

# ✘✘✘ Grofvuil in Amsterdam Oost



This photo essay shows the *grofvuil* that is found on the streets of the Oosterparkbuurt, the red area on the map. *Grofvuil* is the dutch word used to define the big pieces of rubbish that cannot go with the normal housewaste. The variety of objects that are left on the streets are all categorized as non-value by their previous owners.



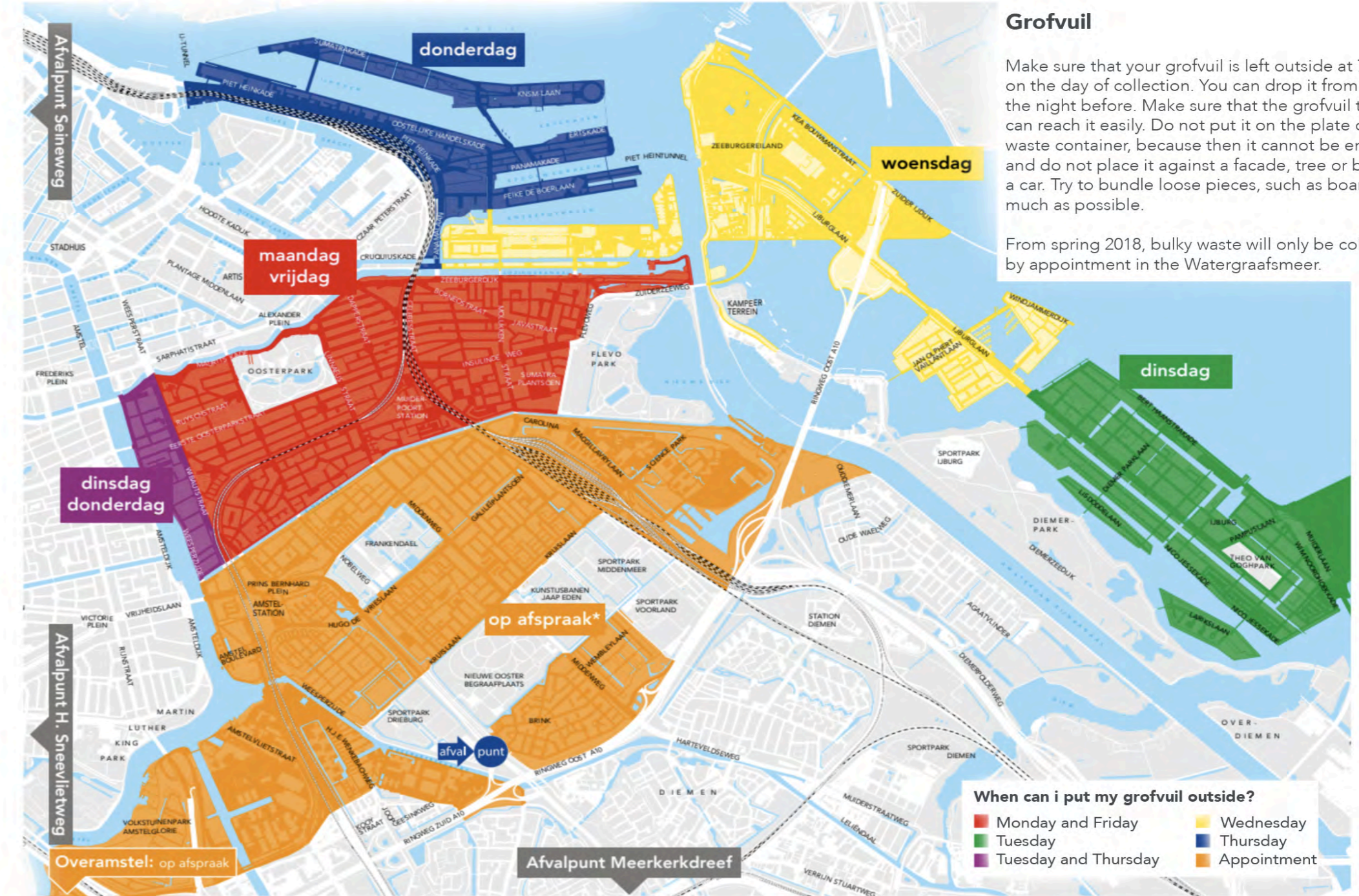
During the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 there is a rise of *grofvuil* on the streets. The dutch 'intelligent lockdown' ensures that people have to spend a lot of time inside their house. This has a huge effect on how inhabitants act towards the material objects they possess. Some people choose to redesign their house into an office, others are suddenly bored of specific items, some use their time to clean their house or fill up time with odd jobs.

