

THE VILLAGE LANDSCAPE OF ENTRERRIOS

Jelle van den Brink
Architectural History Thesis
April, 2024



PREFACE

The following thesis was written for the course Architectural History Thesis in the Master of Architecture at the TU Delft. Preparaty work was done in Delft, whilst the research and writing happened during an exchange at the Universidad Polytechnica de Madrid.

Special thanks goes out to Rocio Sanchez Serrano for her extensive help and knowledge of the archive of the INC, now maintained by the archive of the Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentacion in San Fernando de Henares. Teresa Couceiro, of the Fundacion Alejandro de la Sota helped this research greatly with her enthusiastic conversations and archival assistance. Daniel Ochoa must be thanked too for helping with many translations, and finally my tutor Jean-Paul Baeten for his fruitful input and motivating conversations.

Jelle van den Brink

April, 2024

1. ABSTRACT	1
2. INTRODUCTION	2
Visit	
Research	
2. CONTEXT	4
The INC	
Alejandro de la Sota	
3. ANALYSIS	10
Horseshoe	
Village landscape	
Strange ellipse	
Large chimneys	
Squares to live on	
4. Development	18
La Bazana and Valuengo	
From village to landscape	
Search for new forms	
5. CONCLUSION	21
LITERATURE	22
ARCHIVES	24
IMAGES	24
APPENDIX	26

1. ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the village of Entrerríos, Spain designed in 1953 by Alejandro de la Sota. The village is one of the three-hundred pueblos de colonización built by Franco's Instituto Nacional de Colonización (INC) to revitalize the Spanish countryside after the devastating Civil War, by combining large-scale irrigation projects with new villages that reflect the regimes ideal way of living. Alejandro de la Sota designed a series five villages for this institute, that are known for combining regional architectural motives with the principles of modern architecture. The paper positions the overlooked village of Entrerríos by analysing its context and design principles, through the research of novel primary sources. The village is found to introduce the architects new focus on the landscape and the square as a means to do so.

2. INTRODUCTION

Visit

We had stayed up until five in the morning walking through the tight streets of Sevilla. The women covered in black veils and the barefoot nazarenos that covered their faces with pointy hats and cut-out eyes became a familiar company, but the slow tread of another statue of Maria surrounded by hundreds of candles, polished silver and blaring orchestras kept us awake.

The night of Holy Thursday forms the culmination of the Semana Santa before eastern. In this holy week the whole of Spain is free to return back to the village they have once left behind, and join in the ever-popular processions held each night in the smallest villages of southern Spain.

I had spent my week walking the Camino de la Plata over the planes of the region of Badajoz. After hours of walking through fields filled with nothing more than olive trees or vineyards, the first and only village I would reach was in a bacchanal state. The region that is famous for having the same population density as Finland, suddenly managed to fill all of their tables and barstools with a crowd that was celebrating their reunion in a constant stream of laughter, food and drinks.

The end of my own pilgrimage would however only be reached that day. With the taste of the car-rental coffee in our mouths we left Sevilla as early as we could to finally visit the pueblo de colonizacion that I had been studying the past months. Upon entering the first few villages of the Plan Badajoz, nothing however managed to remind me of the places I had seen the last week. The streets of Don Benito, Medellin and La Serena were as empty as they were straight, and let us onto the deserted main square where a closed bar, church and municipality would greet us.

By the time we arrived at our destination of Entreríos, a steady rain had developed that washed away my last bits of romanticism. We parked the car on the wide main square, and immediately ran to shelter under the big drum-shaped church. The white plastered arcade that loops around the square and the church attracted more than just us. A family was kicking a ball through the arches, and two small women with big shopping bags stared at us. Our presence made them curious enough to approach us, and I carefully started to ask them what life had been like in the village. Behind me I could hear the sound of falling cutlery and loud laughter echoing through the arcade and it said enough.

Research

Entrerríos is one of the five pueblos de colonización designed by the well-known Spanish architect Alejandro De La Sota. These villages had the purpose of revitalizing the agricultural economy and communities, by building small villages in rural areas that were destroyed during the civil war. Over three hundred of these villages were built between 1948 and 1971, following the ideas of Franco's Instituto Nacional de Colonización (INC).

One of the most famous examples of one of these villages is Esquivel, also designed by De la Sota. The village is known to be one of the first villages that manages to combine regional architectural motives loved by those in power, with the principles of modern architecture. It seems to me however that the design of Entrerríos is a further development of the ideas on Esquivel, that has not been researched properly yet.

Academic research focusses either on the village of Esquivel (Lopez, 2023), or the overall development of these designs (Hípola, 2021; Lejeune, 2019; Soriano, 2015; Soto, 2022). The lack of research on primary sources can explain this knowledge gap, and is crucial to properly position the village of Entrerríos within its historical context. The aim of this paper is therefore to understand the design principles and process that formed the village of Entrerríos and the position it has within the context of De la Sota's work for the INC. The main question will be:

What position does the design of the village of Entrerríos occupy within the development of De la Sota's personal design principles?

To be able to answer this question first a brief overview of the historical and personal context will be given. Next an analysis of primary sources will be made to gain an understanding in the design principles and method that shaped Entrerríos. These new insights are then put into the context of existing literature on the evolution of De la Sota's design motives and methods, to finally be able to reflect on the position that the design of Entrerríos takes within the architects work.

2. CONTEXT

The INC

The Spanish Civil war (1936-1939) left the countryside devastated and impoverished, and brought rise to a huge flee to city in search for a better and new life. The very slow development of industry in Spain compared to the rest of Europe, made agriculture still the most important national income. The scarce fertile grounds that were available in the country were in the hands of a few wealthy oligarchs that controlled enormous territories, devided centuries earlier as a result of the Castilian Reconquista. Agricultural and territorial reforms seemed to be the first priority to regain the country's wealth and provide it again in its most basic necessities.

This context gave rise to the founding of the INC in October 1939 under Franco's new regime. The INC formed an institute within the Ministry of Agriculture with the main mission of reforming the territorial disbalance and filling the countries pressing shortages. The institute would use the earlier plans for huge waterworks developed during the Second Republic as a springboard for their agricultural reforms, and Franco's regime would easily break the legislative bottleneck that enabled territorial expropriation. Plans for new reservoirs and large scale irrigation systems were underway, and opened the possibility of using vast unproductive terrains for new

agricultural purposes.

The institute would continue to build a total of 290 villages and create 900,000 hectares of new irrigated land until it was disbanded in 1971. The task to design complete villages from scratch have formed the basis of a permanent debate during the existence of the INC. This discussion can be characterized as one between the existing academic tradition, that relied heavily on powerful and historizing aesthetics, and the ever-more popular modern ideas that tried to get a foot in the door of the institute (Lacruz Vera, 2023). Over eighty different architects tried to integrate their vision on housing, work, religion and social life which presents us today with an incredible resource of architectural experiments and research.

Under the direction of Jose Tames the institute devised a system of norms and testing to establish some universal qualities and control within this huge operation. Tames went to work with knowledge of similar international projects such as Mussolini's agricultural cities and similar projects in Nazi Germany, (Soto, 2013), and with his background in the agricultural reforms of the Second Republic. The INC established a model of equally spaced towns, where those coming from the poorest conditions could live in a productive and Christian community.

People coming from the most devastated regions of the Spain were suddenly able to acquire a new house, agricultural land and tools to work them. They were selected on their acceptable moral and political

backgrounds, and family ambitions, after which they were assigned a plot, cattle and a house through a lottery. They were granted guardianship over this property that they would be able to buy off after a period that for most settlers ranged between twenty-five and forty years.

For the first five years their production on the barely fertile and uncultivated land was monitored strictly by the INC, being able to disband the contract when the productive quota of their assigned crops was not sufficient (Amado & Eirin, 2024). Despite the often poor working conditions with half-finished amenities, the acquired debt to the INC and the only perspective of a stable future put the colonists into a silent submission.

Although many of the first villages were decorated with long rows of traditional stone arcades to please the authorities, the scarcity in the architectural work field also enabled many young architects to work within the INC. These architects brought more modern ideas to the table and were forced to rethink the vernacular architecture with their new rational perspective. De la Sota's work took place in the midst of this dialogue between the modern and the regional.

Alejandro de la Sota

Alejandro de la Sota was born in Galicia in 1913 to a well-to-do family. His mother had noble descent and his father was affiliated with Primo de Rivera's totalitarian

regime. After starting his preliminary studies in exact sciences in Madrid in 1930, he pursued a degree in Architecture at the Polytechnical University of Madrid that was soon interrupted by the start of the Civil War. De la Sota joined the side of Franco's Frente Nacional, where he was promoted to provisional lieutenant of engineers (Soriano, 2014).



Figure 1: De la Sota's identity card for the INC, source: Fundacion Alejandro de la Sota, reference 52-Y VA-1.

