

Building bridges: strengthening of collaboration between communities and scientists

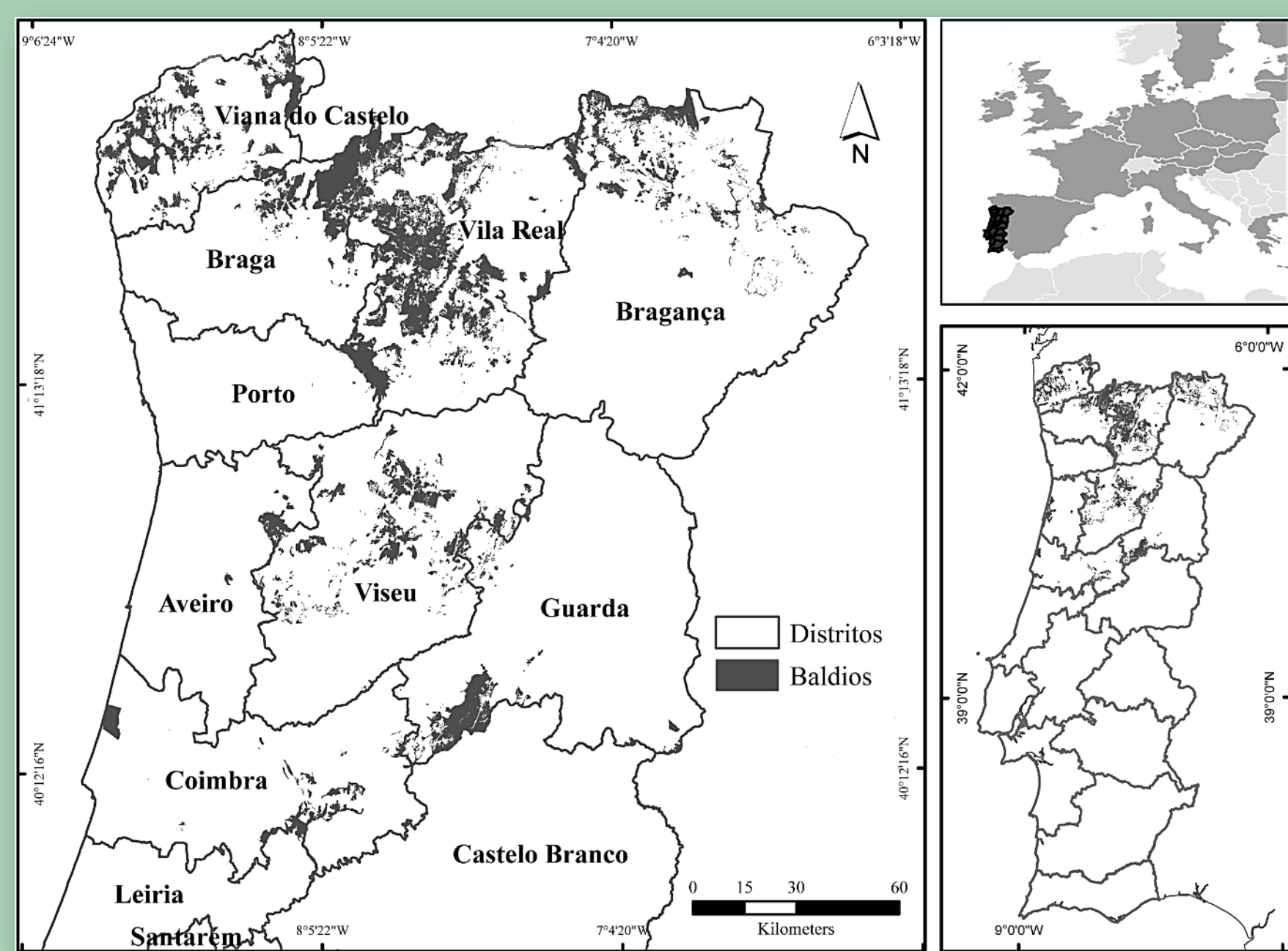
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Colloque du **cef**
Centre d'étude de la forêt

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Location of baldios in mainland Portugal

Since the 1970s, Portuguese rural communities have managed community forests, known as "**baldios**", creating different models of their governance and involving different stakeholders.

- *baldios* occupy 400 - 500 thousand hectares
- 15% of national forest area
- 1156 *baldios* units registered National Forest Services
- more than 400 thousand commoners (*baldios*' owners)
- diversity in land use
- new economic activities (e.g. recreation, green energy)
- different management models
- diversity of stakeholders (commoners, state Forestry Services, NGOs, etc.)

