Interreg
Baltic Sea Region

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CIRCULAR ECONOMY
Creative Circular
Cities

Bulky waste management

Qualitative study – summary

I 2024

INTRODUCTION



Methods

The objective

The main objective of the study was to learn about the residents' strategies for disposing of bulky waste, including to identify challenges they face in that respect.

The other aim was to look at the points of view of institutions and companies that have experience of working with bulky second-hand objects and/or the furniture/interior design industry. In particular, we aimed to identify the boundary conditions (benefits) necessary for their willingness to engage in activities and the perceived barriers.

14

Number of residents participating in the study

Methods

The study was performed using qualitative methods:

- research workshops
- individual in-depth interviews
- netnography

The methods used do not mandate generalised conclusions. The conclusions presented should be seen as an inspiration for further project activities.

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Number of company/institution representatives participating in the study

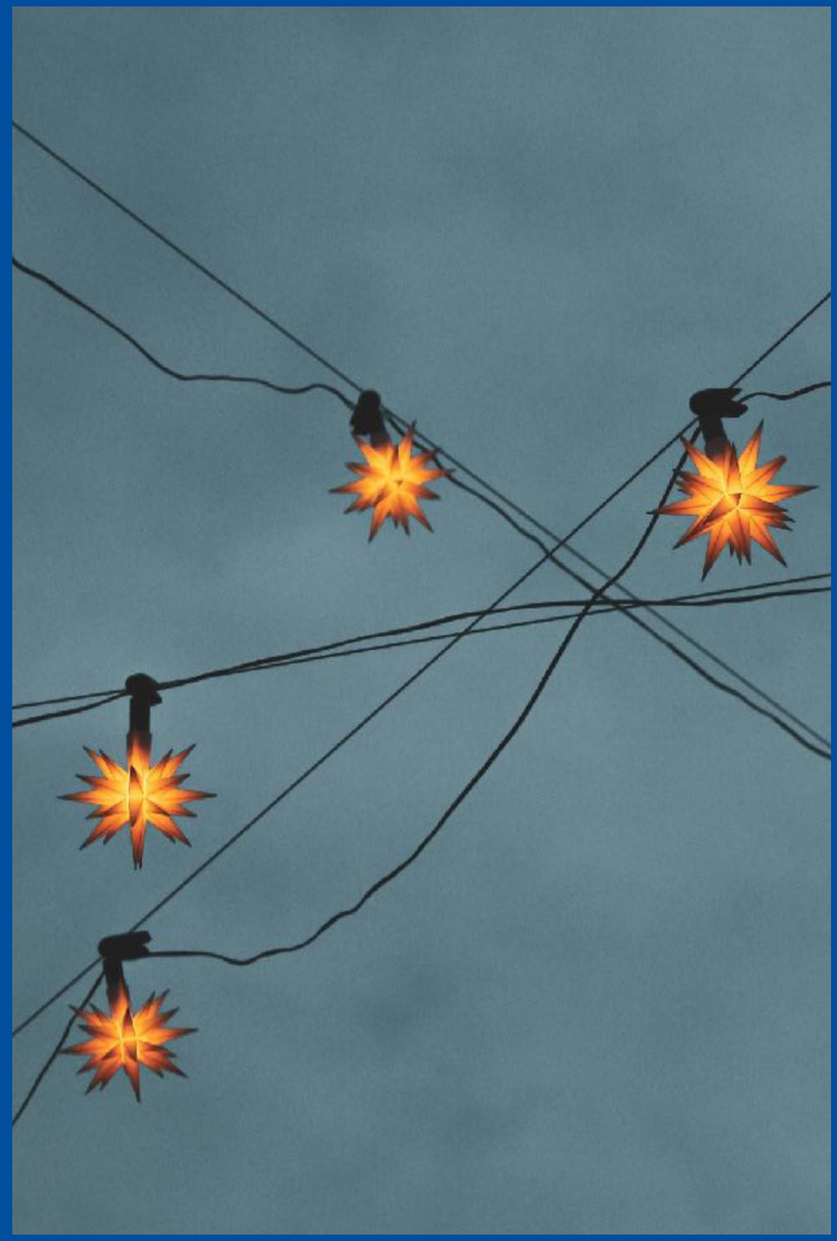
Respondents

The study helped identify several key characteristics that defined recipient attitudes and behaviour.

They treat second-hand sources as an opportunity to buy unique objects at a good price	**Design**	**Function**	Those looking for items that they currently need and that will perform their functions well.
They are mainly motivated to act (donate/acquire) by issues related to responsible resource use.	**Environmentalism**	**Economics**	They are motivated to act by financial issues: the desire to earn, save, etc.
Not looking for anything specific, but buying/taking items they like or that can be useful.	**Opportunity seizers**	**Seekers**	Those actively seeking specific items.
Deciding to buy/pick something up only when it is like new.	**Like new**	**To be repaired**	Ready to repair the item themselves or have it repaired.
Treating time as a key resource, looking for solutions that help save time and/or are not time-intensive.	**Time**	**Responsibility**	Guided by the need to be environmentally responsible in their actions, even when it requires more involvement on their end.

NOTE: The pairs or features are contradictory, but not value-laden.

KEY CONCLUSIONS



Key conclusions

2xEco

Ecological and economic issues are the main motivations for sensibly disposing of bulky items and acquiring them from second-hand sources. Although often complementary, not only do these motivations not always go hand in hand, but they often involve other sets of needs.

People motivated by concern for the environment often underlined the unique nature of objects, and sometimes also their willingness to pay more for a used item made of good materials than for a new one with a similar function. They were also prepared to invest effort and additional resources into renovation.

At the same time, those motivated by financial issues placed more emphasis on the availability of items and their condition, which should be good enough not to require any additional action.

The fight for use value

The motivation to donate bulky items rather than write them off often stems from the will to maintain their use value.

The chances of selling an item diminish even at the first scratch. However, use value is attributed almost until the very last moment. It is not even affected by serious flaws in the objects' appearance.

The dominant motivation for this approach is the "aversion to loss/waste." Waste reduction or care for the environment play a secondary role.

Key conclusions

Disposal is not a problem

In terms of actions to be taken when it comes to disposing of unwanted bulky items, apart from the need to pick them up (most people can count on the support of relatives or neighbours), there are not many problems. Reporting bulky waste as such was not regarded as problematic.

On the other hand, it is a challenge to dispose of the items wisely. It does, after all, involve dedication and time. Items that are particularly problematic are those no longer suitable for sale, but not yet damaged enough to be thrown away without feeling wasteful.

Respondents expected that a system supporting bulky waste disposal will enable actions tailored to the condition of the items.

The burden of logistics

The greatest challenge in terms of bulky waste disposal is logistics. The onus is generally on those interested in the item, whether they buy it or receive it for free.

In general, companies specialising in this type of activity are not involved in the pick-up and transport process. Their participation would make the action no longer viable.

Key conclusions

The race for time and against time

The price one must pay for wanting to furnish a home with second-hand items and cleverly disposing of bulky items is time. The type of actions that are – or are not – taken actually depends on the approach to time.