This background is crucial to the architects' career because it allowed De la Sota to pass the inspection of the 'Junta de Depuración'. This purification council judged all architects after the Civil War, and deprived countless of the right to practice their profession or forced them into exile. De la Sota escaped this faith and managed to graduate from the school in 1941, the same year in which he would get his job as civil servant at the INC (see figure 1).

Despite not having realized anything notable, De la Sota would resign again immediately after his obligatory five-year term of civil service in 1946. Not much is known on the motivation for his departure, but it is plausible that his dissatisfaction with the rigidity of Tames supervision formed the main cause (Soto, 2022). He would however spend the following decade working as an external collaborator to design and built five different villages for the institute between 1948 and 1958.

Preceding work

The first of his projects fits clearly into the Spanish post-war style described by Astarloa (2004). This style filled the gap left by the purification of all the rationalist and modernist movements in pre-war Spain, and is marked by regionalism and historicism to represent the politics of the regime. The architect later reflects on this period as one in which the Spanish architectural isolation, forced him and his peers to come up with some of their most sincere and original creative ideas. For De la Sota starting to design villages without any previous architectural experience meant departing from what was already built¹:

“[...] for me the total good was then in the popular architecture. At that time I went through a great number of villages, not copying or taking photographs, but when I returned from the villages I remembered what I had seen and I think that by remembering

and drawing them I invented something new.”

This development of this mission is shown in very distinct ways in the two projects for the INC preceding the design of Entreríos. The project of Giménells (1948) that was designed during De la Sota's time as a civil servant at the INC and realised later, clearly complies to the ‘Tames Model’: a representative and formal square with streets as a linear transit space (MemorANDA, 2013). De la Sota (1948) obliges to these requirements, but aspires to create a place where “the variety of plans ... are enough for it to lose the appearance of a town with a rigid layout” and to create an architecture that “reminds us of a type of housing found in the region”. The linear organization of the village will form a strong contrast with the villages that De la Sota will continue to design as an independent architect.

In the period between De la Sota's departure from the INC in 1946 and the conception of the village of Esquivel in 1952, the architect worked on private residential projects, renewals and collaborated on competitions. In these first built works, De la Sota showed more and more organic forms and details, while at the same time his work for competitions allowed him the freedom to also design with modernist principles. The influence of this foreign fashion became possible after an unlikely alliance between America and Spain under pressure from the tension of the Cold War.

1 De la Sota, A. (1991). Aus der Sicht eines Spanisches Architekten. Archithese, 5, p 80.

The Fifth National Assembly of Architects in 1949 is seen as the moment when Spanish architecture freed itself from the regimes stylistic yoke and was able to pick up the thread of the modernist developments from before the civil war. Spain would receive technical and financial support in exchange of their military forces, and Franco's regime opened their door to inter-national influences after more than a decade of isolation (Geers & Pancevac, 2022). On this first international conference the Spanish were called by Gio Ponti and Alvar Aalto to give their own interpretation of modernism, in which Spain's isolation gave it the unique opportunity to develop itself (Lejeune & Sabatino, 2009).



Figure 2 : Aerial image of Entrerrios, source: Mediateca DOCOMOCO (n.d.)

It was De la Sota's village of Esquivel (1952) that was the first to manage to radically manifest this mission within the works of the INC. In this village, for the first time, the church and town hall are placed as separate elements in an empty field. The village lies humbly behind these two protagonists as a fan-shaped décor (see figure 2).

De la Sota carefully designed a publication in the national architecture magazine, that included images and text to spread the villages ideology. Its shape is determined by its location next to a busy road. It is a village that people will pass by, and therefore it should expose its core instead of hide it. De la Sota states that he takes the *"the bricklayer who have always made the villages with beauty"*² as his master whilst designing this village but applies a clear structure *"because making two hundred houses is a new problem"*³. A brickla-

2 De la Sota, A. (1953). El nuevo pueblo de Esquivel, cerca de Sevilla. Revista Nacional De Arquitectura, p. 110.

3 ibid

yer would not be able to do it, and the cities floorplan should therefore show its sudden birth.

The anonymous bricklayer is however his master in details and form. De la Sota describes a particular method he used for designing the cities architecture. He would travel through the Area, without taking any pictures or sketches. At home he would remember what he had seen and start sketching, translating the vernacular through his own memory to create new forms. Fountains, facades and metalwork from the area would be warped to create a new catalog, that are aleatorily scattered over the village to achieve the picturesque (see figure 3).

Tames initially refuted the proposal for its radical organization and the costly variation of plans and ornaments. After a period of extensive discussion he was however convinced of the powerful propaganda that the simplified appearance of the square and village from the road could produce. Also, designing separate roads for pedestrians and work traffic was finally conceived by Tames as an expensive but interesting experiment (Soriano, 2014).

The projects realization had a profound influence on the course with which the architects of the INC entered the further 1950s. The institutes approval of the experimental project sent a signal to other architects that the monocentric and rectilinear village model



Figure 3: Street and house in Esquivel, source: Mediateca DOCOMOCO (n.d.)

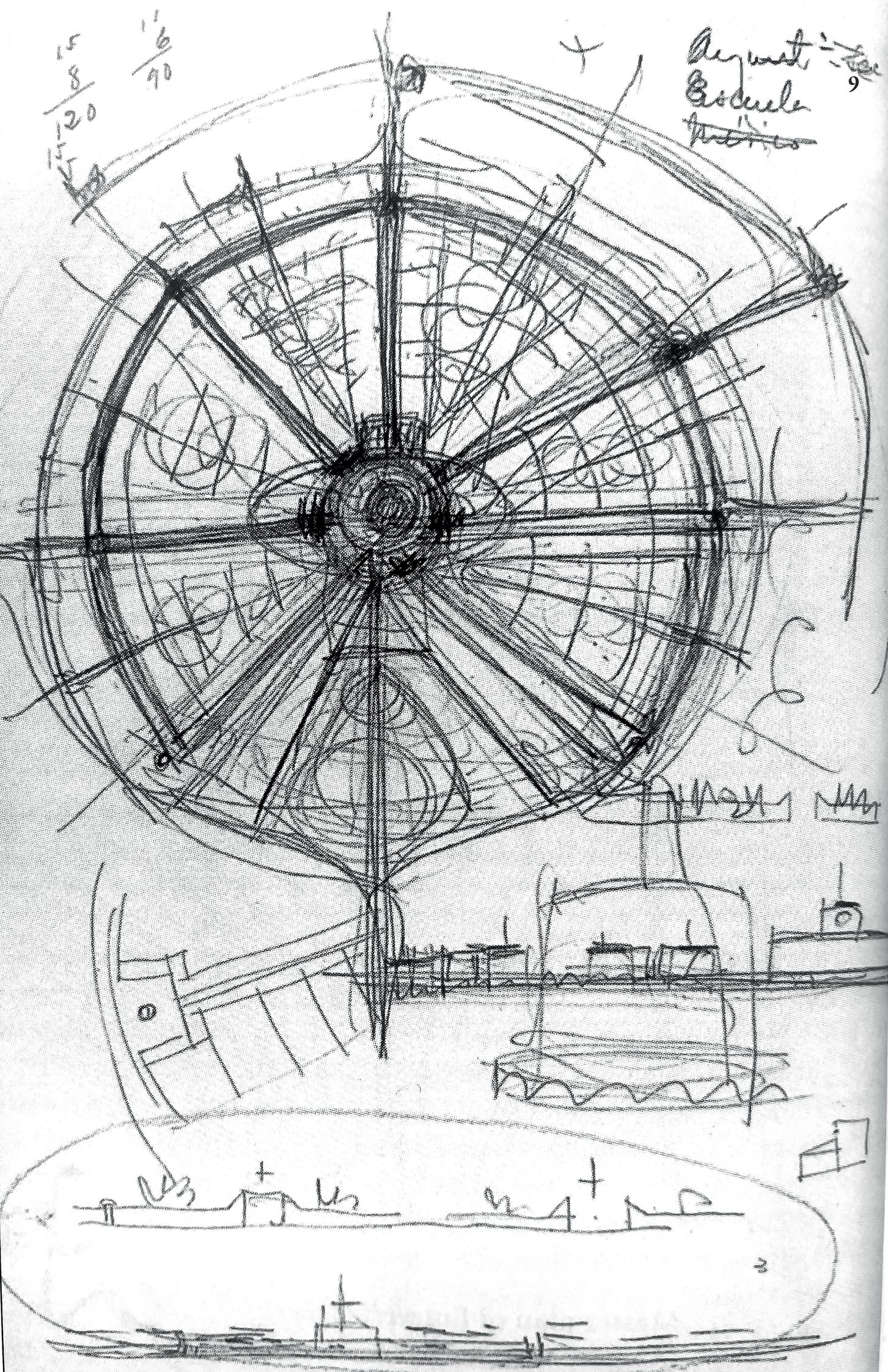


Figure 4: From top to bottom: initial organisational idea, smaller squares on the ringroad and impression of the church, elevation of the gates on ringroad, elevation with horizontal lineplay and central church, source: Fundación Alejandro de La Sota, reference 53B CDI.