In some neighborhoods the offer of *grofvuil* has increased with 50 percent. This increase doesn't happen unnoticed as the municipality asks in newspapers if people living in Amsterdam can please keep their trash inside:

*"We are faced with a huge challenge to keep the city clean with limited capacity. Unfortunately, we have seen an enormous increase in the amount of incorrectly presented grofvuil on the streets in recent weeks."*

This photo-essay explores the variety of *grofvuil* objects through the camera lens.

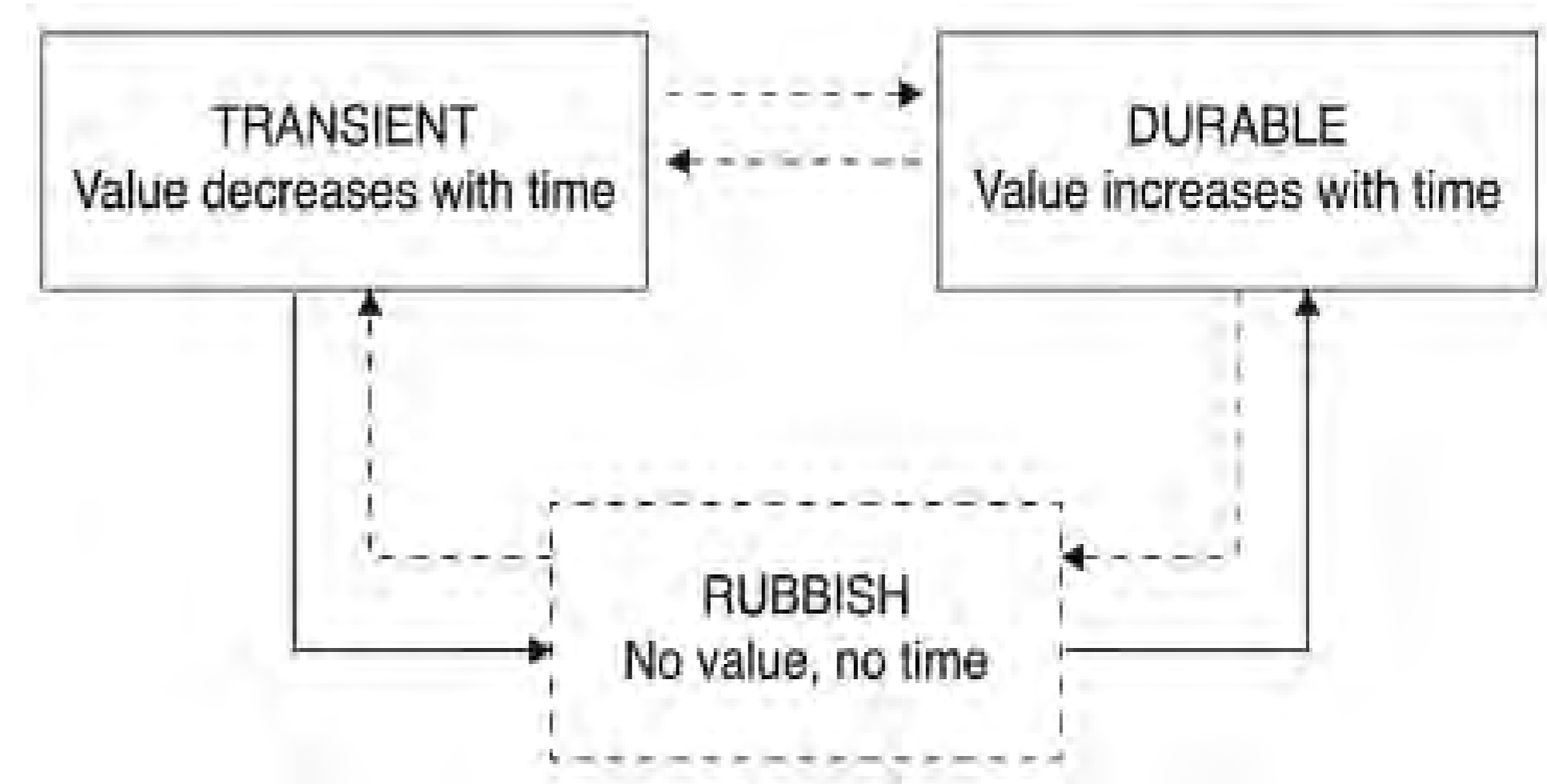
## Grofvuil Collection Days in East





Social anthropologist M. Thompson designed a model of material objects which he relates to society. He classifies possessable material objects within two categories: transient and durable. Transient objects decrease in value and therefore have a finite expected lifespan. Durable objects increase in value and therefore have an infinite expected lifespan. The third category he introduces is named rubbish.

When an object is placed at a collection point for the *grofvuil* collection a social action by its previous owner confers the object into the rubbish category. But not all objects stay there 'till the official pick-up, some objects are recollected and therefore revalued.



The figure is obtained from Thompson's book *Rubbish Theory* (1979:4).



During the pandemic outbreak most people have to work at home. This means for many people that they have to change their homes into an office. Some chairs might be more suitable for this purpose than others. This one did not make it to the end selection. As a response to the fast changing world around us, the chair is now categorized as rubbish.



