

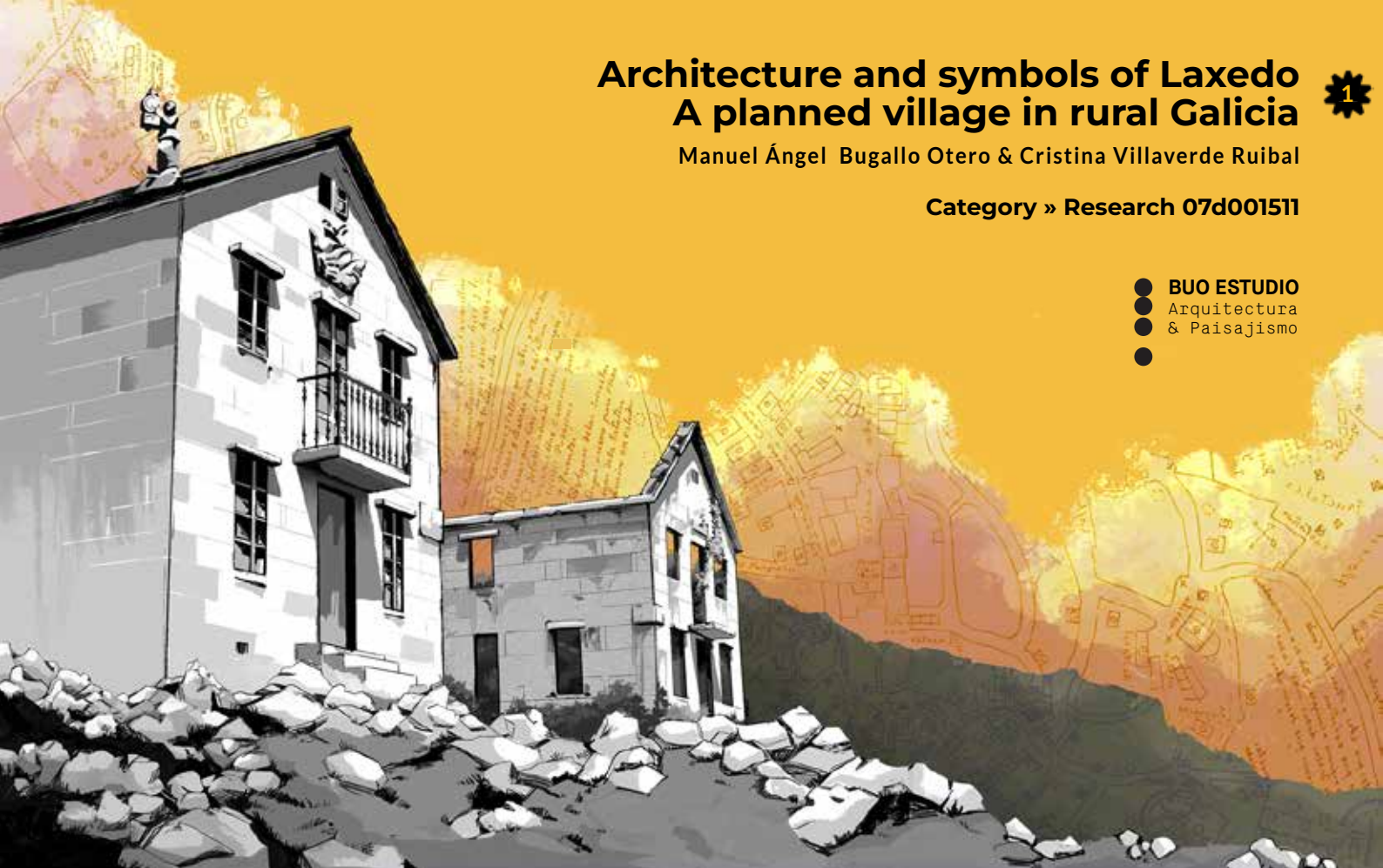
Architecture and symbols of Laxedo A planned village in rural Galicia



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Laxedo is a traditional Galician nucleus. A planning carried out in the first third of the twentieth century and based on the application of urban principles of European and Carioca influence, accompanied by a design full of Masonic symbolism gave rise to a unique and singular place not only in Galicia but in Spain.

Manuel Ángel Bugallo Otero (México City 1978) is an architect and landscape designer with more than 20 years of professional experience. He is the co-director of BUO ESTUDIO, a multidisciplinary team based on the principles of biophilia. His work focuses on architecture, landscaping and consultancy projects. He is a member of the study and territorial stewardship groups O Suído and GESDOGAL.

Cristina Villaverde Ruibal (Pontevedra 1961) is an art historian with more than 30 years of experience in the field of cultural heritage, which she has applied in her work as an archivist in different institutions, as a librarian and as the person in charge of the Municipal Youth Information Office of the Council of A Lama until 2022. She was the founder and coordinator of the municipal magazine A Pedreira, a cultural reference in the province of Pontevedra.

