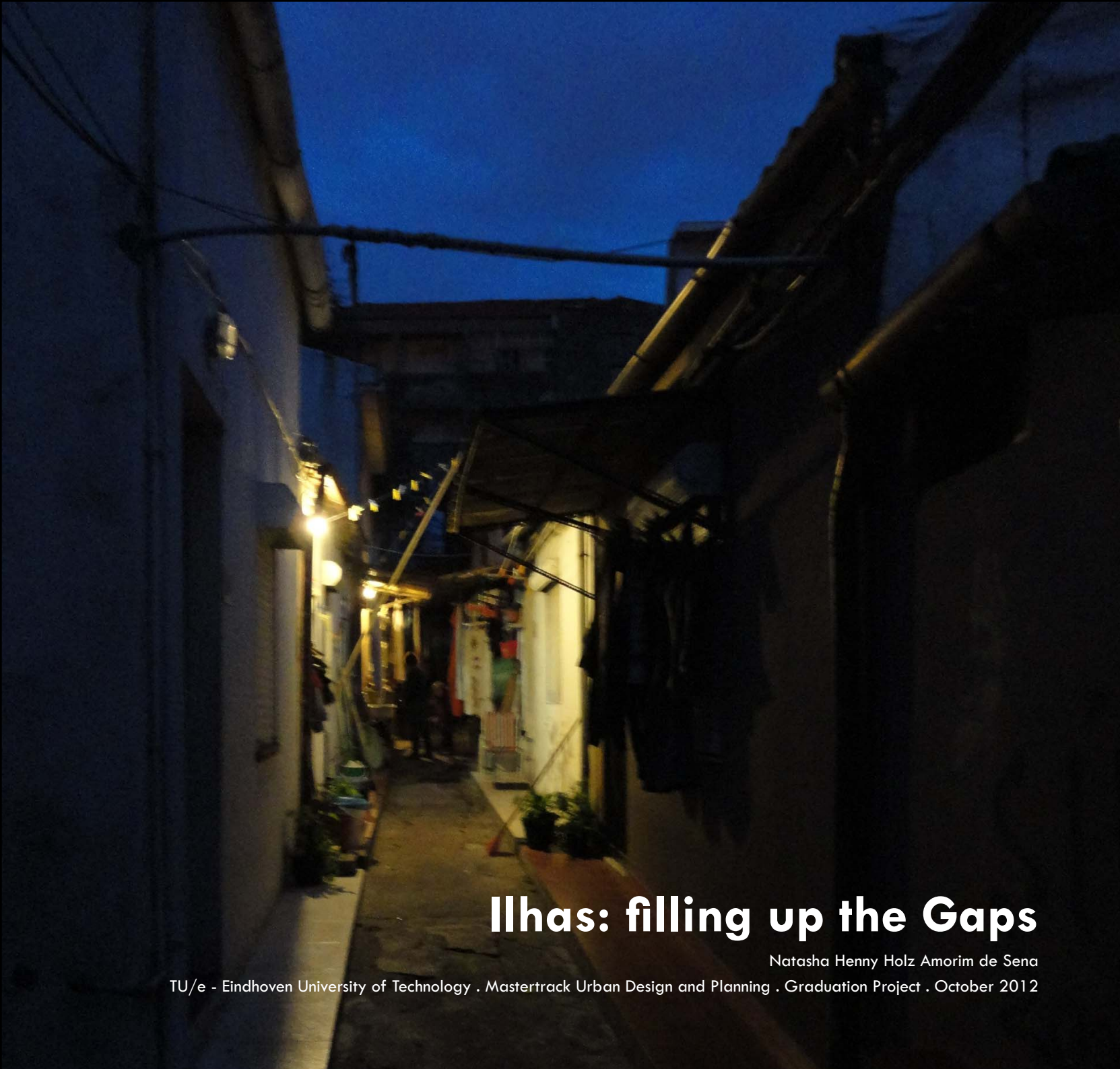




Ilhas: filling up the Gaps

Natasha Henny Holz Amorim de Sena

TU/e - Eindhoven University of Technology . Mastertrack Urban Design and Planning . Graduation Project . October 2012

Illas: filling up the Gaps



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Combining a housing typology from the past with the self-improvement urbanism from the present in Porto, Portugal

Natasha Henny Holz Amorim de Sena

Student number 0755572

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TU/e - Eindhoven University of Technology

Faculty Architecture, Building and Planning

Mastertrack Urban Design and Planning

Graduation Committee:

d.p.l.g. Rousseau, S. S. S.

dr. ir. Doevendans, C. H.

drs. van Zoest, J.G.A.

Summary

The Portuguese word 'Ilha' means 'island'. An 'Ilha' in Porto, Portugal, is a typology of low cost housing which spread within the city in the 19th Century, as a result of the industrial development and population growth. They received this name, Ilha, due to their character of isolation from the urban space within which they were located. The working class dwellings were established within backyards of middle class houses, and were surrounded by walls from all directions, connected to the street through a narrow corridor. The Ilhas represented the main housing typology in the City at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

The extremely small houses, arranged side by side along narrow corridors, lacked quality and comfort. And, despite all public trials of destroying them and relocating the inhabitants through the 20th Century, they still do. The typology survived through time and still exists, providing living conditions that are in many cases rather similar to the ones of the past. They were considered an urban problem in the past, and are still considered as such in the present. More than 1.000 Ilhas still exist within the city of Porto. No official up to date information is available, but there is an estimation that more than 13.000 people still live in these dwellings. The largest existing cluster of Ilhas in Porto can be found along São Victor street, and was chosen as the study area. In this cluster, located near the Centre of Porto, around 700 people live in approximately 29 Ilhas.

It is still the objective of the Municipality to tear down all Ilhas from Porto, and they have been erroneously demolishing them through the past years. There are reasons to believe that they should be preserved, since the people form a strongly tied community and the Ilhas can be an inexpensive solution for the current housing crisis.

Despite the lack of living quality conditions, the people show an impressive attachment to their living space. The most heard sentences in São Victor Street are: *"I will die here"* and *"I would never leave this place"*. The solution of the government of relocating inhabitants to the social housing in the suburbs goes against their own will. Today, most of the public suburban social housing built in the second half of the 20th century is being demolished by the Municipality, who declares that these spaces are room for criminality, whilst in the Ilhas the environment is mostly safe as a result of the community activity and social control on the streets.

But the positive aspects of the Ilhas are being threatened. According to the inhabitants of São Victor street, a wave of newcomers arrived in the Ilhas in the last years, mostly coming from the demolished suburban social housing buildings, diminishing the community feeling and increasing unsafety. Furthermore, the residents still live in dwellings with poor living conditions, in many cases without a private toilet, and they lack financial sources to improve this situation. Next to that the area has a very negative image within the city, as a result of the historical reputation of the Ilhas as unhealthy places, creating a barrier between the inner and outer scales of the urban block.

The problem is quite complex. It is formed by much more than a physical urban problem, but a combined situation of conflicts in social, economical and physical spheres. How to keep the community alive? How to improve the degraded dwellings without financial sources? How to decrease the negative image within the city and increase the relationship with the outside space? And above all, how to do it all without Governmental support?

The existing conflicts were classified into social, economical, scale and physical Gaps. The defined Gaps are nothing more than a translation of the conflicts that form the complete problem. Therefore the main question is:

“WHICH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS CAN MINIMIZE THE THREATS ON THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE ILHAS AND HOW CAN THEY BE IMPLEMENTED IN ORDER TO FILL UP THE SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL, SCALE AND PHYSICAL GAPS?”

The main strategy is to bind the complexity of the problem, using the physical space, by applying solutions to the different conflicts. Because there is no support from the authorities, the objective of the research is to develop improvement scenarios for the Ilhas and their surrounding urban space that can be achieved with the efforts of the population itself, within the middle of a deep economical, social and political crisis. The *‘Urbanism of self-improvement’* comes in a time of high unemployment rates, no financial sources and an aging Portuguese population, and binds it all in a spatial improvement methodology based on volunteer and community work.

The proposals are based on successful innovative solutions listed in a Toolbox. In the form of guidelines, the proposals are made for different scales of the urban space, based on the level of the social relationships, ranging from the privacy of the internal space of the Ilha until the openness of the public spaces.

The solutions show improvement in the large scale, increasing the relationship with outside the study area and diminishing the negative image within the city. In the inner-block scale, the community activities are incentivized through implementation of shared facilities in abandoned spaces. And at last, the inner space of the Ilha is improved through a group construction approach.

The main strength of the project result is the opportunity to spread the thought that urban changes can happen everywhere and in every scale, and can be made by everyone. The innovation is within the thought that urban design does not need an assignment, an investor and a client, but can be made by the people since they are the ones who know more than anyone how their own living environment can be improved. The result is a whole new approach of urbanism, including strong public participation and a whole new position of the planner within the process.

No Porto, a palavra ‘ilha’ tem um significado diferente em comparação a outros lugares do Mundo. Uma ‘ilha’ no Porto é uma tipologia de habitação operária que se espalhou pela cidade como consequência da Revolução Industrial e do crescimento habitacional a partir da segunda metade do século XIX. Essa tipologia de habitação foi batizada com o nome de ‘ilha’ devido ao seu caráter de isolamento em relação ao espaço urbano em que se encontravam. Estas habitações operárias foram deliberadamente construídas dentro dos quintais das habitações burguesas, e eram rodeadas de muros por todos os lados, e ligadas à rua por um estreito corredor na lateral da casa burguesa. As Ilhas representaram, no Porto, a principal tipologia habitacional do final do século XIX e primeira metade do século XX.

Às minúsculas residências, ordenadas lado a lado ao longo de um estreito corredor, faltava qualidade e conforto. E, apesar de todas as tentativas do poder público de destruição das Ilhas e realojamento dos residentes durante o século XX, ainda as faltam. A tipologia sobreviveu ao tempo e ainda existe, oferecendo condições de vida que em muitas vezes se assemelham àsquelas do passado. Elas foram consideradas um problema público no passado, e ainda são no presente. Mais de 1.000 Ilhas ainda existem na cidade do Porto. Não há informação oficial sobre a atual situação demográfica das Ilhas, mas estima-se que mais de 13.000 pessoas ainda vivam em tais habitações. O último aglomerado de Ilhas, na sua forma clássica, encontra-se ao longo da Rua de São Vítor, nas proximidades do centro do Porto, e este local foi o local escolhido como área de estudo deste projeto. Neste conjunto de aproximadamente 29 Ilhas vivem cerca de 700 pessoas.

Destruir todas as Ilhas da cidade ainda faz parte dos objetivos e promessas da Câmara Municipal do Porto, que vem erroneamente demolindo Ilhas nos últimos anos. Há razões para se acreditar que elas devem ser preservadas, devido à forte comunidade e sentido de vizinhança formados nas Ilhas e porque as Ilhas podem ser uma alternativa de baixo custo para o problema da habitação popular. Apesar das inferiores condições das residências, os moradores demonstram uma marcante ligação ao espaço onde moram. Ouve-se com frequência “Daqui só saio morto” ou “Eu não deixo minha Ilha por nada”. A solução encontrada pelo poder público, de relocar cidadãos para habitação popular nos subúrbios, vai contra a vontade dos próprios residentes. Atualmente, muitos dos projetos de habitação social do passado vem sendo demolidos pela Câmara, sob a justificativa de que estes espaços são antros de criminalidade, enquanto no espaço das Ilhas a sensação é na maioria das vezes de segurança, devido à intensa atividade social e vigilância feita pelos próprios moradores.

Mas esses aspectos positivos das Ilhas vêm sendo ameaçados. De acordo com os habitantes da Rua de São Vítor, uma onda de novos moradores está invadindo as Ilhas, muitas vezes vindos dos conjuntos de habitação popular demolidos nos subúrbios, enfraquecendo o sentido de vizinhança e aumentando o sentimento de insegurança. Além disso, os moradores ainda habitam residências de má qualidade, muitas vezes sem banheiro privativo, e não há condições financeiras para melhorias. Adicionalmente, a área de São Vítor tem uma imagem negativa na cidade, consequência da reputação histórica das Ilhas como lugares insalubres, criando uma barreira entre a escala do bloco e a escala da cidade.

O problema é consideravelmente complexo. É formado por mais do que um problema urbano, mas pela combinação de conflitos sociais, econômicos e de espaço. Como manter o sentido de vizinhança? Como melhorar a condição das habitações sem recursos financeiros? Como diminuir a imagem negativa deste espaço dentro da cidade? E acima de tudo, como fazer tudo isso sem o apoio do Governo? Esses conflitos foram classificados em vãos, sejam eles sociais, econômicos ou espaciais. Esses vãos nada mais são que a tradução dos conflitos que formam o problema como um todo. Portanto, a questão principal é:

“QUE SOLUÇÕES INOVADORAS VIRÃO A MINIMIZAR AS AMEAÇAS À QUALIDADE DAS ILHAS, E COMO PODEM ELAS SER IMPLEMENTADAS PARA QUE SE PREENCHAM OS VÃOS SOCIAIS, ECONÔMICOS, FÍSICOS E DA ESCALA DO ESPAÇO URBANO?”

A principal estratégia é agrupar toda a complexidade do problema dentro do aspecto físico do espaço, os vãos urbanos, aplicando soluções para os diferentes tipos de conflito. Como não há apoio do Governo, o objetivo da pesquisa é desenvolver cenários de melhoria para as Ilhas e seu entorno que podem ser atingidos através de esforços da própria população, em meio a uma profunda crise social, econômica e política. O ‘urbanismo autônomo’ é aplicado num momento de altas taxas de desemprego, falta de recursos econômicos e uma população Portuguesa envelhecida, e une todos esses aspectos num cenário de melhoria baseado em trabalho voluntário e esforços da comunidade.

As propostas são baseadas em soluções inovadoras de sucesso, apresentadas numa ‘Caixa de Ferramentas’. Na forma de diretrizes, as propostas foram feitas para diferentes escalas do espaço urbano, baseadas nos níveis de relações sociais, indo desde o ambiente privado do interior da Ilha até à amplitude social dos espaços públicos. As propostas mostram melhorias para a macro escala do entorno, incentivando o relacionamento entre o interior e o exterior da área de estudo, diminuindo a imagem negativa da Rua de São Vítor. Na escala da rua, o sentido de vizinhança é incentivado através da implantação de espaços comunais em pequenos vazios urbanos. E, por último, a escala privada do interior da Ilha recebe melhorias através de ações comunitárias.

O ponto principal desde projeto é a oportunidade de espalhar o conceito de que melhorias urbanas podem acontecer em qualquer lugar, em qualquer escala, e serem feitas por todos. A inovação está na ideia de que urbanismo não precisa de um investidor e um cliente, mas pode ser feito por pessoas, uma vez que são elas que sabem melhor do que ninguém que melhorias são necessárias no espaço onde habitam. O resultado final é uma nova forma de se encarar o urbanismo, incluindo intensa participação popular e uma nova posição do profissional urbano no processo.



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I have visited Porto for the first time in during during a short holiday in 2010 and I fell in love with the City. Maybe due to the language recognition, being a Brazilian and therefore having Portuguese as mother tongue. I felt surprisingly at home in a City I have never been before. Later in that year, I came across an image of one “Ilha” of Porto during a lecture from Mrs. Sophie Rousseau, who has been the main supervisor of this project. The image initiated my interest and I started to research more about the topic.

I felt immediately thrilled about the subject, but was well aware of the intensity of the challenge that such a project would bring, particularly because there is hardly any research being conducted on this subject. I decided to go for it, since it had always been my objective to work on a topic with a strong social aspect.

The beginning of the process was, indeed, challenging. There was little information available, and most of it only accessible in Portugal. After a brief research with the tools I could reach from the Netherlands, I went to Porto on my own and found amazingly helpful people and a very receptive atmosphere. There, I visited the Ilhas and felt extremely sure that I was on the right way. I got immersed in the topic, tried to put myself in the place of the inhabitants to fully comprehend the situation. And I talked so much, to so many people. Having Portuguese as my mother tongue surely was a precondition for the development of this research.

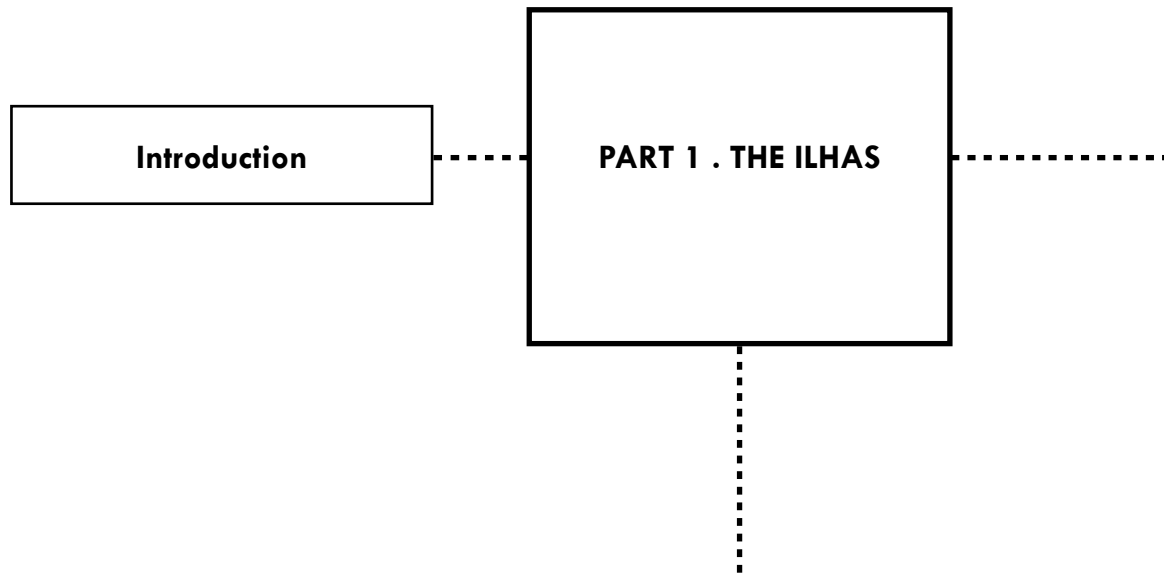
After all, I can state that this project was an amazing experience for me, and I hope that its message will bring some attention to the Ilhas and their people. I am very satisfied with the results I have reached after this year, which can be seen in the next pages.

Furthermore, I would like to show my gratitude to the numerous people who have in many ways contributed to my results. I would like to thank the Professors Rui Póvoas and Virgílio Borges Pereira from the University of Porto, for the time and precious advice, and Professor Fernando Matos Rodrigues for the long talks about the Ilhas. My gratitude also goes to Maria João Carvalho and Manuel Ribeiro, from the Municipality of Porto, for all research material and and their company while visiting São Victor street on sunny Saturday afternoons.

In the Netherlands, I would like to thank Mrs. Inneke Hulshof for the precious interview and inspiring social concepts. I also appreciate the valuable contribution of Irene Curulli, who has been one of the supervisors of this project for a great part of the process. And of course, I would like to say thanks to my supervisors Kees Doevendans, Johan van Zoest and Sophie Rousseau for the constant enthusiasm, ideas, contacts and encouragement.

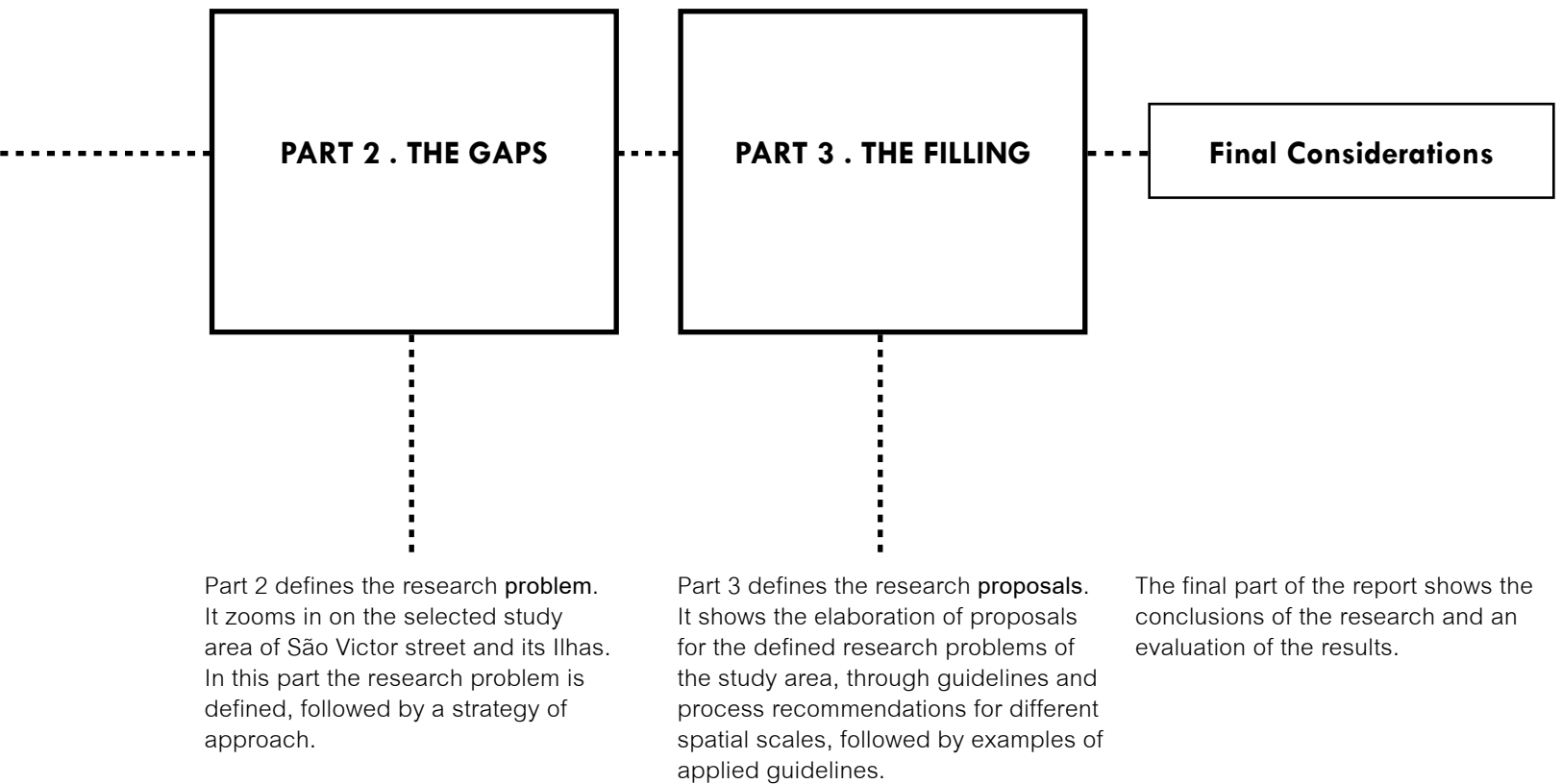
Finally, I would like to thank my Mother, who is always so positive and compassionate, and my boyfriend for his patience, unconditional support and constant certainty that everything would be all right.

Natasha Henny Holz Amorim de Sena
Eindhoven, October 2012



The first part of the report shows an Introduction to the subject and the theoretical framework of the process.

Part 1 defines the research **subject**. It shows an overview of the Ilhas of Porto. It starts with the historical development of the Ilhas, followed by their current situation in the City of Porto.



Introduction

Ilhas . Islands in the City

The Portuguese word 'ilha' means 'island'. But in the city of Porto, the image associated with the word 'ilha' is quite different than in the rest of the World. An 'Ilha' in Porto is a typology of low cost housing, which appeared in the city as a result of industrial development and population growth in the 19th Century. They received this name, Ilha, due to their character of isolation from the urban space within which they were located. The working class dwellings were established within backyards of middle class houses, and were surrounded by walls from all directions, connected to the street through a narrow corridor.

The extremely small houses, arranged side by side along narrow corridors, lacked quality and comfort. They were a cheap, fast solution for the lack of housing at the time, as it happened in another European cities which went through the same development process. The difference is that in Porto, the typology survived through time and still exists and provides living conditions that are rather similar to the ones of the past. They were considered an urban problem in the past, and are still considered as such in the present.

For the Municipality of Porto, the situation is quite simple to define: families living in such low conditions, in houses with low infrastructure should be removed from their houses, and the Ilhas should be demolished. This has been the concept of approach from the authorities since the Ilhas appeared in the city of Porto.

According to Mr. Armino Teixeira, president of the Bonfim Neighborhood Department, "the current Major made from the 'total extinguishing of The Ilhas' one of his campaign promises" (INTERVIEW FROM MAY/2012). To destroy the Ilhas is surely a topic on the agenda of the authorities.



Nevertheless, the objective of this project does not agree with the Governmental approach. The Ilhas are, without any doubt, a problem when concerning living conditions for their inhabitants. On the other hand, the Ilhas might be a housing solution in times of crisis, especially in the field of social housing. In the last years, several social housing neighborhoods, built for the poor through the 20th century, had been demolished in the city. They represented, according to the authorities, ghettos of criminality. The people living there had been classified by social workers, and the ones who were not considered a 'social threat' were relocated to another social buildings through the city (according to Mr. Armindo Teixeira in Interview from May/2012). The fact is, there is a lack of social housing. Not only social housing for the real poor and needy families, who manage to be selected by the municipality and located within a social program. But a lack of affordable housing, with a minimum of living quality, for many inhabitants.

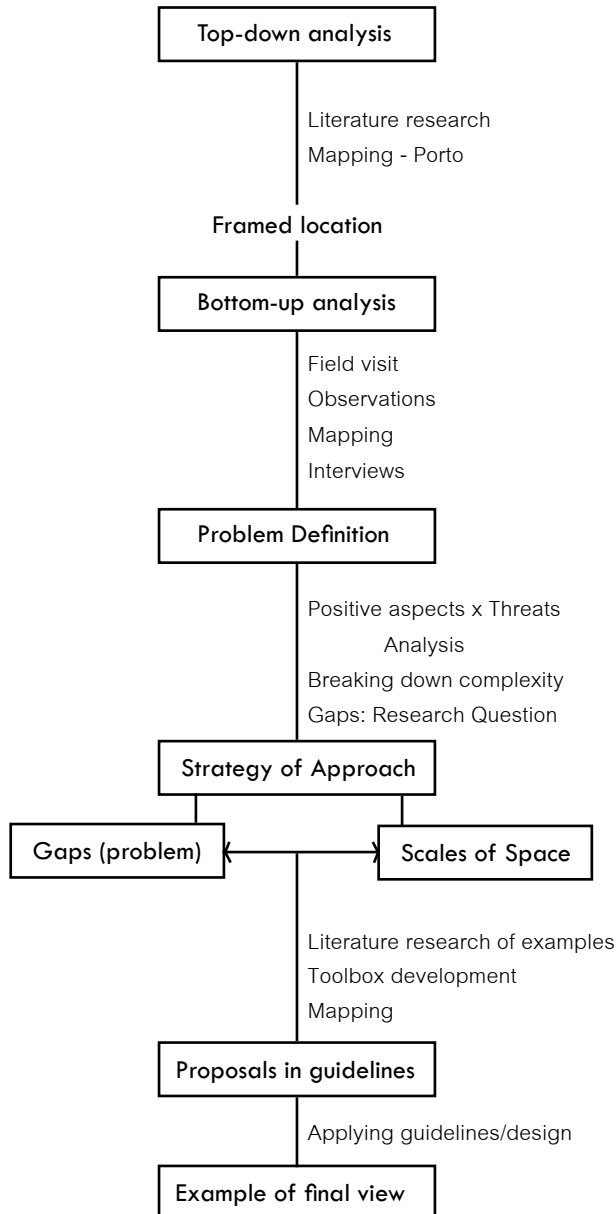
The social neighborhoods are showing now that the social projects of the past did not result in successful living areas, whilst the Ilhas have a status of 'tight communities' for generations. Despite the lack of living quality conditions, the people are happy living there. The most heard sentences in São Victor Street are: *"I will die here"* and *"I would never leave this place"*.

The high social control of the street provides safety, and the fact that the people know each other and see each other constantly is a obstacle for criminality. The dwellings surely need improvement in several aspects, but their environment is a success concerning one of the most important aspects for the inhabitants: the satisfaction of living where they live, and the sense of belonging to a place.

The image of the Ilhas is still the same as at the end of the XIX century, as places of cholera and death. The authorities still treat them in the same way, as a public threat. But they have changed! Times have changed! Everything has changed. They can, and should, be seen with a different perspective nowadays, in times of strong crisis. It is time for innovating old thoughts and reevaluating what could be done differently.

The reaction of the authorities is usually the same, concerning the Ilhas: There is no solution, they say. And if there is, it is too complicated. Expensive. Difficult. Too many people involved. Poverty. No public power, no public will. But what if rehabilitating the space would be possible? What if the São Victor Street would be allowed to stay in the city, as it is, and not be vanished like so many other Ilhas had been through the past years? What if the solution is to go on without the authorities?

What if it is not that impossible, expensive and complicated to get the innovation started?



1. Top-down analysis

The research started with a top-down analysis of the theme 'Ilhas' as a whole. The available literature concerning this topic is not very extensive. There are very few books published about the Ilhas, and they are mostly mentioned in publications about the history of the City. The available literature has been analyzed and the analysis of the historical development of the Ilhas was the first step of the process. After the historical development, the limited information about the current situation of the Ilhas was analyzed.

After the analysis of the current situation of the Ilhas in the City, the location of the research could be framed. The São Victor street cluster was chosen because of its large size, and also due to its authentic character, where the Ilhas still kept their original form. The area could then be analyzed through mapping and research about the surroundings.

2. Bottom-up analysis

The bottom-up analysis started during the field visit. The selected location was visited and observations of the public space were made in different time frames and different days of the week. During this visits, interviews with the inhabitants were made following a non-structured interview approach. They took place like informal conversations, when the inhabitants usually felt more confident to talk, without fearing that it could be an official interview from the Municipality (although some of them still asked if it was a Municipal initiative).

Besides interviewing inhabitants, other types of people involved in the subject were also interviewed.

The objective was to have opinions from as many angles as possible. The interviews included members of the Municipality, and professors from different Universities and faculties (Architecture, Urban Planning and Sociology).

3. Problem definition – summarizing complexity

After the analysis and the first field trip, the research topic was defined. All positive aspects of the Ilhas were related to identified threats. The problem in São Victor street is much more complicated than an urban design matter. It is a combination of social conflicts, lack of financial sources, a negative image of the area within the city and the strong degradation of the living space. In order to break the complexity of the problem and facilitate the understanding of the situation as a whole, the issues were divided in different Gaps, each one defining one main conflict. Each gap lists the conflicts of different aspects of the problem, which were classified into 1. scale, 2. social, 3. economical and 4. physical. The main research question was therefore defined as:

Which innovative solutions can minimize the threats on the positive aspects of the Ilhas and how can they be implemented in order to fill up the social, economical, scale and physical gaps?

4. Strategy of approach

The strategy of the project was to use the physical gap (the available urban space) as a binding space for solving the different spheres of the problem, because the space is the area of approach of an urban planner. The challenge is to read the space in detail and understand how the identified problems attach themselves to it, and how urban interventions can help solving problems that are beyond physical.

In order to read the urban space in detail and grasp all its meaning, it was divided into three scales. Because the social environment forms the greatest positive aspect of the life in the Ilhas, the social relationships were used as the main criteria for classifying and separating the different scales of space. The larger scale is related to the space surrounding São Victor Street. The medium scale concerns the street itself, connecting all Ilhas. The smaller scale is related to the internal space of the Ilha corridor, before reaching the household threshold.

Following the objective of using the physical space as the answer for the identified problems, in this step of the research the Gaps and the Scales of Space were connected. The conflicts of each identified Gap can be located within each scale of space, where the conflicts can be grasped. The community is built from both public and private directions, and a multi scaled strategy allows a global approach of the area and of the different social relationships. Therefore each conflict could be approached in the exact space where it happens.

Scale Gap	x	Large Scale
Social Gap	x	Medium Scale
Economical Gap	x	Small scale

Because rehabilitating the Ilhas has never been an intention from the authorities of Porto, who were only interest in demolition, one objective of the research is to develop improvement scenarios for the Ilhas and their surrounding urban space that can be achieved with the efforts of the population itself. Therefore, all proposals should be based on a concept defined as the “urbanism of self-improvement”.

5. Toolbox of example

Before jumping to proposals, examples of ideas are gathered within a toolbox, to be used further on as proposals for each scale of space. The main concept that connects all the Toolbox examples is the fact that they are mostly developed without or with little Government intervention. This was the main motto for this project: the urbanism of self-improvement. The main objective of the toolbox is to prove that such ideas can be successfully realized, since they have already been implemented and reached positive results elsewhere. The tools should certainly be adapted to the problem scenario in São Victor, but their concepts can definitely be used as inspiration for other similar situations.

6. Proposals in guidelines

Before the development of the proposals, a second field visit was made in order to have more details about the space, and have more interviews with the inhabitants. During this visit, some of the strategy ideas were discussed again with professors from the University of Porto and with some members of the Municipality.

The proposals for the Ilhas of São Victor are presented in the form of guidelines (based on the toolbox concepts) for each one of the three defined scales of space, followed by a suggested process of implementation. The choice for guidelines was made due to the flexibility that they offer to the proposal. No blueprints can be defined for a project that relies on public participation and is process oriented.

The principle of the guidelines is to work as clear recommendations for spatial improvement and as a list of ideas that could be applied together or individually. The implementation process is divided per scale and has two possible scenarios of execution: with or without major investments. The first scenario is based on the self-made urbanism concept, where the community gathers together, guided by project coordinators who can be volunteers, professionals or Universities. There should be an organized project group, with all stakeholders, guiding the process. The second scenario assumes that some investment could take place, either by public or private initiative, and some governmental support would also be part of the process.

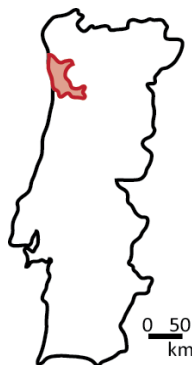
7. View – example of result

The development of the defined guidelines is a rather uncertain process, because of the dependence on the involvement of several different groups of actors and the financial limitations that exist in both implementation scenarios. Therefore, the creation of a possible 'view' of results is only an illustration of what the future results could look like, but without the assumption that the space would have that physical appearance.



01
THE ILHAS

01 THE ILHAS



- < Porto's Metropolitan Region within Portugal;
- < The city of Porto within its Metropolitan Region;
- < Porto, along the River Douro.

1.1. The City: Porto, Portugal

The city of Porto is located in the northern part of Portugal, along the River Douro and reaching the coast of the Atlantic. Since 1996, the historical centre of Porto is part of the Unesco World Heritage sites, due to its value as urban fabric and many historical buildings (UNESCO, 2012).

Porto is the second largest city of Portugal with more than 250.000 inhabitants, and is only smaller than the capital Lisboa, which has 500.000 inhabitants and a metropolitan region of 3.000.000 citizens. Porto's metropolitan area is considerably large, with 1.500.000 inhabitants (MUNICIPALITY OF PORTO, 2011. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FROM 2001).

During the last decades, after a long period of growth, Porto is facing the decrease of its population, who fled towards the suburbs, as it happened in several occidental cities (PEREIRA, 2005, p. 1). Between 1991 and 2011, the population living in Porto decreased from around 300.000 to 260.000. These inhabitants moved to the metropolitan region, a trend which was already present in the previous decades (AMP, 2008. p. 5).

The fact that the metropolitan region offers more affordable housing is the major cause of migration. Even though the population moved to the surrounding municipalities, Porto is still the major employer, especially for the more qualified jobs (AMP, 2008). The leaving population is mostly formed by young adults. The elderly stays in the city, and one more social division is created in the urban space, besides the one related to income level (PEREIRA, 2005. PAGE 1).

Porto is a city with a daily flux of more than 500.000 persons. It concentrates mainly services – administrative, educational and cultural – and offers more than 218 000 jobs. 50% of the employees come from nearby municipalities (MONTEIRO, 2009).

The city is also facing a process of deindustrialization and increasing of the third sector. The city still has a more qualified and educated population in comparison to the metropolitan region, and is a large employment nucleus (PEREIRA, 2005, p. 1).



> The Historical Centre of Porto, a World Heritage site. PHOTO FROM MAY/2012

A general overview

The main features of the housing situation in Portugal are known as: 1. High access to private property and consequent families living with large debts; 2. Difficulties for selling properties on the market; and 3. High incidence of new constructions instead of rehabilitation of existing ones (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 5). The strong dynamics of the construction market in the past decades in contrast with the slow dynamics of the real estate market created a high percentage of vacant dwellings, which are mostly degraded (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 7).

Approximately 18% of the Portuguese families live in poverty (around 720.000, from the total of approximately 4.000.000 families – INE, 2012), according to data from 2007 (INE, 2007, CITED IN CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 5). These families are mostly more vulnerable due to specific characteristics of its composition, such as added relatives within the same household, single parents, young unemployed couples or elderly members (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 5).

Such an expressive amount of families below poverty increases the demand for social and affordable housing. Data from 2008 indicated a social housing waiting list of 50.000 families in the whole country. From these families, more than 10.000 live in Lisbon and 5.000 in Porto (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 28). Almost 30.000 families live in precarious and temporary dwellings. Besides, more than half a million dwellings are over occupied in Portugal, mostly within the largest cities, and almost 200.000 dwellings are in severely precarious conditions (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 28).

Even though 18% of the population lives below the poverty line, the percentage of private housing property among these parcel of the population is rather high (78.1%), being above the European average (58.3%) and national average (73.4%) (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 9). This is a result of the rural parcel of the population, which have low income but mainly own its property, and of the relatively low prices of housing when compared to another European countries (CET-ISCTE et al, 2008, p. 9). Furthermore, the lack of sufficient public programs for social housing incentivizes the market to create cheap (and consequently low quality) dwellings.

Portugal has had a diminutive intervention from the State concerning social housing in the past decades. Only 3% of the dwellings in the country are publicly owned and used for social housing purposes. These are mostly concentrated in Porto, where 25% of the dwellings are public, and Lisbon, with only 4% of public social dwellings (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 17). The larger incidence of social housing in Porto comes from the large State interventions in the 1950s and 60s, and an expressive amount of these constructions are now in degraded conditions (CET-ISCTE ET AL, 2008, p. 17).

Porto

In Porto, the construction of dwellings increased in general since the 1980s, since the Government changed the approach of housing into a market oriented system, giving the responsibility of housing affordability to banks and credit.

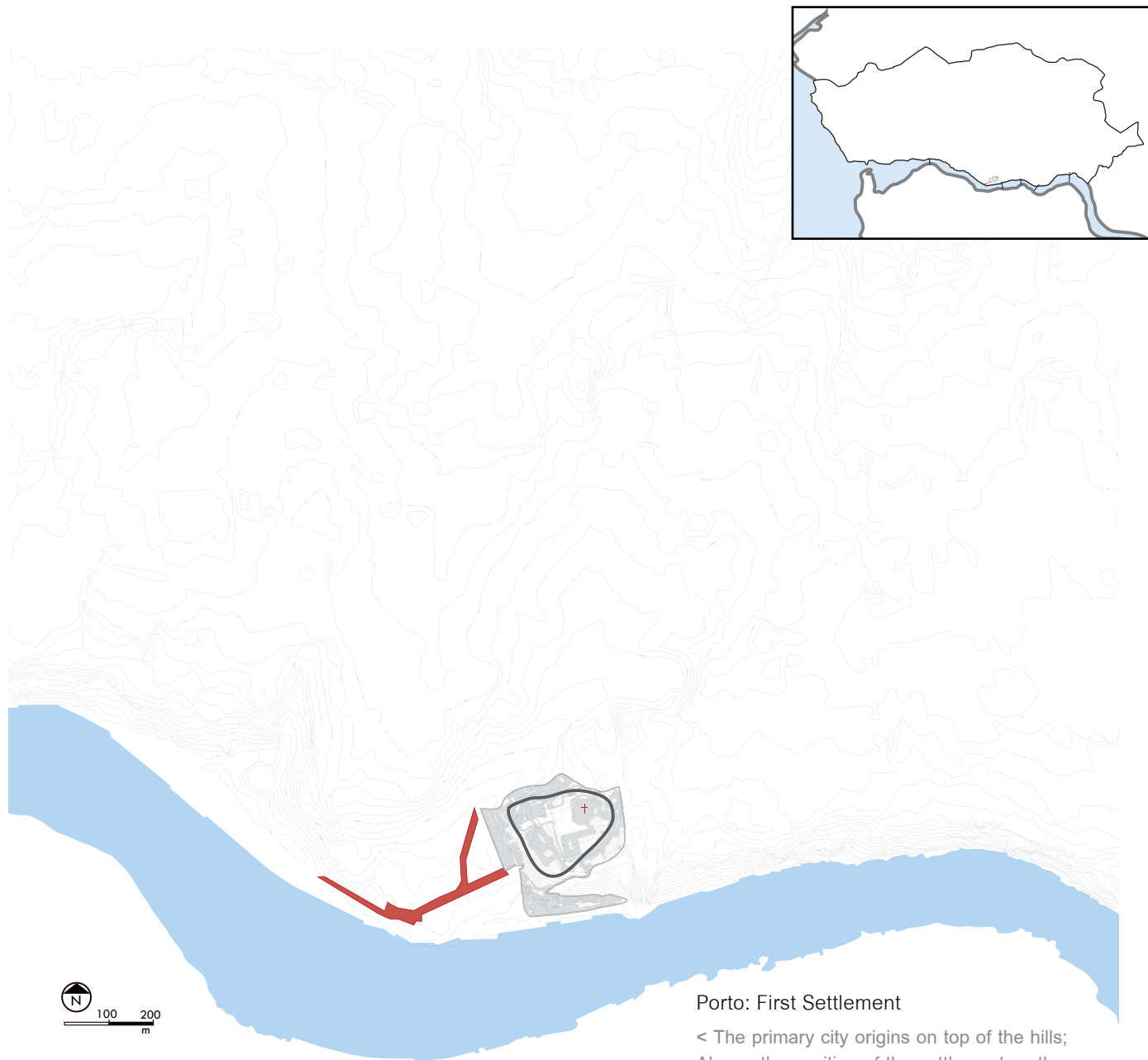
Through public programs and the development of inhabitants construction cooperatives, the lack of housing had been remediated through the construction of new buildings, located mainly in the suburbs, and not through revitalization of existing ones. The amount of dwellings exceeded the amount of families in the City (MATOS, 2001, p. 600).

Nevertheless, there is still need for housing. Over occupation of dwellings and high levels of degradation are urgent needs, whilst on the other hand the amount of vacant dwellings increases. The existing urban/housing problems are a result of an unsustainable occupation of the space, where new constructions were systematically located in new land outside the urban limits of the city. The current main problems are the degradation of the vacant constructions, the evasion of the central area of the city and the increasing degraded conditions of Ilhas and social neighborhoods. In the meanwhile, the periphery keeps spreading through new constructions, in many cases disconnected from the existing urban infrastructure (MATOS, 2001, p.605).

The Government has been developing programs of revitalization of the central area in the last years in Porto (IHRU, 2012). They incentivize the rehabilitation of existing buildings, and have defined city priority zones and a phasing of approach. But these programs do not include social housing, and propose a relocation of people who live in the Ilhas and another degraded dwellings. If the problem has being the major relocation of people to the suburbs, urban spread and degradation of central area, why relocate the people who still wants to live in the centre, and appreciate their Ilha?

01

THE ILHAS



1.3. The Past

1.3.1. Historical Development

The Ilhas have an unique typology within the urban tissue of Porto. This typology is a result of several specific events within the historical development of the City, in the physical, economical and social environments. Therefore, this chapter will show the historical development of the city with a focus on its physical expansion, and how the Ilhas appeared in the city.

City Origins

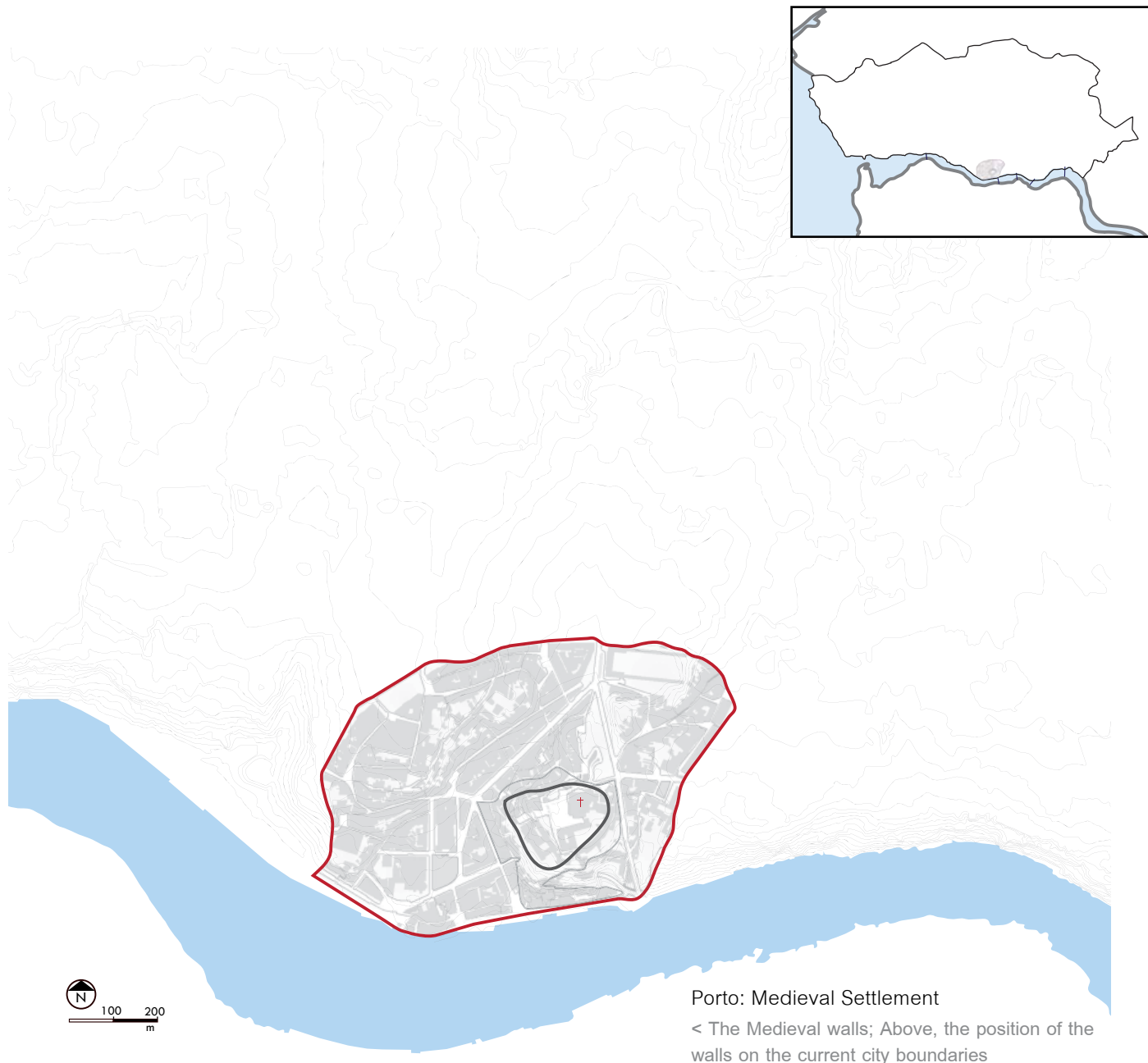
The first signs of occupation in Porto date from the 8th century BC, and the name Porto comes from the time of the first Roman settlement in the 1st century BC, when the settlement was named 'Portus'. After the Romans, the city had been domain of the barbarians, and later of Visigoths. By the 11th century, the settlement was a Castilian domain (UNESCO, 2012). By this time, the small village was surrounded by the former city wall, which existed since the beginning of the 3rd century, and was rebuilt on the 12th century (MONTEIRO, 2009). The village occupied a high point, on top of a hill, where the still existent 'Sé' Cathedral is located. At first, Porto was not a main riverside urban form. New constructions slowly took place beyond the walled area and spread towards the riverside, and the area was called, as today, the 'low part' of the city (PORTO VIVO, 2005, p. 22).

During the development phase, between the 12th and the 16th centuries, Porto was established in two main nuclei of development: the high area, space with strongest defense power, where the both religious and political authorities were located; and the low area along the river, where the main trade activities took place, together with residential space (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 2).



>The Sé Cathedral
PHOTOS FROM OCTOBER/2010

01 THE ILHAS



The medieval walls

The city expansion came in the 14th century when a new wall was constructed, unifying the two urban nuclei of the high and low areas. The wall was finished in 1374, during D. Fernando's reign (Unesco, 2012). At this time, the settlement had around 10.000 inhabitants (PORTO VIVO, 2005, p. 23).

Some buildings, especially along the riverside, were left outside the new wall area. The new wall and its entrances structured the growth of the urban tissue, strongly influenced by the topography of the terrain. The streets followed a radial pattern, and were the result of the urbanization of former routes (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 2). The morphology was of a highly compact and dense city, with narrow streets and few open spaces (MONTEIRO, 2009). Until the 18th century, Porto kept the image of a relatively small scale trade settlement surrounded by its defense walls, and the city would then stay within this boundary for centuries.

The Almada Plans

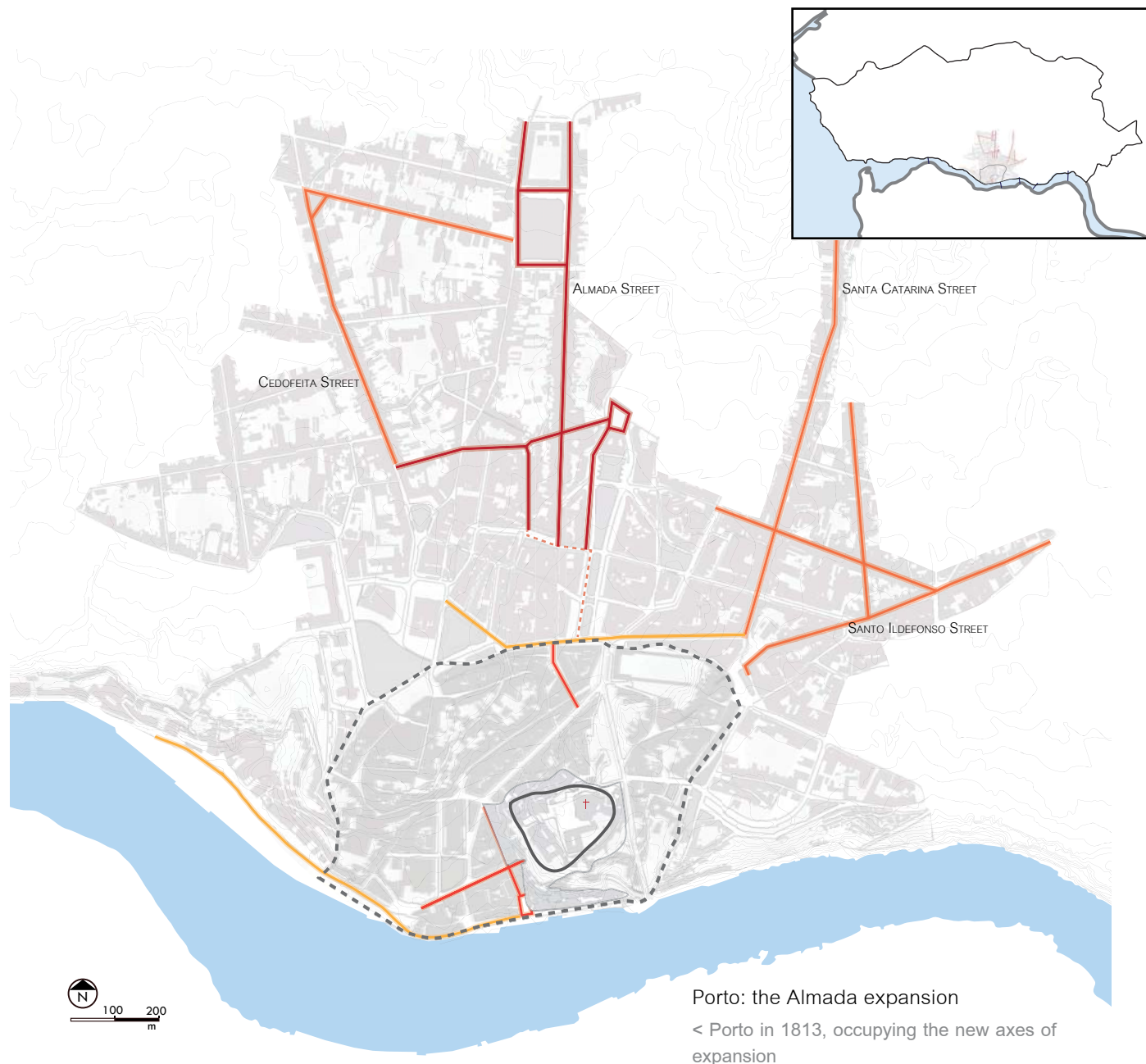
During the 18th century, there is a very significant improvement on the trade relationships between Porto and other countries, a fact that is highly associated with the development of the Porto Wine, the city's main trade product (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 3). Related to the demographic growth and to the increase of the city's influence on its surroundings, the amount of commercial buildings and trade markets increased in Porto. The merchants formed a new ascending part of society, upheld by high economical and social authority (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 3).

"THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TRADE RELATIONSHIP, ESPECIALLY WITH ENGLAND, AND THE SUCCESS OF THE PORTO WINE ARE THE TWO MAIN FACTORS FOR THE ECONOMICAL PROSPERITY DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY" (PORTO VIVO, 2005, p. 27).

The economical growth stimulated an increase of population, which was enlarged also by emigration of inhabitants from Lisboa after an earthquake in 1755. Porto faced back then its first large population growth (TEIXEIRA, 1996). In 1732, the city had around 30.000 inhabitants, and reached more than 60.000 in 1787. "Within its central zone, the population density increased as new pavements were added to existing buildings, to receive the growing population" (TEIXEIRA, 1996). Porto went through a densification process within the city walls, and only after 1760 the city expanded, in a planned development, to outside the former borders.

Concerning urban development, the 18th century was very important for the city. Under the governance of the Almas, new streets were opened or restructured, and new public space is created in the oldest urban area (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 4). The economical growth was translated into a clear urban expansion. The medieval walls lose their military defense value, as a result of the development of artillery, and are therefore destroyed in almost all its length. The stones from the demolished walls were reused in building construction and as supporting walls for the terrain (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 4).

01 THE ILHAS



In 1763, the governor João de Almada started the expansion plans for the city, in a highly centralized decision making process (MONTEIRO, 2009). Almada, later followed by his son Francisco de Almada, had the objectives of defining new expansion lines for the city; building new housing areas for the bourgeois class (outside the crowded centre); and providing connections between the old centre and these expansion new areas (MONTEIRO, 2009).

The plan was proposed in phases, in an adaptable approach *“which progressively defined the new urban structure, following the pace of the intervention phasing”* (FERRÃO, 1997). Four axes were built, irradiating from the old centre and pointing towards the main agglomerates of the outside region. The first, Almada street, was built between 1762-64 (Phase 1), followed by improvement in the old centre (Phase 2, see map on the right). Later, Santa Catarina street (1774), Direita de Santo Ildefonso street (1778) and Cedofeita street (1782) were built (MONTEIRO, 2009). Connecting streets between the old centre and the new areas, as well as smaller transversal streets between the main axes were also built in the same time.

The new axes of development were then slowly occupied by the new plots, where new dwellings for the higher classes were built. The bourgeois class gradually left the old centre, what resulted in some negligence from the authorities, concerning maintenance of the urban space (TEIXEIRA, 1996). The old centre was deteriorating and being occupied by other uses, such as small industries, and as low cost housing for the working class. The map of 1813 (*on the left*) gives a clear image of the city and its urban transformation, with the axes irradiating from a dense nucleus.

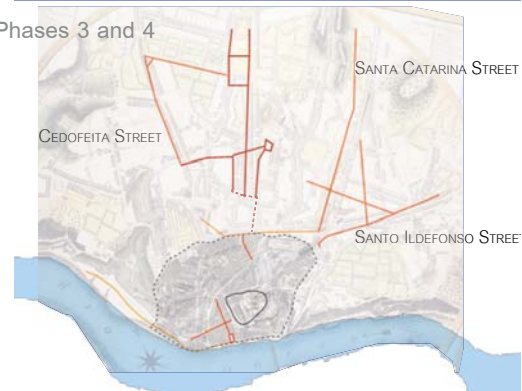
Phase 1



Phase 2

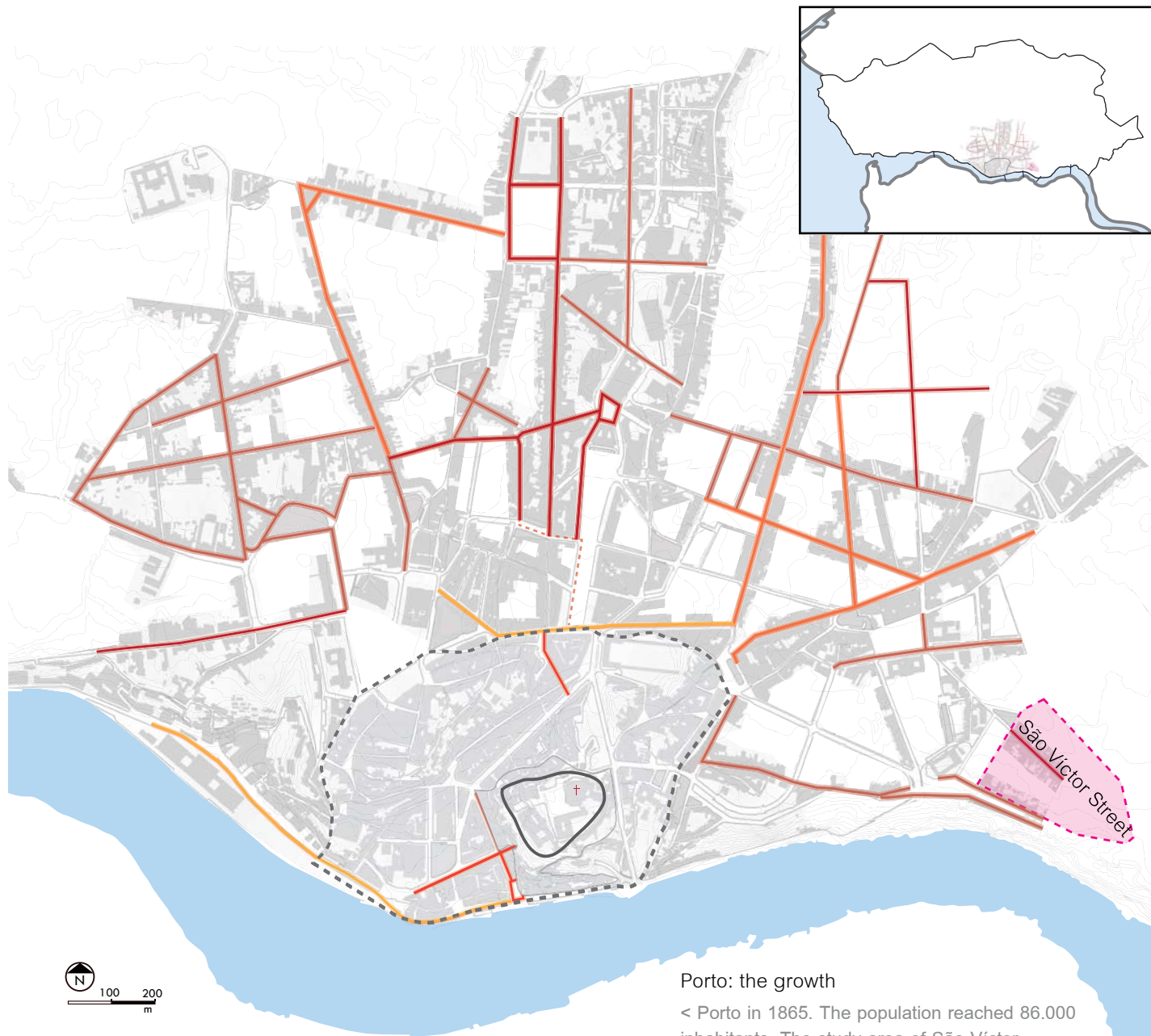


Phases 3 and 4



>The Almada intervention phasing: new streets were opened, but also existing streets and spaces were rearranged in the second phase.

01 THE ILHAS



Porto: the growth

< Porto in 1865. The population reached 86.000 inhabitants. The study area of São Víctor Street appears for the first time on the city map (represented in pink).

Historical Development

1.3. The Past

At first, the occupation of the new axes did not meet the high expectations of the Almadás, since the French invasions (1803-1813) and the civil war (1832-34) were causes of a slight population decrease. In 1838, Porto still had a population of around 59.000 inhabitants, 1.000 inhabitants less than 50 years earlier (TEIXEIRA, 1996). After the end of the civil war, Porto started to change with a new liberal government. The city restarted to grow and the industrial development started. *“The new period of growth is symbolically marked by introduction, in 1835, of the first steam engine for industrial use in the city”* (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 19).

Between 1838 and 1864, the population of Porto increased 46% due to the industrial development and the arrival of immigrants from the countryside. Nevertheless, the city map of 1865 does not show the spatial changes which are expected from an increase of 30.000 inhabitants. The newcomers occupied the existent built up area of the old city districts, resulting in a massive densification of the urban area (TEIXEIRA, 1996). The map of 1865 (*on the left*) is also the first where São Victor street – at least a part of the current length - is already existent within the urban space of Porto.

The expansion areas were designated to the higher classes, a small parcel of the population, and the new parcel of occupied city surface did not correspond to the extreme population increase. In the meanwhile, the central neighborhoods reached high density marks. In 1864, the medieval centre had density levels of 395 inhabitants/hectare (TEIXEIRA, 1996).

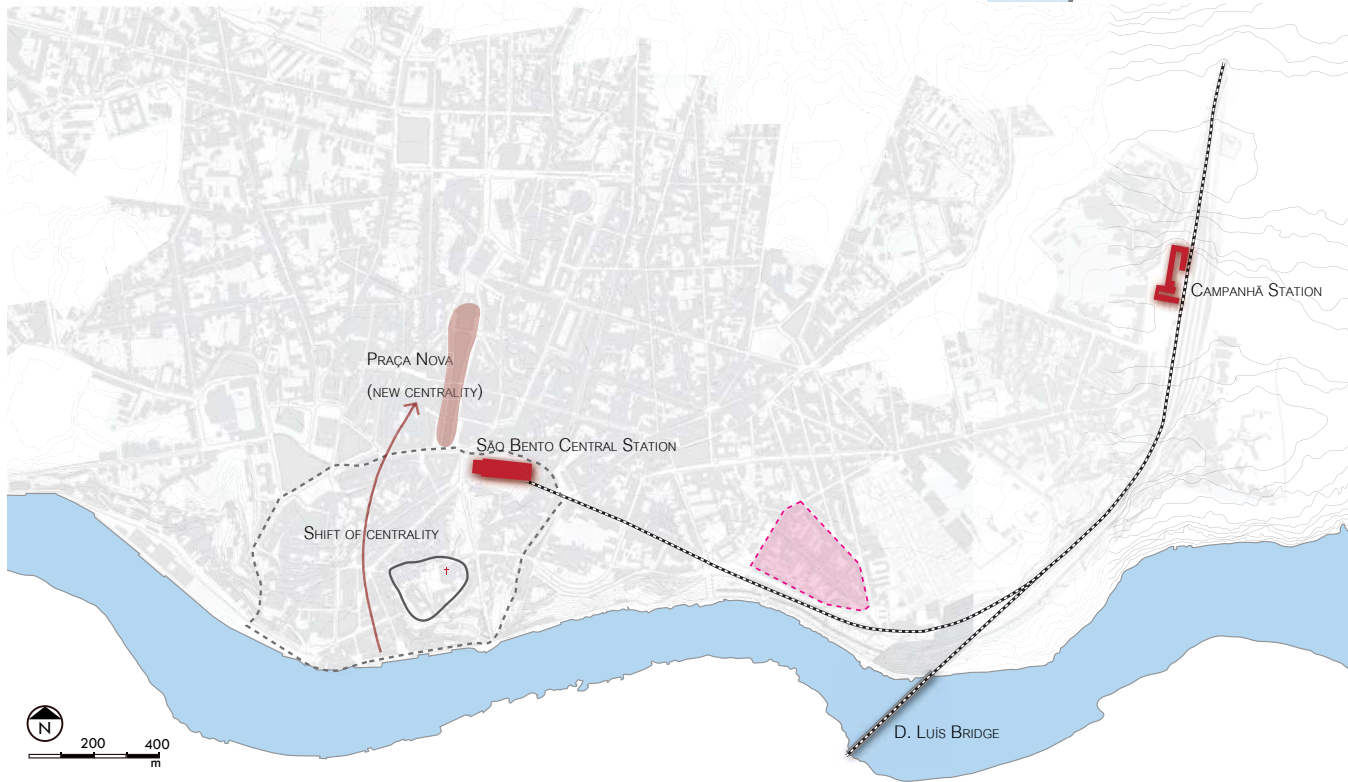


> Porto in 1813 (BY GEORGE BALCK)

> Porto in 1833 (BY J. HENSHALL, BALDWIN & CRADOCK, LONDRES)

> Porto in 1865 (BY F.P. VIDAL) 33
(TEIXEIRA, 1996)

01 THE ILHAS



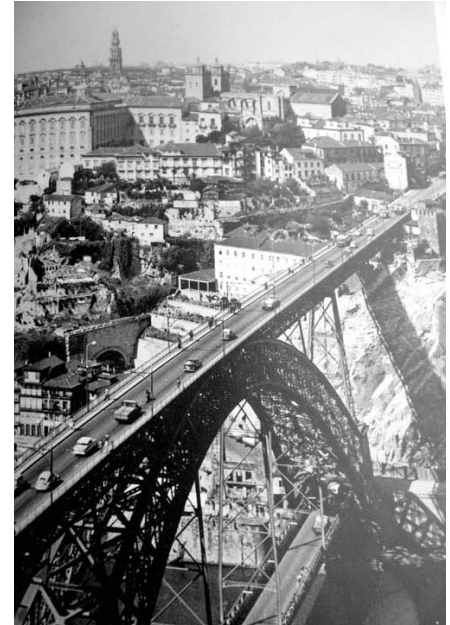
Porto: the transportation development
< Porto in 1892. The city faces a significant growth due to the new transportation investments and industrial development. On the left, within the former limit of the walls, the Central Station. On the right, the Campanhã Station.

The image of Porto as an industrial city became a reality mostly from 1860 onwards. In a few decades, Porto's characteristics deeply changed, and it can be clearly seen within its spatial structure. The industrial development brought immigration increase, and all its consequences: fast population growth, urban expansion, alteration in the city structure and new infrastructure construction. The development of transportation systems, with the construction of the railways, stations and bridges was a central factor for the city's urban revolution.

According to the first official Census in the city, in 1864 Porto had a total of 86.761 inhabitants. It can be assumed that, before this date, the city was already going through a fast growing process. In 1890, the numbers raised to a total of 138.860 inhabitants (PEREIRA, 2003). The growing numbers of Porto, at the end of the 19th Century, were even higher than the ones from Lisbon at that time (PEREIRA, 2003, p. 140).

The growth and development of the city was incentivized by the advance of the transportation modals. The first railway station on the eastern part of the city (Campanhã) was built in 1875, what would give the area a strong industrial character in the future. In 1886, the railway bridge D. Luís was built, improving the connection between Porto and the southern municipalities. The railways reached the city centre in 1896, with the construction of São Bento central station.

The location of new transportation, together with the results of the previous expansion plans slowly shifted the centrality of the city (see map on the left). The riverside was losing its central status and importance, and the 'Praça Nova', located on a higher city area and therefore more accessible to the Central Station, was becoming the new commercial and social main centre of the city.



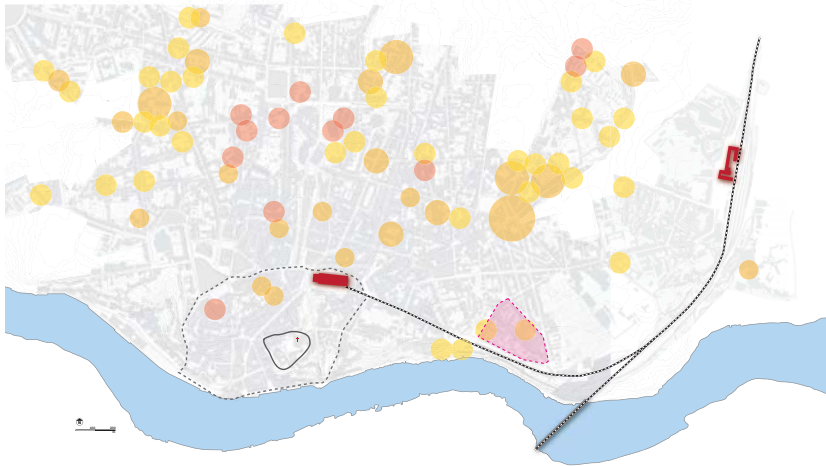
>The bridge D. Luís, built in 1886

>The train arrives at São Bento Central Station in 1896. (PORTO ANTIGO, 2012)

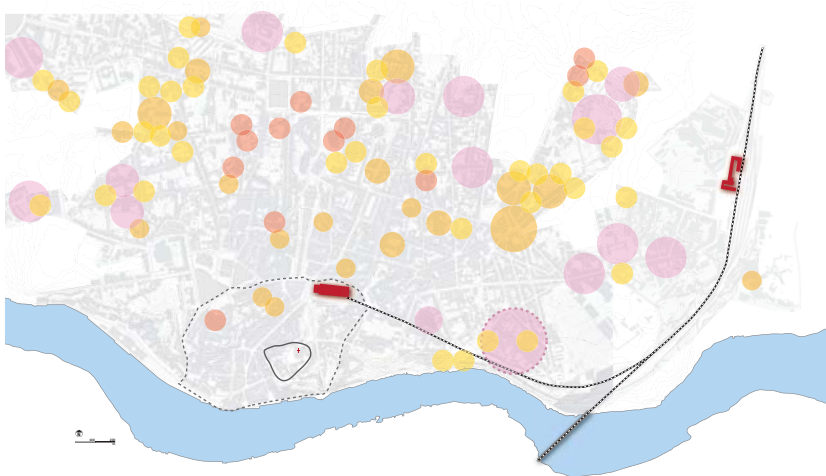
01

THE ILHAS

Porto in 1892: main industries

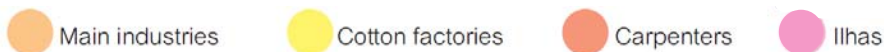


Porto in 1892: main industries and Ilhas



< Porto in 1892. The map shows the location of the main different industrial activities of Porto in 1890-1900.

< Below, the map shows the main concentrations of Ilhas in the same period. The clusters of Ilhas (in pink) were mainly located near industrial areas.



Historical Development

1.3. The Past

The bridges and railways brought a new dynamic to Porto, with a bigger relationship with its surroundings and a greater impression of the city scale. The city image and identity changed from a small trade city to a large, industrial, active and crowded city (TEIXEIRA, 1996). The population kept growing, from around 89.000 inhabitants in 1864 to almost 168.000 in 1900. The key period of Porto's major growth were the 12 years between 1878 and 1890, when, according to Teixeira (1996) the city integrated 24.000 new immigrants. That represents 81.000 extra inhabitants in 36 years, a short period of time for a city to see its population double in size (TEIXEIRA, 1996). In 1911, Porto had expanded its surface and had a population of 194.009 inhabitants (PEREIRA, 2003, P. 140).

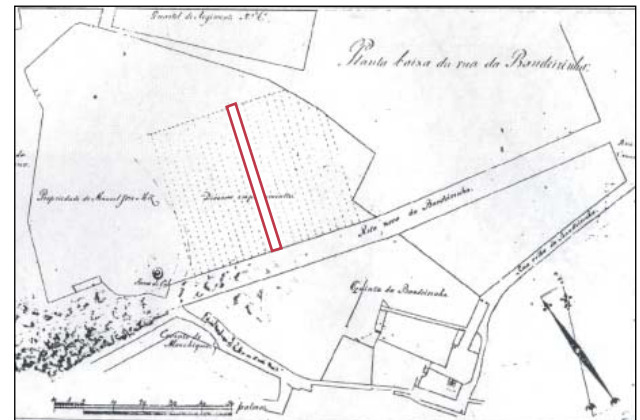
The industry was spread around the central area of the city, but in the second half of the 19th century, the new larger industry was mostly settled in the neighborhoods of Bonfim and Campanhã, due to the presence of the railway. The map of 1892 (on the left) still shows a spread pattern of industry location, but slowly the eastern would only increase its industrial character. The two eastern neighborhoods of Bonfim and Campanhã were the ones which registered the most extreme growth in population between 1864 and 1890.

According to Rio Fernandes (2005, p. 6) there are two main consequences for the high levels of population growth of this time. Firstly, the residents of the oldest parts of the city, who had financial sources, moved to large housing areas in the suburbs. The empty houses left behind were then occupied by the immigrants, and the centre faced a continuously densification of its buildings.

Secondly, the main destination of immigrants, especially the ones coming from the rural areas, became the backyards of profit seeker property owners, usually located nearby industrial areas. These are the Ilhas.

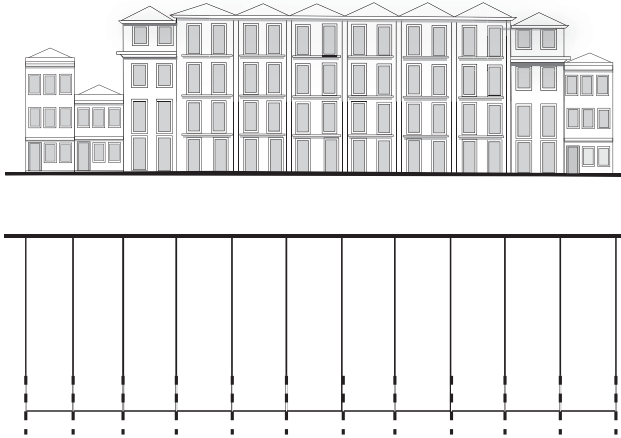
The Ilhas

The expansion plan of the Almadás would define several future aspects for the city of Porto, including the development of "Ilhas". Besides defining expansion lines, the plan also created norms defining the new plots, and general construction norms and principles. The focus of the plan was the street, and not the urban block (FERRÃO, 1997). The pattern for new urban plots defined spaces with narrow front lines and deep depth, making the maximum use of the new street infrastructure in its length. The façade of the plot was mostly 5,5-6 m wide and very long, sometimes reaching 100 m of depth (TEIXEIRA, 1996). The dwellings had long backyards, differing from the pattern of the old compact medieval city.



>Drawing from the Almada plans. The long plots were placed along the new street, without a pattern of urban block. (NONNEL, 2002)

01 THE ILHAS



The standard plot dimensions increased the building capability on the street front, making the maximum use of the new street infrastructure in its length and therefore reducing the costs of implementation (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 109). But this was not the only reason for the determination of the plot dimensions. They were adequate to the Portuguese construction technology of the time. The width of the façade was based on the structural capability of the wooden beams used back then, which were further supported by the side walls of the building. The regularity on the plot division contributed for the regularization of the construction criteria which created a characteristic building typology based on that dimensions (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 109-110).



< Representation of the plot width and the consequent façade typology of the 18th Century expansion areas;

< Street façades of one of the Almada streets in the current situation. (Floret Arquitetura. Levantamento do Quarteirão da Escola Académica, 2012)

Historical Development

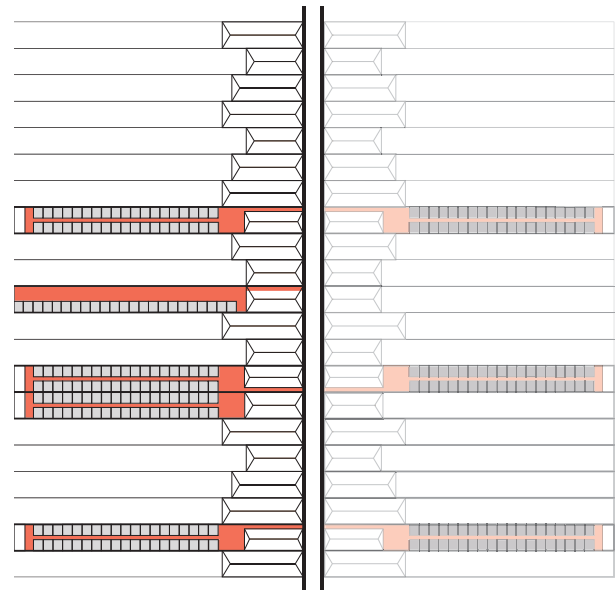
1.3. The Past

The centre of Porto had a role of 'arrival space' for the immigrants. After the centre was fully occupied, through sub-rented rooms in full to capacity dwellings and even construction of extra pavements on existing buildings, the occupation area extended to the surroundings (PEREIRA, 2003, p. 141).

The new working class needed a new solution for low cost housing, and in this context, the *Ilhas* appeared in Porto. *Ilha* is the Portuguese word for island, and that refers to the relationship of these dwellings with the urban space. They occupy inner spaces of the city, like small infill islands, surrounded by buildings from all sides.

The pattern of urban blocks from the urban development of the 19th century and the urban policy of the Municipality at the time were highly responsible for the origin of the *Ilhas*. Through a very exceptional legislation, the Municipality of Porto regulated the constructions only concerning the façades, omitting building policies for the inner-block space. As a result, in a very simplified way, it can be said that Porto 'grew inwards', increasing its density through the development of the *Ilhas* (PEREIRA, 2003).

Besides, the urban plots had between 5,5-6 m of façade and a deep depth, and these long and narrow backyards were viewed by the inhabitants as an opportunity. The responsible for the construction of the *Ilhas* were not large developers, but small entrepreneurs with limited sources, the inhabitants of the front houses themselves. The higher social classes were, at this time, moving to even further from the centre, and the first expansion areas were occupied by the lower middle class (TEIXEIRA, 1996).

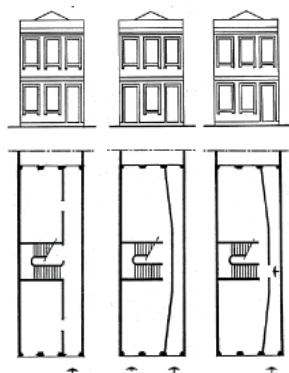
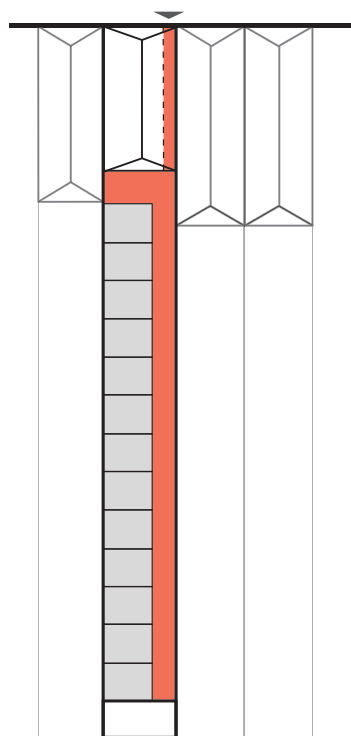


> Several families occupying the same building, and a protest against sub-rented housing on the wall. (Photo not dated)

> The *Ilhas* infills in the backyard spaces

01

THE ILHAS



- < The standard Ilha typology and the extra door on the existent façade of the building;
- < Different methods of entrance through the front house: when both, house and Ilha, share the same door, or independent entrances (TEIXEIRA, 1996)

The Ilhas were, therefore, small scale and low quality constructions, with the only objective of providing cheap and fast housing. Most of the Ilhas were built not at once, but gradually, in a process of internal growth of the city through occupation of the inner space of urban blocks. The typology had a very rational use of sources: low cost and reduced space. *“The Ilha’s constructors knew how to explore both the character of the housing need and the spatial character of the city; they adapted their own methods and budget in order to obtain the maximum profit from their limited sources”* (TEIXEIRA, 1996).

The investors and future landlords of the Ilhas were mostly small or medium scale third sector workers, mainly salesmen, carpenters, tailors, construction workers, etc. These investors had a limited amount of funds, and found in the Ilhas an ideal investment for their savings: low starting capital, short return on investment period, and almost absence of maintenance costs, together with certainty of the success of the Ilha (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 149). The demand for housing was significantly high.

In their most simple forms, the Ilhas consisted of rows of small and single-layer houses, built in the back side of middle class houses. The majority of the Ilhas had around 20 dwellings, with a single pavement and average size of 16 m². The small houses of the Ilhas were then built based on the façade space, forming lines of houses and corridors through all plot. The access to the street was made usually through a small corridor on the side of the middle class houses which faced the street (TEIXEIRA, 1996). The sanitary facilities were minimum, shared by all houses, and usually located on the back of the plot (CMP, 2000).

Historical Development

1.3. The Past

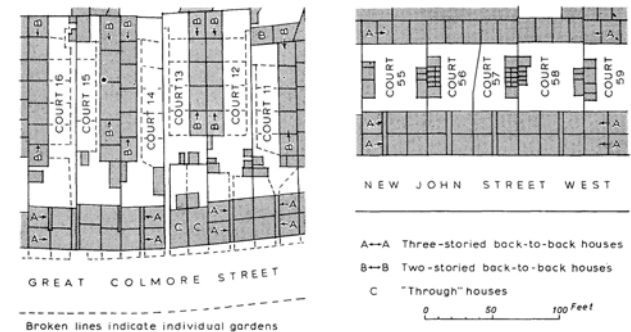
The intensive use of space and economic efficiency made this typology a standard, being used even when the land did not impose size limitations. When low cost housing for working classes was being built in large plots, the same typology of row small houses was being repeated in a back-to-back system (TEIXEIRA, 1996).

The Ilhas offered a housing typology which was adapted to the limited income of its inhabitants, the economic provisions of its constructors and to the spatial availability where they were developed. The basic form of Ilhas was kept as a standard, even when later developments created 'improved' and larger versions of this first model. As an example, some Ilhas were built in the same system of row-houses but with direct access to the street, without the cover of a middle class house system (TEIXEIRA, 1996).

The Municipality of Porto kept ignoring the development of Ilhas along the second half of the 19th century, but not without critics and protests. The policies were kept the same, only focused on regulating criteria for building façades (PEREIRA, 2003. PAGE 141). In the meanwhile, the inner block spaces were only becoming more dense. In 1832, Porto had around 200 Ilhas with an estimative of 8.000 inhabitants.

Within the most critical period of city growth, between 1878 and 1890, more than 5.000 dwellings in Ilhas were built. In 1899, the Ilhas were home to 35.000 people, 30% of the total population (PEREIRA, 2003). The city had around 168.000 inhabitants at that time (CMP, 2000). The largest concentration of Ilhas was on the eastern part of the city, near the industrial areas. Nevertheless, Ilhas could be found all over the city, but always with some proximity to an industry.

The Ilhas are a solution for fast and inexpensive housing facilities, found by the inhabitants themselves, without the control of the authorities. They are an answer to the need of the working class of a specific time, but in contrast with what happened in some of the other European examples, they did not disappear through time. Similar housing developments could be found in several countries: the 'courts' and the 'back-to-back' typologies in England, the 'curralas' and 'casas de viciños' in Spain, the 'balconatas' in Italy and the 'vilas' in France (SEIXAS, 1997), and in addition the 'pátêos' in Lisbon.

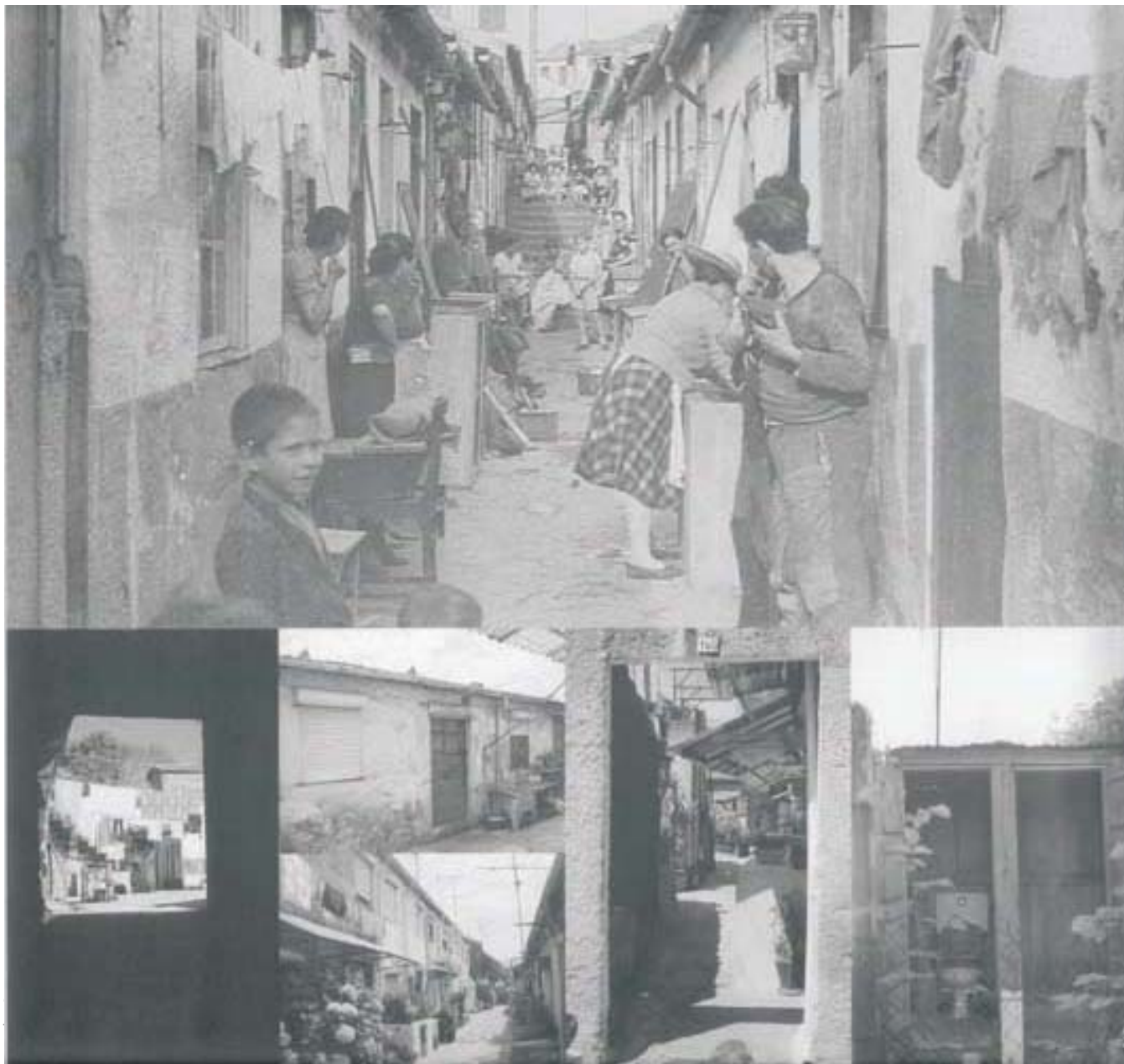


> The back-to-back typology in England, contemporary to the Ilhas (SECULAR ARCHITECTURE, 1964, p. 43-57)

> Representation of London and the working class housing conditions by Gustave Doré, 1872 (RUTGERS, 2010)

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THE ILHAS



< Image of the Ilhas on the 1940s (CMP, 2001)

1.3.2. The Ilhas as a public issue

The Ilhas quickly spread through the city inner blocks, and the 'investment in Ilhas' made by the middle class or bourgeoisie landlord became known as being profitable. The process of real estate speculation started, in a moment where the demand for cheap housing was growing daily. The smaller Ilhas, with 4 or 5 small dwellings, brought a fast return on the invested capital, with a high profit considering the short term pattern of investment. Some Ilhas have even been built by factory owners, to shelter their own employees (PEREIRA, 2010). The Ilhas were becoming larger, like small scale neighborhoods hidden in the city's inner tissue.

The small dwellings were the only housing option for the industrial labor force, and their living conditions were extremely underprivileged. The rental prices were overrated for such houses, costing the residents an average of 10% of their income, while 80% was necessary only for food supplies. As a result of low sanitation standards and other limited living circumstances, people were often ill and the death rates were high (PEREIRA, 2003. PAGE 141).

Due to its construction characteristics, such as reduced size, cheap and low quality materials, common sanitary facilities and lack of sewage system, the Ilhas soon became famous in the city as insalubrious and sickening places. The high density of these housing areas, together with the lack of hygiene and sanitary facilities was a strengthening to the common diseases at that time, and helped the proliferation of tuberculosis, cholera, typhus and the bubonic plague (CMP, 2001). The plague and the tuberculosis were the most common causes of death.

A report from 1914, elaborated by the Medical School of Porto, shows a good overview of the Ilhas at the time, and also some criticism about the actions taken by the authorities. They analyze the death rates in Porto and criticize the profit oriented landlords:

“CONCERNING THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE IN PORTO, ALREADY FOR SOME YEARS THE ILHAS HAVE BEEN NOTICED DUE TO THEIR POOR HOUSING CONDITIONS, AND SOME REMEDIATING MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN, BUT THE PROBLEM IS MORE COMPLEX. THE ISSUE IS RELATED TO THE ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS OF THE MUNICIPALITY AND OF THE INHABITANTS OF ILHAS, AND TO THE ECONOMICAL AND MORAL CONDITIONS, WE CAN SAY, FROM THE LANDLORDS.

THE DEATH RATES IN PORTO WERE THE FOLLOWING:

Anos									
1880 — 1884	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	31,94
1885 — 1889	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	32,63
1890 — 1894	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	30,32
1895 — 1899	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	29,62
1900 — 1904	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	29,82
1905 — 1909	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	31,00

PORTO HAS ON AVERAGE 30 DEATHS PER 1.000 INHABITANTS, A VERY HIGH NUMBER THAT HAS BEEN CONSTANT FOR THE LAST 30 YEARS. PORTO IS NOT MAKING ANY PROGRESS CONCERNING ITS INSALUBRIOUS ENVIRONMENT”

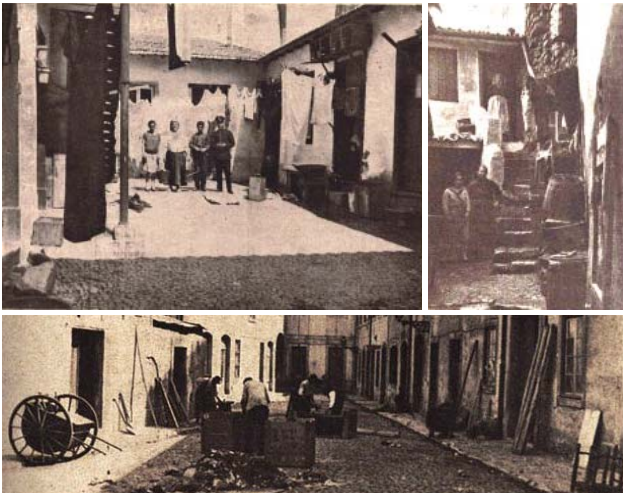
(LEMONS, 1914. CONTRIBUTION FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN PORTO – ILHAS).

01
THE ILHAS

QUADRO VIII

CIDADES	POPULAÇÃO EM 1897	TAXA OBITUARIA MÉDIA 1890-1897	TAXA NATALICIA MÉDIA 1890-1897	SALDO
Portsmouth.....	182:585	17,3	28,0	10,7
Brighton.....	121:401	15,0	24,6	9,6
Norwich.....	110:154	18,9	30,7	11,8
Haya.....	191:529	18,9	30,9	12,0
Havre.....	119:470	29,9	31,7	1,8
Rouen.....	112:657	32,1	26,1	- 6,0
Nuremberg.....	168:654	22,7	35,4	12,7
Altona.....	150:747	20,7	35,4	14,7
Stuttgart.....	146:661	18,6	26,6	8,0
Bremen.....	145:385	18,3	30,0	11,7
Dantzie.....	127:272	24,7	33,8	9,1
Liège.....	165:404	17,8	25,2	7,4
Gand.....	159:218	25,0	27,8	4,8
Trieste.....	162:603	25,0	31,3	2,3
Christiania.....	192:141	18,9	15,7	-3,2
Veneza.....	163:254	23,3	26,1	2,8
Bolonha.....	149:898	23,4	24,6	1,2
Lisbon.....	338:608	27,7	25,9	-0,8
Porto.....	149:458	30,6	36,2	6,6

< Translation: Column 1: Cities; Column 2: Population in 1897; Column 3: Average death rates 1890-1897; Column 4: Average birth rates 1890-1897; Column 5: Average growth rate. Lisbon and Porto appear at the end of the table, with rather high death rates. (ANTAS, 1902)



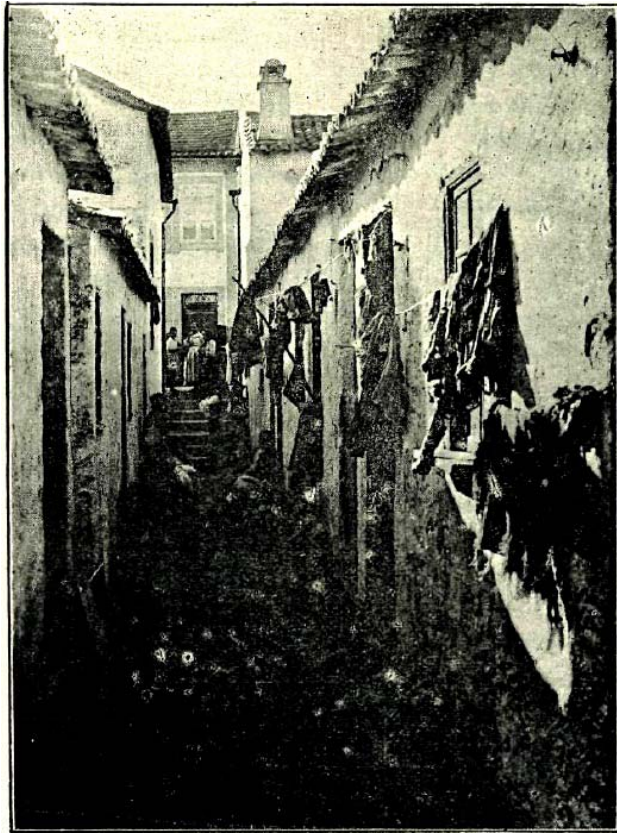
< The ‘Páteos’ of Lisbon, in photos published in a newspaper in 1929 (BARÃO, 1929)

Another medical report from 1902 made a comparison between death rates of European cities (see table on the left). Porto, indeed, showed the second highest rates of the time, only behind Rouen, in France (ANTAS, 1902).

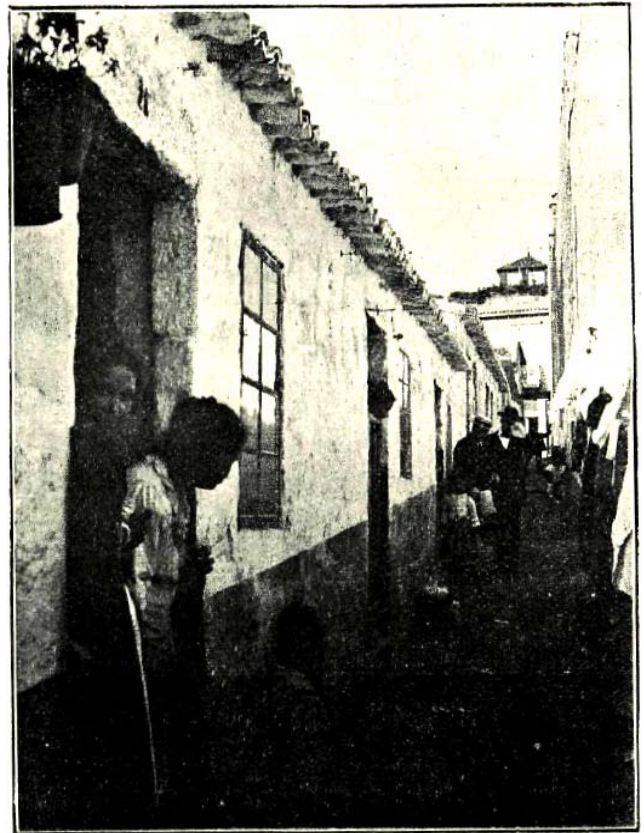
The medical reports were clear and alarming in their conclusions. *“In surveys made especially focused on the ‘Páteos’ from Lisbon and the ‘Ilhas’ of Porto (1901-1902) extremely sad conclusions were taken. Porto had at that time 1.048 Ilhas with 11.129 dwellings, were vegetated 50.000 people. In Lisbon, 221 ‘Páteos’ were visited, with 192 dwellings and 7.484 inhabitants. A total of 161 of them were in bad conditions, and 78 were in extremely degraded circumstances, offering risk to its residents”* (LEMOS, 1914).

Besides the biological threat, the image the authorities and the higher social classes had concerning the Ilhas also included a moral and social hazard that they often related to these spaces of lower classes dwellings. The ‘people from the Ilhas’ were part of a different world, culturally and socially degraded. In a book about social housing published in 1909 (by Caeiro da Mata), the Ilhas were mentioned as awful places, where *“the promiscuity of the inhabitants caused the diminishment of the moral level of the working class families, translated in the high levels of illegitimate births, alcohol addiction, prostitution and criminality”* (PEREIRA, 2010).

All in all, the public health was the main reason for all protests claiming for plans concerning the Ilhas at that time. For this reason, the researches and inventories of the Ilhas made by the authorities, had always occurred in moments of disease threats, as it happened in 1883 and 1885, with cholera, and in 1899 with the bubonic plague (PEREIRA, 2010).



Obs. X — *Ilha* n.º 264 — Rua de S. Brás



Obs. I — *Ilha* n.º 113 — Rua de S. Vítor

> Images from the Medical Report of 1914. On the right, one *Ilha* of São Vítor street (the study area) (LEMOs, 1914)

Description of an Ilha, from 1914:

“WALK THROUGH THE POOR HOUSES OF PORTO, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE ILHAS, IS TO WALK ALONG WITH MISERY IN ITS MORE EXPLICIT EXPRESSION. (...)

ALMOST ALL ILHAS ARE BUILT IN A 5M WIDE PLOT OF AN ORDINARY HOUSE OF PORTO, AND THE SMALL DWELLINGS FOLLOW ONE ANOTHER IN THE SPACE THAT ORIGINALLY WOULD BE THE BACKYARD OF THE FRONT HOUSE. THE FRONT HOUSE HAS A DIFFERENT SANITARY PATTERN THAN THE BACK ONES. (...)

THERE IS AN AVERAGE, CALCULATED BASED ON OUR INVENTORIED SAMPLE, OF 3,6 RESIDENTS PER HOUSEHOLD, BUT SOME HAVE EVEN 9 PEOPLE LIVING ON THE SAME SPACE. MANY OF THESE PEOPLE STAY MOST OF THE DAY AT HOME. THERE ARE MANY CHILDREN, 2,2 PER DWELLING ON AVERAGE. (...)

ALL SURFACE OF THE ILHA DWELLING DOES NOT OCCUPY MORE THAN 16m² OF THE PLOT, WITH SOME CASES OF SMALLER HOUSES OF EVEN 9m². THE PLOT HARDLY HAS A FREE SURFACE, SINCE THE LANDLORD TRIES TO COVER THE PLOT WITH AS MANY HOUSES AS IT FITS. THE GROUND OF THE ILHA IS MOSTLY IRREGULAR, WITH RAMPS OR STAIRS, AND NEVER PAVED. THERE ARE NO GARDENS OR ANY OPEN SPACE, ONLY THE ONE USED AS CORRIDOR, WHERE PEOPLE, CHILDREN AND CHICKEN COEXIST IN A VERY DISGUSTING ENVIRONMENT. IN SOME CASES THE CHICKEN ARE KEPT WITHIN THE DWELLING, AND IN OTHER CASES IN DIRTY WOODEN BOXES OUTSIDE. (...)

AS A RESULT OF THE IRREGULAR GROUND, THE WATER THAT COMES FROM THE ROOFS ACCUMULATES IN LARGE PUDDLES AND GATHERS ALL KINDS OF RUBBISH AND DIRT. CLEANING METHODS SEEM TO BE TOTALLY UNKNOWN. THE RAIN WATER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEANING THE FLOOR, CARRYING THE TRASH ACCUMULATED FOR SOME TIME TO TOWARD THE STREET, ENDING UP IN ONE LOWER PLOT OR AT THE END OF THE STREET. ONLY TWO VISITED ILHAS HAD CONNECTION TO THE PUBLIC SEWAGE SYSTEM. THE OPENED TOILETS REPRESENT THE HIGH POINT OF THE INSALUBRIOUS ATMOSPHERE. (...)

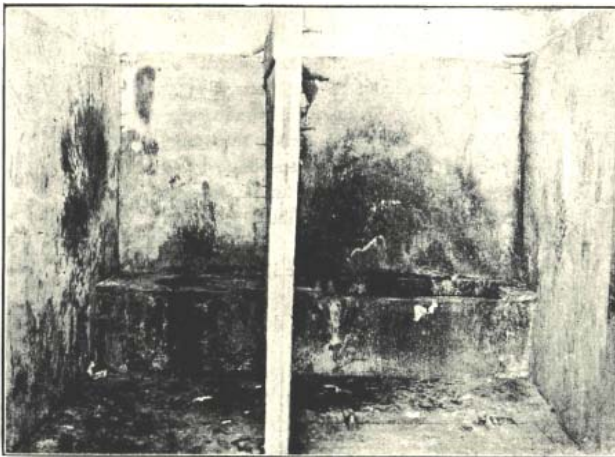
AND IN THIS EXTREMELY POLLUTED SOIL, THE RESIDENTS OPEN WELLS. THE WATER IS SO FILTHY THAT THE INHABITANTS, EVEN WITHIN THEIR LACK OF SANITATION KNOWLEDGE, KNOW THAT THEY SHOULD ONLY USE IT FOR WASHING AND NOT FOR DRINKING. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS KNOWN THAT IN SOME MOMENTS, AS A RESULT OF LACK OF OPTIONS, THEY USE IT FOR COOKING. THEY HAVE TO WALK TO GET WATER FROM THE PUBLIC WELLS NEARBY, EVEN THOUGH RESEARCHES PROVED THE UNSUITABILITY FOR CONSUMPTION ALSO FROM THAT WATER.

THE DWELLINGS ARE MOSTLY DIVIDED IN THREE PARTS: A LIVING ROOM, A KITCHEN AND A SLEEPING ROOM. IN REALITY, THEY ARE FORMED BY ONLY ONE ROOM DIVIDED WITH PIECES OF WOOD IN SMALLER COMPARTMENTS. (...)THE NUMBER OF BEDS IS MOSTLY INSUFFICIENT, AND 3 OR 4 PEOPLE COMMONLY SHARE THE SAME ONE.

THE MOST DANGEROUS DEFECTS OF THE DWELLINGS ARE RELATED TO VENTILATION AND SUN LIGHT INCIDENCE, FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS FOR GOOD HOME HEALTH. THE MISERY IN CONSTRUCTION QUALITY ALLOWS HUMIDITY TO INVADE THE DWELLINGS. AND THEY ARE NOT IN BETTER SITUATION CONCERNING DAY LIGHT. THE SUN LIGHT COMES IN THROUGH NARROW WINDOWS OPENED ON THE FAÇADES. THE WINDOWS ARE FAR TOO SMALL TO ILLUMINATE ALL THE SPACE THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO. (...)

IN THIS SCENARIO, THE TERRIBLE CONDITIONS OF THE DWELLINGS MEET THE GENERAL BAD CONDITIONS OF THE ILHAS AS A WHOLE, FORMING A TRAGIC ENSEMBLE. NO WORDS COULD DESCRIBE WITH REALISM ALL MISERY OF THESE DWELLINGS, WHERE THE POOR CLASSES OF PORTO HAVE TO LIVE. (...) IT IS NOT A SURPRISE WHEN THE NEWSPAPER DECLARES THAT PORTO IS THE MOST INSALUBRIOUS CITY OF EUROPE. WITH SUCH DWELLINGS, THERE IS NO POSSIBLE PUBLIC HEALTH QUALITY”.

(LEMONS, 1914. CONTRIBUTION FOR THE STUDY OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN PORTO – ILHAS).



Obs. 1—Latrina e despejadoro da Ilha n.º 113
—Rua de S. Vitor

The report from 1914 shows criticism against the governmental measures: *“The Portuguese law concerning public hygiene is very deficient. In 1864, a law which regulated building heights, gardens, sewage and sanitation had been created, but nothing of it have been followed in reality. In 1901, the general public health law recommended visits to working class dwellings in Porto and Lisbon, in order to create a sanitary inventory of the dwellings, and created norms that would oblige a new construction to be approved by the sanitary authorities. All of it have been done... in paper”* (LEMOS, 1914).

Ideas for solutions had always been presented. The medical community presented possibilities of small reforms to improve the health standards of the dwellings. Lemos (1914) mentioned that according to analysis made during their research, it was concluded that the landlords would be able to afford small scale reforms without rising the rental prices for the residents.

“There are two ways of solving the housing problem in Porto: building new dwellings which follow all criteria related to good hygiene and with affordable prices for the working class; and improve, through partial reforms and new sanitary regulations, the conditions of the existing dwellings” (LEMOS, 1914).

Nevertheless, there always had been economic interest on the central ground where they were settled (CMP, 2001), a situation that still is rather contemporary. Relocation of people always seems more interesting than rehabilitation of the existing dwellings. The eradication - and not the rehabilitation - of the Ilhas has always been a declared objective by the authorities, but has never been achieved.

