



# R\_URBAN HUBS

QUESTIONING THE BOUNDARIES  
OF 21<sup>ST</sup>-CENTURY BARCELONA

**FINAL PROJECTS 2015/2016**  
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# Leisure Architecture in the Llobregat Delta, 1954-1965

*Excerpt from the doctoral  
thesis, in process*

EVA PRATS

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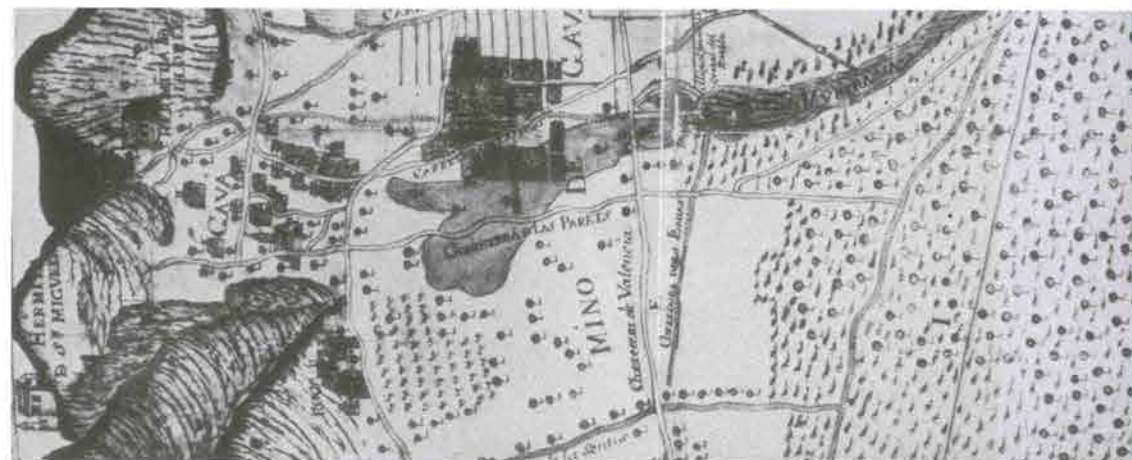
*“In a ludic society,  
urbanization will  
automatically take  
the form of a dynamic  
labyrinth... Instead of a  
centre to be reached, there  
will be an infinite number  
of moving centres.”*

—H. Constant<sup>1</sup>

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This article is an excerpt from the research for my doctoral thesis, which involves collecting a series of projects built in the pinewood landscape of the Llobregat Delta over a time period of a decade, all with the same programme of free time and recreation.

What makes the study of this specific situation so interesting is the exceptional achievement during this period of a complementary relationship between landscape, use and architecture. This relationship produced a series of projects, some publicised in books of their creators' works, as in the case of Antoni Bonet and Francesc Mitjans, but most of which have not been publicised or studied as a joint response to a given brief and time.



Fragment of the drawing dated 1590 belonging to the Barony of Eramprunyà.

The need to organize free time that first colonized this territory came mainly from the nearby city of Barcelona. It was, then, initially a need manifested beyond the area itself. However, the implantation of this programme worked in favour of the natural environment, and the necessary constructions for its use (bathing establishments, camp sites and holiday homes) shared a common proposal with the pinewoods, the dunes and the seafront. The new facilities served to design the relation that future users would have with this environment.

Contact with the outdoors seen as something positive channelled specific attention to the design of the built boundaries of these services, sometimes allowing construction to

extend into the woods or across the sand. The role of architecture in this context was to promote contact with the earth, the water, the shadows and the trees, giving rise to situations of recreation in the natural environment.

The origin of these projects lies in the pinewoods, but what remains unknown today is the origin of the woods themselves. There are references to the existence of seaboard pinewoods in the Llobregat Delta in 16th-century documents, but the origin is still unknown, presenting the possibility that it may be artificial or natural.

The pine trees were first drawn in this 16th-century engraving, in a very similar situation to when they were discovered in the early





Aerial view of the Ciutat de Repòs, 1932.

1930s by the GATCPAC group of architects (Grup d'Arquitectes i Tècnics Catalans per l'Arquitectura Contemporània). For this site, the GATCPAC proposed the Ciutat de Repòs (City of Rest) to be organized throughout the pinewoods, crossing over municipal boundaries. This city formalized a newly emerged programme: leisure for the working classes, the organization of free time for urban workers in a natural open space. It was an ambitious proposal with comprehensive documentation, presented as an immediately possible project. Ultimately, the initiative was not built, but when occupation of the area by urban leisure re-emerged as a possibility in the 1950s, the Ciutat de

Repòs project surfaced as a reference that was either accepted or denied by the respective architects working in the pinewoods.

Another two decades were to pass before a decisive date for the development of the area: that date was 1954, when the Castelldefels expressway was opened, linking the land around the Delta with the city of Barcelona. The construction of this road was accompanied by an analysis of the territory conducted by the Studies Department of Barcelona City Council. This study continued to envisage delta land as a preserve for leisure and urban sport. Despite the existence of this document,



Peyretti pavilion, Ricard Ribas Seva, 1955.

