

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS FOR

FØismo?

DESTRUÍR UN PAÍS

A FIM DO TERRITÓRIO HUMANIZADO: UM NOVO INTRACOLONIALISMO

UglinØss?

DESTROYING A COUNTRY

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DE LETRAS, ARTES E IDEAS

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THE END OF THE HUMANIZED TERRITORY - A NEW KIND OF INNER-COLONIALISM

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It was due to the collective spirit that appeared during the public demonstrations of the social movement *Nunca Máis* (*Never More*) that we at the Difusora de Letras, Artes e Ideas Publishing House (henceforth Difusora) recovered a latent idea from the beginning of our project and took the decision of tackling different subjects related to our society — in ways that are more global than it seems — by means of publications.

Thus the project *Nunca Máis. A voz da cidadania* (*Never more. The Citizens' Voice*) was born, compiling in one volume — a second one is still waiting for the appropriate circumstances to be published — all kinds of contributions (photos of public demonstrations and of different activities, materials created by groups and by anonymous people) generated the months after the sinking of the oil tanker *Prestige*, due to the poor political management of the resulting environmental disaster.

We couldn't leave aside another serious problem which is affecting us: forest fires. A new book is going to come out, after a three-year fieldwork around the involved parties in fire prevention and extinction.

At the same time, and connecting with the previous ones, an essential subject to deal with was *ugliness*, which didn't even have any specific bibliography. From our first approach, we were convinced that we had to show the most polyhedral view, as it obviously wasn't just an aesthetic question — although we had to discuss the degree of aesthetic components in this problem. So, having the viewpoints of many people from different fields became imperative, and the attendance of people from Portugal seemed desirable — as Galicia and Northern Portugal form a natural region, their views could be very useful. However, would the compilation of different, independently generated approaches be enough? Our conclusion was that we had to convene a Forum which served as a laboratory for ideas, for the dialectical confrontation of points of view and for clarifying the dimensions, the causes and maybe the solutions of this problem.

We had previously organized a much more modest and simpler experience, the *Foro dos Maios* in Ourense (2004), which was an attempt to reactivate the *Maios* feast, a traditional May celebration in the city of Ourense, which had remained untouched since the institutionalization of the grass sculpture contest in the early 20th century. For a day, several specialists and members of the associations that make the sculptures or *maios* met and had talks and conferences. The contents of that Forum were written down in the book *Levántate, Maio* (*Rise up, Maio*), produced by Difusora for the Ourense City Council.

Nevertheless, this new idea meant to convene a closed Forum, where about thirty people with very different specialties, experiences and sensibilities could freely expound and discuss their

theories about this problem. Starting from its name, which is an evidently unfortunate name but difficult to substitute for a more precise term. The absence of audience in the discussion intended to optimize the fluidity and the intensity of the process of sharing reflections among people who, due to their personal trajectories, had already meditated on this problem.

The logistics of such a summoning had evident difficulties, especially coming from a small publishing house without the capacity to make a strong investment. So we appealed to the generosity of our guests, who participated without any kind of payment, and to the good sense of our institutions. During the organization process, it was obvious that most of our guests were already convinced of the urgent necessity of starting to discuss the trite *ugliness* topic, and they put themselves at the disposal of the organization without a doubt. On their side, public and private institutions allowed the financing of this book: the Regional Department of Housing and Land Affairs, the Official College of Architects of Galicia and the building enterprise Otero Pombo.

Once the coordination team defined the participants who could contribute with interesting reflections and ideas — many of them were proposed by the already contacted people —, this invitation letter was sent to them for joining this Forum:

Ugliness is a problem that is on everyone's lips.

One of the meanings of *ugliness* would designate a phenomenon traditionally related to social situations of endemic extreme poverty and of unbounded speculative growth. In both cases, environment is transparent, it doesn't exist and it doesn't produce any goods. Only the exact surface of the site has value, and its value is extraordinary.

Another semantic field of this word is applied in the strict field of arts, designating a style that tries to include the very original work of certain “marginal” or “alienated” artists.

Meanwhile, *ugliness* is occupying new spaces and acquiring new meanings. Nowadays in our country, it has changed from a symptom of poverty or a creative product to an infectious disease that is spreading omnipresently, deeply hiding the origin and the character of the social anomaly or anomalies that allow it.

What is *ugliness* really? Where does it come from? How far do its consequences reach? Are there many different kinds of *ugliness*? Is it a unique phenomenon or is it a multiple phenomenon? Is it caused by a socio-political situation? Is it fed on impossible orography? Can it be historically tracked? Is it endemic or is it induced? Do we know other societies who suffer it? Should it be called *ugliness*? All these questions and many more will appear in the

Forum, in an attempt to reflect on this problem in its magnitude, to evaluate the state of the question. Certainly from this reflection many conclusions will be drawn for the future. To start, a book with the results of this Forum will be published. Later, it will be the citizens' and the power's turn to opine and to act.

Next, there was a comment on the methodology of the Forum, conceived as "a meeting of about thirty guests from different fields, coming from Galicia and Portugal." It was clearly stated that this subject's complexity would not be conveniently discussed if the participants only focused on architecture, on heritage and on landscape; that was the reason for inviting people related to anthropology, to history, to philosophy, to journalism, to literature, to politics, to arts, to teaching, to economy...

It was established that the time of the Forum would be scheduled in round tables — coordinated by a moderator —, so that there would be a rotation of participants in a somehow symbolic arena (the table, round, would be the same for everybody). Guests were asked to act as lecturers, so that there were four or five people per table, and they were asked to write a three or four-page text that summarized the ideas which they were going to develop in a 10 or 15-minute lecture. For us this was the most convenient way to make secure a good rhythm in the Forum and that no important topics were left undiscussed.

Of course the purpose of this "laboratory for ideas" was to make a book, and so every lecturer's participations would be recorded. That material, along with the summary texts, would be used for the publication.

The fixed dates for the Forum on *Ugliness* were November 20th-21st, 2004.

The programme designed to modulate as far as possible the different subjects according to the participants' specialties started Saturday 20th at 10 a.m. with the conference "Intervened Space", where took part Alexandre Alves Costa, Sergio Fernández, Manuel Gallego Jorrito and José Antonio Vázquez Martín. At 12.30 p.m., after a coffee break, the round table "Ethics and Aesthetics", with Carlos Santiago — who finally couldn't attend —, Ana Vaz Milheiro, Begoña Muñoz, Chus Pato and Xesús Vázquez. After lunch, at 5 p.m., the talk "Humanizing the Landscape", with Xan Creus, Pablo Gallego, Antón Baamonde and Manuel Rivas. At 7.15 p.m., the first day was closed with the round table "*Homo Uglysticus* in Northwestern Spain?" with Xerardo Pereiro, Camilo Franco, Carolina Leite and Xosé Manuel Beiras.

Sunday 21st, the programme was continued at 10 p.m. with the round table "Validity of Tradition", with Manuel Caamaño, Xosé Otero Pombo, Xosé Carlos Sierra and Teresa Táboas, and at 12.30 p.m. with "Resource Administration", with Álvaro Domingues — who couldn't travel to Ourense as he was ill —, Xosé Lois Martínez Suárez, Bieito Iglesias and Rubén Lois González.

As you can confirm in the book, the course of the Forum sometimes forced to change the initial participation scheme. Some guests joined the meeting after closing the programme, as

Portuguese architect José Miranda, proposed by Carolina Leite, and as photographer Roberto Ribao, who intervened through the projection of his photographs, brought by Camilo Franco.

As for the round tables moderators, we had Fernando Dacosta, who is an actor, director and dramatist, and also Xavier Paz, Alberte Pérez Rodríguez and Xosé Lois Vázquez, members of the organizing team.

The Forum would not have been possible without the invaluable help of the Cultural Centre of the County Council of Ourense, which put its facilities at the disposal of the organization, turning one room into our "laboratory" and another one into our rest and refreshment room. The Forum was also possible due to the inestimable help of the Department of Urbanism of the Ourense City Council (and with the collaboration of the Department of Culture), which provided a hotel and restaurants for the participants.

So, about eleven hours of lectures and discussions, which we believe that were worthy. More than half of those hours were transcribed. The rest, every participant's lectures, is either the texts they read, either summaries that extract the content of their speeches, and in some cases — all of them had that option — more extensive texts than their initial contribution, to go more into detail than it was allowed by the stipulated ten minutes for their contributions.

So here is the book. A fieldwork supervised by Xavier Paz with photographs by Alba Vázquez Carpentier opens this volume. This is a series of thematically grouped images, taken in different Galician places, which try to illustrate this problem — or problems, or even not a problem at all: that is later elucidated in the book —. This display doesn't try to have statistical or exhaustive data; just some pictures of different landscape models that exist in our country (rural, rural-urban, urban, interior, coastal landscapes...) to give a realistic idea of the process that we are aiming to study, and so later to distinguish degrees and shades. We omitted the exact location of those images on purpose, because that could be understood as blaming the exhibited cases, when they were mostly chosen at random among hundreds of similar cases throughout our geography. Many more could have been chosen.

Straight afterwards, there are several texts included which aren't from the Forum but which were generated in their "surroundings": before, during or after, always related to any participant in the process. Later, the transcription of every participant's contribution and the subsequent discussions, divided in episodes corresponding chronologically to each session of the Forum. Finally, there are biographical and bibliographical notes of each participant, so that readers have precise references of the people who gave their opinions in these fruitful reflecting days.

11/10/2004

I still think that before evaluating the landscape and what is at stake (collectively, as landscape) we must dig into the foundations that cause this discussion. I would advance some of them:

1. There may be (or may not be) an identity crisis in Galician culture. If there is, landscape is one of that crisis' ideological referents. I don't know if that is true, as there isn't any nationalist phenomenon in Portugal, but it seems to me that the autonomies' political emancipation in post-Franco Spain surfaced a desperate (in a positive sense) search for identity. I realized that in Catalonia, where the official languages in international conventions were Catalanian and English, and the attitude was (and still is) nationalist and cosmopolitan at the same time. For a foreign observer who combines information sources as the Galician regional television or the regional government's cultural promotion policies (such as the support of Galician language), it seems that in Galicia the construction of an authenticity rooted in the past and in the land is emphasized as a way of isolating from the Spanish state and as a reaction to a certain regional peripherization. I could witness the reinforcement of Santiago de Compostela as the regional referent for international positioning (through its Jubilee Years and the building of new icons such as Siza Vieira's and Eisenman's projects) and the certain negligence to the rest of the territory and cities. The Prestige affair brought new edges to the 'Galician question', providing an easily understandable message abroad (because nowadays the environmental question is easy to communicate) and emphasizing once more the idea of an identity based on landscape

values and on fishing economy (more for craft fishing than for the fishing industry, which is one of the most important ones in Europe and one of the region's economic pillars). For a foreigner, it is incomprehensible that the common denominators in the meeting between Manuel Fraga and Fidel Castro are the form, the past and the roots. I am not surprised that there are many difficulties in reaching new levels of consensus (about landscape as well) in this diversity and apparent contradiction of new cultural and identity models.

2. The public interest crisis, as a socially shared consensus in a lengthened way, is generic to the speed with which neo-liberal ideologies are spreading (in Portugal, this is quite a sharp subject). The State is tending to a minimal version, individuals and private entrepreneurship are being emphasized, and according to Jean Viard society is becoming an "archipelago" of extremely different and contradictory interests. Then, which are the new inter-reflectivity mechanisms? What we are noticing here is the unstable and wandering journey of the lobbies, which are straightjacketed defending unilateral values (such as "not in my backyard" or Jordi Borja's "not here") about minorities, heritage, environmental values, etc. I don't think that the supposed emergence of the aforementioned civil society is a solid way of constructing new, fully shareable values. They are always occasional, ephemeral consensus of variable geometry, unequally amplified by the media in accordance with their power to secure audiences and later left aside if a new case arrives. At this point, the discourse on landscape has found different and contradictory examples, oscillating between situations of illegality, lack of interest, difficulty to express and justify explanations and opinions,

etc., and cases of occasional hegemonies that manage to mobilize the means of social communication.

3. I agree with you in the question of planning. It's easy to blame and identify abstractions such as the speculation and the State. But the truth is that in the absence of a strong State (a more or less enlightened dictatorship or the already lost idea of democracy as a welfare state) and in its own disciplinary crisis of planning (for the State it's every time more difficult to read the public interest and its priorities, the speed of social transformations, the contradiction system for which land is a support or a direct object of appropriation and transformation...), the State is reaching a huge "sound stridency" where it's difficult to find the structure of the new music staff and of the new composition rules. In countries where the "landscape crisis" has already caused the regulation of landscape plans (for instance, France and Italy), no consensus is seen:

— Landscape ecologists (who normally come from biology, physical geography, etc.) empty landscape's cultural and aesthetic contents, quantifying biodiversity, biomass, hydrological oscillation, land losses, wasting of non-renewal resources, etc.

— Landscapers take refuge in predominantly aesthetic criteria and have difficulty to take the long-scale of landscapes (they work better in a much closed land). They also oscillate between utopically freezing traditional landscapes and admitting, as did Gilles Clement, the existence of a "third landscape" (the first one would be the natural one or its rests; the second one would be the one appropriated for productive purposes as agriculture or forests), which is related to the erratic evolution of land uses that

became dysfunctional (abandoned agricultural land, degraded forests which are left for fires and for the incapacity to regulate forest policies in public or private land, “*terrain vague*” among roads and buildings, etc.).

—Culturalists take refuge in (rural or urban) heritage, without producing an way out about how to understand the new landscape languages related to new ways of living and land production.

4. The “lack of taste” is the most difficult part. Post-modern aesthetics is valuing chaos’ “biodiversity” and richness of referents, leaving aside the production of models or “great discourses”. “Cultivated taste” sanctions both the supposed vernacular and the most international avant-garde. But above all, it hurries to make stigmatizing judgements on the popular (always bad) taste, increasing the distance between cultivated and “non-cultivated” culture, obstructing the construction of consensus (even the most fragile ones). As stated Pierre Bourdieu, this question of taste, transformed into a powerful vehicle for conflict and social differentiation, is for the moment making us prisoners of our discussion and of our double condition as individuals and as social actors with more or less makings of opinion leaders (or people educators, for the most radical ones).

Let’s try to separate, as in the parable of the bundle of sticks, the different ingredients of *ugliness* to know what we are actually discussing.

A Hyperbolic Reflection on Ugliness

Carlos Santiago

An entropic — and not a tropical — country reflecting on *ugliness*. Ugly: what a word. Nobody wants to be ugly, that's for sure. However we speak about ugly people and ugly things that are unpleasant to see or to touch, and even to smell. There are people and things which may even cause displeasure to our minds. Nevertheless *ugliness* is especially an impact to our senses, a radically sensible attack against our innermost aesthetic conventions. So *ugliness* can be used as an artistic or political weapon, even as a dramatic device. Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos*¹ or Fellini's transgressions are acts of *ugliness*, tactics of provocation that aim to reject the established aesthetic order, as Wiener Aktion Group's body outrage or *punk* aesthetics. Italian Neorealism spoke about the imprudence of reality: *ugliness* has rights because it is real. And along came Pier Paolo Pasolini criticizing the use of travellings: travelling is a camera movement that denies the despair present in reality and that embellishes what is tried to be shown as unbearable reality. Travelling introduces hope in the cinematographic vision of hard and ugly realities.

Ugliness. Who invented and theorized such a discourse? Who introduced that "concept" in our everyday thinking? There is something evil in it. *Ugliness* is mainly a voracious and floating significant that devours all the possible meanings. Urban planning chaos is *ugliness*, real state speculation is *ugliness*, the way people build their houses in Galicia is *ugliness* and the land policy of our regional government is *ugliness*... There is a too intellectual smell in the background, like the taste of hidden or distant frustration. *Ugliness*

¹ *Esperpento* is a literary style created by Valle-Inclán which is characterized for grotesque characters and plots, a distorted and bitter point of view on reality and the predominance of verbal violence.

is related to those who don't want to speak clearly, those who sublime the complexity of reality in a simple and uncompromised idea. It is related to the democratic idea of having the right to opine about everything and nothing at once. Abortion, yes or no? Are you in favour or against?

But in favour or against what?

When the word *ugliness* is invoked, we can be certain that the plots of post-modernity, another concept difficult to understand, are near. That's right. *Ugliness* is a way to reduce or to defer the discussion about the environment and living space of the cultures to a matter of appearances. What is our problem? Is it that we don't find *cool* what we see? Then someone, as I myself, can say without lying that for them the recovery of Santiago's downtown area may seem aberrant, even when it deserved an European award. Many nights, perhaps under the effect of any toxic substance or liqueur, I wonder if I am in a German town or in the set for a TV contest. The impact that all this causes in me, not to mention the hangover, is *ugliness*. But this is just my opinion.

On the other hand, why does the drug trafficker's villa annoy us? Is it because of the excessive use of granite or is it the peculiar tendency to proto-Doric triangulations? Is it just its bad taste?

Why does the municipal coat of arms of Cerceda bother us? Maybe it is how bad the chimneys of the Meirama power plant look at the bottom of it, under the traditional oak and torque necklace.

Why does the forecast of a new viaduct projected over a river mouth cause us a resigned sadness?

What shall we think about the culture houses that spring up all over the country, with magnificent

auditoriums endowed with a reverberation impossible to obtain with digital methods, and with the brightest and most polished stages but without any access for loading and unloading?

And what about those unfinished buildings where brick walls must wait ages to be plastered? Maybe people are so poor and need houses where to live that they build them the best (or the worst) that they can? It is odd, isn't it? Of course, for us these are the symptoms of an ignorant society lost in the sea of post-modernity. Perhaps that is why we find appropriate that people have that word in their mouths ready to dissipate our hesitations and to tell us which is our problem: *ugliness*.

Curiously, when talking about *ugliness* we introduce an assumption through the back door: that there is a conscious subject with a specific social and aesthetic will to do things as he wishes, exactly as in Surrealism, in Cubism or in Russian Suprematism. As if there was a "programme". And even when the term anarchy is more descriptive about what is going on, we prefer the word *ugliness* because that allows us to blame someone or something psychologically: either our obstinate ignorance, our social indolence towards real state speculation or our politicians' innate incompetence. And for example we never blame our conformism or our handicapped rhetoric narcissism. *Ugliness* is a conviction that, cynically or naively, we all share at both ends of the social spectrum. Identifying the culprit is where we differ. But even so, we keep the discussion alive because when we can identify a culprit we are in the process of solving the crime. Hope for redemption reappears. The travelling is reaching paroxysm. Let's rejoice: there is a culprit! In this sense all the false expectations must be contradicted: there is

nothing as optimistic as the discourse about *ugliness*.

Some other remarks on the matter. As any other drug, *ugliness* is subjected to the cycle of dependence. The more it is consumed, the less effective it is. Anyway, *ugliness* has the power of seduction enough to join people, as in this forum of discussion. This is perhaps an attempt to materialize its meaning, to specify and rule its diffuse theory. If some day someone tries to convince related builders, politicians and architects to do things in a different way, he must have his arguments and files in order. Or if someone decides to execute cultural and educational programmes in order to make Galician population aware of the worthiness of respecting the environment and some rules of cohabitation, his reasoning must be solid and his points of view must be consistent. Our current society offers enough channels to be as idealistic as we wish.

But actually, shouldn't everything we must know about that thing we vaguely define as *ugliness* be already written? I mean, isn't there any scientific research on urban disaster, on fragmentation of the territorial space, on Galicia's cultural deconstruction and economic prostration? From a positive point of view, aren't there anywhere any ethnological studies that point out rational and culturally viable political guidelines, any politological analysis on effective land ordinance, even any philosophical reflections about culture and its space projection...? Just the fact of not knowing if this knowledge exists and if it is going to be useless anyway from a social and political point of view puts the problem into its right dimension. A dimension that doesn't need a theory about *ugliness* to be understood because it's more related to the simple lack of commitment: the commitment to a country where, for one or other reason, we all must live, even the architects, the builders, the politicians and the other involved parties in this whole that bothers us so much.

It is not an easy commitment. We aren't unaware of the prevailing globalized social order: accelerated societies where the social energy is completely kidnapped in an omnipotent, omnivorous combustion process. And so, they are societies where any attempt of social transformation is almost cornered in utopian and marginal approaches. The problem is that the degradation of our common space requires a complete social transformation, because it's a part of Galician society's general degradation, a society demographically declining — demographically suiciding, as it were — with inactive employers and intellectual elites comfortably disconnected from real life; a society dismantled on the inside and on the outside, with a cultural fragility more extreme every time and politically settled on mediocrity and on mental periphery.

Of course, I'm exaggerating. None of this happens. It's just my personal appreciation. But curiously, it is the same with the issue we are discussing. That's the reason why I am going to finish my speech by trying to give my own definition of *ugliness* to add to this discussion. *Ugliness*: when everything around us is too ugly to be true.

Strength and Health.

There are probably set few expressions so etymologically unfortunate and nevertheless as socially accepted as the term *ugliness*. The confused use of this word, which according to the dictionary can mean 'an artistic or literary trend that appreciates aesthetically what is ugly', involves a deliberate — and so, a conscious — aesthetic will in the creator to express himself by means of canons based on disorder and ugliness. However this word is used more to characterize the subject (effect) of this act than to characterize its object (cause). This causes a confusion which is probably favoured by those forces that generated this discussion and that reduced it exclusively to a pure aesthetic question.

Nobody denies the deterioration of Galicia's environment and landscapes, but we must start by disapproving the implementation of this controversy by those (the governments and the media) which tolerated until recently what they now denounce superficially and partisanly, trying to appear before the public opinion as the saviours of our land heritage after a long period of obvious ignorance, tolerance, complicity and autism against this reality. In this campaign, *ugliness* is usually joined by the adjective "architectural", reducing and simplifying a situation that is related to other aspects of our environment. Not only certain architectures may attack, but also the construction of transport channels (motorways, railways), of energy infrastructures (dams, windfarms) and of production plants (ports, quarries and heavy industries) have also an impact on the environment. Not to mention the changes to the landscapes that certain foreign forest plantations cause.

So it seems that there is a link between environmental degradation and the progress of

the same environment, and that this attack is due to the interests which, arising from this situation, intervene in the physical environment. There is no doubt that all these interventions mean a necessary socioeconomic development and transformation, but the public administrations must assume the responsibility of imposing values (rationality, harmony, sustainability) to reduce the impact of these interventions. Meanwhile, in a theoretically mature society, politicians would interpret the citizens' wishes and opinions and so they mustn't be exclusively attributed the culpability for the current status quo, as they just reflect the people's will expressed democratically every four years. Besides, the implementation of the law didn't guarantee by itself the plot of the wrongly called *ugliness*.

For fifty years, Galician society has completely and vertiginously evolved, integrating in our popular culture exogenic elements usually different to our 'traditional' patterns. Their inescapable assimilation is in conflict with the livelihood with which it takes roots, in a complicated dialectics that gives rise to a sometimes contradictory mestization. This permeability leads inevitably to the assimilation of new or foreign values that are incorporated into the common cultural wealth. This shouldn't be considered evil but enriching when the culture on which these new patterns are settling is mature enough to profit from them. A society with a low self-esteem, which ignores or underestimates its most valuable symbols, can't absorb correctly the external influences that receives, but it substitutes the traditional ones for them in a self-destructive way.

Obviously this crisis situation affects all the ways of expressing the people's identity or everyday life. The evolution of the media, the generalization of

communications and information, the market and economic systems, in short the global civilization threatens every culture's local features and identity signs if they are not appreciated. It may seem that the reactions against this should be protectionism, isolation or involution, but actually the priority should be sensitization and awareness in a world inevitably subjected to flows and exchanges.

When talking about *ugliness*, our attention is distracted towards tendentious controversies focused exclusively on architecture and urbanism, in which these technicians are the ones to blame for the deterioration of our landscapes. In any case this responsibility or complicity should be also assumed by the ruling classes that administer the public interest, by the economic powers that offer, and by the citizens who act *motu proprio*; that is to say, by society in general. Why don't we question other aspects of our contemporary popular culture which are lacking *preciosity*, such as certain television programmes, food habits, press and literature, leisure, etc.? Maybe are these anomalies more reversible than the ones confined to the land? Isn't it of interest to reach the bottom of this situation?

With regard to this scenery, does it make sense to look for an antidote by recovering antiquated ways? Can romantic nostalgia be the solution for an uncertain future? Must substantives have priority over adjectives? Is there hope for evolution in a society not adapted to its own time?

Is urban law able to control the appropriate construction of our environment? Is the application of strict parameters or the veto of certain materials useful to develop our environment? Probably not: the root of the problem is deeper and the solution must be obtained through education and the intellectual regeneration of our society.

Ugliness

José Antonio Vázquez Martín

Ugliness

Alexandre Alves Costa

Two previous observations:

1. I am not going to use images. Images work as a mediation between reality and our discourse, and that's why reality is read in a distorted way, or rather interpreted subjectively. Furthermore, photographs are a sort of artistic expression, which can use the form charm to captivate the audience about their message's kindness. An interesting situation happened with Sebastião Salgado's photographs, which caused great controversy in Brazil as many people accused this author of aesthetizing terror. His pictures weren't a libel against terror, and on the top of that they tried to integrate it without questioning our "good conscience". In a different register, the bombing of Baghdad was transformed into an abstract videogame that was keeping us away from the horror of death and destruction. A transfiguration in the opposite direction can also happen.

We know that oral discourse can also be perversely fascinating, but at least the hypothesis of checking the image is withdrawn.

2. I am not going to put myself on the side of the political correctness which considers that using the adjectives 'beautiful' and 'ugly' is moralistic, or at least circumstantial.

Basically we all know that there's no accounting for tastes! All of us have already experienced the beauty of ugliness decontextualized and turned into a work of art, as Duchamp did. All of us have also felt attracted by ugliness, and the more we notice how ugly is what we love, the stronger this feeling is. The love of Beauty for the Beast causes us an emotion greater than the natural, vulgar love of a beautiful woman for a handsome man. Calling the Beast a beast is not a prejudice because he is really a beast, and that's why he is different from the handsome man.

As men are free to love what is ugly and to be disgusted with what is beautiful, I will use the words *ugly* and *beautiful* in accordance with my own idea of beauty and ugliness, without trying to commit the audience to agree with me, and so my discourse not being any kind of moralistic activism. I say this because I think that, in a convention like this, with a communicative and discussing discourse, we will understand each other better to analyze our discouraging reality and to try to discover new common programmes for its regeneration.

Due to personal — and perhaps ideological — disagreement, I will give up some possible assumptions for reflection, such as a certain satisfaction caused by the conformist consideration of "chaos" as a result of the system's inevitability, which puts us in a passive and calm analysis of accomplished facts. I will even give up the defence of a burnt land policy, a policy of "the worse, the better", to which I am sensitive due to my anarchical tendencies. I always remember the words of wise poet Antero de Quental, who wished to walk on ruins as if he walked in a flower field.

Before throwing some ideas, which I hope they are operative for our discussion, I need to place myself historically in life, in politics or in architecture in the very ancient and paradoxically renewed context of Northwestern Iberia, called "Atlantic Axis" by some technocrats.