< Images from the Medical Report of 1914. Ilha no 52 at Rua das Antas (LEMOS, 1914)

< The impression of a common toilet from one of the Ilhas from São Vítor street (LEMOS, 1914)

01

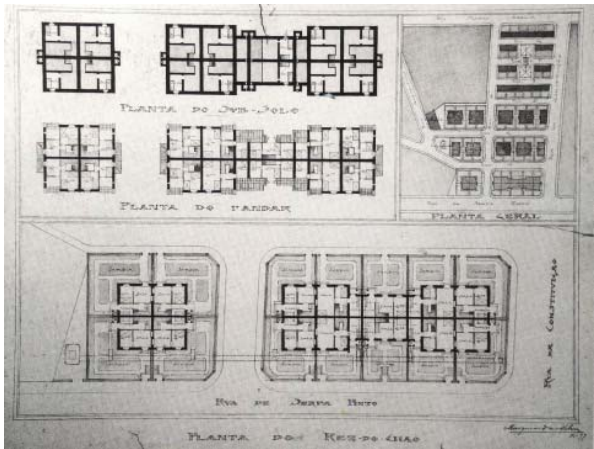
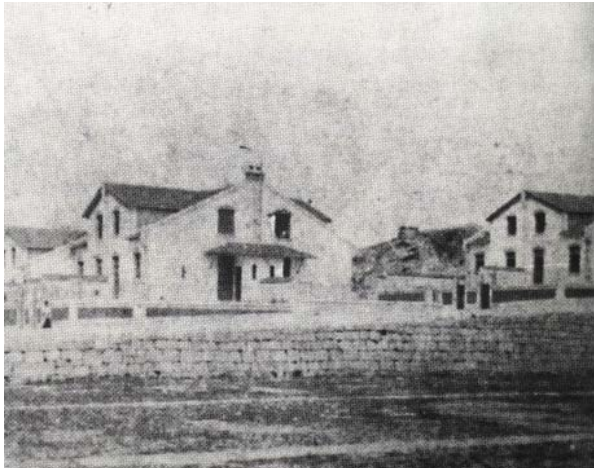
THE ILHAS

Table 1. The demographic development of Ilhas x City

Year	Number of Ilhas	Dwellings in Ilhas	Inhabitants in Ilhas	Inhabitants in Porto
1832	200	-	8.000	-
1864	-	-	-	86.731 ¹
1878	-	-	-	110.707
1885	531	6.020	19.460	-
1890	-	-	-	146.454
1900	1.048	11.129	35.000	168.000
1900-1910 . First Social Housing Plans				
1909	1.200	12.000	39.000	-
1911	-	-	-	194.009 ¹
1914-1917 . Four new social housing projects				
1920	-	-	-	202.310
1929	1.301	14.676	47.000	
1930	-	-	-	229.794
1935-1950 . Economic housing neighborhoods				
1939	1.153	13.510	45.243	
1940	-	-	-	258.548
1950	-	-	-	281.406
1956-1966 . The Improvement Plan				
1960	-	-	-	303.424
1974-1976 . SAAL				
1993- PER				
1996	-	-	-	290.421

< Based on: CMP, 2000; MATOS, 1994; TEIXEIRA, 1996; PEREIRA, 1996; PEREIRA, 2003.

> The 'Monte Pedral' neighborhood, with 14 dwellings, projected by Marques da Silva in 1899. The project was one of the first implemented social housing projects (CMP, 1999)



1.3.3. The social housing plans

The quarantine caused by the plague at the end of the 19th century finally was enough to generate some action concerning housing quality, coming from the Government (PEREIRA, 2003, p. 142). The first regulation concerning public health was made in 1901. According to the new law, houses could be inspected and the ones classified as insalubrious dwellings could be destroyed by the authorities. During the following years, the authorities developed new regulations and surveys, besides implementation of sewage and water supply facilities (MATOS, 1994, p. 682). Nevertheless, in 1925, only 25 private buildings in Porto were connected to the existing sewage network. In 1933, the number increased to 2178 (ANTAS, 1934 CITED IN MATOS, 1994, p. 682).

Besides the concern with general public health and sanitation, the first measurements related to social housing took place in the first years of the 20th century. The first developments built especially for social housing purposes were initiatives from the local newspaper “O Comércio do Porto”. Three communities for the working class were built between 1901 and 1904, with the support of the local government, and provided housing to 95 families (MATOS, 1994, p. 683).

The new communities were built with the objective of relocating the working class from the unhealthy environment. Nevertheless the reality was different, and according to surveys from 1910 (BOLETIM DO TRABALHO INDUSTRIAL, 1910 CITED IN MATOS, 1994, p. 685), the new houses were rented to middle class families with good levels of income.

The rent prices of the new housing, even though considered low at the time, would cost two or even three times more than an Ilha house, and as a result the families could not afford the change (PEREIRA, 2010).

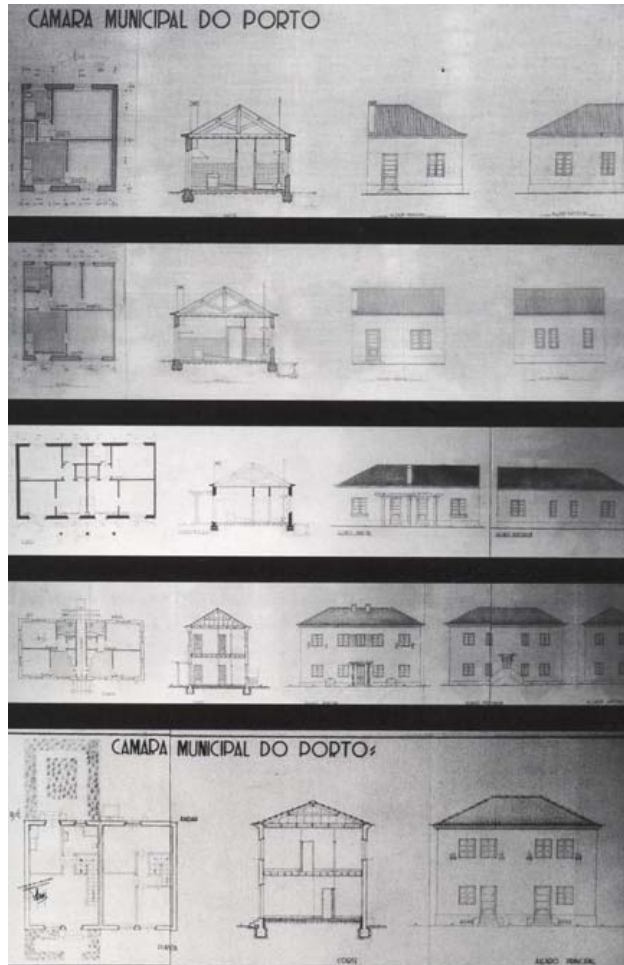
After that, a government initiative planned and built 4 communities with single family dwellings between 1914 and 1917. Nevertheless, the Ilhas did not stop spreading. In 1929, Porto had almost 15.000 dwellings located within 1.300 Ilhas, 300 more than in 1900 (MATOS, 1994, p. 685).

As a consequence of the First World War, more immigrants from the countryside arrived in the city, starting a new housing crisis. In Porto, the over-occupation of central buildings increased, and *“the Ilhas appear in every street, even in the ones that seem inhabited by higher classes”* (BARBOSA, 1930 CITED IN MATOS, 1994, p. 686). The problem was only growing.

In fact, the industrialization process in Porto started in 1870, and for the next 50 years the city faced a continuous growing problem concerning social housing. According to Pereira (2009), it took a very long time for the authorities to start a debate about these problems and initiatives which would finally take action. *“Portugal was immersed within social and political contradictions due to the end of the Monarchy and start of the Republic and had neither financial or social ways to think and act”* (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 90).

01

THE ILHAS



< The standard project for the 'Bairros de Casas Econômicas' (CMP, 1999)

Only in 1933 the Government change in 1933 brought a new period for the social housing policy. The "Estado Novo" ('New State', 1933-74) had a greater role in promoting housing estates (MATOS, 1994) and already at the beginning implemented the first public social housing program (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 91).

The New State, a fascist dictatorship, applied all conservatory moralist concepts from their philosophy in the housing program. The strong authority of the State came to change the liberal pattern that the country was used to (PEREIRA, 2009). During that time several neighborhoods of single family homes were built by the national Government together with local municipalities, the "*Economic housing neighborhoods – Bairros de Casas Econômicas*" (CMP, 2000). Between 1935 and 1950, 12 neighborhoods of Casas Econômicas containing 1662 single family dwellings were built in completely new areas in the city outskirts (MATOS, 1994, p. 687).

The program was structured around the private property, following the concept of a traditional Portuguese house, with front and backyard, located on neighborhoods in the city's periphery and not within the urbanized limits of the urban tissue. The State put effort into a strong moral control and selection of the new standard families, preferably formed by public employees and members of syndicates (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 91).

It could be promptly seen that the program would not be sufficient to solve the urgency for social housing in the city. The 2000 built houses stayed far below the needed amount. In 1939, there were 14.000 Ilha's dwellings in the city, and none of their inhabitants were actually helped by the 1933 program.

The social housing plans

1.3. The Past

The problems only persisted, since the lower social classes, who had the real need for new housing, did not benefit from this program (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 91).

Besides building new social housing, the authorities also focused on the Ilhas and its living conditions. Several surveys were made in the 20s and 30s, identifying Ilhas and reporting their conditions. A large research was made by the Municipality in 1939, and the Ilhas became entitled as a public problem that needed urgent attention. The research was followed by a strategic approach for relocation of Ilhas inhabitants.

According to the 1939 survey, Porto had at that time 1.153 Ilhas, with 13.500 dwellings and more than more than 45.000 inhabitants in 'horrible health living conditions' (AZEVEDO, 2000 CITED IN CMP, 2000). 20% of the population was still living in Ilhas, despite all social housing programs of the beginning of the century (MATOS, 1994, p. 690).

The neighborhoods of Bonfim, Cedofeita, Santo Ildefonso and Paranhos concentrated most of the Ilhas. Bonfim had 34% of its total population living in Ilhas. Between 1940 and 1956, 285 Ilhas dwellings were reformed and 360 were demolished, and 1.094 new dwellings were built in the social housing programmes (MATOS, 1994, p.693).

Only in 1939, when the social block 'Duque de Saldanha' was built within a dense area of Ilhas (São Victor street), a project was really designated for the lower income working class (CMP, 1999). "The dwellings in Ilhas were expropriated, and new dwellings in the Duque de Saldanha block were offered to the inhabitants, who were forced to accept it" (TEIXEIRA, 1985).

CONCENTRATION OF ILHAS IN 1939



The unique point of this social housing block is its location: for the first time, inhabitants were not deported to the suburbs, but were allowed to stay in the same region of the demolished Ilhas. Duque de Saldanha is located next to the Ilhas of São Victor Street, on Bonfim neighborhood (see Box on next page for details and see map above for location of São Victor Street in the City).

Despite the ambitious intentions of the 1939 plan to eliminate the Ilhas, and the execution of projects such as Duque de Saldanha, the Municipality did not succeed to eliminate the Ilhas from Porto. Duque de Saldanha was a punctual project which provided new housing for a limited amount of families (TEIXEIRA, 1985).

> Map with the location of the mentioned neighborhoods (Bonfim, Cedofeita, Santo Ildefonso and Paranhos) with the highest concentration of Ilhas

01

THE ILHAS



The Duque de Saldanha residential block was projected in 1937 by the Municipality of Porto, and finished in 1939/40. The building has four pavements and a U shape, forming an internal courtyard which opens to the street. The U shape building has 115 dwellings, and another building was added later to the complex, facing the street and enclosing the courtyard space. The construction of this housing project was polemic for its time, because its typology of collective housing block and the central location near the Ilhas community went against the principles of dictator Salazar, who was under the Nazi influence. The common corridors, entrances and the courtyard were seen as spaces for unwanted activities, and the rumor at the time compared the project to the 'Karl Marx-Hof' built at the 1920s in Vienna (CMP: Tv PORTO, 2012).



According to Prof. Virgílio Borges Pereira, from the Sociology Faculty of the University of Porto, Duque de Saldanha was an atypical case for the time. "It was the first time that inhabitants of the Ilhas were actually relocated to another dwellings. Some houses of the Ilhas were demolished, but not the whole Ilhas, since the objective was to relief the demographic density of São Victor Street.

The building typology kept the "collective housing" shape, with a common courtyard and access corridors. Given the type of ideological debate that was typical of the time, it is still difficult to understand how such a project had the approval of Salazar's dictatorial government. The typology of the building, compared to KarlMarxhof, soon made it impossible to replicate in other contexts of the city. For ideological reasons, and for a long period, the regime refused collective housing solutions." (INTERVIEW FROM MAY/2012).

Currently, 200 inhabitants live at the social housing building Duque de Saldanha. The building is divided in 5 blocks, with a total of 118 dwellings owned by the Municipality. According to the Municipality of Porto, the neighborhood had been forgotten for more than 50 years, and had not received enough attention concerning maintenance. The degraded structure of the building has been rehabilitated in 2005. The building infrastructure has been fully renewed (CMP, 1999).



< The location of 'Duque de Saldanha', nearby São Vítor street;

< Images from the construction of the building in the 1940s;

< Current images of the building. (CMP: Tv PORTO, 2012)

Later on, the State had its own internal tensions and discussions. Towards the half of the 20th century, the Government went for a capitalist modernization of its methods, and it can be seen in the transformation of the social housing programs. The first large scale housing programs for the working class appeared in Lisboa and Porto in the 1950s (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 92).

After the implementation of the 'New State', and the slowly implementation of the principles from the Athens Charter, the city suffered the effects of a rational and tough urbanism. The devaluation of the older urban tissues and the functionalism created new zones in the city. The residential, industrial trade and green areas were separated, and the traffic network had a new hierarchy. The social housing policy was also associated to these principles, integrating the functionalism to the new social neighborhoods in the suburbs (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 10).

In 1956, the Government developed a 'Sanification Plan for the Ilhas' and a large 'improvement plan' called "*Plano de Melhoramentos*" (MATOS, 1994, p. 694) with the objective of demolishing the existing Ilhas and building new neighborhoods (CMP, 1956). The changes of the authorities' approach concerned the target groups. The State aimed to act in different social levels, with housing typologies for all classes, and finally "*solve the moral, social and political problem of the Ilhas of Porto*" (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 92).

The Ilhas were the main target for the authorities, and these plans were responsible for the largest relocation of inhabitants so far. The "*Improvement Plan for the city of Porto*" (Plano de Melhoramentos para a cidade do Porto – 1956/66) built more than 6.000 social dwellings (CMP, 2000).

The social control and repression against the inhabitants only increased in these new neighborhoods, especially focusing on the lowest social classes (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 92).

The new housing built in the second half of the 20th century had a different typology than the single family houses of the 'Economic Neighborhoods' from the first half of the century. The new typology, following the modernistic examples Worldwide, was defined by multi-familiar flats in the suburban areas. More than 30.000 inhabitants of the Ilhas were relocated to the new buildings, increasing the already existing social segregation in the city (TEIXEIRA, 1985).

The empty central plots, left after relocation of inhabitants, lead to real estate speculation. Replacing the houses, higher buildings started to appear (COSTA, 2002). The new social neighborhoods lacked quantity and quality. They contributed to the expansion of the urban tissue, but did not increase the amount of housing in the city (COSTA, 2002). Besides, the relocation did not necessarily mean an improvement of living conditions for the families. The new dwellings, built with limited sources, had low quality standards. They still lacked comfort and, in some cases, sanitary facilities (AZEVEDO, 2000 CITED IN CMP, 2000).

01

THE ILHAS



< Examples of social housing blocks planned by the 'Improvement Plan' of 1956 (CMP, 1999)

Between 1956 and 1974, 25.000 inhabitants from Ilhas were relocated to the new social neighborhoods, formed by peripheral residential zones, classified by social class. The program did not include social solutions for the new areas and had no long term planning, but provided a short term solution for the housing problem. In summary, the population was relocated to new areas where the social problems would only be replaced, and even worse, would increase (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 92).

Social housing became then a tension subject, since the inhabitants were asking for the right to the city, and the right of living with dignity. The degrading of living conditions contributed to the fall of 48 years of Military dictatorship on the Revolution of April 25th, 1974.

In 1974, Portugal was finally free from the dictatorship. The revolutionary spirit raised even more the discussion concerning social housing, among other subjects. Between 1974 and 1976, the country faced a deep process of reconstruction of its political and social practices within the urban dimension (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 94). For the first time, the urban discussions were concerned only about solving deep social problems, and claiming the 'right to the city' for the lower social classes (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 94).

The social housing scenario changed, following the social changes. There was a new approach to life, community values, power and public participation. Within this context, the SAAL was created, with the objective of providing better housing conditions for the population. The SAAL ('Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local') was a national social housing program with a new vision.

The social housing plans

1.3. The Past

SAAL's approach was focused on local solutions, with a strategy for each determined zone of a city, trying to keep the population inside the city boundaries and avoiding the isolation and social exclusion of the suburban developments. The project teams - formed by architects, engineers, planners, students - worked directly in the field, making contact with each specific situation and listening to the needs of the local population, usually organized in associations.

In Porto, the SAAL operation took place within the urban centre, using empty spaces located nearby existing working class housing areas. The interventions were punctual and fragmented, but gave value to the historical centre and its mixed urban functions and social classes (BECKER, 1997). The SAAL had quite an impact in the city of Porto, and one of the factors for this strength was the discontent of thousands of inhabitants concerning their low quality living conditions. Not only inhabitants from Ilhas, but also from the sub located buildings and low quality social neighborhoods, were all claiming for change in a moment of freedom. *"From the 50s onwards, in Porto, around 50.000 people were compulsory relocated to the periphery, where they were subject of a straight vigilance system, political and moral. The growing population had not enough room in the social housing buildings, and the slums were growing. The Revolution of 1974 brought to this population hope of having a home with dignity, and above all, freedom".* (COSTA, 2007).

The inhabitants of the Ilhas were the ones who most benefited from the advantages of the SAAL process, once they wanted better housing but without leaving the place where they already lived.

In contrast with previous social housing approaches, which considered the working class housing areas insalubrious places to be extinguished, the SAAL recognized these spaces as a possible solution for the housing problem in Porto, repairing the existing structure, promoting the inner city occupation and trying to diminish the exiting social segregation.



> The Revolution of April 25th, 1974

> Image from the Documentary 'As Operações SAAL' (2007)

01

THE ILHAS



São Vítor by Álvaro Siza

The plan from Siza aimed to relocate people within the same area they were living, following the SAAL principles. The São Vítor plan was divided in two parts, one on the northern side of Praça da Alegria, and the second formed by two blocks along São Vítor Street. Only part of the first zone had been completed.

The realized part of the project was located in a plot previously occupied by Ilhas, which were demolished earlier with the objective of placing there a parking lot. The project had been developed in group with the Inhabitants Association, making use of existing foundation structures. The project included construction of new dwellings and rehabilitation of existing ones, but only part of it had been actually built.

The existing building is formed by 12 dwellings with two pavements, with simple and rhythmic design and access allowed by the front or the back of the houses. "The Ilha was, in this project, turned inside out: is opened to the city, no more ashamed of itself" (RODRIGUES, 1992).

Siza also created a degree of public and private space. The public space of street enters a semi public space created by an elevation on the floor, in front of the houses. A third space, more private, but still public, is formed in front of the houses by a second difference of level and low concrete walls between the houses. Siza tried to keep the contact between the inhabitants through a common space where they would meet, such as in the Ilha.



< The location of São Vítor project by Álvaro Siza, nearby São Vítor street and a sketch from Siza in the back;
< Current images of the building. PHOTOS FROM OCTOBER/2011

The social housing plans

1.3. The Past

The SAAL faced its end, but left a legacy. The cooperative working approach of SAAL stimulated the creation of associations of inhabitants, who build together new housing developments. Several housing associations were created after 1978, and thousands of good quality dwellings have been built since then. Nevertheless, the associations are mostly formed by middle class citizens, and not by the lower social classes, who saw no more social housing programs since the SAAL.

In the following years, no more social housing programs were created by public initiative in Porto. After the 1970s, the State tried to relief part of the responsibility of creating social housing to the market. With the economical crisis as justification, the government started up several incentives for the private market and the cooperative initiative (PEREIRA, 2009). In 1977, the State changed the leasing process for new housing buyers, in order to incentivize the real estate market. In 1982, the social housing governmental fund is extinct. Through the 1980s, the social housing becomes the responsibility of the private sector and credit systems from the banks (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p.97).

The consequence was the migration of the population to the surrounding municipalities, which offered housing for lower prices. The development of the private housing sector for low cost housing strongly increased the suburbanization of the city. Great part of the new developments took place in the suburbs and in the metropolitan region. From 1981 onwards, the population of Porto started to decrease, losing 3.756 inhabitants per year, in average, until 2005 (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 98).

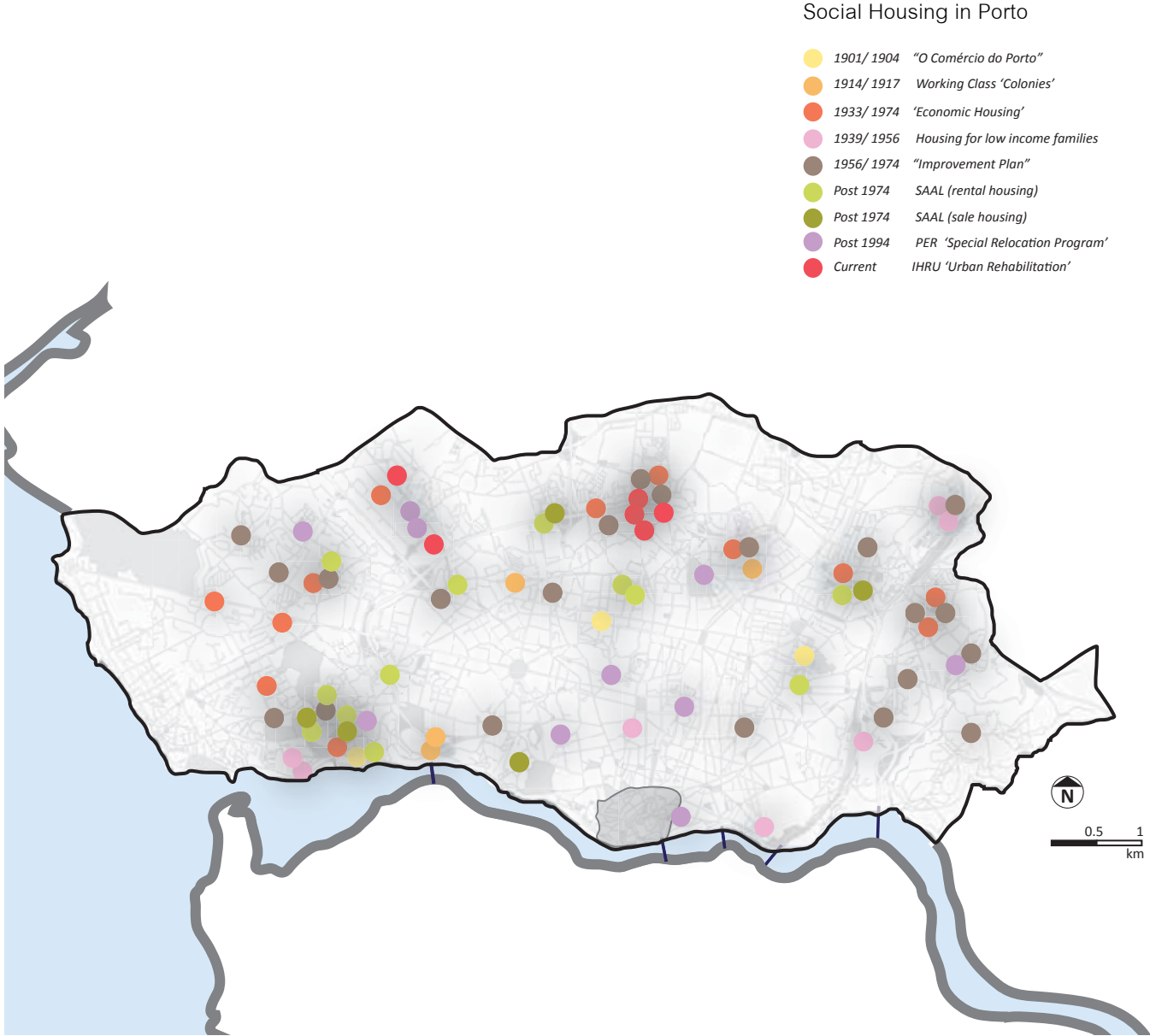


The market approach for social housing did not benefit the lower social classes, repeating the history of so many housing programs of the past. Great part of the population had no access to financial credit and housing possibilities in the new system, and the housing need persisted among the old centre, the Ilhas, and in the slums along the river and nearby social neighborhoods (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 98).

The government got once more involved in the problem in 1993, when the State created a new social housing program, which came in 1994. The PER (Special Relocation Program) had the objective of building 1356 dwellings spread in the city, including the central area. In Porto, several interventions were planned, but not all of them were implemented (PEREIRA; QUEIRÓS, 2009, p. 99).

> Housing built by the Cooperative groups (CMP, 1999)

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Until 1999, 14 housing projects had been developed within this program (CMP, 1999). According to the Municipality of Porto, around 700 families, 'that were mostly living in Ilhas', were relocated through the social housing program PER (CMP, 2001).

Innovation could be seen in some projects, through different architectural typologies and occupation within the central area of the city instead of within the suburbs.. Nevertheless, the old model of large suburban buildings was still used. Existing social neighborhoods were expanded, increasing the social problems and segregation of these regions (PEREIRA, 2009).

In the last years, the focus of the government concerning the housing problems had turned its focus to the derelict housing within the city centre. Within a concept of 'urban regeneration', the urban central space is being expropriated and used to incentivize the private sector market. According to Pereira and Queirós (2009), the production of urban space in this case focuses on a small and wealthy part of the population, denying the lower social groups.

After all the trials from the authorities to eradicate the Ilhas, they still exist in the city. The several programs of relocation of inhabitants through the years only changed the social segregation pattern in Porto. The pattern of "internal-external" segregation with the working class occupying internal spaces and the higher classes facing the 'exterior', had a shift to a "centre-periphery" segregation.

The objective of this overview was to list all types of approaches already developed in the city concerning social housing. As it could be seen, only during the SAAL the lower classes (including Ilhas' residents) were relocated according to their wishes, within a public participation process. All other episodes involved relocation to suburbs, to the neighborhoods that are currently considered 'problem areas' in the city, and are now being demolished by the authorities (as it will be shown on Chapter 2).

< The map shows an overview of social housing projects through time. The high concentration of projects in the belt surrounding the central area can be clearly noticed.



< Ilha Grande, São Victor Street.
PHOTO FROM MAY/2012

1.4. The Present

1.4.1. Current Situation

After 200 years of history, and several programs trying to extinguish them through the years, the Ilhas are still a reality in the city of Porto. Information available in 2001 pointed to an estimation of 13.500 people living in Ilhas, plus more than 6.500 people in similar living conditions, and more than 40.000 people living in social neighborhoods (PEREIRA, 2003, p. 145).

According to Pereira (2003, p. 145), *“most probably, around 20% (...) of the population of Porto have inherited living conditions from the housing solutions – and lack of solutions – that were a consequence of the industrialization and urbanization process of Porto”*.

Within the Ilhas and social neighborhoods of Porto of the 21st century, maybe not many of the sons, but surely many of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the old industrial labor forces from Porto can be found. Nevertheless, these neighborhoods are far from being socially homogeneous. They might be in many cases segregated, but they contain a social diversity that makes from each neighborhoods different than the other, with its specific problems (PEREIRA, 2003, p.145).

The Municipality sees the Ilhas, undoubtedly, as a major urban problem. They have demolished the majority of Ilhas located in public ground in the last years. In June 8th, 2003, it could be read on the first page of the newspaper *“O Comércio do Porto”*: *“Last municipal Ilha breaks down this month”* (CITED IN PEREIRA, 2003, p. 147). They claim to have relocated 700 families from publicly owned Ilhas to another housing conditions, but declare that ‘the large and critical problem of the private Ilhas in highly degraded conditions persists’ (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001).

The problem, according to the authorities, is formed by the high degraded conditions of the dwellings, unhealthy standards, the low income of the inhabitants and *‘the expectations of future profit with the liberation of the plots situated in privileged zones of the city’* (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001).

There is no actual official data listing what is left from the Ilhas. In a report of 2001, the Municipality presents the last official public numbers concerning the Ilhas of Porto. *“In the classic form, there are still in the city of Porto 5.900 houses in Ilhas”* (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001). It is also mentioned in the report, that 6.500 more inhabitants live in ‘similar conditions’ of the Ilhas, in a total of 2.771 dwellings (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001). The ‘similar conditions’ mentioned by the report are formed by ‘deformed Ilhas’ (dwellings based on the standard typology of Ilhas but in different configurations); working class communities (considered an evolution of the Ilha typology, but with a inner-block occupation); and rural communities (located on the city borders, mostly improvised housing) (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001).

Table 2. Ilhas in Porto - the latest data available (2001)

Type of housing	Occupied Dwellings	Vacant Dwellings
<i>Ilha - ‘classic’</i>	5.182	725
<i>Ilha - ‘atypical’</i>	651	74
<i>Working class community</i>	1.507	186
<i>Others (Vilas/ Quintas)</i>	314	39
Total	7.654	1.024

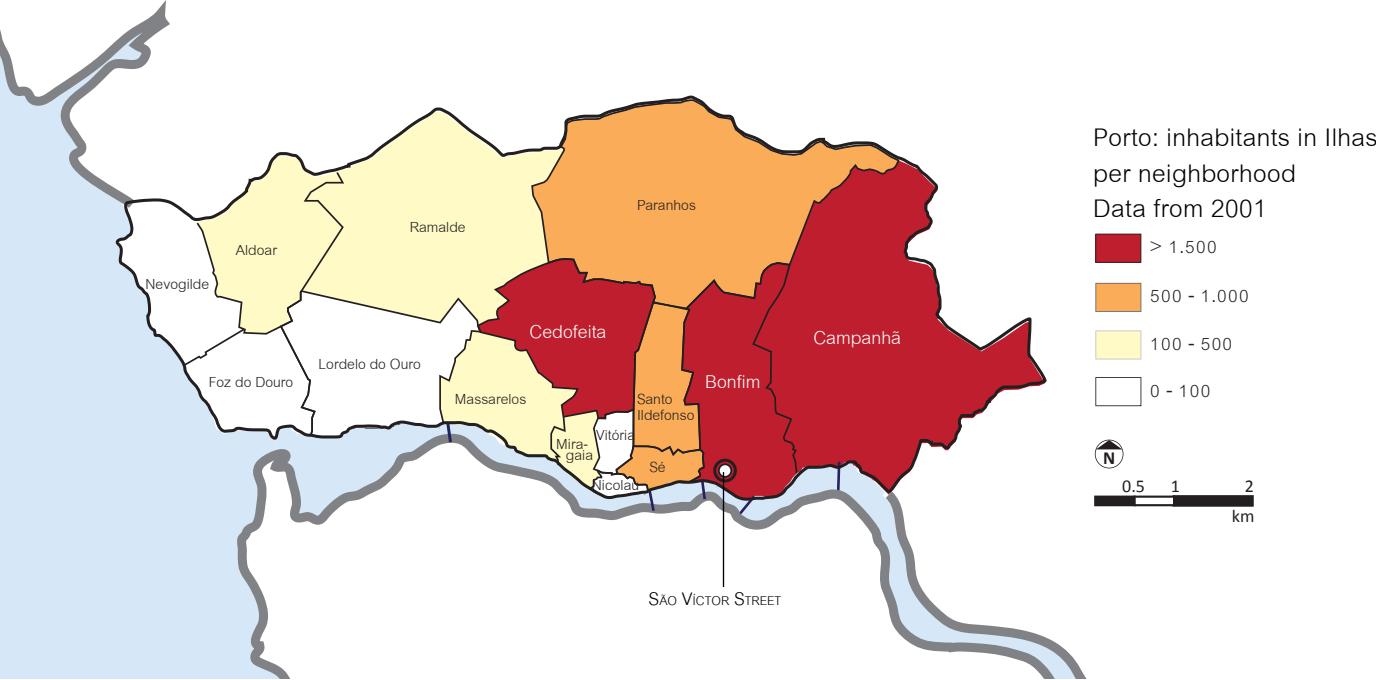
> CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001.

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The majority of Ilhas identified in the report are located on the neighborhoods Bonfim, Campanhã and Cedofeita, areas high in concentration of Ilhas during all their history. The industrialization process developed through history with higher intensity within the neighbourhoods of Bonfim and Campanhã, which therefore attracted the working class who was looking for low cost housing. *“In the year 2000, around 37% of ‘Ilhas’ dwellings of the city are still located in this two neighbourhoods, especially in Bonfim”* (CMP, 2000). The neighborhood of Bonfim, where São Victor street is located, has almost 2.000 of its residents living in Ilhas. It is the neighborhood with the larger amount of Ilhas’ population.

According to Pinto (2007), at the end of the XIX century the eastern zone of Porto faced a strong industrial development, and the consequence was a social and symbolic devaluation of this area of the city. Nowadays, this devaluation increased and these areas became forgotten spaces in the city sphere, since the industrial activity partially moved to the surrounding municipalities.



1.4.2. Demographics

Within the Ilhas, the population aging tendency which is already observed in the city of Porto is even stronger. In the whole city, 17,8% of the population is formed by the elderly, while in the Ilhas the percentage is higher, reaching 23,3% (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001). In comparison with Porto, the percentage of young adults is also lower in the Ilhas. Nevertheless, the Ilhas have a slightly higher percentage of children than the City.

THE MOST PRESENT SOCIAL PATTERN OF THE CENTRE OF PORTO IS FORMED BY THE ELDERLY, MOSTLY WOMEN, WITH LOW INCOMES AND ISOLATED FROM THE CITY, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SOCIALLY. FURTHERMORE, ANOTHER PATTERN COMMON IN THE CENTRE IS FORMED BY UNEMPLOYED ADULTS, NOT YET PART OF THE ELDERLY, BUT OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE DIFFICULTIES FINDING A JOB. THIS PART OF SOCIETY IS EXCLUDED, DUE TO THE LACK OF SOCIAL DIVERSITY IN SEVERAL PARTS OF THE CENTRE (PEREIRA,2005,p. 2).

The growing levels of aged population increases the amount of one person households. These residents are more vulnerable, socially and economically, due to social isolation and low retirement income (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 29). The dependence of the youth/elderly on the economical active population is also higher in the Ilhas: with 61,5%, while in Porto the dependants are 46,16%. It can be explained by the lower number of economical active adults in the Ilhas.

The majority of the dwellings in Ilhas are occupied by couples with children (28,9%), followed by persons living alone (21,3%) and couples without children (19,9%). But from the last two groups, 70% is formed by the elderly. 14,5% of the dwellings are occupied by an extended family, defined by the research as a family with more than one nucleus (including grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 30).

Graph 1. Population age – City of Porto x Ilhas

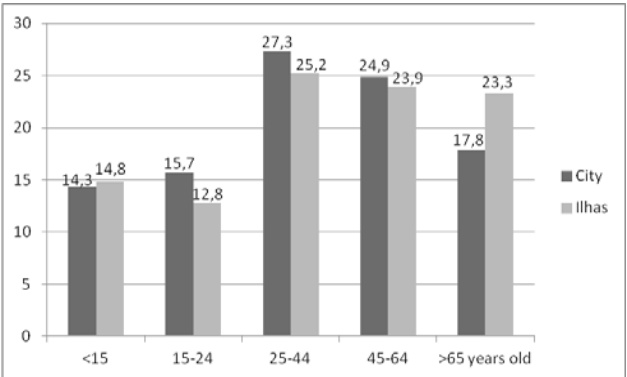


Table 3. Family typology per household

Family Typology per household	Nº of Families	%
Single family, with (unmarried) children	1.018	28.9
Single person	750	21.3
Single family, no children	699	19.9
More than one family	356	10.1
Single mother with children	287	8.2
Extended family	185	5.2
Grandparents with grandchildren	82	2.3
Grandmother with grandchildren	65	1.8
Single father with children	23	0.7
Grandfather with grandchildren	4	0.1
Other	48	1.4
Total	3.517	100

> ADAPTED FROM CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 28.

> IBID, p. 30.

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The average dimension on the families is low (2,6 people per household), when compared to the city average of 3 people per household. The cause of the lower occupation is, according to the Municipality, the aging process of the inhabitants and the reduced size of the dwellings, which make the old fashioned form of 'extended families' (sharing the same home) a difficult reality for an Ilha household. In the Ilhas, it is more difficult for the younger generation to share the house space with the older ones, due to the limited room of the dwellings.

The strong presence of an aged population explains the weak level of education. Two thirds of the Ilhas population never completed the primary years of school. The educational level of the Ilhas population (older than 14 years) is rather low, since 55.3% of them did not study more than 4 years of primary school. The elderly is significantly lower educated than the younger generations. Furthermore, 11.2% of the 14+ years old inhabitants are illiterate and 8.8% did not finish any school year. Only 2.2% of the inhabitants acquired a university degree, the average in the city of Porto is 11%, and 6.3% in the whole country. Even among the economically active population the instruction level is rather low. Only half of them completed the primary education (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, PAGES 33 AND 34).

The result of the low level of education is an economical vulnerability of the population concerning their employment possibilities. Not even half of the population is economically active (46.3%). The level of economically active population is significantly lower than the average of the northern region of Portugal. This is partially explained by the large numbers of people living from a retirement fund. The retired inhabitants are the second largest group, with 31.6% of the total. Students are 15% of the total, and 5% are housewives (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, PAGE 34).

Table 4. Economically active population

<i>Economically active</i>	<i>Ilhas</i>	<i>Northern region of Portugal¹</i>
<i>Men</i>	<i>50.5%</i>	<i>58.1%</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>37.8%</i>	<i>44.3%</i>

1. The Census data chosen to be used is from 1999 because the data available from Ilhas is from 2001. The similar timeframes allow a more suitable comparison of information.

Table 5. Types of income source

<i>Income source</i>	<i>Nº of Families</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Retirement fund</i>	<i>1.535</i>	<i>49.3</i>
<i>Working for employer</i>	<i>1.365</i>	<i>43.8</i>
<i>Government assistance fund</i>	<i>87</i>	<i>2.8</i>
<i>Self employed</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>1.7</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>2.3</i>

Table 6. Level of income

<i>Income (in €²)</i>	<i>Nº of Families</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Under minimum of 306€</i>	<i>949</i>	<i>30.2</i>
<i>306€ - 612€</i>	<i>1.412</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>612€ - 917€</i>	<i>578</i>	<i>18.4</i>
<i>Above 917€</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>6.4</i>

2. The values in Euros are estimated, since the original research was made when the currency in Portugal was the 'Escudo', before the Euros were introduced.

> *BASED ON DATA FROM CENSUS 1999. ADAPTED FROM CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, P. 35.
> ADAPTED FROM CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, P. 53.
> IBID, P. 56.

Financially, the income level of the Ilhas population is quite low. In 1999¹, the minimum monthly salary in Portugal was the equivalent of € 306 (the currency at that time was ‘Escudos’, and not Euros). Around 30% of the families was living from income lower than the minimum salary, and the great majority of the families was not trespassing the income of € 612 (twice the minimum income). The low income levels show the vulnerability of the Ilhas population, and explains their need for the low rental prices offered by the Ilhas’ dwellings.

Nevertheless, sole information about the income of a family does not tell about their real living conditions. The live standards depends also on how many people compose the household, and where the line of ‘poverty’ is being drawn. In the report, the Municipality uses the poverty index of Portugal from the year 2000, and a calculation methodology used in several studies about poverty in the Country (PIMENTA, 2001). The poverty standard used is based on a monthly income lower than 182€ per adult in the household. Based on this, the estimation is that 25.8% of the families (33.9% of the people) living in Ilhas are below the Portuguese poverty level. The table on the right shows how the poverty levels are related to each typology of household.

As mentioned before, the population living in the Ilhas do not own the dwellings, in most of the cases. The houses are rented by a landlord who owns the plot. There are a few Ilhas which are owned by the Municipality, but the majority of them have been destroyed in the last years. In the public Ilhas (currently almost extinguished), the rent is paid then to the Municipality, in the system of social housing rent.

Table 7. Poverty incidence per family typology

Family Typology per household	Incidence of poverty (%)
<i>Single family, with (unmarried) children</i>	29.6
<i>Single person</i>	10.7
<i>Single family, no children</i>	12
<i>More than one family</i>	51.9/50 ³
<i>Single mother with children</i>	14.3
<i>Extended family</i>	42.4/52.4 ⁴
<i>Grandparents with grandchildren</i>	18.4
<i>Grandmother with grandchildren</i>	62.9
<i>Single father with children</i>	40.6
<i>Grandfather with grandchildren</i>	25
<i>Other</i>	39.4
Total	25.8% of totality of households (810 families)

3 - 4. The second value is related to extended or enlarged families with single mother or father.

Great part of the Ilhas were built a long time ago, without any elementary facilities or concern with comfort. Therefore, some improvements that can be found today in the Ilhas, depending on the economical possibilities of the inhabitants. When these users had the financial conditions for improvement through the years, they would upgrade the houses, building, for example, a private toilet.

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Nevertheless, most houses still lack primary facilities. More than a third of the Ilhas have no private toilets and bathrooms. From the ones which have their own facilities, they lack quality. The majority of bathrooms do not have warm water (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 40 AND 41).

When asked about what are the technical problems of their houses, the inhabitants cannot list an specific problem, just saying that the dwelling is totally degraded. Almost 50% of the dwellings are in degraded conditions. The other mentioned problems are related to humidity and lack of facilities. The reduced size of the household, remarkably, was not mentioned. (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 44).

The permanency level is also very high among residents, increasing the sense of belonging to the place and the community feeling (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 44). The majority of them lives in the Ilhas for more than 30 years (see Graph 2). Nevertheless, a pattern of change can be noticed in the graph. There is a significant amount of residents who recently arrived in the Ilhas and live there for less than 5 years. The Ilhas are facing a process of redefinition of its social pattern, since great part of these newcomers (57,3%) are younger than 40 years old (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 44).

Table 8. Sanitary facilities - Toilets

Toilet - typology	%
Private, inside	47.1
Private, outside	16.6
Shared	33.9
Non existent	2.4
Total	100

Table 8. Sanitary facilities - Shower

Shower - typology	With warm water	Without warm water	% Total
Private, inside	21.9	23.4	45.3
Private, outside	5.8	8.6	14.4
Shared	2.8	20.1	22.9
Non existent	-	-	17.3
Total			100

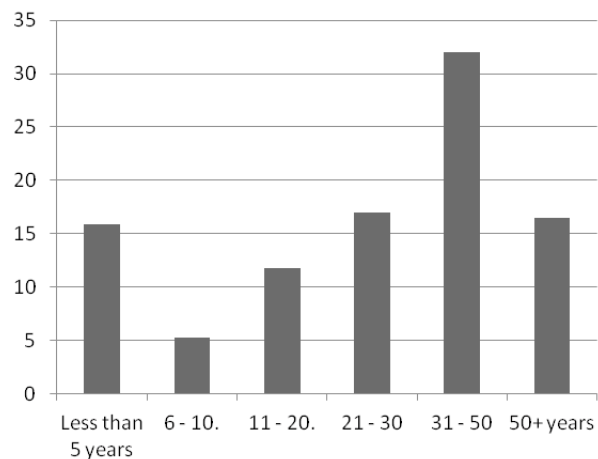


> ADAPTED FROM CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 40.

> IBID, p. 41.

> EXAMPLE OF SHARED TOILET FACILITIES IN ONE ILHA. EVEN WHEN EXISTENT, THE TOILETS IN MANY CASES LACK QUALITY. (CIDADES, WITHIN JORNAL PÚBLICO, EDITION OF 19/DEC/2010)

Graph 2. Residents Permanency
% of residents x amount of years living in the same Ilha



Conclusions

The demographic data gives an overview of the estimated 10.000 people who live in the (classic) Ilhas and in which financial conditions. The main conclusions are:

1. The population is aging.

23% of the inhabitants are 65+, but other 24% are between 45 and 65 years old. This data is more than 10 years old, therefore we can assume that the aging only increased in the last 11 years.

2. They are socially vulnerable.

21% of the households are formed by persons living alone, and almost 20% by couples without children. Most of them are elderly people, and life alone only gets more difficult through the years.

3. They are economically vulnerable.

25% of the families live below poverty levels. 75% of all families have income levels below €612 per month. The active population works at services and industrial jobs. The women have more difficulty finding formal employment.

4. They have low levels of education.

Two thirds of the Ilhas population never completed the primary years of school. The level of illiteracy is high, 11.2%, and the elderly is significantly lower educated than the younger generations. This results in more unemployment and unqualified jobs.

5. The housing quality is low.

More than 30% of the dwellings have no bathroom or toilet. The ones which have their own facilities, lack quality in most of the cases. 25% of the people cannot even list the technical problems of their dwellings, declaring that it is 'totally degraded'.

6. There is a high level of permanency.

More than 50% of the people live in the same dwelling for more than 30 years. Nevertheless, a wave of new younger residents, living in the Ilhas for less than 5 years, can be noticed (15% of the total).

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1.5.1. The Ilha in Detail

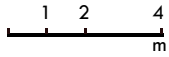


Ilha in Detail

< *THE PLOT REPRESENTED IS THE N° 113 OF SÃO VÍCTOR STREET.
MEASUREMENT ADAPTED FROM PIRES, 2009. THE REPRESENTED
DWELLINGS' DIVISIONS ARE BASED ON OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING FIELD
VISITS TO SÃO VÍCTOR STREET IN 2011 AND 2012.

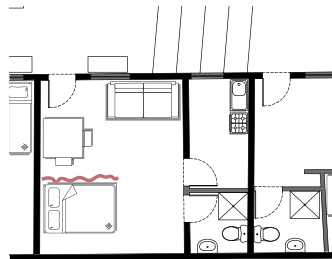
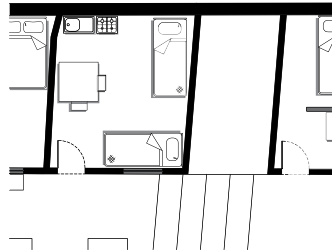
The primary typology of the Ilha is composed by the entrance on the side of a front house, through a door or gate; the corridor space in the main role (it represents 'the ilha' and its image) and the dwellings. The Ilhas can have all kinds of variations, but the original typology, which is still rather common, is defined above. The drawing gives an impression of the dwelling size and how the residents outline the inner divisions of their homes. More common details of the Ilhas common space and the dwellings can be seen on the right.

1.5. The Spatial Quality



Open space

In some of the Ilhas, a small stripe of open space can be found between the dwellings. They function like a small 'backyard', and relate to the immediate dwellings on the sides.

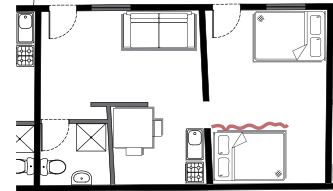
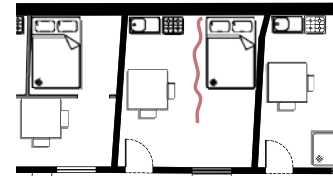


Open space – self-improvement

The stripe of open space, when present, have been converted into built up area in several cases. The inhabitants use the space for adding a toilet or an extra room to their dwellings. All improvement is usually planned and paid by the inhabitants and not by the Ilha owner.

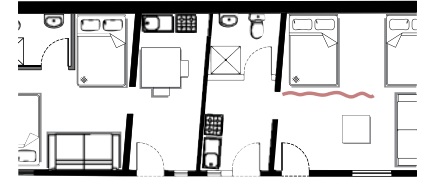
Curtains

Due to the reduced size of the dwellings, privacy within the household is a difficult task for the inhabitants. Many of them create divisions of space with curtains, that isolate the bedroom area from the rest of the house.



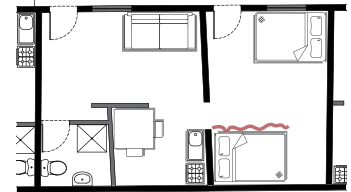
Vacant

Great part of the Ilhas have some empty dwellings. These dwellings are usually in worse conditions when compared to the occupied ones, in most cases with no private toilet.



Family toilet

In some cases, an extra built toilet has a semi private character. Families occupying more than one dwelling share a toilet, built between the houses.



More space

There are some examples of families renting more than one house in order to improve their living space. They usually create more privacy to the bedrooms, separating them from the living room space. Some families also improved their space building an extra pavement on top of the original one.

Shared toilets
One of the main characteristics of the Ilhas is the shared toilet facilities. Even Ilhas that have already built private toilets for the dwellings still keep the shared facilities.

A closer look at the urban tissue

Concerning their physical aspects, the Ilhas form unique pieces of urban tissue in the city, besides being an interesting living typology by themselves. When putting side by side some different urban tissue patterns of Porto's central area, more of the characteristics of the Ilha's settlement in the city can be comprehended. Oliveira (2007) identified 7 different urban tissue patterns in Porto. The classification was based on the relationship between kinds of urban space (built, open or green) and the defined criteria were the volumetric and compact pattern of the built up area; the access spaces and road classification; and finally the formal pattern and functionality of green spaces (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p.351). When observing Porto and its urban structure, it can be effortlessly concluded that the city grew clearly in a radial pattern. The different urban tissues start in the nucleus, and go through transformations towards the borders of the city in a radius pattern. The three initial tissues classified by Olivera (2007) are: the medieval core, the expansion areas (the Almada expansion) and the areas with Ilhas. It can be noticed that the Ilhas increase the density of the space but without changing the general appearance of the area. The densification takes place inside the block, and these inside spaces of corridors have characteristics that would help binding a tight community, as it will be explained next.

1. The Medieval Core

The tissue



Built up area



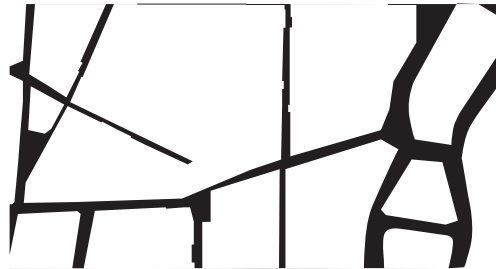
Streets



The central nucleus had its urbanization starting several centuries ago, and despite moments of spatial reorganization, it maintained in some of its areas the primitive characteristics of spatial organization (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p.351). This typology of urban tissue is formed by the area within the former medieval walls. The walls limited the sprawl of the urban area through the centuries, creating a dense urban space. The built up area is highly compact, with more area covered by buildings than by open space. The dominant typology is formed by buildings with two or three pavements, with narrow façades aligned and facing the street. The streets are narrow and follow the curved topography of the soil and have no formal design.

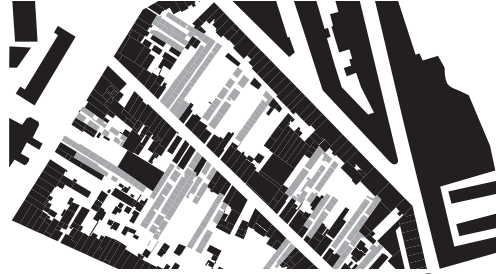
1.5. The Spatial Quality

2. The 18th Century Expansion Lines



This typology of urban tissue had a shorter urbanization time than the first one and therefore has a more homogeneous typology. The built up area of the expansion zone, located beyond the former medieval walls, is less compact, however rather dense. The dominant construction typology is formed by narrow buildings, with its façades perpendicular to the street. The green spaces occupy a larger area on the urban surface than in the central core typology. These green areas are mostly formed by the long backyards of the plot typology from the 1760s planning. The streets are long and straight, result of a planned design, and wider when compared to the central core typology.

3. The Ilhas



This type of urban tissue shares its main characteristics with the previous one. Buildings and streets have the same pattern, but the green areas are replaced by the Ilhas. The density is consequently high, due to the numerous undersized dwellings. The continuation of the aligned façades to the street are in some cases interrupted by Ilhas which reach the street (without a main front house), or by the gates which give access to the back houses. The houses in a row have only one access to the street, therefore the accessibility pattern of the area has a degree of privacy: the main street becomes another 'access road' to the houses, formed by the small corridors. There is an inversion or hierarchy concerning the buildings, once the 'secondary' construction faces the street, and the main accessed ones are located in the back of the plot (OLIVEIRA, 2007). The street enters the urban block, and the inner corridor of each Ilha is a continuation of the street but in a lower degree of publicness.



Social Environment: after all, why should the Ilhas be saved?

The Ilhas form great communities. This is the greatest advantage of this housing typology, and the main reason to keep them, with the required adaptations for improving the living quality.

The fact, however, cannot be generalized, since not all Ilhas are places of cheerfulness and pure solidarity among neighbors. Each Ilha is different than the other, as the residents say. There are constraints in such a tight and enclosed way of living, such as lack of privacy, when desired, and severe limitations for dwellings expansion. Nevertheless, the residents greatly appreciate the main positive aspect, which is the communal quality.

Despite the low quality of living standards and the social and economical difficulties, the satisfaction of the residents concerning their living environment is quite high. The solidarity network that is built among inhabitants anchors them to their space and to the community. When questioned, 65% of the residents would accept leaving their current dwelling due to its degraded conditions, but 55% would only move to another house located in the same place (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 49). They wish for a better house, but not for a better place. In fact, 80% of the Ilhas' residents declare themselves satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbors (CMP, PIMENTA; FERREIRA, 2001, p. 49).

The constant concern about health and over occupation through the Ilhas' history never allowed an analysis of them as a social space. The disadvantages were always much overwhelming when compared to the positive aspects of living in Ilhas (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 2), which for a very long time, were not even acknowledged.

