

"The Memory of Water" proposes that the regeneration of place begins with its memory. By revisiting and reinterpreting the cultural, ecological, and spatial traces of the past, tradition becomes a foundation for innovation—a strategic tool for the renewal of neglected urban environments.

1. Context

The project site is located within the Campolide district, in the central-western area of the city of Lisbon. Spanning approximately 11.6 hectares, the area presents various critical issues, primarily of a morphological and urban nature. It is situated in a wedge of land currently disconnected from the city's broader urban context, due to the presence of major infrastructural elements on its periphery: to one side, the Campolide train station and the EIXO Norte-Sul highway; to the other, Rua de Campolide, a heavily trafficked road serving as a key axis for the area.

Compounding this isolation is the complex internal topography, characterised by steep slopes—up to 70% in some areas—and a total elevation difference exceeding 28 meters. These conditions make the area challenging to manage and inhabit.

At present, the site is undergoing a significant transformation, as it has been chosen as the starting point for the main tunnel of the *Plano Geral de Drenagem de Lisboa*. This 5-kilometre infrastructure project will connect the Alcântara Valley to Santa Apolónia, supporting the city in its efforts to manage stormwater—particularly during the increasingly intense rainfall events. This intervention marks the beginning of a broader transformation and could initiate a new chapter for the site.

2. Project Development

The proposed development for the Campolide site is entitled **As Memória das Águas**.

This name was chosen to evoke the multiple historical layers of the area and to connect them with the present, shaping a design approach that responds to contemporary urban challenges while remaining deeply rooted in the site's identity.

The design process began with a contextual and intrinsic analysis of the site, aiming to acknowledge both its strategic position and potential. The area lies within what is considered Lisbon's principal green corridor, connecting Avenida da Liberdade to the Monsanto Forest Park—one of the city's primary green corridors. The development of this ecological corridor has resulted in the creation of pedestrian and cycling paths that unfortunately become fragmented upon approaching the project area.

A simple pedestrian path became the conceptual foundation of the design. This path, represented as a delicate "yellow" spline, traverses the site from north to south, stitching together the area's fragmented elements. The introduction of a pedestrian bridge linking Campolide Station enhances accessibility and strengthens the site's integration with public transportation networks.

This path acts both as a connector and a boundary, segmenting the space while simultaneously creating cohesion. It generates a series of zones with distinct functions, much like pieces of a puzzle—each with standalone value, but enhanced when connected.



Fig 1: Initial design of the path and division of the areas.



Fig 2: Conceptual development of the area's functions

Four main functional models were defined within this framework:

Ecological Function

To reinforce the continuity of the green corridor and enhance the ecosystem services it can provide, efforts were made to increase the ecological value of the site. The park becomes the central connective element, a green lung designed not only to promote biodiversity but also to improve the quality of life for residents.

The pedestrian spine bisects the park into two primary zones. The section bordering Rua de Campolide and the urban frontage to the south is designated as an urban park, supporting a range of human activities such as sports facilities, playgrounds, and communal spaces. Conversely, the northern portion of the park—positioned at a higher elevation—offers scenic views over the Águas Livres Aqueduct and a more immersive landscape integrated with residential areas and local amenities.

The segment adjacent to the station is assigned an ecological character. This area features constructed wetlands—systems for collecting and absorbing stormwater. The design references the area's hydrological past, as the Ribeira de Alcântara once ran alongside this site. Its presence can still be perceived in the curvature of the station's railway tracks. Reintroducing water elements, even partially, reestablishes a riparian character that had long disappeared.

Productive Function

A significant component of the site's identity is its historical use as agricultural land. Existing structures—such as a traditional *Quinta* currently under restoration and *Vila Elvira*, a former workers' housing unit—bear testimony to this legacy. Seeking to reestablish this relationship with the land, the project introduces the concept of an agri-village. This will enable local families to partially sustain themselves through small-scale agriculture.

The agricultural plots are located at the intersection between the residential fabric and the natural park. Defined by low retaining walls that terrace the land, the gardens remain visually and spatially accessible to those walking through the green areas.

The system includes approximately 100 plots of 145 m² each, capable of providing food for around 100 families of four for one year. Management of the plots is envisioned at the local level, offering both productive and social benefits by fostering collaboration and community identity among residents.

Residential Function

Currently, the area presents substantial residential challenges, both in terms of topographical complexity and lack of connectivity. However, Lisbon's rapid urban expansion and growing population have intensified existing lack of housing, prompting the inclusion of approximately 200 residential units within the proposal.

These units are strategically integrated with multifunctional and socially-oriented buildings, reinforcing the spatial connections between park and urban fabric. The architectural diversity of the buildings ensures continuous activity throughout the day, enhancing the area's vibrancy and appeal for permanent residents.

As with the park, the residential buildings are designed to be functionally integrated into the territory. Green roofs and greenhouses complement the productive landscape of the gardens. Furthermore, sustainable strategies such as rainwater harvesting and solar energy generation promote resource circularity. The overarching goal is to attract stable inhabitants while deliberately avoiding patterns of mass tourism, positioning Campolide as a place to live rather than simply to pass through.

Social and Cultural Function

To strengthen the area's identity and weave it back into the surrounding urban fabric from which it is currently isolated, the proposal highlights initiatives with strong social and cultural dimensions. From sports facilities capable of drawing residents from adjacent neighbourhoods, to the creation of a dynamic network of activities, the space is envisioned as a generator of communal vitality.

This productive character is also manifested in the creation of local markets and thematic workshops, which promote the development of a strong social network. In today's urban environments, where social fragmentation and forced commuting are common, reestablishing meaningful connections between people and place is imperative.

The proposed agri-village also supports this vision by placing both the land and the citizen at the centre of the urban experience—promoting intergenerational exchange and collective engagement through sustainable and place-based practices.



3. The Future of Campolide

The regeneration of Campolide represents a crucial opportunity not only for the site itself but also for the future of Lisbon. Through this intervention, we aim to propose a replicable and scalable model, adaptable to other complex urban areas. It is a regeneration strategy that acknowledges the realities of climate change and facilitates the re-emergence of a socially connected urban fabric.

Stormwater management remains one of Lisbon's most pressing infrastructural challenges. The techniques proposed here are aligned with the principles outlined in the Plano Geral de Drenagem de Lisboa, which emphasises the importance of small-scale interventions that increase the land's absorbent capacity.

The establishment of a new green and pedestrian corridor will also improve the area's liveability over time, supporting the creation of a new Bairro Social—a socially focused neighbourhood serving as a hub for integration, collective identity, and community-oriented policies.

In conclusion, As Memória das Águas is more than a project; it is an approach. It is a model that invites us to reimagine urban regeneration through memory, ecology, and community. It calls for a shift in perspective—seeing forgotten spaces not as voids, but as vessels of potential, shaped by their past and ready for a new future.

