

Objects in the Margins

Marginal Items in Sleutelbakjes

All kinds of peculiar things:

A bead

An old phone-card

Shards of a vase

A Paperclip

(Gineke)

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Research Questions	4
2. Theoretical Context	5
2.1 Grounded Theory	5
2.2 Literature review	7
3. Research Methods	19
3.1 Grounded Theory	19
3.2 Surveys	22
3.3 Free Listing	22
3.4 Item Listing	25
3.5 Pile Sorting	26
4. Types of Key-Containers	29
4.1 Types of Bakjes	29
4.2 Drawers	33
4.3 Cabinets	33
4.4 Conclusion	34
5. Items in Sleutelbakjes	35
5.1 Item list results	36
5.2 Free list results	36
6. Analysis	43
6.1 Keys and Marginality	43
6.2 Items to Clean Up	46
6.3 Items Marginal to the System	49
6.4 Lacking Information	54
6.5 Disposal	57
6.6 The Threshold of the House	61
7. Conclusion	66
7.1 Discussion	68
References	71
Appendix A: Overview of the Participants	75
Appendix B: Original Quotes and their Translations	76
Appendix C: Examples of Memos	82
Appendix D: Containers Analysed	83
Appendix E: Results Free Lists	88

1.1 Research Questions

This study set out to investigate sleutelbakjes in Dutch homes. I chose *grounded theory* as my research methodology (this will be discussed in the following section). In grounded theory, a study begins with a general topic of interest and, as research progresses, the direction and focus of the study is guided by the data. As such, I did not define a specific research question. Instead, I divided my research topic into four sub-topics, each with a number of guiding questions which remained open to changing throughout the process.

1.1.1 Verifying Sleutelbakjes

At the outset of this study, I did not know whether the word and concept *sleutelbakje* was only known (or used) by people in my surroundings, or if it was more broadly shared across Dutch culture. Therefore, my first research topic sought find out whether other people (beyond my acquaintances) also spoke of (or used) sleutelbakjes. Additionally, I wanted to explore the alternatives to sleutelbakjes: where else do people store their keys?

1.1.2 Defining Sleutelbakjes

This topic centred on defining the concept *sleutelbakje*: when someone uses the word *sleutelbakje*, what do they have in mind? And do people have similar ideas about what a sleutelbakje is, or do people define it differently? I was also curious to know whether there are items that are considered ‘typical’ items to be found in sleutelbakjes, which would make them part of the concept *sleutelbakje*.

1.1.3 Exploring Sleutelbakjes

Using interviews, I wanted to study existing sleutelbakjes, to find out which types of items (including keys) are kept inside, and what they have in in common.

1.1.4 Understanding Sleutelbakjes

To gain a deeper understanding of sleutelbakjes, I wanted to explore sleutelbakjes in a larger context. I used the following questions for guidance:

- Why do people keep items (other than keys) in sleutelbakjes? How did they end up there?
- (How) do sleutelbakjes differ from similar containers with keys?
- What role do sleutelbakjes play in the lives of participants and in their homes? What is their function?

With these questions I began my investigation into sleutelbakjes. Thus, the purpose of this study was to define, explore, and and understand what sleutelbakjes are, and how they are used.

2. Theoretical Context

2.1 Grounded Theory

The breadth of my research topic led me to choose grounded theory (hereafter GT) as my research methodology. The founders of this method, Glaser and Strauss (1967), created (classical) GT as a reaction to the positivist research norms prevalent in the social sciences in the 1960s, which focussed heavily on hypothesis testing and ‘grand theorising’ (Suddaby, 2006; Thornberg, 2012). Glaser and Strauss later went their separate ways to further develop their own versions of the method, and more variations emerged through (collaborations with) students of theirs.¹ This research employed GT as described by Corbin and Strauss (2008).

GT is a qualitative research method through which hypotheses and new theories are formed through observation and analysis of data. Unlike traditional positivist research, GT integrates the processes of data collection and analysis into an iterative cycle, where the analysis determines which data will be sampled next (called *theoretical sampling*) (see figure 2). GT therefore includes methods for sampling, data collection, and analysis, and therefore it should be considered an entire package of research methods (Walsh et al., 2015). Although systematic, it is also a messy and creative process (Suddaby, 2006). I will briefly discuss some essential aspects of GT below, while further details of the process are discussed in chapter 3.

The analytic process of GT revolves around using the *constant comparative method*, where findings are continuously compared to previously collected data and knowledge in search of patterns and explanations (Thornberg, 2012). Data (in the form of transcripts) is coded, and codes are combined into categories. The resulting increasingly abstract categories “lift data to a conceptual level” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 636). Tentative theories which may explain the data are built, but as they are compared to new data, they are continually modified, reshuffled, broken down, and rebuilt (Suddaby, 2006; Thornberg, 2012). This combination of induction and deduction, referred to as *abduction*, requires immersion in the data and a sensitive reading of it, with eye for “subtleties of meaning” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 640).² It also requires creativity and an open mind, to make innovative connections and “create new order out of the old” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 27). The constant comparative method allows one to formulate a theory which, while grounded in data, also goes beyond the data and extant theories in discovering new explanations (Thornberg, 2012). The ideal (and realistically unattainable) goal is to continue collecting, coding and analysing data until theoretical saturation is reached: the categories and subcategories reflect all the data and new data does not change the findings. The final theory does not aim for an objective truth. It is a conceptualisation of a situation, that bests explains the data, providing an “explanatory framework with which to understand a phenomenon” (Willig, 2013, p. 70). The final theory is presented as “set

¹ Grounded theory has a complex history. For reviews of different types of grounded theory see Bryant and Charmaz (2007), Clarke (2005), Corbin and Strauss (2008), Suddaby (2006), or Walsh et al. (2015).

² Langley (1999) said researchers have compared the constant immersion in data to ‘drowning’ in it (as cited in Suddaby, 2006). The interpretive process that takes place during immersion has been described as “occurring subconsciously” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639).

of concepts related to one another in a cohesive whole” and is often expressed in a visual model such as a flowchart (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011, p. 3).

Traditional positivist research begins with a theoretical framework of extant assumptions and theories from the literature in the field. Based on these, hypotheses are formulated and tested. In GT, the theoretical framework is not determined in advance. Instead, as research progresses, a new theoretical framework emerges. Based on the analysis of data, new theories are formulated or existing theories are modified. Classical GT, more so than other qualitative methods, emphasises that theories be based solely on findings, and they must not be ‘contaminated’ by extant theories. To ensure that a theory is truly grounded in data, classical GT takes a drastic approach and discourages reviewing relevant literature, particularly in the early phases of the research. However, because one can never enter a study as a blank slate, contemporary grounded theorists instead choose to embrace and make use of pre-existing theories throughout the research process (Thornberg, 2012). By reviewing existing literature, mistakes that have already been made can be avoided. Also, it enables researchers to relate their theory to earlier work or elaborate on it (Suddaby, 2006; Thornberg, 2012). To ensure that theories are not imposed on the data, and that the emerging explanation remains firmly grounded in the data, researchers can make use of a number of strategies.

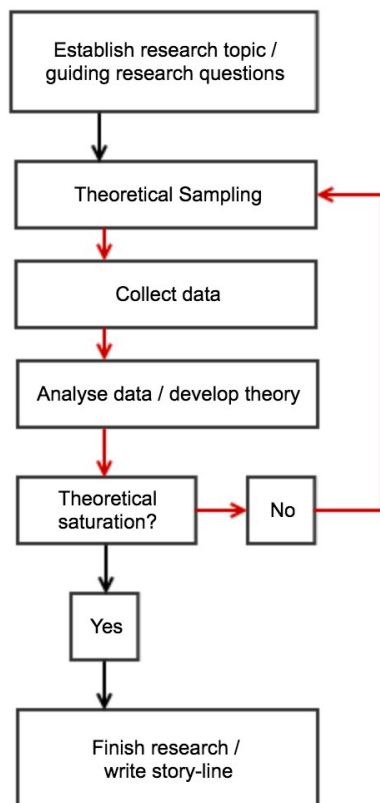


Figure 2. The grounded theory process. A simplified visualisation of the grounded theory research process.

First and foremost, researchers must always remain skeptical of their own evolving theories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As a form of self-monitoring, researchers can write, in memos, about how their analytical lens may be influencing their emerging theory (Thornberg, 2012). To ensure a critical stance towards the literature, a researcher must try to adhere to *theoretical agnosticism*: they must reflect on preexisting theories critically, and reflect on how they may be influencing the analysis (Thornberg, 2012). Only theories that truly fit the data and are useful should be accepted, and, when needed, they should be modified (Suddaby, 2006; Thornberg, 2012).

Researchers should use a variety of “different and even competing theoretical perspectives”, also referred to as *theoretical pluralism* (Thornberg, 2012, p. 250). In this way, rather than potentially narrowing the researcher’s view, the literature can widen their field of vision and greatly enrich the data (Thornberg, 2012). Comparing concepts and theories from a variety of fields by “playing with them in new, innovative, creative and unorthodox ways” greatly stimulates the creative process (Thornberg, 2012, p. 253). This also forces the researcher to look at their own concepts more critically, and challenge them in light of other theories (Suddaby, 2006).

2.1.1 Justification Grounded Theory

I chose GT as my methodology because of the breadth of my topic, and the lack of information available about sleutelbakjes. Because GT allows one to move from data to theory, it is particularly suitable for understudied research areas (Pettigrew, 2000). Using GT, I could begin my study with a general research topic, after which a focus could naturally emerge from the data. GT provided a framework in which I could combine multiple research methods to explore the topic from different angles. GT provided a creative and flexible, yet also systematic and reliable way to manage my broad research questions, and the variety of data I intended to use to investigate sleutelbakjes.

Additionally, sleutelbakjes I had previously encountered contained a variety of different items other than keys. Because GT analyses for (increasingly abstract) concepts, this approach allowed me to shift my focus away from individual objects. By analysing sleutelbakjes conceptually, I could explore and compare sleutelbakjes as a whole, even if they contained different items.

In the section that follows I present an overview of theories from the literature which ‘earned’ their way into my analysis. The concepts they presented were relevant and fit well with my data in various (and sometimes unexpected) ways. The next chapter (chapter 3) describes the various methods used in this research. Chapter 4 describes the different types of containers (including sleutelbakjes) I encountered throughout my research, to put the prevalence of (and alternatives to) sleutelbakjes in perspective. Chapter 5 thereafter analyses items in sleutelbakjes. In chapter 6 I present my theory of sleutelbakjes: what sleutelbakjes are, what characterises them, what they are used for, and what relates keys to the other items found inside.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Material Culture Studies

This study falls within the scope of material culture studies (hereafter MCS). MCS is a multi-disciplinary field combining methods and theories from, amongst others, sociology, anthropology, archeology, consumption studies, and design. *Material culture* can be defined as “objects that are used, lived in, displayed and experienced” (O’Toole & Were, 2008, p. 617). Everyday we are surrounded by, and continuously interacting with, material culture. It is a product of our lives, and creates a framework in which our lives take place (O’Toole & Were, 2008). But material culture is also used as a tool, to mediate and define relationships and self-identity (Eriksen, 2001, pg. 190).

Specifically, this investigation relates to studies of everyday objects and consumption in the domestic sphere. The domestic space has often been overlooked by researchers: all that takes place in the home seems to be so self-evident that it is taken for granted and no longer questioned, and this has resulted in a ‘blind spot’ (Cieraad 1999; Löfgren, 2014). It is described as an elusive place, a “place of paradoxes” and “rife with ambiguities” (Short, 1999, p. x). The complexity of the home, combined with our misleading familiarity with it, make it “one of the least understood and most methodologically challenging areas of human life” (Buchli, V., Clarke, A., & Upton, D., 2004, p. 3).

Early MCS research focussed on objects' social role as communicating agents, carrying symbolic messages about a person's identity, lifestyle, social position, values, and taste (Smith, 2007; Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Hetherington, 2004; Löfgren, 2014). These studies were later criticised for overlooking mundane and routine consumption practices (such as grocery shopping) and the mass of ordinary objects in our lives, and which are not on display (Smith, 2007; Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Hetherington, 2004). Everyday consumption and ordinary objects have been the focus of many MCS investigations post-1990s (Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Löfgren, 2014). This study, too, falls within this context.

In this review of the literature I present concepts and theories from MCS related to five main themes. I first discuss cultural expectations and norms regarding tidiness, as they are an impetus for organising objects in the home. Thereafter I discuss classification and how this relates to organisation practices in the home. Then I look at a number of assemblages of items described in the literature which were reminiscent of the items in sleutelbakjes. I subsequently turn to the process of disposal, as sleutelbakjes also contained items waiting to be thrown away. Finally, I will discuss marginal spaces in the home, as these turned out to be intimately related to sleutelbakjes.

2.2.2 An Ideal Home

An 'ideal home' is often seen as a tidy and organised home, where there is 'a place for everything, and everything is in its place' (Dion, Sabri, & Guillard, 2014; Belk, Seo, & Li, 2007). This idea is endlessly reinforced through TV-shows, books, displays in stores, and websites about home decoration (Dion et al., 2014). Having an organised home is seen as a social and moral quality, and is considered a reflection of a person's quality of life and emotional status (Dion et al., 2014; Belk et al., 2007). A tidy home is equated with having peace of mind, and a messy or disorganised home means a "disorganised life and a fragmented and chaotic sense of self" (Belk et al., 2007, p. 134). Personal motivations to organise, as opposed to social or moral reasons, are increasingly emphasised both by people themselves and by the media, as this quote from an IKEA catalogue illustrates (Dion et al., 2014):

To us, being organized means feeling good. Knowing where you left your keys, or where to find that vital bit of paperwork, quickly. Imagine not having to stress about things like that? In a well organized home, daily life gets easier, while surroundings look lovelier. Beautiful objects can take center stage in a glass-door cabinet, with not-so-beautiful objects stowed behind solid doors. So why not wave goodbye to chaos, and say hello to the new order of things? (IKEA 2013, 23)

Mess is often associated with incompetence, and a messy home can result in feelings of guilt and embarrassment (Löfgren, 2016; Belk et al., 2007). According to Löfgren (2016), these feelings are "closely tied to the constant presence of invisible guests" (p. 4). Naturally, the extent to which people want an organised home varies per person, and some people are far less bothered by a messy

house than others (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Abrahamson (2002) suggested that people with a “low need for closure or a high tolerance for ambiguity” may be more tolerant of a messy home (p. 35).³

2.2.3 Classification

The way objects are organised in the home is based on a cultural system of classification. In this section I will briefly discuss anthropologist Mary Douglas’ seminal theory on symbolic classification, described in her book “Purity and Danger” (1966). According to Douglas (1966), the experience of life is inherently messy, and humans want clear concepts and boundaries with which they can structure the world around them. To do so, they make use of exaggerated structural concepts such as clean and dirty, inside and outside, pure and impure, order and disorder (Douglas, 1966; Eriksen, 2001). Culture provides basic categories, determining what belongs in certain categories and what does not (Douglas, 1966; Nippert-Eng, 1996). These cultural categories and their boundaries divide up the world into parts which people can understand and coherently order into a larger system, making them the fundamental building blocks of culture and society (Dion et al., 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996).

The system with which order is created is therefore made up of categories with boundaries. To maintain such a system, elements that disrupt the system must be identified and rejected. Douglas (1966) uses the terms *dirt* to refer to that which has to be excluded in order to maintain a pattern, making dirt “all rejected elements of an ordered system” (p. 37). Hence, dirt is the inevitable by-product of creating order and having a system. Dirt is “matter out of place” (Douglas, 1966, p. 41).⁴

The term *dirt* (or *pollution*) is therefore used to describe entities that disrupt cultural and social boundaries, and threaten order (Douglas, 1966; Belk et al., 2007). Anomalous and ambiguous entities are examples of dirt, as they are entities which “confuse or contradict cherished classifications” and cause disorder (Douglas, 1966, p. 37). According to Douglas (1966), dirt is dangerous, and being confronted with an anomaly may lead to discomfort and anxiety, and condemnation, avoidance, or rejection. Alternatively, and if possible, the anomaly can be faced and dealt with, but to do so the system of classification must be altered to account for it (Douglas, 1966).

Douglas (1966) also describes the margins of a structure or system as vulnerable and dangerous. Entities found in margins of a system are ambiguous, and potentially threatening to order. For example, she describes how people with no clear place in the social system are considered dangerous because their status is ambiguous, and this unclarity makes them threatening to order. To illustrate, she described how criminals are not seen as threatening as long as they are in prison. Once they have left prison, however, they are in an unclear position in the eyes of society, and this

³ Throughout history, mess has also been associated with creativity, and so disorder in the home of intellectuals or artists is more often excused (Löfgren, 2016).

⁴ It is thereby also relative. In a famous passage Douglas (1966) describes how items around the house are not inherently dirty, but finding them in certain places is considered to be dirty: shoes and kitchenware are not dirty, but shoes put on a table, or kitchenware in the bedroom, *are* dirty.

ambiguity makes them threatening. Consequently, they are also marginalised: expelled from the system to maintain order.

Transitioning across margins is therefore considered equally dangerous. Whilst in the process of transitioning, an entity has gone “out of the formal structure” but not reentered into another, and this ambiguity of status is powerful, and also threatening (Douglas, 1966, p. 106). Such transitions must be controlled by rituals which clearly separate an entity from one status before allowing it to enter into another. This is clearly visible in rights of passage in various cultures, where people are temporarily outcast and isolated in spacial locations, as they make a social transition to a new status (Douglas, 1966). By labelling certain entities (items, events, transgressions, ideas, people, and so forth) as dangerous, it enforces conformity to culturally shared norms (Douglas, 1966). Such danger beliefs attributed to transgressions are thereby used to influence behaviour and maintain order (Douglas, 1966).

2.2.4 Organisation

Our system of symbolic classification provides a mental framework with which to structure the world around us. Through our actions, we try to shape our physical world so that it reflects, or conforms to, our mental framework (Ger and Yenicioglu, 2004; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Entities are identified as ‘matter out place’ (dirt) and removed to maintain a “symbolically unpolluted environment”, keeping our mental framework stable and ordered (Dion et al., 2014, p. 56). The physical, visible actions through which categories are substantiated and negotiated are referred to as *boundary work* (Ger and Yenicioglu, 2004). Nippert-Eng (1996) defines boundary work as “the strategies, principles, and practices that individuals use to create, maintain, and modify categories” (p. 564).

By way of illustration, Ger and Yenicioglu (2004) discuss homeless children in Istanbul. Homeless children do not have a clear place in the social system (similar to the ex-prisoners described by above). They are commonly considered to be ‘dirty’, in the literal sense, but also because they are seen to “contaminate” the city as they roam the streets (Ger and Yenicioglu, 2004). These children are seen as threatening, as they do not belong in the streets and disrupt order, and by ‘containing’ them in the slums (where they do ‘belong’) they are no longer perceived as threatening to society. By physically moving these children out of the city to the slums, the city as well as the idealised view of society, is kept ‘pure’ and unpolluted (Ger and Yenicioglu, 2004). Nippert-Eng (1996) provides another example: by sweeping the floor one is physically keeping the home ‘pure’, but also symbolically de-polluting the cultural categories of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Sweeping the floor thereby becomes “a physical, visible attempt to maintain a mental categorical purity and order” (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

And so it is as well with cleaning and organising objects in the home. Our cultural system of classification outlines certain categories of objects and ways of classifying them (Dion et al., 2014). Cultural norms (often expressed through the media) prescribe right and wrong places to keep certain

objects: kitchenware belongs in the kitchen, a bed in the bedroom, and so forth (Löfgren, 2016; Dion et al., 2014). Having standard and predictable places for objects, according to this framework, helps to maintain social order, as objects in their proper position are “enduring fixtures around which habitual actions and routes are repetitively practices, as props in the performance of everyday routine” (Edensor, 2005, p. 312).

When we are cleaning up and ordering our objects, we are doing boundary work: identifying dirt, including and excluding things from categories, and getting rid of pollution, to make our environment conform to our mental framework of classification (Dion et al., 2014; Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Douglas, 1966; Nippert-Eng, 1996). In their study of domestic organisation practices and mess, Dion et al. (2014) described how their participants tried to make their physical surroundings reflect their cognitive order: they categorised items into groups of similar products, and preferably kept these together in one place, marked by boundaries. Boundaries can be either implicit or explicit. Implicit boundaries (such as putting cookies on the left side of a shelf, and grains on the right) are naturally more susceptible to transgressions. Explicit boundaries, such as containers, can be used to set a physical boundary around a class of objects (Dion et al., 2014). Containers are therefore a tool in boundary work: making mental categories (and their boundaries) tangible.

If an item is in a container (or place) where it does not belong, it is therefore transgressing a physical, as well as a symbolic, boundary (similar to dust blowing into the home, described above). It is literally ‘matter out place’ and disrupts order, and may therefore be considered dirt, or pollution (Dion et al., 2014; Douglas, 1966). In practice, Dion et al. (2014) indeed found that their participants experienced mess and disorder as items out of place in the system of classification, or when categories themselves were not well-defined.

Because mess is pollution, it is also dangerous, and “clutter and chaos in the home mean a disordered and ‘dirty’ life” (Belk et al., 2007, p. #). Here too, the danger beliefs enforce conformity, pressuring people to keep their homes tidy. But fear not, here to help us declutter are an ever-increasing array of products and services, in the form of smart storage solutions⁵, de-cluttering gurus, TV-shows, books, and anonymous support groups. They promise not only a de-cluttering of the home, but also the mind: less stress, improved time-management, and ridding oneself of the burden of objects in aiming for a simpler, cleaner life (Belk et al., 2007; Löfgren, 2016). However, their very existence only further reinforces the idea that mess is dangerous and requires solutions, and as a result, the industry has grown dramatically in the last decade (Dion et al., 2014). And in spite of them, most people still find themselves in a constant battle with “disorganised possessions that control us more than we control them” (Belk et al., 2007). Although this may be ascribed to improper storage systems, classifying and organising objects is a complex endeavour, and some unruly objects escape even the best storage systems.

⁵ Löfgren (2016) compared IKEA catalogues, and found that “storage was not a big theme in 1990, whereas in 2015 the pages were bursting with smart storage technologies: sophisticated wardrobe systems, as well as boxes, containers, and labelling systems, in all shapes and forms” (p. 4).

Organisation in Practice

In studying tidiness practices in the home, Dion et al. (2014) extended Douglas' (1966) theory of symbolic classification and pollution to the micro-social domestic context. They explored how their participants dealt with symbolic pollution in the organisation and ordering of their possessions. In doing so, they shed light on a number of ways in which the day-to-day handling, classification, and organisation of objects is, in practice, a complex process.

When organising objects, Dion et al. (2014) found that their participants generally grouped items using basic categories (cups with cups, batteries with batteries, and so forth). Size, shape, colour, functionality, and ownership were also classificatory factors used. In accordance with Douglas' (1966) theory on symbolic classification, participants identified anomalies, or items that could not be easily classified, as threatening to their system of organisation. Dion et al. (2014) concluded that tidying and organisational practices were aimed at avoiding such anomalies.

One way their participants dealt with anomalies was through using multiple systems, and changing which system (size or colour, for example) the participant gave priority to. Another tactic entailed adjusting the boundaries of their classifications: by expanding categories new or anomalous items could be accounted for, and were no longer seen to pollute the system. In this way, over time, the system of classification behind a single shelf of books, for example, can grow and evolve into a complex meshwork of different classifications and (unstable) rules, overlapping and sometimes clashing. Although "each rule taken independently makes sense when informants set them up" over time it may result in a "complex and incoherent classification system" (Dion et al., 2014, p. 583). Nonetheless, in doing so, anomalies can be avoided while a classification system (however complex) can be maintained.

Dion et al. (2014) also found that their participants used various degrees of precision in classifying objects, ranging from single items (like a single barbie) to small groups of items (barbies or legos), to large and more generalising groups, such as 'stationary'. In the category 'stationary', a great variety of items can mix without being considered anomalies or pollution. Accordingly, the more precise someone's systems of classification is, the more anomalies they are likely to encounter, and the harder it is to maintain that system. As a result of these varying levels of precision, one person may consider a jumble of pens and erasers and scissors a disorganised mess, while to another is simply the (ordered but) broader category of 'stationary', leading to two very different perceptions of what constitutes a mess.

In a household, items are constantly moving around the house, coming in and going out. Perfectly and constantly maintaining a system of classification and organisation is impractical and unrealistic. Dion et al. (2014) found that their participants dealt with this by, at times purposefully ignoring their classification systems and tolerating transgressions. Sometimes transgressions were systematically tolerated: for example, a messy room was tolerated during the workweek, but not during the weekends. In some cases, transgressions may even come to be accepted as a new norm,

or alternative ordering (Dion et al., 2014). As long as these transgressions were tolerated, they were not considered symbolic pollution (Dion et al., 2014). Nevertheless, Dion et al. (2014) also identified a ‘tipping point’ at which transgressions are no longer tolerated and *do* become symbolic pollution. For example, when an accumulation of items on a bathroom sink overflows and items fall off, then it is no longer tolerated and the items are cleaned up (Dion et al., 2014).

This study by Dion et al. (2014) provides practical examples of ways in which people navigate tidiness rules at home. It also illustrates the variation, complexity, flexibility, and fluidity that underlies the organisation of objects in the home.

2.2.5 Assemblages

As people go about their daily business, objects are frequently put down without thinking and lost around the home. Objects are always on the move, and this great migration does not always feel fully within our control (Löfgren, 2014). Some items evade classification and find themselves wandering around the home (Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003). Items may be reclassified unpredictably and repeatedly: one day an item may be considered precious memorabilia, while it is labelled as *junk* the next day (Löfgren, 2014). And as seen above, systems of organisation are continually changing. In this commotion, some systems of organisation are spontaneously, temporarily, or unintentionally created: items pile up around the house in unexpected orderings, on tables, in corners, and in closets, drawers, and cupboards (Löfgren, 2014). These groups of various items may be considered disorderly in that they deviate from the ordered system of classification (Abrahamson, 2002). Boscalgi (2014) described them as “non-descript heaps, bundles, piles, assemblages” (Löfgren, 2014, p. 84). In this section I will share some examples of assemblages which I encountered in the literature, whose diverse contents I felt were reminiscent of the items in sleutelbakjes.

The Kitchen Drawer

One example of such an assemblage was a kitchen drawer belonging to a participant in the study by Dion et al. (2014). The participant felt that this drawer was disorderly because the purpose of the drawer was not defined: unlike her ‘oil drawer’ or ‘kitchen foil and bags drawer’ it was not dedicated to specific items. As a result, it contained items that belonged to a variety of categories, which were not grouped together by a certain logic. Additionally, it was disorderly because it contained items which did not belong there: these items were out of place and in the wrong categories, making them clear examples of pollution or dirt. All participants in the study by Dion et al. (2014) described items in the wrong categories, and the transgression of boundaries, as disruptions to order.

The Bowl

In the following example, described by Löfgren (2014), items ended up in a container through “magic force”, beyond a person’s intentions, and control. Löfgren (2014) describes how a ceramic

bowl put on the table as decoration comes to be seen as invitingly empty. Over time the bowl attracts a variety of items, such as a matchbox, a few coins, and “a cellphone charger, an old lottery ticket, an unpaid electricity bill, and some used batteries” (Löfgren, 2014, p. 84).

Boscalgi (2014) calls such assemblages of items *stuff*. She defines stuff as “things on the move” and “out of bounds”, that are “vague, liminal and overwhelming” (p. 84). The items in the bowl are only there temporarily. At a certain point someone will point it out as a mess⁶, and it will be subjected to a clean up: the items will be recategorised, and the bowl decluttered (Löfgren, 2014). Figure 4 shows a photograph of a similar bowl, originally printed in the paper by Löfgren (2014).