The residents are very aware of the negative image the Ilhas have within the city. Nevertheless, the inhabitants show a resistant feeling against this image, that even contributes to the building of a positive place identity, as a proud feeling of experiencing and valorizing their way of living (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 174). Even though the Ilhas are viewed as a very negative place from the outside, their symbolic value for the residents is based on the place and related memories, important aspects for building place identity (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 175).

The strong community pattern can be explained by the origin of the first residents. In a process of intense movement of the rural population toward the city, intensified especially at the end of the 19th century, the social environment of the Ilha seemed to play an important role as place for urban and social integration. Pereira (2010, p. 13) declares that for the newcomers *"the Ilha was a place where, in cases, a relative or an old neighbor already lived; It was a place where the working urban class met the rural newcomers, and the Ilha became, in this point of view, this important space for welcome and of social integration"*. As it used to happen in the rural communities where people were coming from, in the Ilhas the private space was not well separated from the public space, since the common or collective areas were used as an extension of the dwellings (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 13).

In comparison with other living areas occupied by similar social classes, like the old centre and the social neighborhoods from the second half of the 20th century, the Ilhas have the highest level of inhabitants attachment to the living space. *“They provide a greater level of territoriality and privacy, symbolized by the entrance gate”* (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 177). Inside, the Ilha, and outside, the rest of the city. The delimitation of the entrance creates a separations of dimensions to the person, even though the space is not yet private. It is communal.

“The territoriality is naturally associated to the communal privacy, since the gate marks the entrance of the Ilha in the same way the front door marks the entrance of the house” (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 177). The Ilha is a sort of house, where the privacy is desired, but yet allows social relationship with others. The reduced dimensions of the dwellings led to the intense use of common spaces, especially by women and children, strengthening the social relationships and the solidarity among neighbors, but also causing conflicts. The physical character of the housing typology, where the small dwellings were separated from each other by thin walls, decreased levels of possible privacy or desired isolation (PEREIRA, 2010, p. 13).

However, the residents are able still to control their level of interaction, being in social or in private as they wish. The household space still represents privacy (maybe a bit constraint when the construction materials are thin), and the social contact is easily accessible, in contrary to what happens in towers of apartments. In large apartment complexes, the social encounter is more difficult, since there are less meeting areas, and with no privacy pattern.

According to Rodrigues (2002, p. 178) the feeling of freedom to interact and the intimacy of the household do not seem to have be in conflict in the Ilhas. They sense privacy in their dwellings, without a feeling of social pressure for interaction.

Furthermore, the privacy provided by the gate enclosure increases the small appropriations of space. The Ilhas have a strong character of small personal appropriations of the space made by the residents, since the communal space is regularly used (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 178). This appropriation can be vertical, when using wall space, or horizontal, when a stripe of the corridor represents an extension of the dwelling.

Besides being functional and increasing the total area of the dwelling, the small space appropriations show the residents' concern about the space, and give them room for personalizing their houses on their way. While painting or using tiles on the façade, putting plants, hanging laundry, cleaning and caring about that space, the residents are personalizing that area, and they become proud of it. This is one important factor that increases their attachment to the living space.

“RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS, SMALL DECORATIONS OBJECTS AND SOCCER TEAM FLAGS ARE THE MOST COMMON PERSONAL DETAILS” (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 182).



< APPROPRIATIONS OF COMMON SPACE: PLANTS IN THE CORRIDOR USING FLOOR SPACE, AND THE LAUNDRY USING VERTICAL SPACE.

> PERSONAL DETAILS ON THE WALLS

SÃO VÍCTOR STREET, PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012

01 THE ILHAS



< JOÃO (8) WAS ONE OF THE INTERVIEWED RESIDENTS, AND HE ENJOYS LIVING THERE. HE WANTED TO MAKE A DRAWING OF HIS ILHA. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CORRIDOR IS CLEAR FROM HIS DRAWING, AND THE GATE IS A CLEAR BOUNDARY BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE FOR HIM. PHOTO FROM MAY/2012

The Social Environment

The changes in the environment mostly result from the effort of the inhabitants themselves, and that might be the reason why they are frequently mentioned by them and help building the image of each Ilha. The inhabitants of the Ilhas emphasize the changes that happened in their living space, either physical or social. They mention how the space has been before, and how it is now, showing that the experience of the space is strongly influenced by memories and by witnessing the space transitions (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 166).

The living experience in the dwellings has a determinant role on the individual's attachment to the space. The meaning of the house is quite positive, especially when self-improvement through the years increased the quality of the dwelling. The house has a well-built value as central living space, and the residents show strong affective relations with it and a desire of permanency. They associate the main improvements made in the house, such as a built toilet, with this attachment process, considering them an important part of their satisfaction (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 181).

The residents often help each other taking care of their dwellings, and of common areas. *"In neighborhoods characterized by residential stability and where residents report having friends and relatives living nearby, residents are likely to feel more invested in the neighborhood and more responsible for activities that occur there and for their own well-being"* (BURCHFIELD, 2009, p. 47). They feel the neighborhood as part of their own dwelling and personal space, and therefore care about the Ilha as a whole.

1.5. The Spatial Quality

"WELL, IN ONE ASPECT I AM SURE HERE (IN THE ILHA) IS BETTER. IT IS VERY GOOD CONCERNING THE FRIENDSHIP, WE ARE LIKE A FAMILY. IF SOMEONE HERE HAS ANY PROBLEM, ALL PEOPLE COME ALONG TO HELP".

"WE HAVE HERE WHAT PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE IN THE SOCIAL TOWERS. BECAUSE IF SOMEONE DIES IN ONE OF THOSE APPARTMENTS, HIS NEIGHBOR DOES NOT EVEN NOTICE HE DIED"

"THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE HERE IS VERY ATTACHED TO THIS PLACE. MY DAUGHTER, FOR EXAMPLE, SHE LIVES HERE. SHE IS YOUNG AND COULD LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE, LIKE IN A BUILDING, BUT SHE PREFERS IT IN HERE."

"I HAVE VERY STRONG ROOTS HERE, AND THAT IS THE REASON WHY, EVEN IF I WOULD BECOME A RICH MAN, I WOULD NEVER LEAVE!"

(INTERVIEWS WITH INHABITANTS OF ILHAS, CITED IN RODRIGUES, 2002. P.176-177)



> PHOTOS FROM 'BAIRRO DO HERCULANO', A CLUSTER OF ILHAS THAT HAVE BEEN PARTIALLY SOLD TO THE RESIDENTS. THEY HAVE IMPROVED THEIR HOMES AND DESCRIBE THEM WITH PRIDE.

PHOTOS FROM NOVEMBER/2011

01
THE ILHAS



< SÃO VÍCTOR STREET. PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012

The Social Environment

Furthermore, the Ilhas also provide a relatively safe environment, when compared to the social housing neighborhoods in the city suburbs. It is a result of a higher level of social control, that is closely related to satisfaction with the living space. Several studies suggest that informal social control, defined as the willingness of neighborhood residents to intervene in local problems, is an important mediator between neighborhood structural conditions and crime (BURCHFIELD, 2009, p. 47). According to Burchfield (2009, p. 51) *“neighborhoods characterized by extensive friend and neighbor networks, familiarity among residents, local organizational participation, and residents’ positive evaluations and sentiment about the neighborhood exhibit higher levels of informal social control”*.

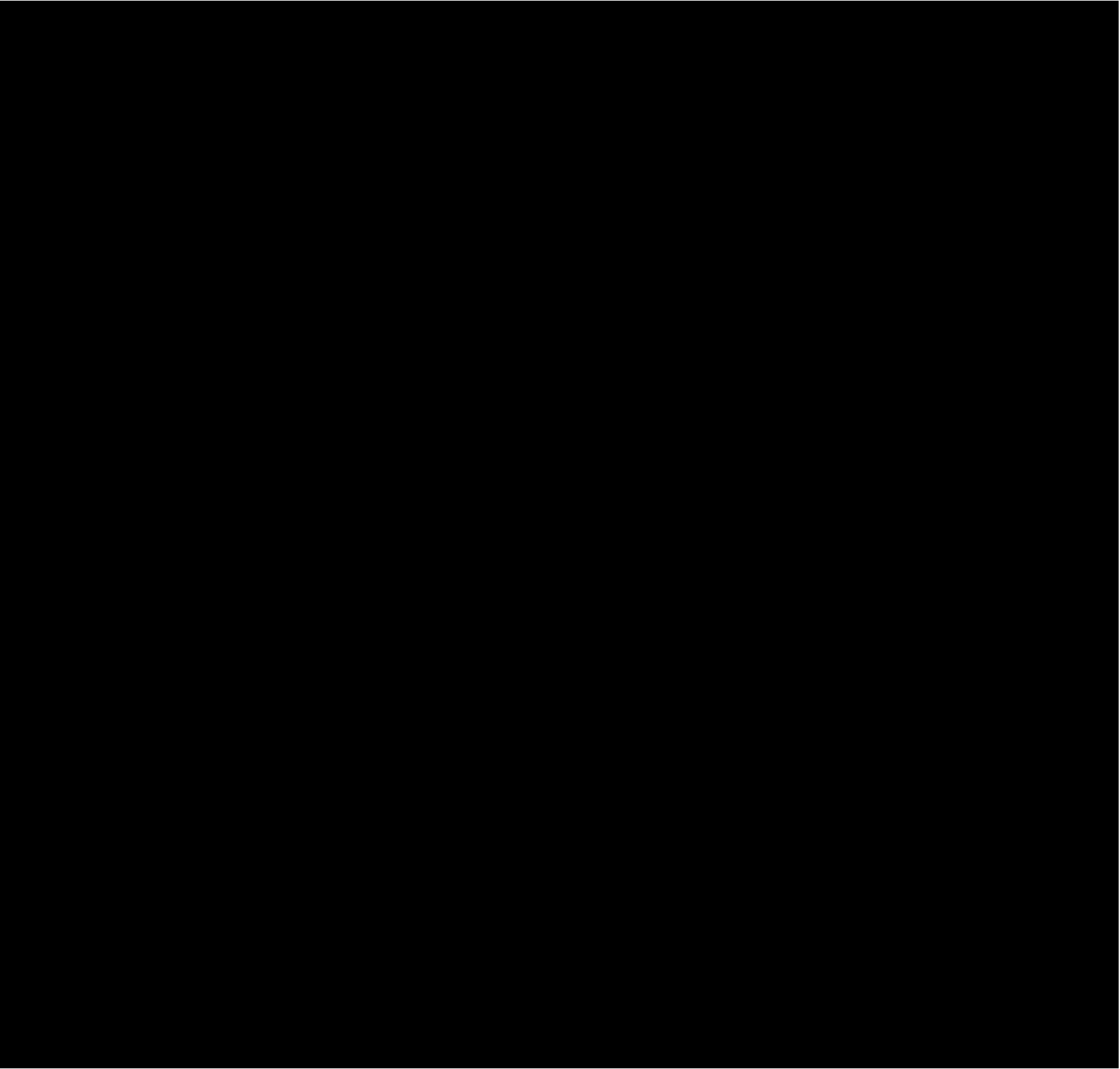
In summary, the Ilhas have within their morphology several points that enhance the individual attachment to the living space and consequently their general environmental satisfaction. The typology of the Ilhas as low cost housing is more successful, in the social point of view, than the social neighborhoods built in the second half of the 19th century. They form today the main focus of the Municipality as ‘problem areas’, with high rates of criminality.

According to Prof. Virgílio Borges Pereira, from the Sociology Faculty of the University of Porto, the Ilhas are an historical problem, but also an actual issue. *“The problem changed through the years, but still an actuality in Porto. If in the past the Ilhas faced very high density, large families and meant public health threat, today the scenario includes lower density, elderly, small households. But the Ilhas keep their urban function, their character of low cost living spaces and never lost their character of ‘actual subject’*.

1.5. The Spatial Quality

There is nothing being developed, at the moment, in order to ‘solve’ the problem of the Ilhas, but only demolition wishes coming from the authorities. There are some necessary debates concerning the Ilhas, in order to achieve solution scenarios” (INTERVIEW FROM MAY/2012).

For the authorities and for the city in general, the Ilhas have always kept the image based on their negatives aspects of public health and poverty from their origin. The positive social aspects are mostly unknown. For the Ilhas’ residents, in contrary, the good qualities and positive experiences of their life in the Ilhas are enough to compensate, at least in great part, the negative side. Therefore, it is worth to look at the Ilhas typology from a new point of view, considering that they have been a housing solution in the past, and can still be a (good) housing solution in the present.





02
THE GAPS



2.1. The Location

Despite the lack of actual information of active Ilhas within the city of Porto, the last clusters are visible in the urban tissue. Near the centre of Porto, the cluster of Ilhas located along São Vítor Street is the most significant one.

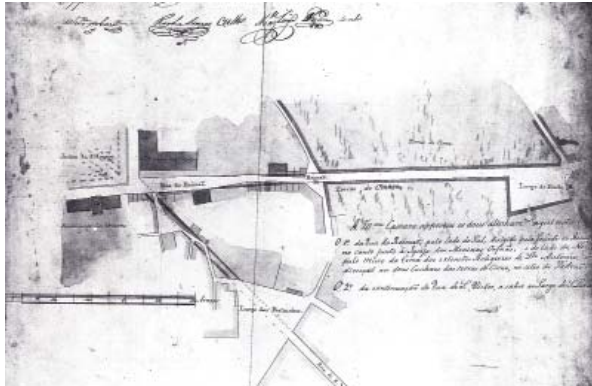
The eastern area of Porto, where São Vítor street is located, was the most industrialized area of the city in the 19th century, and as a consequence was also the area with the highest concentration of Ilhas. In addition, these Ilhas were the most dense ones. Therefore, the image that stayed printed within the city's imaginary, concerning São Vítor and region, is often related to the public health problems and to the dense occupation of the space. There is hardly an image, or a concern, about the people who live in this area and the way they live (TOMÉ, 2010, p. 59).

The Ilhas of São Vítor street form perhaps the last large group of Ilhas in their original form of backyard occupation⁵. The houses are still privately owned and rented for low prices by the inhabitants, as it has been done through their history. The street has more than 20 Ilhas, concentrated in one part of its length. The two urban blocks, on both sides of the street, have a particular atmosphere and unique urban characteristics, as will be shown on the next pages.



5. Another considerable cluster is located at Alexandre Herculano Street. Bairro do Herculano has a different typology of occupation. The houses filled up the inner block space in rows, and form corridors like in the original typology if Ilhas. Nevertheless, the space of the corridors is public, and each house of the cluster has access to the public space, different than the original form of Ilhas, where the corridor was part of the private property.

02 THE GAPS



< Extension project for São Vítor street from 1835.

(TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 260)

< Alignment and extension project for São Vítor street from 1857. Despite both these projects, this street section was only built in the decade of 1880. (IBID., p. 261)

> The area of São Vítor street in 1892. (IBID., p. 256)

2.1.1. São Vítor street - Brief History

São Vítor Street was one of the first concentration of Ilhas in Porto. The first document mentioning Ilhas in this area dates from 1844 (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 235), and it might refer to the first Ilha ever built in the city. Soon the area would become the largest example of the low hygiene conditions of the Ilhas, since there the sanitation conditions reached its lowest levels and the child mortality was the highest in the city (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 235).

Until the beginning of the 19th Century, the area was still a rural property at the periphery of Porto. The owner of the land at that time started to urbanize his possession, dividing the land and selling the plots. The first official plots date from 1805, and the São Vítor Street was officially built in 1818. The construction of the street incentivized the development of the area (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 236).

It is possible that the initial intentions of the developer were to make from the area a new bourgeois neighborhood, given that its location was nearby some areas inhabited by the aristocracy of the time and the plots were being offered for a high price. After the construction of the first part of São Vítor Street, the development was intensified. Due to the death of the original owner of the plots, followed by the death of its descendants, the rest of the property was sold in an auction. The plots development continued, now guided by different owners who bought smaller pieces of the land (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 237).

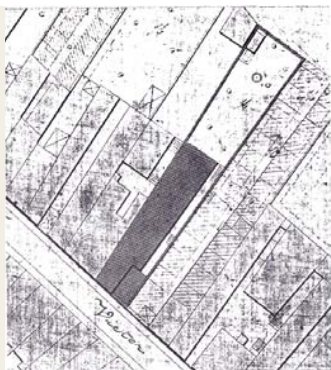
The urbanization of São Vítor street followed then a similar pattern of other areas of Porto in the 19th Century. The land was usually bought by an investor, who divided it in plots and resold them to members of the lower bourgeois or middle class.

These buyers were mostly owners of small businesses, and they would divide their backyards into smaller houses for the working classes, in the future (Teixeira, 1996, p. 238). For these people, being an owner of an Ilha meant a way of social ascension, and a suitable investment for their financial sources.

The early development of the working class housing in São Vítor is related to the concentration of small factories and ateliers in the neighborhood of Bonfim (where the street is located) during the first phases of industrial development in Porto. This neighborhood was one of the areas of Porto which showed the largest population growth, going from 10.320 inhabitants in 1864 to 22.633 in 1890. Together with the eastern neighborhood of Campanhã, Bonfim formed the most important industrial area of Porto (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 236). The settlement of industries in Bonfim devaluated the area, and as a consequence, several Ilhas started being built in the region to receive the newcomer working class.

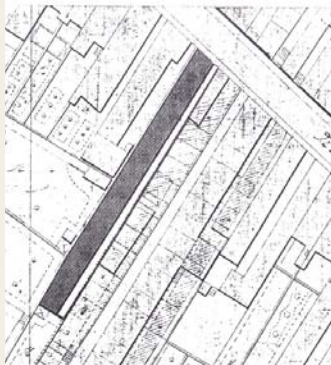
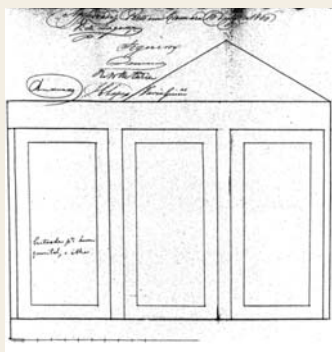
There was no fixed pattern for the typology and construction of Ilhas in São Vítor. They were built in one or two plots, with one row of houses or more, occupying the whole plot until the street front or hiding behind a front house. The basic shape of the Ilhas dwellings was adaptable to each plot configuration, and there was no control from the authorities.

02 THE GAPS



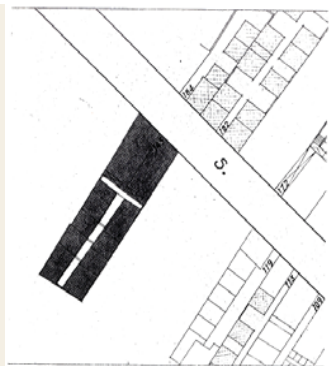
SÃO VÍCTOR STREET, N° 80

HOUSE BUILT IN 1867, IN A PLOT A LITTLE LARGER THAN NORMAL (8M), THEREFORE THE ILHA HAD AN INDEPENDENT ACCESS. IN 1873, THE FIRST OWNER BUILT FOUR LITTLE DWELLINGS IN THE BACK OF HIS HOUSE. A SECOND OWNER BUILT THREE MORE HOUSES WITHIN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY. (TEIXEIRA, 1996, P. 241)



SÃO VÍCTOR STREET, N° 113

THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT IN 1860, AND THE ILHA WAS ALREADY BUILT TOGETHER WITH THE HOUSE, WITH AN INDEPENDENT ENTRANCE. IN 1877, THE ILHA HAD THIRTEEN HOUSES, ONE FACING THE STREET AND TWELVE IN THE INSIDE. IN THIS CASE, THE OWNER DID NOT LIVE IN THE FRONT HOUSE, BUT ALREADY BUILT THE WHOLE ILHA FROM SCRATCH. (IBID., P. 242)



SÃO VÍCTOR STREET, N° 143

THE HOUSE DATES FROM 1860 AND OCCUPIES TWO PLOTS, WITH 11M OF WIDTH. THE ILHA WAS BUILT AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE PROPRIETOR OF THIS HOUSE WAS ALSO THE OWNER OF THE FIRST ILHA OF SÃO VÍCTOR STREET. WHEN HE PASSED AWAY IN 1871, HE POSSESSED THREE ILHAS IN THE STREET, BESIDES HIS OWN HOUSE. THE HOUSE WAS SOLD, AND THE NEW OWNER ADDED THE ILHA DWELLINGS IN THE BACK. (IBID., P. 243)

< TEIXEIRA, 1996, P. 257

< IBID., P. 269 AND P. 258

< IBID., P. 259

The Municipality of Porto did not worry, neither with what happened behind the façades, neither with the life condition of the people occupying the Ilhas until the end of the 19th Century (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 247). The Municipality only controlled the construction of the front houses, and the only project that needed to be approved by the planning authorities was related to the main house. The Ilhas, officially, never existed under the eyes of the authorities during all 19th Century. The lack of control contributed to the extremely low living conditions in the Ilhas of Porto.

A survey about public health (mentioned during Chapter 1: The Ilhas) made in 1914 by Antônio Ferreira Lemos (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 248), analyzed the living environment in 14 Ilhas of the City. According to his conclusions, São Vítor Street was the working class zone with the worst circumstances in Porto. He illustrated in detail the Ilhas of numbers 113 and 143 of the street. He described houses with bad maintenance, broken walls and roofs, rotting doors and windows, no sunlight and no ventilation.

The dwellings of the Ilhas of São Vítor had between 9 and 13 m² of area, insufficient sanitary facilities (only one toilet for all houses of each Ilha), no sewage system and no water supply. *“The toilets were reduced to a small wooden house, with a whole in the floor on the inside”* (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 249). Large families (of 4 people in average, but sometimes with more than 7 per house) were living within these insalubrious dwellings. The bad living condition, combined with hard and long working days in the factories and a poor diet created a very weak and ill population. São Vítor was one of the main focuses of tuberculosis, the main cause of death in Porto at the time.

According to a report developed by the Municipality in 1939, São Vítor Street had, at that time, 36 Ilhas, with 518 dwellings and 1.892 inhabitants (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 251). The description of the conditions of the housing was extremely similar to the older report of 1914. Nothing had improved in 25 years, besides the high increase of amount of Ilhas.

The lack of solutions for working class housing, which were not provided either by the Municipality or by private investors, was responsible for the proliferation of the Ilhas at that time. The lack of alternative for the workers who needed a house was responsible for the permanence of the Ilhas and their economic profit for the owners. The prices of an Ilha dwelling, especially in São Vítor, were only increasing, while the living conditions did not face any improvement (TEIXEIRA, 1996, p. 255).

Several decades passed by, and the living conditions of the Ilhas of São Vítor had changed and faced a slight improvement. Nevertheless, it was not enough to provide appropriate living conditions to the people. For some residents, the conditions of the dwellings increased due to facilities upgrading, such as the construction of a private toilet. The improvements have been developed in a few cases by the landlord, but the majority of them is a result of the effort from the inhabitants themselves. Unfortunately, for some residents, the life in the Ilha is still similar to the life of the working class from the past. It is a fact that in the 21st century, there are people living in similar conditions of the Industrial Revolution time within the second largest city of Portugal. And all this nearby the heart of Porto.

02 THE GAPS



- > The whole length of São Victor Street is marked by the white dashed line, and the blocks where Ilhas are located is marked in red.
- > To the left, the centre of Porto in red. The white dashed line marks one of the main shopping streets (Rua de Santa Catarina). To the left, the large cemetery in yellow and the railway in orange forming a boundary in the city tissue.

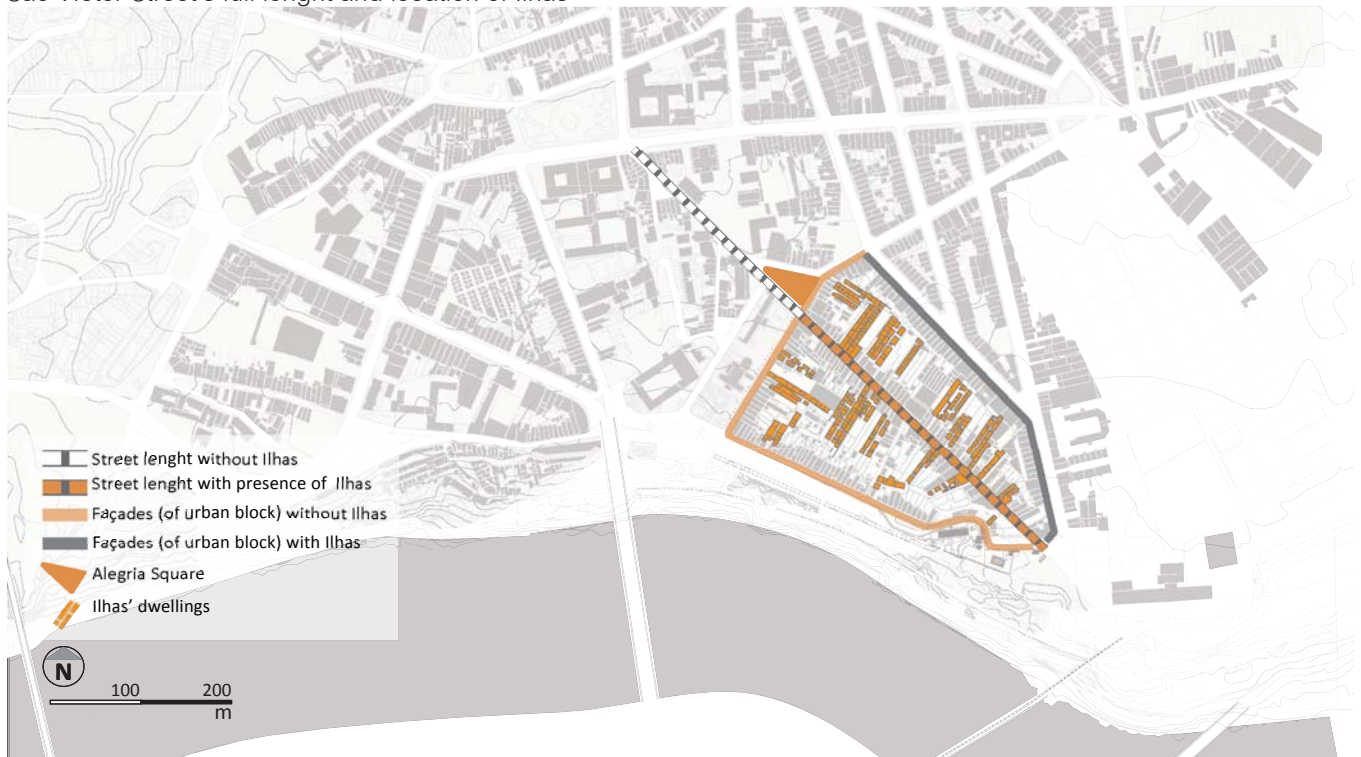
2.1. The Location

2.1.2. São Vítor street - The location

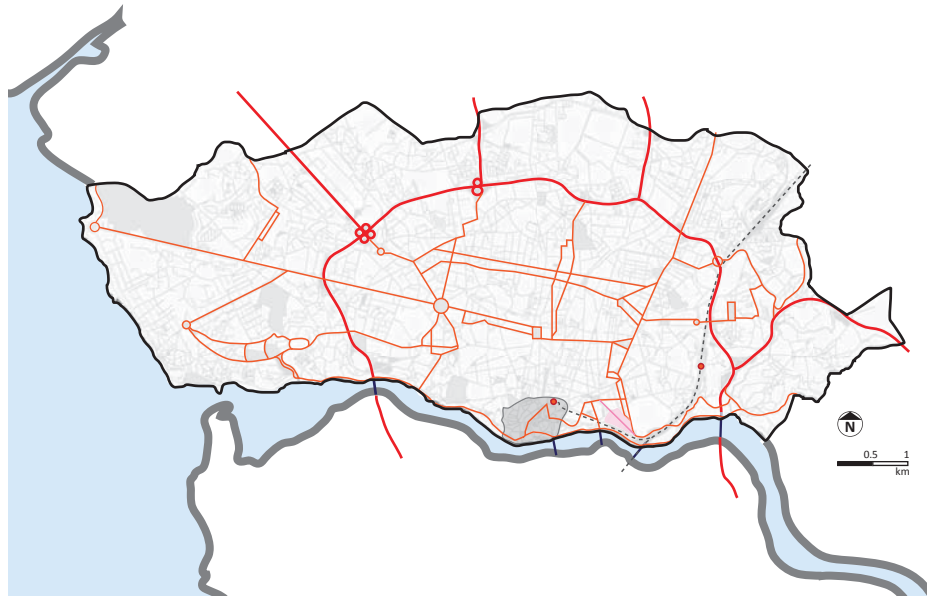
The area of São Vítor street is located within Bonfim neighborhood, and can be seen as a buffer zone. On the left side of São Vítor street, the city is lively and crowded, with the Old Town and the Centre of the city, with main touristic attractions and commercial areas. But towards the eastern side, a large cemetery followed by the railway form a whole different environment, already outside the main city route. São Vítor street is located in between, forming a transitional space.

The privileged location in the city is indeed one of the strongest characteristics of São Vítor street. The Street is located on the eastern side of Porto, nearly to the City centre. The street is short (625 m long) and the Ilhas can be found only within a part of its length (367 m, between Praça da Alegria and Largo do Padre Baltasar Guedes). The street ends at a cliff, with a great view to the railway and the Douro River.

São Vítor Street's full length and location of Ilhas



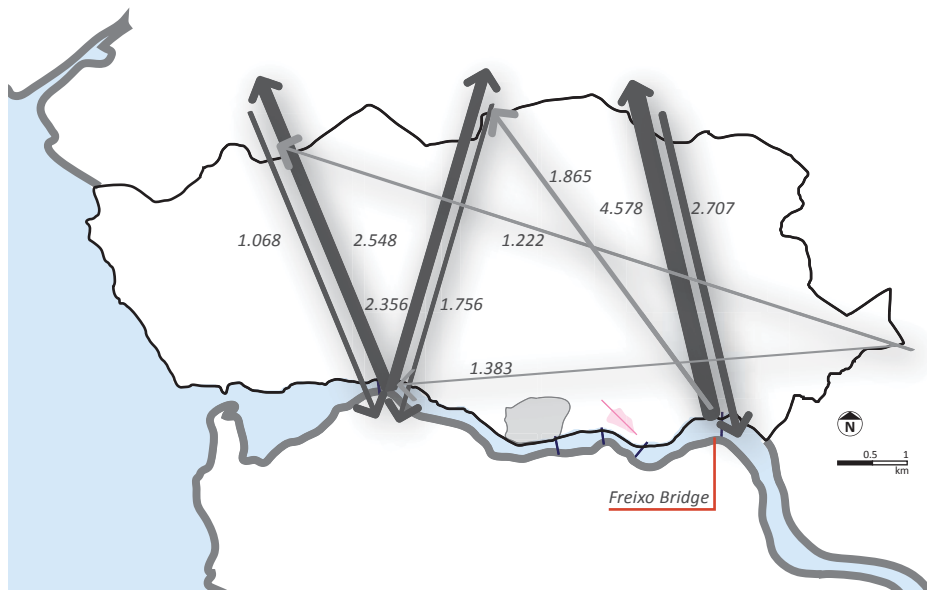
02 THE GAPS



Porto's main roads

- Historical centre
- São Vitor Street and study area
- Railway
- Train stations
- Main intercity roads
- Main internal roads

< The belt road system manages to concentrate great part of the city daily traffic. The map shows the inter-cities roads in red. The main roads for internal traffic in the city are marked in orange, and São Vítor Street in pink.



Porto's main commuting routes

- Historical centre
- São Vitor Street and study area
- Main commuters' routes
- Secondary commuters' routes

< The map shows the main entrances of the city and the amount of commuters entering/leaving Porto in the morning (between 7:30 and 9:30 am). The data is from 2007 (CMP, 2007, p. 7).

2.1. The Location

2.1.3. The street as a street

The street itself has no extreme traffic, an advantage within a city where traffic is mostly intense. Even though located in the middle of main city roads, São Vítor is an Ilhas in itself, and does not have high traffic levels. Commuting is a strong activity in Porto, as a result of the suburbanized pattern that the city achieved during its expansion at the end of the 20th century. The 30 years period starting in the 1970s is a time of great and intense transformation of the city.

The fact is closely related to the democracy comeback in 1974, and by the following process of strengthening the international relations, with its high point in 1986, when Portugal became part of European Economic Community (today, the European Union) (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 11). The improvement of the economical power of the inhabitants increased the use of the personal vehicle, a fact that led to extensive expansion of the urban territory. The expansion is also explained by the higher values of m2 per capita, given that the average family size decreased (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 11). Within a more expanded city, long commuting is one of the main consequences for the residents.

Porto is a city where the individual transportation by car is the most used by commuters (CMP, 2007) and where the daily commuting from the surrounding municipalities to the centre is very strong, once the city of Porto concentrates the majority of the jobs (AMP, 2008). Nevertheless, the centre of Porto is not the only pole of jobs in the metropolitan region. The Municipalities on the northern side (Maia and Matosinhos) are also nuclei of employment, whilst the opposite happens to the eastern ones (Valongo and Gondomar).

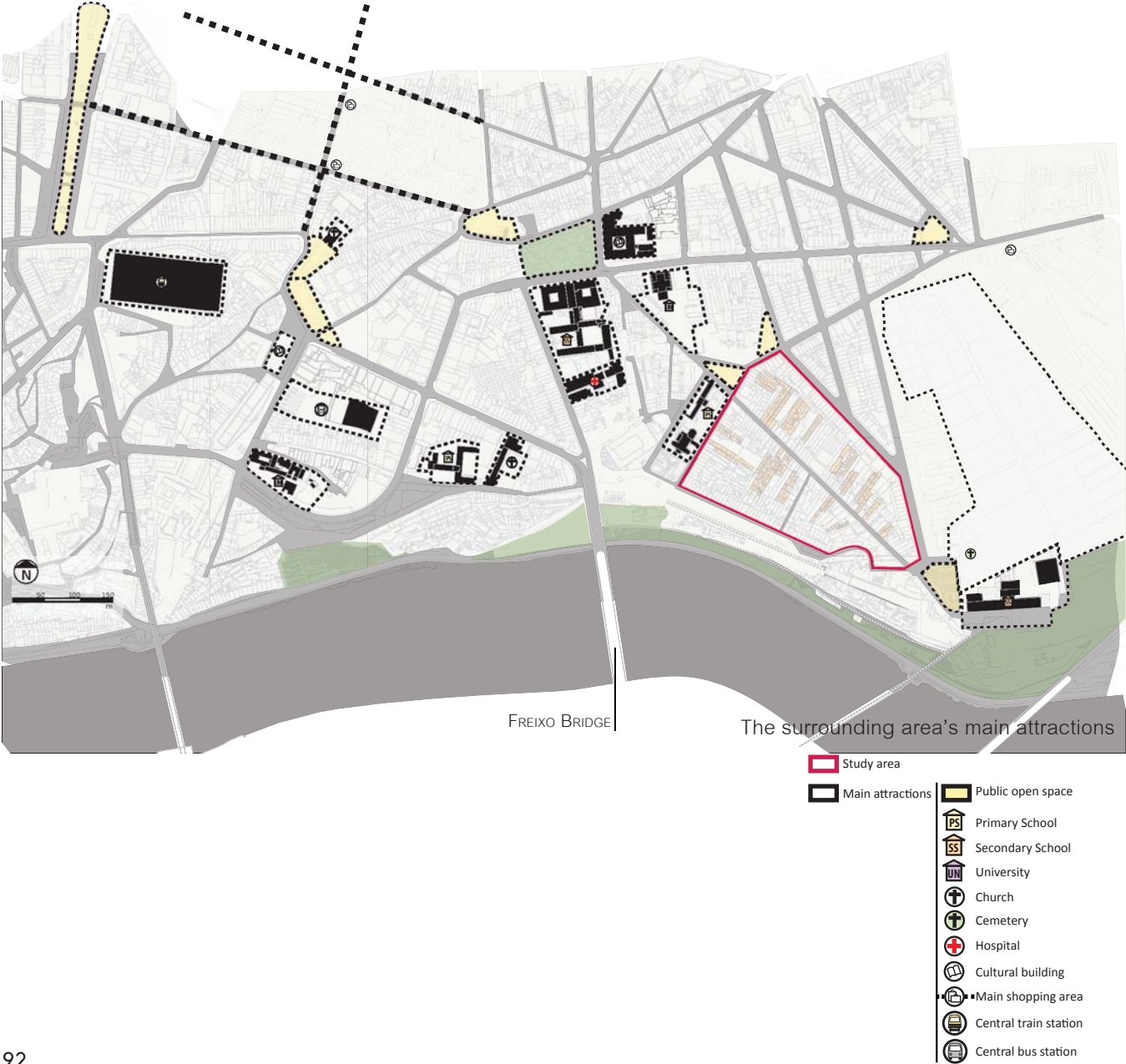
In the southern side of Porto, the municipality of Vila Nova de Gaia has a high residential pattern (CMP, 2007). All this commuting creates main axes of accessibility in the city. São Vítor Street is located nearby the Freixo Bridge. The main access roads of the area are connected to this bridge, which gives access to the southern municipality of Gaia. The bridge is an important entrance from the south, connecting commuters to the city of Porto and also to the northern side of the city.

Porto has a ring road around its centre. The 'Internal Belt Road' (Via de Cintura Interna) might be the urban infrastructure construction with the strongest impact on the city's urban organization and on the citizens' daily life (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 13). The belt road was already planned in 1954 (by the Garret Plan), but was only built in the 1990s, together with the Freixo bridge, which completes the ring on the eastern side. The western side is completed by the 1963 Arrabida bridge (RIO FERNANDES, 2005, p. 13).



>The ring road planned by the Almeida Garret plan, from 1952.

02
THE GAPS



The street as a street

The Bonfim neighborhood (where São Vítor street is located), together with the eastern Campanhã, are less active areas of the city. Consequently, they attract less commuters when compared to the western side of the city. The map shows the amount of arrivals in one area between 7:30 and 9:30 am in a working day. Bonfim, where São Vítor is located, has the lowest levels of the city. The western neighborhoods of the city also present lower arrival level when compared to the centre, but when analyzing the high levels of departures in that area, it can be concluded that they are strongly residential.

On the other side, Bonfim also shows low levels concerning departures. The neighborhood had a low level of commuters by private transport modal, either arriving or leaving. According to the Municipality of Porto, the low levels of Bonfim are explained by its decay in the past years, together with the deficit in population levels (CMP, 2007). The western side of the city is a pole for working, immediately after the city centre, and living, towards the coast.

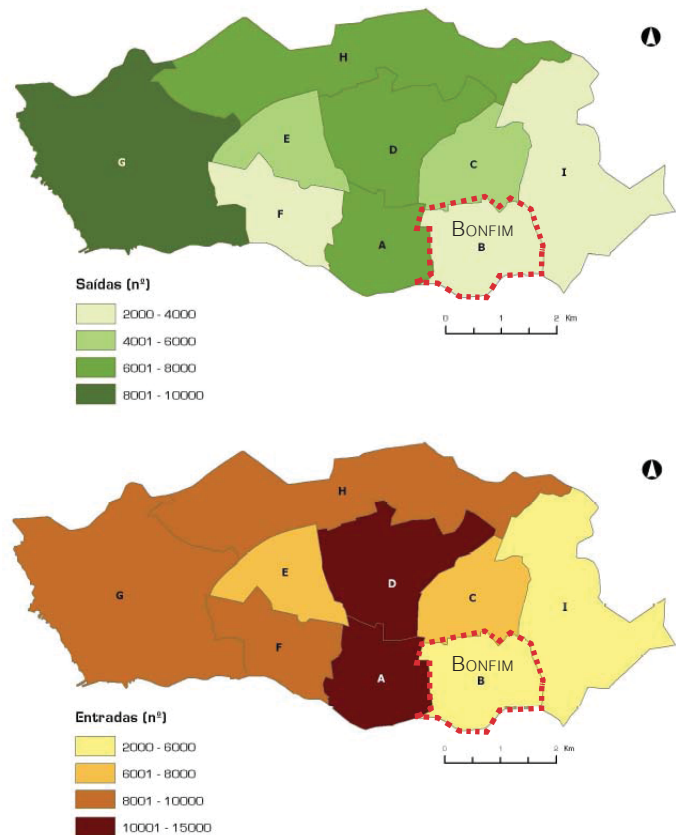
Furthermore several representative city spaces are located around São Vítor street, such as large school, Universities and a large Cemetery. On the left, the map shows the main attractions points in the surroundings of the study area.

> Amount of commuters leaving each area in the morning (7:30-9:30h). (CMP, 2007, p. 12)

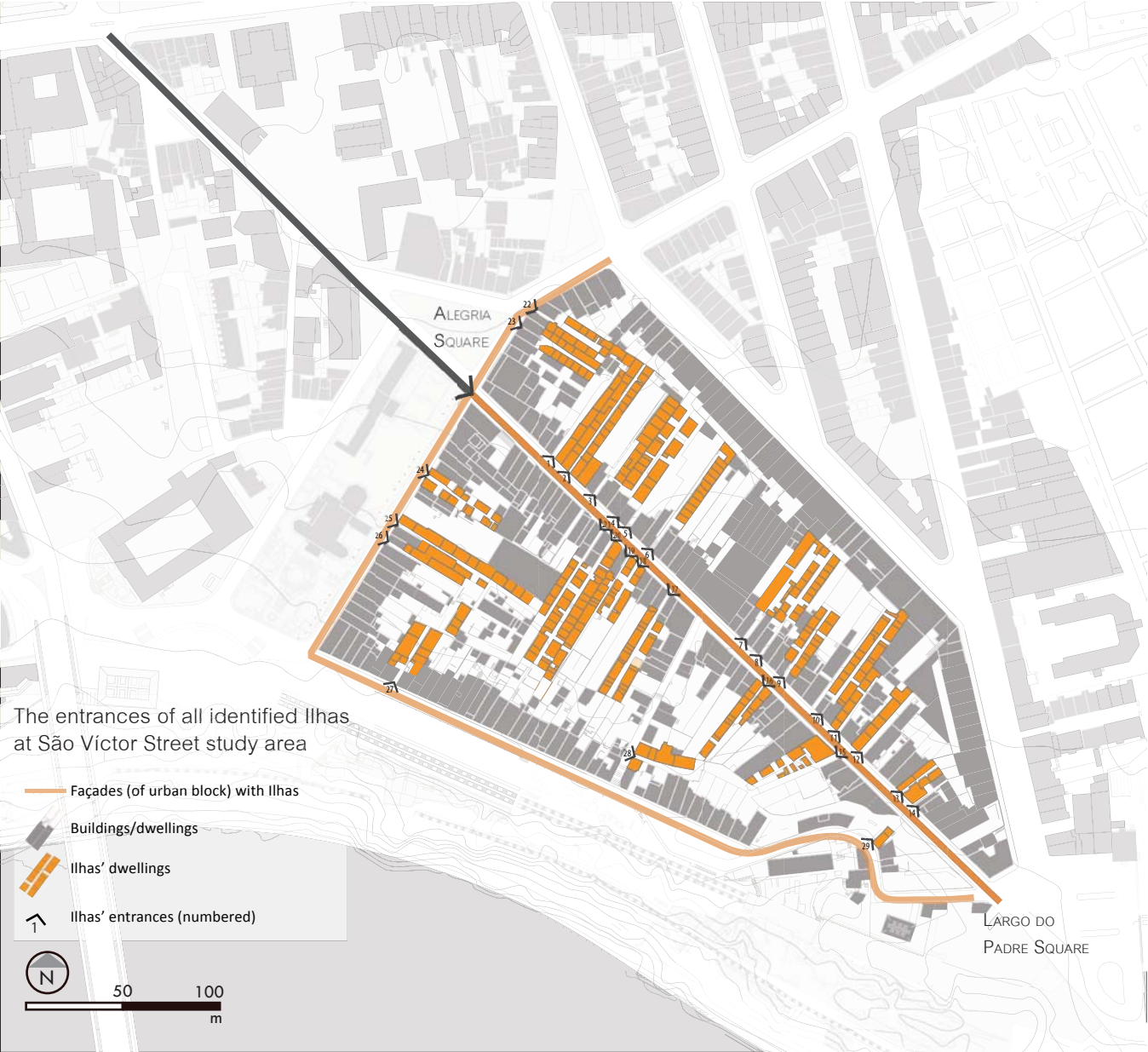
> Amount of commuters arriving in each area in the morning (7:30-9:30h). (IBID., p. 15)

In both maps, the area of Bonfim neighborhood (red dashed line) shows low amount of commuters.

2.1. The Location



02
THE GAPS



2.1.4. The Ilhas of São Vítor street

A total of 29 Ilhas were identified within the study area, which is located between Alegria Square and Largo Baltazar Guedes. Some Ilhas face the Square, and some of them face the riverside, but the majority faces São Vítor street. Given that there is no official data concerning the Ilhas' dwellings, this conclusion comes from a combination of aerial photos analysis and visits to the area. Some of them are empty, but the majority is at least partially occupied. Their pattern follows the original Ilha typology, with small houses occupying the backyard of larger houses, connected to the street through a long corridor.

The study area, formed by the group of urban blocks on both sides of São Vítor street, has a total of 1.388 inhabitants (data from the Census 2011 – INE, 2012). In an estimation based on observation combines with the aerial photos of the area, it can be assumed that the 29 Ilhas contain 280 dwellings.

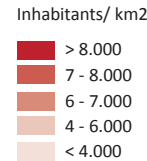
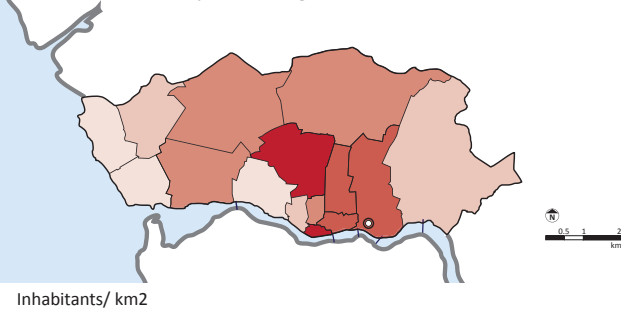
There is no data available concerning the population of the Ilhas in the region, but using the average household size of 2.6 people as a basis, the estimation results in around 730 people, from the total of 1.388, living in Ilhas.



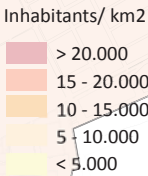
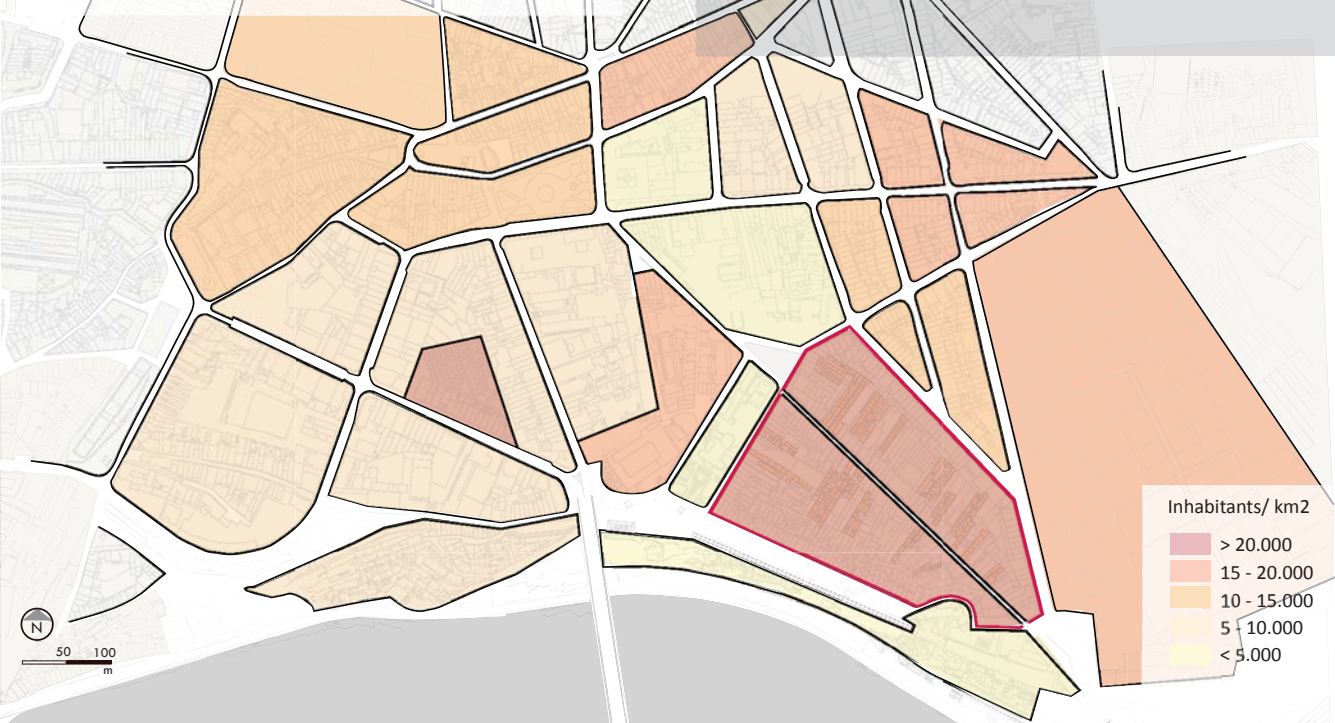
>View of the street. Photo from November/2011
< The map shows the entrances of the 29 Ilhas, indicated by the arrows.

02
THE GAPS

Population density per neighborhood (INE, 2012)



Population density per urban block - surrounding area of São Victor Street (INE, 2012)



The Ilhas represent a rather dense residential typology. When compared to the demographic density of the neighborhood and the city, the study area is significantly more dense. But the comparison should also be made with the surroundings, and the study area is once more rather dense. The map shows the density of the urban blocks of the region, and it is clear that the Ilhas form a dense living area. The other dense block appearing on the map is formed by another large cluster of Ilhas (Bairro do Herculano).

DENSITY COMPARISON:	
CITY OF PORTO	5.702,93 RESIDENTS/KM ²
NEIGHBORHOOD BONFIM	7.955,74 RESIDENTS/KM ²
STUDY AREA (SÃO VÍCTOR)	23.133,33 RESIDENTS/KM ²

The impressions

Livability

Despite the high density, the environment of the street is quite paroquial. When walking through the Street, as a stranger, you feel noticed by the inhabitants. This feeling is not present in any of the surrounding streets, where passersby walk freely as it happens in any other large city. But São Vítor is different.

Small groups of people gather on the sidewalks and talk, social interaction can be found at every glance. In front of the commercial spaces, especially in front of the restaurant and headquarters of the Soccer Team of the street, there is always a group of men hanging out together. A stranger is noticed and followed with the eyes. You will probably be asked sooner or later by someone: 'Can I help you?'. But not in a hostile way. When answering to the questioning with an introduction of yourself and a short explanation of your intentions, you feel welcome. The inhabitants are mostly friendly, open, and proud to show their houses and their Ilha. Well, you are also often asked: *'Are you from the Municipality?'*. Maybe the hospitality in case of a positive answer would be a little different.

This livability of the Street is lost in so many urban spaces. The value of the neighborhood and its community community is still clear and lively present in São Vítor, clear and lively. A distracted pedestrian crossing the area would maybe not notice the reason for such street activity. The Ilhas are visible only for who knows about their existence. Their presence can easily be ignored, since many of them are secretly hidden behind a locked door. The visual impression of the street, concerning its typology and building façades, is not different than another street of central Porto, but the activity going on is certainly exceptional.



02 THE GAPS

Quality degree

When walking through the street, it can be noticed that the conservation standards of the buildings change along its length. Immediate signs of degradation can be felt when just passing Alegria Square, and they increase as far as the street reaches the riverside. As far as the passerby walks down the street, the Ilhas show less and less efforts to hide themselves behind doors. More opened Ilhas are located at the end of the street, as if they reached such a secure point, that they do not need their doors anymore.

Towards the end of the street, the number of small alleys and abandoned buildings increase, giving a stronger impression of degradation and poverty. The traffic of pedestrians is significantly lower in this part of the street, when compared to the corner of Alegria square. More intense agglomerations of people are located near the small commercial spaces of the street and especially in front of the São Vítor soccer team headquarters. The small shops and cafés of São Vítor show their signs of frailty and oldness.



