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San Cosme, Spain:

Planning and Renewal of a State Housing Area

by Martin Wynn

Abstract: The San Cosme Residential Estate was built outside Barcelona, Spain, in the mid-1960s by the state-run Syndical Housing Authority to rehouse over seven thousand people, most of them from cleared shanty towns on the Montjuic hill overlooking the city. Within five years of construction, the houses began to deteriorate rapidly and San Cosme has since become notorious as an example of the worst aspects of State housing in Spain. This article examines in detail the planning and construction of San Cosme, and the successful campaign of the local residents' association to persuade central State authorities of the need to rebuild the estate. At the same time, the article identifies the major socio-political and planning issues involved in the San Cosme experience, that may be of relevance to other State housing projects in both the developed and developing world.

The Spanish Planning System

The Land and Urban Planning Act of 1956 formed the basis for urban planning in Spain for the following two decades. The Act established an administrative hierarchy for urban plans at the municipal, sub-regional, provincial, and national levels. Local councils were made responsible for drawing up Municipal Development Plans, although in some cases, particularly in the larger cities, municipal authorities could join together to draw up Sub-Regional Plans, some of which in fact pre-dated the 1956 Act. Such was the case in Barcelona, where a sub-regional plan for the city and the surrounding 27 municipalities had been approved in 1953, when the Greater Barcelona Planning Commission (GBPC) had also been formed to manage urban planning in the Greater Barcelona Sub-Region. The 1956 Act recognized this plan and made the local councils and the GBPC responsible for its enforcement.

The 1956 Act, however, failed to provide any effective control over the growth of Spain's major cities for several reasons. Urban planning at the upper-tier levels has been virtually non-existent and has had little bearing on urban growth in the large metropolitan areas.¹ At the lower-tier levels, the municipal and sub-regional authorities, which were entrusted with drawing up and implementing urban plans, lacked the financial and technical resources to actively intervene in urban development and, in many cases, the political will to fulfill any effective development control role. A loophole in the 1956 Act enabled developers (in both the public and private sectors) to draw up "Local Plans," which could change land use classifications established in approved development plans.²

At the same time, central State authorities, each with their own investment programs, frequently intervened with non-coordinated developments, that sometimes crossed established planning procedure and contradicted approved urban plans. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the activities of the Syndical Housing Authority in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s.

The Syndical Housing Authority

The Syndical Housing Authority (SHA) was founded in 1939 to provide State-subsidized housing for members of the State-run trade unions. It became the major national public housing authority in the Franco era, promoting over 300,000 houses in Spain during the period 1939-75, of which over 24,000 were in the Barcelona Sub-Region, where there nevertheless remained a housing deficit of 118,000 dwellings in 1972,³ due largely to the continued massive migration into the region throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.⁴

The SHA was a Madrid-based authority under the wing of the Labour Relations Ministry but it worked closely with the National Institute of Housing (a sub-section of the Ministry of Housing), which usually financed and directed land acquisition for SHA activities. The SHA provided, above all, "limited cost" housing⁵ for the lowest paid workers and San Cosme was one of three "Overspill Estates" ("Unidades Vecinales de Absorción") specifically built in the mid-sixties to re-settle shanty town dwellers (most of them in-migrants from the south and west of Spain) from Montjuic, a hill area overlooking the city.

The SHA estates of the early and mid-sixties are generally regarded as the worst ever built by the SHA, in terms of the quality of their construction and design. Following the approval of the National Housing Plan in 1961, the Ministry of Housing put the SHA in charge of the construction of over 170,000 low cost houses in the country as a whole, and quantity rather than quality became the main criterion for SHA operations in the ensuing "boom" period. But although San Cosme was undoubtedly one of the worst SHA estates ever built, the vast majority of the SHA housing areas have experienced similar, if less extreme, problems associated with the poor quality of house construction and inadequate service infrastructure.

Montjuic and the residents' associations

Montjuic has subsequently been developed by the Barcelona Council and private developers as a major tourist and recreational area with an amusement park, sports installations, public gardens, and a variety of museums. Eight hectares were also ceded by the Barcelona Council to the State in 1971 for the installation of a television broadcasting center, and the Council, despite massive opposition from local residents and the Architects' Colleges, has used other parts of the hill area (screened from the city center) as municipal rubbish dumps. Thus, although this article focuses on procedural aspects of planning and development at the local level, it is worth noting that the San Cosme project can also be seen in the context of inner city renovation of working-class housing areas by the public administration and/or private developers that has invariably involved the re-housing of residents in the city periphery where land values are much lower and urban services and infrastructure often inferior.

It was precisely this insensitivity to resident needs that gave rise to the residents' association movement in Spain's major cities in the 1960s and 1970s, which, as Borja (1977) and Castells (1978) have pointed out, is one of the most developed movements of its kind in Europe. The San Cosme experience is of interest in this context also, as the struggle by the local residents' association to secure improvement, and then the total renewal, of the San Cosme Housing Estate by central State authorities constitutes one of the most successful and dramatic residents' association protest campaigns in Spain.

The San Cosme case study

The designation of San Cosme and local council opposition 1963-4

In July 1963, the National Institute of Housing (NIH) put other State bodies in charge of the construction of 6,500 houses and complementary service buildings in Barcelona, specifically to house people from Montjuic.⁶ On July 29th, the provincial (Barcelona) delegate of the Ministry of Housing notified the Prat Council of the decision of the SHA to build 300 provisional dwellings on a 100 hectare site (247.1 acres) in the municipality of Prat, 12 kilometers from the Barcelona city center. The Council was asked to supply information regarding land ownership and estate value, so that the expropriation procedure could go ahead. The Prat authorities did this in their reply of October 28th; at the same time, however, they expressed their dismay that a 100 hectare site should be chosen for the construction of only 300 houses and their opposition on the grounds that it contradicted the land use classifications for the area contained in the 1953 sub-regional plan.

The Prat Council drew attention to the fact that the 1953 plan gave three different classifications to the designated area – "Permanent Agricultural Land," "Extensive Suburban Development," and "Special Airport Zone" (Figure 1) – and that development exceeding the specified limitations could only take place if a local plan was passed to change the land zone classifications as necessary.⁷ Further, as the entire area consisted of agriculture land, a Roads and Services Project⁸ would have to be drawn up and approved so that the necessary infrastructure and services could be provided before house construction started, as was demanded by the 1956 Act. In addition, it was pointed out that the designated area contained some of the richest agricultural land in the province, which, because of the problems of drainage and of providing adequate foundations, was scarcely suitable for residential development.