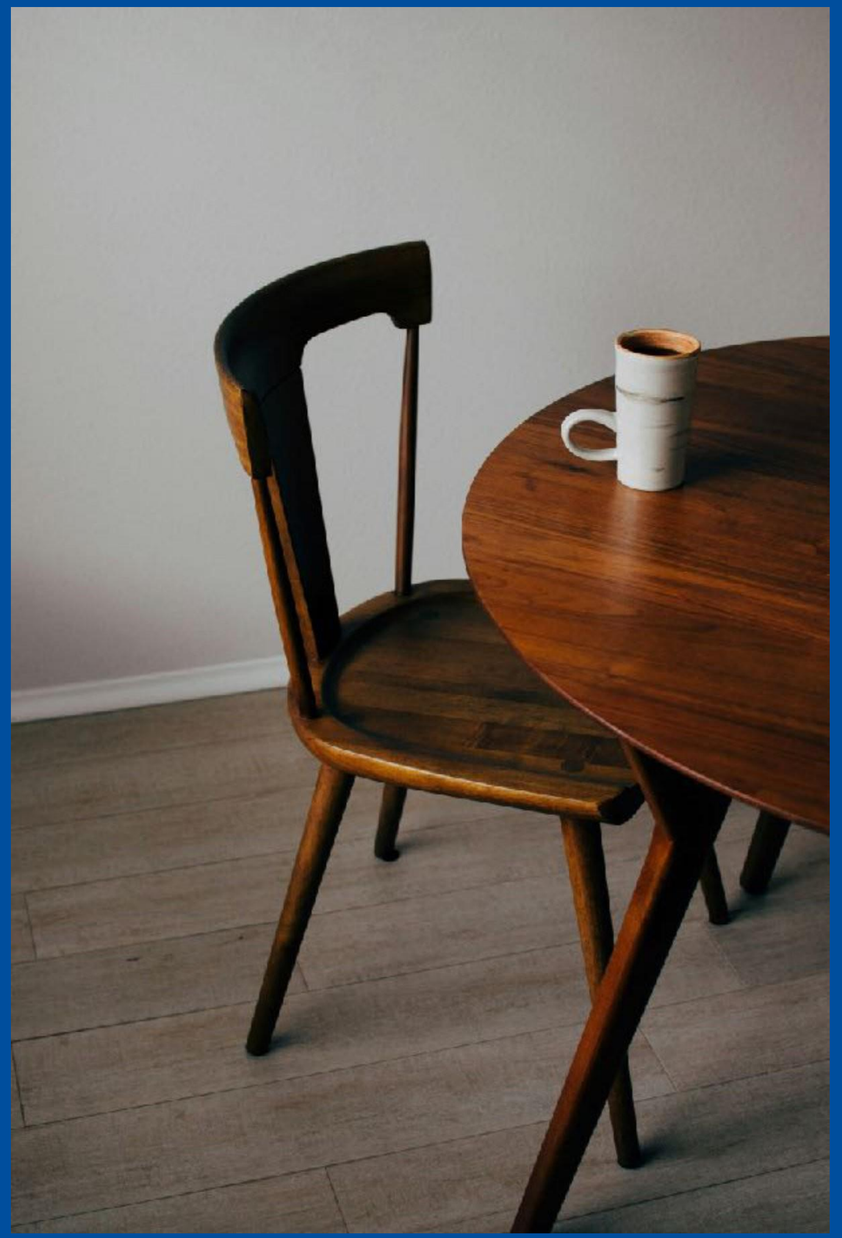
Time appears in various contexts. From whether we have enough time to place an ad on a website to how long we can wait for a response, how much time it takes to talk to potentially interested parties, how much time we can spend looking for the item we need, and whether we are prepared to act here and now to rescue a piece of furniture from the bin store.

From sales to bin stores

As a rule, bulky waste disposal is a three-stage process. Its course is at least equally affected by the given object’s material value as by whether we have somewhere to store it.

If the object allows it, the process starts with an attempt to sell it. Then, when time starts running out, it enters the phase of being given away for free. Placing it outside a bin store is considered a last resort. It becomes the first step only if the object no longer fulfils even its basic functional characteristics.

THE APPROACH TO HOME FURNISHING



Fine furniture

In theory, furniture should be bought to last. In practice, the choice is determined by budget and convenience.

Respondents agreed that furniture qualifies as something that is bought to last.

At the same time, they repeatedly opted for “as-good-as-it-gets solutions”, which were a compromise between quality (generally, the material from which the piece of furniture is made), design and price. As a rule, furniture from chain shops was perceived as being of inferior, but often sufficient quality “right here, right now”. However, such furniture was considered temporary from the start.

Quality furniture is something whose time will come one day. “One day”, i.e. when the respondents start earning more and/or when they move into their final home. Even if they already opt for quality solutions, it is only regarding selected furniture that they can possibly take with them.

One of the situations in which people decided to buy second-hand was that they did not accept the quality of chain store furniture, and at the same time, they did not have enough money for new furniture of a higher quality.

> *For me, furniture is definitely something that’s meant to last, which is why every time we talk about doing it on a budget, I get a bit nervous, because I know that these budget items, the cheapest ones, they won’t last very long, and I generally like to have things that will last me a long time*

> *However, what is very important to me is that buying new furniture now means buying something that is of very low quality in terms of the kind of budget that I’m interested in*

> *I think I prefer to take something used of better quality and usually, if something has lasted long enough for someone to pass it on, it’s really nice wooden furniture, of better quality than what you can buy now in such a cheaper shop*

Fine furniture

For me, furniture used to be something much finer: real natural wood, heavy, precious, something that will stay with us for a long time, not the type of cardboard stuff they make nowadays.

Well, within our budget, these tend to be very low-quality products and it annoys me terribly too, we bought a chest of drawers for the little one for a small amount just so that the dimensions would fit and so on, but it still annoys me

What's available is cheap, perishable, we move quickly, often, it's supposed to be light, for two years, [then] throw it away, buy something else, something new in another city, something else changes and [with] such changes

This is furniture that most people can afford, so they can afford it too when the furniture breaks down or goes out of fashion, they can make their interior fashionable again for the next two to five years.

THE APPROACH TO HOME FURNISHING

The middle way

When it comes to new and old furniture, there is no need for “either” – “and” works better.

The respondents’ interiors were often filled with objects that were of various origin: from previous dwellings, purchased in popular shops, received from friends, found on platforms, etc.

The decision on how to furnish the flat was taken not on a general level, but separately for each piece of furniture.

> *We now have a mix of new and old furniture. We have some old furniture, because we like old furniture and we either got it from the family or we would look for it on some platform, and it's wooden furniture. We have some armchairs that someone left in the flat we moved into [...] of course, we also have furniture from [a chain shop]: we have wardrobes, a bed, children’s furniture.*

The price for convenience and time

Buying new low- or mid-range furniture means paying for convenience and time, not quality.

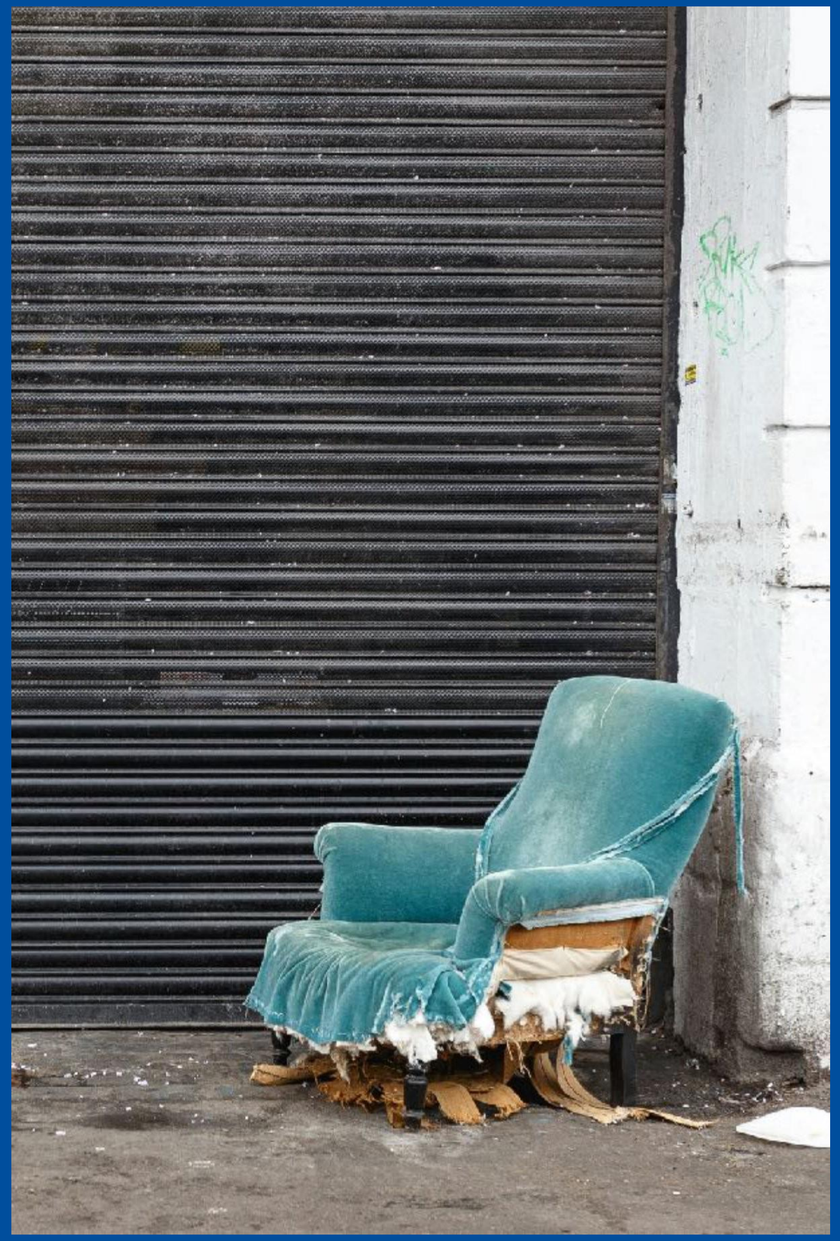
Respondents who decided to buy new furniture from the low to mid-range were aware that these were not items that would be passed down from generation to generation.

Buying in a shop is all about seeking convenience and saving time. The quality is supposed to be sufficient for the here and now + a few years.