3. ANALYSIS

To form a genuine account of the design ideas that shaped Entreríos, this chapter combines two types of primary sources: sketches and text. Thankfully, the INC made a minute effort of documenting all of the realized projects in the same format and style. Each architect had to work with a minutely described visual identity of drawings in order to create a uniform documentation of all of the institutes work. For this reason each realized village is documented in two volumes containing four fixed elements: written memories, plans, specifications and financial statements. The first section of written memories contains the initial architectural proposition and following correspondences between the judging entities of the INC, and therefore provides an invaluable source of information on the architects intentions (see figure 5, and appendix for full text).

These written ideas will be illustrated with the sketches preserved by the Fundación Alejandro de la Sota. It is important to note that these sources provide an insight into the initial project proposal, and that a selection has been made of excerpts that bring forward the most important design intentions.

Horseshoe

De la Sota opens his text by explaining the general organization of the village¹:

There are towns through which one passes and towns to which one goes; in both one lives natural-ly. This distinction leads to different ways of making their plans: the first will have open plans; closed and concave the second. This determines the general distribution of the town; the parts that form it should be no distinction; all has to be towards its interior.

This criterion was valid for the composition of the plan of this new village: Entrerrios, is one of the second type, of the villages to which you have to go, far from the main or secondary road, even separated from the road to the farm, it is set apart from any route. It was therefore formed towards its interior around a square, the main one, which was nevertheless left open on one of its sides, that of the access from the road that links it to the rest of the world.

The text follows a logic that is hard to refute, which immediately distinguishes the design task of this village from De la Sota's earlier villages. The isolated location of Entrerrios is a new assignment compared to the earlier villages of Giménells and Esquivel, where the location on the main road or a junction determined the organization of the village, and therefore requires a concave and closed form.

The upper part of the sketch illustrates this

¹ De la Sota, A. (1953). Memorias. In Instituto Nacional de Colonización, Proyecto de nuevo pueblo de "Entrerrios" from MAPA Archive, p 1

idea (see figure 4), clearly still at an early stage, without observing the underlying terrain. With enthusiastic pencil scratches, this drawing experiments with this organizational idea, still without observing the underlying terrain. The circular shape turns into an ellipse in the design, corresponding to a small plateau in the landscape on which the church and town hall stand proudly. The village encapsulates the plateau with a horse-shoe shape, leaving an opening towards the entrance road and allowing the surrounding landscape to flow directly into the village's intimate interior. De la Sota thus distorts his functionalistic scheme to the present terrain.

Village landscape

In the lower part of the same sketch, we also see De la Sota reflecting on two other principles that strongly shaped the village. These ideas are described in the following excerpt²:

A set of protruding and receding parts is sought, in which trees are planted, which with the curved layout of the plant is expected

2 *ibid.*

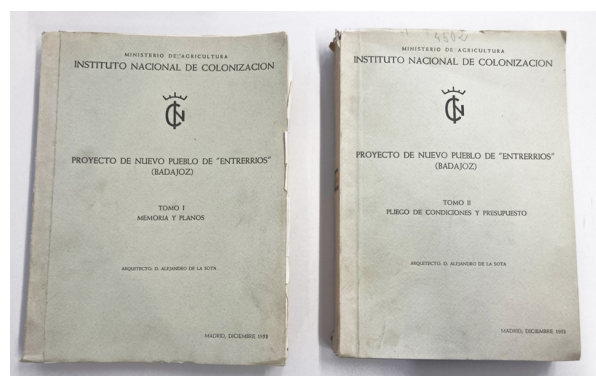


Figure 5: INC documentation of the project of Entrerriós (photograph supplied by author)

to achieve a good and new effect; the gates should also contribute to this, by breaking the white lines of the walls. - This is intended to achieve a village landscape, to contemplate it from a distance, like so many that exist and are so pleasing, formed by a series of horizontal whites, dark lists of roofs and the mass of the church dominating everything and that, as is also often the case, has to be built with exposed masonry: its heaviness must be more obvious in this way.

It is clear from this text that De la Sota is concerned with creating a village that settles naturally in the landscape. He does this by thinking about a variation of elements that together can form a familiar image, visible in the lower two views. A familiar protagonist in this image is the church, but it is now given an unusual round shape thanks to the overall organization of the village.

A contradiction emerges from this text. De la Sota is concerned about the natural way to fit the village into the landscape, and speaks with some romanticism about the appearance of the naturally grown villages of the region. The interplay of gates, walls and cornices with the proud church above them tries to approximate this image. His architecture, however, takes an entirely different path. The organization of the village and design of the church immediately betrays to any visitor that this village is anything but traditional. De la Sota thus combines his love of popular and anonymous architecture with new organizational principles to create the architecture for Entrerriós.

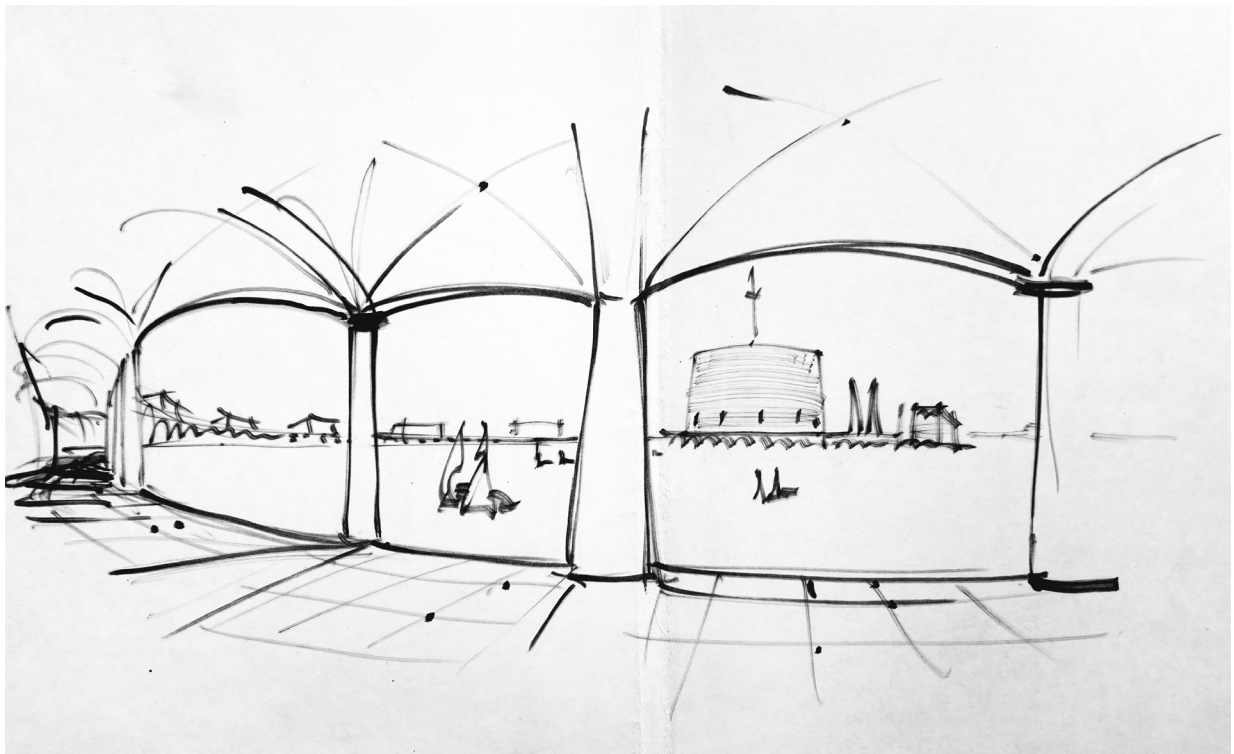


Figure 6: View towards the church from beneath the municipality, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – AD5

