

Urban discourses and rural settlements: Toward a documentary analysis of the effects of governmentality on the built environment in rural Galicia (Spain)

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1. Introduction

The generation of the built environment in rural areas has historically created physical places with distinctive characters. The processes and underlying logics (reasonings) through which these have been organised and generated have been significantly impacted by changes in governmentality, where the approach of government is understood as “the regulation of conduct by the more or less rational application of the appropriate technical means” (Hindess, 1996, p. 106). The philosopher Michel Foucault took this concept in its more original meaning, that conduct, or more precisely, “the conduct of conduct” is a term which ranges from “governing the self” to “governing others” through forms of knowledge tied to particular practices and exercises of power (Elden, 2007a, p. 564). They structure and shape the field of possible actions through a heterogeneous array of regulatory practices and technologies. The governmentality of a modern state is characterized by a rational-legal authority, which is implemented through a bureaucratic structure. This structure is defined by hierarchical organization, specialized roles, merit-based employment, and a clear set of rules and procedures designed to ensure efficiency and predictability (Weber, 1978, p. 987). From this vantage, Foucault focused on showing how the

modern state and the autonomous modern individual (Lemke, 2002, pp. 2–3), in this case architects, planners and other technicians, are entangled and co-dependent

‘Governmentality’ comprises the techniques and rationalities of rule employed by government in exercising social control (Thompson, 2005, p. 324). From this starting point, this paper aims to use the concept of governmentality to relate the rationalities of planners, architects and other technicians to governmental practices, by showing how these technologies have been used in the planning and design of rural territories. In particular, those technologies related to the ways in which space is abstracted and rendered subject to mathematical modelling and control (Elden, 2007b, p. 32) will be explored, and how these are tied to the development of measures and statistical techniques based on a specific model. Governmental practices will also be examined through study of contemporary interventions in the built environments and landscapes of rural areas guided by techno-bureaucratic processes (Alcindor, 2019, p. 351), in contrast to traditional rural landscapes and settlements built from locally sourced natural materials, and using construction techniques which obeyed customary laws specific to the local environment when understood as a governing body (Martin Galindo, 2006, p. 60). Therefore, governmentality is a “key notion”

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(Lemke, 2002, p. 3) needed to understand the path followed by territorial management in rural areas, and its effects on the landscape in the late modern period, that is to say, the period characterized by the advent of a new socio-technical organizational model as the fundamental matrix of economic and institutional organization (Castells, 1989).

This paper offers a perspective that it is necessary to recognise the nature of governmentality, in order to understand the ways in which modern forms of territorial governance are imposed, since this is intrinsically linked to the administration of diverse types of built environments through countless, often competing, tactics and technologies of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation, and encouragement. In fact, these technologies work to make reality “stable, mobile, comparable, and combinable”, thereby enabling government to act upon it (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 185). Therefore, it is important to point out that work is first needed to record and characterise the features and conditions of a territory, before any technical work can take place, however this requires homogenization and quantification of characteristics which are qualitatively different. This reflects Bruno Latour’s notion of inscription (1987, p. 69), that the way in which facts are constructed makes reality comparable, which is a necessary precursor for constructing the evaluative processes which enable planning, and upon which subsequent actions and interventions can be based.

Considerable scrutiny has been given to different concepts regarding approaches to rural territories. For instance, the analysis of development and implementation of public policy in rural localities, together with associated developments, and their contribution to rural studies (Thompson, 2005; Tu et al., 2018); the ways in which urban strategies also have the potential to reap the benefits of agglomeration for rural areas as well (Meijers & van der Wouw, 2019), the construction of theoretical models regarding transitions from urban to rural (Chen et al., 2020; Qu et al., 2019; Yanbo et al., 2019), or the identification of differing metabolisms between disparate environments, and in particular the associated cognitive environmental models of an archipelago versus continental models which exist but are largely invisible, and are therefore subsumed within prevailing urban logics (Ther-Ríos, 2020). At the same time, there are studies which have focused on rural territory and the identification of key development spheres for rural spatial change (Marsden, 1998); changes in rural landscapes associated with urbanisation and land use dynamics (Antrop, 2004; Chen et al., 2017; Tan & Li, 2013); policy instruments and spatial approaches available to guide rural landscape change (Balta & Atik, 2022; Munton, 1995; Nas-sauer & Wascher, 2008; Primdahl et al., 2013), and more specifically in Galicia a study focused upon classifying the territory based on the degree of urbanization (Dalda et al., 2005).

While the aforementioned studies have explored the rationalities that lie behind regulations and their implementation, there is still room to evidence this phenomenon within different geographical contexts, in particular as regards both the planning of rural settlements and in terms of architectural design, together with the associated consequences these have for wider landscapes (see for instance Donovan & Gkartzios, 2014; Xu et al., 2023).

Although territorial planning involves the intervention of multiple actors who all have an influence on the final character of a place (see Farid Uddin & Piracha, 2023), the largest impact on the physical characteristics of rural places can only be fully investigated in relation to regulations established as part of wider urban discourses. That is to say, systems of knowledge that determine the limits of thought or action specific to times and places (Lewellen, 2009, p. 257), which nowadays are guided by a dominant techno-bureaucratic process in the urban environment. For this reason, an understanding of the universalistic principles of rationalisation used to manage interventions within a territory will be examined, understood as cognitive urban models. Therefore, the main focus of this paper involves long-term approaches to planning in rural areas and their outcomes, which have not previously been fully examined or understood within the Spanish context, and more

particularly in Galicia. In particular, the architectural outcomes in rural settlements over time will be explored, in relation to changing regulatory policies.

To summarise, this study seeks to understand how the dynamics of policy formation and its implementation affects rural areas with regards to an underlying discourse. How has the rural territory/landscape changed over time through the application of these policies?

This paper is organised as follows: In the first section, the relationship between discourse and different strategies of governmentality used by the State are examined. In the following section, the methodology used in the research is presented, before moving to the next, where the particular features of the region of the area of study are shown. The fourth section focusses on an analysis of territorial regulations, provided by documentary analyses across one case study in the area, and especially by examining the outcomes associated with the transformation of this territory. The main conclusions are presented in the final section.