01



02



03

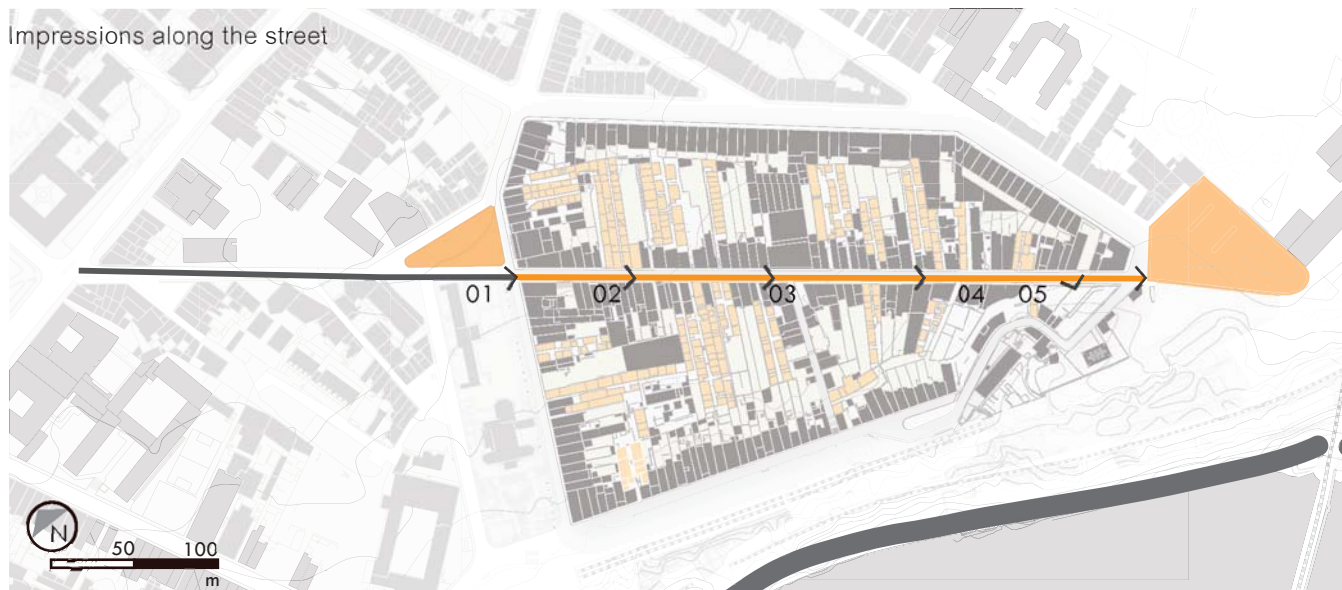


04



05

Impressions along the street



The Ilhas of São Vítor street

2.1. The Location

Quality and price variation

The Ilhas in São Vítor street still function under the same system which they have been created. The dwellings are rented, and the prices are lower than what would be charged for an apartment or another dwelling in the city. The interviewed inhabitants mentioned rental prices between €15 and €85, depending on the Ilha, the landlord, and the conditions of the dwelling.

But the price of the rent might vary even more per household. The older contracts have lower rental prices, while newer inhabitants tend to pay significantly higher rental prices. As an example, Mrs. Maria Alice (see photo) lives at Ilha Grande, in São Vítor, for 46 years. She pays €40 a rent of per month, whilst Bruno Freitas, who lives for 2 years at Ilha do Galo Preto in São Vítor, pays a considerably higher rent. He declared during an interview for a newspaper: *"I pay 250 euros per month of rent. Plus the costs with water and electricity, it ends up at 300 euros per month"*. He says he has no other alternative besides living in the Ilha under such prices, given that there are no available dwellings for social housing prices. Besides, Mr. Freitas mentions that in the Ilhas he has close neighbors and family to assist him looking after his daughter (JORNAL NACIONAL DIÁRIO, EDITION OF 20/ JULY/2010, P. 16).

According to Mr. Vítor, who lives in São Vítor street for 53 years, there is an speculation going on during the past couple of years, and the rental prices of Ilhas' dwellings are visibly rising (INTERVIEWED IN MAY/2012). There is a higher demand for Ilhas during the last years, as a result of immigration, economical crisis and the demolition of social housing complexes, as it will be further explained later on this chapter.



Maria Alice, há 46 anos moradora da Ilha Grande, uma de várias que persistem na Rua de S. Vítor, freguesia do Bonfim



>Mrs. Maria Alice and her house at Ilha Grande.

(JORNAL NACIONAL DIÁRIO, EDITION OF 20/JULY/2010, P.16)

> A sign from a Real State office, 99
signaling that one Ilha's dwelling is for rent. Speculation?

02 THE GAPS

Typologies

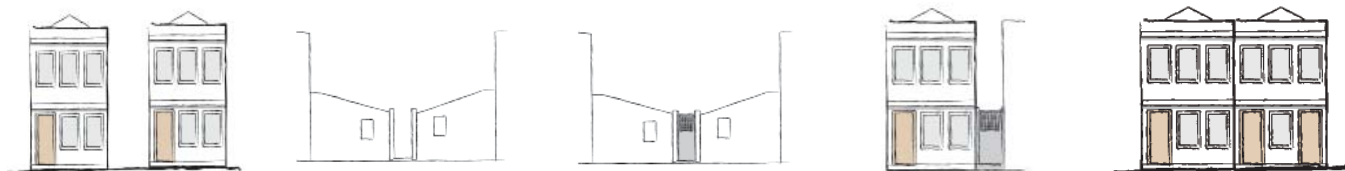
As mentioned before, the typology of the Ilhas in São Victor remains like the original, filling up backyard space of long plots. Nevertheless, the Ilha pattern has some variation. Not all Ilhas have a front house, and some plots are fully occupied by the small dwellings. In this cases, the first house of the Ilha is directly connected to the street, but oriented towards the corridor (door and front window), like the other dwellings.

The variations among Ilhas continue concerning the type of entrance and relationship with the street. The Ilhas have a degree of access and privacy, based on the type of entrance (see sketches below). The most open typology has a totally open corridor, with no gate. This system makes the Ilha fully visible from the street, and the corridor easily accessible.

More privacy is obtained by Ilhas with an entrance gate. The gate still provides different levels of closeness: it is left fully open in some cases, or closed but unlocked. Some Ilhas have a 'robe system' for opening the gate: one pulls a robe, which rings a bell and opens the gate. So, entrance is announced. In the last level of gated-privacy, there are Ilhas which keep their gates locked with a key.

The level of enclosure reaches its highest point on the original Ilha typology with a front house. These Ilhas are mostly gated and locked. The gate might increase the privacy in the Ilhas without the front house, but they still clearly perceived as an Ilha. The ones behind a front house can go easily unnoticed within the urban environment. They are more difficult to be identified, once there is no difference between an ordinary front door and the Ilha entrance.

Furthermore, the Ilhas might also vary regarding the amount and typology of dwellings. There are Ilhas with one row of houses facing the corridor, and some with two rows, facing each other, with the corridor in between. Only one Ilha has a totally different typology, with two pavements of dwellings facing a larger than average corridor. The first level dwellings are accessed by stairs and a long balcony connects them all. The typology is very similar to the one used by Álvaro Siza at Bouça Neighborhood (comparison below).



THE PRIVACY LEVEL OF THE CORRIDOR INCREASES WHISLT THE ILHA'S ENTRANCE BECOMES LESS OBVIOUS FROM THE OUTSIDE

The Ilhas of São Vítor street

2.1. The Location



11 ILHAS



10 ILHAS



04 ILHAS



03 ILHAS



01 ILHA



< Examples of Ilhas from each entrance typology, followed by the total of Ilhas (from the 29 analyzed ones) with the referred typology.

The 'standard' entrance typology of an Ilha is defined by the 'extra door' on the front house façade. This typology has a variation, where the door on the façade is located in between two houses, and belongs, apparently, to both of them (First example). This typology is still the most common type of entrance, followed by the Ilhas without a front house. The Ilha reaches the street, and the corridor is in most cases gated. A front house with a side gate and a single corridor between two houses are the least common entrance types of São Vítor street's Ilhas.

< The complete table with information about all identified Ilhas can be found on Appendix 1.

02 THE GAPS



< Mrs. Filomena

< Mrs. Catarina (PHOTOS FROM NOVEMBER/2011)

Sense of place

As it can be noticed, each Ilhas has singular characteristics even though all of them follow the same occupation typology. Besides the physical differences, each Ilha is also unique as a place. They have different stories and different names. Their names are sometimes quite out of the ordinary. They were named after a former landlord, a famous inhabitant, or a characteristic of the Ilha itself. The names give to the Ilhas a sense of identity and place. The Ilhas without a name are usually called by the number of the plot.

MRS. FILOMENA PROUDLY DECLARES THAT SHE LIVES AT 'BAIRRO DO SOUZA' (Nº 76), BUT PREVIOUSLY LIVED AT 'ILHA Nº 49'. SHE KNOWS THE NAMES OF ALL THE ILHAS, AND ALSO THE STORY BEHIND IT. "MY ILHA IS CALLED 'BAIRRO DO SOUZA' BECAUSE THAT WAS THE NAME OF A FORMER LANDLORD, MR. SOUZA. THERE ARE FUNNIER NAMES. THERE AT Nº 68, THE ILHA IS NOW 'ILHA DO ZÉ DO ALVES' BECAUSE THAT IS THE NAME OF THE LANDLORD. BUT EVERYBODY CALLS IT 'ILHA DO ZÉ DA MERDA' (IN PORTUGUESE, A VULGAR NAME FOR EXCREMENT) BECAUSE HE HAD A FARM, AND HE ALWAYS SMELLED LIKE ORGANIC FERTILIZER. HE SURELY DID NOT APPRECIATE THAT NAME, SO BOTH STILL EXIST. OR THE ILHA AT Nº 109, WHICH IS CALLED 'ILHA DO GALO PRETO' (BLACK COCK) ALSO HAS A FUNNY STORY. YEARS AGO THERE WAS A MAN LIVING THERE, WHO WAS COLORED AND VERY TALL, AND HAD A SMALL HEAD AND A LONG NECK. SO PEOPLE STARTED CALLING HIM BLACK COCK, AND THE NAME STAYED."

MRS. FILOMENA COULD GO ON ALL DAY WITH THE STORIES, AND THEY WERE INDEED ENTERTAINING. HER NEIGHBOR, MRS. CATARINA, HEARD THE TALK AND JOINED THE CONVERSATION WITH MORE STORIES. THEY WERE BOTH VERY PROUD OF THEIR ILHA AND THE STORIES OF THEIR STREET.

The Ilhas of São Vítor street

2.1. The Location

Going in

The feeling of entering an Ilha is quite incomparable. They are surely a whole different environment and form an unique heterotopia. One does not feel invited inside, even when there is no gate or door. It is, in any case, private property. So entering is not for everyone. They are turned towards the corridor space, which belongs to all inhabitants and form small extensions of each house at the same time.

Nevertheless, the connection with the street is strong in most cases. They are not a parallel world, as one can expect from a place called 'island'. The street is present in the corridor space, through a constant in and out of people and through the ones who stand at the gate to see the street and interact with others. As it can be expected, the gateless Ilhas seem to have a stronger connection with the street, when compared to the ones behind houses.

THE PHOTOS BELOW SHOW THE VERY FIRST ILHA I ENTERED. I WAS STANDING OUTSIDE, NOT EVEN SURE IT WAS ACTUALLY AN ILHA. I WAS INFORMED BY A MAN, WHO WAS STANDING IN THE STREET, THAT IS WAS INDEED AN ILHA. HE CAME TO ME AND SAID: 'BEHIND THESE DOORS, IT IS FULL OF LITTLE HOUSES!'. I WAITED FOR A CHANCE TO ENTER, SINCE THE DOOR WAS LOCKED. AN ELDERLY LADY CAME OUT, AND I ASKED HER IF SHE LIVED THERE. SHE SAID 'YES DEAR, FOR 50 YEARS'. I ASKED TO SEE INSIDE, SHE SAID SHE HAD TO LEAVE BUT SHE JUST PUSHED ME IN, AND TOLD ME NOT TO BE AFRAID! I WENT INTO THE CORRIDOR AND FINALLY REACHED THE ILHA. I WAS IMMEDIATELY NOTICED BY SOME WOMEN INSIDE, AND EXPLAINED I ENTERED INVITED BY MRS. MADALENA (I ASKED HER NAME) WHO JUST LEFT. I INTERVIEWED THEM, THEY SHOWED ME THEIR HOUSES. IT WAS AN IMPORTANT MOMENT FOR ME, BECAUSE IT WAS MY FIRST ILHA. THAT ILHA AT PRAÇA DA ALEGRIA WAS, AFTER ALL, ONE OF THE POOREST ONES I HAVE SEEN.



02 THE GAPS



Corridor and Dwellings

As mentioned in chapter 1, the dwellings have a small extension towards the corridor. The corridor is an extra space for the dwelling, but only when the corridor is partially private. In another Ilha cluster (Bairro do Herculano), nearby São Vítor street, the corridors connecting the houses are public, and the residents do not use them as much as in the private corridor pattern.

In São Vítor, all corridors are full of plants, laundry, washing machines, children's toys and all sorts of things. The dwellings occupy an extra stripe beyond their walls, sometimes identified by a small level difference on the pavement tiles. This small buffer zone keeps the walking area of the corridor free from objects.



Concerning the dwellings, their dimensions are mostly very compact. Some of them have an extra pavement which was usually built by the inhabitants. Some families rent more than one dwelling, and make from both one larger house. The façades of the dwellings are painted in different colors, and some are covered by tiles. The differences between dwellings of a common Ilha show that the changes had been made by each inhabitant, and not by the landlord. Self-improvement can be found everywhere.

- < A comparison between a public corridor (Bairro do Herculano) and a private one (São Vítor);
- < Dwelling with an extra pavements, result of self-improvement., and their compact internal space.

The Ilhas of São Víctor street

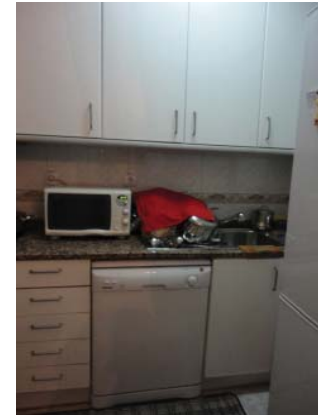
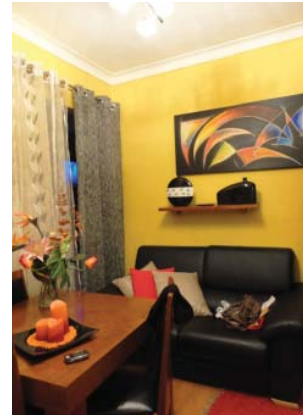
Self-improvement

The Ilhas carry quite a heavy and dark image with their name. They bring an image of insalubrious places, of extreme poverty, justified by their historical existence as an urban problem. Even though Ilhas without sewage and dwellings without private toilets still exist, the situation improved, mostly as a result of efforts from the residents themselves.

Several Ilhas are equipped with private toilets and small extensions for the dwellings, resulting in more life quality for the inhabitants. The residents are usually proud of their accomplishments improving their houses. Mrs. Rosa, from nº 76, declared: *“I have my own toilet and a second floor with bedrooms which I built up myself. The landlord does not do anything to improve the houses, everything has to come from us. If your roof is broken, if you want to paint the house, we do it all by ourselves”*.

Mrs. Filomena, from the same Ilha, had the best house of all visited ones. Her home is an example of the self-improvement made by the inhabitants. Her family extended the dwelling, using a small space on the side of the house, where was previously an open area. Now, her son has his own bedroom. Furthermore, they also built an extra pavement, where her bedroom is located, and a bathroom for the family. The house is well maintained, and she mentions: *“We pay such a cheap rent that we can afford reforms, and we feel happy to improve our home”*.

2.1. The Location



> The house of Mrs. Filomena (above) and the house of Mrs. Adelaide have quite a difference in quality standards. PHOTOS FROM NOVEMBER/2011 105

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The differences between the building condition within the Ilhas are quite strong and visible. Based on some interviews, it can be concluded that the improved houses belong to the long time inhabitants, who reformed their space through the years, maybe even through generations. The houses without toilets and with the worst structural problems seem to have a more dynamic occupation pattern, with less permanency of residents. Many of them are now rented by people who arrived a few years ago, and have no funds for repairing the house. Mrs. Rosamaria, from an Ilha at Praça da Alegria, is not so positive about her life conditions. "I like the place, but I would move from here if I could. I would not go far, I like the location, but I rather have a better house to live with my son. But here I pay €15 per month, I cannot afford more than that. I do not really have a choice". She lives there for 5 years, and her house has no toilet or bathroom facilities.



< CIDADES, WITHIN JORNAL PÚBLICO, EDITION OF 19/Dec/2010

ARTICLE ON NEWSPAPER:

"WHEN THE ILHAS ARE MENTIONED, THE IMMEDIATE THOUGHT IS OF VERY SMALL HOUSES, A COMMON ENTRANCE, SHARED BATHROOM, POVERTY. NONE OF THE LAST MENTIONED FACTS DISAPPEARED FROM PORTO IN THE 21ST CENTURY, BUT MANY THINGS CHANGED DUE TO THE EFFORT OF THE ILHAS' INHABITANTS, WHO IMPROVE THEIR HOMES SLOWLY.

ROSALINA, AN INHABITANT OF ONE ILHA, WHEN ARRIVED IN HER HOUSE DECADES AGO, HAD NO WATER OR ELECTRICITY. TODAY, AFTER SEVERAL IMPROVEMENTS, SHE HAS, BESIDES WATER PIPES AND ELECTRICITY, RESTORED FLOOR AND ROOF, AND A COLORFUL HOUSE WITH THE COLOR SHE CHOSE.

LIKE HER, MANY INHABITANTS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING SMALL IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR RENTAL HOUSES. JOÃO E ISABEL ARRIVED IN THEIR ILHA HOUSE MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO, AND DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY, THE ROOF IS RESTORED, AND THEY BUILT AN EXTRA SMALL BEDROOM AND A BATHROOM. THEY SHOW THEIR HOUSE, PROUDLY, AND SAY "WE ARE HAPPY HERE. THE NEIGHBORS ARE A FAMILY, TO WHOM YOU CAN ASK FOR HELP FOR ANYTHING".

THE COMMUNITY QUALITIES OF THE ILHAS IS THE GREATEST REASON FOR THEIR REQUALIFICATION, ACCORDING TO THE DEFENDERS OF THIS IDEA. JORGE RICARDO PINTO, GEOGRAPHER, SAYS THAT "THE SOCIAL HOUSING COMPLEXES EASILY FORM GHETTOS, AND THE SOCIAL CONTACT AMONG NEIGHBORS IS MORE DIFFICULT".

JOAQUINA PIMENTA DOES NOT AGREE. SHE IS NOT HAPPY LIVING IN THE ILHA, AND "WOULD GO ANYWHERE ELSE TO LEAVE THE ILHA". SHE ARRIVED 12 YEARS AGO, AND HER HOUSE IS IN HORRIBLE CONDITIONS: BAD ROOF, HUMIDITY, NO BATHROOM, NO TOILET. SHE CANNOT AFFORD IMPROVEMENTS HERSELF, AND THE LANDLORD DOES NOT PROVIDE ANY HELP".

(CIDADES, WITHIN JORNAL PÚBLICO, EDITION OF 19/Dec/2010)

The Ilhas of São Víctor street

2.1. The Location

The people

Have some interesting conversations is not a difficult task on São Víctor street. Especially the elderly are quite sympathetic. They enjoy sharing their stories and their love for their living space. The interviews were all conducted with a small talk approach, semi-structured and without a clear impression of an official interviews. They were friendly talks.

The statement: *“Here I was born and here I will die”* is rather popular among the interviewed inhabitants. Mrs. Adelaide said: *“I like living here. The people here are so good, everyone is really nice, we get along together”*. Mrs. Emília, from nº 76, said: *“Yes of course I like it in here. That is the reason I came back. I was born here, and here I grew up. Then I moved to Gaia (metropolitan region) and lived with my brother for a long time, because the house was better. Now I thought it was enough, I wanted to be back here. And I am, for 5 months”*. And like these ones, many others enjoy showing their appreciation to whoever asks.

The community is the first item mentioned in a description of positive aspects of the Ilha life. People know each other, families grew up together. There is a feeling of cooperation, company and friendship, which is strong especially for the elderly. They have been there for a longer period of time, and have tighter relations with the space and with the others. They also keep company to one another, since they are in many cases alone.

Nevertheless, not only positive aspects have been mentioned. The inhabitants who were interviewed shared a common opinion about their Street: ‘it had been better in the past’. When asked why, they say the street was, in the past, a large family.



> Friendly women of São Víctor street (PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012)

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THE GAPS

The community feeling, even though very present in the current situation, used to be stronger. Mrs. Catarina declared *"The people here are the best thing. But in the past, things had been better here in the Street. It was like a huge family. People were closer to each other. Now, all the new people that come, they do not merge. It is worse now. I want to go out more, but I stay in the Ilha"*.

According to the interviewed residents, a new wave of users has arrived in the Ilhas in the past years, and the atmosphere has changed. *"Before, we never had problems with crime or drugs. Now we have to watch out outside, since it is not longer safe here"* says Mrs. Filomena. They blame the newcomers for the changes in their community. Mrs. Rosa declared: *"I know plenty of people here, which are great. But there is all this young people coming, they are trash. They brought drugs to this street, it used to be a family place here, and now is not anymore. Before, the street was happier. On a sunny Sunday everyone would put the chairs on the sidewalk and talk, kids would play on the street. It does not happen anymore"*.

One inhabitant mentioned during an interview that since 'Aleixo Towers' have been demolished, the wave of newcomers increased. In the past few years, the Municipality of Porto have been demolishing social housing complexes in the suburbs. Since 2002, the Municipality of Porto is the responsibility of the major Rui Rio, who started a process of a so called 'revitalization' of Porto's social housing. The large social complex São João de Deus was already demolished in that year. The Municipality justifies the first demolition saying that the neighborhood was 'room for most of the drugs dealers of Porto'. This demolition is considered by the authorities as a symbol of the new approach in social housing.

In the past 10 years, several other areas have been demolished, in a total of 12 'rehabilitated' neighborhoods. Three new social housing buildings have been built in the same period of time. The Aleixo towers were demolished in the first half of 2012 (CMP, 2012). The Municipality claims to have relocated the inhabitants of the demolished dwellings, but this is not the impression the inhabitants of São Vítor have at this moment. According to Mr. Armindo Teixeira, director of the Bonfim Neighborhood Association at the Municipality of Porto, *"Demolition was the only solution for that areas. They were focus of crime, ghettos of ethnical groups related to drugs and thefts. Only the selected people were relocated. The ones that met the adequate social levels, after an analysis of the social workers from the Municipality"* (INTERVIEWED IN MAY/2012). That means not all residents were relocated, and that might explain the increase of demand for a dwelling in the Ilhas.



> The Aleixo Towers, before and after.
(CMP WEBSITE, 2012)

ARTICLE ON NEWSPAPER – SOCIAL DEMOLITION:

THE NEWSPAPER SHOWS THE DEMOLITION OF THE SOCIAL NEIGHBORHOOD 'SÃO VICENTE DE PAULO', IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF CAMPANHÃ. IN TOTAL, 35 HOUSES WERE DESTROYED, UNDER PROTESTS, IN THE SECOND DEMOLISHMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. IN 2005, ANOTHER PART OF THE AREA WAS DESTROYED DESPITE THE PROTESTS OF THE INHABITANTS.

JOSÉ ANTÔNIO FREITAS LIVES IN THE AREA AND DECLARES THAT 70 FAMILIES ARE LEFT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 201 DWELLINGS: "SOME PEOPLE ARE LIVING HERE FOR 60 YEARS! WE DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE." HE RECOGNIZES THAT THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS IN A DEGRADED SITUATION, BUT BLAMES THE MUNICIPALITY FOR THE TOTAL LACK OF MAINTENANCE. HE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH THE NEW EMPTY PLOT.

ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER, NEITHER DOES THE MUNICIPALITY ITSELF. ONE INTERVIEWED, REPRESENTING THE MUNICIPALITY OF PORTO, ADMITTED THAT THERE WAS NO KNOWN DESTINATION FOR THE NEWLY EMPTIED AREA. HE DECLARED THAT THE FAMILIES WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER DWELLINGS.

THE CRITICISM FROM THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS CALLS THE TRANSFER OF FAMILIES A PROCESS OF 'DEPORTATION' AND A 'SOCIAL TERRORISM'. RUI SÁ, ALDERMAN FROM THE OPPOSITION PARTY, DECLARES THAT THE DEMOLITIONS CREATE A SCENARIO OF SOCIAL INSTABILITY AND MAKE THE INHABITANTS WANT TO LEAVE THE AREA. THE AREA IS AFTERWARDS SOLD FOR HIGH PRICES FOR DEVELOPERS.

ACCORDING TO THE INTERVIEWED FERNANDO AMARAL, FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, A PROPOSAL FOR THE AREA HAS TO BE MADE, WHICH ALSO BENEFITS THE INHABITANTS. "IN ANOTHER NEIGHBORHOOD – SÃO JOÃO DE DEUS – PEOPLE HEARD THAT THEY WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE NEW AREA, BUT THE PLOTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SOLD FOR NEW INCOMERS".

(JORNAL PÚBLICO, DECEMBER 6TH, 2007, P. 24)

The social decay and the satisfaction issue

The criminality which justifies the demolition of the social neighborhoods is not present, at least not in alarming figures, in São Vítor street. According to Mrs. Luísa Fontes, an Ecology Education teacher who works at the Children's Fontainhas playground at São Vítor region, the street itself and the surrounding area have a peaceful atmosphere: *"I am working here for 9 months and I have never seen anything wrong, related to crime or violence. There are always people on the street, which creates a sort of protected atmosphere"* (INTERVIEWED IN MAY/2012). Mrs. Fontes also declared that the waterfront area of Fontainhas Street, towards the old centre, is a more hostile environment, with presence of prostitution and drug users on the streets.

The safety on the streets is most probably a result of the social control provided by the constant presence of people on the street. The high density added to the strong contact to the street only increases the general security. Within social neighborhoods formed by high rise residential towers, the density might be high, but the relationship of the residents with the street is weak, resulting in unsafe public space.

An increasing unsafe feeling and decreasing community status has been mentioned by several inhabitants, especially by the elderly. The newcomers are often held responsible for the neighborhood changes, thus we can speculate that a generation clash might be a part of the problem. Mrs. Joaquina Soares, social worker from the Municipality of Porto and responsible for the Bonfim Neighborhood, declares: *"The elderly say that in the past everything was better and young people do not merge. I think they have this feeling because the younger people work all day, while the elderly stay mostly at home."*

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They do not see each other so much. In the past, maybe the women also stayed more at home and they have this feeling that the people were more close" (INTERVIEWED IN MAY/2012).

The newcomers are now blamed for the social decay because their relationship with the neighbors is not as strong as in the past generations. As a result of less social acquaintances, the community status decreases and therefore the social control also becomes weaker. Reestablishing the strong social control from the past through incentivizing the community strength might be part of the solution for the decreasing security and social decay.

Based on observation of the space and on interviews with inhabitants, some assumptions can be made. The extreme satisfaction concerning the life in the Ilhas was not unanimous among the residents. From a qualitative (and not quantitative) analysis of the interviews, can be concluded that the newcomers are the least satisfied residents, and would leave the Ilhas if they could afford other type of housing. The social relationship is the greatest reason for the residents satisfaction. Hence, when the proximity to others is absent, there are hardly reasons to become attached to the living space within the Ilhas situation.

Furthermore, the differences between living conditions regarding the quality of the dwellings can explain most of the inhabitants' satisfaction issue. The community value of the space depends on how satisfied one resident is, since this satisfaction reflects on the general social quality of the area. It can be said that the oldest generation of inhabitants, formed by the people who were born there at the Ilhas, is generally satisfied with the Ilhas life. These families frequently have better dwellings, resulting from years of self improvement.

The dissatisfaction is more present among the younger generation formed by the newcomers, who moved to the Ilhas as a result of pure financial need. The rental prices in the Ilhas are low, what gives to several residents no other option. When asked, they declare that they would certainly leave their house to another dwelling with better conditions. The newcomers occupied dwellings in worse situation, that were in most cases empty and degraded.

Mrs. Rosamaria is an example of a new Ilha resident. She lives at Praça da Alegria for 6 years, with a 5 year old son. Her dwelling is in bad conditions and has no private toilet. *"I even like the place, is close to the city, but I would move from here if I could. I would not go far, I like the location, but I rather have a better house to live with my son. But here I pay €15 per month, I cannot afford more than that. I do not really have a choice"*.

To sum up, it can be speculated that the satisfaction of the inhabitants concerning their living conditions might be a result of their option. The satisfied older generation wants to be there, living in the Ilha. They are attached to the house, to the community, to the space. They have family around, history, memories, and in most cases, improved dwellings. They do not want to leave. On the other hand, the unsatisfied ones did not choose to be there, they had no option. They have in most cases worse living conditions, no attachment to the environment and therefore their arrival degrades the community feeling. The unsatisfied ones claim for better housing, private toilets, and all primary improvements of the living space. The satisfied ones complain about the degradation of the community and the changes on the street. The crash between options and generations is threatening the best quality of the Ilhas: their 'family' atmosphere.

2.2. The Conclusions



The Ilhas of São Vítor street are a place for numerous problems, but they also have several positive aspects. The Ilhas have always been seen, either by the authorities or by the population, as a shameful city problem that needs to be vanished.

The change of times ask for a change of point of view. The Ilhas should be faced and analyzed from a different point of view, associated to the current time of (deep) economical, social and political crisis. Thus, positive aspects should certainly be equally considered during the conclusions.

This project aims to propose successful innovative solutions. The problem definition will start from a different position. Instead of listing the obvious weak points of the Ilhas (such as low quality living standards) as always has been done, the starting point will be listing the positive aspects of the Ilhas. Which threats are putting these positive aspects in risk?

The problem can be defined afterwards, after the confrontation of positive and negative aspects that resulted from the analysis.

02
THE GAPS

Positive aspects

Community Quality

This might be the greatest positive aspect of the street and the Ilhas' living typology and the starting point for the following positive social aspects, since without the community quality, they would most probably not even exist.

Livability and Safety

The social control and the high density are responsible for the active street life and consequent safe environment of the street.

Satisfaction

As a consequence of the strong community feeling, the inhabitants are in their majority, satisfied with the life in the Ilhas, despite all problems related to living conditions and infrastructure.

Inner-city occupation

The area is part of the settled urban tissue of the city, fully equipped with infrastructure. Inner-city occupation goes against urban sprawl and is a essential topic of urban sustainability.

Attractiveness

The location of São Victor street is outstanding, within walking distance to the centre of Porto. Universities, schools and several other main attraction points of the centre are also located within short distance.

Low cost housing

Even though there is a need for reform, dwellings of extremely small dimensions and simple infrastructure can be repaired and improved with a relatively low budget.

Self-improvement

Much can be learned with the residents own experience. They have been implementing self-improvement techniques through generations, and have basic knowledge of self-building.

Threats

Newcomers

The new residents have difficulty merging with the existing ones and becoming part of the community. Perhaps because they do not spend time enough with the neighbors, or maybe there is a lack of interest from both sides.

Increasing Unsafety

It is all a cycle: weaker community, less social control, and less safety on the streets.

Social Decay

Unsatisfied inhabitants become less attached to their living space, decreasing the community quality and causing social decay. The most common reason for dissatisfaction is the low quality of the dwellings.

Bad image within the city

The Ilhas, with their history and their image, are totally stigmatized in the inhabitants' minds. Change this embedded bad impression is surely more complicated than solving technical problems.

Land value/ Municipality interests

A great location might be a negative topic due to the higher value of the land. The Municipality is already carrying on expropriations and selling plots within the old centre.

Low quality housing

The dwellings are, in general, in very a degraded situation. There is a need for further analysis of the building conditions, but the need of deep structural reforms is most probably a fact.

Lack of financial resources

The residents themselves, and also the landlords, have no financial sources for large improvements of the dwellings. There is a lack of finances and interest from the authorities, and a major financial crisis in the Country. Money is surely a problem.

Problem Definition

The table on the left lists the positive aspects of the Ilhas, mentioned through the whole analysis, and their related threats. When looking at the table, can concluded that the problem is quite complex. It forms much more than a physical urban problem, but a combined situation of several involved spheres.

————— **The problem is social.**

————— **The problem is physical.**

————— **The problem is economical.**

Despite the complexity of the situation, the positive aspects and related threats previously mentioned have an unifying point within its essence, and therefore can be summarized as one major problem: *lack of connections*. The missing connections do not necessarily mean a lack of a physical link, but a lack of harmonically co-existence. This lack of harmony should be seen as a distance between different spheres, either social, economical or physical. The distance creates an isolation of the opposite extremes, and generates a conflict in the middle. This conflict, is the missing connection.

These conflicts, or gaps, will be the focus of this project. The term Gaps will be used further on as a definition of conflicts caused by missing connections in all defined spheres: scale, social, economical and physical. In fact, the definition of the main problem in one summarized term allows the organization of proposals. Furthermore, the classification of the ‘gaps’ in types (scale, physical, social and economical) helps gathering all necessary topics for a global solution for the problem which is equally concerned about all involved spheres. All spheres need to be considered in a complete approach for the Ilhas, since the issue is much larger than only an urban design subject.

Term definition:

GAPS: THE TERM CHOSEN FOR THE PROBLEM DEFINITION. A GAP IS A MISSING CONNECTION BETWEEN DIFFERENT EXTREMES WITHIN THE SAME SPHERE (DEFINED BELOW). THE WORD GAP WAS CHOSEN TO DEFINE CONFLICTS WHICH ARE RESULTS OF MISSING BINDINGS. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE TO THINK THAT THE ILHA, AT THE FIRST PLACE, APPEARED IN THE CITY IN ORDER TO FILL UP A LACK OF LOW COST HOUSING OF THAT TIME. THE PROBLEM WAS A MISSING CONNECTION BETWEEN A NEW CLASS OF WORKERS AND A PLACE TO LIVE. THE ILHAS FILLED UP THE SPACES OF THE BACKYARDS AND PROVIDED A CHEAP AND FAST SOLUTION.

SPHERES: HERE DEFINED AS THE DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW WITHIN THE PROBLEM DEFINITION. THEY ARE CLASSIFIED AS 1. CITY SCALE; 2. SOCIAL; 3. ECONOMICAL AND 4. PHYSICAL.

SCALES: THE PHYSICAL SPACE HAS BEEN DIVIDED IN THREE SCALES (BASED ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE RELATIONSHIP, AS IT WILL BE EXPLAINED FURTHER), THEREFORE THE URBAN RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE EASILY GRASPED. THE LARGER SCALE IS RELATED TO THE SPACE SURROUNDING SÃO VÍCTOR STREET. THE MEDIUM SCALE CONCERNS THE STREET ITSELF, CONNECTING ALL ILHAS. THE SMALLER SCALE IS RELATED TO THE INTERNAL SPACE OF THE ILHA CORRIDOR, BEFORE REACHING THE HOUSEHOLD THRESHOLD.

02 THE GAPS

Research Topic

Which innovative solutions can minimize the threats on the positive aspects of the Ilhas and how can they be implemented in order to fill up the social, economical, scale and physical gaps?

Scale Gap



The scale gap can be approached in two ways. At first, it represents the conflict between the urban block formed by the Ilhas of São Vítor and the surroundings. The area is, as shown in the analysis chapter, a buffer zone in the city and does not relate itself to the very next surrounding area. The urban block is an 'island' itself. The challenge is to increase the **reciprocity** between the block and the city, to make the Ilhas part of the larger urban scale.

Secondly, there is a gap between the city and the Ilhas concerning their **image**. The Ilhas have a historical bad image within the city. The reciprocity city-block should to be increased, but the image of 'Ilhas' for the city of Porto is based on their past condition of unhealthy environment. An improvement of connection should slowly increase not only the physical, but also the social relationship with the surroundings.

Social Gap



The social gap is defined by the conflict between the older and the newer **generations** of residents and the consequent threat to the community value. This important value of the Ilhas should continue existing, even within newcomers. Improve the living conditions and bring satisfaction concerning the living environment is fundamental for the space approval by newcomers, and their approval only increases their attachment to the space. Afterwards, the challenge is to incentivize encounters and **community binding** between both generations, diminishing the gap between them.

Economical Gap

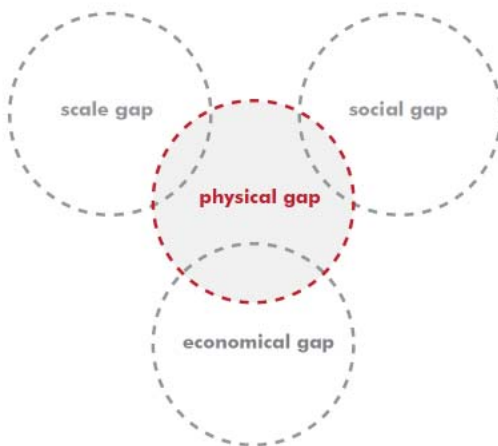


The economy is a strong threat for any urban project in times of crisis, and the conflict of this gap is between need for improvement and lack of financial sources. The authorities claim to have no funds, the financial power of citizens only gets lower and low cost housing is needed more than ever. How can the Ilhas be renewed with the **lowest possible cost**? And how could the investment come from another source besides public funds?

Furthermore, the Ilhas have always been serving the lower working class who cannot afford other types of housing. New projects should not change this economical feature of Ilhas, the low costs, and should avoid increase on value of the housing in totality. How can the process keep benefiting the lower classes and still improve the quality of the urban environment?

The challenge is to bring innovation to the economical approach concerning the Ilhas, but keeping their **authentic character** and social housing status.

Physical Gap



Since the objective of this project is to have an urban plan as a tool to solve the identified issues, the foundation of all proposals should be the physical space. The objective is to use all potential of an urban and physical planning as a solution. How far can the physical space solve **multidisciplinary issues**? Therefore, the physical gaps will be the binding element for the other gaps. The Ilhas' subject is complex and multifaceted. The problem is political, historical, cultural, social and financial. An urban renewal plan might not be the answer for the problem in its totality, but the challenge is to find solutions as far as the space can reach, and show that urbanism can represent great part of the answers.

Therefore, the physical space is the starting point for the elaboration of proposals in order to fill up these Gaps.

How to bind problem and space

The main strategy has just been defined: the physical gap as a binding space for solving the different spheres of the problem. The challenge is to read the space in detail and understand how the identified problems attach themselves to the space, and how urban interventions can help solving problems that are beyond physical.

Classifying the Space

Because the social environment forms the greatest positive aspect of the life in the Ilhas, the social relationships will be used as the main criteria for classifying and separating the different scales of space. From the most public to the most private space, the pattern of social encounters and the relationship between users and their space defines invisible boundaries within the urban environment which create different heterotopias.

The main difference between these scales of 'publicness' of the spaces concerns who meets in the space, and which social relationships take place in them. Based on the public-private scales of space, and considering the level of proximity between people, the public-private spatial scales can be divided as follows.

From public to private

The group of social acquaintances from a person reduces gradually, from the most public space until the privacy of the household. The public space is opened for everyone, and a stranger would not be easily noticed in this scale. The collective space is more narrow, where the community formed by all Ilhas is able to meet, and a stranger who does not belong to the street is already perceived and observed by the users of the space. The communal space is the rather special scale of the Ilha corridor. Its level of privacy may vary according to the type of entrance of the Ilha, but the corridor is mostly more private than public. Finally, the household space provides privacy and protection to the resident.

The corridor of the Ilha is a distinctive space. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (The Ilhas), it gives an extra level of collective privacy to the Ilha, and is partially responsible for increasing the social cohesion, community strength, and is consequently improving the social control. The extra level of public-private transition provided by the corridor is not an exclusive characteristic of the Ilhas. Residential buildings with a common entrance hall or condos with internal streets also present such a layer of semi-public space. Nevertheless, the unique feature of the Ilhas is the reduced size of this common space. The narrow corridor becomes part of the dwelling, and at the same time is an extension of the street, keeping the line between private and semi-public rather porous.

2.5. The Strategy

Social Groups

Spatial Scales



Strangers (and eventual acquaintances)



The PUBLIC Space



Acquaintances



The COLLECTIVE Space



Friends/ Intimate acquaintances



The COMMUNAL Space



Family



The PRIVATE Space

02

THE GAPS

2.5.1. Gaps and Scales: Problem and space related

Applying these scale division to São Vitor street and the Ilhas, the result is a hierarchy of three layers of space, divided according to the scales of privacy and level of social contact. The household space is not included, because this space is a domain out of the control of an urban planner. Therefore, only the layers concerning the public will be considered further on.

The conflicts of each identified Gap can be located within each scale of space, where the conflicts can be reached. The community is built from both public and private directions, and a multi scaled strategy allows a global approach of the area and of the different social relationships. Each scale, with its respective boundaries, is explained further in more detail.



public space

scale gap

THE LARGER SCALE CONCERNS THE OUTER SPACE OF THE URBAN BLOCK WHERE THE ILHAS ARE LOCATED AND RELATED PUBLIC SPACE. THIS PLACE IS WHERE STRANGERS MEET, LIKE USERS OF THE SURROUNDING FACILITIES, BUT ALSO THE COMMUNITY MEETS DURING THEIR NORMAL COMMUTING. THE **SCALE GAP** CONCERNS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDY AREA AND THE CITY, HENCE RELATED TO THE LARGER SCALE OF THE PUBLIC SPACE.



collective space

social gap

THE MEDIUM SCALE IS WHERE THE RESIDENTS OF THE STREET ALREADY FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE, EVEN THOUGH THE SPACE STILL USED BY STRANGERS. THE STRANGERS THAT PASS BY ARE ALREADY NOTICED AND WATCHED BY THE RESIDENTS. IT IS AN HETEROTOPIA OF ACQUAINTANCES AND THE MAIN COMMUNITY BINDING SPACE. THE **SOCIAL GAP** IS RELATED TO THE COMMUNITY AND CONFLICT OF GENERATIONS. THE COMMUNITY FORMED ALL ILHAS HAVE THE STREET AS THEIR MEETING POINT, THEREFORE THE MEDIUM SCALE IS THE MAIN SPACE TO REACH THE SOCIAL GAP.



communal space

economical gap

THE SMALLEST SCALE IS FORMED BY THE PARTICULAR SPACE OF THE CORRIDOR, WHERE THE LINE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GETS SMOOTH, AND NEIGHBORS CO EXIST. THE **ECONOMICAL GAP** IS RELATED TO THE DREADFUL CONDITIONS OF THE ILHAS AND DWELLINGS, THEREFORE IT CONCERNS THE INTERNAL SPACE OF THE ILHA, FORMED BY THE SMALLER SCALE OF THE COMMUNAL SPACE.

2.5. The Strategy

1. Large Scale - The public space

This scale represents the room for social relationships between the residents of Ilhas and outsiders, which take place in the public space in the surroundings of the street. These spaces form the boundaries of the urban blocks where the Ilhas are located. The public spaces on the edges, formed by praça da Alegria and Largo do Padre Baltazar Guedes Square are anchor spaces, one on each side of the block. The waterfront space is also part of this scale, even though that area is less used than the two mentioned squares.

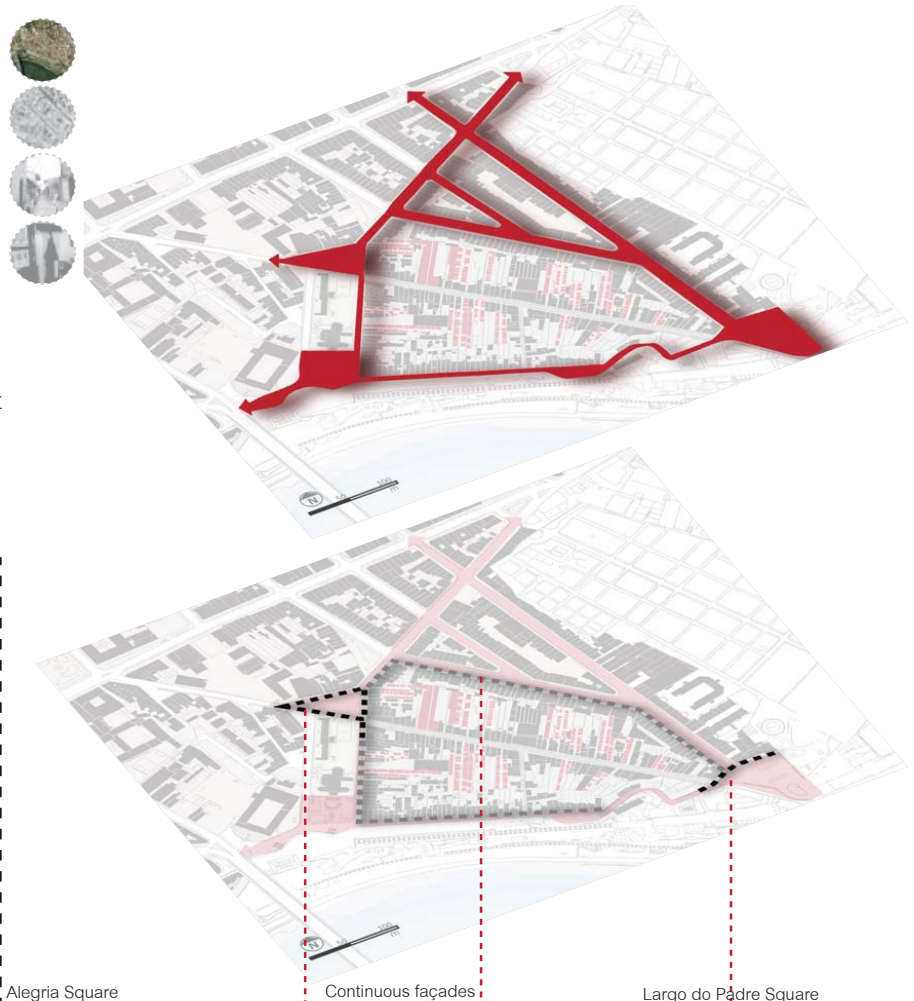
The filter

All edges of the urban blocks, formed by sidewalks and the two main squares is a smooth area between large and medium scales. The continuous façades around the block help isolating the inner-space of the street and adding visual privacy to it.

The part of the São Vítor street located inside the selected urban blocks seems less used by outsiders than the other streets in the surroundings.

This part of São Vítor street in the selected urban block has no high traffic standards, and most of the local pedestrians are inhabitants of the block itself. Other pedestrians might avoid the street due to its image of 'place of Ilhas', but this is only an assumption.

The street itself is a boundary in this



Alegria Square

Continuous façades

Largo do Padre Square



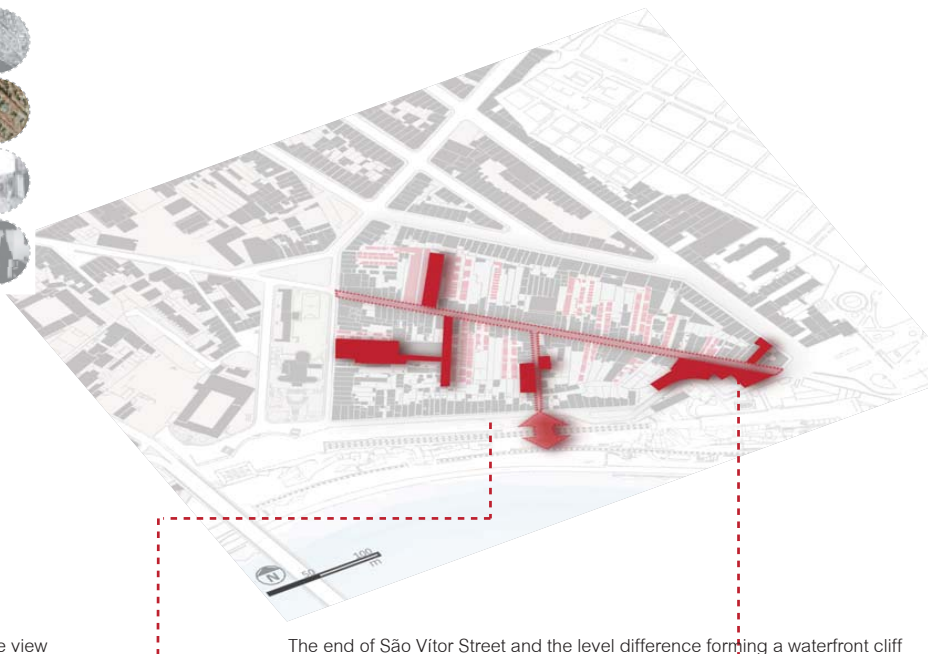
02 THE GAPS

2. Medium Scale - The collective space

The collective space is still public – opened for all people. Nevertheless, it is a space already filtered by the first boundaries, forming a different heterotopia. The inner-block space of São Vítor street is mostly used by inhabitants, and a stranger passerby is already noticed. These collective spaces include the street itself, with its sidewalks, and its adjacent spaces, such as open spaces, commercial buildings and the alley connecting the street to the riverside (and a beautiful view). The collective space is a key for the binding of the whole community, and where people from different Ilhas meet. As mentioned by an elderly lady in an interview: “In the past, this street used to be a large family”.

The filter

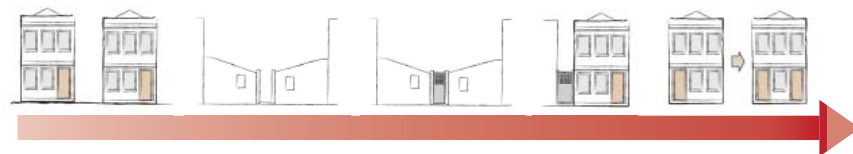
The medium scale starts at the public edges of the street, and merges to the smaller scale by the entrances of the Ilhas, which have different levels of porosity. These entrances provide more or less continuation of the collective into the communal. Besides this physical boundary, there is the psychological boundary of the fear. The increasing criminality mentioned by interviewed inhabitants is also part of the filter between the Ilhas and the collective space, since some inhabitants might avoid the street space as a result of its social decay.



The view



The end of São Vítor Street and the level difference forming a waterfront cliff



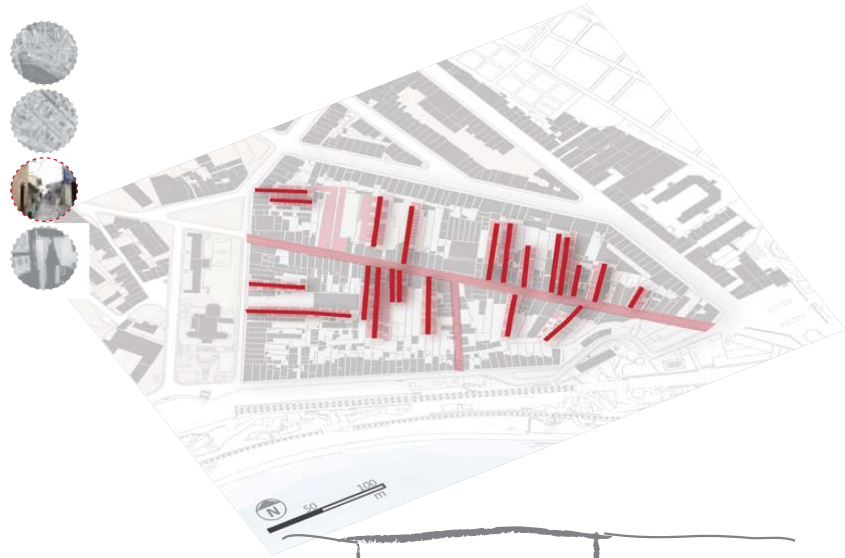
3. Small Scale - The communal space

The corridor of each Ilha is already a private space, located within a private urban plot.

Nevertheless, due to the use by several families, and in some cases the openness to the outside world, this space can be considered semi-private, or communal. It is shared by all neighbors within the Ilha, and is also an extension of the household. The inhabitants place outside, in a thin line along their dwelling, several personal belongings which coexist with the neighbors in the narrow corridor. Laundry, plants, chairs, toys, and several other objects give to the corridor a 'private backyard' impression.

The filter

The household and the corridor slightly merges with the dwellings along its edges, where the inhabitants extend their houses in around 40 cm, forming a smooth boundary. The real filter is formed by the household door and window. There is usually only one window per house, and the proximity of the inside of the house to the corridor allows neighbors to see each other constantly. The windows have, in most cases, the curtains closed, as a last call for privacy.





03
THE FILLING



The connection between the Gaps and the physical space has been drawn through the division of the space in scales of privacy and the association of each layer to a Gap. This chapter will show the proposals for solving the identified problems, not only through interventions within the public space, but mainly on the process of implementing the changes.

Before showing solutions, this chapter will start with a collection of ideas that could be applied not only on São Victor street, but on all Ilhas of Porto. The examples of ideas are gathered within a **toolbox**, that will be used further on, in the proposals for each scale of space*. Nevertheless, the ideas are left as motivation and encouragement for anyone who is interested in helping Ilhas or any other kind of urban problem with a similar social approach.

The main concept that connects all these proposals is the fact that they are mostly developed without Government intervention. This is the main motto for this project: the urbanism of self-improvement. Since it has never been an intention from the authorities of Porto on rehabilitating the Ilhas, but only to demolish them, such project should not rely on tools like legislation support, and much less on public investment. In times of economical and political crisis, the interest in investing, coming from the Municipality, became even less significant. Therefore, all proposals from here on are based on what the society is able to do by itself**.

* The Toolbox helps building the guidelines, but is not the only source for them. Other innovative proposals are also presented.

** *'What if'* scenarios will also be shown, picturing a situation where the Municipality would be interested and/or there would be some financial support coming from them or from an investor.