Functional Assemblages

Abrahamson (2002) described two types of assemblages which were (explicitly) functional. People use *to-organise piles* or *messes* to store items that still need to be organised or given a place. However, as long as an item in the pile does not yet have a place in the greater ordering scheme (or is not given one), then it cannot be cleaned up, and remains inside the pile until the ordering scheme is adjusted to account for it (Abrahamson, 2002).

Abrahamson (2002) argues that using to-organise piles (or leaving to-organise messes to form) can increase efficiency in a number of ways. To-organise piles can improve *flow*: when confronted with items that need to be organised, rather than repeatedly allowing them to interrupt activities or thoughts, they are put in the to-organise pile. In this way activities or thoughts can continue uninterrupted. Sometimes cleaning up can be more efficient if a number of items are left to accumulate in the pile: for example, instead of going upstairs for each item separately, they can all be taken upstairs at once, at a later time. Additionally, when deciding how to organise things, sometimes it helps to first collect a large enough sample. Only then does an “optimal organising scheme” become clear (Abrahamson, 2002, p. 28). Also, by keeping frequently used items at hand, one saves time otherwise spent repeatedly putting the item back in place and (re)retrieving it.

Another type of assemblage, described by Abrahamson (2002), is a to-discard pile (or mess), consisting of items that need to be “removed from the ordering system” (p. 11). In the following section I will give a more detailed account of the process of disposal, as it is a common theme in MCS research, and also proved to be very relevant for my study into sleutelbakjes.



Figure 3. The Kitchen Drawer. Reprinted from “Home Sweet Messy Home: Managing Symbolic Pollution,” by Dion, D., Sabri, O., and Guillard, V., 2014, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41, 565–589.

⁶ This is comparable to the ‘tipping point’ described by Dion et al. (2014), where a transgression is no longer tolerated and it becomes pollution.

2.2.6 Disposal

Consider the saying ‘you are what you buy’. By implication then, you are also what you throw away, and choose not to throw away (Hetherington, 2004). In throwing away even the most mundane items we are not only ordering our home, but also ordering ourselves: we are deciding that certain items no longer fulfil our needs or reflect our self-identity, or that we no longer need to be reminded of a person or memory through an old keepsake (Edensor, 2005). This is another example of how we try to make our physical world (our home) reflect our mental world (who we are).



Figure 4. A bowl, similar to the ceramic bowl described by Löfgren (2014). Reprinted from “The Black Box of Everyday Life. Entanglements of Stuff, Affects, and Activities,” by Löfgren, O., 2014, *Cultural Analysis*, 13, 77-98.

The process of disposal, referred to as the *divestment process*, takes place in phases (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). It is a very personal process: sometimes it may be experienced as painful, while at other times it can be liberating (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). Studies have shown this process to be as relevant for mundane items as it is for objects more explicitly related to self-identity (Hirschman et al., 2012; Hetherington, 2004).

During the divestment process, an item undergoes a transition from one status or category to another: from useful to useless, wanted to not wanted, mine to not-mine. As we saw earlier, transitions across classifications may be considered dangerous, and are best dealt with through rituals (Douglas, 1966). This also applies to the divestment process. The item must first be separated from the self and its old status by removing the item’s meaning and emotionally detaching from it. During this phase, the object is in a liminal zone between two classifications, where its value (use, exchange, or sentimental) is uncertain (Lucas, 2002; Edensor, 2005). At this time the item does not really belong in the home, nor outside it. The item can only be properly disposed of when this phase has been ‘completed’ (McCracken, 1988; Korosec-Serfaty, 1984): when a person has sufficiently detached themselves from the item and their “inner psychological evolution” is ready to let the item go (Korosec-Serfaty, 1984, p. 313).⁷

Previous studies have found that items in the divestment process are often kept in a dedicated place while they undergo their transition from rejection to disposal. Removing them from their structured place in the home, but not fully removing them, gives people time to “grow indifferent to the items” before throwing them away (Korosec-Serfaty, 1984).

Interestingly, the spaces typically used for the divestment process reflect the status the items inside: having been rejected, the items in the divestment ritual no longer play a central role in our lives and

⁷ According to Lucas (2002), “the more care we take to dispose of something, the more we are contradicting the act of disposal” (p. 18).

move to the “edge of our consciousness” (Hirschman et al., 2012, p. 379). Accordingly, they are removed out of the central spaces of our daily life, and put in peripheral, or marginal, spaces of the home (such as spare (bed)rooms, attics, garages, or sheds) where they are out of the way and out of sight (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). In this way the items are already beginning to move out of the house, which is equated with disposal. Thus, the spatial transitions made by items in the divestment process directly mirror their changing status, as they are both physically and mentally pushed away and eventually removed altogether.

2.2.7 Marginal Spaces of the Home

Marginal spaces of the home, as those discussed above, are also referred to in the literature as *liminal* or *transitional spaces*, as well as (the more encompassing term) *secondary spaces*. Secondary spaces of the home are juxtaposed with the primary spaces: the areas of the home, such as the living room, where day to day life takes place. These are the visible areas of the home, open to potential guests and therefore not completely private (Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003). According to Korosec-Serfaty (1984) the qualities of the visible areas of the home only exist because of their dialectical relationship to the hidden areas of the home. The (polar) structural elements described by Douglas (1966) in section 2.2.3 are often mapped onto spatial ones, as illustrated in table 1 below.

Spatial	Outside	Entrance Hallway	Primary Spaces	Secondary Spaces
Social and Psychological	public	< >	semi-private (visible)	private (hidden)
	dirty	< >	clean	dirty
	disordered	< >	ordered	disordered

Table 1. Structural Elements of the Home. The social and psychological characteristics (structural elements) as they are often mapped onto the spatial areas of the home.

Because primary spaces are the central areas of our lives we try to keep clutter-free and properly ordered. We do so because it increases our comfort and efficiency, but also because the space reflects our emotional world to potential visitors, as we saw in section 2.2.2 (Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Maycroft, 2009). In order to keep these places tidy, items that do not belong there and disrupt order (dirt) must be removed. Such clutter is frequently stored in secondary spaces (which are allowed to be disordered), where they are hidden from sight.⁸ Items undergoing the divestment process (because of their ambiguous status) are an example of such items. However, clutter can also consist of meaningful items loaded with memories or symbolic meanings (Belk et al., 2007). The decluttering hype encourages us to throw even these items away (as they ‘weigh us down’), yet because of their symbolism we are unable to let them go. Instead, we hide them away in secondary spaces. In table 1 above we see that primary spaces can only be kept clean and ordered because of the existence of secondary spaces, which, because of their hidden qualities, are allowed to be dirty and disordered. (This is even considered characteristic these spaces: one participant in a study by Korosec-Serfaty (1984) said their attic was not an attic, because it was not messy.) As marginal

⁸ In a study into hoarding, Maycroft (2009) found that one of the things that sets hoarders apart from “orthodox consumers” is that they store their clutter in primary, rather than secondary spaces.

spaces edge away from the centre of home, they increasingly share characteristics with the dirty and chaotic world ‘outside’. Below I will briefly describe three marginal spaces: garages, attics, and hallways.

Garages and Attics

Hirschman et al. (2012) studied American garages which were not used for cars but as marginal storage areas. They found that garages are used to store what he calls *liminal items*. Liminal items are transitioning from one state or status to another, and are therefore in an ambiguous state. Items undergoing the divestment process are an example of liminal items. According to Hirschman et al. (2012), liminal items “combine elements of order, disorder, structure, anti-structure, cleanliness, and dirtiness” (p. 383). As a result, liminal items are ambiguous and difficult to classify, like the anomalies described by Douglas (1966). According to Hirschman et al. (2012), these items must be kept in a “spatial area which exhibits same mixed-state status” (p. 383). While in this liminal space, the items are “suspended both in space and time as they move from one category to another” (Hirschman et al., 2012, p. 376). These findings align with descriptions of the divestment process in other studies.

Korosec-Serfaty (1984) found that attics were used to store items that are not in use or have no use. Keeping these things is considered to be irrational, and by keeping them in the attic they will not be seen by others. Although useless at the moment, they may prove valuable in the future. Similarly, Hirschman et al. (2012) found garages are used for items that their participants were hoping to use in the future. These items were in a mixed state, both useless (at the moment), but potentially valuable in the future. Hirschman et al. (2012) also described how garages contained projects that were postponed, and items which were waiting to be repaired.

Both garages and attics were also used to store memorabilia that remind people of (their relationships with) other people, often family (for example, old toys belonging to children who have long since grown up) (Hirschman et al., 2010; Korosec-Serfaty, 1984). People do not want to throw these items away, but also do not want them on display, so the hidden character of the garage and attic make them good places to store these private items. Attics, which are more hidden and secretive than garages, are also used for items that people want to forget (Korosec-Serfaty, 1984).

Entrance Hallways

As shown in table 1, entrance hallways are a transitional space between outside and the primary spaces of the home. Because they are not private or hidden, they are not used for storage, like many other marginal spaces. In this section I will discuss hallways by the front door, as described by Rosselin (1999). The hallway is a threshold between inside the house and outside, and so also between private and public, known and unknown, safe and dangerous. As Douglas (1966) described (see section 2.2.3), transitioning across boundaries can be dangerous, and it requires special rituals

to ensure a safe passage. After exiting one status or space, an entity must be neutralised before entering the next status or space (Rosselin, 1999, Douglas, 1966).

Hallways are a liminal transitional space: people passing through hallways are transitioning from inside to outside, but they are also transitioning from one status to another (from student to daughter, for example). Neutrality and purity are conditions for transitioning into a home, making the hallway a neutralising and purifying zone. The decoration and objects in a hallway, and the behaviour (rituals) which take place there, cater to its neutralising and purifying functions. A doormat affords an act of purification: wiping your shoes is cleansing them from dirt from outside.⁹ Similarly, leaving objects that have been defiled by the outdoors (such as shoes, coats, and umbrellas) in the hallway before entering the home, is also an act of purification.

The garages described by Hirschman et al. (2012) also had a lot in common with hallways. This is because the American garages studied are often also transitional spaces between indoors and outdoors, with a door leading into the home. Garages were also used to store items that had been defiled by the outdoors, such as dirty shoes or sports gear (sports gear was also mentioned by Rosselin (1999) as a dirty item kept in the hallway). Alternatively, the garage was used as a space to clean these items (an act of purification) before allowing them into the home.

2.2.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical context of my research: GT as my research methodology and framework, and MCS as a source for comparative concepts and theories. The theories discussed were theories which proved valuable to my analysis: studies into classification and organisation were particularly helpful in the early stages of my research, while studies into marginal spaces worked their way into the later phases of my analysis. The following chapter presents the research methods used for my investigation.

⁹ Some houses even have two doormats, emphasising the liminality of the hall as a space between two statuses, each with their own exit/entrance point (Rosselin, 1999).

3. Research Methods

My research area was roughly subdivided into four topics, as seen in table 2 below, and described in section 1.1. For the first three topics, I chose to use additional methods which I felt were suited to explore the related questions. GT encourages using different methods of gathering data to approach a phenomenon from multiple angles (Thornberg, 2012). These methods were not approached sequentially: although I began my study by sending out surveys, I continued collecting the same information from all participants up until the last interview. The results were each analysed separately, but they were also integrated into my GT analysis: the results were treated as additional comparative data. I also used my emerging GT theory to reflect back on the results. I will discuss each method separately in this chapter.

Grounded Theory	Verifying Sleutelbakjes	Surveys
	Defining Sleutelbakjes	Free Listins
	Exploring Sleutelbakjes	Item Listing
		Pile sorting
	Understanding Sleutelbakjes	-

Table 2. Chosen Methodology. The additional methods used for exploring each topic.

3.1 Grounded Theory

In order to investigate sleutelbakjes I conducted extended semi-structured interviews with eighteen participants. Although I discuss data collection and analysis separately in this section, it is important to emphasise that, in practice, they did not take place successively: analysis began the moment I began transcribing and coding the first interview.

3.1.1 Data Collection

Sampling

To select participants, I used theoretical sampling. Through analysing data I discovered possible relations, but also missing information which lead to more questions. I let these findings and questions determine my choices in data collection: I modified my questions and specifically selected participants who were most likely to help me answer questions and test current theories, or provide negative examples (Sbaraini et al., 2011).

I chose to interview (Dutch) friends and acquaintances because the interviews asked a lot from participants: they were quite long, had to take place in the home of the participant, and I predicted that going through their key-containers could be considered quite personal. By choosing to interview acquaintances I was more assured that the participants felt at ease and were motivated to participate.¹⁰ See appendix A for an overview of the participants.

¹⁰ My relationship to each participant was documented in memos, including reflections on possible biases that could have resulted from the sample.

Data Collection

The interviews generally took place in the homes of the participants, and lasted (on average) two to three hours. During these interviews, tasks were done to collect additional information about the topics (the additional methods seen in table 2). These tasks formed the spine of the interviews, around which participants freely told stories and described their thoughts (these comments were often far more telling than the raw data elicited from the tasks). I used a general script to guide the interviews. The script contained a number of standard questions which had to be as consistent as possible across interviews, such as the questions used in the survey and for free listing. The remainder of the script was more open-ended. It was not meant to control the interview, but rather consisted of topics I wanted to touch upon, and additional probes I could use during conversations. These scripts were adjusted as necessary after each interview. The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed using *T5 Transcription* in order to analyse them using the GT method. The interviews were in Dutch, and therefore any quotes mentioned in this paper are my own translation (see appendix B for a list of the original quotes alongside their translations).

3.1.2 Analysis

In addition to theoretical sampling, there are three essential aspects to GT analysis: the coding of the transcripts, the use of memos, and the constant comparative method. Together these aspects make up the cycle of data collection and analysis described in section 2.1 of this paper. I will briefly discuss how I approached each of these aspects in my research process.

Coding

The coding process began with open (initial) coding, in which I labelled sections of the data. Initially these codes were mostly low-level descriptive labels of certain instances of phenomena which I observed (Willig, 2013). This process requires the researcher to be as flexible and open-minded as possible to produce as many ideas as they can from the data (Sbaraini et al., 2011). Examples of low-level codes I used were *loosing keys* or *small items*. In the next phase, focussed coding, I decided which codes were the most important for my analysis. I applied more general labels to the codes and they became descriptive categories (Sbaraini et al., 2011). Later in the process, these low-level categories were integrated into higher-level ones, based on observed relations between them. These more analytical units are referred to as *concepts* or *themes* (Willig, 2013). Examples of higher-level themes I used in my research were *self-management* and *transience*. These themes were more abstract, and were applicable to all cases studied, in varying ways. When new codes or themes were found, I would go back through all my transcripts and look for new instances of that code or theme. Thus, in practice, the different stages of coding described here were an integrated and cyclical process. A final analytic step was the integration of themes into a core theme, which is a theme with the “greatest explanatory relevance and highest potential for linking all the other categories together” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 23). I chose for line-by-line coding of the transcripts as, according to Willig (2013), this ensures that “analysis is truly

grounded” and that higher-level categories “actually emerge from the data rather than be imposed on it” (p. 73).

Memos

Throughout the research process I kept notes and documented my thoughts in memos. In *case-based memos* I reflected on each interview and participant: I documented my relationship to the participant, and any notable things that happened during the interview. I used *methodological memos* to critically reflect on my methods and document adjustments therein. In my *conceptual memos* I reflected on the formation of categories, and documented any thoughts, theories or questions I came across, or simply things I wanted to take note of. This also included critical reflections on how my findings related to the literature. These memos came in a wide variety of formats throughout the process: they included notes, drawings, flow-charts, collages, and essays.¹¹ This helped me abstract the data and maintain an overview. As a whole, memos are a record of the development of the researcher’s theories (Sbaraini et al., 2011). See appendix C for examples of each type of memo.

Constant Comparative Method

GT makes use of the constant comparative analysis, as briefly described in section 2.1 of this paper. During analysis, whenever I discovered new categories or relationships I went back through my previously collected data to compare it to the new findings. Similarly, all codes, themes, memos, and cases were continuously compared in light of each other (also in a continual attempt to find negative examples which have not yet been accounted for). Throughout the process I treated literature as another source of data: concepts I encountered were compared to similar and different concepts from other sources, and critically compared to concepts emerging from my data. Additionally, as comparative data, I used quotes from two Dutch forum threads on which contributors discussed where they kept their keys.

3.1.3 Process

After an initial analysis of all my data I was left with a number of inconsistencies and gaps in my theories. I returned to my data, and analysed all transcripts a second time using my findings so far, as well as focussing more on processes as an explanatory mechanism. This is in line with Corbin and Strauss’ approach to GT, which emphasises “describing and coding everything that is dynamic — changing, moving, or occurring over time — in the research setting” (Borgatti, 2005, p. 4). Additionally I focussed more on the larger context surrounding key-containers by, for example, analysing their role in relationship to the rest of the home. I also explored how cultural norms and social expectations may impact the creation or use of sleutelbakjes. By shifting my focus I was able to trim excess categories and focus on filling in the more relevant, yet insufficiently developed,

¹¹ Midway through the research process I wrote a research paper on my findings. This led me to discover gaps in my data and theory, after which I conducted more interviews and reanalysed my data. As such, this paper became part of the process of analysis and can be considered an (extensive) conceptual memo, as memos are any form of “written records of analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 3).

themes. To do so I conducted more interviews and further explored the literature. After refining my theoretical scheme I selected a core theme around which I built my theory.

3.2 Surveys

At the outset of this investigation, the first thing I wanted to explore was where people keep their keys, and whether the term ‘sleutelbakje’ is commonly used to refer a container with keys. I was not looking to reliably measure the prevalence of sleutelbakjes using a representative and random sample. Instead, I simply hoped to get an idea of the different places where people keep their keys, and how they refer to these places.

To answer these questions and reach as many people as possible, I used self-administered surveys, sent by e-mail. The surveys were not anonymous, so that I could easily contact participants with follow up questions, or to request an interview.¹² The survey asked people what types of keys they had, where they kept their keys, and to describe these locations. If the participant used a container to store keys, the survey asked them to include some basic data such as its size, material, and shape. I also asked participants how they refer to the container, and to describe the contents of the container. Fifty self-administered surveys were returned to me via e-mail or mail. The returned self-administered surveys often contained additional information, small stories, or extra comments, and were therefore also included in my GT data for analysis.

During the interviews I asked participants the same questions as those listed in the surveys. I combined the data from the self-administered surveys and the interview surveys for analysis, resulting in survey data from 65 respondents in total (three interviews were conducted with people who had previously filled out self-administered surveys).

3.3 Free Listing

One of the things that fascinated me about sleutelbakjes was the collection of random items, other than keys, which I had encountered in a number of sleutelbakjes. I was curious to know to what extent these items characterised sleutelbakjes, and which items people feel can ‘typically’ be found in sleutelbakjes. I also wanted to know whether people had similar ideas about what a sleutelbakje is, and which items belong inside.

To explore these questions and help me define the concept *sleutelbakje*, I chose to use a method from cultural domain analysis (CDA) called *free listing*. Free listing is used to define a domain by identifying its contents. A domain (also referred to as a concept or category) consists of a “set of items that are all alike in some important way” and which “a group of people define as belonging to the same type” (Borgatti, 2011, p.3). In free listing, a researcher asks participants to list all items that they feel belong to a certain domain or category. If a number of items are mentioned by many

¹² For transparency I documented my relationship to each survey-participant in case-based memos.

people, then these items (the most salient items) can be said to constitute a culturally shared domain.

For the purpose of my research, I considered my domain to be “items that belong in sleutelbakjes”. At the outset of this study, I did not know what system of organisation underpinned the collection of items in sleutelbakjes, and therefore I did not know whether free listing was a reliable method for analysing the items inside. If sleutelbakjes were an explicit border to one or a few coherent categories of items, it would be a viable method to use. However, if the items in sleutelbakjes were a random assemblage of items, formed unintentionally, then my chosen category could be problematic. Nonetheless, I felt that using free listing experimentally could yield interesting results: regardless of the system underlying sleutelbakjes, I could explore the extent to which there is consensus amongst participants in the free lists. Additionally, any comments or discussions that arose from the task would be valuable in and of themselves, as they could be used in the further GT analysis.

3.3.1 Data Collection

I collected free lists from 32 participants.¹³ To obtain free lists from participants, I asked them to “please list as many items that you feel theoretically belong in a sleutelbakje. These do not have to be items in your own container, if you have one, although they can be, but any items which you would consider normal, or not abnormal, to find in a sleutelbakje.” Here I made use of the redundant question probe advised by Bernard (2006). I did this to avoid making assumptions about the system underlying sleutelbakjes (for example, if the items in sleutelbakjes ended up there unintentionally, then using only the term *belonging* could be problematic). When testing the question on a number of people before commencing free listing, I quickly noticed that this triggered participants to explain how they interpreted it, and these comments were valuable to my understanding of sleutelbakjes.

After completing the task, I cleaned-up the list together with the participant (to avoid, as much as possible, making any interpretations for them in later analysis). This involved removing synonyms, alternative labels, and attempting to bring all items to the same level of contrast, which was a complex task because the items were very divergent.¹⁴ Synonyms and varying levels of contrast, however, *were* taken into consideration during further analysis, as these could be informative in and of themselves.

¹³ Eighteen free lists were collected during the interviews, while an additional 14 people were interviewed separately and only asked to provide free lists.

¹⁴ If, in later analysis, I came across a level of contrast I could not use, I contacted the participant for clarification.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

Individual Analysis

Free lists can be analysed individually (per participant) and by creating an aggregated free list which combines all participants' lists into one. When analysing individual free lists, one can look at item recall and clustering.

Item Recall

Item recall refers to *how* participants were able to recall items: how many items can they recall? Did they find it hard or easy to come up with the items? We can expect that the clearer a category is in someone's mind, the easier it is to list the items that belong to the category. The order in which participants recall items (item rank) is an indication of the items saliency. A *salient item* can be considered an item that is more important to or typical of, the category (Weller & Romney, 1988). The first items a participant mentions are likely the most salient, and the further down the list a participant goes, the less typical the items become, and the more marginal they are to the concept.

Clustering

Clustering refers to participants listing certain types of items successively because they are related by association. In doing so, the participants are making use of a web of relations, and items similar in some way will be grouped together in the free list. For example, if asked to free list 'items in a kitchen', participants will likely list 'knife' or 'spoon' (types of cutlery) successively, before going on to, for example, 'a blender'. Clustering can give insight into the types of sub-categories in a list, as well as the web of relations used to recall items.

Aggregate Analysis

A domain is never definite, and people have different opinions of which items belong in domains. Nevertheless, using free listing, one can determine which items people within a given culture or group agree on as belonging in the domain. These items are the most salient members of the domain, and can be considered to make up a *culturally shared domain*.

There are two measures of item salience in free listing. The first is the ranking of an item on an individual's list, as we saw above. The second measure of salience is the amount of lists on which the item appears: the frequency with which an item is mentioned across all lists (Weller & Romney, 1988; Borgatti, 2011). These two measures of salience are highly correlated. The higher an item is listed on individual free lists, the more often it is probably listed by different participants. As such, they can be combined into a single measure of salience referred to Smith's S, or composite salience (Borgatti, 2011).

3.3.3 Results

The result is an aggregated list of all the free lists, ranked by composite saliency. The higher an item is on the list, the more salient it is as an item that belongs in the domain. Ideally, the final aggregated free list will show a core/periphery structure: a number of items will be mentioned by a large number of participants, while a very long list of items will be mentioned by only one participant. In this case there is a clear natural ‘elbow’ in the data, which can be seen by plotting the frequencies in a scree plot (Borgatti, 2011). The items within the high-end of this elbow are the core items of the aggregated list, which can be reliably considered ‘members of the shared domain’. If this structure is not so obvious, then another method has to be chosen, most likely simply selecting the top N items, depending on what the researcher intends to do with the data (Borgatti, 2011).

3.4 Item Listing

To explore existing containers, I made inventories of the items in containers encountered during my interviews. In doing so, I was able to compare the types of items found in different sleutelbakjes, as well as other key-containers. By comparing the item lists of existing sleutelbakjes to the aggregate free list, I could see to what extent the items listed by participants during free listing reflected items found one existing sleutelbakjes.

To create the item lists, I asked the participant to take each item out of the container one by one, and name it for me (figure 5). I did this in order to document the participants’ own names for objects. Interacting with the objects also triggered additional comments about the items from participants, and sometimes actions (such as testing whether a pen still works). Sometimes they triggered a memory, and participants told me stories related to the items. As with the survey and the free listing task, this task was recorded as part of the interview, and also analysed as data following GT procedures. I then created *cleaned-up item lists* which I could use comparatively.



Figure 5. Creating an Item List. A video still from the end of creating an item list, when all items were displayed on the table.

3.5 Pile Sorting

In order to get a better idea of what the items in key-containers may have in common, I used a method from cultural domain analysis (CDA) called *pile sorting*. Pile sorting is used to explore the internal structure of a domain and “elicit the attributes and relations that structure the domain” (Borgatti, 2011, 2). I chose for an informal approach to the method, as I was not attempting to make a formal classification scheme or quantitatively analyse the results (direct comparison across participants was not possible because each participant used different items for this task). Pile sorting could give me insight into what the items in key-containers have in common with each other, and whether there is an internal structure to the contents. Primarily though, it offered a framework within which the participants could interact with the objects, describe them, and reflect on them (and their similarities).

3.5.1 Data Collection

I conducted pile sorts with 12 of the 18 participants with who I conducted extended interviews.¹⁵ During the interviews, pile sorting took place after making item lists, at which point all the items were laid out on the table. Together with the participant, I put any double items back in the container, leaving on the table one of each type of item found in their container. To describe the process of pile sorting, I will use stills from a video of one of my interviews to illustrate. I began by asking participants to put the items in however many piles they saw fit, based on any system they chose to use, known as a *free pile sort* (figure 6).



Figure 6. Free Pile Sort. The initial piles made by the participant (while discussing the piles the participant already grouped the items into two larger categories, which was noted on the yellow post-it notes).

I then asked participants to explain and name each pile, and I wrote the names on post-it notes and put them by the piles. Then I asked the participant to choose one pile and subdivide it, and again name the new piles (figure 7).

¹⁵ I did not conduct pile sorts with the other participants for a variety of reasons: for example, their sleutelbakje contained such a homogenous collection of items that we chose to discuss the items rather than try to pile sort them, there was no time, or they simply did not have a sleutelbakje.



Figure 7. Pile sorting. Splitting piles to make sub-piles. Note the different coloured post-it notes used for each level of additional splits.

I did this for as long as the participant was willing to, but preferably until all piles consisted of only two items, or until it was simply irrelevant to divide them up further. Then I asked the participant to go back to their original piles (figure 6), and combine two piles repeatedly, ideally until only two piles were left (figure 8).¹⁶



Figure 8. Pile sorting. Combining the original piles (the pink post-it notes) into larger piles (the yellow post-it notes).

This approach to *successive pile sorting* (proposed by Jim Boster, as described by Borgatti, 1996) is complex and time consuming, but also more informative than other approaches. Normal successive pile sorts do not allow the participant to initially group the items however they see fit: at the start, they ask the participants to either split all the items into two piles (and subsequently split each pile until all have been subdivided), or they ask participants to group together two items, and then two groups of items, until only two groups remain. The approach proposed by Jim Boster, however, lets participants initially group the items in whatever way feels most natural or intuitive to them.

¹⁶ Throughout the process I took photographs of the piles with their labels for documentation.

