



Community-based landscape awareness

The Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

Landscape policy cannot be effective without awareness-raising. Beyond formalised processes based on highly structured methodologies and strategies regarding education, communication, dissemination of publications, organisation of courses, et cetera, direct action in the territory based on dialogue has proven to be a very powerful and effective way to positively influence a community's values and attitudes towards the landscape and, indirectly, improve the state of the landscapes. The paper illustrates this for Catalonia.

In December 2000, the Parliament of the autonomous region of Catalonia, Spain, signed the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (Council of Europe, 2000). Without this Convention and the institutional (and moral) impact it had, many of the political, legislative, academic and professional initiatives on landscape that followed would have been otherwise unthinkable, with Catalonia being no exception. From a cultural point of view, the ELC's approval was an innovation, a small shake-up within the dominant landscape paradigms, which had been predominantly disciplinary until then. The ELC established and disseminated a comprehensive definition of landscape, one that placed the active role of citizens at the centre of the debate.

In 2005, the Catalan Parliament passed the Landscape Protection, Management and Planning Act (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006) as the basis of landscape policy in Catalonia. Landscape ceased to have an exclusively aesthetic connotation and not only became an active element in regional planning and management but also a driving force for development. A few months before the Act came to pass, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia was set up. In operation since 1 March 2005, the Observatory was conceived as the Government of Catalonia's assessment body on

landscape matters, in charge of raising public awareness of landscape. In other words, the Observatory is a space for reflection and action on landscape issues; 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 (Sala, in press).

Unlike other European Landscape Observatories, created on the premises of administrations or universities, the structure of the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, in the form of a public consortium, and based on a model of cooperation between administrations, universities, civil society, and professional groups is an unusual case in Europe (Nogué & Sala, 2018b).

Landscape policies based on awareness-raising

Indeed, landscape policy cannot be effective without awareness-raising. Awareness-raising on landscape matters is the process of endowing an individual or a community with sensitivity towards the landscape. In other words, it is the process through which an individual or a community comes to perceive a specific landscape reality through the senses or acquires knowledge through a sensorial or intellectual activity.

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Raising someone's awareness of or sensitising them to landscape is closely related to perception (Busquets & Rubert, 2011). This relationship is doubly intense because landscape awareness in itself has an individual and perceptive dimension. In the case of landscape, the senses are not focused on a totally tangible and objectifiable reality but also present intangible and subjective components associated with each person (like the emotions, values or interests it awakens in each one of us). Moreover, landscape is perceived differently throughout the course of a person's life, both at an individual and social level, and over time acquires and loses significance or gains and loses emotional implications. Depending on the era, the very same landscape – forested mountains, for example – may have been perceived as an inhospitable space, as a place to be “colonised” or as a natural haven. Therefore, raising awareness of landscape cannot just be conceived as a simple transfer of knowledge that reveals what is, but also as an open and interactive process that improves people's disposition to perceive the various stimuli originating from the landscape and which provides food for thought that helps us to understand it. A reference to raising awareness of landscape can be found in the ELC (Council of Europe, 2000). Among the measures that countries ratifying it must drive forward, raising awareness is one of the most relevant issues listed. Placing awareness at the top of the list aligns perfectly with the vision of landscape promoted by the ELC, particularly in the sense that the citizens have to adopt an active role in lieu of being mere spectators of change (Nogué & Sala, 2014).

Awareness-raising through direct action and dialogue

According to the experience of the Landscape Observatory, beyond formalised processes based on highly structured methodologies and key strategies regarding education, communication, knowledge transfer, direct action and dialogue have proven to be a very powerful and effective way to positively influence a community's values and attitudes towards the landscape and, indirectly, improve the state of the landscapes. We must not overlook the fact that sensitising is a process similar to learning because, through other people's experiences and influence, one discovers hitherto unknown realities. Managing and planning the landscape with the communities has also been one of the main objectives since the beginning of the Landscape Observatory (Observatori del Paisatge, 2020).

There is no landscape without community. We live in a community, and it is with this community that we share our perceptions of and experiences with the landscape. Initiatives such as the Landscape Catalogues of Catalonia or the Cross-border Plan of La Cerdanya, among many others, clearly show that different dimensions of the landscape are generating increasing local interest, as local communities perceive the landscape as a catalyst for development and a way to increase self-esteem, identity and quality of life (Sala *et al.*, 2015). As such, these initiatives signify a turning point due to both their ability to document and guide public policies and their enormous potential for educating and raising public awareness.



The Landscape Catalogues

Based on participatory processes, the Landscape Catalogues 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 (Sala, 2012). 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 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’ (Sala, 2021).

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 (Nogué *et al.*, 2016).