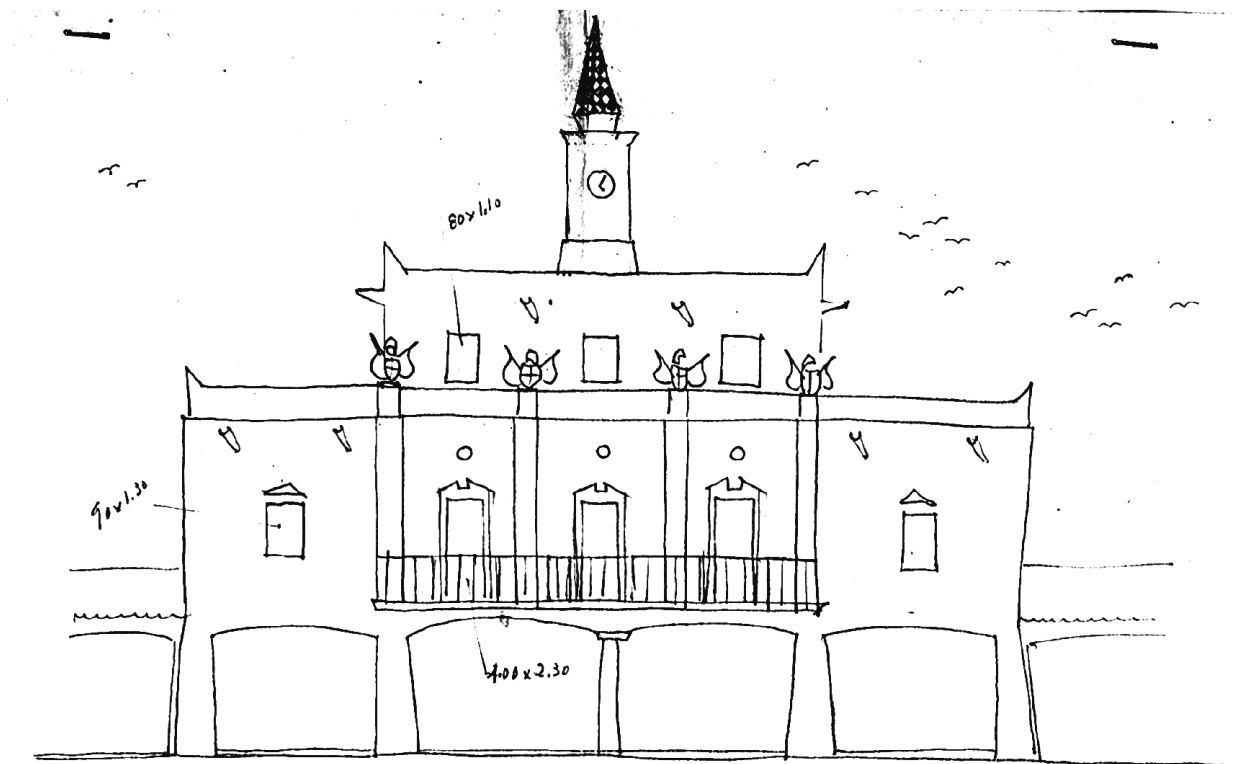


Figure 7: Sketched elevation of the municipality, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – AC1

Strange ellipse

Surrounding the main square are situated the main buildings; the town hall, the church, the school and the teacher and doctor's house are³ *"joined by a single linking element: the portico is continuous."* The town hall and the church are emphasized by this arcade. The church is⁴ *"located in one of the focuses of the strange ellipse that forms the square"* and marks the end of the long walkway through the arches. The municipality should mark its prestige by placing it ⁵*"in the axis of the square, opposite to the Church and by its location, the advancing on the porch and the prestige of its facade has to stand out in the set."* De la Sota took great care in visualizing these ideas in a sketch (see figure 6), that almost perfectly matches the village square after its realization.

Simple pomposity and meniscus-shaped choir

The municipality would counter the dominant church⁶ *"with simple pomposity, with the inevitable pilasters and in the coronation a series of pennants and triumphs, with strong colors ... to give its notable features"*. This decorated and playful façade is an almost exact copy of the municipality previously realized in Esquivel, and shows the pursuing interest and method of reinterpreting regional architecture (see figure 7). It is however crowned with a higher clocktower to be distinguished from afar.

The church complex is the most extensively documented asset in both text and sketches. Its dominance is mentioned five times throughout the text, and De la Sota repeats also its materialization in⁷ *"brick as a contrast to the [white plastered] village, to increase its quality and its heaviness"*. This can be explained by its importance for the total organization of the village and the need to justify its unusual shape. In ornamentation it is however a sober⁸ *"cylindrical mass, with circular plant and with an extreme simplicity, nothing of 'Architecture' has to be attached to the clean cylinder"*. An early sketch shows this church with a free-standing cam-panele that was later replaced by a small metal frame housing the bells mounted to the churches façade (see figure 8). This illustrates De la Sota favoring the isolated contour of the church over keeping its shape totally clean.

The interior of the church displays a clear interest and play with organic forms. It is a parabolic brick vault that houses a circular altar and a *"meniscus-shaped choir"*⁹ that merges with its round entry (see figure 9). This interior formed by smooth and bent surfaces poses a contrast with De la Sota's earlier angular churches in Giménells and Esquivel.

3 *ibid.*, p2

4 *ibid.*, p3

5 *ibid.*, p2

6 *ibid.*

7 *ibid.*, p5

8 *ibid.*, p2

9 *ibid.*

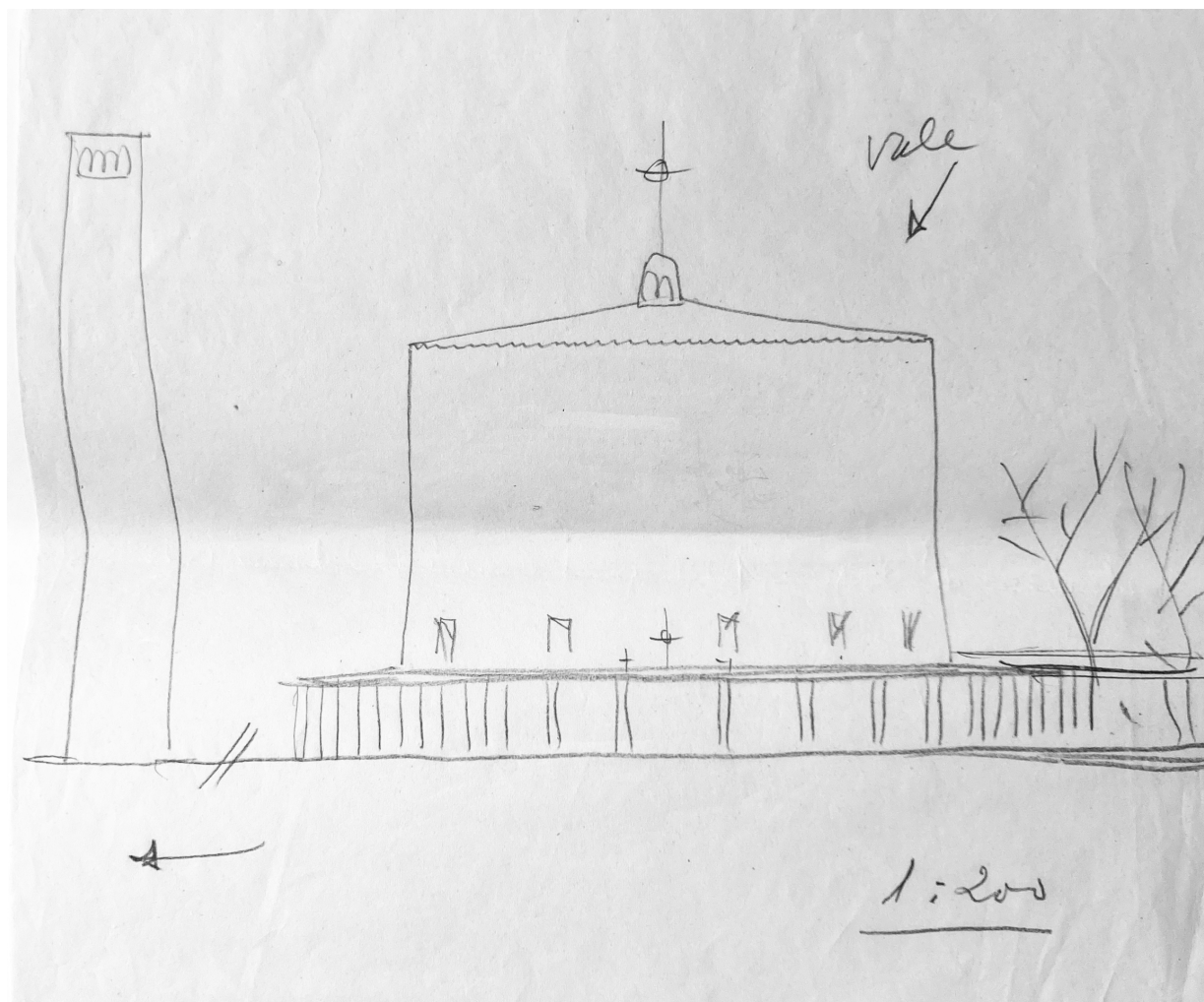


Figure 8: Initial sketch of the church with free-standing campanile, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – EF1

