Rebirth of Gallaces

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

The origins of Gallaces 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 Gallaces 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" in 600 hectares of land in the Gallaces Valley, emphasising housing rather than industry. The ministry, however, had carried out only preliminary studies on the possible replacement of the old town, and was faced with opposition to the project, in both Madrid and Barcelona, so the Ministry decided 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 for the 24 Subregions which cover the Montgoya-Maresme District which may use the school bus regardless of the distance they live from the school. There are also adult education and vocational courses at the college. Students of university age may go to college in Houston.

A new branch library is provided by Montgomery County but sports facilities are generally provided by the development corporation and, apart from those provided as part of school programmes, are private to the extent that they are managed by the Woodlands Community Association, which charges fees. Family memberships are available to all, but although the public group on a day-off 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 180,000 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 visitor's Information Centre set among the pine trees, the well-designed I ren and Convention Centre, and the Water Shopping Mall, all suggest that focial 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 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 unique the idea 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 various community facilities in step with homes and industry in its busy woodland setting must help to foster a more vital community life that needs and which is envisaged by the developer.

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 the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Expropriation, opposition and delay

In Barcelona in the early 1970s, Gallaces, and the two other designated ACTURS (Mataró, Anoia and Sabadell-Terrassa) areas, 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, in 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 and financed 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 Borrau Gallaces 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 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, Gallaces was the first Barcelona new town where the Ministry initiated expropriation procedure. Its designated area covered 1472 hectares east of the Galdes River, and bordered the built-up areas of Peral, Parets, and Sant Perpeta de Mollet, occupying parts of the old municipality, and, of course, it had a strong voice in the city structure. Aided by a council, including the councillors, fought the expropriation orders to halt and fall, taking their case to the supreme appeal courts, which in many cases made the order but often increased compensation payments. The court hearings so held things up that the momentum of the ACTURS plan 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 begun.
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 Galles 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 Galles master plan in limbo, and shortly after the national elections in 1977 the corporation embarked on a parallel planning strategy that they hoped might find more support among local political groups. It employed Catalan architects Canetllops, Boffill and Escudero (the EDP group) to plan a much smaller residential complex 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 Galles.

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 largely expropriated the land, socialist and communist dominated local authorities now contemplate returning land to former owners. Meanwhile, for the general public Galles 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 Galles project, even in this modified form, under way at last.

Acknowledgments
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 beam- ing vice-presidents. It is sharply observant and admorory, 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, an fact 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 struggling 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", pushed aside the class bias of traditional aesthetics.

That book never quite got the attention it deserves, and through some bookshelving skullduggery, I bought my copy of the US edition of 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 book 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 Alley: a Hidden Resource or, to give it its full 18th century title, A Disquisition Upon the Origins, Natural Disposition, and Occurrence in the American Scene of Alleys, together with Special Attention Being Given to Some Small Scale and Easily Completed Propositions for their Improvement in Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, where they do Constitute a Hidden Resource.

The book is a sequel to the Disappearance of Alleys from polite Society and Prospects for their Reappearance. Now he is making a television film called Unknown Places.