They have been working together for more than 15 years to promote the cultural and natural heritage of the municipality of A Lama, where Laxedo is located.

Disclosure of architectural heritage values

Architecture and symbols of Laxedo. A planned village in the Galician countryside that addresses a rather unique topic of study: the evolution of a rural settlement with an intervention not typical of its typology and scale.

The application of urban planning principles from the carioca plans of the city of Rio de Janeiro, such as those of Beaurepaire, the Improvement Commission, Pereira Passos and Agache, sought to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. From hygienist principles to the influence of the École de Beaux Arts, including the guidelines proposed by the City Beautiful movement, all this makes Laxedo an unconventional village.

The study of its urban form highlights the application of European-influenced carioca plans and the existence of an underlying Masonic layout, confirmed by the location and orientation of several buildings.

The sculptures and bas-reliefs scattered throughout the site have a strong symbolism related to divinities and myths of the Greco-Roman world and of the Galician rural imaginary itself, and maintain a close link with the cardinal points, the stars and the cycles of agriculture.

The study methodology is based on the principles of "citizen science" and "collective intelligence". The work was approached through a detailed study of the available documentary material, with the sketches made by the "count" and the territorial drifts and collective mappings with the neighbors being key pieces of the study.

The contribution to the field of architectural heritage is evident when studying a traditional rural nucleus unique in Galicia. Our objective is to value, protect and disseminate the cultural and natural heritage of Laxedo.

Laxedo is a conventional village, in appearance.



Count Cabanelas

When we talk about Manuel Barreiro Cabanelas, we are referring to a material heritage of great value. Within the count's legacy, there is a series of graphic documents that allow us to know in detail the development plans carried out in Laxedo, as well as all those longings and desires that remained unfinished when he went to Rio de Janeiro.

The graphic documentation consists of at least three hand-drawn sketches by Barreiro Cabanelas, which describe in great detail the work already carried out in the Laxedo neighborhood, accompanied by notes on the planned development for the coming years.

The first of these sketches was made by the count in Rio de Janeiro in 1936, based on his memories, and shows astonishing accuracy. Once finished, he sent it to his cousin Alejandro Cabanelas, noting: "He was the sculptor who made the ornamental stones found in my buildings."

FROM SKETCH TO REALITY

Once we had analyzed the graphic material available on the intervention in the nucleus and defined the "1936 Sketch" as a fundamental document, we delved into Laxedo itself to verify its concordance.

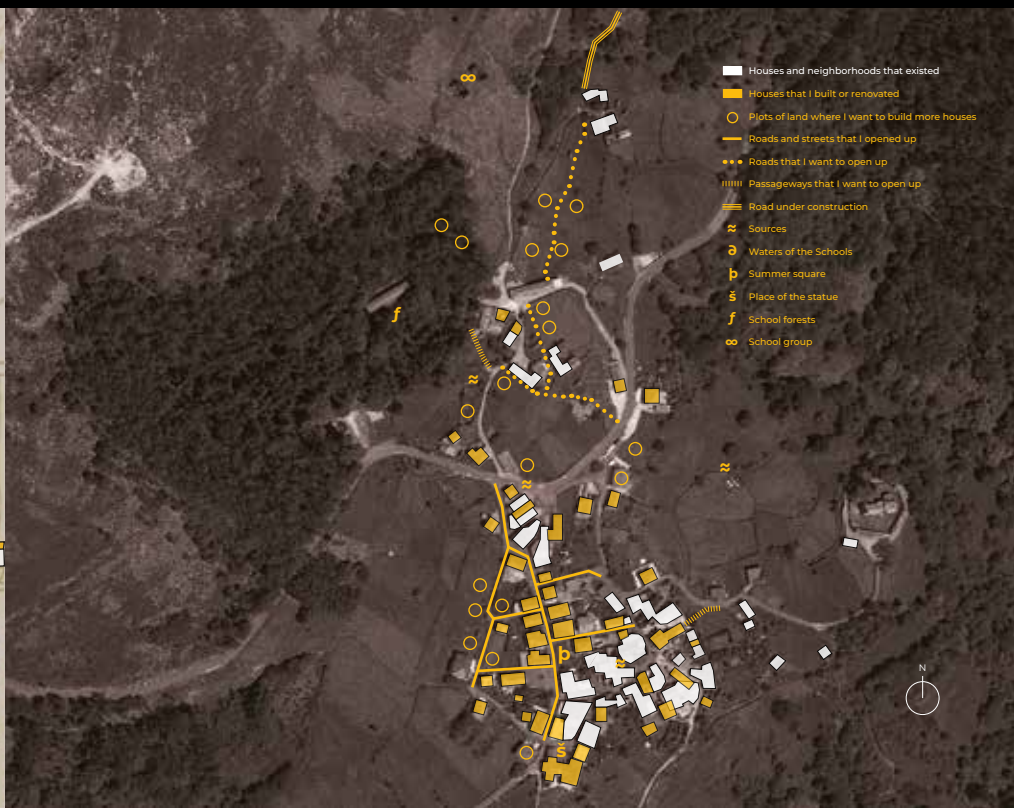
The initial fieldwork consisted of comparing the sketch with the reality constructed in the nucleus of Laxedo. In this way, we were able to immediately verify the precision of the graphic work carried out by the count.

