

Railway buildings out of service in Portugal

Rehabilitation and new uses

INTBAU World Congress 2025 - Breakout Session - October 24, 2025

António Borges | Infraestruturas de Portugal | IP Património

Introduction

Following the closure of several railway lines over the last 40 years, as well as the reduction in service at several stations throughout the country, railway buildings and around a hundred stations were closed, which led to their degradation and abandonment.

These are historic buildings that characterize Portuguese railway architecture throughout its expansion, consisting of modular constructions and unique construction details, which for decades were fundamental to the urban and social development of regions, cities, towns and other places in Portugal.

Development

In recent years, it has been possible to develop programs, projects, and rehabilitate historic buildings, aiming at giving them new uses, but always with the goal of preserving the heritage. This cooperation has been intensified through partnerships with municipalities, business owners, academia, and various entities, resulting in projects and construction projects that enhance the history and heritage of railway buildings.



Concept

The main concept that we try to develop with our partners in rehabilitation projects is based on the premise, as far as possible, of maintaining the building's constructive structure, preferably maintaining its volumetric and functional configurations, adapted to new uses and functions, recovering and rehabilitating the existing constructive aspects and finishes, to ensure the historical continuity of the stations, covered platforms and other railway buildings.



01. Vale do Tua Station

Tua Valley Interpretation Centre

Architects: Rosmaninho+Azevedo Arquitectos

Construction Owner: ADVRT/EDP/Carrazeda de Ansiães City Council

Partnership: ADVRT / EDP / Carrazeda de Ansiães City Council / IP / IP Património



01. Vale do Tua Station

The basic concept of the intervention "*...in the Foz Tua railway station warehouses, focuses on the recovery and reuse of existing buildings and their constituent elements of significant value, ...*" as well as encouraging "*...the use of traditional materials and their techniques, combined with the application of new materials that harmoniously fit with the previous ones.*"

At Goods Shed, where the project involves adaptation and preservation, "*...the proposal aims at restoring the entire structure, without affecting the authenticity of the existing building and the 'spirit' of the place, through the adoption of an intervention philosophy that preserves and enhances the preexisting elements, seeking an appropriate articulation between the new and the existing.*" Regarding "*... the north warehouse, the language of the contemporary intervention seeks to stabilize the existing built context, using strong materiality and an identifiable geometry in its relationship with the environment...*" employing construction elements that recreate and recover the language used in other railway buildings, characteristic of industrial construction, namely the zinc sheet cladding.

01. Vale do Tua Station

Details

The first image shows a detail of the construction, finishing, and color tests on the facade cladding of the Goods Shed, composed of wood planks and finishing bits. The second image shows the same facade in the foreground, with the zinc-clad warehouse in contrast.





02. Mirandela Station

Railway station, Railway Museum, Mirandela Museum, Multi-functional and Learning spaces, Office areas

Architect: Nuno Sousa (AMTQT)

Construction Owner: Mirandela City Council

Partnership: Mirandela City Council/AMTQT/IP/IP Património



02. Mirandela Station

In this project, the main objective was the "... rehabilitation and conservation of a historically significant building, characterized by an architectural language that evolved over an extended period of time, during which it was adapted to accommodate various functions, while maintaining its original purpose — a Railway Station intended to serve the population of Mirandela and to promote economic development and accessibility within a geographically remote region."

All of this was carried out with the aim of redeveloping the building and its surroundings so that, in the future, it may "... once again welcome the train, serving both daily and tourist mobility along the Tua Line, and, in connection with this component, it is proposed to create a cultural space dedicated to the Tua Line, its impact on the people of Mirandela, and on the region as a whole."

02. Mirandela Station

From a construction standpoint, *"the new interventions consisted of requalification works, replacing existing elements where these were deteriorated, or where the new function of the space required modification."* Contemporary materials and construction techniques were adopted. However, *"restoration techniques were also foreseen for the recovery of interior ceilings and walls, among other details, materials, and construction solutions of historical and architectural relevance."*





02. Mirandela Station

Details

Wall in wooden structure and partition with lime mortar coating. The structure consists of a wooden grid, with laths over planks, over which a slatted structure is nailed. The filling is made with mortar and/or gravel, and possibly natural fibers such as straw. The entire structure is coated with lime mortar on both sides.