2. Theoretical framework

Governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion, and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by the self (Foucault & Blasius, 1993, pp. 203–204). It is a way of structuring and shaping the field of possible action of subjects through a heterogeneous array of regulatory practices and technologies that result in a reformulation of how to apply coercion or consensus, in which the latter is applied from “autonomous” individuals’ capacity for self-control (Lemke, 2002, p. 52). This power is not as repressive as in other periods, but instead exerts itself in the production and control of new techniques and apparatuses of power. In fact, according to Lewellen (2009, p. 258) real power does not lie with a presidency, the police, or with bureaucrats, but in the school system within which we are socialised, and through which the discourse is spread. In many ways schools and universities are closely enmeshed with the State endorsed formation and education of ‘good citizens’ (Müller, 2011, p. 3).¹

Government refers to more or less systemic, regulated and reflected modes of power that go beyond the spontaneous exercise of power over others, following a specific form of reasoning (discourse) which defines the telos of action or the adequate means to achieve it. Therefore, technologies of government refer to strategies, techniques, and procedures through which different authorities seek to enact programs of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand, and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered (Rose, 2009, p. 148). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that it is not technologies or programmes of government that act, but rather the social forces deploying these technologies and programmes for their own particular purposes (Jessop, 2002, p. 468). From this perspective, political programmes are defined in terms of the underlying rationalities that shape their development (O’Malley et al., 1997, p. 501). Indeed, states are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002, p. 981). These are also related to and shaped by teaching and linked to the development of professional expertise, skills, and codes of conduct, inasmuch as educational institutions transmit particular knowledge about the nature and organisation of the built environment (c.f. Müller, 2011, p. 3).

Foucault hints at the procedure of the urbanisation of territory as the model for policy formation, with the aim to make the territory as a

¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a summary of these courses (see Lemke 2001). Instead, this paper attempts to show why the concept of spread of discourse occupies a central place in Foucault’s work, and how this might be used as an analytical tool to critique rural planning development.

whole a sort of great city, to order it like a city (Elden, 2007a, p. 573). This entails a dialectical back and forth between the cultural uprooting of deterritorialization, and the new emerging cultural identity of places characteristic of the reterritorialization that governs the dynamics that are taking place in rural areas. In other words, in this techno-bureaucratic government the territorial referents of rural environments cease to respond exclusively to the immediate territorial referents they'd followed previously, and begin to be (or are increasingly or even decisively) influenced and marked by actors, phenomena, or processes related to other territorial spaces, even from those which are very geographically distant (Mato, 2007, p. 38).

For instance, the dynamics of capital accumulation are characterised by a continuous expansion of urbanisation that is closely associated with a constant reconsideration of city limits and rural-urban interactions (Champion & Hugo, 2003; Harvey, 1985; Lerner & Eakin, 2011). Urbanisation and capital accumulation are closely related processes (Isin, 2002). Much of the excess capital is invested in real estate, generating the so-called secondary circuit (Christophers, 2011; Harvey, 1985). These dynamics have been particularly intense in recent years, in a context characterised by the centrality of the processes of neoliberalisation and financialisation (Aalbers, 2008; Brenner et al., 2010; Brenner & Theodore, 2002). The extension of urbanisation has been accompanied by its territorial expansion into rural areas, promoting, among other things, a strong fragmentation of the landscape in a typically peri-urban context (Tacoli, 1998, p. 158). Therefore, the recognition that social relations (as a product of the dynamics of capital accumulation) are becoming increasingly interconnected on a major scale necessarily problematizes the spatial parameters of those relations, and under these circumstances space no longer appears as a static platform of social relations, but rather as one of their constitutive dimensions, itself historically produced, reconfigured, and transformed (Brenner, 1999, p. 40).

So, to understand this reterritorialization phenomenon, it may be more important to look at the less dramatic, multiple, mundane domains of bureaucratic practice by which states reproduce spatial orders and scalar hierarchies. That is to say, the 'know how' that has promised to make government possible (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 174) for settlements and aspects of the physical environment at different levels of scale, together with their respective relationships.

The modern form of political rationality has been based on the problem of population and its improvement, bringing the state directly into contact with its territory and, more precisely, with the qualities of this territory (Braun, 2000, p. 12). Statistics are a common instrument for both the balance of power and policy because both are concerned with the forces and resources of states and all the measures of territory (c.f. Elden, 2007a, p. 573). Importantly, most forms of statistical knowledge regarding the distribution of populations use territory as a fundamental base, leading to a designation as 'rural' based solely on population metrics that maintain a simple dichotomy of urban and non-urban (Nelson et al., 2021, p. 355). Therefore, the workings of 'governmentality' are inherently and fundamentally spatial (Elden, 2002, p. 958). Spatial planning is therefore a particularly significant area of study when trying to understand the interconnected relationships between those working to shape the built environment, and the policy frameworks, assumptions, and other mechanisms of government which shape the discourse, and their ultimate consequences and outcomes.

Through this process people become understood as both discrete individuals and their aggregated whole, and the land they inhabit is more than merely land, but a rendering of the emergent concept of 'space' as a political category (Elden, 2007a, p. 578; Lefebvre, 1978). Lefebvre (1978, 2013, p. 318) which conceives the modern nation-state as a 'spatial framework' characterized by the domination of a centralized administrative apparatus over a dispersed national territory that needs to face different contradictions (exchange-value and use-value; work and leisure; production spaces and consumption spaces;

homogenous spaces and fractured spaces; the centre and the periphery; global spaces and fragmented spaces; and the territorialization of surplus value in the secondary circuit of landed property and its deterritorialization in global capital flows). Confronted with those contradictions, the state adopts various strategies, but regarding rural territories the most important is the deployment of regulatory policies to impose order and coherence on the uneven development of localities and regions.

Viewed through this lens it is important to highlight Lefebvre's (1978) association of the production of socio-spatial configurations to two paramount concepts that require attention: verticality and encompassment. Verticality refers to the idea of the state as an institution which is located at the top of a hierarchical structure, therefore state actions are efforts to manipulate through top down planning. By contrast, encompassment is when the state is located within an ever widening series of circles in a consequential understanding of scale, one in which the locality is encompassed by the region, and the region by the nation-state (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002, p. 982). So, it is important to highlight that central actors opt for concepts that should be sufficiently universal to describe each and every single territory, yet also flexible enough to be incorporated into the idiosyncratic discourses of local actors (Uitermark, 2005, p. 154). In architectural design terms, these have been related to modernist concepts of the 20th and 21st century, coupled with biased interpretations of the ICOMOS Venice Charter when required to deal with pre-existing conditions or contexts (Dawans & Houbart, 2016, p. 57). In this regard, it is important to point out that the place character of any settlement is mainly defined by its urban morphology, namely, the combination of streets, plots, and buildings seen as a composite (Kropf, 2018, p. 15). However, forms are concrete manifestations, fundamental constituents of how we see the urban world (Chiaradia, 2019, p. 5). Thus, those forms associated with past ways of living linked to an agrarian economy (Xu et al., 2023, p. 2839) and which as a result have a defined rural morphology are subsequently redefined by concepts linked to the current economy and imposition of top-down planning. And according to Parham (2008, p. 535) this situation is actually shaped and dictated by urban theory, where the past and the future are often represented in a series of dualities that situate historical context in polarised and pejorative ways. This duality is one of the ways that allows architects and architectural practices to emerge from educational institutions as strong and explicit opponents of [European City] models (Clos, 2006) whose common characteristics resemble those of compact cities (Parham, 2008, p. 537), versus 'zeitgeist' models which promote and prioritise design which is "of its time", but which pays scant attention to a location's urban design, architectural, or historical associations (Parham, 2008, p. 535).