I approached the pile sorting task flexibly: if participants wanted to put an item in two piles for example, I would let them rearrange things as they pleased, discuss the situation (of value in itself) or come up with an improvised solution together. The informal nature of these pile sorts allowed me to be flexible per participant, as well as keep an eye on their level of enthusiasm, and adjust the activity accordingly. If there was less time I could focus more on interesting piles, for example. The informal nature allowed for a more natural way of categorising objects, allowing participants to combine multiple groups, change their mind, or their classification system, and switch things around, or refuse to divide up piles.

Borgatti (2011) advises using cards with the names of the items on them, rather than photographs or real objects. He suggests this avoids a bias towards sorting based on physical attributes, rather than, for example, functional attributes. However, I chose against this: I felt the interaction with the actual objects would be more likely to trigger associations, particularly because these items were all owned by, and personal to, the participant. It is not just a pen - it is *their* pen, and it could have a personal history to it, or a specific pattern of use, or it could be their favourite pen, most comfortable in their hand. These associations may not arise when using notecards. By interacting with the objects extensively, my hope was that this would elicit reflections on the items, and that participants would feel compelled to tell me about them without me needing to probe for information.

3.5.2 Results

Using photographs and the (transcripts of the) recordings made during the pile sorting task, I drew a taxonomic tree for each participant's contents, as seen in the example in figure 9. I kept track of how often certain types of piles occurred across participants, in search of common sub-categories.

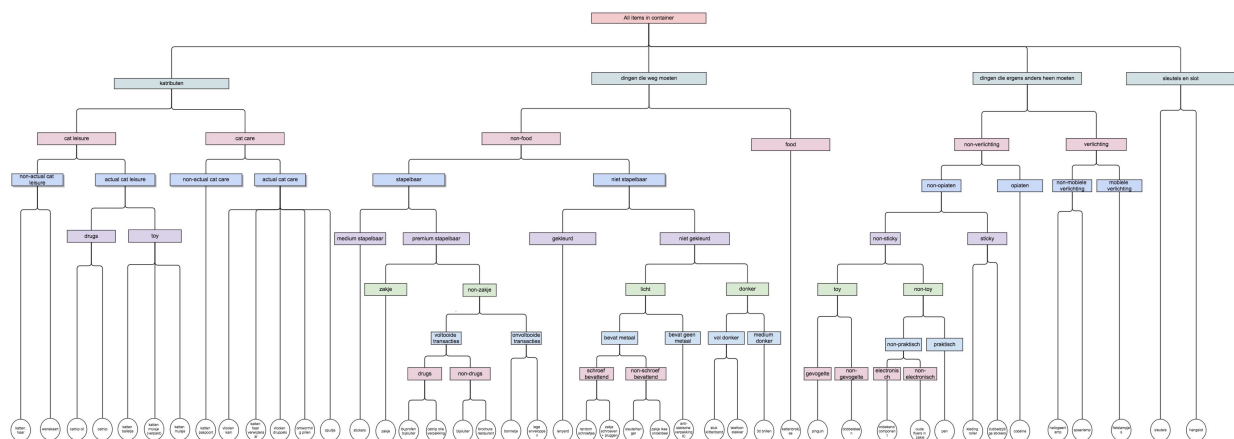


Figure 9. Taxonomic Tree. An example of a taxonomic tree made using the results of the pile sorting task.

4. Types of Key-Containers

The Dutch word *sleutelbakje* is a compound word made up of *sleutel* and *bakje*. *Sleutel* means *key*, but the word *bakje* requires some explanation, as it does not have a direct translation in English. A *bakje* is any type of small container, a bit comparable with a box. However, boxes often have lids, and *bakjes* do not necessarily have one. *Bakjes* can be any shape, so they can also be round, like a bowl or a dish. Crucially, a *bakje* has to be a freestanding container: it cannot be a drawer.

In this chapter I present an overview of the types of containers used to store keys. Using the data obtained from the surveys, I explored to what extent people used *bakjes*, drawers, or cabinets to store their keys. Of the 65 survey-respondents, eleven people did not use containers to store their keys.¹⁷ The remaining 54 respondents had one or more containers, resulting in data about 73 containers in total. As my investigation and GT analysis progressed, I identified three different (sub)types of *bakjes*, one of them being *sleutelbakjes*.

4.1 Types of Bakjes

From my survey data I was able to conclude that *bakjes* are a popular container for storing keys, as 60% of the 73 containers which I received data about were *bakjes*. Table 4 below depicts the most popular names used to refer to the *bakjes*, as well as the most common shapes, materials, and sizes, and locations to store them. On the forum thread “Where do you keep your keys?” contributors also frequently described using *bakjes* to store keys. One contributor wrote:

Sheldon and Leonard in The Big Bang Theory have a bowl by the door for their keys. I thought that was a good idea, so now we also have a bowl by the door. Since then I never lost my keys again. (Dutchy83, 2013; own translation)

Name	%	Type	%	Shape	%	Material	%	Diameter	%	Location	%
Sleutelbakje	34%	Bakje/box	55%	Round/oval	50%	Wood	27%	±20 cm	34%	Living room	30%
Bakje	11%	Bowl/dish	30%	Rectangular	48%	Metal	20%	±10 cm	23%	Kitchen	25%
(no name)	7%	Basket	14%	Other	2%	Plastic	20%	±15 cm	25%	Hallway	16%
<i>Sleutelmandje</i> [Key-basket]	5%	Jar	2%			Reed	14%	±30 cm	9%	Unknown	16%
Kistje [Box]	5%					Ceramic	9%	±25 cm	5%	Shed	5%
<i>Rommelbakje</i> [Junk-bakje]	5%					Glass	7%	±5 cm	2%	Other	9%
Other	34%					Other	2%	Unknown	2%		

Table 3. Data About Bakjes. A summary of the survey data about bakjes.

¹⁷ One person made use of hooks, the others kept their keys in, for example, their bag or pocket, or did not have a set place for them.

As shown in table 3, the word *sleutelbakje* is commonly used to refer to bakjes containing keys. However, during my interviews, I found that not every bakje that contains keys is a *sleutelbakje*. Throughout my research, I studied all the items inside bakjes used for keys, and participants described how they interact with their containers. I then compared these findings to the descriptions participants gave of the *concept* *sleutelbakje* during free listing, as well as the free lists themselves. I found that only a subset of the bakjes I encountered matched these descriptions. For clarity, I therefore reserve the term *sleutelbakje* only for these bakjes that reflect the cultural concept *sleutelbakje*, and not any bakje that has keys inside. I will first describe *sleutelbakjes*, and then describe two other types of bakjes with keys I encountered during my interviews.

4.1.1 Sleutelbakjes

A *sleutelbakje* is a small container used to store keys, that is located in a visible and accessible place in the home (three examples from the interviews are shown in figure 10). It is often situated centrally within the home, in the kitchen or living room for example, or it is kept near the front door. The keys in *sleutelbakjes* are generally keys that are frequently used. Other than keys, *sleutelbakjes* often contain a hodgepodge of other small, seemingly random items. These items are very characteristic of *sleutelbakjes* (although they are not always appreciated, as they often end up in a *sleutelbakje* unintentionally). In fact, they are so characteristic of *sleutelbakjes* that one participant said that she did not have keys in her *sleutelbakje*, but considered the container a *sleutelbakje* nonetheless.

The strange thing is that my keys are not in there, because it is used for all kinds of other things...it is actually used for knick-knacks. (Ingrid)

All those kinds of small things, everything that isn't bigger than a key. What do you do with them all, you need to keep them somewhere. (Anette)



Figure 10. Sleutelbakjes. Three examples of sleutelbakjes encountered during the interviews.

Some of these other items truly belong in *sleutelbakjes*: these were often items needed when leaving the house (such as bike-lights or coins) or frequently used items like pens. Other items are only meant to be in there temporarily, as they are, for example, intended to be cleaned up, moved elsewhere, or thrown away. *Sleutelbakjes* are also routinely used for items which a participant did not know where else to keep, as it did not have a set place in the participant's system of

organisation. Because of their visibility, sleutelbakjes help remind people that something still has to be done with the items inside (they should not be forgotten, or have to be cleaned up, for example). It was these items, other than keys, that I was interested in when I began this study into sleutelbakjes, and which I will focus on in the following chapters. It is also these items which sets sleutelbakjes apart from the other two types of bakjes used to contain keys.

4.1.2 Bakje for old and unknown keys

Participants also used bakjes to store old or unknown keys (figure 11 shows three examples of such bakjes). Participants barely interacted with these containers, so they were stored in less accessible places, such as a shed. There were very few items other than keys inside these containers. Some participants seemed to care quite little about these collections: one survey-respondent called her collection of old keys “een totale onzin-verzameling”, meaning “a collection of complete nonsense”. However, sorting through them (to clean them up, or throw them away) was more effort than storing the bakje away indefinitely. Additionally, participants were afraid that one day they would come across a lock and no longer have the key for it.

These items will go back into the container blindly, we absolutely don't look at them, because we have no idea what they all are. (Herman)



Figure 11. Sleutelbakjes for old and unknown keys. These three sleutelbakjes were used to store keys which participants no longer used in any way, but did not want to throw away.

4.1.3 Bakje for spare keys

Another type of bakje with keys, are bakjes used for spare keys, and other important keys which are not used on a daily basis, such as keys to houses of friends or family (figure 12). Participants emphasised the importance of these keys: they often felt responsible for the keys of family and friends they were entrusted with. Because of this importance, and because the keys were only occasionally needed, these bakjes were stored away in a safe place, but close enough at hand to be easily accessed. In order to safeguard them, most containers had a lid, and were kept privately inside a closet or drawer. One survey respondent did not want to disclose the location of his bakje, saying it was hidden somewhere in his home. Another participant stored the container away a little *too* well:

[I keep those keys in a bakje under my bed] because I am absolutely not allowed to loose them...however as a result I also forgot I had them. (Maartje)

These bakjes contained a few items other than keys, but these were mostly items closely related to keys, such as locks, labels, or key-rings.¹⁸



Figure 12. Sleutelbakjes for Spare Keys. These containers were used to store important keys, particularly those belonging to other people.

4.1.4 Classifying Bakjes

The two bakjes described above, bakjes used for old or unknown keys, and bakjes for spare keys, bared little resemblance to participants' descriptions of sleutelbakjes during free listing. They were also clearly different from the sleutelbakjes described in section 4.1.1. Where participants felt a 'real' sleutelbakje should be frequently used and contain a variety of other items, these bakjes mostly contained only keys and were used sporadically at most. The other items remained in the bakjes rather statically as well, not being used, thrown away, or cleaned-up: the bakjes merely functioned as a storage place for items with which there was little interaction. Additionally the containers were (purposely) not very accessible, whilst accessibility was emphasised by participants as an essential characteristic of sleutelbakjes. I concluded that these bakjes are not the type of containers the participants had in mind when they described the concept *sleutelbakje*.

I would like to emphasise that this classification of types of bakjes is one I extracted from the data and created for my own analysis. It is an oversimplified and artificial pattern. In reality the containers often overlapped, and there were exceptions and contradictory characteristics. Each participant has his or her own way of interacting with the container, their own unique types of keys, and their own systems. For example, one sleutelbakje I encountered during my interviews was a combination of two types of bakjes: the bottom half of the container had an untouched layer of old keys in it, while the top half was actively used for items needed when leaving the home.

Appendix D therefore presents an overview of the different containers I analysed, including a description and explanation of my classifications. By classifying them into different types I was able to understand why some bakjes were barely touched and others used daily, and why some were so organised and others very messy. It also allowed me to focus my remaining analysis on

¹⁸ Although one bakje for spare keys which I encountered also had a coin and a piece of paper in it, which were also important to the participant: they reminded her of significant past events or memories she wanted to hold on to.

containers which were representative of participants' theoretical idea of a sleutelbakje, as described during free listing. This allowed me to paint a picture of, specifically, the culturally shared concept *sleutelbakje*, rather than any bakje containing keys. Before I do so, however, I will briefly describe the remaining types of containers or places used to keep keys which I encountered in my data.

4.2 Drawers

Of the 73 key-containers I received data about, 33% were drawers. Half of these were kept in the living room, 21% were kept near the front door or in the front hallway, and 12,5% were kept in the kitchen. Drawers can be roughly split into two subtypes: *key drawers* and *junk drawers* (note that, as with the bakjes, these distinctions are artificial and oversimplified). Key drawers were drawers used specifically for keys, and likely to be located in the hallway or near the front door. These drawers were often used to store keys which were frequently used, as well as spare keys or other important keys. Like sleutelbakjes, some other items may end up in these drawers alongside keys, but because they are less accessible it would not be as many.



Figure 13. Junk Drawers. Three of the junk drawers analysed during the interviews.

Junk drawers (including some kitchen drawers), on the other hand, contained a lot of other items. In these containers keys were not the central object, but rather one of the many objects kept inside: it was not a case of *other items kept with keys*, but *keys kept with other items*. The keys kept inside were generally spare keys, or other keys which did not need to be accessed frequently. Similarly, the items inside were sometimes used, but not as actively as items in sleutelbakjes. Nonetheless, the types of items in junk drawers were very similar to the items found in sleutelbakjes, and the containers showed much overlap: I encountered two containers which were used as junk drawers, but were actually bakjes. Because of the striking similarity between the items in junk drawers and the items in sleutelbakjes, I also analysed junk drawers during my interviews, to compare them to sleutelbakjes.

4.3 Cabinets

Of the 54 survey respondents, five used key-cabinets to store their keys (key-cabinets are purpose-made to store keys and contain hooks on which to hang them). Two of these cabinets were located in the home's attics (inside closets), two were kept in hallways, and one was in a basement.

4.4 Conclusion

Sleutelbakjes are containers used to store frequently used keys, and as such must be accessible: participants emphasised that they wanted to be able to “throw” their keys inside a sleutelbakje. One contributor to the forum thread “Where do you keep your keys?” described how this incited the creation of a sleutelbakje:

Here everyone always threw [their keys] on the table, despite a key-rack in the kitchen, so I just put a sleutelmandje [key-basket] on the table. (anoniem6281846, 2013; own translation)

As a consequence of this accessibility, other items easily end up in sleutelbakjes as well. Spare keys and old keys do not need to be at hand or in sight, and are therefore stored away in less accessible containers or places. Only through the process of analysing different containers was I able to differentiate between them, allowing a definition of sleutelbakjes to emerge. In the following chapter I will explore the items in sleutelbakjes.

5. Items in Sleutelbakjes

In this chapter I will compare the items found in existing sleutelbakjes (documented in the item lists), to the results of the free list method. The goal of comparing them was to see to what extent the items in existing sleutelbakjes corresponded to the items listed by participants during free listing — the items that are characteristic to the *concept* sleutelbakje. In this chapter I first discuss the results of each list separately, before comparing them. In the final section I present my analysis of the results, which was, in part, based on my GT analysis of the transcripts.

Rank	Item	Frequency	% Respondents	Smith's S
1	Pens	16	50%	0,367
2	Coins - current	18	56,25%	0,365
3	Paperclips	14	43,75%	0,343
4	Elastic bands	14	43,75%	0,253
5	Coins - foreign or old	11	34,375%	0,204
6	Keychains	10	31,25%	0,201
7	Bike-lights	13	40,625%	0,2
8	Earphones [in-ears]	9	28,125%	0,173
9	Buttons [clothing buttons]	9	28,125%	0,161
10	Jewellery	11	34,375%	0,160
11	Sunglasses	8	25%	0,155
12	Screws	9	28,125%	0,149
13	Screwdrivers [small]	10	31,25%	0,138
14	Chewing gum	7	21,875%	0,130
15	Pencils	7	21,875%	0,125
16	Receipts	6	33.33%	0,124
17	Cards - customer/discount cards	7	21,875%	0,117
18	Markers	6	33.33%	0,116
19	Business cards	7	21,875%	0,108
20	Key-rings	5	15,625%	0,102
21	Tape	4	12,5%	0,1
22	Consumption coins	7	21,875%	0,096
23	Cards - public transport	4	12,5%	0,096
24	Pushpins	5	15,625%	0,095
25	USB-Sticks	4	12,5%	0,094
26	Wallets	4	12,5%	0,091
27	Batteries	5	15,625%	0,089
28	Medicine - painkillers	6	33.33%	0,086
29	Cards - bank cards	4	12,5%	0,081

Table 4. Aggregated Free List. The top 29 items on the aggregated free list, sorted by composite saliency. Items in red were also on the item lists of existing sleutelbakjes.

5.1 Item list results

To see which types of items are found in sleutelbakjes, I made inventories of the items found in sleutelbakjes which I encountered during my interviews. I limited my selection of sleutelbakjes to the seven I felt most reliably classified as sleutelbakjes (containers one to seven in appendix D). In table 4, the 24 items which are marked in red were found in those sleutelbakjes.¹⁹

5.2 Free list results

In total, 32 free lists were collected from participants. I asked the participants to list which items (other than keys) they feel ‘belong in sleutelbakjes’ (see section 3.3.1).²⁰ The participants listed a total of 225 different items, with an average of 17 items per person. Table 4 above presents the top 29 items of the aggregated free list. Figure 14 shows a scree plot of the composite salience of the first 72 items, as represented by Smith’s S (for a scree plot of all the items, see appendix E). In the scree plot there was a clear cut-off point, or elbow, after seven items. These items can be considered the most salient, and culturally agreed upon, members of the domain (Borgatti, 2011). As such, these items can be said to belong in the shared concept of a sleutelbakje:

- Pens
- Coins (current)
- Paperclips
- Elastic Bands
- Coins (foreign)
- Keychains
- Bike-lights

The remaining 22 items can be considered less salient members of the domain. I chose to include these because I wanted to consider a larger sample of items in my further analysis, for a number of reasons.²¹ These will be addressed in the analysis in section 5.2.2.

5.2.1 Comparison

Looking at table 4, we can see that the items found in existing sleutelbakjes closely correspond to the items listed by participants during free listing as ‘belonging in sleutelbakjes’. The first seven items (those which can most reliably be considered items that belong in sleutelbakjes) were all found in existing sleutelbakjes. Considering all 29 items in the aggregated free list, 24 were also found in existing sleutelbakjes, indicating that the items which people feel “belong in a sleutelbakje” theoretically, accurately reflect the items found in existing sleutelbakjes.

¹⁹ If we consider chewing gum the same as mints, then it would be 25 items. Additionally, if containers 20 and 21 in appendix D are also included in the analysis, then a total of 27 out of 29 items on the free list can be found in sleutelbakjes.

²⁰ Most participants still began their list with “keys, of course”.

²¹ As a cut-off point I chose the second elbow in the scree plot, the red dot in figure 14.

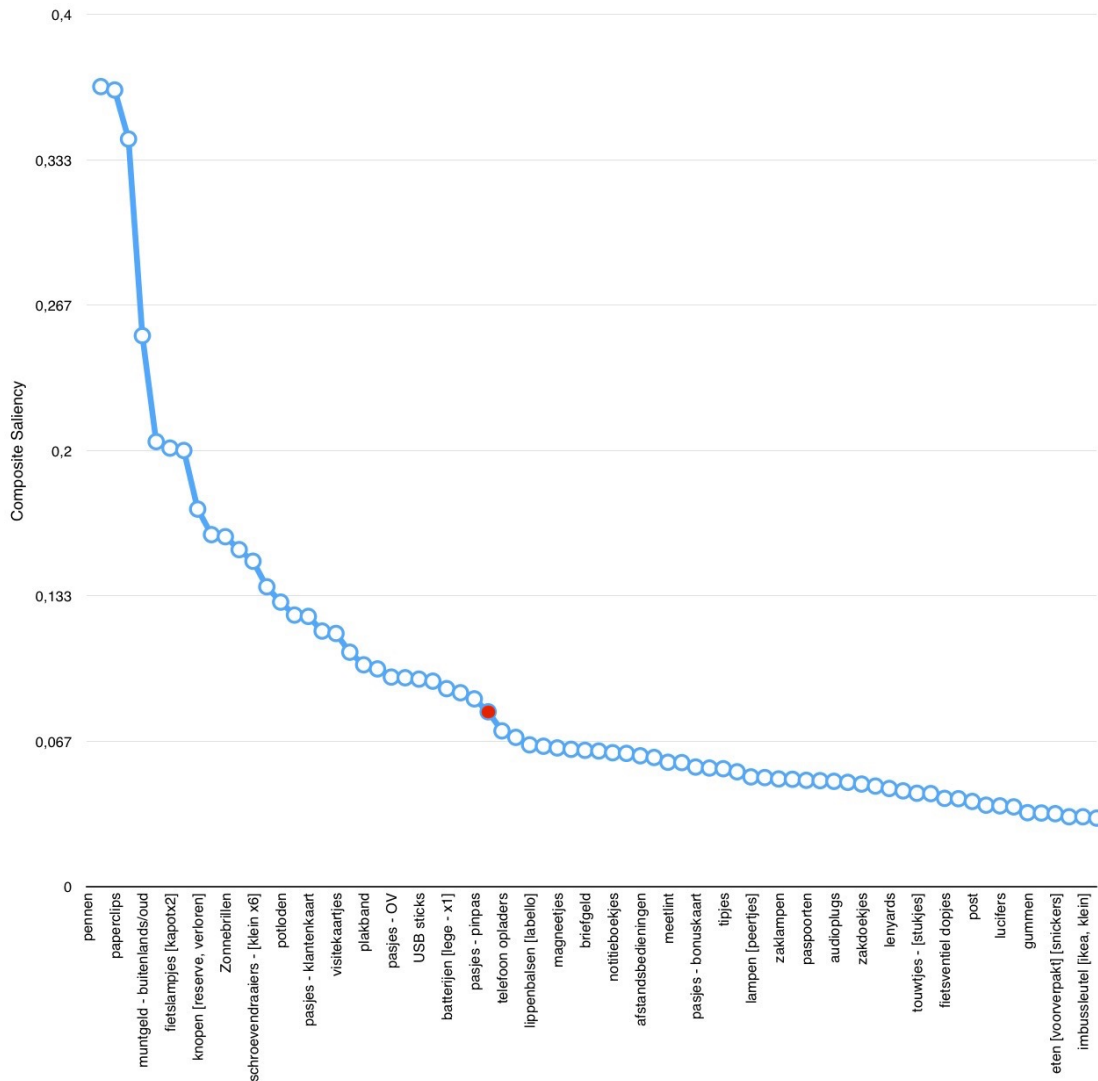


Figure 14. Scree Plot of Free List Results. A scree plot of the first 72 items of the free lists. The red dot marks the selected cut off-point.

5.2.2 Analysis

In the coming section I present my analysis of the free list results. I used my GT analysis of comments made during free listing, and during the remainder of the interviews, to help interpret the data. I will reflect on the saliency of the category “items that belong in sleutelbakjes”, as well as the internal structure of the category.

Saliency

When I asked participants to “list all items that belong in a sleutelbakje”, not a single participant asked me what a sleutelbakje is. This was a clear first indication that the concept *sleutelbakje* was salient to the participants. Participants seemed to have a clear sense of which items belong in a sleutelbakje, and which items do not.

You don't just put anything in a sleutelbakje. (Herman)

They often used words to emphasise a strong sense of belonging, such as *especially* (“a sleutelbakje especially contains receipts”), *definitely* (“there would definitely be a pen in a sleutelbakje”), *absolutely*, and *logically*. Other participants said they would “expect” to find certain items in a sleutelbakje, and that they would go looking for them in a sleutelbakje. If the participants had a clear sense of what belongs (and what does not belong) in sleutelbakjes, it may indicate that the items make up a clear category with boundaries (and rules for inclusion and exclusion).

There are certain rules about which items are allowed to go [in my sleutelbakje]. (Emma)

To these participants, the concept of a sleutelbakje (and the items that belong inside) is one that is salient and well-defined. Crucially, even participants who did *not* have a sleutelbakje themselves, seemed to have a clear picture in their mind of what it is, and which items belong inside:

I don't have one myself, but I have a lot of items that belong in a sleutelbakje. (Arie)

I understand that someone would put [consumption coins] in their sleutelbakjes, but we don't have them in ours. (Ineke)

One participant, who did not have a sleutelbakje herself, was able to list 103 items she was confident belonged in a sleutelbakje. As we see in table 4, the concept *sleutelbakje*, as described by people with *and without* sleutelbakjes, closely corresponds to existing sleutelbakjes. These findings indicated that the concept *sleutelbakje*, and the items that belong inside, is external to these individuals, and not dependant on personal experiences. Many participants also listed items and followed with the term *of course* (“screws, of course”), as if this was completely self-evident, and a shared idea, and it would not come as a surprise to me. Descriptions of sleutelbakjes from other sources also closely matched the descriptions of sleutelbakjes given by participants, and the items listed were often items found in the top items of the aggregated free list. For example, one contributor to the online forum thread “Curious: Where do you keep your things?” wrote:

In the living room I also have a set of small white baskets in the bookcase, in which keys, phones, pens, and other knick-knacks end up. (Zusenzoo, 2011; own translation)

Similarly, in a book called “The Netherlands: A Material Self-Portrait” (own translation), Wortel (2015) is asked to describe a *koektrommel*, a round bakje (with a lid) typically used to store cookies. She writes:

I don't keep cookies in them, but keys, love-letters, money, or drugs. (Wortel, 2015, p. 87; own translation)

These findings suggest that the concept *sleutelbakje*, and the items the belong inside a sleutelbakje, are a culturally shared concept: people generally have similar ideas about what constitutes a sleutelbakje, and this is independent of whether someone owns a sleutelbakje or not.

Nonetheless, I also encountered evidence which suggested that the concept was not very salient to participants. Although some participants had no troubles listing items during free listing, other participants could come up with no more than four or five items (ironically, one participant who *did* have a sleutelbakje could only think of two items). On average, participants had no trouble listing about five to eight items, but then began to struggle significantly. However, throughout the remainder of the interview, they would recall items they forgot to mention but absolutely felt belonged on the list, commenting “how could I forget that!”. Noticeably frequently, participants indicated that these items, recalled later, ‘belong in a sleutelbakje’ more so than items they mentioned far earlier in their list. This contradicts the method’s assumptions that an item’s rank reflects its typicality or importance as a member of the domain. Contrary to the findings described in the beginning of this section, these results could indicate that, to these participants, the category “items that belong in sleutelbakjes” is not well-established in memory. In the following section I discuss the internal structure of the category, which was able to account for these findings.

Internal Structure of the Category

Categories which are well established in our memory are linked by a clear web of relations in our mind. In free listing, associating one item with another (related) item in this way makes it easier to recall the items in a category. As a result, items closely linked by this web of relations will likely be listed successively, which is referred to as *clustering* (see section 3.3.2).

The items that belong (and are found in) sleutelbakjes, however, are incredibly variable, and did not seem to belong to one, or a few, common categories. This makes the items in sleutelbakjes more comparable to assemblages of items like those discussed in section 2.2.5. All participants indicated that variability was characteristic of items in sleutelbakjes. Moreover, not just variability but a certain sense of disorder within this variability was describe as characteristic for sleutelbakjes:²²

If we are talking about organised containers then we are talking about, from a philosophical point of view, a completely different container. (Jilt)

This suggests that sleutelbakjes are not used as explicit boundaries for a single, or few, common categories of items. Indeed, in the free lists, I observed surprisingly little clustering of common categories. Sometimes participants listed items like pens and pencils successively, or they listed a few types of jewellery in a row. However, equally often these items were listed far apart on lists, or participants only listed one of them before moving on to a seemingly unrelated item. This inability to make use of a web of relations, or associations, would make it much harder to recall items that belong in sleutelbakjes.