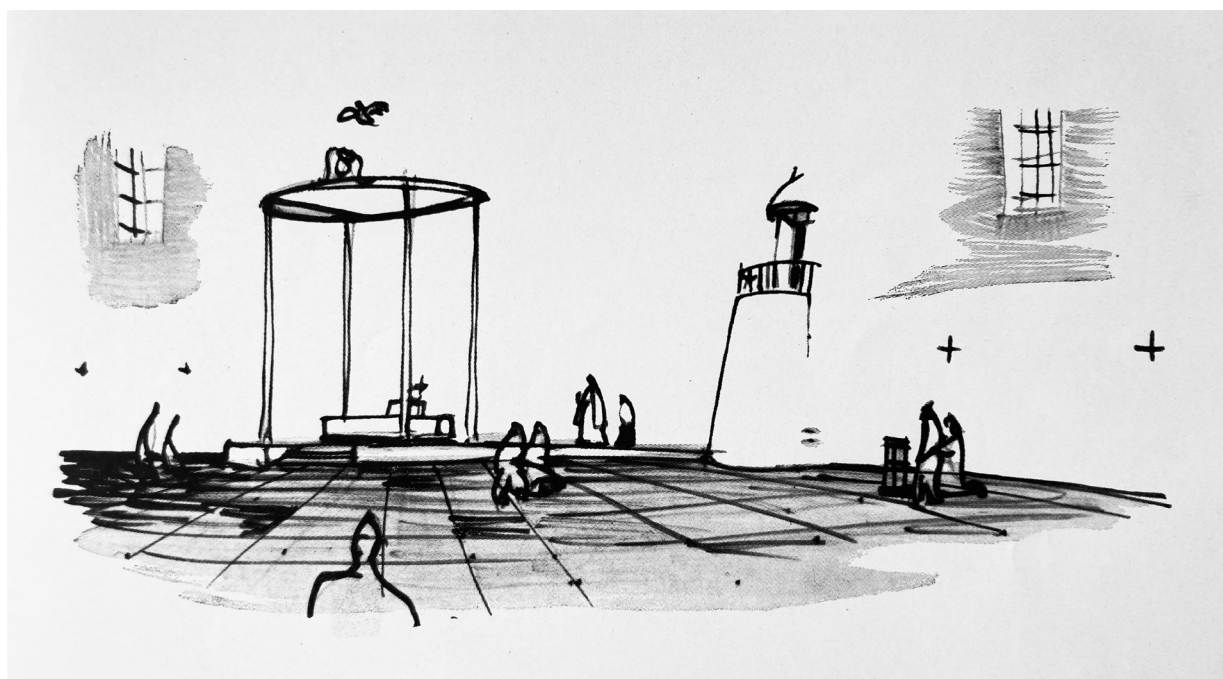


Figure 9: Sketch of the church's interior, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – EF2

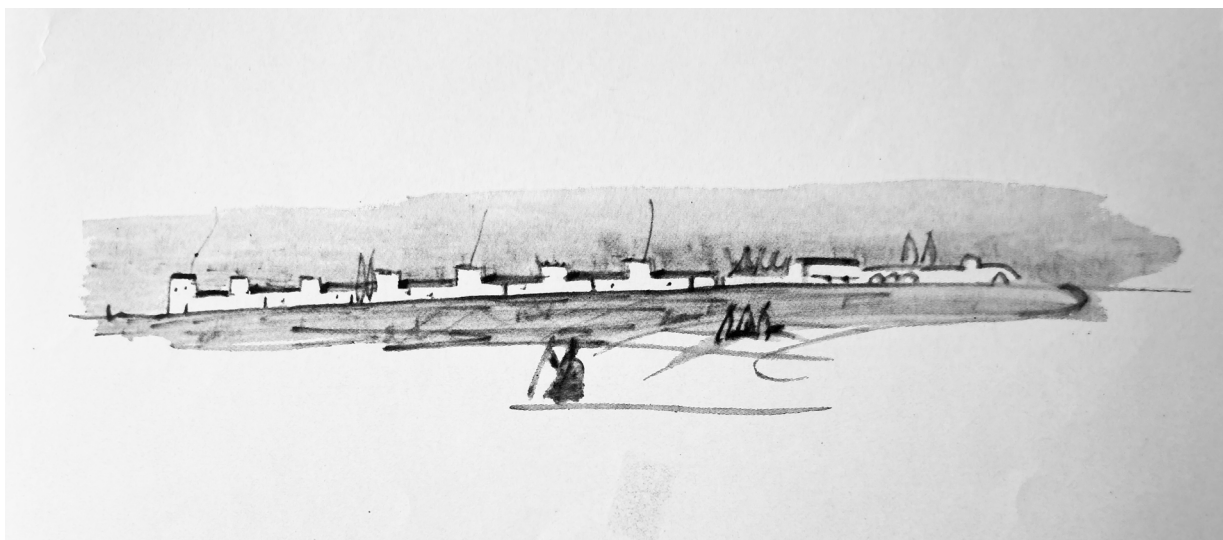


Figure 10: Impression of the entrance road to the village with large chimneys, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – BC1

Large chimneys

The village makes use of five different housing types, corresponding to the amount of bed-rooms provided. Different variations of the same amount of bedrooms is mentioned to be redundant, *“since it is believed that it is better to achieve variety with the same elements arranged in various forms and conditions of location and only aesthetics”*¹⁰ could justify more types.

In the description of the housing types, its exterior composition is said to be focused around *“the large chimney, characteristic of some areas of the province of Badajoz”*¹¹ (see figure: 10). This is another mention of De la Sota reinterpreting the vernacular architecture of the area, as done earlier in Esquivel. De la Sota also writes that one of the most remarkable housing types, one where the entrance is formed by a small receding patio¹² *“corresponds to one [house] exist-ing and studied in Merida Benefits were found and it was adapted”*. This small statement makes clear that the architect not only took inspiration from the appearance of the regions architecture, but also directly applies organizational schemes from buildings in the area.

10 *ibid.*, p 3

11 *ibid.*

12 *ibid.*

Squares to live on

De la Sota takes special care in designing separate roads dedicated to foot traffic and agricultural traffic. This principle was already present in the design of Esquivel, but this time the intersections of these different road types are obviously marked and separated by low walls with a long bench sculpted into it (see figure 11).

The intersections of the radial streets and surrounding ring road are marked by¹³ “*small squares to live on*”. Around these squares the smallest housing types found in the are located. This shows De la Sota’s intentions of using the public space as an extension of the house. The social function of the central village square is spread out into the village by repeating it in these smaller forms. As in Esquivel, a large catalogue of elements is made to adorn these squares and streets (see figure 12). These include different fountains, drinking troughs and seats that¹⁴ “*are indispensable in a town to find it really lively*”.

13 *ibid.*, p 4

14 *ibid* p.5

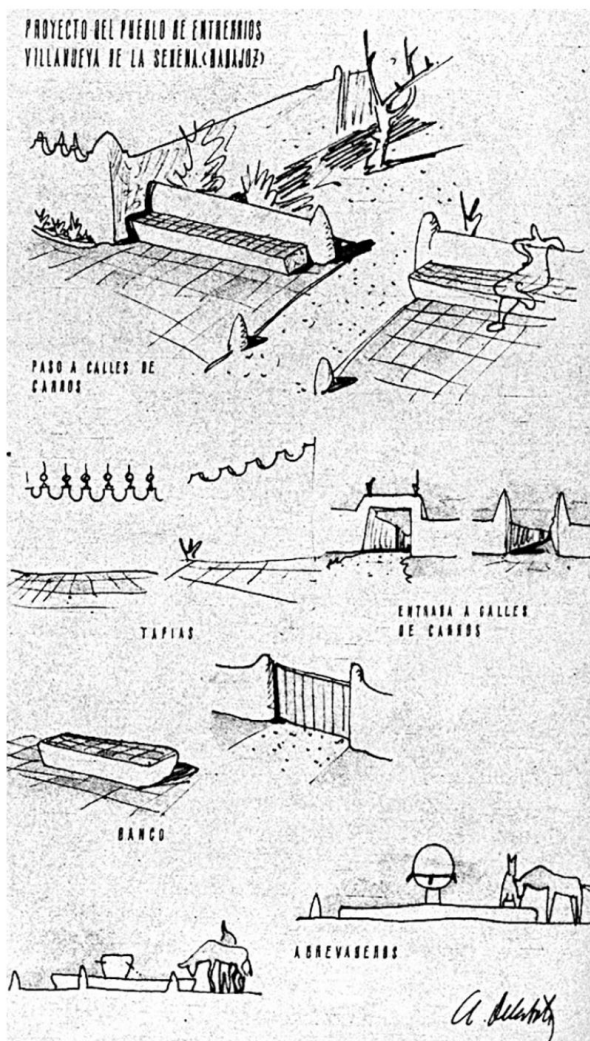


Figure 11: Sketches of different street furniture, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – CC1