The architects of my previous generation had travelled through the rural world, and not so frequently through Europe and America, about which they read in books and discovered in Brazil. They had carefully observed our people's genius and art in building houses, granaries, threshing floors and washing places. They had noticed how people and animals lived in perfect harmony, in ground zero of survival. They had observed their agricultural work, their water guidance for irrigation, their clean rivers due to the lack

of industry, their cornfields, their vegetable gardens, their vineyards and their apple orchards.

We also travelled through the missing rural world. We also cleaned our hands in linen towels. We noticed the intelligence of those women dressed in black, widows due to the absence of their men, who were emigrated or in war. We felt the cleanness of the parquets, the serenity of oil lamps as there wasn't electricity, the birds and the happy, barefoot children. We remember the Masses and the Saint Patron's day, the lack of medical assistance and of basic education. We loved the cold, the smells, the people and the houses.

Without really knowing, we got Távora's idea — who unfortunately isn't attending this Forum — that the rural world and the new architectural languages that we were handling weren't contradictory, but complementary. Never speaking or thinking in terms of heritage, we emphasized the understanding of places, and without any form or language from them, we perceived that considering a universal linguistic code was difficult, and so that we had to find an own suitability for each case. With it, we exceeded the reasons for modernity in the heart of rural world.

And before that, Boaventura Sousa Santos had far-sightedly said that from the misery of pre-modernity, so beautiful and so ugly, we should take advantage of a lot of good things to build the future: a post-modernity without the treasons of developed capitalism. We prepared a political programme and we designed architectures with the calm of those who had the certainty of a pause in time that allowed us to have time.

It is interesting that we discovered the city due to political action, either here or in Paris, either in student struggles or in wars against fascism, and since then it has always been the centre of our lives.

It was in a still limited but consolidated city, both inside and outside, where we worked after the Carnation Revolution of

April 25th 1974, trying to guarantee the right to the city and the right to a place for the most socially disadvantaged. There was a lack of houses for 400,000 families in Portugal then.

The future development of Portuguese democracy had questioned the projects and the prepared ideas, and all of us were placed before damaged rural and landscapes that weren't rebuilding the harmonic society we wished.

Countryside was destroyed, transformed into the outskirts of the outskirts, with no other choice than giving land for the cities' crazy growth or for emigrants' houses, which were empty almost the whole year and cold, with electric cookers and refrigerators instead of fireplaces and cellars. Everybody said it's a pity. It's not only nostalgia for childhood or for a time of misery and ignorance, but structural rejection for unproductive land.

We call *ugliness* to the breaking between the past and a present designed without a planning, designed by market laws. It's ugly because it still represents the social imperfection, the exclusion, the inequalities, the unemployment and all the effects of unbalanced development, of savage liberalism, of abandoning factories, palaces, historic downtowns and fishing boats. Soon the term urbanism will be substituted for "urban marketing". Civil construction enterprises make progress by building more than it is necessary, and with that they earn the local finance; we call it diffuse urbanism or, in a different scale, generic city.

If causes are ugly, it's obvious that effects will be ugly too.

Because of the aforementioned factors, what I hate the most about the current urban planning intelligence is its widespread conformism when considering the inevitability of the related social imperfection, which we associate to

generic city or to diffuse urbanism. Koolhaas doesn't believe in designing the city, or in the possibility of establishing urban regulations; that's why architecture must integrate the cities' dimensions and subjects, producing large, complex, dense, versatile buildings. Although he never stated it clearly, Portas doesn't believe either in urban design, accepting that it is established through an open urban regulation in a permanent process of adjustment. He placed his hope for regeneration of urban life in the treatment of public space, among the density of what is built, negotiated and subtracted to private builders.

In the current discussion I place myself out of fashion. I'm not moved by architecture's contemporary condition of renouncing its ancestral conditionings, reassured by digital culture. I prefer to reproblematicize, giving rise to conflict and discussion. On my side, Vitruvian trilogy and the union of ethics and aesthetics are accepted, believing in the design of the city in the context of a kind of democratic illuminism—which is fundamentally based on the new movements of citizen participation—against despair. I am encouraged when I think that we are living a kind of intermediate time, which is demanding and interrogative. In our world, where no-places are taking shape, we must give rise to utopia, always looking for the land that binds us, for the exercise of our freedom and of our structural and maybe scandalous artisticity.

Our programme can't be vague. It should combine some general considerations with methodological considerations that would surely include citizen participation and the facilitation of planning processes. Knowing that every case is different, we will have to answer some urgent questions related to consolidated cities, suburbs and the rest.

In the end, what is our current programme for cities? How do we understand their vocation, their size, their delimitation? Must cities spread like wildfire in the previously rural land, with no

solution of continuity, no inside and no outside? Perhaps, on the contrary, must cities decrease and densify with strict limits, decentralizing the territory? Are there any solutions of continuity between city and countryside? Are there an urban experience and a rural one?

How can we perform our permanent critical function with regard to urban policies without using slogans of pre-industrial nationalist nostalgia, without constructing an alternative movement, without the faintest capacity to prefigure a future that isn't a return to the good old times, assuming that we love cities as mankind's greatest creation? What is our proposal to reverse liberal cities' structural logic of exclusion and marginality, to transform them into true different places? What is the true meaning of the right to the city?

Two years ago some colleagues and I committed ourselves to a municipal candidature in the city of Coimbra, as a list of candidates integrated in the left-wing party Bloco de Esquerda. We had to establish a series of principles in our programme, which I am going to sum up because I think that they can set up a practical platform for discussion among activists.

We defended the notion of city as a project under construction, knowing for certain that a new city could be reshaped. We were always aware that changing is not a choice but a one way road. Cities are modern men's habitat, where about 80% of European population is living. Now, instead of among countries, there is competitiveness among regions and among cities. The organization of society must be reconsidered with regard to the appearance of those socio-political realities.

We know that, for the balanced development of Portugal, understanding the vocation of our cities and our regions is fundamental, and for that we must perceive their characteristic differences and their possible specialization. We must verify their available resources. We must establish geographical connections and links.

We must rebuild scales. We must incorporate the local elements into global reality. We must establish intelligent nets and interrelationships. We felt that it was necessary to establish a critical trend that dared to face every problem without respecting any specialization and that managed to introduce in our time ideas and methods to fight the unanimist and totalitarian presumption that disaster is inevitable and to recover in an active and offensive way the idea that everything is possible. All of us can see that instead of consolidating, cities are disintegrating. They are suburbanizing, advancing over rural land and over decadent historic downtowns which turn into museums to defend themselves. As it happened with medieval European towns, we can notice that many cities won't be able to last if they can't assume a decisive role, especially by means of new functions and protagonisms.

In this framework we should highlight the appearance of a new urban problematization, particularly determined by three central subjects: environment, heritage and public spaces.

Urban environment means quality of life. It's not about the first generation of environmental questions — such as water, air, pollution, noise and infrastructures — but especially about those related to mobility and transport, to concentration of employment in downtown areas, to expulsion towards the suburbs, to building degradation and abandon, to exclusion and to poverty. This new and spread view converges in the possibility of including the environmentalists in the discussion about the city.

Economic growth was associated to urbanization — extensive land occupation — insofar as the notion of heritage was established against the current of the prevailing urbanization process. Urban heritage is the cultural and historical dimension that integrates the cities' social and spatial identity. In this subject the interrelationship between historical past and current urbanity can be explored. Historic cities may have a value in use and a museological value, highlighting the

utilitarian character of these cities and of their experience.

Finally we have public spaces, which are the true spaces of sociability, of freedom and of difference. They are the stage where the principles that make the democratic city possible — such as citizenship, civism and civility — and that refer to citizens' rights and duties are transubstantiated. This subject is not about consolidating, but about advancing to the suburban implantations and about never allowing the use of empty spaces, waterfronts and rests for potential, profitable land operations.

Integrating this subject, we presented a structural model for cities that emphasizes three fundamental aspects: densifying, limiting and recovering. They will be three emergency fronts, in three concentric rings, that will help to resize cities from a quantitative and especially qualitative point of view.

Densifying means reinventing historic downtowns. It is about consolidating and planning the existing reality, about keeping it up and requalifying it. It is about opening new uses and being densified with them. For that we need an observation and a careful programming through the discovery of new functions and new protagonisms that give rise to a cultivated and contemporary intervention. This intervention must accept diversity, reading and preserving its unity; it must safeguard its visible and occult history; it must resist the demolition and the general trend for a passive acceptance of suburban culture, disappearing under the pretext of guaranteeing vitality.

Limiting, the most controversial concept, means identifying and consolidating the outlying urban structure, designing the limits of a new map for the city that seems lost and spoiled, and undoing with no reason to be redone in a hybrid and disconnected way. Starting from periphery, from development areas, we must look for exits, for signs of the formless urban tissue. Limits don't close, but explain how to redesign the interior starting from them, and how to give a

new sense to the historic downtown by giving power to a sort of centripetal force. Those limits will have to confine an indefensible fortress at the mercy of any invasion, vulnerable to the massive irruption of newcomers, precisely so that everybody has their right to be recognised in its bosom.

Recovering means revitalizing the rural or forest environment, starting from the creation of new systems of integrated, quality farming production. This land must be strictly classified to stop being expectant land for the cities' unstoppable growth. Consolidation, recovery and contemporary reconstruction of the existing agglomerations or of scattered habitats, are linked in a non-dissociable way to productive structure and to its supports, to natural parks, to flora and fauna, to landscape. The new-rural population has the right to an urban experience in the same circumstances as the other urban citizens, through decentralization and an efficient transport system. And vice versa, we would confer the right of reciprocity to the most central population.

Densifying, limiting and recovering are three virtual lines. On the ground, the forms determined by what already exists will win: either circles or lines, in the infinite geometries suggested by reality's complexity. But the fundamental ideas are the return to the notion of city as a project under construction and the extension of territory. We aren't proposing a new urban utopia, but the pragmatic consideration and regeneration of the existing tissues. If we were convinced that for reconfiguring the cities the power of dreams and desires would be equal to the power of profits and speculation, we could imagine Coimbra, Évora, Santarém, Bragança or Faro, and also Vigo, Ourense or Pontevedra, as beautiful cities in their difference, and not as mere objects in the process of morphological and experiential uniformization.

«Ugliness is a problem that is on everyone's lips»

was a catchphrase in the letter sent to us when summoning this meeting

Sergio Fernández

The fact of presenting *ugliness* as a problem clearly presupposes a critical position.

It is “on everyone's lips” because we are all concerned and so we are included in that critical position, or because it is a phenomenon whose presence is too notorious and so uncontrollable.

Grosso modo, the existence of a canon for beauty (an attribute that is granted to anything opposed to what is ugly) is not given anymore an unquestionable and assumed importance, as it was for an elite during Renaissance, and starting from the French Revolution it gave rise to a broad freedom of concepts and a lack of strict rules.

So it seems that the affirmation of democracy necessarily led to the loss of character and of demonstration quality for the citizens, of quality of the interventions, of the architecture and by extension, of the landscape that supports it.

With regard to that loss, that restricted and aware class, which in a certain way was also vigilantizing, was the only holder and defender of a true way that would ignore the *others'* outrages.

It doesn't work like that. Like it or not, we are included in that elite, and on the one hand we react against what we think is degrading our environment, but on the other hand we probably are the greatest perpetrators of that degradation.

I am referring neither to each one of us, nor to any restricted professional group, but to a whole which in fact imposes the rules. Even worse, once verified the apparent inevitability of that degradation, we cultivate that image as a mere evidence of a life style, rarely evaluating which socio-political conditions determined it. We transform its formal expression into an analysis

object, sometimes into a cult object, frequently into an art object.

The “generic city”, a phenomenon clearly based on the environment on which all of us are taking a stand, either on its character or on its lack of it, is not far from deserving these attentions. The lack of rules, the complexity or –better– the apparent maladjustment to a qualified experience seem transformed into an object to value.

We don't know how to determine the limits of this question. Neither we can or intend to be moralists holding absolutely certain values, nor can we resign from creating alternative values that we consider more correct for the search for happiness.

I feel that accepting the chaos or *ugliness* that surrounds us more and more is approaching the attitude of buying a new pair of blue jeans that look aged in advance, even torn, to reach the status of interesting item. We are not looking for full performance or full form, but for the morbidity of their decadence.

On the contrary for us the architects, what seems incongruent is that everything that looks manifestly correct, unpolluted, irreprehensible, even artificially because it's not minimally related to reality, isn't the right answer.

The definition of the promptness to appreciate the problems and consequently of the capacity and the quality of intervention is the question with regard to *ugliness* that dissatisfies us but that has justifiable reasons to exist. Which hypothesis for the alteration of this status quo will we be able to add to this equation?

It has been a long time since the behavioural references were based on long-time settled cultures; nowadays they are superficially

related to foreign cultures or to aleatory crossing. The access facilitation to all the new sources led to a marked cultural dissolution from which it will come out an amalgam of infinite, potentially valid — although poorly assimilated in many cases — expression forms. Even Loos' statement about no matter what countrymen build, it will always be well built, doesn't make sense anymore.

I think that the new open possibilities shouldn't only become bastardizing facts.

At this moment I'm working on an inquiry about 20th century Portuguese architecture. I'm studying River Douro's northern area. During my journeys I am observing the transformation of the built land (which seems negative in most cases). The displeasure almost makes us feel helpless and resigned. On the other hand, simultaneously to the damage caused to values that should be preserved, we can't help but notice the presence of signs of acceptance, more than we could have predicted, and even the adoption of solutions revealing that the elements that form *ugliness* aren't the only ones and aren't an inevitable fate.

Although timidly, a new culture contradictory to the one determined by the usually accepted patterns is appearing.

Promoting us culturally by questioning postulates and rules established a priori, with the purpose of finding in diversity ways of behaviour and expression which can contribute to the full implementation of the highest amount, is certainly a vague, distant and perhaps utopian objective.

Despite that, I can't conjecture any other possibility to face this issue.



1 & 2. The will to remark until the image of the key element — a car — almost disappears.

3. A statement of wealth associated to concepts about recovering the "land heritage" spread and interpreted in a questionable way.

4. Individual property, even if concentrated or superimposed, stated in full autism before the others.

5. A statement of the most popular values — in this case, football — destroying an author's work — Fernando Távora's — previously chosen by the owner.

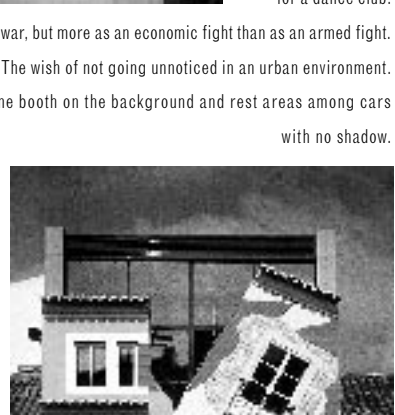
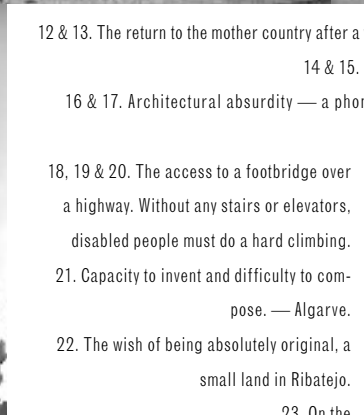
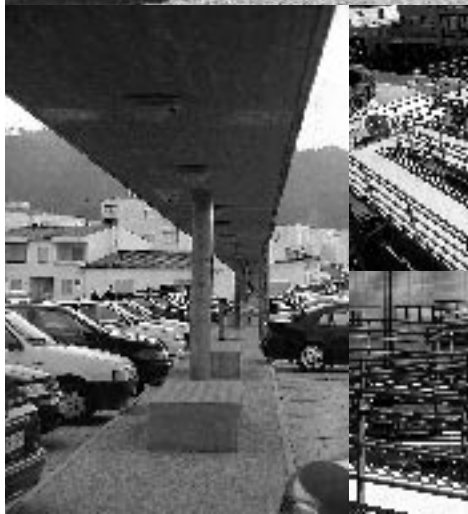
6. A statement of economic power by means of diversifying materials.

7. The wish of being modern — of establishing clear ruptures — even when the values are religious — an image of Christ.

8. An attempt of announcing contents by means of a direct image. Obviously, a library.

9. The shameless external dynamism defending religion.





10 & 11. A recourse against History. Disorder referred to classical orders. Subversion of every concept to serve as an advertisement for a dance club.

12 & 13. The return to the mother country after a war, but more as an economic fight than as an armed fight.

14 & 15. The wish of not going unnoticed in an urban environment.

16 & 17. Architectural absurdity — a phone booth on the background and rest areas among cars with no shadow.

18, 19 & 20. The access to a footbridge over a highway. Without any stairs or elevators, disabled people must do a hard climbing.

21. Capacity to invent and difficulty to compose. — Algarve.

22. The wish of being absolutely original, a small land in Ribatejo.

23. On the contrary, rigorousness, conciseness as beauty factor. *Land art* at its best.

Ugliness

Manuel Gallego

Defining architecture as beautiful or ugly in a generalized way has no sense. The strange term *ugliness* is completely misleading if we try to use it to define the buildings in the Galician rural environment.

Judging something as ugly means to make a reference to a prefixed model on how architecture must be, which implies an academicism that doesn't recognize the variety and richness of architecture as a human expression.

Being based on the previous statement, it can also imply a romantic nostalgia of the architecture that used to be made in the rural environment, which involves ignoring that architecture is the consequence of certain living manners and a culture. Houses are the expression of their inhabitants' aspirations, desires and needs. They answer a certain economic and social order. They are the expression of their lives.

Rural landscape has deeply evolved. Rural landscape is the representation of a certain

agricultural order. Peasants are disappearing, and with them their culture and their landscape are also disappearing.

In Galicia villages change and die, old paths are lost and new ones inconsistent with their environment are indiscriminately opened. Traditional farming systems are substituted. Eucalyptus forests predominate in huge areas. Industrial buildings are spread all over the land with no reasonable implantation criteria. New uses are invading the rural space. Peasant culture is dying.

How is developing the Galician rural environment?

What is the answer for this situation?

The big questions about land planning are not a subject to discussion. However a sensibility is appearing with regard to one of its demonstrations: architecture looks ugly to us, and not as a distorted and convulsed landscape that is expressing what happens within itself.

Architecture is life's space. But before dogmatizing about its aesthetic qualities, we should explain what its conditions are: technical, healthiness, implantation, adequacy, constructive logic and economic conditions. And not only in villages, but also in towns and cities. And then we should talk about habitability and adequacy of public spaces, and about what implies speculation, and about creating public spaces.

Information about these subjects and education must be later turn into a social demand that will produce a self-regulation.

Talking about *ugliness* seems to me a frivolity that distracts us from the important problems of the process of building our environment.

Linguistic Ugliness

Begoña Muñoz Saa

[The author reflects on the colloquial use of Galician language, especially among young people. She also reflects on how the carelessness of youth slang is joining the mixture of Castilian forms and structures due to the diglossia prevailing in Galicia. She thinks that this phenom-

enon could be considered as a part of *ugliness*, which obviously isn't just architectural or visual but covers everything. As the original text was written using the criticized forms, it's impossible to translate it without an endless list of annotations that would only confuse the readers.]

Not all the popular sayings are true. For instance, it isn't true that *there is no accounting for tastes*, although its meaning may be true.

There is no formula, definition or corollary that certifies if a work of art is either excellent or mediocre. Not even one that defines or decides what art is or why we make art. It seems that there aren't any absolute and inescapable criteria in order to value all the activities and objects, useful or not, which aren't related to the scientific field, at least to "not speculative sciences". One might think that the 24 *lieder* of Schubert's *Winterreise* are sublime and one could defend them with enthusiastic, historical, musical and emotional criteria. However, another person might consider them a pain and they could explain their reasons in the same way and with similar eloquence. Even if we may think the same as the defender and we consider the critic an illiterate philistine, we won't be able to express a definitive, conclusive argument to get the detractor to our side or, due to the seriousness of the subject, to disintegrate him. This argument doesn't exist.

It is said in Galicia that we are bounded to insecurity and uncertainty. We have built logical frameworks in order not to scream with terror. These frameworks keep us standing, although they usually end up turning into cages. Thanks to the animal world (after all, we descend from animals and it seems that we are still members of their world), we know that the expulsion from a herd or short trips alone can end in murder. Therefore, we keep order and correctness.

Being inside the cage of logic we were able to turn the screams into doubts and questions: Why isn't there rather anything?

What are we?

Or, if modulation doesn't follow the guidelines of our language, if logic creates prohibitions, we make art, music and poems.

Nature doesn't doubt nor raises questions. If it decides that iron sulphide must crystallize in the cubic system, then shiny cubes of pyrite appear in their respective places. If it decides that a nitrogen atom must combine with three oxygen atoms and one hydrogen atom, then the resulting molecule will dissolve almost everything. It doesn't reflect on the best way to improve the qualities of nitric acid, nor tries to crystallize pyrite in a monoclinic system in order to check if it would be more coherent then. Insects have six legs, maple leaves usually have five lobes and our planet rotates on its axis. The fact that the wide range of lives, forms and associations of any kind come from the combination of the few elements of the periodic table under the influence of a few variants bothers us.

Nature doesn't show itself, it doesn't display. Sun doesn't rise in the East so that we can observe the scene and construct metaphors which embody us or comfort us. Rainbows don't appear so that we open our mouths, nor tigers exist so that we consider our physical incompetence and how far we are from gracefulness.

We talk about beauty in the natural world. We attribute beauty to things such as thunderbolts, the aurora borealis, deserts, glaciers, tigers, fruit, storms or pyrite. In this kind of beauty, contradictory ideas are substantiated, such as mortal danger, pleasure, awareness of our own defenceless, of all that is alien to us, of all that is blind and implacable, harmony or chaos. We appreciate this kind of beauty as the sharp, unquestionable existence of a sense, of

Xesús Vázquez

a kind of rationality, although this order is often incomprehensible. It seems that this rationality unifies us with animals and nature. We use it to understand reality and and we project it on everything we know, but it is alien and lent. We are nature's anxious, witty, capricious, self-destructive part. We are always dissatisfied. We feel melancholic because of the wide difference between what we want and what we finally get.

We think and for us it's impossible not to think, stated Imre Kertesz. So we need to develop our thought in order to obtain the explanation of both our life and our death. Reason seems useless at this task. At this point we change, as much as we can, reason for a special construction, only ours, which is art. Even when art comes from the caverns where our reason can't penetrate, we think that it must have the threatening serenity of a tiger, the generosity of a bird's song, the purity of an atom and the aura of what is necessary: Sense, which is related to feeling.

Due to this significant sense we can feel majesty and evidence of glory even looking at the skeleton of an animal which is clean because of vultures. We can also tremble with the beauty of what is unknown in a donkey's decomposing body, as Buñuel and Dalí felt and reflected in their works. Especially Dalí.

Surrealists perpetrated a decisive, furious attack against the possibilities of beauty, limited by Enlightenment's inherited reason and critical spirit, and against the critical spirit itself as the last feature of the "common sense". Nevertheless, Dalí's assault on Surrealists was even fiercer and sharper. It was not that he thought that there wasn't any beauty in marvellousness. Not even that he didn't agree that what is marvellous is always beautiful, in

the way that Breton defined marvellousness and connected it to children's feelings before the unknown. It was not that he had rejected the early Surrealism's receptive mechanisms, such as the pure psychic automatism, dreams or automatic drawing, which he soon defined as non evolutionary, because they could easily be reduced into common language and logic by psychoanalysis. Salvador Dalí's assault on Surrealism showed the movement up. With his attack he tried to find new ways to go into the unconscious without any kind of alibis or taboos. He tried to penetrate into the dark, sinister and corrosive field of pure irrationality, in a tough, fanatic, criminally patient frame. He tried to find the meaning of sex and desire, lying as a mystery in each of our cells. This conquest of "irrationality", as the painter defined it, created a gap between him and the other members of this movement. This gap also existed between his works and the ones of the historical avant-garde because, according to him, and I agree, they were too formalistic.

Being Picasso already in an undeniably Olympus, from all his contemporary colleagues, only Marcel Duchamp would resist next to him against everyone else.

We could say that both of them created new borders on art. Or that because of them, a new modernity appeared, different from the canonical one opened with the Impressionist Revolution. They established a new perspective for the inner sight, a new North in the compass.

Dalí:

— "I've come to save painting from modern art."

From the art made by those artists who "fatten in the nauseating welfare of a life with no vigour, no shape, no tragedy and no soul."

— The irrational "with which one could hurt himself," as he wrote, was showed with the meticulousness, the accuracy and, if possible, all the mastery of Vermeer or of Raphael.

We can say that, if art has to reflect the truth in its works, the working method must be sincere, deep, patient and tireless; it must go beyond any limit, any obstacle different from its demand. Even reaching delirium.

It seems that the mere fact of talking about what art demands, the Heideggerian expression of "reflecting truth in the works", expels all impurity and forces the language to violently project one's voice or at least to realize that what art sets out is unlikely paraphrasable.

But Salvador Dalí tried to feel paraphrases. He emptied himself through words and during his whole life he tried to produce a literary work as intense and brave as his paintings.

I think that his main aim was to build a universal dimension made up of images and words, whose existential constitution were, unavoidably, the question which we already know: what are we? Duchamp:

Despite having devoted his last years to make his work *Étant donnés*, a three-dimensional landscape composition which must be seen through a keyhole, he considered that "retinal phenomena" were useless at the purposes of art.

— His silence. Joseph Beuys built this Duchampian pun: The Silence of Marcel Duchamp Is Overestimated.

— His radical way of non painting and, at the same time, his devoted and smart defence of Dalí — the accursed painter, the painters' clown — against everybody, including Breton.

— But his way of non painting... What is *The Large Glass* today? What is *Élevage de poussière* (*Dust Breeding*)?

— His silence, so laborious but hidden by his chess tournaments, seems the project of an installation without objects. Stripped of any purpose, alien to any metastasis or self-reference process, it could have as title *Why Not Rather Anything?*

The gap created by these two artists' works gives people vertigo and, at the same time, invites to ask oneself two new, important, subsidiary questions related to their works:

What does "I sat Beauty on my knee and I found her bitter" mean?

What does "Beauty will be convulsive or it will not be" mean?

Signs? Prophecies? Or screams still? Art doesn't state as prophets do. It shows itself by revealing us unknown harmonies, latent wounds, ignored dreams. And it does it with simplicity, with prodigality and with the full sense of natural phenomena. Or maybe it isn't art. Maybe it is only propaganda, or a show, or liturgy.

And like art, what we create to enjoy ourselves, to eat, to live, to wear or to calm pain, but with no need of tackling *sub specie aeternitatis*, either it has the coherence of an atom, or it is nothing. Only *ugliness*.

When is something ugly?

Corot said that he saw too much and that he should squint up one of his eyes.

I would answer to that: Everything is ugly.

I can reduce my habitat to my body, to some clothes that cover it, or not. That is the condition of many human inhabitants of the world, who live in refugee camps or in civilian areas of armed conflicts, on the floor and under stormy skies. Despite having no shelter, the body remains being a fold of the outer space. Dwelling only the inside because the whole outside is homicidal.

