

COSTA DE LA RUINA: NEGLECTED PLACES AT THE COSTA DEL SOL ALL THE WAY FROM MALAGA TO MANILVE

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This chapter deals with the topic of the current situation of hundreds of empty and abandoned construction sites and their relations to their environment. This phenomenon has its roots in the time of mass construction, which was followed by the global financial crises. Nowadays these places are neglected and avoided by local residents and city municipalities. In particular, this paper is going to refer to the example of the Costa del Sol area in the south of Spain as the main case study.

Since the 1950th this area in southern Spain experienced a tremendous urban growth in providing settlements and infrastructure for Mass Tourism. Rapidly it became one of the most travelled holiday destinations for Europeans. Short term vacation tourism, as well as long term and constant residents from Spain and abroad, bought a 2nd or summer resident home at the coast. Hence the major part of the developments comprises residential buildings. Most of these developments especially inland, prioritised time efficiency of construction, not quality of the structures. The developments have almost no reference to the history or identity of that area. This creates the feeling of being in a copy-paste-mass-production-urbanisation, with fences and borders. There are isolated settlements, unrelated to their surrounding and even other neighbouring regions. The levelling of the topography to establish infrastructure for roads and houses caused big scale nature destruction and landscape sealing.

These developments continued until the Spanish property bubble burst in 2008 due to the global economy and financial crisis. Since then plenty of 'in progress' buildings stopped in construction and still remain in that very situation as they came to halt four years ago. Some of the developments could continue but even these structures are empty today. Together with other vacant developments they are generating ghost towns as though nobody ever lived there. What is going to happen with that kind of abandoned and neglected urban obstacles, when there is no money to continue, to transform or to destruct? How can one interact with the residential building typology that appears along the coast and has become part of Costa del Sol's identity?

An area is influenced by its on-going developments. Some of the results are being planned and others not. Does the area itself profits from it, or is it just the individual? Since the speculation business got forced stopping its developmental leadership what are the claims and consequences to residents, nature and the Costa del Sol identity?

THE LINEAR COSTA DEL SOL CITY

The coastline of the Costa del Sol is an elongated urban agglomeration that stretches from Malaga to Manilva throughout 9 different municipalities. While driving along the coast these municipality boarders are barely visible. There are no tangible borders instead they blend into each other. Is it one never-ending suburb or one lengthened city centre?

There are more continuous elements that support this linear perception. Nature surrounds the Costa del Sol from one side with the linear stretch of the Mediterranean coast with the affiliated linear beach plot and on the other side the continuous mountain range. The existing 'National 340' and the 'AP-7' toll highway are the main infrastructural backbones for the Costa del Sol. They connect all the urban developments, conglomerations and inhabitant spaces, allowing a fast and direct linear connection. Whereas it is possible to reach more or less every space at the Costa del Sol along the highway, the places among each other are rarely connected and some neighbouring settlements are only accessible from the highway itself. This makes the car more or less the only transportation medium to move around.

Even though there are all this linear aspects of the coast there is almost no infrastructure to experience the coastline in itself. The highways are facilitating structures, Marc Augé's so called non-place, a transit space mainly to reach a certain destination (Augé 1992). Whereas for experiencing the area by walking, this very highway constitutes a boundary which rather blocks accesses than enable them.

Social situation

What is the residents' perception of their coast and what are their relations between each other, the abandoned constructions, the inhabited buildings and their individual desires for the area? Since the 1950th the Costa del Sol area experienced huge developments concerning all aspects of the Tourism sector. With that also the user-target-group remained the very similar. The coast as an image for relaxation, water, beach and sun. Is there a way to develop something for tourists and local people? Is there a target group who takes the area as it is without becoming artificialized?

There are different actors around the nature-concrete landscape like the investors for whom the Costa del Sol was a residential business machine and the dwellers themselves which we can distinguish in two main sub groups of people, the local residents and the seasonal tourists. Due to the holiday travel concept of predominantly being in an isolated resident complex right next to the beach, these groups differentiate themselves among each other in individual zones. The, on the one hand, overdeveloped real estate market led to an, on the other hand, underdevelopment of social activity, common space, cultural offers and traditional everyday habits. Before tourism became the major business at the Costa del Sol, inhabitants used to work in the fields of fishing and agricultural. Due to the 1998 change in the building law in order to access more ground for the real estate market, plenty of traditional farmland had to be sold to residential developers leaving the original land owners with a absents of parts of their identity.