Facade coating tests with lime mortar and final finish.



02. Mirandela Station

Details

Original main staircase

During the rehabilitation process and in its final restored condition



03. Macedo de Cavaleiros Station

Welcome Center, Geopark, Exhibition Space, Multi-use Pavilion and Creative Residence

Architects: Alexandre Loureiro / Paulo Providência

Construction Owner: Macedo de Cavaleiros City Council

Partnership: Macedo de Cavaleiros City Council/IP/IP Património

03. Macedo de Cavaleiros Station

The rehabilitation of the old Railway Station and Goods Shed "... is linked to the recovery of the railway channel space for the construction of a cycle line (@ecopista) to reinforce sports, leisure and tourist use, the creation of a square generating a new urban centrality, the reinforcement of the museum infrastructure of the Macedo de Cavaleiros Geopark hostel, the provision of a Multi-purpose Pavilion and Creative Residences, as well as functions of a tourist Welcome Center and general infrastructure for these programs."



03. Macedo de Cavaleiros Station

Details

Rehabilitation of the wooden roof structure and architectural pillars made of steel railway rails in the Goods Shed, and the square flooring made of reused wooden sleepers from the railway lines.





04. Pocinho Halt Station and Foz Côa Station

Dining Room and Tourist Housing

Architect: João Rafael

Construction Owner: Casas do Côro

Partnership: Casas do Côro/IP/IP Património





04. Pocinho Halt Station and Foz Côa Station

"The building of the former halt station is part of the group of disused buildings belonging to the Railway Public Domain, which lost their original function with the deactivation of the Douro Line." It is a construction over 100 years old, built according to a modular standard project that was applied across several railway lines.

Conceptually, the project defined that "the interior of the former halt station building would remain as an open space for the dining area, with an integrated pantry," including "a large, glazed opening on the north façade, intended to allow interior views towards the river — to which the building had originally turned its back. The window is supported by steel beams embedded in the masonry walls and clad with matte black steel plates," replicating a typical constructive feature of railway architecture — the use of rail sections as structural elements.



04. Pocinho Halt Station and Foz Côa Station

The building complex, the station and the Toilets, were found to be in a very poor state of conservation. The main objective of the project was "to obtain a housing unit suitable for a family or two couples of friends, making use of the outdoor areas for leisure, ensuring both privacy and harmony with the surrounding landscape and environment." With regard to the rehabilitation of the historical heritage, and taking into account the volumetry to be maintained and "the strong visual identity of the buildings, with their stonework, white plastered façades, and decorative tiles," the project established "the conservation of the existing volumetry and finishes, including the reinstatement of tiles and lacquered wooden frames, as well as the reconstruction of the roofs and the train shed over the platform, preserving all elements of high aesthetic value and ensuring the continuity of their strong presence within the landscape."



04. Pocinho Halt Station and Foz Côa Station

Details

Rehabilitation of the north façade, including the restoration of the tile panels, the stonework, and the metallic structure of the platform roof, as well as the small building housing the toilets, where the timber roof structure was also renewed, reinstating its original constructive design.

05. Marvão Beirã Station

MARVÃO TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE SUMMER SCHOOL 2018

Organized by: INTBAU, The International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture and Urbanism

Founder & Patron: His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales

The Rafael Manzano Prize for New Traditional Architecture, extended to Portugal thanks to the Serra Henriques Foundation, with the High Patronage of His Excellency the President of the Portuguese Republic

Thanks to the support of:

Richard H. Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust

Fundação Serra Henriques

Fundación EKABA

With the collaboration of:

Câmara Municipal de Marvão

Infraestruturas de Portugal / IP Património

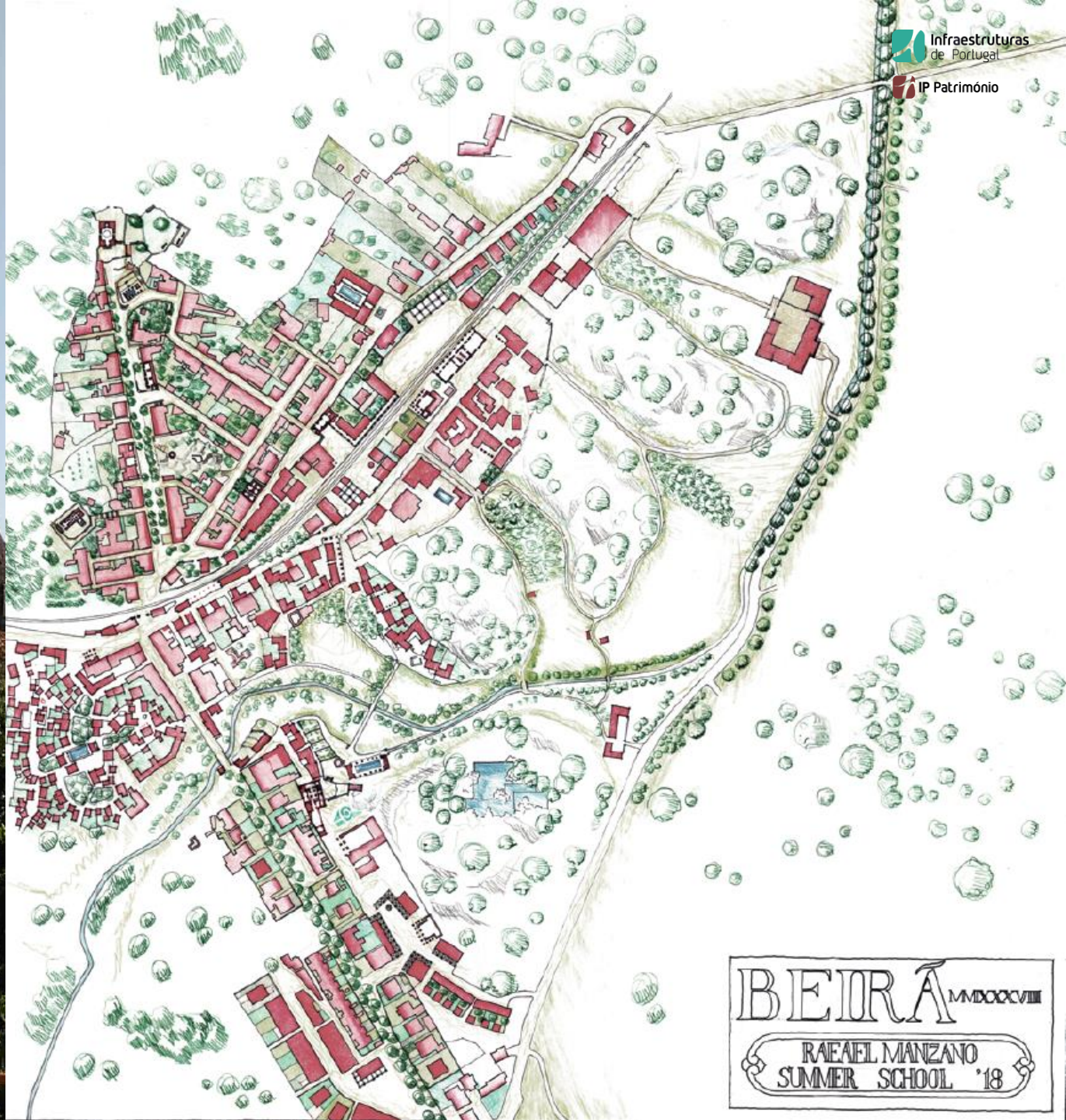
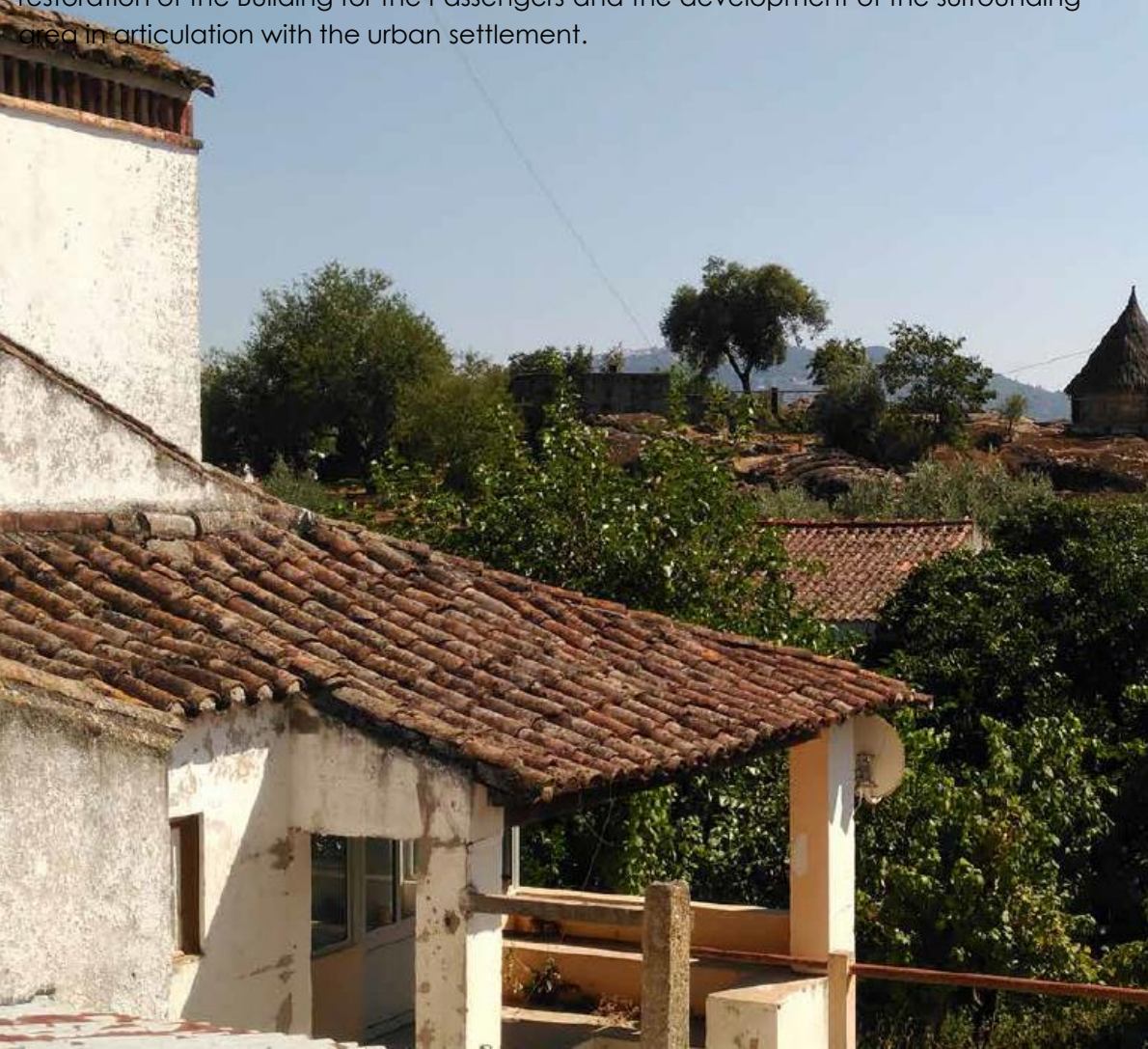
Associação A Anta (Beirã)

