Landscape Observatory
Landscape Observatory
What is a landscape?

A landscape is an area, as perceived by the public, the character of which is the result of the dynamic interaction of natural factors (such as the relief, the rivers, the flora and fauna) and human factors (such as financial activities or historical heritage).

Landscape is both a physical reality and the representation that we make of it. It is the face of a land with all its natural and anthropological elements and, at the same time, the feelings and emotions that it arouses in us when we see it.

Landscape is, also, a social product. It is the cultural projection of a society on an area determined from material, spiritual, ideological and symbolic dimensions.
Why is it important?

_Because the quality of life of people depends on landscape: the urban or rural surroundings, degraded areas or others of high quality, unique areas or everyday areas._

_Because it reflects the good or ill health of the relationships between society and the land. It is an excellent indicator of environmental quality._

_Because it is another factor in well-being. The European Landscape Convention makes the quality of landscape into a right (the right to enjoy agreeable, harmonious landscapes, not degraded, which transmit various cultural and territorial identities)._ 

_Because it offers pleasing sensations (aesthetic, sensory, emotional)._ 

_Because it identifies us with the land, with the country. Landscape is a reflection of past lifestyles and, specifically, our history, and thus it has value as part of our heritage._
What is the Lanscape Observatory?

The Landscape Observatory is an advisory body of the Catalan Authorities and for awakening society to matters of landscape. It studies landscape, monitors it, prepares proposals and sensitises society to the appropriateness of better protection, management and planning of the landscape in Catalonia in the context of sustainable development.

It is the meeting point between the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia), local authorities, universities, professional groups and, in general, Catalan society, in connection with the management and preservation of landscape.

It supports the application of the European Landscape Convention in Catalonia.

It is conceived as a centre for thought and action in relation to landscape.

The Landscape Observatory, legally formed on 30 November 2004, is organized as a consortium and is included in the Act for the Protection, Management and Planning of the Landscape of Catalonia.
Functions of the Observatory

Establishing mechanisms of observation of the evolution and transformation of landscape.

Fixing criteria to establish the objectives of landscape quality and adopt the measures of protection, management and planning of landscape necessary to achieve these objectives.

Proposing actions directed to the improvement, restoration or creation of landscape.

Preparing the landscape catalogues of Catalonia, destined to identify and evaluate the various landscapes.

Preparing a four-yearly report on the state of the landscape in Catalonia for the Catalan Parliament.

Following up European initiatives in landscape matters.

Stimulating scientific and academic collaboration in landscape matters, and the exchange of work and experiences among specialists from universities and other academic and cultural institutions.

Promoting campaigns of social sensitisation with regard to landscape, its functions and how it evolves and is transformed.

Dissemination of studies and reports, and establishing working methodologies in landscape matters.

Organizing seminars, courses, conferences and exhibitions on landscape policies.
The Act for the Protection, Management and Planning of the Landscape of Catalonia defines these as “documents of a descriptive and prospective nature which identify the types of landscapes in Catalonia, their values and state of preservation, and propose the quality objectives to be met.”

The landscape catalogues are tools which enable us to know what our landscape is like and what values it has, the factors that explain why we have that type of landscape and not another, how it has evolved with regard to current social economic and environmental dynamics and, finally, the catalogues define what types of landscape we want and how to achieve them.

Seven landscape catalogues have been prepared, coinciding with the seven territorial regions in which the new territorial organization of Catalonia will be structured.
Application of the catalogues

_They integrate landscape into the instruments of town and county planning in Catalonia on various scales, from area zoning plans to detailed town planning, passing through directing plans and urban plans._

_They are a reference in preparing the landscape charters._

_They facilitate the process of definition of sector plans and strategies (policies for the preservation of nature, infrastructures, farmland, rural, tourist and cultural development, among others)._  

_They act as a basic document for campaigns of sensitisation over the diversity of landscape and its values, and for the inclusion of landscape at various levels of teaching in Catalonia._

_They act as a starting document for the definition of regional and local strategies directed to sustainable development._

_They supply the objectives of landscape quality for processes of strategic environmental evaluation and the preparation of studies of environmental impact and studies of landscape integration._
The Landscape Observatory Documentation Centre is a place for information and consultation, with the aim of becoming a reference centre in matters of landscape in Catalonia.

