

Parcel N. 9 - Companhia Aurifícia - Terms of Reference for an Urban Intervention

Parcela N. 9 - Companhia Aurifícia - Termos de Referência para uma Intervenção Urbana

Parcela N. 9 - Companhia Aurifícia - Términos de Referencia para una intervención urbana

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Abstract: An UOPG is a specific area detailed in the Oporto Master Plan (PDMP) that as a subset of the city needs specific planning in terms of urban coherence, urban integration or obligation to a specific use or subset of specifications. According to the PDMP, the objective of making the study area a UOPG is “the recuperation of the internal part of the block of the *Companhia Aurifícia* through the rehabilitation of the existing buildings with architectonic value and valuing of green areas, contributing to the overall revival of Downtown Oporto”. The flagship of the proposal is the restoration and reconstruction of the block, creating a large cultural and commercial center integrated to the green area inside and outside the block, thus connecting the surrounding streets and increasing the permeability of pedestrians.

Keywords: Urban Planning. Urban Intervention. Urban Integration.

Resumo: Uma UOPG é uma área específica detalhada no Plano Diretor da cidade do Porto (PDMP) que, como um subconjunto da cidade, necessita de planejamento específico em termos de coerência urbana, integração urbana ou obrigatoriedade de um uso específico ou um subconjunto de especificações. De acordo com o PDMP, o objetivo de tornar a área de estudo numa UOPG é “a recuperação da parte interna do bloco da *Companhia Aurifícia* através da reabilitação dos edifícios existentes com valor arquitetônico e valorização das áreas verdes, contribuindo para a revitalização

geral da Baixa do Porto ". O carro-chefe da proposta é a restauração e reconstrução dos edifícios da Companhia Aurifícia, criando um grande centro cultural e comercial integrado às áreas verdes dentro e fora do bloco, conectando as ruas ao redor e aumentando a permeabilidade dos pedestres.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento Urbano. Intervenção Urbana. Integração Urbana.

Resumen: Un UOPG es un área específica detallada en el Plano Director de la ciudad de Porto(PDMP) que, como un subconjunto de la ciudad, necesita una planificación específica en términos de coherencia urbana, integración urbana u obliga a un uso específico o subconjunto de especificaciones. Según el PDMP, el objetivo de convertirlo en una UOPG es "la recuperación de la parte interna del bloque de la Companhia Aurifícia a través de la rehabilitación de los edificios existentes con valor arquitectónico y la valoración de las áreas verdes, contribuyendo a la recuperación general de El centro de Oporto ". El buque insignia de la propuesta es la restauración y reconstrucción de los edificios de la Companhia Aurifícia, creando un gran centro cultural y comercial integrado a la zona verde circundante y dentro del bloque, conectando las calles circundantes y aumentando la permeabilidad de los peatones.

Palabras clave: Lanificación Urbana. Intervención Urbana. Integración Urbana.

INTRODUCTION, OBJECTIVE, AND METHODOLOGY

The City of Oporto's Masterplan (PDMP) defines UOPG (Unidade Operativa de Planeamento e Gestão) as specific areas detailed as a subset of the city in order to specific planning in terms of urban coherence, urban integration, or obligates a specific use or subset of specifications (PORTUGAL, 2009).

Each UOPG of the PDMP is given an identification number and a short name, as well as its limits, are set in the PDMP's maps. Any kind of urbanistic operation in one of these areas must comply with the objectives defined in that particular UOPG's regulation.

The main objective of this work is to develop a comprehensive strategy of intervention for an area with urban potential surrounded by a consolidated urban area located in downtown Oporto. The UOPG no. 9 or Parcel no.9 - *Companhia Aurifícia* refers to an area located in the Cedofeita parish, in the northernmost part of Downtown Oporto (the parish is now a Union of Parishes along with Santo Ildefonso, Sé, Miragaia, São Nicolau, and Vitória). It consists of a large city block of pre-existing buildings with an undeveloped innermost area (Fig. 1). It is outlined by four streets: Rua dos Bragas, Rua de Cedofeita, Rua de Álvares Cabral, and Rua dos Mártires da Liberdade. It also is outlined by Praça da República, an important square in the center of Oporto. The core of the block is not accessible, as it is surrounded by buildings, which constitutes a nuisance for the analysis of the area. The UOPG 9's name comes from the metalworking and jewelry factory that used to operate in that block, which entrances still exists in Rua dos Bragas.

