrella organisation for promoting



Image 8. Wikipedra's portal.

and developing the Wikipedra database. The information comes in from members of the public and associations, for use in landscape policies.

Education

The main education initiative of the Observatory is the production of teaching materials on landscape from an integrated perspective entitled "City, territory and landscape", designed for the compulsory secondary education. The project includes an educational website on landscape (www.catpaisatge.net/educacio). Over 450.000 Catalan secondary school pupils aged 12-16 years have this material in their school from 2009.

This project works in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of

Territory and Sustainability of the Catalan Government, and the Landscape Observatory. It is a shining example of the transversal collaboration that is so hard to achieve. The Ministry of Education's contribution is fundamental, not only for guaranteeing the educational goals of the project, but also for introducing it into all schools in Catalonia. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the fact that dialogue with publishing houses has resulted in the landscape map of Catalonia being included in some Geography textbooks for use in secondary schools.

Mutual assistance and information exchange

The chapter cannot be finished without pointing out the international co-operation within the Observatory. Co-operation with other European regions and states strengthens not only our own landscape policies in Catalonia but also the ELC. Many examples of assistance and information exchange at international and European levels and transborder co-operation (see next section) are being implemented.

In the field of mutual assistance and information exchange, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia has been active in the following ways:

- Participating in European and international conferences and seminars; organizing conferences with guest participants from other countries; or co-organizing conferences with other European institutions (www.catpaisatge.net/eng/jornades.php).
- Attending the Irish Heritage Council's "Landscape Character Assessment" course on a twice-yearly basis, since 2009.
- Meetings to exchange experiences with the governments of other regions in Spain and some European countries (Ireland, Italy, Netherlands).
- Participating in the panel of experts on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention Information System (ELCIS), promoted by the Council of Europe.

- At an international level, collaborating with the Argentinean Landscape Network (Red Argentina del Paisaje) in setting up landscape observatories in various provinces of Argentina. In like manner, the Observatory also collaborates with similar institutions in Brazil, Uruguay and Costa Rica. It is important to point out that the ELC is the main point of reference for Latin American landscape initiatives, which of course says a lot about the Convention.
- Participating in the European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of the European Landscape Convention (RECEP-ENELC), which provides good opportunities for exchanging information, experiences and university research on ELC implementation.



Image 9. Materials and website of “City, territory, landscape”

Transborder co-operation

In 2009, the Observatory collaborates with the French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Land Planning in the organization of the 5th Transborder Workshop, held in Olot (Catalonia), aimed at exchanging points of view and working methodologies comparing French landscape atlases and Catalan landscape catalogues, with the participation of experts from different European countries. The first four editions of the workshop, promoted by the French Ministry, were held in countries or regions sharing borders with France (Wallonia, Spain, Italy and England).

On the other hand, the translation into English and French (the two official Council of Europe languages) of the Observatory's website, newsletters, and other information disseminated, helps to share the Catalan experience with the rest of Europe and the world and fosters the participation and co-operation.

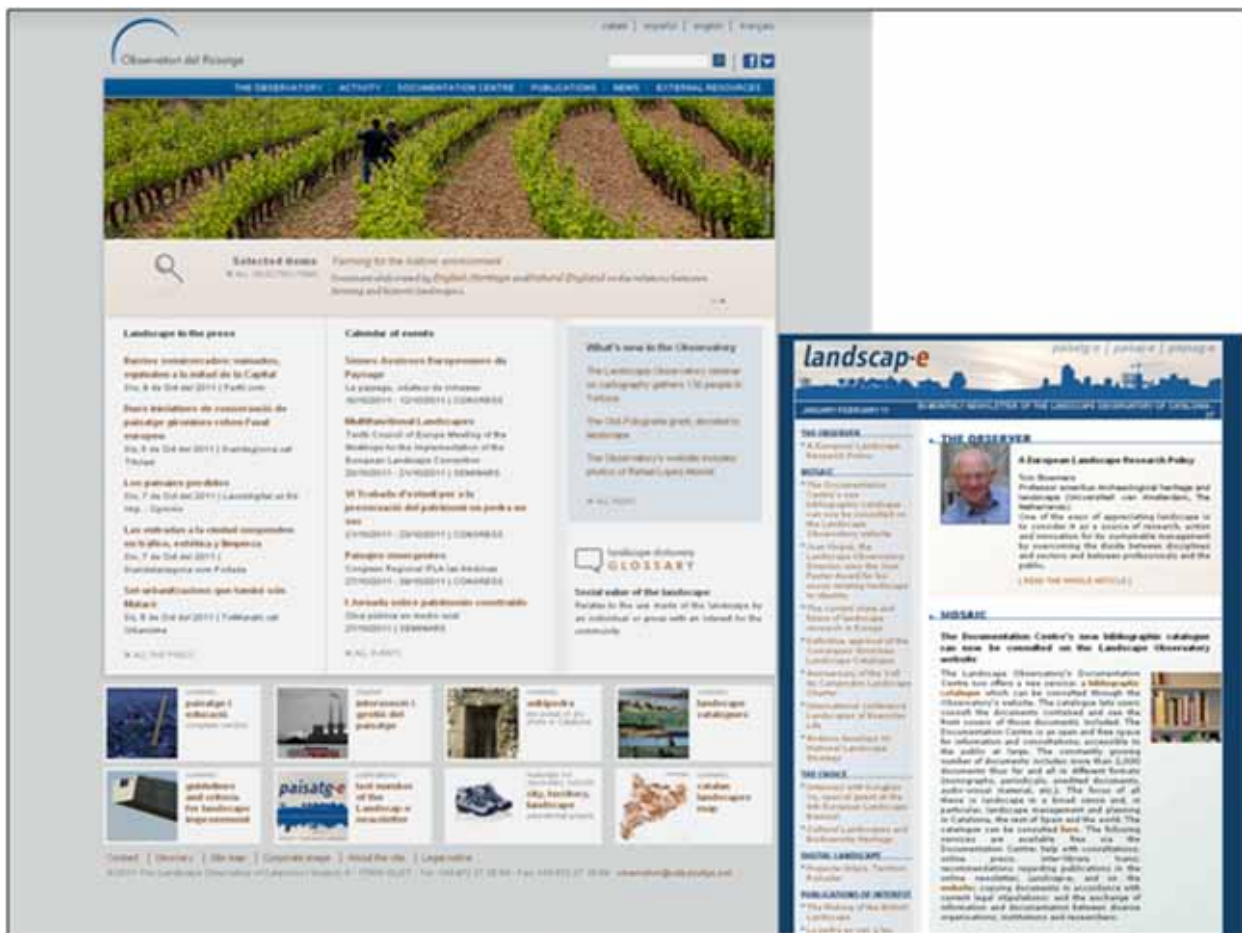


Image 20. English version of the Observatory's website and the "Landscape-e" newsletter

Conclusion

Landscape management in Catalonia starts out from an integrated vision of the whole. This vision includes regulations, agendas and policies; the actors and their respective networks; the public, and, finally, institutions and technicians that are committed to the cause. All these elements make for good co-operation experiences. But the challenges faced are many and great: encouraging a climate of dialogue between governments, in order to overcome the fragmentation of the public administration structure; strengthening the dialogue between civil society and the different administrations; fostering co-operation between the public and private spheres, while exploring alternative channels for landscape management and planning, and means of financing them; finding imaginative ways of surmounting the scarcity of economic resources destined for co-operation or solving the convoluted question of governance which is familiar to us all (who does what and at what level regarding landscape?). The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia aspires to continue playing a major role in achieving these important goals. These are collective challenges with no finishing line.