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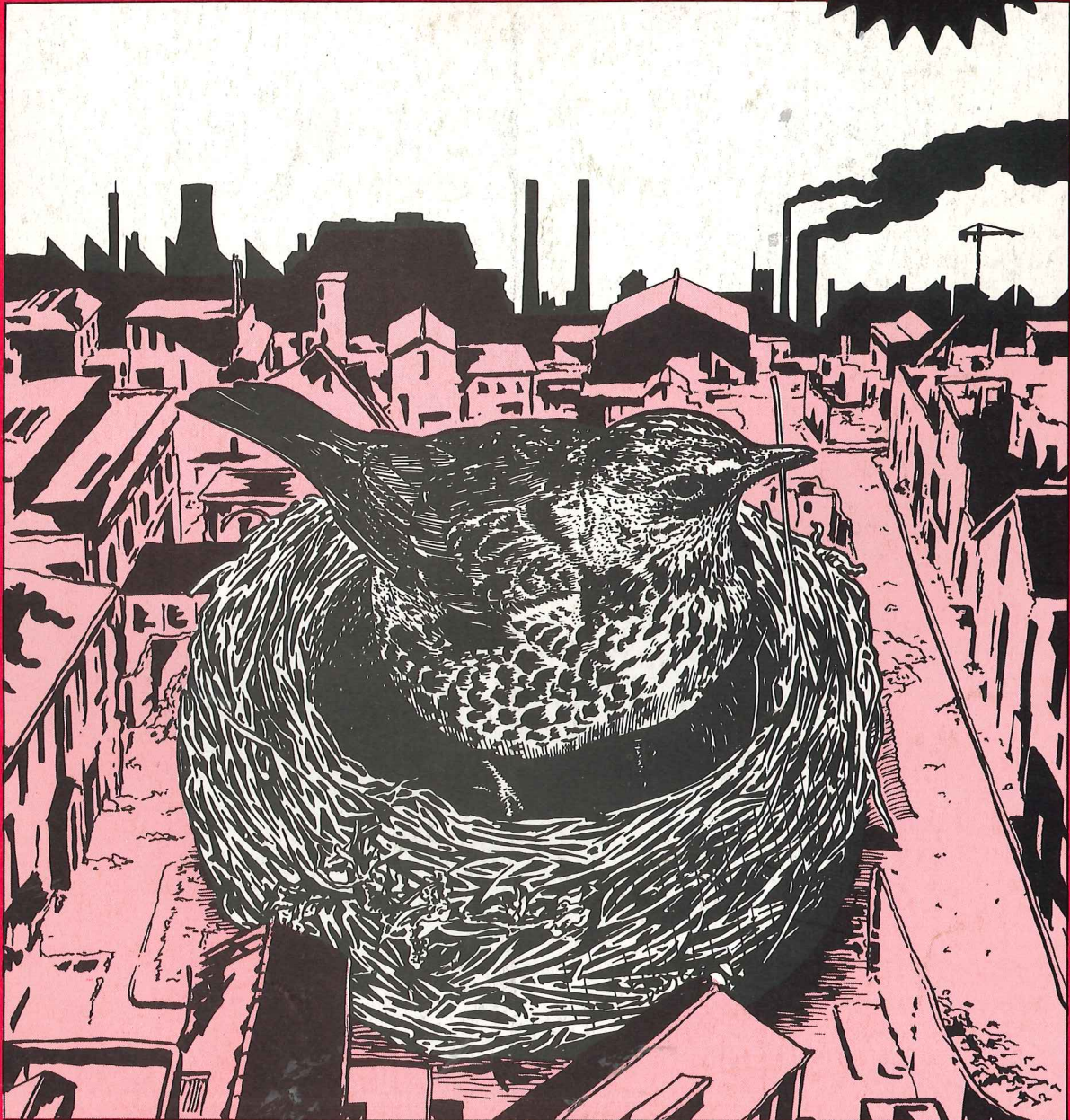
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# Town & Country Planning

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Making new  
communities



services. Panther Creek, the next village to be developed, will have a new Interfaith centre with a child development unit, offices for human services, offices for Interfaith, and a community meeting room. The child development centre will provide pre-school education, all-day care for children with working mothers, and a Sunday school. The pre-school will be fee paying but at least 10 per cent of the places will be free.