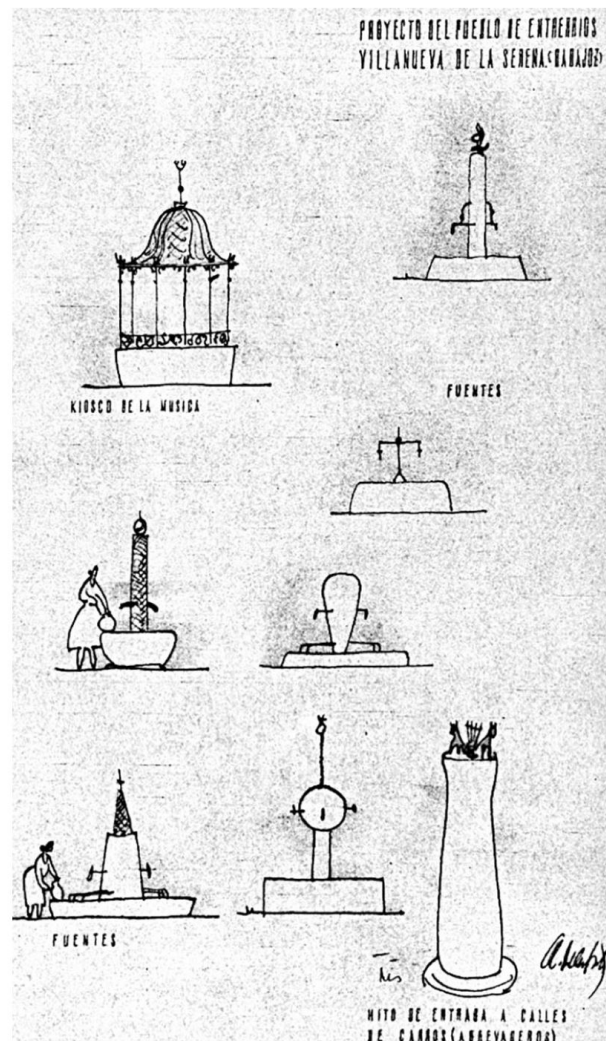


Figure 12: Sketches of drinking fountains, musical pavilion and posts to tie cattle to, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – CC2

Initial sketches showed us that De la Sota departed from a rationalist scheme, sparked by the villages isolated and elevated position. In his process he adapted a simple circular organization to match the existing terrain and open it to the landscape. In both sketches and text it becomes evident that the architect intended the village to appear as a natural part of the landscape, through a conscious variation of few elements. As in Esquivel he reinvents the popular architecture of the area to create a new architectural language. The aesthetics of church however takes a new direction by experimenting with new organic shapes on its interior, and pure geometry as its exterior. Lastly De la Sota carefully designs small squares that provoke a social street life throughout the village.

4. DEVELOPMENT

A few months after designing Entrerríos, De la Sota along with thirty other leading architects, signed the Alhambra Manifesto. This manifesto would form the basis for the Spanish modernism of the 1950s, substituting the earlier architectural ideal of the 16th century Escorial for the Alhambra in Granada (Arribas, 2019). This elaborate complex justified the application of a simplified vernacular architecture and inspired the development of a less rigid layout of the village as a sequence of organically grown spaces. The villages that are realized by the INC in the fifties show many variations of these themes, and De la Sota continues to design two more villages in this context.

La Bazana and Valuengo

The villages of La Bazana and Valuengo (1954) bear a strong architectural resemblance to Entrerríos and Esquivel. The now familiar bulging fountains are repeated in all villages, and the same mosaic peak crowns both the church of Esquivel, the town hall of Entrerríos, and the retirement home of Valuengo. At the organizational level, however, De la Sota is navigating a new course. Increasingly, he seems to take the present site as the main starting point, and the plaza is the main building block to do this.

The institute allowed the little La Bazana

the most modest program possible, namely without the usual minimal social amenities of a church, town hall or school. De la Sota figured that the square is the most social place in the village, and so designed a village with only squares. Five horseshoe-shaped squares therefore lie side by side on an elongated plateau, with one open side to the best view of the surrounding valley. The wobbly series of squares form holes in the village where De la Sota does not add any new content to the existing underlying landscape with the exception of a small drinking fountain.

Valuengo also plays with the role of the plaza as the main public space. De la Sota deforms the village's main roads until they take on the qualities of a square, and spreads the public buildings along these street squares. The town is situated on a hillside, and the houses seem to be dotted on the hillside like stranded boulders. The streets follow this jagged and indistinct pattern. The last village De la Sota would create for the INC achieves the image of a village grown organically, concealing the role of the inventive architect.

The poor economic results in the 1940s and 1950s, and the decline in popularity of Falangism brought about a major change in Franco's policies from the 1960s onward. This period after De la Sota's departure is characterized by hasty industrialization and the opening of the economic market as an international and self-regulating organism. The model set up for self-sustaining agriculture was obsolete, and the number of villages built declined steadily since the early 1960s. The organic

experiments of the 1950s gave way to the less-expensive architectural abstraction and repetition and the return of the efficient grid (Escolano, 2008). The institute still managed to realize eighty villages in this fashion in the 1960s until it merged into the Institute of Agrarian Reform in 1972.

From village to landscape

It has become evident that throughout his villages De la Sota constantly tries to find new organizational forms (see figure 13). Hípola (2020) characterizes the architects development by displaying an ever growing scale of focus. She claims that De la Sota's initial aim for creating anonymous architecture in Esquivel caused him to change his interest from people to landscape. His initial focus on the existing anonymous architecture changes to an attempt to anonymously blend a village into a landscape. The found descriptions of the "village landscape" of Entreríos that is formed by the horizontal roof cornices, gates and churches marks the introduction of this landscape scale into De la Sota's work.

The village square is assigned a key role in bridging the vast landscape scale and the intimate domestic life. In Entreríos, the village square is represented as an embra-

cing campus in the heart of the village, and smaller squares are given the role of spilling over the social life of the home into the public space. De la Sota repeats and distorts this plaza in the last two villages in an attempt to naturally intertwine the cultivated landscape and the inhabited village (Soto, 2022).

Soriano (2015) reads in the changing design of the plaza a growing critique of the INC's ideal image of colonization towns. He distinguishes between the first two villages attempts that deploy the plaza as a representative center and propaganda image, and the last two in which De la Sota attempts to distort this appearance. Entreríos represents a tipping point in this, in which the village square is a traditional administrative center, but in which a more liberal design is sought and smaller squares take over the social function.

Esquivel's distinctive architectural language is repeated and refined throughout the following villages. The larger changes become apparent in the integration of the village into the landscape and the plaza as a means to that end. At Entreríos begins a transformation of the plaza as an organic element to integrate the village into the landscape and enable a new polycentric organization.

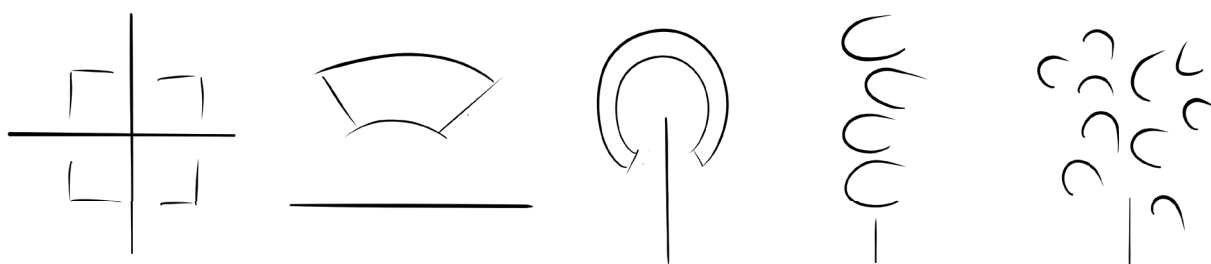


Figure 13: organisational schemes of De la Sota's five villages, from left to right: Gimenez, Esquivel, Entreríos, La bazana and Valueno (own work)

Search for new forms

De la Sota stopped his collaboration with the INC well before it made its stylistic change. The political sensitivity that came with Franco's Spain has again hidden his motivation for doing so, but explanations are found in the constant opposition De la Sota's projects faced from the institute, his growing dissatisfaction with the INC's mission and the change in his own architectural ideas (Escolano, 2008; Soriano, 2015). It becomes clear from his own writings that after finishing his last villages, he began to question his focus on vernacular architecture¹:

We have lived through a sad period of architecture in Spain, and we are probably about to live through another sad one as well. We have lived through a bad or good architectural craftsmanship; we can enter, we have entered, in another even worse one; the craftsmanship of the new forms.

His architecture, on this search for new forms, will take on a totally new appearance within a few years. The pure geometry of the church of Entreríos is a precursor to this, which we do not see again in the following villages. De la Sota's caricatural sketches evolve into thin geometric lines to produce the rational architecture for which he eventually became known. A later reflection seems to explain this transformation² (De la Sota, n.d.):

One day I stopped working and tried to think freely about what I, and others as well,

were doing. That very day I began to shake many of the additions that shake off. I found the clean outcome attractive and I thought it could also be called Architecture, or perhaps architecture. I enjoyed that lower-case a, which sufficed to solve the issue that architecture always had to resolve: organizing the world in which we live our lives.

Despite the radical stylistic change De la Sota makes at the end of the 1960s, the architect maintains the same method in his next phase. The new organizational logic that reshaped his villages each time, formed exercises for the rationalism that characterizes his work thereafter. The period that De la Sota worked for the Institute gave him the opportunity to experiment widely with his ideas about Spanish identity. His stripped-down vernacular architecture, is abstracted further to the mere use of local materials from which he shaped the modernism of Spain in the 1960s.

