On-going processes within the partnership | Óbidos, Portugal

ÓBIDOS – PORTUGAL
Small cities great visions
LOCATION AND ECONOMY: AN INTERMEDIATE REGION 45 MINUTES FROM LISBON.

Óbidos is located in the Western Tourism Region of Portugal, near the sea, within the District of Leiria. With a population of 10,875 inhabitants, according to the 2001 census, the village is 80 kilometres North of Lisbon, connected by highway, and 245 kilometres from the city of Oporto. In Caldas da Rainha, 5 km from Obidos, one can find the District Hospital, the oldest Thermal Hospital in the world and several museums as well as the Art and Design University.

Due to its geographical position and impressive built heritage, Óbidos becomes more attractive for tourism, reuniting excellent road structures, and pleasant weather conditions.

According to the 2001 census, 50% of the working population is part of the tertiary sector where tourism plays a main role. The peculiar features that Óbidos offers make this town extremely appealing for tourist development, representing the most important activity for the local economy by far.

In what concerns the industrial sector, food processing, construction and furniture have to be underlined. Small businesses absorbed the excess agricultural employees, consequence of an agricultural exodus (however, not necessarily a rural exodus).

Concerning the primary sector, the main source of sustenance for the local population comes from the natural resources where agriculture is, undoubtedly, important. It’s a vital sector in local economy, especially horticulture, fruit and wine, all representing around 34% of local employment.
A RENOWNED CITY BRAND: MAIN ASSETS.

Óbidos plays an iconic role comprising the history and character of Portugal, like Siena in Italy. A renowned brand although still just associated with the historical past and tourism. The Castle walls that embrace the town and it were concluded at the end of the 14th Century is the symbol of the town. The town of Obidos delights visitors by its medieval environment. White painted houses with colour bars, narrow streets, and surrounded by the castle walls, mixing Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque and Manueline styles.

The town of Óbidos holds centuries of history inside its walls. With a vast heritage, this Land of Kings and Queens was in other times a place of refuge for these many royal families. King Joao IV, King Pedro II, Queen Mary I, Queen Leonor of Lancaster, Queen Catarina of Austria were only some of the monarchs who spent time in this town and that left marks, still visible to this date.

Óbidos is often referred to a House of Queens. The reason for this is that a King, on his wedding day, would give this land to his bride Óbidos as a wedding present. The Queens would manage this territory for a lifetime period. This tradition lasted from the 13th to the 19th Century and Óbidos was given to over 25 different queens.

In 1755 the Lisbon earthquake also affected Óbidos and many of the town buildings were destroyed in this natural disaster. However, in the beginning of the 20th Century, many actions were undertaken in order to revitalize the town. With the creation of the Tourism Initiative Commission in the late twenties, small improvement works were effectuated, along with the publication of the first guide, translated in three languages. However it is after the 1940’s that the castle is restored, along with the castle walls. The first historic Pousada (Inn) is inaugurated in 1950.

Besides historic and cultural heritage that exists inside the walls, Óbidos also offers other places of tourist interest such as the lagoon of Óbidos, that communicates with the ocean through the beaches of Foz do Arelho and Bom Sucesso. This is the area where a number of international resorts have been placed:
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Bom Sucesso Resort – Contemporary Architecture and Golf
Rated as a Project of National Interest by the Portuguese Investment Agency because it represents the most ambitious project ever planned for a luxury tourist resort, blending contemporary architecture into the landscape, giving the opportunity to a group of elite, internationally renowned architects, of creating architecture masterpieces. It has received various awards.

Royal Óbidos Resort – Golf resort
It has a complex residential, a golf course and other facilities with high standard quality, combining nature and architecture. Also considered to be a Project of National Interest by the Portuguese Investment Agency.

Praia D’el Rei Resort and Marriott Hotel – Golf and spa resort
Winner of the European Golf Resort of the Year 2007, this resort has the excellency of the Marriott trademark and offers an oasis of luxury in a sea of tranquillity. It has a deluxe luxury hotel and an 18-hole golf course among other leisure services.