In February 1964, the provincial delegate of the Ministry of Housing again wrote to the Prat Council, this time informing them that 3,000 dwellings⁹ were to be built within part of the previously designated area in Prat, and that the State was officially to occupy the land, following a hand-over ceremony to take place on March 13th. The Prat Council again strongly contested the legality of the proposals on the basis of the 1956 Act, and demanded that, as the local council, they be consulted before expropriation take place, as stipulated in the Law of Limited Cost Housing of 1954.¹⁰

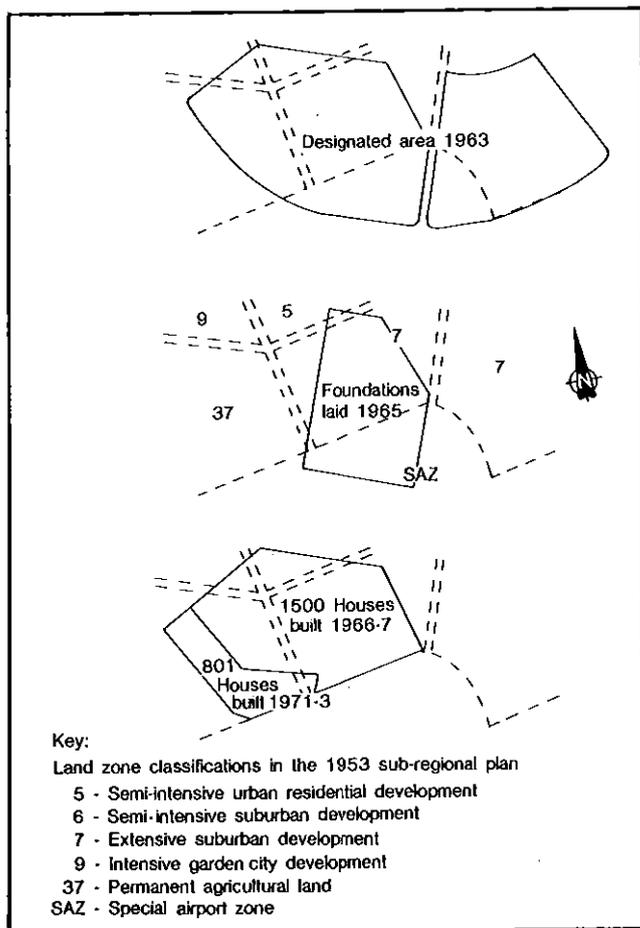


Figure 1. The growth of San Cosme, 1963-1973

The Council also pointed out that 3,000 new dwellings in Prat would constitute an increase of approximately 15,000 people, almost as many as the existent population of 16,021, and that "an increase of such proportions would create enormous difficulties in the satisfactory provision of municipal services and government as there will not be the necessary financial compensation for this Council."¹¹ The Prat Council continued their campaign against the San Cosme proposal throughout 1964 and early 1965, lobbying even the Vice-President of the government for an audience. This relentless protest by the local authority undoubtedly made an impact on the central State authorities. In March 1965, the NIH informed Prat

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Council that it "had agreed to reduce the number of provisional dwellings to be built in Prat to 1,500 instead of the 3,000 originally programmed."¹² Prat Council, on the advice of their legal advisors, accepted this as a reasonable compromise, and the SHA could now proceed with the construction of the new housing estate.

Construction of San Cosme, 1965-67

Although no Local Plan or Roads and Services Project had been submitted to the Public Information Stage, or followed the procedural course outlined in the 1956 Land and Urban Planning Act¹³, the Prat Council contacted the SHA in March 1965, inviting them to discuss details of the San Cosme operation. In April, the SHA replied by forwarding copies of their plans and asking that the Prat authorities grant the necessary building permits, which the Council did in May 1965. By this time, the SHA had awarded the contract for construction to *Colomina - Serrano S.A.*, a nationwide building contractor, and the foundations had been laid (Figure 3). In April 1965, however, the Aviation Ministry intervened with an objection that necessitated the re-planning of about half the estate. This highlights the incredible lack of coordination between government ministries, that was in many ways typical of State intervention in the Franco era.

In October 1963, Prat Council had pointed out that part of the designated area encroached on land classified as "Special Airport Zone" in the 1953 Barcelona Sub-Regional Plan. Now, the Aviation Ministry wrote to the SHA noting that construction was underway in this area, and warning them that should plans for future runway extension be approved, the houses would have to be demolished. The SHA clearly took the warning seriously. By May 1966, a revised lay-out (Figure 2) had been drawn up and construction continued accordingly,¹⁴ leaving almost half the 1965 foundations (those within the Special Airport Zone) to be abandoned. By 1967, construction of the two-story H-shaped and linear apartment blocks was complete, and by the end of 1968, 7,215 people were living in San Cosme in the River Llobregat delta area, with over 5,000 of them having been removed from shanty towns on Montjuic.

House deterioration, 1970-74

In the early 1970s, many houses in San Cosme began to show clear signs of deterioration, notably large surface cracks in the outer and inner walls. The San Damian Residents' Association (SDRA), representing the San Cosme residents, contacted the SHA and asked that the necessary repairs be made. In 1973, the River Llobregat broke its banks and flooded San Cosme, filling the house cellars with flood water that often contained sewage effluent. By

now, the majority of San Cosme residents were refusing to pay part or all of the mortgage payments that the SHA had set in 1969 for twenty-to forty-year loans, based on the subsidized cost of houses.¹⁵ The SHA had failed to carry out repairs, and relations between the SHA and the SDRÁ were further embittered by the serving of eviction notices on some of the residents.

How was it possible that these houses began to crack and crumble so soon after completion of construction? As already noted, the Prat Council had pointed out in 1963 that the delta soils posed problems for the adequate provision of both drainage and house foundations. In a geological survey subsequently carried out in 1977,¹⁶ it was discovered that deltaic deposits extended to a depth of 40 meters from the surface. The SHA had designed their houses on "egg-box" foundations, reaching only one meter below the surface, which in theory could "float" in the soft delta clays, and thereby support the two-storey apartment blocks above. But in practice, the movement of the sub-soil was so great that the foundations moved disproportionately, causing cracks to appear in both inner and outer walls of the apartments. Here, one could possibly place some blame on the Prat Council's technical planning office, which had reported favorably on the house design in April 1965, prior to the granting of municipal building

permits. But by then all formal planning procedure had been reduced to something of a farce by the illegality of the San Cosme operation over the previous two years, and one can suppose that Prat Council, having just secured a reduction in the overall size of the housing estate from 3,000 to 1,500, was reluctant to push its luck. It must also be said that if statutory planning procedure had been followed,¹⁷ Local Authorities and the general public would have had the opportunity to closely examine the plans for San Cosme, and that the technical aspects of the SHA's proposals would have been seriously questioned. In any case, the blame must surely rest fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the SHA which, as a State housing authority, should have ensured that the proposals for foundations were satisfactory, before submitting the plans to the Prat authorities.

