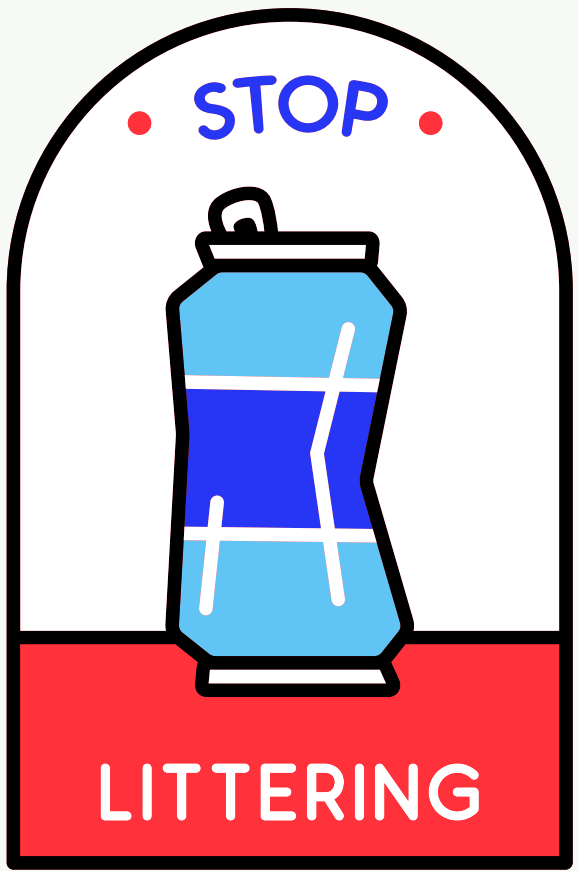
GTL Project

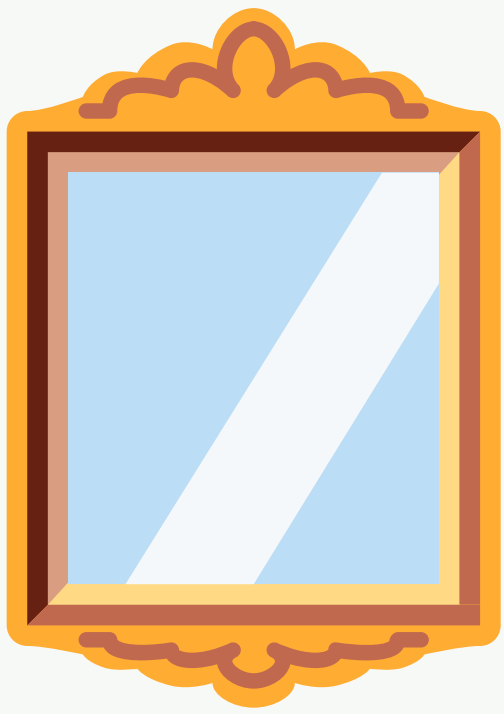
GreenTecLab

In 2010, eight municipalities in the Netherlands participated in a project aimed at reducing littering in the immediate surroundings of waste containers.

Six behavioural interventions were tested through a field experiment with a before/after design: in each treatment group, waste containers and their surroundings were monitored for two weeks which were then followed by two weeks of treatment. The six rolled-out treatments were:



1. Self-correction by self-reflection: placing a mirror next to the waste container, so that people see themselves when bringing their waste to the container.