Quintas d’Óbidos – Equestrian Tourism
The municipality of Óbidos has in its heritage a numerous of farms related to equestrian and rural tourism. In other times those farms were property of important royal families or of religious orders and represented an important rule in the economy of the region.

Pousada do Castelo – Tourism in a Historical Castle
Classified as a National Monument because of its castle. Very damaged by the 1755 earthquake, it suffered a lot of reconstructions since then. In 1950 was inaugurated as the first "historic" Hostel in Portugal, representing a network of hostels in Portugal underlining a new concept of recovery and restoration of historic Portuguese buildings.

Municipal Museum of Óbidos – Manor House of Saint Mary’s Square
The permanent exhibition at the Municipal Museum of Óbidos shows the artistic production identified with religious devotion throughout the town’s history.
Nova Ogiva Gallery – Arte Contemporânea

Part of the network of Gallery and Museums, this space is dedicated to consecrated artists of Contemporary Art.

Várzea da Rainha

One of the most beautiful landscapes in Óbidos, devoted to agriculture and visible from the Castle’s walls.

Rei Cortiço Beach and dinosaur footmarks

Peculiar beach for its cliffs and extensive white sand. The sea invites you to take a swim and to practice water sports. At the southern it is possible to observe the first occurrence of vertebrate fossils in the region.

Roman City of Eburobrittium

Situated on a small hill, near the village, Eburobrittium was built in the first century BC.

Saint Mary’s and Almshouse Church

Founded in the Middle Ages, was completely remodelled in the 16th Century. The Almshouse Church was founded by Queen Leonor, characterised with Mannerist and Baroque architecture.

Our Lord Jesus of the Stone Sanctuary

Situated in the outskirts of Óbidos, it's an impressive building because of its dimensions, being one of the references in the baroque Portuguese architecture.

Aqueduct

Built in 1550, the aqueduct extends itself for about 3kms, feeding a great number of town’s fountains in the village.

Another assets are the Cynegetic Park, the Municipal Auditorium Casa da Música, with approximately 200 seats or the Escola de Altos Estudos de Turismo de Óbidos.
CREATIVE ÓBIDOS: THE VISION.

“Garantir e preservar a nossa escala para afirmar um modelo de desenvolvimento é decisivo, tal como importa qualificar esse mesmo modelo. Já o dissemos recentemente: um modelo assente nas economias criativas e culturais.”

Telmo Faria, Mayor of Óbidos

Based on a strong leadership by the Mayor, Telmo Faria, and a qualified local government, there is a formal strategy in Óbidos to become a creative, eco and healthy town based on distinctive endogenous assets, in order to turn into an unique place to live, work, learn and play at national and international level.

Goals:

- Double the qualified employment in the municipality.
- Triple the investment of the municipality in the next thirty years.
- To be the first Portuguese Eco-Town, reducing CO2 emissions.
- To become one of the main destinations of Residential Tourism in the country;
- Óbidos schools amongst the best in the country, giving students access to a wide range of technologies;
- Regarding what already takes place in Portugal, Óbidos wish to be a relevant actor in the European agenda on promoting creativity in low density urban areas.
Types of Measures.

**Investment in Education:** Three new school centres, Municipal Academy of the Arts, Live Science Centre, Discover your Talent Project, Project: Music 100%, Creative Schools of Óbidos, Scholarships, and Centre of Specialized knowledge.

**Entrepreneurship:** Educational Programmes, Technology Park, Incubator of Arts and Talent, Óbidos Tax-free [already implemented, special municipal taxes for professionals and enterprises]

**Creativity and Culture:** Advisory Council of Creativity; Creativity Conferences, Creative Housing [the town has elaborated a first survey on existing buildings and preparation of a public-private partnership to regenerate these spaces], new concept of housing, a new Theatre-Opera of Óbidos, Corpus Project, Cinema Village, Experience Museums (House of Queens, Peninsular War), Bank of Knowledge and Creativity.

