



“City, Territory, Landscape” Innovative educational project in Catalonia

By Pere Sala, Landscape Observatory of Catalonia

“Landscape education has a long tradition in Catalonia...”

It is very important for a society to learn to understand its landscapes, to identify their value and to acknowledge when and why this value may be under threat. Education plays a fundamental role in achieving this aim, as acknowledged in the Law for the Protection, Management and Organisation of the Landscape of Catalonia, passed by the Parliament of Catalonia in June 2005.

Landscape education has a long tradition in Catalonia, but it still has to address a number of challenges. Amongst these challenges we should note the limited number of practical tools and resources that could help the work of educators, and the need to foster a more resolute involvement of the corresponding governing bodies. Another challenge should be added: that of achieving a significant and integrated understanding of the territory and its dynamics, while avoiding views of the landscape that are too partial and narrow. Taking this fully into account, the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning and Public Works of the Generalitat de Catalunya, have launched the development of the educational materials “City, Territory, Landscape” and their application. The materials are aimed at students of social and natural sciences in the four academic years of Compulsory Secondary Education (Educació Secundària Obligatòria, ESO, between ages 12 and 16) within the framework of educational innovation programmes.

The project aims to foster a new culture of landscape in which the young students, full citizens of the future, will feel co-responsible for the state of Catalan landscapes. Even today, the prevailing approach in the study of landscape throughout the curriculum and in most educational materials has a mainly descriptive character and is mainly focused on the natural or rural landscapes. For this reason, “City, Territory, Landscape” aims to strengthen the explanatory dimension of landscape and to achieve a significant understanding of the city, of the current processes of urbanisation and transformation of land areas, and of the fundamentals of landscape organisation and landscape dynamics. These aims are furthermore achieved by stimulating the students to work in groups and to use the new technologies at school.

Image ▲ A village on the Costa Brava, Catalonia



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“City, Territory, Landscape” is based on three kinds of materials. Firstly, a folder containing 12 large size panoramic leaflets with aerial photographs, maps and information corresponding to 12 different humanised landscapes that are representative of the diversity of landscapes in Catalonia and of the issues affecting them.

	Sheet Title	Landscape
1	The Renovation of Urban Landscape	El Barcelonès
2	The Vicinity of the Metropolis	El Pla de Bages
3	An Agricultural Park in an Urban Area	El Baix Llobregat
4	Landscape as a Touristic Resource	Costa Brava
5	A City inside a Natural Park	La Garrotxa
6	The Renovation of an Agricultural Landscape	El Priorat
7	An Industrial Landscape	El Tarragonès
8	Compact City, Diffuse City	El Vallès
9	A City in an Agricultural Area	El Segrià
10	Fluvial Landscape and Energy	La Ribera d’Ebre
11	The Border Landscape	La Cerdanya
12	Landscape as Touristic Scenery	Era Val d’Aran

Table ► Landscapes studied by the project

Secondly, these materials also contain a guide, which offers general and specific guidelines to work with the students and to supervise and assess them. Finally, the website (www.catpaisatge.net/educacio) adds to the 12 leaflets by taking advantage of the educational potential of the new technologies. The website shows the landscapes in both an interactive and an attractive way, with many images, animation and sounds that help students to understand the landscape. It also includes the possibility of creating working groups and of enabling the ongoing supervision of students by the teachers.

The website —a key element in the project— consists of five activities, in which the student can at any moment know what they have completed, if they have done it well, and what remains to be done. The first activity enables the students to have initial contact with the landscape they will study. They are asked to observe and to look for a number of hidden elements in a photograph of the landscape that is displayed on the screen. The aim of the second activity is to describe the landscape by classifying and locating its most significant features in a topographical map and in an aerial photograph. In the next one, the students are asked to find out and analyse the processes of change and evolution of the landscape through the years, using two aerial photographs corresponding to 1986 and 2006.

In the fourth activity the analysis of landscape is continued by gaining an understanding of the views held on it by the agents involved in the transformation of each specific landscape. Here the students are asked to formulate a number of questions for a series of fictional characters, so that they can get a sense of the processes that are taking place in the landscape. Finally, the website suggests that the students put together a report based on all that they have learnt through the previous activities. It includes an exercise to visualise the evolution of the landscape according to a number of scenarios which can be simulated. The report written by the students can be printed and is stored in a database so that the teacher can assess the work.

All of these materials are valuable in themselves, both for formal and for non-formal education. But it should be noted that the success of this initiative would not have been the same without the direct involvement of the Ministry of Education. In 2009 the Ministry put these materials into circulation among the more than 450,000 students of Compulsory Secondary Education in high schools, in centres for adult learning and in the distance learning Open Institute of Catalonia, and it is implementing training courses for the teachers.

