

From tourist resort to a friendly town

The 12 lines of action Jávea must take to achieve this before 2022

On Monday (Nov 21st) the PSPV local government of Xàbia unveiled proposals to make it one of the municipalities chosen to obtain funding from the Feder Funds of the European Union through the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategy (Edusi). The project would allow Xàbia to change its current social and urban image from top to bottom through a series of actions between 2017 and 2022 (these are to be approved at the next Town Council plenary session) . The total cost would be 10 million euros: Five from Brussels and five from Xàbia's budgets .

However there are obstacles in the way before the 200-page dossier prepared by Xàbia gets selected. For starters there is only €35.5 million of Feder funds for the whole of Valencia province and many other municipalities will be putting forward their proposals as well. "Competition will be tough" admitted the Councillor for Economic Development, who presented the plan together with the mayor, José Chulvi, and the technical team. However, Chulvi added that the five million euros corresponding to Xàbia's contribution are already insured: "This is a roadmap that will mark the future of the municipality over the next two legislatures," he said. *(Note: If the submission fails, there is a possibility of resubmitting the proposals for another tranche of the Feder funds in 2017)*

The proposals which are encompassed in the project called "Fent Xàbia", were developed after an extensive, transverse, citizen participation process which included not only all departments of the town hall, but also opposition groups, groups of various nationalities that comprise the registered residents of Jávea as well as social, cultural and sports organizations and individual citizens.

These consultations have led to a general conclusion: this municipality aspires (after decades of urban development) to "take a look back" to recover its lost identity, in other words "the hidden paradise" («el paraíso escondido») The goal? "to go from being a tourist resort to being a friendly town" because people will only want to visit if the town's residents enjoy quality of life . And not vice versa.

But that is still a long haul. Everyone involved in the process of participation has detected abnormalities that prevent Xàbia from being a friendly city, at least for a good part of its inhabitants.

What is wrong

Three, scattered urban centres.

Firstly, the municipality is divided into three urban zones – The Old Town, Port and Arenal as well as houses spread far and wide, where 35% of the population is concentrated. All these areas need to be connected, both in regard to public transport (bus or bike path, currently very deficient) and as part of an urban fabric.

In addition, the surroundings of the Arenal have suffered "historical injustices" as regards public resources. These have always given more benefit to the Old Town and the Port . The area needs more investment, better social and health facilities, such as a health centre which it now only enjoys in the summer. It needs improved access to the rest of Jávea. Another area that suffers problems of social marginalization is Jávea Park.

Xàbia is no place for young people.

40% of the residents of Xàbia aged between 16 and 35 leave the town because of the lack of opportunities. This is one of the main concerns of the project, which calls for creating economic and social spaces for this age segment.

Too much reliance on tourism and construction

Part of the exile of young people is due to the high economic dependence on two sectors, especially tourism (services monopolize 80% of Xàbia's economic activity) and construction, which despite the decline since the crisis still remains strong, at 11%. The large workforce in these sectors is made up of older people. This economic monoculture does not attract young people. Xàbia is missing economic

diversification into sectors such as the knowledge society, the collaborative economy and multimedia industries.

On the other hand, agriculture and traditional industries are marginal activities today.

Gender inequalities.

This debateable production model has also caused "social imbalances" and "gender inequality". Here's another statistic as an example: 98.6% of construction workers are men. In contrast, 92.7% of persons running households are women.

Disconnected groups in social life.

Javea is a complex society that goes far beyond the 27,000 that marks its census. Many more people live in this municipality as evidenced by the predominance of second homes and the large number of foreign residents who are not registered voters, many of them retirees. Some of these groups, such as British and German residents participate in social life but others like the Moroccans are more isolated and should be integrated.

More municipal investment.

But not everything is negative. Despite these difficult times, the municipal investment in Xàbia at 1,300 euros per inhabitant per year, is better than the provincial average -828 euros, state -850 and regional -900-. According to the local government, this path is already being made. "We began investing in the Arenal and urbanisations only after the last legislature. This had not been done before" remarked Chulvi and Camprubí.



