



STORY» PUXEDO, THE ESSENCE OF TRADITION WITH A CONTEMPORARY FLAIR

I am Jesus Rodriguez, president of the Puxedo Neighbours Association, a non-profit organization established in 2008 to counteract the abandonment that plagued the village after decades of emigration, lack of opportunities, and the resignation of residents facing a predetermined future: the demise of the village in less than twenty years as the last residents passed away or left.

Faced with this reality, several of us who were born, grew up, formed families, and worked or lived permanently in the village decided to organize ourselves. With limited resources but great enthusiasm, we outlined an ambitious plan for the comprehensive recovery of the village. Despite its abandonment, the village still possessed an extraordinary cultural heritage that could be reclaimed if immediate action was taken with appropriate restoration criteria.

We began with the restoration of the altarpiece and the chapel of San Antonio in 2010, and once achieved, we didn't stop. We acquired a property and converted it into a social centre for our meetings and cultural programming. We rehabilitated the four paved threshing floors, the granaries in poorer condition, a total of 10 water mills along the Mao River, and the oven. In the absence of the original oven, sold by the villagers in the sixties to fund the road to the village, a stone oven was donated by a neighbour and installed in a former stable, becoming the new communal bread oven.

With all this heritage, we created the ethnographic route of the bread cycle, which, along with the

interpretation centre, constitutes the Ecomuseum of Xurés Bread—an open-air museum where visitors can learn about the different phases of the traditional bread-making cycle, supported by explanatory panels and Mon Devane's graffiti murals depicting these tasks.

In addition to the Bread Ecomuseum, we undertook other projects, such as collecting old tools and implements from neighbours to create the Xurés Trades Centre, with exhibitions on linen weaving, farming, carpentry, and blacksmithing. We also restored an old wine cellar with its wine press, showcasing the various historically cultivated grape varieties in the area and the methods of winemaking and distillation. To highlight local products, we refurbished a dilapidated hayloft, displaying representative items such as pork sausages, oil, jams, chestnuts, and honey.

Collaborating with various public administrations, we revitalized the streets and meeting spaces, replacing unsuitable asphalt with granite, stone, or deactivated concrete. We also restored neighbourhood fountains, old sheds, and walls made of local stone.

Alongside the restoration of our heritage and public spaces, we enlivened the village with numerous cultural and festive activities throughout the year. These include the festivals of San Antonio with its "spit-roasted" pig, chestnut roasts, the Santa Lucia stew, open-air quick painting sessions where artists from all over the country come to paint scenes from the village, and storytelling sessions with renowned storytellers.

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We organized folklore events, exhibitions of traditional crafts, a local product fair, and ethnographic days focusing on the bread cycle, where residents reenact all its phases—sowing, harvesting, threshing, milling, and baking.

Currently, we continue with our roadmap because, although much work has been done, there are still many projects ahead to complete the comprehensive rehabilitation of the village, not only in the public domain, the initially set goal but also in the private sector. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in recent years, we have welcomed a dozen new residents who bought and restored abandoned houses for their personal use. Additionally, three other residents rehabilitated a total of five houses with 30 tourist accommodation spaces, catering to the over 2,000 visitors we receive each year. The villagers are also highly committed to eliminating architectural eyesores in their properties, having completed over 50 projects in the last three years to replace asbestos-cement roofing with curved ceramic tiles, expose brick or concrete block facades, clean masonry stone facades, or restore stone perimeter walls.

After 14 years of intense work, we have seen that the effort was worthwhile. In contrast to the fatalism and resignation of a decade ago, we have regained hope and pride as villagers—a village with 21st-century services and infrastructure but the soul of its origins as an agricultural and livestock community. Like the centuries-old oak in its square, it grows with roots firmly planted in the earth and a vast canopy sheltering all who wish to visit.



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