This is especially connected with Foucault's work because these concepts are contained within the processes of discourse formation. Rationality in planning is embodied in the complementarity of the concepts of discourse and power. As Foucault (1980) stated, science and power are linked, and scientific knowledge is never above the play of power.

Therefore, regulatory laws are a typical example of a collective endeavour of an inter-organizational ensemble that functions relatively autonomously from a larger institutional complex, and hence have particular dynamics that deserve attention (Uitermark, 2005, p. 141), since besides their role in shaping local conditions, the state through its apparatuses of power may play a role as a distributor of discourses. As Flyvbjerg (2002, p. 355) argues, power analyses in the field of Planning have frequently disregarded the relationship between rationality and power and has identified it as a 'blind spot' and a 'large grey area', even though in the post-collaborative era (since 2004) this dynamic began to change in some countries through processes of public participation (Brownill & Parker, 2010). However, until this change became more widespread, the central state continued to facilitate the distribution of locally produced rationalities and technologies of government by importing discourses from some areas, and then exporting these to

others, impacting rural landscapes.

These considerations provide us with various analytical tools for a critical analysis of shifts regarding rural regulations and resulting changes in the architecture of rural settlements in Galicia.

3. Method

The nature of this study does not attempt to be conclusive, but to explore and discuss ideas for the academic progress of rural planning studies. The choice of a case study as a methodology is based on an understanding of changes in the rural landscapes of the late modern period in Galicia. The predominant question is how and why (Yin, 2017, p. 11) since these questions are central to capture the complexities and underlying mechanisms of a given phenomenon. The “how” addresses the processes, strategies, and interactions that occur within the case, while the “why” digs deeper into the reasons behind those processes. The “how” involves identification of shifting architectural features resulting from different legislation which requires an exploration of the relationships among rural places, discourses, and changes in policy. This has also involved investigation of the back-and-forth negotiation inherent in dis-embedding and re-embedding processes of cognitive models related to the dynamic character of rural locations and environments, that is to say, the “why”.

Galicia provides an excellent case study due to unique rural features which differ from the rest of Spain, so it is even more evident how techniques and rationalities of rule employed by government in exercising social control have been characterised by general discourses conceived and implemented at central levels of government, then applied uniformly to very different urban and rural contexts irrespective of specificities or distinctions.

Evidence has been gathered from Galician village of Salvaterra de Miño, and in particular the Leirado parish, where one of the authors and their family have lived for generations. This association has provided the intimate knowledge needed to identify locations, interventions, and changes which illustrate the key point of this paper. To reiterate, even where powers and decision making are devolved to the regional or local levels (to allow greater flexibility and differentiation in the implementation of policy), the internalised discourse is more dominant when it comes to regulating behaviours and practices (c.f. Thompson, 2005, p. 324), manifested in mundane practices that often slip below the threshold of discursivity, and yet which profoundly alter rural landscapes.

Salvaterra de Miño is a settlement with a deep history, allowing clear observation of changes over time, and the effects on rural architecture, landscapes, street scenes, and local character brought about by the emergence and implementation of new policies governing buildings. To properly understand these changes however one needs to look not just at the policies or regulations deemed responsible, but at their underlying framework or discourse, perhaps best understood that by applying a certain working principle, a specific value will be created (Dorst, 2011, p. 524). It is commonly understood that ‘design is what you did without knowing why you did it’ (c.f. Diblon cited by Dilnot, 2018, p. 1).

This study on the identification of the values that guide the creation of policy and its implementation has required examination and analysis of the articulation between material practices, policy practices, and discourses (Foucault, 1991), work which brings to light the profound logics that link different social practices. Specifically, the search for these articulations was made using the perspective of a diachronic comparative analysis to explore the implicit cognitive model that has followed the practices associated with the implementation of rural policies in Galicia. These embody an impersonal notion and exercise of

power located in what Foucault called “dispositifs”² (Foucault, 1994) which, according to Uitermark (2005, p. 140), generate and discipline subjects flowing from institutional matrices that are not under the intentional control of any particular agent.

This comparative research has mainly been conducted via desktop analysis, based on the policies which have been produced since 1956 (when the first national law that regulated the territory was brought into force in Spain) and upon the buildings which these have produced. Working with these two kinds of documents has been based on the idea that policies are institutional documents; therefore, they reflect exactly what the name suggests, that insights into societal trends are cognitive models anchored in time with an institutional dimension (Corbetta, 2003, p. 388). At the same time, buildings can be considered as material documents that allow the deduction of the cognitive models through which they have been designed or modified (Corbetta, 2003, p. 399). Both have been deployed qualitatively (using discourse analyses) in relation to discursive formation, as the ‘condition of existence’ (Foucault, 1991, p. 61). They are specific to, and situated in, a socio-historic context. As Scott (2014, p. 34) suggests, documents should be seen as ‘situated products’, while recognising that they are also actants which have agency inasmuch that they shape the way we traverse the social dimension, as Latour (2005) pointed out in his actor-network theory.

Twenty-one regulations were enacted to regulate the land and buildings within the Salvaterra de Miño territory, covering a period of 60 years. These belong to three spheres, national, regional, and local, although only those that introduced changes and/or nuances in the underlying cognitive models of interventions in rural land and buildings have been highlighted. A total of 8 key policy texts (see Table 1) were analysed, together with buildings and/or refurbishments as documents (as previously outlined). This has provided an invaluable opportunity to recognise how policies affect the way we act in any regulated context.

Table 1
Legal Urbanistic Galician Framework under study.

Level	Legislation
National	⇒ Law of 12 May 1956 on the land and town planning regime. [Ley de 12 de mayo de 1956 sobre régimen del suelo y ordenación urbana]. ⇒ Law 19/1975 of 2 May 1975 reforming the Law Regime and Urban Development. [Ley 19/1975, de 2 de mayo, de reforma de la Ley sobre Régimen del Suelo y Ordenación Urbana]
Regional	⇒ Law 11/1985 of 22 August 1985 on the adaptation of land legislation to Galicia. [Ley 11/1985, de 22 de agosto, de adaptación de la del suelo a Galicia] ⇒ Complementary and Subsidiary Planning Regulations of the provinces of A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra, 14 May 1991. [Normas complementarias y subsidiarias de planeamiento de las provincias de A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense y Pontevedra, de 14 de mayo de 1991] ⇒ Land Law 1/1997 of 24 March 1997 of Galicia. [Ley 1/1997, de 24 de marzo, del suelo de Galicia] ⇒ Law 9/2002 of 30 December 2002 on town planning and protection of the rural environment of Galicia. [Ley 9/2002, de 30 de diciembre, de Ordenación urbanística y protección del medio rural de Galicia] ⇒ Law 2/2016, of 10 February, on Galician land. [Ley 2/2016, de 10 de febrero, del suelo de Galicia]
Local	⇒ Subsidiary Standards of Salvaterra de Miño, 12 June 1993. [Normas Subsidiarias, 12 de junio del año 1993]

² Dispositif is a term used by Michel Foucault to refer to the various institutional, physical, and administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within a social body.

