Cascais-Estoril - Portugal

Located in the south slope of Serra de Sintra, in the western end of Cascais municipality, inside Parque Natural Sintra-Cascais, between the urban periphery of Alcabideche and the mountain, Quinta do Pisão represents an historical and cultural legacy, which has become structural for the territory, either by the scale and natural values that it comprises, but also because of its built heritage and its landscape.

Quinta do Pisão – Nature Park it’s considered a case study regarding nature conservation and biodiversity and responsible tourism development, as a contribute to health and wellness of the populations. The concept of Nature Park aggregates a set of valences that, combine in the same space, gather history with nature conservation, agricultural activities with biodiversity preservation, visitation with education and environmental volunteering. The aim is to intervene at the landscape scale, identifying the natural systems and its interactions to be reactivated, in order to find the decisive factors for the maintenance of the landscape mosaic, in a natural and balanced way, minimizing the interventions and externalities.

The project, started in 2008, intends the gradual recovery of the landscape mosaic, maintaining the traditional cultural practices through an integrated management, in favor of the nature conservation with the farming activities. A new territory, which integrates the agricultural activity with visitation, thus promoting an unforgettable experience to those who visit it.

The key points of this recovery are the natural habitats preservation and healing, the agricultural activities maintenance, the recovery of built architectural heritage, building an Interpretation Center, the preservation of Gruta de Porto Covo and, at last but not least, reactivate the Quinta do Pisão as a living landscape, promoting the transition between the peri-urban areas to natural areas.

For this purpose, conservation actions were carried out, including the control of invasive species, the conversion of forest patches, the reclassification of riparian galleries and conservation actions for target species. After the intervention, 124 species of 11 orders were identified, including 3 endangered butterflies (Nymphalis polychloros, Polyommatus bellargus e Zerynthia rumina) and
another endangered (*Tomares ballus*), suggesting an increase in biodiversity and improvements in area management.

The built architectural heritage, as the Capela do Porto Covo (XVI century), the stables, the whitewash oven and the “pateira” (place to shelter ducks) are being recovered, being granted the visitors to see them.

The recovery of Armazém da Cal allowed the construction of the Center of Interpretation of Casa da Cal, that aims to provide a pleasant and exciting experience for those who want to know Quinta do Pisão. This Center works as a multifunctional space, containing an interpretative exhibition on the farm, sanitary facilities, rooms for activities and a small auditorium, besides allowing the rental of bicycles, segways or schedule a visit to the farm with a guide, either walking or by horse or donkey.

The woolly donkeys are an endangered species, so their presence at Quinta do Pisão is a way to contribute to their conservation. The presence of the horses, sheep and lambs of Campaniça breed allows them to live in the wild and can live in perfect harmony with nature.

Casa da Cal also has the “Loja da Quinta”, where people can buy sweets and jams with products from the farm, honey (with partnerships between local beekeepers), social merchandising products resulting from partnerships with the institutions and associations of the council and, the organic vegetables that are produced in the biological vegetable garden. The sales from all these products promote sustainable development and enhancement of human capital.

The human capital is further valued through employment opportunities created, including long-term unemployment, with workers in forestry and agricultural brigades being involved in support for maintenance.

The preservation of Gruta de Porto Covo is essential, since it has vestiges belonging to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic period and the Bronze Age and Iron Age.

The landscape reactivation promotes the connection of the community with nature and restores the connection to the countryside, allowing visitors to walk and ride a bike, finding informative panels along the various paths of Quinta do Pisão.
Currently, the area is managed by Cascais Municipal Council that, besides promoting the recovery of agricultural and forest areas, is stimulating fauna repopulation and promoting a greater connection with the population, through activities developed throughout the year.

This project has already been presented at some conferences, such as the European Week of Regions, DG Environment in Belgium, Global Green Destinations Day in Cascais, Biodiversity and Health in the Face of Climate Change, Environment Protection Agency in Germany in 2017 and finally, at Landscape and Life, in Fundação Gulbenkian, in Lisbon, in 2016.

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