Writing often involves suspending the sight, cancelling communication and sounds, in order to listen to the voices, to see the illuminations from the inside. However, that inside is still a fold of the outside. For a writer, bearing in mind only how ink glides on the piece of paper, how words appear on the screen, is a way of living. The difference between both ways of confinement (being in a refugee camp-civilian scene of wars // being a writer) is that the second one is an act of volition, whereas the first one is a transgression.

I enjoy going for walks. I like running, being outdoors. I love recognizing my inner self in the world. I agree with the idea that defines us (as species) as this uncontrollable impulse of being all over the space. I could say that we are linguistic mammals. All mammals grow in wombs (dome-sphere) and leave them towards the outside space to make it their home. All mammals need to communicate and the space is the mediate place *par excellence*: the earth's crust, the deep oceans, the visible sky and the interstellar realities. These are the basic territories to exchange, as earlier it was the amniotic fluid, the mother's placenta.

I will call atmosphere to the combination of these two necessities: a protection space // an outer space or world. Without atmosphere, life is impossible.

Mustard gas was first used in the European war in 1914. This military technique was designed not to kill the enemies directly, but to deprive them of atmosphere. As usual, the dramatic character of battles got ahead of future civil disasters.

I would say that we are dealing with an attempt to kidnap and to privatize the atmosphere and, consequently, the spaces that had been considered common until the present time (which are considered to start just after the Second World War). We are facing a process of stripping people of lands. After this statement I must specify something in order to avoid misunderstandings: any space is a system altered by human action. Moreover, what is considered an outrage by a generation may not be considered so by the next ones. Thus, my generation considers that there aren't any problems with having mussel beds in our estuaries, although our grandparents considered them an unprecedented damage. Some people around my age may think that the rural constructions built in the 70s are paradigms of destruction. However, people who built them claim that they show their small social success. In that sense, the studies that they gave us, the purchase of agricultural machines, etc., made up their feeling of success against the adverse conditions during Franco's dictatorship. So, there is no habitat that had benevolent origins. Not even the idea of "original habitat". No golden, harmonious way of dwelling has preceded us. And now, it has: Space-speculation / *Ugliness* / Privatization of common places...

I would claim that post-modern settlements follow a kind of logic opposite to the one of Renaissance paintings. I'm not talking about a

lack of humanism, but about something more basic. While the master painters from the 15th and 16th centuries struggled to introduce the illusion of the three dimensions on a flat surface, nowadays we persist in reducing the outside to only two of these measures, leaving out width or depth. The current trend is the corporate trans-national uniformity of sublime capitalism regarding space. The previous countryside-city dichotomy doesn't work anymore. We go over places that are almost two-dimensional pictures. From my point of view, it is not only an aesthetic question. For me, the problem is this: can I live in a place that hides and removes depth? And, even more important: how does this place affect me? Can I breathe, move continuously over a picture? Is it possible to exist moving relentlessly? And what is going to happen with my shelter needs? Transmitted, passed on and glided along an implacable, amoeban, digital and metaphorical stone, without beginning or end.

This is what I think about it, as an inhabitant of the so-called first world, although with the connotations of coming from Galicia, a quite backward region. This is the reason why I can still fantasize about idyllic places and claim that I knew them. I will talk about two of these *omphalos* and about a third one, which is not.

- *Omphalos* a. — Carnota: I define it as an *omphalos* because this area is round. I could draw a diameter from the foot of the mountains to the horizon or an equator from Caldebarcos to Lira, and then I could design a protection bubble or sphere in osmosis with the ocean, which would enlarge further than the horizon. Whoever walk, barefoot or not, on the sand of this area could feel how cosmic forces go through them: Pindo mountain's stone magnetism, the wild and delicate rhythm of

the waves, the sky, the fierce-looking crows or the North-Eastern wind. I tell you that people who walk like that straighten out their spines, and the weight of their brains fit better with their whole bodies. They also open their minds to the world and, in general, they feel happier, more telluric and more human. Sure. However, you can't ignore wind farms. You can't avoid the suspicions when you eat bivalves from Berbecheira beach nor when you taste the archaic sand fishes of the area. Carnota, as any *omphalos*, is a powerful place and, at the same time, an impossible, endangered Eden.

• *Omphalos* b. — A Limia: When I was born, all of us, Galician people, had already our memory drained. Almost everyone was in Frankfurt, for instance, working in the AC carbon factories or just in time to emigrate to Germany. However, when I was born and glanced for ever at that mathematical infinite that was my original formula, land consolidation didn't exist. Therefore, Trasmiras didn't look like Oklahoma at all, neither like a Roman camp nor like a computer chip seen from a plane. It was curved, endlessly curved, as a navel. Oaks and chestnut trees grew everywhere and things like that. The possibility to go back in time, and the fact of knowing all the women from my mother's family had been born there and had been peasants or shepherdesses, even at the time of dolmens, has always made me feel safe in a way that is difficult to explain. It is a kind of ability to have the vertical position. However, I realize that this is a privilege, as I know that most of the people of my age were savagely deprived from their origins due to different political, economic or social causes. In any case, they could not take their own decisions. So none of them had the privilege I have. Despite all this, A Limia is not endangered, but brutally despoiled.

• *Omphalos* c, which is not. — Currently I live in one of the most prosperous towns in the region of Galicia. A 5-km long esplanade by the side of a stream was built in the town. It goes just next

to a mill that belongs to the local leader. There are three different sections with an interval in between. I start. My house: sightseeings from my studio or materials that I have to enounce my reality:

— A botanical garden, "micro-size" (in part because it has just been planted, but I don't think that any of its small plants could be considered as exotic at all; it can't be compared with the one in Padrón, for instance), but that is how I called it: "Botanical Garden"

— A farm: my grandfather with his tractor, my grandfather checking works with a little boy, a black dog, a singing cock

— The straight stretch of a very busy ring road with signposted central reservations and a roundabout in the middle

— The sky

— Amazing twilights

— Hundreds of spiders producing kilometres of cobwebs that I see wherever I go

— A Halley mall (with a shopping arcade, cinemas, a supermarket and a hotel) under construction

— The foundations of the future town hall, which according to the mayor (who is not the local leader) will be modern and emblematic

Every morning I get up hearing the cock-crowing and the also loud sounds of cement mixers and cars. I have to walk a stretch of the esplanade to go to work. My wild imagination divides the esplanade into different stretches. The Nilotic stretch has a pond with palm trees and a pier. The medium stretch, not really in the medium, which I also call the Magritte stretch. The Mediterranean stretch is the next one. Finally, we have the Atlantic stretch, designed by architect César Portela. From there you can see the mill. I am well aware that this would be the perfect moment to show some slides, but I am too lazy for that.

The Magritte stretch: you can reach it going through a Romanesque London-like tunnel.

The stream here flows under thick layers of concrete. On the surface, it winds over an orange synthetic bicycle lane. On the left bank there are a group of old vegetable gardens with all kind of crops, depending on the seasonal rhythm. Finally, a slum quarter appears. Most of its houses are not painted and their bricks can be seen, and they are damaged due to the erosion (this is a high-altitude climate, as a billboard advertises). The town is certainly in the geographical centre of the current region of Galicia. It is 700 m above sea level, and I could define it as the frozen heart of our motherland. The landscape is framed by a row of old streetlamps in both sides of the esplanade, which have straight lamp posts and lunatic lampshades, even more eccentric when lights are on, as they give off weak and orange light. I call it "Magritte stretch" because, as the paintings by the Belgian painter, it makes you feel restless. Suddenly, your eyes can't believe what they are looking at and they try to deny that image. The difference is that in front of one of those Surrealist paintings you feel captivated in an intellectual and brilliant fascination. However, here, in this esplanade, your senses only want to run away as soon as possible. I won't enlarge on this subject. I'll only say that this place bears a certain resemblance to a free trade area on a local level.

Defusing a common space involves destroying all the social relationships which had been forged by the environment. Space (allow me this school weakness) could be defined as the lamination between the environment (I use this term, environment, lacking a better one, because all environments are technology, prosthesis // physical relief, water, climate, vegetation) and the different human settlements. Hence, space follows both the guidelines imposed by the leaders of the species and the resistance of the

rest in that specific situation. Privatizing the space is like selling it. Therefore, acquiring a good atmosphere is/will be a privilege only for those who can afford it. From my point of view land, the atmosphere is an inalienable right, such as freedom, equality, the right of self-determination and fraternity. And as an inalienable right I wish it were considered a legal concept. Then, the attacks against it would be punished by the penal code. I am not in favour of death penalty, but I am aware that all texts shoot. I don't like the term *ugliness* to define this problem because it sounds awful and it is a reductionist concept. It is reductionist because its opposite is *beautiffulness* and I don't aspire to live in a beautiful environment, but in a fair and egalitarian heavenly body. We could only solve this problem that we have just started to suffer by means of a political intervention in the economy. It is not possible to survive in a homicidal atmosphere. Capitalism is sublime because it captivates us and moves us, because it depresses us inevitably and, over all, it makes us to detest it. Arts are autonomous, no doubt, but arts without ethics have never been possible.

I finish, then, by saying that space isn't just related to "nature" as opposed to "human-man". Space is a technology in dispute. On the one hand, the headquarters of capital and its local branches, by whom we are deeply touched. On the other hand, all of us who don't want to be robbed of our right of walking outdoors, all of us who consider the outside as a fundamental right.

Zero nostalgia. I love space.



architecture
means always violence
on nature

Gaudi's Park Güell, Barcelona
Chicago
Los Angeles
Forum, Barcelona
Music House, Porto
Porto
Minho River
Three pictures of Madeira



The relationship between architecture and nature is complex and variable: architecture means always violence on nature. The expression that architecture introduces builds what we call 'landscape'. Our references are due to our nearest History: modern architecture is the modelling material for the new urban landscape, a new way of signposting the land. Transport mechanization changes our perception and notion of landscape. The next pictures will enlighten the place which nowadays we call 'home'. These phrases will explain it.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

James Kirwan. *Beauty*, 1999

"Civilization needs an honourable dwelling place."

James Howard Kunstler. *Home from Nowhere. Remaking our everyday world for the 21st century*, 1996, 1998

"The automobile promoted a centrifugal flinging outward away from the center."

Witold Rybczynski. *City life*, 1995

"Getting around São Paulo can be difficult even if you speak Portuguese, have a car, time and money, and you know the streets and traffic patterns. For the traveller, it takes much longer to get a feel for the layout of São Paulo than for just about any city in the world. Why? First, it's a big, sprawling city. Second, there is no plan or pattern to the arteries. Third, there are few natural or artificial landmarks by which to orient oneself. There is no ocean or river (of importance), and either few dominating boulevards or so many, depending on how you look at it, that they are of little use to the visitor. Visibility is limited by buildings everywhere. Even maps reflect the difficulty of bringing the city down to comprehensible dimensions."

Brazil, a Lonely Planet travel survival kit, 1996

From which architecture is the big city made? It is known that Brazilian architecture also cultivates its own myths. Mainly the myth about its audacity, fulfilled by the expression of the long, visionary gesture that is suggested by

the country's vastness. The myth about the technique that materializes that audacity. The myth about the lightness of the buildings, "raised from the ground", erected over minimal points, defying gravity since Niemeyer was born for it and showed it to the world. It is significant that nowadays the greatest master alive of modern Brazilian architecture is creating little models for wire sculptures that would be later executed by others at real scale. He thinks about them installed in his studio at Copacabana where, despite the broad window over Guanabara Bay, he is hidden in a small room with no air vent.

That free, innovative architecture in reinforced concrete or steel creates buildings that are placed on the terrain as huge inhabitable sculptures, the way all architectural objects should be. But always sculptures, as an interpretation to the limit of the Modern Movement's legacy: the unique, finite, secretly Renaissance buildings. Brazilian architects had started to create them as a formula tested in the

"The public realm is the connective tissue of our everyday world. It is made of those pieces of terrain left between the private holdings."

Witold Rybczynski. *City life*, 1995

"Grid planning has often been associated with colonization."

Witold Rybczynski. *City life*, 1995

"Ugliness Is in the Eye of the Beholder"

Ana Vaz Milheiro

Big city

[195, March 2000, pages 66-67]

spirit of modernity. They had reproduced the lesson learnt from the foreign masters whom they really admired, as Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies, and later Aalto. They had also imitated Brazilian masters, as Artigas or Reidy. When cities closed themselves, they had continued with altruistic and generous works, blinder to and for the rest. The solution of isolating the building in a unique point, even when trying to resume relations with the place or the landscape in the most abstract sense, appears nowadays as a way of redemption. Now that most of Brazilian big cities don't offer anymore extensive, unexplored spaces, contemporary Brazilian buildings, especially those which follow a modern image party, take shelter in the only thing that may be recoverable: to exist. Even so, it is still contradictory that expansion lasts in the imagination of Brazilian creators and that this idea is joined to the myth of the young, virgin land where history is still starting.

There was the belief that the full, exuberant vegetation devoured everything, even ugliness, as foreign travellers stated describing 19th century Brazil. But Brazilian nature, as mistreated as Tietê River in São Paulo, became exhausted, got tired. It even seems incapable of recover itself. And architects who regret working against the time in those same cities are devoted to themselves, and can only build buildings that are islands. It's paradoxical that such a vast territory is nowadays tighter and tighter. Those cities only offer spaces that are fragmented, divided into blocks, crowded together and chaotic, connected by highways glorified by cars. To survive, these buildings, erected in the sides of the axis that determine the city flows, are competing to be seen. As the city is crossed by viaducts, avenues and tunnels, the landscape is discontinuous, defined by fast circuits that control people's migrations.

For a long time, São Paulo's suburbs are mixing up with the mother city. To feel what really is a big city, you must visit early in the morning the bus stations that permit the journey of the doubly immigrant men — because they were born in the inland or in other states, and because they live in the suburbs. How must they live the city?

Legions of street salesmen concentrate in the main bus stops. Trade is the real motor of the city, its regenerating activity now that nature became exhausted and there aren't many free spaces for squares or public walks. Squares are the bus spots. Ticket offices, flyovers, tile makers mixed with groups of salesmen, painted façades with many posters and bills. The vertigo of speed obliges the arrangement of big outdoors billboards to remember the essence of São Paulo's urban life. Everybody buys in malls, in small stores, in the street. And to obtain visibility, the buildings acquired their affirmative, sculptural scale. They agree with the outdoors principle: to spread beauty and order. They are powerful, almost superb, in order to be seen from afar, from your car or from the bus. They

are spaces of beauty more and more distant and improbable. That's why it was possible for Brazilian architects to construct the myth of the great gesture from which architecture is born: the audacious building that shows its generative force trying to rebuild urbanity. It's not about dominating the landscape anymore, but about subordinating the disorder around it. It has changed into a way of surviving in the big city.

"Have you ever gone by train?," asked me a Swiss lady emigrated to São Paulo a decade ago, as I was also a foreigner and so an accomplice. "I used to take the train at Luz Station and went to work to Mauá. I don't want to return to the time when I didn't own a car. Brazilian middle class, especially upper-middle class, doesn't know anything about how common people live. You just have to take the train and see how these people are transported. And they do not even complain." It's not just a mean of transport; it's also the urban setting that provides a physical support for it. Long avenues and bus lanes surrounded by stretched, pollution-blackened buildings suggest the idea of neglect. But only if you travel by bus. By car this threat is vanished in the comfort provided by the air conditioning, the radio and the pleasant conversation. It is only intensified by the obligatory stop at a red traffic light. That is the fear among São Paulo's bourgeoisie, which was called 'mean' by singer-composer Caetano Veloso, when guitarist-singer João Gilberto was booed at the shocking opening of the Credicard Hall, the biggest concert hall in South America, a post-modern work by the trio Groce, Aflalo & Gasperini. People were horrified when I gave them my address. "You live in a

dangerous neighbourhood," they said. So that was the reason why nobody visited me. But I'm going to move, I'm going to Vila Olímpia, near Itaim. "Don't do that, it is a nouveau riche area." Oh, that means that they live in closed condominium apartments, with a view to the neighbour's room and a doorman to open the hall door for them, and that only go out by car? Even worse, they try to imitate the true nouveaux riches, living in the chic residential neighbourhoods of Alphaville where maids are inspected when entering and leaving and goods are counted. "Once my mother gave an Easter egg to her maid and a security guard phoned to ask if she had stolen it," told me a neighbour of that area. Sorry? Those Alphaville villas and buildings are so beautiful, so timeless and stylish, as in the novels. Children playing in clean streets, everything is so first-world-like. "Did you know that there is a mall imitating a medieval town there?" No, never been there. But I believe it; the sophistication of those places requires memories. All modesty aside, in my country there are also malls built as overornated play-centers, with streets, squares, esplanades and everything else, and that have names related to discoveries. That is the price of globalization, which uniformizes our desires.

São Paulo



An optimistic approach

1. Galicia is not ugly. It just wears a mask.

Destroying Reaction

2. Any mask can be removed. Unless it lives within us.

If this is the case, it will take a long process of exorcism, of self-destruction.

3. I want to believe that it doesn't live within us yet!

4. Any construction can also be destroyed. This is a consequence.

But, which are the different typologies of destruction?

In order to categorize, I'd start by finding what is unnecessary.

When we are talking about a collective or individual level, we should distinguish between a tic and an illness.

Look at the book *A terra das mil belezas* (Land of A Thousand Beauties). Choose between Saving / Demolishing. Who chooses?

Waiting

5. Due to our mask, sometimes nobody recognizes us.

It carries out its task: it seems that a Galician person is multiplied on stage.

6. Camouflaged?

7. If this is the case, we needn't worry. When this Carnival finishes, everything will be normal again.

8. But, while it lasts, the identity problem destabilizes and causes restlessness.

Against restlessness

9. Which identity?

Local or global.

Feeling globality in one's place transmits the need of giving a personal answer.

Don't relinquish it. *An encouraging message for creators.*

By doing it we can be right or wrong, but we don't create a trend.

At least, a *collage* of eccentricity is still a *collage*.

The problem arises with the organized chains of horrible imitations. The series.

The superlative *ugliness* is the one of the series, because it seems to be a vital process.

10. To attack the series we should place one inhabitant next to the other, mask and stage.

If we only handle one of them, we are only making up.

Unfortunately this is the system used by the qualified ones, including the government and the professionals.

11. If we place the three of them together, we'll obtain the true beauty and the true awfulness. We'll find out if strategy is possible.

12. We miss the order relationships while looking at awfulness. Balance. It is better not to do it for a long time, as without balance we run the risk of feeling genuine.

13. *Genuinely unbalanced.*

14. While looking at beauty we could also be paralyzed. (At ease, at least).

We feel its discipline, its parameters, although we can't define it precisely.

Beauty is an ever-changing process; it is always moving and going into and out a room. It is alive, we must follow it.

15. That is why there are moments to look at oneself in the mirror: chances.

This should be an essential therapy for powers.

16. So many chances have been already missed that we can only fight against two important enemies: habits and institutions.

17. Therefore I demand a real Constitution of the rights of landscape in order to start with their restitution.

Rights are not actions, but truths which remove masks.

18. Information campaigns. Fashion shows. Rehabilitation courses. All of them are channels which can be easily manipulated.

That is why the mask is still there...



Hope and injury. 13 pictures

This person has decided to create a place beyond technology. Their disconnection is avant-garde. Their way of proceeding, choosing every stone and every place, giving a thought to all of them, involves such an important intellectual effort that it sums landscape and life in such a way that merges into them. Also into anybody who looks at it.

[Picture 1: Fence in Porto de Negros, Quilmas, Carnota].

Moreover, here we can see an approach towards the characteristic forms of technology and the complete lack of interpretation of life and of landscape. Precisely both show themselves as cracks and blackness. It's true, but there is a loose gundog behind. You can only see it when you get closer.

[Picture 2: Fence in Bañías, Vimianzo].

This man decided to extend his house in order to have more room. He economized on structure. In a really personal way, he created one space resting on another. This new cover perfectly reflects all the needs that justified its construction.

[Picture 3: House in Paiosaco].

In this case we can see the idea of dwelling in our country. Its author proposed the construction of elements that identified us in previous periods. They rise under this vegetal layer with an atmosphere where there is no place nor size and where, surely, everything seems unnecessary.

[Picture 4: Group of traditional Galician constructions for an exhibition in a hotel. Baio].

The person who made this bas-relief didn't know exactly the forms that it represents. He never worked physically in that place. However, he is a sailor and he knows how a ship is made by scratching a penknife into an old board.

[Picture 5: Bas-relief made in a shutter. Quilmas].

In contrast to this attitude, the people who decided to build this gate for their house looked for the exact measures, shapes and placing. They had everything under control, apart from the negligence of not thinking with complete liberty.

[Picture 6: Gate of a house, A Pereira, Santa Comba].



Some people don't need advice or regulations defined by laws to build spaces for coexistence. There are still communication and pride channels, which are transmitted and remain in that space.

[Picture 7: Houses in Pindo Mountain].

Some people use difficult control principles and their terminology, such as alignment, cornice height or minimum window area. By doing it, they can move away from everything, even from life and landscape, only to focus on building square metres.

[Picture 8: Tourist apartments, Sardiñeiro, Fisterra].





These are different pictures that try to show how sometimes we define *ugliness* as the recurrence of the same mistake. For instance, here we have the individualism of the party wall. When this is an unconscious habit, it leaves a lot of loose ends. Therefore, with some little changes, such as painting, it could end up having a particular expression.

[Pictures 9-11: Malpica, general view of its harbour.

Malpica, drawing of the party walls painted in white.

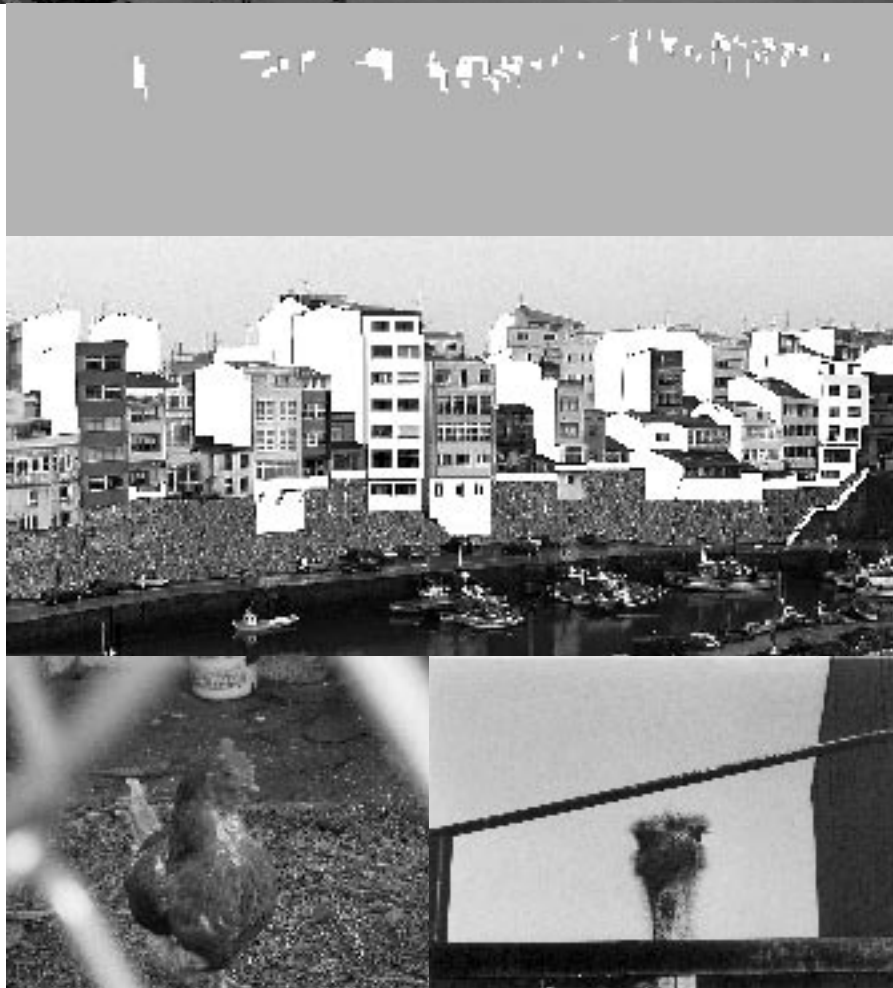
Malpica, partial picture with a little retouching and with painted party walls and facades].

Finally, these are the hen and the ostrich. We could have said these are a grape and a kiwifruit, or these are an oak tree and a eucalyptus. However, this is not a specialization or xenophobic problem, but a problem of cohabitation among inhabitants.

[Pictures 11-12: Hen from Pindo Mountain.

Ostrich from Vimianzo].

Photographs by X. Creus



Antón Baamonde

Ugliness is an ambiguous term, because it could seem that we are discussing important aesthetic matters about what is ugly or what is beautiful. That could lead us to revise the whole history of philosophy on this topic, the whole history of aesthetic theories and so on. However, I would like to focus my discussion on a more empirical and sociological pattern, if it is possible to define it that way. I would like to talk about the deep transformation lived in Galicia in the last 25 years, for establishing a starting point. Then, I would like to specify a certain amount of true facts, which, despite being quite obvious, people are not aware enough of them.

The starting data is that in the mid-60s 60% of Galician population were considered agricultural. Nowadays, this figure is about 12%. Moreover, Galician population is mostly settled on the coastal strip. The two interior provinces, Lugo and Ourense, have recently suffered a decrease of demographic importance at the expense of the coastal areas, and this process seems to continue. Both Lugo and Ourense have about 350,000 inhabitants. Around 100,000 of them live in their capitals. We have to bear in mind that Lugo is a third of the total Galician land. Therefore, most of it is almost uninhabited and the population who does live there is quite old.

So the most important data in the last 25 years is the importance and the consolidation of the urban phenomenon in Galicia. This process started long time ago. I must insist on this point because there might be a trend to believe that Galicia, along its history, has only been a rural region. Only recently some publications have started to come out, doing some research on the history of Vigo or A Coruña or on the settlement of medieval cities. One of these writers is Anselmo López Carreira. For me, this is a promising way of getting out of this one-sided view. In Galicia peasants have been considered

the epitome of the country for too long, while urban development has been neglected, as well as the processes which took place in the villages, which are very interesting.

The case I know best is Vilalba's. When my mother was young, in the 1920s, associations were an important aspect of life in the village. They usually were catholic associations, such as "Juventudes Antonianas". Nevertheless, they organized theatre and poetic evenings. When I watched the film *The Dead*, directed by John Huston, the atmosphere reminded me of my mother's Vilalba. There was an interesting little bourgeoisie. In fact, sometimes they were the precursors of Galician nationalist groups. Even my grandfather, a local shopkeeper, was a member of the nationalist group *Irmandades da Fala*. This nationalism expressed a certain choice: a desire of modernizing their country.

Nowadays we are dealing with the appearance of very new urban phenomena. In my opinion, these processes haven't been deeply analyzed, although we could discuss it later on. But, in any case, the most important fact is that 60% of peasants and fishermen lived in the past throughout the whole country, and nowadays they are living in a specific area: the axis from Ferrol to Vigo. Besides, 60% of population who used to work in the primary sector is now working in the service sector, which –I'm afraid– is not analysed in its current variety and diversity of our country. Anyway, this sector involves a wide range of jobs and activities, so I think that aspects such as taking into account in what kind of enterprises people work, what they do or how much they earn are very important data.