During our tour, we established collective drifts and mappings with several local residents. Many of them were aware that their homes were part of Cabanelas' legacy, as evidenced by the bas-reliefs on the facades, also the work of Alejandro Cabanelas. Others, however, were completely unaware of this fact, as their homes did not feature any artistic interventions.

The residents mainly highlighted the count's work in the construction and management of the school colonies and expressed their gratitude for the benefactor's role in providing the area with unparalleled facilities.

During the fieldwork, each of the elements described in the sketch was identified and juxtaposed on a recent aerial photograph. This allowed us to identify practically all the elements, although there could be some errors in the accuracy of the location of some plots of land earmarked for future buildings.

The aim of producing this new sketch was to create a document that would reflect the graphic information produced by the count about the current reality of Laxedo, as no other document exists.



THE MICROCOSM

The carioca influence is present in the actions undertaken by the count in Laxedo. His privileged social status and his large real estate businesses allowed him to be in direct contact with the urban reality of Rio de Janeiro for decades and to be nourished by the most modern intellectual and technical ideas of the time. The evolution of the Brazilian city in this period reflects the advances of Western urban planning thought.

On its arrival in Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the 19th century, the city's greatest challenge was hygiene and public health, centered on the hygienist movement. This approach included urban design based on alignments to consolidate new property rights. It also used service infrastructures as a tool for urban expansion and, later, for interior reform.

In the first half of the 20th century, the appropriation of the built city and the monumental ideas of the City Beautiful movement and the Beaux-Arts, together with the influence of the urban planning movement, focused on housing and urban structure, were possibly the design theories that were gradually implemented in Laxedo.

Between 1900 and 1936, the count applied his knowledge and implemented a series of European and American-influenced urban planning principles in the plans for the city of Rio de Janeiro. These plans include the Beurepaire Plan, the Plan of the Comissió de Melhoraments, the Pereira Passos Plan and the Agache Plan, all of which changed his native Laxedo forever.

Impact of the Beurepaire Plan

- Consolidation of urban centers
- ≈ Construction of fountains
- Projection of new housing
- ||||| Projection of roads
- ▭ Projection of squares



Impact of the Plan of the Comissió de Melhoraments

- Construction of new housing
- Opening and construction of roads
- ▭ Construction of squares
- Consolidation of north-south axis



Impact of the Pereira Passos Plan

- Consolidated road
- ▭ Squares with sculptures
- f School colonies or forests
- ∞ School group



Impact of the Agache Plan

- Buildings used for housing
- Educational facilities
- Decorative elements





- A. Sunrise and sunset
- B. Day and night
- C. Terminus
- D. Fountain of the Aldea de Arriba
- E. The experts
- F. Sun and moon
- G. Demeter
- H. Caduceus with angels and lions
- I. Lions rampant with serpent's tail
- J. Tambourine player
- K. Sphinxes and Cupid with torch
- L. Venus and Mars
- M. Hermes
- N. Manuel Barreiro Cabanelas
- O. Child figure between a greyhound and a deer
- P. Piper
- Q. Villa Laura
- R. Fountain of the Aldea de Abaixo
- S. Rampant lions under a sphere
- T. Hermes in the count's house
- X. Medallions and corbels
- Y. Street name plaques



SYMBOLISM AND MYTHS

Laxedo, a small, old center in the parish of Covelo, is a mountain village carved in stone that guards its history with the stroke of a hammer and chisel. At the foot of the Sierra del Cando, in the heart of nature, lies the new Laxedo, built in the first half of the 20th century next to the old housing developments. Among the stonework that decorates the place, there are sculptural groups in low and medium relief, medallions, cornices, fountains, mausoleums, mills, granaries, shrines and crucifixes, forming a sculptural forest that constitutes the cultural and spiritual heritage of the parish. Many of these works were made by Alejandro Cabanelas, although previous master stonemasons had already left evidence of their skills in the village.

The symbolism present in the reliefs embedded in the walls and the sculptures that adorn spaces define the shared identity character throughout the community. This environment offers an innovative and original setting that, over time, has won the hearts of its inhabitants and makes them feel like they are breathing art. Laxedo looks like an open-air museum with its double language full of mysteries. Multiple iconographic resources and signs form an aesthetic of Masonic influence that the inhabitants consider their own, and that their guard dogs protect so zealously.