The shrinking phenomenon and de-growth

In the nowadays situation, after the crises, we can find this area with an oversupply in living space. After the banks cancelled the supply of loans, people cannot afford to buy these holiday houses anymore. That is why we can find even new furnished apartments which not get sold, but fall prey to weather and decay over time. Even in terms of a recovery, the new investment would need to consider to demolish the afflicted structures first and then to fully new construct, due to decay and

Progress types:

1. Foundation	Concrete foundation platform with concrete columns
2. Skeleton	Construction of concrete slabs supported by concrete columns
3. Bricks and Walls	Skeleton structures with either a dobe brick walls or even plastered walls
4. Finished but vacant	Finished constructions with color, windows and doors, but still empty
5. Abandoned Historical	Buildings which were once inhabit but became abandoned, i.e. old farm houses or mansions

Size types:

1. Single unit	A single solitary ruin
2. Building complex	Two or more ruins belonging to the same construction project
3. Resort	Developments with the size of a whole resort

Table 3-1 Types of construction ruins. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

the simple fact that we would never get the same conditions and customers as before the crisis.

What are possible de-growth strategies with this building typology? And would it be a good strategy to just demolish these obstacles to give the Costa del Sol back its initial natural landscape? Does de-growth mean deconstruction? Or what else can happen then with these empty and unfinished houses?

Fascinations and potentials of the abandoned construction ruin

Giovanni Battista Piranesi showed us already in the 18th century with his etchings of the ruins of Rome the very aesthetics in ruin structures. A little later Hubert Robert drew the brand new Louvre in Paris as an imaginary ruin and reveals this hidden mystic layer of architecture. Ruins are different; we immediately bring them in relation with history witnesses the past. We are able to see two worlds at the same time. The one how it originally was and the one how it got transformed and remains today. The Costa del Sol abandoned construction ruins are different form normal ruins because they were never inhabited and some never even finished being constructed. It is a negative ruin, not the classical one when a building falls apart into ruins, but these developments rise up to ruins (Smithson 1967). While working on the Costa del Sol ruins I characterise them into different types. (Table 3-1)

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Example of the aesthetics of the stalled concrete Skeletons:

A construction site surrounded by cranes which gives the impression of a still growing urban fabric. However the cranes have been idle for some years and the construction fields abandoned. Even construction debris litters the site, such as ten thousands of bricks still wrapped and unused. The buildings, skeletons, ruins, concrete slaps as floors and columns to support these floors. Simple as it is. The structures are fulfilling the model of basic modern architecture. It is minimalism in its pure form, which means a wide space to move in and a structure to support that space. There is no wall, no separation, no border. It is a minimalistic radical version of the Mies



Figure 3-2 Ghost town in Manilva. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

van der Rohe's Farnsworth House. Landscape, nature, sun, air and views are flowing through the unfinished skeleton structure and let people inside experience a much more natural surrounding related interior feeling than in regular types of housing interiors. The design concept provides users with a defined space like a room, but without being in an enclosed space. It is more like a public square, but rather a multi-layered public square building.

Like in Piranesi's etchings of the Carceri series, the staircases are the conspicuous elements of attraction in these skeleton structures and you sometimes cannot be sure where they lead. (Figure 3-1)

98 **Example of finished but never-inhabited ghost-town resort:**

Walking along an empty street with many of the same looking buildings all around. All the blinds are shut and there is no single towel on either balconies or gardens. Everything is new and freshly painted. Walking by, one expects to see somebody sitting in the next garden or opening up a window, maybe the neighbourhood kids are skateboarding on the street you are walking on.

The wild grass growing out of the curb stones shows slight evidence that something is not right. In fact, this place is vacant and always has been. Somehow there is no soul. There never were any kids skateboarding on the street. There is no history with these buildings, no relation to anybody. Nobody misses the time growing up there because no one ever enjoyed afternoons with a hot chocolate on the terrace. Because it is in no one's memory, can we easily tear down this place?

With or without the people, on site, we see all the images, stories and history even though there is nobody and the history of the area is a history of construction. We see and imagine stories

or possibilities. Such a surrendered and exposed man-made fabric automatically lets us think and create scenarios. The ruins are the means for imagination. (Figure 3-2)

Internet activity

The importance of the digital network in our daily routine is not comparable with the situation even just 10 years ago. Booking, buying, renting and lending became easy and accessible. Going through books, streets and museums all over the world from your laptop is common, as well as being connected with thousands of persons, sharing videos, pictures and impressions from everywhere in the world wireless via your smartphone. The digital world is not just something for the young generation and big global companies to sell products. For example problematical urban areas or local discrepancies could get more participation from neighbourhoods and global contributions to achieve a contemporary solution. Therefore it seems inevitable to involve that digital layer in contemporary urban developments.

