Rebirth of Galileo

The fete of Santa Maria de Galileo, 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 the last year, and it is now widely expected that development will begin after a decade of planning, protest, replanning, and general uncertainty about Galileo's future.

The origins of Galileo 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 acknowledged 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", and the plan documentation emphasised the need to give industrialists alternatives to locating in the Barcelona conurbation. In 1983, however, following the passing of the National Housing Plan, the Ministry of Housing proposed to create a "large housing estate" of 500 hectares of land in the Caldes Valley, emphasising housing rather than industry. The Ministry of Housing recommended the site of the new town to be the location of Santa Maria de Galileo.

However, had it carried out only preliminary studies on the possible replacement of housing and the initial stages of development, and had it faced opposition to the project, in both Madrid and Barcelona, the Ministry decided to drop the proposal.

Then in the mid-1980s, the Greater Barcelona Planning Commission started work on a new plan for the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. The Commission had planning jurisdiction over the Sub-Regional (286 municipalities) but not the new plan - the Plan Director - was to cover a larger area (193 municipalities) and provide the general strategic framework for the new town.

Galileo - then called Riera de Caldes - was one of three new towns outside Barcelona in what was the first real step away from blueprinting in Spain. At that time the Madrid government gave only limited support to the Plan Director, and in 1970, the new Director of Urban Planning (within the Ministry of Housing) embarked on a new policy of central state management, largely to overcome the problems of completely changing the planning and political contexts of the Galileo operation. While the Plan Director was abolished, the Urgent Development (ACTURS) Act, passed in 1970, gave the Ministry of Housing new powers to extricate 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 opportunities of 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, Galileo, and the other two designated towns, ACTURS (Manuel Anoia and Sabadell-Terrassa) 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 the general absence of an overall planning framework. Noguera, in 1972, wrote that "it needs great ingenuity to see how a vast expanse of housing and industry, created and run exclusively by who chose to ignore the basics of the urban growth process, has anything to do with planning or the strategy of development," and Birds-eye Galileo was "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 extripated the land, and many were concerned at placing the large capital promoters with these responsibilities.

Meanwhile, landowners and local councils contended the expropriation of their land. Because preliminary proposals had already been made, Galileo was the first Barcelona new town where the Ministry initiated expropriation procedures. Its designated area covered 1472 hectares east of the Caldes River, and bordered the built-up areas of Moltó, Parés, and Santa Perpetua de Moguda, occupying parts of seven municipalities.

Affecting landowners, including the councils, fought the expropriation orders tooth and nail, taking their cases 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 program in general was lost and by the mid-1970s only in Galileo, and in Tres Cantos outside Madrid, had much progress been made in acquiring the land, and in none of the new towns had building begun.

This loss of momentum was compounded by political change in the Ministry of Housing in Madrid and a general weakening of the central state, with the cabinet following strong opposition from the property-owning lobbies of Madrid and Barcelona. In 1975, however, in the first years of the Social Democratic government, the new Minister (Lozana 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, were created by decree, one in Madrid to manage Tres Cantos, and the other three to try to revive the flagging Galileo project.

After Franco

The Galileo 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 estimates. 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 dwellings would be needed. In 275 hectares were planned to house 130,000 - 140,000 inhabitants in a variety of house types in areas of differing building density. The plan was dis- tributed through the plan area and almost 200 hectares were left to be used according to the needs of the growing town. The new town was expected to cross the town with extensions linking the new town centre with Mollet to the south. The lay-out was structured around a rectangular grid, with 400 metres wide, defined by one-way roads 30 to 40 metres wide, with adjoining houses necessray to the local terrain.

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

The ministry - advised by the Galileo Corporation - did not ignore the political and social impact of the new town, and some small modifications, the master plan was finally approved, after six weeks' delay due to Spain's first general election in over 40 years. This period of political uncertainty was a delicate issue when devolution of power to a Catalan parlia- ment was pending. Garaigues-Walker, the new Ministry for Public Works and Urban Affairs, effectively held up the master plan.

1. This new community is being built by The Woodlands Development Corporation, a subsidiary of the Invention Energy and Development Corporation, assisted by the New Community Development Corporation, assisted by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
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 Galgos project should be left for decision by the Catalan parliament once devolution legislation had been passed in 1978/80.

This changing and complex political scene left the Galgos 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 Canellas, Buffa and Escudero (the EDP group) to plan a much smaller residential-commercial zone 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 Galgos.

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 Galgos remains a Madrid-inspired, Franco-era operation: a political stigma that may still thwart it, as it seems to have thwarted other ACTUS 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 Galgos project, even in this modified form, under way at last.

Acknowledgements
Grateful acknowledgement is given to Carlos Gómez Pardo, President of the Galgos Corporation (Santa Maria de Galgos), and to Pedro Flores, chief engineer/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
2. The National Housing Plan was passed in 1961 to programme the construction of 1.5 million houses in all Spain over a 10-year period. The figure was passed in 1974.
3. The Galgos Corporation — Santa Maria de Galgos S.A. — was founded in 1976 with capital of 350 million pesetas (£22.5 million). Most was provided by the Ministry of Housing, the rest by Catalanian banks.
4. The Public Information Stage was a statute delayed by a period of a month during which members of the public could inspect and make comments on the plan which had previously been initially approved by the planning authority. If, as in the case of Galgos, this authority was not the local council(s), then a further month's Audience of Local Corporations stages were added, during which the 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.

366 Town & Country Planning

Experiencing the Obvious. He looks at five American cities and towns: Boston; Las Vegas; 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 organization 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 midwives 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 plunnds, Clay remains a firm advocate of decentralisation and of new towns, "I don't know the easy 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 disappoited 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 discontinue mobility."

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 a house magazine full of leading American practitioners, presented this country to the overseas visitor.

Seven years ago Clay brought out a book Close-Up: How to Read the American City, which is, in effect, "What is the point of looking at the American urban scene through the lens of the picturesque townscapes tradition of Camillo Sitte or Gordon Cullen and then concluding that, with those struggling miles of used cars, drive-in motels and hoardings, the American townscape is no good? Why not look at it from the point of view 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 deserved, and through some book-selling skullduggery, 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 titled Alleys: a Hidden Resource or, to give it its full 18th-century style title, A Dissertation Upon the Origins, Natural Disposition, and Occurrences in the American Scenery of Alleys, together with Special Attention to the Remainder of the Alleys in the Disappearance of Alleys from Polite Society and Prospects for their Future Rehabilitation.

Now he is making a television film called Unknown Places...