03

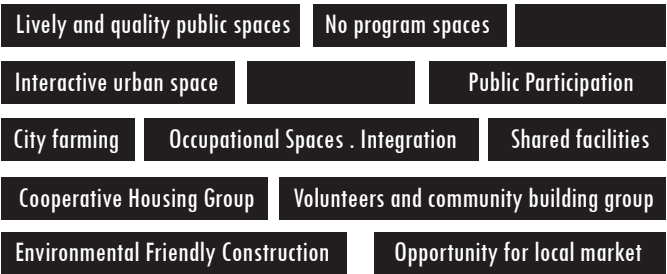
THE FILLING

The concepts – building a toolbox

“IF CITIES ARE THE ORGANIZING UNITS OF THE NEW GLOBAL ORDER, THEN A BROAD RANGE OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES AT THE CITY, NATIONAL AND SUPRA-NATIONAL LEVELS NEED TO BE OVERHAULED, REORDERED AND INTEGRATED AROUND NEW SPATIAL REALITIES AND PARADIGMS” (BURDETT, 2009).

The toolbox is a list of ideas that could be applied as solutions for the identified problems of São Víctor Street. They give great examples of solutions developed for similar problems and could be useful as a reference for this project, even though these ideas took place in complete different places and situations.

The main objective of the toolbox is to prove that such ideas can be successfully realized, since they have already been implemented and reached positive results elsewhere. The tools should certainly be adapted to the problem scenario in São Víctor, but their concepts can definitely be used as inspiration.



The tools

Main binding concept: Urbanism of self-improvement

- 01. Lively and quality public spaces (Gehl Architects)
- 02. No program spaces (Paola Viganó and Bernardo Secchi)
- 03. Interactive urban space (Movable chairs and examples)
- 04. City farming (Hortas Comunitárias, Brazil; Creatif Beheer/ NL)
- 05. Occupational Spaces . Integration with University (Yale School of Architecture)
- 06. Public participation (SAAL; Urban Think Tank)
- 07. Cooperative Housing Group (Hulshof Architecten/ NL)
- 08. Volunteers and community to build the houses (NGO Um Teto para meu País, Latin America)
- 09. Environmental friendly - affordable construction (Sustainable Social Housing Initiative, UN)
- 10. Shared Facilities and Opportunity for local market (From these concepts, no examples are shown on the toolbox, but these ideas will be used in the proposals)

3.1. The Concepts

Lively and quality public spaces

“WE CONSIDER THE ATTRACTIVE AND LIVELY PUBLIC REALM TO BE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT KEYS TO QUALITY IN CITIES”
(GEHL ARCHITECTS, 2012).



< Lively public spaces

(CITY OF MELBOURNE; GEHL ARCHITECTS, 2004, P. 9 AND P. 22)

01. Lively and quality public spaces (Gehl Architects)

The first tool for the first layer of space (large scale) is a collection of design guidelines that increases urban quality of the public space and consequently the use of such space, reinforcing the connection between city and the study area. A very positive example of urban quality spaces is the work of Gehl Architects, from Denmark. Professor Jan Gehl researches life on public space for more than 40 years.

The lesson they teach is that lively, healthy and safe public spaces are focused on the human dimension. *“The natural starting point for the work of designing cities for people is human mobility and the human senses because they provide the biological basis for activities, behavior and communication in city space”* (GEHL, 2010, P. 33). Human oriented quality spaces will be attractive for the users and generate more social contact and interaction.

According to Gehl (2010, P. 64 AND 65), inviting cities must have carefully designed public spaces to support the processes that reinforce city life. One important prerequisite is that city is a potentially self-reinforcing process. *“Something happens because something happens. Once a children’s game gets going, it can quickly attract more participants. Corresponding processes are at work with adult activities. People come where people are”* (GEHL, 2010, P. 65).

03

THE FILLING

No program spaces

THIS DESIGN TOOL WAS IMPLEMENTED BY VIGANÓ AND SECCHI IN THEIR PROJECT FOR THE THEATERPLEIN IN ANTWERP. THE ROOF ALLOWS SHELTER FOR ACTIVITIES, BUT DOES NOT DEFINE OR LIMIT ANY OF THEM.



< Theaterplein in Antwerpen
(STAD ANTWERPEN, 2009, P. 176)

02. No program spaces (Paola Viganó and Bernardo Secchi)

During a guest lecture at the TU/e in November/2011, Paola Viganó presented projects from her office (Paola Viganó and Bernardo Secchi) and talked about urbanism of public space. According to Viganó (2011), the project of the public space is fundamental for the city and for the urban designer, since an open domain is a place of convergence of different disciplines and different people. Urbanism should be always interrogating how the spaces are used and how they could be used.

Public space should be flexible and able to adapt to the need of the users and their different interests and activities. It should not be too defined, and people should be able to walk any direction they wish, without fixed pushing routes. Furthermore, activities that already take place on the space, before any intervention, should be taken into account in a project, and should not be limited.

A flexible design provides quality space but does not limit possibilities on how the space will be used. Some part of the space can be left free for the users to give their own interpretation and meaning.

3.1. The Concepts

Interactive urban space

“EVERYONE LOVES MOVABLE URBAN FURNITURE. THERE IS SOMETHING ALMOST PERVERSELY PLEASING ABOUT CHOOSING THE PLACE AND POSITION OF PUBLIC FURNITURE.”

(TOPOS MAGAZINE – BLOG – 14/02/2012)



- < The movable chairs, with a trick (BERNSTRAND, 2012)
- < The classic parisian example (GERMANOPRATINES.FR, 2012)
- < Bryant Park, New York. The flexible chairs became a symbol of the park (BRYANTPARK, 2012)

03. Interactive urban space

As an addition to the just presented tool of program free spaces, the urban furniture can also provide possibilities for open interaction with the urban space. Lose chairs, that can be easily repositioned by the users as they wish provide to the user a close connection to the space and the feeling of adapting it to its needs. People can move and sit in the sun or under a tree, gather in groups and so on. The classic Parisian chairs and the chairs of New York City's Bryant Park are simply some of the examples.

According to Gehl (2010, p. 144 AND 145) *“These movable chairs provide flexibility to users, who can move them around to make the most of the site, climate and view”*. Furthermore, Gehl also declares that the flexible chairs allows the social space to be arranged for specific situations.

But the particular feature of this specific tool is not only the flexibility of the chair, but the solution for problems such as theft, and the high maintenance scenario of a public space where chairs get spread everywhere and someone has to be responsible for collecting and organizing the chairs at the end of the day. The Swedish designer Thomas Bernstrand presented in 2012 a new concept of movable chair, that borrow the supermarket shopping cart concept to ensure return. *“The chair's locking mechanism can be operated by a coin or a token, encouraging users to return the chairs to the correct location after use”* (BERNSTRAND, 2012).

03

THE FILLING

City farming



< City farming with the community in São Paulo, Brazil
(GOVERNO DE SÃO PAULO, 2009)

< City gardens in the Netherlands (CREATIEF BEHEER, 2012)

04. City farming (Hortas Comunitárias, Brazil/ Creatif Beheer/ NL)

City farming is not a new idea, and it has already been applied all over the World. Community gardens for agriculture make use of wasteland, produce quality and healthy food for the residents and improve the relationships among the community. For Porto, the list of advantages is even longer, since cultivated areas on the steep terrain control rain storm water and avoid erosion.

The examples presented here in the Toolbox are from Brazil and the Netherlands. The first one, from São Paulo, is implemented by the Municipality, but in association with NGOs and the community. The agriculture gardens exist for more than 20 years, and are very successful. The farms improve soil conservation, avoid invasion and irregular constructions, have low maintenance costs, generate income for some of the residents and provide healthy and low cost food for the community (GOVERNO DE SÃO PAULO, 2009).

In the Netherlands, the initiative is from the private sector, even though the Municipality is also involved in financing the process. Creatief Beheer is an office in Rotterdam which implemented green spaces in the city, improving neighborhood community development. Neighborhoods with green active spaces are more child-friendly and provide a healthier life for the users (CREATIEF BEHEER, 2012).

3.1. The Concepts

Occupational Spaces . Integration



As an example, The architecture school of the Yale University has since 1967 a mandatory course for students that includes the design of dwellings in economically-depressed neighborhoods. “The houses allow students the experience of working with a client and the opportunity to respond to the challenges of affordable housing and urban infill. Students have shown great enthusiasm for these projects focusing on community development and neighborhood improvement” (YSOA, 2012).

The idea also works within partnerships with other stakeholders: “More recently, partnerships with Habitat for Humanity and Home, Inc., Neighborhood Housing, and currently Common Ground, have led to a focus on affordable housing.” (YSOA, 2012).

< Vlock Building Project, example from an student project from the Yale University (YSOA, 2012)

05. Integration

The increase of integration between the community of the Ilhas and the outside society might diminish the negative image that they have in the city. Besides, integrating activities between insiders and outsiders might bring a positive outcome for both worlds. As it is already done all over the World, NGOs might come to the space of São Vítor and work with education and skills training. The unemployed residents might learn a new profession and improve their chances of finding a job. The Universities should be involved and use the community space as a practice opportunity for students of several disciplines. Furthermore, people from the Ilhas themselves might teach each other, since many of them have a background of handcraft professions.

The examples exist via an uncountable amount of NGOs that deal with voluntary work, and all the proven benefits of University-community connection. According to Bruning et al. (2006, p. 126) “in a time of cost cutting and shrinking resources, integrating the university and the town as a unified entity makes sound economic sense”. Furthermore, engaged universities are better able to integrate the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution and fulfill the function of the academy in society (BRUNING ET AL., 2006, p. 126).

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Public Participation



< Photos of public participation in Caracas, Venezuela, by
Urban Think Tank
(URBAN THINK TANK, 2012)

06. Public participation (SAAL/ Portugal; Urban Think Tank)

The SAAL was an example of public involvement and participation in Portugal, and resulted in successful projects of residential areas and even included inhabitants from Ilhas. If it has been done once, why not repeat it? Urban design has a great potential of empowering and integrating communities, since the subject is their own living environment. It is also part of the social responsibility of the designer to include the users in the process, and this can happen in different ways and levels.

According to Brillembourg (ET AL, 2005, p. 111), integration of community is a critical element of an urban process: *"Quite apart from the psychological and social importance of empowering individuals and their own initiatives, these collaborations (...) initiate a process of education through each dwellers themselves identify and implement incremental solutions for the major problems. (...) This supports the development of community organizations and gives them the necessary strength and legitimacy to undertake ongoing improvement in their neighborhoods"*.

Participation of the public can be seen in several examples of innovative projects which redefine the traditional tools of urbanism, and surely make extremely valuable contributions for the future of the city.

3.1. The Concepts

Cooperative Housing Group



07 Cooperative Housing Group (Hulshof Architecten/ NL)

Housing cooperatives are formed by groups of future residents who develop together their own designs in an organized process. The example of this toolbox comes from Hulshof Architects in the Netherlands, who took the initiative to improve an urban block in Rotterdam in a collective mandate. A building that would have been demolished is purchased by the group for a lower price than the average market price. Afterwards, the residents are able to decide, during the process, all details of the internal space of their own dwellings.

< Wallisblok Rotterdam, before and after (HULSHOF-ARCHITECTEN, 2012)

Each person has a different budget to invest, and therefore each dwelling is unique at the end of the process. The process is guided by the architect. The inhabitants meet and have group discussions about the project, forming a community from the beginning. Existing inhabitants of the area can also be involved in the process (HULSHOF, 2008).

The full idea is useful for the Ilhas when concerning the front houses, for example, which are buildings that could be restored and become new housing typologies, and also useful as an inspiration and example of community work for the Ilha's dwellings. In the Rotterdam example, the neighborhood was unpopular and a target group had to be found. Nevertheless, the possibilities of deciding the internal design of your home and, majorly, of buying a property in a good location for a cheaper price than asked for the market are very attractive (HULSHOF, 2008).

All process must be well guided, mostly by the responsible architect. The architect comes with calculation of possibilities, and the future residents with the budget and personal interests. The result is a group of new residents with their own dream home, a new project integrated in a previously degraded area and the reutilization of wasted land (HULSHOF, 2008). The existing residents are also involved in the procedure, and the community is certainly strengthened after the process.

As a result of this example two benefits can be distinguished: the possibility of a whole project developed by the private residents themselves for housing in unpopular areas; and the success of community involvement in a collective project.

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Volunteers and community building group



08. Volunteers and community to build the houses (NGO Um Teto para meu País/ Latin America)

In a scenario of degraded housing infrastructure and lack of finances from the residents and landlords, the self-construction might be an adequate solution. Nevertheless, not all inhabitants are able to build with their own hands, such as elderly or disabled people.

And then comes the importance of volunteer work. The NGO '*Um Teto para meu País*' (A Roof for my Country) is an example of successful organization of volunteers who build social housing in poor communities of Latin America. The NGO was created in Chile, in 1997, by a group of university students, and today they are present in 19 countries. In Brazil, the NGO exists since 2002, and in 10 years it helped building almost 500 dwellings in the country (UTPMP, 2012).

Students work together with the community, and together they put in practice the vision of the group, which is providing adequate and healthy living environments for poor families. The lesson learned is that, when organized, students and young people with aim to help can make the difference for the society, one family at the time.

< Um Teto para meu País, Brazil
(TETO BRASIL, 2012)

3.1. The Concepts

Environmental Friendly Construction



LOCALLY-APPROPRIATE TECHNIQUES, SOLUTIONS AND PRACTICES EXIST TO DELIVER SUSTAINABILITY IMPROVEMENTS AT LOW OR NO-COST. RECENT STUDIES IN BRAZIL AND THAILAND SHOW THAT ADDITIONAL INITIAL INVESTMENTS CAN BE OFFSET IN LESS THAN TEN YEARS. DEVELOPING A LOCAL PROJECT AGENDA, AND IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES RELATED TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT, WILL LEAD TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE SUSTAINABLE HOUSING UNITS WITHOUT AN INCREASED LIFE-CYCLE COST, AND WILL EVEN REDUCE THE COSTS OF HOUSING FOR DEVELOPERS AND RESIDENTS IN THE LONG-TERM (UNEP, 2012).

09. Environmental friendly - affordable construction (Sustainable Social Housing Initiative, UN)

Sustainable and low-cost construction are usually faced as non-compatible characters for a project, especially when concerning social housing. Time, budget and land-use constraints faced by social housing developers typically leads to buildings being assembled with little consideration for durability, sustainability or environmental health (UNEP, 2012). There is also the preconception which assumes that social housing has already a low environmental impact, and therefore needs no investment in sustainability.

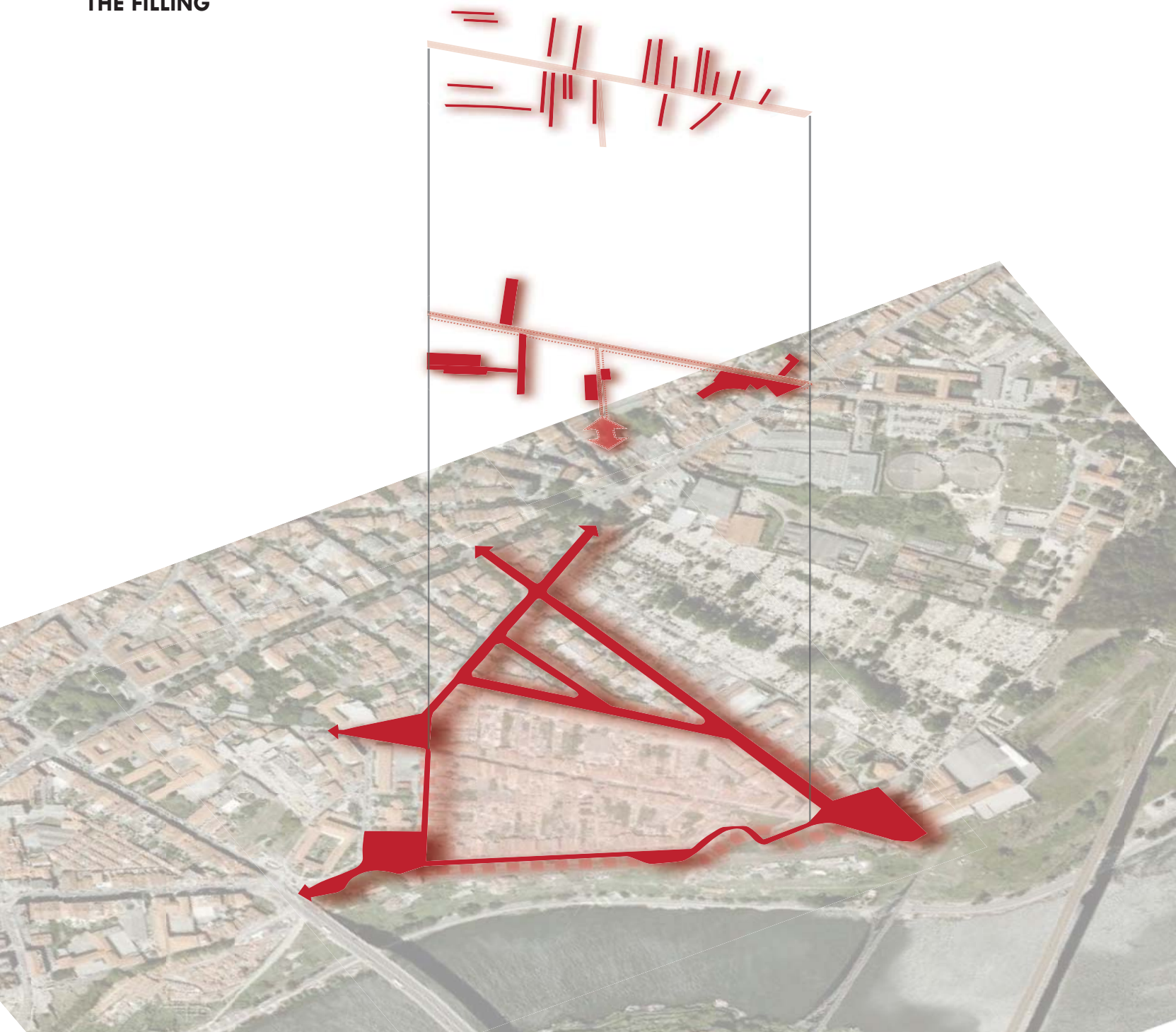
The United Nations Environment Program developed the Sustainable Social Housing Initiative, which promotes sustainability applied on social housing projects. The initiative have two pilot sites, in Brazil and in Thailand, where the principles of the program were successfully applied. The projects were focused on improving the energy efficiency (including provision of thermal comfort) and water efficiency (water supply and consumption) of social housing units (UNEP, 2012).

The key of the combination between sustainability and affordability is the use of local knowledge and material. *“The project identifies building components or functions where business-as-usual solutions in social housing projects can be improved by using alternative solutions (technologies/materials) which are commercially available in the local market”* (UNEP, 2012).

The SUSHI-project, as it is called by the UN, was initiated in 2009 and is still in development. They are coming up with a guidebook for application of the sustainability implementation process. Such an example can surely be applied during reconstruction of the dwellings in Ilhas, since the techniques are simple and local.

Sustainable social housing units can deliver significant environmental, social and economic benefits to low income population and to the society as a whole, besides implementing a special character to the Ilhas dwellings and certainly raising the attachment of the residents to their living space.

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3.2. The Guidelines

The proposals for the Ilhas of São Victor will be presented in the form of guidelines (based on the toolbox concepts) for each one of the three defined scales of space, followed by a suggested process of implementation. The choice for guidelines was made due to the flexibility that they offer to the proposal. No blueprints can be defined for a project that relies on public participation and is process oriented. The principle of the guidelines is to work as clear recommendations for spatial improvement and as a list of ideas that could be applied together or individually.

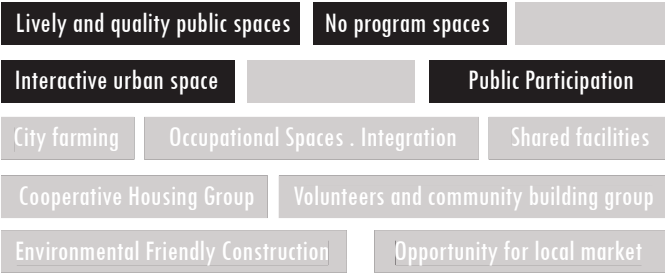
The implementation process is divided per scale and has two possible scenarios of execution: with or without major investments. The first scenario is based on the self-made urbanism concept, where the community gathers together, guided by project coordinators who can be volunteers, professionals or Universities. There should be an organized project group, with all stakeholders, guiding the process. The second scenario assumes that some investment could take place, either by public or private initiative, and some governmental support would also be part of the process.

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3.2.1. Large scale – Public space x Scale Gap

The objective of the large scale approach it to increase the reciprocity between the study blocks of São Victor street and the surrounding area of the city, either physically or socially. The reciprocity can be increased through the enhancement of the use of the available public spaces by both social groups (residents and outsiders). The augment of connection between these groups would diminish the isolation of the Ilhas area and, in a longer term, would also diminish the negative image that the space has in the city.



Large Scale

3.2. The Guidelines



Guideline 1 – Use the existing anchors and flows

The study area is located in between several attractions of the region, that already form a sort of network of users. The flows are present around the blocks, and this is a positive point since the objective is to increase the social contact between insiders and outsiders of São Vítor street. Nevertheless, it is not desirable that the car traffic of São Vítor street increases.

Pedestrians move in a speed that allows social interaction to happen, but all kinds of flows (of different transport modals) should be considered in a project. According to Søholt (2004), the important thing is not to only have a single pedestrian street, that many cities might insert in the space and expect a great public space afterwards. *“It is the fact, that a network of streets is established with a balance between cars and pedestrians offering equally attractive city environments and movement systems”* (SØHOLT, 2004).

The map depicts the most crowded points in the surroundings of São Vítor street, and the main routes taken by the users of these spaces. The analysis was made by observation of the spaces, and some short questions to passersby, questioning them about their route choices. The anchor points attract a relatively large amount of users (especially the schools and the hospital), and that is the reason they are called ‘anchors’. They are settled activities, where outsiders already have a built connection. The incentives to social interaction between in and outsiders of the area should make use of the existing flows created by these anchors.

Therefore the public spaces that are in contact with such routes are the most suitable spaces that could merge the outside resident and the inhabitants of the Ilhas in a common public room. The spaces will be more successful when planned as a network of good quality spaces. Sequences of public places to produce a continuity on use of space and support each other.



Main routes and anchors

- Main routes - vehicles
- Main routes - pedestrians
- Main attractions
- Soft edges*
- Public Space

* Soft edges are façades with a commercial (shop, café, restaurant) activity is located, therefore attracting visitors.

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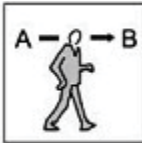
Guideline 2 – Mind types of users and activities

The recognition of networks and available public spaces was the first step to fill up the Scale Gap. After identifying the anchor points in the surroundings, the next guideline recommends that the types of space users should be identified and located in the map. Only knowing the anchor spaces and major flows does not provide enough information about the intentions of the users and their potential for social interaction. According to Gehl (2010) and Sørensen (2004), the groups of users can be classified according to the frequency of visit and the reason that motivates their visit to the defined space. There are 5 user types: the everyday users (residents and people who work in the area); the visitor/customer (user who visits the functions of the area); the passersby (people in transit through the area); the recreational visitors (people who visit the public space for leisure and pleasure); the event visitor (people that visit the area because of special events) (SØHOLT, 2004).

The different kinds of use allows the planner to define different types of activities and flows. From daily activities, which are done by the users without choice, to planned activities that happen as a result of a prepared choice, the conclusion is that the space does not have the same meaning for all users. As Sørensen (2004) presented: *“User group 1-3 visit places because they have to. People have to go to work or have to go shopping. This means that a great number of people walking in a street does NOT necessarily equal a successful space and an area of good urban quality. But user group 4 & 5 only visit a space if it is nice and offers a great city environment. It is these groups of people doing optional activities in a space we need to plan for, and THEY are the indicators of a successful and lively environment”*.



< Photos from users of São Vítor street. May, 2012

Type of User		Activity
 	Type 1 - The everyday users Route: The daily comings and goings – to walk to and from (inhabitants, employees of shops)	
 	Type 2 - The visitors/customers Route: Daily/ routine transit activity TO the area (school students, users of facilities, customers of shops)	
	Type 3 - The passers-by Route: between anchors, main streets (pedestrians in transit THROUGH area)	
 	Type 4 - The visitors to recreational activities or events Route: way to planned activity (spectator/participant)	
		

Spaces on their way have potential to receive daily recreational activity to be used in connection to visits in the area, or during breaks and pauses.

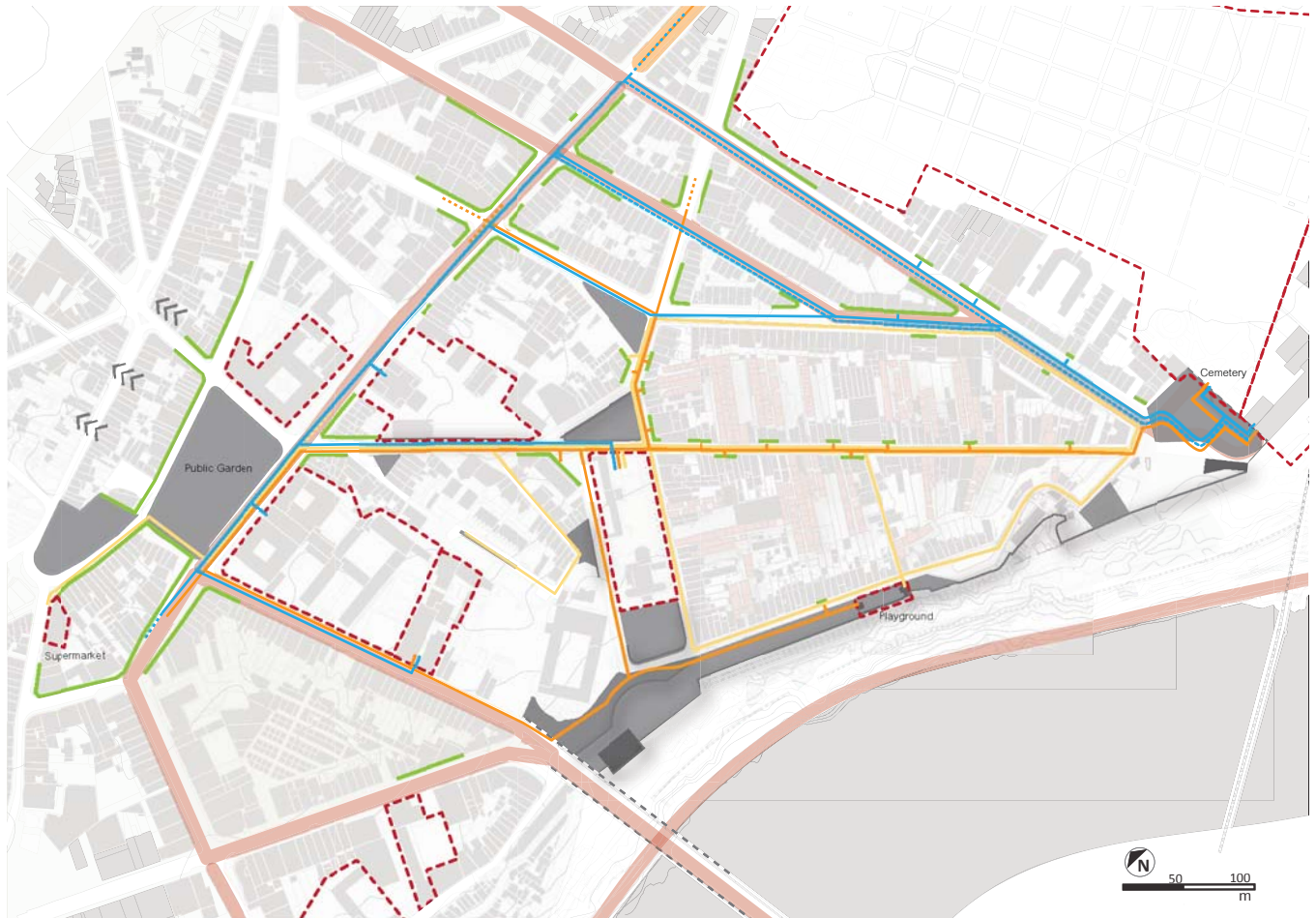
The map shows the main routes used by public space users from the classified typologies. Typology 4 (visitors for recreation/events) does not even appear on the map. The current quality of public space does not offer enough attractiveness to bring outside users only for enjoying the area. Furthermore, there are also no large regular events in the area.

Typology 1 is formed by the inhabitants of the study area (SV urban blocks) and their daily main routes. Most of these users are pedestrians, and observation of the area lead to the conclusion that the majority of residents reach the street via Praça da Alegria, and use the continuation of São Vítor street as main route to the rest of the city. The route depicted in the map leads to the closest supermarket (on the left), where most of the interviewed residents declared to go for daily shopping. Many users also commute by car, and the continuation of São Vítor street is the main way route used for reaching the main city roads.

Typology 2 is formed by daily visitors that come to the area with an objective. This group (in orange) is mostly formed by pedestrians, and their final destination is in most cases the schools or the commercial buildings in the area. The green stripes in the map define soft edges (GEHL, 2010), that are façades with a commercial activity. The employees from the shops, and many of the owners, do not live in the street, therefore form a large part of the daily visitors group. Residents from the close surroundings who are customers of these shops complete the group. The cemetery and the hospital are also part of these pedestrian main routes for visitors.

Typology 3 is formed by passerby users, that cross the area while commuting towards an outside destination. Since the main streets have a dead end at Largo do Padre square, there are not many outside destinations that bring many visitors from this group. The last destination, from passersby coming from the direction of city centre, is the cemetery and the secondary school. These outside commuters, coming towards the school, arrive mostly by car (dashed blue lines), but also by foot. Nevertheless, they seem to use the upper streets more than São Vítor street itself (based on qualitative observation). The riverfront space, below the study area, seems to be used only by residents of the region.

As we can see, the main typology of users is from groups 1 and 2, therefore people have did not exactly chose to the using the public space. The increase of visitors from groups 3 and 4 should be incentivized. The way of achieving this objective strongly relies on the quality and attractiveness of the public space. In summary, it can be said that the two main squares (Praça da Alegria and Largo do Padre) are the spaces where more different types of users coexist, and therefore provides the largest chances of improving social contact between these groups. The presence of users from typology 3 and 4 should be incentivized especially on the riverfront and surroundings.



Types of space users

- Type 01 - Everyday User
- Type 02 - Daily visitor/ customer
- Type 03 - In transit/ passersby
- Type 03 (vehicles) - In transit

— Main traffic - surroundings

- - - Main attractions

— Soft edges*

■ Public Space



< Based on SØHOLT, 2004 and GEHL, 2010.
SKETCHES FROM SØHOLT, 2004

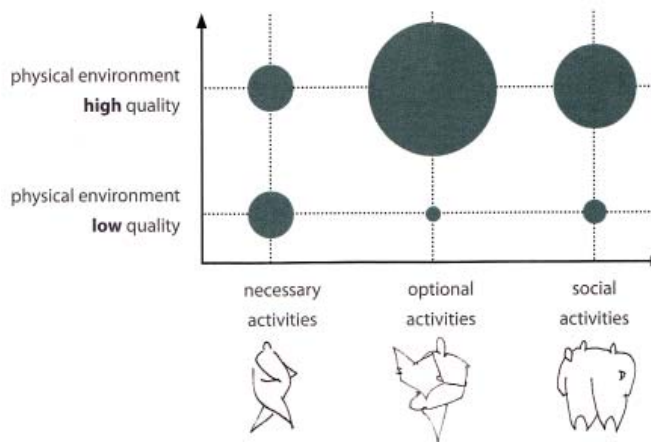
Guideline 3 – Create good quality public spaces

In order to increase the number of optional public space users and therefore improve the potential for social relationship, diminishing the scale gap between Ilhas and the city, the quality of the public space should be improved. According to Gehl (2010, p. 20 AND 21) purposeful necessary activities, such as going to school or waiting for the bus, take place under all conditions, whilst recreational optional activities, such as sitting down to enjoy the view or walking down a promenade, have a good spatial quality as a prerequisite. More spatial quality, more activities and users.

“Planning and design can be used to influence the extent and character of outdoor activities. Invitations to do something outdoors other than just walking should include protection, security, reasonable space, furniture and visual quality” (GEHL, 2010, p. 21).

The more optional activities, the more social encounters. City life is a precondition for strengthening all forms of social activity in city space, which are basically all types of communication between people in the city space (GEHL, 2010, p. 22).

“UNPREDICTABILITY AND UNPLANNED, SPONTANEOUS ACTIONS ARE VERY MUCH PART OF WHAT MAKES MOVING AND STAYING IN THE CITY SPACE SUCH A SPECIAL ATTRACTION. WE ARE ON OUR WAY, WATCHING PEOPLE AND EVENTS, INSPIRED TO STOP TO LOOK MORE CLOSELY OR EVEN STAY OR JOIN IN” (GEHL, 2010, p. 20).



< The graphic shows the connection between outdoor spatial quality and types of activities. More quality strongly influences the amount of optional activities, and therefore also the amount of social activities as a consequence (GEHL, 2010, p. 21).

Gehl (2010) created a list of criteria to be taken into account when creating a good quality public space. The 12 key words are grouped in issues concerning protection, comfort and enjoyment. To ensure that a public space becomes lively and popular one must make sure that as many of the listed qualities have to apply to the space as possible. This means that the public space must be highly attractive (SØHOLT, 2004).

Protection is on the top of the list, and includes safety against violence and traffic, and also against unpleasant sensory experiences, such as rain or noise. Comfort comes right after protection, and concerns opportunities for the users to walk, stay, sit, see each other, talk, play and interact. At the end of the list is the top quality criteria, which relates to enjoying the space, with good sensory experiences that can be provided by design. Gehl declares that the design criterion *‘should be seen as an umbrella concept that should include all of the other areas, (...) and cannot be dealt with in isolation from the other criteria’* (GEHL, 2010, p. 238).

Designing the Public Spaces
A Key Word List

Protection against	1. Traffic and accidents	2. Crime and violence (feeling of safety)	3. Unpleasant sense experiences
	<i>Fear of traffic; traffic accidents</i>	<i>Streetlife; streetwatchers; overlap of functions</i>	<i>Wind, rain, cold, pollution, dust</i>
Comfort	4. Possibilities for walking	5. Possibilities for standing/ staying	6. Possibilities for sitting
	<i>Room for walking; No obstacles; Interesting façades</i>	<i>Attractive edges; supports for staying</i>	<i>Zones for sitting; primary and secondary sitting</i>
	7. Possibilities to see	8. Possibilities for hearing/ talking	9. Possibilities for play/ activities
	<i>Seeing-distances; interesting views; lighting</i>	<i>Low noise level; bench arrangements</i>	<i>Invitation to physical activities;</i>
Enjoyment	10. Scale	11. Possibilities for enjoying positive climate	12. Aesthetic quality
	<i>Dimensioning – human scale</i>	<i>Sun/shade; Warmth/coolness; Breeze/ventilation</i>	<i>Good design; Views, trees, water</i>

< Based on SØHOLT, 2004 and GEHL, 2010.

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Quality Criteria		Public Space								
		1	2	3	4	5*	6	7	8	9
Protection against	<i>Traffic and accidents</i>	--	0	+	--	+	+	-	+	--
	<i>Crime and violence</i>	0	+	+	0	+	--	-	-	0
	<i>Unpleasant sense experiences</i>	-	0	0	-	0	-	-	0	-
Comfort	<i>Walking</i>	-	-	+	-	0	+	+	-	-
	<i>Standing/ Staying</i>	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-
	<i>Sitting</i>	-	-	+	-	+	+	++	-	-
	<i>See</i>	-	-	+	0	+	+	+	-	+
	<i>Hearing/ talking</i>	0	0	+	-	0	-	-	+	-
	<i>Play</i>	-	0	+	-	+	+	0	-	-
Enjoyment	<i>Scale</i>	-	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	+
	<i>Positive climate</i>	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+
	<i>Aesthetics</i>	-	0	0	-	0	+	+	0	+
Total		-	3+	10+	1+	8+	9+	6+	3+	4+
		2 0	5o	2o	2o	3o	3-	2o	2o	1o
		10-	4-		9-			4-	7-	7-

*Space 5 is a gated square which is now closed. The judgment of the spatial quality is made based on the infrastructure of the square, in case it would be opened and in use.

The criteria from Gehl (2010) were applied to the listed public spaces of São Victor area. Each space was judged with a (+), a neutral (o) – which means that the quality may exist but needs improvement, or a (-) point. In this simple way, the quality of the public space becomes clear, and the strong and weak points of each space can be listed.

The summary of the points forms a general grade for each space, and the overview is applied to the map on the right. As a result, it can be seen which parts of the large scale area need more or less work in order to become good quality spaces.

Public Spaces:
 1- Square used as parking area
 2- Square with grass, no function
 3- Alegria Square
 4- Space on the side of school, used as parking area
 5- Gated square, not being used
 6- Riverfront space
 7- Riverside boulevard
 8- Old public laundry space
 9- Largo do Padre, (cemetery entrance) used as parking space



Quality of public space

- Good quality Public Space*
- Neutral Public Space*
- Bad quality Public Space*

- Soft Edges**
- Sidewalks*
- Freixo Bridge*
- Cemetery entrance*



1 – Space used as parking area

This area has no real positive aspects as a public space, since it is currently used as a parking area. The parking is not official, and the space is not suitable for this use, since the cars end up parking behind each other and blocking the exit.

Nevertheless, the locale was listed as public area due to its potential of becoming a public space located in a strategic spot, between the University and the study area. The area could receive a restaurant or café and have a pleasant outdoor terrace space.



2- Square with grass, no function or use

This square is graded as a neutral space that needs improvement to become a pleasant public space. Safety is a positive aspect of the space, since there is a rather strong social control coming from the surrounding edges, both residential and commercial. The space can be observed from all angles. The space is also more elevated than the street level, providing safety against traffic. Furthermore, the square has a suitable size for the surroundings and a pleasant appearance due to the trees and shadow provided by them.

The negative aspects are comfort related, because the square is not officially suitable for use. All surface is covered only with grass, and there are no paths or paved spaces to walk. There are also no sitting spaces or comfortable edges to stand.



3- Praça da Alegria

This square is surely the most successful public space of the whole area. Even though it could have some improvement related to the aesthetics and protection against unpleasant climate, the square is broadly used by the inhabitants all day. It has a daily small market, where the residents buy fruits, vegetables and fresh fish. There are benches under the trees, but these are often occupied. More secondary sitting could be added to the square.

In any case, such a successful space is an important anchor for building a network of agreeable public spaces.



- > The daily market
 - > The crowded benches at Praça da Alegria
- PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012



4- Space on the side of school, used as parking area

In the same way as space 1, this area is used as an unofficial parking lot and could be available for any other use. The space is located in a higher position than the street, connected to it by stairs, and provides a view of the school and the other public areas.

Like space 1, this area needs a total new use to become a public space. The area was listed due to its potential for becoming a good space due to its location between the Alegria Square/School area and the more elevated area of the Hospital.

The space would be ideal for binding the connection between outsiders and the Ilhas area. Terraces and restaurants would have the amazing view of the River, together with a view of São Víctor street.



> The locked square

> The riverfront space

PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012



5- Gated square, not being used

This square is currently inaccessible for the inhabitants. The space limited by a continuation of the school walls, and it is closed by gates. The ground is public, since the whole block is officially called Praça da Alegria (the name of the triangular Square opposite to this gated square). The square was judged here based on the existing infrastructure and possible use if the square would be opened for the public.

The gated pattern of the square provides safety, either against crime or traffic. Parents could take their kids to play and keep them in sight. The space has existing sitting spaces, besides paved and green surface and a playground. The aesthetics could be improved, but the space as it is could surely be used by the people. There is no clear reason that explains why the square is locked, and it had been like that for a long time, according to some interviewed inhabitants. None of them have ever seen the space opened. The square provides to the user a beautiful view of the riverside.



6- Riverfront space

The riverfront area has two different spaces in it: a higher one, more connected to the space of the city, and a lower one, more in contact with the river. They are connected to each other by stairs. This space (06) has each half in one level. The higher part feels like a large sidewalk, and would possibly work well together with the gated square (05) if the last would be open for users. This higher part is rather pleasant for walking, and connects the study area to the southern space, but only for pedestrians. The bridge makes a barrier for vehicles at that point, which is quite interesting and provides this area with quietness and makes it relatively silent.

Nevertheless, the lower part of this space (connected by the higher part by stairs) is not intensively used to its potential. The area has pleasant aesthetics, trees and shadow, sitting and walking space, but no social control. According to interviewed users, the 'Fontainhas' boulevard is a known area of crime, drug users and prostitution. The lower level of the square, together with the dense vegetation creates a level of privacy that invites this kind of activity.

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7- Riverside boulevard

The continuation of the space 06 formed by the riverfront area was separated from the previous one because it has a different spatial quality. The space is more open and therefore more visible from the street and from the façades of the dwellings. The increase of social control provides a bit more safety to this space.

Furthermore, the space is used as unofficial parking, decreasing the level of protection against traffic. The space would be very pleasant for sitting and walking, but the proximity with the unsafe corner (space 06) and the use as a parking area bring down the quality of this area. The public playground from the Municipality is located at the end of this boulevard. The playground is gated and opened from 9am to 5pm, always controlled by a responsible employee. This public playground already brings children to the riverside, and works as an anchor for the improvement of the riverfront. If safety increases, the users of the playground might start to play outside.



> The public playground (gated)

> The Riverfront boulevard

PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012



8- Old public laundry space

The common laundry is rarely used by the inhabitants, mainly due to lack of maintenance, but it was a success in the past. The location is terrific, at the end of São Vítor street, and has a breathtaking view of the River Douro. The space on the right of the common laundry, towards the 'Largo do Padre' square, is mostly abandoned. The space is now mostly graded with negative points, but it comes as a result of the abandonment. The potential for improvement is quite high.

This space has the special characteristic of being a buffer zone between the large scale and the medium scale of spatial privacy. The space is important for the collective space of the street and community building, but can also be used by inhabitants from the surroundings who do not live in Ilhas.



9- Largo do Padre Baltazar Guedes cemetery entrance used as parking space

This square has positive aspects concerning its scale, since it covers a large area, and enjoyment. The square is located at a high point on the riverside, and provides a beautiful view of the river. The school building on the square's edge is valuable, and the cemetery entrance brings a constant flow of people to the space.

Nevertheless, the square is used as a large parking area, providing no safety for pedestrians and no suitable places to sit or even stand with comfort. Most of the surface has no use, and allows the vehicles to move freely without a clear street pattern (especially at the end of São Vítor street, when arriving at the square, the vehicles move in a chaotic way).

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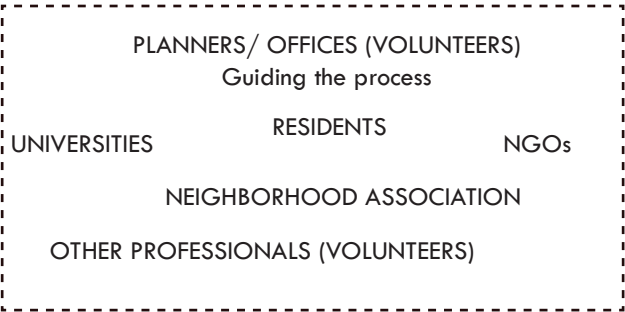
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Scenarios of implementation

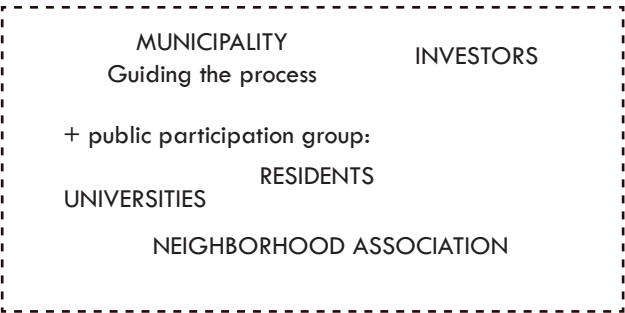
Creating good quality public spaces surrounding the study area is the proposed solution for the Scale Gap. The three guidelines recommend the improvement of the public spaces based on realistic criteria, and also the attention to users and existing surrounding activities.

But, how to apply such recommendations and improve public space in a self-made urbanism method? It is difficult to propose major changes in a self-improvement scenario, without great investments. Two scenarios of proposals will be shown next: the first one without investment, following the toolbox concept of self-improvement urbanism. The second scenario shows what could be done in a ‘what if’ situation where there would be support from the Municipality and/ or investors. The first scenario can always start the change, and may be followed by the second one.

Scenario 1 - Self-made: The project team



Scenario 2 - Investment: The project team



Large Scale

3.2. The Guidelines

Public Space: 1 – SPACE USED AS PARKING AREA



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
Main action: <i>Create a public space</i>	The space needs a total new use to become a public space. Such radical change is more difficult to be implemented in the self-made scenario, therefore the group should find interested private partners. The proximity to the University is a good attractive point.	The Municipality has the power to renew the square, and develop a better design improving the quality of the space. The first step would be forbid parking in the space.
<i>Add activity</i>	The project team (initiative group/stakeholders) could find someone interested in opening a restaurant/bar in the area (near University) and start the process of making a terrace from that parking space.	The buildings on the edges of the square (some of them abandoned) could be incentivized on becoming commercial, preferably restaurant/café with terrace.
<i>Add possibilities of staying</i>	The wall between the square and the sidewalk already provides secondary sitting. More movable chairs or benches could be added as far as the space becomes more used.	Benches and other urban furniture could be implemented (a fountain, for example, would avoid parking in the space even when the commercial spaces are closed, besides providing secondary sitting).

03
THE FILLING

Public Space: 2- SQUARE WITH GRASS (NO FUNCTION OR USE)



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest	
Main action: <i>Increase permanency on the space - add possibilities of staying</i>	The space is already green and rather pleasant, but it offers no staying possibilities. Only a few changes would make from this triangle more than a 'grass leftover' space.		
	<i>Add sitting possibilities</i>	Movable chairs could be located on the sidewalks around the grass, increasing the use of the space.	Fixed benches could be located on the edges of the square.
	<i>Add comfortable standing possibilities</i>	Small edges around the grass (low walls) provide edges where people enjoy standing against	

Large Scale - Scenarios of Implementation

Public Space: 3- ALEGRIA SQUARE

3.2. The Guidelines



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
Main action: <i>Improve the existing quality and boost even more the use of space</i>	The square is already strongly used, therefore improvements on the space would only enhance the existing qualities of the square as an important social public space	
<i>Increase sitting possibilities</i>	Movable chairs increase sitting possibilities and increase the interaction with the space.	The Municipality could implement improvements: a) increasing the amount of benches;
<i>Add covered space for climate protection</i>	-	b) creating a small covered space for community activities;
 <i>Add playing space for sports</i>	The community could add facilities for sports, such as movable soccer goal posts.	c) adding a simple sport field, with floor lines and posts.

03

THE FILLING

Public Space: 4- SPACE ON THE SIDE OF SCHOOL (USED AS PARKING AREA)



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
Main action: Create a public space	Like space 01, this area needs a total new use to become a public space, The space would be ideal for binding the connection between outsiders and the Ilhas area. Terraces and restaurants would have the amazing view of the River, together with a view of São Víctor street.	The Municipality has the power to renew the square, and develop a better design improving the quality of the space. The first step would be forbid, or at least limit, parking in the space.
<i>Add activity</i>	Following the guidelines for Space 01, the project team (initiative group/stakeholders) could find someone interested in opening a restaurant/bar in the area and start the process of making a terrace from that parking space.	The buildings on the edges of the square could be incentivized on becoming commercial, preferably restaurant/café with terrace.
<i>Add possibilities of staying</i>	After an activity is settled, staying possibilities attract other users. Once more, movable chairs are the only option of adding sitting space in the self-made scenario.	Benches and other urban furniture could be implemented. The sitting should be oriented towards the school side, making use of the view of the street/river.

Large Scale - Scenarios of Implementation

Public Space: 5- GATED SQUARE (NOT BEING USED)

3.2. The Guidelines



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
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Main action:
Make the space available and suitable for users

The square have great location and potential, but it has been locked for a long time.

Open the square and make accessible for public

The inhabitants association could make an official request to open the square through a collective petition.

The Municipality has the power to open the square, and make use of the existing facilities.

Make the square suitable for use, through maintenance of the existing facilities.

The inhabitants together, organized in a group, could clean up the square in a planned collective activity. Cut the grass, clean the floor, paint the walls, and another simple improvements can be made by the community.

If the Municipality takes the initiative of opening the square, cleaning and restoring the facilities could also be a public responsibility. The program of the space should not be fixed, but follow the needs of the users as they appear.

03

THE FILLING

Public Space:

6- RIVERFRONT SPACE



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
Main action: Enhance use and safety	Lack of safety is the main problem of this space, a very pitiful situation since the area has ready infrastructure, such as benches and pavement, and a very pleasant location along the river.	
<i>Increase safety against crime</i>	More social control can increase security. The community can shift some of the activities (like the market or community parties) to the area, eventually. More eventual use in the space might help increasing the trust of the residents on the space, increasing the daily use and consequently reducing unsafety.	Increase security through reinforcing police patrols.
<i>Add eventual uses to the area</i>	The community could add facilities for sports, such as movable soccer goal posts. Universities and schools could also use the space for events.	City activities (with Municipal organization) and events could take place at this area.

Large Scale - Scenarios of Implementation

Public Space: 7- RIVERSIDE BOULEVARD

3.2. The Guidelines



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
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Main action:
Enhance use and safety

In the same way as the previous space, lack of safety is the main problem of this space. But in this case the traffic safety is the main problem, since users avoid the space used as parking lot, and the cars park there because no one is using the space.

Diminish/ forbid vehicle access to the riverside sidewalk.

If all community is aware of the objective, social control can help against vehicle entrance. Small barriers (like signs) can also be located on the sidewalk and prevent vehicle access.

Small bars blocking the way can be implemented in the sidewalk (exactly like the existing ones further on the same street on Space 06 - see Figure)



> TRAFFIC SIGN IMAGE FROM
WWW.GELDERLANDER.NL
> PHOTO FROM MAY/2012

03

THE FILLING

Public Space:

8- OLD PUBLIC LAUNDRY SPACE



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
Main action: <i>Make the space once more suitable for users</i>	The common laundry had been a success in the past, and plays an important role binding the community, both internally and externally, with the surrounding inhabitants. The space just needs maintenance to come back to the living scene.	
<i>Maintenance of existing facilities.</i>	The residents themselves could clean and improve the laundry space in a planned collective activity.	The Municipality could invest on the laundry space, since it is located on public ground, and finance the revitalization of the laundry room and the area.
<i>Renovation of laundry room, include washing machines and more modern facilities.</i>	The organized group could also apply for financial help in NGOs or private investors, to finance the reform of the laundry space. The residents should then be responsible for management of the room (opening hours, etc).	They would then be responsible for the room, as it already happens on the public playground of the riverfront.

Large Scale - Scenarios of Implementation

3.2. The Guidelines

Public Space

9- LARGO DO PADRE SQUARE

(CEMETERY ENTRANCE, USED AS PARKING SPACE)



Actions based on Guidelines	Scenario 1 self-improvement	Scenario 2 investment and public interest
Main action: Redefine the space	This square needs full redefinition of its configuration, including a more compact space for vehicles and parking. Therefore, self-improvement is hardly possible.	
<i>Redefine vehicle space – diminish area for traffic and make parking space more compact (keep it near cemetery entrance)</i>	-	The Municipality has the power to renew the square, and develop a better design improving the quality of the space (with strong public participation). The program of the space should not be fixed, but follow the needs of the users as they appear.
<i>Redesign square space:</i> - add sitting space - make use of River view	-	
<i>Consider the school as part of square – the space in front of school can be suitable for activities (like parties) that blend school and community.</i>	-	

The Process - Priority

The improvement of several public spaces is surely not a short term process. Even with minor investments, both scenarios need time to plan and implement the changes. In the self-made scenario, the creation of the project team and gathering of the community is already a challenge in itself. Discussion of changes and their implementation would be the second main step. Furthermore, in the investment scenario, all political and bureaucratic discussions are surely very time consuming.

Therefore a priority list is an important tool within the process. Make visible changes from the beginning and creating fast positive results only supports the longer term process and builds up public acceptance. The priority list shows the degree of urgency of intervention of each public space, which defines in which planning order they should be improved. The criteria for dividing the priority were:

- *The network formed by the public spaces:* the high priority spaces form already a network of spaces surrounding the urban blocks of São Vítor street. Spaces 1 and 2, for example, are located outside this network and therefore can have their improvement in a later time. The spaces located closer to the Ilhas, when improved, allow an immediate possibilities of social interaction between Ilhas and outside inhabitants, from the surroundings.

- *Gathering different types of users:* as shown on the previous guideline, some of the public spaces gather more types of user pattern than others. They are located within existing flows of users, supporting the intervention.