This makes sleutelbakjes more comparable to the kitchen drawer (described by Dion et al., 2014) and the bowl (described by Löfgren, 2014), seen in section 2.2.5. Like the kitchen drawer, the items in sleutelbakjes did not belong to a one or a few (well-defined) categories. The items listed as

²² This is reminiscent of a participant in the study of Korosec-Serfaty (1984) who felt their attic was not truly an attic, because it was not messy.

ending up in the bowl described by Löfgren (2014) were also extremely similar to the types of items listed by participants during free listing (such as coins, batteries, or an old lottery ticket). Such items were described as being liminal, and on the move, similar to items in sleutelbakjes. Both Löfgren (2014) and Boscalgi (2014) described the items in the bowl (“stuff”) as if they had ended up there by a “magic” force. The participants in this study, however, distinctly stated that there was some logic, or a system, behind the items in their sleutelbakjes. I believe that this too may be the case for the bowl described by Löfgren (2014): the items did not end up there by a ‘magic force’, but rather were placed there for a reason, based on a system — albeit a complex system, or one acted on intuitively.

I asked participants to describe the system behind sleutelbakjes, but many participants took the initiative themselves: after listing a few items, participants often resorted to trying to describe types of items used or found in a certain situation, which they would put in a sleutelbakje. I documented, amongst others, the following motivations to put an item in a sleutelbakje (these classifications were also common piles made during the pile sorting):

- items in use
- items not in use
- useful items
- useless items
- important items
- unimportant items
- small items
- items that need to be cleaned up
- items that need to be thrown away
- items lying around
- found items
- items that come out of your pocket
- items you don’t know where to keep
- other people’s items

This list can be considered the ‘rules’ which determine which items can be included in the category “items that belong in sleutelbakjes”. Some are reminiscent of the functional assemblages described by Abrahamson (2002): “to-organise” and “to-throw away” piles and messes. Perhaps sleutelbakjes, and the bowl described by Löfgren, (2014), are more functional than they seem at first sight , but this functionality is masked by the apparent disorder.

These findings are able to explain why the participants had trouble recalling items: an item which “needs to be cleaned up” or is “lying around” could be a different item at any given moment. Whether or not an item belongs in a sleutelbakje is context dependant — often it does not depend on the type of item (the common category it belongs to), but the context or situation in which the

item finds itself. This made it understandably hard for participants to come up with examples of such items because, at a given time, an endless array of objects could “belong” in a sleutelbakje. This could explain why participants did not make use of a pre-established web of relations to list items, and why they often forgot items despite considering them to be very salient. As a result, the frequency, and particularly the rank of an item (and thus also the correlation between the two) were problematic for my chosen method (for example, lightbulbs were mentioned by seven participants, but because of their low ranking they are listed in 33rd place on the aggregated list). This was why I chose to include the top 29 items of the free list in my analysis: if it is context dependant whether or not an item belongs in a sleutelbakje, then I wanted to include more variation. This would more realistically reflect the variety of objects that could apply to these contexts in practice.

A Not-So-Salient Concept?

In the above section I analysed sleutelbakjes as a systematic collection of items, albeit a complicated one: the many rules were reminiscent of what Dion et al. (2014) described as “an accumulation of rules that are mutually incoherent” that result from multiple overlapping logics (p. 577). Nonetheless, although the participants admitted there was a system behind sleutelbakjes, they were often unable to articulate it:

I don't know why [I would put that in a sleutelbakje], but I would find that logical. (Maaïke)

Lost staples for some reason ... also belong in sleutelbakjes. (David)

I really don't like this... (laughing) I have a certain system which I make without thinking about it, and now I have to think about it and now I am starting to doubt my system. (Emma)

Participants spoke of sleutelbakjes as if they were not fully under their control. The collection of items in a sleutelbakje was also described by participants as “strange” or “peculiar”, as if they themselves did not really understand how the items had come to be as they were. They often used phrases through which they distanced themselves from the objects, such as saying an item “ends up” in a sleutelbakje rather than saying they put it there.

I had no idea it was in here, and I don't think I've ever seen it before. (Herman)

In the following quote the participant does not describe the process as something she actively does, but rather as something that happens on its own accord:

What also happens a lot, when things are too big for my bakje, like papers or mail or something, they end up under the container...not very much fits in, I think that's how it ends up under the container. (Jozine)

One survey respondent wrote, when asked to list the items in her container:

In our container we also have:

Licence papers

Flashlight

Buttons

Safety pins

[Wine] opener

Corks

Actually none of this belongs in there!!!!!! (Tiny)

The above quote brings me to an essential point: what does the world *belonging* mean in the context “items that belong in sleutelbakjes”? One participant asked me whether she should list the items she actually *has* in her container, or the items that *belong* in such a container (in theory). She explained that, despite her best intentions to keep her bakje clean, it was always littered with other items that did not belong. Therefore, in her sleutelbakje, there were items which she would not be surprised to find there, but which nonetheless did not belong there. To complicate matters more, she said that after 25 years of littering her sleutelbakje, she had come to accept those other items, and felt they really belonged, and insisted I list them on her free list. (Similarly, Dion et al. (2014) and Abrahamson (2002) both observed that items out of place, in the form of a tolerated transgression or a mess, can sometimes come to be accepted as an alternative ordering and may even become the new norm.) This example highlights the ambiguity inherent in the classification and organisation of objects. By using the redundant question probe I left it up to participants to fill in whether their concept of a sleutelbakje reflected a messy existing sleutelbakje, or a more hypothetical sleutelbakje, or anything in between.

5.2.3 Conclusion

Considering the above findings (the category “items that belong in sleutelbakjes” consists of a complex multiplicity of rules, which are not entirely clear to participants themselves, and which could apply to almost any item at a given time), the results of the free lists and item lists are all the more surprising. Despite the complexity, many participants still agreed on a number of items which can typically be found in sleutelbakjes, and these items were also found in existing sleutelbakjes: “items that belong in sleutelbakjes” seems to be a culturally shared, but ‘sub-conscious’, category. In the following chapter I will discuss what these rules (and items) have in common, and why they, as a result, accumulated in a single container. Additionally, I explore how these items relate to keys, and why they end up specifically in *sleutelbakjes*.

6. Analysis

In this chapter I present my analysis of items in existing sleutelbakjes, which I encountered during my interviews. Results from the item lists and pile sorting will be woven through this analysis, as well as notable results and findings from the free listing method and the surveys. The analysis also reflects my interaction with the literature: I explore to what extent my findings coincided with, or contradicted, existing theory, and in some cases I built forth on existing theories. For clarification, I use diagrams throughout the chapter to illustrate my concepts.

I will explain what sleutelbakjes are by identifying how they are used by participants: why items are put in sleutelbakjes and what the items have in common. Additionally, I will shift my attention to beyond the boundaries of the container itself, and focus on the role of sleutelbakjes in relation to the rest of the home, and organisational practices. As we saw in the previous chapter, the items in sleutelbakjes, and the reasons they end up there, are many and diverse. After a brief overview in section 6.1, the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the items in sleutelbakjes in all their complexity and variation.

6.1 Keys and Marginality

The core theme of my GT analysis, which integrated all other themes, was *marginality*. Throughout this chapter, the word “marginality” will be used in a number of ways. For clarity, I briefly explain a few below, although each type of marginality will be addressed in the remainder of this chapter.

- **Marginal spaces:** Marginal spaces are peripheral areas of a house. They correspond to secondary spaces, discussed in section 2.2.7.
- **Marginal items (classification):** Marginal items are items that cannot easily be placed in a category, and are therefore hard to classify. They linger in the margins between categories.
- **Marginal items (organisation):** When marginal items are hard to classify, it is also harder to organise them in the home (with other items). They often have no set place they belong in. Also, items that do not belong inside the home (such as other people’s items) do not have a place they belong. These items are marginal to the system of organisation in the home.

6.1.1 Sleutelbakje as a Marginal Space

Keys control the boundary transition between inside the home and outside the home: they could not be more intimately related to the threshold and the margins of the home. Keys and sleutelbakjes (as containers for *keys*) therefore symbolise the margins of the home. Additionally, keys can be considered marginal items: some participants described keys as anomalies, in the sense that they found it hard to categorise keys with any other items. One participant, during pile sorting, refused to group keys with any other items:

Me: The keys are separate?

Maaïke: Yes, those are...just there.

Keys are also continually crossing the boundary between inside and outside the home. They are always on the move and, because of this, keys are unruly and disorderly items.

I have four bunches of keys for my work, they are always everywhere, so in the morning I always have to go looking for them. (Maaike)

These characteristics make keys marginal to the system of classification and organisation within the home, and therefore to the home itself. However, because keys are so central to our lives, they cannot simply be hidden away in back rooms of the home or attics, as is often done with other disorderly items. The creation of a sleutelbakje, as a dedicated container for keys, is a way of controlling their unruliness. In this way, they can be kept at hand in an accessible place, without causing disorder.

The fact that keys symbolise the margins of the home (and are inherently marginal themselves) results in sleutelbakjes effectively being used as ‘miniature marginal spaces’, located centrally within the home. As we will see in this chapter, sleutelbakjes were used for strikingly similar purposes, and to store similar items, as marginal spaces described in the literature. Thus, sleutelbakjes are a symbolically marginal space: putting an item in a sleutelbakje is like putting it in the margins home, although it physically remains in the centre of the home. Recall table 2 in section 2.2.7, which illustrated the way structural elements are mapped onto spatial areas of the home. Figure 15 illustrates the position of sleutelbakjes in this context.

In chapter 4, I mentioned that some sleutelbakjes were kept near the front door. Essentially, these sleutelbakjes were not only symbolically marginal, but also physically in a marginal area of the home. However, this distinction between sleutelbakjes by the front door and sleutelbakjes in primary living spaces is a tricky one: in some homes the sleutelbakje was meant to be next to the door, but the nearest surface available was in the living room.²³ The items discussed in this chapter were found, in varying degrees, in both types of sleutelbakjes. Throughout this chapter, unless relevant and mentioned otherwise, I therefore do not make a distinction between the two.

²³ Additionally, as we saw in section 2.2.7 hallways (although marginal) have more in common with the primary areas of the home than marginal spaces like the attic or shed: they are not private or hidden, but a visible area where day to day life takes place.

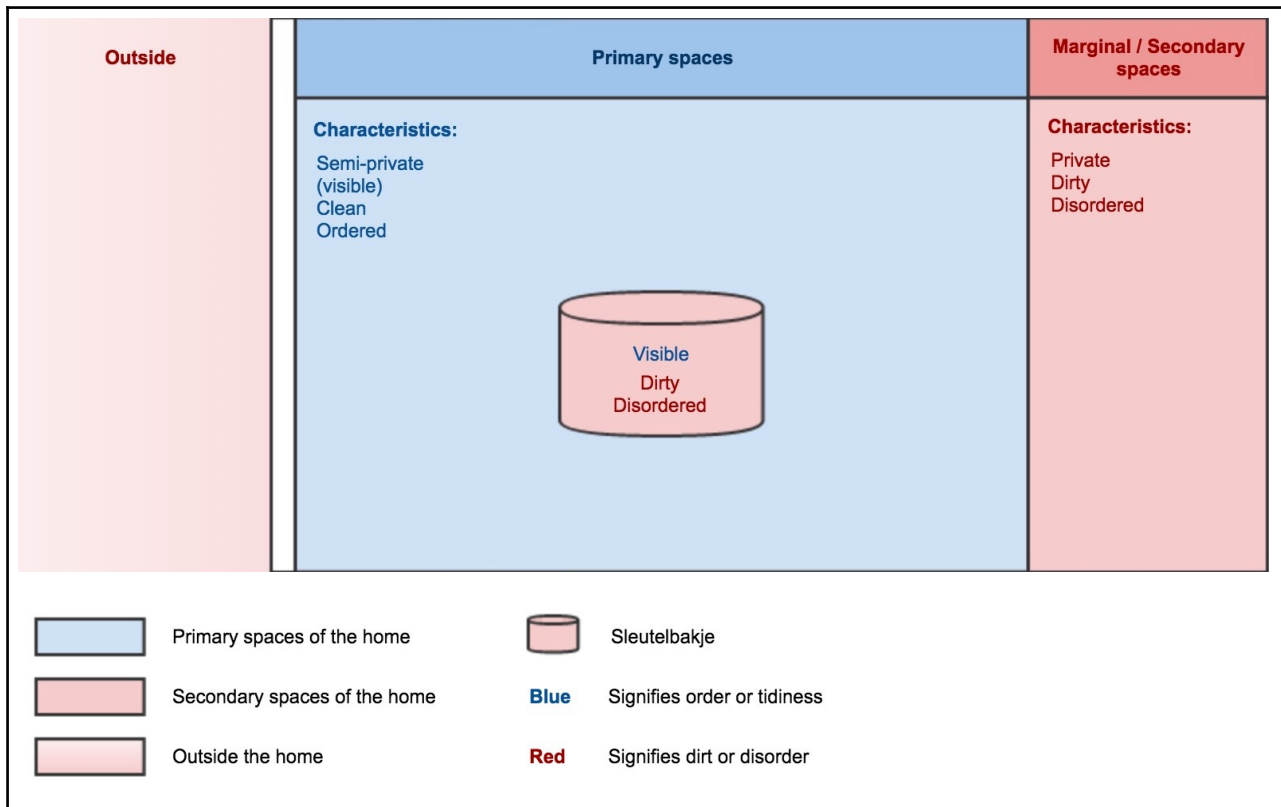


Figure 15. Spatial and Structural Layout of a Home with a Sleutelbakje. Blue represents order and cleanliness, which primary spaces are intended to be. Red represents the characteristics of disorder or 'dirt'. Hence, outside is coloured red. Marginal spaces are also red (dirty or disordered). The sleutelbakje, located inside the primary living spaces, is also red because it shared characteristics with marginal spaces and outside — it is symbolically marginal.

6.1.2 Marginal Items in Sleutelbakjes

Because of their status as marginal spaces containing marginal keys, sleutelbakjes attract similarly marginal and disorderly items. This was also described in comments on the forum thread “Where do you keep your keys?”:

I had quite a bunch of keys, my own, my mother, the gate, my beloved, the car-keys. First they were all in a drawer, but that became a real junk drawer, and consequently I couldn't find my keys anymore. (sammie00, 2013; own translation)

I have a kitchen drawer with different bakjes inside: 1 for my daily keys, bike keys, and car keys, and one for all the other keys and spare keys. Works fine but I do have to clean it up every six months because a lot of things disappear into there amongst the keys, like small change, screws, saving-stamps, etc. (Dachsie, 2013; own translation)

As seen in chapter 2, marginal items (ambiguous or liminal items) are frequently kept in correspondingly ‘liminal’ spaces. Secondary spaces are often private and hidden — they are “a place to forget” (Korosec-Serfaty, 1984).²⁴ The marginal items in sleutelbakjes (including keys), however, were not items which participants wanted to forget, rather, they wanted to remember

²⁴ This makes them ideal places to store keys that are not frequently used: in my survey data, five people described using cabinets to store keys. These cabinets were all located in peripheral or marginal areas of the home: two were located in the attic (inside a closet), and two were kept in upstairs hallways, and one was in a basement. Additionally, the four sleutelbakjes for old and unknown keys I came across in my analysis were all located in marginal areas: the attic, the shed, and in one case in the hallway.

them: they were small items that had to be used, thrown away, or cleaned up. Sleutelbakjes provided an ideal solution: a visible and accessible marginal space, where small disorderly items can safely be stored, but kept in sight and at hand.

The disorderly items in sleutelbakjes are comparable to what Douglas (1966) described as *dirt* or *symbolic pollution*: they are the items that do not fit neatly into a group and must be rejected to maintain the purity of categories, and order (Douglas, 1966). As a container for these ‘misfits’, sleutelbakjes are a tool in maintaining order in the home. They are a tool in boundary work: physically removing these disruptive items from the system allows other categories to remain in stance.

They are the remaining, leftover items, that don't have a place, and then end up together in a bowl or basket or bakje. (Jilt)

Being a category of leftovers is likely another reason why some participants had trouble recalling items during free listing: not only were the items in sleutelbakjes not clearly linked to one another, they were sometimes also not clearly related to other items in the home more generally. Additionally, because these items could be marginal in a number of ways, it was hard for participants to articulate the system behind the sleutelbakje.²⁵

In this chapter I will discuss the various ways in which items in sleutelbakjes can be marginal. I will describe different types of items that reside in the grey areas of systems of classification and organisation. Along the way, I will further explore the relationship between keys and marginal items, and sleutelbakjes and marginal spaces.

6.2 Items to Clean Up

Sleutelbakjes were used to store items that still needed to be cleaned up, and all participants with sleutelbakjes had “to clean-up” piles during pile sorting. Items in these piles were also frequently listed during free listing, and therefore considered typical items in sleutelbakjes: for example, paperclips (ranked 3rd), elastic bands (ranked 4th), buttons (ranked 9th), jewellery (ranked 10th), screws (ranked 12th), or receipts (ranked 16th). These were generally items which participants found lying around the house and identified as being out of place.

This just needs to be cleaned up...it doesn't belong with these items. (Maaïke)

Participants indicated that items out of place bothered them: they disrupted order. A number of times participants had an item in their sleutelbakje with which nothing was wrong, but it was simply (found) lying out of place, such as a screw which actually belonged in the shed. These items were suddenly characterised as “useless” or “junk” during pile sorting, even though there was nothing inherently wrong with the item itself: the only difference with the other ‘useful’ and ‘valuable’

²⁵ Hirschman et al. (2012), on the other hand, concluded that people are aware of the liminality of some objects, which incites them to move such items to appropriate places. However, my findings suggest that although people may be sensitive to liminality, and act on it, they are not per se consciously aware of it.

screws was their location. This illustrates that just by physically falling out of place in the system, these items caused discomfort and even lost their value. This condemnation is, according to Douglas (1966) a typical reaction to “matter out of place”, or *dirt*. In lying around, these items threatened order, and as seen in chapter 2, this could result in a physical mess, but also a ‘messy self’ emotionally (Belk et al., 2007). By putting these items in a sleutelbakje they were not yet properly cleaned up, but at least they were no longer lying blatantly out of place, disturbing the order of things. By allowing participants to temporarily de-pollute the space, sleutelbakjes can be seen as a tool in boundary work.

Then at least it won't remain lying in another place in which you know for sure you don't want it to be. (Ineke)

6.2.1 Marginality

While in the sleutelbakje, waiting to be cleaned up, these items can be considered marginal items. As they transition from place A to place B, they are not out of place, but not *in* place either. Therefore, they linger in the margins of the system of organisation in the home. When asked why the “to-clean” items had not yet been cleaned up, participants often said it was because of “laziness” or “laxness”.

I probably wanted to clean that up at some point, but just threw it in here...People also go for easy solutions, you have something in your hand and then you think gosh I have to clean it up somewhere, and you throw it in the container. (Marjan)

More often than not, their laziness was also simply efficient though. The items that had to be cleaned up, were often items that actually belonged upstairs or in the attic, or in the shed for example. By putting them in the sleutelbakje, the items could be taken along at a later time when the participant was going there anyway, or could take multiple things there at once. In this sense, sleutelbakjes functioned like the “to-organise piles” described by Abrahamson (2002).

I think I would throw everything in there of which I think ‘oh I need to clean that up, but I don't feel like walking upstairs now’, or having to look for where it belongs...everything about which I think: ‘Oh I need that for now’ or ‘I'll clean it up later.’ (Wieke)

Paperclips belong in my pen-case, that's where my paperclips belong. But then if I am standing here and I run into a paperclip and [I don't feel like going upstairs], then I put it in [the sleutelbakje]. (Ingrid)

We find [a piece of lego] while cleaning up, and then you think, the box with legos is in the attic, and if I was really organised then I would climb up to the attic, but I'm not, so I just put it in there and then I'm rid of it, then it looks like it's cleaned up. Actually that's what it is, if I think about it. It looks as if things are cleaned up. (Ingrid)

In these examples, the items are physically on their way to marginal spaces of the home: the sleutelbakje functions as a bridge directly between the centre and the margins of the home. The third quote also illustrates how sleutelbakjes are used as “impromptu storage spaces”: Cwerner and Metcalfe (2003) described that people use secondary spaces to store “that which is seen as clutter, for example, just before entertaining visitors” (p. 235).

Sleutelbakjes were also used for items that had to be ‘used’ as opposed to just being moved to another place, such as hooks that had to be hung up or discount cards participants were hoping to use. Hirschman et al. (2012) described that garages, because of their spatial liminality, were also used to store “both novel and postponed projects” (as the items were also in a liminal state) (p. 373). These items were kept in garages as “visible reminders of the future tasks that should be completed” (Hirschman et al., 2012, p.378). Participants also described using sleutelbakjes in this way: as visible reminder systems: items with which something still had to be done (for example, they had to be cleaned up) were temporarily kept in a sleutelbakje because the participants knew that they would be confronted with the item again soon, when grabbing their keys.

In that way you keep running into them and then in the back of your head you know ‘I will take care of it, clean them up, or perhaps use them after all’. (Fabienne)

Next time I go outside I will think ‘oh right, I have to take that with me’. (Ineke)

Because sleutelbakjes are located centrally within the home they are more in sight than secondary spaces like the garage. Using sleutelbakjes, a distinction can be made between more pressing projects (those visibly in sight in the sleutelbakje) and those which can be postponed to the long-term (and might be put in a drawer, or moved away to secondary spaces of the home). Additionally, sleutelbakjes cater specifically to small items, which could easily get lost in the ‘disorder’ of secondary spaces.

Sleutelbakjes were therefore used to temporarily store items that had to be cleaned up: they belonged elsewhere in the home, often in secondary spaces in the margins of the home (figure 16 illustrates the themes discussed so far). Some other items that had to be cleaned up, however, did not have a place they belonged — a place where they could be cleaned up *to*. These items will be discussed in the following section.

It’s the things that are not important, and which suddenly get stored in [the sleutelbakje], because you don’t have another place for them. (Emma)

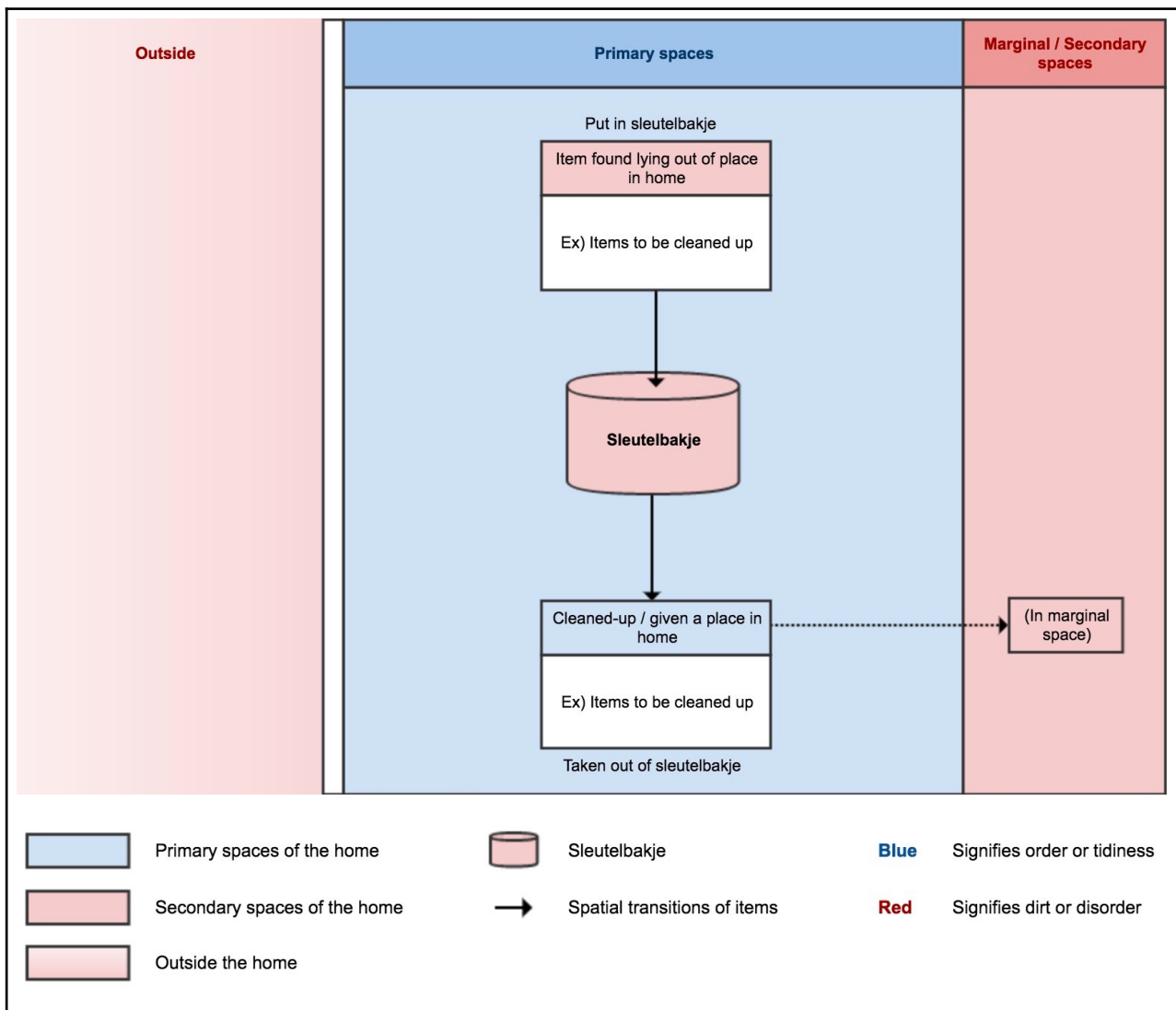


Figure 16. Spatial Transitions of Items in Sleutelbakjes. Items that need to be cleaned up: the item was likely found lying out of place (as such, it was disorderly, or 'dirt' (matter out of place), hence it is coloured red). It was subsequently put in the sleutelbakje to be cleaned up later. At that point, in the sleutelbakje, it was lingering between place A and place B, between 'out of place', and 'in place'. Eventually it may be cleaned up, in some cases to primary spaces of the home, or it is moved to a marginal space of the home.

6.3 Items Marginal to the System

As seen in chapter 2, the way we physically organise and order our home is a reflection of our (cultural) system of classification (Dion et al., 2014; Nippert-Eng, 1996). We try to group items together in categories (classification), and give everything a suitable place accordingly (organisation) (Dion et al., 2014). Nevertheless, some items resist easy classification, and therefore do not have a place in the system of organisation either. Participants frequently put such items in sleutelbakjes. These items were not out of place, so much as they did not have a place they to be 'out of': they did not have a place they belonged. During free listing, almost all participants described 'not knowing where to keep an item' as a reason to put it in a sleutelbakje.

[Consumption coins] are also an example of those types of things which you don't know where to keep, so you just throw them there [in the container]. (Jozine)

6.3.1 Singular Items

Small items of which participants only owned one, what I call ‘singular’ items, often had no place they belonged (as they could not be grouped with other items). These items lingered unclassified between categories.

When we find a marble somewhere in the house...one marble...what do you with that? ... Everything that you find in the house that you have no place for; especially small [things]. (Herman)

That's a piece of the piano, that's why it's' in here, there were more pieces of the piano but I attached those and I forgot to attach this one. (Ingrid)

These items are dirt, the residue of a system of classification: when all is ordered and has a place, these items remain, not really fitting anywhere. The fact that these items were leftovers was also evident during pile sorting. After grouping most items, participants were often left with a few items they were unable to group with anything, which they labelled as “miscellaneous” or with a question mark. By putting these items in a sleutelbakje, participants prevented them from wandering around and polluting the working system. As one survey respondent wrote about the contents of her mother's sleutelbakje:

The rest was kind of junk: from a single paperclip that was lying around to a swimming-subscription. Everything that was a little bit important, but had no set place in the home. (Lizette)

As a symbolically marginal space, a sleutelbakje is a suitable place to temporarily keep these ambiguous items and anomalous items (the participants in the study by Hirschman et al. (2012) similarly used garages to temporarily store such items “until a suitable spot is found for them” (p. 381). Although often intended as a temporary solution, some items unintentionally remained in the sleutelbakje for a long time.