1 De La Sota, A. (2002). Alejandro de la Sota: escritos, conversaciones, conferencias, p. 80

2 *ibid.*, p 134

5. CONCLUSION

This research started with the goal of bringing the village of Entrerríos out of the shadow of its famous predecessor, and giving it a rightful position within De la Sota's work for the INC. De la Sota's interest in regional architecture has been better understood by outlining the architectural climate of post-Civil War Spain and the mission of the INC. His more widely shared interest in regional architecture first conformed to the existing format of this ideology, but changing political conditions allowed his design of Esquivel to confront this with pioneering modernist ideas.

Although Esquivel represented this radical change in the work of both the architect and the INC, this research also finds new ideas originating in Entrerríos. The novel combination of De la Sota's sketches and text have formed a clear picture of the design principles that shaped the village.

A continuity in the architectural style and method of distorting popular forms from the environment has been established. This same process of famously applied in Esquivel is refined in Entrerríos and subsequent villages, with the unique excursion of the pure geometry of the village church foreshadowing his later style.

The real innovation, however, is found in De la Sota's new concern with territorial integration. Starting with this village, the architect seems to shift his focus from an architectural to a landscape scale. The considered appearance of the village as a "village landscape," and the new role of the square as a landscape element mark a principle that will play the leading role in his subsequent villages. The smaller social squares also provide the stimulus for the two polycentric villages with which the architect concludes his series. These last two projects further blur the boundary between landscape, street and square by once again testing new organizational forms.

The fascination that sparked this research began with De la Sota's quick sketches of his alienating regional modernism, but ends with these constantly innovative floor plans and his total stylistic reinvention that follows the villages. This demonstrates a curiosity and openness that I hope to develop myself, which is why I will conclude with this task¹:

"To be perfectly honest, I think we should carry the old-fashioned "starting from scratch" within us. When I design, I never feel the slightest need to draw on my memories of the past [...] nothing bears any relation to the moment of immediate real use. Likewise, "What do I need? What can I rely on?" could also be proclaimed "ground zero"."

1 De La Sota, A. (1965). New materials new forms, in *Nuevas Lecciones* p. 2

LITERATURE

- Amado, A., & Patino Eirin, A. (2024). A strand of gold: Work and assignments of the Instituto Nacional de Colonizacion in Twentieth-Century Spain. In *Pueblos de colonizacion, miradas a un paisaje inventado*. Ediciones asimetricas.
- Arribas, A. Z. (2019). Industrialization and housing: Images of Spanish modernization (1953-1981). *Joelho*, 10, 016–025. https://doi.org/10.14195/1647-8681_10_1
- Astarloa. (2004). *La construccion de la arquitectura postguerra en Espana* [Thesis Doctoral]. ETSAM.
- Baldellou, M. Á. (2006). Alejandro de la Sota.
- De Jorge Crespo, Z. (2008). Alejandro de la Sota: Cinco poblados de colonización. In Junta de Andalucia, *Pueblos de colonizacion durante el franquismo* (pp. 358–371). <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7809528>
- De la Sota, A. (1948). Vivienda Agrupada - Pueblo de Giménels. *Revista Nacional De Arquitectura*, 83.
- De la Sota, A. (1950). Hotel de verano en Galicia. *Revista Nacional De Arquitectura*, 101.
- De la Sota, A. (1953a). El nuevo pueblo de Esquivel, cerca de Sevilla. *Revista Nacional De Arquitectura*, 110.
- De la Sota, A. (1953b). Memorias. In *Instituto Nacional de Colonizacion, Proyecto de nuevo pueblo de “Entrerrios” (Badajoz)*. Ministerio de Agricultura.
- De la Sota, A. (1991). Aus der Sicht eines Spanisches Architekten. *Archithese*, 5, 80.
- De La Sota, A. (2002). *Alejandro de la Sota: escritos, conversaciones, conferencias*.
- Geers, K., & Pancevac, J. (2022). The American model. In *Alejandro de la Sota* (1st ed.). 2G.

- Hípola, M. G. (2020). Arquitectura en el campo expandido: el concepto de paisaje en los escritos y en la obra de Alejandro de la Sota. *ACE: Architecture, City and Environment*, 45, 8289. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8162137>
- Lacruz Vera, J. (2023). *Learning from los pueblos de colonizacion* [Masterthesis]. Universidad Polytécnica de Madrid.
- Lejeune, J. F. (2019). *Rural utopia and water urbanism: The modern village in franco's spain* (1st ed.). DOM publishers.
- Lejeune, J. F., & Sabatino, M. (2009). *Modern architecture and the Mediterranean*, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203871904>
- Lopez, R. (2023). *La arquitectura oculta del pueblo de Esquivel: los alzados que Alejandro de la Sota no quería mostrar* [Master thesis, Universidad de Sevilla]. https://idus.us.es/bitstream/handle/11441/151458/T_robloplop_1685963273_L%c3%93PEZ_L%c3%93PEZ_02.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- MemorANDA. (2013, October 7). *Esquivel, poblado de colonización diseñado por Alejandro de la Sota | Arquitectura* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YrqTaVeIZA>
- Olveira, M. (2020). *How to live with memory. Artistic attitudes towards architecture and Francoism*. MUSAC.
- Soriano, R. (2014). *Los pueblos de colonización extremeños de Alejandro de la Sota*.
- Soto, J. a. F. (2013). Pueblos de nueva fundación en la colonización de posguerra: comparación con las ciudades de la “bonifica” italiana del “ventennio.” *Ciudad Y Territorio*, 178, 731–750. <http://oa.upm.es/23118/>
- Soto, J. a. F. (2022). Espacio intermedio en los pueblos de colonización de Alejandro de la Sota. *Norba*, 41, 257–282. <https://doi.org/10.17398/2660-714x.41.257>

ARCHIVES

Fundacion Alejandro de la Sota - Bocetos de los Pueblos de Colonizacion, otros bocetos. Ref 53 B

Archive of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishing and

Mediateca DOCOMOCO - Fondo INC

Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentacion in San Fernando de Henares - Instituto Nacional de Colonizacion, Proyecto de nuevo pueblo de "Entrerrios" (Badajoz). Ref 52300-22

IMAGES

Cover image: Inauguration of the church of Entrerrios, source: Mediateca DOCOMOCO (1954)

Figure 1: De la Sota's identity card for the INC, source: Fundacion Alejandro de la Sota, reference 52-Y VA-1.

Figure 2 : Aerial image of Entrerrios, source: Mediateca DOCOMOCO (n.d.)

Figure 3: Street and house in Esquivel, source: Mediateca DOCOMOCO (n.d.)

Figure 4: From top to bottom: initial organisational idea, smaller squares on the ringroad and impression of the church, elevation of the gates on ringroad, elevation with horizontal lineplay and central church, source: Fundacion Alejandro de la Sota, reference 53B CD1.

Figure 5: INC documentation of the project of Entrerrios (photograph supplied by author)

Figure 6: View towards the church from beneath the municipality, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – AD5

Figure 7: Sketched elevation of the municipality, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – AC1

Figure 8: Initial sketch of the church with free-standing campanile, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – EF1

Figure 9: Sketch of the churches interior, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – EF2

Figure 10: Impression of the entrance road to the village with large chimneys, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – BC1

Figure 11: Sketches of different street furniture, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – CC1

Figure 12: Sketches of drinking fountains, musical pavilion and posts to tie cattle to, source: Fundación Alejandro de la Sota, ref 53B – CC2

Figure 13: organisational schemes of De la Sota's five villages, from left to right: Gimeneles, Esquivel, Entrerrios, La bazana and Valuengo (own work)

APPENDIX

MEMORIAS

There are towns through which one passes and towns to which one goes; in both one lives naturally. This distinction leads to different ways of making their plans: the first will have open plans; closed and concave the second.

This determines the general distribution of the town; the parts that form it should be no distinction; all has to be towards its interior.

This criterion was valid for the composition of the plan of this new village: Entrerrios, is one of the second type, of the villages to which you have to go, far from the main or secondary road, even separated from the road to the farm, it is set apart from any route. It was therefore formed towards its interior around a square, the main one, which was nevertheless left open on one of its sides, that of the access from the road that links it to the rest of the world.

This square is projected in elliptical shape, to be good in this way. It represents a natural plateau on the land on which it is located, and all the streets that lead to it are on the gentle slope of this plateau. - The Church and the Town Hall in the square, by its height and its situation have to dominate the town and the landscape. A ring road surrounds the new village. At its intersections with the radial streets are formed small squares to live.

The criterion of separating the pedestrian and carriage streets was followed. Apart from the one that surrounds the town limits, these are planned for penetration, with a variant to the normal ones, which is the widening in the rear areas of the corrals, widening where water troughs, benches, animal restraint poyos will be installed and trees will be planted; these widenings are separated from the round and pedestrian streets by low parapets with seat; the feeling of spaciousness that your view has to produce when driving through these streets will be great.