THE PROJECT

The project is about creating a new spatial dynamic between all kinds of residents, natural landscape and dense urbanisation. Due to the crisis the construction developments came to a halt. These so far unfinished and neglected constructions are going to become a new place of action. The project is making use of these structures and provides possibilities and gives an answer to the lacks and needs of the Costa del Sol inhabitants. In addition the project will introduce the area to the contemporary generation of travellers and locals. This new target group will bring more variety in the future developments but without considering mass tourism and mass commerce. The project is more about the real-life of the area. Additionally it has the concept of investing no new money by working with the minimal tools of intervention. The aim is to work with the ruins, natural appearance and decay for the need of the area itself. It will bring people together with themselves, with nature and the human creation of concrete structures figuring out the question: How can a participatory design process integrate man, the abandoned and nature and making use of the place as a collective good?

The proposed strategy works with different elements whereas the first and second are more focused on the external representation of the coastal area. The third and fourth element gives answers and scenario based solutions to the various perceived scarcities in the research area.

The first element in particular introduces the area and the phenomenon of abandoned construction ruins and their positive appearance in a new perspective. The second element describes the connection of the sites and therefore a way to individually perceive the already existing linear conglomeration with a new infrastructure. The elements 3 and 4 are dealing with ephemeral vs. permanent interventions in order to create a new spatial dynamic for the site itself. Empower the specific character and spatial quality with a permanent addition, and the architectural supporting module as a replaceable ephemeral object.

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Element 1: Rediscovery of the Coast (Information):

The people should become aware of the positive potentials in the neglected spaces. Residential estates appear in such huge presence in the region of Costa del Sol that we cannot deny that these structures became part of the identity already. We have the opportunity to work with these stalled ruins before they get replaced. To just deconstruct what we already destroyed is not an answer. To flatten with bulldozers an area for the second time does not bring us back to



Figure 3-3 Web page draft. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

nature. Richard Wagner wrote: ‘What is being built is always a tomb, a memorial to failure and disaster...only ruins have permanence’ (Huyssen 2003). So the concept is to use that neglected but permanent structures, in order to give them relevance in their uniqueness but also to support the neighbourhood and their individual desires. The places have to remain accessible to everybody in physical and theoretical way. No privatisation, no fences and no boundaries. The place will be for looking, exploring, imagining, reflecting, playing, acting, meeting, doing, creating, exchanging, learning and being.

The abandoned construction ruins, or place of possibilities, will be explored and facilitated on a webpage, which shows all the ruins with specific information about the plots and their surroundings. The internet site introduces different categories of ruin types, pictures of the ruins, texts, notes, imaginations, stories, sketches, and others to discover the new view toward the neglected mass. Basically the webpage introduces and communicates in a contemporary way the topic of the Costa del Sol situation and its special objects. On that platform it is possible to exchange opinions and experience, photos, stories and imaginations. Furthermore the web page is able to grow and therefore provide always new sites and updates which keeps the website and the place worth to go.(Figure 3-3)

Element 2: The path of identity (Infrastructure):

The potential is there, we just need to support the way it can get experienced.

Since these ‘dead bodies’ are appearing all over the coastline, they form an element of

continuity that can be seen as a connected itinerary along the coast. The 'Costa del Monumento' pilgrimage, the enlightenment journey is meant to discover the origins and hybridisation in nature phenomena and artificial human creation.

Hereby the abandoned construction ruins are the eye catching highlights and particular targets to guide you along the path. Possible to create different routes suitable for different extensive day trips. Throughout your trip you discover the exciting ruin typology but you will also experience the coast in its linear outstretch, not just out of a transit non-place. It is important to realise that 'The way is the aim'.

I will introduce the 'IBA - FürstPückler Land' (Internationale Bauausstellung) in Brandenburg Germany where a new infrastructure of bicycle paths around the area were established. They connect cultural activities with the beautiful landscape. Highlights on these paths are the active and the rehabilitated coal mining pits.

The communication of this contemporary traveling tour for alternative tourism is again accessible through the web page. Users are able to interactively design their own personal itinerary and discover this new layer of the Costa del Sol.