**Tourism Edutainment:** Chocolate Factory and Museum. Events that follow the guidelines of the World Tourism Organization, in what concerns Creative Tourism.

**Users and beneficiaries.**

The project aims to generate a local creative economy not only for recent graduates, but also for older generations. Correlating the capacity to attract young artists and creators, the vision is to provide amenities for professionals of technical areas where creativity correlates with the technological capacity. To enhance linkages between Science, Art and Engineering, creating a more versatile environment, open to new converging experiences.

The target population is made up of the two million tourists that visit Óbidos along with the many visitors coming from Lisbon. Naturally, much of this success is owed to the inhabitants of the municipality, for the open mindedness and involvement in the innovative ideas that are presented to them.
CITY RECENT BACKGROUND IN CREATIVE ISSUES.

Since 2002 Óbidos has been implementing a development strategy in Tourism, Culture and Economy. The Town Council has organized a number of events that has attracted the attention to the historic town. The organization of these events implies a set of different areas that embrace creativity:

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<td>Maio Barroco</td>
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The relation with the School of Arts and Design of Caldas da Rainha is increasing and, together, these two institutions have organized the event *June of Arts 08 - Contemporary Art Month*, bringing Art to public spaces with Contemporary Art installations.

Óbidos is working to become energetically self-sufficient, reducing its carbon dioxide emissions. Therefore, projects such as Óbidos Social Carbon have promoted investigation and debates in this field.

The municipality has invested around 20% of its budget in Education. Three schools will be built and will be equipped with the highest technology. This project has already begun and aims to create a solid base for local students, conferring them specific competencies in what concerns Creativity and Entrepreneurship.

Culture has also good indexes with a high rate of participation of the population in the associative cultural movement. The town is identified with cultural events such as the Opera Festival, June of Arts – Contemporary Art Month, Baroque May – Classical Music Season, Harpsichord Season, along with exhibitions from young and renowned artists.

In what concerns Social Services, there has been a large investment in support programmes that aid birth programmes, poor families and seniors. The results have been encouraging and the programme has been considered as something to be repeated.

The Economic revitalization, aside from the national difficulties, has been strengthened with new investments and with the reinforcement of traditional sectors like agriculture. Anyway, the Tourism sector has had the most significant growth.
CREATIVE ÓBIDOS: AN IMPRESSIVE PROJECT PORTFOLIO.

Technology Park. The local agency Obidos Requalifica, along with other companies, business associations and universities, is developing a Technology Park. The network of infra-structures and communications, the buildings of common use such as incubator, auditorium, restaurants, green areas... make this a more competitive project, attracting new investments.

Cinema Village. Next to the Tech Park, it is a PPP scheme between the Town Council and one of the foremost movie directors in Portugal. This cinema village will provide working conditions for the movie industry as well as technically equipped studios. The location has been resolved.

School Centres of Óbidos. In virtue of the renovation of the schools of Óbidos, concentrated in fewer, but better equipped schools, the local Council searches to create a beneficial educational environment, giving preference to the basic instruction of the town’s younger citizens offering modern and competitive tools. The first of these schools has been opened in 2008 and concerning the pedagogical projects for creativity just mention: i) discover your talent: cultural training, complementary to school program; ii) 100% Music: aims to give the opportunity to all students to learn how to play a musical instrument; or iii) Think Colourful, developed in kindergartens and Municipal Museum about Painting.

Network of Investigation, Innovation and Knowledge. Óbidos is in the process of concluding the first phase of this project which counted with fifteen research teams coming from the best Portuguese universities that have studied Óbidos in a multidisciplinary way. History, Art, Biology and Geology, Landscape, are some of the themes that are being investigated. These studies will be the base for the application of Óbidos for World Heritage.
Great Events. Óbidos has been producing an impressive set of great events which fulfil the whole calendar year and which have aided the economic regeneration of the town:

**International Chocolate Festival, February:** International Chocolatiers Contest, Chocolate Ateliers, Fashion Show with chocolate accessories, street animation, chocolate brands representation, among many other animations.