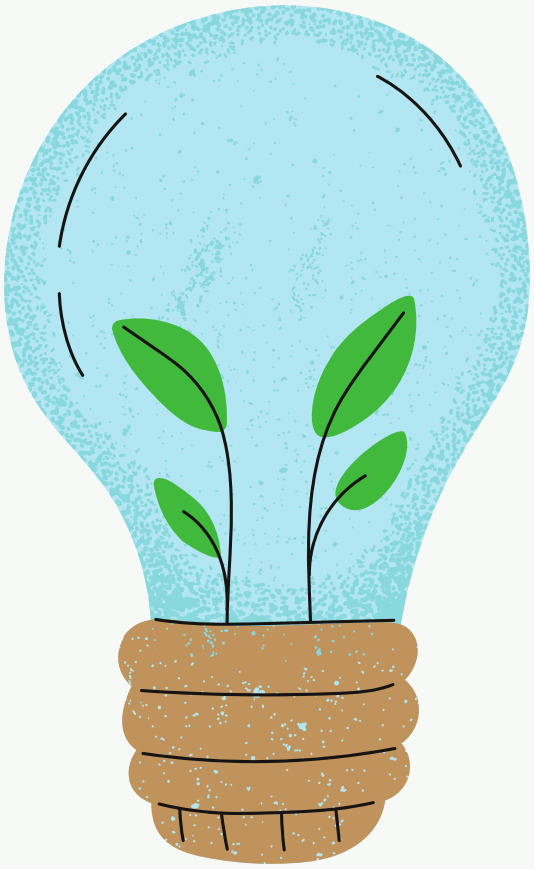


2. Injunctive social norm: placing a picture of a person littering next to waste containers alongside the request to behave in the right way by throwing trash bags in the appropriate containers.

3. Descriptive social norm: placing alongside the waste containers a sign with the text: “Help to keep it clean here: most people in this neighbourhood do not litter around the containers”.

4. Monitoring and penalties: monitoring waste container sites and placing a warning that littering can result in a fine.

5. Commitment and consistency: the “foot-in-the-door” approach consists in first prompting people to a generic commitment (e.g. commit to keeping the neighbourhood clean) and then giving them a concrete hint of how to honour that commitment (e.g. placing a sign next to the container inviting them to keep the neighbourhood clean by not littering).

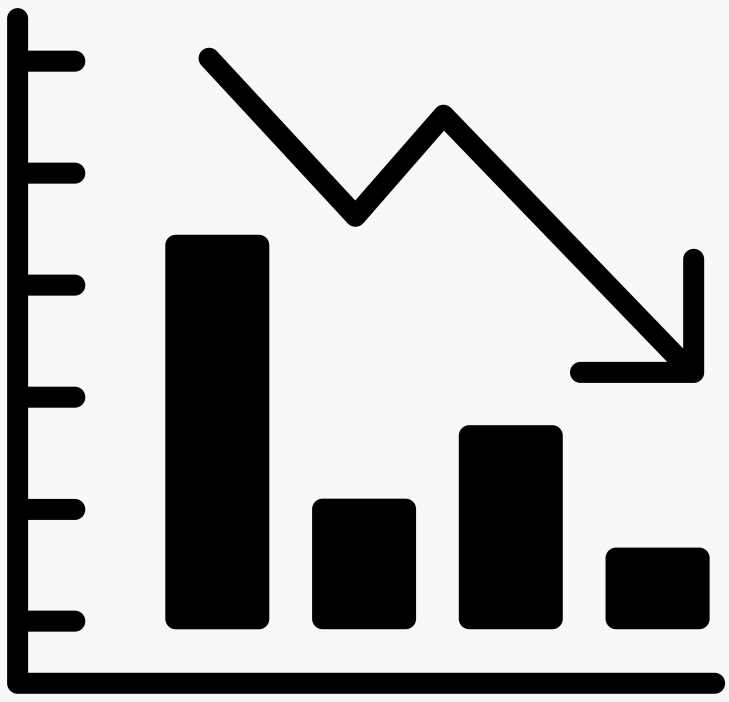


6. Setting the right norm: emptying the containers more frequently and keeping their location clean.

The experiment showed that three of the interventions had statistically significant effects.

The descriptive social norm intervention led to a reduction in littering frequency from 50% to 30%;

Mechanisms based on monitoring and penalties resulted in a reduction from 51% to 29% and commitment devices led to a reduction from 45% to 28%.



For the remaining interventions, no significant effect was found.

Do you have any better idea to reduce littering and improve the waste management of your city?

GreenTecLab

Visit the webpage of the GTL project and join the course to become a future leader of the transition!

- Data from: Dijksterhuis & Van Baaren, Tabula Rasa and IPR Normag, 2010