New schools are already being built in The Woodlands; pupils can also attend other schools in the Conroe Independent School District which is within Montgomery County and may use the school bus regardless of the distance they live from the school. There are also adult education and vocational courses in Conroe. Students of university age may go to college in Houston.

A new branch library is provided by Montgomery County but sports facilities are generally being provided by the development corporation and, apart from those provided as part of schools programmes, are private to the extent that they are managed by The Woodlands Community Association Inc. which charges fees. Family memberships are available. Golf, although available to the general public on a day-fee basis, is attached to the Country Club. All facilities are top-class, and international golf and swimming competitions can be staged.

#### Future prospects

Although The Woodlands has a long way to go before it reaches its total population of 150,000 there is enough on the ground for a comparison with British new towns. Particularly striking, as with many British new towns, is the great effort to make the place a success from the outset. The charming and excellent visitors' Information Centre set among the pine trees, the well-designed Inn and Convention Centre, and the Wharf Shopping Mall, all suggest that focal points have become established and that an incoming family can settle in quickly and develop roots.

This success is due to the development of community facilities hand in hand with residential and industrial development — a lesson long since learnt, but not always followed, in British new towns. The series of linked villages, although not unlike the ideas behind some earlier British new towns, seems to help foster a sense of community. However, the idea that the University of Houston is to develop on a site within the community would make a significant impact on all aspects of industrial and community development.

New towns must be visited more than once, and from time to time. It will be interesting to see how The Woodlands grows, not only in the development of land and buildings, but also whether it will become a living town in the best sense of the word. Only time will tell. One advantage is the steady influx of newcomers who will influence and help maintain the pace of growth while the development of varied community facilities in step with homes and industry in its beautiful woodland setting must help to foster the community life it needs and which is envisaged by the developers.

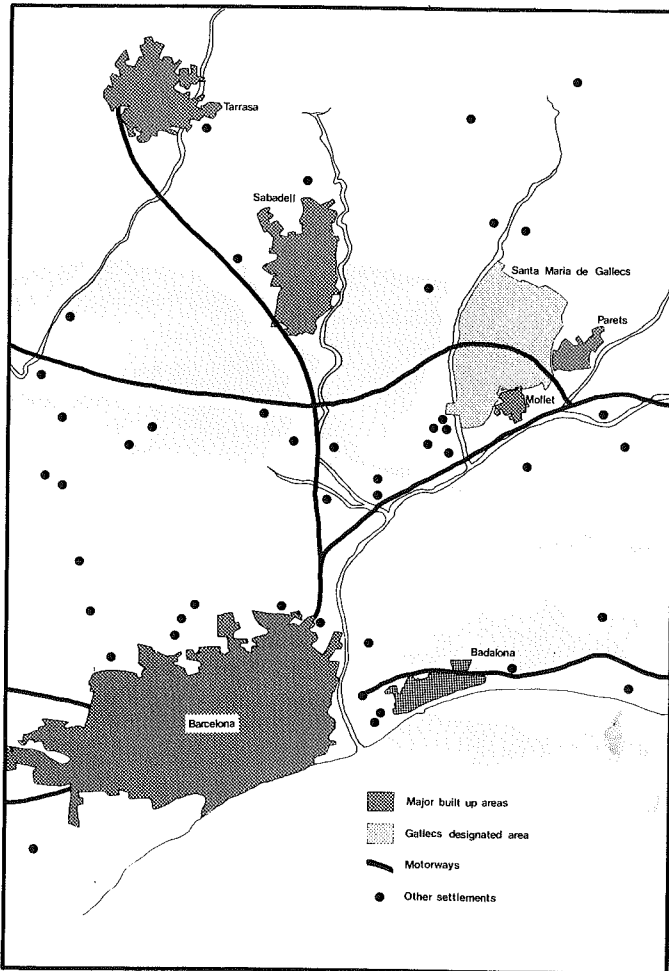
1. This new community is being built by The Woodlands Development Corporation — a subsidiary of the Mitchell Energy & Development Corporation, assisted by the New Community Development Corporation of HUD (the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development).