**Functions:**
- To support the Landscape Observatory in the development of its activity.
- To support investigation on landscape undertaken by institutions or private organisations.
- To offer the maximum updated quality information to people interested in landscape.

**Documentary Funds:**
- Monographs, regular publications, unpublished documents, audiovisual documents... about landscape in the broadest sense and particularly the planning and management of landscape in Catalonia, in the rest of the Spain and in the world.
- The documentary funds are available for physical consultation in the headquarters in Olot, and also virtually through the Observatory web (www.catpaisatge.net).
The website www.catpaisatge.net

Is a tool of information, training and sensitisation in reference to landscape.

It contains:

- International calendar of activities on landscape.
- Daily collection of press items on landscape on a national and international scale.
- Glossary of landscape terms.
- Funds of the Documentation Centre.
- Content of the landscape catalogues of Catalonia.
- Photographic archive of landscapes in Catalonia.
- Good practices in landscape.
- Landscape teaching materials.
- European and international landscape policies.
- Landscape plans and programmes.
- Institutions and entities for the study, preservation and management of landscape.
- University programmes and research groups specialised in landscape.
- Landscape initiatives and projects.
- Thematic sections.
The Governing Board and Advisory Council of Landscape Observatory

Governing Board:


Universities: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona / Universitat de Barcelona / Universitat de Girona / Universitat de Lleida / Universitat Oberta de Catalunya / Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya / Universitat Rovira i Virgili

Catalonian Counties: Diputació de Barcelona / Diputació de Girona / Diputació de Lleida / Diputació de Tarragona

Ajuntament d’Olot

Associations local authorities: Associació Catalana de Municipis / Federació de Municipis de Catalunya

Professional associations: Col·legi d’Ambientòlegs de Catalunya / Col·legi d’Arquitectes de Catalunya / Col·legi de Biòlegs de Catalunya / Col·legi d’Enginyers Agrònoms de Catalunya / Col·legi d’Enginyers de Camins, Canals i Ports / Col·legi d’Enginyers de Monts - Forests de Catalunya / Col·legi de Geògrafs de Catalunya / Col·legi de Geòlegs de Catalunya / Col·legi Oficial d’Enginyers Tècnics Agrícoles de Catalunya

Fundació Territori i Paisatge de Caixa de Catalunya
Advisory Council:

Scientific and research institutions and associations: Institució Catalana d’Estudis Agraris / Institució Catalana d’Història Natural / Societat Catalana de Geografia / Societat Catalana d’Ordenació del Territori

Ecological, environmental and agrarian foundations and associations: DEPANA / Federació Ecologistes de Catalunya / Fundació Natura / Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori

Individual people: Georges Bertrand (Université de Toulouse Le Mirail) / Paolo Castelnovi (Politécnico di Torino) / Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons (Council of Europe) / Eduardo Martínez de Pisón (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) / Margarita Ortega (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente) / Riccardo Priore (Council of Europe) / Florencio Zoido Naranjo (Universidad de Sevilla)

Financial and business entities: Associació Empresarial Catalana de Publicitat / Associació de Promotors i Constructors de Catalunya / Consell General de Cambres de Comerç, Indústria i Navegació de Catalunya / Federació Catalana de Caça / Federació Catalana de Pesca Esportiva i Càsting / Foment de Treball Nacional / Reial Automòbil Club de Catalunya

Public bodies, public and private consortiums: Consorci Forestal de Catalunya / Institut del Paisatge Urbà i la Qualitat de Vida

Trade unions: CCOO / Institut Agrícola Català de Sant Isidre / Joves Agricultors i Ramaders de Catalunya / UGT / Unió de Pagesos

Excursionists: Centre Excursionista de Catalunya / Federació d’Entitats Excursionistes de Catalunya / Unió Excursionista de Catalunya

Educational and cultural entities: Consell Escolar de Catalunya / Unescocat