Junta de Freguesia da Beirã



05. Marvão-Beirã Station

The Architecture Summer School in the Marvão-Beirã Station proved to be an energizing event for the town, eager of social life. During this event, a group of approximately 40 people, among students, professors and lecturers interacted with the local population for two weeks. The association of IP Património to this event is part of the company's objective of stimulating, rescuing and rehabilitating its vast built patrimony. Some subjects matters under discussion were suggested by the students, such as the restoration of the Building for the Passengers and the development of the surrounding area in articulation with the urban settlement.



06. Alcântara-Terra Station, Lisboa

HORTA NAVIA

ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION PROJECT FOR THE
ALCÂNTARA-TERRA RAILWAY STATION AND ADJACENT AREA

Escola Superior Gallaecia Integrated Master's Degree

INFRAESTRUTURAS DE PORTUGAL

Infraestruturas de Portugal (IP) is the public company resulting from the merger of Rede Ferroviária Nacional (REFER) and EP – Estradas de Portugal. IP, whose sole shareholder is the Portuguese State, operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Planning and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Finance.

IP PATRIMÓNIO

IP Património is the public entity within the Infraestruturas de Portugal Group responsible for managing a vast real estate portfolio, consisting mainly of buildings of historical and cultural significance. The mission of IP Património is to recover, rehabilitate, and revitalise this built heritage.

FUNDAÇÃO SERRA HENRIQUES

The Serra Henriques Foundation is dedicated to cultural heritage and territorial development. In 2017, in collaboration with INTBAU, it launched in Portugal the Iberian Award for New Traditional Architecture, under the High Patronage of His Excellency the President of the Republic.

INTBAU

In 2019, INTBAU signed a cooperation agreement with IP Património to study the intervention at the Alcântara-Terra Railway Station, in collaboration with the Integrated Master's Degree in Architecture and Urbanism of Escola Superior Gallaecia.

ESCOLA SUPERIOR GALLAECIA

Escola Superior Gallaecia (now integrated into Universidade Portucalense) functioned as a centre for the creation of arts, research, and the dissemination of science, culture, and technology.



HORTA NAVIA

PROJECTO DE INTERVENÇÃO NA ESTAÇÃO FERROVIÁRIA DE ALCÂNTARA-TERRA E ZONA ENVOLVENTE

DOSSIER DESENVOLVIDO NO ÂMBITO DO MESTRADO
INTEGRADO DA ESCOLA SUPERIOR GALLAECIA



FUNDAÇÃO
SERRA HENRIQUES

06. Alcântara-Terra Station, Lisboa

"Escola Superior Gallaecia accepted the challenge proposed by INTBAU Portugal (with whom the institution has developed several partnerships), inviting 4th-year students of the Integrated Master's Degree in Architecture and Urbanism (MIAU) to develop their academic intervention projects for the Alcântara-Terra Railway Station and its surrounding area in Lisbon, as part of an initiative promoted by Infraestruturas de Portugal (IP Património). The work took place during the 2019–2020 academic year, within the framework of the curricular units Project–Urbanism (1st semester) and Project–Heritage (2nd semester), involving four professors and thirty students."

Mariana Correia / Gilberto Duarte Carlos



06. Alcântara-Terra Station, Lisboa

07. Sabor Railway Branch

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN: The Sabor Railway Branch

ISCTE - Final Architecture Project

1st Semester | Class 3 – Academic Year 2022/2023

"It was with great enthusiasm and dedication that IP Património accompanied the development of the final-year projects by the Architecture students of ISCTE focused on the Sabor Railway Branch.

The Sabor Line was inaugurated in 1938 and ceased operations in 1988. Since then, with only a few isolated exceptions, the entire railway corridor and its associated buildings have progressively deteriorated, with no prospects for reactivation of their original function or for any alternative use that could support the rehabilitation and preservation of this railway heritage.

The selection of the Sabor Line as the subject for final-year projects by the ISCTE faculty was therefore an excellent initiative. Combined with the enthusiasm of the local municipalities, it may contribute to raising awareness of the crucial role that railway activity has played in the territorial and economic development of the region.

As a final outcome, we have a collection of projects covering the entire branch line, displaying formal and programmatic coherence throughout the territory, and demonstrating a general level of quality that has led the participating municipalities to make prestigious venues available to host the general exhibition of the works between September and January."

