

LANDSCAPE QUALITY OBJECTIVES BASED ON SOCIAL PERCEPTION. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LANDSCAPE OBSERVATORY OF CATALONIA



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The European Landscape Convention and the Catalan Landscape Law as a framework

In December 2000 the Parliament of the autonomous region of Catalonia (Spain) signed the European Landscape Convention (ELC) promoted by the Council of Europe and adopted on 20 October 2000. The ELC established and disseminated a comprehensive definition of landscape, one that placed the active role of citizens at the center of the debate. Five years later, in 2005, Parliament passed the Landscape Protection, Management and Planning Act 8/2005 as the basis for landscape policy in Catalonia.

Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, a place for dialogue between different actors

The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia was set up in 2005 (and eventually recognized in the Act) as the Catalan administration's advisory body to contribute to the application of the ELC and the Landscape Law, and as a way to create public awareness on landscape matters. The Landscape Observatory is the place where theoretical reflection and practical application come together at the service of landscape policies. It is a shared, open, receptive meeting point, midway between civil society, government and academic and

professional sectors. Its purpose is not merely to provide support on landscape issues for public policies but also to educate, imbuing society as a whole with knowledge and increased awareness.

Landscape quality objectives and social perception

Article 6 of the ELC urges the different European societies to set out landscape quality objectives, which are defined in article 1 as "the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings". As a meeting point between citizens' aspirations, expert opinion and public policies regarding the landscape, the landscape quality objectives, after an intense consultation and public participation process, reliably depict the greatest challenge a society can set itself in terms of improving its landscapes. Therefore, the landscape quality objectives have a strategic aspect and they mark a path towards a new culture for territorial management and planning that demands enormous sensitivity to the landscape by all the intervening stakeholders and society in general.

Today, challenges as important as depopulation, health, climate change, energy transition, social cohesion, food sovereignty, the maintenance of

biodiversity and the conservation of heritage - both tangible and intangible - force us to rethink the role that the landscapes in which we live and in which we recognise ourselves should play. In this context, landscape quality objectives allow us to answer the simple yet endlessly complex question: "What landscape do we want for the future?". The same question verifies that the definition of the landscape quality objectives cannot be based only on the opinion of specialists, but they must also reflect citizens' aspirations and wishes, beginning with their perception (see Image 3).

Two relevant initiatives: The Landscape Catalogues and the National Landscape Strategy of Andorra in the horizon 2035 (ENPA 2035)

The **Landscape Catalogues of Catalonia** have become the main instruments for generating knowledge about landscape in Catalonia as well as for introducing landscape quality objectives into urban and regional planning and into sectoral policies such as agriculture, heritage, tourism and energy. The Landscape Catalogues, ordered to be drawn up by the Government of Catalonia and conceived by the Catalan Landscape Law, are therefore a tool that acts as a nexus between knowledge and action, recognition, commitment, co-responsibility and awareness-raising.

The preparation of Landscape Catalogues is based on participatory processes and various techniques were combined, such as telephone interviews, opinion studies, consultations via the Internet, interviews with agents and experts, workshops, information sessions, etc. Participation is essential because, among other functions, implicate society in identifying and evaluating the landscape, and in

defining landscape quality objectives.

One example is the map of the 134 landscapes units (see Image 1), as a result of the Landscape Catalogues. These landscape units are not strictly speaking landscape typologies, but rather spaces of everyday life around a landscape lived and perceived by the local people; in other words, landscapes that have their own character as a result of the historical interactions of natural elements with cultural ones, which already existed but were not 'recognised'. So, the map visualises the landscape imaginary of a society, and has a great virtue: it is used, indistinctly, by the Administration and civil society. Both the construction of the map itself and its management have become a great tool for not only to understand the diversity, but to implement landscape quality objectives with the community, as well as for educational activities and awareness-raising.

A key element for the definition of LQO are landscape values: natural, aesthetic, historic, social, symbolic and productive. The landscape values are acknowledged both by the scientific community and by the general public, from the knowledge of specialists to the perceptions and opinions of civil society (see Image 2).

A second relevant experience is the **National Landscape Strategy of Andorra** (ENPA) on the 2035 horizon (pending approval by the Government of Andorra), which will give continuity to the National Andorran Landscape Strategy for the period 2011-2020. Commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment, Agriculture and Sustainability, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia coordinated its preparation. The new ENPA 2035 will make a step forward: the landscape quality objectives and the priority action

lines evolve from being written to being territorialised and mapped.

Therefore, the result is a Map, which legend includes the 4 principles, the 7 landscape quality objectives (see Image 4), and the 28 priority lines of action for 2035.

The Map has been elaborated from a participatory process that has included both the contributions of the ministries involved, the City Councils, other key agents of Andorra and the citizenship as a whole. Various participation mechanisms were developed, from online questions to participation workshops, passing through in-depth interviews. The creation of collaborative maps with the technical teams of the seven City Councils has been one of the most innovative features of the participatory process, which has made it possible to work simultaneously with around fifty online maps.