4. Galician rural territory and its particular features

The Galician region of Spain lies in the northwest part of the Iberian Peninsula (see Fig. 1). Its historical religious boundaries resulted in a specific term of territorial delimitation in Galicia called “parroquias” (parishes, local administrative demarcations, although lacking an express legal recognition) (Fariña Tojo, 1980; Labrador, 2004), which are only found in this part of the country. One of the main distinctions that define this region are the territorial division or administrative boundaries, which are characterised by a greater dispersion and dissemination of settlements across a territory marked by rugged orography (Fariña Tojo, 1980). Dispersion should be understood as the organisation of the villages around these “parroquias”, which are spread widely apart, and dissemination as the fact that they do not form larger conglomerates. This is reflected quantitatively, since of the 41,083 settlements that make up the Spanish territory, 20,812 are Galician. However, these belong to only 313 municipalities, which represent only 5,8% of the total number of municipalities in Spain, according to data obtained from the Galician Institute of Statistics (I.G.E), updated in 2023 (www.ige.gal).

Although these lack an express legal recognition, they nevertheless represent the original articulating elements of this territory (Labrador, 2004), and stand distinct from the rest of Spain spatially, economically, and culturally.

The origins of this evolution reflect ancient patterns of habitation, linked to self-subsistence and adaptation to this specific environment which resulted in a marked dispersion (Labrador, 2004, p. 243) of settlements at different (albeit modest) scales, beginning with the settlement of the Celtic people in Castros and Citanias (specific types of settlements) in the Castro period (Coelho, 1986). These early settlements were located at crossroads, along rivers, or in areas conducive to agriculture (Fariña Tojo, 1980, p. 13). A second defining moment for the territory came at the hands of the Romans, who strengthened (rather than altering or weakening) the system they found there. Finally, in the Christian period, the Roman villas became rural settlements established as hamlets, whose unifying element was the church, and it was with these that the “parish” first appeared (Alarcão, 1988).

Over time, parishes (which encompassed a series of villages, neighbourhoods, places or settlements around a church), were modified and adapted to include additional secular elements, such as communication routes (Nárdiz Ortiz, 2009, p. 236) or even water lines. Over time, the evolution of the parishes and administrative boundaries have ended up being grouped into larger entities as municipalities.

Salvaterra de Miño is a municipality located in the southwest region of Galicia, belonging to the province of Pontevedra, and home to the case study examined in this paper (see Fig. 2). This municipality has, according to the Nomenclátor Geográfico Nacional (NGN, a register of information that gathers the official geographically referenced names in Spain) 17 parishes and 296 settlements. The first settlements in the area appeared before the current era (BCE) with the settlement of ‘Castros’, although it was not until 991 CE that the first parish was formed in the area (de Torres Luna et al., 1989, pp. 136–137), with contemporary structures and geographical (municipal) boundaries consolidated in the 20th century.

5. Case study: exploring Salvaterra de Miño, Galicia (Spain), 1956–2016

An explanation for the architectural development in Salvaterra de Miño municipality towards rural settlements first requires a reconstruction of the legal urbanistic framework from both a cultural-historical and an ontogenetic perspective of its underlying rationalities that shaped their policies.

The building regulations that regulate the land of any municipality in Spain operate at three levels: national, regional, and local. Although the most direct stipulations for building regulations are those of a local

nature, the ones that establish the designations of the different types of land take place at the regional level, although at the beginning they were only national. In the case of Salvaterra de Miño specific local planning has only existed since 1993, and has not yet been aligned with regional planning laws. Namely, it has not been aligned with the higher order laws that have appeared in subsequent years.³

5.1. National: law of 12 May 1956 on the land and town planning regime. [Ley de 12 de mayo de 1956 sobre régimen del suelo y ordenación urbana]

This was the first State Land Law enacted in Spain, and established that all land that was not classified as urban or rustic (rural) could be converted into urban land, providing evidence of how the law functions as a “dispositif” structure (Foucault, 1994), shaping the field of possible action of subjects.

‘... a regulation of the land is established, according to its situation and destination. It is thus classified as rustic, urban reserve,⁴ and urban’. (“Ley de 12 de Mayo de 1956 sobre régimen del suelo y ordenación urbana,” 1956, p. 3107)

This statement offers an insight into the model through which modern forms of territory governance are imposed. Namely, what Foucault hinted at with the procedure of the urbanisation of territory as a model for policy, which in effect aims to order it like a city (Elden, 2007a), and is intrinsically linked to the administration of a single type of built environment wherever new development is allowed.

At the same time however this law introduced aspects that showed some concern for the existing rural environment, such as drafting studies of the rural environment, or the acceptance of settlements as defining elements of the Galician territorial structure.

‘Article Thirteen: Without prejudice to the inclusion in territorial plans, urban planning may refer especially to the development of cities of art, the protection of the landscape and communication routes, the conservation of the rural environment in certain places, the drainage of towns, and any other similar purposes.’

‘(“Ley de 12 de Mayo de 1956 sobre régimen del suelo y ordenación urbana,” 1956, p. 3111)’

It was thought that the way to make government possible in rural areas was through the development of special plans. These special plans were to regulate the aesthetic features of existing buildings (rather than new development) according to criteria which were to be established by the responsible planner/architect. However, since the central state encouraged an urban approach, despite also encouraging the conservation of some rural environments, new expansion around these areas implied certain discursive rules of exclusion. These included approaches which were beyond consideration for contemporary practice and theory, such as planning which followed the traditional rural morphology. This resulted in inevitable changes to character of place, as it is virtually a truism of social science research into cities that interest or support for traditional city form implies a loss of authenticity in the approach to urbanism (Parham, 2008, p. 535).

5.2. National: law 19/1975 of 2 May 1975 reforming the Law Regime and Urban Development. [Ley 19/1975, de 2 de mayo, de reforma de la Ley sobre el régimen del suelo y ordenación urbana]

In this law, the previous paragraphs which legislated specifically on

³ This circumstance is common throughout Spain, and represents a lack of coordination and alignment between laws when they are updated at different levels over time.

⁴ ‘Urban Reserve’ meaning areas identified or allocated for development.



