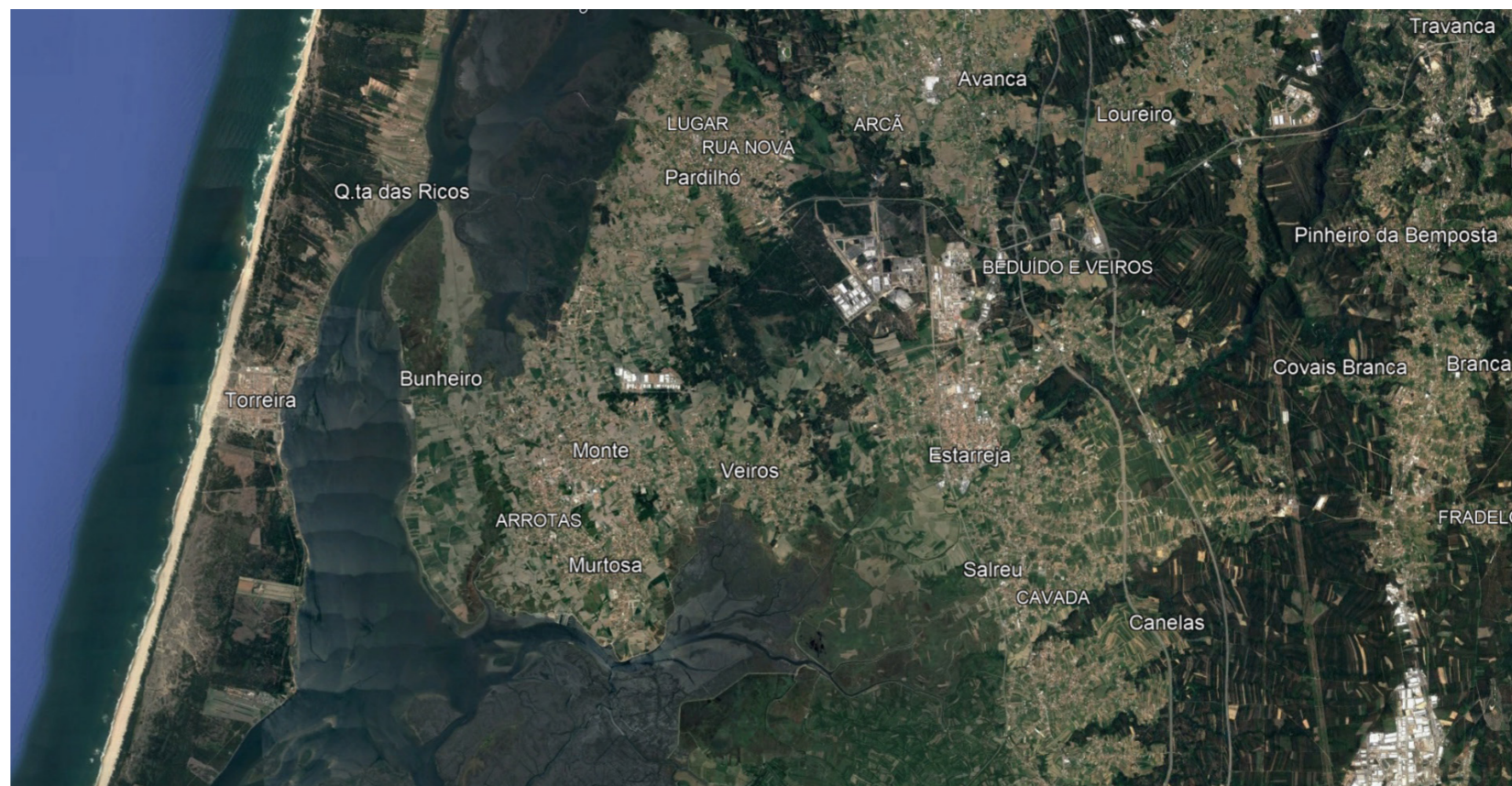


Map of the proposed area for classification as a local Natural Park, which includes part of a Natura 2000 site, in yellow, and a new area, to the East, in green. With this strategy, over 50% of Estarreja's territory will be classified, as well as all major water bodies.



Aerial view of Estarreja's territory. It is possible to distinguish the urban area of the city of Estarreja, from the Rural areas that comprise most of the Municipality. All five Parishes are identified on the picture, from North to South: Avanca, Pardilhó, União de Freguesias de Beduido e Veiros, Salreu and União de Freguesias de Canelas e Fernelã.