At the end, the participatory process has served to define in a consensual way the principles, the landscape quality objectives, and the priority lines of action (which concretize the landscape quality objectives), in addition to several elements represented on the map (see Image 5). The participatory approach encouraged a greater recognition of the values and dynamics of Andorran landscapes and increased co-responsibility among all the agents involved in their protection, management and planning.

Looking ahead

The function of the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia in the initiatives described and in others is to act as a meeting point between all those institutions, entities and people who, in Catalonia and outside Catalonia, are concerned and interested in the subject of landscape, both from the

Administration, as from the professional, educational and research fields. With its simultaneous work of generating knowledge and planning with the community, it tries to help establish new forms of participatory democracy in everything related to the government and management of the territory.

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Image 1. Map of the Landscape units of Catalonia

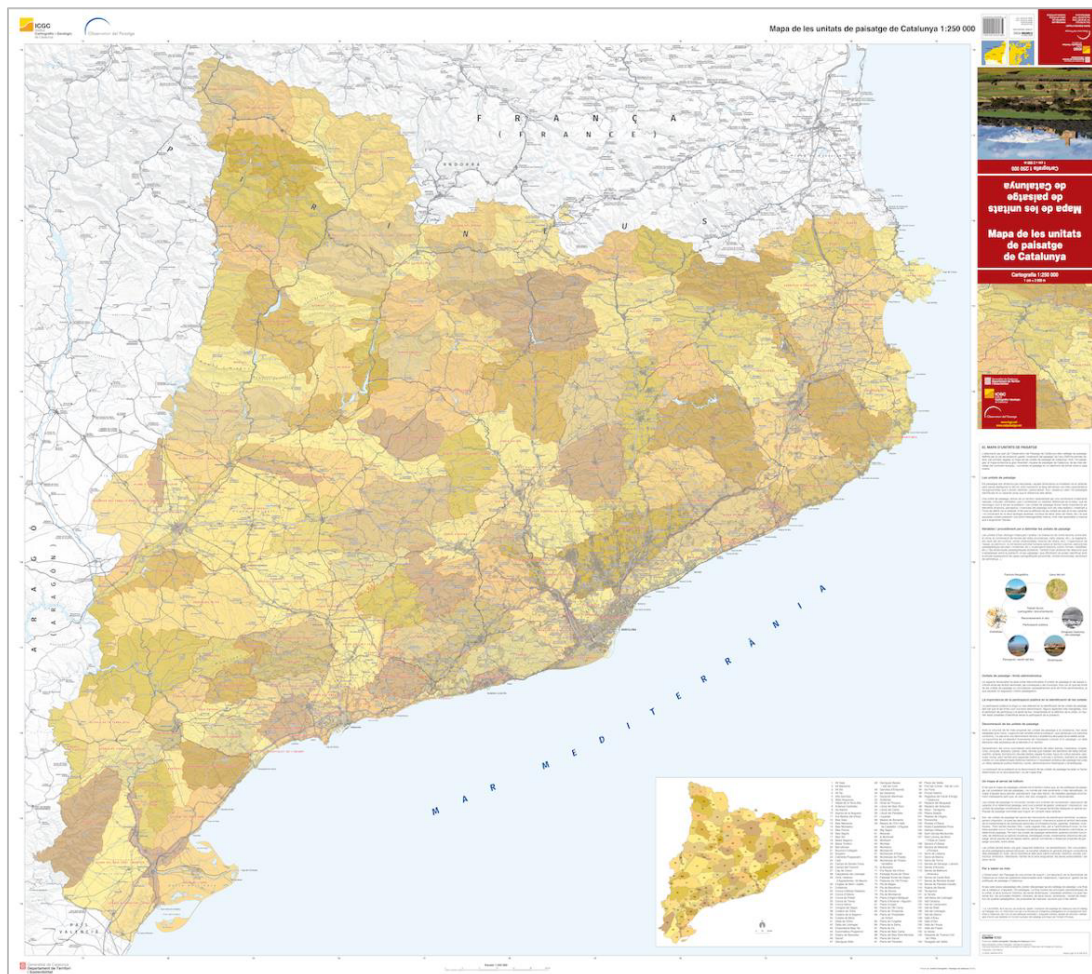


Image 2. Landscape values perceived by Penedès population, identified through different mechanisms of interpretation (Landscape Catalogue of Penedès).



Image 3. Example of a landscape quality objective defined (Landscape Catalogue of Penedès).

