

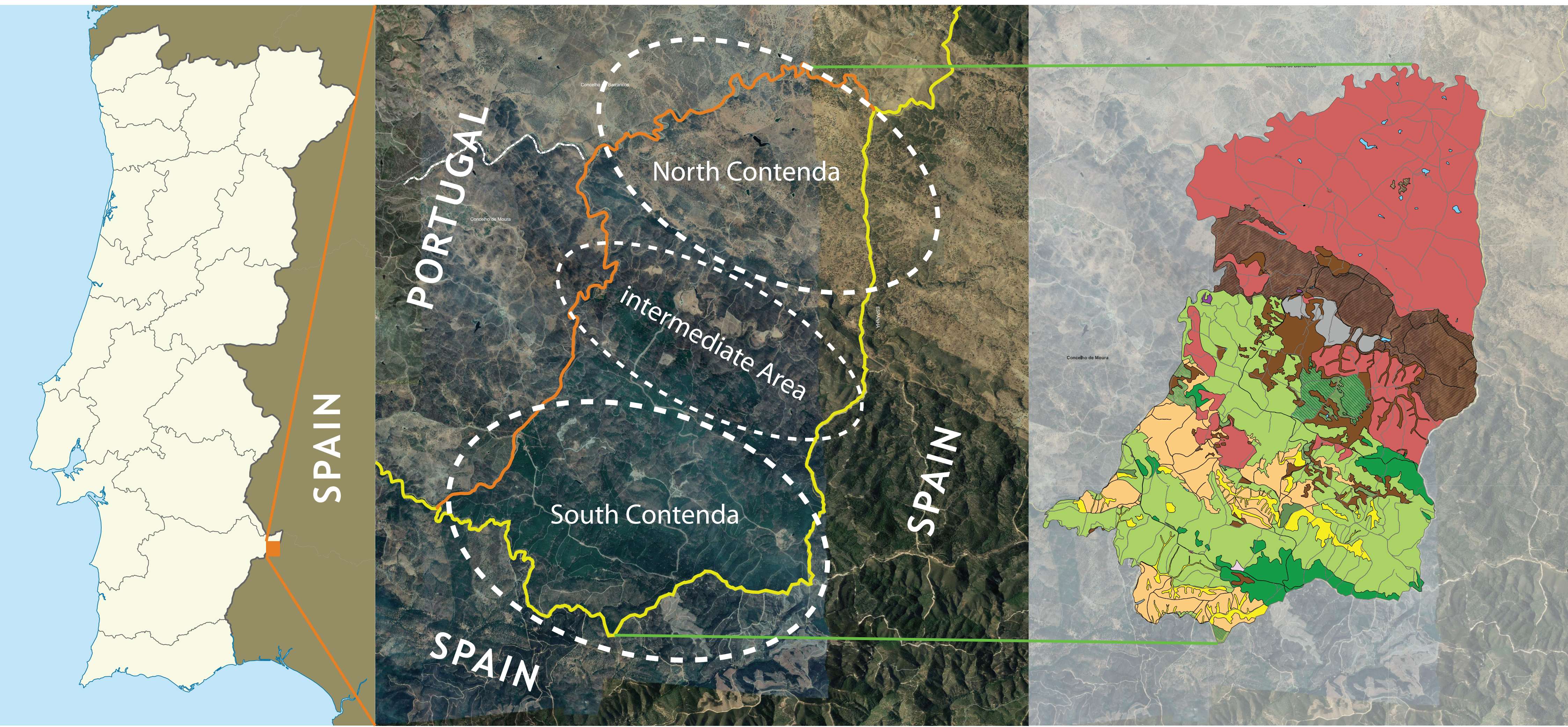


Herdade da Contenda - A tale of resilience for Nature

The Contenda Estate is a successful example of the recovery and the giving of value to a Mediterranean landscape arising from the implementation of a policy of excellence focused on sustainable management and appreciation of its endogenous resources, seeing landscape as a territorial resource.

The project covers a territory of around 5,270 hectares at present. It is State owned property (belonging to the Local Municipality), situated on the left bank of the Guadiana River, having its frontier with Spain for 21 km has and is part of the Moura Local Authority.

This case is an example of a montage landscape, a system of great relevance in ecological, economic and social terms. It is a traditional agro-silvo-pastoral system of community exploitation, which produces the set of benefits translated by the so-called ecosystem services. It is located in territories most vulnerable in Europe under climate change.



NORTH CONTENDA



North Contenda is characterised by a more flattened relief, dominated by the Holm Oak “montado” with its agro-silvo-pastoral exploration, also being made use of to feed the deer. The “montados” and other extensive uses have maintained a relative protection of the soil already degraded by intensive erosive processes (dominated by skeletal schist soils).