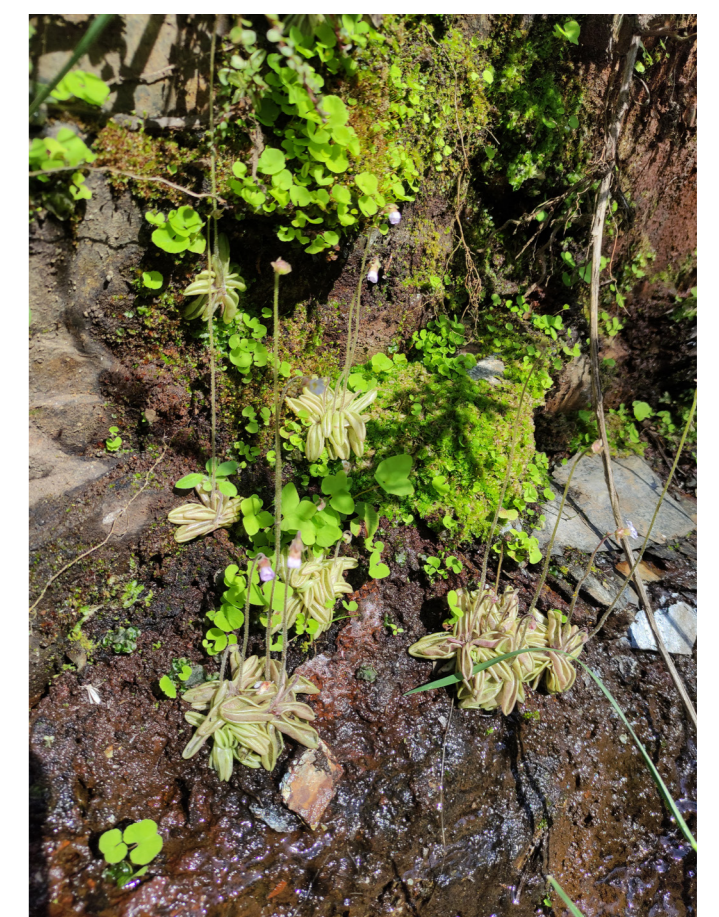
The "Bocage". This bucolic landscape is typical from the Low-Vouga area, and is a landscape shaped by local populations for centuries. It is composed by small agricultural fields and pastures, each one surrounded by freshwater ditches and live fences, with native trees and shrubs. It is then a man-made agro-ecosystem, that maintains its traits from the past, and proves that a healthy relationship between human activities and nature can still exist today.



Picture of one of several brooks that will be included on the new classified area. Usually overlooked, these small water bodies are vital for many animal and plant species. These brooks and adjacent areas, are also frequently altered and disturbed, not only endangering the species that depend on them, but also affecting water catchment. The brook represented on this picture, although severely altered, still maintains some original vegetation, such as an oak-tree and some species of ferns, which highlights its potential for restoration.



Fishing boats, docked in one of the many "Ribeiras" located on the Pardilhó Parish. There are plenty of human activities in the territory, closely linked with the region's natural values, highlighting its importance and relevance for the communities.



*Pinguicola lusitanica* – This carnivore plant, an endemic species from Portugal, practically disappeared from Estarreja's territory, mostly due to the disturbance and transformation often applied to water bodies. This is one of many examples of plant species whose populations are decreasing at a local, regional and national level. With the adoption of good practices, and implementing direct actions towards their conservation, these species will benefit, providing conditions for a larger diversity of animals.



Volunteering activities are a good way to link environmental awareness and conservation efforts, and collaborations with NGO's, Schools, Universities and Companies are important in reaching and involving a larger number of participants in these initiatives. Volunteer activities, such as the control of invasive plant species represented in this picture, developed in partnership with local actors, will be essential in BioRia Natural Park, and will benefit both natural ecosystems and the relationship between local communities and nature.



A Natural Park also intends to promote local territory and its products, especially those based on ancestral knowledge and natural values. Therefore, we believe this classification will help to maintain, promote and value several activities and products, such as the typical (but scarce) weaving of lakeshore bulrush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) mats, represented in this figure.



The "Natural Park" seal is a strong name, and one that attracts nature lovers from national and international locations. Thus, the implementation of this classified area will boost local Nature and Sustainable Tourism, and allow the linkage with Estarreja's agriculture, museums, urban art, history and traditions.

## Community social characterization

The Municipality of Estarreja is located in the Center-North coastal area of Portugal, close to Ria de Aveiro Lagoon, population of 26 224, population density of 242.4 hab/km<sup>2</sup>. 63% of its population is between 15 and 64 yo, and 24% is over 65 yo.

## Motivation of the pilot

To co-create and implement a local classified area, that will be governed through innovative and inclusive approaches. Although part of the focus area is included in a Natura 2000 site, there is a lack of a management strategy that ensures a sustainable development of the territory, involving all its stakeholders.

## Existing NBS applications and initiatives

The main NBS already implemented in the focus area of this pilot is BioRia, a Nature Tourism and Environmental Education project.

## Leverage resources for NBS

1) Local farmers and livestock production associations; 2) NGO's with established environmental projects; 3) Universities; 4) Local tourism businesses; 5) Hunters and Fishermen Association; 6) Local media; 7) Inst. for the Conservation of Nature and Forests; 8) Regional Direction for Agriculture and Fisheries.

## Environmental Challenges

The intensification of agricultural activities and land-use change; the brackish water intrusion affecting not only landscape and ecosystem functioning, but also agriculture and cattle production; water and soil contamination from past and current large industrial complex; private character of the territory, often in a smallholding scheme.

## Social Challenges

Lack of environmental awareness of the main stakeholders. Gaps in knowledge regarding integrative or regenerative agriculture. Youth disconnected with nature.

## Economic Challenges

The maximum yield and profit approach in farming leads to intensive or impactful practices, invasive species have negative impacts on primary and secondary economic activities; wild animals as agricultural pests.

## Governance in the pilot case

Democratic and inclusive process in three phases:

- 1) should focus on communicating the area's main natural and cultural values;
- 2) common vision;
- 3) defining methods.

## Local governance profile

Coordination of Municipality and horizontal partners – landowners, farmers, livestock producers, public entities, schools, environmental NGO, Universities, local businesses, population, media.

## Target group

Families, landowners, farmers and livestock producers, local students, general population.

## Small scale NBS testing

Co-creation of a new classified area, with the ultimate goal of developing a strategy for the area that balances the interests of local stakeholders and biodiversity conservation.

## Challenges raised during the preparatory meetings

Joining and involving different stakeholders, conflicts with landowners, how to link with local industry.

## Who owns the land?

Mostly private ownership, often smallholding.

## Possible local partners, associations, initiatives and champions to be engaged

Environmental and social NGO's, Universities, schools, landowners, farmers, cattle producers, beekeepers, hunters and fishermen associations, local businesses, private companies, media partners, among others.