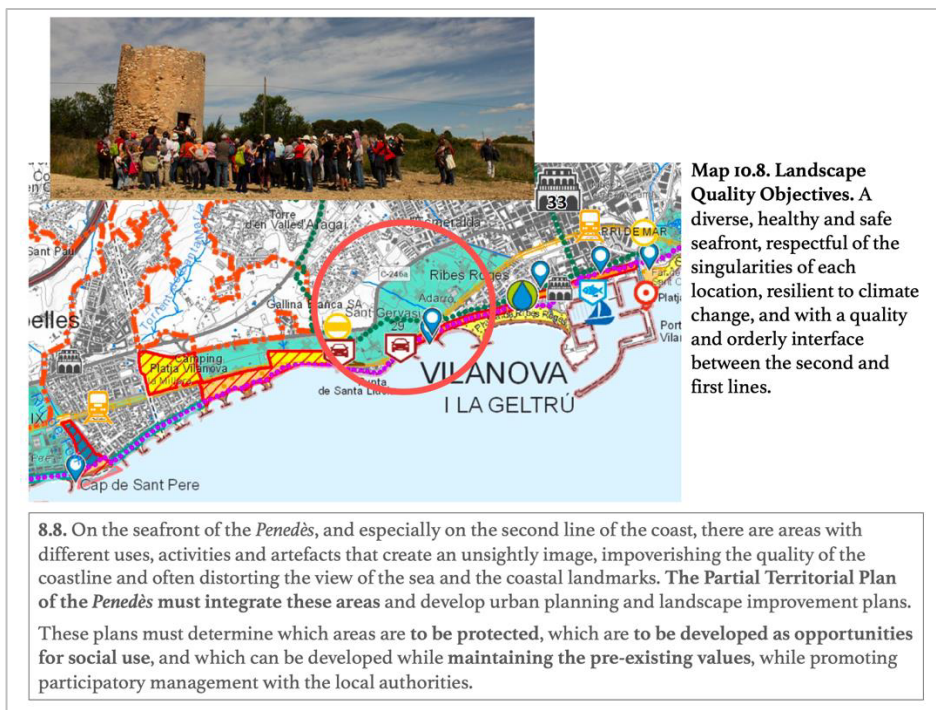


Image 4. Landscape quality objectives included in the National Landscape Strategy of Andorra on the 2035 horizon, fully agreed by the Government and the City Councils as a result of the participation process.








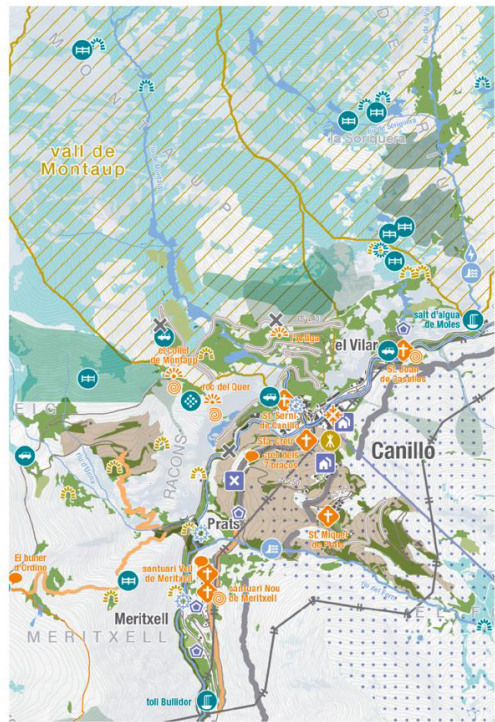
			
<p>01</p> <p>Well-preserved high-mountain landscapes, in which maintaining their natural and cultural heritage is compatible with economic use and responsible enjoyment by the local population and visitors.</p>	<p>02</p> <p>Productive, ecologically functional, socially recognised agricultural and woodland landscapes that contribute to economic prosperity.</p>	<p>03</p> <p>Quality urban landscapes that enhance the public spaces and heritage elements of towns and villages and improve the image of the urban fabric as a whole, including accesses.</p>	<p>04</p> <p>Living, functional river landscapes that allow sustainable use of water resources and facilitate their social enjoyment, while also promoting their value as heritage.</p>
			
<p>05</p> <p>Energy and communication infrastructures that are more integrated in the landscape, address the challenges of the climate emergency, and contribute to discovering and promoting the territory's environmental values.</p>	<p>06</p> <p>Quality, suitably sized, multifunctional tourist and leisure amenities that facilitate deseasonalisation and preserve landscape quality.</p>	<p>07</p> <p>Natural and cultural landmarks that highlight the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Andorra's landscapes.</p>	

Image 5. Some sort of actions established at the National Landscape Strategy of Andorra on the 2035 horizon, as a result of the participation process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly frequented natural areas where access needs to be regulated. Areas of urban allotments that need to be valorised and revitalised. Dry-stone heritage linked to agricultural landscapes and pastures that need to be preserved and activated. Unfinished buildings that need to be finished or demolished. Disordered accesses to urban centres that require planning and landscape integration. Open spaces between nearby villages that need to be kept free of urban development. Stretches of river for social use that need to be promoted. Road sections poorly integrated into the landscape that should be improved. Huge parking lots at ski slopes that need to be made more permeable to reduce their impact on the landscape. Emblematic summits and landmarks that need to be enhanced. Emblematic valleys that need to be kept free of urban development. Historical cross-border paths that need to be valorised as identity landmarks.
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