

# Focus Experience

#16

Educating Cities  
International Documents Databank



## Title

### White spot

#### A project of restoration of public spaces of Loulé (Portugal)

## Basic data

**City:** Loulé

**Country:** Portugal

**Number of inhabitants:** 62,000

**Topics:** art and humanities, associationism and participation, civics, leisure, personal development, policy and administration, urban development and welfare.

**Principles of the Charter of Educating Cities:** 1, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 20

## Summary

The municipality of Loulé, and mainly its coastal area, Quarteira, is engaged economically for the most part in tourism. That is why the image of its public spaces is of constant concern for the City Council.

**White Spot** is an initiative of the Municipal Environmental Service whose main goal is the restoration of degraded public spaces (tags, advertising posted illegally, climate effects, etc.). For that reason, the City Council set up a series of actions aimed at improving the image of the city, with the support and participation of different public and private entities and the citizenry in general.

The project began in June 2010 in the coastal area, whose image was the most worrisome because of degraded public street furniture, spaces and facilities. As an initial measure an Environmental Team was created whose main function was to eliminate tags, remove illegal advertising and repaint public spaces, amongst others.

One of its goals is to raise the consciousness of the citizenry in order to strengthen their feeling of belonging to the city as well as their respect and care for public spaces, which has led to the voluntary involvement of the inhabitants in different actions to improve the city's image, for example, the painting of public buildings or degraded street furniture used by all.

At the same time, the City Council and different groups of young people in the municipality signed a collaboration agreement in order to respond to the need of young people to have spaces to freely express their taste for mural art. Thus, Graffiti Spaces, self-managed by the young people, were created where they can paint and develop their creativity.

The project also includes the placing of panels where associations and groups can post their advertising and publicise their events, exhibitions, shows, etc., as well as the unification of the signage, mainly at crossroads and roundabouts, indicating where companies and businesses are located. This signage has also begun slowly to be used to indicate the location of cottages in the area.

Thanks to this initiative, the image of the municipality has improved, which has contributed to the quality of life of the inhabitants and constitutes a determining factor in terms of the tourist business, with direct repercussions on the region's economy.



Graffiti space

## Objectives

- To improve the general image of the municipality of Loulé.
- To make the community conscious of participating in the conservation and maintenance of their heritage.
- To contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of the citizenry.
- To promote tourism and the local development of the region.
- To provide young people with the opportunity of developing their mural art (graffiti), providing them with the spaces to do so.
- To reorganize the signage for companies and cottages as well as the advertising spaces in order to reduce visual pollution.

## Methodology

A specific team has been set up whose job it is to identify the priority intervention sites as well as remove tags and illegal advertising in public spaces and facilities and on street furniture and to repaint damaged or vandalised surfaces.

On the other hand, based on the awareness actions addressed to the citizenry, some people have voluntarily offered to maintain and paint public buildings in the city. An example of this is the intervention at the Quarteira Municipal Sport Pavilion, in which City Council employees, public companies, the private enterprise Vilamouragest, Lda., young people (Policromia, the Boy Scouts), associations (Quarteira Judo Club, the Quarteira Sharks Club), as well as other individuals, participated.

The awareness campaigns aimed at involving the citizenry were carried out using the Council website, e-mail, and direct contact with possible participants (students, the Loulé Environmental Centre, etc.). Furthermore, a video of the initiative has been put out and posted on the social networks YouTube and Facebook.

During the 3 years of the experience we have used 2,400 litres of paint, beautifying a surface area of almost 17.000 m<sup>2</sup>, involving 120 people from different spheres and ages.

Parallel to this major intervention and in order to provide young people with a place to express their creativity, the City Council of Loulé created Graffiti Spaces at various points in the municipality that are used for promoting mural art. Thus, collaboration protocols were signed with different groups of young people, such as, for example, the Policromia Group(Quarteira district), the Union Point Kru Group (Loulé district) and the Esteval Group (Almancil district). The management of the Graffiti Spaces is the responsibility of the young, who organise and assign the space to be painted, taking into account the design and the message of the murals. In this way their work is appreciated whereas spray painting vandalism is discouraged, thus setting an example for the younger kids.

In order to avoid illegal advertising postings on public facilities or street furniture, mainly electricity boxes, public light poles, bridges and other places, 21 panels were set up across the municipality on which associations and groups can freely post information on their events. Actions are still taken to raise the awareness of entities so that they use these advertising collaterals and do not dirty public spaces.

Another phase of the project consists of the placing of signage pointing the way to companies, thus improving the looks of the shoulders of the roads that contributed to visual pollution. Signs placed illegally and in a disorganised way proliferated at cross roads, giving the city a poor image. At this time there is a standard signage system that any company can ask for. Companies contact the City Council almost daily to ask for their signs. Simultaneously, the illegal signs are removed.



**Volunteers Painting public buildings**

## Social and urban context

## Assessment

## Resources

## Contact

The signage indicating the location of cottages is the newest phase of the project. A standard signage system is also employed, with official Portuguese Post Office boxes being used.

**Entities involved:** Department of the Environment of the City Council of Loulé and other municipal companies; private companies mainly linked to civil construction; the tourist company Four Season Vilamoura; youth groups, etc.

The municipality of Loulé occupies a surface area of 576 km<sup>2</sup>, which covers the coastal and interior areas. It has a population of 70,622 inhabitants in 11 districts (*freguesias*). The population breaks down by age groups as follows: from 0 to 14 years old, 14.5%; from 15 to 24 years old, 10.4%; from 25 to 64, 55.5%; and from 65 and up, 19.5%.

The interior of the municipality has an ageing population, which is decreasing in number, in contrast with a coastal tourist area that is more urbanised and populated.

The main business sector is services, mainly tourism, and, accordingly, the population increases during the summer season.

After 3 years of operations the Project has acquired stability and has notably improved the general aspect of the municipality, especially in the areas that were most affected, and offers a clean and organised image of the city.

The reaction of the population has been very positive, showing their satisfaction that a balance has been struck based on everyone's interests. An example of this is the involvement of the inhabitants in the cleaning activities that have been organised.

### Strengths:

- The general cleanliness of the city's public spaces.
- Citizen awareness.
- The creation of spaces for young people where they can express themselves through mural art (graffiti).
- Organised signage.

### Future proposals:

- To continue along the same lines of care and maintenance of public spaces.
- To continue carrying out awareness actions.

### Reports on the Project (in Portuguese)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyhaX8Myi64&list=UU87dsbqYVqBjy7vnQqPZGpw&index=3>  
<http://videos.sapo.pt/AwVineCKmOW5S8zskr1G>

**Organization:** City Council of Loulé  
Department of Environment, Transport and Energy  
**Contact:** Mr Carlos André  
Chief of Department

**Email:** carlos.andre@cm-loule.pt, ambiente@cm-loule.pt

**Phone:** +351 289400890 Ext. 27260

**Web :** <http://www.cm-loule.pt>



Standardization of signage



Loulé Market  
Photo: CHTOE (Wikipedia)