> *A lot of people around me even, although these tend to be rather conscious people, don't want to mess around looking for second-hand furniture. They go to a shop and buy it there because it's easier, simpler.*

> *I mainly buy furniture from chain shop X. What do I like? The price, because they are cheaper than furniture from other chains, and transport, because I don't have to order a transport company to ship it.*

THE CURRENT SITUATION



The current situation



The current situation







The current situation







The current situation



562 points



THE CURRENT SITUATION

The current situation





The current situation







No-man’s rubbish

The current situation regarding bulky waste is very difficult in Gdynia. No one feels responsible

The solution in place in Gdynia, based on the residents’ proactivity, i.e. the need to report items, is assessed as not working well.

Many residents still assume that waste is simply collected regularly without any action from their end. Others do not know how to report the need for item collection. Others still simply do not see a problem in the lack of reporting. Some are concerned about the lack of anonymity and fear they will be charged extra if they provide their details. In each case, the result is the same: bulky waste lying around bin stores, sometimes for weeks at a time.

Respondents pointed out that it is difficult to require the commitment of having to collect bulky waste when residents do not follow segregation rules even for everyday household waste.

> *I live in [...] and here, it is an older type block of flats, there are a lot of renovations in the area.*
> *People throw these things away and don't even arrange them, it doesn't look nice, these are dangerous things, I have three small children, but when I go to the nursery or kindergarten, I have to point out to them that they shouldn’t run around there.*

> *It only disappears after a few days, maybe the cooperative reports it, because if people were obliged, they would do it nicer, arrange it somehow.*

No-man’s rubbish

Even though Gdynia invested in rubbish sheds, this is where waste segregation fails. What is happening... I segregate the rubbish in my house, I have rubbish bins for segregation, but as I see the bin stores are locked, and if someone forgets the key, they leave their rubbish outside the bin store, wild boars prowl, this rubbish is dispersed.

REMEMBER

Large electrical and electronic waste, bulky waste, used tyres and ash outside the heating period are collected upon request.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Dumped bulky waste

The challenge some residents face is not only to dispose of their bulky items, but also to fight off others who drop their items at their bin stores.

One aspect of dealing with the problem of bulky waste is the need to dispose of bulky waste that is dropped off at bin stores by people from other parts of the district.

In this case, rapid intervention is expected of the city. Residents notice that the dilapidated objects lying around make others more willing to add their own to the pile. This is because lying objects are treated as a form of “consent” for this type of activity, because “there is already rubbish lying around anyway”.

> *Where I live there’s an open courtyard, anyone can come and there’s always some furniture that people bring down from all over the neighbourhood and leave [...] Well that’s a problem, because that courtyard is perpetually littered.*

> *I see that the more neglected the bin store is, the more people don’t have any boundaries. There, everything is mixed with everything, one thing stacked on another.*

Non-listed waste

Unusual waste is a problem that requires additional action.

Unusual waste that is not on the list of bulky waste that can be contracted for collection requires additional action already at the stage of obtaining information on what to do with it.

Sometimes the desire to act in accordance with the rules forces the person to reorganise their entire day, e.g. because of the opening hours of sites accepting a particular type of waste. Sometimes this is too much, even for the residents who want to follow the rules.

Not knowing what to do with the waste sometimes leads to a situation where we do nothing with it. Provided, of course, that we have somewhere to keep it.

> *I had a large piece from a car body to throw away. I didn't know what to do, in the end my daughter found out that we could haul it away for scrap. I work until 5 pm, so those junkyard hours were never convenient to go there. My daughter went with it on a Saturday, of course the junkyard was closed, not a soul inside.* ***Well, she got angry and just left it by the fence or what was I supposed to do with it, drive back and forth with such a big piece of a car bonnet, so that's what she did.***

> *I still have some panels in the basement and two boxes of old tiles, but I don't know where to throw them out.*

A small community means more responsibility

In communities where one is not anonymous, the propensity to act seems greater.

Respondents indicated that in smaller communities, where one is not anonymous, leaving bulky waste without informing the relevant services is less common than in large blocks of flats.

> *Where I live, we have two housing cooperatives that use this one garbage gazebo, they are small communities where you can get along. People discipline each other, so when someone is doing a renovation, other people usually know about it, so they don't pretend it's not theirs and we haven't had problems where such waste is lying around notoriously for weeks, but usually it's there for a few days and then it's taken away.*

Beyond the aesthetics

Unmanaged bulky waste generates problems that go beyond aesthetics.

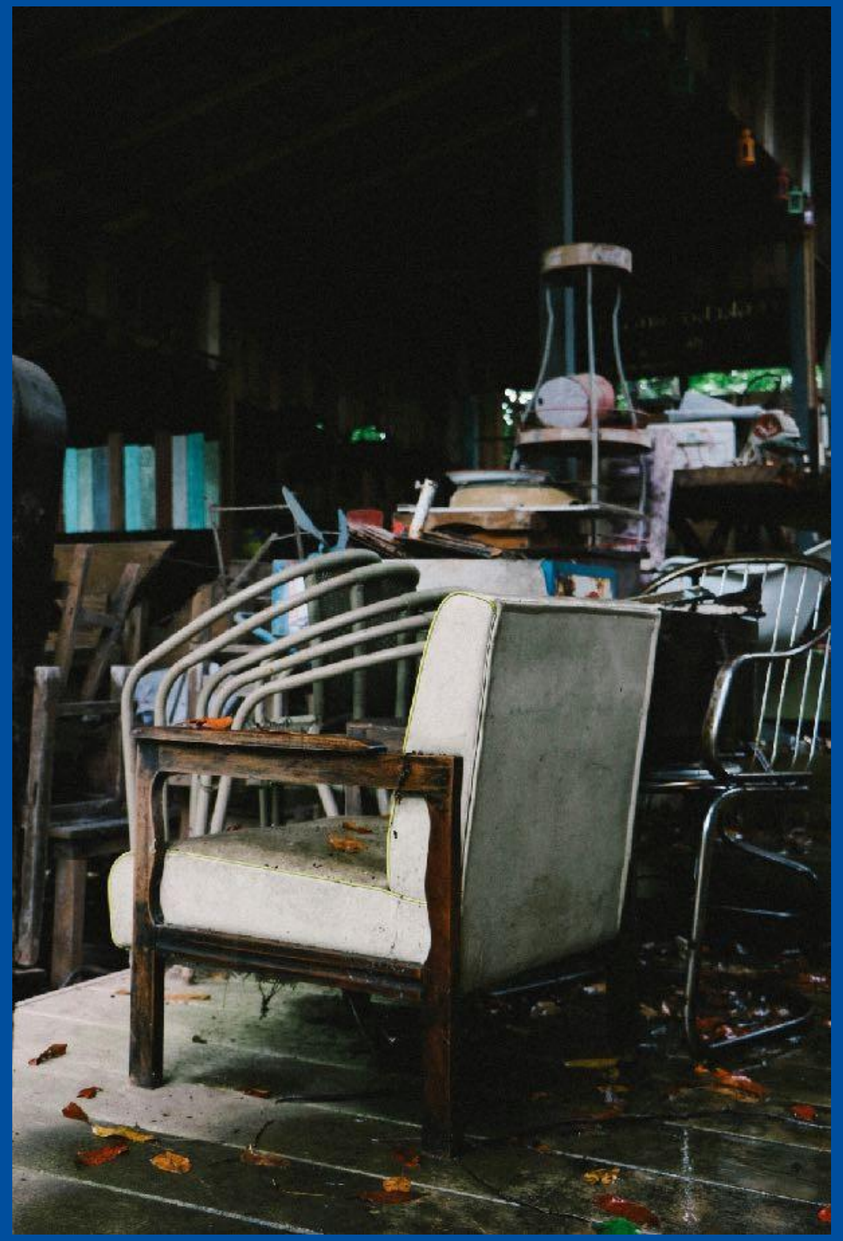
Not only do leftover items not look good, but they also make everyday life difficult, e.g. by blocking the entrance to a car park and, in extreme cases, becoming a health hazard.

The problem is even more frustrating if you do not know who left the waste and who can be held responsible in the event of damage to property or health.

> *The waste was dumped in such a way that it overlapped with the drive along the car park*

> *It was raining and I was walking past a shed and there were furniture slabs lying around, stripped furniture, high-gloss, of course the pavements are as they are, so I stepped on this furniture slab accidentally and the slab lifted. I fell and broke my arm, spent 7 weeks in a cast, that's one thing, plus the long rehabilitation.*

RECIRCULATION



The much-missed “displays”

“Displays” are seen as a near-perfect solution: simple rules and a benefit for everyone involved.

“Displays” (placing old furniture next to bin stores but in a neat manner, easy to pick up before the garbage truck comes) are a form of disposing of old furniture that was remembered with great fondness. Many people had colourful stories from taking part in such events.