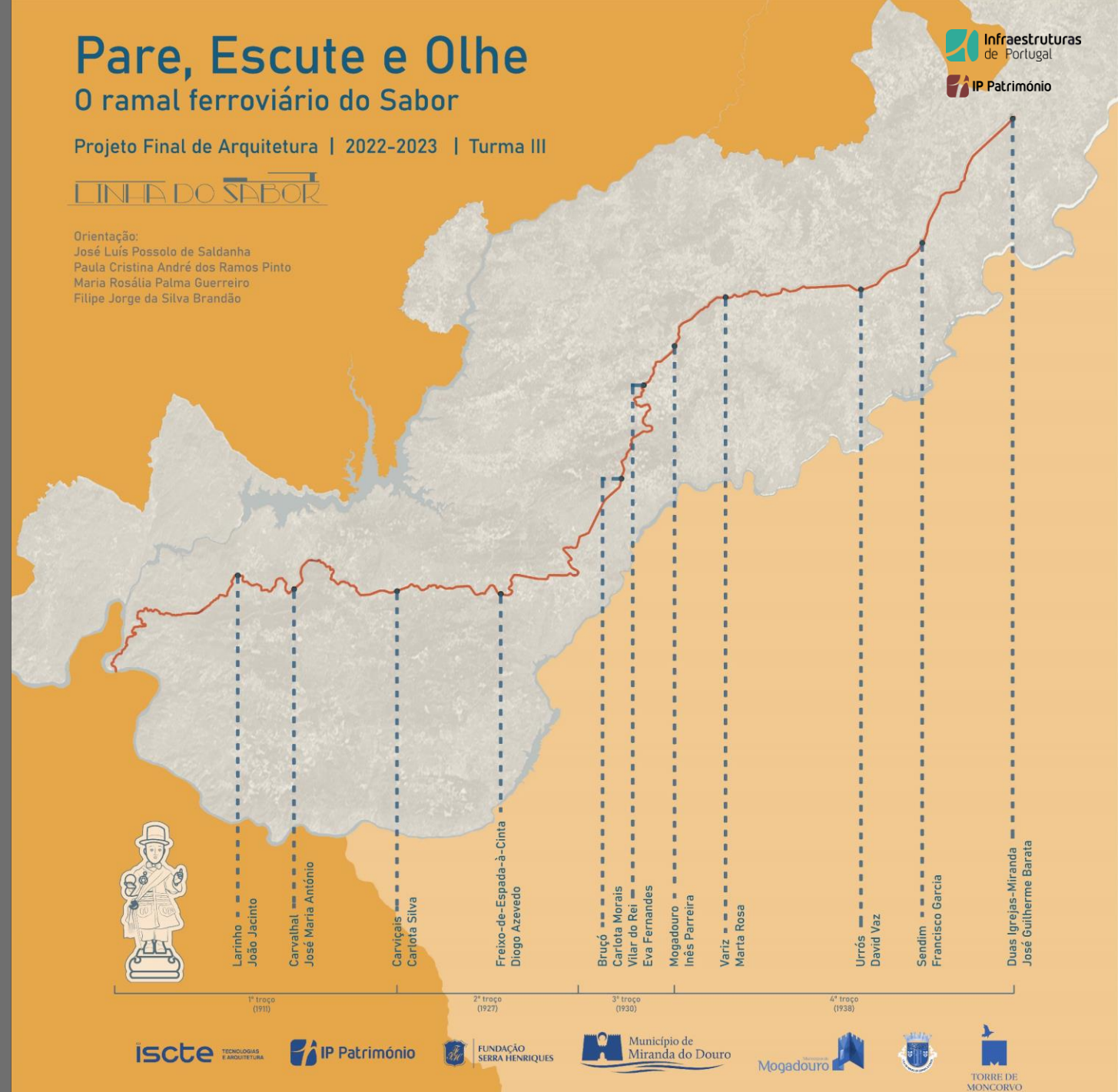
Pare, Escute e Olhe

O ramal ferroviário do Sabor

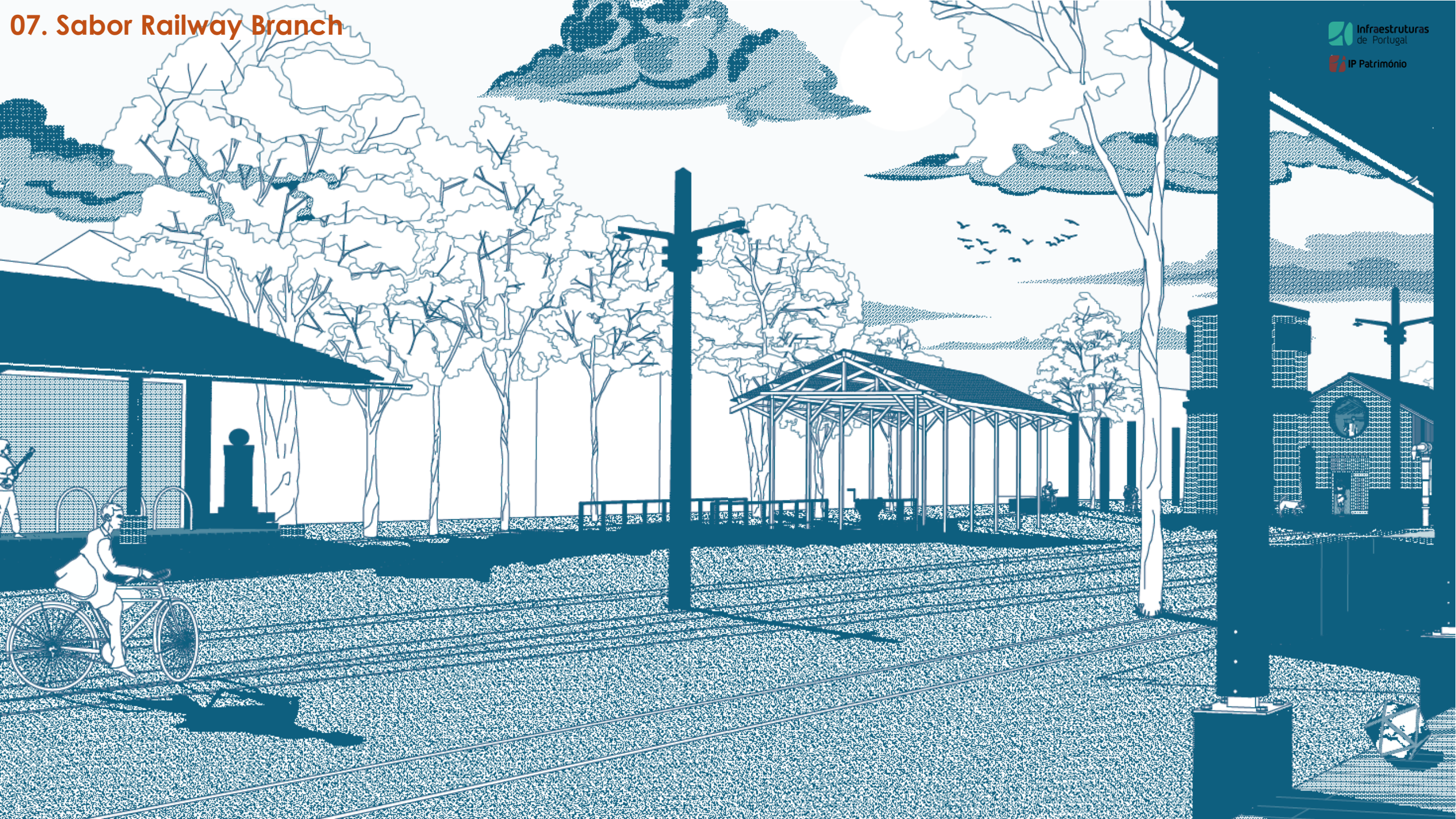
Projeto Final de Arquitetura | 2022-2023 | Turma III

LINHA DO SABOR

Orientação:
José Luís Possolo de Saldanha
Paula Cristina André dos Ramos Pinto
Maria Rosália Palma Guerreiro
Filipe Jorge da Silva Brandão