**Holy Week, March or April:** a tradition of the Town which counts on re-enactments of the principle historic – religious moments associated with Lent.

**Baroque May:** Music Festival based on the work of a local composer of the 18th century called José Joaquim dos Santos;

**June for Arts, June:** a new event of 2008. Consecrated plastic and young artists were invited to intervene in public spaces like old churches, squares and unoccupied buildings.

**Medieval Fair, July:** historic animation event held within the castle walls.

**Óbidos Opera Festival, August:** Great recitals in the old Arms Square, in the magnificent Casa das Gaeiras Garden and at the Lagoon of Óbidos.

**Vila Natal/ChristmasTown, December:** A Christmas village recreated within the castle walls, with an ice skating-ring and snow ramps, Santa Claus’ village, toy factory, all very associated to the children’s imaginary world.

New cultural equipments. During 2008 the town has opened new visiting spaces and adapted two old churches for new uses like contemporary exhibition spaces (preferentially): Abílio Mattos e Silva Museum; Casa do Arco (Arch House); and the so-called Interior Design Centre - Maria José Salavisa, a space for small exhibitions and for the development of Design Projects.
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Óbidos Social Carbon. The selective waste collection has reached results that have exceeded the national average, right in the first year. The municipality aims to reduce the carbon emissions in a superior volume to the one Portugal committed to the EU. The collection of used oils, the increase of the forest area, the efficient management of water resources for agriculture and population, greenways next to the Arnoia river and lagoon, public private partnership for eco-efficiency support in the new constructions are some of the projects already implemented. Investments in public transports, electric transports and in resorts are foreseen, besides the creation, in a medium term, of an environmental park with about 600 hectares.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

- Nice accessibility to the main urban hub of Lisbon.
- A new generation of tourist and golf resorts: Bom Sucesso a huge investment of 390 million Euros or Royal Óbidos [160 million €], both rated as Project of National Interest; or Quinta de Óbidos, investment of 100 million Euros. High standards, luxury, privacy, high architecture design, sustainability.
- The strong leadership of the Mayor, Telmo Faria, an innovative public manager with an accurate and powerful vision for Óbidos as a creative city.
- A creative strategy not only focused on the built central village but also comprising the whole surrounding area.
- An impressive array of culture and nature related assets as well as an impressive project portfolio concerning creative issues.
- A vibrant cultural agenda covering the whole year.
- Óbidos as a renowned brand at national and international levels linked to history, culture and charming life. A new dimension must be added [and recognized by the public] related to creativity and innovation.
- Agency model for undertaking relevant issues as regards the creative city model: Obidos Requalifica and Obidos Patrimonium local agencies.
- Art and Design School 5 km from Óbidos.
- Vitality of the many local associations.
GAPS AND THREATS.

- The effective cooperation between all the municipalities in West Region [Peniche, Óbidos, Caldas da Rainha] should be reinforced.
- The existing configuration of the administrative space in Portugal with a gap in the relationship between the central government and the municipalities.
- Lack of long term funding schemes to support strategies related to creative economies in low density urban areas.
- Still to explore the real impact of the big luxury resorts devoted to residential tourism and golf [with a strong consume of prime space] in the local economy. Uncertainty in the real estate market due to the current global financial crisis.
- It is needed a formal package of aids and incentives to attract talented and creative entrepreneurs, and diffuse it in Lisbon.
- Still high illiteracy and school drop out rate.

EXPECTATIONS ON THE URBACT THEMATIC NETWORK: APPROACHING THE LOCAL ACTION PLAN.