Element 3: Activation of the character (Permanent transformation):

The third element confronts the issue of the interactions with the buildings in general and applying a program to the site. Travellers but even more local inhabitants are going to design their neighbourhood and provide a chance to empower the cultural, local and nature activity. The possible implementations at such places are as big as the amount of the sites itself. One example to mention is a skeleton structure which is on former agricultural ground and in between local resident homes. A traditional and contemporary activation of such site would be a common nature-green-house (see Figure 3-4) in which to plant, farm and store. In this sense, the site gets integrated in the Costa del Sol fabric and linear city experience where locals are able to bring back their traditional craftsmanship, meeting and share at these common places the different historic layers of the costal developments with temporary visitors, seasonal tourists and other local residents.

This type of programs would also help the ruin to be one. In terms of perception, which reminded to the words of Robert Smithson in his speech about the Hotel Palenque in Mexico where he talks about the carefulness of how these people tear down a building: 'Slowly with a certain degree of sensitivity and grace so that there is time for the foliage to grow through the broken concrete, and there is time for the various colours on the wall to mellow under the sun.' (Smithson 1972). Robert Smithson is talking about the potentials in decaying and that it shows us the entropy of the presents. The ruins are witnesses of the ephemeral.

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The transformed ruin does not ask for anything and the visitors will feel invited. Its charismatics and playfulness let people interact with it and they will ask themselves 'what could be next?' while having ideas and inspirations the person is taking part of the whole interactive process of observing and imagining possibilities which can be transformed into that structure. Therefore the ruin is also the means for imagination itself.

The main element of the already on-going transformation hereby is the nature which is taking back its original space (see Figure 3-5). So, let nature take back its space?

Element 4: The module (Ephemeral supporting object):

The ephemeral addition is a supporting module for the individual activity or the stroll, which can



Figure 3-4 Nature greenhouse scenario. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

be installed on each site. One of the biggest challenges in providing a solution to the various desires might be to implement some kind of architecture when it was architecture which failed at these specific places. Therefore the focus lies on the perceived space which is created already by the ruin structure itself. Hence the additional installation will be simple, flexible and just temporary. In fact it is just there as long as a person is using it and its space it creates. The Module adapts the existing incomplete ruin structure and completes it momentary to an individual defined area for a specific person or group.

In order to adjust this flexible structure on all kind of positions, an installation of several hocks around the whole site will be implemented. That is giving the users a variety of different options to define an individual space. By using just a simple and traditional like shade-sail-fabric to implement walls, roofs and benches, one is able to define different size areas by just this minimal and temporary installation (see Figure 3-7 and Figure 3-8). In each site the module will be individual due to its adaption of the ruin, its specific character and the personal user needs and desires. In that way people can establish places for sitting, meeting, selling, sharing, playing, enjoying, sleeping and more, a common space for a collective good.

POSSIBLE APPLICATION IN OTHER CONTEXTS

In terms of an application in other contexts we are going to look at the phenomenon in general. Architectural projects which were resigned for a variety of reasons like design errors, clashing political decisions, inaccurate cost estimates, contractor bankruptcies, evident disregard of building regulations, disappearance of funds and more, have stopped, leaving just a series of ruins, abandoned even before having been used at all.



Figure 3-5 Already on-going nature reconquering process. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