Clear rules of organising them, so that everyone knew what to do and when, were particularly appreciated.

The format of the event was equally important. It alleviated the resistance to taking things “out of the bin”. The “display” gave the green light for this type of activity, while introducing an element of fun, a social gathering.

Some communities have, from the bottom up and spontaneously, created places where they leave items that may be of use to others.

> *I often did such rallies back in the day, driving around the neighbourhood looking for cool things, and I did manage to find a few. It’s not that I went out to get chairs, it’s just that there were such shell-shaped chairs standing there and I found them and had them upholstered.*

> *You put the thing on display, you know there will be a car coming so you generally have a clear conscience and what gets taken away is taken away*

> *People sometimes held on to these things on purpose just to put them on display later*

> *You put the thing on display, you know there will be a car coming so you generally have a clear conscience and what gets taken away is taken away*

The much-missed “displays”

> *People also sometimes held on these things on purpose just to put them on display later*

> *You put the thing on display, you know there will be a car coming so you generally have a clear conscience and what gets taken away is taken away*

> *We have a place where we put some reasonably good furniture on display [...] it's become such a habit for people to put out or have some toys for children there, for example.*

From selling to bin stores

As a rule, bulky waste disposal is a three-stage process. Its course is at least equally affected by the given object’s material value as by whether we have somewhere to store it.



STAGE 1: Trying to sell



STAGE 2: Give-away in exchange for self-pickup



STAGE 3: Putting it on ’display’

When we bought the flat, it had two big wall units, a sofa, a table that needed a bit of repairing: things we wouldn’t use. The first thing we did was put them up on OLX even I think for free or for some ridiculous amount, and something might have sold, the rest didn’t and then we just put them out by the bin store.

I sell some things, but only if I know they can stand at my place and don’t disturb me, because it takes longer [...] and at the rubbish dumps it’s so that [...] you can get rid of a fairly good item even in a day.

I would probably put it up for sale; after two months, if no one bought it, then I would just put it out on display, like “if someone needs it, let them have it” because if it’s obviously cluttering the place up, I would wait [...], after some time, say two or three months, if I don’t want to wait any longer [...], then I choose to remove it and simply look for a way to remove it

RECIRCULATION

From sales to bin stores

STAGE 1: Trying to sell

Respondents opted for this stage when they perceived a material value in an item they owned and were able to keep the item for some time. In addition to material value, sentimental value also plays a role, significantly influencing the value attributed to the object.

It is precisely the question of size and whether we have somewhere to keep the item that affects how long we are able to wait for a new owner.

STAGE 2: Give-away in exchange for self-pickup

If the sale was unsuccessful, respondents would put the item up for free, hoping to speed up the process. Although the process of “handling” an advert was just as demanding as a sale (and sometimes, due to the number of enquiries, even more so), the time from publishing the advert to closing the transaction was considerably shorter.

The motivation for the sale, however, is not only to give the item a second life, but also to solvie the problem of having to remove it.

STAGE 3: Putting it on ’display’

As a rule, displaying an item next to the bin store was seen as a last resort or a solution for strongly damaged furniture.

People also opted for it when the flat needed to be emptied very quickly, e.g. before the start of renovation work the following day.

RECIRCULATION

From sales to bin stores

I think I can make something out of them, but probably the quickest way would be if I put up an ad saying I'll give them away and they're gone by tomorrow, but I don't have that pressure because I have a lot of space in the garage.

I happen to give things away for free on OLX, people offer up straight away, they will take anything, so generally to get rid of anything at all you post for free and really there's a line of people willing to take it after just five minutes

If you want to sell something, you have to take the time to do it, but that time isn't always there, and things take up space, so I sometimes give things away for free

It seemed to me that you give it away quicker if you want to get rid of something quickly because you just need the space, but if something is very valuable, well, then I prefer to sell it so that I get something back from it.

With selling, you have to get the timing right and people take things for free even if they don't need them

First, I'm simply going to see whether anyone might want it on the garbage truck [group] [...] well that's where I put it first, I wait three-four days, if I don't hear from anyone then I take it down

Two types of recirculation

Whether respondents treated their home as temporary or not influenced not just their approach to buying second-hand items, but also what they looked for in them.

People who were planning to move in the near future were mainly counting on a bargain when buying second-hand. In turn, they focused on the functional aspect when choosing furniture. They were more interested in furniture from popular chain furniture shops than Communist Poland gems.

Respondents who used second-hand purchases for a flat in which they planned to stay longer were looking for objects made of quality materials that met their aesthetic expectations. In this case, in addition to functional issues, emotional issues are also beginning to play a role.

One the one hand, buying second-hand was an option when new items of this standard were too expensive. However, the price was not always crucial. Sometimes it proved more important to buy an item that was unique, a work of a particular designer. Recirculation was seen as an opportunity for getting design at a good price.

> *We are renting a flat, so we don't invest like a few thousand in furniture. We don't even have a house, we don't know what's going to happen in a while, so we can't buy furniture for some crazy amounts of money.*

> *I hunt for them later [chairs from the 1960s] and I have chairs that, you know, not half the people in Gdynia have, because they buy in the big shops. I mean it's not even that I want to stand out, it's more that I just really liked the sort of shape, the line, it's just prettier in a way, but if I had unlimited money, I would buy some beautiful furniture or hunt for an antique.*

Two types of recirculation

We’re not buying some designer furniture that’s going to be our final forever one, because I don’t know if we're going to live here.

You have to pay a lot of money for such designer things, but I can’t afford it at the moment, maybe when I’m decorating my dream flat someday

And [what counts] is that it has such a unique value, and it’s not produced anymore, it's not a mass product from the shop, it’s something precious, something you can really enjoy.

We’d rather not buy such contemporary design we simply cannot afford it now.

We have a lot of vintage stuff in the house, a lot of second-hand stuff, but let’s call it a bit soulful

I have second-hand furniture, from olx: children's beds, when we replaced the beds, I we looked for cheaper ones, we have our own mattresses, and we bought the frames.

RECIRCULATION

Recirculation full of stereotypes

Buying second-hand clothes is seen as being in good taste. Furniture is still a slightly different story.

Some respondents indicated that buying old furniture that is not an antique or a communist gem is seen as a sign of financial problems – that someone cannot afford a new piece of furniture from a chain shop. Taking something from the bin store is met with extreme emotions.

In some circles, this is something to be proud of. In others, however, it remains an embarrassing issue.

> *For some, it continues to be an embarrassing subject to approach and take, for example, a good chest of drawers from the bin store.*

> *There is still a notion lingering in society that if someone has something used, it means that they are poor.*

Environmentalism in the background

Environmentalism is cited as an important factor in opting for second-hand items. This aspect often cements the decision; yet, it does not determine it.

Environmental considerations played an extremely important role for some respondents. This motivation did not, however, work in isolation.
It accompanied other aspects, such as the price, the effort required for the action, the time available, etc. It motivated action as an additional factor but was sufficient in itself for just a few respondents.

> *Of course, I have environmental concerns somewhere in the back of my mind, but it's just that only I care about it in my family. I don't want to produce so much rubbish and especially that it is of such poor quality that I know that, as I have bought this chest of drawers, I am unlikely to pass it on and I would rather get rid of it because it annoys me, and no one will use it later.*

> *All the pollution and the way everything looks now, I find it kind of scary and I just feel bad throwing some things out.*

Environmentalism in the background

We’re simply looking for something cheaper. Especially as we’re only temporarily living in this flat. It’s not ours and we probably won’t be taking these things home in the future either, so we’re just trying to cut down the costs.

If it’s from a chain shop I always check first to see if I can have it second hand and I do that because, well, the price is nice, although I could probably afford new furniture too, but I try not to create demand

RECIRCULATION

District specificity

The place for furniture hunting influences its quality.

Those more experienced in furniture hunting pointed out that what could be found reflected, at least to some extent, the specific nature of individual districts: both in terms of their wealth and type of architecture.

> *X is not a rich neighbourhood, and when I sometimes go downtown, well, sometimes I've come across cooler things downtown*

Inspirations



Reuse pop-up station

In Stockholm, stations supporting giving objects a second life are set up in individual neighbourhoods for a few days.

Not only can you refurbish your (smaller) piece of furniture there, but you can also simply leave it behind or take one that suits you and was left behind by a neighbour.
This action becomes an event which further integrates the local community.

https://www.norradjurgardsstaden2030.se/articles/popular-mobile-reuse-station



Drive-in

In Denmark, an action was organised based on the idea of a drive-in. People would leave e.g. chairs, old lamps, but also smaller rubbish in appropriately marked bins set up in a car park. Residents were able to drive up in a car and easily leave an unwanted item.

Some of the items could then be purchased in a special shop.

https://www.citizen.digital/lifestyle/denmark-where-waste-is-a-resource-n308201

RECIRCULATION

BUYING SECOND-HAND



Second hand de luxe

The growing awareness of the value of some furniture items from years gone by makes it difficult to hunt down gems at a good price.