## MARTIN WYNN Rebirth of Gallecs

**The fate of Santa Maria de Gallecs, a new town designated outside Barcelona in the early 1970s, hangs in the balance in the flux of political-economic change in post-democracy Catalonia. Elections for the Generalitat, the autonomous Catalan parliament, took place in March this year, and it is now widely expected that development will begin after a decade of planning, protest, replanning, and general uncertainty about Gallecs's future.**

The origins of Gallecs pre-date the official designation of the new town by almost a decade, and in the 1960s there was a general uncertainty about the project's function and purpose. In 1961, the Sub-Regional Plan for Central Valles recognised the "need to provide new land for industry in the River Caldes valley, where conditions are ideal for such development . . . to be accompanied by new residential zones"<sup>1</sup>, and the plan documentation emphasised the need to give industrialists alternatives to locating in the Barcelona conurbation. In 1963, however, following the passing of the National Housing Plan,<sup>2</sup> the Ministry of Housing proposed to create a "large housing estate" in 500 hectares of land in the Caldes Valley, emphasising housing rather than industry. The ministry,

Location of Santa Maria de Gallecs



however, had carried out only preliminary studies on the possible repercussions of such large-scale intervention, and horrified opposition to the project, in both Madrid and Barcelona, persuaded the Ministry to drop the proposal.

Then in the mid-1960s, the Greater Barcelona Planning Commission started work on a new plan for the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. The Commission had planning jurisdiction only in the Barcelona Sub-Region (28 municipalities), but the new plan — the Plan Director — was to cover a far larger area (193 municipalities) and provide the general strategic guidelines for decongestion of the Barcelona centre. Gallecs — then called Riera de Caldes — was one of three new towns outside Barcelona in what was the first real step away from blueprint town planning in Spain. At that time the Madrid government gave only limited support to the Plan Director and in 1970 Linares, the new Director of Urban Planning (within the Ministry of Housing) embarked on a new policy of central state intervention in Spain's major cities, completely changing the planning and political contexts of the Gallecs operation. While the Plan Director was shelved, the Urgent Development (ACTURS) Act, passed in 1970, gave the Ministry of Housing new powers to expropriate land to develop green field new towns, and short-cut statutory procedure in the plan approval and implementation stages. Eight new towns (or integrated urban units as they were called) were designated, including the three outside Barcelona. But without the strategic guidelines of the Plan Director or any metropolitan planning authority to manage and coordinate the growth of the new towns, fears were expressed about the dangers and consequences of such ill-planned, autonomous, piecemeal intervention by the central state in a region renowned for its anti-Madrid feeling.

#### Expropriation, opposition and delay

In Barcelona in the early 1970s Gallecs, and the two other designated ACTURS (Martorell-Anoia and Sabadell-Terrasa), were attacked by interest groups representing various political opinions. Planners attacked the ACTURS as anti-planning because of the scant regard paid to statutory procedure and general absence of an overall planning framework. Noguera, in 1972, wrote that "it needs great ingenuity to see how a vast estate of housing and industry, created autonomously by those who choose to ignore the basics of the urban growth process, has anything to do with planning or the strategy of development," and Borja saw Gallecs as "destined to become a vast residential ghetto rather than part of an equipped, balanced urban structure". The 1970 Act also provided for private enterprise to play a leading part in planning, financing, and managing the new towns once the state had expropriated the land, and many were concerned at trusting the large capital promoters with these responsibilities.

Meanwhile, landowners and local councils contested the expropriation of their land. Because preliminary costings had already been made, Gallecs was the first Barcelona new town where the Ministry initiated expropriation procedure. Its designated area covered 1472 hectares east of the Caldes River, and bordered the built-up areas of Mollet, Paret, and Santa Perpetua de Mojuda, occupying parts of seven municipalities. Affected landowners, including the councils, fought the expropriation orders tooth and nail, taking their case to the supreme appeal courts, which invariably upheld the order but often increased compensation payments. The court hearings so held things up that the momentum of the ACTURS programme in general was lost and by the mid-1970s only in Gal-

lecs, and in Tres Cantos outside Madrid, had much progress been made in acquiring the land, and in none of the new towns had building been started.

This loss of momentum was compounded by political changes in the Ministry of Housing in Madrid and a general weakening of support for the ACTURS policy in the cabinet, following strong opposition from the property-owning lobbies of Madrid and Barcelona. In 1975, however, in the first government of King Juan Carlos, the new Minister of Housing (Lozano Vicente) revived the ACTURS projects, and adapted them to meet the demands of the recently approved Land and Urban Planning Reform Act. The following year, two mixed companies, founded with public and private capital,<sup>3</sup> were created by decree, one in Madrid to manage Tres Cantos, the other in Barcelona to try to revive the flagging Gallecs project.

