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The Heritage of a Bridge: A Portuguese interpretation

A small historic bridge was the motive of a public competition found in a national newspaper in 1995. A visit to the site showed that this little bridge of *Ribeira da Venda* was a landmark in the *Alentejo* landscape, in the South of Portugal. It was the place where, in the hot summer days, people come to enjoy the shadow of the trees and the fresh water running in a small stream. A stream that runs under three damaged arches, displaying an irregular shape as the result of the loss of materials, that were swept away during the last decades, in what once was a well designed bridge. The function still remained then, although the connection between the two margins of this cultural landscape was a difficult and dangerous path.

This paper will discuss the architects reflections that the above issues triggered in the interpretation of this bridge heritage and describe the design solutions implemented on site to preserve the values of the place, using contemporary materials and technologies. The result, is a discreet presence in the cultural landscape.