Respondents pointed out that it was increasingly difficult to find quality second-hand furniture at a good price, let alone find it on ’display’.

It follows that second hand does not equal a low price. Sometimes items that are decades old are much more expensive than new items. However, quality and design are cited as their advantages.

> *In fact, there are pieces of furniture that I like very much, but they already cost a substantial amount, when they are restored, they can cost several thousand zloty, if we’re talking about original 1950s furniture*

> *People are now more aware of what is valuable*

> *It used to be easier to get Chierowski chairs or something on “display”, and now people are more knowledgeable, they don’t throw such things away anymore, and when they do want to get rid of it, they put it up for a certain amount of cash*

> *Because a lot of the stuff that people throw away, it’s just that it’s less and less of it, probably because people have learned that you can sell things and some of the old stuff has some value after all*

Too difficult for second hand

Certain categories of furniture almost immediately ruled out a second-hand search.

The main category of furniture deemed too difficult for recirculation was built-in furniture; respondents wouldn't even start looking for it second hand.

Some respondents found furniture that was too personal, such as a bed, especially troublesome.

Often people also excluded very specific furniture items, such as an adjustable desk with specific dimensions, from the list of items sought on groups and platforms. This is because respondents assumed that searching for such furniture could take too long.

> *I don't know if I would choose to buy a bed second-hand*

> *When the pandemic started and we had to start working from home, well, one of the desks is a folding one, so you can fold it up and down, and the other one, which is also from Ikea, you can adjust its height, so it was something specific enough that we bought new ones here as well.*

Quality for a moment

Whether we buy new or second-hand furniture for a child’s room, it is immediately with the idea that we will be selling/giving it away soon.

Children’s furniture is seen as temporary. However, temporariness is not followed by a desire to find the cheapest solution, but a quality solution. At the same time, it should be quality at a good price.

Quality is both the material and its durability, but also the possibility of repairing/replacing components.

Quality is not only a question of safety but prevention: increasing the chance of reselling the item (and thus recover some of the money) when it is time to redecorate the interior.

The best evidence of a second-hand piece of furniture bought is the condition in which it was preserved after its previous little owners.

> *We assume that this is furniture for a few years not because these are some units with drawers that we can replace. We wanted them to be wooden and not made of plywood, wood panels or something. They can be from a chain shop, but wooden, wood ages nicer, so that even if it’s a bit damaged ,the wood looks nicer*

The race for time and against time

The price one often has to pay for buying second-hand furniture is time. Sometimes it proves to be too high.

Purchasing second-hand furniture takes time. On the one hand, it often entails hours of browsing through adverts (which some see as a form of entertainment). On the other, waiting, sometimes for weeks on end, until an item that suits us appears.

For items that are donated, some people gave up already at the start. The first-come, first-served principle, combined with the generally huge interest, discouraged them from making any moves.

Time is also an issue when items are to be disposed of. Doing something more than putting an item outside a bin store “costs time”, which may also be a difficult barrier to cross.

> *The worst thing is time, because I have, to now find such a desk, I have to follow this rubbish truck [group] to see if someone doesn’t post it for the next however-long-amount-of-time, it might be tomorrow or in three months, I don't know. This is definitely the most difficult thing, because I do still have the perseverance to browse through it, manage the notifications, and stay on top of it all, but I know that if my partner were to do it, it wouldn't be possible at all.*

> *I never believed it would still be there. Often a comment pops up really fast that [the item] is no longer available.*

The race for time and against time

I’ve never taken anything from the displays because I've never come across anything nice, and of all those specific groups for givinh something away for free, well, there was a time I looked through them too, but there’s such a race there, and I’m too quiet a person to race for such things

I think I’m a bit short of time I just don’t want to organise it all

There’s so much of it, you need time for that too, and you’re already at the computer for so long

Below expectations

Buying second-hand is sometimes a game of roulette. This is because the photos in the offers don’t always accurately reflect the reality.

Some respondents encountered at least one situation where they decided not to take/buy a second-hand piece of furniture due to its condition being much worse than indicated in the advertisement.

Fear of finding yourself in such a situation was also an important motivation to meet the seller in person and make sure everything is OK before the purchase.

> *When we started to furnish the first floor here for rent, it sometimes turned out that these rhings were in a deplorable condition and my partner would get annoyed with me because I was pregnant at the time, and I would always send him out to get this stuff, and he would carry it all and then it turned out that the furniture was in a much worse condition than described or than it looked like in the pictures*

3, 2, 1… reserved

Reserving something just because it’s there and it’s free is a hype that hinders effective group operation.

Items posted for free are often reserved in a matter of moments. Those interested then form a waiting list of sorts.

However, this mechanism is only seemingly effective. The “fastest” people often do not appear to pick up the object. This is because they reserve items without thinking and without the basic information necessary to make a rational decision, e.g. dimensions.

> *There’s this annoying thing where people see a new post and, without even thinking about it, they just reserve it and only then begin asking their friends if anyone wants it. I’ve encountered it a couple of times even giving things away and a couple of times I’ve encountered it when I was taking things. I was the second or third in line for these items and the owner would write me that the previous ones didn't show up and can I come pick it up*

Additional values

Sometimes the choice of second-hand items is not determined by financial or aesthetic issues. It is the additional properties attributed to them that count.

Some respondents associated second-hand furniture with characteristics that made it more attractive, e.g. it was seen as healthier or there was less fear of reworking it, which would also be needed for new furniture.

> *There's also the aspect of buying second-hand, which matters to me when it comes to children's furniture, that the second-hand furniture is already weathered and not so saturated with all these different chemicals, so it seems a bit safer to me.*

> *If you want to cut it somehow, to adjust it, it's also less of a pity, and such an item that bears traces of use, when reworking it into someone's own thing, i.e. adding embellishments, it doesn't lose its value, because it's already sort of worn out and these next changes don't make it look worse*

Own work

Having second-hand furniture means being ready to renovate or refresh it

People whose motivation is to hunt down second-hand gems are much more prepared to invest either their time or additional resources in their restoration. If the motivation behind the purchase was purely economic and/or related to products available in chain shops, this option was not even considered.

Refreshing chain furniture, on the other hand, is a way of avoiding the whole problem and the (also financial) burden of having to make changes to the interior.

> *There's also the aspect of buying second-hand, which matters to me when it comes to children's furniture, that the second-hand furniture is already weathered and not so saturated with all these different chemicals, so it seems a bit safer to me.*

> *When we bought one flat, it had the furniture of the previous owner, an elderly lady — from a chain shop — a chest of drawers, a TV stand and a three-door mirror — they were dark, and I wanted light furniture. This was our first flat and we wanted to decorate it our own way. But nobody wanted the furniture, so I decoupaged it and it stayed with us for two years and then we raised money to get new furniture.*

Inspirations



Kierratyskeskus

Kierratyskeskusto is a not-for-profit enterprise. You can donate unwanted furniture directly to one of the shops or by ordering transport to facilitate the donation (for a small fee)

In addition to the on-site shops, the company also operates an online shop where you can also buy large items.

https://kauppa.kierratyskeskus.fi/



Youzd

Youzd is a French platform that enables the sale of second-hand furnishings, including bulky ones.

Its distinguishing feature is providing transport. The buyer doesn’t need to worry about it.

What is more, if you buy items from several sellers, an attempt will be made to have them all delivered in one shipment.

https://www.youzd.fr/



Noch mall

A shopping mall where all products, including furniture, are second-hand. Those wishing to dispose of furniture can use the collection service.