The intervention area is located in an area previously known as Quinta das Pamplonas. Between 1897 and 1905 the area suffered an allotment and all the parcels were sold. One lot, in particular, was bought by five wealthy businessmen, who dealt in goldsmithing and jewelry crafting, that used the area as a factory for their business. The *Companhia Aurifícia*

was a leading company back in these days, using steam-powered machines to work on high profile metals such as gold and silver. It also sold other metal goods, such as nails, metal wiring, etc.

Following the success of the company came the building of workers' housing in the adjacent areas to the industrial complex, creating the so-called 'islands', closed-off areas that are faced inwards that house persons that work nearby, like 'Ilha do Lampião' and 'Ilha das Engomadeiras'. The company went out of business at the end of the 20th Century and the building has been left in the derelict state ever since.

It constitutes a rare example of 19th-century industrialization, with very well kept facilities. In 2000, among the "*Porto: Capital Europeia da Cultura*", the area was studied for intervention by Souto Moura and Graça Correia, with planned to divide the block, create a new urban front and implement a museum, art galleries and art studios on the requalified *Companhia*. That plan did not come to fruition and in 2006 the area was constituted as a UOPG on the *Plano Director Municipal do Porto*.

Figure 1. UOPG 9 - Companhia Aurifícia location at Oporto, Portugal.



Source: Google Maps, 2019

According to the PDMP, the objective of making it a distinct UOPG is "the recuperation of the internal part of the block of the *Companhia Aurifícia* through the rehabilitation of the existing buildings with architectonic value and valuing of green areas, contributing to the overall revival of Downtown Oporto".

Furthermore, there are some urbanistic parameters that the PDMP deems as mandatory, such as:

- i) "The area must be mainly occupied by either public or private green zones and pieces of equipment. Some housing, commerce and service use is permitted";
- ii) "A walking or driving pathway must be considered between the streets that define the Aurifícia Block";
- iii) "The UOPG must be materialized through a Detailed Plan (Plano de Pormenor)".

In the first part of the work, we've analyzed both the intervention area and the study area, not only in terms of permeability, type of use, legibility and robustness but also in terms of accessibility and pre-existing buildings. Afterward, it was proposed some solutions for what was identified as the main problems of that same area, improving on its quality of urban environment without interfering on the already existing block in a negative way.

In the second part of the work, it was developed a proposal, integrating the block interior to the surrounding streets, opening the green area already existent to public access, and renovating the *Companhia Aurificia*'s historical buildings. Economically, this proposal will be viable through creating commercial spaces and offices at the renovated buildings, and also by the construction of an underground parking lot and a new residential building.