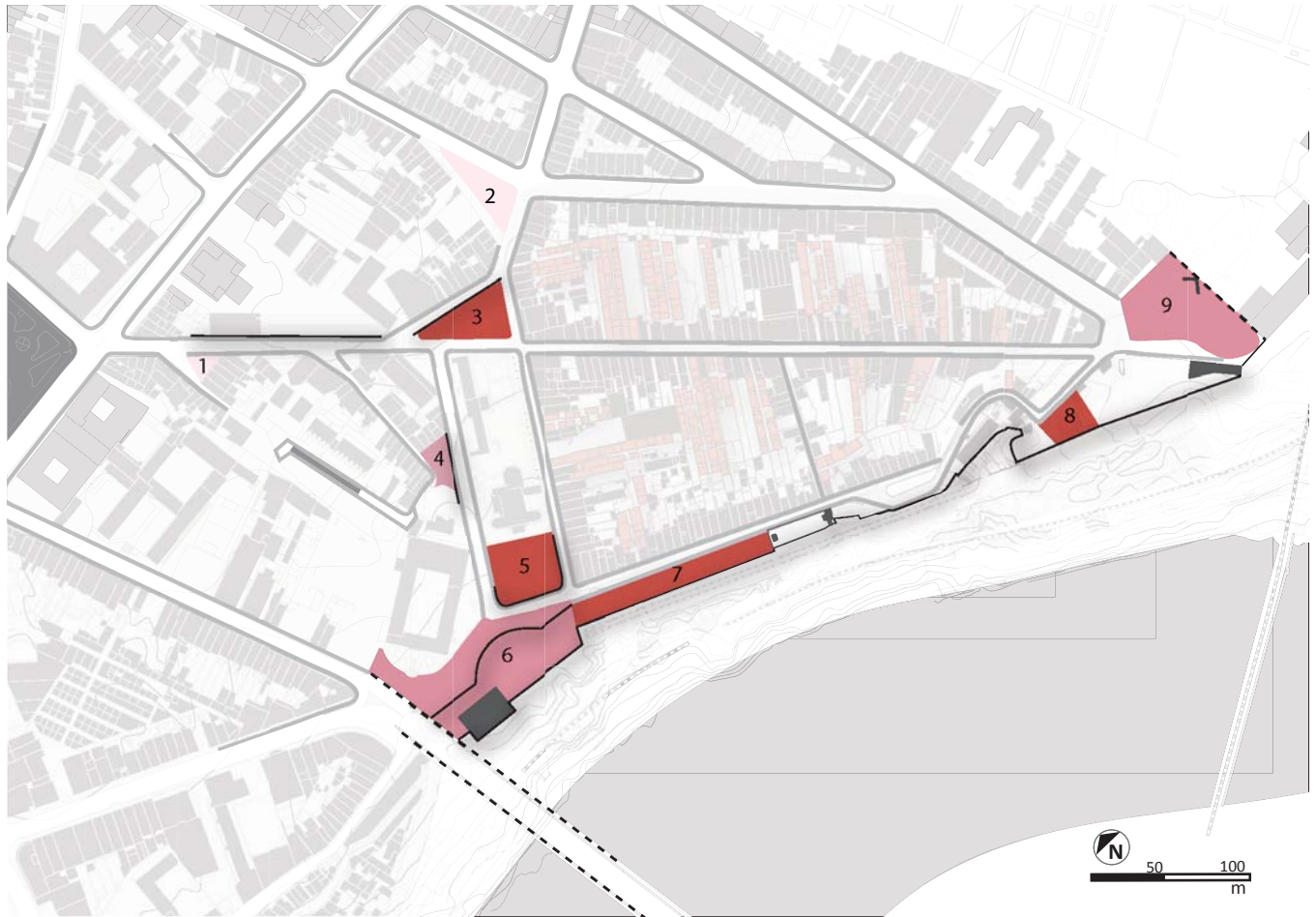
- *The difficulty of intervention:* spaces where the intervention is less complex and could be intensely developed within the Scenario of self-improvement come first in the priority list.

The 'Largo do Padre' square has an important weight in the final network of spaces, but its improvement demands investment. Therefore this space comes lower in the priority list when compared to the gated square (05) or the common laundry room (08), which needs less investment and could be deeply improved only by efforts of the community.

The network of spaces defines the direction in which the Ilhas environment will build a stronger relationship with the surrounding space. The strongest possibility of reciprocity takes place in the southeast direction, towards the riverside, since the majority of existing public spaces is located towards that direction. The relationship between the study area and the northern side is weaker. The fact can be considered a positive aspect, since the riverside has a strong attractiveness for inhabitants in general, and will provide better chances for social relationships between different social classes.

The Process - Phasing

Even though there is only one priority list for the large scale planning for public spaces, the two different scenarios of intervention – Self-Improvement of Investment – have different capabilities and limitations. The self-improvement scenario has less tools and less capabilities, unsurprisingly, when compared to a scenario of traditional planning and investment. The improvements of the self-made scenario are more simple to be applied, and therefore build a faster process at the end. The phasing for both scenarios is, as a result, different, and it can be seen on the phasing maps (on the next pages, after the priority map).



Public space priority list

- Level 1 . First phase*
- Level 2 . Second phase*
- Level 3 . Third phase*

- Sidewalks*
- Freixo Bridge*
- Cemetery entrance*

THE FILLING

Scenario 1 - Self-improvement

Phase 1

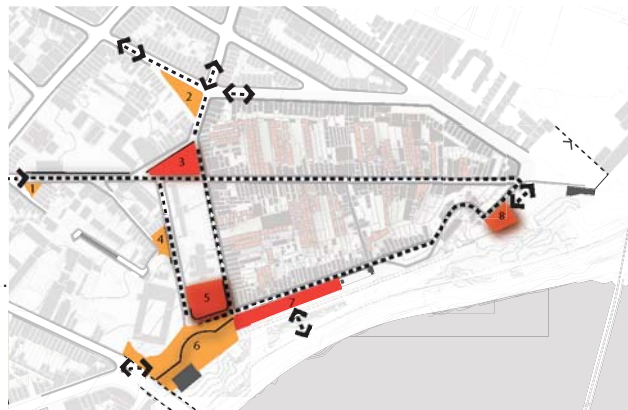
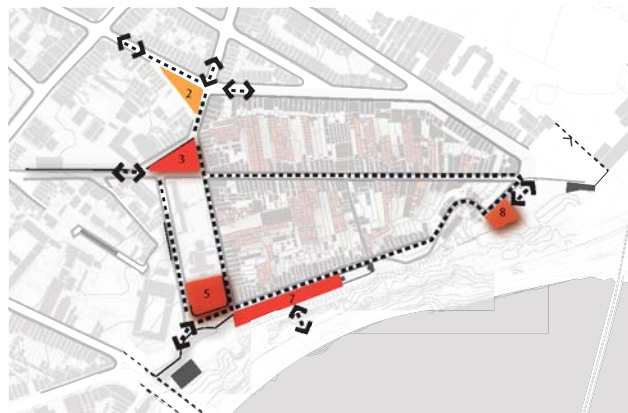
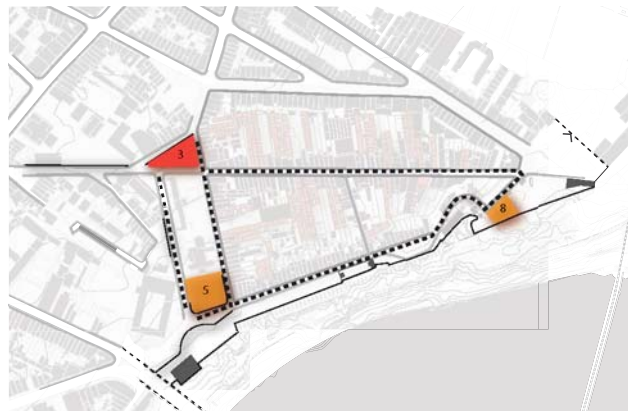
The improvement should begin with the easier interventions. The movable chairs and sport tools at Praça da Alegria, for example, would make visual changes and show results from the moment they are installed. These materials can be donated by NGOs, companies, or it can be bought by the community. A petition signed by all residents (who are involved and of course, who agree with the process) requesting the opening of the Gated Square should take place at the beginning, since such processes might take a long time to finish. A working group can be gathered for cleaning and restoring the common laundry room. Just bringing some activity to the space might already bring positive results concerning the public space usage.

Phase 2

In the second phase, the Gated square and Laundry room are more settled, and the process is on its way. The riverfront boulevard should receive the protection against traffic and parking, and more activities should take place there (maybe the daily market, or activities for children from the surrounding schools). If the movable chairs have been successful so far, at Praça da Alegria, they can be implemented in the Grass Square and also in the Riverfront boulevard.

Phase 3

During this phase, the project group and the community are more settled, and results are visible (in a positive scenario). If not, the project group should evaluate the methods, the guidelines, and discuss it with the community. The Riverfront space can be more used, and larger events could take place on that space. The Ilhas have a large party in June (São João) which usually takes place inside the school at Praça da Alegria. It could take place at the Riverfront, and bring outside people to the area for recreational/events purposes. Furthermore, the two squares used as parking lots can be improved at this final stage.



Large Scale - Phasing

Scenario 2 - Investment

Phase 1

The Investment scenario includes a new design for the 'Largo do Padre' Square. The planning process should start at the beginning, including public participation and involvement. The laundry room improvement can also have a start, at least improving the actual conditions of the space. Extra facilities and machines could be added later on the process.

Furthermore, the Gated square can be opened and get ready to use with only minor improvements. The safety issue on the riverfront space can start to be solved with an increase of police patrols in the area.

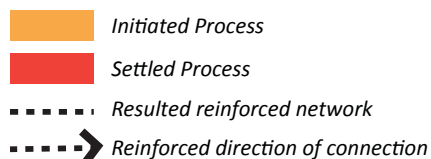
Phase 2

The spaces if phase 1 continue to be settled. The Riverfront boulevard can have the traffic barriers implemented, together with more sitting spaces. Praça da Alegria and the Grass Square can also received the needed minor improvements. The main activity of this phase is the development of the major interventions at Largo do Padre square.

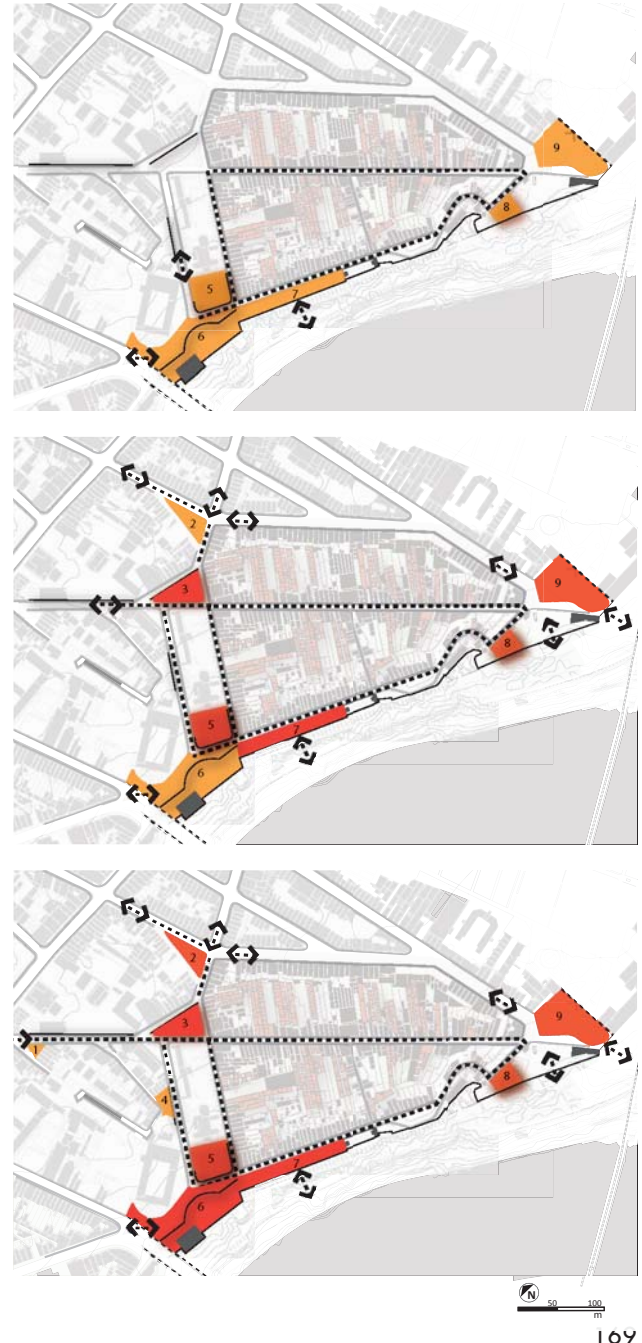
Phase 3

The small parking lot squares can be improved next, completing the network of public spaces. During the process, evaluations should be done, together with the community, in order to avoid possible mistakes to be carried on from phase to phase.

A real timeframe, defined in years, is hard to be defined for both scenarios, since all process depends on the participation of the public.



3.2. The Guidelines



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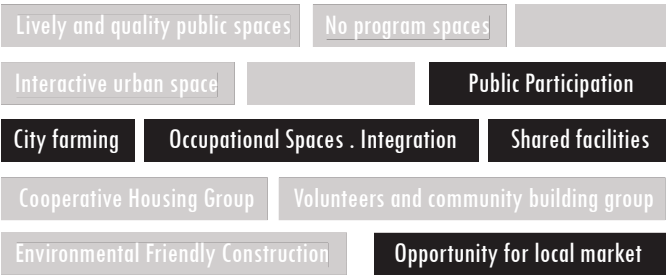
THE FILLING

3.2.2. Medium scale – Collective space x Social Gap

The objective of the medium scale is to strength the Ilhas' community, and as a result fill up the Social Gap. All inhabitants have the street as a meeting point, and the street is the space where the main 'São Vítor' community assemble itself. The collective space of the street provides room that could be used for the community incentives and connection between the older and younger generations.

As explained in previous chapters, the residents have strong impressions related to the changes suffered by the collective space through time. *“When referring to the social environment, the residents emphasize the community environment of the past and the changes on this feeling by the new modern inhabitants”* (RODRIGUES, 2002, P. 170). In fact, there are major social changes going on nowadays. As it could be seen on the demographic data and interviews in the previous chapters, there is a new wave of inhabitants arriving at the Ilhas.

As a result of the new patterns of inhabitants, the dynamics of the collective space have changed. For the elderly, the nostalgic memories of the time when the corridor was full of life and packed with children creates for them the meaning of real community.

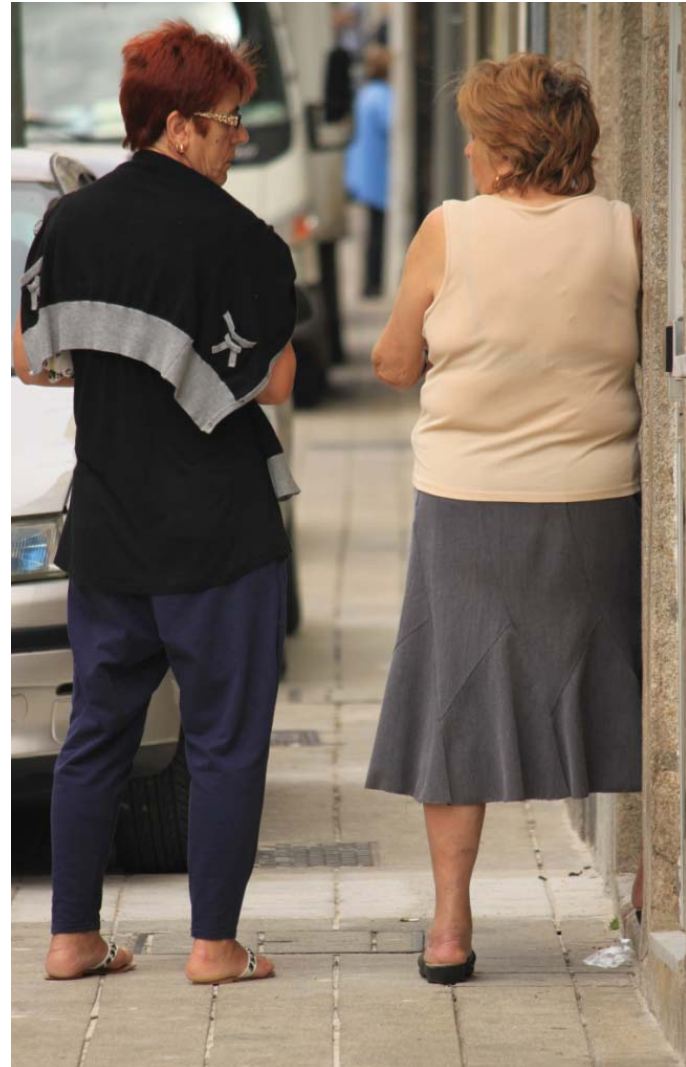


Today, the dynamics of use of the space have a different pattern, without all women and children staying home all day. The daily dynamics of the space have a slower pattern during the day, when the elderly and some housewives make use of the space. The dynamics achieve a more active pattern at the end of the afternoon, and also during lunch time at midday (RODRIGUES, 2002. PAGE 173).

How to incentivize encounters between people with different dynamics and schedules? One great incentive might be make them benefit from using common space and therefore meeting others. Since their dwelling space is so small, extra facilities could be offered as an extension of their houses, just as the corridor space works. For example, if laundry space or outdoor gardens are missing in their houses, it could be offered in a collective area, as it happens in middle class condos worldwide. The area have one old common laundry space (for hand wash), which is still used by the residents despite the lack of maintenance.

The concept just needs innovation, and needs to adapt to the contemporary needs of the population. The laundry room is also part of the large scale plan of connection to the outside city. This space is an important buffer zone between the community/ collective space and the public space, providing meeting opportunities for the community itself but also social encounters with surrounding neighbors.

3.2. The Guidelines



- < THE LAUNDRY ROOM, SEEN FROM THE STREET
- < THE VIEW FROM THE LAUNDRY AREA
- > CHATTING ON THE STREET (PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012)

03

THE FILLING

The collective space

The collective space is formed by the street space, which is public whilst providing a certain privacy to the street residents. The community of the whole street meets at this scale of space, including Ilhas inhabitants and also the inhabitants of the other dwellings.

The small alley connecting São Vítor street to the riverside (image on the left) is only suitable for pedestrian use, and form an extension of the street space but with an extra hint of privacy. The alley also provides a connectivity with the riverside that can be very useful for creating a network of community spaces.

In the map, the main collective spaces (main street and alley) are depicted in dark orange. The side streets and the riverside space are also part of the collective space, but already have a stronger connection with the larger scale formed by the public space.

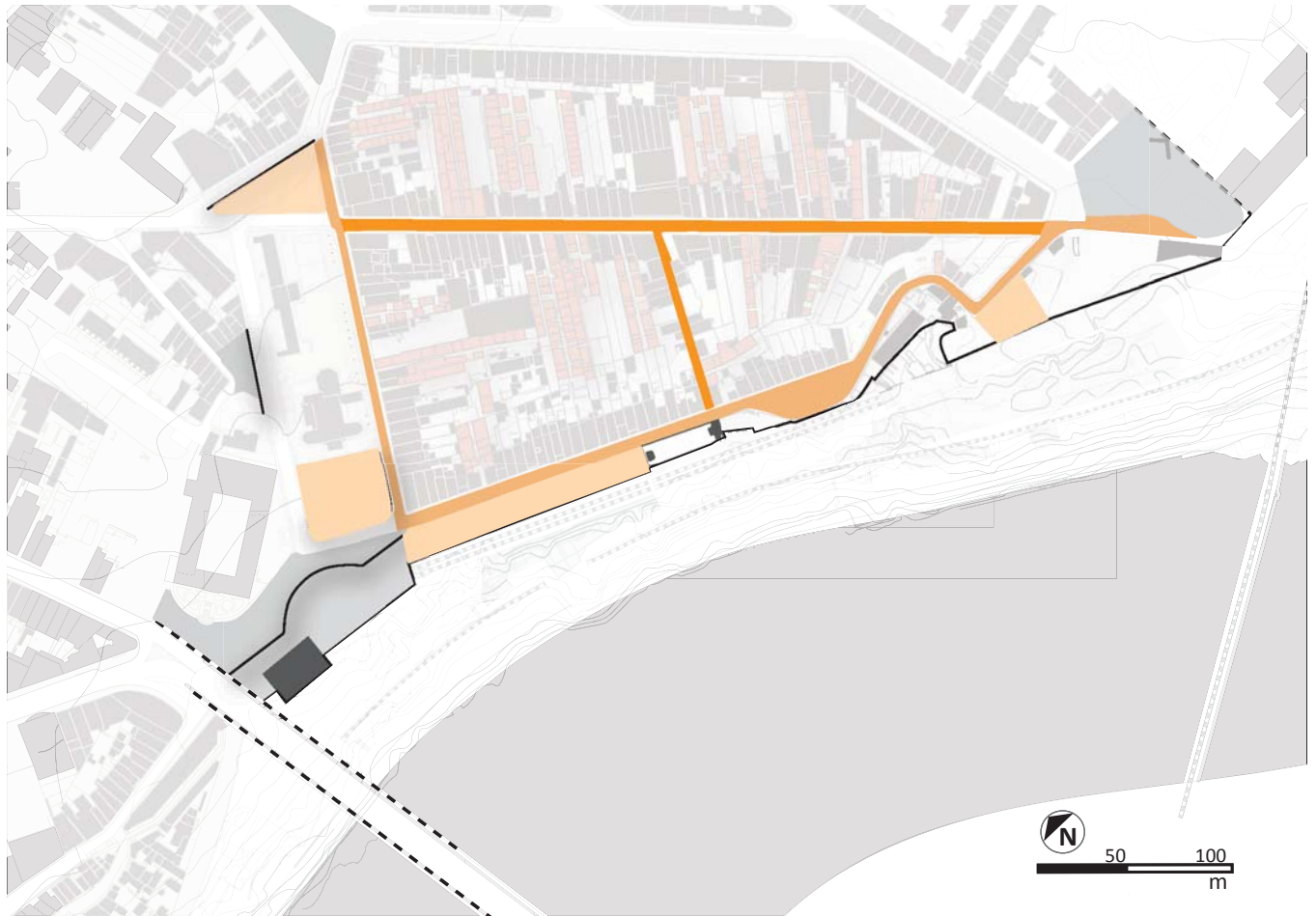
Therefore, these spaces are more porous, and share their character between both scales. The lighter spaces on the map (laundry room and two squares) are real buffer zones between public and collective spaces. They are used by both groups, insiders and outsiders, providing great social interaction opportunities. The objective of the map is to show that the collective space is not defined by exact boundaries, but has a porosity character that merges it smoothly with the outside.



< THE ALLEY SEEN FROM SÃO VÍTOR STREET

> THE ALLEY SEEN FROM THE RIVERSIDE

(PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012)



The collective Space

- Collective space - Street*
- Collective space - surrounding sidewalk*
- Smooth boundary*
- Public x Collective space*
- Public Space*
- Freixo Bridge*
- Cemetery entrance*

THE FILLING

Guideline 1 – Use the existing available space

The main proposal for emphasizing the community strength is to implement common facilities in the collective space. The first guideline defines the main question that comes from such proposal: but where can these facilities be implemented?

No buildings should be demolished in order to open space for intervention. This method would be too forceful, besides creating larger costs. The interventions should be smooth, naturally integrated to the daily life of the residents, so they can see them as positive improvements in their daily life and not a harsh transformation on their living space.

a) Building space

It is quite complex to identify available built up space, since the properties are privately owned and therefore not accessible, even when unoccupied. Nevertheless, the process can start with an inventory of the vacant spaces and also the ones with the highest probability of becoming vacant (highly degraded ones). The most degraded buildings could be partially used for common facilities. Through an agreement between owner and community, the building could be restored (by the community) and one common room could be implemented on the ground floor, for example.



The map above shows the degree of building quality in the study area. It is quite visible that the buildings of São Victor street are in worse conditions than the buildings of the surrounding street. Especially the street above São Victor has a rather conserved built up area.

The buildings of São Victor street have a clear pattern of degradation that increases towards the riverside. Especially the end of the street, and the curve towards the laundry space is mostly degraded and abandoned. The buildings marked in darker red are the most degraded ones, and the buildings that are degraded and vacant have the highest potential for receiving new uses in the common facilities plan.

Medium Scale

b) Open space

Concerning open space, the end of the street is the main location where space is found available. The laundry room area is located on public ground and belongs to the Municipality of Porto. It is a positive aspect, since public ground is basically public space, and it would be an easier process for the community to make use of that area, when comparing to a process of negotiation with a private land owner.

Through a petition, and presenting a project to the authorities, the community could acquire the right of using that piece of land for a city farm, for example. Furthermore, the surrounding space of the laundry room is mostly abandoned, and a large cluster of common spaces can be located at the end of the street.

Another interesting available space is located in the middle of the alley between the Street and the riverfront. The space is identified by the Municipality (SRU, 2010. UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENT) as available. It is not clear if the space is public or private ground, but the area is open and empty, among rather degraded buildings (see map on next page).



03 THE FILLING

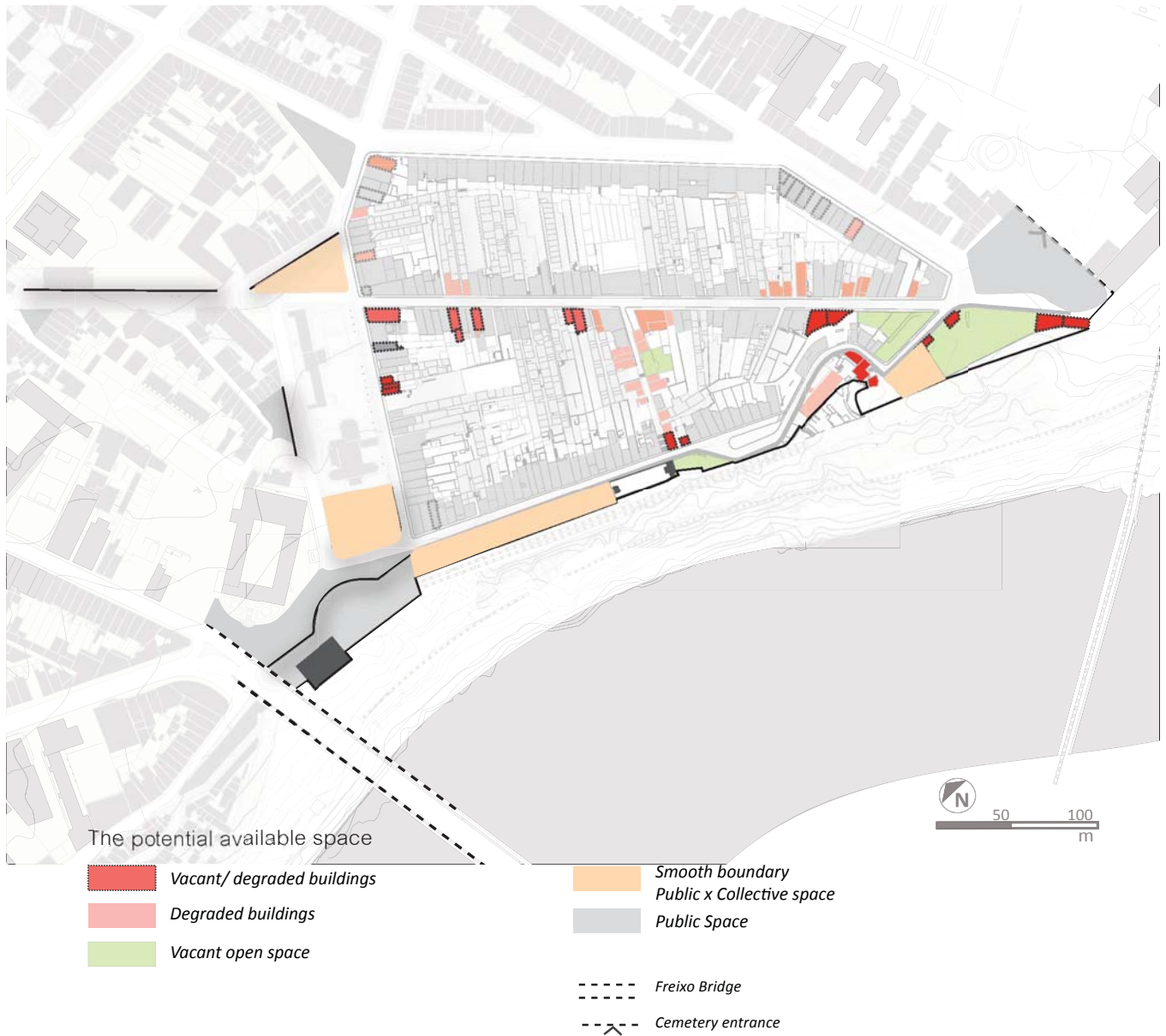


The existing commercial facilities on the street already work as community binders. People are constantly standing in front of the small market, the restaurant or the café of the street. The (potentially) available buildings located near these spaces have an outstanding potential for receiving a common meeting room and other indoors common facilities. The existing community routine of meeting on that area anchors the new spaces and enhances chances of success.

The first part of the street is already a meeting location. More meeting opportunities should be implemented in the alley and towards the riverside, in order to balance the social encounters along all collective space. If the meeting opportunities are spread all over the street, all inhabitants will feel closer to the collective space. Furthermore, the available space at the end of the street has the advantage of having an extra level of 'urban privacy' for the community. The area of the old laundry area is mostly used only by residents of the area.



< Empty space and abandoned plots. PHOTOS FROM MAY/2012



THE FILLING

Guideline 2 – Shared facilities: extending dwellings and binding the community

The list of possible shared facilities for the community is a simple example of what could be implemented in the collective space. The real needs of the community would define a real list, that would only exist after discussions among the inhabitants.

The opinion of some residents was asked during some of the interviews. The idea of a shared cultivating area or space to grow chicken had positive reactions. People especially enjoyed the fact of producing their own vegetables and eggs and also spending an enjoyable time outside. Even the social worker from the Municipality, Mrs. Soares, said that shared facilities could be a good idea. She was only not sure about the Municipal interest on implementing and maintaining such a space (INTERVIEWED IN MAY/2012).



Possible facilities:

Outdoors (using available open space)

Community farm

Small areas can be divided among the interested residents, for cultivating fruits and vegetables. Another area can receive facilities for growing chicken, in a further moment.

Depending on the interest, the plots can be divided per dwelling/family or per Ilha. In the last case, the group of the Ilha itself would be responsible for organizing the division of work, space and production.

In a scenario where all Ilhas are interested on the cultivating space, the possibility of using some of the Riverside cliff area – beyond the railway - can be analyzed and discussed with the authorities. Professionals and students from the field could be volunteers and help the community with the first steps of the cultivating process. The initial material could be gathered by donations.

The city farming examples of the toolbox could be a basis for the beginning of the process.

< Community farm in São Paulo, Brazil. The plot on the image has a similar pattern to a former 'Ilha'. Empty plots in São Víctor could receive farming as a temporary use. (GOVERNO DE SÃO PAULO, 2009)

Medium Scale

3.2. The Guidelines

Sports facilities (merging with public space scale)

Temporary sports activities can take place at the public space, but organized by the community initiative. Such events are also part of the objectives of the large scale plan.

Laundry room

a. Rehabilitation of existing one

The existing facility can surely be rehabilitated and made once more suitable to use. The space is still being used by some of the residents, but is a expressively lower intensity than in the past. The residents themselves can tell what have changed, and how the space could be useful again.

b. New laundry room with machines

Maybe the addition of machinery would modernize the laundry space. But this improvement would bring concerns such as maintenance and security. Therefore new machines could be implemented in another location, indoors.



Possible facilities:

Indoors (using degraded building space):

Multifunctional room

This facility would be a room that could be used for community meetings, workshops, classes, movie sessions, and an uncountable amount of possible uses.

Library

A small community library could be created in connection with University and educational entities. It could be focused on the children, at first. Parents would bring them to the library, and then their interest for the place would possibly grow. Books can be gathered in campaigns for donations, and the space can be maintained by volunteers from the educational field.

Profession-school (in connection with University/ NGOs)

Following the concept of the library, one more space could be devoted to teaching skills to the unemployed residents of the area. This could integrated into a larger social project, or to the University. It could be interesting for University students to teach the community, like in an internship experience. Such projects already exist Worldwide, guided by specialized NGOs.

Depending on the success of the first implemented facilities, many other ideas could appear: a computer room, a children's day care and even a common large kitchen. All depends on the interest of the people themselves.

< Community laundry room in Santos, Brazil. (A TRIBUNA, EDITION FROM MARCH 18TH 2010)

Possible facilities:

A commercial Ilha

Because many of the residents in Ilhas are independent workers, a new concept could be implemented on the street: a commercial Ilha. There are already residents that make use of another Ilha dwelling as a working space. Mrs. Filomena and her husband have their typography business in an Ilha apart from the one they live, and another examples can be seen on the street (like the man and his garage on the image).

A new Ilha with space for commercial activities of the residents themselves might give to more of them space and opportunity for working, what is a positive aspects among such high levels of unemployment. This idea would need sponsorship and support from outsiders, and connected to a larger social project of teaching professions and entrepreneurship to the inhabitants.

The ideal location for a commercial Ilha would be facing the outer limits of the urban block, and therefore creating a stronger connection to the outside scale. The Ilha would attract outsiders and improve the relationship with the surroundings.

The Process - Phasing

The list shows the suggested common facilities in order of implementation costs and complexity, for both Scenarios. The first ones have easier/faster implementation, and would bring more immediate results. After the first community facilities are successfully implemented, the group gets stronger and the process can continue further on to the indoor facilities. The list of possible shared facilities can only grow afterwards.

Demand

An important calculation to keep in mind during the process is the demand for use of the facilities. There is a total of 1.388 people living in the depicted study area. From this people, 730 are residents of Ilhas (estimated calculation*).

At first, the facilities should be designated for the Ilhas residents, since their dwellings are far smaller and they are the ones with a need for extra outdoor space. Depending on the success of the project, the latest facilities of the list, such as the library and the study room, could be also available for the other residents, taking the community binding incentives to its maximum level.

Not all spaces can be used by everyone at the same time. The common laundry and rooms, if the demand of interested people is too high, could work within a timeframe schedule. The elderly could have preference during the morning, and the working people in the evening, for example.

* The calculation was based on the average residents per Ilha dwelling (2,6 people/dwelling) and an estimation of number of Ilhas' dwellings on the study area.

Medium Scale

Scenario 1 . Self-improvement

1. Community farm - cultivating

Place to start

The first place to start implementing the community farm is on the plot where the old laundry space is located. Since the plot is Municipality ground, it would be less difficult to obtain authorization (maybe through a petition) to make use of the space. The surrounding plots, which are privately owned, could be used in a second moment, after negotiations with the owners. The plots are abandoned, and the farming could be a temporary use for them.

City faming – how to

The connection with University and professionals at this point would be important, in order to instruct the community about farming techniques. Material can be gathered by donations, or even from the people themselves.

Growth

If successful, farming can expand to growing chicken (for use of eggs, since they are very popular in the Portuguese cuisine).

2. Laundry room

The process for laundry room rehabilitation was already mentioned on large scale plan.

This area is a buffer zone between large and medium scales, since it is available for use for the whole area.

3. Common Multifunctional room and other indoor facilities

The project team will need a room to meet and work together during the whole process, and this room can be converted into multifunctional room. One of the empty properties could be temporarily used, or one room from one of the houses could be used at first.

3.2. The Guidelines

Scenario 2 . Investment

1. Community farm - cultivating

Larger project - faster implementation

In an investment/support scenario, all riverside empty space can be converted into a larger city farming area at once, with orientation of professionals and community participation. The empty land around the laundry room could be purchased and integrated to the whole area.

2. Laundry room

The process for laundry room rehabilitation was already mentioned on large scale plan.

This area is a buffer zone between large and medium scales, since it is available for use for the whole area.

3. Common Multifunctional room and other indoor facilities

A good multifunctional room needs some investment to become attractive. If some sponsorship is arranged, one of the empty houses of the street could become a combination of all indoor facilities.



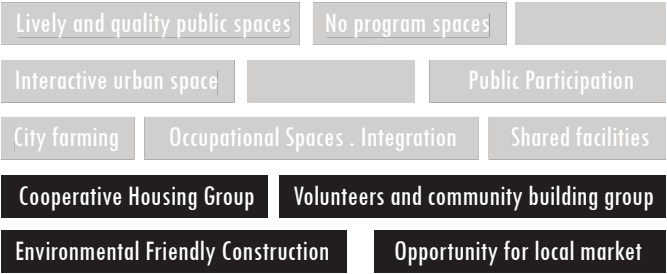
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THE FILLING

3.2.3. Small scale – Communal space x Economical Gap

The communal space of the corridor is where the community starts to be built. The corridor represents the very basis of the community strength from the Ilhas, and therefore is a delicate and important type of space. Nevertheless, within the corridor the lack of living quality of some dwellings becomes visible, especially on the shared toilets that can still be found, together with infrastructure that definitely needs rehabilitation. Thus, the communal and the dwelling space are the ones that need the largest infrastructure investment.

Because all Ilhas are owned by different landlords, a whole project of rehabilitation would be quite a challenge. Convince all owners at once and gather investment budget for so many dwellings is nearly impossible, especially when the approach is based on self-improvement types of solutions. Therefore, the Ilhas could be improved one by one, corridor by corridor. Deal with the Ilhas individually would make the process easier to start, but longer in time. Nevertheless, it might be that a single start in one Ilha would make the first results already visible, and thus incentivize another Ilhas to join the process and start up their rehabilitation as well.



3.2. The Guidelines

Guideline 1 – Cooperative construction group

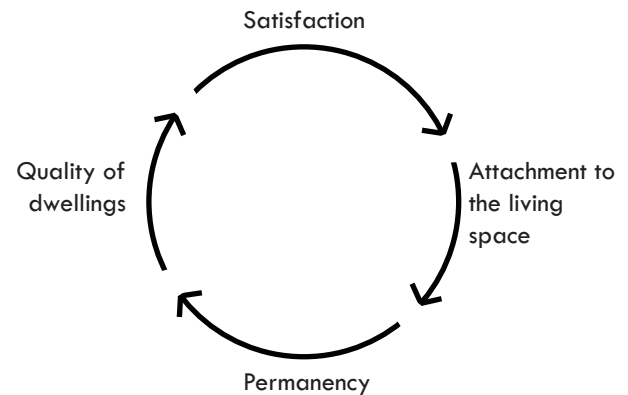
Mrs. Ineke Hulshof, from the office Hulshof Architecten, has several examples of successfully realized residential buildings developed under the concept of cooperative construction. During an interview in June 2012, Mrs. Hulshof was quite optimistic when asked about a possibility of cooperative building in the scenario of the Ilhas. *“I believe that the people can do it themselves. There is always someone that knows how to build or knows how to fix a roof or a toilet, and they can teach each other. If well organized, they can surely do it”.*

The situation of the Ilhas is, nevertheless, quite different than the ‘market approach’ of the traditional cooperative construction method applied by Mrs. Hulshof. In the market case, the future residents have a budget for investment, which is lower than the average market price but is still far more money than what an Ilha’s resident would be able to invest. Furthermore, one of the objectives of the market approach is the value increase of the land and the area, fact that is not welcome in São Victor. Speculation should actually be avoided, since the prices should stay low and suitable to the current residents financial capabilities.

But Mrs. Hulshof believed that, with the suitable adaptations, the concept could surely be applied in the Ilhas. One important point to think at the beginning of the process is to avoid undesired speculation: *“Contracts should be made at the beginning, with the intention of avoiding future problems concerning rental prices and land ownership”* (HULSHOF, 2012). The landlords should legally agree on not rising the rental prices for the residents, and if the plot is sold, the Ilha’s dwellings should be able to stay as they are. New rental contracts should also not offensively increase in price.

The advantage for the landlord is the improvement of his property without any effort or investment coming from his side. The residents would work by themselves, as they have been doing for generations of small self-improvement, but this time in a greater scale. The advantage for the inhabitants is the possibility of improving their dwellings and rising their living quality standards. And finally, the great advantage is for the community, which would surely have a boost of integration after such process.

The main complaint from unsatisfied residents in Ilhas is related to the low quality of their dwellings. If the quality is improved, the satisfaction levels rises, the attachment to the space gets stronger and consequently the level of residents permanency in the area also grows. It is a cycle of positive consequences.





< The 'Gemeindebau', community building in Vienna, 1922. After the WWI, more than 60.000 dwellings were built by the community, with very low costs. (NOVY AND FORSTER, 1985, p. 8)

< (IBID., p. 62)

Guideline 2 – Working group – what is your skill?

The groups of cooperative construction have a defined investment budget, which defines the possibilities of the project. But the word budget is practically non-existent in the situation of the Ilhas. The residents live in simple conditions, and if some of them would be able to invest, it would not be enough. The landlords depend on the rent of dwellings to live, in some cases, and would also not be able to make major investments in reforms.

The budget invested by the residents should not be financial. They can invest their skills, experience and work. As Mrs. Huslhof said: *“it is important to know what they can do by themselves. If someone ever built a toilet by himself, he knows how to make toilets and he can either make for others or teach the skill”*.

As mentioned on Chapter 1, one of the main demographic groups living in the centre of Porto, including the Ilhas, *“is formed by unemployed adults, not yet part of the elderly, but old enough to have difficulties finding a job. This part of society is excluded, due to the lack of social diversity in several parts of the centre”* (PEREIRA, 2005, p. 2). In a society immersed in a deep crisis, the economy of unemployment should give value to investments that go beyond money.

These unemployed men had a job once, and many of them worked with construction, in industries, or in a handicraft profession. An opportunity for them to improve their dwellings and have again an occupation, investing their time on their community, might be quite welcome. It is also an opportunity for the local market to promote their work among the others.

Such a cooperative way of sharing skills already exists in the daily life of the Ilhas. The community already experiences collective improvements of the common space, or the improvement of dwellings through group work (RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 171). Therefore, implementing an improvement project for the dwellings would be a more organized way of applying practices that are already familiar to the inhabitants.

“LAST WEEK OUR GATE LOCK WAS BROKEN. MY HUSBAND BOUGHT A NEW ONE AND INSTALLED IT, WE SHARED THE COSTS THROUGH ALL HOUSES AND ALL OF US HAVE A KEY”.

“THE BATHROOMS OF THE AREA, THE MAJORITY OF THEM WAS MADE BY MY HUSBAND. AND AFTERWARDS, THE PEOPLE CAME AND HELPED HIM WITH OTHER THINGS, BRINGING CEMENT, MATERIALS, OR ONLY GIVING US A HAND FOR SOMETHING”.

(INTERVIEWS WITH INHABITANTS OF ILHAS, CITED IN RODRIGUES, 2002, p. 171)



Guideline 3 – Connect to outside

Such a self-help process of housing improvement gives to the people a feeling of 'making the difference' without waiting for public help. "The self-help housing approach has received praise from some for promoting independence and help-sufficiency and reducing dependence on the state" (CURLEY, 2012, p. 292). Nevertheless, the group needs assistance from outside partners, either for funding, working force and knowledge.

There are examples of organizations developing the process of 'self-help' housing, and the trend is growing. As explained by Curley (2012, p. 292), self-help organization appeared *"in response to the housing needs of lower-income families who are not able to secure their own homes through conventional methods,(...) and employ alternative funding and building schemes"*. The funding for such projects might come from different sources, from big sponsors to small companies. Materials can come from donations, or can even be recycled. According to Mrs. Hulshof (INTERVIEW FROM JUNE/2012), the construction materials can come from demolished buildings. Reutilization is cheap, besides being sustainable.

The connection between University and community, mentioned in the toolbox, could involve construction techniques, innovation using recycled materials and self-building. For the students, applying knowledge on reality is also a very good learning opportunity. The Ithas can be a laboratory for ideas and originality. Additionally, NGOs that organize volunteers for social housing construction are an example concerning the process of gathering groups of volunteers to help the residents on building their houses.

External help for construction might be indeed a need, since many of the residents are part of the elderly and therefore no longer suitable for heavy work.

The connection with outside knowledge can also concern sustainable construction, following the example of the UN program for sustainability and social housing. Green technologies can be applied if companies become interested on participating on the project, maybe donating samples of products. The University can also implement experimental technologies and evaluate results of new innovative techniques for sustainability.

This small scale guideline meets the medium scale guideline within the shared community room proposal. The skills of community and supporters (students, NGOs) can be shared in common facilities on the street.



> Students and other volunteers working on construction of dwellings in Latin American slums (TECHO.ORG, 2012)

The Process

Scenarios of Implementation

Scenario 1 - Self-improvement

The implementation of such a public participative process is something complex to explain in a theoretical way, without taking real action. Each community would react in a different form, and the obstacles would appear slowly during the process. However, the word of someone with experience in similar situations already gives a good 'reality check' on the proposal. The step by step approach for implementing a cooperative housing group project was explained by Ineke Hulshof, in an interview in June/2012, and is showed next.

The approach in this case (of the Ilhas) is different than the 'market' approach, but also concerns community involvement and neighborhood requalification. There are some crucial steps in the process. They should take place in a logical order, and everything should be carefully planned.

Step 1 – Organize a group, persuade the landowners to participate, present idea to community

First, the initiative maker needs to organize the involved people together, and have a large meeting. All people should come together and discuss the project. They should leave this meeting convinced about the advantages of the process.

Step 2 – Legalize the properties

The landowners have to be involved in the process, at least within the first part. With a private land owner it is more difficult to get the process started, when comparing to the projects that used public ground.

Firstly, the owners have to be convinced about the advantages of the projects and confirm their participation. Secondly, the properties, including the dwellings in the backyards, should be officially registered. A contract should be made at the beginning of the process, to make sure that the improvement will stay with the current residents.

Step 3 – Inventory of the needs of community

The quality of the existing conditions of the dwellings should be analyzed. An inventory of what the dwellings need, concerning major needs such as toilets and structural parts. The needs should be prioritized, starting from the most basics. The people should participate on this discussion, since they know better what is their priority. Nevertheless, sanitation should always come high in the priority list. From this list, comes the phasing definition of the project.

Step 4 – Discuss the inventory, calculate budget, define community skills

After the inventory, a new meeting should take place with the people. The list should be shared with them, and the plan should be developed together, since the costs and budget should be discussed together. Moreover, the skills of the residents should be identified. It is important to know what they can do by themselves. If someone ever built a toilet by himself, he knows how to make toilets and he can either make for others or teach the skill.



All the self-improvement experiences they had form a great catalogue of their skills and should be carefully analyzed. All their stories should be listened, and is also an important moment to understand exactly how is their experience of living there.

It is important to know how much they can invest themselves, and not only financially, but also concerning time, work and experience. For example, when the first houses are being restored, where do the people go? Can they stay at each other's houses? Maybe a common kitchen can be temporarily built, or a common room.

Step 5 – Define a phasing: what can be done and in which order

The phasing is elaborated based on the priority list of the residents' needs. Whatever problem which is more urgent, should have the solution applied first. The people should also be able to place themselves in the timeframe, and practical problems such as where people can stay while the house is being reformed, should also be solved in the part of the process.

Step 6 – Gather materials and organize workforce

Construction materials are the largest cost, since the workforce comes from the community itself and will not represent a cost. Materials could be bought, but can also be donated by companies. Furthermore, second hand materials could also be used. Reutilization is cheap and also sustainable. Toilets, tiles, pavement, everything can be recycled.

Step 7 – Apply the project, manage results

After, is just put in practice, and the architect needs to be present controlling the implementation of the project, together with other professionals.

INTERVIEW WITH INEKE HULSHOF – JUNE/2012

Small Scale

3.2. The Guidelines

Scenario 2 - Investment and support

Within a scenario of investment, the improvements of the dwellings and corridors could go beyond the basic needs of the self-made. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the prices should stay the same and the target group as well. The residents of the Ilhas have the right of staying where they are and should be still able to afford for their living, and this is actually what all this project is about.

However, there are possibilities for upgrading on the dwellings that could be implemented with extra financial sources.

The improvement *can go from basic to extended*, as far as the budget allows the project group to apply the change.

These are just some examples of how far the improvements on the dwellings can go. The public participation process and the involvement of companies and experts would surely bring up interesting solutions, and more adequate to the real need of the inhabitants.

Basic improvement – urgent needs

THE HOUSEHOLD SPACE: SIZE

The dwellings are too small. Extra space can be added by addition of an extra pavement (like many families already did by themselves) or through combination of two dwellings in one. Extra size also allows more interior privacy between different bedrooms, for example.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The main need concerns the dwellings infrastructure. They urgently need improvement in structure and roofs, rain water drainage system, besides a better insulation and ventilation system. In this category, green construction techniques could be applied, and companies that produce sustainable materials could be partners or supporters from the project. In this way they might even use the project to promote their products.

Extended – improving living comfort

ENERGY SAVING

The Ilhas could have a system of energy saving and/or generating, with for example solar panels. They dwellings are small and use little energy, therefore they might become energy self-sufficient.

OUTDOOR SPACE

The dwellings have no outdoor space, besides the narrow corridor. The rooftops could become small gardens for the dwellings, if the structure is improved. Besides, rooftops provide several other environmental benefits, such as retaining rainwater and providing thermal isolation.



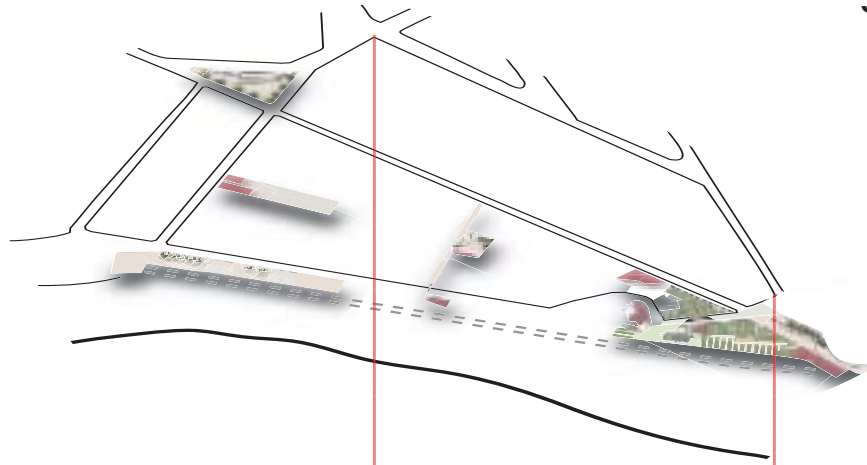
> The plot represented is The N° 113 of São Vítor Street.
Measurement adapted From PIRES, 2009.

The development of the defined guidelines is a rather uncertain process, because of the dependence on the involvement of several different groups of actors and the financial limitations that exist in both implementation scenarios. Therefore, the creation of a possible 'view' of results is only an illustration of what the future results could look like, but without the assumption that the space would have that physical appearance.

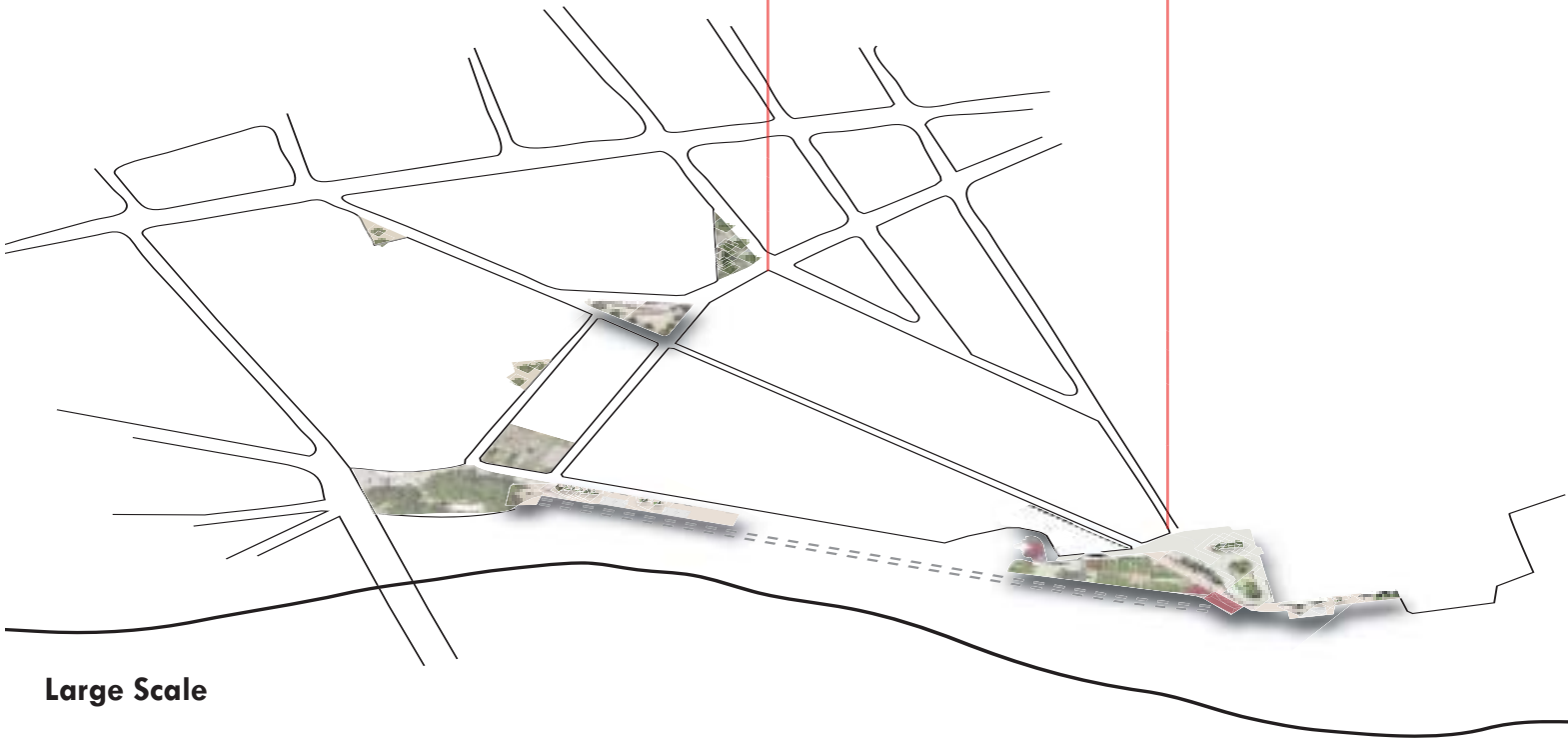
The objective of showing this views is to give an idea of how much the proposed improvements can change the space. The views showed here are not related to one specific scenario (from the 2 scenarios of the guidelines), but they assume the merge of both of them. In this view, the community takes the first initiative and apply the self-improvement Scenario, and as a consequence Scenario 2 would follow with investments and larger interventions.