One day those items end up in there randomly and then they never leave again. (Lars)

In the above quote, the participant's use of words such as “one day”, “end up”, and “randomly” is indicative of the lack of control participants feel in regard to these unruly items. This lack of control was discomfoting to some participants, as it threatened their system, and thereby order. As one participant wrote about a small container in her home, used to store anomalous items:

All those things irritate me, and I like it better when they are all together in one [container]. (Nanda)

Because of their discomfort with these items, participants preferably avoided dealing with them. As a result, the items so intended to be transient, often never left the sleutelbakje.

I hope we don't have to sort it...It's hopeless to have to think of places where you could keep these items. (Herman)

He emptied the whole container into a moving box. (Jozine)

Now I have to think about it...while, as long as it is in the container, I don't have to think about it. (Emma)

One participant explained that when her sleutelbakje became too full of items, rather than cleaning it up, she moved the keys to a new container and stored away the old container, still full of items. In this way she did not have to deal with them. Figure 17 below shows the participant's new sleutelbakje (on the left) and old sleutelbakje (on the right).



Figure 17. A New and Old Sleutelbakje. The right image shows the participant's old sleutelbakje. When this sleutelbakje began to overflow, she removed all the items that truly belonged in the sleutelbakje and put them in a new sleutelbakje, which is the one pictured on the left. The image on the right, therefore, shows items that collected in the sleutelbakje, but were not supposed to be there.

For anomalous or singular items to be cleaned up, the participants would have to adjust their system of classification and organisation to account for the item. This coincides with Douglas' (1966) description of anomalies, as well as Abrahamson's (2002) description of 'to-organise' piles: for the item to be organised, a new organisation scheme must be made, or else it will simply be returned in the 'to-organise pile'. As a result, cleaning up these items takes far more effort than simply cleaning up an item that already belongs somewhere, as those described in the previous section. I therefore believe that what participants described as "laziness" (see section 6.2.1) was in some cases the result of the extra effort required to deal with anomalous items.

Alternatively, it could also be a matter of efficiency: participants may be waiting for another (similar) item to appear with which it can be grouped. As Abrahamson (2002) described, "there are instances in which the optimal organizing scheme for a set of new entities can only become apparent when a sufficiently large sample of these entities has accumulated and it becomes clear how they should be organized" (p. 28). In this case, postponing cleaning up the items would be more efficient than adjusting the organisation scheme.

Whatever the reason, as a result of the participants' avoidance of these items, they often remained in sleutelbakjes for a long time, sometimes even years. Whilst in a sleutelbakje, these items may be considered "tolerated transgressions", described by Dion et al. (2014). Participants also described moments akin to the 'tipping point' described by Dion et al. (2014), when transgressions are no longer tolerated and dealt with:

There comes a moments with I think: "and now I'm sick of it". There are so many things in there which don't belong there. (Ineke)

Other participants were also frustrated with the items, and so did not tolerate them, but also did not deal with them: they remained in sleutelbakjes all the while bothering the participant. It seems that these participants were very reluctant to adjust their system of organisation. This contradicts Dion et al.'s (2014) findings: they observed that their participants were quite flexible in terms of adjusting their system to account for anomalies, using the various techniques described in section 2.2.4.

Sleutelbakjes provided a temporary solution for anomalous items — a marginal place to store them so that they do not disrupt order, while they are waiting to be given a place. However, by putting these items inside a sleutelbakje, the participants were essentially only delaying the problem. As a result, participants often had a love-hate relationship with their sleutelbakje, as a couple I interviewed described:

Herman: That is the power of the sleutelbakje...that you don't have to think about that one piece of lego...[that you] got rid of it.

Ingrid: But it is always just postponing the problem...and that really bothers me.

6.3.2 Items Belonging to Other People

Items belonging to other people were also found in sleutelbakjes. They were often left behind or forgotten inside the participant's home. As these items belonged to someone else (and participants intended to give them back) they did not have a place in the home, and were therefore marginal to the system of organisation. I frequently encountered other people's items in sleutelbakjes, and they were repeatedly listed by participants during free listing as typical items found in sleutelbakjes. Jewellery was often given as an example, and jewellery ranked tenth on the aggregated free list.²⁶ The sleutelbakje served to remind people to give these items back:

When someone forgets something at my place [I put it in the sleutelbakje], because then I see it daily and think 'oh right I still have to give it back when I see that person. (Fabienne)

By putting other people's items in a sleutelbakje, the participants were symbolically moving the items to the margins of the home: they were acknowledging that the items do not belong within the home.

²⁶ Although in the free lists I did not differentiate between the participants' own jewellery and those belonging to others, almost all participants who listed 'jewellery' described (also) meaning other people's jewellery.

6.3.3 Items Frequently in Use

Frequently used items are inherently disorderly, as they move around the house and are more likely to get lost or end up in places they do not belong — in other words, cause a mess. Thus, unlike the previous types of items discussed, what makes these items marginal is not that they were hard to classify or place, but that they did not remain in their assigned places. These unruly items were often kept in sleutelbakjes, although they repeatedly moved in and out of the sleutelbakjes. Keys, of course, are a prime example of disorderly, frequently used items. During free listing, pens and coins were often given as examples, and they also ranked 1st and 2nd, respectively, on the free lists (thereby considered the most typical items found in sleutelbakjes).

Hirschman et al. (2012) described items that do not have a regular place in the home as “chaotic and disordered”, and for this reason they are often moved to the garage (p. 381). In doing so, they are essentially expelled to the margins of the to prevent them from disrupting order. However, frequently used items have to be kept at hand. Sleutelbakjes therefore provide an ideal solution: they are a ‘marginal’ space centrally located within the home, and therefore also at hand.

For some frequently used items (keys for example), sleutelbakjes were considered the place they belong. Nonetheless, they were still described as unruly and hard-to-control, and often scattered around the house. Other items *did* have another place they belonged, but a place which was impractical considering their frequent use. These can be considered a controlled or systematic “tolerated transgression” (Dion et al., 2014): an accepted ‘place-out-of-place’. For example, small screw drivers were listed as typical items in a sleutelbakje by ten participants during free listing, ranking 13th on the aggregated free list. Most people have a toolbox where their screwdriver belongs, but toolboxes are often stored away and hard to access, so having one screwdriver more at hand is practical. As one participant explained:²⁷

[I am] too lazy to take it out of the toolbox each time, it is stored away too far. (Fabienne)

Because the screwdriver actually belongs elsewhere, it is kept in the sleutelbakje, alongside other things that do not belong or have a place in the home. In doing so, participants might also be *expressing* that it does not truly belong in within the home (similar to items belonging to other people). Moreover, toolboxes are often kept in marginal areas of the home, such as the attic or a shed. Again sleutelbakjes act as a marginal space, containing items usually stored in marginal spaces.

6.3.4 Conclusion

As (symbolically) marginal spaces located centrally within the home, sleutelbakjes were ideal places to store items items that did not have a place in the participants system of organisation (marginal items): small anomalous items could be kept there without getting lost. Other people’s items could be symbolically removed from the home by putting them in ‘the margins’, while kept in

²⁷ This participant did not have a sleutelbakje, but kept her screwdriver in a kitchen drawer — alongside a pair of keys.

sight so as not to forget them. Similarly, frequently used items had an acceptable “place out place”, where they would not disrupt order, but could still be kept at hand. Sleutelbakjes were therefore used as a tool in boundary work, helping to maintain the rest of the house ordered and clean, by (temporarily) giving ambiguous and anomalous items a place. Figure 18 illustrates the spatial transitions of the items in sleutelbakjes discussed so far.

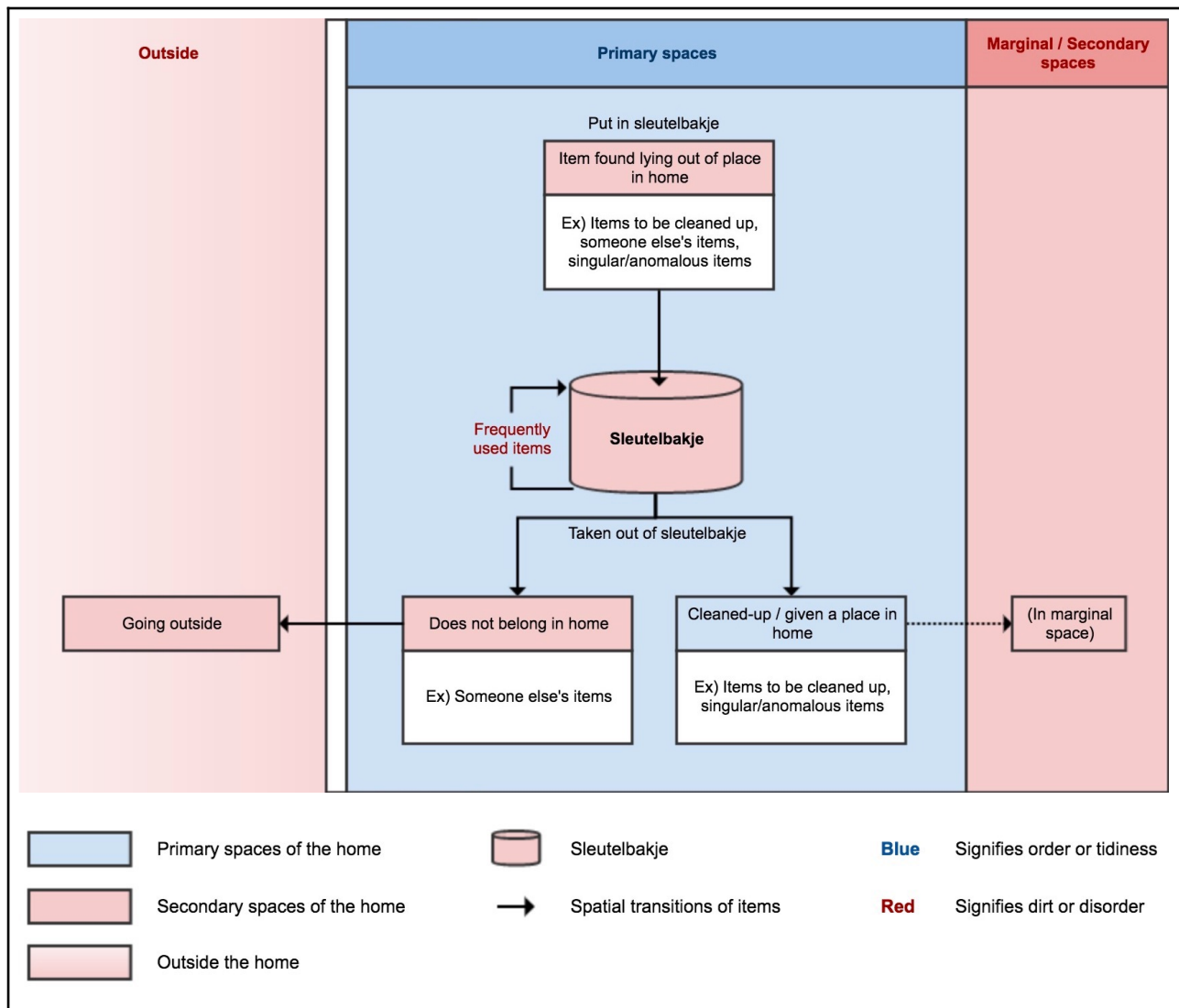


Figure 18. Spatial Transition of Items in a Sleutelbakje. Singular or anomalous items linger between categories and do not have a place they belong in the system of organisation. Hence, they are disorderly and put in a sleutelbakje. If participants classify the item, or give it a place in the home, it leaves the container. Someone else's items do not have a place in the system of organisation either. When they leave the container, they go outside the home to be given back. Frequently used items leave the container but are put back again after use.

6.4 Lacking Information

In this section I will discuss items which participants are unable to classify or clean up because they were lacking information which was necessary *to* classify them. While in the sleutelbakje, these items were ambiguous and marginal, lingering indeterminately in between classifications.

6.4.1 Unknown Components

Unknown components were elements which were part of another item, but the participants did not know what object the element belonged to. In the hubbub of everyday life and the constant disposition of items, there are legions of small things that get lost, or fall or break off of things. When participants found something small lying around the house, but did not know what it was or belonged to, they frequently put it in the sleutelbakje. Such components were very common in sleutelbakjes (figure 19). During an interview, while holding an unknown component in hand, one participant said:



Figure 19. Unknown Components. One participant's pile, during the pile sorting task, which contained many unknown components. The pile was labelled by the participant as "not functional, incomplete".

This is typically something that belongs to something, that broke or came off of something. What do you do with this? This is typically something which if I was to put it somewhere else I would have no idea where else I would put it...so I threw it in that bakje. (Ineke)

In some cases, participants knew what the component was, such as a clothing button (ranking 9th on the aggregated free list), but they did not know what it belonged to. (Notice that the pile shown in figure 19 also contains a button).

A button, you see a button, you don't know what it belongs to, and then you think 'well I'll put it in the sleutelbakje for now because later I might find the piece of clothing that it's supposed to be on'. (Wieke)

As long as the unknown components were in this ambiguous state, they were essentially useless and of no value, and could be considered clutter. As such they were not deserving of a place within the home (according to decluttering norms) and participants indeed often described wanting to throw such components away — but they were unable to. The fact that the origins of these components are unknown not only makes them useless, but it also empowers them: they *could* turn out to be extremely valuable or important. This is the power in ambiguity that Douglas (1966) described as residing in the margins of classifications (see section 2.2.3). Things that cannot be clearly classified have 'undetermined potential', and are therefore potentially threatening to order. As such, they can be considered dangerous (this is also why transitions must be carefully controlled by ritual).

Similar to items undergoing the divestment process, unknown components are therefore marginal as a result of their unclear value status, and are placed somewhere accordingly: a marginal space of the home, where they do not disrupt order.

I couldn't think of anything it belonged to, but I thought it must be a part of something, so I put it in the container, and figured eventually we will find out what it belongs to...because

you know it has a purpose but you don't know yet what that purpose it, so you sort of wait, time will tell. (Ineke)

Sleutelbakjes were an ideal marginal place for these small components, as they could easily get lost if hidden away in other secondary spaces. Also, the sleutelbakje's visibility ensured that they are not forgotten, in case the object which they belong to is found.

Sometimes keeping unknown components or items in a sleutelbakje also served a social function.²⁸ One participant put components or other found knick-knacks in her sleutelbakje if she suspected that it might belong to her husband or children (or that they, in turn, might know who or what it belongs to). In her family of six, putting a component in the sleutelbakje was more efficient than asking everyone. Because the sleutelbakje was known as the place where such components were put, everyone would know to look there if they were missing something.

6.4.2 Find a Use

Another kind of 'incomplete item' found in sleutelbakjes were items which participants currently had no use for, but were still hoping to find a use for. These were often items that lost their original function, but could potentially still be used for something else. These items are marginal in that they, for the moment, have no function, and are waiting to find a purpose. Anti-waste values, encouraging recycling and re-use, likely pushed participants to keep these items (Lucas, 2002). However, items considered 'useless' are often considered clutter, and should therefore be moved out of primary living spaces and into marginal storage areas. Similar items were also kept in attics, according to Korosec-Serfaty (1984). Also, Hirschman et al. (2012) described items similarly being kept in "suspended animation" in garages, "sleeping until an opportunity arises and there is the will or need to use them" (p. 379). Sleutelbakjes thereby functioned as marginal spaces, however, by keeping them in sight (rather than in a hidden space, such as the attic), participants were more likely to be reminded to find a purpose for them.

6.4.3 Conclusion

Unknown components and items with potential, but currently unknown, functions could be safely kept in sleutelbakjes until their ambiguous states were resolved. Until participants decided whether they could be thrown away, stored away, or used, the sleutelbakje provided a marginal place in the home, suitable to their marginal state. In being located centrally in the home, these small and unruly items would not get lost or be forgotten again, and could easily be retrieved when their purpose was found. Figure 20 below integrates these findings with the items discussed so far.

²⁸ I also observed sleutelbakjes serving a social function in terms of keys: keys that were shared with other people were kept in sleutelbakjes, so that they could be easily accessed by everyone in the home.

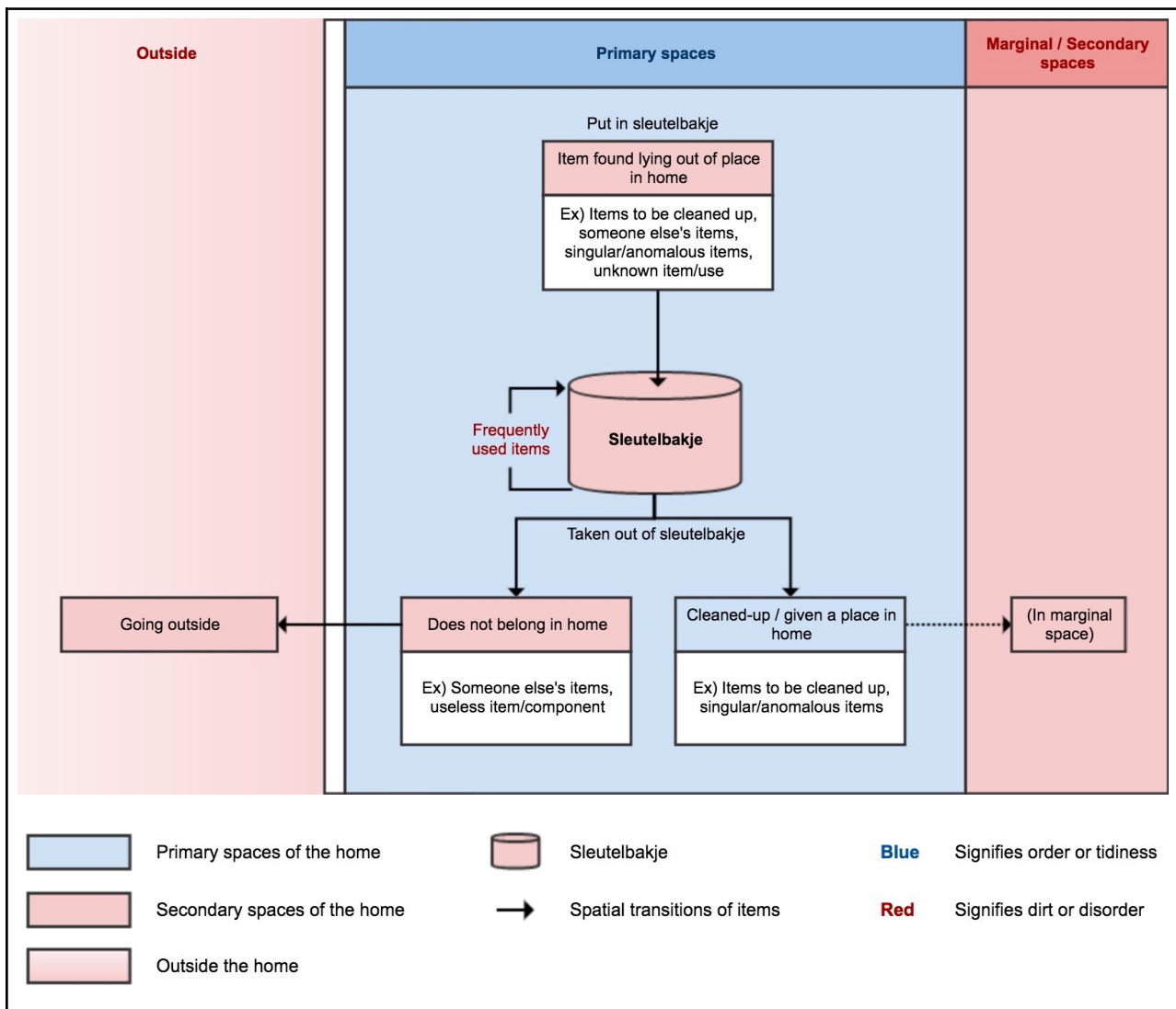


Figure 20. Spatial Transitions of Items in Sleutelbakjes. Items whose function is unknown, such as unknown components, or items which participants are hoping to find a use for, can leave the container when they are either thrown away, or their use or function is discovered.

6.5 Disposal

All sleutelbakjes contained items that needed to be thrown away (and all participants had “to throw away” piles during pile sorting). These objects were described by participants as ‘typical items in sleutelbakjes’ during free listing.

It's hoarding...I find it very hard to throw things away so I'm very glad I have that container. (Ingrid)

The main reason participants gave for throwing an item away was that the item was not being used. As seen in the previous sections, in judging objects, participants greatly focussed on functionality. This was also evident during pile sorting: all participants made piles based on functionality or use. They did so early on in the task, indicating this is likely a natural and intuitive way of differentiating between items. Common piles were “useful” as opposed to “useless”, and piles like “handy” or “practical” as opposed to “non-practical” and “junk”. Piles indicating actual use (rather than usability), such as “use” or “never use”, were also common. If an item did not have a clear

function, it was often regarded with contempt, and preferably thrown away. As mentioned in 6.4.1, this (negative) focus on functionality was likely also driven by the current mode for decluttering, or ridding oneself of all things that no longer have practical use (Belk et al., 2007). As one participant described, in relation to two notebooks she got from her mother in law:

I hate them, because I would never buy them, and what do you do with them then? We are trying to give it a function buy (laughing)... it's not working and that annoys me. (Nanda)

This is ballast...look, it has lost its function. (Ineke)

Despite participants labelling items as “to throw away”, the items had not been thrown away yet, and sometimes they had been in the sleutelbakje for a long time. When I asked participants why they had not been thrown away yet, most participants again replied that it was out of “laziness” (see section 6.2.1) or “forgetfulness”, while others admitted that they did not know or understand why themselves.

I just wish I was more organised. It's just indecisiveness...and laziness. (Emma)

Why do I keep this!...I don't understand why I don't throw this away. (Marjan)

However, many of these items were undergoing the divestment process. The divestment process, as seen in chapter two, requires a certain amount of time, and rushing it may lead to regret (Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005). As such, what participants described as laziness, was actually the divestment process taking time to play out: they were not ready to throw the items away yet. And, indeed, after completing the interviews, all participants put the “to throw away” items back in their container.

I could throw this [pile] away immediately, but this one, I still sort of like it so I would be hesitant to throw it away. (Emma)

Items which you are not sure yet what to do with, whether you should throw them away or not. (Fabienne)

6.5.1 Reasons Not to Throw an Item Away

The divestment process requires a person to completely detach from an object before letting it go. If its value status is unclear, or any value still lingers, the item cannot yet be disposed of (Hirschman, 2012; Lucas, 2002; Edensor, 2005). In this section I discuss three types of lingering value which participants gave as reasons not to throw away items they had previously labelled as “to throw away”.

Use Value

Items were often not thrown away until the participants were completely certain they had no use-value left (as with unknown components). This even applied to items which were broken, such as

bike-lights and pens: participants likely wanted to (double) check that they were absolutely worn out before definitively throwing them away. These items were frequently mentioned by participants during free listing as well.

Actually you know that you're not going to use it anymore, [but you think] maybe, maybe I will still use it for something. (Fabienne)

Loose bike-lights, that actually no longer work but that you haven't thrown away yet. (Fabienne)

Participants were sometimes frustrated with these items and their indecisiveness. Items transitioning in the divestment process are ambiguous, and lack of clarity is discomforting to people, in the same way that anomalies discomfort people because they cannot easily be classified (Douglas, 1966). At other times, they may have felt torn between the decluttering norm, which encouraged them to throw such items away, but also 'ant-waste values' which press us not to throw away items that can still be used (Lucas, 2002).

[A sleutelbakje] is a collection-bakje for things that are important like keys, and small things that you don't want to loose and which temporarily find a place there, and small things that you don't want to throw away because it would be wasteful, but which you don't really have a place for because you don't really need them. (Emma)

Exchange Value

Items which retained any exchange value were not thrown away either. Such items were frequently listed during free listing as typical items found in sleutelbakjes, and also found in existing sleutelbakjes. For example, consumption coins ranked 22nd in the aggregated free list (and figure 21 shows the consumptions coins found in one participant's container). Other examples include one-cent coins, foreign coins, pieces of unknown (broken) jewellery, and discount cards.



Figure 21. Consumption coins. One participant's collection of consumption coins found in his container.

(Laughing) But that might be silver! So it should not be thrown away. I don't throw away silver, that's absurd. (Ingrid)

Well it's still money, you're not going to throw it away, but you're not going to carry it around either. (Jilt)

In Holland you don't use two and one cent coins...you can't use them anywhere, but it is still money, you can't throw that away. (Nanda)

The participants blatantly admitted to never using such items, but being unable to throw them away, sometimes for a very long time:

Because I think I'll use [the consumption coins] again and then you forget to take them with you the next time, then you keep them for four years and then you think after a while...I'll just throw them away. (Jozine)

[I would put] Discount cards which you barely or don't use [in a sleutelbakje], which you have in your wallet and then think well I never use it but I'm not going to throw it away. (Fabienne)

Sentimental Value

Participants also found it hard to throw away items with sentimental value. Sometimes they related the items directly to certain memories or personal relationships. Gifts were a typical example of this. At other times the sentiments attached to the object seemed more subtle. For example, one survey respondent kept shards of a broken vase in her sleutelbakje.