#### After Franco

The Gallecs Corporation had two initial tasks. First, land acquisition had to be completed, and by mid-1978 most of the wrangles over expropriation had been resolved, state indemnity payments having reached 3000 million pesetas (£22 million), almost double the original estimate. Second, a master plan had to be approved to provide a new legal and planning framework within which development could take place. This was particularly important in the new, post-Franco, political climate and the corporation was aware that any attempt to bulldoze the operation through was unlikely to find support among any of the major political parties.

The master plan was completed by the end of 1976. It modified the seven existing municipal development plans in the designated area, which consisted largely of undeveloped land. A commercial centre and sub-centre (88 hectares) were planned in the north centre of the area, with the bulk of land zoned for industry (233 hectares) to the west, on the east bank of the Caldes River, where it was estimated that 40,000 new jobs would be created. 31,000 new dwellings (in 275 hectares) were planned to house 130,000 — 140,000 inhabitants in a variety of house types in areas of differing building density. Green spaces and schools, libraries, etc, were distributed through the plan area and almost 200 hectares were left to be used according to the needs of the growing town. The third Barcelona ring road was to run east-west across the town with extensions linking the new town centre with Mollet to the south. The lay-out was structured around a rectangular matrix of superblocks of 400 by 400 square metres, delimited by one-way roads 30 to 40 metres wide, and adapted as necessary to the local terrain.

During the Public Information Stage<sup>4</sup> (Feb-March 1977), landowners, industrialists, and residents' associations appealed against the plan, some complaining about the undemocratic nature of the operation, and in the Audience of Local Corporations Stage<sup>4</sup> (March-April 1977) the seven local councils all strongly opposed it. The Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona, however approved "the project and its objective",<sup>5</sup> stressing Gallecs's role in the decongestion of the Barcelona conurbation.

The ministry — advised by the Gallecs Corporation — dismissed most of the appeals, and in June 1977, with some small modifications, the master plan was definitely approved, after six weeks' delay due to Spain's first general election in over 40 years. This led to further change: Gallecs was a politically delicate issue when devolution of power to a Catalan parliament was pending. Garrigues-Walker, the new Ministry for Public Works and Urban Affairs, effectively held up the master

plan by refusing to approve any of the local plans which had to be drawn up and approved before development could take place. The Madrid government felt that the Gallecs project should be left for decision by the Catalan parliament once devolution legislation had been passed in 1979/80.

This changing and complex political scene left the Gallecs master plan in limbo, and shortly after the national elections in 1977 the corporation embarked on a parallel planning course that they hoped might find more support among local political groups. It employed Catalan architects Cantalops, Bofill and Escudero (the EDP group) to plan a much smaller residential-commercial centre which would use the designated area to re-equip the periphery of Barcelona, rather than to build a new town. Although the EDP plan lacks legal planning status, it is likely that it, or something similar, rather than the 1977 master plan, will be the starting-point for developing Gallecs.

#### Politics

The Catalan parliament must now decide how best to use some 1400 hectares of publicly owned land. It is ironic that while governments of the Franco era mainly expropriated the land, socialist and communist dominated local authorities have now contemplated returning land to former owners. Meanwhile, for the general public Gallecs remains a Madrid-inspired, Franco-era operation — a political stigma that may still thwart it, as it seems to have thwarted all other ACTURS except Tres Cantos in Madrid. What seems most likely, however, is that there will be limited new housing and commercial development along the lines proposed by the EDP group, the rest of the area being used to provide service infrastructure — a university, schools, parks etc — to serve the ill-equipped Barcelona periphery as a whole. It must be hoped that the new Catalan parliament will now get the Gallecs project, even in this modified form, under way at last.

#### Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is given to Carlos Gomez Pardo, President-Director of the Gallecs Corporation (Santa Maria de Gallecs, SA), and to Pedro Roses, chief engineering-planner in the corporation, for their help and advice in carrying out the research on which this article is based. All responsibility for fact and opinion expressed in this article remains, of course, with the author. Thanks also to Juanita Gonzalez and Jacqui Hunt for help with the map work.