In Entrerrios another exercise is also done, that of projecting a large part of its façade, the north, with simple walls. - A set of protruding and receding parts is sought, in which trees are planted, which with the curved layout of the plant is expected to achieve a good and new effect; the gates should also contribute to this, by breaking the white lines of the walls. - This is intended to achieve a village landscape, to contemplate it from a distance, like so many that exist and are so pleasing, formed by a series of horizontal whites, dark lists of roofs and the mass of the church dominating everything and that, as is also often the case, has to be built with exposed masonry: its heaviness must be more obvious in this way.

THE SQUARE. - Its shape and the reason for it have already been explained; all the houses that make up almost all of its contour are two-storey and are joined by a single linking element: the portico is continuous; the houses that it links are not continuous and are designed in pairs - the continuity of the portico is broken by the most significant buildings in the square: the Town Hall, the Doctor's house, the Teachers' house and the small merchants' square. This portico joins the church and religious buildings with the rest of the houses in the town square and ends at the priest's house.

In the square the two main roads that reach the village cross and from it the streets to all the surrounding areas start. To it, and breaking the arcade it joins the small square of commerce and the big square, in besides the insignificant buildings that were cited, are also located the tavern, the bandstand, a cross, fountains etc.. Behind the church and in a copse that is formed, the school.

PLAZOLETAS - It was said that in all the intersections of the circular street with the radial ones small squares of living are formed. In almost all of them the streets are found in winding which allows to leave rest areas and the location of the fountains - The houses that form these squares are the small ones, those of two bedrooms, to relieve the congestion.

THE STREETS - For pedestrians and cars - The radial pedestrian streets are straight and of constant width, 3.50 meters. The ring road has two widths, 3.50 and 5.00 meters. The greater width corresponds to the areas of contact with the spaces behind the corrals; it is limited in these parts of contact by parapets with benches.

The cart lanes are 5 meters wide, even in the aforementioned widenings, and are reduced to 3 meters in the branches that connect them to the corral gates. Troughs, posts, benches, etc. are located in these areas behind the corrals. As already indicated; they can give a certain grace to the village.

THE HOUSES: The settlers' houses are limited to five types, as many as correspond to the different number of bedrooms that compose them. This solution was thought to be the most elementary, since only the aesthetics could make more than one type of the same number of bedrooms and this was discarded, since it is believed that it is better to achieve variety with the same elements arranged in various forms and conditions of location. Only one two-story house, the four-bedroom house, is projected; the five-bedroom house, which should also be one, is resolved on the first floor because it is needed to compose a certain part of the village, the entrance, and thinking that its limited number, six, does not prevent us from making this slight expense.

The designation "A" refers to single-storey buildings and "B" to two-storey buildings. The following numbers are A-2, A-3, etc. Correspond to the number of bedrooms.

The rule is to make in all of them, a hallway and kitchen-dining room, separating these parts of eating and cooking and joining the bedrooms forming a "zone"; to all of them is added one

more room, of respect, for their small living room, that room condemned to have in it some horrible furniture that has to be used, at most, once a year; However, they are given the possibility of joining this useless room to the living area by simply pulling down the partition wall; for once, they wanted to listen to the tastes of a farmer who would talk to the architect and order his house. A dry toilet is planned for all of them for the dwelling and joined by a small porch.

A-2 (first floor): Entrance hall, living room, living-kitchen, pantry and two bedrooms; built-in closets.

A-3 (ground floor): Entrance hall, living room-kitchen, living room, three bedrooms, storage room and pantry. This type corresponds to one existing and studied in Merida, in which the main entrance and part of its facade to the street, had a small patinillio; the rest of the facade was in line with the street and a window was placed there, the only eye to the world. Benefits of this were found and it was adapted. I believe that its great repetition in the village has to be a positive characteristic of the same - The alternation of facade and wall will serve us to achieve continuity in the streets. The transparent door in the wall, with the light greenery that can be planted in the courtyard has to be a good compositional factor.

B-4 (two floors): Entrance hall, living-kitchen, living room, pantry and a bedroom on the first floor; three bedrooms and storage room upstairs. The entrance porch is shared by the whole square and is independent of the house.

A-5 (first floor): Entrance hall, living-kitchen, pantry, five bedrooms. The hallway is separated from the living room by a partition wall, which does not reach the ceiling. It has already been indicated how this house was born from the need to compose a block of the village; it is a lot of program for a single plant. However, its distribution is reasonable and well zoned. The exterior composition uses as the most important element the large chimney, characteristic of some areas of the province of Badajoz and that if I do not use it more in Entrerríos it is because this village is in an irrigated area where surely, there is not enough wood for the use of all its neighbors.

They are placed in a row in the block they form and their set I hope is a prominent note at the entrance to the square.

SHOPS "A" AND "B." (Two floors both) - The type "A" of greater program, consists of entrance hall, living-dining room and kitchen with pantry on the first floor, plus the store, back room and warehouse; upstairs three bedrooms and bathroom. The porch is common to the square. The dwelling type "B" develops on the first floor only the store with back room and storage, leaving on the upper floor the dwelling itself, consisting of the dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms and toilet.

There are four of them forming the small square of commerce, adjacent to the large square; this square can be that of commerce since in it and in its porches it allows the installation of stalls on certain market days. The position is the indicated one for being located in the square and in

main road.

Medico.- It is developed with the consultation on the first floor and with an independent entrance and the house on the top floor, overlooking the square.- It proceeds on the portico. The consultation forms the office, the room of cures, the medicine cabinet and the waiting room and the housing, a great room, the dining room, three dormitories and bath and the zone of services.

MAESTRO Y MAESTRA - (two floors) - On the ground floor the hall or vestibule, the dining-living room and the kitchen and on the upper floor three bedrooms and a bathroom. A small yard or exit will increase the service area.

TASCA: A small tavern at the entrance to the village, as a place of rest and provisioning for those who go there. It consists of a lounge with a bar and a small kitchen; the porch is part of the table area. It could be made into a cavern.

SCHOOLS - The school is located in the square, in a secluded area behind the church. With two classrooms for boys and girls and rooms for teachers, toilets, cloakroom, etc.. With covered porch for games on rainy days.

CITY HALL - It is projected in the axis of the square, opposite to the Church and by its location, the advancing on the porch and the prestige of its facade has to stand out in the set.

On the ground floor there is a large hallway, the Post Office and the municipal offices, as well as the toilets; on the second floor the Assembly Hall and the offices of the Mayor and Secretary, and on the top floor the Court with the prison.

One of the radial streets crosses the building on the first floor, so that we can get perspectives of some interest.

The facade to the square was designed with simple pomposity, with the inevitable pilasters and in the coronation a series of pennants and triumphs, with strong colors has to give its notable feature. A small tower with a clock, equally essential, crowns the building.

CHURCH. RELIGIOUS DEPENDENCES AND HOUSING OF THE PARISH - The Church was thought to be the heaviest and most dominant element of the village. Located in one of the focuses of the strange ellipse that forms the square, in the elevated plateau, it is outlined of cylindrical mass, with circular plant and with an extreme simplicity. Nothing of "Architecture" has to be attached to the clean cylinder. It is enveloped and united to the rest of the square by the porch that surrounds it.

Its interior is a simple parabolic brick vault, which starts from the same floor and is only broken by the windows, not very high, and in its upper part, at the vertex, by a lantern projected more as a ventilation source than for illumination. The baptistery, the confessional, the start of the

pulpit staircase that merges with the exit of the sacristy and is crowned with the same pulpit in an original way. The baptistery opens onto the porch and the church, with transparency through it, which will give a certain grace to this corner - The altar, on a wide pedestal, is covered with an austere circular baldachin resting on four slender feet. The meniscus-shaped choir will be a light slab of reinforced concrete supported on the wall of the church and a curved beam resting on two straight concrete feet.- Under the choir a simple round gate directs and channels the movement of the faithful in their entry and exit, to avoid stumbling, in days of crowds; it does not impede, with its transparency, the vision of the altar from the same entrance.

On the outside, there is a light iron bell tower formed by two angels that support a system to hold three bells.

The adjoining premises to the church, the religious dependencies, are formed by the sacristy, with an attached archive, the premises of Catholic Action and a small toilet; in the front there is a porch, the one of the whole square.

The three-storey parish priest's house is the final element of composition of the religious complex: on the ground floor the office, dining room and kitchen services, on the first floor the bedrooms and bathroom, and on the last floor a large living room with a solarium and the service bedroom - joined to the rest by the porch - the whole complex is designed in brick as a contrast to the village, to increase its quality and its "heaviness".

LOOSE ELEMENTS: An open-air cinema is planned which, like the site to be used as a union building and for shows, is located at the entrance to the street that coincides with the road that crosses the village.

A Tavern or Bar is projected, as already indicated; near a gazebo for the Music, fountains, drinking trough, benches, etc, elements that have to value all the places where they are placed and that are indispensable in all town to find it really lively.

CONSTRUCTION SYSTEM: Reference is made here to the Specifications and Budget of the present project.

Madrid, December 1953

The Architect, Alejandro de la Sota