Throughout 1973, the SDRÁ pressed the SHA for urgently needed repairs, while a Barcelona member of the Spanish Parliament (E. Tarragona) took up the case with government authorities in Madrid. Finally, in November 1973, the NIH was authorized to draw up a repair program for San Cosme and in March 1974, *Constructora Internacional S.A.*, an international building contractor, was given the state contract for carrying out these repairs. But failure to arrive at an agreement with residents over what families should do while their houses were being repaired delayed

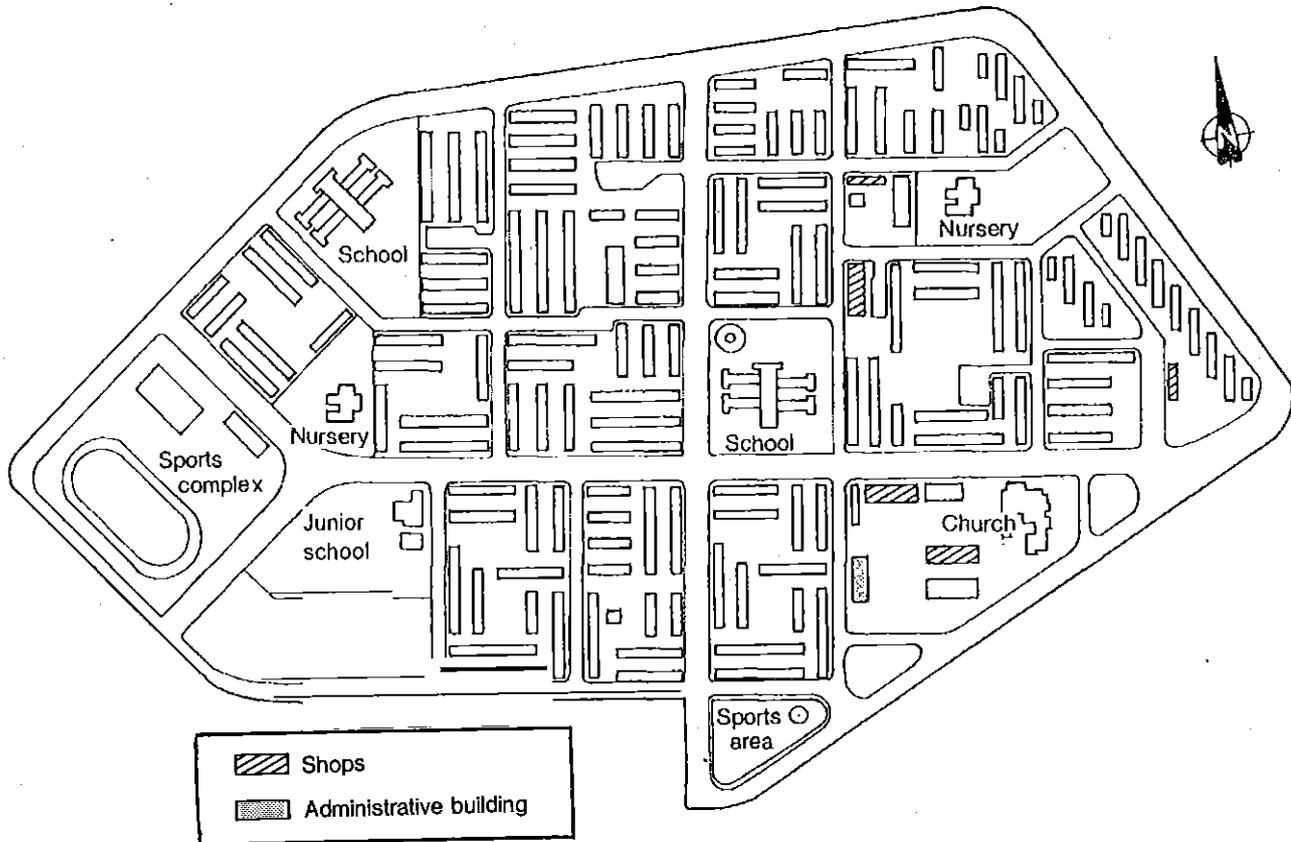


Figure 2. The Syndical Housing Authority's revised plan for San Cosme, May 1966

the start of operations until October 1974, when Mr. Tarragona again raised the matter in the Spanish Parliament, demanding that the urgent problems in San Cosme be satisfactorily resolved. In a written reply, the President of the Spanish Parliament confirmed reports that because of new estimates¹⁸ on the total cost of repairs, the Government had decided to demolish the 1,500 houses built between 1965 and 1967, and build approximately 3000 in their place. Instead of being repaired, San Cosme was now to be renewed.

The first renewal scheme, 1974-5

In 1974, the SHA was undergoing transition from a house promotion and management authority to an essentially estate management body within the Syndical Organization, and after that time, they played very little part in proceedings. By early 1975, the NIH had prepared its own draft plan for the renewal of San Cosme (Figure 3). The new estate was to consist of pre-fabricated star and linear-shaped blocks of five and nine stories (c.f. the existing 2 storey blocks), to house 13,000 people.

Meanwhile, in January 1975, the residents' associations in SHA estates in Barcelona collectively petitioned the Ministry of Housing, demanding that they be allowed to set up "Committees of Control" to supervise all repair and renewal schemes. In March, the NIH officially rejected the idea, and stressed that "in no way may persons outside the Administration intervene actively in the realization of

the Administration's programmes."¹⁹ This tended to sour the reception of the NIH's renewal scheme in San Cosme, and relations worsened throughout 1975, as disagreements arose over payment of removal and other costs to be incurred in implementing the project. Further, problems surrounded the 801 houses built by the SHA in 1971-3 to the south of the 1500 built between 1965 and 1967; 500 of these remained empty and the NIH proposed to move 500 families into these houses as permanent residences to facilitate the phased demolition-construction-rehousing operation of the renewal scheme. The habitable state of these 500 houses was put in doubt by an architect's report commissioned by the SDRA. The report stated that the houses had "great structural defects and many are considered uninhabitable."²⁰

This was subsequently challenged in a report commissioned by the SHA, but following a series of bitter exchanges in the summer and autumn of 1975, relations between the SDRA and the housing authorities reached a new crisis point. The rent strike continued (not just in San Cosme, but in almost all SHA estates in Barcelona), and the future of the renewal scheme remained uncertain.