Andrew (38): "It used to be from my nephew who visited me a lot. He used to play with it when we would go to the beach. But now he got older and does not use it anymore."

Next to an old suitcase, a vase with some pinecones in it, a green jerry can and some glass bottles was this bodyboard placed ready for the collection of the next morning.





While walking on the street I had an encounter with Lina, who left this painting for the pick-up. Lina has been living in this neighborhood for 2,5 years. She is a dancing and performing artist, who was supposed to go to Vienna to perform in a musical this summer. But due to the pandemic she has to stay at home with her three roommates. She is getting used to the stay-at-home vibes, as she has a lot more time to relax than her busy career normally allows.



Lina (26): "We've left this painting because it is a painting from an ex-roommate. She is the one in the middle, the others are her siblings. She is not living in our house for 2,5 years. Since the pandemic we're having a living room make-over. We have painted all the walls and got a new couch. When we were cleaning, we've decided to ditch this item, as we all only know one of the three girls on the painting. It is time for something new."



At the place of the picture on the left I have a short conversation with a man who picks up a broken geyser. He is going to ask a friend if he can fix it so he can send it to people in Africa. The same day I've noticed that two parts of the oven, that I put outside at the pick-up point earlier that day, have disappeared. I have a look and find them somewhere hidden on the opposite side of the street. I ask the man if he knows why people do this.