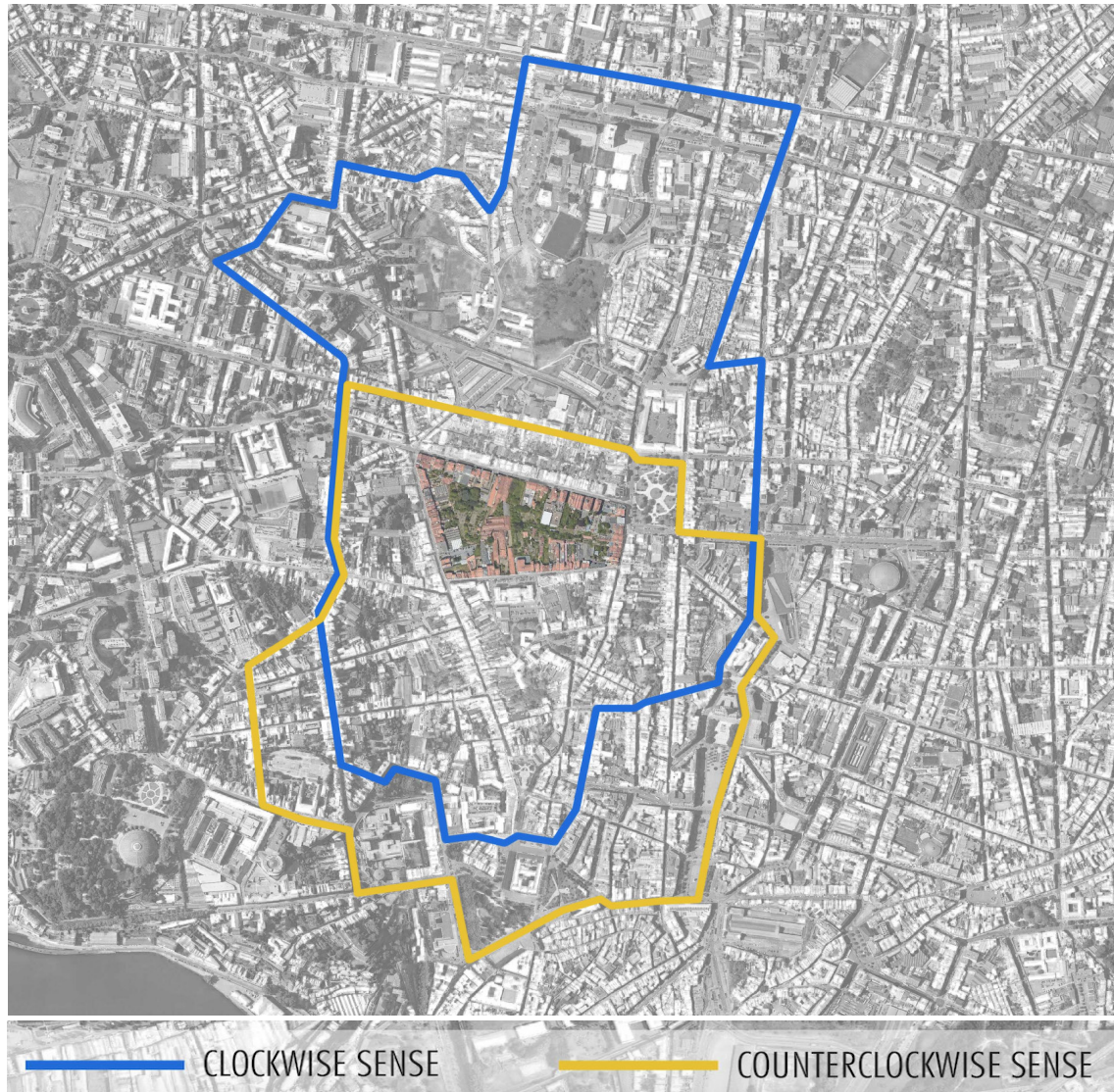
DIAGNOSIS OF THE INTERVENTION AREA

Analysis of accessibility

The UOPG 9 - *Companhia Aurificia* is outlined by pre-existing buildings (*Frente Urbana Contínua Consolidada*), with only two possibilities for inside access: the entrance of the factory "*Companhia Aurificia*", located in Rua dos Bragas nº230-254 (which is closed to public); and a parking lot in Rua de Cedofeita (which is walled off for the sake of its user's safety). Therefore, we considered the innermost part of the area to be unvisitable and focused on the access to the block itself.

The definition of the intervention area is given by the contour of UOPG 9 (Fig. 2). The area of study is given by the ability to circle the parcel in question by car in a clockwise and counterclockwise way. Both are important to define as any change in one could influence the other.

Figure 2. Study Area versus Area of Intervention



Source: the authors.

After an analysis of the main access axis to the area, it is possible to identify distinct uses, mainly by vehicles and pedestrians. The preferred axis of access for the outside of the block by vehicles is Rua Sacadura Cabral, Rua de Cedofeita, Rua dos Mártires da Liberdade and Travessa da Figueirôa. Regarding pedestrians, the most important axis is through Praça da República and the last part of the Rua dos Mártires da Liberdade.

The study of the topography of the access routes to the study area allowed us to better understand the slope of each possible entryway. Almost every street that provides access to the study area has a low slope but the streets inside the study area have higher slopes. In Rua dos Bragas it is possible to find an average slope of 5.3% and in Rua de Álvares Cabral the average slope is 4.6%.

Analysis of most relevant pre-existing buildings and points of interest

In terms of remarkable pre-existing buildings, the PDMP categorizes eight buildings inside the intervention area as following (Tab. 1):

Table 1. Remarkable buildings in the Parcel no. 9 - Companhia Aurifícia, Oporto.