New initiatives in the post-Franco era

In 1976, the first full year of the post-Franco era, a new administration, and subtle but significant changes in political attitudes brought new impetus to the San Cosme renewal scheme. New "social housing"²¹ legislation placed emphasis on making loans available to house buyers, representing a significant



Housing in San Cosme, 1977. The repair of cracks in the outer walls was often undertaken by the residents themselves (Photo: M G Wynn).

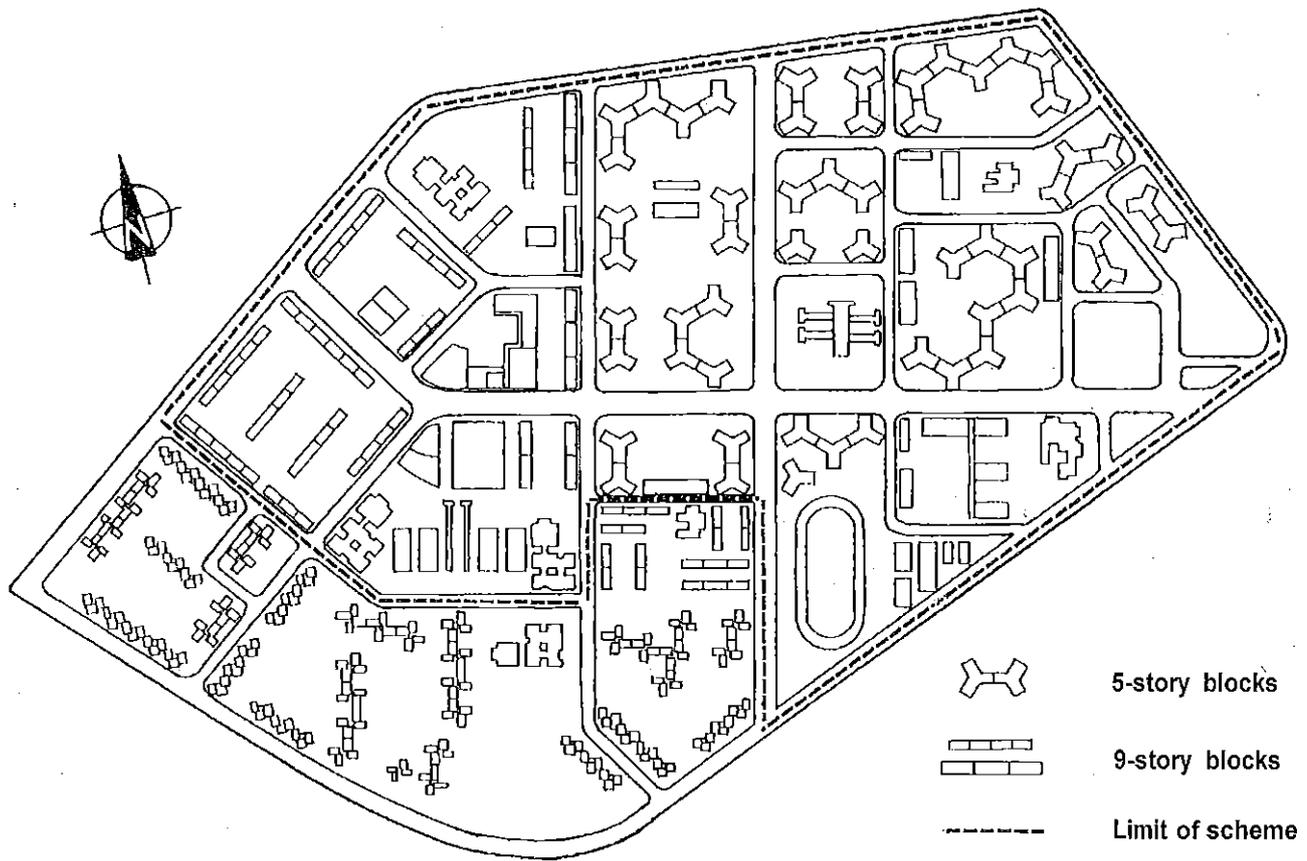


Figure 3. The National Institute of Housing's plan for renewal in San Cosme, January 1975



Houses built in the second phase of construction, 1971-73. These houses were the center of a dispute between the San Damian Residents' Association and the Syndical Housing Authority in 1975, when it was suggested that 500 families from the first phase (1965-67) be permanently rehoused (Photo: M G Wynn).

policy change from the constructor subsidy system which had been the major feature of previous state housing policy. More importantly as regards San Cosme, it was stated that "in exceptional cases, the National Institute of Housing may acquire or construct 'social housing' themselves, using their own funds.....such exceptional cases include.....house deterioration."

²² This, then, provided a new legislative framework within which renewal schemes could be financed by the NIH.

At the same time (in July 1976), the Barcelona General Metropolitan Plan (GMDP) was definitively approved. This replaced the 1953 sub-regional plan and was of importance to the San Cosme scheme for two reasons. First, it made reference to the role of special plans in the renewal of existing areas. This type of plan had been introduced in the Land and Urban Planning Reform Act of 1976 as having the "objective of carrying out operations in urban areas aimed at decongestion, creation of urban and community services, improvement of unhealthy areas, traffic circulation, and environmental conditions..."²³ Second, the GMDP classified all San Cosme as a "previously re-planned zone.." This classification was intended for areas for which local plans had been drawn up and approved since 1953, resulting in land uses that contradicted the land use classifications for such areas in the 1953 sub-regional plan. Paradoxically, no local plan had ever been approved for San Cosme, and yet San Cosme existed in contradiction to the 1953 classifications. What the 1976 plan did was to recognize formally the existence of San Cosme, even if the land zone classification was not strictly

appropriate. Therefore, by the end of 1976, the GMDP, the new State housing policy, and the Land and Urban Planning Reform Act provided a new legal, administrative and planning framework for the renewal of San Cosme.