A Coruña can be an example of this transformation process. In the 60s this city had 60,000 inhabitants, but nowadays it has about 300,000. Its hinterland-area extends to Ferrol in the North and to Arteixo and Carballo in the South. Santiago could be

also considered an example of this, despite being a really small urban area of about 140,000 inhabitants. But over all, the actual heart of a country which is changing very fast is the province of Pontevedra, because it is the most dynamic area in Galicia. The area from Pontevedra to Vigo, including Porriño and the border with Portugal, is very important, as well as the Arousa area, which has its own special features. In recent years the housing sector has highly developed in those urban areas. I don't know the exact figures for Galicia, but I do know that half of the total amount of houses which are built in the whole Europe is being built in Spain. And Galicia is not out of this trend. This means that there is an important building boost as a consequence of the social and economic changes of the country. The former agricultural population, that 60% of people who currently work in the service sector, live in those areas. I consider extremely important to draw our attention to these data and therefore to take into account these new working and middle classes' interests and needs. The terrible urban development which appears in the neighbourhoods and suburbs of cities is a terrible attack to the quality of life of the inhabitants. You needn't have much imagination to realize the big problems, even co-existence problems, which this situation could cause.

I can give many examples of urban planning being conspicuous by its absence or, if there is any, it basically responds to short-term speculative and property interests. In Santiago, the paradigmatic examples are the areas of Milladoiro and Cacheiras. I insisted on the short term because building contractors can earn money either doing things wrong or doing them right. In any case, the public administration is

responsible for a rational and sustainable urban development. Therefore, we can't ignore that corrupt politicians can obtain

profits by classifying land as suitable for building. As everybody is well aware, it is because of this that corruption is mainly based on a municipal level on Galicia and Spain.

Anybody of a certain age, or with some perspective, may realize that an absolute disaster has happened in Galicia in the last 25 or 30 years. They also may know that this disaster was caused by the changes and the reasons that I have just mentioned. In the 70s, most of our urban environments' beauty and balance could still be conserved. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that this destructive phenomenon has a wide cultural dimension. I could talk about the fast acculturation process and about the disruptions that it is causing, but I prefer to speak in a more direct way: the *nouveau riches* — or people who think they are them — have a huge capacity of destruction.

However, I would like to emphasize the importance of understanding that we are now in a different historical period of our country, which is nowadays organized in a different way and with different classes. Therefore, this leads to different kinds of population centres and settlements, with cultural and sociological dynamics different from those which were the standard practices until recently. Meeting the necessities of this population is also very important.

Some years ago I organized in Santiago a convention whose main purpose was to make the agents aware of the basic questions. It was addressed to political agents, as well as architects and all the people involved in urban development. The key point wasn't discussing important aesthetic matters but bearing in mind criteria like the provision of water or of electricity. That is, the basic principles of urban development. Some members of the neighbours

association from Milladoiro and Cacheiras attended the convention. It was really interesting to see how the neighbours themselves proposed possible solutions for their own problems; but at that moment their ideas were blocked by the coalition of interests prevailing in the municipalities of Ames and Teo (which include the abovementioned areas). By the way, in the last local elections there was a change of government in the municipality of Ames, due to the new classes which settled in that area, with new political ideas that include requests on urban planning.

Even though, we have to take into account the fact that Galicia is currently going through a transition period. Indeed, in the last 25 years there has been a great social acceleration. Moreover, we must be aware of the need of creating new concepts to meet the requests of this new and ever-changing reality. I am not saying that we should repair the already done disasters, but at least we should be able to prevent new ones. Among other things, being well aware of this acceleration process involves to understand that the current Galician society is mainly an urban society. It's not only that metropolitan areas are concentrating most of the population, but they are the laboratories where our future is being fabricated. Innovation, social changes, new fashions, new criminal methods, new enterprises and the new working and middle classes have the cities and the suburbs as their reference public spaces. It is there where they write the novel of their lives.

I think that there is another topic related to this situation: every country needs a plan, a common idea and a view for the foundations where everything else should rest. This plan can refer to philosophical suppositions and to values and intuitive feelings about the way we want to live. However, it can also refer to the key points of the economic activity, of the social model or of the cultural priorities. That is to say, to strategic points of view undoubtedly related to the different ways

of land organization. For instance, we can see that many decisions are taken every day in Galicia without the necessary previous discussion with technicians. The port under construction in the area of Punta Langosteira, in A Coruña, is one example of this. It is obvious that these decisions must be previously discussed in depth. Moreover, things should be done without being ridiculous. The interested parties in the aforementioned port are talking about competing with the port of Hamburg. I don't know, maybe this is true and Galicia should compete with other ports.

On the hand, it is obvious that there has been a transport revolution, either by road, by railway or by air. Therefore, we should take into account the strategic point of view of Galicia, obviously related to its Atlantic coastal strip and to the near location of Porto airport and to the role that it could play on the transcontinental level. Galicia's chances are undoubtedly determined by its location. In the Iberian Peninsula, the Mediterranean regions are the ones which are growing faster, extending over France. It seems that the Atlantic coastal strip is in *impasse*. The Euro-region is the most important one, both for Galicia and for the North of Portugal. Hence, we have to learn to think in a different way.

Indeed this strategic element and the position of Galicia are related to many strategic decisions which will have to be taken in the future. This would demand a level of discussion and of formulation from the country's big strategic interest centres. Unfortunately there aren't any of them in our country. All the social agents, such as professional associations, trade unions, political groups and public organisms, should be responsible for this. The level of discussion about strategic subjects in Galicia is very low, and however that has an influence on the previous ones and particularly — I would like to emphasize this — on the living conditions of the new social classes who live in the urban and peri-urban areas.

Examples of Ugliness, Pictures and Landscape:

15 examples, 16 pictures and 1 landscape

Pablo Gallego Picard

NOTE: "the order of numbers doesn't change the product", that is: $16 - 15 = 1$

15 examples of ugliness

1. Due to its political utilization, *ugliness* is focused on what it should not be, on what is wrong. It limits the possibilities and by doing it, it defines taste.

2. Due to its nature, it is dual. That is, it causes opposition, because if there is *ugliness* there also must be *beautiffulness*, which would deal with what is right.

3. Due to its location, *ugliness* is placed in limited areas. Nowadays we speak about *ugliness* in rural areas, in the agricultural world. In the 21st century, this term is not really precise. Maybe should speak about areas with concentration of capital and areas with lack of capital. Periphery isn't limited by distances; it isn't just a geographical phenomenon, as it exists both in rural areas and in cities.

4. Due to its meaning, *ugliness* is a style, because it does as it manages. Humbleness is its language, necessity is its weapon.

5. Due to its origin, *ugliness* is popular. That is why inventiveness is one of its traditional features.

6. Due to its presence, *ugliness* is a new phenomenon. New materials are used and so new forms are created. A lot can be learnt from these architectural patterns.

7. Due to its strong character, *ugliness* marks the landscape, as it is different from the traditional

patterns. But what is tradition, if not what remains in a place?

— pause and a redefinition of *ugliness* —

8. Shouldn't we maybe forget the current definition of *ugliness*, erratic in taste? Shouldn't we start to talk about a modern popular architecture, about a modern populist architecture or about architecture with or without capital?

9. Wouldn't this popular and modern, new and current architecture, spread around this region, be a reality that is alive, as (cultivated) landscape is?

10. Shouldn't we better talk about landscape with an *ugly* macro-architecture? About the excessive eucalyptus reforestation? About the excessive amount of enterprises? About satellite towns which are extending the concentration of — speculative — capital? In fact, aren't these examples more alien to a slow and forgotten structure of traditional landscapes than to modern popular architectures which survive surrounded by these fast movements of global exploitation?

11. Would it mean, then, that the protection of the supposedly traditional rural architecture, the so-called phenomenon of *beautiffulness* is the necessity of controlling what is local against what is global?

12. Wouldn't it be necessary to identify the alive landscape as a cultured place or atmosphere, in the

same way that concentrations of "cultured" architecture in cities are identified as the so-called urban landscape? Galicia also includes what our ancestors left for the future: landscape.

13. Landscapes are never innocent natural spaces without meaning. Portraying a landscape is always the result of a choice: a part is shown, and another part stops being observed. Drawing on this border between what is visible and what is invisible is a political act. These are the so called "politics of representation". I would even say more: that it is also an ideological act.

14. Therefore, wouldn't it be more important to know —understand— what is visible and what is not? And I add: how could it be seen?

Since when must a dump or an industrial estate be built in the top of a mountain? Since when does the coastal regeneration involve asphaltting or cementing its rocks, filling an area which we are never going to see again? Centuries ago, another occupation structures were already in the coastal areas, such as harbours made of iron or wood. Aren't there any more respectful occupation structures?

15. No image has free status. Therefore, we want to use pictures as if they were a polysemic language. Of course, one of the meanings of this language will be irony. It intends to be a critical, thoughtful act.

Fismo?

DESTROYING A COUNTRY



16 pictures

1. Landscape, outside a bar — open page: I start by showing photos from a book published five or six years ago. This picture of an outdoors landscape shows the reality known by all of us.

©Pablo Gallego. *Centros da terra* (Land Centres), book published by coag. Author: Pablo Gallego. May 1999

2. Inside the bar with Pinto d'Herbón: then we can see our indoors, daily landscape. Maybe they seem two opposite ways of life, but they are complementary to each other, actually. One of them has no apparent order, it is dismantled, while the other one is strong, a meeting point. This is our life.

©Pablo Gallego. *Centros da terra* (Land Centres), book published by coag. Author: Pablo Gallego. May 1999

3. Man: here we can observe two different lives, two different speeds, two different scales.

©Xan Creus. *Viaxe á fin da terra* (A Journey to the End of the World), book published by coag. Authors: Xan Creus and Pablo Gallego. May 1999

4. Central reservation: the same as before, two different periods of time, two different scales.

©Pablo Gallego. *Viaxe á fin da terra* (A Journey to the End of the World), book published by coag. Authors: Xan Creus and Pablo Gallego. May 1999

5. «There can't be more ugliness here»: this picture was published recently. The title is surprising. I like it, because it is the first time that *ugliness* is quantified. The text which goes with it says:

"Before arriving the town of Teixeira, in between three 4-storey blocks, there is a small single house. 'And the urban

plan doesn't intervene. I do not know why, as there can't be more ugliness here...' The regulation grants this area a low urban density: only one-storey buildings, and that's all. 'I don't think we'll see these blocks demolished. And, if the plan is approved, the houses next to them aren't going to have more storeys. So...' And we are told that the maximum height allowed in some streets has caused arguments among neighbours. The problem is that they see how, without a particular reason, the people who live next door have their development potential increased and, with it, the value of their land, whereas they have theirs diminished."

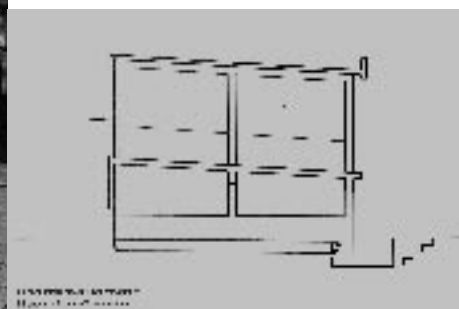
© Foto Estudios Blanco. *La Voz de Galicia*

6. «Only the granary is different» I: this picture appeared in an article entitled "In the Time Machine". Here you can see a present-day photo of the village of San Martiño de Ombreiro. The article says that the landscape remains almost the same, if we compare it to the original one.

© Xurxo Lobato. *La Voz de Galicia*, 24th November 2004

7. «Only the granary is different» I: this photo was taken by German anthropologist Walter Ebeling in the beginning of the 20th century. The comparison surprises us not only because of its title, but also because of our own idea about what is traditional and what is not; for example, the granary.

© Walter Ebeling. *La Voz de Galicia*, 24th October 2004



8. Gaps: a straw loft and a granary made of modern materials, using them in a rational way. Blocks made of cement and brick with gaps are the main features of the new, present-day popular architecture. Gaps are needed in order to air the building, because of the humidity. A basic concept of modern architecture is that function and building go hand in hand. Nowadays we could define this trend as modern popular architecture, or our own tradition in the future.

©Pablo Gallego.

A terra das mil belezas (Land of A Thousand Beauties), book published by coag. Authors: Xan Creus and Pablo Gallego. June 1998

9. Washing place: this is a washing place, a stage for festivals, a court to play basketball and a roundabout for cars. This construction was designed by an unknown

person. Probably, its different functions have been added along the time and they are the reason of its surprising form and its beautiful architecture.

©Pablo Gallego

A terra das mil belezas (Land of A Thousand Beauties), book published by coag. Authors: Xan Creus and Pablo Gallego. June 1998

10. Sketch of a washing place: re-drawing forms is a way to understand them and to define them in level of cultured architecture which they never had but did deserve.

©Pablo Gallego

A terra das mil belezas (Land of A Thousand Beauties), book published by coag. Authors: Xan Creus and Pablo Gallego. June 1998

11. House: the book *A Aldea Terremota* (Too-Remote Village) is the result of a research work. As if I were an explorer in a remote land, I started to take photographs of the

inhabitants of a village, one among Galicia's many villages. I had the necessity to portray the two sides of dwelling: that is, the house and the owner.

Each house is a different life and expresses itself in a particular way. This is a house full of living wish, as says X. S., made by adding all the necessary step by step, humbly.

©Pablo Gallego. Published by the County Council of A Coruña. First prize in the Luís Ksado awards. June 1997

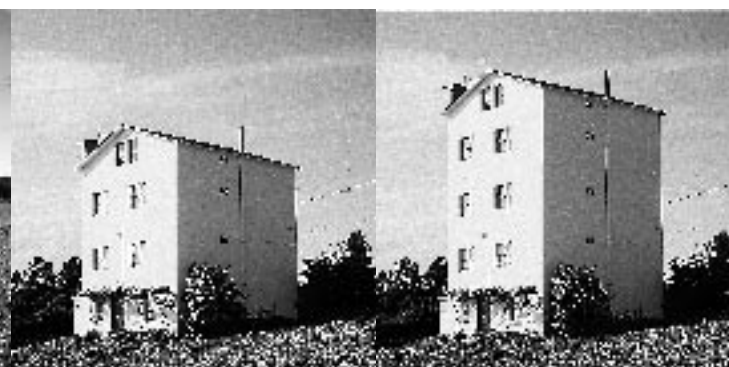
A Aldea Terremota (Too-Remote Village), book published by coag. Authors: Pablo Gallego and Xurxo Souto. December 1997

12. Inhabitant: and her owner also shows her living wish.

©Pablo Gallego.

Published by the County Council of A Coruña. First prize in the Luís Ksado awards. June 1997

A Aldea Terremota (Too-Remote Village), book published by coag. Authors: Pablo Gallego and Xurxo Souto. December 1997



13. Inhabitants and their houses: the result was this group of inhabitants from a village with different forms. [p. 34]

©Pablo Gallego. Published by the County Council of A Coruña. First prize in the Luís Ksado awards. June 1997
A Aldea Terremota (Too-Remote Village), book published by coag. Authors: Pablo Gallego and Xurxo Souto. December 1997

14. Too-remote Village 1: different characters which all together remind you of something familiar, as landing in a place that you already know. [p. 34]

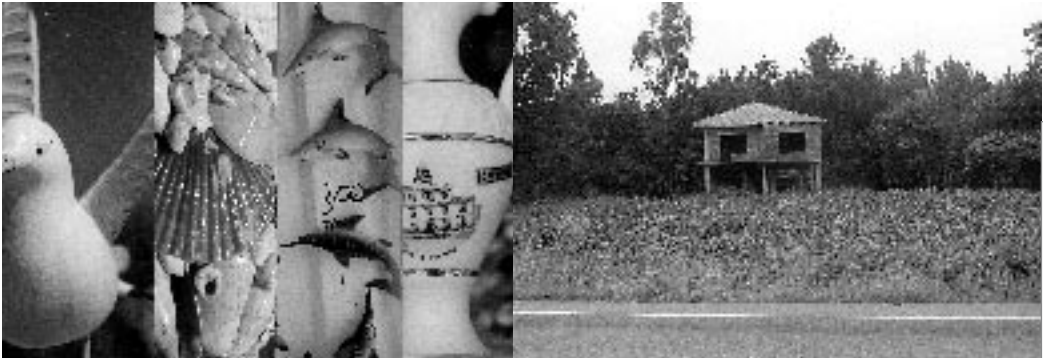
©Pablo Gallego. *A Aldea Terremota* (Too-Remote Village), book published by coag. Authors: Pablo Gallego and Xurxo Souto. December 1997

15. Too-remote Village 2: I've been asked a lot of times where this village is. In fact, it is everywhere. [p. 34]

©Pablo Gallego. *A Aldea Terremota* (Too-Remote Village), book published by coag. Authors: Pablo Gallego and Xurxo Souto. December 1997

16. Pictures 'A' and 'B': Too-Remote Village has taught us that a house can grow. [p. 34]

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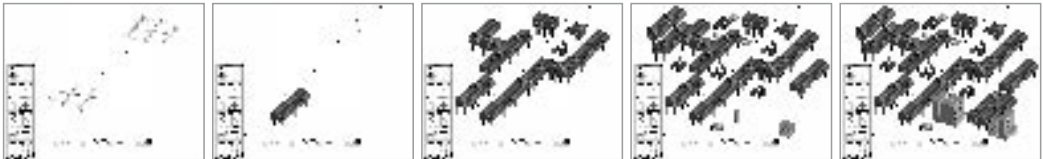
One landscape

Picture Intro 1: this is what we find when we arrive at Fisterra. A collection of souvenirs which we took home to remember a trip, which are pieces of a landscape that has nothing to do with that place.

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Picture Intro 2: there is a present-day, unfinished architecture which can be defined as characteristic of the Galician region. I'd like to reflect this in an iconography.

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A critical pattern is suggested by identifying a particularizing iconography that allows us to have a language of the particular and encoded representation, by using an emblem, by assuming the local elements to enter the public domain and by creating then an exchange outside the academic field. It would be a system or a computer program, which should have a series of basic param-

eters or inputs — icons —, and some simple performance rules. Its aim would be to create a new landscape full of new and not so new spatial relationships with autonomous growth. It would also be a pattern or a tool of evolutionary logic which would create a living and ever-changing landscape, always different but familiar at the same time. This axonometric

Galicia would have two sides and would be called **GalizaX-Y-Z:** create your own interactive landscape.



The attribution of *ugliness*, urban chaos and architectural neglect just to the lack of regulations, to a chaotic management, to land interests or basically to a certain identity sign of Galician people, who are just concerned about their own good, is ignoring the fundamental and submerged part of this iceberg. Necessarily there must be deeper causes that, in addition to bringing about this confusion, are also the reasons of the aforementioned circumstances. A philosopher once said that nothing is without reason; and there are plenty of reasons.

Another equally misinterpreted subject is the idea that urbanism and architecture only move for technical, economic or material reasons. This is a necessarily destabilizing argument that caught us since the late 80s, evoking a fatal destiny, which was used to disarm some of the best left-wing reasoning, and also to leave us at the mercy of the construction industry.

Please excuse me for beating about the bush. In the late 80s, the 90s or so, dialectic materialism prevailed: everything could be talked about if it was related to money. I can understand that attitude because money is a universal language, more accepted that acceptable, which circulates profusely if there are real state affairs in the way. However, this wave of resignation hid another one which was bigger, more destructive, more silent and more difficult to fight. It tried to explain that imagination doesn't matter and that people and collectives never take decisions from their imaginaries. What is a trick and what is a mistake. The trick is theirs, and the mistake is ours for believing it. The USA election showed once again what a lie is: people taking decisions in terms of imaginary arguments, of ideas with no legal basis; people being told that to vote in accordance with a flag is better than

to vote in accordance with economic indicators. Imaginaries are very valuable because people with no idea of politics also have the right to vote. And even when we know that, we don't stop calling elections.

Now we must clear up what is the role of the individual and collective imaginary in *ugliness*, architecture and urbanism. In Galicia, its role is bigger than it seems: even when there are no surface arguments to explain the change of patterns, the sudden irruption of new materials or the abandonment of the traditional model, all of them refer to a quiet but operational original choice. Not a spoken choice, but one with such an impetuosity that acts as an instinct: survival or ambition.

This phenomenon has two sides. On the one hand, the desire; on the other hand, the possibility to fulfill it. In Galicia, among with the other million misfortunes related to the civil war and the repression of Franco's dictatorship, there was one misfortune never well acknowledged or calculated that probably has still an influence over the present: the huge breaking of our collective imaginary. The supplantation of this imaginary, whichever it was, for others that were less harmonic, some of them even colliding, caused a change in our behavioural directions, but not in our behaviours. I think that this argument operates in every field, from metallurgy to poetry, from sea to construction.

The change in the architectural imaginary started to operate in Galicia after the civil war, but it wasn't obvious so early: maybe there was the desire, but there weren't the possibilities to fulfill it. However, a brief flash of this could be found even before. The introduction of Latin American architecture in Galicia by the emigrants who returned after having made

a fortune there supposed a change in the imaginary, but it was an expensive, refined, cult change. It was an exotic change, but in it there are references to what would come later.

In the 50s, as the economic situation became slightly bearable for the lower-middle classes, a new imaginary started to take shape. It wasn't related to the previous one, nor was it related to forms managed by a certain tradition which was established with the years, the uses, the weather and nature. The breaking is not produced because these referents are negative, but because they are hidden by greater ones: almost all of them are related to a society of misery, suffering and starvation. The maintenance of that loyalty would be asking too much. So, rural and urban traditional architecture, the stone architecture, was identified with the experiences which the residents suffered. As the referents changed, the desires also changed: after the lack of firewood for the kitchens and the fireplaces in the 40s, the new bourgeois society really felt like having a cast iron radiator.

Because there is another possibility confronted with a culture identified with the Galician economic backwardness. As if things weren't confused enough, after the 50s, the word *progress* started to spread in an unstoppable and unjustified way. This is a word full of expectations, of rumours of improvement, of electric light and machines. And then a predictable defeat arrived because the paradigm changed and three different crises coincided at the same time: the identity crisis, the crisis of the agricultural model and the world crisis between the good and the evil. Too much and too close. The imaginary acted powerfully and it made believe that a recently built, three-room flat without central heating or elevator in the

suburbs of a city was much better than a stone house in a small village.

At the same time, the first urgent changes in the building technique appeared. The cement inflation, the cement mixers and the first cranes gave force to a change that in addition was economically profitable. In the 60s, a new visual system to calculate progress was developed: the more cranes in the skyline, the more wealth.

That calculation method is still alive.

The social paradigm is established. It allows a spiral of which everybody tries to take advantage. In it, almost everybody is indulgent with their own defects because, let's be serious, it's about fucking time to understand that everybody is indulgent with wealth and doesn't want to be different. Lack of planning, urban chaos and the remorseless elimination of the previous building forms are the result of the sum of the indulgence caused by money and of the lack of interest for those forms which still represented a society understood as backward.

To close this circle, even urgently, I should finish by saying that in the 90s a slower and less certain movement of appreciation and recovery of the past started. But we must understand that this return is produced just when the social imaginary is starting to change; when tradition is recovering its prestige; when we start to understand that recovering our autochthonous stone is desirable because it's better and more characteristic of us than those concrete walls that have represented for years a hard vision of the future.

I think that the atmosphere and the discussion in this Forum are very interesting. One fundamental thing to finish with the phenomenon that we are referring to as *ugliness* is breaking with a different kind of *ugliness*, which is the complete mute silence.

There are many different kinds of silence. For instance, studying poetess Rosalía de Castro's work, it's very interesting the kind of silences there: there is an "old friend silence", which is a productive silence, but there is also an overwhelming, terrible silence, the "mute silence", where she finished her book *Follas novas* (*New Leaves*). I think that last kind of silence is what allowed the spread of *ugliness*.

I think that certainly *ugliness* shouldn't be only analyzed as an architectural question, not even with regard to urbanism or to land planning, but as a part of what I call "*ugliness regime*". I think that what happens with land is a text: peoples, societies write on their land. I made this parallelism because I am a writer, I work mainly with words, and so I can see land as a book that sometimes is well written but usually it isn't. We shouldn't speak about Galicia as a violated virgin territory, but as a second nature, a reversed one, with located areas of natural heritage.

Everything is somehow written, but it may be well written or badly written. What is badly written activates our alarm call and breaks the mute silence, which should have been broken before. This is evidently caused by violent writing, and we should call it "land violence". Somebody used that expression to define what happens with territories during war; I think that somehow it is very precise and fitting to define what we are living in Galicia. For instance, land violence has been used when speaking about

excavators pulling down houses and orange groves in the Middle East. I think that here, historically, there has also been land violence that changed Galicia: for instance, when olive trees and centenarian oaks were removed, when the Invincible Armada, etc. But nowadays we are experiencing a different kind of land violence, not formally warlike, but which is being practised on land in aggressive ways. Someone referred to it as ill-treatment, which I think is also an appropriate expression.

I'm going to fly some metaphorical kites; maybe some of my thoughts can be useful. I think that political *ugliness*, the government of *ugliness*, is very much related to land violence. Because at the present time speaking about *ugliness* is even affected, and it is becoming a trend, an artistic avant-garde, and we will end making a museum of *ugliness* in the middle of *ugliness*. Then, perhaps we should speak about what I call "our government of *ugliness*": a kind of apodictic government that imposes a rough language on the land, without any feedback, without any dialogue, without any bringing up to date. Furthermore, we can call it a government in state of emergency on land (a permanent state of emergency), where all the traditional control mechanisms only — or mainly — exist formally. For instance: it is really impressive that Galicia's greatest mountain parks, Ancares and Courel mountains, a fundamental part of our heritage, the Galician "magical mountain", have been suffering for years land violence through a huge illegal quarry! We aren't questioning an approved intervention of land violence, legitimated by law, but stating that this is a punishable wound denying any possibility for this environment. For me, its connection to the regime of political

ugliness, which is a kind of authoritarianism on land that allows a minority liberalism, and which by all possible means looks for the lack of mediation between power and people, is fundamental. When I speak about mediation I'm fundamentally referring to cultural mediation, because when speaking about society we can't only refer to people who are here and now; it means a community tradition, cultural learning, things such as aesthetic dances and a way of being connected to land... There is a relationship which is all about the lack of mediators who could mitigate land violence. Evidently, this is a relationship of superiority, with the complicity of an important part of the population.

Another question related to this is that *ugliness* seems a point of view that somehow reproduces what Edward Said stated in *Culture and Imperialism*: it seems the relationship of an elitist look, depending on if it comes from cities or not. From the cities it seems that *ugliness* is happening outside them, and what happens inside them is because "cities are like that". And as these discussions even go well with cities, it seems that there isn't *ugliness* in Galician cities but modernity. I think that the duality which works so well for many things in Galicia — for instance, in language, with diglossia —, when referring to the way of writing on land it still appears as "look at the horrible things that rural people make in their villages, look at the result of emigration". With this I'm not looking for absolution, but it reminds me of Polish heterodox Stanislaw Lec's aphorism: "Ignorance of the law excuses no man, but knowledge does".

