2. Bouça da Lage, Minho, Portugal



The Diffuse Territory of Vale do Ave

This territory, located in the northeastern part of Portugal, encompasses areas of both the Braga and Porto districts. Historically, it has been a dynamic and diffuse area, largely due to the fertility of its soil and the abundance of water resources. The Ave River and all its affluents form its base structure, serving a variety of purposes such as irrigation, energy production through mills and early hydroelectric plants, and drainage. Vale do Ave is characterized by the simultaneity of multiple activities (agro-pastoral, industry, and housing) within the same place, with layers of time overlapping, from the Celto-Lusitanians (such as the Citânia de Briteiros) to the present, creating traces and tensions that reflect its complexity.

The Vale do Ave highlights the challenges faced by so-called "*diffuse territories,"* which lack clear frameworks for recognition or effective interpretative tools. This often results in ineffective preservation, management and intervention strategies. Therefore, it is crucial to closely examine these areas, exploring their unique characteristics, specificities, cycles, relationships and processes, without letting preconceptions, generalisations or global taxonomies shape the understanding. This approach requires, above all, moving away from traditional interpretive models, such as the classic rural-urban dichotomy or the territorial zoning.

This territory features a wide range of systems and interconnections of diverse natures. Open spaces are essential, not only due to their size, visibility or continuity—though often interrupted by buildings—but also because they contain **a transcalar rural milieu**. These spaces reflect the coexistence of abandoned land with massive industrial farming, a situation that can lead to soil depletion and reduced fertility.

Maybe it is time to reconsider the **main relevance of the soil.** The origin of this landscape. The implementation of ecological principles, adapted to the specific characteristics of each place, throughout the design process, will ensure the operativeness of the entire metabolic system. This means aiming for a way of constructing the territory that is more effective and complicit in a set of fields of relations based on diversity and multiplicity, which embraces promiscuity and contacts between materials, processes, productivity, activities, habits and inhabitants.


CITÂNIA DE
+ BRITEIROS
BOUÇA
DA LAGE
KIWI GREENSUN
LOGISTICS CENTRE
CASTRO
+ SABROSO
+ AVE PARK
1 km

Site description

In the Minho region, the *bouça* plays a significant role in both the landscape and rural culture. Traditionally, these areas of spontaneous vegetation—featuring shrubs, brambles, scrub, and trees like pines and oaks—functioned as multifunctional reserves. They provided firewood, timber, and grazing land for livestock, and were integral to the subsistence economy of local communities. The *bouça* also supplied plant manure, which was mixed into the soil for farming. This use was closely tied to the community's natural resource management practices.

Different views inside the site.

Today, Bouça da Lage is partially in ruins, but if we look closely, we find a pluriversal rurality, where multiple temporalities of the Ave Valley intersect. This parcel, located between the Citânia de Briteiros (2nd century BC) and the river Ave (the namesake of this region), focuses on a territory in constant flux, with the oldest settlement in this territory coexisting with intensive kiwi production, centred on GreenSun (the largest kiwi company in the Iberian Peninsula), with processes of abandonment and extensive occupation by eucalyptus. There is also the persistence of subsistence farming, which is inherent to living in this area, and the textile industry. It is in this triad of living-working-producing that the Ave Valley has been transformed.

Program requirements

We invite proposals to envision a "New Rurality Laboratory”— a community space fostering practices that interconnect different uses. The regeneration of the site focuses on revitalizing the soil through measures such as removing impermeable surfaces, soil remediation, adding organic matter, enhancing water infrastructure, planting pioneer and native species, and employing crop rotation and polyculture. It envisions fostering agro-pastoral production alongside the creation of work and research areas. Housing solutions range from temporary accommodations for workers to innovative models that promote connections between living, working, and production. Additionally, the plan explores alternatives for reusing or dismantling the existing structures without expanding the current building footprint, ensuring a sustainable transformation of the ruined space.

Minimum program requirements:

- Soil remediation laboratory
- Experimental greenhouse
- Stables for animals
- Temporary housing for workers
- Storage space
- Collective kitchen
- Community room