N.º	Designação	Localização	Nível clas.
C11	Edifício de Habitação e Comércio	R. Mártires da Liberdade	
C12	Edifício Albergues Noturnos	R. Mártires da Liberdade	
C13	Edifício de Habitação e Comércio	Rua dos Bragas	
C40	Companhia Aurifícia	R. dos Bragas, 230-254	IVC 7
C41	Edifício de Habitação (Palacete)	R. de Álvares Cabral, 384	IVC 7
C42	Moradia	R. de Álvares Cabral, 306	IVC 7
C44	Moradia e Jardim	R. de Álvares Cabral, 184	IVC 7
C45	Edifício de Habitação Ferreira Alves & Irmão	R. de Álvares Cabral, 20	IVC 7

Source: PDMP, 2010.

These eight buildings are considered “*Imóveis de Interesse Patrimonial*” and therefore cannot be demolished, only can be intervened if authorized. Furthermore, the *Companhia Aurifícia* is considered a ZOPA (*Zona de Potencial Arqueológico*) n. 69, which means that it is an area with potential archeological interest.

Figure 3. Representation of remarkable pre-existing buildings located in the Parcel no.9, Oporto.



Source: the authors.

The PDMP has no special restrictions on any arboreal species in the area. Nevertheless, the residents of the area take great pride in a large ‘Jacaranda’ tree located next to the entrance in Rua dos Bragas.

Permeability

The area is not physically permeable one the block is too big and there aren't many possibilities to reach and cross it. The visual permeability is not strong, also. Despite the buildings not being very high and the streets not being narrow, the relation between them does not favor its visual permeability.

There is a segregation between pedestrians and vehicles. Rua de Cedofeita's long stretch is pedestrian, closed to vehicles, which also strengthens its lack of physical permeability.

Variety of uses

Regarding its variety, the area is rich and offers many different uses and activities. All the streets surrounding the area and the block have a healthy mix of uses among residential, commercial, and institutional.

The buildings in the block and its surroundings are of different types, ages, and sizes. At Rua de Cedofeita, the buildings are older and in a more traditional fashion. At Rua dos Bragas e Rua de Álvares Cabral, they are newer and more modern, but there are also some old historical buildings in those streets.

Rua de Cedofeita is an important commercial street too, which is a magnet for this area. The presence of the *Faculdade de Direito da Universidade do Porto* in Rua dos Bragas also serves as an important anchor of movement and gives variety to the area.

Rua de Álvares Cabral houses headquarters to institutions as *Ordem dos Arquitectos*, a using completely different from the two *Pingo Doce* grocery stores in the vicinity.

However, in spite of all the variety of uses in the area for both residents and visitors, there are not many options for the poor, elders or children.

Legibility

The block's legibility is not very clear. Some important buildings, as the *Capela da Nossa Senhora dos Anjos*, the *Companhia Aurifícia* of the *Faculdade de Direito da Universidade do Porto*, may go unnoticed. Even being impressive and alike from the pattern of the surrounding buildings, the width of the streets and the big size of the block often give no space for users to read them. There are not many elements that contribute to the area's legibility: the paths are clear, despite they are few; there are no many nodes, just the corners; there are no landmarks, nor edges.

Robustness

Regarding robustness, the block's buildings could be considered favorable: the lots are length, although not the buildings, providing good ventilation and natural light to their interiors; they have many doors and shop windows, giving easy access from the streets; the buildings are not so high. On the other hand, at the specific quarters around this block, the form of the streets and sidewalks does not give many options to extend

outwards into adjacent public outdoor space, and there is not much integration between the public and the private.

Since many of the buildings of this block are not modern and were previously used as housing for larger families, they possess some qualities suitable for other uses. The impressive facades, high ceilings, and compartmentalization of old residential buildings are characteristics that are very important, explaining why they are now used to house institutions.

PROPOSAL

Criteria for the Proposal

With the previous analysis in mind, some changes were proposed in order to solve Parcel no. 9's problems and shortcomings.

The first of which is improving the accessibility of the area, permitting pedestrians to enter the *Companhia Aurifícia* block by three-axis: i) The ancient entrance in Rua dos Bragas; ii) The vacant lot in Rua de Álvares Cabral; iii) The parking lot in Rua de Cedofeita.

These passages aim to create paths that lead people through the block and not around it.

Regarding the already built buildings, the proposal aims in rehabilitating some of the more economically viable ones using a formula that already has been proven successful: retrofitting turn of the century housing in institutional, commercial, and office buildings.