With regard to land, for me there is a fundamental space that I would call "road-land". In Galicia paths and roads have a capital

importance. When writing on the land they are the most defining elements, with all their typologies and psychologies. That's why as people have more purchasing power to travel throughout the country, the "Galicia-road" — or maybe it should be called "Galicia-walkscape" — is being built as a shopwindow with a mixture of functions in roadsides. The way those houses and buildings are made is very meaningful: for school bus garage, for stores, for furniture... I think that it's very important to reflect on the way Galicia is being built, on the way Galicia is being put on the road. I'm not talking about cities or towns, which are community forms; this is something different, there isn't any centre in the traditional way.

A last question which I think that may be very important for our relationship with the environment, and which is connected with art: when the idea of landscape is being developed in a modern way, the intervened landscape, the relationship of architecture with humans and with the environment, is fundamentally related to Enlightenment and to Romanticism. Romanticism focused again on landscapes. Until then, the countryside had no interest for the books. For instance, for Molière the countryside was "awful, full of flies, full of cows...!" Romanticism also focused on Galicia. But while in Europe landscape painting was so important, Galician painting Romanticism would be carried out by the "ill generation", a group of painters who died prematurely and left few landscape paintings. Galicia hasn't been much painted. Previously there were Villaamil and Serafín Avendaño, who was a promising author who also died prematurely, but in the 19th century we can only see Galicia painted by Ovidio Murguía. But there isn't any Galician iconography, and so it hasn't been assimilated by people. That is important: sometimes we appreciate better our environment when it has become art. Here we don't have a tradition of hanging pictures of

autochthonous landscapes in our houses, as it happens in other European countries. What is hanging on Galician walls? The Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is a good metaphor for land violence, but Galicia isn't there... Maybe an advertising calendar poster, but not a landscape poster... This is like witchcraft: we can see English landscape paintings, French ones... Nobody was going to cut a forest the year after Courbet painted it: it's a kind of protection amulet, a shield. And in our second chance, during the Second Spanish Republic, with the intellectual movement Xeración Nós, with the creation of the Seminar of Galician Studies, with the arrival of the avant-garde movements to Galicia, when there was the possibility of a Renaissance, of creating a popular iconography of Galicia... you already know what happened.

New Actors in Landscape: Regulation and Taste Policies

Carolina Leite

First I would like to say that I'm pleased with the idea of this forum on *ugliness*. At first the concept seemed to me a little dubious, but this forum in Ourense dispelled my doubts and substituted them for the pleasure of participating in this human atmosphere of infectious vitality.

Thank you for inviting me.

In the 60s, 70s and even early 80s there was an unprecedented transformation of the built landscape in Portugal, especially in the less urbanized Northern areas. This phenomenon was due to the dwellings built by emigrants who had set off mainly for France, Germany and Switzerland in that period. Migratory exodus were nothing new in this country or in this region. But the extent of this move was more surprising than its nature. In fact, as new houses were appearing everywhere — sometimes in ancient population centres, but more frequently in the agglomerate extension areas — criticizing became outstanding. Violent criticisms escalated, especially in urban areas by several specialists. A unanimity threshold was reached where good sense was the prevailing tone. In those circumstances, blaming someone was easy as owners were identified: the emigrants. They became the centre of attention for the media's criticisms and irony. The houses were criticized, but above all their owners were scapegoats for a sometimes apparent, sometimes real situation of urban chaos. It's true that increasing urbanization was spreading all over the country, especially in the suburbs of urban centres. But it was difficult to point out to the ones to blame for that. In this case the 'authors' were unidentified, at least socially.

This happened until this first generation of emigrants' project of building dwellings in their homelands was exhausted. Once limited,

and as the migratory cycle was developing its multiple stages, these building emigrants had been reorienting their investments from their native lands to their welcoming countries. From the mid-80s, this population's amount of building permits for own houses significantly decreased. At the same time, especially in France, the amount of Portuguese owners highly increased. In 1991, half of naturalized Portuguese emigrants owned the dwelling they occupied.

After almost two decades, nowadays we can wonder if the criticisms towards these buildings are still valid and, in case that is true, if the situation were inevitable. Those criticisms can be grouped around three key concepts related to domestic space: their conception, their production and their appropriation. In other words, projects were 'ugly' and inappropriate; houses showed several malfunctions, especially aesthetic ones; and the owners made 'undue' use of those spaces.

In a survey carried out then, we can find:

— That the circulation of architectural models — from destination countries to Portugal — happened, but in a limited amount of cases. All the other projects were the result of a complicated mixture of models treated by local *skilful* designers.

— That the rules regulating construction were not always known and rarely followed in a context where local authorities didn't have the practical possibility to put them into effect.

— That this population of 'absent' people could only make uncommon use of these built houses. Used just a few weeks per year, these dream houses show an unrealistic registration in their design, in their materials and colours, in their location and implementation or in several

of these factors. These huge sculptures, many times self-built, sheltered the projects of a generation. Many of them have an uncertain future, waiting for the new senses of a new generation of heirs that might reinterpret these spaces.

But on behalf of a widely divided, common landscape, the building of a house, of any house, must be understood inside a set of rules extensible to everyone. It would only be possible with everyone's opinions, even the specialists'.



Houses in Parada do Monte (North of Portugal)



Annotations on Architecture, Space and Culture

Xerardo Pereiro

ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL VIEW

Architecture can be thought from different perspectives and not only as the art of writing in space through the use of forms, proportions, scales and materials. From an anthropological perspective, architecture can be defined as a kind of semiotics that expresses forms of social organization, ideas, values and cultural patterns (Eco, 1981).

This is the best point of view to interpret it, as architecture refers to ways of living and understanding reality. In this approach, architecture is a model to understand reality and also a model of understanding that reality.

Even a building in ruins can be understood this way: it can inform us about its socio-spatial planning, its use and its meaning. Its morphology informs of the logic, the principles and the senses of the architectural text. So, a way of understanding humankind is written in architecture.

Architecture¹ implies an interpretation challenge, because architectural objects weren't initially conceived for communication, but for other eminently pragmatic purposes. Despite that, architecture can be understood as a system of signs that communicate something, inclusively without using architectural objects for their primary function. The use of architecture doesn't only permit its provided function, but also the meanings related to those meanings/functions that lead its use. An architectural

sign is based on a coded meaning attributed to a significant by a certain cultural context.

Architecture's² supposedly exclusive pragmatism is unmasked, reflecting that form, as many architectural elements, has a function which was absorbed by its meaning and by its symbolic dimension.

BEAUTIFUL AND UGLY AS RELATIVE CULTURAL CATEGORIES

Making aesthetic judgements about our environment (people, objects, landscapes...) is a universal tendency. Humans come to an agreement about what they find 'beautiful' and 'ugly'. We can observe this attribution of cultural categories in fashion, in cosmetics, in body culture, in architecture, in painting, etc. But those attributions are the result of our eyes' cultural construction, and perspective speaks more about the beholder than about the observed.

Humans idolize what is 'beautiful' according to beauty patterns, but sometimes these idolatries can imply social risks (f. i.: anorexia, bulimia...). On behalf of beauty anti-humanisms can be committed. Confronted with that risk, cultural relativism shows us that the criteria of 'beautiful' and 'ugly' change in the course of time and from culture to culture. From a certain height, tall buildings were considered beautiful and associated with the idea of progress. Some decades later, we think the opposite, that they should be demolished. But cultural relativism

shouldn't be used to justify that everything is worthy and that everything has the same aesthetic value. Cultural relativism must be a theoretical tool to fight the excesses of the theories about beauty and ugliness. Therefore, beauty and ugliness are just cultural categories relative to a time, a space and a cultural universe.

"If Rubens would have seen any of Picasso's paintings, he would have found them horrible." (Umberto Eco, quoted from *El Semanal* #886, p. 25, 10/17/2004)

ARCHITECTURE, SPACE AND AESTHETICS IN GALICIAN TOWNS

Certain architectures of certain Galician towns and their rural environments are incorporated by some people into the phenomenon called *ugliness*, that is to say, a kind of aesthetics considered bad taste as opposed to the prevailing beauty pattern. From my point of view, we are witnessing a symbolic fight among beauty patterns, where symbolic distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) has a fundamental role to understand these phenomena. This fight among beauty patterns is not an exclusively material or economic question — as 'ugly are only those who have no money' — but a question about strengthening positions in a social structure.

In my fieldwork about the relationships between urban and rural universes in central Galicia towns (Pereiro, 2004), I have noted that villagers define beautiful spaces and ugly spaces through dichotomic cultural categories:

¹ Eco, Umberto (1989, or. 1968), p. 280 and next.

² Eco, Umberto (1989, or. 1968), p. 290.



Vila de Palas de Rei, Lugo | Camiño de Santiago-Vía da Prata. Perto de Cambado | Perto de Prado (Lalín). Autoestrada

sheltered	cold
flat	sloping
house	apartment
downtown	suburbs
town	town entrance or exit
noisy	noiseless
beautiful	ugly

A 'sheltered' space is a 'warm' space, protected from the wind, sunny, not so humid or cold, and probably flat. It is the ideal place to live or to build a dwelling. It can also be related to 'beautiful', which is a category with extended contents, not exclusively aesthetic and functional. On the contrary, a 'cold' place is usually well-aired and on the coast or on the top of a hill, unsheltered from north northwest wind, not sunny, with freezes and snowfalls; a 'chilly' place.

With regard to the concepts 'house' and 'apartment', land for apartments is usually more expensive, as is its construction. But the purpose is to sell the flats, obtaining huge profits. These two concepts are intimately related to values as intimacy and privacy, hierarchically understood as more satisfied in a single house. According to an informant, "in a house no one knows if you are farting."

In this point, the downtown/suburbs binomial is associated to the possibility of commercial or industrial installation. That's why downtown is valued as a commercial installation area, using the own dwelling for that. Suburbs are valued as industrial installation areas instead. Noisy places are categorized as spaces attached to the busiest roads and the less quiet areas.

Finally, the categories 'beautiful' and 'ugly' are far from containing just aesthetic contents. 'Beautiful' also has connotations about a sunny, cultivable, useful place, where horticulture can be practised, and so water is needed. According to an informant, a beautiful place is also a 'nice' place, "somewhere independent but near your neighbours, because if you have nobody to talk with, you have nobody to be happy with." On the other hand, 'ugly' is usually understood as arid, barren and unproductive, but also as socially isolated: "with no neighbour to talk with", which underlines the denied possibility of close neighbourhood relations and at the same time their importance.

So far, a brief semantic analysis of space in Galician towns, a space thought to live and with which topophilic relationships are established. But the aforementioned dichotomic categories shouldn't be understood as radically opposed, but as categories of gradual relationship with intermediate contact points. These categories

are articulated in mental maps that interconnect different spaces and architectures which at the same time condense values, ways of living and social memories full of meaning.

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The next text is not an improvisation, but an ad-lib speech, caused by everything I've heard today, specifically after an answer or comment I did about Rubén Lois' participation and Xan Creus' and Pablo Gallego's answer to it. I spoke about variables, and about what is necessary to systematize a bit; sorry for being such a rationalist. I would point four basic variables out, which I am going to enunciate in antithetical forms and limit values, dialectically opposed: 1) space and land; 2) economic logic and economic calculus; 3) culture and barbarity; 4) identity ideology and alien ideology.

Space and land: for the citizens or for the de-facto powers. For the citizens: then it is social heritage, and its space occupation gave rise to a symbiotic solution. For the de-facto powers—either economic or political-institutional, especially when the democratic formulas to articulate the political-institutional powers in relation to the citizenship fail—: then it is private heritage, and instead of symbiosis, there is appropriation. I think these are two main opposed logics.

Economic logic and economic calculus. I'm not going to refer to logic, to capitalism, to private or public enterprise, etc., but to the next ideas: economic calculus and rationality of economic calculus and of generation of resources, and so a cost-benefit calculus. The calculus can either be exclusively individual calculus—called enterprise calculus or microeconomic calculus—or either social cost-benefit calculus, which is not necessarily antithetic to the own enterprise unit calculus but must be antithetic to a non-macroeconomic calculus, so it has to include non-excludable variables. The variables of the so called *external diseconomies*, of the impact on the environment, of the impact on the land, etc., mustn't be excluded. There is a contemporary thinker in the movement now known as sustainable development: Herman Daly. He has no Marxist background, and he was an important

expert of the World Bank until the late 60s, when he left it and wrote a book, *Steady-State Economics*, which nowadays is a classic but which was condemned outside of North American university environments for ten years. In this book he made the first proposal to integrate the consideration of ecosystem and biosphere into the analysis and the formulation of interpretative models about how societies' structural dynamics work, what we Marxists would call "social formation". He even says that instead of referring to *inputs* and *outputs*, we should talk about *throughputs*. I don't want to go deeply into that, but that's the idea. The cost-benefit calculus shouldn't be enterprise calculus or micro calculus. It must be a cost-benefit calculus that takes all these ideas into account: the integration of variables instead of their removal; the integration of parameters instead of their removal; the integration and valuation of new realities instead of the elimination of the parameters which intervene in a project calculation in terms of enterprise economy, production autonomy and denial of autonomy. Otherwise, there's no way to do it.

Culture and barbarity. There is class culture and a declassed culture. This is very important when we talk about the construction of rural houses, when we examine a contribution such as Manuel Caamaño's to Galician popular rural constructions, which is a paradigmatic book... What are we really talking about when we refer to "rural"? We are talking about society, about peasant society. And in terms of class, peasant society is completely different from bourgeois society, which is an urban society where 95% of working population are salary earners, while in rural society is the other way round: 98% of them aren't salary earners. About the subject of canons or anomy, my answer to Umberto Eco's question about Rubens and Picasso would be: musicians can perfectly distinguish music from noise, and I'm sure that if Mozart rose from the dead nowadays

and listened to Shostakovich, he would distinguish it as quality music, even when it doesn't belong to the aesthetic canon of his culture. And with regard to the problem of degradation or damage, that is neither architecture nor music: that is noise. If a sound is physically captured in a spectrograph, it is studied that the reflected sound wave is different depending on if it is music or if it is noise: that is reality's categorical difference. That is the difference between *strictu sensu* nature—noise exists in nature—and music, which is the product of a human device. I think that is fundamental when we are talking about the *culture of ugliness*, which I call barbarity.

To finish, identity ideology and alien ideology. It is alienating in two projections that must be taken into account in a society like ours: colonization and self-colonization or declassment. We must be very aware that there isn't just one only phenomenon of class alienation in its own sense — I mean, ways of alienation coming from the point of view of class alienation with all its morphology, but from identity alienation non only with regard to a social extraction that belongs to a social segment, but it is related to identity in the sense of depersonalizing the colonized. Colonization means an absolute inversion, considering that the the foreign culture is the own one because they want to ascribe to it, and considering that the own culture is the anti-culture, the denial of culture. So, it's an absolutely radical phenomenon. The possible phenomena of rural architecture, even the ones explained by professor Carolina Leite, are not related to the rural areas of Galicia, and however these phenomena have at first the same origin, which is the return of emigrated people with fortunes who build houses, etc. As far as I know, in Portugal there aren't the same phenomena as here. There are analogous components, but the morphology is different, because there isn't a phenomenon of identity colonization there and here there is one, which I think it's fundamental.

Xosé Manuel Beiras

José Miranda

I did a research project¹ where I chose at random 100 numbers corresponding to work authorization processes in the autarchy of Santo Tirso, from the ones approved by the Town Council in 1991, and I looked for those houses — already built — and their owners.

More than 90 % of those projects weren't signed by architects but by draughtsmen and some of them by an engineer.

One person whose house I visited, a textile worker from Roriz, asked me: "Now architects also want to make houses?" He imagined that they only planned monuments and public buildings. He would never look for one to plan his house nor would he know where to find them. Another couple told me how their brother-in-law did the stupid thing of hiring an architect for them... that didn't include anything that they wanted for their house in his project! They had traveled through the county noting down what they wanted: a cylindrical wall here, a balcony with exterior stairs there, etc. They found the resultant house cute, when we, bourgeois citizens, would have called it *ugly*.

We hate the excessive use of exterior wall tiles — which had to be forbidden by the town council of Santo Tirso even when it has decreased, what is not included in my research — and the mixture of decorations and materials. Personally, what annoys me the most is the lack of land planning and the planting of houses in corn fields (which nowadays are only worthy as building land, and not for agricultural production).

Introduced in the 16th century, corn structured the landscape as it was the main wealth producing source, what people worked. When I was a kid, people asked about country houses how many corn wagons they yielded.

Because there were landlords and tenant farmers, these ones who lived in the 'corn-

architecture houses', photographed in the 50s at the "Research on Portuguese Popular Architecture" by architects who loved their flat beauty. But if criticizing their living conditions, they were cold houses with no chimney, no toilet and ineffective tiles, etc.

In the second half of the 20th century, the corn produced in America was very much cheaper, and so it was used to feed the cattle. Nowadays cattle can't support the European competition, and corn isn't produced anymore. In Santo Tirso textile industry appeared and hired farmers as part-time cheap labour, who also produced potatoes and vegetables for their own sustenance.

In the 60s, the impulse of emigration to Europe — since prehistory, this had always been land of emigrants — was very important for the landscape transformation: the money earned in France was invested in houses whose main function was symbolic, and many times they weren't occupied. For the peasants, these houses represented the liberation from the almost-feudal condition of servitude, mainly related to the corn production.

The ones who stayed in the country imitated them and building a house became 'compulsory'. The situation moved from the habitation deficit — according to a research of 1975 — to a huge excess of dwellings in relation to the amount of inhabitants. The civil construction industry surpassed at length the textile one and nowadays is inertially kept as the main economic activity of the region, even when it doesn't fit a real necessity.

But we mustn't be surprised that this has created the landscape, as corn had created it! In the past landscape was only punctuated by granaries, nowadays there are cranes and useless granaries, as there is no corn left!

In the course of time this new 'rural bourgeoisie', which makes urban houses and apartments settled in piles with exterior stairs and a spacious ground floor for 'storage' (as

it is stated from the procedure), will be able to integrate into the oldest bourgeoisie's prevailing taste. Meanwhile they symbolize their liberation joining the development poetics, building properties with several floors in the villages and envying the consumer society.

Beauty, as opposed to *ugliness*, is still harmony. It isn't so subjective, otherwise we wouldn't be able to appreciate it in different cultures, for instance in a Japanese garden or in a Japanese temple. Perhaps harmonizing is about integrating the whole, about making sense for it.

Architects have a role in the integration of these new landscapes, and citizens too. I think that we must start accepting these buildings, making sense for them, which they have. They are monuments in honour of those who decided that it was enough and crossed the borders, both the Pyrenees and the medieval servitude. With their silent work (which didn't bring curriculum to integrate the new democratic power), they had created the imperative need for our European integration, that is to say they had created democracy.

Integration of *ugliness* by citizens must go through respect above all, but also through urban design, through structural localization of the proposed equipment, through defense of protected landscapes... "Countrypeople" are open to innovation, to modernity. They are useful for their symbolic purpose: ecological values are being quickly assimilated. Values such as protecting wild life, saving energy, using solar energy and biodegradable materials... In fact, I think that integration will be possible, and that we will live in landscapes with sense, appreciated both by citizens and ex-peasants. And even by Japanese tourists!

¹ Included in my Master's Degree Thesis in Architecture at the ESAP (Porto's Higher Education School of Arts), "The Role of the Architect in Contemporary Popular Architecture."

Remarks on Discourse Ethics about Ugliness — The Question of Truth

Teresa Táboas

When I was invited to participate in this Forum on *Ugliness*, the first thing I could think of was the book by Jürgen Habermas titled *Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, and so I wanted this lecture to be titled in a similar way. Because precisely that word I never liked, *ugliness*, comes from politicians, the same politicians who could have regulated things to be different. And with regard to “the question of truth”, we should think where the degradation of our landscape, both the natural and the inverted ones, really is.

There are three ideas which I would like to discuss: land as cultural identity, the necessity to know the land for a codifier urbanism, and the necessity of municipal control over urbanism.

I have been talking about the subject of land as cultural identity for months. Apart from language (which we always refer to), the main thing that distinguishes a people is their land. And we have been forgetting land for the last three decades. Land is there, with its geographic determinism conferred by its weather, its fauna and its flora. It is there with its cobweb of rivers which are flowing until the border between land and sea. Land is there, and it is intervened by desire or by necessity. For centuries, each generation has intervened in the land with common sense, through popular architecture or through cult architecture, made by aristocracy and the Church in former times. But what happens if a people loses their bearings and starts to intervene in the land chaotically, on the edge of legality?

It's curious, but until the appearance of the First Land Law in 1956, there hadn't been any legislation on land in Galicia. There was only the common sense law. For approximately two decades we have been defending the historic downtowns without concessions (making

modern architecture in those areas is difficult, because we are mimetically repeating historic architecture, even falling into the trap of building theme parks, exacerbated by celebrations such as medieval fairs), but outside those areas we don't care about land, which is really our heritage as Galicia people. Inverted land is not only intervened by architects: we should also discuss the forest interventions; forests which in the last two decades have nothing to do with the previous landscape. Land interventions were too quick and too chaotic, and the result was not only a degraded land, but, as our land is very fragile, it is difficult to recover the previous land and change the damages.

There have never been so many urbanism regulations as in this decade. We are continually legislating. Every municipality has or wants a municipal planning and all kinds of regulations... I can understand the necessity of a codifier urbanism or of a land-fixative approach, but knowing what to do with land is more important. I find the land guidelines short. We have an external point of view on land: what is happening in the economic issues, how we want to shape the land... And starting from there, then how to codify it. But we are starting the other way round: every municipality must have a plan, and in the next municipality there is a whole different land plan — different ordinances, different regulations... — There are 315 municipalities with different regulations, and there aren't any common guidelines. I don't want to join — neither wants the College, nor many architects — the army that is trying to fight *ugliness* with laws. I think that we should convince through knowledge instead of forbidding. As scholastic philosophers used to say, “Nothing is loved unless it is known”.

We must know what we have before we issue forbidding laws. It is also true that at the present time, besides insisting on the educative field, a harder control is necessary, because otherwise in ten years everything will be destroyed again. That's why we at the College of Architects, through our *Proxecto Terra*, are trying to educate kids between 12 and 16 years in public high schools to prevent them from repeating the same architectural mistakes in the next twenty years. They will know popular architecture and its reasons, contemporary architecture and land planning.

The same governments that have recently issued so many laws — the last one, from December 30th 2002, will be modified soon — forget them when they arrive to the municipal level: there is no municipal control on urbanism. Many times there isn't enough technical staff to perform that control, but most of the times it is an affair of clientelism. For instance, we are speaking of the occupation licence, which is an obsession in the College of Architects. Fifteen days ago, I sent a letter to every Galician municipality which doesn't have that legal figure, which comes from the previous Galician land laws and is compulsory to carry out the energy supply, the telephone supply, etc. 80% of the municipalities don't demand any papers. What is happening then? If I ask for a licence to do a ground and first floor and nobody will control me and there is no final document, I can fail to observe that licence. There is a lack of municipal control on urbanism, and legislation is useless if there is no further control. Many years ago Manolo Gallego made a report on the necessity of county architects, and in 1991, during the 1st Convention of Architects of Galicia, I insisted again on the necessity of creating that figure.

If municipalities are small, three or four of them may share a common architect who will inform people and will be closer to society.

There is no control; land doesn't matter. The discourse is cautious, too simple, with no margins. If we try to blame someone for what has happened in Galicia, we blame the emigrants. I have published a book about emigration and Brazilian architecture, and there is another one about returned emigrants. Both of them show that there are migration architectures which understood perfectly the land. Some of these emigrants, returning from Cuba or Brazil, brought exotic architectures which were introduced naturally in the Galician population centres, enriching them. Did the emigrants who later moved to Europe (Germany, Switzerland...) bring worse models? It wasn't an emigration problem; the problems were already here. There was no control, municipalities allowed anything. That discourse (too basic for me) hides the damages made by everyone: emigrants and non-emigrants, politicians... Especially those politicians were responsible in the moment of economic development, the moment of prosperity for Galicia. In the last 20 years, the coastal areas have suffered a great urban pressure due to tourism, and those are the municipalities with the greatest urban-planning infractions... There are no control mechanisms, or maybe that's on purpose: they don't want to stop this damage.

About the Phenomenon of Ugliness in the Rural Areas of Galicia

Manuel Caamaño Suárez

In the past, the term *ugliness* was used to mention a plastic trend. Nevertheless, nowadays it is a popular euphemism widely used in the media and generally accepted, although it is not considered the most suitable term. Despite being related to aesthetics in principle, it also refers not only to an architectural and urban degradation, but to a demotion of the land and the landscape where it appears. This degradation is particularly obvious in the rural and coastal areas of Galicia, as if a degenerative illness affected them. This term can also be used in other fields, such as fine arts, linguistics or toponymy.

For a long time, Galicia has been seriously wounded by very complex factors. Some of them come from a lack of resources, from this region's uncontrolled growth and from aggressive settlements, which are the result of the economic globalization and the *pensée unique* that surround us. That is how the phenomenon of *ugliness* is spreading, with a wide range of examples, all over our geography. Although it is not an excuse, it must be said that *ugliness* also appears in other European countries, to a larger or lesser extent. Organizing this Forum on *Ugliness* in order to discuss about this "illness" has been a wise decision.

We must also bear in mind that the nationalist precursors of the Galician nationalist groups *Xeración Nós*, *Irmandades da Fala* and *Seminario de Estudos Galegos* always worried about and condemned the foreign interferences that were to be introduced in our own architectural constructions, in accordance with their commitment to protect Galicia and its culture. When in 1918 the nationalist meeting *Asamblea Nazionalista* took place in Lugo, one of the reached agreements was to issue a law in

order to force landlords to adapt the style of their buildings and constructions to the general style of each Galician village. Also the publications of the aforesaid nationalist groups (*Cadernos do S.E.G*, *Nós*, *A Nosa Terra*) showed the same worry in the 20s for the already built traditional heritage and for its corruption with foreign constructions. Galician writer Xohán Viqueira asked architects to "have a bit more of love for our traditional architecture," and Otero Pedrayo, another Galician writer, also expressed his disagreement because "a new kind of uncomfortable, snobbish and ugly city construction" was slowly appearing in the countryside. He also said that the defence of the own personality does not contradict the acceptance of foreign trends: "certainly modern ideas are not against the ancient culture of our peasants." In 1930, in the monographic publication *Vila de Calvos de Randín*, by Florentino López Cuevillas and Xaquín Lorenzo, the latter widely stated his worry for the constructive innovations that followed patterns which were completely out of context.