Fig. 1. Location of Galicia © encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

rural issues were slightly strengthened by the addition of new articles (see Articles Thirteen and Sixty of the law of 2 May 1975) and the repeal of others which had compromised them (see the repeal of Article Forty-six of the previous law). But the way in which the Spanish state tried to control spatial orders was high level and general, and despite being well-intentioned proved to be ineffective in regulating interventions in rural areas. This led to unexpected and unintended results, which in turn bred an atmosphere of permissiveness due to the absence of tighter and more rigid legislation. These ineffective articles for the protection of the rural environment were later repealed, when the failure of these to manage rural specificities became evident, with the apparent realisation that rural issues were increasingly less easily addressed through the mundane domain of bureaucratic practice (see Figs. 3-5).

The unintended consequences were dependent upon an underlying framework ('discourse') given that this had been done by the central state with complementarity to other apparatus of power such as academic institutions, which played a role as a distributor of discourses (Müller, 2011).

It should not be forgotten that the training of planners and architects operating in the region was not local, but that they had been trained in schools of architecture and urbanism in the national territory that were alien to the reality of Galicia.⁵ It should also be borne in mind that academic syllabus approaches tend to be universalistic in nature, with limitations imposed by the bureaucratisation of educational institutions which operate in favour of homogenization, since the introduction of local knowledge would also bring increasing levels of variety and

⁵ The Galician School of Architecture in A Coruña was inaugurated in the 1980/1981 academic year.

potential discord that could not easily be dealt with, and an excess of diversity that would hinder management capacity (Díaz de Rada, 2008, pp. 37–38).

Therefore, the actions that were carried out with the modification of existing buildings (or the new buildings that were allowed to be built) in the different settlements of Salvaterra de Miño illustrate how a specific (urban) model can end up imposing itself upon the rural environment, fragmenting landscapes in a peri-urban fashion (Tacoli, 1998).

5.3. Law 11/1985 of 22 August 1985 on the adaptation of land legislation to Galicia. [*Ley 11/1985, de 22 de agosto, de adaptación de la del suelo a Galicia*]

This was the first regional law in Galicia and was where the concept of the *Núcleo Rural* (Rural Nucleus) appeared for the first time, to define the unique entities that characterise the Galician rural landscape. Specifically, in article 12:

'Art.12.3 The system of population nuclei shall be understood to be that made up of existing urban and rural nuclei.

Existing rural nuclei are those areas of the territory which, due to the existence of groups of dwellings and the existence of community life and associated relationships which make them a singular, differentiated and identifiable population settlement, are defined as such by the plan or the regulations, taking into account, at least, the parameters of number and density of dwellings and distance between buildings. They shall also be divided, according to their characteristics, into traditional and recently built.

In addition to the above, the defining parameters of a rural nucleus are those determined by its location and by the special linkage or pre-

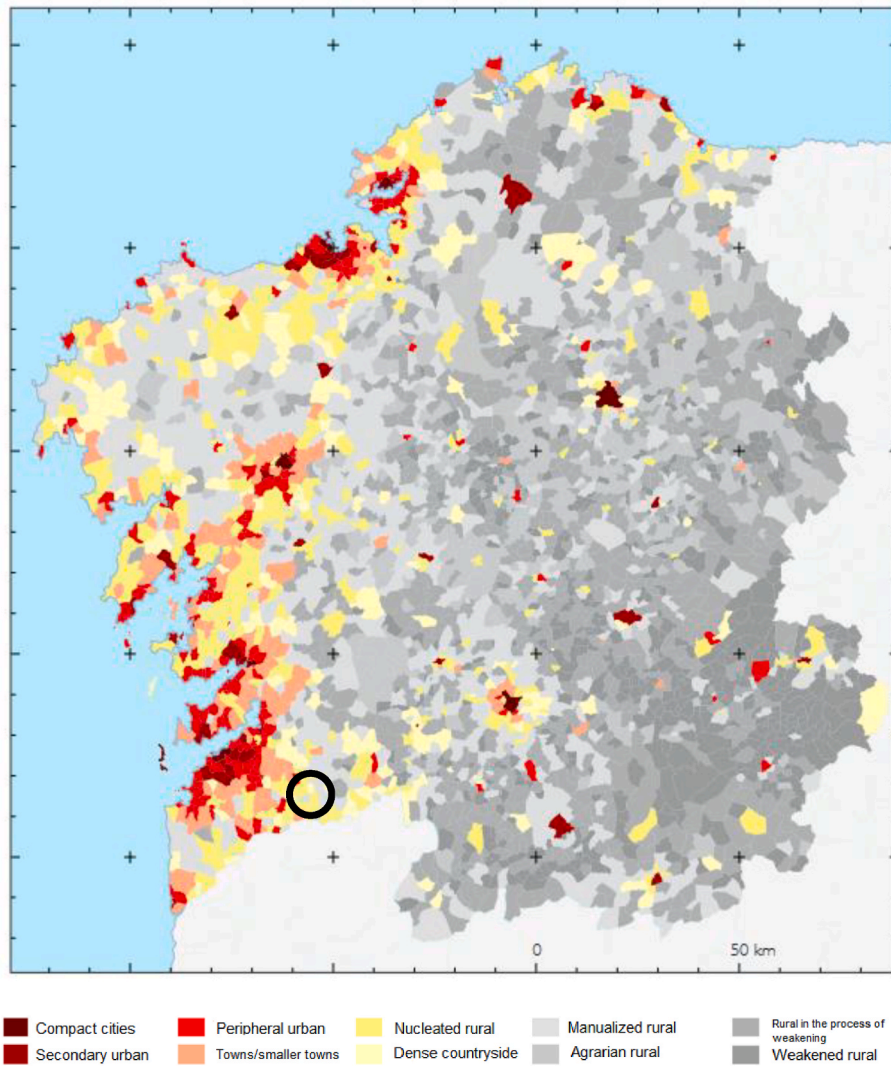


Fig. 2. Location of Salvaterra de Miño in Galicia in the classification map of parishes by rural-urban gradient. Source: Dalda et al., 2005.