The actual *Antiga Companhia Aurifícia* buildings and space should be preserved since they maintain pleasing aesthetics and could be integrated into public or commercial use connecting the pathways implemented. The idea is to keep the defunct factory and the worker's houses and warehouses provided they could be used for some public or commercial use. It also aims to requalify the inside of the block with a large public green area that would connect all the pathways and the intervention in the *Antiga Companhia Aurifícia*, including the Praça da República, by access through Rua Mártires da Liberdade.

To provide financial feasibility to the proposal, it will be included a 4-floor residential building and an underground car park, not only to serve the new users but also to substitute the old parking lots that will be subtracted to the city.

Thus, the program should include the general objectives, functions or planned activities, the public services, the main formal constraints (building highs and dominant alignments, the ground configuration of the blocks, etc) with a view to improving and integrating the area of intervention in the study area.

Summarizing, the proposal consists in (Fig. 4):

- Demolition of 'ilhas' and other derelict buildings in the core of the block;
- Rehabilitation and integration of the *Companhia Aurifícia* in the new urban morphology with new uses (storefronts, offices, galleries, workshops, public uses);

- Requalification of the interior of the block, creating a public green area and integrating it with the streets (semi-public space - garden with opening hours);
- Controlling the construction indices and the volumetrics in the new building;
- Space requalification;
- Better channels and accessibility with the pre-existing axis of access;
- Safeguarding of patrimonial values and industrial atmosphere of the block.

Figure 4. View of the 3-axis proposed pathways in Parcel no.9, Oporto.



Source: the authors.

Outlining a Proposal - OASRN Competition

In 2012, the Order of Architects - Northern Regional Section (OASRN) held an International Seminar on Rehabilitation and Urban Regeneration, and in 2013 it promoted an International Architecture Ideas Contest for this area, once it is a central location in the city and has great potential for the dynamization of the Boavista-Baixa axis (PORTO, 2018), with an inherent richness of its built-up and exceptionality of the interior spaces of this block. The objective was to contribute to the definition of planning strategies, methodologies of action and useful work tools in the area of rehabilitation and sustainable development of the city.

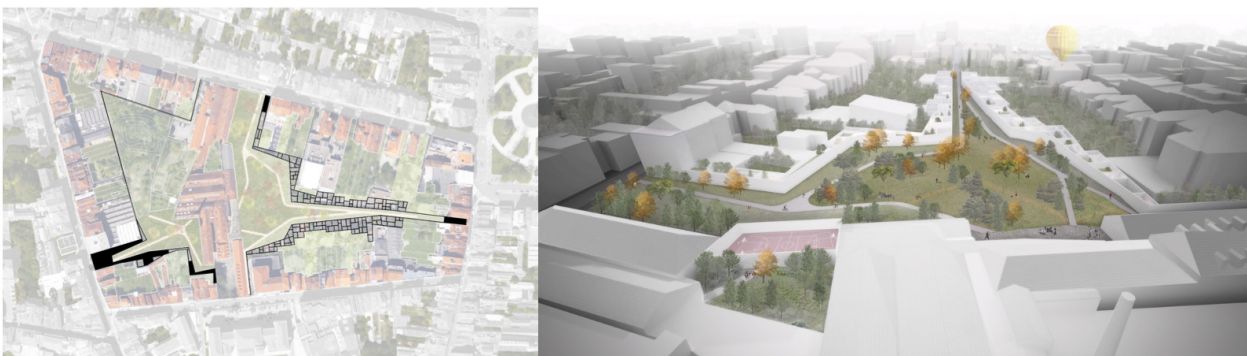
Figure 5. QR code for accessing the video “Process - English version - The Call for Ideas International Competition Norte 41° | Urban Regeneration of the block Aurifícia, Porto, Portugal,



Source: <http://www.concursosoasrn.com/concurso.asp?Id=25&action=home>; accessed on Feb. 24, 2019

The contest served as a call for ideas for the intervention area, providing some pointers for what some more experienced planners and architects see as fit for the UOPG no.9 block.

Figure 6. Winning proposal of the contest by Humberto & Humberto.



Source: Alves, Ribeiro e Sousa (2012).