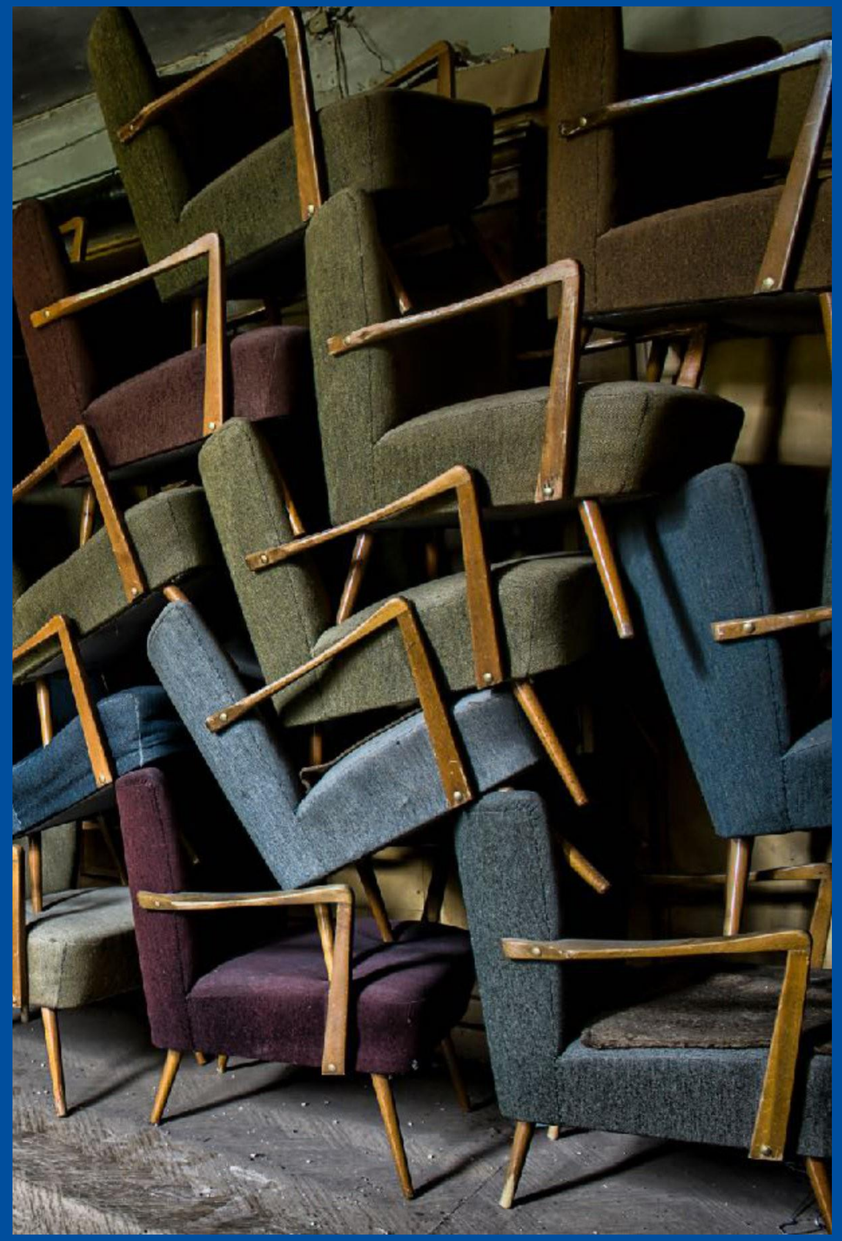
In addition, companies offering sustainable products can present them in the mall in the form of pop-up shops.

There are also events where a specific type of items can be repaired.

https://www.nochmall.de/about

BUYING SECOND-HAND

DISPOSING OF BULKY ITEMS



Sweet (temporary) ignorance

When respondents put items outside the bin store, they don’t always think about what happens next.

Some respondents hoped that items taken from outside the bin store by the city were managed by means other than their destruction. For some, gaining awareness was the point at which they began to pay more attention to other forms of disposing of bulky items.

> *I remember the first time I did it [put the furniture outside the bin store] and there was such stuff there that I thought: well, I’m not going to give it away, I would redo it, but I don’t have time. I was watching through the window when it arrived, so I thought goo,d they’re going to do something about it too, and I saw it all being thrown into this container and crushed and it just broke my heart because then I realised that nothing was going to happen to it, it becomes some pulp, and I don’t even know what happens to it afterwards.*

Clearing your conscience

Regardless of what happens to the object we give to someone, our conscience is at least a little clearer.

Respondents were not interested in what the new owners of an item that they gave/ sold them will do with it. Even if the new owners put it up for grabs outside a bin immediately afterwards, the donor's conscience remained clear, although as a rule they nevertheless believed in the good intentions of the recipients.

> *It's better to give it to someone than to put it outside a bin store and just watch it deteriorate, because people are less likely to take something from the bin than from someone directly*

> *I assume that if someone takes it, it means they need it, they will either sell it on or use it. Well, I get rid of it, I don't throw it in the bin and for me it's important that these things don't end up in the bin*

The art of selling

Selling requires not only patience, but also the right approach and skills.

The challenge in selling furniture is not only the waiting time for a potential buyer, which is hard to predict.

Respondents who had more experience highlighted the importance of taking a good picture or good pricing (based on an analysis of similar offers available in the area).

Without the right approach, it is harder to close a transaction successfully, which in turn discourages people from making further attempts.

> *Recently, for example, I had a bed, a bunk bed with space at the bottom for a desk, and I took a picture with my mobile phone, made a description on OLX, and nobody wanted to buy it. Then I took pictures with a camera, processed them in Photoshop, had my kid sit down and styled the thing and a few people responded to the ad and I sold it for PLN 600*

Save as much as possible

Even the display of an item outside the bin store is accompanied by the hope that, before it is taken away by the rubbish truck, someone will make use of at least a part of it.

Respondents who decided to put a bulky item outside a bin store were hoping that someone would be tempted to take the item or at least a part of it.

Sometimes they encouraged this by writing a card or preparing the item for easier pick-up. Some, wanting the items to have a chance, reported the waste for transport only after 2-3 days to see if anyone was interested.

> *I took out the bathtub to the bulky waste compartment and I was supposed to put it in the bin store, because my store is normally locked, but the metal parts, like the bathtub legs, I left them outside the bin store because there are people who go around collecting scrap metal, so to speak, and I leave the metal parts of the bulky waste outside the bin store.*

> *Well, these were wardrobes of that size, three such segments, and we put it out by our bin store, there was a niche near the bin store and people put things out there and these things disappeared*

> *You can see that there are people who are aware and they tend to try to put things out so that they can still be [collected], but there are people who make a big pile just throwing these things on top of one another and these things are already deteriorating in the process, and then you can't get much out of it anymore*

> *I will take it out to the gazebo and only report it after two days maybe*

Financial value versus use value

The first to disappear is the financial value. The use value of objects is not lost until long afterwards, and it is the maintenance of this value that is often the motivation for taking action that requires more effort.

The motivation to donate bulky items rather than write them off often stems from the will to maintain their use value.

Even minor damage, especially to furniture from chain shops, disqualifies it as an item for sale. However, use value is maintained even if the furniture needs to be refurbished. Only significant damage will disqualify a piece of furniture from this category.

The dominant motivation for this approach is the “aversion to loss/waste”. Waste reduction and care for the environment play a secondary role.

The financial value became even less important compared to the use value in the case of items we received for free.

> *Of course, I’m of the opinion that if there’s something I don't like aesthetically, but it’s still functional and someone could use it for free, it’s nice to give it a second life or a chance for a second life*

> *If the items continue to have some use, well, I don't know, someone will take this to their summer house, a student will take it home and so to speak I am also recycling to reduce waste.*

> *I had a lot of furniture like that which I was given for my children, for example, so when I got it, I also wanted to give it away, I just somehow didn’t feel that I should sell it, I just felt that I should give it away like I got it myself.*

> *At the back, this panel had fallen off, this wardrobe already had these hinges just so rotten, they were falling apart, and it didn’t smell right, [...] so I decided there was no point in saving it in any way it was still a piece of furniture from the distant communist era*

Troubled relations

The intensity of contacts with those interested in the object we want to get rid of is as gratifying as it is frightening.

One of the more intense memories associated with disposing of unwanted bulky items was contacting people interested in the item. The number of questions asked, the phone calls at the oddest hours, the dozens of missed messages were exciting at first, but over time became overwhelming.

Sometimes this perspective caused respondents to postpone posting the item online.

Situations where someone makes an appointment to collect an item and does not turn up are especially frustrating. Also annoying was the list of additional wishes from the people who picked up the item, e.g. that the furniture be dismantled, that the person handing it over should carry it downstairs, etc.

Respondents who were slightly more fortunate with face-to-face meetings at reception/transfer recalled them well or neutrally.

> *You make an appointment with someone who doesn't turn up or tells you to reserve the item for the next 3 days and you want to get rid of it now*

> *They didn't fully appreciate it and didn't know how to fully respect the deal, but in the end, someone took the chest of drawers away and freed me from it*

> *I stopped posting on groups very quickly because I couldn't handle it there, the comments and so on*

Troubled relations

If I give something away people are very happy, smiling and it’s so cool that usually when I give something away, they are really very grateful

I don’t engage in conversation with everyone who answers, because a lot of people just don’t give a damn or don’t get to specifics, and so I've learned to write back in a perfunctory way without committing full time

I put up a desk made of decent MDF for 50 PLN because it's a shame to throw it out for someone to use it as firewood, but people were demanding. People expect you to dismantle the furniture for them, they wanted cardboard boxes for the furniture, I happened to be selling the children’s beds from a chain shop and people came in and were surprised that the cardboard boxes weren’t there.

When we gave away furniture for free there was always a “but”

Sometimes I took my time, waited and the person said they would not come.