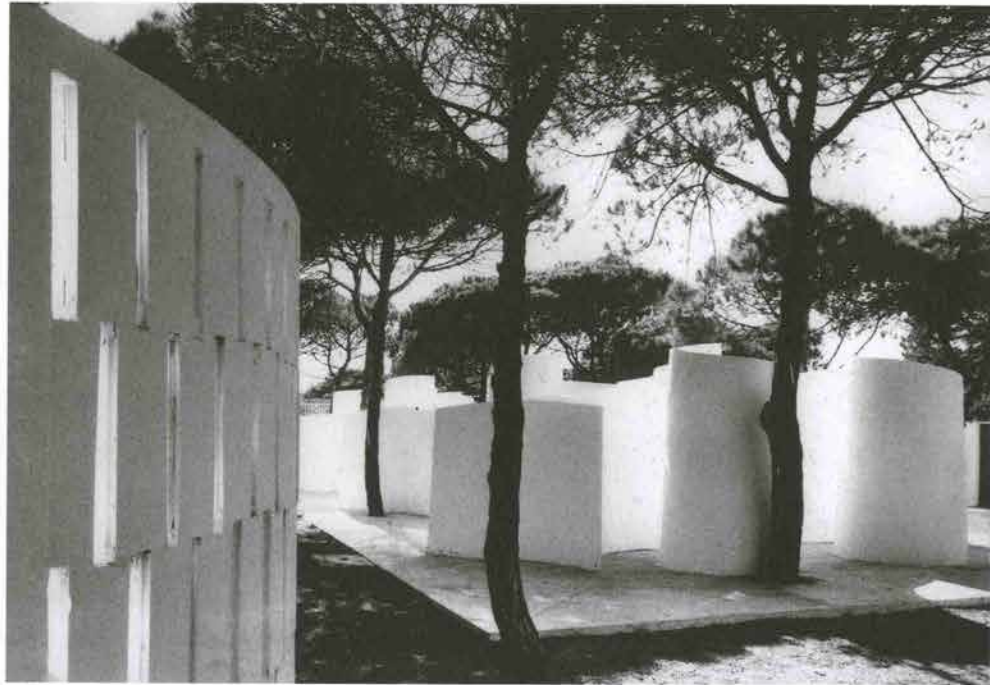
development was carried out in piecemeal fashion and on private initiative. The construction of the expressway enabled the appearance of the various projects presented below and explained in more detail in the thesis.

The generation of architects working in this area was younger than that of the GATCPAC, but despite the cultural interruption of the Spanish Civil War, its members were familiar with the Ciutat de Repòs project. Some of them, as in the case of Antoni Bonet or Ricard Ribas Seva, had taken part in the project as collaborating members; others, such as Francesc Mitjans, had been

student members of the GATCPAC. The different projects built during the decade under study functioned as a variety of centres scattered throughout the maze of pine trees in the Delta. In this period, we can distinguish two phases of colonization of the territory. The first provided the basic services needed for Barcelona citizens to enjoy a day at the beach, including various bathing establishments (Pineda de Gavà, Baños Capri and Pabellón Peyretti).

The next stage involved campsites and second homes. Campsites made longer stays possible, and not just for visitors from the nearby city; they also attracted tourists from all





Spiral showers at the La Pineda baths. Ramón Tort Estrada, 1956.

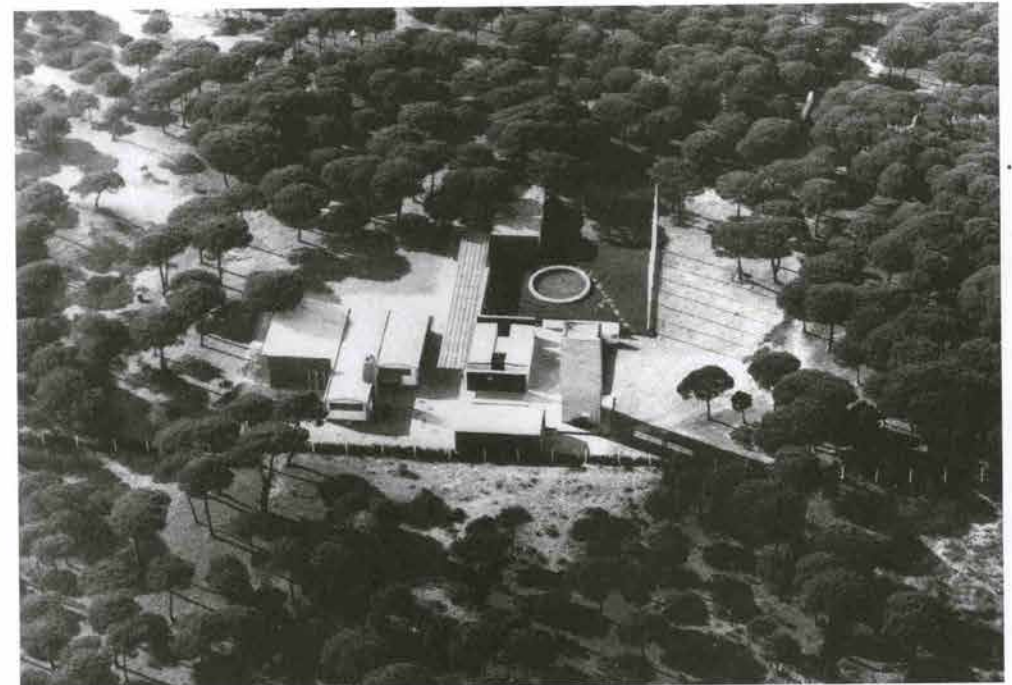
over Spain and the rest of Europe. La Ballena Alegre and Las Naciones are two examples. An example of second home is La Ricarda house.

The various centres offered leisure activity in the pinewoods, amid the trees, in a unitary landscape, all connected. After reading Constant's description that heads this article, it is possible to consider the period under analysis was a first real example of this dynamic labyrinth, where the principles of orientation and economy of distance that characterize utilitarian urbanism give way to a more dynamic use of

time and space: space itself becomes the object of play, adventure and exploration.

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1 — H. Constant, *The Principle of Disorientation*, page 86 of the catalogue of the exhibition at the MACBA, "Situacionistas. Arte, política, urbanismo", curated by Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa.



La Ballena Alegre campsite, Francesc Mitjans, 1960.



La Ricarda house, Antoni Bonet Castellana, 1962.