Nowadays, the Galician newspaper *La Voz de Galicia* is paying constant attention to the phenomenon of *ugliness*. Since the 90s, after verifying several attacks on the architectural, artistic and natural heritage, it has often reported and condemned the damages that were taking place in different areas of Galicia, at the same time as civilian population started to show a feeling of sensitivity to protect these heritages. During 2001 this newspaper ran a campaign to increase public awareness of this problem. Moreover, it showed an intense contrast of opinions, particularly about the ruling uncontrolled urban development. People from different research fields and with different

political commitment with Galicia, most of them related to the architectural field, took part on this debate. This initiative helped to spur the political institutions and the regional government of Galicia, which decided to promulgate and pass the law 9/2002 on urban planning and protection of rural areas at the end of 2002. According to its authors, the objective of this law was to neutralize the anarchy and carelessness that for a long time had mistreated the Galician land, its environment and its heritages, both the built and the artistic ones, because of the obvious irresponsibility and insensitivity of different sectors.

Until then, in spite of having several laws, the different institutions had not shown a great interest neither for applying the laws nor for ensuring that they were enforced. Establishing regulations and setting up institutions to stem the chaos that surrounded us were not causes for concern. A bird's eye view of our beautiful and varied country would offer an outlook of the amount of different and astonishing tricks, made both in cities and in their outskirts, in coastal and rural areas, no matter which political party ruled in the municipality. There are only a few exceptions to this trend, such as the town of Allariz or the city of Santiago de Compostela. We have the consequences of a series of unfortunate performances, many of them completely illegal, both in the interior and in the mistreated coastal area, where an excessive concentration of buildings, along with uncontrolled volumetries and heights, can be seen. The whole country is full of ugly buildings, typical of an illiterate and lawless country, but not of a country where outstanding architectural constructions were set up at some stage by illiterate farmers and fishermen.

The rural areas of galicia. factors that caused their crisis

Before the so called Industrial Revolution, Galicia was mostly a rural region (at the beginning of 20th century, 85% of the population lived in rural areas). People lived in dispersed settlements all over the country — which were their basic structure—, and they were organized in different and small population groups, such as villages or hamlets. Due to the fact of having an environment with good conditions for human life, these settlements set up a close, harmonic and balanced link between humans and nature. However, this doesn't mean that there weren't any aggressions to the environment. One example of this could be the deforestation in many places, mostly in the region of Ourense. Its self-sufficient economy, in the middle of pre-capitalist social communities, was based on agriculture, stockbreeding, fishing and forest resources, and also on a traditional and domestic industrialization connected to natural resources (wood, leather, fish, stone, linen or clay). It did not make any difference in the territorial structure but offered meagre resources, which provoked that people started to emigrate towards America.

Traditional settlements had popular architectural patterns, full of an original richness, utility and balanced forms, without forgetting its beautiful sensitivity, each of them different depending on the region where they were. These settlements remained the same while Galicia was linked to the environment, which determined the areas for human habitation and even productive life. Modern world arrived in the second half of 20th century. In the 60s it burst in and the phenomenon of urbanization threatened the basic principles of the rural world. That isolated world with a subsistence economy, so familiar and supportive, intimate and connected to nature, whose biggest business organization was the family group, experienced a serious

crisis along with the constant antagonism between that world and the urban world.

The socio-cultural and economic importance of this antagonism had very negative consequences for Galicia's rational development and for the strengthening of its identity awareness. Whereas in other societies bourgeoisie had an important leading role in towns and villages, here it was hidden in an urban environment, turning its back to the problems in Galicia and in the rural areas. Despite being reported about the current situation by educated sources, it didn't have any commitment to the society where and on it lived. It lacked an idea about the cultural reality of architecture and it disregarded or rejected the traditional creative culture. It wasn't worried about the land or the already built heritage, with the exception of some bourgeois nationalist minorities. When the new guidelines of the modern world arrived, population of rural areas felt defenceless. Until then, they had lived in a culture that had suited their requirements but, at that moment, they had no cultural reference models. Although the prestigious bourgeoisie could have been followed as a model, their lack of commitment prevented it. Emigration caused several cultural changes in that world, as a process of culture diminishment and of cross-culture, and the acceptance of all foreign innovations.

As an example of this disdain towards the traditional heritage we can mention the following event: in 1919, Galician writer Castelao's father was involved in litigation with the municipality of Rianxo over a traditional granary. An important politician with a great influence on Rianxo wanted to demolish it because "this kind of constructions next to roads is in very poor taste."

Due to the new model of the free market economy, derived from the industrialization movement, the immobility that Galicia had suffered for centuries, with a mostly rural population, started to decline. Villages became depopulated and

cultivated lands became unproductive and barren. People migrated again to larger industrial cities in Spain or Europe. This new exodus had a greater effect than the previous one to the overseas countries. This was the starting point of the ultimate crisis in the rural and fishing worlds. They underwent profound changes both in its life and economic models, both in the countryside and in the landscape, as well as in the traditional architecture that was sited on it.

From the 60s and 70s, the rural areas of Galicia altered their land development and *ugliness* established implacably.

At this moment new landscapes appeared because of the **profound changes in the land development**. This led to a re-sort of the land, mainly because of **reforestations**, the opening of **mines**, the appearance of the **public transport** and the **expansion of electricity** due to the **construction of many dams**, the establishment of new **communication channels**, the appearance of **extractive, transformer and enclave industries**, the spread of **farm economy** and the **land consolidation**. More recently, a great number of **seafronts** and **esplanades by rivers** were built; many **windmills** appeared in the hills; **different posts** invaded paths and lands; **street furniture** designed in an inappropriate way was set up, even advertising political institutions in a wrong way; there are **electricity pylons, wires** and **signs** everywhere. There are also **dumps where all kind of waste** can be found, most of them out of control. They damage and pollute places next to population centres.

The appearance of the so-called modern age and the development policies during Franco's regime ("*desarrollismo*") involved both an obvious and fast development of towns and villages and the establishment of new needs. These needs were the consequences of

ideological urban guidelines influenced by the media, mainly by television. In the **architecture** field, the appearance of new building materials would slowly replace the craft ones, typical of the traditional architecture in the pre-industrial era. These innovations would allow the crisis of the stoneworkers and, at the same time, the appearance of masons. Many of them would shortly become small and big building contractors. Moreover, specific actions in the **tourism** field will continue in the **coastal areas** and thousands of **single-family houses would be built**, also in groups, in uncommon places.

The social fact of changing land's traditional consideration from a value in use into an exchange value was an important distorting factor. This led to the appearance of a speculative market, which would have profound effects both in the rural areas of Galicia and in the outskirts of many towns and cities. It would also involve the destruction of whole traditional constructions centres. In this process, the change from rural into urban areas is never completely clean; there would always be interferences of a world into the other without any solution of continuity. Therefore, traditional culture and the "modernizing" cultural guidelines became the same thing, giving rise to the **rural-urban** culture, very representative of nowadays Galicia.

Origins of ugliness in rural galicia

The different constructions built from the 60s onwards and the improvements made in old rural houses would gradually use new materials, most of them industrialized, such as cement, concrete, brick, block, sheet metal and cement asbestos sheets, aluminium, PVC and stainless steel carpentry, different

surfacing or pre-assembling sets, etc. All of them would be present even in the most remote villages. The use of typical Galician stone and wood, such as granite or slate, oak or chestnut wood, traditional materials used in popular architecture, would slowly disappear in the new constructions, whereas concrete would replace the traditional constructive systems, such as load-bearing walls or horizontal divisions with beam structures, *pontones*¹ and wood boards, both in the structural skeleton and in the horizontal divisions. Single-family houses, cottages or groups of houses dotted rural, rural-urban and urban areas, because they can be settled anywhere, most of times without any urban planning. This would cause that ugliness acquires different characters.

Thousands of new single-family houses and groups of houses with a new ground plant were built everywhere. The former ones were spread uncontrollably, far away from the old houses. In many cases, their volume and surface were out of proportion to the actual needs of their owners, mixing different elements or with designs made "in situ". Sometimes, this mixture was shown with exotic models and ostentatious elements, as if they tried to illustrate their owners' success during their migratory journeys. A research ("A vivenda rural na Galicia contemporánea, unha arquitectura impactante", published in *Cadernos de Pensamento e Cultura*, by A Nosa Terra nº28, p. 12-18) done by architect and professor Plácido Lizancos found that in the last third of the 20th century 240,000 dwellings were built in the rural areas of Galicia, most of them by returned emigrants. These houses have three main styles, depending on the period of their construction (*archaic*, *rupturist* and *involutionist*). They also mix different elements in their design, which had diverse origins, many of them due to the emigration process, and to some contributions from the traditional and

modern houses, without anybody "organizing, directing or supervising" them.

The **return of thousands of emigrants** from other European countries and Spanish cities would imply the start of the process of building many new single-family houses and the desertion of the old ones. With their new mentality, acquired during their stay in foreign countries, the owners of the old houses rejected them because they reminded them of their previous life style, full of privations and sacrifices. They didn't have any own references, so they brought some mental guidelines that mixed factors of culture diminishment and of cross-culture. They tried to build new homes resulting from an architecture that combines different kinds of styles and models, usually being a transgressor element in their new settlement.

We also have, in a lower amount, **groups of blocks of flats**, with modern architecture or vague models. Sometimes they appear in rows, sometimes semidetached. They can also be built just next to a road. There are many examples of **buildings for industrial or public services purposes**, spread all over wide areas.

Together with these buildings of new ground plant there are the **constructions included into the traditional architecture**. Mostly, they are dotted all over the rural and rural-urban areas, in the still inhabited spread settlements. Their old and solid walls are full of damages, usually with some alterations. Many of them have modern materials to solve the immediate problems, which contribute to *ugliness*, and are transformed in order to be provided of hygiene services, installations and facilities. Some of them have extra pieces added to the building's original volume, as roofs raisings to increase the living space and the opening of many new skylights. Others are built an extra room in the original construction to insert there a new W.C., a chimney or a water tank. Original lime mortar and slaked lime from walls have been profusely removed, leaving bare walls afterwards

¹ Timber used in traditional constructions in Galicia and Asturias.

or covering them with tiles or adding a coat of paint, a recent fashionable trend all over the country. The modification of the whole traditional building by internal casting is also quite popular and, after the renovation, they are provided with extra room and facilities.

The large amount of unfinished houses and constructions are clear examples of this *ugliness*. They are only partially built and their concrete columns can be seen in the ground floor, which remains empty. Some of them even have walls with no lime mortar, only bricks, maybe caused by the lack of economic resources, municipal ordinances, laxity or other reasons. These palafitte-looking dwellings invade, just like a plague, the villages' and small towns' closest and most far lands.

Outbuildings have also been altered by different additions and changes. Therefore, we can find a large amount of granaries partially or completely made by bricks and of traditional sheds made by blocks, unfinished in many cases. Other examples of this trend are putting up block fences that, sometimes, are alternated with metallic structures, washing places with the structure, walls and roofs made of concrete, or baths placed in the middle of a field as drinking troughs.

Causes of ugliness in the rural areas

In the rural areas of Galicia everything is neglected. Therefore, we cannot deal with all the types of *ugliness* in a report like this. Galicia is a country where people lack a strong collective consciousness. Moreover, there is an actual alienation process about the "Galicianess", and although there is a strong sensory and sentimental consciousness, people feel vulnerable to adopt indiscriminately all foreign innovations, different from their traditional culture. The result is the adoption of architecture patterns that try to erase all the reminiscences from the past.

Having in mind this background, there are some factors that foster our current architecture patterns. Such patterns are the result of a bad copy of the imported ones, of the mixture of styles and typologies that have ostentatious and ugly patterns, of the settlements without any awareness for the surrounding landscape or the environment, of the use of inappropriate materials in many cases and of the damage to the environment. Among the factors that led to this situation we can distinguish economic, socio-cultural, historical, anthropological and educational factors. However, the current and critical situation in the construction, urban and landscape fields all over Galicia related to *ugliness*, is due to a series of situational factors. Moreover, there are some specific institutions and people to blame, although the responsibility is collective.

There is no doubt that some sectors have a greater responsibility for the disastrous outrage made in the rural areas of Galicia because they boosted or allowed it. First of all, we have the **Galician regional government's power organs**, which have the main responsibility in this situation. The lack of enforcement of the municipal ordinances, really obvious in some areas, is allowed by one or more of the following culprits: the local authorities, the mayor, the town councillor responsible for urbanism or the technicians who work for them. The avarice of many **developers and building contractors**, added to the complicity and the laxity of the municipalities and/or their technicians or to those of other organisms is another important factor. The developers and building contractors don't have any restrictions in their urban plans, nor in the materials or in the aesthetic or constructive elements used in them. Also the technicians, **architects, quantity surveyors and building surveyors** can be blamed in many cases for their bad designs and in

other cases because they sign them without further research or because of a lack of control. **Users** can also be responsible for this situation, as they don't frequently like the intervention of the technicians and they do whatever they have in mind, together with the contractors, mostly in bad taste; or because they are limited by their economic resources, what leads to an out of control construction. Finally, we must take into account the **civilian population** because of its contradictions. On the one hand, they claim the conservation and preservation of the traditional architecture and, on the other hand, they don't usually doubt about infringing laws to take advantage of the profits from subventions and to do later what they want. We should qualify the widespread opinion of blaming the returned emigrants for the *ugliness*, just as Americans were accused for using imported architectural patterns. They try to use here patterns original from the places where they went to work in order to legitimately have a better life. However, politicians and local technicians who do allow (direct or indirectly) all kind of constructions with no control at all should be the ones to blame. The processes of culture diminishment and of cross-culture that returned emigrants brought with them make them reject the old houses that are part of a cultural world from their hard past. These emigrants want to assert themselves by building constructions that are as different as possible from their old ones.

Coda

The present situation, without going into it in any depth, is depressing, bleak and grim. Whoever goes around Galicia will be shocked at what they see: new buildings with modern

appearance, and traditional old ones, altered or not, thousands of them deserted or falling to pieces, particularly in the almost 300 abandoned villages and those that have a "closing time". The situation is the same when we talk about the numerous outbuildings that have been damaged. Since a few years ago, Galicia has an air of gloominess, with a great amount of examples of the most terrible *ugliness*. This situation was denounced years ago by the Council of Europe. The once balanced, harmonic and environmentally-friendly world has turned in most places into a complete anarchy, with only two main objectives: first, to destroy the natural resources; and second, to ruin or devastate in an arbitrary way the traditional habitat, with no consideration for the environment, for our beautiful landscapes (which we still have) or for the original creations of the traditional architecture.

It is true that thousands of houses are still standing, despite having different anomalies caused by time, carelessness and the *ugliness* that surrounds us. Some of them are currently being restored in an appropriate technical way, following the new trends coming from the Anglo-Saxon countries. Fortunately, these upward trends can help to recover a large number of the traditional experiences and their heritage. Other outbuildings include granaries, straw lofts, sheds, mills, lathes, dovecots, beehives, fairgrounds, salteries, smithies, fulling machines and tanneries. Even nowadays some of them are used for their original purposes and all together constitute a rich heritage that can be restored in order to be both useful and appreciated.

Summing up these rough notes, it must be said that the reversal of this leading trend is not easy, if it could be done at all. Lately, different experts have been worried about and have publicly reported the *ugliness* problem. Some of them have attended this Forum, which has come to be

a good opportunity to discuss about the current situation. All these experts, or most of them, agree that this is a complex problem. People who are aware of it should take actions to make a decision on the appropriate steps that need to be taken in order to deal with it. However, and despite the actual trend of hurrying, we should observe and think about the country as a whole, having in mind the different habitats and planned situations that should be considered. There aren't obvious or definitive solutions, as everybody would be overwhelmed by this problem. Some topics should be studied and discussed, such as the re-sort of population settlements, the problem of completely or partially deserted villages or the need of increasing the value of different traditional heritages. Suitable conditions for the actual standard of living in rural areas should be created; rivers, rias or estuaries and forests should be cleaned up; still inhabited areas should be re-sorted and a large amount of constructions should be restored. Too many things, and we still have to remember that two thirds of the rural areas are partially desertified and they are crying out for effective and radical solutions, so that people settled there can live according to current times.

It could only be done introducing an important regenerative movement. Different organisms should lead this movement working hard and trying to spur both individual and collective consciences. Urban policies are urgently needed and, first of all, a law on urban planning should be issued. This law should respond to the specific situation and needs in Galicia, as it should design the country model. The resulting framework of law would draw the guidelines to rebalance and to sort Galician spaces. A rational regional planning is also needed, as well as a new management of local and provincial institutions and the promotion of laws on urban planning that act as general,

regional or provincial guidelines. 25 years after the assumption of the responsibility for urbanism and urban planning by the Galician regional government, 20% of the 315 councils in Galicia still don't have any urban plan. This fact shows the great irresponsibility of those who governed the country in recent years. Both the promotion of **restoration policies** and the lack of concern for **ethnographic heritage** should be taken into account. If the management of the **local organisms** doesn't change, they should be provided with technical means and planning instruments, so that they could control the actions taken in the construction and in the urban and environmental fields. These are the requests that we must make in order to deal with *ugliness* in a responsible way, to erase it and to plan the future urban situation.

Professional groups related to the architectural and construction fields, both in the building and engineering sectors, should also take part in this regenerative movement. The associations and colleges of architects, quantity surveyors and building surveyors, each of them with their own responsibilities, together with different associations in the various engineering sectors play an important role because they can urge their members to behave in a more committed way than the one they have had until these days. Another important sphere in the future urban situation is the one of **developers and building contractors**, as they should be aware of the whole community instead of thinking only of speculating and destroying the land.

The Galician Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEGAMP, an institution made up of the 315 municipalities and the 4 provinces of Galicia) should get involved in the regenerative movement to help its members to control the situation and to increase their awareness or it. By doing it, municipalities could acquire information that are currently lacking, and could

be trained by planning courses, discussing the situation and reaching agreements in the scope of their authority. Bringing within **civilian population's** reach the measures to make them aware of the situation is also needed, so the authorities should promote debates and different campaigns to increase their awareness. The inclusion or widening of subjects related to our architectural, artistic and environmental heritage in the **university and secondary school plannings** would be important. The *Proxecto Terra* developed by the Official College of Architects of Galicia is a useful training and assessment tool for this purpose.

The government and the organisms responsible for these topics should be aware of land policies and of policies on cultural heritage, specifically on ethnographic heritage, as well as policies on dwelling and land, on environment, on rural areas and on tourism. It is not only a matter of thinking of them, but also of taking actions. Let's hope they are already being taken.

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I didn't intend to participate in this Forum. As a builder, I was on the defensive, thinking that I would be booed by those present; the subject discussed here is suitable for that. But it never happened, and so I thank you for your tolerance. Even when it may be due to corporativism, as all of us, one way or another, are responsible for *ugliness* or urban deterioration or however you call it.

The effects of *ugliness* are obvious, but its causes are so many that it's easy to be lost. If we don't analyse them and make profound self-criticism, we run the risk of looking for scapegoats to blame as a solution instead of finding what we are doing wrong, which is a very serious social problem.

As, among other causes, there is an economic component, especially in my field, I would like to start by speaking about profitability, a concept that should be redefined. Because for me profits aren't only economic; there is something more that is earned. And that "something more" is differentiating certain ways of behaviour: thinking in the long term, with quality as an asset for our heirs, to whom I think we are leaving a damaged landscape, even when it's an important part of our heritage. We are running up against a lack of culture; our history, our landscape and our heritage must be known. We need to know, to want and to feel to overcome the current urban deterioration.

We must value and give power to our difference. The difference I'm referring to is not related to the subject that we discussed the previous day, which was the ostentation of the owners who show you their cottages, and when you ask them "which architect designed it?," they answer "the project was signed by that fellow, but I directed everything; this is my wife's idea, that's from my

brother-in-law..." You have to answer: "Sure, you can tell." A room is of a colour, the next is of a different one; etc. The only thing you notice is their wealth, which ultimately is what matters to them. And I'm not talking about people with a lack of culture, but about illiterates with a degree, who transfer their wisdom to their population centres, to squares and sidewalks and street lights, etc., giving us reasons for a meeting like this.

That "something more" to which I previously referred must be cultivated. I agree with Teresa Táboas when she stated that the most important thing is to teach young people to love and get along with themselves. The work in the schools, even when the achievements will be for the medium or long term, has also an influence on older people. We must take into account the ideas with sentimental or ethnographic value that were transmitted in the villages in the past; this is infrequent nowadays due to the influence of the youngest people.

Logically, urban deterioration has perverse effects unrelated to aesthetics, to functionality or to respect for the environment, which are very serious for society. Even more serious if there isn't any dignification of our professions. For me, this is happening due to the authorities' ignorance. Deprofessionalization is not being corrected, and our professions aren't socially promoted, because that is not in fashion. For instance, there may be new stonemasons who are good professionals, but their aim (perhaps influenced by their families) is to become bureaucrats of the town hall or of the regional government. There is a lack of stonemasons, but in plenty of workshops many kids want to become sculptors. Where are we going, everybody carving saints? Is there a new Renaissance over here?

Xosé Otero Pombo

Demotivation of these professions is logic to a certain extent. They are not economically motivated, neither socially recognized, and our environment is hostile, as it is immersed in mediocrity. And I think I'm being kind when I talk about the mediocrity of our subject's protagonists (builders, architects and society in general).

This means that if anyone tries to rectify this situation and they are standing out, they may lose their head. Every architect, entrepreneur or citizen who promotes a project or a certain intervention rarely submits it without wondering "what can I really make" or "what will I be allowed to make" before. This attitude is eliminating the human capital in the supposed "society of knowledge". When we say that the citizens' collaboration is fundamental for the improvement of urbanism and of environment, I doubt if collaboration can exist without citizen participation. For me, this is more than just the right to present allegations because a country state does not appear in the municipal land planning as we want.

Speaking about mediocrity and its consolidation, I remember a historical episode attributed to Alexander the Great in Afghanistan, which I don't know if it's true but it is revealing. When he couldn't control this country, he asked the former king how he could dominate it. The former king took him to the city outskirts, showed him a corn field where some spikes were standing out over others, and ordered to cut the tallest ones, leaving all of them at the same level. After seeing this, Alexander said he understood. He summoned the twenty wisest people, cut their heads and calmed the situation.

On the other hand, I still don't know the profits of sacralizing the planning, as in many cases it

causes the standardization of creativity, which for me should be socialized. This is worrying, especially if we think that with the laws currently in force, if the cathedral of Santiago was to be built nowadays, it wouldn't be allowed due to its excessive size. Most of our artistic heritage would be illegal or out of the urban planning, according to the environmental regulations in force.

This is something diffuse that I don't understand well. As there are architects here who possibly can explain it to me, I would like to know what the convergence point between urban planning and architecture is. Where does one begin and where does the other finish?

Many times, the only thing a good architect can do is to wrap a predetermined project with the beautiful paper of applying the regulations. The promoter will sell the flats as luxury apartments not for their architectural design, but for their automatic blinds, their hot tubs or their ambient music.

To finish, I think that professionals' and citizens' proposals should be favoured, to substitute the idea of "what will I be allowed to make". The bureaucratic situation that makes citizens feel that they are climbing a ladder with somebody trying to impede it must be eliminated.

I can't understand either the constant criticisms to a government by the opposition parties, no matter their ideologies, when an urban planning is changed several times while it's in force. I think it is easy to show that a planning which never changes becomes a complete failure.

Only common sense can save us from our current situation. Culture, training and the knowledge of our environment and of ourselves will be the keys, through a non-excluding dialogue. In the meantime, we must take notice of writer Camilo José Cela's saying: "whoever lasts the longest wins." Otherwise the Galician proverb "when in the land of wolves, howl as wolves howl" will be true.

In a previous intervention, Alves Costa said that this Forum increased his perplexity, and I think that Camilo has just contributed to the enrichment of our perplexity, but at the same time adding touches and suggestions which break the seriousness of these discussions, and so I thank him for that.

I am going to be daring and shy at the same time, because many of the questions that the other speakers and I are going to comment were already pointed out or shown to a certain extent. Although there is much to be said, reflected and discussed about the subject we are dealing with, due to the conception and the dimensions of this Forum, the ideas that we might point out and comment shall be reflected later on.

So, there isn't really anything new to add, but I'm going to study in depth some of the previously shown ideas from the point of view of the field where I am working.

First, I think that all of us agree that *ugliness* is an inappropriate term, or at least it is not scientifically supportable, as it doesn't define nor conceptualizes the idea behind it. Then, in my opinion *ugliness* is somehow demanding us, in addition to a commitment, an analysis to find what is hidden behind the visible phenomenon of a certain behaviour. This behaviour of intervening in the land is the result of the relationship between the members of a community and their occupation, transformation and planning of a certain land. That is what we visualize, the results of a certain behaviour, against which there is an apparently invisible, profound reality that is the real cause of this behaviour.

After that, we have to ask ourselves, and for that the comparative analysis in social sciences is always suitable and useful. To understand

the subject we are discussing, the question would be: "Why in other countries or regions (for instance, within Spain, Catalonia and the Basque Country, and also some spaces without any national identity but with a strong socio-cultural identity, such as the Andalusian areas of Ronda and Grazalema) we can see that the intervention in the land shows a greater continuity and a lesser breaking of the link, in terms of dialectical relationship, between our heritage and the later production and management of that heritage?" Precisely, the phenomenon called *ugliness* is just a part of a more complex phenomenon, which includes a process, a reality of resource management, with more or less suitability in our memory. When those resources cause malaise and uneasiness in the memory of the population that is managing them, that's when the problem is really happening and the results that all of us notice are taking place.

Link devices are the elements that feed or inform the historical movements. In our case, they suffered a series of short circuits that somehow annoyed the mechanisms of social assumption and metabolization of the own cultural memory, creating an inharmonic and discordant system. I think all of us understand that the complexity of this subject requires a discussion, which must be multi-disciplinary in the first place, to overcome the unilateral views and the moral perspectives of a phenomenon which can't be understood from aesthetic sensibilities and values. In my opinion, the spread of the term *ugliness* to identify and denominate such profound problems is as unfortunate as appropriate from the point of view of the media, because it helped to promote the interest to discuss something which is behind the stage of

the aforementioned reality. So, the moralization of a historical phenomenon means hiding its visualization as a process. At the same time, it also confuses the analysis necessary to identify its causes, to know the different social actors that lead and suffer it, and to evaluate the different responsibilities, either individual or collective, especially the institutional ones, of those who take part in the action called *ugliness*. As all of us have already agreed these days, *ugliness* is not a question exclusive of architecture, neither of urbanism understood as space planning or as legal-administrative regulations. *Ugliness* is an expression of social intervention in the land, and so it is the result of the relationships that men and women of a specific historical period establish with the space they occupy and with the history they participate. Therefore, history can explain better what the other social sciences help to make clear (particularly geography, economy, sociology and anthropology).

The notion of *ugliness* is inappropriate because it is aprioristic and because it is based on an aesthetic appreciation that hides the social dimension of a non-recent process. This appreciation also has deep roots in the journey travelled by the Galician society to reach modernity. Furthermore, this is a blaming expression, and the texts that many journalists and publicists published in the press about this question lead the culpability to undifferentiated social sectors of our community. So, these texts don't value the singular manifestation among us of the link and the dependence between public powers and population. They don't value either the public administrations' typology of responsibilities in a process which is intimately related to land planning, to economic and demographic evolution of rural and urban

spaces, to articulation processes between the countryside and the cities (in the geographic, social and symbolic levels), to migratory dynamics and return behaviours, to the Galician people's phenomena of constructing or deconstructing their self-esteem, and to the complex readings about the own identity and about the cultural and moral values, both material and immaterial, on which this identity is historically weaved. This process is also connected to the relationship among self-esteem, identity and the educational action on the own cultural values.