We got this from friends as a gift, what do you do with that? I can't throw it away because it was a gift. (Nanda)

I don't throw things away so easily I've realised... but you know, it's also my history. (Marjan)

[It is] junk you don't want to throw away, but actually should be thrown away. (Alex)

6.5.2 Conclusion

In labelling these items as items “to throw away” (whether privately at an earlier time or explicitly during the interviews), these items came to be rejected (Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003). However, unable to let go of them yet, they remained in the sleutelbakje, lingering in between rejection and disposal, wanted and unwanted, inside the house and outside the house. In this phase of the divestment process, they were ambiguous and marginal, and sleutelbakjes provide a practical marginal place to store these small items (figure 22). While in a sleutelbakje, the participants were reminded of the fact that they intended to throw these items away: because of the sleutelbakje's visibility, and central location in the home, participants could intentionally confront themselves with items in the divestment process, something that is not possible in normal marginal spaces. As one participant explained:

Things you don't really use or won't do anything with, which you actually could have, or should have, thrown away, you put them in a place where you run into them so that you really don't forget to deal with them, as in 'then I will see it tomorrow, or the day after, or next week, and then I'll do something with it then, but for now I don't feel like it, [or] don't know very well what to do with it, if I should throw it away or not. (Fabienne)

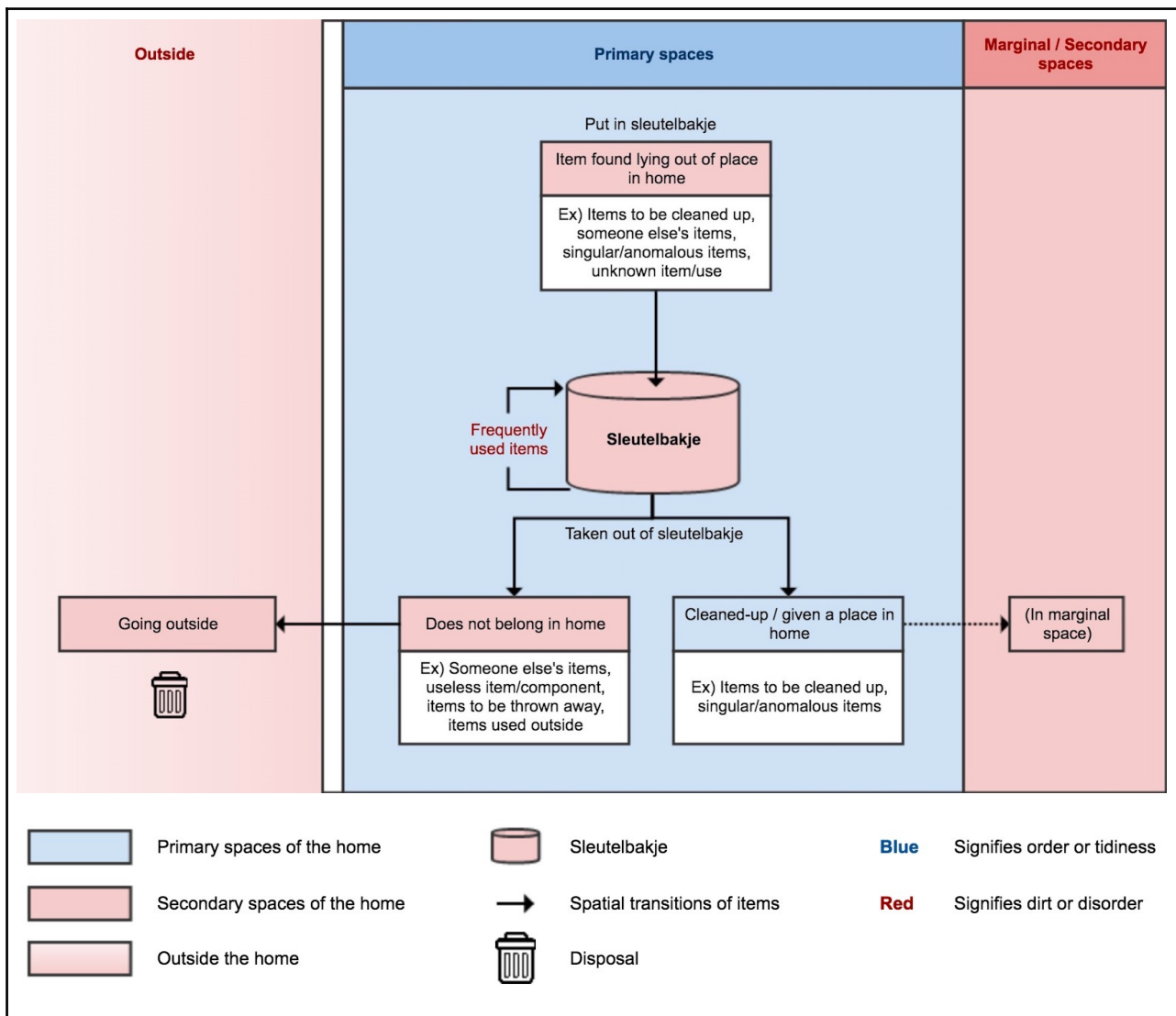


Figure 22. Spatial Transitions of Items in Sleutelbakjes. Items whose function is unknown, such as unknown components, or items which participants are hoping to find a use for, can leave the container when they are either thrown away, or their use or function is discovered.

6.6 The Threshold of the House

In the coming section I will discuss items found in sleutelbakjes which related to the boundary crossing between inside and outside the home: items that are leaving the home, items that are used outside, and items coming into the home.

6.6.1 Items Transitioning Out of the House

Sleutelbakjes were used to store items that did not belong in the home and were transitioning out of the house (including items belonging to other people, described in section 6.3.2). In many cases, these items had to be taken along by the participant when going outside, and by keeping them visibly in the sleutelbakje alongside their keys, it helped to remind the participant to do so. Here too, sleutelbakjes functioned as a reminder system:²⁹

²⁹ The first quote also gives an interesting perspective on 'pens', which the participant was discussing when she made this comment. In this quote the participant related pens in her sleutelbakje to the action of 'coming home'. Another participant said she kept pens in their sleutelbakje so that they could take them along when grocery shopping, to cross items off lists. Thus for some people pens can be directly linked to leaving the house and coming home.

Then I walk outside and think 'oh right I shouldn't forget to take that with me' ...it is a sort of trigger in case I forget something when I leave, or when I come home and think 'oh I immediately need to write that down or remember it'. (Dyonne)

You need to do something with those when you leave the house, so it is logical that you put them here. (Ingrid)

Items that had to be disposed of (described in the previous section) are another example of items transitioning out of the house. This includes both items undergoing a divestment process, but also certain trash which was waiting to be disposed of for more practical reasons. For example, sleutelbakjes were used for special kinds of trash, such as batteries or lightbulbs, which cannot simply be thrown in the trashcan. Such items were also listed by participants during free listing. Similarly, in their study into garages, Hirschman et al. (2012) found that their participants used garages as 'pre-disposal areas' to store garbage bags before putting them outside. One couple I interviewed had a thermometer in their sleutelbakje:

Ingrid: Well this is in here because of procrastination...I have to take this back to the pharmacy.

Herman: Well that's because that container used to be kept by the front door, on your way out...and it retained that function..you need a place to keep things that have to go out.

6.6.2 Items Used Outside

Sleutelbakjes also contained items which are *used* outside, such as keys and, in typically Dutch fashion, bike-lights and other bike-related paraphernalia. When leaving, participants took these items out of the sleutelbakjes and put them in their pockets or bags, and when coming home, they were put back in the sleutelbakje. In doing so, the items were 'left' in the margins of the home (symbolically, or physically if the sleutelbakje was located by the front door).

[I keep items in the sleutelbakje which] I usually have in my bag. (Emma)

All the things I need when I go from being dressed to leaving the house. Everything that needs to go into the pockets of my pants or jacket. (Marc)

This was also described by a contributor to the forum thread "Where do you keep your keys?":

[My] bike-key is in a bakje (define bakje?) where I keep all the junk from my bags. I put everything that comes out of my bag in that bakje and subsequently use it to fill up another bag. (Pienternella, 2013; own translation).

Items used outside were considered very typical items for sleutelbakjes. During free listing, participants described them as "items you need when you leave the house" and they gave as examples: bike lights (ranked 7th), coins (ranked 2nd), earphones (ranked 8th), or sunglasses

Everything you can conjure out of your pockets. (Marc)

Everything that is in my pockets at the wrong moment. (Louis)

Upon entering the home, participants also put things in their sleutelbakje which they had found outside. This included “natural debris” (such as stones or shells) found and taken into the home, something listed by four participants during free listing, and also found in four sleutelbakjes. Other ‘found’ objects included a found ring, or elastic bands the mailman dropped.³¹

The mailman sometimes drops those nice elastic bands...those also go in [a sleutelbakje]. Where else would you put those? They are related to the front door. (Herman)

Sometimes I have a stone in my pocket, or something else I found, and I don't want it in my pocket anymore, and I have to put it somewhere, I can throw it away but I don't want to throw it away so I put it in the container. Then I think 'I'll see what I'll do with it later'. (Ingrid)

In the above quote, the participant is not sure yet what she wants to do with the stone. In this case, the item is in an ambiguous state between ‘wanted’ and ‘not wanted’. If she decides to keep the stone, it can be considered a ‘reverse divestment process’, where the item is transitioning from ‘not mine’ to ‘mine’ and from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’. The ambiguous state of these items makes them disorderly and dirty. By keeping them in a dedicated transitional space, they do not pollute the home. Until a decision is made regarding the item, whether or not to keep it, or where in the home to keep it, it remains in limbo in the sleutelbakje, no longer outside, but not fully accepted into the home either.

Rosselin (1999) described hallways as an “ambiguous neutralising space” that allows for a gradual transition from outdoor to indoor, from public to private, from dirty to clean (Rosselin 1999). They are used for specific rituals which can “purify” someone before entering the house, such as wiping your shoes (Rosselin 1999). In this way, sleutelbakjes are a tool in this purification process: they provide a place for small dirty items to be purified before entering the home (as illustrated by the example of the stone above), and when a participant leaves those items in the sleutelbakje, they are also purifying themselves before entering the home. In this way, the home is protected and kept clean, both physically and symbolically, by leaving dirty things outside outside.

One of those clips with which you can let your plant grow up [a rod]...which you put in your pocket by mistake while working in the garden and then you still have one in your pocket and you throw it in there. (Marjo)

³¹ Another participant, during free listing, mentioned putting hotel soap bars in a sleutelbakje, and indeed I encountered one of these in another participant's sleutelbakje. Hotel soap bars are also brought in from outside the house, and often do not have a place in the home, or still have to be given one. Or, as the free listing participant described: they are brought home with the intention to use them when going on another holiday (for use outside), but instead they are often simply thrown away.

Sleutelbakjes serve an important role in keeping the house ordered, by helping to control the small items coming into the home. Here too, sleutelbakjes take on a role similar to other marginal spaces, in this case transitional spaces like the hallway or garage. Sleutelbakjes are therefore used as a tool in boundary work, helping to maintain the integrity of the categories ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.³² Figure 24 below illustrates the spatial transitions of the items in sleutelbakjes discussed in this chapter.

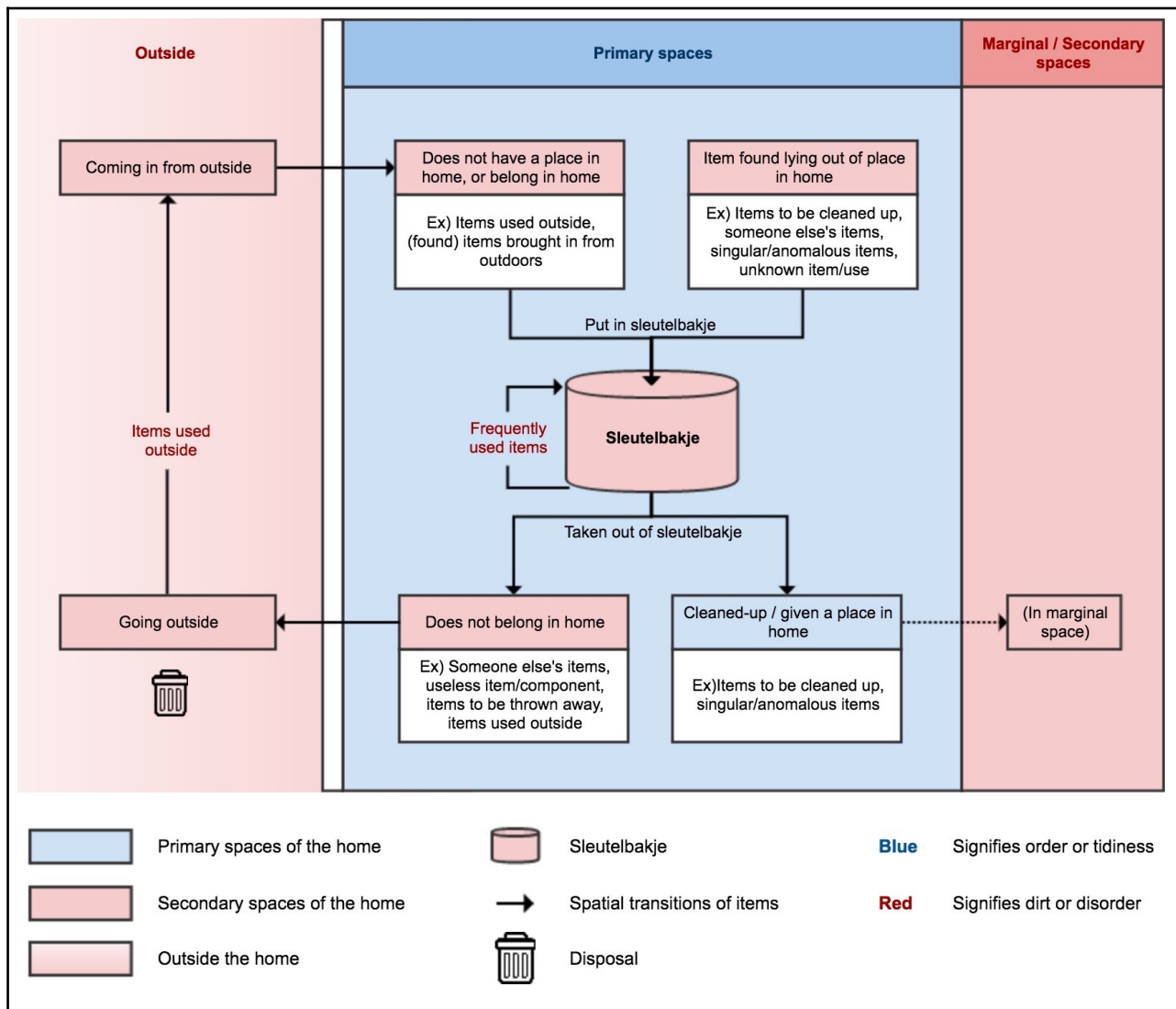


Figure 24. Spatial Transition of Items in Sleutelbakjes. Items that came from outside are kept in the sleutelbakje until they are given a place in the home. Items that do not belong in the home, are kept in sleutelbakjes until they are taken outside. Items used outside are kept (and often belong) in sleutelbakjes: taken out by participants when leaving, but put back again when coming home.

³² During the interviews I encountered one case where the opposite was true: one participant had a bit of dust and dirt lying at the bottom of her container, which had blown in through the front door. This bothered the participant, and she described how, had I been a complete stranger, she would have been embarrassed because of this. For this participant, the dust in her sleutelbakje symbolically disrupted the clear categorisation of inside and outside as separate realms. However, if the dust and dirt had entered the container with the items that were put inside (which had been used outside), then the sleutelbakje had (at least) prevented the items from dirtying the rest of the home.

7. Conclusion

Recall that people have a culturally shaped idea of an ideal home, which most try to live up to (as discussed in section 2.2.2). Such an ideal home is often an organised and tidy home (Dion et al., 2014; Belk et al., 2007; Ger & Yencioğlu, 2004). This is not for no reason: an ordered environment ensures stability, and predictability, and helps to “preserve the orderliness of one’s mental framework” (Nippert-Eng, 1996, p. 579). Amongst my participants, most indicated generally wanting their house to be ordered, and an aversion to disorder and items out of place:

I have a lot of bakjes, I like organising things...I like order and I think it is very annoying when things are in the wrong place. (Nanda)

I am very chaotic with my things, everything just goes everywhere, I would really like it if—it would be very good for me to keep it all in one place, but in my case, it just goes through the entire house, and in different bags. (Maaike)

I like it when things are just where you expect them, you shouldn’t just throw anything in [a sleutelbakje]. (Anette)

Some participants were a little embarrassed to share their containers with me, as many of the items were not really supposed to be in there, or should have been thrown away or cleaned up. Perhaps it confronted them with their own ‘failure’ to maintain their system properly or live up to their own expectations. Or, by having to share their ‘disordered’ containers with me, they were confronted with not living up to social expectations, where I, as an outsider, embodied these social expectations. Subtle comments like “it’s not that bad” or “I’m sure you’ve seen worse” hinted at their disapproval of the items inside. Another participant joked:

[You’ll record this] and ridicule us in front the rest of Holland! (Herman)

If participants had something in their home which *was* exceptionally well organised, they were proud of this, and wanted to share it with me. During one interview, a participant showed me her organised collection of screws in her workplace:

But I can show you my bakjes for screws, they are all very organised and neat, everything is very ordered, a screw is mid, long, black, small, everything, the tape...this is neat...so we’re not that bad. (Nanda)

Thus, it was clear that most participants were sensitive to social expectations regarding organisation in the home, and generally wanted to keep their homes tidy. To keep a home ordered, it needs a system of organisation, which is based on an underlying system of classification. Maintaining this system consists of giving items a place, and identifying and removing items that are out of place and disrupt order — what Douglas (1966) referred to as *dirt*. Sleutelbakjes are used to store such dirt: small items that are out of place, or do not have a place in the home. These items are marginal

to the system of classification, and organisation, within the home. They are kept in sleutelbakjes until they can be cleaned up or given a proper place (or until they are removed from the home altogether).³³

Small things which you just dumped out of your bag but haven't cleaned up yet, [like] nail polish. (Fabienne)

The only items that remain in sleutelbakjes (and often truly 'belong') are items which are frequently used, or items which are used outside, which are both unruly and dirty as well. In this way, sleutelbakjes are a tool in boundary work: they help maintain the purity of categories, and the system, by providing a place to temporarily store items that disrupt order.

In some cases, postponing cleaning up an item was practical or efficient, and at other times participants simply did not feel like cleaning an item up. In this way, sleutelbakjes could improve flow, like the 'to-organise' piles described by Abrahamson (2002): participants did not have to stop what they were doing to think about, or clean up, every item found out of place.

You know what I find the worst, sometimes I have a paperclip on my desk and then I put it on my lamp because I have a plateau under it, that annoys me so much, then I throw it away, it bothers me! Then I have to go looking for where I keep my paperclips, and it's not always within reach, and then I think 'oh god a loose paperclip on my desk'...then it's there for a week, in that one spot, and I see it every day...they are annoying things. (Herman)

This was especially helpful in the case of items which were hard to classify, which made it particularly hard to organise them. For example, sleutelbakjes contained many items undergoing transitions, and anomalies, which are hard to classify and clean up. These items, in their ambiguity, disrupted the system of organisation and bothered people, however, they also had nowhere to go — they had no place they belonged. They are the 'leftovers' that remain, when all else is properly organised.

Like the people living in the margins of society, described by Douglas (1966) and Ger and Yenicioglu (2004) in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 respectively, the ambiguous items in sleutelbakjes fall outside of a structured system.³⁴ Indeed, five participants personified these marginal items by referring to them as roaming "homeless" or "stray" items, or "orphans" who could not be grouped with other items.³⁵

That is the power of sleutelbakjes, that it is a place where you can put things away, things I call 'orphans' like a single item lying on your desk, you don't do anything with [one

³³ Participants also often described putting items in sleutelbakjes which they did not want to lose. The fact that participants were afraid to lose these items indicates that they were likely unruly items as well, or had no place they belonged (and as a result, could easily get lost).

³⁴ One participant mentioned feeling like a sleutelbakje could contain a playing card, and specifically mentioned the joker — the anomalous card of the deck.

³⁵ The Dutch terms used were "zwerfspullen", "weeskinderen", and "verdwaalde spullen".

paperclip]! What am I supposed to do with that? Then I sit there and think about it, [I could] throw it away, then at least I don't have to think about it anymore. That's the power of a sleutelbakje, that you don't have to think about that one piece of lego...All kinds of orphans, of which you only have one. (Herman)

Disorderly items are often moved to marginal secondary spaces of the home. As seen in the previous chapter, however, this was not possible, or practical, for many of these small items (particularly those frequently used). Sleutelbakjes provide a marginal space within the home - an accepted place to keep such small, ambiguous, and unruly items.

Sleutelbakjes are symbolically marginal spaces because they are containers dedicated to keys, which are marginal for two reasons. First, they symbolise the threshold of the home. Second, they do not have a clear place in the system of classification or organisation in the home: they are considered dirty, unruly anomalies. However, we inevitably have to keep them at hand within our primary living spaces. To keep keys under control (and perhaps because it is hard to group them with other items) they are given their own container. Along the way, other marginal items end up in sleutelbakjes alongside keys.

Evidence of the fact that keys are marginal items came from my analysis of junk drawers containing keys. Keys not only attract marginal items, but marginal items also attract keys. Junk drawers were incredibly similar to sleutelbakjes, containing many of the same items. People put items in junk drawers for many of the same reasons as sleutelbakjes:

What on earth do you do with that, it is so random, it can go back to [the drawer]. (Jilt)

There is absolutely zero connection between these items. That is why they all go in one big drawer. (Arie)

Like sleutelbakjes, they are miniature marginal spaces within the home. However, as opposed to sleutelbakjes, junk drawers are specifically intended to be private and hidden places — they are like miniature attics. Unlike sleutelbakjes (which were used as reminder systems) junk drawers were used as forgetting systems: by putting an item in the junk drawer, it was dealt with and could be forgotten. The items inside junk drawers were not transient, but remained there, and as such, the keys in junk drawers were also keys that participants rarely used. Hence, sleutelbakjes are not the only marginal spaces centrally located in the home: what makes sleutelbakjes unique is their visibility and accessibility, and the transience of the items inside. Junk drawers, then, are the hidden and secretive counterparts to sleutelbakjes.

7.1 Discussion

Much research on liminality has already identified the need for liminal, transitional spaces, where items in an ambiguous state can be kept (for examples, see Cwerner & Metcalfe, 2003; Douglas, 1966; Hetherington, 2004; Hirschman et al., 2012; Korosec-Serfaty, 1984; Lastovicka & Fernandez,

2005). Most of this research, however, has focussed on the use of liminal rooms in the periphery of homes. This study into sleutelbakjes has revealed the need for a marginal space located *centrally* within the home, which caters specifically to the countless small and mundane items that surround us. These items are easily overlooked, but they may be the most unruly of all. And, they too, undergo complex transitions, and require special places to do so. Seen in this light, the assemblages of items found in sleutelbakjes (and junk drawers) are not the result of inadequate organisational practices or ‘laziness’. Rather, they are a creative and efficient coping mechanism for the small, unruly, and disorderly items inevitably found around the house.

This study helped me (and perhaps can help other people) understand why certain items are unruly and disruptive, and can thereby help keep them ‘under control’. Some participants explicitly wanted their sleutelbakje to only contain keys, but other items ended up there nonetheless. For these people, understanding *why* those items end up in the sleutelbakje can be of help. For example, some participants indicated not comprehending why they did not throw certain items away, and being frustrated by it. Having a better understanding and awareness of the divestment process could result in the acceptance of it. People could, for example, assign a certain place as a dedicated transitional space for small items in the divestment process, whereby they may no longer end up in sleutelbakjes.

However, the battle people experience with objects, is often not with the objects themselves, but with their own system of classification. As seen in section 2.2.4, the more someone tries to hold on to a (rigid) system of classification in an attempt to control objects, the more power or agency is invested in these objects, and the more likely they are to defy the system (Dion et al., 2014). As a result, people feel like they do not have control over their objects. Therefore, dealing with unruly items may best be tackled through classification, rather than organisation: instead of trying to clamp down on these items with a more rigid system of classification or more complex storage systems, we could choose to use a less precise system of classification. We could acknowledge the efficiency and necessity of assemblages like those found in sleutelbakjes and junk drawers, rather than see them as a sign of failure.

To help defy the danger beliefs associated with items that are hard to classify, I suggest the following: ideally, IKEA, as a cultural trendsetter in terms of organisational practices, should design a container with a visible and explicit label such as “sleutelbakje” or “junk drawer” on it. In this way, assemblages of knick-knacks, ‘dirty’ things, and junk, can come to be accepted and normalised. One reason I genuinely believe that explicit labelling can be influential in the process of acceptance came from the following anecdote, described to me by a participant: after installing a new sleutelbakje, the participant took her old sleutelbakje full of items that did not belong (see figure 17) and placed it in a junk box, with the intention to clean the items up later. When I asked her how she referred to the junk box, she adamantly replied:

It's not allowed to have a name, it doesn't have a name and I don't want to give it a name, it needs to be cleaned up, because I don't want it to exist. It is a temporary solution. (Emma)

In this case, the participant felt that by giving her junk box a name, she would be acknowledging its existence, and she would be less likely to clean it up. Perhaps for some people, the disapproval of the container, or the items inside, is a necessary motivational force to ensure that the items are cleaned up. However, personally, realising that messy bakjes or drawers in my home serve a clear purpose, helped me to embrace them. Understanding that items, like people, undergo transitions and can have ambiguous statuses, helped increase my “tolerance for ambiguity” (Abrahamson, 2002). Like the participant in the quote below, rather than pigeonholing, it encouraged me to ‘think outside the box’:

These are actually items which don't belong in the drawer...but they don't have to leave either. (Jilt)

References

- Abrahamson, E. (2002). Disorganizational Theory and Disorganizational Behavior: Towards and Etiology of Messes. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 24, 139-180.
- anoniem6281846 (2013, July 9). Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/2
- Belk, R.W., Seo, J.Y., & Li, E. (2007). Dirty Little Secret: Home Chaos and Professional Organizers. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 10(2), 133-140. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10253860701256208>
- Bernard, H.R. (2006). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Borgatti, S.P. (1996). *ANTHROPAC 4.0*. Natick, MA: Analytic Technologies.
- Borgatti, S. (2005). *Introduction to Grounded Theory*. Available online at www.analytictech.com/mb870/introtoGT.htm
- Borgatti, S.P., & Halgin, D. (2011). Elicitation Methods for Cultural Domain Analysis - Revised. In J. Schensul & M. LeCompte (Eds.), *The Ethnographer's Toolkit, Volume 3*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.
- Boscalgi, M. (2014). *Stuff Theory: Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Buchli, V., Clarke, A., & Upton, D. (2004). Editorial. *Home Cultures*, 1(1), 1-4.
- chantalhuissen (2013, July 9). Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/2
- Cieraad, I. (1999). Introduction: Anthropology at Home. In I. Cieraad (Ed.), *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (pp. 1-12). New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Clarke, A.E. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cwerner, S.B., & Metcalfe, A. (2003). Storage and Clutter: Discourses and Practices of Order in the Domestic World. *Journal of Design History*, 16(3), 229-239.

- Dachsie (2013, June 25). Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/0
- Dion, D., Sabri, O., & Guillard, V. (2014). Home Sweet Messy Home: Managing Symbolic Pollution. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41, 565–589.
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and Danger: An analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo*. New York: Routledge.
- Dutchy83 (2013, July 9) Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/2
- Edensor, T. (2005). Waste Matter - The Debris of Industrial Ruins and the Disordering of the Material World. *Journal of Material Culture*, 10(3), 311-332.
- elastiekje__ (2013, June 25). Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/0
- Eriksen, T.H. (2001). *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Sterling: Pluto Press.
- Ger, G., & Yenicioglu, B. (2004). Clean and Dirty: Playing with the Boundaries of Consumer's Safe Havens. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 31, 462–67.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. New York: Aldine.
- Hetherington, K. (2004). Secondhandedness: Consumption, Disposal, and Absent Presence, *Environment and Planning D*, 22 (1), 157–74.
- Hirschman, E.C., Ruvio, A., & Belk, R.W. (2012). Exploring space and place in marketing research: Excavating the Garage. *Marketing Theory*, 12(4), 369-389.
- Korosec-Serfaty, P. (1984). The Home from Attic to Cellar. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 4, 303-321.
- IKEA (2013), *IKEA Catalog*, Tampa, FL: IKEA-USA.
- Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 691– 710.
- Lastovicka, J., & Fernandez, K. (2005). Three paths to disposition: the movement of meaningful possessions to strangers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31, 813–823.
- Löfgren, O. (2014). The Black Box of Everyday Life. Entanglements of Stuff, Affects, and Activities. *Cultural Analysis*, 13, 77-98.

- Löfgren, O. (2016). Mess: on domestic overflows. *Consumption Markets & Culture*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2016.1158767>
- Lucas, G. (2002). Disposability and the Dispossession in the Twentieth Century. *Journal of Material Culture*, 7(1), 5-22.
- Maycroft, N. (2009). Not Moving Things Along: Hoarding, Clutter and Other Ambiguous Matter. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8(6), 354–64.
- McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement Goods of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13 (1), 71–84.
- Nippert-Eng, C. (1996). Calendars and Keys: The Classification of ‘Home’ and ‘Work’. *Sociological Forum*, 11 (3), 563–82.
- O’Toole, P., & Were, P. (2015). Observing places: using space and material culture in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 8(5), 616-634.
- Pettigrew, S. (2000). Ethnography and grounded theory: a happy marriage? In Hoch, S.J. & Meyer, R.J. (Eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, 27, 256-60.
- Pienternella (2013, June 25). Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/1
- Rosselin, C. (1999). The Ins and Outs of the Hall: A Parisian Example. In I. Cieraad (Ed.), *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Sammie00 (2013, June 25). Waar laten jullie je sleutels? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/waar-laten-jullie-je-sleutels/list_messages/198773/0
- Sbaraini, A., Carter, M.C., Evans, R.W., & Blinkhorn, A. (2011). How to do a grounded theory study: a worked example of a study of dental practices. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 11(128).
- Short, J.R. (1999). Foreword. In I. Cieraad (Ed.), *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Smith, M. (2007). Inconspicuous Consumption: Non-Display Goods and Identity Formation. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 14(4), 412-438.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Suddaby, R. (2006). What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 633–642.