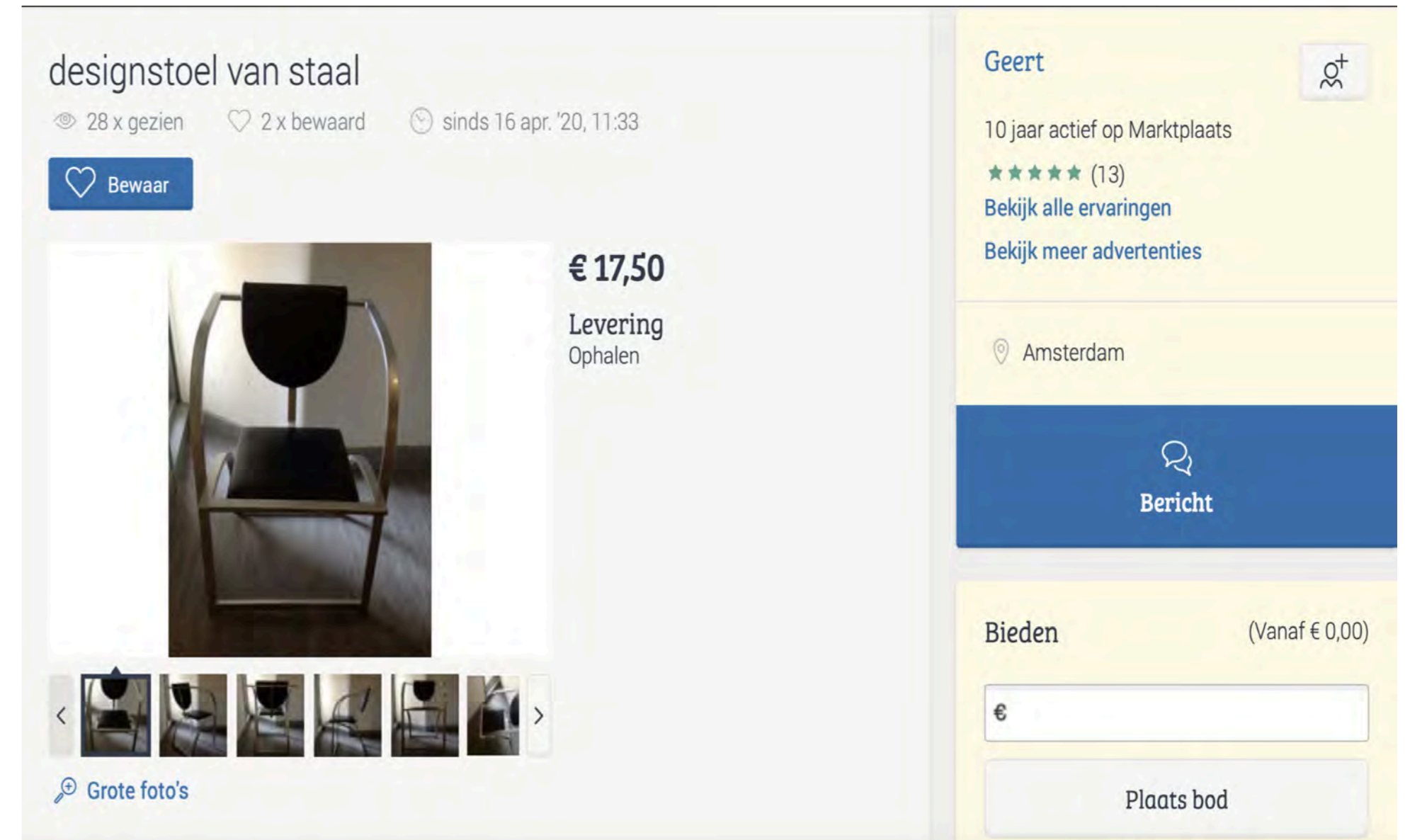
Anonymous: "I think some people hide stuff and come back later to pick it up. Sometimes the material is worth money. For instance, this piece of aluminum. It could be used later on. But I think it's only worth 50 cent for a kilo."



One evening my roommate and neighbor called me to ask if I can help to pick up an item they found on the street. It's already dark outside and the corona restrictions are sensible as not a lot of people are outside. At a collection point, we see an ordinarily shaped chair. When we cross the same spot on our way back, we notice that the chair has gone.

A day later I'm scrolling on Marktplaats, the dutch version of Gumtree. Surprisingly, I notice an advertisement with the exact same chair that had disappeared the day before. It is now being sold on the website as a 'designer chair'. The description says: 'Robust steel designer chair. Fits well with some extra lower back support'. The first bid of ten euros is made already in an hour.

The sellers address is the same street as the collection point of the day before. The expected lifespan was very short when the chair was ready for the *grofvuil* collection. Now it has the chance to be revalued and become a durable item. The person who found this chair created this opportunity by selling the object within a virtual space.



designstoel van staal

28 x gezien 2 x bewaard sinds 16 apr. '20, 11:33

Bewaar

€ 17,50

Levering  
Ophalen

Amsterdam

Bericht

Bieden (Vanaf € 0,00)