The new renewal scheme, 1976-7

Throughout 1976, the SDRA continued to press local and central authorities for action in San Cosme. At the same time, the SDRA contracted an advisory team of architect planners (led by F. Calbet) which became increasingly involved with finding an alternative to the renewal scheme proposed by the NIH in January 1975. In October 1976, Calbet's team presented an alternative plan to San Cosme residents in a public exhibition held in San Cosme. Following a series of minor adjustments, this was accepted as a new draft plan for renewal by the Ministry of Housing in late 1976. This was of considerable significance: it meant that the SDRA had effectively won its campaign to have a direct say in the plan-making process. This victory was consolidated in February 1977, when an official contract was signed between the NIH and Calbet, stating that architects from both camps would work together in drawing up a Special Plan of Interior Reform and a Roads and Services Project for all San Cosme, and a Building Project (detailed house design) for the first phase of renewal (Figure 4). The NIH was to finance the operation and twenty year loans would be made available to residents for the long-term purchase of the new houses.

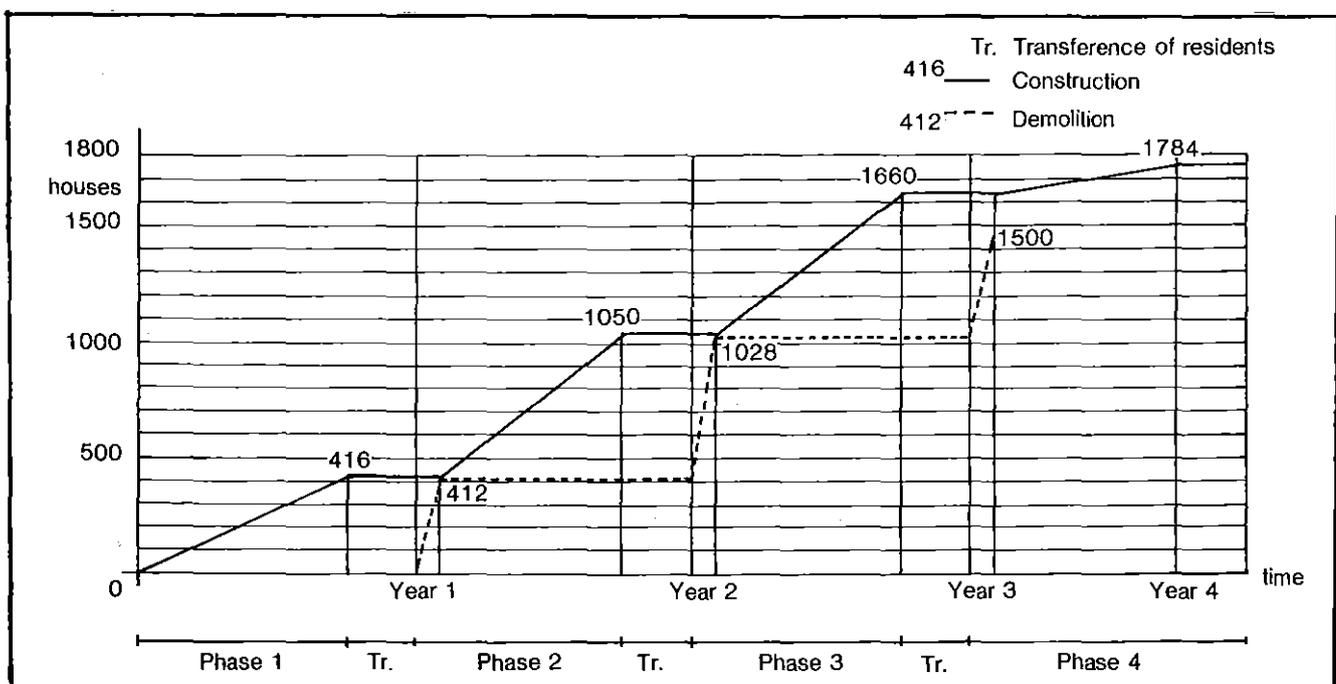


Figure 4. The four phases of the special plan of interior reform for San Cosme, 1978. Construction will start on the existing football pitch, enabling residents to move directly into their new homes. Their former homes will then be demolished to make way for the second phase of construction.