DISPOSING OF BULKY ITEMS

Inspirations



IKEA: Odzyskaj i Zyskaj (Recover and Profit)

Odzyskaj i Zyskaj is an IKEA programme, under which IKEA repurchases furniture purchased after 2016, of which it is the manufacturer.

A simple app has also been developed that allows the user to check what the valuation of an item will be before they bring it in.

The shops run Circular Hub sections, where second-hand furniture can be purchased.

https://www.ikea.com/pl/pl/customer-service/services/okazje-na-okraglo-pub63b48c50#/?store=203

DISPOSING OF BULKY ITEMS

LOGISTICS



Pickup as added value

Self-pickup of the furniture by the buyer/receiver is an essential prerequisite for completing the transaction.

> *The person that collects it needs to take it downstairs, I no longer have to worry about it.*

For people giving up/selling furniture, one of the key benefits of the transaction is that they will get rid of both the furniture and the problem of removing it.

At the same time, this is one of the greatest logistical challenges for buyers. However, they regard paying for this type of service as uneconomic, so they organise the pickup on their own.

Moving the treasure

Finding an attractive piece of furniture at the bin store is just half the battle. The second half is to transport it, which is especially difficult as we must act here and now.

Transporting found furniture is often so problematic that the respondents gave up.

Finding transport here and now, before someone else takes the furniture, proved too stressful and demanding. The respondents did much better with smaller objects, such as small cabinets, chairs, etc.

With the need to act here and now, and a car not always at hand, carrying the items is an option.

> *Well, I carried some cabinets myself, or more to the point, there were these two cabinets that we found on the dump next to here, so we took [them]*

> *You always need someone to watch before I organise transport, or I'd pay some drunks to carry it for me [...] when it's winter, it's more difficult, but you can go outside Żabka [convenience store] and I think they'd carry it in exchange for a beer or something*

Overall calculation

Buying an item second-hand means looking for a balance between price and the commitment necessary to transport it.

Transporting second-hand furniture is one of the greatest challenges. As a rule, respondents engage friends/family for this purpose rather than transport companies. Some also happened to use carsharing vehicles designed to carry larger items.

However, logistics is not only about providing a means of transport, but also about assessing whether the distance is not too far. Particularly as, after seeing the furniture, the deal may ultimately not go through.

The concept of “too far away” was very individual. In general, however, it did not exceed 20-30 km. Its perception was also influenced by how much one had to pay for the item itself and how much one could gain by buying it second-hand rather than from a shop.

> *If, for example, I have to go to Gdańsk to buy something for 50 zloty, and I can buy it in a shop for 100 zloty on the spot, and take into account the time spent on the road and the fact that you have to take a bigger car to transport it, it is not worth it at all*

> *I have recently given up. We wanted to take a bookcase from [a chain shop], this big. It was in Rumia. I asked for the dimensions and it was probably 40 wide, even 90. We didn’t want to take it apart, because you know if you take it apart it could be the end of it and we didn’t take it in the end because we were afraid that we'd go, carry it downstairs and it wouldn’t fit in the car. To make matters worse, we had no one to stay with the child, and the child could not be in the car.*

Overall calculation

In the Tricity area, I think we would have no problem, and maybe Rumia. I think that's within these limits, we would rather not go to Kościerzyna or somewhere, I don't know, further, maybe Żukowo. I don't know, about 20 km, maybe 30, because it can still be 30 km to Gdańsk. On OLX there is a filter, so I usually tick Gdynia, Gdańsk and Rumia and plus 10 km for example and so this is how I usually filter.

Well, it will probably also be difficult to organise transport when I find that desk. It's always a logistically complicated operation to arrange for someone to be there at a specific time so that my partner is not at work and can pick it up.

Hire someone to pick it up from that person, often remove it from a block of flats and move it into a block of flats or a house, so the transport is sometimes more expensive than the furniture, so it's just not worth it. If you can fit it into a passenger car or a station wagon, fold down the seat, there is plenty of room and you push the chest of drawers in, it's still OK to find someone willing to buy it or maybe an armchair but not if you're selling a sofa.

There is a problem, because often when I am on Facebook in the [...] group, if someone wants to sell a piece of furniture for a low price, which is good for use or maybe needs a bit of refreshing, the problem is that they always say that the buyer is responsible for transport and now the buyer not only buys but also has to think about how to arrange the transport

Speaking of the sofa, it just happened to me that a friend of mine had his own transport, it was possible for him, and he took it to Łeba, because he has a summer house there which he rents during the summer and he just took it, because this sofa was in a really good condition

Size that matters

Not every bulk size is equal. The limit is whether the item will fit into a passenger car.

It is much easier to dispose of items that can be transported by passenger car, in whole or dismantled. Buyers tend to make a quicker decision if they don’t have to think about complex transport arrangements.

> *A man who had some sort of car repair shop came and he literally sat down on this stool in the car park and said: OK, I’ll take it. Well, it was the kind of thing that could be carried, easily packed, and it wasn't a problem, but the bigger stuff was the problem*

Inspirations



Habitat ReStores

The Habitat ReStores organisation runs a chain of shops selling second-hand items. If one wishes to donate a bulky item, they also offer to collect and remove it.

Money from the sale goes to support people in need to create affordable homes. .

Those who have donated in kind can deduct it from their tax.

https://www.habitat.org/restores/donate-goods



Eco transport

The bulky waste collection company Junkbusters emphasises in its communications that it operates in an environmentally friendly manner. Furniture unfit for use is disposed of in a manner that is as environmentally friendly as possible.

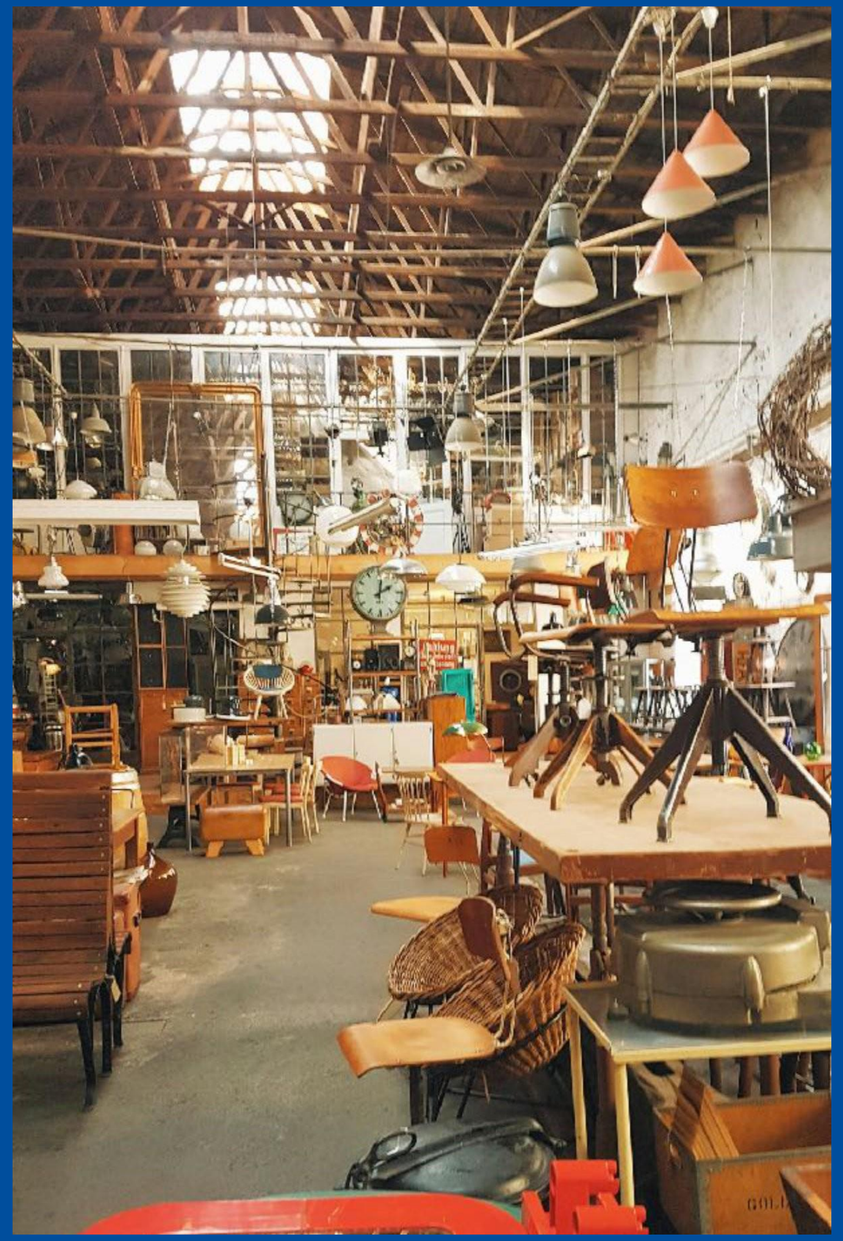
Usable items, in turn, are donated to charities.

