

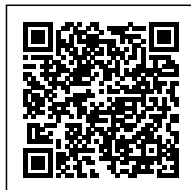
OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND THE OBVIOUS - ABBC

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Luis Filipe Carvalho

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Alongside the major infrastructure projects now under development in Portugal, opportunities inevitably surround peripheral projects, say Luis Filipe Carvalho and Raquel Sampaio at ABBC in Lisbon.

Lisbon's future airport in Alcochete will generate an intense work cycle until 2017, as will the five new proposed high-speed rail routes – with concessions for the Lisbon-Poçoirão section that will ultimately connect to Madrid now under public tender – and the necessary third Tagus River crossing. The secondary opportunities presented by such developments are wide-ranging, with reciprocal road and rail connections. But besides this, they will create a modern and efficient transport system reducing the cost of national and international journeys and help to reduce

Portugal's European isolation,' Carvalho says.

In order to guarantee the scheduling and execution of such projects, and to ensure their viability, the government has however implemented preventive measures to avoid major alterations to the defined routes of the railway and Tagus crossing, or airport location.

'New city groups as well as the construction of new buildings or zoning alterations are strictly forbidden except for prior authorisation by the Rail Infrastructure Authority (REFER), while local authorities cannot grant zoning licenses or authorisations within these geographical scopes,' says Raquel Sampaio. Redevelopment opportunities may be presented by the existing airport site but Carvalho notes, however, that plans have already been under debate for a decade, and despite the residential potential nothing has yet been decided.

'The closing of the old airport is an operation that may last four or five years and be very costly to the Portuguese State, with the possibility of its conversion into a military or secondary airport now being considered.'

Nonetheless the scale of such projects will inevitably have a major impact on the local, regional and national Portuguese economies. 'Over a 30 year period, it is expected that combined these investments will create over 50,000 permanent jobs, increase private investment and GDP growth, and increase tax income for the Portuguese State,' says Carvalho.