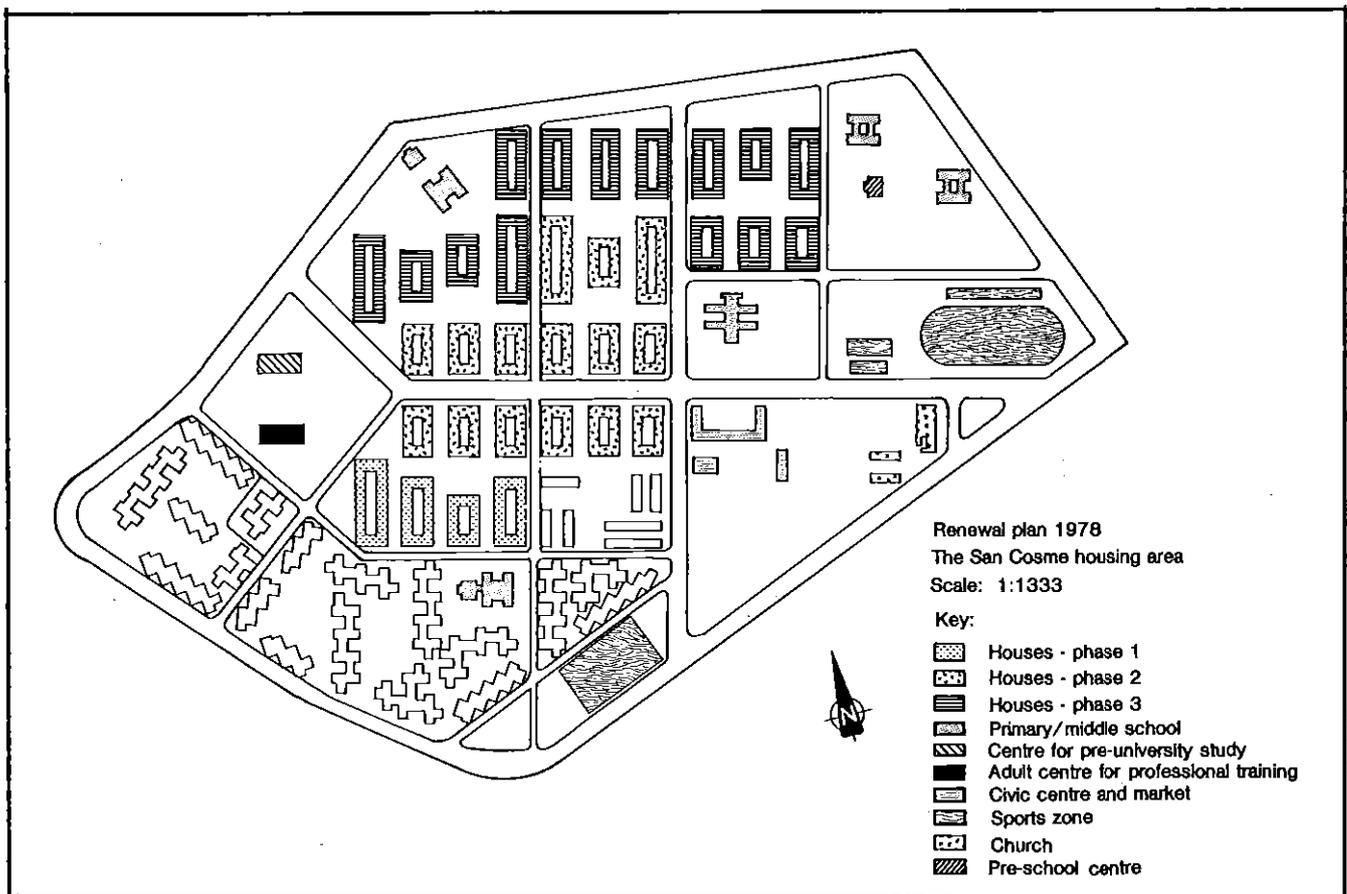


Figure 5. The Special Plan of Interior Reform for San Cosme, 1978.

By July 1977, the Special Plan of Interior Reform (Figure 5) had been completed. The 1500 houses built in the years 1965-7 were to be demolished and 1,784 new houses built in their place in four-storey blocks enclosing central recreational areas. Construction was to start on the old football pitch as part of a four-phase scheme whereby residents would move directly into their new houses and thereby avoid any enforced temporary residence elsewhere. By January 1978, after a series of meetings and discussions with residents to determine design details and the exact community service needs, the Roads and Services Project and Building Project for the first phase was also complete.

The plan approval process, 1977-8

According to Article 41 of the Land and Urban Planning Reform Act of 1976, the Special Plan of Interior Reform (SPIR) for San Cosme should have been initially approved by the Ministry of Housing, then submitted to the Public Information Stage for a month, with a further month for the Audience of Local Corporations, before being provisionally and definitively approved by the Ministry of Housing and Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona²⁴ respectively. But, as Figure 6 shows, the SPIR was not formally approved by the Ministry at all.

It was *accepted* by them, and then forwarded to the Prat Council for the council "to proceed with the approval process, as outlined in Article 41 of the Land and Urban Planning Act of 9th April 1976."²⁵ Paradoxically, as noted above, this was *not* in accordance with the referred to Act. The Ministry, it seems, was bending over backwards to avoid giving the impression of heavy-handed state intervention (such as had characterised events 1963-5) to such an extent that they were technically not following correct planning procedure.

On October 17th, 1977, following reports by the Municipal Planning Department and the Committee of Construction and Installations of Prat Council, the SPIR for San Cosme was initially approved by Prat Council. Following announcements on the Council notice-board and in the Official Bulletin of the Province, the Public Information Stage was officially opened on November 17th. The Colonel-Director of Barcelona Airport and the Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Public Works were asked to forward reports. These reached the Prat Council in January and February of 1978, and stated no objection to the plan. No appeal at all was presented to the Council in the Public Information Stage, and the plan was therefore forwarded²⁶ to the Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona for definitive approval. This was

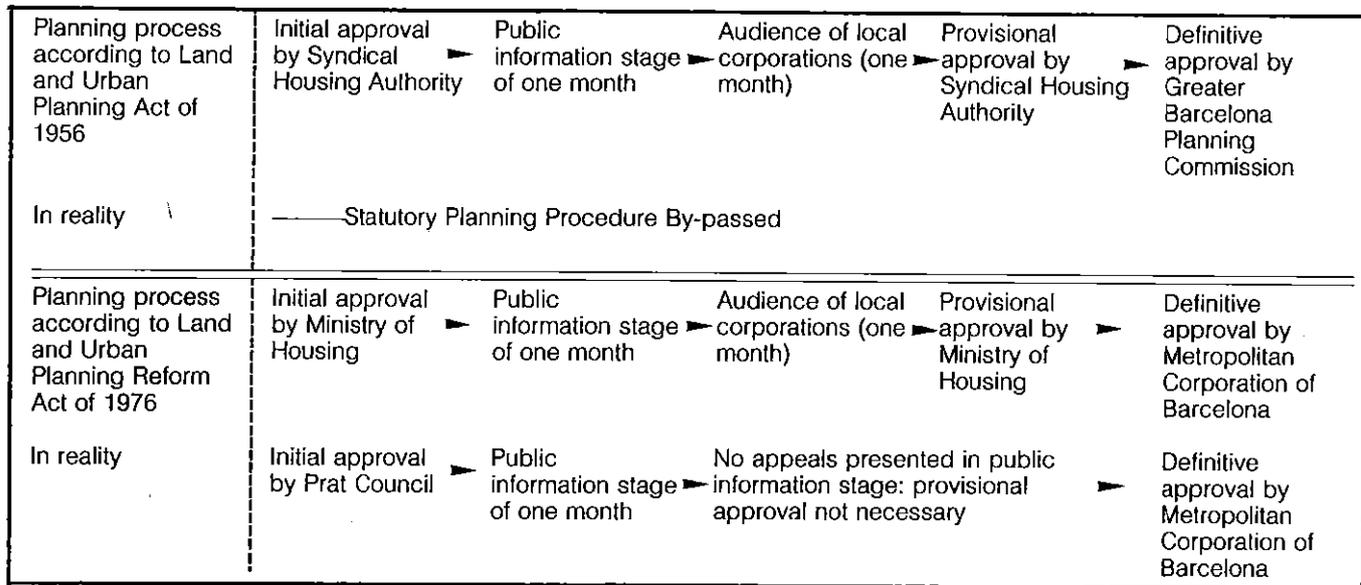


Figure 6. The plan approval process in theory and in reality for the Local Plan of 1963-5 (above), and for the Special Plan of Interior Reform of 1977-8 (below)

given on April 21, 1978. Following visits of Ministry Officials to Barcelona and to San Cosme itself, the budgetary allocation for the first phase of the renewal scheme was approved by the full cabinet on December 15, 1978, and *Dragados y Construcciones*, a nationwide building contractor, was awarded the contract for the first phase on March 1, 1979. By October of that year, foundations for the new houses had been laid, with the first phase scheduled to be completed by mid-1980. The battle of the residents' association and Calbet's team to get San Cosme rebuilt was almost won.