- Thornberg, R. (2012). Informed Grounded Theory. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 56(3), 243-259.
- Walsh, I., Holton, J.A., Bailyn, L., Fernandez, W., Levina, N., & Glaser, B. (2015). What Grounded Theory Is ... A Critically Reflective Conversation Among Scholars. *Organizational Research Methods*, 18(4), 581-599.
- Weller, S.C., & Romney, A.K. (1988). *Systematic Data Collection*. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology (3rd edition)*. New York: Open University Press.
- Wortel, M. (2015). Koeltrommel. In W. Brands & J. van Kan (Eds.), *Nederland: Een objectief zelfportret in 51 voorwerpen*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans.
- Zusenzoo (2011, December 7) Nieuwsgierig...Waar laten jullie je spullen? [Online forum comment]. Message posted to http://forum.viva.nl/forum/thuis/nieuwsgierig-waar-laten-jullie-je-spullen/list_messages/134180/2

Appendix A: Overview of the Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Location	Container (See Appendix D)
Jorick	M	38	Technical director IT company	Enschede; Freestanding house	#20
Arie	M	34	Translator	Leiden; House	#15
Daan	M	24	Student/Sales clerk	Leidschendam; Apartment	#22
Pim	M	61	Artist	The Hague, House	#12
Marjolein	F	39	Accountmanager	Amsterdam; Apartment	#7
Maaïke	F	28	Branch manager daycarecenter	Amsterdam; Apartment	#16, #21
Marjan	F	54	Art historian/Data projects	Leiden; House	#17
Julius	M	23	Student	Amsterdam; Apartment	#18
Alex	M	28	Legal Assistant	Leiden; Studio	#19, #23
Jilt	M	42	Teacher/Researcher Virtual Reality	Amsterdam; Apartment	#24
Lisa	F	32	Designer/Photographer/Teacher	Amsterdam; Apartment	#9
Ineke	F	59	Administrative Volunteer	Zoeterwoude; Freestanding house	#4, #10, #11
Nanda	F	32	Study Coordinator at University	The Hague; Apartment	#3, #8, #13
Emma	F	24	Artist	Leiden; Apartment	#1, #2, #14
Herman	M	63	Sanskritist	The Hague; House	#5, #6
Ingrid	F	61	Professor of Sociohistorical Linguistics	The Hague; House	#5, #6
Maartje	F	34	Branch manager daycare/ Student	Amsterdam; Apartment	*
Fabienne	F	37	Catering / Waitress	Amsterdam; Apartment	**

* Maartje had recently reorganised items in her home, and no longer had any sleutelbakjes. During the interview, she described the containers she used to have.

** Fabienne did not have a sleutelbakje. I specifically sampled a participant without sleutelbakje for my final interview.

Appendix B: Original Quotes and their Translations

Page #	Translated Quote	Original Quote
1	<i>All kinds of peculiar things: A bead An old phone-card Shards of a vase A Paperclip (Gineke)</i>	<i>Allerlei rare dingetjes in de druppelcontainer, zoals een kraal, oude telefoonkaart, scherven van een vaas, paperclip. (Gineke)</i>
29	<i>Sheldon and Leonard in The Big Bang Theory have a bowl by the door for their keys. I thought that was a good idea, so now we also have a bowl by the door. Since then I never lost my keys again. (Dutchy83, 2013; own translation)</i>	<i>Sheldon en Leonard hebben in The Big Bang Theory een schaalje bij de deur voor hun sleutels. Vond dat wel een goed idee eigenlijk, nu hebben wij ook een schaalje bij de deur. Sindsdien nooit meer sleutels kwijt geweest. (Dutchy83)</i>
30	<i>The strange thing is that my keys are not in there, because it is used for all kinds of other things...it is actually used for knick-knacks. (Ingrid)</i>	<i>Maar het rare is dat mijn sleutels zitten d'r niet in...want uuh het word dus gebruikt voor allerlei andere dingen en wat herman ook zei het word gebruikt eigenlijk voor rommeltjes (Ingrid)</i>
	<i>All those kinds of small things, everything that isn't bigger than a key. What do you do with them all, you need to keep them somewhere. (Anette)</i>	<i>Allemaal van die kleine we- (incomprehensible)-maak dingetjes, alles wat niet groter is dan een sleutel...want dat zijn- ja want wat moet je allemaal- dat moet je ergens kwijt. (Anette)</i>
31	<i>These items will go back into the container blindly, we absolutely don't look at them, because we have no idea what they all are. (Herman)</i>	<i>Dit gaat blindelings terug in het bakje, we kijken d'r absoluut niet naar...want we weten allemaal niet wat het is (Herman)</i>
32	<i>[I keep those keys in a bakje under my bed] because I am absolutely not allowed to loose them...however as a result I also forgot I had them. (Maartje)</i>	<i>M'n huissleutels van bijvoorbeeld me zusje ofzo...of van Friesland van me moeder, die zitten dan uh in een ander bakje onder et bed...die mag ik sowieso wel niet kwijtraken dus daar nooit aan kom...maar ja het gevolg was dat ik ook niet meer wist dat ik ze had. (Maartje)</i>
34	<i>Here everyone always threw [their keys] on the table, despite a key-rack in the kitchen, so I just put a sleutelmandje [key-basket] on the table. (anoniem6281846, 2013; own translation)</i>	<i>Iedereen gooide ze hier altijd op tafel, ondanks een sleutelrekje in de keuken, dus ik heb nu maar een sleutelmandje op tafel gezet. (anoniem6281846, 2013)</i>
37	<i>You don't just put anything in a sleutelbakje. (Herman)</i>	<i>Maar toch, je stopt niet alles in het bakje. (Herman)</i>
38	<i>There are certain rules about which items are allowed to go [in my sleutelbakje]. (Emma)</i>	<i>Er zijn wel bepaalde regels over wat er in mag. (Emma)</i>
	<i>I don't have one myself, but I have a lot of items that belong in a sleutelbakje. (Arie)</i>	<i>Want ik heb geen sleutelbakje maar wel allerlei dingen die daar in thuis zou kunnen horen (Arie)</i>
	<i>I understand that someone would put [consumption coins] in their sleutelbakjes, but we don't have them in ours. (Ineke)</i>	<i>Maar dat snap ik wel dat die in zo'n rommelbakje ligt maar niet bij ons. (Ineke)</i>
	<i>In the living room I also have a set of small white baskets in the bookcase, in which keys, phones, pens, and other knick-knacks end up. (Zusenzoo, 2011, own translation)</i>	<i>In de woonkamer heb ik ook een set met witte kleine mandjes in de boekenkast staan waarin sleutels, telefoons, pennen en andere rotzooitjes komen te liggen. In the living room I also have a set of small white baskets in the bookcase, in which keys, phones, pens, and other knick-knacks end up. (Zusenzoo, 2011)</i>
	<i>I don't keep cookies in them, but keys, love-letters, money, or drugs. (Wortel, 2015, own translation)</i>	<i>Ik bewaar er geen koekjes in, maar sleutels, liefdesbrieven, geld of drugs. (Wortel, 2015)</i>
39	<i>If we are talking about organised containers then we are talking about, from a philosophical point of view, a completely different container. (Jilt)</i>	<i>Als je et overal (incomprehensible) georganiseerde bakken dan hebben we het wel over hele ander soort filosofisch gezien soort bakje. (Jilt)</i>
41	<i>I don't know why [I would put that in a sleutelbakje], but I would find that logical. (Maaïke)</i>	<i>Ik weet ook niet waarom...maar dat zou ik dan ook logisch vinden. (Maaïke)</i>
	<i>Lost staples for some reason ... also belong in sleutelbakjes. (David)</i>	<i>Verdwaalde nietjes om een of andere reden, horen d'r ook in. (David)</i>
	<i>I really don't like this... (laughing) I have a certain system which I make without thinking about it, and now I have to think about it and now I am starting to doubt my system. (Emma)</i>	<i>Ik vind dit echt helemaal niet leuk... (laughing) nou omdat ik een bepaald systeem dan maak, zonder dat ik daar over nadenk en nou moet ik daar over nadenken...nu moet ik twijfelen aan mijn eigen systeem. (Emma)</i>

Page #	Translated Quote	Original Quote
41	<p><i>I had no idea it was in here, and I don't think I've ever seen it before. (Herman)</i></p> <p><i>What also happens a lot, when things are too big for my bakje, like papers or mail or something, they end up under the container...not very much fits in, I think that's how it ends up under the container. (Jozine)</i></p>	<p><i>Ja ik wist niet dat die hier in zat ik denk ik heb hem ook nooit eerder gezien. (Herman)</i></p> <p><i>Wat d'r ook vaak gebeurt als dingen te groot zijn voor m'n bakje zoals uh bladen of post ofzo dat het onder het bakje terecht komt...ja dus d'r past ook gewoon niet zo veel in maar daarom komt ook alles d'r onder terecht denk ik. (Jozine)</i></p>
42	<p><i>In our container we also have:</i></p> <p><i>Licence papers Flashlight Buttons Safety pins [Wine] opener Corks</i></p> <p><i>Actually none of this belongs in there!!!!!! (Tiny)</i></p>	<p><i>In onze container zit ook:</i></p> <p><i>Autopapieren Zaklamp Knoopjes, speldjes, Opener Kurken</i></p> <p><i>Dit alles hoort er eigenlijk niet in!!!!</i></p>
43	<p><i>Me: The keys are separate? Maaïke: Yes, those are...just there.</i></p>	<p><i>Me: En sleutels is apart? Maaïke: ja die is, die is er gewoon.</i></p>
44	<p><i>I have four bunches of keys for my work, they are always everywhere, so in the morning I always have to go looking for them. (Maaïke)</i></p>	<p><i>Ik heb 4 bossen sleutels voor me werk, die liggen ook overal, dus dan 's-ochtends is het echt zoeken naar waar is het. (Maaïke)</i></p>
45	<p><i>I had quite a bunch of keys, my own, my mother, the gate, my beloved, the car-keys. First they were all in a drawer, but that became a real junk drawer, and consequently I couldn't find my keys anymore. (sammie00, 2013, own translation)</i></p> <p><i>I have a kitchen drawer with different bakjes inside: 1 for my daily keys, bike keys, and car keys, and one for all the other keys and spare keys. Works fine but I do have to clean it up every six months because a lot of things disappear into there amongst the keys, like small change, screws, saving-stamps, etc. (Dachsie, 2013, own translation)</i></p>	<p><i>Ik heb best een paar sleutelbossen, die van mezelf, mijn moeder, poort, lief, autosleutels. Eerst lagen ze allemaal in een lade, maar dat werd een echte rommellade, met als gevolg dat ik m'n sleutels niet meer kon vinden. (sammie00, 2013)</i></p> <p><i>Heb in de keukenla verschillende bakjes: 1 voor de dagelijkse sleutelbos, fietsensleutel en autosleutel en 1 voor alle overige- en reservesleutels. Werkt prima maar moet wel om t half jaar weer ff opgeruimd worden want er verdwijnt vaak vanalles tussen de sleutels zoals kleingeld, schroefjes, spaarzegels, etc :-\$ (Dachsie, 2013)</i></p>
46	<p><i>They are the remaining, leftover items, that don't have a place, and then end up together in a bowl or basket or bakje. (Jilt)</i></p> <p><i>This just needs to be cleaned up...it doesn't belong with these items. (Maaïke)</i></p>	<p><i>Ja het zijn echt overige dingen...die eigenlijk nergens een plek hebben en dan maar bij mekaar in een mand of een schaal of een bakje terecht komen. (Jilt)</i></p> <p><i>Hier van weet ik dit moet gewoon opgeruimd, dit hoort er niet tussen. (Maaïke)</i></p>
47	<p><i>Then at least it won't remain lying in another place in which you know for sure you don't want it to be. (Ineke)</i></p> <p><i>I probably wanted to clean that up at some point, but just threw it in here...People also go for easy solutions, you have something in your hand and then you think gosh I have to clean it up somewhere, and you throw it in the container. (Marjan)</i></p> <p><i>I think I would throw everything in there of which I think 'oh I need to clean that up, but I don't feel like walking upstairs now', or having to look for where it belongs...everything about which I think: 'Oh I need that for now' or 'I'll clean it up later.' (Wieke)</i></p> <p><i>Paperclips belong in my pen-case, that's where my paperclips belong. But then if I am standing here and I run into a paperclip and [I don't feel like going upstairs], then I put it in [the sleutelbakje]. (Ingrid)</i></p> <p><i>We find [a piece of lego] while cleaning up, and then you think, the box with legos is in the attic, and if I was really organised then I would climb up to the attic, but I'm not, so I just put it in there and then I'm rid of it, then it looks like it's cleaned up. Actually that's what it is, if I think about it. It looks as if things are cleaned up. (Ingrid)</i></p>	<p><i>En het blijft niet op een andere plek liggen waarvan je denkt daar wil ik het in ieder geval niet hebben. (Ineke)</i></p> <p><i>Ik heb dat er gewoon een keer- dan wilde ik waarschijnlijk opruimen en ik dat er in gegooid...</i></p> <p><i>...Mensen zijn ook gemakzuchtig, heb je iets in je hand en dan denk je god ik moet het even opbergen en dan gooi je toch snel weer in die doos. (Marjan)</i></p> <p><i>Ik denk dat ik daar alles in zou gooien...waarvan je denkt van oh dat moet ik straks even ergens anders opbergen maar heb ik nu even geen zin in om dat om d'r voor naar boven te lopen of te zoeken waar het hoort...</i></p> <p><i>...waarvan ik denk van 'oh dat heb ik nog even nodig' of 'dat ga ik later nog opruimen'. (Wieke)</i></p> <p><i>Als je het hebt over wat hoort...dan vind ik horen de paperclips horen in een soort van pennen zakje...um daar horen mijn paperclips in, maar dan sta ik hier en dan kom ik een paperclip tegen en dan denk ik van ja dan moet ik naar boven lopen...en dan stop ik er daar (Ingrid)</i></p> <p><i>Misschien zit daar nog een lego steentje in...en dat vinden we dan bij het opruimen, en dan denk je van ja de doos met lego staat op zolder en als ik nou heel erg georganiseerd ben dan loop ik naar zolder maar dat ben je ben ik niet, dus dan doe ik het daar in ben ik het kwijt, lijkt het alsof het opgeruimd is... eigenlijk is dat de (incomprehensible) tenminste als ik er over nadenk. het lijkt net alsof dingen dan opgeruimd zijn (Ingrid)</i></p>

Page #	Translated Quote	Original Quote
48	<i>In that way you keep running into them and then in the back of your head you know 'I will take care of it, clean them up, or perhaps use them after all'. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Die blijf je dan toch tegenkomen zodat je in je achterhoofd weet dat ga ik dan nog wel regelen of opruimen of misschien toch nog eens gebruiken. (Fabienne)</i>
	<i>Next time I go outside I will think 'oh right, I have to take that with me'. (Ineke)</i>	<i>Dat ligt op daar omdat ik uuh als ik nog ga naar de tuin in ga (incomprehensible) dan denk ik 'oh ja ik moet dat nog (incomprehensible). (Ineke)</i>
	<i>It's the things that are not important, and which suddenly get stored in [the sleutelbakje], because you don't have another place for them. (Emma)</i>	<i>Het zijn de dingen die uh die juist niet belangrijk zijn en daar dan ineens worden opgeborgen omdat je geen andere plek voor ze hebt. (Emma)</i>
49	<i>[Consumption coins] are also an example of those types of things which you don't know where to keep, so you just throw them there [in the container]. (Jozine)</i>	<i>Dat zijn ook wel van die dingen ja...ja dat is echt zo een (incomprehensible) waarvan je niet weet waar je het moet laten en dan gooi je het maar daar. (Jozine)</i>
50	<i>When we find a marble somewhere in the house...one marble...what do you with that? ...Everything that you find in the house that you have no place for, especially small [things]. (Herman)</i>	<i>Alles wat je los vind, als wij een knikker in huis vinden... maar één knikker...wat moet je daar mee?...alles wat je in huis vind waar je geen plaats voor hebt, klein, vooral klein. (Herman)</i>
	<i>That's a piece of the piano, that's why it's in here, there were more pieces of the piano but I attached those and I forgot to attach this one. (Ingrid)</i>	<i>Dat is van de piano...en daarvoor ligt dat hier, is een puntje van de piano, en ik had eigenlijk—want er waren nog meer van die stukjes—had ik ze d'r aan gezet maar deze ben ik dus vergeten. (Ingrid)</i>
	<i>The rest was kind of junk: from a single paperclip that was lying around to a swimming-subscription. Everything that was a little bit important, but had no set place in the home. (Lizette)</i>	<i>Eigenlijk de rest was een beetje rotzooi: van een losliggende paperclip tot een zwembadabonnement. Alles wat een beetje belangrijk was, maar geen vaste plek had. (Lizette)</i>
	<i>One day those items end up in there randomly and then they never leave again. (Lars)</i>	<i>Ja die komen gewoon random ooit daar terecht en die komen dan nooit meer d'r uit. (Lars)</i>
	<i>All those things irritate me, and I like it better when they are all together in one [container]. (Nanda)</i>	<i>Maar al die spulletjes irriteren me en dan vind ik het fijner als het dan in één- (Nanda)</i>
51	<i>I hope we don't have to sort it...It's hopeless to have to think of places where you could keep these items. (Herman)</i>	<i>Ik hoop niet dat we gaan sorteren...</i>
		<i>...ja weet je weet je het is ook hopeloos om dingen te bedenken waar dit in zou moeten. (Herman)</i>
	<i>He emptied the whole container into a moving box. (Jozine)</i>	<i>(Laughing) hij had 'et ouwe bakje leeggegooid in een verhuisdoos. (Jozine)</i>
	<i>Now I have to think about it...while, as long as it is in the container, I don't have to think about it. (Emma)</i>	<i>Nou moet ik daar over nadenken en dan ga ik twifelen en dan moet ik keuzes maken terwijl als het in het bakje zit hoeft ik er helemaal niet over na te denken. (Emma)</i>
52	<i>There comes a moments with I think: "and now I'm sick of it". There are so many things in there which don't belong there. (Ineke)</i>	<i>Maar d'r is een moment dat ik denk 'nu ben ik het zat' (incomprehensible) want d'r zit van alles in wat-wat moet dit nou! dus d'r zit van alles in wat d'r niet in hoort. (Ineke)</i>
	<i>Herman: That is the power of the sleutelbakje...that you don't have to think about that one piece of lego...[that you] got rid of it.</i>	<i>Herman: ...dat is de kracht van een sleutelbak, dat je niet hoeft na te denken dat ene stukje lego...ben je kwijt.</i>
	<i>Ingrid: But it is always just postponing the problem...and that really bothers me.</i>	<i>Ingrid: maaar, het is altijd uitstel van executie, en dat vind ik dus heel vervelend</i>
	<i>When someone forgets something at my place [I put it in the sleutelbakje], because then I see it daily and think 'oh right I still have to give it back when I see that person. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Als er iemand iets bij mij vergeten is...omdat ik dan denk dan zie ik het dagelijks en dan denk ik oh ja dat moet ik nog teruggeven als ik diegene zie. (Fabienne)</i>
53	<i>[I am] too lazy to take it out of the toolbox each time, it is stored away too far. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Maar ook te lui ben om elke keer 'em uit de gereedschapskist te halen want die staat dan te ver opgeborgen. (Fabienne)</i>
55	<i>This is typically something that belongs to something, that broke or came off of something. What do you do with this? This is typically something which if I was to put it somewhere else I would have no idea where else I would put it...so I threw it in that bakje. (Ineke)</i>	<i>Ja dit is nou typisch iets wat ergens van is, dat is ergens vanaf gekomen...Dit is dus echt zo iets van als ik het ergens anders leg weet ik ook niet waar ik het moet leggen, dus komt dat hier in. (Ineke)</i>
	<i>A button, you see a button, you don't know what it belongs to, and then you think 'well I'll put it in the sleutelbakje for now because later I might find the piece of clothing that it's supposed to be on'. (Wieke)</i>	<i>Een knoop, je ziet een knoop, je weet niet waar die bij hoort, en dan denk je 'nou ik leg hem maar even in het sleutelbakje want straks vind ik het kledingstuk waar die aan hoort'. (Wieke)</i>

Page #	Translated Quote	Original Quote
55	<i>I couldn't think of anything it belonged to, but I thought it must be a part of something, so I put it in the container, and figured eventually we will find out what it belongs to...because you know it has a purpose but you don't know yet what that purpose it, so you sort of wait, time will tell. (Ineke)</i>	<i>Nou verder kon ik niets bedenken, en toch dacht ik, het moet van iets zijn, nou en dan heb ik dat in dat bakje gegooid en dan denk ik, het komt vanzelf wel Me: want dan weet je dat het een nut heeft nog maar je weet nog niet wat dat nut is dus je wacht een soort van af...ja van het zal de tijd wel duren, et et moet duidelijk worden. (Ineke)</i>
57	<i>It's hoarding...I find it very hard to throw things away so I'm very glad I have that container. (Ingrid)</i>	<i>Het is hoarding...dus dingen verzamel- ik vind het moeilijk om dingen weg te gooien- dus dan ben ik heel blij dat ik dat doosje heb (Incomprehensible) dat bakje. (Ingrid)</i>
58	<i>I hate them, because I would never buy them, and what do you do with them then? We are trying to give it a function buy (laughing)... it's not working and that annoys me. (Nanda)</i>	<i>Ik haat ze omdat ik zou nooit zo iets kopen en dan wat doe je met dingen...dus we proberen hem een rol te geven maar (laughing) ...ja nee maar dat werkt echt niet dat irriteert me. (Nanda)</i>
	<i>This is ballast...look, it has lost its function. (Ineke)</i>	<i>Het moet worden opgeruimd, tis tis een ballast. (Ineke)</i>
	<i>I just wish I was more organised. It's just indecisiveness...and laziness. (Emma)</i>	<i>Ja ik weet niet ik uh wou dat ik gewoon wat georganiseerder was, het is gewoon besluiteloosheid dat je- en gemakzucht. (Emma)</i>
	<i>Why do I keep this!...I don't understand why I don't throw this away. (Marjan)</i>	<i>Maar waarom ik dat nou bewaar!...Ja nou dat ik die nou niet weggooi, dat snap ik dan niet he. (Marjan)</i>
	<i>I could throw this [pile] away immediately, but this one, I still sort of like it so I would be hesitant to throw it away. (Emma)</i>	<i>Nou dit zou ik in één keer weg kunnen gooien en deze vind ik nog een soort van leuk dus daar zou ik dan nog over twijfelen. (Emma)</i>
	<i>Items which you are not sure yet what to do with, whether you should throw them away or not. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Als je niet ehm zo goed weet wat je d'r nog mee moet, maar je wil het ook nog niet weggooien. (Fabienne)</i>
59	<i>Actually you know that you're not going to use it anymore, [but you think] maybe, maybe I will still use it for something. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Eigenlijk eigenlijk weet je al dat je d'r toch nooit meer mee doet, nee dus dan dat van misschien, misschien gebruik ik het nog wel ergens voor. (Fabienne)</i>
	<i>Loose bike-lights, that actually no longer work but that you haven't thrown away yet. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Losse fietslampjes, die het eigenlijk niet meer doen maar die je nog steeds niet weggegooid hebt. (Fabienne)</i>
	<i>[A sleutelbakje] is a collection-bakje for things that are important like keys, and small things that you don't want to loose and which temporarily find a place there, and small things that you don't want to throw away because it would be wasteful, but which you don't really have a place for because you don't really need them. (Emma)</i>	<i>Omdat het een verzamel bakje is voor dingen die belangrijk zijn zoals sleutels en kleine voorwerpen die je niet kwijt wil raken en daar dan even tijdelijk een plek vinden en kleine dingen die je niet weg wil gooien omdat het zonde is maar waar je ook niet echt een plek voor hebt omdat je ze niet echt nodig hebt. (Emma)</i>
	<i>(Laughing) But that might be silver! So it should not be thrown away. I don't throw away silver, that's absurd. (Ingrid)</i>	<i>(Laughing) Ja maar dat is misschien zilver! Mag ook niet weg. Ik gooi geen zilver weg is ook absurd. (Ingrid)</i>
	<i>Well it's still money, you're not going to throw it away, but you're not going to carry it around either. (Jilt)</i>	<i>'Tis toch geld je gaat 'et niet weggooien, maar je gaat niet bij je steken. (Jilt)</i>
	<i>In Holland you don't use two and one cent coins...you can't use them anywhere, but it is still money, you can't throw that away. (Nanda)</i>	<i>In Nederland gebruik je geen twee en één cent en volgens mij vroeger eh gaven ze nog bij postkantoor nog deze muntjes wel uit...maar nergens anders kun je ze gebruiken dan het is toch geld, dat kun je niet weggooien. (Nanda)</i>
60	<i>Because I think I'll use [the consumption coins] again and then you forget to take them with you the next time, then you keep them for four years and then you think after a while...I'll just throw them away. (Jozine)</i>	<i>Want denk ik ik gebruik hem nog wel een keer en dan vergeet je hem de volgende keer gewoon mee te nemen, dus, ja...vervolgens bewaar je ze vier jaar en dan denk je na een tijdje van nou...dan gooi je het maar weg. (Jozine)</i>
	<i>[I would put] Discount cards which you barely or don't use [in a sleutelbakje], which you have in your wallet and then think well I never use it but I'm not going to throw it away. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Umm bepaalde pasjes waar je vrij weinig of niks mee doet, jaa zo'n ding wat je dan een keer in je portomonee hebt zitten en denkt ik gebruik hem toch nooit maar ik ga hem ook niet weggooien. (Fabienne)</i>
	<i>We got this from friends as a gift, what do you do with that? I can't throw it away because it was a gift. (Nanda)</i>	<i>Dit hebben we ooit van vrienden als kado gekregen!...wat doe je daar mee?...ik kan hem niet weggooien omdat dat een kado was. (Nanda)</i>
	<i>I don't throw things away so easily I've realised... but you know, it's also my history. (Marjan)</i>	<i>Ik gooi niet zo snel dingen weg merk ik...maar het is ook mijn geschiedenis hé. (Marjan)</i>
	<i>[It is] junk you don't want to throw away, but actually should be thrown away. (Alex)</i>	<i>Troep die je wil bewaren, maar niet wil weggooien, gewoon troep die je net niet wil weggooien, maar eigenlijk wel weg kan. (Alex)</i>