In this regard, the Landscape Catalogues have brought about a paradigm shift in landscape knowledge and management thanks to their ability to enrich public policies and to educate and raise public awareness of the importance of landscape values and diversity (Sala, 2021). Therefore, the Landscape Catalogues are a tool that acts as a nexus between knowledge and

Figure 1 Detail of the Map of the Landscape Units of Catalonia, prepared by the Landscape Observatory, and published by the Cartographic and Geological Institute of Catalonia. All landscape units are different from each other. Source: Landscape Observatory of Catalonia. Original map can be consulted via www.catpaisatge.net/eng/catalegs_mapa.php

Figure 2. Cross-border area of La Cerdanya. Based on Vinals, CC BY-SA 3.0, commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9797292

action, recognition, commitment, co-responsibility, and awareness-raising (Nogué *et al.*, 2016).

In the Landscape Catalogues, there is a two-way relationship between participation and raising awareness; raising awareness about landscape is a prior step to boosting participation in landscape issues, and participation increases awareness of the landscape. Public consultation is a fundamental element of landscape cataloguing, particularly when it comes to defining stakeholders' individual valuations and perceptions (especially regarding more intangible aspects, like a sense of place or the emotions a landscape invokes). Various instruments were used as part of this process, including in-depth interviews with the principal stakeholders, consultations with experts who provided their opinions about aspects including maps, working groups with local people, consultations through the Landscape Observatory website (which collected over 5,000 opinions), or opinion polls (Nogué *et al.* 2010).

In this sense, participation processes awaken people's interest in the landscape, uncover the active role that society can have in the transformation of landscape, and make citizens aware of their right to landscape (and, in turn, of the resulting obligations to care for it).

Drawing up the landscape catalogues has made it possible to obtain a map of the landscape units (or simply "landscapes") for the first time (Observatori del Paisatge de Catalunya, 2019). With 134 different landscapes, the map shows the great diversity and wealth of landscapes in Catalonia. The landscape units, 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, as recog-

nised by the population. 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.

Landscape units are not new political-administrative entities; they represent landscapes. They are spaces of life, realities with collective memories, precisely because the population recognises them. For this reason, both the construction of the map and its actual management have become a great tool for educational activities and awareness-raising. So, we need to think of this map of 134 landscapes as more than just an exercise in cartography or an attempt to comprehend and describe particular landscapes and see it as an area for management, planning and action, through which to apply initiatives and local strategies or to implement landscape directives with the community. Despite its enormous potential as a tool, Landscape Catalogues still need to exercise greater influence on land planning, sector policies and direct action on the ground. The move from working at a global territorial level to working at the local level of land or urban planning and working simultaneously at multiple scales is also a pending issue.

Communication is also a key factor in creating awareness among contemporary societies. The landscape, a genuine carrier of messages easily decoded by the general public as a whole, offers enormous value in

terms of communication, and we must take advantage of this. For example, it has been noted that the Landscape Catalogues are very powerful tools when it comes to meeting this objective. The use that various audiovisual and printed mass media outlets, such as the TV channel TV3 Televisió de Catalunya, the newspaper Ara, the magazine Descobrir Catalunya and the weekly publication El Temps, have made of them has been important in creating awareness about the importance of the landscape.

Another example related to the Landscape Catalogues is the innovative educational project "City, Territory, Landscape", aimed at secondary school students and recognised by the Council of Europe. As previously mentioned, awareness-raising was a relevant measure established by the ELC; another relevant issue of the Convention's specific measures was training and education. These two concepts are closely linked to the awareness that must be simultaneously and consistently promoted. Education is the quintessential awareness-raising strategy because among its crucial purposes are the transfer of knowledge, the awakening of values and the generation of attitudes. In this sense, the school is the social framework in which a very important part of children's and young people's education takes place and is thus an ideal framework for promoting education on landscape during the compulsory stages of education.

