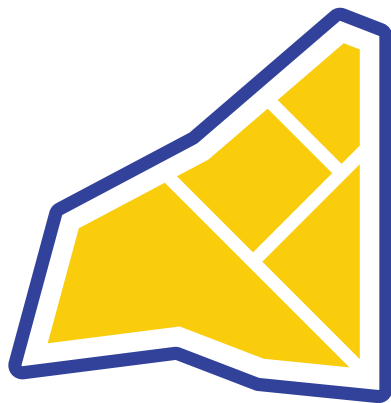




Colectivo Colonia

COLONIA TODAY

“Más allá de carreteras y calles” – more than roads and streets.

Colonia Casa de Campo was originally conceived as an alternative to the chaos of Madrid - an enclave meant to offer calm, dignity, and domestic life at human scale. Today, however, it often feels like the very urban condition it sought to escape: fragmented, car-dominated, and disconnected, while grappling with urgent 21st-century challenges such as climate risk, spatial inequality, and diminished social cohesion.

And yet, the very feature that defines this condition most - its 100,000 m² ¹ of ambiguous in-between spaces - offers a profound opportunity. Rather than expand or demolish, Colonia has the chance to reinvent itself from within by transforming its overlooked and underused voids into vibrant, shared infrastructure. What would it take to turn these spaces into the foundation of a healthy, inclusive, and climate-resilient neighbourhood?

REIMAGINING THE IN-BETWEEN

At the heart of Colonia's challenges lies its built form. Between dense residential blocks lie dozens of ambiguous plots—remnants of an outdated plan, never fully programmed, and now severed by roads that prioritise cars over community. Fragmented in size, quality, character, and ownership—some overgrown and fenced, others paved and parked upon, and many simply neglected - these leftover spaces erode urban vibrancy and fail to provide the social, mobility, and ecological infrastructure vital to neighbourhood life. The result is an under-utilised territory rife with missed opportunities: places where children might play, neighbours might gather, or excess rainwater might be captured.

To regenerate Colonia, we must first rediscover the value of these leftover spaces both for the city - as vital ecological and spatial infrastructure - and for residents - as extensions of everyday life and shared belonging. This requires a rigorous yet empathetic approach to understanding what is needed, what is possible, and what is desired. Which actions are required to address the urgencies defined within the Madrid Regenera plan? What new programmes can be supported by the fragmented plots, given their complexity and variation in size, shape, quality, location, and ownership? Crucially, what are the desires of the residents themselves—how do they envision their urban environment, and what different urgencies do they perceive?

AN ACTION PLATFORM

Colectivo Colonia is an Action Platform for the community-led transformation of Colonia Casa de Campo's fragmented collective spaces into a resilient, accessible, and inclusive urban commons. Rather than proposing a static plan or predefined set of interventions, the platform acts as an adaptive ecosystem of tools, strategies, and processes, designed to support ongoing action across all stages of trans-

formation, from diagnosis and visioning to development, activation, and maintenance. Its open-ended structure enables diverse stakeholders to engage and co-create solutions in ways that evolve with time, urgency, and capacity. At the heart of the Platform is a systems-based approach that weaves together three critical dimensions - People, Space, and Data - ensuring that transformation is participatory, spatially

1. Excluding buildings, roads, pavement, parking spaces, and formal public space, Colonia contains approx 102,700 m² of in-between spaces
2. Ayuntamiento de Madrid. "Programa municipal de Huertos Urbanos Comunitarios." Madrid.es



grounded, and insight-driven. Together, these three pillars form the architecture of the Action Platform - ensuring that transformation in Colonia is not only

participatory and place-based, but also informed, strategic, and scalable.

DATA - THE VISIONING TOOL

The CreateColonia tool is an intuitive digital application that helps communities see their neighborhoods through three complementary lenses - what is needed (urgent spatial challenges), what is possible (site conditions and programme feasibility), and what is desired (community aspirations). Drawing on the *Madrid Regenera* framework, it uses algorithms to analyse complex spatial conditions to map localized urgencies, and flag where different interventions - new green spaces, pathways, community squares - could or should fit.

