



## The soundscape and the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

By Joan Nogué,  
Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

Landscape has been associated with the sense of sight. However, hearing, smell, taste and touch can be equally or more decisive than sight when we perceive or experience a given landscape. The sound of a place shapes its identity, and is an essential dimension of its landscape. A forest, a village square and a festival all have their own characteristic sounds which define and differentiate them from other similar environments. Soundscape can be defined as the sound (or sound environment) of a given landscape at a given time. Landscape is in a constant state of evolution; soundscapes likewise vary over the course of time, and are sometimes the reflection of one unrepeatable moment in time. The recording of sounds helps to preserve our sound heritage and to make it better known.

For all these reasons the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia has decided to create a digital dossier on soundscapes. This dossier is a directory of the main websites on initiatives, projects, institutions, research groups and other bodies linked to soundscapes in Catalonia, Spain and the rest of the world. Published in Catalan, Spanish, French and English, the digital dossier 'Soundscapes' aims to bring the local inhabitants closer to soundscape heritage, which is often little understood and valued.

**Image** ▲ Soundscape on the beach of Ametlla de Mar.  
© Landscape Observatory of Catalonia



“The soundmaps and sound archives disclose the characteristic sound of a space”



Image ► Recording the soundscape on the Calatrava bridge, Valencia © Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

The websites in this dossier are ongoing collections of sound fragments associated with the place where they were recorded, usually with a high degree of interaction between the platform and its users. The soundmaps and sound archives disclose the characteristic sound of a space, but also seek out hybrid sounds, unexpected relationships, and echoes between different places. It is important to stress that only soundmaps and archives with active websites have been listed. This ruling inevitably excludes others which cannot be accessed via the internet.

The aims of the dossier are:

1. To make soundscapes more generally known.
2. To assemble, classify and facilitate access to the fragmented information on soundscapes around the world which is currently available on the internet.
3. To provide a benchmark soundscape space for specialists and members of the general public.

The dossier ‘Soundscapes’ will grow and be updated periodically. It is the fourth to be published on the Landscape Observatory’s website, with the first three dedicated to dry stone landscapes, outstanding heritage trees and gardens.

The idea for the dossier came out of a congress organised by the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia in November 2008 and held at Barcelona Centre of Contemporary Culture (CCCB). The information gathered there has since been added to, updated and adapted to a digital format. We have also included the introductory and concluding contributions from the congress.

The dossier can be read at:

[www.catpaisatge.net/dossiers/psonors/eng](http://www.catpaisatge.net/dossiers/psonors/eng)