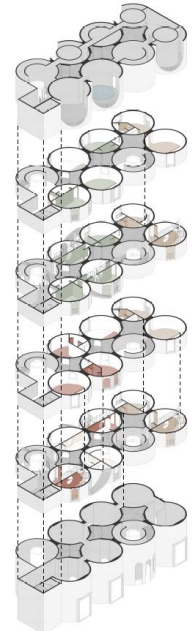
07. Sabor Railway Branch



Estação Ferroviária de Vilar do Rei



Carbide Drill / 61x100 L200
 Permijärn Camionvagn / 61x100 L200
 Långsmåttigt Exploater / 61x100 L200



08. Alcântara-Terra Station - Goods Shed

Archive and Common Area

Architects: António Borges (IPP) / Jorge Duarte (IPP) / Tatiana Castanhas (IPP)

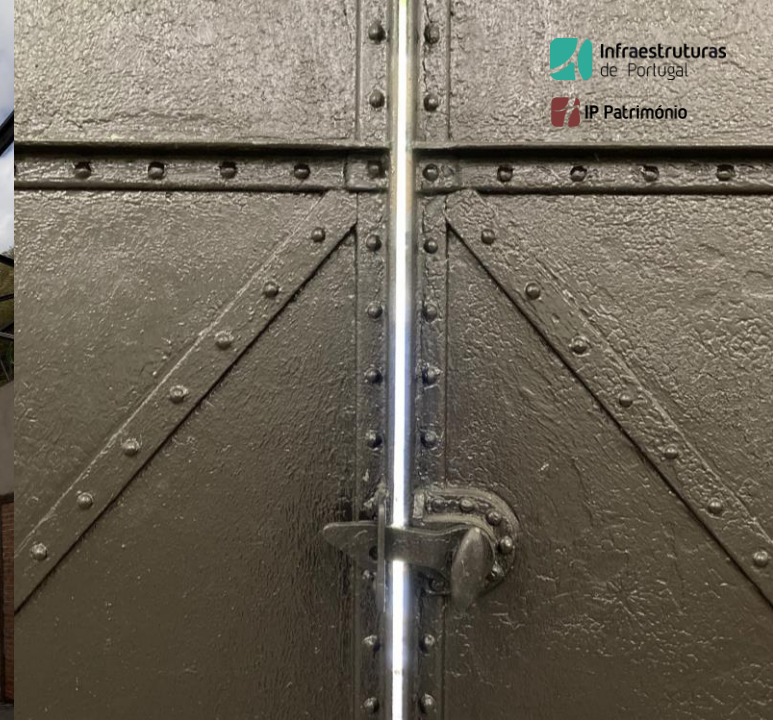
Construction Owner: IP (Infraestruturas de Portugal SA)



08. Alcântara-Terra Station - Goods Shed

Details

Some details of the rehabilitation of the metal roof structure, pre-intervention condition, the walls, and the original gate.





09. Aveiro Station – Old Housing

New IP facilities in Aveiro

Architects: António Borges (IPP) / Jorge Duarte (IPP) / Tatiana Castanhas (IPP)

Construction Owner: IP (Infraestruturas de Portugal SA)





09. Aveiro Station – Old Housing

The basic concept for the restoration and rehabilitation of a set of three existing buildings follows the existing structural and spatial matrix and adapts it to the required program. The geometric composition of the facades will be maintained and renovated, except for the east elevation, which will be redesigned to provide the building with formal coherence. Considering the volumetric coherence and the unique architectural composition of a specific period of the railway, the restoration project for these buildings includes construction solutions that do not detract from the building's formal quality, emphasizing construction detailing, and attempting at, whenever possible, rehabilitating or replacing existing materials and details to preserve the legacy of railway architecture.





10. Castelo Branco Station - Old Dormitory

New IP facilities in Castelo Branco

Architects: António Borges (IPP) / Jorge Duarte (IPP) / Tatiana Castanhas (IPP)

Construction Owner: IP (Infraestruturas de Portugal SA)



10. Castelo Branco Station - Old Dormitory