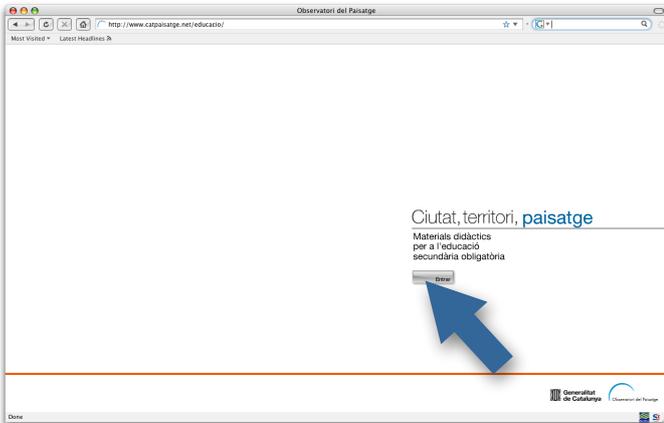
In short, “City, Territory, Landscape” aims to develop reasoning and critical thinking about the state of the landscapes of Catalonia among the educational community. In this sense, the materials have been designed to enable the work of teachers, to contribute to the updating of knowledge on the city and the territory of contemporary Catalonia of secondary education students, and to raise awareness of landscape as an important constituent part of the natural and cultural heritage of Catalonia and of its collective identity.

For more information: Landscape Observatory of Catalonia (www.catpaisatge.net)

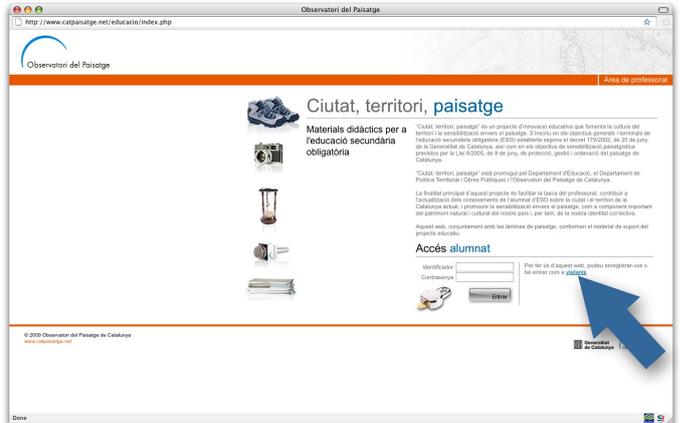


How to use the website

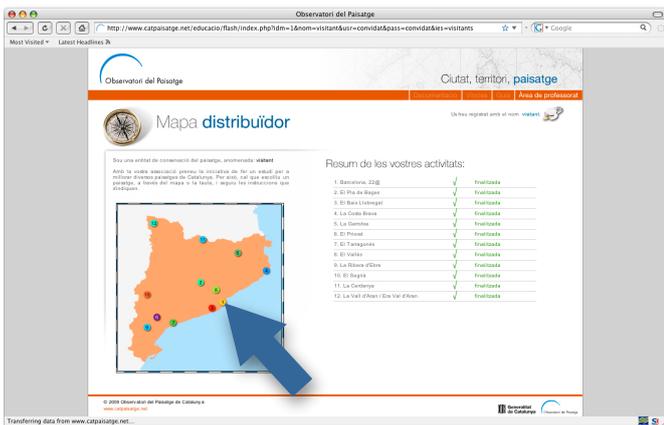
The website referred to in the article is written in Catalan. However, it is still possible to view the interactive functions, which will allow you to obtain a better understanding of how the website works. The following directions allow you to access the website and its activities at www.catpaisatge.net/educacio/



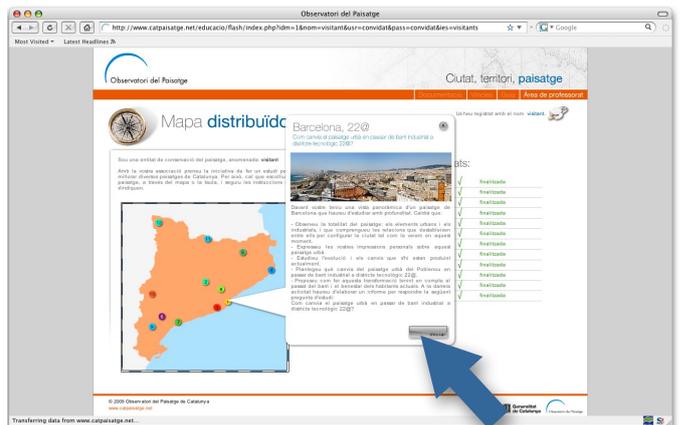
▲ Click "Entrar"



▲ Click "Visitants"



▲ Click on a number on the map to view information about that landscape



▲ Click "iniciar" to view the interactive section of the website



▲ Click arrows "Anterior" or "Següent" to view further information/activities. Once all the information has been viewed the box can be closed using the "x"



▲ View the panoramic image using the "Control Imatge" panel. The panel allows you to pan round the image of the landscape and zoom in and out to find the hidden elements within the landscape (numbers within the image) that can be clicked on to view more information and photographs