In any case, the discussion promoted by this Forum can and must give consideration to the social function of the powers, standing aside the own regulations (land, urban, heritage). Because in this function resides the institutional responsibility of not fighting *ugliness*, a questionable idea, but of fighting the disordered knowledge of different spaces and fields that form our land. It also resides in the lack of a model or of a purpose for the upsettings and the asymmetries that the *glocalization* processes — according to Robertson's concept — are causing in our country's material and cultural landscape.

The question of *ugliness* as a socio-cultural phenomenon is adjacent to the question of cultural heritage, better understood in processual terms than in formal terms. We mustn't forget that the wrongly called *ugliness* is alluding to visual manifestations that represent the contradiction between tradition as a historical process and a modernization released from that process and so in conflict with heritage, establishing the breaking with the values that we understand as representative of our identity as a people. Consequently, the discussion about *ugliness* must be faced from the binomial heritage-identity, being conscious that previously we must discuss the historically constructed notion of heritage and the notion of identity,

a synthesis of images and values recognized, admitted and assumed by a community. *Ugliness* is an epiphenomenon from a complex reality, in which structural disadjustments, cultural breakings, the lack of referents and of social and symbolic leaderships in our contemporary history and a profound moral subordination, clearly expressed in the language phenomenon, produced atrocious cultural discontinuities, visible in the land and even more in the material productions which every society uses to live.

The present of an unbalanced Galicia, with strong features of territorial dismemberment, which is living the accelerated disappearance of agriculture—or disappearance of peasants, in anthropological terms — and is suffering severe readjustments in its industrial tissue, doesn't offer the best balance opposite to a unpleasant past for most of the population's collective memory. So, when agricultural space reports don't bring loved memories, when future is uncertain at least and when endogenous imaginaries can't easily spin identity fibres, hope doesn't always link to memories, and memory experiences strong life disadjustments. Then, public powers which are incapable of re-weaving what has been deweaved, and fundamentally incapable of bringing nearer the necessary confidence in the future, make difficult that memory can choose the constructive and creative values of its own identity from the essential package. And so, the suggested cultural breaking is deepened and the cultural diglossia where our society is moving is increased.

We must talk about concrete questions, about shortages, which should be highlighted in a more instrumental level, such as the aforementioned lack of criteria with regard to the planning subjects. But especially and basically, about the necessity that this discussion must lead us to understand the complexity of our heritage,

and also that a cultural good doesn't have a self-referential character in historical, social and anthropological terms, because it obeys to recognition, and so the lack of self-recognition by the community explains this kind of behaviours. And also to aprioristic aesthetic criteria, and to interests not only speculative but political, socially mediated that are manifest in the form of action and process.

I understand that in this field of understanding history, of understanding the own structure of social segmentation and of social and cultural subordination of our own property, not only the peasants' but also of other fields of the urban tissue; they explain that this is but a phenomenon of disadjustment and an incapacity by the population to assume the management of their own memory and to express it visually, and the power's lack of interest and historical responsibility to redirect this kind of processes.

On Ugliness. A Geographical Contribution

Rubén G. Lois González

I feel obliged to start by saying that I reject the word *ugliness*; I don't like it. I hope it will be forgotten after some time. But I don't want that the symptoms or the facts that a part of Galician society is identifying with the wrongly called *ugliness* are forgotten.

I have two main reasons to reject that term. First, its lack of precision; second, its origin, which is political and vulgar. In a society marked by diversity, by complexity, it is extremely complicated to state what is ugly, in the same way that it is increasingly difficult to use the adjective *beautiful*. In my city, I am used to see kids with green hair, with Mohawk hairstyles or with excessive make-up, but I would never say that they are aesthetically wrong, that they are ugly, and that they practise the *ugliness* culture. Fortunately, most of us consider the coexistence of tastes as something normal. That's why if some people decide to cover the external walls of their houses with deep blue mosaics, or if they prefer to leave white piles visible or to put crenellations in their beach houses (some examples that can be easily seen throughout the country), it never crosses my mind to report the *ugliness* of these constructions. If urban planning regulations are respected, I mustn't opine about the aesthetics (or the anti-aesthetics) of these buildings. In this field, I must confess that I've learnt a lot from the anthropologists' "cultural relativism".

So, I don't trust the denomination *ugliness*. This word was born outside the academic and intellectual fields (sorry for being an elitist snob). This word was born in a newspaper and I suppose it was financed by a political leader responsible for urban deterioration who in a given moment wanted (pseudo)ideological justification to sustain his megalomania. *Ugliness* is repeatedly mentioned, but I don't

know its antithesis, *beautiffulness*, which would be the model urban interventions that should be used as a referent (it is unlikely to exist). When speaking about *ugliness*, I always suspected that there was a regionalist proposal behind it: the defence of the own landscape, of the old hewn stone buildings, of the rural tradition's aesthetic superiority. As if these elements were to last in the last half century of irreparable land impacts allowed by the power.

Galicia's urban and landscape illness is obvious. But the problem resides in the lack of control that followed the building practices until recently (and also in the agricultural productivist intervention). In cities, becoming a construction entrepreneur meant showing that you were able to do a lot of business in a short time and in a small space (verticalization of our neighbourhoods). In rural areas, everyone should behave in their estates as they may consider suitable. Even cemeteries were built as multi-storey niches in closed squares; it's madness. And all that was implemented vindicating the ignorance of urban plannings, which are the governments' only instrument to call to order. The non-observance of urban plannings (no matter if buildings were more or less ugly) usually implied the irrational increase of building heights and the construction of houses in land that should have remained as rustic. That is not *ugliness*: it was and still is an allowed indiscipline, which permits many people to earn a lot of money or just to forget the observance of certain collective duties.

This may sound hard, but I think that the minimum-quality, urban and landscape destruction process in Galicia (and in Northern Portugal, and in the area of El Bierzo, etc.) was fundamentally due to material reasons. For half a century, indiscriminate construction and

aggressive real state promotion are the main Galician and Spanish contributions to capitalism. The construction sector has been doing exactly as it pleases in many municipalities of this country. This sector can buy local politicians, it speculated with the shortage of dwellings in the 60s and the 70s (two decades of strong rural exodus), and now that the *urban housing hunger* is over, it plays with the expectations of the apartments' quick price revaluation. In a territory where the execution of infrastructures, industrialization and the wealth of cities were magnified, the alibi of concrete, bricks and uncontrolled building production was to be expected. In fact, this sector with important companies that needs land to pave and to build has developed a crazy race for new spaces that starts to be difficult to stop. Some buildings are attractive (remember that there is a market for middle and upper classes), some others are hardly looked after, but the important thing is to keep building and having purchasers available (and with the current low interests, that's not very difficult). Furthermore, who is going to question the employment and the wealth (even when it's a bit fictitious) that this (constructive-)destructive dynamics is generating? Likewise, there are still elements of hope for the most recent times: landscape can be reconstructed in small free spaces (there are many examples); even when houses are still built vertically, they have less height than in the past; new residents are always a blessing for any land, etc. This process' reasons of continuity are clear and make difficult to revert this situation.

But together with these material elements, there are cultural ones. Don't forget the importance that contemporary thinking has granted to tastes. So, since the mid-20th century, height

construction started to be valued. Those were a kind of buildings related to progress, to freedom and to the possibilities of the city. They were also related to the trends of that moment: functionalism and the principles of the Athens Charter had a lot of weight. First there were high buildings in the main cities (in A Coruña and to a lesser extent in Vigo, as *regional* paradigms); then this model was reproduced in other towns (O Carballiño would constitute the most repeated example of this case); and at the end of the process, we have the already commented rural cemeteries. Second, this way of *urbanizing* was consciously or unconsciously related to personal success. Workmen who came from the country and were working in the city considered, and still consider, that owning a house is a fundamental life achievement. Similarly, middle-class bureaucrats and salary earners valued the fact of settling either in flats in quiet and prestigious areas of the city or either in semidetached houses in the suburbs. Then they would intend to have a small place (an apartment, a cottage, etc.) near the beach or close to their hometown, etc. High income groups also buy in the most exclusive areas. Most of the people, depending on their economic possibilities and their possibilities to accede to different urban areas, follow the same behaviour patterns that lead to the purchase of a house; then, if possible, to buy a second residence, and in some cases even more.

The most rural version of this process was defined by the unplanned construction throughout the country. Construction increased in all the villages, even when villages were losing a high amount of inhabitants; starting from many particular initiatives, anticipating the maximum average of dwellings per place (a house for every child, warehouses to park the cars, etc.). People either improvised this dynamics (from their own ideas on the concept of accommodation) or copied from what they had seen abroad, while there were emigrants

in Europe. Sometimes these two factors mixed, and so foreign reality was adapted by the taste of the (self) builders. On the other hand, don't forget that there were regulations, such as the Subsidiary Laws in the province of Pontevedra from 1975, or the first regional land law (the LASGA) in 1985, which permitted to build in every space, even in non-buildable land, without justifiable reasons.

In the early 21st century, we can draw two consequences from the previous events. First, the deterioration of landscapes and urban morphology. Our cities were wrongly built: they aren't attractive, they have too high densities, there is too much traffic in the streets (as nobody thought about it, only about building) and a lack of free spaces and green areas. Some historical centres, 20th-century neighbourhoods and amusement areas with a certain aesthetic value could be preserved, but usually surrounded by high building blocks, all of them accumulated as *walls* created by last century's urbanism that don't let the wind blow. Second, the proliferation of houses throughout the country. From having a habitat perversely spread, or either crowded around the communication channels, combined with spaces for reforestation and pasture or intensive forage, to defining a new and impoverished landscape framework. Anywhere in the country we can identify all these landscape elements, a kind of the so called *ur-banalization* of our extra-urban areas.

And what about the future? As we don't know where we are heading (the famous lack of prospectivity for analysis in social sciences), I shall propose two hypothesis, a pessimistic one and an optimistic one. The pessimistic one insists on the fact that everything will remain the same, perhaps with a little adaptation of the builders, who will try to decrease the densities of urban spaces and to improve the quality of future houses (don't forget that the market has been qualifying). But the advance of concrete

and the use of bricks will continue (even when some old neighbourhoods are going to empty). The optimistic one insists on the importance that social change is reaching. New tastes for housing are appearing. The horror that many buildings from the 60s to the 90s caused, the negative paradigm with which they are associated; and so, the necessity to recover some traditional materials in construction and the obligation to contain building sizes under the most restrictive regulations. Maybe the future is in the middle of both points of view, but the correction of the damage materialized in the last times will be a pending subject for many generations.

I apologize for being late for this discussion. Actually, I don't work in any field related to the topic we are dealing with here. The only authority that I have in it is that I have lived, at least until I was 18 or 19 years old, in *ugly* houses.

First, I lived in a neighbourhood of Ourense called Chavasqueira. There are some thermal baths there known as "Chavasqueira thermal baths", which were earlier called "A Burga" (The Fountain) and before that, "Os Baños do Bispo" (The Bishop's Baths). Until the 60s it was a source of income for the neighbours. This area was the result of late *desarrollismo* (development policies during Franco's regime) and the people who came there had just arrived from other Galician municipalities, such as Chantada, Barreña or Amoeiro. Also people from the rural periphery came to live there, as well as the first Portuguese immigrants and some travelling gypsies, who set up their camps in the fields by the river. It was in August when more people arrived, crowds of people from rural areas. They were called *bañeses* — a local word only used in Ourense and which was French-like, at least for the locals — by the neighbours, instead of *bañistas* (the usual term for calling the bathers in Galician). These *bañeses* had the traditional hygiene habits of this country: they hardly ever had a bath or a shower, as we well know. So, what they did in the thermal baths was not to bath at all. They brought a blanket with them, put their feet into the pools, which had hot water, and covered them with the blanket. So, when you were walking along the riverside in August, the picture that you saw was loads of blankets along the river. But these people were a main source of income for the proletarians, who usually worked in the Malingre factory, in the construction industry or making coffins.

Because when the *bañeses* arrived, they rented rooms in the local houses. In fact these were not proper houses, but *conventillos*, similar to the typical houses in Havana where five families live together, sharing a small toilet and a kitchen. Well, as I was saying, when *bañeses* arrived, the locals put a curtain up in the middle of the only bedroom in the house, so that the *bañeses* slept in one part of the bedroom and the local family (for instance, a couple and a child) in the other. That's how the extra income was earned. I remember that one of my neighbours had an old Chevrolet in disuse, parked in the street for years. When the *bañeses* arrived in August, he and his family moved to the old car in order to rent their house.

This was a neighbourhood like the one that appears in Pasolini's films; the one that is on the outskirts of Rome, full of Neapolitan, Calabrese and Sicilian newcomers in the 60s. My neighbourhood was like Vicálvaro neighbourhood in Madrid or like any other suburb. There were *ugly* houses there. Some of them still survive nowadays, although I think there is an urban plan in order to build there a tower block like the ones in the Pino neighbourhood. Therefore, within two years there won't be any house there any more. If you went to bath in Chavasqueira, you would go right past a house that has a small balcony in the front. That was my house until 1962.

Later on I moved to a different kind of *ugliness*, the one that appears in rural areas. I moved to the neighbouring municipality of Coles. If you've come from Santiago, you would have gone through it. There I lived in traditional houses, from the times of half-autarky, before the arrival and the abduction of capitalism. Afterwards everything changed.

Bieito Iglesias

These drastic changes were caused by the Swiss franc — the only "Franco" that had a real influence in that area. What really happened was that an architectural revolution had started. Houses like the ones in the pictures shown earlier were built. But the worst damages to the environment and to the beauty of Coles were not caused by local people, but by a collection of circumstances. For example, earlier we saw a picture where some rocks appeared together, making up a crag. In the area of Coles there were some of these crags. The area is a plain with some crag formations, which have fanciful shapes. Some of them look like a sitting dog and you can be really scared if you watched them at night. This area looked like the landscape that appears in the film based on *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Conan Doyle. One of them was called *O Coto Grande* (The Big Crag) and another one *O Coto dos Ladróns* (The Thieves' Crag) because in that place Galician bandits assaulted in the 19th century. However, banditry in Galicia was different from banditry in other areas such as Sierra Morena. Galician bandits were normal guys who turned into bandits at night and in the morning they went back to their daily work. Some of these crags disappeared recently because of the poor taste, not of the locals, but of the people who had their second houses built there and wanted to carry these crags to decorate their gardens. One of them was in Costa de Paradela and disappeared because someone paid 75,000 pesetas (about 450 € per rock). These stones, which were similar to the ones from the landscapes that appeared in John Ford's films, are now set up in different middle-class houses.

This is an example of the damages, but there are more. Some of them were caused by the political management. For example, some streams were turned into sewers. The reason is that when modernization and cleaning up of water channels were needed, sewage was not channelled into the Minho River. Therefore, no actual sewage treatment was made. Instead, it was directly dumped into different streams. Before doing so, eels even could be seen there, near the dams. Now, they are sewers. The Galicia Plan has threatened us about the butterfly effect. I say "threatened" because for the people who live in Coles this is only one example of the catastrophe theory. As I was saying, this effect doesn't have any relation to the sinking of the oil-tanker *Prestige*. However, it is said that a highway will be built connecting Lugo and Ourense, and it will cross the municipality of Coles through the areas of Soutullo and Seoane, destroying the last forest of strawberry trees of this region.

This is still a project that we hope it is never executed. But what did happen in this area was a great decrease of agricultural activities. There was an actual extinction of the traditional rural world, while forest areas terribly increased. For instance, my father claims that forests have at least doubled their size since he was born. It may cause less important consequences, such as the return of medieval fauna (squirrels and wild boars) and the extinction of fauna who feeds on seeds. Nowadays you can't look at the bucolic scene of crested larks flying over the fields in the summer evenings. However, wild boars may appear, which were the totem animals for the medieval Galician bourgeoisie but which I had only seen in pictures when I was a kid. Neither had I seen squirrels before. I knew them because of the postcards that the emigrants sent from Switzerland. There were squirrels in the parks of Zurich. This change doesn't matter, because it is only a question of changing one ecological

niche for another one. I don't even think it is a bad thing. The real problem is that it also has negative effects, such as fires. Technicians have already expressed their opinion about them. This is a complex topic, with different subjects involved. Politicians have also shared their own opinions. For instance, Romay Beccaría, in the articles that he writes from time to time for the Galician newspaper *La Voz de Galicia*, still repeats that fires are caused by some organizations. And then picturesque explanations are given. For instance, there were some signs written by the local people from the hamlet of Biduedo or a place near there. If you drove on the Santiago road in August, you should have seen them. They asked for the imprisonment of a boy from the area. My godson is a reporter, and he went there to do some research. He asked an old woman about those signs and she answered: "A girl from here despised the marriage proposals of a boy and she married another guy. Now he comes every Friday to set fire to forests."

The thing is that if I had any authority on this subject, it is only because I have lived in those *ugly* places. Nevertheless, I've written a text because I lived surrounded by the mentality, the sentimentalism and the ideas of the people who played a leading role in the phenomenon of *ugliness*. I'll read the text, as it is a short one.

The Sirex's song

In the mid-60s there were few television sets in the outskirts of Chavasqueira de Abaixo and of Ribeiriño, two areas were full of *ugly* architectural works where "nice" pre-industrial groups of people lived, such as lame people, beggars, gypsies and immigrants from neighbouring municipalities, who were similar to the *accattones* in Pasolini's films. That incredible decade brought the miracle of suddenly having TV sets in our neighbourhood. One of them was in Aquilino's bar, who had bought it only to follow Legrá's boxing combats. There was

another one in the Capador bar, where you could watch the map of Nevada burning when *Bonanza* started. The third one was at the house of our helpful neighbour Eugenia. Therefore, I went out of the *ugly* house of my uncle Antonio, who had been unfortunately nicknamed as *Carallas* (Cocks). The house had a kind of balcony, which was more of a landing of the exterior stairs made of stone and cement. A cherry tree grew in the middle of the garden and there were two fig trees on both sides, as if it were a Calvary scene. As I was saying, I was leaving my uncle's house and went to the also *ugly* house of Eugenia. It was one of these Havana-like *conventillos* where four families shared a toilet and a kitchen. There, in the morning programme, I watched the performance of the Spanish band Sirex and I listened to their most successful song, *Que se mueran los feos, ¡que no quede ninguno!* (I wish that all the ugly people died, that none survived!).

This was "the song" for most of the Galician urban middle-class people who wanted to be cool at those times. They talked about the terrible damages made in the rural houses and how shocked they felt about it. There were cement and uncovered bricks everywhere. Moreover, houses were expanding with no control or planning, by adding extra rooms or by following Swiss patterns, for instance. Some people think that this phenomenon was caused by some kind of Galician endemic feature, but I must tell them they are wrong. Félix de Arzúa wrote in 1988: "Wandering across the Ampurdan area a colleague told me: 'Look at that; it seems that they were made yesterday and have been here for centuries.' Because the amount of hangars, sheds, pigsties and granaries which were set up with no control and bare walls made you think that it was a temporary situation, that they would be removed

at any time. That carelessness contrasts with the carefulness of the Andalusian, Basque, Leon or Asturian villages. This situation makes you think, and even more if we take into account that architecture has been and still is an obsession in Catalonia. On the one hand we have local people's carelessness, which had been caused by the peasants' low mood. As a consequence of that process, they started to consider their lands as something alien, temporary and weak. On the other hand, we have Catalan bourgeoisie's excessively ornate image." Disregarding the bourgeois ostentation, almost unknown in this area, we could apply the whole story to our rural areas without changing a word. I must add that the peasants' low mood mentioned by Azúa is called enculturation and it was suffered during the late Francoist development. The delicate Alpine architecture, those houses with wood exoskeletons weren't the patterns followed by Galician countrymen. They imitated the flats of the new urban districts, with their terrazzos, long corridors and modern materials.

As Tournier stated in his book *Les Météores*, the poor can even doubt of their human condition. In order to make sure that they aren't from another planet, they imitate the nearest human pattern that they have, both in their language and construction fields. In this case, they imitated the *petit bourgeois*. It is true that Galician peasants weren't exactly poor. However, they were stripped of important values for the mass culture, which was just arriving, along with the cities, the televisions and the consumer culture.

The traditional culture, which had created the *architecture without architects*, with limited resources and following inherited patterns from past generations and functional trends, would later inspire some avant-garde architects. Nevertheless, the market culture had different

features: breaking any previous canons, extolling any novelty, the fast trends. This would create *democratic* masses eager for exciting innovations who were enemies of the lasting trends. The so-called *ugliness* appeared as a consequence of the economic and social promotion of these masses. Facing this trend, there is no point to keep conserving the *theme parks* that are historic buildings, unless they were financed, as in fact they are in some European countries.

A last biographical note about myself. I lived in houses with the fumes from the fireplaces leaking through tiles and with wooden floors full of holes that absorbed the heat and the smell from the stables. I lived in houses that had added extra rooms by altering the previous straw lofts. When Venezuelan bolivars and Swiss francs started to arrive, my grandparents didn't call any follower of the Bauhaus, but a rough builder who installed new stoves and converted the corridor into a concrete *gallery*. However, I am not going to criticize these rustic changes, as they allowed me to escape from my past rural generations, from Galician writer Pondal's dark clans. Thanks to them I could have a degree and a salary from the Galician regional government in accordance with the Galician consumer price index.

Furthermore, this discussion about old-fashioned plastic tastes is perhaps related to the past. New laws and urban trends are establishing a pattern of settlement with no isolated houses and limiting the constructive diffusion. In the near future the anonymous architecture will disappear. Every area will become a municipal capital with urban guidelines and semi-detached houses. Every building will be *architecture by architects* and the urban middle classes won't be able to claim their superiority laughing at the *ugliness* caused by illiterate people. In this country, which is developing very fast, aesthetic and moral deformity or beauty are moving to

different fields. For instance, what do these housing areas inhabited by guilds, by castes, mean? Are they exclusive clubs just for teachers or doctors? What is this *apartheid* announcing? Outside this space is landscape, the *pulchritudo vaga* or *natural* beauty, also endangered by the mass culture's tendencies. It is prone to artificial beauty in such a way that constantly correcting the skyline with skyscrapers is not enough. It also tries to sculpt our bodies, to recreate them by diets, gyms and tattoos. All this to claim: *I wish that all the ugly people died.*

Urbanism, Architecture and Landscape

Xosé Lois Martínez Suárez

We can perceive landscape as a tale; a tale that reflects history. History is made up of different layers with their folds and shades; and while artists, painters and writers look at them, they make up new stories, new tales, which open our eyes to see and to look at our environment in different ways.

In this tale, the peculiarity of architectural works is that they occupy a specific place; they have a certain fixed position in space. Being there, they alter the previous landscape, the tale itself.

An architectural work needs to hold on the earth and to be set up in an area that has a certain appearance. Its constituent parts, such as vegetation, physical relief or human settlements, define the landscape. The architectural work has an actual meaning being in the landscape... but, at the same time, it belongs to it.

In that sense, landscape turns into a kind of register where history can be observed by the accumulation of mechanisms. That is the reason why architecture has been so important as a defining element for the identity of a nation, a country or a region.

In an architectural work two main trends can be distinguished in the relationship between humans and the environment. On the one hand, the search for a harmonic relationship, adapting "mechanisms" to the environment, while trying to be a part of that landscape. On the other hand, the conflicting, challenging relationship that prevails in the fact of locating the building in the area.

In both cases the impossibility of neutrality in architecture as a defining element of the landscape is obvious. Ruskin, in his text *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1855), stated that all

buildings either enrich or destroy a landscape; they alter it, anyway.

ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE IN THE URBAN WORLD

Social diversity, functional complexity and morpho-typological richness were the most important features of the European urban settlements until the Industrial Revolution. The different social groups lived inside small, fenced enclosures: Santiago de Compostela, the biggest Galician city par excellence, was 750m × 500m; the town of Pontevedra was an oval of 550m × 400m; A Coruña had two centres: the City, that was 350 m in diameter, and the *Arrabalde da Peixaría*, a rectangle of 850m × 350m. In these towns there were different social groups, such as artisans, merchants, servants, lords, clerks, monks and knights, who mingled in narrow streets and squares, among houses, shops, workshops, castles, churches, monasteries and cathedrals.

Inside the enclosures, a great diversity of professions were shown (streets with shops specialized in selling cords, shoes, fish, etc.). They were always inside specific borders, defining an area where citizens had their own privileges and a specific legal status by the town walls; outside the walls, fields and nature.

In those small enclosures, towns were a medley of different groups, where aristocrats, the trading bourgeoisie, clergymen and soldiers mixed with artisans and servants in a creative melting pot where the great ideals of modern society were created. That mixture made possible that in the pre-industrial urban landscape, great Renaissance or Baroque buildings could be seen just next to artisans' humblehouses, amazing Romanesque churches

close to impressive Gothic cathedrals, and episcopal castles next to stalls of stallholders, bourgeois houses close to the poor fishermen neighbourhoods or prostitute quarters next to the high walls of monasteries.

This social diversity and complexity was obvious in the typological diversity (cathedrals, episcopal castles, parish churches, monasteries, castles, artisans' houses), in the different building styles (traditional constructions mixed with different architectural styles: Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque...) and in the functional diversity (residence, work, industry, trade, movement and stay...) of the urban structure of towns that were basically big markets.

All the Galician towns remained like that until the 2nd half of the 19th century. The crisis of enclosed towns demarcated by their walls became evident under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, due to the appearance of industry, of railway tracks, of new harbours, of a new network of roads and of a new working class who would have their peripheries as a defining element of the idea of a town and as counterpoint to the always immaculate and organized new bourgeois districts.

20TH CENTURY: A BREAK IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE. ARCHITECTURE OF UPROOTED CULTURE AND LANDSCAPE «PERIPHERALIZATION»

Until a few years ago, Galicia was a mostly rural, agricultural and seafaring country. The great majority of its population still lived in traditional settlements (villages and hamlets) in the 20th century. At the beginning

Foismo?

DESTROYING A COUNTRY

of that century only 13% of its population lived in cities or towns and so could be defined as urban population. In 1950

the percentage was 22.3%.

In 1850 only three towns had more than 10,000 inhabitants and none of them had 25,000. Neither of them reached 50,000 inhabitants in 1900. Therefore, in the mid-20th century there was a very much decentralized and really stable system of settlements. The leading role of the urban centrality was established on a small or medium urban scale and it lacked the scale of great urban metropolitan concentrations.

The importance of rural Galician population who worked in the primary sector was one of the main features of its society: in 1900 there were 880,000 peasants in Galicia. In 1950 there were still 780,000. Therefore, architecture and landscape in the Galician rural and agricultural world during the first half of the 20th century basically preserved their traditional system of settlements. They were organized by a pre-industrial land exploitation and merged with a "natural" landscape where, as the century went on, would be covered by a weak network of roads promoted mainly by county councils and, to a lesser extent, by town councils.