#### Notes and references

1. Sub-Regional Plan of Mollet, Martorelles, San Fausto de Campcentelles, La Llagosta and Santa Perpetua de Moguda. Definitely approved by Ministry of Housing 17 May 1961.
2. The National Housing Plan was passed in 1961 to programme the construction of 3.7 million houses in all Spain over a 16-year period. The figure was passed in 1974.
3. The Gallecs Corporation — Santa Maria de Gallecs S.A. — was founded in 1976 with capital of 350 million pesetas (£2½ million). Most was provided by the Ministry of Housing, the rest by Catalan banks.
4. The Public Information Stage was a statutorily required period of a month during which members of the public could appeal against any plan which had previously been initially approved by the plan-making authority. If, as in the case of Gallecs, this authority was not the local council(s), then a further month's Audience of Local Corporations stage was held during which time local authorities were invited to comment on the plan. Following this, the plan-making authority would provisionally approve the plan, incorporating any modifications as deemed necessary, and submit it to an upper-tier planning authority for definitive approval.
5. Report sent by the Director of Urban Services, Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona, to the Gallecs Corporation, and to the Ministry of Public Works and Urban Planning, Madrid, dated 12 April 1977.

# & People Ideas

COLIN WARD

## Baedeker to the Commonplace

Grady Clay is one of those lean, upright Americans who looks and sounds like a southern gentleman, but his ideas and interests are rather different. From Louisville, Kentucky, he edits one of the best landscape journals in the world, and he has one of those very shrewd editorial deals, like the one the RIBA Journal is negotiating in this country. For although *Landscape Architecture* is published by the American Society of Landscape Architects, it is no house magazine full of beaming vice-presidents. It is sharply observant and admonitory, not least in Clay's 'Roving Eye' column, which a year or two ago sharply castigated the phoney-folksy way in which Britain's tourism entrepreneurs presented this country to the overseas visitor.

Seven years ago Clay brought out a book *Close-Up: How to Read the American City*, which asks in effect "What is the point of looking at the American urban scene through the lens of the picturesque townscape tradition of Camillo Sitte or Gordon Cullen and then concluding that, with those straggling miles of used car lots, drive-in motels and hoardings, the American townscape is no good? Why not look at it from the standpoint of the way people use it, adapt it and change it: the functions it plays in the lives of its inhabitants?" Clay claims in fact that his book, "a Baedeker to the commonplace", pushes aside the class bias of traditional aesthetics.

That book never quite got the attention it deserves, and through some bookselling skulduggery, I bought my copy of the US edition off a pile in one of those remainder shops in London in the very week that the British edition came out. However, it has just made a welcome reappearance as a paperback from the University of Chicago Press.

Not the kind of person to be pushed around by the book trade, Clay formed Grady Clay & Co and published his next book himself. It came out in 1978 as an elegant little volume called *Alleys: a Hidden Resource* or, to give it its full 18th century style title, *A Disquisition Upon the Origins, Natural Disposition, and Occurrences in the American Scene of Alleys, together with Special Attention Being Given to Some Small-Scale and Easily Completed Proposals for their Improvement in Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, where they do Constitute a Hidden Resource, together with an Inquiry into the Disappearance of Alleys from Polite Society and Prospects for their Future Rehabilitation.*

Now he is making a television film called *Unknown Places:*

*Experiencing the Obvious.* He looks at five American cities and towns: Boston; Los Angeles; the new town of Columbia, Maryland; Manhattan, Kansas; and his own city of Louisville. "We want to see how America is changing, so we're using the ancient device of the cross-section," he says.

Clay spent a crucial year as president of the American Society of Planning Officials, which in spite of its name is (unlike the RTPI but like the TCPA), an organisation of both professionals and lay citizens. Back in the 1960s he was a director of the old American Planning and Civic Association, "which merged into Urban America, which in turn merged into the National Urban Coalition, becoming more elitist with every merge. I'm very concerned that this doesn't happen with ASPO." He used his term of office to act as one of the mid-

wives of the merger of ASPO with the purely professional American Institute of Planners, "so that the voice of the citizens is strongly heard".

Unlike many American urban pundits, Clay remains a firm advocate of decentralisation and of new towns. "I don't know a ready instant solution, but continued decentralisation to reduce pressure on big cities is necessary to ensure the well-being of everybody." He insists that there is a strong desire of people of all classes and races to live in smaller and middle-size towns, if they can get the opportunity. "I've been dissatisfied with the easy way in which suburban growth is dismissed as a phenomenon fuelled by snobbery and designed to segregate social classes. That's a very incomplete picture." Nobody, Grady Clay declares, "is going to disinvest mobility."

Cliff Harper