The Cross-border Plan (and Map) of La Cerdanya

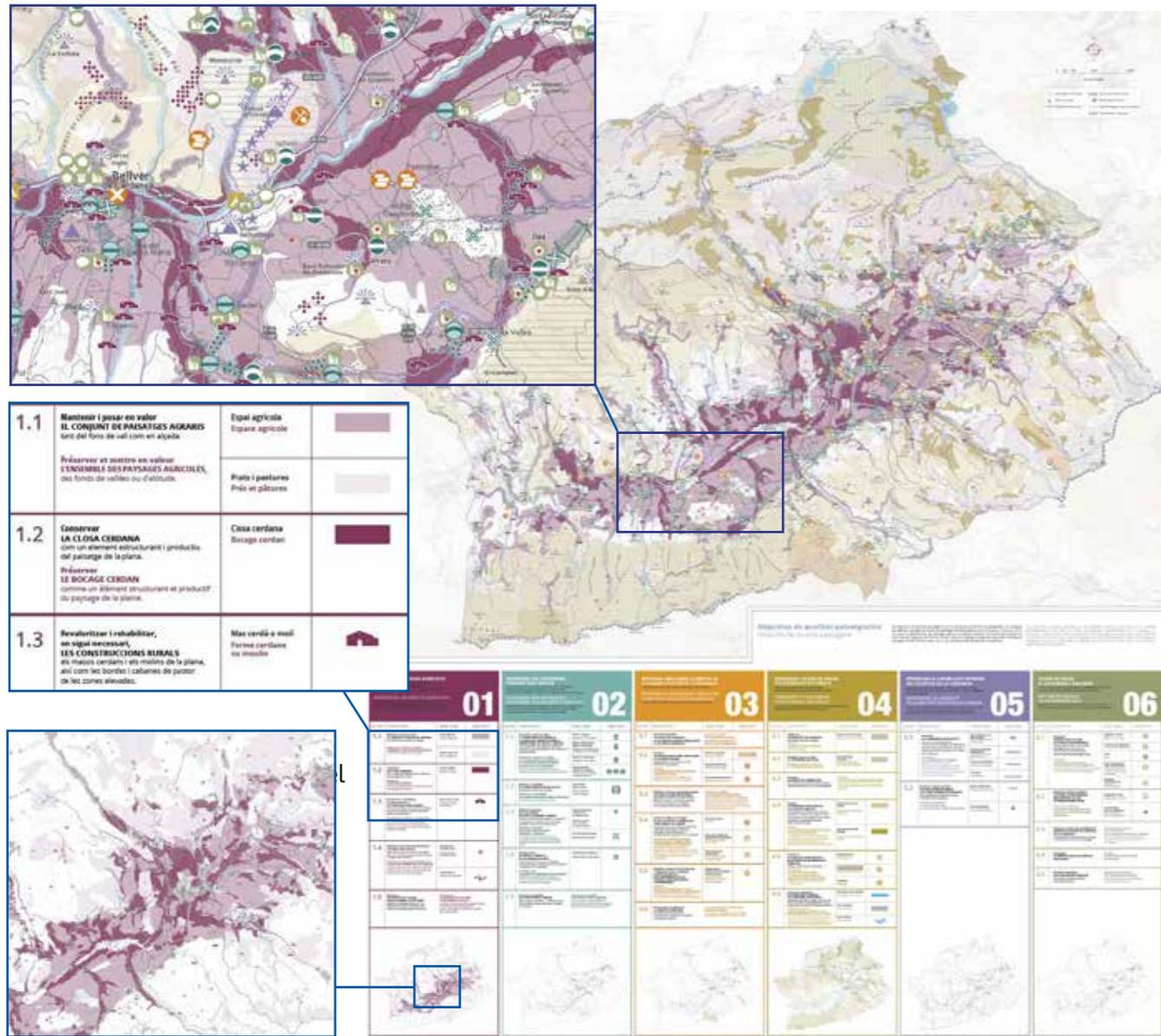
In 2012, the institutions of La Cerdanya, from both the Catalan (Spanish) and French sides, aware of the strategic importance of preserving their landscape and enhancing its quality, made a concerted effort

in collaboration with the territory's main agents to think about and establish the bases that would guide its future treatment and highlight its value. The result was the Cross-border Plan of La Cerdanya, a tool for knowledge, action, awareness and commitment that applies the principles of European cooperation established by the ELC (Nogué & Sala 2018a). The Plan's methodology, which mainly differs from that of the landscape catalogues because the scale of work is local, that of a landscape unit, developed jointly by the Regional Natural Park of the Catalan Pyrenees and the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, is based on agreement with the territory's main actors. The Plan itself attempts to rethink the territory on landscape unit scale at a time when local administrations are seeking alternative and imaginative formulas for landscape management and planning.

It must be said that this Plan has also been a way to reinforce a collective view of a common landscape historically divided by a border since the Treaty of the Pyrenees in the 17th century. In a territory whose rules vary greatly depending on the side of the border (urban planning and water management included) and where it is difficult for both administrations to plan together, the landscape is a meeting point, a catalyst, when it comes to finding new ways of seeing, thinking and acting in the territory. It is also a factor for territorial dynamism linked to local development and the creation of economic opportunities.

The actions developed by the Plan are diverse, and all of them contribute to the generation of knowledge and the promotion of management, planning, training, dissemination and awareness-raising, in line with the principles of the ELC.

