

Dan Hancox - Spain's Empty Housing Project Valdeluz

newsweek.com. June 2014. The first thing you notice in Valdeluz, Spain is the wind. It meets no resistance as it blows hard and loud across empty lots where apartment blocks were meant to stand. Roads that appear on Google Maps go nowhere and have no names. Some 40 miles from Madrid, Valdeluz was conceived at the height of what is sometimes called Spain's economic miracle. In a Catholic nation, whose faith has declined substantially during its three decades of democracy, there is an increasing reluctance to believe in miracles of any kind.

Spain's economic crisis now feels so deep, lasting and all-pervasive, it's hard for many to recall how different the atmosphere was during the economic boom. A huge influx of immigrant labor, tourists and expatriate house buyers after Spain joined the European Union in 1986, and the launch of the euro, in 1999, helped the economy to soar. After decades of backwardness, Spain opened its cultural riches to the world, and the world came to visit: It is second only to the United States in revenue from international tourism.

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