

*Oral presentation, Session title: "Cultural transformations of mountain landscapes"*

# Cultural Landscape and Fire through the Iberian Central Mountain System

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## **Abstract:**

Fire has historically shaped landscapes as a natural and cultural element of land management in the Iberian Peninsula. In fact, the Iberian Central Mountain System is known as one of the greatest mainland historic and current rural fire landscapes of Mediterranean regions. These cultural landscapes have been studied by different disciplines from a millennial perspective to shorter time scales. However, because of limitations on fire and land use history data availability, these studies have been reduced to the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This presentation focuses on analyzing the historic bond of fire and territory in Estrela massif and Ayllón massif from a long-term perspective. We applied a comparative analysis in order to understand the changing dynamics in both the western and eastern ends of the Iberian Central Mountain System, as well as to be able to explain its relation to the current fire issue. Geohistorical and geospatial information sources, along with methods of Geographical History and GIS techniques, enabled the following results: an original database of historical rural fires (prior to 1968 in Spain, and prior to 1975 in Portugal), and the reconstruction of the historical dynamics of land use, population and settlement, and forest management activities. Results analysis showed that the different environmental, political and socio-economic contexts at either end of the Central Mountain System, have led to distinct cultural landscape dynamics and associated nonlinear fire regimes. This approach highlights the historical role of fire and its value as an integrating component of the cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** Rural fires, forest, historical dynamics, landscape change, Estrela massif; Ayllón massif

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