Once the raw data is in place, the tool shifts into *scenario mode*, blending those objective site constraints with the priorities that workshop participants set through simple sliders, drag-and-drop elements, and preference inputs. Although powered by data, the tool is not designed to produce one 'optimal' blueprint. Instead, it sparks collective imagination by generating and visualising a suite of possible future scenarios, each illustrating how different priorities and trade-offs play out on the ground. Essentially, the tool is a time machine, allowing residents to

imagine, debate, and refine transformation ideas long before any investment is made, saving both time and resources.

Designed expressly for non-experts, the CreateColonia tool strips away expert jargon and complex interfaces so that everyone - from long-time neighbors to first-time participants - can engage directly in co-design workshops. As they tug and tweak scenarios, users immediately see how their wishes bump up against spatial constraints, environmental targets, or others' desires, transforming abstract and complex conditions into tangible visualised map layers. In doing so, the tool not only builds consensus around a shared vision but also deepens public understanding of urban complexity and the trade-offs inherent in every decision. Anchored at the intersection of People, Space, and Data, and inspired by real-world precedents like the *Rotterdam RoofScape*³ software, it turns static diagnostics into a dynamic engine of collective imagination, while bridging human desires with systemic necessity. But how do we translate these visions to space?

SPACE - THE SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Spatial Strategy is built around a flexible, extensible catalogue of urban actions - each one a targeted intervention designed to unlock the latent potential of Colonia's existing in-between spaces. Whether it's an Urban Garden that echoes Madrid's *Huertos Urbanos Comunitarios*², a Shared Street that reclaims a car-dominated road for people, or a Neighbourhood Square that fosters cross-generational interaction, every action comes with clearly defined spatial requirements and delivers specific ecological, accessibility, or social benefits. By reimagining everything from narrow alleyways and irregular leftover plots to oversized parking lots, the catalogue reframes each awkward gap not as wasted space but as a vital patch in a broader, more connected neighbourhood fabric.

Crucially, each action can be deployed in two complementary modes - a tactical version that's low-cost, low-effort, and quick to implement, and a structural

upgrade that secures long-term quality and permanence. This dual-phasing enables a hybrid regeneration model: experts can rapidly address urgent needs with municipality-backed structural interventions, while the remaining majority of space evolves at a slower pace, with the residents at the heart of the process. With residents leading and professionals supporting, even such bottom-up tactical interventions can become powerful catalysts for change, as illustrated by initiatives elsewhere in Madrid like the Puente de Colores⁴ and Solar Almendro 3⁵ projects, fostering a resilient, inclusive, and continuously evolving public realm that truly belongs to the community. Yet even the best interventions demand a clear, inclusive governance framework to move from tactical wins to lasting change - without it, these spaces risk reverting to fragmentation rather than coalescing into a true commons.

PEOPLE - THE COMMONS FRAMEWORK

The Commons Framework puts Colonia's residents squarely at the heart of both visioning and stewardship, empowering them to collectively create, im-

plement, and govern their neighbourhood as a living urban commons. To facilitate the transformation, the Action Platform builds on the existing *Asociación*

3. Rory Stott. "MVRDV, Superworld, and the City of Rotterdam Create Software for Reimagining Rooftops." ArchDaily, November 16, 2022.

4. "Puente de Colores." Wikipedia. Last modified April 2024.



*Vecinal de Campamento*⁶ and evolves this grass-roots body into a fully empowered Neighbourhood Association, broadening its membership to include not only residents but also planners, architects, ecologists, traffic engineers, and sociologists. This hybrid assembly ensures that every decision is grounded in local insight yet informed by technical expertise and aligned with municipal objectives, fostering genuine collaboration that transcends token participation.

Within the Association, resident-led Action Groups focused on all aspects of transformation - design, building, events, maintenance, and feedback - translate high-level strategy into street-level action and stewardship. By taking responsibility for day-to-day tasks, these groups embed a care-based ethic into every corner of the neighbourhood, from organising community build-days to monitoring the health of newly planted green spaces. This distributed model of stewardship not only accelerates implementation but also cultivates shared responsibility and a deeper sense of belonging among all residents of Colonia.

TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

Transformation in Colonia can only happen incrementally. Every action, from a reclaimed parking spot to a full park redesign, acts as a building block of a larger comprehensive vision. Starting with such small tactical interventions addressing both general urgencies and the desires of residents, the Action Platform facilitates small, rapid wins that build momentum, while maintaining the flexibility to evolve based on community feedback and changing needs. These swift, low-cost pilots not only relieve immediate pressures but also act as live prototypes; as experts and residents observe their performance and gather feedback, the most successful interventions are gradually formalized into lasting, structural upgrades.

To keep local knowledge and lived experience at the forefront, the Action Platform supports participatory processes with practical resources. Community forums and guided mapping walks feed on-the-ground insights into spatial urgencies, while co-design workshops translate these insights into concrete plans. DIY manuals and a shared library of tools and materials enable residents to take hands-on responsibility for small-scale builds, and regular co-build weekends mobilize collective energy to construct and maintain installations. At every step, resident surveys and structured feedback loops capture evolving aspirations and performance data, ensuring that each project not only responds to

However, true systemic change requires more than participation. It must also scale beyond public land and into the fragmented mosaic of semi-private and privately owned collective spaces. To this end, the Action Platform establishes a dedicated Community Land Trust (CLT). Initially stewarding municipally owned plots, the CLT offers private landowners the option to lease their properties temporarily for communal use in exchange for co-financing of redesign and regeneration, shared maintenance, and community benefit. Jointly managed by the Neighbourhood Association and the Madrid Municipality, the CLT pools funding from public budgets, grants, donations, and crowdfunded contributions, while ensuring transparent transformation, governance and coordinated upkeep. Drawing on global precedents such as *Brussels' Community Land Trust*⁷ and emerging digital approaches like the *Re:Permissioning the City*⁸ protocol, Colonia's CLT embeds solidarity, not speculation, at the core of its governance model. This approach allows residents to become true stewards of their collective spaces without altering formal ownership, anchoring regeneration in local care and mutual trust.

immediate needs but also productively informs the next wave of interventions.

Coordinating and sustaining this ecosystem is the Neighbourhood Association, now expanded with technical partners who bring planning, ecological, and infrastructural expertise into the collaborative fold. Within the Association, resident-led Action Groups - focused on everything from design and construction to event programming and ongoing maintenance - embed stewardship directly into daily life. This distributed model of care builds social capital, deepens a shared sense of responsibility, and transforms isolated projects into a coherent tapestry of public spaces cared for by the entire community.

By pairing tactical agility with structural permanence and placing residents at the heart of both design and delivery, the Action Platform transforms Colonia's fragmented voids into a living urban commons—one where each small success builds momentum for larger change and every lesson learned feeds back into the strategy. Initially, major urgencies on public land are tackled through municipality-backed structural interventions, while resident-led tactical activations - pop-up gardens, temporary seating, modular play areas - test and refine ideas in real time. As the neighbourhood rallies around these early wins, the Platform prepares to scale beyond the municipal footprint: through the Community Land Trust model, private landowners

5. Ayuntamiento de Madrid. "Almendo, 3: un espacio recuperado para los vecinos de Sol." *Diario.madrid.es*, April 25, 2017.

6. Asociación Vecinal de Campamento. "Inicio." *AVCampamento.org*



will be invited to lease under-utilized parcels first on trial and eventually under permanent stewardship. In this way, Colonia's commons grows organically,

remaining rapid, responsive, resilient, accessible, and equitable, and always true to the dreams and values of the people who call it home.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This Action Platform is just the beginning. Colectivo Colonia now calls on residents, municipal partners, and technical experts to pilot our CreateColonia tool in neighbourhood workshops, launch the first tactical activations, and formally charter the Community Land Trust. Each quick win will catalyse further action,

while the CLT provides the structure to bring private parcels into the commons and expand the regeneration across the neighbourhood and possibly beyond. Together, we can re-source Colonia's leftover plots into a self-governing, resilient, and equitable urban commons.