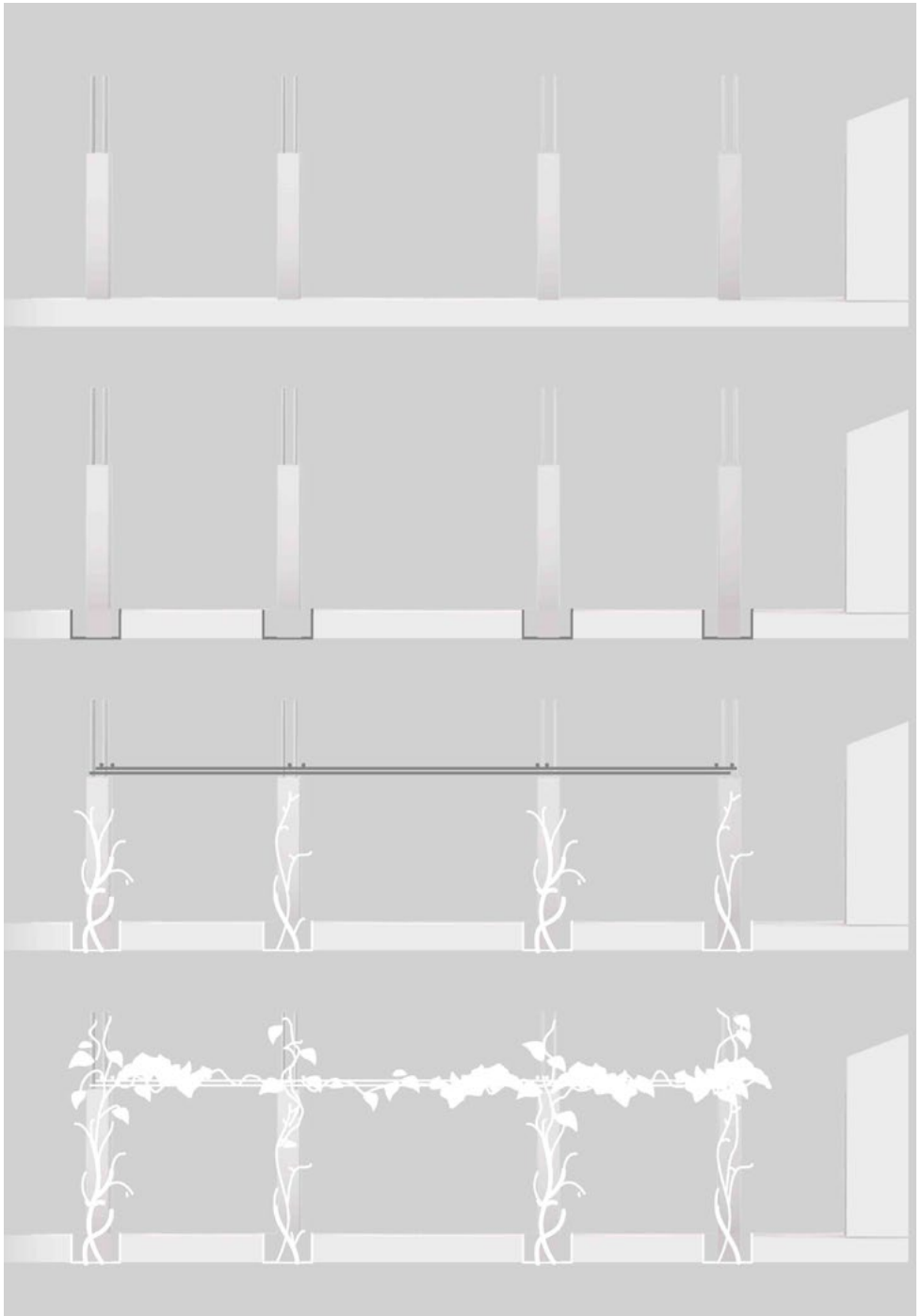


Figure 3-6 Uses the existing conditions to create a green roof. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

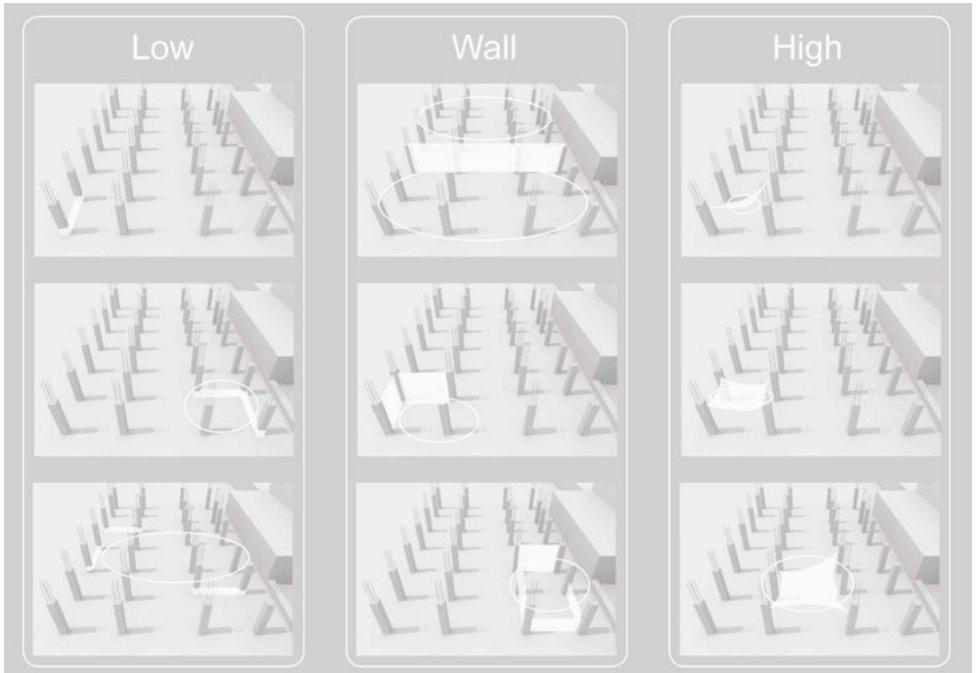


Figure 3-7 Variety of different option to define space. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