Collection service is available for a fee.

https://www.junkbusters.dk/storskrald/

LOGISTICS

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS



WYRZUCAM.TO: simple, but...

Wyrzucam.to is a recognised solution, but one that does not quite solve the actual problem.

Respondents were familiar with the wyrzucam.to solution. Even if they did not recall the name, they knew the site existed. Its high positioning is extremely helpful. Simply typing in “bulky waste Gdynia” is enough to come across it.

Most respondents also had the experience of using it. The solution itself is generally perceived as simple and intuitive. However, it is not seen in terms of “smart” disposal of bulky items. It is merely a notification that something needs to be collected from outside the bin store. So, it partly solves the logistics problem (it is still a challenge to remove the item and put it out outside the bin store), but it does not answer the desire to extend the object’s use value.

However, the website is no substitute for human contact. Being able to call and receive a specific answer to a question without having to search for it, interpret the available content, etc. is seen as an important asset.

> *I sometimes took stuff out to the bin store, but we called for these big bulky items, then for such a special service and they come, but you can report through the app. My neighbours used it when they had something cramming up the place, some rubbish, they typed it in the app, and someone would come over*

> *After reporting it, they arrived after two weeks. I was under the impression that they don’t respond to the call, but they just drive around once in a while.*

> *When I have something to dispose of, I usually just search for it on wyrzucam.to or alternatively I just call the environmental department of the City Hall and ask them where I can take it to*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

WYRZUCAM.TO: simple, but not to the point

It’s also become super convenient, this system is just really cool, you just go on the website, tick it and these gentlemen just arrive.

This website [wyrzucam.to] is quite nicely described I just use it in cases when I don’t know what to do

I simply typed selective collection points Gdynia in Google and there is information on this page

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

Ease of adding offers

Proficient use of apps that facilitate recirculating items encourages action.

Efficient use of the apps encouraged rapid posting of photos of objects that respondents wanted to dispose of.

Solutions that work well on mobile devices provide an opportunity to act “in the meantime”. Those with less proficiency in using mobile devices either asked for help from their relatives or spent much more time on the task.

> *Not everyone is proficient in these solutions, I have an app, I do it quickly, but the kind of people who are, I don’t know, maybe a little less familiar with the phone with an internet connection, so then for them… for me, it takes, I don’t know, 20 minutes and for someone who is not that familiar, it can take two hours.*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

A needle in a haystack

There is so much going on so fast on the available platforms that it is impossible to keep up.

The dynamics of groups with items to give away/sell are so high that even people who visit them regularly have trouble keeping up with the content. A key problem, however, is the lack of a good tool to find interesting content, which was still at the top of the page a short while ago but has moved down in a flash.

> *The posts that are uploaded to this [group] get lost, they are displayed on the board in a different order, it is difficult if not impossible to filter them, so this is probably the most difficult part.*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

What happens in the groups

No dimensions

People who donate furniture often do not provide its dimensions. Those who are interested reserve the item without asking for dimensions.

Complete confusion

Many groups do not have a distinction as to what type of objects are involved. As a result, bulky waste is mixed with trinkets, and it seems impossible to find anything.

Self-pickup

In the case of both paid advertisements and things given away for free, self-pickup is indicated as the only option.

Immediate reservations

Furniture given away for free is reserved almost immediately. There is often a queue of interested people. It turns out, however, that often the furniture is available even a few days after being posted, as several people in a row have not turned up to collect it.

Unkind communication

Most content posted by those giving things away is laconic, often limited, for example, “to give away” and the name of the district. Also, replies to posts are rarely full sentences.

Specified collection date

Sometimes a specific date and time is given when the item can be collected. Some of those who give furniture away allow advance reservations. Others are implementing the first-come, first-served rule to take the spoils.

SOLUTIONS AVAILABLE

What happens in the groups

On your own

One of the most common phrases on the group in the context of large-scale items is: “pickup and transport on your own”.

No status information

One of the challenges with group announcements is the lack of information on the status of items. Some try to cope by adding information in the body of the ad.

Give away in exchange for dismantling

Sometimes you can see advertisements in which furniture/furnishings, e.g. parquet flooring, will be donated in exchange for help in dismantling them.

All or nothing

Those donating several bulky items often apply the all-or-nothing principle, meaning in practice that those interested in one item must decide to take the entire posted set.

Finding, not searching

There are few announcements in the groups in which someone is looking for a particular item. These are definitely dominated by those in which someone wants to give something away.

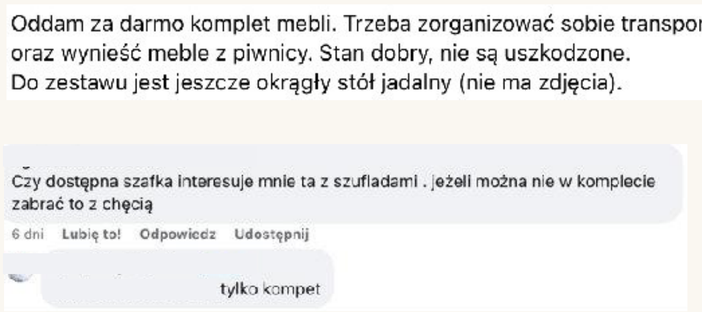
AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

What happens in the groups

Huge number of announcements



Possibility to collect a set only



All logistics on the receiving end



Information on current status



Laconic announcements, no dimensions given



AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

Inspirations



London-Merton

The official website not only provides information on what waste is collected, but also simple instructions on how to place items for collection so that they do not end up damaged, are easier for the service to take away, and do not disturb others.

It also promotes upcycling organisations, upholsterers and local groups that can be helpful when wanting to dispose of an item, etc.

https://www.merton.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/bulky-hazardous-and-clinical-waste/furniture-fridges-and-bulky-items

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

THE DESIRED SOLUTION



Space + transport

The provided solutions can be reduced to one thing: creating space. However, there was a split over whether it should be an online or offline space.

Respondents' ideas can be reduced to the need for a single place where items can be left and from which they can be taken. The physical nature of the place seemed evident to many. However, there were claims that it would be insufficient if it only existed in a physical form, using it would require too much effort.

Respondents also emphasised that support in transporting items, e.g. by allowing car rental, should be an integral part of the solution. .

> *There should be something like the second-hand furniture shops of the past, where, for example, if someone had a wardrobe, the owner would look at the photos and, if they were interested, they would come.*

> *I imagine that I can also come and pick up a piece of furniture, a door or whatever, but at the same time it's not smashed up or dirty and I can just take it there, like it's a kind of warehouse*

Space + transport

> *Then you’ don’t have to fiddle about with these [platforms], set a specific collection date and time, you don't need to take it to pieces, you don’t get this feeling that a good chair is about to get smashed, but there's a kind of feeling that’s important, at least for me, that you're giving some kind of a second, third, fifth life*

> *Ideally, I wouldn’t even have to have someone take it from me, but that, for example, I can hire a car to bring it in, because having someone remove it or take it downstairs isn’t the worst thing for me, just what to transport it with.*

> *Then you’ don’t have to fiddle about with these [platforms], set a specific collection date and time, you don't need to take it to pieces, you don’t get this feeling that a good chair is about to get smashed, but there's a kind of feeling that’s important, at least for me, that you're giving some kind of a second, third, fifth life*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

No remuneration or payment

An easy and meaningful disposal of an object is satisfying enough. Financial compensation is secondary.

For many items that are in the middle: i.e. they are already hard to sell but it feels a waste to throw them away, a sufficiently satisfying solution is one that is effortless and guarantees that our item will gain a second life.

Respondents had no expectation of financial compensation. At the same time, they emphasised that they would not like to incur any costs for using such a service.

> *For me, just getting rid of these things and the guarantee that, for example, someone would continue to use it somehow would be gratifying*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

Several options

A good solution should account for the different condition of the items being transferred.

The solution should approach the subject comprehensively, assuming several paths of action depending on the condition of the item to be handed over.

> *You have several options to get rid of something, and at the same time none of these options will lead to damp rubbish in the landfill [...] a whole system like this*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

The city as a guarantee of credibility

The city should address the problem. The most important thing, however, is for the task to be carried out by someone competent.

Respondents were unanimous that the city should address the topic of bulky waste. However, they did not specifically define its role. Still, it was stressed that the city's participation could help ensure greater trust in the new solution on the part of the residents.

> *I think that if the city promoted this, there would be more interest from older people: Oh, it's municipal, the city is promoting something about giving things away, so I'll ask my granddaughter, I'll ask my neighbour*

AVAILABLE SOLUTIONS

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Research team Agnieszka Mróz, Agnieszka Schroeder
Research organisation Marta Szaduro

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Creative Circular Cities

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