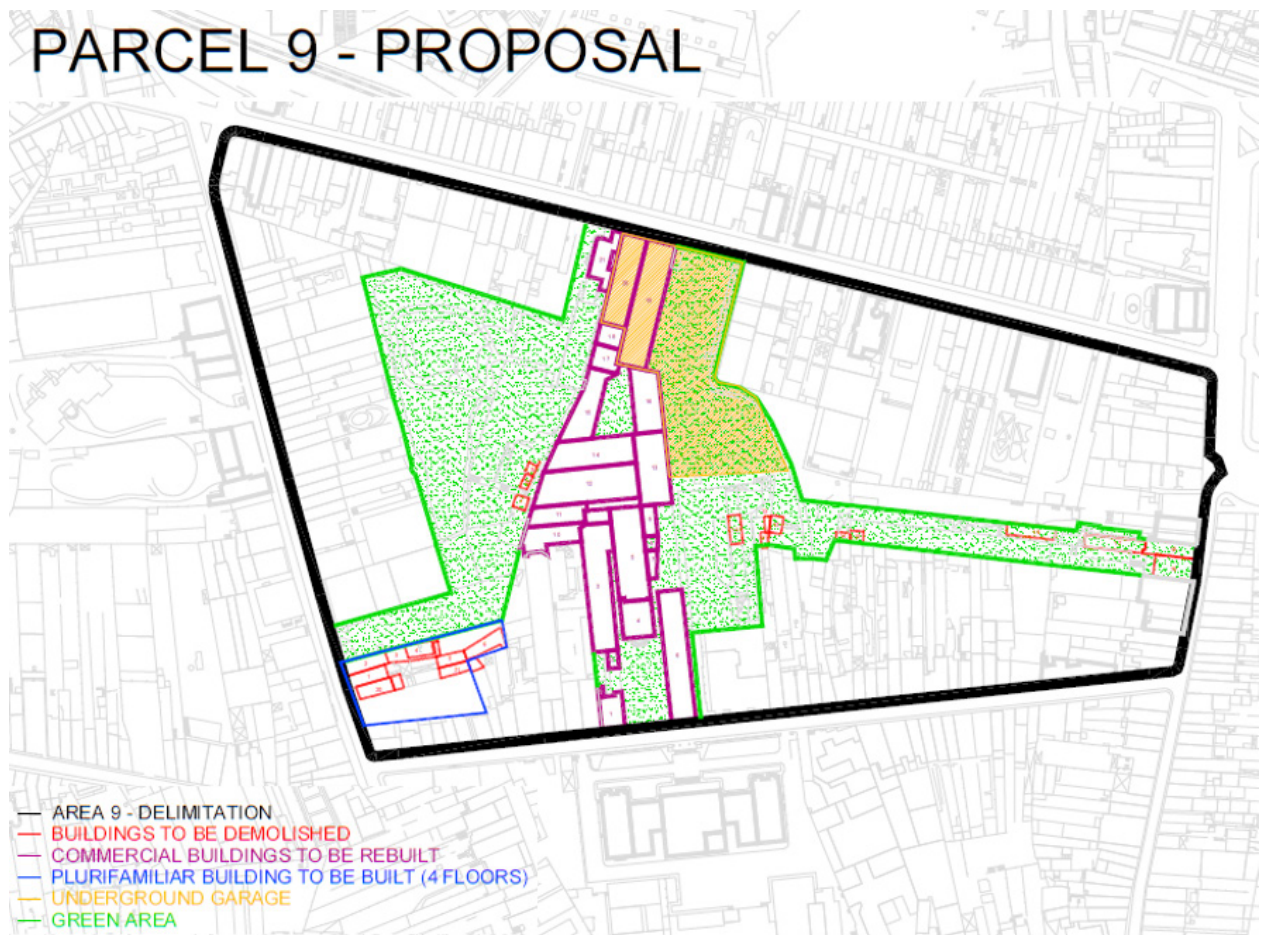
The Proposal

The flagship of the proposal is the restoration and reconstruction of the *Companhia Aurifícia* buildings, creating a large cultural and commercial center integrated to the

surrounding green area and inside the block, connecting the surrounding streets and increasing the permeability of pedestrians.