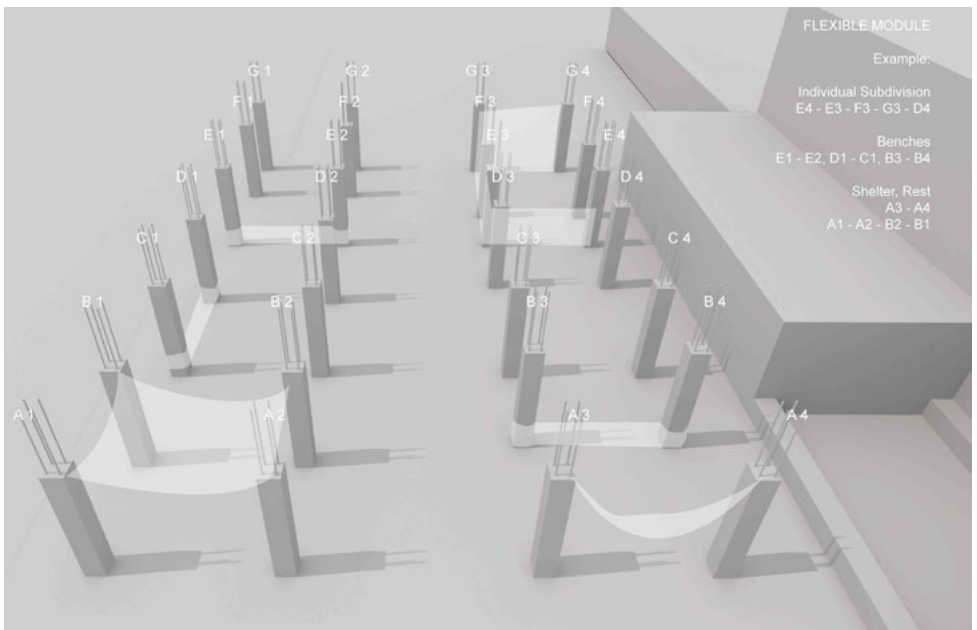


Figure 3-8 One possible constellation of individual space creations. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.

The phenomenon appears also in other areas of the Mediterranean Sea, just a few examples like in Italy, especially on the island Sicily, where a national survey discovered 156 unfinished abandoned construction ruins. Another conglomeration of unfinished and abandoned constructions is near by the resort town Kusadasi in Turkey, where over 50 abandoned concrete skeleton structures from 4 to 15 floor height are located right next to the Aegean coast.

Due to the contemporary increasing global capitalist economy, buildings no longer just get built due to housing demand, but as a financial investment. This strategy works until the property bubble burst. This did not only happen in the area like the Costa del Sol, but in other places around the Mediterranean and the global world.

The city of Kangbashi in Ordos China was built for around 300.000 people, most of the apartments are sold, but just a few people are really living there. There are plenty of these ghost towns in the bigger urban fabric of Shanghai like Thames Town, Anting German Town, Holland Town and other new towns.

We do not have to go that far away because in Spain we can find a lot more ghost town developments for instance the place El Quiñon. Areas are usually not able to cope with such high population growth. The problem of missing infrastructure like shopping facilities, schools, hospitals and social establishments is eminent. To live in these buildings is rather secondary, so it is usually meant to buy, possess and sell them.

In the end, we can only hope that the crises stops these speculation-based developments, otherwise more ghost cities will grow and we will be left with more ruins and a failing environment.

CONCLUSION

This strategy of transformation creates unique architectural hybrids which generates a forward thinking and contemporary intervention, while strengthening the identity of a region. Architects and planners have to be aware of this character of identity while intervening in the urban and natural fabric. It is important to understand that urban developments are creating large scale environmental changes and could cause nature irregularities. Otherwise, areas will end up as interchangeable non-places with no relation to environment, citizens and traditions.

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Figure 3-9 Concrete pillars, today. Fuengirola.Benalmádena. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.



Figure 3-10 One example of a transformed site.Fuengirola.Benalmádena. Source: Sebastian Seyfarth.