Camprubí, Chulvi and the two Edusi technicians oo Monday in Xàbia Town Hall

What to do

"Fent Xàbia" will focus the following twelve lines of action in the development strategy:

1. Towards an e-government focused on citizen attention. Overcoming language barriers.

It is intended to further improve the use of ICT and technology to improve relations between citizens and the administration, improving public information and overcoming "language barriers" which separate the elderly people of foreign origin .

2. Technology, an instrument for social development and equality. Bridging the digital divide.

By incorporating technology for the elderly who are not accustomed to using a computer but also for children and youths so that there are no technological inequalities.

3. Sustainable mobility to structure the town. Not everything needs to be a private vehicle.

The heavy reliance on the private car must be corrected by creating pedestrian routes, promoting the use of electronic vehicles, making more kilometers of bike lanes and improving the bus service linking the three urban centres. In this context, the local government has announced the placement of information panels about buses next year. To date, there are no reports on what's happening.

4. The local Government leading the way to sustainability. Pollute less.

This will consolidate the Covenant of Mayors which Xàbia signed in 2012, reducing electricity consumption and greenhouse gas effects, achieving more energy efficiency in public buildings, renovating lighting and decarbonising municipal vehicles.

5. Reactivation of heritage resources for local culture. History for everyone.

There is still much heritage to recover, especially the languishing nineteenth century mansions in the old town. But this should be not only for tourism but primarily to revive the civic culture of residents. Cultural itineraries guided by digital applications are proposed as well as the promotion of "the construction of a common identity."



La Grava. Photography: Alberto Diaz.

6. To strengthen links with the natural environment. The town ceases to be a threat to the environment (Jet skis, parking ...).

Reconciling the relationship between the built up town and the territory surrounding it , reducing the pressure of parking on the beachfront and recovering peri- urban paths. Such a philosophy should tackle two of the major controversies last summer: the parking chaos that occurred in natural spots like Granadella and the indiscriminate proliferation of jet skis on the coast.

7. Humanisation of the town and environmental comfort. Children and adults.

This is to improve the conditions of the public space ' a town tailored for all the people "and especially for the most vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. To do this, it is proposed to increase green zones, improve neighbourhood parks and plazas and create accessible routes.

8. Correction of imbalances to ensure accessibility. The Arenal also exists.

This is a general proposal for the whole municipality. It aims to ensure access to health, cultural, sporting and administrative resources to all citizens and to decentralize neighborhoods. But it has to act particularly in areas with deficits in those services, such as the Arenal and to a lesser extent, the Port.

9. Adapt the town to the life of the elderly.

As obvious consequence of the significant aging of the local population "we must rethink the town" creating opportunities for generational exchange, accessible routes and e-health solutions. The care of the elderly can also be a niche for new businesses to diversify the economy.

10. The youth space. Prevent them from leaving.

Improving delivery of services to this age group, getting them involved in public life, creating opportunities for participation, improving infrastructure and strengthening sports programs such as Monjove.

11. Community action to build an inhabited environment. Thinking about Jávea Park.

Revitalize the most disadvantaged areas with urban recovery interventions and also by social actions such as cultural exchange and participatory budgeting.

12. Local socioeconomic innovation. So that there are not just bars and building works.

Stop relying on construction and tourism by diversifying the economy, creating an urban laboratory to boost new projects and promoting business and other economic alternatives.

Source: <http://lamarinaplaza.com/2016/11/21/las-12-cosas-que-quiere-hacer-xabia-hasta-2022-para-convertirse-en-una-ciudad-amable/>

Footnote:

The forecast annual investment is:

2017: 957,000 euros

2018: 1.51 million

2019: EUR 2,090,000

2020: EUR 2,390,000

2021: 2.15 million euros

2022: 885,000 euros

Total: 10 million euros (Of these five come from the EU and another 5 would from the town)

From: <http://xabiaaldia.com/xabia-fija-la-hoja-de-ruta-para-su-desarrollo-los-proximos-seis-anos/>

English version by PUXS (Para una Xàbia Sostenible)