Old and abandoned factories in other cities around the world have already been remodeled to this end such as the LX Factory in Lisbon, Kulturbrauerei in Berlin, Landschaftspark in Duisburg, Chelsea Market in New York, Bhering Factory in Rio de Janeiro, Casa das Caldeiras in São Paulo and Companhia Lionesa in Porto. The idea is to refurbish the different buildings associated with the old *Companhia Aurifícia* and develop a new space capable of various uses. The area and pre-existing buildings are capable of handling commercial storefronts, art galleries and workshops, food courts or even offices for startup hubs or small to medium businesses. A mix of these uses should be possible, as well, provided that there is an adequate use of space and buildings. The use of storefronts facing ample green areas should be a strong calling card for shops and businesses. The construction should respect the Industrial Age architecture and keep the areas suitable for changing of uses if the specific use it is given does not pan out (BENTLEY et al., 1996).

Figure 7. Proposal for the study area.



Source: the authors.

The proposal about the innermost area of the block is to refurbish the fallow area into public access gardens maintained by the storefront spaces or offices kept in the *Companhia*

Aurificia's buildings and warehouses. The gardens would be accessible during the day but would also have opening and closing hours in order to maintain the area safe.

The gardens associated with the *Lar de Santa Teresa de Jesus* building, located in the Rua Alvares Cabral, should also be maintained and kept, as they are a clear example of a 19th-century private garden. There are some areas that inspire these visions and illustrate it, as the Jardín del Príncipe de Anglona, in Madrid, the Oporto Botanical Gardens, and the Jardines de Monforte in Valencia.

The proposal also considers a vertical garden in order to solve the link between the pre-existing buildings and the green area proposed to be built. So there would be a visual anchor inviting the exploration of the new innermost part of the *Companhia Aurificia* block. This kind of entryway could be placed both in the Rua de Cedofeita front, on the Rua Alvares Cabral, and maybe even on another smaller entry corridor facing the Praça da República/Rua Mártires da Liberdade area, assuming that some buildings should be demolished.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT EXPECTED IMPROVEMENTS

The proposal focuses on the need to create physical forms and activity patterns that can be easily understood by users of the area. Demolishing some buildings and building new ones is part of a strategy to turn this area into a more organized concept. This new organization allows people to easily recognize what is going inside the block by just looking from the streets surrounding it. The most important thing is that people feel they are being welcomed to enter this space and this feeling only occurs whether it is possible to fully understand what it is.

One very important concern with the proposal is that the paths entering the block must have a form where people realize the concept of crossing the block and use that area for their activities. There is a need to pass an image of belonging and security while revealing the new concept.

A very interesting path is the one entering the old *Companhia Aurificia* as the purpose is to mix both modern, trendy and history in the same spot. It is all about reviving an old building without changing its DNA.

The main goal of this proposal is that people are able to fully understand exactly what is being created without losing the mystery and atmosphere of the block. The proposal presented in this paper aims to build a solution that can stand the same taste of the time the original *Companhia Aurificia* did.

Even two centuries after its original construction, the spaces designed at that time can nowadays be retrofitted to accommodate new uses in an easy manner, due to their high ceiling and multiple points of access. The ground level pavilions formerly used for metalworking can be divided up in a way so as to receive multiple storefronts (using the shell of the pavilion itself and the many points of access) for simple commerce uniting Rua dos Bragas and Rua Álvares Cabral, or, alternatively, closed up in modules and functioning as a secluded hub for different small companies. If either those concepts fail,

the modules could be torn down and used for a farmer's market or workshops/galleries. We can even envision the ground floors of this complex as a small school if need be. The configuration of the industrial buildings is such that many uses are feasible, making it a very robust solution. The same can be said of the houses, very similar to the ones on Rua Álvares Cabral that presently serve as headquarters to various organizations. In a similar manner, the parking lot could easily be changed to fit a public charging hub for electric cars or storeroom for computer servers / commercial storage-goods should parking lots become less in demand in the next decades.

While refurbishing the industrial warehouses and houses that constitute the *Companhia Aurifícia's* complex, the proposal should, therefore, afford the conscient decision of using that space in a way that can easily be adapted to other uses.

In terms of green areas, special attention should be given to the creation of microclimates, since the gardens are outlined by 3-4 story buildings. Correct use of trees can give both shade and sunlight in order to make the area hospitable. Sparse seating can be fundamental since this is a place for idling, although the pathways should be wide enough for relaxation and simple crossing of the block, giving the whole innermost part of the UOPG no.9 room for both uses.

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