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### E13. Strategic Projects for Contemporary Architectural Waste



Mirador del Ebro. Tarragona Photos: Julia Schulz-Dornburg

One of the most horrific images in my mind is the ghostly vision of the streets of Detroit. I drove to this great more than ten years ago, hoping to find modernity and progress. But what appeared before my eyes was the complete opposite: from the outset I was overwhelmed by its alarming state of decay. I saw more than half of the buildings along endless streets in ruins or abandoned, not a few burned and still smouldering. Lonesome, ragged souls wandered aimlessly through this utterly degraded, tattered landscape, dragging their huge black bodies. The city and its inhabitants seemed to be barely surviving in this comatose state. That vision was so unreal and so distant from our idyllic image of the modern American city that over the years, I constantly wondered whether it was a dream or something I had seen in an apocalyptic movie.... until this summer, when it was given front page treatment in the news, and I found that my memories did in fact reflect a terrible reality: the city of Detroit has been declared bankrupt. Since that dramatic announcement, the press, television and especially the Internet have been inundated with stories and photographs about a city with almost 80,000 abandoned buildings, gardens and streets overgrown with weeds, vehicles and facilities turned into junk, a dramatic illustration of the total collapse of this huge metropolis, the cradle of the world's automobile industry which not so long ago was considered to be the Paris of the American Midwest on account of its architecture.



Photos: Detroit 2013

Buildings, like cities and empires, have a use-by date. *All that is solid melts into air*, announced the industrial revolution. But the inflexible structures also collapsed in the course of the last century, and gave way to new ethereal technologies. Now, as philosopher Jose Luis Pardo points out, referring to an idea of Zygmunt Bauman, we find that "the duration of human life has become the ultimate reference point and yardstick for every other human thing, as neither of them are now guaranteed of having a