Óbidos will launch in 2009 the strategy Creative Óbidos. Through the URBACT thematic network, the town aims to systemize all the implementation and development of Creative Óbidos. Documents like the URBACT Local Action Plan will be set up with the support of local actors (the Local support Group) and in cooperation with the international partners.

With this URBACT network, the Municipality of Óbidos expects to participate in the process of conceiving and implementing an economic and cultural development strategy in low density territories. Researching an specific spatial development model for the so-called intermediate regions [not urban neither rural]. The innovative mark of the project will allow places (with diverse dimensions, baseline positions and expectations) to manage its own development strategies transforming them in good-practices. Cities like Óbidos wish to take an active participation in the European construction.
Institutional roles. Local administration: project concept, partial financing and human resources; Regional Administration – Coordination Commission of Regional Development of the Centre of Portugal: inclusion in financing programmes of Operational Regional Programmes.

Public Department in charge of Coordination and Development. Óbidos is studying an operational centralized structure that will answer to the growing requests. Up to this point, they have maintained a structure comprising of the different services of the Town Hall. Some components of the project, such as the Technology Park, due to its specificity and demands, will have an independent structure in accordance to its goals.

Financing. The global and more ambitious estimate of the project will involve 80 million euros. The financing will be completed in different phases and according to sector action plans as a way of attaining sustainable financing. This strategy has a limitation in the sense that the structure and Operational programmes do not allow low density urban places to present development programmes in the areas of creativity, only specific actions. The financing that exists is all directed towards large urban spaces.

Private Sector. The launching of a programme designated by Municipal partnerships for Urban Regeneration will be a form of involvement of the private sector. It will convert the old industrial or agricultural spaces in work areas for artists that need to develop their projects. Financing will be another area where the private sector will be invited to participate, namely through capital funds, or through sponsorships to artistic projects.
THE LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP.
Telmo Faria. Mayor of Óbidos
José Parreira. Chief of Mayor’s cabinet. Co-ordinator URBACT project.
Luís Cajão. President of Óbidos.COM (Business Association of Óbidos).
Humberto Marques. Town councilman for Historical Centre and Environment.
Ricardo Ribeiro. Óbidos Patrimonium, local agency.
Alexandre Ferreira and Filipe Montargil. Óbidos Requalifica, local agency.
Ana Calçada. Network of Museum and Galleries.
Miguel Silvestre. Head of the network of Museum and Galleries.
Teresa Félix. ADRO - Regional Development Agency of the West Region.
Susana Santos. Óbidos TV and Creative Lab.
António Carneiro. President of the West Tourism Region.
Paulo Cruz Graça Moura. Bom Sucesso Resort
Rita Zina. Local Technical Bureau.
Carlos Orlando, José Duarte et al. Civil society/citizens.
Samuel Costa. Journalist, responsible for the TV Memory Chanel.
A representative. Art and Design University of Caldas da Rainha.
A representative. Tourism School.
A representative. CCDR-Centro as associated Managing Authority.
POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND DEMANDS WITHIN THE URBACT PARTNERSHIP.

Óbidos offers.
- New [creative] attributes to tourism: especially for Enguera and Reggio Emilia.
- Creating local cultural agendas and major events: for all the partners.
- Creative education in primary and secondary schools: for all the partners.
- Branding the creative place: especially for Reggio Emilia and Hódmezővásárhely.
- Networking local museums and cultural facilities: especially for Hódmezővásárhely.
- The creative small city working agenda: especially for Enguera, Viareggio, Hódmezővásárhely and Mizil.

Óbidos demands.
- Support tools packages for creative entrepreneurs: especially from Barnsley
- Re-using old industrial buildings for creative purposes: especially from Barnsley
- PPP schemes for creative projects and initiatives: especially from Barnsley
- Promoting emergent clusters in the creative industries: especially from Reggio Emilia.
- Enhancing cultural agendas: especially from Reggio Emilia.
- Effective local-local cooperation at regional level: especially from Barnsley
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