INTERMEDIATE AREA



Intermediate Area is marked by the valley of the Murtigão River, a river that crosses the property, essential for the maintenance of the ecosystems. Here areas of more or less diverse scrub land predominate with Holm Oaks on the North facing slopes.

SOUTH CONTENDA



South Contenda is characterized by a more pronounced relief that corresponds to the Western most point of the Serra Morena in Spain, with altitudes higher than 400 metres and a densely wooded territory with a variety of tree species.

1 - BACKGROUND



Due to its cross-border setting it was the object of disputes between the Portuguese and Spanish for more than six hundred years, which justifies the origin of its name, kept until nowadays - Contenda In Portugal and Contienda in Spain, both meaning “Dispute”. the “GREAT CONTENDA” was the setting for rivalries and conflicts until 1893, when the property was divided after the signing of the Treaty of Madrid. Two parts resulted from that great property, one for each country, in an agreement that fixed the boundaries of one and the other and part of the frontier which still needed to be drawn. After the division of the Great Contenda, Moura’s Local Authority, having no means to manage more than half a dozen thousand hectares of the Estate, decided to hold a public auction in order to lease the land in lots. The tenants cultivated wheat, barley, oats (grass) and rye and furthermore promoted goat, sheep and pig farming.

2 - A LANDSCAPE IN DECLINE

The land was over worked as a result of the Portuguese State agricultural policy, known as the Wheat Campaign that continued during the 30s, 40s and 50s of the 20th century. As a result, the land became exhausted, degraded, there was soil loss, all characteristic of the desertification process with its corresponding low production. Agricultural activities declined and in the end were abandoned at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, leading to the abandoning of the territory. Abandoning agriculture led to the tenants migrating, as what was taken from the land barely paid the respective rent.



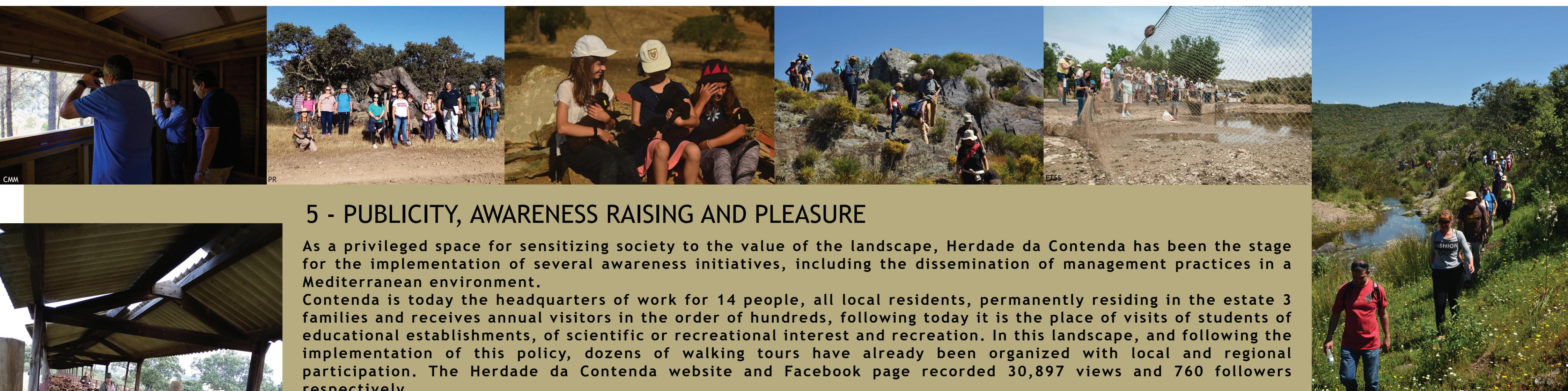


3 - RECOVERY AND APPRECIATION

At the end of the 50s (1958), the Forest Services, now known as the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Forests, intervened in the Contenda Estate and it was submitted to the optional partial forest regime. Apart from its recovery via the forestation process, especially in relation to the holm oak, stone pine and cork oak, the sylvo-pastoral exploration promoted the introduction and upkeep of groups of traditional Portuguese pure breeds. These practices were implemented for a period of about 50 years which introduced significant alterations to the landscape, transforming land cover and creating habitats associated with the exploration and giving worth to the resources present in the territory. However in 2000, the Contenda Estate became part of Nature Network 2000 / Rede Natura 2000 and in 2006 an Ordering and Management Plan was established for the estate. Following this critical moment in the Contenda Estate's history, the Moura Local Authority, once again took on the management of this territory, from 2009 to 2011, overseeing its existing rich landscape heritage. This culminated with the creation of the Contenda Estate Municipal Company in 2012. The alteration in management was committed to maintain the property as a public utility.

