

Rionegro

Memories of Water

Memories of Water: Reconnecting Rionegro with its Living Landscape

In the centre of Colombia, where mountains embrace the land and rivers weave through valleys, a vision is taking shape. Five architectural and landscape studios—Geográfica Sur, Cosme, Rojas Y Abaco Arquitectura, TAP, and EMS Arquitectura—have united to create "Memories of Water." This project seeks to heal the fractured relationship between nature and urban life, fostering an ecologically responsible and socially cohesive city where water is not an obstacle but a guiding force.

A Territory Shaped by Water

Colombia is a country born from water, endowed with an immense hydrological wealth that has long been neglected in urban planning. Nowhere is this more evident than in Rionegro, a city cradled in a basin of lush landscapes and shaped by the flow of its namesake river. Rapid urban expansion has severed the delicate ties between the city and its natural environment, leading to flooding, ecological degradation, and a collective disconnection from the very element that once defined the territory.

Restoring Balance: A River Reimagined

The "Memories of Water" project seeks to reimagine Rionegro's urban fabric, positioning the

river not as a constraint but as the backbone axis of a revitalized ecosystem.

By transforming the floodplain into a dynamic network of amphibious parks, we aim to restore the lost dialogue between water and people. These parks will adapt to seasonal floods, creating spaces that celebrate water rather than fight against it.

Ecosystemic revitalization will turn the river into a thriving ecological corridor, reinforcing its role as a living artery that nourishes biodiversity and reconnects fragmented urban spaces. Public spaces will be redesigned to embrace rather than resist the water's presence, integrating cultural programs that celebrate the river's history and significance.

A Living Legacy

For Rionegro, the river is not just a body of water—it is a storyteller, shaping the land and the lives entwined with it. "Memories of Water" embraces this ever-changing landscape, recognizing that the river will always flow, sculpting the city's history as it has for centuries. Through this project, we aim to craft a future where Rionegro and its river move forward together, resilient, full of life, and in harmony with nature.

- DURATION

Ongoing since 2022

- POPULATION 2024

Rionegro: 62,000 (Growth rate 0.98%)

- URA SCOPE

ECOLOGY. Green Urbanism.

- TOPICS

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

CONNECTIVITY

REVITALIZATION

LEGACY

- MAIN ACTORS

TAP Arquitectura del Paisaje

GEOGRÁFICA SUR Architecture and Landscape

COSME Architecture and Landscape

ROJAS Y ABACO ARQUITECTURA

EMS ARQUITECTURA





This collaborative approach strengthens local identity, encourages resource stewardship, and builds a resilient future.

Impact

Reviving Nature, Empowering Communities, Shaping the Future

This project represents a transformative approach to urban and ecological development, enhancing both the region's environmental dynamics and fostering human rights, social justice, equality of opportunities, and overall community well-being.

Through participatory planning workshops, the initiative actively involved residents, ensuring that their needs and aspirations were addressed. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership, encourages responsible interaction with the area's natural heritage, and celebrates the community's cultural identity.

The design of diverse social spaces within the ecological park promotes equality and well-being by incorporating environmental recovery interventions. These efforts mitigate erosion, provide serene areas for landscape appreciation, and create lively social gathering points. By engaging with the river's dynamic ecosystem, residents develop a deeper awareness of its ecological significance.

The proposed stilt architecture further enhances resilience by accommodating seasonal floods, allowing commercial and recreational activities to thrive within the park, thereby broadening its appeal to various users.

To redefine urban-nature integration, the project advocates for amphibious and stilt architecture as sustainable solutions that harmonize human settlements with the natural ebb and flow of rivers. Built with durable and resilient materials, these structures withstand flooding while preserving the environment, reinforcing sustainability, and ensuring long-term ecological balance.

Furthermore, the ecological park serves as a cultural and recreational hub, hosting events that foster social cohesion and enrich community life. By educating residents on the critical role of these ecosystems, the project lays the groundwork for a future where environmental consciousness and quality of life are intrinsically linked, ensuring lasting benefits for generations to come.

Challenge

Rionegro has faced significant environmental and social challenges due to rapid urban expansion and a lack of comprehensive urban planning. The accelerated growth of the municipality has disrupted the natural balance, leading to the deterioration of ecosystems and a landscape increasingly vulnerable to flooding. As impermeable surfaces replace natural soil, drainage capacity has been severely reduced, intensifying the risks associated with extreme weather events and diminishing the resilience of the urban environment.

This transformation has not only caused ecological damage but also weakened the historical relationship between the community and its natural surroundings. The river, once a central element in the lives of the inhabitants—providing sustenance, cultural identity, and recreational spaces—has been progressively neglected. Public spaces have lost their connection with the water, reinforcing a collective disassociation from the very ecosystem that once shaped the municipality's identity.

Addressing this challenge requires a reconceptualization of urban development, integrating ecological restoration with social inclusion. Restoring Rionegro's lost connection with water and its ecosystems is essential for creating resilient, flood-adaptive environments, promoting environmental awareness, and ensuring a sustainable and harmonious future for both the city and its inhabitants.

Solution Proposed

Consolidating a System of Floodable Parks. **Integration:** Reconnecting Ecosystems and Urban Habitats. This project aims to strengthen the ecological corridor of Río Negro by restoring connections between nature and the city. It focuses on improving soil drainage, promoting permeable urban areas, and regenerating native ecosystems. By leveraging the territory's hydrological network, the initiative enhances air quality and mitigates urban heat islands. Public spaces are designed to minimize environmental impact, using local materials and sustainable construction techniques, while waste reduction strategies help lower the carbon footprint.

Consolidation: Creating Water-Adapted Public Spaces. A network of flood-adapted parks is established to enhance ecological and social interactions. By improving connectivity between various city areas, the project redefines the river's role as a communal space. These areas accommodate the river's natural dynamics and promote environmental education, recreation, commerce, and reflection, making the river a vital part of urban life.

Recovery: The project promotes inclusive public spaces that enhance community well-being. Participatory planning workshops engage residents, local authorities, and private entities to address various needs.