€

Plaats bod

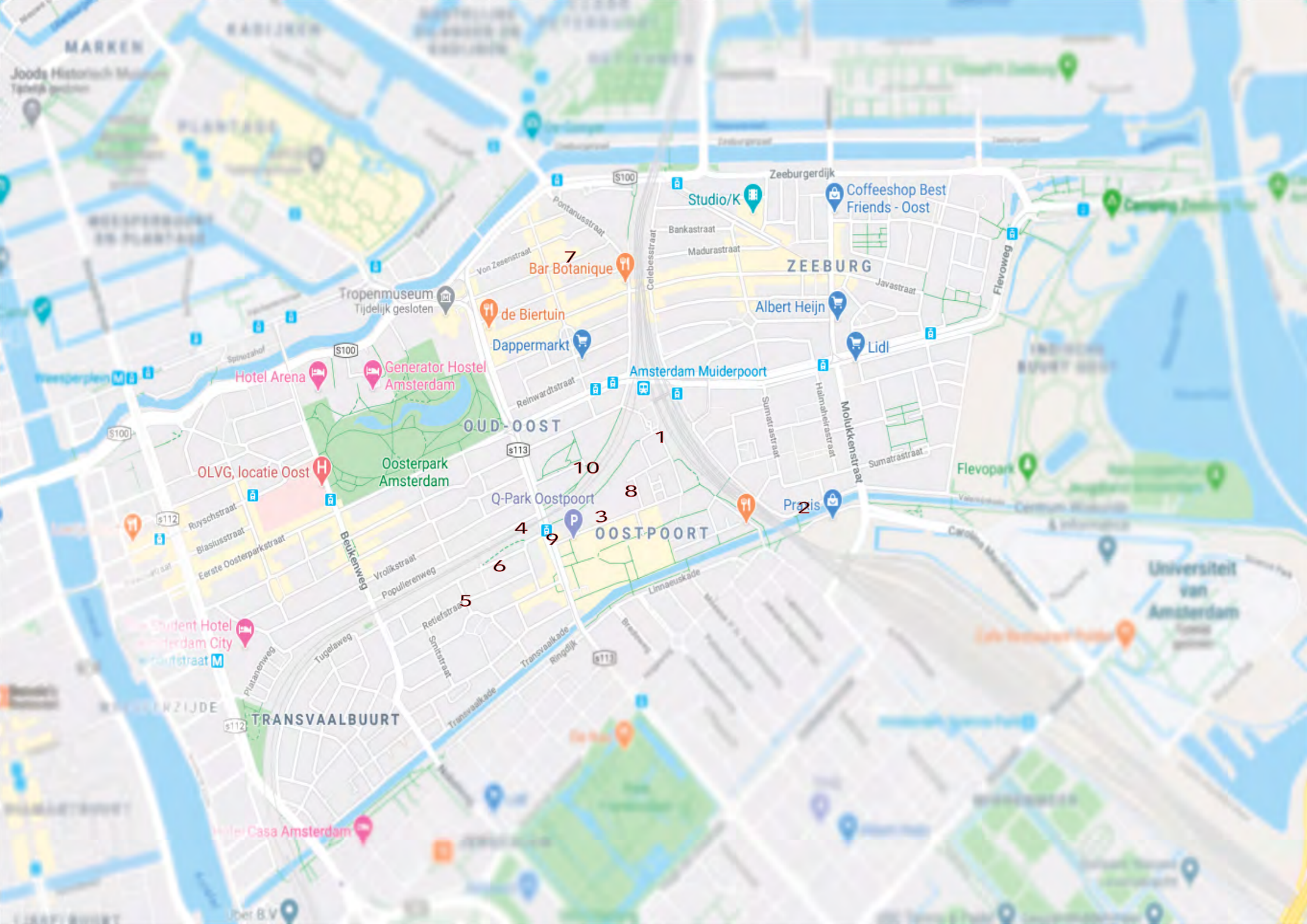
Grote foto's



Carmen has been living in the Oosterparkbuurt for four years. I would like to introduce her as the queen of *grofvuil*. When she needs something, she will say it out loud and a few days later she often finds it on the streets. It can vary from kitchen utensils to furniture to plants that need some extra love to decorative objects. In a short interview she tells me more about her love for *grofvuil*.

Carmen (27): "I love to go outside on the *grofvuil* evenings. It gives me a reason to make a walk with the extra thrill of a scavenger hunt. I've collected over fifty items and found a lot of treasures. All the objects are different and together they represent the diversity of the neighborhood. I've found this mask on the day that I've moved in here, four years ago. It really became an essential part of the living room as it defies our mantelpiece like a trophy."

The diverse *grofvuil* collection of Carmen is one of the many examples that show that people from the same neighborhood bear different opinions on certain objects. Hence, the rubbish category is never fixed and always generated within a social context.



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