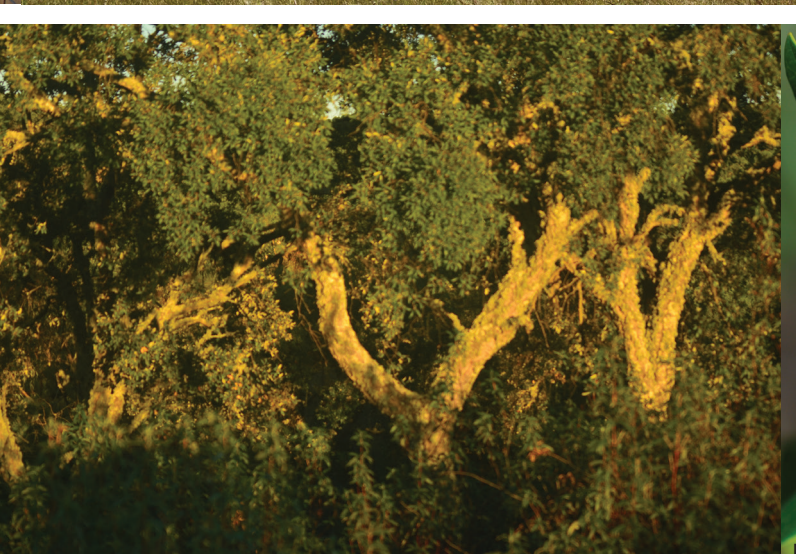
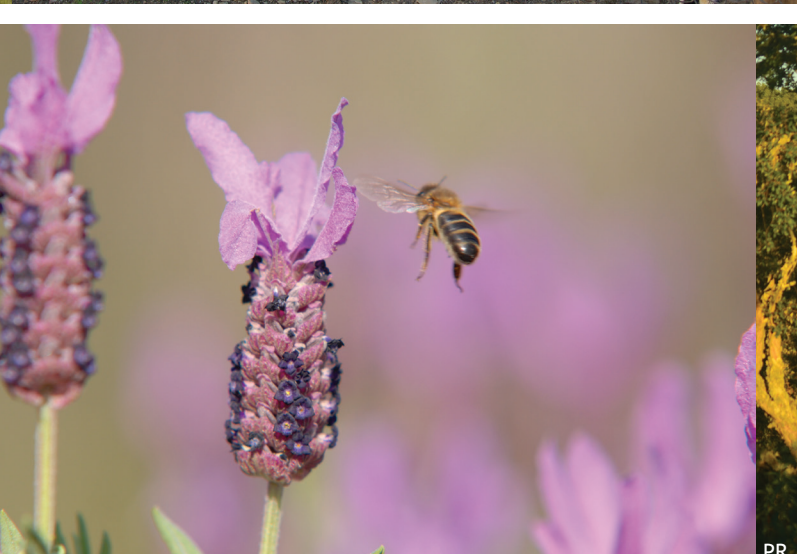
4 - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In 2010, the Contenda Estate was considered one of the places of interest within the work integrated in Long Term Ecological Research due to its diverse landscape, scenic interest and the recovery of its biodiversity, this being a platform of communication, documentation and collaboration amongst scientists developing research on the environment. Public participation, as a process of community involvement, has been manifest in various activities over time, both in the presentation of projects, plans and programmes for the community, as well as the implementation of initiatives to promote the collection of opinions and contributions for management of this landscape and the identification of future challenges that will have to be faced. For these ends, events with the community have been organized, the meeting dedicated to the theme "Reflection on the future of Contenda" to be highlighted. The results of these initiatives have been used to define priorities on a landscape management level and activities that should take place there.



5 - PUBLICITY, AWARENESS RAISING AND PLEASURE

As a privileged space for sensitizing society to the value of the landscape, Herdade da Contenda has been the stage for the implementation of several awareness initiatives, including the dissemination of management practices in a Mediterranean environment. Contenda is today the headquarters of work for 14 people, all local residents, permanently residing in the estate 3 families and receives annual visitors in the order of hundreds, following today it is the place of visits of students of educational establishments, of scientific or recreational interest and recreation. In this landscape, and following the implementation of this policy, dozens of walking tours have already been organized with local and regional participation. The Herdade da Contenda website and Facebook page recorded 30,897 views and 760 followers respectively.



6 - PRODUCTION, SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSERVATION

The results of this persistent landscape policy continued over time show recovery and revitalization of a territory which has become sustainable and multifunctional in which biodiversity patterns are relevant. The fauna and vascular flora survey and that of the Contenda Estate's habitats carried out in 1996 and 2007 confirmed the rich biodiversity, registering 133 bird species, 18 species of mammals, 13 species of reptiles, 10 species of amphibians, 3 of fish, 447 species of plants of which include various endemic species (4 Lusitanian, 24 Iberian) and furthermore 10 natural habitats of E.U interest. This project is an example that demonstrates how, over the centuries, the interaction between Humankind and Nature can contribute to construct, destroy and reconstruct landscape and bring back its functions of support to biodiversity as a universal asset.



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