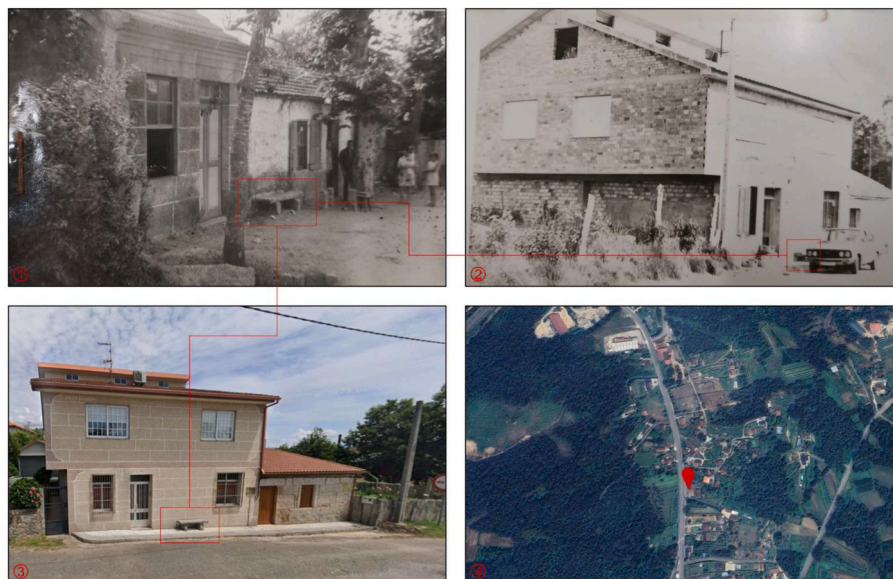


Fig. 3. Location and evolution from the 1960s–2000s of a traditional house in Leirado Parish in Salvaterra de Miño, Galicia – For orientation, note consistent placement of bench seating, despite progressive degradation of setting and context.

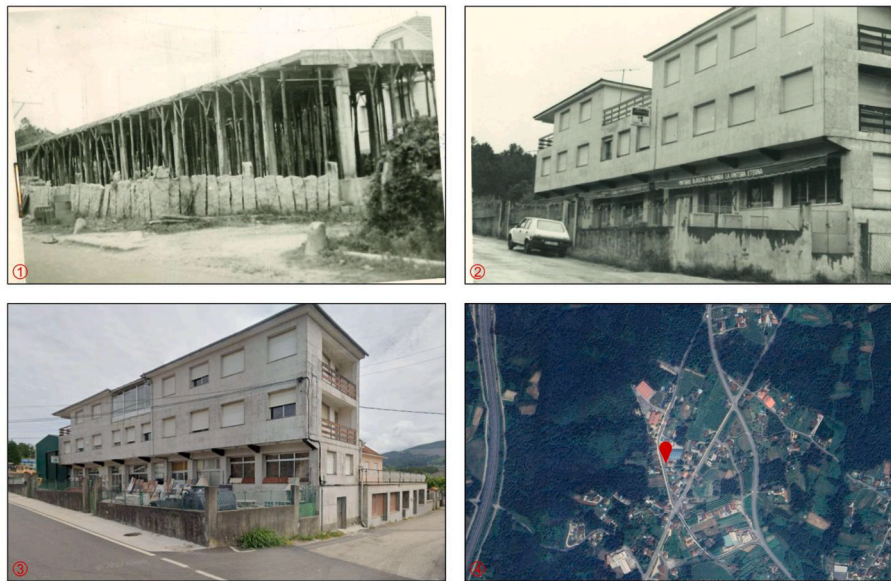


Fig. 4. Location and evolution from 1960s to 2000s of a rural site in Leirado Parish in Salvaterra de Miño, Galicia.



Fig. 5. Location and evolution from the 1960s–2000s of a traditional house in Leirado Parish in Salvaterra de Miño, Galicia.

eminence of agricultural, livestock, forestry, fishing, or similar activities.’ (“[Ley de 22 de agosto de 1985](#), de adaptación de la del suelo a Galicia,” 1985, p. 33945)

This respected the intent of the national legislation, and therefore required the same urban planning tools for territorial planning. The model underlying the interventions in these nuclei was not established in concrete terms however and was left in the hands of those drafting the general plans and “subsidiary norms” (supplementary planning guidance), or through the drafting of a special (area action) plan. (“[Ley de 22 de agosto de 1985](#), de adaptación de la del suelo a Galicia,” 1985, p. 33946). As with the previous analysis, this reveals again that it is not technologies which act, but rather the social forces deploying them (Jessop, 2002, p. 468). In other words, the underlying framework (‘discourse’) contained within the academic syllabus and approaches used to train architects, planners, and other technicians are what ultimately determine how to intervene in rural settlements.

5.4. Complementary and subsidiary planning regulations of the provinces of A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense and Pontevedra, 14 May 1991. [*Normas complementarias y subsidiarias de planeamiento de las provincias de A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense y Pontevedra, de 14 de mayo de 1991*]

Due to the fact that the land law continued to demonstrate insufficient capacity to regulate the urban development situation in this autonomous region, in 1991, the autonomous administration (Xunta) decided to approve the Normas Subsidiarias Provinciales (NN.SS.). These regulations recognised the small settlement sizes and population

densities particular to this regional administrative area (the *comunidad autónoma*), and therefore the importance of establishing a set of regulations tailored to the rural environment. They sought to respond to the gaps detected in current legislation, as well as to provide support for municipalities that did not have their own plans. (“[Resolución de 14 de mayo de 1991](#) por la que se ordena la publicación de las normas complementarias y subsidiarias de planeamiento de las provincias de A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense y Pontevedra,” 1991, p. 5388).

Although these rules devoted special attention to aspects of architectural and ethnographic heritage, these were limited to granaries, dovecotes, crosses, or elements of religious and civil architecture, without additional regard for residential character, which was left to the discretionary or loosely defined controls found in point 4 of Article 21 and point 3 of Articles 22 and 23. In fact, the established building standards or controls for development did not take locally specific rural parameters into account. This is an important indicator of the modern state’s inclination to oversimplify approaches to planning for different contexts.

Guerrero (2008, p. 63) points out that the Venice Charter already emphasised that the minor settings, the town contexts, and the organization of agricultural systems and territorial infrastructures have value which should be taken into account when attempting to maintain the existing character of place. However, this law established that the contextualisation of the interventions in the existing environment was at the discretion and interpretation of both the architects who designed the interventions and the local authorities responsible for granting building licenses. So, the key issue regarding the urban discourse (as identified in

relation to the first land and town planning law from 1956) remained unaffected, despite ongoing changes to the legal and planning frameworks intended to address the problems which the agent's internalized discourse continued to create.

- a) Typology: The buildings will harmonise with the existing or dominant traditional typologies in the settlement, including those within the wider context of the urban continuum and isolated buildings. (“Resolución de 14 de mayo de 1991 por la que se ordena la publicación de las normas complementarias y subsidiarias de planeamiento de las provincias de A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense y Pontevedra,” 1991, p. 5398)

5.5. *Local: subsidiary standards of Salvaterra de Miño, 12 June 1993. [Normas subsidiarias de Salvaterra de Miño, 12 de junio del año 1993]*

Rural areas were included in the classification of *Suelo No Urbanizable* (Land Not for Development). For the first time, the norms included the name *Núcleos Rurales Existentes Tradicionales* (Traditional Existing Rural Nuclei). This classification is divided into two types: Existente Consolidado (Existing Consolidated) and Existente de Baja Densidad (Existing Low Density). Furthermore, these regulations clearly establish what these nuclei are (article 2.2.1) and the building conditions (article 3.5). The latter emphasises the importance of contextualising new buildings with existing housing typologies through visual harmony and material contextualisation, but in this struggle to avoid visual discordance other aspects can be forgotten or underestimated, but which are nonetheless important when it comes to ensuring a correct contextualisation with the environment for these buildings (c.f. Alcindor, 2015, p. 156). For instance:

“In new buildings, the use of coloured lacquered aluminium is permitted, while natural colour and anodised aluminium are expressly prohibited”.