Page #	Translated Quote	Original Quote
60	<i>Things you don't really use or won't do anything with, which you actually could have, or should have, thrown away, you put them in a place where you run into them so that you really don't forget to deal with them, as in 'then I will see it tomorrow, or the day after, or next week, and then I'll do something with it then, but for not I don't feel like it, [or] don't know very well what to do with it, if I should throw it away or not. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Dingen die je eigenlijk niet gebruikt of niks meer mee doet die je eigenlijk weg had kunnen of moeten gooien, die leg je dan op één plek waar je ze nog dus tegenkomt zodat je jezelf een stok achter de deur geeft van dan zie ik het, morgen of overmorgen of volgende week en dan ga ik er dan wel even war mee doen, maar daar heb ik nu even geen zin in, weet nu nog niet zo goed wat ik er mee moet of ik het weg moet gooien ja of nee. (Fabienne)</i>
62	<i>Then I walk outside and think 'oh right I shouldn't forget to take that with me'...it is a sort of trigger in case I forget something when I leave, or when I come home and think 'oh I immediately need to write that down or remember it'. (Dyonne)</i>	<i>Dat ik naar buiten loop dat ik inderdaad nog denk van 'oh nou moet ik niet vergeten dat nog mee te nemen' of .. het roept een ja het is een soort trigger voor um mocht ik iets vergeten als ik de deur uit ga, of als ik binnenkom dat ik direct denk van oh dat moet ik nu direct effe opschrijven of aan denken. (Dyonne)</i>
	<i>You need to do something with those when you leave the house, so it is logical that you put them here. (Ingrid)</i>	<i>Die moet je iets mee doen als je de deur uit gaat, dus dat is ook wel logisch dat je ze hier bij legt. (Ingrid)</i>
	<i>Ingrid: Well this is in here because of procrastination...I have to take this back to the pharmacy.</i>	<i>Ingrid: nou deze hier vanwege- da's uitstel-gedrag hé want dat is eigenlijk ook allemaal...hiermee moet ik naar de apotheek, want die moet ik gewoon weg- ja want die moet ik wegbrengen, dit moet weg, dit moet weg gewoon [participant sounds determined, edging on irritated].</i>
	<i>Herman: Well that's because that container used to be kept by the front door, on your way out...and it retained that function...you need a place to keep things that have to go outside.</i>	<i>Herman: nou dat komt die bak stond vroeger bij de deur en op de plaats waar (incomprehensible) op weg naar buiten... en die functie die heeft 'ie —</i>
		<i>Ingrid: [interrupts] ja, moet echt weg, naar de apotheek</i>
		<i>Herman: —die heeft 'ie behouden, je moet ergens dingen die weg moeten.</i>
	<i>[I keep items in the sleutelbakje which] I usually have in my bag. (Emma)</i>	<i>De dingen die ik normaal gesproken in me tas heb zitten. (Emma)</i>
	<i>All the things I need when I go from being dressed to leaving the house. Everything that needs to go into the pockets of my pants or jacket. (Marc)</i>	<i>Nou dat zijn eigenlijk alle dingen die ik nodig heb als ik zeg maar van aangekleed naar buitenga...dus dat zijn dan ja dan bedoel ik niet kleren ofzo maar alle dingen die in me broekzak of in me jaszak moeten. (Marc)</i>
	<i>[My] bike-key is in a bakje where I keep all the junk from my bags. I put everything that comes out of my bag in that bakje and subsequently use it to fill up another bag. (Pienternella, 2013, own translation).</i>	<i>Fietssleutel ligt in een bakje waar ik al mijn troep uit mijn tassen bewaar. Alles wat uit mijn tas komt stop ik in dat bakje om vervolgens weer een andere tas mee te vullen. (Pienternella, 2013)</i>
63	<i>[I keep my keys in] a basket on a cabinet which is in the hallway, but my work keys, name badge, garbage card, and bike-bel are also in there. (chantalhuissen, 2013, own translation)</i>	<i>In een mandje op de kast die in de gang staat, maar daar liggen ook me werk sleutels in, naam badge, pasje van container en een fiets bel. (chantalhuissen, 2013)</i>
	<i>We have a table in the hallway with a bowl on it, on which we always throw mail, keys, en other junk ;-) that way it is always within reach when I leave the house. (elastiekje__, 2013, own translation)</i>	<i>Wij hebben een tafel in de hal staan met een schaal waar we altijd post, sleutels en overige troep opgooien ;-) ligt het altijd binnen handbereik als ik de deur uit moet. (elastiekje__, 2013)</i>
64	<i>Everything you can conjure out of your pockets. (Marc)</i>	<i>Ik denk eigenlijk alles wat je nog verder uit je broekzakken tovert. (Marc)</i>
	<i>Everything that is in my pockets at the wrong moment. (Louis)</i>	<i>Alles wat ik uit m'n zak- of wat ik in me zak zou hebben zitten op het verkeerde moment. (Louis)</i>
	<i>The mailman sometimes drops those nice elastic bands...those also go in [a sleutelbakje]. Where else would you put those? They are related to the front door. (Herman)</i>	<i>De postbode laat ook wel eens van die mooie elastieken vallen hé, en die gaan ook daar in...dat is waar moet je die anders dat hoort bij de voordeur (Herman)</i>
	<i>Sometimes I have a stone in my pocket, or something else I found, and I don't want it in my pocket anymore, and I have to put it somewhere, I can throw it away but I don't want to throw it away so I put it in the container. Then I think 'I'll see what I'll do with it later'. (Ingrid)</i>	<i>Nou ja en soms dan heb ik dan bijvoorbeeld uh een steen in me zak of zoiets anders dat ik gevonden heb, en ik wil die niet meer in me zak dan moet die ergens naar toe dan kan je hem weggooien— en dan wil ik hem niet weg gooien zo en dan kan die bijvoorbeeld in die bak, want dan denk ik, ik zie wel wanneer ik daar wat mee doe. (Ingrid)</i>
	<i>One of those clips with which you can let your plant grow up [a rod]...which you put in your pocket by mistake while working in the garden and then you still have one in your pocket and your throw it in there. (Marjo)</i>	<i>Zo een clipje waar je je plant mee uh langs een uh dat zou ook wel (incomprehensible) waar je dan in je zak per ongeluk met het tuin werken en dan heb je er nog eentje in je zak en die gooi je dan daar in. (Marjo)</i>

Page #	Translated Quote	Original Quote
66	<i>I have a lot of bakjes, I like organising things...I like order and I think it is very annoying when things are in the wrong place. (Nanda)</i>	<i>Ik heb veel van bakjes, ik hou van or- van dingen ordenen. (Nanda)</i>
	<i>I am very chaotic with my things, everything just goes everywhere, I would really like it if— it would be very good for me to keep it all in one place, but in my case, it just goes through the entire house, and in different bags. (Maaïke)</i>	<i>Ik ben heel chaotisch met spullen, dus alles ligt overal en ik zou heel graag- eigenlijk zou het voor mij heel goed zijn om het op één plek te hebben maar bij mij gaat alles door het hele huis en in verschillende tassen. (Maaïke)</i>
	<i>I like it when things are just where you expect them, you shouldn't just throw anything in [a sleutelbakje]. (Anette)</i>	<i>Ik hou d'r van dat het een beetje gewoon...de dingen liggen daar waar je ze ook verwacht...daar moet niet alles in geknikkerd worden. (Anette)</i>
	<i>[You'll record this] and ridicule us in front the rest of Holland! (Herman)</i>	<i>Dit ga je later filmen..., en voor de rest van Nederland worden wij belachelijk gemaakt (laughing)! (Herman)</i>
	<i>But I can show you my bakjes for screws, they are all very organised and neat, everything is very ordered, a screw is mid, long, black, small, everything, the tape...this is neat...so we're not that bad. (Nanda)</i>	<i>Maar ik kan je wel heel snel al die schroef bakjes laten zien (incomprehensible) hier zijn. Is echt allemaal netjes...alles is echt hier in orde...en een schroef is mid, long, en zwart, en klein, en echt van alles, de tape...dit is wel netjes...dus eh heel erg zijn we niet (laughing). (Nanda)</i>
67	<i>Small things which you just dumped out of your bag but haven't cleaned up yet, [like] nail polish. (Fabienne)</i>	<i>Kleine dingetjes die je zeg maar net uit je tas hebt gedonderd maar niet meer opgeruimd hebt, nagellak... (Fabienne)</i>
	<i>You know what I find the worst, sometimes I have a paperclip on my desk and then I put it on my lamp because I have a plateau under it, that annoys me so much, then I throw it away, it bothers me! Then I have to go looking for where I keep my paperclips, and it's not always within reach, and then I think 'oh god a loose paperclip on my desk'...then it's there for a week, in that one spot, and I see it every day... they are annoying things. (Herman)</i>	<i>Nou weet je wat ik het aller ergste vind, zal ik je dat maar vertellen, dan heb ik soms een paperclip, op mijn bureau, en dan leg ik hem even op mijn lamp want daar zit onder een plaatje...dat vind ik zo erg (laughing) (incomprehensible) ik ik dan gooi ik hem vaak weg in de prullen bak...dat hindert me! Dan moet ik gaan zoeken waar ik de paperclips ook alweer op moet bergen...maar dat staat niet altijd binnen hand bereik en dan denk ik oh god...zo zo een losse paperclip op mijn bureau dat vind ik...(incomprehensible) dan ligt die daar een week, op die ene plek. Dan zie ik hem elke dag...eigenlijk zijn het vervelende dingen. (Herman)</i>
	<i>That is the power of sleutelbakjes, that it is a place where you can put things away, things I call 'orphans' like a single item lying on your desk, you don't do anything with [one paperclip]! What am I supposed to do with that? Then I sit there and think about it, [I could] throw it away, then at least I don't have to think about it anymore. That's the power of a sleutelbakje, that you don't have to think about that one piece of lego...All kinds of orphans, of which you only have one. (Herman)</i>	<i>Herman: Dat is de kracht van de sleutelbak dacht ik, dat je- Ingrid: [interrupts] ja ja ja, zie je Herman heeft er de hele tijd over nagedacht! Herman: nee ik ben heel erg geïntregeerd door dat dat jij daar mee bezig was, want de kracht is dat dat de plek is waar je dingen kwijt kan...en zo één zo één, dat noem ik dan maar weeskinderen, die op je bureau ligt...daar doe je niks mee! Één paperclip, ik denk wat moet ik daar mee, (incomprehensible) ga je daar over zitten tobben, gooi ik hem maar weg dan ben je van dat getob af...dat is de kracht van een sleutelbak, dat je niet hoeft na te denken dat ene stukje lego... Herman: ...allerlei soorten weeskinderen waar je één ding van vind.</i>
68	<i>What on earth do you do with that, it is so random, it can go back to [the drawer]. (Jilt)</i>	<i>Wat moet je daar in godsnaam mee, dit is zo random die mag wel weer op z'n plek. (Jilt)</i>
	<i>There is absolutely zero connection between these items. That is why they all go in one big drawer. (Arie)</i>	<i>Nou daarom belandt het allemaal in één grote la ...Is echt nul samenhang tussen die vijf dingen.</i>
69	<i>It's not allowed to have a name, it doesn't have a name and I don't want to give it a name, it needs to be cleaned up, because I don't want it to exist. It is a temporary solution. (Emma)</i>	<i>Die mag geen naam hebben, die heeft geen naam maar die wil ik ook niet benoemen, want die moet worden opgeruimd...omdat ik hem moet opruimen omdat die helemaal niet wil ik wil helemaal niet dat dat bestaat, ik wil gewoon, ik wil gewoon, hij moet gewoon, het is tijdelijke oplossing. (Emma)</i>
70	<i>These are actually items which don't belong in the drawer... but they don't have to leave either. (Jilt)</i>	<i>Ja dit zijn eigenlijk dingen die niet in dat laatje thuis horen... maar ook niet weg hoeven. (Jilt)</i>

Appendix C: Examples of Memos

Example of a methodological memo

MM

The surveys were meant to provide basic data about containers/their existence/types, etc. This data is not very insightful other than the types though. This is why I used a separate tab in coding them, so all the raw data about containers doesn't clutter my more analytic approach to coding which I use for the interviews. However, occasionally things come up in the survey which are definitely worth coding more analytically. I added these to the 'interview' coding tab when they came up. I also added a coding tab for the free lists from interviews, as well as a coding tab for item lists, as I feel the contents *can* add interesting analytical insights, albeit later in the process. In the case of coding (rather than data collection+analysis), I combined the observed and reported item lists, as I feel in this case they do not make much difference, any additional data is welcome, and missing data is not problematic.

Example of a case-based memos

CBM DO (Interview)

Sampling: DO is an old classmate of mine. I had discussed my research with him briefly before, but this was quite some time ago, before I began my first interviews. I do not think this influenced the data (he also did not have a sleutelbakje, but he had a junk drawer).

Interview: The interview took place at his house and lasted approximately two hours. It was just us two, and there were no interruptions. Participant seemed to feel at ease - nothing abnormal/notable. DO mentioned a definition of "rommel". Decided it would be good to add a sort of 'theme' called "definitions" just to keep track of any definitions coming from the participants.

DO also specifically mentioned searching, the act of searching for something, which could be related to the reasoning why something is or isn't kept in the key container. I decided, just in order to keep track of them, to add the theme "zoek".

Occasionally I came across quotes which I felt could in some way be significant, but which I couldn't place in my current themes. I decided to mark these with a star * to at least note/save them, and when I go over my transcripts again maybe I can place them later.

DO: handige rommel #00:04:54-1#

Me: handige rommel. waarom is et handige rommel? #00:04:58-2#

DO: ja omdat het handige dingen zijn, maar ik gebruik ze nooit #00:05:02-1#

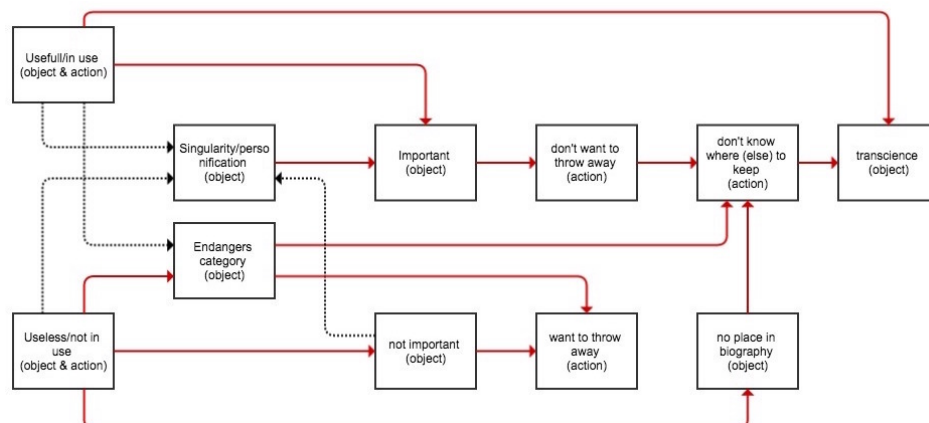
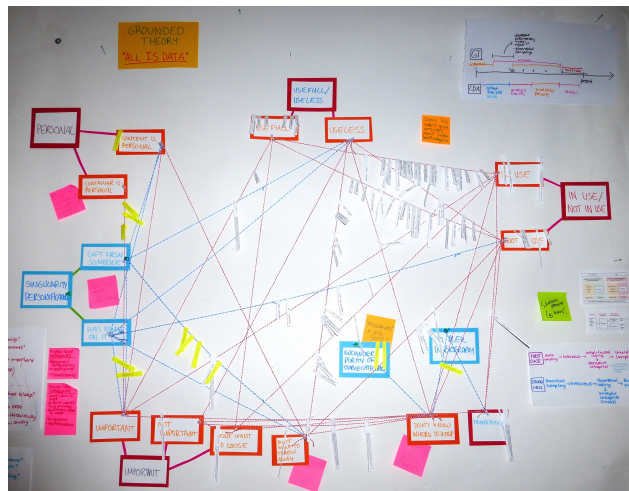
DO: omdat me sleutel altijd in me pennenbakje zit .. dus dat is de eerste plek waar ik ga zoeken #00:11:42-9#

Examples of different types of conceptual memos






CM






Most likely whether the bakje is shared or not influences the contents, as well as whether participants intend to use it as a more public or more private container (this participant called it "persoonlijk", in a more reflective sense then intentional so I left this one unsure). This participant said the shared items were "intertwined", nobody knew exactly what belongs to who.






Is this as a result of ending up in the container, or maybe the reason things ended up in the container? If something is shared, and one of the two puts it away in a certain place, then one can't find it. Could things be put in there precisely because they are shared, and it is a dual-access container?









Appendix D: Containers Analysed

#	Photograph of Container	Description of Container	Classification
1		<p>Name container: <i>Sleutelbakje</i></p> <p>Participant: Emma</p> <p>Description: This sleutelbakje was located on a cabinet in the dining room, which was the nearest surface to the front door of the home. It was intended to be used for items related to leaving the home, and was used for keys the participant used on a daily basis. It had recently been bought because the participant's original sleutelbakje (container #2) had overflowed with items that did not belong inside. As such, the participant bought this new container. She transferred the important items from the old to the new sleutelbakje, and stored away the old one (with the intention to clean it up later).</p>	Sleutelbakje
2		<p>Name: <i>(Old) Sleutelbakje</i></p> <p>Participant: Emma</p> <p>Description: This sleutelbakje belongs to the same participant as sleutelbakje #1. It was her old sleutelbakje, before she bought a new one. It now only contained the items that did not really belong in the sleutelbakje, and had caused it to overflow (the important items were put in the new sleutelbakje). As such, it only contained two unknown keys. This sleutelbakje was stored away in a junk box (see container #14).</p>	Sleutelbakje
3		<p>Name: <i>Sleutelbakje bij de deur</i> [Sleutelbakje by the door]</p> <p>Participant: Nanda</p> <p>Description: This small sleutelbakje was located right by the front door, and mostly contained bike keys. Although it contained few other items, the surface surrounding the sleutelbakje (on a cabinet) was used to store many items similar to those kept in sleutelbakjes. The participant explained that she did not want a bigger sleutelbakje, because she was afraid those items would end up in the sleutelbakje, and she would be unable to find her keys. As such, those items were also included in my analysis of the items in sleutelbakjes.</p>	Sleutelbakje
4		<p>Name: <i>'t Bakje bij de deur</i> [The bakje by the door]</p> <p>Participant: Ineke</p> <p>Description: This sleutelbakje was located next to the front door. Interestingly, it did not contain any keys — the (bike) keys hung on hooks directly above the bakje, so as not to get lost in the bakje. The items in the sleutelbakje were all typical items found in other sleutelbakjes, particularly by the front door. It contained mostly items related to keys (like key-chains), items (such as unknown components) found outside, and bike-related paraphernalia.</p>	Sleutelbakje
5		<p>Name: <i>Sleutelmandje</i> [Key-basket]</p> <p>Participant: Herman & Ingrid</p> <p>Description: This sleutelbakje (or basket) was kept in the kitchen, on the counter. It contained the participants' car keys as well as spare keys. Furthermore, it contained many unknown components and items that were related to leaving the house/outside. This was because the participants had recently moved, and before moving the basket was situated by the front door (like their other container, #6). Since moving it was kept in the kitchen, but retained its function as a bakje related to the front door.</p>	<p>Sleutelbakje</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p>

#	Photograph of Container	Description of Container	Classification
6		<p>Name: <i>Het kistje (met sleutels)</i> [The box (with keys)]</p> <p>Participant: Herman & Ingrid</p> <p>Description: This sleutelbakje was located by the front door, in an entrance room. The 'bottom half' of the container, so to speak, only contained old and unknown keys, which were rarely touched or sorted. The 'top half' of the sleutelbakje, on the other hand, was actively used: it contained keys belonging to other people (children, friends), as well as items related to leaving the house (such as bike-lights). Note, however, the small die in the top-right corner: a typically anomalous or singular item, also found in other containers.</p>	<p>Sleutelbakje</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p> <p>Bakje for old/unknown keys</p>
7		<p>Name: <i>Sleutelbakje</i></p> <p>Participant: Marjolein</p> <p>Description: This sleutelbakje was kept by the front door, and can be seen as both a sleutelbakje, and a bakje for spare keys. On the one hand it contained keys used frequently, such as those for the mailbox, and also items related to leaving, such as bike-lights. On the other hand, it contained important spare keys, and keys belonging to other people, and as such, it was stored inside a drawer (in the hallway), and the participant described its contents as 'personal' and 'private'.</p>	<p>Sleutelbakje</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p>
8		<p>Name: <i>Key bakje in de studio / reserve sleutelbakje</i> [key-bakje in the studio / spare sleutelbakje]</p> <p>Participant: Nanda</p> <p>Description: This bakje was used to store spare keys and other important keys, such as friends' keys or the neighbours' keys. It was neatly stored away on a shelf in the studio/living room, and had a lid to cover it. It contained few items other than keys: three coins, a lock, and two small pieces of paper considered memorabilia.</p>	<p>Bakje for spare keys</p>
9		<p>Name: <i>Sleutelwekpot</i> [key-jar]</p> <p>Participant: Lisa</p> <p>Description: This jar was used to store spare keys and keys belonging to other people, but also a number of old keys. It also contained a few key- and door-related items. The participant kept this container stored away inside a closet. As is typical for containers with important keys, it also had a lid.</p>	<p>Bakje for spare keys</p> <p>Bakje for old/unknown keys</p>
10		<p>Name: —</p> <p>Participant: Ineke</p> <p>Description: The participant had inherited this bakje and its keys from her mother, and as such she did not know what they belonged to. The container was stored away in the shed: because it was never used it did not need to be at hand and, in this way, it did not clutter the home.</p>	<p>Bakje for old/unknown keys</p>

#	Photograph of Container	Description of Container	Classification
11		<p>Name: —</p> <p>Participant: Ineke</p> <p>Description: This participant had inherited this container from her father-in-law. Similar to the one inherited from her mother (container #10), she did not know what any of the keys belonged to. It was also stored in the shed, as it was never used.</p>	Bakje for old/ unknown keys
12		<p>Name: <i>In de Chinese kast</i> [In the Chinese-closet]</p> <p>Participant: Pim</p> <p>Description: This container is technically not a bakje, but a drawer — one of many in an apothecary cabinet. It was located in the hallway near the front door. The drawer contained old and unknown keys (and if you look closely, a screw and a paperclip as well). The remainder of the cabinet was mostly used to store “toys, elements, components, small things, junk, small boxes, [and] electronics” (Pim).</p>	Bakje for old/ unknown keys
13		<p>Name: <i>Crap/Battery Drawer Living Room</i></p> <p>Participant: Nanda</p> <p>Description: This drawer was not frequently accessed. Inside the drawer there were two small bakjes which contained items typically found in sleutelbakjes as well: paperclips, coins, elastic bands, screws, and components. It also contained small locks and unknown keys.</p>	Junk Drawer
14		<p>Name: —</p> <p>Participant: Emma</p> <p>Description: This container is technically a junk box, rather than a drawer. It contained items that had been kept in the participants sleutelbakje, but were removed again because they were too big. They were moved to the junk box, with the intention to clean them up later. This junk box also contained the participants old sleutelbakje, which had been stored in the box for the same reasons (see container #2). Unlike other junk drawers, the participant did not accept it, and intended to clean it up soon. Therefore, the container was not <i>allowed</i> to have a name — she was afraid that, by naming it, she was acknowledging its existence, and she would be less likely to clean it up soon.</p>	Junk Drawer
15		<p>Name: <i>De Bureau</i> [The desk-drawer]</p> <p>Participant: Arie</p> <p>Description: This junk drawer was situated in the participant's living room, inside his desk. As such, it was both at hand, but also hidden. The participant described the hidden and private nature of the junk drawer as clearly setting it apart from a sleutelbakje: he kept things in the drawer which he would not keep in a sleutelbakje for all to see. It also contained spare keys, and keys belonging to friends and family.</p>	Junk Drawer

#	Photograph of Container	Description of Container	Classification
16		<p>Name: <i>In de blauwe kast</i> [In the blue closet]</p> <p>Participant: Maaïke</p> <p>Description: This drawer, located in the living room, was used to store spare keys and the participant's work keys, alongside many other items. It also contained bike-lights.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p>
17		<p>Name: <i>Bovenste la van het houten kastje</i> [The top drawer of the wooden cabinet]</p> <p>Participant: Marjan</p> <p>Description: Initially the participant said that this container was not a junk drawer: it contained too many important items to be a junk drawer. Later during the interview, however, she encountered many items inside which did not belong there. She then explained that she puts unimportant items (junk) in the drawer to 'mask' the importance of the other items. Inside the drawer she had a small bag which contained important keys belonging to other people, and a small bakje with her own spare keys.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p>
18		<p>Name: <i>De linker la</i> [The left drawer]</p> <p>Participant: Julius</p> <p>Description: This drawer, inside a cabinet in the living room, contained spare keys and keys belonging to friends. Furthermore, it contained many items related to leaving the house, or use outside.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p>
19		<p>Name: <i>Het (mega)glas</i> [The (mega)glass]</p> <p>Participant: Alex</p> <p>Description: This container was a giant beer-glass, situated on the participants desk, near the front door of his studio. It contained a spare key to a lock, and the participant always put his house keys inside when coming home. It contained items the participant actively used, many of which are typically found in sleutelbakjes: (consumption) coins, paperclips, lighters, pens, a die, and some items related to leaving the house. However, because of the large amount of items inside, the container is also similar to a junk drawer, and the participant explicitly said he did not feel it was a sleutelbakje because of the large amount of junk inside, and the fact that many items were not important. (Important items were removed from this container, and put in his other container, #23).</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p> <p>(Sleutelbakje)</p>
20		<p>Name: <i>Het wisselgeldbakje</i> [The small change/coins bakje]</p> <p>Participant: Jorick</p> <p>Description: This container had characteristics of each type of container I identified in my classifications. It was located near the front door, and the participant described actively using the container. Nonetheless, it was also full of many(!) items the participant barely used, making its contents more similar to junk drawers, than other sleutelbakjes.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p> <p>Sleutelbakje</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p> <p>Bakje for old/ unknown keys</p>

#	Photograph of Container	Description of Container	Classification
21		<p>Name: <i>Het rommelbakje</i> [The 'junk' bakje]</p> <p>Participant: Maaïke</p> <p>Description: This bakje was kept on a shelf in the kitchen. It contained the keys to the attic. The participant described keeping the keys there (in a more accessible place than her other container, #16) because her partner also used those keys. The bakje was described as a 'junk bakje', very similar to her junk drawer, only more accessible. Perhaps as a result of this accessibility, it was also similar to a sleutelbakje: it also contained oil for her bike, a screwdriver, coins, pens, hair-clips, lighters, and a screw.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p> <p>Sleutelbakje</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p>
22	X	<p>Name: <i>De zwarte ladekast</i> [The black cabinet]</p> <p>Participant: Daan</p> <p>Description: This drawer contained old and unknown keys. The participant did not explicitly consider it <i>the</i> place to keep keys, but knew that a number of them could be found inside. However, he stated that the same likely applied to other drawers. It contained mostly stationary items, tools, and memorabilia, but also coins, elastic bands, batteries, buttons, key-rings, and discount cards.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p>
23	X	<p>Name: <i>Rommelbakje</i> ['Junk' bakje]</p> <p>Participant: Alex</p> <p>Description: This container was stored away inside a closet, slightly hidden. It contained items and keys the participant did not frequently use: both important ones, but also old and unknown keys. Yet, despite calling it a 'junk bakje', the participant felt it was an important container, and the items inside were characterised as items he does not want to lose.</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p> <p>Bakje for spare keys</p> <p>Bakje for old/unknown keys</p>
24	X	<p>Name: <i>Het laatje met kattenspullen</i> [The drawer with cat-items]</p> <p>Participant: Jilt</p> <p>Description: This drawer contained mostly unknown and old keys, and a few spare keys. Besides items related to the cat, it also contained memorabilia, tools, (unknown) components, screws, receipts, and bike-lights (and a die).</p>	<p>Junk Drawer</p>

Appendix E: Results Free Lists

Results Free Lists