These landscapes were required references for the regionalist painters' picturesque works. In them, the balance between nature's mechanisms and order appeared sublimated in the search of creating a completely balanced whole. Villages and hamlets appeared in a "natural" way next to cultivated lands, offering a sweetened and heavenly picture of a society that was waging a great battle in order to survive. Popular architecture and the rural and seaside settlements appeared sometimes on the background, sometimes as the main motif in hundreds of landscapes paintings by Galician painters such as Llorens, Imeldo Corral, Alfredo Souto and Seijo Rubio.

They were a "Milky Way" of villages and hamlets around a parish structure. These small population settlements were included in the thousand-year-old division of ecclesiastical nature. In spite of being socially considered as the first level in the suprafamily structure, it wasn't politically recognized. Therefore, collective participation in "public" issues (in its modern meaning) couldn't be set up.

Science and technology were introduced in the Galician agriculture by civil engineers, who were the "high priests" of a new religion, in which the laws of Physics and Mechanics were the backbone of a new world conception that made its way among superstitions and obscurantism. Road routes and the construction of railway tracks in the late 19th century and the early 20th century were seen as signs of progress, freedom and justice by a society racked in the backward state of pre-capitalist economic relations. This society was submitted to an almost feudal social control, which was supported by the Catholic Church in the pulpits of its parish churches, in the rooms of its seminaries and in the cloisters of its monasteries.

In this context, in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the design of the first new element that changed the centenarian landscapes developed: roads. Which was the criterion to design the new roads in the rural and agricultural world? The *municipal capitals* turned into interim locations or the junctions of a network of roads that connected them with other municipal capitals (roads built by the county council) or with regional capitals (usually related to the settlement of the headquarters of administrative areas or to the venue of important fairs or markets) or provincial capitals. This was the new network that connected the new influential places, headquarters of the new organisms in the municipal, administrative and provincial areas, with the powerful institutions of the

previous social structure (parish churches and castles).

Along with these roads paving came first, and lately, asphalt. Just next to them, rain would be channelled by ditches, which would be in good working order thanks to road workers.

The old villages and hamlets were left out of this new network because of the high price of compulsory purchases and because of the needs of this kind of infrastructures in order to be built: flat areas or slight slopes. This backward lack of infrastructures (no paving roads, sewer systems or electricity) in the traditional population settlements remained until the end of the 20th century.

Along with roads, transport arrived: buses, trams (that would reach an area of 20-30 km from downtowns). Later, electricity would appear. Roads would be the inducing element to build houses, shops and cinemas. Coffee shops would be built opposite to bus stops where countrymen waited for the buses that would take them to fairs or to their jobs in factories or in the urban building industry. Therefore, countrymen were part of the proletarian process of the urban peripheries. Its main consequence was that the different urban styles of the working-class houses would be the "models" followed by the countrymen who lived in the rural area influenced by the town.

Working-class houses appeared in these cases out of context, with no urban area close to them. As if it were a Surrealist picture, houses could be built next to a road, only separated by a ditch where rainwater flowed. They were small one-story buildings, maybe two-story, which rose alone, isolated, even surrounded by pine forests or cultivated lands.

This kind of buildings was originally thought to be urban constructions that could be *attached* to others in long rows, as London slums. Its side facades were often blind, what could be considered anachronistic if houses were alone.

This pattern moved forward from suburban periphery along the roads in a process that shows how urban limits changed in its suburban formulation, entering slowly in the agricultural world.

This was a new landscape, part of a new world of solitude and exploitation. The former peasants, then proletarians, first walked for hours, then pedalled long distances in rainy and cold days, surrounded by water and fog, and finally got on full buses towards the town trying to earn their wages salaries in factories or in the construction sector.

These were the forgotten and rejected landscapes in the painters' works, who were still looking for their inspiring motifs in the "gentle countryside" or in the picturesque seafaring villages.

Nowadays those working-class houses built one by one along roads out of cities such as A Coruña, Vigo and Ferrol make up a continuum set up in a century of history. One hundred years without services or equipments, being the roads the only "public spaces" that had a minimum of urban development. One hundred years when often roads slowly turned into actual streets.

This was the starting point of a slow crisis in the structure of traditional settlements. New buildings would rise in the countryside; buildings that ignored the logic of the growth of rural centres, attracted by the accessibility that came together with the new road routes.

The relationship between those new buildings and traditional settlements changed. Their construction didn't look for contiguity with other buildings. There was a different logic based on the new conditions created by roads, which would even influence the formal treatment of the pattern that would be built. The "houses by the road" faced, as working-class houses did in urban peripheries, the road that was the reference to build the "alignment". The main facade of the house always faced the road. Some "cultured" criteria appeared in this pattern: the

disposal of spaces based on axis of symmetry, the construction of fences or the use of plinths and modern decorative elements. There were small windows in the roofs and balconies in the first floor of the main facade. These balconies didn't face any busy street, so they didn't invite to lean out; they were architecture patterns "learnt" from towns, from houses that were seen in the urban landscapes that were the bourgeois districts of the capital cities.

Like them, the *quintas* and *chalets*, which were the houses made by the returned emigrants who had made their fortune in Latin America, added new names to the vocabulary of what had already been built. They were the most obvious display of a different way of being in the world, adopting a different relationship with the environment. They were a clear sign of recognition of the victory in the great odyssey of transoceanic emigration. This fact legitimated the returned emigrants to cover their houses with elements of colonial architecture and of the new styles (eclecticism, modernism and regionalism). Buildings were were placed farther apart from entrances, in the middle of plots, surrounded by gardens where palm trees and magnolia trees grew. Parterres were drawn in the middle white-gravel paths. Fences didn't remind the protective walls of castles; you could see through new designs of cast iron railings or painted wooden railings. They rose on discreet walls, so that the suggestive forms of this magical architecture could be seen through foliage.

LANDSCAPE DURING FRANCO'S DICTATORSHIP

The new "Spanish pattern" of development adopted during Franco's regime in the 50s gave two roles to the Galician land and population:

1. This country would be an exceptional energy supplier due to the construction of hydroelectric power plants by many rivers (Sil, Minho, Tambre, Ulla and Eume) and a few thermal ones, such

as the one in As Pontes, Meirama. For its building, it was necessary to make *tabula rasa* of broad areas where population lived on pre-capitalist production style.

2. Rural population would supply labour to the big industrial enclaves in Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao. These cities were very important for the proletarianization process, as well as the member countries of the then recently created European Common Market.

Both actions caused different landscapes in the rural, agricultural world. First, the big infrastructures created for the hydroelectric sector were introduced into the landscape.

Modern hydraulic engineering works radically modified the environmental and landscape conditions of broad areas, on a scale never seen before. Next to them, "working-class settlements" introduced the urban planning into the rural world by experimenting with architectural styles and with innovative "adding forms". Different elements related to different socio-economic realities would clash in the same space and at the same time. Among them, there were the big energy-producing buildings put up to supply the important areas in the industrialization process, set up hundreds of kilometres away from the small population centres, such as villages and hamlets that, surrounded by fertile lands, would end up sank in the depth of a swamp. In other cases, mass emigration would prepare the ground for deserted cultivated lands and countryside and would lead to the progressive process of desertion of hundreds of population centres that has lasted until our days. Agricultural employment dropped from 62.7% in 1955 to 14.3% in 2000, a decrease of 538,000 agricultural posts. Together with peasants, also many other workers such as artisans, stoneworkers, carpenters and blacksmiths went away. They

were the repositories of the building tradition inherited from the previous generations.

The process of absence from the house and from the world that it symbolized in relation with the system of traditional settlements reached its climax in the 60s and 70s, when most people emigrated.

Along with emigration, a process of "landscape peripheralization" in Galician villages, towns and countryside started. The ultimate crisis of the rural, agricultural and seafaring worlds started, showing its devastating effects both in rural and in urban landscapes.

FRANCOIST DEVELOPMENT AND CITIES: FROM THE CLOSED SQUARE BLOCKS TO THE MODERN MOVEMENT'S NEW TYPOLOGIES

After the interrupted experiences that were the urban plans of Ferrol (by S. Rey Pedreira, 1930-1931), Vigo (by A. Palacios, 1932-1934) and A Coruña (by C. Cort, 1943), in the mid-20th century the urban development of Galicia had been limited to writing a new wave of municipal urban plans, such as the ones in A Coruña (1948: *Plan Iglesias Atocha*), Pontevedra (1953), Ourense (1955: *Proxecto de Urbanización Xeral da Cidade de Ourense*) or Vigo (1944: *Plan Cominges, de Aliñamentos*). These documents described a model of compact and monocentric cities, inherited from the 19th-century German pattern. It was based on a framework of a radial, ring-shaped road system that surrounded and met in the Central Nucleus (the historic downtown and the new bourgeois districts, if it was the case). An urban continuum would be superimposed, being completely homogeneous and limited. The basic design units were the *closed square blocks*, either compact or with a yard, what guaranteed a high population density. A secondary road net with reticule shape fixed

the alignment of the square blocks, which could have variable sizes. In any case, they were the most obvious evidence of the dependence on the 19th-century urban forms in a time when the Modern Movement had already given many examples of brand new urban planning forms, such as the Viennese *Hoff*, the German *Siedlungen* and the Dutch districts, and of new urban documents as the Amsterdam General Extension Plan (1928-1935). The latter was the main point of reference in the IV International Congress of Modern Architecture, which culminated in the programmatic synthesis of the functional city in the Athens Charter (1933). This would end up being the official doctrine applied in the field of urban planning during the post-war years in Europe.

The settlement of the first migration wave during the post-war period would be based on the theoretical framework of 19th-century tradition. The second one, coming from the European emigration, would be settled from 1960 onwards.

Cities turned into the main investment areas for the savings of the emigrants who worked in Central European countries. Districts such as Calvario in Vigo, Agra do Orzán in A Coruña or Ensanche in Santiago were the references of this golden period for property speculation and of defeat for architecture and for the architects. Historic downtowns in the big Galician cities were abandoned to speculation and were unceremoniously destroyed. In this trend, the height of buildings coincided with the level of ambition of the local leading groups.

The new bourgeois districts in A Coruña and Vigo kept their original pattern until the 1960s. These urban landscapes showed a great homogeneous typology, characterized by wide pavements with trees and by marvellous squares with parks and gardens. Later, the bourgeoisie altered them by changing their typologies, doubling the height of the buildings

and progressively removing green spaces, which would turn into underground parking lots.

The savings of hundreds of thousands of emigrants who went towards Europe were buried in these new neighbourhoods. These areas were inhabited by them when they returned to this country, becoming part of the urban population.

In the 70s, high buildings spread in the municipalities that bordered the peripheries of the big cities. The "new pattern", which had originally appeared in capital cities, in addition to the increase of the number of private vehicles, encouraged the basic property sector to start a compacting process along the roads. This trend appeared only in the borders of municipalities and was possible due to the help of the local authorities. The peripheral villages of the neighbouring municipalities, far away from their municipal capitals, started to have anomalous building dynamics. These dynamics were caused by exogenous reasons, different from the urban and socio-economic development of the other municipal areas. These villages were the favourite objective of unscrupulous speculators because of their settlement, just next to the areas that were suffering enlargement processes. However, speculators weren't alone; they were helped by the politicians and technicians who were responsible for controlling and designing the urban plans in the municipal and county councils.

FRANCOIST DEVELOPMENT AND THE AGRICULTURAL WORLD: THE UPROOTED ARCHITECTURE

In the rural and agricultural world, the pattern of the peripheries is the prevailing one: any agricultural or cultivated land, field or scrubland can be developed. Galicia is a huge piece of land made up of plots where different people with different backgrounds and from different social

sectors set up their homes, both their usual houses and their second homes, with a mix of styles. These houses are isolated and usually empty for long periods. Another characteristic common to all of them is that they are built during several years.

Thousands of houses spread along the countryside, built due to the effort of emigration. This is the typical model of uprooted architecture: isolated houses rising in the middle of cultivated lands or fields, near streams or rivers, consciously far away from villages and hamlets. These houses are completely isolated, without the ability or the will to be part of a superior group. The logic of the creation and growth processes of the previous settlements breaks out, as well as the historic relationship between the emigrants and the agricultural world is broken, partially at least.

All works of architecture, even traditional and anonymous architecture, need some kind of guidelines. For many centuries, the professions related to the construction of a house (carpenters, stoneworkers, master builders) or to the decisions taken in order to set out the elements for the settlement were bounded by tradition. History had the answers after contrasting previous experiences about how to solve problems caused by construction and settling. The problems that appeared and the solutions that were given were codified by tradition. Both technical requirements and aesthetic values merged in the answers. This link with history permitted to find the path to security, to belong to a certain place, to be part of a culture that gave the guidelines that were needed to "understand".

Which were the referents of returned emigrants when they were converted into unwitting builders of images and producers of landscapes?

Their past had been characterized by the denial of their history and the branding imposed by the power and by official organisms (the State through schools and the Catholic Church through

pulpits and confessionals) in all cultural levels (exclusion of their own language and culture, rejection of traditional architecture, rejection of traditional settlements such as hamlets, disapproval of the traditional ways of living). Returned emigrants had a new survival attitude, adopting everything that was "new" with an uncritical sense. An individualistic touch would be shown even when building the simplest on-storey, single-family houses. This individuality would be made up by setting together different "pieces" that would invariably deny all the building knowledge and the aesthetic sensibility gained for centuries in Galician villages. This process would be pressured by the urgency of finishing their houses in a short period of time. Some traditional elements in architecture, such as load-bearing walls, wooden structures, small and controlled gaps, traditional galleries and balconies were replaced with reinforced concrete columns raised on wide bases. Beams and fences made of uncovered bricks were also used, waiting year after year for the end of an always unfinished work. The final element was usually a fence made of concrete blocks. It surrounded the land as a defensive wall protecting the area from an aggressive world. The owners felt that they didn't owe anything to that world, but they came back repeatedly looking for deeper vital references.

Those were times of fragmented reality, of dispersion, of landscape peripheralization. Those were times of definitive crisis in the rural, agricultural and seafaring world, particularly in the 60s and 70s. The institutions established in towns and cities lacked cultured patterns, which should have been the guidelines for the settlements. These patterns should also have been appropriate for the cultural, economic and technical development of a society immersed in a deep process of transition and change. There was a lack of research works, which should have been carried out by the institutions socially responsible for theoretical thinking and

which should have looked for solutions of continuity between tradition and modernity. These solutions should have met the new collective and individual needs that were appearing at that moment. To sum up, those were times of persecution and marginalization of the intellectual groups that had a political and cultural commitment with Galicia, such as *Xeración Nós*, which had started to show their worries about the identity of our country in the 20s. Without them, society lacked "masters"; it was disorientated and running away towards nowhere.

On the contrary, the urban ruling classes took advantage of the earthquake that had shaken the rural society in order to follow the speculation trend by destroying in a few years many high-quality, centenarian urban landscapes. These classes were a minority; however, they had a great power to manoeuvre and were settled in the administration of Franco's dictatorship. The speculative conceptions of the ruling classes would quickly infect the whole society. The most obvious consequence of this process would be the *adoration of the private appropriation of urban land rent*. This was the undeniable leitmotif in the developing and building processes of cities and towns in Galicia in the last third of the 20th century. Several appeals for reflection on urban planning were rejected (*A Cidade das Rías*, by Andrés Fernández-Albalat); many enterprising ideas were blocked. Most of people had to emigrate to other countries, where their ideal of improvement and welfare could become true. Between 1960 and 1975, thousands of millions of foreign currencies were sent to the real state sector, which was basic and voracious. The result was that the savings from hundreds of thousands of emigrants, earned during long years of emigration in other European countries, were buried in degrading neighbourhoods.

The second wave of municipal urban plans appeared in the 70s (A Coruña: PXOU, 1968; Vigo: 1961-1971...). They showed the "zoning" model in the cities. To this model financial institutions sent an important amount of the emigrants' savings. The quantity of the available resources was huge. The investment euphoria with speculative purposes on the real state sector was also so important that the policies on subsidized housing directed to be a solution for the problem of the population's urban development and for the resulting problem of housing were merely symbolic, as well as the municipal policies on urban planning. Unable to develop the inherited plans of the "zoning" culture, these new plans didn't pay attention to the management or control of the urban development, postponing indefinitely the basic planning stages. Therefore, the critical situation got worse. Residential neighbourhoods in the cities (Elviña and Zalaeta in A Coruña, Coia in Vigo, Caranza in Ferrol, Campolongo in Pontevedra, Vite in Santiago, As Lagoas in Ourense, etc) and "groups of houses" in the towns were the State's answers to a transition from an urban population of 300,000 inhabitants in 1930 to 900,000 inhabitants in 1980.

When disposing the new population settlements, the topography and the morphology of the area, what there was previously or the characteristics of its landscape were rarely taken into account. For the layout of buildings, the relationships with the area, the vegetation or the river beds were usually forgotten. This happens in the areas of Elviña, in A Coruña, and of Campolongo, in Pontevedra. Monelos River and Gafos River were canalized and turned into real sewers. The result was completely mediocre: neighbourhoods without their own identity, where urban planning standards to free spaces and funding according to the laws

were automatically applied. The most commonly used building styles in these areas were those from the modern movement: isolated volumes of laminar blocks and towers repeated monotonously. Free surfaces appeared more by chance than on purpose and were dotted over residual areas, in the middle of a road network that expanded uncontrollably. Bigger and bigger areas that would be used as parking lots spread and green spaces have a very poor design. Only certain sequences and approaches in the Barrio das Flores neighbourhood in A Coruña (Corrales-Molezún) and in the Vite neighbourhood in Santiago (Julio Cano Laso, Manuel Gallego) had an outstanding level due to the high quality of the urban and architecture plans.

There was a lack of cultural policies that boosted the recognition of the distinguished values of traditional architecture and the forms of traditional settlements, as well as those of the urban landscapes in the old towns and cities that had medieval origins and of the new bourgeois districts in A Coruña and Vigo.

The century-old settlement model was characterized by its decentralization and small size. It was also the reference used in villages and hamlets. But this model faced a profound crisis in the last fifty years. Most of the population who lived in typical settlements related to the primary sector left their traditional houses. This model was changed in a traumatic way by a model of population who lived on the secondary and on the service sectors in a limited number of urban centres settled basically along the axis Ferrol-A Coruña-Santiago-Pontevedra-Vigo-Tui: the Atlantic highway.

LANDSCAPE DURING THE DEMOCRATIC RESTORATION

At that moment, policies on urban planning both on a large scale (through urban master

plans) and on a small scale (general plans or guidelines on a supra-municipal level) should have tried to visualize and control the effects introduced by the change of model. However, its lack caused that the speculative market had the main role in the process, as the weak public administration followed the trends of the private enterprises.

The imbalance affected both the traditional agricultural landscape and the historic urban centres, although in different ways. In the provinces of Lugo and Ourense, as well as in the interior of the provinces of A Coruña and Pontevedra, a process of desertion by their inhabitants caused their abandonment. The structural joints of a new urban society set up in the coastal strip from Ribadeo-Viveiro-Ferrol to Vigo-Tui. Although this area is the 15% of the total surface of Galicia, 75% of its population live there.

There was a concentration of population throughout the Atlantic axis and a boosting of urban patterns because of the suburbanization of the areas next to the big urban centres (Vigo, A Coruña, Santiago, Ferrol and Pontevedra). Despite their small size (none of them has more than 250,000 inhabitants), they presented some "symptomatology" characteristic of wealthy metropolis, such as traffic problems, lack of housing and of open spaces, and difficulty to access the installations.

The concentration of Galician population throughout the Atlantic axis and the boosting of urban patterns in the residential peripheries were two sides of the same coin. They were the result of a post-capitalist urban planning which was unsustainable and which showed the obvious "real state hegemony and uncontrolled urban planning". This is a model where the private sector feels free to act in supra-municipal fields, beyond obsolete political and administrative limits. This model was characterized by the lack of public initiatives adapted to each urban

situation. A lack of solutions for the problems of public transport (trains or buses) on a suburb level was the most popular one. This problem led to the transfer of transport responsibilities to individuals, who were almost forced to use exclusively their own cars.

Destroying the land was one of the main features of this model.

Land was inevitably destroyed by building closed "ghettos" of semi-detached houses for middle-class people placed 10-30 kilometres away from the downtown. More examples of this kind of destruction are the development of high-density areas (until 100 houses per hectare) and the intensive patterns of height building for the lower classes throughout the borders of the municipalities neighbouring the central cities. This destruction was the inevitable result of savage neoliberalism policies, originally led by the most conservative sectors and quickly followed by most of the parliamentary groups in the field of municipal urban planning. These policies were enthusiastically adopted by real state developers and municipal governments. Their legal formulation was based on the deregulation of urban planning, being the market the main instigator of this "new control", and on the "Balkanization" of the urban management. In most of the cases, the municipal governments just gave legal cover to the big corporations' real estate initiatives by classifying agricultural or forest land as land suitable for building. They also signed ridiculous agreements and assumed as a "symptom of modern times" the lack of an explicit urban planning that described a model where the public control on the process of building a new urban reality was possible. This lack was the new scene where we could realize the similarities between the 19th-century bourgeoisie's urban practices, most of them limited to their residential spheres, and those practices carried out by the new political classes in the last twenty years. The latter were more

concerned about propagandist and marketing operations than about giving solutions to the "chronic problem" of cheap houses in suitable urban areas, to the energy and environmental problems, to indiscriminate settlement and to the destruction of agricultural landscape.

ugliness as a stigma

When Galicia had the greatest activity in the construction of housing estates, industrial estates and business parks; when urban and building lands in the big cities and neighbouring municipalities multiplied the suitability for building, increasing the height of buildings, which would allow to build thousands of houses where millions of people (!!!) could live; when peripheries grew unstoppably due to real state developers, who were helped by the councils' democratic "blessing"; when houses cost scandalous amounts of money, whereas population decreased and Galicia's political power dropped because of its low demography... it was then that the State, on its central, regional, provincial and municipal levels, became inhibited before this problem. At that moment (the 90s), the mass media were skilfully moved to focus on thousands of unfinished rural houses; on houses made by emigrants with "subversive" aesthetic patterns; on deserted or improvised sheds next to stone fences; on traditional granaries made of new materials such as cement asbestos, blocks of concrete and wire netting; on stone crosses made of brick; on dovecots made of plastic and tin; on modern palaces in the middle of the countryside, the way traditional ones were; on week-end cabins with ornamental elements just next to agricultural features; on typical Swiss houses with steep roofs surrounded by typical Galician fences; etc. They focused on examples coming in most cases from people in the rural world, in small villages and hamlets, who play a residual role in the country as a whole.

These examples are the evidence of the existence of a "periphery" that we don't want; the existence of "*our periphery*", the "*periphery of our times*" which, as in the 19th century, is spreading from the heart of the cities to the countryside, to the furthest medieval towns and villages. Everything is now part of the city. In the countryside we can see objects, forms and uses completely decontextualized. They are incomprehensible for anyone who may interpret them, from a so-called superiority, in a partial, reductionist way, without taking into account the hegemony of the urban world, where historical and cultural values and the respect of the environment must bow to economic profitability.

Once again, the weakest link of the chain is marked, the one that is out of the "orthodox" real estate circuit because of its peripheral origin. However, these "orthodox" circuits are really codifying the building process of the space, the "politically correct" idea of the already built heritage and the redefinition of aesthetic guidelines for a new urban Galicia.

This link is called *ugliness*. It is an isolated phenomenon, but it is clearly seen due to its marginalisation. It is then when its complexity, its contradictions and the formal heterogeneity of a plural and democratic society must appear.

Nowadays, the concept of "traditional city" is in crisis. Urban patterns are invading cultivated lands, forests and the countryside on a supra-municipal level, transforming the landscape; and a new kind of peripheries is appearing in municipal borders. However, no institution has assumed its responsibility or its leading capacity to promote policies on land planning. These policies should cause consequences on urban planning, on landscapes and on aesthetics, on the same scale as other

important subjects of these times do.

Neoliberal practices implicit in the municipal urban policies, when accepting the deregulation of planning, have as a collateral effect the complete desertion of agricultural and forest exploitations in the municipal areas next to urban areas, caused by speculative expectations. Despite their size, the *ugliness* of thousands of hectares of deserted and unproductive lands is surprisingly invisible. That is because they are urban lands, lands for development or lands which will be developed in the near future. The same happens with thousands of invisible empty houses (14,000 only in A Coruña), as if Harry Potter's cloak covered them. In the meantime, hundreds of cranes work above the roofs of the "happiest cities in the world".

On the contrary, official iconography usually shows us scenes of a phenomenon, *ugliness*, located in rustic Galicia's backward world. There, the demographic crisis and the paralysis of agricultural activities are leading to the construction of empty landscapes and to the desertion of villages and of fertile agricultural areas. Those are the consequences of remote decisions that prevent the normal development of an economic activity that keeps alive thousand-year-old landscapes.

That is why the claim of a cultured and alive landscape is needed, the claim of an anthropomorphic landscape opposed to a desert and illiterate landscape.

There is a perception of the landscape, both from the huge transport infrastructures (new roads, dual carriageways and motorways) and from the air, which allows only a distant brief view. It shows "beautiful and huge empty landscapes" which, a short time ago, were areas of economic and cultural activity.

But, if we approach and go into most of the Galician municipalities, carefully observing the

reality to which they belong, if we study their population pyramids and their demographic development, we will see the real face of death and desertion. Only old people remain in the interior of Galicia. Everyday the lights of a house switch off forever. Everyday doors and windows are closed in some village once and for all. They are the most dramatic image of the defeat's magnitude: those who remain are aware of their uselessness in the new order.

Nowadays, more than ever, a reformulation of the urban planning for Galician population is needed. Galicia is scarcely 30,000 square km and has no more than 2,750,000 inhabitants. However, its urban planning should tackle a neoliberal conception that causes terrible imbalances in the different areas of Galicia: a whole desertification in the interior and a mass concentration throughout its coastal line by means of speculative settlements which consume a large extent of land and produce an unsustainable urban development in terms of environment and energy. They also have a great economic consumption and, what is worst, they cause alarming processes of social destructuring.

As it was said lots of times, "societies reflect and express themselves in the way they build their houses, monuments and cities, in the way they plan their land and model their landscapes".

We need to re-introduce a critical view and to claim a productive and positive relationship between society and nature. It is not about going back to a fake idyllic past, but about reflecting deeply on the relationship between humankind and the environment. The purpose of these relationships would be the reciprocal promotion of environment and human resources.

In this situation, a profitable relationship with nature would be validated. It would brighten up our land and its inhabitants in a dynamic, creative and productive process, able to

deal with changing and multiple situations. Therefore, this situation is against the idea of "landscape as a piece of furniture", according to which landscapes would be immobilized in a canonical image, codified by administrations and by wrong urban legislations, in order to be inaugurated in the future.

That new relationship would be based on a *transforming urban development* and would follow the ecological patterns to which fifty years ago Galician writer Castelao referred in his book *Sempre en Galiza (Always in Galicia)*:

I can see a profitable land where everybody works and lives peacefully. I can see my country as just one city, the most beautiful garden-city in the world, the ideal city for people who want to live close to Nature.

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