The use of wood or aluminium involve different textures and finishes, and as Edward T. Hall states, their use in architecture is largely casual and informal. That is to say, “the textures of buildings and interiors are rarely used consciously and with psychological or social knowledge” (Hall, 1990, p. 86), and forgetting that the effects of different choices in this regard are not simply visual, but also qualitative, inasmuch as they allow us to feel that the building is part of the existing environment. It should not be forgotten that industrialised and globalised materials, supported by prices, regulations, and easy distribution, have a high capacity for self-imposition, to the detriment of other more traditional materials (Alcindor, 2019, p. 355). They have won the battle with the majority of those agents involved in the design, financing, insuring, or delivery of buildings and construction, with regards to the identification of risk factors, the monitoring of variables, the analysis of complex situations, and the design of responses to deal with accidents and disasters’ (Mañillo et al., 2006, p. 271). The result is that both the place and the techniques associated with local specificities have become somewhat ‘phantasmagorical’, because the structures and processes through which they are constituted are no longer locally organised (Alcindor, 2018, p. 312). Those materials and building systems that had defined rural place character are then redefined by concepts linked to the global economy related to the reterritorialization that governs the dynamics that are taking place in rural areas, which define the field of possible action, with architects and technicians effectively creating and then becoming subject to an unacknowledged and invisible force that modulates the ‘autonomous’ individual’s capacity for self-regulation (Alcindor & Jackson, 2023, p. 9).

With regards to the morphology of the public realm, the delineations which define spaces are also critical, including building lines and boundaries. However, the rules governing these have only been established for urban areas. Within the existing traditional rural nuclei found within the Land Not for Development areas (as set out in Article 1.4.7),

the parameters for these delineations have not been defined, but have instead been left to the discretionary powers of the Delegation of the Mayor’s Office, the Municipal Surveyor, and the owner of the plot, leaving the parameters of this defining element at risk and open to interpretation, despite constituting one of the main variables determining the rural identity and character of place (Kropf, 2018)(see Fig. 6).

5.6. *Regional: land law 1/1997 of 24 March 1997 of Galicia. [Ley 1/1997, de 24 de marzo, del suelo de Galicia]*

This law incorporated the *Suelo de Núcleo Rural* (*Rural Nucleus Land*) as an urban classification equivalent to the classification of Land Not for Development of the traditional rural nucleus established in the previous regional law of 1985.

‘A new type of land appears, the rural nucleus land, which corresponds to the characteristic phenomenon of Galician population settlements’. (“Ley 1/1997, de 24 de marzo, del Suelo de Galicia,” 1997, p. 13755)

This implied that municipal urban planning would have to regulate the aesthetic characteristics of the buildings in this new classification, which would have to be adapted to this specific environment. It would even allow a special plan to be drawn up for the improvement of the nucleus when it was necessary to deal with the urban complexity that could arise.

From this point, the designation as rural had left behind the simple dichotomy of urban and non-urban (Nelson et al., 2021). The guidelines of this regional law made it clear that it recognised the unique and distinctive characteristics of the Galician territory which should form considerations for planning, as well as the importance of regulating its buildings, although it should be borne in mind that at that time there was little municipal planning. In fact, in 1997, only 56.05% of the municipality had some kind of land planning, but most of these covered coastal areas (Sistema de Información de Ordenación do Territorio e Urbanismo de Galicia, S.I.O.T.U.G.A.). For practical purposes, this left the rural territory devoid of a battery of regulatory measures in terms of building regulations and specific planning guidance. As a result, even though regulations were becoming more effective, interventions in rural environments remained subject to the dominant discourse imparted from the academic institutions connected to those agents involved in shaping or intervening in the territory, and guided by generalist definitions of what territory meant. In short, planning decisions had previously been dictated by the central state, which had adopted the rural characteristics and locally produced rationalities of some areas, then distributed those to dissimilar areas on the basis that they were also ‘rural’ (irrespective of regional/local histories, contexts, or culture), while at the same time disseminating this approach and types of discourse through educational institutions.

5.7. *Regional law: law 9/2002 of 30 December 2002 on town planning and protection of the rural environment of Galicia. [Ley 9/2002, de 30 de diciembre, de ordenación urbanística y protección del medio rural de Galicia]*

This law developed a series of articles specifically aimed at regulating both the territory and the architecture of rural areas. The main difference with respect to previous laws is that, although it is a regional law, it defines building features (see articles 24 to 30) and expressly prohibits certain types of actions. These requirements were intended to ensure that the architect in charge of the intervention would make their design decisions on the basis of the cultural logics of the environment.

The aesthetic and constructive characteristics and the materials, colours and finishes will be in keeping with the rural landscape and the traditional constructions of the settlement. In this sense, stone or

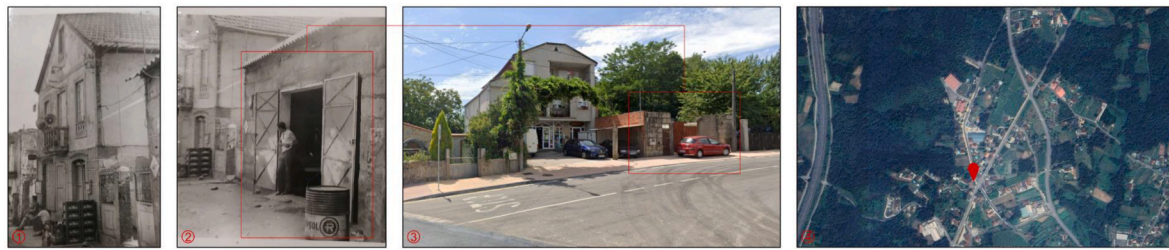


Fig. 6. Location and evolution from the 1960s–2000s of a traditional house in Leirado Parish in Salvaterra de Miño, Galicia.

traditional materials typical of the area shall be used for the finishing of the buildings. In cases justified by the architectural quality of the building, other materials that harmonise with the natural values, the rural landscape and the traditional buildings of the area may be used. (“Ley 9/2002, de 30 de diciembre, de Ordenación Urbanística y Protección del Medio Rural de Galicia,” 2002, p. 23).

The most remarkable aspect of this law is the express prohibition of certain types of interventions (see article 28) including buildings characteristic of urban areas, industrial warehouses, the unjustified demolition of traditional walls in rural streets or even prohibiting the construction of terraced dwellings, planned in series, with similar characteristics and placed in continuity in more than three units; in addition to preventing modifications to the plot of land that would disfigure the urban morphology of the nucleus.