Introduction

The process of decentralization of forest governance has been ongoing in Portugal for 50 years. This began after the Carnation Revolution, when, among various social benefits, *baldios* were returned to rural communities after being occupied by the State for an intense afforestation and establishment of Forest Regime.

Current *baldios* management is democratic and reflects the choices of its owners. Rural communities engage various actors (e.g. State, local municipalities, NGOs) in managing *baldios*, which can range from local to landscape-level (e.g. clusters of *baldios*).



Left image: forests of the baldios community. © Jochen Faget

Right images: Baldios Community Congresses in 2022. © BALADI

In recent years, scientists have been integrated into *baldios* governance, collaborating in identifying needs and proposing sustainable solutions.

Methods: national and international collaborative research projects, master's and doctoral dissertations, organization of discussion events, etc.



Examples of some recent research projects.

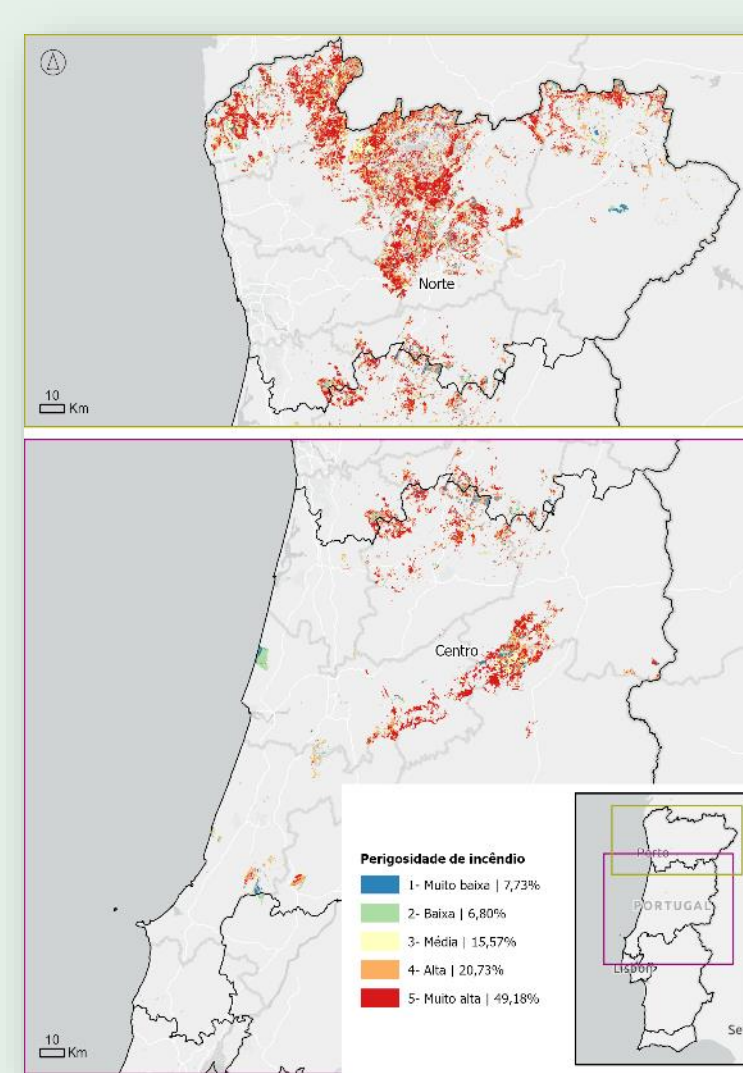
Baldios & CEABN* Collaboration Goals



- Make the management of *baldios* forests more attractive, reducing rural exodus and generating employment opportunities;

CEABN 2019. One of the action research activities.

- Ensure the rights of *baldios* communities and raise awareness of responsibilities in managing their forest areas;
- Analyse *baldios*' resource management for sustainable suggestions;
- Generate knowledge and actions to understand and mitigate wildfires.



Map of wildfire hazard level in baldios

One of the important recent outcomes:

Initial findings from our current project **SAFER LANDS** indicate that approximately 70% of baldios forests have a high level of wildfire risk, while only 15% are considered low-risk areas. These data were collected and analyzed in close collaboration with the Baldios Federation.

Our next critical step involves translating scientific insights into national policies and initiatives aimed at managing bushfire risk and enhancing the resilience of *baldios* on a national scale.

Worldwide Connections

Simultaneously, we are actively seeking to foster international cooperation to advance this line of research. We anticipate that engaging with colleagues from **CEF** in Quebec will offer invaluable opportunities for exchanging experiences, thus enriching our understanding and promoting more effective and sustainable practices in collaborating with local communities and/or First Nations in forest governance.

More information about Portuguese *baldios* here:

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