One of the key elements of the Plan is the La Cerdanya



Cross-border Landscape Map (Nogué & Sala, 2016), which through a joint approach, seeks to plan, manage and design collective actions on the landscape. It is published in paper and digital format; it is bilingual, in Catalan and French (see figure 3).

The map is special for several reasons, the first of which is that it is cross-border in nature. Secondly, it not only identifies and describes the landscape, but also embodies six agreed landscape quality objectives and a territorial project for La Cerdanya, based on the territory's values and the landscapes perceived and experienced by the population. Thus, the map has highlighted the everyday heritage that is there, but often unseen, and represents the landscapes perceived and seen by the population based on their personal memory, their experiences or the links of past generations in these places. The map also has a more project-based approach, grouping together 29 actions, and is intended to be a useful tool for territorial planning and for use by the general public, local authorities and the economic and associative agents of the territory. In other words, the map represents a future model of the territory based on the landscape.

To draw up the map, prior work had to be carried out to find equivalences, not just literal translations, between the Catalan and French languages to express the main concepts and terms linked to the landscape. “Enjeux du paysage”, for example, is a concept that does not have a literal translation in Catalan, although it is understood as “landscape challenges”. The “closo” is also a type of landscape structure that in France is assimilated to the “bocage”, similar to “enclosure”. Respecting the sensibilities of each individual language and culture allowed the concepts’ true meaning to be grasped and, at the same time, provided a more

personal view of the places.

The final design of the map came from joint, collaborative work between the citizens, territorial agents and town councils of La Cerdanya. In fact, this is precisely one of the map’s main values: it is the outcome of face-to-face working sessions with the 39 municipalities of La Cerdanya, on both sides of the border, and consultations with citizens and 20 local agents on the perception of the landscape of La Cerdanya, in addition to the prioritisation of landscape quality objectives. The development of this whole network of local authorities and administrations does not avoid the suspicions that have often and traditionally existed between territories separated by an administrative border, which makes it necessary to constantly create and maintain the necessary complicity. This experience also raises new questions that we are constantly trying to address: how can social agents and economic sectors be involved in managing and improving a cross-border landscape?

The map, therefore, has brought about new forms of active pedagogy and new ways of heritage conservation and has contributed to increasing citizens’ awareness.

Conclusion

Both experiences show that raising awareness has to be approached as an open and spiral-shaped interactive process in which every step forward makes people more receptive and places them in a better position to appreciate the value of landscape. In this sense, the elaboration of the Landscape Catalogues and the Cross-border Landscape Map confirms the importance of the existence of the Landscape Observatory, in the form of a public consortium, and based on a

Figure 3 (p. 100) La Cerdanya Cross-border Landscape Map, with various cutouts. Source: Nogué & Sala, 2016. Full map can be found at landchap.nl/tijdschrift/archief/jaargang-39-2022 or with the QR code below.



model of cooperation between administrations and civil society, whose work philosophy is based on the principles of the European Landscape Convention. The daily dialogue that contemporary societies engage in with their everyday landscapes demands the continuous exchange of ideas, cooperation and consensus between government and civil society and between the public and private spheres, establishing new forms of participative democracy in territorial management (Nogué & Sala, 2014). 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 such as the Landscape Observatory, 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 (Nogué & Sala, 2018b).

The aim is to promote a quality landscape that increases people's well-being, generates economic op-

Summary

In 2005, the Parliament of Catalonia passed the Landscape Protection, Management and Planning Act as the basis for landscape policy, and the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia was set up as the Government of Catalonia's assessment body on landscape matters and as a way to create public awareness on landscape.

The Landscape Catalogues of Catalonia and the Cross-border Plan of La Cerdanya, among many other initiatives, note that awareness-raising has to be approached as an open and spiral-shaped

opportunities and invigorates a territory both socially and culturally. 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 they could benefit from the landscape idea by becoming involved at some point (Nogué & Sala, 2018b).

In addition, the objective of the Landscape Observatory to introduce the landscape in sectoral policies has been rather timid and is, as yet, an unresolved question that requires cross-cutting, interdepartmental and participatory landscape policies, which are never very easy to achieve.

Through the above-mentioned initiatives, and the many others existing in Europe, the issue of landscape has slowly spread into the sphere of public administration and the consciousness of experts. However, its penetration of society is still scant, and so the task of raising people's awareness at all levels is immense (Sala, 2021).

interactive process. Every step forward makes people more receptive and places them in a better position to appreciate the value of landscape. It is also relevant that local communities are increasingly interested in landscape, as they perceive the landscape as a catalyst for development and a way to increase self-esteem, identity and quality of life. As such, both initiatives have contributed to making a step forward because they have the ability to document and guide public policies and, at the same time, an enormous potential for educating and raising public awareness.

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