3.3. The View

Medium Scale



Large Scale



03 THE FILLING

Large Scale



On the left side, Alegria Square is the main public space, because of its already existing intense use. The square is improved with extra sitting space and more shade provided by trees. The Grass Square has added space for staying, and might go along Alegria Square in its success, binding together groups of inhabitants from inside and outside São Víctor (SEE IMAGE ON THE RIGHT). The Gated square, when opened and put back into use, increases the relationship with the Riverside space, now nearly abandoned, creating more social control and hopefully increasing the safety feeling for the users. The Riverside boulevard has more sitting space, besides small sport fields (that can be movable) to attract kids and playing activities.



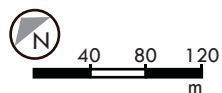
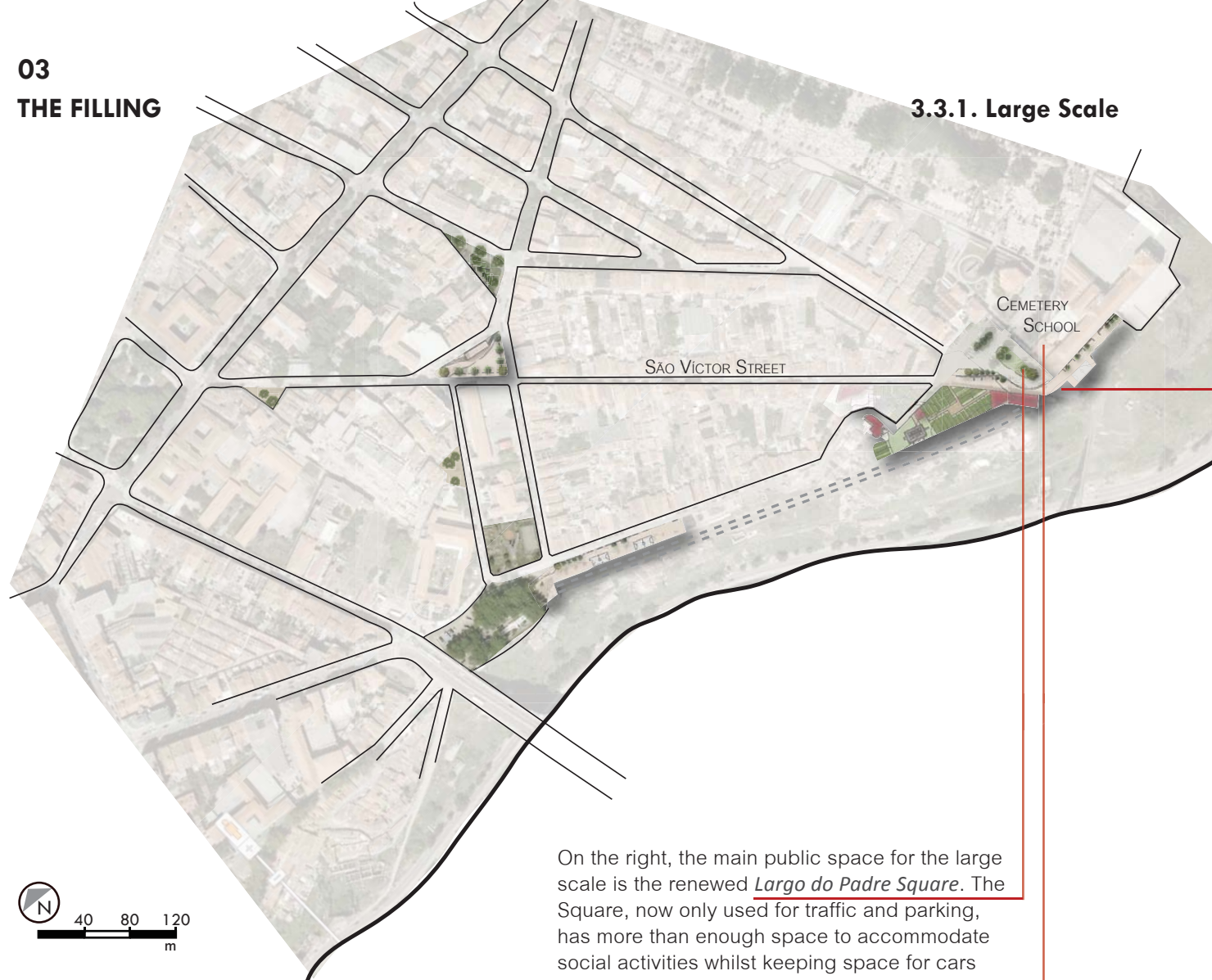
3.3. The View



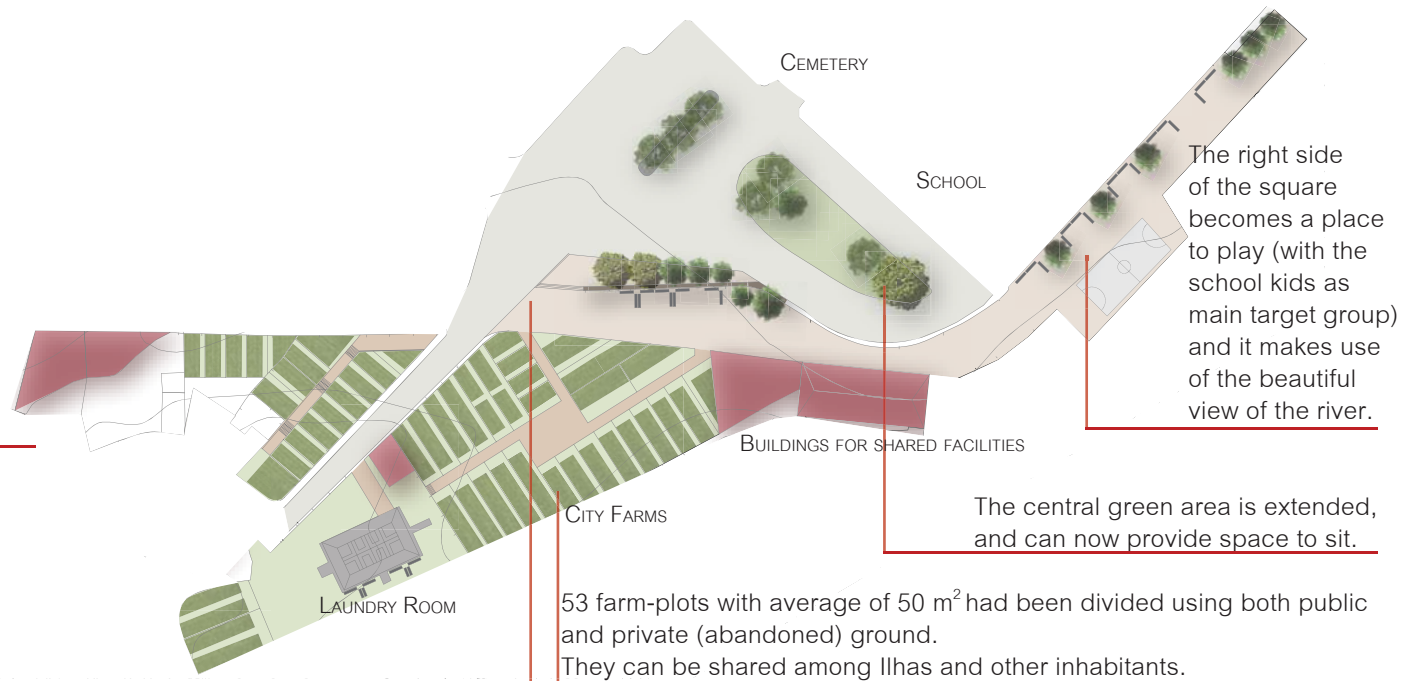
VIEW OF THE GRASS SQUARE, WITH ADDED MOVABLE CHAIRS AND A SMALL WALKING PATH - POSSIBILITIES OF STAYING

03 THE FILLING

3.3.1. Large Scale



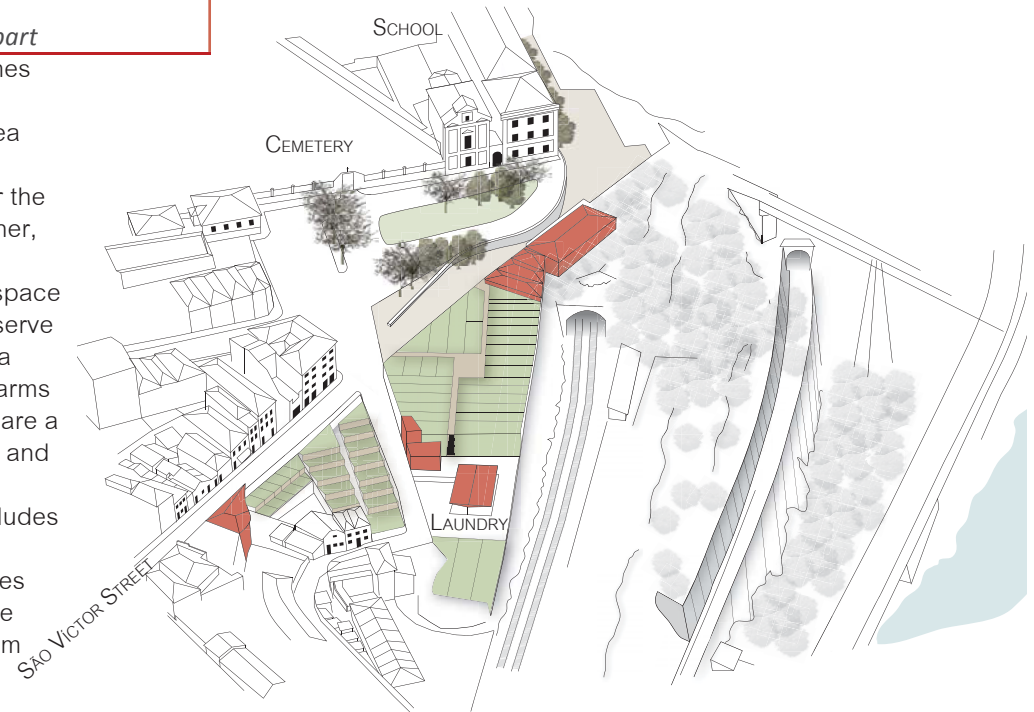
On the right, the main public space for the large scale is the renewed *Largo do Padre Square*. The Square, now only used for traffic and parking, has more than enough space to accommodate social activities whilst keeping space for cars and parking. The intervention is not large, but gives room for the inhabitants to make use of the square together with the external visitors that come to the School and Cemetery. The design of the Largo do Padre Square can be seen in more detail on the right.



The pavement on the lower part now used for parking becomes a lively edge with sitting and staying possibilities. This area merges with the new urban farming space, proposed for the abandoned plots on the corner, near the laundry room.

There is more than enough space for the small scale farms to serve each Ilha and still some extra interested inhabitants. The farms and related piece of square are a great space to merge inside and outside communities.

Besides, this space also includes room for communal spaces for community shared facilities (buildings in red), as it will be explained next on the medium scale.



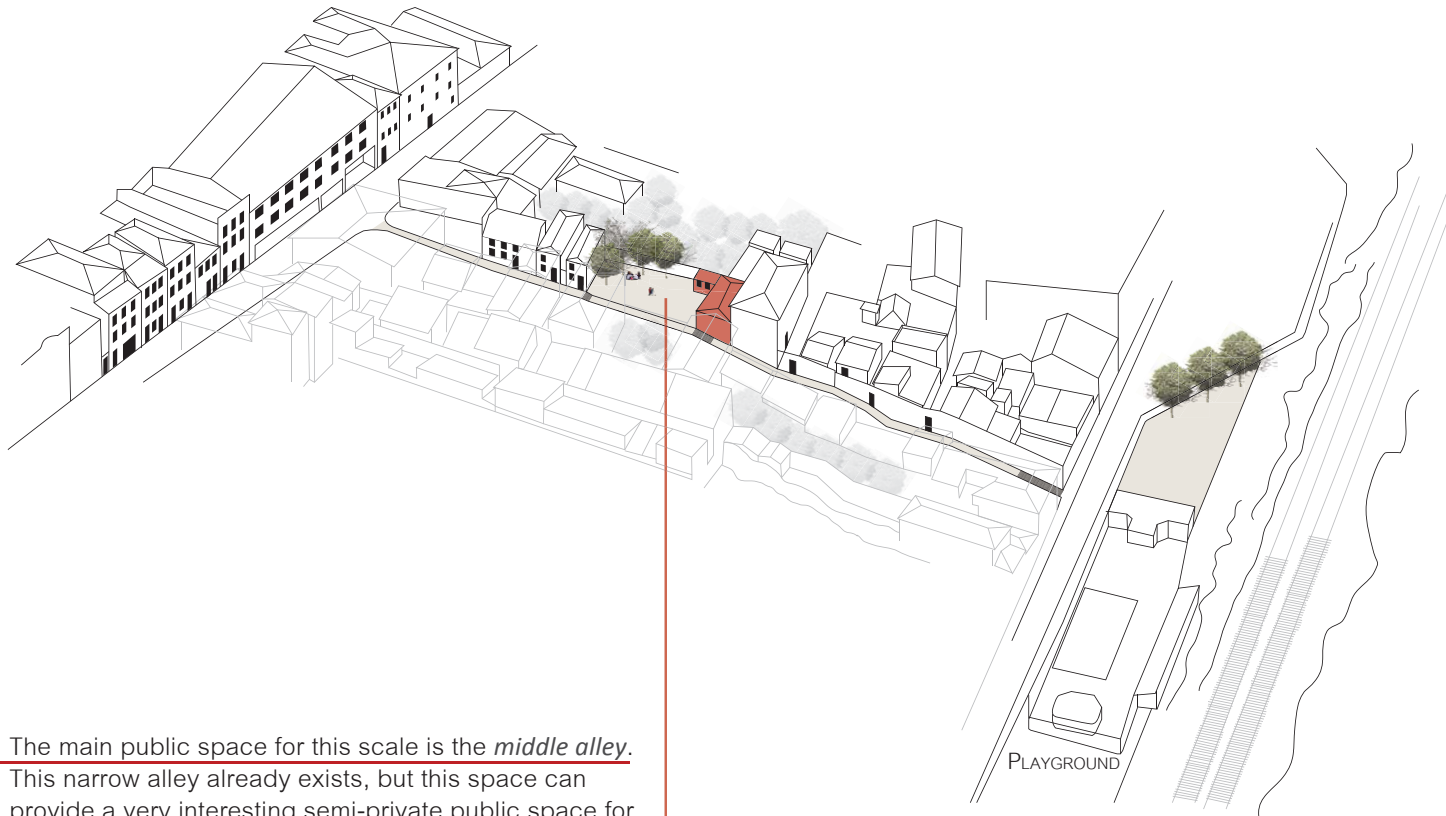
In the medium scale space, the objective is to provide room for community binding. The shared facilities are located all over the block, because they rely on building availability. The drawing suggests some locations (*buildings in red*), choosing the most degraded and/or abandoned buildings.

The *commercial Ilha* (previously listed together with the shared facilities) would be ideally located here, close to the Primary school and to the Alegria Square. This side of the urban block has a stronger connection to the rest of the city, because the other side has a dead end towards the River. This plot is currently an abandoned Ilha, and could shelter commercial activities from inhabitants of other Ilhas as well as outsiders. It would look like a gallery, and would give opportunity to the local market besides increasing contact with the outside users. Unemployed inhabitants could be trained in entrepreneurship



The *farms* are also an important space for the medium scale, even though they are also present in the large scale space. This space is a smooth boundary between scales and social groups. The existing buildings, next to the farms, are mostly abandoned. They could be room for a new laundry space with machines, for example, or spaces for storing farming material. (SEE IMAGE ON PREVIOUS PAGE)

3.3. The View



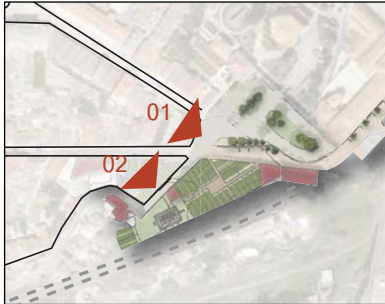
The main public space for this scale is the *middle alley*. This narrow alley already exists, but this space can provide a very interesting semi-private public space for the inhabitants of the block, because the entrances of the *alley* are quite subtle in the street façade. In the middle of the alley, there is an empty space that could become a *community meeting square*, attached to a shared facility located in an existing building. The library or the multifunctional meeting room would be ideally located there, where they would have a small outdoors attached space for great collective interaction. As a result of the implementation of the facility in attachment to the square, social control and constant activity can prevent an unsafe environment within the alley.

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THE FILLING

Medium Scale

The end of the street, towards the riverside, becomes a lively space with the farms, the shared facilities and the renewed laundry room, and it merges smoothly with the large scale space of the Largo do Padre square.



CURRENT SITUATION OF THE SPACE



01 VIEW OF THE CORNER OF THE CITY FARMS AND THE SMOOTH TRANSITION TO THE LARGO DO PADRE SQUARE ON THE LEFT



3.3. The View



02 VIEW OF THE EXISTING LANDRY SPACE, AFTER THE COMMUNITY SELF-IMPROVEMENT



**FINAL
CONSIDERATIONS**



The presented proposals for the Ilhas of Porto have a different approach than the usual, where the task to the planner come from the authorities or from an investor. The main message left by this project is not to wait for the Government take the action on urban problems as if it is the very only solution. If the authorities lack interest, financial sources or even do not share the same opinion about the importance of the problem, there should be a different way for the people to achieve results that goes beyond waiting and hoping for a major shift in the authorities' minds.

It might sound a bit revolutionary or extreme, but that is not the idea. The project does not aim to spread a large scale urban revolution where only the people take care of their own space, because the Government is still a very important actor in the urban sphere and they should be involved. The point is to bring attention to what matters. If the Municipality of Porto still has an old fashioned image of the Ilhas as unhealthy dirty spaces and do not notice their great community advantages, such action coming from the Ilhas community would give the first step towards changing this image.

The project can get started as a self-improvement approach, and get more partners - including the Government - along the way. That is why two scenarios have been proposed for this project, hoping that one would get the other started. In this way, the Municipality is no longer the main initiator and carrier of the whole project responsibility, but a partner that might get involved along the way. This means that public participation achieves a new position, in an equal role in the course of action. And the community only gets stronger in such a process.

Community is actually the main word in this project. The Ilhas are an example of people's attachment to the living space, so strong that it overlooks the low living quality standards and results in satisfaction and permanency. The self-improvement approach shown here can be left as an example to all other Ilhas and other communities, and the Ilhas are therefore exposed as an example of proximity among people.

Bringing the general attention to the essence of the Ilhas quality – their community – could inspire new developments to apply this essence in their design. The semi-private ambiences, the smooth barrier of the corridor and the narrow spaces, all this aspects form guidelines for a new way of projecting social housing, at least in Portugal. Other countries already learned the community-building lesson (such as in Denmark, as a result of Gehl's approach), but Portugal still needs to learn and apply it. This could be the continuation of this project.

In the end, besides helping the Ilhas, we should also learn from them.

Initiative

Who could implement and guide the project?

One possible idea is to involve of the University students of Porto. The Portuguese youth seems to be more politically engaged than in other European countries (I state it as a personal impression during the visits). There are quite some discussion going on concerning political discussions and protests. It seems possible to acquire a group of students who, together with Professors who could volunteer to guide the process, form a group to organize the São Vítor project.

Public participation with respect

The implementation of a participatory working method is a delicate issue. The approach among the residents should be done carefully and, most important, respectfully. The bottom-up approach of the project includes listening to the problems of the inhabitants and discussing together possible solution for them. But at first they should feel respected, and not only invaded by a wave of 'help' which they did not request.

The approach should start gathering the residents confidence. The main opening sentence should not be: 'We came here to help you'; but 'We came here to learn with your good example'. In fact, the Ilhas environment has a sense of community which is pursued by many contemporary projects. We should learn with them.

All people should get the chance to participate on meetings and discussions. Professionals might have to learn how to communicate in an effective way with the residents, keeping in mind their lack of knowledge in the planning field and their (in most cases) low educational level.

Solutions and ideas should be presented in a simple way, because they have to be, in their essence, simple. The project team might include students from the Pedagogical school, or Communication. For them is also a great moment to learn.

Avoiding speculation

One major problem of renewing and improving any urban area is the consequent land value speculation that might occur. The fact can be a positive consequence for areas which have value improvement as an objective, but is surely a negative aspect when it involves low cost housing.

Some precautions should be taken to avoid rising of rental prices once the street reaches all desired improvements mentioned within this project. Before starting the process, the landlords should be aware of the improvement plans. It should be an official agreement, in a contract, that the current residents will be able to stay with the same renting contract and price of the current situation, as mentioned by Mrs. Hulshof.

The advantage for the landlord is the renewal of their own property, with no need of investments coming from his side. In fact, the residents who apply self-improvement through decades have no increase in their rental prices after the reforms are done. It should be an reasonable argument for the landlord to agree with the process.

The speculation of rental prices might occur when one family leaves, and a new contract starts. The price of a new contract would probably be significantly higher when the area shows improvement, and this is a more complicated matter to deal with. One possible scenario that would avoid such speculation is the increasing of residents' permanency.

The major reason for departure from the area, in the current situation, is the low quality of the dwellings. If the dwellings are improved, the permanency might increase, slowing down the price speculation if the current contracts have fixed prices. Furthermore, self-improvement of the dwellings also enlarges one's attachment to their living space.

Leave a house that you helped building with your own hands is more difficult. And if the community becomes stronger as a result of the process, the permanency of the inhabitants increases even more.



Position of the planner within the process

The position of the urban designer within this process is quite unusual. There is no assignment, and no partnership with the Government. The people from São Vítor street did not come to the planners asking for solutions or even presenting problems. The task came from pure observation of the urban area of Porto, the historical background of the Ilhas and their outstanding social community cohesion.

The urban designer, in this process, plays the role of a coordinator of ideas and interests, applying his knowledge in order to improve one's life, but not taking the credit for it. The credit, at the end, is from the whole community.

The people might not clearly know how a better environment would look like, or how to work together for their own benefit and improvement of their dwellings. Therefore, the urban designer, in this case, would be responsible for guiding the public participation process and translating 'planning' into comprehensive acts and visible results. Step by step, applying small interventions, and making the improvements visible. Public participation gets slowly stronger when the residents trust the process each day more. When the first vegetables from a common garden can be used, the advantages of the group work will be part of their life.

It is surely not an easy process, and it is very different than the traditional way of urban planning. Perhaps, as a result of the time of crisis, the profession of the urban designer will change. The time of big developers investing in large scale projects seems now far from reality, especially in Europe. The traditional way of working that architects and urban designers were usually habituated, with a designing task given by a paying client, has declined, and will maybe stay like this for some time. Or maybe it will never come back, at least not as it was before.

Design should be concerned about the people and should also focus on the public formed by billions of people in the planet living in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Now may be the time for a 'shift from the architecture of the 1% to the architecture for the other 99%' (FISCHER, 2012), and the rise of the public-oriented design. It already exists, and there are many examples of professionals that are examples of social consciousness, like the ones used on this project Toolbox.

Perhaps this change of mind is the positive legacy left by a time of crisis: More social awareness, innovation within the working method, and design-thinking in a process oriented way could be the rebirth of urban designing and planning.

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Professor Rui Póvoas, Faculty of Architecture from the University of Porto; director of the Architecture and Urbanism Research Center (CEAU) of the UP. (November/2011 and May/2012)

Mr. Rui Loza, architect from the IHRU (Urban Rehabilitation Institute from the Municipality of Porto).

Professor Fernando Matos Rodrigues, ESAP (School of Fine Arts) Porto.

May/2012

Professor Virgílio Borges Pereira, Faculty of Sociology from the University of Porto.

Mr. José Teixeira, Municipality employee, responsible for the maintenance of the Children's playground from the Fountainhas.

Mrs. Luísa Fontes, Municipality employee as Ecology Education teacher of the Children's playground from the Fountainhas.

Mr. Armindo Teixeira, director of the Bonfim Neighborhood Association, Municipality of Porto.

Mrs. Joaquina Soares, social worker from the Bonfim Neighborhood Association, Municipality of Porto.

Ineke Hulshof, architect from Hulshof Architecten. Delft, the Netherlands.

Manuel Rocha Ribeiro, architect from the Municipality of Porto. (November/2011 and May/2012)

Maria João Carvalho, geographer from the Municipality of Porto. (November/2011 and May/2012)

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APPENDIX

- 1. Table - Ilhas Typology
- 2. Interviews

Appendix 1 - Table: Ilhas typology



São Vítor Street (SV)

SV 1			No front house; Gated; 1 row of dwellings.
SV 2			No front house; Gated; 2 rows of dwellings. (<i>'Ilha Grande'</i>)
SV 3			Front house; Gated; Door on façade; 1 row of dwellings. (<i>Grey door on the left</i>)
SV 4			Front house; Gated; Door on façade; 1 row of dwellings.

SV 5			No front house; Gated; 1 row of dwellings.
SV 6			Gate on the side of house; 1 row of dwellings. (<i>the blue door on the left</i>)
SV 7			In between two houses with door on façade; 1 row of dwellings. (<i>two-pavement dwellings with balcony</i>)
SV 8			In between two houses with door on façade; 2 rows of dwellings.

SV 9



In between two houses
with door on façade;
2 rows of dwellings.

('Ilha do Doutor')

SV 10



In between two houses
with door on façade;
2 rows of dwellings.

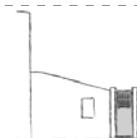
('Bairro do Souza')

SV 11



No front house; Gated;
1 row of dwellings.

SV 12



No front house; Gated;
1 row of dwellings.

SV 13



No front house;
No gate;
2 rows of dwellings.

SV 14



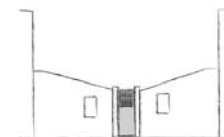
No front house; Gated;
1 row of dwellings.

SV 15

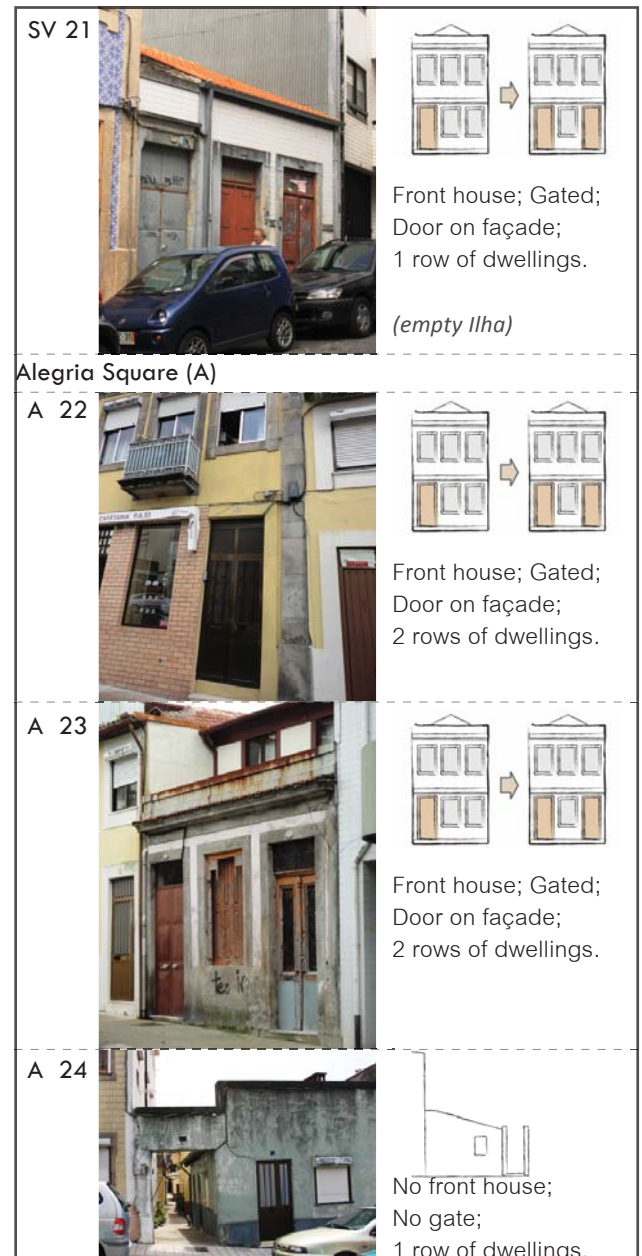
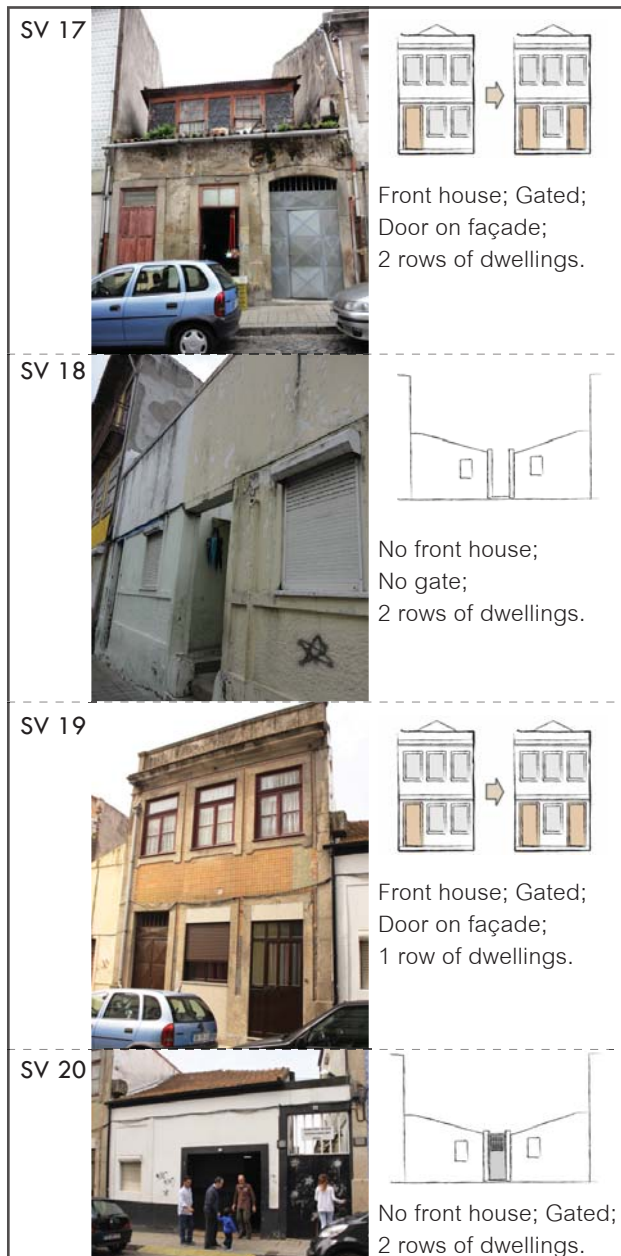


Open entrance
between two houses;
1 row of dwellings.

SV 16

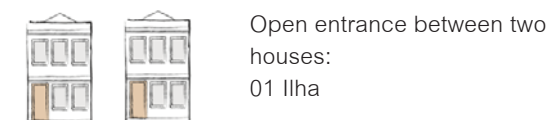
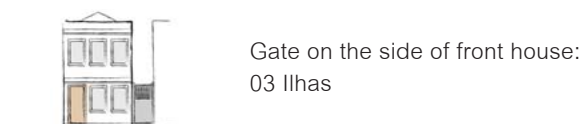
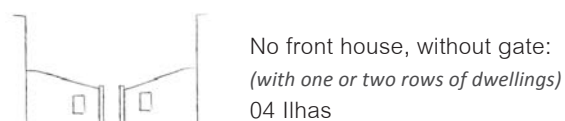
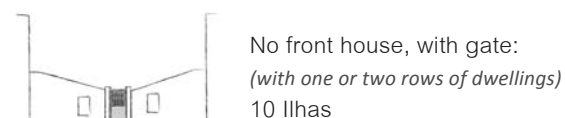
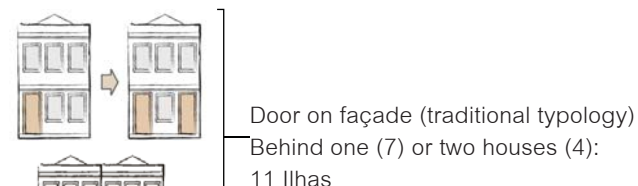
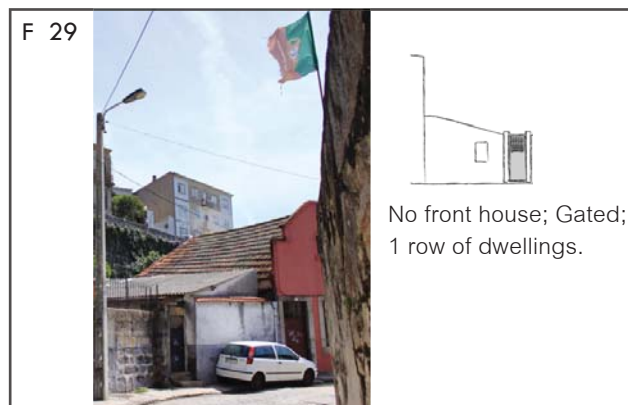
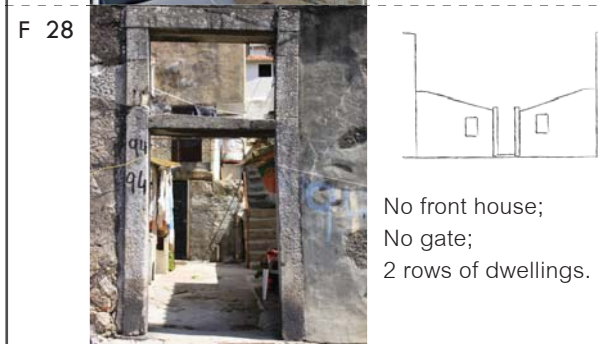
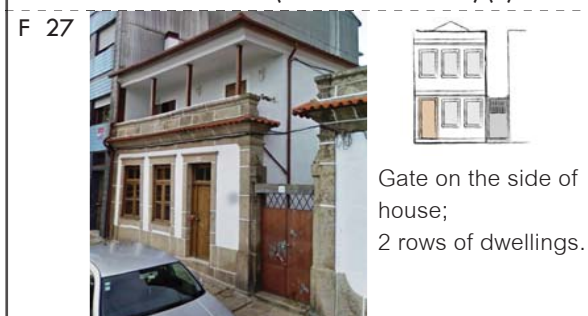


No front house; Gated;
2 rows of dwellings.





Alameda das Fontainhas (Rua Gomes Freire) (F)



Appendix 2 - Interviews

The following interviews are the most important and/or most useful interviews made during the field visits in Porto. They are summarized in texts, without showing a transcription of all asked questions. Most of them developed as an unstructured conversation, giving freedom to the interviewed and without following a strict list of questions. The interviews do not represent my personal opinion.

All interviews are from November/ 2011 and May/2012

Professor Virgílio Borges Pereira, Faculty of Sociology from the University of Porto.

“One of the curious aspects of the Ilhas’s history is that they had been understood as a solution for that time, but still in use as a ‘solution’ today. They saw no evolution in their typology or in their system, besides minor improvements. There had been several trials from the authorities, through the years, first to improve the Ilhas, and later to remove them. From a historical point of view, the most significant improvement trials did not succeed, because every improvement would mean a rise in the rental prices and the houses cost in general, making them less affordable for the social class who really needed them. The working class would then leave to another Ilha; the reformed (or new) houses having, usually, too many difficulties to survive in the housing market. In the area of São Vitor street, Duque de Saldanha was an atypical case for the time. It was the first time that inhabitants of the Ilhas were actually relocated to another dwellings. Some houses of the Ilhas were demolished, but not the whole Ilhas, since the objective was to relief the demographic density of São Victor Street.

The building typology kept the “collective housing” shape, with a common courtyard and access corridors. Given the type of ideological debate that was typical of the time, it is still difficult to understand how such a project had the approval of Salazar’s dictatorial government. The typology of the building, compared to KarlMarxhof, soon made it impossible to replicate in other contexts of the city. For ideological reasons, and for a long period, the regime refused collective housing solutions.

In 1956, and after an intense ideological and political debate in its interior, Porto’s municipality finally proposes a specific program for the inhabitants of the Ilhas, based on a collective social housing typology that would be responsible for the transfer of around 20% of the population of the Ilhas of the central area to the city’s periphery. Yet, in the specific area of São Vitor, the most significant projects that try to propose new solutions for the Ilhas will have to wait until the end of the dictatorship in 1974. With the revolution in 1974, new discussions emerged concerning social housing and the right to the city. In this scenario, the SAAL was created. Despite the new social housing concerns, the Ilhas did not see major improvements during the SAAL years. The inhabitants, organised in associations, claimed for new dwellings, and not for the improvement of their existing ones. In the area of São Vitor, several families have been relocated to the new projects of the time, but their houses in the Ilhas stayed behind. The Ilhas are historical problem, but also an actual issue. The problem changed through the years, but still an actuality in Porto. If in the past the Ilhas faced very high density, large families and meant public health threat, today the scenario includes lower density, elderly, small households.

But the Ilhas keep their urban function, their character of low cost living spaces and never lost their character of 'actual subject'.

There is nothing being developed, at the moment, in order to 'solve' the problem of the Ilhas, but only demolition wishes coming from the authorities. There are some necessary debates concerning the Ilhas, in order to achieve solution scenarios. Maybe concerning minimum intervention, small scale approach. Today there is less density in the Ilhas, and that means more freedom for solutions that could add quality of life for the inhabitants. Any project for the Ilhas should be open for public participation, once they form such tight communities. Further, the renovation should be visible, touchable, concerning the space and the buildings and their infrastructure. Only a visible improvement would start a change of the image of the space.

From the Government point of view, changes will be difficult. There is no 'public will' to start up such a project. Who would be responsible for that? No one would wish the position of guiding this process".

Professor Rui Póvoas, Faculty of Architecture from the University of Porto; director of the Architecture and Urbanism Research Center (CEAU) from the University of Porto.

"I do not believe that the Ilhas should be sold one by one, or in a group. They only work under the rental system, it is a better deal for the land owner, who needs the income, and the residents. I do not believe that gentrification could occur in that area, and speculation should not be a main problem for any rehabilitation proposal.

There is a quite new phenomenon, that I have been noticing, about the Ilhas. They are becoming 'hip', there is a trend of artists, students, or other slightly alternative group who is interested on the Ilhas.

The number 113 of São Víctor Street have been sold to a group some years ago, who would reform the Ilhas and rent them for students. I heard lately during a meeting about Urban Heritage that another Ilha (not in São Víctor) have been sold to a developer, which wants to keep the housing."

Mr. José Teixeira, Municipality employee, responsible for the maintenance of the Children's playground from the Alameda das Fontainhas (riverfront near São Víctor).

"The World have changed, the times have changed. I was born and grew up in an Ilha, in city centre. Our family was relocated to a social housing development before the revolution of 1974. We all went to Lordelo do Douro, to live in a large area of social housing, there are several buildings. I would not go back to an Ilha, because that life was not good, there was no dignity for us. I remember I had to shower in the sight of everyone, the toilets were terrible. Today I have a good house, with a bedroom and a bathroom.

Nevertheless, my neighborhood does not have the 'community' that the Ilhas have. The community is getting lost everywhere, the World became so individualized. Here in São Víctor you still see a little of this 'community' atmosphere, but is also getting lost. You can notice it.

For example, the small shops here on the street, they are not doing well. I know one owner over there, and he makes his money with the Ilha he owns. His shop does not provide enough income for his survival. Everyone goes shopping at the large supermarkets, and this does not help the community.

But here in São Vítor you still have the Soccer Team meeting point. The club keeps the people together, is a reason for them to meet regularly. In the past, there were many of these soccer teams, from all communities. Where I lived, we also had one, from the Ilhas. Now there are only a few left, and São Vítor has the strongest one. That is a good thing here.

In my neighborhood (of social housing), after 8 p.m., there is no one on the streets, nothing to do. If I want to have a cup of coffee outside, I need to walk at least 20 minutes to reach a place, while here in Porto you usually have Cafés everywhere. If I want to take my grandchildren out to play, I have to walk again 20 minutes with them to the nearest square. We have loads of green space there, all covered with grass. But I wish some of the grass would be used for something more useful, like playgrounds.

I am part of the inhabitants association of my neighborhood. We often ask the Municipality for this kind of improvements, but we do not receive answers. We do not have money, it is not interesting for them. Every time the authorities do the same thing with the poor: relocate, to further and further, not caring about the people, but only about money. First we left the Ilhas, and now they are demolishing social housing, saying that they are criminal and degraded spaces. They are spreading the people around, neighbors that knew each other. I ask you to visit the Aleixo (one of the demolished social housing areas) in one or two years from now, and tell me what you see. New houses, expensive ones, is my guess. Aleixo has a great view, why keep the poor people there if the land can be sold for to the rich?"

Mrs. Luísa Fontes, Municipality employee as Ecology Education teacher of the Children's playground from the Alameda das Fontainhas (riverfront near São Vítor).

"I really appreciate working here. The kids are incredible, the people are fantastic. But I can also see how abandoned this region is. From the Fontainhas, until the bridge, all this riverfront here, there is so much drugs, prostitution and crime. And all this in city centre, in the heart of the city. There are things being done in the Municipality, revitalization projects for the city centre. But they are now busy with the old centre, and it all takes so long. It would take so long to reach us here. This piece of riverfront, here near São Vítor is quite calm. I am working here for 9 months and I have never seen anything wrong, related to crime or violence. There is always people on the street, it creates a sort of protected atmosphere. Sometimes there are fights among the inhabitants, but family fights, I hear people screaming. Maybe is because they have to live on top of each other, so tight, they end up fighting! (laughs). When I started working here I had to promote some activities of our space here and I entered the Ilhas for the first time. I thought everything was very clean, people keep their houses neat, also themselves very clean. It was a good surprise, that in such tight households and corridors, there is an order and neatness that you would not expect. Nevertheless it was still shocking to see how small the houses are, and how many people have no choice but to live here in such life conditions. They miss mostly privacy, and some quietness. They wish they would not constantly hear everything the neighbor does, and not to be heard all the time."

Mr. Armino Teixeira, director of the Bonfim Neighborhood Department, from the Municipality of Porto.

“The Ilhas could have solutions, could be kept, but there is no financial sources for that. And of course, that is not the political idea concerning the Ilhas. The idea of the Municipality now is to get rid of all the Ilhas, and keep only one because of its historical importance for the city. It could be like a museum.

This idea was one of the commitments made by the Major during his political campaign, but it is not a reality yet. The same people have the power since 2002, and the idea still exists, even though is not mentioned as often as before.

The obstacles we have to demolish Ilhas are, especially in São Vítor Street, related to land ownership. There are many different land owners, who make money from renting their Ilhas’ houses and do not want to sell the land. We need to oblige them to sell, though expropriation. There is no solution without a back up law, which obliges the owners to sell. It has to be clear, either they sell or they leave the property. Without that they would never agree leaving the few possessions they have.

It is like in the social neighborhoods now. People were relocated, and they had no option. Demolition was the only solution for that areas. They were focus of crime, ghettos of gypsies and other ethnical groups related to drugs and thefts. Only the selected people were relocated. The ones that met the adequate social levels, after an analysis of the social workers from the Municipality.

But I believe that there is a solution for the Ilhas. If someone comes here with a plan that also brings the financial sources, why would it not work? The money will always be the problem. And of course, the different interests involved. All people want to benefit, the inhabitants, the land owners, the government.”

Mrs. Joaquina Soares, social worker from the Bonfim Neighborhood Association, from the Municipality of Porto.

“When I started working here as a social worker, 23 years ago, I went to São Vítor street to make some inquiries. The people were saying at that time the same things you told me they say now. The elderly says that in the past everything was better, that the young people do not merge. I think they have this feeling because the younger people work all day, while the elderly stays mostly at home. They do not see each other so much. In the past, maybe the women also stayed more at home and they have this feeling that the people were more close.

The largest problem there today is the condition of the dwellings. They have infiltration of rain water, humidity, lack of bathrooms. Many of them already improved the houses in some level, but many still in terrible conditions.

Even though living like that, you always hear the same sentences from them: “I would never leave, I love living here”. There are good things, the elderly lives in mutual assistance, checking on each other, helping each other. They also have their June parties (São João), their soccer team, etc.”

I asked Mrs. Soares her opinion about my idea of having shared facilities in São Vítor:

In the past the street had a common laundry space, but it did not work for a long time. The Government changed, as it happens every four years, and the new managers did not continue with the project. I think it can work, can be a good idea, but how would it happen? It is difficult to get the Municipality to implement such facilities, there is no public will for that.

Inhabitants of São Victor street:
(many inhabitants were interviewed; some of these interviews are showed here)

Mr. Victor

- *Lives at SV street for 53 years, in a regular house, not an Ilhas*
- *Unemployed for 7 years*
- *Shares a house with wife*
- *Wife receives Governmental support (as unable to work)*
- *Rest of family lives around him*
- *His sister is the owner of the Beauty Salon of SV street.*

Do you like living here?

Oh yes, of course. Here is very peaceful, I've been here for 53 years. All my family lives here, my wife, kids, sister, brother. I grew up here. My parents bought the house decades ago, it still belongs to my Mother. The house was rented before, and once the former owner passed away, and the next generation who inherited the house gave the chance to my parents to buy it, and they did.

Is this street a community, in your opinion?

Yes, we all know each other. There are very nice moments here, like the June parties of São João. We all go to the School courtyard, there is a great party there. All Ilhas are decorated, and every year we choose the best one. They get this shiny silver board to hang on their entrance when they win, is a very nice competition. The street is great, but there is new people living here. Is less familiar then it was long ago. But the owners of the Ilhas are making profit with it, they are rising the rents for the latest incomers. The newer generations of land owners just think about money. Some sold their plot. In one plot they made a deposit, they are trying to rent the building for a long time already, but no success yet. Here on this Ilhas there is one house for sale. One Ilha there, on number 113, was demolished long ago by the Municipality and still empty. I think it had been sold.

Mrs. Rosa, lives at Ilha from nº76

- *73 years old, lives in the Ilha for 42 years*
- *Shares the house with her 54 years old daughter, husband passed away long ago*

Do you like living here?

Yes, of course I like it in here! I would never leave this place. I am here for 42 years!

How is your house? Do you have your own toilet?

My house is good. I have my own toilet and a second floor with bedrooms which I built up myself. The landlord does not do anything to improve the houses, everything has to come from us. If your roof is broken, if you want to paint the house, we do it all by ourselves.

What do you think of the people here on the street?

I know plenty of people here, is great. But there is all this young people coming, they are trash. They brought drugs to this street, it used to be a family place here, and now is not anymore.

Before, the street was happier. On a sunny Sunday everyone would put the chairs on the sidewalk and talk, kids would play on the street. It does not happen anymore.

What do you think is missing here on your street? What would you like to have?

I do not know. Maybe some space. Yes, maybe space, where the kids can play and we can chat.

But there is a playground here down the street.

Oh yes, but is only for kids, and they close at 17h. This is not good.

I am sorry to ask this, but how much do you pay for rent every month?

50 euros.

Mrs. Emília, lives at Ilha from nº76

- Around 60 years old, lives on Mrs. Rosa next door for 5 months

- Lives alone

Do you like living here?

Yes of course. That is the reason I came back. I was born here, and here I grew up. Then I moved to Gaia (metropolitan region) and lived with my brother for a long time. Now I thought it was enough, I wanted to be back here. And I am, for 5 months.

How is your house? Do you have your own toilet?

Yes I do. The house is good, the previous renter made improvements as well. We have 18 houses here in our Ilha, and I think.... (asks Mrs. Rosa) around 5 maybe do not have a toilet. The rest already managed to build one.

Why did he leave, do you know?

He bought a better house somewhere, moved on to a better condition.

Mrs. Rosamaria, Praça da Alegria

- Around 30 years old, lives at Praça da Alegria Ilha for 6 years

- Lives with her 5 year old son

- Pays €15 rent/month

Do you like living here?

I even like the place, is close to the city, but I would move from here if I could. I would not go far, I like the location, but I rather have a better house to live with my son. But here I pay €15 per month, I cannot afford more than that. I do not really have a choice. I have no toilet.

How is your house? Do you have your own toilet?

No. The house is bad. I would like to have a better house.

Mrs. Maria Emília, lives in an Ilha at Alegria Square

- Around 50 years old, former inhabitant, visiting her Mother

Do you like living here?

I do not live here actually. I came to see my Mother, who lives here. She is ill. But I grew up here, my Mother is here for 60 years already.

And does your Mother like living here?

Of course! She loves it. I used to like as well, but I left because of the low living conditions. My Mother's house has no toilet, my family's house never had a private one. Here used to be so crowded, there were so many children. I really enjoyed growing up here, it was a good childhood. We all knew each other. Now there are so many empty houses, I think it is so sad. And it is also sad to live in such bad houses.

Mrs. Adelaide, Praça da Alegria

- Around 70+ years old, lives here for 50 years, lives alone, pays €173 for renting two houses.

Do you like living here?

Yes I do. The people here, everyone is really nice, we get along together. I would not leave this place, even though I would leave for a better house I guess. I live here alone, since my son got married and left. He was born here and left when he was 27 years old.

My daughter also left when she got married, but she comes to see me every day, we eat together. She works nearby, but lives far from here.

When they were kids, there were 23 children in this Ilha. It was very good for them, to have so many children around. Now there are more old people alone, like me, or young people alone or in couples. But we never see them, they are hardly home.

You mentioned your children left. Would they like to live here?

Yes I think so. They always liked it in here. But now they do not want their own families living here in such bad houses.

How is your house? Do you have your own toilet?

I have two houses now, facing each other. My original house is the older one. The second one I started renting when the lady who lived there passed away and the house became vacant. It is a better house, with a toilet. Now the old one is my living room and kitchen, and the new one is my bedroom. But when it rains, both of them get very wet inside, it is horrible.

Mrs. Filomena, works at one Ilha (office) and lives in Ilha from nº 76 (house)

I met Mrs. Filomena on my first visit, and she was a wonderful person to meet. It was the beginning of my visit, I was not familiar with the environment of SV. I saw her leaving nº113 and, at the door, asked her if she lived there. I said I was making a research for my University, and she guided me through the whole street. She told me stories, showed my her house, and told me so much. She was, without doubt, a great help at the beginning of my work. Because we talked for a long time, there are no questions/answers, but only a summary in one text.

Mrs. Filomena is 55 years old, and lives at São Vítor street since she was a child. She lived at the Ilha at nº 49 until she got married, at the age of 19, when she moved with her husband to 'Bairro do Souza' at nº76, where she lives until the present day. She has a typography office together with her husband, also located inside an Ilha, at nº 113. The office uses the space of two dwellings. Most of the Ilha is not occupied.

When asked if she appreciates the life in the Ilhas, she is very positive: 'Of course!'. She was indeed the happiest and most satisfied inhabitant from all interviewed ones. She pays €50 of rent per month. Her home is an example of the self-improvement made by the inhabitants. Her family extended the dwelling, using a small space on the side of the house, previously an open area. Now, her son has his own bedroom. He also brings income to the household, working at a mobile company. She also has a daughter, who got married and left the house. Furthermore, they also built an extra pavement, where her bedroom is located, and a bathroom for the family. The house is well maintained, and she mentions: "We pay such a cheap rent that we can afford reforms, and we feel happy to improve our home". She said she would not change a thing in her life there. "Improve, here? Nothing! I am really satisfied." "Before, we never had problems with crime or drugs. Now we have to watch out outside, is no longer safe here" says Mrs. Filomena.

Mrs. Catarina, lives in Ilha from nº 76

- Around 70+ years old

- Lives at the Ilha for 53 years

Do you like living here?

Yes I do. I know everybody, it is great. I would never leave. I lived in other Ilha before, but always here on the street. The people here are the best thing. But in the past, things had been better here on the Street. It was like a huge family. People were closer to each other. Now, all the new people that come, they do not merge. It is worse now. I want to go out more, but I stay in the Ilha.

How is your house? Do you have your own toilet?

Yes I do. My family built the toilet years ago. Now I live alone, but before my children were here. They left some years ago.