The administration, with the help of the law, promoted a growing recognition of local cultural diversity (Alcindor, 2019, p. 352) and tried to preserve the Galician countryside, but much of the distortion of this countryside had already taken place (Gallego Joreto, 1988, p. 31). This included Salvaterra de Miño, where most of the local damage had occurred between the 1970s and mid-1980s.

5.8. Regional law: law 2/2016, of 10 February, on Galician land. [Ley 2/2016, de 10 de febrero, del suelo de Galicia]

This law once again delegates controls for the detail and design of buildings within *Rural Nucleus Land* to the local councils, which, through their general plan (which must be adapted to the present law) and based on an analysis of the settlement models, define the building parameters.

However, according to data obtained from the Sistema de Información de Ordenación do Territorio e Urbanismo de Galicia (S.I.O. T.U.G.A) in February 2024, out of the 313 municipalities that currently make up the whole of the Galician region, only 126 of them (40.25% of the total) have regulations adapted to the current land law of 2021, while 29 municipalities (09.26% of the total) do not have any type of regulation. At the same time, 11 of the total number of municipalities only have a *Delimitación de Suelo Urbano* (delimitation of urban land). In the rest of the municipalities of Galicia (147 municipalities) regulations have yet to be updated, and are instead aligned with land laws which predate the current one. Planning determinations are therefore left to the internalised discourse of decision-makers regarding rural territories, ranging from the choice of materials and building systems through to aspects of urban morphology.

6. Conclusion

To understand tensions between centralized apparatus over a dispersed national territory, applying the governmentality approach is particularly useful. Governmentality has several relevant dimensions. Firstly, significant processes which render some of the typical elements of the modern state visible or invisible can be observed within planning. Henri Lefebvre’s analysis of the modern state as a form of ‘violence directed towards a space’ sheds light upon these forms of territorial misrecognition (Lefebvre, 2013, p. 202). The modern state, understood

as the Weber approach (1978, p. 987), is intrinsically grounded upon the drive to rationalize, unify, and homogenize social relations within its territorial space (Alcindor, 2019, p. 352) through statistical tools. Secondly, a range of ‘authorized building discourses’ (c.f. Smith, 2006) has been generated concerning different aspects of building elements, many of them essentially urban, understanding these as those building systems which go hand-in-hand with transnational processes that go beyond domestic territories and institutions, as part of global rules born out of the rational-legal system of the modern state (Giddens, 2013, p. 18).

So how has the Galician rural territory/landscape changed over time through the application of these policies?

The case study of Salvaterra de Miño has helped to suggest an answer, by identifying and understanding that changes in the built and physical environments have proceeded from the imposition of an implicit idea, that all land susceptible to urbanisation was (therefore) urban in nature, irrespective of existing characteristics, context, or history. In Galicia, this was also compounded by the lack of planning laws that recognised and/or protected its specific territorial morphology. Through variations introduced in the evolving laws over time, the same effort to provide flexibility when intervening in the rural environment to adapt to the different contexts, also opened the ‘creative’ door to architects and those responsible for permitting interventions on rural land, allowing them considerable freedom to establish their own criteria for development or to simply disregard existing contexts. This phenomena is most evident in the main period of de-characterisation of these rural settlements which occurred between the law of 1975 and the law of 1985, namely the law 19/1975 of 2 May 1975 reforming the Law Regime and Urban Development. Although there have been efforts on the part of the planning authority to assume and respect the rural specificity of Galicia through different laws after this period, these have not achieved encouraging results.

This case study demonstrates that significant changes occur when governmentality focuses on techniques and rationalities used to impose order and coherence on development of localities and regions with distinctive characters. Dispositifs, in the form of laws and academic institutions, acting as apparatus of power (Lewellen, 2009, p. 258), have an important contribution in allowing (and/or spreading) certain discourses to be applied to any territory, while at the same time disregarding existing knowledge or practices contained in specific rural areas. It is important to note that this situation is not exclusive to Spain, as other case studies have also highlighted (See Donovan & Gkartzios, 2014; Torre & Wallet, 2015; Vázquez Trejo et al., 2022).

We must also not forget how architects and planners have been trained in educational institutions. The role of architects and planners is strongly conditioned by the prevailing academic conceptions regarding urban environments. Although architects and planners have some degree of autonomy in proposing planning strategies, in most cases urbanisation has been naturalised in these disciplines through the modernist discourse that has been spread in academic institutions throughout the 20th and 21st centuries as the ‘authorized building discourse’ (c.f. Smith, 2006). This is particularly relevant to the processes by which rural settlements are transformed into urban settlements, and the surrounding countryside is transformed into urban areas

(Qu et al., 2021). In this context, as the planning processes have an important discursive dimension, the possibilities of proposing alternatives outside the limits established by the dominant discourse are limited (Foucault, 2019; Jones, 2006). In this sense, it also prioritises the use of remote and decontextualised materials in a highly globalised way (Alcindor, 2019, p. 352; Cinieri & Zamperini, 2013, p. 193; Rolt, 1944, p. 197). However, simultaneously, planning policies promote the significance of rural areas, resulting in a confused pattern of ignorance or recognition of cultural logics associated with the indigenous conceptions of rural areas (Alcindor & Coq-Huelva, 2020, p. 696; Gkartzios & Scott, 2009).

Looking to the future, the hope is that architectural design studio learning will increasingly incorporate our growing understanding of different models. This era would mark a new paradigm shift, validating and incorporating an array of alternative models which could also be taken into account. To an extent, it is about the reconsideration of the epistemology through which architectural practice is built.

Architects and planners must aim for larger models addressing the meaning and significance of cultural environments. The main point is to introduce a syllabus/curricula which not only imparts or teaches specific knowledge, but also develops the skills to understand and analyse underlying discourses, and fosters the development of a more observant, sensitive, and responsive professional. This presents a challenge, requiring an improved understanding of the design and evaluation of settlements and habitation of place.

In conclusion, an internalisation of the urban cognitive model has been produced by an unconscious and slow (insidious) process of layering or sedimentation (as an accretion of logics and practices combined with their visual, spatial, and empirical effects) that has ended up distorting the rural landscape and the local and traditional knowledge associated with rural building design. In other words, urban discourses manage to penetrate to the heart of local decision making with impacts discernible in the rural landscapes and settlements.

For this reason, deeper ethnographic attention must be given to how architecture and planning curricula are realized in practice, and how they frequently overlook essential features of rural areas because of the prevalence of urban cognitive models (c.f. Alcindor & Coq-Huelva, 2020, p. 697).

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Mónica Alcindor: Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Jennifer Prieto:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Delton Jackson:** Writing – review & editing, Formal analysis.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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