Summary

The San Cosme case study illustrates in striking manner some of the worst aspects of State housing in particular, and State intervention in general, in the Franco era. All along, central State authorities have dominated developments in San Cosme to such an extent that formalized planning procedure has been of little consequence. In 1963-4, the NIH paid scant regard to the objections raised by Prat Council, even though they were quite legitimate according to planning and housing legislation. The San Cosme operation of the mid-sixties typified the heavy-handed central State intervention that did so much to undermine the credibility of the Madrid Government in Catalonia in the Franco era. The NIH also went back on its word, assuring Prat Council that only 1,500 houses would be built, and then constructing a further 800 (through the SHA) in the early 1970s.

The bungling in decision-making must also be something of an object lesson. First, over half of the original foundations had to be abandoned, because of

the objection of the Aviation Ministry, which ironically took as its planning guidelines the land zone classifications of the 1953 sub-regional plan (which had been ignored by the NIH and the SHA). Then, in the early and mid-seventies, the change of policy from repair to renewal revealed the absence of a full comprehension of the problems involved, and was also accompanied by an about face by Ministerial authorities on the question of whether these houses were or were not supposed to be permanent dwellings. If, as the President of the Spanish Parliament asserted in 1975, these houses were meant to provide "temporary shelter only,"²⁷ then the same is presumably true of the other two "overspill estates" built at Pomar and Cinco Rosas in the mid-sixties, and yet no renewal schemes exist for these estates.

The San Cosme operation of the mid-sixties is perhaps best seen within the context of the political, economic, and social realities of the age. Barcelona had a housing deficit (in the municipality alone) of an estimated 100,000 houses²⁸ in 1960, and the continued flow of migrants into the city²⁹ put great strains on the urban structure, with shanty towns springing up in most of the green areas and on waste land (near railways, cemeteries, industrial installations) in and around the city. With the blessing of the Barcelona Council, which was anxious to exploit the tourist potential of Montjuic, the central State authorities went for a quick, no-nonsense solution to the shanty problem, that in fact had a lot more to do with their desire to rid the Barcelona city center of unsightly shanty towns than any humanitarian housing policy. The shanty dwellers were moved to poorly constructed dwellings in a variety of peripheral locations, including San Cosme on the mosquito-ridden Llobregat delta.

But perhaps what the San Cosme experience shows above all is that housing projects that are totally insensitive to the needs and wishes of residents are unlikely to be successful in the long term. This is well illustrated by the contrast between the attempts of the NIH to effect repair, and then renewal, schemes in the period 1973-75 and Calbet's collaboration with the San Cosme residents after 1975. In the former, implementation was thwarted by disagreement between residents and state authorities over temporary residences, removal expenses, and resident participation in the direction of operations that were to be carried out by an international building contractor employed by a central state authority. In the latter, Calbet, who had been designated by the residents' association to direct the plan-making process on their behalf, drew up proposals that catered as far as possible to individual resident needs, and yet met the budgetary restrictions imposed by the NIH. Calbet also insisted that local building contractors be used if possible, but had to concede on this point in the end when it became clear that no locally-based firm could effectively compete with the nationwide builders for such a large contract. But although such compromises had to be made, the residents as a whole were behind Calbet's scheme from the start. Instead the major battles to be fought were with the sub-regional planning authority to approve the Special Plan of Interior Reform (SPIR), and with the central government to actually finance the scheme.

The need to incorporate resident opinion into the planning process is of particular importance now that Spain has democratically elected *local* as well as central administrations. In the drawing up of the SPIR, public participation was organized on a very ad hoc, if successful, basis under the direction of Calbet's team of architect-planners. At local level, the formalized planning process remained somewhat irrelevant, just as it had for different reasons in the original scheme in the sixties (see Figure 6). Prat Council played very little part in proceedings in 1976-8 and the official Public Information Stage held by the council in November 1977 was a mere formality; the real element of public participation had already taken place through the series of questionnaires, public exhibitions, and meetings held by Calbet. But one must hope that this form of resident involvement in the formulation of planning proposals can take place more directly with the new local authorities (dominated by Socialists and Communists in the big cities) now that they are likely to play a far more active role in urban affairs. It can also be supposed that local authorities at municipal and sub-regional levels will be more successful in managing the coordination of service and infrastructure provision than were the central state authorities in San Cosme where empty spaces remained in 1972 where a school, a day-nursery, and the sports centre should have been.

Finally then, what major lessons can be learned from the San Cosme experience that may be of value to planners and politicians in other countries, as well as in Spain? First, the events of the seventies illustrate the value of careful timing and phasing of plan implementation and the need for the general incorporation of resident preferences into the planning and design processes. Second, the role played by Calbet's team of architect-planners reveals the importance of having a planning team committed to the successful implementation of the project, which should ideally work within the public administration rather than outside it. Finally, the San Cosme experience as a whole highlights the potential dangers of heavy-handed central state intervention, particularly in an area like Catalonia which has a long history of anti-Centralist political activity.³⁰ As a rule, the local authority will be better equipped to manage and coordinate housing project schemes if it possesses the necessary financial and technical resources, and if political power is sufficiently devolved. People involved in the San Cosme experience have learned these lessons the hard way. It is hoped that this account may help others in similar situations to avoid some of the pitfalls.

Author's note

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Notes

1. The Barcelona Provincial Plan of 1963 was one of only three provincial plans that were ever approved. This plan, which included proposals for the resettlement of 400,000 in-migrants in southern Spain and 750,000 other Barcelonans in the Catalan Provinces, was only an "advisory document" without the political-administrative back-up to make it a feasible proposition. At the national level, the Central Commission of Urban Planning was never created and the National Urban Plan was abandoned in the early 1960s once the government embarked on the quadrennial National-Regional Economic Development Plans which centered on a growth poles policy in the underdeveloped south and west of Spain and paid little attention to the need for urban planning in the existent metropolitan areas.
2. The loophole was that Article 10 of the 1956 act stated that public or private promoters could draw up local plans for "the development of municipal or sub-regional plans. This ambiguity permitted developers to use the local plan to reclassify land to suit their development proposals. Thus, an area classified as "green zone" in a municipal or sub-regional plan could be reclassified for residential development in a local plan.
3. According to the Management Commission of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. Other estimates put the figure as high as

- 225,000. See *Construcción, Arquitectura y Urbanismo* No. 21, Colegio de Aparajadores, Barcelona, September-October 1973.
4. In the municipality of Barcelona alone, the number of in-migrants averaged between 22,000 and 35,000 a year between 1954 and 1965. By the late 1960s, the population of the sub-region was growing by 100,000 persons a year.
 5. The Law of Limited Cost Housing (*Ley de Renta Limitada*) of 1954 introduced State subsidies and fiscal exemptions for the constructors of housing that complied with dimensional and maximum cost specifications. The Law is stated in full in *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (Madrid) Num. 197, 16 July, 1954, pp. 4834-4841.
 6. Decree 1622 of 4th July 1963; stated in full in *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (Madrid) Num. 167, 13 July 1963, P. 10875.
 7. The land zone classifications of the 1953 sub-regional plan were subsequently grouped into three main generic categories: urban land, urban reserve, and rural land. To develop any land falling within the last two categories, a local plan had first to be drawn up and approved to reclassify the affected areas as urban land. All the land within the designated area in Prat was either "Rural land" or "Urban Reserve" and so a local plan was necessary, according to the Land and Urban Planning Act of 1956, before development of the area could proceed.
 8. Article 67 of the Land and Urban Planning Act of 1956 states: "Urban Land may only be developed when each parcel of land can be classified as a 'plot' in accordance with the stipulations of Article 63 of this act regarding minimum infrastructural and service provision." Article 63 defined these as being "road surfacing, paving, water supply, sewage and drainage system and street lighting." The Act introduced the concept of "Roads and Services Project" to program the provision of these services. The Act is stated in full in *Ley 12 Mayo 1956-Regimen del Suelo y Ordenación Urbana*, edited and published by *Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Cataluña*, Barcelona, 1971.
 9. The increase from 300 to 3,000 houses between July 1963 and February 1964 seems to be explained by the fact that the July decree made provision for the construction of 6,500 houses in Barcelona. This could have been interpreted as meaning only the municipality of Barcelona; but in December, a further decree (No. 3681/1963) extended the area of possible location of these houses to include the entire Barcelona Sub-Region. Thus, although the SHA intended to construct 3,000 houses in Prat all along, this was not officially communicated to the Prat Council while doubts remained about interpretation of the Decree of July 1963.
 10. Article 22 of the Law of Limited Cost Housing (see note 4), states:
The promoters of "limited cost" housing can in exceptional cases, acquire the necessary land through expropriation. In such cases the project will be declared by decree to be of "public utility" . . . such a declaration can only be made following a favourable report from affected Council(s) . . .
 11. Extract from letter to Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Housing, Barcelona, from Mayor of Prat Council (Mr. Maximo Simon Perez), dated March 5, 1964.
 12. Extract from letter to Mayor of Prat Council from General Manager of the NIH, dated March 22, 1965.
 13. The Land and Urban Planning Act of 1956 established a three-phase approval process for all urban plans drawn up by public authorities. First the plan was initially approved by the plan-making authority (local council, sub-regional or provincial planning authority, ministerial body). It was then submitted to the "Public Information Stage" for one month, during which time anyone could present appeals against the plan. Then, if the plan-making authority was other than the local council, an "Audience of Local Corporations" stage would follow for a further month, during which time the local authorities could state their case. The plan-making authority then provisionally approved the plan, incorporating modifications arising from the "Public Information" and "Audience of Local Corporations" stages, and submitted it to the Provincial or Sub-Regional Planning Authority for definitive approval.
 14. In fact a few minor adjustments were subsequently made, e.g., location of the sports center.
 15. The gross cost per house (including roads, service infrastructure, etc.) varied between 335,000 (\$5583) and 389,000 (\$6483) pesetas. For each house there was a 30,000 peseta (\$500) State subsidy. (U.S. dollars reflect 1966 exchange rates.)
 16. Report of INCE (Instituto Nacional de Edificación) on San Cosme undertaken on the insistence of architect Calbet in 1977. Following the findings of this survey, the houses in the new renewal scheme will have pile driven foundations reaching some 40 meters below ground level.
 17. See Note 13 above.
 18. In March 1974, *Constructora Internacional S.A.* was awarded the contract to undertake the first phase of repairs within a budget allowance of 7.6 million pesetas. Subsequently the NIH drew up estimates for a second, larger-scale repair phase, which alone came to a further 151.9 million pesetas. With a third phase also envisaged, total repair costs were estimated at 450 million pesetas, i.e., 300,000 pesetas per house on average, almost as much as the original cost of house construction.
 19. Extract from letter from Mr. A. Rodriguez, Provincial Director of the Syndical Housing Authority, to residents' associations in SHA housing estates, in which the reply of the National Institute of Housing to demands of the Residents' Associations was quoted; letter dated March 7, 1975.
 20. Report by F. Calbet Rebollo and M. Valls Ferrer, April, 1975. Reproduced in full in *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y Urbanismo* No. 107, C.O.A.C.B., Barcelona, 1975.
 21. The term "social housing" was introduced to replace "state subsidized housing" as used in previous legislation. The 1976 and 1977 legislation is stated in full in *Anexos* Nos. II, 12 and 22, C.O.A.C.B., Barcelona 1976/77.
 22. From Royal-Decree 2278 of 16th September 1976, Introductory and Article 16. Stated in full in *Anexos* No. II (see note 21).
 23. Article 23 of Land and Urban Planning Reform Act, approved by Royal-Decree 1346 on April 9, 1976. Stated in full in *Legislación del Suelo*, Editorial Civitas, Madrid, 1976.
 24. The Greater Barcelona Planning Commission was renamed the Metropolitan Corporation of Barcelona in 1974, and the internal administrative structure reformed.
 25. Extract from letter to the Mayor of Prat Council from the Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Housing, dated August 5, 1977.
 26. As no appeal was presented in the Public Information Stage, provisional approval of the plan was not considered necessary. This common practice among most councils is aimed at cutting out unnecessary administrative procedure.
 27. From a letter from Mr. Alejandro Rodriguez de Valcarcel y Nebrada, President of the Spanish Parliament, to Mr. E. Tarragona Corbella, dated March 10, 1975.
 28. According to Borja,]. (1973).
 29. See note 4 above.
 30. Although this Catalan anti-centralist feeling was clearly evident in the campaign against the San Cosme project conducted by the Prat Council in the mid 1960s, it is important to note that the Residents' Association movement of the 1970s in San Cosme (and in most other state housing areas) has been conducted by and large by non-catalans. Of course, their protest campaigns have been anti-Madrid, but in San Cosme the majority of residents are from the south and west of Spain and

Calbet is a Madrilenio. San Cosme is not, then, an example of a Catalan nationalist movement fighting repression from Madrid. It is also worth noting that the turnover of residents in San Cosme since it was first occupied in the late 1960s has been negligible.

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